The First Dutch Voyage to the Indies, 1596
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Cornelis de Houtman's voyage to the Indies established the first Dutch presence there at the end of the sixteenth century. Europeans had been coming to the area for many decades already, though they had left only a very small footprint. It was by no means clear that the Dutch would be able to come all the way to the Indonesian archipelago in large numbers either, as the distance from Europe was exceedingly far, and the dangers that ships and their crews had to face along the journey made even the thought of such voyages extremely harrowing. Mortality rates on many of these voyages reached 50 percent. It was evident when de Houtman arrived in Java that other "foreigners" had reached these waters first—including the aforementioned Portuguese, but also Chinese, Indians, and Persians. De Houtman's journey set the stage for more Dutch ships to arrive, with this system of isolated voyages giving way to the early seventeenth century's more unified effort at trade, contact, and exploration initiated under the aegis of the VOC. De Houtman's voyage marked the beginning of centuries of commerce, occupation, and eventual acceleration.

How We Came to Sunda Harbor and What Happened There on Arrival

Sailing slowly then (because of the unfavourable 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 difficult to pass through the Straits) we came, on June 29, to Bantam Harbor and the Coast of Sunda, seeing before us an uninhabited, green, beautiful island which is called Pulo Panjang (Pulau Pandjang, or Long Island) by the Javanese; it is said to be a long island. To the north of it we saw about seventy small sails, which looked like a forest from afar; these were (as we were told) all fishing boats, which made it evident that Banten must be a very large, populous town. In a bay of the Java country we saw a junk [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 junk and brought someone who spoke Portuguese, who asked us where we came from. And when we asked him to come aboard,
great friendship. And since we inquired urgently about the King they told us that he had succumbed before Palimban (Palimbanj) (a-town situated on Sumatra, which had rebelled) with many of his people, at the time they occupied most of the town but then, because of the death of their King, they had left 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 seven fathoms close to the Island of Pulau Panjan; to the southwest of us we had another uninhabited green island, from which a tiny river flowed; here we stayed and our sounding-man went to the town of Istant which we saw from afar lying two miles away. The naval admiral, called Tomongon Angabaya, came to our ship's, and talked to us through an interpreter, offering us 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 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 Sabardar (shahbandar, collector of the harbor dues or harbormaster) 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 Tomongon Angabaya came with the Sabardar, 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 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 (green cloth used for Moslem turbans). After this a black man came to us on behalf of the Governor; he was a Quillin (a Klingonese, from the Comorandel coast of India) commonly called Quillin Panjan, or the tall Quillon, acquainting us with the fact that the whole kingdom desired a service from us, that is, that we should sail to Palimban (Palimbanj) 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 . . . men had come on board, who wished to see our nautical maps, on which we showed them 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 fourteen months looking for the way.

The next day, being the 28th 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 Pulau 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 29th of the month many Paroo came alongside in the morning . . . (and) the Sabardar 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 gift on behalf of our King, in token of peace and friendship; four midshipmen were sent for this purpose with a gift of beautiful crystal glasses, a silver 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 pailside it was clear that at high tide the depth must be as much as eight feet. On arrival, they were met by the Portuguese and after a frigid Resse leen mens (I kiss your hands) they (the midshipmen) were separated from the others and met by the Sabardar 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 Sabardar's courtyard, who then 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 Coraçone [Khorasan, in northeast Persia] and many others, who honored us with gifts of clean cin-
amon, water and brandy. Many fruits were offered for sale, as radishes, on-
toms, leeks, etc.