

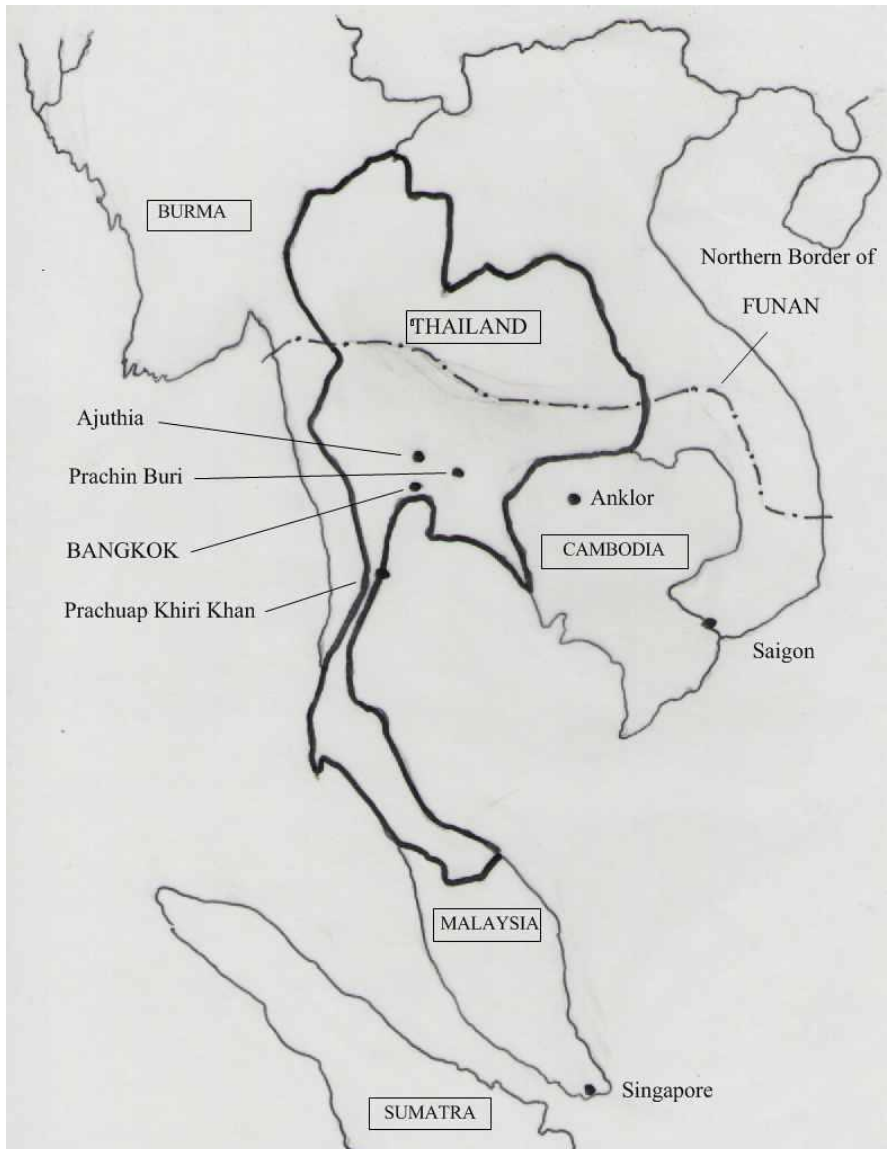
HENRY ALABASTER OF SIAM
CORRESPONDENCE 1866-1884
AND CAREER



JOHN S. ALABASTER

Occasional Monograph, No. 3
Published by the Alabaster Society

September 2009



Map of Thailand
Showing places mentioned in the text

The Alabaster Society

The Alabaster Society was established in 1992 and twice a year since 1993 has published a regular journal, the *Alabaster Chronicle*, details of which are available on the Society's website, www.alabaster.org.uk. Several books on the family have been published by members of the Society, including:

A Quintet of Alabasters by Adrian Alabaster (1997) Able Publishing, Knebworth. 259 pp. and

Hadleigh and the Alabaster Family: The Story of a Suffolk Town during the Tudor and Stuart Periods by Sue Andrews and Tony Springall (2005), 360 pp.

Earlier volumes in this Series of Occasional Monographs published by The Alabaster Society are:

1) *A Closer Look at William Alabaster (1568-1640): Poet, Theologian, and Spy?* by John S. Alabaster (2003), Occasional Monograph No. 1. 159 pp.

(A postscript and an Index were later published in The Alabaster Chronicle No. 22 (2004) pp. 14-18 and a further note, *William Alabaster's Stolen Letter and the Earl of Essex* was published in The Alabaster Chronicle No. 23 (2004) pp.19-22) and.

2) *Sir Chaloner Alabaster Correspondence (1840-1880)* by John S. Alabaster (2005), Occasional Monograph No. 2. 46 pp. (A synopsis of the letters).

Some of the family papers have been archived in Public Records, together with transcripts:

1. Documents concerning **James Chaloner Alabaster** of 58 Piccadilly, London (1760-1853) relating particularly to his visit to North America in 1837 in pursuit of a claim to Indian land. These were deposited in 2004 at the City of Westminster Archives, Accession No. 2369.

2. Documents of **Sir Chaloner Alabaster** Correspondence 1840-1880. Altogether 56 letters and transcripts and six photographs were deposited in 2005 at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; Reference No. MS 380823).

3. Original or copies of documents and transcripts relating to **Henry Alabaster** (1844-1880). Altogether 47 letters were deposited in 2005 at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; Reference No. MS 380824).

Further information can be obtained from either the website or the Secretary, Laraine Hake, Tollgate Cottage, The Turnpike, Bunwell, Norfolk, NR16 1SR

About the Book

A memorable meeting with Nan Kenyon in Canada gave the author his first access to part of her large, fascinating collection of papers on the Alabaster family, some of which have now been incorporated into our family history. The first, main part of this booklet comprises the transcription of family correspondence of Henry Alabaster (1836-1884), whilst the second part, a short essay, takes a broad view of his work in the context of Thailand's history of independence.

In Part 1, Henry appears in several roles: enthusiastic youth soaking up the atmosphere of a strange new land and culture; solicitous and conscientious correspondent and advisor to his recalcitrant cousin Percy; keen sailor; incipient artist; caring and responsible nephew to his widowed aunt Mary Ann Rebecca Criddle; rival to the British Consul, George Knox; hardworking and influential servant to the King of Siam; agent for importing machinery, instruments, statuary, jewellery, consumer goods and plants for members of the Thai Royal family and others; and fond family man.

His financial difficulties are highlighted and the importance of the rôle of his English wife, Palacia is revealed – in entertaining important foreign visitors and at the same time bringing up her sons and keeping in touch with Henry's family back home in England, especially his aunt.

In Part 2, Henry's important part in continuing the centuries old struggle by Thailand to maintain its independence from its French and British colonial neighbours is put into historical context. In doing so, it draws, *inter alia* on the comments on his contribution made by one of his sons, Thongkam Savetisila and by his grandson, Air Chief Marshall Siddhi Savetsila.