



Illustration 1. The emperor Bahadur Shah (reign 1707-1712) mounted on an elephant.

Letter from the Supreme Government to the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707 – 1712), 4 October 1709

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1 Introduction

Maarten Manse, “A Letter for the Great Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707 – 1712): Courtesy and Coalition forming at an Islamic Court, 4 October 1709”, in : *Harta Karun. Hidden Treasures on Indonesian and Asian-European History from the VOC-archives in Jakarta*, document 15. Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2014.

BY MAARTEN MANSE

The death of Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1685-1709) marked the end of an era for the Mughal empire, after a reign of 49 years. It also initiated a renewed attempt of the VOC to reestablish their trade in India after it had suffered a major setback following Aurangzeb's death when the trade rights, which he had personally approved, were withdrawn by his successor, Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707-1712). In this letter of 4 October 1709, Governor-General Joan van Hoorn (in office 1704-1709) requests new *firman*s or trading letters signed by the new emperor carrying his personal seal of approval. Such *firman*s were essential in guaranteeing safe passage for trade in and around the Mughal empire and they solicited immediate respect from local officials and merchants.

On 5 October 1709, two ships, the *Jerusalem* and the *Noordbeek* sailed for Surat from Batavia. They carried Van Hoorn's letter and detailed instructions for Cornelis Bezuyen, the recently appointed director of the Dutch trading post at Surat (in office 1707-1709) who was subsequently tasked

with leading an embassy to the Mughal court in Delhi, 1711- 1713 (see the Resolution of 18 July 1713), to obtain the favor of the new emperor.

The VOC had maintained a factory at the Gujarati port of Surat since 1618. After falling under Mughal influence in 1573, it had become the chief commercial city of the entire west coast of India. Not only was it a port of embarkation for Mecca, but also a key entrepot for overseas trade in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf linking the Ottoman and Safavid empires.¹ By establishing a factory in Surat and outposts in neighboring Ahmadabad and Agra, the VOC had secured its access to Gujarati textiles and indigo. But maintaining such commercial relations with the local Gujarati authorities proved difficult. Company servants constantly had to deal with corrupt and malign officials, while the local Indian merchants themselves were often irritated by intermittent European support for piracy and illegal trade.²

In 1699, a so-called *muchalka* or obligation to pay for collateral damage caused by piracy on the high seas was imposed on the Europeans. After yet another incidence of piracy in 1702, a quarrel erupted between the Europeans and a prominent Indian merchant by the name of Mulla 'Abdul Ghafur about compensation for damage caused by piracy. Ghafur appealed to the Mughal imperial authorities, who ordered the VOC to pay compensation but they refused to do so. In 1703, the Indian authorities reacted by imprisoning all European personnel, including director Hendrik Zwaardcroon (director of Surat, 1699-1703). The Dutch

¹ A. Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, c. 1700-1750* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1979), pp. 3-4.

² Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat*, pp. 85-94.



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Illustration 2. A view of Agra by Zacharie Chatelain, Amsterdam, 1732 (first ed. 1705-20).

responded by sending a powerful squadron and hijacking a ship with a 'Moorish priest' on board.³ It took two years for the impasse to be resolved by the withdrawal of all VOC-personnel from Surat. The VOC factory was then closed. However, the Dutch blockade of Surat was not lifted until 1707.⁴

In order to escape from the clutches of these local merchants and governors as well as guaranteeing safe access to the Mughal trading network, VOC servants actively sought support of the Mughal emperor, the highest and most respect-

ed authority on the Indian subcontinent. In 1662, an embassy had already been sent to the Mughal court under Dircq van Adrichem (director of Surat, 1662-1665), to gain the favor of Emperor Aurangzeb, and obtain firmans.⁵ The dispatch of such embassies to obtain imperial favor was common practice: in the seventeenth century both Aurangzeb and his predecessors had received missions from a number of European trading companies including the French and the British. Such missions were especially ubiquitous

³ J.Ph. Vogel (ed.), *Journal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis naar den groot mogul te Lahore, 1711-1713* (Werken uitgegeven door de Linschoten-vereeniging 41, 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1937), p. 11.

⁴ Om Prakash, 'The Mughal Empire and the Dutch East Indies Company in the Seventeenth Century', in: E. Locher-Scholten and P. Rietbergen (eds.), *Hof en Handel. Aziatische vorsten en de VOC, 1620-1720* (Leiden: KITLV Press 2004), pp. 181-200, 197.

⁵ See: A.J. Bernet Kempers (ed.), *Journal van Dircq van Adrichem's hofreis naar den Groot-Mogol Aurangze-b, 1662*. (Werken uitgegeven door de Linschoten-Vereeniging 45, 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1941).



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after the in the aftermath of a royal succession. Van Adrichem's embassy was highly successful and received firmans that were declared valid for Dutch trade in Surat, Patna (Bengal) and Orissa.⁶ In 1689, a second embassy under Johannes Bacherus focused on Dutch trade in Coromandel, for which new firmans were needed. Although issued by the Mughal court, these firmans were not, acknowledged by the Mughal emperor's officers in Masulipatam whence the Dutch ambassador had returned, and they were eventually declared invalid.

The installment of the new emperor thus opened the door for new negotiations, hence the embassy lead by Bezuyen.⁷ He was assisted by two deputies: *Koopman* Rogier de Beerenaard, who spoke Persian (the official language of the Mughal court), and *Opperkoopman* Joan Josua Ketelaar, renowned for his long experience in India and Batavia and known for his expertise in 'Moorish' languages and customs.⁸ Ketelaar was fluent in Hindi, about which he wrote a grammar during his time as company servant in Surat in the 1680s. The immediate aim of the Bezuyen embassy was to obtain the favor of the new emperor and acquire new firmans, granting the VOC permission to build a new factory or *logie* in Surat. The cost of the embassy was projected to be high by VOC standards, but this was deemed acceptable as handing out valuable gifts to the court was essential in order to gain the favor of the emperor.

Bezuyen's first concern in Surat was thus to compile and collect the necessary *schenkagie goederen* or gifts. However, in October 1710, Bezuyen died

after a long illness, and he was succeeded by Ketelaar, the latter's appointment already having been envisaged in the embassy's original procedures. Ketelaar's embassy to the Mughal court of the new emperor, Bahadur Shah I, provides an insight into the encounter of late seventeenth-century Dutch merchants with the world of high diplomacy and Mughal court culture. It was both an exotic and bewildering encounter. After an exceptionally tough and difficult journey overland via Agra and Delhi, the embassy finally arrived at Lahore in December 1711, where the Emperor, had recently moved to visit his botanical gardens. The Dutch ambassadorial caravan contained sizeable amounts of high value goods, including gold bars, European art and curiosities, firearms, elephants, horses and other gifts. Upon his arrival, Ketelaar was warmly welcomed by two people he had been in contact with before and whom he knew he could rely on. One of them was Donna Juliana Dias da Costa, a Portuguese lady born in India, who had ended up in the harem of Bahadur Shah as one of his favorite and most devoted wives. She had become the mainstay for European envoys at the Mughal court. The other was a very powerful and high-ranking noble named Zulfikar Khan. Ketelaar carefully picked these people, as he was all too well aware of the dangers posed by the factional politics between the various Mughal princes and their supporters. These would often erupt into open violence at the death of an emperor such as had happened after Aurangzeb's death in 1707.

The embassy was officially received by an Amīr styled 'Hattumbeeckchan' (most likely Khadim

⁶ F. Bernier and V.A. Smith, *Travels in the Moghul Empire A.D. 1656-1668* (translated according to Irving Brock's version and annotated by Archibald Constable. Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1994 reprint of 1934 second revised edition), p. 127; O. Yasuyuki (Kanagawa), 'The French Travelers and the Mughal Empire in the 17th Century', in: M.M. Takahito, *Cultural and Economic Relations between East and West: Sea Routes* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz: 1988), pp. 82-88.

⁷ The news was received in Batavia on June 2, 1707, and because these embassies were so expensive it took the two years before Amsterdam and Batavia agreed on sending a new embassy. See: Daily Journals, file 2530 folio 349-50 and Vogel, *Journaal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*.

⁸ Vogel, *Journaal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, pp. 10, 25.



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Beg Khan) who was ordered to take care of the embassy. On 14 December, the Dutch embassy made their official entry into Lahore, the site of the temporary Mughal court. This was a real show: all members, soldiers and the carriages with gifts as well as the elephants decorated with flags, cloths and gold brocade passed through the camp and were officially inspected by Donna Juliana.⁹ Ketelaar's preference for Zulfikar Khan and Donna Juliana as well as other key Mughal nobles could be discerned from the manner of the distribution of the ambassadorial gifts, a key element of any court appearance.

Francois Bernier, the celebrated French visitor to the Mughal court in the late seventeenth century, had already commented on this issue of the distribution of gifts. They were of essential importance at the Mughal court, as Bernier had written in 1668 to his superior Intendant-General Jean-Baptiste Colbert, founder of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, that "in Asia, the great are never approached empty-handed".¹⁰ This sound advice came too late: the French Company had already dispatched a mission to the Mughal emperor, which arrived without the appropriate gifts. Arriving empty-handed, they were immediately rejected as lightweights by the Mughals.¹¹ It was thus crucial to create the impression of liberality and generosity through the distribution of valuable gifts. Only in this way could an embassy

be assured of some success at the Mughal court.

The Dutch were only too well aware of this: in the Ketelaar embassy's letter of instruction, it was advised to be sparing but not too greedy, for that 'would lead to contempt by the Moors',¹² Therefore, the whole month of December was spent on sending gifts to the emperor, his sons and other important nobles.

Bahadur Shah himself, of course, received the most valuable gifts (valued at more than 130,000 florins, (the equivalent to about 1.61 million USD anno 2014 in Purchasing Power Parity [PPP]).¹³ Zulfikar Khan was second in line, receiving gifts valued in sum at more than 92,000 florins (the equivalent to about 1.14 million USD in PPP), containing amongst others a valuable horse.¹⁴ Particularly striking was the value of the gifts presented to Bahadur Shah's second son 'Azim-ush-Shan (1664-1712), who also received more than 90,000 florins (the equivalent to about 1.12 million USD in PPP) in gifts.¹⁵ This prince was much more assertive and powerful than his brothers, but he was known to be very hostile towards Christians.¹⁶ He was also described as being very greedy, and it was believed that by sending extra gifts, done on the advice of Donna Juliana, his goodwill could be brought.

Usually, a gift was refused one or two times, depending on its value, before it was officially 'gratefully accepted'. Ketelaar appeared to be well

⁹ See for a more detailed description: W. Irvine, *The Later Mughals* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal 1903, reprint New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers 1991), p. 148.

¹⁰ Bernier and Smith, *Travels in the Moghul Empire*, p. 200.

¹¹ A. Jaffer, 'Diplomatic Encounters: Europe and South Asia', in: A. Jackson and A. Jaffer (eds.), *Encounters: the meeting of Asia and Europe, 1500-1800* (London: V&A publications, 2004), pp. 74-87, p. 76.

¹² 'Instructie voor den heer directeur en ambassadeur Cornelis Bezuyen, om te dienen tot narigt in de ambassade ofte bezendinge vanwege de Generale Nederlandse Oostindise Comp. en dese regeringe aen den tegenwoordige Groten Mogol ofte Koning Badursjah [...]', in: Vogel, *Journaal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*: pp. 289-308, p. 306.

¹³ Calculated using the website of IISG (International Institute of Social History), *Historic Prices and Wages, Value of the Guilder*: <http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate.php> (27 October 2014).

¹⁴ 'Instructie voor den heer directeur en ambassadeur Cornelis Bezuyen': pp. 367-8; a long list of all awarded gifts is included in Vogel. See: Bijlage VI: 'Specificatie van onkosten der ambassade en lijst van geschenken', in: Vogel, *Journaal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, pp. 357-93.

¹⁵ 'Specificatie van onkosten', p. 370.

¹⁶ Irvine, *Later Mughals*, pp. 151-2.



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aware of this tradition and the pecking order of how and to whom the gifts should be distributed. Thanks to Ketelaar's prior contact with Donna Juliana and Zulfikar Khan, the enormous value and amount of the gifts distributed, he attracted the attention of the emperor, and Ketelaar received that most coveted diplomatic prize: an invitation to an audience.

This audience took place on 3 January 1712. After three hours of waiting, Ketelaar was guided into the emperor's tent by 'Hattumbeeckchan' (Khadim Beg Khan).¹⁷ He presented the *nesser*, the gift-offers consisting of gold and silver in cash, together with the *credential*, the letter of the Governor-General.¹⁸ These were handed to a high Amir, who handed them to the emperor, seated on his high throne with his two sons ranged slightly below him.¹⁹ Ketelaar and his assistants then each received a *khilat* or robe of honor, in gold for Ketelaar and silver for his assistants and a *patka*, a headband, both traditional gifts.²⁰ Ketelaar and his assistants thanked the king by performing an imperial *kornus* or traditional bow, four times. This was highly appreciated by the emperor; saluting an Asian ruler in the appropriate, native manner was an important way to show respect. After the first meeting, Ketelaar sent the elephants, horses and his other valuable presents to the emperor.²¹ Suitably impressed by these gifts and Ketelaar's performance during his first meeting, Bahadur Shah invited the Dutch embassy for a second audience on 24 January.

Again, Ketelaar received a *khila*, and two other traditional gifts: a betelnut and a *khandjar*, a traditional dagger or poker, for which Ketelaar

again thanked the emperor by performing a *kornus* three times.²² The ambassador also organized a musical intermezzo at the emperor's request and a military exercise for 'Moissuddien' (Mu'izz-ud-Din, Bahadur Shah's first son).²³ Meanwhile, Ketelaar paid a visit to Zulfikar Khan to whom presents were sent on 12 January. Ketelaar 'paid him a few compliments in the Hindu [Hindi] language', expressing his hope that Zulfikar Khan would favor the Company's interests at court, a request which was immediately acceded to by the Khan, although he objected to the construction of a new factory in Surat. Ketelaar did not insist on this issue during this first meeting, as he knew that this would be deemed very impolite according to the 'Moorish habits', as only pleasantries were usually exchanged at a first meeting.²⁴

Still, Ketelaar was extraordinarily successful in his first month at the court. He showed the necessary knowledge and *savoir-faire* regarding the traditions and values of Bahadur Shah's court. In so doing, he worked his way into the circle of noblemen close to the emperor. Unfortunately, for the Dutch, this would not provide lasting benefits for in late February 1712; Bahadur Shah suddenly died aged 59. Ketelaar now had to start negotiations all over again with his successor, Jahandar Shah, the former Prince Mu'izz-ud-Din (r. 27 February 1712–11 February 1713). The bad luck did not end there. After finally receiving the *firman*s of Jahandar Shah in August 1713, Ketelaar returned to Surat, only to learn even before he arrived there that Jahandar Shah had been overthrown by his nephew, rendering the *firman*s useless.

¹⁷ Vogel, *Journal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, pp. 142–3.

¹⁸ Vogel, *Journal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, p. 144; F.W. Buckler, 'The Oriental Despot,' in: M.N. Pearson (ed.), *Michigan papers on South and Southeast Asia 26: Legitimacy and symbols. The South-Asian writings of F.W. Buckler* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1985), pp. 176–89, p. 182.

¹⁹ Irvine, *Later Mughals*, p. 151.

²⁰ Vogel, *Journal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, pp. 144–5; Buckler, 'The Oriental Despot', pp. 178–9.

²¹ Vogel, *Journal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, p. 146.

²² Vogel, *Journal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, p. 150.

²³ Vogel, *Journal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, pp. 151, 156.

²⁴ Vogel, *Journal van J.J. Ketelaar's hofreis*, p. 149.



2 Transcription of the Dutch text

Maarten Manse, "A Letter for the Great Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707 – 1712): Courtesy and Coalition forming at an Islamic Court, 4 October 1709".

UIT: DAGHREGISTERS VAN BATAVIA, 5 OKTOBER 1709 [BEGINNEND BIJ FOL. 518]

Desen brief van eerbiedt en genegentheyt komt van Joan van Hoorn, gouverneur generaal over den Nederlandsen staat in India, ende werd gesonden aan den grooten ende alderwijtberoemste Coning Badursjah die regtveerdelijk den troon van het Groot Mogolse Rijk bekleet en wiens glans en mayesteyt zoo helder als de sonne schijnt zoodat daarin alle coningen der werelt overtreft.

Grootmagtigsten Coningh,

Zoo haast wij verstonden dat het den Almogenden Godt behaagt hadde Uwe Coninglijke Mayesteyt te verheffen en te doen succederen op den throon van dat grootse en magtige Coningrijk in plaatse van Uwe Mayesteyts overleden vader den Coning Orangseeb, is niet alleen ons herte in ons ontstoken van vreugde maar hebben wij het ook van onsen schuldigen pligt g'oordeelt Uwe Coninlijcken Mayesteyt te moeten naderen en met onse zeer eerbiedigen begroeting Uwer Mayesteyt in dien hoog verheven staat, gelijk wij dat bij desen doen met desen hertelijken wensch en dat den Heere des Hemels en der Aarde Uwe Coninglijcken Mayesteyts persoon en regeringe overvloedelijk gelieve te zegenen met alle soorten voorspoed, ook zulx te bestendigen voor veele jaren, tot genoegte [fol. 519] van Uwe Coninglijke Mayesteyts welstand van het coningrijk, mitsgaders Uwe Mayesteyts goede onderdanen.

Maarom dese toewensinge een volmaakte aansien te geven, hebben wij nodig g'oordeelt desen brief tot Uwe Coninklijke Mayesteyt te laten afgaan in handen van den Commandeur Cornelis Bezuyen, die wij op het aldereerbiedigste versoecken dat Uwe Mayesteyt de eere believe te laten genieten, om te mogen verschijnen aan de voeten van Uwe Mayesteyts heerlijken troon, mitsgaders dat ook Uwe Mayesteyts na Zijne Hoogberoemde Goedertierentheyt gelieft te verleenen een gunstig gehoor aan alle hetgene den gemelte Commandeur Bezuyen Uwe Coninglijke Mayesteyt van onsentwegen sal komen voor te dragen en te versoecken, omme daarop van Uwe Mayesteyts loffelijke mildadigheyt een favorabele dispositie en gunstig antwoord te mogen erlangen, teneynde de Generale Nederlandsch Oost-Indische Compagnie mag continueren onder de schaduwe van Uwe Coninklijke gunste, in alle desselfs landpalen en gebied harer handel zo vrij en liber te mogen drijven als haar nu zoo veele jaren door Uwe Mayesteyt hoogstloffelijke voorouderen is toegelaten ofte vergunt geweest onder derselver hooggeagte zegel en brieven ofte firmans, waarmede wij op het allereerbiedigste versoecken dat Uwe Mayesteyt den gemelten Commandeur Besuyen gelieft te begunstigen in de beste en kragtigste forme, daarvoor wij dan niet zullen nalaten altoos onse dankbaarheid te betoonen, terwijl wij wenschen dat God Almagtig Uwe Mayesteyt



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veele jaren zal gelieven te sparen bij gezondheid, I ook alle Uwe Mayesteyts doen en laten strecken tot vermeerdering van Uwe Mayesteyts glorye, en welstand van alle desselfs coningrijken.

Geschreven in 't Casteel Batavia op 't eylant Groot Java den 4en October 1709. (onderstond) door de Gouverneur Generaal van India (was getekent) Joan van Hoorn (ter zijde) ter ordonnantie van gemelte Hoog Edelens) getekent Isaac Garsin secretaris.

Bijlage

De goedkeuring door de Hoge Regering van de diplomatieke missie van ambassadeur J. Ketelaar naar het Mogolse hof.

UIT: NA, 1.04.02 VOC 729 (KOPIE RESOLUTIES VAN GOUVERNEUR-GENE-RAAL EN RADEN, 1713)

Translaat.

[De verrigtingen van den Ambassadeur Ketelaar, met desselfs adjuncten aan 't Mogolse hof, werden g'aprobeert. 18 Juli 1713]

[fol. 440] Dinsdag den 18en Julij anno 1713 voor de middag extraordinaire vergadering absent den heer directeur generaal Abraham Douglas door indispositie

Weder gebesoigneert sijnde over de saken van Souratte op d'ingebragte notulen door de heer Christoffel van Swoll, soo is verstaan in de verrigtinge van den ambassadeur Joan Josua Ketelaar en desselfs adjuncten in de ambassade aan het Mogolse hof, voor soo verre sijlieden aan het oogmerk van die besendinge na den teneur onser instructie van den 5en October 1709 voldaan en verkregen hebben, niet alleen de gerequireerde nieuwe firmans en andere koninklijke bevelschriften voor Choromandel, Bengale, en Souratta [fol. 441] breder vermeldt bij haar daarvan overgelevert rapport, maar [fol. 441] ook alle hetgeene men verder heeft te versoecken gehad; excepto dat men geen bequame plaats buiten de stad Souratte tot een nieuwe logie heeft kunnen bedingen, dog daartegen verkregen een altijd duurende vrij gebruyk van het huys van den gewesene Ettabaarchan binnen Souratta, alsook van het huys dat in Patna veele jaren door d'E. Compagnie in huure beseten, en evenals het huys van Ettabarchan door het overlijden der eygenaers aan den koning vervallen was, genoeg te nemen, en zulx bij onsen nu af te sendene brieff aan gemelte directeur en ambassadeur nevens den raed te betuygen.

Dog wegens de lasten deser besendinge die over de twaalf tonnen gouds belopen, en daarvan ruym ses tonnen aan afgegeve geschenken, soo aan de overlede koningen Badurshah en Jehandaarshah als hare kinderen en de voornaamste ministers en hovelingen van dat rijk, is ten aansien soo een kostbare ambassade in 's Compagnies dienst nog niet is voorgevallen, en hetselve niet alleen alle voorgaande besendingen aan ditselfste Mogolse hof en andere voorname hoven, maar ook selve de verwagtinge



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en calculatie der Souratse ministers bij haren brief van den 4en april 1708 te boven gaan, verstaan, de dispositie over de voortz. onverwagte [fol. 442] sware en exorbitante lasten en geschenken aan de heeren meesters gedefereert te laten, hoewel ons in het resumeeren van die papieren geen reden ter contrarie voorgekomen sijn, waarvan in der tijd van voormelte heeren meesters kennis sal gegeven werden. Evengelijk ook de dispositie op het versoek van den ambassadeur nevens desselfs adjuncten Berenaard en Huysinkvelt om de inlandse sijd-geweiren en hooftcieraden, waarmede den koning Jahaandaersjah haarlieden op haar afscheyt vereert heeft om deselve tot een gedagtenis te mogen behouden, als strijdig tegens 's Compagnies ordre, en den generalen articul-brief, aan haar Eden. hoogagtb. overgelaten werd: dog is verstaan de ceerpaauwen of eerekleederen, haar van diverse beschonken, te laten behouden als sijnde volgens het gemelte rapport van geen groote waardije, en in het gebruyk eenigermaten afgesleten, soodat voor d'E.Compagnie van geen nut soudén kunnen wesen.

Ook is als een dependentie der ambassade en desselfs lasten verstaen niet te dispo-neeren over de sware uytgiften en geschenken die ter somma van ropia 13664 1/2 (hoe-wel met voorkennis en op ordre van den ambassadeur) sijn gedaan, aan den Sourats gouverneur Mameth Beekchan en de andere, om de overgifte en inruyming van het gemelte huys van Ettabaerchan te verwerven maar de dispositie [fol. 443] hierover mede aan onse heeren meesters gedefereert te laten; dog egter te verklaren dat het ons seer oneygen en ontijdig is voorgekomen, dat men heeft gaan kopen de uytvoeringe van een positive ordre van den keyser, welke gunste door den ambassadeur van dien vorst verkregen, en ook ordre tot het inruymen van dien afgesonden was; met verder aanschrijven aan den directeur en raad, dat soowel die saek als de gedane pompeuse intrede en genome possessie van dat gebouw ons gansch onbehaaglijk te voren is geko-men.

Onaangesien ons niet ongefondeert voorkomen de gedagte van den directeur Kete-laar en de verdere Souratse bediendens, dat het dienstig soude sijn hoe eer hoe liever tot het ratificeeren der jongst verkrege nieuwe firmans en andere gunstgeschriften te doen een nadere besendinge aan den tegenwoordigen koning Farochier, en dat hetselve ook na verloop van tijd sal moeten geschieden. Dewijl den handel alomme in het rijk van de mogul op de firmans van den overleden Jahaandaersjah en die van de voorgaan-de koningen sonder een ratificatie van den tegenwoordig regeerenden prins, niet son-der gestadige beletselen en stribbelingen om grote geschenken te verkrijgen, sal kon-nen werden voortgeset, soo is ten aansien van de sware lasten die d'E. Comp. [fol. 444] jongst daarin heeft gedragen, en in dien gevallen nu wederom (hoewel juist sooveel niet) soude moeten supporteeren verstaan, daartoe niet te treden, maar met sodanig-en nader besendinge te temporiseeren en deselve uyt te stellen, totdat men deswegen sal gesterkt sijn met het oordeel en goedvinden der Hoog Edelen heeren principalen, ten ware de volgende advysen uyt Souratta alsook van Bengale, en Choromandel een absolute noodzakelijkheid daartoe mogten aanwijzen en zulx temeer omdat de Sou-ratse advysen wegens den presenten twijffelagtigen en waggelende toestand van het Mogolse rijk, en de harde regeringe van den presenten koning Farochier sodanigen naderen ambassade voor tegenwoordig niet schijnt aan te raden.



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Dog is verstaan te approbeeren de ordre door den ambassadeur Ketelaar aan den resident Huysinkvelt tot Agra afgegeven om den prins farochier met zijn overwinninge op den koning Jehaendaershah, wanneer binnen die stad quam te verschijnen, te begroeten met het voorleggen van een noembaer sigt-offer in contanten na 's lands wijze, en hem over sijne geluckige successen, en de komste tot den Mogolsen throon te feliciteeren, hoewel daartoe de gelegentheynt niet is voorgekomen.

Item de gegeve ordre aan gemelten resident om bij navrage na een [fol. 445] missive of nadere ambassade, daarop niet als in onsekere off twijffelagtige teneur te antwoorden, om ontijdig ongenoegen voor te komen.

Voorts is verstaan de bediendens in Souratta aan te schrijven, dat het nodig sal wesen, dat den gem. resident in Agra niet alleen den radja Tsjiewiekam, dewelken de ambassadeur noteert een goed vrient van d'E. Compagnie te zijn, en bij den vorst Farochier in goot vermogen soudens wesen, na vermogen te complacere, sonder eenig ongenoegen over des princen Farochiers verheffinge te betoonen, om alsoo in der tijt desselfs hulpe omtrent gemelte vorst te kunnen genieten; maar ook aan het hoff met 's Compagnies gewesen volmagten en andere bekende daar het van nutte wesen en de sekerste berigten te bekomen sullen zijn, correspondentie te onderhouden, om niet alleen kennis te erlangen van de gesteltheyt van 't hof, maar ook wat bij hetselve ten opzigte van d'E. Compagnie soude mogen passeren, om er de bediendens in Souratta op Choromandel, en in Bengale telkens na vereysch van te informeeren.

Batavia in 't Casteel, datum als vooren (getekent) Abraham van Riebeeck, Christoffel van Swoll, Cornelis Chastelein, Mattheus de Haan, Frans Castelijn, Lauren Tolling, Hendrick [fol. 446] Zwaardcroon, Pieter Roselaar, Theodorus de Haek, Samuel Timmerman, Jacob Faas, Joan Cornelis d'Ableing en Joan van der Nipoort secretaris.



3 English translation

Maarten Manse, “A Letter for the Great Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707 – 1712): Courtesy and Coalition forming at an Islamic Court, 4 October 1709”.

FROM: DAILY JOURNALS OF BATAVIA CASTLE, 5 OCTOBER 1709 [COMMENCING AT FOL. 518]

Translation. This respectful letter of friendship comes from Joan van Hoorn, Governor-General of the Dutch state in India, and is sent to the great King Bahadur Shah, who fame is most widely renowned, who lawfully occupies the throne of the Great Mughal Empire, whose splendour and majesty outshine the sun, so that he surpasses those of all the kings of the Earth.

Omnipotent King,

As soon as we learned that it has pleased Almighty God to raise Your Royal Majesty to succeed to the throne of that great and mighty kingdom in the place of Your Majesty's late father King Aurangzeb, not only is our heart overcome with joy, but we have also deemed it to be our binding duty to approach [you] bringing most respectful greetings to Your Royal Majesty in this most exalted position, the which we do in this [letter] with the heartfelt wish that the Lord of Heaven and Earth will generously bestow upon Your Majesty's person and government abundant blessing granting them all manner of prosperity, and keep them in this state for very many years, to the benefit of [fol. 519] the increase of Your Majesty's kingdom, as well as that of Your Majesty's good subjects.

However, to imbue these wishes a consummate appearance, we have adjudged it necessary to dispatch this letter to Your Royal Majesty [entrusted to] the hands of Commander Cornelis Bezuyen, whom we most humbly beseech that Your Majesty will grant the honour of allowing him to enjoy an audience at the foot of Your Majesty's lordly throne, and also that in his Wide-famed Graciousness Your Majesty will be pleased to lend a benevolent ear to all that the said Commander Bezuyen will communicate to and request of Your Royal Majesty on our behalf, so that thereupon [we may] expect from Your Majesty's most praiseworthy generosity a gracious response and benevolent reply, so that the General Dutch East India Company may continue, under the protection of Your Royal beneficence, to pursue its trade as free and untrammelled within the same boundaries and territory as it has been allowed and permitted to do now for so many years under Your Majesty's most praiseworthy forbears, under the same greatly esteemed seal and letters or *firmans*, the which we most humbly beseech that Your Majesty will be pleased to bestow upon the said Commander Besuyen [sic!] in their best and most efficacious form, [in return] for this [honour] we shall never at any time neglect to show our gratitude, while we shall pray that Almighty God will be pleased to spare Your Majesty many years in health, also that everything Your Majesty might choose to do shall wax to the expansion of Your Majesty's glory, and the pros-



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perity of all the kingdoms of the same.

Written in Batavia Castle on the island of Great Java [Java Maior] on the 4th October 1709. [below] by the Governor-General of India (Asia) (was signed) Joan van Hoorn (in the margin) on the orders of the said High Excellency (signed) Isaac Garsin, Secretary.

Appendix

The approval by the Supreme Government of the diplomatic mission of Ambassador J. Ketelaar to the Mughal Court.

From: NA, 1.04.02 VOC 729 (COPY RESOLUTIONS OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL AND COUNCILLORS 1713)

Translation.

[The Transactions of Ambassador Ketelaar, with his deputies at the Mughal Court, approved 18 July 1713]

[fol. 440] Tuesday 18 July *anno* 1713 extraordinary meeting in the fore-noon, absent because of indisposition the Director-General Abraham Douglas.

Being again deliberated about the affairs in Surat on the memoranda brought by Mr Christoffel van Swoll, from which it is understood that the transactions of Ambassador Josua Ketelaar and his deputies in the embassy to the Mughal Court, concerning to what extent these people have achieved and affirmed the purpose of this embassy according to the tenor of or instructions of 5th of October 1709. In the report it has submitted, not only have the requisite new *firman*s and other royal decrees of the Cor-mandel, Bengal and Surat [fol. 441] been granted to them in a more expansive form than before, but also the rest which had been asked for [has been granted]; with the exception that it has been impossible to negotiate a suitable place outside the city of Surat for a new factory, but instead [they] have had to be satisfied with the free use in perpetuity of the house of the former/late Eattabaarchan within Surat, as well as of the house in Patna of which the Honourable Company has enjoyed rental occupation for many years, and just as in the case of the residence of Ettabaarchan had fallen to the king after the decease of the owners. The such is to be affirmed by us in a letter to be sent to the said director and ambassador as well as the councillors.

However, concerning the matter of the costs of this embassy which have exceeded twelve barrels of gold, a good six barrels of which was spent on gifts, both to the late kings Bahadur Shah and Jahandar Shah as well as their children and the most prominent ministers and courtiers of that Empire, never in the service of the Company has there been such an extravagant embassy, not even all the previous dispatches to this same Mughal court and other prominent courts, which has even exceeded the expectations and calculations of the Surat ministers in their letter of 4th of April 1708, it has



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been decided to defer the disposition of the earlier mentioned unexpectedly [fol. 442] heavy and exorbitant expenses and gifts to our Lords and Masters [the Board of Directors] to deal with, even though in our recapitulation of the papers no egregious reason has emerged of which the aforesaid Lords and Masters should be informed. Likewise, it has been decided to leave the decision about the request of the ambassador and his deputies Berenaard and Huysinkvelt to be able to keep the native side-arms and decorative headdresses, with which these people were honoured by King Jahandar Shah as a memento upon their leave-taking, which is contrary to the Company orders and the general regulations, to these Honourable Gentlemen: nevertheless it is approved that they may retain the *ceerpaauwen* or robes of office given to them by various people because, according to the said report, these are of no great value, and also somewhat worn through use, so that they would not be of any use to the Honourable Company.

Concerning the annex to the embassy and the costs of the same, it has been decided not to deal with the heavy expenses and gifts, to the sum of 13,664½ Rupees (even though this was incurred on the orders and with the foreknowledge of the ambassador) paid to the Surat Governor Mameth (Muhammad) Beekchan and others in order to acquire the conveyance and furnishing of the said house of Ettabaerchan, but also to leave the decision [fol. 443] about this to our Lords and Masters; but nevertheless to declare that it has struck us as improper and untimely that people have bought the execution of a positive order from the Emperor, which benefit the ambassador had received from this ruler, and also that an order that it should be made ready had also been sent by the latter; with a further note to the Director and Councillors that both this affair and the pompous entrance and occupation of that building has seemed extremely excessive.

In view of the fact that we foster some not unfounded suspicions about Director Ketelaar and the other Surat servants, it would be advisable, the sooner the better, to ratify the most recently granted *firman*s and other beneficial documents and to send another dispatch to the present king, Farruksiyar, and this same must take place within an short while. Although the trade everywhere in the empire of the Mughals can still be carried out using the *firman*s of the late Jahandar Shah and those of the former kings without [requiring] the ratification of the incumbent ruling prince, this does not happen without constant impediments and quarrelling in order to procure large gifts, in view of the enormous [financial] burdens recently incurred by the Honourable Company [fol. 444], and now yet again (although this time so much) which will have to be borne, it is decided not to essay this, but to temporize with any such post dispatches and to postpone the same, until we have been strengthened by the judgement and the approbation of the Most Noble Gentlemen Principals, unless the following recommendations from Surat as well as from Bengal and Coromandel should point to the absolute necessity of doing this, all the more so because the Surat advice about the present dubious and tottery situation in the Mughal Empire, and the harsh government of the present king, Farruksiyar, make it very inadvisable to dispatch such a future embassy for the present time.

Nevertheless, it has been decided to approve the order passed on to Resident Huy-



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sinkvelt by Ambassador Ketelaar to journey to Agra to congratulate Prince Farruksiyar on his victory over King Jahandar Shah, when he happen to come to that city, by presenting him with an impressive gift in ready money according to the custom of the country, and also with his opportune successes and his accession to the Mughal throne, although [so far] this opportunity has not presented itself.

It has been noted to write to the servants in Surat, [saying] that it will be necessary that in Agra the said Resident should not only be pleasant to Raja Tsjiewiekam, whom the ambassador has noted is a good friend of the Honourable Company, and also stands in high favour with the ruler Farruksiyar, as far as his [financial] situation will allow him, without displaying any dismay about Prince Farruksiyar's accession, so that [we] in time might also be able to enjoy the help of the same in dealing with said ruler; but also [when] at the court with the plenipotentiary of the Company and with other acquaintances there pick up useful and secure reports, keep up a correspondence, not just to find out knowledge of the court, but also what might happen to pass in relation to the Honourable Company, so that the servants in Surat, Coromandel and in Bengal can be kept constantly supplied with fresh information.

In Batavia Castle, date as noted at the beginning (signed) Abraham van Riebeeck, Christoffel van Swoll, Cornelis Chastelein, Mattheus de Haan, Frans Castelijn, Lauren Tolling, Hendrick [fol 446] Zwaardcroon, Pieter Roselaar, Theodorus de Haek, Samuel Timmerman, Jacob Faas, Joan Cornelis d'Ableing and Joan van der Nipport, secretary.



4 Colophon

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5 Folio image

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