

ARCHIVE REPORT

THE ARCHIVES OF THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY (VOC) AS THEY RELATE TO BURMA

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The archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) are preserved largely at the National Archives at The Hague (previously the *Algemeen Rijksarchief*/General State Archives). Though the information contained within this vast collection of records and accounts forms an invaluable source for the reconstruction of the (economic) history of seventeenth century Burma, they have never before been examined. This is indeed surprising since practically everything written between 1634 and 1680 by usually well informed VOC employees in Burma is still extant, making this a major primary source for just such a purpose.

The VOC archives have been categorized with each individual volume simply designated VOC and numbered consecutively. The most important sets relating to Burma are given below in alphabetical order followed by the respective VOC numbers where applicable.

Bataviaasch Uitgaand Briefboek, 1621-1792. (Batavia's outgoing letter book, 1621-1792 - letters from the VOC's head-office in Batavia to the various factories in Asia and the *Heeren XVII*). This important series reflects the VOC's grand design in that it sets out Company policy in the East. There are letters stipulating how trade should be conducted, from where certain goods should be procured, the places where private traders could operate, when account books should be closed, the rules on waging war, how to behave towards kings and other rulers. Letters relating specifically to Burma date from 1624 to 1686.
VOC 849-VOC 1052.

Hooge Regering = Hooge Regering te Batavia. Beschrijving van een collectie stukken, in 1862-63 uit Batavia naar Nederland verzonden, voornamelijk het bestuur der Hoge Regeering te Batavia over de buitenkantoren betreffende, 1602-1827. (A collection of documents sent in 1862-63 from Batavia to the Netherlands, mostly concerning Company policy formulated by the High Government in Batavia with respect to its subsidiaries in the East Indies, 1602-1827).
This series contains Batavia's view on the misconduct and death of Company employees in Syriam, the general ban on Dutch wives at undefended trading posts, and proposals to restart the Company's Burma trade. For Choromandel: *Hooge Regering* 300 to 504.

Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren uit Indië aan de Heren XVII en de Kamer Amsterdam, 1607-1694. (Letters and Papers from the East Indies received by the *Heeren XVII* [the Board of Directors] and the Amsterdam Chamber, 1607-1694). Practically all research is based on this important series that forms the main body of these archives. Please note that everything for the year 1611 and books II and III for the year 1614 are missing. Material on Burma from 1607 to 1689 is in VOC 1054-VOC 1432, the year 1695 in VOC 1540 and 1745 in VOC 2614.
VOC 1053-VOC 3986.

Note:

One will find nothing under 'Burma' in the *Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren* or anywhere else in the VOC archives for that matter. The Dutch always referred to Irrawaddy Burma as (*The Kingdom of Pegu* or (*The Court at Ava*. Arakan on the other hand was always called just that. Additional information on the VOC activities in Burma must not only be gleaned from the Choromandel and Bengal documents, but also from those dealing with places such as Siam, Persia, Ceylon, Japan, Mocha, and Batavia.

Plakaatboek - Nederlandsch-Indisch plakaatboek, 1602-1811 (Book of Dutch East Indies Edicts).

Published in 17 volumes, the last volume is the systematic register. Here we find edicts passed in Batavia on the procurement and use of coins, including Chinese copper coins from Burma.

Resolutions: Copie-Resoluties van Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden, 1637-1791 (Copies of Resolutions passed by the Governor-General and Councillors, 1637-1791). Here are, among others, the resolutions passed in 1744 and 1757 on a possible renewal of the VOC's Burma trade. There is also much on Batavia's perpetual concern to provide its citizens with coins suitable for use as small change in the market places.

VOC 661-VOC 827.

Several of the private collections housed at the National Archives are important for Burma as well, such as those of Van Delden, Geleynssen de Jongh, and Sweers. The Van Delden collection is unique in that it consists of filing cards with personal details of many VOC servants. This valuable source is not generally accessible to the public but the custodians are willing to supply photocopies.

After having painstakingly collected and transcribed everything on Burma, it seems a shame to let it all go to waste. I have therefore decided, provided there is sufficient interest, to make my entire collection of transcripts (in Dutch, with English translations to follow in due course) available on CD-rom together with a complete listing of all the VOC volumes containing material on Burma.

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