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**Dhiravatna Pombejra** received his PhD in History from the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) in 1984, taught at the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University from 1985 till 2006, and is now an independent researcher. Using in the main Dutch, French and English sources, much of his research concerns the history of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Ayutthaya. During the academic year 1992-1993 he was a fellow-in-residence at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS), Wassenaar. In 2009 he was named “National Outstanding Researcher” in the humanities by the National Research Council of Thailand.

Dhiravat’s published works include “Ayutthaya at the End of the Seventeenth Century: Was There a Shift to Isolation?” in Anthony Reid (ed.), *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era. Trade, Power, and Belief* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); “VOC Employees and their Relationships with Mon and Siamese Women: a Case Study of Osoet Pegua” in Barbara Watson Andaya (ed.), *Other Pasts: Women, Gender and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hawai’i at Manoa, 2000); “The Dutch-Siamese Conflict of 1663-1664: A Reassessment” in Leonard Blussé (ed.), *Around and About Formosa* (Taipei: T’sao Yung-ho Foundation for Culture and Education, 2003); *The English Factory in Siam 1612-1685* (co-edited with Anthony Farrington; 2 volumes, London: The British Library, 2007); “Javanese Horses for the Court of Ayutthaya” in Greg Bank off and Sandra Swart (eds.), *Breeds of Empire. The ‘Invention’ of the Horse in Southeast Asia and Southern Africa 1500-1950* (Copenhagen: NIAS, 2007); and “Conflict and Commerce in the Gulf of Siam, c.1629-1642: Using Dutch Documents to ‘De-centre’ Ayutthayan History” in Volker Grabowsky (ed.). *Southeast Asian Historiography Unravelling the Myths. Essays in honour of Barend Jan Terwiel* (Bangkok: River Books, 2011).

Apart from his research and teaching work, Dhiravat also serves as board member of the Baan Hollanda Foundation, which oversees the running of an information centre on the history of Thai-Dutch relations at Ayutthaya. He is an Officer of the Order of Orange-Nassau (Kingdom of the Netherlands).

### ***Ayutthaya as an International Port (1351 to 1767)***

The city of Ayutthaya was the seat of the kings of Siam from 1351 till 1767. It flourished thanks to its commercial prosperity as well as agricultural and demographic strength. Ayutthaya was the centre of Siam’s political and cultural life, which in turn was dominated by the royal court. The administration of foreign affairs and trade was conducted by the ministry of the treasury or *phrakhlang*, which also oversaw Ayutthaya’s port.

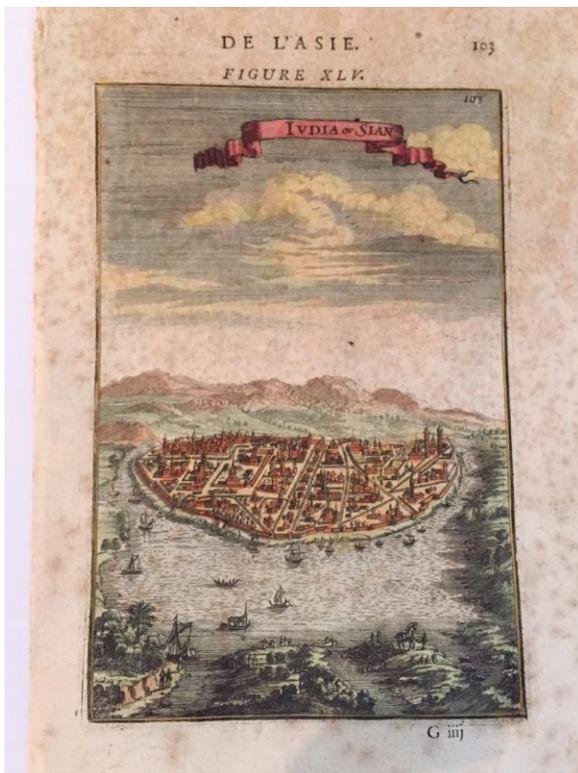
The port of Ayutthaya depended on its rich hinterland for the supplies of forest produce and minerals, which formed the bulk of its exports. Aromatic wood such as eaglewood, the dye wood sappan, deerskins, elephants, and ivory all found space on ships sailing

both east and west of Siam. The Gulf of Siam supplied rayskins, while tin was the most important of the minerals traded in Siam.

A key part of the intra-Asian trading network which linked the markets of Japan and China with those of India, Persia and Arabia, Ayutthaya's trade was oriented towards export of the goods mentioned above, though there was also a considerable entrepôt trade. Ayutthaya became, with its adjunct ports such as Mergui ("Tenasserim"), the channel through which Chinese and Japanese goods could make their way to India or Europe. Ayutthaya thus formed one of the links in the long chain of trading ports and polities, which constituted the "maritime silk route".

An aspect of the city of Ayutthaya much remarked upon by foreign observers was its multi-ethnic character. Religious and cultural diversity did not just manifest itself in the urban fabric of the city, but the flows of goods and people also influenced art, architecture, culture and material life in Siam.

Ayutthaya as an international port rose to its zenith in the seventeenth century, during an "age of commerce" when Southeast Asian products were much in demand worldwide. In 1767 Ayutthaya fell to Burmese (Myanmar) forces. The Siamese polity fragmented, agriculture stagnated owing to the forced migration of tens of thousands of people, and trade was inevitably disrupted. Yet within a few years Thonburi-Bangkok, under King Taksin and the first Chakri king Rama I became the dominant port in the Gulf of Siam region, largely owing to Chinese trade.



Ayutthaya-Alain Manneson Mallet, 1683