

Editor's Note:

The following letters, and in cases extracts of letters, were reproduced by Alexander Dalrymple in 1808, published in London under the title *Oriental Repertory*, by William Ballantine for the East India Company. Relevant portions of Dalrymple's commentary to some letters have also been included.

M.W.C.

Miscellaneous Letters on Burma, 1755-1760, I

Letter 1

13 April 1755

From Mr. Brooke to Governor Pigot

By the occurrences and Transactions of this Place, together with the General Letter, you will be a competent Judge of our present situation, as nothing is related therein but the simple truth, without varnish or evasion; To conclude with the King of PEGU on advantageous terms, I now despair of how can we expect it? when even now, though he wants our assistance, yet He will not assure us, that He will maintain our Soldiers, though they should fight, and lose their lives, in the defence of his Country; has He not used Us ill, on all occasions? has he not, as much as in him lay, underhand endeavoured to ruin us; by preventing the People to work for Us, and to bring Us Rice, &c. Victuals, though his Country might have supplied Us; There is much difference between soliciting and being solicited: we are pursuing the Man, who is unwilling to assist us, yet if he had it in his power He would not; and are courted by the King of AVA, who is ready and able to favour Us, to turn the deaf ear to his address, and tender of his Friendship, would in my opinion be an act of imprudence; but You cannot listen to him, without offending the other; What then is the Medium? had we a Force here sufficient to carry Weight, we could easily turn the Ballance of Power in favour of the Bûrghmahns: to accomplish this would require brisk Force, and a Vessel to lye at Dagon, In

Syrian River, would be absolutely necessary, and would not only prevent supplies of Arms, &c. from passing through Syrian River, but prevent all the King (of Pegu's) War Boats from going up the Rivers towards From, then the Bûraghmahns, could come even to Syrian unmolested, with together with a junction of our Troops by these Rivers, would probably carry every thing before them, and settle the Affairs of this place in one Campaign; but should we not concern ourselves in this Affair, the French who have openly espoused the Peguers' Cause at Syrian may turn the scale against the Bûraghmahns, which now seems to incline to their side; what should we then expect from his Majesty of Pegu? or yet in case the Buraghmahns should meet with success in the next Campaign, without our assistance; We cannot then hope for those favourable Conditions we may at this juncture reasonably expect. I have thus candidly given you my Opinion of our Affairs here, that you may be acquainted with the most minute Circumstances, and though Troops are expensive, yet they are necessary, if you will think proper to spare any, October is the best Month for their arrival here; in the interim I shall, with the utmost Circumspection, give no just Cause of Offence to either Party, though our being on this Island, I believe is sufficient to the King of Pegu.

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.196-1.197.

Letter 2

18 June 1755

Capt. Jackson transmitted the following [copy](#)...

To Capt. Jackson and the rest of the English Gentlemen.

SIRS,

As your are of the side of my Enemys, I am always a Friend to the English, I entend to send my Fleet of Ships and Ballongs to drive away my Enemys, I hope you will not stop or make any resistance against my fleet and Army, that you have no reason to fire at your friends, all the favours I have granted to the English Company, at Syrian. Negrais and Bassim, its a security, I hope that you will not make any Resistance at the Success of my Arms, and it you will come to the Port of Syrian, with all the Vessels of the English flagg, that I give you my word and honour, that I will receive you as formerley, that you may come and trade here without mollestation, I give you the word of a King, that 1 will receive you as

formerly, and sincere freindship, by this this same opertunlty, send me an Answer of yours and the rest of there opinions.

I am Gentlemen and Sirs, your assured freind,

(Sign[e]d W[i]th [h]is Signet) Uppa Raja

Syrian, the 18th of June 1755

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.192-1.193.

Letter 3

28 June 1755

To Capt[ai]n. Jackson.
SIR,

I am very much surprised, that you have not done mee the favour, to write mee an Answer for my former Letter, which I wrote to you dated the 18th of June.

I am of the same Sentiments now, as I wrote to you before, this is my second Letter, which I send to receive an Answer, for your good and my Acquittance.

I am with all emaginable respect
Your most assured Friend
Uppa Raja

Syrian June the 28th 1755

To Capt[ai]n Jackson, of the Company's Br[i]ggentien at Dagoon River
The true Copsy.

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.193.

Letter 4

12 July 1755

Letter to the Upa Raja and Mons[ieu]r Bruno.

To his Highness the Upa Raja and Mons[ieu]r Burno at Syrian.

SIR,

Your Letters was delivered us by the **Burramas** who permitted us to read them, and sent them up to **Prone** with the two Lascars that brought them, to the King of the **Burromers** who left this place the 26th of June and with him is two Sons and the best of his Forces, likewise Mr. **Craston**. and Mons[ieu]r Lavin.

You was so kind as to proffer your Service to help us out of this place which we shall sincerely embrace and in case the **Buramers** should **Attack** you, you may depend that we will assist you to the last **drop** of our Blood, for ever since the **Peguers** attacked the **Burromas** the have **look'd** on us as there **Enimeis** and how far the[y] may resent it GOD above knows, therefore as you are **Christ[i]ans**, we **humbley** beg your **kind assistance** to in order to **gett** out of this Place.

The **Burmas** has now Eighty **Ballongs**, **nine** of which [h]as **great** Guns, and the[y] have two mounted on the Short and a Dutch **Briganteen** is **man'd** with **Burmahs**, The Company's Snow as **thirteen** Guns on board and the rest of the Ships [h]as Six and Small Arms, and with your kind assistance wee think it no **difficulty** to **gett** out.

Wee are [,] Sirs [,] Your most obedient and Humble Servants,

Robert Jackson
Jno. Whithal [Whitehill]
Tho[ma]s Swain
Edward Savage
Henry Stringfellow.

Dated on board the Honble Company's Snow Arcot in Dagoon River, July the 12th, 1755.

To Antony Burno Esqr. At Syrian.

A true **Coppy**.

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.194-1.195.

Letter 5

Extracts

26 November 1755

Dalrymple's commentary: In a subsequent letter, dated 26th Nov. 1755, Mr. Brooke does justice to Capt. Baker's merits, whom he had, on the death of Capt. Hammond, appointed to the command of the Cuddalore, till the Orders of the Government at Madrass could be known; he says

"this Gentleman's Character has been unexceptionable since on this Expedition both in Mr. Hunter's time and since; he has transacted The Honourable Company's affairs; at their Factory of Persaim, with circumspection and prudence, and hope on those Accounts You will find him a person worthy of his present Station."

"Capt. Baker relates that the King of the Bilraghmahns has been very diffident of our conduct, and mistrustful of our Intentions, occasioned by the proceedings of the Gentlemen of the Shipping at Syrian, who have acted quite contrary to what we have done on this Island, in behaving offensively, and firing against the Bûraghmah Tope at Dagoon, in conjunction with the French and Peguers: How then, says the King (of the Buraghmans), can I have confidence in what You say, You come with a fair face, but your Countrymen join with my Enemies against me, and producing an Iron Shot, witness the truth of what I say, this came from an English Ship against my Ptdfh, But in his letter to me, he promises The Company a Place at Persaim, Another at Dagoon, and Liberty to enjoy this Island, but I cannot be assured whether He means that we shall erect Fortifications in his Country, so much however for the first Negociation: yet 'tis highly probable, that were it not for the unlucky and unaccountable affair of the Shipping at Syrian, we should have concluded every thing to our satisfaction. He seems strenuously to desire our assistance against the Peguers, yet would make us believe he does not want our help."¹

¹ Dalrymple's note: "He seemed to want Arms and Ammunition but no other assistance."

“Some French Gentlemen, now here, report that the Upoo Rajah (Apporazah) was determined to make another attack, in conjunction with all the Shipping, French and English, at Syrian; which Report also agrees with our last advices from thence, which further say that the Upoo Rajah sent for all the English Commanders and told them, in publick, to prepare to go against the Bûraghmahns, which they seeming to decline, he further said, it did not signify to raise objections; it was a thing determined they should go, and if not with free will, he would compel them, and send a force of Peguers on board their Ships, or words to that purpose; I have taken the Liberty to advise You of these things, that you may be the better able to proceed, but, with us here, it is the unanimous voice of this Place, that a Force is requisite to extricate the Shipping out of Syrian.”

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.197-1.199.

Letter 6

Extracts

10 December 1755

Extracts of Letter from Mr. Whitehill, Negrais, to the Governor of Madrass

Dalrymple’s Commentary: Mr. Whitehill in a letter, to the Governor of Madrass, dated 10th December 1755 from Negrais, says:

"We are in a very bad state of defence, in case of an attack, which I must say, we may expect, from what I heard and saw, while I was with the Bûraghmahns and Peguers, which was from 3d June to 20th August, in this time I underwent vast uneasiness; The Company will never do any thing in this Country without drawing the Sword, and that must be in favour of the Bûraghmahns; and that soon if at all, for should the Peguers get head again, by the assistance of French, it is all holiday with us, for then you may be sure they will try to route you from this Place, and if they cannot do that, they will hinder you from an ounce of Trade, so that what good will this Island be to you."

[Dalrymple’s commentary]: Notwithstanding these opinions, of the propriety of assisting the Bûraghmahns, It appears by a subsequent letter from Capt. Jackson, that the King of Pegu had obliged him, as well as all the other English Ships at Syrian, to go with the Peguers, again to attack the Bûraghmahns at Dagoon,

promising they should, on their return, have liberty to depart: the Fleet consisted of three English and one French Ship, The King of Pegu's Snow, and three hundred of his Boats; an Army of 10,000 men marched at the same time to attack the Bûraghmahns by Land, who retired to their Fort, and defended themselves resolutely; and having set fire to a Jungodo² of Boats, these driving down towards the Fleet, compelled them to weigh and fall down the River, by which means they avoided the danger, though the French Ship very narrowly escaped being burnt; Sometime after Capt. Jackson's return to Syrian, viz. 5th January 1756, he obtained the King of Pegu's leave to depart; but the King of Pegu obliged him to leave five of the Arcot's Guns behind, promising to return them as soon as the Troubles should be over.

Capt. Jackson, meeting with a violent gale of wind, was carried to leeward of Negrais, and bore away for Vizagapatam.

Mr. Brooke having, on account of his health, desired to be relieved from the Chiefship Negrais; Mr. Andrew Newton was appointed to succeed him; but Mr. Newton having declined on account of ill-health, Capt. John. Howes, a Military Officer, was on 28th February 1756 nominated Chief, and having received his dispatches the 15th March, proceeded thither in the Cuddalore, Capt. Baker, and arrived at Negrais the 12th April: Capt. Howes died in a few months after his arrival, and Lieut. Thomas Newton, as the Senior Officer on the Spot, succeeded Capt. Howes.

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.199-1.200.

Letter 7

[no day] October 1760

The TRANSLATION of a LETTER, sent by the King of the Buraghmahs, to the Honourable Governor of Madrass. October 1760. By the Snow Victoria.

I the most high and mighty King of all Kings, the beloved Son of good fortune, and the most fortunate Master of all these my Dominions; Sole and Supreme Lord of the three Pegu Kingdoms, with all their Provinces; also Master of the Mines of Gold, Silver, Diamonds, Rubies, Sapphirs, Emeralds, Amber, and all manner of precious Stones, in these my Dominions; now at the Golden City, in a Golden Palace, under a Silver Canopy; Master of all good fortune, with a cheerful

² Dalrymple's note: "Supposed to mean several Boats fastened together."

Countenance, and a free Heart, together with a good Will, towards the Governor of Madrass. Send this to acquaint him.

That Captain Hope, when Chief at the Negrais, did not behave agreeable to the Contract and Promises, made on the part of the Company, to the King, my Father who gave Negraise and Perseem to The Company, to trade and merchandize there, on condition, that they paid the customary duties, &c. to the King, my Father; and also assist him if required; but the Governors of the Negrais did not only trade, without paying any duties themselves, but hindered Merchant Vessels, that came to trade, and would have paid them, from entering the Port of Perseem, to my Father's loss and prejudice; also Capt. Hope, kept a Correspondence with the Peguers, my Father's Enemies, and supplied them with Provisions, Arms and Ammunition; with which they killed his Slaves, and robbed and destroyed his Country, whereat my Father being angry, ordered his Slaves to seize and destroy the Factory at the Negrais. The King, my Father, sometime since, being wearied of this World, went to Govern in a better; and I, his eldest Son, am now seated on his Throne; But I am far from believing, either the Governor of Madrass knew of, consented to, or approved of these actions of the Governors of Negrais, and as for the New Governor, that arrived the day; before the Negrais was destroyed, it was his ill fortune to be amongst those who were guilty, and his lot to be killed there; as when you put a piece of Wood in the fire, in which is a Worm you know not of, It is, for want of being distinguished, burnt in the Wood, so it happened to the New Governor.

But if you have a mind to trade in my Dominions, I will give you as much ground as you chuse, at Perseem, or any thing else that is in my Kingdom, that you desire; on Condition that you pay the customary Duties, and supply me with Arms and Ammunition, for which I will give you IN return, the value in Timbers, Wax, Ivory, Amber, or precious Stones, for I am at present in want of both, Arms and Ammunition, as some of my Slaves have rebelled against me their Lord and King; I have released, according to your desire, the five Englishmen that were in my Kingdom, and, on the receipt of this Letter, I desire you will send me as under viz.

Powder Sieves ...	1,000
Muskets	10,000
flints	500,000
Steel	1,000 Viss
Iron	1,000 Do,

A Horse and Mare, both four Cubits high, and a Male and Female Camel, These I want for Breed.

Great and small Shot of sizes, as much as you please, and Powder. Also send me a Man, that can cast Iron Shot, and for all these things I will give what you desire.

The Letter to the Governor of Bengal is an exact copy of this, only change of names. As also the four Vizier's Letter, which is wrote in the name of them all.

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.394-1.395.

Letter 8

8 November 1760

Translation of a Letter from Manglee Norata, Prince of Persaim, &c.
To The Honourable George Pigot, Esq. President and Governor of Fort St. George.

By order and Oath of the powerfull Lord, the Lord and Head of all Kings of the Eastern parts of the World, and above all Crowns, Lord of the White and Speckled Elephants, Lord of the Mines of the Rubys, Topas, Gold, Silver, Iron, and Lead, &c King of Kings, and Lord of all Provinces of the East; whose Oath I have taken with a true heart, and by him appointed Prince of all the Lower Countrys of this Place, that belonged to three Places of Pegue, and Sea-port Town, Slaves of his Majesty, the inhabitants thereof are like the Children of my Breast, whom I take care to Judge as they behave, who am Manglee Norata, with five hundred and twenty-eight Loves, I send my Service to the Honourable Governor of Madrass, George Pigot, Esq. whose Country and ours was in Ancient Times as united together as a Tulip-flower in the middle of a Tank, so was also our friendship then; and I take it to be so now; between Strangers and my Nation, and hope it will last long; and you will please to come to Trade as formerly.

The Chief of Negrais interfered himself with the Peguers, who were Rogues, Runagadoes, Oath-breakers, and being against us, hid themselves in the Woods, and robbing our Towns and Villages, as Opportunity offered them; these People did the Chief of Negrais harboured, we was informed of, and have put a stop to it, that The Company should not harbour them for the future, but could not keep them under, for which reason The Company being found guilty, for acting in the manner which was not right, therefore mischief had befallen them, which you were informed of; and now what is past, is past ; now your Honour has been pleased to send, and advised us by Letters of your intent, and presents to the King by Capt. Walter Alves, which is come to us now, with a clear conscience Capt. Alves, did in behalf of the King of England and the Honourable Governor of

Madrass, Geortg Pigot, Esq. begged; which was accepted by the King, and has granted the Residing Place of Persaim, and the Island of Negrais, as before; but with this Conditions, that all Ships that comes there to Trade, both Company's and Merchant Ships, should pay their due Customs as before; at which time they will have free Liberty to sell and buy their Merchandize, without any molestation: This is the King's orders, and according to this order, you will please to Comply; and whoever you will please to send over as Chief, let him be a man of Confidence, and a man of great Sense, if you will send such a Person here, you shall not want whatever you shall desire; and recommend him to me, that I will assist him whatever lyes in my power to beg of the King. There is a man here whom Capt. Alves informed me, he believed was a man that has done something that was not right, on the Coast of Sumatra; which he desired me, I might call him to my house, and be examined, he being very well informed by several persons here, that this man had killed some English Commander, upon the man's coming to my house, he equivocated,³ but at last confessed, that he was in the same Vessel, where the People killed the Commander of the Vessel and three Soldiers; this man our Warriours took up at Merguy, in a small Vessel, at the time our People being there; and brought him here, in case your Honour will find this story upon this man to be true, please to send me advice, and I will execute Justice upon him. I now send your Honour by Capt. Alves one hundred Viss of Wax, which you will be kind to receive as a present from me.

Rangoon, November 8th, 1760.

First day of the New Moon.

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.397-1.398.

Letter 9

24 November 1760

Antonio the Linguist, To the Honourable GEORGE PIGGOT, Esq. Governor of Fort St. George.

Persaim, 24th November, 1760

³ Dalrymple's note: "So in the Original, for equivocated."

Honourable Sir,

I am sorry to think, that your Honour should have reason to think, that I have been any way concerned in that unlucky affair, that happened at the Negrais, in the month of October 1759; but give me leave to assure your Honour, that I was no further concerned, than as a Linguister for the King's Officer, who commanded the Party; and so far I was obliged by the Order of the King, which Order was absolute, and would admit of no Evasion, for the King said, in the Order, that I must go to the Negrais, as a Linguister, and if by any means his Design discovered, he would look on me as the Author of the Discovery, and my Wife and every Man, Woman, and Child who had any dependence on, or connexion with, me, he would immediately put to death, to avenge himself of me. But that I have always had a very great regard for the English, as I am in Duty bound, and as Actions are always preferable to Words, I shall say nothing in my own justification; but refer myself first to Mr. Robertson, who saw how far I was concerned in the cutting off Negrais; and next to Capt. Alves, who well knows what pains I have taken to assist him, in Transacting the Business he was charged with, on Account of the Honourable Company; and especially as he has had the good fortune to succeed, in renewing the Friendship, which formerly subsisted betwixt his Majesty and the Honourable Company, which is a plain proof, that my Love is sincere; and Captain Alves is so sensible of my Advice and Assistance, on this Occasion, that he has promised to advise your Honour of my good intentions.

Please receive with this Fifty Viss of Wax, Twenty-five Viss of Ivory, being three Teeth; and a large Towel, which I beg you will accept of from

Honourable Sir, Your most obedient, and most humble Servant."

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.396.

Letter 10

Extracts

28 December 1760

From Captain Alves, Calcutta, to Governor Pigot

Dalrymple commentary: Capt. Alves in his Letter from Calcutta, dated 28th Dec. 1760, transmitting these Papers to Governor Pigot, says,

SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 87-98

“I left at Dagon a Dutch Ship, belonging to the Governor of Negapatam, which, from the present situation of affairs in that Country, I know not whether or no they will be able to get away, for the principal part of their Cargo was carried up to Ava, to the Burahmah King, by the Malabar Supercargo, and for what goods he had sold there, he could not get in the money; and at Dagon they took a new Cable out of the Ship by force, for the use of a Ship they have sent to the Nicobars.”

Source: Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, (London: William Ballintine for the East India Company, 1808): 1.398.