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The 1638 Westerwolt treaty in Ceylon: charges of Dutch deceit disproved


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Works on the Dutch period of Ceylon history mark out for special censure the action of VOC agents in 1639-40, when they challenged the Kandyan King's interpretation of the Westerwolt Treaty of 1638. Their alleged lack of scruple on this occasion is taken as proof of a deep-seated bad faith which thereafter poisoned the Kandyan-Dutch alliance. The judgements are unsparing in their harshness, e.g.: “It may be argued that the plan for deceiving Raja Sinha was conceived only after Westerwolt's return to Batavia in July 1638 . . . The deceit practised on Raja Sinha by the Dutch had a profound and permanent effect on the relations between the two parties” (Goonewardena 1958: 35-36).

Despite the assured tone of these verdicts, which also find the Supreme Council guilty of fraud, the charges are unfounded. The evidence on this issue has been obscured by faulty reasoning and guesswork put forward as fact by modern writers in their retouched versions. Yet the documents in their original form tell a different tale and show that the Dutch were firmly upholding the basic terms of the contract against encroachments by the king.

A criticism of more recent date has appeared in an article on the VOC in Ceylon and Coromandel (cf. Arasaratnam 1976: 19 ff.) which largely echoes the mistaken views earlier set afloat by Dr. K. Goonewardena. Both writers leave gaps in their accounts, thus withholding
from the reader vital facts which, had they been stated, would have enforced a different conclusion. The missing details are accordingly supplied in the remarks which follow.

Raja Sinha (1612-87), Ruler of the Kandyan kingdom, or Kandy in its shortened form, claimed the empty title of Emperor of all-Ceylon, though the Portuguese had long been masters of the western half of the Island. On the east coast likewise they had built two forts, one at Trincomalee above Kottiyr Bay, a fine natural harbour, and the other more to the south at Batticaloa. Raja Sinha tried vainly to check Portuguese inroads which kept pushing ever deeper into his heartland. He failed because he refused to train and equip his military forces on effective lines. A small, disciplined army, drawn from his peasant levies, equipped with the fine muskets his gunsmiths were producing, and led by able officers, would no doubt have dealt capably with the invaders, but likewise, he feared, would have turned about and rid themselves of him and his arbitrary rule.

After 1623 and even earlier, Dutch dominance at sea gave the Kandyans a measure of relief from Portuguese pressure (GM. 1.2.1623, I, p. 121). But this invisible help has never been acknowledged. VOC squadrons again in 1632 and 1633 carried out sweeps across the waters round Ceylon to inflict damage on the common enemy (GM. 1.12.1632, I, p. 338 and 15.12.1633, I, p. 411). From 1636 they tightened their blockade and sealed off Goa for about seven months every year till April-May, when the south-west monsoon stopped normal navigation. Portuguese replacements for their garrisons in the Island fell to a trickle. Thus, while the Dutch were pursuing their own separate aims in theatres far away, they raised a protective barrier in a huge arc round Raja Sinha's kingdom. But he never roused himself to seize the chance they gave him to crush his weakened enemy.

Instead he submitted to the Treaty of Goa, ratified in 1634, which required him to pay tribute to the Portuguese yearly on the footing of a vassal (Danvers 1894: II, 245). Two years later he appealed to the Dutch for help. His letter, dated 9 Sep. 1636, was addressed to the Governor of the Coromandel Coast at Pulicat (C. Reyniersz, 1602-53, Governor-General, 1650) with an offer of forts to be built at Batticaloa and Kottiyr (Trincomalee) (CAS. 18/55: 169).

Although in legal terms under the Goa Treaty he ruled a tributary state which covered no more than a third of the Island, he styled himself Emperor of Ceylon, King of Jaffna, Earl of Trincomalee,
The 1638 Westerwolt Treaty in Ceylon

Galle and Mannar, and Lord of the ports of Colombo and Negombo and the Pearl Fishery and yet more places which had always belonged to other princes or powers in no way connected with himself and had never acknowledged his authority. These false titles were paraded to persuade the Dutch that the districts which he named had been wrested from his lawful ownership by usurpers. And, indeed, Batavia formed the opinion that Raja Sinha was truly the Emperor of all-Ceylon and that the Portuguese had “deprived him of his lawful succession to the rule of the Island” (Preamble, Draft Treaty, 1639; KA. 1039, f. 32). They also referred to the western provinces as his kingdom (zijn rijk). Likewise they were ill-informed as to the extent of his military weakness in the lowlands and believed that they could rely on him for decisive support by land to match their own seaborne strength. They kept in mind the example of the Anglo-Persian alliance of 1622 for the recovery of Ormuz and drew a false parallel between the unskilled Raja Sinha and the professional efficiency displayed by Shah Abbas and his troops in their cooperation with the British fleet. The situation in Ceylon, they mistakenly felt, “presents similar features” (Preamble, Draft Treaty, 1639; KA. 1039, f. 36).

Still worse, they were taken aback afterwards to learn that the fine-quality cinnamon for which Ceylon was famous grew in abundance only in the Portuguese-controlled belt along the western coast. It was a blow to their expectations, which were reasonably based on the King’s guarantee under Article 8 of the Westerwolt Treaty that his deliveries would not be adulterated with a blend of the baser sort. He was in breach of the treaty from the very outset, since he was in no position to supply the higher-grade till the Dutch themselves, fighting as his war drudges, captured the vital region and made it over to him in peaceful possession. He fully expected, as indeed the sequel showed, to be able then to sell the spice to them at whatever high price he chose to fix.

Raja Sinha’s seemingly tempting offers were accepted by the Dutch. Envoys passed back and forth; plans were concerted. The fortalice of Batticaloa was chosen as the first point of attack, evidently by request of the King. Its capture would bring the Dutch little benefit beyond a mere lodgment, since it lay on the eastern or wrong side of the Island, far from the habitat of the prime cinnamon. The key to this treasure could be found on the western seaboard, which was guarded by a number of forts. Any one of these, if seized from the Portuguese, would have dealt greater damage to the enemy than the loss of
Batticaloa. The Dutch, too, would have gained a stronger position in command of the cinnamon harvest. On the other hand, to Raja Sinha, now battling against a grave challenge at home, no objective was more important than Batticaloa. He was at feud with his elder brother Vijayapala, Prince of the realms of Matale and Uva, who was now claiming his birthright as the true King of Kandy and, indeed, had proclaimed himself Emperor of Ceylon (cf. Coster to GG, 31.12.1638, KA. 1039, f. 385). The latter could soon be overcome if Batticaloa, which, abutting on his Uva province, was poised like a dagger at his back, should fall into the hands of Raja Sinha’s “trusty Hollanders”. Unless this motive is taken into account the choice of this lonely outpost as a Dutch bridgehead would make little military or commercial sense.

In response to a renewed plea for the help entreated by Raja Sinha, a squadron was detached from the main fleet blockading Goa in March 1638 and despatched to Batticaloa under the command of Vice-Admiral W. J. Coster (who, as a VOC employee since 1627, had seen action in various Asian theatres and risen to the position of president of the Ceylon factories, and was murdered 1640 when returning from the Kandyan Court; cf. Coolhaas 1960: 294). These advance units were joined near the enemy fort by the main task-force led by Admiral A. Westerwolt (who served in a number of senior posts in the VOC from 1614, and was Director in Persia at the time of his death in 1639; cf. Coolhaas 1960: 671) on 10 May 1638.

The king arrived on the 14th, bringing a huge army (15,000) with him. For some days the Dutch landing-parties, which were already ashore, remained on standby at action stations, tensely and alertly awaiting the royal command to attack. But, to suit His Majesty's convenience, a delay was called. He seemed unaware that on the eve of battle time was of the essence. Other shortcomings in his method of handling troops, especially his lack of concern for their welfare and morale, also became evident at this stage. The two Admirals learnt that he had tried sometime earlier to take Batticaloa with a force of about 36,000, but had been repulsed (Westerwolt to Dirs. 24.9.1638; KA. 1036, f. 323). They drew their own conclusions and were on their guard against all possible dangers that lurked behind Raja Sinha’s military thinking and tactics.

Before dawn on 18 May the allied combat units, Kandyan and Dutch, moved up closer for the assault. But, under a massive cannonade lasting four hours, the fort was compelled to yield and surrendered without any hand-to-hand fighting. Westerwolt wrote that the King rejoiced...
greatly. The Dutch were not aware that Raja Sinha was celebrating two victories, one against his public enemy, the Portuguese, and the other against his private rival, Vijayapala. The Admiral therefore allowed time for this feeling of elation to pass and waited a couple of days, during which “His Majesty found diversion in viewing the ships” and visiting the fallen fort (Westerwolt, 24.9.1638, KA. 1036, f. 323). When the King was again in a more sober mood, Westerwolt handed him the draft of the proposed treaty. He spent two or three days studying its implications in consultation with his advisers. After ripe deliberation (the word ‘ripe’ is used by Westerwolt) he approved the terms. These were designed to achieve two aims: to break all Portuguese power in the Island by military force, and to build up stable conditions for the free flow of trade. It was not a treaty imposed by a victorious general on a defeated enemy, but a Contract willingly sealed between brothers-in-arms.

One ingredient of the King’s character should be especially mentioned here. Coster, who met him on various occasions in 1638 (and was murdered by him less than two years later), remarked that he was cunning and suspicious alike in the highest degree (to GG, 31.12.1638, KA. 1039, f. 388). The same judgement was passed by other reliable observers, including Robert Knox, who wrote that he was “crafty, cautious and a great dissembler” (Knox 1681: II, 39).

The Treaty

The Treaty included nineteen Articles and a supplementary clause. The basic draft was drawn up in Dutch and then translated into formal Portuguese, the language with which both parties were familiar. It is hardly necessary to state that the King as well as his high officers were fluent in Portuguese or that the Dutch became equally at home with the language. The last paragraph declares that: “Two covenants, identical in text, have here been drawn up and translated into the Portuguese language from the Dutch”. Thus, each of the two parties received an identical original document to serve as the abiding standard of reference by which doubts could be settled if any difference arose as to the wording of a given passage.

Article 1 bound the King to acknowledge and accept the Dutch not only as friends and allies, but also as the protectors of his kingdom, so that they could help fully to defend (“verdefendeeren” in the Dutch version, where the prefix “ver” intensifies the verb “defendeeren”) his country of Ceylon.
Article 2 laid down that: "When any strongholds or forts, such as Batticaloa or any other fortresses, are taken and occupied by us by treaty or by force with His Majesty's help and military power, the booty shall be equally divided". Here the plural "forten" and "vastigheden" is used in order to make clear that both parties intended to capture as well as occupy a number of other forts besides Batticaloa.

Article 3 declared: "If it should happen that, as described above, any of the aforesaid forts, fortresses and strongholds should come to be conquered and occupied by us and His Imperial Majesty, where (ver) in the land this might be, then, in that case, our (Dutch) personnel shall garrison the said conquered forts with military officers, soldiers, artillery and munitions of war against the forces of the Portuguese enemy poised for attack, at the King's expense [if His Majesty so pleases and approves]. But ("Ende" in the Dutch, which in the 17th century often had the force of "but") if in our estimation the said fortresses do not appear to be an adequate match, in a strong enough state and sufficiently defensible to be able to withstand the enemy, in that case His Majesty shall be bound forthwith to have the said stronghold or place reinforced and fortified as we see fit, at his own expense."

Here again the plural "forts", "fortresses" and "strongholds" is used, providing evidence that the allies planned to occupy — in other words, enter into possession of and maintain for purposes of defence — not only Batticaloa, but also other forts.

This intention, therefore, was put on record by the Treaty as a prime requirement, so that every fort without exception should continue in allied hands as a rallying point in the district. Here the phrase "occupied by us and His Imperial Majesty" carries a clear meaning, namely that both parties were jointly responsible for protecting the fort until the King should decide which should undertake the regular duties of garrisoning. It is equally plain from the last sentence of Article 3 that overriding powers were vested in the higher Dutch command, as final arbiters of military questions, at discretion to determine the strength, equipment and efficiency of the troops ordered by the King to man any of the forts.

The Dutch text of Article 3 is given below (Appendix I). Apart from the errors in Heeres, some of the variant readings that appear in other transcripts are also shown here (KA. 1036, f. 328 ff. Another copy of the Dutch version is preserved in the Ceylon National Archives, No. 3341).

Article 4 stipulated that: "If any of the forts or fortresses should
happen to be garrisoned by our officers and troops, the King shall likewise be bound to defray and pay their salaries and wages monthly”. Here the key words “any of” in the first line show that occupation by a Dutch force was not taken as a fixed rule in all cases. But, since the integrity of the fort had, of necessity, to be maintained, other contingents could equally be detached from the allied armies for garrison duty, provided they were fully competent in the eyes of the higher command.

Article 5 required that: “Likewise, on the conquest of any forts in which there is no facility or suitable place of accommodation or shelter where we may store our goods or merchandise, in that case His Imperial Majesty shall be obliged (zall ... moeten), as time and opportunity permit, to have a stone house built in keeping with our needs, so that our goods shall be safeguarded against fire and other inconveniences and risks; and further, a powder magazine of the type described above, in order that gunpowder, match-cord, munitions of war and other ship’s gear may be brought inside”.

Here again the central aim that every captured fort, none excepted, should be retained on a long-term footing to serve as a base for purposes of trade or warfare is prominent.

Article 6 made the following stipulation: “His Majesty, if he should wish to try any war measures against the Portuguese or otherwise undertake any move, shall be bound first of all to consult with some of the highest officers of our armed services and support them in counsel and deed in order that everything may redound to the welfare of His Imperial Majesty’s lands”. The overruling power to take decisions on any steps affecting war was vested in the Dutch. The King placed himself under an obligation not merely to bow to their verdict and refrain from any measures which they thought mistaken, but to go even further and, setting aside his own wishes, actively give them his cooperation.

Article 7 enjoined that His Majesty should bestow care and diligence to see that a number of rowing-boats were built with due speed in his country for service in the harbours, roadsteads and rivers alongside the VOC ships, yachts and other craft. These lighter, local vessels were essential for landing-operations across waters too shallow or close to dangerous reefs for men-of-war.

Article 8 gave binding force to the promise made by the King in his first letter, of 9.9.1636, to Governor Reyniersz to “bear all the costs, pay all the expenses” of military aid (CAS. 18/55: 171). Under its
terms he now pledged himself to defray the current charges as well as all further expenses to be run up annually on the fitting out of ships, yachts and other types of combat craft with their crews, officers, soldiers and munitions, together with incidental services and supplies. In short, he was financing an expeditionary force. To pay off this huge debt, he mortgaged the natural wealth of his country — its pepper, indigo, wax, rice and, foremost in rank, the fine-quality cinnamon for which Ceylon was famous. Indeed, Article 8 pointedly declared that the baser sort would not be accepted.

Article 11 required the King to send at least one, though preferably two, shiploads of cinnamon, pepper and other valuable products to Batavia every year in exchange for the capital laid out by the VOC.

One further Article, No. 19, is worth noting. It provides for the removal of heavy artillery on loan from the fleet for use ashore “in any forts or fortresses”. Here again the plural “eenige forten ofte fortessen” is used, confirming the resolve to maintain in a state of defence such forts as fell into allied hands, and, indeed, arm them heavily even at the risk of weakening the batteries of the costly men-of-war.

The rest of the Treaty dealt mainly with security as regards the unmolested passage of VOC factors with trains of goods through the countryside. It may be remarked here that stable conditions favouring peaceful traffic could not have been found away from the reassuring background of a military base which housed a mobile strike-force.

The foregoing summary shows that the line of coastal forts was the backbone of the Treaty. Without them neither the war effort nor trade could gather momentum. Their seizure would be no more than a first step. Thereafter the displaced enemy, himself a sea-power, would have to be prevented from coming back and occupying the site again. The task of stamping out all traces of hostile influence in a given district demanded a continuing military presence operating from a base held by one or other of the two partners.

Two exemplars of the Portuguese Master-text were copied out in fair hand, authenticated, signed by both parties and sealed with their signets. Each partner kept one of the twin documents. Numbers of copies, of course, were then transcribed and distributed among those concerned, both Kandyan and Dutch. Nor need it be doubted that a Sinhalese version, too, was prepared.

The King called it his most precious security (KA. 1036, f. 324). And, indeed, it marked the triumph of his policy, recognizing him as
The 1638 Westerwolt Treaty in Ceylon

a sovereign head of state, in contrast to the Goan accord, which reduced him to the level of a vassal.

He had hitched his waggon to a star — the rising power of the VOC — and thereafter looked forward to "the increase of my Imperial fame, estate and the good of my Crown and Empire" (Letter No. 15 from Raja Sinha to the Dutch, CAS. 18/55: 253).

After the signing ceremony the King requested Westerwolt to draft a hundred Dutch troops to garrison Batticaloa. Since the fortress was in the capable hands of the "trusty Hollanders", he was free to settle accounts with his brother, the over-mighty Vijayapala, rival claimant to the title of Emperor. This contender, for his part, was still out in the field trying to contain the Portuguese within their western strongholds. But behind his back his domain of Uva had been overrun by the huge army brought by Raja Sinha to link up with the daunting power of a Dutch battle squadron. About mid-September, when Vijayapala was returning from his campaign, he was led into a cunning trap, suddenly attacked and overwhelmed. He was then held prisoner under close guard (Coster to GG, 31.12.1638, KA. 1039, f. 385). With his downfall and with the Dutch heavily committed to Ceylon in military manpower and equipment and finance, Raja Sinha felt that he had surmounted his immediate crisis. He no longer saw any pressing need to fulfil his part of the bargain by delivering the promised cargoes of cinnamon. The quantity of such products as he slowly scraped together for shipment was meagre, its quality a disgrace. Repeated reminders and complaints by the VOC factors fell on deaf ears. Even a special consignment taken with great ceremony by the Kandyan ambassadors to Batavia was found to be valueless: "550 bundles containing 40,062 lbs of bad cinnamon", which nobody cared even to appraise, since it was not worth the trouble. "His Majesty has been informed accordingly and our agents there have been forbidden ever again to accept such bad cinnamon. Indeed, Commander Caen would have refused it if it had not already been delivered before he arrived" (GG & C. to Dirs, 18.12.1639, KA. 1039, f. 64). Thus, from the outset Raja Sinha was in breach of Article 8, which barred the baser sort of cinnamon. But graver news still had been received. Coster, on one of his visits to the Court, was dismayed to learn that cinnamon of the finer quality grew in abundance only along the western seaboard, well out of reach until the Portuguese could be dispossessed. "If we should bring about the capture of Colombo, then the quality would be better and the quantity larger" (Coster to GG, 31.12.1638, KA. 1039, f. 391). In the same
letter, in fact on the same page, he uttered the warning: "It is certain likewise that the Company will not enjoy full reimbursement of the costs already incurred and those further to be run up until the Portuguese have been driven out of the principal forts".

Raja Sinha had emerged as a master of double-dealing. He had plied the Dutch with misleading information, made promises which he had neither the power nor even the intention to keep, and artfully manoeuvred them into a position from which they could not retreat without loss of face or advance without loss of money. Any districts taken from the Portuguese by force of Dutch arms would at once be claimed by Raja Sinha, under the sham title of Emperor of the Island of Ceylon.

He could refrain altogether from paying even a part of the money due, or worse, go through a pretence of settling the account by means of bogus deliveries. The Dutch would be left to feed on the chameleon’s dish, "eating the air promise-crammed". In this dilemma they decided to go forward, taking a calculated risk of further loss.

*Raja Sinha’s futile bid for Colombo, 1639*

At the King’s urgent request, conveyed through his envoys sent on a special mission to Batavia as his “dearest wish”, plans were framed as early as August 1638 for a joint Kandyan-Dutch attempt on Colombo. To co-ordinate timing and location the Dutch kept the King fully abreast “of our designs and intentions, which can be clearly explained to him in person by his ambassadors” (GG & C. to Coster, 11.8.1638, KA. 765, f. 376). The Kandyan mission embarked for home on 12 August with the good news that an armament would be sent (GM. 22.12.1638: I, 674). By November, Coster became aware that the King was about to send a military mission to the fleet blockading Goa with a fuller briefing for its commander, Anthonio Caen, who would lead the task-force against Colombo (Coster to GG, 31.12.1638, KA. 1039, f. 391).

The Supreme Council had been given the final push into choosing Colombo as their objective by Kandyan assurances that: “His Majesty holds the city of Colombo blockaded as tightly as possible with an army about 20,000 strong” (GM. 22.12.1638: I, 723). The claim was false. In actual fact Raja Sinha’s troops were fortifying themselves at Ruvanvella, no nearer than forty miles inland, which was too far away for an effective curb to be put on enemy supplies. However, he had a flying column said to number about 3000 under the command of Don Bal-
thasar, a veteran Sinhalese leader formerly of the Portuguese armed services. The quality of this irregular force may be described as dubious. Its poor performance would suggest that no Kandyan or Uva stalwarts were fighting in its ranks. It seems to have been recruited largely from lowland vagabonds and jungle bandits.

However that may be, the evidence proves that the King was given upwards of four months in which to complete the mobilization for an offensive which he himself had strongly advocated.

Off Goa, Admiral Caen disengaged his squadron from the blockade on 18 February, no doubt under the terms of an arrangement with Raja Sinha, so as to be able to strike in unison about mid-March. His commission laid stress on cooperation with Raja Sinha, saying, “You should not undertake any action except with the Emperor’s concurrence and you should maintain the closest touch with him” (GG & C. to Caen, 9.11.1638, KA. 765, ff. 548-9).

On 9 March 1638 Caen arrived off the west coast of Ceylon and put in near Chilaw, about fifty miles north of Colombo. There he set ashore two messengers with a letter telling Raja Sinha that they were ready for the landings. “We are confident”, he wrote, “that we shall find Your Majesty near Colombo fully set for an instant attack on the fortress” (Caen, Diary, KA. 1039, f. 167). He was assured by the ambassadors on board that “His Majesty could receive the report of our arrival here within two days”. The messengers knew the routes and were swift of foot. Therefore “we might get a reply to our letter at the end of three more days, or else the King himself would appear with his whole army before Colombo”. Indeed, he had declared to Coster how “he wanted only that the squadron should wait six, or at most, eight days”.

At dusk on 11th March Caen arrived off Colombo. At dawn on the 12th the Portuguese opened fire and the Dutch men-of-war replied. Salvoes were exchanged intermittently till the 17th. Raja Sinha remained silent and unseen. The Council resolved to watch and wait for him till the 21st.

No letters were received from the King or his officers by Caen or Coster, although their names were known to the Kandyans. A message purporting to come from Balthasar was indeed brought by word of mouth, but was belied by events within twenty-four hours. A few days later a letter addressed to the ambassador and the interpreter was read, but was found to be so vague that it aroused suspicion. It seemed to have been forged. Caen was promised shore-based cover under which
to steer landing-craft through the surf to a beach clear of the enemy. "The full Council noted that we had not been able to get any firm advice, much less written information" (Caen, Diary, 4 April, ff. 175 and 316).

The Admirals knew better than to cast their troops ashore on a hostile beach exposed to the risk of some Portuguese ambush on the advice of questionable strangers. For twelve days they had waited in the roadstead outside Colombo. "We would have had a fine chance to capture the fort if only the King had linked up with us" (Caen, Diary, f. 172).

On 23 March, two days beyond their deadline, the Council of the fleet made up its mind to the worst, and that evening set sail for Batticaloa. There, on 12 April, Caen had a reply from the King (to his letter of 9 March, reporting arrival off Chilaw) dated 27 March and written in Kandy. It proposed that "if in view of the imminent strong winds we should be unable to await His Majesty's arrival at Colombo, we should move down to Galle, where he would supply us with manpower and fresh provisions" (Caen, Diary, 12.4.1639; KA. 1039, f. 181). The King also wrote, in a letter dated 15 March, that he was still "diligently mobilizing his forces, but that he would need plenty of time for this" (Caen, Diary, 17.4.1639; KA. 1039, f. 187).

So at last the truth was out. While Caen was waiting in vain for the Kandyans to close the pincers round Colombo, Raja Sinha lay helpless in Kandy straining (if such a word can rightly be applied to him) to muster even part of his army. After five months he still needed "plenty of time". The deadline for an alignment of forces near Colombo had long since passed, but he had not yet even moved from his capital.

However, his letter cleared the Dutch of all blame for the failure of the design against Colombo. Further exoneration came from the Governor of Sammanturai (the province just south of Batticaloa), who received despatches from the Court on 20 April with news that Balthasar had been punished by the King for dereliction of duty (Caen, Diary, f. 192). (The luckless Balthasar was killed the following year, when an enemy force composed mostly of Sinhalese men-at-arms in the Portuguese service attacked his brigade near Negombo and, though outnumbered, put it to flight.)

But the tale of Raja Sinha's ill-success in the field is not yet fully told. Early in April he himself ventured as far westward as Ruvanvella, some forty miles inland from Colombo. The place, which was naturally strong, had been made almost impregnable by stout defence works.
But the Portuguese, freed of the Dutch threat, turned eastwards and struck at the heart of the country. On the eve of Easter they went ostentatiously to their priests to confess and go to Communion, “showing their determination to conquer or die”. The King was thrown into a panic and “resolved to flee” (de Queiroz 1930: I, 815). In his headlong flight to escape the relatively small enemy force advancing upon him, he sacrificed his rearguard and his baggage train. His huge army broke up and melted away. The Portuguese celebrated Easter at his Head-quarters at Ruvanvella on 14 April.

The news of this crushing defeat could not be concealed from the Dutch for very long, even by the King’s propaganda agents.

Capture of Trincomalee
Caen still had a chance to salvage part of the wrecked plan by seizing Trincomalee. With Raja Sinha’s concurrence and promise of military support he made ready to assault the fort, thereby showing that hope can triumph over experience. Once again he waited in vain for any sign of the Kandyan troops, and at last attacked without them and on 2nd May accepted the garrison’s surrender on fair and honourable terms.

“The said fort had been hardly two hours in our hands when the King’s commanders came up with about 3000 men”, Caen wrote in his Diary (f. 206). They seemed to have come to a halt a few miles away in the middle of the action.

The two main ports in the King’s realm had now been freed and thrown open to his subjects, with the resultant benefit to their trade, after a blockade lasting fifteen years in the case of Trincomalee (since 1624) and ten for Batticaloa (since 1628). Not a word of thanks or even a bare reference was breathed (Lukasz to Dirs, 9.1.1640, KA. 1039, f. 20).

The Kandyan leaders then requested Caen to give the fort into their hands. He, believing that the enemy would counter-attack as soon as reinforcements reached the Island, asked them on two separate occasions, the 3rd and 5th May, whether they were able to hold it against a likely assault without Dutch help. They confessed that they felt unequal to the task, but that the question should not arise in any case because the King wanted it demolished.

Caen was taken aback at this proposal to violate the Treaty, which laid down as a cardinal duty in the clearest of terms in several of its articles that every captured fort should be preserved and, indeed,
rebuilt and restored to a full state of defence without delay.

He reasoned with the Kandyans and said that for the time being he
would station his own men on guard, till such time as he could consult
the Governor-General for a ruling that would best serve the interests
of both King and Company. His Deputy, Coster, who had himself
signed the Treaty, was at hand and, no doubt, was able to point out
that the King’s purposes ignored not only his obligations but also the
military situation. Caen saw plainly that if he threw away a tactical
gain in the lowlands it would not be Raja Sinha who would restore
the balance after re-entry by the Portuguese. That burden, at present
avoidable, would fall on the Dutch.

The Treaty itself was then laid on the table and Caen took pains
to explain and expound the full implications of the text. The term
used in his Diary is “vertolcken”, i.e. “interpret or bring out the
meaning of”, just as a lawyer interprets the terms of an enactment or
a preacher expounds the Scriptures. Moreover, he put forward not just
a single clause, but the Treaty as a whole (“wierde voortgebracht het
Contract... doende hetselve henluyden vertolcken...”, Caen, Diary,
3 May, f. 209, also 5 May, f. 212, KA. 1039). He was calling attention
to the force of the interlocking clauses when studied together. In this
context, with the King bent on demolition, too, he pointed out that
the Dutch could invoke their overriding powers to parry any oblique
move such as non-cooperation (non-garrisoning) to find a way round
the Treaty.

The cumulative effect of several clauses laid a duty on the con-
tracting parties to ensure the safety of the forts regardless of all other
demands. To solve the present deadlock he pointed to an alternative
course, namely “that the forts could be dealt with in a different manner
through joint talks between the King and the higher Dutch command
as time and opportunity allowed”, that is, defence needs and the balance
of Dutch and Portuguese military power (Caen, Diary, 5 May, f. 212).
In short, if Raja Sinha wished to vary the set policy, he should at least
abide by Article 6, which bound him, when “wanting to try any war
measures”, first of all to consult the Dutch Chiefs of Staff. To abandon
a fortress was a war measure of the gravest consequence. However,
since three Kandyan ambassadors were about to embark for Batavia
on 21 May, they could address the Supreme Council on the subject in
person. A careful reading of the various Articles bearing on this issue
will show that Caen had construed the terms correctly.

If Raja Sinha was vexed at his failure to deal with Trincomalee as
The 1638 Westerwolt Treaty in Ceylon

he wished, his anger soon passed. Within a few weeks a formal embassy from him arrived at Batavia to offer the Dutch a large part of the western province as a reward if they would capture Colombo. But at this stage in their relations with Ceylon they had no interest in assuming rulership. Trade was uppermost in their minds. Accordingly they rejected the offer. They supplied yet other proofs that colonial ambitions had no place in their Ceylon policy at the time (see Appendix II).

Raja Sinha's further defaults, 1639-40

No way of ensuring recovery of Raja Sinha's debt was left to the Dutch except to conquer the cinnamon belt themselves. The capture of Colombo, Galle or Negombo was the first necessary step towards this end. The Supreme Council, therefore, resolved to hazard further capital in fitting out a fresh expedition, again at Raja Sinha's insistence, later in 1639. Advance notice was given him in a despatch of 24 August 1639 which was carried by a commander of a company of 200 soldiers drafted, at his earnest plea, to serve as his bodyguard. His own 12,000-strong army was not loyal enough, it seemed, to defend him against threats to his life from his insurgent subjects. He had asked for 500 Dutch veterans, but was allowed only 200, "to deter those who have risen in rebellion against him" (Resolns. Supreme Co., 17.8.1639, KA. 564). They were also assigned another task which proved unfeasible, namely to make sure that the King marched down to the coast and linked up with the VOC's seaborne forces. The Dutch fleet, commanded by Director-General P. Lukasz, sailed along Ceylon's east coast early in December, touched land just long enough to send off an urgent reminder to Raja Sinha to move betimes on Colombo, continued towards the south, rounded the southern tip of the island and steered northwards to Colombo. However, they waited in vain for any sign of the King's army to give them the promised support. Once again the Dutch learnt that Raja Sinha's sole contribution towards battle would be sabre-rattling. Lukasz hovered off Negombo further up the coast, and found it to be reefbound and dangerous, but, since he needed water and fresh food, sought a landing at Kammala, some few miles north of Negombo.

While cruising around the seaboard, Lukasz came upon clear proof everywhere that he had been deceived about the extent of Raja Sinha's control of the lowlands. His reconnaissance left him in grave doubt as to whether the King was as much master of Ceylon as he pretended to be and whether his troops could prevail against the power of the
Portuguese and their adherents. “During our voyage round this coast we took note of the conditions in the countryside and discovered that all the fertile, cultivated and well-peopled villages were ruled by the Portuguese. They dominate practically the whole of Ceylon and keep the Emperor penned up in the interior. Indeed, he has recently been driven back by their army and has lost more than a third of the territory he possessed. The Kandyan forces have been pushed back scores of miles inland. Any attempt by them at a downward march is likely to be contested and heavily obstructed.” (To the Dirs, 9.1.1640, KA. 1039, ff. 18-19).

The truth of this assessment was borne out almost at once. Raja Sinha moved his huge host westward, but when he was still a good 35 miles away from the sea, came to a stop at the Portuguese outpost of Arandara. “It lay on a small plain at the foot of four lofty ridges from which gunfire could play upon the fort, so that the site was, so to speak, exposed” (Valentyn 1726: 255). There his advance was barred by a relatively small Portuguese-Sinhalese force made up of almost a dozen Portuguese companies and a couple of thousand lascorins or peasant militia (de Queyroz 1930: 821). Despite his immense advantage in tactical position and numbers, he held back from battle.

Presently the Portuguese field-force abandoned Arandara and marched seaward to face the Dutch. It then merged with a contingent from Colombo and was further re-inforced by the Negombo-based units. The combined three groups then flung themselves upon the bridgehead formed by Lukasz a few days before 29 January. But after a furious struggle they were thrown back in defeat with heavy loss. Their broken and scattered ranks straggled back to Colombo down the road which should have been blocked by Raja Sinha. By the time he approached the scene, on 29th January, the main, decisive battle had been fought, enemy resistance had been overcome and all that remained were minor mopping-up operations. Negombo itself was now a mere husk, “manned by only 45 of the most incapacitated and sick... with some Canarese” (de Queyroz 1930: 3, 829). Ribeiro too says that “its garrison consisted of only one company of the aged, sick and disabled” (Ribeiro 1948: 107). Thus, it was virtually stripped to enable the Portuguese “to reinforce Colombo, which it was more important to defend” (de Queyroz 1930: 3, 824). Raja Sinha now drew up his army in battle array. The combined Kandyan-Dutch units easily overran the position on 9 February. In a masterly understatement the Dutch made a passing reference to Raja Sinha’s “tardy (spade) appearance
The 1638 Westerwolt Treaty in Ceylon

with his army” (GG & C. to Coster, 26.9.1640, KA. 767, f. 620). The word “loiter” (sammelen) is also used.

De Queyroz (1930: 821) makes the sardonic comment that Lukasz was mistaken in his belief that the “King of Candea would not tarry but would be there (at Kammala) with all his might”, and that the Portuguese field-force at Arandara would by then have been destroyed. De Queyroz further expressed as his opinion, soon to be shared by the Dutch, that the King had called in his new allies “only to check the invasions of the Portuguese and to get possession of the lowlands by counterpoising the forces of the two European nations” and thus profit from “their mutual opposition” (de Queyroz 1930: 822).

Dispute over King’s claim to demolish forts

The fall of Negombo brought to the forefront the earlier issue arising from the King’s demand that forts when captured should be demolished. In accordance with the terms of Article 3 of the Treaty the Dutch at once began to repair and strengthen the broken ramparts. But the King brought their work to a temporary halt by asserting that the fort was now at his disposal and that he chose to see it levelled with the ground. He was arrogating to himself a right nowhere conceded to him in the Treaty. On the contrary, it was his inescapable duty to retain and keep in good, reinforced condition all forts that fell into allied hands. He was entitled, of course, to choose the garrison, nominating VOC troops for that duty if he so pleased. His prerogative went thus far and no further. But he was now seeking to extend it beyond the licensed limits. Nobody disputed his claim to decide the question of personnel to occupy each fort — subject to the conditions in the last sentence of Article 3; but the fort itself, the stone walls, masonry, and gunemplacements lay outside his authority. Basing himself on his undoubted right to name a Dutch garrison according to his will and pleasure, he then carried this privilege a step further to include an unwarranted power to name no garrison at all, thus making an empty shell of the fort which would then lie invitingly open to the enemy. The next step in logic was to propose that the ramparts should be knocked down. The King was doubling, indeed, trebling his options. The Dutch opposed the chain reaction in Raja Sinha’s argument, which paid no regard to his obligations. To demolish a fortress was no way to preserve it. Nor could they share his curious belief that “it is a finer performance to wipe out a fort than to win it” (GG & C. to Coster, 26.9.1640, KA. 767, f. 621).
No doubt a drastic step of this kind could be considered at some later date if a marked change for the better occurred in the military situation. The chiefs of the VOC staff could then hold consultations and give advice as to whether such risks were justified, as suggested in Article 6. But at present the combat units were operating in areas wide open to attack. In the case of Negombo they were beset by strong Portuguese forces to the north and south. The local peasantry, bound to the Portuguese by common interests, were mainly hostile. The King’s boast that his influence in the lowlands outweighed the power of the Portuguese proved to be largely make-believe.

In the normal course no Dutch garrison was authorized to occupy a fort without the King’s consent. But at this critical time he withdrew his cooperation and abandoned the fort. His default would have left the Dutch troops exposed to mortal danger unless they used their reserve powers to ensure that the “forts were reinforced as they saw fit”, if need be in defiance of Raja Sinha’s design. He had manoeuvred them into a false position in which they could be checkmated. They had no choice but willy-nilly to block his move by invoking the supreme law to ensure the integrity of the fort. They were within their rights under the Treaty.

The King was already in breach of Article 8 through a double failure: (a) to deliver at least one shipload of cinnamon a year, and (b) make sure that the consignment was not adulterated. He had also broken his pledge, under Article 7, to supply rowing-boats and other light craft for inshore ferry services. His remissness caused Lukasz heavy loss and damage when he was forced to hazard his big ships in shallow, rock-bound waters for lack of small boats.

He disregarded Article 1, which enjoined him to receive the Dutch as allies and protectors of “his country”, though now they were embattled in territory which, for generations, had been held under effective occupation by the Portuguese. Instead, he held them in suspicion, showed indifference to their bare security needs and treated them as enemies though they had come in response to his own pressing invitation. While he could only try to monarchize in the lowlands to the west, he was threatening to strip Lukasz and Coster of vital defences. Since the time of Westerwolt he had revealed an increasing weakness in the field. And now, after a fort had been captured by his allies and delivered into his hands, he was still unable or unwilling to provide his own garrison. It was unreal for him to profess that his troops lacked skill in gunnery and siege-craft. They would soon have
mastered the techniques had they been given the chance to train. But he was too suspicious even of his own commanders to trust them within an armoured base. His army was organized on less than efficient lines to prevent the Soldiers from Plotting... "and was so ordered for fear of Conspiracies" (Knox 1681: 55).

Raja Sinha solved his problem by refusing to tolerate any fort in the low country, as likewise in the highlands "he hath no Artificial Forts or Castles" (Knox 1681: 54). But he forgot that in his own realm, "Nature hath supplied the want of them". The Dutch, for their part, were not content with the shelter afforded by bare houses ("bloote huysen") exposed to enemy commando raids in little armadas ("met cleene armaden", GG to Raja Sinha, 26.9.1640, KA. 767, f. 641).

The fate of a fortress on the seaboard was too important to be left to the judgement of a highlander.

Both parties cited as their authority the Portuguese Master-text as contained in the twin documents, which were identical word for word, and which had been handed out, signed and sealed, to each to serve for final appeal in the event of disagreement. Raja Sinha had construed his own prerogative too liberally. The Governor-General summed up the issue in his despatch to the Directors of 9.6.1640 (van Geer 1895: Bijlage V, 8) as a case of the King pushing his claim unreasonably far, which he qualified as "onredelijcke pretentie".

By dealing a blow at Article 3 the King was tearing up the whole Treaty. His plan required that all captured forts should be wiped off the map. It cancelled Article 5, which provided for the security of merchandise and military stores, including explosives, against enemy action. It made null and void Article 6, which required him to consult the higher Dutch staff before putting in hand any business connected with war. It also breached Article 8, which sought to safeguard the passage of merchants with their goods through the countryside.

However, within a few months the King himself acknowledged that even inside a fort the Dutch would be wise to be watchful against infiltration and sabotage. He wrote on 24 July 1640 to warn them against intruders who, it was known for certain, were Portuguese agents, as came clearly to light in the case of the Negombo fortress, where they plotted to poison the well (D-R., 27.11.1640, p. 96).

The Capture of Galle, 13 March 1640

At the siege of Galle too (9-13 March 1640) he held aloof. By his own admission he had brought his forces to the outskirts of the fort,
“within half an hour's march” of Coster's camp, no later than 12 March (D-R., 2.9.1641, p. 409). Even then he failed to make his way to the place only two miles off where the cannon thundered and his allies were opening a breach and, on the 13th, stormed the walls. Yet, although his combat units were held back in idleness, he took care to send one of his commanders to the spot to watch the closing stage (de Queyroz 1930: 841) in order to claim the half-share of the booty due to him under Article 2, which stipulated: “When any... forts are taken and occupied by us by treaty or by force with His Majesty's help and military power, the booty shall be equally divided”.

No great discernment is required to see the lines on which Raja Sinha was shaping his strategy. Let the two European groupings fight it out between themselves in the lowlands in a war of attrition till both are threatened with bankruptcy. The VOC would be distressed by the drain on its economic resources and quit the island sooner than accept further losses. The Portuguese, already overstretched in other parts of their sprawling empire, would be too impoverished to rebuild and equip their shattered fortresses. Both parties would leave behind them a no-man's land into which Raja Sinha could spread his “Empire and fame”.

In a letter to Thysz, President of the Ceylon lodges (13.4.1641, KA. 768, f. 99), the Supreme Council gave their assessment as follows: Raja Sinha seeks to lull us into placidity with fair words. Once he is rid of the burden of the Portuguese he will help to trip us up and oust us (“de voet lichten”) by making us waste our substance on heavy but vain expenses in order that we might evacuate the country of our own accord (“'t land uyt ons selven ruymden”). That is why he has been continually trying, as he still is, to demolish the forts we have taken. He wants to prevent us from holding them as security till such time as we can recover his debt. Nor is there much chance of that in sight unless we ourselves provide him with the means from our military strength. The Portuguese, for their part, would be overwhelmed by any further defence costs.

De Queyroz (1930: 827-28) has independently confirmed the foregoing judgement by making clear that no effective help towards winning the war would be given to his allies by Raja Sinha. The Dutch, too, discovered for themselves that when they were locked in battle he would spend his time marching and counter-marching with a great display of military fervour but always arriving too late to influence the outcome.
The enormous outlay on the expeditions of Caen and Lukasz was highly gratifying to him, especially since his careful planning ensured that little benefit accrued to the VOC. The longer the campaign, the greater his mountain of debts, but, since he had neither the means nor the intention to settle, they could remain hypothetical except on the rare occasions when he paid a trifle just to give the hopes of the VOC a whiff of oxygen.

He was nearly right in his calculations. Several times the Supreme Council, in despair of his cooperation or any return on their investment, thought of cutting their losses and withdrawing. For instance, at their meeting of 20.8.1639 they resolved to let the “Emperor stand on his own feet [op eygen beenen te laten rusten], pull our garrisons out of there and put in hand some other undertaking of importance elsewhere” (KA. 564). They wrote in the same vein to Lukasz (GM. 18.12.1639, f. 66) and to Coster (26.9.1640, KA. 767, f. 623), arguing that greater advantages could be gained outside Ceylon.

The King’s efforts to dismantle the forts were in no way due to the excessive charges alleged to have been fixed by the VOC for their military aid. The first itemized list specifying details of stores, equipment and services with attendant memorandum of costs was delivered to the King on 22 January 1641 (D-R., 26.8.1641, p. 399). It was compiled in Batavia on 25/26 Sept. 1640 (KA. 767, f. 639 and D-R., 2.9.1641, p. 410). His acknowledgement was dated 16/27 March and was full of lavish promises to the effect that “I will settle your claims”. But he added excuses for his continuing default which, he said, was due to the disturbed state of the country (D-R., 26.8.1641, pp. 401-407).

On the other hand, the dispute over the disposal of Trincomalee fort was thrashed out on 3rd and 5th May 1639, more than twenty months prior to this. The same issue cropped up again at Negombo in early February 1640, or nearly a year before Raja Sinha studied his liabilities. Modern writers allege that the figures were inflated. But that is a debatable question that should be dealt with separately. It has no relevance in the context of his move to wipe out all the forts.

Precedent of the Cautionary Towns

However, as time passed and still not even a single shipload of cinnamon had been delivered for reasons quite unrelated to any high charges, the VOC attitude hardened.

When Negombo and then Galle fell to the allies in February-March 1640, the cinnamon lands lay within easy reach, so that the main
focus of interest, activity and danger shifted from the eastern to the western provinces. Batticaloa and Trincomalee now assumed a subordinate place, and indeed became redundant to the VOC. But to Raja Sinha, for reasons of prestige, they were assets which he coveted. His tardiness in settling his debts prompted the Dutch to turn their “veto power” to account and to withhold the forts until he should make restitution, if even in part. They were guided by examples taken from the history of their own Netherlands, such as the case of “cautionary towns” like Vlissingen and Brielle, which became military bases occupied by regiments from England during the reign of Elizabeth I. The cost of their upkeep was borne by the Dutch, who were allowed to resume possession in 1616 after paying King James I a sum of £215,000/- in settlement of their debt. This well-established precedent was now followed in Ceylon. Batticaloa and Trincomalee might have lost their military value, but had acquired certain uses on the score of security. They were the VOC’s insurance against two risks arising in succession — the first, enemy invasion of newly-won districts, and the second, evasion of payment by Raja Sinha. No doubt, in the second instance the Dutch would not have been justified in clinging to the forts against the King’s wishes if he had indemnified them earlier, as the Governor-General himself frankly avowed in a letter to Raja Sinha (26.9.1640, KA. 767, f. 640). Nor were they very exacting over the terms. Trincomalee was handed over on 20 April 1640, or almost at once, upon delivery of a number of elephants which fetched 21,000 guilders. Batticaloa followed just two years later on receipt of a nominal payment. Indeed, the Dutch never denied that the King “seemed partly right” (scheen . . . ten deele gelijck te hebben: D-R., 26.5.1641, p. 335), since under normal conditions they required his approval before taking over garrison duties.

*Master-text in Portuguese ignored by the critics*

In contrast to the elegant instrument drawn up in Portuguese, which was duly signed, the Dutch draft remained in its rough-hewn state. In fact, it teems with blemishes, including mistakes in spelling as well as grammar. Signs of careless or hasty copying are obvious at a glance (see Appendix I).

By one of these many oversights, the 3rd Article lost a sub-clause affecting the King’s right to decide on the garrison’s personnel. This missing proviso, given within square brackets in the English translation above, had no direct bearing on the issue, since that hinged on the
King's demand to demolish the forts. Nevertheless, the omission of these words, "if His Majesty so pleases and approves", even from a document with no legal force, has given modern writers occasion to bring grave charges against the integrity of local Dutch officials as well as the Supreme Council.

No evidence has been brought forward by these critics to support their theory that: "the Dutch, it is clear, put aside the original copy and, for all practical purposes made use of a Dutch translation" (Goonewardena 1958: 33). No "practical purpose" could have been more important than an occasion when the interpretation of a given clause came under dispute. Raja Sinha and his advisers would instantly have challenged a supposed rendering in Dutch, since they had no knowledge of the language. They would have brought Lukasz or Caen sharply back to the only text which, in their view, possessed validity, namely the Portuguese exemplar. It would have been vain for Lukasz or Caen to have tried to palm off a forged version (as the critics contend) when numerous copies true to the original were already in the hands of the keen-witted agents of the other party. Indeed, the instrument was drawn up in Portuguese for the very purpose of leaving no room whatever for the kind of contingency which the Dutch are alleged to have exploited. Nor was there the least difficulty in producing the Portuguese text. Copies of the Dutch version were attached to the Portuguese original. Twin sets were compiled and issued together, as is amply proved by the lists of documents enclosed with the despatches. For instance in the "Resolutions of the GG & C." for 23.9.1639 (KA. 564), transcripts of which were forwarded to the Directors, references are included to the following items: "No. 4 — Copy of the Westerwolt Treaty with Raja Sinha: the Contract in Dutch. No. 5 — Copy of the same as written down in Portuguese." Furthermore, copies of the Official Diary of Batavia were sent to the Directors with the General Missive of 22.12.1638 along with the following Note: "As regards the Treaty that has been concluded . . . herewith are enclosed six twin sets as copied into our Daghregister under the date 12 July" (KA. 1036, f. 70).

The critic continues (Goonewardena 1958: 33): "What excuse or explanation Lucas gave Raja Sinha for the omission of this clause in the Dutch translation or for having relied at all, so heavily, on a translation and not on the original, is not really known". No such explanation was called for. The master-text lay open before both disputants. It is Dr. Goonewardena who has fallen into error by keeping...
back from the reader the basic terms of the Treaty and stating, on the preceding page (32), “As soon as Raja Sinha saw the Dutch repairing the damaged walls of Negombo, he immediately asked Lucas to stop all repairs and hand over the fort to him as he wished to raze it to the ground”. The King was quite wrong. He had no right to demolish even a single bastion. Lukasz was putting into operation the Treaty's prime requirement when he started to restore the defences.

Modern commentators make great play with a defective Dutch version which was not signed by the parties and may well have been left untouched in its pigeon-hole while the VOC officials were in contention with the Kandyans over any breaches of clauses. The critics are careful to quote only fragments or misleading summaries of the Treaty so that its true scope is not revealed. They also interpolate and mistranslate words and thereby convey wrong impressions. The following passage is an example (Goonewardena 1958: 28): “When Caen found that he could not refuse the request of the mudaliyars merely by pointing out their inability to defend the fort, he produced a copy of the Treaty of 1638. He caused the 3rd Article to be translated and solemnly pointed out to the Sinhalese that the Treaty expressly stated that all the captured forts would be garrisoned by the Dutch.” Here the key words are mistranslated, as will be explained below; likewise the viewpoint presented is the opposite of the terms actually laid down. As soon as the Kandyan chiefs admitted that the defence of the fort was more than they could handle, all argument should have ceased. The safe-keeping and integrity of the fort were of paramount importance. Yet the critic treats Caen’s action as a breach of faith. Caen nowhere specifies the 3rd Article by itself. He brought forward the Treaty as a whole, calling attention to the cumulative force of the various interlocking clauses. But the critic has interpolated into the evidence his own phrase “the 3rd Article” in order to narrow the inquiry down to this single area, where he hopes to prove that Caen was at fault. He then renders the word “verteleken” as “translate”, whereas it means “expound”. In fact, Caen exerted himself to expound the full significance of the entire Treaty in all its bearings. He went much further than “cause the 3rd Article to be translated”. Moreover, a wrong rendering is given for Caen’s phrase “het voorz. Contract expresselyck was medebrengende dat”, viz. “the Treaty expressly stated that”. Now, the word medebrengende does not mean stated. The proper English equivalent is “carries with it the implication” or “brings in its train as a consequence” (Jansonus 1972: 911; 1-4) and “imposes the responsi-
bility on..." Likewise, expresselyck can here be rendered "of set purpose" or "advisedly". Given the correct translation, the meaning of the passage is totally transformed. It should read: "the afore-mentioned Contract carried with it, of set purpose, the implication that..." It was a safety provision against failure or non-cooperation by the King so that the Dutch could step in and ensure continuity.

By garbling the sense of the word medebrengende the critic corroborates the evidence that the document produced by Caen was the Portuguese instead of, as alleged, the Dutch text. If it was the defective Dutch version, stripped of the reference to the King's right to choose the garrison, then Caen would have had no occasion to use the word medebrengende, since that particular text stated categorically that Dutch troops would man the garrisons, without further ado. Therefore, in resorting to the phrase "carried with it the implication" he was clearly referring to the powers reserved to him under the final sentence of Article 3, and was thus using the Portuguese text.

It is not convenient here to mention more than one or two of the many misleading statements made by Dr. Goonewardena. For instance: "From the account of Queyroz (819-26) it appears clearly that the Sinhalese played as large a part as the Dutch at the capture of Negombo. But the available Dutch documents make no mention of this" (Goonewardena 1958: 50, n. 36). What de Queyroz makes clear is that the Kandyans arrived on the scene several days after the main and decisive engagement had taken place at Kammala. Negombo was a mere shell. Its capture was not a battle but a walk-over. The Dutch had no occasion to describe how the King came up in time "to encumber them with help".

In the same way no support can be found for the allegation that the Supreme Council coached the assistant factor Holsteyn in the part he should play and primed him with the excuses he should give in a plot to deceive the King about the missing sub-clause. "This attempt to make it appear that the fault lay with Holsteyn was carried to great lengths. For instance on 18 Oct. 1641 (KA. 768, p. 516) GG & C. wrote to Holsteyn (who was at Kandy at the time) saying that they believed that he had made this wrong translation not through malice but through an error. The letter had the effect which was apparently desired. Holsteyn wrote back a letter full of apologies for his 'error'. (D-R. 1642, 255). That GG & C.'s letter was really sent for Raja's information is apparent from the fact that they wrote to Thyssen at the same time (KA. 768, ff. 503-08) asking him to send the letter for
Holsteyn, only if he thought it prudent; for, after all, they could not be sure what Raja might do to Holsteyn on the strength of that letter" (Goonewardena 1958: 51, n. 42).

Both the letters from the GG & C. of 18 Oct. 1641, the one to Holsteyn and that to Thysz, show with the utmost clarity that they were written in reply to apologies already received from Holsteyn, as conveyed in his letter of still earlier date, to wit, 17 March 1641. The very first line in each letter is proof positive, viz: (a) to Holsteyn: “18 Oct. 1641; Your Honour's letter dated 17 March last at Kandy, has come to hand: the difference between the Portuguese and the Dutch text... etc.”, after which the writers go on to say that they are willing to accept his explanation that the blunder, even though clumsy in their view, arose from human error; (b) to Thysz: “18 Oct. 1641; what we are writing to the Assistant Holsteyn in reply (in antwoorde schrijven, i.e. to this letter of 17 March) can be seen from the attached copy...”.

In the face of this evidence that the GG & C. were responding to a plea for pardon already submitted by Holsteyn, the charge of conspiracy falls to the ground. Of course the Supreme Council felt concern at the remissness shown in the Dutch version of Article 3. It was a reproach to the efficiency of their Protocol branch. But it was irrelevant; and the King's reactions carried little weight, except in so far as the Dutch had given him hostages. He was no doubt aware of the mistake, since the Dutch made no secret of it and his spies were everywhere.

But their letter to Holsteyn included trenchant comments on the King himself, e.g., “We hold for certain and take this view of the matter that in his search for reasons to deny us our due right Raja will never be at a loss for pretexts and therefore, on this account too, the above-mentioned difference in the text matters the less”.

This type of remark in the Supreme Council’s letter would have endangered Holsteyn’s life, especially so soon after the murder of Coster. It was, of course, taken for granted that the King read all the letters written to or by the envoys at his Court. In view of this practice Holsteyn’s letter of 17 March was of necessity brief and restrained. His next letter, written a year later, on 26 March 1642, perhaps was not censored. It is outside the scope of this article to inquire whether Holsteyn was able to send it under less harrowing circumstances after being released from duty at Kandy as promised.

The critic takes two separate letters written more than a year apart and fuses them together to give the impression that they are one. He
then discloses only a part of the covering letters in order to mislead, since even the first line would have laid open the truth. It was not the Supreme Council but Dr. Goonwardena who “carried to great lengths” this attempt to heap discredit on the VOC. Nor is he well placed to frame his charges in the following terms (p. 54, n. 64):

“As will be often noted this misrepresentation or total contradiction of facts is by no means an unusual feature in Dutch correspondence and must be guarded against”.

Dr. Arasaratnam bases his case on a ringing statement which is totally wrong, namely that the text of the Treaty kept by the Dutch differed from its counterpart delivered to the King (Arasaratnam 1976: 19). On the contrary, both parties were armed with the same Master-text in Portuguese, which was identical word for word, as is clearly certified in the last paragraph of the Treaty (Heeres 1907: I, 316). No doubt a Dutch rendering of the Contract was afterwards found to be defective in this respect (along with numerous other mistakes), but, since the Dutch version was unsigned by the principals and void of legal force, it would never have been accepted by the Kandyans nor produced in evidence by the Dutch. No reason except an assumption of VOC dishonesty has been given by Dr. Arasaratnam for ferreting out a paper of subordinate value and presenting it as the sole foundation of the Dutch standpoint.

To suit his argument, he equips the Dutch with a document neither signed nor sealed by the principals and invests it with the authority of the original held by the other party. He then carries the error yet further and misrepresents the whole theme of the Treaty by asserting (p. 20) that it gave the King the right to demolish the forts. No such right was conceded. Still persisting in error, the critic adds that the correctness of the Kandyan stand was proved to the Netherlanders. On the contrary, the Supreme Council pronounced it as unlawful (onrechtmatigh; Resolutions, 20.8.1639, KA. 564). They regarded it as a high-handed attempt to assume rights beyond the bounds of reason (p. 339 above). Indeed, most of the King’s objections were dismissed as “cavillaties”. The Council was shocked by his anger at the Portuguese garrison of Trincomalee having been taken prisoner instead of being put to death or sent to him for execution (Resolutions, 15.8.1639, KA. 564). His double-dealing proved that a revision of the Treaty was required on tighter and more effective lines to forestall continued defaults in his military and financial obligations (nader ende bondiger capitulatien te stipuleren: GM. 18.12.1639, f. 65, KA. 1039). Their
alleged sense of guilt at the miscarriage of their fraudulent project is pure fantasy.

The reasons they stated from time to time for retaining the forts were adjusted to the King's own shufflings. They realized that he was acting a subtle part in a comedy. Very well, then they too would join in the game, changing course in order to prevent him from gaining an advantage at their expense (GG & C. to Thysz, 13.4.1641, KA. 768, f. 99).

Caen's vain vigil off Colombo for the joint attack in March 1639 is misrepresented (Arasaratnam 1976: 19). Raja Sinha's failure to bring the promised land-support was the prime cause of Caen's withdrawal at the end of two weeks. The approach of the monsoon was a contributory, though secondary reason. Yet Raja Sinha's non-arrival is passed over in silence, as is also the next incident, late 1639, when he kept Lukasz sailing up and down on a fruitless search for the Kandyan army. The critic is again misleading with his remark that along with the Kandyans the Dutch, too, continued their attacks on the Portuguese and that, despite a Dutch breach of faith (as alleged), Raja Sinha "kept up his cooperation".

De Queyroz devotes two pages (815 ff.) to the decisive battle of Ruvanvella, in which the King and his forces were routed by the Portuguese on 14 April 1639, when they were supposedly helping the Dutch at Colombo. Yet neither of the modern writers found space for this fiasco, which clears Caen of all blame. It would be tedious to go into more than one other of these general and quite unfounded assertions.

Regarding the rebellion against the King in 1664, Dr. Arasaratnam writes (1976: 23) that Van Goens availed himself of the opportunity, i.e. of the King's distresses, to annex a number of inland districts and the main harbours on the east coast. This is in conflict with the evidence. Van Goens acted to defeat the rebels in response to the King's own pressing request, as conveyed in a letter bearing the royal sign manual.² Dr. Arasaratnam is disabled from giving a trustworthy account of these and later events by assuming without warrant that "after 1659 the King... had no further direct correspondence with the Dutch in our period", i.e. till 1687, which "leaves us without a shred of evidence regarding the Kandyan Kingdom and the Court" (Arasaratnam 1958: xiii). On the contrary, the series of Minutes of the Dutch Council of Policy in Colombo contain abundant evidence of a constant exchange of letters, embassies and viewpoints between

²
the two parties during these years. By denying the very existence of this rich store of primary source material Dr. Arasaratnam deprives his readers of a solid array of those facts which form a barrier against his theory.

APPENDIX I

Article 3 in the Dutch version

The version runs (Heeres 1907: I, 309):

Bij soo verre 't gebeurde, als verhaellt, eenige van de bovenstaende forten, forstessen ofte sterkten, waer ter plaetse sulcx moghte komen te geschieden, bij ons ende Zijne Keijserlijcke Maij6 quamen te veroveren ende te incorporeren, dat wij lieden alsdan deselve veroverde sterkten met krijghsofficieren, soldaten, geschut ende ammunitie van oorloogh tegen des aenstaende vijandts maght der Portugesen sullen besetten; ende ons oordeells de gemelte starcten niet bestant, bequam ende defensijff genogh aghten te wesen, om den vijandt te connen wederstaen, sal als dan Zijne Maij6 gehouden wesen op zijn eijgen cossten de voorschreven sterckheijt 4 offte plaetse van 5 ons gevoelen datelijck moeten laten verstercken ende forty-viceren.6

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4 Schrijffout voor: sterkte of sterkten.
5 Moet zijn: “naar”.
6 In den Portugeeschen tekst, door Westerwolt aan den Maharadja aangeboden, stond nog: “indient syn May’ gelieffde ofte goet denkt, welcke laetste clausule inde Nederlantse articulen by abuys ofte moetwillens uytgelaten was ...” (Dagh-Register 1640-1641, bldz. 335). Is hierbij welkereilijk te denken aan opzettelijk bedrog, hoe dom dan ook (vgl. Van Geer, Ceilon, bldz. 42)? G.G. & Raden doen het voorkomen, alsof bij den “tolck ende translateur” Nicolaas Holsteyn de schuld lag en deze dan ook bevreeds was “van over voorschreven misverstandt ofte valsche interpretatie gecalangeert te sullen werden”. G.G. & R. gaven radja Singa dan ook gelijk, toen deze later tegen onze lezing opkwam (vgl. Dagh-Register 1640-1641, bldz. 335, 410, v.; Van Geer, Ceilon, bldz. 55, v.v.).

The text of this Article should be read along with the entry in the Daghregister for 26 May 1641 (p. 335). There the key words are: “Raya ... scheen ... ten deele gelijck te hebben”. By an oversight, the footnote (no. 6) in Heeres fails to include the limiting phrase ten deele indicating that the King was no more than partly right. Nor does it bring out the force of scheen, which meant that the King appeared outwardly to have some degree of right on his side. Nor did the GG & C. concede the point any further, as can be seen from the detailed statement above. Heeres was therefore mistaken in saying that GG & C. “gaven radja Singa dan ook gelijk”; nor is there evidence that the Dutch version of the Treaty was cited at all in the dispute.

The variant readings in other copies of Article 3 of the Dutch text are the following: line 1 - one l in ‘verhaellt’; line 2 - ‘sterckten’, with
APPENDIX II

The VOC sought trade, not a colony, in Ceylon

The King's offer to make over the Colombo province in full ownership to the Dutch was put forward in two separate despatches, one in Portuguese and the other in Tamil (GM. 18.12.1639, KA. 1039, ff. 64-65). Arguments in favour of acceptance were marshalled by three ambassadors who came on a special mission. But the Dutch were intent on trade with Ceylon and preferred to leave the burden of government entirely to Raja Sinha. The arguments behind their refusal may be summarized as follows: we have no desire for sovereignty or absolute dominion or authority or other powers of any kind in Your Majesty's lands, but only want a grant which, subject to all the restrictions and conditions detailed below, will allow our Directors a share of your chief commodities.

The foregoing paragraph from the letter accordingly appears in the preamble to a new draft Treaty (KA. 1039, f. 38). The original of the letter to the King is listed as Item 25 in the Register attached to the Resoluts. GG & C. (23.9.1639, KA. 564).

The theory that the VOC had planned to rob the King of part of "his Kingdom" is not borne out by this flat rejection. The critics are silent on this proffered gift. Instead, they quote just enough of the reply to create the false impression that the Dutch were piously disclaiming colonial ambitions in order to hide their true intentions (Goonewardena 1958: 33).

The VOC delivered over to the King the forts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa in 1640 and 1642 respectively. These were not the actions of a militant power bent on domination.

When the King offered to place a fort at their disposal in 1640, they reminded him that their objective was trade rather than the acquisition of a spring-board for war. "It is the country's produce we want; without that we are not served by useless forts" (ijdele fort en, GG & C. to Raja, 26.9.1640, KA. 767, f. 640). On the same day they instructed Coster: "We want no forts but cannot get out till our debts are paid... We could (then) withdraw and go elsewhere to our greater profit" (KA. 767, f. 623).

No people embarking on a policy of expansion would regard any fort as useless. From the time of the Peloponnesian war, to go no earlier,
when the Athenians seized Pylos, any base even on a barren headland or islet was an asset. The critics are therefore antedating by some years an occupation of territory forced on the VOC by Raja Sinha's calculated defaults. It is therefore meaningless to discuss the charge that the Dutch handed over Trincomalee and Batticaloa because these were too weak to repel the Portuguese or were situated in barren districts (Goonewardena 1958: 65 and 77). Both were ports vital to Kandyan trade and of the highest strategic value to designing imperialists.

Ceylon as seen by the Dutch at this stage can be described here only in the barest outline. It was a battle ground where damage could be inflicted on the common enemy. It also yielded cinnamon which would fetch high prices, but only if two conditions were met: (a) if the Portuguese hold on it could be broken, and (b) if it could be carried across the seas in fleets strong enough to withstand storms, pirates, the Portuguese and other hazards. In the island itself there was a glut of cinnamon, and the home market was poor. Its export was controlled by the Portuguese, who charged what they liked, however, since they ruled the waves. On the other hand, the local trader who bought their cinnamon at their price was reasonably sure of protection by their coastguards when shipping his consignment across the water. Raja Sinha was in no position to provide naval escorts for Dutch merchant vessels. Moreover, they took the cinnamon away from enemy-held districts, which were only cleared by force of Dutch arms. Raja Sinha usurped the prerogatives of a seapower and pitched his demands proportionately high on the strength of services which he was neither able nor called upon to perform.

The VOC offered 80 xerafins a bahar of 480 lbs., which was nearly three times the market rate in Colombo (30 at its maximum, Coster to GG, 31.12.1638, KA. 1039, f. 386). It is incorrect to say that the Portuguese “paid” 130 xerafins the bahar. This was the price at which they sold it — sometimes. It happens to be among the highest figures mentioned in an ambiguous passage in de Queyroz (Goonewardena 1958: 56).

Raja Sinha missed a golden opportunity to draw steady revenues at a rate that yielded a handsome profit. Instead, he pursued a dog-in-the-manger policy, drove away whole communities of cinnamon-peelers so as to deprive the Dutch of their services, and left the VOC no alternative but to take control of the western seaboard.

NOTES

1 Cf. Heeres 1907: I, 308-316.
2 Raja Sinha’s appeal was received by the Dutch in Colombo on 17 Jan. 1665. In view of later rumours that they had acted with a high hand, Van Goens had the letter translated from Sinhalese into Portuguese and Dutch. Certified copies were attached to the Minutes of the Executive Council of 18 Sept. 1668. CNA 1/14. Modern critics accept the allegations as established fact and either suppress or try to distort the evidence to the contrary.
J. H. O. Paulusz

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAS. Ceylon (Branch of the Royal) Asiatic Society's Journal.
D-R. Daghregister.
KA. Koloniaal Archief.