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

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PART TWO: THE POLITICAL RELATIONS

Nu met het vertreck van dit schip, soo send ick desen brieff aen den Bataviasen Coning, op dat hy myne meeninge soude kunnen weten, dat de coopmanschappen, die in het aenstaende mochten gesonden werden, nevens eenige groote stucken, die ick sal betaelen met syde naer haer waerde; oock soo versoeck ick, dat my een constapel Macy [mach?] toegesonden werden om by my te blyven, daermede ick versoecke de Koninck van Batavia my gelieve te helpen tot myn contentement, opdat wy, soo langh de son en maen haer schynsel geven sullen, voor altoos vrunden blyven mogen.¹

Introduction

The ultimate goal of the Lê/Trịnh rulers in their exertions to lure the VOC to Tonkin was to create a military alliance with the VOC in order to fight against Nguyễn Quinam. Batavia was nothing loath as it wanted to establish trading relations with northern Vietnam in its bid to export raw silk and silk piece-goods to Japan. If this were to facilitate its silk trade, the Company, as it had to do elsewhere in Asia, was willing to involve itself to a certain extent at least in the politics of Tonkin. The mutual relationship which developed between Tonkin and the VOC in the 1637-1700 period, despite attempts by both sides to keep it on an even keel, underwent many vicissitudes as will be discussed in detail in the next two chapters.

¹ “Now at the departure of this ship I am sending this letter to the King of Batavia, in order that he will be informed of my intention to pay for the commodities, which may be sent in the near future, together with a few pieces of large ordnance, in silk according to their value. I also request that one constable be sent to me to remain with me. I request the King of Batavia to aid me with this [i.e. sending the constable] to my satisfaction in order that we shall remain friends for ever for as long as the sun and the moon will shine”. Letter of *Chúa* Trịnh Tạc to Governor-General Joan Maetsuyker in 1670, in *Dagh-register Batavia* 1670, 205-206.