

BANDA ISLES, HOME OF THE NUTMEG, IS DESCRIBED — SPICE TRADE HAS PLENTY OF ROMANCE

(Edward G. Long in P.L.A. Monthly)

Trade and romance are not generally supposed to go together, but in fact there is a great deal of romance associated with trade. Far away in the Malay Archipelago, between Timor and New Guinea, in a sea to which it gives its name, is a group of tiny islands, ten in number, known as the Banda Isles. Well-nigh unknown to-day, three hundred years ago they were the richest islands in the world, for their size. Here were grown the sweet nutmegs in the world, and here alone; and the story of how this came about, and what happened in consequence, is one full of romance, but deeply trimmed with tragedy.

Home of Nutmeg

The Banda Isles appear to be the home of the nutmeg, for this very delicate spice plant was found in cultivation there by the first Portuguese adventurers in the East India waters very early in the sixteenth century. Up to this time the spice trade with Europe had been in the hands of the Arabs, but the Portuguese now seized the Banda Isles, and other spice isles of the Moluccas, and gained control of the spice trade, which they held for nearly a hundred years.

Excited Envy

But about the beginning of the seventeenth century competitors appeared on the scene, English and Dutch, for the wealth of the spice trade had excited envy in England and Holland; an East India Company was established in each country, and while England sent out Captain James Lancaster, with the Hector, Dragon, Ascension and Susannah to the spice islands, Holland despatched Cornelius Houtman with a fleet also of four vessels.

By pursuing the Sultan of Ternate, who was the Overlord of the Moluccas, to enter into a treaty with them, and grant them special trade privileges in the spice islands, the Dutch were able to get ahead of the English, and they soon established themselves in the island of Amboina, and in the Banda Isles. On the former island they cultivated cloves, and in Banda, nutmegs, and by excluding competitors, they were able to build up a monopoly in both of these very lucrative branches of the spice trade. In 1504, Captain Henry Middleton tried to get a share in the clove trade with Amboina for England, but was prevented by the Dutch who, however, did not quite have a "walk-over" in Banda.

Dutchmen Annoyed

Shortly after the first Dutchman arrived there, and before they had

time to build up a trade settlement, a stout old English sea-dog, Capt. William Keeling, sailed into Banda Neira Harbor, and although he had one ship only, with five pieces of ordnance, He set about establishing trade relations with the Bandanese—to the very great annoyance of the Dutchmen who now seized the island of Banda Neira and built a fort on it, with guns of which they threatened Keeling. His reply was that England and Holland were not at war, and he was going to stay right where he was! And he did so, but finding it impossible to trade with Banda Neira, where the Dutchmen were in force, he transferred his attentions to some of the other islands, managed to get a good cargo of nutmegs, and finally, after remaining off Banda for over half a year, left, an ultimatum having been delivered to him by Admiral Peter Williamson Van Hoef, from on board the flagship Hollandia, in the roads of Banda, and, one is very glad to chronicle, got safely back to England on May 10th, 1610, having been absent from his native land for three years.

Later, Captain David Middleton tried his hand at the Banda spice trade but without success, and then in 1619, England and Holland came to an agreement under which both countries were to share the spice trade, and the English were to be allowed to establish factories in Amboina and Banda. They did so, and four years later, under pretense that the English traders had conspired against them, the Dutchmen of Amboina, where they had a strong naval and military force, and a stout fortress, seized all the English traders, tortured them to confess an imaginary plot, and then executed the factor and nine of his assistants, and banished the few remaining Englishmen.

In Banda there was no massacre of the English traders, but instead the Dutchmen proposed that the English should assist them in a massacre of the native Bandanese population, and when the English, to their eternal credit, refused to co-operate in this devilish plan, the Dutchmen exterminated the Bandanese without any English aid. Those of the Bandanese who were not killed, fled to the Kei Islands, some 200 miles south of Banda, where their descendants live to-day, and where alone the old Bandanese language is spoken—it is unknown in Banda, so thoroughly did Jan Pieter-son Coen, Agent of the Dutch East India Company, do his work!

Were Rooted Out

As may be imagined, the people of Banda were rooted out of their motherland because they refused to work, as slaves, in the nutmegging plantations which formerly were their own. The Dutch imported slaves into Banda to work the plantations, and by means of this labor they grew abundantly rich, so rich that they were able to live there in the most lavish style. They imported the luxuries of the world, together with the slaves, and even had mansions built of the costliest marble, imported from the famous quarries of Carrara, Italy!

Drove Out English

They succeeded in driving out the English, who foiled in trade here, and in Amboina, turned their attention to India, and founded an empire there, and for a long long time, Dutchmen maintained their spice monopoly. Then French and English merchants discovered that cloves and nutmegs would grow elsewhere in the East, cultivated them, and broke down the Dutch monopoly. Losing their commanding position, the Dutch spice lords became impoverished; the islands passed from a state of the greatest affluence to one of almost privation, until at length they were attractive no longer to the merchants from Holland, who sought other commodities, elsewhere in the East Indies; and the people of Banda, the descendants of the slaves, now free, became possessed of the nutmeg plantations, in small holdings, and the mansions of the once great merchants, now in a state of decay, and—it is these folks who cultivate the nutmeg in Banda today, and have a considerable share in the spice trade of the Moluccas.

The port of the islands is Banda, with an excellent anchorage, almost land-locked harbor, on Banda Neira, the chief island and the capital. It is an old and highly picturesque town, built on the side of a high hill, crowned by a mediaeval fortress, with a quaint brown tiled houses, in the Dutch style, owning spacious verandahs, massive stone walls, and windows with iron bars and shutters! And there is such an ancient air about them, and the old, weather-beaten quay, with solid stone steps, such as you might find in Amsterdam or Rotterdam, that you almost expect to see a Mynheer of former days, with wide black felt hat, and knee breeches, come forth from some doorway—to pay a visit to the spice storehouse!

But there are very few Dutchmen in Banda today, just a handful of officials. The majority of the population is composed of the slave descendants, Christians all, who wear very scanty costumes all the week, but turn out in rusty black clothes on Sunday, carrying their Bibles under their arms and go to the Kerk, proud of their "white man's religion". Most of the

"TAXI DANCE" GIRLS ARE NICE, SAYS LEADER

New York, Oct. 16—Girls who waltz and fox trot with strangers in New York's "taxi" dance halls drew up a new code of propriety today.

When owners of the halls wait on Police Commissioner Mulrooney next week to urge that his regulation of their establishments be made less rigid they will use this code as their trump card.

"Our hostesses aren't criminals. They're nice girls, most of them," explained Charles Marks, president of the Five Boro ballroom and Dancing Academy Owners Association.

He was commenting on Commissioner Mulrooney's rule that police must keep a full record of girls employed in the "taxi" dance halls, which get their name from the fact that customers pay 10 cents for the privilege of each one-minute dance with a hostess and are required to present a ticket every time the orchestra stops playing.

As for the code of propriety, Mr. Marks said a lot of things in rather indignant fashion.

"Our girls dance so much nicer than your debutantes and college prom girls there just isn't any comparison."

Then waving toward his own big ballroom, he added:

"Just look out there."

There were 45 blondes and brunettes fox trotting with 35 slick-haired youths, 14 older men and a sailor.

"See those two men standing in the middle of the floor?" went on Mr. Marks. "They're out there to see that the dancing is done right. And they're two more men at the gate keeping their eyes open."

"The girls have to be here from 9.30 P. M., when we open until 3 o'clock in the morning. An attractive girl can make 200 tickets a night and she gets 6 cents for every one. By the time 3 o'clock comes most of them are so tired they want to go right home. But we have a rule now they can't leave the place with a customer."

"In view of this code of propriety I don't see why the police should take records of them like they were criminals. Most of the girls are scared to death of the cops now."

One of the suggestions Marks and his associates are going to make to the commissioner is that the investigation into the home lives of the hostesses.

FAMILY HAS A BIBLE 409 YEARS OLD

East St. Louis, Illinois, Oct. 17—A Bible printed in 1522 and which has been in the family for five generations is owned by Mrs. A. L. Davis, of East St. Louis. The fact that the book was printed 409 years ago is definitely established by information on the fly leaf. The great great grandfather of Mrs. Davis is said to have brought the Bible to America from Germany.

actual trading is done by the Chinese, Malays and Arabs; in fact the chief employer of labour in the Band, quite the Grand Seigneur of the isles, is an old Arab Sheikh, who grows and buys spices, fishes for pearls, collects beche de mer and edible birds' nests, also tortoiseshell and mother of pearl, and is extremely hospitable to visitors to Banda, as I have had the good fortune to experience. Once a month steam vessels call at Banda, and this is the only contact with the outer world.

Shorn of their glory of the past, the Banda Isles are very attractive still. They have a good climate, enchanting scenery, no animals of prey, or insect pests. Beneath the waters of their inland sea are the loveliest marine gardens conceivable, and the sight of nutmeg gardens, when the trees are in full fruit, is a goodly one to behold; there is a volcano in the group, but—it behaves itself! Romance and tragedy have touched the islands deeply, but man there is cruel no more to his fellowman.

PAY DAY AGAIN FOR THE EXTRA AT HOLLYWOOD

(Detroit News)

As manna fell from heaven for the Israelites, a windfall has come suddenly to be hapless army of Hollywood extras.

On a recent day employment for 1,692 of these minor actors caused a great and happy commotion among them.

On another day 1,638 were called out, and in five days a total of 7,956 found employment at the studios.

Only those who have haunted the casting bureau month after month, in it.

lucky to get a few day's wages can know what this means.

Fifteen thousand are registered, but for the last year or two the average employment has been pitifully small.

The present burst of luck is too good to be maintained, but it means blessed help for hundreds in dire need.

Incidentally, there has been a gradual lifting in the level of character in the ranks of the extras.

Floater, it is reported, have been displaced by people in the higher professions—ministers, lawyers, teachers and the like.

Hard times have driven this better element to the work, and there are many in the motley who were once of high rank in the movies.

Blood will tell, if you take pride in it.

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