



Illustration 1. Aceh prince welcomes the Dutch, 1603, anonymous, ca. 1644-1646.

Memorandum of the Commanders of the Civilian Yacht *Den Arent* (The Eagle) about the City of Aceh in 1689

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1 Introduction

Sher Banu A.L. Khan, “Memorandum of the Commanders of the Civilian Yacht *Den Arent* (The Eagle) about the City of Aceh in 1689”. In: *Harta Karun. Hidden Treasures on Indonesian and Asian-European History from the VOC Archives in Jakarta*, document 5. Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2013.

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In the year 1689, the kingdom of Aceh Dar al-Salam was ruled by Sultanah Kamalat Syah (r. 1688-1699). She ruled until 1699 when she was deposed by a claimant of Arab descent, Sultan Badr al-Alam Syariff Hashim Jamal al-Din (r. 1699-1702). She was the fourth and last female ruler out of a succession of female rulers who ruled Aceh for fifty-nine years from 1641-1699. The first female ruler was Sultanah Taj al-Alam Safiatuddin Syah (r. 1641-1675). Her husband and predecessor Sultan Iskandar Thani (r. 1637-1641) died from unknown causes in 1641 at the early age of thirty-one, childless. With no apparent male heir, his widow, the daughter of Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636), succeeded him and became the first female ruler of Aceh. She enjoyed a long reign of thirty-five years until her death in 1675. She was succeeded by another woman who took the title Sultanah Nur al-Alam Naqiyyat al-Din Syah. She ruled for three years until her death in 1678. A third woman, Sultanah Inayat Syah Zakiyyat al-Din Syah, ascended throne of Aceh and she ruled from 1678 until her death in 1688. After the reign of her successor, the aforementioned Kamalat Syah, Aceh was never again ruled by a woman, and this unique episode in Acehnese his-

tory was closed.¹

By the 1660s the VOC began to reduce its dealings with the Acehnese court and commenced reaching out unilaterally to vassal states of Aceh on Sumatra's West Coast. This was partly in response to the failure of the VOC to seize control of and monopolize the tin, pepper and gold trade despite the numerous trade and diplomatic treaties signed between the two since the time of Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636). The Treaty of Painan of March 1663, and another Treaty signed in April 1668 between the VOC and the states of Sumatra's West Coast states marked the first attempt by the VOC to side-step Aceh and place a number of these states under Dutch protection.² Indeed, by 1661, the VOC had closed its factory in Banda Aceh and kept only a minimal presence in the kingdom. In the 1680s, most dealings between the Dutch and Aceh were on a private rather than an official basis. There were fewer reports written to Batavia by VOC official representatives stationed in Aceh. Instead, descriptions about Aceh were written by non-VOC officials such as this memorandum written by the chiefs (*opperhoofden*) of the civilian ship *The Eagle*.

This memorandum indeed refers to this official absence since it mentions that the Dutch “do not come here more frequently to trade”. This report also hints at the rivalry between the English and the Dutch and the efforts of the English to woo the Acehnese and to warn them about the aggressive tendencies of the Dutch – “the English tried to convince him that as soon as the Honourable Company has set foot on land, it will make itself the master”. By the 1680s, after losing its

¹ Sher Banu Khan, “Rule Behind the Silk Curtain: The Sultanahs of Aceh 1641-1699”, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Queen Mary College, University of London, 2009.

² Kathirithamby-Wells, “Acehnese Control over West Sumatra up to the Treaty of Painan, 1663”, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 10 no. 3 (1969), 473, 478.



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base in Bantam in 1682, it was the English East India Company rather than the VOC which tried to make its presence felt and increase its trading relations with Aceh. However, even the EIC delegation sent to Aceh in 1684 failed to realize any official residence in Aceh.³ Consequently, reports about Aceh in the 1680s and afterwards tend to be written by free traders and travellers such as Thomas Bowrey⁴, William Dampier⁵ and Jacob de Roy.⁶

This memorandum testifies to the buoyancy of trade in Aceh in the 1680s and more importantly to the resilience of the Asian trading networks even after decades of European commercial interference. Since the time of Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah (r. 1641-1675) the Muslim traders from the region, India and the Middle East had been favoured and this policy continued during the reign of the last queen, as mentioned in the present document – “above all they [privilege] the Moors who come there to trade”. In the 1680s, Aceh remained the main entreport for Indian textile trade to the rest of the region. Besides textiles, trade in slaves between Madras and Aceh thrived and this continued in the 1690s. Besides the Indians and the English, the Danes were also involved. John Pitt, who was in Aceh in 1685, mentioned “a great fleet of ships that lay in the road with bales of cloth and laden with rice.” In the 1690s, De Roy wrote about the thriving port city of Aceh where some one hundred European vessels came each year as well as a great number of native vessels. De Roy rated Aceh as the best place in the

East Indies to make one’s fortune.⁷ By the second half of the seventeenth century, gold had become an important trade commodity even surpassing pepper especially after more gold was discovered during the time of Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah and more goldmines were opened. Of course, these were strictly forbidden to foreigners.

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, especially during the reigns of the four female rulers, in contrast to the policy of warfare pursued by their male predecessors, the policy of accommodation and diplomacy with other powers was favoured. As a consequence the army and armoury of Aceh were not strengthened. Internally, the female rulers ruled peacefully (the first three ruled till death), sharing power with the *orang kaya*. In the 1670s, Thomas Bowrey observed that Aceh had for a considerable amount of time been governed by a queen that the very title of king proved to be nauseous to them.⁸ In the 1680s, William Dampier noted that the English residents there were of the opinion, based on the antiquity of the present constitution, that a Queen had ruled Aceh since the beginning.. They believed that the Queen of Sheba was the queen of this country.⁹ Bowrey explained that the men who served under her rule were all very submissive and respectful to the queen, not daring to do anything until they had thoroughly acquainted her regarding the matter. If she agreed, she sent her *chap* as a signal of her permission to their request.¹⁰ Apart from an occasional upsurge of protest against female rule by the inland faction,

³ For full details of this delegation, see A. Farrington, “Negotiations at Aceh in 1684: An Unpublished English Document”, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 27 no. 77 (1999), 19–33.

⁴ Thomas Bowrey, *A Geographical Account of Countries around the Bay of Bengal, 1669-1679*; ed. by Sir Richard Carnac Temple. London: Hakluyt Society, 1905.

⁵ William Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, Vol. 2. ed. N. M. Penzer. London: Argonaut Press, 1931.

⁶ “Voyage made by Jacob Janssen de Roy to Borneo and Atcheen, 1691. Completed in 1698 in Batavia at the order of Willem van Outhoorn, Governor General of Netherlands East Indies (1691-1704)”. Translated from the Dutch into English in 1816 BL, India Office MSS Eur/Mack (1822)/5.

⁷ “Voyage made by Jacob Janssen de Roy to Borneo and Atcheen, 1691”, 356, 363.

⁸ Bowrey, *A Geographical Account of the Countries around the Bay of Bengal*, 295–96.

⁹ Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 99.

¹⁰ Bowrey, *A Geographical Account*, 299–300.



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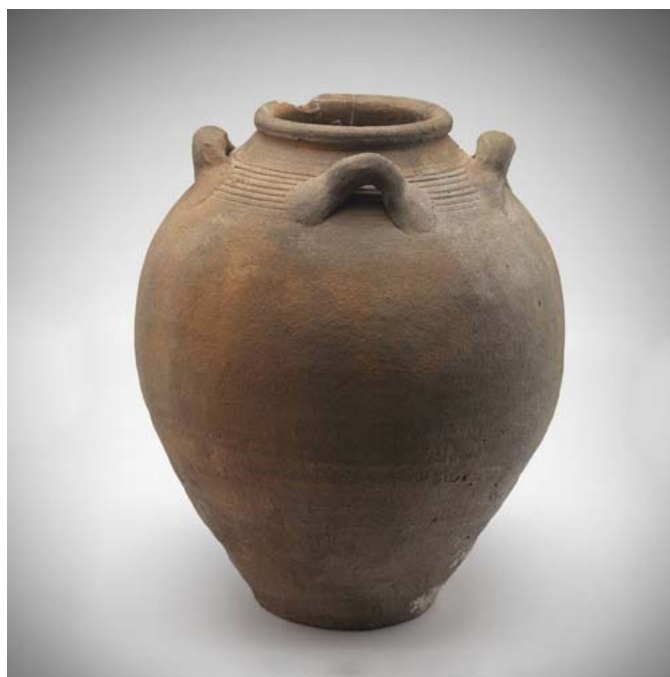


Illustration 2. Martaban jar from Pegu (present-day Bago in southern Burma) used as a container in the VOC ships in the 17th c.

one example of which was in 1688, which was settled in favour of choosing yet another female ruler, Kamalat Syah, Aceh was spared external and internal wars. This was a formula for commerce to thrive. By the end of the seventeenth century, Aceh, unlike most other Malay states, remained an independent kingdom.

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2 Transcription of the Dutch text

Sher Banu A.L. Khan, “Memorandum of the Commanders of the Civilian Yacht *Den Arent* (The Eagle) about the City of Aceh in 1689”.

UIT: DAGHREGISTERS VAN BATAVIA, 2 NOVEMBER 1689 [BEGINNEND BIJ FOL. 807.]

Op die tijt arriveerde hier van Aetchin over Malacca het borger jagtie den Arent, welckers opperhoofden gedaan hebben een schriftelijck berigt hoedanigh zij de stad van Aetchin in zijn hoedanigheden, alsook de zeekusten en negotie aldaar gevonden hadden zooals hetselve hier geïnserieert wert.

Notitie van de opperhoofden van 't jagt Den Arent, hoedanig zij de stad van Aetchin in alle zijn hoedanigheden als ook de zee, kusten, en negotie aldaar gevonden hebben als:

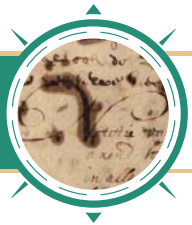
Aangaande de stadt van Aetchin, die is meest open. Want aan de rivier daar leyt deselve heel open, en heeft aan de landzijde het gebergte, zoodat haar sterckte in de veelheyt der menschen bestaat. Fortificatiën zijn er zijn er ook niet want in 't opkomen van de revier omtrent halverwegen, zoo leyd aan de linckerhand maar alleen een opgeworpen hoogte paggers gewijse, dog niet met pallisaten ofte planken omsett, op welke simpele opgeworpen hoogte drie à 4 ijsere 1 à 2 ponders op leggen, niet op affuyten maar alleen op roopaerden op de Maleytse manieren gemaakt zijn.

Belangende nu de gebouwen deser stad, zoo staan de huysen altemaal op staeken wel 10 à 12 voeten van de aarde, waeronder de coopliden haar pakhuysen maeken en van bamboesen opslaen, dog altijd 3 à 3 1/2 voet van de aarde, omdat het water als het hoog is, wel 2 à 3 voeten hoog op de wal staat, en zijn allegaer met adap gedekt en met planken en stutten aen malkanderen gepent.

De stad heeft een groote straat die van het begin ofte ingang der stad regt op het hoff van de coningen aanloopt, voor welk hoff ook de groote basaer is, dog na 't hoff en willen zij niet dat een vreemdeling komt [folio 808] zoodat het maar van verre gesien kan werden, zig verthoonende als een groot huys, op de wijze als vooren gemaakt, zijnde met een pallissaden pagger rondzom bezet welkers ingang door een groote poort is, daer eenige ijsere stukjens staan, waarmede alle avonden als de zon ondergaat een schoot gedaen werd.

Voorts heeft yder coopman rondzom zijn huys, 'tzij daer woonende off wel daeraen komende, 'twelk hij dan in eygendom off wel in huure heeft, een bamboese pagger daar men zijn geweer, ook zelfs kleyne stukjens, in vermag te brengen ende te laeten blijven, om goede wagt te houden voor schelmen en dieven die daar bij nacht en ontijden veel zijn en waartegen, wanneer zij mogten inbreeken, een yder ook de vrijheyt heeft om ze onder de voet te mogen schieten, zoodat het een yder die maar de magt heeft geweer in zijn huys te houden, vrij staat datzelve op zijn erve off huys te planten, en goede wagt te houden, hetwelk de stad zeer groot of wijd uytgestreckt maekt.

Ook woonen de principaelste coopluyden in bovengenoemde groote straat, zoo van



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Mooren en Armenianen, Persianen als andre. In de gemelte straat, die van den inganck der stadt tot aan 't hoff toe wel een mijl lang is, loopen nog 2 à 3 dwersstraaten. Ook isser een straat langs de revier die uyt het gebergte komt.

De revier strekt regt nog Z.Z.O. in de mont dog op die streek ofte regt toe en kan men daer niet in komen, want regt voor de revier is een groote zandbanck die altijd droog legt.

Het water nu dat de revier affkomt, loopt wel regt na deese banck, maar werd van de harde westelijke winden en de stroom om de oost om gezeth, zoodat dit voor de revier de voorsz. groote zandbank maakt en aan de kilt die regt oost nevens het strand langs uyt loopt, in welke kil men met het hoog water omtrent 8 à 9 voeten waeter en met leeg water maer vier voeten heeft [fol. 809] zoodat men meest het hoogste waeter waarneemt om met geraede¹¹ vaartuygen uyt en in te komen. Men moet dan in de maanden van mey, juny, july en augusto bij oosten de revier door dese kil inloopen, dog indien het aldaar 3 à 4 dagen stil is en de stroom de revier hard affloopt, terstont bevind men datter een andere kill dwars door die zandbanck heen schuurt, daer 3 à 4 voeten waeter in is, en daer men met boots en schuyts uyt en in kan komen. Dog zoo rat de wind [zich] weder daar waegt, zoo spoelt die kil weder toe, maer langs d'oostwal kan men dan weer uyt- en inkoomen, te weeten in de bovengem. maanden wanneer de winden aldaar westelijck zijn, dog in de tijd wanneer de winden oostelijck waeyen, specialijck in november, december, januari ende february, zoo schuurt er weder een andere kil bewesten de revier, ende werden de andere killen dan weder toegespoelt. Daerentegen wanneer men de wijffelmaanden heeft, zoo spoelt de kil regt uyt dwars door de zandbank. Men kan daer altijd¹² met geen scheepen inkomen, maar wel met chialoupen ofte vaartuygen die maar 8 voeten diep gaen.

Dese stad staat van de zeestraat omtrent na gissing 1/2 mijl aff, tusschen welke spatie niets anders gevonden werd als het tol- oft wagthuys aan de mond van de revier nevens de voorsz. opgeworpe hoogte, welke alsvooren gezegt middelerweg staat.

Aangaande haere scheepsmagt, zij hebben geen groote vaartuygen, immers niet dat ik gezien hebbe, want doordien daer geen Coningh en is, zijn al haar prauwen en galijen vervallen, als er nu een van haar ourang kayas ofte den sabandar omlaeg gaet, die komt altijd met een lang groot vaartuyg gorabs¹³ gewijs gemaakt, waarop eenige bassen leggen, en [dit] werd van verscheyde groote canoos gevolgt met omtrent [fol. 810] 200 man meest alle met Maleytze roers, lanciën, seepmessen, hasegayen gewapend, werd ook te land gevolgt van 5 à 6 oliphanten met eenige melitie die door een path dat door het bosch gaet op strand bij hem koomen. Anders kan men bij haar geen schepen ofte vaartuygen verneemen als die daar koomen handelen.

Haar regeringe bestaat uyt vier groote ourang cayos en agt mindere ditos die het groot gebiet met malkanderen hebben. Van de vier groote isser altijd eene, die permissie geeft om te handelen, en zij komen tweemaal des weeks in het hoff van de Coninginne bij malkanderen, ja welk hoff, gelijk ten deele reets gezegt is, zij niet toelaeten

¹¹ 'Gerede', 'gereedliggende'.

¹² De tekst heeft: 'altijt men kan daer met'.

¹³ Naar de wijze van een *ghurap*, een type galei afkomstig van de Perzische Golfregio.



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willen dat ymand in komt, ten waere hij een groote schenkagie voor de Coninginne mede bragt, wanneer zij wel toelaten dat men daer inkomt om voor de Coningen te groeten, dog niet dat men se te zien kan komen, want de schenkagie van de Capados aangenomen en voor haar gebragt werd, gelijk ook de verzoeken die men genegen is te doen. Dese groote orangkaays zijn dan daar meest altijd present, die alle zaeken uytregten ende de naem daervan aan de Coningen geven zoodat alles door haar geschiet en de Coningin daar maar de bloote naam van dragt.

Dog te landwaert is een van haare heyligen, die na haar zeggen een magt van 20000 man volgt, en zoodrae daar eenige oneenigheden onder de orangkays is, zoo doet hij dat af, zoodat zij hem alle gehoorzamen dog denzelven neemt geen regeringe aen, en hout hem als een Paep ofte een van haare heyligen.

De goederen die haer aangebragt werden, bestaan ten principalen in rijs, Guinees lijwaat en alderlij geschilderde kustkleeden, dog meeste blauw lijwaat, welke kleeden weder op de Maleytse plaatsen [fol. 811] verhandeld werden. Ook werd hier eenige peper van Paulo Lada en Queda als andere plaatsen aangebragt, als ook veel slaeven.

Bovendien werden daar door de Bataviase vaartuygen aangebragt alderhande Chinese waeren ende slegt goudtraat, ook ijser, kooper bekkens, Combodias gomlak, dog alles in geen groote quantiteyt, item nog van Pegu veel rijs, martevanen en Peguse gomlak, gedroogde visch, ende uyt Bengaelen mede rijs, voorts booter, armosijnen en diverse lijwaeten die hier weder van de Maleytse als Johoreese vaartuygen opgekogt ende elders heenen verhandeld worden. Zoo werd er door de Engels en ook Spaens geld gebragt en door de Maleyers weder opgekogt ende elders heenen vervoert.

De prijzen die loopen daar verscheyden, nadat daar veel off weynigh aangebragt werd, want de rijs zomtijts 30, 40, 50 à 60 rds het last komt ten gelden ende het Guinees lijwaat zomtijts 60, 70, 80, 90 ja wel 100 rds het corgie. De blauwe kleeden die worden daar wel het meeste getrokken ende behaalen veeltijts een goede prijs als bij exempel de sukertons van 5 kleeden waarvan het corgie 50, 60, 70, 80 à 90 rds verkogt werd, hebbende dit jaar yder corgie wel 25 rds meerder gedaen als ordinary. De geschilderde kleeden zoo Maleytse als Javaanse zorteringe gaen meest voor de Bataviase prijs, zoodat de Bataviase prijs daerin meest met de Aetchinse overeenkomt. De slaven werden daar voor 50, 60, à 65 rds namentlijk de jongens, dog de meyden wel 10 à 15 rds duurder verkogt en ook naedat ze groot zijn. De peper geld daar de bhaar ofte 3 picol 20, 22, 23, 24 à 25 rds. De Chinese waeren als coopere bekkens het picol 40, 45, 50 à 60 rds. [fol. 812] Het Cantongs ofte Maccause gouddraad d'kist 30, 36 à 40 rds dog zoo wanneer daar veel in quanteyt van aangebragt werd, kan men daar niet wel aff koomen. Het ijser, zoo van hoepen en bouten als andere snuysterij, werd daar verkogt het picol tegen 7 à 8 rds ende staefijser tegens 10 à 11 rds. 't Combodia's gomlak het picol tegens 40, 45, 50 à 55 rds nadat er veel off weynig komt. Het Pegus gomlak tegens 30, 35, 40 à 42 rds, d'armesijnen het corgie somtijts tegen 90, 95, à 100 rds en ook wel tegen 120 rds dog niet veel in quantiteyt; de Bengaelse boter tegens 20, 18 à 16 rds de poth, zijnde de prijzen van de verdere lijwaten en de Chinese waeren mij niet al te wel bekend, gelijk ook met de prijzen van de allegoedong ofte catoen.



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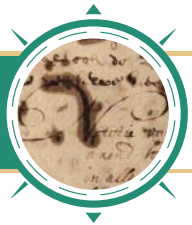
Het voornaemste dat te coop valt, is goud, behalven de daar aangebragte peper hier vooren vermeld, die de Engelsen zoo veel als zij bekomen kunnen daar inkopen, evengelyck door de Maleytse en Johoreesz. als andere vaartuygen van de bijleggende plaatsen d'op Athin van elders aangebragte kleeden opgekogt werden. Goud is daar in quantiteyt ende altijd te bekomen. De prijzen daarvan loopen mede op en aff, te weeten het Aetchins bonkaal van 118 à 119 condrijns tegen 20, 21, 22, 23 à 24 rds zoodat het wel zomtijts 10 à 12 à 16 per cento scheelt. Het geld dat alhier gaat is gemund geld, te weeten mazen die op de naam van de Coningen aldaar geslagen werden met eenige Moorsse letters ofte characters waarmede aldaar alle negotie gedreven werd, weshalven ende om niet vervoert te werden het ook vervalst werd, ende gevolgelyck geen goed goud en is gankbaar, zijnde [fol. 813] yder tot $\frac{1}{4}$ rds, zijnde het Spaans geld aldaar in effecte geen ordinaris gangbaer geld alzo hetgeene de Engelsen daarvan aanbrengen, door de Maleyers weder opgekogt ende vervoert werd.

De winden die hier ordinaris waeyen zijn tusschen de maenden april en october van het Z.W. tot het Noord W. dog de westelyke winden wayen daer van may tot juny op het hartste door, zomtijts ook de zee- en landwinden. Dog in de maanden september, october en november valt er veel regen en beginnen de oostelyke winden dan weder te wayen.

De twee hoeken van Aetchin, zoo op de buyten- als binnenkust, leggen meest oost en west van malkanderen ende de rheede van Aethyn daar meest in 't midden zoodat dit alhier een bogt maakt van wel een groot $\frac{3}{4}$ mijls, hebbende een zeer goede ankergrond alwaar men voor de W.Z.W., Z. en Z.O. winden beschut legt, dog voor de winden van 't N.W. tot het N.O. is het een open rheede. Tusschen deze twee voornoemde hoeken leggen geen spruyten dan alleen een kleyne welke boven bij de stad mede uyt komt alwaar op de hoek bij de stad de Hollandse logie voor deesen geweest is. Deze spruyt dient anders nergens voor als voor vissersvaartuygen om uyt en in te koomen.

In 't N.O. van deze rheede, omtrent 2 à 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ mijl van de stad, leyd een rif, strekkende regt O. en W. en meest midden vaarwaeters leggende tusschen de wal en Poulo Way van loutere steenen dog niet grooter in 't begrip als het eylant Hoorn, en konnen daar binnen en buyten omloopen dog binnendoor is het beste op het [fol. 814] lood aen, alzo men hier goede stek van 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 á 12 vaem heeft, maar men moet niet verder van de wal als tot de diepte van 12 vadem komen, want men bij nagt meerder als 12 vadem werpende, ligt tegen dat rif aen zoude koomen, alzo het daarbij te steyl is.

Dog bij daag heeft men daarvoor niet te schroomen, alzo altijd boven water leyt, en aan de wal zuyvere schoone en goede ankergronde is van 6, 8 en 9 vaem tot omtrent een groot $\frac{1}{2}$ mijl van de wal. Dit voorsz. riff buyten ofte benoorden omloopende, zoo heeft men veel dieper waeter als van 20, 40, 60 en 80 vaem. En doordien de stroomen in de maanden als boven zeer hard om de N.O. loopen, zoo zoude men door stilte ligt van grond affraeken, en veel te doen om in dese tijd 't weder op te haelen. Als men in de voorg. maanden om de Zuyd ofte van Malacca komt en de Diamant point gepasseert is, zoo moet men al digt onder de wal houden, om met de landwind op te komen, want men alhier de weste winden ontmoet, en de wal hier overal zuyver en schoon is, want op een canonschoot mag men die wel op 12 à 14 vaem naderen, en een groot $\frac{1}{2}$ mijl van de wal zijnde heeft men geen grond.



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Van dito Diamant point tot de hoek van Aetchin heeft men veel verscheide spruyten en revieren. Ook is de weg alhier wel 20 mijlen langer als de pascaert aanwijst. Van de buytenkust vandaan komende zoo heeft men twee plaetzen om in te komen, d'eene door de eylanden genaemt het Zuratse gat, 'twelk een kort verlaat is. Dog midde vaarwaeters leggen hier twee steenen die men ziet branden¹⁴, dog het andere beoosten dito eyland is wijd en zuiver, maar zoo wel niet in de voorg. maanden om op der rede te koomen als de westelijke winden wat stijf doorwayen. Op Aetchins rheede ten anker komende, zoo gaet men wat bewesten de zandplad [folio 815] op 6 à 7 vaem goede stekgrond ten anker leggen, een groot canonschoot van de wal aff.

Aangaande nu de bedenking van wat natie zij meest houden, zoo zouden zij na haar eygen zeggen wel veel van de Hollanders houden, gelijk zij ook vraegen waerom dat zij daar niet komen te handelen. Ook heeft den sabandaar aan mijn gezeyt dat haar land voor alle coopliden open stont, dog doordien de Engelsen haar zoeken wijs te maeken dat zij, zodrae d'E. Comp. daar komt te handelen en een voet op 't land heeft, haar daer dan meester van zoude maecken, zoo schijnt het dat zij uyt dien hoofde eenige vrees voor de Comp. hebben, maar dog kan ik niet anders zien, vooral niet uyt het onthael dat zij mij daer gedaen hebben, off zij houden meer van de Hollanders als Engelse, dog meeste van de Mooren die daer komen handelen.

d'Engelse komen daer met ligte jagties van 80, 90, 100 à 150 lasten, dog al meest hier in India gebouwt en op zijn Europaens toegetakeld. De Mooren koomen ook met jagjes van 100, 150 à 170 lasten. Van Koda Kweda komen groote gorappen, gontings, en van de Maleytse plaatsen komen ook mede gorappe, wankans, gontings en andere vaartuygen die allegaer binnen de revier haelen en aan de overzijde van dezelve handelen.

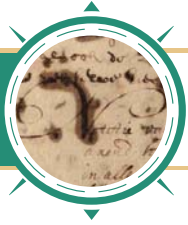
Notitie van de opperhoofden van 't Jagtie den Arend wat datter op de rheede van Aetchin is voorgevallen als volgt.

Den 1 juny¹⁵ op de rheede gekomen vonden aldaar vier Engelse en 4 Moorse scheepen waarvan datter 2 Engelsen scheepen komende van Pegu gelaeden met rijst, martavaenen, gomlack, en eenige Peguse steentjes, de andere 2 dito komende van Madras, inhebbende eenige slaeven, rijst en wat [folio 816] packen almeest blauw lijwaat en allegodon. Twee Moorse scheepen geladen met rijst, martavanen, gomlak en eenige Peguse steenties, de andere 2 komende van Queda inhebbende reyst, mitsgaders 2 chialoupen komende van Tanasserim, een dito Engelsman inhebbende de overgebleve Engelse dewelke door ordre van de regenten van 't land daar vandaen zijn gejaegt, een dito Hollander genaemt Joost de Jong geladen met rijst en eenige gedroogde visch.

Den 20 ditto arriveerden alhier een Engels jagie, groot omtrent 80 lasten, comende van Madras geladen met rijst en slaven en eenige pakken algedon en kleeden. Op dato

¹⁴ 'Waartegen men de branding ziet slaan'.

¹⁵ 1689.



TRANSCRIPTION OF THE DUTCH TEXT

arriveerden 2 Chinese chialoupen en 2 jonken komende van Batavia gelaeden met rijst en andere kleenigheden.

Den 22e ditto arriveerden alhier een Engelsman groot omtrent 90 lasten, komende van Madras, inhebbende eenige slaven en 14 à 16 pakken kleeden, waarop waeren 2 Hollanders, d'eene als schipper ende de andere als stuurman en zouden daar vandaen nae Pegu vertrekken, om aldaer te vertimmeren en dan voorts weder na de Kust¹⁶. Ook arriveerden alhier dagelijx van de bijleggende plaatzen diverse vaartuygen te weeten van Pedri Dely en Peda en andere verscheyde kleyne plaatsjens met rijst en pady.

Den 24 ditto arriveerden alhier een Engelsman komende van Trangebaer en ingelaeden rijst¹⁷ en slaven, alsmede twee Chinese vaartuygen komende van Batavia, hebbende ingelaeden reyst en andere kleenigheeden.

Den 30 ditto arriveerden alhier een Engels schip komende van Madras, dog dien dag wederom t'zeyl gegaen, willende na China, rapporterende dat daer al 5 scheepen na China waeren en nog 2 dito van Madras stonden te volgen [folio 817].

Den 4 july is alhier gearriveert een Engelsman comende van Madras, groot omtrent 70 lasten gelaeden met wat slaven en eenige kleeden en algedon, nevens wat booterpotten.

Den 19 ditto arriveerden alhier een Deens schip groot omtrent 90 lasten komende van Trangabara, inhebbende rijst en eenige Moorse coopliden met kleeden en eenige slaven.

Den 25 ditto arriveerden alhier een Engelsman groot omtrent 70 lasten komende van Madras en Portonovo gelaeden met rijst en slaeven.

Den 30 ditto arriveerden alhier een Moors schip komende van [Ilho?] Maldivo, inhebbende een partij gedroogde vis.

Den 5e augusto arriveerde alhier een Engelsman groot 70 lasten gelaeden met rijst en slaven.

Den 10 dito is van hier vertrokken een Engels schip daer 2 Hollanders op waeren na Pegu.

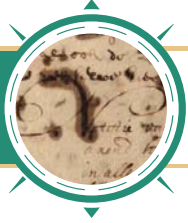
Den 24 dito ben ik weder klaar geraakt, om na Batavia te vertrekken. Ook laegen daar 5 Engelse scheepen gereed om te vertrekken, te weeten 3 na de kust Cormandel en 2 na Pegu.

Negotie die men op Atchin zoude kunnen brengen

Rijst, dog de rijst daarvan, die loopt verschijden nadat het gewasch daar is, en ook nadat daer veel aangebragt werd, zoo van Queda als Dely met inlandse vaartuygen en scheepen van de Kust, als [van] Pegu en Tannassery, zoodat de rijst de eene tijt van 't jaar daer veel duurder is, als de andere tijt, dat wel de helft in de coop scheelt. De maand van december en januari is daer den besten tijt van rijst en ook van kleeden en

¹⁶ Bedoeld wordt de kust van Coromandel.

¹⁷ Er staat: 'rest'.



TRANSCRIPTION OF THE DUTCH TEXT

andere waeren, omdat die tijt de scheepen meest vertrokken zijn en dan het bergvolck sterck afkomt om haar provisie op te doen. En voorts zoo zou men wel van booter en rode armosijnen kunnen aan de man helpen doordien de vaert van de Engelse en Moorse van Bengale na Aethin stil staat. En doordien [folio 818] nu daer weynig blauwe kleeden aangebragt werden, zoo zouw men daer ook een redelijken prijs van krijgen, en ook mede eenige kassen rosewater voor de Mooren omdat de vaert van Zouratta stilstaat.

's Avonts verscheen van Bantham 's Compagnies patsjallang *De Steenbrasem* met een originele missive van den gesaghebber Louys de Keyser en Raad gedateert primo deser, noterende daerbij onder anderen dat den Coning aldaar tot reyse naar Sillebaer off Bancaoulou per 't jagtie *De Grijpvogel* gecommitteert had vier zijner vertrouwste key loeras nevens hare dienaaren, ende hadden de onse haar bijgevoegt een Europees soldaat, omme hun in het vertolcken als anders behulpsaam te zijn.



3 English translation

Sher Banu A.L. Khan, “Memorandum of the Commanders of the Civilian Yacht *Den Arent* (The Eagle) about the City of Aceh in 1689”.

FROM: DAILY JOURNALS OF BATAVIA CASTLE, 2 NOVEMBER 1689 [BEGINNING WITH FOL. 807.]

At that time the civilian yacht *Den Arent* (The Eagle) arrived here from Aceh via Malacca, whose commanders have made a written report of what are the local characteristics of the city of Aceh and of the local sea coasts and trade as these are enclosed here.

Memorandum of the commanders of the yacht The Eagle [about] what they found in the city of Aceh and of all its characteristics, as well as the sea, coasts and trade which they found there:

The [site of the] city of Aceh is very open. Because it lies on the river there, it is entirely exposed and on its landward side [are] mountains, therefore its strength lies in the diversity of the people. There are also no fortifications as in the mouth of the river, about halfway up, on the left hand side but one high knoll has been thrown up but not surrounded by palisades or palings, is but a simple earthen mound on which are mounted two or three iron 1 to 2 pounders [cannons], set not on carriages but directly on earth ramparts in the Malay fashion.

Turning now to the buildings in the city, all the houses stand on posts some 10 to 12 feet above the ground underneath which the merchants make their warehouses from bamboo, but still invariably two to three and a half feet above soil level, because the water there is high, standing two to three feet high on land, and all are roofed with *atap* (palm fronds) and pegged together with planks and struts.

The city has one great street which from its beginning or entrance leads straight to the palace of the kings, before which is a large market, however, strangers are not welcome at court [folio 808]. Therefore it can only be viewed from afar and seems to be a large house, constructed in the aforesaid fashion surrounded by a palisade fence, which is entered through the main gateway, at which stand several iron cannon from which salutes are fired every evening at sunset.

Furthermore, around his house, whether he lives there or only comes there [to trade], whether it is his property or only rented, every merchant also erects a bamboo fence with muskets, even small pieces of ordnance. He leaves them in place, [so as] to be well guarded against rogues and thieves who thrive at the dead of night and on whom every man has the right to shoot in the foot should they break in. Hence everyone who has the authority to keep weapons in his house, is free to place these around his house or its yard, and guard his property well, which means that the city is large and widely spread out.



ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The principal merchants, both Moors and Armenians, Persians and others, live in this great street. From the entrance to the city to the court, the said street is certainly a mile long and it has another 2 or 3 cross streets. There is also a road along the river which comes from the mountains.

This river stretches [from the mountains] in a south south-easterly direction to its mouth, but it is impossible to reach that area directly because right in front of the river lies a large sandbank which is always exposed. The water flowing down the river runs right up against the sandbank. But the hard westerly winds and the current move it eastwards, so that the aforesaid large sandbank is created at the entrance to the river and the channel which runs due east along the coast, in which at high tide one can expect around eight to nine feet of water and at low tide no more than four feet [folio 809], so that with fully rigged ships one has to be sure to sail either in or out at high tide. Hence in the months May, June, July and August, one has to enter this channel from the east. Nevertheless if the wind there has dropped two or three days and the current in the river surges down, suddenly another channel appears in which the water scours through the sandbank three to four feet deep, and it is possible to sail in and out through it with various small craft. But as soon as the wind changes about, there is a chance that this channel will close up again. But one can enter and depart again via the eastern shore, in the months mentioned above when the winds are westerly again, but in the time that the winds blow from the east, especially in November, December, January and February, another channel is again scoured out to the west of the river and the other channels once again fill in. On the other hand, in the months when the wind is variable, the channel washes out straight through the sandbank. It is impossible to enter there with any ships, but this can be done with sloops or craft with a draught of no more than eight feet.

At a guess, this town lies half a mile from the sea strait, and in that distance nothing can be found except the toll or weighing house at the mouth of the river alongside the aforesaid raised mound which, as was said earlier, is placed in the middle of the fairway.

As concerns its naval power, they have no large ships, at least not that I have seen, because as there is no king and all its prauws and galleys have fallen into disrepair, and if one of her *orang kaya* (notables) or the *shahbandar* (harbour master) goes down the river, he always comes on a long large vessel built in the fashion of a *ghurap* on which are some small cannon, followed by various large canoes carrying around 200 men [folio 810], most of them armed with Malay blowpipes, lances, *seepmessen* (scimitars affixed to wooden handles), assegais, followed on land by five to six elephants and some militia, who reach them by a path through the woods which leads to the shore. Otherwise one never hears of any other ships or vessels, besides those which come here to trade.

Its government consists of four great *orang kaya* and eight of that ilk of lesser rank. They divide the rule of that great area among themselves. Of the four greatest, there is always one who grants (permission) to trade, and they meet twice a week in the queen's



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court. Indeed which as has already been said that it will not admit anybody unless he has brought a generous gift for the queen, when they do allow a person inside to greet the queen, not that he can actually see her for the gift is received by the Eunuchs and taken to her, as indeed are any requests which one might be inclined to make. These great *orang kaya* are usually present there to take care of all these matters in the name of the queen so that everything is done by them, and the queen is queen only in name.

However, more inland is one of her holy men, who according to them is said to number 20,000 [men] among his followers, and as soon as dissension arises among the *orang kaya*, he settles it, and they all obey him, even though this said man holds no government office, and they regard him as a pope or one of their saints.

The principal goods which are brought here consist mainly of rice, Guinea cloths and all sorts of painted cloths from the [Coromandel] Coast, but the bulk is blue cloth, and these are traded on to Malay places [folio 811]. Some pepper is also brought from Pulau Lada (Penang) and Kedah and other places, as are slaves.

Moreover, Batavian vessels carry thither all sorts of Chinese wares and poor quality gold thread as well as iron, copper bowls, Cambodian resin (shellac), but not in any great quantity; as well as a large quantity of rice from Pegu, Martaban jars (large earthenware pots) and Pegu resin, dried fish, and from Bengal comes more rice as well as butter, light-weight silk cloths (*armosijnen*) and various other coarser textiles, which are bought up again here by Malay and Johor vessels and taken elsewhere to be traded. The English bring in Spanish money and this is purchased by the Malays and transported to other places.

The prices differ depending on whether much or little is brought, because sometimes the rice costs 30, 40, 50 to 60 rix-dollars per cargo and the Guinea cloth sometimes fetches 60, 70, 80, 90, yea even 100 rix-dollars per *corgie* (a bundle of twenty cloths). Demand is greatest for the blue cloths and [it] often raises a good price. For example, the *sukertons* (Coromandel cloth) of five cloths, of which a *corgie* is sold at 50, 60, 70, 80 to 90 rix-dollars, this year have fetched 25 rix-dollars more per *corgie* than they usually do. Both the Javanese and Malay sorts of painted (batiked) cloth sell mostly for the Batavia price, so that in these the Batavia price comes closest to the Acehnese. There slave boys are sold for 50, 60 to 65 rix-dollars, but the girls are sold 10 to 15 rix-dollars dearer, once they are mature. A *bhaar* or three *picul* of pepper there fetches 20, 22, 23, 24 to 25 rix-dollars. A *picul* of Chinese wares like copper bowls fetches 40, 45, 50 to 60 rix-dollars [folio 812]. Gold thread from Canton or Macau costs 30, 36 to 40 rix-dollars per chest, but when brought in large quantities, it is difficult to get rid of it. Iron in the form of hoops and bolts as well as other trinkets sells there per *picul* at between seven and eight rix-dollars and iron staves for 10 to 11 rix-dollars. A *picul* of Cambodian shellac brings in 40, 45, 50 to 55 rix-dollars, whether much or little is brought. Pegu shellac fetches 30, 35, 40 to 42 rix-dollars. A *corgie* of lightweight silk cloths sometimes raises 90, 95 to 100 rix-dollars, even going as high as 120 rix-dollars if they are few in number. Bengal butter sells for 20, 18 to 16 rix-dollars per pot. I am not very familiar with



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the prices of the other cloths and Chinese wares, nor of the price of the *allegoedong* or cotton.

The principal [commodity] for sale here is gold, with the exception of the pepper which is transported here as mentioned earlier, of which the English purchase as much as they can lay their hands on, and the Malay, Johorese and other vessels which come to Aceh from the places round about buy up the cloths brought in from abroad. Quantities of gold are available at all times. Its price fluctuates, to wit the Acehnese *bonkaal* of 118 to 119 *condrijns* fetches 20, 21, 22, 23 to 24 rix-dollars, therefore it sometimes differs by 10 to 12 to 16 per cent. The money referred to consists of minted coins, namely *mazen*, which have been struck there bearing the name of the Queen, in some Moorish (Arabic) letters, the characters with which trade is carried on there, and as a result and to prevent it from being exported, it is counterfeited, and consequently no sound money is in circulation, one [maes] [folio 813] to the value of a quarter rix-dollar. Spanish gold [coins] are actually not usual currency, because the [Spanish currency] the English bring there, is being bought up by the Malays and transported elsewhere.

The winds here between the months April and October they ordinarily blow from the Southwest to the Northwest, however, from May to June the westerly winds are at their strongest, as also sometimes are with sea and land winds. However, in the months September, October and November, it teems with rain and the easterly winds begin to blow again.

The two heads of the harbour Aceh, on both the outer and the inner coast, lie respectively east and west of each other and the Aceh roads are located in the middle so that here a bight has been formed of a good three-quarters of a mile wide, offering a very good anchorage where one can lie protected from the W.S.W, the S. and the S.E. winds, but with a N.W. to N.E. wind the roads lie exposed. Between these two aforesaid headlands are no streams other than a small one which rises north of the city, at that part of the city where the Dutch trading-post was formerly located. This stream is only of use for fishing boats to sail in and out.

In the north-eastern part of this roads, about two to two-and-a-half from the city lies a reef stretching due east and due west and it comes closest to the middle of the fairway between the land and Pulau Way. It is completely [composed of barren] rocks, but is no bigger than the island of Hoorn and can be sailed around either on either its inner or the outer side, although between is best [folio 814] taking soundings all the while, in this way one will draw a good depth of six, seven, eight, nine, ten, to 12 fathoms, but one should not venture farther from the shore than 12 fathoms because at night casting more than 12 fathoms one could run aground on the reef, as around it, [the sea bed] is too steep.

However, during the day there is no need to worry about this as it is always above water, and at the coast there is good clear anchorage of six, eight and nine fathoms as far as about a half mile offshore. Skirting this aforesaid reef either on the outside or to the north, one comes upon much deeper water at 20, 40, 60 and 80 fathoms. And because the currents in the months above flow very hard in a north-easterly direction,



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if the wind is becalmed one could easily be cast adrift and labour hard in this situation to sail back. If one should happen to approach here from the south or from Malacca and, having passed Diamond Point, one should keep close to the shore and sail with the land wind because here one meets the west wind, and everywhere here the shore is clear and clean therefore within a cannon shot one can draw 12 to 14 fathoms and at rather more than half a mile from the shore there is no longer any anchorage.

Between Diamond Head and Aceh head are various streams and rivers. The distance here is actually 20 miles longer than that shown on the compass chart. Coming from the outer coast, two courses are available: once through the islands called the Surat Gap, which is a short overfall, although in the middle of the fairway there are two rocks on which one sees the waves breaking. But the other [course] to the east of these islands is broad and clear, but not in the aforesaid months to either of the roads if there is a stiff westerly breeze. Coming in to anchor in the Aceh Roads to the west of the sandbank [folio 815] at six to seven fathoms there is good anchorage, a long cannon shot from the shore.

Concerning some reflections about which nation they hold in the highest respect, they claim themselves that they think very highly of the Hollanders which prompts them to ask why the latter do not come here more frequently to trade. The *shahbandar* has told me in person that his country is open to all merchants but, because the English tried to convince him that as soon as the Honourable Company has set foot on land, it will make itself the master, for this reason they are apprehensive, but all I can say is from the welcome that I have witnessed with my own eyes that they favour the Hollanders above the English. But above all they [privilege] the Moors who come there to trade.

The English come there in light yachts of 80, 90, 100 to 150 *lasten*, built here in the Indies but rigged in the European fashion. The Moors also come in small yachts of 100 to 150 *lasten*. From Koda Kweda (Kota Kedah) come large *ghuraps*, *gontings* and from the Malay ports also come *ghuraps*, *wangkangs*, *gontings* and other craft which sail right into the river and trade on its banks.

Memorandum from the Commanders of the Yacht Den Arend (The Eagle) about What Transpired in the Aceh Roads, as follows.

Arriving in the roads on 1 June [1689], we found four English and four Moorish ships already there, of which two English vessels were come from Pegu loaded with rice, Martaban jars, shellac and some Pegu gemstones, and the other two of the same were from Madras and carried some slaves but [folio 816] for the main part blue cloth and cotton. Two Moorish ships were laden with rice, Martaban jars, shellac and some Pegu gemstones, the other two had come from Kedah and carried rice. There were also two sloops (*chialoupen*) from Tenasserim, as well as an English one having on board the remaining English who had been evicted from that land by the regents, and a Dutch-



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man named Joost de Jong. [Her cargo] was rice and some dried fish.

On 20th of this month a smallish English yacht, around 80 *lasten*, arrived here from Madras loaded with rice and slaves and some bales of cotton and cloth. On the same date two Chinese sloops and two junks arrived from Batavia carrying rice and an assortment small goods.

On 22nd of this month an English ship of 90 *lasten* arrived here from Madras, her cargo being some slaves, 14 to 16 bales of cloth. On her were two Hollanders, one as skipper and the other as first mate. She will leave here bound for Pegu, where she is to undergo alterations, after which she will return to the Coast. Various craft arrive here daily from nearby places, namely: Pedri (Pidië), Deli and Peda and other diverse small places, carrying rice, husked and polished.

On the 24th an English ship arrived here from Tranquebar,¹ laden with rice and slaves. There were also two Chinese vessels from Batavia carrying rice and various small goods.

On 30th of this month an English ship arrived from Madras, but she set sail again the same day, desiring to go to China, reporting that 5 ships had already sailed for China and two other were still in Madras, waiting to follow [folio 817].

On 4 July an English ship arrived from Madras, her weight about 70 *lasten*, loaded with some slaves and some cloths and cotton, besides pots of butter.

The 19th of this month a Danish ship came in, her weight about 90 *lasten*, outward-bound from Tranquebar with rice and some Moorish merchants with cloths and some slaves.

On 25th of this month an English ship of some 70 *lasten* arrived from Madras and Portonovo laden with rice and slaves.

On the 30th a Moorish ship came in from the Maldives, with a load of dried fish.

On 5th August an English ship of 70 *lasten* arrived, her cargo rice and slaves.

On 10th of the same month the English ship with two Dutchmen on board sailed for Pegu.

On 24th of this month I made ready to set sail back to Batavia. Five English ships were also lying ready to depart, namely three to the Coromandel Coast and two to Pegu.

Trade which Could Be Done in Aceh

Rice, although this can fluctuate affected by the local harvest and also because much is already brought here on native ships from such places as Kedah and Deli and ships from the Coast as well as from Pegu and Tenasserim, which means that at one time of the year the rice is much more expensive than at another time, indeed the price can differ as much as by half. December and January are the best months of the year to sell rice, not to mention cloths and other wares, as at that time most of the ships have left and the people from the mountains come down in great numbers to buy up what they

¹ Modern Tharangambadi, on the Coromandel Coast.



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need. Furthermore, one could also help the people [to obtain] butter and light red silk as the sailings of the English and Moors from Bengal to Aceh is at a standstill. Because [folio 818] so little blue cloth is brought in, it is possible to get a reasonable price for it, as well as some chests of rosewater for the Moors as sailings to Surat are also stopped.

In the evening, the Company *pencalang*, *De Steenbrasem*, appeared here with a letter directly from the commander-in-chief, Louis de Keyser, and council dated first of this month, noting therein among other matters that the local King [of Bantam] had ordered four of his most trusted key *lurahs* and their servants to voyage to Sillebaer or Bengkulu on the yacht *De Grijpvogel* and that we had added a European soldier to their company, to help them with interpreting and other matters.



4 Colophon

Title	Sher Banu Khan, “Memorandum of the Commanders of the Civilian Yacht <i>Den Arent</i> (The Eagle) about the City of Aceh in 1689”. In: <i>Harta Karun. Hidden Treasures on Indonesian and Asian-European History from the VOC Archives in Jakarta</i> , document 5. Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2013.
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5 Folio image

This is the first page of the original document. All folios may be viewed on the website via the Tab 'Images' in the Harta Karun section or in the Digital Archive Collections. Archival Source, ANRI HR 2505, fols. 807-818 (Dagregisters van Batavia).

