

# On the Political Negotiation between Early Rattanakosin Siam and Konbaung Burma: An Examination of *Collected Chronicles, Volume 21*

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## Abstract

This article critically examines *Collected Chronicles, Volume 21: Records on the Political Negotiation between the Thai and the Burmese* by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, arguing that a full recension of the book is needed due to numerous inaccuracies and a lack of comprehensive coverage. The study finds that the book covers only one-fourth of the existing copies or drafts of negotiation letters exchanged between Early Rattanakosin Siam and Konbaung Burma from *Chunlasakkarat* 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858). To provide a comprehensive recension, the article examines 27 manuscripts, which contain 29 copies or drafts of these letters, as well as all other relevant manuscripts housed at the National Library of Thailand.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1921, a book that would become Volume 21 of *Collected Chronicles (Prachum Phongswadan)* was published on the occasion of the royally sponsored cremation ceremony of Phraya Bhanubandhu Vongsevoradej (RTGS: Yaem Sinsuk).<sup>1</sup> Referred to hereinafter as “PP21,” the book was written by Prince Tisavarakumara, the Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, who is better known in English language literature as “Prince Damrong.” Its content is about the political negotiation between Early Rattanakosin Siam and Konbaung Burma from *Chunlasakkarat* (C.S.) 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858).<sup>2</sup> Compared with other books by Prince Damrong, *PP21* has received little discussion and reference. Nevertheless, as a volume in the *Collected Chronicles* series, the book undoubtedly has considerable value for the study of Siamese history. This article is written out of simple curiosity: how accurate is this work? The curiosity, needless to say, did not come out of the blue, but from inconsistencies found in the book itself. This led to an investigation of black folding-book manuscripts (*Samutthai dam*) with titles suggesting some relation with the said political negotiation. The article mainly contends that a full recension of its subject matter is needed because *PP21* contains numerous inaccuracies and lacks comprehensive coverage. It is found that the book covers only one-fourth of the existing copies or drafts of negotiation letters exchanged between the two kingdoms in the said period. Such inaccuracies and the lack of comprehensive coverage suggest that many manuscripts were not present at Prince Damrong’s hand when he composed the book. The article thus claims to be the first piece of writing to have covered all manuscripts with promising titles and offers a full recension of the political negotiation between Siam and Burma from 1784/1785 to 1857/1858.

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<sup>1</sup> Fine Arts Department, Office of Literature and History, *Prachum Phongswadan Chabap Kanchanaphisek* [Collected Chronicles –The Golden Jubilee Edition] (Bangkok: Office of Literature and History, Fine Arts Department, 2002), 10:(28). Except for some proper nouns, all transcriptions of the Thai language in this article follow the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (RTGS).

<sup>2</sup> C.S. 1 is A.D. 639/640. This article adopts as a pretext a principle in which C.S. changes on the *Thaloengsok* (เถลิงศก) day, between the 6<sup>th</sup> waxing-moon day of the 5<sup>th</sup> lunar month and the 5<sup>th</sup> waxing-moon day of the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month (around mid-April in the Gregorian calendar) whereas the zodiac year changes on the 1<sup>st</sup> waxing-moon day of the 5<sup>th</sup> lunar month of the Thai luni-solar calendar. However, it must be noted that in fact, this principle dates only from the early years of King Rama IV’s reign (1851-1868). Before that, the situation was quite confusing. Whilst the annual *Maha Songkran* declaration stated that both C.S. and the zodiac year would change on the *Thaloengsok* day, in practice most official records did not observe it and changed both on the 1<sup>st</sup> waxing-moon day of the 5<sup>th</sup> lunar month. There has not been a piece of writing on this issue to date, and unfortunately, this article is not in a position to elaborate upon this point either.

Most of what *PP21* claims to be political negotiation is, in fact, simply political correspondence between Early Rattanakosin Siam and Konbaung Burma, not the negotiation proper. Prince Damrong includes even a one-sided negotiation attempt as a negotiation. However odd it seems to be, the article retains the usage of the term “negotiation” adopted by the prince as a pretext for the recension, because the development of a new criterion for the consideration of what should be counted as a negotiation round would end up in a re-writing of the whole book—which is beyond the purpose of this journal article.

This article presents five significant findings. Firstly, a negotiation round which followed Siam’s Second Tavoy Campaign began about a year earlier than the time stated in the book. The said campaign began in the second half of 1792 and ended with Siam’s defeat in January 1793 as elaborated in *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*,<sup>3</sup> not in early 1794 as Chaophraya Thiphakorawong’s *The Royal Chronicle of the First Reign of Rattanakosin* implies.<sup>4</sup> Prince Damrong, however, followed the latter.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, whilst *PP21*—citing *The Royal Chronicle of the First Reign of Rattanakosin*—elaborates as if a negotiation round in 1802 was a one-sided negotiation attempt by Burmese ministers, this article argues that this round was essentially an exchange of letters between a former Burmese captive and Siam’s top Mon official. It is more likely that the one-sided negotiation attempt mentioned in the two books took place a year earlier. Thirdly, the veracity of a negotiation which is said by *PP21*—citing *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*—to have taken place in 1807 is highly questionable. Most likely, this is an error on the part of *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*. Fourthly, although a negotiation round from 1813 to 1814 did happen, one needs to find more evidence to corroborate its occurrence, apart from Chaophraya Thiphakorawong’s *The Royal Chronicle of the Second Reign of Rattanakosin*, which is not primary evidence. What Prince Damrong and Chaophraya Thiphakorawong claim in *PP21* and *The Royal Chronicle of the Second Reign of Rattanakosin*, respectively, to be primary evidence—i.e., Siam’s replying letter to Burma in C.S. 1175 (1813/1814)—is, in fact, an early draft of the letter which would finally be dated 11 January 1795. Lastly, whilst *PP21* claims that there was no negotiation in the reign of King Rama III

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<sup>3</sup> Luang Phraison Salarak (Thien Subindu), “Intercourse between Burma and Siam as Recorded in Hmannan Yazawindawgyi,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 13, no. 1 (1919): 51.

<sup>4</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 1* [The Royal Chronicle of the First Reign of Rattanakosin], ed. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (Bangkok: Rong Phim Bamrungnukunkit, 1901), 168-169. The chronicle does not state when the campaign ended but states that it began in late 1793.

<sup>5</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Phongsawadan Rueang Thai Rop Phama* [Chronicle of the War between the Thai and the Burmese] (Bangkok: Rong Phim Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1932), 2:230.

(r. 1824-1851), this article argues that there were, at least, one negotiation round and two negotiation attempts from the Burmese side. The negotiation round took place in the course of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826), whereas the other two Burmese attempts took place in 1829 and 1844.

Why is it important to recense this matter? Apart from Prince Damrong's reason that unless available records are properly collected and presented, the matter will sink into oblivion,<sup>6</sup> there are two other reasons. One is that because the *Collected Chronicles* series are one of the main sources of reference for the study of Siamese history, all information should be accurate and as complete as possible. Volume 21, however, lacks both qualities. Without recension, readers would be misinformed and reference the matters inaccurately. The other, and more important, reason is that *PP21* was written under a scholarly standard of over 100 years ago, but the same is not acceptable at present. It is now inadequate to claim without proper citation that a given piece of evidence is taken from manuscripts at the National Library. There is no reason to believe Prince Damrong and (to the extent that a significant part of *PP21* is based upon his works) Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, without examining raw data behind their writings. In this regard, it is regrettable that even though many of the manuscripts which form the core of *PP21* were published in 2002 as part of *Collected Chronicles—The Golden Jubilee Edition, Volume 10* (hereinafter, "*PPGJ10*"), *PPGJ10* does not engage with the text of *PP21* at all. With a proper citation of primary evidence, the recension of *PP21* offered herein will definitely be beneficial for future research in this area.

This article consists of four sections. The first section will briefly discuss research materials and give a list of copies or drafts of the letters in the said political negotiation. It is important to show this list from the outset because the other sections, including the summary of the literature, will refer to it frequently. The second section will summarise *PP21* to pave the way for the discussion in the following section. To avoid repetition, where it finds suitable, the section will concurrently engage with the manuscripts which have already been covered by *PP21*. The third section will examine *PP21* and offer the recension of the political negotiation between Early Rattanakosin Siam and Konbaung Burma from 1784/1785 to 1857/1858. Finally, the article will end with a concluding section.

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<sup>6</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmaiher Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama* [Collected Chronicles, Volume 21: Records on the Political Negotiation between the Thai and the Burmese] (Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, 1962), 1.

## 2. Research Materials

Research materials are black folding-book manuscripts maintained at the National Library of Thailand in Bangkok. The study investigates all manuscripts which have titles suggesting some relation with the political negotiation between Siam and Burma from 1784/1785 to 1857/1858. It would be ideal if this article could claim that it had perused all materials relating to the subject matter. However, with the nature of these late 18<sup>th</sup> to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century documents and the regulations of the National Library, such a claim is impossible. To begin with, as many manuscripts are not monographs but are many records—probably, of several years across the reigns—bound together in one black folding book, it is very difficult for the librarian to make a good title for the manuscript. One possibility remains that there are manuscripts which contain primary information about the political negotiation between Siam and Burma but are under irrelevant titles. Due to the National Library's regulations, one cannot simply go to the library and ask for any manuscript to read. All users are required to (1) check the collections of available manuscripts, (2) make one's own list of requested manuscripts and (3) attach it with a request to seek approval from the director of the National Library. One can only read the manuscripts in the list which has been approved. The gist is that a decision whether to include a manuscript in one's list of requested manuscripts depends heavily upon the accuracy of the titles and the thoroughness of the descriptions of manuscripts provided by the library. Under such regulations, one only wishes that these titles and descriptions provided accurate and thorough information. At best, what such a piece of writing as this can claim is thus no more than that it is the first piece of writing to have covered all manuscripts which have promising titles (and descriptions), not all manuscripts relating to the negotiation *per se*.

Copies or drafts of 29 letters between Siam and Burma are found in 27 black folding-book manuscripts at the National Library. Forming the core of this article, these manuscripts belong to the *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1* and *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 4* collections (hereinafter, "CMH.R1" and "CMH.R4," respectively). Each collection is then sub-categorised into C.S. divisions. As stated earlier, without prior recension, it would be time-consuming—if not also confusing—for readers to peruse the manuscripts on the site. To begin with, manuscripts in a C.S. division are not chronologically arranged, and copies or drafts of the same letter may appear in up to three manuscripts across different C.S. divisions. It would take a long time to arrange and match them because the titles and the descriptions provided by the library are not suggestive. Furthermore, some manuscripts are classified by the National Library into C.S. divisions that they should not

be. It is regrettable that a perusal of *PPGJ10* in advance does not help much either. *PPGJ10* often cites solely the calling numbers but neither the collection names nor the C.S. divisions to which the manuscripts belong. In some cases, it makes wrong references or even omits referencing altogether. For all these reasons, it is necessary that this article begin with the following table.

**Table 1**

*List of copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between Siam and Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858)*

#	Date of the letter If N/A, date of receipt <sup>7</sup>	References	<i>PPGJ10</i> (Pages)	Remarks
1	N/A  5 <sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1154 <sup>8</sup> (12 Mar-9 Apr 1793)	CMH.R1/1155/No.4 <sup>9</sup>	–	(1) The manuscript does not contain the date of receipt. We know from #3 that the letter arrived in the 5 <sup>th</sup> lunar month. (2) The first part of the letter is missing. However, it can be inferred from the extant content that the letter is from either the Burmese Front Palace Prince—who was in charge of the defence of Tavoy from 1792 to 1793—or high-ranking officials who took part in the campaign, addressed to Siamese ministers ( <i>Senabodi</i> ).

<sup>7</sup> Conversion of the Thai luni-solar calendar into the Gregorian solar calendar in this article is drawn from Krom Witthathikan [Department of Academic Affairs], *Patithin Samrap Khon Wan Duean Chantharakhati Kap Suriyakhati Tae Pi Kan Chattawa Sok Rattanakosin Sok 1 Phutthasakkarat 2325 Chunlasakkarat 1144 Theung Pi Wok Chattawa Sok Rattanakosin Sok 151 Phutthasakkarat 2475 Chunlasakkarat 1294* [Calendars for the Conversion of Dates in the Thai Luni-Solar Calendar into Dates in the Gregorian Solar Calendar from Rattanakosin Era 1, Thai Buddhist Era 2325, Chunlasakkarat 1144 to Rattanakosin Era 151, Thai Buddhist Era 2475, Chunlasakkarat 1294], 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Rong Phim Aksonnit, 1931). Note that Thai Buddhist Era 1 is Singhalese Buddhist Era 2.

<sup>8</sup> The cover of the manuscript states that Mr. Khong, Mr. Rot and Mr. Yen, Siamese war captives who carried this letter from Burma, arrived “in the year of the ox which is the fifth of the decade,” which must be C.S. 1155. Yet, as stated in Footnote 2, this article adopts as a pretext a principle in which C.S. changes on the *Thaloengsok* day. The *Thaloengsok* day of C.S. 1155 fell on Friday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> waxing-moon day of the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month (Friday, 12 April 1793).

<sup>9</sup> This is abbreviated from *Chotmaihet Ratchakan Thi 1* Collection, C.S. 1155 Division, No. 4. The same pattern also applies to other in-text references.

**Table 1**

List of copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between Siam and Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858) (Cont.)

#	Date of the letter If N/A, date of receipt	References	PPGJ10 (Pages)	Remarks
2	N/A Thur1Wane/9/1155 <sup>10</sup> (Thur, 22 Aug 1793) <sup>11</sup>	CMH.R1/1155/No.6	–	The letter is from the Governor of Tavoy to Siamese ministers.
3	Mon5Wax/10/1155 (Mon, 9 Sept 1793)	CMH.R1/1155/No.1/ก	169-171	(1) This is a replying letter of #1 and #2 from the Governor of Kanchanaburi to the Governors of Martaban and Tavoy. (2) PPGJ10 references it with neither a collection name nor a C.S. division as No.1/ก—which is an error.
4	N/A Sun4Wane/2/1155 (Sun, 19 Jan 1794)	CMH.R1/1155/No.8	172	(1) This is an acknowledging letter of #3 from Asae Nguan Ki (อะแสะง่วนกี), a Burmese high-ranking official, and the Governor of Tavoy to the Governor of Kanchanaburi. (2) PPGJ10 references it with neither a collection name nor a C.S. division as No.2/ก. (3) The manuscript was moved from CMH.R1/1159/No.2/ก to CMH.R1/1155/No.8 on 7 Feb 2015.
5	N/A 9Wax/3/1155 (Sat, 8 Feb 1794)	CMH.R1/1155/No.5	–	(1) The early part of the letter is missing. Therefore, whilst the receiver is the Governor of Kanchanaburi, the sender is unknown. However, it can be implied from #6 that the sender is the Governor of Martaban. (2) It is stated in the manuscript that the letter was received on Friday, the 9 <sup>th</sup> waxing-moon day of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1155. However, that day was Saturday, not Friday.

<sup>10</sup> This is abbreviated from Thursday, the 1<sup>st</sup> waning-moon day of the 9<sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1155. The name of the weekday in the Thai calendar will be omitted in the case where it does not appear on the original manuscript.

<sup>11</sup> The name of the weekday in the Gregorian calendar is indicated for cross-checking purposes.

**Table 1**

*List of copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between Siam and Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858) (Cont.)*

#	Date of the letter If N/A, date of receipt	References	PPGJ10 (Pages)	Remarks
6	Wed5Wane/3/1155 (Wed, 19 Feb 1794)	CMH.R1/1155/No.1/ก	173-174	(1) This is a replying letter of #5 from the Governor of Kanchanaburi to the Governor of Martaban. (2) The CMH.R1 collection also contains earlier drafts of this letter. CMH.R1/1147/No.2 seems to be the first draft, whereas CMH.R1/1155/No.1 seems to be the final draft. CMH.R1/1155/No.1/ก is a copy of the letter which was sent out. CMH.R1/1147/No.2, therefore, should not be classified in its current C.S. division. (3) PPGJ10 references it with neither a collection name nor a division as No.1—which is an error. <sup>12</sup>
7	Tues9Wax/5/1156 (Tues, 8 Apr 1794)	CMH.R1/1156/No.10	175	(1) This is an acknowledging letter of #6 from the Governor of Martaban to the Governor of Kanchanaburi. (2) PPGJ10 does not reference the manuscript.
8	N/A Dated shortly before 5Wax/8/1156 (Wed, 2 July 1794)	CMH.R1/1156/No.6	—	(1) This letter is from the Governor of Martaban to the Governor of Kanchanaburi. (2) The date of the letter does not appear in the manuscript but can be estimated from #9.
9	5Wax/8/1156 (Wed, 2 July 1794)	CMH.R1/1156/No.6	—	This is a covering letter of #8 from Burma's Mon officer to the Siamese border patrol police ( <i>Chao dan</i> ชาวด่าน).

<sup>12</sup> There are three noticeable differences between CMH.R1/1155/No.1/ก and No.1: (1) the former is written by white pencil and *horadan* (หรรดาณ) ink, whereas the latter is written entirely by white pencil; (2) the letter in the former is dated, whereas the one in the latter is not; and (3) the former records the proceedings of the letter after the content, whereas the latter does not.

**Table 1**

List of copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between Siam and Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858) (Cont.)

#	Date of the letter If N/A, date of receipt	References	PPGJ10 (Pages)	Remarks
10	N/A Mon15Wax/2/1156 (Mon, 5 Jan 1795)	CMH.R1/1156/No.3	176-177	(1) This letter is from the Governor of Martaban to the Governor of Kanchanaburi. (2) PPGJ10 does not reference the manuscript. (3) The content suggests that in late 1794, the Governor of Kanchanaburi had replied to #8 and #9. Letters #11, #12 and #13 suggest further that the Governor of Kanchaburi's letter was received by the Burmese side no later than 22 November 1794. However, a copy of this letter is not found.
11	Sun6Wane/2/1156 (Sun, 11 Jan 1795)	CMH.R1/1156/No.8	178-179	(1) This is a replying letter of #10 from the Governor of Kanchanaburi to the Governor of Martaban. (2) PPGJ10 does not reference the manuscript. (3) An earlier, if not the first, draft of this letter appears in CMH.R1/1155/No.1/๗, which is published in pages 180-182 of PPGJ10 but referenced as "No.3, the <i>Chotmaihet</i> collection." The draft in CMH.R1/1155/No.1/๗ is not dated.
12	N/A Mon2Wane/5/1157 (Mon, 6 Apr 1795)	CMH.R1/1157/No.4	-	This letter is from Maeng Rae Maeng La Cho Thaeng (แม่จางแม่จางจ้อไท่), a member of the Burmese royal family, to the Front Palace Prince of Siam.
13	N/A Mon2Wane/5/1157 (Mon, 6 Apr 1795)	CMH.R1/1157/No.4	183	(1) This is a covering letter of #12 from the Governor of Martaban to the Governor of Kanchanaburi. (2) PPGJ10 does not reference the manuscript.
14	Tues10Wane/5/1157 (Tues, 14 Apr 1795)	CMH.R1/1157/No.5	184-185	(1) This is a replying letter of #12 from Siamese ministers to Maeng Rae Maeng La Cho Thaeng. An earlier draft of CMH.R1/1157/No.5 is CMH.R1/1157/No.2. (2) PPGJ10 does not reference the manuscript.

**Table 1**

*List of copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between Siam and Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858) (Cont.)*

#	Date of the letter If N/A, date of receipt	References	PPGJ10 (Pages)	Remarks
15	Sat14Wane/5/1157 (Sat, 18 Apr 1795)	CMH.R1/1157/No.5	186	(1) This is a covering letter of #14 from the Governor of Kanchanaburi to the Governor of Martaban. (2) PPGJ10 does not reference the manuscript.
16	3Wane/10/1158 (Mon, 19 Sept 1796)	CMH.R1/1158/No.2	189	(1) This is an acknowledging letter of #14 from the Governor of Martaban to the Governor of Kanchanaburi. (2) PPGJ10 does not reference the manuscript.
17	4Wax/11/1158 (Wed, 5 Oct 1796)	CMH.R1/1158/No.2	–	(1) This is a replying letter of #16 from the Governor of Kanchanaburi and Chaophraya Mahayotha to the Governor of Martaban. (2) According to the manuscript. The letter is dated Thursday, the 4 <sup>th</sup> waxing-moon day of the 11 <sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1158. However, that day was Wednesday, not Thursday.
18	N/A Tues3Wane/8/1159 (Tues, 11 July 1797)	CMH.R1/1159/No.2	–	This is a threatening letter from the Governor of Martaban to Siamese ministers.
19	9Wax/9/1164 (Sat, 7 Aug 1802)	CMH.R1/1165/No.1	–	This is a personal letter from U-bakong (อุบากอง) to Chaophraya Mahayotha. The manuscript should be classified in the C.S. 1164 division.
20	Sat7Wane/7/1165 (Sat, 11 Jun 1803)	CMH.R1/1165/No.1	–	This is a replying letter of #19 from Chaophraya Mahayotha to U-bakong.

**Table 1**

List of copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between Siam and Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858) (Cont.)

#	Date of the letter If N/A, date of receipt	References	PPGJ10 (Pages)	Remarks
21	N/A  7Wax/12/1168 (Mon, 17 Nov 1806)	CMH.R1/1155/No.8	190	(1) The letter is from the Governor of Martaban to the Governor of Kanchanaburi. (2) PPGJ10 references it with neither a collection name nor a C.S. division as No.2/n. (3) The manuscript was moved from CMH.R.1/1159/No.2/n to CMH.R.1/1155/No.8 on 7 February 2015.
22	Fri3Wane/12/1168 (Fri, 28 Nov 1806)	CMH.R1/1155/No.8	190-191	(1) This is a replying letter of #21 from the Governor of Kanchanaburi to the Governor of Martaban. (2) PPGJ10 references it with neither a collection name nor a C.S. division as No.2/n. (3) The manuscript was moved from CMH.R.1/1159/No.2/n to CMH.R.1/1155/No.8 on 7 February 2015.
23	N/A  5Wane/11/1170 (Sun, 9 Oct 1808)	CMH.R1/1170/No.1	127-129	(1) This letter is from Burmese ministers to Siamese ministers. (2) The manuscript does not provide the date of the letter, but the envoys who carried it were received in Siam on the stated date. <sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1170. No. 1. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. *Horadan* ink. *Samnao Nangsue Akkhara Maha Senabodi Thai Theung Senabodi Krung Angwa* [A Copy of the Siamese Ministerial Letter to Burmese Ministers], verso 15-16; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1152. No. 4. Modern paper. Thai script. Thai language. Typewriting. *Chotmai het Wa Duai Phama Kho Pen Phra Ratcha Maitri Nai Ratchakan Thi 1-2 Chabap Momchao Ying Surai* [Momchao Ying Surai's Record on Burma's Request for the Cordial Relationship in the Reigns of Kings Rama I and Rama II], 3.

**Table 1**

*List of copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between Siam and Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858) (Cont.)*

#	Date of the letter If N/A, date of receipt	References	PPGJ10 (Pages)	Remarks
24	N/A  Dated shortly after 5Wane/11/1170 (Sun, 9 Oct 1808)	CMH.R1/1170/No. 4	-	(1) This is assumed to be an acknowledging letter from the Governor of Kanchanaburi to the Governor of Martaban. (2) The manuscript does not provide the date of the letter, but it must have been dated shortly after #23 was received. (3) The manuscript is in poor condition, and only some parts of the letter remain. The remaining content implied that #23 was accompanied by the Governor of Martaban's letter to the Governor of Kanchanaburi.
25	Thur6Wane/1/1170 (Thur, 8 Dec 1808)	CMH.R1/1170/No.1	137-138	This is a replying letter of #23 from Siamese ministers to Burmese ministers.
26	Sat1Wax/2/1170 (Sat, 17 Dec 1808)	CMH.R1/1170/No.1	139-141	This is a covering letter of #25 from the Governor of Kanchanaburi to the Governor of Martaban.
27	N/A  Fri6Wax/10/1218 (Fri, 5 Sept 1856)	CMH.R4/1218/No.94/n	152-153	(1) This is a passport letter held by Mela Cho Channarin (เมลจอจันฉวีริน) and the other four Burmese mail carriers who came to Siam in 1856. (2) The translation of this letter also appears in CMH.R4/1219/No.9.

**Table 1**

List of copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between Siam and Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858) (Cont.)

#	Date of the letter If N/A, date of receipt	References	PPGJ10 (Pages)	Remarks
28	N/A <sup>14</sup>  Fri6Wax/10/1218 (Fri, 5 Sept 1856)	CMH.R4/1219/No.9	153-157	This is a letter from Maha Mela Sisu (มหาเมลาสิสุ), King Mindon's high-ranking official, to the Siamese supreme patriarch.
29	N/A  Dated on or shortly before Thur5Wane/11/1219 (Thur, 8 Oct 1857) <sup>15</sup>	CMH.R4/1219/No.110 CMH.R4/1218/No.97/n	158-164	(1) This is Phra Phrommuni (Yim)'s replying letter to Maha Mela Sisu (#28) (2) PP21 and PPGJ10 published a draft, not a copy, of the letter, as it is not dated. The manuscript containing this draft is not found. One must combine the two cited manuscripts to make the published draft. The main body of the draft is in CMH.R4/1219/No.110. (3) An earlier draft of this letter is CMH.R4/1218/No.97. (4) The front pages of CMH.R4/1219/No.9 contains roughly the same draft as CMH.R4/1219/No.110. (5) CMH.R4/1219/No.111 contains the draft of the later part of CMH.R4/1219/No.110.

To avoid confusion between the number of the letter as per Table 1 and the calling number of the manuscript, the former "No." is replaced by the sign "#." Of the 29

<sup>14</sup> At the end of the translation of this letter, it is stated as if the letter was dated 5 September 1856, but this is impossible because that is the date on which the mail carriers arrived in Chiang Mai. Whilst Lanna's 10<sup>th</sup> lunar month is Bangkok's 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month, the manuscripts record dates in Bangkok's, not Lanna's, lunar month. This can be confirmed by Phra Phrommuni's letter (#28) which states that the envoys came to Chiang Mai in *Phattharabotmat* (ภัทธรบพมาศ), which is Bangkok's 10<sup>th</sup> lunar month.

<sup>15</sup> Since this is a draft, the space where the date is expected is left empty. It will be explained in Section 4.6 that this letter must have been dated on or slightly before 8 October 1857.

letters, *PP21* only covers 7 letters—i.e., Letters #6, #23, #25, #26, #27, #28 and #29.<sup>16</sup> As for Letter #11, this article will argue in the next section that its earlier draft (i.e., CMH.R1/1155/No.1/๗) is misattributed to the 1813-1814 negotiation round.

It should be noted that there is no standard way of counting page numbers of black and white folding-book manuscripts. Most researchers do not cite a page number altogether. This article, however, finds it more beneficial for the reader to know where exactly the cited information appears in the manuscripts. Here, page numbers are counted in the following way. After turning the cover of the manuscript until the content is found, the article counts the upper *ban* (*Ban bon* บนบน) as page 1 and the lower *ban* (*Ban lang* บนล่าง) as page 2 and so on, even though the content may begin in the lower *ban*. The rationale behind this is to make a consistent way of counting in which odd and even pages are fixed to particular positions of the interface between the manuscript and the researcher, in the same way that even pages are always on the left side whilst odd pages are always on the right side after we turn the cover of a modern, Western-style book. Page 1 should not be fixed to the lower *ban* because whilst the content of all manuscripts is supposed to begin there, there are many manuscripts which begin from the upper *ban* too. This article insists that unless the proposed principle is upheld, it will be extremely difficult for any researcher to focus upon reading the content and counting page numbers concurrently, especially for those who are committed to reading a number of manuscripts.

### 3. Summary of the Literature

According to *PP21*, there are seven rounds of negotiation which took place in (1) 1784, (2) 1794, (3) 1802, (4) 1807, (5) 1808, (6) 1813 and (7) 1856, respectively. None of them turned out to bring about a long-lasting cordial relationship between Siam and Burma. Of the seven rounds, all but the 1807 negotiation were initiated by the Burmese side. Prince Damrong makes it clear from the beginning that some of these rounds are more detailed than others, depending upon the availability of evidence. The prince's criterion is such that a one-sided attempt to negotiate is also considered as a negotiation even though the initiative was turned down by the other party, or even though

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<sup>16</sup> *PPGJ10* incorporates *PP21* as part of it. Letters #23, #25, #26, #27, #28 and #29 are published in *PPGJ10* as part of *PP21*.

a primary source containing copies or drafts of the letters used in the negotiation is not found.

The first five rounds of negotiation took place in the reign of King Rama I (r. 1782-1809). First, *PP21* says that a trace of the 1784 negotiation only appears in Letter #6, the Governor of Kanchanaburi's letter dated 19 February 1794.<sup>17</sup> In Prince Damrong's opinion, it is more likely that Burma initiated this negotiation not out of good intention but to deter possible Siamese attack in the rear during its Arakan campaign in the same year.<sup>18</sup> In any case, the cordial relationship did not last long because King Bodawpaya (r. 1782-1819) led an army to invade Siam in the following year.

Second, the negotiation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1155 (31 January - 28 February 1794) is also evidenced by the letter just mentioned (#6). In the letter, the Governor of Kanchanaburi conveys to the Governor of Martaban that if the Burmese side was determined to initiate a cordial relationship, Amarapura must first of all be clear about the relationship pattern between the two kingdoms. Bangkok lists as many as three relationship patterns for Amarapura to consider: (1) let the two kings rule under a common white umbrella (“จ้ให้พระมหากษัตริย์ทั้งสองฝ่ายร่วมเสตรฉัตรกันหญา”),<sup>19</sup> or (2) only have the officials of both sides take an oath (“หญาจะให้แต่เสนาบดีผู้ใหญ่ผู้น้อย ทะแกลัวะหทาน ทำสัจกัน”), or (3) simply agree to refrain from war and live side by side in peace without taking an oath (“หญาจะไม่ทำสัจแล้ว แต่จะไม่ทำยุทธสงครามแก่กัน ต่างคนต่างอยู่ประการใด”).<sup>20</sup> Once the relationship pattern was decided, diplomatic envoys must be dispatched along with some meritorious monks and former Ayutthayan officials captured thereto to Bangkok.<sup>21</sup> Prince Damrong states in *PP21* that the Burmese message to which this letter replies is unknown and leaves an observation that Chaophraya Thiphakorawong's *The Royal Chronicle of the First Reign of Rattanakosin* may be wrong about the year in which the

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<sup>17</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> It is unclear what the rule under a common white umbrella means. The assumption of this article is that it means building ties of kinship between the two royal families, just like what Siam and Lan Xang attempted to do in the 1560s.

<sup>20</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1. C.S. 1155. No. 1/1*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil and *horadan* ink. *Nangsue Phraya Kanchanaburi Top Chaomueang Motama Cha Charoen Thang Phra Ratcha Maitri To Kan* [The Governor of Kanchanaburi's Replying Letter to the Governor of Martaban on the Development of Cordial Relationship], 8-9. The direct quotations retain the original spelling, although the article cannot fully preserve the original orthography; Cf., Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 7-8, which publishes a slightly edited quotation of the same message.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-8.

negotiation took place because the letter does not mention the ongoing Siam's Second Tavoy Campaign at all.<sup>22</sup> He suspects that this negotiation happened before the year of the ox, C.S. 1155 (1793/1794).<sup>23</sup>

Third, *PP21* cites Chaophraya Thiphakorawong's chronicle to contend that Burmese diplomatic envoys brought a ministerial letter to Kanchanaburi in the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1164 (26 October-24 November 1802) but were expelled by the Governor of Kanchanaburi.<sup>24</sup> Prince Damrong assumes that these are the envoys referred to in the Governor of Kanchanaburi's covering letter dated 17 December 1808 (#26).<sup>25</sup> However, *PP21* does not publish any letter of this round, and neither does it mention Letters #19 and #20.

Fourth, the book says that according to the Burmese royal chronicle, Siam sent diplomatic envoys to Burma, and these envoys had an audience with King Bodawpaya in Mingun on the 7<sup>th</sup> waning-moon day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1168 (1 March 1807).<sup>26</sup> The prince also refers to Siam's message to Captain Henry Burney, who visited the kingdom in the early years of King Rama III's reign, that in the final years of King Rama I's reign, the kingdom agreed to enter a friendly relationship as per Burma's request.<sup>27</sup> Believing that the said friendship led to Siam's diplomatic mission to Burma in 1807, he opines that this round of negotiation was closer to success than any others.<sup>28</sup>

Fifth, the 1808 round of negotiation originated from the Prince of Hsenwi's fictitious tributary mission to the Burmese court. The head of the mission claimed with the Burmese that he represented the King of Chiang Mai, who was then under the overlordship of the King of Siam, in order to please Amarapura as the latter had consistently sought to have Chiang Mai become its vassal. The Burmese side, albeit knowing that the mission was fake, sent envoys to accompany the delegation along with tributes to Siam, hoping that it would jeopardise the relationship between Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Bangkok, however, knew what Amarapura was up to. Having investigated the mission head thoroughly, Siam issued a ministerial letter (*Supha-akson* สุภักษิร)

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<sup>22</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Rattha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 1*, 175-177.

<sup>23</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmaihet Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

dated 8 December 1808 (#25), in reply to the Burmese, stating that their real intention had been discovered.

The sixth round of negotiation took place in the reign of King Rama II (r. 1809-1824). *PP21* mentions six undated letters between Burma and Siam which appear in Chaophraya Thiphakorawong's *The Royal Chronicle of the Second Reign of Rattanakosin*.<sup>29</sup> Because five out of the six letters are not found in any existing manuscript and thus not included in Table 1, it is necessary that they be elaborated in detail here. First is a Burmese ministerial letter brought from Martaban in the 2<sup>nd</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1175 (22 December 1813-20 January 1814) by Suriyananthasura (สุริยานันท์ทศสุระ), a descendant of an Ayutthayan official captured to Burma, and Sangkharan (สังฆรัตน์), a Brahman who used to live in Ayutthaya. Proposing a reconciliation after Burma's invasion of Thalang (1809-1810), the letter is said to arrive with the Governor of Martaban's letter to the Governor of Kanchanaburi, yet the content of this letter is not elaborated.<sup>30</sup> Second is a Siamese ministerial letter replying to the first. The letter reiterates Siam's position towards the reconciliation with Burma as prescribed in the Governor of Kanchanaburi's letter of 19 February 1794 (#6). Third is the Governor of Kanchanaburi's letter replying to the Governor of Martaban. This is the only letter found in the manuscript (CMH.R1/1155/No.1/๗) and published entirely in *The Royal Chronicle of the Second Reign of Rattanakosin* and *PP21*, but its authenticity is highly problematic. This issue will be discussed in the next section. Fourth is a letter from the Burmese border patrol police (*Chao dan* ชาวด่าน) at Singkhon Pass to their Siamese counterparts asking the latter to stop capturing the Burmese along the border.<sup>31</sup> Fifth is a letter from the head of the Siamese border patrol police in Phetchaburi to the Burmese side proposing an exchange of captives.<sup>32</sup> Sixth is a letter from the Governor of Tavoy,<sup>33</sup> who is believed by Prince Damrong to have replaced the Governor of Martaban in the negotiation with Siam, to the Governor of Kanchanaburi. Probably written in late 1814, the letter informs the Siamese governor that his replying letter had reached the ministers in Amarapura but

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-54; Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 2* [The Royal Chronicle of the Second Reign of Rattanakosin] (Bangkok: Ongkankha Khong Khurusapha, 1961), 52-61, 63-65.

<sup>30</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmaiher Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 46.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 51. Note that *chao dan* are not professional police. They simply did policing work around the border.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

not the king because it had been sent by Kanchanaburi, not Bangkok.<sup>34</sup> This, in turn, raises a question about the existence of the replying Siamese ministerial letter (i.e., the aforesaid second letter) because the Governor of Tavoy's letter does not mention it at all. After this letter, the book says that there had not been a negotiation between the two kingdoms again until 1856.<sup>35</sup>

The final round of negotiation took place in the early years of the reign of King Rama IV when, the book says, four Burmese envoys brought a letter from Maha Mela Sisu, who introduces himself therein as one of King Mindon's (r. 1853-1878) high-ranking officials, to the Siamese supreme patriarch (#28).<sup>36</sup> Holding a separate letter which functioned as a passport (#27), the envoys entered the kingdom through Chiang Mai in 1856.<sup>37</sup> After a lengthy description of the legendary origin of the Burmese monarchy, the letter poses two questions for the Siamese supreme patriarch: (1) how many monks are there in the kingdom, and (2) what are the religious books which the supreme patriarch may need?<sup>38</sup> Since the position of the Siamese supreme patriarch was then vacant, a replying letter was written under the name of Phra Phrommuni (Yim) of Wat Phra Chetuphon in Bangkok (#29). However, Prince Damrong appears to be certain that it was actually his father, King Rama IV, who wrote it.<sup>39</sup> The letter answers neither of the questions. Instead, it communicates a political stand that Siam no longer had a policy of capturing innocent people who crossed the border from Burma.<sup>40</sup> *PP21* publishes all the three letters of this negotiation round as they appear in Chaophraya Thiphakorawong's *The Royal Chronicle of the Fourth Reign of Rattanakosin*.<sup>41</sup> Lastly, the book mentions the relationship between Phrachao Kawilorot Suriyawong, the King of Chiang Mai, and King Mindon in which the former received a token of friendship from the latter in 1865.<sup>42</sup> However, it does not elaborate the case as a negotiation round.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 57, 59-67.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 58-79; Cf., Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 4 Chabap Chaophraya Thiphakorawong Phutthasakkarat 2394-2411* [The Royal Chronicle of the Fourth Reign of Rattanakosin] (Bangkok: Rong Phim Phrachan, 1934), 132-156.

<sup>42</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmaiher Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 81-82; See, Phraya Prachakitkorachak (Chaem), *Phongsawadan Yonok* [The Chronicle of Yonok] (Bangkok: Rong Phim Sophonphiphatthanakon, 1935), 509-510.

#### 4. An Examination of *PP21* and the Recension of the Political Negotiation between Siam and Burma from 1784/1785 to 1857/1858

Perhaps because most of the manuscripts shown in Table 1 were not present to Prince Damrong's hand, *PP21* is severely under-researched and *ipso facto* requires a full recension. In the case where the negotiation appears in Chaophraya Thiphakorawong's chronicles, the book relies too much upon them. In the case where the negotiation does not appear in the same, it tends to make inaccurate assumptions. This section examines the seven rounds of negotiation as per *PP21* and points out that the book contains many inaccuracies. Rather than maintaining the seven-round structure, the article finds it more favourable to divide the recension into the following periods: (1) the negotiation in 1784, (2) the negotiation from 1793 to 1797, (3) the negotiation from 1801 to 1808, (4) the negotiation from 1813 to 1814, (5) the negotiation in the reign of King Rama III, and (6) the negotiation from 1856 to 1857. Nevertheless, this article maintains (1) Prince Damrong's criterion to consider even just an attempt to negotiate as a negotiation, and (2) his study period from 1784/1785 to 1857/1858 in accordance with *PP21*. After all, as a journal article, it can offer no more than a recension of the matter in *PP21*, not a re-writing of the book *per se*.

##### 4.1 The Negotiation in 1784

The article confirms the occurrence of the negotiation between Siam and Burma in 1784. There is no concrete evidence to confirm which side initiated this negotiation, the first known reconciliation between the two kingdoms since Maha Thiha Thura's War (1775-1776). Apart from Letter #6, the 1784 negotiation is also mentioned in Letter #25 from Siamese to Burmese ministers and recorded in Manuscript No. 24 of the *Chotmai het Krung Si Ayutthaya* Collection (CMH.A/No.24).<sup>43</sup> As *PP21* says, the negotiation involved an exchange of presents between the two parties.<sup>44</sup> This article agrees with Prince Damrong's assumption that the Burmese side initiated the 1784 negotiation simply because it wanted to deter possible Siamese attack in the rear during its Arakan campaign. Soon after the campaign, King Badawpaya led an army to invade Siam, kicking off the so-called "Nine-Armies' War" in 1785. The military conflict between the two kingdoms continued in the Tha Din Daeng Campaign of 1786-1787 and Burma's

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<sup>43</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Krung Si Ayutthaya, No. 24*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Chotmai het Hon Wa Duai Hetkan Tang Tang Tangtae Chunlasakkarat 1078-1177* [An Astrologer's Record of Events from C.S. 1078 to 1177], 31-32

<sup>44</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1, C.S. 1155, No. 1/n, 4*.

invasion of Chiang Mai in 1787. We know from the Governor of Kanchanaburi's letter dated 19 February 1794 (#6) that during the Nine-Armies' War, the Siamese forces sent an ex-Burmese official held captive in Siam as a go-between diplomat to the Burmese camp, but the Burmese never returned him.<sup>45</sup> Also, as a reaction to Burma's invasion of Chiang Mai, Siam sent a severely reprimanding letter to Burma dated Friday, the 8<sup>th</sup> waning-moon day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1149 (29 February 1788).<sup>46</sup> However, the Burmese did not respond to it. After this letter, there had not been a communication again until the Governor of Tavoy sent a diplomatic mission via Kanchanaburi to Bangkok with a letter declaring his intention to desert from Burma to Siam in March 1792 and persuading the Siamese to invade Lower Burma.<sup>47</sup> This eventually prompted Siam's Second Tavoy Campaign in the same year.

#### 4.2 The Negotiation from 1793 to 1797

The second period of negotiation was a reaction by Burma to Siam's Second Tavoy Campaign and lasted until the arrival of its threatening letter in Siam on 11 July 1797 (#18). Prince Damrong's suspect that the negotiation might have taken place before the year of the ox, C.S. 1155 (1793/1794) stems from an inaccurate piece of information in Chaophraya Thiphakorawong's *The Royal Chronicle of the First Reign of Rattanakosin* that Siam only started its Second Tavoy Campaign in late 1793.<sup>48</sup> In fact, the campaign began in mid-1792 and ended by January 1793, as stated in *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*.<sup>49</sup> This is confirmed by CMH.A/No.24 which records that the Siamese army left Tavoy by the end of 1792.<sup>50</sup> This timing explains why the first two letters from Burma in Table 1

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>46</sup> See, National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1149. No. 3. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. Horadan ink. *Supha-akson Theung Nai Thap Nai Kong Phama Rueang Phama Rukran Chiang Mai* [An Official Letter to Burmese Military Commanders on Burma's Invasion of Chiang Mai].

<sup>47</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Mairapsang Krung Thonburi*. C.S. 1142. No. 1. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. Horadan ink. *Maikamnotkan Riak Prachum Wang Rabiap Kharatchakan* [A Meeting Schedule for Establishing Official Disciplines], verso 69-74; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1153. No. 6. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Phra Ratcha San Rueang Thawai Mi Ma Klao Thot Phrachao Angwa* [A Royal Letter on the Governor of Tavoy's Accusation of the King of Ava], 11-20.

<sup>48</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 1*, 168-169.

<sup>49</sup> Luang Phraison Salarak (Thien Subindu), "Intercourse between Burma and Siam as Recorded in Hmannan Yazawindawgyi," 42-51. Prince Damrong knew about these conflicting pieces of information as early as 1915, six years before he wrote *PP21* in 1921. CMH.R1/1154/No.5 is a typewritten draft of the translation of *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* on this matter. Page 13 of the manuscript states clearly that Luang Phraison Salarak translated and typed it for Prince Damrong, who would then donate it to the National Library.

<sup>50</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Krung Si Ayutthaya*. No. 24, 33-35.

arrived in Siam around March-April and 22 August 1793, respectively. The letter arriving in March-April 1793 (#1) mentions Siam's Second Tavoy Campaign,<sup>51</sup> whilst the letter arriving on 22 August 1793 (#2) states clearly that the purpose of the former letter was to propose a reconciliation.<sup>52</sup> This negotiation, therefore, took place about a year earlier than what is stated in *PP21*. In response to them, the Governor of Kanchanaburi sent a letter of 9 September 1793 (#3) informing the Governors of Martaban and Tavoy that if the Burmese side wanted to negotiate peace, formally accredited envoys should be dispatched for this purpose.<sup>53</sup> To sum up, all these letters confirm that this negotiation did take place in the year of the ox, C.S. 1155 (1793/1794), not before it as suspected by Prince Damrong, and what is mentioned in *PP21* to be the first negotiation letter of this round is, in fact, the sixth in the series.

The Governor of Kanchanaburi's letter dated 19 February 1794 (#6), which replies to the letters from Burma arriving on 19 January (#4) and 8 February 1794 (#5), set the stage for the rest of the negotiation. Although it was written under the governor's name, it was King Rama I who gave the final approval of the content.<sup>54</sup> The key message of the letter has already been summed up in the above section, as it is the first negotiation letter appearing in *PP21*. From then, the exchange of letters from #7 to #17 followed, but there was no progress regarding the negotiation. Having received the letters, the Governor of Martaban would submit them to the higher positions in Amarapura.<sup>55</sup> Amarapura, then, would not heed the Siamese demand and continue to send only provincial-level envoys to Kanchanaburi to negotiate peace. The Governor of Kanchanaburi, acting on behalf of Bangkok, would insist on the same clause as stated

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<sup>51</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1155. No. 4. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Phra Ratcha San Phrachao Angwa Kho Hai Thai Raksa Phra Ratcha Maitri Wai Hai Chong Di* [A Royal Letter of the King of Ava Asking the Thai to Maintain the Cordial Relationship], 21

<sup>52</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1155. No. 6. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Samnao Plae Nangsue Phama Rueang Maeng Chancha Lae Atonwan Mai Sue Trong To Chao Angwa* [A Copy of the Translation of a Burmese Letter on Maeng Chancha and Atonwan's Disloyalty towards the King of Ava], 4.

<sup>53</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1155. No. 1/6. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. *Horadan* ink. *Nangsue Phraya Kanchanaburi Top Chaomueang Motama Cha Charoen Thang Phra Ratcha Maitri To Kan* [The Governor of Kanchanaburi's Replying Letter to the Governor of Martaban on the Development of Cordial Relationship], recto 21-verso 3.

<sup>54</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1155. No. 1/n, 13-14.

<sup>55</sup> See, National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1156. No. 10. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Samnao Plae Nangsue Mueang Motama* [A Copy of the Translation of a Letter from Martaban].

in Letter #6.<sup>56</sup> Finally, the Governor of Martaban had a letter hung under a tree at the border, which was one of the usual means of communication between the two kingdoms at that time. This letter, having been found by the border patrol police, arrived in Siam on 11 July 1797 (#18). Addressed to top Siamese officials, the letter threatens an invasion of Siam with the assistance of English naval forces.<sup>57</sup> Having investigated the matter, King Rama I believed that the threat was real and even asked an Annamese prince who would soon become Emperor Gia Long (r. 1802-1820) of Vietnam for naval assistance.<sup>58</sup> However, it turned out that the naval threat was unfounded. At the end, the Burmese forces that came overland from 1797 to 1798 were easily dealt with by the joint Bangkok-Chiang Mai-Vientiane forces in the north and Siam's Mon infantry in the west.<sup>59</sup>

### 4.3 The Negotiation from 1801 to 1808

Whilst *PP21* states that there were negotiations in 1802, 1807, and 1808, this article argues that the negotiations took place in 1801, 1802, and 1808. If the assumption of this article is correct, what is claimed to be a political negotiation in the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month of the year of the dog, C.S. 1164 (26 October-24 November 1802), in *PP21*<sup>60</sup>—citing *The Royal Chronicle of the First Reign of Rattanakosin*<sup>61</sup>—was, in fact, a negotiation attempt by Amarapura in 1801. The chronicle states that the envoys carried a ministerial letter proposing a friendly relationship, but King Rama I—distrusting the Burmese—had the Governor of Kanchanaburi reject the envoys.<sup>62</sup> Whilst the detail

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<sup>56</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1155. No.1/n, 11-12; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1157. No. 5. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. *Horadan* ink. *Samnao Nangsue Akkhara Maha Senabodi Top Mueang Motama* [A Copy of a Replying Letter from Siamese Ministers to Martaban], recto 8-10; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1158. No. 2. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Samnao Nangsue Chaomueang Motama Theung Chaomueang Kanchanaburi* [A Copy of the Governor of Martaban's Letter to the Governor of Kanchanaburi], verso 7-8.

<sup>57</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1159. No. 2. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Nangsue Chaomueang Motama Theung Senabodi Phuyai Fai Thai* [The Governor of Martaban's Letter to Senior Thai Ministers], 7-10.

<sup>58</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 1*, 194-195.

<sup>59</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Phongsawadan Rueang Thai Rop Phama*, 2:238-244; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Krung Si Ayutthaya*. No. 24, 35-36.

<sup>60</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 9.

<sup>61</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 1*, 213. The chronicle does not mention the year in which this Burmese diplomatic mission came, but this story is presented between events which are stated to take place in C.S. 1164.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

regarding this letter is not found in Siamese records, a Burmese royal order dated 30 May 1801 mentions it. The order states that King Bodawpaya approved a letter composed by the ministers to be sent from Martaban, Tavoy and Tenasserim to “Yodaya”—i.e., Siam.<sup>63</sup> It is highly likely that this is the same letter mentioned in *PP21* and *The Royal Chronicle of the First Reign of Rattanakosin*, yet the Siamese sources misattributed it to the year 1802.

That year, in fact, witnessed another Burmese negotiation attempt which was entirely distinct from that of 1801. This article is convinced, by the presence of the letters dated 7 August 1802 (#19) and 11 June 1803 (#20), that in 1802, Burma sought to initiate a new round of negotiation by means of personal connection, after the failure of the formal diplomatic attempt in the previous year. As shown in Table 1, from 1802 to 1803, Letters #19 and #20 were exchanged between U-bakong, a Burmese military officer who had been captured in Siam in 1798 but had managed to flee back to Burma, and Chaophraya Mahayotha, Siam’s top Mon official. Another manuscript recording the event also does not mention the arrival of diplomatic envoys in 1802. It only states that U-bakong’s letter was brought to Siam in the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1164, by Phaya Chaiya—most likely a Mon official of Burma—and that the mail carrier was accommodated at Wat Rakhang in Bangkok.<sup>64</sup> Presumably, *PP21*—following the royal chronicle—confuses U-bakong’s personal letter with Burma’s ministerial letter, which should have arrived a year earlier. In the letter, U-bakong tries to persuade Siam, through Chaophraya Mahayotha, to begin a new round of negotiation under the pretence that the ruler of Cho Phakan (จ้อพักัน)—most likely the Tay Son regime in Hanoi<sup>65</sup>—had given two royal sisters to the Burmese court and was ready to attack Siam, Chiang Mai and Lan Xang-Vientiane for Burma. However, King Bodawpaya, at U-bakong’s request,

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<sup>63</sup> Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, vol. 5, A.D. 1788-1806 (Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1986), 141.

<sup>64</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1. C.S. 1152. No. 4, 1.*

<sup>65</sup> In other manuscripts, the name of this city is also referred to as *Cho Pakan* (จ้อปะกััน). The city name in Vietnam closest to *Cho Phakan* or *Cho Pakan* today is Bac Kan. However, it is more likely that the said name refers to Bac Thanh, which was the name of Hanoi at that time. The city must be important enough for Emperor Gia Long to seize after Hue as a final step towards the elimination of the Tayson regime. See, National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1. C.S. 1165. No. 1.* Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Nangsue Phraya Mahayotha Thueng U-bakong Phu Lan Wa Duai Kan Suan Tua Lae Bettalet* [Phraya Mahayotha’s Letter to U-bakong, the Nephew, on Personal and Miscellaneous Matters], verso 13. This article has switched recto and verso pages into an appropriate order. Letter #19 should be in recto pages; See also, National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1. C.S. 1164. No. 3.* Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Phra Ratcha San Yuan Rueang Thawai Khrueng Bannakan* [A Royal Letter of Vietnam on the Presentation of Presents].

had allegedly dissuaded him for the sake of friendship with Siam.<sup>66</sup> Because news of Emperor Gia Long's elimination of the Tay Son regime had already reached Bangkok by the time that U-bakong's letter arrived, Chaophraya Mahayotha knew that U-bakong's pretence was unfounded and quickly, yet kindly, dismissed it in his reply (#20).<sup>67</sup> U-bakong's letter (#19), to put it simply, did not lead to any fruitful outcome.

The article disagrees with Prince Damrong's assumption in *PP21* that the alleged Burmese diplomatic mission of 1802 is the mission referred to in the Governor of Kanchanaburi's covering letter dated 17 December 1808 (#26).<sup>68</sup> The letter says that the mission in question was led by Siriweso, Panyasaming, Panyacheya, Yelanara, Thammasariya, Akpanyi, Sirithaeng and Narakayo.<sup>69</sup> The aforementioned Phaya Chaiya was also part of the mission, but he was certainly not one of the key men. Letter #26 says further that the consequence of sending the mission to Bangkok was that the Governor of Kanchanaburi then was stripped of his rank.<sup>70</sup> Apart from Akpanyi and Phaya Chaiya, the letter notes, the envoys who went to the capital were convicted with death sentences.<sup>71</sup> Unquestionably, the Governor of Kanchanaburi's covering letter (#26) refers to the envoys who came with the letters received on 6 April 1795 (#12 and #13) because all the said names match with the names mentioned thereupon.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, whilst Prince Damrong believes that a Burmese envoy was executed,<sup>73</sup> this article argues that none of the envoys who came in 1795 was executed. The Governor of Kanchanaburi's covering letter dated 18 April 1795 (#15) states clearly that he had his border patrol police escort the envoys, led by Siriweso, back at the Three Pagodas Pass—suggesting that they were all alive.<sup>74</sup>

As for the 1807 negotiation, this article does not believe that it took place for three reasons. Firstly, it is clearly the prince's error to cite Siam's message to Captain

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<sup>66</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1165. No. 1, recto 13, verso 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, verso 12-16.

<sup>68</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 9.

<sup>69</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1170. No. 1, recto 16-20.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, recto 20-21.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, recto 21.

<sup>72</sup> See, National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1157. No. 5, Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. *Horadan* ink. *Samnao Nangsue Akkhara Maha Senabodi Top Mueang Motama* [A Copy of a Replying Letter from Siamese Ministers to Martaban].

<sup>73</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 9. Prince Damrong believes that the mission consisted of only two envoys.

<sup>74</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1157. No. 5, verso 1-4.

Henry Burney as evidence supporting the veracity of this negotiation, as stated in Section 3. Although *PP21* does not reference any source, the message in question is published in the first volume of *The Burney Papers*. In early 1826, acting under the orders of King Rama III and the ministers, Phraya Phiphatkosa informed Captain Burney of certain historical accounts concerning Siamese-Burmese relations. However, the Burmese mission referred to in Phraya Phiphatkosa's message is that led by "Pya Intachak, Akabangi, Pya Chak and Surachakio," who came to Siam "in the year 1170" (1808/1809).<sup>75</sup> The outcome of this mission was that Siam agreed to enter into a friendly relationship as requested by Burma.<sup>76</sup> This has no connection with the purported Siamese embassy to Burma in 1807. Secondly, since Bangkok never received the diplomatic protocol it had consistently requested from Amarapura since 1794, there would have been no incentive for it to dispatch an embassy to Burma in the first place. Thirdly, the relationship between the two kingdoms immediately prior to the alleged 1807 embassy was far from amicable. As discussed above, U-bakong had failed to persuade the Siamese side to initiate a new round of negotiation. In November 1806, the Governor of Martaban had Akapanyi and nine other officers deliver a letter to the Governor of Kanchanaburi (#21) and return some Siamese captives. In this letter, the Burmese governor attempted to place blame for the ongoing conflict between the two kingdoms on the lower-ranking border patrol police,<sup>77</sup> as though Letter #18 and the subsequent invasion of Chiang Mai had never occurred. Within nine days of the mail carriers' arrival, the Governor of Kanchanaburi sent them back with a letter dated 28 November 1806 (#22), stating that the border patrol police had fulfilled their duties correctly—implicitly affirming that the Siamese side would not cease capturing Burmese individuals along the border.<sup>78</sup> Given this reaction, it is highly unlikely that Siam would have sent an embassy to Burma within the subsequent three months.

The assumption of this article is that it was an error on the part of the scholars who recensed *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* to have included this alleged Siamese embassy in the royal chronicle. If this story had been true, it would have been the first embassy

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<sup>75</sup> The Committee of the Vajirañāna National Library, *The Burney Papers (October 1825 to April 1826)* (Bangkok: Vajirañāna National Library, 1910), 1:186.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmaihei Ratchakan Thi 1. C.S. 1155. No. 8*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Nangsue Chaomueang Motama Theung Senabodi Phuyai Fai Thai* [The Governor of Martaban's Letter to Senior Thai Ministers], verso 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, verso 5-10.

between the two kingdoms since the mid-1740s, as the chronicle states that the envoys came with a royal letter (*Phra ratchasan* พระราชสาส์น).<sup>79</sup> The Burmese royal order dated 13 March 1807 states even further that it was a “*shwe pay yaza than*,” a gold-leaf royal letter,<sup>80</sup> which signifies an even greater degree of importance than the royal letter written on other materials. Yet, the article finds it extremely curious since the content of the letter is merely that the Siamese king requested a copy of the Pali Canon and other books.<sup>81</sup>

An investigation of the matter confirms that the alleged Siamese diplomatic mission was, in fact, the Prince of Hsenwi’s fictitious tributary mission under the name of the King of Chiang Mai.<sup>82</sup> As stated in the previous section, this mission was eventually sent to Siam in 1808 with an intention to cause a rift between Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The most decisive reason why this article is certain that it is the same mission is that the name of the mission’s head is identical: “Baya Pain Pi Hsan” in the Burmese royal orders dated 4 January and 24 March 1807,<sup>83</sup> or “Phaya Phim-phisan (พญาภิมพิสาร)/ Phaya Phimsan (พญาภิมสาร)” in CMH.R1/1170/No.1.<sup>84</sup> Initially, when the mission arrived in Burma, the Burmese were convinced that “[e]nvoys of Thailand are here to beseech clemency.”<sup>85</sup> The mission was, therefore, warmly received. In King Bodawpaya’s orders dated 19 January and 13 March 1807, he even ordered the residence built and the proper boats provided for “envoys from Thailand” and the gold-leaf royal letter.<sup>86</sup> However, it did not take long for the Burmese to discover that everything had been fabricated. Consequently, the envoys were never granted a royal audience.<sup>87</sup> Ultimately,

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<sup>79</sup> Luang Phraison Salarak (Thien Subindu), “Intercourse between Burma and Siam as Recorded in Hmannan Yazawindawgyi,” 59; Nai To [pseud.], trans., *Maha Ratchawong Phongsawadan Phama* [Mahayazawin, the Chronicle of Burma] (Bangkok: Thai Quality Book (2006), 2019), 543.

<sup>80</sup> Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, vol. 6, *A.D. 1807-1810* (Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1987), 16.

<sup>81</sup> Nai To [pseud.], trans., *Maha Ratchawong Phongsawadan Phama*, 543.

<sup>82</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1170. No. 1, verso 1-5.

<sup>83</sup> Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, vol. 6, *A.D. 1807-1810*, 2, 31.

<sup>84</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1170. No. 1, verso 23, 27-28, 36.

<sup>85</sup> Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, vol. 6, *A.D. 1807-1810*, 17. Needless to say, the word “Thailand” did not exist before 1939. Here, “Thailand” was translated from “ယုဒယာ (Yodaya)” —meaning Ayutthaya or, in this context, Siam—in the original text. This suggests that Than Tun’s translation is somewhat inconsistent as it occasionally retains the word “Yodaya” in the English summary of the royal orders. The author is unable to read the original royal orders in Burmese himself, and would like to express his sincere gratitude to his friends—Ingyin and Min Htet Naing—for their kind assistance in ascertaining the original Burmese term for “Thailand.”

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 16.

<sup>87</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1170. No. 1, verso 10.

this fake mission was sent to Martaban and then to Siam via the Three Pagodas Pass after the 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1170 (25 May-22 June 1808).<sup>88</sup>

Notwithstanding Burma's hidden agenda, the 1808 round of negotiation turned out to be most successful from the perspective of this article. The success, however, lasted only for a few months. As stated in the previous section, the Burmese ministerial letter (#23) did not sincerely propose friendship. It did not take long for Siam to find out that this Burmese diplomatic mission was a ruse intended to cause a rift between Bangkok and Chiang Mai. For this reason, none of the letters from Siam in December 1808 (#25 and #26) states clearly about the rapprochement with Burma. However, one observation is that, even though Burma's true intention had been uncovered, the tone in both the Siamese ministers' and the Governor of Kanchanaburi's letters was surprisingly gentle—especially when compared with Siam's letters to Burma in the 1790s, which were full of bluff and mockery. The most likely reason for this softer reaction is the one stated in Phraya Phiphatkosa's message to Captain Burney in 1826: “[a]t that time the King of Siam then reigning, was old and sick...”<sup>89</sup> For this reason, the message goes on, Siam had accepted Burma's friendship proposal and ceased to capture the Burmese along the border, yet just in the following year, Burma attacked Thalang and captured many people.<sup>90</sup> Regardless of the negotiation being used by Burma as a ruse, a noteworthy point is that it marked the first exchange of ministerial letters between Siam and Burma since the negotiation began. The testimony of Nga Satana Ong (งะสาตนะฮะออง), a Burmese official arrested during Burma's Thalang campaign in 1810, confirms that the Siamese side had scheduled to dispatch officials to carry on negotiating with the Burmese side at the Three Pagodas Pass in the 4<sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1170 (14 February-15 March 1809).<sup>91</sup> However, before that happened, King Bodawpaya sent Atoengwun (อะเต็งจุ่น) to prepare an invasion of Siam and stripped the Governor of Martaban of his position as he opposed Atoengwun, despite earlier instructing him to re-establish cordial relations with Siam.<sup>92</sup> In short, despite its initial success, the positive outcome of this negotiation round was extremely short-lived.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>89</sup> The Committee of the Vajirañāna National Library, *The Burney Papers*, 1:186.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 2, C.S. 1172, No. 5*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Khamhaikan Ai Nga Satana Ong Phama Rueang Nai Mueang Phama Lae Ma Ti Malayu* [The Testimony of Nga Satana Ong, a Burmese, on the Domestic Affairs in Burma and the Invasion of the Malay Peninsula], recto 25.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., recto 31.

#### 4.4 The Negotiation from 1813 to 1814

The next negotiation period took place a few years after the 1809-1810 Thalang Campaign, although the Burmese had hung a letter proposing friendship as early as 1811.<sup>93</sup> As noted in Section 3, five out of the six letters of 1813 and 1814 published in *PP21* and *The Royal Chronicle of the Second Reign of Rattanakosin* are not found in any existing manuscript. As for the only one found in the manuscript (i.e., CMH.R1/1155/No.1/๗), the article argues that it is, in fact, an early draft of the Governor of Kanchanaburi's replying letter to the Governor of Martaban which would finally be dated 11 January 1795 (#11). To begin with, this document is clearly a draft because the space where the date of the letter is expected was left empty. The content matches perfectly with the ongoing conversation between the two governors from late 1794 to early 1795, save for few spelling differences and the names of envoys. The clearest point of notice is the Governor of Martaban's reference to the receipt by the Burmese border patrol police of a Siamese letter hung under the tree on the 3<sup>rd</sup> waning-moon day of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1156 (10 November 1794).<sup>94</sup> This has two implications. One is that it confirms the time period in which the content of the letter fits. Although it is not unusual to refer to past letters, in the aftermath of the Thalang campaign, there was no reason that the Burmese side should refer to the receipt of the letter about 20 years before, as if its invasions of Chiang Mai in 1797 and Thalang in 1809 had never taken place. In other words, such reference was irrelevant to the context in C.S. 1175 (1813/1814). The other is that it points out an error on the part of the National Library to classify this manuscript in the C.S. 1155 division because a draft written in C.S. 1155 can never refer to an event in C.S. 1156. Notwithstanding the fact that this article tries as far as possible not to make any accusation, it cannot help suspecting that Chaophraya Thiphakorawong was confused about this matter. For some reason, he changed the names of the envoys from Thammasari, Akapanyi and Panyachisu appearing in CMH.R1/1155/No.1/๗ to Suriyananthasura and Sangkharan, the Brahman,<sup>95</sup> and claimed that the draft in the

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<sup>93</sup> The Committee of the Vajirañāna National Library, *The Burney Papers*, 1:186.

<sup>94</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 47; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1155. No. 1/๗. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Nangsue Phraya Kanchanaburi Top Chaomueang Motama Cha Charoen Thang Phra Ratcha Maitri To Kan* [The Governor of Kanchanaburi's Replying Letter to the Governor of Martaban on the Development of Cordial Relationship], recto 10-11.

<sup>95</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1155. No. 1/๗, recto 1-2; Cf. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 46; Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 2*, 54.

manuscript was the letter of C.S. 1175 (1813/14). *PP21*, then, reproduces this confusion without proper examination.

Apart from the above error, *PP21* also made an error in the annotation for this draft letter. Regrettably, the same error is reproduced without any correction in *PPGJ10*, which was published about 80 years later. In the draft letter which was found in CMH.R1/1155/No.1/๗, the Governor of Kanchanaburi quotes the Governor of Martaban's description of Konbaung Burma in the letter which arrived on 5 January 1795 (#10). With slightly different spellings, the description in the two letters says "the Great Kingdom of Ammarabura, in accordance with the chronicle, consists of the territories named Krung Sunaparanta, Krung Tangpathipa, Krung Kamphocha (กรุงเทพมหานครบระมามีนามตามพงศาวดารมีขอบเขตเสมารชื่อกรุงสุนาปรันตะ กรุงตั้งปที่ปะ กรุงกัมโพชะ) ..." <sup>96</sup> Both *PP21* and *PPGJ10* annotate that Krung Tangpathipa means Lanka, <sup>97</sup> which is wrong. According to Than Tun, taking the point where the Irrawaddy runs east to west as the dividing line, "Sunaparanta" was the name of the area north of the line, whereas "Tampadipa" was the name of the area south of it. <sup>98</sup> "Kamboja," meanwhile, is a classic name of the Shan country in Burmese sources. <sup>99</sup> In short, the Governor of Martaban was just describing his kingdom. Lanka is irrelevant here.

Now that the only letter of this negotiation round supported by primary evidence appears to be an earlier draft of the letter in 1795 (#11), the question is whether the negotiation from 1813 to 1814 existed. This article confirms that it did, and is corroborated by, at least, three manuscripts. One is CMH.R2/1177/No.7, which records the testimony of Saming In (สมิงอิน), Burma's Mon official who escaped to Siam in 1815. According to him, a diplomatic mission led by Sirinantha-akhunwun (สิรินันตะอหุนวุ่น) left Martaban for

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<sup>96</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1156. No. 3. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Baibok Phraya Kanchanaburi Rueang Bok Song Nangsue Phama Khao Thai* [The Governor of Kanchanaburi's Administrative Report on the Delivery of a Burmese Letter to Siam], verso 1-2; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1*. C.S. 1155. No. 1/๗, verso 9; Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 49; Fine Arts Department, Office of Literature and History, *Prachum Phongsawadan Chabap Kanchanaphisek*, 10:177, 181. Note that the message had been edited out before the Governor of Kanchanaburi's letter was dated on 11 January 1795.

<sup>97</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, *Prachum Phongsawadan Phak Thi 21 Chotmai het Rueang Cheracha Khwam Mueang Rawang Thai Kap Phama*, 49; Fine Arts Department, Office of Literature and History, *Prachum Phongsawadan Chabap Kanchanaphisek*, 10:177, 181.

<sup>98</sup> Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, vol. 1, A.D. 1598-1648 (Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1983), xi.

<sup>99</sup> Jacques P. Leider, "The Golden Letter of King Alaungphaya to King George II of Great Britain (1756)," *HAL Open Science* (2019): 12, <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02324811>.

Siam in C.S. 1174 (1812/1813).<sup>100</sup> Another manuscript which confirms the occurrence of this mission is CMH.R2/1177/No.9, which is comprised of copies of diplomatic letters between Siam and Vietnam. The royal letters from King Rama II to Emperor Gia Long dated Thursday, the 12<sup>th</sup> waning-moon day of the 4<sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1175 (17 March 1814) and Friday, the 11<sup>th</sup> waxing-moon day of the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1176 (29 April 1814),<sup>101</sup> and from Emperor Gia Long to King Rama II dated “the 13<sup>th</sup> waxing-moon day of the 10<sup>th</sup> lunar month, Gia Long Era 13, the year of the dog which is the sixth of the decade [28 August 1814],”<sup>102</sup> mention this Burmese diplomatic mission. This means the envoys must have left Martaban in the dry season of 1813 and arrived in Siam by early March 1814. The other manuscript is CMH.R1/1152/No.4, Momchao Ying Surai (หม่อมเจ้าหญิงสุทราราย)’s personal record of important events. Most likely, this is not primary evidence but a record of what the recorder had been told. However, it can be used to cross-check the information. The princess’s record says that “in the year of the rooster which was the 4<sup>th</sup> of the decade (*sic*),<sup>103</sup> the Governor of Martaban dispatched 70 Burmese envoys led by Akhonnawunthaiyae (อคนะวุ่นไทแย) for the political negotiation. The party was received at Kanchanaburi. The Governor of Kanchanaburi was ordered to reply that the Burmese envoys had come in several times, yet all the missions turned out to be dishonest. He was thus afraid that he would be guilty of sending the envoys to the capital.<sup>104</sup> Supposing Momchao Ying Surai’s record is correct, it can be concluded (1) that whilst Suriyananthasura and Sangkharan, the Brahman, might be part of the mission, the envoys were led by a Burmese official who held the position of Akhunwun or Akhonnawun, and (2) that the replying Siamese ministerial letter mentioned in *PP21* never existed.

Because the relationship between the two kingdoms was not different from the picture conveyed through the letters between the Siamese and the Burmese border

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<sup>100</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 2. C.S. 1177. No. 7*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Khamhaikan Saming In Cha Nakhon Mon Rueang Nai Mueang Mon Phama Biatbian* [The Testimony of Saming In, a Mon Officer, on the Domestic Affairs of Mon Cities and the Oppression of the Burmese], 4. The year is probably inaccurate, but at least, the manuscript suggests that the negotiation happened.

<sup>101</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 2. C.S. 1177. No. 9*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil and *Horadan* ink. *Phra Ratcha San Thai Lae Yuan Wa Duai Mueang Khamen Chulasakkarat 1174 Theung 1178* [The Royal Letters between Siam and Vietnam on Cambodian Affairs from C.S. 1174 to 1178], recto 51, verso 7.

<sup>102</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 2. C.S. 1177. No. 9*, verso 16.

<sup>103</sup> The correct one must be “the year of the rooster which is the fifth of the decade (ปีระกามาบุญจตก).”

<sup>104</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1. C.S. 1152. No. 4*, 6.

patrol police summarised in the above section, the article presumes that these letters existed even though their copies or drafts are not found. Manuscripts relating to Burma in the CMH.R2 and CMH.R3 collections suggest that since the Thalang's campaign, Bangkok had had it enough with Amarapura and only prepared to fight, not to negotiate. Not only did it continue to capture the Burmese along the border, but it also accumulated information about all possible campaigning routes to Burma.<sup>105</sup> Having considered the comparable information as of 1795,<sup>106</sup> one would find that Bangkok had significantly stepped up its preparation for war. Yet, despite such a high tension, neither a new round of fighting nor a new round of negotiation took place in the rest of King Rama II's reign. In 1819, after King Bodawpaya's death, Burmese captives reported to the Siamese authority that the Governor of Martaban had sent Akhunwun, his deputy, to Amarapura to propose resuming the negotiation with Siam,<sup>107</sup> but this never happened. Before the First Anglo-Burmese War, King Bagyidaw (r. 1819-1837), who succeeded to the throne from his grandfather, preferred war over peace with Bangkok. He attempted to form alliances with Kedah and Vietnam to attack Siam, but both attempts failed.<sup>108</sup> The tension between the two kingdoms remained high until the First Anglo-Burmese War broke out in 1824.

#### 4.5 The Negotiation in the Reign of King Rama III

Whilst *PP21* says that there had not been any negotiation in the reign of King Rama III, this article argues that the reign is marked by, at least, one negotiation round and two negotiation attempts from the Burmese side. Just like *PP21*'s 1784 round of negotiation, however, there is no detail other than the claims that they did happen in 1824-1825, 1829 and 1844. Traces of the 1824-1825 negotiation, which took place during the First Anglo-Burmese War, come from Captain Henry Burney's letter dated

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<sup>105</sup> See, National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 2, C.S. 1182, No. 19*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Rangwat Rayathang Sadet Thap Thang Sathonlamak Lae Chonlamak Pheua Triam Rop Kap Phama* [Measurement of the Marching Distances by Land and Water in Preparation for the War with the Burmese].

<sup>106</sup> See, National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 1, C.S. 1157, No. 3*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Rai-ngan Rueang Rayathang Chak Mueang Hongsa Theung Mueang Motama* [A Report on the Distance from Pegu to Martaban].

<sup>107</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 2, C.S. 1181, No. 12*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Nangsue Lae Khamhaikan Rueang Phrachao Angwa Puai Lae Sawankhot* [A Letter and the Testimony on the King of Ava's Illness and Death], recto 13-14.

<sup>108</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag), *Phra Ratcha Phongsawadan Krung Rattanakosin Ratchakan Thi 2*, 141-143, 155-160, 200-201.

22 December 1825 to Robert Fullerton, the Governor of Prince of Wales Island. The letter says,

[t]he King of Ava<sup>109</sup> has written more than once to the King of Siam during the present war. The first letter offered, as we had before heard at Prince of Wales Island, to assist at the funeral of the late King [i.e., King Rama II]. The second arrived only three months ago [September 1825]. *In this the King of Ava besought the King of Siam to be neutral in the War*, stating that the English had suddenly, it is true, possessed themselves of many parts of his dominions but that they will never reach his Capital, and that the Burmese will soon expel them from all the places they have taken, if the Siamese only keep neutral. This information is implicitly credited by the Siamese Ministers... *The King of Siam answered His Burmese Majesty's letters*. [And,] I am told with an assurance that it would be impossible for the English to subdue Ava, unacquainted as they are with the true religion.<sup>110</sup>

Although this is considered secondary information because Burney did not see the letters himself and neither did he know about the content of King Rama III's replying letters, this article believes that the information is true because the captain appears to have cross-checked the information before reporting to Prince of Wales Island. After Burma had lost the war, the Treaty of Yandaboo committed it to uphold a friendly relationship with Siam and turned a significant part of what had been the border between Konbaung Burma and Early Rattanakosin Siam—from Moulmein to Tenasserim—to be the border between the dominion of the English East India Company and Siam.<sup>111</sup> A few years after the war, we know from an exchange of letters between Chaophraya Mahayotha and the Commissioner of Tenasserim Provinces at Moulmein that Amarapura dispatched six envoys with a letter from Maha Utchana (มหาอุจณา), a Burmese official, to Kanchanaburi

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<sup>109</sup> King Bagyidaw moved the capital from Amarapura to Ava in 1821. Yet, his brother, King Tharrawaddy, would move the capital back to Amarapura again in 1842.

<sup>110</sup> The Committee of the Vajirañāna National Library, *The Burney Papers*, 1:37-38. Emphasis added.

<sup>111</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3. C.S. 1187. No. 16*. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil and horadan ink. *Nangsue Sanya Angkrit Sip-ha Kho* [The 15-Article Treaty of the English], 8-10, 15.

in 1829.<sup>112</sup> However, the Governor of Kanchanaburi detained them because he was afraid that this would be a ruse like all the hitherto Burmese diplomatic missions.<sup>113</sup> In 1844, instead of sending officials, it was reported to Bangkok on the 12<sup>th</sup> waxing-moon day of the 1<sup>st</sup> lunar month, C.S. 1206 (21 December 1844) that King Tharrawaddy (r. 1837-1846) and the Burmese supreme patriarch had dispatched monks to negotiate for a friendly relationship, but the Siamese authority in Tak blocked the mission (“...มองงานบอกว่า เจ้าอังวะกับพระสังฆราชไท้พระสังฆาเมากรุงเพชฯ จ้ได้พุดกับพระสังฆราชเปนทางไมตรี พระสมุ่พ่มาเมาถึงเมืองตากๆ หามไว”).<sup>114</sup> Unlike the negotiation in 1802-1803, for which this article could find primary evidence not mentioned in *PP21*, the same is not found for Burma’s 1829 and 1844 negotiation attempts.

In retrospect, the period of 10 years from 1844 must be a disaster from the Burmese perspective. To begin with, Siam supported the Lanna city-states of Chiang Mai, Lamphun and Lampang to found the cities of Chiang Rai, Phayao and Ngao in their north-east, in the west of the Mekong. Of these, the most significant one was Chiang Rai, as it bordered the area under the suzerainty of Keng Tung, a vassal principality of Burma. King Rama III opined that the security of Chiang Rai was threatened by Keng Tung’s allegiance to Burma and as early as 1844 allowed the Lanna city-states to wage war with Keng Tung if the latter could not be persuaded to shift its allegiance towards Siam.<sup>115</sup> In the same year, Amarapura intervened in the conflict between Karenni city-states, beginning from the seizure of Naungpale.<sup>116</sup> In 1845, King Tharrawaddy

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<sup>112</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1191. No. 15. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil and *Horadan* ink. *Samnao Chotmai Top Wunki Phu Raksa Mueang Motamloem* [A Copy of a Replying Letter to the High-Ranking Official Who Stations at Moulmein], 7-8, 11-12.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>114</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1206. No. 12. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White and yellow pencils. *Chotmai het Rueang Sueb Ratchakan Mueang Phama (Mi Sipsam Chabap)* [Records on the gathering of intelligence in Burma (13 records)], recto 4. Original spelling with slight orthographical adjustments.

<sup>115</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1206. No. 43. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Santra Thueng Mueang Chiang Mai Rueang Kan Chattang Mueang Chiang Saen Lae Hai Khoi Rawang Kongthap Phama* [An Administrative Order on the Foundation of Chiang Saen and the Caution for the Burmese Army], verso 17; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1209. No. 13. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Santra Top Dai Rap Khao Wa Phama Yok Thap Ma Ti Mueang Chiang Mai Chiang Rai* [An Administrative Order in Response to the Report that the Burmese Would Invade Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai], recto 27-28.

<sup>116</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1206. No. 9. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White and yellow pencils. *Chotmai het Mueang Motamloem Wa Phama Rop Kap Yang Daeng* [A Record of Moulmein on the War between the Burmese and the Karenni], recto 5-6; National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1206. No. 13. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Khat Bok Phraya Chiang Mai Rueang Song Chang Phlai Lae Chang Phang* [A Copy of the Marquess of Chiang Mai’s Administrative Report on the Delivery of Male and Female Elephants], recto 41-42, verso 25-28.

lost his mind and was overthrown by King Pagan (r. 1846-1853).<sup>117</sup> Meanwhile, Lanna's attempt to negotiate with Keng Tung failed as the latter showed no sign of shifting its allegiance from Amarapura towards Bangkok, partly because of the presence of the Burmese military officers there and in Mong Nai.<sup>118</sup> It seems that these Burmese officers viewed Chiang Mai's persuasion of Keng Tung as part of Bangkok's attempt to reconcile with Amarapura as they told Nai Phrom, the head of Chiang Mai's diplomatic mission to persuade Keng Tung, that there should be a royal and a ministerial letter along with presents from Bangkok for the negotiation.<sup>119</sup> Maha Khanan, the ruler of Keng Tung, fairly and squarely said to Nai Phrom that "whether we will become brother city-states [*Ban phi mueang nong* บ้านพี่เมืองน้อง] is entirely up to the King of Ava."<sup>120</sup> Finally, the tension culminated in war. Lanna's Keng Tung Campaign, known in Siamese history as "the First Keng Tung Campaign," broke out in 1850 and ended with the invader's defeat. From 1852 to 1853, the Second Anglo-Burmese War erupted and ended with the second Burmese defeat. Political turmoil following the war eventually placed King Mindon on the throne in Amarapura. Concurrently, in 1852, Bangkok started what is known in Siamese historical writings as "the Second Keng Tung Campaign," which again ended with the invader's defeat in 1854. It is under such preceding context that the final negotiation took place.

#### 4.6 The Negotiation from 1856 to 1857

After the Second Keng Tung Campaign, King Rama IV changed Siam's policy outlook towards Burma, which had roughly half a country left from the Second Anglo-Burmese War. Not only did the king terminate the policy of capturing the Burmese around the border to squeeze for intelligence, but he also allowed Burmese monks and novices to enter the kingdom. One group of them even proceeded to a Bangkok suburb

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<sup>117</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1206. No. 12, verso 8. King Tharrawaddy died in detention in 1846.

<sup>118</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1207. No. 29. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Baibok Rueang Dai Chattang Kong Dan Sueb Khao Ratchakan Thi Phama Rop Kap Phuak Yang Daeng* [An Administrative Report on the Appointment of a Platoon of Border Patrol Police to Gather Intelligence on the War between the Burmese and the Karenni], recto 11.

<sup>119</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1208. No. 42. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Bantheuk Kham Totop Khong Nai Noiphrom Kap Mueang Chiang Tung Rueang Khetdaen* [A Record of Noiphrom's Conversation with Chiang Tung Officials about the Border], 32-36.

<sup>120</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmai het Ratchakan Thi 3*. C.S. 1208. No. 41. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Santra Theung Mueang Phrae Rueang Top Rap Mai Khon Sak Lae Pha Khao Sueng Thun Klao Thawai* [An Administrative Order to Phrae Acknowledging the Receipt of Teak Timber and White Cloths], verso 18.

and was accommodated at Wat Phraya Tham.<sup>121</sup> As summarised in Section 3, Burmese envoys holding Letters #27 and #28 came to Bangkok via Chiang Mai in 1856. To correct a small error in *PP21*, Bangkok's sealed administrative orders (*Tra* ตรา) dated 8 and 9 October 1857 to provinces through which the Burmese mission would have to pass on their way back confirms that Mela Cho Channarin (เมลจจจันฉนฉริน), whose name appears in Letter #27, was an officer who led the other four envoys.<sup>122</sup> So, there were five, not four envoys as *PP21* says. The date of the former order also confirms that Letter #29 was issued on or shortly before 8 October 1857. These minute points aside, this article has neither objection nor addition to Prince Damrong's elaboration and assumptions. As we should have noticed by now, the content of the Burmese letter did not at all correspond to the preceding context. Bangkok could but understand that the real intention behind the mission was not to ask about Siam's religious affairs, but to test the waters for rapprochement. This explains why King Rama IV gave a political reply to the letter which asked about religious matters. Upon receiving this reply, Burma could rest assured that Siam no longer entertained the idea of invading Keng Tung or Burma proper.

## 5. Conclusion

This article has critically examined *PP21* and primarily contended that a full recension is necessary to enhance its value as a historical reference. The book contains numerous inaccuracies and lacks comprehensive coverage, relying heavily upon Chaophraya Thiphakorawong's royal chronicles without sufficient engagement with primary sources. Perhaps due to the limited availability of manuscripts at the time of writing, *PP21* covers only one-fourth of the existing copies or drafts of the negotiation letters between early Rattanakosin Siam and Konbaung Burma from C.S. 1146 to 1219 (1784/1785 to 1857/1858). Although *PPGJ10* reprints *PP21* as part of it and publishes many of the relevant letters, it neither provides any annotation clarifying the inaccuracies nor addresses the lack of comprehensive coverage of *PP21*. Moreover, as should be clear by now, *PPGJ10* itself contains numerous errors too.

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<sup>121</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Mairapsang Ratchakan Thi 4*. C.S. 1218. No. 27. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. White pencil. *Ken Lek Lak Ruea Phra Thi Nang Mat Sang Ma Chak Mueang Klaeng Rayong* [A Royal Summons to Transport a Royal Barge Ordered from Klaeng, Rayong], recto 16-19.

<sup>122</sup> National Library of Thailand. *Chotmaihet Ratchakan Thi 4*. C.S. 1219. No. 1. Black folding-book manuscript. Thai script. Thai language. Yellow pencil. *Rang San Tra Theung Phraya Nakhon Lampang* [A Draft Administrative Order to the Marquess of Lampang], recto 12-14. *PP21* refers to the same person as Mela So Sanharing (เมลซอฉฉนหฉริง).

Instead of maintaining the seven-round structure set out in *PP21*, the article has divided the recension into six negotiation periods and identified five key findings. First, the negotiation period following Siam's Second Tavoy Campaign took place in early 1793, about a year earlier than stated in *PP21*, and lasted until 1797. Second, whilst *PP21* mentions Burmese diplomatic envoys who came to Siam with a ministerial letter in 1802, this article argues that that year witnessed only mail carriers who arrived with U-bakong's personal letter and departed in 1803 with Chaophraya Mahayotha's reply. If there had been a Burmese ministerial letter, it should have arrived in 1801, not 1802. Third, the 1807 round of negotiation presented in *PP21* did not exist. Fourth, the existence of the negotiation from 1813 to 1814 requires further substantiation because the only letter with supporting primary evidence in *PP21* is actually an earlier draft of the letter which would be dated 11 January 1795. Nevertheless, after examining relevant manuscripts, the article has confirmed that the 1813-1814 negotiation did take place. Finally, whilst *PP21* claims that no negotiation took place in the reign of King Rama III, this article has identified, at least, one negotiation round (1824-1825) and two Burmese negotiation attempts (1829 and 1844).

An implication that this article may have for the study of the relations between pre-modern kingdoms of mainland Southeast Asia is a more nuanced understanding of the *mandala* structure—i.e., the centripetal-cum-hierarchical form of relations—and the actual influence of Hindu-Buddhist ideologies of kingship, such as that of *chakkavatti*. The political negotiation between Early Rattanakosin Siam and Konbaung Burma suggests that these kingdoms recognised, whether explicitly or implicitly, that even in this small region, there was always more than one kingdom that occupied the top position within the *mandala* structure, save only for some short exceptional periods in history. After the defeat in the Second Tavoy Campaign, it must have been clear to the Siamese elite that Bangkok by itself had no potential to subjugate Ava or Amarapura. This explains why its negotiation with Burma thereafter revolved around the issue of co-existence. The Burmese side must have recognised the same point after the Nine-Armies' War and the Tha Din Daeng Campaign. Whilst it did not give up offensive campaigns against Siam right away, it would be unsound to argue that the ongoing attempts reflected a continuous desire to realise the *chakkavatti* ideology because the invading Burmese army after the said campaign had obviously insufficient potential to proceed to the nuclear zone of Siam from the outset—let alone to conquer it. Whilst the *chakkavatti* ideology undoubtedly provided a political framework for Hindu-Buddhist monarchs, its actual impact upon the relations between pre-modern kingdoms should not be exaggerated. This article, therefore, calls for a more nuanced reassessment of the intersection between ideology and realpolitik in pre-modern mainland Southeast Asia.

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