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

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PART FOUR: DUTCH-VIETNAMESE INTERACTIONS

They [the animals] are very shy since the English and Dutch settled here; for now the Natives as well as they shoot them: but before their Arrival the *Tonquinese* took them only with Nets [...] Since the Jesuits came into these parts, some of them [the Tonkinese] have improved themselves in Astronomy pretty much. They know from them the Revolution of Planets; they also learn of them natural Philosophy and especially *Ethicks* [...] several Mechanick Arts and Trades so that here are many Tradesmen, viz. Smiths, Carpenters, Sawyers, Joyners, Turners, Weavers, Tailors, Potters, Painters, Money-changers, Paper-makers, Workers on Lacker-Ware, Bell-founders, &c.

William Dampier (1688)¹

Introduction

The seventeenth century has long been considered a watershed in Vietnamese history. It witnessed not only social transformation born of the protracted series of political crises, it also saw the penetration of regional and international trading networks into the country. A combination of internal and external factors led to a remarkable metamorphosis of Vietnamese society and its economy during this eventful century.

The vicissitudes in the southern Vietnamese kingdom of Quinam have been clarified in a series of comprehensive works in recent years, those of Tonkin have remained unstudied.² On the basis of the information and analyses which have been reviewed in the preceding chapters, this part is devoted to sketching the major features of Dutch influence on the politics, economy, and society of seventeenth-century Tonkin.

¹ Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 24, 46.

² See, for instance, Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina*; Wheeler, *Cross-Cultural Trade*.