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**AYUTIHAYA AS A COSMOPOLITAN SOCIETY:
A CASE STUDY OF DANIEL BROCHEBOORDE
AND HIS DESCENDANTS**

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The Brochebourdes

In the European sources concerning late seventeenth century Siam, the names of certain minor historical personages crop up with persistent and fascinating regularity. The name "Daniel Brochebourde" is one example. Daniel served as surgeon both to the VOC and to the King of Siam. Later on the name "Brochebourde"¹ resurfaces from time to time in the records, as Daniel's descendants continued to live and work in Siam, most of them as surgeons.

This paper will concentrate on the careers and changing status of the Brochebourdes, insofar as they can be known from the extant documentary material². A study of Daniel Brochebourde and his descendants naturally touches upon certain aspects of Siamese court life, of Ayutthaya's cosmopolitan society, and of Siam's relations with the VOC.

Foreigners in Ayutthaya

Ayutthaya was a leading Southeast Asian port, an entrepôt and trading kingdom which dealt with merchants of many races and religions. As a result, Ayutthaya became a cosmopolitan city where several communities of foreign traders, missionaries, and mercenaries co-existed with the already ethnically diverse (and mixed) local populations. Dialogue and interaction between these groups naturally ensued, taking place within a context of close administrative control by the king of Siam and his officials. Many of the foreigners, who came to Ayutthaya, for example Daniel Brochebourde, remained there all their lives.

Europeans first came to Ayutthaya in the early sixteenth century, and continued to have more or less regular contacts with Siam until the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. Among these Europeans, the Dutch (through the VOC) remained a trading partner of the Ayutthaya kingdom for over 150 years. The relationship was not always cordial, because quite often the

¹ Variants of the name Brochebourde as found in the sources include "Brouchebourde", "Brochebourde", and "Broscheboerde".

² This paper is based on primary sources, but the Brochebourdes have been mentioned by: Han ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat: A History of the Contacts between The Netherlands and Thailand* (Lochem, 1987), 43 and: George Vinal Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand* (De Kalb, 1977), 105.

VOC and the Siamese court found themselves competing for the same commerce interests. During the earlier part of King Narai's reign; for example, the VOC was anxious enough about to the Siamese crown trading in Japan and China impose a short, limited. A blockade in 1663-4, and to stipulate, in the VOC - Siamese Treaty of 1664, that no Chinese people were to be allowed to man or navigate the Siamese royal junks bound for Japan and other destinations. This clause was a clear attempt to cripple Siamese royal trade overseas, as most of the king's ships were Chinese-style junks manned and managed by Chinese or Ayutthaya-based Chinese³.

Daniel Brochebourde at the Court of King Narai

Relations between the VOC and King Narai (r.1656-1688) improved steadily after the crisis of 1663-1664, and by the late 1660s the Siamese king was regularly requesting that the Company send him experts in various fields to serve in his court. In 1669 the Batavia authorities sent a "constapel" (gunner, cannoneer) and a "cruytmaker" (maker of gunpowder) to serve at King Narai's court as requested⁴ Later on in Narai's reign other VOC employees were sent to the Siamese court at Ayutthaya to serve in. various capacities: as enameller, as mason, as goldsmith, and as surgeon⁵.

In 1672 Daniel Brochebourde, a native of Sedan (in north-eastern France) and a surgeon in the service of the VOC, was loaned to the Siamese court, with Batavia's approval, to serve as the king's surgeon. Daniel had been stationed since 1659 at the VOC's office in Ligor (Nakhon Sithammarat), in the southern part of the Ayutthaya kingdom⁶. This opperchirurgijn had married a local woman while at Ligor, and then had moved to Ayutthaya sometime before 1669⁷. By this time he would have been fluent in Thai.

As to why the king should have needed a western medical doctor at all, the account of Siamese medical knowledge and practice given by the French diplomat Simon de La Loubere may provide some clues

³ Smith, op.cit., 39-40.

⁴ Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague (henceforth ARA), VOC 893, Memorandum for Nicolaes de Roy, 23.IV.1669, f.272.

⁵ Ten Brummelhuis, op.cit., 42-43.

⁶ ARA, VOC 1438, Keijts to G-G, 20.I.1687, fs. 651 and verso.

⁷ ARA, VOC 1517, Phrakhleng to G-G, 1692/3, fs.331 verso-332.

"Medicine cannot merit the name of Science amongst the Siameses...

"Their chief Ignorance is to know nothing in Chirurgery, and to stand in need of the Europeans, not only for Trapans*, and for all the other difficult Operations of Chirurgery, but for simple Blood-lettings. They are utterly ignorant of Anatomy",

and also of new knowledge such as that concerning the circulation of the blood⁸. Even allowing for La Loubere's underestimation of traditional Siamese medicine, it seems clear that surgery in Siam was a monopoly of the westerners. King Narai, with his keen interest in all things western, was naturally eager to employ the services of a western surgeon.

Daniel Brochebourde's abilities as a surgeon attracted the attention of King Narai's court when he managed to cure some of the king's men, where upon the Siamese asked that he remain in Siam as the king's doctor. One reason given for Daniel's being the court's choice was his fluency in spoken Thai, a vital asset to have when working in Ayutthaya. According to a French document Daniel was also known as "mocoluan" (probably "mokhaluang", meaning the king's doctor)⁹.

Daniel Brochebourde's combined medical and linguistic abilities made him useful both to the Dutch in Ayutthaya and to the Siamese court. The VOC opperhoofd in Siam Aarnout Faa used Daniel as a translator in some of his dealings with King Narai's treasury officials¹⁰. This was despite the fact that the VOC already had full-time translators Daniel indeed retained his VOC monthly salary of 34 guilders throughout his 25 years' service at the court of Ayutthaya, a career which lasted until his death in 1697¹¹. Daniel seems to have played a prominent part in the court of King Narai, especially in connection with the women of the Palace. He was granted access to the only daughter of King Narai, Princess Yothathep. The French merchant Veret accused him (and the Dutch generally) of having intrigued against the interests of France, leading to this princess anti-French behaviour, exemplified by her refusal to accept Madame la Dauphine's* presents in 1687-8¹².

*Trapans: bone-cutting operations using a surgical instrument called a "trepan" or "trephine".

⁸ Simon de La Loubère, *The Kingdom of Siam*, intro. by David K. Wyatt (Kuala Lumpur, 1969), Part II, 62-63.

⁹ ARA, VOC 1290, Report by de Roy to G-G, 20.XI.1672, fs.260 verso-261.

VOC 1517, Phrakhlang to G-G, 1692/3, fs.332 and verso. Archives Nationales, Paris (henceforth AN), C1 25, Rival's "declaration" of 25.XI.1691, fs.58-59.

¹⁰ ARA, VOC 1350, Hopman & Meijer to G-G, 16.XI.1679, fs. 444-470. Hopman and Meijer accused Faa of dishonesty in his conduct of VOC business in Siam. Faa was not prosecuted.

¹¹ ARA, VOC 931, G-G to Boom, 2.V.1698, fs. 269-270.

¹² ARA, VOC 4026, Véret to Directors of Compagnie des Indes, 15.11.1689, f. 1146 verso.

A further anecdote, as told by the French Jesuit Father de Bèze (who must have heard it from somebody else since the events recounted occurred before he came to Siam), reveals Daniel's role in account scandal.

A sister of Okphra Phetracha – the official who was to usurp the throne in 1688 – was one of King Narai's consorts. Her sexual appetites, however, were those of a Messalina. According to de Bèze¹³,

"This wretch was notorious for her excesses; everyone was privy to them save only the King, but such was the place in his mind which she had usurped that her power in the Palace had become well high supreme. The sole impediment to her brutish lust was the strict supervision to which ladies in the Palace are subject; yet her credit with the King stood so high that at times he obtained exit, to the end that a wound in her leg might be dressed by a Dutch surgeon named Daniel abetted her by keeping open this wound which she herself had caused, his pretext being that it was a dangerous wound, as he assured the King...But she meanwhile was making full use of the liberty she had thus acquired. Her habit was to make for the Portuguese Camp which sheltered certain participants of her favours well out of range of her countrymen's inquisitive eyes. So little circumspection did she practice there that her conduct became a byword and was even pilloried in ribald snatches of song, a license unusual among the Siamese."

If de Bèze's informant was correct, then Daniel Brochebourde played a rather inglorious part in this affair. This promiscuous royal consort was later confined to the Royal Palace, where she still managed to seduce-and thus ruin - one of the King's half-brothers. These two were caught and were both condemned to death. The king reduced his half-brother's sentence, but the prince was still so severely flogged that he became dumb and crippled, and thus no longer a truly viable candidate for the throne.

Towards the end of King Narai's reign, two developments claimed the full attention of Ayutthaya's many foreign communities, including the VOC's. Firstly, the aggressive, monopolistic trading policy of King Narai and his Greek favourite Constantine Phaulkon, whose rapacity and pro-French attitude created much frustration and discontent among the

¹³ Claude de Bèze, *Memoir*, translated with commentary by E.W. Hutchinson as *1688 Revolution in Siam* (Hong Kong, 1968), 54-57 (quotation from 54).

foreigners whose interests suffered: the "Moors" (largely Indian or Persian Muslims), the Chinese, the English East India Company, and the VOC. Secondly, the king's lack of an heir (he had no son) and his frail health led to much speculation and faction-forming on the part of the courtiers, high officials, and other, some of which political maneuvers involved one or more group of foreigners¹⁴.

In late 1687 King Louis XIV of France sent a diplomatic mission to Siam, accompanied by troops meant to garrison the fortresses at Bangkok and Mergui, both these towns being key places in the Ayutthaya kingdom. The Siamese king and his advisers, faced with this *fait accompli*, were obliged to allow the French to garrison these two fortresses. But there were Siamese officials at the king's court who were deeply suspicious of the French presence so close to the city of Ayutthaya. When King Narai fell seriously ill in early 1688, the stage was set for another one of Ayutthaya's frequent succession conflicts. Okphra Phetracha the commander of the royal elephants (and a foster-brother of the king), together with his son Okluang Sorasak, formed a strong anti-French, anti-Catholic party which managed to pre-empt all rivals by staging a coup d'état in Lawo (Lopburi), where the dying king held court. Being in control of the king's person and of his court, Okphra Phetracha then proceeded to eliminate all his rivals and opponents – for example the king's two surviving half-brothers and the Greek minister Phaulkon¹⁵. What exactly happened, and when, can still seem a mystery because the sources often contradict each other. Daniel Brochebourde certainly played a role in these upheavals, but how important this role was is an intriguing question which can admit of no definite answer.

The Dutch opperhoofd Keijts, writing about the events of 1688, related that when relations between Okphra Phetracha and the French were at their most tense, all the Europeans in Lawo (including two VOC men) were put in prison by the usurper. The only exception was "our Mr. Daniel" who that very same day appealed successfully to Okphra Phetracha for the release of the two VOC employees¹⁶. Daniel Brochebourde was therefore on good terms with Okphra Phetracha, and had ready access to him. Keijts also mentions that Daniel was used by Okphra Phetracha as a messenger in the latter's communications with the VOC during the 1688 crisis. For example, on 27 June 1688 (only a fortnight before King Narai's death) Daniel came from Lawo to the VOC settlement at Ayutthaya with an order

¹⁴ See: Dhiravat na Pombejra, "Crown Trade and Court Politics in Ayutthaya during the Reign of King Narai (1656-88)" in J. Kathirithamby-Wells & John Villiers (eds.), *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity* (Singapore, 1990), 135-138.

¹⁵ De Beze; *op.cit.*, 87ff., Nidhi Aeusrivongse, *Kanmuang thai semai phra narai* (Bangkok, 1984), 97ff.

¹⁶ ARA, VOC 1453, Keijts to G-G, 5.XII.1688, f.241 verso.

from Okphra Phetracha to notify Keijts that arrangements had been made for the French to leave Siam, but that they (the French) must first go up to see him in Lawo. If they refused to do so he would order an all-out attack on Bangkok. The VOC thanked the okphra for this information, and 17 counselled "prudence and mercy"¹⁷.

Daniel Brochebourde, as he appears in the VOC sources, did not decisively influence any events in 1688: he was only a trusted and privileged westerner at a time when westerners were under general suspicion. But a French document of 1691¹⁸, a "declaration" by Jean Rival – formerly King Narai's governor in Bangkhli and Takuathung – tells of a conspiracy involving Daniel. M. Rival claims that an "Ocounrot" (a native of Ligor) told him on 18 July 1688 about a plot to kill King Narai and to massacre all Frenchmen in Siam. According to this "Ocounrot", Okphra Phetracha, his son Okluang Sorasak, the VOC opperhoofd Joannes Keijts, Daniel Brochebourde, and an Okmyn "Cymoun chaya" met at Okphra Phetracha's house in Lawo, where they agreed on a plan by which Daniel was to prepare a "slow poison" to be administered to the king by "Cymoun chaya". According to "Ocounrot" this whole idea was sought up by Keijts. A further part of the plan was that all medicines sent from Phaulkon to the king would be prevented from reaching the royal bedchamber. This would thus ensure the success of Daniel's poison.

Two observations must be made concerning this "conspiracy". Firstly, even if "Ocounrot" were correct in his information, that still does not mean that Okphra Phetracha, Keijts, Daniel Brochebourde, and the rest of the conspirators decided in the end to go through with this secret plan. No other evidence mentions this particular plot or planned regicide, although VOC sources would still have maintained a prudent silence over these matters even if they happened to be true. The other observation to be made is that rumours must have been rife in the Siam of 1688, and the neutral position of the Dutch (along with Daniel's privileged status with Okphra Phetracha) must have provoked much discussion – especially among the embattled French.

Véret, the chief agent of the French East India Company in Siam, wrote to the former French Envoy Extraordinary to Siam Claude Ceberet in early 1689 claiming that Okphra Phetracha "had helped a bit to make the King of Siam die, as far as one can tell" and that he was aided by "his dear advisers the Dutch", for example in the provision of "bombardiers", "18 cannons", (mysteriously) "other things which we do not know for certain"¹⁹. What seems

¹⁷ ARA, VOC 1453, Keijts to G-G, 5.XII.1688, f.246 verso.

¹⁸ AN, C1 25, Rival's "declaration" of 25.XI.1691, fs. 58-59.

¹⁹ ARA, VOC 4026, Véret to Cébéret, 15.II.1689, f.1210.

particularly noteworthy is the way Daniel Brochebourde flits in and out of the picture, both as a surgeon to the Siamese court and as a possible ally of Okphra Phetracha. Daniel must have been a deft adept at intrigue and acutely aware of the direction in which the political wind was blowing.

King Phetracha and the Brochebourdes

Daniel Brochebourde did not only survive the troubles of 1688 but he also strengthened his hold on the position of the king's surgeon as the new dynasty took over in Ayutthaya. It was probably at the beginning of King Phetracha's reign that Daniel was given the rank and title Okphra Phaet-osot ("Petosat" or "Pitoesut"), because no document dating from King Narai's reign mentions him by this Siamese royally-conferred rank and title.*

Daniel's son by his Siamese (Ligor) wife, Moses Brochebourde, was also employed as a surgeon at the court of King Phetracha.

This mestizo obviously learnt his trade from his father Daniel. Moses, too, had a royally-conferred rank and title: in his case, Okluang "Sirisitipid" or Sisitthiphaet²⁰. Moses Brochebourde was asked, during Keijts' directorship of the VOC office in Siam (1685-1688), whether he wished to join the Dutch company's service. He agreed to do so under a three – year contract, remaining a court surgeon at the same time. Moses was useful to the Company not so much as a doctor or bookkeeper (his official position) but as a translator. Being half-Siamese and having lived in Siam ever since his birth, Moses knew good Thai (as well as Dutch). Both Daniel and Moses were also potentially useful to the VOC as purveyors of inside – information from the royal court – being the king's surgeon they had direct access to the monarch. Daniel, especially, was close to King Phetracha²¹.

A third Brochebourde, Paulus, another of Daniel's sons, was also employed by the king of Siam. He too learnt the trade of surgeon from his father, and in 1691 joined the VOC's service as a "native employee", being used to perform minor surgical work at a salary of 6 ticals per month (about twelve guilders).

* Okphra was a Siamese official rank. During the Ayutthaya period officials' ranks were, in descending order of importance: chaophya, okya, okphra, okluang, okkhun, okmun, okphan

²⁰ ARA, VOC 1517, Phrakhlung to G-G, 1692/3, fs.331 verso-332.

²¹ ARA, VOC 1517, Phrakhlung to G-G, 1692/3, fs.332 verso-333.
VOC 1676, Tant to G-G, 29.1.1703, £.39.

Paulus was apparently an able and good employee, but had married against his father's wishes. In 1692 Paulus requested (via the opperhoofd Wagensvelt), that the VOC employ him as a full surgeon, but this request was turned down by Batavia. Paulus' last appearance in the VOC records is in a letter from the VOC opperhoofd Thomas van Son to the Governor-General dated 15 December 1694.

Van Son mentions that Paulus Brochebourde was leaving the Company's service, and was to serve King Phetracha as a captain on board the king's ship which was about to leave Mergui for the Coromandel coast. It is surprising that a surgeon should be able to skipper a ship as well, especially a ship which was – if Paulus' ship was the one which left Siam in 1695 – carrying elephants always a tricky cargo to carry. These animals were sold in India in exchange for horses. A VOC letter of December 1695 relates that many of the elephants sent by King Phetracha to the Coromandel died en route²². Nothing more is mentioned about Paulus after this, but he probably devoted himself solely to the service of the king of Siam and no longer had much to do with the VOC settlement.

Daniel and Moses, however, managed to serve both King Phetracha and the VOC, but not wholly without incident or problems. The VOC opperhoofd during the years 1688-1691, Pieter van den Hoorn, did not get along too well with King Phetracha's officials²³. The VOC, in a privileged position immediately following the 1688 troubles, renewed its 1664 "Treaty and Alliance of Peace" with the Siamese court in November 1688²⁴. But relations deteriorated quickly after that. Chief among the problems faced by van den Hoorn was the constant conflict with the court over the pricing of goods and other trading issues. Van den Hoorn himself seems to have behaved insensitively and high-handedly on occasion, at least to Siamese eyes. A prime example of van den Hoorn's insensitivity to Siamese feelings was his treatment of Moses Brochebourde.

In 1690 or 1691 Moses Brochebourde's contract with the VOC expired. He wished to leave the Company's service, but van den Hoorn would not allow him to do so since Moses' linguistic skills were still needed by the VOC. The opperhoofd threatened to send Moses on to Batavia, whereupon Daniel and Moses appealed to the Phrakhlang minister whose

²² 22. ARA, VOC 1498, Wagensvelt to G-G, 13.I.1692, fs. 284 and verso.
VOC 1503, van Son to G-G, 13.XII.1692, fs. 528 verso-529.

VOC 1541, van Son to G-G, 15.XII.1694, fs. 1088; 1094 verso.

VOC 1580, van Son to G-G, 23.XII.1695, f.60.

²³ Smith, op.cit.,

²⁴ See: J. Boeles, "Note on the Treaty between Siam and the Netherlands of 1688 A.D.

responsibilities included foreign affairs, for protection. The Brochebourdes' position, and that of the Phrakhlang, was that Moses was born in Ligor of a local woman, and – as the Phrakhlang wrote to the Governor-General in 1691/2 – the usage in Siam was that all the offspring of Siamese women begotten by foreign fathers must stay in Siam and must not leave the country without the king's knowledge and approval. The Phrakhlang was quite explicit in his condemnation of van den Hoorn's threat to send Moses Brochebourde to Batavia, also pointing out that Moses was a "doctor" to the king, with a royally-conferred rank of okluang, thus making him, and indeed Daniel too, subjects of the king²⁵ Van den Hoorn somewhat conveniently died in 1691, and Moses Brochebourde continued to serve the King of Siam as surgeon, while at the same time maintaining his links with the VOC. For example, he relayed news about some internal unrest in Siam during 1697 to the VOC office in Ayutthaya because – as court surgeon – he had access to all the news (and rumours)²⁶.

Daniel Brochebourde died sometime in 1697. He had been in the Ayutthaya kingdom since 1659, so he must have reached a ripe old age by the time of his death, having served two Siamese kings over a period of a quarter of a century. He left a fairly substantial sum of money at his death, a total of L582 guilders. This considerable inheritance reverted to the crown because it constituted the fruits of the king's generosity towards Daniel in the first place. Also, since Daniel's heirs were all born of "a Siamese woman", they were by Siamese "law" subjects of the King of Siam, who had the right to allocate the inheritance as he saw fit. The VOC opperhoofd Reynier Boom prudently allowed the process of Siamese law to take its course, the Dutch having learnt not to interfere with the affairs of the Siamese king's subjects²⁷.

Moses Brochebourde

After Daniel's death King Phetracha appointed Moses Okphra Phaet-osot. Moses thus succeeded to his father's rank, title, and position at court. He continued in his position even after the death of King Phetracha in 1703, outlived the next king (Phrachao Sua, r.1703-1709), and died in 1724 during the reign of King Thaisa²⁸. From about 1709 onwards Moses was given a monthly salary of thirty guilders by the VOC. This came out after the VOC opperhoofd Aarnout Cleur had written to Batavia asking that Moses be given a salary on

²⁵ ARA, VOC 1498, Wagensvelt to G-G, 13.I.1692, fs.284 and verso.

VOC 1517, Phrakhlang to G-G, 1692/3, fs.331 verso-335.

²⁶ ARA, VOC 1609, Siam dagregister, 18.I.1698, fs.4-7.

²⁷ ARA, VOC 1596, van Son to G-G, 8.XII.1697, f.59.

VOC 931, G-G to Boom, 2.V.1698, fs.269-270

²⁸ ARA, VOC 2013, Prageman to G-G, 25.XI.1724, f.13.

account of his "frequent obligingness" and his "loyalty" to the Company, notably in translating the yearly letters written by the King of Siam and the Phrakhlang minister to the Governor-General of the VOC²⁹.

Moses' performance of his role as a vital link between the VOC and the court of Siam was not always easy, however. In January 1703, Gideon Tant wrote to the Governor – General complaining that Moses did not have as good access to the king as his father Daniel had had, and was therefore less useful to the VOC insofar as information on the court was concerned. Tant speculated that Moses Brochebourde may also have been afraid to reveal too much because the incumbent Phrakhlang minister was a former foe of Daniel (and thus likely to be suspicious of Moses' contacts with the Dutch merchants in Ayutthaya). Moses certainly had regular contact with the VOC's personnel, and in 1720, when the opperhoofd Wijbrand Blom wrote his memorandum for the use of his successor Hendrik Verburg, Moses ("Opa Pethoset a French mestizo") was mentioned as one of the King of Siam's officials the opperhoofd needed to know about³⁰.

Moses Brochebourde had married a Mon woman, something which several VOC men had also done. From this union came at least two sons, Jeremias and Philemon. Another Brochebourde, Pieter (most probably another of Daniel's sons), was the VOC's "tweede taalman" or second translator³¹. The children of Moses Brochebourde and his Mon wife would have been only European. Nevertheless the Brochebourdes remained in touch with the Dutch community Ayutthaya over a period of over half a century even though the first and second generations of Daniel's descendants were (by blood) only 1/2 or 1/4 European. Judging from their names, they also probably remained Christian, and appear to have retained their proficiency in the Dutch language.

The Opium Stall Affair

In 1713 the VOC's second translator Pieter Brochebourde was killed in an incident at the VOC settlement in Ayutthaya. The VOC sheltered people involved in opium trading, an illegal activity in Siam. The Siamese authorities then discovered the existence of an opium stall or shop in the vicinity of the Dutch settlement. The officials who caught the VOC

²⁹ ARA, voc 1743, Cleur's Berigt of 2.VI.1707, fs.37; 102.

VOC 1776, Cleur to G-G, 7.I.1710, f. 9. Cleur to G-G, 29.I.1709, f.12.

³⁰ ARA, VOC 1676, Tant to G-G, 29.I.1703, f.29.

VOC 1945, Wijbrand Blom's Memorandum for Verburg, 22.XII.1720 f. 77.

³¹ ARA, VOC 1841, Dirck Blom to G-G, 15.XII.1713, fs.32-33. Pieter Brochebourde probably Moses' brother because in Cleur's letter of 25.III.1711 (VOC 1808, f. 15) a VOC "ondertolk" was mentioned as being Moses' brother.

employees and others in their wrongdoing were followers of the Crown Prince (the Phra maha upparat Prince Phon) who later became King Borommakot (r. 1733-1758). In a scuffle with the Siamese officials who had raided the opium stall, Pieter Brochebourde was killed. The opperhoofd Dirck Blom later blamed Pieter's "imprudent behaviour" for the troubles which led to his own death. The discovery of the opium stall caused the Ayutthaya authorities to react with some severity: for two months the VOC's trade in Siam was stopped. It was only after a special appeal that King Thaisa granted a pardon to the VOC, and its Siam trade was allowed to proceed as before³².

Jeremias Brochebourde

Of Moses Brochebourde's two known sons, Philemon is no more than a name found in one or two VOC documents. But the other son, Jeremias, appears to have been more prominent figures in the eyes of the VOC merchants in Siam.

In 1711 Jeremias is mentioned in a letter by Aarnout Cleur, the Dutch opperhoofd in Siam. Cleur wrote that the VOC now employed Jeremias because it was hoped that he would become their translator in future. Jeremias was said to have been able to read and write Dutch, and to know Thai, Mon, and Portuguese as well. When Moses Brochebourde died in 1724 Jeremias succeeded him as the King of Siam's personal doctor. Jeremias asked the VOC to continue to give him the same salary which it had given his father. The VOC opperhoofd Prageman, however, wrote to the Governor-General that he doubted whether Jeremias would be of much use to the VOC, so Batavia refused to grant Jeremias his request³³.

Jeremias and his brother Philemon were both surgeons to the King of Siam (in this case King Thaisa). The last mention we have of the two brothers is in a dagrgister for 1732 kept by the then VOC opperhoofd in Ayutthaya Pieter Syen. The entries which mention the Brochebourdes chiefly concern the vain efforts to cure King Thaisa's injured palate, an injury which was to prove fatal. The two Brochebourdes were sent to the VOC settlement to fetch the Company's surgeon to cure the king. The Dutch claimed that the king was not cured because, in his impatience, he did not use the medicaments prescribed by their surgeon,

³² ARA, VOC 1841, D. Blom to G-G, 15.XII.1713, fs.32-33.

VOC 1854, D. Blom to G-G, 28.XI.1714, fs.17-18. W. Ph. Coolhaas (ed.), *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en raden aan Heren XVII der V.O.C. (henceforth GM) Vol. VII* (The Hague, 1979), letter of 26.11.1714, 67; letter of 26.XI.1714, 98.

³³ ARA, VOC 1808, Cleur to G-G, 21.XII.1711, f.11.

VOC 2013, Prageman to G-G, 25.XI.1724, f.13.

GM Vol. VII, letter of 30.1.1725, 747.

resorting instead to consulting Siamese, Cochin Chinese, and Chinese “frauds”³⁴. It appears, then, that by 1732 the Brochebourdes were no longer the best practitioners of the surgeon's craft in Ayutthaya because, during this last illness of King Thaisa, the court had had to send for the VOC's own surgeon.

After these brief mentions in 1732 of Jeremias and Philemon, the Brochebourdes ceased to attract the VOC's attention. Perhaps they had become so much a part of Ayutthaya's court, and of Siamese society, that they no longer had regular contact with the Dutch community.

The Brochebourdes in their social context

This story of the Brochebourdes in Siam, however sketchy, still touches upon some of the more notable aspects of Ayutthaya as a cosmopolitan city, as well as on the “dialogues” and interactions which took place there between people of different races and cultures.

Firstly, the Siamese court was a place where “experts” of all kinds – were welcome (and wanted). It did not much matter which nation or religion the expert belonged to, because the Ayutthaya kings were above all else pragmatic in their choice of servants. The Brochebourdes, who were possibly French Huguenots in origin, could serve King Phetracha as court surgeons just as easily as the Pathan “Rossen Chan”, a Muslim³⁵, could serve the same monarch as equerry of the royal elephants and an expert on horses. The court of Siam, then, was similar to the VOC itself in that it offered careers to people of all races, not out of principle but for practical reasons.

A second salient aspect of cosmopolitan Ayutthaya was the existence in the city of a substantial number of mixed-race families. Daniel Brochebourde's son Moses, already half-Siamese himself, married a Mon woman, while his brother Pieter was betrothed to Marta, the “natural daughter” of the VOC's Swedish employee Elias Corre³⁶. Marta herself was most probably a mestizo, for VOC employees who stayed a long time in Siam usually had native wives.

The Siamese authorities frowned upon all marriages or liaisons between foreign men and Siamese, Mon, or Lao women, ostensibly for religious and security reasons. Laws were promulgated forbidding the union of these local women with foreigners from England,

³⁴ ARA, VOC 2239, Siam dagregister, 31.XII.1731-31.XII.1732 fs.48 ff.

³⁵ 35. “Hossen Chan” (Hosain Khan?) or Okya “Tewijata”/“Tephiata” features in various VOC documents (in the Siam factory records) and in Engelbert Kaempfer, *A Description of the Kingdom of Siam 1690*, translated by J. G. Scheuchzer (1727; reprinted Bangkok, 1987), 28.

³⁶ ARA, VOC 1808, Cleur to G-G, 25.II.1711, f.15. Kaempfer, *op.cit.*, 20.

Holland Java, Malaya, and other lands: in other words, with those who did not belong to the Buddhist religion³⁷. Such measures obviously did not work in practice, and occasionally disputes arose between the kings of Siam and the VOC over the custody of Corre jurisdiction over) the mestizo offspring of VOC employees and "native women". Conflicts occurred because the Siamese kings valued manpower too much to allow mestizos to leave the country freely, insisting that the VOC had no right to interfere. In Ayutthaya, manpower was the most precious resource – politically, socially, and (in some ways) economically. The dispute between van den Hoorn and the Phrakhlung in 1691-1692 over Moses Brochebourde's future was an example of the way Siamese and Dutch attitudes clashed.

Finally, the careers of Daniel Brochebourde and his descendants as surgeons in Siam reflect the Siamese kings' curiosity and receptiveness concerning western medical knowledge. On the one hand, western medical skills (especially surgery) were sought after to the extent that the kings of Ayutthaya from Narai (r.1656-1688) to Thaisa (r.1709-1733) all employed members of the Brochebourde family as surgeons. But on the other hand, western medicine was not thought of as being inherently superior to Siamese or other Asian medical knowledge. It was merely another particular skill or expertise to which the kings wanted to have recourse whenever necessary. This flexible, pragmatic mentality typified the way Ayutthaya dealt with the outside world throughout its long history.

Dhiravat na Pombejra
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³⁷ Ruang kotmai tra samduang (Bangkok, 1978), 479-480; 695.