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## Indian History Sourcebook: England, India, and The East Indies, 1617 CE

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*In 1601 the East India Company was chartered, and the English began their first inroads into the Indian Ocean. At first they were little interested in India, but rather, like the Portuguese and Dutch before them, with the Spice Islands. But the English were unable to dislodge the Dutch, as shown by the following account by an anonymous Frenchman (1617):*

*Two English ships coming to Banda, in course of trade and traffic, the Hollanders assaulted with certain of their ships, which English ships in their resistance and defense of the said Hollanders took, slew seven or eight of their men (whereof one was a chief factor), chained the captain, merchants, and mariners, and put the mariners into their galleys. All the munition and victuals in the said English ships did the Hollanders take out and carried the same ashore, challenging all to be theirs as their proper inheritance, and therefore will be lords of the same.*

*The Hollanders likewise took an English bark going from Bantam [Robinson: Bantam was originally the chief settlement of the Dutch in Java, near the Strait of Sunda, somewhat to the west of the present important port of Batavia (now Jakarta)] to Jacatra, slew some of her men, wounded many more, chained the captain and mariners, and carried away the said bark at the stern of one of their ships into Bantam Road, and there anchored close by the admiral of the English in most despiteful and daring manner, making their vaunts that they were the chief people of all Europe; and to make a show of the same they advanced their own arms and colors, and under them placed the colors of England and France, and then shot at the said English and French colors in most contemptuous and disdainful manner.*

*At Bantam the English and Hollanders had great disputes, insomuch as it was verily thought they would have fought together in the road, for the general of the Hollanders had brought thither fourteen great ships, ready to fight, where the English had nine, which they fitted for defense; but they fought not, for the governor of Bantam forbade them to fight in his road, and threatened them that if they did fight contrary to his command he would cut the throats of all their men that he should find upon the land.*

*The 27th of November the Hollanders proclaimed war against all the English at the Moluccas, Banda, and Amboyna, threatening to make one and all prize and to put them to the edge of the sword; which proclamation of theirs they fixed upon the doors of their lodgings at Bantam, challenging all to be theirs as their proper inheritance.*

*As a result of English disappointments with dislodging the Dutch from the Spice Islands, they turned instead to India. In 1614 Sir Thomas Roe was instructed by James I to visit the court of Jahangir, the Mongol emperor of Hindustan. Sir Thomas was to arrange a commercial treaty and to secure for the East India Company sites for commercial agencies, --- "factories" as they were called. Sir Thomas was successful, and though the Great Moghul Jahangir was contemptuous of the presents sent him by James I, sent the following remarkably polite letter nonetheless.*

### The Great Moghul Jahangir: Letter to James I, King of England, 1617 A.D.

*When your Majesty shall open this letter let your royal heart be as fresh as a sweet garden. Let all people make reverence at your gate; let your throne be advanced higher; amongst the greatness of the kings of the prophet Jesus, let your Majesty be the greatest, and all monarchies derive their counsel and wisdom from your breast as from a fountain, that the law of the majesty of Jesus may*

*revive and flourish under your protection.*

*The letter of love and friendship which you sent and the presents, tokens of your good affections toward me, I have received by the hands of your ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe (who well deserves to be your trusted servant), delivered to me in an acceptable and happy hour; upon which mine eyes were so fixed that I could not easily remove them to any other object, and have accepted them with great joy and delight.*

*Upon which assurance of your royal love I have given my general command to all the kingdoms and ports of my dominions to receive all the merchants of the English nation as the subjects of my friend; that in what place soever they choose to live, they may have free liberty without any restraint; and at what port soever they shall arrive, that neither Portugal nor any other shall dare to molest their quiet; and in what city soever they shall have residence, I have commanded all my governors and captains to give them freedom answerable to their own desires; to sell, buy, and to transport into their country at their pleasure.*

*For confirmation of our love and friendship, I desire your Majesty to command your merchants to bring in their ships of all sorts of rarities and rich goods fit for my palace; and that you be pleased to send me your royal letters by every opportunity, that I may rejoice in your health and prosperous affairs; that our friendship may be interchanged and eternal.*

*Your Majesty is learned and quick-sighted as a prophet, and can conceive so much by few words that I need write no more.*

*The God of heaven give you and us increase of honor.*

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*From: James Harvey Robinson, ed., Readings in European History, 2 Vols. (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1904-1906), Vol. II: From the opening of the Protestant Revolt to the Present Day, pp. 333-335.*

*Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Cal. State Fullerton. The text has been modernized by Prof. Arkenberg.*

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