

Sample letter

This is a sample letter drawn from a previous iteration of the exercise held at Brandeis in 2018. With thanks to all the students who participated in this exercise.

Letter from the Zheng maritime organization to the king of Siam

Dear Siam,

We come with open arms and hearts. The VOC have been terrorizing the waters around Asia for years and have been nothing but trouble in the maritime affairs of our partners and affiliates. Our leadership have dealt with the Dutch in the past and won, surely a kingdom as mighty as that of Siam could do the same. The Dutch are foreigners to this land with no real authority or state to represent themselves. They are merely bands of vagrant thugs and pirates, and are a blight on the high seas. Although you are trading partners with the Dutch, we would like to extend this offer to further facilitate widespread trade and commerce under a legitimate banner. We urge you to help drive these western mongrels to reinforce your dominion over your waters, and hope we can come to a mutually beneficial agreement.

We wish to be recognized as our own state. If you choose to recognize us as such, there are many benefits that can come from our relationship. Trade would flourish between us, an outcome that would positively impact both of our states' economies. We can help facilitate commerce to distant waters usually inaccessible, extending your influence beyond. Our position on Taiwan along with our mighty fleets allows access to ports and cities all along the Chinese coastline, giving you prime access to the silks, porcelains, and other bounties from the mainland. Under the guidance of the great Zheng Jing, Taiwan itself has flourished as well, with bountiful harvests and deer skins worth millions of taels. Surely with this mutual agreement in place both of our kingdoms can prosper for years to come.

We are aware of Siam's lack of military power. In order to help with that, we can offer some protection to the Siam coasts and waters. As you may know, we, the Zheng, command a formidable, independent fleet of ships and people to provide a proper defense for both of our states. We have been unmatched by the Qing and have been more than capable of dealing with the Dutch in our waters. While the VOC has superior ships, they have no means to further themselves beyond petty piracy. Their men and forces come from thousands of leagues away, making it impossible for them to make themselves a substantial threat to any state's sovereignty in the region. These red-haired bandits can barely manage Chinese traders in their own base at Batavia, letting these barbarous fools continue trading in your waters would be an absolute travesty.

We, the Zheng, recognize your supremacy over the region. Despite what the Qing may say, they are no more than mere usurpers to the throne. For years they have tried to defeat us and have yet to even come up with a proper navy to invade Taiwan. With a clear void, we wish nothing more than to see the Qing grovel beneath your feet. Please remember your past sympathies toward the Zheng, and honor that relationship by siding with us, and against the VOC.

The Zheng