

Theodorus van den Heuvel Inspects the *Phramen* of Queen Aphainuchit in 1738

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ABSTRACT—In 1738, the director of the Dutch trade office at Ayutthaya was invited to inspect the crematory building being prepared for one of King Borommakot's chief queens, probably an unique opportunity for a foreigner in this era; and on the following day, he witnessed the funeral procession. He left a detailed description of what he saw, including many details not found in any other account. This article includes an English translation of these episodes, along with reflections on the insight they give into Siamese attitudes and Siamese-Dutch relations at that time.

On 6 March 1737, Theodorus van den Heuvel, the merchant and *opperhoofd* [director] of the Dutch trade office near Ayutthaya,¹ had set out on a seventeen-day journey to Phra Phutthabat, the Buddha's Footprint. On the first page of his account of that memorable journey,² van den Heuvel mentioned that he had been obliged to go,³ having been especially ordered to join the Siamese king's annual pilgrimage to that site.⁴ The distance between Ayutthaya and Phra Phutthabat is just under 60 kilometres as the crow flies, but being paddled upstream on a meandering river and being carried in litters to the shrine made it a cumbersome journey over four days before van den Heuvel arrived at the sacred location.

It is apparent that this invitation was meant to impress the *farang*,⁵ convincing him that the Thai king was mighty indeed, basking in wealth and resources. Indeed, the journey to Phra Phutthabat was a spectacular pageant. For the first stretch upriver, the flotilla consisted of more than 100 large barges, manned by thousands of rowers.

¹ Theodorus Jacobus van den Heuvel was the eldest son of one of the chief magistrates of the town of Maastricht. At the age of 18 or 19, he joined the Amsterdam Chamber of the United East India Company, where he was assigned the rank of junior assistant. On April 10, 1716, he sailed for the East on the ship Doornik, arriving in Batavia (Jakarta) on 23 October of that year. He served the Company in Batavia and Melaka before being appointed on 1 August 1735 as the head of the Ayutthaya office.

² Van den Heuvel, or one of his assistants, wrote a detailed account in the trade office's Daily Register. It inspired a lavishly illustrated book edited by R. Raben and Dhiravat na Pombejra, *In the King's Trail: An 18th Century Dutch Journey to the Buddha's Footprint* (Bangkok: The Royal Netherlands Embassy, 1997).

³ Van den Heuvel wrote that he was obliged to undertake the journey "on special order of the Siamese king" ("door speciaal bevel den Koning van Siam heeft moeten volgen").

⁴ During the reign of King Songtham (1611–1628), a natural depression in a rock, resembling a giant footprint, was discovered at a site circa 20 kilometres from Lopburi town. The king ordered the construction there of various buildings, as well as establishing a wide road to the Pasak river. See Richard D. Cushman (trans.), *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 2000), pp. 209–210.

⁵ The term *farang* is used by the Thais to refer to Europeans in general. Officially, the Dutch were known under the rubric, *wilanda* (วิลันดา), derived from the word Hollanda.

For the second part overland, the king sat in a howdah on a huge elephant, preceded by nine other elephants and 1,000 foot soldiers, followed by four Persian horses, the king's children and many courtiers on elephants and horses. During the week, there were shows, music and theatre.

From his account of the journey to the Buddha's footprint, it is clear that Van den Heuvel, although a staunch Dutch Calvinist, reported on the "heathen" ceremonies without disparaging or scathing comments. Indeed, he follows the indigenous etiquette, raising his hands in respect to the Thai king at various appropriate moments.

Van den Heuvel adamantly refused, however, to raise his hands to the Footprint, saying that his religion prevented him from doing so. He would rather die than adore a heathen god. Interestingly, his stance was understood and accepted by the king, who is reported to have said: "They are right, they are foreigners, let them go wherever they want to; who is not faithful to his god, is not faithful to his master."⁶

During the journey to Phra Phutthabat, van den Heuvel was treated with the utmost respect. He was honoured by being treated like a visiting vassal, and was given a set of costly garments. Such honours did little, however, to alleviate the discomfort of having to attend hour-long entertainments, during which van den Heuvel found the music unbearable, the plays incomprehensible, and the dances of scenes from epic stories boring.

Almost ten months later, on 27 January 1738, two officials from the Phrakhläng's office (the office dealing with trade and foreign affairs) came to the Dutch trade office and once more invited van den Heuvel, in the name of the king, to attend a major ceremony, namely, the state funeral that was being prepared for the cremation of the mortal remains of Queen Krommaluang Aphainuchit, one of the chief queens of King Borommakot (reigned 1733-1758), who had died on 6 August 1737.⁷ This time, the Dutch *opperhoofd* was invited one day prior to the actual ceremony to inspect the temporary ceremonial tower, the funeral pyre (พระเมรุ, *phramen*).

The report of van den Heuvel's experiences just prior to, and during, the queen's cremation can be found in the vast holdings of Dutch East India Company documents in the Dutch National Archives where it is located as inventory number NA 1.04.02, 2438, fols. 500–509. In 2007, this account was summarised by Bhawan Ruangsilp,⁸ but the document warrants a full translation, as it throws light upon Siamese funeral practices, upon King Borommakot's attitude to the wider world, as well as Siamese-Dutch relations.

⁶ *In the King's Trail*, p. 24.

⁷ Krommaluang Aphainuchit was the eldest of King Borommakot's two queens. She was the mother of the prince of the Front Palace and the poet, Chaofa Thammathibet.

⁸ Bhawan Ruangsilp, *Dutch East India Company Merchants at the Court of Ayutthaya* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 189–190.

{Fol. 500} Diary or notes concerning the most important things that happened whilst conducting the business in this trade office, maintained by the patented Netherlands.

{Fol. 501} East-Indian Comp[any] in the kingdom of Siam and its dependencies, commencing 25 January in the year 1738 and ending [31 December 1738].

Monday 27 [January 1738]

The Phrakhlang⁹ sent Okluang Thepphakdi¹⁰ and Samian¹¹ Bunmak¹² to the trade office. They requested the director [van den Heuvel] in name of the king to inspect tomorrow the place that had been prepared to cremate the deceased queen, {Fol. 502} which the director accepted with thanks.

Tuesday 28

The director went with the bookkeeper and all assistants to the king's old or grand palace where he was received by four mandarins, namely Okluang Raksasombat¹³, Okluang Siyot¹⁴, Okluang Choduek¹⁵ and Okluang Thepphakdi. They brought him and his party to the third, most inner forecourt. This place was occupied with many imaginary effigies, such as tigers and horses with wings, demons with eagle heads, griffins, and more. They were all made from light sculpted wood with little towers or small houses on their back [see Figure 1], all painted in various colours and gilded; almost eight feet tall with wheels so that they could be pulled forward. Further, there stood three carts that were all of a similar type, namely square and tapering upwards, leaving at the top just room for a person to sit under a canopy [See Figure 2]. {Fol. 503} [These carts were] completely sculpted and gilded in the indigenous manner and inlaid with bits of green glass, giving the whole not a bad appearance at all, especially when it stood in the sunlight.

Then, after they were shown the gifts that would be distributed by the king (consisting of a large amount of cloth, that had been dyed yellow, and also all objects, nothing excepted, that a Buddhist monk needs for his sustenance, for every monastery

⁹ พระคลัง Phrakhlang, the minister in charge of trade and relations with foreigners.

¹⁰ Luang Thepphakdi (หลวงเทพภักดี) was a harbourmaster in the Phrakhlang Department. He is mentioned in *Rueang Kotmai Tra Sam Duang*, [hereafter KTSD, (Bangkok: Krom Sinlapakon, BE 2521 [1978]), p. 117, where his *sakdina* is listed as 600, and his duty is specified as being in charge of the Dutch section (ได้วาวิลันดา).

¹¹ เสมียน, "scribe".

¹² Samian Bunmak is also mentioned in the *King's Trail* (p. 11), there spelled "simieen bommak", and on p. 36 of that book, he is identified as secretary to the Phrakhlang.

¹³ Luang Raksasombat was a middle-ranking official in the Phrakhlang Ministry. The KTSD (p. 116) lists him not as luang, but with the lower rank of khun and a *sakdinā* of 800.

¹⁴ Luang Siyot หลวงศรียศ. A person with this name is mentioned as one of the five generals sent to combat the invasion ordered by the Burmese king Alaunphaya in 1759. See *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, p. 476.

¹⁵ Luang Choduek is mentioned in the KTSD (with his full title Choduek Ratchasetthi โชติกราชเศรษฐี) as the head of Luang Thepphakdi's Department and a *sakdina* of 1400. Dhiravat calls him "the Chinese Harbour-master". Dhiravat na Pombejra, *Court, Company, and Campong, Essays on the VOC Presence in Ayutthaya* (Ayutthaya: Ayutthaya Historical Study Center, 1992), p. 46.



Figure 1. Two of the “imaginary effigies ... with little towers ... on their back”. Taken from Barend J. Terwiel, “Two Scrolls Depicting Phra Phetracha’s Funeral Procession in 1704 and the Riddle of their Creation”, *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 104, 2016, pp. 79-94.

a litter provided with a canopy) they were conducted [walking on mats made of] plaited bamboo with which the whole road was covered, through three breaches in the partitioning walls, placed about 100 paces outside the palace at the south-eastern side [to the place where the cremation would take place]. This consisted of a square, each side at least 200 paces long measured from the inside, where there were assembly rooms or halls arrayed next to each other, interrupted by eight eight-sided or sixteen-sided tapering towers more than fifteen fathoms tall and proportionally wide, namely one of them at each of the four corners but also {Fol. 504} there was a tower placed in the middle of each side, in which gateways or entrances had been constructed. All of them had been made of plaited [strips of] bamboo, on which rough paper had been glued, that had been painted red, except the corners and the frame, that were gilded. This region of assembly halls and towers (or pyramids), whose only purpose was to seat Buddhist monks and to show the shadow plays, *lakhon*,¹⁶ and other Siamese plays, held in the middle, or its centre, a much taller, larger and wider tower or pyramid, but made of the same materials as the others.¹⁷ Around its base, precisely placed from distance to distance, there were two figures, one of them representing an ape, six feet tall, with a cudgel in his paws and the other a female, a little smaller with wings and the lower body like a bird.¹⁸ Also between each pair [of these statues], various mirrors, screens and more curiosities, both European and Chinese, that gave this tower (and also the other towers) from far away in all directions a most pleasant and magnificent appearance, but close-up it lost much {Fol. 505} of its lustre because of its shabby construction. [This central tower] was hollow

¹⁶ ละครรำ, theatrical performance.

¹⁷ This was the *phramen* (from Pali: meru), the huge central tower symbolising the immense mountain at the centre of our universe.

¹⁸ The “ape” was in reality the effigy of a *yaksa*, a mythical fearsome warrior, the bird-woman a *kinnari*. They guarded respectively the west and the east side of the *phramen*.



Figure 2. An example of a cart “square and tapering upward, leaving at the top just room for a person to sit under a canopy”, taken from the 1704 scroll.

inside and had four entrances, corresponding to the gateways of the surrounding [outer layer]. After having walked two or three times around it,¹⁹ a Mahatlek,²⁰ or king’s page, came and invited only the director together with the four courtiers, that were named in the beginning of this account, to enter. And they did so by climbing six stairways, and after a stretch of crawling on hands and knees over very beautiful carpets,²¹ they found themselves [in the presence of] the king, who was incognito, simply dressed, sitting together with the four chief ministers named Chakri, Kalahom, Phraya Ratchaphakdi and Phraya Phonlathep²² beside the place that was destined to cremate the deceased queen. This was a sort of square altar, each side two fathoms long in the centre of the already mentioned tower. It was built six feet high, extensively gilded. On top there was a grate, and at the side an opening so that one could stoke a fire there.

¹⁹ It must have been three times in a clockwise direction, keeping the *phramen* on the right in accordance with the Siamese custom of honouring a person or object called *prathaksin* (ประทักษ์ชิน).

²⁰ Van den Heuvel wrote “Malek”, but most likely this is a contraction of Mahatlek, มหาเดเล็ก, the corps of royal pages.

²¹ In the Dutch manuscript, the word used is “alkatief”, a general term for Oriental carpets, named after Al Qatif (القطف), the town on the Persian Gulf.

²² Chakri was the chief of Civil Affairs in the north; the Kalahom must have been Phraya Ratchasongkhrum, supervising the southern provinces; Phraya Ratchaphakdi was responsible for Palace Affairs; and Phraya Phonlathep headed the Department of Lands.

{Fol. 506} After some time had passed during which we had lain in front of him, the monarch asked the director – via the Chakri – what he thought of this contraption and whether he had been satisfied with all that he had seen. The director answered that it was truly regal and that he felt most honoured with the favour granted him by His Majesty, but that his pleasure would have been much greater if the spectacle would have taken place in a different context, one not so grievous for His Majesty as this one. The four courtiers trembled with fear to such an extent that none of them was able to utter [translate] this short compliment. It lasted until the assistant interpreter had repeated it to them three or four times, and even then he had to assist the Chakri while he spoke. Then the king replied that he noticed that even the foreigners have pity with us. The Chakri then told Okluang Ratchasombat that it was now enough; in case the captain [van den Heuvel] wished to see something more you can show it to him, with which we {Fol. 507} obtained our leave and from there all returned to the trading post.

Wednesday 29th

In the morning at three o'clock,²³ following the invitation that had been issued, the director, accompanied with the same escort as yesterday, went again to the palace. This was very troublesome because of the enormous crowd of people who had assembled there. After having arrived within the third surrounding walls, they were assigned a place on a sala²⁴ next to the plaited bamboo²⁵ in a separate area. There, after having waited for some time, the cortege passed. First came circa 100 men, all with lotus²⁶ flowers in their hands, walking backwards facing the funeral cart. Then followed eleven pairs of the wooden animal figures, two by two pulled by crowds of people. These [animals] carried substances in the little towers on their back. Thus the first pair, {Fol. 508} being lions with eagle's heads,²⁷ carried the fire with which the pyre would be lit; others [carried] wax candles, sandalwood, agarwood²⁸ and other substances that are needed for the cremation.

In the third place, there came the three carts, the smallest first and the largest, with the corpse of the deceased queen in a large engraved golden container, or *sanko*,²⁹ with a similar cover, coming behind. On the smallest front vehicle sat an old Buddhist monk, who read aloud from a Siamese book. On the middle vehicle sat one of the princes. Fourth [in the procession] came five princes or children of the king, sitting on chairs that had canopies and that were carried by persons on their shoulders. Then, as a fifth item, there appeared a large number of drummers, trumpet players and the like, followed by

²³ Probably (using the Thai system of time reckoning), three hours after six o'clock, i.e. 9 a.m.

²⁴ ศาลา, a pavilion.

²⁵ This must have been a *ratchawat* (ราชวัติ), a ritual fence separating the profane world from the sacred precinct.

²⁶ The Dutch text mentions "pompen". The pompe is a now obsolete name for the yellow or white waterlily. This must be the fan, shaped like a leaf, called *bangsaek* (บังพรก in Thai). It is a ceremonial sunshade, one of the king's regalia.

²⁷ อินทรี, *insi*.

²⁸ A resinous core that forms in *Aquilaria* trees when they become infected with a type of mould.

²⁹ พระโกศ, *phrakot*, from Sanskrit *kośa* meaning a container.

the king, who was carried on a gilded chair but without canopy, between two rows of all the chief courtiers (recognisable by their white dress and their high white headdresses). [The king] was dressed in silver moiré silk,³⁰ and when the director {Fol. 509} presented him, according to the custom in this country, with

40 pieces of haman cloth,³¹

60 pieces of Zaanen cloth,³² and

40 pieces of Gerassen,³³

he stopped a while to receive these gifts. At the end of the procession came the *tamruat nai*,³⁴ and a large number of courtiers and other servants of the palace. While this procession passed, from four scaffolds a lot of gold and silver *fueangs*³⁵ that had been stuck in lemons, were thrown as gifts among the people who scrambled for them. Also there were a lot of yellow robes distributed among the Buddhist monks. Having seen all this, the director took leave and went to the [Dutch] lodge.

Commentary

Thus far, van den Heuvel's report of the ceremony³⁶ is a vivid and detailed account, adding to our knowledge of funeral customs. Thus, van den Heuvel notes that the road towards the third court was covered with plaited bamboo. When entering the third court, he notes how the outer walls have been constructed. The temporary wall was made of:

...plaited [strips of] bamboo, on which rough paper had been glued, that had been painted red, except the corners and the frame, that were gilded.

Entering the second court, he notes the main paraphernalia that were waiting to be used during the cortege. The “many imaginary effigies, such as tigers and horses with wings, demons with eagle heads, griffins, and more”, are well known among Thai historians. They represent animals from the Himavanta forest. Many of these chimeras are depicted in Wat Suthat.³⁷ While passing, the Dutch party has hardly occasion to

³⁰ Moiré is cloth that, when worn, has a rippling or “watered” appearance.

³¹ Thick pieces of cloth, used as wraps during the cold season and as towels; from the Arabic, *hamman* (Turkish bath).

³² Pieces of cloth, from the Persian, *zanāna*.

³³ Pieces of cotton from Bengal. See *VOC-Glossarium* (Den Haag: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 2000), p. 48.

³⁴ ตำรวจใน, the palace guard.

³⁵ เฟื้อง, at that time a silver bullet coin, weighing almost two grams.

³⁶ In the Royal Chronicles, the ceremony is mentioned in passing, whereby it is recorded that the king had ordered the construction of a small *phramen*, five *wa* and two *sok* wide, corresponding to approximately eleven metres, so that the base of the tower must have covered about 121 square metres. See Cushman, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, p. 433. The mention of “ten thousand clerics who were presented with new robes” in the same account must be understood as “a large number of clerics”.

³⁷ See Niyada Lausunthorn and Phiraphat Samran, *Citrakam Phapsat Himmaphan Phra Wihan Luang Wat Suthatthep Woraram*, printed for the occasion of the royal cremation of Somdet Phraphutthakosachan (Wira Phatthacarimahathera P.Th 9), 3 September B.E. 2559 [2016].

make an accurate description. However, they note details that escaped later observers:

They were all made from light sculpted wood with little towers or small houses on their back, all painted in various colours and gilded; almost eight feet tall with wheels so that they could be pulled forward.

The Dutch visitors then admired the three ornate carts, one of them would seat a senior Buddhist monk, probably the *sangkharat* himself, linked with a heavy cord to the urn, placed on another of these carts. Van den Heuvel's description:

[They] were all of a similar type, namely square and tapering upwards, leaving at the top just room for a person to sit under a canopy.

[These carts were] completely sculpted and gilded in the indigenous manner and inlaid with bits of green glass giving the whole not a bad appearance at all, especially when it stood in the sunlight.

Before nearing the central tower they note precisely placed from distance to distance "two figures, one of them representing an ape, six feet tall, with a cudgel in his paws and the other a female a little smaller with wings and the lower body like a bird.³⁸ They note on this space "various mirrors, screens and more curiosities, both European and Chinese" that gave this tower (and also the other towers) from far away in all directions a most pleasant and magnificent appearance. Close-up it lost much of its appeal.

Van den Heuvel and his party are then invited to enter the main *phramen*. Surely, this was an unique experience for *farang*. They had to climb six levels up, then proceed on hands and knees towards the royal presence. Here they found themselves in the very room where the body of the queen would be burnt. This was where the king and his main ministers awaited the Dutch merchant.

The conversation between van den Heuvel and the king presents a dramatic scene. Van den Heuvel's condolences cause a panicky reaction among the translators, but when they were finally conveyed, they were immediately understood and appreciated by the Siamese king. Noteworthy is the inclusion of Chinese and European mirrors, screens and other paraphernalia, a sign of cosmopolitan Ayutthaya of the early 18th century.

The next day, van den Heuvel observes the cortege, and again, it provides modern historians with some surprises. The first contingent, all carrying ornamental fans, walks backwards, facing the queen's urn, thereby paying homage to the royal remains on the way to the *phramen*. This sign of high respect is also found in the 1704 scroll, where a prince is depicted on the cart conveying the royal urn facing his father's remains. However, we do not read of people walking backwards in other descriptions of royal cremations.

Like the journey to Phra Phutthabat, the royal cremation represented a massive

³⁸ กิณนรรี, *kinnari*, one of the creatures believed to inhabit the mythical Himavanta forest, depicted with head, torso and arms of a woman, but wings, tail and feet of a bird.

expenditure of time, effort and resources. Thousands of people were involved in the construction of the huge cosmic mountain and the ceremonial paraphernalia, preparing the processional parade, and organising the accompanying cultural displays. Again, this was proof that the state functioned, that there was wealth, that the king controlled vast human resources.

In his essay, “King Borommakot, his Court, and their World”, David Wyatt, commenting on van den Heuvel’s excursion to the Buddha’s Footprint, noted:

The first thing to strike us is the utter self-confidence of the Siamese. Many of the things that they did, and things that they showed the visitors, were quintessentially Siamese cultural artifacts – from classical dance and cuisine to Buddhist belief and conceptions of astronomy (and eclipses). Not only was there no apparent defensiveness when the Siamese were challenged with European alternatives, but even more interesting is the fact that on several occasions the Siamese demonstrated a willingness to admit that other cultures might see things differently.³⁹

The same can be said for van den Heuvel’s second royal invitation to attend the queen’s obsequies. Wyatt argued that the Siamese display of wealth, the degree of sophistication and the intellectual vitality that can be extrapolated from what happened during the journey to the Buddha’s footprint, is a clear sign that the Siamese attitude to *farangs* had undergone a subtle change. He also noted that the then current idea, that prior to the Burmese invasion in the 1760s, Siam had “retreated from the world” needed to be revised. Indeed, a detailed revision appeared in 2017 by Baker and Pasuk in their *A History of Ayutthaya*.⁴⁰

The king’s invitation to van den Heuvel to inspect the splendid phramen and to witness the impressive cortege demonstrates that the Thais were proud to share their cultural accomplishments. It underlines what Wyatt called the subtle change in the Siamese attitude to *farangs*.

The invitations to attend important Siamese ceremonies go back all the way to the reign of King Naresuan (1590–1605), who invited Jacques de Coutre to witness the state funeral of the elephant who had saved the nation.⁴¹ Then, during the reign of King Prasat Thong (1629–1656), *opperhoofd* Jan van Muyden was asked to attend the cremation of the king’s daughter.⁴² In January 1716, *opperhoofd* Wijbrand Blom was invited to attend the tonsure ceremony of King Thaisa’s eldest son. In 1730, *opperhoofd* Rogier

³⁹ *In the King’s Trail*, p. 58.

⁴⁰ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya, Siam in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), especially Chapter 6.

⁴¹ Barend J. Terwiel, “What Happened at Nong Sarai? Comparing Indigenous and European Sources for Late 16th Century Siam”, *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 101, 2013, pp 26–27.

⁴² Van Muyden was *opperhoofd* from 1646 to 1650. Jan Struys, who was visiting the Dutch trade office in 1650, was also invited, but he arrived too late to see the corpse brought to the *phramen*. His description of the ceremony is therefore hearsay, which helps explain his confusion and fanciful exaggerations. See “Jan Struys, *The Perilous and most Unhappy Voyages of John Struys...*, translated by John Morrison, London 1683”, *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 94, 200, pp. 196-198.

van Alderwereld was invited to attend the last rites of a high-ranking Buddhist monk.⁴³

Not long after van den Heuvel had attended the queen's cremation ceremonies he was once more invited to join the journey to Phra Phutthabat, but this time van den Heuvel refused to go.⁴⁴ This refusal may well have contributed to a falling out with the court, which would help explain the strong wording of the Phrakhläng's complaint about van den Heuvel's unreasonable behaviour, mentioned below.

During most of the 17th century, there had been a Dutch lodge in and near Ayutthaya, but personal contacts between the *opperhoofd* and the Siamese king had taken place only during the most formal occasions. During that time, the Dutch had been able, with varying success, to persuade Siam to grant them trade monopolies, notably in tin and deer hides. They succeeded at first by convincing the Siamese of their military and technological supremacy and later by presenting costly presents to the king and the Phrakhläng. These monopolies ensured that the Dutch lodge for many years could make a profit. Over time, however, the enforcement of such monopolies proved difficult: behind the scenes, Chinese traders, notably, succeeded trading in goods officially reserved for the Dutch.

Van den Heuvel was *opperhoofd* for almost five years, from August 1735 until February 1740, during which the office at Ayutthaya proved utterly inefficient, in that its expenses by far exceeded profits from trade. Apparently, van den Heuvel attempted strenuously to act against what he felt to be unreasonable low prices for the goods he tried to sell. His remonstrations resulted, however, in a strongly worded and well-argued complaint from the Phrakhläng to the *bewinthebbers* [directors] of the United East India Company in Batavia.⁴⁵ Again, such a strongly worded complaint, accusing van den Heuvel of unreasonableness, is another sign of Siamese self-confidence.

By the time of King Borommakot, the Dutch had been accepted as a permanent fixture in Southeast Asia, but the Siamese had learnt that these *farangs* were no longer capable of dictating the terms under which they negotiated with them. Van den Heuvel left Ayutthaya in February 1740 and was assigned to work for the East India Company in Sumatra. He died at a relative early age in his residence, not far from Batavia, on Wednesday, 23 August 1747.

Acknowledgements

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⁴³ Dhiravat na Pombejra, *Court, Company, and Campong; Essays on the VOC Presence in Ayutthaya*, Bangkok (Amarin 1992), p. 47.

⁴⁴ Hendrik E. Niemeijer, "Letter from the Chaophraya Phrakhläng on behalf of King Borommakot Maha Dharmaracha II (1733-1758) to the Supreme Government in Batavia, (received) 29 March 1740, and the answer from Batavia, 28 August 1740". In: *Harta Karun. Hidden Treasures on Indonesian and Asian-European History from the VOC Archives in Jakarta*, document 27. Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2016, downloaded from <https://sejarah-nusantara.anri.go.id/hartakarun/item/27/>. Van den Heuvel's refusal may well have played a role in the subsequent controversy regarding the pricing of Dutch trade goods.

⁴⁵ See Niemeijer, "Letter from the Chaophraya Phrakhläng."