

Gifts and Gift-giving in Portuguese-Indonesian Diplomatic Relations

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This is an interpretative essay that discusses the diplomatic relations between Portugal and the pre-colonial state systems of the Indonesian Archipelago

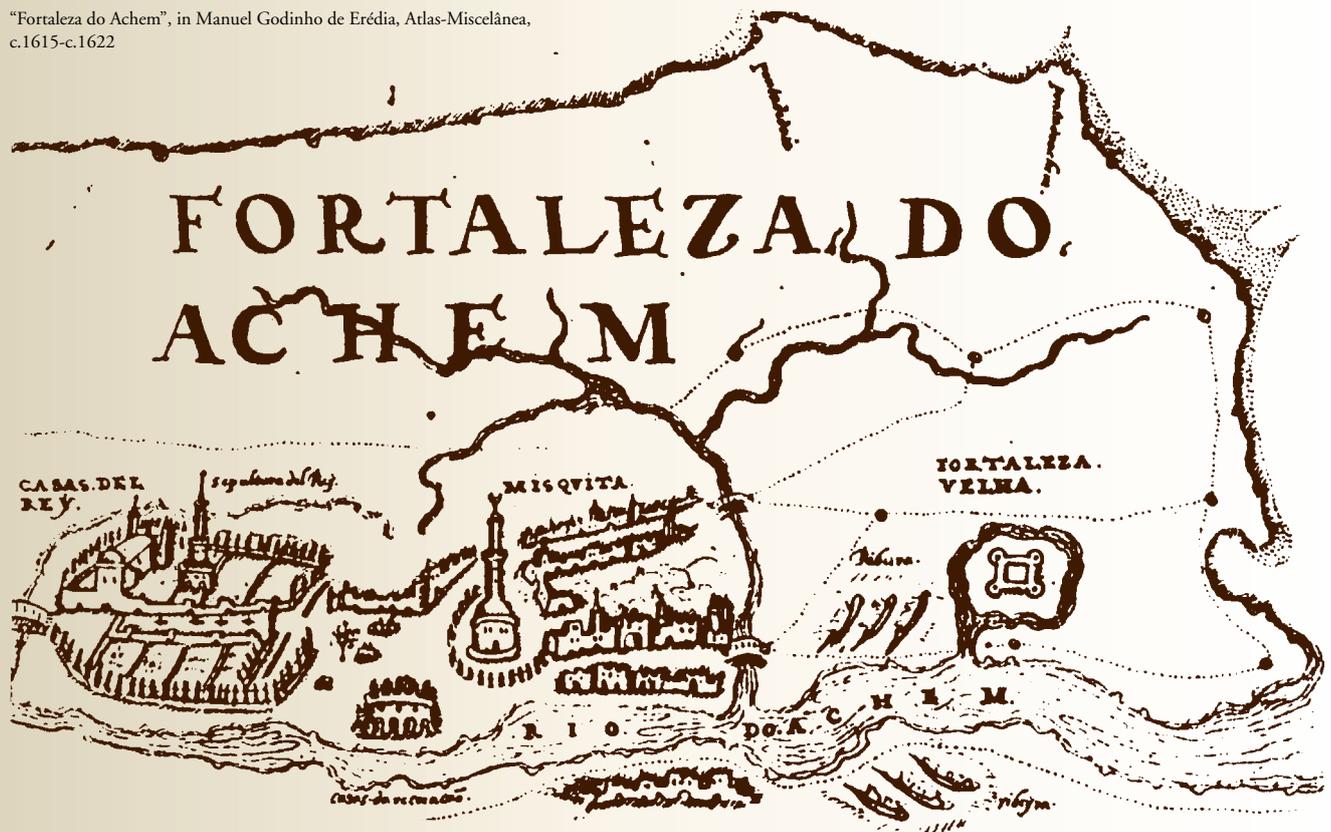
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“Fortaleza do Achem”, in Manuel Godinho de Erédia, Atlas-Miscelânea, c.1615-c.1622

and the role of gifts and gift-giving in those exchanges in the 16th and 17th centuries. There is relatively little literature written on the specific topic of gifts and gift-giving or the range of cross-cultural issues that its examination generates. The preliminary and suggestive findings that are advanced in this article are based upon an examination of Portuguese and Indian archival sources, published documentation, first-hand accounts, and secondary literature.

This topic is approached on several levels. The first is heuristic. It characterizes in general the



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frequency, purpose, outcome and the gifts that were involved in the official and informal Portuguese diplomatic missions to the region over the period. The second is more specific but broader and more conceptual in its implications. It discusses the practical and symbolic nature of these exchanges by commenting upon the political and practical ramifications as well as the cosmological significance and symbolism of the gifts and the gift-giving to Indonesian rulers and their material culture.¹ While the focus of this essay is on Portuguese diplomatic missions—their gifts and gift-giving—an effort is made to strike a balance between the Portuguese and Indonesian perspectives.

This essay is organized into four segments: 1) Diplomatic Exchanges and the Portuguese in Asia; 2) Diplomatic Missions to the Indonesian Archipelago; 3) Gifts and Gift-giving; and 4) The Legacy. The first suggests why and the methods of how the Portuguese acquired the local knowledge of diplomacy and adapted their practices to regional norms. The second identifies and briefly outlines a number of the more important Portuguese missions to the Indonesian Archipelago in the 17th century. The third presents a typology of the gifts that were delivered and discusses their significance. The fourth is a brief conclusion, which explores the legacy of these missions and the gifts that were employed.

DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES
AND THE PORTUGUESE IN ASIA

The nature of diplomatic contact and exchange predates the Islamization of the pre-colonial state systems in the Indonesian Archipelago and the arrival of the Portuguese in Asia. The rationale for diplomacy and its institutional practice within local Asian societies of differing degrees of imperial or local authority parallels the spatial organization and structure of commercial diasporas and the regulation of trade in key port cities in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The acceptance of diplomatic practice and protocol was widespread, as was documented in the reception and exchange of embassies, the position and status accorded to an ambassador, the treatment of a ruler's missive as the surrogate representation of the physically absent ruler/writer and the inclusion and the exchange of gifts. Such practices were not so foreign or alien for the Portuguese as they replicated diplomatic forms in Renaissance Portugal and Europe.²

The arrival of the Portuguese in the late 15th century introduced an increased level of violence in maritime Asia. They embarked upon establishing a series of fortresses at strategically located port cities or “choke points” from the Red Sea to the Indonesian Archipelago and used armed naval forces to restrict and coerce indigenous trading activities and to defend and protect their position and trade, which extended from East Africa to China and Japan.³ They made Goa, in south-western India, their administrative centre for the Portuguese Empire in Asia, which became known as the *Estado da Índia*, in 1510. While Portuguese actions brought them into confrontation with some Islamic state systems in Asia, which may be viewed in part as an extension of the Portuguese-Ottoman conflict in Europe,⁴ it was imperative that the Portuguese establish contact and develop relations with the powerful and lesser non-belligerent state systems throughout the region.⁵

To make these contacts, the Portuguese had to attune themselves to diplomatic practices in Asia. How did they learn, who helped them learn, and how successful did they become at these practices? There appear to be four observable sources of this information. None of these sources was an unbiased cultural interpreter, but all had their value. The first was through local agents—in some cases, spies—and elites who identified that it was in their specific, particular or communal interest to work with the Portuguese.⁶ The second was through inter-marriage with local women who would provide “go-between” insight between European and Asian perceptions and practice and the acquisition of some basic language skills by European males.⁷ These became the *casados* (married settlers) who participated in the local municipal councils throughout the *Estado da Índia* and came to represent the non-Crown commercial and communal interests in the Empire.⁸ The third was primarily from Catholic clergy and missionaries—segments of Portuguese society whose activities received financial support through Crown patronage, or *Padroado*, who zealously embarked upon serious language and cultural studies aimed at successful proselytizing.⁹ The information that they could provide Crown administrators was, generally, invaluable because of their training and discipline in observing and reporting and their physical presence in many distinct locations. It is also one of the reasons why they occasionally became de facto ambassadors of the *Estado da Índia*. The fourth is more problematical

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and speculative because it questions, without being able to provide a convincing general answer, whether or to what degree the non-Asian training, background, and experience of Portuguese administrators in Europe, Africa or America, hindered or aided them in interpreting, learning or negotiating diplomatic skills in Asia.¹⁰

There was continuity and change in Portuguese diplomatic efforts throughout Asia over the 16th and 17th centuries. The decision to participate in diplomacy depended upon the relative or actual perception of their strengths and weaknesses and the level of opportunity or threat to their position in different parts of the region, as defined both in Europe by the Crown in metropolitan Portugal, and in Asia by the Crown's representatives, the Viceroy and the Council of State in Goa.¹¹ Financial support for the mission was required and that support generally included resources from

the local municipal council or *Senado da Câmara*. The Crown's representatives had to negotiate with the municipality that was involved, which permitted local Portuguese communal interests to influence the mission and its objectives.

The greatest change in Portuguese interest in diplomacy occurred with the arrival in Asia of northern European powers and rivals—the Dutch and English East India companies in the late 16th century. The military and diplomatic successes of the Dutch East India Company in particular produced a geopolitical shift in the balance of power and a major reversal and decline in the fortunes of the Portuguese Empire by the mid-17th century.¹² State systems that had initially supported the Dutch incursions and presence had to contemplate political counter-options, including the possibility of working with the Portuguese against this new and powerful foreign presence.

"Jente do reino de Java Jintios chamão se Jaos" (ms. 1889, Biblioteca Casatenense, Rome), in Luís de Matos, ed., *Imagens do Oriente no Século XVI*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1985.



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The Portuguese rationale for participating in diplomacy was not dissimilar to those of their Asian counterparts and global participants; by and large, their objectives were the same. This is not to suggest that it was a “modern” process or, by attributing present-day values to peoples or actions of the past, that history is being read backwards. The major difference between the Portuguese and the Northern European and Asian powers was the level of the Portuguese commitment to the propagation of Catholic religious beliefs. Another difference, which the Portuguese shared with the Dutch vis-à-vis Asian powers, was the European claim and attempts to circumscribe maritime trading navigational rights.

The Portuguese sought strategic, political, military, and commercial advantage via diplomacy. They negotiated alliances, treaties and contracts, which dealt with issues of war and peace. They sought military support against common enemies. They initiated, expanded or maintained exclusive or preferential commercial privileges. On occasion, they attempted to secure the payment of tribute and the delivery of commodities in quantity and quality on beneficial terms. They monitored the passage and commercial behavior of indigenous shipping. Finally, they attempted to secure unfettered access and freedom for their missionaries to propagate religious beliefs.¹³

Official Portuguese diplomatic missions were the responsibility of the Crown in metropolitan Portugal and of the Crown’s representative in Asia, the Viceroy in Goa. If on the rare occasion the embassy originated in Europe, the planning and, especially, the financing for the mission was made the responsibility of the Viceroy, who identified and secured the funds from local imperial financial sources and contributions within the *Estado da Índia*.

Almost all of the missions originated in Asia with ambassadors selected and vetted from local candidates by the Crown and/or the Viceroy. In the 16th century, factors or *feitores*, who were responsible for the execution of Crown commercial activities, were empowered to represent the *Estado da Índia* in its diplomatic efforts.¹⁴ It was common practice that the ambassador

received written instructions from the Crown or its local representative, the Viceroy.¹⁵

During the union of the Crown of Portugal with Spain, from 1580 to 1640, there was a flurry of informal and formal diplomatic efforts towards Safavid Persia, or Iran, that were geopolitical and military in orientation, which culminated with the embassy of D. García de Silva y Figueroa to Shah Abbas in the late 1610s. This mission sought to maintain and enlarge the confrontation between Iran and the Ottoman Empire in order to alleviate the Spanish position in the Mediterranean. This embassy, led by an emissary selected by the Crown, was unsuccessful, since Spain and the *Estado da Índia* were unable to provide sufficient or convincing support to persuade the Iranian ruler to favorably consider such proposals.¹⁶ There were similar unsuccessful efforts by the Portuguese in the 17th century to re-establish their once privileged position in Japan and their trade between the rest of Asia and that country.¹⁷ In the latter half of the 17th century, two embassies were directed at improving relations with the newly installed Qing dynasty in China. They were supported by Jesuit efforts at the Court in Beijing on behalf of the Portuguese. These missions allayed Qing policies that would have eliminated the Portuguese community and its maritime trading activities. While these missions did not restore the former commercial power of the Portuguese, they may be considered a success, since they secured Macao’s survival.¹⁸

The norm, as already mentioned, was official state-to-state missions. However, on occasion a local municipality mounted diplomatic efforts for communal reasons that were consonant with Portuguese Crown objectives but were not ordered or planned in Lisbon or Goa. For example, after the loss of the Japan trade to the Portuguese and threatened by Chinese decrees restricting maritime trade in South China during the transition from Ming to Qing rule, from the 1640s through the 1680s, the city of Macao dispatched a series of diplomatic missions to different rulers and state systems



The Portuguese *padrao* placed in Sunda Kalapa in 1522. Reproduced from A. Heuken SJ, *The Earliest Portuguese Sources for the History of Jakarta* (Jakarta, Yayasan, 2002).

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in the Indonesian Archipelago and mainland Southeast Asia.¹⁹ In addition, there were diplomatic missions to sensitive regions that were conceived and executed by prominent Portuguese merchants with passive official support from the *Estado da Índia* and the municipal council of Macao. Although such missions were rare, they were not insignificant. The best example of a powerful merchant who became a key political and diplomatic figure in Portuguese-Indonesian relations is Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo, who sent missions to the Kingdom of Gowa in Macassar in the mid-17th century.²⁰ The missions of both the municipal council and prominent merchants were important and integral parts of the Portuguese community's strategy of survival. These initiatives normally dealt with the commercial and financial relations of the city or its prominent merchants with different rulers and state systems. Since the Portuguese Crown and the *Estado da Índia* were distracted by more immediate concerns and events in Europe, Africa, America and other parts of Asia, these communal and personal efforts disproportionately influenced Portuguese diplomacy in the mid-17th century.

DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS
TO THE INDONESIAN ARCHIPELAGO

There were, as might be expected, different messages sent to different individual rulers in the Indonesian Archipelago.

The *Estado da Índia* was not omniscient in its interpretation of signals for the possibility of improvement in relations from rulers of belligerent and antagonistic state-systems in the Indonesian Archipelago. For example, after the shipwreck of a Portuguese ship—Dom Francisco d'Eça's voyage to China—off the coast of Aceh in the early 1590s, the sultan returned the survivors, including d'Eça and the Bishop of China, with the mission he sent to Goa. Since the Portuguese were normally held captive in such circumstances, as remarked in official correspondence from the *Senado da Câmara* of Goa in 1596, this was an unusual act that might have signaled Aceh's interest in improving relations. The unnamed emissaries, however, were treated poorly by the Viceroy on this occasion. They left discontented over their treatment and returned to Aceh in 1595. In an effort to repair the damage caused, the Portuguese municipal authorities

at Goa sought permission from the Crown to send an unspecified gift to the ruler of Aceh in thanks for his treatment and return of the prominent members of Portuguese society who had been shipwrecked. The Crown informed the municipal council that it had issued positive instructions to the Viceroy concerning this gift.²¹

The message of the *Estado da Índia* changed in tone and stridency as Portuguese fortunes waned and the necessity for allies against the Dutch grew. The frequency of Portuguese-Indonesian diplomatic exchanges increased throughout the Archipelago in the early 17th century.²² They concentrated on state systems on Java (via Japara with Mataram) and in the Celebes (Gowa or Macassar) that could counter and threaten the growing Dutch presence and influence. Another objective was also directed at diminishing the increased indigenous support provided to the Dutch by other state systems in the western Indonesian Archipelago, such as that from the sultanate of Johor on the Malay Peninsula.²³

The Portuguese message was as easy to understand as it was straightforward—self-interested help against a common enemy, the Dutch. There was at least one significant impediment to improved Portuguese-Indonesian relations in the early 17th century. It was the Dutch East India Company's success in implementing brilliant naval and political strategies to disrupt Portuguese efforts. Despite sporadic individual and combined responses by the Portuguese and the Spanish, Dutch seapower successfully blockaded the principal ports of the *Estado da Índia* and intercepted and captured Portuguese inter-Asian naval and commercial shipping, some of which was dedicated to the delivery of supplies and gifts to allies.²⁴ Dutch seapower and their political efforts with other indigenous state systems weakened the Portuguese ability to deliver on their promised support in anti-Dutch efforts.

Based upon the relations that developed between the *Estado da Índia* and Mataram and Macassar in the early 17th century, the historical record does not support that there was an intractable cultural clash between Islamic and Catholic societies. In fact, it may be advanced that after a hundred years of a Portuguese presence and contact, the indigenous rulers in the Indonesian Archipelago knew the strengths, weaknesses, and traits of an old enemy, which may have actually aided Portuguese diplomatic efforts. Some of those rulers

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perceived that the Dutch East India Company's political, naval, and military threat was a greater danger than the rigid Catholic ideology of the Portuguese. While there is evidence to suggest that the ruler of Aceh might have embraced this proposition, and despite the efforts of Portuguese emissaries to secure his support, the ruler of Aceh never reached an accommodation with the *Estado da Índia*. Although open to further discussion, it is more probable that Aceh's decision against reaching an understanding with the Portuguese had more to do with the ruler of Aceh's perception that his interests were better served by weakening the Portuguese presence and their eviction from Melaka.

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Within the political cultural landscape of the indigenous societies and state systems on Sumatra (Aceh), Java (Japara and Mataram; later, Bantam) and in the Celebes (Gowa or Macassar), the guidelines for rulers to receive and participate in these diplomatic activities were much more complicated than for the Portuguese. A series of useful questions may be asked. What pleased one or all of these rulers in their reception and treatment of foreign embassies generally and from the Portuguese particularly? For which ostensible audiences, both within and without the sultanate, and for what purposes did the local rulers seek to direct and utilize these exchanges? What were the symbols of authority that the rulers of the Islamic states of the Indonesian Archipelago found appealing? The Islamization of the Indonesian Archipelago occurred by way of the seas. By 1500 the Indonesian Archipelago had been converted to Islam only relatively recently.

Of the four legal traditions in Sunni Islam—Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali—this region adhered to the Shafi'i legal tradition because of the intrepid commercial and religious contact with Shafi'i Arabs from southern and western Arabia.²⁵ The question this fact raises is whether the symbols of authority that the rulers appreciated were totally Islamic in nature, mixtures of Hindu-Buddhist, Persian or other beliefs. The importance of the gifts and the gift-giving will be discussed in the subsequent section.

The outline of some general and somewhat tentative answers may be put forward for these questions. The ostensible audiences were both internal and external.

For the internal audience, the ruler's participation in the reception or dispatch of embassies in general and of the Portuguese in particular helped in the legitimization of his political authority and power. It ratified the importance of the ruler's authority. To the ruler's supporters it conveyed his ability to demand consideration and to command and receive respect from other rulers. The image of receiving Portuguese ambassadors was powerful as it placed a heretofore implacable military and ideological foe in the unusual and unaccustomed role of seeking aid – thus being seen or represented as the supplicant. While the receptions of embassies were ceremonial—and these trappings may be considered insignificant—, by receiving these embassies the ruler sought to legitimize his rule by publicly displaying his credentials as a powerful ruler. Not all of the symbols were Islamic in nature. The ruler's physical surroundings, the accoutrements—architecture, carvings, and the ceremonial etiquette before him—indicate the survival of non-Islamic political symbols at the ritual center, many of which were based upon Hindu-Buddhist cosmologies. The reception of embassies, especially Portuguese, aided the ruler in managing internal interests and tensions between groups or factions that aligned themselves on ideological, political or economic lines. The astute ruler could use embassies—their discussion, negotiation, and/or participation—to deter internal efforts at opposition or conspiracy towards his rule. For the external audiences, within the neighboring Islamic and Malay worlds and for the rulers of the Ottoman Empire in distant Istanbul, receiving or dispatching embassies was the mark of equals, if not in absolute power at least in the calculus of recognition by other state systems of

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the necessity of dealing or maintaining good relations in order to avoid interference and conflict in different parts of the region.

Mataram, for example, was the most powerful sultanate on Java and was preoccupied with the extension of its sovereignty over the island. It had absorbed the port-states of Japara and Griesik on the north coast of Java. The Dutch had established themselves at Batavia—a coastal site in lands belonging to the ruler of Jacatra in 1619. Mataram initially thought it could work with the Dutch and incorporate their support into its political and military efforts. Disappointed with the results of this approach, as a result Mataram entered into conflict with the Dutch. From the perspective of the ruler of Mataram, it was time to explore the possibilities of an alliance with the Portuguese.

By 1624, news of Mataram's military actions against the Dutch on Java had reached the *Estado da Índia*. In a move to foster goodwill, better relations and the continuation of this conflict, the *Estado da Índia* dispatched gifts, including a horse, to Java for the sultan of Mataram, which Dutch naval forces intercepted and captured.²⁶ Over the following two decades or so a number of embassies, including that of Jorge da Cunha Costa, gifts, letters and missions were exchanged between the *Estado da Índia* and Mataram. Portuguese reports indicate that Mataram offered Batavia to the Portuguese in exchange for an alliance and the provision of military supplies and naval support for combined efforts against the Dutch.²⁷ This alliance was thwarted by Dutch naval strength and the consequent inability of the Portuguese to provide meaningful support.

GIFTS AND GIFT-GIVING

This essay's perspective on gifts and gift-giving as commodities is to focus "on the things that are exchanged, rather than simply on the forms or functions of exchange." This focus "makes it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is *politics*" and gifts as "commodities, like persons, have social lives."²⁸ Derived from a Hindu Persian word—*saughat*—the term for gifts and gift-giving in Portuguese Asia was *saguates* and *saguatear*.²⁹ There was a wide range of commodities, products and special items, including animals that were considered when budgeting and selecting gifts to be included on a specific diplomatic mission.

Since the expectation of both the reception and the exchange of gifts was omnipresent in diplomatic relations in Asia, as elsewhere, there was an art and a balance to be struck by administrators when preparing a mission. If seen to be inconsequential or insufficient by the recipient, the missions' objectives were jeopardized. If too costly, the *Estado da Índia's* budget was adversely affected, and the recipient would expect the same gift level or higher in future dealings.

There were a myriad of gifts of diverse categories, qualities and values that the Portuguese used in their embassies to Mataram on Java in the early 17th century. The lists, in general, are long and detailed.³⁰ They do not stipulate the rationale for the inclusion of a specific item. In some cases, there are items that have been requested for inclusion, but this was not always the case. It is clear that they were items that the Portuguese knew would be appreciated. Neither do the lists address the question as to what need or purpose the gift was directed. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconstruct and to imagine and place certain groups of gifts into typologies or categories that were intended by the Portuguese and viewed and received by Indonesian rulers.

This proposed typology is not universal – it does not include every item. But, it does represent, in our view, the most significant of all the gift items that are known and documented. Four primary typologies or categories of gifts that were involved in Portuguese diplomatic exchanges and missions to the Indonesian Archipelago can be identified and re-constructed. They are: 1) the practical and powerful; 2) the authoritative and demonstrative; 3) the evocative and ceremonial; and 4) the precious and the esoteric.

Cannon and firearms dominate the first category of the practical and powerful items that were given by the Portuguese as gifts. While much research has focused on the diffusion of their use and technology,³¹ at a practical level the possession of cannon by the ruler would enhance his authority as well as his power. With the reception of cannon, the ruler would be seen as acquiring the attributes of this inanimate object. Beyond the practical, cannon may be construed as a phallic symbol because of their shape and function. Consequently, the powerful, practical, explosive instrument of war garnered for the ruler the attributes of a fertility symbol.

Bold red or scarlet textiles, especially of fine silk, exemplify the second category of the authoritative and demonstrative items that the Portuguese gave as gifts

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and Indian cotton textiles have long been considered as desirable and dominant items of trade and exchange between South Asia and the Indonesian Archipelago.³² More recently the research on Indian textiles in Indonesia has broadened to include the symbolic nature of these items and narrowed its focus to specific types of Indian textiles—the *patola*, in particular—and their transformation from commercial to sacred cloth.³³

The reception of embassies, especially Portuguese, aided the ruler in managing internal interests and tensions between groups or factions that aligned themselves on ideological, political or economic lines.

The selection of fine textiles, especially silk, as gifts was obvious, since they were of a suitable quality for the rank and stature of the ruler. By choosing the color red, signifying “strength and bravery,”³⁴ the Portuguese were incorporating the appropriateness of the gift with the additional symbol of transference or provision of a mantle of authority. The Portuguese lists also detail that these were not just “red” silks but silks that had been dyed using cochineal—the dye from the shell of an insect living on cacti found in the New World in New Spain (Mexico). Cochineal was very expensive, and the availability of textiles in which it was used was rare in Asia. It produced a bold, brilliant red color, which possibly was unsurpassed and unequalled by other red dyes in a region that was using red-brown dyes from the roots of the *Morinda citrifolia* tree, turmeric (*Curcuma domestica*) and sappanwood (*Caesalpinia sappan*).³⁵ Certainly, textiles using cochineal would have been appreciated in insular Southeast Asia.

Horses and their accoutrements are examples of the third category of evocative and ceremonial items included among the gifts in the Portuguese embassies to Indonesia. While there is little written or that has been found on the “ruler on horseback” theme in the

historiography of the region, these animals were clearly sought, prized and valued. The Portuguese, via direct and indirect trade with Arabia, had access to some of the world’s finest horses. The records suggest that they shipped young colts as well as mature stallions as gifts. Specially adorned and worked accoutrements for the rider, such as saddle and bridle, occasionally accompanied the animals. These gifts were obviously of practical and ceremonial importance, but it is difficult to escape the evocative symbolic nature of the horse and the resplendent figure of the rider that is in control of such a beautiful and powerful animal, as suggestive of the rider/ruler’s authority and his don of command.

Jewels inlaid in crafted work³⁶ and European style watches were examples of the fourth and final category of the precious and the esoteric or “other” items that were given by the Portuguese as gifts. While either valuable or curious in nature, in contrast to the previous three typologies, there are no additional symbolic meanings ascribed to the exchange of these items. In particular, there was one item, a jewel-encrusted *beteleiro*, or case for carrying betel leaves, which suggests the synchronization of gift-giving with precious stones and a knowledge that was attuned to mundane pleasures and pastime practices. The practice of chewing betel, of course, was well-known and widespread in Southeast and South Asia. Its use was not devoid of ceremonial and ritual significance. The *beteleiro* and other items, such as European watches, intended as gifts for a ruler or his entourage, may be identified as objects and curiosities that were not without value and may have suggested the perception of appreciation by the sender to its recipient.

THE LEGACY

The legacy of early modern Portuguese-Indonesian relations is ambivalent. Since the outcome of the Portuguese Empire’s confrontation with the Dutch East India Company and the decline of Portuguese contacts with the Indonesian Archipelago are known, the importance of these early contacts is diminished. It appears that the collective memory of the early modern Portuguese-Indonesian encounter focuses on the intractable and contentious nature of the clash between Islamic Asian and Catholic European cultures. Forgotten are the instances when threats to both groups were identified and ideological differences

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Detail of a world map by Diogo Ribeiro, 1529.

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were overcome by strategic, economical, and political concerns. Small Portuguese Eurasian communities were incorporated into Indonesian and Dutch colonial society on Java.³⁷ The use of the Portuguese language as the region's commercial and diplomatic *lingua franca* has left elements of a shared heritage of proximity.

Gifts and gift-giving played a central role in the diplomatic exchanges and relations between Portugal and the pre-colonial state systems of the Indonesian Archipelago in the 16th and 17th centuries. Today, they may be viewed in museums in Europe and Asia, and their past significance or context may be lost or subordinated to whether the object is majestic or beautiful. It is clear that the Portuguese had learned to interpret culturally to some imprecise level or degree the items that they selected and included in the diplomatic

missions they performed throughout Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries. Items were selected not only on the basis of cost or expense, practicality or rarity, whether they were “exotic” or represented the “other,” but with consideration of representation and perception—albeit imperceptible or subliminal—of how the item would be appreciated. It is in these images and in the representations of the exchanged gifts, perhaps, that the Portuguese approached and attempted to understand the rulers and the societies in a region where they shared space and, for a time, similar concerns. **RC**

Author's note: Research in the archival sources mentioned in the select bibliography of this article was conducted on several occasions throughout my career. I wish to acknowledge and thank Pierre-Yves Manguin for sharing transcriptions of some of these documents with me.

NOTES

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- 2 Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955; reprinted New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988.
- 3 For the Portuguese in the Bay of Bengal, cf. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1700*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- 4 Salih Özbaran, *The Ottoman Response to European Expansion*. Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1994.
- 5 Ceylon, modern Sri Lanka, was an interesting example. Cf. Jorge Manuel Flores, *Os Portugueses e o Mar de Ceilão: Trato, Diplomacia e Guerra (1498-1543)*, Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 1999.
- 6 Geoffrey V. Scammell, “Indigenous Assistance in the Establishment of Portuguese Power in Asia.” *Modern Asian Studies*, no. 14 (1980): 1-11; for the specific incorporation of indigenous agents in Portuguese diplomatic missions in India in the 17th and 18th centuries, cf. Panduronga S. S. Pissurlencar, ed., *Agentes da Diplomacia Portuguesa na Índia (Hindus, Muçulmanos, Judeus e Parses)*. Bastora-Goa: Tipografia Rangel, 1952.
- 7 Alida Metcalf coined this term and has initiated research on this issue for Brazil, cf. Alida Metcalf, “Women as Go-Betweens in Sixteenth Century Brazil,” unpublished paper presented at the: Imperial (Re-) Visions: Brazil and the Portuguese Seaborne Empire Conference, in memory of Professor C. R. Boxer at Yale University, November 1-3, 2002.
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- 10 For a general introduction on this theme, cf. Stuart B. Schwartz, ed. *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
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