



Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritson, Giorgio Riello, eds.. *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 314 pp. \$99.99, cloth, ISBN 978-1-108-41550-7.

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There are many important and helpful ways in which the ten essays in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* build on recent literature and provide insight into the ways in which the exchange of material goods through diplomatic practice shaped and reflected early modern economies and power relations, as well as transimperial and intercultural ties and disjunctures. This collection of essays continues to confirm that material culture provides a captivating starting point for exploring regional and global historical dynamics. Additionally, it reveals how difficult it is to isolate early modern European history from its global context. Though there are many threads to follow—including trade diplomacy, religious orders' diplomatic endeavors, and Europeans' varying degrees of competence in foreign gift-giving contexts—its greatest specific contribution may be its case studies of numerous political entities' gift diplomacy with the Ottoman Empire spanning from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth century.

A quick overview will not do justice to the strands of diplomatic history, gift-giving, and material culture that overlap in this volume, but will provide the reader with some context. For roughly fifty years, calls for a new diplomatic history have emerged from a variety of corners, and in

recent decades historical investigations of diplomacy have moved beyond nineteenth- and twentieth-century definitions of what constitutes it.[1] Work on consular diplomacy and diplomatic interactions relating to trade, diplomatic culture, the role of women in official and unofficial capacities, and representatives of religious orders, for example, has expanded the definition of diplomacy beyond a conventional “foreign policy” framework. Not only has the teleological emphasis on increasing professionalization been questioned, but work by Daniel Goffman has also suggested that early Italian diplomatic practices seen as seminal to the development of European diplomacy were influenced by interactions with the Ottoman Empire.[2] Meanwhile, Marcel Mauss's early twentieth-century approach to gifts, a product of the imperial/colonial context of anthropology, based on arm-chair observations of non-European peoples, led to an overarching conceptualization of the reciprocal nature of the gift that remained somewhat definitive until the turn of the twenty-first century. Michael Harbsmeier has suggested that rather than starting with an overarching gift theory, historians document instances of gift exchange in order to create a more empirical understanding, while acknowledging the context-specific contingency of the meaning of gift-giving.

[3] The essays in this volume provide such an opportunity.

Finally, the “material turn” of the last few decades has meant an acknowledgement of the importance of material culture in the form of gifts, commodities, products, and collectibles throughout a globally interconnected early modern world. Here, historians have drawn upon the expertise of art historians, placing much emphasis on European consumption of Eastern goods and transactions between Europeans and indigenous peoples, and more recently, highlighting diplomatic gifts. Two of *Global Goods*’ editors, Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, also edited *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the First Global Age* (2015), a significant contribution to our understanding of material culture as it related to knowledge, collecting, and consumption across the early modern globe.

Global Gifts is divided into ten chapters written from art history, area studies, and global history perspectives, spanning from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Though the editors seek to define the nature of a diplomatic gift, future work will need to build on the work presented here to help us distinguish among tribute, trade, ransom, and gift-giving. The volume does successfully demonstrate that gifts contributed to a “transcultural systems of value,” and that gifts played a prominent role within asymmetrical power relations and political rivalries. However, the confusions and asymmetries point as much to rupture and incommensurability as they do to “social cohesion” or the emergence of a “global political community” (p. 1). The Eurasian territory covered includes western Europe; the Hapsburg lands and borderlands; the Persian and Turkish empires; South Asia; and the Qing, Tokugawa, and Siamese courts. This collection reveals the benefits of combining multiple vantage points to further understand particular, local situations and values in the context of overarching political and economic

shifts. The editors seek to break down barriers between European and global history, and, to that end, these works reveal how integral the Ottomans were to shaping tastes, practices, economies, and competition for international political legitimacy.

The work on diplomatic interactions with the Ottomans begins with two essays that examine Italian governments’ relations from the late fifteenth to the late sixteenth century. In “Portraits, Turbans and Cuirasses: Material Exchange between Mantua and the Ottomans at the End of the Fifteenth Century,” Antonia Gatward Cevizli contrasts landlocked Mantua’s relationship to the Ottoman Empire with those of Venice and Genoa, who had maintained diplomatic relations with the Ottomans prior to the sacking of Constantinople in 1453. The author positions Mantua as resisting crusading rhetoric and forging its own relationship with the Ottomans, though the relationship was initiated in the context of various European entities holding a potential sultan hostage in the 1490s, and subsequent Ottoman efforts to recover his body from the court of French king Charles VIII. The author finds that gifts like horses could provide wealth and prestige to the Italian city state of Mantua, while Ottomans gained knowledge and technology through the process of receiving gifts of armor. Luca Molà’s “Material Diplomacy: Venetian Luxury Gifts for the Ottoman Empire in the Late Renaissance,” reveals that Ottoman demand for silk and wool products buoyed the Venetian textile production in the last half of the sixteenth century, and by the end of the century accounted for one-third of the production of Murano glass. Gifts to the Porte and eastern Venetian territories were integral to the Bailis’ and governors’ smooth diplomatic interactions, and they also lent prestige to Venetian products, stimulating technical and aesthetic innovation. In the decades after Venice betrayed the Holy League in 1573, surrendering Cyprus to the Turks after retaining it at Lepanto in 1571, Molà sees the Venetian gifts to the Ottomans as a form of tribute

much more significant that the Ragusans' annual 12,500 ducats. Molà indicates that individual studies reveal that during this period, a number of European entities, as well as Russia and Persia, increasingly developed gift diplomacy with the Porte, and calls for a systematic investigation of competing gift-giving strategies.

Barbara Karl's "Objects of Prestige and Spoils of War: Ottoman Objects in the Habsburg Networks of Gift-Giving in the Sixteenth Century," takes us from the Ottomans' encroachment on eastern Europe, as they defeated the Hungarians at Mohács in 1526 and then sieged Vienna in 1529, to approximately 1606. The empires negotiated over the splitting of Hungary, until 1547/48, at which time the Habsburgs sent a permanent resident to Constantinople and agreed to send "yearly honorific gifts/tribute" to the Porte. Karl examines textiles, weaponry and stone items given, taken, or bought during the period of asymmetrical Ottoman influence, providing as much context as possible for the exchanges, and looking at them in terms of Habsburg collecting practices, the demand for Ottoman items, and imperial propaganda. Ottoman objects were especially valuable as spoils of war or regifted luxuries. Karl indicates that the Ottomans retained the upper hand until the Peace of Zsitvatorok when the Long War of 1593-1606 ended, at which time the empires occupied a level playing field. Between Mohács and Zsitvatorok, the Habsburgs struggled to frame what they gave as honorific gifts, while the Ottomans considered them tribute. Habsburg ambassadors were considered on par with Balkan vassals, below the French and Venetians, for example, which the Austrians found insulting especially because representatives of the Holy Roman Emperor held precedence throughout Christian Europe. Further, the Ottomans sent low-level envoys to Vienna. Karl indicates that after Zsitvatorok, the tribute payments ended, the Porte was required to send gifts commensurate with the em-

peror's status, and the sultan was also compelled to send fitting representatives.

In "Dutch Diplomacy and Trade in Rariteyten: Episodes in the History of Material Culture of the Dutch Republic," Claudia Swan looks at the role of material culture in the creation of the emerging Dutch Republic as it competed with the Portuguese for East Indies trade and the Venetians, English, and French in Ottoman territories. As the Dutch struggled for independence from Spain, they preferred a Muslim to a Catholic alliance. The Dutch invested substantial resources and thought in their gifts to the Porte, marshalling the appropriate spectacle of exotic Dutch trade goods to negotiate a trade relationship, one of the primary purposes of early modern diplomatic gift-giving. Swan ties the interplay of gifts and trade goods to political recognition of the Dutch Republic.

While no single volume can comprehensively cover all of the literature related to gifts, material culture, and diplomacy in Eurasia, there are strands of literature that one would hope to see integrated into future work. From this collection alone, readers would not gain a sense of the attention paid to women's roles in new diplomatic history, though frequent references to the valide sultan (the Turkish sultan's mother) point to her importance. Isabella d'Este, Catherine of Habsburg, Isabella of Hungary, Elizabeth I, and Queen Anna of Poland are also briefly mentioned.[4] Jewish intermediaries are mentioned throughout the volume; their role, especially in Ottoman relations, begs further illumination. Though the introduction discusses Kazakh-Qing diplomacy, no essay focuses on kingdoms and peoples on the borderlands of the Russian, Ming and Qing Empires, or Great Russian diplomacy.[5]

Further, while there is certainly value in exploring the regions and entities discussed in *Global Gifts*, it is important to consider how an Afro-Eurasian or truly global volume might shift our perceptions of the gift's role in early modern

diplomacy. Another recent, globally oriented publication, *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World C. 1410-1800*, which offers a substantial section on diplomatic gifts, covers similar geographic territory to that explored in *Global Gifts* (though includes Russians).[6] Adam Clulow may get to the heart of this issue when he mentions the work on material culture and gift-giving in the New World and then implies a contrast with Asia, where encountering “well-established states with a long history of diplomatic interaction ... required an extended learning process” (pp. 198-99). The editors mention the importance of considering non-Western perspectives, including Asian and African rulers, but then also turn specifically to Asia. They indicate that they seek to fill gaps between global and European literature and mention the reticence of non-European scholars to tackle diplomacy, but focus primarily on the Portuguese across Asia. We know that Europeans encountered peoples of varying degrees of wealth who engaged in long-standing and shifting alliances and patterns of diplomatic exchange and gift-giving in the New World.[7] Further, similar to counterparts in the Americas, African kingdoms at times equaled Europeans’ in wealth and technological sophistication and certainly engaged in long-standing diplomatic exchange processes.[8] Much Indian Ocean, Atlantic world, US, and Pacific historiography from recent decades has included analysis of trade and diplomatic relations among Europeans and kingdoms, small groups, and confederacies, but this work is not categorized as diplomatic history. The editors demonstrate an awareness of this. A truly global focus would allow us to integrate historical and material culture work from recent decades to continue to expand our definition and understanding of diplomacy.

Finally, aside from looking at gifts in the context of commensurable practices and power relations and drawing on Arjun Appadurai to consider the biographies of gifts, the editors are largely agnostic when it comes to theorizing about gifts,

not building synthetically on previous theorization; they also do not attempt to categorize various types of diplomatic practice. This is understandable given that each contributor has his or her own framework; however, direct engagement with theory and the application of common frameworks and terminology would help as scholars continue to work across disciplines to illuminate various strands of the material culture of diplomacy.

With luck, these rich, readable additions to our understanding of the material aspects of early modern diplomacy will have much company, and future synthesis can draw conclusions about how the exchange of goods functioned and how diplomatic interactions with peoples across the globe functioned in their own contexts and impacted Europe’s historical progression.

Notes

[1]. For quick historiographical overviews of the new diplomatic history, see Diana Carrió-Invernizzi, “A New Diplomatic History and the Networks of Spanish Diplomacy in the Baroque Era,” in *The International History Review* 36, no. 4 (2013): 1-16; and Tracey A. Sowerby, “Early Modern Diplomatic History” in *History Compass* 14, no. 9 (2016): 441-56.

[2]. See Goffman’s chapter, “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: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[3]. See “Gifts and Discoveries: Gift Exchange in Early Modern Narratives of Exploration and Discovery,” in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. Gad Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

[4]. For work on women, see Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James, *Women, Diplomacy and Inter-*

national Politics since 1500 (London: Routledge, 2016).

[5]. For recent work on early modern Russian diplomacy, see Jan Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe: Ritual and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1648-1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); as well as Paul Dukes, Graeme P. Herd, and Jarmo Kotilaine, *Stuarts and Romanovs: The Rise and Fall of a Special Relationship* (Dundee: Dundee University Press, 2009).

[6]. See Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings, eds., *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410-1800* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[7]. As examples of the voluminous Atlantic and New World literature, see the following: Christian Ayne Crouch, *Nobility Lost: French and Canadian Martial Cultures, Indians, and the End of New France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); Carrie Anderson, "Material Mediators: Johan Maurits, Textiles, and the Art of Diplomatic Exchange," *Journal of Early Modern History* 20, no. 1 (2016): 63-85; and Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595-1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[8]. See Gregor M. Metzsig, "Corals, Brass and Firearms. Material Commodities in Cultural Interactions between Edo and Portuguese in Benin around 1500," in *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy from the 15th to the 20th Century*, ed. Harriet Rudolph and Gregor M. Metzsig (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016).

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