

EARLY PORTUGUESE ACCOUNTS OF THAILAND

by

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The Indochinese Peninsula with its great rivers and chains of rugged mountains running from north to south had been for centuries an effective barrier between the two great nations of antiquity, India and China. The communications and commercial relations of China were therefore carried on with India and thence with Europe by the silk, or land, route north of the Himalayas from Syria to Chinese Turkestan, and by the spice, or sea, route from the Red Sea to the Sea of China which was monopolized up to Malaya by the Chinese and beyond, by the Arabs. Between these two routes lay the great Indochinese Peninsula called Extra-Gangetic India or Further India, including Burma, Malaya, Thailand¹ and Indochina, to which no attention was paid while caravans of commercial travellers, Nestorians, Jews and Christian monks passed along the north, and ships laden with spices and silks sailed in the south traversing the China Sea and the Straits of Malacca. Very little about this Peninsula was therefore known to Europe and even to Arabian and to Chinese writers beyond the coast lines and ports, where the products were assembled for export. At the time when the Portuguese came to the Far East, even the hazy notions contained in Ptolemy's Geography regarding Extra-Gangetic India were forgotten by Europe, for Islam had raised a wall between the East and the West, cutting off the northern silk route and monopolizing the Indian Ocean.

¹ In this article the name Thailand is used for the present kingdom but the old name of Siam or Kingdom of Siam is used whenever it is necessary to speak of it as distinct, geographically and historically, from the former Kingdom of Chiangmai.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century the Portuguese wrested the mastery of the Eastern seas from the hands of the Arabs and with them began not only the exploration of the Indochinese Peninsula but the geographical, ethnographical and cartographical studies of this great land wrapped in obscurity. These studies and records of the sixteenth century date back fully a century before the arrival of the English, the Dutch and the Danes in Thailand and more than a century before the time of Phra Narai, about whose reign we have many valuable French descriptions. The Portuguese records are all the more important considering that scarcely any Thai contemporary writings were saved from the flames which consumed Ayuthia in 1767, and that the records of the Ming dynasty and Arab writings contain only desultory references to Thailand.

Before the Portuguese, some European travellers on their journeyings stumbled on the coast of Thailand, but they never visited Ayuthia or the interior and we get very little information from them with regard to Thailand. The first one was Marco Polo, who refers to a kingdom of Locac which is supposed to have been in Southern Siam and where there was a lot of gold, elephants and brazil-wood. He does not say, however, that he himself visited the kingdom.² After him, in 1430, another traveller Nicolo Conti visited Tenasserim under which name he refers to Mergui, where he was particularly struck by the large number of elephants and the great quantities of *sappan* wood.³ About this time the great Arab traveller Abdur-Razzāk also mentions Tenasserim and refers to the traders of *Shahr-i-nao*, which was the Arabic or Persian name for Siam, as frequenting the port of Ormuz in the Persian Gulf.⁴

In 1498 Vasco da Gama discovered the sea-route to India and landed on the coast of Calicut. This event in its far reaching influence was to mould the whole commercial and military history of the East from Jeddah to Japan. Vasco da Gama himself did not sail beyond the Indian Seas, but his expedition was described in a

² Yule & Cordier, *The Travels of Marco Polo*: 1903 Ed. Vol. II, p. 276.

³ *India in the XVth Century*: The Travels of Nicolo Conti, Hakluyt Society, Ed. 1857, by R. H. Major, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibidem*: The Journey of Abd-er Razzāk, A. D. 1442.

Roteiro or a Routier of the Sea written by Alvaro Velho in which was collected the information not only of the lands he visited but of the countries beyond Calicut.⁵ About Siam, which on the information of the Arabs he called *Xarnauz*, he was told that the King, who was at this time King Rama Tibodi II, could muster 20,000 fighting men, 4000 horse and 400 war elephants. As to its products he speaks only of benzoin and aloes which the Arabs transported to other countries. He further says that the King of Siam was a Christian and the kingdom was of Christians. He also speaks of Tenasserim as a Christian kingdom, the king of which could muster a thousand fighting men and possessed five hundred elephants.⁶ Obviously the Arabs did not actually inform Vasco da Gama that the people of Siam were Christians, but that they followed a religion different from Islam, and that they venerated images, whereupon Gama took for granted that Siam was a Christian kingdom, for Europeans, though well acquainted with Islamism, knew very little of Buddhism and of Hinduism at that time.

The expedition of Diogo Lopes de Sequeira to Malacca in 1509⁷ gathered general information about Thailand, but real Portuguese contact was established after the conquest of Malacca in 1511. Even

⁵ *Roteiro da Viagem de Vasco da Gama*, attributed to Alvaro Velho, a companion of Gama. Its translation by E. G. Ravenstein is published by the Hakluyt Society: *First Voyage of Vasco da Gama, 1497-98*, p. 99.

⁶ Lodovico di Varthema, a Bolognese traveller who visited Calicut and Cochim and claims to have landed at Tenasserim, that is, Mergui, somewhere about 1505, though this part of the trip was discounted by Garcia de Orta in 1563 and called an imposture by Henry Yule, speaks curiously enough of some Christians whom he found in Bengal who said that they had come from a city called *Sarnau* and had brought for sale silken stuffs, aloes wood, benzoin and musk. As *Sarnau* was another name for Siam, these supposed Christians might have been Siamese Buddhists. Incidentally Varthema gives a long description, partly correct and partly imaginative, of *Tarnassari* and describes very peculiar customs of the people. Vide Badger's translation of the *Itinerario*, Hak. Soc., 1863, p. 212 and pp. 196-210.

⁷ Diogo Lopes de Sequeira was sent in 1508 by King Manoel to visit Madagascar, Ceylon and Malacca and bring detailed information and merchandise from these places and other ports and islands he might chance to visit. At Malacca twenty-seven of the men that had landed were made captives and this fact led Albuquerque to attack Malacca. One of the captives managed to send a letter to Albuquerque, dated 6th February 1510, in which he said that the King of Malacca was at war with the King of Siam, who had vast territory and many ports. Vide *Arquivo Português Oriental*, 1937 Ed., Tomo. IV, Vol. I, Pt. I, pp. 352-361.

before the conquest was completed, Albuquerque sent to Ayuthia, as ambassador to the King of Siam Rama Tibodi II, Duarte Fernandes who knew Malay very well, having learned it during his captivity at Malacca.⁸ He made the voyage in a Chinese junk and when he sent word that he was the ambassador of the King of Portugal, King Rama Tibodi II ordered a captain with two hundred *lancharas* to receive him, and after landing he was taken in a procession to the palace of the king, hundreds of people rushing to the streets to see these strange white people with big beards, such as had never been seen before in Ayuthia. The King received the ambassador seated on a gilt chair on a raised platform in a large hall hung round with brocades and accompanied by his wives and daughters who with the court ladies sat round the platform dressed in silks and brocades and wearing rich golden jewellery and precious stones. Duarte Fernandes handed over to the King a rich sword the hilt of which was studded with jewels, as a present to the King, with the letter signed by Albuquerque on behalf of the King of Portugal. The King treated the envoy with great courtesy, inquired all about Portugal and about the capture of Malacca and expressed his great satisfaction at the prospect of punishing the rebellious King of Malacca, which was supposed to be a vassal state of Siam from the time of Ram Kamhaeng though it had thrown off its allegiance. The King sent with Duarte Fernandes a Siamese ambassador with the presents of a ruby ring, a sword and crown, and the Queen-Mother herself sent some bracelets with jewels and three small gold boxes. The Siamese envoy was received with due honours and trade was opened with Malacca. The simple yet dignified reception of this embassy contrasts strangely with the elaborate ceremonial that characterized Louis XIV's embassies to Phra Narai in the seventeenth century, and the stiff formalities with which the British envoys were received in the nineteenth century.

Albuquerque sent in 1511 another ambassador, Antonio de Miranda de Azavedo, and with him Manoel Fragoso, who was to stay in Siam especially commissioned to prepare for Albuquerque a written report on all matters,—merchandise, dresses and customs of the land and of the latitude of their harbours.⁹ Manoel Fragoso stayed in Siam

⁸ This embassy is described in the *Commentaries of Albuquerque*, Gray Birch, Hak. Ed. Vol. III, pp. 153-55. I have followed Castanheda, *Historia do Descobrimento e Conquista da India*, 1924 Edition, Liv. III, ch. LXII.

⁹ *Commentaries of Albuquerque* in Hak. Ed. Vol. III, ch. xxxvi. The

about two years and took his report personally to Goa, where he arrived in the company of an ambassador sent by the King of Siam. This report was sent to Portugal and is probably lying in the Archives of the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon with many others not yet published. At this time, however, Duarte Barbosa, the factor of Cannanore who lived in India between 1500 and 1516, was collecting material for his book on the Eastern countries and though he never came to Malacca or to Siam, he gathered much valuable information about the Far East and the Malay Archipelago from the captains and envoys of Albuquerque.¹⁰ In this book, concluded about 1516, he gives an accurate description of Siam, which he calls the kingdom of *Anseum*, as marked in the Map of Diogo Ribeiro (1529). This prefix of *An* and *As* which point to a similarity between *Anseum* and the name of Assam, where also a Thai branch settled, probably originated from the Arabic article *Al* as applied to names of towns and countries. Other Portuguese writers of the sixteenth century like Barros, Castanheda and Couto use *Sião* and Correa uses *Siam*, but the Italian Caesare Federeci, as late as 1567, has both *Asion* and *Sion*.

Barbosa mentions that the King of Siam was a powerful king having sea-ports on both sides of the Peninsula, lord of much folk, both footmen and horsemen, and many elephants. He mentions Tenasserim, that is Mergui, as a great port of Siam where Moorish ships brought copper, quicksilver, vermilion, cloths dyed in grain, silk, coloured Mecca velvets, saffron, coral, opium and Cambay cloths. Ships from Mergui also sailed to Bengal and Malacca. He then mentions the port of Keddah with its wholesale trade and abundance of pepper, for which Moorish ships came from different regions. He refers to the tin of Selangor which was taken to Malacca. Both Keddah and Selangor were tributary to Siam, but Pahang, where much gold was found and gathered, rose against Siam and was subject to the King of Malacca. Then he mentions the *Gueos*, or the cannibals living in territory subject to Siam far in the interior towards China.

In 1518, D. Aleixo de Menezes who had come with especial powers to Malacca, dispatched Duarte Coelho as an envoy to Siam with letters of instructions of Albuquerque to Miranda de Azavedo as to how to conduct the embassy are interesting. See also *Ibid.* Vol. IV, pp. 90-91.

¹⁰ There are two translations of Duarte Barbosa's Book published by the Hakluyt Society, the first by Lord Stanley in 1865, and the latest in 1918, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, by Longworth Dames in two volumes. *Vide* Vol. II, pp. 162-69 for description of Siam.

and presents directly sent by King Manoel of Portugal in return for the presents of the King of Siam taken by Antonio de Miranda.¹¹ Duarte Coelho had been twice already in Siam before this embassy, once in the company of Antonio de Miranda and once when a storm separated him from Fernão Peres de Andrade and prevented him from going to China, whereupon he sailed up the Menam. The object of this embassy was to confirm the peace pact made by Antonio de Miranda, and in return for Portuguese supplies of guns and munitions, the King of Siam was to give to the Portuguese facilities to settle and trade in Siam, special commercial privileges and religious liberty, and was also to send Siamese to settle in Malacca. The policy of Albuquerque was to establish Siamese in Malacca in order to replace many Moors and Moorish merchants that had left the place after the conquest.

The implications of this pact are clear when one considers the political condition of Siam and her neighbours at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Siam was the most powerful kingdom in the Indochinese Peninsula at this time, a fact on which all Portuguese writings agree. Burma was divided and there were at least four kingdoms within its boundaries. In the north ruled the Shans with their capital at Ava. The Burmese to avoid the Shan domination were settling down in Toungu and laying the foundations of a kingdom which in the middle of the sixteenth century was to unify the whole of Burma. In the south there was the kingdom of Pegu, where there was peace because the Talaings were not aggressive and both Ava and Toungu were too busy with their own affairs to disturb the delta of the Irrawady. Between Ava and Pegu was the kingdom of Prome. This partition of Burma into so many kingdoms left Burma much weaker than Siam. On the east there was Cambodia, but far too exhausted to be counted among the powerful kingdoms. The only trouble for Siam came from Chiangmai with which King Trailok throughout his reign was involved in hostilities. In 1507 a new war had started, and between 1508 and 1510 Siam suffered reverses. In 1513 a Chiangmai general invaded Sukhothai and Kamphengphet, and in 1515 just three years before the conclusion of the pact between Siam and the Portuguese, Chiangmai annexed those two provinces. The pact with the Portuguese brought a considerable advantage to Siam and it was effectively used, for the King with a

¹¹ Barros, *Decada* III, Bk. II, ch. iv.

considerable number of fire-arms and a Portuguese training corps took the offensive against Chiangmai, and so completely defeated the Chiangmai forces on the banks of the Mewang in Lampang that for thirty years Chiangmai was quiet. King Rama Tibodi II. not only had striking success against Chiangmai but also re-organized the army with the help of the Portuguese military advisers, and in 1518 issued a book on military tactics, which is apparently lost.

At this time when such excellent relations existed between Siam and the Portuguese, one of the sons of King Rama Tibodi II. was fighting in the army of the old Sultan of Malacca, who was called Sultan of Bintang and had fortified himself at Muar some twenty-six miles from Malacca and was giving trouble to Portuguese commerce. The Portuguese therefore stormed the stronghold of Muar, capturing sixty cannon and many guns, and taking some prisoners. Among these prisoners was the Siamese prince, whose name is mentioned neither by Correa nor Castanheda. The Portuguese having recognized him, treated him with all the honours due to his rank and sent him back to his father who in recognition sent a junk full of food-stuffs as a present to the Portuguese.¹²

When the Portuguese came to Siam fire-arms were not used in warfare in the wars with its neighbours. Fire-arms are said, however, to have been used in the wars between Siam and Cambodia as early as 1393. Mr. W. A. R. Wood in his *History of Siam* also says that Chiangmai history mentions fire-arms as having been used at the siege of Payao in 1411, and that Burmese history records that cannon were used in the siege of Martaban in 1354.¹³ Yet when the Portuguese came to Siam in 1511 and to Burma in 1516 they saw neither gun-foundries nor fire-arms used. It is quite probable that Thailand was acquainted with fire-arms before 1511 because they were used in the defence of Malacca against the Portuguese by the Malays who had got them from the Arabs through India towards the

¹² Correa, *Lendas* Vol. II, p. 552, and Castanheda, *Historia etc.* Bk. IV, p. 460.

¹³ *History of Siam*, p. 77. Vide Harvey's note in *History of Burma* p. 340, to say that the *Pagan Yazawin* mentions "canons jingals, bombs and muskets" at the battle of Pyedawthagyun in 1084.

end of the fifteenth century. But why then did not Thailand use them in warfare, or cease to use them before the arrival of the Portuguese? The reason is clear. Though the Arabs had spread the use of fire-arms not only in Malacca but in Java and Manila these guns and small cannon were never effectively used in Malaysia until after the middle of the sixteenth century. It is not enough to possess arms, for the whole art of war consists in using them effectively. In fact, when Albuquerque attacked Malacca, some of the Malay cannon created more havoc among the Malays than among the Portuguese. This is evidently the reason why Siam did not care to acquire these arms from Malaya until the Portuguese came and were engaged to train the Thai in their use and employed to work the artillery. All that the Chiangmai and Burmese chronicles record, it would appear, is the use of catapults or mangonels in and before the fourteenth century, just as the Chinese chronicles did under the word *pao*. As to China, the claims of European writers and Jesuit missionaries to the effect that cannon and fire-arms were used even as early as the eighth century have been disproved. W.F. Meyers after an exhaustive enquiry into Chinese writings¹⁴ came to the conclusion that the knowledge of the propulsive effects of gunpowder and of the use of guns and cannon was only acquired during the reign of Ming Emperor Yung Loh, that is, after 1407, but even then the secret was jealously guarded by the Chinese Government, and fire-arms were introduced into the army only after Kia Tsing's reign, sometime between 1522 and 1526. The misunderstanding in China arose from the word *pao* which the Chinese used to mean catapults and cannon alike. Similarly it appears that the Burmese and Chiangmai chronicles refer really to catapults and not to fire-arms or cannon, the modern words for fire-arms having been interpolated at later dates.¹⁵

Within a few years after 1518, when Duarte Coelho signed the pact with the King of Siam, a large number of traders were esta-

¹⁴ W. F. Meyers, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, North China Branch*, N. S. Vol. VI.

¹⁵ The Thai word ปืน (*pu'n*) denotes any weapon but ปืนไฟ (*pu'n fāi*), the modern word for fire arms might have denoted at the time the *Kōt Monthien-ban* was written (about 1450) any *flame throwers* such as the mangonels which were also used to throw inflammable material. The use of the word

blished in Ayuthia besides the military advisers, and commercial agents were established in Ligor and Patani. Trade between Siam and Malacca was intense and various dispatches from Siam were sent to the Viceroy at Goa and to Lisbon. Very few of them have been published, but João de Barros, the official historiographer who wrote his *Decades* somewhere between 1550 and 1560 used them for his description of Siam.¹⁶ Barros speaks of three principal kingdoms of the East: in the extreme west the Emperor of China; in the Indo-chinese Peninsula the King of Siam; in India the King of Vijaynagar, then the most powerful king in India. At the time when Barros mentions these three principal kings it must not be forgotten that the Portuguese had visited all the eastern countries, and he himself in the same chapter gives the geographical position of the kingdoms of Ava, Pegu, Arakan, Deccan, Bengal, Orissa, Jangoma or Chiangmai, Cambodia, Champa and others, singling out Siam as more powerful than any one of these. Subject to Siam were Rey Tagala,¹⁷ Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim, though the chiefs of these places as usual called themselves kings. He describes the Menam which he says traverses Siam from north to south and means *the mother of waters* (*Me*=mother, *Nam*=water). According to the old legend, he traces its origin to the Lake of *Chiamai* situated 30° N., that is, not in Chiangmai itself but in the plateaus of Tibet. He, however, correctly places its outlet at 13° N. On the north of Siam and on the east along the Mekhong, says Barros, were the *Laos* whose territories were divided into three kingdoms Chiangmai, Chiangrai and Lanchang, which were subject to Siam though they often rebelled against her. In the mountains north of Siam and among the lands of the *Laos* were the *Gueos*, who were fierce men, rode on horseback, ate human flesh and with hot irons branded figures on their skins. With the *Gueos* both the King of Siam as well as the *Laos* were

pu'n fäi in the *Phongsawadans* written after the 16th century do not prove anything, as by this time fire-arms were well known, and even in the *Köt Monthienban* it might have been an interpolation made at a later date. The Thai word *bariam* and the Khmer *miriam* for cannon are Arabic in origin and came through Malaya. The Arabs who saw cannon first used in Europe by Christians called it *Miriam* from Maria or Mary.

¹⁶ Barros devotes one chapter to the description of Siam, *Decada III, Bk. II, ch. v.* In the *First Decade, Bk. IX, ch. i*, published in 1552, are given the outlines of the Geography of India, the Indochinese Peninsula and China.

¹⁷ Tagala or Rey Tagala, near Martaban may be seen in most old maps, not only Portuguese but in those of Linschoten (1596) and Mercator (1613).

usually fighting. If the *Laos* obey at all the King of Siam it is due to the fear of the *Gueos* against whom they expect his protection.

Now who were these *Gueos*? The *Ngios*, which is the name for the Shans, do not appear to have eaten human flesh though they even now tattoo themselves very profusely. It would appear from this description that the *Gueos* of Barros and other Portuguese writers were the *Lawas* and the *Was*, who had cannibalistic tendencies like the Bataks in Sumatra, and the latter even now delight in surrounding their dwellings with rows of human skulls. Barros, Barbosa and Castanheda make it clear, however, that these wild men did not eat human flesh as their usual food, but ate their own relations after death out of regard for them for they thought they could not give them better treatment after death than by assimilation into their own bodies. But to be so organised as to threaten the Lao kingdom and to fight on horseback denotes that they were not ordinary savages. Could the *Gueos* have any connection with the old Annamites who were known as *Giao-chi*? *Keo* is still the Laotien name for the Annamites. Barros declares he got his information from Domingo de Seixas who was twenty-five years in Siam and as a Captain once fought against the *Gueos*, and he adds that they seem to be the same as the ones inhabiting the provinces of *Caugigu* of Marco Polo.¹⁸ Pauthier also identified *Caugigu* with one of the states of Lao, and Henry Yule believed that it was a province in that region embracing Kiang Hung but not Chiangmai. On the whole it would appear that the term *Gueos* was in the sixteenth century applied to the *Was* and *Lawas* and not to the old *Giao-chi*. There is no difficulty in believing that the *Lawas* rode on horse back because they were well organised and, according to the Pali Chronicle *Cāmadevivāṃsa*, were ruled by a powerful king named Milakkha as early as the seventh century. The Burmese chronicle *Komabaungset* does indeed speak of *Gwe Lawas* and in *Hmannan Yazawin* the *Gwes* and the *Gwe Karens* are also mentioned.¹⁹ The Siamese name *Ngiru* for the Shans indicates that the old name of the *Was* and the *Lawas* passed to the Shans who occupied their lands.

¹⁸ This is the earliest attempt to identify the toponyms of Marco Polo and considering that Barros had never been in the East his pretty accurate conjecture is noteworthy. *Vide* Yule and Cordier's *Marco Polo* Vol. I, pp. 120, 123 and note on p. 128.

¹⁹ Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 354.

Barros mentions a war which the King of Siam had with these *Gueos*, for which purpose he raised an army of 250,000 men and 10,000 elephants. These numbers are of course exaggerated, and the King of Siam could not have taken a big army to fight the *Lawas* but, presumably, the Lao of Chiangmai. Barros had never been in the East and worked on reports that were sent to him in Portugal, which were substantially true though not always accurate in detail.

With regard to Siam and its government, Barros has some interesting details which throw considerable light on the period. The King was the sovereign lord of nine kingdoms. The Siamese themselves inhabited two of the kingdoms, the other seven kingdoms being inhabited by other people. One of the two Siamese kingdoms, which was to the south, was called *Muantay* (Mu'ang Thai) which means lower kingdom (*sic*) in which were situated Ayuthia, or *Hudia* as he calls it, and the following cities and ports: Bang Plassey (Pangoçay), Lugor, Patani, Kelantan, Trengganu and Pahang (Pam) in each of which there was a governor with the title of Oya or Phya. The second kingdom was on the north and was called *Chaumua* (Chau Nua or northern people) the principal cities of which were *Suruculoec* or Sawankhaloke and *Socotay* or Sukhothai. We see here clearly distinguished the two Thai kingdoms, Sukhothai in the north and Suphan in the south, which were united under Phra Rama Tibodi I. at Ayuthia in 1350. Another significant point asserted by Barros four centuries ago is that Siam is a foreign name applied to these two united Thai kingdoms and that it was imposed upon them by strangers. Galvão, who wrote before 1550, also speaks of the King of *Muontalis* now called Siam.²⁰

With regard to the other seven kingdoms over which the King of Siam wielded suzerainty, Barros is not quite definite but includes among them Chiangmai, Chiangrai, Lanchang, Cambodia and some kingdoms in Burma, all of which he says were inhabited by people speaking different languages. We know they were independent at that time, but the Portuguese were obviously told in Ayuthia that they were vassal kingdoms. As a matter of fact, as early as 1450, Chiangmai, Taungu and the Shan States of Kengtung and Hsenwi are claimed

²⁰ *Tratado* etc. of Antonio Galvão, *The Discoveries of the World* by A. Galvano, in Hak. Ed., London 1862, pp. 112-113.

as tributary States in the Palace Law or *Köt Monthienban* of King Trailok.²¹

Barros describes the religious beliefs of the Thai and, though he does not mention the Buddhist religion, he gives interesting details regarding the temples and the ritual followed in Thailand. Some temples were built of stone and others of brick, in which were kept many images of men that are now in heaven owing to their good deeds. There is one enormous image made of earth which is about fifty paces long. The greatest metal image in Siam and regarded as the most ancient was in a Temple at Sukhothai. It was eighty *palmos* or about sixty feet.²² Every king, when he ascended the throne, began building a new temple and endowed it with lands and income. The temples had high towers the upper half of which were gilded with gold leaf fixed on bitumen and the lower half decorated with different colours. On the top of the towers they placed a sort of umbrella and around it very light bells which rang when swayed by the breeze.

The priests, clad in yellow robes, going about shoeless and with shaven heads and large fans in their hands, were held in high respect. In their apartments no women could enter, nor even female creatures like hens. There were many fasts during the year and the feasts were held at the beginning of the new moon or at full moon. The priests not only preached religion but studied the heavens and the movements of

²¹ When the Portuguese took Malacca, Siam considered it as a tributary state, though it had no control over it and did not receive any tribute. On the other hand China considered Siam as a tributary state though it wielded no authority whatsoever. Such facts have to be taken into account when reconstructing kingdoms described by Chinese travellers like Y-tsing and Chau Jukua, such as *Srivijaya* and other kingdoms, which claimed so many tributary states even on stone inscriptions, when really most of these claims were imaginary or at any rate continued to be made to feed the vanity of kings long after such claims had ceased to have any meaning.

²² According to *Thiao Muang Phra Ruang* of the late King Vajiravudh, the tallest image found in old Sukhothai is the one called *Phra Attaros*, a standing Buddha, on the top of Khao Wat Sapan Hin, or the mountain of the temple with the stone bridge. The height of this image is six *wah* or twelve metres and is probably the one referred to by Barros. The height of sixty feet mentioned by him is either an exaggerated estimate or perhaps included the length of the pedestal. The highest image at Ayuthia cast on the orders of King Rama Tibodi in about 1500, and erected in Wat Srisanphet, was forty eight feet high, and the pedestal was twenty-four feet. This was destroyed by the Burmese in 1767. In case a higher image than *Phra Attaros* existed at Sukhothai, it might have been destroyed when the Burmese King Bureng Naung captured Sukhothai in 1563.

the stars and the planets. The year was divided into twelve months and the new year began at the first moon of November.²³ They were great astrologers, and acted in everything important after consulting their oracles when the day was propitious. They had no clocks regulated by the position of the sun, but they had water clocks. With astrology they mixed geomancy, piromancy and sorcery which was brought to them by the *klings* of Coromandel; but he says the religion came from or though China, though it really came from India. The priests taught reading and writing to the people, for which purpose children went to the temples, and though they taught ordinary religious principles and ceremonies in the language of the country, science was taught in an ancient language which was evidently Pali.

Barros then gives some details about the land, its products and the land system. The land of Siam is flat but on the north it is bounded by hills. The waters of the Menam river make the fields fertile and Siam is chiefly an agricultural country with no industries. Silver, precious stones and musk come from the kingdom of Chiangmai. All the land belongs to the king and the people pay rent for the land they occupy or cultivate. The king however gives the land during lifetime to the nobles and to the Phyas (Oyas) who during war-time had to furnish the king with men, horses and elephants, and this was done without oppressing the people. Barros especially mentions that the King could raise an army of a million men and keep garrisons well provided with necessaries. In Barros we have one of the earliest Portuguese descriptions that throw light on the doings and the habits of the people as distinct from a record of the pomp and ceremonial of kings, their wars and intrigues, which alone were supposed by oriental historians to constitute history.

Barros and other historians of the sixteenth century like Castanheda spell the name of this country as *Sião*, and Correa as *Siam*. But in the 15th and the 16th centuries Siam had the alternative name of *Sornau*, though less commonly used. Abdur-Razzāk, as early as 1442, refers to *Shahr-i-nao* on the sea coast of Further India, but it is not certain

²³ This is the New Year according to the old civil Calendar which reckoned dates according to the *Chulasakarat* Era. It is a lunar Calendar, the year beginning with the first of the waxing moon of the fifth month.

if he applied it to Siam.²⁴ Nicolo Conti in about 1430 visited Mergui and mentions *Cernove*, which might refer to Bengal just as much to Siam.²⁵ But in the sixteenth century we have definite references to Siam as *Sornau* or *Xarnauz*. The *Roteiro* of Gama in 1498, Lodovico di Varthema in 1505, and Giovanni d'Empoli in 1514, have this term of *Sornau* differently spelt but certainly referring to Siam.²⁶ The author of the Malay history *Sejarah Melayu* definitely says Siam was formerly called *Sher-i-nawi*,²⁷ and Valentyn the Dutch historian relates that about 1340 a powerful prince reigned in the kingdom of Siam, then called *Sjaharnow* or *Sornau*.²⁸

How did this name originate? Undoubtedly it was spread by the Arabs, since both Vasco da Gama and Varthema had it on Arab information. Henry Yule in his *Hobson-Jobson* derived it from the Persian *Shar-i-nao*, or New City, as applied to Ayuthia. Really Ayuthia was very old when the name was used; besides it was applied more to the whole country of Siam than to the city. To explain this idea of *New City* fanciful explanations were given by Braddel, who invoked the distinction made by De la Loubère between *Thai Yai* and *Thai Noi*.²⁹ Yule connected it with Lopburi which he says is a Pali form of *Novapuri* or New City, *Shar-i-nao* being its persian version. Colonel Gerini as usual did not agree with anybody, and formulated a most ingenious explanation, deriving it from *Sand* or *Nong Sand* the old city adjoining Ayuthia, and so called from the marsh round it, *Sand* being the Siamese form of the name for the sola plant.³⁰

Amidst this confusion worse confounded, Fernão Mendes Pinto, who was twice in Siam in the middle of sixteenth century and uses both the names Siam and Sornau, points a way to the proper solution of the problem. He speaks for instance of the Emperor of Sornau

²⁴ *India in the XVth Century*, Hak. Society Ed. by R. H. Major.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²⁶ *First Voyage of Vasco da Gama*, Hak. Ed. p. 99; Varthema *Itinerario*, Hak. Ed. p. 212, and Giovanni d'Empoli's letter in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Appendix 80.

²⁷ John Leyden's Trans., *Malay Annals*, London 1821, p. 121.

²⁸ *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, Vol. V, p. 319.

²⁹ *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. V, p. 317.

³⁰ *Asiatic Quarterly Journal*, Jan. 1902.

who is the King of Siam. He has many such references such as the Sornau King of Siam and Phra Chao Saleu, Emperor of all *Sornau*, but never Emperor of Siam.³¹ It appears therefore that the *Sornau*, of which the King of Siam styled himself Emperor, is *Suvarṇa* Land or *Suvarṇabhūmi*, the land of gold which was a geographical expression embracing a great part of the Indochinese Peninsula. The Thai word *Suvan* has no close phonetic resemblance to *Sornau* or *Xarnauz*, but there are examples of such strange transcriptions of many other Thai words that it is not difficult to see how *Suvarṇa* was corrupted into *Sornau* or *Xarnauz*, first by the Arabs, and then by the Portuguese and other European writers.³² We know from the *Annals of Lanchang* that the King of Lanchang also called himself Emperor of the Land of Gold, but the founder of Ayuthia who was Prince of Suphan or Uthong (which means *source of gold*) and his successors would naturally call themselves Emperors of *Suvarṇa* Land, whence the name *Sarnau*.

Valuable contemporary descriptions of life in Ayuthia and of some aspects of Siamese history in the middle of sixteenth century are found in Fernão Mendes Pinto's *Peregrinação* and in his letter written from Malacca in 1554 to the Society of Jesus in which he had temporarily entered as a brother.³³ Pinto visited Siam twice, as he himself mentions in his letter, and the information derived from both these visits is utilized in the *Peregrinação*. His style is

³¹ Such expression as *Prechan Saleus of Sornau* are also found in Sebastião Manrique's *Itinerario* Hak. Soc. Ed. Vol. I., p. 195, but possibly they may have been taken from Pinto himself. Manrique visited Arakan in 1628-37, but not Siam.

³² *Sarnau* is not really a direct corruption of the Thai word *Suvan* but of its Indian equivalent *suva* or *sora*, both of which mean gold and are derived from Sanskrit *suvarṇa*. The Portuguese like the Arabs were more accustomed to the sounds of Indian languages than to the tonal Thai languages. Hence they transcribed Thai names according to their Sanskrit equivalents. *Lugor*, the 16th and 17th century name for Nakhon Sri Thammarat is an interesting example. The Portuguese got the name from Thai *Nakhon* by giving it a Sanskrit turn *nagar*, from Sanskrit, *naḡara*. The change of initial *n* into *l* is common in Portuguese transcriptions, such as Liampo for the Chinese port of Ningpo. Apart from this, Nakhon Sri Thammarat was also known as Ma'ang *Lakhon*, from which *Lagar*, *Lugor* could arise.

³³ Christovam Ayres, *Fernão Mendes Pinto, Subsídios etc.* Lisbon Academy publication, 1904, Appendix B.

classic and brilliant, and writing some years after the events he records had taken place, he gives from memory vivid pictures of Siam as of other countries he visited. Many of his descriptions are based on hearsay and hence reflect the popular errors, feelings, beliefs and superstitions. His chronology and the transcription of local names have sometimes undergone frightful distortions and many errors in the *Peregrinação* are attributable to his first editor, F. de Andrade, and to his printers who could scarcely understand the unfamiliar names and facts. There is colouring, but no wilful misrepresentation of facts, in the lurid descriptions of life that can be felt pulsating under the touch of his pen against the background and in the very atmosphere of the places and countries in which he moved and lived. He was not, certainly, a scientific explorer and does not appear to have kept a diary or any notes, but some years after his peregrinations were over, he transferred to his rich canvas the information he had received and the impressions he had absorbed with the instinctive insight of an artist infusing life into the pictures he depicts. Even his mistakes very often prove his veracity. He relates for instance that he found people in Buddhist countries invoking Trinity and saying, *God of truth is three in one*, and he thinks that there may be traces of the gospel in the religion of these people.³⁴ One would immediately reject this story as an invention, but though Pinto's interpretation is wrong the fact he mentions is true for the people were really invoking the Triple Gems of Buddhism, the triad: the Buddha, Dharma and Saugha, or the Buddha, the Law, and the Clergy.

Owing to the many strange facts which Pinto relates, he had been long considered a liar. But justice has been largely done to him, not only by Portuguese writers like Christovam Ayres who exploded many myths, but also by foreign writers who studied the parts of the *Peregrinação* in which they were interested.

³⁴ Nicolo Conti also remarked during his visit to Burma that the people in their prayers said: *God in Trinity keep us in his Law*, and Sir H. Yule remarks that this which appears like fiction is really an evidence of Conti's veracity. See *Embassy to Ava*, p. 208.

Pinto says in the *Peregrinação* that he noticed this in Lanchang (Calaminhan) and in his letter of 1554 he says that he saw a similar fact in Pegu. Fr. G. Schurhammer in his *Fernão Mendes Pinto und seine Peregrinação*, jumps to the conclusion that Pinto betrays or contradicts himself, when it is quite natural that he should make similar observations in two Buddhist countries and might have even done so in a third one such as Siam.

With regard to Siam, Mr. W. A. R. Wood examined the descriptions of Pinto in a paper published in the *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. XX. 1926, and came to the conclusion that he was unreliable. Mr. W. A. R. Wood based his remarks, not on the original work in Portuguese, but on Cogan's misleading and unreliable translation in English, and drew his conclusions, after examining the contemporary description of an eye witness, in the light of Luang Prasoet's *Phongsawadan* written more than a hundred years after the events in question had taken place.³⁵ In this connection it is interesting to quote what a Jesuit Father, P. A. F. Cardim, who was in Ayuthia between 1626 and 1629, says about Pinto's description of Siam in the *Peregrinaçam*: Though the book of *Peregrinaçam* of Pinto is considered to be apocryphal, he is correct in that which he writes about the kingdom of Siam. I say he does not depart from the truth, because a Mandarin who taught me to read and write Siamese told me 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. He told me especially the story of Oceum Chinerat (Pinto: *Ucumchenirát*) telling me that it was true and whoever is interested in it can look it up in Pinto's book.³⁶

Some of the facts mentioned by Pinto regarding Siam and commented on unfairly by Mr. W. A. R. Wood require elucidation. Mr. Wood takes Pinto to task on account of the exaggerated number of men composing the armies, which he calls a perversion of truth. The numbers are often exaggerated it is true, but they represent only popular estimates, which were imaginary. Military authorities themselves could not take a proper count, for as the armies marched or sailed along the rivers, hundreds of village men were recruited on the way and swelled the original numbers. This accusation of exaggerating numbers can be equally levelled against subsequent travellers like Caesare Federeci and Ralph Fitch and against the *Phongsawadans* themselves. When Bureng Naung invaded Siam in 1568, Caesare Federeci who was in Burma, relates that the Burmese army consisted of one million four hundred thousand men. The Siamese *Phongsawadan* gives one million men. Mendes Pinto is more

³⁵ The Chronology of Luang Prasoet's *Phongsawadan* is in general reliable, but it cannot be taken as absolutely correct. Some of the facts can also be demonstrated to be wrong.

³⁶ *Batalhas da Companhia de Jesus*, 1894, p. 286.

moderate with his eight hundred thousand men. Ralph Fitch gives three hundred thousand men and five thousand elephants.³⁷ We know that all these are impossible numbers but this is no reason why errors of judgment, be they of Pinto or Fitch or Federeci, should be called "perversions of truth." Mr. Wood remarks that when Pinto says that the cannon of the King of Burma in his war with Siam were dragged by buffaloes and *rhynoceroses* we are almost forced to agree with Congreve³⁸ who referred to Pinto as the most celebrated liar. Now Pinto never used the word *rhynoceros* but the term *bada* or *abada* which in the sixteenth century had the indefinite meaning of a wild animal or a domesticated animal that goes wild, though some sixteenth century authors like Fr. Gaspar de Cruz used it definitely to mean rhinoceros. The sixteenth century authors like Barbosa, Barros and Correa use the word *ganda* (from Sansk. *ganda*) for rhinoceros. Bluteau, who wrote his dictionary in 1727, followed by the lexicologists Vieira and Lacerda, took *abada* to mean a kind of wild animal and in fact contested the meaning of rhinoceros as applied to *abada*. Hence though some derive the word from the Malay, *badāk*, a rhinoceros, others derive it from the Arabic *abadat*, (*ābid*, fem. *ābida*) which means a *brownish animal* (Belot) or a wild animal (Lane) or an animal that goes wild and escapes (Kasimirski).³⁹ It is only in the 17th century that the word *abada* began definitely to be applied to the rhinoceros and it was thus that Pinto's *abada* was translated by Figuier in his French translation and from this by Cogan into English. Pinto clearly used the word *abada* to denote the yaks in Tartary which were used as beasts of burden and for which there was no term in Portuguese.⁴⁰ In the description of other places he uses the word about a dozen times with an indefinite meaning like that of the Arabic *ābida* when he has to mention a large animal whether it be wild like the rhinoceros or used as a beast of burden for which he could not find an exact Portuguese term.

³⁷ In his *History of Burma*, pp. 333-35, Harvey has an excellent note on these exaggerated estimates.

³⁸ Congreve's *Love for Love*: "*Mendes Pinto is but a type of thee, thou liar of the first magnitude.*"

³⁹ Dalgado, *Glossario Luso-Asiatico* s. v. *Abada*. In *Hobson-Jobson* the meaning and the origin of the word is not so well discussed as in *Glossario*.

⁴⁰ Vide a note on the Yaks of Tartary in Yule & Cordier, *Marco Polo*, Vol. I. p. 277.

The Lake of *Chiamai* is not an invention of Pinto, for it existed in legend and in popular belief centuries before Pinto. The Portuguese who visited Burma and Siam before Pinto were also told of this legendary Lake of *Chiamai*, and João de Barros in 1552, that is, when Pinto was still roaming in the East and some years before he began writing his *Peregrinação*, places the Lake of *Chiamai* not in Chiangmai but 30 degrees north, that is, in the plateaus of Tibet, where within two degrees five great rivers, the Brahmaputra, the Irrawaddy, the Salween, the Mekhong and the Yangtze-kiang take their origin. Barros derives six rivers from the lake, three of which join to form the Menam and the other three discharge in the Bay of Bengal.⁴¹ Pinto was also told in China and Tartary that the rivers in Burma, Siam, China and Indochina were derived from this lake in the north called by different names in different places.⁴² He does not say that he visited and saw the lake of Singipamur in or near Chiangmai but that the King of Siam after his Chiangmai campaign marched north-east for six days and reached the lake of Singipamur called *Chiamai* by people.⁴³ This is apparently a misunderstanding on the part of Pinto who might have been told of a small lagoon by the side of which the king stayed for twenty six days and took it to be the lake of *Chiamai* of which he had heard so much. Pinto does say that he saw a lake, with the names of Fanstir or Singipamur or Cunebete, but that was in Tartary and not in Chiangmai.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Decada* I, Bk. IX, ch. i., and also *Decada* III, Bk. II, ch. v. The three rivers emptying in the Bay of Bengal are, of course, the Brahmaputra, the Irrawaddy and the Salween. The Menam Chao Phya is formed by junction of the three rivers, the Meping, the Mewang and the Meyom but they neither originate in a lake nor are their sources so high as those of the Mekhong and the Irrawaddy.

⁴² V. *Peregrinação*, Chapters 88 and 128. Most of these rivers can be identified, for Pinto gives the kingdoms they traverse and the bays where they disembogue. The river emptying in the Bay of Nanking is the Yangtze-kiang; the river traversing Cochinchina, the old name of Tonking and Annam is the Red River; the river emptying at Cosmin is the Irrawaddy; another emptying in the Bay of Martaban is the Salween; another in the kingdom of Bengal, which he thinks is the Ganges, is really the Brahmaputra. He mentions also one river crossing Siam and entering the Bay of Chantabun. All these rivers have different names according as Pinto gets his information in China, Tartary or in the very countries where these rivers exist.

⁴³ Mendes Pinto, *Peregrinação*, Chapter 82.

⁴⁴ Pinto only records what he hears about this lake and the rivers issuing from it, but makes no attempt at solving the problem of this lake or discus-

The Empire of Calaminham of which Pinto gives a glowing description is not an invention. Calaminhan (Mon *Kala*, from *Trala*, and *muong*: *lord of the country*) refers certainly to the King of Lan Chang who was Photisarath at the time and who received two embassies from King Taben Shweti of Burma, as recorded in the *Annals of Lanchung*.⁴⁵ The religious practices which Mr. Wood considers extraordinary were the relics of Brahmanism and Buddhist Mahayanism with an admixture of animism which King Photisarath, a fervent Hinayanist, tried to stamp out. In this account the journey of Pinto to Luang Prabang and back was really done partly by water and partly by land but there is a confusion in Pinto's description as there is with his voyage from Tartary to Tonkin, these trips appearing to have been done all by water. The same can be said of other travellers like the Chinese travellers in Du Halde who describe their journey from China to Burma all the way by water.⁴⁶ Many similar incongruencies can be read in Marco Polo, and have been pointed out by Henry Yule, without taxing him as a liar. A complete unbiassed critical study of Pinto's *Peregrinação* still remains to be made, but meanwhile he cannot be dismissed as unreliable, in the manner that Marco Polo was even in the nineteenth century, just from a superficial study, and worse still from the study of a bad translation.⁴⁷

sing the conflicting reports he was getting. The lake that he really saw was not the Kuku-nor in Tartary but presumably the Talifu, called Erh-lai by the Chinese, in Yunnan, on his way from Tartary to Tonking where he reached after crossing the western provinces of China and passing Yunnan. When he says the King of Siam went to the Lake of Singpamur or Chiamai he shows that he had no idea as to the distances and the geography of Tartary or Yunnan in relation to Chiangmai.

⁴⁵ A. Pavie's translation in *Mission Pavie, Indo-Chine, II, Etudes diverses*, Paris 1899, *Histoire du Pays de Lanchung*, Hom Kao V; Fr. Schurhammer invents a curious explanation as to how Pinto got the name of this kingdom of Calaminham from the place where according to a famous document St. Thomas suffered martyrdom. The fact is, however, that Pinto is quite precise about this Kingdom and that not only does he mention that the title of *Calaminham* means *lord of the world* (really country), but that he called himself the *lord of the might of the elephants of the world* which corresponds to the title, *Lord of the White Elephant*.

⁴⁶ Du Halde in English Trans. *Description of the Empire of China*, London, 1738.

⁴⁷ Two of the recent publications showing considerable study and research are A.J.H. Charignon's *A propos des Voyages aventureux de Fernand Mendez Pinto*, and Fr. Schurhammer's *Fernão Mendez Pinto und seine Peregrinação in Asia Major*, Vol. III, 1927, Leipzig. Charignon's book is chiefly based

With regard to Siam, Pinto gives graphic accounts of King Phrachai's expedition against Chiangmai, the death of the King by poison, the coronation of his son who was also murdered, the faithlessness of the queen and her intrigue with Khun Chinnarat (*Uquanchenirat*) whom she caused to be crowned king, the conspiracy of the Governor of Phitsanulok and the murder of the usurper with the queen at a banquet, the accession of Phra Thien to the throne, the invasion of Siam by Taben Shweti King of Burma and a detailed account of the siege of Ayuthia. Apart from the *Peregrinaçam* there are some especial details with regard to Siam in a letter of Pinto which deserves to be known.⁴⁸ He is the first writer to call Ayuthia the *Venice of the East* on account of the great number of canals that served as roads. It was the greatest city he had seen in those parts. He was told there were 200,000 boats, big and small on the rivers in and around Ayuthia. For each fair five hundred to a thousand of these boats gathered or assembled. Then he gives a vivid description of the King when he left the palace twice a year amidst great pomp and ceremony, accompanied by his courtiers and elephants. The King tolerated every religion and there were seven mosques of the Moors or Malays, whose houses numbered thirty thousand. There was an eclipse of the moon when Pinto was in Siam and the people, believing that a snake devours the moon, began shouting on

on Chinese sources and he studies Pinto's travels in Indochina, China and Tartary, explaining the historical basis of the facts and identifying the places mentioned in the *Peregrinaçam*, sometimes with fantastic results. He stands out in bold defence of Pinto but is often led astray by the Chinese authorities, which he does not check, taking into account other contemporary sources and writings. However, with all his deficiencies he throws light on many problems of sixteenth century China and shows in many cases how Pinto has been wronged by his critics. On the other hand, Fr. G. Schurhammer's article reveals deep study of the contemporary sources and vast erudition, but he starts with a bias against Pinto while Charignon does the same in favour of Pinto. Fr. Schurhammer accepts nothing of Pinto as positively true unless confirmed by contemporary sources. Unfortunately many of these contemporary sources, including the writings of missionaries in the Far East, are not free from errors of judgment and chronology, and if Fr. Schurhammer's method of criticism were adopted, many of them could also be argued to be *romances* on a relative scale. Apart from this, Fr. Schurhammer's study is a valuable one in that it shows how much of the *Peregrinaçam* can be confirmed from the vast number of authorities and contemporary sources he has consulted, and how much that appears shadowy remains to be explained in the light of a more extensive study.

⁴⁸ Christovam Ayres, *ut supra* : Appendix, document B, pp. 63-64.

land and water while others were aiming and shooting their guns to the sky. The King had a white elephant which died in 1551, whereupon he spent five hundred catties of silver for its death ceremonies. It was for its possession, he says, that the King of Burma had invaded Siam in 1549. These wars with Burma were now to overwhelm Siam for half a century and not only in Pinto but in the *Decades of Couto*, in the 13th Decade of Bocarro, in the *Asia Portuguesa* of Faria e Souza and in missionary writings we have descriptions of this period.⁴⁹

Till the middle of the sixteenth century, Siam was not only powerful but very prosperous. Trade was brisk and there were about three hundred Portuguese in Ayuthia who in their junks transported the produce of Siam such as rice, tin, ivory, benzoin, indigo, sticklac and timber such as dye-woods and *sappan* wood to Ligor and Patani and thence to Malacca. These products were also taken overland to Tenasserim and to Mergui and distributed over the coast of Madras and Bengal where the Portuguese had settlements. During these times of prosperity canals were dug, agriculture improved, military service re-organized, and Siam was feared and envied by all her neighbours. Fighting with Chiangmai and Cambodia was resumed now and then, and the hostilities in which King Phrachai was engaged with Chiangmai from 1545 and 1546 were to a certain extent serious. But these so-called wars were not on the whole exhausting. Battles were fought, it is true, one or the other side got the best of them and then the armies retired, each king thinking that he had punished the other enough. There were no long drawn out sieges, or the overthrow of kingdoms and subjection to new rulers. But for the contending armies, the rest of Siam was completely unaffected by these battles and, in fact, in southern Siam the people were often unaware that any fighting was going on in the north, though many exaggerated stories were told afterwards, which were recorded by the Portuguese at the time, especially with regard to the thousands of men engaged and killed and the hundreds of elephants supposed to have taken part in the wars.

All this was changed in the latter half of the sixteenth century when serious trouble came from Burma, which had been unified under

⁴⁹ Diogo de Couto: *Decada VI*, Bk. VII, ch. ix.

Bocarro; *Decada XIII*, ch. 28 & 29.

Faria e Souza: *Asia* etc., tom. III, pt. ii, ch. v.

the command of Taben Shiweti King of Toungu, who later established himself in Pegu, and cast his eyes on Siam and on lands further east. While Burma was growing stronger, Siam was unfortunately experiencing troubles of succession following the death by poison of King Phrachai. In 1549 when King Chakraphat was crowned after the murder of the usurper, the Burmese King with a huge army, horses and elephants advanced through Martaban and Kanburi and laid siege to Ayuthia.⁵⁰ The Burmese met with strong resistance and in the end the Burmese King retired, though unmolested, because he was lucky to capture the Siamese crown prince and two other royal personages who were made over to the Siamese King. During this siege, guns mounted on forts round Ayuthia were worked by sixty Portuguese under the command of Diogo Pereira. There were also Portuguese artillery men in the army of the Burmese King. After this siege the King of Siam replaced the mud walls round Ayuthia by brick walls and bulwarks mounted with guns. The remains of some of these works can still be seen. But with all these defences Ayuthia could not stand the great siege of the Burmese King Bureng Naung in 1568. After conquering Chiangmai, Bureng Naung invested Kamphengphet, Sukhothai and Phitsanulok, and at last reduced Ayuthia and made Siam and Chiangmai subject to Burma.

The empire of Bureng Naung extended not only over the whole of Burma but included the Shan States, Siam, Chiangmai and Lanchang or Laos. Each of the twenty gates of his new city of Pegu was named after a vassal state such as Tavoy, Tenasserim, Martaban, Ayuthia, Linzin or Lanchang, Mohnyin and Hsenwi. The Portuguese writings of this period and those of travellers like Cesare Federaci, Balbi and Ralph Fitch speak of the magnificence of Pegu and of the glories of the Burmese King.⁵¹ He was not only the most powerful King but was greater than the great Turk and rivalled the Emperor of China himself. For a tooth of Buddha he was ready, to offer the Portuguese viceroy three to four hundred thousand *cruzados* or about

⁵⁰ Pinto mentions the remarkable fact that on this occasion some roads were cut into the forest, the direction being followed with a compass, which is the first record of scientific road construction in the Peninsula. See his Letter, *ut supra*.

⁵¹ Cesare Federaci and Balbi, in *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas, his Pilgrims*, 1907; and for Ralph Fitch, see Horton Ryley's Edition, 1899.

£200,000 and provisions for Malacca when necessary.⁵² But these glories did not last long. After his death in 1581, his son Nanda Bayin could not hold together the empire, which crumbled to pieces in a few years.

In 1584, Prince Naresuen who was in Burma and knew the disorder that was reigning after the death of Bureng Naung, threw off his allegiance to Burma, and though the Burmese King attacked Ayuthia, the invasion was resisted by Naresuen who displayed great courage and military tactics. There are various Portuguese descriptions of King Naresuen who, as a prince, was called the Black Prince because he was distinctly darker than his brothers. His single combat with the Crown Prince of Burma is well described in the *Conquista de Pegu* written in 1617 and in Bocarro's 13th Decade written before 1640.⁵³ Bocarro's version is that the Burmese Prince wounded the Black Prince in the combat, and the latter then called out two Portuguese who were with him to shoot at the Burmese Prince. In the *Conquista de Pegu* it is said that the Burmese Prince was pierced with a dart. King Naresuen's war with Cambodia and his capture of Lowek are also described in Spanish and Portuguese writings. There were some Spaniards and Portuguese at the Court of Lowek at this time and Naresuen brought them all as prisoners to Ayuthia. Among them was Diogo Velloso who later had a romantic career, having married a Cambodian princess and, with the princely rank of *Choufa*, become the Governor and Lord of the province of Baphnom.⁵⁴ Before he died King Naresuen left Siam with frontiers as wide as they were before the Burmese conquest, but both Burma and Siam were exhausted and desolation reigned everywhere. There were not cultivators enough to till the lands, and if there were no great famines, it was only on account of the fertility of the Peguan

⁵² Couto *Decada VII*, Bk. IX, ch. xvii. The emissaries of the king came to Goa to redeem the tooth but all offers were refused. Emerson Tennent in his *History of Ceylon* says Pegu offered eight lakhs of rupees and shiploads of rice. There are many versions. See Gerson da Cunha, *The Tooth Relic of Buddha*.

⁵³ Bocarro, *Decada XIII*, chapter xxix. *Conquista de Pegu* by Manoel d'Abreu Mousinho is published with some editions of the *Peregrinação* of Mendes Pinto.

⁵⁴ The Protectorate of Cambodia has erected his bust on a high pedestal at Neak Luong at a prominent place on the banks of the Mekhong just within sight of the Baphnom hill where he had his palace.

delta and of the Menam valleys. It was thus that the sixteenth century closed on Burma and Siam.

The earliest cartographical studies of Thailand and of the Indo-chinese Peninsula form an interesting study. Before the discovery of the sea-route to India, Europe's conception of Further India did not go very much beyond that of the ancient geography and the *Chryse Chersonese* of Ptolemy. The Arab and Persian ships had indeed sailed in the Chinese Seas and even planted colonies in China as early as the eighth century, but though they were navigators they were not cartographers. Besides, only the sea routes and the ports of call were known to them, so that they had only sea charts with land-marks of the littorals they visited. Albuquerque found a similar Javanese chart in a ship captured by the Portuguese.⁵⁵ The Arabs had no knowledge of the interior, and Edrisi's Map of 1320 shows complete ignorance of the Peninsula and of the Far East. The Chinese were of course everywhere established in Thailand but they were merchants and were not concerned with maps. The Chinese sailors were also content with the rough charts showing the headlands on the littorals, which was all that was necessary for them.

Cartography of Thailand and the Peninsula began with the Portuguese. In his *Le Siam Ancien* Fournereau publishes parts of the early Portuguese maps referring to Siam which are preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.⁵⁶ Besides these, there are however valuable sixteenth century Portuguese maps in Portugal, Spain and Munich, and in the British Museum. For a study of Portuguese cartography of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century Armando Cortesão's classic work must be consulted.⁵⁷ The early maps and charts of the Portuguese were not for publication but were kept strictly secret, so that rival nations could not learn the secret of the new countries. The first maps in Fournereau are just the ones made by Portuguese such as Pero Reinel and Diogo Ribeiro, who worked for the Court of Spain, and though by 1529 the Portuguese had pene-

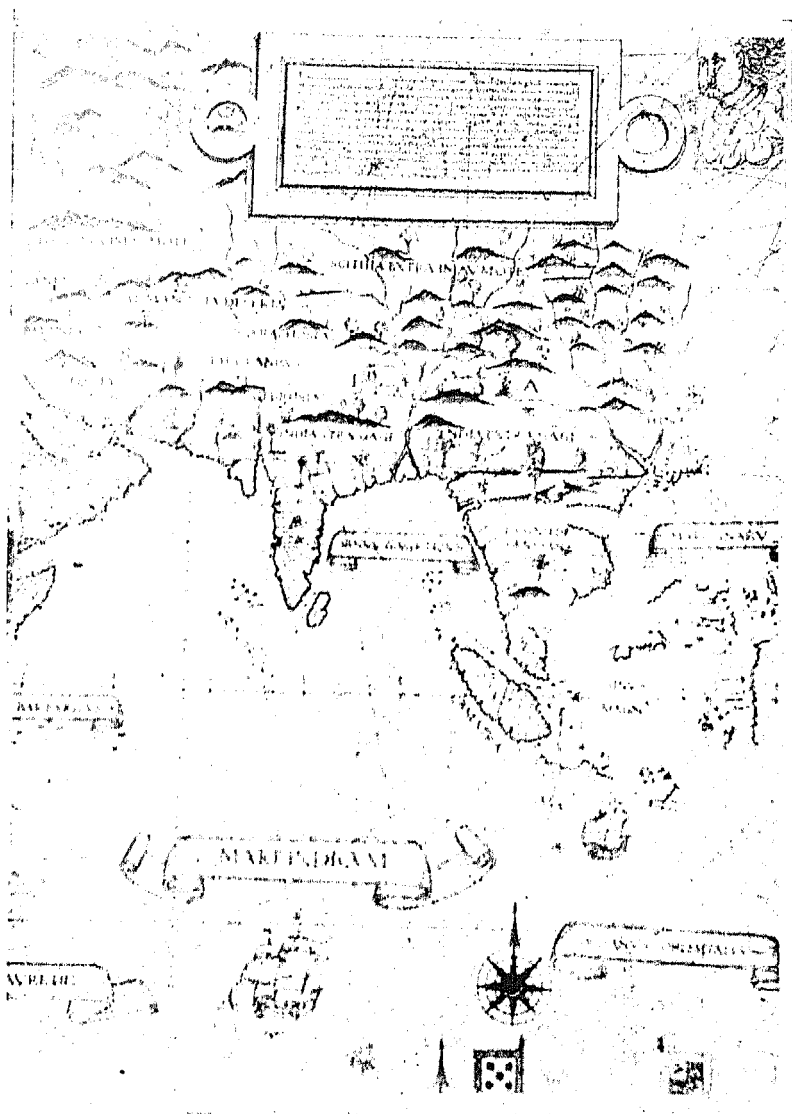
⁵⁵ Letter of Albuquerque of April 1st, 1512, in *Cartas de Albuquerque*, Ed. Lisbon Academy.

⁵⁶ *Annales du Musée Guimet*, Vol. XXVII.

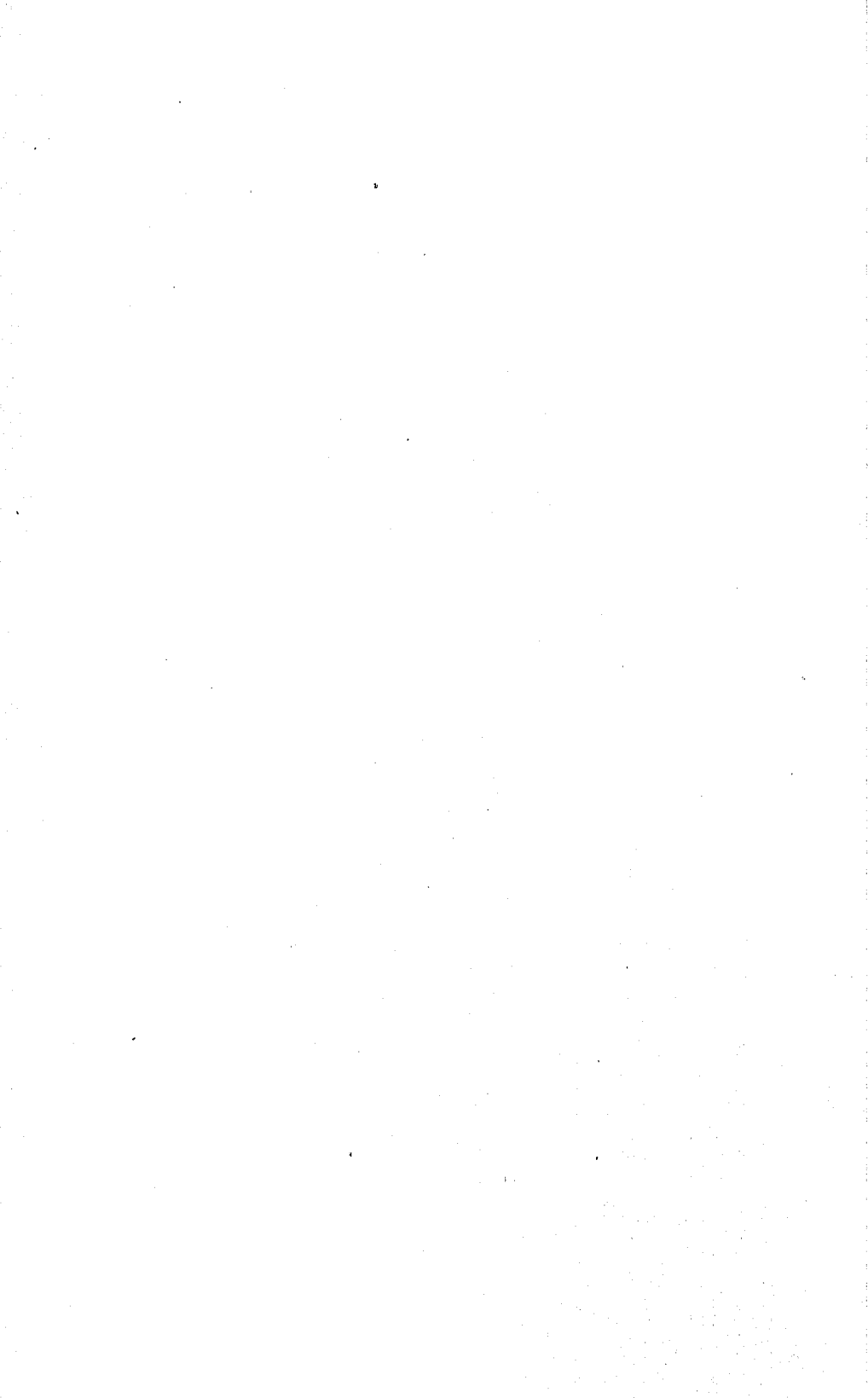
⁵⁷ *Cartographia e cartógraphos portugueses dos seculos XV e XVI*, two volumes, Lisbon, 1935.

trated into the interior of Burma and Thailand, had scoured Malaysia, had visited Canton and knew the general outline of the coast of China, Ribeiro's map does not give any details about the Peninsula. This map marks the kingdom of Siam in large letters but we have few place-names and no rivers marked between the Yangtzekiang and the Ganges or the Brahmaputra. Neither is the Gulf of Siam well shown nor the coast of China properly drawn. However, these early maps of the Portuguese, like the ones of the two Reinels, father and son, in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and of Lopo Homem and his son Diogo Homem in the British Museum are magnificently illuminated with gold and vivid colours, with ships in the sea and animals and trees painted in colours, and rivers the waters of which actually seem to be flowing. Some of these maps of the sixteenth century can be seen in London, Madrid and Munich. This art of map-making found its greatest expression in the maps of Fernão Vaz Dourado.

By the middle of the sixteenth century the Portuguese maps and Linschoten's map, based on Portuguese exploration, show an improvement in geographical detail and mark the important coastal towns and ports of the time. The principal rivers of the Indochinese Peninsula are shown, but their extent into the interior was not marked from actual observation or exploration up to their sources. Hence the Menam according to the old legend is prolonged up to the Lake of *Chiamai*, north of Ava, while the Mekhong is very much shortened and appears to rise where really the Menam rises. On the whole it is the coastal towns and riverine ports, where the Portuguese traded, that are carefully marked. The configuration of the Indochinese Peninsula assumes a correct shape, but the interior, where there were no trading establishments, is still left blank, but for some important places. This absence of detail with regard to the interior also characterises the Dutch and French maps of the seventeenth century, but much improvement may be noticed in the eighteenth century maps, though D'Anville and Dalrymple perpetuated many old mistakes. The sixteenth century Portuguese maps must be taken as marking only the beginnings of the cartography of Thailand and the Indochinese Peninsula, which became fully understood only in the nineteenth century as a result of the famous explorations of men like Macleod, Richardson and McCarthy in Burma and Thailand and those of De Lagrée, Garnier, Pavie and Harmand in Indochina.



Diogo Ribeiro's Map of Extra-Gangetic India 1529
showing: *Regno de Ansiam*.



This article is confined only to sixteenth century Portuguese accounts of Thailand, but even these are by no means exhausted. There are still many reports and documents and also missionary accounts, mostly unpublished, not only of the sixteenth but also of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, lying in the libraries of Portugal, notably in the Torre do Tombo, the National Library of Lisbon, the Library of Ajuda and that of Evora, and their study and examination will provide a rich mine of information for research scholars of Thailand.

