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Editor's Note

I am pleased to be able to provide interested readers with the third number of *UNEAC Asia Papers*. The previous issue's pages were visited more than 640 times after the journal was posted on the Centre webpage in November 1999. This is a remarkable achievement for such a new publishing exercise.

This issue is the last that I will edit. In mid-September I join the Department of Applied Social Studies at the City University of Hong Kong. I also cease being Director of UNE's Asia Centre.

I wish the journal, its new editor, and the Centre further success, and thank all of those who assisted and supported the Centre and its work, including the Centre Board and Professor Brian Stoddart.

Kevin Hewison

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At the Court of King Prasat-Thong: An Early 17th Century Account by Jeremias van Vliet

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Report and Historical Account of the Events which befell the Servants of the United Netherlands Chartered East India Company in the city of Ayutthaya, in the Kingdom of Siam, in the years 1636 and 1637. Containing an Account of the Absolute Government and Severe Laws of the Siamese, as described by Jeremias van Vliet, the Director of the Company's Siam Factory¹

10 December 1636

On 10 December of the year 1636 the Junior Merchant Reynier van Tsum and the Assistants Isaac Moerdijck, Joost Laurentsz, Jan Hart, Guiliaem uyt de Hove, Harman van Tetrode, Dirck van der Veen, Daniel Jacobsz Blijswijck, Jacob Woutersz Barbier, as well as the steward Gerrit Gerritsz, a white boy and two blacks, went sailing in a prao in order to behold the beauty of the rice-fields and also to take a little pleasure. [They went on this outing] with my permission because for several months, on Sundays as well as on weekdays, we had all been very busy and this day just happened to be a quiet one. But due to wilfulness or wanton thoughtlessness of the Assistants Joost Laurentsz and Daniel Jacobsz, as well as the carelessness of the rest of the party (God improves), this day of merriment ended in great sadness because, before the day was done, the entire party found itself in mortal danger, while those of us who had stayed in the lodge were also in peril, as will become apparent from the account that follows.

The aforementioned persons went to Boeretiet² (one of the three principal temples in and around the city), which is situated on the other side of the river, a short distance

¹ In order as much as possible to retain authenticity, all Siamese personal and place names have been left as they appear in Van Vliet's manuscript, even though it is obvious that many of these names were corrupted either by Van Vliet himself, or as seems more likely, by the clerk who made the particular copy of the original manuscript that was used in the preparation of the 1647 publication. In cases where more accurate spellings of Siamese names could be surmised, these have been indicated in italics.

² This is a Dutch corruption of the Siamese name, and probably refers to the temple Noppthat which, according to van Vliet in his *Description of the Kingdom of Siam* (1636), was one of Ayutthaya's holiest temples, a temple where the King occasionally went in stately procession 'to make offerings to the Gods and to pray for a long life ... and for the welfare of the country' (Ravenswaay, 1910: 23).

inland, right opposite the Prince's palace. There they had their meal, and after they had made merry with a little drink all of them, except Joost Laurentz and Daniel Jacobsz, stepped back into the prao intending to return to the lodge. The two Assistants, however, (who were drunk), wanted to walk back to the river (because there was such a good foot-path), and the others (not suspecting any trouble) let them go on their way. But once the aforementioned Joost and Daniel (according to the testimony of the Siamese) were underway, they behaved very wilfully and spitefully against all Siamese who crossed their path, calling some of them names, hitting others, rudely entering some houses, taking food from these houses etc. Finally they came upon the river, precisely at a place where a number of servants of the Prince were sitting, namely some prao-keepers and several fellows with painted arms³. Also these people they rashly assaulted. The Prince's slaves, however, took to flight, but once they saw that the two drunken Hollanders were by themselves, they took courage, seized Daniel and took him to the palace of the Prince⁴. Joost, however, managed to escape by running headlong into the river.

Just at this moment, the rest of the party, unaware that anything untoward had occurred, came down the river in their prao. [They sailed along] until a certain Peguan woman called out from the river-bank warning them that their companions were in trouble; but when they arrived at the place where the fight had occurred, they did not see anyone. Finally, they noticed Joost swimming in the river, but when at last they reached him, he was so exhausted that he was unable to tell them what had happened. Just then they saw that Daniel had been seized and that he was being taken away. Without knowing who had seized him or where they were taking him, they thoughtlessly decided to follow the Siamese (who had seized Daniel) in order to find out how the altercation had come to pass. And even though they saw that Daniel was being taken to the palace, they continued to follow the Siamese, [and when they had arrived at the palace] the Junior Merchant Reynier went ashore intending amicably to speak to the Siamese. But before he, or anyone else, had had a chance to speak to anyone, an angry crowd of Siamese began to throw rocks down at them from the city walls, which they did so fiercely that our men decided to retreat to the prao, intending to sail away.

In the meantime, the Siamese told the Prince that the Hollanders, in a strongly-manned prao and armed, had attacked his people at the gates of his palace. Grabbing hold of a sable, his Highness asked them how the Hollanders had come, whether their Captain was with them and whether they had come to invade his palace? The Siamese replied that they did not know anything about the Captain, but that the Hollanders outside the palace had been playing at Boeretiet on the other side of the river, that some of them had committed wanton acts against the servants of his Highness, whereupon one of the Netherlanders had been seized and had been brought here. It is possible (said his Highness), that they are all drunk, and that they have come to rescue their companions.

³ Elsewhere in Van Vliet's manuscript, the 'fellows with painted arms' are described by the Portuguese-language term '*braspintados*', which literally means 'painted arms'. According to Engelbert Kaempfer, who visited Siam in 1690, the word *braspintados* refers to the royal guards who were tattooed on the arms as a mark of their status and function and who, he said, carried 'short, thick clubs, roving and sauntering about the palace like idle vagrants' (Kaempfer, 1935: 46).

⁴ The Prince mentioned in this passage was the Crown Prince who, elsewhere in this manuscript, is referred to by his Siamese title of Oya Calahom (*Okyā Kalahom*). This Prince was a younger brother of King Prasat Thong (Iwao, 1957-58: 130, 172).

Go grab them, but do not hurt or kill anyone; tie them up, take them to the Berckelang and tell their Captain how unreasonably his people have behaved themselves. At this order, a host of praos immediately appeared on the river and overpowered our men. They fell upon our people and struck them with spears, bared swords and so on as if they wanted to kill them all. Our men, who were without firearms, and who had not expected this, did not resist, so that all of them were badly hurt. [After they had been overpowered], they were stripped naked, tied hand and foot, and in this way they were taken to the Berckelang.

At nightfall, rumours reached the lodge that our men had been in a fight with the slaves of the Prince and that several Netherlanders had been seized. When our people failed to return home in the evening, we had to accept that these tidings were true, but even so, I could not bring myself to send some other Netherlanders to the palace for fear that these innocents, too, should be exposed to danger. Moreover, the river had been closed off so completely that there wasn't as much as a small prao to be seen. I consulted with Mr Verwer and, after some deliberations, we decided to send Ian Iaclijns (a mestizo, born in Paliacatta⁵, who speaks good Siamese), to the palace with one or two of our Siamese servants in order to find out what had happened. When they arrived there in a small prao, they discovered that the palace was heavily guarded and that no one was allowed even to sail past. They were seized by the people of the Prince, and taken into the palace where they were closely questioned. But unable to find them guilty in any way, they released them and allowed them to sail back to the lodge; but, nonetheless, this delay meant that it was past midnight before they returned home.

Around midnight the interpreters Omon Wytsit Bassa and Olong Phit Parap [*Okluang Pith Parap*] arrived at the lodge; they had been sent by the Oya Berckelang [*Okya Phrakhlang*] to tell us that what had happened, which, according to them, was the following, 'That the Netherlanders, who early in the day had gone on an outing in a prao, had taken their pleasure in the temple Boeretiet; that they had entered the temple against the wishes of the monks; that the Siamese had taken great offense at this (because they regard this temple as a holy place), that there had been discord between the Netherlanders and the monks, and that they had left the temple only after many threats and strong insistence of the monks. That on the road between Boeretiet and the great river a few of the Netherlanders had adopted an extremely dissolute and peevish posture towards several Siamese, and finally, that they had not respected the Prince's slaves, but that they had called them names and had assaulted them, whereupon these slaves had seized some of them and had taken them to the palace of the Prince.'

'That the remaining Netherlanders (on hearing that some of their companions had been seized) had wanted to force their way into the Prince's palace in order to release the prisoners and, by doing this, that they had violated his Highness, which was an extremely serious offence. That the Prince (in accordance with the laws of the country) would have been entitled to order all those who had entered his palace to be beaten to death, but that his Highness had refrained from doing this out of respect for the firm

⁵ At Palliacatta (modern Pulicat) the VOC had a substantial presence. Some fifteen years earlier, the Company had constructed a fortress there, named 'Geldria', which was the seat of the Governor of the Coromandel coast and which served as the Company's principal stonghold along that coast.

friendship between his brother, the King⁶, and the Prince of Holland and his Lordship, the General⁷, for which reason he had told his slaves not to hurt or mistreat any of the offenders, but only to seize them and to take them to the Berckelang. That the people of the Prince had taken the Netherlanders to the Berckelang; that the Berckelang had ordered all of them to be released of their bonds and that he had allowed them to spend the night in his pleasure-garden where they would be well-treated.’

I replied that I was deeply saddened by these tidings and that I most strongly disapproved of the actions of our people. I told the interpreters to thank his Honour [the Berckelang] for his kindness in having released our people of their bonds and to relay my request that they be sent home during the night. [I further told the interpreters to ask the Berckelang], if it was possible, to keep the whole incident from the King, and to assure the Berckelang that I would most sharply investigate the deeds of our people, that I would punish the guilty, and that I would ensure that such mischief would not recur in future. The interpreters seemed pleased with this reply and promised to relay everything to his Honour. They declared, however, that the Berckelang could not hide these facts from his Majesty and that our people, necessarily, would have to stay with the Berckelang until he had discussed the matter with his Majesty. But they assured me that his Honour would bring everything to a good end because, they said, he is a powerful Lord and a good friend of the foreigners, especially the Netherlanders.

11 December 1636

In the morning of 11 December, before sunrise, I went to Radie Ebrehem [*Raden Ibrahim*], a Muslim merchant and one of the slaves of the Prince⁸, because he was a friend who, I knew, was quite influential at the court. I told him what had happened and induced him immediately to go to the palace to ask his Highness amicably to settle the difficulties that had arisen between his slaves and the Netherlanders, to send the Netherlanders home to me, and to keep the whole incident from the King. I added that he could assure his Highness that I would most sharply investigate the whole matter,

⁶ King Prasat-Thong, whose full name was Phra-ong Si Thammarachathirat, ruled Siam for some 26 years, from November 1629 to his death in August 1656. In his *Historiael Verhael der Sieckte ende Doot van Pra Interra-Tsia, 22en Conick in Siam*, which Van Vliet presented to Governor-General Van Diemen in December 1640, he describes how Prasat-Thong, a cousin of King Song-Tham (1620-29), came to the throne with the support of a band of Japanese mercenaries, largely composed of Christian *ronin*, or lordless *samurai*. He further relates how Prasat-Thong had proceeded to eliminate all his political opponents, including two sons and a brother of King Song-Tham; how Prasat-Thong had then contrived to poison Yamada Nagasama, the leader of the Japanese mercenaries, after first having appointed him Governor of Ligor; and how, in 1630, he had staged a treacherous surprise attack upon the Japanese *ronin* at their quarters at Ayutthaya, whereupon he had forcibly expelled most of the surviving *samurai*. But even though Van Vliet paints a picture of Prasat-Thong as an unscrupulous and devious usurper, he had healthy respect for the Siamese King, describing him as ‘a wise, careful and mighty Prince who, ... whilst severe in his governance, is neither tyrannical nor bloodthirsty, for the judgement has to be made that His Majesty has not condemned anyone to death other than for reasons of state and to secure his Kingdom’ (Iwao, 1957-58: 190).

⁷ ‘The Prince of Holland’, or more correctly, the Stadtholder of the Netherlands, at this time was Frederick Henry (1584-1647), the Count of Nassau, while ‘his Lordship, the General’, refers to the Governor-General Anthonio van Diemen (1593-1645).

⁸ The name ‘Raden Ibrahim’ suggests that this person was a Muslim merchant from Java because ‘Raden’ is a Javanese title. According to Van Vliet, Raden Ibrahim was a ‘slave’ of Okya Kalahom, which probably means that he was in some kind of dependent relationship with the Siamese Prince.

that I would punish the guilty, and that I would act in such a way that the demands of both his Highness and of justice would be fully satisfied. Radie Ebrehem promised to carry out my request.

From there I went through to the Oya Berckelang with the intention to seek the release of our people through gentle and polite persuasion. When I arrived at the Berckelang's house I was told that, at sunrise, he had arrived at his reception-chamber (to question our people), but that as soon as he was seated, about one hundred *Braspintados* (sent by the King) had arrived who, most unceremoniously, had seized our people, had stripped them naked, had tied them hand and foot and in this way had taken them to the court. [I was further told] that the Berckelang, the Shabandar and the interpreters had followed the soldiers to the court — all of which, to my regret, led me to conclude that the King had learned of the incident, that he was extremely angry and that, as a consequence, our people were in mortal danger.

I sent Alexander Pinieur, a mestizo (one of the Berckelang's people and a very good friend of ours), to the court to tell the Berckelang that I had come to his house in person to ask his Honour's intercession and to request that our people be freed. [I further told Alexander] to remind his Honour of the long-standing friendship between the Netherlanders and the Kingdom of Siam, to ask him to soothe the King's anger, and to assure him that, if our people had offended, I would justly punish them according to their status and according to the severity of their crimes⁹. Alexander promised, in a polite way, to relay this message to the Berckelang.

In the meantime, I went to the house of Tjoucko, a Chinese (presently the chief Tonghsin), who is also a long-standing friend of the Netherlanders and a person with many influential friends at the court. I told him in detail everything that had happened. Tjoucko was of the opinion that the King (in his anger) would order all the imprisoned Netherlanders to be put to death, or perhaps just some of them, even though he might regret it later on. For this reason, I agreed that he should immediately go to the court, seek an audience with the Berckelang and with the King's Chamberlain and, in my name, announce the following: 'That the interpreters, whom the Berckelang had sent to the lodge on the previous evening, had described to me how some Netherlanders had offended and how, as a consequence, they had been tied up and taken to the Berckelang's house; that his Honour graciously had released them of their bonds, had treated them well, which had given me hope that they would be released during the night. That I (seeing that our people failed to return), had appeared at his Honour's house before sunrise and that, upon arrival there, I had learned to my regret that the *Braspintados*¹⁰ had tied them up and had led them away in the most shameful manner.

⁹ This sentence may serve as a reminder that Van Vliet wrote this manuscript before the Enlightenment, that is, before notions of the equality of man gained currency amongst Europeans. In Dutch criminal law of the 17th Century (as indeed in the criminal law of other European nations) it was customary, for the same crime, to mete out different punishments to offenders according to their status in society. Gentlemen were punished less severely than commoners.

¹⁰ In the 17th Century, Portuguese was still the *lingua franca* of the Indies, a language used widely by the Dutch, the English, and later in the Century, also by the French, in their communications with each other and with Asians of various nationalities. Many of the servants of the VOC spoke at least some Portuguese, and it was not at all uncommon for Portuguese words and expressions to find their way into Dutch-language documents. This is a case in point. As mentioned above, the literal meaning of '*braspintados*' is 'those with painted arms', and it refers to the Royal guards who wore distinctive tattoos on their arms.

That considering the alleged offence, the King's anger at the imprisoned Netherlanders was much too severe. That the punishment would have been extreme enough if the Berckelang (who has authority over all matters concerning foreigners), after first questioning the prisoners, had sent only the most guilty to the King; and that, even this, should not have happened without my foreknowledge because his Lordship, the General, has appointed me as head of the Netherlanders in this Kingdom.'

'That the King has acted against the prisoners as if they had already been sentenced to death, even though they had not even been questioned. That it was impossible to draw any other conclusion from these procedures than that the King no longer wished to maintain the long-standing friendship with the Netherlands because, if he had valued that relationship even in the slightest, he would not so completely have trampled under foot the honour of our nation and, for such small offence, have endangered the lives of so many.'

'That the prisoners are in his Majesty's power and that he, being the King of his realm, is also the supreme judge, who could put to death some of them, all of them, yes indeed, he could put to death all the Netherlanders in his Kingdom and that, if he should so decide, we would be powerless to stop him. But even if all of us were to deserve the death sentence, his Majesty should refrain from taking this step on account of the long-standing friendship with the Prince of Holland and his Lordship, the General at Batavia. [Instead of ordering executions], the King should first demand advice from his Lordship, the General, or alternatively, he should send the offenders home to Batavia, like the General did four years ago, in 1632, when he ordered Commander Antonio Caen to take to Siam several of the King's rebellious Chinese subjects.'

'That the King should also consider all the help and assistance those of his Majesty's subjects who travel to foreign lands repeatedly have received from the Netherlanders. For instance, Commissioner Schouten¹¹ brought back to Siam four persons whom our people had freed from pirates. Similarly, a Netherlands Captain, named Adam van der Hoef, saved his Majesty's ship, which was coming from Bengal, from attack by the Portuguese and escorted the vessel into the port of Tanassari¹². In addition, the aforementioned Captain saved six Siamese (who had been stranded on an island) and handed them over to Ockon Sisute Waanghsae, the Anachoda of his Majesty's ship, who brought them back to Siam and surrendered them to the previous Berckelang.'

'That a proper investigation should be held of what has transpired, an investigation during which both the Prince's slaves and the accused Netherlanders should be questioned sharply. If, after this investigation, his Majesty should judge that the crimes of the Netherlanders are inexcusable and that they should be punished, that nonetheless

These guards were responsible for security around the palace. And as is apparent from Van Vliet's manuscript, they also made arrests, held prisoners captive, and carried out the King's orders in respect of tortures and executions.

¹¹ Joost Schouten was Commissioner to Siam in September 1636 when, amidst great ceremony, he delivered letters from Prince Frederick Henry, the Stadtholder of the Netherlands, and Governor-General Anthonio van Diemen, to King Prasat-Thong. It was on this occasion that, as a token of goodwill, he released the four Siamese persons (probably young women) who had been captured by pirates.

¹² By 'the port of Tennassari (i.e. Tenasserim)' Van Vliet meant the port of Mergui, which nowadays forms part of Burma.

he refrain from doing so out of respect for our nation and that, instead, he send all of them to me on the promise that I shall sharply investigate the offences that have been committed, and that I shall punish the guilty according to their status and the degree of their guilt, and in such a way that the demands of His Majesty and of justice both will be fully satisfied.’

‘That if his Majesty persists in his anger and refuses to listen either to reason or to entreaties, it will be impossible to reconcile his stubborn actions with the assurances of increased friendship with the King of Holland and his Lordship, the General, which he so spontaneously and wholeheartedly made to Commissioner Schouten and myself just a few days ago in the presence of all the Lords of the Kingdom, and which he affirmed in his letter to his Lordship, the General. Moreover, His Majesty’s procedures will not meet with the approval of the General; they will undermine the long-standing friendship with the Prince of Holland and will surely lead to great trouble. And finally, (as I have said before in audiences with the King) that His Majesty can act as he pleases, but that I am under the obligation truthfully to report everything that transpires to his Lordship, the General.’

I made Tjoucko write down all the above-mentioned points and induced him to go to the palace and relay my message to the Berckelang and the Chamberlain. [I impressed upon him] that he should do this with great earnestness and modesty and that he, under no circumstance, should show anger or raise his voice but that, instead, he should at all times be mindful of our principal aim, namely, to soothe His Majesty’s severity in order, in that way, to obtain the deliverance of our people. [I further instructed him] that if he should notice some typically Siamese covetousness on the part of either the Berckelang or the Chamberlain, he was to offer them a substantial sum of money, in which case I authorised him to issue them with promissory notes. With these instructions Tjoucko went to the palace, whereupon I returned to the lodge.

Not long after I had returned home, Tjoucko appeared at the lodge accompanied by the Berckelang’s interpreters. Tjoucko told me that the Berckelang had instructed him to tell me that he, the Berckelang, was aware that, even though I was ill and could hardly walk, I had come to his house in person and that this had given him great pleasure. It showed, the Berckelang had said, that I cared deeply about my people. [The Berckelang had further told Tjoucko] that he was surprised at the King’s excessive anger and that he suspected that His Majesty had been given a much graver account of the incident than that which the prisoners’ confessions had shown actually to have occurred. Nevertheless, I should not despair because he, the Berckelang, cared like a father for me as well as for the prisoners and he would do his utmost to ensure that everything be brought to a good end. [Addressing the Berckelang’s interpreters], I replied, in a polite way, that I was sure of his Honour’s favourable disposition towards us; that I had not given up hope of a good outcome, but that his Majesty’s procedures were so severe as to be almost unbearable. Thereupon, I mentioned to the interpreters all the points that Tjoucko had written down and asked them to convey this message to the Berckelang and the Chamberlain, which they promised to do.

[A short time later we learned] that when the interpreters returned to the palace, the King had already in the most arbitrary way sentenced all our people to death — each one of them had already been tied to a stake within sight of the elephants, expecting at any moment to die a miserable death. The interpreters had known this, but (out of

embarrassment) they had not told us, although their sad demeanour had led us to suspect that something was seriously amiss. [Not knowing that our people had already been taken to the execution-ground] I decided to send Ian Iaclijns to the palace with a few medicines and such like, in order to treat the wounds of the prisoners and also to find out what was going on. The aforementioned Iaclijns returned in haste and reported that the whole city was in a commotion; that the entire court was full of sadness, and that he had not been allowed near our people because they had already been tied to stakes, while the elephants that were to devour them had already been led to the place of execution. [Iaclijns further reported] that many thousands of people had gathered around the palace to watch the pitiful spectacle. How these tidings made us feel is known to the Almighty.

We immediately sent a trusted friend to Radie Ebrehem, who was at the palace of the Prince, to inform him of this tragedy and to request that he do his utmost to persuade his Highness to intercede on our behalf, on the understanding that this be done in such a way as not to diminish the honour of our nation. We further sent a messenger to the Abbot of Thimphiatti to request his intercession with the King, partly because this priest is a good friend of mine who is favourably disposed towards our nation, and in part also because the merciful intercession of the Religious is freely permitted in this Kingdom. The aforementioned Abbot, however, was unavailable so that we were unable to enlist his support. In the meantime, we also sent a messenger to the Priest of Wantthong, a close friend of ours but not as powerful [as the aforementioned Abbot], to inform him of our despair and to request that he go to the court with some influential people, which he did immediately, promising to do all he could on our behalf.

Around midday Tjoucko returned to the lodge and, with great sadness, gave us the following message: 'That during the previous night the incident had been presented to the King in such a way that he had come to believe that this group of Netherlanders, unexpectedly, had attacked the palace of the Prince, his brother, although Tjoucko had been unable as yet to discover which person had been responsible for this misrepresentation. That when the King, about two hours before sunrise, was told of the incident he had flown into a rage and had issued orders to his *Braspintados* for the evil and wanton Netherlanders to be seized at the Berckelang's house, for them to be tied up and taken into the court, for stakes to be placed in the earth, and for the elephants to be brought to the execution-ground. That as soon as the prisoners had arrived at the court, they had been sharply questioned and that, after they had confessed, they had been tied to stakes, where they still sat in full view of large crowds of people, many of whom appeared to pity them.'

'That he had given my message to the Berckelang and his Majesty's Chamberlain; that they had promised to submit everything to His Majesty, but that they feared that the King might not be persuaded and that he would put to death at least some of the prisoners. That all the greatest Mandarins had gone to the court; that they were filled with compassion for the prisoners, and that they intended to try, in a polite way, to mollify the King's anger. [Tjoucko further reported] that he had promised the Berckelang five catties of silver, and the Chamberlain two catties¹³, if they succeeded in obtaining the freedom of our people.'

¹³ In most of the Indies the cattie equalled 0.625 kg. This meant that Van Vliet promised the Berckelang about 3.1 kg of silver, and the Chamberlain 1.25 kg.

After some discussion with Mr Verwer, we decided to send Tjoucko once more to the court in order to present Oya Otheyathan, the chief Chamberlain of the King, (a powerful lord an exceptionally good friend of ours) with a gold chain and two pieces of Chinese gold cloth (to a total value of about three cattles), which the aforementioned lord, in my name, was to offer to His Majesty in order, in this way, to obtain the deliverance of our people. Tjoucko also undertook, as a measure of last resort, to seek the intercession of the Abbot of Mappatat, one of the four greatest Religious in the entire Kingdom. In the meantime, we secured the Company's lodge as best we could and prayed to God Almighty for a blessed outcome.

After Tjoucko had left, various people came to the lodge to tell us that Oya Pitsia Songhcrum, the Ney or Head of the Japanese, responding to pressure from these bald-headed villains¹⁴, had today suggested to the King that the crimes of the imprisoned Hollanders had given his Majesty just cause to execute not only them, but all the Netherlanders in his Kingdom. [Oya Pitsia Songhcrum had added] that this was necessary so that His Majesty's Kingdom once and for all be cleansed of this wicked nation, [a desirable outcome] because the Netherlanders had spread bad rumours about the King in Japan and about the Japanese in Siam, so that Japanese merchants no longer dared to come to this Kingdom, which meant that the Siamese crown continued to be cut off from silver-rich Japan. When his Majesty had driven all the Hollanders from his Kingdom, [the Oya had concluded], the Japanese junks would come to Siam once more so that the good relations between the two Kingdoms were certain quickly to be restored¹⁵.

But even though this Oya had given his proposal a semblance of reason, the King had remained silent, which meant that the suggestion did not please His Majesty. Nonetheless, the aforementioned Oya (we have been told) raised his voice once more in order to repeat his proposal, whereupon the King interrupted him and spoke as follows: 'By my first silence you, Oya Pitsia Songhcrum, should have known that your suggestion did not please me. For what reason should I want to kill, or expel from my Kingdom, Captain van Vliet and his remaining companions, who knew nothing of this question and who were not even present at the places where the crimes have been committed? Even though the evil acts of some of the Captain's people have angered me, I do not wish to extend my anger to his person or to the entire Netherlands nation. Even

¹⁴ Van Vliet refers here to Japanese *samurai* who, as a sign of their warrior status, shaved most of their heads, leaving some hair for a kind of 'pony-tail' at the back. At the time of these events (late 1636) there were still about 70-80 *samurai*, whom the King employed as mercenaries, living in Ayutthaya's Japanese quarter which adjoined the VOC compound. Most of the *samurai* had Siamese wives with whom they had children. And since there were also some Japanese merchants residing at Ayutthaya, the total population of the Japanese quarter may have been about 400-550. For more information on the Japanese community in Siam see: (Iwao, 1957-58: v-xxviii).

¹⁵ Obviously, there was little love lost between the Japanese and the Dutch in Siam. This hostility had its roots in trade rivalries because by 1636 the VOC had largely ousted the Japanese from the lucrative Siam-Japan trade, exporting to Hirado and Nagasaki enormous quantities of deer- and ray skins in return for Japanese silver and copper. In part, this Dutch success was due to events in Japan. In the mid-1630's Shogun Iyemitsu, concerned about the spread of Christianity in the southern Japanese island of Kyushu, was beginning to move towards isolationism which meant, amongst other things, that more and more restrictions were placed on commercial contacts between Japan and Japanese living overseas, many of whom were Christian (Boxer, 1935: xxxiv-xlvi).

less [do I wish to extend my anger] to the General at Batavia, who is our friend and ally.’ After the King had spoken thus, he ordered Timon and Froskedonne, both of them Heads of the Japanese, to come to the palace¹⁶. [The King further issued orders] for all Japanese (residing in the Japanese quarter) to be counted and (until further notice) to be confined to their houses, and, in addition, he commanded Ockon Thip to take a prao with some soldiers and guard the lodge in order to see to it that no harm come to us and that no armed Japanese come anywhere near us.

After midday the interpreters returned to the lodge to tell me that the Berckelang requested that I come to his house because he wanted to let me know that the King was extremely angry, that all the prisoners remained tied up, that the King had sentenced two of them to death and that he had ordered his Honour, the Berckelang, without delay to carry out the executions. I replied that I was saddened and surprised by this message, but that it was not necessary for me further to tire my sick limbs¹⁷ in order to hear such a message from the Berckelang himself. [I added] that the King had the prisoners in his power, that he could do with them, and with all of us, as he pleased because we were unable to resist his power and we did not intend to flee. [I protested] that these procedures were far too extreme, that foreigners never before had been so badly treated in this Kingdom, but that I trusted nonetheless that his Honour, the Berckelang, would try to soothe his Majesty’s excessive anger so that the honour of the Netherlands nation would be besmirched no further. In case his Majesty, [I continued], had so little regard for myself and the other Netherlanders in his Kingdom that he wished to persist in his wrath, he should think of the Honourable General and, out of respect for his Lordship, he should not treat any Netherlanders in this way, even if they had committed far graver offences (than those of which they were now accused). The King, [I added], should have confidence in the General and trust him to be a just and severe judge who will most certainly punish the criminals according to the full rigour of the law. I ordered the interpreters to give the Berckelang this message and I asked them politely to impress upon his Honour the importance of ensuring the preservation of good relations between the Netherlands and the Siamese nation. The interpreters seemed very pleased with this reply and they expressed the view that it would tend towards the preservation and deliverance of the prisoners.

Around this time Radie Ebrehem sent word that he had discussed yesterday’s altercation with the Prince and that he had spoken as follows: ‘He had told the Prince how displeased I had been when last night I heard that our people (apparently without his Highness’ foreknowledge) had approached his palace too closely, but that I was sure that none of our people had had any evil designs. [He further had told the Prince how dismayed I had been] that the Netherlanders had been seized by his slaves, had been stripped naked, that they had been tied up and that, in this way, they had been taken to the Berckelang. [Radie had pointed out] that because I myself had not been present at

¹⁶ According to Seiichi Iwao, in his introduction to the 1957-58 publication of Van Vliet’s *Historiael Verhael, der Sieckte ende Doot van Pra Interra-Tsia, 22den Conick in Siam*, the heads of the Japanese community in Siam were named Itoya Taymon and Taramatsu Feroske (Iwao, 1957-58: xxvii).

¹⁷ Van Vliet probably suffered from berri-berri, a disease which in its early stages causes the legs to swell and weaken. Although very common amongst Europeans living in Asia, the dietary causation of berri-berri remained unknown until the late 19th Century when a doctor attached to the Dutch colonial army fighting in Aceh made the simple observation that this disease affected almost exclusively the officers, who ate white rice, while the common sodiers, who ate brown rice, seemed to be immune.

any of these events and because I had not been permitted to speak to any of the accused, I still did not know precisely what had happened, but that I strongly suspected that the actions of our people had not been truthfully reported to the King because otherwise His Majesty surely would not have taken such severe measures against them. [He had further mentioned] that in case His Majesty was to execute all the prisoners, he would not thereby weaken the power of the Netherlands even in the slightest, but he could be sure that it would spell the end of the friendship with the General of Batavia and the King of Holland. [Radie had further pointed out] that, for all these reasons, I most urgently requested that his Honour, the Prince, use his influence with His Majesty to soothe his anger so that none of the prisoners would be executed but, instead, that they all be sent to me on the understanding that I would most sharply investigate the whole incident, that I would report everything to the General, and that if the prisoners were found guilty, they would not escape the General's punishing hand. [And, finally, Radie had concluded by stating] that if our people had insulted his Highness, the Prince, or if they had offended against the laws [of Siam], I requested forgiveness and mercy for them, promising at the same time that I would see to it that such incidents would not recur in future.'

To all this the Prince had replied as follows: 'I, too, am dismayed at the trouble that has arisen between my slaves and the Hollanders and I very much regret that the incident should have reached the ears of the King. At first I considered going to the court myself to explain the matter to His Majesty, but when I heard that the King had flown into a passion, I thought the better of it. In the meantime, my mother, who was very worried, sent one of her servants to the King who came back and reported that His Majesty persisted with his anger. Nonetheless, considering the reasonable arguments of Captain van Vliet, I will send one of my Mandarins to the court to request mercy for the prisoners and to see to it that none of them are executed. Captain van Vliet can count on me — I will do this even if I, myself, have to sit in front of the elephant. It is now about four years that the Captain has lived in Siam and, during that time, he has never offended against His Majesty, the laws of the land, or the Lords of the realm, for which reason His Majesty is favourably disposed towards him and is likely seriously to consider his entreaties.'

Towards nightfall a messenger from the Berckelang arrived at the lodge to bring us the welcome news that the King had pardoned all the prisoners, that he had forgiven them their crimes, and that I was to come to the Berckelang's house immediately. Naturally, we were overjoyed at these tidings. I at once boarded the interpreters' prao (who, in the meantime, had also arrived with the good news) and together we made our way to the Berckelang's house. Having arrived there, his Honour addressed me as follows: 'That the King had been greatly angered by the offences which the Hollanders had committed yesterday; that he had intended to give the prisoners their just punishment and put them all to death, but that His Majesty had learned from their confessions that their intentions had not been quite as evil as he had been led to believe, for which reason he had changed his mind. His Majesty, however, had remained resolved to have elephants trample to death the two instigators of the trouble as well as the coolies, who had called out from the prao, and the Peguan woman, who had called out to the prao, warning the Hollanders that they should come to help Joost Laurensz and Daniel Jacobsz when they were fighting with the Siamese. That after long deliberations and with the approval of several Mandarins, the King had sentenced to death Joost Laurensz, Daniel Jacobsz, the coolies and the Peguan woman, while he had ordered the others to watch the spectacle.'

That the condemned prisoners had already been taken to the Petoutsiaey (the usual execution-ground), whilst the others had already been on their way to that place.’

‘That he, the Berckelang, had very much taken to heart the messages I had sent him via Tjoucko and the interpreters, that he had discussed these messages with some of the most prominent Mandarins, and that he had asked them to help him intercede on behalf of the prisoners. [The Berckelang further told me] that at the very time the prisoners were being led to the execution-ground, he had discussed the substance of my proposals with his Majesty, and that, in doing this, he had been supported by Oya Wangh, a certain Braeme [*Brahmin*] named, Oya Opraë Methon, Oya Opheyathan, Olongh Thip Sombat (the Chamberlain of the King) as well as Oya Tsy Darmart (who had been sent by the Prince). Backed up by all these Mandarins, the Berckelang had, in a respectful way, suggested to the King that the arguments Captain van Vliet had advanced were so weighty that he ought to pardon the prisoners. This the King should do, [the Berckelang had said], especially because the Captain had offered to administer justice himself, because the executions of the prisoners was certain to anger the General, and because the General’s anger was likely to lead to big trouble.’

To these arguments the Mandarins had observed that, ‘the Hollanders have traded in this Kingdom for over thirty years; that they have always observed the customs of the land, and that irrespective of whether the mistakes some of them have now made were due to ignorance, or to wanton thoughtlessness, His Majesty should not believe that these mistakes were made intentionally. [The Mandarins had added] that one ought to be more tolerant of foreigners than of native-born people because foreigners may not always be entirely familiar with the severity of our laws.’

‘In response his Majesty had replied that Captain van Vliet’s suggestions, and everything [his Mandarins] have added to these suggestions, had given him cause to think. That he had decided to pardon the prisoners and to release them from imminent death. [That the prisoners] were to be handed over to Oya Sicri [*Okya Chakkri*] and Calahom, who were to detain them, in accordance with the laws of the Kingdom, until such time as the Berckelang had consulted with Captain van Vliet.’

The Berckelang further told me that the King had ordered him most earnestly to impress upon me the following, ‘That the offences that these Netherlanders had committed had been very serious. They had lingered at Boeretiet against the will of the Religious, even though Boeretiet is one of the holiest temples in Siam, a temple frequented by the King himself, who often goes there to pray and to make offerings both to the temple itself and to the Religious. In addition, when these Netherlanders saw that the Prince’s slaves were kicking one of their companions and were taking him to the palace, they had tried to free him. They should have known that only the King’s Mandarins and slaves may enter the palace. For all these reasons, they had aroused the King’s wrath, which had put them in mortal danger. If one of the King’s greatest Mandarins had committed crimes of comparable severity, His Majesty most certainly would have punished him with death, irrespective of any attempt to intercede on his behalf.’

‘That His Majesty had had ample reason to put these Netherlanders to death, but that several considerations had led him to pardon them. [Firstly], for over thirty years now (to the astonishment and fear of many Indian Kings), there had been friendship between the crown of Siam and the Netherlands, a friendship which only a few days ago with

golden letters mutually had been confirmed. [Secondly], the Honourable Generals have always been great friends of the Siamese Kings, for which reason the [Siamese] Kings and his Mandarins have always greatly esteemed the Generals, an esteem which repeatedly has been confirmed in writing, as was the case, a few days ago, when the General and his Majesty exchanged letters. [Thirdly], I had lived in Siam for about four years, and during that time, I had always obeyed the laws of the Kingdom, and also now, in respect of this incident, I had behaved appropriately.'

'That his Majesty will be pleased if I remain in Siam, but that, from now on, I had to ensure that such disorders did not recur because, if this happened again, the King's wrath would fall upon me. From now on, his Majesty would hold me personally responsible for the good behaviour of all the Netherlanders in Siam. In addition, the King had warned that I was not to permit groups of Netherlanders to go out on excursions unaccompanied by an interpreter, and that I was to write to the General requesting that he send only well-behaved people to Siam, sober people of regular habits and good manners.'

My reply to the Berckelang in substance was as follows: 'That I was most grateful to his Honour, and always would remember, that he had soothed the King's excessive anger, that he had effected the pardon of the prisoners who had been sentenced to death, and that he had obtained the deliverance of the other prisoners. That the failings of my people had deeply saddened me, but that I would ensure (as much as was in my power) that such misfortunes would not again occur. That since the King had pardoned the prisoners, his Honour might want to use his influence to obtain their release so that they could return to the lodge, which was urgently necessary because I had only very few people at my disposal and there was much work to be done in the Company's service.'

'That if we had been provided with able interpreters, this whole incident could have been prevented. Our people had necessarily gone out without an interpreter because the Pecap speaks neither Portuguese, nor Malay, and Trompanidt (who speaks only a little Portuguese) had been away for twelve days without having told us where he was going. And since it is the King's will that henceforth we rely more on interpreters than in the past, I urgently request that his Honour see to it that we are provided with competent interpreters.' I added a number of other arguments in support of these points until, in the end, his Honour replied that I could rest at ease, that he would look after everything, and that he would ensure that everything would be settled in accordance with my requests. Thereupon we said goodbye and I returned home in darkness.

12 December 1636

In the early morning of 12 December, I sent Ian Iaclijns to the Shahbandar, Oloang Tsiut [*Okluang Chut*], with instructions strongly to urge the Shahbandar to recommend to the Berckelang the release of our people. [Iaclijns was also to prevail upon the Shahbandar] to seek permission for some of our people immediately to bring the prisoners some clean clothes and medicines because they had all been stripped naked and most of them were injured. Around noon, Iaclijns returned to the lodge and reported that, together with the Shahbandar, he had been to the Berckelang's house, that the Berckelang had promised to look after everything, that he had given Iaclijns permission to bring our people food and medicines, but that he had advised against giving the prisoners Western clothing or money because, so the Berckelang had asserted, the

Braspintados were certain to take these away from the prisoners. [In support of this opinion] the Berckelang had told the story of how badly the *Braspintados* had treated him when in the previous year he, the Berckelang, himself had been imprisoned.

In the afternoon, Radie Ebrehem, Tjoucko and several other friends came to visit us. Tjoucko returned the gifts [i.e. the gold chain and the two pieces of Chinese gold cloth, which he was to present to the King's Chamberlain] because (God be praised) the Chamberlain had not deemed them suitable. These friends told us that the whole country was in turmoil, that the Muslim merchants who had been about to leave for Tanassery had had to postpone their voyage for the time being, and that they had had to unload the praos in which they had wanted to carry their return cargoes to Piply. [The reason for all this commotion was] that on account of the difficulties that had arisen with our people, the King had given very strict orders that no Siamese was to perform physical labour for any foreigners, presumably in order to drive the foreign merchants from Siam because it is impossible for merchants, and especially for the Netherlanders, to trade in Siam without local labourers and without hired Siamese praos, for it is mostly in these praos that we carry our merchandise up- and down river.

We further discussed the King's procedures against our people and we politely asked our friends what they thought of his Majesty's extreme actions? Everyone expressed great surprise and all of them declared that they could not understand why the King had behaved in this way. But nonetheless, all the friends agreed that his Majesty may have had certain reasons, the most important of which may have been the following, 'Because the tone of the most recent letters from his Lordship, the General, had been too harsh and resolute. [These letters] had not been translated in the flattering style that is customarily used when addressing the King, and, as a consequence, the King and his Mandarins to their dismay had discovered that they can no longer make us do their bidding through either granting or withholding the exportation of rice.'

'Because the most recent Netherlands embassy had offended against the customs of the Siamese court. [This embassy] had been accompanied by far too many armed soldiers, and, as is well known, foreigners are not allowed to carry weapons in this Kingdom. Moreover, even though these soldiers had come to Siam merely to add lustre to the letters of the Illustrious Prince of Holland, the King had imagined that they had been sent to insult him (His Majesty is not a military man and does not handle weapons) and to frighten him with the power of the Netherlands.'

'But nonetheless, the aforementioned friends were of the opinion that His Majesty is not angry with the Netherlands nation in general, and that he is not opposed to the Company's presence in Siam. Rather, he had taken this action to install fear in all the foreigners and also in his own people, so that everyone in future would be more careful not to offend him. If he could treat in this manner his powerful and dear friends, friends who with distinction had resided in this country for so many years and who during all this time had never made any mistakes, what, then, might he not do to others who displeased him?' But whatever his reasons may have been, the King's treatment of our people was both amazing and deplorable.

13 December 1636

On 13 December the Shahbandar, Oloang Tsiut, came to the lodge and together with him I once more went to the Berckelang bearing a suitable gift. When we arrived at our destination, his Honour told us that several of our people, those who were imprisoned by Oya Sicry, had again been tied hand and foot, that the others were kept at the house of Oya Calahom, and that neither the interpreters nor anyone from the lodge was allowed to come near them. In a firm voice I expressed my justifiable displeasure at these Siamese procedures, suggesting that since the prisoners had been pardoned by the King, they should be released forthwith. I further pointed out that their release did not mean that they would be out of trouble because, those who had offended against Siamese customs, would not escape the punishing hand of his Lordship, the General. The Berckelang replied as follows, 'That he cared more deeply for our people than perhaps I thought, and that if our people were imprisoned once more, it was not on orders of the King, but rather, it was due to the customs of the country, and possibly also to the wickedness and greed of the *Braspintados*, who might expect in this way to extort some money from the Netherlanders. That this was something that he could not have prevented because the *Braspintados* are out-and-out villains. That I should have a little patience because, as soon as a suitable opportunity arose, he would plead the prisoners' case with His Majesty. Everything, however, had to be done in a quiet and orderly fashion because it was very important that he, the Berckelang, should not arouse the suspicion of his enemies who otherwise might falsely claim that he, for the love of gain, had violated the customs of the country just to please the Hollanders.' All in all, I was forced to conclude that I would not be able to achieve my objective, for which reason I took my leave and returned to the lodge.

14 December 1636

In the early morning of 14 December Tjoucko came to the lodge at my request. I told him what had happened at the Berckelang's the previous day, and I asked him for advice on how to act in this important matter in order to ensure that no further harm and misery be inflicted on our people. Tjoucko was of the opinion that the Berckelang was too cowardly strongly to argue our case [with the King], because on several occasions, when he had had a chance to do so, he had remained silent, evidently because each time he been overcome with fear. For this reason, the others and I agreed immediately to send Tjoucko to the court with two gold chains and two diamonds, altogether valued at 202 guilders. Tjoucko was to hand these jewels to the Chamberlain, Oloang Thip Sombat, and tell him that he, Tjoucko (in order not to arouse the jealousy of the Berckelang), presented these gifts to the King, that he requested that the Netherlanders be freed, which, he was to suggest, would be a compassionate act because I was so ill that I could hardly walk.

Around midday Tjoucko returned to the lodge to report on his business at the court. He told us that the King had accepted the jewels, that he had called the Berckelang and Oloang Tsiut, and that he, Tjoucko, was sure that before nightfall our people would be back at the lodge. Around this time I received a sad, mournful letter from Guiliaem uyt den Hove, written from prison, in which he wrote that he was held captive with five others, that they were all badly injured, that they were miserable and without any medicine, that they believed they had been forgotten, and that he did not know what had

become of his companions. But even though these sad laments aroused my compassion, there was nothing I could do other than to remain patient.

Today our erstwhile interpreter, Trompanidt, was brought into the city from Bancocq in chains and all tied up because he had been too slow in the King's and in our service. [Upon arrival here], he was thrown into prison. He has been replaced as interpreter by Omon Wytsit Bassa (who is quite able, having served the Hollanders in the past), a change with which we are well pleased, hoping that the new interpreter will serve us better than Trompanidt.

In the evening I sent a messenger to the Shahbandar, Oloang Tsiut, to find out what had happened today, but the reply I received was so ambiguous that I was unable to come to any decision at all.

15 December 1636

On 15 December, before sunrise, Oloang Tsiut and I went to the Berckelang with a substantial gift. [Upon arrival], I complained, in a dignified way, about the harsh actions which, on account of such minor faults, have been instituted against our people, adding that great shame had been brought over our nation in this Kingdom, that this shame was indelible and forever would be remembered, that we have never suffered such harm in any other Indies Kingdom as we have suffered here, that none of the previous Kings [of Siam] had ever treated foreigners (especially Netherlanders) in this way, and that, whilst the King had the power to act as he pleased, I was under the obligation not only truthfully to report everything to his Lordship, the General, but also to give him my opinions about everything that had transpired. I further told the Berckelang that the prisoners held by the Calahom were badly injured, sickly and miserable, and I requested permission to send them a surgeon to dress their wounds.

The Berckelang acceded to my request, whereupon I at once sent a barber to the Calahom's house¹⁸. The Berckelang replied as follows, 'That the King's actions did not in any way concern the Netherlands nation in general, so that this nation cannot be dishonoured thereby. [The Berckelang further said] that to be imprisoned, in the Siamese way, brought no shame on the victims, that [in Siam] harsh imprisonment was a common plague, a plague which frequently and for no reason befell even the greatest Mandarins of the Kingdom, that I should remember that His Majesty is like a father who is wont to chastise most severely his dearest children in order to prevent them straying further from the path of virtue, and that once the King saw his children had bettered their lives, he was likely richly to compensate them for the chastisements they had suffered.'

His Honour further said that His Majesty had called him to the court yesterday and had asked him what faults the Hollanders had committed at the temple Boeretiet. The Berckelang had intended to reply: 'Your Majesty has forgiven them their mistakes, so why is it necessary further to investigate the matter?', but before he was able to utter

¹⁸ It will be noted that Van Vliet used interchangeably the words 'surgeon' (*heelmeester*) and 'barber' (*barbier*). This, of course, is not surprising because 17th Century medical practitioners were multi-skilled. In addition to performing such medical procedures as amputations, blood-letting, lancing boils and the like, they also shaved their clients, cut their hair, and, if necessary, pulled their teeth.

these words, another Oya (whose name he did not mention), replied to the King's question. This Oya painted such an ugly picture of the behaviour of our people at Boeretiet that his Majesty, clearly displeased, abruptly rose from his throne and went inside without speaking. But nonetheless, the Berckelang promised on the next occasion to raise the issue of the prisoners with the King.

After we left the Berckelang, the Shahbandar and I went to see Tjoucko. We told him what had happened, whereupon Tjoucko undertook immediately to go to the court in order to talk to the Chamberlain. [Tjoucko promised] to urge the Chamberlain to prevail upon the Berckelang once more to petition the King. He assured us that our people would be freed today, which God Almighty may grant, so that the shame may disappear and the whole matter may be forgotten.

16 December 1636

On 16 December, before sunrise, Oloang Tsiut and I once again went to the house of the Berckelang. As soon as we appeared there, his Honour ordered Oloang Pith Perap to go to the houses of Oya Sicry and Calahom with some of his servants and one of our people to obtain the release of all the prisoners, the Netherlanders as well as the Siamese slaves who had been imprisoned with them. [The Berckelang further told him] that in case the *Braspintados* or the guards, in accordance with Siamese custom, should demand lock- and unlock moneys, he should tell them to come to him, the Berckelang, for payment. After about three hours they returned, bringing with them the prisoners who had been held by Calahom, namely, Guilleaum uyt den Hoven, the barber, a boy, a black servant of the lodge, the Peguan woman and the coolies. Oloang Pith Perap reported to the Berckelang that Sicry did not want to release the prisoners before he himself had spoken to his Majesty and before he had received the compensation to which he claimed to be entitled (namely, 3.5 tael per head). The Berckelang was very angry with Sicry, saying that he would before midday free the Hollanders from Sicry's clutches and send them to the lodge, or he would not remain Kehousa Tibidy. [His Honour further ordered] that the coolies and the Peguan woman go back to their masters and that the Hollanders return to the lodge. In addition, the Berckelang said that the King had instructed him to tell me once again how our people had offended against the customs of this Kingdom and why they had brought his Majesty's anger upon themselves.

[It was stated] 'That on the day when the troubles occurred our people early in the morning had sailed past the King's palace, [on which occasion] they had refused to take down the cloth (which was spread like a tent over their prao), even though his Majesty's servants in a friendly manner had several times asked them to do so.'

'That the party had gone to the temple of Boeretiet where they had sat down to eat, drink and make merry, even though this temple is so sacred that his Majesty, the Prince, and all the Mandarins frequently go there to make offerings and to pray.'

'That they had refused to comply with the monks' order to leave the temple, but that they had stayed there until the Abbot came with more monks and had threatened forcibly to evict them.'

‘That some of our people (namely Joost Laurentsz and Daniel Jacobsz) had gone on foot from the temple to the great river, [on which occasion] they had met a servant of the Prince whom they had treated very rudely, calling him names and hitting him.’

‘That Joost Laurentsz and Daniel Jacobsz had entered a Siamese house in which there were only two sick people whom they had treated very rudely, threatening them and stealing their last food, notwithstanding the protestations of these sick people that they needed it themselves and that they were too weak to go outside and look for other food.’

‘That when the two Hollanders had reached the river-side, where they had encountered some of the Prince’s people who were there guarding his Highness’ praos, they had forcibly taken away the oars of these people with which they (without any reason whatsoever) had begun to hit them.’

‘That when these aforementioned prao-guardians had fled into their houses to escape the trouble and violence, the two Hollanders had pursued them, whereupon at long last the guardians had seized Daniel (Joost escaped), not with the intention to harm him, but only to take him to the palace of the Prince.’

‘That in the meantime the other members of the party had come sailing down the river and seeing that one of their companions had been seized, they had sailed very quickly to the Prince’s palace which they had entered in such an aggressive manner that the people inside had become alarmed, thinking that the Hollanders had come to fight the palace and forcibly to free their companion.’

The Berckelang further said that six of these eight points were of little consequence, but that the things that had happened at the temple and at his Highness’ palace were so serious as to be almost unforgivable, but that notwithstanding the gravity of these offences, the King had released into my care all the prisoners on the understanding that I would see to it that justice be done and that the instigators of the troubles either be punished for their crimes or be expelled from His Majesty’s Kingdom. [He added] that I should take great care to ensure that henceforth only people of regular habits and good character be sent [to Siam], that I was to give a written guarantee that our people would not again offend against His Majesty or the laws of this land, and that I was to be held personally responsible for any offences which our people might commit in future. [The Beckelang suggested] that I write to his Lordship, the General, requesting that his Lordship send to Siam only decent people (who are prepared to observe the laws of the land), and that the people he sends to Siam be allowed to stay longer and not be replaced so quickly by new people, unfamiliar with Siamese laws. In years past (the Berckelang said), the Castilians and Portuguese have resided in Siam for purposes of trade, during which time (on account of the King’s favourable disposition towards all foreigners) they enjoyed many privileges. However, they lost the King’s favour. They were people of such bad, irregular disposition, they were so volatile and so much given to fighting, amongst themselves as well as against the indigenous people of this land, that his Majesty had had no choice but to expel them from his Kingdom. By contrast, it has usually been the case that the Chiefs of the Hollanders (who have resided in this Kingdom), have been reasonably civil and well-behaved, in consequence of which the affection of the Siamese Kings towards the Netherlands nation in general has increased steadily, so that now our two nations are as one, a state of affairs which the present King confirmed, just a few days ago, in a golden letter to the Prince of Holland and his

Lordship, the General. And, as far as his Majesty is concerned, he will never give cause to diminish this friendship as long as the sun and moon shall shine.

The Berckelang repeated this last point several times. In addition, he earnestly recommended that I, too, commit myself to the preservation of friendship, and he urged me clearly to write to his Lordship, the General, advising him to adopt the same attitude. I replied politely in the following manner: 'That I was deeply pained and saddened that some of our people had offended against the customs of the Kingdom, but that I trusted that both His Majesty and his Honour would understand that these mistakes had not been committed intentionally. One misfortune had led to another. For some time now we had been served by incompetent interpreters, who had failed adequately to instruct our people, so that many of them had not been completely familiar with the laws of the Kingdom.'

'That his Honour should assure his Majesty that I will sharply question all our people, that I will obtain their confessions, and that I will send the instigators of the trouble to his Lordship, the General, so that he can punish them for their crimes.'

'That it is the will of his Lordship, the General, that all Company servants residing in distant lands observe the laws and customs of these lands. They must do this because they reside in these lands to serve their masters and, if these servants should arouse the hatred of the Kings, the Company will most certainly suffer thereby.'

'That I will most strongly recommend to his Lordship, the General, that he see to it that his will in this matter be observed, and that I will try, as much as is in my power, to ensure that only good people be sent to Siam. [I added] that I will set a good example by leading a sober, regular life, that I will instruct our people in the customs of the land to the best of my knowledge, and that I will issue the strictest orders to all our people to observe the laws of Siam and avoid all trouble. [But at the same time], I could not be held responsible for the behaviour of all our people. If indeed I were to be held responsible, my life would be unbearable and highly uncertain. My life would then depend on a jealous tongue or on a mischievous Siamese because, as I have observed on several occasions, the Siamese, too, are sometimes unreasonable and wanton, they, too, sometimes get drunk, and they, too, have been known to attack people without reason.'

The Berckelang further said that a few days earlier Tjoucko had come to his house and very earnestly had requested his assistance on my behalf, on which occasion Tjoucko had promised that when matters had been resolved in a satisfactory manner, I would pay him five catties of silver. The Berckelang said that he had refused this offer, that he did not desire anything, that my arguments alone had persuaded him, and that my gratitude was dearer to him than any amount of gold or silver.

I replied that I thanked him most kindly for his favourable assistance, that I would always remember his Honour, and that my grateful affection would never change. Thereupon I said goodbye and returned to the lodge, greatly surprised that his Honour had not desired the five catties of silver that had been promised him, because this refusal ran very much counter to the general Siamese avariciousness. I resolved, however, more closely to test his Honour on this matter, and if he persisted in his refusal to accept the five catties of silver, to send him gifts of sufficient value to ensure that we will retain his favourable affection.

Around noon the Junior Merchant Reynier van Tsum, the Assistant Isaac Moerdijck¹⁹ and the rest of the party (which had been held by Oya Sicry) appeared in the lodge. The interpreters reported that the Berckelang had severely reproached Sicry over the way his *Braspintados* had treated the Hollanders, and that he had also been angry with Sicry because of his refusal to release the prisoners. The Berckelang had told Sicry not to demand any money from the Hollanders and he had warned him that if he did ask for money, he would complain to the King. I replied to all this in a way which fully satisfied the interpreters.

We sharply questioned our people over the accusations that had been brought against them and we found (as we had suspected all along) that the Prince and also the King (presumably because their fearful Siamese slaves had told them many exaggerations and untruths) had made far too much out of the incident. We also found, however, that Joost Laurentsz and Daniel Jacobsz, unbeknown to the rest of the party, had begun a fight with the slaves of the Prince for which reason they have been the real instigators of all the troubles.

We further found that the rest of them had been well intentioned. Seeing that Daniel had been seized and that he was being taken away, they had wanted to find out what the cause of the problem was, they had gone in pursuit, and had unwittingly strayed into his Highness' palace. And when the Junior Merchant Reynier stepped ashore, he was so terribly pelted with rocks that he was unable to advance further, let alone speak with anyone, so that (because the prao was drifting away from the shore), Reynier had no choice but to jump into the river and swim towards the prao. After he had reached the prao, Reynier had intended to row away, but at that moment the prao was surrounded by a host of Siamese praos and, without giving any reasons, the Siamese viciously attacked them, as if they were public enemies, yes, as if they were traitors. With the approval of Mister Verwer, (and in the presence of the interpreters), I had Joost Laurentsz and Daniel Jacobsz clapped in irons. The interpreters highly praised my decision to punish the instigators of the troubles, saying that they would tell the Berckelang about it and assuring us that his Honour would be pleased because it showed that we strongly disapprove of their behaviour.

17 December 1636

On 17 December we sold a quantity of copper to Opraë Siverodt, alias Sitong Chinese, which (as we were secretly told) was intended for the King, who needed it badly because he wanted to repair some of his idols and there was no copper left in his factory. Ockon Thip and the Pecap (who were still guarding the lodge ostensibly to protect us from the Japanese) came to the lodge to be present at the weighing of the copper. They were displeased that I had not told them about this copper sale and they

¹⁹ A few years later, in 1645, Isaac Moerdijck rose to become Chief of the Company's Siam establishment. He was not, however, destined long to remain in this function because just eight months after he took up his post he was murdered by the Company's cook, a certain Anthonio Rodrigo, who in a fit of rage hit him over the head with a *galegalle stamper* (a pestle used for mixing lime and linseed oil into mortar). Moerdijck, apparently, was very much liked by the Siamese because of his fluency in their language and his careful observation of Siamese customs. King Prasat-Thong himself ordered that his body be shown special respect (Smith, 1977: 175).

suggested that in future I should not trade without their fore-knowledge because, they said, the Berckelang had ordered them to pay close attention to everything and promptly to report to his Honour all that happened at the lodge. I was very surprised about this and I told them that the Company would never agree to place its trade in this Kingdom under the constraint of two slaves (which is what they are), and that we would sooner leave Siam altogether than surrender our liberties to such an extent.

In the evening the interpreter, Omon Wytst Bassa, came to the lodge to tell us that the Pecap had visited the Berckelang to tell him about the copper sale. [The interpreter said] that his Honour had told the Pecap that he did not wish to know anything about such matters, that he had been stationed at the lodge not to spy on the Hollanders, but only to see to it that they do not come to any harm. If, in the meantime, [the Berckelang had continued], you should notice that strangers or people who are not to be trusted wish to buy anything at the lodge, you must warn the Captain. We were very pleased with this message, and I resolved to visit the Berckelang in the morning to complain about the unreasonable behaviour of Ockon Thip and the Pecap.

18 December 1636

On 18 December the Shabandar, Olong Tsiut, and I went to the Berckelang. Upon arrival, we (and everyone else who had some business there) were told that his Honour had gone to the temple Watmoey to assist in the cremation of the mother of the deceased Oya Corassima. They advised us to wait awhile, because the Berckelang was expected soon to return home. We waited until midday, when we were told that the King had summoned the Berckelang to his palace, whereupon we returned to the lodge without having attained our end.

In the evening, about two hours after sunset, Boatswain Joris Dirricksz, (who commands the barge *Crooswijck*), appeared here in the lodge. He had come from Bantiauphia at the river-mouth, to bring me a letter from his Honour, Joost Schouten, dated 4 December, in which he informed me that he was about to leave the roads in the ship *Delft*. The aforementioned Boatswain also told me that it was rumoured at Bantiauphia that the King had attacked the lodge and that, on his orders, all of us had been put to death by elephants. [He further told me] that the local Siamese people at Bantiauphia were so filled with fear that for six days no one had dared even to come close to his barge for which reason he had been unable all this time to buy food for himself and his people. At the beginning of all these troubles, I already feared that these bad tidings would spread far and wide, and that the officers of the Company ships that are expected soon to arrive would hear of these rumours and refuse to come up-river. This was the reason why, on 11 of this month, I had wanted to send a Hollander to Bantiauphia in a small prao to warn our people there, but because everyone was fearful, I was unable to give effect to this plan. For all these reasons, I decided to go to the Berckelang in the morning and ask him permission to send the Boatswain back down-river to tell the officers of the ships (which we are expected to arrive any day) that everything is all right at the lodge.

19 December 1636

On 19 December I went to see the Berckelang and, at our meeting, I proposed the following points to his Honour, namely: 'That Ockon Thip and the Pecap, whom his

Honour a few days ago had sent to the lodge to protect us against the Japanese, had become extremely overbearing and were behaving as if we were their servants and they our masters. They had rudely prevented everyone, especially the small merchants (who, as they well know, are fearful of them), from entering the lodge, and, when they had allowed someone to come inside, they had constantly stayed at my side so that I had hardly been able to speak to anyone, let alone to buy or sell anything.'

'That his Honour should rectify this situation and see to it especially that Ockon Thip be recalled from the lodge because at present we are so closely guarded by the King's people, that it seems as if we are all prisoners in our own house.'

'That the Shahbandar and the interpreters have told us that the King had renewed an old Siamese custom and had issued strict orders that the Hollanders, like all other foreign merchants, be they Muslims, Japanese or Portuguese, will no longer be allowed to employ as labourers either native-born people or foreign people domiciled in Siam.'

'That from this decision I had to draw the conclusion (albeit reluctantly) that his Majesty was tired of the foreign merchants, and especially the Hollanders, because this order [will make it impossible for us to trade in this Kingdom] and seems designed so much to burden us that we, of our own accord, will pack up and leave Siam.'

'That last night a Hollander (who is stationed at Bantiauphia with a Company barge), had arrived at the lodge in a small prao, fearful and under the cover of darkness, because down at the river-mouth he had heard rumours that all the Hollanders at Ayutthaya had been executed on orders of the King. That it is urgently necessary quickly to send him back down-river with a *traa* from the Berckelang and a letter from me, so that the ships' officers (which we are expecting any day to arrive) will not be alarmed by these shameful (but untrue) rumours and resort to hostilities.'

In substance, the Berckelang replied as follows, 'That Ockon Thip and the interpreters had been stationed at the lodge on orders of the King for reasons as have been explained to me, but if indeed they had overstepped the mark, he would punish them and instruct them not to bother us again.'

'That we should have a little patience with Ockon Thip because he would not long remain at the lodge, although the interpreters would have to stay because the King had ordered them to keep an eye on trading activities in order to guard against fraud. And if you in future (said his Honour) should have occasion to take action against someone for non-payment and such like, we will be able to make a sound judgement. By way of example, the Berckelang cited the case of the Japanese Faoske and Tymon, telling me how these two villains had cheated Radie Ebrehem. They had borrowed forty cattles of silver from Radie Ebrehem, which they had refused to repay, saying that they were under no obligation to do so until the Japanese junks (which left here in 1634) returned from Japan, and since Radie had lent them the money without witnesses being present, His Majesty (doubting the veracity of Radie's claim) did not wish that a judgement be passed in this matter.'

'That he was well-aware that foreign merchants would be unable to conduct their affairs without Siamese labourers and prao-hands, but that the King (in accordance with old Siamese customs) nonetheless had given this order. [Even though the order had made

things difficult for us], I should believe and be assured that His Majesty had a deep affection for the foreign merchants, especially the Hollanders (on account of their courteous behaviour). For this reason he would, when a suitable opportunity arose, raise this issue with His Majesty, on which occasion he would propose and ensure that [the order be revoked] and that everything will be regulated as had been customary in the past. [The Berckelang added] that he would have been able to intercede sooner and more boldly if our ships had arrived, because he was sure (said his Honour) that with our ships at the river-mouth, the King would neither deny, nor refuse my request.'

'That it was entirely understandable that I should wish to send one of my people with a letter to Bantiauphia in order to reassure the ships' officers who were expected soon to arrive, and that this would please his Majesty who was certain to issue a *traa* later in the day.' After I had attended to the Company's affairs in this way, I parted from his Honour in an amicable way and returned home.

20 December 1636

On 20 December the interpreter, Omon Wytsit, came to the lodge to tell us, in the name of the Berckelang, that the King had been very pleased to hear that I had requested permission to send a Hollander to Bantiauphia to prevent calamities from occurring, and that His Majesty had ordered that he, Omon Wytsit, should go down-river with this Hollander and remain at Bantiauphia or at Bancocq until such time as the ships appeared in order [to speak to the ships' officers] and dispel the evil rumours that have been circulating.

The aforementioned interpreter urged me write to the ships' officers advising them to give credence to his words concerning Siamese customs. I did as he had asked, whereupon I sent down-river Boatswain Joris Dirricksz (who had arrived here on 18 December) along with the interpreter, Omon Wytsit. In the letter which I gave to the Boatswain, I ordered the ships' officers who were expected soon to appear at the river-mouth, quickly to load their cargoes into the barges *Crooswijck* and *Carloys* (which are waiting for the ships at Bantiauphia) so that these goods will soon arrive here at the lodge. [I further told them] to take great care (in case they came from Japan) to secure the money, to guard it closely, and to send it to me as soon as possible.

21 December 1636

On 21 December I sold a small quantity of cloth to Radie Ebrehem. [While this transaction was taking place] the Pecap constantly remained by our side; he counted the cloths that were sold, wrote down what types they were, and noted the prices for which they were sold. I asked the Pecap who had appointed him head of the Company's lodge and on whose authority he was acting? He replied that he had orders to act in this way. I demanded to see the written order the Berckelang had given him and found that all he and Ockon Thip had been instructed to do was to see to it that no one committed any frauds against us. Even though I clearly explained the order to this beast and admonished him to do his duty, I was unable to expel the beastliness from his head and he remained resolved, so it appeared, to persevere in his wickedness. For this reason I began to think of ways to remove him from his service.

22 December 1636

On 22 December I went to see Oloang Tsiut and told him about the unreasonable behaviour of Ockon Thip and, especially, of the Pecap. I complained about the way they were constantly watching everyone in the lodge and said that under these circumstances we were unable properly to carry out our duties so that it was inevitable that the Company's trade in Siam would suffer. I pointed out that these Siamese procedures were so difficult for us as to be almost and unbearable and I asked him to accompany me to the Berckelang in order to help me impress upon his Honour the urgency of immediate redress. Oloang Tsiut advised me to stay at home today and said that he would speak to the Berckelang first and smooth the path on my behalf. [He further advised me] to go to the Berckelang tomorrow with a valuable gift because, (said Oloang Tsiut), even if his Honour has refused to accept the five cattles of silver, he will certainly be pleased if you honour him with a gift as a token of your gratitude. I was unable to reject this suggestion because we really do need the Berckeleng's help in this matter.

23 December 1636

On 23 December I went to see the Berckelang with the Shabandar, Oloang Tsiut, on which occasion I presented his Honour with a valuable gift, whereupon I stated my grievances as follows: 'That the annoyances which Ockon Thip and the Pecap regularly inflict upon us have become unbearable for which reason I requested his Honours' intercession. [I added] that since we now had to rely more on interpreters, the Pecap was an entirely unsuitable person because he only knew the Siamese and the Moorish languages.'

'That even though the King had released all the Hollanders and had sent them back to the lodge, he nonetheless had continued to restrict my freedom and hamper the Company's trading activities, even though I had never given even the slightest offence against either his Majesty or against the laws of the land.'

'That any day now we expected our ships to arrive for which reason we urgently required a large number of labourers to collect the wooden beams, the planks and all the other goods because all this merchandise needed to be shipped down-river so that everything could be loaded onto the ships. And now we were unable to get permission, yes, we were not even allowed, to hire labourers for money (according to long-established practice) which is a great inconvenience because it prevents us bringing down to the lodge the sappan wood the King has granted us and which we had not received earlier on account of the high water level. All this is most unreasonable. [The prohibition on hiring labour], as well as many other intolerable rules, each day inflict greater damage upon our trade which means that, when our ships arrive, they will have to stay here much longer than necessary, to the Company's loss and to my heart-ache and shame.'

'That we are unable to draw any other conclusion than that the King, contrary to his assertions, does not value the friendship of the Netherlanders. [If he did value this friendship] he would not, for such minor failings, have disgraced our nation and have threatened to throw some of us under the feet of the elephants.'

‘That his Honour please take to heart my arguments, complaints and requests and advocate my case with His Majesty so that we may quickly be restored in our former freedoms. [Quick redress] is necessary also to avoid trouble with his Lordship, the General, because I am duty-bound truthfully to report everything that happens here.’ I added such additional arguments as the subject matter required.

When I had finished, the Berckelang replied as follows: ‘I have always said that Ockon Thip will not stay long at the lodge, and if you are dissatisfied with the Pecap (because he does not know your language), I will propose to His Majesty, and if possible I will see to it, that another person be placed in his position. But everything requires time. The King does not keep you prisoner; he does not obstruct commerce, and when your ships arrive, you will be allowed to hire labourers as before. You also have the wrong impression [if you think] that His Majesty does not value the friendship of the Netherlanders because, I assure you, that he esteems them above any foreign nation that frequents Siam. You also should not think that the shame that befell your people is so great. This is a common Siamese plague, a plague from which even the Mandarins are not exempted. I myself have been in heavy imprisonment on many occasions, most recently in the past year. I cannot imagine wherein lies the shame. Rather than shameful, these periods of imprisonment were admonitions to better behaviour and to a more careful life. The only complaint that I have is that these difficulties have arisen right at the beginning of my service [as Berckelang] and that I cannot immediately rectify everything in accordance with your wishes and my inclination. But please be patient, I shall assist you in everything.’ Whatever other arguments we advanced, his Honour responded to all of them in the same vein, so that it became quite obvious that there would be no redress before the arrival of the ships.

24 December 1636

On 24 December I went to the house of Radie Ebrehim and told him what had transpired at my meeting with the Berckelang of the previous day. Radie Ebrehim agreed with me. He, too, was of the opinion that the Berckelang was a good, honest, diligent and faithful helper of the foreigners, but that he was either too fearful of the King or simply too timid. He suspected that his Honour would not dare to raise our business with the King before the arrival of our ships when he could not avoid speaking to His Majesty about trade issues. And because the Prince and the Berckelang are good friends, I decided, with the approval of the others, to send Radie to the Prince with a gift consisting of four yards of red cloth (super fine), which he was to present to his Highness in my name. He should then, in a mild-mannered way, restate all the complaints and arguments I had put to the Berckelang and request that his Highness assist in this matter. I also decided to send Oloang Tsiut to the Berckelang tomorrow gently to remind him of our grievances, and also in the hope that by that time the Prince would have spoken to him. [In this way] the Berckelang would be spurred on from two sides simultaneously.

25 December 1636

On 25 December I sent for Oloang Tsiut and, when he arrived at the lodge, I suggested to him that he should try (if possible) to persuade the Berckelang to remove Ockon Thip from the lodge and grant us permission to take on workers or *coulys*. The Shahbandar undertook immediately to go to the Berckelang and to state our case to the best of his

ability. In the evening we learned that the Shahbandar had been to see the Berckelang and that he had stated our requests, to which his Honour had replied, that we should not be so impatient, that he would take care of us as if we were of his own family, but that it would take time.

26 December 1636

On 26 December I went to the house of Radie Ebrehem who told me that earlier in the day he had presented the Prince with the four yards of red cloth, that he had had a wide-ranging discussion with his Highness about the Netherlands and the commerce of the Indies, and that [during this discussion] his Highness had asked him honestly and without hypocrisy or flattery to answer the following questions: ‘Whether I was personally wealthy? Whether I still kept my people locked in irons and what I intended to do with them? Whether I was displeased with his Highness because, perhaps, I felt he had been too quick to report the incident to the King, and had exaggerated the seriousness of what had transpired? Whether I felt any hatred for His Majesty for the way he had treated our people, and whether I intended to report the incident to his Lordship, the General? Whether it would be more reasonable to accept my gift or politely to return it on the grounds that he had never done me any favours whatsoever?’

Radie Ebrehem had replied as follows: ‘That I was reasonably well off. That the two Hollanders (who were most guilty) were still locked in irons because that was His Majesty’s wish, even though, after sharp questioning of everyone involved, I had not been able to conclude that the offence they had committed deserved such severe punishment (as they had already undergone)²⁰. That nonetheless, it remained my intention to send them to Batavia so that their case could be judged by his Lordship, the General, and also so that the Siamese should not lay eyes on them again and, therefore, not be tempted to take revenge, because this could lead to even greater trouble.’

‘That I had not shown any displeasure with the Prince, but that, clearly, I wished his Highness had acted more carefully when the troubles first occurred and had refrained from trampling under foot the honour of the Netherlands. [That I wished] that instead of sending our people to the Berckelang, he had sent them to me at the lodge and that, if indeed he had been required to report the incident to the King, he had done so in a restrained manner, because, [I was convinced that if these things had happened in this way], His Majesty’s anger would not have been aroused against our people.’

‘That I had repeatedly complained that the King’s procedures against our people had been far too excessive, and still were, because, even though His Majesty had freed the accused Hollanders and had sent them to the lodge, he still maintained guards around the Company’s buildings so that it seemed as if I was being held prisoner. [In addition], I was to be held personally responsible for all the offences which our people in future might commit against the laws of the Kingdom. [And if all this was not enough], the Company’s trading activities have come to a complete standstill because we have been

²⁰ Van Vliet did not exaggerate here because to be locked in irons for an extended period of time was indeed a severe physical punishment. By 26 December, the two Assistants, Joost Laurentsz and Daniel Blijswijck, had been in irons for about ten days. All this time they had been kept in a sitting position in the lodge’s prison hut with their wrists locked between their ankles, an extremely uncomfortable position which, inevitably, would have produced excruciating backpains.

unable to obtain permission to hire labourers. And even though I had on many occasions sought the Berckelang's intervention on behalf of the Company, the only reply I had received (on account of his faint-heartedness) was that our ships have not yet arrived, and that when the ships do arrive he will have occasion to discuss our affairs with the King. But since the ships evidently have been delayed, it will be expected of us to have loaded the cargoes in barges and to have them ready for shipment at the river-mouth. That even though I am embarrassed to request his Highness' intercession with His Majesty (because I am not certain of his Highness' affection), I nonetheless make bold to do so lest his Lordship, the General, accuse me of cowardice or negligence. [This he could do] because I am duty-bound accurately to report on a daily basis everything that transpires here (especially an incident of this nature) and I may propose to go to Batavia in person in order orally to report everything to his Lordship.'

'That if his Highness returned the gift he would demonstrate thereby that he bore ill will towards the Hollanders and towards me.'

The Prince replied as follows: 'I regret that the Hollanders have been in a fight with my slaves and it was not my intention to send them to the Berckelang. I had wanted to send them to the merchant at the lodge [i.e. Van Vliet] but all the Mandarins (who were at the palace at the time) outvoted me. Everyone thought this was the best thing to do because the King had elevated me higher than any of the other Princes. [I had to be very careful] because, [had I acted differently], His Majesty (who is full of jealousy) might easily have concluded that I was closer to the Hollanders and to his Lordship, the General, than is warranted²¹. In addition, these Mandarins said, Oya Berckelang, as the advocate of the foreigners, is best able impartially to investigate the matter, and either to report the incident to His Majesty, or amicably to settle matters between his Highness and the Captain of the Hollanders. And even if the King later should hear about the incident, everything can then be presented in the most favourable light, and his Highness will remain beyond reproach. In the meantime, (said his Highness), my mother (who thought that the Hollanders had entered the palace bearing arms and that they had almost seized me) had told His Majesty about the matter, whereupon the King flew in a rage and condemned the Hollanders to death. [But in retrospect] His Majesty wishes (and so do I) that this matter had never occurred, or that at the beginning everything had been truthfully reported to him.'

In addition, his Highness, the Prince, ordered Radie Ebrehem to bring the following points to my attention: 'That when the lodge was built [at Ayutthaya], his Highness, on three occasions, had received valuable gifts from his Lordship, the General, and from Captain Schouten, an honour which he had not deserved and, much to his regret, he had not reciprocated for fear of arousing the King's jealousy. But that notwithstanding his negligence, I should be assured of his Highness' sincere and pure affection for his Lordship, the General, the Netherlands nation, the Company, and for me personally.'

²¹ These fears were not unfounded because in his blood-stained rise to power King Prasat-Thong had conspired to bring about the executions of three Princes, namely, the brother (and rightful heir to the throne) of his cousin, King Song Tham (1610-29), and two of Song Tham's sons, as well as all their followers. Van Vliet gave a detailed account of these events in his *Historiael Verhael der Sieckte end Doot van Pra Interra-Tsia, 22den Conick in Siam*, a work which, in 1640, he presented to Governor-General van Diemen (Iwao, 1957-58).

‘That in my report to his Lordship, the General, I should guide my pen with moderation in order not to damage the friendship between the Siamese and the Netherlands nations, a friendship which not only must continue, but should strengthen and deepen. His Highness is at a complete loss to understand what may have led to the distrust between our people and his slaves, so much so that he regards the discord as a work of the devil, rather than of human beings.’

‘That I should take great care to manage everything in such a way so as not to arouse the anger of his Lordship, the General, lest the friendship diminish, troubles arise, and the seeds of war be sown, which would be to the detriment of both nations, to his Highness’ eternal regret and to my dishonour.’

‘That his Highness was displeased that I proposed to go to Batavia. Even if his Lordship, the General, should recall me [to Batavia] and write to the King about this matter, His Majesty would be unlikely to let me go because the arrival at the lodge of a new Captain, a Captain unfamiliar with Siamese customs, might possibly give rise to new troubles.’

‘And finally, that I should not lose courage, and that I could rest assured that his Highness would order the Berckelang to assist me in all my requests and to restore the Company to all its former freedoms. And if his Highness should find that the Berckelang was negligent or too timid, he himself would speak to the King in which case he had no doubt that all my requests would be granted.’ Radie Ebrehem repeated the aforementioned points so many times that it was very late before I returned to the lodge.

27 December 1636

On 27 December I went to the Berckelang once again to remind his Honour of the most urgent Company issues, namely, our pressing need to obtain workers, of our objections to the continued stationing of guards at the lodge, and of our desire once and for all to be rid of the insufferable Pecap. His Honour promised very soon to look after these matters, whereupon I took my leave and went home. In the evening Oloang Tsiut came to the lodge to tell me that earlier in the day the Berckelang had been to the palace, that he had spoken to the King about our affairs, and that I was to appear at his house in the morning.

28 December 1636

On 28 December, early in the morning, I again went to the Berckelang who told me that he had spoken to the King about our requests, and that his Majesty had made the following decisions: ‘That since we are not satisfied with the Pecap, he will be removed from our service and be placed with the Muslims. Omon Trompanit has been released from his bonds and will once again be our interpreter, but, in order to keep an eye on everything, Ockon Thip will maintain his guards at the lodge for a while yet.’

‘That his Majesty is prepared to give us a permit allowing us to hire as many workers and prao-keepers as we require in order to carry out the Company’s business, but that, before issuing this license, the King demanded I sign a document promising that all the Hollanders presently in Siam, and all those who may come to the Kingdom in future,

will obey its laws and customs, and agreeing that, if any of them should offend against these laws and customs, I was to be held personally responsible and be subject to His Majesty's punishment.'

Our reply was as follows: 'That we thank his Honour for his advocacy and that we are very pleased to be relieved of the ill-mannered Pecap, but that we would have liked to have been allocated a more able interpreter than Trompanidt (because he knows little language). However, the King's will is our command in this matter. [I also accept] that I have to be patient in respect of the guarding of the lodge by Ockon Thip.'

'I am also very pleased once again to be allowed to hire workers, but the demand that I agree in writing to be held responsible for any faults our people may commit, imposes a heavy and sheer unbearable burden upon me. [This burden is all the heavier] because the Hollanders are not familiar with the customs of the Kingdom and also because the Siamese laws are severe. In case the King makes this demand of me alone, I will necessarily have to obey (because I am forced to), but I would be obliged to write to his Lordship, the General, informing him that I am not be prepared to continue in Siam under such harsh conditions.'

The Berckelang replied that it was the clear, unambiguous will of the King that I give a written guarantee for all the Netherlanders [in Siam] and that I ought to accept this demand without protestations. [His Honour added] that his Majesty had instructed him not to issue a permit for the hiring of workers until I had well and truly given the written undertaking. I made various objections and protestations, but it was all to no avail. I had no choice but to accept this demand.

In the evening, the interpreter Omon Wytisit Bassa (who on 20 December had been sent to Bantiauphia) arrived back at the lodge. He had come from Bancocq and told us that there had been no sign as yet of any Company ships. He further reported that the Siamese guards at Bancocq had received orders to detain our ships' officers (who are expected any day to arrive) when they come up-river in the barges. The arrival of our ships first has to be reported to the Berckelang who, in turn, has to report it to the King, and only with his Majesty's permission can the Berckelang issue a permit (*traa*) allowing our ships' officers to proceed further up-river. And since the interpreter had heard nothing about these orders when he went down-river [on 20 December], and because he suspected that the jittery gunners at Bancocq might have made this up out of fear, he had come up-river in order to obtain certainty from the Berckelang himself.

We were greatly saddened by this report because, if these orders were indeed to be enforced, our ships' officers would have to stay at Bancocq until a permit arrives from Ayutthaya which, even if everything is handled expeditiously, will take at least 5 to 6 days. This would mean a considerable delay for our ships. God grant that, with the Berckelang's assistance, these damaging orders soon may be rescinded.

29 December 1636

On 29 December I was called to the Berckelang's house. Arriving there, his Honour told me that, in accordance with the old laws of Siam, the King had ordered the officers of all the ships arriving in the roads [of Bantiauphia] to wait at Bancocq until he, the Berckelang, had received written confirmation of the ships' arrival and had notified the

King. The ships' officers would be allowed to proceed on to Ayutthaya only after the King had given his consent, and he, the Berckelang, had issued a permit. But since this was a new regulation with which our people were not familiar, I was to send the interpreter, Omon Wytsit Bassa, back down-river with an order to this effect, which the interpreter was to hand to the King's soldiers at Bancocq, so that these soldiers could show the order to our people when they came up-river in their barges.

I told the Berckelang that this was a most irksome law, a law that would serve to ruin the Company's trade in Siam. [I pointed out] that the ships (especially those coming from Batavia) sailing for Japan and Taiwan necessarily arrive here late in the year because the Southerly winds, which are to carry them here, do not blow any earlier. And because the monsoon season is very short, it is necessary, lest these ships endanger their voyages, that they be send on their way as quickly as possible. If we were to be restricted by the necessity to have this permit, the barges would appear at the lodge at least eight days later than usual, which is an intolerable situation, because the success or failure of an entire voyage can sometimes depend on a single day. Moreover, during the additional eight days that the barges would lay idle [at Bancocq], they would be unable to provide the ships [in the roads of Bantiauphia] with water and firewood, whilst we, [at the Ayutthaya lodge], would be prevented from sending the cargoes down-river.

I added a number of similar protestations, but it was all to no avail because the Berckelang remained by his standpoint declaring that this was the will of the King, insisting that I send the order down-river, and urging me to have a little patience. His Honour did mention, however, that he could well understand that merchants could not and should not be restricted in this way, for which reason he promised once again to discuss this matter with His Majesty. But he had decided to wait until our ships arrived because, with our ships in the roads, he would be able with greater frankness to put my complaints to the King. All in all, the Berckelang gave me the hope that this contrived new law soon will be nullified.

I realised, however, that I would be unable at this time to reach my objective and that the ships' officers and their barges necessarily would be delayed, much to the detriment of the Company. For this reason, I decided to ask one of the Netherlanders in the lodge to accompany the interpreter to Bancocq, and to stay there until the arrival of our barges, so that I at least would quickly receive the letters etc. which they would be carrying. The Berckelang approved this and immediately ordered Simeenraedt to write out a permit. Thereupon I took my leave and returned home where I wrote the following order addressed to the gunners at Bancocq:

The Company servants who are about to arrive, as well as the freemen who may be sailing on the ships, are hereby instructed to obey the bearers of this order (officers of the King of Siam), to lay up their barges, to tell the officers whence they came, and to remain at Bancocq until such time as the officers have send word of their arrival to the Berckelang in the city of Judia [Ayutthaya] and the Berckelang has issued a permit to the aforementioned officers at Bancocq. This is an order from His Majesty, the King, which you people have to obey and observe in order to safeguard the Company's interests in Siam. Done in the city of Judia, at the factory of Siam, 29 December 1636.

Signed: Your well-intentioned friend, Jeremias van Vliet.

30 December 1636

On 30 December, before daybreak, the interpreter Omon Wytst Bassa came to the lodge. He told me that he had waited all day yesterday for a permit to go to Bancocq (with one of our people), that the Berckelang had now given him his permit, and that his Honour had ordered him to remain at Bancocq until the Holland ships arrived. I sent the boatswain, Louis Pierre, to accompany the aforementioned interpreter, handed him the above order, and told him to give it to the King's gunners at Bancocq. I further handed him a sealed letter addressed to the ships' officers who are soon expected to appear there, in which these officers are advised to give the missives they are carrying to the aforementioned Pierre so that he can quickly take them to the lodge at Ayutthaya and let me know what the situation is with the ships, what kind of cargoes they can carry, and also what their requirements are. In this way, the time that the ships' officers have to stay at Bancocq will not be entirely wasted.

Today I presented the Shahbandar, Oloang Tsiut, with a draft of the statement by which I was to agree to be held personally responsible for the behaviour of the Netherlanders in this country. The aforementioned Shahbandar did not object to the thrust of my statement, but he suggested that it should be shorter and more to the point. [He took it with him] and, after long consultations with the Berckelang, returned the statement to me, with the suggestions that I put it in the Siamese script, that I have it written out neatly, that I sign it with my name and affix my seal onto it.

31 December 1636

On 31 December the Muslim merchant, Radie Ebrehem, and the Chinese, Tjoucko and Sitong, bought nearly all the Company's cloths that were available at the lodge for such prices as have been recorded in the account books. The aforementioned merchants asked Trompanidt, the interpreter, whether he wanted to count the goods they had bought and take note of their prices, like the Pecap had done. Trompanidt replied that the Berckelang had not issued any orders to do this, either to him or to the Pecap, [and he added] that it was his Honour's will and pleasure (as indeed it was the King's) that our trade should be free, that the Pecap had not been sent to the lodge to place restrictions upon us, but that he had appointed himself to do this. Trompanidt further said that he had not been sent to the lodge to spy on us, but that the only reason he had come here was to prevent (as much as was in his power) troubles from arising and to settle all disputes connected with the buying and selling of merchandise. This, he said, was the only objective of the King and his Mandarins.

Today I gave Oloang Tsiut the statement I had been forced to write, [the statement] by which I had to agree to be held personally accountable for all the Netherlanders residing here. It read as follows:

On the fifth day of the waxing moon, named Deun Gy, in the year of the rat, Oya Berckelang, via the Shahbandar, Oloang Tsiut Raymontry, has demanded this statement from me, Jeremias van Vliet (Chief of the Company's lodge and trade in Siam), by which I promise, as much as is in my power, obediently to observe, in

accordance with the laws and customs of this Kingdom, all the orders and recommendations pertaining to the Netherlanders residing in Siam that come from the aforementioned Berckelang and are given to us by the Shahbandar, interpreters etc., and I agree that I (being the Chief), will be held personally accountable for all offenders, to which I pledge myself. At Ayutthaya, at the Siam lodge, the last day of December 1636.

At the side was my seal, pressed in red wax.:

Was signed: Jeremias van Vliet.

[Oloang Tsiut took the above statement to the Berckelang] who ordered him to keep and safeguard it and promised to send us a permit in the morning by which we would once again be allowed to hire and use workers and praos for the Company's service.

1 January 1637

On 1 January the Shahbandar, Oloang Tsiut, and the interpreter, Trompanidt, came to the lodge to bring us the long-awaited and dearly-bought *traa*, with which (so they said) we once again would be permitted to hire workers and praos and without restrictions deal freely with everyone. [They further told us] that Ockon Thip would be guarding the lodge a few days longer. We told the Shahbandar on our behalf to thank the Berckelang for all his help, adding that we trusted that through his Honour's righteous assistance we would soon be restored to all our former freedoms. Oloang Tsiut further told us that the Berckelang had suggested that it would be very good under the present circumstances to present the King with a substantial gift and that, in addition, we should express our gratitude to his Majesty for his beneficence (especially his merciful redemption of our people and his forgiveness of their crimes). [He added] that this was the custom of the country, that it would please the King and that, [as a consequence of his Majesty's favour], the Berckelang would dare in future to speak more freely on our behalf.

We replied that it was indeed true that the King had shown us great favour, and that we owed him gratitude but that, at the same time, I remained of the opinion that King's latest procedures against our people over such minor faults had been far too harsh. [I added] that I would leave this issue to the wiser judgement of his Lordship, the General at Batavia, that we trusted he would be our best councillor, and that we would obey his Lordship's will in this matter. After long deliberations, the Shahbandar, the interpreter and I agreed [on a suitable set of gifts for the King] and we made available a piece of Persian gold cloth, eight yards of red cloth (super fine), and some trifles which they would take to the Berckelang so that he, in accordance with the customs of the court, could present them to the King, along with such of our compliments as the occasion demanded.

3 January 1637

On 3 January I was called to the Berckelang's house. Upon arrival, his Honour told me that on the previous day he had presented the gifts to the King on my behalf, that His Majesty had accepted them with pleasure, and that His Majesty had ordered him to inform me that within a few days His Majesty would call me to his court in order in person to appear before him. [The Berckelang added] that I should put my faith in this and that I should be ready to go to the court at all times. We thanked his Honour for the

trouble he had taken in presenting our gifts [to the King] and said that we would forever be mindful of his efforts on our behalf. We were very surprised, unable to think of any reason why the King should wish us to appear before him. We talked about it with various friends, all of whom were of the opinion that the King wanted to show everyone that his anger had abated, and that he was now completely reconciled with the Hollanders (who had insulted him). In summary, everyone was of the opinion that this could only bring honour to our nation and be of service to the Company. God Almighty grant that this may be so.

4 January 1637

On 4 January Osoet Pegua (formerly Meerwijck's concubine)²² informed me that, earlier in the day, one of the Queen's state-daughters had called her to the palace and had told her that her Majesty for some time now had intended to send me one of her state-daughters. [The Queen had wanted to do this] because she was sure that my mind was troubled and my heart was pained about the King's procedures, but her Majesty had refrained from actually sending the girl out of fear (that the other concubines, who would be jealous, should tell the King about it). [Osoet Pegua further told me] that the Queen was greatly disappointed and very displeased with the King's procedures because His Majesty had never before inveighed so severely against any foreigners, for which reason, her Majesty wanted to implore me not to think the worst and not to write to his Lordship, the General, so that great troubles might be avoided.

We could not believe that the Queen had sent this message at her own volition. We thought it much more likely that this had occurred with foreknowledge of the King, perhaps because His Majesty had come to regret his actions, or perhaps, because he had been mellowed by the gifts he had received.

14 January 1637

The 10th day after this last entry [i.e. 14 January] the Berckelang said to me: 'It is now about 24 days since the Assistants, Joost Laurentsz and Daniel Jacobsz, have been locked in irons for the crimes they have committed. You have acted cautiously and wisely in punishing them in this way because [by doing this] the King, and all of us, have become convinced of your Honour's sincerity. His Majesty, however, has taken pity on them and has forgiven them all their failings. Release them of their bonds. And when you write to his Lordship, the General, tell him that His Majesty wishes that they be spared further punishment, which is also my earnest request to the General.' We thanked the Berckelang and said that we would obey his commands. Arriving home, we unlocked the aforementioned Assistants and ordered them to stay in their room for the time being so that they would remain (as much as possible) out of the sight of people.

17 January 1637

On 17 January, around noon, I was summoned to appear at the court. When all the nobles had gone inside, the interpreter, Trompanidt, ushered me in. After we had passed

²² Van Vliet forgot to mention that Osoet Pegua was now his concubine. In fact, Van Vliet was to have three daughters by Osoet Pegua (also called Tjau Soet) who were born between 1636-41, the eldest of whom was named Maria. For more information on Osoet Pegua see (Kraan, 1998: 59-69; 70-71).

through the court's innermost gate, Trompanidt handed me the base of a *pinang*-head in which was placed a small wooden tray with flowers and fried rice, and requested that I take it in both hands, crouch down and, in this way, carry it towards the King in the audience hall. But since I knew that this was an admission of guilt, which all delinquents have to perform in this manner (when they reconcile themselves with the King and want to show their gratitude), I politely refused, arguing that I had not committed any offence against His Majesty. But after much consternation, I was forced to carry the unworthy token, which I did most reluctantly and under protestations of innocence.

There were more people in the audience hall than I had ever seen before. When we had approached [the throne] to a distance of about 60 meters, to the point where the Mandarins were positioned, I had to crawl with the aforementioned tray in one hand until I reached the meeting. As soon as I had arrived there, the King appeared on his throne and before His Majesty spoke to anyone, the Berckelang addressed him as follows: 'Before Your Majesty, at this meeting, appears Captain van Vliet to show his gratitude for the mercy Your Majesty has been pleased to show towards his people (who reside with him in Your Majesty's Kingdom) by forgiving them their crimes.'

To which the King replied thus: 'It is now about four years that you, Captain van Vliet, have resided in my Kingdom, during which time you have carried out your work in accordance with the laws of this Kingdom, for which reason I am favourably disposed towards your person. I have no doubt that you are completely familiar with my laws and, since this is the case, it will be necessary that you instruct the people who reside with you and that you govern them in such a way that the customs of my Kingdom will be observed. Some days ago, a group of Netherlanders so badly offended at my temple and at the palace of the Prince that I became enraged. I could have punished them for their deeds, but due to the long-established friendship with the King of Holland and with his Lordship, the General at Batavia, and also due to your intercession, I have decided to forgive them and I shall not think of it again. And finally, I desire that such licentiousness be prevented, that it does not occur again so that my anger will not be aroused against you. And further, I desire that you carry the burden for your people because, henceforth, I shall hold no one responsible but you because you are their head and, since this is so, it is entirely reasonable that you care for your people and that you are responsible for them.'

After the King had spoken, I had to throw the flowers and the fried rice over my head and, after touching my head reverentially to the ground, I modestly replied as follows: 'I shall set an example for my people by leading a regular, orderly life (as I have always done). I shall take care that all misfortunes be prevented, and that the laws of the land be observed as much as possible, with which I trust your Majesty will be satisfied.'

The King replied: 'I love and care for all foreigners who frequent my country and come to my Kingdom to trade, but I am particularly well disposed towards the Holland nation because of their cordiality and righteousness. I love the Hollanders like my own people and I care for them in equal measure. I shall give no cause to diminish the friendship with the King of Holland and his Lordship, the General at Batavia, as long as the sun and moon shall shine. You must also undertake to do this, and you will certainly succeed, as long as his Lordship, the General, in addition to yourself (who knows the laws of this land), sends to Siam only considerate people with good manners and lets

them stay longer than has been the case in the past. This you should recommend to his Lordship.’

I replied reverentially as follows because there [in Siam] it cannot be otherwise: ‘I do not doubt that our King in Holland and his Lordship, the General, are very pleased with Your Majesty’s affection of which I, during my residence here, have witnessed numerous instances. Furthermore, it is the will of our principals that their servants observe the laws and customs of the countries in which they reside so that their profits will not be diminished by unnecessary difficulties.’

The King had spoken the words I have related in such an emphatic and earnest manner that everyone at the court was greatly surprised. In the meantime, the Ambassador of Cotop Tsia [Kampuchea?] had entered the audience hall. His Majesty spoke with the Ambassador (according to the customs of the court) and, after he had finished, he rose from his throne and left the audience hall without addressing anyone else. Hereupon the whole gathering rose, but I had to crawl out of the audience hall in the same way I had entered. After I had left the hall I returned to the lodge.

18 January 1637

On 18 January the Shahbandar, Oloang Tsiut, came to the lodge with the interpreters. They told me how surprised all the Mandarins had been about the King’s speech of yesterday, declaring that it was a clear indication of His Majesty’s sincere affection for our nation and for my person. I complained, however, that I had been wronged and that I had been deeply humiliated by having to appear before the whole gathering as if I was a criminal, even though I had never committed even the slightest offence. I also said that even though our people had been accused, it had never been proven that they were in fact responsible for the troubles. I further declared that if I had known what humiliations awaited me, if I had known that I had to crawl in and out of the audience hall, I would never have appeared at the court. Oloang Tsiut said that he had feared as much and that he had told the Berckelang of his fears, for which reason they had kept everything hidden from me. He assured me, however, that it was to the honour of our nation, that it would advance our trade, and [he assured me] that later in the day Ockon Thip and his guard-prao would be withdrawn from the lodge. I was content with this news, because as long as I can advance the service of my principals, I fear neither humiliation nor dishonour.

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