

De Marees and Schouten Visit the Court of King Songtham, 1628

Barend J. Terwiel¹

University of Hamburg

ABSTRACT—In 1628, two Dutch merchants were received in audience at the Ayutthaya palace by King Songtham. Joost Schouten's detailed account of the event, written immediately afterwards, has many interesting differences from the well-known embassies of the 1680s. The main audience hall where the envoys were received is much larger than the building where audiences were held in the late 17th century. Songtham's throne is much more imposing than the "window" described in later accounts. The meal the Dutch envoys shared with all who attended the audience was unique, ending with a hitherto little known Brahman ceremony.

Introduction

On 2 September 1628, two Dutch merchants, Adriaen de Marees and Joost Schouten, had an audience with King Songtham in the Grand Palace at Ayutthaya to present a missive and presents from Prince Maurice, the Dutch Stadholder. Immediately afterwards, Schouten composed a lengthy report on the audience and the visit in general.² Unlike many reports compiled long after the event, Schouten's narrative has great immediacy and an impressive level of detail. At present, this is the only detailed account of a foreign audience at the Siamese court before the French and Persian visits in the mid-1680s, and there are striking differences from these later accounts.

Schouten's report of meeting the Siamese king is known to historians dealing with 17th century relations between Siam and The Netherlands. Both Vinal Smith and Han ten Brummelhuis mention the document, and Bhawan Ruangsilp has provided a summary in English. But Schouten's lively report deserves to be better known for it adds to our knowledge, presenting details of the way Prince Maurice's words were translated, the layout and buildings of the palace, and the procedure at audience. The account of the meal the envoys enjoyed in presence of the king is unique.

¹ In January 2017, I sent a translation of Schouten's *Uytloopigh Verhael* to Chris Baker, who has here added some footnotes (labelled CB) and an Appendix.

² See my "A Map Depicting the Arrival of a Dutch Diplomatic Mission in Siam," *JSS* 106 (2018), which describes the early stages of the visit, based on Schouten's account.

Background

The Dutch Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (hereafter VOC),³ like the Portuguese during the 16th century, set up trading posts in strategic places in order to buy and sell commodities. Their senior merchants courted independent kings and princes by offering them “protection” and assistance against possible encroachment by the Iberian powers, in return for special—but usually exclusive—trading rights. The VOC thus concluded a web of treaties with Asian sovereigns during the first decades of the 17th century.⁴

Among the first were agreements between the Dutch and the Queen of Patani. Patani gave the Dutch access to pepper. In addition, the annual arrival of a fleet of Chinese junks on the north-east monsoon made this port essential for entering inter-Asian trade. In 1603, the directors of the VOC even planned to make Patani and Bantam (Banten) their two main Asian trade establishments. Each station would be manned by a chief merchant, twelve assistants and a minister. From Patani a trade mission to China would be prepared.⁵ These plans were never executed. Probably the surprising surrender of a Portuguese fortress in Ambon on 22 February 1605 changed the picture by giving the Dutch easy access to the spice trade.

In his general report of January 1614, Governor-General Coen recorded that Dutch traders were sent from Patani to Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Phatthalung and Songkhla to gain access to the lucrative Chinese junk trade without having to pay the excessive duties in Patani.⁶

With the conquest of Batavia in 1619, the VOC strategy changed dramatically. Coen invested in building a major fortress in Batavia (Jakarta) from where the Asian trading network could be supervised and controlled. He instructed outposts like Patani to send trade and traders to the new centre.

Until the Dutch trade office in Patani was closed in 1623, it supervised the setting up of minor trade offices, not only the ones in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Phatthalung and Songkhla, but also in Cambodia and Tongkin (in northern Vietnam). It is seldom realised that the small VOC office, established in Ayutthaya in 1608, was subordinate to that of Patani during the first fifteen years.⁷

³ On 20 March 1602, the States-General of the Netherlands Republic formally established the VOC, giving it the right to build fortresses, enroll soldiers, negotiate treaties and engage in war-like activities.

⁴ P. Borschberg, “The Seizure of the Santo António at Patani. VOC Freebooting, the Estado da India and Peninsular Politics, 1602-1609,” *JSS* 90 (2002), p. 60.

⁵ H. Terpstra, *De Factorij der Oostindische Compagnie te Patani, Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Indië, Deel I*, 's-Gravenhage, 1938, p. 27.

⁶ In Patani, the VOC had to pay 5 percent on all exported goods, as well as 856 Spanish reals on each departing ship. See the letter written by Coen to the VOC Directors, dated 1 January 1614, in P.A. Thiele (ed.), *Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanders in den Maleischen Archipel*, Vol I, 's Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff, 1886, pp. 62-63.

⁷ Although both Terpstra (passim) and G.V. Smith (*The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1977, p. 112) describe the original role of Patani as the regional VOC centre, in the standard Dutch history of the VOC, Ayutthaya is described in the year 1615 as the main office from where Nakhon Sri Thammarat was supervised (F.S. Gastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC*, Zutphen, 2002, p. 53).

Early diplomatic contacts

Prior to the mission of 1628, there had been a number of diplomatic exchanges between the VOC and the Siamese, primarily initiated by the Siamese. Best known is the journey of two ambassadors⁸ sent in 1607 by King Ekathotsarot to the Dutch Stadholder Maurice, Prince of Orange. The presents they brought are listed in a contemporary account:

Two spears, their irons damascened; Two javelins; Two arquebuses, made like ours with a buckle, their barrels damascened, their stocks gold-plated, of large calibre like our muskets, with which they kill elephants; Two swords with sheaths of beaten gold; Two fans; and two boxes, one of them wooden, covered with cloth and sealed; another bejewelled.

In the first box was the golden letter from the Siamese king. This letter was rolled up and had a length of three-fourth of an *aune* [88 cm].⁹

The other box, made of gold in the form of a cup, was made with great skill and inside were two small wooden boxes each one covered with pearls. In the first was a heavy golden ring in which eight small rubies were set as well as a large diamond, of such a size [in the text a square is drawn with a base of 7 mm]

In the other a golden ring carried a ruby the size of a thumb nail.¹⁰

This first mission returned four years later in 1611, during the reign of Ekathotsarot's successor, Songtham.

In late 1621, King Songtham sent costly presents to Prince Maurice, requesting assistance in his efforts to subdue Cambodia.¹¹ At the same time, he asked the VOC Governor-General for military assistance, and accompanied the request with a gift

⁸ Three ambassadors and twelve attendants arrived in Bantam. The Dutch reduced the mission, allowing only two ambassadors and a retinue of three to travel on. During their visit, the Siamese must have been the first Asians to use a telescope. H. Zoomers and H.J. Zuidervart, *Embassies of the King of Siam sent to his excellency Prince Maurits, arrived in The Hague on 10 September 1608: an early 17th century newsletter, reporting both the visit of the first Siamese diplomatic mission to Europe and the first documented demonstration of a telescope worldwide*, Wassenaar, Louwman Collection, 2008.

⁹ The French *aune* was around 118 cm (or larger), so this report estimates the length of the gold letter was around 88 cm long. The more recent examples that have been preserved were all much shorter.

¹⁰ *Ambassades du roy de Siam envoyé a l'excellence du Prince Maurice, arriué a la Haya le 10. Septemb. 1608* (L'an de grace 1608), pp. 6-7 (my translation). See also P. Pelliot, "Les relations du Siam et de la Hollande en 1608", *T'oung Pao Archives*, 32, 1936, pp. 223-229. The list recorded by Admiral Matelief as published in I. Commelin (comp), *Begin ende Voortgangh van de Vereenighde Nederlantse Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Amsterdam, J. Jansz. 1646, p. 139 is incomplete and inaccurate.

¹¹ Songtham also dispatched presents to King James I in London, asking him for assistance in his bid to regain control of Cambodia. However, the return present of the British monarch (reputedly gold spangles) never arrived because the British East Indiaman *Tryall* foundered near Western Australia. "On 24 May 1622, Trial (John Brookes) was on voyage from Plymouth to Batavia with a general cargo (hunt horns, sheathing nails, cartridges and sheet lead, 500 silver reales (coins) and a quantity of spangles for the King of Siam) and a crew of 139, when she ran aground off the now called Tryal Rocks. 93 died." museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/sites/default/files/no_278_trial_bar_1977_0.pdf. See also Jeremy N. Green, "Australia's oldest wreck: The Loss of the Trial, 1622," *British Archaeological Reports*, Supplementary Series 27, Oxford, 1977.

of a golden crown and a golden betel box, together weighing almost five pounds.¹² Songtham's request came at an awkward time, for Governor-General Coen was implementing the new policy of concentrating on Batavia and reducing investments in the far-flung network of VOC trading stations.

As part of his review of all outer stations in 1621, Coen asked Cornelis van Neijenrode, then chief merchant in Ayutthaya, to write a report on the situation in Siam.¹³ Neijenrode complied by submitting a 72-page report, in which he described Siam in glowing terms: Ayutthaya is surrounded by fertile lowland; a great variety of goods can be obtained cheaply; the inhabitants are friendly to people of all nations; and the king is tolerant. In the five years that Neijenrode was in charge of the Ayutthaya office, the king preferred the Dutch over the English and Portuguese. At the end of his report, Neijenrode included a long list of trade goods, each complete with their cost price. He stressed that deerskins, ray skins and lead could be profitably acquired and sold in Japan for a large profit. He concluded that the VOC should not leave Ayutthaya, but should expand its office on the grounds that Siam was richer than Sumatra, Java, Macassar and other such places, and that the English and the Portuguese would be quick to reap what the Dutch had sown once the Dutch office was closed.¹⁴ Governor-General Coen did not accept Neijenrode's passionate advice that the VOC should invest more in Ayutthaya, and after 1622 only an assistant nominally kept the station functioning.

In response to the presents sent by Songtham in 1621, the VOC sent Frederick Druijff as an ambassador to Ayutthaya, but the Thai king had to wait until late 1628 before receiving the return presents of Prince Frederic Henry (Maurice's brother) from Adriaen de Marees and Joost Schouten.

The news that, after seven years, the Dutch ruler's formal answer finally had arrived, and that the letter was accompanied by costly presents, had an enormous symbolic importance in Siam. During the past thirty years the Dutch had shown themselves to be the mightiest among the Europeans, having supplanted the Portuguese. The Siamese had seen their trading vessels, equipped as superior warships. That the Netherlands was a place with prosperous cities was confirmed by the Siamese ambassadors, who returned in 1611.

The news of the arrival of the letter from Prince Frederick was considered a major diplomatic coup, confirming Siam's leading role in mainland Southeast Asia. Whilst the letter was translated, it was scrutinised for proper wording; it can be seen that the Siamese king was addressed in most flattering terms, thanking him for the boons received in the past and ending with the hope that friendly relations would continue in the future.

The Dutch letter confirmed Ayutthaya's role as a major power on this earth, second

¹² Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand*, p. 18.

¹³ A goldsmith and jeweller, van Neijenrode had resided many years in Siam-controlled stations, first in 1611 and 1612 as junior merchant in Ayutthaya. In 1615 and 1616 as chief merchant in Songkhla, and from 1617-1621 he directed the VOC office in Ayutthaya, also with the rank of chief merchant.

¹⁴ The manuscript is kept in the Archives of Utrecht, Hilten Archives. On it is written that it was received on 14 October 1622. A somewhat abbreviated and occasionally inaccurate version was published as "Remonstrantie ende vertooninge der gelegentheyte des conincrijcx van Sjam, mitsgaders haere handel ende wandel, ende waer de negotje meest in bestaet," *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap Gevestigd te Utrecht*, 10, 1854, pp. 176-191. Eighteen years later, an accurate transcript was published as "Verloog van de Gelegenheid des koningrijcks van Siam", *Kroniek van het Historisch Genootschap Gevestigd te Utrecht*, 27, 1872, pp. 279-318.

only to China, as demonstrated by the tokens of submission sent from a large number of minor principalities.

The formal presentation in the palace served two purposes. In the first place, all ministers of state and representatives of subject centres heard the flattering way the Siamese king was addressed, and were made aware of the accompanying valuable presents. The fact that the missive was sent on a piece of paper and not on a precious metal was embarrassing; it showed that the faraway ruler had not been informed of the proper protocol. In 1633, when another paper missive was received from the Dutch Prince, the Siamese formally requested that a sheet of gold be used in future for such important documents.¹⁵ Apart from witnessing the honour bestowed on the Siamese king, the representatives of subject centres could witness the king's health, the number of his disciplined soldiers and the size of his war elephants. In the second place, the formal audience was meant to impress the Dutch ambassadors, showing them how many princes were subject to the Siamese king, how strong his army was, how impressive his elephants and horses seemed, and how generously they were rewarded with costly presents.

De Marees and Schouten knew in broad outline what the Thai court looked like, for Neijenrode had described it: "...a magnificent, wonderful palace, inside divided in sections separated by walls, inside very neatly organized and constructed without sparing costs; our people are astounded when they see it."¹⁶ As for the proper behaviour when attending an audience, Neijenrode undoubtedly wrote from personal experience:

[fol. 13] The Emperor or King of Siam maintains a state of magnificence and splendour as befits a king in all of Asia. His feet do not touch the earth. Whenever he wants to go somewhere he is always borne sitting on a golden chair. He holds a daily appearance in his court before his nobles and grandees and does so with a magnificence that surpasses some Christian kings. His nobles salute him very respectfully, for when they arrive at the court they kneel down with folded hands and beat their face on the earth¹⁷ whilst addressing his majesty their king (also at the end of their report or proposal) with the words *Chaofa chao phra phutthachao*.¹⁸ *Chaofa* means in Dutch chief of chiefs, and king of kings.

He sits on a golden chair, pyramid shaped, made in such a way that nobody can see him ascend it. On both sides of the chair stand some monsters or animals made of gold, almost like Solomon's temple or chair is depicted by us. Some hundreds of armed soldiers stand in ranks on guard. [fol. 14] Also there stand some elephants, decoratively decked with gold and silver, on both sides of his chair.

¹⁵ The Dutch only complied once, in 1636. See Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁶ Neijenrode manuscript fol. 6: "...sijn residentie... in een magnificq ende treffelyck palleijs, met mueren gesepareert, binnen seer ordentelicken geordonneert ende sonder kosten te sparen getimmert, een verwonderinge bij onse natie om te aensien."

¹⁷ Van Vliet wrote in 1640 that King Naresuan had instigated the custom of creeping before the king and lying face downward, adding that foreigners were not obliged to follow this custom. C. Baker et al., *Van Vliet's Siam*, Chiang Mai, Silkwood Books, 2005, p. 229.

¹⁸ Thai: เจ้าฟ้าเจ้าพระยาพุทธเจ้า.

Neijenrode's account of Siamese court etiquette is superseded by that of Joost Schouten, presented below.

In 1628, William Cunningham, the original Dutch envoy, died en route. The merchant, Adriaen de Marees, and the sub-merchant, Joost Schouten, took over his task and, since they were familiar with the basics of Thai etiquette, acquitted themselves with honour. At the close of the mission, when the scenes he had witnessed were still fresh in his memory, Joost Schouten wrote his lengthy report, intended for internal use: it was important for the VOC to know exactly how to deal with mighty Asian rulers. That is why Schouten reported in detail the reception of the Dutch missive and presents, the translation procedure and the actual presentation to the Siamese King.

Schouten's *Uytloopigh Verhael* holds a number of surprises for historians. For example, De Marees and Schouten arrived by boat, entering the palace via a north-eastern gate by the river. All late 17th century envoys entered on the south side of the palace from the city. Schouten and De Marees had their names recorded before entering the audience hall, apparently this was done in order to be able to label the vessels that contained their food. The French envoys, almost fifty years later, entered without such a registration and were not given food. Also, Schouten's description of the interior leaves no doubt but that this building was not that visited by envoys in the late 17th century. Schouten counted four rows of fifteen pillars, and "between four- and five-hundred persons present". The French noted that the room held a mere fifty courtiers, and La Loubère's sketch of the audience hall indicates that these fifty filled the room. Moreover, Schouten describes the king's elaborate triple throne, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with stairways on both sides. Late 17th century envoys saw the king appear at a high window in the western wall, where he was visible from the waist up.

Schouten wrote this text immediately after the visit was completed. It differs, therefore, from many travel accounts of the time that were composed long after the event. Four years later, after having resided in Japan, Schouten would again submit a lengthy report to his superiors in Batavia, describing the difficulties that had arisen between the Dutch and the Japanese and how these were resolved.¹⁹

Schouten's *Uytloopigh Verhael*²⁰

[21 r] Detailed account of the way in which the letter and gifts from the illustrious Prince of Orange were handed over to the King of Siam in 1628.

The deep mutual friendship between the Dutch and the Siamese dates from the time

¹⁹ Joost Schouten, "Memorabel verhael van den waeren oorspronck, voortganck ende nederganck van de wichtige differenten die tusschen de Nederlanders en de Japansche natie om den Chineeschen handel ontstaan zijn" [Memorable account of the true cause, development and resolution of the important differences that developed between the Dutch and the Japanese concerning the trade with China]. See L. Blussé, "Justus Schouten en de Japanse gijzeling," in P.H.D. Leupen et al. (eds.) *Nederlandse historische bronnen*, 5, 1985, pp 69-110.

²⁰ "Uytloopich Verhael, in hoedaeniger wijze de missive ende geschencken van den doorluchtichsten Prince van Orangien aen den Coninck van Chiam in den jare 1628 behandicht, ende overgelevert zijn," catalogued as ARA VOC 1098 in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague.

they started trading and visiting each other's countries.²¹ It goes back to the previous reign,²² when the King's father sent a letter to the illustrious Prince Maurice²³ of Orange-Nassau and, through the answer received, this friendship was placed on a stronger footing. Therefore, His Majesty sent a royal letter in 1622 (on return from a march against his rebel, the King of Cambodia) to the illustrious Prince of Orange in Holland. This was followed by the arrival of Commander Frederick Duijff, who came with two ships to assist in the campaign against Cambodia. He was sent by Governor-General Jan Pietersz Coen from Batavia to Siam, and although these ships arrived too late, His Majesty did appreciate the proven friendship, and in order to give thanks to the Governor-General for that despatch, he sent back with these two ships a missive and excellent presents for the illustrious Prince Maurice. This letter consisted, apart from the request to subdue the Cambodians, mainly of polite words and ceremonious compliments. Commander Duijff took this royal letter to Batavia. From Batavia the letter accompanied Governor-General Coen and his fleet [21v] to the Netherlands, but he [Duijff] died on the way there, and thus through the intervention of Governor-General Coen, the letter and the presents were handed over to the illustrious Prince Maurice, who delayed an answer and meanwhile passed away to glory with the God Almighty. Therefore, the matter lasted quite a bit longer than Siam's king would have hoped and expected. Finally, however, in 1627, when Governor-General Jan Pietersz Coen was once more summoned by the central government to report on the situation of the Netherlands in India, he requested an answer from the illustrious Prince Frederick of Orange, who had succeeded his brother Prince Maurice in all his lands and governments, also for excellent presents that he had brought from Batavia.

Some months after his Excellency's return, the chief merchant, Cunningham, was appointed as envoy to deliver in the most proper manner to his Majesty of Siam the princely letter and presents. Thus, in July 1628, he departed with the ships *Groot Mauritius*²⁴ and *Zuid-Holland*²⁵ to Siam, but ill fate (or rather the opposite) caused him to die only half way and to set his course to the palace of another king than the one he had expected to visit.

In the beginning of September, both ships with the letter from the Prince, arrived at the mouth of the Siamese river and its arrival and the death of the envoy were announced to the Phrakhleng (the king's minister for all foreign affairs). The letter from

²¹ If this letter were to be translated accurately, the formal style with its clauses and sub-clauses, its multiple provisos and side-issues, surely would annoy a modern reader. The opening sentence in the original runs over more than one folio page. It was decided, therefore to present a readable free translation. Many of the formalities have been left out, and the cited letters appear here in much shortened form.

²² With the present reign, Schouten refers to Songtham, who reigned from 1610 to 12 December 1628. Songtham's father was King Ekathotsarot (r. 1605-1610/11).

²³ The Siamese embassy to Prince Maurice arrived in The Hague on 10 September 1608.

²⁴ In the list of VOC ships there are in the 1620s two ships called Mauritius, one built in 1612, one bought in 1623. The first was 800 tons, the second much smaller, 560 tons. We may conclude that this was the ship, built in 1612 for the Chamber Amsterdam. See *Dutch Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th centuries, Vol II, Outward-bound voyages from the Netherlands to Asia and the Cape (1595-1794)*, and, *Vol III, Homeward-bound voyages from Asia and the Cape to the Netherlands (1597-1795)*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979.

²⁵ Built in 1619 for the Chamber Amsterdam, 600 tons.

the Governor General to introduce the envoy, Cunningham, to the Phrakhlang was also handed over, and it was immediately translated into Siamese. The content was:

[22r] Jan Pietersz. Coen, Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies, sends greetings to Your Excellency Chaophraya Phrakhlang.

Since we received with the most recently arrived ships of our fleet (which we had not yet mentioned to Your Honour) the rare objects for His Siamese Majesty that we expected, we decided to expedite the letter and the presents for His Royal Majesty as soon as possible, and in order to hand them over to appoint the Honourable William Cunningham as our envoy. Would Your Honour be so good as to assist him with obtaining access to the King and do all that would expedite his commission.

Especially your Excellency is kindly asked to announce this matter at the court in such a way that the letter and the presents may be handed over to His Majesty as soon as possible, as well as to facilitate the visit that our people may bring to the King. They have been sent to expedite the business so that these may eventuate quickly. This will cause our friendship to prosper. As a token of this I send to Your Excellency herewith

10 yard of red cloth

2 Lb sandalwood

May Your Excellency accept them thankfully.
In the Castle Batavia, on the 27th of July 1628
Signed: Jan Pietersz Coen

[22v] In accordance with the recommendation of the Honourable Governor-General, the Phrakhlang took the matter in hand. After he had informed the King of all this, he appointed the merchant, Adriaen de Marees, and myself, Joost Schouten, sub-merchant (together with the Dutch translator, or procurator, as well as another important person who had been the King's envoy to Japan), to bring the letter of the Prince from the ship with all customary respect. At the same time, he sent a command to the Mandarins of the villages situated downriver from the capital that they should pay proper respect to it [the letter].

After the Phrakhlang had given his orders, we all together sailed away, and arrived at Bangkok. This is a little town some fourteen miles south of the capital. Its Governor made available two long rowing boats, one for the Princely letter, and one for himself. This Governor is one of the most important persons of the kingdom, son of the old King of Phatthalung and married to the sole heiress of the Kingdom of Patani (but expelled from there because of partisanship and jealousy). Together with these long rowing boats, we sailed further down to Ban Chaophraya at the mouth of the river. Then the letter (which had been taken from on-board with a sloop) was placed in a small case, under a cover of red cloth and handed over to the King's long rowing boat where it was placed in a round, red elevated small house with silken curtains on all sides.

As soon as the letter was handed over, wind instruments and drums began playing and the journey upriver began, together with the long rowing boat of the Bangkok Governor, who sat under a silken tent, and also ourselves sitting under a red tent in a

long black prow, manned by thirty rowers, flying the Prince's flag. Our interpreter sat in a similar, but a bit smaller prow, and the other Siamese commissioners followed behind the letter up until Bangkok. There accompanied by the sound of many wind instruments and drums, the letter was transferred to the beautiful long prow of the King, with fifty rowers, where it was placed under a gilded small house. Twelve [23r] of the grandest and most important persons from Bangkok, each one in a long paddle-prow, accompanied it upriver, so that by that time we were sixteen prows and around 400 persons in all. During the journey upriver, vessels in both directions stopped until the letter and its retinue had passed. Arriving at the toll station, situated approximately one mile outside the capital, those coming from Bangkok took leave and returned down the river.



Figure 1. The boat procession to Ayutthaya (from map K 478, fol. 56, Karlsruhe State Library)

The next day, the 15th of September, one of the King's state prows came. It had about seventy or eighty rowers, with a painted pyramid-shaped little house, silken curtains and two umbrellas made of the same material. It was accompanied by some thirty prows, each with a royal officer, who had come from the city to the toll station to take delivery of the letter and to bring it to the city. They took the letter reverently out of its casket and respectfully placed it in a golden receptacle on a large golden platter in the small house in the royal prow, and with a grand, magnificent procession (greater and more magnificent than customarily was done for any other princely letters), it was transported and brought to land at the beautiful gilded heathen temple opposite the city under two umbrellas, and in front of the temple's entrance under a gilded baldachin it was opened in the presence of many gentlemen and officers so that it could immediately be translated. This was as follows:

Illustrious and mighty King

Although Your Majesty's realms are situated far away from these lands, that did not prevent Your Majesty to show beneficence to members of our nation over a period of many years. Especially we wish to recognise, commend and praise the great honour Your Majesty bestowed to our brother Prince Maurice of Orange, who has passed away and is now in glory with God, but who was still alive when

the Governor General from India came [23v] to these lands and handed over letters and presents that Your Majesty had sent to His Excellency.

And since we succeeded our brother in all these lands, dignities, dominions and governments, we also inherited the good disposition to do all that is possible to contribute to the honour and glory of Your Majesty, thereby requesting that Your Majesty with royal grace will continue his multiple good offices to the Dutch nation.

We are also obliged to thank Your Majesty for the special favour done towards the Yacht Zeeland, when it was inland on Your Majesty's river and there forcefully taken by a Spanish captain.²⁶ Then upon Your Majesty's order your soldiers bravely recaptured it and gave it back to our people. All this was told to us by the chiefs of our Indian merchants, and this shows both Your Majesty's courageousness and justice, leading to the punishment of his enemies and consolation of his friends. Confident that Your Majesty will have increased his beneficence once more towards our nation regarding the monies and merchandise that were recaptured in the above-mentioned ship, we shall have even more reason to thank and praise the magnanimousness that Your Majesty decides to demonstrate to all foreign nations, since we trust that Your Majesty will have shown us also this favour.²⁷

Because of the great affection that we have for the prosperity and welfare of Your Majesty's affairs we had wished to learn more about them. But after our Governor General had arrived we heard about them, especially of the fact of the differences that had come about between Your Majesty and the King of Cambodia of which we had not been informed. We hope that meanwhile this will have been accommodated in accordance with Your Majesty's reputation. Meanwhile we have given orders that [every]where in India in order to support and maintain Your [24r] Majesty's rights, proper assistance will be given, as much as our state can afford in all reasonableness.

Illustrious and mighty King, may the Almighty God keep Your Majesty and increase his days to his contentment and glory with conquests of his enemies.

Written in 's Gravenhage 15 January 1627

Signed

Henry,²⁸ with the Grace of God, Prince of Orange, Duke of Nassau etc.

As soon as the translation was made, the letter was immediately sent with the same prow to the court, but since it was already late in the evening, it was brought to the

²⁶ On this incident, see Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth Century Thailand*, pp. 18-19; Dhiravat na Pombejra, "Port, Palace, and Profit: An Overview of Siamese Crown Trade and the European Presence in Siam in the Seventeenth Century" in *Port Cities and Trade in Western Southeast Asia*, Bangkok, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1998, pp. 69-70.

²⁷ This convoluted sentence is a diplomatic reminder that the Dutch had been given only part of the value of the captured cargo and that they now would appreciate a full restitution. This remained a matter of irritation for years. See Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth Century Thailand*, pp. 18-19.

²⁸ The Dutch prince's name was Frederick Henry.

Phrakhlang's house, where the next day we checked the translation against the letter, and having improved it, he put it into the proper language.

It is an old custom in this kingdom that all external ambassadors with the letters of their overlords have to stay ten to fourteen days outside the city before they are allowed to be translated. During that time, the missive would be placed in an elevated small house, and the envoy had to guard it. Such a small house had been prepared for his princely letter, but it was not used because of the great desire and inclination of His Majesty to see the missive and to learn its contents. On the following day, the Phrakhlang showed them and we heard that it was to His Majesty's liking.

On September 28, ten days after the translation, when His Majesty, in accordance with ancient custom, offered in his palace a royal meal to all his mandarin crown officers, we, the merchant, Adriaen de Marees, and myself were ordered in the King's name to go there with the Princely presents [24v] because His Majesty wished that the letter and the presents from his Princely Grace should be handed over on such an important day in the presence of his most important vassals. To that end, two long paddling prows, with covered small houses, each with about thirty rowers, were sent from the court to the lodge. One was for the presents and the other to transport us. In that vessel, we went beside the presents to the palace, accompanied by the prow of our lodge, with the Princely flag flying and two assistants from the station, sitting under a red cloth, followed this train. Our two boys went to a monastery opposite the palace in order to stay there until they would be called.

The presents were quickly unloaded and brought to the palace's forecourt on the large common Sala Enclosure or counsellors' place where they were carefully examined by the mandarins and then carried to the large royal hall. The presents were truly princely, having cost in patria more than 4,000 guilders. They were:

One *morlioen*²⁹ with gilded bands
 One *rondas*,³⁰ as before
 Six gilded halberds with velvet [around the] handle
 Two pistols with their holsters, triggers and scratchers
 A piece of Dutch golden cloth, length sixteen yards
 A large beautiful mirror inlaid with silver

At about two o'clock in the afternoon, we were called to come to the palace, and after a short wait we came with our retinue on land. We were met by the person, who had been with us, as well as our interpreter, and led into a large water gate of the palace. Once inside, we had to take off our shoes and since it had rained during those days, we had to go through mud and puddles, first over a small courtyard and then through a porch. On a large courtyard stood two beautiful wooden pavilions in which the mandarins usually confer.³¹ Here we had to leave our own company, namely the two assistants

²⁹ A helmet, from the Spanish word, *morrión*.

³⁰ A round shield.

³¹ Unlike the embassies in the 1680s, which entered the palace from the south, De Marees and Schouten

square court, with the royal residences at the front and to the sides. On this court, there sat in proper order 500 or 600 men with their weapons. Then we had to make the usual reverence towards the royal residence, sitting on our knees, three times bowing with the face to the earth, with folded hands and stretched arms. Standing up again, with folded hands, stooping we proceeded to the middle of the courtyard, where we repeated the threefold reverence.

From there we continued to a higher courtyard, directly in front of the King's large hall where the lower courtyard ended, beneath there stood on either side of the staircase a small stable and in each of them two very beautiful horses, ornamented with gold and gemstones. Here we performed again the above-mentioned reverence and proceeded some four feet forwards over a sloping wooden bridge to a high paved court.³² Then in front of us we saw the grand hall, with a throne at the front, certainly four fathoms high on which on certain occasions the King shows himself. On either side of this throne, some forty feet apart, stood two very beautiful elephants, exquisitely and heavily draped with gold. On both sides of this courtyard were long handsome curtains. There lay crouched many officers of the court. We again performed the above-mentioned reverence and passed on the right-hand side of the above-mentioned throne, five to six steps upward, crawling up to the threshold of the door to the grand hall, where we had to make the same reverence once more. We found ourselves in a very large room, a very long hall with four rows, each of fifteen wooden pillars, two of them high and the other two rows nearer the wall were somewhat lower.³³

[25v] On either side, between the wall and the lower pillars, were many musicians and other officers of the court, lying down. On both sides, between the higher and the lower pillars, many lower mandarins and court officers reclined, but in the middle of the hall between the tallest pillars sat, or rather lay with their face to the earth, almost all the greatest gentlemen and mandarins of the kingdom. Altogether, counting the great and the lesser, not including the court servants, we estimated there were between 400 and 500 persons present, through them we crawled (making several times the oft-mentioned reverence) up to next to the fifth pillar, counting from the front. There, at our left side, lay the presents of his royal grace. In front of them stood some twenty or thirty silver and gilded flowers, representing the number of countries and possessions that obey the King of Siam. The gilded flowers represent kingdoms and the silver ones lesser dominions.

Here, directly behind us, was the back of the throne that we had seen outside on the façade of the hall, and directly in front of us was the throne on which the king sat, to which we made the threefold reverence from the sitting places that had been reserved for us, and there we stayed half sitting, half lying in the Siamese manner. Directly in front of

³² No other account mentions a "higher courtyard", but the sites of the audience halls would have been raised by earth fill about the level of the annual flood. The bridge is not mentioned elsewhere. According to the Fine Arts Department, the Sanphet audience hall was surrounded by a courtyard paved in marble (Prathip, "Phraratchawong boran" [The ancient royal palace], in *Boranasathan nai jangwat phranakhon Si Ayutthaya* [Monuments in Ayutthaya Province], Bangkok: Fine Arts Department and James H. W. Thompson Foundation, 2008, Vol 1, pp. 211–237. (CB)

³³ This building is significantly larger than the audience halls whose bases have survived. See the Appendix to this article. (CB)

us sat the great mandarins and some princes, most of them with golden crowns on their heads, maybe twenty of them. In the middle of these twenty crowned heads stood his princely grace's letter, about three feet above the ground lying in a golden saucer, that stood in a large golden basin.



Figure 3. The ceremonial tray for the royal letter at the French embassy in 1687, perhaps similar to the “golden saucer ... in a large golden basin” described by Schouten; from La Loubère, *Description du Royaume de Siam*, Vol. 1, Amsterdam, 1700, after p. 50.

The hall and the ceiling were badly painted and the floor was covered only with cheap rattan mats, but in front, on the west side, stood the royal throne which was very exquisitely and magnificently made. It looked like three thrones, the middle one was broadest, highest and projecting somewhat in front of the side ones, having below a broad foot, diminishing upwards in the form of a pyramid, artfully inlaid with mother-of-pearl and gilded, in some places there was black lacquer, the whole making a splendid impression. Halfway up on this throne, about twenty feet up, was a quadrangular high window frame with three small pillars, and in front of these the king showed himself from the waist

up, dressed in a white loose shirt [26r] embroidered with gold. On his head, he wore a pyramidal white turban, almost an *asta*³⁴ or cubit high, around which there was a three-fold golden crown decorated with precious stones, not unlike the pope's crown.³⁵ Directly in front of the king stood an umbrella on a golden pole, certainly 25-feet high, exquisitely embroidered in seven diminishing levels to a sharp end. On each side of this umbrella stood a smaller, similar one, in five layers, corresponding with the lower thrones on each side of the king's seat.³⁶ Directly in front of this throne, three pillars further to the east, there was attached high up from one high pillar to another a thick round iron stave, from which hung two large, very beautifully embroidered curtains, pushed aside against both pillars, so that the king's seat could be seen. On each side of these middle pillars there were two similar iron staves, that touched with one end a smaller pillar, and with the other about halfway up the third large pillar. On these hung two damask curtains, of which the edges were embroidered with gold; they had been gathered against the small pillars, allowing the two beautiful empty galleries on both sides of the throne to be perceived.

³⁴ From the Malay word, *hasta*, the length from elbow to tip of the middle finger.

³⁵ Exactly the king's headgear worn in 1685, as described by Guy Tachard (*A Relation of the Voyage to Siam Performed by Six Jesuits ...*, London, 1688, p. 168).

³⁶ In the late 17th century, the middle *chat* (ฉัตร) had nine layers and the side ones each seven (La Loubère, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*, London, 1793, p. 109).

After having waited a while in that sumptuous and royal hall, where there was remarkable silence among a crowd of some 500 persons, one of the mandarins spoke in a loud voice that a letter and presents and envoys from the Prince of Orange (whom they named in their way the King of Holland) were present by order of the king. After a moment of silence, the matter would be explained further. Then, the Phrakhleng (whose task it is to introduce matters from abroad to the king) began to explain with a loud voice that His Majesty's letter to the Prince of Holland had been well received and that his Princely Grace's missive was the answer that the honourable Governor General had brought together with some presents to Batavia, and that he had sent an envoy, especially nominated by the prince, to bring it with two ships to His Majesty, but that this ambassador [26v] had passed away en route, and that therefore the residing merchants in Siam, servants of the Prince and of the Governor General (being the most apt for this task), had presented themselves to His Majesty. Hereupon the King answered that he was very pleased to receive this long-expected letter and that which accompanied it, that he was sad to hear of the death of the ambassador, but that he was pleased by our appearance, the more because by living so long in Siam, we had become like his own servants. He continued straight away with the order that the letter from his Princely Grace be read aloud, so that all those present could hear it. This was done by the chief secretary, who read it very slowly and with great respect.

After the letter had been read, the King asked whether we had something to add to the letter. We answered that the honourable ambassador had been charged to thank His Majesty highly for all the friendship, kindness, and favours hitherto shown to our nation and to ask respectfully that His Majesty would continue this old-established friendship. This would be duly acknowledged by his Princely Grace, by the Governor General and the whole Dutch nation. Hereupon His Majesty answered that the death of the illustrious Prince Maurice of Nassau had very much distressed him, but he was glad that he now lives with the Gods in glory. In addition, he was pleased to hear of the succession by his brother, Prince Frederic of Nassau, to whom he turned his affection, not just to maintain the previous friendship, but also to increase it, so that the subjects on both sides will enjoy pleasure and prosperity, and that all foreign princes should take note.

When the king fell silent, one of the mandarins announced in a loud voice that His Majesty presented the merchant, Adriaen de Marees, and myself each a golden cup and a pack of damask clothes, each one's present lay in a wooden lacquered case, which each of us placed three times on our head, followed by the customary reverence, just like we had done with each of the addresses and answers of the King. The cloth was draped over us, as we were half lying down. Meanwhile a charming performance on many different instruments could be heard and when this stopped, a long prayer was uttered by a Brahman or heathenish priest (dressed in a long white silken gown) which [27r] when ended, something else was read aloud. Meanwhile silver containers with holy water were carried around, and everybody took a little to spray over his face. It was also offered to us, but we refused. The King was also brought a little in a golden basin by the heathenish priest, who climbed up at the side of the throne and blessed His Majesty

during the handover.³⁷ Again, musicians played on many instruments. Then the whole company raised themselves from the floor, and once sitting, in front of each person a lacquered covered case was placed, every case provided with the name of the recipient. Each of us also got a case, in which we found several dishes, boiled, fried, with other baubles and fruit. Also, silver basins with drinking water were brought. During the meal two officers, girded with golden sabres, stood each with his loins against a pillar, having folded their hands. These overlooked the company so that no disorderly things would occur. Continuously there was a sweet and melodious playing with blown instruments, drums, cymbals and strings.

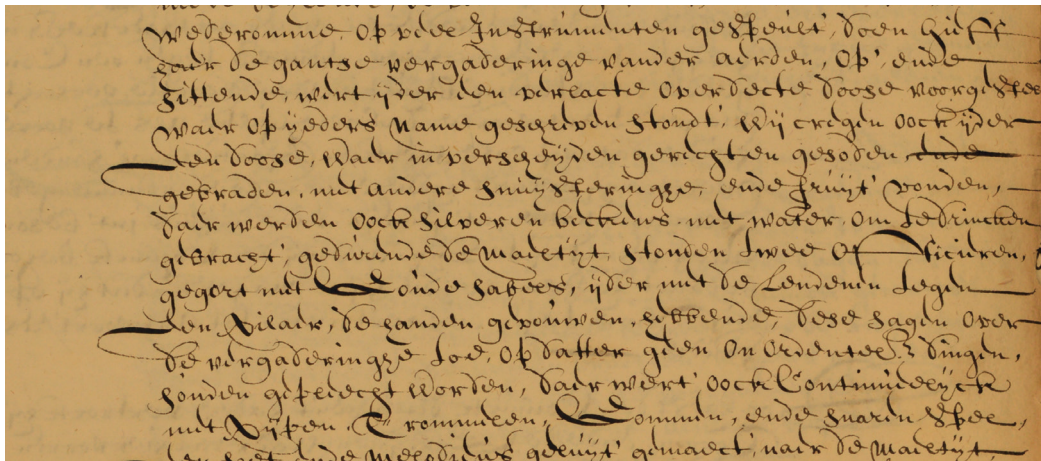


Figure 4. The description of the meal in Schouten's *Uytloopigh Verhael*

After the meal, each was given a spoonful of fragrant ointment to rub over the face and hair, each was also given a small garland made of flowers, and after everybody had placed this on his head, the music stopped. Then, after the whole company had made the customary reverence to the King, His Majesty asked us whether the present King, or Prince of Holland, was prosperous, and whether the succession in his brother's place had taken place quietly and with the consent of the important persons in Holland. We answered that, according to the latest ships from Holland, his Princely Grace was in good health, occupied with a war against his enemy, the King of Spain. As for the succession, everything had gone satisfactorily, with the consent of all the mighty persons and the approbation of all communities. Hereupon His Majesty said that this pleased him very much, and then asked if we had any wishes for the Governor General or for

³⁷ Schouten accurately calls the person uttering a lengthy chant "a Brahman", for the Brahmins played an important ceremonial role in the court. These white-robed ritual specialists had a special department at the court. The civil list in the Three Seals Law shows a "front department" (Krom Hora Na) headed by Phra Horathibodi with *saktina* of 3000 *rai*, and a "hind department" under Luang Lokathip, with *saktina* of 1500 *rai* (Kromsinlapakon, *Rueang Kotmai Tra Sam Duang*, 1978, p. 144). Apparently, on this occasion, the chief Brahman blessed a container with water, not unlike the well-known blessing during which Buddhist monks turn a container with water into "mantra-water" (น้ำมนต์). See Priyawat Kuanpoonpol, "Court Brahmane of Thailand and the Celebration of the Thai New Year", *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 33, 1, 1990, pp. 37-38. The fact that the Calvinist Dutch envoys refused to take part should not surprise us: it may well have reminded them of popery.

ourselves, adding that we should speak boldly: his royal pleasure was at our command. We answered with thanks that now we would like to further our trade speedily, also be allowed to load rice in both of the ships that had come [27v.] and be allowed to export it, and that these were the things that we would like His Majesty to do for the honourable Governor General and ourselves. But the Phrakhleng (who speaks directly to the King, receiving the words from the Shabandar, who got it from the interpreter and the interpreter from us, in accordance with the customs of this court), motivated by avariciousness or, as some said, because it was not customary, concealed the request for rice and we could not remedy this, obliged to accept it silently. He only told the King that we asked for speedy assistance with our trade negotiations. His Majesty answered that we would receive all assistance as in former times, and that we should contact the Phrakhleng, whom he had given special orders, and these were hereby repeated to assist the Dutch nation in general and us in particular in everything. After we had properly thanked the King, His Majesty told us that he had decided to answer the received missive before our departure.

As soon as he said this, the King departed from his throne and the curtains (mentioned above) were closed simultaneously with astounding speed, and up to three times a sudden sound of many trumpets or bassoons was heard, during which we, and also all mandarins and those in the hall, and also those who were outside in the courtyard, made the usual reverence. Then, we left immediately, accompanied by the same two persons who had guided us inside, making during the departure the same and as many reverences as we had done whilst entering. Once outside the courtyard we and our party were brought home in the king's prow. We had been more than two hours in the palace, something that seldom happens to foreigners because usually the conversation is short and the departure quick.

Departing with us were also the envoys of the King of Kedah, who, after his capital had been destroyed by the King of Aceh, willingly became a tributary of the King of Siam. These envoys laid down in the royal hall behind us on the right side, but his Majesty did not speak to them. This happens often to the envoys of lesser princes, especially when they come from tributary states or vassals. Their request (which they had presented to the Phrakhleng) was that some [28r] hundred Peguan families, that had fled from Kedah to Nakhon Sri Thammarat, be given back to their king. Later their request was granted, and to that end an official was sent along with them.

Meanwhile, during the period that we were busy loading the ship *Groot Mauritius*, the *Zuid-Holland* having already been sent off to Batavia, the King departed from this world on 12 December 1628 after a long dragging illness, and his eldest son did immediately succeed him in the realm and on the 13th, he took the oath of faithfulness.

On 4th January in the year 1629, the merchant, Adriaen de Marees, and myself were fetched by royal prow in order to take our leave from the young king.³⁸ This was just 100 days since we were with the old king. Arriving at the court we were met by the same two persons who accompanied us the first time, and there was also a third, and with the same

³⁸ On 13 December 1628, Songtham's fifteen-year old son succeeded to the throne, taking the name of Phra Chetthathirat. Eight months later, he was murdered on instigation of Chaophraya Suriyawong, who also disposed of Chetthathirat's younger brother and took the throne. The usurper is known as King Prasat Thong.

ceremonies as last time, we were led into the royal hall, where we found everything in the same order as before,

After a while, it was announced in a loud voice that the servants of the Prince of Holland and the Governor General were present in front of His Majesty. The King then asked us whether we were prosperous. We answered that thanks to God, we were healthy and always ready to serve His Majesty. Hereupon His Majesty asked whether we had finished all our business and whether the ship was ready to depart, because he planned to send greetings and a missive to the Prince of Holland with the ship. We answered (since a different answer was impossible) that the ship and our persons were at the service and ready to await orders of His Majesty, even though our affairs were not yet completely cleared. Then His Majesty told us briefly that because his father, the King, had died and he had succeeded in his place, and since he, as before, wanted to maintain friendship with the Dutch nation and even to increase it, he ordered us to tell all that to the Governor General in Batavia, adding that we needed not say much about this, since it was sufficiently mentioned in his letters [28v.] to the Prince of Holland and the Governor General.

When the King was silent, the list of presents that it had pleased His Majesty to send to his Princely Grace the Prince of Orange, and also what His Majesty was giving us was read out: To the merchant de Marees 2 catties and to me 1 catty of silver in Siamese coin and to each of us a set of damask clothes. This was immediately brought to us, lying in a lacquered platter or bowl, the money sealed in a piece of cloth. Whilst receiving these presents, after bringing them three times to our head, we had to do the usual reverence.

Meanwhile there was melodious playing on many musical instruments, and when that stopped, His Majesty said that the letters and the presents would be handed over by the Phrakhleng, and wished us a fortunate and safe journey. After having said this, he went inside his throne and the curtains that hang in front were immediately drawn. Just as quickly, the bassoons, trumpets and drums sounded. When that stopped, we left after the usual reverence, and so did all the mandarins, and we were brought home in the same way as before.

On 10 January 1629, we went to the King's most exquisite monastery (which is very beautifully built and inside everywhere richly decorated) in order to translate the royal letter in front of the entrance, as is customary. We found there some twenty mandarins, of which the Phrakhleng and the Okphra Alak (or secretary) of the king were the most important. The doors of the monastery, being as high as the building's wall, stood open. In front of the middle threshold stood a small gilded bench, approximately a foot high, on which stood a large golden basin and therein a golden cup, in which the letter lay in an embroidered piece of cloth. It was taken out of the cup by one of the secretaries with the same reverence that is done to the person of the king and [29r.], word for word, read out to the interpreter, who translated it to me in the Portuguese language. From this, the substance or meaning was written down in the Dutch language. After this translation of the letter was written down in neat writing, it was handed over to the Phrakhleng. The content was as follows:

Phra ‘aya Comkam maen Prabangkong; nai Phrabat Somdet Borommobophit, Phrabat’di tijan Krung Phra Maha Kalicock Dwarawadi Si Ayutthaya,³⁹ .

The great and very firm friendship that already existed for a long time between my ancestors the Kings and the Prince of Holland reminds me that it is necessary to continue such a valuable matter in a princely way, so that the past friendship will continue to increase, and may be maintained to the pleasure of the subjects on both sides. Because luck and fortune chose to unite Your Princely Grace’s lands with our realm (where previously because of the difference there was no awareness of the situation, neither of the prosperity of the rulers on both sides) our Princely Grace’s subjects have laid the foundations. It was confirmed by Your Princely Grace’s ancestor and continued, and quite recently renewed by Your Princely Grace’s letter and worthy presents to my father, the King.

And because through the decease of His Majesty of much renowned memory we did succeed as nearest and legal heir to all realms, lands and possessions, so we did inherit Your Princely Grace’s friendship and his pleasant missive, of which the content has pleased us much [29v.] and although we were sad to learn about the death of Your Princely Grace’s brother, the illustrious and much renowned Prince Maurice of Nassau, we were in contrast no less pleased about the good and peaceful succession and the admirable governing of Your Princely Grace, heartily wishing and also requesting that the friendship between us and Your Princely Grace, together in both our realms and subjects, will remain and that it may increase from the good state as it was during the government of the King, my father, and of Your Princely Grace’s brother.

Your Princely Grace’s request and proper wish that the Dutch nation may trade in my kingdoms, as was allowed all the time before, will be favourably decided, in accordance with our royal friendship, and will never fail. Until now they have been treated like our own subjects and great friends, and we are pleased to say that they all have behaved properly and never showed themselves improperly. Therefore, it is all the more our wish to continue in the former goodwill and to increase it so that in the future those Dutchmen, who are your Princely Grace’s subjects and come here, will be regaled and well treated. For it is an old custom among all befriended Princes, including their subjects, to demonstrate and maintain all friendship so that the situation of the one is just like the other.

Some years ago, the Castilians overpowered a Dutch yacht in our river, and our ancestor was justly angered about it and retook the same yacht from the Castilians, gave it back to the Dutch and properly punished the miscreants. Afterwards, His Majesty restored the loaded cargo of that ship to Jan van Hasel, the envoy, who had been sent here from Batavia by the Governor General.

With much pleasure, we understand from Your Princely Grace’s letter the order to the Governor General in [30r.] Batavia concerning the aid to subdue our rebellious

³⁹ Perhaps: พระโอรสการแมนพระบาทของในพระบาทสมเด็จพระบรมพิตรพระอนุชาเจ้ากรุงพระมหาดิลกภาพทวารวดีศรีอยุธยา.

Cambodia, which we accept with friendliness, since we have not yet decided to attack the same. When this eventuates, we will take the matter in hand and will advise the Governor General so that Your Princely Grace's order will be acted upon.

At present and forever shall the excellent friendship between us and Your Princely Grace, of which the reputation flies around the world, continue for the prosperity of our subjects, so that the realms of Ayutthaya and Holland will be like one, which should continue as long as the sun shines and the moon will shed its light.

On 15 January, the merchant, Adriaen de Marees, and myself were called into the palace to the grand hall or wooden enclosure where the normal meetings of the great mandarins take place. There we found a large number of the most important gentlemen gathered together with the Uparat, or viceroy, of the king, who was the president, sitting majestically at the upper end. All the mandarins who were there sat according to their rank in proper order. One gentleman, an old man, asked politely how we were situated, whether the ship was ready and when we planned to leave. We answered that we were well and ready to serve His Highness and that we hoped to leave within three or four days. Then, His Highness began to relate that when the day before we took leave of His Majesty, the Phrakhleng was not able to attend because of an illness, and that His Majesty therefore was not properly informed of our situation, and that he had not rewarded us as to our merit. But now that the Phrakhleng felt better and had properly informed him and the other gentlemen of state, it was therefore resolved that the Phrakhleng would inform His Majesty. This had taken place, and through the generosity of the King and our luck because of [30v.] our long and good service to the country of His Majesty, His Majesty had endowed us with honours: namely the merchant, Adriaen de Marees, with a silver bousset or betel box, which usually is given to the Ophras (comparable to European barons) and me a golden sabre, usually given to Oluangs or Okkhuns (which are similar to Christian knights or captains).

The presents were immediately given to us, which we placed three times on our head, and then made the usual three reverences to the chambers of His Majesty, then to the viceroy who wished us with the presents and the honour much luck and a safe journey, and then we left the enclosure in the court.

On 18 January, we were called by the Phrakhleng in order to receive the King's presents to the Prince of Orange and to translate the letter, which the King had ordered him to write to the Governor General in Batavia, from Siamese to the Dutch language, which we did in front of the king's monastery. The content of this missive was as follows:

Okphra Sithammarat Amatayanuchit Phiphit Ratanaratchakosathibodi⁴⁰ wishes to send his greetings to Jan Pietersz Coen, Governor General of the Dutch might in India.

Your Honour's very pleasing missive arrived with the two Dutch ships and was handed over to the former Okphra Sithammarat.⁴¹ He was much pleased that Your

⁴⁰ Schouten wrote: "Oprha t'sijacraij amathianoucksich' Pipphit, arattuatt Bhajckhehoua Tsipbedi"; this is part of the official title of the Phrakhleng (ออกทญญาศรีธรรมราชอำมาตยานุชิตนิพิทรัตนราชโกษาธิบดี).

⁴¹ The former Phrakhleng was one of the three chief ministers, who were executed because they had voiced

Honour had sent the missive of your Prince as well as the presents so quickly after having arrived in Batavia to this place. At the same time, he was very sad to hear that your envoy had died on the journey. Nevertheless, immediately after receiving Your Honour's [31r.] recommendation, he announced to His Majesty the arrival of the letter of the Prince of Holland and ordered that it should be fetched and at the first opportunity possible be handed over, for which he used the merchant, Adriaen de Marees, as well as the sub-merchant, Joost Schouten, as being persons who best know the customs of this country.

The missive and the presents of his Princely Grace of Holland did please His Majesty extraordinarily, he would have been greatly pleased to thank Your Honour for the quick despatch. His Majesty's friendship and wish was, straight away to send a letter to his Princely Grace, but being ill he could not execute so speedily his good intention, and this is the reason why this matter has been delayed somewhat.

And since His Majesty departed from this earth and went to glory to heaven and his son succeeded as his rightful heir, we, having recently occupied this our office, presented the letter of his Princely Grace to His Majesty, for which he was no less than His Majesty's father much thankful and greatly pleased, on the one hand sad regarding the death of the envoy who was sent to us by Your Honour with the Princely letter, for which the sending (done to Your Honour's order) we thank you in His Majesty's name, the more so because you, being ordered by His Princely Grace to rule His Grace's lands in this part of the world, are the proper cause and the nourishment of the friendship between two so mighty potentates. Your Honour's action is necessary amongst friends, as was since olden days done by peace-loving gentlemen in high office, such as Your Honour.

[31v.] His Majesty's father had always remembered with pleasure the friendship with his Princely Grace and the whole Dutch nation, and the same friendly attitude possesses our present king, wishing in all respects to continue the previous friendship, yes, to increase it, and in order to achieve this the king sends this letter, asking and hoping that Your Honour, in the name of his Prince, will maintain the old friendship.

If Your Honour's servants or somebody of the Dutch nation is sent here to trade, they shall through the wish of His Majesty – and through his good will – be received and treated well. Like previously Your Honour will send only good and capable persons as directors, so that the ancient friendship between both nations will be maintained and improved.

To the letter that His Majesty has sent to His Princely Grace, he has added the following presents in the hope that they will be acceptable:

A golden sword and sheath decorated with rubies

(the gold weighing 10 tael [ca.380 gram])

A spear with golden decorations, its sheath decorated with rubies

the opinion that the previous king's brother should have succeeded to the throne. See Baker et al., *Van Vliet's Siam*, p. 263.

(the gold of spear and sheath weighing 8 ¼ tael [ca.310 gram])

10 pieces of gold and silver wollen cloth

10 pieces damask

10 pieces of flat damask

10 pieces of “armozijs” [a type of silk]

Together 50 pieces [32r.]

With this we send Your Honour six pieces of material, kindly asking to judge them not to their worth but to our good heart when accepting them.

On 21 January, the King’s missive was sent to the mouth of the river in a long prow with seventy rowers and royal officers, whereby all officers of the villages that lay beneath the city were ordered to venerate the missive as if it were the king himself, which is an old custom in this land, meaning that the vassals have to pay obedience like slaves not only to the king but also to his orders, which they have to follow and obey completely as if His Majesty were personally present. This was so strictly followed that, if someone did not follow it, he would commit the highest crime and could be punished with death.

On 22 January, the Phrakhlang gave us his letter and present for the Governor General, and repeated to us the words of the King with respect to the friendship with the Dutch nation, asking that we should tell this to the Governor General, as well as that he was kindly disposed to him and all his servants. After wishing us a safe journey, we left him in order to take leave of other important gentlemen.

On the 23rd, having finished all our affairs, we left the city of Ayutthaya to Ban Chaophraya at the mouth of the river in order to receive the King’s letter. When we arrived there, and after we and the king’s officers present had done the customary reverence to it, we sailed to the ship *Mauritius*, lying at the bar, accompanied by two [32v.] long rowing boats of the king to outside the Siamese river.

Written on the ship *Mauritius*, lying in front of the river of Siam, on the 1st of February 1629.

Signed

Joost Schouten

Verhael van de Reys van de Compagnie tot Buitten de Indes.
 van Siam, —
 tusschen het schip Mauritius, seggende door de Schouten
 van Siam, desden 1^{sten} Febr. 1629.
 Mars Oudeveertien.
 Joost Schouten.

Figure 5. Schouten’s signature on the *Uytloopigh Verhael*.

Appendix: The audience hall (CB)

From the Portuguese in the 1510s through the French and Persians in the 1680s, to the Sinhalese in the 1750s, the building used to receive foreign embassies in the Ayutthaya palace was the Sanphet audience hall.⁴² Schouten's account of his route into the palace suggests that he was also received at this location. However, the building he describes is much larger than that described by the French embassies in the 1680s. Schouten recorded that there were 400 to 500 people inside the building, whereas La Loubère states: "there were 50 Mandarins prostrate in the hall" during the 1687 French embassy, and made a plan showing they filled the available space.⁴³ The brick base that survives to this day is clearly smaller than the building Schouten describes.

According to Kreangkrai Kirdsiri,⁴⁴ the major buildings in the Ayutthaya palace, distinguished by the number of the *prang* and *mondop* on their roofs, were all called *mahaprasat*, "great palace." The weight of these roofscapes imposed constraints on their construction. Their width was limited, and the internal pillars were large, consuming space. In late Ayutthaya, the Sanphet Mahaprasat, with nine *mondop* on its roof, had four brick pillars around a metre square to hold up the central *mondop*. Kreangkrai notes: "The space under these decorative roofs was therefore cramped, inadequate for many uses, but suitable for religious and royal ceremonies connected with the king" (300).

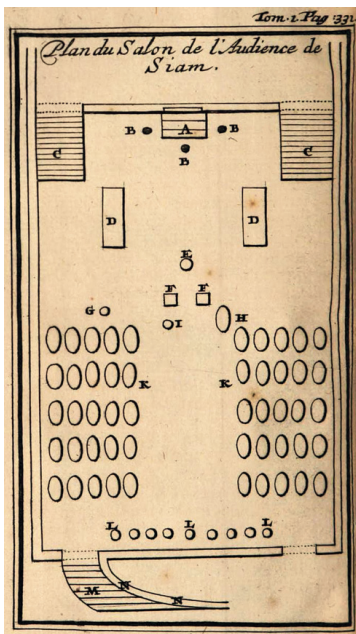


Figure 6 (left). La Loubère's plan of the audience hall, 1687 (*Description du Royaume de Siam*, after p. 330).

Figure 7 (above). Surviving base of the Sanphet Mahaprasat, showing the size of the brick pillars (photo: Chris Baker)

⁴² Prathip Phentako, "Phraratchawong boran" [The ancient royal palace], in *Boranasathan nai jangwat phranakhon si ayutthaya* [Monuments in Ayutthaya Province], Bangkok: Fine Arts Department and James H. W. Thompson Foundation, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 229.

⁴³ La Loubère, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*, p. 109 and illustration after p. 112.

⁴⁴ Kreangkrai Kirdsiri, "Sathapathayakam lae prathimam kam khong ayutthaya" [Architecture and sculpture of Ayutthaya]. In Winai Pongsripian (ed.), *Ayutthaya si ramathepnakhon thawarawadi moradok khwam songjam haeng sayam prathet* [Ayutthaya... Siam's legacy of memory], Bangkok: Thailand Research Fund, 2016, Vol. 2, pp. 299-306.

The palace had other reception buildings, built largely of wood with lighter roofs, which could be significantly larger. These were called *prasat*. All traces have disappeared.

The Sanphet audience hall was built by King Trailokanath at the start of his reign in 1448. The chronicles states:

จึงให้สร้างพระที่นั่งเบญจรัศมีมหาปราสาทองค์หนึ่ง สร้างพระที่นั่งสรรเพชญ์ปราสาทองค์หนึ่ง
... he had built the *phrathinang benjarat mahaprasat* and the *phrathinang sanphet prasat*⁴⁵

The chronicle clearly differentiates the Benjarat as *mahaprasat* and Sanphet as *prasat*. The building that Schouten entered in 1628 thus may have been the Sanphet Prasat, a wooden building without the heavy roof decoration. This may then have been demolished and replaced with a smaller brick building, renamed as a Sanphet Mahaprasat, before the arrival of the embassies in the 1680s. There is no record of this reconstruction, but King Prasat Thong made extensive modifications to the palace—enclosing new areas, building a surrounding wall, adding another throne hall—and may well have overseen such a reconstruction.

⁴⁵ The wording is the same in the Bradley, Phra Poramanuchit Chinorot and Royal Autograph chronicles. The Phan Janthanumat edition mentions only the Benjarat Mahaprasat.