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Madame Constance's Jewels

The life and character of Constantine Phaulkon, Monsieur Constance to the French, has been sufficiently discussed to require no introduction here;¹ that “the little Greek” rose from being a cabin boy on the East India Company vessels to a person of considerable power and quasi-ministerial rank at the court of Siam between 1683 and 1688, when he fell and was executed in a coup d'état, is well known. His abjuration of Protestantism and embracing of Catholicism in May 1682, and marriage the same month to a lady of mixed Japanese, Portuguese, and Bengali extraction is equally well known. His wife, only 16 years old at the time of her marriage, was Maria Guyomar de Pinha; her parents were “Master Phanick” and Ursula Yamada. Phanick was part-Bengali, part-Japanese, a devout Catholic, not a man of means but of good sense; his wife was, according to the extremely well-informed “English Catholic”,² not as faithful as she might have been, had several “fairly white” children (including one said to be fathered by a Jesuit), among them Maria Guyomar, who after the appearance of the French in Siam in 1685 became known to them as Madame Constance. We wish to examine here one detail of events in 1688, what

became of the jewels which Madame Constance managed to salvage from the pillaging of her residence in Ayutthaya.

There exists in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, an anonymous account of the 1688 revolution in Siam (BN. Ms Fr.6106). Written in a regular hand, and well-spaced, the contents bear a close resemblance to the published text of Vollant des Verquains, though it is much more concise and not given over to philosophical reflections. It always refers to Vollant des Verquains as “the chief engineer” (*l'ingénieur en chef*), something he would have liked but was not. It gives the same details as Vollant des Verquains about the number of French officers accompanying Phaulkon from his house to the palace on 18 May 1688 (both have four, whereas all other accounts mention three), and both have eight French officers (rather than six plus one engineer) making their escape after being imprisoned in Lopburi. Both have the same details about the rings and jewels relieved from Madame Phaulkon, always referred to in the text as “Madame Constance”. There are no clues as to the identity of the author in the text, except that he was clearly an officer and took part in the retreat from Bangkok on 2 November, as

did Vollant des Verquains. It is not impossible that it could be an underling of Vollant des Verquains writing, or even Vollant himself.

What follows here is a translation of the hitherto unpublished account insofar as it refers to Madame Phaulkon.

[55r] “Whilst we were prevented from arming this vessel,³ Madame Constance, only waited for a favourable moment to be able to escape from the hands of Phetracha’s son;⁴ he was not content with treating her as the most despicable of unfortunates, making her perform the lowest and most abject tasks, but also tried to force her to satisfy his brutal passions, being resolved to incarcerate her. She thought that if she could find [55v] the means of escaping to Bangkok flying the [French] king’s flag, she would indubitably be saved, the more so as she was armed with two letters in which His Majesty [Louis XIV] assured her late husband of his Royal protection for himself and all his family. Having decided on the Sieur de Lar⁵, formerly a ship’s lieutenant, to extract her from her wretched captivity, she told him that, being long since resolved to escape to Bangkok, she had nonetheless desired to wait until nothing was lacking to Mr Desfarges to ensure his departure, so that her escape would bring no delay in the execution of the planned [French] withdrawal, and that, being informed [56r] that he had everything needed to depart, she did not doubt that he would entirely approve that she refused the offers which had been made many times by the head of the Dutch factory⁶ to take her away in safety to Batavia in their Company vessels, to put herself completely under his protection, not believing that she could be in better nor safer hands than those of the French; her late husband had always insisted that she took this course of action in preference to any other should any misfortune occur. Thus she implored de Lar most insistently to take her to Bangkok with her son [56v] in a small boat, which she held ready in a rather remote place so as not to be discovered, and that if some misfortune caused her to be arrested during the journey, the first thing he was to do was to cut off her head, so that she would not fall into the hands of her cruel persecutors and her vile abductor.

Sieur du [sic] Lar, for whom M. de Constance had conceived considerable esteem when he

was alive, and to whom he had already given two of the King of Siam’s vessels to command, did not doubt that he would much oblige M. Desfarges in bringing Mme [de] Constance to [57r] Bangkok, the more so as he had heard him say many times that he would be very pleased to be able to extract her from the miserable condition to which she had been reduced. He [therefore] promised Mme de Constance to take her to Bangkok, or to die with her; and having embarked between ten and eleven at night, they arrived there the following day at three in the afternoon, and had her brought on board the largest vessel⁷ through a rear porthole, while waiting for him to inform M. Desfarges of her arrival, not doubting that he would prepare a lodging as soon as her knew of her presence. But this faithful guide, who expected to be [57v] praised for his action, was very surprised to see that M. Desfarges spoke to him in a tone which indicated he was very far from being pleased, and asked who told him to bring this lady, and why he was so bold as to do so without his orders, or at least without having consulted him. He replied that as he had gone to Siam⁸ at his command, to obtain an anchor and ropes for the large ship, he found Mme Constance had already prepared everything for her departure, and gave him to understand that if she did not escape that very day, she would be locked up the following day on the orders of the prince, the son of the new king; thus seeing that the matter was too urgent [58r] to be delayed until the following day, he was unable to give him forewarning, and he thought he was supporting his kindly intentions concerning this lady by placing him in a position to make amends to the wife what had happened in respect of her husband.

But M. Desfarges, who was more concerned than anyone to leave Bangkok, abandoning several small outposts which he should have held on to for the glory of [the king] his master, say that the arrival of this lady would delay matters, and perhaps place him in a position to restart hostilities [with the Siamese], as well as [to require him] to hand back her jewels, which [58v] he had seized when he knew that she had saved them from her home; however, seeing himself much solicited by the chief officers of the garrison not to leave her further in this vessel, he finally consented that she be placed in the

fortress after dark, loudly declaring that he did not wish to see her, nor know where she might be. The following day he sent *Sieur Verret*⁹ to find the *Barcalon*,¹⁰ who was on the west side [of Bangkok] to inform him that *Mme de Constance* had taken refuge with us, and to request him to say what had to be done about this. The *Barcalon* replied that it was not a matter of great [59r] importance, and that if the general desired to please the king, he did not doubt that he would grant his permission for him to take her with him, providing that for his part he consented to hand over the jewels which she had under torture admitted having sent for safety to Bangkok, and a list of which he had in his possession.

It is appropriate to mention that *Mme de Constance*, seeing her husband arrested in the palace,¹¹ thought to save the 25–30,000 *écus*¹² in jewels she possessed, and which she had placed in three small packets, which she sealed herself. She gave two to the superior of the [59v] *Jesuits*,¹³ who subsequently entrusted them to *Sieur de Beauchamp*¹⁴ to give them to the Fathers who were in Bangkok, where they acted as almoners to the soldiers since their arrival in that country. This officer, seeing in his possession two important packets, which he knew did not contain trifles, kept them with him, proposing to hand them over to the persons to whom they were addressed as soon as they knew he was in possession of them. The third packet, which contained fifteen rings, the least of which was worth twenty catties (a catty being worth fifty French *écus*) and some extremely valuable necklaces, was confided to a captain [60r] in the infantry,¹⁵ who, on entering the fortress [in Bangkok] declared he would not relinquish it except on the orders of the person who had placed it in his hands. When *M. Desfarges* heard of this, as well as of the two packets with his chief-of-staff, he desired that they be placed in his hands, on account of a thousand *écus* which he had entrusted to *M. de Constance* and which were plundered along with the rest of [the contents of] his house. But his chief-of-staff, who was expecting *Mme de Constance* to succumb to the rigours of the tortures which the Siamese applied each day in order to extract from her information about her possessions and the places where her husband

might have concealed them when he was alive, or [believing] that she would have at least be [60v] condemned to perpetual slavery, thought fit not to hasten to hand over what he had in hand; it was not impossible that some should fall to him in the division of the spoils. This is why he resisted as much as he could placing them in the hands of *M. Desfarges*. But this general, who had no less desire than him to profit by them, treated him as the most despicable of men, reproaching him his very existence and his birthright, and finally prevailed on him to hand them over; but this was only after he [*Beauchamp*] had inspected both of them and sealed them up again as best he could, to be sure that he had received the real ones. *M. Desfarges* did not remain long without doing the same as his chief-of-staff, and after having [61r] extracted what suited him, sealed them up as before, waiting for them to be claimed. Concerning the officer who had the third packet, he was forcibly required to hand it over, and it was not possible for him to keep it for the person who had placed it in his possession as he had proposed.

Sieur Verret, after bringing the list of these jewels which the *Barcalon* had given him to give to *M. Desfarges*, who, not having found mention of the fifteen rings and the pearl necklaces contained in the third packet, thought sufficient to send him the two which the chief-of-staff had given him, after having [61v] reimbursed himself for the thousand *écus* which he had entrusted to *M. de Constance*, to the balance of which sum this minister had formerly paid him 500 *livres*. The *Barcalon*, having left for Louvo,¹⁶ called together the chief mandarins and sent for the *Jesuit Superior* to be present at the opening of the packets. On finding scarcely one third of what *Mme de Constance* had declared, he [the *Barcalon*] asked him how this considerable diminution had come about. But the Father, better placed than anyone, knowing all that was contained in these two packets, told him they must have been opened.

[62r] Meanwhile the resentment of *M. Desfarges* concerning the liberator of *Mme de Constance* increased in proportion to the realization that he could not keep her without returning to her what he possessed which belonged to her, nor placing her in the hands of

the Siamese without being greatly blamed for his action. That is why he assembled a council of war and indicated to it that the Barcalon was now in Louvo to obtain from the King of Siam permission for Mme de Constance to withdraw with us. [He stated that] His Siamese Majesty had in no respect wished to listen to this proposition, and that his intention was to have her again in his possession, or else abrogate their treaty [governing the withdrawal from the fortress], start the war again more [62v] intensely than ever, and exterminate all the Christians in Siam. He sought the opinions of the council about this, to decide what should be done. Of the nine captains who formed it, with the whole general staff, there was only Sieur de La Roche du Vigé and the elder son of M. Desfarges who were not for dying rather than hand her over, given that the intentions of the king were to provide asylum for all those who came to place themselves under his flag, and that if the council were permitted to express its thoughts, Mme de Constance should not be considered other than a subject of the [French] king, seeing that His Majesty had taken her under his protection with all her family [63r] and that she came to Bangkok as though entering her new homeland, to enjoy there the advantage of being among those subjects of the most powerful monarch in the world.

M. Desfarges, who was far from content with what had just been resolved in the council, closed it with such transports of anger that would be difficult to describe, so much was he opposed to all that he thought might delay his departure; for it is certainly true that, although he gave out [the Siamese] were resolved in wishing to keep this lady, the new king [Phetracha] had agreed that he could take her away, even with all her wealth, rather than [63v] restart hostilities, knowing we were supplied with provisions and all necessities, and our garrison was reinforced by several Europeans, both French and English, who had been permitted to come and remain in our stronghold after the conclusion of the treaty [of withdrawal], and consequently were better prepared than ever to continue hostilities and provide long and vigorous resistance. He also knew that his people were beginning to be tired of the war, and only sought our departure.

Matters remained unresolved for about a week, and M. Desfarges, who saw he was alone

in his viewpoint [64r] did not know what position to take, and began by venting his anger on the liberator of Mme de Constance, whom he relieved of his command of the larger of the two ships [supplied by the Siamese], and then had him cast in prison, watched over by two guards with drawn swords, with orders not to allow him to speak to anyone. He also reviled the Jesuit Fathers, and had an officer of the guards placed at Mme de Constance's door with orders to prevent any of them speaking to her, attributing to them her arrival there, as if this lady had not been shown enough callousness to need to be requested to leave [64v] the deplorable situation to which she was reduced.

However, M. Desfarges sought advice on all sides, not knowing what course of action to take, when the Bishop of Metellopolis,¹⁷ the only person in whom he had complete confidence, advised him to reassemble his council [of war] to see if there were no change in its viewpoint of being resolved to keep this lady, which was a means of losing all that had been obtained up to now, and he undertook to draw up a short memorandum giving all his reasons, which in truth only concerned [the position of the] Christians [65r], having little knowledge of worldly points of honour. M. Desfarges, who did not know what course of action to take, took this one supplied by the prelate, and after calling together the council for a second time, began by reading out this memorandum, which was much less than from a good and pious bishop than from a man determined to maintain the glory of the King. But he found the second council no less resolved than the first. Each person maintained his earlier position. This caused M. Desfarges to explode in anger once more, and he swept out of the council, threatening everyone, saying that he would show them who was the [65v] master and the wisest of them all therein, and ending by saying he would hand her over on his own authority, taking upon himself the consequences of his action. He then ordered Mme de Constance to be taken into the central fort, thinking that having no contact with the Jesuits, they [the French] would make her bend to his will in the necessity of her returning to Siam to save all her relations and the Christians which had been placed in the cangue¹⁸ on account of

her flight, threatening to leave them all in this condition until she returned. Sieur Verret, who was in Siam at this point in time, was arrested along with the others, causing Mme de Constance's mother to write [66r] to M. Desfarges to implore him to take pity on her advanced years, and not to leave her to suffer further, any more than the rest of her family, by immediately returning her daughter.

The ruse of imprisoning the Christians and the family of Mme de Constance could only be done with considerable circumspection, but Fr de La Breuille, the Jesuit destined to remain in Siam and who was among those incarcerated, became aware of it and informed his superior, who was then in Bangkok, assuring him that it was a trick behind some [66v] other reason for handing over Mme de Constance. But M. Desfarges, who only waited for a letter of the kind he received from the mother of this lady in order to have something to show the court [in Versailles] to justify his conduct, immediately had drawn up with the Barcalon a short treaty concerning her. She would henceforth have complete freedom [in the practice] of her religion, as well as to marry again as many times as she desired, and finally that she would not be pursued subsequently concerning the effects of her late husband. Both having signed this, he sent his chief-of-staff to inform her that she absolutely must be ready [67r] to leave immediately the stronghold, and if she refused four sergeants would be charged with carrying her out, holding her arms and legs. This lady, carried away by indignation and despair at seeing herself thus sold and robbed, said that she had never expected anything less from the general, since he had so treacherously abandoned her husband, and the detachment of four sergeants was to no purpose. As she was at the doorway of the small central fort, she called to the commissioner¹⁹ and declared in front of him and all the officers present that she had come to seek refuge flying the King's flag by virtue of the honours which her husband [67v] had received from him and the two [royal] letters, which she publicly displayed. In spite of two councils of war, M. Desfarges was returning her to her enemies on his authority alone, against which she protested in the presence of all those who heard her as being contrary to the intentions

of the King, all of which she requested him to inform His Majesty. Her declaration over, she moved to the river bank, where the second ambassador to France²⁰ was waiting for her with several ceremonial barges, and once on board she was led away as in triumph to Siam, where she was kept in her barge in the middle of the river, surrounded by several others armed with soldiers, without [68r] being allowed to go ashore.

Having no further obstacle to our departure, and everything having been brought on board, M. Desfarges requested the hostages, who were brought to him the following day. As soon as he had received them, he had the entire garrison take up arms, and withdrew from the stronghold, drums beating in accordance with the treaty. M. Desfarges desired the vessel on which he travelled to come up in the rear, not taking account of the fact that several small boats, loaded with cannons which were to go on board the *Oriflamme*, were closely following him, [68v] and being three leagues from the place where it had been agreed to hand over the hostages on both sides, Sieur de Beauchamp, the Chevalier Desfarges,²¹ and Verret, all three [designated] hostages for the Siamese, went on board the largest vessel on pretext of going to eat, and from which place they did not propose to leave. The Siamese were waiting with their barges at the place where according to the treaty they were to receive their hostages, but M. Desfarges refused to hand them over, though all the small boats still remained behind. At this, the Barcalon, who was following us close behind, said that it was not his [69r] fault if the general had neglected to move the small boats before him, and ordered that they all be detained. Since the French were the first to break the terms of the treaty, he did not consider himself particularly obliged to adhere to the terms he had agreed to in it, as was sufficiently shown subsequently, since they rounded up all the Christians into the forests, to be eaten by tigers there,²² made Mme de Constance a slave again, and strung up her son at the head of a barge. The Barcalon declared that Desfarges would not receive his small boats until he had received his hostages. He reproached the Bishop of [69v] Metellopolis, who was by his side, and ordered him to be a witness of his resentment of M.

Desfarges. After several comings and goings on both sides, the Barcalon demanded that the first of his hostages be returned to him, an Oya²³ who was governor of the city of Siam, and he would send him all the small boats, leaving to M. Defarges' discretion to return the other two hostages as soon as the boats drew up alongside him. This being so, the general resolved to return the first hostage; but the Barcalon had no sooner received him than, believing he was in the right not to keep his word, he released none of the small boats, not caring [70r] much about the other two [hostages], and being unwilling to enter into any further discussions. We were thus obliged to depart from the roads of Siam with our two hostages, one being the second ambassador sent to France, and the other the governor of the *Tabanque*,²⁴ the first place passed on entering the river, and to abandon six cannons, more than 6,000 *livres* of victuals, and some ten or twelve Frenchmen to the sad fate which awaited them."²⁵

Of the other standard texts describing the events of 1688, Desfarges, unsurprisingly, given the testimony above, makes no mention of Mme Constance's jewels. He does though mention her tribulations, and tried to put himself in the best light possible, as can be seen in the following paragraph:

"Whilst this was going on²⁶ there occurred a new concern, which yet again threatened to disrupt everything. Sieur Constance's lady, after being cruelly tortured to reveal all her husband's effects, and after suffering various other outrages, as much from the miserable 'Painted Arms' who had been assigned to guard her as from the attentions of Phetracha's son, who is now called the [crown] prince, and who was brutishly enamoured of her, found the means of escaping and coming to Bangkok. This was [soon] known by the mandarins, and then the king, who informed us that no compromise was possible if she were not returned.²⁷ They were afraid that once out of the kingdom she might take possession of and lose for them the funds which her husband had sent abroad. Although I was extremely concerned by this latest development, in which I had no hand, and which occurred at an unseasonable moment (the Siamese withheld, on her account, sailors, ropes, anchors, and other things essential for our

departure and which I had the greatest difficulty in the world in assembling). However, I thought I could not return her without providing for her safety. I even wished to attempt to obtain from the king [Phetracha] permission for her departure, but my suggestion was totally spurned, and the war was about to resume more tenaciously than ever. Sieur Veret, whom I had sent to finalize our negotiations, all the missionaries, and a Jesuit Father who still remained there had already been arrested in [the city of] Siam. All the widow's relatives, whom the Siamese had seized, were threatened with cruel punishments. Her mother wrote to me, and requested me immediately to settle this matter. This I did with a treaty in which the King of Siam himself gave me his word that he would grant her and all her family complete freedom of conscience, the right to marry whomsoever she wished, and promised she would suffer no violence from whomsoever. Given this, I returned her."²⁸

Given the Jesuit involvement in the whole business of the jewels, it is also not surprising that the two Reverend Fathers who wrote detailed accounts of events of 1688, Fr de Bèze²⁹ and Fr Le Blanc,³⁰ make no reference to the jewels belonging to Mme Phaulkon and which they handled. They both expatiate on her sufferings and tortures though, the purpose of which was to get her to reveal where her husband might have hidden his wealth.

Lieutenant de La Touche, whose account was only recently discovered and published,³¹ has the honesty to make reference to the jewels.

"Mme Constance was not spared these cruelties, for after the death of her husband, all her goods were seized. She was held prisoner and very severely tortured in order to make her reveal where all her husband's precious stones and jewels had gone. She declared in truth that they had been confided to a person I shall not name and who was not to profit greatly by them."³²

Clearly de La Touche knew more than he cared to reveal about the jewels, and is either implicating Desfarges or Beauchamp. But we need to turn our attention next to Vollant des Verquains' published account.³³

He describes the tortures Mme Constance endured in her house after the death of her

husband, her abject condition, and her flight to Bangkok. Specifically, he mentions the jewels in the same terms as the anonymous author of Ms 6105.

"During the time Mme Constance was held prisoner, the lady, foreseeing misfortune overtaking her family, sought in good time to save something from the wreckage. She believed that putting aside some 30,000 *écus* of jewels she possessed would serve as a resource for her in case of need, and flattering herself that they would be safe in French hands, she put them into three sealed packets which she wrapped herself and to which she applied her seal.

Looking around at those to whom she might confide this deposit she gave two to the superior of the Jesuits, and then third was placed at the discretion of an infantry captain whom she knew to be a man of honour and good faith. It contained items of no less importance than the other two, and it was thought that the pearls there were of great value, and there were fifteen rings, the least of which was worth twenty catties, the catty being worth fifty *écus* of our money.³⁴

The Father, who was not in safety himself in Louvo, thought there would be little surety for Madame Constance's deposit except in Bangkok, and as M. Beauchamp, its chief of staff, was going there, he requested him to give it to the Fathers of his order who were acting as almoners to the troops in the fortress. As for the infantry captain, he took his packet there, and, not hiding it, declared he would be its faithful guardian until it was convenient to hand it over to the person who had given it to him. But Major Beauchamp, to whom articles of this importance acted as a violent temptation, said nothing, taking the view that it should at least be requested by those who wished to possess it.

The commission which he had carried from the Father Superior had hardly come to the knowledge of the Jesuits but that M. Desfarges was informed about it. He required that everything belonging to Mme Constance be given to him, and he would hold it as a guarantee for the sum of 1,000 *écus* which he had lent her late husband, and which had gone the way of other valuables in the affliction of the family.

M. Beauchamp, however, who was prepared to resist his general, was not displeased to see

this conflict arise, which gave him an excellent pretext not to relinquish the deposit in favour of the Jesuits, considering that time would be in his favour, that perhaps a young lady of tender disposition would die in reduced circumstances, or would become a slave for the rest of her days; and having the spoils in hand, it would be unfortunate if the better part of it did not fall to him. But M. Desfarges did not desist in his order until he was in possession of what could recompense him for his money, and became so infuriated with the chief of staff that he spared him nothing in the outrages he uttered concerning his birth, finding it strange that a man who had always enjoyed his favour above everyone dared to oppose him.

M. Verret had returned from the Siamese fort bearing a memorandum which the Barcalon had placed in his hands containing a detailed list of all the jewels which Madame Constance had declared having sent to Bangkok, and demanded their restitution. It was then carefully examined and seeing that there was no mention of the rings the matter was covered up; and after several comings and goings on account of the rest, the result was that, leaving aside the interests of Madame Constance, the general would begin by returning what was listed in the memorandum; and for his part the Barcalon would have him paid his 1,000 *écus*, which was done. After that the minister left for the capital city, where M. Verret, who had been the go-between in this matter, followed him to negotiate others.

It was known later that the Barcalon, having carried the sealed packets to Louvo, where the Jesuit Fathers had been with most of the Christians since the beginning of the troubles, sent for the Father Superior, in the presence of whom and of a mandarin he opened the two packets. But only seeing at most one third of what was in the deposition of Madame Constance, the Father was questioned as to how there could have been such a considerable diminution in the number of jewels, and he, who recognized it as obvious, replied that he did not know."³⁵

The rest of Vollant des Verquains' text follows that of the anonymous manuscript. Defarges called a council, nine officers plus the general staff opposed him, only two supported

him (these are not named in the published text). Bishop Laneau was brought in, another council called, Madame Constance's family were locked up, her mother wrote a letter to Desfarges seeking the return of her daughter to the Siamese to ensure her and her relatives' release, Fr de La Breuille, also locked up with them, knew it to be a trick. But Vollant exonerates, in his printed text, Desfarges from the deceit, laying the blame on Véret (aka Verret). Desfarges drew up a treaty governing Madame Constance (the terms of which are almost identical with those in the anonymous manuscript), the lady was expelled from the fortress and returned to the Siamese, and the French were free to go. They left in the confusion and broke the terms of the treaty in the manner already described above.

With whom did the unaccounted jewels remain? Some were possibly still with Desfarges, some fairly certainly with Beauchamp, and some with the captain of the infantry who had Madame Constance's trust. It is now time to turn to Beauchamp's version of events, but his text has to be treated with caution: it was written (rather poorly) in prison in Holland, and is nothing less than a justification of his and his general's behaviour during the events of 1688, and consequently is largely a tissue of lies, for they both had much to account for. The text has only been published once, serially in issues of the *Cabinet Historique* in 1861. The original manuscript will here be followed.³⁶

The first mention of Mme Constance in Beauchamp's text occurs after the seizure of her husband (accompanied by three officers, according to Beauchamp: himself, the Chevalier Desfarges, and the Chevalier de Fretteville). "Madame Constance, who was kept under close guard in her house, sent Fr Dolu to me to request me to go and speak to her. I told this Father that I would be pleased to, but I implored her that it not be in her house, and in order to avoid arousing suspicion, that she should go into the chapel where I would find her. She went there with Fr [Le] Royer. I went up to her, and she said to me, 'My good lord chief-of-staff,³⁷ if M. Constance had wished to listen to you, he would not be where he is. I implore you not to abandon him.' I said I was powerless, but she should be assured that I would always do my best to help." [ff.524r-v] Soon after he prepared to return to

Bangkok, in the company of the Abbé de Lionne, the *phra khlung*, and the former *uppathut*, after seeing Phetracha, who insisted Desfarges went up to Lopburi: "As I was mounting an elephant, Fr Dolu brought me two sealed packets, to give to Frs Comilh and Thionville who were in Bangkok" [f.525v] After much coming and going, attempting to get Desfarges to go to Lopburi, Beauchamp arrived in the fort at Bangkok. "I then went to see Fr Comilh, to whom I gave the two packets which Fr Dolu had given me, sealed with the Society [of Jesus'] seal to place in his hands. Four hours later he came to find me, with the packets in his hand, telling me what they contained did not belong to them, and he did not wish to be responsible for them, as this could cause difficulties. He wanted to give them to me; I told him that I did not wish to be responsible for them either. And as he saw I resisted, he left them on my table, sealed with his seal, and went off." [f.530v] Beauchamp loses the thread of the packets for some time, giving details of Desfarges visit to Lopburi, the declaration of war, the blowing up by St Cry's of his vessel, the arrival of the *Oriflamme* and so on. All these details are well known.

He then resumes, rather incoherently: "The Jesuit Fr [Le] Royer then wrote a letter to me from Louvo to say that the two packets which Madame Constance had given me did not belong to her, but to the King of Siam, and that I should give them over into the hands of the bishop [Laneau]. The Jesuit Father wisely instructed me by this letter, as if it were Madame Constance who gave me the two packets, which he ordered me to give to Fr Comilh, and not him, because if the Siamese knew the truth, they would not have failed to torture him and all those of his order as persons who were party to the secrets of this lady and her husband, and she used them to conceal her finest pieces." [f.549v]

"I had this letter taken to M. Desfarges, who told me to keep the packets, until he had been reimbursed for the 400 *pistoles* which he had given M. Constance to have silver for his expenses. M. Desfarges wrote to the Barcalon that the packets would be returned to him provided he gave back the 400 *pistoles* which M. Constance owed him, as everyone knew. The Barcalon replied that as soon as the packets

were returned to him, he would bring him the money himself. Finally it was decided to send them through Verret who had to return to [the city of] Siam. M. Desfarges, in order to do everything correctly and appropriately, sent for Fathers Comilh and Thionville, and in front of them, himself, and Verret, I opened them. Inside were four necklaces, a rosary, two pairs of bracelets and pearl ear-pendants, four dozen gold rings of several kinds, one very big and perfectly formed emerald, small ruby clasps, four rings with small diamonds, nine or ten gold chains, eleven gold ingots weighing more than three marks³⁸ each, eight gold bars worth ten *écus* each, a dozen buttons, a half-dozen hairpins and twelve gold ducats, [all of] which the Fathers recognized and said to be all that the two packets contained, which Fr Dolu had given me on leaving Louvo, and not Madame Constance, to place in their hands. Verret took charge of them and placed them in the hands of the Barcalon, who found in them all that they were said to contain. He immediately returned the 400 *pistoles* to M. Desfarges through the second [Siamese] ambassador [to France].” [ff.549v–550v]³⁹

Beauchamp continues: “A few days later Saint-Vandry and Des Targes⁴⁰ came to find me and told me that they had saved the diamonds which Madame Constance had placed in the hands of de Fretteville when they were taken and searched when they were taken back to Louvo, and that the Chevalier Desfarges had them, and they requested me to give them their share; since they had lost everything and had helped save them, it was just that they profited by them. I told them I would not become involved, and these were things that had to be returned to Madame Constance, and it was unworthy of people like them to wish to profit by her misfortune. Saint-Vendry saw I would not be party to his proposal, and spoke of it to M. Desfarges, who told him it was outrageous to wish to share the [remaining] wealth of a lady who had lost everything; that if he were to do his duty he would have them all cast in to the deepest dungeon. He immediately summoned the Chevalier, his son, whom he upbraided roundly for not having said anything about the diamonds, ordering him to return them to de Fretteville, since Madame Constance had given

them to him, and ordering Fretteville to return them to Madame Constance as soon as he was able, and that if anyone failed in any of these matters, he would put the lot of them in prison, beginning with his son.” [f.550v–551r]

Beauchamp then deals with the arrival of Madame Constance at the fort of Bangkok (adding one detail, that the Jesuits intended to help her escape, and Fr de La Chaise, the king’s confessor, would never abandon her) and the interruption of peace negotiations that her appearance caused. The matter of the 400 *pistoles* owed to Desfarges is brought up once again in the presence of the Barcalon. The council of war decided to retain Madame Constance, though the two sons of Desfarges, Vollant des Verquains, and de la Roche du Vigeay [Vigé] were for sending her off, which does not accord with other accounts. Desfarges was then in dispute with the Jesuits for taking Madame Constance’s part. Details of her mother’s letter to Desfarges follow.

Then comes an astonishing passage. “The Chevalier de Fretteville, who was charged with the diamonds about which I have spoken, went to see Madame Constance, to whom he returned what he had managed to save. Two days later, as he was leaving one of the vessels in which all the officers were coming and going on visits, while he was on the plank, which I had just left, the vessel shifted with the tide, leaving the plank to one side, which fell into the water, together with the Chevalier de Fretteville, and who was never seen again after entering the water. He was a devout youth who received Holy Communion frequently, who had made his devotions that day, and who had resolved on returning to France to become a mendicant friar.” [ff.556r–v] How convenient for Beauchamp and Desfarges to have one less witness to their conniving! Fretteville was no pushover; he had already gone to Siam as a midshipman with the first French mission in 1685, returned with the second mission, and had, as has been seen, taken part in some of the more important events in 1688. Whilst it is astonishingly true that many French and other seamen at the time were unable to swim, it does seem too extraordinary that de Fretteville should die at this juncture simply by falling off a plank into the water. Beauchamp makes no mention of Madame Constance being

held incommunicado in the fortress, but says she was lodged in the house of de Vertesalle, the fort commander; Fretteville is unlikely to have had access to her. It is significant that Fretteville's death occurred, according to Beauchamp, very shortly before Madame Constance was handed back to the Siamese. It would seem to us that Beauchamp appropriated the diamonds, caused Fretteville to fall into the water (probably knowing he could not swim), and went along with Desfarges in removing Madame Constance as soon as possible so the French could leave the country without delay. The gush about de Fretteville having made his devotions and intending to take orders one suspects is to make one think he went straight to heaven and therefore his loss is not to be pitied.

The rest of Beauchamp's account deals with the handing over of Madame Constance, the departure from Bangkok, the arrival in Pondichéry, his departure on the *Normande*, its seizure at the Cape, and his transfer to the prison of Middelburg in Holland. In this instance, his account is chiefly useful for its detailed listing of the contents of the two packets of jewels belonging to Madame Constance and the details about the third packet containing diamonds as well as (or inserted in) rings.

Beauchamp did not, as La Touche indicated, profit by his ill-gotten gains. The Dutch removed all the possessions of the French captured at the Cape, and apparently did not return them, considering them as war booty. Desfarges died at sea on his return journey to France in 1690 and so was saved from the rope. Madame Constance remained a slave until the death of Phetracha in 1703, by which time his successor and son, Sua (Sorasak) seems to have lost interest in her (she would have been thirty-seven years old by then and so less attractive to him). She started legal proceedings with the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* (which between 1708 and 1713 was progressively liquidated) in order to obtain some of the 300,000 *livres* her husband had placed in the company through Céberet in 1687 to become one of its directors; the matter dragged on for several years before she was accorded a pension.⁴¹ The Jesuits contented themselves with turning Phaulkon into a martyr and a saint and carefully avoided any mention of their part in handling his widow's jewels. But she apparently saw nothing of any of her necklaces, rings, ear-pendants, and precious stones again, *pace* Beauchamp's version of Fretteville returning the diamonds to her.



Notes

¹ See Dirk Van de Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam*, Paris, Fayard, 1991, for a recent assessment.

² Archives of the Missions Etrangères, Paris. Siam 853, pp.107–144: *Remarques sur l'Histoire de M. Constance* composée par le P. d'Orléans Jésuite, and Siam 854, pp.887–942: *Mémoires en forme de lettre d'un Anglais catholique au R.P. Pierre d'Orléans Jésuite sur l'Histoire de M. Constance et des révolutions arrivées à Siam en 1688* écrite par ce Père.

³ This refers to the two vessels granted by the Siamese to the French, under the terms of the treaty governing their withdrawal from the fort of Bangkok; General Desfarges had asked that they be armed with the French cannons. The *phra khlang*, Kosa Pan, Okphra Wisut Sunthorn, supplied "refreshments" for the vessels, but apparently was not amenable to their being armed.

⁴ Phetracha had seized power on 18 May 1688; his son, Sorasak, lusted after Mme Phaulkon.

⁵ *Sieur de Larre*, so spelt by Volland des Verquains. All other French texts maintain that it was the *Sieur de Sainte-Marie* who came to Mme Phaulkon's rescue.

⁶ Johan Keyts was the director of the substantial VOC establishment in Ayutthaya.

⁷ *The Oriflamme*.

⁸ Ayutthaya.

⁹ Véret, as his name is usually spelt, was the head of the French Indies Company's office ("factory") in Ayutthaya and in collusion with Desfarges.

¹⁰ The *phra khlang*, minister of foreign affairs and trade, was known to Westerners as the Barcalon, a Portuguese corruption of the Siamese term.

¹¹ In Lopburi on 18 May 1688.

¹² An *écu* was worth 3 *livres*, and one *pistole* was worth 10 *livres*. The *livre* or pound, minted at Tours, in 1687 was worth 538 mg of pure gold (G. Antonetti, in *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle*). The price of gold on 19 September 2000 was US\$271.60 per ounce, and one ounce equals 28.35 grammes. One *livre* at

today's prices would therefore be worth, if our calculations are correct, about US\$5.154, so one *écu* was worth US\$1.718; 30,000 *écus* would therefore be worth US\$51,540.

¹³ After the departure of Fr Tachard at the beginning of 1688, the Jesuit Superior in Siam was Fr Abraham Le Royer (Le Blanc 1692:I 212, 284).

¹⁴ Desfarges' chief-of-staff.

¹⁵ This person appears to be, according to Beauchamp's account, the Chevalier de Fretteville.

¹⁶ Lopburi.

¹⁷ The saintly but indecisive Mgr Louis Laneau, apostolic vicar in Siam

¹⁸ A kind of portable stocks.

¹⁹ Sieur de La Salle.

²⁰ Ok-luang Kanlaya Rachamaitri, *uppathut*.

²¹ The younger of Desfarges' two sons with him in Siam; the elder was the Marquis Desfarges.

²² This might have been a rumour, but was not true.

²³ A mandarin of high rank also known as *Okya*.

²⁴ Customs house; there was also one just below Ayutthaya. The word is a corruption of the Malay term *pabeau*.

²⁵ The anonymous ms ends here.

²⁶ He refers to the arrival of officers on the *Oriflamme* in Ayutthaya.

²⁷ This is completely contrary to what is maintained in the anonymous manuscript.

²⁸ Desfarges, *Relation des révolutions arrivées à Siam dans l'année 1688*, Amsterdam, P. Brunet, 1691, pp.51–2.

²⁹ Claude de Bèze, *Mémoire sur la vie de Constance Phaulkon, premier ministre du roi de Siam, Phra Naraï, et sa triste fin* (éd. J. Drans and H. Bernard), Tokyo, Presses Salésiennes, 1947; English translation, E.W. Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1968.

³⁰ Marcel Le Blanc, *Révolution du Royaume de*

Siam arrivée en l'année 1688, 2 vols, Lyon, Horace Molin, 1692.

³¹ *Relation de ce qui est arrivé dans le royaume de Siam en 1688*, in Robert Challe, *Journal du Voyage des Indes Orientales*, éd. J. Popin and F. Deloffre, Geneva, Droz, 1998, pp.309–337.

³² p.314.

³³ Jean Vollant des Verquains, *Histoire de la Révolution de Siam arrivée en l'année 1688*, Lille, Jean Chrysostome Malte, 1691.

³⁴ The wording here and in the next paragraph very closely follows the anonymous text.

³⁵ Vollant des Verquains 1691:126–130.

³⁶ 'Relation des révolutions de la cour de Siam,' BN Ms Fr 8210, ff.506r.–570r., said to be by Pinsonneau, in fact by Beauchamp.

³⁷ She actually said, according to Beauchamp, "Seigneur Major", giving him an importance his rank hardly deserved.

³⁸ A denomination of weight of gold and silver, usually equal to about 8 ounces.

³⁹ For someone writing some years later from prison, and who elsewhere says in his manuscript that all his papers were taken from him by the Dutch, Beauchamp has a remarkably clear memory of the jewels.

⁴⁰ La Touche lists these two, as well as de Fretteville, Beauchamp, de Lasse, the Chevalier Desfarges, and an engineer de Bressy who attempted to escape from Lopburi, were captured, and returned, being tied to and having to run after their horses.

⁴¹ The French Council of State decreed in 1717 that Madame Phaulkon receive an annual pension of 3,000 *livres* and be deemed one of the Company's creditors (L. Lanier, *Etude historique sur les relations de la France et du royaume de Siam de 1662 à 1701*, Versailles, 1883, p.196). There exists considerable documentation in the Archives Nationales (Colonies C/1/26. Siam: 1689–1717) on the subject.