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Dutch East India merchants at the court of Ayutthaya : Dutch perceptions of the Thai Kingdom, c. 1604-1765

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Citation

Ruangsilp, B. (2007, March 7). *Dutch East India merchants at the court of Ayutthaya : Dutch perceptions of the Thai Kingdom, c. 1604-1765*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/11406>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift

‘Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya
Dutch Perceptions of the Thai Kingdom, c. 1604-1765’

van Bhawan Ruangsilp

1. The interactions between the European employees of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Thai, particularly those which took place at and around the royal court of Ayutthaya, exemplified ‘conditional partnership’ and ‘sense of (cultural) differences’ between the European guests and their Thai hosts. (Regarding Holden Furber’s ‘Age of Partnership’.)
2. One of the keys to success of the Dutch in Ayutthaya was their ability to reinvent their own functions to suit the specific needs of each ruler. They served the Thai court not merely as commercial, political and diplomatic partners but also acted as its link to the wider world.
3. Because the role of the Ayutthayan King as the ‘last instance’ to which the Dutch could look for succour strongly decreased from the last decade of the seventeenth century onwards, the claim by VOC employees that the ruler no longer seemed to have knowledge of their miseries appears a strategy that helped them to bear their situation and continue in Ayutthaya.
4. Besides his roles as diplomat and courtier, the head of the VOC office in Ayutthaya was an ‘administrative official’ in charge of Thai town people who lived in the Dutch compound. Therefore, his significance in Thai society lay not only in his status in the court hierarchy but also in his actual administrative responsibility.
5. While condemning the Thai for being greedy and corrupt, the VOC servants constantly oiled their relationship with their host by means of ‘gifts’ or ‘bribes’. Such a contradiction between moral criticism and political practice is reminiscent of the present-day ‘business culture’ as conducted between some Western companies and governments in the developing world.
6. Long before 1871, when King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) paid a visit to Batavia and Java, where he visited workshops, schools, hospitals and other institutions, King Narai (r. 1656-1688) showed an interest in the material progress of Dutch Batavia.
7. Flexibility, vagueness of purpose, and lack of strong institutions have been attributed to the ‘ASEAN way’. The Cebu ASEAN Summit 2007 offers the opportunity to change the ‘ASEAN way’ by formulating clear goals and strengthening the institutions.
8. The current attempts to separate the so-called historical Kingdom of Patani/Pattani from Thailand are part of the centuries-long conflicts between the Malay polity and the Thai Kingdom. Yet, the present violence in Southern Thailand is both politically and criminally motivated.
9. The September 2006 coup d’état in Thailand was not a necessary evil.
10. ‘The more I see of man, the more I like dogs’. – Madame de Staël.