The Siamese Wars with Malacca
During the Reign of Muzaffar Shah
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The object of this paper is to collate the information on two Siamese campaigns against Malacca during the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Shah, who ruled from about 1445 to 1458 A.D., from the accounts given in the Siamese chronicle, the Pongsawadan of Luang Prasoet and the Malay annals, the Sejarah Melayu. It should be read in conjunction with pp. 12-13 of Dr. Linehan’s History of Pahang (1).

The Pongsawadan of Luang Prasoet was compiled in 1680 and has been shown by W. A. H. Wood (2) to be reliable in its chronology. It should therefore help to fix some of the dates in Malayan history. Its era, the Chulasakaraj, begins from 640 A.D. approximately.

First Campaign (1445)

The Pongsawadan of Luang Prasoet (3) states:
“In 806, the year of the rat, the king suppressed the contending factions, and erected a camp at Pathai Khasem, and after having made 120,000 prisoners of wars, the army returned.”

Commenting on the above translations, Wood remarks in (2):
“The original version reads: สมเด็จพระเจ้าตากสิน พระยาแค้น
does not mean “contending factions”, but is the corruption of the name of a place. If the reference is to internal disputes, how could 120,000 prisoners be taken? On the other hand, the histories of neighbouring countries supply no clue.... This is the most obscure passage in the whole document.”

The same writer on page 83 of (4) says:
“In 1444, King Boromaraja II was engaged in an expedition, concerning which the true facts are not known. The earliest history, Luang Prasoet’s, written in 1680, says—‘In that year, the king went to Prab Pak and made his camp at Pat’ai K’asem. At that time he took 120,000 prisoners. The royal army then returned.’

"The later editors have assumed that this was another war with Chiangmai, and have inserted "Chiangmai" instead of "Prab P'ak". Chiangmai history is silent about any such expedition. . . . .

"Prab P'ak" may mean "to subdue the confederates", but this seems a meaningless phrase. Probably "Prab P'ak" is the corruption of the name of some place which cannot now be identified."

In the Séjarah Melayu, the first event recorded for the reign of Muzaffar Shah was a Siamese attack on Malacca overland by way of Pahang. The accepted date for Muzaffar Shah's accession is 1445 or 1446 A.D., sufficiently near the date given in the Pongsawadan of Luang Prasoe for the Siamese expedition to Prab P'ak. (806 Chula era = 1445 A.D.). I therefore suggest that Prab P'ak is the base, perhaps in Pahang from which the Siamese launched their invasion on Malacca, and that Pathai Khasem is the scene of the principle engagement. Perhaps "Prab P'ak" stands for "Pura Pahang" or else for "Paka" in Trengganu. "Pathai Khasem" appears to be a Malay name (= Pantai Kasim?). Its association with "Prab P'ak" strengthens the probability that the latter place is also in a Malay-speaking area.

The account of the campaign as given in the Séjarah Melayu (5, page 93) is as follows:

"From former times, the kingdom of Siam was known as Shahru'n-nuwi (= Ayuthia), and all the kings of the east were subject to him. The king's name was Bubunnya (? = Boromaraja II). When it became known in Siam that Malacca was an important state, but not subject to him, King Bubunnya sent an embassy to Malacca to demand letters of submission. But Sultan Muzaffar Shah would not submit; the king of Siam was very angry and prepared to attack Malacca. His general, Okya Chakra¹, headed a great army. It was reported to Sultan Muzaffar Shah that the king of Siam was sending his general, Okya Chakra with a very large force, moving overland to the hinterland of Pahang."

Here follows a description of Malacca's preparations, and of Tun Perak's justification of the Klang levies' bringing their womenfolk to the wars. The narrative then continues:

¹ usually transliterated "awi", may be better rendered "oya", which is nearer the Siamese form "okya". "Okya Chakra" is an official title and not a proper name. "Okya" is the designation for ministers of highest rank; "cakri" one of the ministerial offices. See H. G. Quatrich Wales, (6, page 22).
"The forces of Siam came and fought against those of Malacca. After a long struggle, many of the king of Siam's troops were killed, but Malacca was not defeated by Siam. The Siamese retreated; and while they were on the march, all the rotans they had used for tying up their baggage, they abandoned up-river from Muar; and the rotans took root and are still there, so the place is called Rotan Siam. The embers of the wooden fittings sprouted and are still to be seen in the Muar valley; and all the Siamese tripod, relics of their cooking, sprouted and are still there. After the Siamese had left, the defence force was dispersed."

It remains to identify the "Pathai.Khasem" of the Siamese account. From the Sejarah Melayu, it appears that the main engagement took place near Muar. Two miles to the south-east of Muar, there is a stream known as Parit Kasim. Perhaps this is the "Khasem" referred to and "Pathai" = Malay "pantai"? I have not been able to locate Rotan Siam.

**Second Campaign (1456)**

The Ponsawadan of Luang Prasoet tells us:
"In 817, the year of the pig, the king prepared an army to conquer Malacca."

Wood, in (3), p. 88 adds:
"The town was captured, but subsequent events go to show that Siamese control was not effective for long."

This attack was launched during the reign of the Siamese king Boroma Trailokanat. The account in the Søjarah Melayu is as follows, (5, p. 96):
"Some time later, the Siamese came to attack Malacca. The name of their general was Okya Tejo. The news reached Malacca and Sultan Muzaffar Shah ordered the Bëndahara Paduka Raja to prepare to expel the Siamese, so Sri Bijadiraja and all the captains were put under the command of the Bëndahara Paduka Raja. When they were prepared, the Bëndahara Paduka Raja went out to expel the Siamese with Sri Bijadiraja and many warriors.

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2 Sir Richard Winstedt remarks: "perhaps Parit Kasim is a corruption of some older name, as Kasim is a Muslim name, unlikely to have been used in 1446 A.D." [But it may be of interest to note that before his accession, Muzaffar Shah was known as Raja Kasim (5, page 92) (G.E.M.)]

3 (5) has "Awi Dichu". For the rendering "Okya Tejo" cf. Gerini (7, page 645) where another Siamese commander of that title is mentioned. "Okya Tejo" seems to mean "Army Commander". See H. G. Quaritch Wales (8, pages 141-2).
“Now Sri Bajadiraja had a son, named Tun Omar, who was very brave, but eccentric in his behaviour. Tun Omar was sent out by the Béndahara Paduka Raja to scout; he took a small boat, which bobbed about in the sea. When he came upon the Siamese fleet, he forthwith attacked and two or three of the Siamese vessels were worsted. He sailed right through their fleet and attacked other of their vessels, and again worsted two or three of them; then Tun Omar returned. “After it had got dark, Okya Tejo advanced. The Béndahara Paduka Raja then attached burning torches to the mangroves and other sea-shore trees. When the Siamese saw these innumerable fires, their captains said: “The Malays have so many war vessels you can’t count them; if they attack, what is it going to be like for us? We didn’t even defeat that one boat of theirs this afternoon.” So Okya Tejo said: “Yes, it’s just as you say; we had better retire.” So the Siamese retreated.

“It was the Siamese who built the well at Batu Pahat. The Béndahara Paduka Raja pursued them to the Singapore border........

“When they returned to Siam, the Okya Tejo reported to king Bubunnya (? = Boroma Trailekanat) and gave an account of the campaign to him. It was the king’s son, Chau Pandan, who had suggested to his father attacking Malacca.”

Here follows a verse ridiculing Chau Pandan and an account of how his death was procured by black magic performed by a Malacca holy man.

Subsequent Malaccan Foreign Policy

The History of the Ming Dynasty, book 325 (9, page 131) states that in 1456, Muzaffar Shah sent tribute to the emperor of China and asked to be invested as king. If the synchronism between the Chinese and Siamese chronicles is correct, the inference would be that Muzaffar Shah having refrained from seeking recognition from China during the previous decade on account of his embroilment with Siam, or perhaps because of a guilty conscience for the murder of his brother (5, page 92), now sought Chinese recognition to strengthen his position. The fact that a second embassy from Malacca went to China soon after the first, because the first set of royal vestments were burned, may perhaps reflect the troubled times that Malacca was then experiencing from Siam.

4 Dr. Linehan informs me that a correspondent in the Kuala Lumpur Malay paper “Majlis” of recent date published a photograph of this “well” (a basin hollowed out of stone) but wrongly attributed its construction to the Portuguese.

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Though the Sejarah Melayu accredits Malacca with routing the Siamese, it scarcely disguises Muzaffar Shah’s anxiety to keep on friendly terms with his warlike neighbour there-after. To his assembled court he said: (5, page 96):

“What do you all think? Hadn’t we better send envoys to Siam? What is the good of our quarrelling with her?”

Then, after some difference over the compliments, the Bendahara Paduka Raja began the letter:

“If we are to be attacked, we fear for the loss of life: for king Bubunnya is indeed greatly to be feared in the attack; but inasmuch as we sincerely hope for your mercy and favour, we are sending Tun Telanai and Mantri Jana Putra to you”.

The superscription of the Siamese reply was:

“This letter is from Phra Chau Wadi to the Okya of Malacca.”

Thus it was not sent from the king, but from a prince of the rank of Phra Ong Chao, that is the son of the king by a commoner mother. Muzaffar Shah is not accorded royal compliments, but is addressed as “Okya” which may be taken here as Viceroy of the Siamese king in a vassal province—a pretentious claim re-echoed in later Malayo-Siamese history.

While the Malay delegation was in Siam, they assisted Siam in an attack on a neighbouring state (5 page 99). Perhaps this was the Siamese campaign of 1457 against Muang Lisobthin (unidentified) mentioned in Luang Prasot’s chronicle. But Shellabear’s version of the Sejarah Melayu places the Malay embassy to Siam during the reign of Mansur Shah. In this case, the campaign in which the Malays helped the Siamese may be that of 1460 against Chiengmai.

In Shellabear’s Sejarah Melayu (10, chapter 13), Muzaffar Shah dies after the second Siamese invasion, and is succeeded by Mansur Shah, whose first act is to invade and subdue Pahang. In Winstedt’s edition, this campaign is related after Mansur Shah’s visit to Majapahit. If the latter is chronologically correct, the former is certainly clearer, and in this case the 1612 editor is to be thanked for an “improvement” which indicates the sequence of policy more logically, for the subjugation of Pahang was Malacca’s final move in consolidating her position against the encroachments of Siam. Dr. Linehan (1, page 12) dates this campaign about 1454 A.D., but the Siamese chronicles show that it must have taken place somewhat later, perhaps 1458 or 1459.

Citations


(3) *The Pongsawadan of Luang Prasoe* translated by Dr. O. Frankfurter, J.S.S., Vol. 6, part 3, (1909).


(6) *Siamese State Ceremonies* by Dr. H. G. Quaritch Wales, London, (1931).


(8) *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration* by Dr. H. G. Quaritch Wales, London (1934).


(10) *The Séjarah Melayu* edited by W. G. Shellabear, Malay Literature Series No. 9 (Singapore 1909).