

The First Dutch Voyage to the Indies

The following document represents excerpts from the famous account of the first Dutch voyage to the Indies (1595–1597) under the command of the impetuous Cornelis van Houtman, who was killed in Sumatra on a subsequent voyage. The passages reproduced are from the comprehensive work written by Willem Lodewijcksz and originally published in 1598. They provide an account of the Dutchmen's first impressions of the port and city of Bantam (Banten) in West Java.

HOW WE CAME TO SUNDA HARBOR AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE ON ARRIVAL

Sailing slowly then (because of the unfavorable currents and also the change of wind: for after midnight the wind is from the east until 10.-A.M. and then from the west until evening, which makes it so difficult to pass through the Straits) we came, on

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June 22nd, to Bantam Harbor and the Coast of Sunda, seeing before us an uninhabited, green, beautiful island which is called Pulo Panan [Pulau Pandjang, or Long Island] by the Javanese; it is said to be a long island. To the north of it we saw about 70 small sails, which looked like a forest from afar; these were (as we were told) all fishing-boats, which made it evident that Bantam must be a very large, populous town. In a bay of the Java country we saw a *iunco* [junk], which is a Javanese ship . . . and a canoe came to us from this ship, but we could not understand what was said, so they went back to the *iunco* and brought someone who spoke Portuguese, who asked us where we came from. And when we asked him to come aboard, he went back to the *iunco*, which immediately hoisted sail and disappeared around a corner, where we lost it (from sight). In the afternoon we measured 34 fathoms, after that 24, and after two hours 10, so that the bottom seemed to become drier very suddenly: for shortly afterwards we measured only 8 fathoms and our shallowest depth was 7 fathoms, but then it became deeper again. We had the high Java mainland to starboard, and Pulo Panjan to port, the former to the east, the latter to the west; we measured a depth of 10 fathoms. To the east we saw some more uninhabited islands, also straight ahead the town of Bantam, whither the small sailboats were heading; the wind was northeast from the sea and we sailed a course (at the wish of our sounding-man) of southeast to south. Towards evening a *Parao* [prow] came from the town, carrying 6 Portuguese with their slaves; they came aboard and told us they had been sent by the Governor, who, together with all the inhabitants, was greatly afraid of us; they asked us from whence we came, to which we replied: from Holland, in order to trade with them, in all friendship, their spices against our merchandise; to this they answered that we certainly had come to the right place but at an unsuitable time: because five days ago they had sent five *sommas* (which are Chinese ships) to China and that the one we had seen lying in the bay that morning was looking for cargo along the coast; they showed us great friendship. And since we inquired urgently about the King they told us that he had succumbed be-

fore Palimban [Palembang] (a town situated on Sumatra, which had rebelled) with many of his people, at the time that they occupied most of the town but then, because of the death of their King, they had left the town again. . . .

Through the Portuguese we offered the Governor all friendship and service. The Portuguese upon leaving our ship feigned pleasure and so sailed to the town, where they told the Governor of their experiences.

On the 24th we came somewhat closer to the island, and cast anchor at 7 fathoms close to the Island of Pulo Panjan; to the southwest of us we had another uninhabited green island, from behind which a tiny river flowed; here we stayed and our sounding-man went to the town of Bantam which we saw from afar lying 2 miles away. The naval admiral, called Tomogon Angabaya, came to our ship(s?) and talked to us through an interpreter, offering us all friendship and refreshment in the name of the Governor, and all that was in the Governor's power; (asking us) to come to the town as well as to him personally; we thanked him very much for this, telling him that if he should like to come over he would be welcome. He wanted some (ship's) biscuit, which was given him, after which we excused him, since he had some business on the long island, so he said; (but) then we saw him go back to the town without having gone to the island. . . . Shortly afterwards the Judge of the King's Tolls, called Sabander [collector of harbor dues] came, and with him the Portuguese, who offered us all friendship in the name of the King and the Council, as a proof of which they brought us many chickens, goats, and other fruits. . . .

The next day Tomogon Angabaya came with the Sabander, offering us on behalf of the Governor and themselves all that we might need, and expressing the wish that we should not trust the Portuguese because they were seeking to play us tricks and were so double(-faced) that one could never know their hearts and their manner, and that we need not be afraid: for the harbor was free for all merchants: promising also that we should receive all spices in preference to others. They wished to see some merchandise, and we showed them some, presenting them with eight

(lengths) of green *Caffa* [gauze cloth used for Moslem turbans]. After this a black man came to us on behalf of the Governor; he was a *Quillin* [a Klingalese, from the Coromandel coast of India] commonly called Quillin Panjan, or the tall Quillin, acquainting us with the fact that the whole Kingdom desired a service from us, that is, that we should sail to Palmban [Palembang] situated on Sumatra and take it under fire from the sea; that they would march by land in order to capture the town; they would give us all that would be found in the town; this we refused since we had come to trade and not to wage war; he then left our ship, just before . . . two . . . men had come on board, who wished to see our nautical maps, on which we showed them from how far we had come in order to obtain their friendship and their trade, with which they showed themselves very satisfied, the more so when they heard that we could come thence and go back in six months; also that we had been underway 14 months looking for the way. . . .

The next day, being the 26th of that month, (people of) several nationalities came on board, with whom we traded in all friendship and who wished that we would not trust the Portuguese. We showed them some merchandise which pleased them exceedingly. We sent a manned boat to the western corner of Java, three miles farther west than Pulo Panjan, where there was a small village, in order to buy some cattle, but since the people were slaves they were not allowed to sell any; so we bought a large pot of wet indigo for three little Nuremberg mirrors. In the meantime a high courtier (or so it seemed) came to the ship *Mauritius*; we showed him our maps and then he left our ship again; later we understood that he was a bad character sent by the Portuguese to spy upon us. The Chinese brought several kinds of merchandise on board, as porcelain, silk goods, silk and others. . . .

The 27th of that month many *Paraos* came alongside in the morning. . . . (and) the Sabandar came aboard, very urgently requesting that we should come and greet the Governor on land and present him, according to the old customs, with some gem on behalf of our King, in token of peace and confederation; four midshipmen were sent for this purpose with a gift of beautiful crystal

glasses, a gilded mirror, and some scarlet cloth; they went with this Quillin Panjan. When they came to the harbor they found the water very low, the harbor was even dry, but from the marks on the palisade it was clear that at high tide the depth must be as much as 8 feet. On arrival they were met by the Portuguese and after a feigned *Beso las manos* [I kiss your hands] they [the midshipmen] were separated from the others and met by the Sabandar who led them to the Governor's palace; the latter was still at table and therefore they waited in the front courtyard. . . . The Governor appeared here within a short time . . . (and) they immediately presented (him) with their gifts, asking him if it might please him to come and visit their masters in order to negotiate a firm alliance and covenant; through his interpreter he answered that he would take this into consideration. From there they went to the Sabander's courtyard, who there served them some preserves, and from here they went back on board that same evening. The next day we brought all our guns on deck since we heard the news that the Governor would come and visit us the next day; we prepared everything in order to receive him well. Several gentlemen came aboard, also merchants from Coraone [Khorasan, in northeast Persia] and many others, who honored us with gifts of clean cinnamon water and brandy. Many fruits were offered for sale, as radishes, onions, leeks, etc.