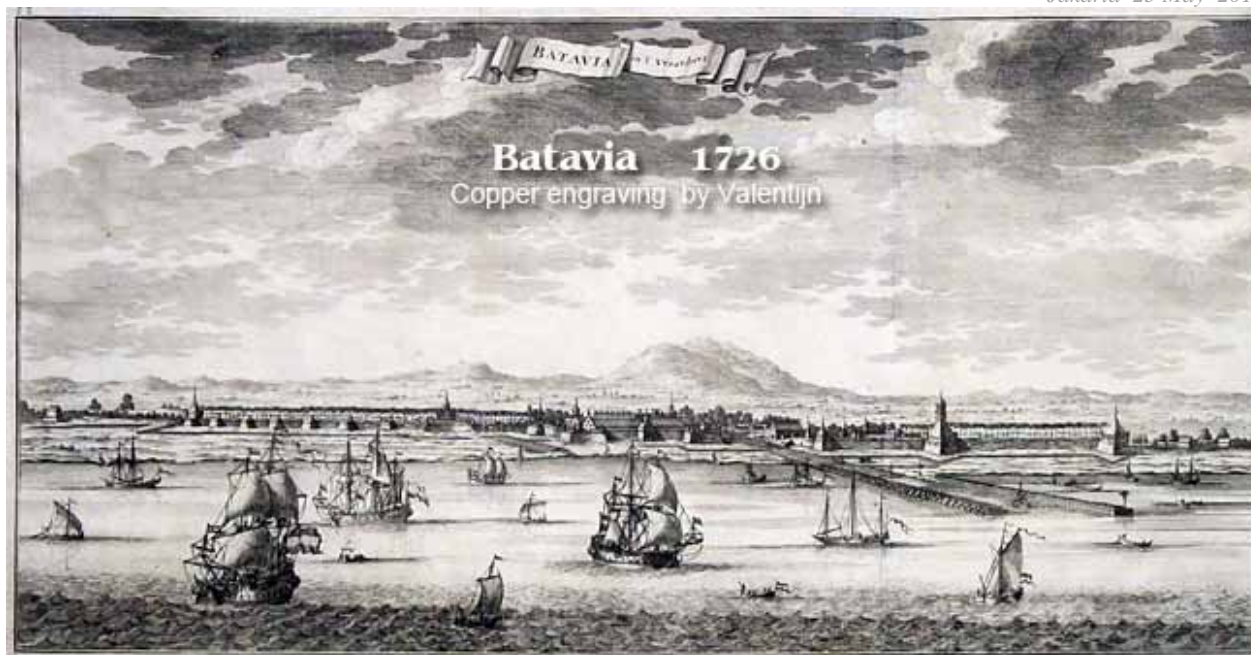




## JAKARTA SNAPSHOT

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**JAKARTA** in its various guises - at times under the influence of **Indians**, **Portuguese**, **Dutch**, **British** and **Japanese**, dates back over two thousand years. This is a snapshot of some events that led to the modern, thriving, cosmopolitan city it has become.

**4<sup>th</sup> Century AD** An established **Hindu** settlement was in place at the mouth of the **Ciliwung River**. Trade beads and a dish from southern **India** show trade with **India** was established as early as 150 BC.<sup>1</sup>

**5<sup>th</sup> Century AD** A stone called '**Prasasti Tugu**', erected by **King Purnawarman**, recording the construction of a canal, was excavated near the present village of **Tugu**, which is just south of the present harbour **Tanjung Priok**.



Prasasti Tugu

According to this stone, the king ruled over a river basin kingdom called **Taruma** or **Tarumanegara**. The characters on the stone indicate a **Hindu** influence.

**Java** was well known to **Indian** and **Chinese** scribes from the beginning of this period. The trading ships that came from India helped the spread of **Hinduism** and **Buddhism**.

**Chinese** records show that an **Indonesian** kingdom called **Ho-lo-tan**, sent missions to **China** in 425 AD.

Historians have suggested this kingdom was **Tarumanegara** ruled by **King Purnawarman**.

Trading among the **Arabs**, **Chinese**, **Indians** and **Indonesians** was peaceful. The products traded were diverse and in small volumes. It needed **European** privateers to introduce the element of monopoly, which led to aggression and war.

**Islam** Arab traders had been sailing to **Java** from **Arabia** and the West Indian port of **Gujarat**, well before the advent of **Islam**. According to some historians<sup>2</sup> **Islam** may have originally come from southern India, whose Muslim traders arrived in this region before **Gujarat** came under **Muslim** rule in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

**Sunda Kalapa** The earliest mention of what is now **Jakarta**, is in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when referred to as **Sunda Kalapa**, because of its export of coconut, or **kalapa**.

It was the principal harbour for the **Javanese Hindu** kingdom of **Sunda**, the capital of which, **Pakuan** was located 60 km upstream at what is now **Bogor** (which gets its name from a now extinct palm – **Bagor**).



Portuguese Carrack 15th Century

**Jayakarta** The first European fleet, comprising four **Portuguese** ships from **Malacca** arrived in 1513. The **Portuguese**, after conquering **Malacca** in 1511, saw **Sunda Kalapa** as an ideal relay port from the 'Spice Islands' as the **Moluccas** were known.

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In 1522 the kingdom gave the **Portuguese** permission to build a factory and godown, mainly as protection against the growing influence of the **Muslim Sultanate of Demak** in central **Java**. The word 'factory' long used in **Asia** to describe trading settlements of **Europeans** derives from the **Portuguese** 'feitoria' where trading goods were collected for distribution.

However a **Sumatran Malay** warrior from the **Sultanate of Demak**, **Fatahillah**, conquered **Hindu Sunda Kalapa** on 22 June 1527 – the day **Jakarta** now celebrates as its birthday.

He renamed the port **Jayakarta** which means 'glorious victory' in Sanskrit

**The Dutch** Initially several small **Dutch** companies equipped fleets of ships to trade in the Far East. In 1596 many arrived in **Jayakarta** to trade spices.



However this 'tramp trading' led to internal competition. They were amalgamated under one banner – the **VOC** (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*) in 1602.

The company was managed by **Heeren XVII** or *Gentlemen Seventeen*. It was given sweeping powers, including the license to establish colonies, declare and sign peace treaties with indigenous rulers, establish fortifications, call for financial support and requisition the military or navy for defence purposes. *The VOC was the first company to issue stock to shareholders.*<sup>4</sup>

In 1611 the **Dutch** were given permission to build a godown in the **Chinese** quarter of **Jayakarta**, on the eastern bank of the **Ciliwung River**. The **Dutch** reneged on their agreement and fortified the godown into *Kasteel Jacatra* in 1618. The architect of this action was newly appointed **VOC** Governor General for the Moluccas, **Jan Pieterszoon Coen**.

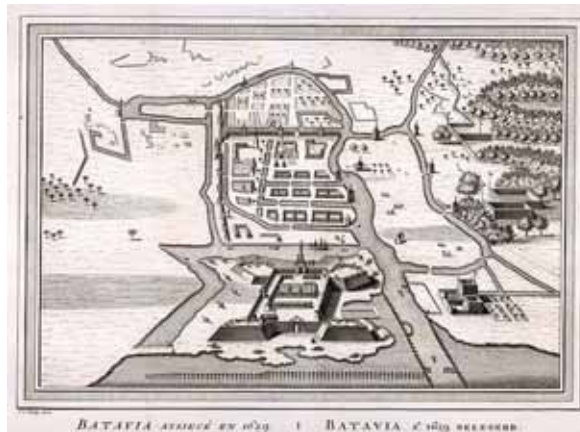
The **British East India Company's** first voyage in 1602 commanded by Sir James Lancaster, arrived in **Aceh** and sailed to **Bantam**. The **British** were given approval to build a trading post which became the centre of **British** trade in **Indonesia** until 1682.<sup>5</sup>

The **British** were also allowed to build houses directly across from the **Dutch** in **Jayakarta** in 1615 by the **Sultan of Banten**, **Prince Jayawikarta**.

Relations between the **Prince** and the **Dutch** deteriorated after the **Dutch** built their fort. The **Prince's** soldiers attacked the **Dutch** fortifications in

1619. But even with the help of 15 **British** ships, **Prince Jayawikarta's** army was defeated by the **Dutch**, who then drove away the **English** ships and burnt the **British** trading post.

**Batavia** After the defeat of the **Prince** and the **British** in 1619, on the ruins of **Jayakarta**, **J.P. Coen** founded **Batavia**, named after the ancestors of the **Dutch** people, the Germanic tribe called the **Batavi**.



Thus was created the headquarters of the **VOC** in the Indies. A company town which was the hub of the very lucrative **Dutch** trade and commerce with trading posts reaching from **Africa** to **Japan**.

**J.P. Coen** has a tarnished reputation. He was no doubt a strong man often using means to justify an end. He was capable of ruthless and sadistic decisions including the enslavement and *forcible transplanting of native peoples*.

He advocated populating **Batavia** with **European** (*read Dutch*) colonists who could be commandeered in times of need. However he was bitterly disappointed in the calibre of the **Europeans** who heeded his call.



He felt they were a *deficient and despicable lot, addicted to drink* and prompted by the lure of personal gain.

No doubt he was a patriot and instrumental in the **Dutch** gaining supremacy over other **Europeans** in the East.

**Coen died of cholera in 1634**. There is no significant memorial to him. **Even the Heeren**

**XVII took an indulgent view of his excesses:** '... the late Coen was rather too energetic in these matters.'<sup>6</sup>

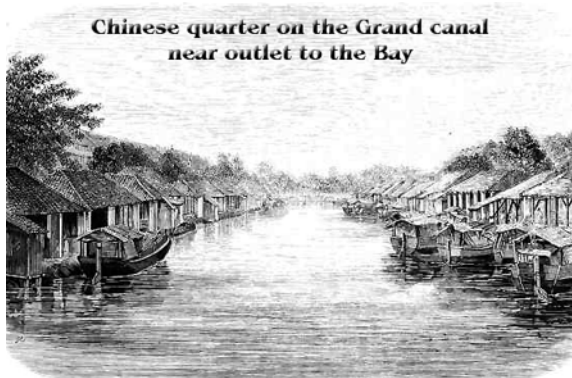
**Chinese Massacre** The **Dutch** encouraged *non-Javanese* to settle as they were fearful of rebellion by the local natives.

The **Chinese** were an industrious race providing the **Dutch** and the local people with an immense network of individual industry.



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They also fostered the unofficial interests of corrupt VOC officials by entering into illegal trading ventures. No labour was too hard for them, no service not profitable enough.



Batavia was 'a Chinese Colonial town under Dutch protection.'<sup>7</sup>

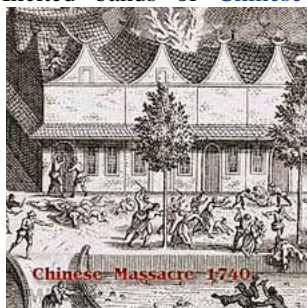
In earlier days the indigenous community, realising their worth, also appointed Chinese as letter bearers and diplomatic brokers between kingdoms and as respected advisers to the local ruling elite. Traditional Javanese law during the Mataram dynasty stated that a fine (*Diya from the Arabic, meaning 'blood money'*) for killing a Chinese was twice that for murdering a Javanese.

The Dutch initially allowed the Chinese to live inside the city walls to ensure that their immense volume of trade could be easily taxed.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century increasing numbers of Chinese began arriving on the tea junks. The Dutch worried that such numbers posed a threat to security. They tried unsuccessfully to impose restrictions on Chinese migration. A glut in the sugar market led to the closure of several sugar mills and many unemployed Chinese.

These unemployed workers began resorting to theft. The Governor General decided in 1740 to enforce transportation of unemployed Chinese to Ceylon to work in the cinnamon plantations. *However rumour had it they were going to be dumped at sea.*

Incited bands of Chinese from outside the city, attacked it. They were repulsed, but the wrath of the Dutch and Indonesians inside the city was turned on the Chinese living there. They burnt up to seven thousand Chinese homes and massacred over one thousand Chinese.



Five hundred Chinese who were shut up in the Town Hall were brought out and killed in cold blood.

The trust between the Dutch and the Chinese was broken

Thereafter the Chinese lived south of the walled city in the area now called Glodok or Chinatown.

Batavia's fame reached its peak in the early and middle 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was called the 'Queen City of the East'. However it declined when internal corruption and maladministration led the VOC to eventual bankruptcy and it was formally dissolved in 1800.

The Dutch Government took over the debts and possessions of the VOC. After the fall of the Netherlands to the French army in 1795, the Dutch sent out Governor-General Daendels to make sweeping changes to what was then known as the Dutch East Indies.

The Colonial Era Marshal Hermann Willem Daendels (1808-11) arrived with heavy responsibilities – to rectify the shortcomings of the VOC. Mainly consolidate Dutch authority, assemble defence against the British intrusion and liberalise the administration.

He was relatively successful. He improved the deteriorating sanitary conditions by filling in the canals in the old town, which were responsible for such exotic diseases as *remitterende rotkoortsen* (intermittent rotting fevers), and *rood loope* (red diarrhoea) and constructing a new hospital.



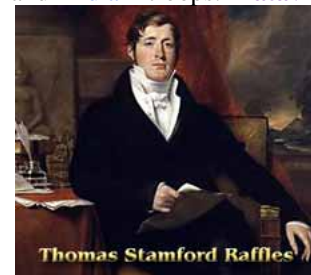
Daendels also took strips of road and made a broad serviceable road from West to East Java. The new road from Anyer to Panaroeakan ran for 1,600 km and cut transport time from forty to six days. However its construction caused innumerable deaths amongst the native conscripts.

His methods of implementation were often harsh. They were based on the unfortunate view (*shared by many of his compatriots*) that the Javanese were inherently apathetic and lazy.

He was recalled in 1811 supposedly because of ill health.

The British Meanwhile in Europe, Napoleon formally annexed the Netherlands in 1811. The expelled King of Holland fled to England to request the British look after his colonies.

Lord Minto, Governor General of India, led an expedition to Java comprising 12,000 English, Irish, and Indian troops. Batavia was conquered by the British in August 1811.



Following the expulsion of the Dutch, Thomas Stamford Raffles, later to become the architect of neighbouring Singapore, was appointed Lieutenant-Governor at a salary of Stg 800 a year with residences in Batavia and Buitenzorg.

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**Raffles** restless energy and statesmanship resulted in various new measures. He tried to abolish slavery, which was a time honoured custom.

He also substituted **Daendels'** scheme of forced delivery of produce with a system the **British** had used in **India**, tenant farming.

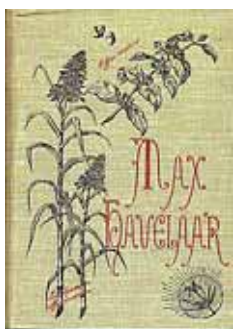
It was **Raffles** who introduced the **British** system of *driving wheeled vehicles on the left*. He also recorded his observations documented in the famous *The History of Java (1817)*.

The **British** wishing to create a strong bulwark against **French** power in Europe and needing **Dutch** co-operation, relinquished **Java** to the **Dutch** in April 1816.

The **Dutch** in order to meet the spiralling costs of maintaining peace in the Indies, introduced '*Cultuurstelstel*' or the *Culture System* in rural areas. The peasants were forced to cultivate export crops at the expense of rice for their own needs.

This callous disregard for the local people was another spur to

**Indonesian** nationalistic feelings and disgust amongst **Dutch** reformers in **Holland**. This was highlighted by the famous novel published in 1860 - **Max**



**Havelaar** by **Edward Douwes Dekker**.

The **Dutch** reformers reactions resulted in government resolutions to check abuses and introduction of various progressive measures in **Batavia** and other regions.

The first telegraphic line between **Batavia** and **Buitenzorg** was inaugurated in 1856. The railway line between these two towns was completed in 1873.



Shortly after the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, it was obvious that **Batavia** needed a new harbour to cope with increasing trade and traffic. The silting of the mouth of the *Ciliwung River* made it difficult for ships to anchor. A new harbour was constructed at **Tanjung Priok**, 14 km east of the **Batavia Roads** and finished in 1886.

**20<sup>th</sup> Century** Education received an impetus. This in turn accelerated the struggle for independence. In 1908 students formed *Budi Utomo*, the first organisation to call for freedom.

It was at this time that *Bahasa Indonesia* was promulgated as the national language, the national anthem was agreed upon and the red and white national flag first advocated. **Sukarno** a charismatic **Javanese** engineer who led the PNI (*Indonesian National Party*) was imprisoned initially in 1929 along with other freedom fighters.

**The Japanese** invaded **Indonesia** in 1942. They freed **Sukarno** in the hope of getting support from the **Indonesians** for economic progress.

**Sukarno** was decorated by the *Emperor of Japan* in **Tokyo** on 11 November 1943 for his collaboration with the **Japanese**.

The **Indonesians** however no longer wanted to be submissive to foreigners for the **Japanese** were no better rulers than the **Dutch**. *"Unless we were prepared to tolerate a kick in the groin, a slap on the face or a rifle butt in the stomach, we could not refuse their demands."*<sup>8</sup>

The **Japanese** eliminated all vestiges of **Dutch** occupation by removing **Dutch** street names, prohibiting speech or writing in **Dutch** and interred all 'pure' **Europeans**. They forced the conscription of **Javanese** peasants, called *romushi*, to join labour contingents in **Burma** under false pretences and to serve with the notorious secret police force, the *Kempeitai*.



High-ranking officials were marched through city streets to gaol in their night-clothes to humiliate them. **Japanisation** was taken to extremes when they decreed all calendars and clocks had to be adjusted to **Japanese** time.

However one decree the **Japanese** took in 1942 turned out to a wise one. **Batavia** was renamed **Jakarta**, a version of the old *Jayakarta*.





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### Dutch again

After the **Japanese** surrender in 1945, the **Dutch** returned. However it was obvious that their time had run out.

A visiting **French** Professor *G.H. Bousquet* had recognised in 1940, '*Batavia was neither European nor the Orient; it is a plot of ground for some centuries the **Dutch** have pitched their tents.*'



Rebellions by the **Indonesians** provoked vicious measures of repression by the **Dutch** who changed **Jakarta's** name back to **Batavia** and restored colonial rule.

### THE WORLD SAT UP AND TOOK NOTICE

In September 1945 the **Australian Waterside Workers Union** placed a **black ban on all Dutch ships operating out of Australian ports**<sup>9</sup>.

The nail in the coffin of **Dutch** rule was when the **USA** government realised that the *amount of financial aid* it was giving the **Netherlands** under the **Marshall Plan** equalled the amount the **Dutch** government was spending trying to reimpose colonial rule in **Indonesia**. **BINGO !**



The **Dutch**, advised that their funding from the **Marshall Plan** was at risk, yielded to internal and external pressure and on **27 December 1949**, at the former Governor General's Palace, - **Istana Merdeka**, **Indonesia's red and white flag was raised over what was Batavia and what would in future be JAKARTA.**

*Duncan MacDonald*  
founder of dMAC Asia Group

### Reference:

- <sup>1</sup> National Museum Jakarta
- <sup>2</sup> John Legge, 1977
- <sup>3</sup> Old Jakarta, Maya Jayapal, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1993
- <sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, The Dutch East India Company
- <sup>5</sup> A History of Modern Indonesia Since c1300, Merle Calvin Ricklefs, 1993
- <sup>6</sup> Meilink-Roelofs, 1962
- <sup>7</sup> Blusse, 1981
- <sup>8</sup> The D.Abdurrachman interviewed by Susan Abeyaeskere, 1985
- <sup>9</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald, 17 May 1947

