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Principled pragmatism : VOC Interaction with Makassar 1637-68, and the nature of company diplomacy

Feddersen, C.F.

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Author: Feddersen, Carl Fredrik

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Chapter 9: The Pragmatic, Empirical Model of Overseas Diplomacy in Cornelis Speelman's *Notitie*

Section 1: Chapter introduction

The challenge of preserving the Company's hegemony by diplomacy

The Company tactics to stabilise their power in Ambon was to cut local bonds, establish equality between the local units and forge new ties with each single local unit to itself as overlord. To establish consensus, the tactic was to play on the elite by giving the village heads a position in the administration, and make them swear an oath to the Company.¹⁰⁶⁵

The Company's hold of power posed challenges similar to those in Ambon, as well as similar, but also somewhat different solutions.

The preservation of the Company's hegemonic regime basically rested on keeping the Makassarese at bay; but it depended in particular on the successful preservation of the alliance with the Bugis. There is no evidence to support the proposition that Cornelis Speelman ever believed that these challenges could be satisfactorily solved by treaty alone. The two extra supporting pillars of the Company's hegemonic regime were

¹⁰⁶⁵ Knaap 2004, 41.

its military presence in Sulawesi, and the pre-emptive use of diplomacy to preserve the loyalty of both original allies and former foes.

For both the original allies and those who had recently become friends, the diplomatic challenge lay in continuing to cultivate good relations while at the same being on the alert for any signs of a slackening of commitment or independent policy-scheming. Thus in both cases, preserving the Company's political hegemony depended on diplomacy based on good intelligence on political intrigues locally. The topic of this chapter is Speelman's reflections on and advice about the challenges of the Company's hegemony, and the role of diplomacy in maintaining it, as put forth in his report to the High Government on the completion of his mission in 1669,¹⁰⁶⁶ which was praised by Noorduyn as going "deep into the history of the Buginese and Makassarese."¹⁰⁶⁷ Before I start to analyse it I shall start by giving a brief overview of

¹⁰⁶⁶ "Notitie dienende voor eenen corten tijt en tot nader last van de Hooge Reeringe op Batavia, tot naarrigtinge van den Onderkoopman Jan van Oppijnen, bij provisie gestelt tot Opperhoofd en Commandant in 't Casteel Rotterdam, op Makassar, en van den Captain Jan Fransz.: als hoofd over de Militie, mitsgaders die van den Raadt." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fols. 684–1007. (Hereafter *Notitie*.) I have had immense help by comparing the original source with the typed manuscript undertaken by W. Ph. Coolhaas and H. J. de Graaf in 1949–50, now at the KITLV (Nr. H 802). For a brief introduction to the *Notitie*, see J. Noorduyn, *De handelsrelaties van het Makassaarse rijk volgens de notitie van Cornelis Speelman uit 1670* (Amsterdam: Verloren, 1983), 99 ff.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Noorduyn, 1955, 6.

Speelman's diplomatic career in the Company to put his performance in and reflections on Makassar into perspective.

Section 2: Cornelis Speelman, a brief diplomatic-military biography

Cornelis Speelman left the Republic for Batavia in 1645 at the age of 17. Until his death in Batavia on January 11, 1684, he held a variety of positions in the Company's administration.¹⁰⁶⁸ He started out as assistant and climbed upwards to become "*boekhouder*" (bookkeeper) in 1648, "*onderkoopman*" (junior merchant) in 1649, before he was promoted to "*koopman*" in 1652. On December 28, 1655, he was made "*boekhouder-generaal*," and on March 24, 1671, he was appointed ordinary member of the Council of the Indies. With Maetsuyker's death in January 1678, and Rijcklof van Goen's succession as governor-general, Speelman was made director-general. He ultimately took over as governor-general on November 25, 1681, in which position he served until his death. Speelman was to receive criticism for sloppiness in performing his duties as governor-general, so that although formally his appointment marked the top of his career, his performance in the position did not.¹⁰⁶⁹

¹⁰⁶⁸ The chronology to Speelman's administrative career in Batavia is based on P. C. Molhuysen, P. J. Blok, and L. Knappert, eds., *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, vol. 5 (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoffs, 1921), 1254–57. The section on Speelman's military-diplomatic career outside Batavia is based largely on F. W. Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1936).

¹⁰⁶⁹ For points of charges brought against Speelman after his death for his ill conduct in office, see Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, 153.

Still, whatever the evaluation of Speelman's performance within the Company hierarchy in Batavia was, of greater relevance here is his diplomatic and military career and performance outside the colonial headquarters. Speelman's diplomatic experience started with his participation in Councillor of the Indies Joan Cunaeus' diplomatic mission to Persia, September 15, 1651 to November 12, 1652. In his capacity as secretary, he wrote the whole report on the mission, though he is not reckoned to have had any influence over the actual proceedings due to his young age and inexperience.¹⁰⁷⁰

Stapel credits him for registering events with an observant eye, often recording local modes of negotiating with humorous comments.¹⁰⁷¹ All in all, Speelman must have performed well, as after the mission's return to Batavia he was promoted from *onderkoopman* to *koopman* on Cunaeus's recommendation.¹⁰⁷² In this period, and as a glimpse of what was to be his later emphasis on getting to know the ways of the local

¹⁰⁷⁰ Cornelis Speelman and A. Hotz, "*Journaal der Reis van den Gezant der O.I. Compagnie Joan Cunaeus Naar Perzië in 1651–1652 door Cornelis Speelman*, (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1908), Inleiding, lxx.

¹⁰⁷¹ Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, 5–6.

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid.* 7.

people, it is evident that at least as early as 1655 he had acquired a working knowledge of Malay.¹⁰⁷³

From July 2, 1663 to October 18, 1665, Speelman served as the Company's governor in Coromandel, one of the more important Company positions outside Batavia. Considering the number of different parties the Company had to deal with there—not just local princes and power holders, but also rival Portuguese, English, French, and Danish merchants—the position demanded particular insight and competence.¹⁰⁷⁴ Adding to Speelman's challenge during his period in Coromandel was that by January 1665, news of the Second Anglo-Dutch War between the Republic and England had reached Asia.¹⁰⁷⁵ Symptomatic of Speelman's direct mode of facing challenges was that he asked permission to attack Fort George. Although he received permission to do so, he was asked to return to Batavia to answer to allegations of private trade before he could begin the campaign.¹⁰⁷⁶

Suspicious about Speelman having taken part in private trade had arisen among the Heeren XVII already in 1662 because of letters sent by

¹⁰⁷³ Ibid. 8.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid. 12.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ibid. 21.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid. 25–26.

Speelman in August that year, in which it was clear that he wanted a diamond stone, originally meant as a present for his wife, cut and sold in the Republic.¹⁰⁷⁷ We need not go further into details, except to note that Speelman was barred from the Company's service for fifteen months and fined 3000 florins.¹⁰⁷⁸

The private trade allegations are included here for two reasons. First, Speelman's determination to fight the allegations—as exemplified by his letters written in self-defence (one in January 1664 and two in December 1665)¹⁰⁷⁹—gives us an idea of his tenacity. Second, because the affront Speelman must have felt over the accusations may well have been a motivating factor in his pursuit of personal glory in the Makassar campaign. Andaya, for one, seems to regard this as decisive in Speelman's motivation. "It was perhaps Speelman's desire to vindicate his name," he writes, "which led him to 'reinterpret' his instructions and decide to launch an all-out war against Goa. If glory were to be gained, it had to be on this mission."¹⁰⁸⁰ Although Andaya's point is plausible, it

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibid. 26. For the whole affair about the charges of private trade, see 26, 34.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ibid. 31.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Ibid. 30, 32.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, 70.

should be remarked that nothing in Speelman's behaviour during the Makassar campaign is contradicted by his behaviour prior to it.

As Speelman's exploits during the Makassar and eastern quarters campaign is covered elsewhere, I shall only address it briefly here. When the High Government decided to declare war on Makassar on October 5, 1666, Johan Van Dam, the leader of the 1660 campaign was initially offered the command, but when he declined in favour of returning home, the position was offered to Speelman.¹⁰⁸¹ It is noteworthy that this offer was made when only nine of Speelman's fifteen months of suspension had passed.¹⁰⁸² It seems reasonable to take this as an indication of the High Government's trust in him.

The Java campaign

Speelman's next major campaign as commander was in central and eastern Java. In the middle of the 1670s, a state of unrest and rebellion had arisen there. It started as a rebellion against the *susuhunan* of Mataram, Amangkurat I, by Trunajaya, the prince of Madura, but in 1675 he was joined in an alliance by Makassarese pirates who had

¹⁰⁸¹ Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, 34–35.

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid.* 35.

originally sought refuge in Banten after the fall of Makassar, but later emigrated to and settled in the eastern hook of Java.¹⁰⁸³

When the High Government received news that the Makassarese pirates had conquered Surabaya and Grisse, and had handed over both to Trunajaya, the decision was made to fight the Makassarese pirates, but not Trunajaya. After a couple of not too successful raids against the Makassarese pirates, and when the High Government received a request by the *susuhunan* to lend him support against the Madurese (made in a letter of December 2, 1667, from his governor in Japara), it was decided on December 5th in an extraordinary session of the Council of the Indies to intervene on the side of Amangkurat I against the Madurese, as well.¹⁰⁸⁴ Speelman offered himself for the position of command, and was chosen to lead the expedition. He sailed from Batavia with his fleet for the north coast of Java on December 30, 1676.¹⁰⁸⁵ He would not return to Batavia until April 1678.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸³ Ibid. 84–85.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ibid. 85–86.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ibid. 88.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ibid. 115.

During his campaign in central and eastern Java, Speelman concluded five treaties on behalf of the Company with representatives of or with the ruler of Mataram in person. The first was with the *susuhunan*'s governor in Japara, February 28, 1677,¹⁰⁸⁷ the next two with Amangkurat II on October 19 and 20, 1677, respectively,¹⁰⁸⁸ and another two with Amangkurat II on January 15, 1678, by which the *susuhunan* renounced his sovereignty over Semarang and surroundings in favour of the Company, and guaranteed monopoly rights for the Company for all the sugar production in the coastal cities.¹⁰⁸⁹ Taken together, the five contracts secured the Company's superiority over Mataram as well as its commercial monopoly rights. Although political stability was not achieved across all of Java before the treaty of Giyanti in 1755,¹⁰⁹⁰ by 1678, Speelman still had obtained more than the High Government initially had hoped for, or even wanted.¹⁰⁹¹

How did Speelman do it? First of all, there was determination and persistence. Already at the initial discussion over the objectives of the

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ibid. 90.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ibid. 106. Amangkurat had succeeded his father in July 1677; M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since 1300*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan, 1993), 75.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, 114.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 96–97.

¹⁰⁹¹ Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, 106, 107.

Java mission in Batavia, Speelman had put forward the idea that one should not miss the opportunity to see if one could extract monopoly concessions from the *susuhunan* now that he was in dire need of assistance. The High Government opposed this position.¹⁰⁹² All the same, already the February 28, 1677 treaty accorded the Company regulation of its eastern border in the Company's favour, securing freedom from tolls and harbour taxes, and gave it the right to build lodges wherever needed, as well as other favours.¹⁰⁹³ Similar privileges were granted in the October 19 and 20 contracts.¹⁰⁹⁴

While Speelman was dealt a strong hand by the *susuhunan*'s desperate need for assistance, context alone cannot explain his success. Determination and persistence is one part of the answer, but personal charisma must have also played a part. Speelman had, after all, built himself quite a reputation during his exploits before the Java campaign. For one, he was the conqueror of Makassar, and in general, Speelman's fame and high standing among Asian rulers was exceptional.¹⁰⁹⁵ That

¹⁰⁹² Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, 88.

¹⁰⁹³ Ibid. 90.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid. 106, 114.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Ibid. 157, pointing to examples, 72, 102, 115.

Amangkurat commanded all Mataramese to obey Speelman's orders¹⁰⁹⁶ may have been indicative of this standing. Speelman's insistence on getting to know local conditions must also have played a vital role in his ability to handle local affairs. His *Memorie* on Java testified to the fact that he had made no exception to the rule of acquiring local knowledge regarding Java and Mataram.¹⁰⁹⁷

After his return to Batavia and his appointment as director-general after the Java campaign, Speelman increasingly came into the foreground in public life, and his esteem among local rulers continued to rise. Tellingly, letters from local power holders to the governor-general were increasingly addressed to Speelman as well, and even to Speelman alone.¹⁰⁹⁸ Replies from the High Government increasingly came to be signed by the director-general in addition to the governor-general and members of the Council.¹⁰⁹⁹

Although Speelman in his period as governor-general, as already mentioned, came to be criticised, he still earned one final success regarding the Company's relations with local Asian powers in this

¹⁰⁹⁶ In a letter of March 16, 1677; *ibid.* 92.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 115.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 120.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 121.

period, namely the pacification of Batavia's neighbour to its west, the trading sultanate of Banten.

The conquest of Banten

The port-state of Banten was situated on the north-western hook of Java, and comprised also parts of Lampung in southern Sumatra.¹¹⁰⁰ Its relationship with the Company, apart from being Batavia's territorial neighbour to the west, was similar to and ran in important ways parallel to the development of the Company's relations with Makassar. If one substitutes pepper for nutmeg and cloves, and the English for the Portuguese, we have a similar conflict over trade monopolies and interference of non-Company European rivals that made up the basic conflict with Makassar. Even cycles of negotiations, war, and treaty between Banten and the Company to a certain extent paralleled those between the Company and Makassar. Thus, after a period of conflict in 1636, a truce was made between the Company and Banten that later was

¹¹⁰⁰ The general information on Banten is taken from Guillot, Ambary, and Dumarçay, *The Sultanate of Banten*.

confirmed in a treaty in 1639 that in many respects was equivalent to the one concluded with Makassar two years before.

After another period of deteriorating relations after 1639, an agreement for a ten-year peace was made in 1645; but as Banten supported Makassar, a cooler climate again set in. Their rapport worsened when the starkly anti-Company Sultan Ageng came to power in 1651, and tensions heightened as the ten-year truce agreed in 1645 neared its term. Open hostilities started again in 1655, and after intermittent negotiations in 1657 and 1658, ended with a new treaty in 1659. This is roughly the same period of war and treaty negotiations with Makassar between 1654 and 1660. A short while after the 1659 treaty, relations deteriorated again until Sultan Ageng declared war on the Company at the end of April 1680.¹¹⁰¹ To understand the ensuing chain of events up to the peace treaty of April 17, 1684, one has to look at internal conditions and events in Banten from 1680 to 1682 and how the Company reacted to them.

Inside Banten, there was a conflict at the outset between Sultan Ageng and his younger son, Purbaya, on the one side, and his elder son,

¹¹⁰¹ The chronology is based on Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, 239, 261, 277, 287, 350–53, and 413–23.

prince Haji,¹¹⁰² on the other. The conflict was caused by Haji's jealousy over being side-lined in favour of his younger brother, but was also caused by differences over policy towards the Company. Haji showed a more accommodating approach than his father and brother. On May 1, 1682, there was a palace revolution in Banten in which Haji ousted his father from power and immediately sent envoys to Batavia to negotiate for peace.¹¹⁰³ The Bantenese envoys and their entourage reached the roadstead of Batavia on May 8.

Preliminary negotiations: The issue of letters of delegation

Negotiations between Bantenese envoys and Speelman and Johannes Camphuis, who were chosen for the task, took place with preliminary hearings about the arrangements and procedures from May 10 to the beginning of June. It is clear from the transcripts of the talks that the Company's aim was to lead Haji's negotiators into a treaty of alliance that would stand up to any formal criticism from rival Europeans, in particular the English. Symptomatic of that purpose is Speelman's

¹¹⁰² Named so after his pilgrimage to Mekka in 1674, Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, 132.

¹¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 132–33.

insistence that the two Bantenese envoys, Sadana and Astradjadja, be provided with a valid letter of delegation of powers from Haji. The discussion of that issue took place on the first day of negotiations proper, May 17.¹¹⁰⁴ It is characteristic of Speelman's persuasive mode of negotiating, which combined a paternalistic reproach with a forthcoming attitude. It is worth looking at in some detail.

Speelman opened the session by asking whether the Bantenese envoys had written authorisation empowering them to conclude a treaty¹¹⁰⁵ and substantiated his request by a reference to the fact that such was the habit with the Dutch and other nations."¹¹⁰⁶

Sadana, who was the only one of the two Bantenese ambassadors to speak during the negotiations, replied by saying that the letter from Haji that they had brought on their arrival May 8 was meant to serve this purpose,¹¹⁰⁷ and added that according to their custom it should suffice well enough for the purpose.¹¹⁰⁸

¹¹⁰⁴ The negotiation session is recorded in *DRB* May 17, 1680, 249–51.

¹¹⁰⁵ "met een credentiebrief waeren voorsien met qualificatie omme met ons in alles te mogen tracteren." *DRB* May 17, 249.

¹¹⁰⁶ "Gelyck onder ons en andere volckeren waere." *DRB* May 17, 249.

¹¹⁰⁷ "in plaets van dien was dienende." *DRB* May 17, 249.

¹¹⁰⁸ "na haer wyse genoegsam goet en valiede." *DRB* May 17, 249.

To this Speelman acidly pointed out that Haji's May 8 letter may well be considered to serve the function of a letter of delegation to the Bantenese, but it did not meet the standards adhered to by the Company. It would have been better if the actual delegation of powers had been explicitly stated.¹¹⁰⁹ Rather patronizingly, he repeated that "for the sake of their own convenience in handling their mission, it would have been better still if they had been furnished with a letter clearly expressing their powers as delegated from both the sultan himself and all his nobles."¹¹¹⁰

Speelman went on to phrase his demand for an explicit and specific letter of delegation as an ultimatum: "with no clear credentials, or assurance of delegated powers on behalf of the sultan, all the negotiations might in the end prove to be of no avail and useless."¹¹¹¹ In other words, if a confirmation by Haji that his two envoys were empowered to negotiate on his behalf was not produced, there would be no negotiations at all. Sadana then had to give in, replying that it would

¹¹⁰⁹ "dat sulx soo waere, maer dat het niet quat waere sulcx expresser by geschrift ware verclaert." *DRB* May 17, 249.

¹¹¹⁰ "en oversulcx, toot haar gesantens eygen gerustheyt ontlastinge niet beter soude wesen dat zy sich van den volcomen credentie off volmagt des Conincx en alle de ryxgrooten quamen te voorsien." *DRB* May 17, 249.

¹¹¹¹ "sonder hun volle credentie off vollmagt de conferentien en onderhandelingen wederseyts maar voor nodeloos en onnut zouyden wesen te agten." *DRB* May 17, 249.

have been better if they had brought such a letter with them.”¹¹¹² Sadana offered to return to Banten to get a proper letter of delegation from the sultan, to which Speelman replied that Sadana’s rank were credentials enough. Although there was no need for a person of such high rank to go, he advised the Bantenese to instead send someone of lower rank from their entourage.¹¹¹³ So, at the end of what one must regard as a rather humiliating instruction in the proper mode of conducting diplomacy by Speelman, there was also a sugaring of the bitter pill by acknowledging Sadana’s rank and status.

One should not mistake Speelman’s insistence on proper credentials for dogmatic formalism. There was a real issue involved, but it did not primarily concern the Banten–Batavia axis. It primarily concerned the VOC–EIC axis, and more broadly, relations between the Company and its European rivals. The motive for and intent in obtaining a formal watertight letter of authorisation was to ensure that any agreement between Haji and the Company could withstand challenges to the negotiations’ legitimacy from the Company’s rivals. Thus, the agreement had to be made “by the book,” which required that the

¹¹¹² “Waarop zy repliceerde sulx mede wel te connen begrypen, dat een volcomen credentiebrief . . . voor haarzelver beter en geruster waere.” *DRB* May 17, 249.

¹¹¹³ *DRB* May 17, 250.

Bantenese negotiators be properly empowered. Paradoxically, this issue was but another example of how the context of local interactions imprinted on the Company's mode of approach, although in this case it had the appearance of procedural dogmatism.

In the end, nothing binding came out of the negotiations in Batavia, and the ensuing negotiations in Banten also ended inconclusively because the counterproposals made by the Bantenese were unacceptable to the Company. All the same, relations between Banten and Batavia remained peaceful through 1681.¹¹¹⁴

Inside Banten, however, a civil war erupted in the beginning of 1682, as Sultan Ageng supported by the English and other Europeans residing in Banten sought to regain his power from Haji. As the rebels gained increasing support in the beginning of March, and Haji became isolated in his residence in Banten, he sent a letter to the Company asking for assistance.

Speelman convened the Council on March 1, when a decision was made to assist Haji in order not to miss "this golden opportunity." At

¹¹¹⁴ Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, 133.

the same time, it was also decided that the Company should initially offer to arbitrate between Ageng and Haji. As Ageng did not even respond to the Company's offer, the Company engaged itself militarily on Haji's side.¹¹¹⁵ We need not go into details of the Banten campaign here, except to state that in the end it was a success for the Company, and resulted in the treaty between the Company and Banten of April 17, 1684 that made Banten a vassal state of the Company in all but name. By the time of the signing of this treaty, Speelman had already died, but surmising that he may have had some influence over the outcome, and because parts of the treaty illustrate another aspect of the Company's diplomatic repertoire than we saw in the handling of the delegation of power issue, I shall offer some comments on it.

The 1684 contract

The April 17–28, 1684, treaty between Banten and the Company¹¹¹⁶ consisted of ten articles and two amendments: a statement by the sultan about the treaty, called an *acte van obligatoir* (declaration of obligations) and a declaration of remission of debts owed by the Sultan to the

¹¹¹⁵ Ibid. 134–35.

¹¹¹⁶ In *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.336–51.

Company by the governor-general and the Council of the Indies called an *acte van remissie*.¹¹¹⁷

The two amendments to the 1684 treaty laid down a transaction in which the *acte van remissie* gave the Company a monopoly on the purchase of pepper and the sale of Indian cloth in Banten, and in return relinquished its claim on Haji for war costs. The *acte van obligatoir* also stated the background for Haji's debt of gratitude to the Company for its assistance to him during the civil war. Additionally, in the way it narrated the story of the relationship between Haji and the Company, it sought to make the arrangement between the Company and Haji into a solid patrimonial relationship of Company generosity and altruism reciprocated by gratitude and loyalty from Haji. This also made the relationship impenetrable and immunized the Company against accusations of interference by outsiders. This illustrates a constructivist aspect of treaty making very well, and I shall analyse it in some detail.

The main part of the text in Sultan Haji's *acte van obligatoir* gives a chronological account of the events from Ageng's abdication in

¹¹¹⁷ *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.342–46 and 346–47, respectively.

May 1680 to the Dutch intervention in 1682. The background for Haji's precarious position, his letters asking support from Batavia, the Dutch offer of assistance linked to the offer of arbitration and Ageng's rejection of it, and Haji's rescue by the Company, are all recorded true to the basic historical facts. All the same, these facts are described in a manner that underscores the patrimonial bonds between Haji and the Company.

The Company as the "Good guy"

Being narrated in the first person plural by the sultan, the prominent theme in the *acte obligatoir* is his recognition of his bond of gratitude to the Company. The focus is placed on the Company's assistance to him, which has been "rendered so loyally and proved to be so important."¹¹¹⁸

The Company is further praised for having "dedicated itself fully, and spared neither their empathy, nor money nor men"¹¹¹⁹ in their support for the sultan's cause.

¹¹¹⁸ "de hulpe, die soo getrouwelijk en soo vruchtbaar bewesen is." *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.342.

¹¹¹⁹ "niet gespaard haar sorg, onkosten en volk om mijn rebellige onderdanen te dwingen en ons te herstellen." *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.344.

The other foreigners in general and the English in particular as the “Bad guys”

The loyal dedication of the Dutch must be understood as all the more praiseworthy when contrasted to the devious conduct of the other European nations at Banten, who had allied themselves with and supported the rebels with arms as well as with money from the beginning of the rebellion against Haji.¹¹²⁰ The Dutch thus by both explication and implication stand out as Haji’s only true and committed friends. When Haji was still sultan in 1684, it was thanks to the Dutch intervention. Haji’s moral obligation to the Company should thus be “obvious to the whole world.”¹¹²¹

Tokens of gratitude

Given Haji’s bond of gratitude to the Company for its efforts in support of his cause and the services rendered to him, the privileges given to the Company are to be regarded as no more than tokens of his obligations to the Company. The commercial privileges are depicted as an offer of

¹¹²⁰ “Van den beginne des vyandschap af den vyand geholpen met raad en met daad en met wapenen en oorlogengereetschap en met geld.” *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.343.

¹¹²¹ “opdat onse schuldige beleydenis en dankbarhey openbaar werde voor de gantsge wereld.” *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.344.

compensation made by Haji and not as demands from the Company.

They are, in fact, presented as Haji's initial offers. The opening paragraph of the *acte obligatoir* states that Haji had decided "to approach the Company not only with the promise to compensate [it] for the war costs, but also to accord an exclusive privilege of all trade on Banten to the Company."¹¹²² Those were Haji's terms or offer if the Dutch would help him keep the throne and establish peace and order in his realm.¹¹²³

It is further noted that the Company is the generous party. Haji's offer of compensation is stated to be less than a fair return for the services rendered to him; in fact, the Company could fairly have demanded more in return for its services or benevolence.¹¹²⁴ An appeal to legal legitimacy is forsaken for the benefit of motives of altruism, although implicitly mixed with promises of material gain: "Realising the sultan's precarious situation, the governor-general and Council were

¹¹²² "te versoeken de hulp en bystand der Comp.ie, op conditie, dat wy niet en allen soudon voldoen de penningen en oncosten, welcke door de Comp.ie dartoef verspielt soude moeten werden maar daarenboven ook haar te geven octroy van den gatschen handel, met uytshuytinge van alle andre natiën of personen." *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.342.

¹¹²³ "Alles met conditie, dat wij maaar alleen soudon blyven sultan van Bantam, met rust en vrede." *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.342.

¹¹²⁴ "reeds merder vereyst werd tot vergeldinge van haer dienst (ofte weldaad)." *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.344.

moved into action by the sultan's promises and their compassion."¹¹²⁵

The noble aspect of the Company's motives is emphasised.

The Dutch condition that before they could dedicate themselves militarily to Haji's cause, they must first establish whether there were any grounds for arbitration with Ageng, fits into this configuration of benevolence and altruism. The offer of arbitration must be understood as an indication that the Company was dragged into the conflict against its will. In this scenario, the fact that Ageng ignored the arbitration offer is used to present a contrast between a moderate, peace-seeking Company and a hardened and uncompromising Ageng abetted by his European supporters. The Council had decided first to see if there was any possibility of Ageng and the rebels agreeing to a peace,¹¹²⁶ but the latter "were neither willing to negotiate nor to enter a truce, nor hear any talk of peace, encouraged and supported as they were by other European

¹¹²⁵ "Wanneer den Gouverneur- Generaal en de Raden van India... onse uysterste nood sagen, soo sijn sy door onse beloften, en haar medelyden bewogen geworden." *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.342–43.

¹¹²⁶ "dat sy eerst souden ondersoken of den sultan Agon en zijn wederspanning volk niet in der minne te vrede konde gestelt werden." *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.343.

residents.”¹¹²⁷ In other words, because Ageng was intent on war with Haji and the Europeans residing in Banten conspired with him and encouraged him, the Company was driven to intervene to support the lawful ruler and re-establish law and order.

The Company’s accommodationist approach manifested itself even after victory. Although Haji would have liked to see the Europeans who sided with Ageng punished more severely, at the Company’s urging he agreed merely to expel them from the realm.¹¹²⁸

So, not only were the Dutch content to see their European rivals disappear from Banten, events had played into their hands to present it as a consequence of their rivals’ own doing in the course of events that the Dutch themselves had done nothing to instigate. On the contrary, they had acted as go-betweens in order to “soften” the attitude of the sultan, to “rescue” their fellow Europeans from a more forceful revenge.

For all the explicit and implicit praise of the Company in the sultan’s *acte obligatoir*, it is clear that the Company’s actions between 1680 and 1682 had another, much more narrowly defined dimension of

¹¹²⁷ “maar haar rebellie en hertnekkigheid... was soo vermeerdert en toegenomen, dat sij weygerden aan te horen eenige redenen of versoek tot stilstant van wapenen of tot vrede gevoed en ondersteunt door de Frangise residenten.” *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.343.

¹¹²⁸ *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 3.344.

power politics about it. But, the configuration of the Company's altruism and Bantenese gratitude and obligation had a function in power politics, too. They went to provide legitimacy to both the Company's intervention as well as its post-war arrangement with Banten.

Despite their difference in form, the patrimonial altruism in the depiction of Company–Banten relations described in the *acte obligatoir* and the seemingly procedural dogmatism in Speelman's stand in the May 17, 1680, negotiations in Batavia were both manifestations of the wide spectrum of pragmatic treaty configurations in the Company's diplomatic repertoire at the time. A close reading of the *acte van remissie* makes it clear that the altruism was pragmatic and not idealistic, because it was stated as a condition of the remission of debt that it could be revoked at any time should the Bantenese meet their contractual obligations.¹¹²⁹

Poorly concealed under the Company's self-praise was, in other words, its insistence on its rights by treaty, and implicitly its will to enforce them if necessary.

¹¹²⁹ *ende so wij ter contrarie in het gebruyk en geniten van het meergenoemde octroy warden verhindert... om deselve schult ten allen tijden te mogen eysgen en ontfangen*, Ibid. 347

As we now move on to the more specific topic of Speelman's advice on the diplomatic approach towards Makassar, my proposition is that in that case too Speelman reveals a similar broad-spectered pragmatism.

Section 3: Analysis, the Notitie

On the Notitie as a source for Speelman's thinking about overseas diplomacy

After having secured the Company's power in Makassar, Speelman left for Batavia in October 1669. Shortly before that, he had begun writing his instructions and advice to assistant merchant Jan van Opijnen, who had been left in charge in Makassar. During the six-week voyage to Batavia and after his arrival Speelman continued working on the manuscript, until it was finally delivered to the High Government on February 17, 1670. The original manuscript is probably no longer in existence, but the oldest surviving copy runs to 646 folio pages in all.¹¹³⁰ The analysis below is based on the latter.

The *Notitie* covers the period from Speelman's arrival in Makassar in November 1666 up to his departure. The text is organised in part chronologically and part topically. Thematically, it can be divided into two parts: Speelman's instructions for the defence and administration of Fort Rotterdam, and a survey of the political geography

¹¹³⁰ For the chronology and general introduction to the *Notitie*, see J. Noorduyn, *De handelsrelaties van het Makassaarse rijk volgens de notitie van Cornelis Speelman uit 1670* (Amsterdam: Verloren, 1983), 99–101.

of South Sulawesi. The latter can in turn be further split into sections devoted to the Company's Bugis allies, the outer islands, and former allies of Makassar in Sulawesi. These three parts concern, respectively, local colonial administration, descriptions of and reflections on the Company's allies, and descriptions of the Company's erstwhile enemies during the campaign. A striking feature of Speelman's treatment of his subject is his detailed and at times intimate description of individual power holders regarding both their personal traits and personal and kin relations. Quite apart from the political implications, this bears witness to Speelman's thorough knowledge of local affairs.

In addition to information on local political conditions, he also included observations on topography, flora, fauna, geography, and history. Some of this seems to have been written out of a sheer joy of observation and formulation, but most of it was primarily meant to provide relevant information to the Company's residents in Makassar with tacit and explicit advice about how to act to preserve the Company's position.

Propositions

Beginning with Speelman's reflections and advice on diplomacy in the *Notitie*, I intend to demonstrate that he applied a consistent casuistic approach to diplomatic interaction with local power holders, whether they were friends or foes. He stressed the need to obtain as precise information of local conditions and circumstances as possible, in the evident belief that diplomacy had to be based on a knowledge of and willingness to adapt to local conditions. Conversely, formal legal considerations receive little if any consideration. I shall term this approach "empirical, pragmatic diplomacy." By its pragmatic approach, this also represented a "learning-by-doing" approach to diplomacy. At the risk of repeating myself: The mode was dynamic.

The learning presupposed an ability to make meaningful and relevant interpretations of local conditions and situations. I propose that this was what happened for two reasons: First, the overseas interaction was sufficiently commensurable with European standards to make possible a variety of meaningful understandings and communications. As this was the case, relevant understanding and actions increased over time.

A methodological reminder

The term “model” may be misleading if it is taken to mean that I suggest that Speelman worked out an explicit, general recipe on the “art of overseas diplomacy” in the *Notitie*. He did not. What we *do* find are descriptive overviews of the background and history of friend and foe, as well practical considerations and advice on how the Company could uphold the loyalty of its allies and maintain control over its former enemies. In fact, the very idea of a “general model” of overseas diplomacy runs counter to Speelman’s mode of exposition and analysis in the *Notitie*, which focuses consistently actual cases. All the same, I have chosen to use the term “model” in the title because some general characteristics of Speelman’s thinking about and approach to overseas diplomacy can be *reconstructed* from his casuistic and concrete exposition. It is this kind of reconstruction that I intend to undertake in the following.

Plan of exposition

I shall start by briefly introducing Speelman’s conceptualisation of the relative roles of treaties, military force, and diplomatic negotiations, before I turn to some of his considerations on diplomacy’s role in

upholding the Company's hegemony in general. I then point to some of Speelman's remarks on the importance of acquiring precise information on local conditions. The main body of the discussion constitutes an analysis of Speelman's case descriptions and assessments of old friends and former foes in South Sulawesi—more specifically, three of the Company's main enemies in Makassar, and the Company's principal ally, Arung Palakka. While all these cases have their peculiarities, they all highlight a characteristic feature of Speelman's "method," namely his keen eye on the personal character and human nature of the men of power with whom he dealt. Not least was his continuous assessment of how their personal characteristics could be used for the benefit of the Company. These traits go to illustrate that Speelman conceived of and handled overseas diplomacy in more "personalised" than "institutionalised" terms. That is but another characteristic of the empirical pragmatic approach.

I shall round off the survey on Speelman to suggest that even some traits in Speelman's physical appearance and personality contributed significantly to his diplomatic success, and that these attributes were reinforced by their compatibility with local perceptions.

The limitations of treaty agreements in upholding the hegemonic regime
 Speelman certainly had no trust in treaties as a regulating means of interaction by itself. The Makassarese, he believed, would agree to any treaty without necessarily having any intention of honouring it. For instance on the sultan's remark that the "Admiral (Speelman) decides everything and that there was nothing he himself could do about it, but to accept it," Speelman laconically remarks that this was "nicely put, but in reality not so intended."¹¹³¹ Promises of support from local allies could be even more confusing and less trustworthy.¹¹³²

However much these examples seem to support Andaya's view of a collision of conceptions about the nature of treaties, one should first take a look at the weak institutional structure of diplomacy in Europe, and the European record of broken treaties in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹¹³³ More significant, contextual factors may do more than local political culture to explain Makassar's breaches of treaty with the Company in the period 1637–66. First of all, there was an objective clash

¹¹³¹ "den Admiraal is meester van alles, Soo als hij ordonneert, moeten wij tevreden zijn. Gunt van die zijde wel gezegt, maer niet gemeent is." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 707b.

¹¹³² See for instance Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, 718b–719b.

¹¹³³ See for instance, Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, chapter 1, and Black, *A History of Diplomacy*, 43–59.

of interests in the Moluccas. Second, the terror of distance, and thus the Company's weak sanction power as long as it did not have a territorial base in Sulawesi, must have played a part in Makassarese risk calculations.

As it was, the context changed radically with the Company coalition's victory in 1667 and the establishment of Fort Rotterdam as the Company's colonial headquarters in Sulawesi. Speelman's historical account of the Company–Makassar interaction between 1637 and 1666 serves to corroborate his view that treaties not backed by realistic military sanctions were of limited value.

Speelman's account of the Company's interaction with Makassar up to 1666—the relative value of treaty regulations to military sanctions

Speelman's description and analysis of VOC–Makassar interaction from 1637 up to the decision for the campaign on October 25, 1666, proceeds chronologically, using the three cycles of conflict, negotiations, and war, and treaties in 1637, 1655, and 1660, respectively, as the structuring

principle of his story.¹¹³⁴ The prose is written in a neutral, objective tone with few comments. Thus Speelman's view of the role of treaties in the Company–Makassar interaction can be reconstructed by implication.

Speelman depicts the “settled peace” of the 1637 treaty¹¹³⁵ as one that “settled all differences and issues between the two, with all conflicts solved and done with,” excepting the issue of a permanent trading lodge for the Dutch.¹¹³⁶ As for the period from the 1637 treaty to the outbreak of war in 1653, and the 1655 treaty, Speelman merely notes that interactions went on with ups and downs until 1653.¹¹³⁷ The incidents that took place that year, and Makassarese support of the rebels in Ambon are given as the reasons that “war came to break out.”¹¹³⁸ The outbreak of war is thus presented as a logical response to Makassarese provocations and breaches of the 1637 treaty.

As for the outbreak of the war in 1660, Speelman simply states that the 1655 treaty was of such a nature that the High Government was

¹¹³⁴ With the qualification of course that in 1637 there was no war between Makassar and the Company.

¹¹³⁵ “vaste vrede” by Speelman consistently dated to 1636, VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820a.

¹¹³⁶ “alle verschillen, verwijderinghe veroorsaackt hebbende, bijgelecht ende vergeleucken.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820a.

¹¹³⁷ “sijnde dit soo onder diverse contenties, goede ende quade wederzijdse bejegeninge etc. gecontinueert.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820a.

¹¹³⁸ “tot een openbaar oorloch quam uijt te breken.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820a.

displeased with it; he refers to its instructions to Van Dam and Truytman in 1660 as evidence.¹¹³⁹ This statement of fact is all that Speelman offers as an explanation for the High Government's decision to go to war in 1660. Makassarese breaches of the 1655 treaty were by implication what had "led the Honourable Gentlemen to declare the 1655 treaty annulled and actions of war begun."¹¹⁴⁰ The brevity of the narrative needs no further explanation other than to remark that by 1660 the belief that a settlement with Makassar could be reached by good faith and treaties alone was a dead letter.¹¹⁴¹

Speelman attributes the decision for war in 1666 to continued Makassarese harassment,¹¹⁴² which led to Resident Verspreet's departure from Makassar and return to Batavia in 1665, and Wesenhagen's "unproductive negotiations" in February the following year.¹¹⁴³

¹¹³⁹ "soodanich, dat hun Ed. Daervan haar misnoegen thoonden, connende blijcken, bij d' instructie voor d'Heer Van Dam en den Ed. Truijtman 1660 verleent." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820a.

¹¹⁴⁰ "wat rede Hun Ed.le gemoveert hebben, deselve . aff te breecken, en een aenslach op Pannekoka te maecken." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol.820a.

¹¹⁴¹ See chapter 6.

¹¹⁴² "uijt de bedrugtinge van ongemeacq." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, 820a.

¹¹⁴³ "sonder ijets te verrichten.", VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820a. Speelman seemed to have the correct dates confused, Wesenhage left for

Speelman is hardly any more elaborate on the underlying reasons for the outbreak of open conflict here than in his treatment of the background of the 1655 and the 1660 wars. Although he refers to “the real reasons”¹¹⁴⁴ given in his instructions in October,¹¹⁴⁵ in the *Notitie* the outbreak of the war is again explained as a result of Makassarese provocations, namely the Makassarese invasion of the Sulu Islands and the murder of Company personnel on Saleijer, and the plunder and murder in connection with the wreckage of the ship *De Leeuwin*.¹¹⁴⁶

Summary: The limitations of treaties

In Speelman’s historical survey of Company–Makassar interactions, these are represented as a continuous story of broken treaty terms by the Makassarese. The implicit lesson is that treaties unsupported by political control and a realistic recourse to military sanctions, were worth next to nothing. The functional treaty was one that could be protected and defended within the framework of a hegemonic political and military

Makassar February 16, 1666, see Stapel, *Het Bongaais Verdrag*, 85, referring to *DRB*. For the events see Stapel, *Het Bongaais Verdrag*, 82–85.

¹¹⁴⁴ “de eigentlijkke oorsaecken.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820a.

¹¹⁴⁵ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820a.

¹¹⁴⁶ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820b.

structure. In the post-1667 order, the alliance structure of the Bongaya treaty and Fort Rotterdam filled that function.

On diplomacy's role in upholding the Company's hegemony in general

Speelman ends his historical narrative of Company—Makassar interactions with a note of pride in the Company's achievements. With victory and the Bongaya Treaty, not only was peace restored in the land, it was restored with added glory and an enhanced reputation for the Company.¹¹⁴⁷ Taking into consideration that the Company's hegemony rested on the various parties' loyalty to it as their supreme overlord, a boost to reputation was beneficial, and a main diplomatic challenge lay in protecting it. But the hegemonic system also rested on the preservation of peace among the local signatories of the Bongaya Treaty. In other words, as hegemon the Company had not only to oversee and keep the allied parties loyal to itself, it also had to concern itself with, and be prepared to interfere in, regional and local conflicts to preserve peace and order. I shall analyse Speelman's presentation of typical challenges in some of these axes and the respective means he recommended for handling them.

¹¹⁴⁷ "in 't gantse land nu weder vrede, met veel meerder reputatie als te voeren." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 820b.

Bugis–Makassar relations

The approaches towards the Bugis allies, on the one hand, and the erstwhile foe Makassar, on the other, had different ends at the outset. During the campaign and before the conclusion of the 1667 treaty, the challenge was to keep the alliance with the Bugis intact in order to crush Makassar. In the post-Bongaya order, the challenge regarding the Bugis was essentially to keep its loyalty intact and transfer it into the post-conflict order. For Makassar, the challenge was still to check and eventually pre-empt any ambitions of regaining its former power.

Balancing the power of the formerly dominant Makassar against the rising power of the Bugis proved a challenge. Speelman confided to the High Government that he was well aware that, after the fall of Sombaopu, the Bugis had started to feel uncomfortable about being tied too closely to the Company,¹¹⁴⁸ and had from time to time approached Makassar.¹¹⁴⁹ Contact had taken place in secret, without either asking for

¹¹⁴⁸ “De Bougijs in dees tijdt haer onder Comp’s ontsach wat gevreest en geviert siende.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 821a.

¹¹⁴⁹ “hebben nu en dan al meer met de Maccassaren genegotieert.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 821a.

the Company's presence or informing it of the initiative.¹¹⁵⁰ Although never explicated by Speelman, the Bugis initiatives not only represented a breach of loyalty, but also of the treaty, particularly article 25, which stated that all such contacts should take place with the knowledge of and in the presence of the Company's representatives.¹¹⁵¹ The High Government need not worry unnecessarily however over these secret negotiations,¹¹⁵² consoled Speelman, as nothing seems to have come of it.¹¹⁵³ His advice on the matter is that one would do well to stick to the agreed articles of the treaty as far as possible and enforce them with discretion and firmness.¹¹⁵⁴

It seems fair to suggest that although not explicitly proposed, what Speelman had in mind was a pre-emptive strategy based on balance-of-power thinking. The alliance with the Bugis should be maintained while keeping their ambitions in check. At the same time, it was important to not weaken the Makassarese too much. If so, a balance

¹¹⁵⁰ "sonder van ons ijmant present te roepen off daer van kennisse te doen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 821a.

¹¹⁵¹ Particularly art. 25 of the Bongaya Treaty. *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 2.378–39, see chapter 7.

¹¹⁵² "hoedanich negotiatie U.E. haer niet hoeve aen te trecken." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 821a.

¹¹⁵³ "soo der dispuijt over viele." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 821a.

¹¹⁵⁴ "maer de bekende pointen dienen naer vermogen en met discretie in vigeur gehoude te werden." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 821b.

of power among the local powers, presided over and regulated by the Company, was to be a governing principle of Speelman's hegemonic order.

Implications

I regard Speelman's pragmatic reaction to the Bugis breach of contract and his trust in a balance of power to keep both the Bugis and Makassar pacified as illustrative of his pragmatic thinking. Power relations took precedence over insistence on legalisms. One does well to note that this pragmatic approach meant that an observant eye had to be kept on events at the two courts so as to identify any increase in dissatisfaction and opposition, but at the same time provocative action, which would result in unnecessary aggressive reactions on the part of either the Bugis elite or at the court of Makassar, had to be avoided. If that was true for the main ally and former main enemy, it was also true for the smaller political entities as well. In short, the hegemonic system was built on information and the interpretation of local political activities.

The importance of acquiring precise information on local conditions as the general foundation of the Company's diplomatic performance

In the introduction to the section headed "Description of the allies,"¹¹⁵⁵ Speelman makes the limitations of his effort clear. His ambition is "not to give genealogical tables of rulers nor account for the precise jurisdiction and authority, or the military strength of their realms,"¹¹⁵⁶ as that would have taken more time than he himself had at his disposal.¹¹⁵⁷ Drawing an encompassing political geography of South Sulawesi with the aim of organising the required political order among the local allies had to be left to his successors¹¹⁵⁸ who would be able to assess the situation more accurately,¹¹⁵⁹ Speelman seems almost to lament this.

In any case, for Speelman, the increase of knowledge based on experience or the accumulation of information on local conditions had to form the basis of the Company's power in South Sulawesi. And one

¹¹⁵⁵ "Beschrijvinge der Bontgenooten." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 708a ff.

¹¹⁵⁶ (ick) "ben niet van sinne daer bij te doende geschlaghtreckeningen, eigelijcx jurisdictie van landen en heerschappijen, nogh sterckte van vermogen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 708a.

¹¹⁵⁷ "want dat een en andere vereijst wat meer tijdt, als ick nu over hebbe." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 708a.

¹¹⁵⁸ "meest te staade sal comen voor den geenen, die het zijn wercq sal worden onder de bontgenooten selve de gerequireerde orde stellen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fols. 708a.

¹¹⁵⁹ "wanneer oocq de perfectheijt best en clarest te ondervinden sal wesen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fols. 708b.

should add that he was definitely far too modest about his own contribution to it. The *Notitie* is full of information about political fissures, power factions, and the personal qualities of rulers and pretenders in South Sulawesi. This information is not a neutral survey, but a systematic political mapping necessary to preserve the Company's power.

Information about local power is typically presented at two levels of analysis in the *Notitie*, namely as an analysis of relations of power seen from an historical-contextual point of view, and from the level of personal agency. Of the two approaches, the latter takes primacy in Speelman's analysis. At the end of the day, from the Company's point of view the questions were who to approach because of their position and influence in the power hierarchy, and how to approach them to deter them from scheming against the Company, or how to win them over to the Company's side and make them useful to the Company.

The need for detailed information on local political conditions thus went with the institutional order of hegemony as such, but might have been enhanced by an appreciation of the fluid nature of the overseas context, where personal bonds were stronger than institutional ones. The

latter called not only for accurate information on local political conditions, but for intimate knowledge and information about personal character in order to either bar unwanted persons from power or forge or renew bonds with desirable ones. If information on both context and agency prospects was equally indispensable, it was at the agency, or personal, level that the “art of diplomacy” was practised. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to an analysis of Speelman’s performance and advice in four cases that concerned three of the Company’s main adversaries in Makassar—Karaeng Karunrung, the “young king” of Makassar,¹¹⁶⁰ and the “king of Tello,”¹¹⁶¹—as well as the Company’s main ally in South Sulawesi, Arung Palakka.

¹¹⁶⁰ This must be Hasanuddin’s son, I Mappasomba, in favour of whom Hasanuddin abdicated after the fall of Sombaopu, June 1669. See Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, 134, I shall be using Speelman’s term.

¹¹⁶¹ This must be Karaeng Tello. Ibid. 121–22. I shall be using Speelman’s term.

Considerations with respect to the foe: Karaeng Karunrung

References to Karaeng Karunrung are scattered throughout the *Notitie*. In the description of the 1667 campaign, he appears for the most part as a secondary figure, but in the section on Makassar¹¹⁶² he is the subject of a lengthy and systematic treatment. In brief *Karaeng* Karunrung and his brother *Karaeng* Sumana fell in and out of favour with Sultan Hasanuddin from the 1660s and up to the fall of Makassar. The two represented a hard and an accommodating approach towards the Dutch. In 1660 Karunrung been replaced as chief minister by the more moderate Sumana, and in 1664, Hasanuddin pressured the banishment of Karunrung from Makassar, whereupon the latter went to Banten and then Passir in Borneo. But in 1665, after the failure of a Makassarese embassy to Batavia in 1664, the peace party led by Sumana was discredited, and 1665 saw the return of Karunrung to the Makassarese court.¹¹⁶³ Speelman's relation of Karunrung starts with a chronology of his falling

¹¹⁶² VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 816b-819a.

¹¹⁶³ Basset 1958, 34-35.

in and out of favour at the Makassarese court.¹¹⁶⁴ Speelman also offers a description of Karunrung's vices and virtues, and ends up with an account of his own abortive attempt to make Karunrung a Company ally. For economy of space, I shall limit my analysis to Speelman's characterisation of Karunrung's personality, and give some comments on the implications of Speelman's plan to make Karunrung an ally.

On Karunrung's vices

Intelligence and cunning in a cynical quest for power are the characteristic features of Speelman's depiction of Karunrung's political manoeuvring. Relating the story of Karunrung's return to power in the court of Makassar, Speelman holds nothing back in depicting him as having a totally amoral and cynical personality. Karunrung's re-entry into court opened a Pandora's box of evil. He was now once again in position to "go on with his daily base deeds and ill-doings of murder, provocative behaviour and various sorts of black magic, just as before."¹¹⁶⁵ This is a tale so horrifying Speelman goes on, "that it would

¹¹⁶⁴ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fols. 817bf.

¹¹⁶⁵ "gaande voort alle sijne vulgaire dagelijcxe misdrijven, en quade comportementen van moord, (ongeschickte vertooningen, bemoeijenisse met tooverijen en anderer dergelijcke, dewelke superstition, soo wel nogh in den jegenwordigen als in den voorganghe tijdt." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

be inappropriate for decent ears, as it would fill the listener with nausea, and if written down, would take piles of paper.”¹¹⁶⁶ Speelman then denounces Karunrung’s base womanizing and lack of sexual morals: “No one can keep count of his numerous broken marriages, not to mention his concubines.”¹¹⁶⁷ This went together with numerous murders of innocents initiated or committed by him.¹¹⁶⁸

Speelman similarly condemns Karunrung’s political machinations and motives as amoral. The recklessness of Karunrung’s exercise of power is generally recognised by the Makassarese, states Speelman, yet no one dare speak out openly against him.¹¹⁶⁹ Karunrung’s motives are recognised as base too. All agree that he was out to ruin the realm for no other reason than to avenge himself on the kings of both

¹¹⁶⁶ “als sullende de vertellinge daervan voor eerbare ooren onbetamelijcq en met een affgrijselijcq wesen, behalven datter vellen papier met soude gevult worden.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁶⁷ “sijn getroude en weder verlaten vrouwen can hij selve niet mer tellen, ik swijge van sijne bijwijven.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁶⁸ “Noch veel minder can hij opreecken de moorden, door hem selve gedaen, en door de sijne ten sijne bijwesen doen, sonder oorsaecke off waerom.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁶⁹ “de Maccassaren groot en cleen, siende en observerende sijne directie tot hiertoe stellen vast, maer derven het niet openlijck uijtseggen.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

Gowa and Tello for their prior ostracism of him.¹¹⁷⁰ In other words, if Karunrung was a base man as far as personal conduct is concerned, his political conduct and motives were no better.

A special case in which Karunrung's cynical politics and womanizing intertwined was his disgraceful abduction of Karaeng Saderbone's wife, a plot for which he recruited the king of Tello. Although rumours had it that Karunrung's intention was to marry his captive, there can be no doubt, states Speelman, that he had no other intention than bringing her into disrepute and mistreating her.¹¹⁷¹ The political rationale seems to have been that the act of abduction itself not only brought the abducted wife into disrepute, but her husband, one of Karunrung's adversaries as well. In Speelman's eyes, Karunrung was thus a man in whom deviousness and evil in private and political affairs went together.

Yet, Speelman presents another perspective of Karunrung, viewing him in terms of his strategic use in maintaining the Company's

¹¹⁷⁰ "dat hij geen ander opsigt heeft, also om door een totael bederff van het gantse lant sich te wreecken, en te resenteren tegens de beijde coningen over sijne uijtbaninge." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁷¹ "Dat hij nu met de novo na ons vertrecq sal ten wijve nemen, ongetwijffelt met intentie om desselve dan daernaer in verachtinge te brengen, en met quaet tractement te beswaeren." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. fol. 818b.

power in Sulawesi. In this light, Karunrung comes out very favourably because of his strategic and cultural competence, which in actual fact may be viewed as an alternative, more positive, way of looking at some of the qualities we have seen Speelman condemn above.

Karunrung's virtues

“Putting his vices and dubious nature aside,”¹¹⁷² Speelman opened his description of Karunrung’s virtues, “on the other hand one does well to appreciate him as a man of intelligence, well-informed about the world around him, and well experienced in both political and military strategy and tactics.”¹¹⁷³ Speelman further praised Karunrung’s ability to keep calm and not easily be taken by surprise by unforeseen developments and events.¹¹⁷⁴ He is bright,¹¹⁷⁵ possesses a good memory,¹¹⁷⁶ and has a sharp

¹¹⁷² “Sijn boosheeden en quade nature aen een sijde geset.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁷³ “men mach hem aenhouden voor een heer van goet verstant, wereldkundich en gauw ervaren, soo wel in politie als oorlogsdirectie.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁷⁴ “Assurant en niet licht verset over onverhoetse toevallen.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁷⁵ “Schersinnich.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁷⁶ “groote memorie.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

eye for observation.¹¹⁷⁷ When circumstances demanded, he could also act with the required leniency and forgiveness to tie bonds of allegiance with his people.¹¹⁷⁸ In addition, Speelman holds forth that Karunrung has been taught in many trades¹¹⁷⁹ and is well spoken.¹¹⁸⁰

Speelman went on to stress that one also had to take into account the cultural competence of Karunrung's upbringing and education.

Karunrung's father had for instance let his son be taught by the Portuguese.¹¹⁸¹ Thus, not only did Karunrung speak perfect Portuguese, in addition to a number of local languages, he read and wrote them, too.¹¹⁸² All in all, concluded Speelman, Karunrung stands out as "the most competent of all the people of power in Makassar: none more so than him, none his equal, all of them below his standard."¹¹⁸³

¹¹⁷⁷ "naeuwkerig observantie." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁷⁸ "oock near gelegenheijt door miltheijd 't volcq hem aenhangigh te maeken." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁷⁹ "onderwesen in veel fraije exercetien." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁸⁰ "seer wel te tael." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁸¹ "door de bestel van de vader sijn meeste onderwijs en de instituatie bij de Portuguesen gehadt." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁸² "spreeckt hij perfect haere en versceijde anderer hierlandsche taelen, leest en schrijft se mede." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁸³ "Summa boven alle regenten in Maccassar de bequaemste, dies noch in effect meester van sijne meesters." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

Significantly, Speelman's praise of Karunrung is in terms of diplomatic and political strategic capability and not in terms of personal moral assets. Furthermore, Speelman's profile of political admiration for Karunrung comes close to a self-portrait; at least it is hard not to recognise qualities in Speelman's praise for Karunrung that he himself would not have taken pride in. But there was a more immediate practical dimension to Speelman's praise. Despite all his moral flaws, Karunrung was a man of political competence that could become very useful for the Company. In his virtuous aspects, Speelman considered him a "perfect partner," and so had moved to seek out the possibility of luring Karunrung over to the Company's side.

Luring Karunrung over to the Company's side

Immediately after the conclusion of the peace of Bongaya, Speelman had approached Karunrung to establish bonds of confidence with him.¹¹⁸⁴ But although the prospects looked good in the beginning, in the end it did not

¹¹⁸⁴ "waerom icq oocq al ten eerste near de vrede van Bonaetje gepooght hebbe, met denselven in vertrouwe te comen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

work out.¹¹⁸⁵ Speelman blames this on Karunrung's initial lack of confidence in him, which he attributed to his generally suspicious and conspiring mind.¹¹⁸⁶ Karunrung's inherent devious nature thus aborted Speelman's scheme to make use of his virtues in the service of the Company.

That Speelman considered recruiting Karunrung to the Company's side despite his vices is still telling of Speelman's view of overseas diplomacy. Karunrung's personal vices were outweighed by his extraordinary political capability. One might even suspect that some of his vices, or at least his cynicism, might have counted as a politico-tactical asset so long as they were used in the service of the Company. In any case, Karunrung's political talents taken into the balance, the benefits were too tempting not to try to secure his cooperation. As such, the effort well illustrates the pragmatic nature of Speelman's overseas diplomacy.

¹¹⁸⁵ "maer offschoon geleeceq, dat het sich wel soude schicken, soo echter viel het naar mijnen sin niet uijt." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b.

¹¹⁸⁶ "want gelijk hij was vol alderhande quade machines sulcx beswaert van gemoet, stacq hij oocq vol achterdocht, en dorffte sich darhalven aen mij niet vertrouwen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 818b-819a.

The young king of Makassar

In Speelman's eyes, the "young king" of Makassar matched Karunrung's base morals. Inclined towards drinking and gambling in his youth,¹¹⁸⁷ he continued these habits after coming into power.¹¹⁸⁸ He also demonstrated little interest in more serious matters (of state)¹¹⁸⁹ for which he had received little training in his youth.¹¹⁹⁰ The lack of education in affairs of state as a youngster probably would not have made much of a difference anyway considering that the king "should not be considered of the brightest kind" at the outset.¹¹⁹¹

In addition to his lack of moral standards, training, and intellectual capacity, Speelman also finds weaknesses of character in the sultan. He is a man of "no direction,"¹¹⁹² "nor resolution,"¹¹⁹³ but "self-

¹¹⁸⁷ "in sijne jonckhejt is hij genegen geweest tot drinken en speelen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. fol. 819a.

¹¹⁸⁸ "sedert in emplooi comende, is dat naer gebleven." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁸⁹ "heeft sich weijnig becommert in observatien van wightige saecken." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹⁰ "clein onderwijs ontfangen in sijn minderjarigheijt." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹¹ "van deselve 't verstant niet groot sijnde." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹² "geen man van directie." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹³ "noch van resolutie." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

absorbed.”¹¹⁹⁴ The young king was, in short, a man badly qualified to handle a crisis.¹¹⁹⁵

Speelman’s judgment of the young king’s character flaws with political implications extended to a more personal, private level. He declared him extremely petty,¹¹⁹⁶ never rewarding any services, not even those of his house staff,¹¹⁹⁷ and being inclined towards womanizing as well.¹¹⁹⁸ In matters of religion, Speelman depicted him as a hypocrite, being outwardly demonstrative in his pious observances¹¹⁹⁹ while his real concern was for personal enrichment only.¹²⁰⁰ No moral standards seem to have restricted his quest for more money; any means sufficed for him¹²⁰¹ to the extent that he would (even) consent to do business with a street slave if he thought he could make even a marginal profit from

¹¹⁹⁴ “disponneert van sich selve.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹⁵ “niet vervaert en verset in tegenspoet.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹⁶ “gierich boven mate.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹⁷ “loont gene diensten, sijne domestiquen selve krijgen niet.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹⁸ “genegen tot vrouwen.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹¹⁹⁹ “naer ‘t uiterlijcq, fijn in het gelove.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²⁰⁰ “op sijn getijen, heel overgegeven tot geld conquestie.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²⁰¹ “‘t sij op welke wijze ‘t oocq wesen magh.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

it.¹²⁰² In short, by Speelman's standards the king was more a petty peddler than a worthy ruler.

In addition, the sultan had a vengeful nature and was filled with hate for his foes,¹²⁰³ while he considered all his own faults and misdeeds as pardonable.¹²⁰⁴ He was "In all truth a mock king to serve as a Company king,"¹²⁰⁵ Speelman concluded. The young king was but a Company puppet, in other words.

This "caricature king," with all his faults and follies, was one that the Company could live well with. Tellingly, after his character assassination of the sultan, Speelman went on to speculate that the break of the Bongaya Treaty and the war that followed¹²⁰⁶ would probably not have taken place, if the real power had lain in the hands of the king instead of, as had been the case, with Karunrung.¹²⁰⁷ The implication is a

¹²⁰² "sullende een slave van de straet bij hem ter negotie admitteren, soo der een weinich winst bij is. VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²⁰³ "Wraeksuchtigh en haetdragent." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²⁰⁴ "evenwel sijn alle misdrijven bij hem voor gelt vergeffeelijcq." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²⁰⁵ "echter spuls genoch, om een Comp's coninck te wesen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²⁰⁶ See chapter 8.

¹²⁰⁷ "Dat de vrede van Bonaeije niet en soude sijn vervallen, soo hij sich selve meester waer geweest, en sijn eijgen sinlicheit opgevolgt ware, hebbende het oocq niet an hem

familiar one, namely that one had to keep good intelligence about which individual or faction held actual power at the court, and to support Company-friendly rulers however stupid they might be, following the principle that better stupid and friendly than smart and unfriendly.

A shared implication in Speelman's characterisation of Karunrung and the young sultan of Makassar

Although Karunrung stands out as the chief villain in the history of Makassar–Company relations at this time, there can be little doubt that in Speelman's hierarchy of qualities in a ruler, Karunrung ranked well above the young king. For one thing, whereas Speelman kept a balance sheet between vices and virtues for Karunrung, he recorded no virtues for the young king at all. Some of what he found is detestable, but mostly he found harmless mediocrity. Karunrung's vices seem to imply a certain "grandeur" when compared to the sultan's mediocrity, and to reflect a complementary side of a man of great intelligence, strategic insight, and the ability to act wisely.

geappert, onse successive aenmaningen van herten te ampleteeren, om een eijnde van 't oorloch te maeken. Dan gelijcq hij sijn macht langer onmactig was, soo en dorffde hij sijnen inentie niet te kennen geven, indien se was contrarie de opinie van Cronron." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

I suggest this contrast in depiction reflects that Speelman felt he shared more with the cunning politico-military Karunrung than with the ruler who cared more about satisfying his own lusts and greed than to rule. In this configuration, Karunrung represented a “worthy opponent” whom one should try to lure over to the Company’s side. The small-minded, money-seeking sultan—the Company’s “mock king”—represented but a comical figure of nominal power who the Company could manipulate for its own ends.

The king of Tello

In the introduction to the characterisation of the King Tello we are, as in the case of the young king of Makassar, presented with the picture of an untrained, incompetent, and spoilt man of power. Only seven months old when recognised as ruler following the sudden death of his father,¹²⁰⁸ the king of Tello’s training as a political leader was totally neglected during

¹²⁰⁸ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

his childhood. He was not instructed in political matters, but simply left free to follow his personal impulses, whatever they might be.¹²⁰⁹

Still, Speelman is less critical of his personal vices than he is of either the young king of Makassar or Karunrung. There are no tales of big scandals and excesses told about him,¹²¹⁰ but neither was there much to praise him for.¹²¹¹ The king of Tello stood out in Speelman's description as a grey man of little significance. He was not of evil temperament,¹²¹² but he does not seem to have been particularly keen on amassing riches for himself either.¹²¹³ Of the extensive means left to him by his inheritance, a lot had been squandered in gifts to women whom he consecutively married and then left.¹²¹⁴ Apart from this, he seems to have

¹²⁰⁹ “maer heel niet geïnstrueert, noch in eenige saecken onderricht, volgende onbecommert sijne begeerlijckheijt, ‘t sij dan goet off quat.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹⁰ “Heele groote uitjspoorigheden ofte quade comportomenten worden van hem niet vertelt.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹¹ “veel loff en wert hem oocq niet toegeschreven.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹² “quaetaertigh is hij niet.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹³ “onbequam om schatten te samelen.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹⁴ “De middelen hem naergelaeten sijn veele, vermindert met begiftinge *van* vrouwen, die hij al eenige getrouet en weder verlaeten heeft.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

been preoccupied with nothing other than sleeping, eating, and pleasure seeking.¹²¹⁵

Besides showing little interest in politics, the king of Tello also seems to have felt uncomfortable with the attendant responsibilities.¹²¹⁶ Still he was not a devious man,¹²¹⁷ though he seems not to have possessed a lot of courage.¹²¹⁸ A man of little significance, and so seemingly harmless, one would conclude. Still, Speelman noted that after the “last peace” a change could be spotted in the king in that he seemed to have become more observant of political matters, and had started to look behind his back.”¹²¹⁹ This called for an intensified courtship by the Company as it might open the opportunity to bind the king closer to it.

¹²¹⁵ “bemoeijt sich nergens met als met slaepen, eten en vermaeck te soecken. VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹⁶ “onbequaem tot het bestier van saecken.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹⁷ “maer niet valsch off bedrieghlijck.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹⁸ “Sijn couragie wert niet seer gelaudert.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819a.

¹²¹⁹ “Evenwel schijnt hij sedert de laetse vrede wat andachtiger te sijn geworden, beginnende oocq wat achterrugge te sien.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819b.

Advice on how to approach the king of Tello

The political message from Speelman to the High Government and his successors in Makassar was that although the king of Tello seemed to represent neither a potential threat nor a particularly useful ally to the Company, one would do well to look out for his “political awakening” or if he should start to harbour political ambitions of his own that could be turned to the benefit of the Company. In view of the king’s recent political reorientation, he might be drawn over to the Company’s side. But that would take planning and due caution. The task of pursuing the switch of loyalty had to be put in the hands of a “trustworthy agent,” and one had to take care to isolate the king from “agents with bad influence.”¹²²⁰

Working in favour of this scheme was that the king of Tello stood in higher esteem among the population in Makassar than, and was clearly preferred as a ruler to, both the king of Makassar and Karunrung.¹²²¹ So, all in all, prospects did not look bad; at least they were presented as

¹²²⁰ “Men sal hem genoeghsaem near Comp’s intentie connen leijden ... als men door ijmaent, die men vertrouwen magh, quade instrumenten van hem weert.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819b.

¹²²¹ “Bij het volcq van Goa en Tello is hij verre veel getrocken en bemint, boven den conincq van Goa ende Cronron.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819b.

being well worth pursuing. What it would take was clever diplomacy. In Speelman's conceptualisation, and in Company's conceptualisation generally I would say, that meant a man with knowledge of and competence in local thinking and modes of behaviour. If "clever diplomacy" had to be performed by agents well versed in local ways and manners of doing things, the discovery of opportunity for increased Company influence had to be based on assessments of the local situation. Company self-sufficiency and Eurocentrism would have been counterproductive in both cases.

Summing up: The implications of Speelman's assessments of the Makassarese foes

There can be no doubt that for Speelman, the major flaw in the king of Tello's character, as it was in the case of the young king of Makassar, lay in his lack of interest and training in matters of state. Speelman's harsh judgement of both in this respect represents a complement to his admiration for Karunrung's political competence and abilities. By implication, Speelman's condemnation also demonstrated his own political credo, namely that one must know about affairs of state to take part in them successfully. By implication, for the Company to take part

in local politics it had to learn about their workings, not to speak of what it took to protect and defend its hegemon position.

It goes for all three of these character assessments that although some of Speelman's observations might resemble gossipy journalism, the gossip in the final instance served a political purpose as part of an assessment of how to act towards these men of power to gain maximum Company influence. In the case of Karunrung, Speelman tried to win him over to the Company's side because of his exceptional abilities; in the case of the young king Makassar, one was better off leaving him be and not provoking him, harmless as he is in his indulgence in private pleasures, and use him as a "mock king." In the case of the king of Tello, one could well have left him be too, if it were not for the fact that his new interest in politics might open new opportunities. It was better to explore and pursue that possibility. Speelman's "gossip" was not "gossip" per se; it was an essential part of his political survey for defending the Company's political hegemony.

A return to the information dimension

A nicer word for "gossip" is "information." As for Speelman's information about local affairs, he makes explicitly clear that it was

based on his personal experience of the kings on site, both friends and foes.¹²²² But he also made it clear that he might have gotten some facts wrong, or that facts might emerge that would be contrary to what he had related.¹²²³

It is beyond my ambition at present to point out what Speelman actually might have missed or even gotten wrong. What should be noted, however, is that both the implications of Speelman's analysis of local power and his own self-proclamation of their inherent shortcomings point towards a critical approach that is diametrically opposed to a dogmatic Eurocentrism.

¹²²² “Dit sij geseght van de voors. 3 princen naer de presenten tijdt, soo uitgenooome informatie, als eijge bevindinge, staande mijn aenwesen hier omtrent, dat icq deselve als vriend en vijant gefrequeenteert hebbe.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819b.

¹²²³ “connende niet te min wel sijn date er ergens in mijn voorgaende schrifturen wel iets contrarie desen gevonden wierde.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 819b.

Three aspects of keeping the alliance with Arung Palakka

In the case of Arung Palakka, the situation was inverted compared to Karunrung and the other foes. It was the task of keeping Palakka as the glue that held together the alliance with the Bugis states that constituted Speelman's overriding challenge and concern. However, his diplomatic approach towards Palakka remained the same as it was in the case with Karunrung; a personalised, pragmatic approach.

Speelman's point of departure in his analysis of Arung Palakka was that both the Company's political hegemony and political stability in Sulawesi depended on his position as uncontested leader of the Bugis. It was not merely important, it was *vital*; the success of the campaign and the integrity of the Company's hegemony depended on it. There were two potential obstacles to reaching that goal; that Bugis unity would fall apart with the death of Palakka, or that Palakka would lose his hitherto uncontested position as leader of the Bugis. Speelman sought to pre-empt these threats by appealing to both local and non-local traditions.

I have selected three particular cases that illustrate the composite nature of overseas diplomatic challenges as well as Speelman's pragmatic approach to handling them: his use of Palakka's claim to

Soppeng and Bone on the grounds of dynastic rights and heritage; his handling of the succession issue in the event of Palakka's premature death; and the issue of Palakka's speculations on religion as a possible threat to his position should his speculations be known. The first and last were argued in terms of local tradition, the second reflects the institutional difference between the South Sulawesi polities and the Company.

Legitimacy by dynastic claims and historical tradition

Speelman began his description of Arung Palakka¹²²⁴ by laying down the legitimacy of his claims to kingship in the Bugis realms of Bone and Soppeng. It was a claim based on dynastic legitimacy: Palakka was connected by family ties to both the ruling houses of the Bugis.¹²²⁵ Palakka's claim to Bone needed no extra argument, considering that he came from one of the highest-ranking families there;¹²²⁶ but for Soppeng, the situation was more complicated, as Palakka was only indirectly

¹²²⁴ For Speelman's description of Arung Palakka in the Notitie, I build on VOC 1276 OB, Inkomend Briefboek Makassar 1671, fols. 708b ff. and 746a ff.

¹²²⁵ "vermaghschapt aen de beide hooge huijsen der Bougjis." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomend Briefboek Makassar 1671 fol. 708b

¹²²⁶ "en onder die voor eene van de hoogste rangh." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomend Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. fol. 708b.

related to its royal house.¹²²⁷ Speelman's approach to arguing for Palakka's right to Soppeng was thus made primarily in historic and only indirectly dynastic terms. The logic of the legitimacy of Palakka's claim was that as Soppeng was a dependency of Bone,¹²²⁸ so by his dynastic rights to Bone Palakka was in fact a legitimate pretender to the throne of Soppeng, too. He was, claims Speelman, a legitimate pretender to both the royal houses of Bone and Soppeng, by force of traditional custom as well as by legal rights."¹²²⁹ The point here is that whereas neither the dynastic nor the historical claim to sovereignty was foreign to European tradition, one would have to know something about local South Sulawesi affairs to discover Palakka's claims to the lineage as Speelman does. That Arung Palakka must have been one of his main sources here does not detract from the fact that Speelman regarded this information as vital to an understanding of the political structure and workings of the political system.

¹²²⁷ VOC 1276 OB, *Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671*, fol. 708b.

¹²²⁸ "eijgelijck te reekenen voor en steende en onderhoorigh Koninckrijck van Bone." VOC 1276 OB, *Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671*, fol. 708b.

¹²²⁹ "de een en ander soo na is dat hij buijten infractie van outheden couthumen en wetten sustineert, soo wel tot conincq van Soppingh als tot conincq van Bone te comen en te mogen gecooen worden." VOC 1276 OB, *Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671*, fol. 746a.

Surveying local political power relations

Speelman also analysed the political implications of not only dynastic heritage but of current marriage alliances as a source of power. In his account of the quality of Bugis leaders under Palakka's command¹²³⁰ is, for instance, one Arou Vacqua, who was married to Palakka's sister.¹²³¹ The marriage tie was obviously seen as leveraging Palakka's "alliance capital," as Vacqua was a lesser prince of Soppeng.¹²³² This is but one instance of how Speelman surveyed constellations of local power relations. His listing of genealogical records and marriage alliances, as well as his surveys of local lord–vassal relations and dependency relations all constitute specific aspects of a mapping of local power in South Sulawesi; and that mapping was an indispensable element in the Company's diplomatic structure.

Two questions still arise: Was Speelman's information reliable? And was Speelman in a position to interpret his information reliably? A lot of his information must have come from Palakka himself, the rest from local sources, so at least most of it must have been factually correct.

¹²³⁰ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 709a ff.

¹²³¹ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 709a.

¹²³² VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 709a.

But even so, was Speelman in a position “understand” its deeper implications? According to Andaya, as a European, Speelman was “culturally blocked” from acquiring a deeper understanding. I have two counterpropositions. First, insofar as the interactions between the Company and local powers are concerned, the political cultures of Western Europe and South East Asia were sufficiently compatible for a pragmatic transcultural, if still not “perfect,” understanding.

None of the cases of legitimacy claims that Speelman explored in detail needed “cultural translation” to achieve a workable understanding in the first place. All were compatible with seventeenth-century Western European political culture. The dynastic principle was the main source of power legitimation in Western Europe, to the degree that even if one considers the Dutch Republic as something of an exception, it still applied to the power position of the House of Orange.

Second, one should note that Andaya’s argument rests on the assumption that locals had only one model of political communication at their disposal, their own. But why would they apply that without modifications in transactions with outsiders? The evidence both in the Makassarese use of the Portuguese and in their dealings with the Dutch suggests, to the contrary, that they “imported” what they thought useful,

and tried to fend off whatever threatened their freedom of action and autonomy from the outsiders. This points towards a quite different and dynamic interaction logic than that allowed for by the proposition of static mutual misunderstanding. Speelman's particular competence acquired from his long overseas experience and his fluency in Malay also seems to suggest that he would not have consistently been blocked from understanding local conditions and structures.¹²³³

The concern over Arung Palakka's lack of legitimate heirs

After laying out Palakka's genealogy and its political implications, Speelman went on to comment on Arung Palakka's four (official) wives. His "first wife," long a resident in Batavia when Speelman wrote, descended from the kings of Gowa and Saderbone on her father's side and was thus, remarks Speelman, generally to be regarded as of Makassarese descent.¹²³⁴ Putting aside Speelman's personal characterisations of her, based on second-hand opinion and on private

¹²³³ See, for instance, Stapel, *Cornelis Janszoon Speelman*, ix.

¹²³⁴ "Sulcx in 't generael van Maccassarse affcomste." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747a.

conversations with Palakka,¹²³⁵ the issue was basically political, although there seems to be some disagreement over the role of heredity in the Bugis tradition. Noorduyn for one stresses that the Bugis kingdoms, were “strictly hereditary in character”,¹²³⁶ although he also admits an aspect of pragmatism, or “pragmatic opportunism” as he calls it in the fact that “people oriented themselves to the person who manifested the greatest concentration of power.”¹²³⁷ On the other hand Pelras holds that in the Bugis kingdoms no office was properly speaking hereditary, although it was not uncommon for a son or daughter to succeed a parent.¹²³⁸

Whatever difference of opinion, there still can be no doubt that for Speelman and the Bugis nobles who he was discussing the matter with, the issue was who should succeed Palakka if he should pass away.

By right of his first wife’s descent, Arung Palakka had a legitimate claim to the throne of Makassar. In this regard, his first wife represented both a political asset and a liability. Apart from the prestige inherent in her dynastic heritage, she was regarded with high esteem at

¹²³⁵ “gelijck oocq Sijn Hoogheijt daer van mij betuijcht heeft.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747a

¹²³⁶ Noorduyn, 2000, 113,

¹²³⁷ Noorduyn, 2000, 116.

¹²³⁸ Pelras, 1996, 179, see also 184..

the court of Makassar.¹²³⁹ But her status also represented a potential danger. This came to the surface in Speelman's response to Palakka's raising the issue of the return of the first wife to Sulawesi. Palakka had put the request gently by asking Speelman "whether he thought the High Government would object to it."¹²⁴⁰ Speelman recorded that "he had laughed it away as if that was no issue at all."¹²⁴¹ But Speelman's laugh in this instance was tactical. On this particular issue, there is reason to believe that Speelman was double-playing Palakka, or at best was not being totally open with him.

The Company's hegemonic position rested on preserving a relative strength compared to its Bugis allies. The possibility of a Bone–Makassar union, which Palakka's marriage to his first wife made possible and which a return of her to Sulawesi would actualise, could possibly have jeopardised the Company's hegemony in South Sulawesi. Tellingly, after having related his reply to Palakka on the issue on the

¹²³⁹ "onder de eersten spraecken de Maccaarse coningen seer met groote genegenheijt van desselve." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747a.

¹²⁴⁰ "off dan de Hooge Regeeringe wel toelaten soude, dat sij met hem ginge." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747a.

¹²⁴¹ "daer icq doorgaens om lachte, in sulches schijn, als off dat geen vrage waert was." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747a.

repatriation of the first wife, Speelman addressed the High Government directly, revealing that he himself had done nothing further to push the matter.¹²⁴² The final decision on the issue he left to the Council,¹²⁴³ but he himself was of the conviction that it would be wise to keep an eye on the first wife's association with the Makassarese, "as she is said to possess bold ambitions."¹²⁴⁴ Speelman's fear was that the presence of the first wife in Makassar might well prove a distracting factor in Palakka's war effort and that she may well harbour political ambitions of her own. Concerns of political strategy held primacy over personal friendship at the cost of feeding Palakka with false expectations.

On the other hand, Speelman made a detailed "tour de force" of personal intimacy when describing Arung Palakka's three other official wives. On the one hand, this goes to illustrate the fact, often overlooked or understudied in the historiography, that there were personal friendships and emotional bonds between Company commanders and

¹²⁴² "Tot nogh toe heb ick althoos daer geene geinclineert, van deselve ginder te doen verblijven, dat met fatsoen, staende het oorlogh, conde geschieden." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747a.

¹²⁴³ "Wat hun Ed.le nu voorts daerinne disponeren sullen, staat te besien." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747a.

¹²⁴⁴ "benick van gevoele, dat het niet onnoodigh sal wesen soo se hier coomt, op hearer ommegangh met die van Maccassar goede acht te geven, zijnde, near ick hoore, oocq seer ambitious en grootshertigh." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747a.

local allies. After all, Speelman and Palakka were brothers in arms who fought together and drank together, and thus knew each other's personal weaknesses, faults and, not least, emotions. In short, it was human beings—not cultures or legal systems—that were interacting. But if the human factor should not be underestimated in the study of diplomatic practice, Speelman's basic issue concerning Palakka's wives was still basically about power.

The political dimension comes fully to the fore when Speelman rounded off his survey of Palakka's marriage alliances with a brief conclusion on his many by-wives, whom he did not really consider "proper wives."¹²⁴⁵ Official wife or by-wife is not the issue, however. The issue is the lack of legitimate heirs to Palakka, and who should then succeed him in the event of his premature death.

As for the by-wives, they could be dismissed or treated more lightly than the four "official" wives because the former could not produce legitimate heirs comparable to the ones produced by the

¹²⁴⁵ "nu niet veel in aensien als eijge wijven werden gehouden." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 747b.

“official” wives.¹²⁴⁶ The problem was, however, that none of Palakka’s official wives had yet produced any legitimate successor either.¹²⁴⁷ The closest in the line of succession were thus Palakka’s four sisters, all of whom at the time resided in Batavia.¹²⁴⁸

This situation left the matter of the succession of Arung Palakka with all its implications for the political stability and preservation of the Company’s hegemony hanging in the air. And Speelman could not let it hang there, the issue was too pressing. The alliance with the Bugis with Arung Palakka as king of both Bone and Soppeng formed the cornerstone of Speelman’s plan for Company hegemony in South Sulawesi. An unsolved succession procedure thus represented a potential obstacle for Speelman’s venture and the Company’s cause in Sulawesi as such. It therefore posed an immediate challenge.

Establishing an agreed succession procedure

During the campaign, writes Speelman, he had often discussed the matter of succession in the case of Palakka’s sudden death with other Bugis

¹²⁴⁶ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁴⁷ “Geene kinderen heeft zijn Hoogheijt van al sijne wijven, nogh bijwijven geprocureert, oocq bij gene van de affgaende en aengecoomende soorte, soodat hij is sonder eenigh wettige eerffgenaem.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁴⁸ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

leaders.¹²⁴⁹ The key questions were who might be trusted to fill his position as leader of the Bugis peoples, and how it would be possible to go on fighting the war with undiminished stamina.¹²⁵⁰ The response, according to Speelman, had been evasive and inconclusive on all occasions. The Bugis commanders neither wished to discuss the matter,¹²⁵¹ nor had they been willing to point out any likely successor candidates.¹²⁵² All the same, both parties had agreed that it would be necessary to have a plan in place in the event that Palakka should be indisposed or pass away.¹²⁵³

As can be seen from the effort that Speelman put into it, the issue represented a pressing problem of the highest priority, but it was a difficult challenge that required considerable tact. In a meeting where the most prominent Bugis leaders were present, Speelman relates that he had

¹²⁴⁹ “geconfereert.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

¹²⁵⁰ “waeraen men in cas van Radjas verongelucken offte affsterven het gesagh, aen hem over de Bougijse volckeren gedefereert, weder met gerustheijt toevertrouwen ende overgegeven mochte, tot vermijdinge van ‘t oorlogh derselver.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

¹²⁵¹ “daer zij evenwel niet geerne spraecken.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

¹²⁵² “en nogh veel minder om verklaeren van ijmant te doen.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

¹²⁵³ “hoewel zij selve oordeelden heel nootsaeckelijcq, dat het diende te geschieden.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

once again put forward the issue in the most “discrete manner”¹²⁵⁴ at the end of the session. The response from the Bugis leaders left much to be desired. All of them declared that they were willing to die with the prince if he were to be killed by the enemy.¹²⁵⁵ Speelman put little faith in this declaration, however, cynically adding in parenthesis: “words come easy, but deeds had already proven differently to our men.”¹²⁵⁶

Speelman, then, obviously pressing for a more decisive solution—collective suicide would hardly solve the problem—presented a scenario in which Palakka had died of illness, that is a situation in which demonstrative self-sacrifice made no sense. The Bugis leaders’ response to this scenario was that in such a case they would have no alternative but to turn to the Company.¹²⁵⁷ Still, they refrained from any commitment to identify Palakka’s successor.¹²⁵⁸ By implication, the Company was made an integral component in the appointment of a successor to Arung Palakka. But, this was by implication only. The

¹²⁵⁴ “op een gevoelijcque wijze ten tapijte gebraeght.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

¹²⁵⁵ “Ijgelijck woude sterven met sijn Hoogheijt, soo hij stierff van ‘s vijants hant.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

¹²⁵⁶ “woorden sijn dogh niet duijr, ‘t contrarie van dit opgeven was ons volck al gebleven.” Ibid. fol. 748a.

¹²⁵⁷ “maer van sieckte, daer niets tegen te doene was, zij hadden geen andere toevlugt als aan de Comp.e.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁵⁸ “en conden derhalven niet seggen, wie in sulcken cas van hun des coningx plaetse hoorde te becleeden.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

Bugis leaders' response to the succession issue confronted Speelman with a situation in which he neither got any explicit proposals for a plan of action nor suggestions for a procedure to which the ally was totally committed. This was unacceptable for him.

At the same time, the situation might have struck Speelman as ironic, because he was confronted with a situation that would have appeared ideal, given that the Company wanted to establish a kind of direct hegemony over the Bugis. All it would have taken would be to wait for, or even arrange, Palakka's death in battle or otherwise at a convenient moment when control over Makassar had been secured. After all, a situation of political paralysation or conflict in conjunction with a succession crisis was normally viewed as a "golden opportunity" for political intervention in local affairs.¹²⁵⁹ But in the case of Palakka, the conditions were the other way round. Palakka was the indispensable ally without whom the campaign stood to lose its impetus and pace, or actually fall apart altogether. The plan for his succession was an emergency plan, to secure the success of the whole venture of

¹²⁵⁹ Banten 1682 is a classic case, also with Speelman as the executor for the establishment of Company hegemony. See De Jonge, *Opkomst*, 4.clvi–1clxxi.

establishing and upholding Company hegemony in South Sulawesi in case of his premature death.

If Palakka should die on campaign, Speelman could hardly hope for a replacement by a man of comparable status and standing among the Bugis. But he could at least hope for a replacement process in which the Bugis leaders themselves took part, and dedicated themselves unanimously to one and the same candidate. A candidate anointed by the Company alone could hardly expect to be met with the same recognition. So, in this case Speelman was confronted with a situation where he had to take on the role of mediating and arbitrating positions within his local ally camp.

As it was, a plan of action in case of Palakka's premature death was finally agreed upon between the Bugis leaders and Speelman. The nobles declared that they would have no other choice than to turn to the Company, and would therefore not be in a position to declare who succeed Palakka. They would, however, comply with whatever the Company recommended. And, as they recognised the king of Soppeng as their legitimate overlord, they would also be loyal to his choice for Palakka's successor, which he and the Company would come up with

together.¹²⁶⁰ There then followed a discussion about who would be the least controversial and most competent ruler, about which no conclusion was reached. The matter was finally resolved when the lord of Soppeng and Palakka without further ado simply declared the princes of Craijo to be the primary of the candidates, and thus the group from which the Company should make its selection.¹²⁶¹

So, even if postponing the actual selection of a specific candidate, the agreement at least produced a procedure with a built-in guarantee of legitimacy by involving the Bugis directly. It was probably the best Speelman could get at the time.

Two preliminary lessons can be learnt from Speelman's tackling of the challenge of securing a succession procedure with the Bugis leaders. Accepting for the sake of argument that Speelman had a deficient understanding of cultural perceptions of power underlying the Bugis unwillingness to name a successor to Palakka, in the end he did reach a solution that both parties could accept. That must have taken at

¹²⁶⁰ "Sij soude alles doen 't gene wij haer deden aenbevelen en erkennende sij hem ook in alles gehoorsamen, insgelijcx dengeene, die hij daer met ons soude goetvinden in plaetse van sijn Hoogheit te laten succederen." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁶¹ VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

least some cultural competence. Second, the discussion about the succession procedure illustrates an important aspect of what overseas diplomacy was about in general, namely negotiations with local leaders on ad-hoc issues as one went along.

No one even remotely sane would do that without taking into consideration the mode of thinking of the local negotiation partners. The baffled way in which the scenario of Palakka's sudden death was received and tackled by the Bugis leaders might be taken as an indicator of a political environment with a low degree of institutionalisation. In contrast, Speelman's insistence on a rational, predetermined solution to the succession issue might be taken as indicative of a political tradition in which the impersonal took primacy over the personal. But such a structural contrast in which Speelman's positions are taken to have been "dictated" by a pre-imported notion of the institutional holding primacy over the personal misses the mark or is incomplete at best.

As we have seen in other instances, Speelman's reflections on diplomacy towards his Makassarese foes and his Bugis friends demonstrate a tuned appreciation of the "personality factor." A better way of explaining Speelman's pressing for an institutional solution to the succession of Palakka than as an overreliance on familiar institutional

procedures is that it was conditioned by context. While predictability as in this case was crucial, Speelman reverted to institutional arrangements because it came closest to insuring the Company's situation. One should also bear in mind that it was partly the charismatic dimension of Palakka's political power that made it so crucial for Speelman to construct an institutional safeguard for a continued alliance between the Bugis and the Company should he pass away. The established institutional solution then represented a pre-emptive device made particularly pressing because of the lack of, or weak, local alternatives—an example of a pragmatic approach, actually, although one with a familiar European outcome.

I shall conclude with a discussion of Speelman's pragmatic handling of a totally different issue, namely the threat to Palakka's personal prestige and standing with the Bugis, should he make his personal speculations on religion public.

Arung Palakka's personal charisma and the hazards of going public with his religious speculations

To a large degree, Palakka's political capital rested on the popularity he held with his men, which did not go unnoticed by Speelman. Illustrative

is the latter's recording of an instance in which many of Palakka's men, at a time when they thought him dead, were brought to tears of joy and affection to see him alive and well.¹²⁶² This is another example in Speelman's text in which he actually comments on emotions. But once again, his objective was to accentuate the political considerations. Not only did Arung Palakka's dynastic heritage identify him as legitimate king of Bone and Soppeng, his personal charisma secured his place as the undisputed leader of the Bugis. So it must continue. Yet, the prince was in danger of jeopardising his personal prestige by making his thoughts on religion public.

On several occasions, states Speelman, Palakka had confided in him about his animosity towards Islam and announced that he was inclined to renounce his faith, having become more sympathetic towards Christianity.¹²⁶³ The only obstacle to Palakka's acceptance of

¹²⁶² "In desen generale toeloop bleecken actien van lieffde niettemin, die veele Bougijs over vreughde van sijn Hooghheijt in sulcken state te recontreeren, met tranen beteughden." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 710a.

¹²⁶³ "Bij verscheidene gelegentheden heft sijn Hooght. In particuliere bijeencomste mij zijne adversiteit getoont tegen de secte der Mahumetanen, amplexerende onse religie." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

Christianity was the doctrine of monogamy. It would be unsuitable for a king to have but one wife.¹²⁶⁴

As we have seen above, Speelman refrains from any moral judgements on the Arung Palakka's polygamy in the survey of his four wives, and the issue of polygamy does not concern Speelman in this context. But he accords a rather lengthy passage to the political implications of Palakka's speculations about Islam and Christianity with evident concern.

In addressing the High Government on the issue, Speelman is quick to dismiss any profound religious conviction in Palakka: "However much he [Palakka] professes his sympathies for Christianity, he understands next to nothing of it."¹²⁶⁵ Speelman had tried to enlighten Palakka, but with little success: "Much as I have, to the best of my ability, and in Malay too, from time to time tried to inform him of the

¹²⁶⁴ "allenlijcq wat swaermoedigh valt aensiende op het Christen huwelijcq, meenende, dat het voor een conincq te hard was een vrouwe te mogen hebben." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁶⁵ "Dogh evenwel, en schoon hij (als geseght) ons Christen gevoele wel beaengenaemde, soo noghans en verstaet hij daarvan niet." VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

general principles of it.”¹²⁶⁶ It has all been to no avail, however, as Palakka in Speelman’s eyes has problems with his attention and focussing, as often as not diverting the discussion to other topics.¹²⁶⁷ The argument is elaborated further: Palakka is distracted, and without an ability to differentiate between issues of relevance and irrelevance, with a preference for discussing matters of minor importance.¹²⁶⁸ Speelman’s judgement of Palakka’s intellectual capacity thus stands in stark contrast to his positive judgement of Karunrung’s. But it is not primarily in intellectual terms that Palakka’s religious concerns are viewed. If Palakka’s thoughts on religion are superficial, a whim that should not be taken seriously in Speelman’s eyes, what should be taken seriously is that if Palakka’s religious thoughts came to light, they might jeopardise Palakka’s prestige and position among his own people.

Speelman makes it clear to the High Government that on several occasions he tried to warn against and lead Palakka away from his “path

¹²⁶⁶ “hoewel ick nar vermogen, en voor soo veel ick dat in ‘t Maleijts zeggen ende hem te verstaen conde, nu en dan in generale termen hem wel eenigh onderright hebbe gedaen.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁶⁷ “Dogh hij is seer niet attentiff ofte opmerkende, niet alleen darin, maer aen voorts alle andere saecken.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁶⁸ “seer vergeetelijcq, maer genegen tot discoersen van cleen belang.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

of folly.”¹²⁶⁹ His advice and instructions to Palakka was, he goes on, that Palakka keep his dislike of the Muslim faith a closed subject.¹²⁷⁰ Then, introduced first by what I take as a conventional concession to piety, in which Speelman holds forth that the spreading of the Christian faith is an ultimate duty,¹²⁷¹ he goes on to stress that it was of still greater importance that the religious issue in the case of Palakka be handled with absolute discretion.¹²⁷²

In the actual communication between Speelman and Palakka, this message must have taken the form of a non-negotiable order rather than as friendly advice. Speelman’s account of his final instructions to Palakka on the matter cannot be understood in any other way: “bordering

¹²⁶⁹ “hoe dickmaels ick hem van die voderrij aff getrocken en vermaent hebbe.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁷⁰ “dat hij best onthielde, ‘t geene tot naedeel van de voorsz: secte tusschen ons beijde werde bijgebraght.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a.

¹²⁷¹ “en off wel ten hooghsten plicht zij, ‘t gelove Christ uijbreijden.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748a-b.

¹²⁷² “dat alsnogh sal moeten geschieden, want de saecke veel te teer om niet heel voorsightigh gehandelt werden.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

on the offensive, Palakka has been instructed not to talk to nor discuss such matters with anyone, to pre-empt any conflict.”¹²⁷³

The consideration in Palakka’s reflections on religion is that a local Company ally should not reveal thoughts that might be interpreted as contemplating converting to his European ally’s religion. For his part, Speelman, tried to block any conversion out of considerations of political stability and preservation of an invaluable alliance. Speelman’s handling of Arung Palakka’s thoughts about conversion thus demonstrates an example of how secular political concerns took priority over religious missionary ones, which conforms to the Company rule. But the case also demonstrates a point of methodological significance in overseas diplomacy, namely that one should not underestimate the factor of agency.

For, from a counter-factual, hypothetical point of view, a disclosure of Palakka’s toying with the idea of conversion might well have had the disastrous effects that Speelman feared, and broken the alliance with the Bugis. If the alliance had broken, it might have changed the outcome of the campaign. Speelman’s delicate handling of the

¹²⁷³ “Niettemin is hij daerin althoos geconfronteert benevens insinuatie, sich selve in dien deele aen niemant te verclaeren, tot vermijdinge van alle revolutie.” VOC 1276 OB, Inkomen Briefboek Makassar 1671, fol. 748b.

problem was probably decisive in keeping the Bugis from falling out over this issue, and thus of equal importance to the success of the Company's venture. The incident at least goes to illustrate how delicate overseas diplomacy was, and how much instinct it took to conduct it successfully. This is not to say that all the Company's agents possessed Speelman's abilities. But to suggest that none of them did, or that cultural differences prevented all of them from acquiring such an intimate understanding of indigenous culture in South East Asia is wide off the mark and leaves the Company's diplomatic successes unexplained.

Speelman's handling of the two obstacles and the diplomatic mode of empirical pragmatism

Speelman's tackling of the succession procedure and Palakka's religious speculations form striking illustrations of how "big models" sometimes are inadequate at best when confronted with empirical facts at the level of micro-action. Both issues illustrate the kind of practical challenges that Speelman had to grapple with when dealing with his main ally. Even on a more general level it could be argued that this was what overseas

alliance diplomacy was about, keeping an observant eye on seemingly trivial “details” that beneath the surface were of crucial importance.

Palakka stood in danger of losing his standing and prestige among the Bugis if his personal speculations on religious issues were made public, with potentially disastrous consequences. When Speelman managed to find a solution to the potential hazards, of both the succession and the religious conversion issues, and also managed to manoeuvre himself into a clandestine personal negotiating position with Karunrung (although the outcome was unsuccessful), these achievements were definitely the result of Speelman’s “cultural competence” and personality. Qualities that he somehow managed to “fit” into the local cultural matrix of politics.

Section 4: The personal prowess argument

Finally, there is one factor that in my mind probably was one of the most important in explaining Speelman's diplomatic success, regardless of how he acted towards friend or foe. If we keep in mind Speelman's admiration for Karunrung's positive attributes as well as his admiration for Arung Palakka's courage, we can establish a basic motto of Speelman's own values which may be summarised as: "Bold action by good sense." Bold action as an ideal would be compatible with local standards and it seems reasonable to argue that the indigenous elite understood Speelman as a man of extraordinary personal, if not charismatic power. If so he would fall in line with what O. W. Wolters has designated as typical of South East Asian conceptions of power-legitimacy, namely charisma,¹²⁷⁴ and then understood as an ideal type in opposition to European "rational power legitimation."¹²⁷⁵

If, however, Speelman's reputation as a "man of prowess," was one of his greater assets in his diplomatic performance in Sulawesi, which there is reason to propose, such a proposition spoils the schematic

¹²⁷⁴ O. W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: SEAP, 1982), 9–10.

¹²⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 13.

simplicity of the Europe–South East Asia dichotomy of charismatic as opposed to “rational” conceptions of power. I have argued consistently in this chapter, and in this thesis as a whole, that this dichotomy is generally too simplistic. But, returning to the case in point here, if charisma was one of Speelman’s assets, it was also put in force by his recognition of the particular nature of indigenous conceptions of state power and diplomacy. The two went together in Speelman’s pragmatic, empirical diplomacy.

Chapter conclusion

Negotiations with local power holders on concrete issues formed the foundation of the Company's diplomatic edifice. The diplomatic treaty formed the top floor, the institutional formal level where specific negotiated agreements could be inscribed in writing and presented to the world as "forever binding." But a preoccupation with this level may delude us into drawing mistaken conclusions about "legal formalism," "Eurocentric bias," and the like as the predominant characteristic of the Company's overseas negotiations with local power holders, by overlooking that the basis of these respective treaty agreements was always personally conducted negotiations between local rulers and Company representatives. As we have seen, Speelman did not trust the institutional arrangement by treaty to support the Company's hegemony in South Sulawesi alone. It had to be backed up by a military presence and the threat of sanctions. But still more important was the personal diplomacy that underlay alliance building.

Speelman's evaluation of his former Makassarese foes and Palakka and the Bugis allies gives us a glimpse into this agency level of overseas diplomacy. It demonstrates that the cornerstone of Speelman's

diplomatic method was the personal bonds that could be established with potential or actual power holders. It also demonstrates that Speelman was working from a realist assumption in which personal ethics and moral standards were viewed as secondary compared with the Company's politico-diplomatic use-value. Establishing collaborative bonds with Karunrung was deemed "good," despite his moral deficiencies because the Company considered his political talents useful. Establishing a fixed procedure of succession in the event of Palakka's premature death, and preventing him from undermining his own legitimacy by going public with his religious thoughts, were "good" in the sense that they were necessary to pre-empt a difficult situation for the Company. Adequate reaction to such challenges had to be based on relatively precise assumptions and assessments of the personal qualities of rulers and members of the local power elite alike, as well as of the local political context and situation. Empirical pragmatism seems to be a relevant term for this kind of approach.