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Source: *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Sep., 1960), pp. 30-46

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of Department of History, National University of Singapore

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20067301>

Accessed: 13-07-2016 03:34 UTC

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THE ATTEMPTS OF RAFFLES TO ESTABLISH A BRITISH BASE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA, 1818-1819.

J. S. TAY.

In the year 1814, Great Britain, recuperating from the effects of the Napoleonic Wars and anxious to protect itself against another outbreak of "Revolutionary Madness", determined to restore the balance of power in Europe. To this end, it turned its attention towards the problem of rebuilding a strong and united Kingdom of Holland. Because the stability of this new Kingdom depended on the prosperity it could derive from its colonial possessions, Britain restored to it, by the Anglo-Dutch Convention of 1814, all the factories and establishments which Holland had possessed in the Eastern Seas at the commencement of 1803. These were Java and its dependencies, Celebes and the smaller islands situated in the Straits of Macassar, the Moluccas, Malacca on the Malay Peninsula, and various establishments on the island of Sumatra. Great Britain also ceded to the Dutch the island of Banca.¹

On being thus reinstated, the Dutch made vigorous efforts to re-establish their former supremacy in the Indonesian Archipelago. They began by refusing to acknowledge all treaties that had been entered into between the British Government and the native chiefs during their absence, and they took steps to convince the natives that Britain no longer had any regard or influence on their behalf. This measure was followed, two years later, by the promulgation of local decrees designed to monopolise the native trade and to exclude other nations from directly participating in it. Foreign vessels were refused permission to touch at the minor ports of Java; all the cargo had to be taken in at the port from which the vessel was cleared out; a heavier duty was imposed on the cargoes carried by foreign ships; and all native traders at the ports under the control of the Netherlands Government were again required to take passes from the resident European authority. Finally, to obtain complete supremacy over the Archipelago, they revived their pretensions to establishments which they had occupied before January 1st, 1803, but which they had subsequently abandoned.

The result of this intense activity on the part of the Dutch was that by 1818 they had not only reoccupied their former establishments but had also extended their sway over almost the entire Achipelago. In

1. In exchange for the Dutch possessions on the Malabar Coast in India.

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consequence of this, Britain was confronted with the threat of complete exclusion from the Island trade. Where twenty years before the English East India Company and private merchants had enjoyed almost exclusive trading privileges, while the Dutch cowered at the feet of the French, they were now barely able to obtain a share of the country trade. To aggravate matters, as a result of the Convention, there appeared every possibility of the Dutch extending their influence further westward towards the Malay Peninsula. During the British occupation of Java (1811-1816), the absence of Dutch competition had enabled the British merchants of Penang to develop an extensive trade in this area. Any encroachment on the part of the Dutch in this territory would unquestionably result in a decline of this trade. More than this, it might also have the more serious consequence of jeopardising Britain's vital trade with China. East of India, Britain possessed only one station to protect its China trade, and this post was too remote to answer the purpose adequately. During the British interregnum, the unsuitability of Penang as a port of call for the China ships was made a relatively unimportant issue by the possession of Malacca, the port situated within the Malacca Straits further southward. When the restoration of Malacca to the Dutch became imminent, however, the problem was again brought into focus. Unless Britain also possessed a post in the Malacca Straits nearer the China Sea, the Dutch would be left in command of the principal trade route to China. As it was, by possessing Batavia, they had already secured the command of the other route, the Sunda Strait.

This was the situation that confronted Raffles on his return to the Indian Archipelago to assume his duties as Lieutenant-Governor of Bencoolen on the east coast of Sumatra. To counteract the alarming expansion of Dutch influence and to safeguard British interests in the East Indies, Raffles submitted a number of proposals to the Board of Directors of the East India Company in London. He first suggested that the Dutch Government of Batavia be made to acknowledge and uphold the treaties, whether of alliance or independence, entered into between Britain and the native ports during the British occupation of Java.² The continued enforcement of these treaties would provide English ships with free ports at which to conduct commerce without having to submit to Dutch demands.

Enlarging on this proposal, Raffles subsequently suggested that a line be drawn separating those possessions which the Dutch were legally entitled to resume under the terms of the 1814 Convention from those which were independent of Dutch authority. The latter he described as those native states which had grown into independence "by means of the British trade and influence and in which the Dutch influence has, in many instances, ceased to be felt exerted during the last fifty or sixty years."³ To this group of independent native states belonged Rhio; the five most important native states on the West and East Coasts of Borneo, viz.

2. This proposal was submitted before Raffles left England. It was embodied in a paper addressed to the President of the Board of Control, George Canning, entitled: "Our Interests in the Eastern Archipelago."
3. Raffles to the Secret Committee, April 14, 1818. (Dutch Records 'A' No.29 India Office Library).

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Pontianak, Sambas, Coetei, Brunei and Pasir; and Bali, which had always maintained its independence of European authority.⁴

Raffles next proposed the appointment of a "regular and accredited authority on the part of the British Government to maintain British rights, to receive appeals and to exercise such control as might help to preserve the British honour and character."⁵ He observed that at the time, British authority was confined to only two stations, Penang and Bencoolen. The authority of the former did not extend beyond Malacca, while that of the latter, he feared, would be confined to the west coast of Sumatra. To make the influence of British authority felt, he recommended the establishment of a station on the island of Banca, if that was attainable. However, as Banca had been ceded to Holland and as it was uncertain whether the authorities in London could be induced to negotiate for its restoration to Britain, Raffles suggested, as alternatives, either a post in the Sunda Straits or "somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bentang."⁶

In addition to these proposals, Raffles urged the establishment of a chain of stations strategically placed to limit the sphere of Dutch influence. These stations, he submitted, should extend down the entire west coast of Sumatra from Achin to the Sunda Straits without a break but for the port of Padang⁷; they were then to be linked with Penang by means of the key-station situated either at Banca, if feasible, or at Rhio or in its vicinity. This centrally located post would prevent Dutch influence from spreading in an uninterrupted chain from Bali to Batavia and thence to Malacca. It would also perform the multiple function of a resort for the independent native trade; a source of protection for Britain's commerce with China and all of her interests in the Eastern Islands; and, not the least important, an entrepot for Britain's merchandise.

These were the main suggestions put forward by Raffles a month after his arrival at Bencoolen in March 1818. About a month and a half later, upon finding the Dutch bent on pressing their claims to the southern districts of Sumatra adjoining the Sunda Straits, he decided that his earlier proposals were insufficient. Contending that friction would result from having Dutch and British settlements established side by side, he decided that the integrity of the larger islands should be preserved under the protection of one European authority alone. All islands to the east of the Sunda Straits, he decided, should be occupied by the Dutch, and those on the western side of the Straits, including Sumatra, should be regarded as strictly British territory.

To implement this was not within Raffles's power; he could only suggest the idea to the authorities in London in the hope that they would negotiate with the Netherlands plenipotentiaries to bring them about. However, being on the spot, he was in a position to attempt the founding of a station from which to exercise British authority and with which to

4. Subsequently he also included Padang and the south-eastern coastal districts of Sumatra.
5. Raffles to the Secret Committee, April 14, 1818.
6. Raffles to the Secret Committee, April 14th 1818. Bentang is the island on which the port of Rhio stands.
7. Because Padang was to have been restored to the Dutch by the terms of the 1814 Convention. Raffles, however, advocated its retention by the British Government and did his utmost to obstruct its restoration.

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start the proposed chain of stations. "The footing once obtained in the Straits of Sunda," he observed confidently, "I apprehend all will follow without difficulty."⁸ To the attainment of this objective he directed his attention immediately upon his return to Bencoolen.

SAMANKA AND CALLAMBYAN BAY.

To secure the command of the Sunda Straits between Sumatra and Java, and thus forge the first link in his proposed chain of stations, Raffles directed his attention to the establishment of an anchorage in Samanka Bay. Such an anchorage, he declared, would not only provide Britain's outward-bound China ships with a port at which to water and refresh; by virtue of its favourable location, it might become an entrepot between Bencoolen and the islands of the Archipelago, and thus rival Batavia; and, not the least important, in the event of hostilities with an European power such as the French, it would prove itself to be indispensable to the British navy. Certainly a British base there would have been most useful in the Napoleonic War.

Of Britain's right to this anchorage on the Sumatran shore, Raffles was perfectly convinced. He claimed that it had never been disputed before and pointed out that a British flag had flown over the Bay, unchallenged by any European power, since 1801.⁹ The Dutch, on the other hand, did not possess a colony, factory or establishment there before January 1st, 1803. This fact precluded them from any claim to it. Nevertheless, a question raised by the Dutch in the previous year complicated the issue. In 1817, they had sent one Mr Krusendum to reassert Dutch authority over the Lampongs, an ancient dependency of Bantam adjoining the territory of Bencoolen and stretching eastward down Sumatra to the Straits of Sunda. In the course of administering the country, Krusendum had occasion to write to the British Resident of Croe, Mr Garling, expressing doubt as to the boundary of the Lampongs or Dutch possessions in that quarter. Krusendum maintained that the boundary was indicated by a "wooden pillar erected four miles to the Northwest of Flat Point."¹⁰ If the Dutch boundary should be determined by this mark, Samanka Bay would be included within the Dutch territory, in which case Britain would be deprived of its right of anchorage within the Bay.

Raffles, however, refused to admit the Dutch claim to this Sumatran Bay on these grounds. In refutation, he drew attention to an account of a survey of the Bay made by the British Resident of Croe¹¹ in 1802,

8. Raffles to the Secret Committee, April 14, 1818.

9. Wurtzburg, in his biography, *Raffles of the Eastern Seas*, p. 437, incorrectly gives this date as 1811.

This flag was hoisted on September 24, 1801, to mark the drawing up of a treaty between the Chiefs and Pengerans of Samanka and John Campbell, acting on behalf of the English East India Company whereby Samanka and its dependencies were delivered by the former to the British Government. This treaty, however, was not signed and was therefore not acknowledged by the Dutch. For the same reason Raffles did not press this treaty as grounds whereby Britain could claim a footing to the Bay.

10. Krusendum to Garling, 15th August 1817 (Dutch Records 'A' No. 29).

11. Mr Jarrett.

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fifteen years earlier. From this, it appeared that the location of the pillar placed the Bay within the British territory of Bencoolen. Because the British Resident's statement was made at an earlier date, when the actual location of the pillar was not an important issue, Raffles was inclined to place more weight upon it than upon that of the Dutchman. He always placed more weight on his own judgement than on that of any Dutchman. In any event, he doubted the validity of Dutch claims to exclude the British from the Bay on these grounds because the act of erecting the pillar had not been made in the presence of a British officer.¹²

To prevent the Dutch from denying Britain its right to Samanka Bay, however, Raffles resolved to bring the matter before Van der Capellen, the Dutch Governor-General. To this end, he wrote a letter embodying his arguments, and containing a proposal that the natural boundary of the British possessions on the West Coast of Sumatra, which included the pepper districts of Croe, should be "the long range of mountains terminating between Sumanka and Lampong Bay."¹³ Within the limits thus defined by Raffles, the right of anchorage within the Bay would be indisputably secured for Britain.

This letter was entrusted to the care of Captain Otho Travers. The object of Travers' mission, Raffles emphasised, was to retain Britain's right of anchorage in Samanka Bay. This was to be done not only through negotiations with the Dutch Commissioners; on route, Travers was to survey the Bay and, upon confirming Raffles' belief that the Dutch flag had never been hoisted there, he was to "cause the English flag to be continued under a proper protection."¹⁴ On the same day, Raffles issued instructions to Frederick Garling, the British Resident of Croe, and Lieut. Hull and Lieut. Johnson to assist Travers in the execution of his orders.¹⁵

Travers left Bencoolen on 3rd April and was joined by Garling at Croe. On the 18th, they called at Lampong-Borni, where Garling was left behind, in accordance with Raffles' instructions, to hoist the British flag under suitable protection at the earliest opportunity. Travers, with Hull and Johnson, then proceeded to survey the Bay. In the course of this task, they obtained information that the Dutch flag had not been hoisted within the Bay, "certainly not within the last fifty years, if ever."¹⁶ Garling, in the meantime, attempted to make the chiefs of Borneo sign a treaty of friendship and alliance with the British Government but was unsuccessful, the latter preferring to remain neutral. Garling thereupon hoisted the British colours upon Tandjoengan in the neighbourhood and departed, leaving behind Thomas William Baillie and a squad of six Sepoys.

When the news of Garling's action reached the Batavian Government

12. Raffles addressed his argument to Van der Capellen in a letter dated March 27th 1818.
13. Raffles to Van der Capellen, March 23, 1818.
14. Wurtzburg writes that Raffles resorted to direct measures only after learning of the failure of Travers' mission to Batavia. (*Raffles of Eastern Seas*, p 443). Actually, as the above instructions to Travers show, he had decided to take direct measures to achieve his end before Travers' return.
15. Raffles to Travers, March 27, 1818.
16. Raffles to Hull, March 27, 1818.

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they immediately despatched the Assistant-Resident of Bantam, J. A. Du Bois, with instructions to request the British Resident to account for his presence and then to ask him to leave the place. In the event of Garling's refusal, Du Bois was to protest and report to Batavia immediately. Du Bois, accompanied by five soldiers, arrived at Tanjoengan to find Baillie acting on behalf of Garling. Du Bois ordered Baillie to withdraw his sepoy and to lower the British colours, but the latter refused to comply pending further instructions from Raffles. Du Bois, therefore, reported the incident to Van der Capellen as instructed, and pitched his camp at Borni where he in turn hoisted the Dutch flag. Thus the representatives of the British and the Dutch camped side by side in the Lampongs. Du Bois, acting on Van der Capellen's instructions, did not attempt to force Baillie's departure. In the meantime, however, he proceeded to adopt measures calculated to establish Dutch influence in the Lampongs.¹⁷

Garling's action at the Lampongs was the occasion for much lengthy correspondence between Bencoolen and Batavia. On May 15th and 17th, Van der Capellen complained to Raffles that Garling's action was a breach of Holland's sovereign rights. He further informed Raffles that he had advised the chiefs not to recognise any authority other than the Batavian Government, and requested him to order the withdrawal of Baillie and the sepoy. Raffles, in a reply dated June 7th, refused, as he considered the Lampongs not to be territory belonging to the Dutch. He declared that although they were an "ancient" dependency of Bantam and Bantam had reverted to the Dutch by the Convention of 1814, the fact that the Dutch had not occupied them on January 1st 1803, and that the Sultan of Bantam had resigned his sovereignty to Raffles, rendered the Lampongs independent of Dutch control. As for the hoisting of the British flag, Raffles admitted that this had been done under his orders, but that he had deemed such a measure necessary to ensure the "immediate security of British interests in Samanka Bay." He concluded by hinting of his intention to urge the authorities in Europe to consider whether "at the present day and on the footing on which the nations now stand, the necessity or policy of allowing Java to hold the opposite Districts of Sumatra in the same manner as Great Britain some centuries ago held Calais, is admissible." In any event, he determined to be "an advocate for the integrity of Sumatra by the strongest arguments I can use".¹⁸

Batavia's reply to this consisted of a repetition of previous Dutch claims. Their views on the boundary question remained unchanged. However, they were prepared to expound their claims again and, upon these being recognised by Raffles, they would appoint a representative to discuss outstanding details. They reminded Raffles that the native chiefs had no desire to treat with the British. In view of this they expected him to agree to their proposals.¹⁹ Raffles did not reply, and after waiting about a month the Batavian Government wrote to the Supreme Government of Bengal about the Lampong affair.

17. One of these was the removal of a chieftain and his replacement by another, whom Travers suspected of being a puppet. See Travers to Raffles, June 30, 1818.

18. Raffles to Van der Capellen, June 7, 1818.

19. Van de Capellen to Raffles, July 1, 1818, in Van de Kemp, *Raffles and the Occupation of the Lampongs*, B.T.L.V. Vol. 49. 1898. p. 54.

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In the meantime, while the fruitless correspondence on this issue raged back and forth between Bencoolen and Batavia, Travers had returned to report the failure of his mission to Batavia. He informed Raffles that he had been cut off from all communication with Van der Capellen and the other Commissioners for a whole month since his delivery of Raffles letter on April 24th. When the Commissioners finally communicated with him, it was to declare that they did not feel themselves authorised to accede to any of the terms or proposals of Raffles and that their instructions were "to take possession of every spot to which they had claim and that they were without any power to give up their right to any country formerly occupied by the Dutch". They were therefore "compelled to reject Raffles proposals".²⁰

With the failure of his attempt to obtain Samanka Bay through negotiation, Raffles decided that he had no alternative left but to enforce Britain's right to a station within Callambyan or Forrest Bay, also in the Sunda Straits, on the Sumatran shore. By this time he had begun to place more weight on Callambyan Bay as a more favourable site in the Sunda Straits. Lieutenants Hull and Johnson, whom Raffles had directed to survey the Bay, reported favourably, and Raffles therefore wrote to the authorities in London, informing them of his intention of fixing an establishment in Callambyan at which the Company's outward and homeward bound ships from China might touch during their passage through the Sunda Straits. In this letter, Raffles drew attention to "the desired intention of the Dutch authorities to assume and enforce the same intention in these seas as formerly, when their monopoly was undisturbed, and the British wholly excluded". Such a course, Raffles insisted, could only be met "by our being beforehand with them, or by insisting on our flag remaining in all disputed places pending a reference to Europe". Raffles feared that his arrival in Sumatran waters had been too late; nonetheless, on 17th August, 1818, Raffles attempted to gain his foothold on Callambyan by requesting permission from its chief to establish a small service station for British ships near Lampong-Samanka. He explained to the latter that the Dutch had no official right to the Lampongs.

On 31st August, 60 soldiers arrived at Callambyan under Lt. Johnston and immediately set up residence there. Raffles then dispatched his belated reply²¹ to Van der Capellen's letter of 1st July. In this despatch, Raffles again refused "to admit any basis for negotiation which would exclude the British Government from Samanka Bay". He explained the presence of the British on Callambyan, as being "in consequence of the unhealthiness of Bourne and the advantage of fixing on a more convenient post for communicating with the homeward bound China ships". Raffles then proceeded to explain the move he was on the verge of making, namely the reinforcement of the British troops at Callambyan; these men needed "some defence against pirates".

Batavia again protested to the Bengal Government, and also to Raffles. Raffles, however, ignored the protest and proceeded to reinforce his posi-

20. Capt. Travers to Raffles, June 30, 1818.

21. This reply was written on 19 August 1818 but was not despatched to Batavia until after Johnston's settlement at Callambyan. The Dutch at Batavia thus received it on 5th October 1818.

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tion at Callambyan. In retaliation, Krijgsman, a Dutchman acting on behalf of Du Bois in Samanka, was ordered to proceed to Callambyan, where he was to hoist the Dutch flag. He was also to inform the British that they were on Dutch territory and order them to leave. Krijgsman arrived on 24th November and informed Johnston of his intention of hoisting Dutch colours. Although Raffles had hitherto expressed his willingness to permit the flags of both nations to fly side by side, this request was now refused. Johnston also refused to comply with Krijgsman's order to withdraw his military strength from Callambyan and the whole district of Lampong-Samanka, and insisted that his orders had been to remain at Callambyan "until His Excellency Baron der Capellan would be pleased to appoint any authority on the part of the Netherlands Government whom I might have the honour of meeting to point out the boundaries of the Lampong Country."²² Such authority not having arrived yet, he could not withdraw the British forces. Krijgsman thereupon left on 27 November, but not before leaving behind 4 soldiers and a corporal.

Thus, as it had happened in Lampong-Samanka, so did a stalemate threaten to take place at Callambyan, with both British and Dutch forces camping side by side and watching the movements of one another, but without either making much progress. However, by now the complaints submitted by the Batavian Government to Bengal had borne fruit. In spite of Raffles' recommendations, the Supreme Government declared that the proposed settlement at Samanka Bay "did not present . . . advantages to compensate for the inconvenience of a collision with the Netherlands authorities."²³ On 7th November, the Supreme Government notified Batavia that they had "signified to the Lieutenant-Governor of Fort Marlborough our opinion that no attempt should be made to form a British establishment in Samanca Bay, and we have directed him to withdraw the parties he has sent to Caloonbayan Bay or any other places of the Bay of Samanca."²⁴

By this rap over the knuckles from the Supreme Government, Raffles' attempts to secure the command of the Sunda Strait were suddenly cut short. The first link in his proposed chain of stations could not be forged. Raffles had to adopt some other measure swiftly if he still desired to combat the growth of Dutch influence in the Eastern Archipelago.

PALEMBANG AND PADANG.

Raffles' abortive attempts to secure the command of the Sunda Straits were begun within a month of his arrival at Bencoolen, and at that time he expressed confidence in being able to re-establish British influence by this means alone.²⁵ By the end of May, 1818, however, he began to entertain doubts as to the complete efficacy of this measure. The Dutch had started to press their claims to the southern and coastal districts of Sumatra,

22. Johnston to Krijgsman, 25th November 1818. Quoted in *Van der Kemp*, pp 24-25.

23. Bengal to the Secret Committee, 25th November 1818.

24. Quoted in *Van der Kemp*, p. 36.

25. To the secret Committee on April 14th, 1818, he wrote: "The footing once obtained in the Straits of Sunda, I apprehend all the rest will follow without difficulty."

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such as Palembang, and Raffles feared that in the event of these claims being admitted, the resultant establishment of British and Dutch posts in close proximity to each other would lead to endless disputes. To prevent this, he decided that "Sumatra should be under one European Power alone, and this Power is, of course, the English".²⁶ The island of Java he conceded to be exclusively Dutch.

On July 3rd, Raffles submitted to London the recommendation that negotiations be started in Europe for the preservation of the integrity of Sumatra under British protection. In the meantime, he determined, on his own initiative and without obtaining the sanction of his superiors at home, to extend British influence in Sumatra. The first step was to forestall Dutch occupation of key areas to which it might be possible to allege that their pretensions were questionable.

The port of Palembang was the first of these to occupy his attention. In 1812 Raffles had obtained for Great Britain, in his capacity as Lt. Governor of Java, the cession of Banca and Billiton from Ratoo Achmed Najamoedin, the then Sultan of Palembang.²⁷ In return for the islands, Raffles had promised that Great Britain would preserve the independence of the sultan. This undertaking, according to Raffles, had been entered into on the express condition that all previous engagements placing the sultan in a state of dependence on the Batavian government through his overlord, the sultan of Bantam, were to be annulled.²⁸ Consequently, when Britain ceded Banca in turn to the Dutch by the terms of the Convention of 1814, it transferred to them also the obligation to protect the independence of the Sultan of Palembang. Raffles' logic did not convince the Dutch, who arrived at Palembang on 10th December, 1816, and insisted on setting up an establishment there, despite a protest from the departing British Commissioners.

The Palembang issue remained unsettled until Raffles' return to Bencoolen in 1818. Immediately upon his arrival, Raffles notified the Sultan of his new appointment. In reply, the Sultan informed Raffles of the expected arrival of a Dutch Commissioner, H. M. Muntinghe, at Palembang, and requested him to send "proofs of his assistance."²⁹ Upon receipt of this letter, Raffles immediately deputed Captain Francis Salmond to proceed to Palembang to offer the protection of the British Government to the Sultan.

Raffles at this stage admitted that he was unacquainted with the measures being pursued by the Dutch, but from the tenor of the Sultan's letter, he presumed that the Sultan had not committed himself to any engagements with them. Nevertheless, Salmond was to lose no time in calling upon the Sultan to make his selection between the two nations. If he was "desirous to exclude the Dutch and of remaining under British protection", the sultan must be prepared to enter into an explanatory treaty with the British government. "At all events," Raffles stressed, "you will

26. Raffles to the Secret Committee, July 3rd 1818.

27. Ratoo Ahmad Najamoedin was raised to the throne by Raffles in that year. For the circumstances that led to his installation, see Wurtzburg, *Raffles and the Palembang Massacre* (JMBRAS, Vol XXII, Part I, March, 1949).

28. By the terms of an Explanatory Treaty drawn in the following year.

29. Raffles to Dowdeswell, Vice-President in Council, Fort William, July 6th 1818.

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consider it your duty to convince the Sultan that he is not abandoned by the British Government and should he place himself unequivocally under its protection, to afford him that protection and the extent of your means, and to require the Dutch to withdraw all pretensions and in no way further interfere with the affairs of Palembang.”³⁰

Salmond left Bencoolen on June 22nd, accompanied by Frederick Garling and an escort of 100 men under Lt Haslam. Two days after his departure, another embassy arrived from the Sultan informing Raffles that the Dutch Commissioner, H. W. Muntinghe, had entered Palembang with “hostile accompaniments” and had ordered him, on pain of dethronement, to divide his territories with his rival, the former Sultan Badroedin, whom Raffles had deposed in 1811. Upon learning this, Raffles advised Salmond to deliver a letter of protest to Muntinghe, and a copy of a Proclamation dated June 24th, 1818 repudiating all arrangements made by the Dutch Commissioner.³¹ On the same day, Raffles wrote to the Governor of Penang, urging him to withhold the restoration of Malacca to the Dutch in protest against Dutch measures at Palembang.

While Salmond proceeded to Palembang to afford British protection to the Sultan, Raffles determined to capitalise on the news of Muntinghe’s measures to further his plan for establishing British influence over Sumatra. In this scheme the port of Padang occupied a place as important as that of Palembang. Padang, centrally situated on the west coast of Sumatra, was then the chief outlet for the fertile interior of Sumatra. It had been a Dutch possession until May 17th, 1795, when it capitulated to Britain. It was restored to Holland by the Treaty of Amiens, but the resumption of hostilities in Europe prevented its re-occupation by the Dutch. Thus, at the time of Raffles’ return to Bencoolen, it remained under British control, and Raffles, recognising its importance as the key to Sumatra, determined upon it remaining so. As early as April, he had signified his intention of retaining Padang provisionally. On general grounds, he argued that Dutch claims to it were inadmissible as they had not occupied it on January 1st, 1803. He further drew attention to the “immense and outstanding demands on account of Java” and stipulated the adjustment of these as a necessary condition for the transfer.³² These terms he placed before the Dutch representative James Du Puy when the latter arrived at Bencoolen on June 5th to demand the immediate transfer of Padang.³³ Du Puy declined to undertake a settlement of the debt, explaining that he had been strictly enjoined not to discuss any matter with Raffles until after the transfer was “actually effected.”³⁴ Raffles continued to press his demands, and correspondence on the subject only ceased when Du Puy lodged a protest before departing. The matter was subsequently referred to the Bengal Government. Raffles, in the meanwhile, wrote to the authorities in London and Calcutta urging them to press for the retention of Padang. He himself resolved to withhold it from the Dutch, giving as an additional reason, the conduct of the Dutch at Palembang.

30. Raffles to Salmond, June 20th 1818.

31. Raffles to Salmond, June 20th 1818.

32. Raffles to the Secret Committee, April 14th 1818.

33. Raffles to Du Puy, June 6, 1818. To put Du Puy in a still more difficult position, Raffles in the same letter insisted on the Dutch paying for all the moveable property at Padang, at inflated prices.

34. Du Puy to Raffles, June 6, 1818.

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Having thus successfully protracted the restoration of Padang, Raffles embarked for that town in the first week of July with a view to bringing it and the country immediately behind it under British influence.³⁵ To ascertain the inclination of the inhabitants of Padang, Raffles revealed that he would have to restore the settlement to the Dutch. Upon learning this, they protested strongly and declared that Padang had never belonged to the Dutch. Raffles then proceeded to verify their statement by examining the public records and by questioning the oldest inhabitants. From these, he learnt that the footing which the Dutch possessed at Padang was of a purely commercial nature; that the sovereignty of the country was legally vested in the Chiefs of the Tegablas Country in the interior; that the latter were in turn under the superior control and general authority of the Sultan of Menangkabau.

Thus informed, Raffles proceeded into the interior, to make arrangements for extending British influence in Sumatra. He first concluded preliminary treaties with the Chiefs of the Toja Blas Country and subsequently had these confirmed at the capital Menangkabau on July 20th. With the signing of this treaty, subject to the approval of Lord Hastings, the Governor-General of India, Raffles obtained for the British East India Company "in full sovereignty all the lands to the westward of the hills to the sea including the islands lying off the same from Indrapura to Nattal and also of the districts of Perenghian, Lindongbaker and Kasi, together with the passes leading from thence through the mountains to the coast District."³⁶ This was a considerable part of central Sumatra. Having formally taken possession of the new territory, Raffles left a Resident and a party of troops at the capital of Menangkabau to uphold the authority of the princes of Menangkabau so that a central government might be established. Once communications were opened between the different parts of the country, the influence of the British Government, he foresaw, would be gradually extended over the whole island.

Raffles by now was firmly convinced of Sumatra's potentialities. With the conclusion of his visit to the Menangkabau territory, he had penetrated Sumatra in three directions altogether and from the observations he had made he was led to believe that Sumatra was "at least as good" as Java in soil and climate. Moreover, it was populous and rich in minerals, while agriculture in many parts of the island was well advanced. The only factor that retarded its growth economically during the Dutch occupation of Padang had been the absence of commerce. This Raffles attributed to the trade having been monopolised by a Dutch Resident whose capital "had necessarily been limited". During the previous two or three years, however, Padang under the provisional control of the British had been the scene of increasing trade; its imports and exports in 1817 being estimated by Raffles at about a million Spanish dollars. Padang

35. Raffles gives a number of conflicting reasons for his visit to Padang. To the Government of Bengal on August 5th, he gave the reason: "with the view of facilitating the transfer of the place". This is unlikely to be the truth as he had just obstructed its transfer and was even then urging its retention. Some idea of his real motive is revealed in his letter to the Duchess of Somerset written on 11th July, 1818, while off the coast of Padang. "I am now on my way to Padang to see whether I cannot reach Menangkabau before the Dutch arrive, who claim the place under the Convention."

36. Raffles to Dowdeswell, August 12th 1818.

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therefore was indispensable to Raffles' scheme of making Sumatra a British Protectorate. Now that he himself had successfully prevented its return to the Dutch, he urged the authorities at home to retain it permanently. "With an influence at Menangkabau and the exclusion of the Dutch from Sumatra", he confidently wrote, "a prospect is now held out of rendering Sumatra within a short period as valuable a possession to Great Britain as Java".³⁷

Raffles' ambitious schemes, however, were checked by the news that Captain Salmond's mission had failed. It appeared that Salmond, in deference to Raffles' instructions, had duly entered into a treaty with the Sultan excluding all European nations from his dominions and had hoisted the English flag to mark the occasion; whereupon Muntinghe who had himself extracted similar treaties from both the Sultan and the ex-ruler Badroedin on June 23rd and 21st respectively, prior to Salmond's arrival, demanded the withdrawal of the British flag and the departure of Salmond from Palembang. Salmond refused to comply and was consequently arrested and transported to Batavia in a Dutch vessel. On hearing this, Raffles decided to turn the failure of Salmond's mission to account. On August 12th, he issued a Protest, citing the Palembang incident as a specific example of "the political system by which the interests of the Netherlands Government appear to be exclusively considered without reference being made in how far the honour and interests of the British nation may be involved thereby."³⁸ At the same time, he took measures in retaliation against Muntinghe's action by moving troops into the Musi river area. Nothing came of this, and on September 1st Raffles issued another Protest after hearing an account of the Palembang affair personally from Salmond.

By now Raffles had come to the conclusion that "nothing effectual could be done to check the evil of Dutch encroachments in Sumatra until a definitive arrangement was made in Europe, and orders are sent out by the Netherlands Government".³⁹ The Dutch had anticipated him at Palembang and had frustrated his attempts to secure the command of the Sunda Straits; and his attempt to lay the foundations for a Pan-Sumatra protectorate stood little chance of success unless he could persuade Lord Hastings, the Governor-General of India, to lend his support to the retention of Padang and to ratify the treaties concluded with the Menangkabau chieftains. Failing this, there was no other alternative but to implement his alternative plan to re-establish British power by founding a station in the vicinity of Rhio. With the view to discussing these matters with Hastings, Raffles embarked for Calcutta on September 2nd 1818.

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Raffles arrived at Calcutta in late September to find his misgivings justified regarding the Sumatran issue. Hastings took exception to the unscrupulous measures he had adopted there for two reasons. The first was that they had contravened his policy of avoiding open conflict with the Dutch. Where the Dutch had resumed or maintained the privilege of resuming their connection or authority, he deemed it impracticable

37. Raffles to the Secret Committee, August 5th 1818.

38. A copy of this Protest is included in Dutch Records 'A' No. 29.

39. Raffles to the Secret Committee, September 1, 1818.

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to make any attempt to thwart their influence. Secondly, Hastings was contemplating the exchange of Bencoolen for Malacca and had even then decided on the Equator as the demarcating line between English and Dutch spheres of influence. To this end, he resolved to concede to the Dutch their pretensions in Sumatra by disavowing Raffles' measures at Palembang and by ordering the immediate restoration of Padang.⁴⁰

Towards the second object of Raffles' visit to Calcutta, however, Hastings was fully sympathetic. From Raffles, he had received, either directly or through references made by the Secret Committee, frequent reports verging on the hysterical of Dutch encroachments in the Archipelago; and from the Penang Government, he had received repeated warnings more sober and even more alarming, that the prosperous trade which Penang had built up over the last twenty years would be ruined as soon as Malacca was restored to the Dutch. The combined effect of these reports and warnings was to convince the Governor-General that, contrary to the belief he held four years ago, the Dutch had no intention of honouring their pledge to provide for the security of British interests in the event of the restoration of their colonies. "Circumstances", he observed, "have since changed and in return for our liberality to the Dutch, we are now exposed to the hazard of being totally shut out by them from all participation in the commerce of those seas".⁴¹ He resolved therefore that the time had come to take a positive stand against Dutch encroachments.

From the suggestions submitted by Raffles and the Penang Government, Hastings decided that to prevent Dutch influence from extending beyond the Equator he must secure the command of the entire Straits of Malacca. This was to be achieved by obtaining a firm foothold at Acheen, on the northern tip of Sumatra, and on the island of Rhio at the southern entrance of the Straits. Acheen or Acheh was considered because of the danger it would constitute to India if it fell into the hands of the Dutch, French or Americans.⁴² The Dutch in particular were suspected of having immediate designs on Acheen detrimental to British interests.⁴³

To forestall them, Hastings decided to enter into a treaty with that state, the basis of which was to be "the reception and permanent residence of a British Agent and the exclusion of foreigners from a fixed habitation in Acheen".⁴⁴ Rhio was selected mainly on Raffles' recommenda-

40. The Government of Calcutta to the Government of Batavia, October 10th 1818.

41. Minute of the Marquis of Hastings, October 25th 1818, paragraph 59 (Dutch Records 'A' No. 28A).

42. In the late war between Britain and France, the French privateers derived advantages from the privilege of refreshment and refitting in the ports and roadstead of Acheen. Also, following the Anglo-American War of 1812, the establishment of an American station at Acheen or at some adjacent point was also thought to be a definite possibility.

43. At the time of Raffles' visit to Calcutta, Acheen was the scene of a struggle between two chieftains for the throne. The Ex-King in his distress was believed to have made urgent appeal for European aid, and to have indicated his willingness to throw himself into the hands of the first European power that offered itself. Because the English had previously refused to support him, Hastings feared that he would appeal to the Dutch at Malacca.

44. Instructions to Sir S. T. Raffles and Captain Coombs on their departure to the State of Acheen, 31st October 1818.

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tions. In his early despatches, Raffles had represented it as being centrally placed and commanding both the Straits of Malacca and the China Seas: he also described it as having at all times been a place of great commercial resort and as possessing one of the best harbours in the Eastern Seas, a considerable population and every advantage for becoming a general emporium. These advantages were enhanced in the eyes of Hastings by two other attractions. The first was an unequivocal admission on the part of the Dutch themselves that there was no other port in the Eastern Seas more commandingly situated to undermine their influence.⁴⁵ The second attraction was that Major W. Farquhar, acting on behalf of the Penang Government, had already entered into a preliminary treaty with Rhio.⁴⁶ Raffles had only to obtain the ruler's permission to plant a station there in order to consolidate Britain's footing on the island.

On November 28th, instructions were issued to Raffles to proceed first to Acheen in the company of Captain John Monckton Coombs of Penang; having accomplished his mission to Acheen, he was then to execute the ulterior objective of planting a station on Rhio. In the event of the Dutch having already occupied Rhio, he was enjoined to abstain from all negotiation and collision. A week later, Raffles was furnished with additional instructions to investigate the possibilities of establishing a station at old Johore. He was directed in particular to ascertain the "actual political condition and relations of the State of Johore, the degree of independent authority exercised by the chief, his power of maintaining any engagements which we may contract, his relations with other States, especially the Dutch settlement of Malacca, and the Government of Siam". The Dutch were suspected of wanting to lay claim to Johore "by virtue of some old engagements", but in the event of their not having done so, Raffles was to negotiate with the chief of Johore and effect an arrangement "similar to the one contemplated at Rhio".⁴⁷

Raffles embarked for Penang on December 7th. While still off the Sandheads of Calcutta, he expressed the fear lest "the Dutch have hardly left us an inch of ground to stand upon".⁴⁸ The news that greeted him on his arrival at Penang confirmed his misgivings: the Dutch had forcibly occupied Rhio. This in itself need not have deterred the execution of his mission to the Eastward: the supplementary instructions of December 5th had provided for this exigency and he himself, before his arrival at Penang, had conceived of an alternative site on which to plant the station southward of Malacca. The place he had selected, so he informed his friend Marsden, was the island of Singapore.

However, Raffles discovered a serious obstacle to his plans in the envy and fears of Bannerman, the Governor of Penang. Raffles' projected station at the southern mouth of the Malacca Straits, being more advan-

45. Ibid, paragraph 86. This despatch written by the Dutch Governor of Malacca to the Commissioners of Batavia in 1793, was captured from the Secret Archives of Batavia.

46. In July 1818, Farquhar was sent by the Penang Government to conclude treaties with Rhio, Lingga, Pontianak and Siak, which would "secure the freedom of commerce with these Countries".

47. Instructions to Raffles, dated December 5th 1818. The work of drafting this set of Instructions is ascribed to Raffles by most historians.

48. Raffles to Marsden, December 12th 1818. Quoted in D. C. Boulger, *The Life of Sir Stamford Raffles*, p 303.

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tageously situated, constituted a threat to the prosperity of Penang; Bannerman, recognising this, naturally regarded the proposal for its foundation with antipathy. The Dutch occupation of Rhio provided him with the grounds on which to prevent Raffles from fulfilling his mission.

The stand adopted by Bannerman was that any attempt to plant a settlement in the vicinity of Rhio, now that the Dutch had announced their pretensions to Rhio, Johore, Siak and Lingin,⁴⁹ would only involve Britain in open conflict with Holland and frustrate the object of the negotiations then proceeding in Europe. He maintained that no advantageous political relations with the Malay States to the eastwards could be established as "the period for such a measure had passed".⁵⁰ In his opinion, the independence of Rhio could be obtained by negotiation with the Dutch.

These views were communicated to both Hastings in Bengal and Raffles on the spot. Raffles, however, refused to be dissuaded from his mission. The Dutch occupation of Rhio, he argued, made the establishment of a British station south of the Malacca Straits an imperative necessity.

In a little known letter, Raffles referred simultaneously to Russian moves as a further reason for a southern post. He had heard that Holland was supporting Russia in its attempts to secure Pacific Islands, and felt that this increased the dangers to Britain in the East. He became even more determined to check the extension of Dutch influence in any form.

Raffles' opportunity for achieving this end came on January 18th 1819. On that date, prior to his embarkation for Achien to execute the first stage of Hastings' plan to dominate the Malacca Straits, he received a letter from Bannerman requesting him to delay his proceedings in that direction until a reply was received to certain references he had made to the Governor-General.⁵² Upon receipt of this letter, Raffles at once decided to proceed to the Straits of Singapore to advance the "ulterior object of his mission".⁵³

On the night of January 19th, Raffles embarked for the southern entrance of the Malacca Straits. He first undertook a survey of the Carimon Islands⁵⁴ but, on finding them unsuitable for the purposes of a station, proceeded directly to the site of his own choice, Singapore. Anchoring off the island on the 28th, Raffles received a deputation of Malays on board and, in accordance with his instructions of December 5th, inquired of them whether any attempt had been made by the Dutch to exercise their authority over Singapore and Johore. On receiving a negative reply, Raffles landed on the island and concluded a preliminary

49. The Dutch naval commander Rear-Admiral Wolterbeck concluded a treaty with the Raja Muda of Rhio on 26th November 1818. Thereafter the Dutch reasserted their pretensions to Johore, Siak and Lingin claiming these lands to be vassals of Rhio.

50. Bannerman to Hastings, January 1st 1819. (Dutch Records 'A' No. 28A).

51. Raffles to John Adams, January 8, 1819.

52. Bannerman to Raffles, January 18th 1818 (Dutch Records 'A' No. 28A).

53. Raffles to Bannerman, January 18th 1818 (Dutch Records 'A' No. 28A).

54. This was done in deference to William Farquhar's recommendations.

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treaty with its chief authority, the Dato Temenggong, on January 30th. By this treaty, Raffles-secured for Britain the right to establish a post on the island, and the undertaking on the part of the Temenggong not to enter into any relations with other European powers so long as the English remained to protect him. In return for the concessions he had made, the Temenggong was guaranteed an annual payment of 3000 dollars.

Having thus obtained a provisional concession of occupancy rights, Raffles turned his attention towards establishing Britain's footing on the island on a permanent and impregnable basis. The Temenggong, with whom he had concluded the preliminary treaty, was a high officer of state who practically ruled the island in complete independence; legally, however, sovereignty over Singapore resided in the Sultan of the ancient Empire of Johore. Raffles fully realised that the treaty had to be ratified by the Sultan if it was to be indefeasible by the Dutch. The question he had to resolve, was: who was the Sultan of Johore? From the Temenggong, Raffles learnt that the death of the last Sultan, Mahmud, occurred at a period (1812), when his eldest son and successor, Hussein Muhammad Shah, was absent from the seat of Government on a visit to his relative, the Bendahara or Chief of Pahang. Because communication between Pahang and Lingeh could only be held in the favourable monsoon and because he feared the Bugis who controlled the throne, a year elapsed from the time of his father's death, before Hussein arrived to assume his legitimate authority. During the interregnum, however, the Bugis Viceroy, the Raja Muda had induced the younger brother, Abdul Rahman, to accept the throne on the pretext that the deceased Sultan could only be interred by his successor. When Hussein finally returned to Rhio, he was unable to recover his rights because the Bugis were too powerful, and he lived in poverty on a small stipend paid from the port duties of Rhio. Abdul Rahman, in the meantime, remained the puppet of the Bugis Raja Muda until the Dutch came back in 1818. However, in the opinion of the Temenggong of Singapore, and also, he declared, that of the Bendahara of Pahang, Hussein was, without doubt, the legitimate Sultan.

Raffles, casting about him for a way to strengthen beyond question Britain's title to Singapore, saw in Hussein the answer to his problem. Raffles was aware that a treaty concluded with the Temenggong, the *de facto* ruler of Singapore, stood the risk of being challenged by the Dutch on the grounds that legally he was not authorised to make any cessions; but, he argued, a treaty signed by both the Temenggong and the rightful *de jure* ruler of Singapore, whose title was acknowledged by the Temenggong and Bendahara of Pahang, would prove itself indefeasible. To this end, he summoned Hussein to Singapore to be installed as Sultan. Evading the Dutch, Hussein duly arrived. On February 6th, 1819, Raffles signed a treaty with the Sultan and the Temenggong, by which the terms of the Preliminary Agreement entered into on January 30th were confirmed. The Company secured the right to build a factory, while the Sultan and the Temenggong agreed that so long as it should be maintained, they would neither treat with any European or American Power, nor allow them to form a settlement in any part of their territories. The Company undertook to pay the Sultan an annual pension of 5,000 Spanish dollars, and the Temenggong 3,000 dollars; the Temenggong, in addition, was to receive half of whatever dues it might be decided to levy on native

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vessels. Furthermore, as long as the Sultan and Temenggong resided near the Company's factory they were to be protected, but it was understood that this alliance in no way bound the British to interfere in the internal affairs of Johore, or to maintain the Sultan's authority by force of arms. Finally, the port of Singapore was considered to be under the immediate protection and subject to the regulation of the British authorities.

With the signing of this treaty, Raffles' attempts to counteract the expansion of Dutch commercial influence came to a successful conclusion. His station at Singapore, planted in a position that commanded absolutely the principal route from the West to the East, required only a few years to establish itself as the greatest commercial emporium in the East. With its foundation, Britain's position in the Eastern Seas was permanently secured and the danger of Dutch monopoly forever destroyed.