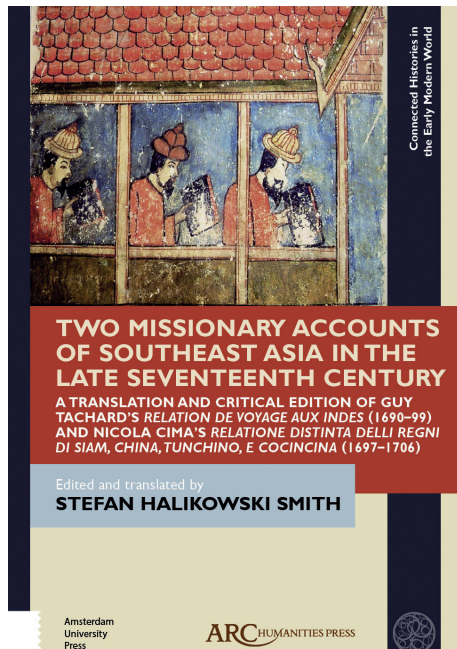


*Two Missionary Accounts of Southeast Asia in the Late Seventeenth Century: A Translation and Critical Edition of Guy Tachard's Relation de Voyage aux Indes (1690–99) and Nicola Cima's Relazione Distinta delli Regni di Siam, China, Tunchino, e Cocincina* edited and translated by Stefan Halikowski Smith. Amsterdam University Press and ARC Humanities Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781641893183. €109.



Father Guy Tachard played a major role in the French diplomatic missions to Siam that ended in 1688 with Phetracha usurping the throne. In the 1690s Tachard made two further journeys to Asia, choosing Pondicherry as his place of residence. After several attempts, he managed another journey to the Siamese court in 1699, carrying a missive from the French king. At the conclusion of his text, in a separate *Memorandum to Louis XIV*, Tachard proposed nothing less than a renewed French occupation of Mergui and Tenasserim.

In his introduction Halikowski Smith gives a balanced account of Tachard as missionary and diplomat. He judges the *Memorandum* to be ill-timed and excessively optimistic.

Between 1698 and 1700 the lesser-known Augustinian Nicolo Cima had been a missionary in China. He returned home in 1703, via Aceh and Siam. He relates having been admitted to the Phrakhlang (the Siamese minister in charge of foreign trade). His text, written around three years after returning to Europe, aimed to induce the Venetian Senate to organise an Eastern trading company. He describes glowing opportunities in Siam and several ports on the Indian subcontinent and suggests a number of practical measures.

Both accounts dwell on trade opportunities. Both appear impractical. Cima's grandiose scheme is rather naïve and it is no wonder that the Venetian Senate did not pursue the matter. Halikowski Smith admits that after mid-1700 Cima's movements are "a little hazy" (p. 164). Indeed, Francesco Surdich, Cima's first biographer, noted that Cima lived in Sumatra and then spent twenty months in Pondicherry, before returning home. However, in Halikowski Smith's translation Cima claims to have resided three years in "this kingdom" (p. 216) before returning to Europe in 1704. Halikowski Smith assumes that Cima meant "Siam" when he wrote "this kingdom", but that can hardly be the case. Surely, if Cima had lived three years in Siam, he would have left traces.

Halikowski Smith's introduction to each text demonstrates his wide reading and familiarity with missionary activities of that period. The copious annotations to the two texts admirably succeed in widening the scholarly interest. This book is a welcome addition to the primary literature on Southeast Asia.

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