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**PORTUGUESE AND LUSO-ASIAN LEGACIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1511-2011**

**VOLUME 1**

The Making of the Luso-Asian World

Intricacies of Engagement

**EDITED BY**

**LAURA JARNAGIN**

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Cover photo: Close-up of a green parrot’s feathers. The green parrot, or papagaio verde, is an enduring centuries-old folk motif found throughout the Lusophone world.
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FROM MELIAPOR TO MYLAPORE, 1662–1749: THE PORTUGUESE PRESENCE IN SÃO TOMÉ BETWEEN THE QUṬB SHĀHĪ CONQUEST AND ITS INCORPORATION INTO BRITISH MADRAS

Paolo Aranha

Along the seashore of Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu state, known previously as Madras, runs the Santhome Highway. It links Marina Beach in the north, a highly popular sightseeing attraction and a place of socialization in the Tamil metropole, with the Adyar area in the south, where the headquarters of the Theosophical Society and its renowned Library are. Between these two landmarks is placed Santhome Cathedral, the centre of Catholic life in Chennai.

The toponym “Santhome” is probably the most visible legacy of the ancient Portuguese settlement of São Tomé (originally “Thome”, and hence today’s toponym “Santhome”) de Meliapor. What used to be a fortress that preceded and then competed with the English Fort St George is now only a borough in the Tamil capital. However, it is remarkable that the Portuguese settlement had a compound denomination: São Tomé de Meliapor. Before the advent of the Lusitans there had already been an Indian town today called Mylapore (originally “Mailapur”), or the “city of the peacocks”. Archaeological
excavations in Mylapore demonstrate that the city was already an important trading post in the second century and that around the seventh century it counted at least a śāvīte, a satiśāvīte, and a jāina temple.1

The purpose of this chapter is to propose some preliminary lines of research that may allow us to understand the strategies of resilience of the Portuguese in São Tomé de Meliapor between its conquest in 1662 by the Qubš Shahi dynasty of Golconda and its incorporation into British Madras in 1749. By examining archival documents kept in Goa and Lisbon, it will be possible to see better how an autonomous Portuguese community, perfectly exemplifying what has been defined the "shadow empire",2 persisted in a corner of the Coromandel Coast, blessed by the memory of the Apostle Thomas and still considered economically viable.

RELIQUARY CITY OR A PORTUGUESE RELIC?

Ines Županov has explored how the “discovery” in 1517 of the sepulchre of Saint Thomas in Mylapore made possible the creation of a “factory settlement of independent merchants”. Thanks also to “the elaboration of the legends around the life of Saint Thomas, the rearrangement of the sacred geography around the burial site, and the ‘invention’ or superposition of subsidiary sacred places and objects — all the work of Jesuits and other religious specialists”, the casados (married men of the reserve army) of São Tomé de Meliapor were able to resist “the centralizing efforts emanating from Goa and could legitimate the mercantile, indigenized, and consequently independent status of the town”.3

São Tomé was born as a “reliquary town”, a settlement whose location was primarily determined by the special grace emanating from the sacred places related to the life and death of the Apostle of India: the Great Mount (Pertiya Malai), the Small Mountain (Cinna Malai) and the so-called Santa Casa,4 where the apostle was buried. São Tomé grew steadily in the course of the sixteenth century. In a letter that the moradores (residents) addressed in 1535 to Dom João III, it was specified that sixty Portuguese families already lived around the apostle’s tomb.5 The presence of religious and secular priests made it possible to undertake evangelical activities even among the local population, so that by 1559 there were already about 2,000 Indian converts.6

In that same year, a military event clarified the specific nature of the Portuguese presence in São Tomé, insofar as that was necessary. The town was laid siege to by Rama Raja, a powerful mahārājanāga Empire, in order to assert his tributary rights. The casados accepted the demand that they pay the tribute, against pressures received from Goa to offer military resistance.7 A few decades later, it was stated in the Jesuit Annual Letter between 1604 and 1606 that the Portuguese governed themselves, having their own captain and judge (ausidor), while a governor of the “King of Bissaga” resided in a town near São Tomé, leasing our the collection of port dues and governing the Hindu population.8

São Tomé became a major centre of religious life. The Franciscans had a friary outside the walls dedicated to Saint Anthony of Lisbon (or Padua) and the Igreja da Nossa Senhora da Luz, where they took care of the Indian Christians.9 The Jesuits provided educational services through their college, where it was possible to learn “cases of conscience, Latin, reading, writing, and counting”.10 According to a description that Pedro Barreto de Rezende, secretary to the Conde de Linhares, wrote, probably around 1635, within the walls of São Tomé there was the cathedral and also three churches belonging to the Dominicans, the Augustinians and the Jesuits. Outside the wall there were, in addition to the Igreja da Nossa Senhora da Luz, two other churches: the Jesuit one known as the Madre de Deus and the São Lázaro.11

In 1606 São Tomé was elevated to a bishopric, after having been part of the Goa diocese that then belonged to the jurisdiction of the bishop of Cochin since 1558. André de Santa Maria, the Franciscan prelate in charge of Cochin, who was particularly hostile to the Jesuits, persistently requested the Holy See to create the new bishopric, most probably as a way to check the pretensions to jurisdictional autonomy claimed by the Jesuit missionaries on the Costa da Piscaria.12 This anti-Jesuitic stance is somewhat ironical, inasmuch as the episcopal see of Meliapar, under the Jesuit bishops Gaspar Afonso Álvares (1691–1708), Francisco Laynes (1708–14) and José Pinheiro (1724–44), became a stronghold in the defence of the Malabar Rites allowed by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus in the regions of Madurai, Mysore and the Karnatak during the first half of the eighteenth century.13

Around 1635 there were 120 Portuguese families and 200 Indian Christian families living within the walls of São Tomé, whereas 6,000 Indian Christians lived outside them.14 The settlement beyond the walls — that is, Meliapar in the strictest sense — had settlements of weavers producing for the export market, so that São Tomé could be considered an extended port with an inland market and manufacturing facilities.15

A major town along the Coromandel Coast, São Tomé suffered from Dutch competition and then entered into a totally new phase once the English East India Company obtained permission in 1639 to establish Fort St George just three miles north.16 The English took positive steps to attract the Portuguese and Indian Christian population to their new town.17 São Tomé found itself deprived also of the institutional support provided by

From Meliapar to Mylapore, 1662–1749

Paolo Aranha
considered a "renascent empire". If it is true that "the Portuguese were never able to reestablish themselves in any significant fashion on the Coromandel coast", nonetheless they achieved the goal of going back to São Tomé. As the first foundation of the town in the sixteenth century was the effect of the autonomous agency of the carta dos, in the same way the reconstruction of São Tomé became possible thanks to an initiative undertaken directly by the Portuguese inhabitants themselves, although in coordination with the authorities in Goa.

They accomplished their reinstitution in São Tomé by way of a delegation led by the Augustinian, Friar Luís da Piedade, plus ten other Portuguese, including the governor of the São Tomé bishopric, Friar Constantino Sardinha Rangel. The sultan of Golconda, Abu'lı Hasan, had issued a farman (a royal decree or charter) on 18 October 1686 with which he allowed the Portuguese to settle again in São Tomé, build houses, plant orchards and trade freely, paying the royal dues every year to the same extent that the English and the Dutch did in the port of Masulipatnam (known as Massulipatão in Portuguese). Moreover, the Portuguese would be free to come and go from Golconda.

From a memorandum drafted on 15 April of that year by four of the members of the Portuguese delegation, it can be understood that the mission had been solicited by the viceroy Francisco da Távora (1681–86), Conde de Alvor. The latter had suggested in particular offering gifts (seguinte) to both the sultan (rey) of Golconda and the nawáb (nabábo, governor) who had jurisdiction over São Tomé. The success in obtaining the farman had been particularly relevant because, at the same time, both the French and the Dutch were exerting pressures to acquire São Tomé. After the farman, negotiations shifted to the local level in order to establish a monopoly on the collection of customs dues by all the traders who called at São Tomé, whether Europeans ("estrangereiros", literally, "strangers"), Muslims or Hindus. At the moment at which the memorandum was composed, there were good prospects for success. The final section of the document is badly damaged, but it can be understood to express a concern for establishing regular officers for the government of São Tomé and to suggest that the Portuguese who refused to come back to the town (most likely those from Madras) should be punished by being deprived of their nationality. The negotiation eventually led to a favourable solution. In a letter sent to the viceroy on 8 October 1687, it was reported that, on that very day, the Portuguese flag was raised on São Tomé, notwithstanding the attempt made by the English to impede the re-establishment of the Lusitan presence. Moreover, the nawáb had agreed to grant the Portuguese half of the rights due on sea trade ("a metade dos direitos do mar"). The English
had entrusted the Company’s merchant, Chinna Venkatadri, to prosecute the business so as to disappoint the Portuguese, though we pay something more for it (the lease of São Tomé port) than they offer, which we doubt not in time to recover from them. Besides it is of such absolute necessity to rent that town, as well for preventing the diminishing of our trade and customs, as also our force; five parts of our soldiers being Portuguese topasses, who if they should settle at Saint Tomé would certainly run thither from us in our necessity. 35

The choice to use a middleman such as Chinna Venkatadri instead of to undertake direct talks with local administrators was explained in the general letter sent from the board of directors on 14 January 1685. It was feared that direct involvement by the “Right Honorable Company” could cause “many scruples and difficulties” to the divan (council), and in particular induce it to “enhance the rent”. 31 On 4 August, Chinna Venkatadri informed the council of Fort St George that he had been able to obtain from Mādanānta Pantulu, the Brahmin governor of Kanchipuram, the offer of a triennial lease of the São Tomé “Town, Customs, and Adjacent Towns and Paddy grounds”. 32 However, this was not yet a concession but only a conditioned proposal, always keeping open the possibility of striking a deal with the Portuguese instead. 33 It seems therefore that between August and October the Portuguese were able to counter the English manoeuvre and win the lease of São Tomé. 34

The Lusitan recovery of São Tomé took place during a major political change in the Deccan region. In the course of 1687, the Qutb Shahi sultanate was conquered by the Mughal Empire, with the fortress of Golconda finally surrendering on 2 October after eight months of a laborious siege and just a week before the return of the Portuguese to São Tomé. 35 The concrete enforcement of the decisions in favour of the Portuguese granted by the sultan of Golconda was therefore the fruit of further negotiations with the Mughal emperor, undertaken once again by Friar Luís da Piedade, defined by the Portuguese governor, Rodrigo da Costa, as a “friar of very good proceeding” (frade de muito bom procedimento). 36

Only four years after the re-establishment of a Lusitan presence in São Tomé, the situation seemed again critical. In a letter sent by the viceroy Miguel de Almeida to Dom Pedro II on 22 January 1690, it was reported that the inhabitants of São Tomé had suffered as a consequence of the war against the Mughal emperor Rama Raja (also known as Rama Raza in the Portuguese text), brother of the Maratha ruler Shambaji. Rama Raja had requested the Portuguese to pay dues in arrears on the port of São Tomé.

Since the Portuguese had not been able to fulfil their obligations, they had lost the customs contract. In fact, as can be gleaned from an English record of 23 August 1688, by that time Chinna Venkatadri had been able to obtain a couve (a written lease or grant) for renting São Tomé town, its customs, and the adjacent countries as far as Saint Thomas Mount. 37 The choice of obtaining the couve in the name of Chinna Venkatadri had been made on account of tensions between the English and the Mughal Empire, but also so as “not too much [to] exasperate the Portuguese in their loss and disappointment of a place they retain a most superstitious veneration for, which possibly might provoke them to mutiny or rebellion, or at least some disturbance or mischief; they being at present two-thirds of our soldiers, and at least six for one to the English inhabitants”. 38

In his letter sent to Dom Pedro II, the viceroy Miguel de Almeida observed that, in addition to their precarious economic foundation, the Portuguese of São Tomé had no fortifications and needed artillery for the defence of the town. Moreover, a stable civic government had not yet been established. While an ouvidor and a juiz dos órfãos (judge for orphans) were in place, at the death of the capitão-mor (local commander), Manuel Teixeira Pinto, the office was replaced with three deputies, elected by the inhabitants. This collegial arrangement did not seem expedient to the viceroy. 39

From the Portuguese and English records it is possible to understand how the appointment in 1695 of Luís Francisco Coutinho, relative of the viceroy Pedro António de Meneses Noronha de Albuquerque (1692–98), as “General of the Coast of Coromandel” was probably devised as a way to strengthen ties with Goa and enhance the Portuguese presence in São Tomé. In the town, Coutinho, provided with secret patent letters, established an office of the Inquisition and summoned back all the Portuguese who had moved to Fort St George in previous decades, but he did not achieve much success. He was not able to obtain from the English company the guns necessary to arm the fifty soldiers that he commanded, and his attempts to rebuild the walls of São Tomé were frustrated in particular by the intervention of the local Mughal governor (awaldar), Háji Muḥammad Ali, with the demolition of three bastions in January 1697. Coutinho also failed in an attempt to pacify the inhabitants of São Tomé, who were divided into two opposite groups (ranches). Soon, Thomas de Maya, capitão-mor of the town, sided against the general. 40

In order to address the problems of São Tomé, as well as to improve overall relations with the Mughal Empire, the Augustinian friar Luís da Piedade was sent on a second diplomatic mission in 1700, this time by the viceroy António Luís Gonçalves da Câmara Coutinho (1698–1701). As far...
as São Tomé specifically was concerned, the task of the Augustinian was to obtain a *patrósina* (a decree or written warrant) to the capitão-mór of the town, (João?) Matheus Carneiro da Silva. At the onset of the clash, there was the alleged deception that Carneiro da Silva had committed by presenting himself as a person who was positively requested by the inhabitants. Moreover, once the inhabitants had complained against him, attempts were to replace him with his son-in-law. On 6 August 1706 the Conselho Ultramarino (overseas council) endorsed the request of the *moradores* and ordered the removal of Carneiro da Silva as well as cancelling the appointment of his relative, taking into account his violent behaviour, which included arson of his adversaries’ houses.

It could be argued that anarchy had been a feature of São Tomé since its beginning. At the opening of the seventeenth century, the internal dissensions that characterized the Portuguese town had displeased Venkata II, the emperor of Vijayanagar. François Martin spoke of internal fights within São Tomé during the few years before it fell to Golconda, which may in part explain its defeat; in turn, Portuguese Governor Rodrigo da Costa complained about the spirit of rivalry ("emulação") prevalent among the inhabitants of São Tomé. From this point of view it appears that the Portuguese recovery of São Tomé implied first an internal reorganization, the resolution of internal factional strife (attempted unsuccessfully by Luís Francisco Coutinho) and only subsequently the achievement of better relations with the rulers of the land.

The extent to which internal stabilization was eventually achieved is not clear. Definitely, the diplomatic strategies on behalf of the city did not succeed in renewing its pristine glory. Attempts were made in 1712 to involve Juliana Dias da Costa, a major figure in the relations between Goa and the Mughal Empire. On the other hand, the diplomatic steps undertaken by the viceroy Vasco Fernandes César de Menezes (1712–17) were frustrated by the actions of individuals such as the Dominican friar Sebastião da Miranda. He had supported the patriarch Carlo Tomaso Maillard de Tournon in Macao in his claims on the superiority of the jurisdiction of Propaganda Fide over that of the Portuguese Padroado Real. Because of this attitude, he had been sent to India. However, he was able to escape from Goa and sided with the English, informing them about the steps that the Portuguese undertook to improve the condition of São Tomé.

The viceroy was then trying to use the mediation of the French medical doctor Jean de Saint-Hilaire. A courtier (válido) of the nawab of Karnatik, he appeared almost more Portuguese in affectation and inclination than French by birth ("mais parece Portugal no affecto e inclinação que Francez em [seu] nascimento"). Another foreign doctor, the Castilian Francisco Pereira, was employed in the years 1720 to 1722 in order to bring presents to the Mughal emperor and obtain concessions from him concerning the restitution of all the landed properties that had once belonged to the Portuguese. This
CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented the first results of an ongoing research project on life in São Tomé after its conquest by the Golconda sultanate. The vast documentation available in Goa, Lisbon, Rome and elsewhere might cast a clearer light on the ways in which a Portuguese presence continued in the "reliquary town" until its annexation to the British settlement of Madras in 1749 — made in order to prevent its acquisition by Joseph François Dupleix, the French governor-general in India, and supported by the Franciscan friar and adventurer António da Purificação (António José de Noronha). On 14 May 1750, the Council of Fort St George replied to the vibrant protest made on 5 February by the Marquês de Alorna (Pedro Miguel Almeida Portugal, viceroy of Portuguese India, 1744–50) against the occupation of São Tomé, defined as a dominion of the king of Portugal. The English officers simply observed that "no Revenue has Accrued to His Majesty of Portugal from that Place for these fifty Years Past". It was a brutal but realistic way to describe the relation of the Estado da Índia with a territory that had continued to be Portuguese more in terms of desire and imagination than in concrete ways.

However, the case of São Tomé shows the inadequacy of a simple dichotomy between absolute hegemony and a fate of stagnation and decline. Even if São Tomé was no longer a source of wealth for the Estado da Índia, nonetheless a Portuguese presence on the sacred site of the Apostle Thomas amounted indeed to a political asset. Scholars have already examined how the uncorrupted body of Saint Francis Xavier, the "Lord of Goa" (Goemcho Sahib) played a central role in the ritual representation of the Portuguese enterprise in India until its very end in 1961. In a similar way, contact with the memory of the first Apostle of India — origin of the cristão (Christians) for whom, together with especiarias (spices), the Portuguese were looking at the end of the fifteenth century — was a reassurance and a source of meaning for a Luso-Indian community scattered throughout the Coromandel Coast. Only from the point of view of power politics could it then be feared that in the future even the memory of the Portuguese in São Tomé would be lost, as the highest officers of the Estado da Índia argued in a letter sent from Goa on 23 December 1723 to Dom João V. If the political influence achieved during the sixteenth century could not be replicated, nonetheless the Portuguese left lasting traces in São Tomé de Meliapour, as well as in vast regions throughout Asia.

Notes


4. "Samta" is the correct spelling in this case, not "Santa".

5. Letter, 27 December 1535, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon.


9 Ibid., pp. 7–47.

10 "Breve relazione di Cristianadelie da Provincia do Malabar na India oriental (1609)", unsigned, fol. 162, Goa 48, Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Rome.


17 Ibid., 1: 304. Important to understanding the relation between São Tomé and Madras is George D. Winius, "A Tale of Two Coromandel Towns: Madraspatam (Fort St. George) and São Thomé de Meliapur", *Itineraria* 18, no. 1 (1994): 51–64. Winius’s most important contention is that the Indo-Portuguese traders of São Tomé were able to overcome the naval blockades organized by the Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, thanks to the partnership established with the English Honorable Company’s settlement of Fort St. George. In fact they “had taken to flying English colours on their vessels and sometimes even had an Englishman on board to warn the Dutch in no uncertain terms to keep their hands off” (p. 59). Winius also observes very appropriately how Love’s *Vestiges of Old Madras* — notwithstanding its lack of documentary references — is still the main source on the early history of Fort St. George, given the catastrophic conditions in which the Tamil Nadu State Archives are currently kept. This situation is particularly deplorable considering that “next to the former Portuguese archive in Goa, Egmore [a borough of Madras where the archives are located] is the richest depository in Asia for the history of European expansion” (p. 51).


19 King of Portugal to viceroy, and viceroy to king of Portugal, *Livros dos Monsôes do Reino* (hereafter cited as MR) 22A, fols. 242 and 243, 4 March 1652 and 13 January 1653, respectively. Historical Archives of Goa (hereafter cited as HAG), Panaji, Goa. N.h.: Many collections in the HAG have no title and thus are referenced by a number only. Dates appearing in the HAG citations herein pertain only to the specific folios cited.


[Trad% do] firmano q. El Rey da Goleçâ pa[sequ aos Portugueses p[ara]
powarem Melipor, vertido bem e fielmente por [Persian] by [Portuguese].

MR 52, fol. 408, 18 October 1686. Among the Portuguese delegation, the farman specified not only the Augustinian leader and friar Rangel, but also Alvaro Cancelli (or "Castella") do Valle, Lucas Luis de Oivi[eira], and Antonio [L]i[eira]. This document has been published (without specifying its archival location) by Julio Firmino Judice Biker, Colleccao de Tratados e Concertos de Pazas que o Estado da India Portuguez Fez com os Reis e Senhores com Quem Teve Relações nas Partes do Asia e Africa Oriental desde o Principio da Conquista até o Fim do Seculo XVII (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1884), p. 227-28, and then by Pandurang S.S. Pisurilencar, Asentos do Conselho do Estado, vol. 5, 1696-1750 (Bastora, Goa: Typographia Rangel, 1957), 573-74.

MR 52, fol. 410, 15 April 1686.

MR 52, fol. 412, 8 October 1687.


Ibid.


It cannot be conclusively determined, therefore, that Chinn Venkatadri "just before the fall of Golconda Kingdom ... rented San Thome", as it is affirmed in Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant*, p. 115.


Pandurang S.S. Pisurilencar, *Asentos do Conselho do Estado*, vol. 4, 1659-1695. Letter of Dom Rodrigo da Costa to Dom Pedro II, fol. 369, MR 53, published in (Bastora, Goa: Typographia Rangel, 1956), 576-77. See also a memorandum of the to a mission to the Mughal in 1700 and to another one that led to a farman Cid[ade] de S. Thomé (reverting to the Crown of Portugal the City of S. Tomé).


MR 59B, fol. 430, 1691[?]. The document seems to be dated 1691; however, the correct date should be 1690 because there is a response from Dom Pedro II clearly referring to the topics discussed in the letter examined above, dated Lisbon, 22 October 1690.


43 Letter, MR 71, fols. 82-83v, specifically fol. 83, 9 January 1708.

44 The king wrote on 20 December 1706 to the viceroy Caetano de Mello de Castro, mentioning what the latter had written in this respect on 15 January 1704. Dom Pedro II decided to resort to the Jesuits. MR 71, fol. 81, 20 December 1706. The name of the Jesuits is mentioned in a letter addressed to Dom João V, Goa, 8 January 1708, fol. 84, MR 71.

45 MR 74A, fol. 25, 6 October 1706.

46 In the Indian Ocean, shabbandars were much more than simple "harbourmasters". For instance, "in Malacca at the time of the Portuguese conquest in 1511, four merchant communities were dominant, each of them living autonomous lives with their own headmen, called shabbandars, and governing themselves with little or no reference to the ruler, the sultan, who provided facilities, law and order, and fair dealing in return for customs duties"; see Michael N. Pearson, "Markets and Merchant Communities in the Indian Ocean: Locating the Portuguese", in *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion*, 1400-1800, edited by Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 95.

47 MR 74A, fol. 26, 24 November 1708. The viceroy replied to a letter from Dom João V, sent from Lisbon on 24 November 1708, which included the petition made by the inhabitants of São Tomé on 6 October 1706.

48 India, 6 August 1706, codex 88, doc. 25, *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* (hereafter cited as AHU), Lisbon.


51 Vasco Fernandes César de Menezes to Dom João V, Goa, HAG 85, fol. 88, 23 December 1712.


53 India, 10 January 1715, codex 107, doc. 6, AHU.
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EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN PORTUGUESE MACAO AND AYUTTHAYA: THE 1721 DEBT REPAYMENT EMBASSY FROM MACAO

Stefan Halikowski Smith

One of the pre-eminent, current historiographical debates in Thai history concerns the nature of the “National Revolution” of 1688 and whether it genuinely ushered in a period of xenophobia and retreat from international engagement, with Siam becoming a “hermit kingdom” in the language of the academic literature. Traditionally, historians like Hutchinson have insisted that the country became moved by “a spirit of blind and arrogant self-sufficiency”. Revisionist historians like Anthony Reid would like to suggest that this was not necessarily the case, since relations between Siam and China were strengthened in this period, and that Phetraha (ruled 1688–1703) was not personally motivated by xenophobia but used it to motivate political support.

The European population remaining in Ayutthaya nevertheless suffered considerable hardships when we compare their situation to earlier times. Fernão Mendes Pinto created an enduring myth of the “good king” (bom rei) of Siam, which we can accommodate to the long reign of Narai (ruled 1656–88). Under Phetraha, on the other hand, some of the leading European families