

BITTER ENEMIES OR MACHIAVELLIAN FRIENDS? EXPLORING THE DUTCH-PORTUGUESE RELATIONSHIP IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SIAM*

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por

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Dutch and Portuguese co-existence in Asia has been looked upon almost exclusively as a matter of rivalry in the secondary literature. The weight of important Portuguese positions conquered by the Dutch (such as Malacca and Colombo, among others), as well as naval battles and seizures of ships have deviated attention from possible forms of partnership. This paper aims to fill the gap in the studies of the Portuguese presence in the seventeenth century, by analysing Dutch and Portuguese relations in the Siamese context. That is, it will examine the nature of the Luso-Dutch relationship on neutral territory: was it strictly a relation of rivalry or was there space for cooperation?

The study of the Portuguese presence in mainland Southeast Asia is work-in-progress that has a recent historiographical tradition. The Portuguese presence in Siam has been an object of study since the publication of a couple of short articles by Portuguese diplomatic officials in the 1930s and 1940s, the most relevant by Joaquim Campos.¹ Later Father Manuel Teixeira published his long-awaited work *Portugal na Tailândia*, which contains valu-

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¹ Joaquim CAMPOS, *Early portuguese accounts of Thailand*, Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Lisbon, 1983 (reprint of the 1940 edition). See also Jacinto Nascimento MOURA, "Relações dos Portugueses com o Sião", Separate edition of numbers 68, 69, 70 et 71 of the *Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias*, Lisbon, 1931.

able information, especially concerning missionary activity. More recently, Maria da Conceição Flores, Leonor de Seabra and I have dealt with the topic of the Portuguese presence in Siam from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.² To the best of my knowledge, VOC sources have been rather sparsely employed for the study of the Portuguese presence in mainland Southeast Asia. However, scholars researching the Dutch presence in Siam, such as George Vinal Smith, occasionally focus on aspects of the Portuguese presence in their publications.³

In my previous research, I realized that a specific image of rivalry appeared through the Portuguese sources. The Dutch were classified as “enemies of the Faith”, “men without a king”, etc., and this was the image which prevailed in the historiography.⁴ In choosing to examine Dutch sources exclusively, I am interested in seeing whether a new or different image of this relationship emerges from the sources.

The first point to be taken into account is that the sources produced representations of a historical reality. This means that from Dutch sources one will obtain an image of the Portuguese presence, a representation and ultimately, a construction. The existence of an *observer* group (the Dutch) and an *observed* subject (the Portuguese) involves several problems. A fundamental one is the range of perception. In other words, what could *the observer* observe and in which way(s) could *the observed* be observed? And how did this dialectic affect the relationship between the two?

The idea of perception will work here as a conceptual tool for the study of the Luso-Dutch relationship. Several factors could influence the range of perception. For instance, the cultural proximity between the Dutch and the Portuguese, both being part of the same European cultural framework, could

² Maria da Conceição FLORES published several articles and her MA *thesis* analysed the Portuguese presence in Siam during the sixteenth century: *Os Portugueses e o Sião no século XVI*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1995. Leonor de SEABRA worked on the relations between Siam and Macao (18th-19th centuries) and more recently edited the manuscript of Pero Vaz de Siqueira’s embassy to Siam in 1684-1686: *A Embaixada ao Sião de Pêro Vaz de Siqueira (1684-1686)*, Instituto Português do Oriente/Fundação Oriente, Macau, 2004. In my MA *thesis* (Rita BERNARDES DE CARVALHO, *La présence portugaise à Ayutthaya (Siam) aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, unpublished MA *thesis*, EPHE, Paris, 2006) I analysed the Portuguese presence in Siam in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries with special attention to the Portuguese settlement in Ayutthaya. This work is available on-line: <http://rbcarvalho.pt.vc>.

³ Especially George Vinal SMITH, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Special Report No.16, Northern Illinois University, 1977. Two Thai scholars are equally worthy of attention, Dhiravat na Pombejra and Bhawan Ruangsilp. Their works focus on the Thai-Dutch relationship and on using Dutch sources to write a history of Siam. See for instances, Dhiravat na POMBEJRA, *A political history of Siam under the Prasatthong Dynasty 1629-1688*, PhD thesis SOAS – University of London, 1984; and Bhawan RUANGSILP, *Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya. Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom c.1604-1765*, Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2007.

⁴ See for instance Charles R. BOXER, “Portuguese and Dutch colonial rivalry, 1641-1661”, separate edition of *STVDIA*, 2, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, Lisbon, July 1958, pp. 9-10.

enhance social proximity and made it easier for the Dutch to understand some Portuguese customs and traditions. Other aspects could establish the degree of the author's understanding of the events. For example, the domain of the Portuguese language, the direct or indirect presence in the event, the physical distance and position of the author (active/passive), the distance in time from the event, etc.

The next logical step in my reflections is to choose among the panoply of VOC sources available. This study intends to present the subject rather than cover it extensively, and for that reason printed sources were given preference. Three of the selected sources show the institutional VOC perspective: the writings of two VOC directors of the Ayutthayan *lodgie*, Joost Schouten (1636) and Jeremias van Vliet (1636-1640), and a compilation of the Batavian *Dagh-Register* (1624-1642). Schouten and van Vliet were two of the most important and prolific authors of the seventeenth-century Siamese history. Two other sources illustrate the point of view of VOC officials, who spent around one month in Siam and wrote a description of the country: Gijsbert Heeck (1655) and Engelbert Kaempfer (1690). Lastly, the "Succinct Account of What Occurred in the Kingdom of Siam in the Year 1688" written by an anonymous author reveals some curious details about the Dutch-Portuguese relationship during and immediately after the so-called "1688 revolution" in Siam.⁵

The analytical and methodological proposal presented above will be used as a framework to investigate the nature of Dutch-Portuguese relationship in seventeenth-century Siam.

1. Particularities of the Portuguese presence in Southeast Asia

The structure of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* made it possible to develop private trading activities, as well as considerable interaction between Portuguese individuals and Asian communities. Merchants, soldiers and missionaries progressively migrated as the opportunities for country trade or conversion increased. The Portuguese expansion in the region was marked by the actions of renegades (*renegados*), men who escaped from the Viceroy's control and put themselves in the service of Asian kings as merce-

⁵ Vide Francis CARON & JOOST SCHOUTEN, *A True description on the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan & Siam*, Charles Boxer (ed.), N. Israel Keizersgracht Amsterdam/Da Capo Press New York, [1636] 1971; *Van Vliet's Siam*, Chris Baker, Dhiravat na Pombejra, Alfons van der Kraan, David K. Wyatt (eds.), Silkworm Books, Bangkok [1636-1640], 2005; *Dutch Papers – Extracts from the "Dagh Register" 1624-1642*, Vajirañana National Library (printed by order of), Bangkok, 1915; *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655. Extracts from the Journal of Gijsbert Heeck*, Barend Jan Terwiel (transl., intr.), Silkworm Books, Bangkok, 2008; KAEMPFER, Engelbert, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam*, Collection *Itineraria Asiatica*, Thailand vol. IV, Orchid Press, Bangkok, [1690] 1998; Anonymous, "Succinct Account of What Occurred in the Kingdom of Siam in the Year 1688", in *Witness to a Revolution: Siam 1688*, Michael Smithies (ed., trans.), The Siam Society, Bangkok, 2004, pp. 124-134.

naries⁶. Southeast Asia and other zones that were outside of official Portuguese control were the privileged areas for the settlement of these individuals. The Portuguese diaspora in mainland Southeast Asia had, therefore, an indubitably “particular” character.

Once these men had settled in a region, they had families, by way of marriage or cohabitation with local or other Asian women. They diversified their fields of action as well, and began to participate in the intra-Asian trade. Private investors could choose between a variety of markets (ports) and products, according to the number of ships, amount of capital and availability of the commodities they had to purchase. Private trade⁷ presupposed a reliable network of information on both internal and external markets. Agents and brokers were of considerable importance for the management of this network: “European and Asian traders, ship owners, captains, supercargoes or agents executed verbal or written instructions from themselves or their investors orienting them as to how to employ the available capital, which goods and commodities to purchase, at what price levels and quantities, in order to maximize return.”⁸ Sometimes, Asian women were instrumental for this proximity with the local markets. In Siam there were several examples of women conducting trade, the most well-known is Soet (or Osoet Pegua), the concubine of three Dutch directors of the Ayutthaya *lodge*.⁹

The Portuguese and their descendants living in Southeast Asia gradually organised themselves in communities called “*bandel*” (i.e., settlement), which were recognized as such by the local rulers and by the Portuguese authorities in Goa.¹⁰ An example is the *bandel* of Makassar (also called *Borrobos*), which was of considerable proportions and had a high population density.¹¹

⁶ See at this respect Maria Augusta Lima CRUZ, “Exiles and Renegades in Early Sixteenth Century Portuguese India”, *The Indian Economic Social History Review*, 23:3, 1986, pp. 249-262, as well as the complementary article by Dejanirah COUVO, “Quelques observations sur les renégats portugais en Asie au XVI^e siècle”, *Mare Liberum*, 16, 1998, pp. 57-85.

⁷ Private trade appears in historiographical essays as opposed to official trade, the latter relating to the practice of commerce in the name of a State, a King, or an official entity (like a trading Company).

⁸ Cf. George Bryan SOUZA, “The Portuguese Merchant Fleet at Macao in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in Ernst van Veen, Leonard Blussé (eds.), *Rivalry and Conflict. European Traders and Asian Trading Networks in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, CNWS Publications, Leiden, 2005, pp. 342-369 (quote from p. 350).

⁹ Dhiravat na POMBEJRA, *Court, Company, and Campong – essays on the VOC presence in Ayutthaya*, Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre Occasional Paper No.1, Amarin Printing Group Co., Thailand, 1992, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰ *Bandel* is the common word used in Portuguese sources to designate a more or less organized community of Portuguese and Portuguese descendants located in areas where the official Portuguese power was not so effective. For instance, Portuguese sources refer to the Portuguese settlement in Ayutthaya as the *bandel de São*, which corresponds to *kampong* in Malay and to *Ban Portuguet* in Thai. *Ban* would also mean village, as in Ban Chao Phraya.

¹¹ About the community of Borrobos see Maria do Carmo Mira BORGES, *Os Portugueses e o Sultanato de Macaçar no Século XVII*, Câmara Municipal de Cascais, Cascais, 2005, chapter 5 (pp. 175-194). On the Portuguese in Makassar and the activities of its merchants see Charles

Religion had an important role in shaping the formation and the outlook of the Portuguese-Asian communities. With the presence of the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Jesuits, and in some cases the Augustinians, the religious “lobby” was well represented in all Portuguese settlements. To their traditional functions of escorting the religious life of the believers, baptising their children, celebrating mass and other catholic ceremonies, and preventing the adoption of any local “vices” by the Portuguese communities, the missionaries added a new feature. They participated actively in trade activities, especially the Jesuits. It was common for missionaries to circulate between several Portuguese communities in Southeast Asia, thus becoming a link between those settlements. As a consequence of the persecution of all Catholics in Japan, many catholic Japanese priests travelled and sojourned in Siam, Cambodia, Tonkin, etc., where they served the local catholic communities (both Portuguese and Japanese). The impact of the missionary presence can still be seen throughout Southeast Asia in the ruins of St. Paul’s church in Malacca, and even in today’s Ayutthaya, in the form of the brick ruins of the Portuguese church of *São Domingos*.

1.1. The Portuguese in Ayutthaya, Siam – the *bandel de Sião*

The first Portuguese men who arrived in Siam in the beginning of the sixteenth century were adventurers and renegades. They served in the Siamese army as artillery experts and participated in wars against other Asian potentates (like Burma), sometimes fighting other Portuguese who were on the other side of the barricade. Around 1549, to pay and thank them for their services, the Thai king gave them a piece of land and allowed them some freedoms: to live in the country, to profess their own religious beliefs and exemption from commercial taxes for a three-year period.¹² The Portuguese quarter, nowadays called *Ban Portuguet*, was situated on the right bank of the Chao Phraya River, outside the city walls and facing the Japanese settlement. On its west side was a Chinese settlement and in the south-west direction the Malay community. On the left bank of the river and north of the Japanese quarter were the English warehouse and further north the Dutch VOC *lodgie*. In the Portuguese settlement, houses were built in accordance with traditional building techniques, made of wood and bamboo, and on stilts to protect them from the annual floods. As the population grew during the seventeenth century, three brick churches were built there: the Domin-

BOXER’s work, *Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo: a Portuguese merchant-adventurer in South-East Asia 1624-1667*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1967. One interesting case is the *bandel* of Hugli, which shares similarities with the Portuguese settlement in Ayutthaya: cf. Jorge Manuel FLORES, “Entre bandel e colônia: O regresso dos Portugueses a Hugli, ca. 1632-1820”, in *Aquém e Além da Taprobana – Estudos Luso-Orientais à memória de Jean Aubin e Denys Lombard*, CHAM, Lisboa, 2002, pp. 331-347.

¹² Cf. Fernão Mendes PINTO, *Peregrinação*, chap. 182, quoted by Maria da Conceição FLORES, *Os Portugueses e o Sião...*, p. 106.

ican *São Domingos* church, of greater dimensions; the Franciscan church (*São Francisco*), right north of the Dominican but smaller than that one; and the Jesuit church, called *São Paulo*.¹³

Estimating the number of people living in the Portuguese Ayutthayan community is a difficult task, due to the lack of data such as the registers of births and deaths (normally part of the church documents). The Portuguese sources are either non-specific or vague, indicating “a big number of people” or “about 2,000 souls” for the period after 1616.¹⁴ One can hardly be sure about what *kind* of Portuguese people these numbers referred to. Were the mestizos included in the count? What about black-Portuguese from India or slaves?

In the seventeenth century, the Thai-Portuguese mixed community participated actively in Siamese social life: many of their members were government officials and/or worked as interpreters; they took an active part in the internal commercial market, or sometimes served as brokers for other traders. They maintained a certain independence from the Portuguese official instances, which allowed them more autonomy in terms of choosing their commercial partners and detachment in their relationship with the Asian authorities.¹⁵ To grasp the commercial movements of this type of communities presents a problem for scholars, due to the scant of information about private business matters in the official Portuguese sources. Dutch sources could, therefore, help to fulfill this lacuna.

2. VOC presence in Siam in the seventeenth-century

The arrival of the Dutch in Siamese territory may be explained through different factors. First, the Dutch expected to use Ayutthaya to easily get into the Chinese market.¹⁶ Second, there was a strategic need to access certain products available in Ayutthaya, in order to exchange them for Japanese

¹³ For more information concerning these three churches and the archaeological excavations in *São Domingos* site, see Patipat PUMPHONGPHAET, “Les fouilles archéologiques dans le Mu Ban Portuget, sur le site de Sao Pedro”, in *Phra Narai roi de Siam et Louis XIV*, catalogue d'exposition vol. «Études», Paris, 1986, pp. 23-26; and Rita BERNARDES DE CARVALHO, *La présence portugaise...*, pp. 92-94.

¹⁴ Cf. Frei Luís de SOUSA, *História de S. Domingos*, 2 vols., M. Lopes de Almeida (intr., revision), Lello & Irmãos Editores, Porto, 1977, 2nd vol., chap. VI, p. 350. About the population in the Portuguese empire see the study of Francisco BETHENCOURT, “Low Cost Empire – Interaction between the Portuguese and Local Societies in Asia”, in *Rivalry and Conflict. European Traders and Asian Trading Networks in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Ernst van Veen and Leonard Blussé (eds.), CNWS Publications, Leiden, 2005, pp. 108-130.

¹⁵ However, towards the end of the seventeenth century they still wrote to the king of Portugal to ask him to designate the head (*capitão-mor*) of the community. Cf. Rita BERNARDES DE CARVALHO, *La présence portugaise...*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁶ Michel JACQ-HERGOUALC'H, *L'Europe et le Siam du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle – Apports culturels*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1993, p. 30.

silver.¹⁷ Third, the VOC took advantage of the Thai sovereign's strategic interests: "Cette facilité dans leur installation était en fait la conséquence d'un calcul politique délibéré de la part des souverains locaux [of Southeast Asia] qui virent en eux le moyen de contrebalancer l'influence portugaise. Du côté du Siam, gouverné alors par le roi Naresuen, le calcul était le même".¹⁸

In 1602, the first VOC commercial factory was constructed in Patani,¹⁹ followed two years later by another one in Ayutthaya. The Dutch settlement (*Hollandze Lodgie*) was situated very near to the main Siamese port and the Pomphet Fort, although outside the city walls. To the south were located the English settlement and farther south the Japanese one. On the opposite bank of the Chao Phraya River and facing the Japanese quarter was the Portuguese settlement. The Dutch settlement was constructed with bricks, and "its warehouses and offices were contained in a large, brick-and-plaster building, the largest of the commercial buildings in the city".²⁰ The Dutch settlement was excavated in 2004 and 2005 by the Fine Arts Department of Thailand. It seems the occupational period started around 1630 with one main warehouse building, which expanded later on, and other buildings were erected: offices, halls, two more warehouses, kitchen, bedrooms, etc. A short article by Anek Sihamat²¹ does not give precise details about the site occupation, its organization or the chronologies of most artefacts. However, according to this article one can be reassured that this was actually the place where the Dutch lived in Ayutthaya.

2.1. VOC commercial interests in Siam: trade opportunities, products, monopolies

The Dutch factory was commanded by an appointed director, the *opperhoofd* (or chief-merchant, a rank in the VOC hierarchy) who in turn answered to the Governor-General in Batavia. In Ayutthaya, a new director

¹⁷ See Dhiravat na POMBEJRA, "The Dutch in Siam during the 1630s", in *The Dutch East India Company in Japan, Siam and Indonesia: three essays*, Akira Nagazumi, Dhiravat na Pombejra, A. B. Lapien (eds.), Antropologisch – Sociologisch Centrum Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 1982, p. 23.

¹⁸ Michel JACQ-HERGOUALC'H, *L'Europe et le Siam...*, p. 29.

¹⁹ Patani (actual Pattani) is not considered in this paper as part of the Siamese kingdom, but as an independent state. Tensions were continuous between the central government in Ayutthaya and its provinces, specially the more distant ones, like Ligor (actual Nakhon Si Thammarat) and Patani. Part of Ayutthaya's effort to centralize its administration was to bring the provinces closer to royal influence. The Sultanate of Patani resisted repeatedly to Siamese military offensives and it could be interesting to observe the role Europeans played in this conflict. For the history of Pattani see Daniel PERRET, Amara SRISUCHAT, Sombun THANASUK (eds.), *Études sur l'histoire du sultanat de Patani*, EFEO, Paris, 2004.

²⁰ Cf. *Ayutthaya – the former Thai capital*, Akson Samphan Press, Bangkok, 1980, p. 5.

²¹ Cf. Anek SIHAMAT, "Excavation of the Dutch United East India Company (V.O.C.) Historic Site Ayutthaya", in *Crossroads of Thai and Dutch History. Proceedings of the International Symposium 9-11 September 2004*, Dhiravat na Pombejra, Han ten Brummelhuis, Nandana Chutiwongs, Pisit Charoenwongsa (eds.), SEAMEO-SPAFA, Bangkok, 2007, pp. 402-417.

was appointed every three or four years. The regular reports sent to Batavia or to the *Heren XVII* in the Netherlands (*via* Batavia) by the successive VOC directors in Siam, are consequently important sources of information for scholars.

The VOC assured a few monopolies in Siam, especially products destined to the Japanese market. Among these, deer-hides, sapanwood and tin (especially from the Thai-Malayan peninsula including Ligor)²² were the most valuable merchandises. António Bocarro, a Portuguese seventeenth century chronicler, described the Dutch and the English settlements and their respective commercial ventures:

There are in this city of Ová²³ (*sic*), capital of the Kingdom of Siam, two factories; one of big dimensions belonging to the Dutch and one of smaller dimensions belonging to the English. The kind of commerce they do is in deer-hides, ray-hides, sapanwood and a large amount of silk, which arrives there from Chincheo and Cochinchina.²⁴ With these merchandises, some pepper they buy in Bintão next to Patane,²⁵ and also some other commodities, they send their vessels to Japan, thus making huge profits, which they also share with the king of Siam, who for this reason is so dependent on them.²⁶

Most monopolies in Siam were granted by the Siamese king. Therefore, the Dutch started to value cooperation rather than violent military action to obtain commercial privileges and favourable trade agreements from local powers.

Although the commercial activities of the Dutch in Siam were interrupted on several occasions, between 1620 and 1628 and during the eighteenth century (1705, 1740 and 1747), it is undeniable that during the seventeenth century the Dutch were in a providential position to observe Siamese commercial and political evolution. In fact, after a few decades spent in Asia, the Dutch had gained considerable knowledge about Asian states, their rulers, their societies, their external relations and their trading habits.²⁷

²² Cf. Dhiravat na POMBEJRA, "The Dutch in Siam...", p. 24. About the tin trade, see Supaporn ARIYASAJISKUL, "The So-called Tin Monopoly in Ligor: The Limits of VOC Power vis à vis a Southern Thai Trading Polity", *Itinerario*, 28:3, 2004, pp. 89-106.

²³ Generally, Ayuttaya is called *Odiá* in portuguese sources.

²⁴ Chincheo is the actual Quanzhou (or Zhangzhou), but sometimes refers to the province of Fujian. Cochinchina is a region in actual Vietnam.

²⁵ That is, Bintan, next to Pattani.

²⁶ Cf. António BOCARRO, *Década 13 da História da Índia*, Academia Real das Ciências, Lisboa, 1876, chap. 120, p. 530. Translation from the Portuguese: "Estão n'esta cidade de Ová [sic], cabeça do reino de Sião, duas feitorias ; uma de holandezes com grande cabedal, e outra de ingrezes com mais pequeno. O tracto que tem uns e outros é da courama de veados, pelles de lixas, sapão, e muita seda que alli vem de Chincheo, e Cochinchina, com as quaes fazendas e alguma pimenta que tomam em Bintão junto a Patane, e outras veniagas, mandam a Japão suas naus, em que fazem grandissimos proveitos, dando-os tambem grandes ao rei de Sião, por cuja causa está tão apegado a elles."

²⁷ In this respect, in the late 1630s, several records written by VOC directors in Siam, Schouten and van Vliet, were presented to General-Director in Batavia. In van Vliet's case, this

Following the same logic, they also learned more about their “classic” enemies – the Portuguese. The arrival of Dutch vessels in Asian waters had strong implications on the relationship between the Dutch and the Portuguese in the region, especially in terms of territorial and commercial disputes.

3. Rivalry: Episodes of conflict between the Dutch and the Portuguese in Siam

After 1580, when Portugal and Spain were united in the same monarchy, the armed conflict between Spain and The Netherlands included from then on Portugal as well. The Portuguese ports (especially Lisbon) were blocked from the Dutch, which contributed to inspire them to get the merchandises they needed directly from the production areas, i.e., Asia. The Dutch collected information about Asian products and their sources through individuals such as Linschoten.²⁸ At first, Dutch vessels avoided Portuguese areas of influence and trading routes used by Portuguese ships. However, confrontations inevitably began, even before 1600, with the seizure of ships and casualties on both sides. To local potentates, the Dutch had the advantage of presenting an alternative to the Portuguese naval supremacy, while at the same time the Dutch were for the most part “uninterested in any proselytising activities”,²⁹ or at least less interested in such activities than in purely commercial ones.

It is worth examining how this conflict emerged in areas out of direct control of the Portuguese or the Dutch, and examine the motivations behind the conflicts, the nature of the rivalry and what it meant for the participants. In sum, how did this conflict express itself in Siam, and how did the Dutch perceive it in their writings?

was done in the attempt of saving his career within the VOC. If producing descriptions of a country and the history of its kings could save one’s career, consequently it also means that records of this type were highly valorized by the High Government in Batavia. See note 6 above for references.

²⁸ Linschoten, who was born in 1562 or 1563, lived in Enkhuizen as a child and was in Goa between 1583 and 1588, where he acted as the secretary of Portuguese archbishop D. Vincente da Fonseca. During those years, the Dutch traveler collected information of different nature (geography, politics, culture, commerce, navigation, etc.) related to the Indies, published as *Itinerario, Voyage ofte Schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naar Oost ofte Portugaels Indien* (Cornelis Claesz., Amsterdam, 1596). His works were soon translated into English, German, Latin and French, and had a huge impact on the Dutch and English maritime expansion in Asia. For a recent English edition see the forthcoming VAN LINSCHOTEN, John Huyghen, *Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies: The First Book, Containing His Description of the East*, 2 vols., Arthur Coke Burnell and P. A. Tiele (eds.), Cambridge University Press, 2010. For a Portuguese translation see: *Itinerário, Viagem ou Navegação para as Índias Orientais ou Portuguesas*, Arie Pos, Rui Manuel Loureiro (eds.), Arie Pos (transl.), Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, Lisbon, 1997.

²⁹ Cf. Rui Manuel LOUREIRO, “Early Portuguese Perceptions of the ‘Dutch threat’ in Asia”, in *Rivalry and Conflict. European Traders and Asian Trading Networks in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Ernst van Veen and Leonard Blussé (eds.), CNWS Publications, Leiden, 2005, p. 176.

3.1. Commercial rivalry

As it is well-known, trade was the main motivation for Dutch expansion in Asia. In this sense, much of the rivalry between the Dutch and the Portuguese was inevitably connected to trading ventures. Assuring access to production zones, and in particular obtaining monopolies from local authorities were the main objectives to be attained. The Dutch were better prepared. They had larger and safer investment capital and powerful modern ships that were heavily armed, allowed the transport of a great amount of cargo and at the same time provided adequate protection. The seizure of Dutch or Portuguese vessels had two great advantages: one could seize the cargo (and sometimes even the ship itself) while weakening the enemy.

However, an important element served as an intermediary between Dutch and Portuguese trading rivalry. In the case of Siam, the king controlled most of the monopolies and sent his vessels to diverse Asian ports. The king's authority was recognized by the Dutch and the Portuguese, and it was only by *grace* of the king that the Europeans could be assured of advantages in trade. To obtain such, everything was allowed, ranging from astute diplomatic moves to promises of helping out in ongoing conflicts with other neighbour states.

Thus, rivalry in trade implied political rivalry as well. Political decisions and strategies were set up in view of obtaining profit. Moreover, both sides employed politically motivated propaganda with the purpose of denigrating the enemy in the eyes of Asian rulers. The main trade-related objective was to virtually eliminate the competition, and at a political level, a number of measures were taken to achieve this objective. The conquest of ports, cities, key-spot trading *entrepôts* and vessels were for the most part political decisions with a trade-related objective. An example of political rivalry regarding Portuguese communities, that is to say against Portuguese private merchants, was the Dutch demands for the expulsion of the Portuguese from Makassar in 1667.³⁰

Scholars have emphasized the role that the Dutch played in the decline of the Portuguese Empire. Dutch sources show that they were admittedly responsible for the Portuguese losses in Asia and more specifically in Siamese territory: "the Portuguese enjoyed for many years prosperity and good reputation in Siam, until the servants of the Netherlands Company also took hold of the country. From time to time on several occasions (...), they caused the Portuguese so many losses that at present [1638] the Portuguese trade has much declined".³¹

³⁰ Cf. Stefan HALIKOWSKI SMITH, "No Obvious Home: The flight of the Portuguese "tribe" from Makassar to Ayutthaya and Cambodia during the 1660s" in *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 7, 1 (2010), pp. 1-28. See also note 12 above.

³¹ In *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 140. Boxer was one of the scholars who stressed how important the successive Dutch conquests of Portuguese possessions were in the decline of the Portu-

As it has been shown above, being enemies in commerce provoked an entire panoply of military actions. One could then wonder whether if there was no Iberian Union and no “excuse” for the war against Spain, would the Dutch and the Portuguese have engaged in such *ad infinitum* armed struggle? To put it another way, did commercial competition justify military action(s)?

3.2. Naval rivalry

The obvious response is “yes, it did”. Whether it was European-Asian competition or Europeans among themselves, the recourse to arms still signifies the difference between commercial success or failure. In this section, the focus will be on two incidents, which have in common the seizure of ships in a Siamese context, either in national or international waters. What was the meaning of these particular episodes for the “general” Asian-spread rivalry between the Dutch and the Portuguese?

The *Cleen Zeelandt* incident (1624)

In August 1624, D. Fernando de Silva, the captain of a Spanish galleon, launched a ‘semi-pirate’ action against a Dutch vessel, the *Cleen Zeelandt*, in the roads of the Chao Phraya River. As soon as the Thai king found out what had happened, he tried to convince D. Fernando to restore the ship to the Dutch. The Spaniard refused and king Song Tham ordered five or six of his galleons, with both Thai and Japanese crews, to capture D. Fernando’s galleon. In the subsequent battle, the Spaniards lost around one hundred and fifty men, among them the captain. The survivors were imprisoned and the Siamese took possession of all the cargo in the ship.³²

guese empire (see Charles BOXER, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1828*, New York, 1969, p. 114). On the other hand, van Veen draws a study around three entities which constitute the Portuguese ‘empire’, the *Carreira da Índia*, the *Estado da Índia*, and the Portuguese (private) intra-Asian trade, explaining when each of those entities started to lose ground and eventually declined (Ernst van VEEN, *Decay or Defeat – An inquiry into the Portuguese decline in Asia 1580-1645*, CNWS, Leiden University, Leiden, 2000). Concerning the situation of the Portuguese presence in Asia after the Iberian Union see Glenn J. AMES, *Renascent Empire? The House of Braganza and the Quest for Stability in Portuguese Monsoon Asia, ca.1640-1683*, Amsterdam University Press, 2000.

³² Cf. Van Vliet’s *Siam...*, p. 130 and 140-141. For the Spanish documentation concerning this episode see Florentino RODÃO, *Espanoles en Siam (1540-1939) – Una aportación al estudio de la presencia hispana en Asia*, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid, 1997, pp. 50-52. Vinal Smith claims that 200 people were killed, whilst Rodão claims 30 people. Since Rodão quotes mainly Spanish sources, perhaps the divergence of number between these two authors can be explained by Spanish will to minimize this defeat, reducing therefore the numbers of their loses (George Vinal SMITH, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand...*, pp. 18-19; and Florentino RODÃO, *Espanoles en Siam...*, p. 52).

According to Joost Schouten, the Portuguese suffered the consequences of this action directly:

(...) they are at present very low and out of credit, occasioned more particularly by their taking of a Dutch Yacht by a Spanish Galley in the River of *Siam*, [in the year 1624] which the King took so highly, that he revenged it with his Arms, which produced a war between him and *Manilha*; and however the *Portugals* seemed unconcerned in this quarrel, yet they wholly lost their credit at Court.³³

The situation of the Portuguese is somewhat confusing. Although part of the Iberian Union (*União Ibérica*) since 1580, it seems that in Siam Portugal continued to be seen as an independent country. Hence Schouten's last remark ("however the *Portugals* seemed unconcerned in this quarrel") and also van Vliet's observation that "although the Portuguese did not care much for what had happened, although they continued their correspondence and remained in Siam, they were since that time in disgrace with the king and the mandarins".³⁴ The true impact of the Iberian Union in Asia regarding Portuguese subjects remains yet to be determined.

The *De Walvisch* incident (August 1655)

The main source used for this episode is the diary of Gijsbert Heeck, a doctor in the service of the VOC, on his third voyage to the Indies. On 19th August 1655, the vessel *De Walvisch* (the Whale), coming from Batavia, arrived and "anchored in the roadstead at the mouth of the Siam River, firing three shots to signify a safe journey".³⁵ Shortly afterwards three vessels were spotted anchored in the same bay. The Dutch were unsure of their provenance, and thought they were ships belonging to the Siamese king. However, when they sailed by, they identified the vessels as a flute and two Portuguese yachts. Heeck states that it was the task of the captain, Van Campen, and of "the honorable (sic) ship's council to deliberate as to the best course of action under these circumstances".³⁶ They had their ship prepared to confront them if necessary. The Dutch approached the Portuguese flute (the flagship) with a sloop, to ask for its license, its pass³⁷ or if preferred, that the Portuguese

³³ And Schouten continues: "(...) This breach and difference between these two Nations, was fomented by the Dutch, and increased by several acts of hostility on the *Portugals* side, who took many of his Majesties Ships and Vassals at Sea", cf. Francis CARON & JOOST SCHOUTEN, *A True description...*, pp. 109-110.

³⁴ Cf. *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 140, see also page 235.

³⁵ In *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 29.

³⁶ Cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 30.

³⁷ On the Dutch pass system of *pasedullen*, based on the Portuguese *cartaz* see for instance George D. WINIUS, "Luso-Dutch Rivalry in Asia", in *Indo-Portuguese History: Global Trends. Proceedings of XI-International Seminar on Indo-Portuguese History*, F. da S. Gracias, C. Pinto, C. Borges (eds.), Maureen & Camvet Publishers, Goa, 2005, pp. 152-153.

captain went back to the Dutch ship to explain himself. The latter refused, explaining that “he was anchored under safekeeping or protection of the king of Siam, in his roads, and that therefore we [the Dutch] had no claims on him”.³⁸ On the other hand, the Dutch deliberated that he was too far from the coast, thus in international waters, and opened fire against the Portuguese ship. It defended itself well, and the Dutch prepared to “take him [the ship] by force (...) by grappling and boarding him”.³⁹ Heeck describes what followed:

Meanwhile we prayed (according to custom), asking the Lord for a blessed outcome and happy victory. The Portuguese, noting that they would be engaged again, hastily cut their anchor-rope, raised their topmasts and yard-arms, and (while we were busy raising our anchor) took course (with one of the other yachts) straight upriver until they ran aground. We followed them (...) [but] since our ship went too deep, it was not possible to come near her.⁴⁰

It seems the Portuguese were putting themselves clearly under the Siamese area of influence so that they could benefit from the Siamese king’s protection. At the same time they were getting out of international waters, where the Dutch might use their “legal right” to attack them. The decision as to whether to attack a Portuguese vessel came from the captain of the ship, who sometimes was following prior instructions from Batavia.⁴¹

As a result, Heeck affirms that “the Portuguese had complained bitterly about the injustice we had done them, demanding from the king immediate right to compensation for the damage they had suffered”.⁴² The Thai king sent his officials to enquire on board of the *De Walvisch* and the matter was then in the hands of the Siamese legal system. It seems the Dutch were able to convince king Prasat Thong that they were right in attacking the Portuguese vessel. The power of the Siamese court and the role it had as a mediator between the Europeans’ struggles is noticeable in this episode. While in Siam or in Siamese waters, both the Dutch and the Portuguese had to cope with local rules.

³⁸ Cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 31. Following the Portuguese captain’s reaction, Heeck praises his “good courage” and intrepid answer, which reveals a certain degree of cordial respect for the Portuguese captain.

³⁹ Cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 32.

⁴¹ In 1632, for instance, there was the following indication in the Batavia’s *Dag-register*: “... if the Comander deems it more advantageous to cruise for Portuguese vessels plying between Macao and Manilla, he may do so, but he must arrive in Toyan by the end of August (...) Afterwards the vessels that cannot be filled up at Toyan will sail with the North Monsoon to attack the Portuguese vessels going from Japan and Macao to Malacca”, in *Dutch Papers – Extracts from the “Dagh Register”...*, p. 7.

⁴² Cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 33.

These two episodes of naval conflict could mesh into the “general” Asia-wide rivalry on several points: on the one hand, the *Cleen Zeelandt* incident shows the practical impact of the Iberian Union where the Portuguese suffered the impact of Spanish actions against the Dutch. On the other hand, the *De Walvisch* incident demonstrates in the first place the control mechanisms that the Portuguese vessels were submitted to, like the pass system (*pasedullen*). The very existence of this system shows that there was at least one legal way to avoid Dutch attacks on Portuguese vessels. Second, rivalry depended on the circumstances, hence the Dutch captain’s power to decide whether to attack another ship or not. Third, in this incident the awareness of legal concepts such as “territorial waters” and “international waters” is especially relevant. In a complementary analysis, the *De Walvisch* incident suggests one of the Portuguese strategies to escape Dutch naval persecution: the use of smaller boats that were able to travel in shallow-waters, where the Dutch vessels could not sail.⁴³

Dutch-Portuguese rivalry had obviously different impact levels for its participants. The Dutch had clear naval and military supremacy, and managed to acquire many important monopolies in Southeast Asia. In seventeenth-century Siam that was also the case, and despite Portuguese efforts otherwise, the Dutch *comptoir* in Ayutthaya successfully subsisted for many years. The analysis of naval conflicts in Siamese waters showed that Dutch-Portuguese rivalry had indubitably a local character, where the role of the Asian ruler as conflict-mediator was in evidence and accepted by Europeans.⁴⁴

4. Cooperation: On the interaction between the Dutch and the Portuguese in Siam

In their writings, the Dutch clearly preferred to focus on rivalry because situations of conflict were often dictated by the VOC’s internal strategy, and thus were highly influential in local politics and trade rhythms. As a result, information concerning cooperation forms and episodes of interaction and sharing between the Portuguese and the Dutch is well hidden. Nevertheless, a careful source analysis might disclose these possible forms of partnership.

It is relevant to note that much of this data is absent from Portuguese secondary literature and published sources. For this reason, Dutch sources have a special importance for the study of Portuguese expansion in mainland Southeast Asia. Interaction also implied some form of data compilation

⁴³ See Heeck’s affirmation reported above (cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 32).

⁴⁴ In other Asian regions, local populations are the ones recurring to the Dutch as conflict-mediators, since they represented a foreign and just element. In Siam, however, this “just element” is the country’s king. See David HENLEY, “Conflict, Justice, and the Stranger-King Indigenous Roots of Colonial Rule in Indonesia and Elsewhere”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 38:1, 2004, pp. 85-144.

about the Portuguese. After all, “it is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will fight without danger in battles”.⁴⁵ To illustrate this point, we will give some examples of how the Dutch perceived the Portuguese, with special emphasis on the Portuguese community in Ayutthaya.

4.1. Commercial activities

In the *Daghregisters gehouden in 't Casteel Batavia*, one finds observations regarding the performance of the Portuguese commercial initiatives in Siam. Around 1640, Dutch sources narrate the difficult situation Portuguese traders were going through, a mirror of the crisis the *Estado da Índia* was facing. Under 1640-1641 there is the following entry:

The trade of the Portuguese had turned out very badly. They had sold only a few goods, besides the spialter and the radix china which were sold at such a low price that there could not have been any profit at all. Perceiving that they could not dispose of their silk embroidery there, they intended to sail for Manilha.⁴⁶

The next year entry, 1641-1642, insists on the same topic: “The Portuguese negotiation in Siam is going on very badly, and ship-building proceeds slowly, probably the vessel will not be ready within the year”.⁴⁷ Besides the commercial information, this entry reveals that the Portuguese were also involved in ship-building activities; however, the entry is not clear as to whether the Portuguese ordered ships to be built in Siam or whether they participated directly in the construction process.

The Dutch insisted on the unfavourable economic prospects of the Portuguese, giving the example of a Portuguese ship coming from Makassar:

On the 3rd of August [1640 or 1641] another Portuguese vessel, which came from Macassar, had come to Bangkok. The captain was called Juan de Strados, a Scotchman by birth, who had lived more than 45 years in Spain and in India. His yacht had a cargo of 160 piculs of sandal-wood, 90 piculs of sulphur, 30 piculs cloves, some hair for finishing ropework, and 800 bundles of rattan-wood, besides a letter of introduction and a small present for the Berckelangh from the regent of Macassar. The captain has been treated wondrously well, but he has sold nothing up to this date, so he will make a bad voyage.⁴⁸

Van Vliet often compared instances of Portuguese commercial failure in Siam with the successes of the VOC. The author’s strategy can perhaps be partially explained by the fact that the primary objective of his writings was

⁴⁵ Classical Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* saying.

⁴⁶ In *Dutch Papers – Extracts from the “Dagh Register”...*, p. 84.

⁴⁷ In *Dutch Papers – Extracts from the “Dagh Register”...*, p. 100.

⁴⁸ In *Dutch Papers – Extracts from the “Dagh Register”...*, p. 85.

to obtain a promotion in the VOC's hierarchy. Naturally, focusing on how well VOC trade in Siam was progressing under his supervision, and informing Batavia about Portuguese commercial losses demonstrated the VOC's success to its director in Batavia.

Behind this background of Portuguese commercial failures, information regarding private local traders emerges: "The Portuguese mestizos and the Mons were concerned only with internal trade. After they had procured goods for foreign markets they sold or traded them to exporters. Lumber and rice were major goods provided by the Mons; the Portuguese mestizos did not seem to have any particular specialty except for deer and buffalo hides in the early years of the century".⁴⁹ Vinal Smith presents other references to Portuguese mestizos who were active in the internal market, procured and sold non-monopoly products to the Dutch: "Throughout the seventeenth century the Dutch bought most of the nonmonopoly goods from Japanese, Muslim (Persian, Indian and Malay), Chinese, Mon and Portuguese mestizo *nai*".⁵⁰ Bhawan Ruangsilp adds that "the Portuguese delivered local goods", among which were deer skins.⁵¹

Moreover, each *nai* seemed to send a representative of his upcountry, with the task of buying merchandise: "Domestic goods were actually purchased by the individual *nai*'s 'phrai' [representative] who went upcountry to transact business with the rural commoners. These 'phrai' traders, who were of the same ethnic identity as their *nai*, brought the goods back to Ayutthaya where the *nai* sold them to foreign traders".⁵² In this quote, the role played by foreign communities in Thai domestic commercial sphere is evidenced, a role that seems to be reserved for these communities in exclusivity. The fact that Portuguese mestizos are included in this category seems to indicate that they took an active part in supplying monopolized goods to the Dutch. How did these activities conjoin with the official trade policy of the *Estado da Índia* where commercial Luso-Dutch rivalry often occurred?

Another sign of cooperation (or at least of *non-rivalry*) is worth mentioning: on 2nd September 1655, the Dutch passed across three Portuguese vessels and the Portuguese flute *Lübeck*, lying in front of Ban Chao Phraya in the Chao Phraya River. The flute was the same ship with which the Dutch had engaged some days beforehand (see the *De Walvisch* incident). "They let us pass free and unmolested however", Heeck reveals.⁵³ The Dutch serving

⁴⁹ Cf. George Vinal SMITH, "Princes, Nobles and Traders: Ethnicity and Economic Activity in Seventeenth-century Thailand", in *Contributions to Asian Studies*, vol. 15 – *Royalty and Commoners: essays in Thai administrative, economic, and social history*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1980, p. 9.

⁵⁰ The *nai* (a specific rank in Thai society) was the chief of a determined group of people in Ayutthaya. In the Portuguese community, the *nai* was often the chief of the settlement (the *capitão-mor do bandel*). Cf. George Vinal SMITH, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand...*, p. 75.

⁵¹ Cf. Bhawan RUANGSILP, *Dutch East India...*, pp. 44-45 and p. 235, note 40.

⁵² Cf. George Vinal SMITH, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand...*, p. 75.

⁵³ Cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 37.

at the Bangkok lodge “were familiar with this flute. They had been on board several times while on the river.” Heeck also states that the ship was in its third voyage from Macao, that it was in bad shape, and that “her cargo consists mainly of coconut-oil, ripe coconuts, ripe bananas, and rice, as much as they can procure for export, and other cheap wares. They return mainly with gold chains, hat-bands, buttons, and other very unusual golden objects which they offer for sale, and these sorely tempted us, but to no avail”.⁵⁴

On the 16th of September 1655, the Dutch vessel in which Gijsbert Heeck travelled met this flute again and three other Portuguese vessels in Bangkok. They “were lying near the shore, fastened with ropes. [...] (After the confrontation with us, as told above) they were forced to remain here throughout the coming northern monsoon, because [...] without this southerly wind it is impossible to go up to Macao or other points north”.⁵⁵ And then an extraordinary exchange took place:

“As our boat passed here our crew went on board and sold them sole hats, knives, and the like, for which they paid well enough, showing our crew all signs of friendship”.⁵⁶

If Heeck’s testimony is accurate, barely one month after the direct confrontation between the Dutch vessel *De Walvisch* and the Portuguese *Lübeck*, their crews were showing “signs of friendship”. One might be led to reconsider the gravity of the previous confrontation, and to acknowledge the subjective character an episode of rivalry could take on.

4.2. A case study of the Portuguese settlement in Ayutthaya

Descriptions of Portuguese people living in mainland Southeast Asia, and of their social practices rarely appear in Portuguese sources. A good example of what occurs periodically in VOC sources is descriptions of the Portuguese “people” in comparison with the Dutch. One Dutch source refers to the Portuguese and the Spanish in Siam as “people of such bad, irregular disposition, they were so volatile and so much given to fighting, amongst themselves as well as against the indigenous people of this land”. It is actually a contrasting definition, because the author defines the Iberians as the opposite of the Dutch: “By contrast, it has usually been the case that the Chief of the Hollanders (who have been resided in this Kingdom), have been reasonably civil and well-behaved”.⁵⁷ The definition by contrast has the

⁵⁴ This quote and the previous in: *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 37. Here is an example on how Dutch sources can be influential when grasping the commercial movements of Portuguese vessels (as well as their cargo) while in Siam.

⁵⁵ Cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 68.

⁵⁶ Cf. *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 68.

⁵⁷ Both quotes are from Van Vliet, in *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 68.

advantage of giving a positive image of the contrasting object, in this case subject (the Chief of the Hollanders). In addition, examples of the “participative perspective”, where the observer describes the observed while taking part in the action, are also worth noticing.

By analysing what the Dutch tell about the Portuguese, one might disclose clues as to the nature of their relationship as well as contribute to the study of the Portuguese expansion through the intrinsic content of that sort of data. Moreover, if one takes into consideration that most Dutch sources used in this essay came from direct observations, the observer and the observed were probably at a close distance, which implied a certain level of attention and social proximity. In this sense, the Portuguese settlement in Ayutthaya constitutes a unique case study because it presents evidence of the Luso-Dutch relationship in a relatively close space.

The Portuguese community in Ayutthaya was formed mainly by migrations and intermarriage politics. Consequently, in the seventeenth century the population of the Portuguese settlement consisted mostly of mestizos, the result of various types of miscegenation practices. Van Vliet, who was assistant and later director of the Ayutthayan *lodgie*, commented on the situation of the Portuguese around 1635: “there are in this country only a few poor Portuguese, mestizos and Indian Christians”.⁵⁸ In turn, Kaempfer, who visited Siam in 1690, states that “on the opposite side of the [Chao Phraya] River stands a village inhabited by a Portuguese race begot on black Women”.⁵⁹ Dutch sources contain several references to Portuguese-Japanese individuals, and to Portuguese ‘half-caste children’ with Siamese and Chinese mothers,⁶⁰ to give a couple of examples. Likewise, French sources show some examples of ‘a Portuguese who married a Pegu woman’, a Portuguese woman whose husband was Armenian,⁶¹ etc.

The status of the mixed offspring is an interesting element for analysis. The *Dagh-register* of Batavia, on the 13th May 1641 entry, carries what is believed to be a missive from the Siamese king to the Dutch Governor-General in Batavia: “On Your Honour’s demand the King, our Lord, has granted to Capt. Van Vlieth that the Christian children, born from Netherlands parents, might leave this country to be educated in your language, religion and morals, according to Your Honour’s wish”.⁶² However, on some occasions the fate of these children was not in the hands of their European relatives.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Van Vliet’s Siam...*, p. 141.

⁵⁹ Cf. Engelbert KAEMPFER, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam...*, p. 51.

⁶⁰ See Anonymous, “Succinct Account...”, p. 132.

⁶¹ References in Marcel LE BLANC, S.J., *Histoire de la révolution du royaume de Siam arrivée en l’année 1688 et de l’état présent des Indes*, 2 vols., Horace Molin, Lyon, 1692, vol. 1, p. 311.

⁶² In *Dutch Papers – Extracts from the “Dagh Register”...*, p. 90. Han ten BRUMMELHUIS dedicates some pages to the history of Thai-Dutch children and the difficulties of bringing them to Batavia, see his *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat: A History of the Contacts between The Netherlands and Thailand*, De Tijdstroom, Lochem/Gent, 1987, pp. 57-60.

A Dutch text of an anonymous author describing what happened during the so-called Revolution of 1688 in Siam shows a different side of the story:

M. des Fargues⁶³ had had two half-caste Portuguese disguised in Siamese clothes, and sent them to Judia [Ayutthaya] to find out what was happening at the court. They were recognized, arrested, and sent to prison, and this so irritated the king that he had the bearing of arms by all the Portuguese forbidden, and seized and took away to the court all their children born of Siamese and Chinese mothers. This caused much agitation in the town with the cries of these mothers, but they obtained no concessions and seemed without hope of ever seeing them again, which indeed so happened, for the head of the Dutch Company went to the court to request the king to return the children to these disconsolate mothers; the king granted his request, but to little purpose, because when it was desired to take them away, [137r] none were found, [...] so that these poor innocents became slaves [...].⁶⁴

It is worth drawing attention to the efforts made by the Dutch Director in Ayutthaya to restore these Portuguese mixed children to their mothers, once again proving that he was “reasonably civil and well-behaved”.⁶⁵ Also, the quote shows the control of the Siamese king over his subjects, even in the case of mixed children of European parents.

Dutch sources make several revealing observations about the social organization of the *Ban Portuguet* and about the participation of its members in Thai society. Van Vliet states that the Portuguese were under the authority of a ‘quartermaster’, Opra Ray Montri (Okphra Ratchamontri). He even explains why this happened: “in the whole country the common class of people, who are not slaves, are divided under quartermasters. [...] This is done for the accommodation of the king, for if His Majesty needs people, these quartermasters are requested to provide the required number”.⁶⁶ The Portuguese are the only community of European origins under this system, according to van Vliet; the others are the Pegus, the Laos, the Japanese, the Chinese and the Malays. Could this indicate a certain degree of integration of the Portuguese and their descendants within Thai society or is it just an artifice for the king to better control the population?

Some leads into this matter may be gained through analysing the occupations and *métiers* of the Portuguese community members. Working as an interpreter was one of the most common occupations of the Portuguese descendants. Van Vliet refers to Alexander Pinieur, a Portuguese mestizo at

⁶³ The French General Desfarges.

⁶⁴ In Anonymous, “Succinct Account...”, p. 132.

⁶⁵ In *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 68.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 149. The Thai category of ‘quartermaster’ can be compared to the Cambodian *Shabandar* (a Malayan word, *Sabander* in Dutch). See the “Journael in Cambodia van Jan Dircxz Gaelen, 1636”, in Hendrik P. N. MULLER (ed.), *De Oost-Indische Compagnie in Cambodja en Laos: verzameling van bescheiden van 1636 tot 1670*, Martinus Nijhoff, ‘s-Gravenhage, 1917, pp. 59-124, especially pp. 63-64.

a Thai noble's service: "one of the Berckelang's people and a very good friend of ours [the Dutch]".⁶⁷ The importance of interpreters who could express themselves in Portuguese or Malay is demonstrated in a posterior affirmation of van Vliet:

That if we had been provided with able interpreters, this whole incident⁶⁸ could have been prevented. Our people had necessarily gone out without an interpreter because the Pecap speaks neither Portuguese nor Malay, and Trompanidt (who speaks only a little Portuguese) had been away for twelve days without having told us where he was going.⁶⁹

Commercially and diplomatically, the interpreters who spoke Portuguese would provide an effective service for the Dutch.

Another aspect worth mentioning is the sporadic participation of Portuguese descendants in the Siamese army. Van Vliet states that "in the beginning of the year 1634, the King assembled a powerful army of about thirty thousand Siamese soldiers (reinforced with many foreigners residing in His Majesty's Kingdom, such as Portuguese mestizos, Japanese, Malays, and other)".⁷⁰ Apart from this remark, van Vliet does not mention the Portuguese soldiers again. Schouten is equally silent on this topic. One explanation might be the fact that the Portuguese were only called to serve in the army in a particular conflict, in case of an extraordinary need, thus not as a profession. This clearly contradicts the "traditional" image of the Portuguese mercenary that appears in the sixteenth century (men who would be put at the king's service every time the occasion arose), but rather reinforces the idea of a veritable integration of the Portuguese in Siamese society's structures in the seventeenth century.

The population of the *Ban Portuguet* could also be part of the crew of His Majesty's ships, as simple sailors or pilots. As it is well known, the vessels of the Siamese king carried out trade in all of Asia. Engelbert Kaempfer mentions one of these men, while he describes an episode about a Japanese man called Hanjemon:

In 1682 he [Hanjemon] went on board a large Siamese Jonk, bound for Manilhas in the Philippine Islands. The Pilot of this Jonk, on board which there were besides him sixty four other People, was a Portuguese. After a tolerable

⁶⁷ Cf. *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 50. Pinieur is not a Portuguese surname. Yet, it could be an adaptation from the Portuguese name Pinho or Pinheiro. The 'Barcalan' was the Siamese minister of foreign trade or what we would call today 'foreign affairs'.

⁶⁸ Van Vliet is referring here to the Picnic Incident. For more details check Han ten BRUMMELHUIS, JOHN KLEINEN, *A Dutch Picnic in Ayutthaya, 1636*, Amsterdam Asian Studies No. 52, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 1984; and also *Van Vliet's Siam...*, pp. 34-88.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 61. Pecap spoke only "the Siamese and Moorish languages" (p. 75) while Trompanidt was the VOC translator. Instead of going out with an interpreter who knew the Siamese, like Pecap, the Dutch preferred someone who spoke Portuguese which is quite peculiar, since the Picnic Incident occurred in Siamese context.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 313.

good Voyage the Ship stranded in fair weather on a rock about two Leagues off a small low Island, call'd by the Portuguese Visia Grande. The Pilot and some others went into the Boat, and after six Days driving made the Coasts of Tunquim from whence they return'd to Siam.⁷¹

Hanjemon, after many adventures, managed to come back to Siam on board Kaempfer's VOC ship, only to understand "to his great grief, that his Wife, impatient of his long and tedious absence, had laid aside all hopes of ever seeing her Husband again, and married a Portugueze, by whom she had already a Child".⁷²

Finally, curious information presented by Kaempfer describes the representation of Portuguese people in Siamese art, in this case in the Barcalan's temple doors: "The second square contain'd two remarkable Temples, the first of which represented on each door in the porch two Savages with heads of Devils, [...] and at the back door were painted two Portugueze as big as the Life".⁷³ Kaempfer's drawings show this temple and several of its architectural and decorative features, but unfortunately they do not depict the temple doors where the life-size Portuguese figures were painted.

The religious experience was an important trace of the Ayutthayan Portuguese community. An immediate interrogation arises from this observation: how was the spiritual life of its members conducted? And how did the Dutch understand religion in their writings? To explore these items and others it is worth taking a closer look at the religious life of the Europeans in seventeenth-century Siam.

4.3. Religiousness. The Christian experience in Siam

Dutch authors described the catholic Portuguese churches and the religious orders who kept them, and did not lose the opportunity to comment on the ultimate function of these institutions – the spread of the Catholic faith. Engelbert Kaempfer presents quite an accurate description of the Portuguese churches, which he visited in Ayutthaya in 1690:

On the opposite side of the [Chao Phraya] River stands a village inhabited by a Portuguese race begot on black Women, and further down stands a Church, dedicated to St. Domingo, to which belong the Fathers of the Dominican Order. Behind it stands another small Church, which is kept by two Fathers of the Order of St. Austin, who with the foresaid three Dominicans live peaceably together in a House built of Reed. Not so far from hence, on the same plain, stands a Jesuit Church nam'd St. Paul, after the chief Church at Goa, belonging to the Fathers of this Order (...).⁷⁴

⁷¹ In Engelbert KAEMPFER, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam...*, p. 15. Additional data on Kaempfer's biography and new unpublished papers in Barend Jan TERWIEL (ed.), *Engelbert Kaempfer in Siam*, Iudicium, München, 2003.

⁷² Cf. Engelbert KAEMPFER, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam...*, p. 17.

⁷³ Cf. Engelbert KAEMPFER, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam...*, p. 62.

⁷⁴ Cf. Engelbert KAEMPFER, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam...*, p. 51-52.

Thanks to Kaempfer one has a hint about how many Christians lived in Siam: “The Roman Catholik Ecclesiasticks in Siam have assur’d me, that there live above three thousand six hundred Christians in the neighbourhood of Judia [Ayutthaya], who are past seven years of age, and have been admitted to the Sacrament”.⁷⁵ As we have seen, this estimation does not correspond to the number of Portuguese people, but rather to the number of “Christians”, without specifying whether it includes both Catholic and Protestant faiths or the citizenship of the faithful. Being “christian” was therefore viewed as a “status”, with more substance to it than just the reflection of a spiritual experience.

Examining who exactly frequented the catholic churches can be a fecund exercise. Around 1641-42, the Thai king gave a curious order: “The King has ordered that nobody, except Portuguese, may enter the Papist church or go to mess, upon pain of death”.⁷⁶ So authorization to frequent the churches in Ayutthaya was allowed exclusively to the Portuguese. About fifteen years later, Heeck reports a distinct situation in Ayutthaya:

The Portuguese very frequently visit our lodge, and our people in return go to their quarter, almost as if they were allied friends, even though the contrary was evidenced [by the incident] at the mouth of this river. Their priests come and baptize the children begotten by our people, and they marry them and drink with one another in all friendship, but it is a Machiavellian friendship, as one may imagine.⁷⁷

Again, we have suggestions of friendly relations between the Portuguese community and the Dutch living in the lodge. From a historiographical point of view, this is something completely new, since there is no information about it in Portuguese sources so far consulted. The attitude of the Dutch people who appealed to Portuguese priests can perhaps be explained by the small number of protestant preachers in Southeast Asia. The VOC wasn’t keen on financially supporting their employees’ spiritual lives although the rites Heeck mentioned (baptism and marriage) were considered crucial for any Christian community. So why not use the good services of the Roman Catholic priests that sojourned just across the river? Heeck affirms that the Dutch and the Portuguese visited their respective quarters for recreational activities, and when this happened they “drink with one another in all friendship”. The signs of proximity are abundantly clear, and one hopes to find more evidence of this type of “friendliness” in Dutch sources in manuscript form.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Cf. Engelbert KAEMPFER, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam...*, p. 52.

⁷⁶ *Dutch Papers – Extracts from the “Dagh Register”...*, p. 100.

⁷⁷ In *A Traveler in Siam in the Year 1655...*, p. 61.

⁷⁸ In the archaeological excavations of the Portuguese *São Domingos* church in Ayutthaya several Dutch pipes and VOC period coins were discovered. One possible interpretation is that this set of artefacts might indicate exchanges between the two communities, thus reinforcing

Another feature Dutch sources refer to is the conversion attempts made by Portuguese missionaries among the local people. Joost Schouten described the situation of these priests: “they [the Portuguese] had not only the free exercise of their Religion, but their chief Priest had also a monethly pension allowed him for his more splendid subsistence”.⁷⁹ Despite this tone of criticism, the missionary zeal of these catholic priests was never questioned. On the contrary, the Dutch gave other types of explanations for the priests’ failures:

The [Siamese] priests carry themselves very moderately to those of a contrary Religion, condemning no opinions, but believe that all, though of differing tenets, living virtuously, may be saved, all services which are performed with zeal being acceptable to the great God, especially theirs, they being convinced of its truth and innocence. This constancy of theirs makes them not easily to be drawn to any other persuasion, which hath been sufficiently attempted by the *Portugals*, whose industrious Priests omitted nothing for their conversion, and by the Mahometans who are no lesse zealous in their way, though with little or no success by either of them, and yet the Christians, as also the Mahometans, are both permitted the free exercise of their Religions in their Country.⁸⁰

Similarly, van Vliet presents the same opinion: “The little success of the Portuguese we cannot ascribe to the little ardor of their priests, but principally to the old customs and the obstinacy of the Siamese”.⁸¹ The same is valid for Cambodia, where the Portuguese evangelistic fervour never attained great results. The Khmer people were extremely clenched to their religious convictions, so that “in almost 150 years of missions (...) the few Cambodians which converted to Christianity never reached twenty and even those, shortly afterwards, embraced their original religion”.⁸²

The perception of Dutch authors regarding Portuguese missionary activities show no visible judgements as to the model followed in the conversion process. The Dutch do not present alternative strategies or solutions; they just observe and comment on the event. Their perspective is rather passive, which is consistent with the common indifference of the Dutch towards proselytizing matters.

the idea of proximity between the Dutch and the Portuguese given by Heeck. The potential of manuscript Dutch sources is revealed in the Guide prepared by Ernst van Veen and Daniel Klijn (eds.), *A Guide to the Sources of the History of Dutch-Portuguese Relations in Asia (1594-1797)*, Institute for the History of European Expansion, Leiden, 2001. It is a remarkable work that presents evidence of different kinds: commercial movement of Portuguese ships, their cargo, the ports they call at and information about their crews; references to several Portuguese and/or Portuguese mestizo individuals and their network of contacts; private Portuguese trade in Southeast Asia, and so forth.

⁷⁹ Cf. Francis CARON & Joost SCHOUTEN, *A True description...*, p. 109.

⁸⁰ Cf. Francis CARON & Joost SCHOUTEN, *A True description...*, p. 106.

⁸¹ Cf. *Van Vliet's Siam...*, p. 161.

⁸² In the words of Vanessa LOUREIRO, “The Jesuits in Cambodia: a look upon the Cambodian religiousness (2nd half of the 16th century to the 1st quarter of the 18th century)”, *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies*, 10/11, June/December 2005, p. 221.

Concluding remarks

The idea behind the topic of this study was to reassess the nature of the Luso-Dutch relationship in the Siamese context. The nature of this relationship is not so reducible as it has been assumed to date as just a question of rivalry. Indeed, this relationship has revealed evidence of cooperation, which could arise under particular circumstances. A complementary objective was to examine the construction of an image – a perspective – engaging Europeans in Asia. The usual image in the historiography revolves around how the European perceived the Asian or how the Asian perceived the European. The question left to be asked then is how did the Europeans perceive other Europeans in an Asian context?

In this sense, it became necessary to analyse Dutch sources through the conceptual tool of perception, which implies to be aware that the existence of an image presupposes equally a construction, where two elements intervene: the *observer* and the *observed*. Thanks to the methodology followed in this paper, a new and different image of the Luso-Dutch relationship emerges from Dutch sources, when compared to that of the Portuguese archival material.

Accordingly, the rivalry between the Dutch and the Portuguese has been looked at from a closer angle. The main factors for rivalry were economic (mainly for monopoly rights) and political. These factors were expressed in naval combats and political strategies, which included aggressive diplomatic moves against each other. The *Cleen Zeelandt* and the *De Walvisch* incidents reveal that the rivalry took a local character, and show evidence of the role played by the Siamese monarch and his legal systems as moderator of the conflict.

Occasionally, the subjective character of this rivalry allowed for a few cooperative moments in Luso-Dutch relations. In fact, Dutch sources allude to Portuguese mestizos selling certain goods to the Dutch in Siam, and to Portuguese interpreters at the VOC's service in the Ayutthayan *lodgie*. There is also evidence that the Dutch and the Portuguese visited each other's settlements, which suggests probable signs of friendship between them. The Dutch would also resort to the services of the Roman Catholic priests from time to time. Although in VOC sources the *observed* is primarily represented as an enemy, he could also be understood as a friend, in a very particular context of daily proximity.

In addition, Dutch observations allow us to understand a number of anthropological and social features of the Portuguese community in Siam, as well as to consider new demographic and spatial organization data. From this analysis, a diverse ethnic composition of the population emerges revealing the preponderance of mixed children and mestizos with their own status within the Thai society. Furthermore, the analysis of the *métiers* of

people living in the settlement gives the impression that many participated actively in the institutional affairs of the Siamese kingdom. The hypothesis of integration of the Portuguese in Siamese society seems to grow stronger, especially when taking into the equation the overall context from the 1630s onwards, i.e., the difficult situation of the official instances in Goa which might have increased the vulnerability of the Portuguese private communities in mainland Southeast Asia. These communities could less and less rely on the Portuguese Empire for assuring their status-quo and their economic prosperity.

The issue of whether there was a degree of integration of these individuals into Thai society and the state apparatus or whether the king submitted them to the Siamese state system only as a way of assuring control over this population is still unsolved. The aspects listed above concerning the Portuguese in Ayutthaya strongly suggest that the Portuguese role had changed from what was observed for the sixteenth century. One century later, they seem to have evolved from a mercenary/soldier of fortune role to a more permanent position, which gave them the same rights and duties as long-term inhabitants of the Siamese country. It goes without saying that one still needs to establish to what degree the Portuguese were integrated or integrated themselves into Thai society, and more importantly, how exactly this process took place.

Finally, let us consider the nature of the Dutch-Portuguese relationship in layers and relate them to a spatial context. At the top layer, we have a bitter enmity, following the propaganda of the governments in Portugal and in the Dutch Republic. The *Heren XVII* incite the military confrontation in Asia, and the Portuguese refer to the Dutch with epithets like “the Enemies of Faith”, “the Dutch pirates and rebels”, “men who do not have faith, nor word, nor king”.⁸³ It is the official, “politically correct” sphere, a thick layer of ideology. Below sits another layer, an economic one, based on the commercial rivalry to obtain Asian products or to sell them for the highest prices. Militarism, diplomacy and political ruses are the key features of this strategic layer, which allowed the VOC to achieve its successes in Asia. Under this layer there is another one, more vulnerable and narrow, based on the economic collaboration in a domestic space between the Dutch and the Portuguese private traders in order to obtain profit. Finally, we have the last layer characterised by close contacts which implied a kind of personal proximity. It is the subtle layer of friendship, which had to be “machiavellian” due to the layers above it. The Dutch and the Portuguese were enemies in a conceptual context, but showed signs of partnership in daily life. After all, at the ground level, *they had to live together*.

⁸³ Cf. BOCARRO, *Década 13*, chap 117, p. 523. Translated from the Portuguese original, “os piratas e rebeldes holandeses; (...) são homens que não tem fé, nem palavra, nem rei”. George Vinal Smith mentions equally “the Portuguese assertion that the Dutch had no land but were only sea pirates”, in George Vinal SMITH, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand...*, p. 12.