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Chapter 1: Presenting My Case

Section 1: Chapter Introduction

In 2006, Martine van Ittersum could write “With one or two exceptions, the VOC’s ideological and political dimensions have been neglected for a long time by both Dutch historians and specialists in the history of South East Asia.”¹ But for some exceptions,² Ittersum’s statement still holds true. This thesis is one of the exceptions. My topic is the nature of the diplomatic mode of the Company and I use the Company’s diplomatic interaction with the sultanate of Makassar in the seventeenth century as my case.

Three points need initial clarifications. First, as for the use of the term “diplomacy” in the early modern period two explanatory remarks must be made. “Diplomacy” and “diplomatic action” will be used in the present context to cover any communication between Company officials

¹ Martine J. Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595–1615* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), xlv.

² See: Section 2, pp 16-29, below.

and local men of power concerning specifics or general aspects of their mutual interaction. In short, the use of the term “diplomacy” is closer to “negotiations about practical matters in reciprocal affairs” than to “political state interaction” in the modern sense.³ Still, since the arrangement of reciprocal affairs must be considered “political” as it concerned distribution of power, the term “political interaction” will be used in this broader meaning.

Second, the present thesis is not a work of intellectual history, but rather a history of *assumptions* and *perceptions* characterising the Company’s diplomatic practice. Third, the thesis is a case study, using the politico-diplomatic interaction between the port principality of Makassar on the west coast of Sulawesi and the Company in the period from their first treaty in 1637 until the treaties in 1667–68, which effectively made the sultanate a dependency of the Company. The actual case, or “object of study,” is neither the Company, nor the sultanate as such, nor their interaction as such, which has already been described.⁴ It

³ See for instance Leonard Blussé, *Tussen Geveinsde Vrunden en Verklaarde Vijanden* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1999).

⁴ I am thinking of F. W. Stapel, *Het Bongaais Verdrag* (Groningen: Wolters, 1922) and Leonard Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka: A History of South Sulawesi (Celebes) in the Seventeenth Century* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981), both to be commented on below [or later].

is, rather, the interpretative implications of the Company's diplomatic practice in interaction with Makassar.

My main propositions are that at the outset the Company's diplomatic mode was neither Eurocentric, nor legally dogmatic, nor static, as has been claimed time and again in the historiography. To the contrary, I propose that the Company's seventeenth-century diplomatic mode, as demonstrated by the interaction with Makassar, was programmatically non-Eurocentric, pragmatically orientated, and dynamic.

Contents and plan of the chapter

After these general introductory notes, I shall proceed by giving a historical introduction to the kingdom of Goa-Makassar and a chronology of its diplomatic interaction with the Company circa 1637–68, and then present an overview of positions in the historiography of VOC diplomatic interaction. These positions and my own propositions will be further elaborated in chapter 2.

Section 2: A brief chronology of VOC-Makassar interaction, 1603-68

The twin kingdoms of Goa-Tello

The term “Makassar” is originally an ethnic name, and could thus be applied to “where Makassarese” resided, but as a historical term it is applied to the twin kingdoms Goa and Tello, situated on the southwestern and southern tip of Sulawesi respectively.⁵ The two kingdoms are recorded as once being one kingdom, but split in two by a king dividing his kingdom between two of his sons, sometime in the fifteenth century, declaring that they should be twin kingdoms “with two lords, but one people.”⁶

There was a working relationship between Tello and Goa up to the second half of the 17th century where the ruler of Tello would be adviser or first minister to the king of Goa. In the Dutch records this arrangement is reflected in that the ruler of Tello is designated as the

⁵ Christian Pelras, *The Bugis*, Oxford, 1996, 116.

⁶ Ibid. 114. More accurately the formation of the double monarchy of Goa and Tello can be set to 1560, see John Villiers, “Makassar: The Rise and Fall of an East Indonesian Maritime Trading State, 1512-1669”, in: J. Kathirithamby-Wells & John Villiers (eds.) *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity, Rise and Demise*, (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), 147-148 (see page 2 of the style sheet, but please check this).

“elder king” and the karaeng (noble) of Goa as “the younger king.”⁷

While some hold forth that the collaboration between Tello and Goa was a harmonious affair,⁸ others surmise that the unity between Gowa and Tello, has been overdone, and suggest that it should be seen as a reaction to outside pressure, namely the Company’s encirclement by its trading contacts in places such as Taiwan, Java, Solor, Timor, Buton, Moluccas, more than as a result of internal forces.⁹ In any case in the 1660s political divisions had definitely developed between the then Sultan of Makassar, Hasanuddin and Raja Tello.¹⁰ But, be that as it may for now, what I want to state is that when I in the following use the term “Makassar”, it is the twin kingdoms I am referring to unless otherwise indicated.

⁷ William Cummings, *Making Blood White: Historical Transformations in Early Modern Makassar*, University of Hawai’I Press, 2002, 112.

⁸ For instance John Villiers, Kathirithamby-Wells & John Villiers (eds.) 1990, 149.

⁹ Arend de Roever, *De jacht op sandelhout*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2002, 230.

¹⁰ Basset, D.K., “English Trade in Celebes, 1613-1677”, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 31/1 1958, 1-39, 35.

Actors in the Makassarese political field

The late sixteenth and seventeenth century rulers of Goa and Tello, who are of particular interest to us, are, beginning with Goa: Tumamenag ri Gaukanna, the sultan Alauddin (ruled 1593 to 15 June 1639), his son: Tumamenang ri Papambatuna, who ruled from 1639 to 5 November 1653, under the names of Sultan Malikusaid and Muhammad Said, and his son: Tumamenang ri Ballaq Pangkana, who ruled as Sultan Hasanuddin from 1653 to 17 June 1669 when he abdicated.

In the same period two important rulers of Tello who also functioned as advisers to the rulers of Goa, were: Karaeng Matoaya who ruled from 1593 to 1623, and Karaeng Pattingalloang, who ruled from 1641 to September 15 1654.¹¹ Of the three Sultans of Goa mentioned, Sultan Alauddin and Hasanuddin concluded the treaties with the Company that I analyse. Of equal importance, if not even more, are the two rulers of Tello mentioned, because they helped form policy in their function as advisers to Goa. I shall return to them in my discussion of Makassarese dynamism in section 3 in chapter 2, but suffice it for now to point to the fact that both Matoaya and Pattingalloang are considered

¹¹ All based on: William Cummings, *Reign List for the Rulers of Gowa and Talloq*, in *The Makassar annals*, KITLV Press: Leiden, 2010, 351-52.

able politicians; in the words of Anthony Reid they represented an “extraordinary combination of intellectual eminence and political wisdom.”¹² Noorduyn for one, praises the sensible and pragmatic mode of Matoaya’s policies.¹³

Added to this, and I shall return to this in more detail, is that both Matoaya and Pattingalloang displayed a preoccupation with all kinds of innovations, including European ones. Finally it should be remarked that although Sultan Hasanuddin came to end the tradition of appointing the rulers of Tello as his advisor,¹⁴ two sons of Pattingalloang, namely Karaeng Karunrung and Karaeng Sumana came to play an important role during Hasanuddin’s reign, as proponents of an aggressive and accommodating policy towards the Company respectively.¹⁵

¹² Reid, Anthony, “A great seventeenth century Indonesian family: Matoaya and Pattingalloang of Makassar”, *Masyarakat Indonesia*, 8/1, 1-28, 1981, 3.

¹³ Noorduyn, Jacobus, *Een Achiende-Eeuwse Kronik van Wadjo – Buginese Historiografie*, Proefschrift, Universiteit te Leiden, ‘S Gravenhage, 1955, 98, emphasising for Matoaya’s: sensible politics, as for instance as seen in his non-offensive, conciliatory policy towards Bone during the Islam-wars.

¹⁴ Reid, 1981, 26.

¹⁵ Boxer, C. R., *Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo: A Portuguese Merchant-Adventurer in South East Asia, 1624-1667*, *Verhandelingen, KITLV*, 52, ‘S-Gravenhage-Martinius Nijhoff, 1967, 30. For Karunrung in particular, see section 4, chapter 9.

Internal tensions in South Sulawesi: The Bugis-Makassar dimension

Political life in South Sulawesi centred on the split between four dominant ethnic groups, of which the Bugis and the Makassar were the most important.¹⁶ These two groups were also politically dominant, occupying as they did the most fertile lands and having access to the most favourable harbour sites.¹⁷ As for historical kingdoms in South Sulawesi, the earliest dated from the tenth century.¹⁸ By the middle of the sixteenth century, Makassar and the Bugis kingdom of Bone, situated to the east of Makassar stood out as the two most powerful in South Sulawesi.¹⁹ A series of wars between Bone and Makassar characterised the seventeenth century.²⁰

For reasons we need not go into here, in 1643 Goa, assisted by the Bugis states of Wajo and Soppeng (to the north-east and east in South Sulawesi respectively) attacked and defeated the Bugis state of Bone.²¹ The following year, after a period of uncertainty about the political standing of Bone, another battle was fought, and this time Bone's

¹⁶ Leonard Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, The Hague: Verhandelingen van het Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 91, 1981, 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* id. 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* id. 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* id. 28.

²⁰ *Ibid.* id. 9.

²¹ *Ibid.* id. 41.

relation to Goa was reduced from one of “vassal” to “slave.”²² Bone’s defeat in 1644 marks the beginning of the career of the Bone Prince Arung Palakka, who was to take a leading role in a Bugis rebellion against Makassar in 1660, and after its defeat join with the Company and regain the independence of Bone in the joint Company–Bugis campaign of 1666–68.

The nature of politics

Originally, political organisation was based on kinship groups and their offshoots, held together by origin myths of shared founding fathers.²³

This kinship and sacred logic underlay the process when the original small kinship groups came to merge into larger confederacies and larger state units.²⁴ An integral part of state integration in the seventeenth century was the conversion of Goa to Islam in 1608 and the Islamic wars between 1608 and 1611.

²² Ibid. 42.

²³ Ibid. 10 ff.

²⁴ Ibid. 13.

The role of Islam

One consequence of Goa's victory in the "Islamic wars" was the conversion to Islam of the Bugis states of Soppeng (1609), Wajo (1610), and Bone (1611). The Islamic wars should be fitted into the struggle for hegemony in South Sulawesi where Islam gave Goa extra prestige and power, and at the same time created new bonds of equality between the conquered and conqueror.²⁵ It also gave Makassar status as an exemplary centre in the Archipelago,²⁶ and proper Islamic piety became indivisible from political allegiance to Goa.²⁷

Extra potential power was also added to the converted states in that they could align with the Islamic powers in the archipelago as well as with the Muslim Ottoman and Mughal empires. For Makassar, there was also a commercial aspect to this, as Goa and the port of Makassar now became a link in the trade of spices from the Moluccas, which later was to become the main cause for friction and conflict with the Company.

²⁵ Noorduyn, 1955, 98, Cummings, 2002, 32.

²⁶ Cummings, 2002, 154.

²⁷ Cummings, 2002, 161. See also: 162 and 163.

With the conversion to Islam there was also a transformation in the institutions of the polity, as Islamic administrative and judicial institutions replaced traditional bodies.²⁸ Also, there was an enhancement in the ideological power of the ruler as he was now officially regarded as the religious leader of society and polity.²⁹ This acquired religious prestige and the position of the sultan as a defender of Islam in the Eastern Archipelago would also become an important issue in the conflict with the Company. Before we turn to the interaction with the VOC, we should take a look at Makassar's expansion and role in the region outside South Sulawesi.

The regional dimension

Although some would say Makassar did not develop into an important sea power until the 1620s,³⁰ already from the late fifteenth century Makassarese had diplomatic interactions with rulers of Mataram, Banjarmassin and Johor, as well as with rulers of Melaka and Timor.³¹

²⁸ Andaya, 1981, 28–34. (28-35?)

²⁹ Ibid. 35.

³⁰ De Roever 2002, 230.

³¹ Cummings, 2002, 27.

However already in 1580 a regional political settlement was reached between Makassar and Ternate where it was recognised that Saleyer should belong to the sphere of Makassar, but Buton to the sphere of Ternate.³² This did not however preclude a “constant Makassar struggle to establish its supremacy in Buton”, against the claims of Ternate, and later the Dutch.³³ Anthony Reid claims that in the following period, under Matoaya’s rulership of Tello and thus in his period as first minister of Goa, Makassar was the most important power between Java and Luzon, with its hegemony over most of Sulawesi, eastern Borneo, Lombok and Sumbawa.³⁴

As it was, in the period of Matoaya, and after him up to the second half of the seventeenth century, Makassar led expeditions against Sumbawa in 1617, 1619, 1621 and 1632, against Lombok in 1624, against Buton in 1624, 1633, and 1639, and against Timor in 1640,³⁵ while at the same time keeping close ties with Ternate and the Banda.³⁶

³² Pelras, 1996, 133.

³³ Anthony, Reid, “The Rise of Makassar”, *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian affairs*, 17, 1983, 117-160, 139 .

³⁴ Reid. 1981, 8.

³⁵ where it came to have a lasting influence on the north coast, see Hans Hägerdal, *Lords of the land, lords of the sea: conflict and adaptation in early colonial Timor, 1600-1800* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012), 98.

³⁶ Pelras, 1996, 139.

At this junction in time Makassar's role as a regional power, and its role as a free haven for trade in spices, cloves and nutmegs from Ambon and Banda, which the Company regarded as a break of its monopoly rights, became enmeshed.

The Ambonese wars

Asian trade in East-Indonesia after 1625 increasingly became a Makassarese activity,³⁷ including Makassarese sailings and trade with cloves in the western islands in the Ambonese archipelago, which meant breaches of Company contracts of monopoly.³⁸ In reaction to Company efforts to enforce the monopoly the *Kapitan Hitu*, Kakiali and the *Kimelaha* of Hoamoal, Johu Luhu, sought and obtained support from Makassar against the Company, but lost out during the Hituese war of 1641-46.³⁹ Because of its defeat to the Company in a decisive sea battle in 1642 hardly any cloves were for sale in the market in Makassar after that year, and the Company's realization of the VOC monopoly should thus be reckoned from 1642 rather than from 1656 (i.e., the subjugation

³⁷ Knaap, Gerrit, *Kruidnagelen en Christenen: De VOC en de bevolking van Ambon 1656-1696*, tweede herziende druk, Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2004, 24.

³⁸ Knaap 2004, 27.

³⁹ Knaap 2004, 28.

of Hoamoal, see below) or 1667 (the subjugation of Makassar, see below).⁴⁰

Still illicit trade continued to a degree, which led to the Company extracting so-called Hongi services from the local population in Ambon to patrol the sea lanes for smuggling. The Hongi services meant the bringing together of a number of smaller vessels *kora-koras* by several villages for this purpose.⁴¹ This led to local resistance and escalated into the so-called “Great Ambon” (or: Hoamoalese) war 1651-56 (58).⁴² In this war the rebel leader *Kimelaha* Madjira received support from Makassar.⁴³

On 29 July 1655, the rebel stronghold Asahudi was conquered by the Dutch.⁴⁴ When the news of the peace between the Company and Makassar, concluded later in 1655, reached Ambon in the beginning of

⁴⁰ Knaap 2004, 28, referring to Basset, 1958.

⁴¹ “Kora-kora en kruitdamp – De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in oorlog en vrede in Ambon”, in Knaap, Gerrit, and Teitler (eds.) *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie tussen Oorlog en Diplomatie* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2002), 261.

⁴² Knaap 2004, 29-30.

⁴³ Knaap 2004, 33.

⁴⁴ Knaap 2004, 34.

1656, the Ambon war was over.⁴⁵ As can be seen, the Makassar-Company rivalry formed an integral part of this struggle.

Global dimension

If there was a regional dimension to the Company's conflict with Makassar, there certainly was a global dimension as well. The confrontation between the Company and the Iberian powers of Portugal and Spain [which were united (1580-1640)], in the Moluccas can for instance be seen as part of the larger conflict over the issue of confession between the Protestant and Catholic states in Europe.⁴⁶ And Makassar was also part of this. One of the factors that made it essential for Van Diemen and successors to conquer the Spanish Moluccas in the 1640s was the trade in Makassar of cloves from the Spanish forts in Tidore and Ternate.⁴⁷ The maritime rivalry in Europe between England and the Republic was also, as we shall see, reflected in their rivalry to obtain

⁴⁵ with the exception of Buru where peace was not concluded not until 1658, Knaap, 2004, 34.

⁴⁶ Knaap, Gerrit :«Kora-kora en kruitdamp – De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in oorlog en vrede in Ambon», in Knaap, Gerrit, and Teitler (eds.) *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie tussen Oorlog en Diplomatie* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2002), 257-279, 258.

⁴⁷ Basset, 1958, 18..

goodwill in Makassar; on a larger scale one might, as Hägerdal for one indicates, follow Anthony Reid, and view the decline of Southeast Asian states such as Makassar in the second half of the seventeenth century as part of a global seventeenth century crises.⁴⁸

Whatever the specifics of either the global or the regional dimension, both point to the fact that Makassar in the seventeenth century was a cosmopolitan harbour city which was part of both regional and global networks, and that it played an important role in the former. This meant that a number of “outsiders” both visited and also came to settle in the city. I shall now take a closer look at these groups.

The outsiders

William Cummings points to the fact that already before the sixteenth century there had been centuries of Makassarese contact with Javanese and Malay traders.⁴⁹ Still there is no doubt that the expansion whereby Makassar became a maritime power by the middle of the 16th century increased its attraction to and its reliance on “outsiders.” One such group of growing importance were the Malays.

⁴⁸ Hägerdal, 2001, 12. Referring to Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450 – 1680*, vol. 2, *Expansion and crisis*, 1993.

⁴⁹ William Cummings, “The Melaka Malay diaspora in Makassar, c. 1500-1669”, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 66 (2): 107-122, 108.

The fall of Melaka in 1541 had worked as catalyst for a Malay diaspora to Makassar,⁵⁰ and after the conversion to Islam the role of Malays increased both at the court of Makassarese rulers, and in the function as teachers and Mosque officials.⁵¹ Of other Asian visitors, albeit with a lesser internal influence, one could mention Chinese junks from 1619, as well as that there were agents from Jambi and Golconda in the city.⁵² As for Europeans, besides the VOC, mention must be made of the EIC which established a trading post in Makassar in 1613, the Danish India Company which did the same in 1618, and the French factory from 1622-1625.⁵³ But above all the Portuguese played an important role, and particularly so after the fall of Melaka, when the numbers of stable residents reached up to 3,000 at the highest, and came to represent a “key figure in the life of the Sultanate”,⁵⁴ An indication of the impact of Portuguese influence is that Portuguese was widely spoken at the court of Makassar.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Cummings, 1998, 108,

⁵¹ Cummings, 1998, 111.

⁵² Reid, 1981, 10.

⁵³ Pelras, 1996, 141.

⁵⁴ Basset, 1958, 18.

⁵⁵ Villiers, in Kathirithamby-Wells & John Villiers (ed.)1990, 155.

I shall return to the role of the Portuguese as agents of dynamism and innovation in Makassar in section 3, chapter 2 below, but will introduce the general argument here. Christian Pelras has argued that innovation was the hallmark of Bugis culture.⁵⁶ This trait was only broken in the nineteenth century with the integration of South Sulawesi in industrial capitalism. As will be shown in more detail below, the same features of innovation and dynamism may be said to apply to Makassar in the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. This dynamism has (particularly by Reid) been ascribed to the international trade and maritime rivalry typical of those centuries.⁵⁷ I shall, as mentioned above return to this phenomenon in more detail, and also point to criticisms of Reid for overdoing the effects of international trade. But it will suffice for now to say that there is a tradition of singling out a particular dynamic streak in Makassarese society at the time of its rivalry with the Company.

⁵⁶ Pelras, 1996, 150.

⁵⁷ See vol. 2 of *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce, 1450 - 1680, Expansion and crisis*. And Reid, "Pluralism and Progress in seventeenth-century Makassar", in: Roger Tol, Kees van Dijk and Greg Acciaoli (eds.), *Authority and Enterprise among the Peoples of South Sulawesi*, *Verhandelingen, KITLV 188*, Leiden, KITLV PRESS, 2000, 55-73,57.

As for the particularity of the historical context of the Makassar–Company interaction in the seventeenth century, five major factors should be kept in mind regarding the background and standing of Makassar at the coming of the Company: firstly that Makassar already was an international entrepôt; secondly that it was connected to the spice trade in the Moluccas; thirdly that it was a cornerstone of Islam in the region; fourthly that the period of the first half of the seventeenth century was a dynamic one; and finally that there was latent tension within the realm connected to its conquest and subjugation of the Bugis.

Chronological overview of the seventeenth VOC-Makassar interaction

The first contact between Makassar and the Company took place in 1603,⁵⁸ when Company merchants stationed on Banda sent a request to the then Sultan Alauddin asking to be allowed into the realm. Permission was granted on condition that the Dutch would come for trading purposes only and not in large numbers. On those conditions, the Dutch

⁵⁸ Andaya has 1601 for the stationing of a Dutch factory on the invitation of Sultan Alauddin; Andaya 1981, 45.

were also allowed to establish a factory for their commerce.⁵⁹ The sultan's emphasis on restricting the Company's activities was grounded in his awareness of the ongoing conflict between the Dutch and the Portuguese in Asian waters. He did not want to become entangled in this intra-European conflict. As time would show, there was no way to avoid this.

The Dutch factory was temporarily closed in 1607, for internal Company reasons, but it reopened in 1609. Harassment against Company servants by the Portuguese, to which the sultan turned a blind eye, did not make life any more pleasant for the personnel of the VOC factory, with the result that it was closed again in 1615.⁶⁰ The Company's departure was accompanied by dramatic incidents that involved the killing of a number of Makassarese subjects who resisted being taken hostage by the Dutch. This was later avenged by the sultan, who ordered the killing of fifteen Company sailors after the hostages, among them a member of the sultan's family, had been returned.⁶¹ The incidents of 1615 demonstrates that even before the Company approached the sultan

⁵⁹ F. W. Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, vol. 3, Amsterdam: Joost van der Vondel, 1939, 192–93.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 193–94.

about a treaty in 1637 there had been serious tensions between the Company and Makassar that had led to outbreaks of violence on both sides.

The monopoly on nutmeg and cloves as the central issue of conflict

The core of the conflict between the Company and Makassar lay in the sultanate's infringement of the monopoly rights that the Company began to impose on trade in the Spice Islands.⁶² At the outset, the Banda Islands possessed a monopoly in production and sales of nutmegs and mace because it was the only place the nutmeg tree grew. Ships from all quarters flocked to its roadstead. But the coming of European buyers, first the Portuguese and the Spaniards, and in their wake the English and Dutch, resulted in armed rivalry. The conquest of the islands in 1621 by Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen solved the struggle in favour of the VOC.⁶³ The result was that the Banda Islands were made a territorial possession of the Company, who deported the original population and repopulated the islands with slaves from Sulawesi among other places.

⁶² I lean on Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor, *Nederlanders overzee: De eerste vijftig jaar 1600–1650* (Franeker: Wever, 1983), 110–41.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 118–23.

The Company organised a system for the production of nutmeg and mace by the newly imported population.⁶⁴ The Banda Islands thus became an essential part in the Company's monopoly regime.

I have already accounted for the Ambonese wars, so suffice it here only to repeat that the product was cloves, or *kruidnagel*, and that when the Dutch began to operate in the area in 1599 they were in competition with the English, whom they ultimately bested for control of the clove trade and that they at first established a Company-controlled system of production similar to that used on Banda from the mid-1620s.⁶⁵

The important point in our context is that the Company's monopoly rights in the Eastern Archipelago were to become the primary source of conflict between the Company and Makassar as the latter became a centre for the smuggling of "illicit"⁶⁶ nutmeg and cloves, and thereby undermined the Company's monopoly.

The fact that the Portuguese, English, and Danes could snap up smuggled cloves and nutmeg in Makassar was a steady provocation to

⁶⁴ Ibid. 123.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 138. See also H. J. de Graaf, *De geschiedenis van Ambon en de Zuid-Molukken* (Franeker: Wever, 1977), 77–81.

⁶⁶ "smuggling" and "illicit" in the eyes of the Company, of course.

the Company.⁶⁷ Heaping insult upon injury, these European competitors of the Dutch also assisted the build-up of Makassar's military power.⁶⁸ A final provocation was Makassarese expansionist aggression against the Company's declared ally of Buton. In response to a Makassarese siege of Buton in 1633, the Company sent ships to blockade the roadstead of Makassar in 1634, with the orders to destroy all local and Portuguese vessels. The Makassarese had anticipated the attack, however, and when the Company ships arrived, all Portuguese and local merchant vessels had already been evacuated.

Unable to move his ships closer to the coast, the commander of the Company's fleet had to watch a fleet of Makassarese war vessels bound for the Moluccas escape from the mouth of the river into open waters. In May of the same year, the Dutch learned that Buton had fallen to the Makassarese. The blockade of Makassar continued until August, when the fleet was ordered to return to Batavia. Another expedition sent later the same year met with even less success. The situation worsened when in 1635 the Company learned that the Butonese had started to act

⁶⁷ Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, 245–46.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 246.

aggressively against the Dutch. A Company revenge expedition achieved little else but the exchange of prisoners. Such was the situation when in June 1637 Governor-General Anthonio van Diemen, having re-established peace and order in Ambon, left for Makassar to make an effort to end the conflict with the sultanate.⁶⁹

The 1637 negotiations and treaty

The rebellion on Ambon had been intensifying since 1634 and in December 1636 Van Diemen, governor-general since January 1 of that year, set forth with an expedition to set matters straight. Having accomplished his mission, he left Ambon for Batavia in May the following year, but went via Makassar to see if difficulties could be overcome and peace concluded there.⁷⁰ Negotiations between Van Diemen and Sultan Alauddin took place between June 23 and 26, and resulted in a treaty of June 26.⁷¹ These negotiations and the June 26 treaty form the subject of chapter 4. Suffice it for now to say that the

⁶⁹ Ibid. 245–46.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 244–45.

⁷¹ *Corpus diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum verzameling van politieke contracten en verdere verdragen door de Nederlanders in het Oosten gesloten, van privilegebrieven aan hen verleend, enz.*, edited by J. E. Heeres and F. W. Stapel, 6 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1907–55), 1.303–306. (Hereafter *Corpus Diplomaticum*.)

agreement was a peace treaty, negotiated at a time when both parties were under pressure to obtain a positive result.

From the 1637 peace to war, negotiations, and the 1655 treaty

The smuggling of cloves from Ambon via Makassar continued after 1637, and when in 1652 one of the Ambonese rebel leaders, a *kimelaha* (district leader) named Madjira, went to Makassar to seek support there, the Company decided to send an embassy to Makassar to discourage the sultan from supporting him.⁷² An expedition under the command of Jacob Hustard arrived at Makassar on February 1 only to find that Madjira had already left with thirty well-armed war vessels with the permission of the sultan,⁷³ thus leaving Hustard's mission pointless.

After Hustard's return to Batavia, Arnold de Vlaming van Oudshoorn visited Makassar on his return trip from Ambon to Batavia, and tried to persuade the sultan to send envoys to Batavia for negotiations. His proposal was rejected, but the sultan was willing to give De Vlaming a diplomatic letter for the governor-general. The

⁷² Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, 331.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 331.

sultan's letter was of a general nature, just stating that he wanted to live in peace with the Company, but on condition that the Company allowed the people of Ambon and Ceram to live in peace and to practise their religion freely. As the self-styled protector of those rights, he also gave notice that he had sent envoys to Ambon. Batavia considered the sultan's declaring himself protector and defender of peoples who were (by treaty) under the Company's protection, nothing less than a *casus belli*. At the meeting of the governor-general and Council on October 21, 1653, it was decided to declare war on Makassar. We do not need to go into the details of the campaign here, but will simply state that fighting started at the end of the same year, and the war went on until negotiations for peace took place late in 1655, which resulted in a new treaty dated December 28 of that year.⁷⁴

As in 1637, the 1653–55 cycle of war, negotiation, and treaty was rooted in the issue over what the Company considered Makassarese infringement on its monopoly rights in the Moluccas. What distinguishes the 1655 peace from that of 1637 was that the former to a large extent came about under pressure from the Company directors in the

⁷⁴ Ibid. 331–32.

Netherlands, and that it was accompanied by a robust internal discussion between Governor-General Maetsuyker and De Vlaming van Oudshoorn, who disagreed with the lenient tactics that were applied. This discussion forms the topic of chapter 5.

Tensions 1655–60, and another cycle of war, negotiations, and treaty

Not long after the conclusion of the peace in 1655, it became clear that armed Makassarese vessels again had taken up sailings to the clove islands. In response, Governor-General Joan Maetsuyker sent Willem Basting as envoy to Makassar with the message that the sailings must stop or Makassar would once again find itself at war with the Company.⁷⁵ The Makassarese response to this was a cluster of counterclaims, one of which was that the Company give up its fortifications on Menado (in North Sulawesi) because, among other things, it was built on lands under the sultan's sovereignty.⁷⁶ On receiving these claims, the Company once again declared war. The fleet under command of Van Dam and Johan Truytman arrived at the

⁷⁵ Ibid. 332.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 332-333.

roadstead of Makassar on June 6, and engaged in battle immediately.⁷⁷

Troops were landed on June 12, and Fort Panakkukang was seized.

Given that loss, the sultan sent out feelers for negotiations, which resulted in a ceasefire. A Makassarese negotiation delegation was then sent to Batavia, and a treaty concluded there on August 19.⁷⁸ The treaty was countersigned in Makassar on December 2⁷⁹ the same year.

Context and treaty making: The Bugis rebellion in 1660

After the Company's conquest of Panakkukang in June 1660, 10,000 Bugis, among them nobles such as Arung Palakka, were ordered to dig a canal to cut the fort off from the mainland. They refused to do so and fled back to their homeland on August 7.⁸⁰ Hasanuddin's preoccupation with laying siege to the Company's garrison in Panakkukang left the Bugis to reorganise and prepare themselves for new attacks by the Makassarese.⁸¹ During the fall, the Dutch were on the verge of being starved out, but were still hanging on, perhaps encouraged by news of the continuing rebellion of the Bugis. However, when a Makassarese

⁷⁷ Ibid. 333.

⁷⁸ *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 2.171–77.

⁷⁹ *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 2.177–79.

⁸⁰ Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, 49.

⁸¹ Ibid. 49.

offensive against the Bugis was finally launched, the rebellion was quelled in the beginning of October.⁸²

What is of particular relevance to us in this context is that the Bugis rebellion took place between the sending of Makassarese delegates to negotiate in Batavia in August and the countersigning of the treaty in Makassar in December. With the Bugis rebellion, an opportunity opened for the Company to renew the war with Makassar in alliance with the Bugis. But, by the start of the rebellion, the Company had already committed itself to negotiations, and by the time of the countersigning in Makassar in December, the Bugis rebellion had been quelled. Still the option of allying with the Bugis made its impact on Batavia's reflections on policy towards Makassar. The impact on policy positions by shifting constellations of contexts forms the topic of chapter 6.

New tensions and decision for war, 1660–66

Neither a complete stop the illicit traffic with the Moluccas nor the expulsion of the Portuguese as were agreed in the 1660 treaty were met in the years to follow. The traffic in the Moluccas continued, and even if

⁸² Ibid. 50.

some of the lower strata of the Portuguese left Makassar, the richer merchants stayed on. The latter filled an important military function, too, in the construction defence works.⁸³ Sultan Hasanuddin confided to the Company's resident Jan Barra that a total expulsion of the Portuguese would lead to the destruction of his realm. A new Makassarese grievance against the Company was that Bugis rebels had taken refuge in Batavia, including the Bone leader Arung Palakka. To these grievances were added a number of lesser complaints that, together with a number of incidents, led to the Company's decision to start another war on October 5, 1666.

It is important to note that before the final decision for war was taken, several attempts were made to negotiate a solution. For instance, on October 25, 1661, the council decided to let the Makassarese who had been held as hostages as part of the 1660 peace settlement to return to Makassar.⁸⁴ When on November 23, 1663, a decision was made to delegate Jacob Cau and Abraham Verspreeet to go to Makassar to try to reach an accommodation, it was made with the instructions not to mention the continued presence of the Portuguese. The ensuing

⁸³ Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, 334.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 334.

negotiations, taking place in the beginning of 1664, started off in a positive atmosphere, but were hampered by both the issue of the Bone refugees in Batavia and the accusation of the sultan that the Company had taken sides against him in Ternate and Buton.

What turned the atmosphere from tolerable disagreement into open conflict was the incident of the yacht *De Leeuwin*, which shipwrecked on the island of Don Duango on December 24, 1664, with 40 dead and 162 survivors, who were brought to Makassar. The Company's resident in Makassar, Verspreeet, was prohibited from going to the ship to save the money case.⁸⁵ Shortly after the incident, considerable amounts of Dutch money began to circulate in Makassar. A party of fifteen men sent to save the rest of the money were attacked and killed. When Verspreeet himself later received threats, he saw no other option than to lock up the lodge and leave.⁸⁶

Yet another attempt to reach a peaceful solution by negotiations was made when on November 20, 1665 when Receiver-General Joan van Wesenhagen was sent to Makassar. No agreement was reached however.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 337.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 338.

Quite the contrary, Wesenhagen considered the mood in Makassar bellicose. He sensed a dedication to war, encouraged by the English there, and noticed signs of preparations for a campaign against the Company's ally, Ternate. Against the background of the threatening situation in the eastern quarters, on October 5 of the following year the High Government passed a resolution to prepare an expedition against Makassar.⁸⁷

A final cycle of war and treaty, 1667–68

A fleet under the command of Cornelis Speelman sailed on November 24 and arrived at Makassar December 19. War started with the bombardment of Makassar city in late December, followed by a landing of troops further south. Speelman then sailed for Buton, which was besieged and conquered on January 3, 1667.⁸⁸ On January 31, a treaty was concluded with the raja in which an annual stipend was accorded in exchange for the extinction of the clove trees on the island. This arrangement was to form the pattern for the other outer islands.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid. 338.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 338–39.

⁸⁹ See chapter 8.

After the successful attack on Buton it was decided that Arung Palakka should go to Bone with his fellow Bugis to prepare a general revolt against Makassar,⁹⁰ while Speelman, as instructed by the High Government, should go on to inspect the state of affairs in the eastern quarters.⁹¹

Speelman left Buton for the eastern quarters in February 1667 and returned to Makassar in June. In the Moluccas, Speelman brought about a peace between the sultans of Ternate and Tidore and linked them to the Company as their overlord and protector,⁹² which was of vital importance for the subsequent campaign.

War on and in Makassar, June–November 1667

In late June 1667, Speelman returned to Makassar, and from July 1 hostilities in Makassar began and lasted until a ceasefire was reached at the end of October. The signing of a peace treaty, the Bongaya Treaty took place on November 18.⁹³ The text of the treaty will be analysed in detail in chapter 8, but in essence it recognised the establishment of an

⁹⁰ Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, 339.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 339–40.

⁹² *Ibid.* 340, see chapter 8.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 341.

autonomous Bugis state under Arung Palakka and effectively put Makassar under the overlordship of the Company, both politically as well as commercially. The Company's position was further secured by the sultan's cession of Fort Pandang, which was renamed Fort Rotterdam and became the Company's base in Makassar.⁹⁴

Securing the peace by war and still more treaties, 1667–69

The news of the Bongaya treaty was received with celebrations in Batavia. A public mass of thanksgiving (*dankpredicatie*) followed by public celebrations, including a 200-gun salute, was held on March 14, 1668.⁹⁵ Yet, Speelman did not trust the Makassarese and doubted whether they would live up to the agreement.⁹⁶ Several nobles, for instance, showed considerable opposition to the Dutch and the treaty, and neither the raja of Tello nor Karaeng Linques, another prominent noble of Makassar, had signed it.

Even when Speelman had the raja of Tello and Karaeng Linques sign the treaty on March 9 and 31, 1668, respectively,⁹⁷ opposition continued, and open conflict broke out again April 12. Abortive peace

⁹⁴ Ibid. 345.

⁹⁵ Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, 342-343.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 345.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 345.

talks took place in November 1668 and February 1669. On April 15, having received reinforcements from Batavia, the Company started its attack on Goa. The sultan's palace was finally conquered on June 24. The raja of Tello and Linques then signed a treaty confirming the one of March 1668, and on December 20, 1669, peace was finally confirmed with great pomp and circumstance in Fort Batavia.⁹⁸

Section conclusion

The Bongaya Treaty and its aftermath marked a break in the nature of the relationship between the Company and Makassar. The interaction regime now in place was a multilateral, hierarchical one, comprising both Makassar and polities of the Eastern Archipelago, who were all bound together under the overlordship of the Company.

A particular trait of the 1666 campaign, and without doubt the one that won the day for the Company, was that it was allied to an internal Makassarese opposition, namely the Bugis coalition under the leadership of Arung Palakka. Reflecting this, the restructuring of power relations on South Sulawesi itself was woven into the Bongaya Treaty.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 346–49.

This guaranteed Bugis independence from Makassar and recognised their homelands as an autonomous realm under Arung Palakka.

Section 3: Approaches to VOC Diplomacy in the historiography: General overview

Section introduction

The Dutch East India Company was given the power to sign treaties in the charter area. Counting from Heeres and Stapel's compilations,⁹⁹ over five hundred treaties were concluded between the Company and Asian princes and rulers during the Company's existence. That makes for an average of about twenty treaties a year, although the peak years were in the second half of the seventeenth century. It goes without saying that the larger part of this contractual corpus had been preceded by negotiations. We may thus conclude that both negotiating for and concluding treaties for political and commercial interaction was an integral part of the Company's undertaking in the charter area.

In this section I shall be looking at approaches to the Company's diplomatic interaction with Asian rulers in the historiography from the nineteenth century to the present. The section will be divided into three subsections in which I first give an overview of some central positions in the interpretation of the nature of VOC diplomacy and the nature of the

⁹⁹ *Corpus Diplomaticum*, vols. 1–3.

Company's interaction with local rulers in the charter area. I then place various positions and approaches along a historiographic timeline more generally, before I turn to a topical discussion focusing specifically on propositions about the role accorded to "international law" in the Company's overseas treaties.

General types of approaches

My typology of general approaches begins with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,¹⁰⁰ which is characterised by a mixed narrative of commercial and political history, but with a bias towards the latter. C. H. Alexandrowicz's *An Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies (16th, 17th and 18th Centuries)*¹⁰¹ represents a second approach. He propagates a position I term "the system compatibility approach," which advocates a principled comparability and compatibility between Asian and Western systems of state interaction. G. J. Resink

¹⁰⁰ To name some representative works in this tradition: J. K. J. de Jonge, M. L. van Deventer, et al. *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indie. Verzameling van onuitgegeven stukken uit het Oud-Koloniaal Archief*. ('s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1862–1909), both sources and introductory narratives; H. T. Colenbrander, *Koloniale Geschiedenis*, 3 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1925–26); F. W. Stapel, in collaboration with E. C. Godée Molsbergen and H. Terpstra, *Geschiedenis van Nerderlansch Indië*, 5 vols. (Amsterdam: Joost van den Vondel, 1938–40).

¹⁰¹ C. H. Alexandrowicz, *An Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies (16th, 17th and 18th Centuries)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

holds a modified but similar position. If I would subsume Resink in the system compatibility category, he still deserves further comments because of the function his views occupy in my argument by his insistence on compatibility between Makassar's and Western institutions of diplomatic interaction. Resink also marks a special case in the historiography because of his mixed cultural background. He was born in Yogyakarta, served in the colonial administration, and did research on Indonesian legal system and diplomatic interaction after independence, when he also opted for Indonesian citizenship.¹⁰²

A selection of his essays, published in 1968 by the Royal Tropical Institute of Amsterdam as *Indonesia's History between the Myths* points back to his article "Between the Myths: From Colonial to National Historiography,"¹⁰³ which appeared in 1952. Writing in the immediate postcolonial period, it is symptomatic that the myths he warns against are, on the one hand, an overinflated emphasis of the historical importance of Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia, while on the other

¹⁰² Foreword, G. J. Resink, *Indonesia's History between the Myths—Essays in Legal History and Historical Theory* (The Hague: Van Hoeve, 1968), v–vi.

¹⁰³ First printed in *De Nieuwe Stem* 7:6 (June 1952). My references are to the reprint in Resink, *Indonesia's History between the Myths*.

hand he is also critical towards an Indonesian-centred chauvinistic approach.¹⁰⁴ Of particular importance in the context of this thesis is his article “The law of Nations in Early Macassar,”¹⁰⁵ the propositions of which serve well to problematize propositions about non-compatibility. In particular, Resink’s discussion of Makassarese diplomatic practice highlights problems in assumptions that the Makassarese applied the same set of diplomatic standards towards foreigners that they did towards fellow South Sulawesi states. For now, however, I shall restrict myself to considering Resink as a special case under the compatibility category. I will return to his particular views on international law in Makassar in more detail in my elaboration of positions and propositions in chapter 2.

Returning to my list of types of approaches, the third is what I call the “cultural embeddedness approach,” which is represented by Leonard Andaya’s article “Treaty Conceptions and Misconceptions,”¹⁰⁶ and his book on Arung Palakka and seventeenth-century South

¹⁰⁴ See the editors’ “Foreword” in Resink, *Indonesia’s History between the Myths*, vi–vii.

¹⁰⁵ Originally written to be given as a lecture at the Faculty of Law in Makassar, first published in Dutch as “Volkenrecht in vroeger Makassar,” *Indonesië* 6:5 (March 1953): 393–410. I use the English translation in, *Indonesia’s History between the Myths*.

¹⁰⁶ Leonard Andaya, “Treaty Conceptions and Misconceptions: A Case Study from South Sulawesi,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 134:2/3 (1978): 275–95.

Sulawesi.¹⁰⁷ I have also included a controversy between J. H. O. Paulusz and S. Arasaratnam over the Company's diplomatic interaction in Ceylon.¹⁰⁸ Neither should be regarded as a defined type in his own right. Paulusz should be considered as part of the late nineteenth- early twentieth-century tradition, whereas Arasaratnam's argument lies closer to Andaya's. I have chosen to include their controversy because it casts light on the positions of Alexandrowicz and his critics as well as the prior historiography.

Jan A. Somers' Thesis: *De VOC als volkenrechtelijke actor*,¹⁰⁹ and his *Nederlandsch-Indië, Staatkundige ontwikkelingen binnen een koloniale relatie*¹¹⁰ built upon it, are, as the titles suggest, both preoccupied with the legal relations between the Republic (and later the Kingdom) of the Netherlands—and Indonesia. Somers is included as a fourth type primarily because he occupies an ambivalent position

¹⁰⁷ Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, Verhandelingen KITLV 91, Martinus Nijhof, 1981

¹⁰⁸ Respectively, J. H. O. Paulusz, "The 1638 Westervolt Treaty in Ceylon: Charges of Dutch Deceit Disproved," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, 136:2/3 (1980): 321–52, and S. Arasaratnam, "J. H. O. Paulusz on the Westervolt treaty in Ceylon: A Rejoinder," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, 138:2/3 (1982): 191–205.

¹⁰⁹ Proefschrift, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, juni 2001.

¹¹⁰ Jan A. Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië, Staatkundige ontwikkelingen binnen een koloniale relatie* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2005).

between the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers and Alexandrowicz on the one side and his critics such as Leonard Andaya on the other side. I have called Somers' position a "legalist-pragmatic approach" because he seems to oscillate between assumptions that the Company's actions were determined by legal considerations even as he stresses the built-in need for the Company to act pragmatically given the circumstances of the overseas context. In Somers' perspective, the Company's diplomacy stands out as a strange combination of both legalist and pragmatic considerations leading to a mixed or ambiguous form of communication.

Finally, I have included Martine Julia van Ittersum's work *Profit and Principle—Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of the Dutch Power in the East Indies (1595–1615)*.¹¹¹ Van Ittersum earns her place in the selection because she offers an original interpretation of the nature of the Company's use of law by putting it in a broader historical and political context. Her main proposition is that the Company's legal arguments as articulated by Grotius should not be separated from considerations of power. In her view, the legal arguments

¹¹¹ See note 1.

served as little more than instruments of pure power. I have therefore termed her position “legal cynicism.” Ittersum’s “legal cynicism” transgresses the restricted legal perspective generally dominant in the historiography on VOC diplomatic relations and practice, with the notable exception of Andaya and, possibly, Somers.

Having outlined these respective types of approaches to VOC diplomacy, I shall now turn to placing them in a broad chronological overview.

Section 4: Chronological overview of the historiography

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography

Characteristic of the treatment of the Company's politico-diplomatic interaction and treaty making in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography is that the topic was treated chiefly in a descriptive matter, fitted into a chronological narrative. A recurring feature is telling the story of how treaties came into being and commenting on their essential terms.¹¹² This tradition could be said to have been, and was later attacked for, operating from a Eurocentric point of view.

¹¹² The selection and structuring principle of the source extracts in de Jonge, van Deventer, et al., *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indië* is for instance both based on the Patriase Instructions, treaties and reports from Company servants on site to Patria, all centred on Company relations with specific places of interaction. In Colenbrander's three-volume work, only chapters 5–14 in volume 2 (1925) are dedicated to the Company period, where three of the chapters are concerned with local Indonesian history. Still the chapters that are dedicated to VOC interaction in Indonesia are mainly concentrated on the history of political events. Volume 3 of Stapel's *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië* of 1939 is organised by narrating a chain of events with an emphasis of political relations all structured by chronological time periods in respective places of operation, and thus conforms to the history of political events tradition.

The Van Leur break and the economic turn in the post-World War II historiography

J. C. Van Leur¹¹³ represented a reaction to the “Eurocentric bias” in the traditional historiography, and promoted a shift towards a more Asia-centred viewpoint. After Van Leur, non-Eurocentric interpretations of Company–Asian interaction were further developed and refined. In his *De Nederlandse Koloniën*, Jurrien van Goor, for instance, argued a “post-van Leur approach” that, in distinction from both the Eurocentric and Asiatic approaches, focused on the interaction between the two. Van Goor’s approach thus aimed at escaping both the pre-Van Leur Eurocentrism as well as avoiding the danger of underplaying the role of the VOC inherent in the Asiatic approach.¹¹⁴ A perspective of interaction with a focus on the impact of Asian influences on the Dutch Republic was more recently applied in Gommans and Emmer’s *Rijk aan de rand van de Wereld*.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ J. C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague: Van Hove, 1955), printed posthumously.

¹¹⁴ Jurrien van Goor, *De Nederlandse koloniën: geschiedenis van de Nederlandse expansie, 1600-1975* (Den Haag: SDU Uitgeverij, 1993) 75.

¹¹⁵ Piet Emmer and Jos Gommans, *Rijk aan de rand van de wereld: de geschiedenis van Nederland overzee 1600-1800* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2012), 15.

Another trend characteristic of the period after the Second World War was a shift of focus away from political interaction to economic history. So, while the changes in perspective starting with Van Leur came to relativize the role of the Company, with decolonisation the focus shifted away from narrative political-diplomatic history towards a more structural economic history.¹¹⁶

Revisionist comparative perspectives and views on the nature of interaction

Still, studies either directly or indirectly concerning the political interaction of the Company in the Asian arena came increasingly to be published after the 1970s, predominantly with a revisionist edge against Eurocentrism. Both European significance on a global scale and European modernity in global comparative perspectives were played down. Perhaps the most prominent exponent of this reorientation is Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who rejected both the contrast between Asian stability and “European dynamism”¹¹⁷ as well the relative “modernity”

¹¹⁶ Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, xlvi.

¹¹⁷ See for instance his “Aspects of State Formation in South India and Southeast Asia, 1500–1650,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 23:4 (1986): 364–65, and *Merchant Networks in the Early Modern World*, edited by Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), xii.

of European actors in Asian waters.¹¹⁸ Anthony Reid's magnum opus on South East Asia in the Age of Commerce¹¹⁹ is a typical example of how the dynamism of local Asian societies was upgraded. Another, possibly less known, example is Claude Guillot's *The Sultanate of Banten*.¹²⁰

Approximately ten years after Guillot, Johan Talens' presented a more bleak evaluation of the dynamism and developmental potential of Banten,¹²¹ but still his approach was non-Eurocentric by his choice of study-object. Also, it should be remarked that although apart from Andaya's contributions little had been written on the theoretical dimension of VOC diplomacy, an exception must be made for Talens. In an article of 1993, he accords considerable space to problematizing the commensurability and dynamics of conceptualisations of power and

¹¹⁸ There was thus no break between the era of the Portuguese (16th century) and the 17th-century Company period. The Northwest European companies represented no break in mentality, Subrahmanyam - 93 p. 272.

¹¹⁹ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, vol. 1, *The Lands Below the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) and *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, vol. 2, *Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

¹²⁰ Claude Guillot, Hasan Muarif Ambary, and Jacques Dumarçay, *The Sultanate of Banten* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1990).

¹²¹ Johan Talens, *Een feodale samenleving in koloniaal vaarwater, Staatsvorming, koloniale expansie en economisch onderontwikkeling in Banten, West-Java (1600-1750)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999).

kingship by the Dutch and the Bantenese.¹²² This was an invitation for a discussion that has not been followed up.

Belonging to the general revisionism that followed Van Leur, but more radical in its perspective, was a reinterpretation, if not an outright rejection, of the idea of the West's modernising impact on Asian society. For instance, M. N. Pearson could write "nor can one see the early European settlements on the Indian coast as introducing positive European notions such as the rule of law that providing security for property and persons inevitably attracted merchants from the surrounding Asian-ruled, and so implicitly less lawful, areas. Quite the contrary."¹²³

As for the nature of interaction and the direction of impact, even an inverse constellation to Eurocentric assumptions has been argued, as, for instance, by referring to the indigenisation of the European colonial enclaves in the eighteenth century: "With their endemic family feuds and institutional splits," Victor Lieberman writes, "the communities of 18th

¹²² J. Talens "Ritual Power; The installation of a king in Banten, West Java, in 1691", *Bijdragen tot de de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde* 149, pp. 333-335.

¹²³ M. N. Pearson, "Merchants and States," in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State Power and World Trade 1350-1750*, edited by James D. Tracy, 41-116 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 108.

century Batavia and Manila resembled indigenous courts more closely than a concern with formal structures might suggest.”¹²⁴

Still, when looking at the historiography of the European impact as a whole, Lieberman finds a pattern in which there is a movement away from a Eurocentric approach, passing through a revisionist Asiatic reaction, and back to a renewed emphasis on the European impact.¹²⁵ Lieberman subscribes to the relevance of the latter position with the reminder that “the collapse of the archipelagic states is inconceivable without the Dutch.”¹²⁶

It was not until 1999 that the first initiative to open up the study of VOC overseas diplomacy as a new field in its own right was taken. In his *Tussen Geveinsde Vrunden en Verklaarde Vijanden*,¹²⁷ Leonard Blussé lamented that there was as yet no new, invigorating study of the diplomatic interaction between Western and Asian powers in the early modern period, and to remedy the situation he called for a systematic utilisation of the VOC archives to establish a “new diplomatic history of

¹²⁴ Victor Lieberman, “Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies: Structuring Southeast Asian History,” *Modern Asian Studies* 27:3 (July 1993), 568.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 557.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 554.

¹²⁷ Blussé, *Tussen Geveinsde Vrunden*, 1.

overseas diplomacy” on a par with Geoffrey Parker’s “new military history.” He pointed out that the VOC tuned its diplomatic practice throughout the Asian theatre according to existing local norms and rituals, and suggested that researchers should pay fresh attention to Heeres’ source publications and give them a closer reading.¹²⁸ Since Blussé’s original plea, a number of developments have occurred indicating that such a process was in the making. Among these were the conference held in conjunction with the quadricentennial jubilee of the VOC in 2002 and the resulting conference publication, *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie tussen Oorlog en Diplomatie*,¹²⁹ as well contributions in the compilations published in honour of Jurrien van Goor and Leonard Blussé in 2004 and 2011, respectively.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, it seems fair to say that as of today the research programme that Blussé called for in 1999 has not fully blossomed. Van Ittersum’s proclamation in 2006, seven years after Blussé’s original plea, that “the new history of

¹²⁸ Ibid. 6.

¹²⁹ Held in Den Helder and Leiden 2002, the contributions printed by Nederlandse Organisaties voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, 2002.

¹³⁰ Namely Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Peter Rietbergen, eds., *Hof en Handel: Aziatische Vorsten en de VOC 1620–1720* (Leiden: KITLV, 2004), and J. Thomas Lindblad and Alicia Schrikker, eds., *Het Verre Gezicht Politieke en culturele relaties tussen Nederland en Azië, Afrika en Amerika* (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2011).

international relations in monsoon Asia still needs to be written”¹³¹ still holds true today.

Regarding for instance general works on the Company or Dutch-Indonesian relations published from the second half of the 1990s, such as J. J. P. de Jong’s *De Waaier van het Fortuin: Van handelscompagnie tot koloniaal imperiu; De Nederlanders in Azië en de Indonesische Archipel 1595–1959*,¹³² René Barendse’s, *The Arabian Seas 1640–1700*,¹³³ or Els M. Jacobs, *Merchant in Asia: The Trade of the Dutch East Company during the Eighteenth Century*,¹³⁴ with the exception of Barendse,¹³⁵ none accorded any significant treatment to the Company diplomacy.¹³⁶

In brief, Barendse’s view on the nature of the Company’s overseas diplomacy which he treats in chapter 4, “Diplomacy and the State”,¹³⁷ is that European overseas diplomacy in general and the Company’s diplomacy in particular do not exclusively nor primarily

¹³¹ Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, li.

¹³² Sdu Uigervers, Den Haag, 1998.

¹³³ Leiden: CNWS, 1998.

¹³⁴ Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2006.

¹³⁵ Chapter 4: “Diplomacy and the State”

¹³⁶ “diplomacy” is for instance neither in de Jong’s nor in Jacob’s index.

¹³⁷ Barendse 1999, 100-126.

represent a form of Eurocentric legalism, but rather a pragmatic configuration of the Asian societies formed to serve European purposes:

*The problem is not just that Asian states were perceived through the distorted lenses of Roman or common law but that the policy of the Company was justified by a peculiar interpretation of Asian societies*¹³⁸.

The pragmatic configuration Barendse has in mind more particularly, is a lack of “constitutional safeguards to liberty”, in other words, “despotism.”¹³⁹ So, on the one hand Barendse supports the legalist Eurocentric assumption with modifications by giving it a constructivist twist by referring to how propositions about “Asiatic despotism” served to legitimate actual European overseas practice. The latter proposition in one sense foreshadows implications of cynicism later brought forward by Van Ittersum.¹⁴⁰

So where does that leave us as far as the historical writing on the Company’s overseas diplomacy after the middle of the twentieth century is concerned? First, there was comparably little of it until after the 1970s, as the scene before then was dominated by economic history. The little there was on political interaction history was to a large degree dominated

¹³⁸ Barendse 1999, 104.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 105, 108.

¹⁴⁰ See below.

by a variety of revisionist trends. But, it was not until the end of the millennium that pleas for a “new overseas diplomatic history” in its own right began to make their mark.

Entering a new millennium: The coming of a “new diplomatic history”?

The 1990s saw the publication of a number of case studies such as, Reinout Vos’ study on VOC diplomatic interaction on the Malay Peninsula,¹⁴¹ and Luc Nagtegaal’s study of the intertwining of the Company’s diplomatic and commercial interaction on the north coast of Java.¹⁴² Indicative of a renewed interest in the cultural dimension of the Company is the work of Femme Gaastra, usually associated with studies of the commercial aspect of the Company, who at the end of the 1990s published on sociocultural aspects.¹⁴³

While the plea for a new diplomatic history of the European overseas expansion and global interaction originally came from Leonard

¹⁴¹ Reinout Vos, *Gentle Janus, Merchant Prince, The VOC and the Tightrope of Diplomacy in the Malay World* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993).

¹⁴² Lucas Wilhelmus Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger—The Dutch East Indies Company and the Northeast Coast of Java, 1680–1743* (Leiden: KITLV, 1996).

¹⁴³ Femme S. Gaastra, “Competition or collaboration? Relations between the Dutch East India Company and Indian Merchants around 1680,” in *Merchant Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era*, edited by Sushil Chaudhuri and Michel Morineau, 189–201 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Blussé, one person who has exhibited a consistent interest in the cultural dimension of the Company and its diplomatic dealings with local rulers deserves to be brought forward, namely Jurrien van Goor. Van Goor took a general cultural approach in his study of Dutch education in Ceylon in 1978,¹⁴⁴ but his *Kooplieden, predikanten en bestuurders overzee* published four years later made the preoccupation with perceptions of “the other” explicit in the title.¹⁴⁵ His *Prelude to Colonialism* (2004)¹⁴⁶ focuses on the political dimension of the Company and its diplomatic activities. No wonder that the contributions in *Hof en Handel*¹⁴⁷ were all concerned with VOC diplomatic interaction in some aspect or other.

Bringing it up to date, 2010–14

Bringing this overview up to date, but by no means claiming to present an exhaustive list, another person who has made a mark in the recent historiography on cultural contact and diplomacy is Markus Vink.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Jurrien van Goor, *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster: Dutch Education in Ceylon 1690–1795* (Groningen: Wolters Noordhoff, 1978).

¹⁴⁵ Jurrien van Goor, *Kooplieden, predikanten en bestuurders overzee: beeldvorming en plaatsbepaling in een andere wereld* (Utrecht: HES, 1982).

¹⁴⁶ Jurrien Van Goor, *Prelude to Colonialism: The Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004).

¹⁴⁷ See n. 92, above.

¹⁴⁸ See, for instance, Markus P. M. Vink, “Images and Ideologies of Dutch-South Asian Contact: Cross-Cultural Encounters between the Nayak State of Madurai and the Dutch East India Company in the Seventeenth Century,” *Itinerario* 21:2 (1997): 82–123, and

Mention should also be made of Blussé's article, "Peeking into Empires: Dutch Embassies to the Courts of China and Japan,"¹⁴⁹ the essays gathered in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*,¹⁵⁰ Adam Clulow's *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan*,¹⁵¹ and Matthias van Rossum's, *Werkers van de Wereld; Globalisering, arbeid en interculturele ontmoetingen tussen Aziatische en Europese zeelieden in dienst van de VOC, 1600–1800*.¹⁵² As all these contributions were published between 2010 and 2014, they may represent an upsurge in the study of the cultural and politico-diplomatic dimension of the Company.

Van Meersbergen

Finally, in the finishing stages of my own work, I was made aware of Guido van Meersbergen's PhD thesis *Ethnography and Encounter*:

idem, *Mission to Madurai: Dutch Embassies to the Nayaka Court of Madurai in the Seventeenth Century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012); and numerous reviews.

¹⁴⁹ Leonard Blussé, "Peeking into Empires: Dutch Embassies to the Courts of China and Japan," *Itinerario* 37:3 (2013), pp 13-29.

¹⁵⁰ Siegfried Huigen, Jan L. de Jong, and Elmer Kolfin, eds., *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

¹⁵¹ Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

¹⁵² Matthias van Rossum, *Werkers van de Wereld; Globalisering, arbeid en interculturele ontmoetingen tussen Aziatische en Europese zeelieden in dienst van de VOC, 1600–1800* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014).

*Dutch and English Approaches to Cross-Cultural Contact in
Seventeenth-Century South Asia.*¹⁵³

Although Van Meersbergen's work and mine clearly overlap as far as topic and issue are concerned, there are also some differences. Van Meersbergen presents his analysis of the VOC and EIC documentation as focused on "what it reveals about perceptions of Others, categories of human difference, and approaches to cross-cultural interaction."¹⁵⁴ Thus Van Meersbergen may be more focused on ethnographic assumptions "shaping worldviews" in the general, while I focus more specifically on assumptions in the Company's diplomatic interaction. In brief, I may tend to put more emphasis on the context of diplomatic interaction whereas Van Meersbergen puts emphasis on cultural tradition.

I shall briefly state some points that follow from this difference. First, I hold that the Company was not acting on an overarching theory or general assumptions of cross-cultural interaction; it primarily relied on casuistic reflections and advice. The whole issue of diplomacy was approached practically and pragmatically. This is to say—and this may

¹⁵³ Guido van Meersbergen, *Ethnography and Encounter: Dutch and English Approaches to Cross-Cultural Contact in Seventeenth-Century South Asia* (PhD diss., University College London, 2014).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* "Abstract," 5.

be the main difference between Van Meersbergen's thesis and my own—that I am not convinced that VOC personnel brought a set of cultural meta-conceptualisations with them overseas that were then used uncritically as a grid through which all their observations and reflections were processed. The Company's servants were well aware that they were in foreign lands and adopted ways of reflection to adapt to that fact.

Second, as for modes of adaptation, Company servants could draw on the Portuguese cross-cultural experience, from which they could pick and choose, to model their behaviour as outsiders. Third, and this is the view that I shall particularly be pursuing in the following, the Company's overseas experience was in itself a learning process by which the Company came up with different responses and adjusted them to the overseas challenges.

The present thesis is meant as a contribution to a "new history" of overseas early modern diplomacy, by presenting a case study in the Company's seventeenth-century overseas diplomatic practice. In particular, I intend to clarify the restricted role of international law, the specific meaning and function of the overseas diplomatic treaty, and the

rules guiding negotiations for regimes of interaction in the Company's diplomacy.

My reasons for undertaking this project are that I think that the nature and dynamics of the Company's diplomatic practice have been misunderstood or distorted. Too much emphasis has been placed on law, too little on the practical dimensions of diplomacy and negotiations. Before elaborating on my own positions on these points,¹⁵⁵ I first need to go more into detail regarding the historiography on the above issues.

¹⁵⁵ See the section: "The structure of the argument", chapter 2, 67-72

Section 5: Positions on and propositions about law and treaty

Nobody denies that exchange of envoys and letters as well as conclusion of agreements between rulers took place in both early modern South East Asia and Europe. Opinion is split, however, as to whether these diplomatic activities meant the same in Asia as in Europe, and also whether transcultural diplomacy in early modern Asia represented a clash of political cultures or an interaction between compatible systems.

As these issues go directly to the heart of my thesis, I shall dedicate the rest of this chapter to clarifying a variety of positions and propositions on the understanding and meaning of “international law” and “treaty” and assumptions about compatibility and incompatibility among Asian and European systems of state interaction. I shall pick my examples from the selection of works already mentioned, starting with the “classical” historiography of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then turn to C. H. Alexandrowicz’s propositions in his work of 1967.¹⁵⁶ I then go on to clarify Leonard Andaya’s refutations of

¹⁵⁶ Alexandrowicz, *An Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies*.

positions in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography, as well as his attacks on Alexandrowicz's perspectives.¹⁵⁷

To accentuate this issue I shall also include the controversy between Paulusz and Arasaratnam over the Company's diplomatic interaction in Ceylon,¹⁵⁸ because it illuminates the positions of Alexandrowicz and Andaya. I conclude with the positions of Somers and Van Ittersum before rounding off with a summary comparison of the respective positions.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

The historiography of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not understate the fact that there was a difference between the diplomatic habits and traditions of the Company and its Asian counterparts, and that this must be taken into consideration when analysing the nature of their interactions. Heeres, for one, elaborated on the implications of the overseas setting for the mode of the Company's performance in the following manner:

¹⁵⁷ Andaya, "Treaty Conceptions and Misconceptions," and *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*, respectively.

¹⁵⁸ Paulusz, "The 1638 Westerwolt Treaty in Ceylon," and Arasaratnam, "J. H. O. Paulusz on the Westerwolt treaty in Ceylon: A Rejoinder."

Through the behaviour of its sons in the Orient the Dutch national character has manifested itself in all manners, good and bad, but above all in a specific accentuation exacerbated by the environment in which it interacted, exacerbated by the antagonism between white and black, Christian and non-Christian, European and Asian.¹⁵⁹

Another characteristic trait of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography is its preoccupation with the Company's politico-diplomatic and military actions.¹⁶⁰ As for the nature of communication with the Company's local partners, it was assumed that however unfamiliar the treaty terms were to them, they were still, in principle, intelligible.¹⁶¹ The latter view was not only held, but accentuated as a basic assumption in C. H. Alexandrowicz's *An Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies* of 1967.

¹⁵⁹ "Het Nederlandsche volkskarakter heeft zich in de daden van Neerlands zonen in het Oosten vertoond in al zijn uitingen, in al zijn kanten; goede en slechte. ... Maar vooral in zeer bijzondere accentuatie, verscherpt door het milieu, waarin het daar optrad, verscherpt in de eerste plaats door de tegenstelling van blank en bruin, van Christen en niet-Christen, van Europeaan en Aziaat." *Corpus Diplomaticum*, 2. xvi–xii.

¹⁶⁰ The selection of sources and comments in de Jonge, van Deventer, et al., *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indië* and Stapel's focus in *Geschiedenis van Indië*, may serve as exemplary cases.

¹⁶¹ See the discussion on Andaya's views on this below, 31.

Alexandrowicz's work remains a classic study in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century international law and the nature of the diplomatic interaction between Europeans and Asians in Asia. Compared to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tradition, Alexandrowicz distinguished himself by his principled insistence on an essential similarity, and thus compatibility, between the thinking and practise of early modern international law in Asia and the West. He starts by admitting that initially there were differences in the Asian and Western systems of politico-diplomatic interaction, which originated in different conceptualisations of the nature of treaty making. For instance, the Asian systems and approaches were originally characterised by a "personal" approach, while those of the West by an "institutional" one.¹⁶² However, increased contact and treaty making possessed an inherent "law-promoting character,"¹⁶³ so that in the long run, a "depersonalisation" of the Asian conceptualisation towards an institutionalised interpretation took place.¹⁶⁴ In other words, for Alexandrowicz, interaction was a

¹⁶² Alexandrowicz, *Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies*, 169.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 176. For his views on the dynamics and development of politico-diplomatic relations between European and Asian rulers, see p. 203–204.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 231.

dynamic process by which Asian accommodation to Western conceptualisations made their approaches increasingly similar.

A consequence of this was that up to the nineteenth century, the treaties between the Europeans and Asian rulers were basically concluded on an equal basis.¹⁶⁵ It was against these propositions of compatibility and symmetry that Leonard Andaya came to launch his attack on what he considered to be Eurocentric misconceptions of Asian treaty making and diplomacy.

Andaya versus Alexandrowicz

In his 1978 article, Andaya declared his intention to “provide a fair and balanced analysis of treaty relationships between Europe and non-European states prior to the 19th century.”¹⁶⁶ In diametrical opposition to Alexandrowicz, his main proposition was that European international law is irrelevant to understanding the nature of Europe–Asia treaty making before the nineteenth century. Rejecting Alexandrowicz’s proposition of a “similarity of ideas of interstate relations and a mutual

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 224.

¹⁶⁶ Andaya, “Treaty Conceptions and Misconceptions,” 292.

adaptation of legal concepts”¹⁶⁷ between the Europeans and their Asian treaty partners, Andaya argued the opposite position, namely that treaty making between Europeans and Asians from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries represented a cultural collision because Asian conceptualisations were incommensurable with the European ones: “treaties between the Company and a South Sulawesi state were characterised by conflicting expectations, leading to frustration, then mutual recriminations, and finally war.”¹⁶⁸ A similar clash of positions can be found in an exchange between J. H. O. Paulusz and S. Arasaratnam.

The Paulusz–Arasaratnam exchange on the Westerwolt Treaty

In his 1980 article, “The 1638 Westerwolt Treaty in Ceylon: Charges of Dutch Deceit Disproved,” Paulusz set out to clear the Company of charges of foul play in its conflict with the king of Kandy, Raja Singha, in the aftermath of the conclusion of the Westerwolt Treaty of 1638.

Attacking views put forward by Arasaratnam and Goonewardena that the Company was consciously misleading the king, Paulusz holds that such

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 276–77, quoting Alexandrowicz, *An Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies*.

¹⁶⁸ Andaya, “Treaty Conceptions and Misconceptions,” 291.

charges are unfounded, and in fact should be reversed. While the Dutch had been “firmly upholding the basic terms of the contract against the king,” the king himself had, for instance, been claiming, misleadingly, that he was the “emperor” of the whole of Ceylon.¹⁶⁹ When the Dutch had been lured to support Raja Singha on such false pretences, the king on his side had proven unable to live up to his promises of military support to the Company. Neither had he honoured obligations of cinnamon deliveries stated in their treaty.¹⁷⁰

As a matter of fact, Raja Singha had been in breach of the treaty from the very outset as he had presented his motive for entering into an alliance with the Company as originating in their common goal of expelling the Portuguese from Ceylon.¹⁷¹ Yet, Singha also had another motive that he kept hidden from the Dutch, namely to seek support against a personal rival, Vijayapala.¹⁷²

As for the treaty concluded after the fall of the Portuguese fort in Batticaloa on May 18, the king was given a draft of the treaty text which

¹⁶⁹ Paulusz, “The 1638 Westerwolt Treaty in Ceylon,” 321.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 321.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 323.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 325.

he spent a couple of days deliberating over with his advisors¹⁷³ before finally signing it on May 23. The treaty was thus, claims Paulusz, “not a treaty imposed by a victorious general on a defeated enemy, but a Contract willingly sealed between brothers-in-arms.”¹⁷⁴ For Paulusz, then, any notions of deceit and fraud by the Company are wrong because the treaty was entered into voluntarily by the Ceylonese, who were given time to consider its contents.¹⁷⁵ For Paulusz, arguing from assumptions on a par with Alexandrowicz’s, the Westerwolt Treaty was a symmetrical treaty built on universal terms of international law understandable to both the Ceylonese and the Company. If there was deceit involved, it came from the Ceylonese.

Arasaratnam came to disagree on all counts, and intensely so. Starting by referring to the unanimous opinion in the historiography that the Dutch “behaved with duplicity,”¹⁷⁶ he goes on to claim that Paulusz’s arguments were “erroneous in the extreme.”¹⁷⁷ Paulusz produced no new evidence to support his case, his interpretations of the existing evidence

¹⁷³ Ibid. 325

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 325

¹⁷⁵ Implying the assumption that they were capable of understanding its contents.

¹⁷⁶ Arasaratnam, “J. H. O. Paulusz on the Westerwolt Treaty in Ceylon: A Rejoinder,” 191–92.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 193.

were unacceptable, and he revealed an inadequate knowledge of the issues and background of the period.¹⁷⁸

Arasaratnam calls Paulusz's interpretation of Singha's claim to be emperor of all of Ceylon fraudulent and an example of Paulusz's "ignorance of the philosophy and practice of state power in the island of Ceylon."¹⁷⁹ The claim of universal kingship was "ingrained in Sinhalese kingship" as such.¹⁸⁰ Arasaratnam also rejects Paulusz's proposition about Vijayapala, who, he notes, had nothing to do with the attack on Batticaloa.¹⁸¹ In other words, according to Arasaratnam there was no duplicity involved from Singha here either. After going through and rejecting Paulusz's reading and interpretation of the meanings and intentions in the 1638 treaty point by point, Arasaratnam rounds out his criticism with an appeal for a revisionist, non-Eurocentric colonial history.

Prior historiography he divides into three phases, starting with the writings of the original Company administrators, which were taken over

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 193.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 193.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 193.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 194–95.

by the professional historians of the colonial era. Both these periods shared the colonizer's perspective, but the latter singled itself out by working professionally with colonial sources.¹⁸² Arasaratnam calls the third stage, which he dates from the 1950s, a revolutionary period, because it inaugurated a reaction to the previous Eurocentrism, a reaction based on a new consensus in that it was "no longer adequate to write the history of Europe's expansion in Asia solely as an extension of European history."¹⁸³ Crucial for this reorientation and programme to avoid the pitfalls of the colonial sources, was to apply a more critical methodology. Paulusz, in Arasaratnam's eyes, fails to meet this essential requirement on all counts.¹⁸⁴

I shall not be taking a stand on the Paulusz–Arasaratnam exchange in particular here. Their respective positions in the debate primarily go to illustrate two points that are particularly relevant to my case. First, Paulusz's approach generally aligns with the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century positions of Company observance of international law and treaties, while Arasaratnam's criticisms generally is in accord with Leonard Andaya's anti-Eurocentric approach. Second,

¹⁸² Ibid. 202–203.

¹⁸³ Ibid. 203.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 203.

when Arasaratnam's criticizes Paulusz for failing to see the Sinhalese tradition and thinking on kingship in their own terms, the implicit assumption is that the Dutch not only brought their own standards overseas, but that they also operated from them without any effort to try to understand local traditions. This is an assumption close to Andaya's radical proposition of Eurocentric tunnel vision. One scholar who seems to try to balance these two positions in a moderate proposition is Jan A. Somers.

Somers

In this section I address Jan A. Somers' positions on VOC diplomacy as put forward in his Thesis: *De VOC als Volkenrechtelijke actor* of 2001, and his book partly built on it: *Nederlandsch-Indië – Staatkundige ontwikkelingen binnen een koloniale relatie* of 2005¹⁸⁵. The main difference between the two is that while Somers presents the whole history of Dutch diplomatic interaction in Indonesia from the Company

¹⁸⁵ Somers, Jan A., *De VOC as volkenrechtelijke actor*, Proefschrift Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, Juni 2001, and *Nederlandsch-Indië – Staatkundige ontwikkelingen binnen een koloniale relatie*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2005). From now on: Somers, *volkenrechtelijke actor*, 2001, and Somers, *Nederlandsch Indië*, 2005, respectively.

era up to Indonesian [what?] in the latter work, his Thesis is restricted to the Company period. Regarding the coverage of the Company period, in both works he uses Banten, Mataram, Ceylon and the Moluccas as his cases.

I shall briefly point to Somers' positions regarding international law and the conceptualisation of treaties in the Company period as they are depicted in both works. In general, I hold that Somers represents a view of the Company's diplomacy as pragmatic, although his view on this may be said to be more explicitly voiced in the 2001 Thesis than in the 2005 book. It should also be said, that although I endorse his views on the nature of VOC diplomacy, Somers is more preoccupied with the formally legal aspect of the interaction than with the actual practice of diplomacy, as for instance in negotiations, than I am. I shall treat the two works in chronological order.

Somers 2001

The *volkenrechtelijke actor* comprises twelve chapters in all. Chapters 1-7 deal with the conceptual framework and the historical background of the VOC up to the establishment of Batavia in 1619. In chapters 8-11 VOC diplomatic interaction with Banten and Mataram, the Moluccas, Ceylon and Cape the good hope, are analysed as cases of

Company diplomatic interaction from the perspective of international law. In the final chapter, chapter 12, the conclusions are summed up chronologically.

Somers' focus is primarily on the way the Company saw itself as a diplomatic actor in various and changing contexts. Concerning the Banten case, Somers for instance distinguishes between two separate phases, namely the period between the establishment of Batavia in 1619, and the period after Banten's submission to the Company in 1684. In the period up to 1684 the Company viewed its contracts with Banten as concluded between the governor-general as representing the Company, whereas after 1684 the governor-general acted as representing the States-General and the Prince¹⁸⁶.

Mataram proves a contrary case to Banten, in that the Company never acted in the name of the States-General towards it, as it did towards Banten. Somers attributes this difference in approach to a difference in context and challenge. The need to keep European rivals

¹⁸⁶ Somers, *volkenrechtelijke actor* 2001, 244.

out, i.e. the English from Banten, made stronger formal bonds necessary than in relations with Mataram, where no such external threats existed.¹⁸⁷

Regarding the Ceylon case, the Company acted as instrument of the States-General in its contracts with the kingdom of Kandy, and again this is explained by the presence of a European rival, in this case the Portuguese.¹⁸⁸ The Moluccas represented a special case compared to the three above because of the fragmented and weaker political structure dominating there, but as in the case of Banten and Ceylon, there were European rivals to be taken into account, namely the Spanish and Portuguese as well as the English.¹⁸⁹ In the Moluccas the Company originally acted as an instrument of war on behalf of the States-General. But from 1651, with the signing of contracts of submission and the end of war with Spain from the second half of the 17th century, the Company should no longer be seen as an actor in international law in the area¹⁹⁰. Cape the good hope is included in Somers' sample as a case of *res nullius*, and thus falls outside international law from the beginning. The

¹⁸⁷ Somers, volkenrechtelijke actor 2001, 245.

¹⁸⁸ Somers, volkenrechtelijke actor 2001, 245 .

¹⁸⁹ Somers, volkenrechtelijke actor 2001, 246 .

¹⁹⁰ Somers, volkenrechtelijke actor 2001, 246 .

Company personnel there acted solely as administrators on behalf of Batavia.¹⁹¹

The résumé of Somers' sample of cases above has been given to illustrate two general traits about his approach: Firstly that his preoccupation lies with formal legal aspects of the Company's diplomacy, and secondly the formal legal interaction is considered in historical context. What is particularly relevant to my own topic in this connection is Somers' evaluation of the Company's assumptions and mode in its diplomatic dealings.

*On the Company's assumptions and mode in its diplomatic dealings
VOC mode*

It is basic for Somers that in the Company's diplomatic world de facto power held primacy over formalities of contract. This came from the fact that the diplomatic challenges that the Company was confronted with in Asia were never foreseen in 1602. The Company's diplomatic mode developed *sui generis*.¹⁹² Also, as for the Company's view on the function of contracts, Somers stresses that the Company hardly paid

¹⁹¹ Somers, volkenrechtelijke actor 2001, 247.

¹⁹² Somers, volkenrechtelijke actor 2001, 247.

attention to the aspects of international law in the treaties: *De Compagnie had meestal geen behoefte aan formeele volkenrechtssubjectiviteit; de inheemse vorsten werden echter gefronteerd met, vergezeld van gangbare rituelen.*¹⁹³ It was this pragmatic view that made the Company able to navigate flexibly among the various customs of the respective courts it was dealing with.¹⁹⁴

Somers 2005

In the 2005 book Somers starts his narrative of the Company period by stating that with the establishment of Batavia, the Company came to be perceived as and acted as an independent sovereign state in Asian waters.¹⁹⁵ As for the nature of communication with the locals, he asserts that the Company came to encounter a “totally different cultural environment” in Asia.¹⁹⁶ Regarding the kinds of states encountered in Asia, he notes that different typologies built on categories such as “agrarian,” “harbour polities,” or “communal states,” or other ways of characterising them as, for instance, “feudal” or “patrimonial-bureaucratic,” do not frame the problem [describe the context?]

¹⁹³ Somers, volkenrechtelijke actor, 2001, 247.

¹⁹⁴ Somers, volkenrechtelijke actor 2001, 247 .

¹⁹⁵ Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005, 25.

¹⁹⁶ “een volstrekt andere culturele omgeving.” *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005, 25.

adequately.¹⁹⁷ He prefers to look upon them as “network states,” understood as various nodes and concentrations in networks of commercial and diplomatic interaction that reached from Arabia to China and Japan.¹⁹⁸ He also takes care to stress the variety among Asian actors operating on the diplomatic stage, as for instance between Mataram and the harbour states of Indonesia and the village communities of the Moluccas.¹⁹⁹ Asian states prior to the coming of the Europeans all bore individual characteristics,²⁰⁰ but whatever their particularities, Somers’ point is that these states had all long before the European maritime expansion upheld interstate contacts and interactions that were operated in a way that deserves to be considered as “international law.”²⁰¹

This proposition of general similarity, and by implication of Eurasian compatibility, is one that Somers shares with Alexandrowicz. But to a greater degree than Alexandrowicz, Somers points to the

¹⁹⁷ Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005, 33.

¹⁹⁸ Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005., 34.

¹⁹⁹ Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005., 33–34.

²⁰⁰ “De volkenkundige constellatie in Azië, voorafgaand aan de Europese expansie, was vol eigenaardige aspecten, die doorwerkend in het Indisch staatsrecht, mede een stempel hebben gedrukt op de staatsvorming.” Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005Ibid. 35.

²⁰¹ “Bovendien bleken de machthebbers onderling betrekkingen te onderhouden, zich te erdragen als volkenrechtssubjecten.” Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005 Ibid. 34–35.

difference between the pre- and post-nineteenth-century periods in holding up the early modern system in Asia as “incomparable” to the modern one.²⁰² On this particular point Somers is closer to Andaya’s positions than those of Alexandrowicz. On the other hand, he leans on the Eurocentric side when he judges the conceptualisation of treaty obligations of the Asian princes, as a “concession they could withdraw at will.”²⁰³ Unlike Andaya, Somers does not elaborate on the possible Eurocentric cultural foundations for such a judgement. He simply states that facing such differences in conceptualisations and practices, the VOC diplomatic mode had to be, and actually was, accommodating and pragmatic.²⁰⁴

All in all, Somers’ recognition of particularities and differences never glides into a position of incompatibility as far as communication between Company and local polities or Company and rulers is concerned. Where Andaya sees a breakdown in Company–Makassar

²⁰² “In de toenmalige volkenrechtelijke constellatie, onvergelijkbaar met de huidige internationale verhoudingen.” Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005, 63.

²⁰³ Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005, 58.

²⁰⁴ “Wel heeft de Compagnie altijd getracht de door machtsverhoudingen feitelijk onstane situatie in te kaderen.” Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005., 41, and “De Compagnie paste zich als koopman/vorst in het sociale en diplomatieke verkeer binnen de Zuidoost-Aziatische volkenrechtelijke constellatie volledig aan bij de binnen de vorstenhoven heersende gewoonten.” Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005 ., 63.

communication, Somers points to accommodation as, one must assume, a relative successful communicative means employed by the Company. Similarly, Somers explicitly subscribes to Alexandrowicz's proposition of functional understanding and increasing secularisation.²⁰⁵

To sum up, Somers does not advocate a position of structural blockage for communication, but points out that the Company often had to accommodate the other side for practical reasons. But still, if Asian and European concepts of international law were not instantly compatible, and European law consequently had to be accommodated to local standards, the question that needs to be answered is which factors shaped the accommodation of the Company's diplomatic practice and thus gave it a typical overseas "twist"? Alas, that is a question that Somers never really addresses. In his survey of the legal aspects of the VOC diplomacy and state interaction in Asia, the answer to this problem [issue] fades into the background.

Van Ittersum is the one in my sample who comes closest to offering a characterisation of VOC diplomacy in practice within a

²⁰⁵Somers, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 2005, 46, referring to Alexandrowicz, *Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies*, 89.

broader historical framework. She proposes that the Company's legal theory was but a vehicle for politics of power. According to her, the Company not only held a pragmatic view on the use of law overseas, but an outright cynical one.

Van Ittersum

One of Van Ittersum's objectives is to remedy what she considers to be shortcomings in the Cambridge school of political thought. Although the school must be credited for having disclosed "the dark side of rights theories," such as demonstrating the thinking of Grotius, Hobbes, and Locke as "building blocks of Western Imperialism,"²⁰⁶ its approach still has clear deficiencies. For one "its methodology does not always seem compatible with its self-proclaimed mission to write the *history* of political thought."²⁰⁷ Instead, it seems to be locked within the confines of philosophical study.²⁰⁸ What are lacking, claims Van Ittersum, are an awareness of historical context and an analysis of "the historical events that inspired or provoked the writings of early modern theorists and that these theories themselves hoped to influence."²⁰⁹ What she advocates is an analysis of the "interrelationship between politics and political

²⁰⁶ Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, xxxvii.

²⁰⁷ "If the Cambridge school is gradually broadening its scope ... its methodology does not always seem compatible with its self-proclaimed mission to write the history of political thought." Ibid. xl.

²⁰⁸ "remains preoccupied with the canon of Western philosophy." Ibid. xli. "Although the Cambridge School continues to maintain a refreshingly critical stance towards the canon of Western philosophy, it refuses to abandon the notion of a canon as such." Ibid. xlii.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. xliii.

theory,”²¹⁰ and this is what she herself sets out to do in *Profit and Principle*, which examines the relationship between Grotius’s legal theories and the Company’s enterprise and interests.

Positions

The point of departure for Van Ittersum is that Grotius’s legal theories were intrinsically bound to the interests of the Company. For its part, the VOC context was marked by the world of aggressive military and naval strategies in which the Republic was born,²¹¹ and run by capitalist directors who were themselves cynical and opportunistic.²¹² For all the sophistication of form and level of abstraction, Grotius’s thinking was part and parcel of this world. “Even though he conceptualised this material at a higher level of abstraction than anybody else,” writes Van Ittersum, “his theoretical concerns were always subject to the VOC’s political needs and commercial interests.”²¹³ When Grotius was bound by and committed to the interests of the Company in this way, his text must also be interpreted in that context: “Grotius did not philosophize for

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* xlili.

²¹¹ “The VOC itself was a product of the aggressive military and naval strategies of the Dutch Republic at the start of the seventeenth century.” *Ibid.* lii.

²¹² VOC directors: “hard-headed capitalists and opportunistic to the core.” *Ibid.* lii.

²¹³ *Ibid.* liv.

philosophy's sake. He wrote *De Jure Praedae* and published chapter 12 as *Mare Liberum* in order to safeguard the VOC's commercial interests and political needs.²¹⁴ In other words, Grotius's legal theories constituted a "key component of Western imperialism and colonisation in the early modern period."²¹⁵ His theories were thus not only contemporary with, but intrinsically built into and directly instrumental to the venture of early modern mercantile expansion: "Grotius' rights and contract theories were not just coterminous with the rise of global trading empires in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but made them possible in the first place."²¹⁶

It is a central proposition for Van Ittersum that once Grotius is identified as a Company spokesman and agent, his cynicism comes clearly to the fore. For example, *De Jure Praedae* was written in defence of Van Heemskerck's capture of the Portuguese ship *Santa Catarina* at the explicit request of the VOC directors.²¹⁷ Likewise attached to Company interests, and thus opportunistic, was Grotius's defence of "the

²¹⁴ Ibid. lxi.

²¹⁵ Ibid. lxi.

²¹⁶ Ibid. lxi

²¹⁷ Ibid. lv.

Black Legend,” which he used for all it was worth to legitimize Dutch privateering against the Iberian enemy.²¹⁸ Van Ittersum’s most prominent proposition about Grotius’s cynicism is however the nature of his contract theories, which she considers a kind of fraud by law.

Grotius’s treaty theory: Fraud by law

Grotius’s contract theory rested on the recognition of the local parties as legitimate legal subjects. Therefore, they were by natural law free to sign treaties with whomever they wished, but once a treaty had been signed, they were committed to keep their obligations by the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept). Thus, the VOC’s monopoly treaties “contained no escape clauses. Once signed, the latter (the local signatories) were obliged to ensure that their subjects sold their manufactures to the VOC in perpetuity.”²¹⁹ During the London conference in 1613 and 1615, in which Grotius negotiated for the Company, he systematically defended the right to take up arms to defend the monopoly treaties, even if it meant taking up arms against the local

²¹⁸ Ibid. lv.

²¹⁹ Ibid. xxii.

population.²²⁰ The trick here, holds Van Ittersum, is that Grotius does not bring the imbalance in strength into the reckoning. Because of its relative weakness of power, the Spice Islands in practice “had little choice but to renew their contracts with the VOC year after year. They simply lacked the military means to dislodge the Company from their countries. Grotius blatantly ignored these power differentials in his rights and contract theories.”²²¹

Grotius’s rights and contract theories served two purposes: To undermine Iberian claims to the extra-European world and to legitimize Dutch participation in the age-old trading systems of the Indian Ocean and the China Seas.²²² In the latter area, more specifically the Indonesian archipelago, the Company’s tactics and mode of operation were to lure or pressure local rulers into treaties that were beneficial to the Company. When the former came to realise that the treaties ran contrary to their own interests, the Company could defend them on Grotian principles by claiming that were entered into freely by autonomous subjects of law, and thus were legally binding and had to be observed.

²²⁰ Ibid. xxii.

²²¹ Ibid. lx-lxi.

²²² Ibid. lxi.

Summing up: Ittersum

Grotius is the “villain” in Van Ittersum’s story as he is the one who gave the Company the legal theory to justify their behaviour after the fact. In other words, he provided the opportunity to suppress local states by legal trickery. One assumption Van Ittersum shares with Andaya is that local people had an imperfect understanding of the implications of agreeing to treaties with the Company. But Van Ittersum’s emphasis is different. It is not the miscommunication in itself that is her point; it is the fraudulent way that the company manipulated partial understanding or misguided interpretations in its treaty practice. This point also contrasts with the approach of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tradition, as well as Somers’ view, in that Van Ittersum primarily analyses law in terms of power relations and as a means of extortion. When and where power relations were asymmetrical to the advantage of the Company, “law” could and did become a cynical instrument for achieving the Company’s ends.

Section 6: Summing up the historiography of VOC diplomacy

Five approaches to the understanding of the nature of seventeenth-century VOC diplomacy and the nature of its interactions in Asia have been identified above. The classical approach of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries recognised differences in conceptualisations and practice, but still assumed a functional understanding between the Company and its Asian partners. The “the system compatibility approach” represented by Alexandrowicz advocated both a level of compatibility in thinking about international law at the outset as well as cumulative cross-cultural understanding by increased interaction. Andaya heavily attacked this approach, and advocated a cultural embeddedness approach that emphasized conceptual incompatibility and structural miscommunication as typical of pre nineteenth century East-West state interaction. Somers’ “legal-pragmatic approach” may be regarded as a variant of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century approach, though it should be distinguished from the former by being more explicit about its emphasis on cultural differences. Van Ittersum for her part shares the preoccupation with law with both classical

historiography and Somers, but marks herself off by analysing law as primarily an instrument of power. The discussion between Paulusz and Arasaratnam marks no original positions on its own, but is primarily used to clarify the difference in positions between Andaya on the one hand and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography and Alexandrowicz on the other.

I propose that the approaches I have treated here, with the possible exception of Van Ittersum and with some modifications for Somers, “over-focus” on law as far as the nature of the Company’s diplomacy is concerned. By that I mean that they all seem to assume a direct and decisive impact of concepts of European international law on the Company’s diplomatic practice. I suggest not only that this was not the case, but that this misapprehension leads to a distortion of a relevant conceptualisation of Batavia’s diplomatic *practice* proper, by underplaying both its thoroughly pragmatic and case-oriented character and, not least, its dynamic nature.

There are some propositions in the above survey with which I particularly differ. I hold Andaya’s assumptions and propositions about the Eurocentric nature of VOC diplomacy to be anachronistic in that he seems to transfer nineteenth-century conceptualisations of treaty law to a

seventeenth-century world of commerce by treaty. This has in its turn implications for his propositions about the structural misunderstanding in communications between Makassar and the Company. I think Andaya wrongly rejects the reciprocal understanding there was and underrates the dynamics of the Company's understanding. I also object to the all-embracing pretensions that seem to be implied in Van Ittersum's propositions about the Company's cynical application of treaties. It may fit well in the smaller states in the Moluccas, but probably not in the Moluccas in general, and certainly not in the charter area as a whole. And, as a generalisation, it is contradicted by the instances of idealism that can be found in the Company treaties.

In the next chapter, I shall first analyse propositions about the nature of VOC diplomacy particularly as they come forth in Andaya's analysis of seventeenth-century VOC–Makassar diplomatic interaction, and then elaborate on my own propositions.

