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Silk for silver: Dutch-Vietnamese relations, 1637-1700

Hoang, A.T.

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EXPLANATION FOR UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

Currencies

1 tael	= 10 maas = 100 conderin = 3 guilders 2 stuivers (before 1636) = 2 guilders 17 stuivers (1636-1666) = 3 guilders 10 stuivers (1666-1743)
1 rixdollar (rixdaalder)	= 48 stuivers (up to 1665) = 60 stuivers (after 1666)
1 *quan* (long string)	= 10 *tiền* (short string) = 600 cash (*kasjes*)
1 tael	= c. 2,000 cash (before the 1650s) = c. 6-700 cash (during the 1650s and 1660s) = c. 2,200 cash (during the 1670-1700 period)

Weights

1 picul	= 100 catty = 125 Dutch pounds = c. 60 kg
1 catty	= 16 taels = 600 gr
1 tael	= 37.5 gr = 0.0759 Dutch pound = 0.0827 English pound
1 Dutch pound	= 494 gr = 13.17 taels
1 *faccaar*	see Glossary

GLOSSARY

C.: Chinese; D.: Dutch; H.: Hindi; J.: Japanese; M.: Malay; P.: Portuguese; V.: Vietnamese.

bakufu	(J.) the Shogunate Government.
bariga	(P.) belly, used to designate second quality goods. See also: *cabessa* and *pee*.
baa(s)	silk textile from Tonkin.
Batavia	(in endnotes) the Governor-General and the Council of the Indies.
bogy	a Japanese name for yellow (raw) silk.
burgemeester	(D.) governor or mayor, for instance, of Nagasaki.
cabessa	(P.) head, used to designate the first quality goods, especially silk. See also: *bariga* and *pee*.
calambac	resin from the finest kind of aloeswood, with a strong, pleasant scent, used in medicine and fragrance. Or the dried root of the Chinese rhubarb used as laxative.
capado	also *capada*: eunuch.
chio(s)	silk textile from Tonkin.
Chúa:	(V.) Lord, but actually King (vương: 王) in the context of seventeenth-century Tonkin. See also: *Vua*.
calico	all-cotton fabric woven in plain or tabby weave and printed with simple designs in one or more colours, originally from Calicut (India).
catty	(M. *käti*) an unit of weight. 100 catties = 1 picul (c. 60 kg). See: Explanation of the Units of Measurement.
chious	silk textile from Tonkin.
chiourons	also *chiouronghs*, *chouwerons*: silk textile from Tonkin.
chop	(H. *chhäp*) an official stamp or permit, by extension any official document bearing a seal-impression or stamp.
Coxinga	the popular name of Zheng Chenggong (1624-1662), a prominent leader of the anti-Qing movement and a general who recovered Taiwan from Dutch colonial rule in 1662.
eiryakusen	(J.) coin minted in Nagasaki for the Restored Ming in southern China and the Zheng in Taiwan prior to the early 1680s.
faccaar	unit of weight used in the Tonkin silk trade. The calculation was one tael of fine silver for some taels of raw silk. For instance, the silk price of 15 *faccaar* means one tael fine silver (c. 2.17 guilders) for 15 taels raw silk (c. 1.13 Dutch pounds).
galiot(a)	small ship which could both be sailed and rowed.

genho tsuho	(J.) coin minted in Nagasaki for export, mainly to Quinam and Tonkin, between 1659 and 1685.
Gentlemen XVII	(D. *Heren XVII*): a board of directors forming the supreme decision-making authority, generally convened in Amsterdam.
High Government	(D. *Hoge Regering*) the Asian headquarters of the VOC in Batavia, formed by the Governor-General and the Council of the Indies.
hockiens	(V. *hoàng quyến*?) (also *hockingh*, *hockins*) yellow silk textile.
itowappu	(J.) a system in which Chinese silk imported to Japan was purchased by Japanese merchants at prices fixed by the Japanese authorities, namely the heads of the five shogunal cities (Miyako, Edo, Osaka, Sakai, and Nagasaki) in order to prevent rising prices as a result of competition. This system was first applied to the Portuguese in 1604, to the Chinese in 1633, and then to the Dutch in 1641. It was annulled in 1654 and was re-applied from 1685.
yakan	(J.) kettle.
jurebass	(M. *juru bahsa*) interpreter.
kaikin	(J.) the maritime prohibition policy of the Japanese Tokugawa.
kanme	(J.) a monetary unit. One *kanme* = 100 taels of silver.
kasjes	(D.) coins made of copper, zinc, or spelter with a hole in the centre. *Kasjes* circulated in Tonkin in the seventeenth century could either be locally minted or imported from China or Japan. See: Explanation of the Units of Measurement.
koban	(J.) small shaped gold coin in Japan, weighing 18 gr, valued at six rixdollars. See also: *oban*.
kronen	(D.) coin used in the Indies, also called *leeuwendaalder*, valued at 39 stuivers (1615) and at 48 stuivers (1639).
kruisdaalder	(D.) silver coin minted in Holland, valued at c. 3.60 guilders.
lb	Dutch pound (*pond*), 0.495 kg.
leeuwendaalder	(D.) see: *kronen*.
lings	(V. *lĩnh*?) (also: *linghs*, *langhs, pelings, pelangs*) silk textile from Tonkin.
loas	(V. *lụa*?) silk textile from Tonkin.
maas	(also: *mas*, *maes*) an unit of weight. 10 *maas* = 1 tael. See: Explanation for Units of Measurement.
Mexicanen	Mexican silver coins.
musk	(*muscus* in Dutch) a substance with a strong, penetrating odour obtained from a small sac under the skin of the abdomen of the male musk deer, used in perfume and medicinally.
nachoda	(Persian: *na-khuda*) (also *anachoda*, *annakhoda*) captain of an Asian vessel, especially Chinese junk.
navet	(P. *naveta*) small sea-sailing ship.

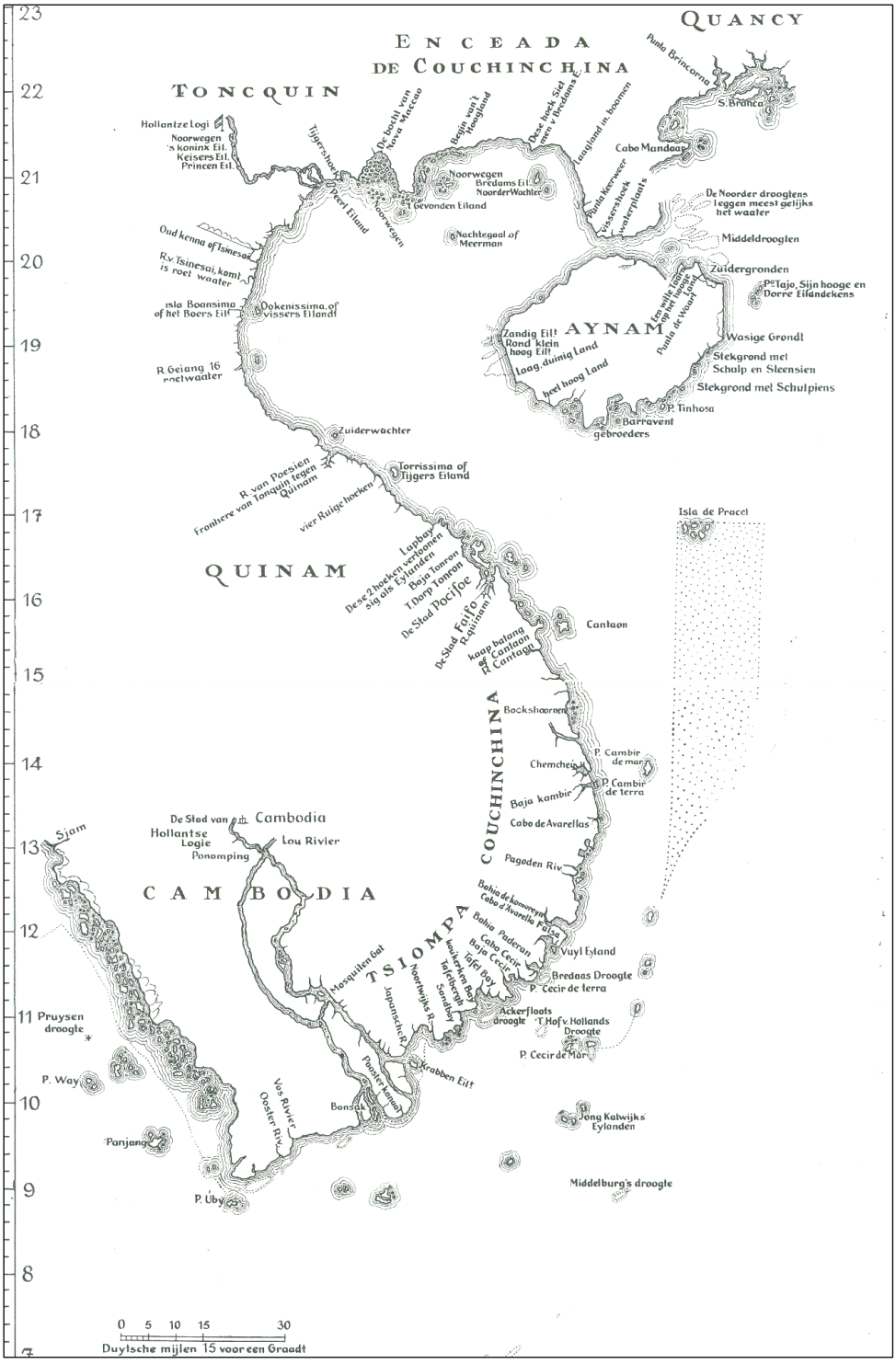
oban	(J.) gold coin only in use among the *daimyo* (lords of domains), worth 7 *koban* and c. 45-50 taels of silver. See also *koban*.
Ongia	(V. *Ông già*?) mister, sir, nobleman.
opperhoofd	(D.) Chief of the Dutch factory in Tonkin (and in other Dutch trading-places in Asia) with the VOC rank of senior merchant (*opperkoopman*) or merchant (*koopman*).
pagoda	coin used popularly in Coromandel (worth 120 stuivers).
pancado	(P.) see: *Itowappu.*
pee	(P.) foot to designate the lowest quality of goods, especially silk. See also: *bariga* and *cabessa*.
pelings	(also *pelangs*), see: *lings*.
perpetuaan	(also *pepertuana*) durable woollen fabric from England.
picul	(M.) unit of weight. One picul = c. 60 kg. See: Explanation for Units of Measurement.
provintien-daalder	(D.) silver coin minted in Holland, worth 2 guilders 8 stuivers (1606), 2 guilders 10 stuivers (after 1606).
putchuck	(H. *pachak*) dried, fragrant, spicy root of *Saussurea costus*, a species of thistle, used for burning as incense or in medicine as a stomach tonic, diuretic, and expectorant.
quan	(V.) a monetary unit used in Tonkin (and Quinam). One quan (long string) = 10 tiền (short string) = 600 coins (*kasjes*). See: Explanation for Units of Measurement.
radix China	(or China root) the dried root of the *smilax* China, used for medicinal purposes. The root is astringent and slightly tonic; the parched and powdered leaves have been used as a dressing on burns and scalds.
rial of eight	(D. *reaal van achten*) Spanish silver coin, minted in Peru, Mexico, and Sevilla, worth 48 stuivers (before 1662) and 60 stuivers (after 1662).
rixdollar	(D. *rijksdaalder*) silver coin, worth 48 stuivers (up to 1665), 60 stuivers (after 1666). See: Explanation for Units of Measurement.
sandalwood	the fragrant red wood of the *Pterocarpus santalina*, native to South India, used for carvings, cosmetics, and incense.
sappanwood	(D. *sappanhout*) the red dye-wood of the *Caesalpina sappan*, found in South-East Asia but mainly from Siam, used for medicine and for dying cotton products.
shichusen	(J.) copper coin minted privately in Japan. In the early seventeenth century, in an attempt to standardize the monetary system, the Japanese Government forbade the circulation of these coins in Japan. They were therefore exported to Quinam and Tonkin in a considerable quantity

shuin-sen	(J.) Japanese Red Seal ship.
schuitzilver	(D.) silver ingot cast in shape of a small boat.
sittouw	silk textile from Tonkin.
Spelter	(D. *spiaulter*) zinc alloyed with small amounts of copper, lead and a few other metals, usually found in the form of ingots, slabs, or plates.
sumongij	silk textile from Tonkin.
Surat rupee	(D. *Suratse ropia*): silver coin, valued 37 ½ stuivers. See: Explanation for Units of Measurement.
tael	a monetary unit and a unit of weight. See: Explanation for Units of Measurement.
the thua	silk textile from Tonkin.
toraisen	(J.) copper coins imported to Japan from China. In the early seventeenth century, in an attempt to standardize the monetary system, the Japanese Government forbade the circulation of these coins in Japan. They were therefore exported to Quinam and Tonkin in a considerable quantity.
Vua	(V.) King, but actually Emperor (Hoàng Đế: 黃帝) in the context of seventeenth-century Tonkin. See also: *Chúa*.
wako	(J.) Japanese pirate.
wenyin	Sailing licence issued by the Chinese authorities for junks sailing abroad.
zeni	A general term used by the Dutch to indicate coins (*kasjes*), imported by foreign merchants into Tonkin. See also *kasjes*, *eiryakusen*, *genho tsuho*, *shichusen*, *toraisen*.

MAPS

Map 1 Vietnam in seventeenth-century South-East Asia

Map 2 VOC map of Vietnam (Tonkin and Quinam), late 1650s

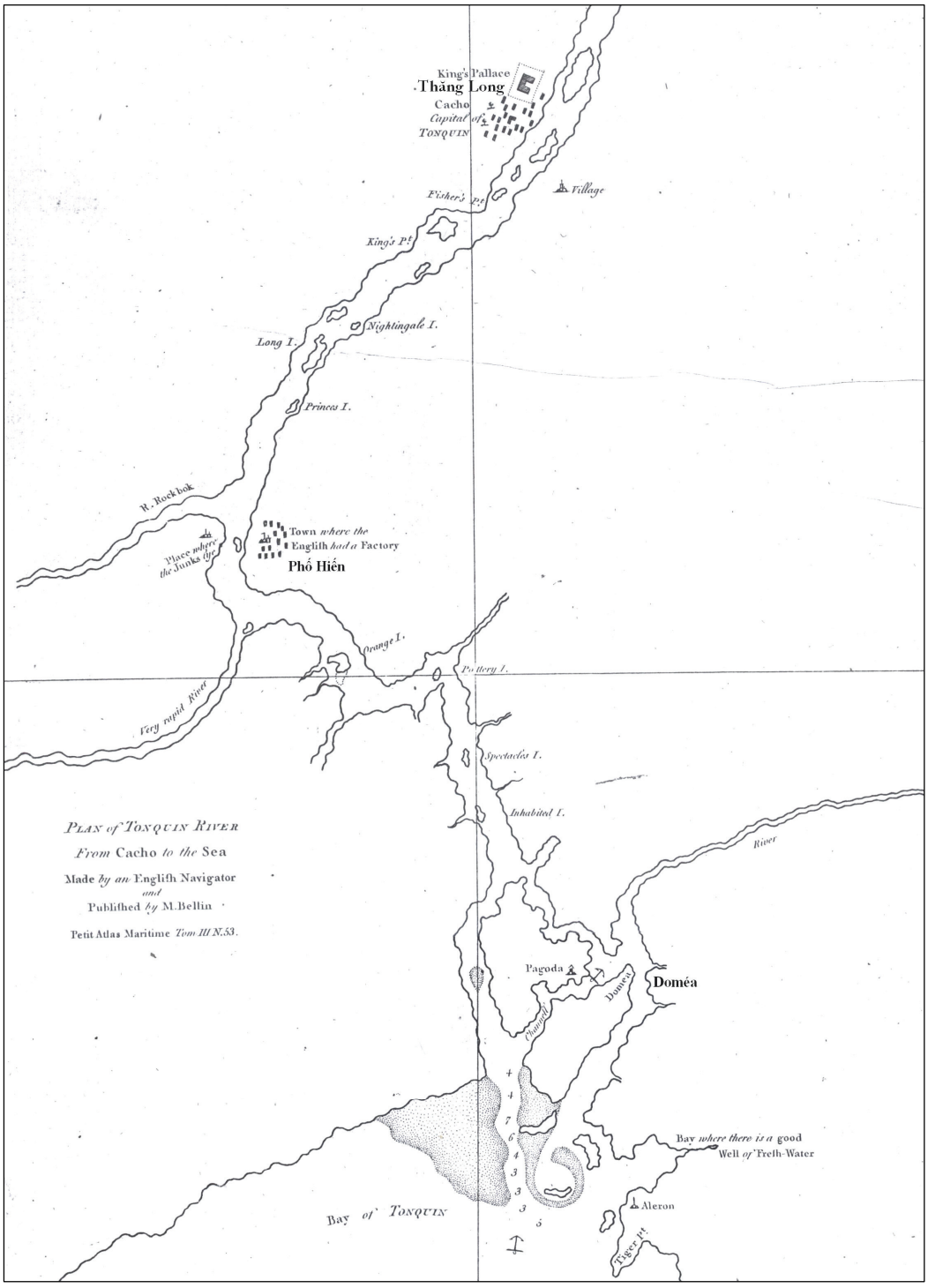


Source: Nationaal Archief, The Hague.

Map 3 VOC illustration of "The River of Tonkin", seventeenth century

Source: Nationaal Archief, The Hague.

Map 4 The "River of Tonkin" as depicted by the English c. 1670s



Source: British Library, London. Indications highlighted by the author.