SPANISH INTERVENTION IN CAMBODIA 1593—1603

BY

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When Phra Naret Suen of Siam invaded Cambodia in 1593, King Satha, or Sotha I (the "Apram Langara" of Spanish writers), was advised by some Portuguese and Castilians at his court to send an embassy to Manila to ask assistance of the Governor General of the Philippines, promising, in return for such assistance, to be baptized as a Christian and to accept a sort of Spanish protectorate. The embassy sent in consequence of this advice started a train of events in that Kingdom which resulted in the massacre of the Spanish and Portuguese in Cambodia and the assassination of King Baroma Racha ("Prauncar"), son of Satha, in 1599 and 1600, and a series of missionary undertakings from Manila, which ended only with the accession of Soriyopor and the establishment of Siamese influence in Cambodia in the latter part of 1603.

This series of events has been the object of an intensive study by the distinguished French savant and orientalist, Antoine Cabaton, who, more than twenty-five years ago, collected a great deal of information on the subject, wrote several articles¹) and translated

into French two memorials 1) written to King Philip III of Spain early in the seventeenth century for the purpose of persuading him to send an armed force and some friars to Cambodia to reestablish and maintain there a mission of the Order of the Dominicans, to which the memorialists belonged. For more than a quarter of a century, M. Cabaton's studies have been accepted as definitive and quoted approvingly by all writers on the subject. So far as the writer of this article is aware, no one has ever questioned the accuracy of his conclusions.

But a candid and unprejudiced examination of the evidence, even confining oneself exclusively to the material used or mentioned by Cabaton, will show that his study is far from definitive. Apparently seduced by the "Relacion" of Fray Gabriel de San Antonio, which he translated 2), Cabaton seems to have used that memorial as a criterion by which to check all other accounts of these events. His seeming predilection in favor of this "Relacion" of Fray Gabriel, which is propaganda pure and simple, as against the scholarly history of Antonio de Morga 3), led him at times to reject the latter, even when supported by evidence more worthy of faith than either. Cabaton suppressed (or at least did not use in any of his articles mentioned above) important depositions which he listed among the documents found by him in Archivo de Indias, Sevilla 4), apparently because they did not agree with Fray Gabriel's account,

2) Gabriel (Quiroga) de San Antonio, Brève y Verdadera relation de los sucesos del reyno de Camboza ('Relacion'), Valladolid, 1604.
4) Cabaton, in JA, p. 286; Cabaton, in BCAI, p. 69.