

# Basic Detail Report

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## Title

Ian Pieterszoon Koen, Gouverneur Generaal Van Nederlands Indien

## Date

1726

## Primary Maker

Matthijs Balen

## Medium

Paper, ink

## Dimensions

Overall: 587 x 435 mm, 0.1 kg

## Name

Engraving

## History

Jan Pieterszoon Coen (sometimes called simply Jan Coen)

was born on 8 January, 1587 in Hoorn, The Netherlands and died on 21 September, 1629 in Batavia, Dutch East Indies. He married Eva Ment on 8 April, 1625 and is reported to have had at least one child. In 1601 he travelled to Rome where he trained as a merchant and learnt the art of bookkeeping under the guidance of Justus Pescatore. After joining the VOC, Coen's first journey to the East was as an onderkoopman (junior merchant) aboard the 700-ton VOC ship HOORN which left Texel on 22 December, 1607, arriving in Goa (on the west coast of India) on 18 September, 1608. After travelling on to other ports in the region, and eventually finishing up at VOC headquarters in Bantam, the ship arrived back in home port on 28 June, 1611. Having spent four years at sea, Coen wrote an exhaustive report to the Lords XVII (heads of the VOC and also known as the Gentlemen XVII) outlining how Dutch trading practices in the East could be improved. It obviously impressed them because the following year he set sail again, having been promoted to opperkoopman (chief merchant) and this time responsible for two ships. In October, 1613, Coen was appointed as accountant-general of all VOC outposts in Indonesia and president of the head office in Bantam. The following year he was made Director-General (second in command to the Governor General). Finally on 25 October, 1617, the Lords XVII officially appointed Coen as Governor General. He took up his duties of 30 April, 1618. Coen's first order of business was to establish a better situated headquarters for the VOC in the Far East. On 30 May, 1619 he led a fleet of ships to conquer the Javanese port of Jayakarta (also called Djajakarta), which he subsequently renamed Batavia (he actually wanted to call it New Hoorn after his home town but did not get his way). Coen also set about establishing

a monopoly over the trade in nutmeg and mace, which, at this point, could only be obtained from the Banda Islands (ten small volcanic islands in the Banda Sea, about 140 km south of Seram island and about 2,000 km east of Java). The inhabitants of Banda had been selling the spices to the English, despite contracts with the VOC which obliged them to sell only to the VOC, at low prices. In 1621, Coen led an armed expedition to Banda, encountering what is believed to have been heavy resistance from the islanders who had acquired some cannon from the English. A large number of the inhabitants of the Banda Islands were either killed or exiled to other islands. It was this incident which earned for Coen the infamous nickname of the 'Butcher of Banda'. On 1 February, 1623, Coen handed the post of Governor General to Pieter de Carpentier and returned to The Netherlands at his own request. He was given a hero's welcome when he arrived off the coast of Texel in September, 1623. He was then appointed as bewindhebber (Director) of the VOC chamber in Hoorn. It was in this role that he succeeded in establishing a set of regulations for the trade conducted by Dutch vrijburgers (free citizens) in Asia. On 3 October, 1624 he was reappointed as Governor General, having been persuaded by the Lords XVII to return to Batavia. Ill-health, together with a British blockade that had been established in response to the scandal of the Amboyna Massacre, however, prevented his return until 1627. In March, 1627, Coen boarded the 300-ton VOC ship GALIASSE and, much to the dismay of the English, succeeded in getting through to Batavia (despite nearly running aground on the west coast of Australia), arriving on 27 September, 1627. He was pleased to see that the city had grown considerably in his absence. He officially began his second term in office on 30 September, 1627. In 1628, and again in 1629, Batavia was besieged by Sultan Agung of Mataram. However, his forces were not a major threat to Coen's rule given that they were poorly armed and had inadequate provisions of food. It was during the second siege that Coen suddenly died on 21 September, 1629. His light sickness which had come and gone for several years had apparently worsened. The next day he was buried in the town hall because the church had burned down during the Agung's first siege of Batavia. Jacques Specx arrived in Batavia just in time to attend the funeral and to succeed Coen as Governor General. It has been suggested that parts of Coen's remains were later secreted away from their Batavia resting place, and placed under the stairway to Agung's grave in Imogiri, central Java, so that all pilgrims to the grave would walk over them.