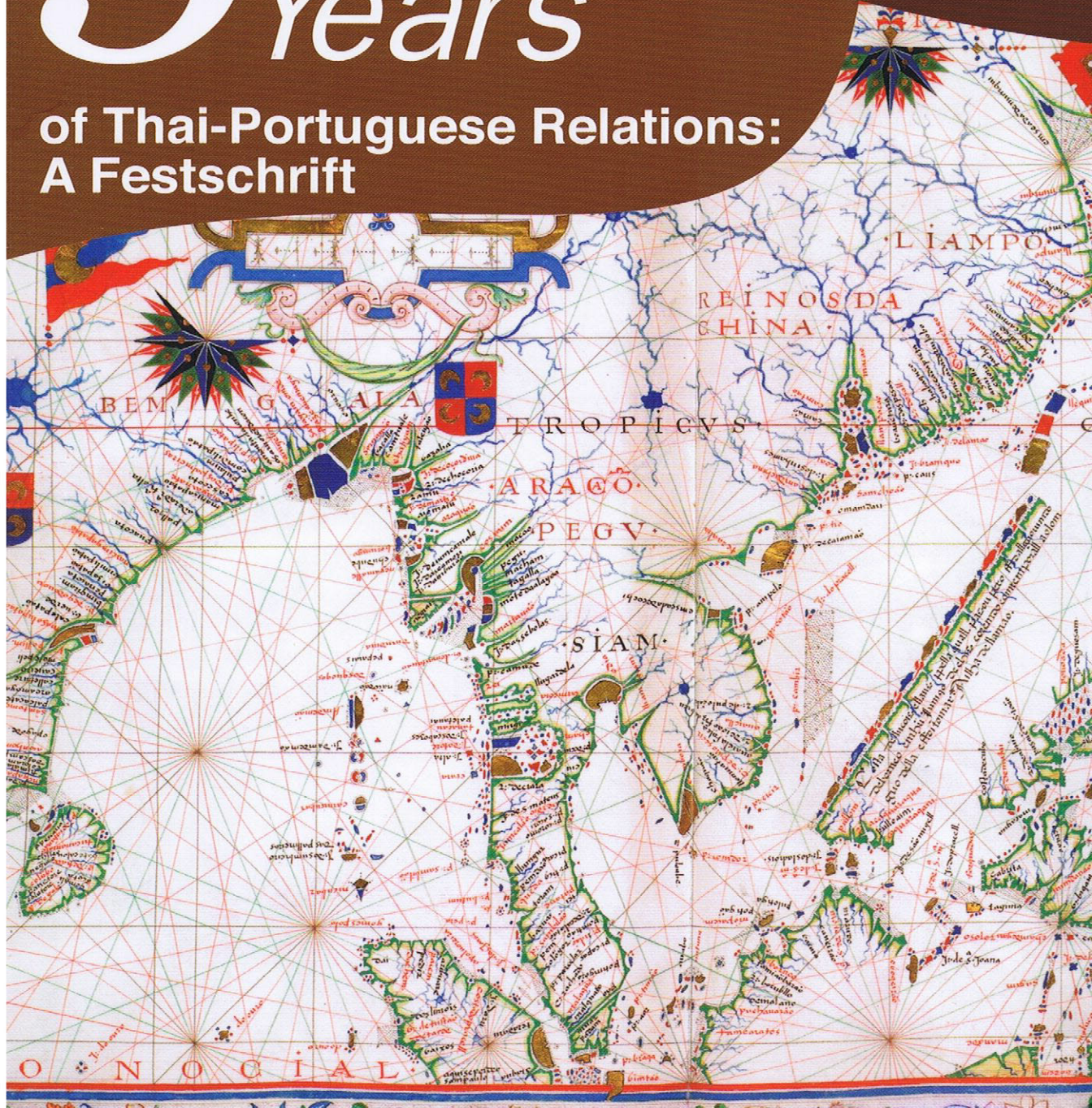




500 Years

of Thai-Portuguese Relations:
A Festschrift



A PORTUGUESE EMBASSY TO SIAM IN 1595 AND SOME CURIOUS OBSERVATIONS

Teotónio R. de Souza

We have utilized here seven chapters of the First Book (fis. 21-53) of the original of *La Vida de Jaques de Couttre*, catalogued as Ms. 2780 in the National Library of Madrid. The account describes the diplomatic manipulations by a Dominican friar who took control of the embassy and many other intrigues and quarrels among the Portuguese officials and others. Couttre (also spelt Coutre) includes in his account of Siam many curious observations from his eight months' stay in Ayutthaya.

Couttre, a Flemish jewel-trader, travelled to India as a soldier in September 1592 and spent nearly three decades in the *Estado la India* before he was arrested by the Goa Inquisition and packed off to Lisbon in 1623. He had travelled widely in South India and in South-East Asia, and was able to satisfy his desire to see places by combining the roles of a *soldado*, jewel-trader and member of some embassies of the Portuguese Malaccan authorities to the neighbouring kingdoms.

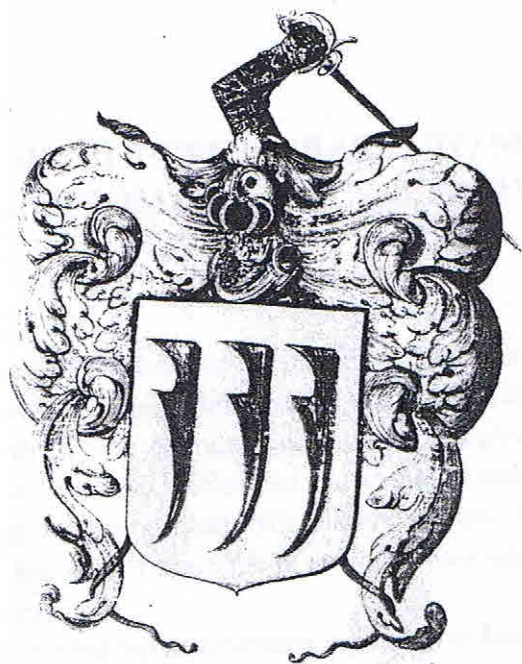
We have made use of Couttre's account in our PhD thesis, published as *Medieval Goa* (1979). More recently G.D. Winius has given us an account of Couttre 's jewel-trading activities in India. ¹ Our "A New Account of the Diamond Mines of the Deccan" has drawn further details from Couttre's text.' This complements Official sources and other contemporary private accounts giving insight into the Portuguese *grande soltura*, or the free trade and piracy that we can glean from the *Peregrinação* of Fernão Mendes Pinto. Early in the seventeenth century the Dutch arrived to contest the Malacca-based Portuguese control over the South-East Asian region.'

Couttre narrates his participation in an embassy sent by the Portuguese captain (in effect governor) of Malacca, D. Francisco de Silva de Menezes, to Siam in 1595 and throws some light on the functioning of embassies and on Siam of the time. It was a period of Siamese military expansion in the region. In such a conflicting situation with its neighbours, Siam was looking eagerly for

Indica n. 25, Bombay, March-1988, pp. 15-34.

'A.R. Kulkarni, M.A. Nayeem & T.R. de Souza, eds *Medieval Deccan History* (Commemoration Volume in honour of P.M. Joshi), Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1996, PP. 124-134, thaws on Book 2, ch. 15-16, and Book 3, ch. 3 of Couttre's account.

Peter Borschberg, Department of History, National University of Singapore, "Challenges from Early Modern Source Materials: Melaka and Adjacent Regions" can be consulted for the Sources in this context; it includes references to Couttre's account.



Vida de Jaques de Coutre
natural de la ciudad de
Brugas Condado de
Flandes 33.

Puesto en la forma que está por su hijo
Don Estevan de Coutre. z.

Libro Primero

De como sali de la casa de
mis Padres y mi Patria, y lo q
me succedio hasta llegar a
España.

Capitulo Primero.

Tuue por Patria la nobilissima Ciudad
de Brugas del Condado de Flandes, y por
Padres a Jaques de Coutre, y Anna Van Cou-
uen, Ciudadanos y naturales de la misma Ciu-

foreign allies, including the Europeans and the Japanese.' While the text contains interesting information specific to the region, the duplicity and diplomatic dissimulation demonstrated in it were by no means atypical.

Sketchy and sporadic information about early Luso-Siamese relations is available in the correspondence of Afonso de Albuquerque (1510-1514), in *The Suma Oriental* of Tome Fires (1515), in Duarte Barbosa's *A Description of East Africa and Malabar in the beginning of the Sixteenth Century* (1516), in the mid-sixteenth century *Lendas da India* of Gaspar Correia, the *Décadas* of Joao de Barros, the *Chronica* of Damiao de Gois, and in *Feregrinacao* of the famous merchant-traveller Fernão Mendes Pinto (in Siam 1540-45). At the time of the Portuguese conquest of Malacca, Siam was engaged in a military campaign against Malacca, which had been defaulting on its payment of customary tribute to Siam. The Portuguese in Malacca maintained friendly contacts with Siam from the time Afonso de Albuquerque sent an ambassador, Antonio de Miranda de Azevedo, bearing gifts for the King of Siam and with instructions to draw up a trade agreement with Siam.

The Dominicans had begun the early missionary contacts in the region in 1566. The Christians and missionaries in Siam had to face intermittent persecutions provoked by local Muslims, and later by the intrigues of the Dutch and the English. After a treaty in 1616 the King of Siam had even engaged Portuguese guards for the royal establishment in Ayutthaya, where the soldiers married local women and founded a Portuguese settlement, which the missionaries and merchants of Macao did much to develop after the fall of Malacca.

Until the fall of Malacca to the Dutch, Luso-Siamese relations were regulated from Malacca, whose captain was often also the captain of the *armada do sul* (the southern fleet) in charge of patrolling the straits and navigation in the South China Sea. The captain of Malacca could sell trading voyages to the Coromandel coast, Bengal, Burma, Siam, Sunda, Timor and Borneo. While the captains of all Portuguese forts had a bad reputation for pressuring local merchants and thereby discouraging them from frequenting Portuguese ports, the captains of Malacca seem to have been even more notorious in this respect, as testified by frequent documentary references to their abuses. In addition to many other instructions, there was

Somdet Phra Naresuan, r.1590-1605. The reign of his successor and brother, Ekathotsarot (1605-1620), saw a large influx of foreigners into Siam as traders and mercenaries. Ekathotsarot established Krom Asas (i.e. volunteer regiments) of foreign soldiers, for example; Krom Asa Mon, Krom Asa Chain, Krom Asa Yipun (Japanese mercenaries), and Krom Asa Maen Puen (Arquebusiers - the Portuguese and Dutch). Ekathotsarot had a close relationship with the Tokugawa shogunate under Tokugawa Ieyasu, who commissioned Red Seal Ships to Slam. Around this time Siamese metallurgists learned the arts of forging mortars from the Westerners.

generally a clause requiring information and threatening with severe punishment the involvement of the Malacca captains in the illegal trade with Manila.

The embassies sent to different countries were not always of the same importance and the local captains often sent personal envoys to neighbouring chieftains. They usually had to report decisions to Goa, but it was understood that the difficulties of communication required flexibility in urgent situations. As a rule the foreign policy decisions were taken in Goa and *regimentos* or *instruções* to guide the embassies were issued by the viceroy. But, for instance, when the city of Macao decided to send an embassy to the emperor of China in 1678, taking a lion from East Africa as a gift, the city issued its own instructions, drawn up in the name of the crown. A year later the authorities in Goa wrote praising the efforts of the city and asking to be informed about the instructions issued to the ambassador.

Given this background, we can consider the details of an embassy sent by Francisco de Silva de Menezes, captain of Malacca, to Siam in 1595. Couttre was included in this embassy. He had endeared himself to the captain from the time he arrived in Malacca and was introduced to the captain by Sequin Martinella, an old Venetian, who seems to have been the resident "business manager" of Malacca fort captains. Within six months the captain had sent Couttre to Pahang with an embassy under Martin Teixeira in 1594. Couttre's main and secret mission was to purchase diamonds and sapphires for the captain.

An embassy to Siam in 1595

An embassy had arrived from Siam in Malacca after Siam had captured the kingdom of Cambodia and taken captive many Christians and Portuguese, including persons from different religious orders, such as Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans. One Dominican friar named Fr Jorge de Mota, whom Couttre describes as *astuto y terrible* (cunning and terrible), had succeeded in bribing an influential courtier named Prachidech and had himself sent as an envoy of the King of Siam to the captain of Malacca to open negotiations for the release of the prisoners.

Couttre says that the unscrupulous friar dangled visions of cut-rate diamonds, rubies and sapphires of Siam before the captain of Malacca in exchange for textiles and foodstuffs. Silva Menezes was eager to combine a mission of mercy with the opportunity to enrich himself. Not many were keen to join this embassy, fearing the King of Siam, but there were some who were too ambitious to resist an opportunity of making material gain. Couttre avers that he himself was initially very reluctant to go when the captain asked him to accompany the mission, which was to consist of a favourite of the captain as ambassador, a factor, and nine other Portuguese. Couttre agreed to join the embassy when the captain acceded to some of his demands.

The embassy left in a *junco*, a vessel described as of nearly a thousand tonnes burthen and with sails made of palm leaves, on 5 May 1595. The crew was all Chinese, and the friar Jorge was not just accompanying the embassy but had taken full control of it. Couttre expresses his resentment that everyone had to dance to his tune.

After a hying voyage through the Straits of Singapore in which the junk scraped a submerged rock' and Couttre's watering party was ambushed by pirates (whom he calls *bayus borneos*) on a lonely island, the expedition reached Patani and thereafter Lugor (Nakhon Sithammaraj), where the captain of a junk coming from Siam reported that Prachidech had died and the Christian captives had been freed and were going about armed, often killing one another without interference from the king. In fact, some Japanese Christians had killed a Dominican friar and had sought refuge in a Capuchin-run church in vain. They were murdered by the Portuguese at the foot of the altar.

The last leg of the voyage to Siam was completed only after an attack on their junk by pirates, whom Couttre calls *tutos*, who were successfully repelled with musket fire. On entering the river of Siam neither the ambassador nor the friar was keen to disembark. Both wanted to divert the vessel and go to Cochinchina. The resistance of all the others in their company forced them to change their minds and continue with the purpose of the mission. On arrival, they had to register their names and all their goods and armaments at the checkpoint manned by a mandarin. After that the friar and Couttre obtained a passport (*thara*) to proceed up river to Odia (Ayutthaya), some 40 leagues away, to meet the king and inform him about the arrival of the ambassador. They observed many vessels keeping watch and the strict vigil enforced all along their route. They reached Ayutthaya after seven days' travel.

In the city they were warmly welcomed by the Portuguese, who confirmed the news they had been given at Lugor. They did not find the king in his capital, because he was hunting elephants. They were given permission by the city governor (called *Hojavan*) to go to where the king was in a *pangayo* of thirty oars on each side and with a roof. They were also allowed thirty Portuguese who had been captives to man the vessel. But before they could reach their destination they received the news through two Franciscan friars (one a Castilian, Fr Pedro Ortiz, and the other a Portuguese, Fr JregóriO da Cruz, who had been vicar in Cambodia) and a Castilian renegade called Miguel de Pina, that the king was already on his way back to the capital. They returned to Ayutthaya. The king was already informed about the embassy.

King Naresuan granted them an audience, and as required by custom they were given flowers of gold and silver mixed with natural flowers' with which to approach the royal presence. Friar Mota then had a private audience with the king and dissuaded him from inviting Couttre to join in, on grounds that he, Mora, had something confidential to convey to His Majesty. The friar took with him as interpreters two Hans brothers (Antonio and Miguel), sons of a Fleming living in Macao. The brothers had married in Cambodia and were treated as princes in recognition of the services rendered by their father. Now they were captives in Siam, but were treated better than the other captives.

The friar told the king that he had come with an ambassador who was a relative of the King of Portugal and that he was sent to provide assistance to the King of Siam in his wars with Pegu, because he was skilful in matters of war and had conquered the whole island of Ceylon. He also told the king that the King of Portugal had sent two Portuguese for his service. Couttre reports that the king was so pleased with the news that he declared that even the gift of a white elephant would please him less than this embassy from a king that he considered as powerful as himself. He also promised that there would be no poor Portuguese in his kingdom henceforth. He immediately ordered that arrangements be made for a solemn welcome for the ambassador. The friar, the superintendent of revenue (*parabaci*) and the general of the rivers (*oyasimintoy*) were put in charge of working out the details of the reception to be accorded to the ambassador. The friar would have the final say in the arrangements, and he was sent away with a gift of eighty *catis* of silver coins (each catty weighed four *inarcos* or 32 ounces) and many bales of gold and silk brocades in 18 trays carried by 13 bearers.

The friar and the ambassador then got together with mandarins to translate into the Siamese language the text of the Portuguese letter of credence. They claimed that the original was written in Malay and was in a sealed golden container, which had to be offered to the king unopened. For the purpose of the translation several mandarins, the entire team of the Portuguese embassy, and the friar met in a big hall in the royal palace. The friar had sought the assistance of Miguel de Pina, the renegade mentioned above, to act as his interpreter from Malay to Siamese. The friar, who knew Malay and also some Siamese, dictated as the text of the letter of credence whatever he pleased, so much so that he described the whole party accompanying the ambassador as royal slaves (*paylvan*). The mandarins then happily asked those present their names, to be noted down. The friar's text of the letter greeted the King of Siam and Cambodia in the name of the King of Portugal, and declared that he was sending his relative Manuel Pereira d'Abreu with ten others

⁶ Roses of the size of Spanish pieces of eight. The common Malay term was *bunga inas*, the gold and silver flowers of allegiance.

and some armaments and gifts. Most of these statements were untrue, and the letter in a gold container was from the captain of Malacca, requesting the King of Siam to release the captives and listing the gifts that were sent. Couttre and some others present understood the gist of the friar's deceits, but were chilled with honor and feared that a protest would cost them their lives.

The king was delighted, and on the day fixed for officially welcoming the ambassador he sent rich presents to the ambassador and the friar. The embassy cortege moved towards the royal palace, a league and a half away, accompanied by a thousand musketeers, a thousand bowmen, a thousand lancers, and a thousand swordsmen, moving in two parallel columns. Only their loins were covered and their bodies painted with many designs. The two Hans brothers were seated on elephants with the containers of the true and false embassy letters held above their heads. They were surrounded by three hundred trumpeters and drummers. Then followed the ten Portuguese, including Couttre, carrying the various gifts brought by the ambassador. The friar on a palanquin, and to his left the ambassador on a horse, brought up the rear with the rest of the Portuguese and the Christian captives.

The cortege moved in complete silence. No one spoke a word, and the trumpets and drums made a deafening noise. All the houses along the way had their doors and windows shut and no one could be seen outdoors. No barking of a dog was to be heard under penalty of death to the dog and its owner. On arrival in the palace, the ambassadorial party had to cross three large courtyards, each a harquebus shot long and little less wide, lined by thousands of armed retainers sitting on their haunches. The Portuguese accompanying the embassy had to move with their heads lowered and arms crossed over their shoulders.

The king was sitting on a golden throne on a raised square platform, about two hundred paces wide and long. The throne was like a gold-roofed bedstead. It had glass panes, and the king was communicating with the party through a small window and was barely visible. At the foot of the throne was seated the king's brother, called the White King, and a bonze, who was a brother of the King of Pegu.

There were five stages before reaching the royal throne. The distance between each stage was thirty paces. At each stop a part of the letter was read and transmitted orally from person to person until it reached the king. When the entire message was conveyed the king sent gold boxes (worth about 2,000 escudos each) containing the customary betel leaves and accompaniments for the friar and the ambassador. Baskets worth about 50 escudos each with similar contents were presented to the other Portuguese accompanying the embassy. The King then asked the ambassador how many men he had used to conquer Ceylon. He said in reply that he had 500 Portuguese and 3,000 Indians with him. The king then presented more expensive gifts to the ambassador and the friar.

After ending the ceremonial reception, the king left the audience place very solemnly behind his guards. The king was wearing only a loincloth, but on his head he was wearing something like a bishop's mitre, gold plated and studded with precious stones. He was seated on an elephant and had two golden hooks in his hands for controlling the animal. In front of him moved the ambassador and the friar and the rest of the Portuguese with their hands joined. Behind the king was his brother on another elephant with his hands on his bowed head. Around him were the trumpeters and drummers. The party moved so quickly that Couttre reports having a brush with the tusks of the royal elephant behind him.

The king was convinced of the genuineness of the embassy and sought to respond with an embassy of his own to the King of Portugal.⁷ He decided to send the friar with two *grandeess* from his kingdom. These were sons of a royal concubine, who was most unhappy about this and was praying to her gods and consulting priests with expensive offerings to seek a change in the royal plans for her sons.

The king gave the friar a big junk for the journey. Couttre describes the junk as bigger than a Portuguese carrack. It could take 30,000 quintals of cargo. The king also gave him 10,000 quintals of *sapam* (similar to Brazil wood used for making dyes), 400 quintals of white *menkul* (benzoin), a large quantity of alum and several other products of the country. He also invited the friar and the ambassador to choose from a box of rubies the best one for the King of Portugal. Couttre says that even though he was not present at the time, he had held it in his hands, and thought it worth 60,000 escudos. The king also sent a sapphire that weighed 300 carats and would be worth 8,000 escudos. The king had both stones set into two ornaments with many rough diamonds of eight carats each fitted into them. Couttre valued both the jewels and their cases at 150,000 escudos.

As the date for the departure of the embassy neared, the friar called his Portuguese friends and favourites, and chose ten to go with him. The others approached Couttre and Simon Peres (the factor of the captain of Malacca), expressing their fears of the tortures they could expect once the king discovered that he had been a victim of deceit.

Couttre and Peres approached one of the Ms (Hans) brothers and paid him four *marcos* of silver to serve as theft interpreter with the mother of the two ambassadors-designate. The court lady gave them an interview and they disclosed to her all the deceptions contrived by the friar in connection with the Portuguese embassy. To ensure the veracity of their version, she could ask the king to check the original Malay text in the sealed golden container. They also requested her to use her good

offices to obtain royal permission to depart and a junk to return to Malacca and report to the captain of Malacca what had happened. She felt that her prayers were being answered and served them sweets and fruit, sending them away with the promise of attending to their request.

The king was furious when he was told about the ruse and ordered immediately that the junk and goods given to the friar should be seized. He also summoned Couttre's party to his presence. But while they were on their way to the royal palace with gifts, some fifteen hoodlums sent by the friar and his fellow emissary from Malacca assailed them. Simon Peres was badly hurt in this assault. The king came to know about this incident and repeated his invitation to see him. Couttre, Antonio Hans and Peres went before the king with gifts. The king was seated on a golden throne about three metres high, with two tigers chained nearby. The visitors were made to sit in front and below the throne on a mat. At one stage the tigers were released and Couttre says that one came frightfully close to him before the king ordered them to be taken away. The king then listened to them and granted their request to leave for Malacca with all the Portuguese they might want to take along, including the Capuchin friar Gregorio da Cruz, whom the king greatly respected.

A good junk was given to them and they assembled the group that would leave. They included, besides Couttre and Peres, Fr Gregorio da Cruz, Luis de Freitas (captain of a voyage to Tenasserim) and several other Christians. However, as they were being registered by an official, Friar Mota arrived, with the ambassador and their friends. They told the official that the junk should not be allowed to leave for Malacca, because Freitas had stolen the king's idols (which was true). In the meantime they reached the junk, sought to scuttle it, and a big fight ensued between the contending parties of Portuguese. The official departed with a small vessel to report the matter to the king. Strangely, the king heard the news and went off hunting elephants once more. But he ordered that his factor and *oyasiminloy*, his "general of the rivers", and twelve chief mandarins, who had been responsible for the translation of the letter of credence, should all be killed. Rumours were also circulating that the Christians who were the cause of all this would be fried to death.⁸

The rumours had scared Friar Mota to such an extent that he came to meet Couttre, crying like a child and pleading that he be allowed to join his party leaving for Malacca. However, he insisted that neither the Capuchin nor Frèitas should go with them. As Couttre would not hear of such a deal, the friar and the ambassador Plaided to escape on their own. Couttre's group acquired three boats and started moving upriver, pretending they were looking for the king's camp to ask his

⁸ A similar situation was faced by the Dutch some time later. See Allons van der Kraan, "The Dutch in Siam: Jeremias van Vliet and the 1636 incident at Ayutthaya".

permission to leave, but in fact they had taken a native pilot who knew a stream that could lead them to the open sea. There they planned to hijack a bigger vessel and make their escape. However, they were intercepted by royal guards one night. The officer in charge accepted the Portuguese alibi that they were on their way to obtain the king's leave to depart, but was informed that Friar Mota's party had been captured while attempting to escape.

They reached the king's hunting camp after a journey of seven days upriver. There were 20,000 men and 3,000 boats. The Portuguese were told that it would not be possible to meet the king there. They then decided to watch the hunting operations. The king had chosen only twenty elephants from among many caught. The others were set free. The king then moved away. One of the vessels had a gilded cubicle for him, and in some other well-equipped boats his women, courtiers and guards travelled. The king stopped at the city called Repery [?]. From there he went to Sapampur [?], where he had a collection of over three thousand elephants. They were looked after by *cornecas* (mahouts), who had their little houses in tree-tops as protection against tigers. Fires were lit at night to keep the tigers at bay. The place was also infested by the so-called elephant flies that could bite through clothes, and made it impossible to sleep at night. Couttre's party had to wait there for 25 days, and all they could do was to submit their petition to the king in writing. The king replied that their request would be granted on his return to Ayutthaya. True to his word, on arrival there he gave them a new junk and named his ambassadors to the captain of Malacca. He also gave leave to the Portuguese ambassador to go with them. The friar and many other Portuguese had to remain behind as captives. Couttre's party finally left Siam after eight troublesome months.

Couttre's party stopped at Cambodia on the way. In the city they met a Castilian and a Portuguese called Diego Veloso, whose wife was still captive in Siam. He himself had been sent by the King of Siam on an embassy to Manila; but instead of returning with a reply, he had gone to Cochin-China in company of the said Castilian Blas Ruis. From Cochin-China they had crossed overland into Laos, where a son of the King of Cambodia married to a princess of Laos lived. They urged the King of Laos to send a big fleet [sic] to conquer the kingdom of Cambodia, to which he had right. The king followed their advice and sent the prince as general. Diego Veloso and Blas Ruis were appointed governors of the fleet.

On arrival in Cambodia they found that a rebel *laxamana* (admiral) had seized power. Seeing the big fleet, he feigned obedience. In the city of Cambodia there were several other Portuguese who had escaped from a junk that the King of Siam had sent to Manila and in which was travelling a Capuchin friar, Pedro Ortiz (Couttre had met this friar during his first trip to the hunting camp of the King of Siam). These Portuguese approached Couttre's junk and gave the news of the place and disclosed their plans to kill the *icixamana*. They wanted Couttre to speak to the

captain of Malacca on their behalf and convey their request for priests to administer the sacraments to the Portuguese living in Cambodia, and also for some Portuguese to help them carry out their plans.

On returning to Malacca, Couttre found that the captain Francisco de Silva de Mertezes had gone to Goa and been replaced by Martim Afonso de Melo. The captain responded immediately to the requests. He sent some Augustinian friars and many Portuguese. These joined up with Bias Ruis and others who were planning to kill the *lwcamana*. However, he suspected their intentions and killed all the Portuguese and the friars, without sparing any of them. The prince escaped and went back to his father-in-law, the King of Laos.

The ambassadors of Siam and the Portuguese ambassador Manuel Pereira d'Abreu had arrived in Malacca before Couttre. Manuel Pereira was returning rich and had won over the new captain with the gift of the gold box that the King of Siam had given him. No one was talking any more of the problems he had created in Siam. Couttre got him to pay back with some reluctance money that he had lent him. He pretended to be friendly, but had not forgiven Couttre the blows that he had struck during a skirmish in Siam. He refused the offer of a duel, but started conspiring with the captain, who also bore a grudge against Couttre over a woman.

They planned an assault on Couttre by sending someone to purchase an emerald from Couttre. It had belonged to the Jesuit Bishop of Japan, who had been present at the martyrdom of many there. The Jesuits had asked him to sell it. On the way he was assaulted and hit with a blow of a sword on the head, but Couttre had time to draw his sword and scare away his assailants, after seriously injuring one. Manuel Pereira and the captain were apparently watching the situation from the top of the fort.

Ten days after the assault Manuel Pereira and his men went back to Siam. When he wanted to return and could not obtain the king's permission to do so, his men joined up with a Castilian frigate that was there at the time and fought with the Siamese guard vessels, with many casualties on either side. Friar Mota was returning with him and was wounded in the conflict. Both died of exhaustion and illness soon after their return to Malacca. A few days later there was a big fire in the suburbs of the city of Malacca where Couttre lived. He lost his house, along with the entire stock of *mengui* [benzoin] and all other goods. Couttre calls it the climax of his sufferings in Siam.

Some observations about Siam

Couttre devotes two chapters to some of his observations during his eight months in Ayutthaya. He had lost no opportunity to observe life and customs there. He gives lengthy descriptions of the city's location, the temple architecture and

sculptures, what he calls the barbarities of Siamese justice, a funeral of the king's favourite elephant, the annual inundation of the capital and surrounding lands, the king's retreat during this season to higher ground, the common practice of men wearing up to four *buncholes* (small gold, silver or copper bells) in their penis and women wearing skirts with a long slit in front.

The description of "barbarities" observed shows that even Couttre, a hardened buccaneer in many respects, was struck by the severity of punishments meted out to miscreants.

In his description of the temples of Ayutthaya, Couttre refers to huge bronze statues brought there by the King of Siam from Cambodia. He says that they were discovered some forty years earlier in the ruined city of Angkor.

Couttre also describes the currency of Siam: the silver coins resembled harquebus bullets, with the royal seal on them representing an elephant. A *tical* of silver was equivalent to seven and half rials. *Mazes* were equal to one and half rials. Shells (*buzios*) were used as small currency. But the best currency in Siam was cloth pieces.

In conclusion, Couttre appears to have been an honest witness to what he saw and experienced in Siam in 1595. Readers of Spanish who wish to read his complete text should consult the edition of Jacques de Coutre's *Andanzas Asia'ticas* by E. Stols, B. Teensma, and J. Werberkmoes (Historia 16, Información y Revistas S.A., Madrid 1990). More readily available perhaps are the pages in Dirk van der Cruysse, tr. Michael Smithies, *Siam and the West 1500-1700* (Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2002), pp.21-32.