

## **LION AND DRAGON**



# **LION AND DRAGON**

**Four centuries of Dutch-Vietnamese relations**

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## Foreword

Working on the realization of this book was a great pleasure. In the first place because the editors, John Kleinen, Bert van der Zwan and Hans Moors brought a great deal of knowledge and a great sense of humour to the project.

The energy of editorial assistants Margriet Kruse and Janneke Dufourquet was crucial. With great skill and understanding they managed to keep the sometimes turbulent and seemingly endless stream of e-mail exchanges from running out of control. Surely, without them this book would not exist. Many thanks!

Many people have contributed to this book in their own way, either through their scientific knowledge or through their network. Professor Phan Huy Le was important in both respects. During the editors' visit to Vietnam he was more than helpful, and I often think back to the pleasant conversations we had in Hanoi at the time.

Many people have contributed eye-witness accounts of the events described in the book, thus greatly inspiring our work. Unfortunately I cannot list them all here, but it is with great pleasure that I make an exception for the energetic Mrs. Henny Schoute Bussolati. Perhaps she does not realize to what extent her memories and nuances were a source of inspiration.

The staff at the Consulate-general in Ho Chi Minh City were always there for me with help and advice. And so were the people at Boom publishing house, especially Geert van der Meulen and Marlies Enklaar.

Our greatest praise, however, goes out to the authors. They have made this collection of articles into the present book: an overview of Dutch-Vietnamese relations from the 17th century until today. The result is a work of great interest, with much to offer to the scientist, the lay person and the traveller alike.

Once again, I thank all who have collaborated on this book. It has been a pleasure to work and write together!

*Ton van Zeeland*, Consul-General of The Netherlands  
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
May 2007

# Introduction

A book about the history of the relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam is like a book about a couple who maintain separate residences. The two countries have been in contact for more than four centuries, but at first sight it would be difficult to point out anything they have in common as a result of this history. Could this white spot have been caused by a lack of clarity that we have about the countries that we are actually talking about? Because that is precisely what seems to make it complicated.

In the past the Netherlands maintained diplomatic and commercial contacts with a country that by turns was called Tonqueen, Tonkin, Quinam, Cochinchina and Annam. After the Second World War there were a South and a North Vietnam, and only since 1976 has there been a sovereign, undivided Vietnamese Republic. Vietnam, in turn, was first confronted with a private Dutch trading company, the Dutch East India Company (voc), and later, as part of the French colonial empire, mainly with the colonial government in the Dutch Indies. It was not until decolonization and the Vietnamese wars that direct contact with the Dutch state presented itself via diplomatic channels.

Or could the lack of information about each other have been a consequence of the fact that the Netherlands and Vietnam were usually outside each other's sphere of interest? In spite of some violent confrontations in the earliest period, in the end neither side had a real incentive to consolidate the contacts. Moreover, as a French colony Vietnam was relegated to the far periphery of the Dutch colonial interests in Asia, the Dutch Indies absorbing all the attention. When decolonisation got under way after the Second World War, the Dutch were interested in Vietnam mainly in the context of the loss of their own colonial possessions. Moreover, the conflict of the 'new Vietnamese states' on the ruins of the failed French decolonisation process was looked upon mainly from a Cold War perspective. The Vietnamese, on the other hand, saw the trouble the Dutch had in defining their attitude towards the protest against the Vietnam war mainly as a Western luxury problem. Vietnam wanted political and material support in order to survive and was not interested in the



opinions of several different allies that were competing with each other in the Netherlands.

Things have changed considerably over the last few years. There are twenty thousand Vietnamese citizens living in the Netherlands now. Increasing numbers of Dutch people are visiting Vietnam, for business as well as for pleasure. As a result, Dutch and Vietnamese are learning more about each other's countries. Whereas twenty or thirty years ago the Dutch picture of Vietnam was still determined by the war and related internal political preoccupations, in the last few years this association has gradually disappeared. Political relations between the countries have been normalised. The close relationship in the field of development cooperation that has existed for two decades now, already stands in need of revision. All this because of the spectacular economic development that Vietnam is going through at the moment. Over time this will certainly bring more changes to the nature of the relations between the two countries – but that is not what the present book is about.

In this collection of articles a number of Vietnamese and Dutch historians take different aspects from four centuries of Dutch-Vietnamese relations and give them a close examination. It is a first step in mapping the contours of a common past and in making this past accessible to a broad public.

### **Early contacts**

The first time that Dutch people came into contact with the inhabitants of the coastal area of what is now Vietnam was shortly after 1600, still before the foundation of the VOC in 1602. However, what happened then is no cause for celebration. While looking for fresh water in a bay, the crew of two Dutch ships were attacked and 23 sailors were murdered. In spite of this loss the ships continued to the international port of Hoi An, or Faifo as the town is called in Western texts. At first it seemed the Dutch were going to be successful in concluding trade agreements with the local rulers of the Nguyen dynasty, but rumours about an impending attack by the local authorities led the Dutch to beat a hasty retreat; they attacked and burnt a village on their way back to the sea. The first trading contacts between the VOC and the kingdom of Quinam would not come about until 1633.

The early trading contacts between the Netherlands and Vietnam in the 17th and early 18th centuries provide the subject matter for four chapters in this collection. The VOC ruled supreme in Asia in the 17th century, developing into an important link in the internal trading network between Japan, China and other coastal states, such as Siam, Cambodia and the two Vietnamese kingdoms on the Southeast Asian mainland. A variety of goods were exchanged to satisfy the hunger for profit in early capitalist Europe as much as possible. Unlike in the Indonesian archipelago, most other kingdoms turned out to be stable, cen-

tralised states whose rulers attached only limited importance to foreign trade. This did not make it easier for the VOC.

The key to success lay in Japan. In order to be able, first, to maintain themselves there, and then to keep trade contacts in the rest of Asia at a healthy level, the VOC was forced to exchange Chinese silk for silver in Japan. At first the VOC had to compete with Japanese merchants in the importation of silk, but over time the company achieved a monopoly. This was symbolised by the famous trading post on the artificial peninsula of Deshima, the result of Japan's decision to close the country to foreigners. As the VOC itself did not have access to China, it had to try and obtain silk elsewhere. Therefore Chinese merchants, who in turn had no access to Japan, brought silk – in addition to tea and chinaware – to ports in regions where the VOC did have access. Among these were the ports in Vietnam.

In Chapter 1 John Kleinen describes the troubles the VOC had in setting up trade with the 'southern' kingdom of the Nguyen rulers. Under the rudimentary international diplomacy of those days, friendly relations could easily turn into open hostilities with bloody violence. In Chapter 2, Hoang Anh Tuan draws the important conclusion that the relation between the VOC and Tonkin was all about trading silk for silver and cannons. In Chapters 3 and 4 two other Vietnamese historians, Nguyen Quang Ngoc and Nguyen Van Kim show how important it is to research the historical places in the north of Vietnam – where the Dutch trade activities took place – if we want to come to a more complete understanding of Vietnamese history.

After residing in Pho Hien (Hung Yen) for a couple of years, in the early 1640s the Dutch moved to the capital Thang Long, present-day Hanoi, where they traded until 1700. As a rule the offices were staffed by some ten VOC servants annually; one of these was Samuel Baron, who later became famous; he was the son of Hendrick Baron and an unknown Vietnamese woman. An estimated several hundred Company sailors have lived in Doméa, a small coastal town that was an anchoring place for foreign ships. Between Thang Long and Doméa the merchandise was transported in smaller boats. This transportation formed part of an extensive commercial network along the Tonkin river, which connected Thang Long, Tonkin's commercial hub, with the outside world. The fact that Dutch and other foreign merchants lived and traded there played an important role in the feudal society and economy of 17th century Tonkin. It gave a strong boost to the silk and ceramics industry, and increased interest in new information from outside Vietnam. An interesting note is the libertine behaviour of the Dutch as well as the Vietnamese, who did not seem to have any problem with Tonkinese or Japanese *liaisons dangereuses*. Only in 1663 did the court proclaim a ban on 'obscene relations between men and women'. The research done by Buch, on which Kleinen bases himself, does not bear out whether such relationships were also frequent in the south. It is clear, however, that the presence of the Dutch there was of a much less permanent character than in the North.

An important cause of the deterioration in the relations between the Dutch and Quinam was the the VOC's improved trade relation with Tonkin. As soon as relations with Tonkin intensified, Quinam's significance as a trade zone for the VOC automatically diminished. On the other hand, the relations between Batavia and Thang Long were a thorn in the side of the king in the south. By 1638 the Dutch Indies' and Vietnamese governments were at loggerheads. Three sea battles ensued, in which to the dismay of the Dutch the Vietnamese rulers showed a, albeit short-lived, supremacy. Relations were restored in 1651, but without much enthusiasm and only for a short spell. However, the VOC soon concluded that there was not much to be gained by further relations with Quinam. In the end the VOC opted for Tonkin; relations with this kingdom were to continue until the end of the 17th century.

### Interim

After this, half a century would pass before the VOC, albeit briefly, ventured on Vietnamese soil again. Later, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, relations were all but nonexistent. The war that was going on then between the north and the south of Vietnam ended with the Tay Son rebellion, named after the town from which three brothers from central Vietnam succeeded, by means of a sort of *Blitzkrieg*, in placing the country briefly under one central government. In 1802 a successful counter-campaign by the restored Nguyen dynasty consolidated this central government, and from that year on stability reigned. Although the Nguyens did not take a xenophobic stance towards the West, some of them did fear the undermining influence of the colonial powers. They screened off their kingdom as much as possible.

The article by Vietnamese historian Phan Huy Le (Chapter 5) is of great importance in this context. In it, he relates the visit to Batavia by his great-grandfather, Phan Huy Chú (1782-1849). That mission, undertaken on the order of emperor Minh Minh, was one of a total of 49 journeys to neighbouring countries that the court in Huế commissioned between 1802 and 1844. Phan Huy Chú, the perfect example of a recluse scholar, visited Batavia in 1833. Certainly in comparison with the Javanese, he found the 'red-haired' Dutch that he met there aggressive and big-boned, with their long front teeth that looked like 'dragon teeth, and their big noses and deep set eyes'. According to Chú, Batavia in those days was mainly the domain of Chinese and Europeans. Thanks to his Chinese contacts, the Vietnamese envoy was able to get an impression of the European rulers, whose writing system he called 'barbaric', used as he was to Chinese characters, and whose lack of hierarchy he thought cause for concern. Although he admired their technological achievements, Chú seemed little impressed by the Dutch imperial power in the archipelago. His contemporary

Cao Bao Quat would report to his imperial patron in a very different tone about the Dutch Indies after his return from Java. Of the thirteen reports that were made of visits to Java, those of Chú and Quat are the best known. A few years later the missions of the Vietnamese envoys were discontinued – and the colonial powers began to be interested in Vietnam in more direct but also more aggressive ways.

The interest that Napoleon III had in Southeast Asia was to develop into full-out colonial expansion. He considered colonial expansion a good way toward economic growth as well as a *mission civilisatrice*. Between 1860 and 1885 the peninsula of Indochina, which consisted of parts of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, came into the hands of ‘Paris’, and the exploitation of this colony in the Far East was ready to begin. The Netherlands quickly appointed a consul in Saigon in 1867, thinking that this would stimulate trade from the Dutch East Indies. Jody Leewes, who in Chapter 6 examines the successive Dutch consuls, subtly points out the unrealistic expectations that were cherished in The Hague and Batavia – completely in line with the 19th century tradition, for that matter – concerning the possibilities of trading with China via the Mekong and Red Rivers. As a result of the rapid population growth in Java, the rice that was exported to the Dutch Indies remained the only trade product of significance. For a short while kerosene looked like another successful product for lamp oil. APC, a joint venture of Shell and Royal Dutch Petroleum, imported kerosene to the French colony, but discontinued it when it proved too expensive for the local population. Around the turn of the century the French, with the purpose of protecting their own trade and industrial interests, introduced a system of heavy tariffs, which nipped the development of Dutch trade in the bud.

After almost 80 years, in 1946 the honorary Dutch consular representation in Saigon was transformed into a professional post. This decision was inspired by political considerations in the context of changes after the Second World War. The decolonization process in Asia got under way and the world came under the spell of the Cold War.

### **After the Second World War**

In Vietnam the pickets of the Cold War were arbitrarily planted on the 17th parallel. This meant that once again the country was divided in a northern and a southern part. After the ‘loss’ of China and part of Korea, now Vietnam was about to fall prey to international communism, and in American eyes it had to be contained. The American fear was expressed in the metaphor of the falling dominoes: if one country in Southeast Asia became communist, the neighbouring countries would automatically follow. That was the reason that the American presidents after Harry Truman (1945-1953) continued his policy of intervening, where necessary, in countries that were in danger of being taken over by the communists. The Netherlands

only played a modest role in the American policy in Vietnam, but it did maintain a diplomatic representation there.

The role of the Dutch embassy office in Saigon against the background of the Vietnam war is the subject of Chapter 7. In it, John Kleinen gives an outline of the Dutch diplomatic and international relations with a country that in 1976 would cease to exist. The year before that, its capital Saigon had been run underfoot by the troops from the north. The dramatic circumstances under which the city fell and, consequently, the Netherlands saw itself forced to close its diplomatic representation in the city, are highlighted by Ton van Zeeland in Chapter 8.

The way the war was reported in the Dutch media during these years is discussed by media historian Niek Pas in Chapter 9. According to Pas, in the fifties journalists tended too loyally to the government line, while in the sixties they changed to a more independent and critical attitude in their reporting. This was due not only to the rapidly changing media landscape and the socio-cultural and economic upheaval of the mid sixties, but also to the emancipation of television reporting in general. The visual media adapted themselves rapidly in the way they reported the Vietnam war, but this led to a situation where the journalists themselves took the role of politicians. It was the introduction of a new form of politically engaged left-wing journalism. The reports produced by the Dutch news and news analysis program *Brandpunt* were indisputably among the most striking expressions of this development.

This new journalistic attitude was instrumental in creating the dominant picture of Vietnam in the Netherlands: a country torn and destroyed by war. However, doubts about the American actions in Vietnam became increasingly linked with prejudice in favour of the North Vietnamese government. Originally the group of people holding this view was a minority. In Chapter 10 Rimko van der Maar strikingly illustrates how first the American intervention was widely supported in the Netherlands out of fear of a supposed advance of (Chinese) communism and the conviction that only the United States was able to stop this advance. It was not until the late sixties that uncertainty slowly began to get the upper hand. This was caused mainly by the hopelessness of the fighting and the continuous media attention for the bombings on North Vietnam, but also by the growth of a social climate in which voicing political protest became more accepted. The sudden wave of protests around Christmas 1972 illustrated the turn-about: anti-American feelings were expressed mainly in indirect ways by supporting the North Vietnamese population. As a result of the international political *détente* and the gradual withdrawal of the American troops from South Vietnam, North Vietnam was no longer seen as a dangerous communist bastion with China hiding behind it, but as a poor third-world country that was about to succumb to American violence.

From the late seventies onwards this idea became less obvious, as thousands of Vietnamese refugees started to arrive in the Netherlands. Were they given such a hospitable welcome because of guilt feelings in the Netherlands? When confronted with images of desperate refugees who looked like they were perishing on the open sea, many Dutch felt a certain amount of shame when thinking back to the years that, out of solidarity, they had turned a blind eye to what the North Vietnamese government was doing. So in the long run the Dutch Vietnam movement lost its influence on Dutch politics. Therefore, the traditionally pro-Atlantic foreign policy of the Netherlands hardly changed during the seventies and eighties, even though individual ministers had certainly shown empathy for the feelings of discontent regarding Vietnam among the Dutch population. In the words of historian Maarten Kuitenbrouwer: the Netherlands changed from a faithful to a regular ally of the United States. The 'discovery of the Third World' led to active Dutch support for Vietnam. With the fulfilment of the promise to give developmental aid, the relationship with the opponent of the United States became normalised in a certain way.

In Chapter 11 Duco Hellema traces how during this process the image of Vietnam was slowly turning upside down. After a euphoric kick-off, relations with Hanoi quickly froze on account of the severe economic and political measures with which the southern population was confronted and also on account of the invasion of Pol Pot's Cambodia, which had been condemned by the Netherlands. What followed was a phase of distrust and distance, even leading to the decision to close the Dutch embassy in Hanoi. Between 1988 and 1992 the Belgian embassy in Hanoi stood in for the Netherlands.

In the early nineties relations were restored; Vietnam became a 'donor darling'. The Netherlands increased aid on a grand scale and even boasted one of the largest embassy departments in the region. The Royal Family too showed interest, by means of visits by Prince Claus and, later, his son, crown prince Willem-Alexander. By now also many Vietnamese Dutch have returned to the land they left under such miserable circumstances after 1975 – although they often return as tourists or as employees of Dutch companies. Dutch educational institutions have trained more than 1500 Vietnamese academics who sooner or later will find their place in government jobs or in the private sector.

As was mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, it is inevitable that over time, relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam will enter a new phase again. This book deals in the first place with relations as they were in the past and therefore does not pretend to be a blueprint for future relations. But hopefully it does inspire reflections on the future. In this respect the book may even serve as an example: it would never have come to be without the cordial cooperation of many Dutch and Vietnamese individuals. We owe thanks to former Dutch diplomats such as Jan Herman van Roijen, Jan Zaadhof, Frans van Dongen and Charles Rutten, and

to their ex-colleague from Belgium, Piet Steel. All of them have shared their experiences in Vietnam with us. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the friendly assistance from Hans den Hollander, head of the archives study room, was of vital importance. In Vietnam, professor Phan Huy Le showed unparalleled enthusiasm about the project. As the president of the Association of Vietnamese Historians he opened doors for us that otherwise would have remained closed for a long time. A central role in the realization of this book was played by the Dutch Consulate-general in Ho Chi Minh City. Consul-general Ton van Zeeland took the initiative and without his tireless efforts the project would not have existed. Margriet Kruse and Janneke Dufourquet showed themselves to be energetic and faithful editorial assistants. Jelle Gaemers excelled in editing the images. Sytske van Turenhout was an accurate assistant in the archival research. Jos Meijer, Ngo Lam, Dao Mai Trang, Cao Xuan Tu, Anya Burghes-White and Koos Kuiper provided translations in several languages. The editors thank them all very much for their work. We would like to ask those whom we have forgotten to thank here, not to hold it against us. They were involved in a unique project and have contributed to a way of cooperation between two countries that deserves to be a modern day example – a cooperation on an equal basis with mutual understanding for each other's points of view. A last note on the way Vietnamese names and terms are spelled: Due to technical reasons, the editors decided to abstain from the use of diacritical (tonal) marks on Vietnamese terms and names. A Vietnamese version, published by The Gioi in Hanoi, will provide the interested reader with the correct spelling of the Vietnamese language.

*John Kleinen*

*Bert van der Zwan*



# 1

## About former friends and feigned foes Dutch relations with ‘Quinam’ in the 17th century<sup>1</sup>

*John Kleinen*

The Vietnam of the 17th and 18th century that the Dutch encountered was similar only geographically to the country as we know it today. Although the population was probably as heterogeneous as it is nowadays, migrations were the striking feature in those days. Natural disasters brought about a somewhat regular exodus of the population of the fertile Red River delta to the deltas on the southern coast. There lay the Hindu kingdom of Champa, which eventually came under the influence of the Vietnamese from the north, at first by military force, as in 1471, and later less insidiously through a clever strategy of marriage with the reigning rulers. That was the work of the Le kings who in 1428 had founded Dai Viet (Great Viet[nam]) in the Red River delta. Population growth impelled them to look for places to settle in the peninsula's southern river deltas. Around 1530, northern Vietnam was the scene of a civil war that, intermittently, was to last for a century and a half. It was triggered by the coup of an army leader, Mac Dang Dung, in 1527, who occupied Thang Long and proclaimed himself sovereign. Supporters of the Le kings rallied around two individuals: the military mandarin Nguyen Kim and his son-in-law, Trinh Kiem. They represented two feudal family clans that remained loyal to the Le kings. Nguyen Kim was murdered in circumstances which are unclear, at the instigation of the Macs. The other families then continued their fight against the Macs, but they too began feuding among themselves. Thereupon Nguyen Kim's son Nguyen Hoang fled to Quang Nam with his followers, which he had earlier taken from Champa. Based in Phu Xuan (lit. 'the Land of Rich Springtime'), on the site of present-day Hue, he actively supported the Trinh's attempts to dethrone the Macs. This was achieved in 1592, with the conquest of Hanoi. The supporters of the Mac dynasty fled to Cao Bang on the Chinese border from where, with support from China, they tried to carry on the fight against Dai Viet until 1677. The Trinh clan for their part turned out to be unhappy with the independence of the Nguyens in the south.



Around 1600, under circumstances that still have not been elucidated, Nguyen Hoang broke with them. He gave himself the title of *Vuong* (viceroy of the (Le) king, who was referred to as *Vua*). His successors named themselves 'lord' (*chua*) like their rivals in the north. After his death in 1613, the area that Nguyen Hoang had ruled was given the name of Dang Trong, i.e. the Inner Region. Until deep into the 18th century the Nguyen would expand this region southward. The so-called Outer Region or Dang Ngoai, which foreigners called Tongking and that had Thang Long, present day Hanoi, as its capital, was the domain of the Trinh. From Quang Nam one of Nguyen Hoang's sons, Nguyen Phuoc Nguyen, carried on his father's opposition against the Trinh family in the north. This led to a formal breach in 1620, when he refused to pay tribute any longer. After another scion of the Trinh family ascended to the throne some years later, an armed conflict broke out in 1627. In order to put an end to the regular attacks from the north, the Nguyen ruler built a Vietnamese version of Hadrian's Wall near Dong Hoi on the other side of the Gianh River between the 18th and the 17th parallel. He fortified it with military camps and stationed 2,000 soldiers there.<sup>2</sup> This turned out to be to the Nguyens' advantage because the relatively close proximity to the wall enabled them to keep their supply lines short, and also because they set up trade relations with foreign powers, first the Portuguese and later the Dutch.

The Portuguese called the Inner Region Cochinchina, from the Malay term *Kuchi*, the Cochin of China, which in turn was a corruption of the old Chinese term *Jiao zhi* or *Gao zhi*. The Dutch later turned it into 'Coetsjientsjina'. However, they first preferred the name Quinam, a corruption of Quang Nam Quoc, the kingdom of Quang Nam. This was the 'Quinam' with which the VOC maintained its first contacts. Its harbour town, Hoi An, which the Portuguese called Faifo (presumably Hai Pho, 'town by the sea'), was a 'neutral' enclave for Chinese and Japanese merchants in the 16th century, where they were able to trade Chinese silk for silver without being obstructed.

### Dai Viet

Already in the 15th century the undivided kingdom of Dai Viet was known for its production of raw silk and woven fabrics. Japanese merchants from the Ryuku islands acted as middlemen in the trade system between the states on the coast of the South China Sea. They played a prominent role in the supply of raw materials for the weaving industry. In the course of the 16th and 17th centuries the Chinese, the Cham and 'merchants of all kingdoms', and thus also the Dutch, took over this trade (Ishii 1971).<sup>3</sup> The position and significance of Dang Trong have been greatly underexposed in the modern historiography of Vietnam. This is partly due to the one-sided view of the northern nationalist-communist historians. They considered the history of the Red River delta heartland as the only determinant in the birth and development of a presumed early nation state. Likewise, the fact that the seceded part of Dai Viet ori-

entated itself more strongly than the north toward foreign trade is not a popular theme with many historians of this kind. It reminds them too much of the later Nguyen kings, who in the 19th century enabled foreign powers once more to exercise influence on developments inside the country. In their eyes, this had the dramatic consequence of Vietnam losing its independence. For some time now, however, new research has drastically corrected this idea.<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Buch was not aware of these sensibilities when in 1929 he wrote his doctoral thesis (see box). Also, because of his sources he only had eyes for the VOC's brief flirtation with the south of Vietnam. Now, as parts of his work are coming out in translation, he is unwittingly contributing to the revision of a cherished but unclear picture of a region that, by virtue of its history, was much more dynamic than has been supposed so far.

### Wilhelm Buch

Wilhelm Jozef Maria Buch (1895-1975) obtained his Ph.D. on March 19, 1929, under the Amsterdam historian Hajo Brugmans (1868-1939), with a dissertation titled 'De Oost-Indische Compagnie en Quinam: de betrekkingen der Nederlanders met Annam in de XVIIe eeuw' (The Dutch East India Company and Quinam: Dutch relations with Annam in the 17th century). It was the first complete publication devoted to relations with the southern part of Vietnam. After his promotion Buch worked at the National Archives (Algemeen Rijksarchief) in The Hague, where he was responsible for the remaining archives of the High Government in Batavia, and which had been sent to the Netherlands in 1862. In 1936 an Inventory was drawn up of the documents of the former Dutch possessions in the Dutch East Indies 1703-1826, which can still be consulted in the National Archives in The Hague. In 1935 the *École Française d'Extrême Orient* invited him to make a summary of his dissertation. It appeared in two parts in 1937 and 1938. This French-language summary hardly differed from the original dissertation. Buch, however, became acquainted with the French colonial sources on Vietnam and obtained documents from Hanoi. This enabled him to add new details but it also made him follow persistent errors of French historiography of the time. Publication in an influential French review brought him international attention, and his dissertation was reviewed in foreign magazines. Little is known about his further career. In 1934 he published the diaries of a priest-poet from Tilburg, Antonius van Gils, from the period 1797-1801. In the 1950s Buch started a law study, which enabled him to work as an assistant-registrar at the Court of The Hague. He died in Rotterdam on January 2 1975. Vietnam remained a closed chapter in his life.

John Kleinen

## Early contacts<sup>5</sup>

The first Dutch contact with Vietnam dates back to the years prior to the establishment of the VOC in 1602. In 1601 Captain Jacob Cornelisz. van Neck, on his way from China to Patani with six ships, landed near 'a pretty bay' on the east coast of Vietnam, looking for drinking water. 'Because of their shyness' he was not able to see the inhabitants of what was presumably the kingdom of Champa. Two other ships under the command of vice-admiral Gaspar van Groensbergen on their way from Ternate to China were attacked off the same coast and 23 crewmembers were killed. Van Groensbergen was taken prisoner but managed to buy his freedom in exchange for two cannons. Sailing further northwards, merchant Jeronimus Wonderaer and his second merchant Albert Corneliszoon Ruyl went on land to conclude trade agreements with the Nguyen ruler in what was called the royal residence of Thachem (a corruption of Dai Chiem, the older name of present-day Hoi An). There they encountered Portuguese who were engaged in trading. They were offered lodging by a local merchant, who was acting on behalf of the king. Two elderly female interpreters, representing the king, introduced Wonderaer to Nguyen Hoang, who promised to punish any aggression against the Dutch. He also pledged all possible help with the commercial negotiations.

The king received Wonderaer and Ruyl cordially, in the residence at Sinoa, north of Hoi An, but the visit yielded nothing concrete apart from an exchange of curious commentaries on each other's beliefs and customs, such as eating with chopsticks. For five months they tried, be it with very little success, to buy pepper and silk. The business journey ended abruptly when Van Groensbergen got wind of a new assault and managed to escape with his ship, after first having assaulted and plundered a village.<sup>6</sup>

With the establishment of the trading post at Hirado in Japan in 1609, the VOC began to be interested in silk from China and Vietnam. Chinese silk was the best and therefore the most expensive. However, it was difficult for European traders to get access to the empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Hundreds of Japanese ships sailed to South-east Asia and also to Vietnam under the system of the Red Seal permits (*shuinjo*); raw silk, animal skins and ceramics were the major export products. As there was no direct access to China, in 1613 the head of the Hirado lodge, Hendrik Brouwer, sent his compatriots Cornelis Claesz. van Toorenburgh and Adriaen Cornelisz to the coast of Vietnam to establish contact with the local king. Just before their arrival in Hoi An there had been an incident involving an English merchant, who had been put to death after making a disparaging remark about the king. His merchandise was seized. The Vietnamese, although well aware of the difference between Englishmen and Dutchmen, also directed their aggression against Van Toorenburgh and a

Japanese colleague who was travelling with him. The Company's possessions were also seized. Cornelisz. survived the slaughter and was allowed to return to Japan. Bickering over the strategy to be followed led to delay, however. In spite of new signals from the Vietnamese ruler that he was willing to trade, it would be years before Dutch ships landed in Vietnam again.

### Troubled trade (1633 to 1635)<sup>7</sup>

The third time that the VOC came into contact with Hoi An was in 1632. In that year a captured Portuguese coaster (galliot) foundered on the South Vietnamese coast. It had been captured by the fluitschip *Warmond*, which was on its way to Taiwan, commissioned by independent citizens of Batavia, who were not in the service of the VOC (free citizens) in Batavia. In a storm the two ships lost each other and the galliot foundered. At first the Dutch were given friendly treatment, but then they were arrested and, with the confiscated goods, taken to King Nguyen Phuc Nguyen (1613-1635), the son of king Nguyen Hoang. The ruler threatened to extradite the Dutch to his rival in Cambodia. A Chinese trader, however, proposed letting them go to Batavia on his junk, with an invitation to the Governor-General to trade with 'Quinam'. On May 3, 1633, this ship arrived at Batavia. The Governor-General and the Council of the Indies (the Hoge Regering) turned out to be interested in trading in the Inner Region, as products for the Japan trade could be shipped in from there, e.g. silk, sandalwood, cloves, nuts, lead and gold. Moreover, the presence of merchants from China and Japan, and also from the rest of Southeast Asia, made Hoi An an attractive trading place. Chief merchant Paulus Traudenius and Commissioner François Caron, who had started his career for the VOC in Japan working as a galley boy, received instructions to go to Quinam and to buy all the gold and yellow silk they could, but also to demand restitution for the damages suffered in 1613 and 1632. Next, Caron was to join a fleet of six ships that would sail to China under the command of Governor Putmans. After arriving in the bay of Da Nang (called Toeron by the Dutch), they were visited by the head of the Japanese colony, a certain Domingos, and by some mandarins accompanied by a Chinese interpreter. Caron, who spoke Japanese, discovered that most of the silk and the gold had already been bought up by the Japanese. The harbourmaster, referred to as 'Onkadoy, High Lord of the Beach<sup>8</sup>', offered to take the presents and accompanying letters to the king himself. Ten days later, the ruler let the Dutch know that he was happy with their arrival. He authorised them to do business and even to build a trading post. In exchange for copper *senes* (round Japanese coins that were used as cash), coarse ceramics and iron pots, he hoped to supply gold and silk on a future occasion. For that reason, Jan Gommersbach, a second merchant who spoke Portuguese, and assistant Daniël Reiniersen remained behind in Hoi An.





Letter from 'the representative of the country of Annam' to J.P. Coen. The red seal is the 'Stamp of the general' (Tran Thu Tuong Quan), presumably a brother of the king. Next to the red seal are two images in black ink, representing the Chinese character *thu* (missive) and an undisclosed sign that could refer to the author of the letter, respectively.

*'Missive from the envoy of the country of Annam to His Excellency Captain Moor. The moon and the sun move across the skies, and although the years are counted in different ways, the seasons are the same; the north and the south are separate and although the languages are different, the feelings of justice are equal. If we look back through the ages, considering the rulers of the days of yore, we find that all of them considered it their duty to maintain contacts with the countries around them. For this reason the vassals have submitted to them, and ten thousand generations have looked up in awe to their sublimity, and with good reason indeed. [I], a mere human being, have respectfully accepted [the mandate of] the Heavens, have carried on the civilization, and have ascended to the throne. In the past I have admired the high morals of your honourable country, and therefore sent envoys to set up negotiations. However, the goose [symbol of bringer of messages] has flown to the edge of the clouds, and messages have been few and far between. This may have been because the times and questions were different, or because the sea was too wide and the darkness too deep. For the present letter I make use of envoys to inconvenience Your Honour once again. My hope is that when reading the lines of this simple letter, you will sing a song of flourishing times and of prosperity, and will presently send forth ships, in order to jointly conclude a treaty of opulent growth, thereby developing the worthy interests of the two countries and creating splendid prospects for this moment. In addition to this, I add wondrous fragrances from the south [i.e. eaglewood] and a lance and pike, two things that are not enough to consolidate the friendship, and that for the moment are only suitable for use by [a leader who is to his people as] a shield and a fortress, and to spread pleasing fragrances in the outlying districts. Respectfully written on the 21st day of the first month of the 8th year of Vinh To [February 25 1626].'* (translation Koos Kuiper)

The sender of this letter, the unnamed 'representative of the country of Annam' [An Nam quoc Su Quan], is difficult to identify. In 1614 a son of Nguyen Phuc Nguyen became the military commander of the central region Quang Nam, the heartland of the kingdom. In 1626 the king transferred his government affairs to one of his younger brothers, Ton That Khe, who thereby acquired the title of 'General of Defence' (Thuong Quan Cong). Consequently, both the son Ky, who died in 1631, and the brother, Khe, could be the sender of this letter. The Dutch inconsistently referred to 'the crown prince of Annam', but it is out of the question that it was written by Nguyen Phuc Lan, as he did not obtain this title until 1631. Remarkable is the fact that the dynastic year of the Le-emperors (Vinh To) has been chosen for the date. Coen's answer (Coen was 'Captain Moor', from the Portuguese *mor*, i.e. *maior*) to this missive was friendly but negative. Not until 1633 was a new missive sent, which led to more stable relations with Quinam.

John Kleinen

On July 15, 1633, one of the ships left to join Putmans' fleet, which was anchored off Qui Nhon. The other ship went to the east of Hai Nan. However, trade with Vietnam was felt to be quite disappointing. The merchants had not been granted access to the king. Somewhat injured they drew up a list with the exact volume and cost of the presents. There had been no restitution of the goods confiscated in 1632, nor had the losses incurred in 1613 been made good. The merchandise they had brought to Hoi An had been sold at a loss because the king had forced them to trade part of it at cost. Nevertheless, Quinam produced yellow silk, iron and gold of various qualities that was attractive to the VOC as a means of exchange with certain trading posts in India. From Batavia the Dutch brought lead, pepper for the Chinese who traded there, raw pearls, many-coloured silk cloths and other multicoloured fabrics, cotton printed with varied patterns from Coromandel, and for the Japanese camphor from Borneo and woollen and lightly twilled woollen fabrics from Europe. The Chinese traded raw white silk and porcelain for red copper and *senes* from Japan.

Because of this, Batavia decided to resume trade with Quinam after all, but out of Taiwan, because in the second half of the year the north monsoon winds favoured this type of operation. The fact that in 1633 there were new hostilities between the two parts of the Dai Viet kingdom was no impediment to trade. A drawback was, however, that the VOC was troubled by pirates in the waters south of China. Since 1621 the VOC had been making efforts to fight them, but also to involve them in its attempts to force China to free trade. On the principle that it takes a thief to catch a thief, Governor Putmans had the pirate 'Janlauw' (Lin Xiang) tracked down to pull him into an alliance. The pirate was supposed to have a great influence on other pirates' alliances, which were ubiquitous in the area. When nothing came of it, the Council of Taiwan decided, in October 1633, to temporarily cease hostilities and to send two ships to Hoi An. On the way they ran into heavy storms. One of the ships, the *Zeeburg*, arrived undamaged, but the other one washed ashore as a wreck, south of Da Nang, although the crew was unhurt. Five days earlier another Dutch ship had washed ashore and been confiscated by the Vietnamese authorities. A ship coming from Vietnam took over the trading capital of a ship that had been driven off course and that had been involved in the hunt for pirates, and took it to Hoi An in a fishing boat. After a fourth ship anchored at Da Nang, in January 1634, with a Japanese cargo of 172 chests of copper *senes* and 4 kilograms of 'silver ships' [*schuitgeld*] with a value of 1,500 guilders, trade with Vietnam seemed propitious.<sup>9</sup> Among them, these ships carried a total trading capital worth almost 200,000 guilders. Nevertheless the Dutch met with great opposition from Japanese merchants, who exercised a strong influence on the Vietnamese court. Trade did not go well and, disappointed, the Dutch had to take back to Batavia more than half the amount that they had brought. From the reports of chief merchants Abraham Duijcker and Adriaan

van Liesvelt, who were in charge of this trade mission, a very pessimistic image emerged: the VOC had better forget about this country, especially now that Chinese merchants had appeared in Taiwan with big junks.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Duijcker returned to Quinam twice more that year to negotiate with the Nguyen king about claims for damages and the possibilities of doing business. It was not until 1636 that his efforts would begin to bear some fruit.<sup>11</sup>

#### Trade relations from 1636 to 1638<sup>12</sup>

A series of edicts from the Tokugawa Shogunate banned Japanese ships from sailing outside Japan. For the VOC this was a great opportunity, and they used it, among other things, to take over the Japanese trade contacts with Dai Viet. Abraham Duijcker appeared in Hoi An with a small war fleet under Adriaan Anthoniszoon. Apparently the threat created by this naval power was effective, for he was given a most cordial reception. On that occasion he learned that the old King Nguyen had passed away, and that a violent and bloody succession struggle had ensued. Meanwhile, a new ruler had taken power in Hue, Nguyen Phuc Lan (1635-1648), who was governing under the title of Cong Thuong Vuong. There, Duijcker was shown a number of guns, 18 of which had come from one of the ships stranded in 1633. Subsequently there ensued a diplomatic sparring match between the Dutch and the new ruler concerning the damages, in which the latter made it clear that he would only negotiate directly with the Governor-General, as the Dutch king in the East Indies, and not with his subordinates. King Nguyen Phuc Lan confirmed reception of the emissaries and offered restitution of two of the eighteen cannons. In spite of all kinds of threats he did not want to hear about paying damages. Had not all this unpleasantness happened during the reign of his father? But he had ordered the Harbour Master who had served under his father to execute him for embezzlement and as punishment for what he had done against the foreigners. Nevertheless, the ruler offered exemption from anchorage fees, gave presents and authorised free trade. Business looked promising. The local Portuguese did not pose a threat. The Japanese cut their losses and went home now that the Dutch were the only ones still allowed to trade with Japan.

Back in Taiwan Duijcker again reported to his superiors in Batavia about the situation in Dang Trong. His main conclusion was now that the country must not be given up, because the raw silk trade had started to pick up somewhat again. Moreover, the 'southerners' seemed to be winning their war against the northern Outer Region. This presented the VOC with opportunities to do business in both parts of the country. Still, Duijcker's report to Batavia led to fierce criticism of his policy. What hurt most was the unresolved matter of the damages. The head of the establishment at Hirado, Nicolaes Couckebacker, received orders to put things

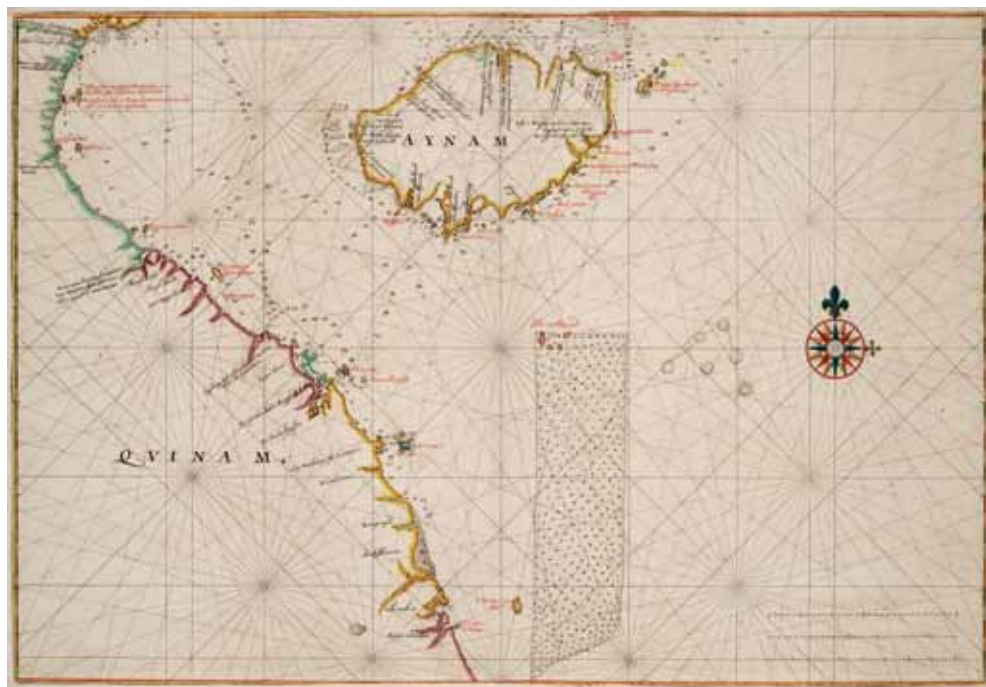


right. But his journey in the course of 1636 did not yield better results than the ones Duijcker had given in his report and in his reply to the criticism from the High Government. The king of Quinam had subtly informed the 'king of Jacatra', as Van Diemen was called, that if he preferred to trade with the Tonkinese, he had better know that 'then he was dealing with the *'Chua'* (ruler or lord) Trinh Trang, not with the *'Vua'* (king or emperor) from the Le dynasty. The Dutch mistakenly consider this person to be a great king'.<sup>13</sup>

On January 18, 1637, Duijcker left Taiwan for Vietnam once again. The king received him cordially and the prospects for a resumption of trade looked favourable. Meanwhile in Taiwan, Carel Hartsinck had received orders to 'send the ship *Grol* (...) to Toncquyn to incorporate the profitable trade into the General Company as well'.<sup>14</sup> After a month of waiting and negotiating, Hartsinck and his assistant Romeyn were allowed an audience with king Trinh Trang (1623-1652) in Hanoi. The reception was very cordial and, following traditional custom, Hartsinck was even adopted by the king. The latter showed that he was well informed of the VOC's activities in the south. Hartsinck argued that the VOC was not after expansion but it was only interested in trade. The issue of the claim for damages from Quinam and a possible alliance against that country was also raised. Trinh Trang spoke about the Quinam people as follows: '[...] Their hearts are full of wiles, because they are like the beasts of the earth. They love and trust each other in unusual ways and do not obey me.'<sup>15</sup> The king's request to send three ships and 200 cannoneers to teach the population in the south of Vietnam a lesson was diplomatically parried by Hartsinck: he passed the request on to his superiors in Batavia. The VOC feared it would not be able to remain neutral any longer, as Trinh Trang had used VOC guns for his attacks on the wall of Dong Hoi.

Meanwhile, on April 28, 1637, Duijcker had arrived at Batavia, where he informed the Governor-General in great detail of what had happened in Quinam. He proposed to make it impossible for the Portuguese to come into Vietnam. He also proposed to establish a second merchant in Senua (Hue) to buy silk from Tonkinese traders while at the same time maintaining contacts with the ruler and his courtiers. His expectations of trade were running high now. On the basis of his observations in Vietnam, he expected that the merchant, who had been left in Hoi An, Cornelis Caesar, would have great quantities of silk and brown sugar in stock. With this optimistic report he convinced his superiors this time. They decided to establish a permanent trading office.

On his return to Hoi An, Duijcker found out that two-thirds of the promised (raw) silk had not been sold to the VOC but to Chinese traders. The king of Tonkin had prohibited the export of silk, while the local production had turned out bad because of floods. Nevertheless, Duijcker was received cordially at the court, although no discussion ensued about how trade could be conducted. That was left



The coast of 'Quinam' or Dang Trong, south of Hainan. The map is made by Johannes Vingboons (1665).

to the Harbour Master. Duijcker did use the opportunity to complain about a decree that great quantities of *senes* would be demanded from each shipload, of which the ruler would establish the price and which he would pay for in raw silk and silk fabric. Duijcker asked for restitution and also asked for permission for free trade and for the export of timber for shipbuilding. The request for restitution was denied. Couldn't the Dutch just conform to local custom? Moreover, they had already been granted exemption from anchoring fees. The king did grant the right to cut trees and to export wood.

These setbacks tipped the scales in Batavia and it was decided to give up the office in Quinam. Tonkin was going to be the centre of the VOC trade now. In a general missive dated December 22, 1638, the Council of the East Indies pointed out the danger that the employees of the Company would run if relations with Quinam were to be continued. Moreover, the extortions and the scarcity of silk and silk products were seen as great disadvantages, at a moment when trade with Dang Ngoai seemed to promise only advantages. In 1638, 25,000 guilders had been lost in Quinam; in the accounting books at Batavia this was added to the damage caused by the losses of other ships. Duijcker himself received instructions to go to Thang Long to sound out the king about forming an alliance against Dang Trong, which in the language of those days was to last 'as long as the sun shines and the

moon shall give her light.’<sup>16</sup> He was strongly urged though to add that VOC trade policy did not allow for turning ‘former friends into enemies’.<sup>17</sup> After having set out from Hanoi for Taiwan, a storm forced him to return. Back in Hanoi, the Portuguese spread a rumour that he had supplied Dang Trong with rice. The Tonkinese seized his ship and its cargo and took the chief merchant prisoner. Duijcker was not released until March 1, 1639, but his health was broken. He died on March 11, 1639.

### **Trade with the North and War with the South (1639-1644)<sup>18</sup>**

Breaking off business relations meant the end of contacts with Quinam: the name no longer appears in the Company’s official correspondence at first. The year 1639 saw a rapprochement between the VOC and Trinh Trang. The latter sent an ambassador to Batavia to conclude a ‘Batavian-Tonkinese’ alliance, which, however, did not get off the ground. The ambassador sailed back to Thang Long together with Nicolaes Couckebacker. Governor-General Anthonie van Diemen had given Couckebacker *carte blanche* to negotiate with the king about possible VOC support in his war with Dang Trong. After Couckebacker’s arrival it was decided to supply, over time, four ships instead of the three that Trinh Trang had asked for. No agreement was reached, however, on the financial compensation that the VOC demanded in exchange for the assistance. After Trinh Trang had repeated, and even stepped up, his request for help, he nevertheless offered a number of trade freedoms. In the eyes of the Dutch the North Vietnamese king was playing for high stakes. What he really wanted was to have the war against his rival in Hue fought completely by his new allies. With an eye for detail, Couckebacker elaborated on Trinh Trang’s weak position, on the way in which the latter had acquired the throne from the Le dynasty, and on the discord on the part of the mandarin bureaucracy, whose family ties with the Nguyens were stronger than those with the Trins. The High Government agreed to support Trinh Trang in exchange for his promise to reopen trade. It would go into action as soon as it received word that Trinh Trang’s army was ready to join with the Dutch forces. Should Quinam submit, out of fear of the ‘Tonkinese-Batavian armed forces’, the king was supposed to take care of the VOC’s claims on that country.

Although Trinh Trang did reply to this letter, he did not mention cooperation anymore. A year later Anthonie van Diemen suggested that he had the impression that the southerners were not to be deterred by a Dutch-Tonkinese alliance and were preparing for war. Batavia was hoping for favourable news: Van Diemen said he wished that the alliance and the friendly relations between Dang Ngoai and Batavia ‘would last for thousands of years’. On May 15, 1641, Carel Hartsinck, who had now



Antonie van Diemen, Governor-General of Batavia from 1636-1645.

been promoted to chief merchant, left for Hanoi. The offer of support was received favourably by Trinh Trang, and he promised to send an ambassador to Batavia again.

But a shipwreck of two Dutch ships off Hoi An on November 26, 1641, gave things an unexpected turn that made the Dutch decide to accelerate the agreement with Dong Ngoai. Although the new ruler Nguyen Phuc Lan had given orders to provide the 82 survivors lodging in the Japanese quarter in Hoi An, the Dutch feared that he would use them as hostages. Moreover, the cargoes and 18 cannons of the stranded ships had been seized. The VOC calculated in her Daily Log [*Daghregister*] that this shipwreck had resulted in a loss of 455,736 guilders.<sup>19</sup>

#### Escalation and war (1642-1644)

Travelling from Taiwan, merchant Jacob van Liesvelt had arrived in Thang Long. Trinh Trang promised him that he would make good the damages suffered in

Quinam if the Government of the Dutch East Indies would help him against his rival in Hue. To that purpose, a combined Vietnamese-Dutch army and navy force had to meet at the river Gianh (which the Dutch called Poutsin after its estuary) on the border of Dang Ngoai and Dang Trong. On February 6, 1642, Van Liesvelt's ships appeared off Da Nang, with Trinh Trang's ambassador on board. According to a later interpretation, on this ambassador's request an attack had been launched on Vietnamese boats, and 120 people had been captured. Twenty of them, mainly elderly people, were returned. Through this, Van Liesvelt also learnt about the shipwreck and the imprisonment of the crew. He immediately made contact with his compatriots in Hoi An, with the result that the local mandarin (whom the Dutch insisted on calling 'prince', because he was a son of the king) sent 35 galleys to the bay to fight against the Dutch. On the request of this crown prince (later king Nguyen Phuc Tan), second merchant Isaac Davids went on land as a negotiator to discuss an exchange of prisoners. According to one version of the events, the Dutch had released their Vietnamese prisoners but, out of caution, had taken a mandarin and the Japanese interpreter Francisco hostage.<sup>20</sup> In response, the Vietnamese refused to release the Dutch prisoners. Nguyen Phuc Lan was offended about the presence of the Tonkinese ambassador on a VOC ship; the released prisoners had informed him of this. Although he was irritated with the Dutch, who did not know the customs of his country, such as showing hospitality to shipwrecked persons and lodging them, he pardoned them their behaviour but demanded that the 'northern' ambassador be handed over. The Dutch prisoners in Hoi An begged Van Liesvelt to comply with this wish, as they feared for their lives. Van Liesvelt was warned that 300 warships were at the ready, but he rejected the request. He felt he could not hand over the ambassador of a friendly nation. Nor did they want to send a new negotiator, as he would also be arrested. After this, Van Liesvelt continued his voyage to Batavia. In Hoi An, the Dutch prisoners decided to try to convince the king to set them free so they could mediate for him in Batavia. Phuc Lan responded by allowing fifty of them to leave. They left on April 1, 1642, but their voyage ended in disaster. On April 15, 1642 they were attacked by a junk with a Portuguese and Chinese crew. Eighteen castaways managed to save themselves on the coast of the neighbouring kingdom of Champa. Four died of exhaustion soon after. One survivor, corporal Juriaan de Roode, eventually made it to Batavia, where he told his superiors what had happened at Hoi An. Unaware of the fact that Phuc Lan had treated the survivors well, the Government of the Indies resolved to restore their damaged prestige. An armada of five ships with 152 sailors and 70 soldiers on board was sent to Quinam under Jan van Linga's command. Also on board were the two Vietnamese ambassadors, hostile to each other, and the Japanese interpreter Francisco, who later would prove his usefulness by entering into



Carel Hartsinck, chief merchant in Tonkin from 1637-1641.

direct contact with Phuc Lan. Thanks to him we also have an extensive report about Dang Trong, which Van Linga used for his punitive expedition.<sup>21</sup> On May 31, 1642, he attacked two villages in the Bay of Cambir, present-day Quang Ngai province, and took around 50 hostages. As strong opposition was expected from the Vietnamese side, they decided to employ a ruse. Two ships under the command of Van Liesvelt carried out a landing south of Hoi An with the aim of making contact with the Dutchmen. The operation failed. About 150 soldiers of the prince were waiting for them. They killed not only Van Liesvelt but also 23 crew members.

After this defeat Jan van Linga decided not to undertake any further landings. His fleet now took position in the bay of Da Nang. The Japanese interpreter, Francisco, was instructed to inform the crown prince that five ships were riding at anchor off Da Nang, and that they should be considered as the vanguard of a larger armada from Batavia. This was followed by a complicated political



exchange which made it clear to Van Linga that serious efforts had been made on the Vietnamese side to bring the conflict to a favourable conclusion. Although Van Linga knew that the king had released 50 Dutchmen, he rejected his request to liberate the ambassador on board his ship. That would have been a repetition of the game that had been played with Van Liesvelt, the Dutch reasoned. The interpreter Francisco even went to Hue to try to make the king change his mind. It was to no avail. After five days, 20 Vietnamese prisoners were executed. In reaction, the king threatened to put the Dutch prisoners out to sea in a barque, to kill them, and to send their corpses to the VOC ships. But this did not come to pass. The impasse led to heightened security around the 24 Dutch hostages.

Jan van Linga sailed his fleet to the mouth of the Gianh near Dong Hoi. In vain did he look for the Tonkinese forces. On June 24, 1642 he informed Trinh Trang of his disappointment and he expressed the hope to soon be able with his army to wage a 'just war' against his rival. Trinh Trang was now hoping to put the VOC under his command with the arrival of the northern monsoon. Van Linga refused and delivered six prisoners to the king. The others he took with him to Taiwan. During that voyage he drew up a strategic plan, which he presented to Governor Paulus Traudenius with his report of the expedition. However, after his arrival in August 1642, the VOC did not include him in military affairs on the Vietnamese coast anymore.

### **The naval battle of 1643**

In Taiwan it was resolved to send a new armada of five ships to the north of Vietnam, in order to join with a Vietnamese army in a military campaign against the 'evil Quinammer'.<sup>22</sup> These ships, too, waited in vain for the Tonkinese army. After some insisting, commander Johannes Lamotius (Jean Lamotte) obtained permission from Trinh Trang to sail on to Batavia, as the south monsoon was favourable. A yacht appropriately named '*Wakende Boeye*' ('the Vigilant Buoy') remained at the king's disposition with fifty gunners. In the gulf of Tonkin two ships had drifted away from the other two of Lamotius' fleet. As the monsoon was getting bad, they returned to Tonkin, to the king's great pleasure. This fact was not known in Batavia, however, and the Governor-General and the Council of the Indies still decided to send three ships to Tonkin, under the command of Pieter Baeck. Again, Baeck was supposed to join with Trinh Trang's army at the Gianh river. On July 7, 1643, however, this fleet was attacked by 50 to 60 armed galleys south of the river. There were many victims on both sides. The commander's ship, the *Wijdenes*, caught fire and exploded. Baeck and practically the whole crew perished.<sup>23</sup> Seven people were picked up from the sea by the Vietnamese and then beheaded. Two Dutch prisoners had been executed on land already after refusing

to submit to the Vietnamese king. Two ships barely managed to escape, but they suffered great losses, too. On the Vietnamese side 700 to 800 men allegedly perished. Afterwards the Naval Council of Baeck's fleet was blamed for the defeat because there had not been enough cannons on board and the enemy had been underestimated. The rest of the fleet was afraid and did not want to wait for the army of the Dang Ngoai ruler any longer. They continued on to the estuary of the Red River, where they anchored off the Island of Pearls. Thus they missed Lamotius' ships, which had also sailed southward in support of Trinh Trang, but did not come into action. On land, meanwhile, a 'northern' army of 100,000 had gathered. In an attempt to give his campaign extra status, Trinh Trang had even included the legitimate Le king Le Than Tong in his retinue. However, there was no joint action and the Vietnamese army turned around and marched back. One and a half centuries later the Nguyen kings still had this naval battle, which was so glorious for them, officially recorded in their own court chronicles. They added that the crown prince had not informed his father of the plan of attack. The enemy had fled in sight of the attackers. The general's ship had caught fire after shots were exchanged, and had sunk. After the king had seen the burning ship with his own eyes, he decided to wait for his son on the coast. After his fatherly reproach that he had taken too much risk, he praised him at length and returned to his palace in Hue.<sup>24</sup>

In Taiwan there was great discontent with the events. Nevertheless, the head of the factory at Hirado, Jan van Elserack, tried to save face by telling Trinh Trang that the battle had actually been won by the VOC. According to the Dutch, Trinh Trang had wanted to claim the victory but afterwards, in a letter to the Governor-General in Batavia, he complained about how little help the Dutch had given. He asked for 20 ships and 5000 soldiers. But, he added, he would not hold it against the VOC if they stopped the war. Should the VOC wish to continue trading, they could do so at a stiff price of import duties and a separate payment to himself, as the king, for the supply of silk.<sup>25</sup> Should these conditions prove to be a problem, they had better forget about trading, so no animosity would arise. The VOC management in Batavia wished to continue trading but did not see much point in supporting Trinh Trang against his southern rivals. After all, he would never compensate the VOC for the cost of the war. This was also Carel Hartsinck's opinion, who in Amsterdam reported to the Gentlemen XVII that 'the 'perfidious nation' of 'Tonking', if they ever were victorious over 'Quinam', would certainly not make good her promises to the Company and that the Company, therefore, had better leave the subjugation of Quinam to the Tonkinese themselves'.<sup>26</sup> In spite of this, in 1644 the Government of the Indies equipped yet another military expedition to avenge the loss of the *Wijdenes* and the ill-fated operations of its other ships. The idea was to restore prestige, liberate the prisoners in Hoi An and obtain compensation for damages.



This operation would also be directed against the monarch of Cambodia, who in 1643 had had chief merchants Pieter van Regemortes and Harmen Broeckmans and ten other Dutchmen killed.

In mid-June of 1644, a heavily armed fleet of five ships left for the South China Sea. They carried instructions to leave ships from Champa alone, as that country was at odds with Cambodia and Dang Trong. It did not come to a confrontation with Dang Trong, however, as no Vietnamese ships showed up. The fleet then sailed on to Taiwan. Under the command of Vietnamese general Ongsouma Ongadangh<sup>27</sup> an expeditionary army of 15,000 men and a great number of elephants and horses moved to the border with Dang Trong. According to a report by Van Broeckhorst, who was in Thang Long, king Trinh Trang complained about the 'cowardly Dutch', who had allowed his subjects 'to end up on the slaughtering block'.<sup>28</sup> This expedition, too, had little effect. Until 1648 all remained quiet between the two rivalling dynasties.

#### **Negotiations, peace treaty and the end of relations with the Nguyen state (1651-1652)<sup>29</sup>**

By now, trade with Tonkin well outweighed trade with Quinam. Nevertheless, worries persisted about the survivors of the shipwreck, who were still detained in Hoi An. Nineteen of them were still alive and there was reason to believe, on the basis of a letter that had arrived in Siam, that their situation was precarious. In July 1644, fourteen prisoners were still alive, among them two persons described as 'coloured', at least one of them being from Goa. The Dutch sources made no mention of the fate of the Vietnamese that the VOC had taken to Taiwan or other places. King Lan did complain about them to the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes, who visited Dang Trong in March, 1644. De Rhodes advised the king to release the Dutchmen, but the king refused because of his deported subjects. De Rhodes lent the detained Dutch sixty taëls worth in barges of silver; he did not want interest but he did ask for a receipt for 50 taëls, payable at Batavia.<sup>30</sup> In the years that followed, the friendly contacts between De Rhodes and some employees of the Company would lead to a church-related quarrel. The Dutch Governor of Malacca, Arnold de Vlamingh van Outshoorn (1608-1661), had to account for his friendship with the famous Jesuit all the way to Amsterdam. The Church Council at Batavia suspected him of adhering to the Catholic faith, and had the matter investigated as far back as the motherland. No evidence was found against De Vlamingh however, and the matter blew over. He would make history as the notorious 'pacifier' of the Moluccas.

An exchange of Dutch prisoners for Vietnamese foundered on the resistance of the Council at Batavia and François Caron, the Governor of Taiwan. Every now and

then, however, the Dutch prisoners received letters of consolation and money from François Caron and his successor. In 1645, six of them managed to escape to Champa, from where they sailed to Johor and Malacca on board a Chinese junk. In those days their fellow prisoners in Hoi An were hoping to be released, but that did not happen.

Meanwhile, hostilities between Quinam and Tonkin had flared up again. After some initial victories of the northern armies, the tide turned in favour of the court in Hue. Nguyen Phuc Tan, Nguyen Phong Lan's son, who had already successfully fought the naval battle against the Dutch in 1643, turned out to be an excellent land strategist as well. He defeated Trinh Thang's troops in 1644 and 1648 at Thuan Anh (Non Hai) north of Hue. After his victory he succeeded his deceased father (March 19, 1648). Tan (Hien Vuong to the Dutch), who was to reign until 1687, wanted peace with the VOC. He sent a letter of that tenor by way of the Chinese leader in Batavia. This resulted in the mission of Willem Verstegen, member extraordinaire of the Council for the Indies, to Dang Trong in 1651. He had himself accompanied by Hendrick Baron, who spoke Vietnamese fluently. In Dinghtlay, on the 17th parallel, 33 prisoners from Dang Trong were handed over, together with a great quantity of presents.<sup>31</sup> With Baron's help a peace treaty was drawn up. It consisted of ten articles and it regulated not only free trade but also a procedure for dealing with stranded ships.<sup>32</sup>

In Hoi An Hendrick Baron was put in charge of a new VOC office, together with second merchant Jan Houtman, and assisted by Pieter Backer, Jacob Driscordt, one of the survivors of the shipwreck of 1641, and a sailor who is not mentioned by name. The office was purchased from a Japanese merchant, who had had a stone house and two semi-underground storage rooms built there. It was surrounded by a garden with fruit trees.<sup>33</sup> When Verstegen wanted to leave on December 19, 1651, the Vietnamese tried to inspect his ship. The king had heard rumours that Verstegen had ambassadors from Dang Ngoai on board, who wanted to travel to Batavia. This suspicion was not completely unfounded, as in June, while on his way from Taiwan to Batavia, Verstegen had called at Thang Long, where he had put things in order. Verstegen's sudden departure led to the arrests of Baron and the four other Dutchmen of the factory. They were going to be beheaded in the market square in Hoi An. At the last moment, however, the king granted them pardon at the request of the Japanese harbour master 'Taffioyedonne' and the mandarin Ongsia (Ong Xia). They were allowed to sail to Batavia in a Chinese junk, with orders to inform the Governor-General that the treaty was still in force and that the 'Dutch Lodge' remained available. But the king did demand the right to inspect the crew of the ships from then on. The incident signalled the end of relations with Dang Trong. On January 18, 1652, Baron and the other officials of the Hoi An office departed for Batavia, where they arrived on February 2. Offended, the Government of the Indies

wrote an official letter to the head of the lodge in Tonkin, informing him that the Company had instructed its ships to do 'all possible damage to the Quinammers and to whoever visited their country'; the Company was only waiting 'until it had gathered an army large enough to resume war against the king of Quinam'. 'This (...) did not come to pass, but trade relations had been broken off (...) and would not be restored anymore'.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

Buch ends his book with some conclusions. In brief, the breaking off of trade relations between Batavia and Quinam was the result of a combination of factors: a lack of agreement on the international legal status of wrecked ships, and the different positions the Dutch and the Southern Vietnamese had vis-à-vis Tonkin. The VOC held the opinion that impounding stranded ships with the cargoes they carried was not part of the rights of the Vietnamese ruler. A much more important cause of the deteriorating relationship, however, was the fact that trade relations with Tonkin had improved. As soon as relations with the more important Tonkin had been established, Quinam's significance as a trade zone for the VOC diminished. On the other hand, the connections between Batavia and Thang Long were a great annoyance to the southern king.

The breaking off of relations in 1638 was the result of the way in which the governments of the Dutch Indies and the Vietnam kingdoms considered each other. When relations were resumed in 1651 it was without much enthusiasm. The Company concluded that there was not much profit to be drawn from a connection with Quinam. The outcome serves as evidence that the VOC was right in giving preference to Tonkin, and indeed relations with this kingdom continued until the end of the 17th century. Then, a hundred years went by before the VOC, albeit only briefly, would venture on Vietnamese soil again.

# 2

## The Dutch East India Company in Tonkin (1637-1700)<sup>1</sup>

Hoang Anh Tuan

*Now at the departure of this ship I am sending this letter to the King of Batavia, in order that he will be informed of my intention to pay for the commodities, which may be sent in the near future, together with a few pieces of large ordnance, in silk according to their value. I also request that one constable be sent to me to remain with me. I request the King of Batavia to aid me with this [i.e. sending the constable] to my satisfaction in order that we shall remain friends for ever for as long as the sun and the moon will shine.*

Letter of Chua Trinh Tac to Governor-General Joan Maetsuyker in 1670, in Dagh-register Batavia 1670, 205-206.<sup>2</sup>

The first Dutch-Vietnamese encounter ever recorded took place even before the foundation of the Dutch East India Company (*de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* – VOC). In 1601, two ships *Leiden* and *Haarlem* on their way to China called at the coast of the southern Vietnamese kingdom of Quinam (Dang Trong) where twenty-three Dutch sailors were killed by local people. However this bloody incident did not deter the Dutch from sending two merchants to Hoi An to negotiate the opening of trade. There, much to their surprise, not only were they given a friendly welcome but also were granted a licence to conduct business. Shortly afterwards a rumour spread that the Nguyen authorities were preparing a surprise attack on the Dutch. The Dutch merchants hurried back to their ships after having raided and burnt a village on their way to the sea. By then the southerly monsoon was over, the Dutch vessels did not pursue their voyage to China and instead returned to Patani. The first encounter between Holland and Quinam thus ended on a sour note.

In the early seventeenth century, the silk-for-silver trade was the mainstay of European commerce in East Asia. In order to obtain Japanese silver to run its intra-Asian trade, the VOC needed Chinese silk. Since it had no direct access to

mainland China, the Company had to procure Chinese yarn from third parties located in such disparate places as Hoi An and Manila. Nevertheless, the 1601 misadventure proved to be a formidable obstacle for the Dutch to make further inroads in trade relations with Quinam. In 1613, two merchants from the Dutch factory in Japan were sent to Hoi An; they too were attacked and murdered. In the next decade, the Dutch renewed their efforts to trade with the Nguyen domain but to no avail. A factory was finally set up at Hoi An in 1633 but was to close down five years later.

The VOC relations with the northern Vietnamese kingdom of Tonkin (Dang Ngoai) fared much better. Batavia turned its attention to Tonkin as the political and commercial landscape of East Asia underwent drastic changes in the mid-1630s. As the Tokugawa imposed the seclusion policy (*sakoku*), Japanese merchants had to abandon their trading network between Japan and South-East Asian ports. Shortly after the Japanese withdrew from the regional maritime trade route, the VOC took on the task of replacing their former competitors in exporting Tonkinese silk to Japan. At the same time, the Le/Trinh rulers in Thang Long (present-day Hanoi) were seeking military support from Western powers to gain extra influence in their protracted wars against their Nguyen rivals in Quinam. In 1637, the Dutch in Japan dispatched a ship to Tonkin to open trade relations with the Le/Trinh court. This relationship was to last until 1700. During sixty-four years of trading with northern Vietnam, the VOC imported into Tonkin mainly silver, copper coins, and military goods such as cannon, cannon balls and ammunitions in exchange for Vietnamese silk and silk piece-goods. The VOC-Tonkin relations witnessed many ups and downs, and in the main could be divided into five major periods.

### **Ideological struggles and belligerent decisions (1637-1643)**

The ultimate aim of the Le/Trinh rulers (the Le emperor reigned only in name but all powers lay in the hands of *Chua* (king) Trinh) was to form a military alliance with the VOC in their efforts to defeat their Nguyen rivals in Quinam. This was explicitly expressed by *Chua* Trinh Trang during his meetings with the Dutch Chief (*opperhoofd*) Carel Hartsinck in 1637. In order to persuade Batavia to enter into a 'thousand-year alliance' with Tonkin, *Chua* Trinh Trang and his son Crown Prince Trinh Tac regularly sent warm messages and presents to Governor-General Anthonie van Diemen in Batavia and to the Dutch Governors in Formosa (present-day Taiwan) and Japan. He even made the grand gesture of adopting Hartsinck as his own son. In 1639, *Chua* Trinh Trang sent his first ever ambassador to Batavia. Deeply impressed by the grandeur of the capital of the Dutch East Indies and by the sight of the mighty Dutch navy, the envoy gave a highly

favourable account of the Dutch presence in Batavia and urged the *Chua* to cement further friendly ties with the Company.

In Batavia, however, the High Government (*Hoge Regering*) was reluctant to get involved in the Tonkin-Quinam conflict. Contemplating a long-term strategy towards the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, and despite heavy setbacks in Quinam in recent years, Batavia still wanted to maintain a friendly relationship with the Nguyen domain. Thus, having established formal relations with Tonkin in 1637, Batavia still hoped that it could maintain its factory at Hoi An. Nevertheless, a year later it decided to withdraw the Hoi An factory, considering the risk of leaving its servants and assets in a kingdom which was at war with Tonkin, its northern ally. Moreover, the Tonkin trade began rather well and was likely to take off within a few years. Eventually, banking on the bright prospects of its Tonkin-Japan silk trade and of receiving hefty compensations for its losses in Quinam, Batavia was now inclined to ally itself with Tonkin. In 1640, Batavia appointed Nicolaas Couckebacker as the Company's representative to negotiate with the Le/Trinh rulers about forming a military alliance. The negotiation failed quickly because *Chua* Trinh Trang rejected the Dutch 'extravagant demands' on financial compensations and trading privileges.

But neither Couckebacker's unsuccessful negotiations nor the Trinh's ambivalence deterred the High Government from its desire to forge a military alliance with Tonkin. In the summer of 1640, the Governor-General informed *Chua* Trinh Trang that Batavia was now ready to send ships and soldiers to support Tonkin's war against Quinam. He therefore requested the *Chua* to inform him about the military plans Tonkin had in store for the Nguyen. Since the *Chua* Trinh did not allude to Batavia's queries in his reply, in the summer of 1641 the Governor-General reminded him again of the plans against Quinam. In the winter of the same year, Governor Paulus Traudenius in Formosa also sent a message accompanied by gifts to Thang Long. Assured of the Company's clear intentions, *Chua* Trinh informed Batavia that he would compensate the Company for its losses in Quinam. Furthermore he would station his armies to wait for the Dutch fleet at the estuary of the Gianh River (present-day Quang Binh province), from where they would go south to attack Quinam. Another Tonkinese ambassador was sent to Batavia to consolidate the mutual relationship.

As Batavia's military alliance with Tonkin was taking shape, tension between VOC and Quinam mounted dangerously. In the spring of 1642 it turned into open hostilities. The *Maria de Medici* and *Gulden Buijs* from Formosa en route to Batavia were wrecked off Hoi An. Eighty-two survivors were imprisoned and their salvaged goods were confiscated. Meanwhile, the appearance of Jacob van Liesvelt on the already inflammatory scene only made matters worse. To please

his Tonkinese ambassador, on his way to Batavia Liesvelt dropped anchor at Tourane (Da Nang), where he sent Dutch soldiers ashore to capture a few hundred Quinamese. Having heard about the wreckage of the Company ships and the captivity of its sailors, Liesvelt returned to Tourane to negotiate with the Nguyen rulers for an exchange of prisoners. The negotiations failed. As the news on the Company's latest misfortunes in Quinam reached Batavia, the High Government unanimously decided to ally itself with Tonkin to attack Quinam.

On three occasions in 1642 and 1643 the Dutch sent a total of 13 ships, together with about one thousand troops to support Tonkin, but due to lack of coordination, these ships were unable to join the Trinh troops in battle. During the third expedition, Dutch ships suffered heavy losses at the hands of the Nguyen navy in the summer of 1643: one ship exploded with its entire crew. The Tonkin-voc military alliance failed due to a number of reasons, most notably the Trinh's ambiguous attitude towards such an alliance, and Batavia's underestimation of the Nguyen' power – not to mention the impulsive behaviour of the Dutch soldiers. Disappointed with the Trinh's half-hearted involvement, Batavia decided to cancel the military cooperation with Tonkin and went on waging wars against Quinam on its own. In 1644 another Dutch fleet was sent to attack Quinam, again without success. In the years leading to the 1651 peace agreement, the voc-Quinam relations remained hostile, even though the voc undertook no further military actions. The Company ships sailing past the coast of Quinam, however, were ordered to attack and capture all foreign vessels trading with the Nguyen domain.

#### Frigid relations (1644-1651)

As Batavia ended the military alliance with Tonkin, the Dutch factory's relations with the Le/Trinh court cooled off considerably. Most of the trading privileges previously granted to the factory were revoked. When Chief Antonio van Brouckhorst arrived at the estuary of the Thai Binh River in the winter of 1644, one *capado* (eunuch) announced on behalf of the *Chua* that unless the Dutch agreed to advance his master 25,000 taels silver, to be paid back in silk, they had better sail away immediately in order to avoid disputes. Seeing the *Chua*'s discontent with the Company, high-ranking mandarins tried to squeeze the factory's silver and imported goods. In 1650, for instance, besides the 25,000 taels advanced to *Chua* Trinh and 10,000 taels to his son the crown prince, the Dutch factory had to give five eunuchs a total of 10,000 taels.

Despite frigid relations with the court, the Tonkin factory managed its import and export trade rather smoothly. After a short try-out period (1637-1640), the voc's export of Tonkinese silk to Japan prospered between 1641 and

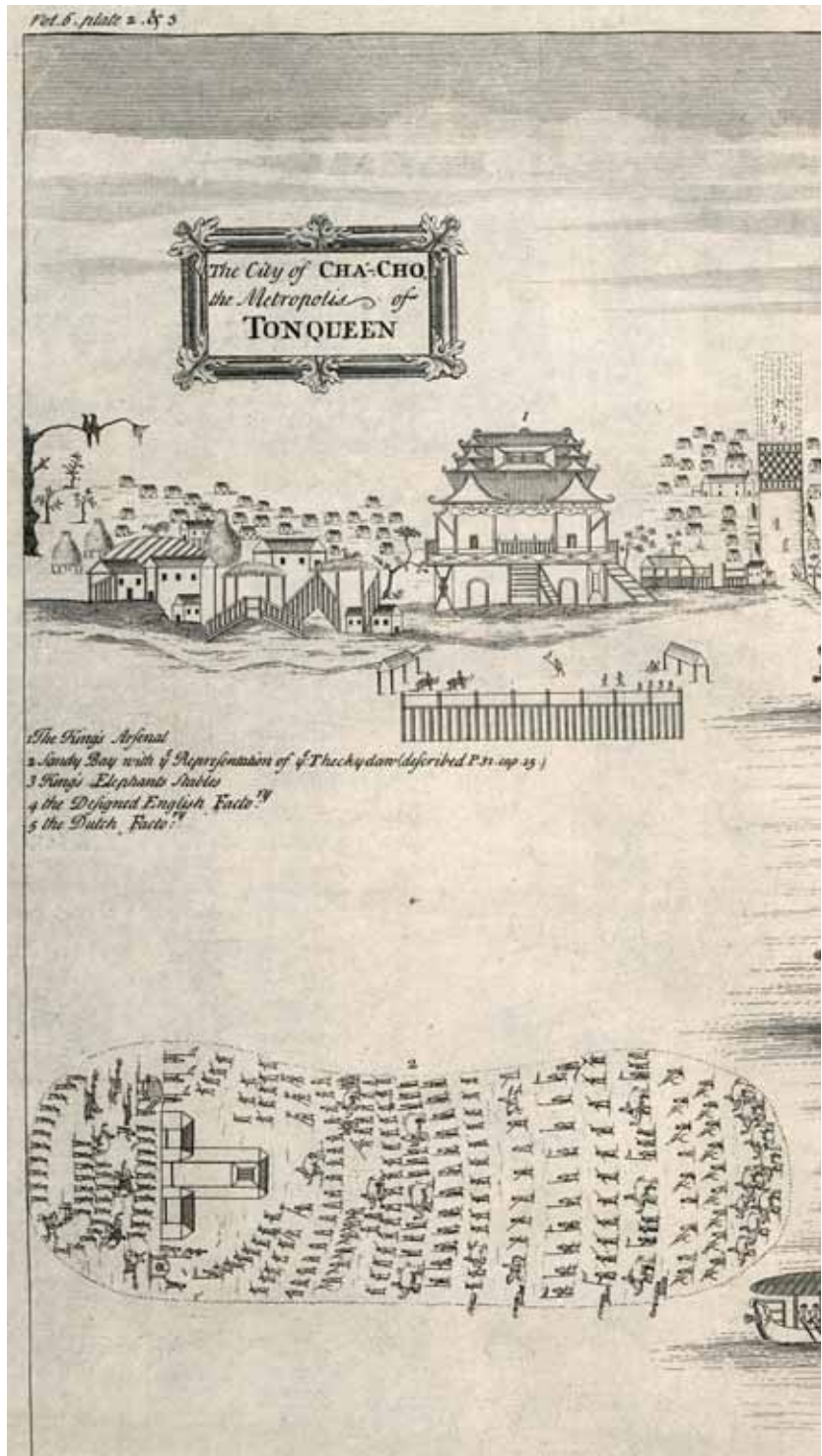


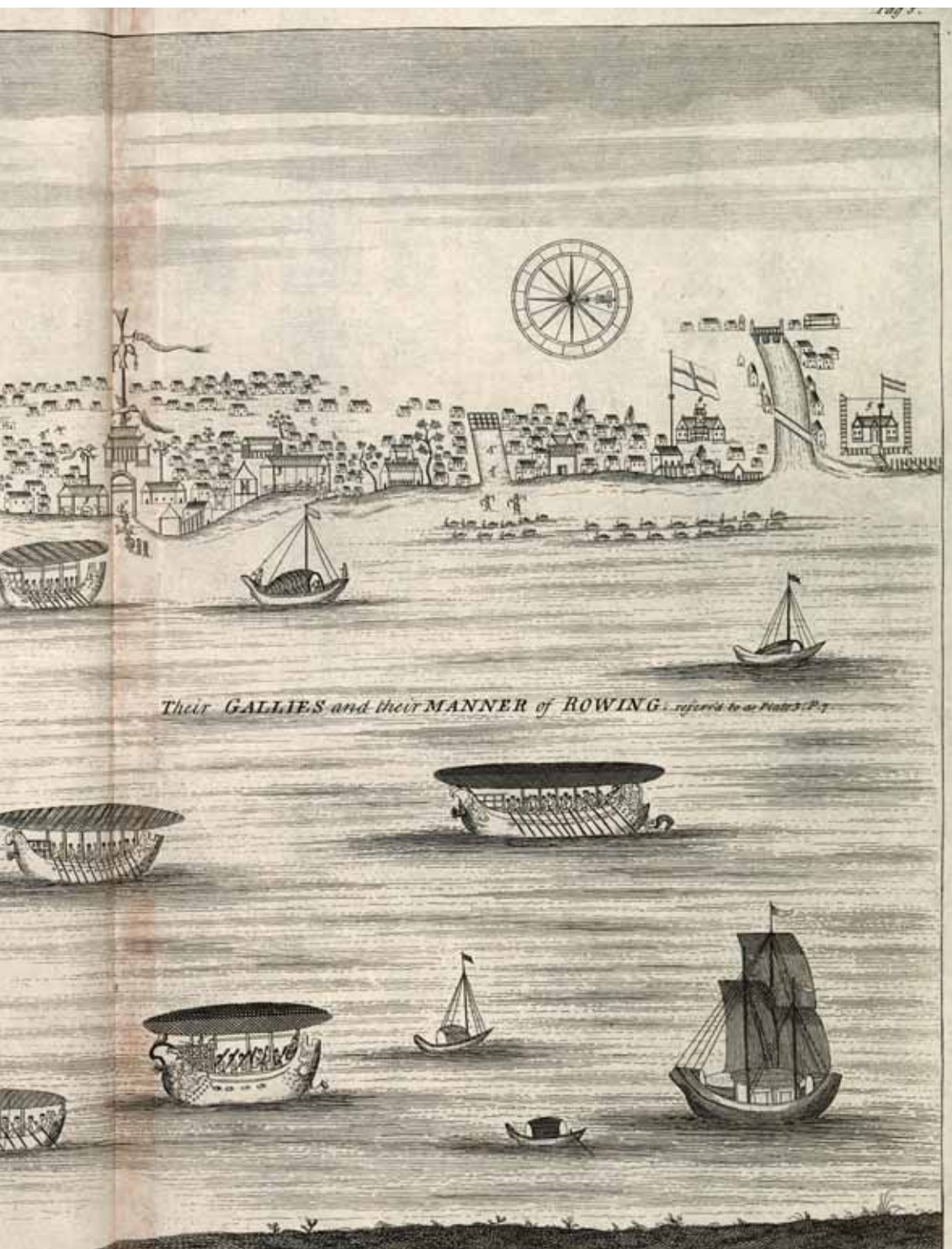




The capital of Tonkin, Cha-cho (literally: marketplace), now Hanoi. River view of Hanoi with Vietnamese galleys and ships.

Legend: 1. the royal arsenal; 2. Sandbay island, where the ceremony to protect the Capital from evil and misfortune (Te Ky Dao) takes place; 3. the royal elephant stables; 4. the intended site of the English factory; 5. the Dutch factory (above right) [Baron 1732].





*Their GALLIES and their MANNER of ROWING: referred to as Plate 3. P. 7*

wanted to build a shooting range on its grounds. The factory's import and export trade was also severely curtailed. The eunuchs sent their servants to prowl the Dutch residence and thrash any local merchant coming to trade with the factory. When the chief appealed to the *Chua*, he frostily replied: '*Ick en heb uw niet in mijn landt geroepen*' (I did not summon you to my country). In 1650, the Tonkin court planned to expel all foreign merchants from the capital; the Dutch factory was to be moved to the district governed by the great *capado* Ongiatule (the eunuch-mandarin Hoang Nhan Dung, or Trinh Lam). That summer, while the factory's mounting difficulties remained unresolved, Schillemans died. The Tonkin factory's management was passed on to the interim Chief Jacob Keijser.

### Revival and vicissitudes (1651-1660)

As soon as the fourth Chief Jan de Groot arrived in Tonkin in the spring of 1651, he drew up a meticulous report on the current situation of the Company's Tonkin trade. After weighing up all the difficulties and risks the Tonkin factory was facing, De Groot advised Batavia to suspend the Tonkin trade for a few years. However, this proposal was rejected by the High Government. In the meantime back in the Netherlands, the Gentlemen XVII (*Heren XVII*) ordered the High Government in Batavia to inspect the Company's factories in Tonkin, Formosa, and Japan on the grounds that there might be large-scale private trade going on in these Northern Quarters. In 1651, Batavia appointed Willem Verstegen as the Company's extraordinary commissioner to Thang Long with the double task of improving relations with the Trinh rulers and of inspecting the Tonkin factory.

The Commissioner's sudden arrival caught the Tonkin factors off guard. Verstegen discovered to his dismay the existence of a vast network of private trading in which most of the Tonkin factors were involved. Private goods were found both on board the *Kampen* and the *Witte Valk* and inside the factory itself. The book-keeping was messy and out of date. Even De Groot's private trade had mistakenly been entered into the factory records. After dismissing De Groot for gross mismanagement, Verstegen appointed Jacob Keijser – who was also accused of illicit trading, albeit on a minor scale – interim director.

Verstegen was given a warm welcome at the court. Highly pleased with the visit of a high-ranking Dutch official, *Chua* Trinh Trang graciously granted the local factory extra trading privileges. He also sent ambassadors to Batavia to congratulate the newly appointed Governor General Carel Reniers whom he adopted as his son with the noble rank of 'Thieu Bao Quan Cong'. Trinh Trang's son, Crown Prince Trinh Tac also sent the Governor General – now his 'brother' – precious gifts consisting of a cap and three princely parasols as 'a testimony of love'. At Batavia, the Tonkinese delegates were dined and wined lavishly.

After Verstegen had left Thang Long, Batavia upgraded the Tonkin factory to the 'permanent' status. This decision was taken not only because of improved relations with Tonkin but also was based on Batavia's expectations of substantial export of Tonkinese silk to Japan in the months ahead. The optimism proved to be short-lived, however. Early the following year, Batavia decided to cancel the project, considering the risk of entrusting large assets to just a handful of servants in Thang Long, while Tonkinese silk yielded less profit in Japan than anticipated. The revocation proved to be a right decision because the improvement of relations was only transient. After Verstegen's departure, the mandarins again obstructed the factory's trading activities. In 1653, the factory suffered a grievous loss after the execution of the great eunuch/mandarin Ongiatule, accused of high treason, who still owed the factory 14,499 guilders. To make matters worse, the Crown Prince demanded that the factory deliver to him, apart from the big guns and other miscellaneous goods, at least 25,000 taels silver per year. The Dutch factors, much to their sorrow, realized that the prince was only following the example of the Japanese Shoguns in dealing with foreign merchants. Batavia was most unhappy with this demand because, together with the 25,000 taels the factory already had to offer the *Chua*, almost half of the Tonkin factory's annual investment went to the coffers of the Trinh rulers, who in turn delivered low-quality silk at exorbitant prices.

Meanwhile, political instability in Tonkin played an important role in the decline of the factory's trade. In 1655, the other sons of the *Chua* Trinh were plotting against the crown prince, threatening to burn down the capital. Had the *Chua* failed to prevent the insurrection at the very last moment, there would have been bloodshed in the city. As a great number of the capital's inhabitants fled to the countryside, the Dutch and other foreigners, gripped by panic, hid themselves in their factories. Although the rebellion was eventually crushed, it took months for commercial activities to resume their normal course. Shortly after this ill-fated rebellion, Tonkin's armies marched south to attack Quinam for the fifth time. The campaign lasted for almost six years (1655-1660) and absorbed most of the country's labour force. In 1660, the Dutch factors estimated that about one-fifth of Tonkin's population (estimated at 4.5 million at the time) was forcibly conscripted to serve the war efforts.

The bloody and inconclusive campaign made the Trinh rulers turn their attention once again to Batavia for procuring weapons and ammunitions. As shown in VOC records, in the years leading to the ceasefire of 1672 the Trinh rulers regularly sent letters and presents to Governor-General Joan Maetsuyker, with requests for weapons and other war materials. In cases of emergency, *Chua* Trinh simply helped himself by taking cannon on board the Company ships anchoring at Domea. To prepare for the 1656 campaign, for



example, *Chua Trinh Tac* asked for nine cannon from the *Cabo de Jacques* when it arrived and went on to 'confiscate' another seven pieces upon its departure. On the whole, in order to please the Trinh rulers, Batavia often tried to comply with part of their demands.

Besides the unstable political situation, Tonkin's economy also declined in the latter half of the 1650s as a result of natural disasters. The heavy flood in 1654 destroyed most of the mulberry crops, causing a severe shortage of silk on the domestic market. Worse still, the shortage of copper *kasjes* (coins) led to a severe devaluation of silver, the main form of investment capital, which the VOC often earmarked for its Tonkin trade. By April 1654, the silver/cash ratio, which had stood at 1/1,600-1,700 during the last three months, slumped to 1/800. It was further predicted that if the situation did not improve, one tael silver might slide down from 700 to 600 and even as low as 500 cash in the short range. Consequently, prices soared, increasing at the rate of twenty per cent on average. Meanwhile, the profit margin of Tonkinese silk in Japan was diminishing. Facing these negative developments, Chief Louis Isaacszn. Baffart advised Batavia to suspend the Tonkin trade for a few years. Batavia rejected this suggestion and instead reduced the annual investment capitals for the Tonkin factory.

In order to reduce the Company's dependence on Tonkin's annual silk production, which had been rather haphazard in recent years, Batavia made a plan to import Tonkinese and Bengali silkworms to produce silk locally [in Java]. In 1653, the High Government ordered the Tonkin factory to buy silkworms. The first shipment of this special product virtually failed because most of the silkworms did not survive the long voyage. However, the ones, which made it, together with the Tonkinese mulberries, did well in Batavia. The High Government hoped that good mulberry fields would bring opulent silk crops. The demand for Tonkinese silkworms was therefore renewed for a 1654 shipment. The Tonkin factory however, was not able to comply, because the superstitious Tonkinese, fearing their silkworms would die if the foreigners were allowed to look at them, did not show nor sell them to the Dutch.

Another attempt of Batavia to revive the Tonkin trade was by reducing its dependence on copper coins of which there was a shortage. This scarcity led to a fall in the exchange rate of silver/cash. In order to cut their losses on the silver import and reduce their dependence on these coins, the Portuguese had been importing copper coins minted by Chinese in Macao into Tonkin. In 1654, Batavia made its first attempt towards solving the copper cash shortage in Tonkin when it had coins minted locally in order to send them to northern Vietnam. It was a good try but the experiment failed because the Trinh rulers devalued these coins. The shortage of copper coins in Tonkin went on until the

following decade. In the early 1660s, however, the Company successfully dealt with the copper cash equation when it began to import Japanese *zeni* (copper cash) into Tonkin in great quantities. As the Japanese coins became acceptable for circulation and its import proved profitable in northern Vietnam, a total of c. 213,812,376 pieces were shipped by the VOC from Deshima to Tonkin between 1661 and 1677.

Despite all its efforts, the High Government was not able to reverse the decline of the Company's Tonkin trade. After a temporary suspension in 1655 the Tonkin factory was again ordered to start exporting Tonkinese silk to Japan. However, the gross profit margins were so discouraging that Batavia decided to suspend the Tonkin-Japan silk trade again between 1658 and 1660. As a result, the annual investment capital Batavia remitted for the Tonkin factory was reduced considerably.

#### **Attempts at expansion, 1660-1670**

From the early 1660s, China's political transformations had a direct bearing on the VOC's East Asian trade. Under the Qing's increasing pressure, the remnants of Ming were defeated; the anti-Qing leader, Zheng Chenggong, left southern China to occupy Dutch Formosa in 1662. The loss of Formosa to Zheng was a severe blow to the Company's East Asian trading network.

Reacting to the heavy loss of Formosa, the VOC formed a naval alliance with the Qing court, first to take revenge against Zheng, and secondly to obtain trading privileges in bilateral relations with Beijing in compensation for the Formosa loss. Despite sporadic joint naval operations in the years 1662-1664, which effectively reduced Zheng's power in Amoy and Quemoy, the final task of conquering Formosa did not materialize owing to Beijing's hesitation. The trading privileges that the Chinese had granted the Company were consequently revoked.

Another way of gaining access to the China trade was to use Tonkin as a springboard. Apart from the diplomatic channels to Beijing, Batavia also instructed its Tonkin factors to explore the seaport system around the Tonkin-China border, and to look for possibilities to establish a permanent factory there for trading directly with the Chinese. Indeed, from the mid-1640s, Batavia had already ordered the Tonkin factory to develop trading ties with China with a view to increasing the purchase of Chinese gold and musk for the Company. This order was not fully met, however, because of the rapid decline of the Tonkin-China border trade from the mid-1650s onward. In 1655, the Tonkin factors reported to their masters that although China's civil war did not completely stop the export of Chinese goods to Tonkin, it reduced considerably the

flow of Chinese gold to northern Vietnam. As Tonkin failed to send tribute to Beijing, in 1662 Qing soldiers took punitive actions by raiding Vietnamese merchants engaged in border trade, worsening further the Tonkin-China border trade.

Batavia's attempts to overcome the loss of Formosa led to what was to become known as the 'Tinnam strategy'. After obtaining a license for an exploratory voyage, in March 1662 the Dutch under Chief Hendrick Baron set sail to explore the Tonkin-China northeast border. Upon his return, Baron advised Batavia to establish a permanent factory at Tinnam (today in Quang Ninh Province), based on several reasons. First, Tinnam was close to several commercial locations in the Tonkin-China border area, merchants therefore preferred travelling to Tinnam to other places. Second, Tinnam had a good harbour: the Company ships could conveniently anchor right in front of the factory. Third, the coastal area was navigable and had been carefully sounded. Finally, and also most importantly, the presence of a factory at Tinnam would attract not only Chinese goods from Nanning but also Chinese gold and musk from Yunnan.

The Trinh rulers' precautions, however, turned the Dutch 'Tinnam strategy' into nothing but a far-fetched dream. Despite Governor-General Joan Maetsuycker's repeated appeals to Thang Long to open up of the Tinnam trade, *Chua Trinh Tac* did not give his consent to the Dutch project. While the mandarins were too timorous to intercede with the *Chua*, the eunuch Ongdieu regarded the Dutch plan as 'very harmful' to Tonkin, warning the *Chua* that the Dutch presence at the border would bring instability and threaten the country's security. In the winter of 1664, the Tonkin factors informed Batavia that the *Chua* had hinted that he would allow no foreigners to reside and trade at Tinnam. Thus the *voc*'s 'Tinnam strategy' came to a premature end.

Meanwhile, in early 1663, the Tonkin factors proposed to their masters in Batavia to re-promote the Tonkin factory to the permanent rank, in order to revive the Company's Tonkin trade. Similar advice came also from the Company's trading partners in Tonkin, such as the Tonkinese mandarin Plinlochiu and the Japanese free merchant Resimon. At a meeting on 24 April 1663, the High Government decided to promote once again the Tonkin factory to the permanent status with a view to: i) stimulating local people to maintain their annual silk production which the Company needed for both Japan and the Netherlands; ii) helping the factors to select raw silk and silk piece-goods more carefully; and iii) attracting more Chinese merchants to Tonkin with their musk and gold.

But despite Batavia's unrelenting efforts to revamp it, the *voc*'s Tonkin trade continued to decline throughout the 1660s. Because Tonkinese silk yielded only

25 percent profit in Japan during the 1659 trading season, Batavia was forced to reduce the annual capital for the Tonkin factory. And yet the Dutch factors were able to spend only 12,038 guilders on local goods. The reason, as they justified it, was that Tonkin's fifth military campaign against Quinam had absorbed most of the country's labourers. Fearful of sudden conscription, a large part of the capital's inhabitants had fled to the countryside. The depression of the Tonkin trade dragged on in the following years, due to a series of natural disasters, civil wars, and the severe shortage of copper coins. In 1660, Resimon, the Japanese trader, blamed the VOC for the silver devaluation in Tonkin, alleging that the Company's excessive imports of silver had caused a rapid fall in the silver/cash ratio. Since its unsuccessful experiment of sending to Tonkin copper coins minted at Batavia, the High Government was unable to solve this problem until 1661, when it began to export great quantities of Japanese copper *zeni* (coins) to Tonkin.

While Japanese copper *zeni* did relieve the Company's dependence on local copper coins and partly cut the loss on the import of silver, the re-promotion of the Tonkin factory in 1663 was not as successful as expected. Because of frequent natural disasters, Tonkin's annual silk production was highly unstable. In 1663, for instance, heavy downpours flooded most of the kingdom. Consequently, the Tonkin factory could spend only 198,974 guilders out of the 373,465 guilders Batavia had earmarked for the Tonkin trade. The unspent capitals were largely responsible for the widespread corruption among the factors, such as embezzlement, misuse of money, and private trade. Meanwhile, the Tonkin factory faced stiff competition from various sides. The free Dutch merchant Bastiaan Brouwer, who operated under the auspices of high-ranking mandarins, competed fiercely with the Dutch factors in purchasing goods. The Chinese merchant Itchien, who had an elaborate trading network between Tonkin and Japan, was another feared competitor. He was often provided with additional funds by Japanese officials in Nagasaki. In 1664, Batavia ordered the Tonkin factors to prevent Itchien from sailing to Japan. Fearing the Dutch would capture his junks at sea, Itchien did not dare to leave for Nagasaki. The Dutch move was bound to backfire, however: not only did it displease the Trinh rulers, it also provoked a strong reaction in Nagasaki, because Japanese officials were also partial owners of these junks. In the summer of 1665, Batavia had to order the Tonkin factors to lift the blockade of Itchien's junks for fear of Japanese retaliations.

Continuing tension with Quinam during the 1660s prompted the Trinh rulers to maintain a smooth relationship with Batavia for procuring weaponry. The *Chua* regularly sent letters and presents to the Governor-General and treated the Dutch factors at Thang Long more generously. In 1666 and 1667, for example, *Chua* Trinh Tac offered the Dutch factory very good prices for the



saltpetre the Company shipped to Tonkin – something unheard of in the past. For its part, in order to facilitate its Tonkin trade, Batavia reciprocated by trying to satisfy part of the Trinh's requests for weapons. While saltpetre and sulphur could be easily shipped in large quantities to Tonkin, demands for cannons and bullets could only be fulfilled partly because, as lamented the Governor-General in his letters, Dutch wars against France and England in Europe had slowed down the flow of such vital objects to Asia. The *Chua* for the most part sympathized with Batavia's predicaments, but occasionally reacted to these excuses with sarcastic remarks such as: 'I have no doubt that the Governor-General needs them [ordnances and bullets] to defend your fortresses. But you should know that I too need them badly to defend mine!' In preparation for the final campaign against Quinam, in 1671 *Chua* Trinh Tac asked Batavia to provide him, besides weapons and ammunition, with an experienced constable who could stay in Thang Long to assist him personally. The Governor-General politely turned down the Trinh's special request and expressed the hope that this would not affect the 'thousand-year' friendship between two parties.

#### **Decline and the final ending (1670-1700)**

The 1670s witnessed several political-economic changes in Tonkin, which, in the long run, caused a reversal of the Trinh's policy regarding foreign trade, and its relationship with the VOC in particular. After the seventh campaign ended in 1672 without any breakthrough, the Trinh rulers decided to put an end to the protracted wars with their Nguyen rivals and concentrated their efforts to pacify the northern border area. Five years later, they ultimately defeated the remnants of the Mac in Cao Bang. The last survivors of the Mac clan who had fled to southern China were seized by the Qing troops and extradited to Tonkin in 1683. Peace was finally restored in northern Vietnam after almost two centuries of intermittent conflicts of a dynastic nature. Tonkin's requirement of military hardware from the VOC was sharply reduced although the Trinh still occasionally asked for arms. Tonkin's economy which normally should pick up after the restoration of peace, declined rapidly instead, due to regular natural disasters causing crop failures during the last quarter of the 1600s. In the meantime, reformations at the Le/Trinh court by the late 1600s saw a power transfer from military officials to literati whose Confucian ideology was scornful of the trade profession. All this augured ill for the foreign merchants doing business with Tonkin. Xenophobia was on the rise, exacerbated by the court's suspicions of the activities of Christian missionaries.

By the early 1670s, Batavia saw fit to reconstitute the structure of its Tonkin trade. Since its attempts to revive the Tonkin-Japan trade in the 1660s had failed, Batavia eventually abandoned direct shipping between Tonkin and Japan in 1671. From now on, cargoes from Tonkin would be shipped to Batavia. Despite this reconstitution, the Dutch Tonkin trade continued to decline. In 1678, for instance, on the Japanese market profit margins for Tonkinese silk and silk piece goods were only 16 and 14 percent respectively, hardly covering transportation costs. The factory also bore a deficit of 21,036 guilders. Disappointed by the depression of the Tonkin trade, in 1679 Batavia decided to reduce the annual investment capital as well as the size of the Tonkin factory.

The local trading situation in Tonkin deteriorated rapidly during the 1680s. The 1680 flood caused a severe famine in Thanh Hoa and the southernmost region of Tonkin. In the following year, severe drought ravaged most of the kingdom's rice crops. Famine was widespread, causing misery and death on a large scale. So severe was the 1681 famine that, according to Dutch accounts, hungry people had to feed on dead bodies lying unburied in order to survive. Everywhere, the rich were looted. *Chua Trinh Tac* urged the Company to ship rice and other provisions to Tonkin to save his people from dying of hunger. Natural disasters frequently devastated Tonkin's economy in following years, quickening the country's economic decline. In 1688, Tonkin suffered another large-scale famine. The Trinh ruler again urged the High Government to send rice to Tonkin. The arrival of the *Gaasperdam* with 80 bales of Javanese rice in the summer that year was a welcome sight. Beset by a series of famines and faced with an acute shortage of essential commodities, the Tonkin economy was in dire straits as prices soared sky-high and exchange rates veered out of control. In the meantime, competition among foreign merchants became more severe. It should be mentioned that during this period, apart from the Chinese, the French and English also attempted to gain a foothold in the Tonkin trade, making business much harder.

The VOC's Tonkin trade declined further along with the deterioration of the local trading situation. Worse still, in 1685 the Japanese government enforced import and export regulations that made Tonkinese silk, the kingdom's most important export item, practically unmarketable on the Japanese market. Consequently Batavia ordered the Tonkin factors to concentrate mainly on the purchase of musk and silk piece goods for the Netherlands market. The Governor-General also requested the Trinh rulers to stop delivering yarn to the Company. This request fell on deaf ears as *Chua Trinh* insisted on paying the Dutch factors in raw silk, asking why he should change this regular mode of payment, which his predecessors had been practising for so many years. Because raw silk was cheap in Tonkin, Batavia instructed the Tonkin factors to have some samples of local yarn spun following the Chinese and Bengali methods in order to sell them in the

Netherlands. This experiment failed however, and Batavia's plan of exporting Tonkinese yarn to Europe came to nothing.

Needless to say, the commercial decline had an impact on the political relations. As the Tonkin trade became less profitable, Batavia began to downgrade the quality of the gifts annually sent to Thang Long, which greatly irritated the Trinh rulers. In 1682, *Chua Trinh Can* threatened to expel the Dutch if Batavia did not offer him valuable presents. In 1688 and 1689, he stopped sending letters to the Governor-General because Batavia had failed to send him the things he specifically demanded. In 1691, the *Chua* again threatened to remove the Dutch from the capital because Batavia did not send him the crystal works he requested. Tension reached a high point in 1693, when Chief Jacob van Loo and the captain of the *Westbroek* were jailed on the accusation that Batavia did not send the *Chua* the precious amber as demanded. In 1694, the Crown Prince detained merchant Gerrit van Nes and a factory interpreter because the latter declined to lend him 200 taels of silver. In 1695, *Chua Trinh Can* again imprisoned the factory's interpreter and confiscated part of the factory's silver to compensate for the low-graded gifts that Batavia had offered him.

The Trinh's continuous maltreatment of the Dutch factors had a discouraging effect on the Batavia authorities. In 1695, the Governor-General and the Council of the Indies advised the Gentlemen XVII to close the Tonkin factory. Nevertheless, as long as no official words arrived from *patria*, Batavia was obliged to keep the Tonkin trade open, while urging the local factors to stay on and remain calm. The Governor-General also wrote to *Chua Trinh Can*, with the request to protect the Company servants. This appeal had no effect: the Dutch factors were continuously subjected to harassments and humiliations. In 1696, the Company's interpreters were detained for twenty days while the factory was blockaded and ransacked by some twenty-five Tonkinese soldiers.

Disheartened by all these negative developments, Batavia again contemplated abandoning the Tonkin trade. Taking into account the fact that *Chua Trinh Can* had not bothered to reply to the Governor-General's letter in 1698, Batavia unanimously agreed to abandon the Tonkin factory. The Gentlemen XVII in the Netherlands, however, still insisted on Batavia's plan, arguing where else the Company could procure such silk piece-goods as *pelings*, *hockiens*, *chiourongs*, and *baas* for the home market, if the Tonkin trade was to close down. In their missive to the Netherlands that year, the Governor-General and the Council of the Indies insisted that, although Tonkin did provide marketable silk piece goods for the Netherlands, the profit was rather insignificant. Once the Company stopped the Tonkin business, it could invest in other places such as Bengal and Batavia, whose profit margins were much more reasonable.

The discouraging news that the *Cauw* brought back to Batavia in the spring of 1699 dashed Batavia's last hope of saving the Tonkin trade. It was now concluded

that, since the Tonkin trade had yielded no profit during the last decades, while the Company servants were suffering increasing maltreatment, the Company had no reason to continue its relationship with Tonkin. In the summer of 1699, the *Cauw* sailed to Tonkin to pick up the Company's servants and assets. The Governor-General explained to *Chua Trinh Can* that the Company was forced to halt the Tonkin operations for a few years due to the unprofitable trade and the unbearable humiliation it had to suffer. Chief Van Loo was instructed to continue the factory should the *Chua* request him to do so.

Contrary to the Governor-General's anticipation, the Trinh rulers were not in the least bothered by Batavia's decision of quitting the scene. In the spring of 1700 the Dutch factors, without bidding farewell, quietly left Tonkin for Batavia. *Chua Trinh Can*, after blaming the Dutch factors for their bad behaviour, confirmed in his letter to the Governor-General that 'I do not oppose the decision to recall your people and abandon your trade in my country, but I hope you will change your opinion'. Those half-hearted words were the final blow that effectively ended the VOC-Tonkin relationship, after sixty-four years of relations fraught with vicissitudes.

### Summary: the VOC trade and seventeenth-century Vietnamese society

After residing in Pho Hien (Hung Yen) for a few years, in the early 1640s the Dutch moved to the capital, Thang Long, where they were allowed to engage in trading activities until 1700. The number of Dutch factors in Tonkin was around nine and increased to fourteen during the periods the factory was raised to permanent rank. It fell to about ten as soon as the promotion was withdrawn. Between the months of May and July, hundreds of Company sailors arrived at Domea – an anchoring place for foreign ships. Between Thang Long and Domea commodities were conveyed by local boats, forming an interrelated commercial system along the ‘Tonkin River’, linking Thang Long, Tonkin’s commercial hub, with the outside world. Generally speaking, the presence of the Dutch and other foreign merchants together with their trading activities contributed significantly to the transformation of Tonkin’s feudal society and economy in the seventeenth century.

The VOC’s import and export trade had a considerable impact on Tonkin’s feudal economy. The Company’s import of monetary metals into Tonkin, namely silver (c. 2,527,000 taels between 1637 and 1668) and copper coins (c. 213,812,376 pieces between 1661 and 1677), greatly affected the silver/cash ratio. Consequently, prices rose and fell according to the fluctuation of the exchange rate, despite the fact that they were relatively stable in the long run. The rise and fall of the VOC’s export trade also influenced the number of labourers employed in the silk and ceramic industries. As for silk, for instance, it is roughly estimated that Tonkin’s annual production of 1,500 piculs (90 tons) of raw silk required at least 90,000 households or 45,000 labourers (around 1 percent of Tonkin population in the mid-1600s); not to mention another great number of reelers, bleachers, weavers, and the like involved in the production of silk piece-goods. The enlargement of the country’s commodity economy during this century stimulated the emergence of embryonic elements of capitalism in Vietnamese society. There are better indications that western branches of knowledge such as ethics, mathematics, clock techniques, and the like were introduced into Tonkin. According to Vietnamese sources, one Vietnamese reportedly travelled to Holland in the eighteenth century to learn the techniques of mending and making clocks.





### 'Samuel Baron Was Here'

'Baron 1680'. These graffiti, written on a rock at the mouth of the river Day could be seen until far into the 19th century. Who was this Baron and what was he doing in Vietnam? Baron is the author of *A Description of the Kingdom of Tonqueen*. It was published in 1732, included in a voluminous collection of travel accounts about Asia. After his name it said 'A Native thereof', indicating that he was born in Tonkin. We don't know when he was born, but we do know that Samuel Baron was a son of the Dutch VOC servant Hendrick Baron, who from 1660 to 1664 had been in charge of the Company Lodge in Hanoi. This Hendrick, who was described as 'a long-term resident of Tonkin and fluent in the language' had been to Vietnam in the 1650s already. Replacing the head of the establishment in Hanoi, a certain De Groot, and later, albeit briefly, as 'upper merchant' in Hoi An, Hendrick Baron had made enough of a name to be entrusted with the management of the VOC establishment in Hanoi.

Although Baron was not an uncommon name on VOC payrolls, Samuel Baron's name occurs for the first time in 1659, with Salomon as his first name. In that year his father, before leaving for Hanoi himself, sent him from Batavia to the Netherlands. Sources from almost fifteen years later inform us that the 'Toncquinese mixtese' ('Tonkinese half-breed') Baron had defected to the English, with whom the Netherlands were at war again at that moment.<sup>4</sup> In 1674 the head of the English establishment at Bantam described him as someone who 'had been born on the coast with China'. Samuel Baron himself, who had gone to great lengths to become an employee of the English East India Company (EIC), said that his grandfather was Scottish, his father Dutch and his mother Portuguese. Apparently he did not want the EIC to know that his mother was of Vietnamese origin; Hendrick had had a relationship with her in the first years of his stay in Tonkin. This kind of intimate contact was not uncommon, by the way. Contemporaries such as William Dampier had already pointed out the custom among Vietnamese tradeswomen of taking care of the commercial interests of foreign merchants by being their temporary wives. Although this fits in with a Vietnamese tradition of polygyny, the Court still warned women against the consequences of too loose contacts with foreigners. It seems that Baron too feared his contemporaries' opinions about his origin. His English superiors saw him as an 'active and intelligent person with great skills for his age' who was 'well-acquainted with' Tonkin, Taiwan, Japan and China – but they rejected him for the post of 'upper merchant', saying that 'a foreigner as the head of our factories is, we would think, not

practical'. William Gyfford was offered the position. He had arrived in Pho Hien from the English enclave at Bantam on June 25, 1672. In Pho Hien, with a small staff, he would lay the basis for the English Company, which would stay there until November 1697. The young Baron was in close contact with Gyfford. In 1680 Baron left his name and the year on the rocks on the river Day. On the basis of EIC sources it cannot accurately be established how often he was in Tonkin before or after that date, but according to a Dutch source it is certain that in 1685 he was 'headed from Tonquin for Siam on a freight barque' and that in that same year following the Dutch capture of the Sultanate of Bantam, he had to 'leave after the turning of the monsoon'.<sup>3</sup> Baron's profound knowledge of the north of Vietnam found expression in his 'Description of the Kingdom of Tonqueen' (1732), published after his death. He had written the manuscript in Bantam and Madras, where Gyfford had become governor after his tenure in Tonkin. From his account it also became clear that he had regularly visited Hanoi between 1678 and 1683 under the patronage of a son of king Trinh Tac, whose funeral he had attended in 1683.

In a foreword Baron described Tonkin as 'the land of my birth', where he moved in circles with people from all walks of life. Baron's extensive treatise about his land of origin was a reaction to the fabulous stories of the French globetrotter Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689), who had made six journeys to Asia. During one of these journeys he had visited Java to see his brother, who had told him about Tonkin; Tavernier would devote a famous report to this. He had also acquired a position of authority by copying passages from the writings of missionaries such as Alexandre de Rhodes and Joseph Tissanier, often without mentioning them as sources. The publication of his account in England in 1680 was the occasion for friends of Gyfford's, among them a scientist, to ask Baron for comments. The result was the detailed 'Description', in which he frequently wiped the floor with Tavernier's remarks. Without doubt this account is one of the earliest in-depth descriptions of northern Vietnam, with which the author was quite familiar. Unfortunately, Baron was not to enjoy the fame that fell to Tavernier during his lifetime. The manuscript became lost and half a century would pass before it was rediscovered and published. By then, Samuel Baron had passed away, although we do not know the exact date. After Madras he left for China. 'Baron was there' too, although he did not leave his signature on a rock. Alas for us, no report of that journey has passed down to us.

*John Kleinen*

It should be mentioned that Vietnamese traditional social norms, and sexual norms in particular, were heavily challenged by the itinerant merchants, Dutchmen included. Many Dutch factors at Thang Long enjoyed their ‘Tonkinese wives’, while seasonal traders readily found prostitutes at Domea, just like their colleagues in Japan who enjoyed ‘Japanese wives’ and *keisei* (courtesans). Some Dutch-Vietnamese offspring were born out of temporary liaisons and casual sexual relations. The Dutch chief Hendrick Baron (1660-1664) lived with his Vietnamese wife and had a son, Samuel Baron – a famous traveller and trader. On the social scene, by the late seventeenth century prostitution at Domea was so rampant that the grave illness afflicting the English sailors was attributed not only to the harsh climate but particular to their ‘excessive debauches’. The widespread prostitution undoubtedly was a source of irritation to the court, which decreed in 1663 that ‘obscene relations between men and women’ were forbidden. Emperor Le Than Tong was rumoured to have a Dutch concubine although this is not mentioned anywhere in Dutch or Vietnamese official documents.<sup>4</sup>

Although the relationship was based mainly on mutual interest: a silk-for-silver trade accompanied by a transfer of military hardware in exchange for business privileges, the impact went much further. In the course of sixty-four years of residing in and trading with Tonkin, the Dutch no doubt left their on the political economy of Tonkin. Against the backdrop of seventeenth-century Vietnamese history, the influence of the Dutch on the local scene cannot be underestimated and requires further scrutiny.

#### *Appendix 1 Chief Factors (opperhoofd) of the Dutch factory in Tonkin:*

1637-1641	Carel Hartsinck
1642-1647	Antonio van Brouckhorst
1647-1650	Philip Schillemans
1650-1651	Jacob Keijser (interim <i>opperhoofd</i> , first time)
1651 (March-June)	Jan de Groot (dismissed by Commissioner Verstegen)
1651-1653	Jacob Keijser (interim <i>opperhoofd</i> , second time)
1653-1656	Louis Isaacszn. Baffart
1657-1659	Nicolaas de Voogt (de Voocht)
1660-1664	Hendrick Baron
1664-1665	Hendrick Verdonk
1665-1667	Constantijn Ranst
1667-1672	Cornelis Valckenier
1672-1677	Albert Brevinck
1677-1679	Johannes Besselman
1679-1687	Leendert (Leonard) de Moy
1687-1691	Johannes Sibens
1691-1700	Jacob van Loo

## Appendix 2 Dutch shipping in Tonkin, 1637-1700

Year	Name of ship	Capital (guilders) at	
		arrival	departure
1637	<i>Grol</i> , plus a junk from Taiwan	188,166	190,000
1638	<i>Zandvoort</i> ; <i>Waterlooze Verve</i> ; <i>Wijdenes</i>	298,609	187,277
1639	<i>Rijp</i> ; <i>Lis</i> ; <i>Waterlooze Verve</i>	382,458	311,268
1640	<i>Lis</i> ; <i>Engel</i> ; <i>Rijp</i>	439,861	431,974
1641	<i>Meerman</i> (two trips); <i>Klein Rotterdam</i>	202,703	240,380
1642	<i>Kievit</i> (two trips); <i>Brack</i> (two trips); <i>Kelang</i> ; <i>Kievit</i> ; <i>Wakende Boei</i> ; <i>Meerman</i> (two trips); <i>Zeeuwsche Nachtegaal</i>	297,529	129,352
1643	<i>Kievit</i> ; <i>Wakende Boei</i> ; <i>Zeeuwsche Nachtegaal</i> ; <i>Wijdenes</i> ; <i>Zandvoort</i> ; <i>Lillo</i> ; <i>Waterhond</i> ; <i>Vos</i> ; <i>Jonge Zaaier</i>	299,835	200,000
1644	<i>Leeuwarden</i> ; <i>Zwarte Beer</i> ; <i>Bresken</i>	397,590	299,572
1645	<i>Gulden Gans</i> ; <i>Zwarte Beer</i> ; <i>Hillegaersbergh</i>	454,606	378,092
1646	<i>Zwarte Beer</i>	352,544	?
1647	-	377,637	352,454
1648	<i>Kampen</i> ; <i>Witte Valk</i>	457,928	393,384
1649	<i>Kampen</i> ; <i>Witte Valk</i> ; <i>Zwarte Beer</i> ; <i>Maasland</i>	334,105	254,126
1650	-	372,827	513,293
1651	<i>Witte Valk</i> ; <i>Kampen</i> ; <i>Delfhaven</i>	552,336	?
1652	<i>Witte Valk</i> ; <i>Taiwan</i> ; <i>Katwijk</i> ; <i>Bruinvisch</i>	680,294	434,628
1653	<i>Witte Valk</i> ; <i>Taiwan</i> ; <i>Kampen</i>	-	?
1654	<i>Witte Valk</i> ; <i>Zeelandia</i>	149,750	300,000
1655	<i>Vleermuys</i>	25,773	?
1656	<i>Cabo de Jask</i> (two trips)	184,215	?
1657	<i>Coukerken</i> ; <i>Wakende Boei</i>	276,077	93,606
1658	-	-	-
1659	<i>Zeeridder</i> ; <i>Spreeuw</i>	317,500	318,183
1660	<i>Roode Hert</i>	64,773	-
1661	<i>Roode Hert</i> ; <i>Meliskerken</i>	164,703	316,487
1662	<i>Klaverskerke</i> ; <i>Bunschoten</i> ; <i>Roode Vos</i>	405,686	318,264
1663	<i>Bunschoten</i> ; <i>Hooglanden</i> ; <i>Zeeridder</i>	394,670	510,102
1664	<i>Elburg</i> (two trips); <i>Zeeridder</i> ; <i>Bunschoten</i>	347,989	533,785
1665	<i>Spreeuw</i> ; <i>Zeeridder</i> ; <i>Buiksloot</i>	420,245	309,384
1666	<i>Spreeuw</i> ; <i>Hilversum</i> ; <i>Zwarte Leeuw</i>	419,779	371,044
1667	<i>Witte Leeuw</i> ; <i>Buiksloot</i>	137,181	11,459?
1668	<i>Buiksloot</i> ; <i>Zuylen</i> ; <i>Overveen</i>	254,219	16,019?
1669	<i>Bloempot</i> ; <i>Overveen</i> ; <i>Pitoor</i>	184,657	44,194?
1670	<i>Vredenburgh</i> ; <i>Pitoor</i> ; <i>Hoogecappel</i>	183,804	249,335?

Year	Name of ship	Capital (guilders) at	
		arrival	departure
1671	<i>Bleyswyck; Meliskercken; Armuyden</i>	366,338	297,529
1672	<i>Meliskercken; Bleyswyck; Papegay</i>	318,327	450,998
1673	<i>Papegay; Meliskercken</i>	182,544	80,030
1674	<i>Papegay; Voorhout</i>	167,386	215,943
1675	<i>Experiment; Marken</i>	343,600	147,668
1676	<i>Janskercke; Croonvogel</i>	244,933	90,800
1677	<i>Experiment; Croonvogel</i>	385,213	488,407
1678	<i>Experiment; Croonvogel</i>	19,284	230,334
1679	<i>Croonvogel</i>	110,576	125,608
1680	<i>Croonvogel</i>	113,318	94,922
1681	<i>Croonvogel</i>	132,354	126,053
1682	<i>Croonvogel</i>	165,420	137,964
1683	<i>Croonvogel</i>	197,879	172,145
1684	<i>Croonvogel; Bombay</i>	138,980	161,480
1685	<i>Wachthond</i>	60,303	?
1686	<i>Wachthond</i>	58,000	111,371
1687	<i>Gaasperdam</i>	?	74,648
1688	<i>Gaasperdam</i>	115,091	158,371
1689	<i>Gaasperdam</i>	174,930	145,453
1690	<i>Gaasperdam</i>	174,786	345,943?
1691	<i>Gaasperdam</i>	150,759	125,933
1692	<i>Boswijk</i>	?	130,000
1693	<i>Westbroek</i>	172,711	-
1694	<i>De Wind</i>	50,000	219,843
1695	<i>Cauw</i>	84,813	49,840
1696	<i>Cauw</i>	61,502	57,000
1697	<i>Cauw</i>	~50,000	~50,000
1698	<i>Cauw</i>	~50,000	~50,000
1699	<i>Cauw</i>	~50,000	58,956
1700	Tonkin factory was closed		

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- Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren: 1123, 1124, 1140, 1141, 1144, 1145, 1146, 1149, 1156, 1158, 1161, 1163, 1166, 1169, 1172, 1175, 1184, 1194, 1197, 1206, 1213, 1216, 1219, 1220, 1230, 1233, 1236, 1240, 1241, 1243, 1252, 1253, 1259, 1264, 1265, 1267, 1272, 1278, 1283, 1290, 1294, 1302, 1304, 1307, 1311, 1314, 1320, 1322, 1330, 1339, 1348, 1350, 1354, 1362, 1377, 1386, 1403, 1407, 1415, 1438, 1440, 1445, 1453, 1456, 1462, 1485, 1489, 1498, 1517, 1521, 1536, 1557, 1563, 1573, 1580, 1596, 1602, 1609, 1623, 8361, 8364, 8365, 8680, 8681, 8714, 8715, 8716, 8717.
- Resolutiën 661, 665, 666, 672, 673, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 694, 713, 714, 784, 790.
- Dagregisters, Nederlandse Factorij in Japan, 1609-1860 (NA NEJ) 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69.

#### *Oriental and Indian Office Collections, British Library, London (BL OIOC)*

- G/12/17-1 – G/12/17-10: Journal Registers of the English Factory in Tonkin, 1672-1697.
- E-3-87; 88; 90; 91; 92, General letters sent to Asia between 1668 and 1697.

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# 3

## Finding Domea, the border port of the Tonkin estuary

Nguyễn Quang Ngọc

### The Tonkin estuary and Domea border port from ancient Western maps and documents

William Dampier (1652-1715), a famous British adventurer and privateer, left a comprehensive account of the Tonkin area, the Domea mooring place and a map detailing *'The Tonkin River from Cacho to the Sea'*.

When initially looking at the rivers which connect the Gulf of Tonkin to the Red River delta, one might easily assume that the Tonkin river was the Red river,



The Tonkin river from the coast to the Dutch lodge.

the Red river being the major artery running through the heart of the whole northern delta and which is divided into two distinct parts, the left and the right.

For early western traders, the Red river estuaries of Nam Dinh, and Thai Binh were too shallow to allow a route through to the Red river delta for the tall ships from the west. The tall ships attempted to enter from the Day river estuary (formerly named Doc Bo or Roc Bo) in the western part of this estuary, however during the 16th and 17th centuries, this estuary was pitted with sandbanks and had treacherous low tides which meant that western tall ships could not move easily. Only some of the smaller Chinese and Thai craft were able to navigate this river estuary with relative ease. The Tonkin estuary was the major gateway for trade relations between Tonkin and the west in the 17th and 18th century, however, if the point of access for tall western ships was not from Ninh Binh, Nam Dinh, (now called 'Thai Binh' estuary) where was the entry point to the Red river delta actually located?

In 1991, during a research project examining ancient documents kept in the archives of the Dutch East India Company in The Hague, I found a map of the Tonkin river which accurately depicted our area of study and helped us to evaluate the northern river systems more concisely (see map on page 63). We also found a number of maps upon which the Tonkin river was drawn that showed clearly the relationship between the Tonkin river and the delta. We were able to see how the Tonkin river, which is also shown on the 'Annam Greater Nation' map drawn in 1838 *Annam Dai quoc hoa do*, resembles the older maps drawn by the Dutch East India Company (see map on page 65).

Based upon what we know from the reports and travelogues of western traders and missionaries and from historical documents of the 19th century, it seems that the Red river of today is not what was called 'the Tonkin river' of the 19th century, and it is clear that this Tonkin river offered greater accessibility to Western trade ships who wished to enter the Thai Binh estuary in order to reach Pho Hien or Thang Long – Cacho (Hanoi).

The matter of identifying the river which gave tall ships entry to the Tonkin area has been discussed and examined by a number of western experts. A German geographer, Dr. Gützlaff, wrote in his *Geography of the Cochinchina Empire* published in 1849:

(T)he river then moved in southeastern direction. There was the Tonkin capital, called Cacho or Hanoi – on the right. It suddenly turned the way at Hien, ran by the Northern way, forming a delta in which Domea was the port for foreign shipping. The river had three estuaries, the Northern one was the deepest, the Southern one had sand zones and shallow areas that could not help ships with 10-foot water line to enter.<sup>1</sup>



Map of Tien Minh district near Haiphong in king Dong Khanh's atlas (1885-1889). Based on a map from the beginning of the Nguyen dynasty, 1838.

These maps suggest that the Tonkin river was composed of parts of the Red river including the stretch from Hanoi to the Hai Trieu confluence, the whole Luoc river from Hai Trieu to Quy Cao and the Thai Binh lower section and estuary. The reason for this is that the maps examined show the Tonkin river with two river branches drawn; the left side of the upper branch is named Roc-Bo river (Doc Bo or Day river) and the lower one showing a section which followed part of the Red river but actually was not as large then as it is today. On these maps, there were also references to places called Dao Ngac and Moi Ho on the estuary. Today, it is possible to recognize Ngac hill (on its peak stands the Tong Long tower built during the Ly Dynasty) in Do Son Town and Moi Ho in Kien Thuy district, Hai Phong city. Many other documents explain that the area of the Tonkin estuary belonged to the Mac motherland and describe how ships entering the estuary always used Elephant Hill (Nui Voi in An Lao district) as their datum-point. In conclusion it appears that the evidence suggests that the lost Tonkin estuary could only be the Thai Binh estuary.

On ancient maps and documentation the main line of the Tonkin river flowing east to the sea mouth had a place name which – although today it is not marked on any modern maps – has attracted the attention of our research team and initiated a search for this well documented and now lost place called, ‘Domea’. William Dampier wrote in 1688 in his publication, *Voyages and Discoveries*:

The other river or estuary, was that by which we entered; and ‘tis larger and deeper than the former. I know not its particular name; but for distinction, I shall call it the river of Domea; because the first town of note that I saw on its banks was so called. The mouth of the river is in lat. 25d. 45M. It disembogues 20 leagues to the N.E. of Rokbo. There are many dangerous sands and shoals between these two rivers which stretch into the sea two leagues or more ... Domea has been the water line that most of the European ships have entered because of its depth ... The focus point that can help recognize it from the estuary is a high-descent hill in the mainland called Noi Voi ... When the boat entered in about 6 fathom (1 fathom = 1.8m), far from the sands and Dao Ngac about 2,3 miles, one could anchor to await a navigator. Navigators on this river are fishermen living in Batsha village, nearby the estuary. From there on, they can see any ship waiting navigator as well as hear firing from the European ships to sign their arrival ...<sup>2</sup>

William Dampier went on to describe the surroundings of Domea village and the Thai Binh estuary:

About 5 or 6 leagues (16 to 18 miles) upstream, we passed by Domea village. This is a beautiful village: and ‘twas the first of note that we saw standing on the

banks. 'Tis seated on the starboard-side going up, and so nigh the river, that the tide sometimes washes the walls of the houses, for the tide rises and falls here nine or ten foot. This village consists of about 100 houses. The Dutch ships that trade here do always lye in the rivers before this town, and the Dutch seamen, by their annual returns hither from Batavia, are very intimate with the natives, and as free here as at their own homes; for the Tonquinese in general are a very sociable people, especially the traders and the poorer sorts: but of this more in its proper place. The Dutch have instructed the natives in the art of gardening; by which means they have abundance of herbage for sallading; which amongst other things is a great refreshment to the Dutch seamen when they arrive here. Tho' the Dutch who come to trade in this Kingdom, go no higher with their ships than this Domea, yet the English usually go about 3 mile farther up, and there lye at anchor during their stay in this country. We did so at this time, and passing by Domea came to an anchor at that distance. The tide is not so strong here as at Domea; but we found not one house near it; yet our ships had not lain there many days before the natives came from all the country about and fell a(bout) building them houses after their fashion; so that in a month's time there was a little town built near our anchoring place ... the poorer sort of natives taking this opportunity to truck and barter; and by some little offices, or begging, but especially by bringing women to let to hire, they get what they can of the seamen.<sup>3</sup>

In 1778, Jérôme Richard also wrote in his publication *The Tonkin History* (Paris): 'Away from the estuary 5 or 6 sea miles, there is another town called Domea, smaller than Pho Hien but very well-known to foreigners because it is in a gulf made by the opposite river. They anchored and were allowed to settle trading only here'.<sup>4</sup>

The maps depicting the Tonkin river system and the descriptions by Dampier and Richard help us to confirm that the Thai Binh estuary in Vinh Bao and Tien Lang district (Hai Phong city) were the ones indicated as the Tonkin River estuary, or in other words, the gateway to the Red river delta at that time. This was the place where the Tonkin authorities allowed foreign merchant ships to enter to trade and was a point for expanding international relations. In the 17th and 18th century, trading developed very well at the Thai Binh estuary, creating a prosperous economy which contributed to an enhanced quality of life for the local population.

Through the research of Vietnamese history in the 17th and 18th centuries from these ancient western bibliographies and maps, one cannot ignore that the Tonkin estuary is intimately associated with Domea – a real and lively border port, described by some western writers as the third main city or city-port after Thang Long/Cacho (Hanoi) and Pho Hien (Hung Yen).<sup>5</sup> Domea was a sort of pre-port to Pho Hien, and the only place in Vietnam where foreigners, most of them

Dutch, could live and trade freely. It was a rare cultural, economic and historical phenomenon in Vietnam during that period. Johann Matthias Hase's Asian Map, published in Germany in 1744 also noted that Domea was an important and major place-name in Tonkin.

Although Domea is not mentioned in any Vietnamese historical source, the name usually appears in documents relating to the Dutch, English and French trading activities in Tonkin during the 17th and 18th centuries. It is strange, however, that Vietnamese historians have no references which place the name 'Domea' in that area.

### **Field work and related documents at the Thai Binh estuaries**

Based on documents and maps of the Dutch, English and French East India Companies, it is clear that the location of Domea port was not north of the Tien Lang district in Hai Phong city today, despite the fact that this area was also called 'Me' or 'Do Me' and known locally through expressions such as *'Dau Me, duoi uc'* ('Me is the head, Uc the end'). 'Dau Me' refers to Do Me river (a local name for the particular stretch of the Thai Binh river passing this area) which was the border between Tien Lang (the head of the district in the north-west) and Tu Ky district. 'Me' was also a common name for many other places in the district such as markets, wharfs, temples, banyan trees, Mandarin gardens, districts and streets. The 'Me' district streets and architectural ruins as well as glazed terracotta and ceramic remnants found in the Dai Cong field were the relics of the Tien Minh prefecture from the early part of the Nguyen Dynasty. The Dutch and the English – as indicated in William Dampier's publication – came (but not too often) to anchor and trade in the area of Do Me river but they could only enter when given permission by the local authorities at Domea. Perhaps this is the reason why vestiges of western trading along the Do Me river are extremely scarce whilst evidence of Chinese traders is still so prominent.

Do Me river flows into the Tonkin river at the Quy Cao confluence or perhaps more accurately: the Luoc river (the western people called it the main flow, i.e. the middle part of the Tonkin river) flows into Do Me river (at that time it was the main stream of Thai Binh river) at the Quy Cao confluence, leading to the lower section and then finally into the Tonkin estuary. The confluence became the first important point in Tonkin for shipping control and for the piloting of ships into a port. If the western ships only went to Pho Hien or Thang Long, they did not follow the Thai Binh river main branch to the Do Me river but turned into the Luoc river. Do Me river is also called Lap river because in recent decades, many of its sections have been reclaimed as fields or villages, whilst some other sections



have been narrowed. It is possible that Do Me river was ‘the opposite river’ which made the ‘gulf’ as described by Richard above, and that Domea river as described in William Dampier’s publication was actually the Thai Binh river or Thai Binh river lower section – the lower part of Do Me river from the Quy Cao confluence to the sea. The river section from Quy Cao to the sea has changed much in recent years. Some sections which were newly dug have completely changed the natural flow of the river, causing some other sections to fill up. The relics which reflect the ancient river culture have nearly all been destroyed, which has made it extremely difficult to recover evidence of trading from the 17th and 18th century.

The village of An Ho (or An Du today), Khoi Nghia commune, Tien Lang district, is a rich and well-known trading village in the area of ‘Dau Me’ and Thai Binh river bank (called Domea by William Dampier). It was the first village that planted western vegetables such as cabbage, turnips, cauliflower and salad. We have identified An Ho village in the ‘Dau Me’ area as ‘Domea’ because of its close proximity (only three kilometres) to ‘Me’ wharf, the most important place-name in the ‘Me’ area. In folklore memory, the ‘Me’ area was rather large, consisting of villages and communes from the end of Tu Ky (Hai Dong) to the head of Tien Lang district (Hai Phong). However, there was no village along this stretch named ‘Me’ except a small river, a wharf, or a street. The border between the head or the end of ‘Me’ was not fixed. Perhaps, this partly explains why An Ho land has expanded to the Moi river. However, this placing is in dispute as the author of *Dong Khanh Du Dia Chi* (Dong Khanh Geography book) placed An Ho village and Ninh Duy district near the Quy Cao confluence and the Do Me river in the area of the Tien Minh canton, or Duy Ninh district close to Dai Cong district in the realm of the Nam Sach prefecture.<sup>6</sup>

One can imagine that ‘Do Me’ was perhaps the private name for a part of the Thai Binh river passing the Quy Cao estate today and that it gradually became the accepted name for the whole Thai Binh river lower section in the north of Tien Lang district, Hai Phong city. Westerners arriving at Tonkin by boat borrowed this name in order to distinguish the river and also used the name to refer to the confluence where ships and boats could enter as well as the wharf where they anchored and the place to stay and to trade. Domea was born in that context and perhaps has its origins of the ‘Do Me’ place-name.

According to the coastal geomorphologist, Tran Duc Thanh, Khoi Nghia commune was at the head of an ancient sand dike with a height of 4 to 6m. The dike enclosed an ancient cove or bay occupying almost the entire area of the Moi and the Thai Binh river confluence; the north of Tien Tien and Tien Cong communes; Dai Cong village today and Lac field in Giang Bien commune, Vinh Bao district. In the south of Khoi Nghia commune, there was a system of flood plains and swamps expanding to the head of the ancient sand dike which barri-

caded the Thai Binh estuary, on the left was Nam Am, Ngai Nam (Vinh Bao district), on the right was Phong Doi, Tien Minh (Tien Lang district). This dike was engineered by Tran Duc Thanh who increased the height from 3.3m to 3.5m. This advantageous natural terrain put An Du village in an especially important position within the lower section of the Tonkin.

On the map of the Tonkin river drawn by the Dutch East India Company, there was a place called 'Domey' (which was perhaps 'Domea' spelled differently) within the Khoi Nghia area. William Dampier said that Domea river was placed at lat. 20d. 45m. It is of note that the Do Me river which unites with the Luoc river at the ancient gulf and then flows into the Thai Binh river lower section near the north-west of Khoi Nghia commune was exactly at lat. 20d. 45m, and exactly as William Dampier stated in his 17th century publication.

Today in Khoi Nghia commune one can still identify the vestiges of a port system, a trading system and a residency at the ancient river bank – now filled up – expanding down to Tien Lang town near the An Du village. The relics of the trading and residency areas include Oc wharf, Thap Giang wharf,<sup>7</sup> Vang pagoda, Bac bridge and a system of ancient wells (which possibly supplied fresh water for ships). Many other architectural relics of such as bricks, tiles, tube-tiles, Bat Trang bricks, ceramics in the 16th, 17th, and 18th century etc. were found within about 1 square km around the site with the cultural level nearly 2m deep. Similar to the ancient Hoi An and Pho Hien towns, the area of administration and ship control was settled separately upon a high sand hill on the opposite side of the town. This was within the So Cao, Dong Quan and Cong Phu areas. The Grol merchant ships which belonged to the Dutch East India Company noted in the ship's log that seamen were welcomed officially at the Tran Hai Mandarin Palace. It is possible that the Tran Hai Mandarin Palace was located in So Cao area.

Coming away from the street and port relics, about one kilometre in a straight line, and on the opposite side of the silted-up river lay Ha Doi temple, Tien Thanh commune, Tien Lang district, where Tran Quoc Thanh, a member of the Tran Royal Family was venerated. This was the site of the Tran dynasty's most important naval base on the Thai Binh estuary. The naval force commanded by Tran Quoc Thanh directly contributed to the amazing feat of arms at Chong Dong wharf, Ham Tu gate. Ha Doi temple was built upon the grounds of Tran Quoc Thanh's old house during the Tran dynasty.<sup>8</sup> This position was the right place for a pagoda, nearby the anchor and land promontory named 'Domea' drawn on the map of the Tonkin river in the 17th century. One can see how important the site of the pagoda was placed as it is on the maps of the Dutch East India Company as well as on the maps of Tien Minh district from the Dong Khanh era.



The temple of Hai Dinh, dedicated to a member of the Tran dynasty, which ruled from 1225 to 1400.

Through viewing the preliminary collection and in the analysis of ancient Western maps, bibliographies and field works, there is real reason to determine that An Ho village (An Du village, Khoi Nghia commune, Tien Lang district, Hai Phong city today) was the place called Domea. We hope to have the opportunity to co-operate with other Vietnamese and foreign researchers in organizing a larger-scale investigation within this locality in order to find the exact position of Domea and to re-establish Domea as a major international border port of the Tonkin Kingdom during the Eastern Sea trading period.

From Khoi Nghia we followed an ancient river trace that was drawn fairly accurately on the Dong Khanh map and the French maps from the early part of the 20th century. The vestiges of markets, wharfs, pagodas, commune houses, temples, trading and military activities as well as vestiges of cultural and missionary work and customs, allowed us to imagine what an important position this now dead river played from the 13-18th century. The last section of the ancient river we investigated flowed into Cong Doi and then united with Do Han river (or Thai Binh river today). Below Cong Doi and about 500m away was Phong Doi village (or Hoa Doi) which had been the site of the ancient sand dike barricading the Thai Binh estuary.

Phong Doi had an hamlet called Tao Phao (or Tao Phao Tien Trieu) nearby the dike, which was about 14,400 square metres in size and which lies some 3 metres higher than today. In this village, there are place-names such as Cong Don, Ho Don, Truong Ban, Veng Ban ... which are all vestiges of Ngai Am Huu military post defending the Thai Binh estuary in the Le/Mac period (with many Le/Mac relics surrounding the area). On the other side of Thai Binh river lay the remains of the high sand dike upon which the Ngai Am Ta military post was built, which defended the Thai Binh estuary. Today the Thai Binh river passes by this area but the section from Cong Doi to Khoi Nghia, called Do Han river by the local people, was certainly very small. Nguyen Binh Khiem's work on the



Today's So Cao area near Hai Phong, where Domea used to be situated.

‘stele’ in Trung Tien temple in the 16th century revealed that the Tuyet Giang river flowing beside the Han market with the Nguyet ferry passing by, was only a narrow water line. Later, the line became a bigger river which was the main flow of Thai Binh river (which we followed upstream) until it gradually dried up. In 1936, Moi river was dredged, taking water from Luoc river to Van Uc river. As a result the river gradually lost its vitality again and took on the ancient form of Tuyet Giang river, as Nguyen Binh Khiem had described it more than 400 years before.

In the history of mobility, transformation and development of the Tonkin estuary, Co Trai-Dong Kinh of the Mac dynasty in the 16th century and Domea





border port in the 17th-18th century and Hai Phong city port in the 19th century are seemingly closely related. Therefore, Domea must be seen as the precursor to Hai Phong city.

Further qualified research will be necessary to explain the unique phenomena at the Thai Binh estuary, like Nguyen Binh Khiem who proclaims only to 'stay at home seeing tide up and down to know everything long since<sup>9</sup>'; or the Mac dynasty's birth with Dong Kinh capital and views toward the sea; Domea's appearance and its ruin. The rise and demise of Domea border port is especially important in the study of foreign trade and international relationships in the 17th and 18th century in Vietnam. It was also a time which offers an understanding of the role of the Dutch East India Company as well as Dutch-Tonkin relations during those centuries. We expect that in the near future, VOC document archives will be explored methodically and comprehensively, and that seeking evidence in folklore, bibliography, on the ground and especially in the earth in Tien Lang, Vinh Bao (Hai Phong city), Tu Ky, Thanh Ha (Hai Dong) will be carried out in a larger scale project.



# 4

## The position of Pho Hien and Domea in the Tonkin trade system in the 16th and 17th century

*Nguyen Van Kim*

### The trade system of Dai Viet

In the Tonkin trade port system in the 16th and 17th century, together with Thang Long, Pho Hien emerged as a big city port. Traders from many Asian countries such as China, Japan, Siam as well as from the West, came here through the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the English East India Company (EIC), the French Compagnie des Indes Orientales [French East India Company] (CIO) etc. to trade, and establish enterprises.<sup>1</sup> It was the first time in Vietnamese history that the foreign trading economy developed so prosperously.

Together with the sea and estuary port system, the foundation of the river port system in the mainland brought about strong domestic economic changes as well as the Tonkin authorities' self-control and free economic policy. The river port system transformed the Tonkin trade centre into one composed of sea ports which connected the mainland closer to Thang Long, its economic zones and its trade villages. This became the specific characteristic of the Tonkin trade activities in the 16th and 17th century.

Pho Hien was well-located, 50 km from Thang Long or a journey of two days upstream. It was founded and developed in close relation with Thang Long, and a number of sea ports and other economic centres in the area. However, only a limited number of foreign merchant ships could enter the Red River delta and pass by Pho Hien and Domea. As a result, large Western ships had to anchor at Pho Hien and Domea for transporting goods to smaller ones. It is thus probable that the *Tonkin* that is referred to in Western historical documents indicated these river ports. During those days, 'Pho Hien has streets, markets, wharfs, foreign trading posts as well as the Service of Constitution head-office (*So Hien Ty*) with officials and military posts. It had also craft industry and trade surpassingness. Such a dense populated place as Pho Hien enables us to consider it as a river-side trade port or city port'.<sup>2</sup>

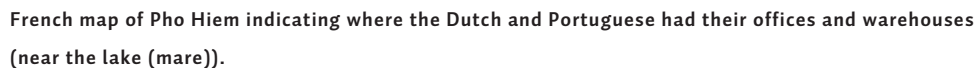
Likewise, located in the confluence of the Thai Binh and the Luoc River, Domea was one of the main gateways to receive directly textile and silk products from Kinh Bac and ceramics from elsewhere in northern Vietnam. Domea had been considered as an important place in the Western historical documents but it seemed not to be noted yet in the Vietnamese official historiography. Perhaps, it was because of some traditional historian's point of views or that Domea was not as important as Thang Long and Pho Hien. Therefore, the Tonkin authority control in the coastal area, which was developing surpassingly, was rather loosely structured.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the 'unofficial' trade activities were somewhat out of the authority control. That could be proved by the appearance of marauding troops and frontier villages in the Domea confluence and Thai Binh estuary. However, Domea was certainly the major port for receiving and transporting goods in the Tonkin trade system. From this area, goods on the Western merchant ships (including weapons, silver and bronze coins etc.) were transferred to Pho Hien and Thang Long, etc. for exchanging well known products in the Northern handicraft and trade villages.

Together with changes of domestic socio-economic factors, the prosperity in Thang Long, Pho Hien, Domea and other river ports was influenced strongly by the international economic environment in which the maritime trade economy was in the most prosperous time. In the 16th and 17th century, a mass of city ports in Southeast Asia were founded and developed very well. They were the result of economic changes, expressing their integration with the regional and inter-regional economic network. That was the new development phenomenon of the Southeast Asian cities with their main function of economic activities. Therefore, this city type was much different of one that is presented as being part of Asiatic Despotism.

Domea, like Pho Hien, was an open city port without a defence perimeter or a rampart as seen in other cities. People here lived in close relation with their natural environment and with economic activities in multi-dimensional trade network.<sup>4</sup> In the 16th and 17th century, both places Pho Hien and Domea were pre-ports of Thang Long, with a relatively clear function division in the Tonkin international exchanges and foreign economic activities.

As compared with Thang Long and other Southeast Asian city ports, Pho Hien was not a large town. Its major trade area was a street next to the Red River. According to William Dampier, most of the Vietnamese who lived there were handicraftsmen, small dealers and people providing services. He wrote that: 'The Tonkin people have much knowledge of craft works as well as trade. There are many dealers and craftsmen such as: weavers, woodworkers, blacksmiths, turners, limners, lacquer workers, bell makers, money exchange brokers, and paper-makers. Money exchange is a real business here. Most of the brokers are women. They are very skilful.'<sup>5</sup> On steles in Hien pagoda and Chuong pagoda, it was written that in the early 17th century Pho Hien had 20 wards<sup>6</sup> among which most of them lived on handicrafts and trade.

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Like in the majority of the Vietnamese towns at that time, architecture in Pho Hien was rather simple. According to Dampier, Pho Hien had 2,000 houses in 1688. The first English trading head office was a thatched cottage. Then, a number of edifices such as the Dutch and English trading head offices, two French bishops' residences and Chinese merchants' houses were made of bricks. In the *Dan nam nhât thong chi* (1997) it was written: The upper and lower Bac Hoa [North-China: streets] were at the southwest of Kim Dong district. During the Le dynasty, the coastal village of Lai Trieu [Van Lai Trieu] and the palace of Hien Nam were located here. Houses on these two streets were made of tiles that looked like reversed bowls. This is where the Chinese gathered for trading. There was also the Chinese Nam Hoa street opposite to Bac Hoa'. The Vietnamese used to call streets where the Chinese lived *Pho Khach*: the town for the (Chinese) guests.

In order to control the security and to manage trade activities, the Le-Trinh authorities sent many officials to Pho Hien and even established a military post there. The Son Nam town head office was also located in Pho Hien during the early and the late Le period. Therefore, viewed from a security angle, Pho Hien was like the outer controlling station for Thang Long, where foreign trade activities were regulated and business was done with foreigners on behalf of the Tonkin authorities. Meanwhile, Domea was like a pre-port of Pho Hien, with the function of goods regulation and distribution as well as controlling the estuary area. On the other hand, Domea could also independently conduct trade activities to Pho Hien and Cacho. Thus, it was not easy for Domea to develop into a real city or city port. However, archaeological and ethnological evidence show that Domea was a relatively developed area. Its development started early on (14th and 15th century) and lasted for a long time (17th and 18th century).

### **The economic triangular of Tonkin-China-Japan**

Located nearby the prosperous Southern Chinese economic zone, Tonkin became major hub in the Asian trade system. From the early 16th century, the Ryukyu merchant ships came to conduct trade with 'Annam'. The most reliable source document for this is King Ryukyu's letter to King Le Uy Muc in 1509.<sup>7</sup> In the 15th and 16th century, merchant ships from China, Japan and Siam gradually moved to the North after a long period of trade with the Northern Central region.<sup>8</sup> This economic transformation was the important factor in making the city port system and the Red River Delta economic zone a success. In *The Tonkin Kingdom History* (1994), the French priest Alexandre de Rhodes supposed that many Chinese and Japanese merchants had come to Tonkin for trade before 1627. He wrote: 'The Japanese people once with them a lot of silver to buy silk here. They also brought along a lot of weapons and swords to sell'.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the 16th century and the early of the 17th

century, the demand for silk was great in Japan. The Shogunate of Edo actively sent merchant ships to Dai Viet and other Southeast Asian states for importing silk, ceramics and aromatic spices. The Japanese merchant ships that arrived to trade with Tonkin were loaded with about 400-500 tons. Every ship could normally carry 4,000 kilos of silk. During the period of *Shuin-sen* (the Red Seal Licenses, 1592-1635), Japan had relationships with 18 territories, mainly the Southeast Asian nations. From 1604 to 1635, about 356 *Shuin-sen* merchant ships came to Southeast Asia and Taiwan, of which 87 ships came to Quinam, 56 to Siam and Luzon (Philippines), 44 to Cambodia and 37 to Tonkin.<sup>10</sup>

After the first Trinh-Nguyen conflict (1627), the Nguyen Lord requested the Japanese influential merchants such as Chaya Shinrokuro not to come in Tonkin to trade. However, Japanese merchants still maintained their business with Tonkin because of their foreign affair balance and economic profits. Because of security, the Trinh Lord always strictly controlled the import of metal, weapons and gunpowder.

Among the Japanese traders in Tonkin, Wada Rizaemon was influential. He had experience in trading with Quinam, and as soon as he moved to Tonkin, Rizaemon immediately built a close relationship with the Le-Trinh authorities. When the Dutch trader Carel Hartsinck requested the Trinh Lord's permission to establish his trading post in Tonkin in 1637, Rizaemon qualified as the trading representative. However, as Rizaemon wanted to meddle in VOC's business and property and personnel protection, Hartsinck protested against him.<sup>11</sup> After 1635, Rizaemon usually asked help from the Dutch because he could not actively carry goods to Nagasaki and other Southeast Asian ports. In 1661, he also asked a Dutch ship to transport 14,000 Japanese silver coins to Tonkin. During 1660s, as the amount of Japanese coins and silver transported to the Tonkin was reduced, the Le-Trinh authorities faced difficulties in foreign economic payment. Rizaemon planned to control Japanese currency circulation in Tonkin but failed because of the Trinh Lord's protest. Certainly, the Trinh Lord did not want foreign traders to interfere too deeply in the domestic economic activities.

After 1639, influenced by the economic blockade policy, the Japanese could not continue to trade directly with Dai Viet. Many researchers have suggested that the Vietnamese-Japanese relationship ended after 1639. However, the Japan-Tonkin trade exchanges continued indirectly through Dutch and Chinese intermediaries. Raw silk, silk fabrics, aromatic spices, ceramics, forest and native products were still transported to Japan. On the other hand, because of the Ming (1368-1644) and the Ching (1644-1911) maritime embargo, the Western and Chinese traders living in Taiwan and the Southeast Asia faced a lot of difficulties in direct trade with China. In a situation that the Japanese-Chinese relationship was discontinued, they had to come to Domea, Pho Hien, Thang Long, etc. to buy silk, ceramics and other products for the Japanese and other markets. The overseas Chinese were the main

force in collecting and transporting goods from the domestic market to other countries. From 1647 to 1720, 266 overseas Chinese merchant ships sailed to Japan from Dai Viet.

In business, the exported silk from Tonkin was mainly produced at home. However, Tonkin still imported more silk from China in order to have enough for foreign merchant ships as well as to meet their requests of high quality silk. This extra imported silk came from the Chinese traders in the south of China. Although the Dutch established their relationship with Tonkin after the Portuguese, they set up a trading basis in Pho Hien early on. Their trading post was founded immediately after Hartsinck's journey of the Grol ship from Hirado (Japan) to Cacho (Hanoi) in March 1637. On the way to Thang Long, the Grol passed Pho Hien and carried along an amount of goods amounting to 190,000 florins. This large supply of goods immediately interested the Le-Trinh authorities.<sup>12</sup>

The Dutch penetration of Tonkin was in accordance with the VOC plan of controlling this high potential market. Making use of the Japanese seclusion policies (*sakuko*), the Dutch sent merchant ships to Pho Hien and Cacho to buy silk, ceramics for trading in Japan and other Southeast Asian city ports. From 1639 onwards, the Dutch and Asian merchant ships continued to conduct trade in Japan, even though they had to stand the pressure of *sakuko*.<sup>13</sup> Reliant on those intermediary traders, the Japanese-Tonkinese economic relationship was not interrupted. After 1639, the Dutch almost monopolized the Japanese market because they attained foreign trading incentives. The Le-Trinh authorities clearly understood the Dutch economic power and military potential, and reserved certain advantages for them, creating good conditions for them to establish foreign trade relationships. In turn they imported modern Western weaponry.<sup>14</sup>

After the establishment of a second Dutch trade basis in Thang Long in 1644, the Dutch-Tonkinese trade level grew even further. During 13 years (1641-1654), 51% of the amount of silk (equivalent with 3,538,000 guilders) imported in Japan by VOC were from the Tonkin. One can affirm that: 'The period of 1641-1654 was a golden period for the VOC because they could buy silk for very cheap prices in Tonkin to sell at good profits in Japan. VOC usually collected interests up to 250% or more from this business. From 1636 to 1668, the average VOC interest rate in the silk business was 119% from China, 183% from Bengal and 186% from Tonkin because the silk price here was cheap'.<sup>15</sup> During 1650-1660, the Dutch still continued to maintain their relationship with Tonkin for their trade profits, even though they were facing many difficulties.<sup>16</sup> The Japanese market needed a large amount of imported silk. Tonkin's raw silk resource was an important factor that enabled the Dutch to maintain their position in the relationship with Japan as well as to maintain VOC activities in the Asian maritime trade system.



### A reconstruction of Pho Hien III and Domea through archaeological fieldwork

The archaeological researches in Pho Hien and Domea were rather modest as compared to those in Hoi An. However, during the last three decades, a number of explorations and excavations have been carried out. Archaeologists and historians have been very interested in historical documents and practical geomorphic progress in the lower delta zone. During the last three centuries, the Red River system has been changed in such a way that it has become difficult to locate the exact locations of the former central location and the wharfs of the Pho Hien and Domea trade port system.

Foreign trade in Tonkin was dependent on climate factors and took place in a certain period during the year. People called it 'the business season'. Normally, this season lasted from November to April. During that time, foreign traders actively bought and collected goods while waiting for the southern monsoon. But when the season changed earlier, the Red River water level also lowered at least. The water amount in many parts and branches of the river lowered to 20 or 30% of the average water output. On the other hand, the river bed was changed by raining and floods.<sup>17</sup> This was the great disadvantage of the Tonkinese river port system. However, the Tonkinese river system still had two sea routes to meet necessary conditions for ships entering the mainland ports from the sea.

As an experienced navigator, W. Dampier described the Tonkinese estuary system in his *Voyages and Discoveries* rather precisely. In 1688, he himself came to Domea and Pho Hien from the Thai Bin estuary because it was larger and deeper than Roc Bo or Day. He wrote: 'I know not its particular name; but for distinction, I shall call it the River of Domea; because the first town of note that I saw on its bank was so called. The river estuary is in lat. 20d. 45m. It disembogues 20 leagues to the N.E. of Rokbo. [...] Domea has been the water line that most of European ships have entered because of its depth [...].'<sup>18</sup>

Far upstream from the estuary, about 5 or 6 miles, there was a crowded village with more than 100 houses. This was the place where the Dutch ships usually anchored. It was also called Domea. The merchant ships from other Western countries such as Portugal, England, etc. also entered this river connecting Pho Hien and Cacho. According to historical documents, the English ships always anchored at a place 3 miles upstream from Domea. Based on ancient maps and historical resources, we can confirm that the sea route of merchant ships from the Eastern Sea (South China Sea) to Domea and then to Pho Hien at that time was the Thai Binh river (or the Lau Khe river), through the Luoc River, joining the Red river and then going to Pho Hien. Therefore, the Domea estuary was the Thai Binh one, and the centre of the ancient Domea town was probably located in this confluence. This was

the major river connection leading to the great economic centres and towns that provided materials and products for Tonkin.

Since 1972, a number of scholars from the Hanoi National University and Hanoi Teacher Training University have carried out many excavations. In 1989, the Hai Hung Museum carried out an excavation in the area of Hung Yen town. At the depth of 0.60 centimetres, they discovered a ceramic kiln with a wall of a half a metre in width. The displays included big bowls and plates, made with a special technique. Expanding the investigation, they also discovered piles of adhesive bowls dating from the 17th century. We can confirm that was the place of handicraft ceramic production in Pho Hien.<sup>19</sup>

During the 1992 international seminar on Pho Hien, the Hung Yen museum reported extensively on the tangible cultural heritage and archaeological sites of Pho Hien and its surroundings. Not only a number of religious monuments, including a Christian church, but also the remnants of cultural monuments were identified, of which the majority dated from the 17th and 18th century. The researchers especially looked for vestiges of commercial streets and places where Westerners had lived. Ben Da, the main wharf, and an area around Hien Ha turned out to be the centre of activities where foreigners traded. Based on ancient maps, it was possible to determine where Western traders including the Dutch have been located. In the 19th century, the commercial firm area was rather intact. However, in due time human and natural changes including the building of the Red River dike have changed the area.

In February 2002 the Vietnamese–Japanese researchers group carried out four excavation exercises in the area of Hung Yen, especially in places where old maps pointed out the Dutch loge. Pottery of the 15th and 16th century was found, but research should be expanded in order to determine whether this was merchandise for Western trade partners. However, most ceramic displays in Pho Hien dated from the 17th and 18th century. Besides the Vietnamese origins, most foreign ceramics were from Cahn Duc Tran (Vietnamese: West of China) and from Guandong in the South of China, which were attractive to the local market and the overseas Chinese. Until today, with the exception of the Chinese ceramics, foreign ceramics have not been explored much. The reason, according to some researchers, is that Tonkin was also a big centre of ceramic imports and exports. Furthermore, it was difficult to import the Hizen ceramics into Vietnam because of its high price.<sup>20</sup> The exploration of kilns allows us to think that there were ceramic and glazed terracotta villages in Pho Hien in the 17th and 18th century.

Towards the Domea river port archaeologists carried out archaeological explorations and discovered many commercial display types, architectural vestiges, geographical locations and references to ancient place-names. Thereby enormous amounts of 16th and 17th century (and even 15th century) bricks, tiles, and glazed



Eighty-year-old Vu Van Sa (left) from the village of Tram Khe, with historian Phan Huy Le.

and unglazed ceramics and terracotta were discovered. The ovens of An Do produced ceramics for internal use and for export. Even a bowl with Siamese inscriptions was found, the exact date of which still has to be determined by Thai specialists. The finding of Vietnamese ceramics which was also found in Japan, suggests that this type of ceramics was exclusively meant for exporting spices, honey and sugar to Japan.<sup>21</sup> Today in Japan 'Vietnamese ceramics' are quite popular among practitioners of flower art (*Ikebana*) and tea ceremonies (*Chado*).

Although clear architectural foundations have not been found, the large amount of tiles and bricks affirm that relatively large-scale architectures were made of stable materials here. Certainly, An Do was an age-old resident area. Most of the displays dated from the 16th and 17th century and the others dated from as early as the 13th-15th century. The archaeological displays and the important temples in this region are true evidence of Domea's function as the port to the Red River Delta.

Based on those achievements, in the field work seasons in 2003-2006, researchers from the Department of History and a number of candidates and master-class students broadened the scope of investigation,<sup>22</sup> and included the concept that the Domea river port was certainly a large area, along the Thai Binh river system, including many wharfs where ships could enter, anchor for import and export of

ceramics and other commercial goods. Then, An Do village and Khoi Nghia commune might have been parts of this port system. Therefore, it is necessary to have an overview on the area and to carry out more concrete investigations in other places, among which the confluence of Thai Binh and the Luoc Rivers with the coordinate at 20d. 45m. 52s. latitude. This place is far from An Do, about 3 kilometres to the North.

In order to prepare the visit of the Dutch Consul-general and his experts in April 2006, we returned to Haipong, investigating two communes, Dai Thang and Tien Cuong in the Tien Lang district, especially the place called Do Mi wharf by the local habitants. The river is filled up now, so that boats cannot enter but its vestige remains rather clearly. There, we affirmed the area of Ben Do (the Mi wharf) and other place-names such as Vuon Quan (in the village of Tram Khe), Ao Don, Vuon Don and Ao Tra (in the village of Nhue Dong). They were close to one another, along the Mi River. In the Nhue Dong field, there was a hill for planting water melon, salad, turnips and cabbage. According to Mr. Vu Van San (80 years old), in the village of Tram Khe, who has a vast knowledge of the local history, the Thien Ly route was along the river. Obviously, those place-names are meaningful for researches. The local habitants also supposed that once Tram Khe and Nhue Dong were very rich because they were nearby the Mi River. They still remember the folk line of poetry: 'Come to Dang Cong to find beautiful wives; marry with men in Tram Khe if you like feasting' (*Vo dep thi xuong dai Cong / Muon an co yen lay chong Tram*).

The village of Giang Khau is nearby Nhue Dong and preserves a number of valuable steles in the commune house that date from the 17th and 18th century. Besides, according to the old men, there were some foreigner tombs called 'Ma Phien' and 'Ma Ngo' in the past. Ma Phien points to tombs of Westerners and Ma Ngo to Chinese. Nearby at the confluence of the former rivers was the village of Dai Cong which is possibly the place from where goods were transported (where the place-name of Dai Do or Ben Do occurs). The habitants of Dai Cong were well-known for their agricultural production technique. According to the old men, Dai Do was the main wharf for the transportation of goods. In the past there was a 'Dai Do street'. Perhaps, that was the riverside street described by W. Dampier in his writings.<sup>23</sup> In Dai Cong some Chinese lineages like Uong and Dang still survived. Other names refer to palaces or official buildings. In the village of Lac a temple is dedicated to an officer of the Tran dynasty who battled the Mongolian armies in the 13th century. This is possibly the place-name noted *Pagoda* with a sign of anchor in the European map (see the map on p77).

No explorations have been carried out to date but many valuable displays have been collected in the Domea confluence area. Vietnamese and Chinese glazed terracotta, pottery and ceramics dating from the 16th and 17th century, many of

which of the Chinese Chu Dau style, have been found. The discovery of Chinese ceramics and pottery was remarkable and might make the difference with other sites. Obviously, a trade port development and role is not based on the pottery and ceramic displays alone. It is necessary to conduct more archaeological and interdisciplinary research to affirm the Domea river port centre and to ascertain place-names. Nevertheless, based on the denseness of the old place-names and trading vestiges on the ground, we can guess a real and important centre of the Domea river port system in history. At least, according to Japanese, Dutch and Vietnamese experts, the discovery of exported Chinese pottery and ceramics and Vietnamese pottery and glazed terracotta at those places is an important sign of the international characteristic of the ancient Domea confluence area. The Vietnamese-Dutch cooperation program opens prospects for researching the Thai Binh estuary that was so very important in the domestic and international trade system in the 16th and 17th century.

#### Dutch-Vietnamese Relations in the 18th century

A century would go by before another Dutch VOC ship anchored at Hoi An. This time the harbour town seemed attractive as a trading post on the direct route between Coromandel and China.<sup>24</sup> The possibility of obtaining cheap sugar for Suratte and at the same time thwarting the French *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* were opportunities that seemed favourable to Batavia. The idea came from a private Scottish businessman who had been shipwrecked off Hoi An in 1747. This man, Archibald Duff, was said to have won the favour of the then ruler of Dang Trong, Nguyen Phuoc Khoat (1738-1765)<sup>25</sup> after treating his dangerous fistula successfully. During a stay in Macao he managed to interest VOC employees in Canton in a plan to re-establish trade relations with the southern king. In late 1752 the High Government in Batavia decided to send Frederik Roemer to Hoi An on the *Tulpenburg*. He was working in Canton as supervisor of cargoes (super-carga). Duff was appointed second merchant, travelled ahead of the others but did not wait for the arrival of the Dutch ship. He left for Hue to see the king. He allegedly fell out of grace there. Roemer was forced to pay high customs and harbour fees.

It also turned out that the selling prices for all kinds of goods were almost 20% higher for the Dutch than for merchants of other nationalities. Roemer paid the tolls and left Hoi An, arriving in Canton empty-handed. The next year a new attempt was made. The VOC presented Vu Vuong with a Dutch coach and horses, mirrors and birds, a total value of 5,500 guilders. In exchange, the VOC was

allowed to buy gold and a great quantity of cane sugar, which was sold at good prices in Ceylon and Suratte. In 1755 the VOC even concluded a five-year contract to ship great quantities of scrapped guns, lead and tin to Hoi An. These were used to produce metal coins with which trade goods could be paid for. In Batavia the agreement was disparagingly called an 'unprofitable, useless, indeed a windy contract'. The year after that, the Council of the Indies sent a ship to Hoi An to pick up all the VOC's possessions. A call to the 'freeburghers' of Batavia to send trade goods with this ship at their own cost had no result either. With Dang Trong no business was conducted anymore. All that remained behind in Hue was the grave of Captain Jacob (de) Roeper, and in Hoi An, that of sailor Anna Reesloot.<sup>26</sup> The office in Thang Long had already been closed half a century before that.

*John Kleinen*



## 5

## A glimpse of the Netherlands East Indies through the memoirs of Phan Huy Chu (1832-1833)

Phan Huy Lê

Phan Huy Chu was the scion of a family line of reputed scholars, which made up what is known as ‘the Phan Huy literary lineage’. His grandfather, Phan Huy Can (1722-1789), received a doctorate’s degree in 1754, and held important posts in the administration of the Le-Trinh in northern Vietnam. His father Phan Huy Ich (1750-1822) who also earned a doctorate in 1775 was a politician, diplomat, poet and writer, author of numerous works in both Chinese and *chu nom*, collected in *Du Am van tap* (Prose of Du Am) and *Du Am ngam tap* (Poetry of Du Am). Phan Huy Chu’s mother Ngo Thi Thuc (1750-1792), was the daughter of Ngo Thi Si (1726-1792) and the sister of Ngo Thi Nham (1746-1803), both were well-known cultural figures in the period between the 17th and 18th century. Phan Huy Chu’s wife Nguyen Thi Vu is the daughter of Nguyen The Lich, himself a doctorate laureate and a reputed expert of medicine. Having inherited a rich cultural heritage from both paternal and maternal families, since his earlier years Phan Huy Chu was an avid reader with a keen interest in history and geography. By temperament he was not inclined to pursue a mandarin career for its own sake. Although he did take the regional examination in 1807 he only passed the lower table (*tu tai*); this made him more determined to devote his time and energy to studies and research.

The family Phan Huy hails from Gia Thien village (now Thach Chau commune, Thach Ha district, Ha Tinh province). Phan Huy Chu’s grandfather, Phan Huy Can moved to Thuy Khue village (now Sai Son commune, Quoc Oai district, Ha Tay province). This is the picturesque area of Chua Thay, where limestone mountains endowed with breathtaking grottoes rise above the plains of the Red River. Here one can find the Thien Phuc pagoda (Thay or West-pagoda), the Boi Am pagoda (One-Roof pagoda) and other memorable historical and cultural relics. And one cannot miss the famous Chua Thay festival that takes place in the spring each year. Amid the scenic beauty and rich cultural settings of his birthplace Phan Huy Chu built for himself a humble house in the mountains where he could read and write without being disturbed. For ten long years he chose to follow the motto ‘*be mon, ta khach*’

(close the door, bid excuses to visitors) and devoted all his intellect and energy to compile the 49-volume *Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi* (Institutions of different dynasties). With this encyclopedic work that deals with Vietnamese history and culture, Phan Huy Chu established himself as a prominent scholar of 19th-century Vietnam.

In 1819 Phan Huy Chu took the regional examination for the second time but again ended up on the *tu tai* list. Apparently there was an unbridgeable gap between the strict requirements of formal examinations and the vast knowledge of the talented candidate himself. Henceforth he decided not to make his way in life by way of the mandarin's path, which was mainly taken by intellectuals of his times, and set his mind on further studies. But there was a twist in Phan Huy Chu's destiny when, in 1820, king Minh Menh (reign: 1820-1841) convened a number of northern intellectuals to the capital of Hue for an audience. Thereafter Phan Huy Chu was given the post of compiler at the royal academy, in charge of drafting court documents. During his mandarin's career Phan Huy Chu went abroad three times as an official envoy – twice to China in 1824 and 1832. However, on the second mission the delegation in which he took part was reprimanded for failing in its duties, and punishment was meted out: its leader was exiled and the two deputies, one of whom was Phan Huy Chu, were stripped of all functions. In 1833 these very three disgraced envoys were ordered to lead a mission to Giang Luu Ba (Batavia, present-day Jakarta, Indonesia).

The delegation left on three big sailing boats in the winter of 1833, and returned in the summer next year. The results of this mission were highly appreciated by the Court and all three envoys were restored to their former functions. However Phan Huy Chu on the pretext of suffering a pain in his leg, asked for early retirement. During his twelve years' service as a mandarin, Phan Huy Chu was given important posts such as prefect of Thua Thien district (adjacent to the capital of Hue) and deputy governor of Quang Nam province. On three occasions he went abroad as a court envoy. But he also went through bad spells including reprimands, demotions and outright dismissal. It seems that the mandarin's path full of pitfalls did not suit the vocation and temperament of a researcher like Phan Huy Chu. After retirement he devoted the rest of his life to writing and teaching. Apart from the monumental *Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi* of which the first 5 chapters on geography were also published separately under the title *Hoang Viet Du Dia Chi* (Geography of Vietnam), Phan Huy Chu's other works included *Dieu tran tu su tau so* (Petition on four subjects) addressed to the king and the travelogue *Hai Trinh Chi Luoc* (A brief account of a sea voyage), which recounts his voyage to Batavia with a preface written in the summer of the 14th year of Minh Menh's reign (1833).

Phan Huy Chu's mission to Batavia was part of the Nguyen court foreign policy in the first half of the 19th century. After establishing sovereignty over the entire

Vietnamese territory, the Nguyen court – particularly during the reigns of Gia Long (1802-1819) and Minh Menh (1820-1841) – set out to strengthen the nation's internal administration. While paying attention to economic, social and cultural developments on the domestic front, it also closely followed events in neighbouring states to be on guard against outside threats.

Historically Vietnam maintained relations with China and the countries of Southeast Asia for many centuries. From the 16th and 17th centuries it developed trade ties with Western countries such as Spain, Portugal, Holland, Britain and France. Closer to home the British occupied Con Lon Island in 1702. Further out, the Portuguese set up trading posts in Malacca as early as 1511, the Spanish occupied Manila in 1571, the Dutch took over Sunda Kalapa in 1522, the British and the French occupied several seaports on the Indian subcontinent. Colonialist moves of an aggressive nature by Britain and France toward the end of the 18th century and in the early part of the 19th century pose a threat to the sovereignty of the nations of Asia. Facing this ominous danger, the Nguyen, in particular under Minh Menh, dispatched a number of envoys to major commercial centres operated by western powers such as Malacca, Singapore, Batavia, Penang, Semarang, Luzon, Bengal, Calcutta, Madras etc. purposely to procure merchandises and weaponry but also to report on the activities of the western powers. Phan Huy Chu's mission during 1832-1833 reflects the concerns and activities of the Nguyen court in this context.

Before Phan Huy Chu, other envoys had been sent to Ha Chau (southern region) a term used to denote the southern region covering the Indonesian archipelago. For example Ly Van Phuc (1796-1867) went to Bengal by way of Singapore, Malacca and Penang in 1830; Ha Tong Quyen (1789-1839) and Phan Thanh Gian (1796-1867) went to Ha Chau in 1830, Cao Ba Quat (1809-1854) went to Batavia in 1844. These envoys were not only high-ranking mandarins but also noted writers and poets who left behind a number of poems recording their impressions and emotions during their trips. Among them, Ly Van Phuc was an exception with his travel account *Tay Hanh Kien Van Ky Luoc* (Summary account of things seen and heard during a voyage to the west). Phan Huy Chu himself was a writer and poet, but above all he was a historian, a geographer and a researcher. As a result he had recollected his experiences to write *Hai Trinh Chi Luoc* in the spirit spelled out in his *Loi Dan* (foreword): 'During the sea crossing, I made observations and took notes, rather in haste, of the surrounding environment. After arriving in Singapore (Giang Ba) and Kelapa (Luu Ba) I noted down thoroughly my observations of the local customs and products, together with what I have learned of the local history inasmuch as I was able to enquire'. Phan Huy Chu's travel account reflects the perceptions of a Vietnamese intellectual on Singapore and Jakarta in the first half of the 19th century. In the account the daily life and the customs of

the Dutch were faithfully recorded. Although the mission did not have an interpreter, the envoys could rely on the large Chinese community who played an important role commercially in these places. Phan Huy Chu was a Confucian scholar with a deep knowledge of Chinese culture and language – particularly the *Han Viet*, the Sino Vietnamese variation. He and other envoys on missions to China or to foreign ports with a large Chinese community, often employed local Chinese as interpreters: their communication was made possible by way of exchanges jotted down quickly in Chinese characters. This is called '*but dam*' (dialogue by the writing brush).

### Tan Gia Ba (Singapore)

The Vietnamese mission left on three large sailing boats. After leaving Da Nang harbour in the winter of 1832, they sailed along the coast past the Cham island (Quang Nam province), the Re island (Quang Ngai province), Thi Nai harbour (Qui Nhon, Binh Dinh province), Vung Lam (Phu Yen province), Vi Ne or Mui Ne (Binh Thuan province), Con Lon island (Ba Ria-Vung Tau province). From there the boats headed out for Tiuman island with its peak serving as a navigational landmark on the maritime lanes linking China with Southeast Asia – and via Malacca with South Asia, hence the name *Dia Ban* (compass). The boats then sailed past the harbour of Bach Thach (White Rock – Pedra Branca) a landmark 32 miles northeast of Singapore. It appears like a white rock rising above the sea, at its foot is a lighthouse built in 1851 to facilitate navigation. The National Museum in Singapore still preserves an illustration of Bach Thach harbour prior to the construction of the lighthouse. From there the boats entered the harbour of Tan Gia Ba (Singapore).

Singapore used to form part of the kingdom of Srivijaya, which consisted of the Malacca peninsula, the islands of Java and Sumatra – referred by Vietnamese historical records as Do Ban or Cha Ban, phonetically transcribed from the name Java. As Phan Huy Chu wrote: 'Tan Gia Ba (Singapore) formerly was Do Ban (46/149),<sup>1</sup> and 'Tan Gia Ba (Singapore) and Giang Luu Ba (Kelapa/Batavia/Jakarta) formerly belonged to this country' (151/149). In early 16th century, the Hindu kingdom of Majapahit disintegrated as Islam expanded with the formation of various sultanates in the region, including the Malacca sultanate. By then Singapore was already a prosperous trading port. The Western powers began to expand trade activities and extend their influence in the region. The Portuguese came to Malacca in early 1509 and occupied it in 1511, establishing an important power base in the Far East. From early 17th century the Dutch VOC extended its power in insular Southeast Asia with the occupation of Java and Malacca. In the next century the English East India Company in a fierce rivalry with the VOC, wrested Penang from the sultanate of Kedah in 1785 and occupied Malacca in 1795. At the Vienna Confer-

ence in the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat, England agreed to return Java and Malacca to Holland, but kept Penang and set up a new base at Singapore. Realizing the strategic position of Singapore, the deputy governor (of Bencoolen) Thomas Stamford Raffles put pressure on the sultan of Johor to sign a treaty on 6th December 1819, granting Britain the rights to establish a trading port in Singapore in exchange for a fixed sum together with half of the customs revenues from this port. From then on Singapore developed rapidly as a leading free port. In 1823 Raffles signed a second treaty with Johor, extending rights of possession and of exercising British laws in Singapore. The Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824 affirmed England's authority over the Malacca peninsula. From 1826 Singapore and Penang were administered by the English East India Company under the authority of the Governor-General in Bengal. These were the major developments before Phan Huy Chu set foot in this trading port. By then Singapore had become a colony under British rule but there were still features of Dutch influence, which Phan Huy Chu duly observed and recorded in his memoirs.

Phan Huy Chu was aware of the fact that the Hong Mao (British) had occupied Singapore and established their rule over it. 'It takes 5 months for the Hong Mao to travel from the Atlantic Ocean to here.<sup>2</sup> Their boats are equipped with highly sharp weapons. That is why they could sail over long distances and occupy these islands, keep them and administer them. For a few hundred years now, Bo Da (Java) has been subjugated, the people live in the forest and are forced to pay taxes. They would like to resist the aggressors but could not and had to submit themselves to them and then serve them'. The author gave a brief account of the British official presence in Singapore: 'The administration quarters are located on a hill; the flagstaff and buildings rise up in a majestic manner. There are a few hundred professional soldiers. Their banners and weapons are in excellent state'. This is the present day Fort Canning Hill, formerly called Singapore Hill or Government Hill, an illustration of which (dating from 1830) can be viewed at the National Museum of Singapore.<sup>3</sup> Singapore's bustling city life was described as follows: 'Along the river storehouses stand next to one another; the foreign traders live in this quarter. The seafaring vessels are anchored in the harbour and there is a busy traffic of merchandises'. A map of Singapore dating from 1828 shows that the city was divided into four parts: the Europeans lived in the centre; the Bugis and the Arabs lived in the eastern part while the Chinese, Malays and Indians lived in the western part.<sup>4</sup> The area described by Phan Huy Chu is the Boat Quay, as shown in two illustrations dated 1830 and 1837, which fits well with G.W. Earl's description of Singapore in 1837: 'The commercial portion of the town is on the westside of the river's entrance. A range of houses, fronted by wharfs, extends as far as the bridge, a distance of about three hundred yards, the principal streets running at right angles with the river. With the exception of the commercial square, these

streets are occupied exclusively by Chinese, Khips, and other natives, who are chiefly merchants or ship keepers'.<sup>5</sup> According to De Rienzi (1836), 'European ships are armed with canons and flying pennants of various colours, junks from China, Siam and Annam, korokoros of the Bugis, proms from Borneo, pontinos from the Philippines'.<sup>6</sup>

In Vietnamese historical records, people from West are generally referred to as *Tay Duong*, the British are called *Hong Mao*, the Dutch *Hoa Lang*. Phan Huy Chu described how the residents of Singapore lived and dressed themselves. 'They are generally dressed in white, wearing a short vest and trousers. Their hats and shoes are all black; the general appearance is neat and elegant. The westerners, Dutch and



Cavalryman from Java. Watercolour painting by E. Hardouin, ca 1850.



English alike, all wear white clothes. The Java people wear long tunics and wide trousers made of cotton with flowered designs mainly in red and black, varying in style. The westerners live in brick houses, two or three stories high; their doors and windows are adorned with tinted glass. All look bright and spacious. What was most striking in the eyes of a Vietnamese like Phan Huy Chu is the Dutch preference for white clothing, since white is the colour of mourning in Chinese and Vietnamese customs. In the writings of Vietnamese envoys such as Cao Ba Quat (1808-1855) and Ha Tong Quyen (1789-1839), the Dutch are called *tuyet y khach* (people in snow-white clothes).<sup>7</sup>

Phan Huy Chu made some remarks about the monetary system and the calendar currently in use in Singapore. He wrote: 'In Singapore dollars (*phien ngan*) and duits (*dong loi*) are used as means of exchange and not *tien van*. A *phien ngan* is equivalent to 360 *dong loi*. *Dong loi* is circular like *tien van*, but has no hole in the middle, there is a chicken figure engraved on it'. *Phien ngan* or silver dollar and *dong loi* or *duit* made of copper are monetary units that were used in Singapore and the Dutch East Indies. *Dong loi* engraved with the figure of a chicken and which are circulated in Malaya is the '*duit ayam*' or 'chicken coins'. Phan Huy Chu compared this with the *tien van* that circulated in Vietnam and China at the time, pointing out that while both are circular, the *tien van* has a square hole in the middle which allows a string to pass through – reflecting the ancient symbols of 'round heaven, square earth'. Phan Huy Chu remarks that 'perhaps this is the (monetary) system commonly used in the Western countries, for the Hong Mao (English) and the Hoa Lang (Dutch) both use it', adding further that 'in ordinary transactions, a *loi* is equivalent to a *tien*, whereas in our country a *loi* is worth 6 *van*, which is rather expensive'. In Vietnam the monetary unit is the *quan*, 1 '*quan* is worth 10 *tien*, 1 *tien* is worth 60 *van*, and according to the exchange rate at the time, a *loi* is equivalent to 6 *van*, whereas in Singapore a *loi* is worth 1 *tien*, or 60 *van*. As regards computing the year number, while in China and Vietnam the reign of a king is used as a point of reference, in Singapore when registering an event 'at the end of the paper there is a line: this is the Holland year 1833, on such a date and such a month; this is the practice used by the Dutch and the English.' The author speculated that 'the counting must start from (the year of) the founding of Holland ...' and wondered about 'the foundation of Holland thus dating back quite a long time'. This is an error on Phan Huy Chu's part, perhaps due to the misinterpretation of the Chinese he met in Singapore who did not make the distinction between the Christian calendar and the foundation of Holland. Before Phan Huy Chu, a number of Chinese travellers to Batavia like Trinh Ton Nha (Cheng Xun Wo) and Uong Dai Hai (Ong Tae Hae) also made the same error.<sup>8</sup>

Phan Huy Chu took note of the Westerners' seven-day week and their lifestyles as follows: 'The Europeans get together once a week to enjoy themselves. On that day

the government offices and the markets are closed. It is similar to the old (Chinese) custom of resting and bathing once every ten days. In the West people enjoy themselves by seeing each other and holding banquets. As for eating habits they use spoons instead of chopsticks, and often drink sugared water, preferably chilled. The dining table is laden with dishes of meat, which they tear off with their hands. They like to drink wine by the bottle, which they hold upside down as if pouring through their noses'. The customs and lifestyles of the Europeans thus described contrast sharply with Vietnamese and Chinese culture. In China and countries under its influence culturally, a three-week month with a ten-day week are observed; there is no seven-day week and a Sunday as in the Christian calendar. The author also makes reference to the old tradition dating from the Han dynasty according to which mandarins were given a free day every ten days to bathe themselves.

### Giang Luu Ba (Kelapa/Batavia)

Leaving Singapore, Phan Huy Chu's boats travelled 2 nights and 2 days before reaching Riau, which he considered to be in the border zone between the British and the Dutch, 'the beginning of the Dutch territory'. The port of Riau or Tanjung Pinang on Bintan Island was under Dutch authority and only became important after Malacca was ceded to the British following the London Treaty of 1824. Since 1828, The Dutch tried to develop it into a free port to compete with Singapore. The attempt failed, however, because as Earl, the British merchant who visited the place in the early 1830s pointed out, the ships coming from the East past the Malacca Strait did not stop there and instead proceeded to Singapore just 40 miles away, thus leaving commercial activities to local and Chinese traders.<sup>9</sup> When the Vietnamese boats arrived there, 'a patrol boat carrying a white-and-red flag went out to meet us. Five soldiers conducted the inspection, asked how many we were and where we were heading, took notes and then left'.<sup>10</sup>

From Riau the boats carrying the envoys sailed for about 7 or 8 days across open seas until they reached the settlement of Bon To (Mentok) situated northwest of Banka island. They sailed along the shores of Bangka and Ba Liem Bang (Palembang), a district of Sumatra, entering a zone dotted with many islands called Thien Son (Thousand Islands or Pulau Seribu). Here the passage is 'full of submerged rocks and sand banks; one wrong move and it is disaster, no ships dare to pass these waters at night' (156-157/54). There are also the dangers of *gio xoay* (tornado) in the morning or evening, as Phan Huy Chu described: 'Every time dark clouds appeared, orders were given to roll back three or four sails. Instantly a wind hit us. Big waves rose up, the boat rolled about precariously. The skipper had to hold the rudder steady to keep the boat in balance until the tornado subsided, then the sails were up again, with the wind behind it the boat sped ahead like flying. This

happened once a day, sometimes once every two or three days'. These tornados were the source of fear for the ships passing through these waters and were recorded in the journals of Chinese and Western travellers.<sup>11</sup> Afterwards, the boat carrying the Vietnamese envoys anchored in the port of Giang Luu Ba, present-day Jakarta, Indonesia.

This port dates back many centuries. In the 14th century it was part of the Hindu kingdom of Sunda, and was called Kelapa or Kalapa in Malay, meaning 'coconut tree'. The Chinese call it Giao Luu Ba or Gia Luu Ba, sometimes translated as Da Thanh – the City of Coconut Tree. In the early 16th century, the Portuguese in Malacca extended their influence to Java, intervening with the king of Sunda to let them establish a trading post at Kepala in 1522. However in 1527, the sultanate of Demak from central Java took over Kepala and changed its name to Jayakarta. Towards the end of the 16th century, commercial ships from the Dutch East India Company (VOC) began to arrive at Jayakarta; the Dutch put pressure on the Sultan of Banten to allow them to set up warehouses and build a fortress there. Alarmed by these developments the sultan of Banten appealed to the British for help in 1618, but the VOC troops occupied Kepala by force and changed its name to Batavia in 1619. From this strategic base the Dutch set out to conquer the sultanates of Banten and Mataram and established control over the whole of Java by the end of the 17th century. In the second half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, Anglo-Dutch rivalry reached a high point. In 1811 the British forcibly occupied Batavia. After the collapse of the Napoleonic empire, Holland regained its independence and became an ally of England; Batavia and the rest of the Dutch East Indies were handed back to the Dutch. At the time of Phan Huy Chu's visit, Batavia had been returned to Holland, although the rivalry continued throughout the region.

Generally Phan Huy Chu possessed some knowledge about the history of Batavia, albeit there were errors as he wrote: 'Kelapa belongs to the old country of Jawa. The Dutch have controlled it for a few centuries now. Recently the English attacked and occupied it. The Dutch did not resist and withdrew to remote mountainous areas where they conspired with the Javanese to poison the sources of the rivers. Many English people died after drinking the water. Those who survived became frightened; they dared not stay on and returned (Batavia) to the Dutch, but demanded an indemnity ... Now they (the English) are angry, preparing themselves for war. They have collaborated with the French to oppose the Dutch (...) Now they are about to retake Kelapa. The Governor-General here is building up fortresses, training the troops and reinforcing the sea defenses'. The fact is that in 1830, in anticipation of the threatening war in Europe, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies put forth a plan for defending Java and reinforcing the fortresses at Batavia.



Batavia. On the left De Harmonie club, in the middle P. Oger's tailor shop (from Paris). The unpaved sandy roads had to be kept moist with watering cans.

Phan Huy Chu was highly impressed by the scale and the prosperity of Batavia: 'Concerning the level of luxury, Kelapa surpasses Singapore considerably. From the harbour to the suburbs, houses with tiled roofs stand side by side for miles on end. Storied houses face one another across the streets, merchandises are piled up everywhere. Along the streets are canals that are connected with the harbour; boats come and go, while on land carriages follow one other, occupied by men dressed in white and seated on embroidered cushions. In the Dutch quarter the houses are luxurious and modern. Their walls are beautifully decorated with pictures and mirrors that dazzle the eyes. The interiors are full of precious, sparkling objets d'art. The more prosperous houses have elegant gardens, adorned with rare flowers and stones, which make a delightful sight. The general appearance of prosperity and beauty reminds us of Ngaio Chau (Wuzhou) in China, but the houses here are more spacious and comfortable.' Reference can be made to the map of E. Selberg.<sup>12</sup>

Ngaio Chau was a prosperous and picturesque city of Guanxi province where Phan Huy Chu had visited on his two official missions to China. As a Confucian scholar steeped in Chinese civilization Phan Huy Chu used it as a yardstick, affirming that Batavia is of a more elaborate scale compared to Wuzhou. He marveled at 'the quarters being well laid out and well regulated, the streets are broad and even;

the bridges over the rivers are protected on either side by wooden banisters. In the morning workers water the streets to facilitate circulation' (167-168/68). An illustration of the European quarter by C.Th. Deeleman dated about 1850 fits this description.

Regarding the administrative structure, Phan Huy Chu told us that the Dutch divided Batavia into three districts: Giang Luu Ba (Kelapa, Batavia), Ba Lang (Semarang) and Tu Lu Mat Van (Surabaya). At the head was a Governor-General whose wide authority also covered Bon To (Mentok) and Ha Lieu (Riau). 'The Governor-General's palace is situated in the mountains, to get there one has to pass six postal stations. When he goes out, he uses a carved carriage covered with parasols; eight guards riding in front to clear the way. He wears no armor and carries no weapon, looking relaxed but imposing all the same. The Chinese call him Great King or His Majesty (...) This post changes hands every three years so no one has to stay long.' The Governor-General's palace is no doubt the castle at Buitenzorg, built by Governor-General Van Imhoff in 1745, and finished by Governor-General Van der Capellen. It is situated in a broad valley in the middle of the high mountains of Preanger province.

Phan Huy Chu also paid close scrutiny to the military organisation, which he gave high marks: 'The military system of the Dutch is well organized. Soldiers are dressed in short felt coats with dark green collars, wearing a satchel (in the back) held by a copper plate; their waist is tightened by a piece of embroidered red velvet; they also wear a belt, cotton trousers and leather shoes. Generally, the uniforms are rather neat, the guns with sharp bayonets are impressive. The flags are colourful, not longer than 6 metres. Generally these troops are not that much different from the Qing soldiers, the only difference is that they do not carry arches and arrows. Military discipline seems rather strict. I was told that the number of the regular troops stationed here does not exceed one thousand. Soldiers from Java only serve as subalterns'. Although Phan Huy Chu did not actually read the penal code himself, he was a keen observer of the local scene: 'Those who commit light crimes are punished by whipping: the offender is tied to a wooden scaffold, a few dozen of lashes are administered to his shoulder, then he is released. Offenders of serious crimes are chained from body to feet and are forced to do hard labour. Often they are seen working on fortifications. A supervisor dressed in red takes charge of dozens of men in chains labouring in earthwork (...) I heard that the laws are very strict. Lending money at excessively high rates will be punished. The laws are based on impartiality, hence judgment is passed in an equitable manner, ensuring a good public governance'.

While in Java Phan Huy Chu particularly paid attention to the commercial and technological aspects of the Dutch in particular and the West in general. He noted: 'Commercial vessels from far-away lands gather off the port of Batavia. Making



enquiries among the Chinese, he learned that last year there were ships from Siam and France, and this year from the West came American ships. He noted that 'many foreign traders gather in Batavia; merchandises are abundant. Annual revenues from taxes amount to twenty million *dun* (...) Western traders can easily increase their money here many times over. According to Phan Huy Chu, the Dutch are highly skilled, the products they bring over from the West are mainly crystals and glasswork, there are no pearls or jade'.

About the money system he observed that 'in Kelapa people use the same money as in Singapore, namely *phien ngan* (silver dollar) and *dong loi* (duit) (...) In addition, there is paper money which was first introduced some ten years ago, then taken out of circulation for a time, and was put back in use by the authorities last year'.

Phan Huy Chu examined some examples of Western technology such as the steam boat, the sawing machine and the carriage. He describes the steamboat as follows: 'The steamboat is very extraordinary indeed. Inside the boat there is a boiler, which is fed by coal, giving out a big fire. A transversal tube takes in water from the sea. Once the machine starts to operate, the boiler propels the steam while the tube sucks in water which it releases and the wheels create waves pushing the boat forward like flying. There is no need for the sails to catch wind; instantly it can go in any direction. Looking from the shore, it is a supernatural scene. Such a machine is so extraordinary, one has not the faintest idea how it is made. I enquired among the Westerners who told me that that it was first invented by the Americans; since then other countries have adopted it. Nowadays it is quite common in the West'.

About the sawing machine, he wrote: 'the process is as follows: first one has to create a canal from a river to take in water, then build a two-storied structure on the canal side; next to it is a wheel moved by the current across the canal. In the upper part of the structure one fixes a wheel shaped like an umbrella horizontally, under which a circular pivot is installed. Both ends are attached with wooden columns, which serve as rotation axes. At the lower story, another wheel is fixed which is coupled to the one outside; one places two big saws from both sides (each saws has eight iron blades) that are attached to the pivot on the same story. Below each saw a big piece of wood is placed, held up by iron hooks. When one starts the machine, the wheel is moved by water and the axe of the umbrella-shaped wheel propels an upward movement; the internal and external wheels turn downwards and the saws move up and down. The saw-teeth penetrate the wood and open its veins. The planks are pushed towards the saws by suspending hooks, no human labour is required for pushing and replacing; in no time at all two big pieces of wood are transformed into eight planks. Once the water moves, the wood starts to be sawn. All happens so perfectly as if it were the work of creation, eliminating all human



labour and movements. Who invents this technique must be the equal of the most eminent brains.

As regards the means of transport, Phan Huy Chu gives a detailed description of the carriage: 'The carriage of the Westerners are refined, light but solid, far better than those of China. Most have four wheels, of medium size, well made. The lower part is round, the upper part is square. The carriage rests on four iron bars, which serve as delicate suspensions; inside it has elevated seats; there are wide windows on four sides. The bodywork is made of wood, covered with dark green lacquer and revamped with glittering gilt. The wheels are finely made and turn easily. The vehicle is flexible and is not easy to overturn. It is drawn by two horses, and when they run at high speed it seems like flying.'

Phan Huy Chu conscientiously tried to understand the workings of the various machines and instruments produced by Dutch and Western technology which he highly admired: 'In general Dutch instruments are works of ingenuity and precision, for example their watches and steam ships are truly the creator's marvels. Their assembly is intricate, tightly packed, and not easy to figure out'.

Aspects of Dutch and Western culture also attracted his attention. For example he described the way the Dutch people are dressed: 'According to Dutch customs, men wear short jackets, whereas women's clothes are attractive and elegant; their dresses and skirts trailing on the ground; their hair is set in buns adorned with



Carriages on the Waterlooplein in Batavia.

flowers; around the waist is a silk belt; their shoes are finely made. These are the clothes worn in daily use. When attending banquets, women put on their head jewels made of gold and of precious stones that sparkle. According to the Dutch customs women are given special attention; one attaches importance to the way the fair sex dress and adorn themselves'. Phan Huy Chu observed that Dutchmen often wear white jackets and black hats, and used such terms as *tuyet y* (snow-white dress) or *tuyet y khach* (men wearing snow-white clothes) in referring to them. The illustration made by Hardouin of a Dutchman dressed in white fits Phan Huy Chu's descriptions well. Despite his background as a Confucian scholar deeply steeped in the patriarchal precepts of *trong nam khinh nu* (men are favoured over women) and rigid social class differentiation, Phan Huy Chu offers objective renderings of the high regard given to women and the egalitarian relations among the Dutch people. He wrote: 'When going out, the husband must help his wife onto the carriage. When a visitor comes to the house, the woman would chat and laugh amicably, there is no need for her to stay in private chambers, for such are their customs'. He added: 'Western customs are simple, without regard for social class or authority. Officials and commoners are treated in an equal fashion when they mount a carriage or when they are seated. People greet each other by shaking the right hand to show their courtesy. When someone of an inferior position greets a person of higher status there is no kowtow. It is said that their king conducts himself in quite simple manners; when riding in his carriage if he sees someone clasp his hands to salute him, he would stop his carriage to return the courtesy. 'High regard for women and the informal relations between officialdom and the common folk were in sharp contrast with Vietnamese code of conduct, which was steeped, in Confucian ethics. During Phan Huy Chu's times, traditions dictated that, particularly among the upper echelons, the woman is duty-bound to obey her father and husband; she walks behind her man, and when there are visitors, she would briefly greet them then withdraw to the back of the house to prepare food and make necessary arrangements for the guests.

Since the king and his mandarins made up the ruling class, their modes of living from housing to utensils of daily use, their means of transport, their personal manners were socially differentiated from those of the common people. Phan Huy Chu was well aware of these things when he made comparisons, but he merely described what he saw, without commenting.

### General remarks

Vietnam has come into contact with the countries of the West since the 14th century. First came the Portuguese, then followed the Dutch the English, the French, the Americans, etc. Missionaries and traders arrived at Vietnamese ports to



European in a smart white suit. Watercolour painting by E. Hardouin, ca 1850.

respectively propagate the Christian faith and to conduct commerce, many of them have written detailed accounts of the natural landscape and the indigenous people they met, describing their culture and modes of living. It is surprising that, despite the fact that numerous Vietnamese including kings, mandarins, tradesmen, scholars and historians have come into contact with people from the West, there were precious little written about these encounters on the part of the Vietnamese, save for a number of poems and sketchy notes. At the major ports such as Thang Long (Ha Noi), Pho Hien (Hung Yen), Hoi An (Quang Nam) there were factories set up by the Dutch, the English, the French.

In the 18th century, the Nguyen Lords in Dang Trong invited a number of Western doctors to treat members of their families: the Spaniard Juan de Arnedo, the Czechs Jean Kofflers and Jan Siebert, the Hungarian Karol Sleminski. A number of scientists such as Jean Baptiste Sauna from Italy, Sebastian Pirès and François de Lima from Portugal, helped the Nguyen Lords to study astronomy and mathematics. In Dang Ngoai in 1627, the missionary Alexandre de Rhodes presented to Lord Trinh Trang a book of astronomy, which had been translated into Chinese.<sup>13</sup> The Nguyen Lord also invited the Portuguese Jao Da Cruz to set up a foundry to manufacture canons at Phú Xuan (Hue). An artisan named Nguyen Van Tu from Quang Tri boarded a commercial vessel heading for Holland where he learned how to make clocks and binoculars; he returned two years later bringing back the acquired technology.<sup>14</sup> Towards the end of the 18th century, in the war between Nguyen Anh and the Tay Son, the former received the support of French officers that included the transfer of Western military know-how, the construction of Vauban-style citadels was a case in point. In the 19th-century emperor Minh Menh (1820-1841) convened a number of missionaries to the capital of Hue for the purpose of translating technical books into Chinese. In 1839 Minh Menh instructed the state shipyard to build a steamboat, which was completed successfully. Regrettably the many encounters with the West on Vietnamese soil concerning economic, cultural and technical matters were recorded in official Vietnamese historiographic documents as simple facts, lacking in concrete details which otherwise might reflect the local people's perceptions of and responses to the people from the West and their technology.

During the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century, the Vietnamese courts dispatched many missions to the commercial and military strongholds held by Western powers in Southeast Asia and South Asia. The purposes were to buy merchandises and weapons, but also to observe the local situation and report back. According to Chen Chinh Ho,<sup>15</sup> from 1778 to 1847, not including eighteen missions of which little information is available, there were eleven missions to Batavia, six to Singapore, two to the Indian subcontinent, two to Penang, two to Semarang, two to

Luzon, one to Johor and one to Goa/Malacca. Among the envoys, there were poets, writers and scholars; what they wrote of their experiences in the main was poetry, there were hardly any detailed accounts at all. '*Hai Trinh Chi Luoc*' by Phan Huy Chu was a rare exception; despite its brevity, it provided concrete, insightful observations and lively descriptions of Singapore and Batavia, including the author's incisive perceptions of the Dutch people.

Notwithstanding cultural and ideological differences, Phan Huy Chu portrayed the Dutch – a people from a distant land where customs and traditions widely differed from those of Vietnam and the East – as highly talented in commercial and technical matters. He did not pass judgments on their modes of living which were different from his own, and went as far as using such terms as 'intricate' 'marvellous' and 'super intelligent' in lauding their talents and achievements in the technical field which in his view surpassed those of China. He also linked the Dutch with the technological civilization of the West, noting that 'in the science of precise calculations, for a long time now one has come to admire the Westerners for their superb intelligence which is unsurpassable (165/65). His only objection was that the people of Holland, and of the West for that matter, 'is ignorant of the precepts and teachings of Chu (Zhou) and Confucius. Although they excel in many things, they remain barbarous' (167/67). Nevertheless Phan Huy Chu was by no means an ultra conservative who was hostile to the civilization of the West. For example when evaluating the works of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) on the calendar and the map of the world, he praised 'such eminent knowledge, such extraordinary ideas that differ from our age-old knowledge, and this coming from a Westerner'. Since Phan Huy Chu was steeped in Confucian teachings, the realities that he saw in Singapore and Batavia must to some extent have shaken the very foundation of the doctrines to which he adhered. It must have been the workings of a sophisticated mind and a respect for truth that had led him to record his travel experiences in such an unbiased and truthful manner. Above all, his travel notes reflected the perceptions of a Vietnamese intellectual in the first half of the 19th century on the people of Holland, their way of life, their culture and technology.

# 6

## The Dutch consuls in Saigon (1867-1946)

Jody Leewes

In April 1946 Esq. D. van den Brandeler, a Dutch military attaché, undertook an official mission to French Indochina. The aim of his journey was to assist in the repatriation of Dutch citizens that had remained behind in this colony after the majority of them (a total of around 1,700 prisoners of war and citizens detained by Japan during the Second World War) had already been transferred to Singapore by the RAPWI (Recovered Allied Prisoners of War and Internees) six months earlier. Eight months after Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north, Van den Brandeler recorded the number of Dutchmen that were still in the country. He drew up a short list of 25 people: fourteen prisoners of war that had not yet been repatriated, six civilians, two monks, a nun and two members of the French foreign legion.

Before the Second World War the number of Dutch citizens in Indochina had been consistently minimal. It is true that in 1867 a Dutch consulate had been established in Saigon, but that did not necessarily mean that there was a large Dutch community. What was the reason? The following article will focus on the question of who these consuls were and what functions they performed in Saigon.

### The establishment of the consulate

The establishment of the Dutch consulate in Saigon was intimately connected with the general 'scramble for Asia' that was happening within the second half of the nineteenth century. In fierce competition with one another, Western states were vying to extend their colonial power. France was strongly interested in the Southeast Asian mainland and clashed with England there. This forced the French to concentrate on the region that roughly corresponds with the territory of the present-day states of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. It was here, after the French conquest of Saigon in 1859, that the colony of Cochinchina was established in 1862. France was later to establish protectorates extending over Cambodia (1863), Annam and Tonkin (1884) and Laos (1893). In 1887 these areas were united in the



Indochina Union, also called French Indochina. The area was strategically located against the underbelly of China, a country that many ascribed fabulous riches to. Like the other colonial rivals, the Netherlands closely followed every detail of the French expansion, mainly from Batavia, the centre of the Dutch East Indies' colonial administration.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Netherlands were not in the economic vanguard of Europe. Compared with other European powers they lagged behind greatly in the areas of trade, shipping and industry. According to some, active promotion of trade in other countries would be required if they ever wished to catch up. This was aptly expressed by Dutch industrialist C.T. Stork during a debate in Parliament: 'Not a country in the world is better located for trade and industry than ours', he argued. 'But what we principally lack is connections with the foreign colonies. With the exception of our overseas possessions, there are no Dutchmen in Asia or America. Everywhere one encounters Germans, Swiss and Englishmen. As a result we receive less, or more expensive service than other trading nations. This can change and it will have to change'.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the 'connections with the foreign colonies', much was expected from the Dutch consular service in the middle of the nineteenth century. In Asia, where the Netherlands did have a position as a major colonial power, the Dutch consuls stood under the supervision of the Governor-General at Batavia. The number of Dutch consuls in Asia rapidly increased between the 1850s and 1860s, after the Netherlands concluded agreements with a number of other colonial powers regarding bilateral admission of consular representatives in the colonial possessions. This came as the result of a resolute change of policy, inspired by the wish to draw more profit from the growth of international trade. To this purpose, no fewer than seven Dutch consulates were established in Southeast Asia over a period of twelve years, from 1856 to 1867. It is noteworthy that up until then there had been no Dutch representation at all in those regions. One of the new establishments was a consulate in Saigon, by far the most important trade city in the area which had fallen into the hands of the French. Setting it up was not simple. Although attempts to station a Dutch consul in the city were made soon after the conquest of Saigon, the French did not want to authorize this move until 1867. This had to do with the rather feeble power base in the first years of their colonial adventure in Indochina.

As was the case with most Dutch consular representations abroad, the post in Saigon was held by a person whose main job was something else. This was characteristic within the Dutch consular service. It was not until after 1874 that a training course for consular officials was started; the office of consul was usually an honorary function. The honorary Dutch consul compensated the costs he incurred on behalf of his function with the chancellery duties that he charged for his

consular services. Most consuls made their living in trade. Their appointment was usually relative to their financial resources and to the prominence of the position that they consequently occupied within the community in which they resided. They considered their consular office as status-enhancing, their activities as sidelines. The consuls' failings were often blamed on their lack of professionalism. Moreover, the fact that many of these consuls were foreigners was also often felt as a drawback. Rising nationalism led to doubts about the loyalty of these 'foreign' consuls. This was also the case with the Dutch consuls in Saigon. They were regularly the object of this kind of criticism. Nevertheless, until 1946 assigning full-time career diplomats to Saigon was never under serious consideration. The Dutch interests within the French sphere of influence were simply too small for this.

### **A difficult start: consuls Stadnitski and Servaas (1867-1872)**

Was Saigon a popular post? At first, it would seem so. In the four years after the French conquest of Saigon in 1859, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague received no fewer than three spontaneous applications for the function of Dutch consul in the city. But only in 1867, when after several requests the French finally authorized the appointment of a consul, a separate candidate was chosen to those who had initially applied. It was the Dutchman Robert Aemilius Stadnitski, born in Nijmegen. He was the manager of a brickyard in the Dutch town of Bommel, where he had been involved in developing a procedure for moulding bricks with steam.<sup>2</sup> At the time of his appointment, however, Stadnitski was working for the trading firm Renard & Co, founded in Bordeaux in 1861, and had just been transferred from Singapore to Saigon.

In his first report the new consul put great emphasis on the possibilities for Dutch trade. Although the country's most important market, rice, was completely controlled by the Chinese, he still saw opportunities for the Netherlands. He therefore sent a number of samples to the Netherlands. As for export, Stadnitski thought of Dutch textiles. He expected profitable trade in this environment, as long as they were imported directly from the Netherlands and were consequently cheaper than the English textiles that were imported via Singapore. Soon afterwards, however, Stadnitski fell seriously ill. In July 1868 the Ministry in The Hague received a letter from him, in which he excused himself for not having applied for leave according to regulations. His state of health had forced him to hurriedly board a French mail boat to Europe. A few months later the Ministry received word from his brother Jan that, in spite of a stay at the Karlsbad spas, he had passed away.<sup>3</sup>

The acting representative consul that Stadnitski left in Saigon, Jan Nicolaas Servaas, seemed the most obvious successor, despite his application having been rejected in 1863. The appointment of Servaas, a medical doctor and a businessman,

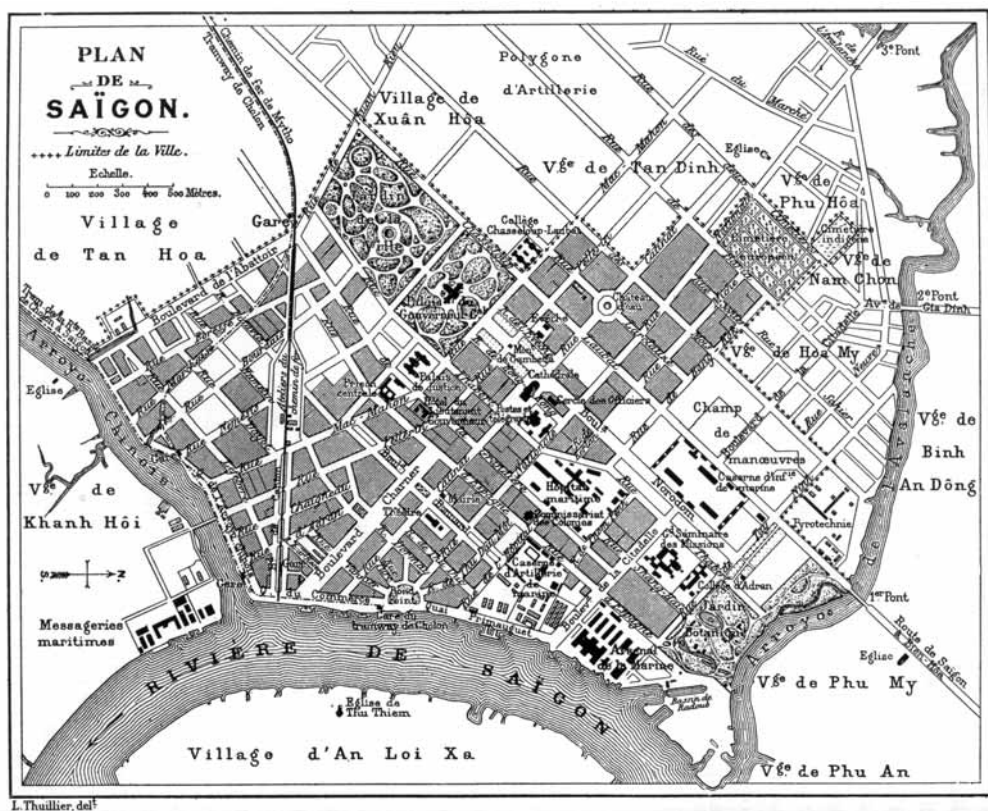
led to a controversy between the Rotterdam and Amsterdam Chambers of Commerce. The former considered him the ideal candidate, calling him the paragon of diligence and refinement, whereas Amsterdam preferred the Frenchman Grandhomme, who was working for the German trade firm Behre & Co. The Ministry suspected that Amsterdam was following its own agenda, and considered that they would rather see the Dutchman Servaas as consul. Therefore Rotterdam's advice was followed, but within a year of his appointment in 1869, Servaas too had to return to Europe because of ill health.<sup>4</sup> From Marseilles, he reported to the Ministry that before his departure he had appointed the German, Speidel, as his acting representative.

### **A period of stability: consul Speidel (1872-1894)**

For a period of almost two years, beginning in May 1870, Carl Theodorff Speidel filled in as consul without any official status. Servaas' official resignation did not come until 1872. He resigned, as he said himself, because returning would have 'fatal consequences' for his health.<sup>5</sup> Once Servaas had officially resigned nothing stood in the way of appointing the German.<sup>6</sup> At the time of his appointment Speidel was employed by the trading firm Kaltenbach Engler & Co in Singapore. In 1874 he left his employer and opened a branch of the company Speidel & Co in Saigon. This family business had been founded in Frankfurt in 1862. Together with two relatives (one of them his brother, J.G. Speidel), Speidel was going to apply himself to the rice trade. It may be true that this market was being dominated by the Chinese, but Speidel & Co was the only local company that was able to use a European steam powered rice mill, the Union Rice Mill. During Speidel's tenure as consul and as a consequence of the rice trade, the company grew to become a well-known firm. It still existed in 1920 and a great number of products were traded out of its branches in Haiphong and Phnom Penh, amongst them paraffin and oil lamps.

After the brief tenures of the first two consuls, Speidel brought the necessary continuity to the activities of the consulate. He was at the head of the Dutch representation for no fewer than 24 years. During this long period he supplied the Ministry in The Hague with a quite regular stream of information. This information consisted on the one hand of letters with political or military subjects and on the other, annual reports with economic data.<sup>7</sup> The Ministry published the consul's annual reports in a series of *Collected Consular Communications and Reports on Industry, Trade and Shipping*. In these reports, which were strictly organised according to ministerial rules, Speidel provided information on such subjects as harvest reports, harbour fees, exchange rates and movements of ships.

A segment on rice was never absent from these reports as it was the most important (export) product. Although over the years the French colony's rice production



Map of Saigon, ca. 1890.

steadily increased, as a result of improved planting and the introduction of new irrigation and drainage techniques, the yearly yields varied wildly. Harvests with a 25% increase or decrease as compared with the previous year were not uncommon. The mediocre quality of the rice also saw to it that demand was strongly dependent upon the supply of faster growing strains from Burma and Siam. These strong fluctuations in supply and demand made the course of the rice export to the Dutch East Indies quite unpredictable. Indeed, during Speidel's time in office it fluctuated between a low of 1,517 tons of rice (or 0.4% of the total export) in 1891 and a high in 1875 of 77,000 tons of rice (23% of the total export). On average, exports to the Dutch Indies did show an increase during these years, however, it was still dwarfed by the exports to China: In the top Dutch year, 1875, 60% still went there.<sup>8</sup> A rice trader himself, Speidel was also involved in efforts to enhance rice quality. His name appears under a treaty from 1874 signed by ten European trade firms and fourteen Chinese traders, in which agreements were made about processing rice locally.

Other than supplying general information, the consul was also there to provide local help to Dutch citizens. There were not many of them in Saigon, but sometimes



Dutch sailors on the Hotel L'Union terrass, Saigon.

a Dutch official visited the colony, in one instance, J.A.B. Wiselius, in 1877, an administrative officer from the Dutch East Indies. Speidel lodged him in his own house and introduced him to the French governor. That the employees of the firm Speidel & Co were also involved in this kind of assistance can be seen in a report (1890) by an anonymous man from China. He travelled in the company of a Dutchman who visited Saigon, and he described how Speidel offered him lodging at the home of his Chinese employee Chan Eng Bok.<sup>9</sup>

The trade firm office doubled as the office of the consulate. Just like all other trading firms and consulates it was located on a quay in the port. The office was on the ground floor, with working hours from 7 to 11 a.m. and 2 to 5 p.m. The first floor served as living quarters for the lower European employees. Wiselius' report describes how Speidel's office was clearly recognizable as the Dutch consulate as it had the Dutch Lion on a coat of arms above the door and the national flag hoisted in front of it.<sup>10</sup>

Consular help needed by Dutch sailors whose ships called in at Saigon proved to be of a completely different nature. In 1894, apprentice mate Sluyter visited Saigon on board the *Evertsen* and he described in evocative language how the crew carried themselves in Saigon. 'First I must say that it is easy for them get liquor on board



here, especially cognac. 60 or 78 cents in Dutch money buys a bottle of good cognac, 20 cents a bottle of good wine. As a result, three quarters of the gentlemen were already drunk before we set out'.<sup>11</sup> These sorts of drinking bouts sometimes got out of hand and the French authorities would take action. Sometimes a ship's crew got into trouble with the law because of smuggling. It was the consul's task to assist them in the judicial process.

Speidel's position as consul was not undisputed. J.C. Opstelten, an ex-colleague of Speidel's at Kaltenbach Engler & Co, requested, in a letter of 1874, that the Ministry appoint him consul. With a certain irony, he pointed out that the Dutch interests were now in German hands.<sup>12</sup> In response, The Hague limited itself to suggesting to Speidel that he appoint Opstelten as his vice-consul in case of his own absence. This never happened, however. Speidel only trusted his brother and H. Kurz, an employee of his firm, to replace him at the consulate.

There were other people who held objections against a German consul and not always for the obvious reason that a foreigner has other loyalties. In a report on the occasion of a naval visit to Indochina, the commander of H.M. propeller ship *Zilveren Kruis* had other reasons to see Speidel's German nationality as a disadvantage: 'The separation between Germans and French in Saigon is so great that a German cannot become a member of a French Club'.<sup>13</sup> It was not very probable that this supposed social isolation caused Speidel problems. On the contrary, the success of his trading house rather assured him a place among the prominent citizens of the city. Moreover, the long time he had resided in Saigon had lent to Speidel's lifestyle a French tinge. And indeed, after his honourable discharge at his own request in 1894, he settled in Paris. For his successor, he proposed a German employee from his company.

#### **Pursued by the past: consul Daumiller (1894-1897)**

In spite of being the only candidate, Jacob Friedrich Daumiller was not immediately appointed as the new consul. His background cannot have been to blame for this, as Daumiller could boast a very extensive career in trade: first four years in Amsterdam and then no fewer than 29 years in Batavia. The last ten years in Batavia he had been employed by the German trade firm C. Bahre & G. Kinder, where he was also responsible for the work of the consulates of Oldenburg, Saxony, Bremen, the new German Empire and Denmark. Daumiller spoke and wrote perfect Dutch and had two excellent references: the director-secretary of the Javanese Bank and the commander of the militia at Batavia.

Although prolonged periods between the discharge of an outgoing consul and the appointment of an incoming consul were not unusual, Daumiller had to wait particularly long for his appointment, almost two years. A letter from the then



resident of Batavia, Schmidstaat, to the Ministry in The Hague was probably to blame for this. Schmidstaat pointed out that Daumiller owed his position at Bahre & Kinder solely to his brother Wilhelm Daumiller, who was a partner in that firm. After Bahre & Kinder had gone bankrupt, Daumiller was said to have given himself over to risky speculations in the coffee market. This led to a forced liquidation that, according to Schmidstaat, had been a ploy on Daumiller's part to avoid paying part of his debt with the Chartered Bank. It worked: he was acquitted of part of the debt, a total of 47,000 Dutch guilders. After this adventure Daumiller was able, with the help of an old friend, to start with a clean slate at Speidel & Co in Saigon. Schmidstaat found this serious enough to suggest not appointing him. The Ministry, however, decided to wait. The absence of other candidates and the relation that had been built up with Speidel & Co left little choice. In the end, Daumiller's reputation turned out to be less damaged than expected and he could therefore be appointed without further problems.<sup>14</sup>

As a deputy consul, however, Daumiller had not sat still. He had already taken the initiative of reporting on the role of Dutch commercial shipping. Just like his predecessor Speidel, he saw shipping as the key to enhancing Dutch competitiveness in Indochina. So far, Dutch products had been imported in very small quantities and in very roundabout ways, mainly on board foreign ships. In order to be really competitive, a direct and regular supply of Dutch goods by Dutch ships was needed. But the fact was that, year after year, the number of Dutch ships that called in at the port of Saigon was far less than the number of ships from other countries. As Daumiller saw it, regular services had to be set up, as England and France had done. The Dutch East Indies Steamboat Company had made an attempt around 1888, setting up a regular service between the Dutch Indies and Saigon, but the enterprise had been short-lived with little success. When the first results fell short of expectations, the company, which was actually English but operated under a Dutch name, immediately stopped the service. In Daumiller's opinion, a truly Dutch company would not have given up, in order to get Dutch trade under way. The initial losses could have been amply compensated later.<sup>15</sup> On the basis of this idea, KPM (the Royal Dutch Packet Company) had been founded in 1891, a company that set up profitable regular services in the Dutch Indies. Although the services were later extended to include French Indochina, Dutch trade did not profit from this. The system of high import tariffs in French Indochina was organised in such a way that it only promoted the trade and industry of France itself.

A year and a half after his appointment, Daumiller was already discharged, at his own request. The consul mentioned family circumstances as the reason for his departure. He too recommended a German colleague employed by Speidel & Co as his successor.<sup>16</sup>

### **The last man of the House of Speidel: consul Woelz (1898-1899)**

The choice of Charles Henri Frederic Woelz was simplified by the absence of suitable Dutch candidates in Saigon.<sup>17</sup> The only Dutchman residing in the city at that moment was one of Woelz' subordinates. This man, of whom nothing else is known, was not proposed because he lacked the social status to be appointed consul. Woelz, born in Stuttgart in 1853, had been in Saigon since 1877 and was an experienced worker. However, his long years in the tropics had apparently taken their toll, as one year after his appointment he already requested to be discharged due to his poor health. The discharge was granted and he returned to his hometown. He left the consulate in the charge of Eugene Meyer, yet another colleague from Speidel & Co. In spite of the reference from his former boss and ex-consul Speidel, Meyer was not automatically appointed as the next consul. For in April 1899 another candidate presented himself, and he was Dutch.<sup>18</sup>

### **A Dutchman at the consulate again: consul Luykx (1899-1906)**

The Dutchman Nicolaas Godfried Maria Luykx had shortly before switched from his old employer Brinkmann & Co in Singapore to Kaltenbach Engler & Co in Saigon. Luykx was not a partner in this firm yet, but the trading house, where Speidel had once been employed, had a very good reputation. Luykx enjoyed a certain prestige and was well-to-do. In view of the appointment of a new functionary, the Chamber of Commerce at Amsterdam voiced the expectation that a consul who held the Dutch nationality would deal with Dutch interests in a more active manner. Still, strangely, Meyer was preferred. The reasoning was formed in that Luykx was not yet a partner and therefore lacked status. Moreover, it did not seem good to take the consulate away from Speidel & Co. There was a chance that later, if no suitable (i.e. Dutch) successors were available, one would have to return to Speidel & Co with one's tail between one's legs. The Hague ignored this advice however and appointed Luykx.<sup>19</sup> Thus, three decades after Servaas, the consulate was headed by a Dutchman once again.

A full month went by before Luykx took the helm from Meyer. After only five months he left for Europe, again because of health problems. He remained there for almost a year. At his request, Frans Fischer, the consul of Austria-Hungary, replaced him.

In one of his later reports, Luykx wrote about Dutch trade: 'The import of Dutch articles remains insignificant due to the onerously high import rates and is restricted to small quantities of printed cotton, cigars and liqueurs'. In the same report he also mentioned a product in which the Netherlands could acquire a considerable share, namely oil. For years the import of paraffin to Indochina had been rising, and that of

candles decreasing. As the volume increased, fierce competition had broken out. Established suppliers in Indochina included Standard Oil from the USA and the British Shell Transport & Trading Company, which imported Russian oil and had built storage tanks in Saigon and Haiphong. Oil from the Dutch Indies was imported in cans by Royal Oil [Koninklijke Olie] under the brand name Crown Oil. To be able to make a stand against Standard, Shell and Royal Oil begun cooperating in 1902 under the name Asiatic Petroleum Company (APC). Thus this new Dutch/British combination had the existing Shell infrastructure in Indochina at its disposal.

In spite of this joining of forces, the fight against Standard remained difficult. Between 1904 and 1908 a Dutchman, Jan-George Mulder, was the depot manager for Asiatic in Haiphong. When his countryman Hendrik Muller visited Haiphong in 1908, however, he found the Asiatic warehouse abandoned. They were no competition for the great quantities of highly-refined American paraffin. Asiatic's position only improved after the demand for 'heavy' oils such as gasoline and fuel oil saw an explosive increase as a result of the growing use of the combustion engine.<sup>20</sup>

In May 1905 consul Luykx traded Saigon permanently for Europe after Fischer had already sat in at the consulate several times during his temporary absences. In 1906, from London, Luykx offered his resignation.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Jan-George Mulder (1869-1922): salesman, adventurer and photographer**

There is little in the collection of photographs that Jan-George Mulder (1869-1922) left to his family that provides direct information about his life in Vietnam. What we do know about the man is gleaned from archival documents, secondary sources and account books that he kept after 1908 on his return to the Netherlands. Mulder was an employee of the German firm Speidel & Co that began operating in Indochina in the 1880s. He travelled to Asia at the age of 35 and in 1904 started to sell lamp oil (kerosene) for the Asiatic Petroleum Company (APC) in the remote harbour town of Haiphong. APC was the marketing company for two emergent giants in the oil business, Shell Transport & Trading Co. and the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company. From 1904 to 1908, Mulder used a *Gaumont Steréospido* to photograph his work environment (offices and outside settings), scenes from his private life, as well as outings to several places. Mulder's photographs are mainly stereoscopic images on glass plates and depict cities, harbours, landscapes and a number of human subjects whose identities remain unknown. The result is a large number of fascinating if somewhat enigmatic images of colonial Haiphong and its surroundings, none of which contains a single caption or any textual information about what is pictured.

The gate to the Red River delta was the port of Hai Phong, which means ‘the Guardian of the Sea’. Traditionally, a lucrative trade in silk, tea and textiles extended as far as Yunnan in southern China. Haiphong soon became home to a small French enclave and gradually grew to include a number of villages along the main river, the Cua Cam. This *Quartier Indigène* was preceded by a harbour area where small storage facilities and a customs house were built. In 1904, the year that J.G. Mulder arrived, the city of Haiphong resembled a building site, with a newly erected hospital for the French Navy and local government staff, and other major projects underway. The municipality was represented by a tribunal, a Chamber of Commerce and a local branch of the *Banque de l’Indochine*. The population numbered about 18,000 Vietnamese and 6000 Chinese. A minority of about 1000 Europeans, mainly Frenchmen and a few women, occupied the European quarter. Jan George Mulder had his office along the busy *Rue Paul Bert* (present day Dien Bien Phu street), in a building Speidel & Co shared with a



Mulder with pitch helmet and a colleague in a sedan chair carried to the beach and surrounded by the ‘Porteuses de Do Son’, fisher women who worked off-season for owners of beach facilities, clad in festive tunics and wearing flat hats or scarps (photo copyright Carla Mulder, ca 1904-1908).

branch of the British *Chartered Bank*. He soon moved to a private house at the corner of the *Canal Bonnal* and the *Rue de Cherbourg* (nowadays Tran Phu and Nguyen Khuyen).

Mulder worked with Chinese traders who distributed the lamp oil throughout the Delta. An almost visible 'colour line' existed in Haiphong. This was institutionalised in the colonial grid of the town planning, with separate quarters for Vietnamese, Chinese and Europeans. The Chinese were treated as foreign nationals or 'Eastern foreigners'. Part of an international link between the port of Hong Kong and Haiphong, their presence was tolerated as long as it benefited French business.

Judging from his images, Mulder was most interested in the Vietnamese countryside where he visited communal houses, temples and pagodas, and where he went duck hunting. He favoured outings to the Bay of Ha Long and the beach at Do Son (20 kilometres from Haiphong). This fishing village was originally a centre for blue water fishing. Soon it would serve as the 'Deauville of Haiphong'.



J.G. Mulder and a colleague having a meal with three Chinese compradors at their office around 1906. Also Vietnamese entrepreneurs had entered the maritime trade. One of them, Bach Thai Buoi, was reputedly one of the four wealthiest people in Vietnam (photo copyright Carla Mulder, ca 1904-1908).

When Mulder returned home from Haiphong in 1908, he left a place where the modern history of Vietnam had started to take shape. In that year, the first of a series of nationalist activities started a string of anti-colonialist revolts. The backdrop was provided by the emerging modernisation of Vietnamese culture and influenced by the stunning Japanese victory over Russia in May 1905. Patriotic scholars organised schools free of colonial supervision, such as the Free School of Tonkin (*Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc*), and organised cooperatives and places of work where a new generation of Vietnamese could be prepared for a peaceful independence. The colonial administration's tolerance for the modernisation movement was short lived and promptly vanished after uprisings in central Vietnam and attempts to poison the garrison of Hanoi in June 1908. Mulder, who must have witnessed or at least known about these events, returned to Europe and married. He had earned a fortune at Speidel's firm, which enabled him to migrate to the US in 1910. He founded a farming community in Virginia inspired by the Dutch socialist, writer and psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden, who, inspired by Henry David Thoreau's Walden, established a communal cooperative in Bussum, in the Dutch province Noord-Holland. This idea, similar to one adopted by reformist scholars in Vietnam, was that residents would be self-sufficient, sharing everything. Like Van Eeden's experiments and the ill-fated cooperatives of the Vietnamese, Mulder's plans failed. His wife didn't support the harsh life at the farm. The couple went back to the Netherlands. After his return, he invested in Imperial Russian Railways bonds and was eventually left bankrupt. He died in 1922.

*John Kleinen*

#### **The Dutch consulate and Diethelm & Co: consul Röst (1906-1923)**

Luykx proposed the Dutchman Dirk Gustaf Röst as his successor. Although still young, this man already boasted a fine record. Through mediation of the association 'Het Buitenland', established in The Hague, he had obtained a situation with the firm Hooglandt & Co in Singapore in 1898. Thirty years earlier, a young Swiss man Wilhelm Heinrich Diethelm had begun his career with the same firm. After rising to partner in Hooglandt & Co in 1886, Diethelm founded the firm Diethelm & Co, independently from the other firm. As a result, the Swiss Diethelm & Co and the Dutch Hooglandt & Co in Singapore were closely related, in practice forming one company. In 1890 Diethelm & Co extended their activities to Saigon and opened a branch there.<sup>22</sup> Fourteen years later, in 1904, Röst switched from Hooglandt & Co in Singapore to Diethelm & Co in Saigon. There, the company traded in a great variety





Poster advertisement of the firm Diethelm & Co., with branches in Saigon and Haiphong.

of goods. An advertisement from the thirties lists their trading activities: textiles, raw materials, metals, hardware, stationery, groceries, liquor, photographic articles, pharmaceutical products, cosmetics, chemicals, paint, building materials, coal, tires, car parts, machines and instruments.<sup>23</sup>

Röst stayed in Saigon for eighteen years. When he was on leave from April 20, 1909 until March 23, 1910 his colleague E. Hottinger of Diethelm & Co replaced him at the consulate. After his return Röst was also appointed consul of Sweden. He was later decorated by Sweden. He was also praised in a report of the commander of *H.M. Tromp*, who called in at Saigon in 1912.

In 1911 Röst met Charles Frey, a rising star within the firm Diethelm & Co. After this, Frey several times performed consular duties whenever Röst was absent. Frey and Röst departed for Paris almost simultaneously in 1922. There, Frey was going to be in charge of the purchasing department of Diethelm & Co, and maybe he had held out the promise of a nice job in Paris to Röst. However true that may have been, in January 1923, from Paris, Röst presented a request to be discharged as Dutch consul; his discharge was granted one month later.<sup>24</sup>

**Saigon and Hanoi, two cities and a world of difference: consuls Meyeringh (1923-1935) and Perroud (1933-1945)**

In January 1923 Röst proposed a subordinate, the Dutchman Ernst Friedrich Johan Marie Mathieu Meyeringh, as the new consul. At the moment of his appointment Meyeringh was 35 years old and had resided in Saigon for nine years.<sup>25</sup> In a report of 1927 the commander of *H.M. Soemba* expressed praise for Meyeringh. Five years later, in 1933, on the occasion of his tenth anniversary, he was knighted and received the Order of Orange-Nassau.

Three years earlier, in 1930, the Dutch envoy in Bangkok, H.J.W. Huber, under whose jurisdiction French Indochina fell, suggested opening a second post in the French possessions in addition to Saigon. Logically, he was thinking of Hanoi. For in 1887 the French had elevated this city, of old the administrative centre of precolonial Vietnam, to be the capital of their *Union Indochinoise*. For this reason, most of the foreign powers had gradually opened consulates in Hanoi or in the port of Haiphong nearby. Huber had a preference for Hanoi, but not a single Dutchman was to be found there. In Haiphong there was only a Frenchman who had become a



The Diethelm & Co. office, with the Dutch consulate.

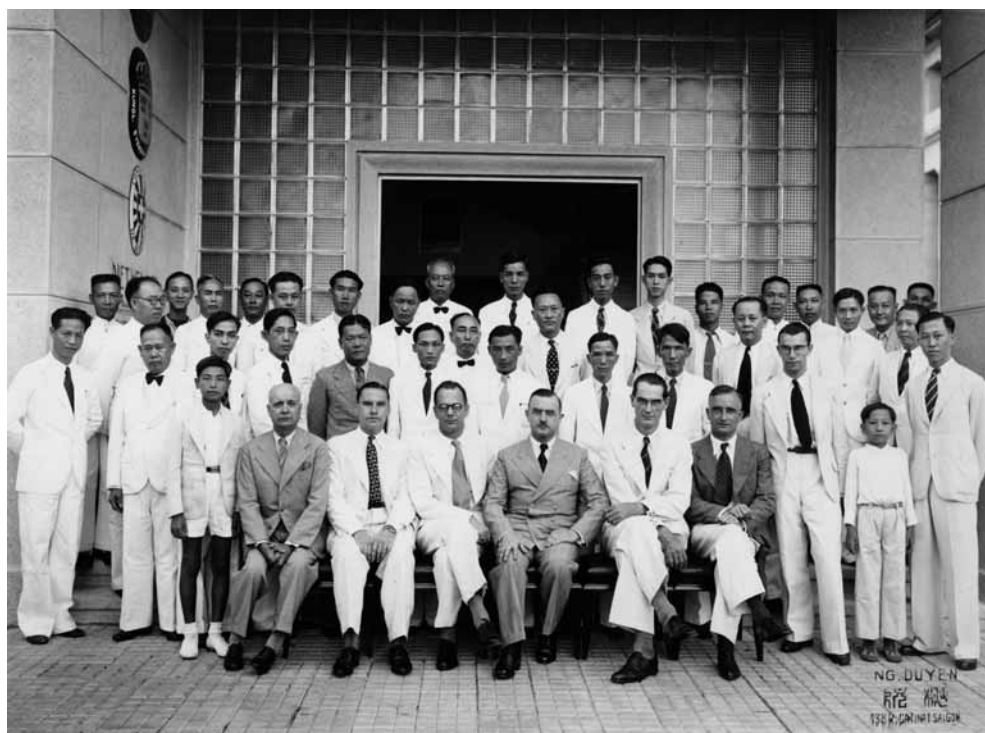
naturalised Dutchman, a Mr. Jansen, who was working for Franco-Asiatique des Pétroles. This company had been founded in 1917 as a working company of Asiatic Petroleum Company (APC), the cooperation between Shell and Royal Oil mentioned earlier. After the departure of this firm from Haiphong in 1908, Dutch interests had returned in 1917 in the shape of Franco-Asiatique. Jansen, however, was to leave Haiphong soon and was no longer a candidate.

Still, a suitable candidate was eventually found in Hanoi. It was the Frenchman Auguste Perroud. He was born in Lyon and had resided in Hanoi since 1906. Perroud owned a well-known silver business in the city and was also the head of the Hanoi Trade Fair and the local Chamber of Commerce. After the French government had made it known in June 1933 that they had no objection to a Dutch consulate in Hanoi, Perroud's appointment was quickly taken care of. Meyeringh was informed of this in early September 1933 by the new envoy in Bangkok, M.J. van Schreven. The district of the Dutch consulate in Hanoi included the protectorate of Tonkin. Saigon remained responsible for the other four parts of the union, viz. Annam, Cochinchina, Cambodia and Laos.<sup>26</sup>

Meyeringh reacted furiously to the new appointment. He had hoped to be promoted to consul-general but instead now had to cede part of his jurisdiction to a new consul. Huber, who had gone into retirement already and who could not defend himself anymore, got all the blame – while he had actually proposed Meyeringh for a royal decoration. But Meyeringh also aimed his fury at the recently appointed Frenchman Perroud, condescendingly referring to him as 'that little shopkeeper' in a letter. After having received reports that Meyeringh was spreading all kinds of strange gossip and was neglecting his duties as consul, Van Schreven responded by deciding in April 1934 to travel to Indochina himself to size up the situation created by this hothead.

The envoy's visit to Saigon was sobering. Meyeringh behaved indifferently towards his superior, was not helpful, even unabashedly boorish. Van Schreven found, moreover, that Meyeringh had strongly neglected his tasks as consul. This made the envoy suspect that Meyeringh, in order to hide all this, was consciously seeking a confrontation. The same trip took Van Schreven to Hanoi too, where he was accorded a very different reception. Consul Perroud was the picture of helpfulness, despite that the man struggled with health problems at that time. They were the result of wounds he had incurred when, shortly before, he had had to save his children from a burning house.

Nevertheless, the Frenchman suggested all kinds of ideas to stimulate trade with the Dutch Indies. He also had good contacts with high-ranking French officials and he managed to set up talks between them and Van Schreven. The agenda featured, especially, the problems around Japanese espionage and the help that that country was giving to local nationalists, which was recognisable for Van Schreven, who saw a comparable situation in the Dutch Indies. His French discussion partners showed



Group picture of Diethelm & Co. employees in Saigon, with consul Sauer (sitting, far right) and Hartlieb (sitting, second from left).

themselves very pleased with Perroud's performance and underlined the importance of his function. After these talks, Perroud further accompanied van Schreven on his visit to Haiphong.

After his return to Bangkok Van Schreven concluded that in principle it would be better to bring all of French Indochina under the jurisdiction of the consulate in Hanoi, with the exception of Cambodia and Cochinchina, which would remain under the representation in Saigon. Thus, 'Saigon' could be reduced to a vice-consulate under the consulate in Hanoi. This suggestion was no doubt in part inspired by the envoy's personal experiences with both consuls, but it also had to do with a political assessment. After all, being the centre of the French colonial administration, Hanoi had significantly more political importance than Saigon.

With his long career in the service, Meyeringh could not be demoted to the rank of vice-consul, nor simply discharged. Therefore, the discontented and incensed consul was asked to present his own resignation. Although Meyeringh was allowed to propose a successor, this was a mere formality since the Ministry in The Hague had already emphatically indicated to him their preference for his subordinate Marinus Johannes Sauer.<sup>27</sup>



### **A simple man: consul Sauer (1937-1939)**

Sauer had already replaced the consul several times in Meyeringh's temporary absences. Directly after Meyeringh's discharge, Sauer was put in charge of the consulate again, but this time officially. His formal appointment as vice-consul followed in February 1936, but the decree was suspended.<sup>28</sup> The cause for this was a negative report by rear admiral J.S.C. Olivier. Olivier was the commander of the naval squadron that called in at Saigon in November 1935. He called Sauer friendly and full of good will but he deemed his social position insufficient to be a 'worthy' representative of the Netherlands. According to Olivier, Sauer was a man of slender means, who had too few contacts with the prominent figures of Saigon. Moreover, Sauer was living in a house that, according to Olivier, was absolutely unsuitable to receive visitors.<sup>29</sup>

The mission in Bangkok jumped to Sauer's rescue. It was true that Sauer was not well-to-do, but what he had was sufficient for a business city like Saigon, with relatively few formal obligations. Also, Sauer had meanwhile found a better residence. Moreover, Sauer's contacts might be few, but they were of high quality. Bangkok pushed for a speedy appointment, because Sauer had faithfully sat in at the consulate all that time. Bangkok's judgement decided the matter and, as of October 1937, Sauer was able to formally assume his duties. He resigned when he returned to the Netherlands in June 1939.

### **Consul without appointment: Hartlieb (1939-1941, 1945-1946)**

When Sauer proposed his colleague Eugene Hartlieb as his successor, in 1939, the consulate had been in the hands of Dutchmen working for Diethelm & Co for more than 30 years. This was mainly because the Swiss firm Diethelm represented so many Dutch company interests in a colony where there were hardly any Dutch people. The *Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland*, the *Rotterdam Lloyd*, the *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij*, the *Java-China-Japan Line* and the *Holland-Oost-Azië Line* were all represented by Diethelm. Besides, the firm also sold insurance policies for *De Nederlanden* since 1845 and acted as an agent for the Dutch Indies Tourism Bureau.

It was therefore quite understandable, in principle, for a Diethelm employee to take on the function of Dutch consul. The appointment of the Dutchman Hartlieb should not have been more than a formality. However, things took a different turn with the outbreak of the Second World War. In the run-up to the war the French wanted to counter German influence in their colony as much as possible and therefore refused to authorize Hartlieb's appointment. He was suspected of pro-German sympathies. When The Hague became aware of this, stand-in Hartlieb was decommissioned and they began looking for a replacement.

In a letter dated December 1939, Hartlieb made an attempt to defend himself against the accusations. Having resided in Saigon since 1933 he declared himself to be pro-French, and to emphasize this he made reference to his brand-new (Dutch) wife, who from age 12 had attended French schools in Saigon. And that was not all. His Dutch brother-in-law, who also resided in Saigon, had even married a French woman. Hartlieb supposed that his low profile in the *Beau Monde* of Saigon was unjustly explained as an anti-French attitude. He was rather under the impression that the French judged him by his German-sounding name.<sup>30</sup> The matter dragged on without reaching a conclusion until 1940 when Germany defeated the Netherlands and France in Europe, which dramatically changed the relationship between the two countries in all kinds of respects. This had consequences for the diplomatic and consular relations between them in the French colonies as well.

At first the not-appointed Hartlieb tried to go back to promoting Dutch interests in Indochina. This was no easy task, as the leaders of the French colony chose to side with the Vichy government, which was collaborating with the Nazis and towards which the Dutch government-in-exile in London (of which Hartlieb was the self-appointed representative) was not well-disposed. Although in the beginning Hartlieb's actions were tolerated by the French colonial authorities, eventually, under Japanese pressure, there came an end to the tolerant attitude of the French leadership and thus to Hartlieb's work. The consul of Sweden and Switzerland, most probably a close co-worker of Hartlieb at Diethelm & Co, formally took over his tasks as promoter of Dutch interests. This situation continued until March 1945 when the Japanese pushed the French administration aside. This *coup* and the formal capitulation of Japan on August 15, 1945, created a power vacuum in which Vietnamese nationalists fought with and against each other for control of the country. At the same time the 'Free French' of General de Gaulle began a reconquest of the colony that would lead to the 1<sup>st</sup> Indochina War (1946-1954). On the eve of this war the Netherlands, plagued as it was itself by the situation in Indonesia, tried to gain a direct insight into the situation in Indochina. To that purpose military attaché Van den Brandeler was dispatched with a special mission. Amongst other things, he acquainted himself with the fate of the consulates in Hanoi and Saigon. In Hanoi he learned from Perroud's widow that her husband had passed away just before the Japanese capitulation. It turned out that a few unimportant letters were all that remained of the consulate's archives, in addition to a broken and stained portrait of the Queen. Van den Brandeler destroyed the portrait there and then, and left Hanoi with the insignia of the decoration that Perroud had received just before the war and which his widow, therefore, had to return.

In Saigon Brandeler met Hartlieb, whose loyalty had been in doubt before the war. Hartlieb had been imprisoned in Java by the Japanese. His wife Lily and his brother-in-law Frans Brilman had been kept in a Japanese base camp in My Tho, south of



Saigon. Brilman had escaped but was later captured and murdered by the Japanese. As soon as possible after the capitulation, Hartlieb had gone on to perform the consular tasks, which he then transferred when the new, full-time, Consul-general E.L.G. den Dooren de Jong arrived to take over the post in August 1946.<sup>31</sup>

### **The end of the honorary consulate**

After almost eighty years the honorary Dutch consular representation in Saigon was converted into a professional post, with a full-time consul. This decision originated from political considerations related to the changes that, as a consequence of the Second World War, presented themselves on an international level and, consequently, also in Asia and Indochina. The decolonization process in Asia was getting well under way and the world came under the spell of the Cold War.

From now on, the new Dutch representative in Saigon, a consul-general, was a salaried official. As a matter of fact, and in contrast to that of his honorary predecessors, his function had a political rather than an economic significance. The honorary consulate in Hanoi, which had been vacant since Perroud's death, was discontinued. It was not until 1997, and in a completely different context, after the opening of an embassy in Hanoi in 1993 and a consulate-general in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) in 1997, that the Netherlands were again represented simultaneously in both cities.

In 1867, in view of the promotion of trade, the Netherlands had held certain expectations of a consul in Saigon. These expectations were never realized. The golden mountains of China did not exist, and direct trade with the French colony never really got off the ground. In fact the rice that was exported to the Dutch Indies was the only trade product of some importance. Perhaps this was also true of the paraffin that was imported into Indochina, but was generally too expensive for the local population. Quintessential Dutch products were only in limited demand in Indochina. The possibilities that may have existed in the consulate's initial period became definitely past tense when the French, around the beginning of the century, introduced a system of heavy tariffs to protect their own interests in trade and industry. The Dutch consuls in Saigon were sometimes (part) owners but usually employees of European trade houses that, with varying success, primarily served their own private interests and those of their employers. Their consular office was in essence not more than a sideline. Whether they were of Dutch or of a different nationality made little difference. The trading houses were never of Dutch origin so the significance of their economic activities for Dutch trade on the whole has been marginal.

## List of archivalia

### *Nationaal Archief [National Archives]*

Foreign Ministry: departmental archives 1813–1870 (2.05.01)

- Entry # 3031 Brieven met betrekking tot de consulaire vertegenwoordiging in Cochín-China [Letters relating to the consular representation in Cochín-China] 1862-1870.
- Kabinetsarchief van het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken betreffende de politieke rapportage door Nederlandse diplomatieke vertegenwoordigers in het buitenland 1871 – 1940 [Cabinet archives of the Foreign Ministry concerning political reporting by Dutch diplomatic representatives abroad 1871-1940] (2.05.19).
- Entry # 757 Briefwisseling consulaat Saigon [Correspondence Consulate Saigon] december 1882 – december 1883.
- Entry # 759 Briefwisseling consulaat Saigon [Correspondence Consulate Saigon] november 1884 – december 1885.
- Entry # 761 Briefwisseling consulaat Saigon [Correspondence Consulate Saigon] november 1882 – december 1887.
- Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken B-dossiers consulaire en handelsaangelegenheden (1858) 1871-1940 (1958) (2.05.38) [Foreign Ministry, B-files consular and trade matters].
- Entry # 1359 Stukken betreffende personeel en werkzaamheden van de Nederlandse consulaire vertegenwoordigingen in de Franse gebiedsdelen in Azië 1872-1906 (1923) [Documents concerning staff and activities of the Dutch Consular Representations in the French provinces in Asia].
- Entry # 1360 Stukken betreffende personeel en werkzaamheden van de Nederlandse consulaire vertegenwoordigingen in de Franse gebiedsdelen in Azië (1906) 1923-1940 [Documents concerning staff and activities of the Dutch Consular Representations in the French provinces in Asia].

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Nederlandse diplomatieke vertegenwoordiging te China (Peking, Chunking, Nanking) (2.05.90) [Foreign Ministry: Dutch Diplomatic representation in China (Peking, Chunking, Nanking)]

- Entry # 705 Verslag van militair attaché Jonkheer D. van den Brandeler [Report by military attaché Esq. D. van den Brandeler].
- Entry # 711 Brief ambassade Nanking aan consul-generaal E.L.G. den Dooren de Jong [Letter embassy Nanking to consul-general E.L.G. den Dooren de Jong].

### *Archives Foreign Ministry*

- Klapper op de stamboeken der onbezoldigde consulaire ambtenaren alphabetisch gerangschikt volgens standplaats [Folder on the Registers of unsalaried consular officials, alphabetically ordered by station].

- Klapper op de namen der onbezoldigde consulaire ambtenaren alphabetisch gerangschikt [Folder on the names of unsalaried consular officials, alphabetically ordered].
- Register van onbezoldigde consulaire ambtenaren [Register of unsalaried consular officials].

*Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum Amsterdam [Dutch Maritime Museum, Amsterdam]*

- Entry # S.6399 Brieven van D.B. Sluijter aan zijn ouders in de periode 1893-1894 [Letters from D.B. Sluijter to his parents in the period of 1893-1894].

*Digital image library of the Diethelm Keller Group*

- <http://www.picturepark.ch/DiethelmKeller/>

# 7

## The Dutch diplomatic post in Saigon Dutch-Vietnamese relations (1945-1975)

John Kleinen

To date, no separate study has been devoted to Dutch diplomatic and international relations with the southern part of Vietnam between 1945 and 1975. Dutch historians showed less interest for this sideshow than in their view was less pivotal for the relationship with Indonesia or with Southeast Asia in general.

The Netherlands had to accept the independence of their former colony, Indonesia, in 1949, after trying to reconquer the country in two toilsome military actions. For the French in Indochina the Vietnamese pursuit of independence followed a different course. After a fierce and painful struggle to squash the armed resistance, the French army suffered a devastating defeat at Dien Bien Phu on May 7th, 1954. At this time the Cold War was at its height. Vietnam played an important part in the Cold War as the spearhead of the containment and domino theories. After the 'loss' of China and a part of Korea, – as the Americans saw it – Vietnam was also under threat to fall prey to international communism, which in the eyes of the United States had to be contained. This fear found expression in the metaphor of falling dominoes: if one country in Southeast Asia turned communist, so it was believed the neighbouring countries would automatically fall 'down' too. Therefore, American presidents followed the example of Harry Truman (1945-1953), of intervening in countries that were poised for a communist take-over. The Netherlands played only a modest role in Vietnam, but it did maintain its envoy. The role played by this field post in Saigon against the background of the Vietnam war is the subject of this article.

### Indonesia and Vietnam

Initially there was little Dutch interest in French colonial Indochina, but this changed drastically after the capitulation of Japan. In the eyes of the Americans, and to the dismay of the Dutch authorities, the situations in French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies began to look increasingly similar. The meeting between Field Marshall Hisaichi Terauchi in the headquarters of the Japanese Southern Army in Saigon and the Indonesians Sukarno, Hatta and Radjiman Wediodiningrat on the eve

of their *Proklamasi* on August 16, 1945, had not gone unnoticed by the Dutch. There and then Terauchi dictated to his guests 'The Committee for the Preparation of the Independence of Indonesia'. The capitulation of Japan one day earlier, and the hesitant behaviour of the allies, who did not have this defeat signed until September 2, created a power vacuum in Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> The Vietnamese Independence League (the *Viet Minh*) seized their chance, to the detriment of nationalist groups that had backed the Japanese horse. All that time, and also in the weeks after it, the Japanese army stayed on in Vietnam guarding the peace and public order. The French Vichy government, which had been removed, had become discredited and the 'Free French' of General De Gaulle had not yet arrived. In the north, on the day Japan signed its surrender in the Bay of Tokyo, Ho Chi Minh had made an appeal for a government of national unity, but in the South this led to large-scale disturbances. The week before, Saigon had been the scene of mass demonstrations, in which young Viet Minh sympathizers and members of mafia-like groups attacked French colonial buildings and people. The French even called September 2nd, 1945, 'Black Sunday'.

Under arrangements made in Potsdam, the allied Southeast Asia Command in Ceylon first sent British troops under the command of General Douglas Gracey to the south of Vietnam to arrange the capitulation, and also to facilitate the arrival of the 'Free French'. Gracey was to act – be it with less dramatic consequences for himself – as hesitantly as Brigadier Mallaby in Surabaya. When Gracey's 20th India Division arrived on September 13, 1945, the south of Vietnam was largely in the hands of the Viet Minh and of militant groups who sympathized with them. Although allied ex-prisoners of war and detainees were left alone at first, they were soon after confronted with anti-French sentiments. Gracey refused to work in liaison with the Vietnamese and had Japanese soldiers act as peace-keeping troops pending the arrival of reinforcements. They chased the provisional Vietnamese government out of the Saigon City Hall. Two weeks later, Gracey allowed 1400 French prisoners of war and citizens to take up arms. They hunted the hated 'Annamite terrorists'. As a reaction, on September 22nd, supporters of a Vietnamese mafia organisation attacked a French residential area in Saigon, the *Cité Heyraud*, which killed 150 people, most of them women and children. The victims were mainly '*métis*', citizens of Vietnamese-French descent.

### The Dutch in southern Vietnam

After the completion of the Burma Railroad in 1943 the Japanese army had redistributed the forced labourers who had survived the work to other construction projects on the Southeast Asian mainland. Thus some 1700 Dutch ended up in internment camps in the south of Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> A number of them went on shore in Saigon when the feared Japanese *hellships* were unable to reach their final destination. The



Saigon city hall, occupied by Viet Minh supporters. Below the Vietnamese flag (red with yellow star), the flags of the allied forces are attached. Photo taken by the Dutch-French photographer Germaine Krull, Joris Ivens's ex-wife.



Japanese defeat offered many of the detainees the opportunity to move about freely there, and to make themselves useful as handymen and housekeepers within French families, of which the male members remained in captivity, however. It is unknown if there were Dutch among the victims at the *Cité Heyraud*.<sup>3</sup>

With the arrival of the British, members of the *Recovered Allied Prisoners of War and Internees* organisation (RAPWI) arrived too. This organisation had been designated by the allied Supreme Command to take allied prisoners of war and civilian detainees to safety; now they were given the responsibility of receiving and repatriating everybody in territory formerly occupied by the Japanese. The Dutch were hoping for allied ships in order to, as a contemporary wrote, 'go and fight for a lost cause in Indonesia'.<sup>4</sup> However, with fighting having flared up in Java, they were not allowed to return to the Dutch East Indies.<sup>5</sup> An envoy of the Dutch-Indies government, the future writer and diplomat H.R. Friederici, took them under his wing, including 35 officers of the Royal Dutch Indian Army, who with the aid of the British had come to Saigon from the north of Vietnam.<sup>6</sup>

During the course of September and October 1945, two thousand Dutch arrived from southern Vietnam and Thailand in Singapore, where they had to wait for transportation until late November.<sup>7</sup> Of the total 26,000 ex-POWs that were concentrated in Singapore, Bangkok, Saigon and Manila, some 12,000 men were placed in the so-called Gajah Merah battalions and sent to Bali. Around 20 Dutchmen had died and were buried in the cemetery of Tan Son Nhut. When France had to repatriate its dead, in 1954, the mortal remains of these Dutch were removed to Singapore too, together with the remains of 21 legionnaires; the latter were sent to France, as they were no longer considered Dutch subjects.<sup>8</sup>

The landing of the 5th colonial infantry regiment on October 3rd, 1945, marked the beginning of the French reconquest of Vietnam, which unwittingly had been prepared by Gracey's Ghurkhas and their Japanese auxiliaries. These military actions formed the overture to the First Indochina War, which started on December 19, 1946. The majority of the Dutch had left by then, however even less is known of the ca. 13,000 Javanese former forced labourers on the mainland of Southeast Asia, an unknown number of whom arrived in Saigon. A small number may have been received in the homes of their fellow Muslims who had founded the Malay-Indonesian Jammaah Rahim mosque on MacMahon (present day Nam Ky Khoi Nghia) Street in Saigon in the late 19th century.

### Decolonisation

French-Dutch relations went through great changes during the course of 1946. After the recognition of Vietnam as a 'free state' within a French Union on March 6th, Van Mook sent T.H. Baud Esq. to Indochina as his personal representative in

order to study the 'French-Annamite treaty'.<sup>9</sup> The head of the Government Information Service in Batavia, A. Bachrach, who was travelling with Baud, even went so far as to speak of a natural solidarity between the European communities, by which he referred to the help offered by Dutch people to French citizens in Saigon the year before.<sup>10</sup> Yet, it was not the French treaty with Vietnam but the British pressure on the Netherlands that would be the decisive factor in the Treaty of Linggadjati. This treaty created a sort of Dutch Union that would prove to be as short-lived as the Indochinese Union (Hellema 1998: 124-125). Of overriding importance in this was the attitude of the United States. In Washington's vision, anticommunism and anticolonialism were vying for priority in the rapidly changing world after the Second World War. After all, containment and the domino theory applied more strongly to Indochina than to Indonesia. The repression of the communist rebellion in Madiun by the Indonesian Republican Army at the end of 1948 made president Truman side with the Republic of Indonesia. The second phase in the Dutch colonial war, Operation Crow, thwarted a UN ceasefire, and met with even more U.S. resistance. Soon the Netherlands was to get the feeling that double standards were being used. The reasoning in The Hague and Jakarta was that it was the 'ambivalent politics of the U.S. and China' that made the situation in Vietnam more complicated than in Indonesia.<sup>11</sup> It would have been more realistic to conclude that both completely misjudged the strength and popularity of postwar Asian nationalism. The Dutch resentment about the absence of American support, which later, in the New Guinea question made itself felt once again, led to a direct refusal of the Dutch to send combat troops to Vietnam in the sixties (see Hellema 1995:<sup>12</sup> 238; cf. Kuitenbrouwer 1994).

### Dien Bien Phu

The Dutch mission in Vietnam consisted of a Consul General (CG) and a modest staff that included a military attaché. In their reports to The Hague they carefully monitored the First Indochina War. A report by the Dutch consul Den Dooren de Jong in January 1947 from beleaguered Hanoi gave a striking description of the atmosphere of a garrison town where political intrigues followed the rhythm of the war. In Batavia and The Hague his superiors read copies of the reports of the French intelligence services.

On April 12, 1950, following the U.S. and Great Britain, the Netherlands recognised 'Vietnam' as an independent state, i.e. the two former protectorates Tonkin and Annam and the colony of Cochinchina. The last emperor of the Nguyen dynasty, Bao Dai, had been appointed head of state. The 'Bao Dai solution', as the arrangement was called, did not take the real balance of power into account. In

terms of international law, it was unclear what the independent Vietnam was. The Dutch government was to wonder often who and what they had recognised in 1950: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), in fact a government in exile in its own country, led by Ho Chi Minh, and recognised only by the Soviet Union, China and a few Eastern Block countries, or the State of Bao Dai and his successors.

In Dutch eyes, the war with the Viet Minh at first was a conflict between French peacekeeping troops and a rebellious movement led by communists, but soon Minister Stikker was sharing the American and British point of view that domino tile 'Indochina (...) is a more important object for the communist block in Asia than Korea. For it gives access to Siam, Malacca and Burma' (July 30, 1951).<sup>13</sup> In autumn 1952, with the French military situation becoming gloomier every day, consul H.C. Maclaine Pont visited the area where the Viet Minh according to 'sensationalist press reports' had carried out a successful offensive. According to him the territorial gain was 'on the whole of little significance'. In retrospect, the fall of a French fortress on October 17th, 1953, near the town of Nghia Lo on the edge of the delta was a precursor to Dien Bien Phu. Nevertheless, the top of the Ministry – Beyen and Luns were Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the same time – secretly ordered a memo to be made; it contained a marginal note from Luns that this was a 'real war' (...) that 'to a certain extent was keeping France from assuming its predestined place in NATO and the EDC (European Defence Community)'. The concern for the European Defence Community and France's role in it would continue to demand attention during the rest of the war.<sup>14</sup>

'With the Communists almost at Thailand's backdoor' (Bangkok Post), the domino theory and American aid to Thailand and Vietnam were a foregone conclusion. Until March 13th, 1954, the day that the big Viet Minh attack in Dien Bien Phu began, hardly anybody doubted General Navarre's military plan. Maclaine Pont had visited the basin on the border with Laos in the first week of December 1953. On March 29th he estimated 'the communist chances of success at fifty-fifty'.<sup>15</sup> Events would take a different turn. On May 7, 1954, the 65th day of the siege, Dien Bien Phu fell to the army of General Vo Nguyen Giap after a massive assault of almost twenty hours. On May 9th Maclaine Pont notified The Hague that 'radio contact with Dien Bien Phu' had broken off 'at 17.00 local time': 'I assume that Dien Bien Phu has fallen by now'. In the chaotic days after the military defeat he organised the evacuation of Dutch people who were still in the north. He not only found war correspondent Alfred van Sprang there, who was 'under the auspices of the French military' and who had been trained as a parachutist in the French army, but also two members of the clergy, father Bohnen and sister Françoise. The latter, whose secular name was Miss E.M. Dassen, belonged to the order of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres and continued to stay in Hanoi, tolerated by the new DRV government, until 1960. After

that she resumed her work in Saigon and Dalat. For that matter, until the sixties clerics formed by far the majority of the small Dutch community in the south (see box).

That other visions of Vietnam's future were possible too, was borne out by a report of the Dutch adjunct vice consul in Hong Kong, Mr. A.C.J. Struycken, who visited Hanoi in late 1954. The old capital had lost little of its grandeur. As a guest of the 'Mission Sainteny', which was in charge of implementing the terms of the ceasefire with the Viet Minh as they had been agreed upon at the Geneva Conference (April 26-June 21, 1954), Struycken had a chance to experience first hand the political and cultural climate, which was at that time vibrant with optimism regarding a possible reunification. Ho Chi Minh was described as 'a lively, intelligent man, younger than one would expect from his pictures, with an undeniable personal charm of which he is well aware'. As a result, Ho as well as Pham Van Dong who had just returned from Geneva as the main negotiator, were 'quite fond of their newly acquired independence, and would not want Vietnam to become a slavish follower of Peking, and to a lesser degree, Moscow'.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Netherlands and the Republic of Vietnam**

The temporary division of Vietnam across the 17th parallel, which had been agreed upon at the ceasefire, with the DRV in the north and the government under Bao Dai in the south, did not lead to a revision of diplomatic relations. Only after Bao Dai's deposition as head of state by Ngo Dinh Diem on October 23rd, 1955 did The Hague face the problem of how to continue diplomatic relations. The Ministers Beyen (Foreign Affairs) and Luns (Minister without portfolio) advised the Queen 'not to perform any further acts that still acknowledge Bao Dai as head of state', but maintained the consulate-general in Saigon.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the following year the Lower House asked if they were supposed to reply to a telegram from the Vietnamese parliament as they did not even know whether there were diplomatic relations between the two countries. Officially there aren't, the Ministry said, but answering would 'show a certain courtesy' (March 20th, 1956).

There were frequent arguments, also in the postwar period, about how important the Dutch interests in Vietnam were. In 1955 The Hague argued in favour of appointing an honorary consul, as there had been before, at the end of J.L.H. Ceulen's tenure, who had been a full-time consul-general.<sup>18</sup> A Frenchman A.M. Barneau was invited to accept this position. After a short period in this function he was asked to continue his role as acting consul. After some confusion about whether he would have to present his credentials to the kings of Laos and Cambodia too, Ceulen won the argument to continue the mission in Saigon as a delegation to the government of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN or South Vietnam). In 1958 R.M.

Neuerburg became *chef de poste*. A year later the Netherlands opened a diplomatic chancellery in Saigon on Duy Tan street (the continuation of Rue Catinat, now Pham Ngoc Thach street), led by a (legation) secretary. Two years later, in 1961, the 'Dutch Legation' moved to the still more centrally located address 135 Nguyen Hue, close to the centrally situated parliament building that had served as a theatre in the French period. The mission's immediate neighbour was the B.N.C.I. (*La Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie*), the predecessor of PARIBAS. Nowadays it is home to the Tax Trade centre.<sup>19</sup> In 1965 the Dutch representation moved to 147 Phan Dinh Phung (formerly Rue Ramaud). This address would be abandoned on April 29, 1975, by Mr. Van Roijen, the then temporary chargé d'affaires, and his first assistant Mr. Zaadhof, after they had destroyed the coding devices and the files, and taking with them the reserve gold stock. Nowadays it houses a car rental agency *cum* travel bureau, and some years before there had been a small office for services to Overseas Vietnamese.

After 1963 the envoys ranked as Dutch ambassadors to the Republic of Vietnam, residing in Manila until 1970 and later from 1970 till 1975 in Bangkok. There, they were also ambassadors to the Philippines and Thailand respectively. In Saigon they were represented by the head of the diplomatic chancellery led by a head of mission who in 1965 acted as temporary chargé d'affaires. In a period spanning about 15 years (1961-1975), four ambassadors and seven temporary chargés d'affaires acted as Dutch representatives. The local envoys headed the chancellery in Saigon assisted by military attachés, who alternated between Saigon and the city where the ambassadors lived. In 1973 the Dutch ambassador in the People's Republic of China became accredited to Hanoi also. In turn, the South Vietnamese Embassy in London started relations with the Netherlands in 1954. For budgetary reasons, it would not be until the early 1970s that a temporary chargé d'affaires was sent to The Hague.

### **America's man in Vietnam**

The American support to the South Vietnamese government of Ngo Dinh Diem (1901-1963) was a consequence of the way in which Diem, a fiercely anticommunist scion of a Roman Catholic mandarin family, refused to implement the elections stipulated in the Geneva Accords. Moreover, in 1956 Diem started a large-scale repression of militant religious sects such as the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao, and dealt in one fell swoop with the members of criminal organisations such as the Binh Xuyen mafia and with ex-militants of the Viet Minh.

Dutch diplomats would not be the only ones and certainly not the first who originally held a very positive opinion of Diem and his government. The envoy in Manila, R.M. Neuerburg, called president Diem a 'realist', who 'has both feet on the

ground', as opposed to his rather 'professorial and theoretic' brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, who as Minister of the Interior was at the same time head of the Intelligence Service and 'perhaps one of the most influential political figures in Vietnam'.<sup>20</sup> His wife, Madame Nhu, was described in practically every article about her as the evil genius of the regime, and her conservative stance on morals was judged with mixed feelings. Nevertheless, the Ministry's Agency for Southeast Asia observed that relations with South Vietnam were very good.<sup>21</sup>

In response to Diem's repression, the Viet Minh resumed its guerrilla activities. The foundation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam on December 20th, 1960, did not go unnoticed to the Dutch legation. It was suspected that the hardcore members belonged to the southern section of the Lao Dong party, which was dominant in the north. In the beginning, the Front was a political coalition of Diem opponents, Viet Minh supporters and die-hard communists. In the long run the NLF was to become an umbrella organisation of Hanoi, in spite of differences in the tactics to be followed.

An important grievance against Diem that was voiced in the frequent reports from Saigon to the Netherlands was his 'strategic hamlets programme', which was a method, executed by the British in Malaysia, of resettling whole communities into fortified enclosures. The purpose was to rob insurgents of their power base, in this case the Vietnamese rural population. Political violence from the South Vietnamese government as well as from the military wing of the NLF, the Revolutionary People's Army, made this programme a complete failure in the long run. Diem named the opposition Viet Cong (short for *Viet Nam Cong San*, 'Vietnamese commies'), and every Vietnamese who advocated an independent or neutral Vietnam would be criminalised under that name over the long term.

Formally, the foundation of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1954 and president Kennedy's sending advisors did not go against the Geneva Accords. These actions however did head straight for a confrontation with the DRV. Between 1961 and 1963 the number of American 'advisors' had already increased from 3,000 to more than 16,000. Kennedy and his successor Johnson became increasingly frustrated with the way things were going in South Vietnam. The Republic did not offer an alternative for the communist DRV. The ritual suicide of the monk (Thich) Quang Duc in 1963 turned into the symbol of the civil war that Diem had caused between the Buddhist majority and his Catholic followers, who formed 10% of the population. The eventual murder of Diem and his hated brother Nhu that same year during a military coup, which the US knew about and did nothing to stop, put an end to the civil war but was not able to curb the rise of more autocratic governments. In Europe the NATO allies, with the stubborn French president De Gaulle as the leading figure, strongly questioned these developments, but they were not able to intervene in any concrete way.



Neither was the open war between the US and North-Vietnam after the fictitious Gulf of Tonkin incident (August 2nd – 4th, 1964) that gave Johnson *carte blanche* to send ground troops to Vietnam, reason for the Netherlands to put American policy in question. Operation *Rolling Thunder* was the first of a series of aerial bombings on North Vietnam. American ground troops landed near Danang on March 9, 1965, followed by soldiers from five different countries that actively supported the US military operations. The Netherlands would show itself, in the words of J.L. Heldring, ‘a faithful but not a slavish ally’. The Dutch parliament openly supported the intervention, but in 1965 Luns once more refused to send Dutch soldiers to Vietnam. Two years earlier he had resolutely ignored Kennedy’s request to send *seasoned troops* (Kuitenbrouwer 1994: 92; see also Hellema 1996: 238). His disappointment with the US, for that matter, could still be felt years later, when in 1968 he informed his Thai colleague Thanat Khoman about ‘Washington’s unfortunate role’ in the conflict of New Guinea and the way in which the US had abandoned the French at Dien Bien Phu.<sup>22</sup>

### Economic relations

Economic relations were on a small scale in the period before 1940, and they did not become significantly better in the years after 1954. In the sixties, commerce consisted of the export of dairy products, chemicals, medicines, electrical machines and appliances to Vietnam, and mainly rubber from Vietnam to the Netherlands. Until around 1963 there was also a modest rice export, which was subsequently taken over by Thailand.

Hardly any Dutch companies had establishments in the Republic of Vietnam. Shell Enterprise (*Cong Ty Shell*), a representation in South Vietnam that fell under the London based Royal Dutch Shell group, occupied a monumental office built in the thirties. With director Louis van Wesseling in charge, Shell in Vietnam manipulated the buying and selling of oil, thus undermining the American war effort (see box).

In the early seventies the ‘Friesland’ dairy factory signed a joint venture with ‘Cosuvina’, likewise a cooperative factory, for the production of condensed milk. KLM and Philips limited themselves to market research and did not open offices in Vietnam. KLM ran a ticketing office that fell under Bangkok and was represented by Air Vietnam.

Time after time the embassy signalled varying annual averages for import as well as export, and they decreased as the war intensified. The majority of foreign investments in Vietnam came from the United States. The Netherlands invested in Indonesia rather than in countries on the Southeast Asia mainland. While the global figures for import and export remained modest until 1967, in 1968 and follow-

ing years the Dutch business community became involved in the local production of pharmaceuticals, canned food and other products. Still, economic relations with the Republic remained modest. The Netherlands exported more than 14 million guilders in canned meat, milk and pharmaceuticals, while Vietnam exported less than 10 percent of that amount to the Netherlands in the form of rubber and rice. After *Tet Mau Than* (the Tet offensive of 1968) trade between the two countries decreased. Around 1974 the trade balance was 20 against 1 million guilders. The galloping inflation between 1964 and 1974 and the complicated exchange rates between guilders, US dollars and piasters are responsible for a blurred picture of the import and export numbers between the Netherlands and the Republic of Vietnam.

Whereas other royal houses were often active in the promotion of exports to many other countries, members of the Dutch Royal House of Orange did not maintain relations with emperor Bao Dai and his Catholic wife Marie-Thérèse Nam Phuong.<sup>23</sup> Even after the imperial couple had left for France, no member of the House of Orange ever visited the Republic. It would not be until 1993 that Prince Claus made a private visit to this country that in the sixties and seventies had appealed to his imagination. It took until 2005 for his son Willem-Alexander to follow in his footsteps.

### Development relations

The Netherlands did not maintain any special development aid relations with the Bao Dai regime. They had their hands full with the liquidation of the colonial inheritance in Indonesia and the implementation of a development plan for New Guinea. In the early fifties, following France's example, there was a fleeting interest in the Colombo plan, which proposed regional cooperation between programmes of financial and technical aid in South and Southeast Asia. After the coup against Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, Jan de Quay as interim Minister of Foreign Affairs signed the Mekong Agreement, which was managed by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), which operated under the United Nations. He pledged an amount of half a million guilders, to be used for the purchase of goods in the Netherlands. This form of technical assistance had come into being when the Lower House insisted on giving extra aid to Southeast Asia. Three years later this amount was raised to 16.5 million guilders, to be used for the construction of a dam and a reservoir in the Nam Ngum river, a tributary of the Mekong. Kuitenbrouwer's thesis that humanitarian concern was the main motive in the creation and implementation of Dutch aid policy is somewhat belied in the case of the participation in the Mekong programme, especially by the clearly political considerations that the Netherlands had in supporting this fund.<sup>24</sup> Support to the American Mutual Security Plan was an economic answer to COMECON, with which the DRV was asso-



South Vietnamese Members of Parliament on a goodwill mission to the Netherlands giving a press conference in Nieuwpoort, 1969. Left to right: Nguyen Gia Hien, Ha Thu Hy, Le Ngoc Chan (London ambassador) and Mrs. Nguyen Phuoc Dai.

ciated. The direct bilateral aid consisted of the construction and outfitting of three neighbourhood centres and the modernisation of a medical clinic (*Trung Tam Giao duc Y Khoa*) for the fight against tuberculosis in Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> In September 1968 the Netherlands had budgeted 3,8 million guilders for this project, while an amount of 4,5 million was to go to international organisations. Almost 3 million of this had been spent. Meanwhile, the Mekong project had received about half a million for the suction dredger *Ha Lan* that had already been delivered in 1964, and for boats and equipment for river research. 75,000 guilders had been spent on scholarships for Vietnamese.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of the sixties Luns, who on the whole was opposed to substantial help to South Vietnam, showed himself in favour of multilateral rather than bilateral aid to the politically weak South Vietnamese government. Temporary chargé d'affaires Van Dongen, who had advised him to this effect, pleaded in favour of direct aid to the Catholic mission.<sup>27</sup> More than 1 million guilders was earmarked for joint projects with private organisations, mainly to finance secondary and technical schools in several Vietnamese cities. All diplomatic posts, including Saigon, received explicit instructions that 'they were not allowed to give to third parties the slightest suggestion that the Netherlands would ever

distance itself from the American acts of retaliation in Vietnam', and instead should push the idea that in fact the 'aid to South Vietnam did not amount to much and moreover was not the issue here'.<sup>28</sup> Other diplomats in the region declared that the Netherlands 'lagged behind in giving aid against communist aggression'.<sup>29</sup>

#### Koos Derksen (1922-1980)

Jacobus Johannes Derksen came close to representing the Netherlands in Vietnam twice in the course of his diplomatic career. From 1965 to 1968 he resided in Saigon as temporary chargé d'affaires to the government of the Republic of (South) Vietnam. And in 1980, as ambassador in Thailand he was accredited from Bangkok, where he was posted, to also take on that same function in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Just after the Vietnamese government had formally agreed to this appointment, Derksen unexpectedly died on July 21, 1980, age 57.

Koos Derksen was born in Rotterdam in 1922 into a respectable protestant teachers' family. Already in his youth Koos turned out to have a more than average gift for languages. After obtaining his 'gymnasium' diploma (secondary school with Latin and Greek) during the Second World War in 1942, he went on to study Sinology in Leiden. After the war he completed his studies in Paris in 1949. There, at the *École des Langues Orientales Vivantes* he acquired skills in a number of Asian languages. A year later he entered into the service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This fit in with the Ministry's policy, which had originated before the Second World War, of staffing the Dutch foreign service with a small number of persons specialised in Arabic and Asian languages. What was new this time was that now people from circles other than the usual patrician families and the nobility were also recruited. During his career, Derksen was aware that his social origin differed from that of most of his co-diplomats and that this sometimes gave him the status of an 'outsider'. Realizing this made him unhappy, increasingly so as his career progressed.

Nevertheless, by 1965 Derksen had worked his way up into the *crème de la crème* of the Dutch diplomatic world, the *chef de poste* corps. Saigon was the first post he was in charge of. But he was not yet an ambassador then. As secretary of the embassy and temporary chargé d'affaires he was formally subordinate to the Dutch ambassador in Manila who beside his mission in the Philippines was also the highest Dutch diplomatic representative to the then South Vietnamese president. Yet, in daily practice Derksen operated as a highly independent diplomat. He reported directly to The Hague.



Koos Derksen.

This latter circumstance undoubtedly had to do with the war situation and the political chaos in the country. Moreover, between 1965 and 1968 international attention for Vietnam strongly increased, and the Netherlands too became aware of the conflict. In the political as well as public spheres, Dutch feelings were still predominantly pro-American, but Derksen's reports and analyses show us that his opinions on the war were far more subtle. Could it be that his knowledge of languages and cultures of the region, as well as the contacts he consequently managed to establish, played a role in this respect?

In any case, Derksen's appraisals and judgements sometimes clashed with the official policy as it was dictated by The Hague. Actually this was not so exceptional in the case of Dutch representatives in Saigon in that turbulent period. While holding this same function, diplomats like Frans van Dongen and Jan Herman van Roijen too came to conclusions that did not please The Hague. Understandably not all the essentials of the Vietnamese conflict were visible to the policy makers in The Hague.

Derksen called his task in Saigon 'hard', but also 'extraordinarily fascinating and 'intellectually' satisfying'. He also met a choice selection of intriguing personalities, such as the Vietnamese political vagabond General Ky, who admired Hitler and drank more than was good for him. Derksen characterised him as an 'uneducated pilot whose imagination does not go beyond control sticks and nightclubs'. After meeting with Henry Kissinger, certainly one of the most prominent American politicians of the 20th century, he described him as 'a scared little bird, hiding away between two American attachés big as tree trunks'.

It was clear that stylistically Derksen thought himself capable of writing more than dry official documents.

After his Vietnamese years, Derksen served as temporary chargé d'affaires in Beijing and as ambassador in Jeddah and Ankara before moving to Bangkok in 1979. He would have preferred to spend the last years of his career in a European capital but he understood that due to his specific knowledge he was deemed to spending another few years posted in Southeast Asia. It was remarkable that in the whole course of his career he only worked in the Ministry in The Hague for two years. This simply did not interest him. The fact that he once announced the function of secretary-general to be the only one in The Hague that he ever aspired to, spoke volumes. Partly because of his passing away long before his retirement age, this never came to pass.

*Bert van der Zwan*

### **The Netherlands: a faithful but not a slavish ally**

What the Dutch knew of the war situation depended heavily on information gathered by military attachés or on information they received from friendly colleagues of other foreign intelligence services. Some reports are still interesting to read today, as they revealed the hidden, and sometimes overt, tensions between the allies regarding which strategy should be followed in Vietnam. The military attaché was also asked to closely monitor the use of armoured military vehicles such as the M113 and the badly functioning M551 Sheridan tank. Like many other allies, the Netherlands would purchase the M113 for its army and go on using it until far into the 20th century. In the long run there grew an intimate cooperation with the Americans, who by now were directly involved in the war. The Dutch diplomats needed to get used to their American colleagues' custom of wanting 'something in return' (i.e. counterespionage) whenever they wanted information. The Americans asked for various sorts, sometimes bizarre, information, like about the effects of the bombings on North Vietnamese coastal areas, the state of the dikes in the north of Vietnam and (more easily obtainable) information on anti-American demonstrations in Europe.

As great differences of opinion between Saigon and Washington grew about the strategy to be followed, The Hague and the post in Saigon also clashed regularly. When temporary chargé d'affaires Derksen reported about a visit from two members of 'a not publicly operating but influential us agency', Luns personally reacted that the two gentlemen's comments he had received from Derksen diverged from the official American point of view and that the State Department needed to



be notified of this. Later, the Minister would remind his subordinate again of his 'lack of understanding (...) of the correctness of American politics'. From Washington, the well-informed ambassador C.W.A. Schürmann regularly commented on the reports from his colleague in Saigon in a way that was more in line with The Hague and Washington. For Schürmann the domino theory and the idea of containment were unshakeable as 'the foundation of the American policy as regards expansive communist tendencies'. Consequently, in his view, a complete communist victory in Vietnam would lead to a strong extension of Communist influence in Southeast Asia. Derksen had a slightly more subtle view of this, instead pointing to the Confucian background of Ho Chi Minh's authority, 'who for twenty years now, as we know, has been in the undisturbed possession of the imperial seals (...) transferred to him by Bao Dai' (also quoted in Kuitenbrouwer 1994: 94-95).

### **'Kis' and the patriots**

J.J. 'Koos' Derksen was to play an important role in the supply of information about the escalating war. He became temporary chargé d'affaires in 1965 and stayed on until 1968. These were also the years that the Vietnam policy in the Netherlands, partly pressured by the political Left, was slowly beginning to topple. In particular there were serious doubts about the legitimacy of the South Vietnamese regime. Derksen's contacts with the American ambassador in Saigon, Henri Cabot Lodge Jr., produced lively reports in a period that was extremely unstable for South Vietnam, with civilian cabinets that were alternately run by generals. It was a period of great political and military confusion as the war was escalating. Derksen's personal friendship with Cabot, who served in Saigon nearly uninterrupted between 1963 and 1967, made for interesting meetings, including one with a certain 'Prof. Henry Kissinger' (...) who 'was sitting at the other end of the table, hiding away like a scared little bird (...) between two American attachés big as tree-trunks and whom Cabot addressed as "Kis"'. Derksen was surprised at Kissinger's merciless criticism of the American policy in Vietnam. As advisor to the president on Vietnam, he asked Derksen to bring him into contact, on a future occasion, with 'real Vietnamese, patriots, who would be willing to speak with him openly'.<sup>30</sup> In late 1967 Derksen moved to Beijing, where he maintained contacts with the NLF and North Vietnam 'at an appropriate distance'. During the period 1972-1974 he would play a significant role again in the efforts of the Netherlands to develop a diplomacy of its own for channelling Dutch postwar development aid.

Derksen as well as his successors kept in regular contact with the 'patriots' referred to by Kissinger, whatever this term may have meant in his eyes. They were able to do this partly thanks to the help of a French and Vietnamese woman employee who had a good knowledge of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary

opposition. In a later phase of the war the Dutch came into contact with members of a group that maintained a neutral position and that opposed intervention by Hanoi as well as by Washington. However, these Vietnamese, referred to as 'the Third Way', could not raise much sympathy in The Hague during the time that Luns was Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During the extremely turbulent year 1965, which saw air force brigadier Nguyen Cao Ky establish another military regime, Derksen even occasioned an overt *démenti* from the head of department about his critical attitude towards the flamboyant Ky, whose contacts with the US were still excellent at that moment. His reproach 'that General Ky's government did not have a grip on the sectarian opposition and for the rest was not taking care of business' was not received favourably. By then, Derksen had



President Lyndon B. Johnson welcomes Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky from South Vietnam for talks at Hawaii.

already had a personal confrontation with Ky about his open admiration for Adolf Hitler, which was causing a stir in the rest of the world. In a report to The Hague, the temporary chargé d'affaires described him as an 'uneducated pilot whose imagination does not go beyond control sticks and nightclubs'. Only after questions about this matter had risen in Dutch parliament (through a motion by Mr. Nederhorst) did Luns instruct his temporary chargé d'affaires to follow Great Britain's example and ask for clarification of the statements by 'naughty' Ky. Luns himself did not attach much importance to Ky's statements, but he did understand that 'Vietnam' was beginning to become a political issue in the Netherlands.<sup>31</sup> A *démarche* of the Foreign Affairs Minister led to a meeting with the former air force general, who greeted the Dutch envoy in a state of inebriation with the words: '*Alors, comment va Hitler?*', adding that he could not care less about 'parliamentarians who have nothing better to do than attack little fellows like me'. The opposition in the Netherlands forced Luns to demand an apology. The apology never came, but this was accepted after the Vietnamese had emphasised that the letter to the British ambassador in which Ky regretted his words was also meant for the other ally, the Netherlands.

### The Tet Offensive

In the US and therefore also in the Netherlands, the anti-war protest increased. The Tet Offensive of January 1968, the Vietcong's attempt to end the war by a general rebellion through attacks on cities in the middle and the south of Vietnam, became a turning point in the war. It was also seen that way by the Dutch diplomats in Saigon, who described the offensive as 'a failure, militarily', but 'the political and psychological effects (...) were considerable, and the prestige of the South Vietnamese government and its allies, who had shown themselves incapable of protecting the population, had been dealt a sensitive blow'.<sup>32</sup> Three weeks after the offensive the new temporary chargé d'affaires Frans van Dongen wrote an extraordinarily colourful account of his experiences in the city under siege. Prophetically he wrote: 'It is not incidental that [in my report] the presence of Americans is mentioned only in passing. They stand as it were apart from what is happening in the city; physically present, but hardly ever integrated with the rest of society'.<sup>33</sup>

During new attacks on Saigon in May of that same year the Dutch Chancellery too suffered many broken windows as a result of mortar impacts in Lam Son Square, where a soldier statue made of fast-drying concrete held a threatening rifle aimed at the South Vietnamese parliament. Mockingly, Van Dongen described the damage as a consequence of 'the celebration of Ho Chi Minh's birthday'. It was not the last time that war damage would be announced. A year later a car parked by the official residence was set ablaze by a Molotov cocktail that was meant for the French ambassador's vehicle.<sup>34</sup>



An office at the Dutch embassy after shellings from the central square in Saigon on May 20th, 1968.

After the occupation of Hue by North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops, the offensive led to a bloodbath in which the Vietcong murdered 1500 civilians in cold blood. The military attaché nor the envoy had much news of their own to add, as they mainly depended on information they received from third parties.

#### **Oil and war**

**Shell in Vietnam (1972-1975)**

**Louis Wesseling (1928)**

Louis Wesseling was born into a family of lawyers in the city of Utrecht on March 9, 1928. His father – Benjamin Richard Wesseling – was a lawyer and was later to become dean of the Order of Lawyers. His mother – Caroline Sophie Louise Nierstrasz – was one of the first female lawyers in the Netherlands. Louis Wesseling himself studied law at Leiden. He was not to make it his profession though. Instead, he moved to the United States. In the early fifties – during the Korean War – he was trained there as a pilot. He served in the us Air force, but after a short time he decided to take up a position at Shell.

Within this corporation Wesseling had a long and international management career. His first mission took him to Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya in the late fifties. After 1959 – the year in which he got his degree in Arabic at the Middle East Centre for Arabic Studies in Lebanon – he worked for five years as a manager for Shell in the Middle East and North Africa. In the sixties he held positions in The Hague, London, and several countries in equatorial Africa. In the spring of 1972 Wesseling was appointed chief executive of Shell in Vietnam. He would occupy this position until just before the fall of Saigon.

In Vietnam Wesseling found himself in the strange world of war, western *hubris*, corruption, oil robbery; in short, economic power and powerlessness. He wrote a book about it: *Fuelling the war. Revealing an oil company's role in Vietnam* (2000). Originally he had thought of 'Saigon Markets' for a title. For it was not so much the corruption that had struck him in Vietnam, or the discovery that the military were stealing oil in order to sell it to the Vietcong, or that a multinational like Shell seemed to accept this black market as an accomplished fact. Come to that, Wesseling had seen enough of this in Africa already. What affected him in Vietnam was the layered practice of surviving in a war economy: the market of dollars and death, which citizens, soldiers, expats and war widows experienced and exploited each in their own way. That is what *Fuelling the War* is about, at second glance a more personal book than it seems.

'My assignment was: not to shame Shell's name in Vietnam', Wesseling writes in the foreword to his book. The American troops had left. Support for the government of South Vietnam plummeted after the Kissinger's peace of 1973, under growing pressure from public opinion at home and abroad, while China and the Soviet Union competed in boosting the North Vietnamese army. Cambodia, Laos and China presented new and terrible theatres of war. Producers of and traffickers in ammunition, weapons and oil were reaping the profits. Wesseling was well-up in South Vietnamese government circles and the diplomatic circuit. Thanks to his cordial ties with the president of the war widows association – a lady he calls Kim Chi in *Fuelling the War* – he maintained close ties with senior military officers. As chief executive of Shell, Wesseling was responsible for half the country's total oil supply. He knew that the army was stealing oil, sometimes with complicity or knowledge of his own Shell employees, and selling it on the black market – to the North Vietnamese army and the Vietcong. He knew that women like Kim Chi too played a subtle, visible invisible role in it. And that it was useless to try and go against it, it would lead to a bloodbath.

'At headquarters nobody wanted to know about it', Wesseling later said in an interview. 'But that was never said in so many words of course. It was for me to

deal with. And my opinion was: if you are selling oil in a country at war, as long as the accounts are in order you are not so responsible anymore for what happens with that oil afterwards. The Americans said: this is a war, we need those guys, we cannot take action against everybody. And I thought: I could push it until there is a shoot-out, but what good is that? So I warned the police, but there was always somebody near me who leaked the information: 'Tonight, lay low boys.' After all, this was not making Shell any poorer. 'And I felt supported by Gerrit Wagner (1917-2003, President-Director of the Shell group 1971-1977) and the people close to him. You see, nobody likes to fuel a war. But I understood very well that I did not need to tell him about these things. He said: You do not get new money, but you are doing it well and we will go on this way. And as long as Wagner did not say no to something, I assumed it was yes.' For a well-respected multi-national, a 'living company' that had been active in Vietnam for years already and duly paid its taxes, war is a *fait accompli*.

After his return from Vietnam in 1975 Wesseling fulfilled several functions within Shell Europe. With a small team he worked on drawing up internal 'business principles' that in a way anticipated the public re-evaluation of the principles of enterprise following the Brent Spar affair. In 1981 he was appointed president for the Latin American and Caribbean region. He held that position until his retirement in 1985.

*Hans Moors*

### **The dismantling of the war**

In the Netherlands 'Vietnam' had by now gained a place on the political agenda and Minister Luns was forced to take steps to urge the Americans to start peace negotiations. In the Netherlands, the big Vietnam debate of August 25th, 1967, drew much attention. As the debate was mainly a matter of national politics, in which Luns revealed himself as a sly diplomat, there was not much to do for the diplomats in Saigon.

With the dismissal of Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defence and Johnson's refusal in March 1968 to run for re-election, political activity between Saigon and The Hague, and also with posts elsewhere in the world, saw a new revival. Van Dongen foresaw the coming of the Vietnamization of the war quite early. A gradual withdrawal of troops on the American side went in tandem with their replacement by South Vietnamese soldiers, a method that the French in their latter days had applied with varying success as well. The background to this strategy was the idea



that North Vietnam was fighting in the south as a 'foreign power', which made American support to South Vietnam legitimate. The Americans limited themselves to a direct confrontation with the standing North Vietnamese army as much as possible, while the South-Vietnamese army, the ARVN, operated on its own territory. Tactical air support in these operations and countless 'attack and destroy actions' by allied ground troops made life in the South Vietnamese countryside hell, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives. Van Dongen, who made a number of tours of duty through the country in 1969, also observed this. He saw the consequences of the pacification in the Central Highlands and in the Mekong Delta, which, 'as regards combat troops has completely turned into South Vietnamese territory'. During a visit to Hue, a year after the massacre, he did not hide his admiration for the provincial governor Le Van Than. Than was a Catholic who had fled from the north, and who had no illusions about his compatriots. Van Dongen quoted with approval his remark 'that the population, after their experiences with officials from both sides, now only judges on the basis of what has been achieved'.<sup>35</sup> As a rule, the chargé did not pronounce much criticism of the war activities and the pacification programme associated with it, but he showed concern about the Phoenix Programme, which he thought 'debatable in its methods'. This programme, which had been set up with the help of the CIA, would break the Vietcong backbone in the long run and claim thousands of innocent victims. Although an account of the My Lai incident of March 1968 was published worldwide (though not until 18 months later, on November 16th, 1969, by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh), there was little attention for the bloody confrontations between the fighting parties.

After ambassador Van der Zwaal visited the notorious South Korean Tiger Division in Central Vietnam, he reported 'accusations from Hanoi about acts of cruelty'. But he added: '[T]heir encampment makes a well-groomed impression (...); they wage war with heart and soul and with very much experience.' But he did not say a word about the controversial South Korean commander-in-chief.<sup>36</sup>

A remarkable thing was that the embassy's military attaché showed great pessimism about the development of the war in his reports to The Hague. According to him, the American war effort was failing on practically all levels, and he believed a significant improvement in the military situation in the short term to be improbable. At right angles to this stood the opinion of ambassador G.J. Dissevelt, accredited in Manila, who with Van Dongen had paid a farewell visit to president Thieu. The 'cheerful and self-assured' impression that the South Vietnamese president made on his guests had a contagious effect on his Dutch conversation partners. They talked with Thieu about the withdrawal of the American ground troops and the pace of the Vietnamization. Thieu thanked his guests for the donation of 50,000 guilders for help to homeless Vietnamese during the Tet offensive a year



Temporary chargé d'affaires Frans van Dongen visiting president Thieu.

earlier. Not long after this, in a report on the operations in Cambodia, the headquarters of the South Vietnamese army showed, clearly irritated, a photograph of seized medical aid goods, sent by the 'Medical Aid Committee Netherlands-Vietnam'.<sup>37</sup>

### Escalation

In the turbulent year 1970, South Vietnamese troops had invaded Cambodia. The Dutch government led by Prime Minister De Jong showed 'understanding' of the invasion and clashed with Parliament over its loyalty to the American ally. When government parties, the christen-democratic KVP (Catholics) and ARP (Protestants) openly expressed their doubts, Luns, partly forced by a motion, came up with a peace initiative that in retrospect could be explained, among other things, as a successful strategy to reclaim the initiative from the opposition.<sup>38</sup> Although only a few countries liked the peace plan, the diplomats in Saigon were working overtime. When later that year at the United Nations in New York, Luns was praised by his South Vietnamese colleague Charles Tran Van Lam for his support to the RVN and in particular for 'the activities of chargé d'affaires Van Dongen', it was completely unclear whether the initiative had ever been meant in a serious way. It was implemented just for appearances' sake, which is also what the



American president Richard Nixon and Joseph Luns (secretary-general of the NATO), 1974.

American ambassador in the Netherlands, Middendorff, reported to his government (Van der Maar 2004: 353-354).

The Vietnamese diplomat Tran Van Lam was not unknown in the Netherlands. This old-guard Catholic had made an official visit to The Hague as early as 1969. In 1973 he signed the Paris Peace Accords on behalf of the Republic of Vietnam. To the communist youth association ANJV of Rotterdam he was only a 'representative [...] of the fascist regime of South Vietnam', a term that would also be used by PPR [progressive Christians] chairman Bas de Gaay Fortman during a visit of a delegation to Hanoi in 1973.<sup>39</sup>

In the Netherlands, disgust with the war had been intensified by the stalemate of the Paris negotiations. Le Duc Tho, the North Vietnamese negotiator, had gotten Kissinger to tell Nguyen Van Thieu to share his power with the Provisional Revolutionary Government, which was led by Hanoi. When Thieu refused and Nixon had secured his re-election, the U.S. tried to force the North Vietnamese to new concessions. They refused to discuss this, and consequently Nixon decided to resume the bombing. The promised peace (*Peace is at Hand*) would be postponed for some more weeks. American air raids on Hanoi and Hai Phong began around Christmas 1972, as an attempt to get the DRV back to the negotiation table. To almost anyone in the US and in the rest of the world this act was considered a military and moral scandal. North Vietnam itself mentioned a death toll of between 1300 and 1600. Many times greater, however, was the serious damage to the infrastructure in provinces north of

the 17th parallel. Remarkable was Schmelzer's stance; he communicated his disapproval of the US 'in clear wording' to the government in Washington and received full support from the Lower House for this. Shortly before that he had expressed to the Dutch ambassador in Washington, Van Lynden, his ambivalent feelings about a 'Dutch government (that) nevertheless feels called upon to act as the friend that shows the US their failings'. For him that meant that 'no doubt will arise about that friendship'.<sup>40</sup> This promise did not keep Schmelzer from receiving two prominent monks from the United Buddhist Church (which was also critical towards the US) in April 1972, one of them Thich Nhat Hanh, who was making a name for himself at the time. Both had been introduced by Ms. Klompé, who shortly after this, at the big demonstration in Utrecht against the Christmas Bombing, was booed down for her remark that one should demonstrate against the war with 'open visor'.

### Whose Vietnam?

On January 27, 1973, the parties involved in the war in Vietnam signed the Paris Peace Accords, which among other things mandated a ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of American ground troops. As had been stipulated in the Geneva Accords earlier, a political solution and national elections would have to bring the fighting Vietnamese parties together.

Meanwhile, in May 1973 the Den Uyl cabinet had been installed. With Minister Van der Stoep on Foreign Affairs, the 'Atlantic' interests got pride of place again. In spite of pressure from the Lower House and from his own party, the [socialist] PVDA, he was to take careful steps towards a diplomatic recognition of North Vietnam. Schmelzer had already started this process, but the criticism by the American government about lack of support from its 'long-time ally' had not resulted in concrete steps.<sup>41</sup> A juicy detail is that Schmelzer did bring about J.H. Vixseboxse's appointment as plenipotentiary ambassador to Hanoi. His accreditation did not follow until 18 months later, however. This put another item on the left-wing opposition's agenda: recognition of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. There was support for this within PVDA, and it was soon taken up by extra parliamentary groups as well. This issue would stir up emotions until June 20th, 1975, when it turned out that the governing power in the south of Vietnam was in fact the PRG. It was to disappear less than a year later, when the territory of the former RVN was permanently placed under the government of Hanoi.

The new temporary chargé d'affaires J.H. van Roijen, who had meanwhile assumed his position in September 1973, was sad to see in South Vietnam how a 'war of flags' led to the permanent presence of North Vietnamese troops and how the number of violations of the ceasefire increased. The situation inside the country was cause for concern: 'although it was South Vietnam that in the first period after

the Paris Accords most frequently violated the ceasefire (...), at that same time the North Vietnamese and the PRG were building paved infiltration roads and oil lines from the Demilitarized Zone southwards'.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, President Thieu did not accept the Accords, knowing that without massive American support his country was not able to survive. The Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) had by now been transformed into a modern army which, however, was completely dependent on American support for its technology. The continuation of the war claimed another 200,000 Vietnamese lives. Van Roijen's deputy, Wolfswinkel, observed that 'at the end of the day' the war is 'an Asian conflict that the Vietnamese had best fight out among themselves. As the history of the last thirty years has shown, Western interference, from the French as well as from the American side, has so far intensified the conflicts rather than resolved them.'<sup>43</sup>

Within the course of 1974, South Vietnamese troops began a counter-offensive in the Mekong delta, soon followed by a North Vietnamese attack. The continued fighting also led to an increasing number of prisoners of war, who remained outside any form of international control and were kept in prison under harsh circumstances. The Peace Accord had foreseen an exchange of these people but nobody knew how many there were exactly. With the growing discontent about the war in Vietnam, the 'tiger cages' of Con Son island, the former devil's island Paulo Condore, also became an object of political controversy inside and outside parliament. The Vietnam opposition in the Netherlands and concerned members of parliament were talking of 'hundreds of thousands' of political prisoners. Even Amnesty International mentioned a number of 200,000. In Saigon estimates were no higher than 'around 40,000'.<sup>44</sup> The New Zealand ambassador's report of his visit to Con Son was used as a confidential source. According to Van Roijen 'the most important shortcomings were not in the prison system itself, such as the tiger cages, but in the random detentions without proper criminal procedure'.<sup>45</sup> The controversy kept stirring emotions for a long time and also influenced the discussion about the distribution of aid to the different parties fighting in Indochina.

### **Development relations with North Vietnam**

Acting on a Swedish initiative, Minister Udink had installed a Workgroup for Postwar Aid to Vietnam as early as 1970; it would exist until 1974 and would go on to play an important role in the recognition of the PRG and the DRV. Although the Workgroup had set itself the goal of 'actively waiting', there were political developments that accelerated events considerably. While the motion Mommersteeg (May 13th, 1970), about the US invasion of Cambodia, had brought about a side effect in the form of 5 million dollars which was reserved for postwar aid, after the official end of the war the Lower House supported a proposal from Minister Boertien to

reserve an amount of 30 million guilders for 1973 and 1974. Of this, 16 million guilders were made available for aid to North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In the Council of Ministers this decision had already been taken before the Accords, which serves as an indication that the protests within the Netherlands against the Christmas bombing were a factor of some significance. There was another reason too: concern about the 'rapid escalation' of aid to (amongst others) Vietnam by 'amateurs' such as the Universities of Amsterdam and Leiden and by cities (e.g. Amsterdam) especially to North Vietnam.<sup>46</sup> For this reason, high-ranking officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pleaded in favour of combining efforts through multilateral channels. Their main motive, as officially worded by Van der Stoel, was that in this way any bilateral contact with the PRG could be avoided, but paradoxically this also caused problems with North Vietnam, which only accepted bilateral aid in order to prevent the US from interfering.<sup>47</sup>



Chargé d'affaires J. Vixseboxse presents his credentials to Nguyen Luong Bang, vice-president of the DRV, December 13th, 1974.



For this purpose, Schmelzer had already tried once, in 1972, to send the former Temporary chargé d'affaires in Saigon J.J. Derksen from Beijing to North Vietnam, but the Americans told him not to. After this, J.J. Vixseboxse was given the task, and in late December 1972 he managed to have talks with North Vietnamese diplomats in Hanoi.

Meanwhile, the new government, in which Minister Jan Pronk held the portfolio for Development Cooperation, was faced with the question of how to put aid to Indochina into practice. Nevertheless, in 1973 Van der Stoel had promised to earmark 15 million for postwar aid, 1 million of which was, by way of the Medical Committee Netherlands Vietnam (MCNV), for the construction of a hospital in Dong Ha in the province of Quang Tri, an area that had been 'liberated' and was under control of the PRG. However, a recognition of the PRG under the terms of international law was out of the question, as far as he was concerned. The *aide-mémoire* that had been issued on May 8, 1974, by the 'Royal Netherlands Embassy in Saigon' explicitly said that the 'PRG Hospital' was not a gift from the Netherlands to the PRG.<sup>48</sup> In the same month, the deputy head of the Directorate General for International Cooperation, Charles Rutten, went on a secret mission to Hanoi with the purpose of discussing the modalities for the establishment of diplomatic relations with the DRV. A gift of 15 million Dutch guilders was offered as 'reconstruction aid'.<sup>49</sup> On December 13th, 1974, Vixseboxse presented his credentials.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, the Dutch government was doing all it could to put its ally the Republic of Vietnam at ease: in The Hague the chargé d'affaires was informed that Vixseboxse's first visit was only a 'fact finding mission'.<sup>51</sup>

Van der Stoel as well as Pronk confirmed that nothing had changed in the diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and the RVN. This also meant that the Dutch government did not recognise a second government apart from this one.<sup>52</sup> After all, the government in Saigon represented 'the indivisible territory of the Republic of Vietnam'.<sup>53</sup> In response to questions by two VVD [Conservative Party] members of the Lower House about the visit by Pham Van Ba, who as an 'unofficial representative of the Vietcong in Paris' had said disparaging things about the government of the RVN, a small riot arose in Parliament.<sup>54</sup> The direct cause of this was Pronk's presence at the ceremony where material for the Dong Ha hospital was transferred.<sup>55</sup> Through Van der Stoel, Pronk made known that he had never used the term 'liberated area' for the region in South Vietnam that was controlled by the PRG.<sup>56</sup> In Saigon, Van Roijen had to pull out all the stops to place the 'Dutch aid to the Vietcong' in the right context. He said it should be seen as 'humanitarian aid in the area controlled by the PRG'.



Group picture at presentation of J. Vixseboxse's credentials, December 13th, 1974.

Left to right: Mai Van Bo (chief director Europe), J. Vixseboxse (ambassador), Nguyen Luong Bang (vice-president of the DRV), Nguyen Co Thach (Vice Minister Foreign Affairs), F.M.M. Kroese (attaché), Hoang Truong Nhu (Chief protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

### The end of the post in Saigon

In March 1975 the South Vietnamese army collapsed. Units of the army panicked and fled southwards with their families along the coastal strip. On March 25, the old imperial city Hué fell. Thieu resigned. In the early morning of April 30th, 1975, communist troops conquered the South Vietnamese capital without meeting significant resistance. The Dutch chargé and his assistants had left the establishment in Saigon the previous day. With the help of friendly diplomats it had been possible to arrive at a realistic forecast of the rapid fall of the regime. In Bangkok, Van Dongen, the ambassador responsible for Vietnam, still made an attempt to play a role of his own, however The Hague deemed Van Roijen competent enough to look after the Dutch interests in Saigon on his own (see contribution by Ton van Zeeland in this book). Reproaches in the Dutch press to the effect that Van Roijen had decided to flee 'more or less on his own authority' and 'partly advised by the Americans', were unfounded. An attempt to take with him friendly members of the South Vietnamese opposition, who themselves expected little good of a communist take-over, failed. Foreign Affairs feared that there would be undesired publicity if these South Vietnamese and the Dutch were seen together.<sup>57</sup>

In The Hague the Vietnamese chargé d'affaires decided to take the honourable way out: on May 20, 1975, he handed over the keys of the office at the Montfoortlaan to the protocol department of Foreign Affairs, along with those of the official car and the license plates of a Mercedes that had been sold. He had already applied for political asylum in the Netherlands. All goods were seized and offered to the PRG representation in Paris, who were not interested in them. The furniture was donated to the MCNV. Diplomatic relations with South Vietnam had now also physically ceased to exist.

# 8

## Farewell to Saigon

### The Dutch embassy in South Vietnam

in 1975

*Ton van Zeeland*

#### The Paris Accords

In 1973 the warring parties in Vietnam signed an accord, after what was in many respects a long and agonising conflict. Among other things, they agreed that the us troops would withdraw, whatever happened. Once the situation had more or less stabilised, elections would be held and more sections of society would be able to participate openly in political and social life. The main protagonists in the negotiations were Henry Kissinger, adviser to President Nixon, and Le Duc Tho, high ranking member in Vietnam's Communist Party and Vietminh's leader in South Vietnam. The accords included a ceasefire.

Henry Kissinger vividly describes the negotiations in a book about his life and work.<sup>1</sup> Le Duc Tho was a tough negotiator and it was very difficult to find a common ground. But both sides wanted the negotiations to succeed – though for different reasons: North Vietnam wanted to conquer South Vietnam, and the us wanted to extricate itself from the conflict.

After the talks had broken down several times, Kissinger and Le Duc Tho finally reached agreement, and Nixon put the South Vietnamese President, Nguyen Van Thieu, under such intense pressure that he finally gave his consent. The accord was signed on 27 January 1973 in Paris, where the talks had been held. The Netherlands attached great weight to compliance with the accords, an issue which the Dutch government brought up time and again.

North Vietnam tried to strengthen its position by sending more troops into South Vietnam. There were an estimated 200,000 North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam by early 1975. North Vietnam received strong support from the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. The Thieu regime's army in the South had been well armed by the us. However, the North perceived the situation differently. Hanoi thought that it would take many years for Thieu to build up a strong and efficient army without us advisers. The situation in Saigon was dire. With the Americans' departure, many jobs disappeared, from prostitute to shoe-

shiner to cyclo driver. Things were made worse by the presence of numerous refugees from rural areas. Furthermore, the Thieu regime was corrupt. In short, the people were discontented and the situation was tense. The North Vietnamese thought they would be able to take Saigon in 1976. It took even less time than that, and, despite their promises to Thieu, the Americans did not intervene to halt the communist advance. One reason was that, after Nixon's resignation in 1974, Vietnam was no longer a lynchpin of US foreign policy, especially if military support was needed. Saigon therefore fell much faster than expected, taking many people by surprise.

### **The Dutch embassy in Saigon**

The Dutch embassy, located at 147 Phan Dinh Phung in the centre of Saigon,<sup>2</sup> was staffed by the chargé d'affaires, Jan van Roijen, and the second secretary, Jan Zaadhof. Attaché R.E.P. Hencke was responsible for administrative support. The ambassador, F.H. van Dongen, lived in Bangkok. He rarely visited Saigon, which meant that the mission in South Vietnam was effectively autonomous.<sup>3</sup> There was also a secretary and a social secretary.

Jan van Roijen and Jan Zaadhof arrived in Vietnam after the combat tasks of the US army had already been taken over by the South Vietnamese army – a large army, reputedly one million strong.

### **Van Roijen's reports**

As usual, embassy staff communicated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague in various ways. Numerous reports were still sent in the form of ordinary letters. These documents were dispatched under the reasonably secure diplomatic seal. Reports sent by public telex, on the other hand, could be read by others. But the safest and most important means of communication was by encrypted messages. Messages were encrypted at the embassy by means of a 'key' and then decoded after being transmitted to The Hague, by radio or some other means, and vice versa. Encrypted messages were an embassy's lifeline and played a vital role in communications with The Hague.

From the beginning of 1975 to the end of April the embassy sent many reports, analyses and impressions of the situation in South Vietnam. The Ministry frequently complimented the embassy on this steady flow of inside information. The reports aroused a great deal of interest and painted a detailed picture of the tense situation in the country and the various political movements and forces.

In one of the first long encrypted messages, received by The Hague on 8 January 1975,<sup>4</sup> the embassy painted a sombre picture. Many South Vietnamese political

groups could see no way out. The Paris peace accords, which called for negotiations and elections, were not being observed. The peace process showed no signs of life. North Vietnam was being backed by the Soviet Union and China, which supplied arms and transport equipment. Its troops were infiltrating the South. These used force to hit southern rice harvests and made the country unsafe through attacks and shootings. These activities were expected to increase further in 1975. The embassy also reported protests against the Thieu regime, though the government appeared to be firmly in control at the time. The influence of religious groups was also described.

On 9 January, The Hague reported that the South Vietnamese interim chargé d'affaires had made a *démarche*<sup>5</sup> to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He asked the Dutch government for help, given South Vietnam's precarious situation. He said that North Vietnam was rejecting any negotiations and talks, as laid down in the Paris accords, by putting forward spurious arguments or making impossible demands.<sup>6</sup>

The embassy reported that infiltration and shootings were steadily increasing. For instance, a radar installation in Southern Cholon (a Chinese district) had come under fire and blasts had occurred at Thu Duc power station, temporarily cutting off electricity to Saigon. Pamphlets had been dropped over the city saying that the Vietcong would attack Saigon after the Vietnamese New Year (Tet).<sup>7</sup> The embassy also reported clear attempts to isolate Saigon from the rest of South Vietnam.

At the end of January the embassy's reports took on special political significance for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Max van der Stoel. The Labour Party, to which he belonged, was calling on the government to break off diplomatic relations with South Vietnam and recognise the South Vietnamese Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG), which sympathised with the North. Van der Stoel wanted to base his position on what was happening on the ground, as well as on formal constitutional arguments.<sup>8</sup> The embassy tried to provide balanced reports, and pointed out that South Vietnam, too, was breaking the agreements. But South Vietnam did not have an army of over 200,000 troops in the North and did not have any oil pipelines or airports there.

The embassy detailed the relations between the People's Revolutionary Party (and the PRG) and its communist 'sister party' in the North, and the growing rumours in February about opposition candidates being fielded for the presidential elections scheduled for October.<sup>9</sup> Increasing attention was also given to a 'third force', a movement of politicians striving for a democratic government.



### The embassy's sources

The embassy drew its information from a variety of sources. Van Roijen attended the briefings given by the South Vietnamese government and had close contacts with his US and Australian counterparts, who had access to an extensive information network. The head of the CIA station in Saigon was also well informed about developments on the ground and in the political sphere, but 'he spoke in propagandist or misleading terms rather than trying to analyse the actual situation'.<sup>10</sup> There were also close contacts between the nine members of the European Community, even on a daily basis in the run-up to April 1975. Van Roijen also knew people from the 'third way' movement, which comprised people and organisations without a clearly defined political complexion, such as Buddhists, Catholics and other opponents of the regime. Many of them worked in the government or civil service,<sup>11</sup> and were therefore able to supply good background information. Their impressions were included in the reports sent to the Netherlands. Equally important were contacts with development workers and members of the armed forces. Van Roijen maintained good contacts with the latter and received useful, though not always objective, information.

All this information naturally had to be analysed and compared with other sources. The diplomats in Saigon acted like true professionals, and their analyses were generally the expression of a carefully considered stance.

### Press and public on the home front

The embassy staff regarded the reports about Vietnam in the Dutch press as extremely biased and very irritating. Sometimes they grew so annoyed that they tried to do something about it. For example, Van Roijen responded to a current affairs programme (*Brandpunt*) in which Charles Schwietert alleged that children were being used as mine detectors. Van Roijen refuted this in his response.<sup>12</sup>

Van der Stoel generally kept his cool and approached the Vietnam problem without turbulent emotions. But the Den Uyl's government (1973-1977) often adopted a very different tone. The mood among Dutch writers and intellectuals was highly polarised, as were many aspects of Dutch society in that period. The left-wing Vietnam movement was a manifestation of this. The political debate often failed to focus on the facts of the matter and the real complexities.

The Hague was fully aware that the press in South Vietnam was also being suppressed and elementary political rights were being trampled on. At a meeting that the South Vietnamese ambassador had at the Ministry in The Hague, probably with Van der Stoel himself, the Dutch made clear that South Vietnam was squandering a lot of sympathy by arresting and detaining political opponents.<sup>13</sup> The embassy in

# „Onze ambassade in Saigon leek een compleet weeshuis“

door  
Thes Detiger

**DEDEMSVAART, zaterdag**  
„Onze ambassade in Saigon leek het laatste jaar een compleet weeshuis“, zegt mevrouw C. H. W. van Royen (34), vrouw van onze zwaarste lastige in Vietnam, die vorige week met zevenentwintig weesjes op Schiphol aankwam.

„Ik zie nooit „moe“ tegen een kindje, omdat ik weet hoeveel mensen in Nederland erom laten springen. Op een dag kreeg ik ineens drie kindertjes, die nog maar drie, twee en twintig dagen oud waren. Mijn man schreef daarvoor van. Hij vond dat ik dat eigenlijk niet moest doen. Maar ik redde me dat ze het bij mij in ieder geval beter hadden dan waar ze vandaan kwamen. En als ik niet meteen toedeed, zou adoptie voor Nederland verkenen zijn.“

Dank zij mevrouw Van Royen worden er thans zestig Vietnamese weesjes landdreef in Nederlandse gezinnen vervoerd. Zelf ingezet ze met haar eigen drie kinderen bij haar ouders in Dedemsvaart, omdat ze door de overhaaste evacuatie uit Saigon niet in haar eigen huis hier terecht kan. Over het feit dat ze nu geen eigen kind heeft, heeft haar hoofd heeft en haar persoonlijke bezittingen waarschijnlijk niet gescheiden uit Vietnam zullen terugkomen, maakt ze zich echter niet in druk. „Het belangrijkste is dat de kindertjes allemaal goed zijn overgekomen en een thuis hebben gekregen.“

**Eigen houte**  
„Om mijn laatste drie maanden van Royen anderszins jaar lang weesjes in de stad al om kinderen voor Nederland los te krijgen. Gewagend met de discussie van Nederlandse adoptie- en door vertrouwen en kinderen er langzaamhand kinderen leekbaar.“

In twee grote kamers van haar eigen huis richtte ze een eigen weeshuisje in om de kinderen te alenacht van hun introversum een beetje bij te werken en op te kappen. En precies een jaar geleden verbraken de twee eerste weesjes naar hun nieuwe vaderland.

„Het was een tijdje even gewaakt. Saigon was een erg drukke plaats wat de sociale verhoudingen be-  
verwachte situaties greef. Toen we van 1961 tot 1967 naar Indonesië waren uitgezonden, met dat ook al te vaak samen met de staats-greep. Misschien heeft het omdat we op 15 december zijn getrouwd“, zegt mevrouw Van Royen, die ook niet erg druk schijn te maken over deze „rouw“ van twee.“

De evacuatie uit Vietnam zal ze echter niet gauw vergeten. Door haar enorme greep van drie eigen en geprojectieerde, Vietnamese kinderen, zou maar te

naar Nederland in Maar toen bleek dat ook een paar van kinderen in Amersfoort bodden, ben ik dus ontsteld. Ik had me gevoelen met alle in Nederland te hou ik als een klomp op te hante met. Ik dacht over er ook maar te staan.

Het ongelukkig is te en met behulp van relaties, kreeg ik op een dag een boezem onverschillig, plattel. Hongkong. Daar in water rochten en ge- mee te krijgen. We waken dat we daar raken de Nieuw „pleegkinderen“, van deelt waren onder te aan te gebracht, v kinderen mogelijk den boden.

**Te kwaad**  
Toen ze uiteindelijk hi aankwamen, mevrouw Van Royen kinderen (thans 11, 10 en Thando, 8), ook zag geen te be- noemen. Alleen, maarstening (met) man hadden geen haar er ook welken te hebben, 1967.

van Van Royen met haar eigen kinderen

(advertentie)

**"Mini-koningin" Mary Quant creëert nu uw cosmetica!**  
Mary Quant werd op slag beroemd in de hele wereld. Door haar sensationele creatie, de minime mode. Wat is er in de mode opvallend aan het randen. Nu met cosmetica. En waar bewijst ze, door om te weten wat u, mondhoofde jonge vrouw, doet, het alomtegenwoordig, de kleuren niet veranderd.

Mary Quant is een alomtegenwoordig. Ook praktisch, naar te dier, in haar desers. Ook al zijn ze de beste. Mary Quant cosmetica zijn al in meer dan 90 landen te vinden. Nederland is er een van.

**Saai Pieten**  
„We zijn twee jaar getrouwd geweest, maar het ging echt niet langer, we verbleven als het en bond“, en verleden week een bekende Nederlandse tegen me. Hij wil nu gaan schieden. Ik raakte hem aan om niet te snel naar de advocaat te lopen. Misschien vergist hij zich. Verleden week zag ik een echtpaar op de tv dat vol trots meende dat ze in vijftig jaar huwelijk geen enkele keer ruzie hadden gehad. Ik dacht of ze te la- ruse, dogg, mensheid in een huwelijk meer ik, zijn de partners voldoende op elkaar uitkerken – lijkt me. Ze waren rijk. Ge- meinde niet naar een rijk op te worden. Zolang ze nog ruzie maakt, is er laatste- ste nog over – al is het maar een soort ruzie. Maar tegen heel een ruzie niet

**FAREWELL TO SAIGON**

Interview with Mrs. C.H.W. Van Roijen in De Telegraaf, April 19th, 1975.

Saigon often tried to refute the 'magic' number of 100,000 political prisoners in South Vietnam, but this was virtually impossible.<sup>14</sup> At his meeting with the ambassador, Van der Stoep reiterated that the Netherlands called on both sides to uphold the Paris accords. This put him in a difficult position, since his party wanted to break all ties with South Vietnam and recognise the PRG. The Minister did not do this, but did impose 'conditions' and sharply criticised the South Vietnamese government.<sup>15</sup> However, the South Vietnamese were not particularly sensitive to criticism.<sup>16</sup>

## The Dutch diplomats' last hope

The embassy staff heard that an attempt at reconciliation would be made between the noisier and more outspoken 'third way' people and the more moderate and realistic opposition. This group was in favour of an Asian approach, i.e. exerting political pressure to try and avoid a public loss of face. Although the population did not have much confidence in the existing government, they regarded those in power in South Vietnam as 'the second-worst option'.<sup>17</sup> Pro-North-Vietnamese sentiment was very rare among the population, contrary to what some people in the Netherlands believed.

Some people in the Netherlands attributed influence of mythical proportions to the third force in Vietnam. Van Roijen had always tried to temper such flights of fancy because the groups involved showed little real coherence and were largely motivated by self-interest. The Hague carried out nearly all its development projects in South Vietnam with third-way groups. It was difficult for the diplomats in Saigon to explain. The embassy clearly saw that the pampered 'third way' did not have – and would never have – much influence. But the third way's hold on people's imagination in the Netherlands, where it was hoped that this political movement would be able to save South Vietnam, was an indisputable fact.

### **The end draws near**

The fighting in South Vietnam continued, and pressure from the North's army intensified. The Dutch government channelled money through the International Red Cross to help the refugees. Towards the end of March the fighting became fiercer and the number of refugees swelled. In Saigon, the people and the international community grew increasingly despondent. People were worried about their families in the provinces and at the front. President Thieu, with Dien Bien Phu<sup>18</sup> in mind, relinquished parts of the country to the North Vietnamese, causing even more people to flee to the south, especially to Saigon. He failed to evacuate the South Vietnamese population from the provinces under threat, with the result that his already poor reputation declined further.

As a result of this policy, refugees streamed chaotically into the city. A tighter curfew was imposed. Food prices rose due to hoarding and the fear that the rice routes from the Mekong Delta would become unusable. On 21 April 1975 the President resigned. His successor was the old, sick Vice President (Tran Van Huong), who had 'made a very senile impression on the ambassador and myself'.<sup>19</sup>

Fear swept the city.<sup>20</sup> Its residents heard stories about the Northern troops acting like animals and sparing nobody. Fear for life and property was widespread; in short, uncertainty and despondency reigned. Many people felt desperate and tried to compensate by seeking salvation in entertainment.<sup>21</sup> Memories of the terrible killings that had taken place during the Tet offensive in Hue in 1968 were still very vivid.<sup>22</sup>

### **Emergency measures and evacuation plans**

The Hague instructed Saigon to submit weekly reports on the situation facing the Dutch community. The Americans were taking measures to evacuate their citizens and advised the Dutch to prepare to evacuate their own compatriots.<sup>23</sup> Like other embassies, Van Roijen sent a low-key circular to all Dutch residents, setting out the

evacuation plans. The official Dutch residence in Saigon became the central collection point; a column of whatever transport was available would leave from there. On 31 March 1975 Da Nang fell, marking the beginning of the end.<sup>24</sup> The embassy decided that the time had come to start evacuating Dutch citizens. Alarming reports and images were arriving from Da Nang. The embassy staff was aware that the picture was rather distorted, but all sources pointed to widespread panic and bloodshed. On 1 April 1975, Van der Stoel ordered the families of embassy staff to be evacuated. Other women and children from the Dutch community were also advised to leave, but at their own discretion.

Van Roijen sent a worried report about rumours of panic during evacuations and the completely inadequate leadership given to such operations by the South Vietnamese government. The other missions were equally concerned, for if the same thing happened in Saigon, the situation would be impossible to control. Evacuations from Da Nang and Nha Trang degenerated into chaos, and many people were left behind. From that point on, the military and political situation was regarded as a lost cause in diplomatic circles. Negotiations between North and South were now pointless.

On 10 April The Hague again drew the embassy's attention to the measures to be taken in an emergency. Saigon was instructed to destroy all classified information. Encrypters and telex machines were to be sent to Bangkok. All the encryption keys had to be destroyed, as had the files on sending and receiving encrypted messages. The same day, Van Roijen received an encrypted message from Van der Stoel, instructing him to make a *démarche* to the South Vietnamese government and request it to hold consultations with the PRG, put an end to the bloodshed and take steps to alleviate the suffering of the Vietnamese population in the South. Slowly but surely it became clear that Saigon was surrounded. According to the Vietcong, pressure on the city was being stepped up to incite an internal coup against the South Vietnamese government.

Van Roijen was subsequently instructed to advise all male Dutch citizens, too, to leave and not to take any unnecessary risks.<sup>25</sup> Consultations with other embassies showed that they had nearly all received instructions to exercise caution and act as they saw fit. Only the French embassy staff were ordered to remain at all times to assist the French in South Vietnam. A growing number of people asked Van Roijen and his staff for help with their evacuation. The cases were often harrowing, such as those involving Vietnamese people who had already been convicted in the North or were afraid of being persecuted by the North Vietnamese. In mid-April a joint TV team from the Dutch networks AVRO, KRO, TROS and NCRV made plans to travel to Vietnam. The Ministry in The Hague strongly advised against this. Van Roijen, too, was opposed. He feared a very chaotic situation in Saigon, even total anarchy. Secret reports circulated of a forthcoming evacuation by the US embassy, followed by a

large number of Vietnamese. The psychological impact of the Americans' departure cannot be underestimated. The population saw it as the end of an era, with all the attendant risks. The TV team eventually decided not to travel to Vietnam; only journalist Fons van Westerloo persisted.

Roads in South Vietnam were slowly becoming totally congested. Thousands of people were fleeing, taking with them whatever they could. 'This meant that the army no longer had any room for manoeuvre. All the roads were clogged by people fleeing the North Vietnamese army.'<sup>26</sup> On 19 April Van Roijen received an encrypted telegram instructing him to evacuate with his embassy staff. Minister Van der Stoel wished him luck. Other embassies had already left or were about to do so. Only the Swiss and Vatican representatives remained. The archives of the Dutch embassy were flown to Hong Kong, in accordance with instructions.

The telex machine at the Dutch embassy broke down. For open telex messages (but also for the encrypted tapes that could later be decoded at the embassy) Van Roijen went to the Saigon post office, where there were long queues.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes he could go at night, together with his Belgian counterpart, who had not had any contact with Brussels for a long time.

The evacuation was coming closer and closer, although Van Roijen really rather would have stayed to assist his compatriots and others. He put the request to The Hague. Van Roijen and Zaadhof wanted to leave with the British ambassador on 24 April. The Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon still seemed reasonably safe at that time. 'But the landing lights are occasionally turned off so aircraft have to land without them.'<sup>28</sup> The situation seemed to have become a little quieter following the President's resignation. Nevertheless, everyone was convinced that the city could fall quickly, even after the bridges over the Saigon River were rumoured to have been blown up.

On 28 April Van Roijen was still sending messages from Saigon. He reported that the situation was becoming untenable. The message ended with a note by the encryption service at the Ministry in The Hague: 'above text was received in heavily mutilated form so we cannot completely vouch for its accuracy. Contact with Saigon was suddenly broken so inquiries are impossible.'<sup>29</sup> That was the last encrypted message to be transmitted between Saigon and The Hague.

Van Roijen and Zaadhof recorded the evacuation on super 8 film. It shows how the encryption equipment at the embassy was destroyed, and how they fled the city. At the airport they were caught in the crossfire. There is also footage of Dutch journalists clambering on board a helicopter and footage shot in the trenches.

The embassy staff's final days in Vietnam were very out of the ordinary. Their instructions were to get out of the country fast. After delaying their departure twice, they finally left. Some twenty Dutch people, including several reporters, had to be evacuated first. The government had chartered a DC-10 for that purpose. Once



that had been accomplished, it was time for Van Roijen and Zaadhof to leave. The Americans gave them their evacuation code: Bing Crosby's Christmas song 'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas' would be broadcast on the radio. But the code became known so that everybody knew about it.<sup>30</sup> The Dutch spent their last night with the Belgians, where they helped to finish off the champagne and pâté. Zaadhof slept on a bed of Stella Artois beer cases.

The next morning, Van Roijen paid a visit to the US ambassador, Graham Martin. He wanted to know when they would give the final exit signal. The curtain was due to fall within half an hour, but that was too soon for the Dutch embassy. Documents still had to be destroyed and Jan Zaadhof had to be picked up. The Dutch were in a difficult situation but fortunately they were given a little extra time. After signalling to The Hague that all means of communication had been destroyed, the moment had come. The remaining journalists came to the embassy and were told that they had to go to the exit point for US journalists. The embassy staff gave the Dutch journalists Heineken beer, which generated a lot of goodwill among the foreign colleagues who had joined the Dutch reporters.

Van Roijen and Zaadhof were then ready to leave. Van Roijen had two pieces of luggage with him. One was a small case containing the embassy's emergency gold reserve,<sup>31</sup> Maria Theresa thalers and Golden Eagles.<sup>32</sup> The journey to the US embassy was extremely chaotic – far worse than can be seen in any footage. 'The gates could not be opened. Children were thrown over the fences in order to get them out. They were picked up by the Americans and were probably able to leave the country.'<sup>33</sup> In short, there were tragic and emotional scenes. The two Dutch diplomats finally realised that the road to the US embassy was closed and sought refuge with the Belgians. The Belgian ambassador was still busy destroying the final messages, and creating a lot of smoke. Law and order in the city had broken down. The police had disappeared and the army mutinied. 'The Belgian knew of a way of getting to the airport in a convoy, together with the UNDP. When we arrived at the UNDP, they were still drinking champagne.'<sup>34</sup> The group left in a car carrying the UN flag, with the Dutch representatives carrying an additional Dutch flag. Two Vietnamese people who wanted to flee the country went with them. The convoy was protected and anyone who tried to interfere was shot at. There was still some security in place at the airport and they managed to reach the Americans. The latter were very frightened, as the North Vietnamese were within shooting range. The Americans refused at first to let the Dutch car through. Only after the bag containing the gold reserve was opened and passports were shown did the Americans let them pass, clearly impressed by the large red wax seals on the envelope containing gold coins.





Chargé d'affaires Jan Herman van Roijen leaves Saigon with a suitcase with the gold storage of the embassy in it, April 29th, 1975. Photo taken by his colleague Jan Zaadhof, second embassy secretary.

The airport was in complete disarray. Everywhere people were screaming hysterically. They had to wait in a bunker and went back once to fetch a case they had forgotten. They then went to a hall where they met the Dutch journalists again. Before leaving, for a while they had to wait for a helicopter in a trench. When things quietened down, they ran to the helicopters. Only one item of luggage was allowed per person. But Van Roijen had two cases. He therefore decided to leave his own belongings behind and took the Dutch embassy's gold reserve with him as his personal luggage.

They were accommodated in the hold of a US aircraft carrier. The situation on deck was too hazardous. This is because the Vietnamese air force was also fleeing but its aircraft were not good enough to land on a carrier. Aircraft shot across the deck and helicopters were thrown overboard to make room for other aircraft. The aircraft carrier took them to Bangkok. Van Dongen,<sup>35</sup> the Dutch ambassador in Bangkok, was waiting for Van Roijen and took him to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he was given the opportunity to tell his story.



Arrival on the aircraft carrier USS Midway.

### Bitter aftertaste

With victory in sight, the North was in no mood to negotiate, especially not with Thieu. Van der Stoel therefore instructed the embassy not to follow suit if the Thieu government fled. Van Roijen was even given the authority to decide to remain in Saigon if necessary to establish contacts with a 'new regime'.

Saigon faced a serious refugee problem. When Van Roijen inquired about the possibility of granting asylum in the embassy, The Hague responded cautiously. Only people whose lives were in danger could be granted asylum there, and Van Roijen should always ask for instructions first. The Ministry in The Hague was afraid, and probably rightly so, that a 'new government' would effectively make asylum in the embassy impossible. The Vietnamese government did however give Van Roijen permission at this time to take twenty orphans out of the country via a Dutch organisation.<sup>36</sup> The Ministry in The Hague responded rather testily to this action and wondered whether it was really necessary. The official position of the Dutch Ministry of Justice seemed a little more 'balanced': it was better for the orphans to stay with relatives in their own country.



Van Roijen talks to a colleague on board USS Midway.

Today, Van Roijen and Zaadhof look back on those events with mixed feelings. They say that in this type of situation it is no cliché that ‘it’s impossible to know who you can count on and who you can’t’.<sup>37</sup> The boundaries between good and evil shift suddenly and in surprising ways. The Hague did not allow assistance to be given to members of the ‘third force’, although so much had been expected of that movement. The former embassy staff still find this painful and disappointing. A plus was that they were able to rely on one another. This was a valuable lesson in their lives. They realised that a career with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs meant more than a dull existence as a civil servant. That feeling has stayed with them ever since.

Van Roijen found it hard to come to terms with the fact that he was unable to save friends and informants. ‘There were no mass killings, but people did die or suffer.’<sup>38</sup> This still troubles him. Even then, they had a strong feeling that The Hague

did not understand what they were trying to say. But in Van Roijen's opinion, Max van der Stoel *did* understand.

The peace that emerged was a tragic one. Van Roijen still feels that the West left South Vietnam in the lurch.<sup>39</sup> It still bothers him that the Netherlands 'was in thrall to certain people [i.e. left-wing parties and organisations – TVZ] who pursued purely political aims'.<sup>40</sup>

Saigon had fallen. The terrifying picture painted of the Northerners generally proved to be a caricature. People feared for the future but they were also able to see relatives from the North again; families that had been separated by the course of the country's history were reunited. People naturally tried to steer clear of the new rulers as far as possible, but were sometimes able to benefit from family ties.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, there was a great deal of suffering after 30 April 1975.

That date marked the dawn of a difficult period for Saigon. Many people were sent to re-education camps. In the city everything was in short supply, and there was no government for a while. Saigon declined rapidly and soon nothing remained of the 'Paris of Southeast Asia'.

In 1998 the Netherlands reopened a diplomatic mission in Saigon, which since 1975 has officially been known as Ho Chi Minh City. The mission is not an embassy because since 1976 the capital of Vietnam has been Hanoi, the old capital of North Vietnam. A commercial, cultural and consular mission – a Consulate-General – was opened in Ho Chi Minh City. But in everyday conversation many people, young and old alike, still call it Saigon.

## 9

## Brandpunt Vietnam

## War reporting by KRO Television (1966-1969)

Niek Pas

‘Motivated and inspired’ is how, in retrospect, television reporter Ed van Westerloo (b. 1938) typified the spirit of the 1960s. At that time Westerloo embraced the belief that ‘we (the people) can influence world events’. Nowhere this became more evident, for him, than through the war in Vietnam and the way it was reported on Dutch television. Together with Aad van den Heuvel (b. 1935), and working for Dutch KRO’s current affairs programme, *Brandpunt* (Focus), Westerloo would come to create the model for a new highly engaged brand of reporting.<sup>1</sup>

This article seeks to shed light on how KRO’s *Brandpunt* reported the first phase of the war in Vietnam (1966-1969). Although some books and articles about the perception of the war in the Netherlands were in circulation, hardly any research has been done into the way the Dutch press and audiovisual media covered the Vietnam war other than some scattered remarks in memoirs, memorial volumes and scientific articles, and a few Master’s theses. This article does not attempt to completely fill the void but will try, through an examination of the *Brandpunt* broadcast, allowing insight into the way the war in Vietnam was reported on Dutch television.

We concentrate on three reports this KRO current affairs programme made in and about Vietnam in 1966, 1967 and 1969. We ask two questions: first, how was the war reported from a Dutch perspective and what part did television (*Brandpunt*) play in this? And second: how did the reporting evolve during those first years of the war? Before analysing the content of the news programmes, we will picture the media landscape in the 1960s and *Brandpunt*’s place in it.

### The Dutch media and Vietnam

Because of the involvement of the United States, former liberator in the Second World War and at that point a recent NATO ally, the war in Vietnam was a sensitive subject in the press and the media. At first reporting – apart from a few exceptions from the left – was predominantly loyal to government policy and Atlanticly orientated. At this time the Dutch press depended heavily upon international press agencies and from American publications for their information. Reporting followed government policy relatively uncritically until 1965. Only after that date

did cracks begin to show in their loyalty, amplified by the socio-cultural changes taking place at the time, such as increased personal freedom, emancipation of the younger generation and women, and a more critical attitude towards authorities.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Dutch media were largely US biased, at the end of the 1960s a climate of polarization set in, and analyses and reports of the war moved between two extremes. Within the written press, there was on the one hand a weekly magazine called *Elsevier*, voicing the opinions of the bourgeoisie. In 1968, the then editor in chief Henk Lunshof did not see the intervention of the US as a war against North Vietnam but rather as a 'brave effort of a democratic country (US) to curtail the spread of dictatorship.' He distrusted critical voices. In his eyes, the orchestrators of the 'eternally demonstrating demonstrators, signature collectors, slogan wavers', and – apparently *Brandpunt* already had that 'leftist' reputation – '*Brandpunt*-whiners' were to be found in Moscow.<sup>3</sup> At the opposite pole there was the weekly publication, *De Groene Amsterdammer*. From the beginning of the conflict, the editors followed every move on the part of the 'imperialist' United States' very critically and joined the chorus of protest against American intervention.<sup>4</sup> As for the daily newspapers, the Catholic *de Volkskrant* – initially loyal to the government but emancipating rapidly in the second half of the 1960s<sup>5</sup> – stood opposite 'neutral' newspapers such as *De Telegraaf*, *Het Algemeen Dagblad* and *Het Parool*. The latter, originally a liberal newspaper from the resistance movement in the Second World War, reported until 1970 from the perspective of a crusade against communism, and for years continued to support the bombings of North Vietnam. Only from 1970 onwards, with a new generation of editors at the helm, they proceeded to condemn the American actions.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly in Hilversum – the town from where Dutch radio and television operated – there would be an about-face in the reporting. Two of the broadcasting organisations, VARA and VPRO, embraced the socio-cultural changes in a generally positive way, although not without strong 'internal tensions'. Instead of confirming the established relationships, as broadcasting organisations had been accustomed to doing in the 1950s, in the 1960s they fanned conflicts and points of contention, which were borne out by the turmoil surrounding VARA's satirical show *Zo is het toe-vallig ook nog 'ns een keer* (1963-1966) and VPRO's *Hoepla* (1967). Like other broadcasters AVRO and NCRV, KRO watched this trend from a distance, although certain news programmes inside this organisation, such as *Brandpunt*, were leading the way in promoting an attitude of social criticism.<sup>7</sup> This development did meet with opposition, inside KRO as well as amongst its audience. The organisation's board of directors showed concern, saying that at times it seemed that the editors at *Brandpunt* 'were interested in extreme points of view only'.<sup>8</sup>

For television journalism, still a relatively new phenomenon in the 1960s, the Vietnam War was a learning process. There was relatively little experience with the



making of independent reports abroad. The first reports had appeared in the early 1960s, and dealt with the independence struggles in Algeria and Congo. Moreover, no tradition of war reporting existed in the Netherlands, as it did in the United States, Britain or France. The Vietnam War drew some five thousand journalists from all over the world to Southeast Asia, but in the period from 1965-1975 a mere 25 of them were Dutch. According to war reporter Arnold Karskens they formed part of the 'motley crew of press individuals, fortune seekers, savers of the world and war addicts' that worked mainly out of Saigon. Only a handful of Dutchmen (photographers and cameramen) travelled with the troops, usually employed by foreign media.<sup>9</sup> Dutch consular representatives were said to have been 'not exactly overjoyed' with the Dutch press people. It is said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was asked to be sparing in granting introductions for visiting Dutch journalists, as this would have led, 'bar some exceptions, to disappointment and misunderstanding'.<sup>10</sup>

On an individual level ideological extremes were personified by Joris Ivens and Henny Schoute. In his films Ivens voiced the North-Vietnamese point of view and became – especially in France, where he lived, and to a lesser degree in the Netherlands – an icon of the Vietnam movement. His work penetrated especially in circles of left-wing militants.<sup>11</sup> Henny Schoute, on the other hand, reported on the war from a South-Vietnamese and a pro-American perspective. Her reports were in great demand with the *silent majority*. Schoute wrote for the protestant weekly *De Spiegel* (later for *De Telegraaf*). She travelled with special units of the South-Vietnamese army and described her stay among the American Green Berets in the following way: 'this was like being in John Wayne's movie. This was the other Vietnam war!'<sup>12</sup> Few Dutch journalists in Vietnam will have shared her romantic-vitalistic vision of the war while similarly Ivens's ideological zealotry would not have appealed to them either. Yet, as the conflict dragged on, an anti-American attitude was becoming fashionable in the media and in public opinion. This was not accompanied by a more critical opinion towards the North-Vietnamese dictatorship, however.

The first television reports filmed in Vietnam were in all probability realized by G.B.J. Hiltermann, the well-known radio voice of AVRO and editor-in-chief of the *Haagsche Post* weekly. For AVRO's television news programme *Televizier* this conservative newspaper man and popular specialist in international affairs flew to Saigon in early 1965. His reports were mere rephrasings of his pedantic and easy to understand Sunday afternoon exposés.<sup>13</sup> His contributions, broadcast in May 1965, made a rather static impression. For Hiltermann, television was still very much 'picture radio'.<sup>14</sup> He did not take it too seriously himself either: his performance in Saigon was more like a 'a (publicity) stunt', as having 'your own man in Vietnam, ... that was something'.<sup>15</sup> Journalistic reporting would evolve greatly in the years after 1965.

## Brandpunt

More so than AVRO's *Televizier* or NCRV's *Attentie*, VARA's *Achter het Nieuws* and KRO's *Brandpunt* set the tone for background news broadcasts in the mid-1960s. Looking back on his years as a reporter, VARA's Koos Postema acknowledged that *Brandpunt* was the 'great competitor', according to him, the other news programmes did not really count. Herman Wigbold, editor of *Achter het Nieuws*, even was 'jealous' of the Catholic competitor.<sup>16</sup> According to Aad van den Heuvel in his memoirs there was a 'fierce competitive struggle' that resulted in 'exciting reports and interviews'.<sup>17</sup>

The success of *Brandpunt* in gaining a reputation as one of the best current affairs news broadcasts on Dutch television, was underlined by the *De Telegraaf* as early as March 1963, although this 'neutral' newspaper had so far reacted rather 'cantankerously' to the 'Catholic' broadcasts, they remarked, after a story about noise nuisance caused by military airplanes around the city of Eindhoven, that: '*Brandpunt* kept up its tradition of being the most interesting of the denominational news analysis programme, especially as they do not tend to broach subjects that would actually belong in the umbrella NTS newscast – the mistake made by so many similar programmes – but rather call attention to wrongs in the world from a general point of view, so that in a way the programme fulfils the function of a television ombudsman'.<sup>18</sup> For *Brandpunt* it had taken some years to develop the right formula that led to this acclaim.

*Brandpunt* began in October 1960. Television had by then existed in the Netherlands for 9 years but the spread of this new medium had been relatively slow. By 1960 there was one single channel, with 22 hours of air time a week, which a number of broadcasting organisations shared. A mere 1 million TV sets had been sold. It was only in the course of the sixties that television would take the Dutch living rooms by storm and gain importance. Originally, in the years of the Catholic/socialist coalition governments led by Mr. Willem Drees, news programmes were essentially 'well-behaved', technically and facilitation-wise rather embryonic, organised in denominational 'spoken columns', and were hardly interested in 'hard news'. Although several shows and broadcasts had an eye for current affairs, news and commentary, as a result of the denominational 'columns' system in the Netherlands and the absence of facilities and technical possibilities, it was not until 1956 that an umbrella news programme came into being: the NTS Journaal.<sup>19</sup>

Partly as a result of an increase in air time, around 1960 several broadcasting organisations started serious broadcasts of current affairs and news analysis. NCRV introduced *Attentie* in 1961, thus following in the footsteps of VARA (*Achter het Nieuws*, 1960) and of KRO, who had started *Brandpunt* in 1960. *Brandpunt* was created to deal with 'the news behind the news'. During its first years it served as a news show for current affairs, a kind of magazine, with a frequency of once a month,



Aad van den Heuvel, presenter and correspondent of *Brandpunt* in 1968.

which dealt with subjects that originally were of an entertaining rather than an informative character. One of its co-founders was Aad van den Heuvel, who had begun working in television in 1959, at that time a 'very special medium' for him, because it 'brought the world so close'.<sup>20</sup> Another editor from the very beginning was Henk Neuman, who provided commentary on international politics. It would be some years until, initiated by the new editor in chief Richard Schoonhoven, the decision was taken to move towards a significantly more journalistic format, political and social events were judged on their news character, and youthful journalistic talent was recruited – such as Ed van Westerloo in 1964. *Brandpunt*'s frequency increased to an average of once a week, the number of permanent staff was extended and the number of self-produced foreign reports grew.

At first KRO had strongly relied on reports from abroad from, among others, the BBC and the French *Cinq Colonnes à la Une*, a news show that 'in many respects' was an example 'of the kind of current affairs programme that *Brandpunt* wished to become'.<sup>21</sup> Compared to the Netherlands, French television covered the war in their former colony early and frequently, in 'Cinq Colonnes' as early as 1963. French television showed a succession of reports, amongst which, those by Roger Pic depicting North Vietnam and the South-Vietnamese guerrilla forces that created furore.<sup>22</sup> Of course the French, as former colonisers of Indochina, had access to excellent contacts and the relevant expertise. In the Netherlands there was nothing that could be compared with the Association d'Amitié Franco-Vietnamienne – a pro-communist foundation, established in Paris in 1961, that published thorough reports by academic specialists on the situation in Vietnam<sup>23</sup> – nor did Dutch reporters have the linguistic and cultural know-how necessary to work in depth. Also, there were no Dutch journalists with a great knowledge of (French) colonisation. The book, *De kwestie Vietnam*, [Vietnam at issue!] first published in 1966, represented a major breakthrough in this respect.<sup>24</sup>

The reports *Brandpunt* began to produce abroad quickly earned international fame and confirmed the programme's position as the flagship of the Catholic broadcasting organisation. This was achieved on a number of levels, the camera work was of a high quality (Piet Kaart); the teams that worked abroad were kept to a minimum (no more than 3 people) in order to guarantee a personal approach and also, *Brandpunt* worked very hard to dramatise the subjects. The idea was to let events speak for themselves through images, and then, through interviews with those concerned let it unfold into a drama.<sup>25</sup>

### Pro-American

Near the end of 1965 *Brandpunt* decided to create a news programme of its own in Vietnam. To that purpose, Willebrord Nieuwenhuis (1938-2006) was sent out, who until that moment had been a correspondent in New York.<sup>26</sup> According to his memories of Vietnam, he informed himself with the help of 'a sweet little folder of clippings' from Hilversum, and his own clippings collection in New York. In his first filmed report, dated 7th January 1966, viewers were presented with street shots of Saigon, patrolling American troops, an interview with some Dutch people and the wedding of an American soldier with a Vietnamese woman.<sup>27</sup>

An item from 15th January reported the aftermath of the war in Qui Nhon, a coastal town in Central Vietnam, which was also characterised from a pro-American perspective. The 8-minute report focused on two hospitals, the public hospital and the Holy Family Hospital.<sup>28</sup> The latter was run by nuns from medical missions from the US (Philadelphia) and the Netherlands (Heerlen). Nieuwenhuis

on this occasion interviewed one of the nuns. This had nothing to do with war reporting in any strict sense, the KRO journalist kept away from the front, as he admits during his stand-up at the road side: 'A few kilometres from here there is fierce fighting going on at this moment.' In his approach, Nieuwenhuis was quite explicit: 'This is the time that the rice harvest is brought in. The Vietcong are trying to steal what they can. American and South-Vietnamese troops are trying to help the farmers'. Years later Nieuwenhuis admitted that 'Vietcong' was too facile a common denominator, and that in fact the name covered a vast spectrum: from criminal organisations, third-way coalitionists and former Vietminh who had previously fought the French, to Buddhists and obscure religious sects.<sup>29</sup>

The item underlined among other things the humanitarian side of the American presence. For example, an 8-year-old patient was being treated for burns in the mission hospital in an aluminium bath that had been a fuel tank of an American aeroplane, a present from an American pilot. The cameras also zoomed in on an American soldier visiting one of the little patients. In strong contrast with this hospital was the world outside, which was identified with poverty. In the description of the Benh Vien Thanh Gia Holy Family Hospital it was emphasised that this was a 'model hospital' run by westerners: 'One of the few hospitals in the countryside and exceptionally good. Only one patient per bed, no flies, no cockroaches.' The transition from this oasis to the world outside was made clear in the montage through the phrase: 'The nuns regularly miss sheets. Vietnamese refugees take them away, to trade them for food at the market', which was followed by shots of shacks made of wood and tin cans, leaning against the hospital wall. The oasis represented by the mission hospital stood in sharp contrast to the public hospital. Here, 'sometimes 3 to 4 patients were piled in one bed.' The suffering in the public hospital was shown for a relatively long time compared to the earlier shots, and the commentary underlined the difference between Vietnamese and Western aid: 'The suffering in Vietnam is increasing daily. Thousands of orphans are wandering around. The government does little for them. Missions and volunteer teams are trying to take them in.'

The underlying discourse reflected a certain sense of Western or pro-American superiority. This was presented to the viewers through the good works of protestant and Catholic missionaries in poor countries, where the South Vietnamese were poverty-stricken and the Vietcong were crooks. Through their attacks the latter were instrumental in maintaining this situation of underdevelopment. The West, by means of the servants of God and the Americans, was trying to change this situation for the better. Although this programme did not exactly distinguish itself for objectifying reporting, it certainly had drama. And the viewers could feel that, according to Victor Lebesque in a short review of the programme for *de Volkskrant*: 'The images of the report revealed in no uncertain terms the shameful lack of medical staff and medicines in the war-stricken country.' He did not discuss the

journalistic quality of the news programme, but the headline of his article, 'Well filmed report', left little to doubt in that respect.<sup>30</sup>

This report shows that Nieuwenhuis relied on spokespersons from the religious communities. He used to do this more often in the beginning, and he also interviewed academics as, according to him, most diplomats were 'poorly informed' and 'found it easy to repeat what the Americans said.' He did not consider the Vietnamese government or military to be reliable sources either. The permanent correspondents from France and the US, who often stayed in South Vietnam for one year minimum, called the visiting journalists who were there only for a short time 'smokejumpers': firemen who are rushed to a burning forest and dropped there to perform for a few moments. But however much it may have been 'incident reporting', the fact that the reporter was there and was recording fragments of the war was sufficient in itself.<sup>31</sup> At first, for the KRO editors these contributions were still an American story. As time passed however, the United States were no longer considered as a faithful ally but as the oppressor.

### Critical sounds

The change in the journalistic culture from an attitude of servility to one of directness,<sup>32</sup> with more critical and more independent questioning of authorities and social problems, was a rapid process in the 1960s, and in *Brandpunt*. Referring to the reports on Vietnam, Nieuwenhuis later emphasised that it was not an easy process: 'In covering a complex conflict like Vietnam, this was no easy transition. It was made impossible for you to be direct there but it was possible to avoid servility as long as you wrote down what you saw and did not concern yourself with propaganda from whichever side, however attractively dished up sometimes.'<sup>33</sup>

How thoroughly the current affairs programme had undergone this transformation can be seen from a report made in March 1967, when it presented a grand two-hour special.<sup>34</sup> This report consisted of two parts: on the one hand a penetrating and critical portrait of the American military presence; on the other hand the South-Vietnamese perspective. The KRO team, with Ed van Westerloo, Aad van den Heuvel and Henk Neuman, filmed on various locations during a week: an American air base, a Vietnamese re-education camp, an American field camp, and in Saigon. In addition the reporters conducted a whole series of interviews, which were candid in tone, from the side of the Americans (soldiers and officers, and even Commander in Chief Westmoreland) and from the Vietnamese side (students and politicians).

One of the most interesting areas of tension in the item can be seen during an interview at an American air base, where newly flown-in soldiers are contrasted with their comrades going home. Ed van Westerloo mingled with the newly arrived American soldiers to gain insight into how the American soldier feels the moment





Ed van Westerloo, presenter and correspondent of *Brandpunt* in 1968.

he first sets foot on Vietnamese soil. The answers vary from a laconic 'Well, I guess it is not a big thing. You just gotta fight', to the dry, 'Well, we got a job to do and we will do it.' Contrasted with the newcomers were shots of those who were returning, depressed soldiers waiting for their flight back to the us. Some of whom elaborated on their experiences. Van Westerloo's question: 'Did you kill vc yourselves?' drew some candid answers: 'I have 7 kills to my credit.' Van Westerloo: 'What do you think about that?' The soldier: 'You come to accept it.'

There was extensive footage, in word and image, of the American material superiority in the air, at sea and on the ground. This first part of the report was concluded with an interview by Neuman with General Westmoreland, visiting an army unit in the field. The commander obligingly replied to Neuman's question of how it

was possible that the most powerful army in the world was not able to defeat ‘poor black pyjama troops’ [Vietcong – n.p.]. Westmoreland:

Well, indeed there are some black pyjama troops as guerrillas; this is one face of the war, but also a number of well-equipped conventional formations at regiment and division strength. As you well know, during the past year (...) they’ve been reinforced by sizeable numbers of troops by the regular army of North-Vietnam. Well-equipped troops with excellent weapons.

This answer toned down the cliché of David against Goliath that was rather widespread in (Western) public opinion and which was magnified especially by the protest movements. Next, Westmoreland answered politely – but with a resolute negative – to the question of whether he was aware that although the war might be won on a military level, it had already been lost politically: ‘Well, I suppose anything is possible. But I believe that your hypothesis is improbable.’ It worth noting that in hindsight, in his memories, Aad van den Heuvel described the conversation between Westmoreland and Neuman as ‘absurdist’.<sup>35</sup> The images certainly do not warrant such an impression.

The second part of the report zoomed in on the political situation in South Vietnam. In a stand-up Neuman emphasised that the absence of a politically active élite was one of the weakest points in the South-Vietnamese Republic. He underlined that the Americans held very high expectations of the future democratisation of the regime, which was being prepared by a constitutional assembly gathered in the former French theatre of Saigon. There, Neuman spoke with some politicians, amongst other things about the role of women, and the president of the Assemblée. The latter emphasised that they were able to work towards their goal completely independently: a two-party system that would put an end to the fragmentation of the South-Vietnamese political landscape (more than 50 parties large and small).

*Brandpunt* contrasted this institutional perspective with the citizens’ perspective. Neuman was standing among a number of students and polled their opinions. One wanted the Americans to stop bombing Hanoi and another emphasised that the cost of living had gone up since the arrival of the Americans. Worse was that ‘bad professions’ such as prostitution and theft were rife. Images of American soldiers among the ‘girls’ in the shanty town of Tin City underlined these rough edges of the war. A third student added subtly that Vietnamese civilization was thousands of years old, and could not be compared with American civilization in this respect.

Thus ample attention was given to the disrupting consequences that the war had for South-Vietnamese society. Ed van Westerloo interviewed inhabitants of a ‘refugee centre’, asking them how long they had to stay there and what they thought of the Vietcong and the Americans. Aad van den Heuvel contributed a report about

the medical situation of the population. Compared with the images in the report of January 1966 this had hardly improved. Van den Heuvel interviewed a doctor on board the *Helgoland*, a German hospital ship, and spoke with a Dutchman who was trying to set up TB-clinics. The images of mutilated patients were shocking.

The review in *de Volkskrant* (by Han Hansen) of this report on a 'sad and hopeless affair' was unreservedly positive:

So we got two hours of pure misery, but then, we know that apart from being an entertainment machine, television is also a provider of reality, or at least of an impression of it. With its Asian tour, *Brandpunt* has driven that (...) home in an especially powerful way. And I believe that Neuman, Kaart, Van Westerloo and Van den Heuvel have tried to render what is going on in Vietnam in a way that is as sincere as possible. They have dealt with it in a matter-of-fact way, without a lot of prejudice and (...) without relying heavily on the official spokespersons.' The long report had 'informed the viewer as widely as possible'.<sup>36</sup>

According to *de Volkskrant* the shock effect was 'less' than expected, but that was partly due to the fact the viewer had by now become accustomed 'to images of horror'. Hansen underlined that many such images from Vietnam had already been shown on television, and *Brandpunt* too had used such material, 'but in a rather modest way'. Although he had expected 'more incisive questions' especially towards Westmoreland, and 'a somewhat more pointed conclusion', his final evaluation was positive, because as a whole the news show had been very well balanced: 'However, *Brandpunt*'s aim was not so much to condemn but to paint a situation that in many respects is hopeless. And they have succeeded in (showing) this in a way that commands respect.'<sup>37</sup>

This critical report undoubtedly contributed to the reputation of *Brandpunt* as a qualitatively high-level current affairs news programme. Aad van den Heuvel himself looked back on this report with 'mixed feelings' in his TV memoirs from 2005:

One supported the demonstrations in the Netherlands and in the US against this war of aggression, but in Vietnam it was impossible to hate the American soldiers. Dazed boys, lost, who in a few hours' time had been transported from 'the affluent society' to an unknown, threatening world of dense, steamy jungle where deadly danger was lurking on all sides and the enemy was an unknown, mysterious shadow.<sup>38</sup>

To approach this 'enemy' with a critical attitude too, and to report on them in a balanced way, was the new challenge the KRO wanted to meet.

## Pro Vietcong?

Soon after the Tet offensive, which drastically changed the perception of the war in Southeast Asia, *Brandpunt*'s competitor *Achter het Nieuws* broadcast a special report on April 16, 1968, in which they explicitly declared themselves against the war.<sup>39</sup> This was unprecedented. Editor-in-chief Herman Wigbold announced this change of direction in the following words:

It is not our opinion that a current affairs programme like ours should always necessarily have its own opinion. In the last year we have reported upon a great many important issues in our specials and left the conclusions to you, the viewer, but we feel that we would be guilty of a certain lack of honesty if we left it at that in the issue that is at stake tonight.<sup>40</sup>

With this announcement the line between factual reporting and news analysis on the one hand, and giving an opinion on the other had been crossed. Part of the Dutch media openly questioned the American intervention. Not all journalists changed positions. In her memoirs, Henny Schoute declared that she left NCRV to work for AVRO (and also for *De Telegraaf*), after the Christian broadcasting organisation had insisted she should report in a more 'anti-American' way, which she refused to do.<sup>41</sup> *Brandpunt* too was shifting its course slowly but unmistakably.

A third news story, at the end of 1969, put the enemy in the picture.<sup>42</sup> In fact this was an almost impossible task, according to Van den Heuvel in retrospect:

Western journalists covered the war of the Americans extensively, with all its dirty details, whereas you never saw anything of North-Vietnamese acts of horror. Independent journalists and camera teams were not admitted in the northern part of the country. (...) the North Vietnamese screened 'their' war off very carefully.<sup>43</sup>

It was difficult at the time for foreign journalists (at least for Dutch ones) to get in direct contact with representatives of the South Vietnamese Liberation front or with North Vietnamese. However, from the beginning of the negotiations between North and South Vietnam in Paris (May 1968) such contact became somewhat easier. Around 1970 the Netherlands began to send out signals towards South Vietnam that recognition of North Vietnam was imminent. Norway and Denmark had already made that move. Yet, in the spring of 1969 the Dutch cabinet was still debating whether representatives of North Vietnam or of the South-Vietnamese Liberation Front would be allowed to enter the Netherlands.

Apparently, by mid-1969 *Brandpunt* was so eager to portray the Vietcong that they portrayed the images and the words of the representatives of the Vietcong (in Paris) as undiluted propaganda. The images were broadcast with a Dutch commentary that, one got the impression, was a direct translation of a Vietnamese text. Only during the course of the programme it was mentioned explicitly that this was a 'Vietcong film' whereupon a certain distance could be taken from the material: 'The film shows, the commentator says, ...'. Various aspects of the struggle passed in review, such as the deployment of women, citizens supplying food to soldiers, the education of Vietcong fighters in the field, as well as the excellent quality of the field hospitals. All these elements emphasised the emancipatory character of the liberation struggle (participation of women in combat units), the progressive and uplifting aspect (the education of fighters and the fact that illiteracy was higher in South Vietnam), as well as, finally, the excellent way the Northern leaders cared (medically) for their people's army.

These images were interspersed with interviews that Ed van Westerloo held with Phan Tan Van and Ly Van Sau, members of the Vietcong delegation in Paris. Critical questions from Van Westerloo were skilfully defused. To his question of whether the food that the farmers supplied to the Vietcong fighters was not in fact a form of taxation, Ly Van Sau answered with a smile that this should be seen as a 'contribution de bon coeur'. After all, the farmers considered their fighters as their 'propres enfants'. How such critical questions were wrapped up so propagandistically for the Dutch viewer with a snappy anecdote to boot, becomes apparent in the following fragment, in which Ly Van Sau details on the aspect of education:

The first thing we do once a certain area has been liberated, is to set up schools. Well, in South Vietnam we now have primary schools in almost every village, and in the provinces or districts we have secondary schools. In the liberation army too education is widespread. Let me give you a nice example: sometimes, during military operations, during marches, the soldier who walks in front hangs a small blackboard on his back and then mathematical formulas are written on it, for example, so that the person walking behind him reads it, and learns it, etc., you see?<sup>44</sup>

In the review of this report in *de Volkskrant* it is striking how easily the propagandistic aspect was disregarded. Actually the newspaper found the images mainly powerful and convincing: 'Extremely primitive, but maybe for that same reason all the stronger as documentary', was its judgement of this 'film made by the Vietcong film makers'. The report was firstly and foremostly interpreted as a confirmation of existing relations in Vietnam, while an undertone of admiration for the perseverance of the South-Vietnamese Liberation Front trickled through into the commentary as well:



KRO correspondent Willebrord Nieuwenhuis (left) in Vietnam, with Fons van Westerloo (AVRO) and TROS cameraman Kees Colson at Tan Son Nhut airport near Saigon, April 1975.

The Liberation Front has its own film department, and it has to process its material underground and in bunkers. What was known already, the documentary confirms: the Vietcong is conducting its struggle not only with weapons, but as much with a conviction that has grown into resentment: for nine years already, supported by a home front that in moral strength is in no way inferior to the fighters at the front.<sup>45</sup>

In his memories, Willebrord Nieuwenhuis underlined – like Van den Heuvel – how tricky it was to form a correct image of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese: ‘About the Vietcong you only heard through the Americans. You did not get access to the North and the journalistic contributions from Hanoi or, very rarely from the ranks of the Vietcong, were not reliable’.<sup>46</sup> The only Dutchman who was given free rein by the North Vietnamese regime to film and report was filmmaker Joris Ivens. His film *17e parallèle* got a predominantly positive reception in the French and also



in the Dutch press. The Catholic daily *De Tijd* wrote: 'Even when Ivens' opinions and intentions are not ours, we can accept his film as a warning that things cannot go on like this.'<sup>47</sup> However, the film had nothing to do with a reporter's footage, more with lip service to Ivens' communist-nationalist hosts. It was not *Brandpunt* alone that was unsuccessful in presenting an unbiased image of the 'enemy', Dutch journalism failed in this respect.

### Conclusions

What impression do the three reports now give us with regard to how the reporting of the war by the Dutch media developed? In the first place a diversity of points of view is apparent: one item investigated the consequences for the civilian population in South Vietnam, the second report zoomed in on the meaning of the war for American soldiers and in a third effort the most difficult angle was chosen: the war from the Vietcong / North Vietnamese perspective.

The quality of the offerings was different: the big report from 1967 is, from a journalistic point of view, very professional: it is critical, objectifying as far as possible, with a use of several different sources, and there is an absence of normative language use or a moralising undertone. The images speak for themselves, and they are supplemented with numerous interviews to heighten the drama. This can not be said of the January 1966 report about the hospitals (which was rather moralising and one-sided) and the 1969 report about the Vietcong (highly propagandistic).

It is remarkable that an oscillatory movement can be seen, as it were: swinging from a 'Western' to an 'Eastern' perspective. Of course it was not correct to assume that American propaganda was traded in for Vietnamese, but it should be clear that a more critical attitude with respect to the American war was being developed, while at the same time a greater interest in the Vietnamese point of view was being shown. The journalists on the spot always had to compromise. Aad van den Heuvel emphasised afterwards in this context how much Vietnam was an 'unreal world', where 'you were allowed to film almost anything', except on the North-Vietnamese side. It is this 'absurd mixture of openness and propaganda' that was constantly making the reporting very difficult.<sup>48</sup> Some journalists, such as Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, have never been able to formulate a final answer to this question where Vietnam is concerned: 'I myself wonder whether we did enough to explain the multifaceted character of the conflict, when we were on excursion to that war all those years. What went on below the surface? What was moving the several factions in Vietnam? What was their success, what exactly their fight? What horrible methods did they use and what ideal did they think to attain them? Who was serving who in that destroyed, blinded paradise? In what direction did the dominoes finally fall in Southeast Asia and why?'<sup>49</sup>

This case study shows how, with the fast-changing media landscape and the turbulent socio-cultural and economic developments of the mid-1960s, television journalism was emancipating. Where the journalist around 1960 was still loyal to authority, in the second half of the 1960s he exercised his profession with a more independent and a more critical attitude. This was also reflected in the television reports on the war in Vietnam. But here was a new pitfall. Increasingly, and culminating at a crucial point within the 1970s, the journalist himself would assume the politician's chair. This was the introduction of a new form of engaged, left-wing journalism. *Brandpunt* is undoubtedly one of the current affairs news shows that stood on the outset of this development.

**A real believer, with difficulty**  
**Joris Ivens, film maker (1898-1989)**

The street in the Dutch town of Nijmegen where George Henri Anton (Joris) Ivens was born on November 18, 1898 is modest and not distinguished by any special light fall. At one time or another in his long life this must have struck him. For Ivens was a man who loved dramatic images. In his films he used images like a trade union negotiator uses words.

His grandfather Wilhelm Ivens had come to Nijmegen from Efferen in Germany in 1867 and started a photographic studio. From the second half of the 1870s he became a market leader in the photographic activities in the city, becoming the 'official photographer' of the citizens of Nijmegen. His son Cornelis Adrianus Peter (Kees) Ivens was less interested in the art of photography than in selling photographic materials. In 1894 he set up the 'Photo technical Bureau and Sales of Photographic Materials for Amateur Photographers'. A few years later he founded the company 'Dutch Photo technical Bureau C.A.P. Ivens & Assoc.', predecessor of the chain of 'Capi' photo shops, with branches in Nijmegen, Amsterdam, Groningen and The Hague.

Soon the young Joris Ivens was given responsibilities in the family company. After his training in 'commercial economy' (Rotterdam) and a course in photo techniques in Berlin, in 1924 he became the manager of the Amsterdam branch of Capi, and later sub director of the company. His heart was not in it. He moved in artistic circles in the capital, was involved in the foundation of the Filmliga [Film League] in 1927 and saw documentary film as the true art that knew how to express the emotion of living. His first two films: *De Brug* [The Bridge] (1928) and *Regen* [Rain] (1929) put him on the map with the international avant-garde. Joris Ivens became the major Dutch representative of film as a form of art. His prewar documentary work laid the foundation for the genre and for an international career.



Joris Ivens in Vietnam during the filming of *Le ciel, la terre*, 1966.

From then on he was not 'at home' anymore, nor did this interest him: possessions were ballast, he sought the weight of the images of the world that had to be related. Hans Schoots, his biographer, links Ivens' restless disattachment to his youth and to the 'fear of committing himself' that was to mark his love life. Yet, Ivens maintained long-lasting relationships and friendships. His postwar, personal involvement with countries that were emancipating themselves, fighting to be free from a colonial, imperialist or autocratic past, also points less to a fear of committing himself than to a desire to leave once the story had been told – his story.

On the basis of his youth and education Ivens can be characterised as an entrepreneur and a 'technician who stumbled onto art'. His films are extremely carefully chiselled, and images are staged for the effect of the story. And that story was about the new world. The world of revolutionary regimes, often impelled by communist convictions. Ivens had joined the Dutch Communist Party in 1931. He was not an active member. In 1938 his membership, presumably because of his continuous absence, was tacitly terminated. Party politics were wasted on Ivens. Questions may be asked about his ideological *Grundbegriff*, although for more than 30 years he saw the Soviet Union as the example of communist praxis. He also filmed for money. After having settled in the

United States in 1936, for example, he made films commissioned by the Shell oil company and the U.S. Ministry of Agriculture. He was also involved in propaganda movies about the allied war effort (*Our Russian Front*, 1941; *Know your enemy: Japan*, 1945). However, his loyalty to communism as a revolutionary way of life remained intact.

Ivens' apolitical attitude was complicated by his direct contacts with advocates of communist or supposedly communist regimes. This was the case with Indonesia – the Dutch bone of contention: because of his film *Indonesia Calling* (1946) Ivens was a long-time *persona non grata* – and later, in the sixties and seventies, with Cuba, Vietnam and China. In judging Ivens as a 'fellow traveller' it was often forgotten that the Western political context in which his films appeared was a context of democracies entrenching themselves, governments that – also where publicity was concerned – had much to lose. Ivens made political films because they were seen and watched as political films. His contemporary, filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, kept using that same argument to defend herself against allegations of involvement with the Nazi regime. Ivens was well aware of where he positioned himself, and this involved a responsibility on which he hardly ever pronounced himself. He was an opportunist, but the nuance of his being seen as a 'left-wing pinko' lies in his dedicated vitalism, rather than in his paying tribute to political communism.

Ivens hacked film images. Politically sensitive images, as in Vietnam. The communist government in Hanoi invited him in 1964, and in the following years he worked practically full time – in cooperation with his new partner and later wife Marceline Loridan – on *Le ciel, la terre* (1966), *17e Parallèle, la guerre du peuple* (1968), *Le peuple et ses fusils* (1970) and *Rencontre avec le président Ho Chi Minh* (1970). At that time his home base was the Paris of *'l'imagination au pouvoir'*, and from there he was directly involved (together with top artists like Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, William Klein, Claude Lelouch and Agnès Varda) in the film *Loin de Vietnam* (1967), a documentary about the reactions to the war in France and in the United States. In this film Ivens sided with the Vietnamese and Laotian 'people's war against American imperialism'. He was not the only one, but he did so unsparingly – technically almost over-skilful, for the story and the drama. Although there are doubts about his presence on the front.

Why was Ivens so interested in the people of the Little Dragon? He maintained cordial contacts, with Vietnamese, in the Parisian *mouvement contestataire* that also opposed the war in Vietnam. From his personal files it becomes clear that he knew, or knew how to reach, the right people in

Vietnam. But he himself hardly voiced what it was he sought or found in Vietnam. A scarce 11 out of 558 pages of Schoots' biography deal with Ivens' time in Vietnam. But it was an important episode in his life as a filmmaker: he produced five films with which he made an unequivocal political statement. And he was of course received there as a comrade. Questioning and contradiction were not part of the communist repertoire in those days, in Vietnam as little as in those western countries where 'imagination reigned'. Ivens filmed in Vietnam because there he was able to picture the 'people's war' against the anti-communist West. Relentless American bombings on North Vietnamese territory – with synchronised soundtrack – that forced the villagers around the 17th parallel literally underground: he got approval from both sides. Ho Chi Minh was pleased to tell his story; the Dutch press (the daily newspaper *Het Parool*, March 12, 1968) wrote on *17e Parallèle* how Ivens told his story 'in revealing and moving images': 'the dog that walks around with a camouflage of branches, children playing games inspired by the war, the camera dwelling on the faces of three men pointing to an air fight they are following, old people touching the wreck of an American airplane shot down from the skies ... He does not want to make pretty films but militant ones, in the service of communist ideology. Ivens the filmer (I quote this from a conversation that film critic Jan Blokker had with him for the daily *het Algemeen Handelsblad*) is heavy artillery for Hanoi, brought to bear against a common enemy'. Lip service – for all those who have ears to hear.

From the seventies on, Ivens and Loridan filmed mainly in China. The usual image the West had at the time was particularly unclear. There was no conflict with China, even though at the time of the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1969 / 1976) there was justified concern in some circles about the carryings-on of the 'Great Helmsman'. Although in their Herculean project *Comment Yukong déplaça les montagnes* (1976) Ivens and Loridan sketched an absolutely positive – and therefore uncritical – image, they received quite some positive attention from the West, because a glimpse was offered of a world that had remained closed until then.

Not until the eighties did Ivens distance himself from communism. In early June 1989 he sent a telegram of protest against the bloody reaction to the students' protest on Tiananmen Square. The world was ready for the end of history. Ivens still loved China. He devoted his cinematographic testament to it: *Une histoire du vent* (1988). In the eighties he became respectable in the Netherlands again. So much actually, that later in bursts of cultural opportunism subsidies for the conservation of his personal archives kept raining down on his

grave. As long as he was alive, however, it was not about the money. In 1985 he was awarded the 'Golden Calf', the major Dutch film prize. In that same year the Minister of Welfare, Health and Culture, as a sign of reconciliation, visited him in Paris where he lived. Three years later Ivens received honorary citizenship of Nijmegen. In 1989 he was raised by Queen Beatrix to 'Knight in the Order of the Dutch Lion'. Shortly after, on June 28th, 1989, Joris Ivens passed away in Paris. A little later a square in Nijmegen was named after him. It looks out on prostitutes and a Chinese take-out. The wind blows where the story goes.

*Hans Moors*



# 10 The right to be right

## The Vietnam movement in the Netherlands (1965-1973)

Rimko van der Maar

On January 6th, 1973, there was a large national demonstration in the city of Utrecht in response to a new and heavy series of American bombings on North Vietnam during Christmas 1972. The demonstration, with between 50,000 and 100,000 people participating and supported by most Dutch political parties, was the culmination of a week in which the daily newspapers had written with horror about what they called 'the Christmas bombings'. Demonstrations against the bombings began erupting all over the Netherlands. 'Highly emotional' and 'increasingly anti-American', was the way in which the American ambassador, J.W. Middendorf, chose to describe the sentiment in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup> at this time.

Anti-Vietnam war activists who had been involved in the first wave of protest actions in the 1960s watched the national turmoil over the 'Christmas bombing' with mixed feelings. Not that much earlier, American military intervention in Vietnam had still received broad-based support from the Netherlands and in 1965 activists protesting against the US Vietnam policy had been either marginalised, ignored or branded as 'anti-American'. This article examines the protest which took place within Dutch society against the American presence in South Vietnam during the period from 1965 till 1973 and seeks to find answers to the following questions: why, in which way, and by which groups were the American actions criticised? And how successful were the protest actions in the Netherlands?<sup>2</sup>

### Protest in 1965 and 1966

Protest against American intervention gained momentum after the start of a long American bombing campaign called *Rolling Thunder* in March 1965.<sup>3</sup> Part of the protest was driven by the small, Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP) and other related pacifist groups. Another arm of the protest was organised by youth and student organisations flying varying leftist political colours, such as the communist General Dutch Youth Association [Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond], Socialist Youth [de Socialistische Jeugd] and the Pacifist Socialist Young People's Work-

groups [Pacifistisch Socialistische Jongeren Werkgroepen]. The protests, which were relatively small-scale in 1965, had not come out of the blue. Many of the early activists had been previously engaged in protest actions, such as those against the atom bomb ('Ban the Bomb') or against French actions in Algeria.<sup>4</sup>

The actions of the first anti-Vietnam War activists were initially addressed at the Dutch government and Parliament, as politically the Dutch government had declared its solidarity with the American actions.<sup>5</sup> Many activists were convinced that a small country like the Netherlands could act as a mediator in the conflict, because, amongst other things, in 1965 and 1966 the Netherlands had held a seat on the U.N. Security Council. Other than sending letters of protest and organising petitions and small demonstrations, the Vietnam activists engaged in spreading information about what they considered to be, 'the real facts' about the American intervention, by means of brochures, nationwide protest meetings and, from 1966 onward, through their own magazine, the *Vietnam Bulletin*.

Fundamentally, the people involved in the first protest actions held the opinion that the situation in South Vietnam had nothing to do with communist aggression from North Vietnam. As they saw it, part of the population in South Vietnam had, with good reason, risen up against the corrupt, undemocratic and incompetent regime in South Vietnam. Viewed in this way, the American intervention not only stood in the way of a 'social revolution', but could also lead to an American-Chinese confrontation in a third World War. Further, critics pointed out the humanitarian consequences of continuous American bombing, also noting the support that the Vietcong guerrilla fighters seemed to be getting from the population in South Vietnam, and the Geneva Accords of 1954, which had prescribed free elections in all of Vietnam. This criticism was ignored by the United States and South Vietnam.

The first actions did not receive much attention. They were too small and not successful enough in mobilizing public opinion. In 1965 there was general support for the explanation by the American government that intervention was necessary to stop the spread of communism in Asia – and even in the whole world. 'Should America withdraw, freedom – also in Western Europe – would lose security and future', the [daily newspaper] *de Volkskrant* wrote in December 1965.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, reference was often made to the Treaty of Munich between Great Britain, France, Italy and Nazi-Germany in 1938, as this treaty was considered to have shown that it is wrong to make concessions to aggressors, in this case North Vietnam.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, criticism of the United States was seen as improper and ungrateful, because this country had liberated the Netherlands from Nazi Germany and had been the Netherlands' most important ally since the Second World War. The press repeatedly wrote that criticising American Vietnam policy would only play into the hands of 'the enemy,' communism.<sup>8</sup> Activists found it frustrating that their efforts kindled such negative attention. Bram van der Lek (PSP), for example, complained



Petitioning for Vietnam, Amsterdam 1966.

that in his view, Western public opinion as a whole had been ‘poisoned for years’ with ‘misconceptions’ about communism and the ‘holy task of the USA.’<sup>9</sup>

Yet, the activists were not alone in their aversion to American military intervention in Vietnam. By autumn 1965, it was apparent that their criticism was shared by a much wider public, primarily from the intellectual, artistic and church-oriented sectors. This became abundantly clear in October 1965, when on the initiative of the PSP a full-page petition was published in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* [newspaper], signed by more than 250 university professors, journalists, medical doctors, artists, theologians and church ministers. The petition called upon the Dutch government to plead for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam.<sup>10</sup> Another strong tactic used by the first anti-Vietnam War activists was a ‘Teach-in’ organised by Amsterdam students in the Koopmansbeurs [the Stock Exchange building] in Amsterdam, on October 29, 1965.<sup>11</sup> The meeting, which had been inspired by similar ones in the U.S. and was attended by around 2,000 people (mainly students), was front-page news in almost every national Dutch newspaper and occasioned elaborate articles in weekly magazines. The Amsterdam Teach-in was an important event because at once it became clear that not only small pacifist or communist groups were concerned about Vietnam. ‘Large groups that had so far been silent now demand the right to have a voice in decisions about foreign politics as these policies



Policeman confiscates a sign saying 'Johnson miller', 1967. Demonstrators designed signs saying 'Johnson miller', as the slogan 'Johnson killer' had been prohibited. However, these too were confiscated.

are carried out in their name, by their government', the PSP party organ *Bevrijding* [Liberation] later wrote in an enthusiastic tone.<sup>12</sup>

During the course of 1966, doubts about the American intervention in Vietnam arose from the three political coalition partners who formed the cabinet under Mr. Cals, namely PVDA [Labour Party], the Protestant Anti Revolutionary Party (ARP), and the Catholic KVP. Their doubts largely centred upon the threat posed by communist China, and their debates were mainly concerned with whether the U.S. was waging a hopeless war in Vietnam.<sup>13</sup> The PSP and anti-Vietnam War activists welcomed this open criticism, but at the same time they distrusted it. This was not only because the criticism was too moderate, but also because critics within the parties in government emphatically distanced themselves from what they considered to be apolitical extra parliamentary protests.<sup>14</sup>

In 1966 in Amsterdam, partly in reaction to the lack of political results, a more determined type of protest against the war began. Inspired by the anarchist action group Provo, the so-called Aktiegroep Vietnam [Action Group Vietnam] sought publicity by entering into confrontations with the Amsterdam police.<sup>15</sup> According to the coordinator of this group, pacifist Otto Boetes, he felt there was a comparison between the military actions of the USA in Vietnam and the authoritarian actions of the Dutch police against the demonstrators. The Action Group, which was founded by radical youth and older pacifist-Christian and anarchist activists, provoked the



Piet Nak shows a poster announcing the demonstration on Sunday October 21st, 1967.

police by not applying for a demonstration permit, despite this being the usual procedure. Also, the mostly young demonstrators were shouting the slogan ‘Johnson murderer!’, This was a highly provocative act for the protesters as at that time ‘insulting’ a ‘friendly head of state’ was a penal act under Dutch law. The Action Group Vietnam received ample media attention but did not become a theme for political discussion in The Hague. The group’s image as ‘agitators’ precluded that. Because of this some of the activists felt that the riots in Amsterdam had an adverse effect, but Otto Boetes saw it differently. ‘Somebody had to throw the first stone and get the mud on him’, he said. He was convinced that as a result of the aggravated protests other more moderate groups would carry on the protest.<sup>16</sup>

### Broadening of the protest, and quarrels, 1967 and 1968

In 1967 Boetes was proven right. In May and October two demonstrations took place in which 10,000 and 15,000 persons participated, respectively. According to the press, moreover, the participants were from all age groups and from all walks of life.<sup>17</sup>

The demonstrations that took place in 1967 were coordinated by a committee which was formed around Piet Nak. Nak was well known in the Netherlands because of his role in the so-called ‘February Strike’ in 1941, a massive protest of the people of Amsterdam against the persecution of their Jewish fellow townspeople.<sup>18</sup> As Nak himself



phrased it, he had decided to protest against the war in Vietnam because the pictures that he saw in the media reminded him of the German occupation of the Netherlands and of the persecution of the Jews. 'Lately I have been having that same feeling again that I had when I saw the Germans flogging Jews', he said in an interview.<sup>19</sup>

For a number of reasons, the Piet Nak committee managed to reach a wider audience. In the first place, it was founded at the right moment. In early 1967, the Dutch media, like the American media, were proclaiming with increasing frequency that the American army was waging a hopeless war and that the American government should suspend the bombing of North Vietnam and thus make peace negotiations possible.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, the committee consciously kept their slogans moderate. The organisers were convinced that there were more people willing to demonstrate against the Vietnam War, but that they did not do so for fear of being associated with the riot-provoking demonstrations in Amsterdam. Moreover, very harsh criticism of the U.S. was still not popular in the Netherlands.<sup>21</sup> To avoid this problem the committee, in its first appeals, pointed to the protests in the U.S.A. and to a speech by Martin Luther King, in which he had pleaded for an end to the American bombing.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it seemed the committee had a very wide appeal and audience because it was not only made up of people from the usual left wing (Amsterdam) protesting activist scene; but that it also included people from circles that were not normally associated with demonstrations. Thus, amongst the founders there were lawyers, psychologists, teachers, church ministers and university professors (one of them the future Minister of Foreign Affairs, P. H. Kooijmans).<sup>23</sup> Another point of interest was the participation of local KVP and PVDa politicians. The participation of Piet Nak was particularly important, not only did he command respect because of his history with the resistance movement against the Nazis, but he was also mediagenic; in interviews he was able to formulate his disgust with the war using clear and dramatic language. He was therefore a popular guest on television shows.<sup>24</sup>

Paradoxically, the success of the Piet Nak committee led to tensions between anti-Vietnam War activists. Since the very first protest actions in 1965 there had been frequent conflicts between activists of different (left-wing) political groups, as they suspected each other of using the war in Vietnam for their own political gain. The PSP and the Communistische Partij Nederland (CPN) particularly were always at loggerheads over this.<sup>25</sup> The CPN did not want to have anything to do with the Piet Nak Committee because Nak was an ex-CPN member, and the party considered his initiative as an attempt of the PSP, which Nak had subsequently joined, to win over the 'young workers' and 'to isolate' the CPN.<sup>26</sup> More radical young Vietnam activists were concerned that Nak's committee had steered the protest against the Vietnam War in too 'bourgeois' a direction.<sup>27</sup> The controversy between the Piet Nak committee and the more radical activists, who fought amongst themselves, was stimulated by the media who regularly reported upon their quarrels.<sup>28</sup>



## Political influence?

As mentioned previously, the first anti-Vietnam war activists mainly addressed national politicians. For example, in the summer of 1966, K.F. Bouman, a history teacher in the province of Zeeland, initiated a petition to move the Lower House to hold a parliamentary debate about the war in Vietnam.<sup>29</sup> The petition failed. The Lower House ignored the initiative despite the fact that 60,000 people had signed it. One of the reasons for its failure was that the PSP and the CPN had been involved in the petition, and the larger parties did not like to be associated with them.<sup>30</sup>

The Piet Nak Committee too made efforts to move politicians to speak out against the American actions. However, in spite of the committee's moderate approach, this was extremely hard to achieve. It was true that the PVDA, who in 1967 had been the opposition, supported the committee's activities, but government circles within The Hague remained hard to reach. Just as in 1966, it was still too controversial in 1967 and 1968 for politicians to participate in demonstrations or to be involved in extra-parliamentary action groups. PVDA party leader Joop den Uyl, for example, affirmed his solidarity with the committee's demonstrations, but did not want to march in them.<sup>31</sup> Later, in 1968, some PVDA leaders did join the committee but they did not take a leading role.<sup>32</sup>

Still, it could be said that the protest actions in 1967 had an *indirect* influence on politics in The Hague. During the months that the Piet Nak committee was entering the public eye, national politics suddenly developed a strong interest in the Vietnam War. In August 1967 the Lower House adopted a motion proposed by Mr. Schuijt, ordering the government to urge the American government to stop bombing North Vietnam. The motion was a reaction to mounting concern amongst the Dutch population about 'the Americans' hard-handed approach in Vietnam', as its initiator, Lower House member Wim Schuijt (KVP) phrased it later on, but it was also a reaction to the Lower House elections of February 1967.<sup>33</sup> These elections, in which PVDA and KVP had lost, and newcomer Democraten'66 (D'66) had won, had made it clear that the traditional parties were losing contact with the voters. The era where voters automatically voted for the party of their own (denominational) group seemed to be over.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, after the elections the PVDA group in the Lower House resolved to voice more criticism of the American Vietnam policy in order to put pressure on the Christian parties and on the new Christian-conservative cabinet under Prime Minister – and ex-Defence Minister – Piet de Jong (KVP).<sup>35</sup> Another reason for the increasing criticism was that Joseph Luns had made a comeback as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Luns was regarded as a conservative Minister who showed little concern about the people's criticism of his policy. In 1965 and 1966 De Jong had staunchly defended the American intervention in Vietnam.<sup>36</sup>



Other voices: pro-American demonstration by students in The Hague, 1967.

Schuijt's motion did not change the direction of the government's Vietnam policy. To the disappointment of Parliament, De Jong's cabinet did not want to carry out the motion. Not only were De Jong and Luns in favour of the intervention, but the cabinet also held the opinion that it would be 'cheap' of the Dutch government to interfere in the conflict whilst not carrying any responsibility themselves'.<sup>37</sup> After long insistence from the Lower House however, Luns was willing to sound out a number of other countries about a common peace appeal. But this appeal never happened, as, on March 31, 1968, Johnson announced that the bombing of North Vietnam would largely be stopped, which suddenly brought the possibilities of peace negotiations much closer.<sup>38</sup>

Anti-Vietnam War activists followed the Lower House debates with interest. They were unhappy with the results, however. The fact that Luns had refused to urge the American government to stop the bombing once more confirmed, in their eyes, that the government did not care at all about the worries voiced within Dutch society.<sup>39</sup> One of the consequences of the lack of political results was that the activists now began to direct themselves more towards the small, local anti-Vietnam War committees appeared everywhere in the Netherlands. Members of the Nak committee, by now renamed the Nationaal Comité Vietnam, travelled all over the country in order to help local committees with their activities, often with the assistance of local PSP-members.<sup>40</sup> By April 1968, committees had been set up in



Writer and artist Jan Wolkers carries a sign with Ho Chi Minh depicted on it, 1968.

Friesland, Alkmaar, Groningen, Maastricht, Rotterdam, The Hague and in 't Gooi, amongst other places. Committees not connected with the National Committee were also active in several other places, for example in Zeeland and Nijmegen.<sup>41</sup>

### **Vietnam rediscovered; medical aid**

Anti-Vietnam War activists were collecting money and goods for the people of Vietnam as early as 1965. At first these collections were small-scale actions that yielded little. Not only because of their limited geographical scope (often Amster-

dam and its immediate surroundings), but also because the collections, according to the reactions on the streets and in the media, were seen as anti-American.<sup>42</sup>

As disgust with the American war grew however, the collections were more successful. By the end of 1967 several committees were working in this field, such as the Nationaal Comité Vietnam, the Aktiegroep Vietnam, and the Comité Hulp Bevrijdingsfront Vietnam [Committee for Help to the Vietnamese Liberation Front].<sup>43</sup> Besides the fact that it had a greater impact on the public, the activists' preference for appealing for medical aid was prudent, as at the beginning of peace negotiations between the United States and North Vietnam in Paris, political protest generated little interest and people were looking for alternative forms of action.

In the Netherlands there was an increasing interest in the consequences that the war had had for Vietnam and its people, as can be seen from the many publications (often translated from English) that appeared between 1968 and 1970.<sup>44</sup> After a period in which protesting against the American Vietnam policy had been the initial concern, the negotiations now ushered in a period of more in-depth questions, such as: who actually are those Vietnamese? What have the Americans inflicted on them in the last few years? This deepened interest in the Vietnam conflict was strengthened by visits to the Netherlands in 1969 and 1970 by the South Vietnamese Liberation Front negotiators. Since the start of the negotiations in Paris, representatives of North Vietnam and the Liberation Front regularly appeared in the western media to tell their side of the story. Although on one hand the visits had an alienating effect, since the Vietnamese did not fit the cliché image (they appeared in three-piece suits instead of black pyjamas), they also strengthened solidarity with the Vietnamese struggle against the United States.<sup>45</sup>

When in 1970 the war flared up again and a peace treaty did not appear to be imminent, it became clear that humanitarian aid had taken a central position in the Dutch Vietnam movement. While politically orientated activists did not generate much attention, the Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam (MCNV) became the face of the Vietnam protest. This committee had been founded by a number of medical doctors in late 1968 and was modelled after medical committees in other countries. Its purpose was to provide medical assistance to the victims of the American bombings in North Vietnam and in South Vietnamese areas controlled by the Liberation Front. From the very start the committee was successful, in part because it was immediately supported by almost the entire medical community, which is borne out by the recommending committee, which numbered 60 medical doctors, dentists and pharmacists in 1969 and more than 600 in 1973.<sup>46</sup>

The MCNV was successful because it inspired confidence and projected an image of expertise. Amongst others things, this was because the committee consisted of medical doctors, and regularly published its receipts and expenditures; it also published telegrams of thanks it received from Vietnam after shipments of medicines

were received.<sup>47</sup> Also, the committee emphatically kept aloof from party politics, which soon gave it an aura of independence. The MCNV was not apolitical, however: their principle of giving medical help only to North Vietnam and to the Liberation Front was too politically charged for that. In order not to scare off potential money donors, the leaders of the committee originally dissimulated their feelings of sympathy for the Liberation Front as much as possible.<sup>48</sup> Once the committee had become successful, however, it openly took a stand against the American Vietnam policy.<sup>49</sup>

The flourishing of the MCNV was indirectly due to the changes within the international context. As a result of the rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1969 and the United States and China in 1971, the communist threat, which had been a matter of dispute before 1970 already, was felt increasingly less, and this made aid to Vietnam much less controversial than in the sixties.<sup>50</sup> In addition criticism of the American presence in South Vietnam was increasing. Reasons for this were the slow development of the 'Vietnamization' of the war that Nixon had announced; the ongoing American bombing; and the publications of the secret government report, the 'Pentagon Papers', by *The New York Times* in 1971. These publications confirmed what many had been thinking already, i.e. that in the 1960s the American government had misinformed the public about its Vietnam policy.<sup>51</sup>

In 1972 the indignation from within Dutch society about the American presence in South Vietnam increased again, as a result of the renewed bombing of North Vietnam and the fighting that broke out after the North Vietnamese spring (Tet) offensive. This period was characterised by an avalanche of visual material depicting the consequences of the American (and South Vietnamese) bombings: images of craters, destroyed forests, bombed dikes and homeless children, fleeing and burnt by napalm. Partly because of these images, more and more people felt that Nixon's 'Vietnamization' was only a cover, used to change the war into an air war.<sup>52</sup> In this period, across the Netherlands anti-Vietnam War committees came into being to organise protest actions and collect money for the MCNV.<sup>53</sup> The new protest actions were often supported by the left-wing opposition parties: PVDA, D'66, the Christian Politieke Partij Radicaal (PPR), PSP and CPN. By doing so, these parties also agitated against the newly installed centre-right cabinet under Barend Biesheuvel, which, like its predecessor, had no intention as yet of criticising the American presence in South Vietnam.

By late 1972 there was so much moral support for the MCNV that for a while aid to the 'opponents' became a new form of political protest. This became clear especially by the negative response to a nationwide fund-raising campaign organised by the Dutch Red Cross and a number of other organisations. With a peace treaty in sight the Red Cross, morally and logistically supported by the Dutch government,





Demonstration against the American bombardments, Utrecht, January 1973.



wished to raise money for postwar aid to North as well as to South Vietnam. But as the MCNV had not been invited to participate (the committee gave aid to North Vietnam only and the Red Cross wanted to remain strictly neutral) the Red Cross was accused of wanting to 'shift' aid from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.<sup>54</sup> As a result, the Red Cross action did not really get off the ground, in spite of two big nationwide campaigns. Whereas their action 'All Vietnam' had raised 2,9 million guilders by September 1973, the Medical Committee raised 5,9 million guilders in 1973 as a whole.<sup>55</sup>

### **The emancipation of North Vietnam**

How broad-based the rejection of the Vietnam war had become in Dutch society could be seen from the floods of protest following the American bombings on North Vietnam that started on December 18, 1972 (the 'Christmas bombing'). All over the Netherlands there were protest actions.<sup>56</sup> An explanation for these protest actions can be seen through the growing compassion for the North Vietnamese population, the time of the bombings (Christmas) and the fact that this time Nixon had chosen not to inform the public about the bombings. The press release announcing the decision was businesslike, and was limited to the message that bombing would continue until there was an accord on the table.<sup>57</sup> Another element that influenced public opinion negatively was that Nixon had just been re-elected. It seemed as if he had purposely postponed the bombing until after his re-election.

Characteristic of the broad-based disgust was that the religion-based parties KVP and ARP supported the national demonstration on this occasion. It was the first time that these parties had formally given their support to a protest action against the American Vietnam policy. We must add that they also had a party-political motive for participating in the nationwide demonstration. Earlier, their members in the Lower House had denounced the bombing. Moreover, the religion-based government parties, especially the KVP, had again lost in the Lower House elections at the end of November.<sup>58</sup> In view of their electoral defeat, the party leaders thought it would not look good if their representatives in the Lower House denounced the bombings while the party leaders did not join in the national demonstration.<sup>59</sup>

The new Foreign Minister Norbert Schmelzer (KVP) also felt pressured by the public turmoil. Already in the first year of his tenure he worried privately about the growing criticism in Dutch society of the United States and NATO.<sup>60</sup> A former member of the Lower House, he held the opinion that if the government were not open to this criticism, it might lose its credibility. Even before the protest against the 'Christmas bombing' had gathered momentum, he announced that he had



Collecting money for the 'Amsterdam helps Hanoi' campaign.

called upon the American government to stop the bombing of North Vietnam. It was the first time that the Dutch government had done such a thing. In a message to the Dutch ambassador in Washington Schmelzer wrote that, as he saw it, the bombing might cause 'serious damage' to 'American prestige' and to 'the moral foundation of the NATO pact' in the Netherlands. However, Schmelzer also protested in response to his annoyance at the United States' not having first informed the NATO allies of the bombing.<sup>61</sup>

It was remarkable that the nationwide turmoil over the 'Christmas bombings' for the most part did not involve the Vietnam committees founded in 1971 and 1972. It is true that there were activists involved in organising the demonstration, but they did not have much to say. Politicians organised the demonstration in a short time via their extensive networks, and negotiated for hours with each other about which slogans could be used. Subsequently many activists had mixed feelings about this period. On the one hand it was a good thing that political parties were helping, as many more people could be reached that way. On the other hand it galled the activists to be overshadowed by national politicians at the *moment suprême*. 'Politicians always work that way', Nijmegen activist Tom Küsters said afterwards, not without a certain cynicism. 'All they do is come out at the right moment to harvest the work of others'.<sup>62</sup> Demonstrative of the sensitivity of the situation was seen as the KVP and the ARP refused to participate if the slogan 'America out of Vietnam' was to be used at the demonstration. After much ado, the slogan was replaced by the more subtle 'Vietnam for the Vietnamese'.<sup>63</sup> These discussions characterised the distance between the Vietnam activists and the politicians.

When the United States and North Vietnam signed the long-awaited peace treaty in Paris on January 27, 1973 and the American troops were withdrawn for good, the politicians proceeded with their daily activities and the activists were on their own again. The action group Brede Vietnam Beweging Nederland [Broad-based Vietnam Movement Netherlands] made several attempts, beginning in 1973, to keep the public interest in the Vietnam war alive, for example by protesting against the political prisoners in South Vietnam, but it never reached a wide public.<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, the 'Christmas bombings' had opened the way for large-scale aid to North Vietnam. Not only was 1973/74 a particularly good period for the MCNV, but several towns founded committees that raised money for specific North Vietnamese towns. What was new as well was the fact that aid initiatives were receiving financial support from Den Uyl's liberal centre-left cabinet, which had come into power in the spring of 1973 and which, because of the American-Vietnamese peace treaty, had more freedom and elbow room in its Vietnam policy than its predecessors. Another difference was that Den Uyl's cabinet, with the progressive Jan Pronk as the new Minister of International Aid and Cooperation, was no longer giving aid to South Vietnam. In this way the cabinet indirectly took a stand against the American involvement in South Vietnam.

The 15 million guilders that Den Uyl's cabinet offered to Hanoi in 1974 symbolised the completion of North Vietnam's 'emancipation'. Whereas in the sixties the country had still been seen as the aggressor, North Vietnam had now become a country in need. The taking of Saigon by North Vietnamese troops in 1975 did not change this image. Indeed, Prime Minister Den Uyl openly showed his happiness at the fall of the South Vietnamese regime and in 1976 his cabinet pledged another 100 million guilders to communist, reunified Vietnam.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

At first, the American intervention was widely supported in the Netherlands, out of fear of the encroachment of (Chinese) communism and because of the friendship with the United States. Critics of the American actions were voices in the wilderness. Extra-parliamentary actions were considered improper and ungrateful in view of the role America had played in the Second World War. Moreover, people generally trusted the judgement of the government and Parliament.

In 1967 doubts hit home amongst larger groups. This was mainly due to the hopelessness of the fight and to the attention given by the media to the bombing of North Vietnam. It was also because of the secularisation process in the Netherlands, which made it easier for people who in the past had automatically voted along with their own social (religious) groups, to openly express different opinions on political matters. In the spring of 1967, Piet Nak's Vietnam Committee managed to mobilize these doubts by making a concerted effort to get media attention and organise a demonstration with a moderate character. In doing so, the committee undoubtedly was a factor in the Lower House also becoming more openly critical – although politicians generally remained aloof from extra-parliamentary protest. The fact that in 1967 the Lower House pressed for a stop to the American bombing was another consequence of the turbulent political climate in the country.

As the conflict continued, disgust at the American presence in Vietnam increased further, especially from 1970 to 1973, as is characterised by the sudden flood of protest around Christmas 1972. Yet, this outburst against the United States did not fit in with the development of the protest since 1970. In the seventies the Dutch expressed their disapproval of the American Vietnam policy mainly in *indirect* ways – by showing their support for the people of North Vietnam. As a result of the détente in international relations and the gradual withdrawal of the American troops from South Vietnam, North Vietnam was no longer seen as a dangerous, aggressive communist bastion with China lurking behind it, but as a poor Third World country that was about to collapse under the American bombings. The turmoil surrounding Christmas 1972 caused Foreign Minister Schmelzer to lodge a protest with the United States. Schmelzer held the view that it was better to 'channel' what he saw as anti-American feelings in society than to go against society as his predecessor Luns had done.

Founded in 1968, the Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam intensified the growing feelings of sympathy for the United States' opponent in the seventies. This committee tapped into the growing indignation over the frequent American bombings, which looked senseless in view of Nixon's professed endeavours to bring the war to an end. After the Paris Peace Accords of January 1973, as a result of which the American troops definitively disappeared from South Vietnam, the MCNV was

given support by the liberal cabinet with Den Uyl at its helm. Thus, this cabinet indirectly took a stand against South Vietnam and against the American support for that country.

Apart from the successes of the Piet Nak Committee and the MCNV, it must be concluded that relations between anti-Vietnam War action groups and the population in general were ambivalent. On the one hand, activists wanted to mobilize as many people as possible, but on the other they were usually too radical to achieve this. Also, activists often expected too much from their protest actions. Relations between the various action groups and national politicians were difficult as well. Although action groups managed to establish relations with the PVDA, these contacts were often temporary and their political success was limited. A logical explanation for this difficult relationship is the difference between the interests of activists and politicians. For activists the Vietnam War was the only point of interest, whereas for politicians the war was only one of many themes about which to speak out every now and then, when the war was making headlines. Moreover, politicians were limited in their actions by the political situation in The Hague. Anti-Vietnam War activists found it hard to relate to this.

### **The Dutch in Vietnam**

The small number of Dutch in Vietnam since the colonial period can undoubtedly be explained as a consequence of the relative lack of interest in the colony and the new state that came into existence after 1954. Other important causes were the fact that the communist north was closed off, and acts of war in the south. In the colonial period the number of Dutchmen could almost be counted on one hand, if we leave out the several thousand migrants from the Dutch Indies. Although since 1910 there was a law that made registration with a consulate compulsory for 'Natives and Foreign Orientals' outside the colony if they wanted to qualify for support from the authorities, in the consular records there is no evidence of actual assistance. Nor is it known how many Dutchmen from the group that had been taken by the Japanese as prisoners of war stayed behind in the south of Vietnam after 1945.

Around 1955 some 25 Dutch nationals were registered with the consulate in Saigon. They mainly consisted of priests or nuns, while the others resided on plantations or had come to Vietnam on short-term contracts through international organisations. This number did not increase in any spectacular way. In 1972 the colony numbered 45 Dutch. By the end of the war, around 1974, twenty Dutch

people and fifteen children resided in Saigon. In Binh Dinh province a family lived with two children, while in other places single men and women were working, some of them as clergymen and nuns in hospitals (Dalat and Can Tho) or on plantations (just outside Saigon).

The one to stay the longest was sister Bets Ashmann. Since the fifties she had worked among North Vietnamese Catholics that had fled to South Vietnam. Later on she worked in the refugee camps that were springing up around the big cities as a result of the war in the countryside. Although in 1975 the embassy asked her to leave the country, she stayed until 1977, when the new government expelled her. In the eighties she returned to Vietnam with the *Lien Doi* (Solidarity) foundation, to resume her support of marginal groups. The foundation has been active ever since and has been recognised as a foreign NGO. In 2005 Ms. Bets Ashmann was knighted for her work.

In the sixties and seventies a small number of Dutch employees of KLM, Shell and Renault or working for international organisations such as FAO, UNICEF and UNESCO remained in the country. Others worked as doctors or as paramedics for the TB clinics that the Netherlands gave to Vietnam in 1967. The Dutch presence was also noticeable in another way: in 1967, the *De Spiegel* and future NCRV journalist Henny Schoute devoted a special article to American soldiers whose parents had come to the US as Dutch migrants and who acquired citizenship by means of military service and a tour of duty in Vietnam. Such was the case of Theo van Staveren (1948): he emigrated to the US with his parents and as a 'resident alien' enlisted in the army. The Roman Catholic Van Staveren was killed in action near Hoi An on April 10, 1968. He was granted citizenship posthumously and was also included on the Vietnam War memorial in Washington (panel 49.E, line 12). How many Dutchmen served in the American army cannot be established anymore because most of them got their American passport afterwards.

The question whether Dutch were allowed to serve in armies of other allies became a hot issue when in 1965 J.H.C. Ulrici, a former captain of the Dutch East Indies Army, appointed himself commander of a military volunteer corps to be formed by himself, of around one thousand men. On August 5, 1965 the headline in *De Telegraaf* [Dutch daily newspaper] read 'The Hague considering volunteers. Dutch soldiers to Vietnam? mwo Knight [of the Military Order of William I] Ulrici invited to take command'. Rumour had it that captain Ulrici would have his men ready in two months, but the Cabinet objected to the plan. Prime Minister De Jong announced that his government did not have any plans for the formation of such a corps. Attempts to get support through the American



embassy in The Hague and even through Prince Bernhard likewise came to nothing.<sup>66</sup>

A few Dutch journalists and press photographers went to Vietnam on temporary assignments. Germaine Krull witnessed the entry of Gracey's troops into Saigon as a correspondent for Associated France Press in September 1945. Although she was divorced from the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens she was travelling on a Dutch passport. In late November 1951 Alfred van Sprang, reporter and photographer for the Dutch protestant magazine *De Spiegel* arrived in Saigon. He was to stay in Indochina for two months. He returned in the spring of 1954. Trained as a parachutist at a French school in Hanoi, he flew over Dien Bien Phu as a stowaway in a Dakota transport plane, but he was not allowed to jump with paratroopers of the French Foreign Legion. Back in Hanoi Van Sprang continued reporting until the final defeat of the French when the enclave of Haiphong was surrendered on May 15, 1955, and he was forced to leave too. His compatriot Henny Schouten was to follow his example in the sixties. She too obtained a parachutist licence, this time in the South Vietnamese army. The reports she made from places where the notorious Green Berets operated in the Central Highlands earned her fierce criticism in newspapers such as *Vrij Nederland*, which slowly began to turn against the war.

Little known is the case of American-Dutch freelance photographer Ronald Pieter van Thiel, who died in Vietnam in 1965 under circumstances that have never been cleared up.<sup>67</sup> Almost forgotten too is Hans Duijnisveld who died in battle in 1970. In August of that year he had been released together with four journalists by Cambodian guerrilla fighters of the Red Khmer who were fighting near Siem Reap. A few months later, South Vietnamese troops that were operating in Cambodia found the body of a 26-year old foreigner who was alleged to have fought in a Vietcong unit. His diary was confiscated by the military intelligence service of the American army. It turned out that this was Duijnisveld. Thanks to his compatriot Hubert van Es he was given a funeral in Saigon. This was the same Van Es who was to become famous for a photograph of what for a long time would be called the 'last chopper from Saigon'.<sup>68</sup>

While relations between the American forces and the press were not always perfect, Dutch diplomats were not always willing to make life easy for the journalists either. Late December 1966 the embassy in Saigon drew up a code of conduct for, among others, 'serious journalists', and in some cases 'personal relations' were called in. In April 1975 temporary chargé d'affaires Van Roijen received explicit orders from The Hague to see to it that in case of an evacuation Dutch journalists took care of themselves.

Much more influential than journalists and diplomats must have been the general manager of the Vietnamese office of Shell Oil, Louis Wesseling. In his memoirs, which were published 25 years later, the former Shell Vietnam CEO reveals how his company made profits by keeping the competition out, and how with false promises he cajoled the Vietnamese into buying a new oil refinery and was able to keep the cost of war for the American Ministry of Defence artificially high. In 1975 it was the fourth time in the history of the relationship between the two countries that an evacuation needed to be prepared: in 1954 the Dutch were dependent on the Americans and the French. In 1965 and 1968 evacuation was seriously considered but no drastic measures were taken. Then, in March 1975, matters were clear: on March 26 the Minister in The Hague agreed to evacuate Dutch citizens that qualified. Families from Qui Nhon and Can Tho were given the guidelines for the evacuation. On April 1 the decision was taken to evacuate the families of the embassy staff. The remaining Dutch received advice to let their wives and children depart as long as this possibility still existed. Private individuals must decide for themselves, as they, of course, had to pay their own way. In the Netherlands the Ministry had announced to the press that Dutch people in Saigon were not in danger. The temporary chargé had taken preparatory measures. On April 4, twelve Dutch people arrived at Schiphol on a German plane. In Saigon, Van Roijen had made arrangements with the allies. His Belgian and British colleagues in particular showed themselves willing to take in Dutch nationals if and when they would leave. On April 14, all males that were still in the Republic got the request to leave. This did not apply to the representatives of the press that were in contact with Van Roijen and his staff. Precisely in connection with their presence, The Hague then insisted on an orderly evacuation, and journalists were now included in the evacuation plans. Smoke-jumpers like Willibrord Nieuwenhuis, Gerard van Westerloo and Kees Colson were practically racing the diplomats towards the waiting helicopters. In Hilversum the management of [Dutch broadcasting organisation] NOS had given orders to the journalists to leave immediately if the city should be taken. Several foreign journalists decided to report the entry of the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong themselves.

Not until the nineties did Dutch people settle in Vietnam again, on longer or shorter stays. A number of men have married Vietnamese women and run hotels, bars or businesses. Nowadays 400 Dutch people are registered at the embassy in Hanoi, of whom a number permanently reside in Vietnam.

*John Kleinen*

## 11

## Changing perspectives

### The Netherlands and Vietnam since 1976

Duco Hellema

This contribution examines political relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam from the reunification of North and South Vietnam in 1976 until the beginning of the 21st century. These years presented striking changes in the relationship between the two countries. We will identify three distinct periods. First, we will discuss the years from 1976 till 1985, a phase that was dominated by the provision of development aid granted by the Dutch government in 1976. In 1985 Dutch aid to Vietnam was discontinued and, from the Dutch perspective, a phase of distrust and distance began, that ended with the closure of the Dutch embassy in Hanoi in 1989. In the early nineties Vietnam was 'rediscovered' as an interesting growth market, a small 'Asian tiger', and this marked a period of rapprochement, which was initially mainly business-inspired. In 1990, development aid to Vietnam was resumed and three years later the embassy in Hanoi was reopened.

#### A problematic aid relationship

In the summer of 1976, Jan Pronk, the young social democratic Minister for Development Cooperation in the centre-left cabinet led by Joop den Uyl, promised the newly reunified Vietnam 100 million guilders in aid. The money was intended to help rebuild the war-ravaged country. Pronk's decision to initiate aid relations sprang partly from the strong feelings of solidarity for Vietnam that existed in the Netherlands during those years. Several times in the period from 1973 to 1975, Pronk had given financial support to campaigns to help parts of the country that were controlled by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. His decision to support Vietnam was also in keeping with his general orientation towards countries who demonstrated self-reliance and whose regimes were in favour of reform. The Minister for Development Cooperation was not alone in his sympathy for Vietnam in 1976. The embassy in Hanoi, that was to adopt such a critical attitude later on, wrote that one 'could not help but feel a great deal of sympathy for the people of Vietnam, who after years of war now embarked on the rebuilding of their country'.<sup>1</sup>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not know much about the situation in the new state as the Dutch embassy in Hanoi had only just been opened. At that time a newly released UN report had suggested that what Vietnam primarily needed was support for the rebuilding of its agriculture and transportation sectors, it therefore seemed an attractive idea to dovetail the Dutch aid with this. During negotiations in Hanoi in 1976 about how the 100 million was to be spent, some surprises were sprung on the Dutch delegation met with some surprise. The Vietnamese made it clear that they were principally interested in steel and other building materials.<sup>2</sup> The Dutch argued that such supplies could not be a basis for development cooperation, however, according to the Agreed Minutes it was nevertheless arranged that 25 million could be spent on steel and 17,5 million on synthetic yarns and aluminium. Under Dutch pressure, the balance of the 100 million was earmarked for an irrigation project in the Mekong Delta near Phung Hiep (35 million), for the creation of an institute of hygiene in Hanoi (7,5 million), and for the building of a corn shelling and husking factory (15 million).<sup>3</sup>

In one fell swoop the promise of one hundred million guilders turned the Netherlands into one of Vietnam's major western donors, after Sweden. This put the Netherlands in a remarkable position, for at this time Vietnam was being boycotted by the United States. The general opinion was that the one hundred million guilders given for reconstruction aid would be the first of many donations. In the years that followed, Vietnam was granted several other forms of aid, for example by way of the non-governmental Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam. At first expectations in The Hague concerning the relationship with Vietnam were still optimistic, including the political sector of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which resorted under the Director-General of Political Affairs, DGPZ. People realised, of course, that Vietnam was a communist state, but in DGPZ circles it was hoped that Dutch aid would contribute to reducing Vietnam's dependence upon the Soviet Union. The Vietnamese people were thought to be flexible, pragmatic and certainly also nationalistic.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the optimism, the aid relationship with Vietnam soon met with complications. The delivery of the requested building materials went very smoothly, although the Dutch had no real guarantee that the steel would be used in a productive non-military way. During 1975-1977 the Netherlands nevertheless supplied Vietnam (initially still North Vietnam) with a total of 55 million guilders worth of steel. The execution of the corresponding projects agreed upon in 1976, however, went a good deal slower. The plan for the shelling and husking factory never got off the ground, and the building of a hygiene institute in Hanoi, as well as the development of the irrigation project near Phung Hiep, ran into serious delays. This meant that the very activities that were to form the basis of a long-term aid relationship soon became a cause for concern.

In 1977, i.e. still during the centre-left Den Uyl government, discomfort with the political developments in Vietnam began to grow. Reports were beginning to appear in the western press about growing repression inside the country, and about political refugees. Against this background, serious differences of opinion arose within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between the DGPZ sector and the departments responsible for development cooperation, that were placed under the somewhat more progressive Director-General of International Cooperation, DGIS. These differences of opinion weren't resolved until many years later. In the summer of 1977 an initial meeting took place discussing whether the Netherlands should take action to protect human rights in Vietnam. The DGIS sector was unhappy with this proposal, but nevertheless, in November Minister Max van der Stoep (by then outgoing) instructed the ambassador in Hanoi to raise the human rights issue. The ambassador was also told to make it clear to the Vietnamese authorities that continuing violations of human rights might harm Dutch-Vietnamese aid relations.<sup>5</sup>

A few days later, a new centre-right wing cabinet took office in The Hague. It was led by the Christian Democrat [CDA] politician Dries van Agt. The Partij van de Arbeid [Labour Party] did not form part of this government. VVD [Conservative-liberal party] diplomat Chris van der Klaauw became the new Foreign Affairs Minister and CDA-politician Jan de Koning became the new Minister for Development Cooperation. The political turn-about in The Hague also had an impact on relations with Vietnam. At first, some new projects in Vietnam were initiated, primarily because they had already been budgeted for under Pronk, but many ran into difficulties. For example, the Netherlands granted a 'soft' loan to an irrigation project in the Mekong Delta near Dau Tieng. With this money, DAF trucks, radio equipment and other items were purchased. This project was soon criticised from within the DGPZ sector, as Dau Tieng was close to the Cambodian border in a 'high military security' zone to which no outsiders (let alone foreigners) had access, and it was close to an area where several border incidents had already taken place. Moreover, other than the World Bank, the Netherlands was the only western donor for this project. As a result of the criticism by DGPZ, the Dutch goods were delivered, but without any technical assistance or back-up. This compromise was the first example of the half-heartedness that would often come to characterise Dutch policy towards Vietnam during those years.

In the summer of 1978 Van der Klaauw strongly pressed De Koning to use the aid to Vietnam as a means of influencing the political situation in the country, especially with regard to human rights violations. Within the DGIS sector there was protest, as they felt that linking these two matters would harm the Dutch aid efforts. The DGIS point of view however, did not prevail. In October, Van der Klaauw and De Koning decreed that aid to Vietnam, whenever and wherever feasible, must be used to effectuate improvements in the human rights situation.<sup>6</sup> By now it had



67 Vietnamese boat refugees arrive at Schiphol, June 1979. They had been rescued by the NedLloyd ship *Agulhas*.

also become apparent that De Koning actually wished to discontinue the aid relationship with Vietnam. In September 1978, in reply to a Vietnamese invitation for a visit to Hanoi, he instructed the Dutch acting chargé d'affaires to inform the Vietnamese that he could not accept the invitation, as, according to De Koning 'It was not expedient and did not fit in with the gradual termination of the special place that Vietnam had occupied within Dutch aid'.<sup>7</sup>

In December 1978 the Vietnamese army invaded Cambodia; after years of border incidents war finally erupted. The Vietnamese conquered the capital, Phnom Penh, putting an end to the Khmer Rouge regime that had wreaked havoc on the country for more than three and a half years. On January 7, 1979, Vietnam helped a pro-Vietnamese government led by Heng Samrin seize power; this government would try unsuccessfully to gain international recognition in the following years. Although in retrospect the Vietnamese invasion might qualify for the predicate 'humanitarian intervention', the western countries and the People's Republic of China rejected the Vietnamese action. China even invaded the north of Vietnam in a (not very successful) attempt to 'teach Hanoi a lesson', as the Chinese themselves called it at the time.

The American government jumped at the chance to use the invasion to further isolate Vietnam and also put pressure on the Netherlands to stop all aid. It turned out that De Koning was willing to comply with this wish. As early as January 1979 he



had decided to limit any further aid to Vietnam. In front of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Development Cooperation he declared that the current activities would be completed but that new projects would be approved only if they involved humanitarian aid.<sup>8</sup> There was no doubt that this decision was meant as a punitive measure, in much the same way that other EU countries instituted sanctions against Vietnam.

The battle within Foreign Affairs was not over yet, as at first the DGIS sector still applied a rather broad interpretation of the notion 'humanitarian aid'. However, when studying internal documents at Foreign Affairs from 1979 it becomes apparent that De Koning had decided to give only emergency aid from then on. At that time the interpretation of 'humanitarian aid' was conflicting as, in front of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee, De Koning had declared that so far, he understood humanitarian aid to mean more than just emergency aid. The DGPZ sector, as well as the embassy in Hanoi, however, insisted on showing maximum reserve. A Vietnamese request for help after a bad typhoon in November 1979 revived the serious differences of opinion between the respective agencies of DGPZ and DGIS within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Eventually Vietnam would be offered a few million guilders in emergency aid.

Meanwhile the international situation had drastically changed since 1976. The so-called 'Second Cold War' had seriously cooled down relations between East and West. Against this background, relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam slowly came to a halt. In July 1981 De Koning decided to completely discontinue aid to Vietnam over the next few years. Substantial portions of the one hundred million that had been agreed upon initially in 1976 had still not been paid – namely the money which had not yet been used for steel, synthetic yarns and aluminium. Understandably it was felt that something had to be done with the money. It was decided to donate 18 million to the Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam in the years 1982-1984 with another 15 million earmarked for the building of a DDT-factory. It was then that a new argument grew between DGPZ and DGIS, about what was still to be considered humanitarian aid. The embassy in Hanoi assumed a very strict position in the matter. They suggested to De Koning that even humanitarian projects, such as those aimed at improving food production, could be misused by the Vietnamese, for example by using that food for the army. It was at this point that the embassy suggested cancelling the funds (35 million) that in 1976 had been intended for the irrigation project near Phung Hiep.<sup>9</sup> Inside the DGIS sector, however, it was pointed out that this project had been recorded in the Agreed Minutes of 1976 and consequently required to be carried out.

In 1984 the Minister for Development Cooperation, the conservative-liberal Mrs. Eefje Schoo, decided to discontinue all aid relations with Vietnam as of January 1st, 1985. The irrigation project near Phung Hiep was struck from the books, even

though it had formed part of the initial agreement of 1976. Only two activities, one of them a modest program of university cooperation, were continued. Thus the aid relationship that had begun with so much fervour in 1976 had come to an abrupt end. Political relations too had hit an all time low. From the mid-1980s an almost icy atmosphere prevailed. When the new Vietnamese ambassador presented himself in March 1985, the Foreign Affairs Minister, Hans van den Broek (CDA), received him in an extremely reserved manner, the spectre of Cambodia casting a heavy shadow over the relations between the two countries. The Minister declared that the human rights situation, too, was a cause of grave concern to the Dutch. As long as Vietnam did not withdraw from Cambodia, relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam were to remain very limited.<sup>10</sup>

### **Vietnamese in the Netherlands**

The fall of Saigon generated a stream of refugees that with some intervals continued till far into the 1980s. The boat refugees that from 1978 on headed towards an uncertain destiny could count on much sympathy. By the early 1980s more than one million Vietnamese, two-thirds of them ethnic Chinese, had left the country. An unknown number perished on the rough seas, through starvation or pirate attacks. Most of them ended up in primitive refugee camps in the countries on the shores of the South China Sea, where they had to await acceptance by third countries or ran the risk of being sent back to Vietnam. A total of 1.5 million Vietnamese left their country. According to estimates by the UNHCR, around 840,000 were registered as refugees between 1975 and 1995. The U.S. took in the greatest number of refugees: around 1.4 million Vietnamese live there now. Some 250,000 and 160,000 reside in France and Australia, respectively.

### **Migration to the Netherlands**

According to calculations by the Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2005 there were 18,019 Vietnamese in the Netherlands. This represents 0.5% of the total population of foreigners. Although originally there was a surplus of males, especially in the younger age groups, nowadays the numbers of men and women are reasonably balanced (52% and 48%). Most Vietnamese arrived in the Netherlands between 1977 and 1991, and were invited by the Dutch government, which gave them A-status under the terms of the UN refugee treaty. Later, in 1991, some 3,000 came to the Netherlands by way of former Eastern bloc countries, seeking political asylum. Because they originated from North Vietnam and because of



Vietnamese refugees arriving in the Netherlands, 1979.

the limited risks they were running in Vietnam by then, only some 500 persons from this group were granted residence. This required a court decision. It remains unclear whether the others returned to Vietnam or left for other countries. Some of them stayed on illegally, in the Netherlands or in Germany, especially in Berlin.

It is known that one quarter of the first group of boat refugees in the seventies were Chinese-Vietnamese who were forced to flee when government measures were tightened. Dutch officials were unpleasantly surprised to find that these ethnic differences among the Vietnamese immigrants led to conflicts in the refugee centres. After this, in the 1980s, a much more homogeneous group of boat refugees followed, mainly from Central Vietnam, which included fishermen or farmers that had been sent back to the countryside, but also many single young men who had run into conflict with the regime, who had run away from service at the Cambodian front, or who had simply chosen a life elsewhere because of the very bad economic situation in the early 1980s. In the second half of the 1980s these groups were joined by a number of people who came in order to be reunited with their families. This happened because only less than half the refugees had initially arrived with their complete family. These two groups of boat refugees accounted for 95% of the total influx. One third of them were

Roman Catholics. Another one-third stated their religion as Buddhism or claimed to be adherents of religious sects such as the Hoa Hao or Cao Dai. The remainder considered themselves non-religious.

### Guests in the Netherlands

Just like the Moluccans, most Vietnamese boat refugees were housed in groups in central or regional refugee centres. But contrary to the Moluccan refugees in the fifties, Dutch host families played an important role by accompanying one or more Vietnamese families. Another important fact is that the Vietnamese were distributed across the Netherlands. Sixty-five percent are concentrated in the provinces of Noord-Holland (19%), Noord-Brabant (18%), Zuid-Holland (16%) and Gelderland (12%). The other provinces each have less than 10%, with Groningen, Drenthe and Zeeland having less than 2%. Of the four large cities in Randstad, only The Hague and Rotterdam have low numbers. For most Dutch people the Vietnamese community is relatively closed. This is partly due to the way in which many of the older Vietnamese especially tried to solve their own problems. This does not apply to young Vietnamese of the second and third generations, who live *in* rather than *between* the two cultures. The way the Vietnamese boat refugees have been received and the government measures that were taken to provide them with housing and offer them financial support, have been important conditions for the relatively successful integration of this population group. In the words of one young Vietnamese woman: 'What is the meaning of 'feeling at home in the Netherlands'? We are glad that we were able to come to the Netherlands and were given a place here. Many Vietnamese see themselves as guests and as guests you behave according to the rules of the house' (quoted in Tillaart a.o. 2000:241).

Depending on their starting position on arrival in the Netherlands, most Vietnamese can be considered reasonably integrated. For those who had already achieved a good position in South Vietnam, language acquisition, further education and the social safety net of their own community in the Netherlands took care of most of their problems. A number of them started their own businesses, which provided the Netherlands with the phenomenon of the 'spring roll Vietnamese'. Others found jobs in restaurants or the clothing industry. Although they dream of returning to Vietnam they will return only for visits. Their ashes or their bones will some day be interred in their ancestors' graves – graves that are kept by their families in their native land (at least that is what their religious precepts prescribe). The children that were born in Vietnam found it easy to connect with the Dutch school system. They are generally viewed as successful. As is the case with other

immigrant groups, they cherish their Vietnamese background but do not feel superior about it. Some are active in one of the three cultural and/or political associations that exist in the Netherlands; others find their place in a religious organisation. Their children seem perfect migrants, judging by their achievements in school: they function in an exemplary way in the schools and it is to be expected that there will be no problems in their integration. Much more difficult, however, is the situation of the refugees from Eastern Europe who seek political asylum and the younger women who have come to the Netherlands because they married a Dutch Viet Kieu (overseas Vietnamese) who as a successful migrant found himself a bride in Vietnam. The group from Eastern Europe was originally considered as a 'fifth column' by the South Vietnamese living in the Netherlands. After all, they had been privileged 'ex-immigrant workers' from the regime in Hanoi and were therefore notoriously unreliable. In addition to the attitude of the Dutch government, this distrust within the Vietnamese community explains why only a very small number of asylum seekers finally made their way into our country. The Vietnamese women run the risk of becoming too much locked up in their families, as they do not have a sufficient command of the language to communicate with their Dutch environment. The number of mixed marriages between Dutch and Vietnamese is also increasing, but the number is small and hardly has an influence on the Vietnamese community in the Netherlands.

*John Kleinen*

By now, 10 years had passed since the end of the war in Vietnam. The feelings of solidarity that had blossomed in the Netherlands during the last years of the Vietnam War turned out to be short-lived. No public debate ensued on the termination of Dutch aid to Vietnam. Parliament supported Minister Schoo. Although the Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam could still count on a loyal group of contributors at this point, it appeared that for most Dutch people Vietnam had become the country of the boat people, of political repression, of a war with Cambodia and the People's Republic of China and, in the last few years, the attention of many former sympathisers had been claimed by the issue of cruise missiles.

### **Distance**

In the second half of the 1980s, Dutch policy regarding Vietnam was determined by political considerations. As the acting Dutch chargé d'affaires put it to a high official of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August 1988; first the

Cambodia issue had to be solved, only after that could relations be resumed on the same footing as before. It was true that positive developments had been set in motion regarding Cambodia; for example, the Vietnamese had begun to withdraw their army. However, the Dutch opinion was that 'the Netherlands was not sufficiently convinced of Vietnam's good intentions'.<sup>11</sup> This Dutch criticism created surprise in Hanoi. The acting Dutch chargé d'affaires reported in October 1988: 'At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi [...] the Netherlands used to be known as the biggest western donor but one; now the Netherlands has 'dropped' to the level of a boycott state, and a quite dogmatic one at that'.<sup>12</sup> Shortly before, a high functionary in Hanoi had declared that even the British Prime Minister Thatcher had a 'more benevolent' judgement about Vietnam than the Dutch government.<sup>13</sup>

By then, the Netherlands was not represented in Hanoi by an ambassador but by an acting chargé d'affaires, and in 1988 the Dutch embassy was finally closed. The Department for Oceania and Asia (DOA) of the political DGPZ sector had protested against the closure, but the head of the department eventually decided differently. From now on, Hanoi fell under the auspices of the already burdened ambassador in Bangkok; visa matters and certain other tasks were to be dealt with by the Belgian embassy. Thus diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam fell to an all-time low.

The closure of the Dutch embassy in Hanoi took place at a moment when western businesses were developing a growing interest in Vietnam. Western companies were emphatically invited to invest in Vietnam, as were a number of large Dutch companies. In June 1988 for example, Shell signed a contract for oil and gas extraction in the Hue basin. This western interest resulted from the liberal political and economic course that the Vietnamese government had taken. At the end of 1986, under the slogan of 'Doi Moi', a limited program of economic liberalisation had been launched, although it was still led in an authoritarian way.

For the Vietnamese the need to improve relations with the West had become increasingly urgent, as, by the end of the 1980s the collapse of the Soviet bloc and consequently the end of Soviet aid were causing serious problems for Vietnam.

It is striking that in this phase Foreign Affairs, and particularly DOA, persisted in their sullen attitude. Several EU countries (France in particular had begun to intensify their relations with Hanoi around 1990) had resumed aid to Vietnam. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected any such change in Dutch policy. In February 1990 DOA held the opinion that although Vietnam had withdrawn from Cambodia; it had not consented to UN supervision. DOA judged that although economic reforms were taking place in Vietnam, there was no political reform, therefore 'it did not seem expedient to release the pressure on Vietnam at the present moment'.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, in March 1990 the new ambassador in Bangkok received instructions from Van den Broek to maintain a reserved attitude when presenting his credentials in Hanoi.<sup>15</sup>



The position of Foreign Affairs in this phase was also ambivalent. Towards Vietnamese diplomats and functionaries it was stubbornly maintained that the closing of the embassy in Hanoi had been a necessary economic measure and therefore a budgetary, not a political, matter. This was clearly hypocritical. Later, in the mid-1990s, internal memos at Foreign Affairs about Vietnam would express it more explicitly. Diplomatic relations, according to several reviews of the relationship with Vietnam, had been 'suspended in 1988 as a consequence of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the continuing violation of human rights'.<sup>16</sup> On the eve of the reopening of the embassy a Dutch diplomat related that in 1988 the embassy had been closed 'because of shifting priorities'.<sup>17</sup>

In any event, two years after the embassy was closed The Hague had begun regretting this decision. In the early nineties it looked like the East and Southeast Asian region was embarking upon a period of rapid economic development, while in Western Europe growth was stagnant. The image of Vietnam began to change rapidly again. Vietnam was now turning into a country rich with economic promise and interest from the Dutch business community was growing. But as yet, Foreign Affairs persisted in its policy of reserve.

### **Vietnam rediscovered**

In 1989 the third cabinet under the CDA politician Ruud Lubbers was formed. It was a coalition of CDA [Christian Democrats] and PVDA [Labour Party]. Van den Broek was still the Foreign Affairs Minister, but Pronk made a remarkable comeback as the Minister for Development Cooperation. It soon turned out that he had not forgotten his old love Vietnam. Before long it became clear that he wished to resume development relations with the country. The improvement of Vietnam's international status helped him in this respect. By now, the International Monetary Fund also held the view that aid to Vietnam should be resumed, which Pronk emphasised in February, 1990.<sup>18</sup> But the political sector of Foreign Affairs (DGPZ) did not agree with Pronk at all. Once more, issues over Vietnam led to disagreement between DGPZ and DGIS.

In March 1990, DGPZ had reason to conclude that a certain divergence was beginning to arise between Van den Broek's policy and Pronk's. Once more, the Foreign Affairs Minister Van den Broek pointed out the reasons for the Dutch political reserve: the ongoing problems with boat people, violations of human rights and the slowness of political reform which all stood in the way of better relations. That the IMF had a positive attitude toward Vietnam came as no surprise to the director-general: the countries of Indochina were known to be disciplined executors of IMF policy.<sup>19</sup> DGIS did not agree with DGPZ. The director-general of the DGIS sector very strongly doubted whether the policy of isolation had had the desired effect. And did it not make more sense, precisely at that point in time, to seek rapprochement with Hanoi?<sup>20</sup>

And so it happened. In March 1990 it was decided to re-establish diplomatic contacts with Vietnam and to resume aid, as long as it was not 'regime confirming' aid. The emphasis had to be on humanitarian aid, which was to be carried out through non-governmental organisations.<sup>21</sup> State-to-state aid was still out of the question. The Department for Asia and Latin America (DAL) of the DGIS sector, moreover, advised the Minister to grant Vietnam the status of sector country as soon as possible and 'to resume cooperation in the same areas in which the Netherlands had been active in the past'. The Department for Asia and Oceania (DOA) of the DGPZ sector announced their complete disagreement.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps Pronk liked DAL's proposal, but Vietnam was not to become a sector country for the time being. Parliament said no. In December a motion was adopted, proposed by CDA and VVD, asking the government not to give any further bilateral aid to the Mekong countries, and consequently not to Vietnam either.

Again, internal discord about Vietnam blocked Foreign Affairs from acting decisively, just as it had in the late 1970s. The hesitations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led to Economic Affairs taking the lead in improving relations with Vietnam. As early as November 1989 the Director-General of Foreign Economic Relations (BEB) at Economic Affairs had asked the head of the economic department of the embassy in Bangkok to conduct an orientation visit to Vietnam. Such a visit seemed of importance, 'as no Dutch representative [had] been to Vietnam since last July' – which was a pity, as several Dutch companies were in the process of extending their activities in Vietnam.<sup>23</sup> Foreign Affairs agreed reluctantly, on the condition that not only economic matters would be discussed during the visit but political questions as well, such as Cambodia and human rights.<sup>24</sup>

Economic Affairs used the Foreign affairs visit to extend their own programme of activities in Vietnam: a few days after the request to the embassy in Bangkok, BEB announced that they were making preparations for a trade mission to Vietnam, which was due to leave in the summer of 1990.<sup>25</sup> These preparations originally did not involve the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry, and especially DOA, were not consulted about the BEB decision beforehand, nevertheless they did agree, partly because the Vietnamese troops were withdrawing from Cambodia at that moment and partly because the mission was to have an 'exploratory' character.<sup>26</sup> Exploratory or not, interest from the Dutch business community was keen. Shell, Stork, Philips, Heineken and ABN, amongst others, told the Ministry of Economic Affairs that they were interested in participating. The trip took place in June 1990, was a great success and was characterised by a pleasant atmosphere with representatives of 24 mainly large Dutch companies participating. The Vietnamese let it be known that they were very interested in resuming Dutch-Vietnamese economic and financial agreements. The reopening of a Dutch embassy was also discussed. In accordance with his instructions, the Dutch ambassador, accredited to the Vietnamese government but

stationed in Bangkok, mainly raised delicate political questions, such as Cambodia, human rights, and the boat refugees. Despite raising sensitive questions the atmosphere remained pleasant, as the announcement that Minister Pronk was considering resuming aid relations counterbalanced this easily.<sup>27</sup>

After the trip, mission participants pressured Van den Broek to quickly re-open an embassy in Hanoi again, stating that not enough attention was being given to Vietnam. As well as representing Vietnam, the embassy in Bangkok was also responsible for Burma, Laos and Cambodia. As a result, not much was happening, despite the fact that Vietnam held such great promise for Dutch businesses. Representatives of international organisations that were active in Vietnam, such as the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), were, according to the trade missioners, surprised at the Dutch absence. Diplomats from other Western European countries too had expressed hope that the Netherlands would open an embassy again.<sup>28</sup>

The Ministry of Economic Affairs, and especially the directorate-general BEB, supported this request for a review of the Vietnam policy and the reopening of the embassy in Hanoi, as did the Dutch Centre for Trade Promotion. The ambassador in Bangkok endorsed these points of view too, but nevertheless, this failed to have the desired effect on Foreign Affairs. This led to Economic Affairs again taking the initiative. In June 1991 another trade mission travelled to Vietnam, led by a high functionary from Economic Affairs. After the trip, members of the mission conveyed the 'disappointment' from their Vietnamese hosts that the Dutch government 'was not showing a similar interest in Vietnam'. For there was still no embassy, and no bilateral aid was forthcoming.<sup>29</sup> During the course of 1991, the pressure on Foreign Affairs, especially upon its political sector, was beginning to increase, the more so as the Minister for Development Cooperation was now making considerable amounts of aid available for the benefit of Vietnam. For 1992, an amount of 22 million guilders was budgeted as aid for Vietnam. Because of the parliamentary motion of December 1990, the aid was channelled through private organisations in the Netherlands and through multilateral channels. Against this background, Foreign Affairs proposed, near the end of the year, to appoint an honorary consul in Hanoi. The local director of Shell had already declared that he was willing to accept this function; however the Vietnamese seemed to be unhappy with this solution.

Economic Affairs kept up the pressure. Now it was even willing to delegate a government member to Vietnam. In April 1992 a sizeable delegation led by the State Secretary for Economic Affairs, Yvonne van Rooy, visited Vietnam. The visit was a great success. The State Secretary was received by a number of Vietnamese Ministers. At the request of Foreign Affairs she also raised some political issues, such as the human rights situation. However, the economic perspective that was pivotal to Van Rooy's trip also made for a more benevolent judgement on the political order in



The Vietnamese Foreign Affairs Minister Nguyen Manh Cam, with Minister Hans van den Broek, 1992.

Vietnam than the one held by Foreign Affairs. A visit to a state company provided, as the embassy in Bangkok reported to Foreign Affairs, 'an interesting insight into a seamless combination of proletarian discipline, very low wages, piecework incentives, Japanese technology and an unprecedented accumulation of financial reserves', that looked like a prelude to 'yet another Asian economic miracle'.<sup>30</sup> 'Proletarian discipline', in short, had its economic advantages.

The Vietnamese apparently appreciated the Dutch rapprochement. Two months later, in June 1992, the Vietnamese Foreign Affairs Minister Nguyen Manh Cam paid a short visit to the Netherlands. In front of Van den Broek he expressed hope that Dutch-Vietnamese relations would be intensified. The Dutch Minister responded positively but with reserve. During the visit to Foreign Affairs there was a demonstration by Vietnamese refugees. One of the Vietnamese cars in the procession was hit by a stone. This may have confirmed to the Vietnamese that initiating relations through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or even the Government, was not their best bet if they wanted to gain contacts in the Netherlands, for almost at the same time another trade mission prepared by Economic Affairs departed for Vietnam. This visit coincided with the opening in Ho Chi Minh City of a representative office of the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce and the inauguration of direct KLM flights.

An actual political reorientation had slowly become inevitable, as was also concluded by DGPZ in February 1992. On a memo from the head of DOA he wrote: 'Cambodia no longer an argument'. The human rights situation was 'normal according to regional standards (i.e. not so good)', and 'the business community was highly interested in Vietnam'. The conclusion, therefore, was: 'Vietnam was in the process of becoming a normal Asian country'.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile a new problem in the relations between the two countries had manifested itself, namely the fact that the Netherlands desired the return of 250 Vietnamese refugees whom were seeking political asylum. They had been sent from Hanoi to Czechoslovakia as immigrant workers but had fled to the Netherlands after the fall of the Berlin wall. Although this matter would still cause concern, it was now generally accepted at Foreign Affairs too that something had to happen. But it did not go fast. During multilateral talks in The Hague about Vietnam in November 1992, it was concluded again that rejection and distance were no longer viable policies. Relations with Vietnam needed to be improved and extended. Points of departure were, amongst other things: the reopening of an embassy in Hanoi, resuming bilateral aid, and setting up agreements on economic cooperation.<sup>32</sup>

This did not alter the fact that by the end of 1992 there was still no embassy in Hanoi. Apparently this began to annoy Economic Affairs. When in April 1993 the head of DOA and the director-general of BEB were having talks with the Vietnamese ambassador, BEB emphasised once more 'that Economic Affairs [was] continuously exerting pressure [...] to reopen the embassy in Hanoi'. That was clear language, especially considering the fact that the Vietnamese ambassador was present. He has probably listened with pleasure, but also with surprise, to BEB openly criticising the Foreign Affairs colleagues. DOA explained once more that the closure in 1988 had been based on financial considerations. But by now, he acknowledged, there were 'convincing grounds' for reopening the post.<sup>33</sup>

Partly as a result of a debate in Parliament, which did not lead to any clear conclusions, the press now began to be interested in the matter of the embassy in Hanoi. *NRC Handelsblad* reported in early April that a representation would be opened in Hanoi within six months. According to the newspaper, this was necessary partly because Dutch commercial activities were now expanding fast.. KLM had just started regular flights to Ho Chi Minh City; Heineken and Shell had been active before that already; ING and Rabobank already had branches in Vietnam; ABN-AMRO would follow soon. Moreover, the Netherlands was now giving a considerable amount of aid to Vietnam.<sup>34</sup> It was true; relations with Vietnam had kept on growing. In May 1993 Prince Claus visited Vietnam, 'as a private person', and 'privately' accompanied by the Director-General of International Cooperation. And in October 1993 Mrs. Hanja Maij-Weggen, the Minister for Transport and Public Works, travelled to Vietnam. The Ministry of Transport and Public Works, it was

said in a preparatory memo, was highly interested in Vietnam and in promoting market access and export. During May-Weggen's visit agreements were signed for several projects, among them a new aviation treaty for the benefit of KLM.<sup>35</sup>

### High expectations

In December 1993 it finally happened: the Netherlands reopened an embassy in Hanoi. In February 1994 the new ambassador presented his credentials to the Vietnamese president. The period of distrust and aloofness had come to an end. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam had become a 'normal Asian country', something DGPZ had established in February 1992 already. Information that came out of the embassy reflected this idea. The Netherlands had little political influence in Vietnam, the new ambassador observed. No doubt the long years of political absence were partly to blame for this. But Dutch businesses had a good reputation, especially within the sectors of agriculture, transport, public works and the environment. For Dutch investments to increase, having good contacts with the Vietnamese government were of major importance. That was in part why the ambassador pleaded for a certain reserve regarding the political hobby horses that had been ridden so far. As far as human rights were concerned, 'a long-term and respectful process of presenting different opinions in this matter seemed to be the indicated way', but this had to be carried out in close communication with the EU partners. The ambassador showed himself in favour of extending the Dutch diplomatic presence in Vietnam, especially by establishing a consulate-general in Ho Chi Minh City. As far as aid to Vietnam was concerned he underlined that the status of the country needed to be redefined 'in consultation with Vietnam'.<sup>36</sup> This sounded quite different from what the embassy in Hanoi, later Bangkok, had expressed in the past. It was clear that the new ambassador in Hanoi came from the DGIS sector.

In March 1994 the newly appointed Christian Democrat Minister Peter Kooijmans visited Hanoi. Kooijmans attached great importance to human rights issues, but his critical review of political relations in Vietnam met with very little comprehension. The talks about the political dossiers, such as the human rights question, did not proceed smoothly. The Vietnamese reactions to the Dutch criticism were 'not very encouraging'.<sup>37</sup> An investment protection agreement was signed, and Kooijmans underlined the importance that the Netherlands adhere to a policy of intensifying political and economic relations. But regarding some economic and financial wishes, the Vietnamese too, adopted an inflexible attitude. The conduct of the Vietnamese was characterised by 'self assurance formed and steeled by centuries full of wars fought to keep or regain independence, mostly against seemingly superior opponents'.<sup>38</sup> Afterwards Kooijmans admitted that the visit had not yielded much. This was understandable, as he saw it: a few weeks earlier the Prime





Sign welcoming Prime Minister Wim Kok in Hanoi on his visit to Vietnam in June 1995.

Minister of Singapore had visited Vietnam and a group of industrialists from Hong Kong had just signed a project worth billions of dollars. Compared to this, the Netherlands did not have much to offer Vietnam.<sup>39</sup> Incidentally, the embassy in Hanoi had already predicted this the previous month.

Prime Minister Wim Kok, the leader of the first 'purple cabinet' (a coalition of the Conservative-Liberal Party (VVD), the Labour Party (PvdA) and a small Progressive-Liberal Party (D'66)), which had taken office in August 1994, was apparently less pessimistic. Kok visited Vietnam in June 1995, albeit without the new Foreign Affairs Minister, Hans van Mierlo. A large number of Dutch industrialists followed in the wake of the Prime Minister's visit. Although the People's Republic of China was the main destination of the Dutch mission, the visit to Hanoi demonstrated that there were still great expectations regarding Vietnam. This visit was characterised by a better atmosphere than Kooijmans' visit in the previous year and several project agreements were signed: one for aviation training and others for projects involving drinking water and nature conservation. In the commercial field too, good progress was made; a Fokker training programme was agreed on, and not much later this led to the purchase of several Fokker aircraft.

Meanwhile, in January 1995, Pronk had decided to resume bilateral aid to Vietnam. The occasion was a visit to the Netherlands of the Vietnamese vice-Prime



Prime Minister Wim Kok and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet sign trade agreements between the Netherlands and Vietnam. On the left Dutch ambassador E. Ader.

Minister and rising star, Pham Van Khai. On the basis of a diplomatic note, 'A world in discord', Vietnam was granted the status of 'transition country'. This meant that for the time being Dutch aid was aimed at supporting Vietnam in the transition from a centrally led economy to a market economy. Pronk's decision was another step towards fully fledged political relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam.

In the mid-1990s Dutch political activity regarding Vietnam remained intensive. In November 1995 the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Jozias van Aartsen, visited Vietnam accompanied by some top-ranking government officials and a group of industrial leaders. A few months later it was the State Secretary for Economic Affairs, Mrs. Anneke van Dok-Van Weele accompanied by a group of Dutch business people. During the visit a trade fair was opened. Problems surrounding the delivery of the Fokker aircraft that had been ordered by the Vietnamese did not spoil the good atmosphere. On this occasion too it could be seen that other ministries did not, at least not completely, share the concern of Foreign Affairs about the human rights situation in Vietnam. In a report of Van Dok-Van Weele's trip it said that it was true that there was no opposition party in Vietnam, but that 'it was a strong point that there was political stability within the foreseeable future'.<sup>40</sup>

## Normalisation

At the end of the 1990s the conclusion had to be drawn in The Hague that not all economic expectations regarding Vietnam had come true. The optimistic predictions about Asian miracle economies were thus adjusted. This happened against the background of the financial and economic crisis that hit the Asian countries in 1997 and 1998. At the same time, economic growth in Western Europe had picked up again, and this also contributed to more sober predictions regarding Asia's future. These reduced expectations applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Vietnam as well. It became clearer to many of those concerned that Vietnam was and continued to be an extremely poor country: The average per capita income was around 475 USD per year and was therefore amongst the lowest in the world. Trade and investment remained difficult on account of the slow and at times unpredictable workings of the bureaucracy. As a result, trade between the Netherlands and Vietnam was still modest, and the same was true of Dutch investments in Vietnam.<sup>41</sup> 'Vietnam was, in short, no longer the little Asian tiger of the early nineties'.<sup>42</sup>

In many respects this development signified, finally, a normalisation of relations with Vietnam. The era of exaggerated expectations was over. This however did not mean that relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam worsened. The Netherlands had by now grown into a middle-sized donor, budgeting some 25 million euro annually for Vietnam. In 1997, as had been requested earlier, a consulate-general was



Prince Willem-Alexander visits Hue, October 2005.

opened in Ho Chi Minh City. A year later Vietnam established an embassy in The Hague. Furthermore, Vietnam became one of the 19 countries to be appointed as a structural partner country by the Minister for Development Cooperation, Mrs. Eveline Herfkens, during the second 'purple' cabinet led by Prime Minister Wim Kok.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Dutch-Vietnamese relations kept developing in a positive direction, as indicated by, amongst other things, the Dutch crown prince's visit to the country. Prior to leaving Vietnam at the end of his term in July 2005, the Dutch ambassador in Hanoi made a series of farewell visits. He reported in an extremely positive tone about the way his Vietnamese discussion partners assessed the Dutch-Vietnamese relationship. The Netherlands were still the second highest EU investor in Vietnam, and the Dutch aid efforts were warmly appreciated. Critical notes, for example about human rights or corruption, were no longer swept aside in irritation.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, political discussions about these kinds of delicate subjects often took place within the framework of ASEM, the Asia-Europe Meeting, an institutionalised consultation body set up in 1996 between the EU and the countries of East and Southeast Asia, in which the Netherlands as well as Vietnam participated. In a memo drafted in preparation for a meeting in September 2005 between the Foreign Affairs Minister Ben Bot, and his Vietnamese counterpart, aid relations with Vietnam were called 'very successful'. Vietnam was even hailed as a 'model country' as far as donor coordination and harmonisation of aid efforts were concerned.

### **Changing perspectives**

Thus, in the middle of the nineties, relations between the Netherlands and Vietnam normalised. In retrospect, the relations between the countries went through radical changes. At the beginning of the period discussed here, feelings of sympathy for the people of Vietnam were still prevalent. This was the initial context in which Minister Pronk offered a considerable amount of development aid to the reunified Vietnam. This aid also fitted in well to the general orientation of Pronk's policy. Although doubts arose regarding the nature of political relations in the new Vietnam, solidarity and optimism characterised the initial years. A few years later Vietnam had become the country of the boat people and the invasion of Cambodia, so much criticised in the West. Relations with Vietnam became increasingly problematic, development aid stagnated and diplomatic relations soured too. The broader context of the second Cold War played an important part in this turn-about. Ten years later Vietnam turned into a modest Asian tiger, a land of growth and investment possibilities. This change had much to do with the widespread neo-liberal optimism of the first half of the nineties. Strangely, Foreign Affairs continued to show a reserved and surly attitude for quite some time. Thus it was Economic Affairs that took the lead in improving relations with Vietnam. By the end of the

nineties relations with Vietnam seemed to gradually normalise and to be based on a realistic assessment of the country.

Through time Vietnam's image changed radically, though the image often had a strong political content and was of a sometimes striking vehemence. The images others held of the country were partly fed by considerations and circumstances that had no direct relation with Vietnam itself, such as Pronk's goal of 'self-reliance' and the 'Tiers-Mondisme' of the mid-seventies, the revived (second) Cold War of the late eighties and admiration for the East Asian growth tigers of the early nineties. Vietnam seemed to be an ever-changing reflection of the political tides occurring within international politics, and of western thought about these. That is why it was sometimes overlooked that Vietnam was a country ravaged by war and poverty, trying to wrest from the misery that had dominated it for decades.





# Notes

## Notes Chapter 1

- 1 Authorised and expanded summary of Wilhelm Buch, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie en Quinam, De Betrekkingen der Nederlanders met Annam in de XVIIe Eeuw*, Amsterdam: Paris, 1929. – XII, 123 p.: ill.; 25 cm + theses, Doctoral Thesis, Amsterdam G.U. And by the same author, *La compagnie des Indes Néerlandaise et l'Indochine*. In *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, (BEFEO), Tome 36, fasc. 1 et tome 37, fasc. 1, 1936-37. The title of this article was inspired by Leonard Blussé, *Tussen geveinsde vrunden en verlaarde vijanden*, Inaugural lecture, Leiden 1999, in which the author discusses aspects of diplomacy and coercion in the VOC's contacts with local rulers. Blussé, for that matter, does not discuss Quinam in his inaugural lecture.
- 2 Leopold Cadière, *Le Mur de Dong-Hoi, Etude sur l'établissement des Nguyen en Cochinchine*, BEFEO V, 1906, pp. 87-254.
- 3 Y. Iishi, Seventeenth Century Japanese Documents about Siam. In *Journal of the Siam Society* 59 (2), 161-174. See also John Guy, *Exotisch en vreemd: handel en uitwisseling in de geschiedenis van Vietnam*. In Miriam Lambrecht (a.o.; eds.), *Vietnam. Kunst en culturen van de prehistorie tot op heden*. Antwerp: Snoeck, 2004, pp. 47-63.
- 4 See e.g. Nola Cooke and Li Tana, *Water Frontier. Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*. Lanham, etc.: Boulder 2004.
- 5 Buch 1929, pp. 9-21.
- 6 Letter from Hoi An by Jeronimus Wonderaer, 1602 in H.A. van Foreest and A. de Booy (eds.) *De vierde Schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Jacob Wilkens en Jacob van Neck (1599-1604)*. Vol. 2. 's-Gravenhage 1981, pp. 67-91. English translation by Ruurdje Laarhoven in Li Tana and Reid, 1993, pp. 6-26.
- 7 Buch 1929, pp. 21-38.
- 8 Probably Ong Cai Bo, a polite form of address that was related to his function of treasurer and special envoy of the king. He was the equivalent of the shabandar found elsewhere in Asia (after Persian *sjah-bender*, which meant king of the harbour or the Siamese 'Berkelang', who fulfilled the same function).
- 9 Little blocks of silver or copper in the shape of a ship formed the basis of the monetary system with a constant value of 4.3 taël or about f 15. The tael was both a unit of weight and a coin in, among other places, China, Japan, Tonkin, and Cochinchina. As a weight, one taël was about 37.5 grams. Until 1666 the Company counted a Japanese taël as 57 *stuivers* (about 3 guilders). Later, following an instruction from the Gentlemen XVII, who wanted to put some unity in this very confused system of conversion, it was fixed

- at 70 *stuivers*. In Tonkin the taël as a coin was worth between 4.125 and 4.25 guilders; in other words more than a *rijksdaalder*. Source: <http://www.inghist.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/VocGlossarium>.
- 10 Reported in Buch 1929, pp. 23-33.
  - 11 See Buch 1929, pp. 33-37.
  - 12 Buch 1929, pp. 38-73.
  - 13 This distinction taught the Dutch how complex Vietnamese political relations were: the Trinh were actually pretenders to the throne and not the hereditary rulers of Vietnam. In their relations with China, which for a long time had ruled Vietnam as a fiefdom, Vietnamese monarchs used the term 'vuong' (king or even viceroy in this context) and for their own subjects 'huong de' (emperor). China gave Trinh Trang the title *An Nam Pho Quoc Vuong*, the Second King of the (pacified) South. The first king was Le Than Tong.
  - 14 *Daghregister* (Daily Log) 1837, quoted in Muller 1912: p. 290. J.E. Heeres, *Het jacht Grol in Tonkin. Indische Gids*, Amsterdam 1907. *Journaal van de reis van Anthonio van Brouckhorst*. (ed.) C.C. van der Plas, Amsterdam, KIT, 1955.
  - 15 F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, Dordrecht 1724-26, Vol. III b, p. 17.
  - 16 Quoted by Buch from 'Bataviaas brievenboek' in id., 1929, p. 70.
  - 17 Buch 1929, p. 72.
  - 18 Buch 1929, pp. 74-104.
  - 19 The *Gulden* or *Gouden Buis* (fluit) and the *Maria de Medicis*. The *Gouden Buis* was in the service of the VOC from 1639 to 26/11/1641, but foundered off 'Champello' (Cua Cham).
  - 20 From the report by Sominira Taffioyedonne, son-in-law of the Japanese Head of the Harbour 'Opmermeester', who possibly had a lower position than the Harbour Master.
  - 21 See Buch 1929, pp. 85-87; 120-123; English translation in Tana and Reid 1993, pp. 27-32.
  - 22 Buch 1929, p. 92 (Missive from Traudenus to the king of Tonkin, Dec. 15, 1642).
  - 23 A VOC website informs: 'Wijdenes (1637), yacht, in active use from 1637 to 07/07/1643 (foundered). Built on the wharf at Enkhuizen. Capacity 160 tons. *Attacked by natives and blown up* (my emphasis (JK) on 07/07/1643.' See <http://www.vocsite.nl/schepen/detail.html?id=11951>.
  - 24 Viện Sử Học, *Đại Nam Thực Lục*, Hà Nội: NXB Giáo dục (2002), p. 55-56.
  - 25 The fact that the *Wijdenes* had gone down with all the presents for the king on board, made the relationship between the Vietnamese and the Dutch none the better.
  - 26 Buch 1929: 100; footnote 2.
  - 27 Ong Su Ma or Ong Ga Dang. Neither name could be traced.
  - 28 Quoted by Buch, p. 105.
  - 29 Buch 1929, pp. 104-110.
  - 30 A considerable amount for that time: 200 guilders. On arrival at Batavia, De Rhodes was arrested, however. G.G. Van der Lijn, who had succeeded Van Diemen in 1645, released him after having been informed about the Jesuit's role in Hoi An. See also *Voyages et Missions du Père A. de Rhodes 1653* (1884). L. Cadière, *Les Européens qui on vu le vieux-Hue*. Le P. Rhodes. In *BAVH* July-Sept. 1915, pp. 141-149.
  - 31 Also called Tingelay, a corruption of the Vietnamese name Dong Hoi. According to Buch the king resided there, but it is more probable that he was staying with his troops for the moment. See also the diaries of Zacharias Wagner (1614-1668), who was present at the transfer as Verstegen's secretary. Wolfgang Michel: *Zacharias Wagner und Japan (I) – Die Autobiographie eines 'Donnermanns'*. In: *Dokufutsu Bungaku Kenkyû*, No. 37 (Fukoka, July 1987), pp. 53-102.
  - 32 Buch translated Verstegen's Daily Log [*'Daghreg-*

- ister'] into modern Dutch (1929: 120-123). For an English translation, see Tana and Reid pp. 33-37.
- 33 So far, the exact location of the VOC office in Hoi An has not been established.
- 34 Buch 1929, pp. 114-115.

## Notes Chapter 2

- 1 The author wishes to thank Mr. Cao Xuan Tu and John Kleinen for their critical review of this text.
- 2 Nu met het vertreck van dit schip, soo send ick desen brieff aen den Bataviasen Coning, op dat hy myne meeninge soude konnen weten, dat de coopmanschappen, die in het aenstaende mochten gesonden werden, nevens eenige groote stucken, die ick sal betaelen met syde naer haer waerde; oock soo versoeck ick, dat my een constapel Macy [mach?] toegesonden werden om by my te blyven, daermede ick versoecke de Koninck van Batavia my gelieve te helpen tot myn contentement, opdat wy, soo langh de son en maen haer schynsel geven sullen, voor altoos vrunden blyven mogen.
- 3 Daghregister (van 't Casteel Batavia van het jaar) 1685 [Journals of the Batavia Headquarters for the year 1685], pp. 162-163, 204.
- 4 A visit to the Temple of the Le Emperors in Thanh Hoa in 2005 revealed that the statue of emperor Le Than Tong was surrounded by those of his 'wives'; one of these was portrayed as the emperor's 'Dutch' wife. These statues are probably replicas of earlier versions.

## Notes Chapter 3

- 1 Gützlaff: Geography of the Cochinchina Empire, Journal of Royal Geographical Society, London, V. 19-1849.
- 2 William Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*,

- London: The Argonaut Press, 1931, pp. 14-15.
- 3 Ibid, p. 16.
- 4 J. Richard, History of Tonquin (translated from the French *Histoire du Tonquin*, Paris 1778, 2 vols, 12 mo). In: J. Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World*, London 1811, p. 715.
- 5 However, the concepts of city, city port or town are relative. Like many other researchers, we consider that some western traders and priests somehow overestimated the crowded appearance of these ports and trading centres (including Thang Long and Pho Hien). Nevertheless, one cannot base assertions upon one aspect of the matter to disclaim Domea as a long-existing border port with many periods of exciting trading activities. In our opinion, Domea was not a town, city port or city but one of the most important border ports in Tonkin in the 17th and 18th century.
- 6 Ngo Duc Tho, Nguyn Van Nguyen & Philippe Papin, *Dong Khan Dia Du Chi* (Geographie descriptive de l'empereur Dong Khanh), Hanoi, 2000.
- 7 Thap Giang wharf was also named An Thap due to the Thap pagoda that belonged to An Du village there. An Thap wharf was an essential position on the road and river traffic connecting Dong Kinh and Duong Kinh. Therefore, it had been famous since the 16th century. *Dai viet su ky toan thu* (The complete history of Great Vietnam) also described the special event of King Le Cung Hoang welcoming Mac Dang Dung at An Thap wharf, Tien Minh district in the summer of April, 1527.
- 8 Official history of the Nguyen dynasty: *Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi*, V. III, Hanoi 1971, p. 401.
- 9 Nguyen Binh Khiem's original writing: 'Tinh quan trao tich hau, Thuy dac co kim tinh'.

## Notes Chapter 4

- 1 See Anthony Farrington, English East India Company documents relating Pho Hien and Tonkin, and Nguyen Thua Hy, 'Pho Hien as seen from foreign sources' in: *Pho Hien. The centre of international commerce in the xvth and xvith centuries*, Hanoi, 1994, pp. 145-148, 83-88.
- 2 Ibid, p. 24.
- 3 John K. Whitmore, 'The Rise of the Cost: trade, State and Culture in Early Dai Viet', in: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 37 (1), feb. 2006, p.103-122; 'Hai Phong, the 'ignored' area in the previous Le-period), in: *Journal of Historical Researches*, No.1 (344), 2005, pp. 10-15.
- 4 Nguyen Van Kim, The relationships between Japan and Southeast Asian countries in the 15th-17th century), Hanoi, 2003.
- 5 W. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, London: 1688, 1931, p. 47.
- 6 'The birth and development of Pho Hien', *Pho Hien*, p. 36. Based on recent field investigations Nguyen Van Chien supposed that there were 23 wards in Pho Hien in the early 18th century. Newly discovered wards were 1. HiOn Doanh; 2. Húng Şinh; 3. Húng Gi-êng.
- 7 Nguyen Van Kim, *Japan and Asia. Historical relationships and socio-economic changes*, Hanoi, 2003.
- 8 Momoki Shiro, Dai Viet and the South China Sea Trade from the 10th to the 15th Century, *Crossroads- An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University, 1998, pp. 14-15.
- 9 Alexandre de Rhodes, *The History of the Tonkin Kingdom*, HCMC, 1994, p. 65.
- 10 Iwao Seiichi, Researches of the Japanese Street in the South Ocean, in: *Iwanami Shoten*, 1966, pp. 10-11.
- 11 Nagazumi Yoko, *The Shuinsen ships*, The Japan History College, 2001, p. 37.
- 12 Nagazumi Yoko, *The Japan-Tonkin trade relationship in the first half of the 17th century*, The Josai University of Economics, Saitama, Japan, 1992, p. 36.
- 13 *Voyage du Yatch Hollandais Grol du Japan au Tonkin* (Voyage of the Dutch Grol ship from Japan to Tonkin), Excursions et Reconnaissances, N.13, 1882, Thanh Ngha, No. 74-89 (1944), p. 6.
- 14 Yoneo Ishii, *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia*. Translation from the Tosen Fusetu-gaki, 1674-1732, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998.
- 15 *History of the Vietnamese Feudal Regime*, Vol. III, Hanoi, 1960, pp. 173-175.
- 16 Li Tana, *Quinam. The Vietnamese Socio-Economic History in the 17th and 18th Century*, Tri Publishers 1999, p. 110.
- 17 Le Ba Thao, Vietnam, the country and its geographical regions, Hanoi, 2002, p. 314.
- 18 W. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, London, 1688, 1931.
- 19 Tang Ba Hoanh, *Hai Hung-mua khai quat nam* 1989 [Hai Hung – the exploration season 1989], in: *New Archaeological Discoveries*, The Institute of Archaeology, Hanoi, 1989.
- 20 See also Kikuchi Seiichi, Hizen Ceramics in the North and the Central of Vietnam (matters of age, using and import method), in: *East Asia-Southeast Asia: matters of history and present*, Hanoi, 2004, pp. 331-348; or the Summary Record of the Conference 'Vietnam-Japan Relationship through pottery and ceramic exchanges', The Hanoi National University – Showa Woman's University, Hanoi, 1999; or Sakurai Kiyohiko-Kikuchi Seiichi, *The Vietnamese-Japanese historical exchanges. Japanese streets and ceramic trade*, Tokyo: Showa Woman's University, 2002.
- 21 Han Van Kan, Excavation report from An Du,

- Khoi Nghia, commune Tien Long district, Hai Phong city, June 2000.
- 22 The investigation group included lecturers and candidates from the Department of History. On May, 4th, 2005, the Dutch Consul-general and 4 Dutch experts came to investigate in Domea area. On this occasion, we would like to extend our thanks to Tran Quec Ving's guidelines on the extremely important position of the Tonkin confluence in the military strategy as well as in economic activities.
  - 23 W. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, London, 1688, 1931.
  - 24 See Els Jacobs, *Koopman in Azië. De handel van de VOC tijdens de 18e eeuw*. Zutphen, 2000: pp. 93-94. For a contemporary description, see Pier Poivre, *Voyage de Pierre Poivre en Cochinchine. Description de la Cochinchine (1749-1750). Voyage du vaisseau de la Compagnie le 'Machault', à la Cochinchine en 1749 et 1750. Revue de l'Extrême Orient* (3), 1, 1885, pp. 81-121.
  - 25 In Dutch sources he is referred to by his postumus title Vu Vuong (*Hieu-Vu Vuong*). H.M. [Nguyen-Phuoc Khoat] *Tu-te-dao-nhon* [The-tong Hieu-Vo Hoang-De].
  - 26 See L. Cadière, *Sur deux tombes de Hollandais*. In: *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue* (BAVH), Oct.-Dec. 1917, pp. 297-300. Jacob de Roeper was the captain of the ship *Oosthuizen* (Chamber of Hoorn) that left Texel for Batavia on November 2, 1754 and that arrived on June 27, 1755. How Roeper, who died in 1756, ended up in Hue is not (yet) mentioned in the VOC-registers.
- Claudine Salmon et Ta Trong Hiep, *Cahier d'Archipel* 25, Paris 1994. Cao Xuan Tu translated Phan Huy Le's text from Vietnamese into English.
  - 2 In fact, it took about 3 months at that time to sail from England to Singapore.
  - 3 Teo, Marianne, *Nineteenth Century Prints of Singapore*, Singapore, 1990, p. 27.
  - 4 Crawford, John, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochinchina exhibiting a View of the Actual State of those Kingdoms*, 1830, reprint Kuala Lumpur/London/New York, Oxford University Press, 1967.
  - 5 Earl, G.W., *The Eastern Seas or Voyages and Adventures in the Indian Archipelago in 1832-33-34*, 1837, reprint Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 348.
  - 6 Rienzi, de M.G.L., *Océanie ou la cinquième partie du monde, Revue géographique et ethnographique de la Malaisie, de la Micronésie, de la Polynésie et de la Mélanésie*, Paris, 1836, T.1, p. 140.
  - 7 *Hop tuyen tho van Viet Nam dau the ky 18 nua dau the ky 19*, [Selection of Vietnamese literature from the start of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century], Hanoi, 1978, pp. 617-618.
  - 8 Lombard-Salmon, Claudine, *Un Chinois à Java (1729-1736), Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême Orient* [BEFEO] vol. LIX, 1972, p. 301.
  - 9 Earl, G.W., op cit, pp. 142-143.
  - 10 As we all know, the Dutch flag consists of three colours: red, white and blue arranged horizontally. Perhaps the author did not see it clearly because of the hard blowing wind. He was correct however in identifying Riau as in the demarcation zone between Dutch and British territories.
  - 11 Earl, G. W., 1837, op cit. pp. 354-355; Medhurst, W.H., *Ong Ta Hae, The Chinaman abroad*, Shanghai, p. 42.

## Notes Chapter 5

- 1 All the quotations from Phan Huy Chu's *Hai Trinh Chi Luoc* were taken from the book 'Hai Trinh Chi Luoc/Recit sommaire d'un voyage en mer', presented and translated by Phan Huy Le,

- 12 Selberg, E., *Reise nach Java*, Oldenburg, 1846, Amsterdam.
- 13 Maybon, Ch. B., *Histoire moderne du pays d'Annam*, Paris, 1919, pp. 135-182.
- 14 Le Qui Don, *Phu bien tap luc*, 1776, translation, Hanoi 1977, p. 328.
- 15 Chen Chinh Ho, On the Ha Chau missions, conducted during the early period of the Nguyen dynasty, in: *Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies* (Soka University), Tokyo, 1990, French translation BEFEO 1994, pp. 63-82.

### Notes Chapter 6

- 1 Acts of the Upper House, November 15, 1872, 88-89 in M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Nederland en de opkomst van het moderne Imperialisme*, Amsterdam, 1985, p. 48.
- 2 Stadnitski was appointed by Royal Decree # 63 of April 22nd, 1867.
- 3 Letters relating to the consular representation in Cochinchina 1862-1870, National Archives, The Hague, Foreign Ministry: departmental archives 1813-1870 (2.05.01), entry # 3031.
- 4 Servaas was appointed by Royal Decree # 23, dated May 3rd, 1869.
- 5 NA, 2.05.01, entry # 3031.
- 6 Speidel was appointed by Royal Decree # 14, dated June 25th, 1872.
- 7 Judging by the inventories left by the consulate, Speidel wrote these letters with some regularity. Unfortunately the archives of the consulate suffered much on account of the tropical climate, as a result of which only a few letters from the period 1882 up to and including 1888 have survived. Speidel reported not only what he heard off the record but he also sent in official communications and local newspapers. See e.g. the correspondence consulate Saigon December 1882-December 1887, National Archives, Cabinet archive of the Foreign Ministry concerning political reports by Dutch diplomatic representatives in foreign countries 1871-1940 (2.05.19), entry # 757, 759, 761.
- 8 Collected consular communications and reports on industry, trade and shipping, Foreign Ministry (The Hague 1865-1893).
- 9 C. Salmon, *De Batavia à Saïgon: Notes de voyage d'un marchand chinois 1890*, *Archipel* 47, Paris, 1994, p. 158.
- 10 J.A.B. Wiselius, *De Franschen in Indo-China*, Zaltbommel, 1878.
- 11 Letters from D.B. Sluijter to his parents in the period 1893-1894, Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum [Dutch Maritime Museum], Amsterdam, entry # S.6399.
- 12 Documents concerning staff and activities of the Dutch consular representations in the French provinces in Asia 1872-1906, National Archives, The Hague, Foreign Ministry B-files consular and business matters (1858) 1871-1940 (1958) (2.05.38), entry # 1359.
- 13 NA, 2.05.38, entry # 1359.
- 14 Daumiller was appointed by Royal Decree no. 24 dated March 24th, 1896.
- 15 Verzameling der konsulaire berigten en verslagen over nijverheid, handel en scheepvaart, Ministerie van Buitenlandsche Zaken ('s-Gravenhage 1865-1893) [Collected consular communications and reports on industry, trade and shipping, Foreign Ministry (The Hague 1865-1893)].
- 16 NA, 2.05.38, entry # 1359.
- 17 Woelz was appointed by Royal Decree # 30, dated March 22nd, 1898.
- 18 NA, 2.05.38, entry # 1359.
- 19 Luykx was appointed by Royal Decree # 23, dated September 22nd, 1899.
- 20 For a description of J.G. Mulder in Indochina, see John Kleinen, *Tropenjaren*. In J.G. Mulder, *Zij-*



*straten van de geschiedenis – De wereld rond 1900 in stereofoto's*. Amsterdam: De Verbeelding.

- 21 NA, 2.05.38, entry # 1359.
- 22 Digital image library of the DK Group, <http://www.picturepark.ch/DiethelmKeller>.
- 23 *KPM Jaarboek 1937-1938*, Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij (1939).
- 24 Documents concerning staff and activities of the Dutch consular representations in the French provinces in Asia (1906) 1923-1940, National Archives, The Hague, Foreign Ministry B-files consular and business matters (1858) 1871-1940 (1958) (2.05.38), entry # 1360.
- 25 Meyeringh was appointed by Royal Decree # 71, dated June 13, 1922.
- 26 NA, 2.05.38, entry # 1360.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Sauer was appointed by Royal Decree # 241, dated February 22nd, 1936.
- 29 NA, 2.05.38, entry # 1360.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Report by military attaché Esq. D. van den Brandeler, National Archives, Foreign Ministry: Nederlandse diplomatieke vertegenwoordiging te China (Peking, Chunking, Nanking) (2.05.90), entry # 705 [Dutch diplomatic representation in China].

## Notes Chapter 7

- 1 The surrender in Vietnam did not take place until September 26th.
- 2 Most of the camps were situated in and around Saigon and in nearby My Tho (to the east) and Phu My (to the west of Saigon). In March 1945 there were 400 Dutch in Phu My, who had to build a runway with British citizens in the same predicament (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar>).
- 3 According to an eyewitness account by war correspondent and photographer Germaine Krull, Joris Ivens' ex-wife, these Dutch ex-POWs, whose number she estimated at around 5000, had also been put to work on weapons transports between Hanoi and Saigon in order to supply the detained French with weapons and ammunition. In skirmishes with the Viet Minh, a number of them were allegedly wounded. (Diary of Saigon, Following the Allied Occupation in September 1945, Douglas Pike Collection, file).
- 4 According to George Wickes, an OSS officer who together with Peter Dewey, also OSS, arrived in Saigon in early September 1945 (<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/apdewey.htm>). See also Peter Dennis, *Troubled Days of Peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command, 1945-46*, 1987.
- 5 See Van der Wal, Officiële bescheiden betreffende de Nederland-Indonesische betrekkingen 1949-1950. The Hague, Martinus Nijhof, 1971: 362 ff.
- 6 Report Dr. Friederici in ABZ 13420.
- 7 RAPWI data in Files of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Archief Buza (ABZ)] Code 3; 3892-3097.
- 8 Of 36 Dutchmen in the service of the Legion, 21 were killed in the 1st Indochina War. 16 of them are listed on the *Mémorial du Guerres en Indochine, Mur du Souvenir* in Fréjus (<http://www.kwaak99.demon.nl/>; Lamberty, E.).
- 9 S.L. van der Wal 1973:662; 685-6 and 1974: 370-371.
- 10 ABZ file 13421.
- 11 ABZ file 839.
- 12 See D. Hellema, *Buitenlandse politiek van Nederland*, Utrecht, 1995, p. 238; also M. Kuitenbrouwer, *De ontdekking van de Derde Wereld. Beeldvorming en beleid in Nederland, 1950-1990*, The Hague, 1994.
- 13 ABZ file 6460.
- 14 ABZ file 6460; cf. Charles Rutten, *Aan de wieg van*

- Europa en andere Buitenlandse Zaken. Herinneringen van een diplomaat.* Amsterdam, Boom, 2006.
- 15 ABZ file 6460.
- 16 911.30 Indochina Travel reports II 1955-1959.
- 17 ABZ file 2778.
- 18 See Jody Leeuwis' article in this volume.
- 19 The official residence remained on Duy Tan, close to the Cambodian embassy that was looted in 1970 by furious demonstrators in protest against the treatment of Vietnamese in Cambodia.
- 20 ABZ, file 911.30 Travel reports II 1955-1959.
- 21 ABZ file 825.
- 22 ABZ file 911.31 942 vol. VI, war acts 1968.
- 23 Her maiden name was Marie-Thérèse Nguyen Huu Thi Lan, granddaughter of a Vietnamese entrepreneur.
- 24 Kuitenbrouwer 1994, chapter 4; ABZ file 3736.
- 25 ABZ file Ministers' Council # 795.
- 26 ABZ file 912.12.
- 27 ABZ file 1896.
- 28 ABZ file 1809.
- 29 ABZ file 1810.
- 30 ABZ file 911.31 Kissinger, at that moment Director of the Harvard International Seminar and of the Harvard Defence Studies Program, was visiting South Vietnam for the first time in 1965 as a consultant with the State Department. There he also met Daniel Elsberg, who was responsible for the pacification programme (cf. Seymour Hersch, *Kissinger. The Price of Power. Henry Kissinger in the Nixon White House*, 1983: 14-15).
- 31 Cf. Van der Maar, *Welterusten Meneer de President. Nederland en de Vietnamoorlog 1965-1973*. Doctoral thesis, RU, 2006, pp 38-39.
- 32 ABZ file 1807.
- 33 ABZ file 1807.
- 34 Personal communication to the author.
- 35 ABZ file 1807.
- 36 ABZ file 1808. Lt. General Chae Myung Shin commanded 300,000 Korean troops in Vietnam. Their cruelties were already well known during the war. See e.g. Diane and Michael Jones for the American Friends Service Committee, 1972. Chae was also involved in the Jeju massacre in South Korea in 1948 (cf. George Wehrfritz and B. J. Lee, *Fallen Heroes; South Korea confronts its troubled legacy in the Vietnam War. Newsweek* April 10, 2000).
- 37 ABZ file 1806.
- 38 See Van der Maar 2004, p. 356; and 2006: chapter 5.
- 39 ABZ file 2319.
- 40 Quoted in Van der Maar 2004, p. 355.
- 41 See Van der Maar 2006, pp. 198 ff.
- 42 ABZ file 1822.
- 43 ABZ file 2318.
- 44 ABZ file 1821 (911.31).
- 45 ABZ file 1821.
- 46 ABZ file 3742, code 6; 3028.
- 47 Or formulated in a more diplomatic way, in the words of the temporary chargé in Stockholm in a secret post telegram: 'In order to ward off too much foreign intervention or interference in what they [the North Vietnamese] consider not the project itself.'
- 48 ABZ file 2318.
- 49 Rutten 2006: 122 -123.
- 50 Cf. the Vietnamese People's Daily Nhan Dan of December 14th, 1974, with among other things the politically powerful Mai Van Bo (head of the Agency Europe II of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and brother of Le Duc Tho), and Nguyen Co Thach (then still Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs).
- 51 ABZ file.
- 52 For a complete survey of the political discussion about the PRG, see Hellema a.o., 1986, pp.154-158; Kuitenbrouwer 1994, pp. 99-100.

- 53 Vietnam Press November 20th, 1974.
- 54 Ba had been the head of the Liberation Front press agency in Paris since 1968.
- 55 ABZ file 2318.
- 56 ABZ file 2328.
- 57 Interview Van Roijen and Zaadhof in 2006. The diplomatic representation did play a role in the evacuation of an ex-Minister and his family through American channels.

## Notes Chapter 8

- 1 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York, 1994, pp. 674-702.
- 2 Now 124 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City. The government's Service Company to Foreign Missions (FOSCO) is based there, around the corner from the residence of the present Consul-General.
- 3 Interview by A.C. van der Zwan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs History Unit) with Jan van Roijen and Jan Zaadhof (interview JRJZ).
- 4 Encrypted message Van Roijen 50, sent from Saigon to The Hague by courier on December, 31st 1974, received in The Hague on January, 8th 1975.
- 5 Official visit by a diplomat, who usually presents a diplomatic note explaining the issue being raised.
- 6 Encrypted message from The Hague to Saigon, 9 January 1975.
- 7 Encrypted message from Saigon to The Hague, 22 January 1975.
- 8 Encrypted messages from The Hague to Saigon and vice versa, January 29th and January, 31st, 1975 respectively.
- 9 Encrypted messages from Saigon to The Hague, February, 6th and 10th, 1975.
- 10 Interview JRJZ.
- 11 Interview JRJZ.
- 12 Interview JRJZ; see also the article by Niek Pas in this volume.
- 13 Encrypted message from The Hague to Saigon, 19 February 1975.
- 14 Interview JRJZ.
- 15 Encrypted message from The Hague to Saigon, 11 March 1975.
- 16 They denied the existence of political prisoners and considered the press was free enough given the wartime conditions. Démarche by Van Roijen, 21 March 1975, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Saigon.
- 17 Interview JRJZ.
- 18 The place where the Vietnamese forced the French to surrender in 1954.
- 19 Encrypted message from Saigon to The Hague, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1975.
- 20 According to a Vietnamese man who later fled by boat, and wishes to remain anonymous.
- 21 Interview JRJZ.
- 22 Many people were murdered by the invading army. Hue was later reconquered by the South.
- 23 Encrypted message from Saigon to The Hague, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1975.
- 24 Interview JRJZ.
- 25 Encrypted messages, mid-April 1975.
- 26 Interview JRJZ.
- 27 Idem.
- 28 Idem.
- 29 Encrypted message from Saigon to The Hague, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1975.
- 30 Idem. The instructions were not to stay longer in order to gain more prestige.
- 31 Many embassies had a fairly large quantity of money, including gold, for emergencies, especially if the local currency had become useless, as was the case in Saigon, where the dong had become worthless.
- 32 Interview JRJZ.
- 33 Idem.

- 34 Idem.
- 35 Van Dongen always received copies of the messages but did not get involved much in the reports once the Ministry had decided it was unnecessary to travel to Saigon (see the article by John Kleinen in this volume).
- 36 The Communist Party later asked questions about this in parliament.
- 37 Interview JRJZ.
- 38 Idem.
- 39 Idem.
- 40 Idem.
- 41 The Vietnamese man being interviewed said that initially everything remained very calm. People did not interfere in one another's lives. His family benefited from the fact that a fairly highly placed North Vietnamese family member returned. As a result, they enjoyed a certain degree of protection. Slowly but surely the grip of the new rulers and their laws became more tangible. The city became more chaotic, and services and food supplies were seriously disrupted later on.

### Notes Chapter 9

- 1 Arnold Karskens, *Pleisters op de ogen. De Nederlandse oorlogsverslaggeving van Heiligerlee tot Kosovo*, Amsterdam, 2001, pp. 183-184.
- 2 For this transformation process, see: Hans Righart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig. Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict*, Amsterdam, 1995; and for the significance of Vietnam in it: Hans Righart, *De wereldwijde jaren zestig. Groot-Brittannië, Nederland, de Verenigde Staten*, Utrecht, 2004, pp. 66-72.
- 3 Gerry van der List, *Meer dan een weekblad. De geschiedenis van Elsevier*, Amsterdam, 2005, p. 122.
- 4 Rob Hartmans, *De Groene van 1877. Geschiedenis van een dwars weekblad*, Amsterdam, 2002, pp. 263-265.
- 5 Frank van Vree, *De metamorfose van een dagblad. Een journalistieke geschiedenis van de Volkskrant*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 100.
- 6 Marije Vlaskamp, *De tragiek van het gelijk: Vietnamverslaggeving in Het Parool, 1963-1975* (Erasmus University Rotterdam, Master's thesis, 1993), pp.130, 148-151.
- 7 J.C.H. Blom, H. Daalder, J.H.J. van den Heuvel, *Een vrij zinnige verhouding: de VPRO en Nederland 1926-1986*, Baarn, 1986, pp. 48-50.
- 8 A.F. Manning, *Zestig jaar KRO. Uit de geschiedenis van een omroep*, Baarn, 1985, p. 280.
- 9 Karskens, *Pleisters op de ogen*, 2001, pp. 191-192.
- 10 Archief BZ 823.32 1966 007153, quoted in: Karskens 2001, p. 187.
- 11 Hans Schoots, *Gevaarlijk leven. Een biografie van Joris Ivens* (Amsterdam 1995).
- 12 Henny Bussolati Schoute, *One more time. A Journalist remembers Wars, Love and Survival* (Atlanta, London, Sidney 1999), pp. 32 and 75.
- 13 'Met eigen ogen: Mr. G.B.J. Hiltermann, in Vietnam I en II'. AVRO, *Televizier*, 14 and 26 May 1965. NIBG Videocassettenummer V93493.
- 14 Mirjam Prenger, 'Uitglijden over de beeldbuis. Nederlandse politici op de televisie in de jaren vijftig en zestig', in: *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 5 (1993), pp. 199-226, see p. 206.
- 15 Karskens, *Pleisters op de ogen* (2001) 189.
- 16 Koos Postema, 'Mijn reportersjaren', in: Daan Dijksman (ed.), *Verheffend, vooruitstrevend, verstrooiend: vijfenzeventig jaar 'Vereniging van Arbeiders Radio Amateurs', 1925-2000* (Amsterdam 2000), pp. 167-177, see pp. 169 and 171.
- 17 Aad van den Heuvel, *Dit was Brandpunt, goed- enavond* (Soesterberg 2005), p. 9.
- 18 Cited in: Mirjam Prenger, 'Van familiemagazine naar actualiteitenrubriek. KRO's Brandpunt in maart 1963', in: *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis*, 2, 1990, pp. 157-186, see p. 179.
- 19 Ad van Liempt, *Het Journaal. 50 jaar achter de*

- schermen van het nieuws, Amsterdam, 2005.
- 20 Van den Heuvel, *Dit was Brandpunt*, 2005, p. 8.
  - 21 Prenger, 'Van familiemagazine naar actualiteit-enrubriek', 1990, p. 171.
  - 22 Niek Pas, *Sortir de l'ombre du parti communiste français: Histoire de l'engagement de l'extrême-gauche française sur la guerre du Vietnam 1965-1968*, Institut d'Etudes Politiques – Sciences Politiques, Paris, 1998, p. 17.
  - 23 Ibid. pp. 14-15.
  - 24 S.J. Bosgra, R.R. Eijbersen (ed.), *De kwestie Vietnam: feiten en achtergronden*, Amsterdam, 1966.
  - 25 Prenger, 'Van familiemagazine naar actualiteit-enrubriek', 1990, p. 173.
  - 26 Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, *Vietnam. De nooit verdwenen oorlog*, Amsterdam, 2000, p. 16.
  - 27 *Brandpunt*, January 7th, 1966. Hilversum, NIBG, docid 53083 and 53086. From the NIBG database it appears that in 1965 Vietnam was dealt with four times: in May an item was broadcasted about 'the helicopter war' (with images that were to all probability of foreign origin); then in July the first report, realized in the United States, where Willebrord Nieuwenhuis portrayed the anti-war movement; in November Ed van Westerloo interviewed film maker Joris Ivens and a few fragments from his film 'Le ciel – la terre' were shown. In December 1965 finally, an item was broadcasted about a military burial in Wayne, USA, about an American soldier who died in Vietnam.
  - 28 *Brandpunt*, January 15th, 1966. Hilversum, NIBG, VHS videotape number V60148.
  - 29 Nieuwenhuis, *Vietnam*, 2000, p. 29.
  - 30 V.L. (= Victor Lebesque), 'Goed filmverslag', in: *de Volkskrant*, January, 17th, 1966, p. 2.
  - 31 Nieuwenhuis, *Vietnam*, 2000, pp. 21, 35.
  - 32 Huub Wijfjes, *Journalistiek in Nederland 1850 – 2000. Beroep, cultuur en organisatie*, Amsterdam, 2004.
  - 33 Nieuwenhuis, *Vietnam*, 2000, p. 28.
  - 34 *Brandpunt*, 31 maart 1967. Hilversum, NIBG, VHS video tape nrs. V22389 and V93495. According to the biographical headword 'Ed van Westerloo (1938 – present)' this was the first broadcast of its kind. See: [www.beeldengeluid.nl](http://www.beeldengeluid.nl), viewed on 26th February, 2006. See also the biased description of this broadcast (that he accidentally situates in 1968) that Aad van den Heuvel gives in his memoirs; see *Dit was Brandpunt*, 2005, pp. 224-231.
  - 35 Van den Heuvel, *Dit was Brandpunt* (2005), p. 228.
  - 36 H.H. (= Han Hansen), 'Trieste beelden', in: *de Volkskrant*, 1st April 1967, 13 [section 'Uit de verte gezien'].
  - 37 Ibidem.
  - 38 Van den Heuvel, *Dit was Brandpunt*, 2005, p. 232.
  - 39 'Kwestie Zuid-Vietnam deel I en II'. VARA, *Achter het Nieuws*, 16th April 1968. Hilversum, NIBG, docid 58072 and 58073.
  - 40 Herman Wigbold & Koos Postema, *De oorlog die niet nodig was*, Hilversum, 1968, p. 31.
  - 41 Bussolati Schoute, *One more time*, 1999, p. 53.
  - 42 *Brandpunt*, 19th December 1969. Hilversum, NIBG, VHS video tape nr. V24992. Earlier, in December 1966 en January 1967 (see database NIBG), items about North Vietnam had been broadcast, with footage that was probably bought elsewhere.
  - 43 Van den Heuvel, *Dit was Brandpunt*, 2005, p. 232.
  - 44 'La première chose qu'on fait une fois une zone est libérée, c'est d'ouvrir des écoles. Alors, nous avons maintenant dans le sud vietnam des écoles primaires dans presque tous les villages, des écoles secondaire dans des provinces ou bien des districts. Dans l'armée de libération aussi, le mouvement d'éducation est très large. Je vous dis une image très émouvant: parfois dans les opérations, dans les marches, le soldat qui marche devant s'accroche au dos un tableau

noir, un petit tableau noir, où ils écrivent des formules de mathématiques par exemple, pour que celui qui marche derrière, le lise et l'apprenne et ainsi de suite, voyez vous?'

- 45 W.S. (= Willem Sprenger), 'Vietcongfilm primitief maar sterk', in: *de Volkskrant*, 20th December 1969, 19 [section 'Uit de verte gezien'].
- 46 Nieuwenhuis, *Vietnam*, 2000, p. 41.
- 47 Schoots, *Gevaarlijk leven*, 1995, p. 403.
- 48 Van den Heuvel, *Dit was Brandpunt*, 2005, p. 231.
- 49 Nieuwenhuis, *Vietnam*, 2000, p. 55.

### Notes Chapter 10

- 1 National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., Record Group 59, Politics 27 Viet South, telegram from Middendorf to W. Rogers, January 12th, 1973.
- 2 For the protests against the American intervention in Vietnam, see among others: P. van Eekert, D.A. Hellema, A. van Heteren, Johnson *moordenaar! De kwestie Vietnam in de Nederlandse politiek 1965-1975*, Amsterdam, 1986; J. Kleinen and D. Dragstra, *Vietnam: echo in Nederland*, Hilversum, 1986; M. Kuitenbrouwer, *De ontdekking van de Derde Wereld. Beeldvorming en beleid in Nederland, 1950-1990*, The Hague, 1994; H. Beerends, *De Derde Wereldbeweging. Geschiedenis en toekomst*, Utrecht, 1994; R. Stapel, *De Vietnam-beweging in Nederland. De eerste aktieperiode, 1964-1968* (Master's thesis) Nijmegen, 1982; R. van der Sanden, *De Vietnam-beweging. Beeld van een samenwerkingsprobleem* (Master's thesis) Amsterdam, 1984; G. Zondergeld, 'PSP, Provo en Vietnam', in: J. Hoffenaar, a.o. (ed.), *Confrontatie en ontspanning: maatschappij en krijgsmacht in de Koude Oorlog 1966-1989*, The Hague, 2004, pp. 81-99; J.D. Verkuil, *De grote illusie. De Nederlandse vrede-beweging na 1945*, Utrecht, 1988.
- 3 Some activists, however, had been interested in

the American intervention in Vietnam before this date. For example, youth groups organised a small demonstration on the occasion of the Tonkin incident in August 1964. M. Kuitenbrouwer, *Ontdekking*, 73.

- 4 See e.g. P. Denekamp a.o., *Ontwapenend. Geschiedenis van 25 jaar PSP*, Amsterdam, 1982, pp. 75-79; 'Vanwege het anti-koloniale standpunt', in: P. Denekamp (ed.) *Onstuimig maar geduldig. Interviews en biografische schetsen uit de geschiedenis van de PSP*, Amsterdam, 1987, pp. 145-153, 148; T. Regtien, *Springtij. Herinneringen aan de jaren zestig*, Houten, 1988, pp. 7-32; A. Verbij, *Tien rode jaren. Links radicalisme in Nederland, 1970-1980*, Amsterdam, 2005, p. 50.
- 5 In May 1965 the Lower House adopted a motion supporting the intervention. See Proceedings of the Lower House [Handelingen Tweede Kamer (HTK)], 1964-1965, 39th meeting, May 18th, 1965, 1423.
- 6 Theo Dams a.o., *De Nederlandse pers over de oorlog in Vietnam (1963-1973). Zes Nederlandse landelijke dagbladen onderzocht naar hun opvattingen over de Amerikaanse politiek en de rol van het communisme in de Vietnam-oorlog* (unpublished Master's thesis), Utrecht, 1978. For a survey of opinions of the daily newspapers *De Telegraaf*, *de Volkskrant*, *Het Parool*, *NRC* and *De Waarheid*: *ibid.* pp. 234-239.
- 7 See e.g. the speech by Minister Luns in the Lower House on the occasion of the American intervention. HTK, 1964-1965, 39th meeting May 18th, 1965, 1418.
- 8 'Every demonstration, every pacifist article will be used in the communist propaganda stream', wrote *Het Parool*. Dams, *Nederlandse pers*, p. 96.
- 9 B. van der Lek, 'Amerikaanse bases in Vietnam', in: *Bevrijding*, July 31st, 1965.
- 10 The petition was published in the *NRC* of October 16th, 1965.



- 11 Teach-ins originated in the American civil rights movement. The first one that was dedicated to the Vietnam war took place at the University of Michigan on March 24 and 25, 1965. See Charles DeBenedetti, *An American ordeal. The anti-war movement of the Vietnam era*, New York, 1990, pp. 107-108, 114-115.
- 12 B. van der Lek, 'Het andere Amerika', in: *Bevrijding*, December 12th, 1965.
- 13 See especially the report written in the spring of 1966 by a subcommission of the ARP. ARP, *Vietnam. Nota aangeboden door de Buitenlandse Commissie van het College van Advies der Anti-Revolutionaire Partij* (Den Haag 1967); see also the commentaries by PVDa Lower House member C. Patijn, in December 1965 and February 1966. HTK, 1965-1966, Permanent Commissions, 2nd meeting December 2nd, 1965, C 716-718; HTK, 1965-1966, 28th meeting, February 1st, 1966, 1141-1142.
- 14 PVDa leader in the Lower House J. den Uyl declared in 1967 that in his opinion the protests against the war could no longer be brushed aside as 'anti-Americanism, soft-hearted pacifism or political ingenuity', as had often been done in the past. F. Zuijdarn, *Tussen wens en werkelijkheid. Het debat over vrede en veiligheid binnen de PVDa in de periode 1958-1977*, Amsterdam, 2002, p. 178. See also: ARP, *Vietnam*, 7, where the one-sidedness of both defenders and detractors of intervention is analysed.
- 15 For Provo, see: N.G. Pas, *Imaazje! De verbeelding van Provo (1965-1967)*, Amsterdam, 2003.
- 16 See e.g. witness' deposition O.M. Boetes, June 30th, 1967 in: *Slotrapport van de commissie van onderzoek Amsterdam*, bijlage 128-1-11.
- 17 See e.g. 'Compliment', in: *Het Parool*, May 22nd, 1967; 'Vietnambetoging verliep ordelijk', in: *De Telegraaf*, July 22nd, 1967.
- 18 See e.g. A. Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking*, Amsterdam, 2006.
- 19 'Drie Vietnam-betogers', in: *De Nieuwe Linie*, May 13th, 1967, p. 3.
- 20 See e.g. the column 'De toestand', in: *NRC* April 5th, 1967 and July 18th, 1967; 'Vietnam en de geschiedenis', in: *NRC*, September 21st, 1967; J.L. Heldring, 'Dezer dagen', in: *NRC*, May 31st, 1967. 'Uitlaatklep', in: *het Algemeen Handelsblad*, August 22nd, 1967. Cf. also the KRO's more than two hour broadcast *Brandpunt* in March 1967, which is analysed by Niek Pas elsewhere in this book.
- 21 For years, national surveys had shown that the Dutch population considered the United States as the Netherlands' best friend after Belgium. See: *Buitenlandse politiek in de Nederlandse publieke opinie; inventaris van in Nederland in de periode 1 januari 1960 tot 1 januari 1975 gehouden onderzoek naar meningen en attitudes t.a.v. de buitenlandse politiek*, The Hague, 1975, e.g. # 1068, 76. Interview J.Th. Degenkamp, August 19th, 2003.
- 22 It was popular at the time to voice support for 'the other America', as the American demonstrators, intellectuals and political critics were called. Two representatives of the 'other America' were J.K. Galbraith (economist and professor at Harvard) and J.W. Fulbright (Democrat Senator from Arkansas). See e.g. J.K. Galbraith, *Een uitweg uit Vietnam. Een alternatief van het andere Amerika*, Amsterdam, 1968; J. William Fulbright, 'The two Americas', in: *Internationale Spectator*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 355-376.
- 23 See 'Lijst met contactpersonen, May 17th, 1967'. in: private files of J.Th. Degenkamp.
- 24 See e.g. *Attentie* (NRCv), May 19th, 1967, carrier number V24949 (VHS); *Brandpunt* (KRO), May 18th, 1967, carrier number 108499 (film) and 25804MI (film).
- 25 C. Dankart, 'Naastenliefde? Solidariteit, van hier tot gunter!', in: *Vietnam. De toekomst van een volk*, Amsterdam, 1983, p. 19.

- 26 Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG), CPN files, entry number 287, folder June 1967, note PB (no date).
- 27 Stapel, *Vietnam-beweging*, p. 110.
- 28 See e.g. M. Deelen, 'Het gezag moet uit de mensen zelf komen', in: *De Telegraaf*, April 22nd, 1967; 'Otto Meines Boetes. Betogingen in het slop', in: *Elseviers Weekblad*, July 1st, 1967; 'Dingen die je niet in de hand hebt', in: *de Volkskrant*, June 22nd, 1967.
- 29 See for Bouman's petition e.g.: Katholiek Documentatiecentrum, Unie van Katholieke Studenten Nederland, entry #848.
- 30 See e.g. Historisch Documentatie Centrum (HDC), ARP files, minutes, Moderamen, September 2nd, 1966. Bouman and his committee claimed not to have any party affiliation.
- 31 Cf. Zuijdam, *Wens*, 178. Zuijdam holds the opinion that Den Uyl did march with the committee.
- 32 See IISG, PVDA files, not. DB, 10-1-1968. Dankaart, 'Naastenliefde?', pp. 21-22; cf. Zuijdam, *Wens*, p. 211.
- 33 W.J. Schuijt, *Levenslogboek van Willem J. Schuijt*, Helvoirt, 1990, p. 217.
- 34 H. Righart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig. Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict*, Amsterdam, 1995, p. 203.
- 35 See e.g. HDC, ARP-files, Proceedings, Centraal Comité, May 27th, 1967. See also R. van der Maar, 'De Nederlandse regering en de Amerikaanse interventie in Vietnam, 1965-1973', in: *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, vol. 117, no. 3, 2004, pp. 338-360, esp. P. 349.
- 36 See R. van der Maar, 'Dutch Foreign Minister for Foreign Affairs Joseph Luns and the Vietnam War (1963-1971)', in: Ch. Goscha et M. Vaisse, *La Guerre du Vietnam et L'Europe*, Brussels, 2003.
- 37 See NA, note Mr. June 2nd, 1967 and August 24th and 25th, 1967.
- 38 Van der Maar, 'Nederlandse regering', pp. 350-352.
- 39 After the debate in August 1967 the group around Nak published a letter in the left-wing magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer*, signed by several hundred people, lamenting the level of the debate and the attitude of the Lower House, lax in their eyes, towards the government. 'Aan de leden van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal', September 6th, 1967, in: Private files Degenkamp.
- 40 Stapel, *Vietnam-beweging*, 97; IISG, PSP files, entry number 16, not. PPB January 6th, 1968.
- 41 Other cities where the committee had branches were Wageningen, Groningen-Drenthe, Amersfoort, Dordrecht and 't Gooi, Twente, Deventer, Zuthpen, Leiden and Delft. *Vietnam Bulletin*, 2e jg., no. 24, April 27th, 1968, p. 22. Cf. Dankaart, 'Naastenliefde', 23. See Stapel, *Vietnam-beweging*, p. 99.
- 42 See e.g. 'Plastic voor Vietnam', in: *Het Parool*, September 23rd, 1966. In order to avoid this accusation, it was kept hidden that the collections were meant for North Vietnam and the Liberation Front; or the money was used to buy goods that were clearly meant for strictly humanitarian aid, such as medicines. Subsequently, through the Red Cross or other agents, the goods were handed to representatives of the Liberation Front in East Berlin. See IISG, ANJV file, entry number 109, 'Verslag van de afronding van de Plastic contra napalm actie en van de delegatie die het plastic overhandigde aan de Vertegenwoordigers van het Zuid Vietnamese Bevrijdingsfront in Oost-Berlijn. February 10th, 1967; Stapel, *Vietnam-beweging*, pp. 107-108; Denekamp a.o., *Ontwapenend*, p. 106.
- 43 *Vietnambulletin*, Vol. 2, no. 24, April 27th, 1968, pp. 20-22; see the annual reports of the Central Fundraising Bureau [Centraal Bureau Fondsenweving], which were consulted from 1968 onward. Other groups that were working in this field were, among others: Vietnam Comité

- Leiden, Vietnam Steun Teams [Vietnam Support Teams], Werkgroep Vietnam Wageningen en omliggende gemeenten [Workgroup Vietnam for Wageningen and surrounding towns]. *Vietnam Bulletin*, Vol. 2, no. 23, April 13th, 1968, pp. 7-9.
- 44 See e.g. M. Lane, *Waarom wij deserteerden. Gesprekken met Amerikanen*, Zwolle, 1970; Susan Sontag, *Reis naar Hanoi*, Utrecht, 1969; B. Spock and M. Zimmerman, *Dr. Spock over Vietnam*, Amsterdam, 1969; W. Fulbright, *De arrogantie van de macht*, Bruna, 1968; W. Burchett, *Vietnam wint* Amsterdam, 1969; M. McCarthy, *Bericht uit Vietnam*, Leiden, 1968; W.D. Verwey, H. Haas and Nguyen Bao Cong, *Hel en hemel. De rol van de katholieken in Vietnam*, Baarn, 1970; S. Lidman, *Gesprekken in Hanoi*, Utrecht, 1968.
- 45 'It inspired in me an enormous respect for their attitude towards life, an attitude of certain tranquility and the confidence that things would turn out well', female activist Hennie de Swaan said, for example, in: J. Kleinen and D. Dragstra, *Vietnam: echo in Nederland*, 28. See also: 'Een warm hart en een koel hoofd', in: *Vietnam bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 17, February 14th, 1970, pp. 9-10.
- 46 For the founding, see: *Vietnam Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 15, January 4th, 1969, p. 10; *ibid.*, no. 17/18, February 15th, 1969, pp. 14-15; *Id.*, no. 5, August 30th, 1969, pp. 5-9. See also: Eekert, *Johnson moordenaar!*, pp. 102-105.
- 47 See e.g. 'Verslag aan de donateurs', September 1971, included in: *Vietnam Bulletin*, vol. 6, no. 5, September 18th, 1971, pp. 3-10.
- 48 See IISG, MCNV files, entry number 1, Van Rhijn to De Haas, July 6th 1970; De Haas to Van Rhijn, June 27th, 1970.
- 49 See e.g. IISG, BVBN files, entry number 7, 'Doelstellingen en activiteiten van het Medisch Comité Nederland-Vietnam', reprint from *Geneeskundige Gids*, May 1972. Cf. Eekert, *Johnson*, p. 103.
- 50 See e.g. R. Havenaar, *Van Koude oorlog naar nieuwe chaos 1939-1993*, The Hague, 1993, pp. 209-224. It is interesting to see how in 1971 an employee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs defended the MCNV when angry letter writers accused the committee of being one-sided. He held the opinion that medical help to people in need should never be condemned, 'not when they are communists either'. See Files of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, code 9, 1965-1974, entr. 1806, M. Vunderink to Mr. Beumer in Rheden, July 9th, 1971.
- 51 G.C. Herring, *America's longest war. The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, New York, 1986, p. 242.
- 52 See e.g. ABZ, code 9, 1965-1974, entry 6863, 'Declaration on Vietnam' from the leaders of D'66, April 18th 1972. For an example of TV images of the consequences of the American bombings, see: NIBG, TV-files, *Achter het Nieuws* (VARA), 27-6-1972, carrier number VHS 42791. It contains an interview with specialist Gilles Quispel about the so-called super bomb 'Daisey cutter'.
- 53 In P. Mug's personal files there is a list of all the contact addresses of groups that occupied themselves with Vietnam in 1973. According to this list, there were 35 local Vietnam committees active in the Netherlands in 1973.
- 54 See e.g. 'Rode Kruis verloor neutraal gevecht in Vietnam', in: *NRC Handelsblad*, January 13th 1973; L. Berends, 'Leuze "Heel Vietnam" misleidend', in: *de Volkskrant*, January 25th, 1973; M. van Dullemen, 'Na de bommen de hulpverleners', in: *De Groene Amsterdammer*, January 10th, 1973 which led PVDa Lower House member Jan Pronk to ask official questions in Parliament. See also: Dutch Red Cross files, box 4, 1.93, Documents concerning the national action 'Heel Vietnam' [All Vietnam], October 1972-January 1973 and February 1973-March 1973, especially the minutes of the meetings.

- 55 Dutch Red Cross files, 1975, box 2, 1.93, 'Stukken betr. div. acties t.b.v. de nationale actie 'Heel Vietnam' en de fin. afwikkeling daarvan. 'Afd. financiën aan Directeur-Generaal, stand alle rekeningen, September 7th 1973; A. Claassen, 'Medisch Comité Nederland-Vietnam Vijftien jaar medische hulp', in: *Vietnam. De toekomst van een volk*, Groningen, 1983, p. 27.
- 56 See e.g.: 'Overall acties tegen de bombardementen', in: *NRC Handelsblad*, January 10th, 1973; 'Protestgolf na bommen op Vietnam', in: *de Volkskrant*, December 23rd, 1972. 'Vraagtekens achter acties voor Vietnam', in: *De Telegraaf*, January 6th, 1973.
- 57 Ibid., p. 333.
- 58 In all, the religion-based parties together lost ten seats, seven of which came from the KVP. The elections were won by the PVDa and the liberal left-wing religious PPR party, but also by the right-wing People's Party for Liberty and Democracy (VVD).
- 59 Afterwards, there was strong criticism of the participation inside ARP and KVP. See e.g.: HDC, ARP files, not. Moderamen, November 1st, 1973; 'Verdeeldheid in ARP over Vietnam', in: *NRC Handelsblad*, January 12th, 1973.
- 60 Van der Maar, 'Nederlandse regering', p. 357.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 'Tom Küsters: 'Het Medisch Comité dat zagen we als het neerdalen op het vrome a-politieke volk'', in: *Vietnam. De toekomst van een volk*, p. 38. Cf. Eekert a.o., *Johnson*, 134; Interview A. Claassen, March 11th, 2005.
- 63 Hellema. *Johnson*, pp. 126-130.
- 64 See e.g. the international conference organised by the BVBN and Amnesty International in Amsterdam, September 1973. See *Vietnam Bulletin*, Vol. 8, no. 6, November 31st, 1973, pp. 9-10.
- 65 For the difficult aid relation between the Netherlands and Vietnam after 1976, see: D.A. Hellema, 'Nederland en de wederopbouw van Vietnam', in: *Internationale Spectator*, vol. 47, no. 7/8, 1993, pp. 426-435 and Mr. Hellema's article in this book.
- 66 ABZ, file 1828.
- 67 In the fifties Van Thiel worked for the American army. In 1959 he was working on his dissertation at Harvard.
- 68 *L'Humanité*, August 27th 1970; *Washington Post*, December 27th, 1970; MacDonald, Glenn. *Report or Distort?* Jericho, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1973, pp.123, 197-199.

## Notes Chapter 11

- 1 ABZ, 911.0, folder 1054, Hanoi to FA [Foreign Affairs], April 8th, 1976. The first part of this article is a reworking of: Duco Hellema, 'Nederland en de wederopbouw van Vietnam', in: *Internationale Spectator*, XLVII, no. 7/8, July/August 1993, pp. 426-435.
- 2 The Vietnamese interest in steel had already become apparent during a secret visit of the acting Director-General of International Cooperation, Charles Rutten, to Hanoi in April 1974. Cf. Charles Rutten, *Aan de wieg van Europa en andere Buitenlandse Zaken*, Amsterdam: Boom, 2005, pp. 122-130.
- 3 ABZ, DAL, 610.32, folder 5460, memo about budget consultations and *Agreed Minutes*.
- 4 ABZ, 912.2, folder 2030, memo DGPZ, May 6th, 1977.
- 5 ABZ, 011.31, folder 1061, emb. Hanoi to FA, November 8th, 1977.
- 6 ABZ, DAL, 610.33, folder 5462, memo October 16th, 1978.
- 7 ABZ, Secret Documents, 921.1, folder 1123, De Koning to Hanoi, September 4th, 1978.
- 8 Acts of Parliament [= Tweede Kamer], 1978-1979, chapter V, no. 102, pp. 2 ff.

- 9 ABZ, DAL, 610.33, folder 3229, Hanoi to FA, November 4th, 1981.
- 10 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', memo DOA/ZA to M, March 1st, 1985.
- 11 ABZ, 912.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', CDP Hanoi to DOA/ZA, August 23rd, 1988.
- 12 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', memo H. van der Hoeven to head of DOA and DAL, October 4th, 1988.
- 13 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', CdF Hanoi to FA, August 23rd, 1988.
- 14 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990-sept. 1993', Celer circular, February 20th, 1990.
- 15 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990-sept. 1993', Van den Broek to Bangkok, March 5th, 1990.
- 16 ABZ, DAO/ARA, folder 1298, several country surveys of Vietnam.
- 17 Quoted in *NRC Handelsblad*, April 2nd, 1993.
- 18 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990 – sept. 1993', memo R, February 19th, 1990.
- 19 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990 – sept. 1993', DGPZ to DGIS, March 13th, 1990.
- 20 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990 – sept. 1993', DGIS to DGPZ, March 22nd, 1990.
- 21 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', memo DOA/OP to head of DOA, March 15th, 1990.
- 22 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', memo acting DOA to DAL, June 15th, 1990.
- 23 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', Kasteel (Bangkok) to FA, November 23, 1989.
- 24 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', Van den Broek to Bangkok, November 24, 1989.
- 25 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', BEB to Bangkok, November 27, 1989.
- 26 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', memo head DOA to M, December 8, 1989.
- 27 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990 – sept. 1993', several coded messages, Kasteel to FA.
- 28 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990 – sept. 1993', note by Blekxtoon, participant trade mission, June 1990.
- 29 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990 – sept. 1993', memo head DOA to DGPZ, October 1st, 1991.
- 30 ABZ, DOA archives, input no. 675, folder 'Vietnam/Bezoek van min. Van Buitenlandse Zaken Nguyen Manh Cam, juni 1992/Werk-dossier', Wehry to FA, May 7th, 1992.

- 31 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990-sept. 1993', note by DGPZ on memo head of DOA to DGIS and DGPZ, February 11th, 1992.
- 32 ABZ, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 990 – sept. 1993', memo DOA/ZO to DOA, November 23rd, 1992.
- 33 ABZ, 921.1, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel III, jan. 1990 – sept. 1993', Kooijmans to Bangkok, April 2nd, 1993.
- 34 *NRC Handelsblad*, April 2nd, 1993.
- 35 ABZ, DDI/DAL file, entry no. 0007, folder 'Coördinatie bezoek MP aan Vietnam en China, 1995', note from V&W about activities in Vietnam and China.
- 36 ABZ, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel IV, oktober 1993 t/m december 1994', memo Chef de Poste (CDP) Hanoi to head of DOA, October 7th, 1994.
- 37 ABZ, Archief DOA, inv. nr. 621, folder 'Vietnam/Bezoek Minister Kooijmans, maart 1994', the embassy in Hanoi to FA, March 12th, 1994.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Kooijmans quoted in *Leidsch Dagblad*, March 12th, 1994.
- 40 ABZ, DOA/Alg. Rijksarchief Depot, inv. nr. 1557, folder 'Vietnam/Bezoeken van Nederland aan Vietnam', Report of the Vietnam visit by Minister of Foreign Trade, A. van Dok-van Weele, March 22-28, 1996.
- 41 ABZ, DAO, folder 'De voorbereiding en verslaglegging van de en marge van de ASEM top gehouden ontmoeting met Vietnam dd. 7 oktober 2004 te Hanoi', memo DAO/ZO, September 24th, 2004.
- 42 ABZ, DOA/NA, entry no. 00135, 'De diplomatieke betrekkingen tussen Nederland en Vietnam, 1997-2002, memo in preparation of a talk between R and Vietnamese delegation in margin AVVN, September, 2001.
- 43 ABZ, folder 'Vietnam: verhoudingen en diplomatieke betrekkingen met Nederland, deel II, 1985-1989', e-mail ambassador in Hanoi to DAO, July 7th, 2005.



# Chronology

830-300 BC	Dong Son civilization
208 BC	First independent state, Nam Viet, established
43 AD	Trung sisters' rebellion
111-939	Northern Vietnam is a colony of China
939	Vietnam independent from China
1010-1225	Ly dynasty rules Dai Viet. The Great Viet Empire
1257-1287	Mongol invasions; battle at Bach Dang river
1407-1428	Chinese occupation
1428-1789	Vietnam independent from China again, under the Le dynasty
1527-1771	Dai Viet breaks up into Dang Ngoai (Tonkin) and Dang Trong (Cochinchina)
1601	Dutch ships reach the coast of Vietnam
1602	Vice-admiral Caspar van Groensbergen lands on the Vietnamese coast
1602	Dutch East Indies Company (voc) established
1633-1639	First Dutch trade contacts with Quinam (Cochinchina)
1637-1700	Dutch trade contacts with Dang Ngoai (Tonkin); voc-factories at Pho Hien and Thang Long
1651-1652	voc maintains factory at Hoi An; relations between voc and Quinam broken off for good
1752-1756	voc maintains factory at Hoi An
1771	Tay Son rebellion
1789	Quang Trung emperor
1802-1945	Nguyen-dynasty rules Dai Nam (Greater Vietnam)
1833	Phan Huy Chu's mission to Batavia
1861	French troops occupy Saigon
1867	Dutch consulate established at Saigon
1883	North and Central Vietnam become protectorates: Tonkin and Annam. Cochinchina remains a colony
1887	Indochina Union (Cambodia, Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina, followed by Laos in 1897)
1907-1908	First modern nationalist reactions against French; Rebellion in Central Vietnam against colonial taxes

1930	Yen-Bay rebellion of Vietnamese nationalists; Indochina Communist Party (ICP) established in Hong Kong
1930-1931	Peasants revolt in several provinces against French colonialism
1933	Dutch consulate established at Hanoi
1936	Popular Front government in France leads to brief spell of liberal climate in Indochina with more freedom for press and civil rights movement
1940	Japanese troops in Indochina
1941	Viet Minh established
1945	Proclamation of Democratic Republic of Vietnam; restoration of French rule in the south
1946	Beginning of First Indochina War
1946	Dutch consulate in Hanoi closed and Dutch consulate in Saigon promoted to Consulate-general and full diplomatic post
1950	The Netherlands recognize Vietnam as an independent state
1954	Viet Minh troops defeat the French at Dien Bien Phu
1958	Ambassador of the Republic of Vietnam in London also accredited as envoy to The Hague
1958	Dutch mission with the government of the Republic of Vietnam established, until 1970 under the Dutch envoy ambassador in Manila, from 1970 to 1975 under the Dutch ambassador in Bangkok
1959	Dutch consular representation in Saigon incorporated in newly established Diplomatic Chancellery in Saigon
1963	The Netherlands and the Republic of Vietnam mutually raise their diplomatic missions to embassy level
1963	Roman Catholic president Ngo Dien Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu murdered
1964	Beginning of American bombings (February); 'Tonkin resolution' (August) leads to undeclared war with North-Vietnam
1965	3,500 American marines land on the beach at Da Nang (March)
1965	Dutch Diplomatic Chancellery in Saigon led by a temporary chargé d'affaires
1968	Tet Offensive
1969	More than half a million Americans in Vietnam; Cambodia bombed
1971	Bombing of North-Vietnam resumed
1971	Opening of Diplomatic Information Bureau of the Republic of Vietnam in The Hague, led by a temporary chargé d'affaires
1973	Paris Accords signed; last American troops leave Vietnam (March)
1974	The Netherlands and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam establish diplomatic relations
1974	President Nixon resigns
1974	Dutch ambassador to China also accredited to the government of the DRV (13 December)
1975	North-Vietnamese troops capture Saigon (April 30); Dutch Diplomatic Chancellery at Saigon closed; Diplomatic Information Bureau of the Republic of Vietnam in The Hague closed
1976	Reunification of North and South Vietnam (July)

1976	Dutch Diplomatic Chancellery in Hanoi opened, until 1980 under the Dutch ambassador in Peking, from 1980 to 1988 under the Dutch ambassador in Bangkok
1976	Vietnamese ambassador in Paris is also accredited to the Netherlands
1977	First Vietnamese refugees arrive in the Netherlands
1978	Vietnam invades Cambodia
1979	China undertakes punitive expedition against Vietnam
1986	Sixth Party Congress, with proclamation of Doi-Moi policy
1988	Dutch Diplomatic Chancellery in Hanoi closed
1989	Vietnamese troops leave Cambodia
1992	Seventh Party Congress
1993	French president Mitterand visits Vietnam
1993	Private visit of Prince Claus to Vietnam
1994	Dutch embassy established in Hanoi
1995	Vietnam becomes a member of ASEAN; end of embargo by USA
1995	Prime Minister Kok visits Vietnam
1997	Dutch Consulate-general established in Ho Chi Minh City
1998	Vietnamese embassy established in The Hague
2000	Trade agreement with the USA; American president Bill Clinton visits Vietnam
2005	Prince Willem-Alexander visits Vietnam



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