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The Siege and Capture of Malacca from the Portuguese in 1640—1641.

EXTRACTS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY

BY

P. A. LEUPE.

Translated by
MAC HACOBIAN

from "Berigten van het Historisch Genootschap te Utrecht,"
1859, pp. 128—429.
TRANS'LATOR'S NOTE.

I am indebted to the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society for this opportunity of presenting to English-speaking readers this translation of Dutch documents relating to the "Capture of Malacca" in 1641. The task has been much more arduous than I at first anticipated, owing to the peculiar phraseology of old Dutch. I have tried to keep as closely as possible to the original text and if the English rendering displays any shortcomings I crave the indulgence of the exacting reader.

I am greatly indebted to Sir Richard Winstedt, K.B.E., C.M.G., for looking over the manuscript, making some corrections in idiom and offering valuable suggestions. My sincere thanks are due to Mr. J. Johnston, Librarian, Raffles Library, for much ready assistance and painstaking collaboration. I must also thank Mr. F. H. van HAELEN of the Netherlands Consulate-General in Singapore for his assistance in a couple of passages.

MAC HACOBIAN.

SINGAPORE,

17th December, 1934.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Occupation of the Straits of Malacca, 1636—1639</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Siege and Capture of Malacca, 1640—1641</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissary Justus Schouten’s Report of his visit to Malacca</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By some English and French writers the capture of Malacca by the Dutch has been attributed to treason. Among others, Alexander Hamilton (1), the English Captain, writes as follows:—

"The Dutch General, seeing no other means of capturing the city of Malacca, and learning that the Portuguese Governor was an avaricious man, concluded a treaty with him for the delivery of the city against payment of 80,000 pieces of eight. To carry out this project the Governor ordered his officers to let Dutch come right under the walls of the city and then by opening a sudden fire on them, to surround and annihilate them. The Dutch who were forewarned, came at the appointed time and forced their way through, and on entering the city they killed the Governor in order to be free from the payment of the 80,000 pieces of eight."

The writer of "Batavia" referring to the above-mentioned says:—

"Meanwhile the whole story is a fabricated lie, because it is a well-known fact that the Portuguese defended themselves to the very last; that they, under the circumstances, concluded a favourable treaty, which they observed sacredly; that the Portuguese Governor died a natural death. Our simple and upright ancestors were not capable of such tricks of which they are accused by the English. Such tricks would perhaps befit heroes like Rodney and Vaughan."

Similar stories are also being circulated in our times. The French traveller Dr. M. Yuan speaking of Malacca says:—

"The Portuguese were in possession of Malacca between 1511 and 1641, but at the latter date the Dutch merchants bribed a miserable Governor to deliver the city into their hands. The Portuguese troops, knowing nothing of the treason, rushed to arms at the approach of the Dutch and fought heroically, but they were overwhelmed. Meanwhile the treacherous Netherlanders rewarded the miserable traitor in their own way. They murdered him in order to escape payment of the 500,000 francs (livres) which they had promised to pay. After gaining this victory they came across the Commander of the Portuguese force and spoke to him insolently thus:—

'When will your people retake this land?'

'When your sins become heavier than ours' was the simple reply of the Portuguese.

(1) In his book entitled "A New Account of the East Indies, being the observations and remarks of Captain Alexander Hamilton, who resided in these parts from the year 1688 to 1723 etc. page 77-88, London. This is also quoted in the important book "BATAVIA" about East Indies, Vol. 3, page 96, Amsterdam, 1799."
The Dutch merchants have departed long ago, the London merchants are ruling Malacca to-day and Portugal is still expiating.

The following extracts from the old Colonial Archives at the Hague demonstrate that the writer of Batavia was speaking the truth when he said that the Portuguese defended themselves to the very last. We refer the reader to the evidence given by the surviving clergymen to Commissioner Schouten when he spoke about the prolonged siege. The important decree by the Government of Batavia in respect of the victorious Minne Willemsz. Caertkoë by virtue of which "the gold necklace which had been hung round his neck by the brave Portuguese Governor Manuel da Souza Coutinho after the loss of Malacca, was presented to him again for use—this time by the Dutch East Indian Company as a token of honour," is also significant. Is it likely that a man like the Governor General Antonio van Diemen would dare to issue such a decree if a villainous treason like that had been committed? No one has doubted that van Diemen was a religious and righteous man. Commissioner Schouten who, immediately after his arrival at Malacca on the 1st February, drew up a report of the siege and forwarded it to the Government at Batavia, says:—

"The Portuguese Governor Manuel da Souza Coutinho died of illness two days after the fall of the city and was interred with due military honours and Roman Catholic rites in the Church of St. Domingo."

Is it possible that the authorities would have rewarded Commander Caertkoë as stated in their decree of 10th October, 1642, had Malacca been captured by treason? The decree reads as follows:—

"A petition has been submitted to this meeting by Minne Caertkoë, Vice-Commander, who has just returned from the East Indies by one of the homeward bound ships. In that petition are enumerated in detail the services rendered by the Vice-Commander to the Company on several occasions during their expeditions, particularly at the Capture of Malacca when he acted as Commander-in-Chief. As an appreciation of his services and to encourage all those in the Company's service, the Committee resolved to authorise their house in Amsterdam to present him with a golden necklace and medallion to the value of Five Hundred Guilders, bearing the engraving of the city of Malacca on one side and that of the Coat-of-Arms of the Company on the other.

Finally the fact that the Coat-of-Arms or the Seal of Malacca was altered on the 13th of March, 1641, sufficiently demonstrates that the old Seal must have been obtained during the capture of that city. In Governor Johan van Twist's journal of that date we read:—

"In regard to the gates and the ramparts and the Coat-of-Arms of the city of Malacca, these shall be altered in the following manner:—In the first place the gate of St. Domingo through
which the victors made their triumphal entry will be baptized Victoria. To the Coat-of-Arms of the city depicting a Chinese junk (because the Portuguese first entered the place under the guise of Chinese traders and afterwards conquered it) shall be added an armed man holding in his fist a crowned negro together with the seal of the Company in commemoration of the capture of the city of Malacca by the Sword and its amalgamation with the United Netherlands State."

Impressed by these achievements of our forefathers brought about by their unbending faith, valour, prudence and steadfastness, without being blind to the shortcomings of some of them, we have preserved these documents from oblivion in order that we may ever remember their great deeds. Every Dutchman must be filled with indignation, seeing that there are some in our time who would belittle the fame of our forefathers and try to extinguish the rays of the halo of their glory that shines before the eyes of Europe.
The Occupation of the Straits of Malacca
1636—1639.

One of the most important events during the Governor-Generalship of Antonio van Diemen, was the capture of Malacca from the Portuguese in 1641. The East India Company thereby became the masters of a place which, as a stronghold and specially by reason of its excellent situation for trade, was of very great value and importance.

Malacca is situated between 2° 10' Lat. and 102° 14' Long. in the Peninsula of Further India on the coast of the Straits now called the Straits of Malacca after her name.

Malacca was once the capital of the kingdom of Malays. When the Portuguese Don Lopez de Sequera appeared for the first time in the year 1509, the city was in a flourishing state being the greatest trade centre or emporium in East India; Arabs, Persians, Gujaratis, Bengalees, Portuguese, Siamese, Javanese, Chinese, Luzons, etc., were there carrying on trade. (1)

No wonder that the Portuguese aspired to take possession of this important place. In this project they succeeded on the 5th of August, 1511 (2) under the command of the famous Alphonso d’Albuquerque. "By capturing Malacca, the Portuguese monopolized the trade between East and West—in the exchange of goods such as clothing, spices, Chinese ware and other articles—making the city the chief centre of trade." (3).

The Dutch, however, who had been carrying on a prolonged war against the Malays, Javanese and Achinese and had finally subdued them, came to India for the first time at the end of the last century, thenceforward becoming formidable competitors. They also had realised the importance of Malacca, and by way of striking at their enemy the Spaniards, under whose rule all the Portuguese possessions had been since 1580, they soon set to work to capture the place.

Cornelis Matelief appearing before Malacca in the year 1605, besieged the city during 1606, but was obliged to raise the siege and re-embark on arrival of a relief fleet from Goa. (4) A second attempt was made by Pieter Willemz. Verhoeven in the year 1608, but again it was a failure. Other attempts were made between 1623–1627, but were likewise abortive. After this, only a few ships and vessels were sent occasionally to the Straits of Malacca to harass the Portuguese as much as possible until a more favourable opportunity should arise to enable them to pursue their object vigorously. The Princes of Achin and Johore had always been hostile to the Portuguese and therefore the Authorities in Batavia made overtures to them to help the Company with
men and ships in order to capture the city of Malacca. The Portuguese however were on the alert. They fortified the city and the outworks, being well supported by Goa. The Viceroy DON MIGUEL DE NORONHA DE LINHARES never missed an opportunity to warn the Governor and the Council. On the 24th September, 1634 he writes:—“It is imperative that you be well prepared in matters of war, because it is the intention of the evil-minded Achinese never to give us a respite. I have information that their king has negotiated with the Dutch with the object of besieging Malacca jointly next year. I am also informed (this with some reserve) that the Achinese, having suffered severe losses recently, are unable to make a move yet; nevertheless it is wise to make timely preparations against all eventualities, and for the defence of His Majesty’s interest.”

CORNELIS SYMONZ VAN DER VEER was one of the leading Commanders of the fleet in the Straits of Malacca against the Portuguese. For three years he harassed the latter incessantly and inflicted damages on their trade, either by capturing their vessels or obstructing the transport of supplies. (7) The most important event is recorded by the Governor-General in a letter to BARENT PIETERZ (1636): “It appears that in the month of May last an auxiliary fleet of 20 well manned vessels (Fustea) and five small ships had been sent to the Straits of Malacca from Goa. Being unaware of this, although we had been there just before the arrival of this auxiliary fleet, the Vice-Commander ORLANDO THIBAULT (8) was ordered to proceed from the South to the North, and taking command of the yachts KOUKERKE, WIERINGEN and BARDES to cut off the arriving vessels. On the 2nd of June the above three vessels, sailing within reach of Malacca, observed the new fleet of the enemy. They valiantly made towards the shore to within a cannon shot, and fired 60 shots at the enemy fleet most of them hitting successfully. At night they returned to sea and sent BARDES to the South to inform the Commander of South Malacca of the event. Meanwhile the two ships that were waiting outside Malacca were located by the enemy and attacked by the 20 ships. Fire broke out on board the WIERINGEN, and as the officers were either wounded or killed, the vessel could not put up a good fight and went down burning. But the KOUKERKE, thanks to THIBAULT, put up a magnificent fight repulsing the enemy several times, sinking 3 of their vessels (Fustea) and causing fire on two. After the burning of the WIERINGEN they retreated and joined our fleet with a crew of only 14 out of 50, having been hit several times by the guns of the fort. Four of the crew of the burning WIERINGEN were rescued by the KOUKERKE. The enemy sustained very heavy damages, and the loss of the WIERINGEN was amply compensated.”

“We are in possession of the waterways of Malacca and according to intercepted Portuguese letters, the city is in dire necessity, and this critical state has presumably moved the new 1936] Royal Asiatic Society.