

Newly Discovered Correspondence (1853-1868) from King Mongkut, Rama IV, and from Phra Pinklao, to Sir John Bowring and his son Edgar Bowring

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ABSTRACT—This article presents for the first time transcriptions with illustrations of eleven examples of Thai royal correspondence dated 1853-1868, including six previously unpublished and two published but minimally accessible handwritten letters from King Mongkut and from “Second King” Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring and his son Edgar Bowring. The letters, purchased in London in 1985 and now at the Library of Congress (Washington), substantively add to the corpus of primary source material on key historical figures from this period during which the “Bowring Treaty” of 1855, between Siam and the United Kingdom, played a role in transformations within Siam. Prior publications of such correspondence rarely included illustrations of the original letters; here, illustrations show not only the original handwritten missives but also the royal seals placed on them, which are discussed in this article. In addition to these eight letters, transcriptions and illustrations of three little-known other examples of related correspondence from King Mongkut are included. One of the eight letters (from 16 January 1868) consists of King Mongkut’s handwritten note on a two-page pre-printed New Year greeting dated 1 January that year. Finally, though Bowring himself transcribed and published examples of his correspondence with the “Major King” (Mongkut) and “Second King” of Siam in his two-volume *The Kingdom and People of Siam* (1857), he also included color lithographs of two letters, related to those published here, that he did not transcribe. Transcriptions and illustrations of both those letters are included here, from original 1857 lithographs in the Smithsonian Institution’s Cullman library.

Introduction

This article presents in detail eleven examples of correspondence from King Mongkut, Rama IV (1804-1868), and from “Second King” Phra Pinklao (1808-1866), to Sir John Bowring (1792-1872) and his fourth son Edgar Alfred Bowring (1826-1911). These include a set of six previously unpublished and two published but minimally accessible examples of handwritten correspondence from King Mongkut and Phra Pinklao. Additionally, three related documents are presented. First, a pre-printed New Year greeting from King Mongkut, dated 1 January 1868, accompanies one of those letters. In addition, transcriptions and illustrations of two related letters are included

here, from original 1857 lithographs in the Smithsonian Institution's Cullman library. Sir John Bowring had published these two as lithographs in his two-volume *The Kingdom and People of Siam* (1857), without transcribing them. The transcriptions given here make these more accessible (including for online word searches), while the inclusion of the two illustrations will confirm similarities to the new documents presented.

The Library of Congress's internal (non-public) records about these letters are scant, noting only that this group of letters to Sir John Bowring and his son from the King of Siam was purchased in London from Winifred Myers in 1985.¹ This would surely have been Winifred Alice Myers (1909-1985) of London, who served as President of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association (A.B.A.) from 1950 to 1952. A brief biography by Robin Myers ("no relation" to Winifred Myers, as the biography states, despite the same surname), published on the website of the A.B.A. in 2017, describes her lifelong collecting interest in rare books and manuscripts (Myers 2017). This purchase would thus have dated from the year of her death, though it is unclear how she acquired these letters. One could speculate that since the collection includes three letters to Sir John's fourth son Edgar, among his five sons and four daughters, these might have been among



Portraits of King Mongkut, Rama IV (1804-1868) (left) and Sir John Bowring (1792-1872) (right). At left is the color lithograph, possibly from hand-tinted tintype, published by Bowring, 1857, vol. 1, facing title page. (At base of portrait: "SPPM Mongkut Rex Siamensium" – i.e., Latin, "Somdet Phra Poramenthra Maha Mongkut, King of the Siamese"). At right is a detail of the lithograph also published by Bowring, 1857, in vol. 2, facing title page.

¹ Email from Jeffrey M. Flannery, Head, Reference & Reader Services, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 22 November 2017. The penciled annotation "[Ac. 19,178]" on several documents is the accession number assigned by the Manuscript Division.

family papers possibly inherited then dispersed through Edgar's descendants. The collection has been stored in the Library of Congress's Manuscript Division since its purchase.

These letters comprise a substantive addition to the corpus of primary data on key historical figures from this period during which the "Bowring Treaty" of 1855 liberalized trade in Siam. That treaty between the United Kingdom and Siam formed the model for subsequent bilateral treaties, including the 1856 "Harris Treaty" between Siam and the United States.

There are three letters from King Mongkut (17 July 1855, 4 September 1857, and 27 November 1858) and two from Phra Pinklao (12 February 1853 and 31 August 1857) to Sir John Bowring, as well as two letters from King Mongkut to Edgar Bowring (16 January 1868 and 28 May 1868). The letter of 16 January 1868, was actually a handwritten addition to a two-page pre-printed New Year greeting from the King, made for distribution to foreigners on the occasion of the Gregorian New Year, 1st January. In fact, Sir John Bowring seems to have separately sent another copy of that same printed New Year greeting to the London-based editors of the *The London and China Telegraph*, who published the printed greeting's text in their 13 March 1868 newspaper, as will be noted below. Finally, there is the undated fragment of an eighth handwritten letter to Edgar Bowring. Although it is unsigned, we see from its handwriting and especially from its seal that the author was King Mongkut.

The compilations of King Mongkut's English-language correspondence, and that of Phra Pinklao, begin with Bowring's own two-volume *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, whose Appendix G ("LETTERS FROM THE KING OF SIAM, ETC.") (Bowring 1857, v. 2: 422-446) contains nine enumerated letters with associated unnumbered royal letters and other documents.² This is apparently the same sequence continued by correspondence in this present publication. That Appendix's last letter, no. 55 (Mongkut to J. Bowring), is dated 23 April 1855; the earliest Mongkut letter published here, also to J. Bowring, is no. 105 dated 17 July 1855 (so presumably 50 enumerated royal letters in this sequence had been written between those dates). In addition to the transcribed royal correspondence Bowring published in his Appendix G, he published in the same book two royal letters as fold-out color lithographs: 27 March 1855 from King Mongkut (Bowring 1857, v. 1: 1); and 4 April 1855 from Phra Pinklao (*ibid.*, v. 2: 1), now reproduced and transcribed here as Documents 10 and 11.

The major compiler of King Mongkut's English-language correspondence, however, was M.L. Manich Jumsai, who published his compilation of then-known correspondence (beyond those already presented by Bowring in 1857) in three parts in the *Journal of*

² Bowring's 1857 Appendix G provides transcriptions of nine letters from King Mongkut within the enumerated sequence (38 to 55). Bowring also published letter no. 37 in facsimile only, without transcription; it is both transcribed and reproduced here (Document 10). Some royal letters published in 1857 include enclosures, perhaps comparable to the enclosed, printed New Year greeting published here. In 1857 Bowring also included some correspondence from himself to King Mongkut, as well as some additional King Mongkut to J. Bowring correspondence that is unnumbered and apparently not part of this sequence (see examples inserted after letter nos. 39 and 55 of Appendix G); these may be comparable to the unnumbered royal correspondence presented alongside numbered examples in the present publication.

the Siam Society (Jumsai 1927-28). Jumsai's invaluable works on the history of Anglo-Thai relations (Jumsai 1970) and his story of King Mongkut's relationship with Queen Victoria and the British (re-issued in several editions, originally Jumsai 1972 and under new title from the 3rd edition, Jumsai 1991) quoted from these and presented additional correspondence by Bowring and his associates. Jumsai's later important study of "King Mongkut and Sir John Bowring" is largely based, as the book's subtitle makes clear, on "Sir John Bowring's personal files, kept at the Royal Thai Embassy in London" (Jumsai 1970). The book's narrative unfolds largely through long quotations from selected examples of original correspondence, including previously published letters but also additional archival material that Jumsai found within the Royal Thai Embassy in London. Jumsai records, in fact, the day when, looking there for something else, he "suddenly came across the most amazing material directly concerning King Mongkut and Sir John Bowring" (1970: iv). (This corresponds to the present author's story, on a far smaller scale, when he inadvertently found the letters presented here at the Library of Congress, also while looking for something else.)

In fact, a file of material associated with John Bowring, consisting of letters, consular papers, newspaper clippings, etc., was published in 2005 as a six-volume set of photographic reproductions of the mostly handwritten documents within that file (Chuanpit et al., 2005). According to the unpaginated prefatory message by the Thai Fine Arts Department's Nai Arak Singhitkun (before p. 1 of vol. 1), the original file whose contents are photographically reproduced in the six volumes had been found in 1964, in the coal cellar of a building in London being given up by the Thai embassy (31 Ashburn Place, South Kensington). The file was turned over to the Fine Arts Department in 1981, and later published by a publications section of the committee formed to celebrate the 200th anniversary of King Mongkut's birth (2004-2005). These six volumes, which include additional examples of King Mongkut's correspondence, were printed in few copies, and are now only minimally accessible for study.³ This publication, however, does include handwritten copies of two of the letters from King Mongkut recently found at the Library of Congress and published here (Documents 4 and 5 below). Thus we may say that these two letters, published and illustrated here, have been "minimally" published previously but not in transcription, only as photographs of that file's handwritten copies, each labeled "(Copy)" at the top of the page.⁴

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) also maintains an online-accessible record (at www.nara.gov) of a few additional archival letters from

³ Per the international WorldCat OCLC library database, these volumes are (in 2017) unavailable in any participating library outside Thailand.

⁴ These facts suggest a potential source of these documents. Two of the enumerated letters of King Mongkut, whose originals are among these letters recently found at the Library of Congress from the 1985 purchase in London (Documents 4 and 5 below), exist as handwritten copies within this file found in London in 1965 and turned over to the Fine Arts Department in 1981. It is possible that at some point, the original letters from this file in London were removed, and handwritten copies left in that file. The other documents presented here are not in that 6-volume publication, however. The author sincerely thanks Barend Terwiel for calling attention to and kindly checking these volumes for this paper.

King Mongkut accompanying royal gifts, within its Record Group 59 (“Ceremonial Letters from Siam”), components of which were also color-illustrated or published in transcription by McQuail (1997) and by Taylor and Smith (2017). Finally, in 2004 Pramin Krueathong published a set of English-language letters from King Mongkut to Anna Leonowens, found in Thailand’s National Archives, in the Thai magazine *Sinlapa Watthanatham*: issues 25, 3 (January): 77-88; 25, 4 (February): 87-98; 25, 5 (March): 148-158; 25, and 6 (April): 133-140.

This article augments the still relatively scarce examples of correspondence among these historic figures. The primary purpose is presentation of the documents themselves, both in illustrations and in transcription. Readers seeking the broader context in which this correspondence occurred would be well advised to begin with Philip Bowring’s (2014) lively and very readable biography of Sir John; and to consult Wyatt’s (1969) historical introduction to the Oxford reprint of Bowring’s *The Kingdom and People of Siam* (original 1857). In addition, Manich Jumsai’s historical accounts cited above not only introduce the protagonists in this correspondence but also directly exemplify the importance of primary documents like these in developing accurate historical narratives.

This article also illustrates and examines the seals appearing on the letters, often ignored in prior publications of such correspondence. Some royal seals were used exclusively on royal correspondence to foreign recipients. For example, *Samnak Lekhathikan Khana Ratthamontri* (SLKR), the standard compendium of Chakri dynasty seals published in 1995 and frequently cited below, illustrates and discusses in detail a Thai seal used only for correspondence conveying royal gifts from Siam to China, from the time of King Rama I up until King Mongkut, Rama IV, decided to halt its use in 1852 (SLKR 1995: 52-53). The rather surprising absence, within this standard compendium, of many seals found within this set of correspondence and published here may be due to their having been sent outside of Thailand where they reside in archives elsewhere, rather than in the Thai archives consulted for the compilation of this standard work. An elegant, visually emphatic example that seems appropriate only for English-speaking recipients of royal correspondence would be King Mongkut’s English-language circular seal, with very European floral decorations but no crown, with the words “Major King of Siam” in English (see Document 4, Figure 4e), which like several other seals reported here is not found in SLKR (1995).

Note on transcriptions.

The transcriptions here (valuable for ease of reading but also for online topical or word searches) inevitably involve interpretations or “best guesses” from an editor. Occasionally a bracketed question mark (thus: [?]), following a transcribed word or phrase, indicates that the proposed transcription is particularly uncertain. Transcriptions may use “[illeg.]” indicating that the original is so “illegible” that the transcriber dares not proffer any guess. As the illustrations show, the name of a letter’s recipient was often placed at the foot of the first page; this is moved to the top in transcriptions here, with the note “[from footer:]”. In a few cases, this author has placed an editorial clarification or annotation, italicized in brackets (and marked “—Ed.”), immediately following an

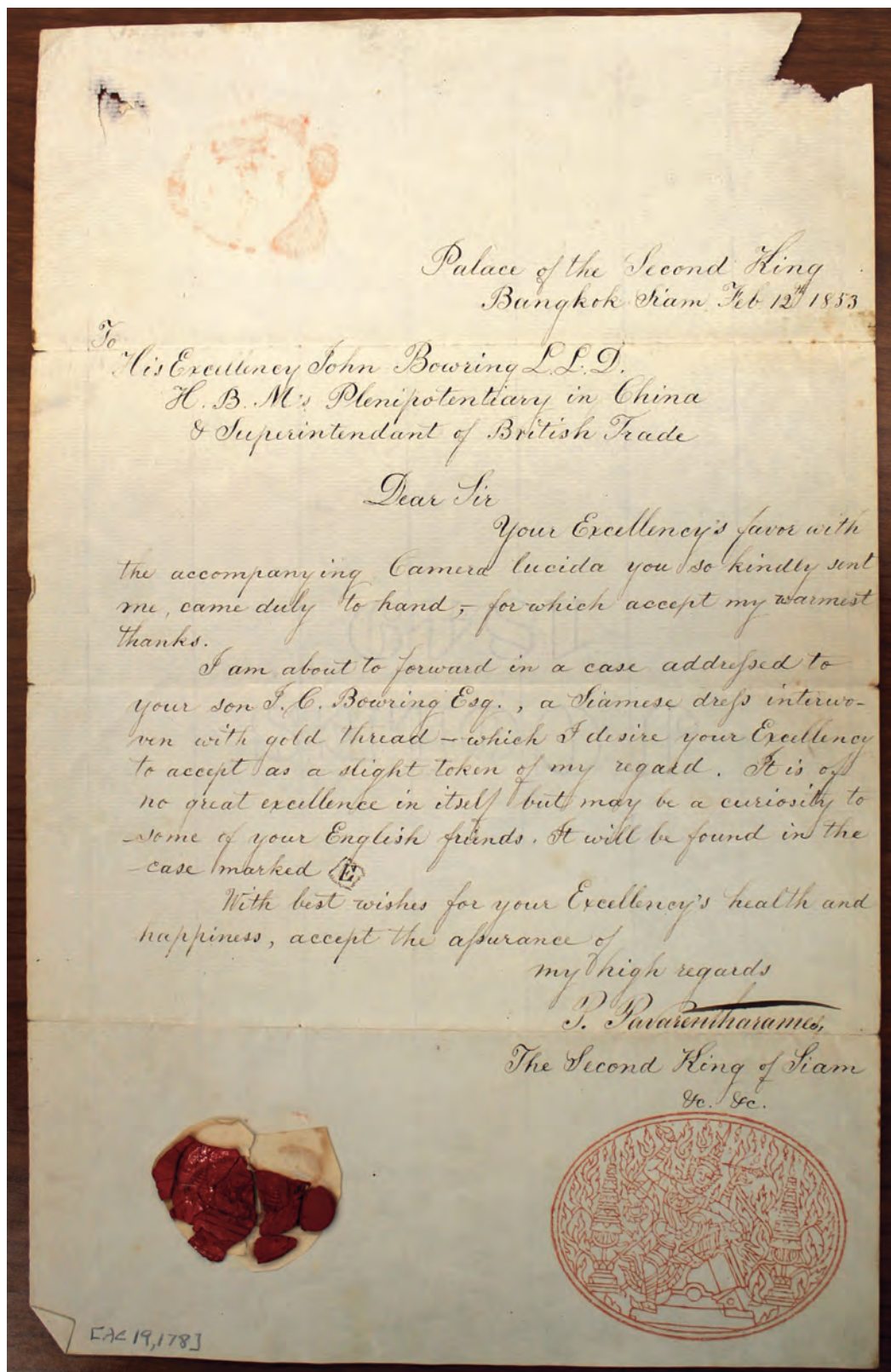


Figure 1a. Letter, Phra Pinklao to John Bowring, 12 February 1853.

accurately transcribed word/phrase that was originally misspelled or needs clarification, e.g.: “Bishop Pallegox [*Pallegoix —Ed.*]”

Documents 1 through 9 below are the set of eight handwritten letters recently found in the Library of Congress collections, along with the printed New Year greeting accompanying one of those letters. (An additional loose envelope within that set is discussed below as an Addendum to Document 9.) Documents 10 and 11, as noted previously, here republish illustrations (scans from the originals) of the two related letters published as lithographs by Bowring himself in 1857, along with transcriptions of those previously untranscribed letters.

Document 1. Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring, 12 February 1853

This one-page letter (blank on reverse side) measures 322 x 202 mm (Figure 1a). This is the only example within this group of documents where two different people placed a seal. The placement of the two seals at the foot of the page follows the standard format in such cases, according to SLKR (1995: 68), with the King’s seal on the left and the other seal on the right.

In this case, the remaining portions of the original red wax seal of the second king, Phra Pinklao, can be seen on the left (Figure 1b) (ca. 23 x 45 mm remaining). This partially missing wax seal depicts a jeweled hairpin on a pedestal, decorated at both sides with a tiered umbrella, indicating that this was the seal of Phra Pinklao; appropriate symbols since the term *pinklao* also means a decorated hairpin (see SLKR 1995: 57 for an illustration and explanation of this same seal; and cf. Figures 3e, 3f).

At right is the seal of Prince Yod Ying Yot Baworn Rachorot Ratana Racha-Khumal (Figure 1c), who served as Minister for the “Front Palace” under Phra Pinklao. The seal (54 x 70 mm) depicts Vishnu on a canon. See SLKR 1995: 68-69 for further explanation and an illustration of this seal.



Figure 1b. Remaining portions of original wax seal. (ca. 23 x 45 mm remaining). This partially missing wax seal depicts a jeweled hair pin on a pedestal, decorated at both sides with a tiered umbrella, indicating that this was the seal of Phra Pinklao; the term *pinklao* means a decorated hairpin.



Figure 1c. Seal of Prince Yod Ying Yot Baworn Rachorot Ratana Racha-Khumal, who served as Minister for the “Front Palace” under Phra Pinklao. The seal (54 x 70 mm) depicts Vishnu on a canon.

Palace of the Second King
Bangkok Siam Feb. 12th 1853

To
His Excellency John Bowring L.L.D.
H.B.M.'s Plenipotentiary in China
& Superintendant of British Trade

Dear Sir

Your Excellency's favor with the accompanying Camera lucida you so kindly sent me, came duly to hand, -- for which accept my warmest thanks.

I am about to forward in a case addressed to your son J.C. Bowring Esq., a Siamese dress interwoven with gold thread -- which I desire your Excellency to accept as a slight token of my regard. It is of no great excellence in itself but may be a curiosity to some of your English friends. It will be found in the case marked **E**.

With best wishes for your Excellency's health and happiness, accept the assurance of my high regards

P. Pavarentharames,
The Second King of Siam
&c. &c.


Document 2. King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 17 July 1855

This letter is a previously unpublished example of King Mongkut's royal correspondence that seems to be within the same enumerated sequence as previously published examples. For example, the last letter in this sequence published in Appendix G of Bowring's (1857) book was no. 55 of 23 April 1855; the present letter is no. 105. That sequence may continue within this set of letters; King Mongkut's 4 September 1857 letter to John Bowring is "No. 266" (Document 4 below). Yet the only other enumerated letter here is his 27 November 1858 letter to J. Bowring given the number at top left "190 *manu regia*" (Latin, "190 in the King's hand"), as though it is in a different sequence, though the handwriting appears the same.

This letter consists of two separate sheets (placed side-by-side in Figures 2a and 2b); each sheet is 225 mm x 186 mm; page 1 only has a 5 mm green frame. The letter's number "105" was written on it after the rectangular red seal had been stamped at its top left. That rectangular seal with Khmer script, according to SLKR (1995: 147-148) has two forms for royal correspondence: one, *ong yai* or "big seal", used for granting titles or rank; while the

second, seen here on this letter, is the *ong lek* or “small seal” form used for matters ranging from granting a pardon to foreign trade. All examples of this seal within the letters presented here use the “small” version (Figure 2c), which is distinguished by having the symbol of the *Ohm* prayer at the top of the inscription (see illus. SLKR 1995: 148) whereas the “big” version uses the word *Ohm* written out instead (see illus. SLKR 1995: 147). The lettering on this seal is in the Thai language written in Khmer script and says: *phraborom ratchongkan*, meaning “by royal order.”⁵

The green upright oval seal to the right of that (at top center) is the same seal we find at top center on the 1857 lithograph of King Mongkut’s letter published by Bowring himself (Document 10 below) (see Figure 2d). Note that both documents also have the same red rectangular seal in Khmer script on the left (Figure 2c).⁶

This green seal in upright oval form, though first apparently published by Bowring in 1857, does not appear in SLKR (1995), the compendium of Chakri dynasty seals. It displays a traditional Thai crown on a pedestal, from the sides of which rise two very European-looking flags with the monograms “T” and “Y.” Above the Thai crown hovers a thoroughly European crown (in striking contrast to the one below), within again a European-style decorated oval field. Though small in size, this seal visually encapsulates the increasingly global role of the Thai monarch at this time, accompanying his royal letters to the foreign recipient. The composition of this seal is far more visible on this recently found 17 July 1855 letter; we clearly see the “T” and “Y” in a quite distinctive, antique version of these two letters: .⁷ By contrast, the underlying monograms seem quite obscured by the green cross-hatching of the 1857 lithograph.

No seal in the standard compilation of Chakri dynasty seals (SLKR 1995) bears these monograms, the “T” and florid “Y” (superficially similar to a D). One possibility is that this might abbreviate the Thai phrase (T and Y highlighted): *Thun kramom Yai*,⁸ which could be parsed “[respectful address] + [crown of head] + [big].” This is a form of address for high-ranking persons (like “Your Royal Highness”). Yet though King Mongkut might have been addressed in this way earlier in his life, before becoming King, it is unclear if that is the correct meaning of the “T” and “Y” here.

At King Mongkut’s signature we find his well-known standard seal at left, on page 4 (see illustration and explanation in SLKR 1995: 56; and discussion below under Document 4, with Figure 4f). At center is a seal with his “SPPMM” monogram with the crown, in a coat of arms format, again not reported in SLKR (1995) but found twice on this letter (at the signature and again at the P.S. on page 4). This same seal is also found twice on King Mongkut’s 4 April 1855 letter to Bowring that Bowring himself had published in 1857 (see Figure 10c), there also at the signature and again at the P.S.

⁵ Many thanks to Peter Skilling for this transcription and translation.

⁶ This juxtaposition of this same red rectangular seal with Khmer script, and the same upright green oval seal having the Thai crown below the modern crown, can also be seen on King Mongkut’s 10 June 1856 letter to President Franklin Pierce in the U.S. National Archives, and on its accompanying list of Thai royal gifts, see McQuail 1997: 46 and 51.

⁷ The font seems very similar to the 21st century “Mariage” font-family, and specifically the subset “Mariage Antique D” illustrated here.

⁸ Many thanks to Prof. Vigal Phongpanitanon for this suggestion.

[from footer:] To His Excellency Sir John Bowring
Knight LLD &c &c &c

No 105

Rajmondirn house
grand palace Bangkok
Siam

17th July 1855 - which is
the 5th of our reign

My Most respected friend

1. I have acknowledged the receipt of your Excellency's letters under the dates of 10th & 23rd May together the book of which your Excellency has been author called "John Bowring's Decimal system" sent me via Singapore through the care of my agent Jan Kim ching on the 24th June.

2. I have informed your arrival at Hong Kong in safety & the content of your Excellency's letters and the contents of letters addressed to your Excellency by Mr. Logal [?] of Singapore & your Excellency's answer to him printed in newspapers of China regarding the desire of merchants of Singapore to open the commercial intercourse with Cochin China, and your Excellency's assurance to do so on future days when opportunity would allow to my royal brother the Second King Krom Hluang Wongsadhirajsnidh⁹ and His Lordship

[page 2]

Lordship Somdetch Chau Phya Param Maha Bijuy-niate¹⁰ & His Excellency Chau Phya Srisuriy wongse SPK¹¹ who were glad to learn your Excellency letters Subjects & Safe arrived at China & pleasure of all merchants &c [?] of Hong Kong upon the articles of new Treaty &c.

3. The latter has returned from Ayudia for many days where he has decided correctly the matters occurred there in & executed 4 personages convicts on the matter. now whole province was tranqueal so as its governments & people of all classes are now enjoying happiness with out any misunderstanding, mistaking.

4. I have perused some pages of your book with much pleasure & interesting & admire mostly for your great knowledge of various languages, letters characters and System of Numbers I am sorry that I can not follow your Excellency 's knowledges in such the hard languages & sciences of various nations.

5. I will endeavor to let your Excellency have more particular of Siamese History & the particular of the present dynasity of royal family here. but I can not yet do on this occasion. the time not very long in which my ship Neptune will be sailed for Hongkong. Then I will sent some things in assistance to your Excellency's

⁹ Krom Hluang Wongsāthirātsanit (1808-1871), พระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ พระองค์เจ้านวน กรมหลวงวงศาธิราชสนิท.

¹⁰ Somdet Chao Phraya Borom Maha Prayurawongse (1788-1855), สมเด็จพระยาบรมมหาประยูรวงศ์.

¹¹ Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriwongse (1808-1883), สมเด็จพระยาบรมมหาศรีสุริยวงศ์; SPK indicates the rank "Samuha Phra Khlang".



Figure 2a. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 17 July 1855, unfolded. Showing outer pages, p. 4 (at left) and p. 1 (on right).

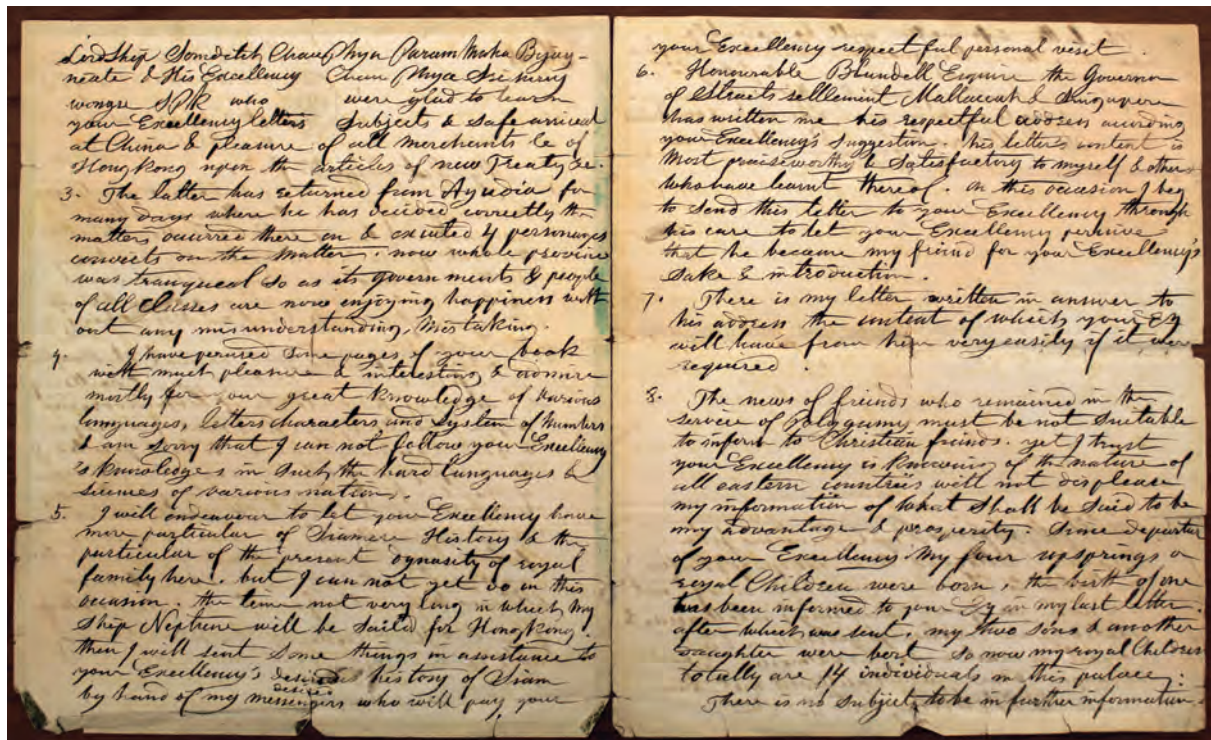


Figure 2b. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 17 July 1855, pp. 2-3 (reverse sides of sheets shown in Figure 2a; p. 2 is on reverse side of p. 1; p. 4 is on reverse of p. 3).



Figure 2c. Detail of seal at top left of page 1 (in Figure 2a). This is the same seal used at top left of the 27 March 1855 letter published by Bowring in 1857 (see Figure 10a).



Figure 2d. Detail of seal at top center of page 1 (in Figure 2a), on left; and at right for comparison a detail of the seal at top center of the 27 March 1855 letter from King Mongkut published by Bowring in 1857 (see illustration of full page, Figure 10a). The 1857 publication's seal (right) is darker and apparently obscures the monograms on the flags, yet this is the same seal. The monograms "T" and "Y" are much more clearly visible at left.

desired history of Siam by hand of my messengers who will pay your
[page 3]

your Excellency respectful personal visit.

6. Honorable Blundell Esquire the Governor of Straits settlement Malluccah & Singapore has written me his respectful address according your Excellency's suggestion. his letter's content is most praiseworthy & satisfactory to myself & others who have learnt thereof. on this occasion I beg to send this letter to your Excellency through his care to let your Excellency perceive that he became my friend for your Excellency's sake & introduction.

7. There is my letter written in answer to his address the content of which your Ey [Excellency —Ed.] will have from him very easily if it were required.

8. The news of friends who remained in the service of Polygamy must be not suitable to inform to Christian friends. yet I trust your Excellency is knowing of the nature of all eastern countries will not displease my information of what shall be said to be my advantage & prosperity. Since departure of your Excellency my four upsprings a royal Children were born, the birth of one has been informed to your Ey in my last letter. after which was sent. my two sons & another daughter were bert [?] so now my royal Children totally are 14 individuals in this palace.

There is no subject to be in further information.

[page 4]

The latter information will be needable when some time this question would be taken place "how many my royal Children? So I beg to supply your Excellency with the objects of answer.

I beg to remain your Excellency's good friend

SPPM Mongkut Rex Siamensium

P.S. My old friend Right Reverend John Baptist Pallegoix the Bishop of Malles embarked to Siam arrived here on 24th inst [instant —Ed.] has given me your

Excellency's intelligence & stated your Excellency's goodness in high respect as exact as he has witnessed at Singapore where your Excellency met him.

SPPM Mongkut R S^m

Document 3. Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring, 31 August 1857

This letter is a single sheet, 320 x 404 mm, folded down the middle to produce four pages, each 320 x 202 mm, with the second and fourth pages blank (Figures 3a-3c). The fourth page (Figure 3d) formed the outer side of the folded letter, on which someone later made four lines of short annotations of the letter's origin and date, and perhaps when it arrived or was filed ("Bangkok August 31, 1857 / Second King of Siam / Sept 24 / 26 [? —*Ed.*]"). The only inked (stamped) seal is on page 3, and it is covered by a pink paper flap (Figure 3b) which when opened reveals the well-known seal of Phra Pinklao (Figure 3c), depicting between two tiered umbrellas a pedestal holding a decorated hairpin (point to the left, decorative elements at right), above which an aureole is displayed. This seal has many variants (SLKR 1995: 53-57); the one found on this letter is particularly intricate and well-wrought. Yet another variant of this same seal was used for the envelope (Figure 3f). In addition to these inked seals, this letter displays (almost invisibly in photographs taken in normal light) a magnificently embossed seal of Phra Pinklao at the top center of the page. The seal, measuring 13 x 22 mm, can be seen via angled lighting in Figure 3e.

Palace of the Second King,
Bangkok, Siam, Aug. 31st. 1857.

To
His Excellency,
Sir John Bowring, L.L.D.
H. B. M. Plenipotentiary, &c.

Dear Sir,

I have to acknowledge your kind favor of July 25th, enclosing a letter from Dr. Knighton.

H. B. M. Str. "Encounter," as you have doubtless heard, reached here safely. Captain O'Callaghan was honored with visits to Our Palace, and he kindly remembered your Excellency to Us. After a short stay at the Bar, the "Encounter" bore away Our Embassy on their distant journey. Intelligence has been received of their safe arrival at Singapore. Our Government is much pleased, in consequence of the kind attentions, which the members of the Embassy acknowledge having received at Singapore, and on board the Steamer.

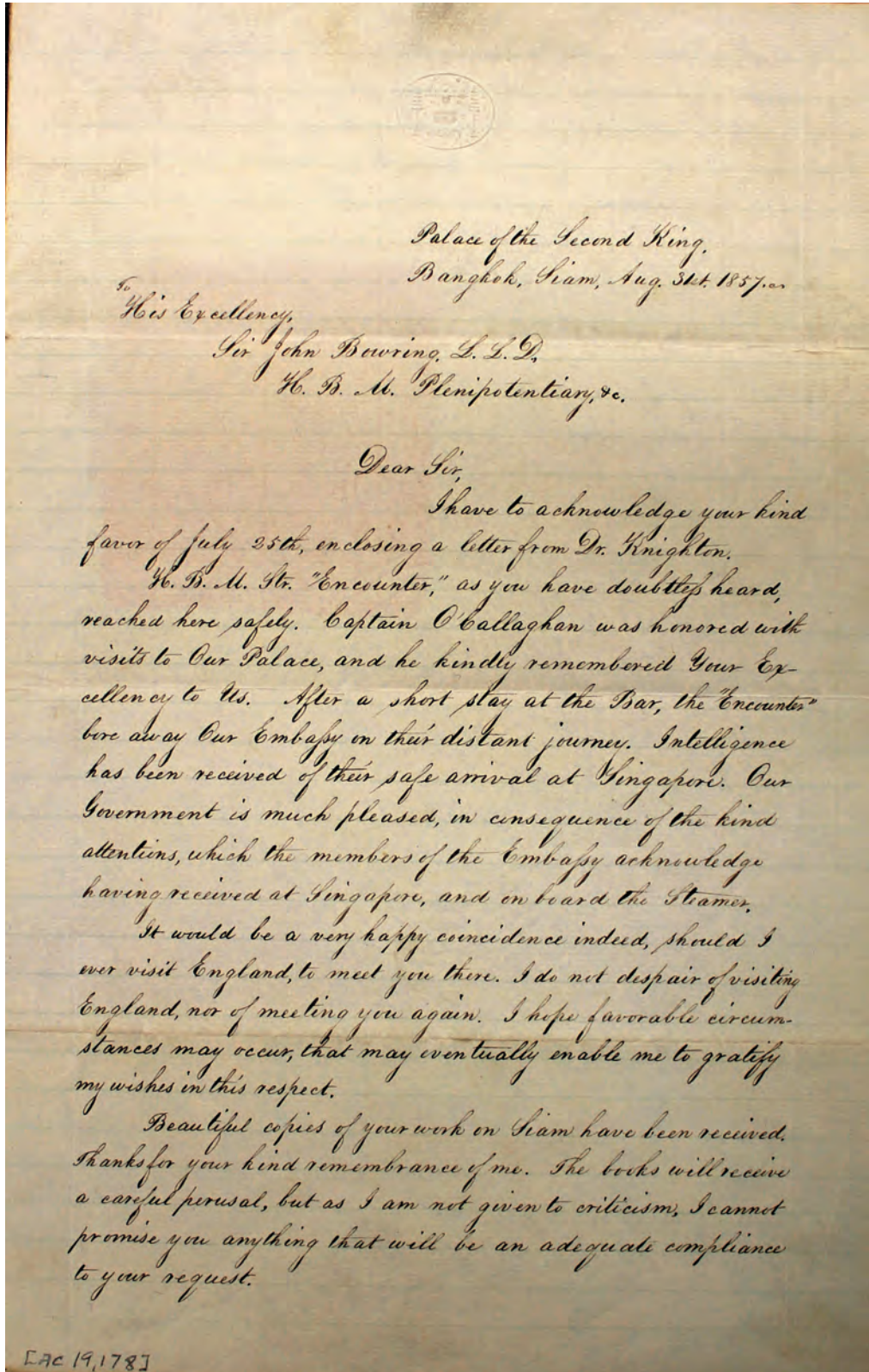


Figure 3a. Letter, Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring, 4 April 1855, p. 1.

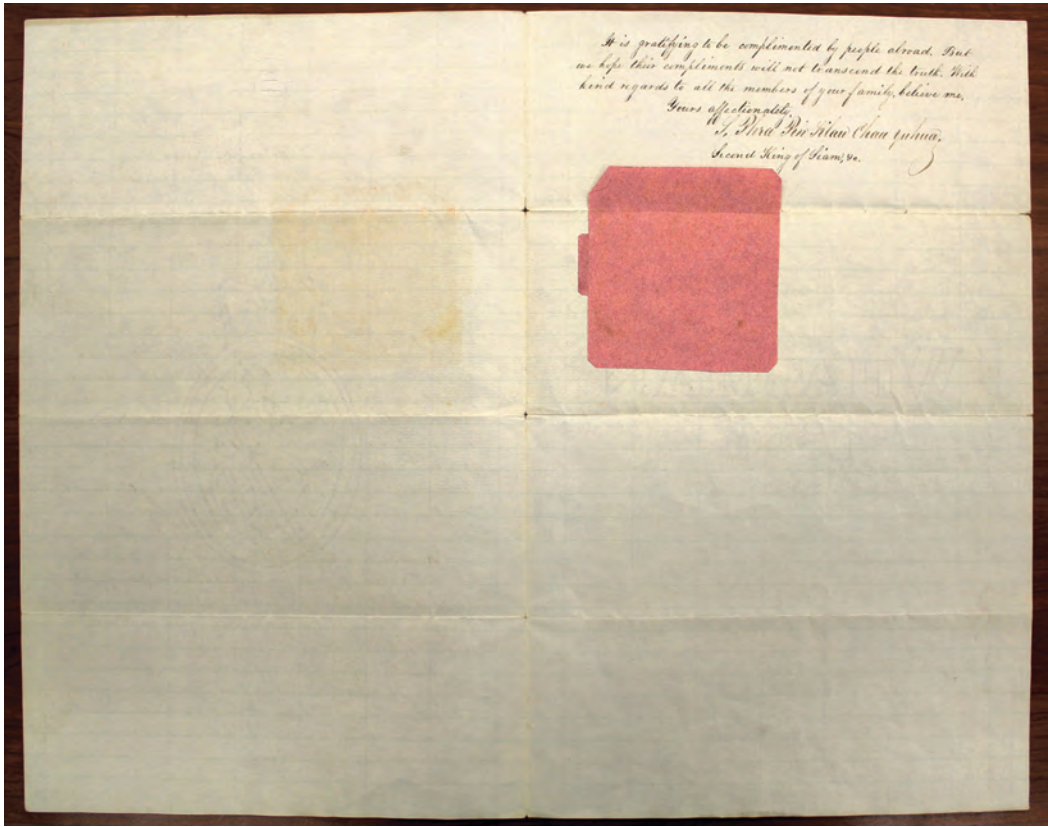


Figure 3b. Letter, Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring, 31 August 1857, blank p. 2 (left) and p. 3, with paper flap over seal.



Figure 3c. Letter, Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring, 31 August 1857, detail of top portion of p. 3, with flap opened to show seal beneath. Measurement of seal (on right): Height: 73mm, Width: 70mm.

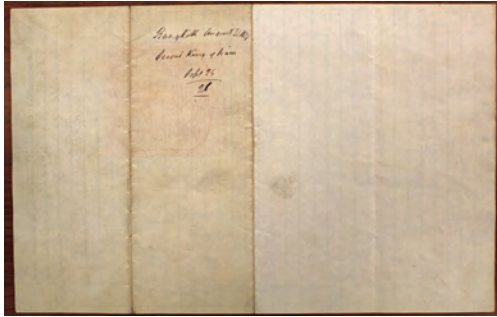


Figure 3d. Letter, Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring, 31 August 1857, page 4 (with inset).

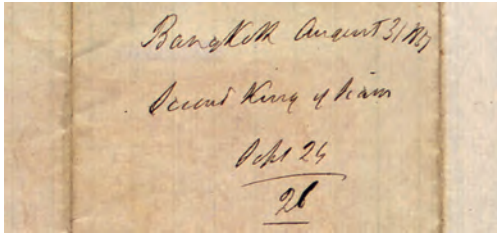


Figure 3e. Embossed seal of Phra Pinklao, photographed with angled light. This embossing is nearly invisible in photographs taken in normal light. Embossing is at the top center of this letter's page 1 (Figure 3a). Phra Pinklao's seal depicts a jeweled hairpin on a pedestal, decorated at both sides with a tiered umbrella.



Figure 3f (above). Envelope; apparently for letter of 31 August 1857. 95 mm x 225 mm.

Figure 3g (at right). Detail of the seal of Phra Pinklao (from envelope seen in Figure 3f).



It would be a very happy coincidence indeed, should I ever visit England, to meet you there. I do not despair of visiting England, nor of meeting you again. I hope favorable circumstances may occur, that may eventually enable me to gratify my wishes in this respect.

Beautiful copies of your work on Siam have been received. Thanks for your kind remembrance of me. The books will receive a careful perusal, but as I am not given to criticism, I cannot promise you anything that will be an adequate compliance to your request.

[page 2]

It is gratifying to be complimented by people abroad. But we hope their compliments will not transcend the truth. With kind regards to all the members of your family, believe me,

Yours affectionately,

S. Phra Pin Klau Chau yuhua,
Second King of Siam, &c.

[Envelope text:]

His Excellency Sir John Bowring, L.L.D.

H. B. M. Plenipotentiary,

Hongkong,

Victoria,

China.

S. Phra Pin Klau Chau yuhua,

Second King of Siam, &c.

Document 4. King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 4 September 1857

In the sequence of King Mongkut's correspondence, this letter is number 266 (or possibly 265, the number seems to have originally been written "265" then modified to "266"). The photograph of a handwritten copy of this letter appears in the 6-volume set of materials found in the London file turned over to the Thai Fine Arts department in 1981, published in Chuanpit et al. 2005: vol. 1, pp. 246-251. The anonymous copyist clearly considered this letter No. 265. It consists of two sheets measuring 250 X 404 mm, folded down the middle to form eight pages each measuring 250 x 202 mm. The back of the folded letter (eighth page) has written on it only three short lines of annotation: "Bangkok 4 Sept 1857" then "First King of Siam" followed by the enigmatic number "24".

At the top left of page 1 (on right in Figure 4a) we find the same rectangular seal with Khmer script, in the *ong lek* or "small seal" form (see detail, Figure 4e), as discussed above with Document 2 (citing SLKR 1995: 147-148).

At the top center of that page we find a circular seal in English, consisting of the words "Major King of Siam" within a very European-looking floral pattern (Figure 4e). It is the only example of this seal in these documents; possibly this seal was only used for royal correspondence to English-speaking countries. In fact, though no comparable English-language seal is found in the standard compendium of Chakri dynasty seals (SLKR 1995), three documents with this seal were published in McQuail 1997 (Figs. 22c, 27, 28a on pages 46 and 51), namely on the royal correspondence accompanying gifts sent by King Mongkut to U.S. President Franklin Pierce in 1856.

With some magnification and angled lighting we can illustrate additional aspects of this document, all within the top left corner of page 1 seen with normal light in Figure 4a. For example there is a scarcely visible embossed seal on the page beneath the number (see Figure 4g) – yet unlike Thai embossings we find on other documents (e.g. Figure

3e), this appears to be the royal coat of arms of the United Kingdom. Presumably the paper King Mongkut purchased and used for his letter had been pre-printed in Britain with this embossed seal. Figure 4h magnifies the red wax seal (now partially missing) holding in place the string tying together the pages of this letter. The wax remaining (approximately 15 x 20 mm) displays another, unique version of the “Major King of Siam” seal pressed into the wax, with a pattern different from that on the ink-stamped version of this seal on this same letter (Figure 4e). Only the letters “Major Kin[g]” are still intact in the wax.

On this letter’s signature page (page 7, Figure 4d) we find a smaller, unique variant of the coat-of-arms seal with the “SPPMM” monogram (also not reported in SLKR 1995, but similar to that seen on Documents 2 and 10, though this one is without the crown). This page has a particularly clear example of King Mongkut’s well-known standard seal, shown in Figure 4f. “Mongkut” means “crown,” and his seal (which he designed) depicts a Thai crown on a pedestal, with tiered umbrellas at each side, along with decorative motifs (flame or floral) rising at the sides above pedestals with lotus-leaf bases, and with a burst of rays from the top of the crown’s spire. (Compare illustration and explanation in SLKR 1995: 56.)

[from footer:]

T^o His Excellency Sir John Bowring K
LLD the superintendent of British trade
in China & Governor of Hongkong &ca &ca.

No266.
Royal Residence
grand palace Bangkok
4th September 1857.

Ex Majore Regi
Siamensium

Respected Sir

I have acknowledged the receipt of the parcil superscribed in address to my royal name signed by your Excellency himself contain two beautiful book of Siamese national account (which your Excellency had devoted to fulfill in preparation after your E_y’s mission to our country & which your Excellency had alluded to in several letters addressed me occasionally until the last letter ~ before sending to accept our Embassy.) from hand of Honorable R Gingell the officiating consul here on late of July or Early part of August. I have read its superscript & seen as fore said, knowing that the said books must be presented me from your Excellency without doubt & have opened it off. and when I looked upon the first pages thereof I saw the name of the second king of Siam.

[page 2]

Superscribed by your Excellency himself in hand writing upon the first pages of both volumns thus

*To His Most Excellent Majesty
The second King of Siam.*

*From his obedient
friend & servant*

*John Bowring
Hong Kong 13rd July 1857.*

Having seen so I was doubtful & have presumed that your Excellency himself or your servants must have mistaken in superscribing at out side of the parcil as the parcil for me must be superscribed in name of the second king & the parcil for him, in my name perhaps. then I have returned those two books to Mr. Consul Gingell showing my foresaid observation of the different superscripts internal & outward of the said parcil.

He has changed the outer wrapping paper of the parcil & superscribed in name of the second king, to whom he sent immediatly for exchange of the other parcil formerly he had sent for acceptance of him upon the same time of deliverance the said parcil to me as he trust that the outer superscripts of both must be mistaken from Hong Kong.

[page 3]

But my younger royal brother the second king on having opened & examination of those two volumns has said that he also was doubtful as in the parcil addressed him formerly received by him before those two books have no superscript in first pages in my name or his name, and he did given his handwriting upon the first pages of them marking his name that those are belonged to him, before he has received the other two for exchange by order of Mr. Consul Gingell. and he said that he observed the outerfitting moroccos of two books recently sent for ~ exchange were more richly ornamented with gilt work than those two he had formerly ~ received for the consequence he was doubtful that those richly ornamented must be intended for me by you but having mistaken in superscript upon the first pages perhaps. and has returned them to me with statement of his doubt. Myself also yet am ~ doubtful lest you might have sent the former parcil in address to the second king and afterward for your consideration that those two books formerly sent for the acceptance of the second king were not richly ornamented with gilt work & you would please to sent him again two beautiful volumns through

[page 4]

through my care perhaps. yet the little doubt is inevitable as if you do so, why your Excellency did not address in his name firstly & mark under the above line that care of me? & why I would not have part to be accepted myself? when your Excellency had alluded this work in your late letters to me. and there is no reason by which your Excellency would not send this printed work to me for happy & interesting perusal? We (myself & my younger brother the Second King) will wait upon your Excellency ~ decision how those two sets of those two & two books to be parted



Figure 4a. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 4 September 1857; p. 8 at left, p. 1 at right.

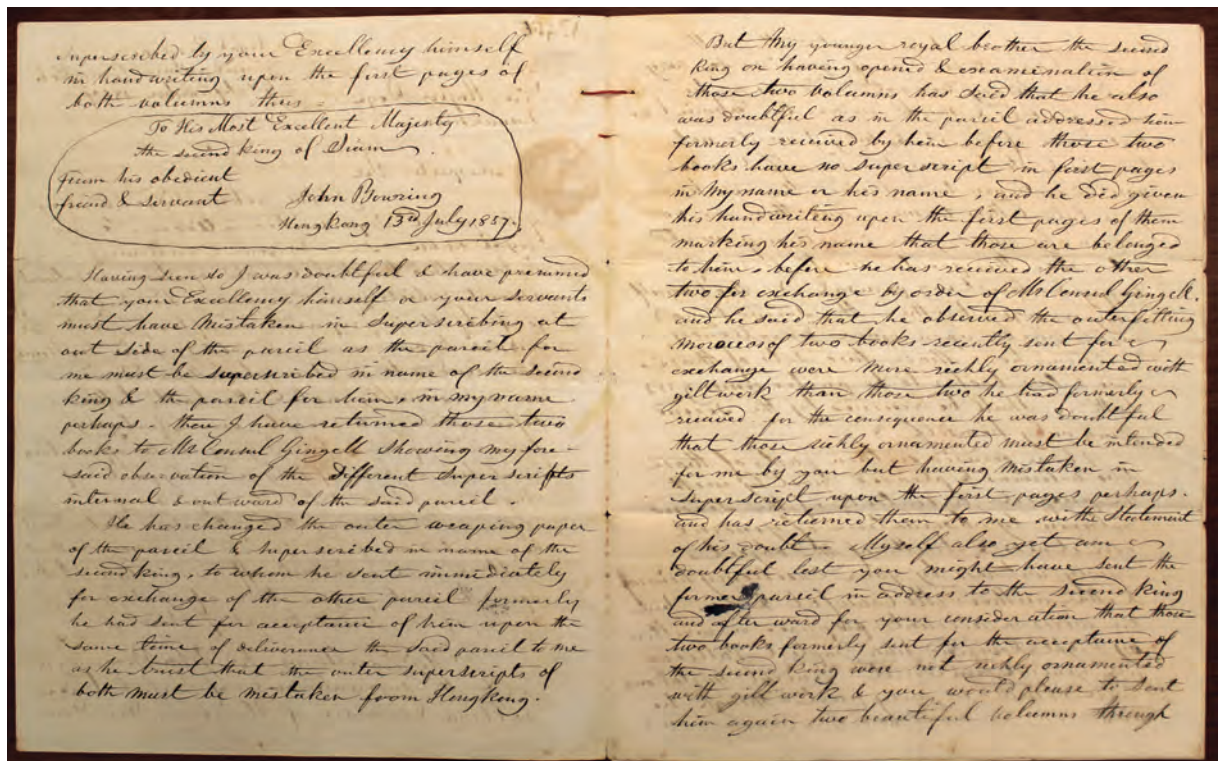


Figure 4b. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 4 September 1857; pp. 2-3.

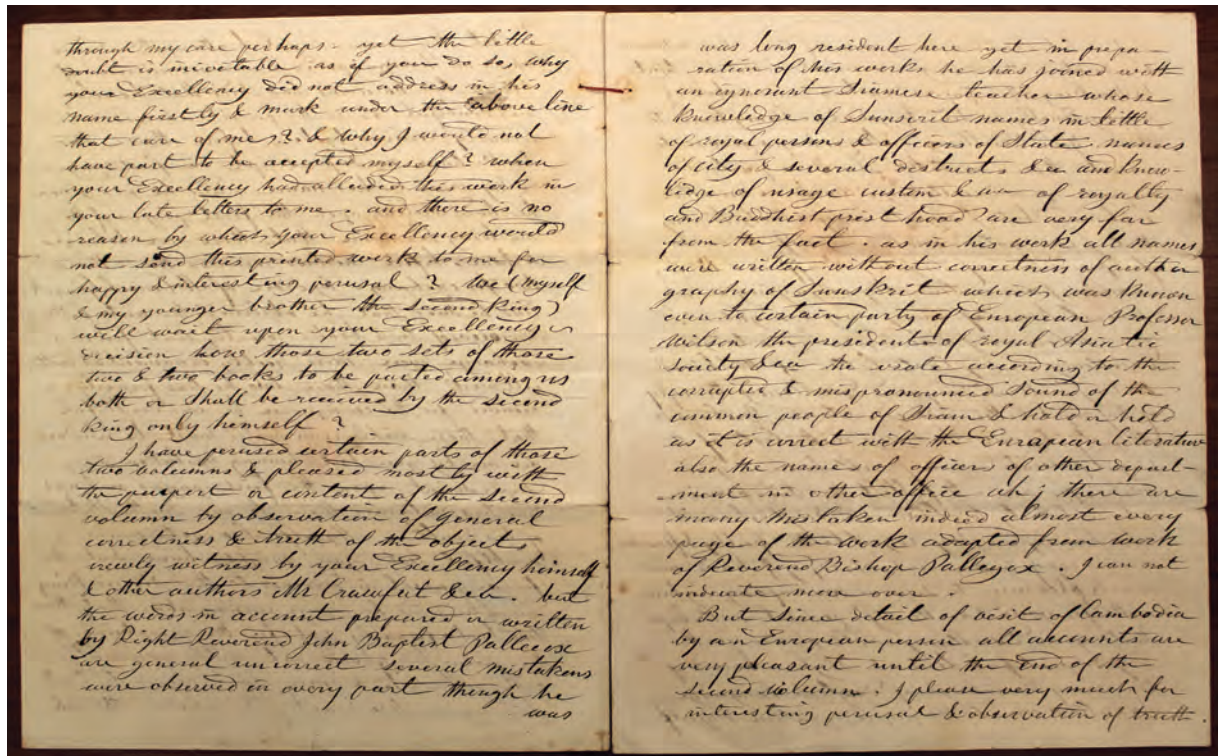


Figure 4c. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 4 September 1857; pp. 4-5.

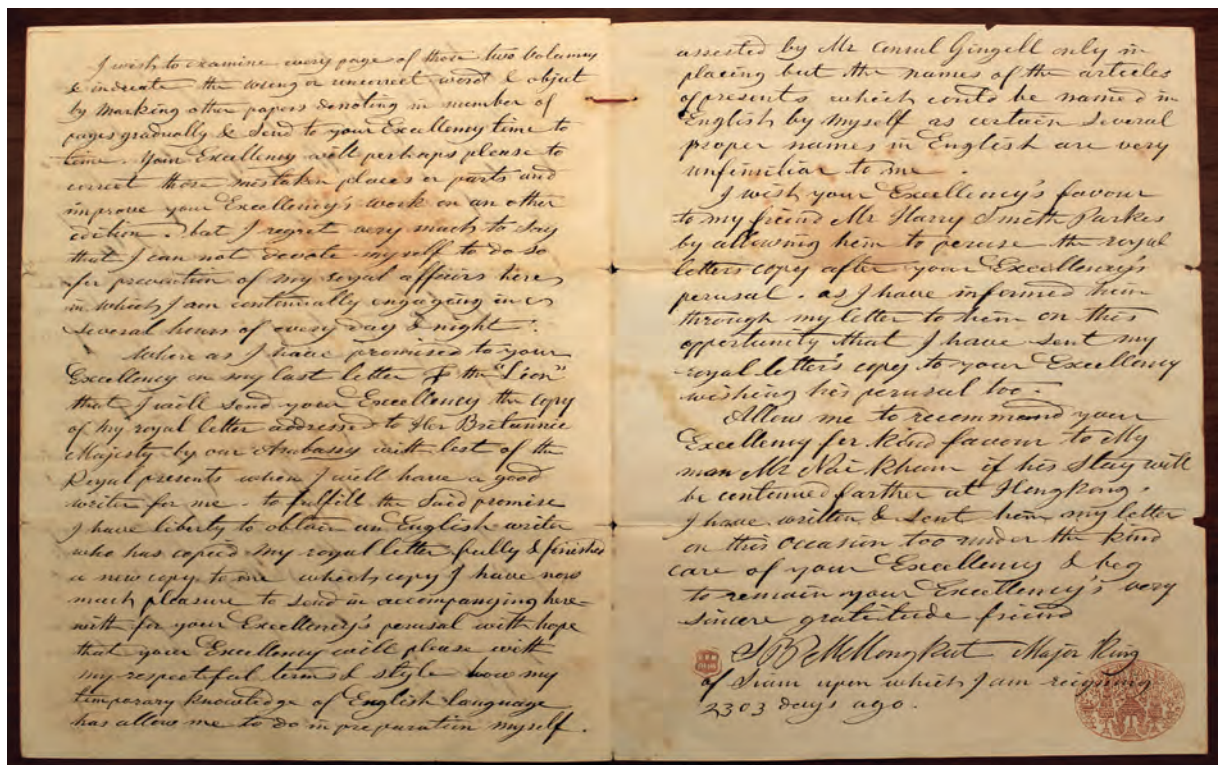


Figure 4d. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 4 September 1857; pp. 6-7.



Figure 4e. Detail of p. 1. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 4 September 1857..



Figure 4f. Seal of King Mongkut, from his 4 September 1857, letter to Sir John Bowring, p. 7. “Mongkut” means “crown,” and his seal (which he designed) depicts a Thai crown on a pedestal, with tiered umbrellas at each side, along with decorative motifs rising at the sides above pedestals with lotus-leaf bases, and with a burst of rays from the top of the crown’s spire. (See description and illustration in SLKR 1995:56.)



Figure 4g. Close-up with angled light, apparently showing embossed royal coat of arms of Great Britain. Though Thai embossed seals occur on other royal letters (see Figure 3e), one may speculate that in this case the paper used for this letter had been purchased from Britain pre-embossed with this seal.



Figure 4h. The wax attaching the strings tying together the pages of this letter displays what remains of a unique version of the “Major King of Siam” seal, different from the one stamped in ink on the same letter (approximately 15 x 20 mm wax remaining).

among us both or shall be received by the second king only himself?

I have perused certain parts of those two volumns & pleased mostly with the purport or content of the second volumn by observation of general correctness & truth of the object newly witness by your Excellency himself & other authors Mr Crawfut &eca. but the words in account prepared or written by Right Reverend John Baptist Palleux [?]¹² are general uncorrect several mistakens were observed in every part though he was

[page 5]

was long resident here yet in preparation of his works he has joined with an ignorant Siamese teacher whose knowledge of Sanscrit names in tittle of royal persons & officers of State names of city & several districts &ca and knowledge of usage custom &ca of royalty and Buddhist pristhood are very far from the fact. as in his work all names were written without correctness of author graphy of Sanskrit which was known even to certain party of European Professor Wilson¹³ the president of royal Asiatic Society &eca the he wrote according to the corrupted & mispronounced sound of the common people of Siam & hold or held as it is correct with the European literature also the names of officers of other department in other office [*illeg.*]; there are many mistaken indeed almost every page of the work adapted from work of Reverend Bishop Pallegox [*Pallegoix —Ed.*]. I can not indicate more over

But since detail of visit of Cambodia by an European person all accounts are very pleasant until the end of the Second volumn. I please very much for interesting perusal & observation of truth.

[page 6]

I wish to examine every page of those two volumns & indicate the wrong or incorrect word & object by marking other papers denoting in number of pages gradually & send to your Excellency time to time. Your Excellency will perhaps please to correct those mistaken places or parts and improve your Excellency's work on an other edition. but I regret very much to say that I can not devote myself to do so for prevention of my royal affairs here, in which I am continually engaging in ~ several hours of every day & night.

Where as I have promised to your Excellency in my last letter to the "Lion" that I will send your Excellency the copy of my royal letter addressed to Her Britannic Majesty by our Embassy with list of the Royal presents when I will have a good writer for me. to fulfill the said promise I have liberty to obtain an English writer who has copied my royal letter fully & finished a new copy to me which copy I have now much pleasure to send in accompanying herewith for your Excellency's perusal with hope that your Excellency will please with my respectful term & style how my temporary knowledge of English language has allow me to do in preparation myself.

[page 7]

¹² Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix (1805-1862).

¹³ Horace Hayman Wilson (1786-1860).

assisted by Mr Consul Gingell only in placing but the names of the articles of presents which could be named in English by myself as certain several proper names in English are very unfamiliar to me.

I wish your Excellency's favour to my friend Mr Harry Smith Parkes by allowing him to peruse the royal letters copy after your Excellency's perusal. as I have informed him through my letter to him on this opportunity that I have sent my royal letter's copy to your Excellency wishing his perusal too.

Allow me to recommend your Excellency for kind favour to My man Mr Nai Kham if his stay will be continued farther at Hongkong. I have written & sent him my letter on this occasion too under the kind care of your Excellency & beg to remain your Excellency's very sincere gratitude friend

SPPM Mongkut Major King of Siam upon which I am reigning 2303 days ago.

Document 5. King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 27 November 1858.

This letter is numbered “190 *manu regia*” (Latin: “190 in the King's hand”) in the sequence of King Mongkut's correspondence, thus apparently not the same sequence as prior correspondence within this set (see Documents 2 and 4). Possibly there is a different *manu regia* sequence, yet the handwriting on this letter matches that of the prior documents. The photograph of a handwritten copy of this letter, labeled “(Copy)” at the top of the first page, appears in the 6-volume set published by Chuanpit et al. 2005: vol. 1 pp. 590-593.

The letter consists of one sheet measuring 253 x 404 mm folded down the middle to form four pages, each measuring 253 x 202 mm, and an associated envelope (98 x 219 mm) also bearing the number 190. The first page, which has a green printed border, depicts at top left King Mongkut's standard seal, here in green (compare to Figure 4f, in red), and to the right of that one the red *ong lek* form of the Khmer script seal seen in Documents 2 and 4, with the *Ohm* prayer symbol. A border similar to the green border on page 1 is found on this letter's envelope flaps, where a variant in green of King Mongkut's standard seal has been placed (Figure 5c; see SLKR 1995: 56).

[from footer:]

To His Excellency Sir John Bowring LLD
the Governor of Victoria HongKong &ce &ce

No. 190
Manu regia

Royal residence Mahamondir
grand palace Bangkok
27th November 1858

Respected Sir

Your letters under the dates of 2nd & 4th February inst [*instant – Ed.*] have been reached my hand on 22nd & 23rd of the same month, of which letter I have the honor in acknowledging the receipt, but I beg to seek very kind pardon from your Excellency for my being silent so long as for many months with answer to you in due course of time as I was very busy or much engaged on our local affairs & other long ~ correspondence with other noble friends at ~ England who became acquainted with me through the medium of our noble Siamese embassy which were sent to pay our homage to Her Britannic Majesty on last year, the receipt of whom at London and several British colonies and very gracious treatment upon them of Her Britannic Majesty & Her Government were most satisfactory & praiseworthy than we have expected several hundred times indeed.

our Embassy were returned from England on March & have their honor of being present to the Emperor of the France & the Prince of Cairo too

[page 2]

We were mostly glad to have this honor of having directly friendship with the royalty and nobility in England which honor is not ever enjoyed by any monarchy in China & [*illeg.*] India. & our so gladness is not ever occurred to us even one before, our Embassy said that they thought they were entered to paradis in heaven.

According to your Excellency's instruction I have written to your Excellency dear son Edgar Bowring & enclosed your letter to him & sent him with some present through the care of our embassy. Your son has written me in answer declaring that his beloved wife was died he is unhappy. his letter has been reached my hand ~ before arrival of our Embassy, which letter I beg to enclose here with for your Excellencys inspection

Two books which you have ordered him to send me from England were sent to my chinese agent at Singapore who has forwarded to me & let me have received them after arrival of the ~ Siamese Embassy. and I have handed the former two book to my dear Royal cousin His Lordship Chauphya Srisuriyongse SPK¹⁴ ~ according to the late instruction from your Excellency.

Will your Excellency favour me to convey the information to my dear friends Mr & Mrs Parkes, that I have accorded their instruction & request have ordered our Embassy to visit home of Mrs Parkes & do their enquiry for

[page 3]

their honorary interview with the parents & kindred of Mrs Parkes there, and our Embassy have informed me that they have fulfilled my order & met with great festivity & respect at Mrs Parkes' home for which I beg to return many sincere

¹⁴ Krom Hluang Wongsāthirātsanit (1808-1871), พระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ พระองค์เจ้าฉนวน กรมหลวงวงศาธิราชสนิท.

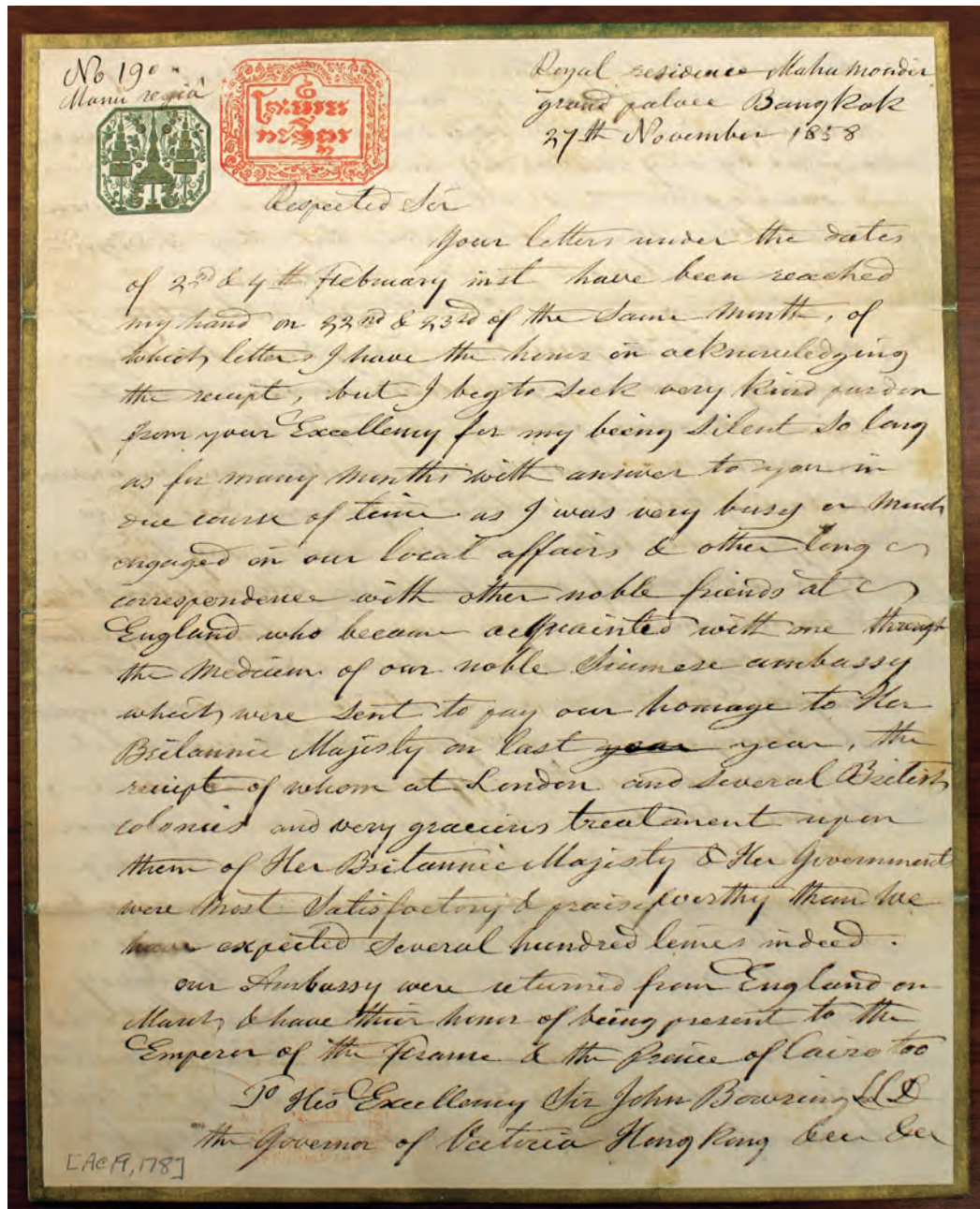


Figure 5a. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 27 November 1858; p. 1

thank to both of them for their good instruction and introduction.

Regarding the purpose of revision & correction of your two books I am very sorry for loss of the most amiable & favourable person Mr John Forrest who fell with dysantary on the month of February & became very ill on arrival of your Excellency's letter under the date of 4th February & has lost his life on 24th of the said month. Doctor Samuel R House is now living far from hence little less than 3 [?] miles. it should be great difficulty if he be ordered to call on me every day for that purpose.

Why Mr. Charles Bell now lives idle what he does now I do not know. he is

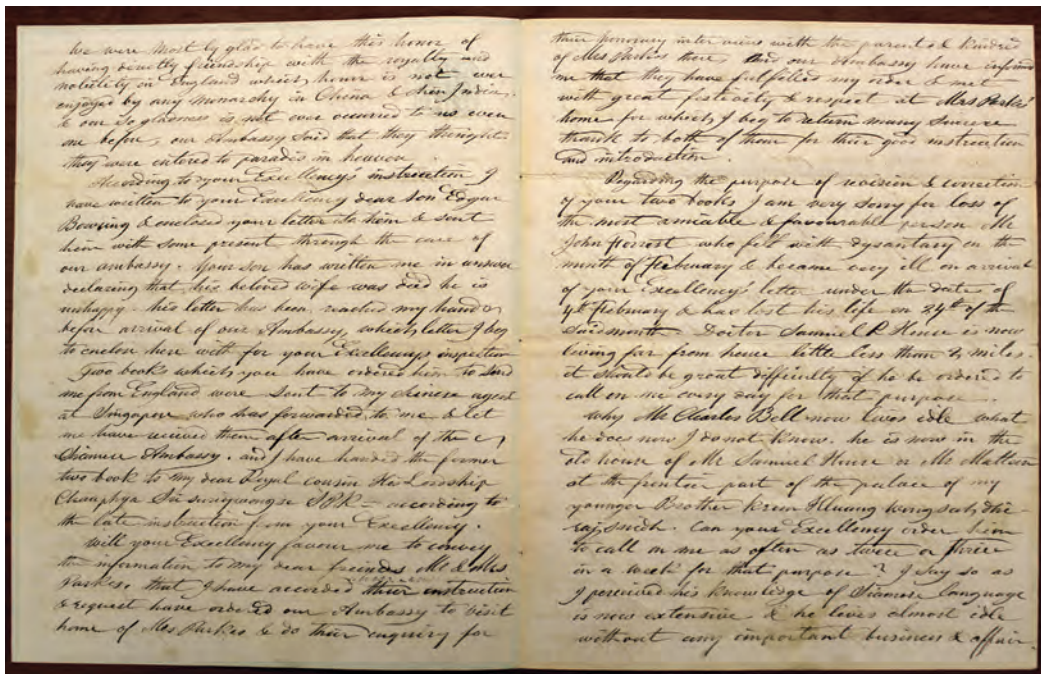


Figure 5b. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 27 November 1858; p. 2-3.

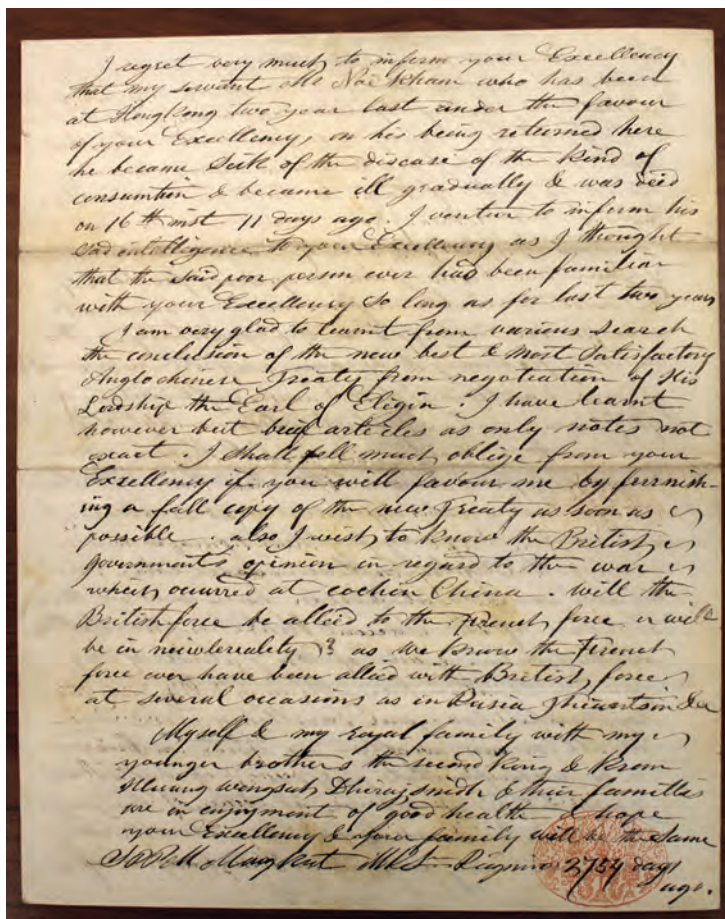


Figure 5c. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 27 November 1858; p. 4

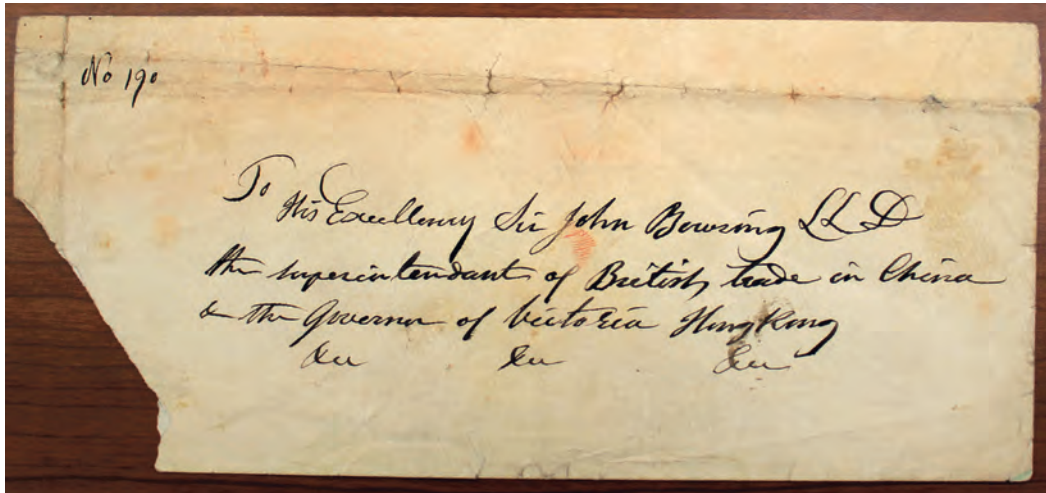


Figure 5d. Envelope for letter (front), 27 November 1858.



Figure 5e. Envelope for letter (back), 27 November 1858.

now in the old house of Mr Samuel House or Mr Mattern [?] at the frontier part of the palace of my younger Brother Krom Hluang Wongsahdhi rajsnidh.¹⁵ Can your Excellency order him to call on me as often as twice or thrice in a week for that purpose? I say so as I perceived his knowledge of Siamese language is now extensive & he lives almost idle without any important business & affair.

[page 4]

I regret very much to inform your Excellency that my servant Mr. Naikham who has been at Hong Kong two year last under the favour of your Excellency, on his being returned here he became sick of the disease of the kind of consumption & became ill gradually & was died on 16th inst [instant —Ed.] 11 days ago. I ventur to inform his

¹⁵ Somdet Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriwongse (1808-1883), สมเด็จพระเจ้าพระยาบรมมหาศรีสุริยวงศ์; SPK indicates the title “Samuha Phra Khlang”.

sad intelligence to your Excellency as I thought that the said poor person ever had been familiar with your Excellency so long as for last two years

I am very glad to learnt from various search the conclusion of the new best & most satisfactory Anglo chinese Treaty from negotiation of His Lordship the Earl of Eligin. I have learnt however but brief articles as only notes not exact. I shall fell much oblige from your Excellency if you will favour me by furnishing a full copy of the new Treaty as soon as ~ possible. also I wish to know the British ~ government's opinion in regard to the war ~ which occurred at cochin China. Will the British force be allied to the French force or will be in neiwleriality [?]? as we know the French force even have been allied with British force, at several occasions as in Rusia [*illeg.*] &ce

Myself & my royal family with my ~ younger brothers the second King & Krom Hluang Wongsah Dhirajsnidh¹⁶ & their families are in enjoyment of good health & hope your Excellency & your family will be the same.

SPPM Mongkut MR Siam~ Reigning 3754 days ago.

[Envelope text (see Figures 5d-5e):]

No 190

To His Excellency Sir John Bowring LLD
the superintendant of British trade in China
& the Governor of Victoria Hong Kong
&ce &ce &ce

Document 6. Printed New Year greeting, 1 January 1868, from King Mongkut.

Though treated here as two separate documents (this Document 6 and Document 7 next), these are on a single sheet, 188 mm high and 195 mm wide (unfolded), which is folded down the middle to form four pages (Figures 6a, 6b).

This document could have been folded such that this printed letter formed pages 1 (front “cover”) and 2, with the handwritten letter forming page 3 then a blank page 4 (“back cover”); or it could fold with the handwritten letter forming a “front cover” with the second page blank, then this printed greeting on the third and fourth pages.

At the top of the first page of the printed New Year greeting we see a blue variant of the horizontal oval seal comparable to others in this group that have the acronym “SPPMM” but in this case with the fuller name “SPPM Mongkut RS” (i.e., “Somdet

¹⁶ Krom Hluang Wongsāthirātsanit (1808-1871), พระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ พระองค์เจ้าจันทรม กรมหลวงวงศาธิราชสนิท.

Phra Poramenthra Maha Mongkut, *Rex Siamensium*”). This seal seems to follow the form of the name handwritten there: S. P. P. M. MONGKUT R S, a phrase seen many times in these documents. This same seal can be found in red alongside the signatures of King Mongkut at the foot of pages 2 and 4 in Document 7, but is not found in SLKR (1995).

The underlying printed document, here called Document 6, is dated in the text 1 January 1868, and constitutes a New Year greeting or address on two pages. This article apparently presents this original printed form of the greeting for the first time, though undoubtedly many other copies of this printed document were distributed. This 1 January 1868 letter does not appear within compendia of known English-language correspondence of King Mongkut. However, it appears that John Bowring, Edgar’s father, must have also received a copy, and sent it for publication in *The London and China Telegraph*. This newspaper (according to WorldCat OCLC records of library holdings¹⁷) was published in London “on arrival of the homeward mails from China Japan, Straits Settlements, & c.” The 13 March 1868 issue of this newspaper includes on page 132, under the heading “SIAM,” an article that begins:

We have been favoured by Sir John Bowring with a copy of the following congratulatory letter, or New Year’s address, sent by His Majesty the King of Siam to his foreign friends in Siam and elsewhere:

This is followed by a complete transcription of this same New Year printed greeting. Thus, though this New Year greeting does not appear in compendia of King Mongkut’s English-language correspondence, and though this 1868 newspaper is an obscure source, we can say that the printed letter illustrated here, from this set of papers in the Library of Congress, has previously been published. A surprising find, however, from the search for records of its publication, is that this same document is actually the source of long passages within the works of Anna Leonowens. Much of the wording in this letter actually appears in her 1870 publication, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court: Being Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok*. In that book (Leonowens 1870a: 262-263), this New Year 1868 text has been slightly modified and integrated into her story of the court, as an “address” distributed on the occasion of the previous new year, 1867. She also published the same excerpts in the April 1870 issue of *The Atlantic* (1870b: 404-405). Since Leonowens’ story of the court was set in 1867, she changes the “address” accordingly, thus whereas King Mongkut’s original printed letter states he had reigned “6,076” days, Leonowens counts “5,711”, transposing the King’s New Year greeting to a year (365 days) earlier. Leonowens also omits passages relating to the relationship between the European and the Siamese calendars, specifically on the role astronomical events have within each system. Nevertheless, it is clear that she has directly taken these passages of her book from a copy of King Mongkut’s original 1868 New Year greeting published here, and modified them for a different time and context.

¹⁷ Available at www.worldcat.org; see OCLC record 14340761.

[Handwritten in ink, above first printed line:] SPPM Mongkut RS
[page 1, printed text:]

S. P. P. M. MONGKUT,

Called in Siamese “ Phra-Chomklau chao-y uhua,” In Magadhi or language of Pali “ Siamikanam Maha Rajah,” In Latin “ Rex Siamensium,” In French “ Le Roi de Siam,” In English “ The King of Siam,” and in Malayan “ Raja Maha Pasah, &c. begs to present his respectful and regardful compliments and congratulations in happy lives during immediately last year, and wishes the continuing thereof during the commencing New Year, and ensuing and succeeding many years, to his foreign friends, both now in Siam: namely, the functionary and acting Consuls and consular officers of various distinguished nations in Treaty Power with Siam and certain foreign persons under our salary, in service in any manner here, and several Gentlemen and Ladies who are resident in Siam in various stations; namely, the Priests preachers of religion, Masters and Mistresses of schools, Workmen and Merchants, &c., and now abroad in various foreign countries and ports, who are our noble and common friends, acquainted either by ever having had correspondences mutually with us some time or ever had friendly personal interview with us some time, at a where and remaining in our friendly remembrance or mutual remembrance, and whosoever are in service to us as our Consuls, Vice-consuls and consular assistants, in various foreign ports. Let them know our remembrance and good wishes toward them all. Where as this very day is known generally in Europe as the 1st day of the month of January, in Anno Christi 1868, the first day of the New Year which is known by us in our native astronomical system as the day of Sdasiti sonkrant or Daxin Basu sonkrant, i.e. the day in which the sun crosses that part of Ecliptic in which part the sun’s diameter was largest for the sun being lowest or nearest to the earth on that very day in the year; so that this very day was remarked by us in like manner of the 1st of January of Europeans, al-

[page 2, printed text:]

ways corresponding to the day of the Sdasiti son-krant or Daxin Basu sonkrant to us. Though we are not christians the forenamed King was glad to arrive this day in his valued life, as being the 23,085th day of his age, during which he was aged 63 years and three months, and being the 6067th day of his reign [*sic, i.e. 6076th, see below —Ed.*] during which he reigned upon his kingdom 16 years and 8 months up to the current month. In like manner he was very glad to see & know and hope for all his Royal Family, kindred and friends of both native and foreign, living near and far to him had arrived to this very remarkable anniversary of the commencement of Solar Year in Anno 1868, which is in Siamese astronomical system the year 4,969th of the Kaliyug, which will be added on being elapsed of 48 days hereafter and being of the Chinindial civil Era 1229 which will be added to be 1230 on being elapsed of 103 days hereafter. In their all being healthy and well living like himself, he begs to

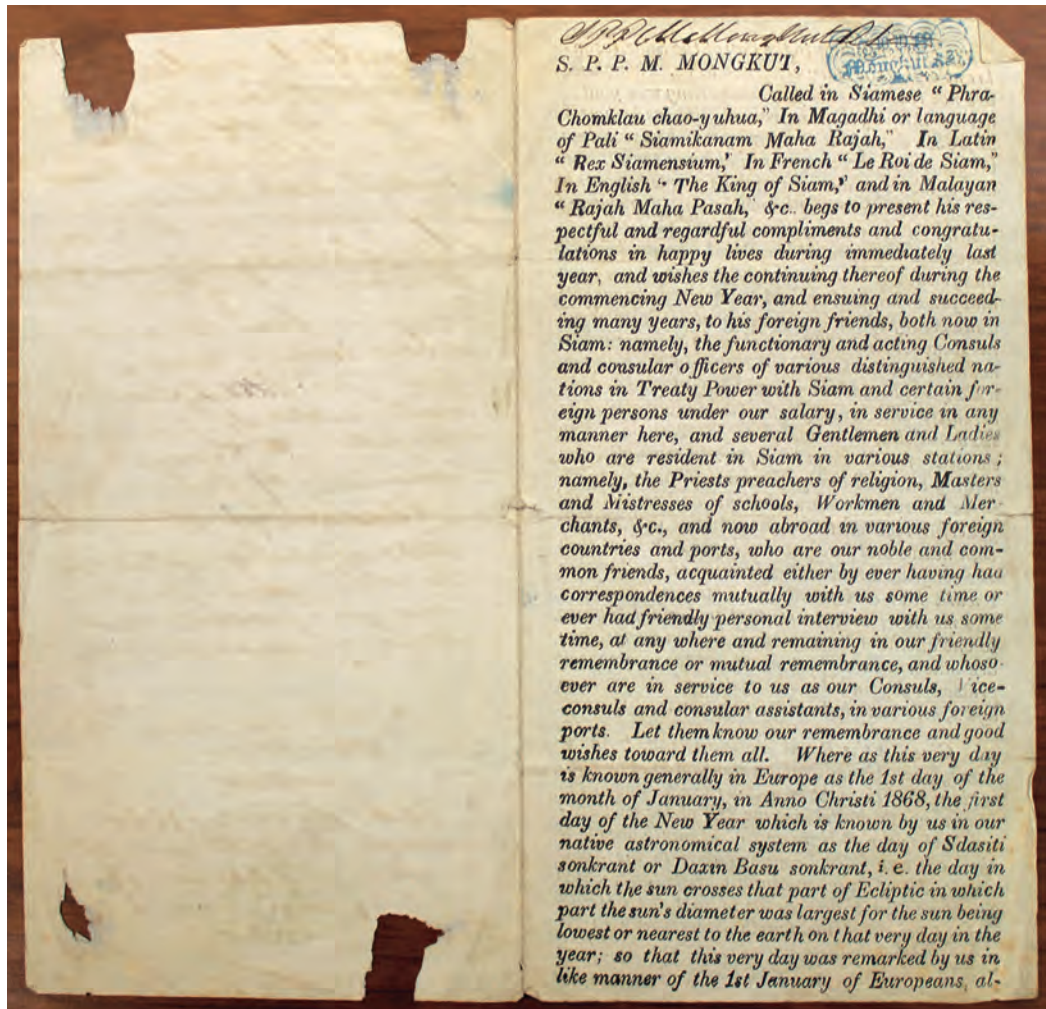


Figure 6a. Printed New Year greeting, unfolded; left side blank, beginning of printed New Year greeting at right.

express his royal congratulations and respect and graceful regards to all his kindred and friends both native and foreign, and hopes to receive such the congratulation and expression of good wishes toward him and members of his family in very like manner ; as he trusts that the amity & grace to one another of every one human beings who are innocent, is a great merit, and is righteous & praiseworthy in religious system of all civil religion, and best civilized laws and morality, &c.

Given at the Royal Audience Hall, “Anant Samagome,” Grand Palace Bangkok, on the Wednesday, the 7th night of waxing moon; age of the Lunar month of Prissia, the 2nd of the cold season in the year of Hare or Rabbit, ninth decade of the local era 1229 ; corresponding to the Solar date of 1st of January, Anno Christi 1868, which may be called 18th year or in fact the 6,076th day of reign, of the fourth Sovereignty in the present royal dynasty upon the Siamese Kingdom.

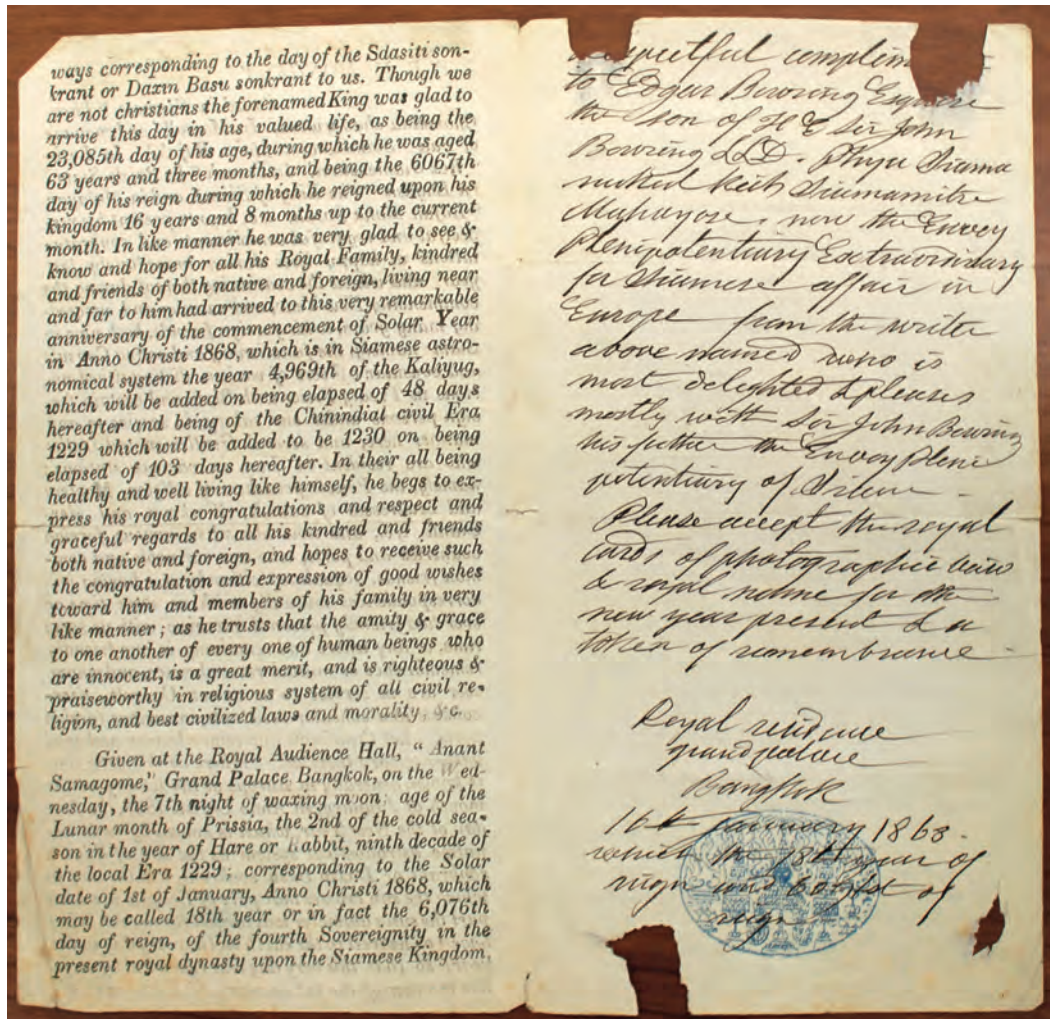


Figure 6b. Reverse side of pages in Figure 6a: printed New Year greeting, unfolded. At left, second page of printed New Year greeting; at right, handwritten letter, King Mongkut to E. Bowring, 16 January 1868, with seal.

Document 7. King Mongkut to Edgar Bowring, 16 January 1868, handwritten on printed New Year greeting dated 1 January 1868.

On this one-page letter of 16 January, handwritten on the printed document dated 1 January that year, King Mongkut has placed his standard seal (see illustration and explanation in SLKR 1995: 56) at the signature. This same standard seal can be seen on later documents in Figure 8b and in the letter originally published by Bowring in 1857 (Figure 10c). As noted with Document 6, there is also a seal at the handwritten note "SPPM Mongkut RS" there. It is unclear whether, on copies of the purely printed document distributed (that did not have any handwriting) any seal would have been placed.

Respectful compliments to Edgar Bowring Esquire the son of H.E. Sir John Bowring LLD. Phya Siamanukul Kith Siamamitre Mahayose,¹⁸ now the Envoy Plenipotentiary Extraordinary for Siamese affair in Europe from the writer above named who is most delighted & pleases mostly with Sir John Bowring his father the Envoy Plenipotentiary of Siam.

Please accept the royal cards of photographic [*illeg.*] & royal name for the new year present & a token of remembrance.

Royal residence
grand palace
Bangkok
16th January 1868
which the 18th year of reign and [*illeg.*] of reign

Document 8. King Mongkut to Edgar A. Bowring, 28 May 1868.

This document consists of a single sheet, 138 mm x 185 mm (unfolded), folded down the middle to form four pages (see Figures 8a, 8b).

Page 1 bears an interesting square variation of the same *ong lek* red seal that we have seen on earlier documents in rectangular form, with the same Khmer script and the *Ohm* symbol, though shown here in square form (SLKR 1995: 147-148). (See discussion above, with Document 2.) The red seals with the acronym “SPPM Mongkut RS” (i.e., Somdet Phra Poramenthra Maha Mongkut, *Rex Siamensium*) – the phrase appearing on King Mongkut’s portrait on p. 2 above) is seen at the foot of pages 3 and 4 in this document. This seal is not found in SLKR (1995). At his signature (page 4), we find King Mongkut’s standard seal (SLKR 1995: 56).

The writing avoids a triangular space at the top left of page 1, which is an embossed area of the paper itself thus on the top right of the reverse side (page 2), also avoided for writing. This embossing (seen with angled lighting in Figure 8c), possibly simply a decorative embossing pre-printed on imported paper, is of unknown provenance or significance.

¹⁸ Siamese title given to Sir John Bowring: Phraya Siamanukulkiy Siammitmahayot, พระยาสยามานุกุลกิจ สยามมิตรมหายศ.

Royal residence
grand palace
Bangkok Siam
28th May 1868

To Honorable Edgar A Bowring Companion of the most honorable order of the Bath
&cc

69 Malborunt Terrace
Hyde Park London

the son of His Excellency Sir John Bowring LLDe & FRS &cc now entitled in
Siamese Significant title of Phya Siamanukul Kitch Siammitre Mahayose¹⁹ the
Envoy Plenipotentiary of Siam in charge of Siamese affairs in Europe.

[page 2]

My Dear Edga Bowring,

I have the honor to aknowledge the receipt of your letter under the date of
Malborunt Terrace Hyde Park London March 13th 1868 reached my hand on 25th

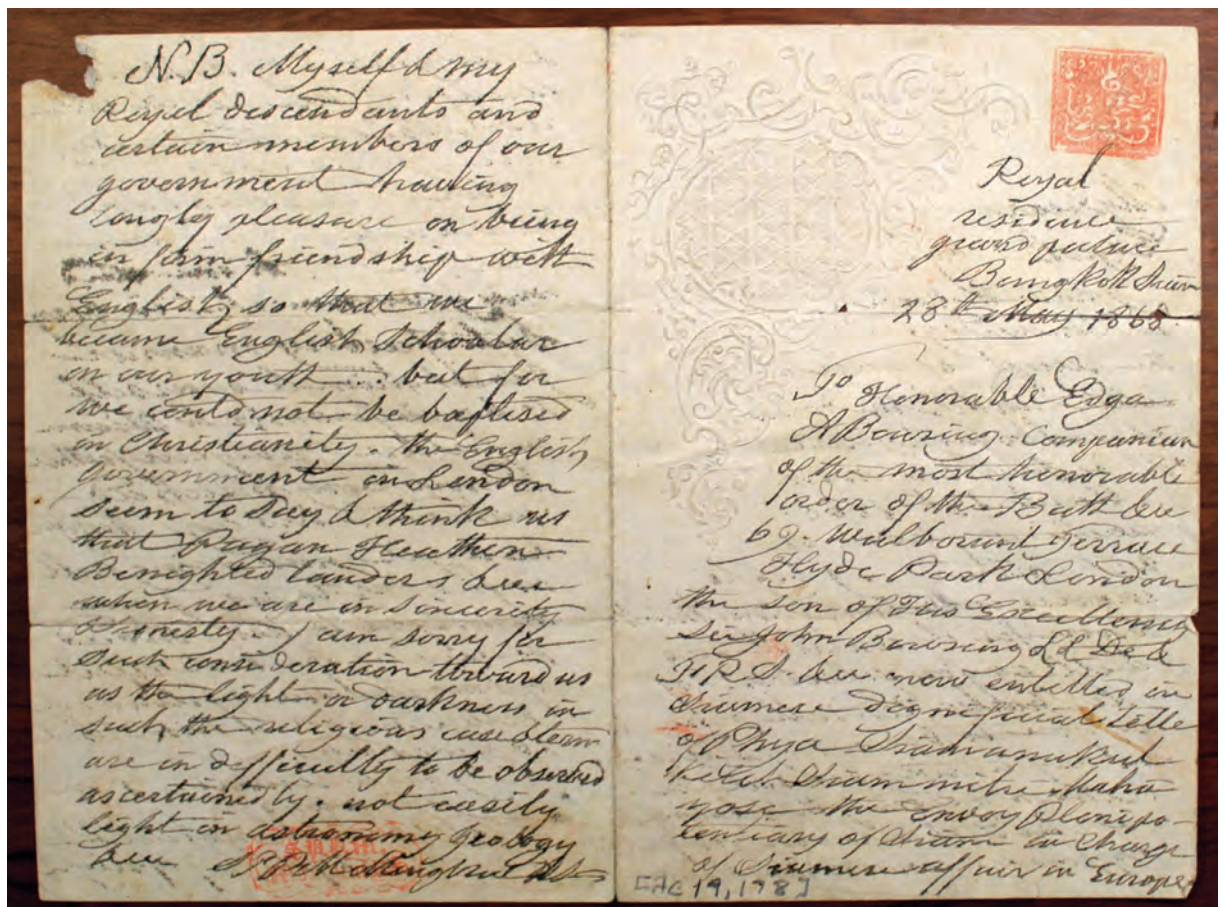


Figure 8a. Letter, King Mongkut to Edgar A. Bowring, 28 May 1868 (p. 4 at left; p. 1 at right forming cover-sheet of 4-page letter, folded at center).

¹⁹ Phraya Siamanulkij Siammitrmahayot, พระยาสยามานุกุลกิจ สยามิตรมหายศ.

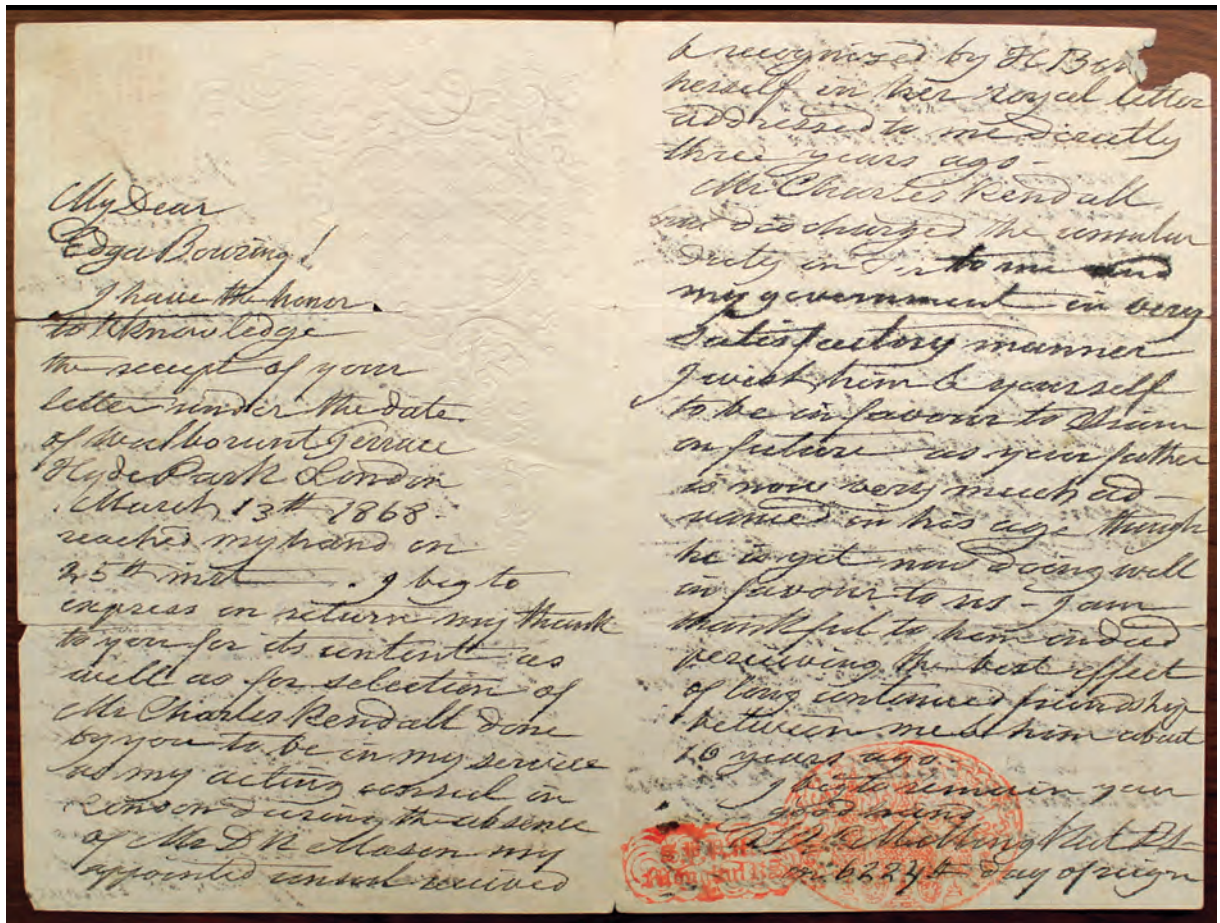


Figure 8b. Reverse side of sheet seen in Figure 8a. Letter, King Mongkut to Edgar A. Bowring, 28 May 1868, pp. 2-3.

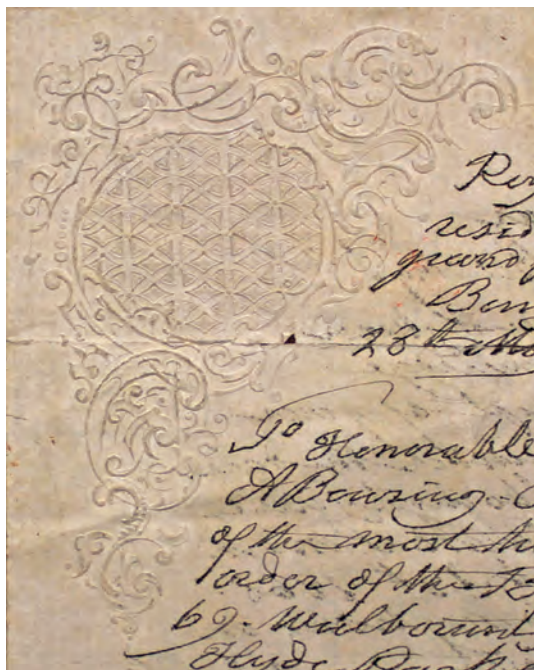


Figure 8c. Detail (photographed with angled light) of embossing at top left of page 1 (reversed on reverse side of page, at top right of page 2).

inst. [*instant —Ed.*] I beg to express on return my thank to you for its content as well as for selection of Mr Charles Kendall [?] done by you to be in my service as my acting consul in London during the absence of Mr DR Mason my appointed consul received

[page 3]

& recognized by HBM²⁰ herself in her royal letter addressed to me directly three years ago.

Mr. Charles Kendall has [?] discharged the consular duty in [*illeg.*] to me and my government in very satisfactory manner I wish him & yourself to be in favour to Siam on future as your father is now very much advanced in his age though he is yet now doing well in favour to us. I am thankful to him indeed perceiving the best effect of long continued friendship between me & him about 16 years ago.

I beg to remain your good friend.

SPPM Mongkut RS

on 6224th day of reign

[page 4]

N.B. Myself & my Royal descendants and certain members of our government having longly pleasure on being in firm friendship with English so that we became English scholar in our youth. but for we could not be baptized in Christianity. The English government in London seem to say & think us that Pagan Heathen Benighted Land as &ce [?] when we are in sincerity & honesty. I am sorry for such consideration toward us as the light or darkness in such the religious case & term [?] [*custom? —Ed.*] are in difficulty to be observed ascertained by. not easily light in astronomy, geology &ce.

SPPM Mongkut RS

Document 9. Undated letter fragment, with seal of King Mongkut: [King Mongkut] to Edgar A. Bowring.

This letter fragment, measuring 108 mm x 129 mm, is also part of the collection purchased by the Library of Congress in 1985. Its remaining text is brief:

To Edgar A Bowring Esquire
Board of Trade,
Whitehall
London

²⁰ M or Majesty (Her Britannic Majesty); corner of page torn/missing.



Figure 9a. Undated letter fragment addressed to Edgar A. Bowring.

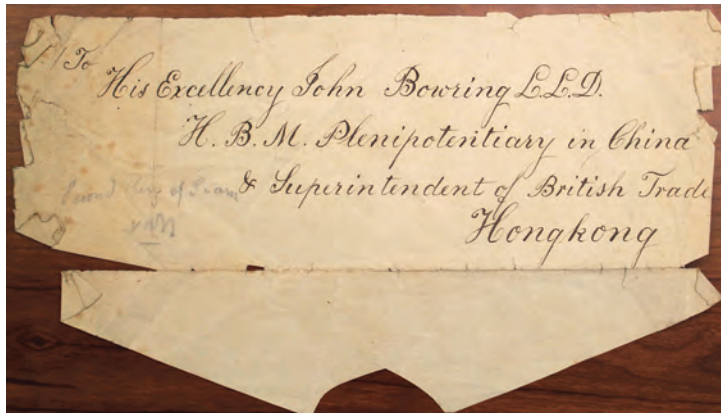


Figure 9b. Loose envelope, undated. Reverse side is blank.

[missing] son of His Excellency Sir John
[Bo]wring LL.D. the Governor of
[Vi]ctoria Hong Kong in China.

Below this remaining English text, the fragmentary Thai text seems to repeat the information in the English above, referring in the first line to “[missing] Edgar Bowring” while the truncated words on the second and third lines are probably “John” and “London.”

This letter’s English text is not only apparently in the handwriting of King Mongkut, but also has his standard seal in white at the top left of the fragmentary page. The seal itself, though here entirely in white, has the same pattern as the green-on-white version seen for example in letter no. 190 dated 27 November 1858, both at top left on the first page of that letter and on the back of the envelope (Figures 5a and 5e).

Addendum. Envelope.

Finally, there is another item in this collection, a loose envelope, undated (figure 9b), measuring (with flap unopened) 77 mm x 211 mm. A penciled note on the envelope (“Second King of Siam”) may not be original; yet the ink writing does resemble that of Phra Pinklao. It is unlikely this envelope enclosed any document in this set. Of the five letters to Sir John Bowring, Document 3 and 5 already have matching envelopes. The height of this envelope (77 mm) is too small for the “maximum folded height” (i.e. at largest fold) of Documents 1 (which folded to 81 mm) or 3 (to 81 cm, and with matching envelope) from Phra Pinklao. Document 2 seems to have a maximum folded height of 67 mm and would fit. The many creases in Document 4 make it difficult to determine a clear maximum original folded height but it seems to have been folded in thirds (to approx. 83 mm), thus would not fit. Documents 2 and 4 are enumerated letters, comparable to Document 5, thus by comparison with Document 5 we might expect the letter’s number also to be placed on the envelope (see Figure 5d); this envelope has none. Most likely this envelope enclosed a letter from Phra Pinklao that is now lost.

To His Excellency John Bowring L.L.D.
 H.B.M. Plenipotentiary in China
 & Superintendent of British Trade
 Hongkong

This concludes the description of the previously unpublished (or minimally published) manuscripts at the Library of Congress, a total of eight handwritten letters, one of which is associated with the pre-printed New Year greeting of 1868.

As noted above, Sir John Bowring also published in 1857 as fold-out color lithographs two royal letters sent to him: 27 March 1855 from King Mongkut (Bowring 1857, vol. 1, p. 1); and 4 April 1855 from Phra Pinklao (*ibid*, vol. 2, p. 1). Transcriptions and illustrations of these, from the 1857 originals in the Joseph F. Cullman 3rd Library of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution, are included here (Documents 10 and 11).

The similarity of seals on these two lithographs, published in 1857, to the seals seen on the recently found documents published here, has been noted at several points above. This article primarily aims to present the Library of Congress documents, including several little-known royal seals found on them. Yet two more seals originally published by Bowring in 1857, and not included in the SLKR (1995) compendium of Chakri dynasty seals, also do not appear in any of the newly found Library of Congress documents. These can both be seen in Document 10. Specifically, (1) the lozenge-shaped seal with the English words “Sovereign of Siam &c” (seen below the Khmer script seal at top right of page 1, and at the “P.S.” on page 3); and (2) the Chinese-language seal²¹

²¹ Thanks are due to Professor Charnvit Kasetsiri who for this paper kindly transcribed the text on the Chinese seal 鄭明 as *Zheng Ming* (in Mandarin) or *Tae Meng* (in Thai-Chinese Taechiu); that is, King Mongkut’s name and *sae* (surname).

at left at the foot of page 3, which is quite different in format from any of the Chinese script seals discussed in SLKR (1995: 36-41, 58-59).

The location and measurements of the original letters illustrated in Bowring's 1857 volume are unknown. The two letters below were illustrated, not transcribed. Bowring's transcriptions of royal correspondence begin in his Appendix G with the next enumerated letter, no. 38 dated 28 March 1855 (which in fact refers to this letter no. 37) – so readers are encouraged to take up the story again from there.

Document 10. King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 27 March 1855.

The color lithograph transcribed and reproduced here (from an 1857 original in the Smithsonian's Cullman library) was originally published in Bowring (1857, vol. 1, p. 1).

No 37.

[from footer:]

To His Excellency Sir John Bowring
Right D^r of Laws &c &c &c

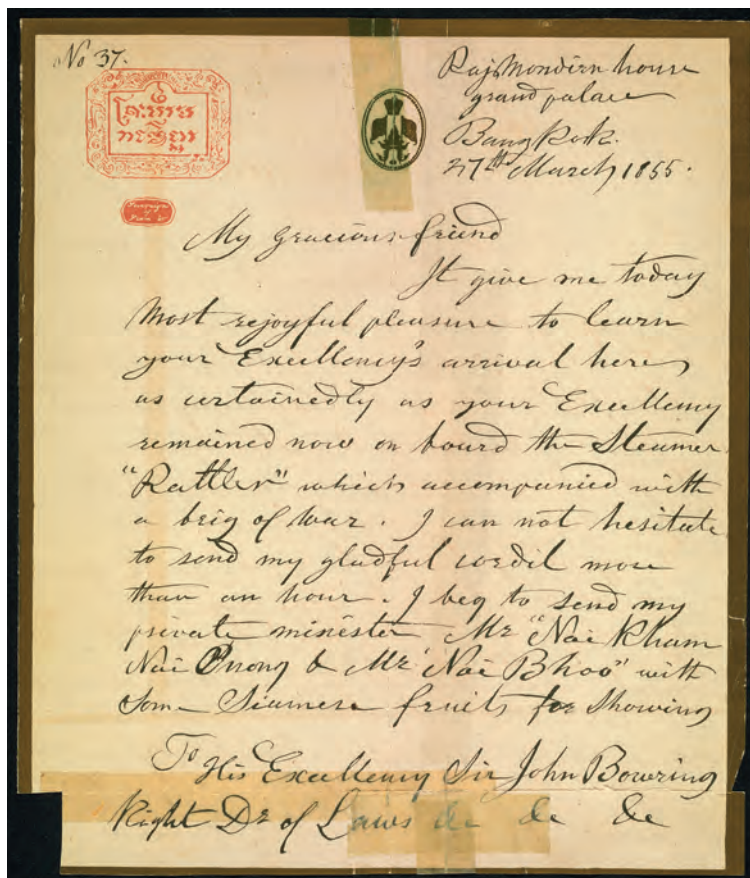


Figure 10a. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 27 March 1855, p. 1.

Rajmondin house
grand palace
Bangkok
27th March 1855.

My Gracious friend

It give me today most rejoyful pleasure to learn your Excellency's arrival here, as certainly as your Excellency remained now on board the Steamer "Rattler" which accompanied with a brig of war. I can not hesitate to sent my gladful cordil more than an hour. I beg to send my private minister Mr. "Nai Kham Nai Pnong & Mr 'Nai Bhoo'" with some Siamese friends for showing
[page 2]

showing of my first respect & expressing of my greatest joy, that I will have now personal entertainment with your Excellency in both publicly & privily as well as very intimate friend during your Excellency's staying here, when our officers of State have communicated with your Excellency according to Siamese custom.

Please enter to Park nam as soon as I have ordered the high Supreme officer of the apartment of foreign affair, to get down today to "Park nam" where your

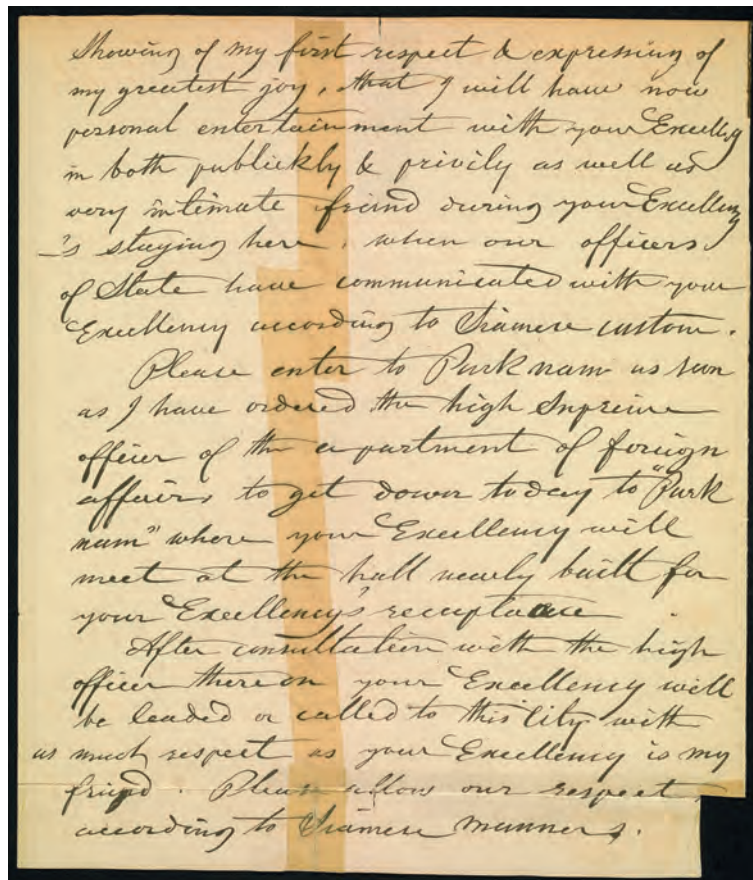


Figure 10b. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 27 March 1855, p. 2.

Excellency will meet at the hall newly built for your Excellency's reception.

After consultation with the high officer there on your Excellency will be led or called to this City with as much respect as your Excellency is my friend. Please allow our respect according to Siamese manners.

[page 3]

your Excellency's residence here was already prepared. we are longly already for acceptance of your Excellency.

I remain your Excellency's faithful friend

SPPM Mongkut
the King of Siam

P.S. I have just returned from old city Ayudia of Siam 15 days ago with the beautiful she Elephant which your Excellency will witness here on your Excellency's arrival.

SPPM Mongkut the King.

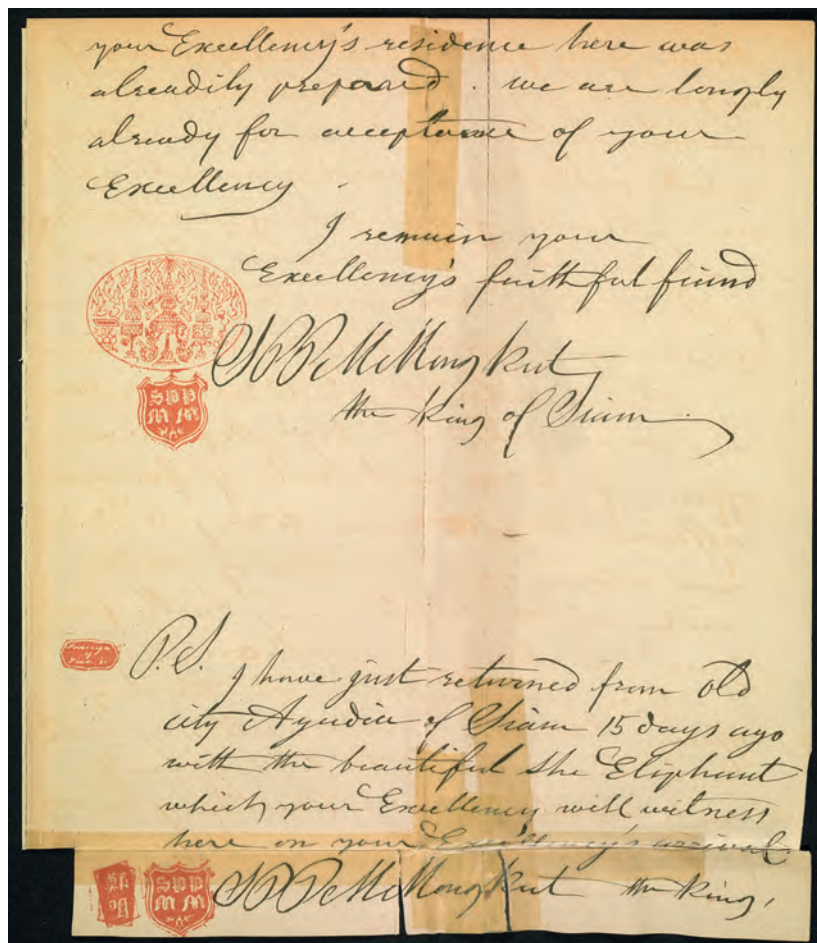


Figure 10c. Letter, King Mongkut to Sir John Bowring, 27 March 1855, p. 3.

Document 11. Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring, 4 April 1855.

The color lithograph transcribed and reproduced here (from an 1857 original in the Smithsonian's Cullman library) was originally published in Bowring (1857, vol. 2, p. 1).

To His Excellency Sir John Bowring
Governor of Hongkong Minister Plenipotentiary to the Empire of China &c. &c.

Sir,

It gives me great pleasure to hear of your Excellency's arrival in Siam as the representative of your most gracious Sovereign Queen Vitoria. It will afford me great pleasure to meet and welcome you personally to Siam. In the mean time I beg your acceptance of a few Siamese fruits, bread, Cake &c, with the assurance of my high respect

I remain Sir

Your faithfully

S. Pinklaw chau yu hua,

Second King of Siam &c,

Palace of Second King

April 4th, 1855

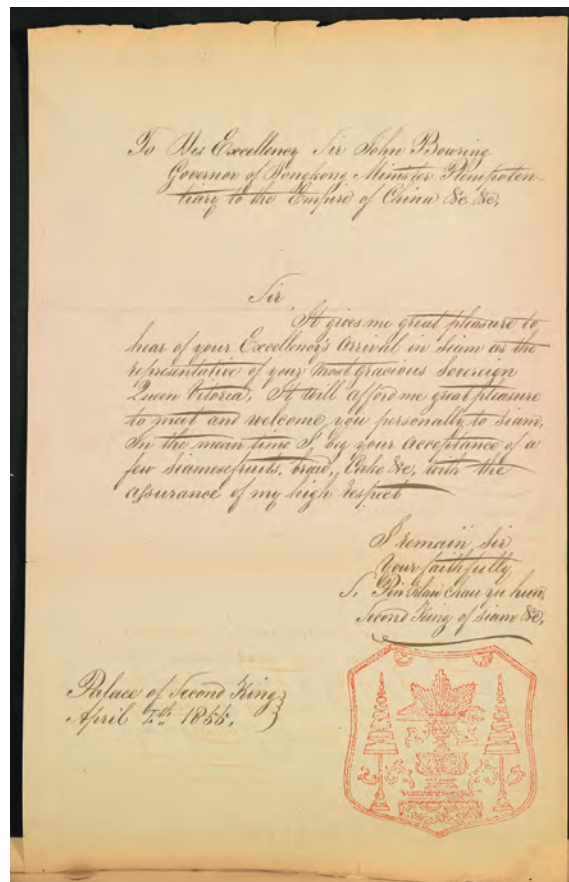


Figure 11. Letter, Phra Pinklao to Sir John Bowring, 4 April 1855.

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