



## **Jan Struys, *The Perillous and most Unhappy Voyages of John Struys....*, translated by John Morrison, London 1683**

### **Introduction to the chapters on Siam**

The account of the three voyages of Jan Janszoon Struys was first published in Dutch in Amsterdam in 1676 and was reprinted in 1686, 1741–2, and 1746. German editions appeared in 1678 and 1705, a French edition in 1681 (with at least three reprints), and English editions in 1683 and 1684.

The edition of 1683 comes with a six-page preface from the translator, of almost total irrelevance and great pretentiousness, stuffed with Latin quotes. We are told of the three voyages to be related, but “It was intended also to publish his 4<sup>th</sup> Voyage with this, which has not yet bin printed in any language, but finding the Authors leisure not answerable to those Intentions, we shall deferr it to the next Edition, if this prove but so acceptable” [sic]. Apparently it was not, for none appeared.

A summary of the three voyages follows; only the first takes the author to Africa and East Asia, though he does spend some time in Persia on the third voyage. Struys in his first voyage describes how he left Holland in 1647 at the age of 17 with a desire to see the world and to escape his father’s chastisements, enlisting as an under-sailmaker. His vessel took him to Genoa, then Madagascar and Sumatra. In chapter III he explains how he entered the service of the Dutch East India Company, the VOC, and went to Siam, which he describes in general terms; he says he left Batavia on 15 January 1650, and so must have arrived in Siam late January-early February (the next precise date given is 23 February). Chapters IV-VI and VIII-X elaborate on aspects of Siam. Chapter VII is non-existent rather than missing, apparently simply due to a printer’s error; a recent French edition also has only eleven chapters in the First Voyage. Chapter XI deals with Formosa (Taiwan), and chapter XII describes Nagasaki, a brief return to Siam from 22 January to 15 February 1651 to take on a cargo of elephants inter alia, and the return to Batavia and thence Holland.

The seven chapters describing Siam are our primary concern and are reproduced here. Chapter III deals with “Iudia” (Ayutthaya) and Bangkok, and provides on p.27 a print of the capital, apparently taken from a well-known anonymous Dutch painting of the city (located in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), dated to c.1650, in part imaginative, and to which have been added in this edition a quantity of sailing vessels and a few palm trees. The temples and royal palace are described, as well as the soil and products of the land. Chapter IV deals with the way of living of the “Siamers”, their industry, organization, and wealth in gold, and

writes of Burmese attacks in 1648 (unsupported by the Siamese or Burmese chronicles and not mentioned in Phayre or Wyatt). Chapter V deals with the revenues and treasury of the king of Siam (Prasat Thong, a usurper, reigned 1629–1656), the lack of pay for soldiers, the priesthood and its practices. Chapter VI deals with daily life, the cleanliness of Siamese houses and bodies, their dress, early marriage, cremation after death, and their liberality to strangers. Chapter VIII (to follow the erratic numbering of this edition) tells of the head of the Dutch godown, the Sieur van Muyden (Jan van Muijden, director of the VOC in Ayutthaya 1646–1650: Brummelhuis 1987, 32), being invited to the cremation of the king's only legitimate daughter, and how the author went too, but arrived late. He describes in detail the funerary pyre and the money thrown to the crowds.

In Chapter IX the plot thickens. The princess is burnt, but a part of her body remains intact. She was declared poisoned. An incredible witch hunt then ensues with her servants and attendants, and later many of the mandarins and their families, being tortured and killed (this is the excuse for a dramatic print, "The Massacring of the Mandorins and great Personages in Syam" [sic] at p.45). Still more are judged guilty and murdered. On 2 March "the Youngest daughter of the late King" (probably meaning King Songtham, r.1610–1628, since Prasat Thong murdered the two intervening kings, legitimate heirs of Songtham, in quick succession) was brought forth and declared she had administered the poison, which was intended for the king himself; she and her only brother were hacked to death and thrown into the river.

Chapter X seems to be a hoax, giving two versions purporting to be the titles of the King of Siam (the language seems invented and is certainly not court Siamese); it ends with a description of the king commanding the withdrawal of the river waters. Chapter XI indicates that after the Dutch ship taking Struys was loaded with hides and sandalwood it set sail on 12 April for Formosa, where Struys maintains he saw a man with a tail (thus invalidating much else that he says he saw). Chapter XII describes the Dutch outpost at Nagasaki and mentions the vessel's brief three week stay in Siam again, taking the director van Muijden back to Batavia, with Struys then proceeding to Holland.

Cruelty was certainly not unknown in Siam at this period (and was practised in Western countries, as the torture and death of the VOC's faithful servant Jan Schouten in Batavia shows), and the visitor, Jacques de Coutre, in Siam for nine months in 1595 in the reign of King Naresuan (1590–1605) relates some of the tortures inflicted on the poor palace servants when one of them purloined a small piece of gold (see Van der Cruysse 2002, 31–2). In addition, Prasat Thong's fiery temperament is well recorded: Van Vliet (1640/1975, 96–7) wrote: "He is inclined to drink and excesses... He is more feared than any other king before him. No one dares contradict him... He is more avaricious than any other former Siamese



king...” Nevertheless the speech given by the daughter of King Songtham (if such she was) seems to be largely invented by Struys, who after a few weeks in the country could hardly have acquired enough Siamese to understand and translate her diatribe against the present ruler, and one wonders if she would have been allowed to continue her extensive public condemnation of the king.

If the reliability of this text is suspect, some things are right: the cleanliness of person of the Siamese (something very different from Europeans of the period), the way they bring up their children, the large trade passing through the capital, the export of ray skins to Japan, the soldiers having no pay, the incredible flocks of deer, and so on. The architectural terminology used to describe a *meru* in chapter VIII does not seem that of a mere sail-maker. Some things are very wrong: the priests are said to use the “Pegu or Borneo tongue”, and the names of the two customs houses, Canon Bantenau for that near Ayutthaya, and Canon Bangkok for that near the mouth of the Chao Phya River, appear to be further corruptions of Tabanque or Tabanca (a Portuguese term apparently deriving from the Malay *pabeau*), though “Bantenau” remains uncertain. While the ceremony of the parting of the waters in Chapter X is superficially accurate, the supposed titles of the king seem to be poppycock. And the story at the end of chapter XII of the elephant accidentally receiving a bowl of hot soup and nearly overturning the vessel transporting it seems strangely familiar; it was perhaps no more than one of the stock-in-trade tales which did the East Asian rounds.

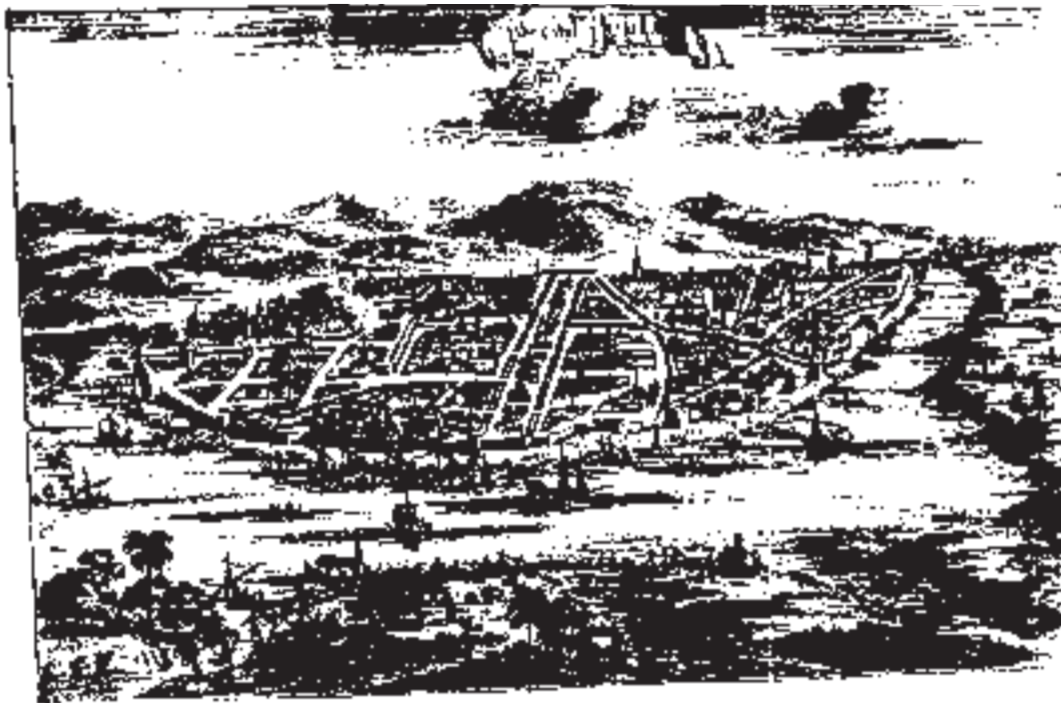
The text is therefore offered with serious reservations. It may well have been entirely invented, drawing on Schouten (1636) and a fertile imagination. If the downright lie of having seen men with tails in Taiwan can pass, and if chapter X was largely invented, there is no reason why the butchery described in chapter IX should not be fodder for contemporary European tastes. As Alfons van der Kraan (C. Baker et al., *Van Vliet's Siam*, 2005, 42–3) has it, “publishers, then as now, had at least one eye on market demand, and in choosing among the various Indies-related manuscripts that came their way, they emphasized the adventurous, the strange, and the exotic.” Siam was certainly that. Van der Kraan goes on to make the pertinent point that seventeenth-century Dutch and English publications emphasized the tyranny of Asian rulers, partly because Holland was a republic and England was in the process of asserting parliamentary control, but also because, while “cruel and sadistic punishments” were not unknown, and European criminal law was scarcely more enlightened, such texts “drew attention to the *arbitrary* way in which Asian kings could exercise power.”

It seems highly probable that this text was printed largely to assuage the taste for exotic voyages at the period, and was considerably dated by the time it appeared in English, which, however, was when Phaulkon, a former servant of the English East India Company, was at the height of his power in Siam and known for such, and this may account for the publication of the volume in 1683.



As this text should perhaps be read as no more than a curiosity, and treated with all the scepticism of a traveller's yarn, it has not been given all of the usual scholarly apparatus, but some explanatory footnotes have been kindly supplied by Dr Dhirarat na Pombejra, and the erratic spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary of the original English edition are preserved. A superficial comparison with the most recent French edition (Chandeigne, 2003) shows marked differences in the two texts, and there are probably differences when compared to the Dutch originals. The copy from which this extract was taken is sometimes unclear (the glosses were particularly hard to read), and where interpretations were doubtful, this is indicated by question marks, or by dotted lines for omissions.

M.S.



The City Judia





## CHAP. III

*The Author's departure from Madagascar, Arrival at Sumatra... The Author admits himself into the service of the [Dutch] East India Company. His Voyage to Siam. An accurate description of that Kingdom.*

Jan. 1650.  
Arrival at Siam.  
The Kingdom of  
Siam described

...[26] On the 15 *January* [1650], I was put aboard the *Black Bear*, bound for *Siam*, where we safely arrived, and cast anchor in the Bay.

The Kingdom of *Siam* lies in the most Easterly part of *East India*, from 7 to 8 degr. Northerly Latitude. There are many Cities, and Towns of note in it, and those very populous, among which *Iudia* is the chief, being the Metropolis of *India extra Gangem*, and the city where the King has his Court and Residence. The land is very fertile, affording all that may serve for the delight and sustenance of human Bodies, the Fields stored with many sorts of Cattel, the Rivers with Fish, and the Towns with Magazines of rich Merchandizes. The Inhabitants are of a tawny and yellowish complexion, and superstitious Pagans in Religion, as appears by their great Zeal, in adorning of their Temples, and strict Reverence for their Priests which are here too great and numerous for the Laity. Their Government is Monarchical, and the King for many ages has been absolute Sovereign, over this and the neighbouring Territories and Dominions, and that with as much Power, Grandour, and Reverence from the Subject, as any Potentate or King, under the canopy of Heaven. In short, *Siam* in regard of it's [sic] Fertility, Wealth, Number of Inhabitants, and subordinat Principalities, may paralel any other Empire in the Universe.

*Iudia*, which (as we have already said) is the Imperial Town of *Siam*, lies about 16 degrees Northerly Latitude from the *Æquator*, and is seated on one of the fairest Rivers (without doubt) in all the Eastern World, where a Ship of the greatest burthen may come up close to the Kay, to load or unload, without fear of sustaining dammage.

Judia.

In going from the mouth of the River upwards about 30 Leagues, we found several Inlets and swift Currents, which disgorge themselves into this great and noble River, with abundance of fair Orchards, pleasant and delectable Groves, an infinit number of Villages, Religious Houses, Hamlets, and other amiable Prospects; the Fields all the while casting a fragrant smell from her spicy Flow-

The River, and  
delight-some  
Country there  
about.





ers; and the Groves afforded a most ravishing melodie of Birds, warbling their wanton strains, and chanting in the shades and thick[27]ets, whither they retired to shelter themselves from the too powerfull raies of the scorching Sun, and those answered again by the soft whispering gales of the gentle Wind, and the base murmurings of the great Cataracts and Water-falls at a distance, rais'd and depress'd with the unconstant turnings of the Wind : all which feemed to have such Harmony, that it ravish'd us as much, as ever the renowned the *Thessalsers* [?] *Tempe* could the men of old.

The Land is for the most part level, of a clay and sandy earth; few Hills appear, or any thing else seems to surmount the Horizon, save the high Towers and Pyramids, whereof we found an incredible number.

About 8 leagues up the River is a small City, of a triangular Platform, and environed with a wall, called *Bangkok*. In the same City is the Kings first Toll—or Custome—house, which they call the *Canon Bangkok*, and every Ship and Junk to whomsoever they belong are obliged to come to anchor there, and give in their information, upon what account they come, and from whence; as also what Men and Goods they have aboard. Having performed that Duty, they pay their Toll, and receive their Billet, with Letters of Conduct, to go so far up as they list, till they come within a League of *Iudia*, where the second Toll-house is, called, the *Canon Bantenu*; and here they are a second time bound to anchor, and exhibit their Cockets, which having shown, they have their liberty to go further. This second *Canon*, is erected only to see that the Prince have his due, and to examin whether that the Stranger be not defrauded by the Commissioners of the first; and to give Licences to enter the Town, and traffique. It is also to be understood, that when any Ship is outward bound, they are to pay their Toll at the *Canon Bantenu* which at coming up was the second, now the first Custome-House; and are to pass an Examen at the *Canon Bangkok*, as they did before at the other, without paying any thing, if they can manifest by their Cocket, that they have already paid : and this every Vessel how mean soever it be, is bound to do, or in case of refusal to forfeit Ship and Carga.

*Siam* although it have abundance of Towns, yet there are but 5 that are walled, in all the Kingdom, whereof *Iudia* is the strongest, being about 3 \**Dutch* miles in circuit : The walls are con[28]siderably strong, with round Bulwarks after the old way, but after its manner very Stately and magnificent. Within the Town are some Thousands

Custome-  
Houses.

\*Fifteen making  
a degree, it  
follows than 5  
Dutch miles  
must be 12  
English land  
miles, or 4  
Leagues at Sea.



of Temples, Cloysters; and gilded Turrets, which together do make a pompous show. The streets of this City are very long and spacious, the Town it self surrounded with a River about 2 Musquet-shot in breadth, and divides it self into 8 streams, at that place where the King has his Court and Residence. The Royal Palace is very magnificent and Costly, strongly walled about, and fortified, within also are very stately and noble Apartments,<sup>1</sup> a Fabric which for Workmanship and Riches surpasses all that ever I have seen in *India*, and certainly, for the Power and Grandour of the Prince, Splendour of the Palace, immense Wealth of the Inhabitants, Fertility of the Countrey, and Temperateness of the Climate, it is second to no place in *India*, if *China* may be excluded.

The Soil is very good, and the Land fertile, producing yearly a vast increase of Rice and other Corn; It is also rich of Cattel, as Kind, Hogs, Bussels, Elks, Hares and Coneys, incredible Flocks of Deer, which are more hunted for their Hides than Carcases, they reckoning That one of the Staple commodities, and export many Thousands yearly to *Iapon*, and other places of Traffic, so that the main Trading of the [voc] Company there to *Iapon*, consists in that Merchandise. Wild-beasts are also here in great abundance, as, Elephants, Rhinocerots, Leopards, Tygres, and the like; as also all kinds of Fowl, both great and small, that I have seen in *Europe*, Swans and Nightingales onely excepted, which I dare not be positive whether there be any or not. Nor are the Rivers, as also the Sea without good store Fish, and that of many kinds: The Sea-shore lies thick with Oisters, and Lobsters, which are as delicate as they are plentifull. They use the Fishing Trade also as in other places, and make great profit, especially in a kind of Scate,<sup>2</sup> that they take chiefly for the Skin, which those of *Iapon* hold in great esteem, paying sometimes at the rate of 50, or 60 Ducats for one Skin, if it be choice and good; yet such is the difference, that I have seen a hundred Pieces of Eight paid for a single Skin, whilst it has been known, that a whole hundred would not yield 4 Rix-dollars. These Skins they first dry, and with [29] great care

Soil and Fertility  
of Siam.

Fish.

The great value  
of Scate-Skins.

<sup>1</sup> It is highly unlikely that Struys would have seen the interior of the royal palace with his own eyes. No foreign trader was allowed inside the royal “apartments”. If Struys had accompanied a VOC envoy, then perhaps he might have seen some of the outer audience halls, but no more.

<sup>2</sup> The reference to the “scate” is interesting: it was most probably the ray. Rayskins were a key export of Siam (especially to Japan via Dutch vessels).

Crocodiles used  
for Medicine.

pack them up, and so export them. There are also in this River many Crocodiles, which the *Siamers* call *Cayman*, and use them for Physic. There are also many venomous Creatures as Serpents, Adders, Scorpions and Snakes. It exuberates, besides the several Products already mentioned, in Sugar, Oil, Kitchin and Medicinal herbs, and various kinds of Fruit: and in a word *Siam* is so well provided by nature of it self that the Inhabitants may supply themselves with what is necessary for human Life, and Recreation; without the means of exotic Commerce, and importation of forreign Commodities.

#### CHAP. IV

*The Nature and Way of living of the Siamers. Their several Trades and Profession. Travail of their Merchants. Government and Politie. The great State of the Emperour, and Magnificency of his Throne: his Cavalcade, and manner of shewing himself to his People. The Riches of his Vessels, the Elephants served in Gold and Silver. The Wars about the white Elephant, against Ava and Pegu.*

*Siam*, as I said before, is very populous, and the Inhabitants generally of a good and free disposition. They Negotiate strongly in every kind of Merchandise, whereof they can make a profit, and that more especially within Land.

They are great encouragers of Art and Artists, especially the Mechanicks, and such as they cannot well want, as House- and Ship-Carpenters, Masons, Smiths, Braziers, Founders, Turners, Plummers, Pewterers, Painters, Carvers, Gold-Smiths, Fullers, Sawiers, Joyners, Weevers, and an infinit number of Jewellers and Lapidaries; Nor are they without their Physicians, Chirurgeons,<sup>3</sup> and Lawiers, after their own manner. Here are also Pedlars by Thousands, that travail from Town to Town, like such as follow the Fairs in *Europe*;<sup>4</sup> these have no fast dwelling, but are in motion the whole year round, and sleep always in the booths which they erect wheresoever they come. Fish-

<sup>3</sup> The Siamese were, according to La Loubère, unacquainted with the art or skills of surgery. King Narai had to hire a VOC surgeon, a French Huguenot by the name of Brochebourde.

<sup>4</sup> Within the traditional Siamese manpower control system (of *mun nai-phrai*), it is highly improbable that there would have been "Pedlars by Thousands, that travail from Town to Town, like such as follow the Fairs in *Europe*".





ing and Husbandry are well promoted, for every man, be he never so mean, if he have [30] a fast Residence, has his Lands, either less or more, which are cultivated with all imaginable diligence, as appears by the yearly Product of Grain, which not only supplies themselves, but is also exported into other Countreys, as well on the main Continent, as the adjacent Islands. And so cheap is all manner of necessary Provision and sustenance, that Labourers and common Slaves will work and fervile work for 3<sup>d</sup> a Day.

Every City has a Pretor, or Deputy, who derives his power from the King, and with a Council of Assistance is to determin of all Matters and Affairs, as well Civil as Criminal. The same Pretor, or Vice-roy has also charge over the Imperial Revenues, Tolls, and Customs, to see that they be payd without defrauding of the King, and that the Sub-commissioners of the said Duties do not exact upon Forreigners, that are not acquainted with the Rates imposed upon their Goods. This Officer, as also every Officer of State, is only to continue three years in one place, and at the expiration of that term, is either removed to a place of greater Trust and Eminency, or has his Discharge sent him. Their Suits at Law are presently brought to an end, and Sentence pass'd according to equity, without regard to the Degree and Quality of the Parties; the Client first going to a Notary, and has his case fairly stated, which then is brought to an Advocate, who is to discuss and comment it before the Pretor, as in most places in *Europe*: with this difference only, that the Advocate or Attorney has the power to continue or give over the Suit, as he thinks fit; which is ordained to prevent tedious Appeals, and perpetual clamours at Court. Criminal Affairs are punished severely enough, especially, Treason and Murther, nor do they dispence with any places of Refuge, or Sanctuary, for the Perpetratours of such enormous Crimes.<sup>5</sup>

Malefactors  
severely  
punished.

There is no Potentate in the East may paralel this Emperour for Magnificence and Pomp. He never sets his foot upon the Earth, but is carried on a Throne of Gold, from place to place, and usually appears once a day before his Peers and Grandees, which always attend the Court: these show him all imaginable Reverence, and ascribe [31] him such honour as accreus to no mortal. When any desires to speak with him, so soon as he gets admission, presents

---

<sup>5</sup> Struys' views on the Siamese judicial system are somewhat sanguine, and quite at variance with the statements of others (e.g. van Vliet).



Stately Throne  
of the King.

himself upon his knees, his hands folded, and his countenance cast to the Ground, then bowing of his body and kissing the Earth, he begins his Harangue, which is alwaies done with a submissive voice, and at the end of every Sentence, rehearses his Title, JAOUA TJAUW PERRE BOEDE TJAUW JAOUA, which by an Idiotism of our own, is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. His supreme Throne is of massive Gold, made after the form of a Pyramid, and so contrived that none can see him ascend. On each side of the Throne stand several Statues, and Creatures of monstrous shapes; as is recorded of the Judgment-seat of *Solomon*, which was guarded with Lions. His Person is secured with a very noble Guard, and well arm'd; several Elephants alwaies ready in the inner court of the Pallace also, for his Pleasure and Service upon occasion; these are mounted with Trappings of rich Silk, simbriated and imbossed with Gold, and precious Stones.

When he goes abroad to visit his Pagods and Religious Houses, or to take his Divertisement (which is ordinarily twice or thrice every year) he is attended with an infinit Retinue of Grandees, and Officers at Court, as also all his Wives and Concubines, which are very numerous, all mounted upon Elephants. When this Setting forth is not performed with a Cavalcade, but by Water; there are a certain number of *Praws*, brought up close to the Pallace. These are almost like a Barge, but far greater, having 20 or 30 Oars a piece, with 5 men to an Oar; without they are richly gilded and charged with Festons and Foliages on a diapered ground. Others there are less noble and rich, which serve only to transport the Soldatesque, and aboard every *Praw* are several that play upon Wind Instruments and Drums, which make a confused noyse; Upon the hearing of this, every one, whether Citizen or Peasant, Freeman or Slave, Young or Old, is enjoined to come forth and fall prostrate, with all imaginable Reverence, upon very severe Penalties, according to the Quality and Discretion of the Party. This Injunction is observed very strictly, and certain Officers ordained to take notice of the Delinquents, whose Rule is Arbitrary, and Mesures sudden; they are so correct in punishing such that few escape; I my self having seen, while I was there, some two or three beheaded with a Scimitar, only for being too remiss, in doing [32] Worship, although in such as want Discretion, or otherwise unable to perform the Ceremony, through invalidity of Body or Mind, the Offence is either dispenced with, or expiated with some inconsiderable Forfeiture. This Solemn Appearance happen-



ing so rarely, and that with such Majestie, creates great Loyalty and veneration in the heart of the Subjects for their Prince: and surely the conclusion and effect of every Maxim in Politic Affairs is the securest Index; or Distinction from a Contrary, which almost all the Kingdoms and Dominions of the East affoord and Example of, and more notably the *Sophy of Perfia*, who when with a huge Retinue he makes a Cavalcade (which might seem to be for no other end than to be seen) none dare presume to appear in the street, upon pain of Death; of which more hereafter.

Gold is here in such plenty that not only Plates, Chargers, Goblets, Bowls, Basons, Lavers, and whatsoever els is usefull for the Kings Table, is all of solid Gold, but also greater vessels in the Kitchin; which had I not seen them my self, should have held it incredible, if the weight and greatness had truly been reported. But what is yet more, the white Elephant, with the rest (which are about 6 or 8 in Number) kept within the Palace, are serv'd in Gold and Silver. The Gallantry of the Court, and the gorgeous attire of the Courtiers, is unspeakeably rich. And to be brief, if I should repeat the Maiesty of that Prince in Power and Command; The profuse Emulation of the Courtiers in Embroydery, Jewels and other costly Ornaments, and the Magnificent Structure of the Palace and other stately Fabrics; I should either prove too weak, in the performance of such a Province, or, hazard my reputation, in giving a Narrative of the Pomp which I have in reality beheld, to such as have not seen it, who would in all probability be too timerous to take things of that nature upon Credit. This I shall only add, that rather than to be undeservedly tax'd with hyperbelizing Froth, I'le content my self with a recommendation thereof to other modest Gentlemen that have been there, and published their Journals for the public perusal of the Curious in general.

The present King of *Siam*, has lived in great peace and tranquillity, ever since he first sway'd the Scepter : But in the time of the late King, that nation has been deeply ingaged in foreign [33] troubles : Specially with *Pegu*, *Ara* and *Lingjander*, partly out of the ambitious minds of those Princes, and partly out of a fordid covetousness; as of the king of *Pegu*, who indeavoured to make himself Master of the white Elephant, which he of *Siam* had : but after the depopulation of the countreys, and loss of many thousand Souls, they made Peace upon strict Articles.

Great plenty of Gold.

The Elephants served in Gold and Silver.

Of their Wars

Quic-quad delirant teges, plectuntur Achivi.

In the year 1648, the King of *Ava* with the assistance of a neighbouring Potentate, invaded part of *Siam*,<sup>6</sup> and took in some open Villages, and Towns of smaller note; but the king of *Siam* coming to have notice of this sudden Expedition, levies an Army of 200000 men, or upwards, marching himself at the head in Person; and encamped about 2 *English* Miles from the Enemy, where without either Battel or Skirmish they lay for 3 Moneths, when the Enemy not finding himself able to continue longer in camp, for want of Provision, and Recruits of men, was fain to break up; and march homewards. Those of *Patany*, had sent Ten Thousand men, all well disciplin'd and arm'd, for Auxiliaries in the Service of the king of *Siam*; but those arrived too late, the King being just upon his March for *Iudia*; where about 20 days after, he was Solemnly fetch'd in by his Nobles with great Triumph and Joy, as if he had obtained some notable Victory : and certainly it was the most prudent course he could have taken, to spare his own people, by shunning the Bloodshed of so many innocent souls, vanquishing the Hostility by the restraint of his Arms; and in making himself formidable with the greatness of his Battalions. There was also a Navy of Twenty Thousand *Praws*, pressed for the behoof of the Army, to transport the Baggage and Provision; and besides the standing Militia and Voluntairs, 52000 Citizens press'd for this Expedition, whom the King allowed Rice for Victualling, the rest they were to take care for themselves. The Mandate was no sooner out, but this Body was completed, which gave occasion of wonder, to some, when they observed the readiness and obedience of those Pagans to their lawfull Sovereign. The weapons used then for that Dispatch, were mostly fire-arms, and about 20 Pieces of Ordnance, which were committed to the charge of 2 expert Gunners; besides 5 Thousand Elephants, and 2 Thousand Horse; those that were mounted on Elephants were armed with Bows, Arrows and Darts, and the Cavalry with Firelocks, Sci[34]matars and Bucklers, which Armory is alwaies ready for use in the Kings Repository. As for Powder they are never at a loss thro want of it, having such plenty of Salt-peter, which is the main Ingredient thereof : so that it is most certain, the *Siammers* are never destitute of any necessary Ammunition for War, either upon

---

<sup>6</sup> There are no records (neither Siamese nor Western) about this particular Siam-Ava (non-) war which Struys claims took place in 1648.



offensiv or defensiv Occasions. Nor yet second to any for true valour and courage, which is checked by a prudent Conduct, and politic Direction of their Power; and thereby the Prince, and the leading Officers of the Army, become dreadfull to the Neighbouring Potentates abroad, and awfull to the Subject at home.

## CHAP. V

*The Revenues and Treasury of the King of Siam. The Religious zeal of those Kings in building of Temples, and Houses for pious uses. Soldiers without pay. The great Slavery and Charges of the Citizens and Plebeians, their Obedience, and Liberality in devotion. Ample Revenues of the Spiritual. Habit and Function of their Priests. The Multitude and monstrous bigness of some of their Idols. Their Ceremonies in Worship; wherein congruous to those of the Romish Religion.*

The Revenues of the King of *Siam*, as we have elsewhere said, consist mostly in Customes, Tolls and Excise, for all exported Wares and Commodities, besides the Fishing, and Growth of the Land, as Corn, Fruit, Trees, &c. There are also in the Countrey several subterranean and fossible things, Mines of Gold and Silver, Lead and Pewter, besides great store of Sappan-wood, as good as that of *Brasilia*, which is reputed a very rich Commodity, and sent abroad both to *Coromandel*, *Dabul*, *China*, *Iapon*, and other Islands in the East.<sup>7</sup> When Any that is imployed in the Kings service dies, 2 Thirds of his Estate fall to the King, and the residue to the Wife and Children of the deceased; or else in lieu thereof such a Salary as they are contented with. The like when any Merchant Stranger comes to die within the Kingdom, two Thirds of his Estate are brought into the Chamber of Finances.

Revenues of the King of Siam.

The...zeal of the Kings of Siam in crecting of Pagods, Religious Houses and Temples.

The King having that special mean of making the Army support it's self [sic], is at very litle Charges else, save what his zeal moves him to [35], in Building of Temples, Religious Houses and

<sup>7</sup> Siam did not have any silver mines, and in the 1640s its gold came from Laos (or perhaps via Laos from China). This is definitely an imaginative account of the King's revenues and the country's resources.



Soldiers without  
Pay, and used as  
Slaves.

The Condition of  
the Citizens.

\*Dutch Tuns,  
without dispute.

Towers, to the Honour of his Gods, which indeed are infinitely numerous and costly in this Countrey, the enobling of his court, with some unnecessary things tending to his own Honour, about which much money is consumed; and lastly providing of Annuntion [sic] and Shipping upon occasion of War: but as we have already mentioned, the Soldaresque have no Pay from the King, except a certain allowance of Rice, and what Spoil they can take from the Enemy; and these, although they goe under the Denomination of Soldiers, yet are but Slaves at best, being employed in all servile uses, as Labourers, when, and where, the King commands.

The Citizens (which may be called Freemen or Proprietaries) are but half a remove from Soldiers, they being obliged to maintain and repair all the Fortifications at their own cost, and defend them in time of need. Yet notwithstanding those heavy burthens imposed on the Commonalty, in the performance whereof they are not found remiss or tardy, they bring up above twenty\* Tun of Gold yearly, for Offerings to their *Pagod*s, and the behoof of the Spiritual; insomuch that the Priests, with the large Offerings of the King, and Liberality of the People, grow rich and in great esteem, notwithstanding their being so numerous in this Kingdom.

The King and People embrace no other Religion than barely Gentilism, which, as appears by the ruins of Monasteries and Cells every where, has been anciently professed among them. Their Ceremonies they seem to have borrowed from the *Roman*, or *Greek* Church, which they ape, as near as may be, with reservation of Paganism. They are incessantly building, repairing and adorning the Temples of their *Pagod*s, founding Cloysters, and erecting of Pyramids; wherein they spare not for money : for though they spend their whole Estates, about them, they must be gilded without, and richly hung within. Their *Bonzi*, or Priests, are distinguished from the Laity by a yellow Vesture, and those again differing among themselves by certain Badges, or tokens, denoting their degrees: Their Beards, Head and Eiebrows are always shaven. According to their Order, they may not handle Money, Marry, nor make use of Women, upon severe Penalties; for if any be taken [36], in company with a Female, he is burn'd alive, or at best banished the Kingdom during the Term of Life; and certainly if their Codpiece were not fastned with such a heavy Padlock; the Laymens Wives and Daughters could never be secure, from that pestiferous rout? Tis true by their Rule they are not to handle money, yet like the Jesuits, have accumulated to them-



selves vast Treasures, which are accompanied with a great reverence and honour from the Commonalty, who whether they have sustenance for their Family and Children at home, will not see the *Bonzi* destitute of what he has a mind to, whether it be in Victuals or Apparel. Their Function is to exhort and teach the People, for which end they have certain Lectures, four times every moon, and at that time set open the Temples, where all the people resort, and meet in due order. So soon as they have buzz'd over a few formal words, they begin a kind of Admonition, insisting upon several good works and moral vertues, but especially to be liberal to the *Bonzi*, or Priests and the *Pagods* : How far this prevails upon them appears truly in their free-will offerings, which are indeed very considerable, in Gold, Silver, Garments and Meat, which the *Bonzi* then receive at the Offertory, promising to make some new Gods therewith, or adorn the Old.

At morning and at night they go to prayers, which they rehearse with a loud voice, that any stranger thereto induced by curiosity, may be permitted to see and hear. They go also to visit the Sick, and pray for the Deceased, with great sobbings, and tokens of sorrow. When they have done Prayer they sing all together in a Chorus, in the\* *Pegu* or *Borneo* Tongue, and that with a tolerable good Harmony; that done, they walk leisurely towards the head of the Temple, and kiss the *Pagods*. The *Pagods* are images of divers sorts of Metalls, as some of Gold, Silver and Brass, others of Wood or Stone. In the Cathedral of *Iudia* are twelve *Pagods* of a vast Bigness, sitting all cross legged, like Taylors upon a Table: the chief whereof was 13 fathom high, as he sat, being of a due Symmetry and Analogy, through all his members. This is usually called by the *Dutch*, *Den grouten Afgodt van SOES* [?], that is, *The great Idol of SOES*.<sup>8</sup> The rest were somewhat than this, and were placed directly one before another. The Ceremonies [37] which we have already said to have affinity with the Church of *Rome*, are, Burning of Lamps, Consecrated, or Holy-water, Auricular Confession, Indulgences, and Pilgrimages, under taken for themselves and others, whereby they are of opinion that they merit much, One of them would (if I had given my Consent) have gone on a long and tedious Pilgrimage for me. They have

\*Which are their ghostly Languages, as Arabic in the Alcoran, and Latin att Mass.

<sup>8</sup> The "Borneo" tongue is hardly likely to be used in a Buddhist ceremony. The Great Idol of Soes, however, is intriguing (it also appears in Heecq, also a 1650s source) and perhaps refers to the large Buddha image at Wat Phananchong, not far from the VOC factory.

\*For that were  
not consistent  
with money [?]  
catching in those  
Countreys,  
where they could  
never yet finger  
it by Violence  
and Tyranny.

some special kindness for the *Hollanders*, in that they allow Liberty of Conscience, and revile not their \*Gods, as do the Mahumetans, for which reason the Opinion of that grand Impostor, could never get footing in this Kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

## CHAP. VI

*Good materials for building in Siam. Their manner of House-keeping, and entertainment of Friends. Neatness and cleanliness in their Houses and Bodies. Their way of dressing them selves, both men and Women. Strange Contracts of matrimony. Early marriage. Education of their Children. Learning and learned men had in great veneration. Rites about their deceased. Urbanity in their Conversation. The great Affection of the Emperour towards Strangers etc.*

Good Materials  
for buildings in  
Siam.

House-keeping  
and  
entertainment  
of Friends.

\*As Coffee in  
the Levant or...in  
Spain.

Cleanly in their  
Chambers and...

*Siam* has of it self whatsoever is requisite in building either for Houses or Shipping: they neither want Lime, Stone, Lead, Iron, nor Wood, or whatsoever else is necessary. Yet notwithstanding Stone be here in plenty enough, yet they build their Dwelling-houses mostly of Wood, and reserve Stone for the use of their *Pagod*s, Temples, Pyramids, Fortifications and other Public Edifices. Their Houses they cover with Tiles, and within have several Apartments, as we have in *Europe*. They use not many moveables in their Houfes neither use they Benches, Stools, or Tables. Their Floors are all spread with Matts which they use for cleanliness, and upon these they sit down. But if a person of Eminency comes to visit them they honour him with another Matt, or else an *Arabian* Carpet, which is of excellently well wrought Tapestry. When he is set, they give him Fair-water in Gold or Silver Goblets, and a \**Siery Pinang*, which is the chief thing wherewith they caress their Friends. They are very nice and curious about their Vessels in the Kitchin and Dishes, which for the [38] most part are of brass, and of a neat fashion, but generally chased. They are also very cleanly in their Chamber, and surpass

<sup>9</sup> The Muslims were, contrary to Struys' statement, quite well established in Siam by the 1650s, even at the royal court, if we are to believe the chronicles of the Bunnag family and *The Ship of Sulaiman*.





any other people that I have seen, either before or since. They keep their bodies cleaner than the Turks themselves, and bath themselves oftner than they eat, which is not only their Head, Hands and Feet, as was the Custome of the Talmudists, and those under the Levitical Law, but all over : which being done, they anoint themselves with perfumed Confectures, made of fragrant Spices, and Herbs. Some of them I have known use an Oyntment made of *Xylaloës*, or, wood of Aloës, Sandal, Musk, and Ambergreece, tempered with Rose-water, which besides the delectable odour it renders, is a great Preservative against epidemical and pestilential Airs.

Whensoever their Devotion moves them to go and visit their Friends, or the *Pagods*, which they frequently adore, they bath and anoint themselves after this wise, and afterwards, attire themselves in a Garb peculiar to such Solemnities : the Men have all their fingers loaden with gold Rings, as many as they can well put on, without hindring the due use of their Joynts, and a long Cotton Robe, or Cassock, of divers colours either so woven, or painted; which appears very gorgeously : this is their Habit from the middle downward; under that they wear a Shirt of very fine Linnen, or Cotton, of red, white, or other colours : above the middle a kind of Surplice, with wide sleeves (like the Gown of a Batchlour of Art in our Universities) Head, Hands and Feet are all bare.

Men how attired  
when a-broad.

The Women have their hair tied up in a round ball, on the crown of the head, fastned with a golden Bodkin, 5 or 6 inches long. At their Ears they hang Pendants of Gold about a finger long, which are fastned to the Tips of their Ears, by great wide holes, bored when they are Young, the head where they fasten the Pendant is set with Precious stones, as Ruby, Diamond, Amethyst, Emerald or Pearls. Besides the Rings, which are also set with Diamonds, or other Stones, and sometimes plain, they wear others about their arms, which are massie and ponderous. They wear also a long Vesture of 7 or 8 foot long, and 6 or 7 broad, painted of divers colours, being fastned with a Surcingle about 16 foot long, wound round their body, which is neatly embroidered with Gold; From the middle upward they have nothing but a Cotton-cloth, or a Scarf of [39] coloured Silk which they throw about their shoulders to cover their breasts. To be brief the Habit of Men and Women, as well as Children, is as costly as gaudy, and their Persons of a very handsom stature, but rather with the shortest; so that with the stateliness of attire, and comeliness of bodie, they present better than those of *China* or *Japan*. When they

Women how  
attired.



Marriages the  
Siammers.

walk the streets, they are attended with a retinue of Slaves conformable to their Rank and Abilitie, which are also in gentile habit.

The *Siammers*, although Pagans, have a sacred veneration for Matrimony, and are generally very chaste; Yet they do not esteem it a dishonour or shame to be Adulterers. Whoredom is in some regard dispensed with (or at least connived at) nevertheless they are not much inclined to Venery, but content themselves with such as they are engaged to by Wedlock : and in their honest demeanor towards their lawfull Consorts (of whether sex it be meant) may convince most of us, that profess the Faith of Christ : The conjugal Love of Man and Wife is so mutually observed on both sides, and the filial Duty of Children towards their Parents, so reciprocally paid, that some who pretend to a more than natural Light, need not to reckon those too mean a precedent for Morality. The parents are very carefull to educate their children, when they are young, and the children diligent in nourishing and providing for their parents, when they are grown aged, and unable to help themselves.

A Batchlour desirous to marry, and consequently having settled his thoughts upon a Maid, must address himself (or send some friend) to the Father of the party, or having none, to her Guardian, and not the Maid her self, with whom they may not converse; and these are to treat together upon the matter. But it is more usual, that the Parents of both the parties make the Overture, among themselves. They have no respect to Consanguinity or Affinity, but marry sometimes with the nearest relations they have, Brother and Sister only excluded, unless they have different Mothers. But to strangers they rarely marry, although it were to a Family of a better rank or Fortune. They look much after Wealth and Beauty, but not so much after vertuous Inclinations, as we do; neither are they prone to be led aside with affability, or flattery, as sometimes happens among us, which tends frequently to a future discontent and irrevocable [40] calamity. Now as the Parents alwaies make up the Marriage, so the young couple may not of themselves dissolve it; and the better to avoid any dissatisfaction, which may arise from the dislike that the one may have of the other, they are generally married before they come to maturity, when they are not capable of judging, as at 10 years of age. I have seen a Couple married, the man at 12 and the Women not fully 9. Another couple I have known, who had 2 Children, and both their ages could not make up 25 years. Polygamy is here allowed, for every man may marry so many Wives, as he lists, unless he be under

Polygamy



some particular obligation to the contrary. They are sometimes divorced for slender reasons, but always when they cannot procreate Children; and being separate they may severally marry again. Their Marriages are not confirmed by the Spiritual, but Temporal Magistrate, yet always the Priest, must be present to do Sacrifice on behalfe both the Parties, They are very punctual in observing all the Articles specified in the Covenant of Matrimony, without the constringency of the Law. They regulate themselves in Hous-keeping, Education of their Children and the like, mostly after the Law of Nature, without restraint or compulsion. Their Children are very flexible and obedient, without beating or other severe chastisement. When they are young their Parents commit them to the *Bonzi*, who instruct them in all Sciences and good manners; as also mechanical Professions and Trades, whereby they afterwards get their living : Although most of them desire rather to stick to their studies, and so embrace the Function of Priest-hood, such being among them esteemed honorable, that have any tincture of Learning.

Learning and  
Learned men in  
great esteem.

Their Dead they bury not, but, after the manner of the old *Romans*, burn them; which is celebrated with great pomp, and expences, proportionable to the merits or abilitie of the Partie. The Ashes they conserve in an Urn, which they inclose in a Pyramid, erected to the Memory of the Deceased : others out of Zeal cause Churches and Monasteries to be built; or bequeath large Revenues to the *Pagods* and *Bonzi*: nay, there is hardly a Slave among them but gives something for Religious uses, or perhaps all that he was master of; and upon these occasions they are burned at the [41] charges of the Convent. Those that die of any disease which they repute unclean as Small-pox, Feavers, &c. are not burned, but either thrown into a River with a stone about their neck, or given to the Beasts of prey. The same they do with Children, if they come to die before a certain age, for that they say, That for want of discretion they could not rightly Worship their Deity, and consequently do not deserve an Urn.

The dead burned  
to Ashes.

They are of a very liberal nature, and civil to converse withall, but especially to Strangers. *English, Portugueezes, Hollanders, and Moors*, without respect to their Profession, have liberal access to enter, inhabit and traffic in the Land, by order of the King; and enjoy as much Liberty, and benefit of the Law, as his own natural subjects; which draws abundance of Forreigners, from all Countreys, who come thither, either upon the accout of Commerce, or to seek protection.

Urbanty in their  
conversation.

This concurrency of so many several sorts of People doth not only daily teach new Politie, but renders the Prince so formidable to his neighbouring Potentates, who know his Kingdom to be so populous and the people so deeply ingaged to their Sovereign.

The Crown  
hereditary.

The Crown is successiv, yet during the minority of the Heir (which is at 15 years) the Uncle or some Guardian nominated by the King, takes place as Administrator : By this Precedent also are all the Officers in the Kingdom regulated, that are successiv.<sup>10</sup>

### [There is no Chapter VII]

### CHAP. VIII

*The Sieur van Muyden invited to the Exequies of the Princess. A stately Scaffold erected for the Solemnity of the day. A magnificent and sumptuous Altar Ornaments of the Corps. The Train attending the Ceremony. Order of the same. Money thrown among the People. Stages erected for the Almosners. Artificial Fireworks. The vast Charges of this Preparation.*

February 1650

On the 23 of *February*, the Sieur van *Muyden*, Consul for the Company,<sup>11</sup> was sent for, by two Interpreters, to wait upon the King; who invited him to attend the Ceremony of burning the Corps of his sole legitimat Daughter. I went my self also [42] to see the Exequies performed, but by the remissness of the Messengers, came too late to see the Train; for the Corps was brought to the place, before we got thither; but yet came in time enough to get to the stage, which was erected for us. On the middle of the Parade before the pallace, were erected 5 Towers; upon each Tower a poll, that which stood in the midst was 30 fathom high, the other 4 that stood in a quadrangular form, each 20 fathom. The Fabric of those Towers was very artificial : Round about under the Architraves, they were neatly painted with Foliage, rais'd with Gold, and depress'd with Umber and burn'd Ivory. On the Stylobat were carved Heads of Leopards, Tygres

<sup>10</sup> Struys' version of the Siamese royal succession is very similar to van Neijenrode's (1620s), particularly concerning the rights of a royal son to succeed after he attains the age of 15 (implicit in the passage).

<sup>11</sup> Van Muyden was indeed the chief or director of the VOC factory in Ayutthaya at that time (not the "Consul").



and Panthers. Under the Projecture, Supporters in antic-work, and emblematical to that occasion; the *Scima*, or Cornish with close Leaves suitable to the Phrise and Architrave, but could not at the distance I was at, perceive whether it was carv'd or painted. Within the great Tower which stood in the middle, was a very costly Altar, covered with Gold, and set with Sapphirs and other stones, being about 6 foot high from the Ground. Upon this Altar was the Corps of the Young Lady laid, after it had lay imbalmed about 6 Moneths within the Pallace. The Body was attired in a Royal Garb, with Gold chains, Bracelets and Collars of Gold and fastned with Diamonds. She was set in a Coffin of solid Gold, in which she sate upright, with her Hands conjoyned, and her face looking upwards : upon her head was a Crown of Gold, very richly set with stones. Then came all the *Mandorins*, or, Grandees of the Nation, with their Ladies, attired in White, without any ornament, for White is their Mourning colour; they feigned themselves sorrowfull for the Dead, and passing by strow'd the Corps, with Flowers and odorous Waters. When these Ceremonies were done, the Corps was brought out of the Tower, and set upon a Chariot of Triumph, richly gilded, and shown to the Grandees of the Empire, whereupon all the Ladies began to weep aloud, which was not altogether real, but feigned; every one emulating to show a greater appearance of Sorrow than the rest; which was with such earnestness, that it might have been heard all through the Town. After the Chariot had stood there about 2 short hours, it was removed to another place, where the Body was to be burned; and was followed by the *Mandorins*, and their Ladies, who went softly after. [43] In the first rank went the Kings eldest son, aged about twenty Years,<sup>12</sup> who was only brother to the Deceased, and was mounted upon a Young Elephant all in White : next him were two brethren of his, by another Queen, mounted also upon Elephants, on each side one : each of these had a long silk Scarf fastned to the Herse, in their hand. On each side the Herse were 14 of the Kings Sons, with green twigs of palm in their Hands, who all the time went in a heavy posture, their eies dejected to the Ground, framing a sad Countenance, and uttering many sighs and expressions of Sorrow. On each side of the way, by which the Herse must pass (that was about 6 foot broad) were erected several stages, for the *Mandorins* of

---

<sup>12</sup> The king's eldest son (about twenty years old) was Chaofa Chai, who was briefly king in August 1656.

\*which is a piece of Money Valuing about 2s 8d Sterling.

† which is half a Ficol.

Presents sent the Bonzi, for their good Service praying for the Soul of the deceased.

a meaner rank. These at the passing by of the Herse, threw Oranges among the common people, in some of which were \**Ficols*,<sup>13</sup> and † *Mafes*. this occasioned such a throng of People, that several lay under foot, and 7 Persons trodden to death. When they were come to the Altar, the Corps was taken down by the *Mandorins*, with Waits and Wind-Music, which made a melancholic noise, and was carried with great Solemnity to the Altar, where it was set down, and laid round with aromatic Woods, and Drugs, amongst which was poured many sorts of perfumes and odorous balsams. When this was done the Princes of the blood, and the *Mandorins* returned to the Kings Palace, but the Ladies were enjoined by the Emperour to remain at the Altar and bewail the Dead, for two days longer; at which time the Bodie was to be burned : and accordingly they stay'd there till the time was expired, striving, who could manifest the most sorrow, hoping so to obtain the greater favour from the Emperour. But the greatest folly I could observe among them was, that when any of them could not dissemble, or let down tears, they were whipped with thongs, by some persons, thereto appointed, till they wept indeed, and this was duly executed without having regard to their Persons. Near those Towers, was erected a stage, covered with thick gilded paper, whereupon sate the Chief of the *Bonzi*, and a litle lower sat the Priests of a lower degree and rank, of which there was a great number; these (like those under the Hierarchy of *Rome*) were employed to pour forth praier for the Soul of the Deceased. Which when they had done by order of the King, there were several Gifts sent them which for the most part, consisted in Ap- [44]parrel, House-furniture and mechanical Implements, of every sort. At the going down of the Sun there were several Fire-works play'd off, which issued out of Twenty Turrets, covered with gilded paper. All these preparations, besides what was that day given to the *Bonzi*, and distributed among the poor, according to the relation given to the Heer *van Muyden*, by the Kings Agent, amounted to 5000 *Catti* of *Siam* Silver, which is about 66000 pound Sterl, besides the Images that were bestowed on the chief Temple, whereof two were of Gold, about 4 foot high, which also amounted to a great sum : for what Gold, Jewels, or other Gifts were in her life time presented her, by the King, or *Mandorins*, were expended upon these exequal Rites.

<sup>13</sup> “Ficols” is a misprint for “ticals”



## CHAP. IX

*The Body of the Princess burnt. A remarkable token, whereby, it was concluded that she was poisoned. The Kings fury against all the Domestic of the Princess, who are committed to custody. The cruel Punishment of the suspected Parties. A strange way to find out the guilty. Elephants used as Executioners. Fifty men and Women executed in one day, some by Elephants, others buried in the Earth, to the Head, where they are suffered to starve. A Young Lady with her Brother taken and dispatched. Their Candour, and free resolvedness to die.*

Two days after the Corps were brought forth, the King went himself in person, and gave fire to the wood with a Torch, which was done with great Solemnity, and Music of all sorts, that all the time play'd very dolefull Airs. The Chest of Gold, together with all the Costly Ornaments, wherewith she was attired, when she lay in state, were burn'd with the Corps, and reduced to dust.

We may not ommit to relate a very remarkable passage which happened about these Exequies; for when the King went to gather up the Ashes, which were to be put in a golden Urn, he found a piece of Flesh, about the bulk of a Young childs head, fresh and unconsumed.<sup>14</sup> This seeing, he was mainly altered, and turning about to one of the *Magi* who stood at his left hand, Asked him; What his opinion was? and, What might be the reason that this gobbet of [45] flesh remained unburn'd. The Sage judging it to be done by some Enchantment, durst not declare his opinion about it, but to satisfy the King, replied, That his Majesty could not but be sensible of the Cause, since nothing could ly occult from his searching Wisdom : the more in regard it was a thing so palpable and open. The King by the Saying of this Parasite, concluded with himself that she had been poisoned, cries out with great ragings, *At length I have discovered the certainty of what I ever had in suspicion : My Daughter is without doubt poisoned.* Upon that in great discontent he went into his Mourning appartment whence he issued an Order for the sudden Apprehension of all the Ladies, that attended the Princess in her Life time, who were in obedience to his Royal Will immediately secured.

An odd Passage.

<sup>14</sup> One should perhaps compare a similar episode in the Siamese Royal chronicles (though in the chronicles it was a son and not a daughter whose body was being cremated). This may make the Struys account of Ayutthaya perhaps less easy to dismiss.

On the day following divers others of the greatest rank were siezed and committed to Custody, who were wont to converse with the Princess, although they had not been in her presence for the space of a whole year.

Shortly after in was my fortune to be Spectator to such a cruel Tragedy as ever I have seen elsewhere. The King being now possessed wthi [sic] Jealousy, and suspecting several to be factious in the matter, yet could not find out any certainty in the thing, he therefore to sift it out, who those should be that were concerned in the deed, practised this cruel Stratagem and impious way of Trial. The king sent a Messenger to summon up some of the chief Nobility in the land to Court, where being come to give attendance, were shut up in Prison, till the Prison would not hold any more, so that he was fain to find a new place, where to committ those unhappy Gentlemen. When the principal Officers and Courtiers were taken into Security. The king not contented so, sent also for their Wives, and several Young Ladies, who were known to be familiar with the Princess some time before her death: these were apart, that they might not have the benefit of Communication, also secured in a place. When the Emperour had as many Persons in Custody, as he, or others that advised him suspected, he gave order to make several Pitts in the ground about 20 foot square, one near another, which the Soldiers were commanded to fill with Charcoal, kindle and blow it up with long Fans, such as the Slaves in *Siam* do fan their Lords and Ladies with. When all was performed according to the Commandment of the king, they brought forth some ot those Personages [46] that were impeached with their hands tied behind their backs being all the time guarded with a Body of Soldiers : and being come to the place, they stript them naked and put their feet in warm Water, to make them tender; after that, the Soldiers paired of the skin with razours. Afterwards they were brought before certain Officers, nominated by the King as Examinators for that day, and were assisted by the chief of the *Bonzi*, who insisted upon them to confess the Fact, but upon their stedfast denial, had the *\*Rigoloza* pronounced against them, and so transmitted to the Tormenters, who were forced to run over the hot coals without their *natural Shoes*. So soon as they were come through the fire their feet were visited; and if they were blistered, it was concluded by the *Bonzi*, that they were guilty, and so led away to the place appointed for them to be kept in, till all the supposed Criminals were turn'd through the Furnace: but when those Officers had don

\*which is a kind of Curse [?] like that in the Levitical Law, when the Woman is to drink the water of Jealousy.





their visits as they were enjoined, they found none, but what were blistered, and consequently condemned as guilty some there were on whom this impious Test was imposed, that indeed with a strong resolution ran through, without receiving much damage : yet many there were who fell down flat in the middle of the Fire, where they expired their last, for (as we were afterward inform'd) there was a strict charge given, as well to the Spectators, as Officers, not to reach forth their hand to pull any person out, upon pain of Death. A Scene (I must confess) so sad as I have never seen as yet, and hope I never shall. That *Perillus* was thrown into the brazen Bull, which he had presented to the Tyrant *Phalaris*, to punish such as he was offended with, had good colour of Justice, but that so many in innocency should be massacred upon bare supicion [sic], and that with such unheard-of Cruelty, is in no wise justifiable. It is a spectacle dismal enough, none can deny, to see a Ship rent upon the Rocks, and the distressed marriners Swimming upon masts and planks, to save their lives, but yet harder to see so many rare Personages burnt alive, and fried in their own blood : for that is from a Divine hand, to which we ow our very Lives and Being : but this the effects of a wretched Tyranny from our fellow-creatures, where Justice it self had nothing to demand.

Every person who had past this horrid Purgatory, and by the aforesaid rule convicted, was led aside, and by the Soldiers made fast [47] to a pale : which done the Elephants were brought forth. Now the reader must understand that at *Syam* they have no other Executioners, on the score of Death, than Elephants. When the great Elephant was brought, and viewed the Condemned party, went twice or thrice round about him and at last took him up with his trunk, pole and all, and toss'd him aloft into the Air, and catch'd him at coming down upon his teeth, which struck quite through his body, afterwards throwing him off, trampled him under his feet till his Gutts burst out, and trode his body flat to the ground. When the Elephant had dispatched, the Soldiers draggd the Carcases to the River, which made the way slippery with blood. On this manner were the greatest part executed, but others were brought to the path, which leads to the City, and there put in holes, digged in the Earth on purpose, where they were closed up, to the neck, and every one that passed by, was to fulfill the Emperours pleasure. (*forsooth*) commanded to spit upon them, to which order I was fain to submit my self, being to pass by that way, so that I could not avoid it. These were to remain there to

Elephants the  
Executioners  
in Siam.

till they died, and none daring to give them any thing to eat or drink. It was lamentable to hear them cry out to every one that passed by to dispatch 'em, but the Officers kept so strict an eye that none durst move his hand. Four moneths long dured this horrible Massacre, and every day a great number put to death: on one day I have seen 50, and the like number on a forenoon. The general number of all that died was by some reckoned to be 2900 Souls, by others almost 300 more, and certainly few had escaped if they had not absented themselves from Court during the implacable fury of the King.<sup>15</sup>

This may seem to be a mean reason, for so great a piece of Tyranny, but it was well known afterwards that the King had formerly a design to cut of the chief of the *Mandarins*,<sup>16</sup> of whom he himself began to stand in awe, and therefore took an opportunity to do it under this specious pretence : and the better to effect it without mutiny or rebellion, he had newly levied an Army of 250000 men, and made as if he would denounce war against *China*.

On the 28 of *Febr.* were 300 of the Domestic of the late Princess brought to the place of Execution, who were also led through the [48] fire, but having passed through, were (I know not for what reason) set at liberty. Shortly after was the Youngest daughter of the late King with all her Household, committed to Custody : and the king as it appeared had a great suspicion of her, the more when he was informed that whilst other Ladies at Court, were bewailing the Dead, she could hardly all the time restrain her self from laughing : but what made the Matter have a better hue, was, her complaining to the king how that her daughter (who was also the kings Child) was had in contempt, and his eldest Daughter, in her life time promoted to great honour.

MAR. 1650

On the first of *March*, was the said Princess brought forth, and a great number of Ladies, who were all led through the Fire; but (according to common fame) none but the Princess were blistered on the feet. Hereupon she was secured with Silver Fetters, and brought into a Dungeon, where none was permitted to have Communication with her.

<sup>15</sup> Struys may have read the letters of the earlier Dutch chief in Siam, Reijnier van t'Zum, who wrote of many people being maimed and killed almost daily during 1643–1644 in the aftermath of the Tha Sai Prince's rebellion in December 1642.

<sup>16</sup> The "Chief" of the "Mandarins" referred to here is a puzzle: the case resembles that of Okya Phitsanulok, got rid of in 1636 on trumped-up charges of treason.

The next day the said Princess was brought forth again into the Palace, where the *Mandarins* were assembled in the Auditory. So soon as they began to make inquisition, upon threatning to put her to torment, if she would not make an ample discovery of the Truth, she, whether out of Fear, or Glory, is uncertain, uttered these Words, or to the same effect, *If the King will promise upon his Royal word, that so soon as I have exhibited the Cause of his Daughters death, he will speedily execute me, without making, me a mocking-stock to the World, I will also promise upon the Honour of a dying Princess, to manifest the whole affair without further trouble.* Upon that liberal saying, several of the old *Mandarins* then present, who had a great honour for her Royal Father, were moved to pity, and 'twas thought, that they would have interceded to the King for pardon for her, if the present fury of the King had not kept them in stricter aw. However after the fairest manner they could made report to the King, who promised to grant her request, and sent the *Mandarins*, back, to take her into further examination. Being returned, they brought her the result of her Petition, and willed her to confess the Cause and Circumstances : whereupon she declared in presence of them all, *That she with the Help of her Nurse were both guilty of the Fact, and that they had used certain exorcisms therein, which was the reason, that that flesh was not combustibile, [49] as the rest.* She added further, *That her ignominious death did not concern her so much, as thus her just Design should have no better issue; whereby the small remainder of her Stock should be reduced to their pristin state, and free'd from the Slavery of so fierce a Tyrant.* When she was further examined in some circumstantial things, She protested that it was not provided for the innocent Princess, but for the King himself. So soon as Report was made to the King how she had made a liberal Confession, and what it was, he commanded instantly that an Executioner should be sent for, who being come, he gave him order to cut a gobbet of flesh out of her Body, and force her to eat it.<sup>17</sup> When the Executioner went to fullfil the Kings command, the Lady suffered the flesh to be tore out with wonderfull patience, but when he tendred it her to eat, she refused, crying out, *O wretched Tyrant, thou mayst be my Executioner, but thou canst not conquer my noble mind. Know,*

<sup>17</sup> The cannibalism punishment seems to be straight out of De Coutre, whose life—including his account of Siam—appeared in print in 1640. The son of King Songtham executed was unlikely to have been killed in 1649 (no other record corroborates this): again, this must presumably have come from earlier data (Van Vliet, Van t' Zum, or possibly Moerdijk).

*that I defy thy Cruelty; and that the end of thy Sham-poyson will speedily come, when the remaining Vertue of my Royal Race shall avenge themselves of thee, and thy Tygre-brood.* With these and the like words she reviled the King, till by a second Charge sent to the Executioner from the Palace, she was hackt in pieces, and thrown into the River.

The same day her only brother, aged 20 years, was brought to the place of Execution, who during all these showers of Cruelty, had feigned himself distraught, by which means, they told us he was excused.

But whether he was guilty or not, it appeared so soon as he was mounted the stage, that he had his Witts about him : for he behaved himself with such candour and modesty, that some of the *Mandarins* could not forbear tears; and with a bitter Harangue so reviled the King, and vindicated himself for what he suffered, that the *Plebeians* were almost moved to an Insurrection; declaring himself more sorrowful for the fruitless attempt of his sister, than his own Death. So soon as he saw the Executioner come to him, he cried out, *Innocent indeed I am, as was my Sister, but now Thou inhuman Tyrant, it is thy will it should be so, I scorn, although I were sure of enjoyment, to desire thy pardon, that thou shouldst not hope for the lest pity from the Hands of them that shall revenge my Blood in after times.* With these and the like words he seemed to declare his Innocency, yet uttered some expressions which contradicted those Protestations, that probably were [50] to only in spire of the King. Thus was the last of the former Kings race extirpated, except one Daughter, which was not capable of doing any thing against the Interest of the present King.

## CHAP. X

*The proud, and blasphemous Titles of the King of Siam. The great Preparations used to assuage the Waters of the Ganges.*

You have heard by what we have related in the former Chapter, with how much power and aw, the king of *Siam* rules. It will further appear how well he knows it, by the proud, swelling Titles he assumes to himself, two of which were presented me by a *Mandarin*,

and I hope will not seem impertinent to insert here; although the Reader may be pleas'd to take notice, that the Idiom of their Tongue is so barbarous, that it will hardly bear sence, when rendred, however we shall give it Word for Word.<sup>18</sup>

*THE Alliance written with letters of fine Gold, being full of God-like glory. The most Excellent, containing all wise Sciences. The most happy, which is not in the World among men. The Best and most Certain that is in Heaven, Earth and Hell. The greatest Sweet, and friendly Royal word. Whose power full-sounding Properties, and glorious Fame range through the World, as if the Dead were raised by a God-like power, and wonder fully purged from a Ghostly and Corporal Corruption. At this both Spiritual and Secular men admire with a special Joy, whereas no Dignity may be here with Compared. Proceeding from a friendly, illustrious, unconquerable, most mighty and most [51] high Lord; and a Royal Crown of Gold, adorned with nine sorts of Precious Stones. The Greatest, Clearest and most God-like Lord of unblameable Souls, The most Holy, seeing every where, and Protecting Sovereign of the City Judia, whose many Streets, and open Gates are throng'd by Troops of Men. Which is the chief Metropolis of the whole World. The Royal Throne of the Earth that is adorn'd with nine sorts of Stones, and most pleasant Valleys. He who Guides the Rains of the World, and has a house more than the Gods, of fine Gold and of Precious Stones, they the God-like Lords of Thrones of fine Gold, the White, Red and Round-tayl'd Elephant; which Excellent Creatures are the Chiefest of the nine forts of Gods. To none hath the Divine Lord given, in whose hand is the victorious sword; who is like the fiery-Armed God of Battails, to the most Illustrious.*

The second is as as blasphemous as the first, though hardly swells so far out of Sence.

*THE highest Paducco Syry Sultan, Nelmonam, welgaca, Nelmochadin Magiviitha, Jouken der eauten lillaula fylan, King of the whole world, who makes the Water rise and flow. A King that is*

<sup>18</sup> It is impossible even to begin to translate the king's titles back into Thai, though it is very interesting that part of the name is in Malay [p.51], indicating that Siamese officialdom, via the translators, used Malay in communicating with the Dutch.

*like a God, and shines like the Sun at noon day. A King that gives a glance like the Moon when it is at full. Elected of God to be worthy as the North-star; being of the Race [52] and offspring of the great Alexander; with a great Understanding, as a round Orb, that tumbles hither and thither, able to guess at the Depth of the great Sea. A King that hath amended all the Funerals of the departed Saints, and is as righteous as God, and of such power that all the World may come and shelter under his Wings. A King that doth right in all things, as the Kings of old have don. A King more liberal than all Kings. A King that hath many Mines of Gold that God hath lent him; who hath built Temples half Gold and half Brass, sitting upon a throne of pure Gold, and of all sorts of Precious stones. A King of the white Elephant, which Elephant is the king of all Elephants, afore whom many Thousands of other Elephants must bow, and fall upon their knees. He whose eies shine like the Morning-star A king that hath Elephants with four Teeth; Red, Purple and Pied Elephants, ay, and a Buytenaques Elephant; for which God has given him many and divers sorts of Apparrel wrought with most fine Gold, enobled with many Precious stones : and besides these, so many Elephants us'd in Battel, having Harnesses of Iron, their teeth tipt with teel and their Harnesses laid ore with fhining Brass. A King that has many Hundred Horses, whose Trappings are wrought with fine Gold, and adorned with Precious stones of every sort, that are found in the Universal World, where the Sun shines, and [53] those shod with fine Gold. Besides so many Hundred Horses that are used in War, of everykind. A King who has all Emperous, Kings, Princes and Sovereigns in the whole World from the Rising to the Going down of the Sun, under Subjection; and such as can obtain his Favour are by him promoted to great Honour, but on the Contrary, such as revolt, he burns with fire. A King who can show the Power of God, and what ever God has made.*

Lucifer

Trappings

Has the...  
Scotch...The Ceremony  
used to aswage  
the River  
Ganges.

And so by this time I hope you have heard enough of a King of Elephants and Horses (though not a Word of his Asses) in this Instrument called a Title : and thereby perceive the Pride and Folly of this unpolish'd Potentate, where we shall leave him and take a walk towards the *Ganges*.

The River of *Siam* is a branch of the famous *Ganges*, and ebbs and flows at the same time with that noble River. When it is at highest and ready to fall of it self, according to it's natural Recourse at a certain time of the Year, as doth also the *Nile*, the King imbarks



himself in a Galley which is within and without so richly Gilded, that it seems to be all of massy Gold. Within the same is a Throne of solid Gold, upon which the King sits, having a Canopy richly set with Pearls, Diamonds and other Precious Stones. About him sit the greatest of the *Mandorins*, on Chairs suitable to their Quality; and on his left hand the Chief of the *Bonzi*, in his Hierarchical Garb. On the Galleries of this Galley, sit several Musicians, which are answered by the inferiour *Mandorins* and Plebeians, who are placed all along the Banks with Musical Instruments, and Flags of an infinite number. The Imperial Galley is followed with a Retinue of some Thousands of smaller Shipping and Yachts. When the King is come to the place where the Ceremony is usually performed, he steps out into a *Prawe*, where the High Priest delivers him a golden sword upon his knees. After the repetition of some formal words, he beats the Water three times, and commands it with a God-like Authority to fall down, and so re[54]turns into the Galley : upon which all they that are on the Banks fall down flat upon the ground and shout. And thus the blind People, who have not the Benefit of Chronicle or Antiquity, and ignorant of the course of Nature, the hand-maid of God, do really take it for a miracle, effected by their Pagan Sovereign.

## CHAP. XI

*Departure from Siam... Arrival at Formosa... A Description of Formosa...*

Our Ship having now taken in her whole Carga, we had all order to come aboard. Our Loading was most Bucks-hides, Sanderwood,<sup>19</sup> and *Amrack*, which is a kind of Colour, used by the *Iaponeezes* in their Cahinet-work for Vernishing : and on the 12 of *April* we set Sail, directing our Course for *Tojovan* or *Formosa...*

April 1650

---

<sup>19</sup> “Sanderwood” – this looks improbable because Siam did not have sandalwood among its export commodities. Perhaps another aromatic wood, “Agerwood” (i.e. eaglewood), was meant here.



## CHAP. XII

*The Author departs from Formosa. His arrival in Japon. The description of Nanguesaque... Departure from Japon. Arrival at Formosa the second time. Their return to Siam, where they take in Elephants. The Author beat with a ropes end at the Main-mast, and why. His return for Holland, and End of the first Voyage.*

May 1650

...[63] [we] cast anchor before the Fort *Zeelandia*. Upon our arrival there I was put aboard the *Post-brase*, which was bound for *Siam*, where we arrived on the 22<sup>th</sup> of *January*, and there took in the *Sieur Van der Muyden*, Consul for the Company at *Iudia*; who was to go for *Batavia*. Here we took in 8 young Elephants, with Provender, which was *Palmes* [?] and Sugar-cane, as also a certain quantity of Rice. Here I may not ommit a certain passage, which (though unadvisedly done) had almost cost me my neck. About noon when the dinner was ready, I went to the Cook for a bowl of hot broth, which having got I came to bring it to 2 of my Comrades, and passing by the Hold, one of the Elephants wound me about the leggs with his Trunk (or snout) that I came tumbling down, Plater and all, which being scalding hot, fell upon the Elephants back and made him to roar out and stamp, that the Ship tumbled and shaken again, this so amazed the Commander that he came running out of his Cabin to know what was the matter. Here I was in a great strait fearing to cry out, being sensible that he was a choleric man, and yet durst not stay below for the Elephant, who if he could have come at me would have trodden me as flat as a Flounder : but considering with my self that the Captain would assuredly come to hear of it, one time or another, and if I staid long I was sure this beast of vengeance would send me to my Grandsir. I cryed out and the Commander in all hast sent one to pull me up. So soon as they had got me upon the Deck, he gave order to tie me to the mast, and commanded a fellow to lick me lustily with a ropes end.

February 1651  
The Author  
dismiss'd. His  
return for  
Holland.

On the 15 of *February* we set Sail for *Batavia*, where I was discharged of my Service, and permitted to go for *Holland* : and in order thereto went aboard the Ship *Zelandia*, which was then almost ready to set Sail. On the 26 we set out, having a good Wind, and a fine serene air. Within a few days we sailed through the Straits of *Sunda*; and thence set our course for *S. Helena*.





On the 21 of *April* we got sight of *Saint Helena*, where we came safe into the Harbour, being 7 Sail in all. As soon as we were arrived, we went up into the Island to Hunt, fish and range the Woods for Oranges, Lemons and other Fruits.

Arrival at  
St. Helena.

Having now refreshed our selves sufficiently, and all things in a readi[64]ness we set sail in order to the pursuit of our Voyage, and made Land on the 10<sup>th</sup> of *August*, where we bartered with fuch Goods as we had aboard, for Oxen, Sheep, and other necessarys : and so forwards for *Holland*, where by God's gracious Conduct we arrived on the first of *September* 1651, and put in at *Gogree* [?].

May.

The end of the  
first Voyage.



The Massacring of the Mandorins and great Personages in Syam

