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Arakan and Bengal : the rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom (Burma) from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century AD

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Stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift

Arakan and Bengal

The rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom (Burma) from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century AD

1. The year 1000 of the Arakanese era marks a decisive turning point in Arakanese history. The dynastic revolution following the death of king Sirisudhammaraja brought a radical revision of Arakanese policy with regard to Arakan's Bengal dominions that would eventually result in the collapse of the Arakanese state at the end of the seventeenth century.
2. The ability of the Arakanese kings to forge alliances with Portuguese *chatins* living in the Bay of Bengal was crucial to the success of the Arakanese kingdom. The reversal of Arakanese policy towards the Portuguese community in Arakan and Bengal from 1638 conversely was partly responsible for the decline of the Mrauk U kingdom.
3. The move of the Mughal capital of Bengal from Dhaka to Rajmahal in the late 1630s was occasioned by the Mughal's inability to impose their control on south-eastern Bengal, faced as they were with Arakan's power.
4. From the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century the economic centre of Bengal was located in the Dhaka area. The mass of archival records left by the European trading companies has focused the attention of historians of Mughal Bengal on West Bengal, neglecting developments taking place on the axis Dhaka-Chittagong.
5. The slave trade in Bengal fundamentally changed in character by the large and sustained demand from the Dutch East India Company (VOC) starting in 1623. Dutch demand meant that the trade in slaves evolved from supply to demand driven.
6. Arakanese rice exports were of crucial importance for the survival of Batavia as the main Dutch entrepôt in Asia between 1627 and 1657.
7. Pala art from Bengal had a strong influence on the development of the iconography of Early Pagan (c. 850-1120). Cf. Paul Strachan, *Pagan. Art and Architecture of Old Burma* (Oxford: Kiscadale, 1996), p. 21.
8. The parallels observed by Victor Lieberman between historical developments in Japan, Eurasia and mainland Southeast Asia are not strange at all. Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels. Southeast Asia in Global context, c. 800-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
9. Southeast Asia did not witness an 'Age of Commerce' in the early modern period (contra Anthony Reid, 'An 'Age of Commerce' in Southeast Asian History', *Modern Asian Studies* 24.1 (1990).).

10. There was no seventeenth century crisis in Southeast Asia in the sense as argued by A. Reid in 'The seventeenth-century crisis in Southeast Asia', *Modern Asian Studies* 24.4 (1990), pp. 639-659.
11. The external evaluation of scientific research in The Netherlands as carried out along the principles of the 'Standaard Evaluatie Protocol' (SEP) cannot in general be viewed as independent, nor does it seem to provide a rigorous account of how public money is spent on research. The sudden erosion of evaluation scores after 2003 provides the best proof of this statement. Cf. "Trust, but verify" *Het eerste rapport van de Meta Evaluatie commissie Kwaliteitszorg Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek* (Amsterdam: KNAW, 2007).
12. The proposals tabled by minister Plasterk for the revision of accreditation in higher education in The Netherlands combine the introduction of an institutional audit with the assessment of each individual programme. This mixed system is a necessary stage preceding the introduction of institutional accreditation in Dutch higher education.

Stephan van Galen
Leiden, 13 maart 2007