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Introduction
The Art of Embassy: Situating Objects and Images in the Early Modern Diplomatic Encounter

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In a chapter published in the 2000 volume *The Diplomacy of Art*, Anthony Colantuono suggested that works of art, particularly monumental oil paintings and sculpture, could play a salient role in the delicate negotiations that comprised European diplomatic relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rather than being peripheral accessories to political action, objects could ease the terms of negotiation or present subtle and sensitive messages, even rebukes, which could only be communicated through the veils of allegory and rhetoric. As such, a work of art, when given as a gift or offered during a tense moment of political uncertainty, could be an "instrument of diplomatic persuasion, even of seduction" and thus function effectively as a "mute diplomat," relying upon shared codes of visual communication.[1]

Over fifteen years later, Colantuono's proposals continue to hold resonance, for they suggest that art and material objects should be understood as central to the project of early modern diplomacy, rather than being dismissed as frivolous items subject to the de-politicized whims of collectors. As Colantuono has shown, narrative images were complex go-betweens that worked effectively because they could suggest divergent meanings or varied intentions to their

* This volume was initially inspired by a panel entitled "The Art of the Gift: Theorizing Objects in Early Modern Cross-Cultural Exchange," held at the Annual Meeting of the College Art Association in New York in February 2013, organized by Nancy Um and Leah Clark. The editors of this volume wish to recognize those who spoke on the original panel, many of whose articles are featured here, in addition to the generous colleagues who participated enthusiastically in the discussion that followed it, all of which helped to guide the present endeavor.

1 Anthony Colantuono, "The Mute Diplomat: Theorizing the Role of Images in Seventeenth-Century Political Negotiations," in *The Diplomacy of Art: Artistic Creation and Politics in Seicento Italy*, ed. Elizabeth Cropper (Milan, 2000), 54.

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givers and receivers, while deftly operating within the language of cross-cultural politesse. By locating diplomatic art within this dynamic locus of exchange and meaning, Colantuono aptly set the stage, and perhaps even presaged, John Watkins' later call for a "new diplomatic history," as a theoretically engaged and wholly interdisciplinary revival to this long-standing and generally conventional field of study.[2]

The present volume builds on Colantuono's theorizations, an influential contribution to that forerunning volume of 2000,[3] while also responding to Watkins' invitation, by asserting that visual and material approaches should be located at the center of the study of early modern ambassadorial exchange, which was always undergirded by the transfer of objects and often represented (or imagined) in pictorial form. By privileging objects of exchange as crucial and active tools of cross-cultural mediation and communication, while also looking closely at visual representations of encounter, the articles in this volume collectively make the case that a patently visual and material approach offers a productive path to pursue a new diplomatic history that is synthetically, rather than cosmetically, interdisciplinary.

The essays that follow eagerly adopt Colantuono's commitment to more fully theorizing the role of objects in diplomatic exchange, but they do so while also considerably opening up the corpus of material considered beyond the expected scope of monumental works in durable materials, such as painting on canvas or sculpture in bronze or marble. Indeed, a whole range of goods appears in the pages that follow: textiles, maps, prints, and tapestries, classes of objects that were much less resilient physically and some more resistant to dense allegorical readings, but even so were quite prevalent media of early modern exchange. Images of the diplomatic encounter are also featured saliently, although these are never taken as transparent documents of events that occurred. Rather, they are seen as mediations, often personal or at least individualized, which provide certain windows into the world of the early modern ambassadorial encounter and therefore must be interpreted carefully.

Moreover, this volume looks at diplomatic encounters that took shape across acknowledged regional borders, rather than remaining within the

2 John Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* (*JMEMS*) 38, no. 1 (2008).

3 Not all of Colantuono's fellow contributors to the 2000 volume deployed the dynamic interpretational framework that he presented. For an example of the "collecting" paradigm that he was critical of, see Vicente Lleo Canal, "The Painter and the Diplomat," in *Diplomacy of Art*, 121-50.

heterogeneous, but still relatively bounded context of intra-European exchange.[4] Thus, it moves away from the traditional concentration on Renaissance Italy and its neighbors, famously exemplified by Garrett Mattingly's "new diplomacy," which was equated with Masaccio's "new art," Brunelleschi's inventions in architecture, and developments in humanism. As a result, it expands beyond some of the limited questions that have sprung mostly from the experience of European embassies, such as the undue weight placed on the concept of the residential ambassador.[5] The following case studies are all cross-cultural and together offer a broad chronology, bridging the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, without privileging Europe as the primary dispatcher or singular recipient of overseas embassies, thus helping to debunk the western imaginary as the primary locus for understanding east-west exchange. While some involve extended journeys across the Atlantic or Indian Ocean, others take short leaps between neighboring lands, although both Sinem Casale and Lihong Liu reveal that the relationships between adjacent states, such as the Ottomans and Safavids or the Manchu Qing and Korean Chosŏn Dynasties, are by no means less complex than more distant encounters. By pushing beyond the limits of intra-European engagement and the diverse, yet generally shared codes of encounter among the "society of princes,"[6] we propose to expand the geography of early modern diplomacy, while also taking up quite purposefully those cross-cultural engagements that could be particularly messy, subject to divergent interpretations, and open-ended.

Indeed, rather than resolving the art of embassy's scope or presenting a master corpus of images or objects to define it, this volume aims to unsettle

4 For a few examples, of many, which deal solely with intra-Europe exchange, see Maureen Cassidy-Geiger, ed., *Fragile Diplomacy: Meissen Porcelain for European Courts, ca. 1710-63* (New Haven, CT, 2007); Cropper, *Diplomacy of Art*; Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, eds., *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Houndmills, 2011), and a special issue of the *JEMH* 14, no. 6 (2010), "Italian Ambassadorial Networks in Early Modern Europe," ed. Catherine Fletcher and Jennifer Mara DeSilva. Conversely, Daniel Goffman has argued that negotiations with states outside of Europe undoubtedly contributed to the "new diplomacy." See Goffman, "Negotiating with the Renaissance State: the Ottoman Empire and the New Diplomacy," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, 2007), 61.

5 Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London, 1963), 55; Cropper, "Introduction," in *Diplomacy of Art*, 9. For a reassessment of the resident ambassador, see Isabella Lazzarini, "Renaissance Diplomacy," in *The Italian Renaissance State*, ed. Andrea Gamberini and Isabella Lazzarini (Cambridge, 2012), 425-43.

6 Erik Thomson, "For a Comparative History Of Early Modern Diplomacy," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31, no. 2 (2006): specifically 151-56.

reconciled perspectives on the visual culture of diplomacy and to highlight the crucial methodological problems inherent to it, while also looking at objects that failed to reach their recipients or did not successfully accomplish the goals of their senders. For instance, in the articles that follow, we consider the ambassador in dynamic relationship to the objects that he carried and not as a loyal figure of the state with a clearly visible or singular agenda. Gifts are key to diplomatic engagements, but they are also murky topics for study because so many have been lost over time and may be known only through copies and other secondary forms and formats. Moreover, texts and images present multiple and sometimes wholly divergent perspectives, which require complex reading strategies to navigate.

The five essays that follow explore objects and images, some of them lost and others extant, as crucial tools that help us to understand the unstable visual and material exchanges that took shape within the context of the early modern diplomatic encounter, as well as the divergent visual records of them. Sean Roberts looks at the map that Sigismondo Malatesta purportedly tried to send to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II in 1461, although the artist-ambassador, Matteo de' Pasti, never made it to Istanbul with his gifts because he was seized en route and declared a spy. By proposing that the map in question may have been of little use as a document or even a complete invention, the author engages a deft discussion about the value of material substantiations of geographic knowledge in the fifteenth-century Mediterranean. Then Casale turns to the Ottomans as recipients of another more successfully dispatched embassy, one sent by the Safavid shah in 1590 after the latter failed to continue an ongoing war. In this case, the young Persian prince who served as both gift and hostage was not necessarily seen as an emblem of victory upon his arrival in Istanbul. As the author shows, the subtleties of his contested reception appear only through a close analysis of the poetic, historical, and visual representations of his arrival, both official and unofficial, which convey that this gift may not have fulfilled the desired goals of its giver or recipient. Carrie Anderson examines the textile gifts that the governor-general of Dutch Brazil Johan Maurits dispersed during his seventeenth-century Atlantic tenure, but also after his return home, thus placing him at the center of wide reaching networks of trade and diplomacy. As the author demonstrates, these gifts were highly mutable in terms of their meaning and interpretation and subject to localized conditions of display and reception in The Hague, Paris, Valetta, and St. Petersburg, a flexibility that can be associated directly with the pliable potential of textiles to serve as a medium of cross-cultural communication. Finally, Kristel Smentek and Liu explore the problematics of engaging

in diplomatic exchange, formal or informal, with the Qing emperors in the eighteenth century. On one hand, the Qing court received all ambassadors as tributary subjects. But on the other, the Qing rulers and their envoys were deeply vexed about their own legitimacy in a post-Ming Asian world. Smentek examines the dispatch and then prominent display of a series of orientalizing French tapestries to the Qianlong emperor in 1765 and the unstable status of the Chinese Christian converts who were to present them as gifts, while Liu takes a close look at an illustrated album produced for the Manchu envoy Akedun. The album showcases and commemorates Akedun's missions to the Chosŏn court, but also reflects the persistent conflicts of inter-state diplomatic relations that took shape under the contested Manchu-Qing imperial order.

Ambassadors as Agents, Artists, and Purveyors of Goods

While the "new diplomatic history" has inspired great interdisciplinary interest, it has also invited certain fears that this reinvention represents nothing more than a repackaging of the old diplomatic history.[7] Indeed, this much-invoked label is uncomfortably and unintentionally close to "new diplomacy," the conventional term employed to characterize the "balance of powers" following the 1454 Peace of Lodi and the emergence of resident ambassadors in fifteenth-century Italy, a convergence that could potentially narrow the stakes of future study rather than expand them.[8] But, if one salient and distinct feature of the "new diplomatic history" can be identified, it is the desire to place the ambassador not as a simple vessel of the state, but as an agent in his own right, with his own subjectivity, perceptions, and expectations about the goal and scope of his mission. In the 2009 edited volume, *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture*, Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani rightly underline the independent subjectivity of the envoy by showing that the emissary was "situated in culture and history," while representing "the acts of mediation and

7 Heiko Droste, "Diplomacy as a Means of Cultural Transfer in Early Modern Times," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31, no. 2 (2006): 144-50. As an example of recent work that reflects paradigms of the "old diplomatic history," see K.W. Schweizer and M.J. Schumann, "The Revitalisation of Diplomatic History: Renewed Reflections," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 19 (2008): 149-186. For an overview of the recent debates in diplomatic history see Paul M. Dover, "Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture," *Renaissance Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2011): 1279-81.

8 Diana Carrió-Invernizzi, "A New Diplomatic History and the Networks of Spanish Diplomacy in the Baroque Era," *The International History Review* 36, no. 4 (2014): 603-4.

communication that he is involved in as constituting cultural meaning, rather than simply bearing it."[9]

And, as discussed amply by Daniela Frigo and Marika Keblusek, the position of the ambassador was by no means circumscribed or limited in its purview, for it commonly intersected with cultural and artistic activities. Frigo has underlined the importance of *negozio*, an elastic term often found in diplomatic correspondence, which could include a wide range of ambassadorial activities, such as the acquisition of goods and merchandise, the commissioning of artists and humanists, the negotiation of trade agreements, and the securing of secret military, financial, and diplomatic agreements.[10] Along similar lines, Keblusek has used the notion of "double agency," referring to the multiple roles that early modern brokers and travelers of all types, such as merchants, artists, and informants, but certainly diplomats as well, could simultaneously inhabit, but also move between.[11] The essays in this volume follow along these now well-established notions of ambassadorial multi-functionality, with the underlying assumption that each embassy could entail many different types of brokerage and mediation, encompassing overtly political concerns in addition to the seemingly "secondary" tasks of procuring art objects and guaranteeing their safe arrival at home.[12] But rather than simply confirming these overlapping and intertwined roles, it is worthwhile to examine the kinds of tensions these multiple engagements could induce. A merchant acting as ambassador, such as Lorenzo de' Medici, to take an oft-cited example, served different interests at the same time—his own and those of his state—which undoubtedly created complex, and perhaps conflicted ties of obligation and allegiance. Through facilitating loans and the circulation of goods through pawning, he provided the material means by which dispersed individuals could come into contact with one another, but which also had the opportunity to initiate new forms of visual culture. These various interests could potentially cause conflicts

9 Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani, "Introduction," in *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, and Traffic, 1550-1700*, ed. Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (Burlington, VT, 2009), 4.

10 Daniela Frigo, "Prudence and Experience: Ambassadors and Political Culture in Early Modern Italy," *JMEMS* 38, no. 1 (2008): 15-34; also see Lazzarini, "Renaissance Diplomacy."

11 Marika Keblusek, "Introduction: Double Agents in Early Modern Europe," in *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marika Keblusek and Badeloch Vera Noldus (Leiden, 2011), 7.

12 Keblusek, "The Embassy of Art: Diplomats as Cultural Brokers," in *Double Agents*, 11-26; Helen Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power: The Material World of the Stuart Diplomat, 1660-1714* (Oxford, 2011), 65-90.

and competition over the objects exchanged, a subtle issue that Keblusek treats as well.[13]

In this volume, we encounter the Manchu envoy, Akedun, who endeavored to situate himself personally as a revered ambassador to the Chosŏn court, where Qing claims to the Ming dynasty's preeminence were not wholly accepted. The images and poetic commentary that he provided on his Korean travels must be understood as attempts to neutralize these implicit anxieties, while also representing the intertwined nature of his personal, familial, and imperial investments in the Qing-Chosŏn relationship. Moreover, as Liu deftly represents, Akedun, along with his portraitists and panegyrists, could mediate, adjust, or calibrate his image depending on the pictorial venue, in order to account for or emphasize these various positions and affiliations.

Moreover, like so many well-placed and well-connected cross-cultural agents, Akedun was an artist himself, although the album that Liu discusses was not rendered in his own hand, and he did not identify himself as an artist-ambassador. Even so, his name may be added to a long roster that includes mainly European artists who undertook overseas missions, such as the Venetian Giovanni Bellini or Bruges-based Jan van Eyck in the fifteenth century and their later Antwerp-centered counterpart Peter Paul Rubens in the seventeenth.[14] As Keblusek and Badeloch Noldus describe, these mobile artists, with their elite connections and firsthand knowledge of various court systems, were well suited to serve as political go-betweens, in addition to providing general advice on cultural matters or facilitating the acquisition and conveyance of foreign works of art, rarities, and exotica.[15] As such, they could expand their professional reputations while also capitalizing on the credibility gained through their accomplishments in the wider art world.

Yet, as illuminated by Roberts in this volume, these overlapping and sometimes ambiguous roles could embroil artist-ambassadors in significant political

13 For his diplomatic and cultural role, see Melissa Meriam Bullard, "Lorenzo and Patterns of Diplomatic Discourse in the Late Fifteenth Century," in *Lorenzo the Magnificent: Culture and Politics*, ed. Michael Mallett and Nicholas Mann (London, 1996), 263-74; Leah R. Clark, "Transient Possessions: Circulation, Replication, and Transmission of Gems and Jewels in Quattrocento Italy," *JEMH* 15, no. 3 (2011): 185-221. On conflicts of interest, see Marika Keblusek, "Introduction: Profiling the Early Modern Agent," in *Your Humble Servant: Agents in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Hans Cools, Marika Keblusek, and Badeloch Noldus (Hilversum, 2006), 9-16.

14 Michael Auwers, "The Gift of Rubens: Rethinking the Concept of Gift-Giving in Early Modern Diplomacy," *European History Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2013): 423.

15 Keblusek, "The Embassy of Art"; Badeloch Vera Noldus, "A Spider in its Web: Agent and Artist Michel Le Blon and His Northern European Network," in *Double Agents*, 161-192.

intrigue. The cross-cultural efforts of Matteo de' Pasti have been cast historically as espionage, a characterization that overrides his artistic agency for a narrowly politicized reading of his role. But, Roberts warns against the tendency to overlook his artistic persona and skills, suggesting that we can only understand the nature of his mission through a close consideration of the map that he was said to have carried. Yet because this item is now lost, the question of the knowledge conveyed therein is still open to debate. Roberts inventively posits a key role for objects and images, thus suggesting that a study of agents cannot be fully executed without considering the material contexts of their dispatch. By positing that art could serve as more than just a "cover" for clandestine activities, he also implicitly suggests that we avoid the narrow biographical focus on human subjects as cross-cultural actors and puts forward a more complex reading of the "tangled intersection" between people and things in early modern diplomacy, thus inspiring a reassessment of conventional subject/object categories, the material and immaterial aspects of embassy, and the exchanges that they facilitated.[16] Such an approach converges effectively with the work of Bruno Latour and his Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), which posits objects as mediating agents within larger networks, a particularly relevant intervention when considering the formation, maintenance, and disintegration of diplomatic relations, which involved both people and things.[17]

The Onerous Weight of the Diplomatic Gift

It goes without saying that the study of the gift has now expanded far beyond its anthropological and sociological purview since Marcel Mauss's *Essai sur le don* of 1925. Historians, such as Natalie Zemon Davis and Felicity Heal, have avidly explored the ways in which gifts enable the constitution, maintenance, and even disturbance of the social fabric through their exchange and circulation, with a keen focus on the early modern world.[18] Yet, both look at the social

16 Badeloch Noldus, "Loyalty and Betrayal: Artist-Agents Michel Le Blon and Pieter Isaacsz, and Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna," in *Your Humble Servant*, 63; Auwers, "The Gift of Rubens," 423.

17 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford, 2005). For an example of how this theory may be applied to early modern gift-giving, see Michael Zell, "Rembrandt's Gifts: A Case Study of Actor-Network-Theory," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 2-26.

18 Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison, WI, 2000); Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014).

relations that were effected by gift exchange, in addition to the protocols that surrounded it, but with little concern for the material and physical content of the gifts themselves.[19]

It thus still stands as a task for art historians, with their object-oriented proclivities, to respond to this significant gap. In recent years, Anthony Cutler, Cecily Hilsdale, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Alexander Nagel, Genevieve Warwick, and Michael Zell have answered this call, by picking up on gift studies as a promising strand of inquiry. Their work demonstrates the ample interest that studies of the gift present for art historians, while also suggesting that this rubric may hold particular resonance as an organizing framework for pre-modernists. But, the work of the above-mentioned group is by no means resolved or unified methodologically. Nagel, Warwick, and Zell primarily treat the gifting practices of early modern collectors and artists, and some particularly well-known ones such as Michelangelo and Rembrandt, who exchanged objects within fairly closed circles of like-minded peers, in addition to art agents and patrons.[20] Their research effectively shows how gifts could solidify and manifest personal bonds between those who shared aesthetic tastes and material preoccupations.

By contrast, Cutler, Behrens-Abouseif, and Hilsdale are much more relevant to the cases at hand because they treat the considerably more elastic context of the cross-cultural diplomatic encounter, although their work also represents certain rifts and divergences. Cutler and Behrens-Abouseif rely on an extensive corpus of textual sources that enumerate but almost never describe items that were delivered as gifts, some of which were relatively generic in character

19 This general lack of attention to visual and material aspects of gift exchange is indicated clearly in the relative absence of plates and figures in these studies, even in the interdisciplinary collection Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen, eds., *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen, 2003). In terms of method, Valentin Groebner's work stands out for its uniqueness. He is concerned not with the social relations that gifts engender, but rather in the ways in which gifts represent changing modes of social order and bureaucracy. Valentin Groebner, *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts: Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn (Philadelphia, 2002).

20 Alexander Nagel, "Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna," *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (1997): 647-68; Michael Zell, "The Gift among Friends: Rembrandt's Art in the Network of his Patronal and Social Relations," in *Rethinking Rembrandt*, ed. Alan Chong and Michael Zell (Zwolle: Waanders, 2002), 173-194; Genevieve Warwick, "Gift Exchange and Art Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Resta's Drawing Albums," *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 4 (1997): 630-46.

despite their considerable value, such as textiles, gems, and aromatics.[21] The task for both is not to examine actual gifted objects, although Behrens-Abouseif presents a few extant or comparable examples. Rather, they endeavor to decipher these long rosters and to interpret their contents beyond the quantitative data that they offer, which was recorded in order to awe future generations in their scope, but is particularly frustrating to the present-day object-oriented scholar. In her recent monograph and related articles on Byzantine diplomacy, Hilsdale presents quite a different approach. She touts the particularity of art historical methods for the study of the gift, stating: "It is one thing for textual scholars to recognize the power and hierarchy inherent in gift exchange, and quite another for art historians to elaborate precisely how such agendas are visually constructed by relying on texts, objects, images, and spatial environments."[22] Indeed, her work successfully represents the results of painstaking visual and often comparative analysis that allows her to tease out dense layers of meaning in objects, many of which were quite complex in their manufacture.

Some of the most famous examples of diplomatic gifts were sumptuous or unique objects meant to inspire awe in the recipient as well as a deep respect for the giver. These luxury objects have in turn served as the fodder for some recent, and quite stunning, museum exhibitions that highlight the extraordinary consumption practices of pre-modern courts.[23] However, visual uniqueness, aesthetic value, and symbolic impact were not the only criteria for early modern gift selection. In fact, some of the items that receive treatment in the following pages were relatively generic, such as the linen garments that Maurits sent to allies in Brazil in the seventeenth century, described by Anderson. Other bestowals are no longer extant, but must be evidenced through alternate types of visual media such as prints, as with some versions of the Old Indies

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21 Anthony Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 247-78; Cutler, "Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine and Early Islamic Diplomacy," *JMEMS* 38, no. 1 (2008): 79-101; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate: Gifts and Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World* (London, 2014).

22 Cecily J. Hilsdale, "The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift: The Royal Crown of Hungary Re-Invented," *Art History* 31, no. 5 (2008): 603-31; Hilsdale, "Gift," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 171-82; Cecily J. Hilsdale, *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline* (New York, 2014), 18.

23 Cassidy-Geiger, ed., *Fragile Diplomacy*; Alexey Konstantinovich Levykin, *The Tsars and the East: Gifts from Turkey and Iran in the Moscow Kremlin* (London, 2009); and Linda Komaroff, ed., *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* (New Haven, CT, 2011).

tapestries and the eighteenth-century French examples that were sent to the Qing court and discussed by Smentek. As the most extreme case, the fifteenth-century map that Sigismondo Malatesta allegedly tried to send as a gift to the Ottoman sultan may have never existed, as Roberts explains. The majority of early modern diplomatic gifts cannot be traced or matched to extant objects, even when relatively complete gift lists and inventories that enumerate them remain, thus suggesting a large gap between our physical and textual record and the methodological difficulties of correlating the two.[24]

For these reasons, this volume rests on the assumption that any discussion of gifts must grapple with a tenuous relationship between tangible goods and the textual accounts of them, moving between the methodological pole represented by Cutler and Behrens-Abouseif who are bound by the rote format of their gift registers and that represented by Hilsdale which is intensely object oriented and undergirded by a much richer material record. Indeed, the relatively poor survival rate of objects of exchange and images of diplomacy is a central rather than peripheral question that should be not be sidestepped, as Roberts conveys so convincingly in this volume. Although, by art historical standards, the essays included here are quite thinly illustrated, the authors are intensely committed to the interpretation of objects of exchange, even those that are lost today. One can still understand the visual features and materiality of gifts, such as Smentek's now-lost tapestries, even if suggested only by brief verbal indications or through alternate representational forms. With this challenge and charge, this volume suggests that the object, however unwieldy, should be the starting point for inquiry rather than an accessory to it.

It is also clear that gifts in the early modern period could serve multiple purposes, interpenetrating the sphere of commodity exchange[25] and encompassing shifting and multivalent realms of circulation, use, and value, as argued eloquently by anthropologists Pierre Bourdieu, Arjun Appadurai, Annette Weiner, and Nicholas Thomas, who all built successively on each other's work.[26] For instance, textiles, as Anderson demonstrates, could be presented

24 For example, see Selma Schwartz and Jeffrey Munger, "Gifts of Meissen Porcelain to the French Court, 1728-50," in *Fragile Diplomacy*, 141-73.

25 Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen, eds., *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2002), 3-4.

26 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA, 1990), 111-21; Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge, 1989), 6-16; Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992); and Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

as unsewn raw materials, worked garments that dictated a particular mode of wearing, or technically sophisticated tapestries that were meant as objects of display. Each form represents a varying relationship and proximity to the body of the recipient and thus could occupy deeply symbolic and representational registers, which were subject to reinterpretation as they moved through space and time. This close relationship between the gift of textiles and the bearer of the gift is exemplified in the Italian poet Torquato Tasso's dialogue *Il messaggero* from the sixteenth century, where he describes the ambassador as "a weaver of friendship" (*tessitore dell'amicizia*).[27] Tasso's apt metaphor of the ambassador at a loom speaks to the omnipresent place of textiles in the early modern world of exchange, but also the entangled quality of the diplomatic encounter, a complexity often doubled by the tapestry and textile gifts carried therein.

It is only through a close analysis of these objects, their meanings, and uses that one can understand the ties that were initiated, or intervened in, through gift exchange. As Roberts and Smentek argue, a gift of a regional map or tapestries with exoticizing motifs could highlight the shared interests and preoccupations of distinct givers and receivers across perceived cultural boundaries and in unexpected ways. But, as Roberts also demonstrates, they could just as easily inspire debate and trigger accusations of treachery and betrayal. Gifts also possessed a generative quality, giving rise to associations between individuals (and other things) that may not have been connected to one another otherwise, as Anderson deftly shows. Gifted objects characteristically inspired copies and served as the basis for new artifacts, whether through imitations, representations, or legendary verbal accounts. Intermediality, the ways that an image or artifact migrates from one form to another, is a crucial mechanism for the circulation of objects, but can also hasten the transformation of their meaning. Gifted tapestries such as the Old Indies and the *Tenture chinoise* discussed by Anderson and Smentek elucidate this effectively, as they were both produced from existing images that were already circulating as prints or paintings. But, both could be copied to produce new textiles with subtle variations, which, in the latter case, were then reproduced again in prints, and thus provided with the means to circulate more widely than was initially intended, and certainly outside the narrow confines of a relationship between a single giver and receiver.

Moreover, gifted items were often placed on view prominently, thus generating circumstances of reception that are worth close consideration. Tracey Sowerby has examined the kinds of behaviors that portraits of Queen

27 Frigo, "Prudence and Experience," 25.

Elizabeth, for instance, inspired when given and then displayed to individuals with varying levels of allegiance to and affection for her.[28] As sketched by Sowerby, portraits were not fixed in the meanings encoded by their painters or gift-givers. Rather such objects, which included small wearable cameos and large life-size paintings, were dynamic triggers that could elicit responses of loyalty or betrayal when exhibited in various external settings. Along these lines, Anderson demonstrates the multiple readings that the Old Indies tapestries generated when hung in various seventeenth-century court settings. To one viewer, the objects represented in them could point to the bounty of the Caribbean, ripe for colonial exploitation. However, the tapestries themselves could just as easily signify the dominance of French modes of artisanal manufacture for another. The later tapestries that were received at the Qing court and discussed by Smentek were copied into other formats and hung in a Europeanized palace outside of Beijing, thus providing the sense that these items could initiate new meanings when exchanged across a dynamic cross-cultural sphere. As such, their interpretation cannot be pinned down through the singular lens of the French giver (or even the modern scholar devoted to unpacking the visual culture of Orientalism), but rather should be understood through a series of fluid and continuous interplays between looking east and looking west.

Representing the Diplomatic Encounter

Central to diplomatic history is the subtle evaluation of sources, both official and unofficial—diplomatic correspondence and ambassadorial reports, as well as local chronicles, and personal letters—which are usually complicated by the presence of two (or more) independent views of any encounter. Then, when attention is paid to the visual representations of diplomacy, yet another set of perspectives and positions enters the purview of historical consideration. Moreover, a reliance on prescriptive textual sources often masks the instability and contextual dynamism of the diplomatic encounters that took place on the ground because prevailing ideals of courtesy and hierarchy often went unrealized in actual encounters that usually required a great deal of improvisation and tailored departure from expected protocols.

As many of the following contributions show, textual and visual sources do not necessarily line up in agreement with each other to describe, account for,

28 Tracey Sowerby, "'A memorial and a pledge of faith': Portraiture and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture," *The English Historical Review* 129 (2014): 296-331.

or refer to the cross-cultural diplomatic encounter. Rather than merely illustrating texts, images often tell a unique story and sometimes allow us to tease out tensions and instabilities that texts attempt to silence or cannot adequately convey. The various visual, textual, and poetic representations of the Safavid prince Haydar Mirza's arrival and reception at the Ottoman court portrayed by artists from the capital, as well as from its fringes and beyond, provide possibilities for alternative readings to the celebratory official accounts. These divergences, which are corroborated in various unofficial sources as well, underline the need to pay particular attention to the investments and limitations of all of these modes of representation, as Casale ably demonstrates.

However, far from privileging the visual over the textual, the articles gathered here have highlighted the productive ways that visual, material, and written sources intersect, but also how one type can open up doors for interpretation of the other. Roberts deploys textual sources along with a close scrutiny of cartographic practices in order to interrogate the use (and even the existence) of a lost fifteenth-century map, thus providing a clearer picture of what actually transpired in the failed and much occluded encounter between Matteo de' Pasti, Malatesta, and Mehmed II. Also, as discussed in Liu's article, the illustrations of the Qing album of Akedun augmented the affective value of the earlier calligraphic passages that they were paired with. As the author demonstrates clearly, the envoy himself self-consciously called for his poems to be transformed into a visual record of his missions, a format that triggered a new set of nostalgic reflections and with them the addition of further interlineal inscriptions. Liu's study suggests that texts can generate images, which can then further instigate new texts, thereby presenting a dynamic model that destabilizes fixed notions of precedence or relational dependency between the two representational modes.

Moreover, when combined, visual and textual records can reveal the performative properties of diplomacy.[29] Through the narration of events, with their associated rituals and art objects, certain texts or poems can present deeply visual components whereby the act of description itself can even take on an ekphrastic tone, particularly when it comes to the ceremonies that underpinned any diplomatic encounter. Descriptions of ceremonies, paintings and images representing processions, portraits of individuals partaking in

29 For two excellent examples that highlight the performative aspects of the diplomatic encounter, but also privilege textual sources, see Susan Mokhberi, "Finding Common Ground Between Europe and Asia: Understanding and Conflict During the Persian Embassy to France in 1715," *JEMH* 16, no. 1 (2012): 53-80, and James Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, NC, 1995).

diplomatic encounters, poetic accounts of royal audience, or representations of gifted objects provide portals to understanding these various multidimensional rituals and exercises, which were fleeting, but still played a major "role in the production and reproduction of social relations," which Brigitte Buettner has described for the Valois court.[30]

In fact, these ceremonial particularities in reception involving subtle bodily movements and highly orchestrated acts of social choreography were crucial parts of the diplomatic encounter, but are often quite difficult to reconstruct based on texts alone. As J. Hennings has shown with the reception of Czar Peter I in Vienna in 1698, the circumstances of this embassy's audience were so contested that they could only be held six weeks after the delegation's arrival and right before their departure.[31] Hennings relies upon a diagram that details the layout of this thoroughly negotiated ceremonial reception and a banquet seating chart, both fortuitously preserved, thus using visual sources to make sense of the subtle codes of interaction that were planned and their spatial particularities. In this volume, Liu highlights the central place of public reception in the Qing-Chosŏn interface, the details of which were watched closely by all participants. The absence of a monarch at a departure ceremony was an obvious snub, but other subtleties, such as how far welcoming parties advanced to greet ambassadors or exactly where individuals were placed within hierarchical relationships of seating, were also closely observed and often represented or alluded to in diplomatic imagery and verse. In some cases, the representation of the event portrayed an imagined ideal obscuring the instability of the performance where real bodies interacted with one another and intended goals were not always achieved. These ephemeral elements of the diplomatic encounter can only be understood through a dynamic reading of text and image in concert with one another.

The Material Stakes of the Diplomatic Encounter

The role of the early modern emissary was complex, dangerous, risky, ambiguous, and always subject to scrutiny, especially through processes of visual assessment and material identification. For instance, in 1608-9, a certain Transoxianan named Aqam Hajji arrived at the Mughal court identifying

30 Brigitte Buettner, "Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400," *Art Bulletin* 83, no. 4 (2001): 598.

31 J. Hennings, "The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1698," *International History Review* 30, no. 3 (2008): 515-44.

himself as an Ottoman emissary.[32] The emperor Jahangir describes how he adjudicated the claim of this unknown visitor, based on his assessment of his character and the documents that he carried with him, which were "credentials of unknown authorship." Jahangir most certainly also examined this individual's material self-presentation, including his garb and the gifts that he presented. In this case, these various material and immaterial elements failed to convey the esteemed status that the proposed envoy claimed and thus the emperor turned him away without any consideration or privileges. Material objects and visual presentation could be the keys to the success of early modern diplomatic missions, but also their failure.

Rather than looking at images and objects as a way to reconstruct the backdrop of embassy, we argue here that the material and visual conditions of embassy and its social underpinnings are deeply intertwined. Thus, they can reveal larger systems of meaning and value that must be located in historically and geographically specific contexts. As established in the following essays, these conditions constitute the substance of the diplomatic encounter, rather than its mere appendages. By nuancing the relationships between text and image, subjects and objects, the material and immaterial, and by closely scrutinizing representations, along with their circulation and citation, these articles provide a rich alternative to the focus on the political, ideological, and social-economic reification of power-relations among regimes that conventionally, but not surprisingly, dominates diplomatic studies. But, the articles gathered here do more than simply argue that these objects and images need to be considered carefully. As a group, they contend that visual and material approaches to the cross-cultural encounter are integral tools in the quest for a deeper, subtler, and in fact more complex understanding of early modern diplomacy in all of its many, and sometimes unruly, facets.

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32 *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, trans., ed. and ann. Wheeler Thackston (Oxford, 1999), 95.