

Notes upon the Relations between Holland and Siam ⁽¹⁾

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A short survey of trade conditions as existing in the Netherlands towards the end of the 16th century, may be useful as an introduction to our subject: "The relations between Holland and Siam".

Up to that time, Holland had principally been trading with the coastal countries of Europe and North Africa. About 1580 navigation was started on Brazil (Bahia and Pernambuco), ten years later upon the coast of Guiana (from the mouth of the Amazon till the Orinoco River), while the Gold Coast was visited in 1593 for the first time by Barent Ericksz from Enkhuizen, whence he returned with a cargo of elephant tusks and gold.

The country at that time was the principal distributing medium all over Europe of spices and other eastern produce, from Portuguese and Spanish harbours, whence they had been brought by Portuguese and Spanish merchants, who had the monopoly of the eastern trade, in these days.

With the advent of the Dutch revolt against Spanish rule, these ports were no longer safe to them, as their ships were often seized and crews and merchants put in jail. It would not have been consistent with that remarkable enterprising spirit which characterized the Low Countries in those days, if their inhabitants had simply abided by that situation. They were automatically driven to try to secure themselves the precious spices, etc. which had been a source of profit to the Portuguese for such a long time, and not only to act as transporters in Europe, but to try and obtain them at the very sources of production.

It was not such an easy matter however to get there. The Portuguese had, during nearly a century, been able to keep the trade to themselves, and, as a matter of fact, so much secrecy had been exercised by them as regards the route, that very little was known in other countries about this navigation. The route via the Cape of Good Hope being thus practically barred to them, the Hollanders

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made their first attempt in 1594 to discover the so-called North Eastern passage, by which they hoped via the north of Europe and Asia to reach Japan, China and India. Altogether seven attempts were made between the years 1594 and 1612, and these were all unsuccessful as far as the object in view was concerned, but they resulted in interesting discoveries.

In the meantime as much information as possible was gathered as regards the Portuguese navigation to that very desirable goal: the Indies, and in 1592, Cornelis and Frederik de Houtman were sent to Lisbon by some influential merchants of Amsterdam, to secretly try to get navigation charts and other useful data, and, upon their return in 1594, their reports were such, that these merchants in the same year founded the "Compagnie van Verre" (Company for trade afar), with the object to start direct navigation and trade with India along the Portuguese routes. Another source of information was Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, who, in 1579, when only 16 years of age, went to Spain, where his brothers were established in Sevilla.

Linschoten remained here and in Lisbon until 1583 when he left on a Portuguese fleet for Goa, where he lived till 1591. Being an intelligent man who took great interest in everything he saw and heard, he obtained much information concerning trade with China and the Indies, all of which, after his return to Holland in 1592, he laid down in his famous book: "Itinerario, Voyage ofte Schipvaert naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien," which was printed many times and translated into Latin, French, German and English. Two years after his return home, we find Jan Huyghen back on board one of the vessels that was attempting to find the Northern passage, and honour has been done to his name by giving it to a Society which was formed at the Hague in 1909, on the lines, of the English "Hakluyt Society".

Confidence in the undertaking must have been very great, as the "Compagnie van Verre" had pushed matters in such a way that already on April 2nd, 1595, their first fleet of 4 vessels of a total tonnage of about 830 tons and manned with 247, sailed from Texel under command of the foresaid Cornelis de Houtman.

It took them about 15 months to reach Java, where in spite of Portuguese opposition, they made a treaty with the King of Bantam and bought their precious spices. After visiting Jacatra (which some years afterwards was to be named Batavia), Madoera and Bali, it was de Houtman's intention to visit the Moluccas, but his crews seem to have felt more for returning home, which cannot surprise us when we know, that only 94 out of the 247 had survived, and that several of these were ill.

It was decided to burn one of the vessels and to spread its crew and lading over the three others. The journey home was started in January 1597 where they arrived after 7 months and a total absence of 29 months. This first voyage, although rich in experience was a very poor one financially, but this did not deter the Compagnie van Verre from fitting out a second fleet, this time of 8 vessels with 580 men on board which sailed from Holland under command of Admiral Jacob van Neck on May 1st, 1598, and safely returned two years later with valuable cargoes. This undertaking thus proved very profitable, and moreover that Portuguese intervention was no longer required.

The splendid results of this second expedition caused several more fleets to be sent out to the East, either by private merchants or newly formed companies. Two of these fleets belonged to the Compagnie van Verre, which had shown the way and which were both back home again in 1601, fully loaded, after about two years absence.

The fifth fleet of this Company, composed of 6 ships and again under command of Jacob van Neck, brings us at last on the subject of this evening. It sailed in 1600 and van Neck, with the intention of reaching Java sooner, detached the three best sailers from his fleet, the rest to follow him, but owing to bad weather it took him 10 months before he dropped anchor at Bantam. He could get sufficient cargo here for one of his vessels, which he sent home and he left with the other two for the Moluccas. Being unable to get spices here, he decided to try Patani, but owing to contrary winds, insufficient observations and faulty maps, he landed near Macao at the mouth of the Canton river, being the

first Dutch Admiral to call with his ships on the China coast.

As in Java, he found the Portuguese in his way again, and not being able to do business, he sailed again for Patani, where he arrived with his vessels "Amsterdam" and "Gouda" on the 7th November 1601. In face of opposition on the part of Portuguese, Japanese and Chinese merchants, he concluded here, 3 days later, a favourable contract with the Queen of Patani (who was tributary to the King of Siam), holding permission to build a factory and giving facilities for the pepper trade.

The three vessels which Admiral van Neck had left behind, took 13 months to reach Bantam, one of which soon afterwards left for home fully loaded, while the other two left for China under command of Jaspas Groesbergen. They did not come so far however but entered the mouth of the Mekong river instead, this being the first call of Dutch ships in Cambodia. Not being able to conclude any business in Annam, Groesbergen also tried Patani, where he also succeeded.

The two Dutch vessels under command of Jacob van Neck, which inaugurated the relations between Holland and Siam, remained at Patani a considerable time, viz. until the 22nd or 23rd August 1602. During their stay, a factory was built, which van Neck placed in charge of Daniel van der Leek from Rotterdam, as Chief Merchant, and Pieter Walicksz from Delft as assistant, together with 6 sailors. While the vessels were still at Patani two more Dutch vessels arrived which obtained a full cargo on May 26th, 1602, and also left 8 merchants behind, and three days before these ships left, another two, under command of Jacob van Heemskerck, arrived, obtained cargo and gave their unsold goods in charge of Daniel van der Leek. Ten more men were left behind at Patani by these ships, which brought the number of Hollanders at Patani up to 26 persons, who were busily engaged in the construction of more godown rooms and living quarters, but it should be borne in mind that they were not all working for the same company, as the great Dutch East India Company, which was only established in 1602, and which was later on to take over all these preliminary establishments, had not yet made its appearance.

The next arrivals, some 6 months after Jacob van Heemskerck, were the two vessels of Groesbergen, named the "Haarlem" and "Leiden", which remained 7 months at Patani, and only the vessel "Leiden" left on September 6th, 1603. The "Haarlem" on account of being leaky, was burnt on the coast and the goods stored at Patani.

Before the establishment of the East India Company, some 15 fleets, consisting altogether of 65 vessels had been fitted out by various merchants or companies, but it soon became apparent that only mighty bodies with ample resources would be able to work profitably, and at the instance of the States of Holland, and especially of their "Raadpensionaris" Johan van Oldenbarneveld, the "Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie" was founded with a monopoly for 21 years "to trade from the Netherlands on the Indies, round the Cape of Good Hope as well as through the Straits of Magellan". Most of the existing companies together with their personnel were incorporated into the new venture, the management of which was entrusted to a Board of 17 Directors, amongst whom representatives of the most important towns of Holland and Zeeland.

Hollanders, in the employ of Spanish or Portuguese interest, probably visited Siam before van Neck, as owing to dynastical relations there existed between Holland and Spain a good deal of intercourse, but van Neck's visit is the starting point of the Relations that form the subject of these Notes.

One of the first fleets to sail for the Indies, for account of the new Company, left under Admiral Wybrand van Warwyck, who, after his arrival in the Indies detached two vessels: the "Zierikzee" and "Hollandschen Tuin" to call at Patani, where they arrived in December 1603, when all factories were placed under one management, viz. the foresaid van der Leck and Walicksz. It seems that they were by now well established in Patani, which was considered by the Hollanders as the "Door for China and Japan", and they were thinking of making it their "general rendez-vous". It was known however that the King of Siam, Phra Chow Song Tam, was doing a lively trade with China and principally with the object of getting in touch with that country, we find in 1603, the Manager of Patani, van der Leck, on a tour of investigation in Ayuthia, and

the next year, Admiral van Warwyck himself went there to seek the King's assistance. He was received well, and the King, in face of Spanish and Portugese intrigues, but being aware of the favourable results which Holland had obtained in her war against Spain, promised assistance. Van Warwyck's visit was the beginning of relations, which were to become most interesting and led, first of all, to the sending of a Siamese Embassy to Holland, the first Siamese Embassy that ever visited Europe.

This Mission, composed of 20 Siamese, arrived on the 9th of December 1606 at Bantam (Java), whence it left on the fleet of Cornélis Matelief de Jonge for Holland, where it was received at The Hague by the Prince of Orange (Maurice), on September 11th, 1608, when presents consisting of rubies and other stones were handed over.

Although their principal object in going to Ayuthia was the China trade, the Hollanders soon found out that Siam itself, for trade purposes, was not to be neglected, and their growing commerce with the country soon made it necessary to establish a factory at Ayuthia, where, from 1610, an assistant was permanently residing. The factory was situated within the City walls, enlarged in 1612, and officially declared open in 1613 by Brouwer, the chief for Japan while passing through Ayuthia on his way hence, who appointed as Manager the merchant Cornelis van Nijenroode. In the course of time, besides Patani and Ayuthia, branches were also opened in Queda, Junkceylon, Ligor and Singora, principally for the tin trade. Ayuthia offered a market for the sale of imported cloth and other manufactures, and for the purchase of hides and sapan wood for Japan and rice for Java.

It goes without saying that especially the Portuguese, who during nearly a century, had practically been masters of the situation, were anything but pleased with the progress which their enemies, the Hollanders, were making. There exists in Portuguese records an interesting letter on the subject dated Lisbon January 4th, 1608, written by the King of Portugal to his Viceroy in India. The Viceroy is therein recommended to make a fortress in Martavan in the Kingdom of Pegu, with the object of keeping the King of

Siam in check and to prevent him making a league and friendship with the "rebels" (in casu the Hollanders). Great fear is expressed in the said document, that these rebels may teach the Siamese the exercise of war and artillery, and thereby do irreparable evil.

Seeing that local protests and intrigues were of no avail, the Portugese caused an Embassy to be sent by the Viceroy of Goa to the King of Siam, imploring him to chase the Hollanders from his kingdom, but instead of complying with their request, the King granted the Hollanders greater facilities and offered them the ownership of the island of Merguy, at the mouth of the river of Tenasserim.

The Hollanders on the other hand, as expected, were of course not wanting in fulfilling any wishes which the King might express. Dutch shipwrights, carpenters, enamellers and other handicraftsmen, entered the King's service. The Prince of Orange presented him with guns, and in a letter from the Manager in Ayuthia dated May 3rd, 1612 to his colleague at Patani, Hendrik Janssen, mention is made of the King's invitation to handle these guns against the people of Luang Prabang, who had revolted against him. On another occasion, when in 1620 Siam was at war with the King of Cambodia, Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen, sent two vessels from Batavia to render assistance. A number of Dutch guns dating from those times, can still be traced. Mr. Sewell, in the course of a lecture before this Society some years ago, mentioned some of them, which can now be seen in front of the Ministry of War in Bangkok.

Having successfully weathered the storms which threatened from the part of the Portugese, the Hollanders soon found themselves up against new rivals, when English competitors arrived on the scene. William Adams, "the first Englishman to settle in Japan" (in which country he arrived in 1600 on board the Dutch vessel "Liefde" after a most eventful voyage), arrived in Ayuthia on August 29th, 1612, with letters from the "King of Great Britain, Ireland, Scotland and France," addressed to the King of Siam, and in a letter dated September 2nd, 1612, van Nijenroode spitefully remarks, that it will not be possible to prevent the English trade, as the King, who tried to attract every nation to

his country, was much pleased that another nation had arrived. It would appear that this first visit of English merchants caused already friction between them and the Hollanders, and that was to remain so in the years to come. Correspondence and documents from both parties, reprinted by the National Library, supply abundant proof of it and as it is not likely that those ill feelings will thereby be revived here I should like, simply as an illustration, to relate an incident which took place in 1616.

The Dutch and English factories were at that time situated very close to one another within the city walls, and the English factor, Benjamin Fairie, who had fallen suddenly very ill and felt his end nearing, asked his Dutch colleague to look after the factory in case he should die, until a new man had arrived, Fairie's English assistant not being of the type to be able to take change. A report about these happenings was brought to the English factory at Patani by a Hollander, who said some particularly nasty things about Fairie's assistant.

The following year these reports were contradicted by John Johnson and Richard Pitt, in a letter written from the Menam bar, and their feelings towards their opponents leave no doubt, when they write the Hollanders to be: "lying, vigorous scorpion tongues," and further: "If we could hear but one true word proceed out of a Dutchman's mouth, I should think one among a thousand honest." A good many instances pointing to the continuous trade war between the two nations could be given, but it would appear that the poor state of trade for both of them, especially as regards Ayuthia, was really not worth the trouble. The English factory was closed very soon afterwards, and when towards 1622 the country became very unsettled on account of war with neighbours and internal disturbances, and their factory moreover became damaged by fire, the Dutch followed the English and closed their factories in Ayuthia, Patani and Singora, to continue trading only by occasional visits.

Relations with the King seem not to have suffered through the closing of the factories (as it well might have been), as otherwise it is not likely that the King would have returned to the Hollanders

in 1625 the yacht "Seelandt," which the Spanish the year before had captured in the river Menam. Besides, the closing was often of short duration, the factory at Ayuthia anyhow, being again occupied from time to time, and it is certain that this was the case in 1627, when Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the great man of early Dutch Colonial History, returned to Java as Governor-General. His policy was against too many settlements abroad and in favour of leaving this outside trade to so-called "free merchants" (not in the service of the Company), as long as they did not interfere too much with the Company's own trade. He was in fact not long in closing the factory again,

On his return to the East, Coen brought letters (dated The Hague, January 15th, 1627) and presents from the "Stadhouder" Frederic Henry for the King of Siam, in response to those which the latter had sent in 1622 to Prince Maurice, who was Frederic Henry's elder brother, but who had died in the meantime. Letters and presents were brought to Siam in 1628 by two merchants of the Company, Marees and Schouten, and they were received with great honour and ceremony by the King, in Ayuthia.

Governor General Coen was succeeded by Henrik Brouwer, who, contrary to his predecessor, was in favour of obtaining monopolies, and he soon sent to Ayuthia an able man, Joost Schouten, who had been in Ayuthia before. He arrived here in 1633 and concluded a contract, whereby the Hollanders, for one year to begin with, obtained the monopoly to buy hides and also the ownership of a conveniently situated piece of land close to the city, with a river frontage of some 300 feet. As a compensation, the Dutch Company promised assistance in the King's war against Patani, which no longer wished to recognize Siam's authority. To that end, some eight vessels left Batavia on May 14th, 1634, with instructions to attack Patani by sea, it being arranged that a Siamese army was to attack the place by land.

The cooperation between the two forces left much to be desired, as the attacks were not made at the same time, but the desired effect seems to have been attained after all, as Patani soon offered submission again.

Schouten started building the factory in 1634 with the necessary materials sent to that effect from Batavia, and two years later, in 1636, he reported to Batavia that the building had been completed, that it proved most suitable for its purpose and that the total cost amounted to fl. 10,349.1.8. The foundations of the principal building, which still exist (and which, I am very glad to say, have been placed by H. R. H. Prince Damrong on the list of historical monuments), testify, at any rate for those times and conditions, to the large conception and strength of the structure. They explain why most travellers to Ayuthia during the 17th and 18th centuries, have written about it in such praising terms.

Most welcome in this connection is a description of the settlement which came to light some years ago, written by a doctor of the Dutch Company, Gijsbert Heecq, who visited Ayuthia in 1655 from September 8th to 15th. He carefully noted everything he heard and saw during his stay in Siamese waters, which lasted about one and a half months, and the Journal was published by Mr. S. P. L'Honoré Naber in a Dutch periodical on naval matters.

As regards the Factory the Journal says that same was conveniently situated on the river, opposite the Japanese and Portuguese quarters on the other side of the river. It was entirely built of brick, high and roomy, with large godowns on the ground floor and the living quarters of the chief merchant and his principal assistants above. He further mentions several others buildings where lived other assistants, the surgeon, butler, cook, buglar, sculptor, carpenters, blacksmiths, book-binder, baker, horseman, etc. (following the order as given in the Journal). He visited the bottlehouse, kitchen, jail, stables, houses for sheep, bocks, goats, fowls, geese, ducks, doves, pelicans (?), etc. The compound was surrounded by a deep and large ditch and a strong and very wide landing had been built on the side of the river to facilitate loading and discharging of the vessels. Special mention is made by van Heecq of the brick-built recreation room for the assistants and the Company's gardens situated outside the compound next to the graveyards "where high and low were buried together."

Resorting under Ayuthia was also an office and godown

called "Amsterdam" built not far from the mouth of the river near Paklat, the remains of which, some 15 years ago, could still be seen, and a little below the capital, a large experimental garden had been laid out, I believe, principally for the cultivation of the indigo plant.

At the time van Heecq visited Siam he found the Company's trade in a flourishing condition, but he was of opinion that at that time it was on the decline.

A few more words should be said regarding the builder of the factory, Joost Schouten, who, during the eight years he stayed in Siam, had made himself most popular at the Court. He received many distinctions from the King and was also titled. Many times his advice was asked in the meetings of the Ministers, and while in office, new letters and presents were exchanged between the Courts of Siam and Holland. Needless to say that he greatly strengthened the position of his Company, and that he was held in great esteem by his masters in Batavia and Holland. After his departure from Siam in 1636, he published a Description of the Kingdom, giving interesting contemporary information regarding the Situation of the country and its Government, Court, Justice, Military Affairs; Religion, Customs, Dress, Houses, Marriages, Education, Trade and Currency. As in his own words he "diligently searched out and gained information" and we know that he was a man of remarkable intelligence, his little book may be taken as a reliable witness of the conditions as existing in that period, and it is therefore not surprising that it has been translated many times in different languages.

After Schouten's departure business was conducted for some 25 years with fairly good results. Relations with the King, the nature of which was of course of the greatest influence upon business, were very good towards 1650, when the King sent many presents to Batavia, amongst which a gold jewelled crown and not less than twelve large elephants, a present which meant a good deal in those days, and which, in our own days, I imagine, would not be without creating some impression.

Apart from a clash which occurred in 1656 when the new King Phra Narai ascended the throne, all went well until 1661, when

things changed considerably.

In that year the Republic of the United Netherlands was at war with Portugal, and a junk flying the Portuguese colours was taken by a Dutch ship in the Gulf of Tongking. The junk appears to have been loaded with goods belonging to the King, who claimed an indemnity of fl. 84,000. The Company's trade met with increasing difficulties. While other nations were favoured, the Hollanders had to suffer insults and hardships, while justice was difficult to be obtained, and all that trouble was put down to the underhand working of a Greek adventurer, Constantine Phaulcon, who, in 1663, had become very influential with the King. Business became almost impossible and as it was feared that the factory, which was besieged by armed Chinese, would be attacked and plundered, the Chief Merchant, Poolvoet, acting under instructions from Batavia, managed to escape unnoticed with all his men and goods, and only informed the King of his departure after he had crossed the bar of the Menam. Poolvoet now blockaded the river and this could have seriously impeded the King's trade with China and Japan, but the blockade was only of short duration, ambassadors being soon sent to Batavia, as a result of which the Commissary Pieter de Bitter, representing Governor-General Jan Maetsuycker, was sent to Ayuthia, to conclude a settlement.

De Bitter's mission had principally for object to obtain :

1. Punishment of the guilty who had committed insults against the Company.
2. Freedom to carry on trade in Ayuthia, Ligor, Oedjong Salung and all other places and country belonging to the King's dominions.
3. Liberty to negotiate, deal and correspond uninterfered with all persons, no matter what rank they occupied.
4. Payment of no other or higher duties, charges, etc. than those agreed upon with the King.
5. No employment of Chinese on Siamese junks or ships.
6. Monopoly for the export of all cow and deer hides available in Siam.
7. Assistance for the recovery of claims upon defaulters.

8. Extra-territorial rights for the Company's residents.

Agreement was reached on all points and laid down in a treaty which was signed in Ayuthia on August 22nd, 1664, and which also stipulated that a sum of 156 catties Siamese (or fl. 18,720) were to be paid to the King by way of indemnity for the junk taken three years before, and further that all goods which had been taken during the blockade from a junk coming from Japan, had to be returned. The treaty further contained several clauses for the rendering of mutual assistance in certain cases and closed with the promise on both parts that it was to hold for ever. Some 4 years later, on the 14th of November 1668, a further clause was added, which secured, or, at any rate, was meant to secure for the Company the sole right to buy and export all the tin of the country, with the exception only of such quantities as His Majesty would require for himself.

It goes without saying that this treaty, which, by the way, was the very first Siam ever made with a Western nation, and which became the prototype upon which, later on, other nations made theirs, was of the utmost importance to the Dutch Company. When we consider that the King, in those days, practically had the monopoly of all trade in his own hands, this concession for free trade and the preference as regards hides and tin, amounts to something like a turning point in the history of trade in Siam. Thus in the year 1664, the Dutch Company obtained partly already what Sir John Bowring was proud to have obtained nearly two centuries later, in 1855.

The signing of the treaty was followed by some years of great prosperity for the Company. Siam supplied good quantities of tin, rice, hides and sapanwood for the markets of Ceylon, Malacca, Japan, Batavia and Holland, and, naturally, bought herself the goods which were imported. Troubles however could not always be avoided, as when it was discovered that lead had been poured into the pieces of tin or when the "squeeze" was becoming too oppressive. The question of the purchase price of the products also often led to difficulties, when competitors of other nations would have only been too glad to offer better prices for

those goods for which the Hollanders had obtained the monopoly. After some years very little was practically left of the advantages which their treaty was intended to secure for the Hollanders.

Towards 1672 conditions in the country became again unsettled, while competition, especially from the side of her English competitors, was keenly felt by the Dutch Company. Nicholas Waite, the Manager of the English Factory in Ayuthia, wrote on December 23rd, 1673, that he had hopes that the Dutch would soon break off, and were not expected to stay for more than a year longer. His above letter addressed to the President of Surat, makes it clear, that English competition was the reason of the decline in the Dutch trade, when he writes that the King of Siam "hath given great encouragement for our Honourable Masters to settle in his Kingdom. God may grant that we may have success and that my honourable employers may reap those benefits which the Dutch have been so many years masters of."

Waite's prediction as to the Hollanders leaving Siam shortly, did not come true however. In an English report dated 22nd December 1675 it is stated, that "The Dutch have here a noble factory, the Government laudable and their trade entire; may we imitate wherein they are deserving and your Honours shall have the credit as well as the advantage".

Some years later the rôles were near to have been changed as the English factory would have been closed but for a decision by the English factory in Bantam, considering that "the withdrawal of a factory, be it from ever so mean a place, discredits our Honourable Masters and eclipseth their trade in those parts, while our neighbours the Dutch, enemies in trade, rejoice thereat, and do always make use of our dishonour to their own advantage."

The first great blow to trade in general came during the revolution in 1688, when King Narai and his descendants were put to death and Phra Petraja ascended the throne. At that time also ended the career of Phaulcon who was also killed.

It would appear however that the Hollanders during that time suffered less than their English, and especially, their French competitors, the latter having a specially difficult time. There exists

an interesting document regarding these happenings in the shape of a report from Batavia to Holland dated February 27th, 1689 and based upon a letter dated Ayuthia, December 5th, 1688 from the Dutch factors Johannes Keyts and Pieter van der Hoorn. From the said document it appears that Phra Petraja asked the Hollanders for assistance in the uprising, which however, for fear of complications with the French, had been politely refused. Fear was expressed that this refusal might have caused displeasure to Phra Petraja, but this seems not to have been of long duration as he declared later on, that he intended to have nothing more to do with any Europeans, excepting the Dutch. As a matter of fact, all existing contracts were soon confirmed by the new King, and for some years the Dutch East India Company did have it all her own way, that is to say, until the first years of the 18th century.

Towards 1705 everything was going wrong, and in a report dated March 20th, 1705 the Chief Merchant at Ayuthia, Gideon Tant, bitterly complains about the many difficulties which were encountered as regards purchases of sapanwood and tin, and the sale of imported cloth. Free trade was an empty phrase and the treaties were not adhered to. The blame could however not be laid exclusively on the Siamese, as prices offered by the Company were often below the market value. Incapacity and dishonesty on the part of her servants, those two causes which many years later contributed so largely to the downfall of that great Company, moreover made their appearance. The crisis came at the end of 1705, when the factories at Ayuthia and Ligor were closed until the following year, but the old times had gone, and one has only throw a glance at the following figures, to understand that it was not possible to go on much longer with these establishments.

In the year	1709/10	the loss	amounted to fl.	8,464.
" "	" 1710/11	" "	" "	44,021
" "	" 1711/12	" profit	" "	25,393
" "	" 1712/13	" loss	" "	5,796
" "	" 1720/21	" "	" "	20,156
" "	" 1725/26	" "	" "	16,432
" "	" 1729/30	" "	" "	20,394

The masters in Holland repeatedly advised to withdraw from Siam, but Batavia was afraid that they were dependent upon rice from Siam, and that once left, other nations may take their place and make it impossible later on to get a footing again. Besides, in these days, interest was being aroused again in Europe for the Eastern markets. But matters went from bad to worse and relations became more and more strained, and when finally in 1741 it came to a big fight between Dutch sailors and Siamese, all effects from Ayuthia and Ligor were removed to Batavia, only two men being left behind to look after the building and the flag.

Until 1747 relations were maintained only by sending some vessels every year to Siam, but in the said year a merchant, named Bang, was again sent to Ayuthia to reside in the factory, principally with the object of buying and storing sapanwood, elephant tusks, buffalo horns, etc. for the Company's trade on Japan, and as expenses were very much reduced now, profit was again made from time to time, in the year 1752/53 even as much as fl. 18,142. Now Batavia thought it was again time to have another trial and all buildings in Ayuthia were put in proper state of repair and presents exchanged. When the King of Siam in 1755 caused a letter to be sent to the Governor-General Jacob Mossel in Batavia, whereby all previous contracts were confirmed, expectations were running high again, which however did not come true. A heavy blow struck the factory in the year 1760 when the Burmese army invaded Siam and advanced as far as the capital.

During that war the Factory was invaded, the merchant Bang and a sailor put to death, and the remaining five Hollanders taken prisoners, while all cash and merchandise were stolen or destroyed. The Dutch camp was set fire to, but the principal building escaped destruction. Seven years later, in 1767, the Burmese were back again, and they succeeded this time in capturing the fortified capital with the well known results: reducing Ayuthia to ruins, the visit to which nowadays forms the most popular trip from Bangkok.

The Factory, hastily fortified even with the tombstones of the adjoining graveyard, withstood the siege for eight days, but

finally also fell a prey to the Burmese, who this time destroyed it more thoroughly. With its fall closes the interesting chapter "Siam" of the famous Company's history, a chapter which covers a period of Hollando-Siamese relations that lasted for more than one and a half century.

It would appear however, that Batavia did not entirely disinterest herself from affairs in Siam, as she sent in 1770 canon to Phya Tak (the "King of Tonburi") to assist him in his endeavours to clear the country from the Burmese and to consolidate it.

As is well known, Siam for a long time, became almost forgotten to the European nations, and, as far as Holland is concerned, nearly a century passed before relations were resumed.

This time it was no longer the Dutch East India Company who acted as medium, she existed no longer, but a special Commissary, Alexander Loudon, deputed by the King of Holland and the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, arrived in Bangkok in the year 1862 to ratify and supplement the treaty, which had been concluded two years before between King Mongkut and the Dutch Envoy, J. H. Donker Curtius, which treaty, as we know, is now about to be replaced by a new one. Intercourse between the two nations appear not to have been very lively however, but there was a decided change in the year 1902 when Hollanders made again their appearance in Siam, this time, however, not so much for trading purposes, but in a quite different direction.

At the request of King Chulalongkorn, the Netherlands Indian Government lent Mr. J. Homan van der Heide, who is now an Honorary Member of your Society, to study and prepare an irrigation scheme for the fertile Menam valley, to the end of no longer being entirely dependent upon the rain for Siam's all important rice cultivation. With the assistance of some ten Dutch Engineers, elaborate plans were completed towards the year 1908, and these, I understand, were very favourably received but only partly executed until now. Mr. Homan van der Heide and his staff gradually returned again to Java and their places were taken by others.

In the meantime, trade between Siam and Holland and her Colonies has greatly developed, and both trade and shipping are