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AHRC Global Diplomacy Network

GHCC Annual Conference

Towards a Global Diplomatic History (c. 1400-1900)

30-31 May 2024

Global History and Culture Centre, University of Warwick



**Global History
& Culture Centre**
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

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Towards a Global Diplomatic History (c. 1400-1900)

What does a truly global history of diplomacy look like? How can we research and write diplomatic history in a way that takes full account of the formative contributions of actors and conceptual traditions from around the world? The history of diplomacy is conventionally written as a story centred on Europe. Central ingredients of the traditional narrative are the city states of Renaissance Italy, the Westphalian system, the rise of the modern nation state, and the dissemination of a system of international law rooted in European legal theory. Taken together, we have long been told, these factors led to the emergence of the modern international order in the nineteenth century.

In recent years, the central tenets of this narrative have been widely contested even for Europe itself, while a growing body of research on the conduct of inter-polity relations in Africa, Asia, and among Indigenous communities in the Pacific and Americas have provided us with a much fuller understanding of the global scope and transcultural development of the conduct of relations between political communities. However, despite this recent increase in local and regional case studies covering different parts of the world, a new integrated narrative about the global and interactive development of diplomatic norms, concepts, institutions, and practices from the early modern period onwards has yet to be written.

The AHRC-funded Global Diplomacy Network seeks to put into conversation and integrate local and regional histories of diplomacy. It aims to establish a connected account of global diplomatic history, one that can replace existing Eurocentric narratives with a new spatial and temporal understanding of the global origins of inter-polity exchange. In this first conference, we invite participants to reflect on the methodological possibilities and challenges of writing global diplomatic history. We invite 20-minute papers that engage explicitly with the transregional dynamics that shaped the conduct of diplomacy in one or more parts of the world.

Key questions

- What were the principal agents and processes driving the development of inter-polity relations in different parts of the early modern world?
- How did diplomatic norms, structures, and practices of varying cultural origin influence one another and change as the result of global entanglements?
- What new diplomatic practices were forged through inter-regional interactions, and which were abolished or marginalised?
- What role did non-Western communities and concepts play in the emergence of the global diplomatic system?

ABSTRACTS

Day 1: Thursday 30 May

10:45-12.30 Panel 1 – World-Making

Meng Zhang (Vanderbilt University / IHSS, Peking University) – “‘Inner and Outer’: Toward a New Framework for Qing Foreign Relations”

Past scholarship on the foreign relations of the Qing empire has alternatively focused on its inheritance and development of the Sinitic ‘tribute system’ (or using the Chinese concept *zongfan*) or the Inner Asian khanate tradition. Both approaches project the modern dichotomy of ‘domestic and foreign’ to the Qing conceptualization of inter-domain relations and enforce a distinction between its East Asian and Inner Asian orientations, which reflects more of a chasm in the historiography than in Qing historical practices. This study seeks to build a new framework for understanding the Qing conceptualization of the political space by focusing on the discourse of ‘inner and outer’ and investigating its invocation and adaptation in different legal, political, and diplomatic contexts. Rather than a dichotomy based on fixed territoriality, ‘inner and outer’ conveys a contrast of shifting relativity based on a flexible notion of distance from political, cultural, ethnolinguistic, and religious factors. What under the modern scheme of territoriality might be considered ‘domestic’ to the Qing empire, for example, might alternatively appear as ‘inner’ or ‘outer’ under this discourse depending on changing contexts. ‘Inner and outer’ thus offers a spatial and temporal imagination of the political landscape that guided relations between political communities both within and beyond the territorial empire.

Peter Kitlas (American University of Beirut) – “An Eighteenth-century Scribal Revival? The Challenges of Incorporating Islamic Thought into Global Diplomatic History”

Islamic thought is typically incorporated into conversations of early modern and modern diplomacy through a very narrow legal lens. Debates over the invocation and meaning of legalese like *jihad* or *dar al-harb* continue to be a focus of inquiry. However, in eighteenth-century Morocco, the main actors participating in and shaping diplomacy were not *‘ulama* (legal scholars), but rather *kuttab* (scribes). This paper argues that diplomatic thought and practice in early modern Morocco lies at the intersection of scribal and diplomatic knowledge production. Examining letters, travelogues, and chronicles this paper demonstrates how Moroccan scribe-cum-diplomats engaged with Islamic scribal traditions to carve out their own space as foreign intermediaries. Working in this space allows us to disengage from a strictly legal reading of Islamic diplomatic thought and practice and instead understand it, as the *kuttab* did, through a more universal ethical lens. Here, positioning themselves in opposition to a corrupt political-religious class, the *kuttab* sought to distinguish themselves as mediators for the people both at home and abroad. In addition to reorienting our approach to narratives of Moroccan diplomatic history, a more robust understanding of the relationship between scribal culture and diplomacy opens fruitful

avenues for thinking about their relationship to parallel intellectual / bureaucratic movements in European courts as well as in the Ottoman Empire.

Michael Talbot (University of Greenwich) – “The World of the Ottoman Consular Network”

In much of diplomatic history, global and otherwise, consuls have lingered in the shadows of ambassadors and exceptional embassies. Whilst some parts of the field have made significant efforts to explore consuls and honorary consuls and their forms of diplomacy in both the early and later modern periods, this has often been quite firmly in the European context or through the view of European interests. In the Ottoman case, significant work has examined or made use of the records of the consuls of European powers within the Sublime State. Although consuls were of course part of a European conception and framework of diplomacy, the Ottoman Empire developed its own consular network from the turn of the 19th century staffed by its *şehbenders*, the ‘harbour masters’ who looked after Ottoman subjects and interests. Starting in key Mediterranean ports, by the second half of the century it spanned across the globe. From professional Ottoman diplomats to local merchants and notables, this complex and constantly changing network allows us to think about what local diplomacy was and what it tried to do - and for whom. This paper will explore the Ottoman consular network through a general view and specific case studies to demonstrate its utility in asking different questions of diplomatic history, provide a different spatial view of global diplomacy, and consider how the Ottoman state adapted this practice for its own particular commercial and imperial needs.

13:30-14:45: Panel 2 – Ritual Performance

Céline Carayon (Salisbury University) – “‘Ces sortes d’amis’ (That Kind of Friends): Compéragé as Embodied Interregional Diplomacy in the Early French-Indigenous Atlantic”

In the seventeenth century, across broad areas of the Greater- and Circum-Caribbean and coastal Brazil, French colonists and missionaries came across a type of ritualized Indigenous alliance system they found distinctive enough to label under a single term: *compéragé*. This form of personal alliance, which bound a Native and a European person in complex and sustained family, commercial, and diplomatic relations, was known by different terms (also used to identify participants in it) in the various Native societies where the French identified it: *Atourassave* among the Tupínamba, *Banari* or *Banaré* among the Caribs (Kalinago), *chetouasaps* among the Native people of northern Brazil and the Guianas. The French generally favored their own word for it and saw parallels between this Indigenous practice and realms outside of the immediate bounds of diplomacy, such as commercial and homosocial partnerships they knew in France. More importantly, seventeenth-century authors only referenced *compéragé* in the southern hemisphere, clearly differentiating it from other kinship-based alliances they formed with their North American Indian allies. This paper offers to investigate the place of carefully scripted sensory and embodied conventions in establishing and sustaining this deeply emotional relationship with “special friends” or

allies. Attention to the intimate and regionally grounded cultural dimensions of diplomatic customs has the potential to nuance the idea of a blanket “accommodation strategy” in the early French empire, while also helping to explain how the breaking of these bonds sparked a heightened sense of deception and resentment that fueled ongoing intercultural violence.

Ulfatbek Abdurasulov (Austrian Academy of Science) – “Allegiance in the Eye of the Beholder: Rituals and Performativity in Russian-Central Asian Diplomacy”

It is well known that the early modern Russian state tended to codify its relationship with the peoples on its expanding frontiers through elaborate forms of diplomatic ritual, such as oath-taking ceremonies or the submission of pledges of allegiance. Although Russian officials tended to regard these ceremonies purely in terms of a suzerain-subject *modus operandi*, Michael Khodorkovsky has compellingly shown that such rituals may well have had completely different, if not opposite meanings for the other parties involved. The focus of this paper is on the events related to the alleged plea of allegiance submitted—in a written form—in 1700 to the Russian Tsar Peter I on behalf of Shāh Niyāz Khān, ruler of the Khanate of Khiva, a relatively small Islamic principality in Central Asia. Although this case has been addressed in previous scholarship, it has generally been considered through the lens of Russian-Khivan bilateral relations alone, or with attention to the question of whether or not the document in question was a forgery by certain Russian officials. The current paper sets out to situate this ‘plea of allegiance’ within the broader dynamic of Eurasian politics and diplomacy. More specifically, it proposes to juxtapose it against various other concomitant events, such as the Treaty of Karlovitz (1699), the course of Russian-Turkish negotiations in Istanbul (1700), competitions between various factions and institutions over having an upper hand in Russian foreign affairs, and, not least, Peter I’s own imperial aspirations. The paper however does not propose to chart yet another narrative of high politics, and seeks instead to interrogate diplomatic interactions as a *phenomenon* at the confluence of semiotics, ethics, and performativity. It furthermore seeks to highlight the improvisational and co-productive character of Russian-Central Asian diplomacy in the early modern period.

17:00-18:30: Keynote

Prof. Saliha Belmessous (University of Oxford/ University of New South Wales) – “The Foundations of Inter-Polity Relations in Pre-1800 North America”

In this talk, I will explore inter-polity relations in North America and discuss the significant role that the legal principle of protection played in establishing and regulating these relations until at least 1800. The prominence of protection in inter-polity law stemmed from its importance in both Indigenous and European political systems. I will begin by examining the mechanisms of protection in Indigenous societies. Then, I will delve into how this principle evolved with the inclusion of French and British colonies in Indigenous politics - both the French and the British relied on this common political principle to integrate themselves into Indigenous diplomatic networks.

Day 2: Friday 31 May

9:15-11:00: Panel 3 – Ordering Empire

Deborah Besseghini – “Imperial Agents’ in South America: Limits and Opportunities of Informal Diplomacy during the Independence Process (1800s-1820s)”

During the disaggregation process of the Spanish empire, from the war against Napoleon to the recognition of the new republics, relations between autonomous Spanish-American governments and Western powers were maintained through exchanges of informal agents. Historiography has mostly analyzed initiatives of Spanish-American agents in European courts and in the United States, much less those of European and U.S. agents in their informal negotiations with the “rebel” Spanish-American governments, even if these agents’ bargaining power was evidently greater, due to the emerging republics’ need for diplomatic and military protection. Thus, their influence was often quite effective in obtaining satisfactory minimum conditions for the imperial interests of the powers whose agents they were, especially in the case of Britain. Missing, however, is a detailed analysis of how this informal diplomacy had to deal with specific “rules of the game”, as defined in Hispanic America. In recent years, historiography has highlighted the role of Hispanic America in the Revolutionary Age as an experimental workshop for the political forms of the “West”. Here we want to understand how foreign “imperial agents” adapted to this political dynamism in order to support their governments’ interests and what were the limits of such action, in the cases of Río de la Plata, Chile and Mexico, by using European and American sources. We will analyze methods, times, contents, and stated rules of their informal mediation, in relation to the practices and political theories of this Spanish-American laboratory and how these experiences helped establish subsequent habits of official diplomacy.

Tom Long (University of Warwick) – “Seeing Berlin from Bogotá: Latin American Reactions to European Imperial Expansion in the late Nineteenth Century”

The 1884-85 Berlin Conference was a watershed for the expansion of European colonialism and the growth of inter-imperialism as a practice of international order. Although its ramifications for African and European politics have been studied, there has been scant attention to how the conference reverberated elsewhere in the world. Because of its own colonial past and prolonged exposure to imperial intervention, Latin America has often been seen as a wellspring of early anti-imperialism. But as European diplomats divided African lands without African consultation, reactions from Latin America included both alarm and ambivalence. Concerns about defending territoriality norms like *uti possidetis* were tempered by short-term interests in maintaining relations with imperial powers. Anti-imperial sympathies were, in some cases, curtailed by civilizational thinking that echoed racialized Eurocentric hierarchies. Drawing on multi-national archival research, this paper seeks to better understand Latin American responses to imperialism elsewhere. In doing so, it opens a discussion of the broader global echoes of the Berlin Conference and “scramble for Africa,” while

also probing the sources, extent, and limitations of anti-imperial sentiment in Latin America during the late nineteenth century.

David M. Anderson (University of Warwick) and Jonathan M. Jackson (University of Cologne) – “African diplomacy on the Zambezi: Lewanika, Count von Caprivi, and the Helgoland-Zanzibar Treaty of 1890”

The north-western portion of South-West Africa (now Namibia), known from the late nineteenth century as Caprivi Zipfel, has remained a deeply contested territory since its first definition in the Anglo-German Helgoland-Zanzibar Treaty of 1890. The diplomatic wrangling that awarded Caprivi Zipfel to Germany saw the strategic archipelago of Helgoland pass back to German sovereignty. Located in the German Bight on the approaches to the Hanseatic ports of Bremen and Hamburg, and (most significantly) now guarding the exit into the North Sea from the newly constructed Kiel Canal, Helgoland had been under British control since 1814 and the Treaty of Paris. The settlement of 1890 also saw the islands of the Sultanate of Zanzibar formally acknowledged as being under British protection, with all German claims withdrawn. Typical of European treaty making in this age of empire, neither the Sultan of Zanzibar, nor any other African ruler or their government was consulted in the settlement of the Helgoland-Zanzibar agreement. None of the African polities in the vicinity of what would become Caprivi Zipfel appear to have had any knowledge of the negotiations that shaped the Helgoland-Zanzibar Treaty, but they were at that same time already engaged in making their own claims to territory that would rival the European empires of Britain, Germany and Portugal in this region of southern Africa. These claims were also in 1890 the subject of diplomatic negotiation. The Lozi leader, Lewanika, in particular, would sign his own treaty only a few weeks after the ink was dry on the Helgoland-Zanzibar deal. Lewanika's agreement was with the British South Africa Company of Cecil Rhodes, and, like the European territorial claims to Caprivi Zipfel, this would be heatedly contested over the coming years. In his negotiations, Lewanika laid claim to vast tracts of territory, including Caprivi Zipfel, asserting sovereignty over other local peoples and claiming rights in duties and taxes that extending far into domains already claimed by the Portuguese and the British. Lewanika had his own notions of the territorial sovereignty of his Barotse state, but he was also learning the arts of European imperial claim-making and the map-making and flag-bearing activities that went with it across the volatile riparian landscape between the Zambezi, Kwando and Okavango rivers. History, and pragmatic politics, were deployed in equal measure to justify the claims of African and European alike, as each player sought to legitimize and authenticate their vision of Caprivi Zipfel's future through diplomatic negotiation.

11:30-12:45: Panel 4 – Trans-locality

Sixiang Wang – “Korean Diplomacy and Imperial Transitions: From Identity to Isomorphism (1400–1900)”

Diplomacy in East Asia, as well as diplomatic history in general, has usually been moored to the baggage of cultural identity. For good reason: after all, imperial

formations often make some kind of cultural identity or tradition central to their mechanisms of legitimation: the Roman *translatio imperii*, Chinese claims of *tianxia*, and Mongol call-backs to the sacred mandates of Chinggis Khan are such examples. Nevertheless, there are also numerous practices that seem to cross lines of identity: the widespread Eurasian practice of *khila* (robing or investiture), the use of passports, dynastic marriages—come to mind. What explains the ability of some practices to “transcend” identitarian considerations and become “norms”? I explore this question by using the case of Korean diplomacy with its imperial neighbours across three separate imperial transitions: Mongol-Ming (ca. 1350s–1390s); Ming-Qing (ca. 1620s–1640s); and Qing-“Western” (1860s–1890s). It aims to detach the continuity of diplomatic practices from narrowly ideological or identitarian terms and reconsider them from the perspective of “isomorphism”: as forms that create interoperability rather than as markers of legitimacy or identity. It will then return to revisit the issue of “identity” in these processes and consider methodological and interpretative issues that these cases elicit.

Gül Şen (Universität Bonn) – “From Captive to Diplomat: Representing the Ottoman State in War and Peace in the Eighteenth Century”

From the perspective of a global diplomatic history, a closer look at the eighteenth century reveals a number of interactive developments of diplomatic norms, structures, and practices between the Ottoman state and its neighboring empires. Ottoman relations to their neighbors, the Habsburg Empire and Russia, were characterized not only by military conflict, but also to a great extent by strong diplomatic ties between the Sublime Porte in Istanbul and the courts in Vienna and Saint Petersburg. Since the protagonists did acknowledge each other as sovereign states, they could meet at eye-level. Therefore, these empires had an interest in diplomatic communication and interaction not only during peace times, but also during military confrontations. In the Ottoman context, the war zones of the eighteenth century were Hungary and Ukraine, regions where territorial and cultural borders were not clearly defined. To understand this situation, and its impact on diplomatic relations, we may apply Juri Lotman’s (1990) model of semiosphere, i.e. of cognitive spaces which exist beyond the political borders, and in which a process of mobility of knowledge as well as multiple interwoven spaces can exist. Furthermore, in this new space of knowledge, trans-local entanglements would take place. This paper examines this form of interactive communication between empires by discussing the diplomatic activities of two Ottoman war captives. The first one is Osman Agha (d. after 1732), who had been a war captive in Austria for fourteen years and after his release served as an interpreter and diplomat in Belgrade. The second is Necati Efendi (d. 1793), an Ottoman official who spent four years in Saint Petersburg as captive and, after his return to Istanbul, wrote a report on his captivity. Their involvement in diplomatic processes, which was based on their first-hand knowledge of the other side, reveals us a number of characteristics of early modern inter-imperial diplomacy.


14:00-15:15 Panel 5 – Textual Practice

Shounak Ghosh (Vanderbilt University) – “The Art of Emissary among Persianate Courts: Querying the Figure of the Early Modern Envoy”

My paper argues that the figure of the envoy (*ilchī*) inscribed in the Persian chancery records of early modern Islamic political entities offers an avenue to write a global history of diplomacy from a non-European perspective. The *ilchī* was a transregional figure straddling the worlds of the Persianate court societies whose shared cultural ethos informed the performative nature of their enterprise. Most envoys appointed by the Mughal state in South Asia and the Deccan sultanates in peninsular south India to each other's courts and to Safavid Iran were prominent members of the diasporic community, chiefly consisting of émigré Iranians who (or whose forefathers) had earlier served the Safavid empire in some capacity. Owing to these entanglements, their persona lied at the interstices of the value systems and ethical sensibilities of both Iranian and South Asian courtly systems which continually evolved through their participation in diplomatic exchanges. The attributes that comprised the professional toolkit of the envoy and the trans-imperial networks in which they were embedded made them adept to negotiate the processes of mediation that lied at the crux of diplomatic practice. In this paper, I will reconstruct the dynamic and versatile profile of the envoy through a historical and contextual analysis of the diplomatic correspondence that transpired between these polities to delineate how their roles were defined, articulated, and perceived in contemporary textual practices. By treating text as praxis, my paper contends that the archival register of Persian courtly texts, especially epistolary compositions (*inshā'*) extant in manuscripts' collections, presents a set of conceptual frameworks to approach the study of early modern diplomacy. Further, it challenges the applicability of European epistemic categories such as “resident ambassador” and the use of prescriptive manuals for training envoys to understand the non-institutionalized and flexible nature of diplomatic service in the Islamicate world.

Ariel Lopez (University of the Philippines Dilliman) – “Malay Diplomatic Correspondences at the National Archives of the Philippines, c. 1750-1800: Connections and Comparisons”

Diplomatic correspondences mainly written in Jawi (Arabic script) and in various languages (Tausug, Malay, Maguindanao) stored at the National Archives of the Philippines remains a largely untapped resource in the study of diplomatic history in Southeast Asia. While recent studies have underlined their importance (Donoso, 2023; Gallop, 2019), closer analysis of these letters through transcription, translation, and contextualization remains lacking. This paper examines a selection of these letters sent by the rulers of the sultanates of Johor, Brunei, Sulu, and Maguindanao to Spanish authorities in Manila and Zamboanga from around 1750 to 1800. This period not only coincided with the increasing role of the British but also and more important, the “last stand of autonomous states” in the region (Reid, 1993). It asks: How similar or different were the various rulers' intentions and diplomatic approach as gleaned through these letters? To what extent were there changes over time in the manner



and contents of diplomatic correspondences? Finally, how are these practices comparable with other Malay correspondence and diplomacy elsewhere in the region?