



Toward the Fall of Cirebon: Political Crisis and the Negotiation of Protection in Cirebon–VOC Diplomatic Correspondence, 1680

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Abstract

This article examines Cirebon's incorporation into the hegemony of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC) in the period leading up to the Batavia–Cirebon Treaty of 7 January 1681. It takes as its primary sources the diplomatic correspondence exchanged between the rulers of Cirebon and the VOC in December 1680 to reconstruct the political dynamics preceding the treaty. The analysis focuses on correspondence involving Sultan Sepuh, Sultan Anom, and Prince Wangsakerta, as well as the responses of Governor-General Ryckloff van Goens and Director-General Cornelis Speelman. These letters reveal that the pressures confronting Cirebon stemmed not only from military threats and local insecurity but also from competing territorial claims, the intervention of regional powers, and tensions among Cirebon's own rulers. The VOC capitalized on this situation by offering protection while formulating provisions concerning the hierarchy of government, revenue administration, relations among the princes, and obligations of alliance. This article argues that Cirebon's transition into the VOC's sphere of hegemony resulted not simply from military defeat or direct conquest, but from an asymmetrical negotiation in which the need for protection became intertwined with constraints on political autonomy. Diplomatic correspondence served both as an instrument and as evidence of this process, revealing the strategies pursued by Cirebon's rulers, the VOC's language of political legitimacy, and the transformation of political relations toward an order increasingly subject to Company control.

Artikel ini mengkaji proses masuknya Cirebon ke dalam hegemoni Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) menjelang Perjanjian Batavia–Cirebon, 7 Januari 1681, dengan menempatkan surat-surat diplomatik di antara penguasa Cirebon dan VOC pada Desember 1680 sebagai sumber utama untuk merekonstruksi dinamika politik menjelang perjanjian tersebut. Analisis difokuskan pada korespondensi Sultan Sepuh, Sultan Anom, dan Pangeran Wangsakerta, serta jawaban Gubernur Jenderal Ryckloff van Goens dan Direktur Jenderal Cornelis Speelman. Surat-surat itu memperlihatkan bahwa tekanan terhadap Cirebon tidak hanya berasal dari ancaman militer dan gangguan keamanan lokal, tetapi juga dari persaingan klaim teritorial, intervensi kekuatan regional, dan ketegangan di antara para penguasa Cirebon sendiri. VOC memanfaatkan situasi tersebut dengan menawarkan perlindungan sekaligus merumuskan ketentuan mengenai hierarki pemerintahan, pengelolaan pendapatan,

hubungan antarpangeran, dan kewajiban persekutuan. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa peralihan Cirebon ke dalam hegemoni VOC bukan semata-mata akibat kekalahan militer atau penaklukan langsung, melainkan proses negosiasi asimetris ketika kebutuhan akan perlindungan bertaut dengan pembatasan otonomi politik. Surat diplomatik menjadi instrumen sekaligus bukti proses tersebut: mengungkap strategi para penguasa Cirebon, bahasa legitimasi VOC, dan pergeseran hubungan politik menuju tatanan yang semakin dikendalikan Kompeni.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Batavia–Cirebon Treaty of 7 January 1681 marked a significant turning point in the political relationship between the rulers of Cirebon and the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), particularly with regard to the status and relations of the two parties (Tjandrasasmita, 2009: 167). However, the historical significance of this treaty cannot be adequately understood if it is viewed merely as an isolated diplomatic act. Rather, it must be situated within a sequence of events that reveals the growing dependence of Cirebon’s rulers on the VOC, the expansion of Company intervention in internal governmental affairs, and changes in the ways in which the legitimacy of political authority was articulated and negotiated in the period leading up to early 1681.

Diplomatic letters recorded in the *Dagh-register gehouden int casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India*, commonly abbreviated as the *Dagh-Registers van ’t Casteel Batavia*, provide an entry point for examining this process from the perspective of contemporary actors. The correspondence, comprising five letters dated 1 December (two letters), 17 December (two letters), and 18 December 1680 (one letter), indicates that the challenges confronting Cirebon’s rulers included security disturbances in rural areas under their authority, disputes over territorial control, political claims advanced by external parties, and tensions in relations among the three rulers of Cirebon. At the same time, the VOC’s replies reveal the Company’s efforts to transform Cirebon’s requests for assistance into a foundation for establishing a more binding political relationship.

For example, a letter from Sultan Sepuh (Prince Martawijaya) complained about the actions of several Makassarese dignitaries who were alleged to have demanded money from villages within Cirebon’s territory under the threat of violence. He also reported that Galuh had been seized by the Demang of Galunggung. Meanwhile, a letter from Sultan Anom (Prince Kartawijaya) expressed concern about the activities of people from Galunggung, the circulation of claims that the Susuhunan of Mataram had

transferred the lands of Galuh and even Cirebon to that party, and his own decision to leave the matter to the Governor-General and Director-General on the grounds that Cirebon was under Company authority. These two letters, dated on the same day, demonstrate how security threats and territorial uncertainty were presented as grounds for requesting VOC intervention (*Dagh-register gehouden int casteel Batavia*, 1 December 1680).

Nevertheless, these letters should not be read simply as transparent factual accounts of the political situation. As official communications addressed to a party from which assistance was expected, they also constituted diplomatic acts. Complaints, declarations of loyalty, acknowledgements of a counterpart's status, and the delegation of decisions to the recipient formed part of a political language directed toward specific objectives. Accordingly, the letters must be analyzed not only in terms of what they explicitly stated but also in relation to the political relationships their authors sought to establish.

The VOC correspondence dated 17 December 1680, in turn, demonstrates that the Company did not merely accept the requests for protection previously submitted by Cirebon's rulers. The Governor-General and the Council of the Indies emphasized the importance of harmony among the three princes, established the principle of precedence for the eldest prince (Sultan Sepuh), prescribed arrangements for the appointment of a *syahbandar* (harbourmaster), directed relations with Banten and Susuhunan Amangkurat, and prepared draft treaty articles in Dutch and Malay to be signed and sworn to by the princes. The protection offered by the VOC was thus accompanied by an agenda of political and administrative reorganization that extended into Cirebon's internal affairs (*Dagh-register gehouden int casteel Batavia*, 1 January 1681).

In light of these issues, this article poses three critical questions for investigating the political dynamics of the period. First, how do the diplomatic letters of December 1680 document, in detail, the tensions and political circumstances that preceded the conclusion of the Batavia–Cirebon Treaty? Second, how did the VOC strategically transform the local rulers' need for protection into a formal mechanism for regulating and intervening in Cirebon's internal governance? Third, what are the status and evidentiary validity of these letters in reconstructing the historical process through which Cirebon was gradually drawn into the grip of VOC hegemony?

Addressing these three questions offers a means of illuminating the dynamics of early colonialism.

The central argument of this article is that Cirebon's transition into the sphere of VOC hegemony unfolded through the interaction of security crises, fragmented authority, the need for political legitimacy, and institutional intervention. In this context, diplomatic letters did not merely record the process; they also played an active role in shaping it. Through their correspondence, Cirebon's rulers articulated their needs and political claims, while the VOC established a basis for positioning itself as both protector and regulator of relations among the rulers. The developments immediately preceding 7 January 1681 should therefore be understood as part of the formation of an asymmetrical political order, rather than merely as the signing of a treaty.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Diplomatic Correspondence as Historical Sources

The primary sources for this article consist of letters recorded in the *Dagh-register gehouden int casteel Batavia* dated 1 and 18 December 1680, as well as letters dated 17 December 1680 that were entered by VOC clerks in the *Dagh-register gehouden int casteel Batavia* dated 1 January 1681. This corpus comprises a complaint from Sultan Sepuh (Prince Martawijaya), a letter from Sultan Anom (Prince Kartawijaya), a report from Prince Dipati (Tohpati), also known as Prince Wangsakerta, the response issued by Governor-General Ryckloff van Goens and the Council of the Indies, and a letter from Director-General Cornelis Speelman to the three rulers of Cirebon, which further reinforced van Goens's response.

The strength of these sources lies in their temporal proximity to the events under investigation and their capacity to reveal relationships among historical actors through official communication. The letters contain not only information about threats and disputes but also evidence of how the parties involved defined their respective positions, expressed their interests, and formulated their political obligations. Primary sources of this kind are therefore particularly valuable because of their high degree of authenticity (Garrahan, 1946: 103–113).

Nevertheless, colonial diplomatic documents cannot be treated as neutral records. In this regard, Gottschalk (1986: 46) cautions that temporal authenticity does not guarantee objectivity of content; primary sources must therefore still be subjected

to source criticism to assess their credibility and potential biases. The letters from Cirebon's rulers were addressed to a party from which assistance was expected. Consequently, their representations of threats, assertions of loyalty, and acknowledgements of VOC authority must be understood in the context of their diplomatic objectives. Similarly, VOC correspondence reflects the perspective of the colonial authorities, whose interests included legitimizing their role as protector, mediator, and regulator.

Another issue concerns the form in which the sources are available. The texts analyzed here are seventeenth-century Dutch translations of letters recorded in the VOC archives. Accordingly, terms such as protection, loyalty, authority, and alliance are interpreted with due attention to their narrative contexts. Without direct examination of the original manuscripts in Javanese, Dutch, or Malay (if such manuscripts can still be located) these terms cannot automatically be assumed to correspond precisely, in semantic terms, to the expressions used in the original texts.

2. Methods of Historical Analysis

This article employs the historical method, with particular emphasis on source criticism, contextual reading, and the analysis of diplomatic discourse. Source criticism focuses on identifying the authors and recipients of the letters, their dates, the circumstances of their communication, and the political interests that may have shaped their contents. This is an essential step in historical inquiry (Lohanda, 1998: 119). Contextual reading is conducted by comparing the letters written by Cirebon's rulers with the VOC's responses, thereby enabling a clearer identification of differences in emphasis and of the relationship between requests and responses.

Diplomatic discourse analysis is then used to examine the functions of expressions such as "father and mother," "the protection of the Company," "a virtuous ally," and "order" in government. These expressions are not understood merely as formulas of politeness but as elements of a political language through which relationships were structured, legitimacy was established, and obligations were articulated. Diplomatic language is thus not regarded as a neutral instrument of communication, but rather as a strategic means of shaping the image of a kingdom or country, establishing moral legitimacy, and regulating the international order.

This approach makes it possible to distinguish among three analytical layers. First, there are the facts stated in the documents, such as requests for protection and the drafting of treaty articles. Second, there are representations of interests, referring

to how each party portrayed threats, loyalty, and its own political position. Third, there is historical interpretation, which seeks to explain how these interactions contributed to the formation of VOC hegemony.

This distinction is important to ensure that statements in the letters are not automatically treated as independently verified facts. For example, reports concerning the actions of the Demang of Galunggung and his followers, or claims by the Sultanate of Banten over Cirebon, demonstrate that these issues were considered significant by contemporary actors. They do not, however, independently establish the accuracy of every detail of the events as narrated by the letter writers.

3. Hegemony as an Interpretive Framework

In this article, the term *hegemony* is used to describe a relationship in which a political power acquires the dominant capacity to influence decisions, constrain the available choices, and direct another party's system of government without necessarily replacing it through direct rule. This understanding is closely related to Robert O. Keohane's work on hegemonic stability and his book *After Hegemony* (Keohane, 1984), as well as to concepts of hegemony in the realist and neorealist traditions of international relations (Gilpin, 1981; Mearsheimer, 2001). These approaches are relevant insofar as they address global politics, indirect rule, and the constraints imposed on political choices.

This conception of hegemony helps explain the paradox evident in the diplomatic correspondence of December 1680. Although Cirebon's rulers continued to be formally recognized as legitimate kings and retained control over their respective territories and subjects, their sovereignty was gradually being eroded. The Dutch trading company, the VOC, began to intervene strategically by determining the framework governing relations among the rulers. In addition, the VOC established a rigid hierarchy, regulated the administration of local revenues, directed external relations, and prepared binding articles of alliance that the local rulers were required to sign.

Hegemony, therefore, is not understood as the immediate disappearance of all local authority. Rather, the concept refers to a transformation in the structure of political decision-making: local rulers continued to perform governmental functions, but their political room for manoeuvre became increasingly restricted by a power that controlled the provision of protection and established the rules governing their relations. Through systemic dependence, encompassing both military protection and

treaty-based regulation, local autonomy gradually risked being reduced to an extension of the authority of a new centre of power.

This framework also helps avoid two forms of oversimplification. The first is the assumption that Cirebon was entirely passive and merely a victim of VOC expansion. The second is the assumption that accepting protection was a wholly voluntary decision without consequences for political autonomy. The historical documents instead reveal a complex dynamic of interaction. On the one hand, Cirebon's rulers pursued active strategies of political survival to preserve their positions. On the other, the VOC strategically exploited this dependence to expand its influence. The relationship was therefore not unidirectional but constituted a form of political negotiation characterized by pressure, tactical manoeuvring, and pragmatic compromise in the pursuit of political survival and the preservation of power.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

1. Cirebon's Political Crisis and the Erosion of Its Capacity to Provide Protection in Late 1680

The analysis of diplomatic correspondence between Cirebon and the VOC in December 1680 indicates that Cirebon's incorporation into the sphere of VOC hegemony unfolded through the intersection of security crises, territorial disputes, internal conflicts, and the need for external protection. The correspondence of Sultan Sepuh (Prince Martawijaya) and Sultan Anom (Prince Kartawijaya), dated 1 December 1680, reveals that the challenges confronting Cirebon were not limited to the threat of open warfare but also encompassed the coercive collection of levies from rural inhabitants, territorial encroachment, and competition for political support. Meanwhile, Prince Wangsakerta's letter of 18 December 1680 demonstrates that the conflict with Galunggung remained an unresolved issue requiring intervention. Taken together, these documents identify the political crisis as a condition that intensified Cirebon's rulers' need for VOC intervention (Dagh-Register Batavia, 1 and 18 December 1680).

Sultan Sepuh's complaint concerning the collection of money under the threat of violence points to problems in the provision of protection for the population. According to the letter, villages had reportedly paid certain sums to groups of Makassarese who were affiliated with the VOC, while refusal to comply with their

demands was met with threats of violence. Nevertheless, the available sources are insufficient to establish the extent of this practice or to assess its impact on the entire population of Cirebon. What can be established is that Sultan Sepuh considered these actions serious enough to report them to the Governor-General in Batavia so that the Company could deal with the matter. The letter thus reveals both the ruler's perception of the threat and his use of diplomatic communication as a means of securing Batavia's attention and intervention.

The presence of a Makassarese military diaspora in the rural areas of Cirebon reflected the broader geopolitical dynamics of Java's coastal regions in the seventeenth century. From a historiographical perspective, this phenomenon was driven by security instability arising from the infiltration of Bantenese factions led by figures with connections across regional boundaries, including Prince Purbaya, Prince Aria Kidul, and Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari. Faced with these threats, Cirebon's authorities sought the VOC's approval and protection. The Company subsequently responded pragmatically by mobilizing mercenary troops (*huurtroepen*) from South Sulawesi. The involvement of military officers such as Karaeng Bisei, Karaeng Panaragan, Daeng Sitolju, and Daeng Mangimba underscores the tactical incorporation of conquered military groups into the Company's military structure in the aftermath of the Treaty of Bongaya. These communities were subsequently deployed as instruments of repression against Bantenese guerrilla movements operating from the interior.

On the opposing side, Prince Aria Kidul emerged as a central figure who combined several strategic roles in the southern part of Cirebon. A former harbourmaster of Banten (Rantoandro, 1998), he organized extensive and disruptive asymmetric resistance that posed difficulties not only for the VOC but also for local leaders, including Cirebon's rulers. In its diplomatic documents, the VOC disparagingly labelled his forces as a criminal band. This stigmatization was formally incorporated into a clause of the Treaty of 7 January 1681 through the term "*Penyamun Kidul*" (Tendi, 2020). This narrative reduction formed part of the VOC's information-warfare strategy to delegitimize the political authority of the Bantenese–Cirebonese resistance.

Meanwhile, the disputes over Galuh and Galunggung reveal another dimension of the crisis. Prince Kartawijaya reported efforts by the Galunggung side to recruit followers, accumulate weapons, and advance claims associated with an alleged transfer of land by the Susuhunan of Mataram. His younger brother, Wangsakerta, subsequently asserted Cirebon's ancestral claims to certain territories and

recommended that the VOC subdue Galunggung before its power grew further. These two letters indicate that territorial control was closely connected to the ability to mobilize inhabitants, build armed forces, and secure legitimacy from a higher authority. However, because this information originated from parties with a vested interest in confronting Galunggung, claims about the opposing side's actions and intentions must be treated as diplomatic reports requiring further verification.

A further finding is that Cirebon's rulers had not entirely lost their capacity to act in response to the crisis. Sultan Sepuh submitted a complaint, Prince Kartawijaya referred the resolution of the territorial dispute to the Governor-General and Director-General, while Prince Wangsakerta advanced territorial claims and proposed action against Galunggung. These differences in emphasis indicate that Cirebon's rulers used correspondence to articulate related but not necessarily identical interests. They were not merely recipients of VOC policy; they were also diplomatic actors seeking to influence the decisions of a power possessing greater resources.

2. VOC Protection and the Expansion of Authority over Cirebon's Government

The letter from Governor-General Ryckloff van Goens and the Council of the Indies, dated 17 December 1680, demonstrates that the VOC's response extended beyond the provision of security assistance. The Company linked protection to demands for unity among the princes, the reorganization of governmental hierarchy, the administration of revenue, restrictions on external intervention, and the drafting of treaty articles. This finding indicates that protection functioned as an instrument of political relations that could develop into a basis for regulating government. The VOC continued to recognize Cirebon's rulers, together with their respective territories and subjects, while simultaneously seeking to establish the principles that would govern the exercise of their authority (*Dagh-register gehouden int casteel Batavia*, 1 January 1681).

In internal affairs, the VOC recommended that Sultan Sepuh, as the eldest prince, occupy the leading position in the administration of government, while the other two princes were to comply with the prescribed arrangements. The regulation of the princes' respective ranks, which is often associated with *perbawa*, or a form of prestige and authority crucial to the legitimacy and standing of each royal family in the eyes of coastal Cirebon's population (Tendi, 2023), reflects a colonial strategy of indirect rule. This strategy employed traditional feudal structures to minimize social friction while reducing the costs of colonial administration. The hierarchical

precedence accorded to Sultan Sepuh was intended to establish broader political stability, which was regarded as an essential precondition for the smooth operation of VOC economic exploitation in the coastal region.

At the same time, the VOC continued to recognize each Cirebonese prince's possession of the lands and subjects under his control. This arrangement reveals two simultaneous tendencies: the preservation of the existing distribution of local power and the reinforcement of a hierarchy among the rulers. The VOC did not propose abolishing the entire existing power structure. Instead, it sought to reorganize relations among the princes to make them more orderly and predictable (Bremen, 2014). From a sociopolitical perspective, this controlled fragmentation of authority served to prevent the consolidation of local power that might otherwise have generated collective resistance to the Company. Through this dual approach, the VOC reshaped Cirebon's geopolitical order into a satellite system subject to European hegemonic control without dismantling the cultural foundations of indigenous patronage.

The proposed regulation of the *syahbandar* (harbourmaster) and public revenue demonstrates that the VOC's agenda also extended to administration and governmental resources. The letter of 17 December proposed that a single harbourmaster be appointed by the eldest prince, with the knowledge of the other two princes, alongside a mechanism for supervising the administration of revenue. This provision made revenue administration part of the broader political question. Nevertheless, the letter establishes only that such regulatory arrangements were proposed; it does not demonstrate their effective implementation or the VOC's direct control over all Cirebonese revenue.

In external affairs, the VOC stated that it had asked Banten to cease intervening in the various affairs of Cirebon's population. The Company also linked the protection of Cirebon to the position of Susuhunan Amangkurat. This finding demonstrates that Cirebon's political circumstances were situated within a regional network of relations involving Batavia, Banten, and Mataram. VOC protection simultaneously provided a basis for restricting the scope of intervention by rival powers. However, the Company's statements concerning Cirebon's rights and Banten's claims must be read as elements of its own political argumentation, rather than as neutral determinations of the historical validity of the respective claims.

3. Institutionalizing Asymmetrical Relations through Treaties and Material Diplomacy

The letters from the Governor-General and the Council of the Indies, together with Cornelis Speelman's letter of 17 December 1680, indicate that the relationship of protection was intended to be institutionalized through treaty articles. Jacob van Dyck was dispatched to Cirebon carrying provisions drafted in Dutch and Malay, which were intended to be signed and sworn to by Cirebon's rulers and subsequently by the Susuhunan. These preparations reveal a transition from diplomatic communication toward the establishment of formal obligations. Nevertheless, the correspondence describing the proposed treaty cannot serve as a substitute for the actual treaty text, particularly when determining whether the proposed provisions corresponded to the outcome of the negotiations on 7 January 1681.

Speelman reinforced this policy direction by emphasizing the obligations of Cirebon's rulers to maintain unity, follow VOC advice, and demonstrate loyalty in return for the assistance they had received. References to expenditure, generosity, and gratitude indicate that political obligations were constructed not solely through formal provisions but also through moral pressure. The VOC portrayed obedience as the appropriate conduct of an ally who had received assistance. Speelman's letter thus reinforced the normative dimension of the relationship being established.

The exchange of gifts formed a material component of the diplomatic process between Cirebon and Batavia. Cirebon's rulers sent rice, livestock, and other goods, while VOC officials provided textiles, weapons, and various commodities to each prince. The individual recording of gifts indicates that diplomatic relations took account of the status of each recipient. Nevertheless, differences in the types and quantities of gifts do not, in themselves, establish a particular degree of political subordination. The significance of these exchanges must be interpreted more carefully in relation to the language of friendship, obligation, and loyalty found in the same correspondence.

The dispatch of commissioners as official VOC representatives or envoys, the preparation of a treaty, the exchange of valuable gifts, and the possibility of stationing troops demonstrate the use of multiple instruments to strengthen VOC–Cirebon relations. However, the available sources do not establish that VOC troops had actually been stationed in Cirebon as a result of the letter of 17 December. Rather, the document indicates that the deployment of troops was still under consideration. Distinguishing

between plans, decisions, and implementation is an important methodological finding, as it prevents conclusions from exceeding the available evidence. Nevertheless, a number of Company officers and troops had already been deployed to the Cirebon region to address the movements of Bantenese forces.

4. Synthesis of the Research Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that December 1680 marked a phase of intensifying political relations between Cirebon and the VOC. The letters from the beginning of the month demonstrate the use of diplomacy to submit complaints and seek the resolution of disputes, whereas the correspondence from the middle of the month reveals the VOC's efforts to link protection with governmental reorganization and contractual obligations. The correspondence dated 18 December shows that the dispute involving the Demang of Galunggung remained a critical concern for Cirebon's rulers. At the same time, preparations for a treaty and the drafting of contractual provisions indicate that political relations were being directed toward a more formalized arrangement.

These findings support the use of the concept of hegemony to explain the transformation of power relations, provided that hegemony is not equated with the complete abolition of local government. The available evidence indicates that Cirebon's princes continued to be recognized as autonomous and independent rulers, but their authority was increasingly situated within a framework of protection, unity, administrative oversight, and obligations toward the VOC. A more detailed assessment of the changes in authority legally established on 7 January 1681, however, requires direct examination of the treaty text.

Discussion

1. From a Security Crisis to Political Dependence

Cirebon's political crisis in 1680 should be understood not merely as a series of security disturbances caused by the movements of forces associated with the Sultanate of Banten, but also as a situation that transformed the ways in which its rulers exercised and negotiated their authority. Complaints concerning coercive levies, threats of violence, and the seizure of Galuh reveal problems that affected the rulers' capacity to protect the population and maintain territorial control. By bringing these issues to the VOC's attention, Cirebon's rulers used diplomatic channels to seek

support from a power they regarded as better equipped to influence regional affairs and resolve the problems they faced.

This relationship does not necessarily mean that Cirebon's rulers had lost all their authority. On the contrary, their letters demonstrate that local political agency remained active through the submission of complaints, the formulation of claims, and the proposal of specific measures. Nevertheless, the need to request decisions or assistance from Batavia indicates that the resolution of certain problems was becoming increasingly dependent on an external party. The political transformation is evident here: it involved not simply the disappearance of local authority, but the growing dependence of its exercise on relations with the VOC.

A distinction must also be drawn between dependence as a short-term strategy and its structural consequences. For Cirebon's rulers, requesting assistance could constitute a rational response to territorial threats and a means of preserving their dynastic positions. However, when assistance was accompanied by demands concerning government, external relations, and loyalty, the decision to seek protection also created opportunities for the assisting party to impose conditions. Thus, actions intended to strengthen local authority could simultaneously increase the influence of the power from which assistance was sought.

This interpretation avoids two forms of oversimplification. First, it would be inaccurate to portray Cirebon's rulers as entirely passive in the face of VOC expansion. Second, their diplomatic agency should not be taken as evidence that the relationship was one of equals. The correspondence demonstrates that both parties engaged in action and negotiation, but the VOC's capacity to provide assistance, formulate regulations, and dispatch commissioners created an imbalance in resources and in the ability to determine the political agenda.

2. Diplomatic Correspondence as Both Historical Evidence and Political Action

One of the principal historiographical implications of this study is the need to read diplomatic correspondence both as a source of information and as a form of political action. Sultan Sepuh's letter, for example, reported the collection of levies and acts of violence, but it also directed the Governor-General's attention toward problems requiring a response. Prince Kartawijaya's letter did not merely report threats allegedly posed by the Demang of Galunggung; it also placed the resolution of these problems within the sphere of authority exercised by the VOC. Similarly, Wangsakerta

linked territorial claims over particular areas to a recommendation for decisive action against parties considered a threat to Cirebon.

This approach requires a distinction between what the documents explicitly state and what historians can reasonably infer from them. The fact that Kartawijaya reported an alleged transfer of land by the Susuhunan of Mataram to the leader of Galunggung is a textual fact. However, the validity of the alleged transfer cannot be established solely on the basis of Kartawijaya's letter. Likewise, Wangsakerta's assertion that Galunggung refused to acknowledge the authority of the Susuhunan and the Governor-General reveals how Galunggung was represented in the correspondence, but it does not prove that all groups in the region held a uniform position.

The same principles of source criticism must be applied to VOC correspondence. The Company's assertion that it had freed Cirebon from disturbances caused by raiders and incurred substantial expenses to facilitate the resolution of its rulers' military difficulties formed part of the VOC's own account of its role. This statement is significant because it reveals the moral justification the Company employed to demand loyalty. Nevertheless, it cannot automatically be accepted as an objective assessment of the effects of VOC protection. In other words, diplomatic language did not merely record political relations; it also helped shape how those relations were understood and legitimized.

Comparing Cirebon's letters with those of the VOC enables researchers to identify the intersection of two sets of interests. Cirebon's rulers emphasized threats and the need for their resolution, whereas the VOC linked protection to unity, compliance, and governmental regulation. This convergence does not demonstrate that the two parties pursued identical objectives. On the contrary, differences in their objectives and resources help explain how a relationship based on protection could develop into an asymmetrical political relationship.

3. Protection as a Mechanism for the Formation of Hegemony

The concept of hegemony is useful for understanding how political influence can expand without the direct abolition of local rulers. In Cirebon's case, the VOC continued to recognize the existence of the three princes (*Ratu Katiga Sanak*), together with the territories and populations under their respective authority. However, this recognition was accompanied by proposals concerning which prince should lead, how internal disputes should be resolved, how revenues should be administered, and how

relations with other powers should be conducted. The continued existence of local institutions, therefore, did not preclude the expansion of external domination.

This mechanism is clearly visible in the letter of 17 December 1680. The VOC linked protection to demands that the princes maintain unity and comply with the provisions to be delivered by Jacob van Dyck, the Company's envoy. The assistance already provided was invoked as a justification for expecting continued loyalty. In Speelman's letter, this relationship was reinforced through the language of moral obligation, particularly the notion that recipients of assistance should remember the services rendered and the expenses incurred by those who provided it. Protection was thus presented not as a temporary measure but as the foundation of a longer-term political relationship.

Nevertheless, hegemony in this context should not be understood as a fully established condition by December 1680. The correspondence reveals an agenda, a set of demands, and preparations for institutional arrangements, rather than the complete outcome of their implementation. The expression *the process toward hegemony* is therefore more appropriate than the assertion that all Cirebonese authority had already passed into VOC hands when these letters were written. This concept makes it possible to analyze gradual political change without assuming that the Company's plans were invariably implemented as intended.

Within the limits of the available evidence, hegemony can be operationalized through three indicators: the VOC's ability to determine the agenda for resolving the crisis, the Company's involvement in formulating governmental regulations, and its efforts to bind Cirebon's rulers through formal and moral obligations. All three indicators are visible in the December correspondence. However, assessing the extent to which each mechanism succeeded requires additional sources, particularly the treaty text and subsequent correspondence.

4. The Reorganization of Hierarchy and the Limits of Local Governmental Autonomy

The provisions concerning the eldest prince, Sultan Sepuh, demonstrate that VOC intervention was directed not only at external threats but also at Cirebon's internal governmental structure. The recommendation that the eldest prince assume the leading position, while the other two princes followed the prescribed arrangements, represented an effort to limit the potential for disputes over the organization of government. On the one hand, such an arrangement could help reduce

uncertainty and prevent struggles over authority. On the other, the VOC's endorsement of this hierarchy positioned the Company as an actor involved in determining the structure of internal political order.

The same principle applied to the regulation of the *syahbandar* (harbourmaster). Provisions concerning the appointment of a single harbourmaster, the princes' consent, and the supervision of revenue indicate that resource governance was regarded as an issue requiring regulation to maintain orderly government. Public revenue and customs duties were not merely technical matters, since both were connected to the rulers' ability to finance their administration and sustain their political influence. Consequently, proposals concerning revenue administration affected a fundamental component of local political capacity.

Nevertheless, intervention in the formulation of regulations must be distinguished from the direct takeover of administration. The letter of 17 December establishes that the VOC proposed specific mechanisms, but it provides insufficient information about the extent of their implementation, the princes' compliance, or the results of revenue supervision after the treaty. Without such evidence, it would be inappropriate to conclude that the VOC had assumed control over Cirebon's entire fiscal administration as early as December 1680.

Changes in autonomy should therefore be analyzed through more specific questions: which areas of authority were regulated, who formulated the provisions, how were decisions implemented, and to what extent could local rulers continue to interpret or negotiate them? This approach is more adequate than treating the loss of sovereignty as an overarching conclusion without explaining the mechanisms through which it occurred.

5. Regional Diplomacy: The VOC, Banten, and Susuhunan Amangkurat

Relations between Cirebon and the VOC cannot be separated from the broader regional configuration of power. The letter of 17 December 1680 connected the protection of Cirebon with opposition to Bantenese interference and with the position of Susuhunan Amangkurat of Mataram. In the letter, the VOC stated that it had asked Banten not to interfere in affairs taking place within Cirebon's territory. This statement demonstrates how the Company used the provision of protection to assert its position in relation to competing powers.

However, the VOC's claims concerning Cirebon's rights should not be treated as a neutral resolution of competing claims to political legitimacy. The letter represents

the position of a party with a vested interest in maintaining its influence. Similarly, reports of Banten's claims based on kinship ties are insufficient to reconstruct the full historical basis of Banten's demands. Further research should compare VOC correspondence with sources from Banten and other relevant materials to clarify how each party defined genealogical relationships, territorial rights, and political authority.

The position of Susuhunan Amangkurat of the Sultanate of Mataram adds another dimension to this relationship. The VOC connected the political arrangements for Cirebon with Amangkurat's restoration to the throne and recommended that a Cirebonese prince convey his respects to the Susuhunan in recognition of that restoration. This indicates that the Company did not always seek to replace pre-existing sources of political legitimacy. Instead, the VOC could strengthen its influence by linking its own agenda to political authorities that continued to be recognized by local rulers.

Nevertheless, the available documents are insufficient to determine precisely how authority was divided between the VOC and the Susuhunan of Mataram in the implementation of the treaty. The tripartite relationship among Cirebon, the VOC, and Mataram should therefore be understood as a political framework in the process of formation, rather than as a structure whose entire operational mechanism has already been established by the evidence. Examination of the treaty text and subsequent correspondence is necessary to determine how this relationship functioned in practice and whether differences emerged between formal provisions and political practice.

6. Gifts, Commissioners, and Diplomacy as Material Practice

The exchange of gifts demonstrates that diplomacy in the late seventeenth century was conducted not only through letters and treaties but also through the circulation of material goods. Gifts from Cirebon to VOC officials, together with reciprocal gifts from the Company, affirmed the existence of reciprocal relations enacted through material practices. The lists of goods assigned to individual princes also indicate that relations with the VOC were structured with consideration for the status of each recipient.

Nevertheless, the relationship between gift exchange and political hierarchy should not be assumed automatically. Differences in the quantity or type of goods may have reflected variations in status, diplomatic function, or other considerations that the documents do not fully explain. Accordingly, gift lists are more reliable as evidence

of differentiation in diplomatic practice than as a direct measure of the degree of subordination of each prince.

The role of Jacob van Dyck also demonstrates that diplomacy required intermediaries capable of explaining and facilitating the implementation of provisions directly. The commissioner was expected to bring the treaty articles to Cirebon and explain them to its rulers. The possibility of deploying troops, if considered necessary, further indicates that diplomatic engagement could be linked to the VOC's material presence. However, because the letter refers to troop deployment as a possibility, the existence of a garrison cannot be inferred from this document alone.

Material and institutional diplomacy should therefore be analyzed as interconnected elements. Gifts helped sustain reciprocal relations, commissioners linked decisions made in Batavia to local negotiations, and the proposed treaty was intended to establish more formal obligations. Taken together, these mechanisms demonstrate the VOC's efforts to develop a more regulated relationship with Cirebon's rulers, although the effectiveness of these efforts cannot be established from the available correspondence alone.

7. Toward the Batavia–Cirebon Treaty of 7 January 1681

The sequence of letters dated 1, 17, and 18 December 1680 demonstrates that preparations for the treaty took place against the background of a political crisis that had already developed. At the beginning of the month, Cirebon's rulers focused on security threats and territorial disputes. By the middle of the month, the VOC's response included proposals for governmental regulation, restrictions on external interference, and preparations for a formal contract. Wangsakerta's letter of 18 December indicates that the Galunggung dispute remained part of Cirebon's political agenda. December 1680 can therefore be understood as a phase of intensified relations and the institutionalization of plans for political reorganization.

The date 7 January 1681 constitutes an important chronological boundary for this study because it is associated with the conclusion of the Batavia–Cirebon Treaty, regarded here as the first formal treaty between VOC officials and Cirebon's rulers. However, if the treaty text is not examined directly, the analysis can explain only the context and preparations that preceded it. The letter of 17 December alone cannot establish whether all the provisions proposed by the VOC were subsequently accepted without modification, renegotiated, or implemented with certain adjustments.

On this basis, the term “the fall of Cirebon” should be used analytically rather than merely as a label for an event. If “*fall*” is understood to mean direct military conquest and the abolition of local government, the December correspondence is insufficient to prove that such a process occurred. However, if the term refers to the growing dominance of an external power over political decision-making, the available correspondence reveals, directly or indirectly, several relevant early mechanisms associated with the proposed treaty: requests for protection, demands for loyalty and compliance, the regulation of political hierarchy and rank, oversight of revenue generation, and the preparation of a formal contract.

The more precise formulation, therefore, is that Cirebon was moving toward a political order increasingly shaped by the VOC. This formulation preserves the historical significance of the Batavia–Cirebon Treaty without assuming that all changes in authority had been completed before the treaty’s provisions and implementation were examined. Analysis of the subsequent treaty text is an essential next step in determining more precisely which areas of authority were regulated and what consequences these arrangements had for Cirebon’s rulers.

8. Comparison with Previous Scholarship and Historiographical Contributions

The corpus analyzed here provides a basis for interpreting Cirebon–VOC relations through diplomatic correspondence rather than solely through a chronology of political events or conclusions about conquest. However, a systematic comparison with previous scholarship cannot yet be undertaken on the basis of the documents presented alone, because the discussion does not identify specific historiographical studies that can be examined and compared directly. Accordingly, the contribution of this study should provisionally be formulated in terms of the analytical findings emerging from the source material, rather than as a claim that previous historiography has entirely neglected this dimension.

The first contribution is its emphasis on the relationship between local complaints and the expansion of the VOC’s political agenda. Cirebon’s letters demonstrate that its rulers invoked security threats and territorial disputes as grounds for requesting assistance. The VOC’s responses subsequently broadened the discussion from resolving immediate threats to regulating government. This transition helps explain the mechanism through which a local crisis became connected to the formation of an asymmetrical political relationship.

The second contribution is the distinction between recognition of local rulers and restrictions on the exercise of their authority. The VOC's recognition of the three princes, together with their lands and subjects, did not preclude intervention in governmental hierarchy and revenue administration. The continued existence of local institutions therefore cannot automatically be equated with complete political independence. At the same time, planned interventions should not be treated as evidence of comprehensive control without proof of their implementation.

The third contribution is the treatment of correspondence as diplomatic action. The letters were not merely sources of information about threats and disputes; they also served as instruments for establishing legitimacy, requesting intervention, advancing claims, and demanding loyalty. Such an approach creates opportunities for historical reconstruction that takes account of Cirebon's rulers as political agents while also recognizing the unequal distribution of resources that constrained their choices.

To situate these findings more firmly within the historiography, the final manuscript should compare them with previous studies on Cirebon's political history, VOC expansion in Java, VOC–Mataram relations, and the diplomacy of coastal kingdoms. Such comparisons should explicitly identify points of agreement and disagreement, as well as the evidence supporting any revision of previous interpretations. Without this stage, claims of originality should remain limited to contributions demonstrable from the source corpus.

9. Research Limitations and Directions for Further Study

This study has several limitations that affect the scope of its conclusions. First, the sources used primarily represent elite communication and VOC administration. The perspectives of villagers reportedly subjected to coercive levies, groups identified with the Demang of Galunggung, and local officials outside the immediate circle of Cirebon's princes are not directly available. Consequently, the reconstruction of social experiences and popular responses remains indirect and requires further investigation.

Second, reports concerning Galunggung, Banten's claims, and the negative actions attributed to Makassarese troops and dignitaries cannot yet be independently verified on the basis of the corpus used here. Third, the analyzed texts are translations, meaning that political terminology and diplomatic formulas require further examination against the original-language manuscripts. Fourth, correspondence

concerning the proposed treaty is insufficient to establish whether the VOC's proposals corresponded to the final provisions of the Batavia–Cirebon Treaty of 7 January 1681.

Future research should therefore examine the original letters in the *Dagh-register gehouden int casteel Batavia* and compare them with the treaty text, its appendices, and correspondence produced after its signing. Sources from Banten, Mataram, and Cirebon are also needed to test territorial claims and explain how each party understood protection, loyalty, and legitimacy. Where possible, research should trace the implementation of regulations concerning princely hierarchy, the *syahbandar*, and public revenue after the treaty.

These steps would enable the analysis to move beyond reconstructing diplomatic plans and arguments toward a more comprehensive explanation of how power was exercised in practice. This is essential to ensure that conclusions about VOC hegemony are based not only on treaty language or official statements but also on evidence of changes in governmental practice and in the scope of action available to Cirebon's rulers.

10. Synthesis of the Discussion

This discussion demonstrates that the process leading toward VOC hegemony in Cirebon in 1680–1681 can be understood as a transformation of power relations shaped by the interaction of the need for protection, elite diplomacy, and efforts to reorganize government. From a historical-sociological perspective, these dynamics reflect a shift in the political structure from autonomous sovereignty toward colonial dependence. Cirebon's rulers continued to engage in diplomatic action to defend their claims and positions, using networks of correspondence to sustain their internal legitimacy. However, their requests for assistance created opportunities for the VOC to expand its role from that of a provider of support to that of an authority formulating the principles governing political relations. This asymmetry was formalized through a treaty that reduced the authority of traditional rulers to little more than an extension of the Company's administrative apparatus.

Protection, therefore, cannot be separated from questions of political authority. VOC protection inherently contributed to the restructuring of local power relations. Colonial intervention through the regulation of revenue, the classification and ranking of princes, and the drafting of a political treaty became legal instruments for shifting power relations toward an asymmetrical and subordinating arrangement. This initial phase reflected the formal articulation of efforts to dismantle indigenous sovereignty.

However, assessing the extent and empirical dynamics of the redistribution of authority among Cirebon's rulers requires an in-depth comparative historical analysis of the multilateral treaty text and contemporary post-treaty archival sources to establish how restrictions on political power operated in practice.

The most important conclusion is that "the fall of Cirebon" is more productively treated as a historical problem to be explained than as an assumption that precedes analysis. The correspondence of December 1680 reveals a process in which local political crises, the strategies of Cirebon's rulers, and VOC interests converged within an unequal relationship. The treaty of 7 January 1681 marked a significant turning point in this process, but its legal and political significance must be established through analysis of the treaty text and evidence of its implementation.

11. Appendix 1 (Primary Sources)

Figure 1. Letter from Sultan Sepuh I Syamsuddin

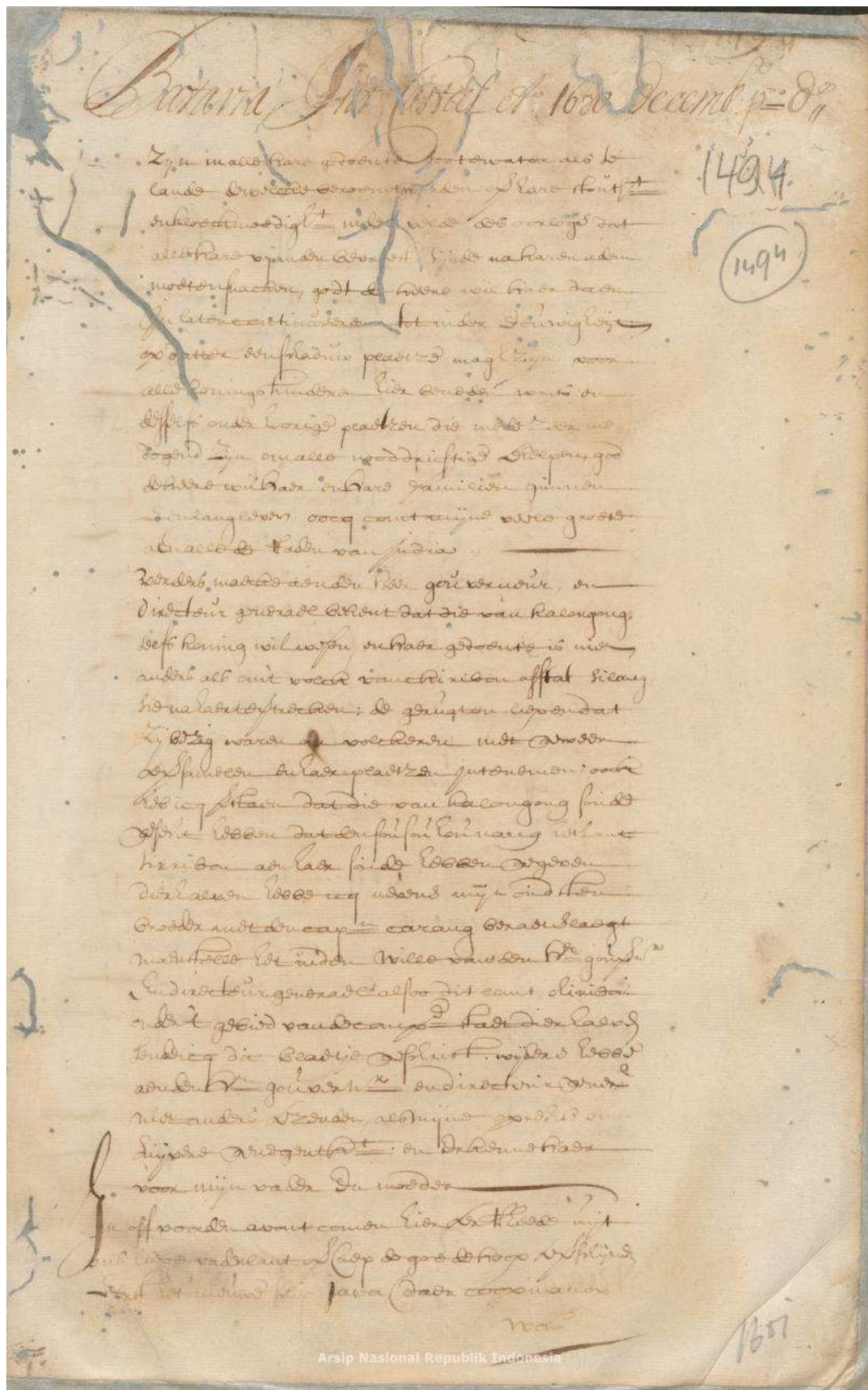


Figure 2. Letter from Sultan Anom I Badruddin

Source: ANRI (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia)

Source: ANRI (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia)

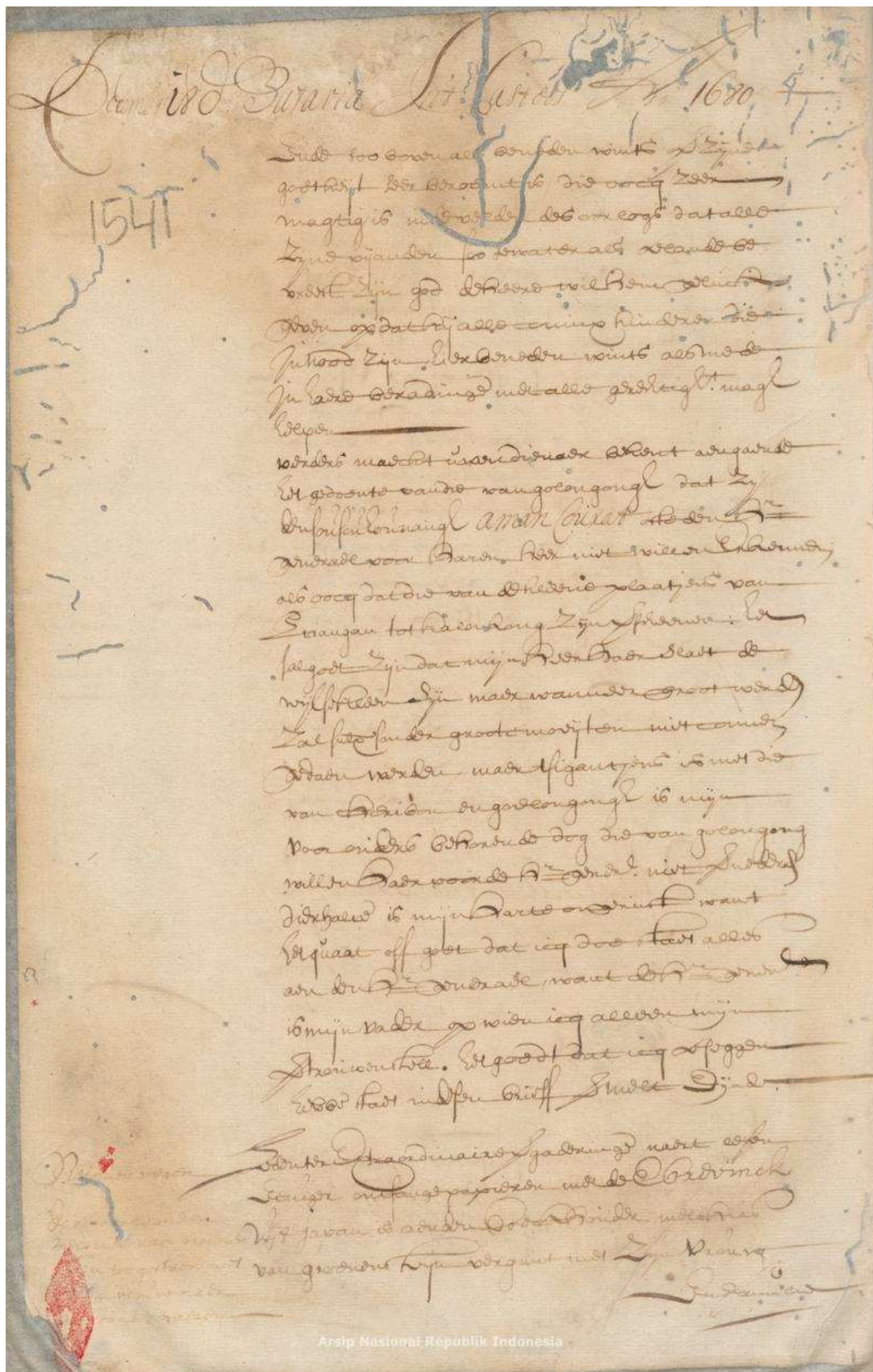


Figure 4. Bagian Akhir Surat Pangeran Dipati (Wangsakerta)

Source: ANRI (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia)

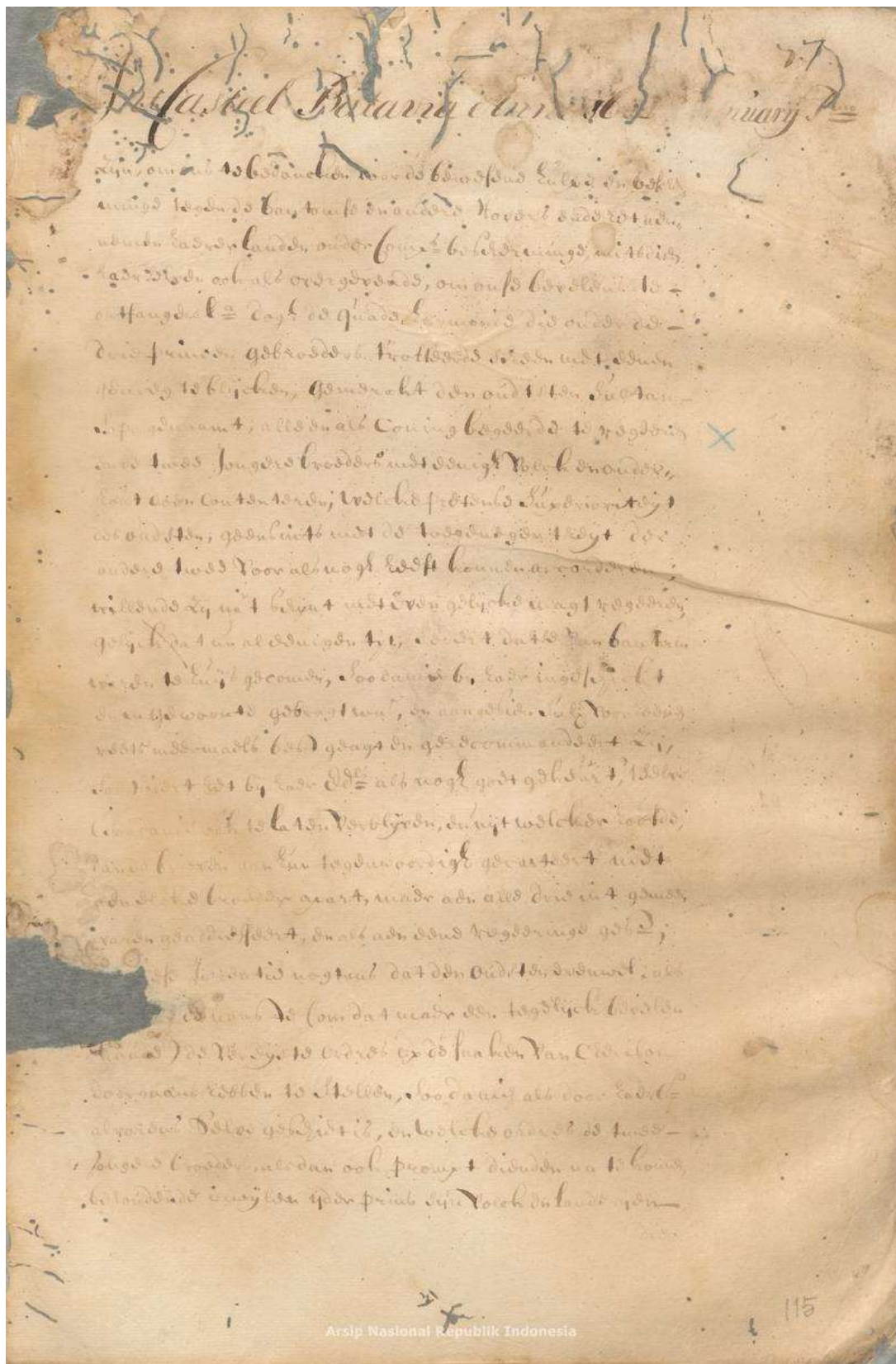


Figure 5. Opening Section of the Letter from VOC Governor-General Ryckloff van Goens to Cirebon

Source: ANRI (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia)

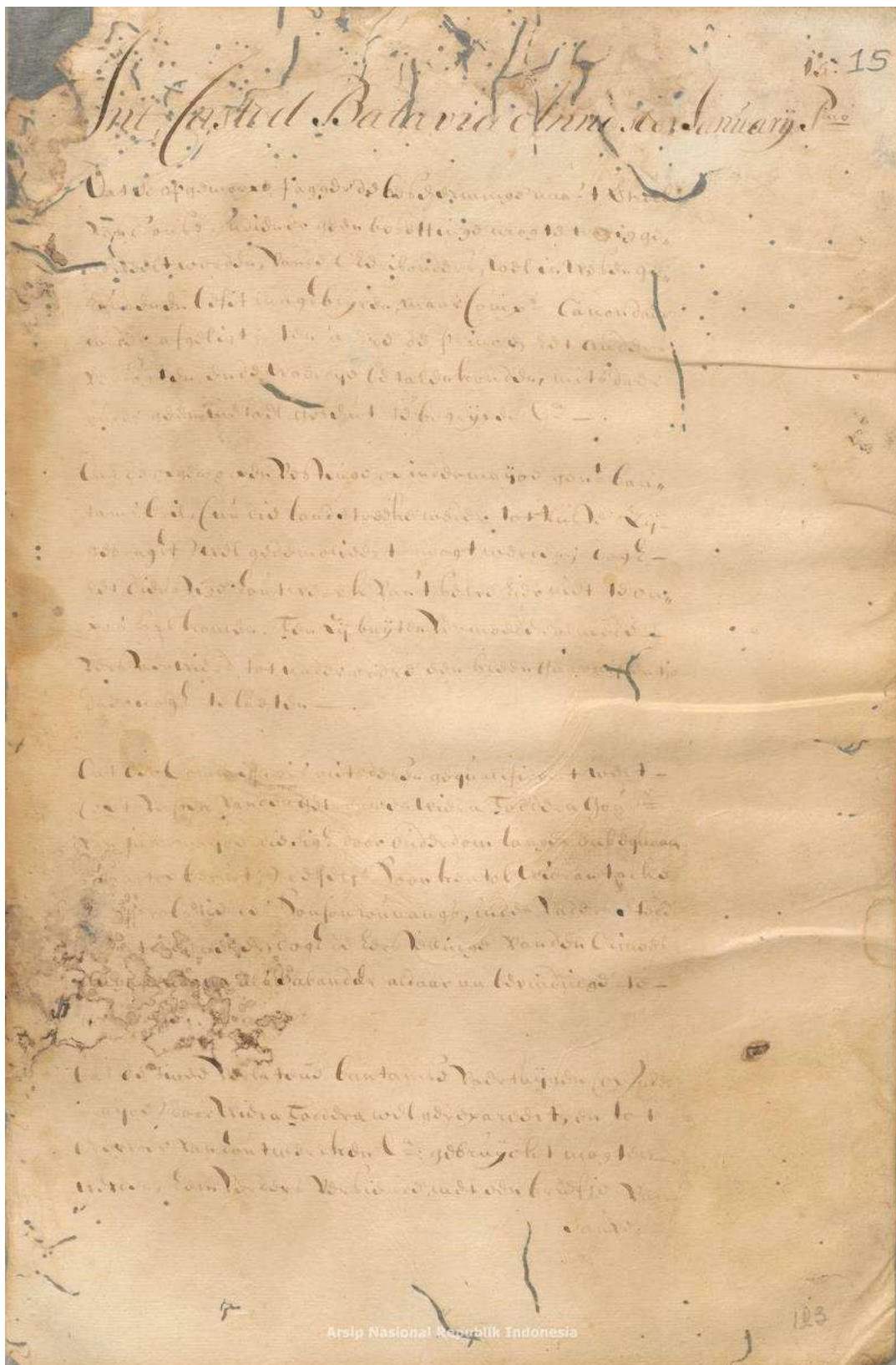


Figure 6. Opening Section of the Letter from VOC Director-General Cornelis Speelman VOC to Cirebon

Source: ANRI (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia)

12. Appendix 2 (Archival Transcript of Primary Source)

First Missive

1 December 1680.

Volgt nu de translaetmissive, door den ouden Sultan Sopo uyt Sirribon aen Haer Ed. geschreven.

Desen brieff van den ouden Sultan tot Chiribon komt aen den Heer Gouverneur Generael, den Heer Admirael en alle de Raaden van India, aen wien ick bekent maecke dat UEd. lant Chiribon nu door de volckeren van Crain Bisse, Crain Panaragan, Dain Sitoudjon en Dain Mangimba verdestrueert werd. Zy hebben na de dorpen gezonden, om van yder plaetse gelt af te eysschen en hebben van den een 50, den anderen 60 en den derden 40 rds. genoten, en die sulx niet en wilden geven wierden gedoot, geslagen en geweld aengedaen. Dierhalven, indien sulx aen den Heer Generaal niet bekent en maeckte, soude bevreest syn. Nog geve aen den Heer Generaal te konnen dat het dorpje Galo, hetwelck onder Chirribon heeft gestaen, nu door de volckeren van Goelengon is genomen. Dit staet nu in de beradinge van mynheer en alle myn seggen is in desen brieff vermeldt.

Second Missive

1 December 1680.

Volgt noch de translaetmissive, door den jongen off tweeden Sultan Carty Wyaya uyt Chirribon aen Haer Ed.

Desen brieff uyt een suyvere oprechte genegentheyt vertelt met veele groete van den jongen Sultan tot Chirribon, die sig overgeeft aen God en de E. Comp., comt aen den Heer Gouverneur Generael Rykloff van Goens en den Heer Directeur Generael Cornelis Speelman, die in grooetheyt en staet verheven ende seer wys en verstandig zyn in alle hare gedoente, soo te water als te lande, dewelcke beroemt werden over hare stoutheyt en kloeckmoedigheyt in den velde des oorlogs, dat alle hare vyanden bevreest synde na haren adem moeten snacken. Godt de Heere wil haer daerin laten continueeren tot in der eeuwigheyt, opdatter een schaduwplaetze magh syn voor alle koningskinderen hier beneden wints en desselfs onderhoorige plaetzen; die mede zeer goedertieren zyn om alle nooddriftige te helpen. God de Heere wil haer en hare familien gunnen een lang leven. Oocq comt myne veele groete aen alle de Raden van India.

Third Missive
17 December 1680.

Volght nu de missive, van Haer Ed. aen de drie Princen gebroeders tot Cheribon geschreven, in handen van hunne gesamentlyke gesanten afgegaan.

Den Gouverneur Generael Ryckloff van Goens ende de Raden van India, die de magten en zaaken van de Hollantse Compagnie hier benedenswints bestieren, zenden desen brieff uyt een opregt suyver herte aan de drie gebroeders, Coningen van Chirrebon, deselve toewenschende een broederlycke liefde en eendragt onder malcanderen, opdat se alsoo haer lant en onderdanen te beter regeeren en tot haer eygen welstant in ruste houden mogen, alswanneer het haer wel gaan zal en zy ook bequaam zullen zyn tegen haere vyanden te bestaan, waertoe Godt de Heere zynen zeegen gelieven te verleen, en haer een geluckigh lang leven te vergunnen.

Voorts maecken den Gouverneur Generael en de Raden van India de broeders by desen bekent, dat alle haere gesanten ter behoorlycker tyt hier wel zyn aangekomen en dat wy uyt haere handen wel ontfangen hebben de brieven, van deselve, om aan ons te bestellen, medegegeven, benevens de rys als anders, die tot teecken van vrientschap daerby gevoegt waeren, dewelcke ons alle aangenaem zyn geweest, en wy hebben ook de brieven van elck in 't besonder, alsmede die de Coningen gebroeders aan den Admiraal Cornelis Speelman geschreven hadden, met aandacht gelesen, en insgelyk zyn de gesanten door denselven Admiraal uyt onsen naeme en van onsentwegen oock mondeling gehoort, die ons alle eenpaerigh hebben te verstaan gegeven de blytschap en het vergenoegen van de gebroeders over de hulpe en bystant, die haer van Compagnies wegen was geschiet, zoodat se daardoor bevryt waren geworden van de overlasten ende moeyelyckheden, die se al een geruymen tyt tot haer smertelyk gevoelen en tot verderf van haer lant en onderdanen zo van de afgesonden van Bantam als wel voornamentlyk van de Kiedolse struyckroovers hadden moeten lyden en verdragen. Wy willen derhalven geensints twyffelen en gantschelyk vertrouwen dat de broeders tesamen en elck in 't besonder de getrouwe sorge, die de E. Compagnie voor haer gedragen, en de bystant, die de E. Comp. aan haer gedaan heeft tot zoo merckelycke onkosten en lasten, noyt vergeten maer altoos en tot den laesten dagh van der werelt toe als eerlyke bondgenoten en nabuuren trouwhertigh en stantvastig gedencken in alle gelegentheyt daer het de E. Comp. te stade kan koomen onfeyllaer erkennen zullen, sonder ter regter noch ter slincker hant van haere beloofde getrouwe bereytwilligheyt af te wycken; en alsoo de broeders

door haere brieven en gesanten alsnogh gebeden en vermoght hebben, dat zy met haer landt en onderdanen onder Compagnies bescherminge mogten blyven, haerselves t'eenemael aan 't welgevallen van de Compagnie en den Sousouhounang Aman Courat overgevende, zoo hebben den Gouverneur Generael en Raden van India van goeder herten en genegentheyt in het voorschreven versoeck bewilligt, en volgens dien ook daarvan aan de gesanten des Conings van Bantam, doen se hier waren, alsmede door onse ambassadeurs, doen sy op Bantam waren, aan den Coningh van Bantam selfs kennisse gedaan, met versoeck dat hy sigh voortaan met de Coningen van Chirrebon en haer landt en onderdanen niet meer believe te bemoeyen, maer deselve in ruste en vrede te laten, dewyle zy nu onder de bescherminge van de Compagnie nevens den Sousouhounang Aman Courat waren aangenomen, 't welck wy vertrouwen en verhoppen dat ook zoodanigh geschieden zal en dat de Chirrebonders van de Bantammers wel ongemoeyt zullen blyven, zoolange de vrede tusschen de E. Compagnie en Bantam duurt, die van Compagnies wegen sonder groote oorsaaken neyt gebroocken zal werden; maer het heeft de Gouverneur Generael ende Raden van India al vrywat bedroeft, datter tusschen de broeders over de maniere van regeeringh uytwysende haere brieven en het mondeling berigt der gesanten eenigh verschil en de beste eenigheyt niet was, op hoedanige wyse het met de saaken van Chirrebon geensints soude connen welgaan, en daerom hebben wy al voor desen, niet lange naerdat capteyn Jochum en Crain Bissey op Chirrebon gecomen waren, door deselve de broeders laten aenseggen en vrundelyck vermanen dat zy tesamen in broederlyke vrientschap en liefde haer verbinden moesten om zoodanigh dan tegelyck aan de Compagnie in alle getrouwigheyt als eerlycke bondgenoten verbonden en gehouden te blyven, mitsgaders by overcomste van vyanden ook haer best te doen om deselve af te weeren en te vernietigen, en dat het daerom ook noodigh was, om alle disordre voor te comen, dat de broeders malcanderen wel verstaan en eene van drie de eerste wesen moste, omdat se niet alle drie tevens spreekken en bevelen kunnen; dat daertoe de oudste de naeste was, om op de saaken van Chirrebon de vereyschte ordre te stellen, zoodanigh als zy dat tesamen altoorens hadden goetgevonden, en dat dan de broeders sulcke ordre ook dienen naer te comen, en haer volck die zy onder haer hebben op die wyse te regeeren, en dat dan oock op die wyse de oudste broeder in respect en aansien zoude wesen, zonder dat de eere van de twee andere broeders daerdoor vermindert wierde. Alle 't welcke de broeders niet zal kunnen vergeten wesen, en wanneer zy het zoodanig tesamen comen naer te volgen, dan zal het op Chirrebon met het landt en de

inwoonderen niet qualyck konnen gaen, mits dat yder zyn volck en landeryen, die se zedert eenigen tyt gewoon zyn te hebben en te besitten, behoude sonder die malcanderen te ontrecken; en wat verder de gemene incomsten en thollen van Chirrebon aangaat, daerover behoorde niet meer als eenen shahandaar gestelt te werden door den oudsten broeder met goetvinden en kennis van de twee andere, die dan van harentwegen wel ymant daerbyvoegen connen om toe te sien of alles welgaat en getrouwelyk gehandelt werd, hoedanigh dan de incomsten in beter verzeeckert zullen wesen, om tot bevorderingh van het gemeene best te gebruycken; en opdat de broeders malcander daerins te beter verstaan en naar voorschreven onsen goeden raadt schicken mogten, zoo hebben wy goetgevonden nevens de gesanten naer Chirrebon te senden onsen Commissaris Jacob van Dyck, die over twee jaeren nogh eenmael op Chirrebon van onsentwegen geweest is, denwelcken en nevens hem oock capteyn Jochum en Crain Bissey de broeders diesnaangaende en van onse intentie nader by monde zullen connen onderrigten, en hebben wy de gemelte Commissaris oock medegegeven eenige articulen, contractsgewyse door ons in 't Duytsch en 't Maleyis opgesteld, om door de Coningen gebroeders op Chirrebon onderteeckent en beëydigt te werden, gelyck dan deselve oock mede onderteeckenen zullen en Sorge dragen dat het door den Sousouhounang t'synder tyt insgelyx geschiet, opdat alles tusschen de E. Compagnie, den Sousouhounang en Chirrebon wel magh gaen, en de vriendschap vast en onverbreeckelyk mogten wesen tot het eynde van de werelt toe en zoolang zon en maan haer schynsel zullen geven, vastelyk vertrouwende dat de Coningen gebroeders den inhoud van de voorschreven articulen ter herten nemen en zoodanig in alle deele als eerlyke en getrouwe bondgenoten naerkoomen zullen, hebbende de gesanten geduirende haer aanwesen alhier niets onredelyx bedreven, maer haerselven altyt stil en wel gedraegen, en heeft haer verblyff alhier zoo wat lang geduirt, omdat de Gouverneur Generael ende Raden van India doorgaans veel werck hebben gehadt dat nodigh en haestigh was, en omdat wy oock gaerne wilden sien, hoe het sig tusschen de Compagnie en Bantam wilde schicken en of zy oock nogh eenige pretentie op Chirrebon soude komen te maecken, omdat zy dickwils hebben voorgegeven dat zy van outs door bloetverwantschap op Chirrebon mede nogh eenigh recht hadden, hoewel wy het wel beeter weten, en daarom hebben wy oock hetselve altyt tegengesproecken; oock hadden wy gedacht dat ons van den Sousouhounang nogh eenige nadere tydinge zoude wesen toegecomen over de saacke van Chirrebon, alsoo hy tevoren misnoegen hadde getoont dat geen van de broeders van Chirrebon

zedert haere wedercomste van Bantam hem waeren comen begroeten noch oock niemand van harentwegen aan hem hadden gesonden, dat wy doen onse Commandeur gelast hebben, als weder daervan gesproocken wierde, op de beste wyse te excuseren, en daernevens te zeggen dat de ongelegentheyte van de tyt hem niet heeft connen toelaten en dat andersints aan de genegentheyte niet ontbrak, zynde nu over weynige daegen met brieven van Samarang en Tagal ons ter kennisse gecomen dat den Sousouhounang Aman Courat geholpen met Compagnies magt syn intrede binnen de Mattaran hadde gedaen en dat het meeste volck naer eenige gedane tegenstant haer voor hem hebben verootmoedigt, maer dat Pangeran Pougar, de Mataram verlatende, met vrouw en kinderen naer Baggaleen gevlugt ware, 't welck door quaden raadt van onrustige menschen zoodanigh geschiet zal wesen, want den Pangeran Pougar tevoren genegen is geweest met alle de grooten den Sousouhounang Aman Courat tegemoet te trecken en met eerbiedigheyt te verwelkomen, dat voor hem en de zyne veel beter zoude zyn geweest volgens de vermaning en den raad, die de Gouverneur Generael en de Raaden van India door brieven hem altyt gedaen en gegeven hebben. En dewyle het nu eyndelyk met Compagnies hulpe en bystant onder den zegen des Alderhoogsten zoo verre gebragt is, dat den Sousouhounang Aman Courat weder op den thron van zyne voorouders herstelt zy, zoo en sal het oock niet onnodigh wesen dat ymand der broeders uyt de naem van alle gecommiteerdte werde, om den Sousouhounang als goede bondgenoten en nagebuuren over zyne herstellingh vrundelyk te gaen begroeten, alsoo hetzelve meteen strecken kan tot onderhoudingh van goede en getrouwe vrintschap; om hetwelck dan oock van onse zyde aan de Coningen van Chirrebon te bewysen, zoo stieren wy hierbenevens onder bewaring van onsen Commissaris Jacob van Dyck tot erkenen en in vergelding van de gesondene ryst, paarden als anders 't naer volgende:

Voor den oudsten broeder, Sulthan Sopo:

- 1 Persiaans carmosyn fluweel;
- 5 ellen goude moirha;
- 1 moye snaphaen;
- 1 carbyn, twee patroontasschen;
- 2 pistolen;
- 50 vuursteen;
- 12 stux pathole neusdoeken;
- 4 sarasse gobars;

3 pond nagelen,
3 @ canneel,
3 @ nooten en
2 @ foely.

Voor de tweede broeder, de jonge Coningh:

1 Persiaans root fluweel;
1 moye snaphaen;
1 patroontasch;
2 pistolen;
25 vuurstenen;
8 pathole neusdoeken;
3 sarassa gobars;
2 @ nagelen,
2 @ nooten,
3 @ cannel, en
1 @ foely.

Voor de derde broeder, Pangeran Depatty Topatty:

1 Persiaans groen fluweel;
1 moye snaphaen en patroontasch;
1 pistool;
20 vuursteen;en;
6 pathole neusdoeken;
2 sarassa gobars;
5 @ nagelen,
2 @ canneel,
2 @ nooten en
1 @ foely.

Alle 't welcke de broeders oock zoodanigh in vrintschap gelieven te ontfangen en aan te nemen, hebbende de Gouverneur Generael ende Raden van India de afgesanten oock doorenboven met eenige vereeringh bedagt, omdat se zoo lange hier geweest zyn, dogh zyn deselve doorgaans naer behooren gedefroyeart, en hebben wy oock onse Commissaris aanbevolen dat hy sigh nevens capteyn Jochum en Crain Bissey met de broeders soude beraden, of er op zyn vertreck herwaarts oock nogh eenige van ons volck tot verseeckering van de broeders op Chirrebon zoude dienen te verblyven,

en ingevalle van ja, dat hy dan eenige van de bequaamste daerto zoude uytkiezen, alswanneer de broeders moeten Sorge draegen dat se van behoorlyk onderhoud versorgt werden; maer wy vertrouwen dat het niet noodigh sal syn om ymand van de onse aldaar te laten verblyven, vermits nu alles daeromtrent in ruste is. Daerom sal oock misschien de Commissaris onse besettinge op Indermayoe verminderen of oock wel t'eenemaal wegnemen, naerdatt hy sal bevinden voor de ruste van het landt en de inwoonderen best en nodigh te wesen. Voorts recommanderen wy de broeders met des Sousouhounangs onderdanen op Indermayoe aan de eene zyde mitsgaders op Brebes, Tagal elcetera aan de andere zyde goede en gebuurlycke vrintschap te onderhouden, en niet te gedoogen dat haer van de een of de ander eenige overlast werd aangedaen, gelyck zy oock van haere kant niet zullen naerlaten desaangaande aan de broeders naer vermogen de behulpzame hant te bieden, gelyck dat de onderlinge vrintschap en bondgenootschap medebrengh.

Geschreven in 't Casteel Batavia den 17 dagh van de maant December in het jaar 1680.

(Onder stont:)

Den Gouverneur Generael van 't Nederlants India

(Was getekent:)

RYCKLOFF VAN GOENS.

(Terzyden stont Comp. segel in rooden lacke gedruckt, daeronder:) Ter ordonnantie van Haer Hoogh Ed.

(Was getekent:)

JOAN VAN HOORN, secretaris.

Fourth Missive

17 December 1680.

Volghet nu noch de missive, door den Edelen Heer Directeur Generael Cornelis Speelman aen de drie Princen gebroeders voormelt in 't gemeen geschreven.

Den Admirael Cornelis Speelman sent desen brief uyt een opregt suyver herte aan de drie gebroeders Coningen van Chirrebon, deselve toewenschende een broederlyke liefde en eendragt onder malcanderen, opdat se alsoo haer landt en onderdanen te beter regeeren en tot haer eygen welstant in ruste houden mogen, alswanneer het haer welgaan sal, en zy oock bequaam zullen zyn tegen haere vyanden te bestaan, waertoe Godt de Heere zyn zeegen believe te verlenen, en haer een gelukkig lang leven te vergunnen.

Voorts maeckt den Admirael Cornelis Speelman de Coningen gebroeders op Chirrebon bekend, dat alle haar gesanten ter behoorlycker tyt hier wel zyn aangekomen, en dat ick uyt haere handen wel ontfangen hebbe de brieven, aan deselve om aan my te bestellen medegegeven, benevens de rys als anders, die tot teecken van vrientschap daerby gevoegt waeren, dewelcke my alle aangenaem zyn geweest, en ick hebbe deselve niet alleen met aandacht doorgelesen, maar oock aan de Ed. Heeren Gouverneur Generaal en Raden van India in haere hooge vergaderinge vertoont, alwaer se mede gelesen en bevonden zyn van meest deselve inhoud als de brieven, door de broeders aan de Heeren Gouverneur Generael en Raden van India geschreven, sulx oock in de eene soowel als de andere een welgevallen is genomen, gelyck de Coningen broeders op Chirrebon uyt de antwoort, die nu daerop gegeven wert en in handen van de Commissaris Jacob van Dyck nevens uwe gesanten overgaat, tot haer vergenoegen sullen connen sien, en ondervinden hoe trouwhertigh de Compagnie nogh gesint en genegen is de Coningen van Chirrebon met haer landt en volck alle zoorte van behulpsaemheyt te bewysen, als maer de broeders oock met malcanderen eenigh zyn en haer eygen gemeens welstant selfs mede betragten. En alsoo in de brief van de Heeren Gouverneur Generael ende Raden van India al het noodige gesegt is, en behalven dat den Commissaris van Dyck u by monde van 't een en 't ander nogh nader berigt sal connen doen, zoo zal den Admirael in dese zynen brief daervan niet verder spraecken, maar de Coningen van Chirrebon alleen recommanderen en broederlyk vermanen, dat zy haer den goeden raat van de Heeren Gouverneur Generael ende de Raden van India laten ter herten gaen en haere vaderlyke vermaninge in goede agtinge nemen, getrouwelyk agtervolgende hetgene in de opgestelde articulen van verbont en vrintschap tot bevordering van het gemene beste en tot onderhoudinge van een onverbreeckelyke vrintschap begreepen is, gelyck als dat alle goede en trouwhertige bondgenoten betaemt te doen, alswanneer den Admirael sigh daerover sal verheugen en niet behoeven beschaemt te werden over al de weldaden, die de Compagnie ten goede van het lant en 't volck van Chirrebon gedaan en bewasen heeft, gelyck andersints den Admirael beschaemt soude mosten wesen, indien de Coningen van Chirrebon anders quamen te doen, en haar niet te gedragen zoodanigh als goede en getrouwe bondgenoten schuldig en verbonden zyn, voornamentlyk als de Coningen gebroeders met ondanckbaerheyt quamen te beloonen de hulpe ende bystant, die de Compagnie al reets gedaan, en de oncosten die se daerom gedragen heeft, opdat de Chirrebonders als vrye volckeren haer landt in ruste besitten en bevryt mogten wesen

van de overlasten, die se nu al zoo lange van de Kiedolse struyckroovers en andere geleden hebben. Oversulx recommandeert den Admirael de broeders nogh andermael, dese zyne broederlycke vermaninge en goeden raad in goede sorgvuldige agtinge te nemen. Voorts stiert den Admirael tot vergeldinge van 't geene de broeders aan hem gesonden hebben onder bewagringe van den Commissaris Jacob van Dyck 't inservolgende:

Voor den oudsten broeder Sultan Sopo voor de twee lasten rys en een paart:

1 Souratse alegia met goude streepen;

5 ellen blauw Hollants phelp;

5 ellen root zyde camelot;

3 ellen carmosynroot laken;

2 fyne moerisse.

Voor de tweede broeder, de jonge Coning, voor 13 dragten rys, een koebeest, wat ajuyn en loock:

5 ellen blaauw phelp;

5 ellen roodt syde commelot;

1 fyne moeris.

Aan de derde broeder, Pangeran Depatty Topatty, voor:

3 ellen root carmosyn laken;

1 fyne moeris;

5 ellen blauw zyde camelot.

Alle 't welcke de broeders elck voor 't zyne mede met zoo goeden herte tot teecken van vrintschap van den Admirael believen aan te nemen uyt handen van den Commissaris Jacob van Dyck, als hy het hare uyt handen van hare gesanten aangenomen heeft.

Geschreven in 't Casteel op Batavia den 17 dagh van de maant December in het jaar 1680.

(Onder stont en was getekent:)

CORNELIS SPEELMAN.

(Terzyden stont Comp. segel in rooden lacke gedruckt).

Fifth Missive
18 December 1680.

Volgt nu de translaetmissieve, door den Pangiran Depatty off jongsten Sultan tot Sirribon aen Haer Ed. geschreven met eenige zynes vaders afgesondene Javanen, die met dese chaloup hiermede overgecomen zyn.

Desen brief, uyt een suyvere oprechte genegenthey, verseld met alle deugd en groote eere van Pangiran Dipatty, comt aen zynen heer, die in grootheyt en hoogen staat verheven ende soo boven als beneden wints over zyne goedtheyt seer beroemt is, die oocq zeer magtig is in de velden des oorlogs, dat alle zyne vyanden soo te water als te lande bevreest zyn. God de Heere wil hem geluck geven, opdat hy alle coningskinderen die in nood zyn hier beneden wints alsmede in haere beradinge met alle gerechticheyt moge helpen. Verders maeckt uwen dienaer bekend aengaende het gedoente van die van Goelongongh, dat zy den Soesoehoenan Amangcoerat ofte den Heer Generael voor haren heer niet willen erkennen, alsoocq dat die van de kleene plaetsjes van Priangan tot Kalongkong zyn verscheenen; het sal goet zyn dat mynheer haer slaet dewyl se klein zyn, maer wanneer se groot werden zal sulx sonder groote moeyten niet connen gedaen werden; maer Tsigantjens is met die van Cheribon en Goelongongh is myn voorouders behorende, dog die van Goelongong willen haer voor de Heer Generael niet vernederen. Dierhalve is myn harte ongerust, want het quaat off goet dat icq doe staet alles aen den Heer Generael, want de Heer Generael is myn vader, op wien icq alleen myn vertrouwen stel. Het goet dat icq te seggen hebbe staet in desen brief vermelt. Eynde.

D. CONCLUSION

The final stages of Cirebon's subordination to VOC hegemony, from late 1680 to January 1681, reveal a process of political transformation shaped by the intersection of security crises, territorial rivalries, internal tensions, and diplomacy. The letters of Sultan Sepuh, Karta Wijaya, and Wangsakerta demonstrate that threats to their territory and population constituted an important reason for seeking VOC support. At the same time, these letters reveal that Cirebon's rulers continued to articulate territorial claims, defend dynastic legitimacy, and seek to influence the decisions of the power from which they expected protection.

The response issued by Governor-General Ryckloff van Goens and the Council of the Indies, together with Cornelis Speelman's letter of 17 December 1680, illustrates how the VOC transformed requests for protection into an agenda for regulating Cirebon's government. The Company demanded unity among the princes, affirmed the

senior prince's position, regulated revenue administration, directed relations with Banten and Susuhunan Amangkurat, and prepared treaty articles that were to be signed and sworn to. Protection was thus offered not merely as assistance in addressing external threats, but also as the basis for establishing more binding political obligations.

This correspondence places 7 January 1681 within a broader historical perspective. The Batavia–Cirebon Treaty did not emerge as an isolated or sudden event; rather, it marked a significant point in a process that had already revealed a shift from requests for assistance toward the institutionalization of an asymmetrical relationship. Nevertheless, the available documents do not establish that Cirebon underwent direct military conquest in December 1680, nor do they demonstrate that local rulers immediately lost all their governing authority.

The principal historiographical contribution of these diplomatic letters lies in demonstrating that VOC hegemony was constructed not solely through military force, but also through the management of protection, legitimacy, obligations, and governmental arrangements. Cirebon's rulers remained diplomatic actors, yet their actions unfolded within a relationship increasingly structured by the Company's capacity to determine the limits of their political choices. Accordingly, Cirebon's subordination to VOC hegemony is best understood as a process of asymmetrical negotiation: the local rulers' need to preserve their territories and positions converged with the Company's interest in transforming protection into institutionalized political influence.

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