

DUTCH MALACCA 1641-1795, 1818-1825.

History of Colonial Malaysia.

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Malacca from "Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien" (1724-26). My thanks to Gerard Fernandis.

On 14 January 1641 the Dutch took possession of the fortress of Malacca, with the help of their ally the Sultan of Johore.

The Dutch had treaties with the Johore Sultans to get rid of the Portuguese. The Malays were confident of a victory that, with the help of the Dutch, would regain the Malacca throne. But this was not the Dutch aim. After the capture, the Dutch set up government. Malacca was too important for the VOC strategies, as the city was situated on the main trade route to the Far East (Spices islands, China and Japan) and was a formidable strategic outpost.

A short time later the conquest of Malacca, the Dutch made trading agreements with several states of the Malay Peninsula, so as to obtain tin (Kedah 1642, Ujung Salang 1643, Bangkeri 1645, Perak). For this reason, a Dutch outpost was established at Perak, but, in 1651, the garrison was killed and the outpost destroyed by the Malay. In 1660, even the factory established at Ujung Salang, was abandoned.

In the 1650s., a great imposing building, the Stadthuys, is built by the Dutch as the administrative centre and home of the Governor of Malacca.

By the 1660s., the trade at Dutch Malacca was in decline and the relations with the Malay states had deteriorated as well.

The Dutch had a factory at Bengkalis (1670s.) at the mouth of the Siak river (Sumatra). From here they controlled the tin trade. The trade at Siak was vital for Malacca and for the Malacca Freeburghers community, a community of Dutch and Portuguese descendants intermarried with the local peoples. The duty collected on their Siak trade was an important share of Malacca's revenue.

Year	Population of Freeburghers	VOC servants	Mesti• os	Portuguese Eurasian	Indians	Chinese	Malay	Slaves	Total Population of Malacca	Freeburghers Ships
1675	104 (1,9%)	674 (12,6%)	1463 (27,5%)		356 (6,7%)	160 (3%)	597 (11,2%)	1970 (37%)	5.324	
1678	145 (2,4%)	666 (11,1%)	1489 (24,9%)		547 (9,2%)	426 (7,1%)	690 (11,5%)	2027 (33,9%)	5.970	
1680	50		72	1420	135	382	523			
1681	52		82	1409	115	382	581			
1687	40		114	1542	120	270	521			
1688	43		129	1445	135	292	443			
1728										27
1732										15
1737										12

Perak was the main tin producing kingdom in the whole Peninsula and the VOC was interested in controlling its trade. For this reason a Dutch outpost was established from 1670 to 1690 at Teluk Gedung in Palau Pangkor. This fort was re-occupied by the Dutch in 1746 and, later in the same year, the fort was moved upstream to Tanjung Putus.

Malacca trade quickly declined after the Dutch conquest. In fact, the city prosperity was supported by free trade. However, to the contrary, the VOC wanted the monopoly on all goods.

Malacca's decline was also due to the fact that, while under the Portuguese rule, the city was behind Goa, the main Portuguese base in the east. Under the Dutch, Batavia was the main Eastern base of the VOC and the company had no interest in developing Malacca's trade to the detriment of that of Batavia.

The Sultanate of Johore (the Dutch ally during the siege of Portuguese Malacca) took advantage of all of this, by opening his seaport of Riau (an Indonesian island near Singapore) to all ships and to all commerces.



Dutch tombstones.

In the 1700s., Johore was a powerful force in the Straits. The trade of Riau (the seaport for the Johore Sultanate) had far surpassed that of Malacca. The VOC maintained the alliance with Johore, despite the discontent of Malacca, for the Dutch East India Company. The strength of Johore was seen as a safeguard to the peaceful trade in the Straits.

In those years it was rumored that the Dutch might leave the city. The only importance of Malacca, for the Dutch, was that it was situated in a very strategic point and they did not want Malacca to fall into any other European hands; this is why the Dutch remained.

During the period of Dutch rule, Malacca had a garrison of usually less than 550 Dutchmen.

Year Strength of Dutch Garrison in Malacca

1685	303
1714	450
1721	440
1722	540
1746	364

In 1710, St. Peter's Church is built. It is still the oldest functioning Christian church in Malaysia.

In the 1720s., a new power came in the scene: the Bugis. They were and are the main ethnic group of the south-western coastal region of Sulawesi (Celebes). After the Dutch conquest of the Sultanate of Makassar, several groups of Bugis emigrated from Makassar (Sulawesi) and settled near Malacca in the 1710s.

In 1722, the Bugis captured the port of Riau and the whole Kingdom of Johore. The Bugis developed not only the port of Riau but also that of Selangor (north of Malacca).

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A Dutch map of Malacca 1750.

In 1746, the Sultan of Johore gave the Siak Kingdom, as a gift, to the VOC. That same year, agreements were made with the Peninsular Kingdom of Nanning, Rembau and Perak. In Perak the Dutch fort was re-occupied.

With these agreements the prosperity of Malacca was improved.

However, the Bugis were a constant threat to the Dutch. Their leader, Daeng Kamboja, made Linggi his base and, from October 1756 till July 1757, besieged Dutch Malacca. In February 1757, help arrived from Batavia and the Bugis were forced to drop the siege. In that year, the Dutch built a fort on the Linggi River and named it Philippe (today's Kota Linggi) after the daughter of the Dutch Governor Jacob Mussel (Governor of Batavia 1750-1761). Tin that was transported from Linggi, Rembau and Kelang Selan. The purpose of the fort was to collect taxes from the tin that was transported from Linggi, Rembau and Kelang Selangor.

On the 1st of January 1758, this fort was the site where the treaty between the Bugis and the Dutch was signed. This treaty enabled the Dutch to impose their control in this area: Linggi and Rembau were ceded to the VOC.

In 1758, on Pulau Gontong at the mouth of Siak river the Dutch built a fort to control the tin trade, but later, in 1765, the fort was abandoned because of the good relations between Siak and the VOC.

In 1759, the fort of Linggi was also abandoned.

Between 1753 and 1760, the Christ Church in Malacca was built.

Malacca trade was flourishing, but a new sea power came on the scene: the English. From the 1750s., they traded tin with Riau and, in 1781, they occupied the Dutch outpost at Perak. Then, in 1786, an English base at Penang was established.

To prevent an English occupation, the Dutch attacked Riau and, on 29 October 1784, the Bugis were defeated. The resulting treaty ended Johore's independence, and a Dutch fort was established at Tanjung Pinang (Riau). In the Malay Peninsula, Johore, Selangore, Perak, Trengganu and Pahang became Dutch territories. The VOC was truly dominant in the Straits.

During the Napoleonic wars, in August 1795, the Dutch Governor surrendered Malacca to the English East India Company.

In 1818, after the Napoleonic Wars, under the Treaty of Vienna, Malacca is restored by the British to the Dutch.

In 1824, the Anglo Dutch Treaty or the Treaty of London was signed between the Dutch and the British. The British give Bencoolen, in Sumatra to the Dutch and Malacca was given to the English.

On 9 April 1825, the Dutch ceded Malacca.