CREOLIZATION AND DIASPORA
IN THE PORTUGUESE INDIES

The Social World of Ayutthaya,
1640-1720

STEFAN HALIKOWSKI SMITH

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BRILL
Creolization and Diaspora in the Portuguese Indies
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The Social World of Ayutthaya, 1640–1720

By

Stefan Halikowski Smith
CONTENTS

Note on Spellings ................................................................. ix
List of Figures ................................................................. xi

Chapter One  Introduction: a world of creolization .......... 1

Chapter Two  Seventeenth century population movements
in the Portuguese Indies ..................................................... 13

Chapter Three  No obvious home: the flight of the
Portuguese ‘tribe’ from Makassar in the 1660s ................. 39

Chapter Four  From contact to settlement in South-East
Asia: a history of mercenaries and interlopers ................. 65

Chapter Five  ‘O campo português’. The Portuguese quarter
in Ayutthaya in the wake of the Makassarese diaspora ........ 93

Chapter Six  The development of the presence of the Catholic
church in Ayutthaya ........................................................ 129

Chapter Seven  ‘Those who occupy the lowest category
here’. The social relegation, but survival, of the Portuguese
‘tribe’ .............................................................................. 175

Chapter Eight  ‘Living great after the fashion of the
country’. Comparisons with Portuguese in neighboring
kingdoms ......................................................................... 213

Chapter Nine  Unpublished depictions of Portuguese in
Thai and Burmese temple murals ..................................... 235

Chapter Ten  ‘All that the French Bishops wish is to see
us leave’. Religious disputes in South-East Asia between
Portuguese Jesuits and French Missionaires Étrangères
de Paris ........................................................................... 277

Chapter Eleven  Conclusion ................................................. 299
DOCUMENTARY APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Holdings of the collection entitled “Rerum Lusitanicarum—Symmicta Lusitanica” relating to Siam, Biblioteca de Ajuda, Lisbon. ................................................................. 303

Appendix 2. Holdings of the collection entitled ‘Jesuítas na Ásia’ relating to Siam, Biblioteca de Ajuda, Lisbon. .................. 304

Appendix 3. Holdings of the collection entitled ‘Macau e o Oriente’ relating to Siam in the Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon. ........................................................................... 310

Appendix 4. List of documents in the Arquivo Histórico de Macau relating to Siam. ................................................................. 312

Appendix 5. The papers of the Franciscan, Giovan Battista Morelli, relating to Siam, in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze. ...................................................................................... 321

Appendix 6. Instructions (Regimento) to Francisco Cutrim de Magalhães, emissary to the King of Siam, Goa, 3 August 1646 [excerpts]. ............................................................................. 322

Appendix 7. Letter from the Viceroy D. Filipe de Mascarenhas to the King D. John IV. ......................................................... 326

Appendix 8. Correspondence between the King, the Viceroy and the Conselho Ultramarino relating to Siam, 1667–1670. ........................................................................................................ 328


Appendix 10. A Memorandum from the Conselho Ultramarino entitled ‘As to what Frey Luis Fragoso, Commissary of the Holy Office in Siam, writes, relating to the molestations that are caused in those parts of Christendom by the French bishops who came from Rome as Missionaries Apostolic.’ ................................................................. 338
Appendix 11. Oath of Loyalty sworn by the Society of Jesus, Siam, 10 October, 1681.  ................................................................. 342

Appendix 12. Letter of Jean-Baptiste Maldonado S.J. to one of the assistants to General Gian Paolo Oliva from Siam, dated 16 November, 1681.  .................................................. 344

Appendix 13. Letter from Jean-Baptiste Maldonado, representing the Company of Jesus in Siam, to François Pallu, Bishop of Heliopolis, 22 August, 1682.  .......................... 350


Appendix 15. ‘News from the Kingdom of Siam’. A Report made from Macao at the end of 1688. .................................................. 360

Appendix 16. Deliberations of the Senate in Macao regarding action to take with regard to the Siamese Revolution, 17 November 1688. ......................................................... 366

Appendix 17. Memorandum of the Conselho Ultramarino regarding what the Viceroy Count of Vila Verde had to say about the events in Siam, Lisbon, September 12, 1696. .... 370

Appendix 18. Letter written by the City [of Macao] to the Phrakhlang of Siam in the year 1720. ...................................................... 384

Appendix 19. ‘Letter sent by Padre António Soares to the Senate of the City of Macao’. 20 June, 1721. ........................................ 388

Appendix 20. ‘Letter sent by the Resident Francisco Telles from Siam to the Noble Senate.’ 28 June, 1721. ................................. 398

Appendix 21. ‘Letter that the Barcalão of Siam sent to the Senate’. Macao, June 1721. ................................................................. 402

Bibliography ..................................................................................... 407

Index ................................................................................................ 441
NOTE ON SPELLINGS

In spelling names of cities and monasteries in Thailand, I have adhered to the phonetic system developed by the Royal Institute of Thailand, except that diacritical marks have been omitted in the body of the book. I have thus dispensed with the ‘graphic’ spelling system, which transliterates names from Sanskrit or Pali according to their spelling in the original language rather than phonetically, as favoured by some authors. For Chinese names, I try to use the Pinyin, rather than the Wade-Giles system (for example, Qing rather than Ch’ing).
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Centres of Portuguese presence in South-East Asia towards the end of the seventeenth century ......................... xiv

2. Fred Woldemar, Dutch attack on Makassar, 1660 ............... 46

3. Dutch boatswain murdered by the Portuguese, from François Valentyn’s Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien, Dordrecht/Amsterdam, 1724–6 .................................................. 78

4. Plan of Ayutthaya. Simon de la Loubère, Du royaume de Siam, Paris, 1691 .............................................................. 95

5. The Portuguese campo on an undated seventeenth-century water colour plan of Ayutthaya ........................................... 98

6. Pair of six-panel paper folding screens (byōbu). Early seventeenth century ................................................................. 102

7. Lacquer-finished trunk (nagamochi). Late sixteenth-century ......................................................................................... 104

8. Martaban pot ........................................................................................................... 107

9. View of the Dutch lodge from the early wooden Jesuit church ....................................................................................... 132

10. The Church of the Holy Rosary, Tejgaon, Dacca, completed for the Augustinians in 1677 ................................. 133

11. Dionisio Li-njian, Michel Foghanin and Antonio Van Kiet, Tonkinese Christian converts accompanying the Siamese delegation to France in 1688 .................................. 141

12. Plan of the Collegio Romano ........................................................................... 151
13. Plan of excavations of the Church of São Domingos, Mu Ban Portuges (หมู่บ้านโปรตุเกส), Ayutthaya .................... 162

14. Portuguese in hat running from a tiger ........................................ 184

15. Depiction of European shipwreck .............................................. 188

16. Typical Siamese house on stilts over the canals (1687/88) ................................................................. 192

17. A detail of the Portuguese bandel in Hoogli, Bengal ....... 193


19. Portrait of individuals from the Portuguese bandel at Hoogli (Golim), captured and brought to Agra in 1632 ................................................................................................. 232

20. Mural details from Po-Win Taung. Bearded Portuguese pay homage to the local ruler, and present offerings at the stūpa ........................................................................................................ 237

21. Eurasian mercenary guards local courtly women c. 1785 ................................................................................................. 242

22. The Peguan family (Peneguais familae) engraved by Joannes a Doetechum for Linschoten’s Itinerario ............. 243

23. ‘Inhabitants of the Kingdom of Pegu. Gentiles. They call themselves Peguans’ .......................................................... 244

24. Luso-Asian shipping scene, Ananda ok-Kyaung, Burma .............................................................................................. 248

25. Eurasian junks, detail from a map of the Indian Ocean in the Ayutthayan Traiphum ........................................................ 256

LIST OF FIGURES

27. Military scene from a former library in a religious complex near Sagaing, late 18th century (Bangkok period) ................................................................. 260

28. ‘Invasion of the palace’. Shwe Sayan Pokala temple murals ................................................................. 271

29. ‘The meeting of two armies’. Shwe Sayan Pokala temple murals ................................................................. 272

30. Crowd scene, Wat Chaiyathit, Bangkok ................................. 273

31. Myths of origins: church murals from the church at Nabet in the valley of the Mu, c. 1910 ................................. 275
Fig. 1. Centres of Portuguese presence in South-East Asia towards the end of the seventeenth century.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: A WORLD OF CREOLIZATION

The issue of imperial decline \((\textit{decadência})\) in the wake of a short-lived golden age \((\textit{idade aurea})\) in the East has been a very difficult one for Portuguese historiography traditionally to confront. Historians argue about suitable watershed dates, whether that be the fall of Colombo to Dutch forces in 1656, the fall of Portuguese Hormuz in 1622, to the union with the Castilian Crown in 1580.\(^1\) Some can see trouble even earlier, with the ‘structural shift’ \((\textit{viragem estrutural})\) of the 1550s, for example.\(^2\) Suffice it to say that by the middle years of the seventeenth century, we are confronted with an empire in full retreat. It is enough to read the accounts of Captain João de Ribeiro, or Manuel Godinho, or learn that the Viceroy Antonio de Mello e Castro travelled out to Goa to his post on the English vessel \textit{Leopard} in September 1662, to perceive this. Western historiography, consequently, has tended to write the Portuguese off as a dead-letter in the Indian Ocean world from around the 1620s, using this date as an otherwise arbitrary cut-off point for study\(^3\) and either provided facile explanations for this collapse such as failed strategy at state-policy level\(^4\) or, as the Dutch scholar Ernst Van Veen has done most recently, gloated over the reasons for this decline in something of a post-imperial Dutch \textit{Schadenfreude}.\(^5\)

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4 Flores, \textit{Portuguese Relations with Siam}, 68.

5 Ernst Van Veen. \textit{Decay or Defeat. An Inquiry into the Portuguese Decline in Asia, 1580–1645}. Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2000. His work has been, however, strongly criticised by some historians, see the review by Timothy Coates in \textit{Itinerario}. 
Recently, however, voices have called for a reappraisal, arguing that it is possible to perceive something of a renascence or a ‘second wave’ under the House of Braganza between 1640–1683, with contemporaries even entertaining parallels to Emperor Trajan’s rejuvenation of the decrepit Roman empire (98–117 A.D.). Indeed, rather than seeing desperate communities of expatriated Europeans clinging on to ever receding territorial landholdings, attention can be drawn to visions of population movements consolidating and invigorating existent colonies, with bold plans to move large numbers of Indians into Mozambique, to send exiled Portuguese to populate Solor, alongside the ad-hoc implantation of sizeable new settlements in mainland south-east Asia. This draws on to a second major point of this book. While a number of historians continue to research the East between 1500–1800 in terms of European entities (Portuguese, English or Dutch), they fail to face up to the fact that the vast majority of ‘Portuguese’ were not soldiers, missionaries or officials sent out to the Estado da Índia, but dark-skinned mestíços who had never been to Portugal, who appropriated certain items of Portuguese dress such as hats whilst neglecting others such as shoes, and were Christians out of status reasons rather than conviction. Indeed, their greatest claim to being ‘Portuguese’ was often not via their blood, but the creolised dialects they spoke. This was particularly true of what George Winius called the ‘Shadow Empire’, a vast but obscure umbra of Portuguese influence beyond Cape Comorin that largely operated outside the formal imperial mechanisms embodied by the Estado da Índia and that had little claim to be a world forged by the ‘children of Albuquerque’ and had more claims to be one forged by the ‘children of Francis Xavier’. It was also particularly true of the period between 1670 and the mid-eighteenth century, when the Estado da Índia was forced on to the defensive by its clash with the Marathas and had to cling to one central concern, to maintain Goa.

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at all costs. And yet for historians of this world, creolization is hardly ever an issue. While nineteenth-century scholars clearly found probing the ‘mixed and degenerated (heruntergekommene) Portuguese race’ an unedifying proposition, even recently Glenn Ames has, for example, suggested that ‘the term ‘creole’ does not have particular relevance for colonial India during the pre-1800 period’. His impression, referring to Brading’s book of 1991, is that this phenomenon is better anchored in the Americas. In this sense, Portuguese historiography is considerably laggard when compared to recent attempts to understand this issue in the Dutch East Indies, perhaps as a result of the issue being recognised more patently by enlightened governors like Joan Maetsuycker, who administered Ceylon between 1646–1650, and actively promoted this process so as to create a ready cohort of artisans and farmers in service to the Dutch. Creolisation in the Portuguese world, by contrast, was marked by social repression and discriminatory legislation, although attempts were made to rein in some of the more offensive legislation by the Viceroy Luis de Mendonça Furtado, the First Count of Lavradio, who reached Goa in May 1671.

Nor is creolization an issue if we look at the literature produced ‘by the other side’. Téotonio de Souza, in a remarkably polemical piece of historical writing, thinks that creolization was something wholeheartedly rejected from the Indian side, who saw caste pollution as a social

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consequence of mixed marriages. He consequently estimates that no more than 3% of Goan society was ever Lusitanized, in the sense of being able to understand or speak Portuguese. Meanwhile, Thai historians have traditionally resorted to crude generics such as farang to refer to European communities in their country, which only betrays the authors’ ignorance. Only a recent generation of Thai historians trained in the West are in a position to make the subtle distinctions relating to identity and belonging of these communities.

If we look at descriptions of the Shadow Empire, European observers immediately draw attention to this great disparity between ‘white’ and ‘black’ Portuguese. William Dampier, for example, who described his visit to Lifao on Timor in 1699, remarked that the inhabitants were ‘chiefly a sort of Indians, of a copper-colour, with black lank Hair (…) speak Portugeze, and are of the Romish religion (…) They value themselves on the account of their Religion and descent from the Portuguze’. While Dampier noted ‘some thousands’ of these ‘black Portuguese’, he saw only three or four ‘white Portuguese, of whom two were priests’. All official population estimates undertaken in the Portuguese East in the seventeenth century distinguished between ‘white’ and ‘black’ casados, and—with the exception of Macao—in every case ‘black’ outnumbered ‘white’ in the Shadow Empire east of Cape Comorin. But there are problems in using this bi-polar schema, if only because it leaves no middle ground. What of the burgeoning intermediary mestiço population, produced as Gilberto Freyre insisted from the Iberian male prediction for ‘dusky maidens’? While the later missionary presence continued to hang on to crude and racist stereotypes and descriptors—the ‘yellow Moors’ (gelber Mohre) and ‘black-

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14 Dhiravat na Pombejra’s work is here of paramount importance, although his talk of ‘westerners’ in the eighteenth-century court at Ayutthaya overlooks the fact that mestiços were a population of joint loyalties and may be better considered insiders, ‘Princes, Pretenders and the Chinese Phrakhlang: An Analysis of the Dutch Evidence Concerning Siamese Court Politics, 1699–1734’, in Leonhard Blussé & Femme GAASTRA eds., On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History. Van Leur in Retrospect, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, 126.
15 William Dampier, A voyage to New Holland, &c. In the year, 1699. Wherein are described, the Canary-Islands, the Isles of Mayo and St. Jago. The Bay of All Saints,… London: James Knapton, 1703, 176.
brown Malabars’ (Schwarz-braunen Malabaren), how should we today go about categorising the mestiço population? Many of such attempts end up comically, Master Phanick, the father of Marie Guyomar de Pina, whom we shall find cause to dwell on in this books, described as ‘half-black, half-Bengali, half-Japanese’ (see p. 120). For scholars like Ann Laura Stoler, who has studied métissage in South-East Asia, the category ‘called into question the very criteria by which Europeanness could be identified, citizenship should be accorded, and nationality assigned’. At a theoretical level, métissage represents an attempt to destabilize conceptions of colonialism as a coherent system.

At the same time, other scholars have drawn attention to the fact that as a middle ground mestiços were able to act in key roles where those more closely identified with the colonial regime were prejudiced: in trade, and diplomacy for example. This did not stop widespread disparagement, perhaps precisely because of their fluid identities: at various times, Portuguese imperial authorities were ordered not to use mestiços as soldiers or sailors because they were too ‘soft’ or ‘effeminate’. To the Dutch, they were known as ‘cockroaches’ (kakkerlakken), or liplaps, and teased for not understanding Dutch culture. Nicholas de Graaf singled out how ‘their pride and arrogance are unendurable, and only exceeded by their ignorance of polite society’. Prejudice and social problems have conventionally been seen everywhere to accompany Miscegenation.

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