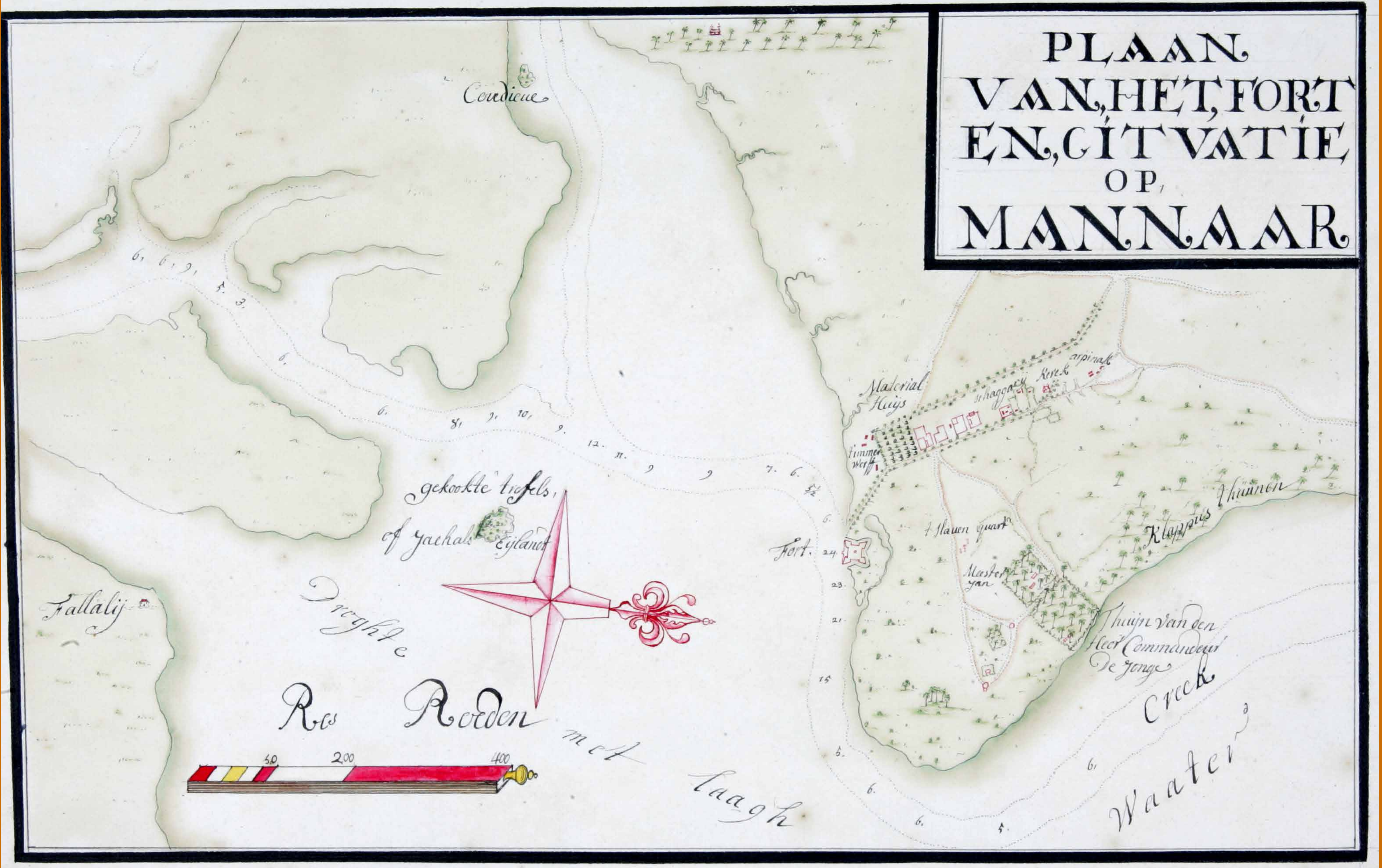


Mannar...

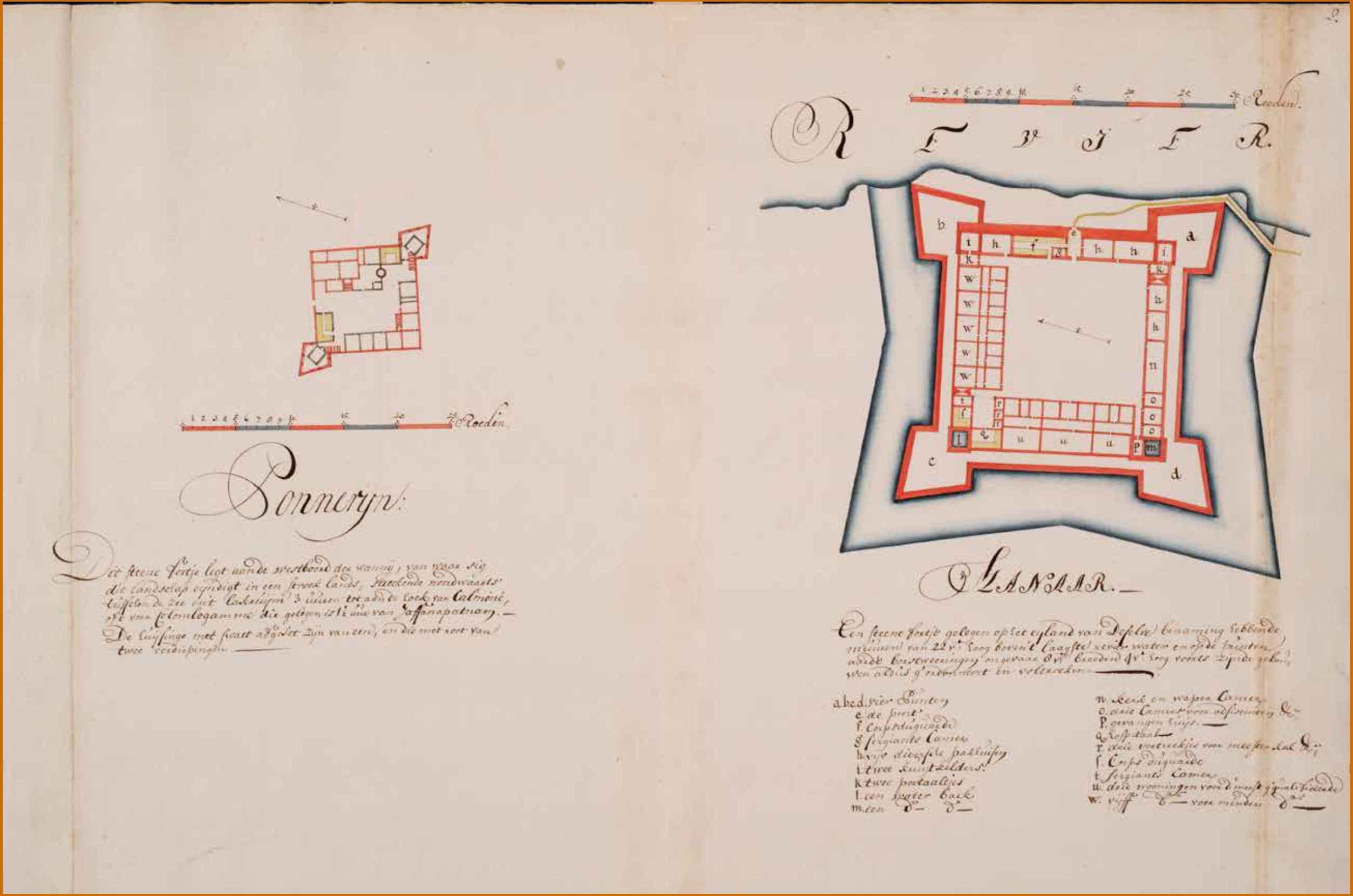


Map of fort Mannar and surroundings, c. 1770

Above the fort one sees a wharf (*timmerwerf*), store room for diverse materials and tools (*materiaalhuijs*), housing for VOC servants, an inn (*schaggerij*) and a church (*Kerck*). The VOC used some twenty slaves for all kinds of services, including for the maintenance of the fort – their quarters are indicated at the right side of the fort (*'t slave quart[ie]*).

Maker not known. University Library Leiden, Special Collections, Collection Bodel Nijenhuis, inv.nr. COLBN 002-11-45 (edited)

Mannar fortress and settlement may have been modest in size but they played a strategic and economic role of some importance. The fort controlled the coastal road, along which elephants from the south were brought to Jaffna every year to be sold. Choya roots (*Oldenlandia umbellata*) were collected there, which were used to dye fabrics from India red. The area was most famous for its pearl fishing but this was not frequent. When inspectors found that enough pearls had been formed, fishermen from far and wide came to the Gulf of Mannar, near the Dutch fort of Aripo (now: Arippeu). Its staff of six was then increased considerably, with a hundred or more soldiers posted along the coast to keep order. Along the beach numerous temporary huts were built.



Plan of Fort Mannar, 1720

This is the second drawing made for the Day Register of the inspection tour to the Commandment of Jaffna (Colombo, 12 December 1719-20 March 1720, Colombo) undertaken by Isaac Augustijn Rumpf (Governor 1716-1723). Rumpf arrived at Mannar on Saturday 23 December 1719. In the legend the use of all spaces is specified:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a, b, c, d. the 4 bastions | n. church and armory |
| e. the gate | o. 2 rooms for assistants |
| f. corps du garde (soldiers' waiting room) | p. prison |
| g. sergeant's room | q. hospital |
| h. 5 warehouses | r. 3 rooms a.o. for the surgeon and cook |
| i. 2 powder cellars | s. corps du garde |
| k. 2 portals | t. sergeants room |
| l. cistern (blue) | u. 3 houses for the most qualified servants |
| m. cistern (blue) | w. 5 houses for the lesser qualified servants |

Martinus Leusekam, surveyor. National Archives, The Hague, Netherlands. Collection of acquisitions of the former First Department of the National Archives, access number 1.11.01.01, inv.nr. 1523.2

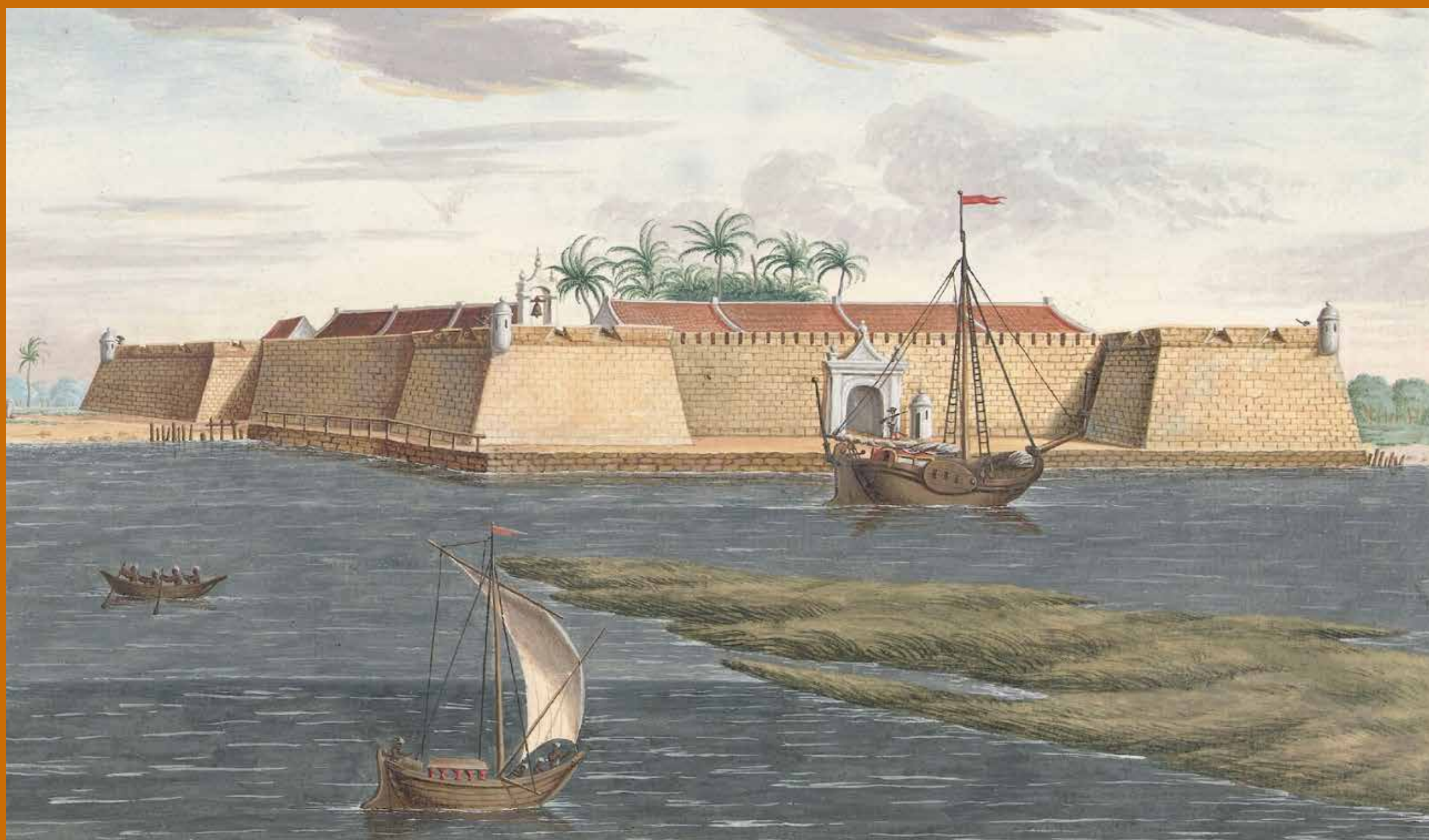
...Pearl of the North



Bird's-eye view of Mannar, 2018

The floor plan (1720) on the banner left, helps to understand which functions still can be seen at present. In the middle of the buildings at the left side one sees the former Church & Armory, on the floor plan indicated as **n**. Further to the left one sees one of the two cisterns, **m** on the floor plan. The only building with roof and tiles is the former corps du garde (**f**).

Photo Stephanie Harder



View of the fort of Mannar, c. 1710 (detail)

Left one sees the bell tower, a simple stone arch on two pillars. Later that structure has been replaced by a construction with four pillars – remnants of these are still present on the southeast bastion.

Cornelis Steiger. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.nr. RP-T-1902-A-4667

View into the former Armory and Church, 2018

In 1814 the Dutch church outside the fort, then used by the Anglican congregation, collapsed from the force of a cyclone. Since then on Sundays the former space of Church & Armory was also welcoming residents of Mannar town. The tombstones from the old church were removed to this place, the Dutch ones in 1814 or shortly later, the Portuguese ones in 1904. However, only a few of those have been preserved.

Photo Yeb George Hiemstra



Pearl fishery before the coast of Arippu, c. 1735-1744

VOC yachts and smaller vessels monitor closely and ensure that no illegal pearl fishing takes place. Alongside the vessels owned or rented by Muslim merchants we see divers rising out of the water. The small fortress Arippu functions as a command post during the period of pearl fishery. Many hundreds of merchants and other stakeholders stay in tents set up on the beach.

Johann Wolfgang Heydt. Plate LXXXI in Johann Wolfgang Heydt, Allerneuester geographisch- und topographischer Schau-Platz von Africa und Ost-Indien, 1744, p. 241. Amsterdam Museum, inv.nr. LA 1905