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Contents

Editorial Letter  i

Early Italians in Burma

Marco Polo. “The Travels of Marco Polo, The Venetian” 91
Kennon Breazeale. Editorial Introduction to Nicolò de’ Conti’s Account 100
Nicolò de’ Conti. “Early Fifteenth Century Travels in the East” 110
Hieronimo di Santo Stefano. “Account of the Journey of Hieronimo di Santo Stefano, a Genovese (1495-1496)” 118
Ludovico di Varthema. “The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna From 1502 to 1508” 119
Cesar Fedrici. “Account of Pegu” 130
Athanasius Nikitin. “Brief Extract from the Travels of Athanasius Nikitin, A Native of Tver” 160
Luís Vaz de Camões. “The Lusiad, or, Portugals HistoriCALL Poem” 163
Ralph Fitch. “An Account of Pegu in 1586-1587” 167
Henri de Feynes de Monsart. “account of the Kingdome of Pegue (1608)” 188
Sonnerat. “A Voyage to Pegu” 190
“Empire Birman-Arracan” 199
“Certaine Words of Pegu Language (1603)” 201

Book Reviews & Announcements

Review by F. K. L. Chit Hlaing 203

Grant Evans. A Short History of Laos: The Land in Between
Review by John Walsh 205

David K. Wyatt. Thailand: A Short History (2nd edition)
Review by Jon Fernquist 207

Announcement: Euan Bagshawe’s translation of the Rajadhammasangaha 211
Dissertation Abstracts 217
News & Notes 221
From the Editor

Welcome to the fourth issue of the SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research, completing our second volume. The letter below includes some comments on the present issue and on those to come.

Current Issue Theme: Early Italians in Burma

Readers may note that in the previous issue (1.2, Autumn 2003), the SBBR published the account of the Gaspero Balbi, an early Italian traveller to Burma/Myanmar. Given the early importance of such Italian accounts, we have reproduced here five other early Italian accounts, along with a substantial editorial introduction to the De’ Conti account by Kennon Breazeale (East-West Center). This is by no means an exhaustive compilation. Italian accounts continue until the end of the precolonial period, including Tarsillo Barberis’ Five Years in Burma, providing an inside look at the kingdom before the fall of Thibaw’s court at the hands of British forces in 1885. Thus, there may be another special issue devoted to this subject in the future. In any event, the SBBR will continue to concentrate on certain themes, such as the emphasis on English accounts of Burma in the next issue. Unlike most special issues, however, material in each issue will not be limited to such themes. Thus, in this issue, for example, the Italian accounts are followed by those of Portuguese, French, and other travellers.

Changes

Over the past two years we have experimented with a number of different formats and features. The present format will serve as our standard model for later editions. If you have looked at the cover on-screen or downloaded it from our website (http://web.soas.ac.uk/burma/index.htm), you will note a more ‘traditional’ journal cover, while still incorporating a photograph of Burmese/Myanmar life. Certainly, any comments on the new cover style would be appreciated (burmaresearch@soas.ac.uk).

Another change that will take place in the following issue is that while we will continue to republish old documents and early publications, we will also include a substantial portion of first-run material, in the form of articles and a continuation of our healthy run of book reviews. Along these lines it might be useful to mention that while the SBBR is devoted to research on Burma/Myanmar,
it is also clear that scholars of Burma/Myanmar benefit from research on neighbouring areas which have comparative value or direct relevance to developments in Burma, both in the past and in the present. Thus, we are gradually including more material from the central mainland (Laos and Thailand) and soon, hopefully, Kampuchea, Vietnam, and the Malay Peninsula. It should be stressed, however, that, wherever possible, connectivities with and relevance to Burma/Myanmar should always be stressed or at least noted.

Perhaps the most significant change will come in issue 3.2 (Autumn 2005). With this issue, and after, we will make a determined effort to include material in the Burmese (and minority) languages, both primary source material and secondary work, in the Burmese (and other) script(s). We are currently working out the details, but such materials should be accompanied by an English summary and a Romanized title for bibliographic and other purposes. While we would encourage those writing in non-Burma/Myanmar languages to translate (or have translated) their work into English, if this is not possible, then every reasonable attempt will be made to accommodate non-Western scripts. The present issue includes a primary document in French and later issues will include documents and accounts in Portuguese and other Western languages, but Chinese and Japanese, for example, would also be welcome.

A related change is that the SBBR will begin to solicit reviews of current Burmese-language publications. While work outside of Burma/Myanmar receives significant attention among international scholars, research by Burmese within Burma/Myanmar does not. Certainly, the study of the Konbaung period has benefitted from numerous recent publications in Burma. Reviews of such materials will hopefully make the Burma/Myanmar research community abroad better aware of such work. On a related matter, the SBBR will sometimes solicit multiple reviews of the same work. We are experimenting with this in the next issue with Mary Callahan’s new book, Making Enemies. Such reviews will hopefully be published together in the same issue to increase their comparative value and indicate, at least in part, the diversity of opinions on the same work.

We would also like to encourage readers to direct students working on Burma to the SBBR. Given its free and easy access on the web, the SBBR would be very useful to students (especially in upper level undergraduate courses and graduate courses) involved in research projects and papers on Burma. Further, if you are supervising a dissertation or an M.A. thesis, or know of someone who is, please suggest posting their abstract with us. This would be an effective and fast way of circulating information on the student’s doctoral product among an interested audience.

Finally, a word of thanks to all those who have contributed in one way or another to the success of the SBBR, by serving on the editorial board, the advisory board, offering advice and opinions, suggesting corrections, and above all, by
submitting material in the form of articles, edited accounts, book reviews, and information for the “News and Notes” and related sections.

Sincerely,

Mike Charney
General Editor, *SBBR*
Editor’s note:

Marco Polo was the first Western traveller to speak of Burma (Mien). His late thirteenth century account has been translated numerous times, one of the most popular editions being Henry Yule’s (tr.) The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East in the nineteenth century and the revision of this translation by Henri Cordier in the early twentieth. The Yule-Cordier edition of 1903 is widely available in reprint. Less widely available is the present translation made by W. Marsden from Ramusio’s collection of travels published in 1818 and re-edited by Thomas Wright in September 1854, published as The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian. (London: Henry G. Bohn). Polo’s account of events in Burma can be dated to the early-mid 1290s, for he returned to Venice in 1295, although the Travels were not put into writing until 1298. The version below has been made from the copy in the British Library.

M.W. C.

THE TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO, THE VENETIAN
(1298)

Marco Polo of Venice

Translated by W. Marsden
Re-edited by Thomas Wright

Chapter XL
Of the Province named Karazan

Leaving the city of Yachi, and traveling ten days into a westerly direction, you reach the Province of Karazan which is also the name of its chief city...Here are seen huge serpents, ten paces in length, and ten spans in the girt of the body. At the fore-part, near the head, they have two short eggs, having three claws like those of a tiger, with eyes larger than a fourpenny loaf (pane da quattro denari) and very glaring. The jaws are wide enough to swallow a man, the teeth are large and sharp, and their whole appearance is so formidable, that neither man, nor any kind of
animal, can approach them without terror. Others are met with of a smaller size, being eight, six, or five paces long; and the following method is used for taking them. In the day-time, by reason of the great heat, they lurk in caverns, from whence, at night, they issue to seek their food, and whatever beast they meet with and can lay hold of, whether tiger, wolf, or any other, they devour; after which they drag themselves towards some lake, spring of water, or river, in order to drink. By their motion in this way along the shore, and their vast weight, they make a deep impression, as if a heavy beam had been drawn along the sands.

Those whose employment it is to hunt them observe the track by which they are most frequently accustomed to go, and fix into the ground several pieces of wood, armed with sharp iron spikes, which they cover with the sand in such a manner as not to be perceptible. When therefore the animals make their way towards the places they usually haunt, they are wounded by these instruments, and speedily killed. The crows, as soon as they perceive them to be dead, set up their scream; and this serves as a signal to the hunters, who advance to the spot, and proceed to separate the skin from the flesh, taking care immediately to secure the gall, which is most highly esteemed in medicine. In cases of the bite of a mad dog, a pennyweight of it, dissolved in wine, is administered. It is also useful in accelerating parturition, when the labour pains of women have come on. A small quantity of it being applied to carbuncles, pustules, or other eruptions on the body, they are presently dispersed; and it is efficacious in many other complaints. The flesh also of the animal is sold at a dear rate, being thought to have a higher flavour than other kinds of meat, and by all persons it is esteemed a delicacy.

In this province the horses are of a large size, and whilst young, are carried for sale to India. It is the practice to deprive them of one joint of the tail, in order to prevent them from lashing it from side to side, and to occasion its remaining pendent; as the whisking it about, in riding, appears to them a vile habit. These people ride with long stirrups, as the French do in our part of the world; whereas the Tartars, and almost all other people, wear them short, for the more conveniently using the bow; as they rise in their stirrups above the horse, when they shoot their arrows.

They have complete armour of buffalo-leather, and carry lances, shields, and cross-bows. All their arrows are poisoned. I was assured, as a certain fact, that many persons, and especially those who harbour bad designs, always carry poison about them, with the intention of swallowing it, in the event of their being apprehended for any delinquency, and exposed to the torture, that, rather than suffer it, they may effect their own destruction. But their rulers, who are aware of this practice, are always provided with the dung of dogs, which they oblige the accused to swallow immediately after, as it occasions their vomiting up the poison, and thus an antidote is ready against the arts of these wretches.

Before the time of their becoming subject to the dominion of the Grand Khan, these people were addicted to the following brutal custom. When any
stranger of superior quality, who united personal beauty with distinguished valour, happened to take up his abode at the house of one of them, he was murdered during the night; not for the sake of his money, but in order that the spirit of the deceased, endowed with his accomplishments and intelligence, might remain with the family, and that through the efficacy of such an acquisition, all their concerns might prosper. Accordingly the individual was accounted fortunate who possessed in this manner the soul of any noble personage; and many lost their lives in consequence. But from the time of His Majesty's beginning to rule the country, he has taken measures for suppressing the horrid practice, and from the effect of severe punishments that have been inflicted, it has ceased to exist.

Chapter XLI
Of the Province of Kardandan and the City of Vochang

Proceeding five days' journey in a westerly direction from Karazan, you enter the province of Kardandan, belonging to the dominion of the grand khan, and of which the principal city is called Vochang ....

Chapter XLII
Of the manner in which the Grand Khan effected the Conquest of the Kingdom of Mien [Burma] and Bangala

BEFORE we proceed further (in describing the country), we shall speak of a memorable battle that was fought in this kingdom of Vochang [Unchang, or Yun-chang]. It happened that in the year 1272 the Grand Khan sent an army into the countries of Vochang and Karazan, for their protection and defense against any attack that foreigners might attempt to make; for at this period he had not as yet appointed his own sons to the governments, which it was afterwards his policy to do; as in the instance of Cen-temur, for whom those places were erected into a principality.

When the king of Mien and Bangala, in India, who was powerful in the number of his subjects, in extent of territory, and in wealth, heard that an army of Tartars had arrived at Vochang, he took the resolution of advancing immediately to attack it, in order that by its destruction the Grand Khan should be deterred from again attempting to station a force upon the borders of his dominions. For this purpose he assembled a very large army, including a multitude of elephants, upon whose backs were placed battlements or castles, of wood, capable of containing to

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1 Wright explains Vochang is the “city of Yung-chang, in the western part of Yun-nan.”
the number of twelve or sixteen in each. With these, and a numerous army of horse
and foot, he took the road to Vochang, where the Grand Khan's army lay, and
encamping at no great distance from it, intended to give his troops a few days of
rest.

As soon as the approach of the king of Mien, with so great a force, was
known to Nestardín, who commanded the troops of the Grand Khan, although a
brave and able officer, he felt much alarmed, not having under his orders more than
twelve thousand men; whereas the enemy had sixty thousand, besides the elephants
armed as has been described. He did not, however, betray any signs of
apprehension, but descending into the plain of Vochang,\(^2\) took a position in which
his flank was covered by a thick wood of large trees, whither, in case of a furious
charge by the elephants, which his troops might not be able to sustain, they could
retire, and from thence, in security, annoy them with their arrows.

Calling together the principal officers of his army, he exhorted them not to
display less valour on the present occasion than they had done in all their preceding
engagements, reminding them that victory did not depend upon the number of men,
but upon courage and discipline. He represented to them that the troops of the king
of Mien and Bangala were raw and unpractised in the art of war, not having had the
opportunities of acquiring experience that had fallen to their lot; that instead of
being discouraged by the superior number of their foes, they ought to feel
confidence in their own valour so often put to the test; that their very name was a
subject of terror, not merely to the enemy before them, but to the whole world; and
he concluded by promising to lead them to certain victory.

Upon the king of Mien's learning that the Tartars had descended into the
plain, he immediately put his army in motion, took up his ground at the distance of
about a mile from the enemy, and made a disposition of his force, placing the
elephants in the front, and the cavalry and infantry, in two extended wings, in their
rear, but leaving between them a considerable interval. Here he took his own
station, and proceeded to animate his men and encourage them to fight valiantly,
assuring them of victory, as well from the superiority of their numbers, being four
to one, as from their formidable body of armed elephants, whose shock the enemy,
who had never before been engaged with such combatants, could by no means
resist.

Then giving orders for sounding a prodigious number of warlike
instruments, he advanced boldly with his whole army towards that of the Tartars,
which remained firm, making no movement, but suffering them to approach their
entrenchments. They then rushed out with great spirit and the utmost eagerness to
engage; but it was soon found that the Tartar horses, unused to the sight of such

\(^2\) According to Burmese sources, this battle did not take place at “Vochang,” but rather at
Nga-zaung-kyān. As G. E. Harvey points out Polo’s Vochang (Yung-ch’ang) is 112.65
kilometres from Nga-zaung-kyān. Harvey 1926, 336n. Polo also gives the year as 1277,
While Ú Kalà gives it as 1281. See Kalà 1960-1961, 1.299-300.
huge animals, with their castles, were terrified, and wheeling about endeavoured to fly; nor could their riders by any exertions restrain them, whilst the king, with the whole of his forces, was every moment gaining ground. As soon as the prudent commander perceived this unexpected disorder, without losing his presence of mind, he instantly adopted the measure of ordering his men to dismount and their horses to be taken into the wood, where they were fastened to the trees.

When dismounted, the men, without loss of time, advanced on foot towards the line of elephants, and commenced a brisk discharge of arrows; whilst, on the other side, those who were stationed in the castles, and the rest of the king's army, shot volleys in return with great activity; but their arrows did not make the same impression as those of the Tartars, whose bows were drawn with a stronger arm.

So incessant were the discharges of the latter, and all their weapons (according to the instructions of their commander) being directed against the elephants, these were soon covered with arrows, and, suddenly giving way, fell back upon their own people in the rear, who were thereby thrown into confusion. It soon became impossible for their drivers to manage them, either by force or address. Smarting under the pain of their wounds, and terrified by the shouting of the assailants, they were no longer governable, but without guidance or control ran about in all directions, until at length, impelled by rage and fear, they rushed into a part of the wood not occupied by the Tartars. The consequence of this was, that from the closeness of the branches of large trees, they broke, with loud crashes, the battlements or castles that were upon their backs, and involved in the destruction those who sat upon them.

Upon seeing the rout of the elephants the Tartars acquired fresh courage, and filing off by detachments, with perfect order and regularity, they remounted their horses, and joined their several divisions, when a sanguinary and dreadful combat was renewed. On the part of the king's troops there was no want of valour, and he himself went amongst the ranks entreating them to stand firm, and not to be alarmed by the accident that had befallen the elephants. But the Tartars, by their consummate skill in archery, were too powerful for them, and galled them the more exceedingly, from their not being provided with such armour as was worn by the former. The arrows having been expended on both sides, the men grasped their swords and iron maces, and violently encountered each other. Then in an instant were to be seen many horrible wounds, limbs dismembered, and multitudes falling to the ground, maimed and dying; with such effusion of blood as was dreadful to behold. So great also was the clangour of arms, and such the shoutings and the shrieks, that the noise seemed to ascend to the skies.

The king of Mien, acting as became a valiant chief, was present wherever the greatest danger appeared, animating his soldiers, and beseeching them to maintain their ground with resolution. He ordered fresh squadrons from the reserve
to advance to the support of those that were exhausted; but perceiving at length that it was impossible any longer to sustain the conflict or to withstand the impetuosity of the Tartars, the greater part of his troops being either killed or wounded, and all the field covered with the carcases of men and horses, whilst those who survived were beginning to give way, he also found himself compelled to take to flight with the wreck of his army, numbers of whom were afterwards slain in the pursuit.

The losses in this battle, which lasted from the morning till noon, were severely felt on both sides; but the Tartars were finally victorious; a result that was materially to be attributed to the troops of the king of Mien and Bangala not wearing armour as the Tartars did, and to their elephants, especially those of the foremost line, being equally without that kind of defence, which, by enabling them to sustain the first discharges of the enemy’s arrows, would have allowed them to break his ranks and throw him into disorder.

A point perhaps of still greater importance is, that the king ought not to have made his attack on the Tartars in a position where their flank was supported by a wood, but should have endeavoured to draw them into the open country, where they could not have resisted the first impetuous onset of the armed elephants, and where, by extending the cavalry of his two wings, he might have surrounded them. The Tartars having collected their force after the slaughter of the enemy, returned towards the wood into which the elephants had fled for shelter, in order to take possession of them, where they found that the men who had escaped from the overthrow were employed in cutting down trees and barricading the passages, with the intent of defending themselves.

But their ramparts were soon demolished by the Tartars, who slew many of them, and with the assistance of the persons accustomed to the management of the elephants, they possessed themselves of these to the number of two hundred or more. From the period of this battle the Grand Khan has always chosen to employ elephants in his armies, which before that time he had not done. The consequences of the victory were, that the Grand Khan acquired possession of the whole of the territories of the king of Bangala and Mien, and annexed them to his dominions.

Chapter XLIII
An Uninhabited Region, and of the Kingdom of Mien

Leaving the province of Kardandan, you enter a vast descent, which you travel without variation for two days and a half, in the course of which no habitations are to be found. You then reach a spacious plain, whereon, three days in every week, a number of trading people assemble, many of whom come down from the neighbouring mountains, bringing their gold to be exchanged for silver, which the merchants who repair thither from distant countries carry with them for this purpose; and one saggio of gold is given for five of silver. The inhabitants are not
allowed to be the exporters of their own gold, but must dispose of it to the merchants who furnish them with such articles as they require; and as none but the natives themselves can access to the places of their residence, so high and strong are the situations, and so difficult the approach, it is on this account that the transactions of business are conducted in the plain. Beyond this, in a southerly direction, towards the confines of India, lies the city of Mien. The journey occupies fifteen days, through a country much depopulated, and forests abounding with elephants, rhinoceroses, and other wild beasts, where there is not the appearance of any habitation.

Chapter XLIV
Of the city of Mien, and of a Great Sepulchre of its King

AFTER the journey of fifteen days that has been mentioned, you reach the city of Mien, which is large, magnificent, and the capital of the kingdom. The inhabitants are idolaters, and have a language peculiar to themselves.

It is related that there formerly reigned in this country a rich and powerful monarch, who, when his death was drawing near, gave orders for erecting on the place of his interment, at the head and foot of the sepulchre, two pyramidal towers, entirely of marble, ten paces in height, of a proportionate bulk, and each terminating with a ball. One of these pyramids was covered with a plate of gold an inch in thickness, so that nothing besides the gold was visible; and the other with a plate of silver, of the same thickness. Around the balls were suspended small bells of gold and of silver, which sounded when put in motion by the wind. The whole formed a splendid object. The tomb was in like manner covered with a plate, partly of gold and partly of silver. This the king commanded to be prepared for the honour of his soul, and in order that his memory might not perish. The Grand Khan, having resolved upon taking possession of this city, sent thither a valiant officer to effect it, and the army, at its own desire, was accompanied by some of the jugglers or sorcerers, of whom there were always a great number about the court.

When these entered the city, they observed the two pyramids so richly ornamented, but would not meddle with them until his majesty's pleasure respecting them should be known. The Grand Khan, upon being informed that they had been erected in pious memory of a former king, would not suffer them to be violated nor injured in the smallest degree; the Tartars being accustomed to consider as a heinous sin the removal of any article appertaining to the dead. In this country were found many elephants, large and handsome wild oxen, with stags, fallow deer, and other animals in great abundance.
Chapter XLV
Of the province of Bangala (Bengal)

The province of Bangala is situated on the southern confines of India, and was (not yet) brought under the dominion of the Grand Khan at the time [c. 1290] of Marco Polo's residence at his court; (although) the operations against it occupied his army for a considerable period, the country being strong and its king powerful, as has been related. It has its peculiar language. The people are worshippers of idols, and amongst them there are teachers [eunuchs] at the head of schools for instruction in the principles of their idolatrous religion and of necromancy, whose doctrine prevails amongst all ranks, including the nobles and chiefs of the country. Oxen are found here almost as tall as elephants, but not equal to them in bulk. The inhabitants live upon flesh, milk, and rice, of which they have abundance. Much cotton is grown in the country, and trade flourishes.

Spikenard, galangal, ginger, sugar, and many sorts of drugs are amongst the productions of the soil; to purchase which the merchants from various parts of India resort thither. They likewise make purchases of eunuchs, of whom there are numbers in the country, as slaves; for all the prisoners taken in war are presently emasculated; and as every prince and person of rank is desirous of having them for the custody of their women, the merchants obtain a large profit by carrying them to other kingdoms, and there disposing of them. This province is thirty days' journey in extent, and at the eastern extremity of it lies a country named Kangigu.

Chapter XLVI
Of the province of Kangigu

Kangigu is a province situated towards the east, and is governed by a king. The people are idolaters, have a peculiar language, and made a voluntary submission to the Grand Khan, to whom they pay an annual tribute. The king is devoted to sensual pleasures. He has about three hundred wives; and when he hears of any handsome woman, he sends for her, and adds her to the number. Gold is found here in large quantities, and also many kinds of drugs; but, being an inland country, distant from the sea, there is little opportunity of vending them.

There are elephants in abundance, and other beasts. The inhabitants live upon flesh, rice, and milk. They have no wine made from grapes, but prepare it from rice and a mixture of drugs. Both men and women have their bodies punctured all over, in figures of beasts and birds; and there are among them practitioners whose sole employment it is to trace out these ornaments with the point of a needle, upon the hands, the legs, and the breast. When a black colouring stuff has been rubbed over these punctures, it is impossible, either by water or
otherwise, to efface the marks. The man or woman who exhibits the greatest profusion of these figures, is esteemed the most handsome.

Chapter XLVII
Of the Province of Amu

AMU, also, is situated towards the east, and its inhabitants are subjects of the Grand Khan. They are idolaters, and live upon the flesh of their cattle and the fruits of the earth. They have a peculiar language. The country produces many horses and oxen, which are sold to the itinerant merchants, and conveyed to India. Buffaloes also, as well as oxen, are numerous, in consequence of the extent and excellence of the pastures. Both men and women wear rings, of gold and silver, upon their wrists, arms, and legs; but those of the females are the more costly. The distance between this province and that of Kangigu is twenty-five [other texts, fifteen] days' journey, and thence to Bangala is twenty days' journey. We shall now speak of a province named Tholoman, situated eight days' journey from the former.
Editorial Introduction to Nicolò de’ Conti’s Account

Kennon Breazeale
East-West Center

Nicolò de’ Conti did not write about his extensive travels. Our knowledge of him has been filtered through the works of two men to whom he recounted his adventures. A Spanish nobleman, Pero Tafur, was visiting the seashore near the monastery at Mount Sinai in 1437, when Conti arrived there, on his way back to Europe from Asia. Conti was accompanied by his wife, whom he had met and married in India, and by his four children, who were born in the course of his travels. Tafur travelled with the Conti family by caravan to Cairo and then set out for Crete. The wife and two children died in an epidemic in Egypt, and Conti returned with his remaining children to Venice, his native town. In 1439 he went to Florence during a papal visit to that city, and at that time he related the stories of his travels to the papal secretary, Giovanni Francesco Poggio Bracciolini.

Conti’s Information and His Times

It seems likely that Conti told Tafur a lot more than he told Poggio, because the two men were constant companions during the fifteen-day trek to Cairo and for another several weeks while seeing the sights of Cairo. Tafur’s style of writing led him to choose and describe the unusual people, animals and sights that Conti had seen, but mostly at random and without placing the stories in any particular geographical context. The version of Conti’s travels that appears in Tafur (1926: 84-95) is therefore of relatively limited use for research about Asia, although it provides helpful biographical notes about Conti.

Poggio was a different kind of writer, with an analytic mind and a special interest in the affairs of the East. His composition, in Latin, tells Conti’s story not only as a continuous chronology but also in an orderly geographical sequence. He placed this relatively short essay at the end of a much larger work titled De Varietate Fortunae (The Vicissitudes of Fortune). The first three parts of that work are unrelated to Conti. The subject of the first part, for example is the Roman Empire and its downfall. The fourth part of Poggio’s manuscript, based on Conti’s information, was published in 1492 by Cristoforo da Bollate for one of the
purposes that Poggio had intended: as an introduction to the countries of southern Asia, about which Europeans knew little at that time.

Conti lived from about 1395 to 1469. His quarter century of travels took him across the Middle East and India and as far as Java, Borneo and possibly Champa, on the central coast of present-day Vietnam. Considering the extensive network of Muslims trading among the ports of southern Asia, Conti arrived on the shores of the Indian Ocean well prepared for his voyages. He lived as a youth in Damascus (where he acquired a knowledge of Arabic) and he travelled with a caravan to the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf (where he acquired Persian). These languages and his familiarity with Islamic cultures made it easy for him to live in Muslim trading communities in various places around the Indian Ocean and to travel from place to place on ships owned by Muslim merchants.

Readers of the *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* will be interested in particular in his descriptions of various ports around the Andaman Sea and the journey to Ava, capital of the then-landlocked Burmese kingdom on the central Irrawaddy. Other European travelers may have gone as far east as Ava before Conti did, but up to his time, no European traveller had left a record of a visit either along the coastline or to the interior of Burma.

The information about Burma provided by Poggio stands out in contrast to accounts by two Chinese writers, who were almost exact contemporaries of Conti. Ma Huan (writing in 1433) and Fei Xin (in about 1436) recorded the findings of the Chinese voyages of discovery in the seas of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. Fei Xin was on four of the Chinese voyages, from 1409 to 1433, and Conti sailed along some of the same routes about the same time that the Chinese ships did. Like Conti, both described the straits and southern part of the Andaman Sea, but they are silent about Tenasserim and the northern coastline. Chinese navigation charts did, however, record Tenasserim, Tavoy and other ports, some of which have not yet been identified. Chinese geographers wrote about the interior much earlier than Conti’s time, but not in the contexts of eye-witness accounts or specific dates.

Similarly, Arab and other Muslim geographers, recounting information gathered from seamen, made frequent mention of the seaports visited by Arab ships. Some ports of the Andaman Sea are therefore well documented, but those at the northern end of the sea seem to appear in the records only in the mid-sixteenth century. The Turkish geographer Sidi ‘Ali Celebi, writing in 1554, mentioned Pegu, Martaban and Tenasserim (Ferrand 1914: 486-7), since his main concern was to provide information useful to navigators in these waters. Abu’l-Fazl writing at the Mughal court in 1595 provided brief notes about coastal Arakan, Pegu and Tenasserim, likewise useful to navigators and traders (Ferrand 1914: 550-2). A glimpse of the interior appears in 1663 in a very sketchy description by Mirza Muhammad Kazim, who described a trail across the mountains, from Assam to the
Irrawaddy River, and the road that led to Ava (Ferrand 1914: 557), although not the route taken there by Conti.

Poggio did not record any dates in his composition. Some modern authors have attempted to assign a specific year to Conti’s journeys in Southeast Asia, but it would be safe to assume only that he travelled through Sumatra, Tenasserim and the central and lower Irrawaddy basin at various times during the second half of the 1420s and perhaps early 1430s, before going on to Java and Borneo. Our only sure dates of reference are 1437, when he was in Sinai (after a two-year delay seeking permission to go there), and 1439, when his recollections were written down in Florence.

English Edition, 1579

The first edition of Conti’s account (in Poggio’s original Latin) was printed by Cristoforo da Bollate and dedicated to Pietro Cara, who was setting out on a journey to India and must have taken this slim volume with him to serve as a guidebook, since nothing else was available on the subject. Printing was a relatively new business in Europe, scarcely 40 years old, and Bollate may have placed an order with a printer, in the same way that a few handwritten and bound copies would have been commissioned a generation earlier.

The motivations for the first edition in English were similar, although John Frampton intended his translation for a wide audience: more than a century after his death, Conti’s description, despite its limitations, was still one of very few reference works of its type available in Europe. Frampton’s main purpose, however, was to translate the account by Marco Polo, to which the Conti text had been appended earlier to support the accuracy of Polo’s claims.

The text in the present issue of the SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research is Frampton’s 1579 translation. This edition is reproduced here because it is the first and probably the least-known version in English. It was reprinted in 1929 by Norman Mosley Penzer, but that edition is now rare and provided very few editorial notes about the Conti text.

Caution is advisable when using the material attributed to Conti for research: Conti himself did not write it. It was recounted from memory, possibly embellished by imagination and clouded by the passage of time—as long as a quarter century after some of the events took place. Poggio inadvertently may have introduced errors by misinterpreting Conti’s verbal statements, by rephrasing them in Latin (without leaving a record in Italian for comparison), by changing toponyms to Latin forms and possibly by rearranging the material to give it the neat geographical order of the final composition. The subsequent succession of translations of the text–into Portuguese (1502) and Spanish (1503) and from
Spanish to English (1579)—adds yet more likelihood of error in the case of the Frampton edition.

**Transition through Several Languages**

The work attributed to Conti is a heritage that defies any simple bibliographical citation, and the succession of publications is complex. Henri Cordier (1899) attempted to compile a bibliography of all the early translations of the Conti account. He failed to find the first editions in Latin, Italian and English, but his essay is still helpful for understanding how widely Conti’s information became disseminated in European languages.

Poggio wrote down the information recounted to him by Conti in 1439, and by 1448 he had completed his four-part manuscript in Latin. Part four, containing the Conti account, was selected by Cristoforo de Bollate in 1492 and published in Milan with the title *India Recognita* (India Rediscovered).

This first published edition, the 1492 Latin edition, was translated into Portuguese (1502) and then into Spanish (1503). The Portuguese edition appears to be the source of the first Italian-language edition, which was included in the collection of travellers’ accounts published in 1550 by Giovanni Battista Ramusio. Frampton translated the Spanish version into English and published it in 1579. A truncated translation from Italian to English was published in Samuel Purchas’ collection of voyages in 1625.

The British Library has a copy of Frampton’s work, but by far the greater part of that publication is a translation of the travels of Marco Polo. The part attributed to Conti is treated almost as a continuation of the Polo text, thereby nearly concealing its identity as a separate work. Not surprisingly, when John Winter Jones, a curator of the British Museum, made his translation (1857), it was believed to be the first English translation of Conti. The claim is true only in the sense that Jones worked directly from the Latin text and not at second hand from one of the translations in other languages. He did not know that the British Museum had a copy of the 1579 Frampton translation, because Conti’s name does not appear in the title of that edition, and the Conti part of the text is placed inconspicuously at the end. Jones also did not know about the first Latin edition (1492) or that the British Museum had a copy of it. He therefore used the 1723 edition. A more nearly definitive English-language edition was published in 1963 by Lincoln Davis Hammond, based on Jones’ work but retranslating and correcting Jones’ errors.

The Conti text continues to be the subject of scholarly study. Recent editions include an Italian one by Allessandro Grossato (1994) and a French one by Diane Ménard, Geneviève Bouchon and Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary (2004), which includes Tafur’s account of his brief acquaintance with Conti.
Selected Versions of the Conti Text in Chronological Order

1439. Giovanni Francesco Poggio Bracciolini made notes of his discussions with Conti in 1439 and, by 1448, he completed his four-part manuscript in Latin titled De Varietate Fortunae (The Vicissitudes of Fortune). Part four, containing Conti’s information, was published in 1492 and given a title of its own.


Bollate’s 1492 volume is the first printed edition of the material attributed to Conti. Bollate appears to have chosen this essay to serve as a handbook for Pero Caro, who was preparing to travel to India, and presumably Caro carried a copy with him on his journey. The only known copies of this edition are in the British Library and Harvard University Library.

Although part four of Poggio’s composition is attributed to Conti, it is doubtless the product of much editing and organisation by Poggio. At the end, Poggio placed some additional facts that he obtained from visitors from Ethiopia.


Poggio’s composition was translated from Latin to Portuguese and published in Lisbon in February 1502. One copy of this rare work is in the national library in Lisbon. The British Library has a 1922 reprinted edition.

The translator’s identity is not apparent from the title. ‘Valentim Fernandez the German’ had exclusive printing and sales rights for this edition, which includes three separate works. The part by Conti may be the source of Ramusio’s Italian translation (Crivat 2003: 14). Note that the main text is the account by Marco Polo, and the information attributed to Conti is appended to provide verifications of Polo’s claims about southern Asia.

According to an apocryphal story, Conti was assigned by the Pope to provide all this information to Poggio, as a penance for his forced renunciation of the Christian Faith in a Muslim land. This penance appears to be the invention of the translator.
of the 1502 Portuguese-language edition, who included it in his introduction (Crivat 2003: 10, 14), and from there it has been handed down in the literature up to the present.

1503. Cosmographia breve introductoria en el libro d'Marco paulo. El libro del famoso Marco paulo veneciano d'las cosas maravillosas q. vido enlas partes orientales. ... Com otro tratado de micer Pogio florentino q. trata de las mesmas tierras y yslas [Cosmography Briefly Introduced in the Book of Marco Polo. The Book of the Famous Venetian Marco Polo about the Marvellous Things That He Saw in Eastern Places. ...With Another Treatise by Mr. Pogio the Florentine Which Deals with the Same Lands and Islands]. Sevilla: por Lanzalao Polono y Jacome Cromberger Alemano, 1503.

A translation of the Latin text into Spanish was made by Rodrigo Fernández de Santaella (or Santa Ella) and published in 1503 in Sevilla by Lanzalao Polono and ‘Jacome Cromberger the German’. The only known example of this edition is in the British Library. It appears that Santaella relied on the 1502 Portuguese translation at least for reference, since the story of the penance imposed by the Pope is transmitted in succession: from the editor’s introduction to the 1502 Portuguese edition, through the 1503 Spanish edition to the 1579 English version.


Ramusio published three volumes of travels (Venice, 1550-9) and included a translation of the text attributed to Conti in the first volume, with the title ‘Viaggio di Nicolò di Conti Venetiano Scritto per Messer Poggio Fiorentino’ [The Voyage of Nicolò de’ Conti the Venetian, Written by Mr. Poggio the Florentine], pp. 364a-372a. The reference to the papal penance in Ramusio’s introduction suggests that he used the Portuguese edition for this translation into Italian.

1579. Frampton, John. The Most Noble and Famous Travels of Marcus Paulus, one of the Nobilitie of the State of Venice, unto the East Partes of the World, as Armenia, Persia, Arabia, Tartary, with many other Kingdomes and Provinces. London: printed by R. Newbery, 1579.
Frampton translated from the 1503 Spanish edition. His reasons for wanting an English edition of the book of Marco Polo (to which the Conti text is appended) are explained in a letter to Edward Dyar, included in the preface and dated 26 January 1579:

Having lying by mee in my chamber a translation of the great voyage & long travels of Paulus Venetus the Venetian, manye merchants, pilots, mariners, and others much bent to Discoveries, resorting to me upon severall occasions, toke so great de light with the reding of my Booke, finding in the same such strange things that I could never bee in quiet, for one or for an other, for the Committing the same to printe in the Englishe tongue, perswading, that it mighte give greate lighte to our Seamen, if ever this nation chaunced to find a passage out of the frozen zone to the South Seas, and otherwise delight many home dwellers, furtherers of travellers.

Frampton’s words might be rephrased (particularly for the benefit of non-native speakers) as follows in modern English:

Next to me in my bedroom, I had a translation of the great voyages and distant travels of Paulus Venetus the Venetian, many merchants, pilots, mariners and others who are very devoted to making discoveries. I returned to it on different occasions. I took such great delight in reading my book, finding in it such strange things, that I could not, in one way or another, remain still until I had printed it in English. I am convinced that it can be instructive to our men of the sea, if this nation ever happens to find a route from the northern latitudes to the southern seas, and that it can also delight many people who remain at home and are supporters of travellers.

It should be noted that Frampton’s main concern was to publish the account by Marco Polo (the Marcus Paulus of his title and the Paulus Venetus of his letter). Conti’s name does not appear on the title page or in the table of contents. The part attributed to Conti thus became somewhat concealed behind the main text, in the absence of a subdivision to distinguish the two authors.


The Purchas edition includes a translation of Conti’s information from an Italian copy. This English edition is greatly abridged, omits many details and is doubtless the poorest version of the text in any language.

Cordier (1899: 388) assumed incorrectly that this was the first Latin edition of the Conti text. Jones (1857) used it for his translation. Neither was aware of the 1492 Latin edition.


John Winter Jones translated the Latin text composed by Poggio into English, using the 1723 Paris edition. He also provided extensive editorial notes. Richard Henry Major published it together with three other travel accounts. Jones’ version has been criticised for errors of interpretation and translation, rectified subsequently in the 1963 retranslation by Hammond.


This version is reprinted from the Purchas (1625) edition. As noted above, this is the poorest and least reliable of all versions.


Norman Mosley Penzer reprinted Frampton’s 1579 edition of Marco Polo’s travels. Conti’s name does not appear in the table of contents. But unlike the 1579 edition, the Conti portion is no longer hidden. It is clearly separated from the rest of the work in a section of its own with a subtitle: ‘The Travels of Nicolò de’ Conti in the
East’ (pp. 123-49). Penzer compiled elaborate editorial notes and detailed maps for Polo’s account, but little for the account attributed to Conti. The Penzer edition was reprinted in London by A. and C. Black in 1937.


Hammond’s careful retranslation of the 1857 Jones edition, using the original 1492 Latin edition, provides a nearly definitive translation in English of Poggio’s Latin composition. Hammond (1963: 1-45) published it with the Latin title ‘India Recognita. The Indies Rediscovered, by Poggio Bracciolini. In Which Are Included the Travels of Nicolò de’ Conti’. This edition does not include explanatory notes for the text, and one must therefore continue to rely on Jones’ work and translations in other languages for scholarly commentary. Two recent editions are listed below.


Other References


Early Fifteenth Century Travels in the East

Nicolò de’ Conti of Venice

Translated by John Frampton in the late sixteenth century
Notes by Kennon Breazeale
East-West Center

From Ceylon to Sumatra and the Andaman Islands

[From] the ilande named Zaylan [Sri Lanka] ... he passed unto the famous ilande named Taprobana [Sumatra], which the Indians calle Scyamucera, where is a noble Citie, and there he has a twelve month: it is sixe miles in compass, and is a famous Citie, having greate trade of Merchandise there, and in al that Island.

From hence he sayled with a prosperous winde, leaving on the right hand the iland Adamania, which is as much to say, as the Ilande of Golde, whyche is 800 myles compass, wherein the Evitrofagitas doe live, and no straungers goe thyther, except it be for necessity of weather, and immediately those barbarous people hewe them in pieces, and eate them.

He sayde that Taprobana is 1600000 paces in compass, the men are verye cruell, and of stubberne conditions, and the men and women have very bigge eares, laden with Hoopes of golde, and with precious stones. They do weare linnen and cloth of silke or cruell downe unto their knees: they take many wives: their houses are lowe, by reason of the greate heate that the sunne hath there. They are Idolatours, and have much Pepper named the greatest, and of the long Pepper, and greate plentie of Camphore and golde. The tree that maketh the pepper is like the Yedra, or Ivie tree, the berries are green lyke unto the Juniper berries, and redde,

1 Frampton’s text is reproduced here exactly as it appears in the 1579 edition. The present editors have added subject headings, however, as a guide for readers.
2 Identified by Jones (1857: 8 n. 3) as Sumatra.
3 One of the Andaman Islands.
4 Cannibals.
5 ‘He affirms that the island of Sumatra is six thousand miles in circumference’ (Hammond 1963: 11).
and being mingled with ashes, they harden with the sun: there is a green fruit named Duriano, of the bigness of Cucumbers. And there be some of them like long Oranges or Lemons, of diverse savours and taste, as like butter, like milk, and like curd. In that part of this land, which is named Bateth, ye Antropophagos\(^6\) dwell, and have continuall warre with their neighbours, and eat the flesh of their enemies that they doe take, and keep their heads for treasure, and use them in stead of money, when they do buy any thing, in giving most heads for the thing that is most worth, and he that hath most heads of the dead men in his keeping, is esteemed to be most rich.

**Tenasserim**

Having [departed] the island of Taprobana, and sailing fifteen days, he arrived by tempest of weather, unto the entring of a river called Tenasserim,\(^7\) and in this region there be many Elephants, and there groweth much Brasill.\(^8\)

**Bengal and the River Ganges**

And going from thence travelling many days journey by land, and by sea, he entred at the mouth of the Reye Gangey, and saild fifteen days up the river, and came unto a Citie named Cernomen, very noble and plentiful.

Thys River Gangey is of such breadth, that sayling in the middest, you shall see no lande on neyther side, and hee affirmeth that it is in some places fifteene myles in breadth. In the armes and branches of this river there be Canes\(^9\) of suche a marvellous length, and so bigge, that scarce a man may compass one of them wyth both his armes: and of the hollownesse or pith of them, they do make things to fishe with, and of ye wood which is more than a span thicke, they do make boates to travel with upon the river, and from knot to knot of these Canes it hath of hollownesse the length of a man.

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\(^6\) Cannibals.

\(^7\) In Hammond’s (1963: 12) translation, ‘he arrived at the city of Tenasserim, which is situated on the mouth of a river of the same name’.

\(^8\) Sapan wood was often called brazil wood. Jones (1857: 9) mistakenly thought Poggio’s Latin term referred to a bird and translated it as ‘a species of thrush’.

\(^9\) Presumably Conti was describing a species of giant bamboo.
There be in this river certaine beasts, having four feete, named Crocodiles, which live in the day time upon the land, and in the night in the water: and there be many kindes of fishe whiche are not founde among us, and upon the braunches of this river be manye fayre Gardens, habitations, and delectable grounde.

On eche side there groweth a kinde of fruite muche like unto a figge, whych is named Musa, and it is verye pleasante, and more sweete than honnye. Also there is another fruite, whyche we call Nuttes of India, and manye other diverse fruities.

Going from hence uppe the ryver three moneths, leaving behinde him foure famous Cities, he came to a goodlye famous Citie named Maarazia, where there is great plenty of the trees called Alloes, and plentie of golde, and silvr, Pearles, and precious stones.

And going from hence he directed hys waye unto the mountaines of the Orient, for to have Carbuncles, and travelling thirteene dayes, he returned firste to Cermon and afterwardes unto Buffetanya.

### Arakan and Crossing the Mountains to Ava

And after that, sayling a whole moneth by sea, he came unto the entring of the river Nican, and sayling upon it sixe dayes, he came unto the Citie also name Nican, and he went from thence seaventeene dayes journey throughe deserte mountaynes, and plaine countrey, the fifteene days of which the people of that countrey cal Clava, and sayling up this river a month, he came unto a famous great Citie called Ava, being 15 miles in compasse.

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10 Frampton was probably not familiar with the word banana, which was not yet widely established in English. He therefore used the Latin name for banana, from *Musa paradisiaca* or *Musa sapientum*.

11 Literal translation of the Latin *nuces indicae* for coconuts (Jones 1857: 10 n. 3).

12 Hammond’s (1963: 13) transliteration is Rachan. Jones’ (1857: 10) transliteration is Racha, and he identifies it as Arakan.

13 Jones’ (1857: 10) identification is the Youmadoung mountains.

14 Jones’ (1857: 11) transliteration is Dava; he identifies it as the Irrawaddy. Hammond (1963: 13) simply translates it as ‘Irrawaddy’.
Specialty Shops with Lascivious Things

[In this city he said there were several shops of ridiculous and lascivious things, about which I have written for the fun of it; in these shops only women sell things which we call ‘ringers’ because they ring out like bells; they are made of gold, silver or brass, and are as big as a small nut. The men, before they take a wife, go to these women (otherwise the marriage would be broken) who cut the skin of the virile member in many places and put between the skin and the flesh as many as twelve of these ‘ringers’ (according to their pleasure). After the member is sewn up, it heals in a few days. This they do to satisfy the wantonness of the women: because of these swellings, or tumour, of the member, the women have great pleasure in coitus. The members of some men stretch way down between their legs so that when they walk they ring out and may be heard But Nicolò, scorned by the women because he had a small member and invited to rectify this, was not willing through his pain to give others pleasure.]15

Elephants of War in Burma

This province is named of the inhabitantes Marcino.16 They have greate plenty of Elephantes, for their Kyng dothe keepe tenne thousand of them for the warres, and setteth upon every Elephantes backe a Castell,17 whyche may carrie eyghte or tenne men with Speares and Shields, or Bowes, or Crossebows.

15 The passage in square brackets is from Hammond (1963: 14), whose translation is the only complete one in English. Jones (1857) included the passage in his translation, but in tasteful Victorian fashion he veiled it in the original Latin, which he left untranslated. Frampton (1579) omitted it altogether. Purchas (1625: 11.396) included only a brief summary: ‘…they are much given to spend the Time in drinking and fellowship both Men and Women. There are certaine old women which get their living by selling Bels of gold, silver, brasse, of the bignesse of Nuts, which they put in mens yards betwixt the skin and flesh, when they are of age to use Women, and in short time cure the place; and the men much please themselves to heare the sound of them as they goe….’

16 Jones (1857: 11) transliterated the name as Macinus and thought it might mean Siam (which seems illogical in this context). Hammond (1963: transliterated the name as Macina but did not attempt to identify it.

17 Howdah.
Manner of Catching and Taming Elephants in Burma

He rehearsed that they toke the Elephantes in this manner, Plinie agreeth unto the like.\(^\text{18}\) They let the tame Elephants females goe unto the mountaynes, untill suche time as the wilde bee acquainted with them, for the male commonly doth content himselfe with the wild, by little and little, grasing, unto a small yard strongly walled, havyng two dores, one to come in at, and another to goe out at. The female when she is in at the first gate, she goeth out at the seconde, and the male following hir, the two dores be locked againste him, and then having him within, by certayne loupe holes made for the purpose, there commeth in to the number of a thousand men, every one with his snare in his hande, and one of those men presenteth himselfe before the Elephant, which runneth, thinking to kill the man, and then all those men runne unto the Elephant, fastning those snares on his feete, and when they be fastened, with great dilligence, they do tye the snares unto a great post, which is set there for that purpose, and they left him alone so three or four dayes, till he be more feeble, and after the space of fifteene dayes, they give him a little grasse, in the whiche time he waxeth tame, and then they do tye him among other tame Elephants, and carrie him aboute the Citie, and in tenne dayes he becommeth as gentle as one of the others. Also he sayde, they did tame them in this other wise, that they had and drave them unto a valley compassed round about, where they did put unto them the females that were tame, and being somewhat feeble with hunger, they drave them into strayter places made for the nonce, where they be made tame, and these the Kings do buy for their owne use.

Some are fedde with Rice, and Butter, and some with grasse. The wilde Elephants feede upon grasse, and upon the trees in the fields. He that hathe charge of them, ruleth them with a rode of yron, or a ring whiche he putteth round about his head. The Elephants have so much providence, that manye with their feete, pull away the Speares from their enimies, for that they shoulde not hurt those that be upon their backes.

The King rideth upon a white Elephant, which hath a chayne of golde about his necke, being long unto his feete, set full of many precious stones.

\(^{18}\) Book 8, chapter 8, of Pliny (Jones 1857: 11).
Marriage, Tattooing, and Religion in Burma

The men of this Countrey have but one wife a piece. Both men and women of this Countrey pricke themselves, making divers markes, and of divers coulours, on theyr bodies.

They be all Idolaters, and assoone as they do rise in the morning, they looke unto the Orient, holding their hands togethier, and worship.

Fruits of Burma

There is in that Countrey a certayne kinde of fruite, like unto the Orenge, whiche they doe call Cyeno,\(^{19}\) full of juice and sweetenesse. Also, there is a tree whiche they doe call Tall,\(^{20}\) whereupon they do write, for in all India, except it bee in the Citie of Combahita, they doe use no paper, and it beareth a fruite like unto the Turnep, but they are greate and tender like unto Gelly. It is pleasant in eating, but the ryne is more pleasant. There be in that Countrey daungersou Serpents,\(^{21}\) of sixe cubites in length, and as thicke as a man, having no feete. The people of that Countrey, have great delight in eating of those Serpents rosted. Also they do eate a certayne rede Ante as bigge as a crabbe, eseeming it much drest with Pepper. Also, there is a certaine Beast,\(^{22}\) having a head like unto a Hogge, the tayle like unto an Oxe, and a home in his forehead, like unto a Unicorne, but smaller by a cubite. He is in couloure and bignesse like unto the Elephante. He is an enimie of the Elephant. The utter part of his horns is good for medicines against poyson, and for this cause he is had in great price and estimation.

Buffaloes and Oxen in Upper Burma

At the end of this Region towards Catay, there be Oxen both blacke and white, had in great estimation. They have a mane and a tayle lyke unto a Horse, but more

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\(^{19}\) In Hammond’s (1963: 16) translation, ‘a kind of apple very similar to a pomegranate.’ Jones (1857: 13 n. 1) thought this was a reference to the jamboo apple, \textit{Eugenia jambos}, but is probably mistaken, since that fruit contains almost no juice at all.

\(^{20}\) Tall refers to the fan palm called \textit{tal} or \textit{tala} in Pali; the palmyra (\textit{Borassus flabelliformis}). Palm leaves for Buddhist manuscripts are made from the fronds.

\(^{21}\) Identified by Jones (1857: 13 n. 3) as pythons.

\(^{22}\) Rhinoceros.
hearie, and reacheth unto their feete. The heares of their tailes be very fine, and like unto feathers, and they be sold by weight, and therof they do make Moscaderos or Table clothes, for the Altares of their Godds, or for to cover the Table of their King, or for to trimme them with gold and silver, to cover ye buttocks or breasts of their Horses, for beautyfulnessse, and they esteeme then for principal ornaments. Also, the Knightes hang of these heares fast by the yron of their Speares, in token among them of singular nobilitie.

Cathay

Beyond the sayde Marcino, there is another Province more principal than the others, which is named Cataya, and he is Lord of it that is named the great Cane, whych is as muche to saye in their tong, as Emperoure, and the City royall, which is 28 miles in compasse, four square, is named Cymbalechya. There standeth in the middest thereof, a very faire and strong Pallace, that serveth for the King. At every corner standeth a round fortresse of 4 miles compasse, which serve for houses of all manner of armoure, and necessarie engines for the warre, and combat against any Citie. And from the Pallace royall there runneth a wall with arches unto every one of these fortresses, whereon the King may go unto any of them, if in case they would rise against him in the Citie. From thys Citie fifteene dayes journey, there standeth another Citie newly edifyed by the great Cane, and is named Nentay. It is in compasse thirtie miles, and is most populous of all the rest. And this Nicholas affirmeth, that the houses and Pallaces, and all other policies of these two Cities, seemed much like unto those of Italy, the men being modest and curteous, and of more riches than the other be.

Departure from Ava

Going from Ava upon a small river seaventene dayes journey, he came unto a Haven Citie, being ver greate, named Zeitano, and from thence he entred into another River: and in tenne dayes, he came unto another greate and populous
Citie, whiche is in compass 12000 paces,\(^{29}\) whiche is called Paonya, where he remayned foure moneths. In this Citie he founde Vines though they were few, for all India lacketh Vines and Wine, nor they make no wine of the Grapes. This grape growtheth among the trees, and after the Grape is cut, the first thing of all, if they do not sacrifice with it unto their Gods, it is by and by avoyded out of their sight. Also, there be in this Countrey Pines, Aberrycocks, Chestnuttes, and Mellons,\(^{30}\) although they be small and greene. Heere is whyte Sandalos or Saunders,\(^{31}\) and Camphora, or Camphire.

[Conti goes on to describe parts of the Indonesian archipelago and visits to Java, Borneo, and possibly Champa, before sailing back to the Malabar Coast and later to Europe.]

\(^{29}\) Hammond’s (1963: 18) translation is ‘12 miles’.
\(^{30}\) Hammond’s (1963: 18) translation is ‘pineapples, oranges, chestnuts, melons’.
\(^{31}\) Sandal wood.
Editor’s Note:

This translation of Hieronimo di Santo Stefano’s journey to Pegu in 1495-1496 was originally published in *India in the Fifteenth Century Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India*, edited by R. H. Major, in 1857. The account was written in the form of a letter to Messer Giovan Jacobo Mainer. Only those portions related to Burma have been included in the version below.

M.W.C.

ACCOUNT OF THE JOURNEY OF HIERONIMO DI SANTO STEFANO, A GENOVESE (1495-1496)

Hieronimo di Santo Stefano of Genoa
Translated by R. H. Major

We departed [from Coromandel] in another ship … and after twenty dayes reached a great city called Pegu. This part is called Lower India. There is a great lord, who possesses more than ten thousand elephants, and every year he breeds five hundred of them. This country is distant fifteen days’ journey by land from another, called Ava, in which grow rubies and many other precious stones. Our wish was to go to this place, but at that time the two princes were at war, so that no one was allowed to go from the one place to the other. Thus, we were compelled to sell the merchandise which we had in the said city of Pegu, which were of such a sort that only the lord of the city could purchase them. He is an idolater, like the before-mentioned. To him, therefore, we sold them. The price amounted to two thousand ducats, and as we wished to be paid we were compelled by reason of the troubles and intrigues occasioned by the aforesaid war, to remain there a year and a half, all which time we had daily to solicit at the house of the said lord.

While we were thus suffering from cold and from heat, with many fatigues and hardships, messer Hieronimo Adorno, who was a man of feeble constitution, and greatly reduced by these afflictions combined with an ancient malady which tried him sorely…yielded up his spirit to our Lord God. This was [on 27 December 1496]. [F]or many months I was so grieved and afflicted by his death…being consoled by some men of worth, I exerted myself to recover our property. In this, I succeeded, but with great trouble and expence, and I set sail in a ship to go to Malacca…
Editor’s Note:

Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna has left us an account of India and Burma from the very first decade of the sixteenth century, prior to the largescale of the First Taung-.ngu Dynasty that would follow in the decades ahead. It thus provides a valuable insight into a period for which many foreign sources are not available.

The original account, in Italian, was published at Rome on the 6th of December 1510 at the request of Lodovico de Henricis da Corneto of Vicenza by Stephano Guillireti de Loreno and Hercule de Nani, both of Bologna. The translation followed here was made by John Winter Jones in 1863, edited by G. P. Badger, and published under the title of “The Itinerary of Ludovico di Varthema of Bologna from 1502 to 1508,” the same title we use in the text below.

Only material relevant to Burma has been included in the following text. Additional editorial changes include additional paragraph breaks and the addition of subject headers for clarification.

M.W.C.

THE ITINERARY OF LUDOVICO DI VARTHEMA OF BOLOGNA FROM 1502 TO 1508

Ludovico di Varthema  
Translated by John Winter Jones

…We … arrived at a city which is called Cioromandel…which is a marine district, and distant from Colon … seven days’ journey by sea, more or less, according to the wind. This city is very large, and is not surrounded by walls, and is subject to the King of Narsinga. The said city is situated opposite to the island of Zaiλon … My companion disposed of some of his merchandise here, and inasmuch as they were at war with the King of Tarnassari we remained here only a few days, and then we took a ship with some other merchants … We passed a gulf of twelve or fifteen leagues … we arrived at an island called Zaiλon…[next] We arrived … at a place which is called Paleachet, which is subject to the King of Narsinga. This district is one of immense traffic in merchandise, and especially in jewels, for they
come here from Zailon and from Pego. There are also here many great Moorish merchants of all kinds of spices. We lodged in the house of a Moorish merchant, and we told him where we came from, and that we had many corals to sell, and saffron, and much figured velvet, and many knives. The said merchant, understanding that we had this kind of merchandize, was greatly pleased. This country is most abundant in everything which is produced in India, but no grain grows there. They have rice here in great abundance. Their laws, manner of living, dress, and customs, are the same as at Calicut, and they are a warlike people, although they have no artillery.

As this country was at fierce war with the King of Tarnassari, we could not remain here a very long time. But after remaining here a few days we took our route towards the city of Tarnassari, which is distant a thousand miles from here. At which city we arrived in fourteen days by sea.

Tenasserim

The city of Tarnassari is situated near to the sea: it is a level place and well watered, and has a good port, that is, a river on the side towards the north. The king of the city is a pagan, and is a very powerful lord. He is constantly fighting with the King of Narsinga and the King of Banghella. He has a hundred armed elephants, which are larger than any I ever saw. He always maintains 100,000 men for war, part infantry and part cavalry. Their arms consist of small swords and some sort of shields, some of which are made of tortoise-shell, and some like those of Calicut; and they have a great quantity of bows, and lances of cane, and some also of wood. When they go to war they wear a dress stuffed very full of cotton. The houses of this city are well surrounded by walls. Its situation is extremely good, after the manner of Christians, and good grain and cotton also grow there. Silk is also made there in large quantities. A great deal of brazil-wood is found there, fruits in great abundance, and some which resemble our apples and pears, some oranges, lemons, and citrons, and gourds in great abundance. And here are seen very beautiful gardens, with many delicate things in them.

In this country of Tarnassari there are oxen, cows, sheep, and goats in great quantities, wild hogs, stags, roebucks, wolves, cats which produce the civet, lions, peacocks in great multitudes, falcons, goss-hawks, white parrots, and also other kinds which are of seven very beautiful colours. Here there are hares and partridges, but not like ours. There is also here another kind of bird, one of prey, much larger than an eagle, of the beak of which, that is, of the upper part, they make sword-hilts, which beak is yellow and red, a thing very beautiful to behold. The colour of the said bird is black, red, and some feathers are white. There are produced here hens and cocks, the largest I ever saw, so much so that one of these
hens is larger than three of ours. In this country in a few days we had great pleasure from some things which we saw, and especially that every day in the street where the Moorish merchants abide they make some cocks fight, and the owners of these cocks bet as much as a hundred ducats on the one which will fight best. And we saw two fight for five hours continuously, so that at the last both remained dead. Here also is a sort of goat, much larger than ours, and which is much more handsome, and which always has four kids at a birth. Ten and twelve large and good sheep are sold here for a ducat. And there is another kind of sheep, which has horns like a deer; these are larger than ours, and fight most terribly. There are buffalos here, much more misshapen than ours. There are also great numbers of fish like ours. I saw here, however, a bone of a fish which weighed more than ten canton.

**Daily Life**

With respect to the manner of living of this city, the pagans eat all kinds of flesh excepting that of oxen, and they eat on the ground, without a cloth, in some very beautiful vessels of wood. Their drink is water, sweetened where possible. They sleep high from the ground, in good beds of cotton, and covered with silk or cotton. Then, as to their dress, they go all’ apostolica, with a quilted cloth of cotton or silk. Some merchants wear very beautiful shirts of silk or cotton; in general, they do not wear anything on their feet, excepting the Brahmins, who also wear on the head a cap of silk or camelot, which is two spans long. In the said cap they wear on the top a thing made like a hazelnut, which is worked all round in gold. They also wear two strings of silk, more than two fingers wide, which they hang round the neck. They wear their ears full of jewels and none on their fingers. The colour of the said race is semi-white, because the air here is cooler than it is in Calicut, and the seasons are the same as with us, and also the harvests.

**Foreigners and Conjugals**

The king of the said city does not cause his wife's virginity to be taken by the Brahmins as the King of Calicut does, but he causes her to be deflowered by white men, whether Christians or Moors, provided they be not pagans. Which pagans also, before they conduct their wives to their house, find a white man, of whatever country he may be, and take him to their house for this particular purpose, to make him deflower the wife. And this happened to us when we arrived in the said city.

We met by chance three or four merchants, who began to speak to my companion in this wise:
“Langalli ni pardesi” that is, “Friend, are you strangers?”

He answered: “Yes.”

Said the merchants: “Ethera nali ni banno,” that is, “How many days have you been in this country?”

We replied: “Mun nal gnad banno,” that is, “It is four days since we arrived.”

Another one of the said merchants said: “Biti banno gnan pigamanathon ondo,” that is, “Come to my house, for we are great friends of strangers;”

And we, hearing this, went with him. When we had arrived at his house, he gave us a collation, and then he said to us: “My friends, Patanci nale banno gnan penna periti in penna orangono panna panni curt,” that is, “Fifteen days hence I wish to bring home my wife, and one of you shall sleep with her the first night, and shall deflower her for me.”

We remained quite ashamed at hearing such a thing.

Then our interpreter said: “Do not be ashamed, for this is the custom of the country.” Then my companion hearing this said: “Let them not do us any other mischief, for we will satisfy you in this;” but we thought that they were mocking us.

The merchant saw that we remained undecided, and said: “O langal limaranconia ille ocha manezar irichenu,” that is, “Do not be dispirited, for all this country follows this custom.”

Finding at last that such was the custom in all this country, as one who was in our company affirmed to us, and said that we need have no fear, my companion said to the merchant that he was content to go through this fatigue.

The merchant then said: “I wish you to remain in my house, and that you, your companions and goods, be lodged here with me until I bring the lady home.”

Finally, after refusing, we were obliged to yield to his caresses, and all of us, five in number, together with all our things, were lodged in his house. Fifteen
days from that time this merchant brought home his wife, and my companion slept with her the first night. She was a young girl of fifteen years, and he did for the merchant all that he had asked of him. But after the first night, it would have been at the peril of his life if he had returned again, although truly the lady would have desired that the first night had lasted a month. The merchants, having received such a service from some of us, would gladly have retained us four or five months at their own expense, for all kinds of wares cost very little money, and also because they are most liberal and very agreeable men.

Death

All the Brahmins and the king are burnt after death, and at that time a solemn sacrifice is made to the devil. And then they preserve the ashes in certain vases made of baked earth, vitrified like glass, which vases have the mouth narrow like a small scutella. They then bury this vase with the ashes of the burnt body within their houses. When they make the said sacrifice, they make it under some trees, after the manner of Calicut. And for burning the dead body they light a fire of the most odoriferous things that can be found, such as aloes-wood, benzoin, sandal-wood, brazil-wood, storax and amber, incense, and some beautiful branches of coral, which things they place upon the body, and while it is burning all the instruments of the city are sounding. In like manner, fifteen or twenty men, dressed like devils, stand there and make great rejoicing. And his wife is always present, making most exceedingly great lamentations, and no other woman. And this is done at one or two o'clock of the night.

In this city of Tarnassari, when fifteen days have passed after the death of the husband, the wife makes a banquet for all her relations and all those other husband. And then they go with all the relations to the place where the husband was burnt, and at the same hour of the night. The said woman puts on all her jewels and other objects in gold, all that she possesses. And then her relations cause a hole to be made of the height of a human being, and around the hole they put four or five canes, around which they place a silken cloth, and in the said hole they make a fire of the above-mentioned things, such as were used for the husband. And then the said wife, when the feast is prepared, eats a great deal of betel, and eats so much that she loses her wits, and the instruments of the city are constantly sounding, together with the above-mentioned men clothed like devils, who carry fire in their mouths, as I have already told you in Calicut. They also offer a sacrifice to Deumo. And the said wife goes many times up and down that place, dancing with the other women. And she goes many times to the said men clothed like devils, to entreat and tell them to pray the Deumo that he will be pleased to accept her as his own. And there are always present here a great many
women who are her relations. Do not imagine, however, that she is unwilling to do this; she even imagines that she shall be carried forthwith into heaven. And thus running violently of her own free will, she seizes the abovementioned cloth with her hands, and throws herself into the midst of the fire. And immediately her relations and those most nearly allied to her fall upon her with sticks and with balls of pitch, and this they do only that she may die the sooner. And if the said wife were not to do this, she would be held in like estimation as a public prostitute is among us, and her relations would put her to death. When such an event takes place in this country the king is always present, however, those who undergo such a death are the most noble of the land: all, in general, do not do thus.

I have seen in this city of Tarnassari another custom, somewhat less horrible than the before mentioned. There will be a young man who will speak to a lady of love, and will wish to give her to understand that he really is fond of her, and that there is nothing he would not do for her. And, discoursing with her in this wise, he will take a piece of rag well saturated with oil, and will set fire to it, and place it on his arm on the naked flesh, and whilst it is burning he will stand speaking with that lady, not caring about his arm being burnt, in order to show that he loves her, and that for her he is willing to do every great thing.

**Justice**

He who kills another in this country is put to death, the same as in Calicut. With respect to conveying and holding, it is necessary that it should appear by writing or by witnesses. Their writing is on paper like ours, not on the leaves of a tree like that of Calicut. And then they go to a governor of the city, who administers justice for them summarily.

However, when any foreign merchant dies who has no wife or children, he cannot leave his property to whomsoever he pleases, because the king wills to be his heir. (And in this country after his death his son remains king.) And when any Moorish merchant dies, very great expense is incurred in odoriferous substances to preserve the body, which they put into wooden boxes and then bury it, placing the head towards the city of Mecca, which comes to be towards the north. If the deceased have children, they are his heirs.

**Water Conveyance**

These people make use of very large ships and of various kinds, some of which are made flat bottomed, because such can enter into places where there is not much
water. Another kind are made with prows before and behind, and they carry two helms and two masts, and are uncovered.

There is also another kind of large ship which is called giunchi, and each of these is of the tonnage of one thousand butts, on which they carry some little vessels to a city called Melacha, and from thence they go with these little vessels for small spices to a place which you shall know when the proper time comes.

**Bengal**

Let us return to my companion, for he and I had a desire to see farther on. After we had been some days in this said city, and being, indeed, tired of that same service of which you have heard above, and having sold some of our merchandise we took the route towards the city of Banghella [Satgaon in Bengal], which is distant from Tarnassari seven hundred miles, at which we arrived in eleven days by sea. This city was one of the best that I had hitherto seen, and has a very great realm. The sultan of this place is a Moor, and maintains two hundred thousand men for battle on foot and on horse; and they are all Mahommedans; and he is constantly at war with the King of Narsingha. This country abounds more in grain, flesh of every kind, in great quantity of sugar, also of ginger, and of great abundance of cotton, than any country in the world. And here there are the richest merchants I ever met with. Fifty ships are laden every year in this place with cotton and silk stuffs, which stuffs are these, that is to say, bairam, namone, lizati, ciantar, doazar, and sinabaff. These same stuffs go through all Turkey, through Syria, through Persia, through Arabia Felix, through Ethiopia, and through all India. There are also here very great merchants in jewels, which come from other countries.

**Nestorians**

We also found some Christian merchants here. They said that they were from a city called Sarnau, and had brought for sale silken stuffs, and aloes-wood, and benzoin, and musk. Which Christians said that in their country there were many lords also Christians, but they are subject to the great Khan Cathai.

As to the dress of these Christians, they were clothed in a xebec [jerkin] made with folds, and the sleeves were quilted with cotton. And on their heads they wore a cap a palm and a half long, made of red cloth.

These same men are as white as we are, and confess that they are Christians, and believe in the Trinity, and likewise in the Twelve Apostles, in the four Evangelists, and they also have baptism with water. But they write in the contrary way to us, that is, after the manner of Armenia. And they say that they
keep the Nativity and the Passion of Christ, and observe our Lent and other vigils in the course of the year. These Christians do not wear shoes, but they wear a kind of breeches made of silk, similar to those worn by mariners, which breeches are all full of jewels, and their heads are covered with jewels. And they eat at a table after our fashion, and they eat every kind of flesh. These people also said that they knew that on the confines of the Rumi, that is, of the Grand Turk, there are very great Christian kings. After a great deal of conversation with these men, my companion at last showed them his merchandise, amongst which there were certain beautiful branches of large coral.

When they had seen these branches they said to us, that if we would go to a city where they would conduct us, that they were prepared to secure for us as much as 10,000 ducats for them, or as many rubies as in Turkey would be worth 100,000. My companion replied that he was well pleased, and that they should depart immediately thence.

The Christians said: “In two days’ time from this a ship will sail which goes towards Pego, and we have to go with it; if you are willing to come we will go together.”

Hearing this we set ourselves in order, and embarked with the said Christians and with some other Persian merchants. And as we had been informed in this city that these Christians were most faithful, we formed a very great friendship with them. But before our departure from Banghella, we sold all the rest of the merchandise, with the exception of the corals, the saffron, and two pieces of rose-coloured cloth of Florence. We left this city, which I believe is the best in the world, that is, for living in. In which city the kinds of stuffs you have heard of before are not woven by women, but the men weave them.

**Pegu**

We departed thence with the said Christians, and went towards a city which is called Pego, distant from Banghella about a thousand miles. On which voyage we passed a gulf towards the south, and so arrived at the city of Pego.

The city of Pego is on the mainland, and is near to the sea. On the left hand of this, that is, towards the east, there is a very beautiful river, by which many ships go and come. The king of this city is a pagan. Their faith, customs, manner of living and dress, are after the manner of Tarnassari; but with respect to their colour, they are somewhat more white. And here, also, the air is somewhat more cold. Their seasons are like ours. This city is walled, and has good houses and palaces.
built of stone, with lime. The king is extremely powerful in men, both foot and horse, and has with him more than a thousand Christians of the country which has been above mentioned to you. And he gives to each, for pay, six golden *pardai* per month and his expenses. In this country there is a great abundance of grain, of flesh of every kind, and of fruits of the same as at Calicut. These people have not many elephants, but they possess great numbers of all other animals; they also have all the kinds of birds which are found at Calicut. But there are here the most beautiful and the best parrots I had ever seen.

Timber grows here in great quantities, long, and I think the thickest that can possibly be found. In like manner I do not know if there can be found in the world such thick canes as I found here, of which I saw some which were really as thick as a barrel. Civet-cats are found in this country in great numbers, three or four of which are sold for a ducat. The sole merchandise of these people is jewels, that is, rubies, which come from another city called Capellan, which is distant from this thirty days' journey; not that I have seen it, but by what I have heard from merchants. You must know that in the said city, a large pearl and diamond are worth more here than with us, and also an emerald. When we arrived in this country, the king was fifteen days' journey distant, fighting with another who was called King of Ava.

Seeing this, we determined to go and find the king where he was, in order to give him these corals. And so we departed thence in a ship made all of one piece, and more than fifteen or sixteen paces long. The oars of this vessel were made of cane. Understand well in what manner: where the oar takes the water it was cloven, and they insert a flat piece of board fastened by cords, so that the said vessel went with more power than a brigantine. The mast of it was a cane as thick as a barrel where they put in the provisions. In three days we arrived at a village where we found certain merchants, who had not been able to enter into the said city of Ava on account of the war. Hearing this, we returned with them to Pego, and five days afterwards the king returned to the said city, who had gained a very great victory over his enemy. On the second day after the return of the king, our Christian companions took us to speak with him.

The King of Pegu

Do not imagine that the King of Pego enjoys as great a reputation as the King of Calicut, although he is so humane and domestic that an infant might speak to him, and he wears more rubies on him than the value of a very large city, and he wears them on all his toes. And on his legs he wears certain great rings of gold, all full of the most beautiful rubies; also his arms and his fingers all full. His ears hang down half a palm, through the great weight of the many jewels he wears there, so that
seeing the person of the king by a light at night, he shines so much that he appears to be a sun. The said Christians spoke with him, and told him of our merchandise. The king replied: “That we should return to him the day after the next, because on the next day he had to sacrifice to the devil for the victory which he had gained.” When the time mentioned was past, the king, as soon as he had eaten, sent for the said Christians, and for my companion, in order that he might carry to him his merchandise. When the king saw such beautiful corals he was quite astonished and greatly pleased; for, in truth, among the other corals there were two branches, the like of which had never before entered India.

This king asked what people we were.

The Christians answered: “Sir, these are Persians.”

Said the king to the interpreter: “Ask them if they are willing to sell these things.”

My companions answered: “That the articles were at the service of his highness.”

Then the king began to say: “That he had been at war with the King of Ava for two years, and on that account he had no money; but that if we were willing to barter for so many rubies, he would amply satisfy us.”

We caused him to be told by these Christians that we desired nothing further from him than his friendship,—that he should take the commodities and do whatever he pleased. The Christians repeated to him what my companion had charged them to say, by telling the king that he might take the corals without money or jewels.

He hearing this liberality answered: “I know that the Persians are very liberal, but I never saw one so liberal as this man;” and he swore by God and by the devil that he would see which would be the more liberal, he or a Persian. And then he desired one of his confidential servants to bring him a certain little box which was two palms in length, worked all round in gold, and was full of rubies, within and without. And when he had opened it, there were six separate divisions, all full of different rubies; and he placed it before us, telling us we should take what we wished.

My companion answered: “O, sir, you show me so much kindness, that by the faith which I bear to Mahomet I make you a present of all these things.
And know, sir, that I do not travel about the world to collect property, but only to see different people and different customs.”

The king answered: “I cannot conquer you in liberality, but take this which I give you.” And so he took a good handful of rubies from each of the divisions of the said casket, and gave them to him.

These rubies might be about two hundred, and in giving them he said: “Take these for the liberality you have exercised towards me.”

And in like manner he gave to the said Christians two rubies each, which were estimated at a thousand ducats, and those of my companions were estimated at about one hundred thousand ducats. Wherefore by this he may be considered to be the most liberal king in the world, and every year he has an income of about one million in gold. And this because in his country there is found much lacca, a good deal of sandal-wood, very much brazil-wood, cotton and silk in great quantities, and he gives all his income to his soldiers.

Final Observations

The people in this country are very sensual. After some days, the said Christians took leave for themselves and for us. The king ordered a room to be given to us, furnished with all that was requisite for so long as we wished to remain there; and so it was done. We remained in the said room five days. At this time there arrived news that the King of Ava was coming with a great army to make war upon him, on hearing which, this one went to meet him half way with a great many men, horse and foot. The next day we saw two women burnt alive voluntarily, in the manner as I have described it in Tarnassari.
Editor's note:

Cesar Fedrici’s travelled in India, Southeast Asia and the Middle East in the 1560s-1580s and his account has been immensely influential in the literature. One reason for this, is that it is not given to the hyperbole of the near-contemporary account of Mendez Pinto and because of its great attention to detail concerning the state, its administrators, and trade at Pegu. Unfortunately Fedrici, who spent a considerable amount of time in Pegu and to a lesser extent in Martaban, in the late 1560s, does not provide us with comparable information on local society, although he still provides some valuable information in this area.

Fedrici was presumably a Venetian, from where he says he began his travels, and his account was originally published in Italian. The most complete version of his account published in English is the original publication of Thomas Hickok’s translation (London: Richard Jones, 18 June 1588), under the title of The Voyage and Travaile: Of M. Caesar Frederick, Merchant of Venice, Into the East India, the Indies, and Beyond, Wherein are Contained Very Pleasant and Rare Matters, With the Customes and Rites of Those Countries. Also, Herein are Discovered the Merchandises and Commodities of those Countreyes, aswell the Aboundance of Goulde and Silver, as Spices, Drugges, Pearles, and Other Jewelles. Fortunately, the British Library has a complete and clear copy of this early book. The Hickok translation is the translation used by later editors. However, one obstacle in making full use of Fedrici is the way in which his account was cut by different editors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and published in various extracts. Even the two earliest compilations that incorporated Hickock’s translation altered the text and unconsciously incorporated copyist’s errors. For example, those who questioned, as asserted by these later editions, whether Tenasserim did indeed supply nutmeg to the world market, will find that “nuts” in the Hickok original was transformed into “nutmeg.” The first of the two early republications is the first collection of travels edited by Richard Hakluyt. This was published in London in 1600 within the third volume of Hakluyt’s The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation made by sea or overland to the Remote and Farthest Distant quarters of the Earth at any time within the compass of these 1600 years (hereafter Voyages). The more commonly used version of Federici, however, is the later and shorter version edited by Samuel Purchas and published as “Extracts of Master Cæsar Fredericke his eighteene yeeres Indian Observations” in the Hakluytus Posthunum or Purchas his Pilgrimes.(hereafter Hakluytus). Not only were Hakluyt’s errors repeated, more were added, and substantial sections of the account related to Burma were deleted.
The account reproduced below attempts to provide as complete a version of Federici’s account of Pegu as possible, based on the Hakluyt and Purchas editions, but checked for major errors against the original Hickok translation. The text included below only includes the sections relevant to Burma and Southeast Asia, for information on trade in India and the Middle East, the reader is directed to the Voyages or Hakluytus Posthumus, or the Hickok original (the latter may be republished here in a later issue).

M.W.C.

ACCOUNT OF PEGU

Cæsar Fedrici of Venice
Translated from the Italian by Master Thomas Hickock

Cæsar Frederick to the Reader

I having (Gentle Reader) for the space of eightene yeeres continually coasted & traveiled as it were, all the East Indies, and many other countreyes beyonde the Indies, wherein I have had both good and yll successe, in my travells. I have seen & understood many things worthy the noting, and to bee knowne to all the world: the which were never as yet written of any: I thought it good (seeing the almighty had given me grace, after so long Perilles in passing such a long voyage,) to returne into my owne countrey, the noble Citie of Venice I say, I thought it good, as brefely as I could, to write and set forth this voyage made by mee, with the mervellous things I have seene in my travels in the Indies. The mightie Princes that govern those Cuntreyes, Their Religion, and faith that they have, the rytes and customs which they use, and live by, of the divers successe that hapned unto me, and howe many of these cuntryes are abounding with spices, drugs, and jewels, giving also profitable advertisement, to all those that have a desire to make such a voyage. And because that the whole world may more commodiously rejoice at this my travell, I have caused it to bee printed in this order; and nowe I present it unto you (Gentle and loving Readers) to whome for the varieties of thinges herein conteined, I hope that it shall bew with great delight received, and thus God of his goodnesse keepe you.

Cæsar Frederick
A Voyage to the East Indies, and Beyond the Indies, &c.

IN the yeere of our Lorde God 1563, I Caesar Frederick, being in Venice, and very desirous to see the Easte partes of the worlde: I shipped my selfe in a shippe called the Gradaige of Venice with certaine merchandise, governed by M. Jacamo Vatica, which was bound to Cypris with his ship, with whom I went, and when wee were arived in Cipris, I left that ship and went in a lesser to Tripoly in Soria, where I stayed a while. Afterward I tooke my journey to Alexo, & there I acquainted my selfe with merchants of Armenia, and Moores: that were Merchants, and consorted to go with them to Ornus, and we departed from Alepo, and in two dayes journy and a halfe, we came to a Citie called Bir...

In my voyage, returning in the yeere of our Lord God, one thousand, five hundred, sixtyn and sixe [1566], I went from Goa unto Malacca, in a Shippe or Galion of the King of Portingales [Portugal], which went unto Banda for to lade Nutmegs and Maces: from Goa to Malacca, one thousand eight hundred miles we passed within the Island Zeyland [Ceylon], and went through the channell of Nicubar, or else through the channell of Sombrero, which is by the middle of the Island of Sumtara, called Taprobana: & from Nicuber to Pigue [Pegu] is as it were, a rowe or chaine of an infinite number of Islands, of which many are enhabited, with wilde people, and they call those Islands the Islands of Andeman, and they call their people savage or wilde, because they eate one another: also these Islands have warre one with another, for they have small Barkes, and with them they take one an other, and so eate one an other: and if by evill chaunce any Ship be loste on those Islands, as many have beene, there is not one man of those Ships lost there that escapeth uneaten or unslaire.

These people have not any acquaintan ce with any other people, neither have they trade with any, but live onely of such fruietes as those Islands yeeldeth: and if any Ship come neere unto that place or coast as they passe that way, as in my voyage it happened, as I came from Malaca through the channell of Sombrero, there came two of theyr barkes neere unto our shippe laden with fruite, as with Mouces which we call Adams Apples, with fresh nuttes, and with a fruite called Inany: which fruite is lyke to our Turnops, but is verye sweete and good to eate: they would not come into the shippe for any thing that wee could doe: neither would they take any money for theyr fruite: but they would truchke for olde shirtses or pieces of old linnen breeches, these ragges they let Downe with a rope into their bark unto them, and looke what they thought those things to bee worth, so much fruite they would make fast to the rope and let us hale it in, and it was tolde me that at sometimes a man shall have for an olde shirte a good peece of Ambar.
Sumatra

This Island of Sumatra is a great Island and devyded and governed by many kings, and devided into many channels, where through there is a passage: upon the head land towards the West is the kingdome of Assi and governed by a Moore king, this king is of great force and strength as he that beside his great kingdome, hath many foists and Gallies. In his kingdome growth great store of Pepper, Ginger, Benjamin, he is a bitter enemie to the Portingale and hath divers times beene at Malacca to fight against it, and hath done great harme to the bowzouges thereof, but the Cittie alwaie defended ... valientlie, and with theyr ordinaunce dyd great spoyle to hys Campe, at length, I came to the Cittie of Malacca.

Malacca

Malacca is a Cittie of mervelous great trade of all kind of merchandize, which commeth from divers parts, because that all the Ships that saile in these seas, both great and small, are bound to touch at Malacca, to paye their custome there, although they unlaide nothing at all as we do at Elsinor: and if by night they escape away, and pay not their custome, then they fall into greater danger after: for if they come into the Indies and have not the seate of Malacca, they paye Double custome, I have not passed farther then Malacca towards the East, but that which I will speake of here, is by good information of them that have beene there. [It] be sailing from Malacca towards the East, is not common for all men, as China and Giapan, and so forwards to goe who will, but onl ye for the king of Portingale and his nobles, with leave granted unto them of the king to make such voyages, or to the jurisdiction of the captaine of Malacca, where he expecteth to know what voyages they make from Malacca thereth, and these are the kings voyages, that every year, ether Departeth from Malacca, two Galions of the kings, one of them goeth to the Muluccos to lade Cloves, and the other goeth to Banda to lade Nutmegs and Maces. These two Galiens are laden for the king, neither doo they carrye anye particular mans goods, saving the portage of the Mariners and Soldiors, and for this cause, they are not voyages for Merchants, because that going thether he shall not have where to lade his goods of returne, and besides this the Captaine will not carrye anye Merchant for either of these two places. There goeth small Ships of the Mores thether, which come from the coast of Java, and change of guild their commodities in the kingdom of Assa, and these be Maces, Cloves, and Nutmegs, which go for the Straights of Meca. The voyages that the king of Portingale granteth to his nobles are these, of China and Giapan: from China to Giapan, and from Giapan to China, and from China to the Indies, and the voyaige of Bengaluco Sonda, with the lading of fine cloth, and every sort of of Bumbast cloth. Sonda is
an I[s]land of the Mores, naere to the coast of Giava, and there they lade Pepper for China. It be ships that goeth everye yeare from the Indies to China is called the Ship of Drugs, because she carieth divers Drugs of Cambaya: but the greatest part of hir lading is silver. From Malacca to China is 1800 miles, and from China to Giapan, goeth every yeare a great ship of great importance, laden with silke, which for returne of their silke bring bars of Silver which they truck in China, that is diffant betweene China and Giapan 2400 miles, and in this waye there is divers I[s]lands, not very big, in which the friers of S. Paule by the helpe of God, make many Christians there like to themselves: from these I[s]lands hetherwards is not yet Discoverd, for the great sholdness of the Sands that they find. The Portingales have made a small Citie neere unto the coast of China called Macha, whose church and houses are of wood, and hath a Bishoprike: but the customes are of the king of China, and they go and pay it at a Cittie called Canton, which is a Cittie of great importance, and verye beautifull, two dayes journeye and a halfe from Macho, which people are Gentiles, and are so jealious and fearefull, that they would not have a stranger to put his foote within their land, so that when the Portingales goe thether to paye their custome, and to buye their Merchandise, they will not consent that they shall lye or lodge within the Cittie, but sendeth them forth into the subburbs....

Pegu’s Conquest of Siam

Sion was the Imperiale seate, and a great Citie, but in the yeere of our Lord God 1567. it was taken by the king of Pegu, which king made a voyage or came by land foure moneths journey with an armie of men through his land, and the number of his armie was a Milion and foure hundreth thousand men of warre: when he came to the Citie, he gave assault to it, and besieged it twentye and one moneths before he could winne it, with great losse of his people, this I know, for that I was in Pegu six moneths after his departure, and sawe when that his officers that were in Pegu, sent five hundreth thousand men of warre to furnish the places of them that were slaine and lost in that assault: yet for all this, if there had not beene treason against the Citie, it had not beene lost, for on a night there was one of the gates set open, through the which with great trouble the King gat into the Citye, and became governour of Sion: and when the Emperour saw that he was betraid, and that his enimie was in the Citie, he poysoned himeselfe, and the wives and children, friend and noblemen, that were not slaine in the first affront of the entrance into the Citie, were all carried captives into Pegu, where I was at the comming home of the king with his triumphes and victorie, which coming home and returning from the warres was a goodlye sight to behold, to see the Elephants come home in a square, laden
with Gold, Silver, Jewels, and with Noble men and women that were taken
prisoners in that Citie.

Now to returne to my Voyage: I departed from Malacca in a great Shippe
which went for S. Tome, being a Cittie situate on the coast of Chiriamandell, and
because the captaine of the castels of Malacca having understanding pro aduyzo
[by advice], that the King of Assi would come with a great armie and power of
men against them, therefore upon this he would not give licence that anye Ships
should Depart: Wherefore in this Shippe we departed in the night, without making
any provision of our water: and wee were in that Shippe fowr [four] hundreth and
odde men: wee Departed from thence with Intention to goe to an I[s]land to take in
water, but the windes were so contrary, that they woulde not suffer us to fetch it, so
that by this meanes wee were two and forty Dayes in the Sea as it were lost, and we
were driven too and fro.¹

Tenasserim

From the Port of Pequineo I went to Cochim, and from Cochim to Malaca, from
whence I departed for Pegu eight hundred miles distant. That voyage was wont to
bee made in twentie five or thirtie dayes, but wee were foure moneths, and at the
end of three moneths our Shippe was without victualles. The Pilot tolde us that wee
were by his altitude [not farre] from a Citie called Tenassiry, a citie in the
kingdome of Pegu, and these his wordes were not true, but we were (as it were) in
the middle of manie I[s]lands, and manie uninhabited rocks, and there were also
some Portugals that affirmed that they knew the Land, and knewe also where the
Citie of Tenassiry was.

Which Citie of right belongeth to the kingdome of Sion, which is situate on
a great river side, which commeth out of the kingdome of Sion: and where this
river runneth into the sea, there is a village called Mergy, in whose harbour everie
yere there ladeth some Shippes with Verzina, Nypa, and Benjamin, a few cloves,
nuts & maces which come from the coast of Sion, but the greatest merchandise
there is verzina and nypa, which is an excellent Wine, which is had in the flowze of
a tree called Nyper. Whose liquor they distill, and so make an excellent drincke
cleere as Christall, good to the mouth, and better to the stomacke, and it hath an
excellent gentle virtue, that if one were rotten with the french pocks, drinking good
store of this, hee shall bee whole againe, and I have seen it proved, because that
when I was in Cochin, ther was a friende of mine, that his nose began to droppe
away with that disease, and was counselled of the Doctors of Phisicke that he
should goe to Tenassary at the time of the new wines, and that hee should drinke

¹ What follows is an account of India’s eastern seaboard, which we omit here. M.W.C.
of the nyper wine, night and day, as much as he could before it was distilled, which at that time is most delicate, but after that it is distilled, it is more stronger, and [if you] drincke much of it, it will fume into the heade with drunkennesse. This man went thither, and did so, and I have seene him after with a good colour and sounde. This Wine is verie much esteemed in the Indies, and for that it is brought so farre off, it is very deare: in Pegu ordinarily it is good cheape, because it is neerer to the place where they make it, and there is everie yeere great quantitie made thereof.

**Difficulties of Journey**

And returning to my purpose, I say, being amongst these rockes, and farre from the land which is over against Tenassary, with great scarcitie of victualles, and that by the saying of the Pylate and two Portugalles, holding them firme that we were in front of the aforesaide harbour, we determ ined to goe thither with our boat and fetch victualles, and that the Shippe shoulde stay for us in a place assigned.

We were twenty and eight persons in the boat that went for victualles, and on a day about twelve of the clocke wee went from the Ship, assuring our selves to be in the harbour before night in the aforesaide port, wee rowed all that day, and a great part of the next day, and all the next day without finding harbour, or any signe of good landing, and this came to passe through the evill counsel of the two Portugalles that were with us.

For wee had overshot the harbour and left it behinde us, in such wise that wee had loste the lande inhabited with the Ship, and we twentie eight men had no manner of victuall with us in the boate, but it was the Lords will that one of the Mariners, had brought a little Ryce with him in the boat to barter away for some other thing, and it was not so much but that three or fowre men would have eaten it at a meale: I tooke the government of this Ryce, promising that by the helpe of God that Ryce should be nourishment for us until, it plesed God to send us to some place that was enhabited: and when I slept I put the ryce into my bosome because they shoulde not rob it from me: we were nine dayes rowing alongst the coast, without finding any thing but Countries uninhabited, and deserts Is[land], where if we had found but grasse it would have seemed Sugar unto us, but wee coulde not finde any, yet wee founde a fewe leaves of a tree, and they were so hard that we could not chew them, we had Water and Wood sufficient, and as we rowed, we could goe but by flowing Water, for when it was ebbing Water, we made fast our boat to the bancke of one of those Is[lands].

And in these nine dayes that we rowed, wee found a cave or nest of Tortugaes [Tortoise] egges, wherein was a hundred & fortie fowre egges, the which was a great helpe unto us: these egges are as big as a hennes egge, and have no shell about them but a tender Skinne, everie day wee sodde a Kettle full of them
egges, with a handfull of ryce in the broth thereof: it pleased God that at the ende of nine dayes, wee discovered certaine fisher men fishing with small barkes, and wee rowed towards them, with a good cheere, for I think there were never men more glad then we were, for we were so sore afflicted with penurie that we could skarce stand on our legs. Yet according to the order that we set for our ryce, when we saw those fisher men, there was left sufficient for foure dayes. The first village that we came to, was in the gulfe of Tavay, under the king of Pegu, whereas wee founde greate store of victualles: then for two or three dayes after our arrivall there, wee woulde eate but little meate, anie of us; and yet for all this, we were at the point of death the most part of us.

Martaban

From Tavay to Martavan in the kingdome of Pegu, are seventie two miles. We laded our boate with victuals which was abundantly sufficient for sixe monethes, from whence wee departed for the porte and Citie of Martavan, where in short time we arrived, but wee founde not our Ship there as we had thought we should, from whence presently wee made out two barkes to goe to looke for her. And they found her in great calamitie, and neede of Water, being at an ancker with a contrarie winde, and came very yll to passe, because that shee wanted her boate a moneth which should have made her provision of wood and water; the ship also by the grace of God arived safely in the aforesaid port of Martavan.

We found in the Citie of Martavan ninetie Portugalles of Merchantes and other base men, which had fallen at difference with the Rector or Governour of the Citie, and for this cause, that certaine vagabondes of the Portugalles had slayne five falchines of the kinges of Pegu, which chaunced about a moneth after that the king of Pegu was gone with a million and foure hundred thousand men to conquer the kingdome of Sion, they have for custome in this country and kingdome, that the king being wheresoever his pleasure is to be out of this kingdom, that every fifteene dayes there goeth from Pegu a caravan of falchines, with every one a basket on his heade full with some fruities or other delicates of refreshings, and with cleane clothes: it chaunced that this caravan passing by Martavan, and resting themselves there a night, there happened betwenee the Portugalles and them: wordes of dispight, and from words to blowes, and because it was thought that the Portugals had the worse, the night following, when the falchines were a sleepe with their companie, the Portugalles went and cut off five of their heads.

Nowe there is a Lawe in Pegu, that whosoever killeth a man, hee shall buy the shed bloud with his monie, according to the estate of the person that is slaine, but these falchines being the servauntes of the king, the Retors durst not doe any thing in the matter, without the consent of the king, because it was necessarie that
the king should knowe of such a matter. When the king had knowledge thereof, he gave commandement that the malifactors shoulde bee kept untill his comming home, and then he would duely minister justice, but the capitaine of the Portugalles would not deliver those men, but rather set himselfe with all the rest in armes, and went everie day through the citie marching with the Drumme and ancient [Ensignes] displayed. For at that time the Citie was emptie of men, by reason they were gone al to the warres and in businesse of the King: in the middest of this rumour wee came thether, and I thought it a straunge thing to see the Portugalles use such insolencie in another mans Cittie.

Dealings with the Retor at Martaban\(^2\)

And I stoode in doubte of that which came to passe, & would not unlade my goodes because that they were more surer in the ship then on the land, the greatest part of the lading was the owners of the ship, who was in Malacca, yet there were divers merchants there, but their goods were of small importance, al those merchants told me that they woulde not unlade any of their goodes there, unlese I would unlade first, yet after they left my counsell & followed their own, and put their goods a land and lost it everie whit.

The Rector with the customer sent for me, and demaunded why I put not my goods a lande, and payd my custome as other men did? To whom I answered, that I was a merchant that was newly come thither, & seeing such disorder amongst the Portugalles, I doubted the losse of my goodes which cost me very dear, with the sweate of my face, and for this cause I was determined not to put my goodes a lande, untill such time as his honour would assure me in the name of the king, that I shoulde have no losse although there came harme to the Portugalles, that neither I nor my goodes should have any hurt, because I had neither part nor any difference with them in this rumor: my reason sounded well in the Retors eares, and presently commaunded to cal the Bargits, which are as Counsellers of the Citie & there they promised me on the kings head or in the behalfe of the king, that neither I nor my goodes should have any harme, but that we should be safe & sure: of which promise there was made publike notes, and then I sent for my goods and had them a land, and payd my custome, which is in that countrie ten in the hundreth of the same goodes, and for my more securitie I tooke a house right against the Retors house.

The Captain of the Portugalles, and all the Portugal merchants were put out of the Citie, and I with twentie and two poore men which were officers in the ship. We had our dwelling in the Citie. After this, the Gentils devised to be revenged of the Portugales; but they woulde not put it in execution untill such time as our small

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\(^2\) This section is included in *Voyages* but not in *Hakluytus*. M.W.C.
Shippe had discharged all her goodes, and then the next night following came from Pegu fowre thousand souldiers with some Elephants of Warre; and before that they made anie rumor in the citie, that the Retor sent, and gave commaundement to all Portugalles that were in the Citie, when they heard anie rumour or noyse, that for any thing they should not goe out of their houses, and as they tendered their own health. Then fowre houres in the night I heard a great rumour and noyse of men of Warre, with Eliphants which threwe downe the doores of the Ware-houses of the Portugalles, and their houses of wood and strawe, in the which rumor there were some Portugalles wounded, and one of them slaine; and others without making proffe of their manhoode, which the daye before did so bragge, at that time: put themselves to flight most shamefullye, and saved them selves a boorde of little Shippes, that were at an ancker in the harbour, and some that were in their beddes fledde away naked, and that night they caried away all the Portugalles goods out of the suburbes into the Citie, and those Portugalles that had their goodes in the suburbes with all.

After this the Portugalles that were fled into the shippes to save themselves, tooke a newe courage to themselves, and came a lande and set fire on the houses in the suburbs, which houses being made of boord and straw, and a fresh winde; in small time were burnt and consumed, with which fire halfe the Citie had like to beene burnt; when the Portugales had done this, they were without all hope to recover any part of their goodes againe, which goods might amount to the summe of sixteene thousande duckets, which, if they had not set fire to the towne, they might have had their goodes given them gratis.

Then the Portugalles having understanding that this thing was not done by the consent of the king, but by his lieutenant and the Retor of the citie were verie yll content, knowing that they had made a greate fault, yet the next morning following, the Portugalles began to batter, and shoote their ordinance against the Citie, which batterie of theirs continued fowre dayes, but all was in vaine, for the shotte never hit the Citie, but light on the top of a small hill neere unto it, so that the Citie had no harme, when the Retor perceiving that the Portugalles made batry against the Citie, he tooke twentie and one Portugalles that were there in the Citie, and sent them foure miles into the Countrie, there to tarrie untill such time as the other Portugalles were departed, that made the batterie, who after their departure let them goe at their owne libertie without any harme done unto them.

I was alwayes in my house with a good guard appointed me by the Retor, that no man shoulde doe mee injurie, nor harme me nor my goodes; in such wise that hee perfourmed all that hee had promised mee in the name of the king, but he would not let me depart before the comming of the king, which was my hindrance greatly, because I was twentie and one moneths sequestred, that I coulde not buy nor sell any kinde of merchandize. Those commodities that I brought thither, was
Peper, Sandolo, and Porcellan of China, so when the king was come home, I made my supplication unto him, and I was licensed to depart when I would.

**Voyage to City of Pegu**

From Martavan I departed to goe to the chiefest Citie in the kingdome of Pegu, which is also called after the name of the kingdome, which voyage is made by sea in three or foure dayes; they may goe also by Land, but hee that hath merchandize it is better for him to goe by sea, and lesser charge, and in this voyage you shall have a Macareo, which is one of the most mervellous things in the world that nature hath wrought, and I never sawe anie thing so hard to be beleaved as this, the great encreasing and deminishing that the Water maketh there at one push or instant, and with the horrible earth quake and great noyse that it maketh where it commeth. We departed from Martavan in barks, which are like to our Pylot boates, with the encrease of the Water, and they goe as swift as an arrowe out of a bowe, so long as the tide runneth with them, and when the water is at the highest, then they drawe themselves out of the Chanel towards some bancke, and there they come to anker, and when the Water is diminished, then they rest a drye: and when the barkes rest drie, they are as high from the bottome of the Chanell, as any house toppe is high from the ground.

They let their barks lie so high for this respect, that if there should any shippe rest or ride in the Chanell, with such force commeth in the Water, that it would overthrowe ship or bark: yet for all this, that the barkes be, so farre out of the Chanell, and though the Water hath lost her greatest strength and furie before it come so high, yet they make fast their prow to the streme, and often times it maketh them verie fearfull, & if the Anker did not hold her prow up by strength, she would be overthrowne and lost with men and goods. When the Water beginmeth to encrease, it maketh such a noyse and so great, that you would thinke it an earthquake, & presently at the first it maketh 3 waves. So that the first washeth over the barke, from stem to stern, the second is not so furious as the first, & the third raiseth the anker, and then for the space of six howres while the water encreaseth, they rowe with such swiftnesse that you woulde thinke they did flye, in these tides there must be lost no jot of time, for if you arive not at the stagious before the tide be spent, you must turne backe from whence you came. For there is no staying at any place but at these stagious, and there is more daunger at one of these places then at another, as they bee higher and lower one then another. When as you returne from Pegu to Martavan, they goe but halfe the Tide at a time, because they will lay their barkes up aloft on the banckes, for the reason aforesaide. I could never gather any reason of the noyse that this water maketh in the encrease
of the Tide, and in diminishing of the Water. There is another Macareo in Cambaya, but that is nothing in comparison of this.

**City of Pegu**

By the helpe of God we came safe to Pegu, which are two cities, the olde and the newe, in the old Citie are the Merchant straungers, and Merchants of the Countrie, for there are the greatest doings and the greatest trade. This Citie is not very great, but it hath very great suburbes. Their houses be made with canes, and covered with leaves, or with straw, but the merchants have all one house or Magason, which house they call Godon, which is made of brickes, and there they put all their goods of any value, to save them from the often mischances that there happen to houses made of such stuffe.

In the new Citie is the Palace of the King, and his abiding place with all his Barons and Nobles, and other Gentlemen; and in the time that I was there, they finished the building of the new Citie: it is a great Citie, very plaine and flat, and foure square, walled round about, and with Ditches that compasse the Walls about with water, in which Ditches are many Crockadels. It hath no drawe-bridges, yet it hath twenty Gates, five for every square on the Walls, there are many places made for Centinels to watch, made of Wood and covered or gilt with Gold, the Streets thereof are the fairest that I have seene, they are as straignt as a line from one Gate to another, and standing at the one Gate you may discover to the other, and they are as broad as ten or twelve men may ride a-breast in them: and those Streets that be thwart are faire and large, these Streets, both on the one side and the other, are planted at the doores of the Houses with Nut trees of India, which make a very commodious shadow, the Houses be made of wood, and covered with a kind of tiles in forme of Cups, very necessary for their use.

**Royal Elephants in Pegu**

The Kings Palace is in the middle of the Citie, made in forme of a walled Castle, with ditches full of water round about it, the Lodgings within are made of wood all over gilded, with fine pynacles, and very costly worke, covered with plates of gold. Truly it may be a Kings house: within the gate there is a faire large Court, from the one side to the other, wherein there are made places for the strongest and stoutest Eliphantes, hee hath foure that be white, a thing so rare, that a man shall hardly finde another King that hath any such, as if this King knowe any other that hath white Elephants, he sendeth for them as for a gift. The time that I was there, there were two brought out of a farre Countrie, and that cost me something the sight of
them, for that they command the Merchants to goe to see them, and then they must
give somewhat to the men that bring them: the Brokers of the Merchants give for
every man halfe a Ducket, which they call a Tansa, which amounteth to a great
summe, for the number of Merchants that are in that Citie; and when they have
payd the aforesaid Tansa, they may chuse whether they will see them at that time
or no, because that when they are in the Kings stall, every man may see them that
will: but at that time they must goe and see them, for it is the kings pleasure it
should be so.

This King amongst all other his Titles, is called The King of the white
Elephants, and it is reported, that if this King knew any other King that had any of
these white Elephants, and would not send them unto him, that he would hazard his
whole Kingdom to conquer them.

He esteemeth these white Elephants very deereely, and they are had in great
regard, and kept with very meet service, every one of them is in a house, all gilded
over, and they have their meate given them in vessels of silver and gold. There is
one blacke Eliphant, the greatest that hath beeene seene, and he is kept according to
his bignesse; he is nine cubits high, which is a marvellous thing. It is reported that
this King hath four thousand Elephants of Warre, and all have their teeth, and they
use to put on their two uppermost teeth sharpe pikes of Iron, and make them fast
with rings, because these beasts fight and make battell with their teeth; hee hath
also very many young Eliphantes that have not their teeth sprouted forth: also this
King hath a brave devise in hunting to take these Eliphantes when he will, two
miles from the Citte.

He hath builded a faire Palace all gilded, and within it a faire Court, and
within it and round about there are made an infinite number of places for men to
stand to see this hunting: neere unto this Palace is a mighty great Wood, through
the which the Hunts-men of the King ride continually on the backes of the female
Elephants, teaching them in this businesse. Every Hunter carrieth out with him five
or sixe of these females, and they say that they anoint the secret place with a
certaine composition that they have, that when the wilde Elephant doeth smell: hereunto, they follow the females and cannot leave them: when the Hunts-men
have made provision, and the Elephant is so entangled, they guide the females
towards the Palace which is called Tambell, and this Palace hath a doore which
doeth open and shut with engines, before which doore there is a long Straight way
with trees on both the sides, which covereth the way in such wise, as it is like
darkenesse in a corner: the wilde Elephant when he commeth to this way thinketh
that hee is in the Woods.

At the end of this darke way there is a great field: when the Hunters have
gotten this prey, when they first come to this field, they send presently to give
knowledge thereof to the Citie, and with all speed there go out fifty or sixty men
on horsebacke, and doe beset the field round about: in the great field then the
females which are taught in this businesse goe directly to the mouth of the darke way, and when as the wilde Elephant is entred in there, the Hunters shoute and make a great noise, as much as is possible, to make the wilde Elephant enter in at the gate of that Palace, which is then open, and as soone as he is in, the gate is shut without any noise, and so the Hunters with the female Elephants and the wilde one are all in the Court together, and then within a small time the females withdraw themselves away one by one out of the Court, leaving the wilde Elephant alone: and when hee perceiveth that hee is left alone, hee is so mad that for two or three hours to see him, it is the greatest pleasure in the world: hee weepeth, hee flingeth, hee runneth, hee justleth, hee thrusteth under the places where the people stand to see him, thinking to kill some of them, but the posts and timber is so strong and great that he cannot hurt any body, yet he oftentimes breaketh his teeth in the grates.

At length when he is weary, and hath laboured his body that he is all wet with sweat, then he plucketh in his trunke into his mouth, and then he throweth out so much water out of his belly, that he sprinkleth it over the heads of the lookers on, to the uttermost of them, although it be very high: and then when they see him very weary, there goe certaine Officers into the Court with long sharpe canes in their hands, and pricke him that they make him to goe into one of the houses that are made alongst the Court for the same purpose: as there are many which are made long and narrow, that when the Elephant is in, hee cannot turne himselfe to goe backe againe. And it is requisite that these men should bee very wary and swift, for although their canes be long, yet the Elephant would kill them if they were not swift to save themselves: at length when they have gotten him into one of those houses, they stand over him in a loft, and get ropes under his belly and about his neck, and about his legs, and bind him fast, and so let him stand foure or five dayes, and give him neither meate nor drinke. At the end of these foure or five dayes, they unloose him, and put one of the females unto him, and give them meate and drinke, and in eight dayes he is become tame. In my judgement there is not a beast so intellective as are these Elephants, nor of more understanding in all the world: for he will do all things thay his keeper saith, so that he lacketh nothing but humaine speech.

**Armies of the King of Pegu**

It is reported that the greatest strength that the King of Pegu hath is in these Eliphantes, for when they goe to battell, they set on their backes a Castle of wood bound thereto, with bands under his bellie: and in everie Castle foure men, verie commodiouslie sette to fight with Harqubuses, with Bowes and arrowes, with Dartes, with Pikes, and other launcing weapons: and they say that the skinne of this
Eliphant is so hard, that an Harquebusse will not pierce it, unlesse it be in the eye, temples, or some other tender place of his body.

And besides this, they are of great strength, and have a very excellent order in their battell, as I have seene at their Feasts which they make in the yeere, in which Feasts the King makes Triumphs, which is a rare thing and worthie memorie, that in so barbarous a People there should bee such goodly orders as they have in their Armies, which be distinct in squares of Eliphants, of Horsemen, of Harquebusers and Pikemen, that truly the number of them are infinite: but their armour and weapons are very naught and weake, as well the one as the other: they have very bad Pikes, their Swords are worse made, like long Knives without points, his Harquebusses are most excellent, and alwaies in his warres he hath eighty thousand Harquebusses, and the number of them encreaseth daily. Because the King will have them shoot every day at the Plancke, and so by continuall exercise they become most excellent shot: also he hath great Ordnance made of very good metall; to conclude, there is not a King on the Earth that hath more power or strength then this King of Pegu, because hee hath twenty and sixe crowned Kings at his command. Hee can make in his Campe a million and an halfe of men of warre in the field against his Enemies.

The state of his Kingdome, and maintenance of his Armie, is a thing incredible to consider, and the victuals that should maintayne such a number of people in the warres: but he that knoweth the nature and qualitie of that people, will easily beleewe it. I have seene with mine eyes, that those people and Souldiers have eaten of all sorts of wilde beasts that are on the earth, whether it be very filthie or otherwise all serveth for their mouthes: yea, I have seene them eate Scorpions and Serpents, also they feed of all kinde of herbes and grasse. So that if such a great Armie want not Water and Salt, they will maintayne themselves a long time in a bush with rootes, flowers, and leaves of trees, they carrie Rice with them for their Voyage, and that serveth them in stead of Comfits, it is so dainty unto them.

The Wealth of the King of Pegu

This King of Pegu hath not any army or power by sea, but in the land, for people, dominions, gold and silver, he farre exceeds the power of the great Turke in treasure and strength. This King hath divers Magasons full of treasure, as Gold, and Silver, and every day he encreaseth it more and more, and it is never diminished. Also hee is Lord of the Mines of Rubies, Saphirs, and Spinels. Neere unto his Royall Palace there is an inestimable treasure whereof he maketh no account, for that it standeth in such a place that every one may see it, and the place where this treasure is, is a great Court walled round about with walls of stone, with two gates which stand open every day.
And within this place or Court are four gilded houses covered with lead, and in every one of these are certain heathenish Idols of a very great value. In the first house there is a Statue of the image of a Man of gold very great, and on his head a Crowne of gold beset with most rare Rubies and Saphires, and round about him are four little children of gold. In the second house there is the Statue of a Man of silver, that is set as it were sitting on heapes of money: whose stature in height, as he sitteth, is so high, that his highnesse exceeds the height of any one rooife of an house; I measured his feet, and found that they were as long as all my body was in height, with a Crowne of his head like to the first. And in the third house there is a Statue of brass of the same bignesse, with a like Crowne on his head. In the fourth and last house, there is a Statue of a Man as big as the other, which is made of Gansa, which is the metall they make their money of, and this metall is made of Copper and Lead mingled together.

This Statue also hath a Crowne on his head like the first: this treasure being of such a value as it is, standeth in an open place that every man at his pleasure may goe and see it: for the keepers thereof never forbid any man the sight thereof. I say as I have said before, that this King every yeere in his feasts triumpheth: and because it is worthie of the noting, I thinke it meet to write thereof, which is as followeth. The King rideth on a triumphant Cart or Wagon all gilded, which is drawn by sixteen goodly Horses: and this Cart is very high with a goodly Canopie over it, behind the Cart goe twenty of his Lords and Nobles, with every one a rope in his hand made fast to the Cart for to hold it upright that it fall not. The King sitteth in the middle of the Cart; and upon the same Cart about the King stand foure of his Nobles most favoured of him, and before this Cart wherein the King is, goeth all his Armie as aforesaid, and in the middle of his Armie goeth all his Nobilitie, round about the Cart, that are in his Dominions, a marvellous thing it is to see so many people, such riches and such good order in a People so barbarous as they bee. This King of Pegu hath one principall wife, which is kept in a Seralyo, hee hath three hundreth Concubines, of whom it is reported, that hee hath ninetie children.

**Justice in Pegu**

This King sitteth every day in person to heare the suits of his Subjects, but he nor they never speake one to another, but by supplications made in this order. The King sitteth up aloft in a great Hall, on a Tribunall seate, and lower under him sit all his Barons round about, then those that demand audience enter into a great Court before the King, and there set them downe on the ground forty paces distant from the Kings person, and amongst those people there is no difference in matters of audience before the King, but all alike, and there they sit with their supplications in
their hands, which are made of long leaves of a tree, these leaves are three quarters of a yard long, and two fingers broad, which are written with a sharpe Iron made for the purpose, and in those leaves are their supplications written, and with their supplications, they have in their hands a present or gift, according to the weightinesse of their matter. Then come the Secretaries downe to reade these supplications, taking them and reading them before the King, and if the King thinke it good to doe to them that favour or justice that they demand, then hee commandeth to take the presents out of their hands: but if he thinke their demand be not just or according to right, he commandeth them away without taking of their gifts or presents.

Death and Property in Pegu

They that die in the Kingdome of Pegu lose the third part of their goods by ancient custome of the Countrey, that if any Christian dieth in the Kingdome of Pegu, the King and his Officers rest heires of a third of his goods, and there hath never beene any deceit or fraud used in this matter. I have knowne many rich men that have dwelled in Pegu, and in their age they have desired to goe into their owne Countrey to die there, and have departed with all their goods and substance without let or trouble.

Commerce in Pegu

In the Indies there is not any merchandise that is good to bring to Pegu, unlesse it be at some times by chance to bring Opium of Cambaia, and if hee bring money hee shall lose by it. Now the commodities that come from S. Tome are the onely merchandise for that place, which is the great quantitie of cloth made there, which they use in Pegu; which cloth is made of Bombast woven and painted, so that the more that kinde of cloth is washed, the more lively they shew their colours, which is a rare thing, and there is made such account of this kinde of cloth which is of so great importance, that a small bale of it will cost a thousand or two thousand duckets. Also from S. Tome they layde great store of red yarne, of Bombast died with a root which they call Saia, as aforesaid, which colour will never out. With which merchandise every yeere there goeth a great ship from S. Tome to Pegu, of great importance, and they usually depart from S. Tome to Pegu the 10 or 11 of

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3 This section has been moved up from the miscellaneous comments added by Federici to the end of his account.
September, and if shee stay untill the twelfth, it is a great hap if shee returne not without making of her voyage.

Their use was to depart the sixt of September, and then they made sure voyages, and now because there is a great labour about that kinde of cloth to bring it to perfection, and that it bee well dried, as also the greedinesse of the Captaine that would make an extraordinary gaine of his fraight, thinking to have the winde alwaies to serve their turne, they stay so long, that at sometimes the winde turneth. For in those parts the winds blowe firmly for certaine times, with the which they goe to Pegu with the wind in poole, and if they arrive not there before the winde change, and get ground to anker, perforce they must returne backe againe: for that the gales of the winde blowe there for three or foure moneths together in one place with great force. But if they get the coast and anker there, then with great labour they may save their Voyage. Also there goeth another great ship from Bengala every yeere, laden with fine cloth of Bombast of all sorts, which arriveth in the Harbour of Pegu, when the ship that commeth from S. Tome departeth. The Harbour where these two ships arrive is called Cosmin. From Malaca to Martavan, which is a Port in Pagu, there commeth many small ships, and great, laden with Pepper, Sandolo, Porcellan of China, Camfora, Bruneo, & other merchandice.

The ships that come from Meca enter into the port of Pagu & Cirion, and those ships bring cloth of Wooll, Scarlets, Velvets, Opium, and Chickens, by the which they lose, and they bring them because they have no other thing that is good for Pegu; but they esteem not the losse of them, for that they make such great gaine of their commodities, that they carrie from thence out of that Kingdome. Also the King of Assi [Achen] his Shippes come thether into the same port laden with Peper; from the coast of Saint Tome of Bengala out of the Sea of Bara to Pegu are three hundreth miles, and they goe it up the River in foure dayes, with the encreasing water, or with the floud, to a Citie called Cosmin, and there they discharge their ships, whither the Customers of Pegu come to take the note and markes of all the goods of every man, and take the charge of the goods on them, and convey them to Pegu, into the Kings house, wherein they make the Custome of the merchandize.

When the Customers have taken the charge of the goods, and put them into barkes, the Retor of the Citie giveth licence to the Merchants to take barke, and goe up to Pegu with their merchandise; and so three or foure of them take a Barke and goe up to Pegu in companie. God deliver everie man that he give not a wrong note, and entrie, or thinke to steale any Custome: for if they doe, for the least trifle that is, he is utterly undone, for the King doeth take it for a most great affront to bee deceived of his Custome; and therefore they make diligent searches, three times at the lading and unlading of the goods, and at the taking of them a land. In Pegu this search they make when they goe out of the ship for Diamonds, Pearles, and fine Cloth which taketh little roome: for because that all the Jewels that come into Pegu,
and are not found of that Countrie, pay Custome, but Rubies, Saphyrs and Spinels pay no Custome in nor out: because they are found growing in that Countrie.

I have spoken before, how that All Merchants that meane to goe thorow the Indies, must carrie all manner of houshold-stuffe with them which is necessary for a house, because that there is not any lodging, nor Innes, nor Hosts, nor chamber roome in that Countrie, but the first thing a man doth when hee commeth to any Citie is to hier a house, either by the yeere, or by the moneth, or as hee meanes to stay in those partes.

In Pegu their order is to hire their houses for sixe moneths. Now from Cosmin to the Citie of Pegu they goe in sixe houres with the floud, and if it be ebbing water, then they make fast their Boate to the River side, and there tarrie untill the water flowe againe. It is a very commodious and pleasant Voyage, having on both sides of the Rivers many great Villages, which they call Cities: in the which Hennes, Pigeons, Egges, Milke, Rice, and other things bee verie good cheape. It is all plaine, and a goodly Countrie, and in eight dayes you may make your Voyage up to Macceo, distant from Pegu twelve miles, and there they discharge their goods, and lade them in Carts or Waines drawne with Oxen, and the Merchants are carried in a Closet which they call Deling, in the which a man shall be very well accommodated, with Cushions under his head, and covered for the defence of the Sunne and Raine, and there he may sleepe if he have will thereunto: and his foure Falchines carrie him running away, changing two at one time, and two at another. The custome of Pegu and fraight thither, may amount unto twenty or twenty two per cento, and twenty three according as he hath more or lesse stolne from him that day they custome the goods.

It is requisite that a man have his eyes watchfull, and to bee carefull, and to have many friends, for when they custome in the great Hall of the King, there come many Gentlemen accompanied with a number of their slaves, and these Gentlemen have no shame that their slaves robbe strangers: whether it be Cloth in shewing of it, or any other thing, they laugh at it. And although the Merchants heipe one another to keepe watch, and looke to their goods, they cannot looke thereto so narrowly but one or other will robbe something, either more or lesse, according as their merchandise is more or lesse: and yet on this day there is a worse thing then this: although you have set so many eyes to looke there for your benefit, that you escape unrobbed of the slaves, a man cannot choose but that hee must be robbed of the Officers of the Custome house. For paying the custome with the same goods oftentimes they take the best that you have, and not by rate of every sort as they ought to doe, by which means a man payeth more then his dutie. At length when the goods be dispatched out of the Custom-house in this order, the Merchant causeth them to be carried to his house, and may doe with them at his pleasure.
There are in Pegu eight Brokers of the Kings, which are called Tareghe, who are bound to sell all the merchandize to come to Pegu, at the common or the corent price: then if the Merchants will sell their goods at that price, they sell them away, and the Brokers have two in the hundred of every sort of merchandise, and they are bound to make good the debts of those goods, because they bee sold by their hands or meanes, and on their words, and oftentimes the Merchant knoweth not to whom he giveth his goods, yet he cannot lose any thing thereby, for that the Broker is bound in any wise to pay him, and if the Merchant sell his goods without the consent of the Broker, yet nevertheless hee must pay him two per cento, and bee in danger of his money: but this is very seldom scene, because the Wife, Children and Slaves of the debtor are bound to the Creditor, and when his time is expired and payment not made, the creditor may take the debtor and carry him home to his house, and shut him up in a Magazen, whereby presently he hath his monie, and not being able to pay the creditor, he may take the Wife, Children, and Slaves of the debtor, and sell them, for so is the Law of that Kingdome. The currant money that is in this City, and throughout all this Kingdome is calle d Gansa or Ganza, which is made of Copper and Lead: It is not the money of the King, but everie man may stampe it that will, because it hath his just partition or value: but they make many of them false, by putting overmuch lead into them, and those will not passe, neither will any take them. With this money Ganza, you may buy Gold or Silver, Rubies and Muske, and other things. For there is no other money currant amongst them. And Gold, Silver and other Merchandize are at one time dearer then another, as all other things bee.

This Ganza goeth by weight of Byze, and this name of Byza goeth for the account of the weight, and commonly a Byza of a Ganza is worth (after our account) halfe a Ducket, little more or lesse: and albeit that Gold and Silver is more or lesse in price, yet the Byza never changeth: everie Byza makes a hundreth Ganza of weight, and so the number of the money is Byza. He that goeth to Pegu to buy Jewels, if hee will doe well, it behooveth him to bee a whole yeere there to doe his businesse. For if so be that he would returne with the Ship he came in, hee cannot doe any thing so conveniently for the brevity of the time, because that when they custome their goods in Pegu that come from Saint Tome in their ships, it is as it were about Christmas: and when they have customed their goods, then must they sell them for their credits sake for a moneth or two: and then at the beginning of March the ships depart. The Merchants that come from Saint Tome take for the payment of their goods, Gold and Silver, which is never wanting there.

And eight or ten dayes before their departure they are all satisfied: also they may have Rubies in payment, but they make no account of them: and they that will Winter there for another yeere, it is needfull that they bee advertised, that in
the sale of their goods, they specific in their bargaine, the terme of two or three moneths payment, and that their payment shall be in so many Ganza, and neither Gold nor Silver: because that with the Ganza they may buy and sell every thing with great advantage. And how needful is it to be advertised, when they will recover their payments, in what order they shall receive their Ganza, because hee that is not practicke may doe himselfe great wrong in the weight of the Gansa, as also in the falsenesse of them, in the weight hee may bee greatly deceived, because that from place to place it doth rise and fall greatly: and therefore when any will receive money or make payment, hee must take a publicke weigher of mony, a day or two before he go about his businesse, and give him in payment for his labour two Byzaes a moneth, and for this hee is bound to make good all your money, and to maintaine it for good, for that he receiveth it and seales the bags with his seale: and when he hath received any store, then he causeth it to be brought into the Magasea of the Merchant, that is the owner of it.

That mony is verie weightie, for fortie Byza is a strong Porters burthen; and also where the Merchant hath any payment to bee made for those goods which hee buyeth, the Common weigher of money that receiveth his money must make the payment thereof. So that by this meanes, the Merchant with the charges of two Byzaes a moneth, receiveth and payeth out his money without losse or trouble. The Mercandizes that goe out of Pegu, are Golde, Silver, Rubies, Saphires, Spinelles, great store of Benjamin, long Pepper, Lead, Lacca, Rice, Wine, some Sugar, yet there might be great store of Sugar made in the Cuntrey, for that they have abundance of Canes, but they give them to Eliphants to eate, and the people consume great store of them for food, and many more doe they consume in vaine things, as these following. In that Kingdome they spend many of these Sugar-canes in making of Houses and Tents which they call Varely for their Idols, which they call Pagodes, whereof there are great abundance, great and small, and these houses are made in forme of little Hits, like to Sugar loaves or to Belles, and some of these houses are as high as a reasonable Steeple, at the foot they are verie large, some of them be in circuit a quarter of a mile. The said houses within are full of earth, and walled round about with Brickes and dirt in stead of lime, and without forme, from the top to the foot they make a covering for them with Sugar-canes, and plaister it with lime all over, for otherwise they would bee spoyled, by the great abundance of Raine that falleth in those Countries. Also they consume about these Varely or Idol-houses great store of leafe-gold, for that they overlay all the tops of the houses with Gold, and some of them are covered with gold from the top to the foot: in covering whereof there is great store of Gold spent, for that every ten yeeres they new overlay them with gold, from the top to the foot, so that with this vanitie they spend great abundance of Gold. For every ten yeeres the raine doth consume the gold from these houses. And by this means they make gold dearer in Pegu then it would bee, if they consumed not so much in this vanitie. Also it is a thing to bee
noted in the buying of Jewels in Pegu, that he that hath no knowledge shall have as good Jewels, and as good cheape, as hee that hath beene practised there a long time, which is a good order, and it is in this wise. There are in Pegu foure men of good reputation, which are called Tareghe, or Brokers of Jewels.

These foure men have all the Jewels or Rubies in their hands, and the Merchant that will buy commeth to one of these Tareghe and telleth him, that hee hath so much money to imploy in Rubies. For through the hands of these foure men passe all the Rubies: for they have such quantitie, that they know not what to doe with them, but sell them at most vile and base prices. When the Merchant hath broken his mind to one of these Brokers or Tareghe, they carrie him home to one of their shops, although hee hath no knowledge in Jewels: and when the Jewellers perceive that hee will employ a good round summe, they will make a bargaine, and if not, they let him alone. The use generally of this Citie is this; that when any Merchant hath bought any great quantitie of Rubies, and hath agreed for them, hee carrieth them home to his house, let them bee of what value they will, he shall have space to looke on them and peruse them two or three dayes: and if hee hath no knowledge in them, he shall always have many Merchants in that Citie that have very good knowledge in Jewels; with whom hee may alwayes conferre and take counsell, and may shew them unto whom he will; and if he finde that he hath not employed his money well, he may returne his Jewels backe to them whom he had them of, without any losse at all. Which thing is such a shame to the Tareghe to have his Jewels returne, that he rath er beare a blow on the face then that it should bee thought that he sold them so deare to have them returned. For these men have alwayes great care that they afford good penniworths, especially to those that have no knowledge. This they doe, because they would not lose their credite: and when those Merchants that have knowledge in Jewels buy any, if they buy them deare, it is their owne faults and not the Brokers: yet it is good to have knowledge in Jewels, by reason that it may somewhat ease the price.

There is also a very good order which they have in buying of Jewels, which is this; There are many Merchants that stand by at the making of the bargaine, and because they shall not understand how the Jewels bee sold, the Broker and the Merchants have their hands under a cloth, and by touching of fingers & nipping the joynts they know what is done, what is bidden, and what is asked. So that the standers by know not what is demanded for them, although it be for a thousand or ten thousand Duckets. For every joynt and every finger hath his signification. For if the Merchants that stand by should understand the bargaine, it would breed great controversie amongst them.
**Manner of Dress at Pegu**

In Pegu the fashion of their apparell is all one, as well the Nobleman, as the simple: the onely difference is in the fineness of the Cloth, which is cloth of Bombast one finer then another, and they weare their apparell in this wise: First, a white Bombast cloth which serveth for a shirt, then they gird another painted Bombast cloth, of fourteene braces, which they bind up betwixt their legs, and on their heads they weare a small Tocke of three braces, made in guise of a Myter, and some goe without Tockes, and carrie (as it were) a Hive on the heads, which doeth not passe the lower part of his care, when it is lifted up: they goe all bare-footed, but the Noblemen never goe on foot, but are carried by men in a seate with great reputation, with a Hat made of the leaves of a tree to keepe him from the Raine and Sunne, or otherwise they ride on horsebacke with their feet bare in the stirrups.

All sorts of women whatsoever they be, weare a smocke downe to the girdle, and from the girdle downewards to the foot they weare a cloth of three braces, open before, so straight that they cannot goe, but they must shew their secret as it were aloft, and in their going they faine to hide it with their hand, but they cannot by reason of the straitnesse of their cloth. They say that this use was invented by a Queene to be an occasion that the sight thereof might remove from men the vices against nature, which they are greatly given unto; which sight should cause them to regard women the more. Also the women goe barefooted, their armes laden with hoopes of Gold and Jewels: And their fingers full of precious Rings, with their haire rolled up about their heads. Many of them weare a cloth about their shoulders in stead of a Cloake.

**A Typhoon**

And at my being in Pegu in the moneth of August, in Anno 1569 having gotten well by my endevor, I was desirous to see mine owne Countrey, and I thought it good to goe by the way of Saint Tome, but then I should tarie untill March.

In which journey I was counsailed, yea, and fully resolved to goe by the way of Bengal, with a Ship there ready to depart for that voyage. And then wee departed from Pegu to Chitigan a great Harbour or Port, from whence there goe small ships to Cochin, before the Fleet depart for Portugall, in which ships I was fully determined to goe to Lisbon, and so to Venice. When I had thus resolved my selfe, I went a board of the ship of Bengal, at which time it was the yeere of

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This section has been moved up from the miscellaneous comments added by Federici to the end of his account.
Touffon: concerning which Touffon you are to understand, that in the East Indies oftentimes, there are not stormes as in other Countries; but every ten or twelve yeeres there are such tempests and stormes, that it is a thing incredible, but to those that have seene it, neither doe they know certainly what yeere they will come.

Unfortunat e are they that are at Sea in that yeere and time of the Touffon, because few there are that escape that danger. In this yeere it was our chance to bee at Sea with the like storme, but it happened well unto us, for that our ship was newly over-plancked, and had not any thing in her save victuall and balasts, Silver and Gold, which from Pegu they carrie to Bengal a, and no other kind of Merchandize. This Touffon or cruel storme endured three dayes and three nights: in which time it carried, away our sayles, yards, and rudder; and because the ship laboured in the Sea, wee cut our Mast over-boord: which when we had done, shee laboured a great deale more then before, in such wise, that she was almost full with water that came over the highest part of her and so went downe: and for the space of three dayes and three nights, sixtie men did nothing but hale water out of her in this wise, twentie men in one place, and twentie men in another place, and twentie in a third place: and for all this storme, the ship was so good, that she tooke not one jot of water below through her sides, but all ranne downe through the hatches, so that those sixtie men did nothing but cast the Sea into the Sea. And thus driving too and fro as the wind and Sea would, wee were in a darke night about foure of the clocke cast on a shold: yet when it was day, we could neither see Land on one side nor other, and knew not where we were. And as it pleased the Divine power, there came a great wave of the Sea, which drave us beyond the shold. And when wee felt the ship afloat, we rose up as men revived, because the Sea was calme and smooth water, and then sounding we found twelve fathom water, and within a while after wee had but sixe fathom, and then presently wee came to anker with a small anker that was left us at the sterne, for all our other were lost in the storme: and by and by the ship strooke a ground, and then wee did prop her that shee should not overthrow. When it was day the ship was all drie, and wee found her a good mile from the Sea on drie land.

**Sundiva Island and Arakan**

This Touffon being ended, wee discovered an I[s]land not farre from us, and we went from the ship on the sands to see what I[s]land it was: and wee found it, a place inhabited, and, to my judgement the fertilest I[s]land in all the world, the which is devided into two parts by a channell which passeth betweene it, and with great trouble wee brought our ship into the same channell, which parteth the I[s]land at flowing water, and there we determined to stay fortie dayes to refresh
us. And when the people of the Island saw the ship, and that we were coming a land: presently they made a place of Bazar or Market, with Shops right over against the ship with all manner of provision of victuals to eat, which they brought downe in great abundance, and sold it so good cheape, that wee were amazed at the cheapnesse thereof. I bought many salted Kine there, for the provision of the ship, for halfe a Larine a piece, which Larine may be twelve shillings sise pence, being very good and fatte; and foure wilde Hogges ready dressed for a Larine; great fat Hennes for a Bizze a piece, which is at the most a Penie: and the people told us that we were deceived the haife of our money, because we bought things so deare. Also a sacke of fine Rice for a thing of nothing, and consequently all other things for humaine sustenance were there in such abundance, that it is a thing incredible but to them that have seene it.

This Island is called Sondiva belonging to the Kingdome of Bengala, distant one hundred and twentie miles from Chitigan, to which place we were bound. The people are Moores, and the King a very good man of a Moore King, for if he had bin a Tyrant as others bee, he might have robbed us of all, because the Portugall Captaine of Chitigan was in armes against the Retor of that place, and every day there were some slaine, at which newes wee rested there with no small feare, keeping good watch and ward aboord every night as the use is, but the Governour of the Towne did comfort us, and bad us that we should feare nothing, but that we should repose our selves securely without any danger, although the Portugals of Chitigan had slaine the Governour of that Citie, and said that we were not culpable in that fact; and moreover he did us every day what pleasure he could, which was a thing contrarie to our expectations considering that they and the people of Chitigan were both subjects to one King.

Wee departed from Sondiva, and came to Chitigan the great Port of Bengala, at the same time when the Portugals had made peace and taken a truce with the Governours of the Towne, with this condition that the chiefe Captaine of the Portugals with his ship should depart without any lading: for there were then at that time eighteen ships of Portugals great and small. This Captaine being a Gentleman and of good courage, was notwithstanding contented to depart to his greatest hinderance, rather then he would seeke to hinder so many of his friends as were there, as also because the time of the yeere was spent to goe to the Indies. The night before hee departed, everie ship that had any lading therein, put it aboord of the Captaine to helpe to ease his charge and to recompence his courtesies.

In this time there came a messenger from the King of Rachim [Arakan] to this Portugall Captaine, who said in the behalfe of his King, that hee had heard of the courage and valour of him, desiring him gently that hee would vouchsafe to come with this Shippe into his port, and comming thither hee shoulde bee verie well entreated. This Portugall went thether and verie well satisfied of this King.
This King of Rachim hath his seate in the middle coast betweene Bengala and Pegu, and the greatest enemy hee hath is the King of Pegu: which King of Pegu imagineth night and day, to make this King of Rachim his subject, but by no means he is able to doe it: because the King of Pegu, hath no power or armie by sea. And this King of Rachim may arme two hundreth Galleyes or Fusts by Sea, and by Lande he hath certaine sluses with the which when the king of Pegu pretendeth any harme towards him, hee may at his pleasure drowne a great part of his Countrey. So that by this means hee cutteth off the way that the King of Pegu shoulde come with his power to hurt him.

Commodities of India

From the great port of Chitigan they carie for the Indies great store of ryce, verie great quantitie of Bombast cloth of everie sorte, Suger, Corne, and Money, with other merchandise. And by reason that Warres was in Chitigan, the Portugall shippes tarried there so late, that they arived not at Cochin so soone as they were wont to doe other yeares. For which cause the fleete that was at Cochin was departed for Portugalle before they arived there, and I being in one of the small shippes before the fleete, in discovering of Cochin, wee also discovered the last shippes of the Fleete that went from Cochin to Portugall, where shee made saile, for which I was mervellouslie discomforted, because that all the yeere following, there was no goinge for Portugalles, and when we arived at Cochin I was fully determined to goe for Venice by the way of Ormus, and at that time the Citie of Goa was besieged by the people of Dialcan, but the Citizens forced not this assault, because they supposed that it woulde not continue long. For all this, I embarked my selfe in a Gallie that went for Goa, meaning there to ship my selfe for Ormus: but when we came to Goa, the viceroy would not suffer any Portugall to depart, by reason of the Warres.

And beeing in Goa but a small time, I fell sicke of an infirmitie that helde mee fowre moneths: which with phisicke and diet cost mee eight hundred Ducks, and there I was constrayned to sell a small quantitie of Rubies to sustaine my need: and I solde that for five hundreth Ducks, that was worth a thousande, and when I began to waxe well of my disease, I had but little of that monie left, everie thing was so scarce: For everie chicken (and yet not good) cost mee seven or eight Lyvers, which is six shillings, or six shillings eight pence.

Beside this great charges, the Apothecaries with their medicines were no small charge to me. At the ende of sixe moneths they raised the siege, and then I beganne to worke, for Jewels were risen in their prices: for, whereas before I sold a

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5 This section is in Voyages, but not in Haklaytus.
few of refused Rubies, I determined then to sell the rest of all my Jewels that I had there, and to make an other voyage to Pegu. And for because that at my departure from Pegu, Opium was in great request, I went then to Cambaya to employ a good round summe of money in Opium, and there I bought 60 percel of Opium, which cost me two thousand and a hundreth duckets, every ducket at foure shillings two pence. Moreover I bought three bales of Bombast cloth, which cost me eight hundred duckats, which was a good commoditie for Pegu: when I had bought these things, the Viceroy commanded that the custome of the Opium should be paide in Goa, and paying custome there I might cary it whither I would. I shipped my three bales of cloth at Chaul in a shippe that went for Cochin, and I went to Goa to pay the aforesaid custome for my Opium, and from Goa I departed to Cochin in a ship that was for the voyage of Pegu, and went to winter then at S. Tome.

When I came to Cochin, I understoode that the ship that had my 3 bales of cloth was cast away and lost, so that I lost my 800 Seraffines or duckets: and departing from Cochin to goe from [sic, for] S. Tome: & in casting about for the I[sl]and of Zeiland the Pilot was deceived, for that the Cape of the I[sl]and of Zeiland lieth far out into the sea, and the Pilot thinking that he might have passed hard aboard the cape, and paying remour in the night: when it was morning we were farre within the cape, and past all remedy to goe out, by reason the windes blew so fiercely against us. So that by this means we lost our voyage for that yere, and we went to Manar with the ship to Winter there, the Ship having lost her mastes, and with great diligence we hardly saved her with great losses to the capitaine of the Ship, because he was forced to fraight another Ship in S. Tomes for Pegu with great losses & interest, & I with my friends agreed together in Manar to take a bark to cary us to S. Tomes; which thing, we did with al the rest of the merchants, & arriving at S. Tomes I had news through or by the way of Bengala that in Pegu: Opium was verie dear, & I knew that in S. Tome there was no Opium but mine to go from [sic, for] Pegu that yeere, so that I was holden of all the Merchantes there: to be verie rich: and so it would have approved, if my adverse fortune had not beene contrarie to my hope, which was this. At that time there went a great shippe from Cambaya, to the king of Assi, with great quantitie of Opium, and there to lade Peper: in which voyage there came such a storme, that the ship was forced with wether to go romer 800 miles, & by this means came to Pegu, wheras they arived a day before me; so that Opium which was before veriw deare, was now at a base price: so that which was solde for fiftie Bize before, was solde for two Bizze and halfe, there was such quantitie came in that Ship, so that I was gladde to stay two yeeres in Pegu unlesse I would have given away my commoditie: and at the ende of two yeeres I made of my 2100 Duckets which I bestowed in Cambaya, I made but a thousand Duckets.
Return to Pegu

Then I departed againe from Pegu to goe for the Indies and for Ormus with greate quantitie of Lacca, and from Ormus I returned into the Indies for Chiall, and from Chiall to Cochin, and from Cochin to Pegu. Once more I lost occasion to make mee ritch, for wheras I might have brought good store of Opion [Opium] again, I brought but a little, being fearefull of my other voyage before. In this small quantitie I made good profite. And nowe againe I determined to goe from [sic, for] my Countrey, and departing from Pegu, I tarried and wintered in Cochin, and then I left the Indies and came for Ormus.

Commerce of the East Indies

I thinke it verie necessarie before I ende my voyage, to reason somewhat, and to shew what fruits the Indies doth yeelde and bring fourth. First, in the Indies and other East partes of India there is Peper and ginger, which growth in all parts of India. And in some partes of the Indies, the greatest quantities of peper growth in amongst wilde bushes, without any manner of labour: saving, that when it is ripe they goe and gather it. The tree that the Peper growth on, is like to our Ivie, which runneth up to the toppes of trees wheresoever, and if it should not take hold of some tree, it would ly flat and rotte on the grounde. This Peper tree hath his flower and berry, like in all partes to our Ivie berry, and those berrys be graynes in Peper: so that when they gather them they bee greene, and then they lay them in the Sunne, and they become blacke.

The Ginger growth in this wise, the Land is tilled and sowen, and the herbe is like to Panyzzo, and the roote is the Ginger. These two spices growe in divers places.

The Cloves came all from the Moluches, which Moluches are two Islands, not verie great, and the tree that they grow on is like to our Lawrell tree.

The Nutmegas and Maces, which growe both together, are brought from the I[s]land of Banda, whose tree is like to our Walnut tree, but not so big.

All the good white Sandolo is brought from the Island of Timor. Canfora being compound commeth all from China, and al that which growth in canes commeth from Bruneo, and I think that this Canfora cometh not into these partes: for that in India they consume great store, and that is very deare.

The good Lignum aleos commeth from Chochinchina.

The Benjamin commeth from the kingdome of Assi [Achen] and Sion.

Long Peper growth in Bengala, Pegu, and Giava.

Muske commeth from Tartaria, which they make in this order, as by good information I have bene told, there is a certain beast in Tartaria, which is wild [and]
as big as a wolfe, which beast they take alive, & beat him to death with small staves that his blood may be spread through his whole bodie, then they cut it in pieces, and take out all the bones, and beat the flesh with the bloud in a morter verie small, and drie it, and make purses to put it in of the Skinne, and these bee the coddes of muske.

Truely I knowe not whereof the Amber is made, and there is divers opinions of it, but this is most certaine, it is cast out of the Sea, and throwne a land and found upon the sea banckes.

The Rubyes, Saphyres, and the Spynetly, they be gotten in the kingdome of Pegu. The Diamandes they come from divers places: and I know but three [sorts] of them. That sort of Diamands, that is called Chiappe, they come from Bezeneger. Those that bee pointed naturally come from the land of Dely, and from Java, but the Diamands of Java are more waightie then the other. I could never understand from whence they that are called Balasy come.

Pearles they fish in divers places, as before in this booke is showne.

From Cambaza commeth the Spodium coniealeth [concealed?] in certaine canes; I founde manye of them in Pegu, when I made my house there, because that (as I have saide before) they make their houses there of woven Canes like to mattes. From Chianela they trade alongest the coaste of Melyndy in Ethiopia, within the lande of Caferaria: on that coaste are many good harbors kept by the Moores.

Thither the Portugalles bring a kinde of Bombast cloth of a Lowe price, and greate store of Paternosters or beads, made of paltrie glasse, which they make in Chiawle [Chaul] according to the use of the Countrie: & from thence they carry Eliphants teeth for India, Slaves called Caferi, and some Amber and Golde. On this coast the king of Portugall hath his castle called Mozenbich, which is of as great importaunce as any castle that hee hath in all his Indies under his protection, and the captaine of this castle hath certaine voyages to this Caferaria, to which places no merchants may goe, but by the agent of this Captaine, and they use to goe in small ships, and trade with the Caferaries, and their trade in buying and selling is without any speeche one to the other. In this wise the Portugalles bring their goods by little and little amongst the sea coast, and lay them down: and so depart, and the Cafer merchants come & see the goods, & there they put downe as much gold as they think the goods is worth, and so goeth his way and leaveth his golde and the goods together, then commeth the Portugal: and finding the gold to his content, he taketh it and goeth his way into his ship, & then commeth the Cafer and taketh the goodes & carieth it away: and if hee find the golde there still, it is a signe that the Portugalles are not contented, and if the Cafer thinke he hath put too little, he addeth more, as he thinketh the thing is worth: and the Portugalles must not stand with them to[o] strict; for if they doe, then they will have no more trade with them, for they disdaine to be refused, when they thinke that they have offered ynough, for they be a peevish people, and have dealt so of a long time, & by this
trade the Portugals change their commodities into gold, and cary it to the Castle of Mozonbich, which is in an I[s]land not farre distant from the firm land of Caferaria on the coast of Ethiopia, and distant from the India 2800 miles.

End of Voyage

…Now to finish that which I have begun to write, I say, that those partes of the Indies is verie good, because that a man that hath little: shall make a great deale thereof, alwaies they must governe themselves that they be taken for honest men. For why? To such there shall never want helpe to do wel, but he that is vicious, let him tarrie at home and not go thither, because he shall alwayes bee a begger, and Dye a poore man.
Editor’s Note:

This translation of Athanasius Nikitin’s fifteenth century travels to India was originally published in *India in the Fifteenth Century Being a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India*, edited by R. H. Major, in 1857. Nikitin appears to have only included information on Burma which he obtained by word of mouth. His brief references to Pegu are provided below. The reference to Pegu has been standardized, as two different spellings were included in the original translation.

M.W.C.

BRIEF EXTRACT FROM THE TRAVELS OF ATHANASIUS NIKITIN, A NATIVE OF TWER

Athanasius Nikitin of Tver
Translated by Count Wielhorsky

Dabul is the last seaport in Hindostan belonging to the Mussulmans. From there to Colecot you have to travel twenty-five days, and from Colecut to Ceylan fifteen; from Ceylan to Shibait one month; from Shibait to Pegu twenty days; and from Pegu to China and Macheen one month; all this by sea…

Pegu is no inconsiderable port, principally inhabited by Indian dervishes. The products derived from thence are manik, iakrut, kyerpuk, which are sold by the dervishes.
Editor’s Note:

Luís Vaz de Camões (c. 1524-1580), the famous Lisbon poet, composed *Os Lusíadas* in 1572 to glorify the expedition and exploits of Vasco da Gama in the Indian Ocean. It is a lengthy and epic poem, consisting of ten cantos, the portion relating to mainland Southeast Asia limited to a portion of the last of these. Only this portion is reproduced below. The chief utility of this information for the historian is that it helps us to understand how much, by 1572, Portuguese at home knew about the region. Some information is of special interest, such as the reference to the Gwe.

The following translation was made in 1655 by Richard Fanshaw and printed in London for Humphrey Moseley at the Prince’s Arms in St. Paul’s Church-yard. According to the translator’s preface,Fanshaw completed the translation on 1 May 1655 at Tankersley Park. The following text is derived from the British Library original (shelfmark g.11385). Other English translations include Vise Strangford’s version of 1804 (n.p.: Carpenter, BL shelfmark B28.a.31), Edward Quillinan’s version, with notes by John Adamson, of 1853 (n.p.: Edward Moxon, BL shelfmark x15/3449), William Julius Mickie’s 1877 edition (London: George Bell & Sons, BL shelfmark W53/4181), and others in the twentieth century. As the first English translation, the one most late seventeenth and eighteenth century English travelers would have read, warrants special attention.

M.W.C.

THE LUSIAD, OR, PORTUGALS HISTORICALL POEM

Luís Vaz de Camões  
*Translated by Richard Fanshaw (1655)*

Tenth Canto, STANZA. 1.

121.

GANGES, in which his Borderers dye lav’d;  
Holding it as a certain principle  
That (be they ne’re such Sinners) they are sav’d,
Bath’d in those streams that flow from Sacred Well.  
The City CATHIGAN would not be wav’d,  
The fairest of BENGALA: who can tell  
The plenty of this Province? but it’s post  
(Thou seest) is Eastern, turning the South-Coast.

122.  
The Realm of ARRACAN, That of PEGU  
Behold, with Monsters first inhabited!  
Monsters, which from a strange commixtion grew:  
Such ill effects oft Solitude hath bred.  
Here (though a Barb’rous misbegotten Crew)  
Into her way was erring Nature led  
By an invention rare, which a Queen fram’d,  
To cure the Sin, that is not to be nam’d.

123.  
Behold the City of TAVAY, with which  
The spatious Empire of SIAN begins!  
TENASSERI! QUEDA: with pepper rich  
For which the praise she from all other wins!  
MALACCA see before, where ye shall pitch  
Your great Emporium, and your Magazins:  
The Rendezvous of all that Ocean round  
For Merchandizes rich that there abound.

124.  
From this (‘tis said) the Waves impetuous course;  
Breaking a passage through, from Main to main,  
SAMATRA’S noble Isle of old did force,  
Which then a Neck of Land therewith did chain:  
That this was CHERSONESE till that divorce,  
And from the wealthy mines, that there remain,  
The Epithite of GOLDEN had annex:  
Some think, it was the OPHYR in the Text.
125.

But, at that Point doth CINGAPUX appeare:
Where the pincht Streight leaves Ships no room to play.
Heer the Coast, winding to the Northern Beare,
Faces the fair AURORA all the way.
See PAN, PATANE (ancient Realms that were)
And long SYAN, which These, and more, obey!
The copious River of MENAM behold,
And the great Lake CHIAMAY from whence ‘tis roll’d!

126.

In this vast Tract see an Infinitie
Of Names and Nations to your WORLD unknown!
LAOS, in Land and men That potent bee!
AVAS, BRAINAS, in those long Hills o’regrown!
In yon far MOUNTAINS other Nations see
(GUEOS they’re call’d) and savage ev’ry one!
They eat Mans flesh, and paint their own in knots
With fire, as ye doe Rooms with watring-pots.

127.

The River MECON (which they Captain style
Of Waters) see; CAMBOYA on his brink!
He overflows the Land for many a mile:
So many other Rivers doth he drink.
Set times he hath of flowing (like cool NYLE):
The near Inhabitants brutishly think,
That pain and glory, after this Life’s end
Ev’n the brute Creatures of each kind attend.

128.

Upon his soft and charitable Brim
The wet and ship-wrackt SONG receive shall Hee
Which in a lamentable plight shall swim
From sholes and Quicksands of tempestuous Sea,
(The dire effect of Exile) when on Him
Is executed the unjust Decree:

SOAS BULLETIN OF BURMA RESEARCH

SBBR 2.2 (AUTUMN 2004): 163-166
Whose repercussive LYRE shall have the Fate
To be renowned more than Fortunate.

129.

Heer, (mark it!) runs the Coast that’s call’d CHAMPA,
Whose Groves smell hot of Calambuco wood:
Heer CAUCHINCHINA, and heer AYNAM’S Bay;
Both One and t’Other little understood.
Heer the great Empire (famous for large sway,
And its vast Wealth’s unfathomable Flood)
Of CHINA runs; calling all this her Owne
From burning Cancer to the frozen Zone.
Editor’s Note:

Like the other travel accounts of this issue, Ralph Fitch is among the most cited English sources for information on sixteenth century Burma. His experiences at Pegu were generally limited to a roughly six or seven week period in late 1586 and early 1587. Another aspect of the account the reader will notice is that Fitch has, in several places, repeated nearly verbatim several sections of Cesar Federici’s account, of which he must at some point have had in his possession.

Various editions of Ralph Fitch’s account are available and the vary in the completeness of the account. The one followed here was published by Samuel Purchas in his Hakluytus Posthumus of Purchas His Pilgrimes under the title of “The Voyage of Master Ralph Fitch Merchant of London to Ormus, and so to Goa in the East India, to Cambaia, Ganges, Bengala; to Bacola, and Chonderi, to Pegu, to Jamahay in the Kingdome of Siam, and backe to Pegu, and from thence to Malacca, Zeilan, Cochin, and all the Coast of the East India: begun in the yeere of our Lord 1583 and ended 1591.”

Only those sections of the account relevant to Pegu and Southeast Asia have been included. In several places, the proper name of places have been clarified within brackets. Macao, for example, refers to Makaw, the river portage where goods for Pegu were dropped off by merchants for land or small boat carriage to the city of Pegu. Other editorial changes have been limited to additional paragraph breaks and the addition of sections headers.

M. W. C.

AN ACCOUNT OF PEGU IN 1586-1587

Ralph Fitch

In the yeere of our Lord 1583. I Ralph Fitch of London Merchant, being desirous to see the Countries of the East Indie, in the companie of Master John Newberie Merchant, (which had beene at Ormus once before) of William Leedes Jeweller, and James Storie Painter, being chiefly set forth by the right Worshipfull Sir Edward Osborne Knight, and Master Richard Staper Citizens and Merchants of London, did ship my selfe in a Ship of London called the Tygre, wherein wee went for Tripolis in Syria: and from thence wee tooke the way for Alepo [and beyond]…
Tippera and Bengala in 1585

From Satagam I travelled by the Countrie of the King of Tippara or Porto Grande, with whom the Mogoers or Mogen have almost continuall warres. The Mogen which be of the Kingdome of Recon [Arakan] and Rame, be stronger then the King of Tippara, so that Chatigan or Porto Grande is oftentimes under the King of Recon….

From Chatigan in Bengala, I came to Bacola…From Bacola I went to Serrepore which standeth upon the River Ganges, the King is called Chondery…Sinnergan is a Towne sixe leagues from Serrepore…Many of the people are very rich….They goe with little cloth before them, and all the rest of their body naked. Great store of Cotton cloth goeth from hence, and much Rice, wherewith they serve all India, Ceilon, Pegu, Malacca, Sumatra, and many other places.

Journey to Pegu in Late 1586

I went from Serrepore the eight and twentieth of November, 1586 for Pegu in a small Ship or Foist of one Albert Caravallois, and so passing downe Ganges, and passing by the Hand of Sundiva, Porto Grande, or the Countrie of Tippera, the Kingdome of Recon and Mogen, leaving them on our left side with a faire winde at North-west: our course was South and by East, which brought us to the Barre of Negrais to Pegu: if any contrary winde had come, wee had throwne many of our things over-boord: for we were so pestered with people and goods, that there were scant place to lie in. From Bengala to Pegu is ninety leagues. We entred the Barre of Negrais, which is a brave Barre, and hath four fathomes water where it hath least. Three dayes after we came to Cosmin, which is a very pretie Towne, and standeth very pleasantly, very well furnished with all things. The people be very tall and well disposed; the women white, round faced, with little eyes: the houses are high built, set upon great high posts, and they goe up to them with long Ladders for feare of the Tigres which be very many. The Countrie is very fruitfull of all things. Here are very great Figs, Oranges, Cocoes, and other fruits. The Land is very high that we fall withall; but after we be entred the Barre, it is very lowe and full of Rivers, for they goe all to and fro in Boats, which they call Paroes, and keepe their houses with wife and children in them.
Dala and Syriam

From the Barre of Nigrais to the Citie of Pegu is ten dayes journey by the Rivers. We went from Cosmin [Bassein] to Pegu in Faroes or Boats, and passing up the Rivers wee came to Medon, which is a pretie Towne, where there be a wonderfull number of Faroes, for they keepe their Houses and Markets in them all upon the water. They rowe to and fro, and have all their merchandises in their Boats with a great Sombrero or Shadow over their heads to keepe the Sunne from them, which is as broad as a great Cart wheele made of the leaves of the Coco trees and Figge trees, and is very light. From Medon we went to Dela, which is a very faire Towne, and hath a faire Port into the Sea, from whence goe many ships to Malacca, Mecca, and many other places. Here are eighteene or twenty very great and long houses, where they tame and keepe many Elephants of the Kings: for there about in the Wildernesse they catch the wilde Elephants. It is a very fruitfull Countrie. From Dela wee went to Cirion [Syriam], which is a good Towne, and hath a faire Port into the Sea, whither come many ships from Mecca, Malacca, and Sumatra, and from divers other places. And there the ships stay and discharge, and send up their goods in Faroes to Pegu.

From Cirion we went to Macao [the river portage of Makaw], which is a pretie Town, where we left our Boats and in the morning taking Delingeges, which are a kinde of Coaches made of cords and cloth quilted, and carried upon a stang between three or foure men.

The Old Town of Pegu

We came to Pegu the same day. Pegu is a Citie very great, strong, and very faire, with walls of stone, and great ditches round about it. There are two Townes, the old Towne and the new. In the old Towne are all the Merchants strangers, and very many Merchants of the Countrie. All the goods are sold in the old Towne which is very great, and hath many suburbs round about it, and all the houses are made of Canes which they call Bambos, and be covered with straw. In your House you have a Ware-house, which they call Godon, which is made of bricke, to put your goods in, for oftentimes they take fire and burne in an houre foure or five hundred houses: so that if the Godon were not, you should bee in danger to have all burned, if any winde should rise, at a trice.
The New Town of Pegu

In the new Towne is the King, and all his Nobilitie and Gentrie. It is a Citie very great and populous, and is made square and with very faire Walls, and a great Ditch round about it full of water with many Crocodiles in it: it hath twenty Gates, and they be made of stone, for every square five Gates. There are also many Turrets for Centinels to watch, made of wood, and gilded with Gold very faire. The Streets are the fairest that ever I saw, as straight as a line from one Gate to the other, and so broad, that ten or twelve men may ride afront thorow them. On both sides of them at every mans doore is set a Palmer tree, which is the Nut-tree which make a very faire shew and a very commodious shadow, so that a man may walke in the shade all day. The houses be made of wood, and covered with tiles.

The Kings house is in the middle of the Citie, and is walled and ditched round about: and the buildings within are made of wood very sumptuously gilded, and great workmanship is upon the fore-front, which is likewise very costly gilded. And the house wherein his Pagode or Idoll standeth is covered with tiles of silver, and all the walls are gilded with gold.

The Royal Elephants

Within the first Gate of the Kings house is a great large roome, on both sides whereof are houses made for the Kings Elephants, which bee marvellous great and faire, and are brought up to warres and in service of the King. And among the rest hee hath foure white Elephants, which are very strange and rare: for there is none other King which hath them but hee; if any other King hath one, hee will send unto him for it. When any of these white Elephants are brought unto the King, all the Merchants in the Citie are commanded to see them, and to give him a present of halfe a Ducat, which doth come to a great summe: for that there are many Merchants in the Citie. After that you have given your present you may come and see them at your pleasure, although they stand in the Kings house.

This King in his Title is called the King of the white Elephants. If any other King have one, and will not send it him, hee will make warre with him for it: for hee had rather lose a great part of his Kingdome, then not to conquer him. They doe very great service unto these white Elephants; every one of them standeth in an house gilded with gold, and they doe feed in vessels of silver and gilt. One of them when hee doth goe to the River to bee washed, as every day they doe, goeth under a Canopie of cloth of gold or of silke carried over him by sixe or eight men, and eight or ten men goe before him playing on Drumes, Shawmes, or other Instruments: and when hee is washed and commeth out of the River, there is a Gentleman which doth wash his feet in a silver Basin: which is his office given him.
by the King. There is no such account made of any blacke Elephant, bee he never so great. And surely there bee wonderfull faire and great, and some bee nine cubits in height. And they doe report that the King hath above five thousand Elephants of warre, besides many other which be not taught to fight.

This King hath a very large place wherein hee taketh the wilde Elephants. It standeth about a mile from Pegu, builded with a faire Court within, and is in a great Grove or Wood: and there be many Hunts-men, which goe into the Wildernesse with shee Elephants: for without the shee they are not to be taken. And they be taught for that purpose: and every Hunter hath five or sixe of them: and they say that they anoint the shee Elephants with a certaine ointment, which when the wilde Elephant doth smell, he will not leave her. When they have brought the wilde Elephant neere unto the place, they send word unto the Towne, and many Horsemen and footmen come out and cause the shee Elephant to enter into a straight way which doth goe to the Palace, and the shee and hee doe runne in : for it is like a Wood: and when they be in, the gate doth shut. Afterward they get out the female: and when the male seeth that he is left alone, he weepeth and crieth, and runneth against the walls, which be made of so strong trees, that some of them doe breake their teeth with running against them. Then they pricke him with sharpe canes, and cause him to goe into a strait house, and there they put a rope about his middle & about his feet, and let him stand there three or foure dayes without eating or drinking: and then they bring a female to him, with meate and drinke, and within few dayes he becommeth tame.

The chiefe force of the King is in these Elephants. And when they goe into the warres they set a frame of wood upon their backes, bound with great cords, wherein sit foure or sixe men, which fight with Gunnes, Bowes and Arrowes, Darts and other weapons. And they say that their skinnes are so thicke that a pellet of an Harquebusse will scarce pierce them, except it bee in some tender place. Their weapons be very bad. They have Gunnes, but shoot very badly in them, Darts and Swords short without points.

**The King and the Nobles**

The King keepeth a very great State: when hee sitteth abroad, as hee doth every day twice, all his Noblemen which they call Shemines, sit on each side, a good distance off, and a great guard without them. The Court yard is very great. If any man will speake with the King, hee is to kneele downe, to heave up his hands to his head, and to put his head to the ground three times, when hee entreth, in the middle way, and when hee commeth neere to the King: and then hee sitteth downe and talketh with the King: if the King like well of him, hee sitteth neere him within three or foure paces: if hee thinke not well of him, hee sitteth further off.
When hee goeth to warre, hee goeth very strong. At my being there hee went to Odia in the Countrie of Siam with three hundred thousand men, and five thousand Elephants. Thirty thousand men were his Guard. These people doe eate Roots, Herbes, Leaves, Dogs, Cats, Rats, Serpents, and Snakes; they refuse almost nothing. When the King rideth abroad, he rideth with a great Guard, and many Noblemen, oftentimes upon an Elephant with a fine Castle upon him very fairely gilded with gold; and sometimes upon a great frame like an Hors-liter, which hath a little house upon it covered over head, but open on the sides, which is all gilded with gold, and set with many Rubies and Saphires, whereof hee hath infinite store in his Countrie, and is carried upon sixeene or eighteene mens shoulders. This Coach in their Language is called Serrion. Very great feasting and triumphing is many times before the King both of men and women. This King hath little force by Sea, because he hath but very few ships.

Hee hath houses full of Gold and Silver, and bringeth in often, but spendeth very little, and hath the Mines of Rubies and Saphires, and Spinelles. Neere unto the Palace of the King, there is a Treasure wonderfull rich; the which because it is so neere, hee doth not account of it: and it standeth open for all men to see in a great walled Court with two Gates, which bee alwayes open.

There are foure Houses gilded very richly, and covered with Lead: in every one of them are Pagodes or Images of huge stature and great value. In the first is the Picture of a King in Gold with a Crowne of gold on his head, full of great Rubies and Saphires, and about him there stand foure Children of Gold.

In the second house is the picture of a Man in Silver wonderfull great, as high as an house; his Foot is as long as a man, and hee is made sitting, with a Crowne on his head very rich with Stones.

In the third house is the picture of a Man greater then the other made of Brasse, with a rich Crowne on his head.

In the fourth and last house doth stand another made of Brasse, greater then the other, with a Crowe also on his head very rich with Stones. In another Court not farre from this, stand foure other Pagodes or Idols, marvellous great of Copper, made in the same place where they doe stand; for they bee so great, that they be not to be removed: they stand in foure Houses gilded very faire, and are themselves gilded all over save their heads, and they shew like a blacke Morian. Their expences in gilding of their Images are wonderfull. The King hath one Wife and above three hundred Concubines, by which they say he hath fourescore or fourescore & ten Children. He sitteth in Judgement almost every day. They use no speech, but give up their supplications written in the Leaves of a Tree with the point of an Iron bigger then a Bodkin. These Leaves are an elle long, and about two inches broad; they are also double. Hee which giveth in his supplication, doth stand in a place a little distance off with a present. If his matter bee liked of, the King
accepteth of his present, and granteth his request; if his sute be not liked of, hee returneth with his present; for the King will not take it.

Commodities Suitable for Pegu

In India there are few commodities which serve for Pegu, except Opium of Cambaia, painted Cloth of Saint Thome, or of Masulipatan, and white cloth of Bengala, which is spent there in great quantitie. They bring thither also much Cotton, Yarne red coloured with a Root which they call Saja, which will never lose his colour: it is very well sold here, and very much of it commeth yeerely to Pegu. By your money you lose much. The ships which come from Bengala, Saint Thome, and Masulipatan, come to the barre of Nigrais and to Cosmin. To Martavan a port of the Sea in the Kingdome of Pegu, come many ships from Malacca laden with Sandall, Porcelanes, and other wares of China, and with Camphora of Borneo, and Pepper from Achen in Sumatra. To Cirion a Port of Pegu come ships from Mecca with Woollen cloth, Scarlets, Velvets, Opium, and such like.

There are in Pegu eight Brokers, whom they call Tareghe, which are bound to sell your goods at the price which they bee worth, and you give them for their labour two in the hundred: and they be bound to make your debt good, because you sell your Merchandizes upon their word. If the Broker pay you not at his day, you may take him home, and keepe him in your house: which is a great shame for him. And if hee pay you not presently, you may take his Wife and Children and his Slaves, and bind them at your doore, and set them in the Sunne; for that is the Law of the Countrey. Their current money in these parts is a kind of brasse which they call Gansa, wherewith you may buy Gold, Silver, Rubies, Muske, and all other things. The Gold and Silver is Merchandise, and is worth sometimes more, and sometimes lesse, as other wares bee. This brasen money doth goe by a weight which they call a Biza; and commonly this Biza after our account is worth about halfe a Crowne or somewhat lesse. The Merchandize which bee in Pegu, are Gold, Silver, Rubies, Saphires, Spinells, Musk, Benjamin or Frankincense, long Pepper, Tinne, Lead, Copper, Lacca whereof they make hard Waxe, Rice, & Wine made of Rice, and some Sugar.

Pagodas and Monks

The Elephants doe eate the Sugar Canes, or else they would make very much. And they consume many Canes likewise in making of their Varellaes or Idol Temples, which are in great number both great and small. They bee made round like a Sugar loafe, some are as high as a Church, very broad beneath, some a quarter of a mile
in compasse: within they be all earth done about with stone. They consume in these Varellaes great quantitie of Gold; for that they bee all gilded aloft: and many of them from the top to the bottome: and every ten or twelve yeares they must be new gilded, because the raine consumeth off the Gold: for they stand open abroad. If they did not consume their gold in these vanities, it would bee very plentifull and good cheape in Pegu. About two dayes journey from Pegu, there is a Varelle or Pagode, which is the Pilgrimage of the Pegues: it is called Dogonne, and is of a wonderfull bignesse, and all gilded from the foot to the top. And there is an house by it, wherein the Tallipoies which are their Priests doe Preach. This house is five and fiftie paces in length, and hath three pawnes or walkes in it, and fortie great Pillars gilded, which stand betweene the walkes; and it is open on all sides with a number of small pillars, which bee likewise gilded: it is gilded with Gold, within and without. There are houses very faire round about for the Pilgrimes to lie in: and many goodly Houses for the Tallipoies, to Preach in, which are full of Images both of men and women, which are all gilded over with Gold. It is the fairest place, as I suppose, that is in the world: it standeth very high, and there are foure wayes to it, which all along are set with Trees of fruits, in such wise that a man may goe in the shade above two miles in length. And when their Feast day is, a man can hardly passe by water or by land for the great presse of people; for they come from all places of the Kingdome of Pegu thither at their Feast.

In Pegu they have many Tallipoies or Priests, which Preach against all abuses. Many men resort unto them. When they enter into their Kiack, that is to say, their holy place or Temple, at the doore there is a great Jarre of water with a Cocke or ladle in it, and there they wash their feet; and then they enter in, and lift up their hands to their heads, first to their Preacher, and then to the Sunne, and so sit downe.

The Tallipoies goe very strangely appareled, with one Camboline or thinne cloth next to their bodie of a browne colour, another of yellow, doubled many times upon their shoulder: and those two bee girded to them with a broad Girdle: and they have a Skinne of leather hanging on a string about their neckes, whereupon they sit, bare headed and bare footed; for none of them weareth Shooes; with their right armes bare, and a great broad Sombrero or shadow in their hands to defend them in the Summer from the Sunne, and in the Winter from the Raine, When the Tallipoies or Priests take their Orders, first they goe to Schoole untill they bee twentie yeeres old or more, and then they come before a Tallipoie, appointed for that purpose, whom they call Rowl: hee is of the chiefest and most learned, and hee opposeth them, and afterward examineth them many times, whether they will leave their Friends, and the companie of all Women, and take upon them the habite of a Tallipoie. If any be content, then he rideth upon an Horse about the streets very richly appareled, with Drums and Pipes, to shew that he leaveth the riches of the world to bee a Tallipoie. In few dayes after, he is carried
upon a thing like an Horslitter, which they call a Serion, upon ten or twelve mens
shoulders in the apparell of a Tallipoie, with Pipes and Drums, and many Tallipoies
with him, and all his friends, and so they goe with him to his House, which
standeth without the Towne, and there they leave him.

Every one of them hath his House, which is very little, set upon sixe or eight
Posts, and they goe up to them with a Ladder of twelve or fourteene staves. Their
Houses bee for the most part by the high wayes side, and among the Trees, and in
the Woods. And they goe with a great Pot made of wood or fine earth, and covered,
tyd with a broad girdle upon their shoulder, which commeth under their arme,
wherewith they goe to begge their victuals which they eate, which is Rice, Fish,
and Herbes. They demand nothing, but come to the doore, and the people presently
doe give them, some one thing, and some another: and they put all together in their
Pot: for they say they must eate of their Almes, and therewith content themselves.
They keepe their Feasts by the Moone: and when it is new Moone they keepe their
greatest feast: and then the people send Rice and other things to that Kiack or
Church of which they bee; and there all the Tallipoies doe meeate which bee of that
Church, and eate the victuals which are sent them. When the Tallipoies doe Preach,
many of the people carrie them gifts into  the pulpit where they sit and preach. And
there is one which sitteth by them to take that which the people bring. It is divided
among them. They have none other Ceremonies nor service that I could see, but
oney Preaching.

Chiangmai

I went from Pegu to Jamahey, which is in the Countrey of the Langeiannes, whom
wee call Jangomes; it is five and twentie dayes journey Northeast from Pegu. In
which journey I passed many fruitfull and pleasant Countries. The Countrey is very
low, and hath many faire Rivers. The Houses are very bad, made of Canes, and
covered with Straw. Here are many wilde Buffes, and Elephants. Jamahey is a very
faire and great Towne, with faire houses of stone, well peopled, the streetes are
very large, the men very well set and strong, with a cloth about them, bare headed
and bare footed: for in all these Countries they weare no Shooes. The Women bee
much fairer then those of Pegu. Heere in all these Countries they have no Wheat.
They make some cakes of Rice. Hither to Jamahey come many Merchants out of
China, and bring great store of Muske, Gold, Silver, and many other things of
China worke. Heere is great store of Victuals: they have such plentie, that they will
not milke the Buffles, as they doe in all other places. Heere is great store of Copper
and Benjamin.

In these Countries when the people bee sicke they make a vowe to offer
meat unto the Divell, if they escape: and when they bee recovered they make a
Banquet with many Pipes and Drums and other Instruments, and dauncing all the night, and their friends come and bring gifts, Cocos, Figges, Arrecaes, and other Fruits, and with great dauncing and rejoicing they offer to the Divell, and say, they give the Divell to eate, and drive him out. When they bee dauncing and playing they will cry and hallow very loud; and in this sort they say they drive him away. And when they be sicke a Tallipoie or two every night doth sit by them and sing, to please the Divell that hee should not hurt them.

And if any die hee is carried upon a great frame made like a Tower, with a covering all gilded with gold made of Canes, carried with fourteene or sixteene men, with Drums and Pipes and other instruments playing before him to a place out of the Towne and there is burned. He is accompanied with all his Friends and Neighbours, all men: and they give to the Tallipoies or Priests many Mats and Cloth: and then they returne to the house and there make a Feast for two dayes: and then the Wife with all the neighbours Wives and her friends, goe to the place where he was burned, and there they sit a certaine time and cry, and gather the peeces of bones which bee left unburned and burie them, and then returne to their houses and make an end of all mourning. And the men and women which bee neere of kin doe shave their heads, which they do not use except it be for the death of a friend: for they much esteeme of their haire.

Capelan

Capelan is the place where they finde the Rubies, Saphires, and the Spinelles: it standeth sixe dayes journey from Ava in the Kingdome of Pegu. There are many great high Hills out of which they digge them. None may goe to the Pits but onely those which digge them.

Body Adornment

In Pegu, and in all the Countries of Ava, Langeiannees, Siam, and the Bramas, the men weare bunches or little round balls in their privie members: some of them weare two and some three [penis inserts]. They cut the skinne and so put them in, one into one side and another into the other side; which they doe when they bee five and twentie or thirtie yeeres old, and at their pleasure they take one or more of them out as they thinke good. When they be married the Husband is for every Child which his Wife hath, to put in one untill hee come to three, and then no more: for they say the women doe desire them. They were invented because they should not abuse the Male sexe. For in times past all those Countries were so given
to that Villanie, that they were very scarce of people. It was also ordained, that the Women should not have past three cubites of Cloth in their nether clothes, which they bind about them; which are so strait, that when they goe in the streets, they shew one side of the legge bare above the knee. The bunches aforesaid bee of divers sorts: the least be as bigge as a little Walnut, and very round: the greatest are as bigge as a little Hens egge: some are of Brasse, and some of Silver: but those of silver bee for the King and his Noblemen. These are gilded and made with great cunning, and ring like a little bell. There are some made of Lead, which they call Selwy, because they ring but little: and these be of lesser price for the poorer sort. The King sometimes taketh his out, and giveth them to his Noblemen as a great gift: and because he hath used them, they esteeme them greatly. They will put one in and heale up the place in seven or eight dayes.

The Bramas which bee of the Kings Countrey (for the King is a Brama) have their legges or bellies, or some part of their body, as they thinke good themselves, made blacke with certaine things which they have: they use to pricke the skinne, and to put on it a kind of Anile or Blacking, which doth continue alwayes. And this is counted an Honour among them: but none may have it but the Bramas which are of the Kings kindred.

These people weare no Beards: they pull out the haire on their faces with little pinsons made for that purpose. Some of them will let sixteene or twentie haires grow together, some in one place of his face and some in another, and pulleth out all the rest: for he carrieth his pinsons alwayes with him to pull the haires out as soone as they appeare. If they see a man with a beard they wonder at him. They have their teeth blacked both men and women, for they say a Dog hath his teeth white, therefore they will blacke theirs.

Justice

The Pegues if they have a sute in the law which is so doubtfull that they cannot well determine it, put two long Canes into the water where it is very deepe: and both the parties goe into the water by the poles, and there sit men to Judge, and they both doe dive under the water, and he which remaineth longest under the water doth winne the sute.

Departure from Pegu, January 1587

The tenth of Januarie I went from Pegu to Malacca, passing by many of the Ports of Pegu, as Martavan, the Hand of Tavi, from whence commeth great store of Tinne which serveth all India, the Hands of Tanaseri, Jun-salaon, and many others;
and so came to Malacca the eight of Februarie, where the Portugals have a Castle which standeth neere the Sea. And the Countrey fast without the Towne belongeth to the Malayos, which is a kind of proud people. They goe naked with a cloth about their middle, and a little roll of cloth about their heads. Hither come many ships from China, and from the Malucos, Banda, Timor, and from many other Inlands of the Javas, which bring great store of Spices and Drugs, and Diamants and other Jewels. The voyages into many of these Ilands belong unto the Captaine of Malacca: so that none may goe thither without his licence: which yeeld him great summes of money every yeere. The Portugals heere have oftentimes warres with the King of Achem, which standeth in the Hand of Sumatra: from whence commeth great store of Pepper and other Spices every yeere to Pegu and Mecca, within the Red Sea, and other places…

All the Chineans, Japonians, and Cauchin Chineans doe write downwards, and they doe write with a fine Pensill made of Dogs or Cats haire.

Laban is an Island among the Javas from whence come the Diamants of the New water. And they find them in the Rivers: for the King will not suffer them to digge the Rocke. Jamba is an Island among the Javas also from whence come Diamants. And the King hath a masse-of earth which is Gold; it groweth in the middle of a River: and when the King doth lacke Gold, they cut part of the earth and melt it, whereof commeth Gold. This masse of earth doth appeare but once in a yeere; which is when the water is low: and this is in the moneth of Aprill.

Bima is an other Hand among the Javas, where the Women travell and labour as our men doe in England, and the Men keepe house and goe where they will.

**Brief Return to Pegu and Departure from Southeast Asia**

The nine and twentieth of March 1588. I returned from Malacca to Martavan, and so to Pegu, where I remained the second time untill the seventeenth of September, and then I went to Cosmin, and there tooke shipping: and passing many dangers by reason of contrarie winds, it pleased God that wee arrived in Bengala, in November following: where I stayed for want of passage untill the third of Februarie 1589. and then I shipped my selfe for Cochin…

**Commodities of the East**

Heere I thought good, before I make an end of this my Booke, to declare some things which India and the Countrey farther Eastward doe bring forth.

The Pepper groweth in many parts of India, especially about Cochin: and much of it doeth grow in the Fields among the bushes without any labour: and when it is
ripe they goe and gather it. The Shrub is like unto our Ivie-tree: and if it did not runne about some Tree or Pole, it would fall downe and rot. When they first gather it, it is greene; and then they lay it in the Sunne, and it becometh blacke.

The Ginger groweth like unto our Garlike, and the root is the Ginger: it is to bee found in many parts of India.

The Cloves doe come from the lies of the Moluccoes, which bee divers Ilands: their Tree is like to our Bay-tree.

The Nutmegs and Maces grow together, and come from the lies of Banda: the tree is like to our Walnut-tree, but somewhat lesser.

The white Sandoll is wood very sweet and in great request among the Indians; for they grind it with a little water, and annoint their bodies therewith: it commeth from the Ile of Timor.

Camphora is a precious thing among the Indians, and is sold dearer then Gold. I thinke none of it commeth for Christendome. That which is compounded commeth from China: but that which groweth in Canes and is the best, commeth from the great Ile of Borneo.

Lignum Aloes commeth from Cauchinchina.

The Benjamin commeth out of the Countries of Siam and Jangomes.

The Long Pepper groweth in Bengala, in Pegu, and in the Ilands of the Javas.

The Muske commeth out of Tartarie, and is made after this order, by report of the Merchants which bring it to Pegu to sell; In Tartarie there is a little beast like unto a yong Roe, which they take in snares, and beat him to death with the blood: after that they cut out the bones, and beat the flesh with the blood very small, and fill the skin with it: and hereof commeth the Muske.

Of the Amber they hold divers opinions; but most men say it commeth out of the Sea, and that they finde it upon the shores side.

The Rubies, Saphires, and Spinelles, are found in Pegu.

The Diamants are found in divers places, as in Bsnagar, in Agra, in Delli, and in the Hands of the Javas.

The best Pearles come from the Hand of Baharim in the Persian Sea, the worser from the Piscaria, neere the Ile of Ceylon, and from Aynam a great Iland on the Southernmost Coast of China.

Spodium and many other kindes of Drugges come from Cambaia.

Return to London

I came with a prosperous voyage to London where by Gods assistance I safely arrived the nine and twentieth of Aprill 1591 having beene eight yeares out of my native Countrey.
Editor’s Note:

In his Haklutus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes, Samuel Purchas collated a number of Jesuit letters relating to events in India and Southeast Asia under the title of “Indian Observations Gathered out of the Letters of Nicolas Pimenta, Visiter of the Jesuites in India, and of many others of that Societie, Written from divers Indian Regionas; principally relating the Countries and accidents of the Coast of Coromandel, and of Pegu.” The main source cited by Purchas are the letters of Nicolas Pimenta, whose own letters related other letters of Portuguese priests who visited Pegu from 1599, shortly after the fall of Nan-dá-bayin (r. 1581-1599), the last ruler of the First Taung-ngu Dynasty. Pimenta’s letters and most of these materials appear to have been extracted by Purchas from Padre Fernão Guerreiro’s Jesuit Anual published in the first nine years of the seventeenth century under the title of Relação Annual das Coisas que fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas Missões... Nos Anos de 1600 a 1609. The following text includes only those materials relevant to Southeast Asia and particularly to Burma. Minor printer’s errors have been corrected. The letters have also been re-sorted chronologically and some paragraph breaks, as well as the section headers, have been added.


M.W.C.
JESUIT LETTERS ON PEGU IN THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Nicolas Pimenta & Others

Voyage to Goa in December 1597

Nicholas Pimenta, the Indian Visiter in his Letter to Claudius Aquaviva the Generall of the Jesuites, relateth his visitation Voyage from Goa in December 1597. To Cochin first, the occurrents wherein hee had certified by Letter in the Vice-royes ship or Caracke, which being richly laden was accidentally and irrecoverably fired, the Ordnance thundring Death and lightning manifold mischieves to the Rescuers. Hee sent from Cochin a Mission to Bengala, Francis Fernandes, and Dominicke Sosa; another to Pegu, Melchior Fonsera, and Andrew Boves. The effect whereof appeared in their letters.

Pimenta’s Relation of Fernandes Letter of January 1599

Fernandes writ from Siripur in Bengala, in Januarie 1599 the dangers of their Voyage by Malabar Pirats, a three dayes Tempest, the shelves of Ganges, before they arrived at Gullum, two hundred and ten miles up that River: where they left one of their Societie which could meanly write to teach that Schoole. Sosa indevoured to learne the Bengalan Language and translated into it a tractate of Christian Religion, in which were confuted the Gentile and Mahumetan errours: to which was added a short Catechisme by way of Dialogue, which the Children frequenting the Schoole learned by heart, and taught the Servants in their Families, with the signe of the Crosse and other things belonging to Christianitie.

They perswaded them to erect an Hospitall, buying a house and householdstuffe to that purpose, and reformed the courses of many which lived in Piracie, and loose lusts: and in October departed thence to the Great Port sixe hundred miles from the Small Port or Porto Pequeno, not without dangers from Tigres and Theeves. In the midway in the Kingdome of Chandecan, where they stayed a moneth to reforme disorders by Lusts and Discord, and Baptised two hundred; The King gave them a place to build a Church in, and monies to that purpose, with libertie to Preach the Gospell. In the Woods of that Kingdome great store of Waxe is made which is thence transported to other parts of India. At Siripur in December, they arrived and were I received as Angels from Heaven, by reason the Bishop of Cochin had Excommunicated the new Captayne with his followers, from which Sentence they hoped the Jesuites would exempt them: and although wee were loth to inter-
meddle, yet could we not but give answer to them. At Siripur the Governour gave us leave to Preach and assigned sixe hundred peeces of Gold for revenue, and roome to build a Church, with promise of all necessaries. I send you two Boyes of Bengal to bee instructed in the Colledge, and next yeere will send two others as your Worship commanded. When we came to Chatigan wee learned that the King of Aracan was gone to the warre of Pegu. Thus farre Fernandes.

Pimenta’s Further Observations

Father Baltasar Sequeira was Elected to the Peguan mission, which went to the Towne of Saint Thomas, thence to sayle with the first opportunitie with Father John Costa for Pegu: but wee arrived at Saint Thomas before they were gone…Whereas a new Peguan mission was talked of [at Meliapor], there came ships from Pegu which related the turbulent state of that King-dome, and I will heere adjoyne what I learned of credible persons which a long time had beene eye-witnesses of Pegues prosperitie and adversitie.

Emanuel Carvalius’s Letters from Melaka in January 1599

Emanuel Carvalius in his Letters from Malaca, in Januaries, 1599 writeth of an Embassage sent thither from the King of Camboia to obtaine some of the Fathers of Saint Paul (so the Jesuites are called in the East Indies) to bee sent into his Kingdome. This Kingdome of Camboia hath Cauci of Cochinchina on the North, Sion (or Siam) on the South, which also lieth in the midst betwixt Pegu and Camboia, the Sea on the other side. It hath a River which overfloweth yeerely. The Region is fertile, and hath also store of Bejoine and other merchandise. Within twenty yeeres last past this numerous people hath beeene much diminished by warres with Siam. Beyond Camboia are the Laos, which inhabite on the Rivers sides, and Lakes made by it. For the River runneth twelve hundred miles, and the head thereof is not knowne by the Camboyans. The Laos which dwelt above on the River twenty yeeres age, would needs come downe the River with an Armie of two hundred thousand men, which all perished, and the King of Camboia perished also in the battell. His sonne by helpe of the Portugals expelled the Laos, which ten yeeres together infested the Countrie. They have many Cities and Temples like the Chinois and Japonians, with their Bonzos.
Boves Letter of March 1600

Boves writeth, the eight and twentieth of March, 1600, that the King of Pegu beleagred with a straight siege by the Kings of Tangu and Arracan, delivered himselfe (unable to hold out any longer) to the King of Tangu, which caused his head and the Queenes also to bee cut off.

The like he did to his sonne the Prince. After this he went to the Tower where the Kings treasure was kept, which was so much that scarcely sixe hundred Elephants and as many Horses were sufficient to carry away the Gold and Gemmes onely. For I say nothing of the Silver and other Metals, as things of no price. The King of Arracan then absent, hearing that the King of Tangu against his agreement with him had taken all this treasure for himselfe, and dismissed the Armie without his Knowledge, came thither with the aide of the Portugals to invade Tangu. I went thither with Philip Brito, and in fifteene dayes arrived at Sirian, the chiefe Port in Pegu.1

It is a lamentable spectacle to see the bankes of the Rivers set with infinite fruit-bearing trees, now overwhelmed with ruines of gilded Temples, and noble edifices; the wayes and fields full of skulls and bones of wretched Peguans, killed or famished and cast into the River, in such numbers that the multitude of carkasses prohibiteth the way and passage of any ship; to omit the burnings and massacres committed by this the cruellest of Tyrants that ever breathed.

The King of Arracan is now ending his businesse at the Tower of Macao, carrying thence the Silver which the King of Tangu had left, exceeding three millions, besides many and rare pieces of brazen Ordnance remayning in that Castle. The Kings of Siam and Jangoma with great forces have invaded the King of Tangu to despoile him of his spoiles. The King of Arracan is yet Lord of Pegu, though not acknowledged by those which fled or hid themselves, and hath delivered the Port of Sirian to Philip de Brito, that the Peguan fugitives might have refuge under Portugall protection. Brito is in hand with building the Fort, and is earnest for a Residence of our Society. The King of Siam in his way towards Tangu made irruption into the Kingdome of Martavan, but was twice repelled with losse; and hath therefore reenforced his Armie, withall commanding two of his Captaines,

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1 Philip de Brito was notorious for his activities at Syriam. He had been in the service of the Arakanese king, but had a secret agenda to take control of this rich port. De Brito left Syriam shortly after in the hands of his friend and fellow desperado Salvador Ribeyro, who resisted Arakanese attempts to bring Syriam back under their control from 1601-1603. After resuming control of Syriam in 1603 from Ribeyro, De Brito ruled a petty port-state and made marriage and other alliances with rulers at Taung-ngu and Martaban, and sacked Prome as well. Ultimately, he stirred up the wrath of Anauk-hpet-lun (r. 1606-1628) of Ava, who besieged Syriam in 1613. De Brito was captured, then impaled on an iron spike. The Portuguese and others in the town were deported to Upper Burma where they became royal servicemen to the Restored Taung-ngu court, devoted mainly in the use of cannon.
for negligence and cowardise to bee drowned in Caldrons of scalding Oile, after which entring a third time hee hath subdued that Kingdome of Martavan. What after happened in Pegu and Siam, See before in Master Floris his Journall…

Pimenta’s Relations of Pegu

The King of Pegu [Bayin-naung, r. 1551-1581], Father of the present [Nan-dá-bayin, r. 1581-1599], of the race of the Bramas, was the mightiest of all which have raigned in Pegu. For hee subdued twelve Kingdomes to his Empire viz. the Kingdome of Cavelan, whence I come the best Saphires and Rubies; Ava, in which are Mines of Ciprian Brasse, Lead and Silver; Bagan, in which are many Gold mines; Tangram, which abounds with Lead and Lac; Prom, which aboundeth also in Lead and Lac; Jangoma, stored with Copper, Muske, Pepper, Silke, Gold, Silver; Lawran, where is store of Bejoine, enough to lade ships; the eight and ninth, are the Kingdomes of Trucon, whence many China wares are transported to us; the tenth and eleventh, are the Kingdomes of Cablan abounding in Gemmes, neere to the Kingdome of Aava, betwixt it and China. The twelfth, is the Kingdome of Sion (or Siam) which he subdued last, and in that Expedition is said to have armed 1,060,000 men, taking one of ten with him to that warre. Hee raigned sise and thirtie yeeres in such affluence of all things, that one hundred Ships laden with Rice would not have seemed to diminish the store. The plentie of Gemmes was such, that in one moneth a man might have bestowed many talents of Gold thereon.

Yet now there are scarcely found in all that Kingdome any men, but a few which with the King have betaken themselves to the Castle, which with Women and Children are said not to exceed seven thousand. For in late times they have beene brought to such miserie and want, that they did eate Mans flesh and kept publike shambles thereof, Parents abstained not from their Children, and Children devoured their Parents. The stronger by force preyed on the weaker, and if any were but skinne and bone, yet did they open their intrailes to fill their owne and sucked out their braines. The women went about the streets with knives to like butcherly purposes. The cause of this misery was this.

The former King [Bayin-naung] being dead, his Sonne [Nan-dá-bayin] the second moneth of his Raigne hearing that the King of Ava his Uncle affected some change of State, and that fortie of his Grandes had conspired with him, committed those fortie and Burned them all, together with their Wives, Children, Friends and Familiers, causing all that fled out of the fire to bee Cut in pieces. This estranged his Subjects hearts, whereof hee had experience in the Warre & against his Uncle, and therefore offered him single Combate upon an Elephant, the survivor to possesse the Scepter. In this Combat, the King of Pegu slew his Uncle of Ava. But whiles hee was in that expedition, the King of Siam entred the Peguan Confines
with an Armie as farre as a Towne called Satan, divulging a rumour that hee came
to ayde his Lord the King. This was much stomacked by the King of Pegu, who
sent an Armie against him, commanding the Generall to bring him Captive. But
this Armie disposed it selfe,and neglecting the Kings command, returned to their
homes. The King after his returne sent to the Siamite to come to him, who offered
to continue his Tribute, but refused to come.

Two yeeres after, the Peguan with an Armie of nine hundred thousand
men, marcheth against Siam and besiegeth it. The Siamite makes him faire offers,
but protracted the time till the third moneth, that in the inundation which happeneth
in March, the Kings Armie might be indamaged. That River like Nilus (but in
another moneth) useth to cover one hundred and twentie miles circuit in ground,
and so overwhelmed this Armie, that scarcely seventy thousand of that great
multitude returned to Martavan, and those without Horses and Elephants, The King
of Pegu having once and againe made such Expeditions in vaine, at length hee sent
his; Brother the King of Jangoma with many Commanders; twise also hee sent his
Sonne thither with a great Armie: which committed hostile spoyles, but yet ever
returned with the losse of more then halfe their Armie: and his Sonne in the last
Expedition was killed with shot of a Piece.

Thus enraged and resolved to revenge, hee made great preparations three
yeeres together, and then thought to carrie with him all the Peguans to this warre.
But of them, presenting the former dreadfull slaughters and losses to their mindes,
some became Talapoies (Friers in their Ethnicisme) others hid themselves in
Desarts, and Woods, and many sold themselves for Slaves. The King caused
Ximibogo his Uncle to search the publike Records, and to presse one halfe to the
warres, he also proclaimed that all which in such a space had turned Talapoies
should returne secular; the young should be compelled to the warres, the old to be
exiled into the Region of the Bramas, whom hee after changed away for Horses.
Hee ordained also that all the Peguans should be branded in the right hand, that
every mans name, Countrie and condition might be known. They seeing
themselves thus opprobriously branded, Talapoies forced to returne Secular, and
old men exchanged for Horses, began to rebell.

The Cosmians first set a King over them, against whom the King sent an
Armie, which spoiled all the Countrie, and brought many Captives, whom the King
causeth to be burned: and continuing his warre upon them, forced by famine, they
yelded to his mercy, but he with exquisite torments slue them all. The next stage
of his furie was the Kingdome of Ava, where he commanded his sonne the
Governour to bring them all into the Kingdome of Pegu, now so destitute of
Inhabitants; but the aire not agreeing, they brake out in pushes and diseases, which
also infected the Natives, that some with impatience of the torture threw
themselves into the River. Some of the Pegusians in this time had with the Siamites
help, brought the Castle of Murmulan into their possession, whom the King
besieged a yere together. And the Siamites comming on them unexpected,
overthrew his Armie, killed his Horses and Elephants, slue and drowned many,
tooke others: and so became Lords of all that Countrie, and many Peguan Peeres
fled to them; whose wives, children, and families the King after his manner
destroyed utterly with fire, sword and water. And thus the whole tract from Pegu to
Martavan and Murmulan, was brought to a Wildernesse.

Whiles hee besieged Murmulan, hee sent for his sonne the Vice-roy of
Prom, who imagined that it was to proclaime him Heire apparant and so preferre
him to his elder brother the Prince of Ava: but when he came was sent to the siege
of Murmulan, which he excusing was threatned by his father, and commanded
presently to salute his brother, and bee gone thither. Hee returned to Prom, and
rebelled against his father. In these bro iles the Siamite taketh opportunitie, and
marcheth against Pegu in harvest time. Some of their fruits were hastily inned, the
rest burned by the Kings command.

The Siamite layeth siege to Pegu, in which were then numbred an hundred
and fifty thousand Peguans, Bramans, and of other Nations; three thousand peeces
of Ordnance, one thousand of them brasse. The siege continued from Januarie to
April, 1596. By the helpe of some Portugals and Turkes, the Citie escaped, and the
rumour of Portugals comming by the way of Camboia raised the siege, the Siamite
fearing to lose his owne, whiles he sought to winne that which was anothers. But
Famine succeeded with a worse siege, which made the forren Souldiers leave the
Citie, a few remayning which were fled from Tangu.

The King hereupon commanded the King or Vice-roy of Tangu, to gather
the harvest then ripe, and to imbarke it and the people for Pegu.

Hee [the Viceroy of Tangu] answered that hee would send halfe, and that
he or his sonne would come.

The King sends foure principall men to fetch him and the provision by
force. The Tanguan kills those Commissioners, possessed himselfe of the ships and
Souldiers, and by Proclamation prohibiteth returne and aide to Pegu. Thus the
famine encreased in the Citie, insomuch that they killed and did eate each other.
The King caused the people to be numbred, and there finding seven thousand
Siamites, caused them all to be slaine, and divided the provision to the rest, of
which there were not of all ages and sexes above thirty thousand remayning.

The King of Prom held out three yeeres against his father, and then
repenting, sent messengers that he would bring all the people of Prom, which were
50,000 to the Citie. Hereupon the King pardoned him, and sent him presents. But
his chiefe Counsellour which had set him on worke, fearing his head would be the
price of his reconciliatiou, poisoned this young Prince, and aspiring to the
Kingdome, was within seven dayes after killed by the Grandes, of whom every
weeke almost yeelded a rising Sunne setting in a bloudy Cloude: insomuch that in
two moneths space, of fifty thousand scarcely fifty men remained, which going to
Pegu, left Prom to the habitation of wilde beasts. Many Pegusians yet remained in other Countries whither they had fled, as in Jangoma, Arracan, Siam.

The Talipots perswaded the Jangoman, brother to the King of Pegu, to usurpe the Kingdome, which he refused, pretending his Oath. They replied, that no Religion hindered, if he placed his brother in the Vahat, that is a Golden throne, to be adored of the people for a God. He also found out another tricke, that his brother of Pegu was borne before his father was enthronized, himselfe after he was now King, begotten also of the old King of Pegu’s daughter, whereas the Kings mother was not a Kings daughter.

The King is said to have killed two hundred Eunuches, lest they should betray his huge treasures: it is also reported, that his father caused to be cast three hundred sixty sixe Combalengas of Gold (a great kinde of Gourd) which none knoweth where they be. He hath also sixty seven Idols of Gold adorned with Jewels of all sorts, fourre Store-houses with great plenty of Lead, Brasse, Ordnance, without weight. This was then the state of the Kingdome of Pegu, brought to one Citie, and that almost destroyed.

**Pimenta’s Further Summary of Boves’ and Fernandes’ Letters**

The rest wee will supply out of the Epistle of Andrew Boves, and Francis Fernandes, Jesuites. This writes concerning Martavan, that it is a large Kingdome, but now desolate by the Siamites warre no lesse then Pegu. But two hundred thousands of the Inhabitants lurke in Woods and Mountaines. The King [Banyà-dalá] hath only two or three fortified Cities, not able to withstand the Siamite.

The fertilitie of that Countrie is such, that it yeeldeth yeerely a threefold Harvest, and at what time of the yeere soever they sowe, the seeds come to ripenesse. Cochin and Malaca alone carrie from thence yeerely thirty ships laden with Graine.

The Woods also abound with divers Fruit-trees; the Herbes are almost all both odoriferous and medicinable. It is able to lade yeerely twenty of the greatest ships with Pitch and Timber. Their Fountaines, Rivers, wilde and tame Beasts, Mines of Gold, Silver, Brasse, Iron, and Lead, also of Rubies and Gemmes, likewise their commodious Ports I omit: as also the temperature of the aire, and the hopes of converting the countrie, since frustrated…

Editor’s Note:

The account of Henri de Feynes de Monsart was translated anonymously into English and published in London in 1615, for Thomas Dawson by William Arondell under the title of *An Exact and Curious Survey of all the East Indies, even to Canton, the chiefe Cittie of China: All duly performed by land, by Monsieur de Monsart, the like whereof was never hetherto, brought to an end*. The original edition is available in at least four copies in the British Library.

M. W. C.

ACCOUNT OF THE KINGDOME OF PEGUE (1608)

Henri de Feynes de Monsart

From Canton I returned to Macao, and tooke, my way though the kingdome of Pegu, which is much transformed from what it was heretofore by reason of a certaine king, who forbad his people the exercise of husbandry and Tillage, or any other thing necessary for the use of man; And having gathered togeather all the victualls of the country, caused it strongly to be immured, where he kept his residence, suffering the most part of his subjects to perish, through famine or sickness, so that at this instant the whole countrey, remaines waste and desolate. Where is times past, there was wont to be found many rare commodities: namely, most faire rubies, and is now all togeat her frequented with savage beastes; yea in so great quantity that they have almost driven out the inhabitants. Yet for such as remaine there to this day, they bee Gentiles and of a swartie hue.

Thence I made it 18 dayes journeyes, to the Realme of Cambodge, which is very spatious, but voyd of any rarities of note, onely that the King is able to bring 400000 men to the field, and makes warre upon the King of Sian.

Thence I came to Sian, the King whereof is able to bring 600000 men to the field. These two Kings have neyther Horses, nor any fiery Instruments: but make use onely of bowes, and a certaine kind of pike, made of knottiewood like Canes, called Bambue, which is exceedingly strong, though pliant and supple for use.

Both these Kings are Gentiles, but yet differ enough in manners; for the King of Sian worshippeth a white Elephant; And that of Cambodge doth as the most of the above-mentioned. I saw nothing remarkable in both these kingdoms, (having but coasted them) but onely much Benzoin in Sian, which is an aromaticall...
gumme, distilling out of a certaine tree, when they have first cut an incision into it, whereof they make a great trade: as being the onely place where it is found. I spent three moneths in traversing these two Kingdomes.

Thence I embarqued my selfe in one of the Portugall ships, which usually traffike thither for Benzoin, and arrived at Conchin, a most fertile Kingdome, as likewise all the others be in those Climes, Pegu onely accidentally excepted.
Editor’s Note:

This account was originally composed in French, but translated into English by Francis Magnus and published in Calcutta at the Joseph Cooper Press in 1789, the year of the French Revolution. It was published within the multi-volume travels (Vol. III, book 4, chapter 2) of the Comissary of the Marine, Monsieur Sonnerat, entitled, *A Voyage to the East-Indies and China; Performed by Order of Lewis XV. Between the Years 1774 and 1781. Containing A Description of the Manners, Religion, Arts, and Sciences, of the Indians, Chinese, Pegouins, and of the Islanders of Madagascar; Also Observations on the Cape of Good Hope, the Isles of Ceylon, Malacca, the Philipppines, and Moluccas*. As only the account to Pegu is included here, “A French Voyage to Pegu” has been decided upon as the title for this edition.

M. W. C.

A VOYAGE TO PEGU

Monsieur Sonnerat

When the Portuguese established themselves in the country of Pegu, they found it divided into two kingdoms. The Abassys, known to the Europeans by the name of Pegouins, inhabited the kingdom of Pegu; and the Barmans that of Ava. These nations, governed by rival powers, did not long preserve a good understanding. The King of Ava, jealous of the commerce of his neighbours, assembled a numerous army in 1685, and declared war against them. Being conqueror, he destroyed their king with all his family, and wanted to annihilate even the name of Pegu. These two states, reunited under his dominion, were now only one kingdom, which extends on the north to China; the east, is bounded by Tonquin, Quinam, and Cochin China; the south by the kingdom of Siam; and the west, in part, by the sea; and going upwards, it terminates at Chittigong, which borders upon Bengal.

In 1735, the conquered Pegouins shook off the yoke, and revenged the blood of their ancient masters; and as a just return they massacred the tyrant with all his family; and no legitimate prince remaining, they elected a new king. By the resolution of this prince, a calm soon succeeded: and when by his courage, and the punishment of the seditious, he had established his power, he employed himself in restoring his kingdom to its former splendor, and revived its commerce. The
Europeans were attracted; and the English, taking advantage of this revolution, established several factories, such as those on the great and little Negrais, at Bacim, and on the western point of the coast of Pegu. At the same period, the Zelanders, driven out of Banqui-bazard, by Allavirdy Khan, nabob of Bengal, took shelter in Pegu, where they wanted to establish themselves by force of arms; but, too feeble for the execution of such an enterprise, they were all massacred.

The French availed themselves of the good dispositions of this prince, and turned them to much better account. Mr. Dupleix, Governor-General in India, sent an ambassador to him with considerable presents, in the year 1751; and the French obtained of the king of Pegu permission to settle themselves at Syriam, where they would still have remained but for the following revolution. [Syriam is] A city of Pegu, where the Europeans formerly carried on their commerce. Though this city is now no more, the river still preserves the name of Syriam, a name which it has also given to the beautiful Siriam Granats, so improperly called Syrien.1

The standard of revolt, after twenty years peace, was raised by a simple countryman, of Barman origin, and whose name was Alompra. Followed by some husbandmen, of whom he was the chief, he was resolved to become the deliverer of his nation, and free it from the yoke of the Pegouins. These rebels, armed only with a club, had some little success on their first attempt. The king of Pegu, despising such an enemy, made but a feeble opposition; but, in the sequel, he experienced that there is no enemy who is not dangerous. Alompra’s party grew more formidable every day, and he soon saw himself at the head of twenty thousand Barmans, by whose assistance he seized on the capital of the kingdom, where he found arms and stores. This conquest increasing his ambition, he caused himself to be proclaimed king; went down the river with surprising rapidity, and encamped two leagues from Siriam, on the very spot where he laid foundation of the city of Rangon, which is since become the staple of commerce. He besieged Siriam, which he razed, in order to punish the inhabitants of having resisted his attempt during the space of eighteen months.

Alompra and the French had agreed upon a neutrality, which, however, was not adhered to by the latter. The king of Pegu had sent for assistance from Pondicherry: they there debated a long time on the subject; but at last, in July 1756, some troops and ammunition were sent him in two vessels, named le Diligent, and la Galathée. Though the last ship arrived long before the other, she could not anchor at Siriam till two days after the reduction of that city, and the captain fell into a snare which Alompra had laid for him. This conqueror, exasperated at the French, seized their vessel, beheaded all the officers, as well as the agent of the French nation, and imprisoned the soldiers and sailors.

1 These two lines have been pulled up from the notes. M.W.C.
Le Diligent being obliged to put in at the Nicobars, did not arrive till six weeks after la Galathée; but the Captain, more prudent than the other, entered the river with precaution, and when he heard of the French being massacred, returned to Pondicherry.

Alompra employed the soldiers and ammunition taken in la Galathée to great advantage. After having promised a reward to the former, he blocked up the king of Pegu in his capital. The king held out against the besieger till the month of May, 1757, when he found himself obliged to surrender. The conqueror, to get rid of his rival, made use of the following stratagem. It was recorded in their annals; that the person who should put a crown on the pagoda of Rangoon, should overcome all his enemies, and be acknowledged for the most powerful king. He caused a crown of gold to be made, enriched with diamonds and rubies, weighing as much as himselfe, his wife and children, and after having placed it on the cone of the pagoda, in presence of the king his prisoner, he asked him if he would acknowledge his superiority; when the other replying in the negative, he was beheaded.

During these troubles, the English fortified themselves in their settlements of Bacim and the Negrais; as they were the only Europeans that had the prudence to build forts. The new king became suspic ious of them; he attacked them several times at the head of his Barmans, but was always repulsed. However, at last, by employing the French, he drove them entirely out of the kingdom.

That depopulation and wreckedness are inevitable consequences of war, is well known; and when Alompre would have enjoyed the fruit of his labours, he was afflicted to find he reigned over ruins alone. He saw no other remedy than the conquest of Siam, and to disperse through his own territories the men that in this conquest he might have subjected to him. In consequence of such revolution, he set out, attended by forty thousand men, and in his route seized upon Tavay, Tennasserin, and Merqui. He soon penetrated as far as Siam, which he besieged, and would doubtless have taken it, if a dysentery, the effect of fatigue, during so long and so toilsome a siege, had not carried him off, in September 1760, in the fiftieth year of his life.

His sons, who had followed him in his expedition, caused his body to be embalmed and sent to Pegu, with all the pomp due to his memory. The eldest, whose name was Kandropa, was declared his successor. The friend of peace, he governed his kingdom with wisdom; but after a peacable reign of five years he died, without leaving any heirs, and the crown passed to Zekinmedou, his brother.

Zekinmedou, following the steps of Alompra, renewed the war with the Siamese, and was so fortunate as to finish with glory what his father had commenced with courage. Siam was conquered, and the king and his family made prisoners. This unfortunate prince, stripped of his kingdoms, presents to this day at Ava the most striking example of the vicissitudes of fortune; those hands,
accustomed to hold a sceptre, have been forced to inure themselves to the vilest tasks. Deprived of all his riches, and reduced to misery in the extreme. The conqueror seems only to have spared his life, that he might the more ardently make him wish for his death.

After having dispersed many thousand Siamese prisoners, in all parts of his kingdom, Zekinmedou subdued the Cassayans, and declared war against the Chinese. This populous nation found no difficulty in opposing him with an army of an hundred thousand men: Zekinmedou’s troops were no more than thirty thousand, but he attacked them with such fury, that they were soon routed, and sixty thousand prisoners taken, who were sent to cultivate the land in the environs of Ava.

It was nearly at this time, that is to say, in the year 1769, that the French East India Company asked his permission to re-establish their commerce in Pegue. The prince received the deputy who was sent, with great distinction—gave him the most singular marks of his esteem for the French nation, and sent him back to the council of Pondicherry, charged with a letter addressed to them, in the following terms:

I, the Emperor of Ava, King of Kings, omnipotent, inform you, that I have received the letter given to me by your ambassador, Mr. Feraud, with the presents, consisting of one piece of red velvet, one of black velvet, a third of yellow velvet, five pieces of gold and silver stuffs, five parcels of gold and silver lace, eight hundred and twenty-four small knives, a double barrelled gun, inlaid with gold, five hundred and twenty-five muskets, two hundred and eighty-six cannon balls, eighteen hundred musket balls, one hundred granades, a cask of flints, and ten barrels of gun-powder. I have also received the letter which your ambassador sent, and which has been interpreted by Millard, my slave.2 I have received your ambassador in my golden palace. With respect to the requests you make, I cannot grant you the island of Molucca, because it is a suspicious place: neither will I give up the five Frenchmen. You also mention their pay, and you ask for a person to settle their account: all this I leave to the disposal of Millard. I exempt you from all duties, and grant you a free trade. I also cede to you that place to the south of Rangon, called Mangthu; the extent of the ground along the bank of the river is 500 Thas,3 and the breadth of two hundred, which the governor of Rangon will cause to be measured. All the French vessels that anchor in the port of the French settlement, shall be obliged to render an account of their merchandize and other effects to the governor of Rangon, in order to see what

2 Original footnote: Mr. Millard went to Pegu, on board the Galathée, as a volunteer; he had the good fortune to escape the general massacre of the French, and to gain the king’s friendship, who appointed him grand master of the artillery, and captain of his guards. On several occasions, he was very serviceable to the French, particularly to Mr. Gouyon, commander of the Castries, who happened to be at Pegu during the disturbances in 1775, when the French were suspected of favouring the rebels. Millard died in 1778.

3 Original footnote: A Thas is ten feet and a half.
presents I should exact, to indemnify myself for the duties. No warlike ammunition is to be sold by you in my dominions, without my license. I have sent in consequence my orders to the governor of Rangon. When any French vessels arrive, he will take care to go on board, and as soon as the goods are in the warehouse, he will put the chap on them.

All French ships which anchor in the French settlement, shall be obliged to bring their rudders on shore.

I send you your ambassador, with the concessions I have made him.

Given the 12th of the Moon, of the month of Kchong, 1132.

The French East India Company obtained at that time a considerable spot of ground at Rangon, with the license of building warehouses and hoisting the French colours, and are the only nation to whom the king of Pegu has yet granted that privilege, which the English, Dutch and Armenians were never able to obtain. But the Company, not knowing how to profit by these advantages, the French who at present trade to this country are no longer distinguished from other nations; the sovereign even esteems them as slaves the moment they set foot on his territories.

The Siamese remained but a short time subject to the laws of the Barmans: those who, to avoid slavery, retired to the woods, assembled, elected a king of Chinese extraction, and marching under his standard, drove the Pegouins and Barmans out of the kingdom of Siam. The king of Ava wanted, a second time, to subdue them, and for that purpose assembled numerous troops of Pegouins and Barmans, in the year 1775. The Pegouins, whose force was superior, revolted, massacred the greatest part of the Barmans, and directed their arms against Tangon; but having no officers to lead them on, the enterprize miscarried without causing any revolution.

Zekinmedou established tranquility in his kingdom, and died the following year. According to the will of Alompra, his brothers should successively have mounted the throne; but, some time before his death, Zekinmedou caused his eldest son to be acknowledged king, who accordingly succeeded to the diadem, at the age of twenty-two. To avoid any disputes with his uncles, who were five in number, he massacred them all, as well as his own brothers, and the great men who were their adherents. By these adominable murders, he this day finds himself peaceable possessor of a sceptre, polluted with blood, and tarnished by the impure hands which hold it.

The Pegouins and Barmans are not divided into casts or tribes. They are all of the same religion, which, in its principle, seems to be that of the Bramins: the doctrine of the metempsychosis is the foundation; but so much disfigured at this day, that they feed on all sorts of animals, even of beef, provided they are not the slaughterers.

They have seven principal deities; the first five are incarnated, and have already lived upon earth, to teach men the knowledge of virtue.
The other two are, sometime or other, to revive the happy times of the first ages. However, they adore one God alone, whom they call Godeman; he is the last of the five that have been incarnated, and seems to be the same as Vichenou.

The precise time of his terrestrial life is not told in the sacred volumes. They only say that when dying, he promised to disperse his infinite grace during six thousand years on those who invoked him. To obtain his favour, the Pegouins and Barmans regularly visit his pagoda once a week; and on festival days they chant his praises, burn tapers before his image, and offer him meats, fish, vegetables, and boiled rice. These offerings become the prey of dogs and other animals, who have free ingress and egress of the pagoda.

Their temples are decently adorned, and not filled with obscene figures, like those of the inhabitants of the Coromandel coast, Malabar, and Bengal. The pagoda of Kelkel, near Siam, is held in a particular veneration by the Pegouins, while the Barmans are equally attached to that of Digon, near Rangon. The construction of the latter is very singular; it terminates in a cone, and has neither door nor window. The princes, nobles, and people throw immense riches they bring for offerings, through a hole made at the top, over which is seen the crown of gold, placed there by Alompra. This should be one of the richest treasuries in the world, if the Barmans have not found the method of pillaging the pagoda, by some subterraneous passage.

When they build a pagoda, a barbarous custom exists of flinging the first people who pass by into the foundation. This shocking ceremony is, however, very frequent, as they consecrate almost all their wealth to building such edifices, which is esteemed a very meritorious work; as well as to found Baos’s, which are a kind of convent. It is also equally meritorious to contribute to the funerals of their Talapoins, whom they burn with great pomp.

Such magnificence in the obsequies of their Priests, shows in what veneration they are held. They are called Ponguis, and are less informed than the Bramins. Although they are called Talapoins, they have no relation to the Priests of Tibet, and are ignorant of the great Lama, though some authors have asserted to the contrary.

The sovereign is honoured in a manner that approaches to adoration. By a common custom in the East, those who come into his presence, prostrate themselves before him, their hands joined, their feet naked, flung behind them, and gathered back close to their thighs; even the great men are obliged to appear in this humiliating posture, whenever they approach him.

In all ceremonies he sits on a high throne, to show how much he is above all the Princes who compose his court. When he goes out, they dare not remain behind in the city, and great care is taken to shut the gates on such occasions.

Lastly, he believes his power great enough to command all the kings of the earth; so that after dinner it is proclaimed, by the sound of a trumpet, that the
ominpotent king of kings has dined, and that all other kings may now have liberty to do the same. He does not believe that any sovereign possesses a territory equally beautiful as his own, and that it is not to be surpassed by any nation: even the people run into this error, as they term all strangers men of wood, and pardon every thing contrary to their customs; imputing it to a natural stupidity, and want of education.

The Emperor has the power of life and death over all his subjects, whom he esteems as slaves. Particulars continually feel the weight of this servitude, which publicly exposes them to want. Whoever is in possession of wealth, gives pensions for the sustenance of the Talapoins, or build pagodas:--if he keeps his money, the governor finds some cause to complaint against him, and he is plundered:--if he conceals his property, and is discovered, his life pays the forfeit, as they suspect he reserves it to promote or form intrigues.

Yet the Pegouin loves his country: he is polite, agreeable, and affable, but inclined to suspicion and wrangling. The laws havenot found a better check than to attack their purse; all abuses have been foreseen, and taxed at a considerable fine, so that you are exempt from all prosecution, provided the tax is paid, with the judge’s and clerk’s fees. Assassination is, however, excepted; but in this, as in other countries, the lower class are only punished, great men escape, and may, with impunity, be criminal. In a court of justice, the plaintiff is not always sure of his cause. If proofs fail, the parties are plunged into water; he who first rises loses his process; but he may free himself by becoming a slave of the Emperor’s body-guard, to whom he gives all his property: by means of this bequest, his adversary has no hold on him.

The Pegouins are very temperate; almost their whole nourishment consisting of vegetables, or rotten fish, which they call Prox, and which serves them for spice, in seasoning their curries. Like other people of the East, they are lascivious. Marriages may be dissolved, the law gives the divorce; but the party who applies for it can carry nothing out of the house, but what they have on their body. Plurality of women, so common throughout all the East, is only tolerated in Pegu, and even forbid by their religion. There are, notwithstanding, convents of public women, where every person is free to go for their money. Women convicted of adultery are obliged to go into these houses, and prostitute themselves. According to the law, men guilty of this crime should be punished with death, but they evade it by paying.

The wives of the common people go almost naked; they are permitted to wear nothing but a kind of petticoat, which reaches no lower than the knee. Gathered behind, it is not a sufficient covering before, so that when a woman

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4 In the original translation, a footnote was added at this point on the Roman Empire, which is superfluous to the present account.
walks, you may see the top of her thigh. The wives of great men wear them shorter or longer, according to their rank.

They commonly burn the dead: but great men, and the Talapoins famous for science, are previously embalmed, and put into a leaden coffin. Six months often elapse after their death, before they are carried to the funeral pile.

Voyages to Pegu are not now so lucrative as they were formerly. To make a profit, merchant vessels are obliged to stop at Acheen, where they carry muskets, powder, and small cannon, coarse cloths, gold thread, lace and broad cloth. They receive in exchange, gum, benjamin, camphire and gold, on which there is now only four per cent profit; little is gained on the other articles. And the whole gain amounts to no more than 20 or 25 per cent. The king having the shole commerce to himself, obliges the merchant to sell and purchase at whatever price his agent fixes. But when any goods can be purloined from this Cupidity, they are sold to his oppressed subjects at considerabe profit.

The French, by their compliant manners, had gained the confidence of the Acheeners in preference to the English; but some expeditions which the French made against them, especially those of the chips La Paix, in 1770, and of the Etoile at Borneo, in 775, have totally alienated this distinction. They always remind them of it when they arrive there, and nothing can make them forget it. By this obstacle, all commerce they wish to carry on with this nation is at an end, as they are a cowardly people, and consequently treacherous and revengeful. When a vessel anchors in the port, one of the ship’s officers must pay his court to the king, who must carry also some presents, as he is never approached with empty hands. Formerly the shoes were to be taken off before they entered his apartment; but the ceremony is now dispensed with, provided a pair of red cloth shoes is worn over them.

The vessels which go to Pegu, take part of their cargo at Acheen, in Arreki, which must be differently prepared to those which are carried on the Coromandel coast; this detains them near four months, and they complete their cargo with cocoas, on the Nicobar Islands. These two articles delivered at Pegu, always yield a profit of 35 or 40 per cent.

The Japanese customs are in use at Pegu. As soon as a vessel anchors before Rangoon, the governor immediately sends his orders for the guns and rudder to be sent on shore. A faithful account is obliged to be given of the ship’s crew, the arms offensive and defensive, the number of bales of goods, and commonly of every thing else on board. They separate what is for the defence and use of the ship, from what is to be disposed of, and after this delcaration, the governor orders a warehouse, where every thing must be deposited.

Till this last article is completed finished, there is no communication. After ll is done, the governor goes on board the vessel with a numerous retinue, who are benefited by the entertainment which is obliged to be given him; and if he
finds any thing on board which has not been reported, even if it was money, he confiscates it. An officer can keep no more than twenty rupees, for the money must be stored as well as the goods; however with this difference, that it pays no duty, and is carefully returned. The visit finished, the governor receives the usual presents, which consist of China, plate, sugar, and boxes of tea. The operations of commerce are often retarded by these preliminaries, as no workman can be procured, if he is ever so much wanted, till they are all entirely fulfilled.

A second visit is paid to all the goods deposited in the magazine. The bales are open for payment of the duties; those of the king consist of ten per cent in kind, as they count out nine pieces, and the tenth is the king’s: the clerks, warehousekeepers, and the person who chaps the goods, have a duty of two and a half per cent. One of the chiefs has also the right of taking five pieces, but not goods of value, as cloths and other high prices merchandize. After all these examinations, the vessel has permission to be loaded.

The teak-wood which they bring from Pegu is excellent for building and furniture. It never rots in the water, so that it is not extraordinary to see vessels, built at Pegu, in use an hundred years. The country is not rich within itself. There are gold, silver, and copper-mines to be found, but they have never been opened. Iron, of a softer nature than ours, is to be found pure, in a mass, from fifteen to twenty pounds fit for use. Rubies, though common, bear however some price, but must be smuggled out of the kingdom; which if detected would cost immense sums, probably imprisonment, and even the confiscation of the vessel.

There are also saphires, emeralds, topases, and aqua marinas to be met with. The Pegouins call these stones fine rubies, and distinguish them by the appellation of blue, green, yello rubies, &c.

Brimstones and pitch are common and cheap. The land is fruitful, but cultivated only for rice. They sow a particular kind, much esteeed on the coast. It is called plot, and dissolves into a jelly on being boiled.

There are no linen or silk manufactures in Pegu. They only make some cotton stuffs for their own consumption. Their other productions are indigo, casia, ivory, the oils of fish, wood and potters earth. Their horses are remarkably handsome; the elephants and buffalos, with which this country abounds, are very large, as well as the sheep and cattle. The most lucrative branch of commerce is saltpetre, which is as common as in Bengal; but this article is particularly prohibited, and the king would never permit of its being exported.

A re-establishment at Pegu would be very advantageous to the commerce of France; but this grant depends on the success their arms may have on the coast of India, and requires peace to be established among the European powers.

End.
Editor’s notes:

This brief account of Arracan was originally published in the Bulletin de la Société de Géographie 5.35 & 36 (March-April) in 1826. Thus, its publication dates from the last year of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826), although it was likely based on information preceding that conflict.

M.W.C.

Empire Birman-Arracan

Ce qu’on a écrit jusqu'à présent, sur Arracan et son territoire, est rempli d'erreurs, et, ce qu'il y a de pire, d'erreurs volontaires. Le Mayou, par exemple, a été représenté jusqu'ici comme un ruisseau insignifiant, et c'est une rivière large de 3 ou 4 milles à son embouchure. On a peint les habitants du pays comme lâches et efféminés; et cependant ce sont, dans le voisinage de la capitale, des hommes robustes et courageux. Au delà des montagnes, le pays est d'une fertilité prodigieuse. Les villages y sont entremêlés de bouquets d'arbres, de jolis étangs et même de petits lacs, dont les bords sont ravissants. La contrée est solitaire dans ce moment où la guerre vient d'y exercer ses ravages. Dans un temps de paix, elle doit présenter l'image de la félicité champêtre. On fait monter à 80 le nombre des villages du territoire d'Arracan, et leur prospérité, sous un gouvernement aussi despotique que celui d'Ava, est la preuve que la bonté du sol lutte avec bonheur contre la désastreuse influence des institutions du pays. Ici un climat salubre favorise singulièrement la végétation. Le blé donne une récolte abondante.

La ville d’Arracan se montre sous un aspect assez singulier elle s'élève au milieu d'une plaine, ou plutôt d'une vallée peu profonde, de 4 milles de circonférence, et tout environnée de montagnes, dont quelques-unes ont 500 pieds au-dessus du niveau de la mer. La plaine est inégale et rocailleuse et coupée de nombreux ruisseaux qui tantôt courent avec bruit au milieu des rochers, et tantôt se réunissent pour se jeter dans la grande rivière; un d'eux coule directement au milieu de la ville, et la divise en deux parties.

Comme Arracan est inondée pendant la saison des pluies, les maisons y sont bâties sur pilotis. Ce sont de misérables huttes en bois, couvertes en paille, élevées de 4 à 5 pieds au-dessus du sol, mais assez bien alignées, et dessinant des rues
assez droites. On porte le nombre de ces cabanes à 19,000; en admettant que chacune d'elles renferme cinq personnes, on aura une population générale de 95,000 habitants. Ce nombre pouvait être exact il y a quelques années; mais il est bien réduit aujourd'hui. Il n'excède pas 20,000 ames.

L'ancien fort est une des curiosités de la ville; c'est le seul de édifice construit en pierre; il est environné de trois murailles quadrangulaires et concentriques épaisse et de 20 pieds de hauteur; elles laissent entre elles une distance qui varie de 100 à 150 pieds. Le Gouvernement et les principaux officiers résident dans la citadelle, placée dans la dernière circonvallation, et qui sert encore de grenier public.

Les hauteurs qui entourent la vallée d'Arracan sont couvertes plus de 60 pagodes dont les toits dorés et pyramidaux brillent sous les feux du soleil, et donnent à ses sites charmans un caractère pittoresque tout particulier. L'architecture de ces temples n'est ni sans élégance ni sans grâce, bien que le style n'en soit pas régulier et ne puisse être avoué par un goût sévére; leur interieur offre une profusion de dorures, de peintures et de marbres; un stuc, qui a toute l’apparence de ce dernier, et qui couvre les parties boisées, y trompe l’oeil le plus exercé. Sans ses pagodes, sans ses murailles, sans sa forteresse, Arracan, jadis capitale d'une vaste province, jadis royaume indépendant, ne pourrait passer que pour un grand village, mal bâti et tres-pauvre. Nous devons, en terminant, faire des voeux pour que cette contrée attire plus particulièrement l’attention d'un voyageur instruit: il y a dans les débris de sa grandeur passée, et dans sa vieille histoire, matière a des recherches qui ne seront pas sans utilité pour la Géographie.
Editor’s Note:

This world list was included in the back matter of *A True and Large Discourse of the Voyage of the Whole Fleete of Ships Set forth the 20 of Aprill 1601 by the Government and Assistants of the East Indian Marchants in London, to the East Indies*, published for Thomas Thorpe by William Alpley of London in 1603. Curiously, the mission, which did come across ships in the Straits of Melaka, does not appear to have visited Pegu. There is no indication in the text of how or where the world list was obtained. It may be possible the it was gathered from Peguan traders on ships encountered at sea or in a local trading port.

M.W. C.

CERTAINE WORDS OF PEGU LANGUAGE (1603)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peguan Term</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mugaru</td>
<td>what you call it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnan tiuan</td>
<td>Give mee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegoe</td>
<td>a Catte (bread)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boon</td>
<td>A Knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacu</td>
<td>A Pen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slappoit</td>
<td>A Booke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pappoit</td>
<td>A Table booke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memura</td>
<td>What is your name?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talla</td>
<td>A Chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tene</td>
<td>A Pillow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tayongabalon</td>
<td>A Maste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomeé</td>
<td>Breeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheochum</td>
<td>Stockings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botoway</td>
<td>A Thombe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toway</td>
<td>a fist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadap</td>
<td>a head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suck</td>
<td>hair of the head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slagota</td>
<td>the eare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu, yu</td>
<td>I, I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moat</td>
<td>eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tegla</td>
<td>By and by</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ciniaut</td>
<td>Let me see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegu</td>
<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catu</td>
<td>The Moone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shenon</td>
<td>A Starre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yacata</td>
<td>The morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keka</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kecho</td>
<td>sit downe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cacadoe</td>
<td>The palme of the head [sic]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanimbodoway</td>
<td>the naile of the hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepoe</td>
<td>Sir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mucherow</td>
<td>how sell you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabang</td>
<td>A Ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aw, aw</td>
<td>What say you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braw</td>
<td>A Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>A Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fekeé</td>
<td>A Whoore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oiara</td>
<td>I will goe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamonra</td>
<td>Farewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keag</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cling, Clang</td>
<td>Much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nung, nung</td>
<td>come hither</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooke</td>
<td>Come hither</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clea</td>
<td>Dogge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cle</td>
<td>Bite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kleg</td>
<td>A Hogge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Togatu</td>
<td>Noone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daick</td>
<td>Water</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrow toway</td>
<td>wash hands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ksole</td>
<td>To spit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoake</td>
<td>Sleepe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notada</td>
<td>Arise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarangcatu</td>
<td>A doore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poontarang</td>
<td>open the dore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dotarang</td>
<td>shut the dore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chulay</td>
<td>let it downe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downang</td>
<td>Take up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^1\) This particular rendering is problematic in the original. It may be as suggested here or simply Pootarang.
Announcement: Translation of the Rajadhammasangaha online

Euan Bagshawe has made a translation of the Yaw Mingyi U Hpo Hlaing (the Wetmasut Myoza Wunyi)’s “Rajadhammasangaha,” edited by Maung Htin (U Htin Fatt), published in 1979 by Sape U Publishing House (the original text was composed in December 1878 and published for the first time about 1915). This has recently been republished (2002) by Unity Press and is currently available in some bookshops in Burma/Myanmar for 1100 kyats (as of December 2003). The translation can be accessed in David Arnott’s Online Burma/Myanmar Library at:

http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/THE_RAJDHAMMASANGAHA.pdf

The Online Burma/Myanmar Library also has a description of the text which includes some of the bibliographic information included above. The translator has kindly sent us a copy of his preface for inclusion here.

M. W. C.

RAJADHAMMASANGAHA – TRANSLATOR’S PREFACE

L.E. Bagshawe
Independent Scholar

In many parts of the world, the middle years of the nineteenth century were a time of major political changes. There was a growing realisation in many countries that others were doing better than they were and that something should be done if they were not going to be left behind. An idea spread that a long established autocracy was not necessarily the best way of managing a country in the modern world and that matters would run more smoothly if the people of the country could be induced to work with the government and not be a dead weight to be dragged along forcibly. That might involve taking steps to find out the wishes of at least the most
prominent of the country’s citizens in any matter. Constitutions were drawn up in many countries with this in mind, even in many subject to colonial administrations.

The Kingdom of Burma was no exception. When the Mindon Prince took the throne from his brother, Pagan-min, at the end of 1852, the country had been through more than thirty years, three reigns, of kings of at least doubtful mental stability, and had also been subjected to humiliating defeats by and loss of territory to the British government in India. Great changes were called for if the kingdom was to survive and the new King, with the assistance of his younger brother, the Kanaung Prince, tried to set a new course. Developments for the next fourteen years went in two directions. The King himself attended to matters of morale, to the construction of a splendid new capital at Mandalay as the central point of a newly unified and purified religion, while the business of modernisation - the nuts-and-bolts of learning modern techniques and putting them into practice - was given to the Kanaung Prince, and his staff. Putting modernity into practice involved bringing in the Industrial Revolution in the shape of ironworks, cotton mills, rice mills, saw mills and the rest. Contracting for the supply, installation and working of such machinery called for much work. Other steps were taken also, that do not fit precisely into either of these categories. For one reason or another Burma did not use coined money and all transactions were by barter in kind, which might be odd pieces of metal to be carefully assayed and weighed out at the point of sale. Revenue collections were also made in kind and recompense to government servants was usually by assignment of revenues from a particular source, again in kind. This cumbersome system was a serious hindrance to trade, both internal and external and to reform it a coinage was introduced, with the establishment of government mints. This led the way to a new system of revenue collection, with the institution of the thatameda tax, a tax levied in cash upon households. Government servants were now to be paid a fixed cash salary in place of the old revenue assignments, although the old practice of designating officials to be myozas of towns, assignees of revenues, continued. Presumably it became more or less purely honorific, but the exact nature of the relationship between a myoza and his appanage after the change is not very clear. Steps were also taken to reform the central machinery of government; the chief executive governing body was the group of four Ministers, acting jointly, known as the Hluttaw. There had in the past been some natural tendency for individual ministers to develop separate interests and responsibilities and this was now formalised. Lines of responsibility were demarcated and separate offices were set up.

In 1866 these changes came to a sudden halt with the murder of the Kanaung Prince in a revolt staged by two of his nephews, the Myingun and Myingondaing Princes. It is not at all clear what their real intentions were, but they escaped with what might seem suspicious ease and found refuge in British territory. No extradition agreement was possible between the jurisdictions since
the Burmese did not formally recognise the annexation. Reform made little further progress. The King had been badly frightened by the revolt, which might have been an expression of unsettlement caused by the earlier reforms. It was clear that he was not going to part with anything of his personal power, which he defended with an efficient network of informers in the Court and in the country. Reform would have to wait for another reign. Discussion of reform did not cease, however, though it might have to be postponed for some years; the King was only about 50 in 1866. One prominent figure in this discussion must have been U Hpo Hlaing, whose biography is set out in U Htin Fatt's preface that follows. He had been prominent in Mindon's entourage since 1846 and from the start of the reign had been associated with the Kanaung Prince's work although he had been dismissed from office in 1865. He was too useful to leave out of office for long and soon returned but was not fully rehabilitated until 1869 and finally lost responsibility for the industrial schemes in 1872.

Another figure was U Gaung - eight years older than U Hpo Hlaing, but not a member of Mindon's household till 1850, four years after Hpo Hlaing entered it. He already had some experience of dealing with the British authorities in his position of Kin Wundauk and governor of Alon, in charge of all the government posts down the river and gained much more in the next two years in his appointment as Ambassador in charge of the Burmese King's missions to Europe in 1872-3, now as Kinwun Mingyi. In the course of these missions he had, and used, many opportunities of examining western institutions, governmental as well as private, and discussing them with prominent members of the Establishment. He does not seem to have formally learned English, but must have understood a good deal by the end of his time in Europe - and no doubt found it convenient not to make his understanding too obvious. In any case, after his return from his missions abroad the King's confidence in him was great and his prestige in the Court pre-eminent, buttressed with his new title Thettawshei which in theory gave the holder a guarantee of personal immunity, whatever unpalatable advice he might give to the King.

During King Mindon's final sickness, which began in August 1878, preparations were made for putting reform into action, and this movement was largely led by U Gaung and U Hpo Hlaing. The first task was to arrange for the recognition of an heir, since King Mindon had never dared to fix on any of his sons as his successor. He had too many sons, none of them outstanding enough to pick without risking the start of an endless series of plots, assassinations and coup attempts, and was now deemed incapable of the decision. Towards the middle of September a conference of all senior ministers and military officers in the capital was held to determine the succession. It looks as though there may have some difference of approach between U Gaung and U Hpo Hlaing, but there was no argument when U Gaung forced the Thibaw Prince upon the meeting. We do not
know whether U Hpo Hlaing had an alternative to propose since, according to Pagan U Tin, he had only just started on a recital of the classical qualifications for a Crown Prince when he was firmly shushed by the Yindaw Wundauk. In any case, the Thibaw Prince's appointment was, at least, acquiesced in by the meeting. He was also approved by the powerful Centre Queen, Hsinbyumashin, who needed a suitable, unattached, husband for her daughters, the Suhpaya Princesses, and the appointment was made formal. Thibaw-min was very young, barely twenty, and inexperienced, and seemed likely to be easily persuaded to accept the changes that were intended in the relative positions of the King and the Ministers. These involved a great expansion of the Hluttaw, the executive council of the Burmese kingdom. Instead of consisting of only four sections under the four Wungyis, jointly responsible to the King, there would now be fourteen separate ministries, each with its own minister and powers. There would also be two lower-ranking committees in which matters might be brought up for discussion to make a total of something over sixty members. The King, presumably, retained a right to be consulted, but probably no right of veto and, particularly, no right of spending tax collections without approval from the finance minister, now U Hpo Hlaing. King Mindon finally died early in October and a few weeks were devoted to his obsequies and the installation of King Thibaw. The new system of government was in place by the beginning of November and at the beginning of December U Hpo Hlaing was ready to present to the new King the volume of his thoughts upon how the monarchical government of Burma should be exercised. This is the Rajadhammasangaha[1] which follows U Htin Fatt's introduction below. It was at this time that U Hpo Hlaing seems to have been rewarded with promotion to a Wungyi's status and the award of his late father-in-law's appanage of Magwe. Perhaps initially the King was pleased, but if so, it did not last long, for at the end of January the King summarily dismissed from office U Hpo Hlaing and two other senior ministers closest to him, the Yeinangyaung Wungyi and the Myothit Wundauk. The reformers seem to have been taken completely by surprise and there was no effort to protest or to present a common front against the King, who had now considerable military force behind him. How and why reform was so quickly and so easily defeated is a question that can be endlessly debated, but there seems to be no good answer. The new structure remained nominally in being up to the end of the kingdom, but it was clear that the King's (and the Queen's) will was not to be gainsaid.
II

In this translation we are concerned with two eminent writers in Burmese. The career of the earlier, U Hpo Hlaing, is described very well and completely by the second, his editor and biographer, U Htin Fatt, in this book. Any addition could only be repetitious. U Htin Fatt, on the other hand, has little to say about himself, and an introduction is called for. He has been a prominent feature of the Burmese literary scene for most of his long life, mainly under his usual pen name of “Maung Htin.” Born in 1909, he started his literary career at the Rangoon University, as an undergraduate, writing in both Burmese and English for various magazines. He continued to write after leaving the University in 1934, as well as performing the duties of a township officer for the government. When the war came, he served as Deputy Secretary in the Information Section of Dr. Ba Maw's Foreign office, where he wrote a play on a story provided by U Nu, the future Prime Minister. With the war's end, he shared the responsibility of organizing the broadcasting service. The great success of his novel Nga Hpa and other stories, published in 1947 gave a promise of a more interesting livelihood than government service and in 1949 he turned to full-time literary work, joining the staff of the Hanthawadi newspaper.

Since then his literary production has been large, including short stories and translations from English into Burmese - Lafcardio Hearn, H. G. Wells, and Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" - and he has given much service to literary and historical commissions. As a crowning point, last year he was awarded the National Literary Award for life-long work. I very much hope that he may approve of my translation of his work, but communication has been difficult and I understand that his health is poor. I am given to understand, however, indirectly, that he has at least no objection to my project.

III

It seems appropriate that this account of an earlier attempt to provide a satisfactory system of government for Burma should be made available at this time when at last a new Constitution is under discussion and I hope that it may be helpful in the deliberations. I have only three final remarks:

1. In the above I have referred to people by their personal names; incorrect for the period, but less confusing than the changeable and multiple official titles used in the records.

2. All footnotes to the translation, unless otherwise stated, are my responsibility only. In some I have indicated an uncertainty about a meaning. I shall be glad to be corrected at <lebagshawe@vance.net>.

*SBBR 2.2 (AUTUMN 2004): 211-216*
3. I have to acknowledge the many hours of painstaking editorial work that David Arnott has put into making my efforts presentable.
GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS, LOCAL CONCEPTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE POLITICS OF COMMUNICATION AMONG THE BURMESE OPPOSITION-IN-EXILE (MYANMAR)

Brooten, Lisa Booth
Ohio University, 2003

This study examines the impact of new information technologies (NITs) on the Burmese opposition movement-in-exile based in Thailand. The intent of the research is to determine whether NITs, primarily computers and the Internet, are helping to reduce, maintain, or intensify ethnic conflict within the movement. The study explores implications for political mobilization by examining what groups within the movement have access to which technologies, and how these groups understand and use global media and the discourses they produce. The research is a multi-sited ethnography conceived within the epistemological framework of standpoint theory, providing an empirically grounded exploration of the Burmese opposition movement in both its local and global contexts. It employs participant observation, in-depth interviews and discourse analysis to examine the impact of global communications at the local level. The work begins with an historical examination of the development of the modern state in Burma, which provides the context for exploring how militarization, gender and ethnicity have affected the development of nationalisms and conflict defined largely as “ethnic” in nature. This is followed by a discussion of how the history and current state of communications both inside and outside Burma constrain attitudes toward the possible uses of communications technologies and media among the opposition-in-exile. An overview of opposition media investigates the degree to which these media have opened a space for dialogue between groups. Interviews with opposition activists and refugees from Burma demonstrate how the Burmese regime’s militaristic values are both perpetuated and countered within the opposition movement itself. The research finds that the introduction of NITs and patterns of foreign funding have reinforced existing hierarchies within the opposition movement. Finally, this study demonstrates how the “local” reinvents the “global” through the use of a global discourse of human rights which acts subtly but powerfully to shape social conventions within the movement. This results in an unstated hierarchy of human rights that perpetuates the inequitable
gender and ethnic composition of the opposition political groups and the hierarchy of access and use of technologies among these groups.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BURMA AND THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY, 1634-1680

Wil O. Dijk
Leiden University, 2004

This study deals with seventeenth century Burma and the activities in that country from 1634 to 1680 of the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie – VOC). It is largely based on the unpublished primary sources that make up the vast VOC archives in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague. These hitherto unexplored materials pertaining to Burma have yielded a rich bounty of unique data that afford us a rare glimpse of life in seventeenth century Burma. They have also proved invaluable for VOC studies since they contain no lacunae whatever so that each set of statistics forms a complete, closed series, rendering all the business figures highly reliable. This has allowed a precise evaluation of volume of trade and profit and loss from which conclusions could be drawn about the commercial aspects of the VOC’s Burma establishment.

The Dutch materials have unexpectedly revealed the extraordinary extent of the ethnic tensions that existed between the Burmans in the north and the Peguans in the south. These eyewitness accounts add significantly to earlier studies on ethnicity in Burma.

Dutch sources also confirm that by the mid-seventeenth century, the use of firearms in Burma’s military seems to have been so common that Burmese conscripts were expected to bring their own gunpowder and flints when marching off to war.

There is now clear proof that Burma’s trade in Indian textiles centred on cheap, coarse, simple cloth intended for every day use by the common folk. This refutes earlier assumptions that Burma’s textile trade was mostly about luxurious fabrics intended for the elite. Burma had a labour market and the wages the labour force could command were so high that the parsimonious Dutch brought in slaves from across the Bay of Bengal to toil at their Burma factories. An additional comparative study suggests that in those days Burma’s standard of living was considerably higher than India’s.

The country had a monetary system of sorts, but it was privately operated and relied on lump metal coinage that went by weight, rather than a state-run system managed by the crown and using standard coinage. Monetization was quite
extensive and ganza and silver jointly were the country’s official medium of exchange. The King and many high Burmese officials were actively and enthusiastically involved in foreign trade, both by land and by sea, particularly at Bhamo where their agents were sometimes guilty of blatantly unfair trading practices.

This study fundamentally revises the general, if meagre, existing understanding of how the Dutch operations in Burma worked. On balance, the VOC’s Burma trade was not so insignificant and irrelevant as some would have it. In fact, the first comprehensive statistics on the Dutch commercial activities in Burma combine to prove that the VOC’s Burma trade was profitable throughout. Almost from the start, the VOC regularly transported Indian merchants to and fro across the Bay of Bengal to Burma while the Company’s factors in Burma provided many of these traders, particularly the ruby merchants, with loans on a regular basis in order to transfer the Company’s surplus capital safely and profitably to Choromandel. The VOC’s Burma trade was an integral and vital branch of the Company’s inter-Asian trade in that it contributed substantially to the funding of the Company’s Choromandel and Bengal factories. Moreover, Burma’s export products were in great demand throughout Asia and in Europe so that the profits on these commodities helped fill the Company’s coffers wherever they were traded.

In later years, the Dutch were also involved in the Sino-Burmese overland trade. They procured huge quantities of Chinese copper cash coins, initially for their high copper content but later the Company turned them into legal tender in Batavia and Ceylon. Dutch attempts to establish a trading post at Bhamo to gain access to the lucrative China trade came to naught. Burma’s King would not hear of it.

Probably one of the main reasons the Dutch abandoned Burma was that considerations of a military and political nature tied to territorial conquest gradually gained precedence over the VOC’s earlier aim, namely the development of a vigorous inter-Asian trade to amass additional buying power to sustain its expansion. When the Company began to concentrate its activities increasingly on its two main power bases, Java and Ceylon, and to focus its commercial activities on direct trade between Europe and Asia to the detriment of its inter-Asian seaborne trade, Burma became irrelevant. For reasons that are not entirely clear, the Dutch made several attempts in the 1740s and 50s to re-enter the Burmese market. By then, however, the country was in the grip of a bloody civil war that would bring down the Restored Toungoo (1597-1752) and usher in the Kon-baung Dynasty (1752-1885). This is where the Dutch sources on the VOC’s activities in Burma fall silent.
DISPLACEMENT & IDENTITY: KARENNI REFUGEES IN THAILAND

Sandra Dudley
University of Oxford, 2000

This thesis is about Karenni refugees from Burma, resident in camps on the Thai-Burma border. The Karenni have not previously been the subject of a full-length ethnographic monograph in English. The thesis explores the mutability of both Karenni-ness and refugee-ness, and how both are influenced by a context of ongoing interactions between displacement, population diversity and nationalism.

Karenni refugees are highly diverse in various ways. Furthermore, they are mostly engaged in an ongoing nationalist agenda dominated by a mainly Christian, political elite known as the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP). This group dominates processes whereby what it means to be ‘Karenni’ and ‘modern’ is deliberately reformulated in exile. Such processes operate through formal education, the re-appropriation (and transformation) of ‘traditional’ forms including religious festivals and clothing, Christian evangelism, etc. Important themes in these processes are Karenni interpretations of history and Karenni hopes, fears and attempts to manipulate the future.

I argue that both despite and because of displacement and diversity, Karenni-ness is self-consciously – and reasonably successfully – continually strengthening and remoulding itself, in order not only to give meaning to its current context of exile, but also to make sense of and define its future. Furthermore, I demonstrate that Karenni refugees work hard not only to make the best of their displaced situation but also to maintain imaginative and cognitive connections with ‘home’, processes ultimately inseparable from the negotiation of Karenni-ness.

Ideas about ‘home’ are relatively neglected in extant studies of refugees. Furthermore, while recent studies have critiqued the hegemony of nation-states that leaves refugees marginalised, I take a pragmatic approach that recognises that ideas of ‘nation’ dominate refugee frameworks too. The thesis thus speaks to refugee studies and wider anthropological debates on nationalism, identity, ethnicity and global contexts, as well as contributing to Southeast Asian ethnography.
NEWS AND NOTES

New Electronic Economics Serial on Burma

_Burma Economic Watch_, a centre in the Economic Department of MacQuarie University in Australia, has launched a new pdf journal that seeks to provide current and accurate information on the Burmese economy. The BEW team includes Joseph Macri, Wylie Bradford, Sean Turnell, and Alison Vicary. Issue number one (2004) of _Burma Economic Watch_ includes the following articles:


Sean Turnell. “Burma Bank Update.”

Alison Vicary. “‘Burmese’ Working in Thailand: An Overview of a BEW Project. Part One”

For more information on the BEW and the publication, contact bew@efs.mq.edu.au or Sean Turnell, Burma Economic Watch, Economics Department, Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia.

Advanced Publication of SBBR 3.1

The forthcoming issue of SBBR (3.1) scheduled for Spring 2005, will be published ahead of schedule in mid- to late- September 2004. This is to accommodate the research leave of the editor. SBBR will resume its normal publication schedule with issue 3.2 (Autumn 2005) the following September. As a result, issue 3.1 will not have a “News and Notes“ section and that for issue 3.2 will be lengthier than usual due to the backlog.