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The Elephant in the Archive: Knowledge Construction and Late Eighteenth-Century Global Diplomacy

Birgit Tremml-Werner 

Linnaeus University Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Växjö, Sweden
Email: birgittremml@gmail.com

Abstract

This article explores the dynamics behind global diplomacy and knowledge in Asian maritime empires in the late eighteenth century. The short-lived diplomatic exchange between the Kingdom of Mysore and the Spanish Philippines in 1776–7 provides a rich resource for an analysis of how global diplomatic agents coproduced material objects, images, and written records which in turn impacted politics and trade relations. The article makes at least four important interventions in the burgeoning field of new diplomatic history. First, it sheds light on certain aspects of growing research on Asian diplomatic encounters connecting the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia; second, it offers insights into the manifold actors involved in creating and negotiating knowledge; third, it highlights the epistemological importance of the visual and material archives for the study of global diplomacy in the early modern period; and fourth, it challenges narratives of cross-cultural foreign relations which tend to overemphasise asymmetrical and confessional explanations.

Keywords: Philippines; Mysore; archive; global lives; trade; foreign relations

Introduction: A Memorable Diplomatic Episode

On 26 January 1776, the Spanish frigate *Rey la Deseada* left Manila for Mangalore, where it arrived on 7 April that same year.¹ The vessel carried a delegation sent by the Spanish governor-general of the Philippines, Simón de Anda y Salazar, to the nawab of Mysore, Haidar (Hyder) Ali. Three years earlier, the nawab had sent an elephant to Spain, and the year before a letter, delivered to Manila by a Jewish merchant from Hamburg by the name of Isaac Berend Goldschmidt (Goldsmith). Written in Arabic script, the document resembled a commercial treaty, including nine clauses for future collaboration. Among them was the exclusive right (meaning: protection against competition from other Europeans) for the vassals of “His Catholic Majesty” to open a fortified factory located at a navigable river in exchange for supplying munitions, shipbuilding knowledge, and commercial goods to the nawab.² Many of the clauses were indeed embellished by the

¹ Archivo General de Indias [hereafter AGI], Mapas y Planos [hereafter MP]-Filipinas 89 (1778/11/26), see Appendix 1. *La Deseada* was one of many armed Spanish vessels operating in Asian waters. It had been sent to Batavia in 1773 with the intention of resuming commercial relations.

² Salvador P. Escoto, “Haidar Alí: Un Intento Frustrado de Relación Comercial Entre Mysore y Filipinas, 1773–1779,” *Revista Española Del Pacífico Asociación Española de Estudios Del Pacífico* 10 (1999): 49–50.

German lobbyist Goldschmidt and freely interpreted by translators in Manila. Yet, despite its singularity, the lack of precedence, and the absence of a return embassy, the diplomatic exchange between the expanding Mysore Empire and the restrengthened colonial government in the Philippines serves as a point of departure for exploring knowledge policies in global diplomacy.

The diplomatic mission sent by Governor-General Simón de Anda y Salazar (1709–76) to the Nawab of Mangalore, Haidar Ali (c.1720–82), ruler of the Malabar Coast, was headed by Basque ship captain Ramón de Ysassi with Spanish lieutenant Don Miguel Antonio Gómez as second in command. Miguel Antonio Gómez's diary holds the most detailed record of the delegation to Mangalore, describing the port facilities and the people living and trading there while also elaborating on important stages of the diplomatic exchange. Gómez recorded that Ysassi departed for the royal residence at Seringapatam to meet the nawab in the company of "Haidar's envoy" Goldschmidt.³ When an exhausted Ysassi arrived in Seringapatam he was strategically kept waiting in costly lodgings and pressed to provide lavish gifts for the nawab and the people at court. Ysassi's eventual reception at Haidar Ali's court strained the budget of the mission after being told that "to be able to talk to the prince, it is necessary to bring a gift to him and to the people surrounding him. Even all the silver of Potosi will appear little to him [Haidar Ali]."⁴ Yet, all he achieved was permission for his party to return to Mangalore.⁵ What happened during and after the negotiations in Seringapatam remains obscure; all that is known is that Ysassi died there, while Goldschmidt went into hiding. The mysterious circumstances of the Spanish ambassador's death and Goldschmidt's disappearance have ever since contributed to a narrative of fake credentials, loss, and failure.

Disconnected from the events in Seringapatam, Gómez and most of the Spanish crew members spent the monsoon season in the port area of Mangalore. Two weeks after their arrival they were entertained by a Mysorian official.⁶ The "admiral" of Haidar Ali's navy, Raghunatah Andria ("Engri"), invited the Spanish party to a reception at his residence.⁷ When the surviving members of Ysassi's party returned from Seringapatam to Mangalore, Gómez was able to sell the ship's cargo and pay for their accommodation and for entertaining local officials and foreign visitors. In November 1776, Gómez was eventually received by Haidar Ali's Brahman envoy Bahader.⁸ In the meantime, Haidar Ali ordered Rajah Ran, the governor of Bednur, to prepare an elephant as a present for Simón de Anda y Salazar, the Spanish governor-general in Manila. Before the official visit was concluded with a glamorous three-day banquet, Haidar's secretary commissioned Miguel Antonio Gómez to escort the elephant to the designated recipient.⁹ This Indian elephant cow, sent to Manila and later to Madrid, was the main diplomatic agent of this episode and highlights crucial aspects of knowledge production and memory that will help to sharpen historians' understanding of the visual and material archive of global diplomacy.

³ AGI Estado 45, n. 5 (1778/12/29). For the account of the journey, see "Copia auténtica de la relación del viaje hecho de orden de S. M. la fragata nombrada Nuestra Señora del Carmen alias La Deseada y escrita por Miguel Antonio Gómez al Puerto de Mangalor, por los fines del Real Servicio," in the same file.

⁴ Compare Salvador P. Escoto, "A Spaniard's Diary of Mangalore, 1776–1777," in *Asian Studies* 18 (1980), 128.

⁵ AGI Estado 45, n. 5 (1778/12/29).

⁶ AGI MP-Filipinas 89 (1778/11/26).

⁷ Identified by Escoto, "A Spaniard's Diary," 123–4.

⁸ AGI MP-Filipinas 90 (1778/11/26). Escoto interpreted this as a party given by Gómez to honour Haidar Ali's new governor: see Escoto, "Spaniard's Diary," 127.

⁹ Cf. Escoto, "Spaniard's Diary," 128.

Knowledge Circulation in Globalised Diplomatic Practices

Several studies have located a shift in foreign relations and the perception of international law throughout Eurasia in the final decades of the eighteenth century. The bulk of them have focused on the protocol of state relations and the lives of career diplomats.¹⁰ The diplomatic episode in Mangalore heralded new practices of knowledge production and circulation at the dawn of the Age of Revolution.¹¹ Yet, somewhat ironically, the cross-cultural negotiations between Manila, Mangalore, and Madrid have been dismissed as a mere commercial delegation of limited success.¹² An exploration of the dynamics behind the creation and circulation of knowledge in the pluralistic sources that form the archive of the 1776–7 diplomatic episode, however, reveals a complex picture.¹³ It appears when juxtaposing the extensive paper trail with the colourful visual archive of illustrations. The latter include sketches depicting Hindu religious sculptures (while notably disregarding the Islamic environment of South India), different types of late eighteenth-century diplomatic dress, ceremonial items and practices, and a detailed map of the port of Mangalore.¹⁴ Inspired by recent studies in new diplomatic history focusing on writing practices, ethnographic knowledge, and disconnections,¹⁵ this article looks at the visual and material aspects of knowledge trajectories and performance.¹⁶ Its polyvocal story adds to the growing body of decolonised literature on the relationship between knowledge and power beyond Foucault's paradigm of power reproducing knowledge.¹⁷ It ultimately aims to conceptually strengthen the study of global diplomacy and to provide alternative narratives to the Eurocentric, Realist international relations saga that has long prioritised the agencies and institutions of ruling elites.¹⁸

Scholars have stressed the reciprocity between actors and space in the construction, circulation, and transformation of knowledge.¹⁹ Rationally motivated forms of knowledge

¹⁰ Charles H. Alexandrowicz, *The European-African Confrontation: A Study in Treaty-Making* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1973); Nadine Amsler, Henrietta Harrison, and Christian Windler, "Introduction: Eurasian Diplomacies around 1800: Transformation and Persistence," *International History Review* 41:5 (2019), 943–6.

¹¹ The period and its specific dynamics, often equated with the rise of British imperialism, are splendidly captured in Sujit Sivasundaram, *Waves across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire* (London: William Collins, 2020).

¹² Escoto, "Haidar Ali," 43–65.

¹³ This approach has been informed by previous work on knowledge regimes. See Peter Wehling, "Wissensregime," in *Handbuch Wissenssoziologie und Wissensforschung*, ed. Rainer Schützeichel (Cologne: Herbert von Halem Verlag, 2018), 704–13; for early modern foreign relations in particular, see Emrah Safa Gürkan, "Mediating Boundaries: Mediterranean Go-Betweens and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560–1600," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19:2–3 (2015), 107–28.

¹⁴ AGI MP-Filipinas 88, 89, 90, 91 (1778/12/12). For the paper trail and official copies, see AGI Estado 45, n. 5, which comprises more than 220 files; and Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN) Estado 3403, exp. 2 (1780/08/07).

¹⁵ For a recent survey, see Guido van Meersbergen, *Ethnography and Encounter: The Dutch and English in Seventeenth-Century South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2022); Zoltán Biedermann, *(Dis)Connected Empires: Imperial Portugal, Sri Lankan Diplomacy, and the Making of a Habsburg Conquest in Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹⁶ For the importance of performance in foreign relations, see Jan Hennings, *Russia and Courtly Europe: Ritual and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1648–1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁷ Kapil Raj, "Beyond Postcolonialism . . . and Postpositivism: Circulation and the Global History of Science," *Isis* 104 (2013), 337–47. For foreign relations, see Gregory Afinogenov, *Spies and Scholars: Chinese Secrets and Imperial Russia's Quest for World Power* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020), 183–233. For Foucault, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998).

¹⁸ Hillard von Thiessen, "Diplomatie vom type ancien. Überlegungen zu einem Idealtypus des frühneuzeitlichen Diplomaten," in *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. Hillard von Thiessen and Christian Windler (Wien: Böhlau, 2010), 471–503.

¹⁹ For a good overview of the historiography on the circulation of knowledge, see Johan Östling et al., "The History of Knowledge and the Circulation of Knowledge: An Introduction," in *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018), 9–36; Simone Lässig, "The History

gathering determined early modern foreign relations such as the European resident and congress diplomacy or the frontier intelligence tools of Eurasian empires such as China, Russia, or the Ottomans.²⁰ As the diplomatic episode of 1776–7 did not involve institutions that per definition existed for intelligence gathering, actors on the spot were key to knowledge construction.²¹ A variety of different materials stand witness to diverse knowledge production processes. Illustrations, objects, and voluminous paper trails with multiple copies created specific types of knowledge, ranging from topographic information, religious practices, and the rationales that guided court ceremonials. However, detached from the place and time of its creation, diplomatic knowledge could easily paint a misleading picture of the actors involved and the authors behind the material. Tanja Bühner's study of the empirical knowledge and the language of intercultural diplomacy has pointed at the semantics of the written archive as both powerful and misleading.²² To counteract, it is important to avoid prioritising the written diplomatic archive.

Previous scholarship has paid little attention to the colourful illustrations depicting the diplomatic encounter in Mangalore. Neither the image of the diplomatic audience of the Spanish nor the sketch of a dance performance in which Gómez is depicted sitting among foreign ambassadors from Persia and Muscat have been analysed. Instead, Gómez's diary (*Relación de Mangalore*),²³ which he wrote during the eleven-month long stay, has determined the interpretation of the diplomatic episode. Indeed, with its rich detail on the commerce of the city, the foreign ships calling at the port, and also on religious festivals, social classes, and governance practices, the diary is more useful as source for local Indian history of the period prior to British conquest than for global diplomacy.²⁴ To understand the latter, other material proves more helpful, such as the accompanying map with its rich details on port life, where ships come from, how many entered, and what the cargo looked like, as well as showing trading facilities and the built environment of Mangalore.²⁵ In addition to the ethnographic illustrations and the Spanish view of Mangalore as seen through the map, the study of elephants complements existing interpretations. Hence, this article will explore the elephant in the archive as a dynamic agent of power relations guiding pre-1800 global diplomacy.

The Manila–Mysore Episode within Global Diplomacy

Asian stakeholders and European merchant enterprises of different scope and scale had been engaging in power bargaining since the early sixteenth century. Representatives

of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 59 (2016), 38.

²⁰ For the European context, see Christof Jeggle and Mark Häberlein, eds., *Materielle Grundlagen der Diplomatie. Schenken, Sammeln Und Verhandeln in Spätmittelalter Und Früher Neuzeit* (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2012). For China and Russia, see Afinogenov, *Spies and Scholars*; for the Ottoman Empire, see Michael Talbot, *British-Ottoman Relations, 1661–1807: Commerce and Diplomatic Practice in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017); Norbert Spannenberger and Arno Strohmeier, eds., *Frieden und Konfliktmanagement in Interkulturellen Räumen. Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013).

²¹ Both resident ambassadors and diplomatic manuals are well known examples for European diplomacy. See Guido Braun, ed., *Diplomatische Wissenskulturen der Frühen Neuzeit* (Oldenburg: DeGruyter, 2018).

²² Tanja Bühner, "Intercultural Diplomacy at the Court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, 1770–1815," *International History Review* 41:5 (2018), 1039–1056.

²³ Included in AGI Estado 45, n. 5, as "Copia auténtica de la relación del viaje hecho de orden de S. M. la fragata nombrada Nuestra Señora del Carmen alias La Deseada y escrita por Miguel Antonio Gómez al Puerto de Mangalar, por los fines del Real Servicio" (1779/12/23).

²⁴ Escoto, "Spaniard's Diary."

²⁵ AGI MP-Filipinas 88 (1778/11/26).

of the Spanish Philippines had been in lively diplomatic exchange with many Asian potentates, including the Japanese shogun, Chinese coastal officials, and the king of Thailand, since the foundation of the colony in 1565. But it was only in the middle of the eighteenth century that foreign relations changed the power equilibrium of the Indian Ocean and maritime Southeast Asia. In 1757, the Battle of Plassey (Palashi) was fought between the last independent nawab of Bengal and the soldiers of the British East India Company, while during 1762–4, Spanish colonial officials and their indigenous allies defended the Philippines against a British invasion. In 1768, Haidar Ali and his troops recaptured Mangalore from the British. Pressed by external threats, both officials in the Philippines and the new rulers of Mysore invested in improving their polity's position and status to counter the growing influence of the English East India Company in Asia. For the same reason, the potential alliance with Nawab Haidar Ali Kan was kept alive for several years after the return of the Spanish delegation from Mangalore. The correspondence between Governor José Basco y Vargas and José Gálvez, head of the Council of the Indies in Spain, reveals how officials in the Philippines and Spain aimed to include the Malabar/Mysore rulers into their strategic network of friendly Muslim rulers, including Ternate, whose sultan visited Manila in 1779.²⁶

The rulers of Mysore, who saw themselves as successors of the Mughal state, mimicked an elaborate system of court diplomacy operationalised by military ranks, scholar diplomats, and foreign trade. While the seventeenth century was marked by aggressive diplomacy against Uzbek expansionism towards India and anti-Safavid alliances, the Great Mughal received envoys from Persia, the Ottoman Empire, Yemen, Ethiopia, and European monarchs. Foreign envoys received lavish gifts and were entertained by court dignitaries while being offered trading concessions.²⁷ Ambassadors performed the Indian ceremony of salaam, as observed by the French physician François Bernier, writing on Mughal court ceremonies and treatment of foreigners.²⁸ Scholars have highlighted the transitional character of Haidar Ali and the Tipu Sultan, his son, who included new approaches to alliances and fiercely resisted colonialism.²⁹ Mysorian diplomacy was indeed influenced by the legacy of the Mughal territorial aspirations (most of all in the dynasty's ancestral homeland in Central Asia) and guided by inspirations of universal Islamic rule and occasional alliances with the Sunni Uzbeks and Ottomans against the Shia Safavids of Persia.³⁰ A well-known example of cross-cultural diplomacy is Haidar's alliance with the French squadron of Admiral Pierre-André Suffren de Saint Tropez in 1782 against the British.³¹ In those years, ambassadors from neighbouring Muslim

²⁶ AGI Estado 45, n.5 (1779/12/4). In 1780, colonial officials summarised “everything that had happened between the years 1773 and 1780 with regard to the desire to establish a foothold (*establecimiento*) on the Malabar Coast for the sake of entertaining commerce between the Spanish Empire and the lands of “Nabab Hyder Ali Kan.” This source collection comprises more than four hundred manuscript pages, including the diary of Miguel Antonio Gómez and the drawings introduced below.

²⁷ The popular narrative of Mughal indifference and disrespect towards European ambassadors and their inferior treatment compared to Persian or Ottoman envoys has been challenged. A. Lambton, “Pishkash: Present or Tribute?” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 57:1 (1994), 145–58. About the Persianate world, see R. M. Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age 1000–1765* (London: Allen Lane, 2019), 11–18.

²⁸ François Bernier, *Voyages de François Bernier: Contenant La Description Des États Du Grand Mogol* (Paris: Imprimé aux frais du gouvernement, 1830).

²⁹ Kaveh Yazdani, “Haidar ‘Ali and Tipu Sultan: Mysore’s Eighteenth-Century Rulers in Transition,” *Itinerario* 38:2 (2014), 101–20.

³⁰ N. R. Farooqi, “Diplomacy and Diplomatic Practice under the Mughals,” *Medieval History Journal* 7:1 (2004), 59–86.

³¹ The memory of Suffren’s audience with Haidar Ali is preserved in the popular engraving by French artist Jean Baptiste Morret, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/64/Suffren_meeting_with_Haider_Ali

empires and distant foreign powers such as France and indeed Spain became integrated in anti-British foreign politics.³²

Mysorian diplomacy of the late eighteenth century is mostly remembered through the legacy of the Tipu Sultan (1751–99), Haidar Ali's successor.³³ Guided by the conviction that British presence must be eliminated in India, the Tipu Sultan's diplomatic portfolio included grand missions to the Ottoman Empire of several hundred members in 1786.³⁴ Between 1786 and 1796 the Tipu Sultan moreover proposed several alliances to France. In 1787 he sent three ambassadors directly to Paris. Other embassies were sent to the Safavid Empire, the Sultanate of Oman, the Zand Dynasty in southern Iran, and the Durrani Empire in present-day Afghanistan, as well as to the French governor on Mauritius (Île de France) in 1798.³⁵ Despite negotiating with representatives of Catholic monarchies, the Tipu Sultan, who is reported to have urged the Safavid Sultan Salim II: "consider not infidels as friends, only other Muslims," understood sovereignty as being negotiated between state and religious concerns.³⁶ Nevertheless, in the 1790s the Persian Empire was reluctant to forge an alliance with the sovereign of Mysore and instead opted for polemics about true Muslim rule, spreading religiously charged rhetoric depicting Tipu Sultan as an infidel. Be this as it may, the Spanish Empire had long ceased to feature in the Mysorian foreign relations portfolio at that point.

Plural Diplomatic Actors, Their Functions and Agendas

For the diplomatic encounter of 1776–7 there can be no doubt that the commercial rationale mattered. The economic calculus of various parties determined intrainperial bargaining across three oceans from point of initiation throughout the aftermath. Ruling elites in both realms were keen to establish solid trade relations beyond private mercantile initiatives.³⁷ In Spain, a strong lobby urged the court of Charles III to sanction direct participation by metropolitan merchants in Asia, and during 1765 and 1784 a mercantile armada came to operate for the first time directly (via the Cape of Good Hope) between Spain and the Philippines.³⁸ Viewed from the Philippines, this was just the final consequence of a long-standing commercial exchange between the Indian coast and Manila that had sustained port city communities for at least a hundred years and rested on the initiatives and networks of diverse actors. Many of them were merchants and seafaring people who operated in the waters surrounding what is known today as

[%2C_26_july_1782_engraved_by_J_B_Morret_1789.jpg](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1931-0708-1). Today held at the British Museum; see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1931-0708-1.

³² Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Irfan Habib, ed., *State and Diplomacy under Tipu Sultan: Documents and Essays* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2001). Embassies were sent to Paris, Constantinople, Muscat, Kabul, Basra, Baghdad, Tehran, Shiraz, Bandar Abbas, Cairo, Mecca, Medina, Pegu, and Mauritius.

³³ Tipu Sultan's diplomacy included such bold interventions as sending an embassy to Mauritius to support the republican settler uprising there in 1798. Sivasundaram, *Waves across the South*, 104–11.

³⁴ An embassy to the Ottoman Court in 1786 is a telling example of the Tipu Sultan's grand diplomacy: Tipu's ambassador was accompanied by a retinue of 900 servants, including secretaries, cooks, interpreters, and soldiers. Since the group was too large to be accommodated in the Ottoman capital, only 300 members of the delegation were permitted to enter Istanbul. Farooqi, "Diplomacy," 79. See also Rishad Choudhury, "Tipu and the Turks: An Islamicate Embassy in the Age of British Expansion," *Itinerario* 47:2 (2023): 166–184.

³⁵ Sivasundaram, *Waves*, 106.

³⁶ Kaveh Yazdani, *India, Modernity, and the Great Divergence: Mysore and Gujerat* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 289–99.

³⁷ Birgit Tremml-Werner, "Marginal Players and Intra-Network Connections: New Perspectives on the Manila Trade, c. 1640–1780," *Journal of Social Sciences and Philosophy* 29:4 (2017), 599–626.

³⁸ Alberto Baena Zapatero, "Regalos de Filipinas a Cádiz en los Barcos de la Armada (1765–1784)," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 74:2 (2017), 493.

the Philippine and Indonesian archipelagos. Spanish Governor-General Anda himself commissioned a group of merchants to assist in resuming trade with Dutch Batavia.³⁹ Members of this multiethnic group were open to collaborations with a variety of stakeholders operating in the Indian Ocean and their local knowledge and alleged neutrality made them particularly effective.

Don Miguel Antonio Gómez, the highest-ranking surviving representative of the 1776–7 Spanish delegation, had a keen interest in the operations of these maritime networks. As part of his work for the colonial government in the Philippines he had drawn the *Plano de la Plaza de Manila*, a precise geometric map indicating the position of the English invaders in 1762.⁴⁰ His career as a colonial engineer had prepared him for the task of knowledge gathering. After arriving at the Malabar Coast in 1776, his tasks resembled those of the scribal elite of Indian scholar diplomats. Captain Ramón de Ysassi's unexpected death made Gómez, formerly second in command, the head of the delegation. As author of the *Relación de Mangalore* he depicted the cosmopolitan nature of the city and shaped the narrative of the Spanish integration into Mysorian courtly diplomacy. He did not refrain from exaggerating his position in the Indo-Persian diplomatic world. A set of illustrations attributed to Gómez depict the diplomatic ceremony in the residence of Haidar's admiral Angri, which artificially raised his status as Spanish diplomatic envoy: Gómez is displayed as being integrated in the Indian court ceremonial and treated with what the community of diplomats in Europe would consider status equality. Although his qualities as envoy remain questionable, he demonstrated his technical knowledge with the elaborate Malabar Coast map, which moreover underlines his sense for useful knowledge gathering and secret intelligence, which was a major accomplishment of the Spanish diplomatic project.

Gómez's knowledge production moreover demonstrates how semantics can overwrite the plurality of the people involved in foreign affairs. Gómez stated that the Spanish governor-general of the Philippines sent the 1776–7 mission and the nawab of Mysore received it, by which Gómez wrongly implied that Simón de Anda y Salazar initiated the diplomatic exchange and moreover understates Haidar Ali's geopolitical visions. Gómez, who had served under Anda for several years, was aware of Anda's diplomatic repertoire, which he demonstrated for instance during the British occupation of Manila, 1662–4, when he negotiated and collaborated with various parties while making use of persuasion and retaliation.⁴¹ Gómez moreover silenced the role of Anda's successor as governor-general, José de Basco y Vargas Valderrama y Rivera (r. 1778–87). Basco y Vargas put significant effort into tapping the economic potential of the Philippines.⁴² His agricultural reforms included the large-scale production of global commodities such as pepper, cotton, and cinnamon, which may explain his interest in maintaining the Indian connection. Ironically, it is by looking into Basco y Vargas's correspondence with Council of the Indies minister José de Gálvez that one gets the many names of Armenian and Indian merchants involved in planning the delegation by outfitting the ship's crew with maps, hints, and contacts.⁴³ Basco's petition to support the people in

³⁹ Serafin D. Quiason, "The English 'Country Trade' with Manila Prior to 1708," *Asian Studies* 1 (1963), 64–83; Xabier Lamikiz and Alberto Baena Zapatero, "Presencia de Una Diáspora Global: Comerciantes Armenios y Comercio Intercultural en Manila, c. 1660–1800," *Revista de Indias* 74:262 (2014), 693–722.

⁴⁰ AGI MP-Filipinas 42 (1763/07/29). As captain of the infantry and an engineer, Miguel Antonio Gómez sketched a map of urban Manila with detailed annotation.

⁴¹ Kristie P. Flannery, "Battlefield Diplomacy and Empire-Building in the Indo-Pacific World during the Seven Years' War," *Itinerario* 40:3 (2016): 467–88.

⁴² AGI Estado 45, n. 5 (1779/12/29); while in office, Vargas' troops temporarily conquered the region of the Igorotes, who had long resisted Spanish dominion, and fought Malay-Muslim raiders off the island of Luzon.

⁴³ In late 1778, the entire set of documents regarding Mangalore was incorporated in a report José Basco y Vargas sent to Spain. See AGI Estado 45, n. 5 (1778/12/29).

Manila in making use of the arrangements made with Haidar Ali reveal once more how the diplomatic exchange was the product of the joint yet unsynchronised efforts of many individuals. Many of them operated beyond the textual record and behind the scenes, thus pluralising the archive of diplomatic exchange beyond the gaze of the historian.

The Hamburg-born broker Isaac Berend Goldschmidt, who sought to make a fortune by arranging a business deal between King Charles III of Spain and Haidar Ali, was one such flexible protagonist of the Mysorian project.⁴⁴ During an extended stay in Madrid in 1774 he offered his services to the secretary of state, Marqués Grimaldi: in exchange for a daily allowance he would mediate the establishment of direct trade between Spain and the Malabar Coast.⁴⁵ Goldschmidt allegedly negotiated directly with Haidar Ali in Seringapatam in 1770, promising to procure steady support for Mysorian military campaigns from a European power in return for Indian commodities.⁴⁶ The Spanish king was one of several potential commercial allies he approached and apparently the only one who agreed to invest in the project. Endorsed by his majesty, Goldschmidt travelled to Manila, where he deliberately approached Governor-General Anda y Salazar as the diplomatic envoy of the “sovereign of Mysore Nawab Haidar Ali.”⁴⁷ Anda’s notary recorded that Goldschmidt showed two pages of official credentials written in “Moorish language.” Their translation included comments on the many vassals submitting to Haidar Ali, as well as the distinction between Mangalore as the main commercial port and Seringapatam as the royal residence.⁴⁸

Goldschmidt represents the stateless diplomatic actors among brokers of empire, who negotiated beyond the interests of “their” nation or state-like institution.⁴⁹ Yet, while such actors are conventionally excluded from the study of official relations, their mercantile capital and personal agendas had a fundamental impact on inter-polity relations. The Spanish archive clearly introduces Goldschmidt as a diplomatic actor who carried Haidar Ali’s written offer of exclusive rights to mutual trade with the Spaniards. The document issued by Haidar Ali and introduced at the beginning of this article concluded with the nawab pledging to deal with any person of Simón de Anda’s choice to maintain, conclude, and ratify the proposed treaty of commerce and alliance.⁵⁰ Whether Goldschmidt was supposed to be this person remains a matter of speculation.

Goldschmidt’s diplomatic talent for gaining the favour of the highest-ranking stakeholders beyond linguistic, cultural, and religious differences literally carried weight: it was the promise of an Indian elephant that gained him the Spanish king’s approval. Elephants had been symbols of global power for centuries. The sheer difficulties in catching and transporting these giant mammals turned elephants into diplomatic actants in Asia and Africa, and, however less frequently, even in Europe. Luis IX of France allegedly sent one to England in 1255.⁵¹ In 1552, an elephant travelled from Goa via Lisbon and

⁴⁴ See <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6765-goldsmid#1105>.

⁴⁵ For Goldsmith’s lobbying in Spain, see Memorial presentado por Goldsmith al Marqués de Grimaldi. Palacio Real de Madrid, AHN Estado 3403, r. 5 (1774/01/09).

⁴⁶ Escoto, “Haidar Alí,” 43–65.

⁴⁷ AGI Estado 45, n. 5.

⁴⁸ Escoto, “Haidar Alí,” 49–50.

⁴⁹ Natalie E. Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012). For an evaluation of such individuals within diplomatic history, see special issue on business diplomacy in *Diplomatica* 2:1 (2020).

⁵⁰ AHN Estado 3403, exp 2, 5

⁵¹ Pichayapat Naisupap, “The Emblematic Elephant: Elephants, the Dutch East India Company, and Eurasian Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century” (master’s thesis, Leiden University, 2020). For the African elephant sent to England in 1255, see the engraving of Martin Schongauer: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/336141>.

Valladolid to Vienna on behalf of Grand Duke Maximilian II.⁵² By the 1770s, the reasons for moving elephants across vast distances had changed, yet their political value remained high: one of the reasons Charles III was so eager to receive an Indian elephant was his rivalry with King Louis XIV of France, who had received a Congolese elephant as a diplomatic gift from the king of Portugal in 1668. Louis's elephant lived in the royal stables of Versailles, where it became an object of both popular amazement and scholarly study before it died in 1681. With the French court being in possession of the only African elephant, the possibility of accommodating its Indian counterpart—according to Spanish scholarly wisdom of the time the strongest of its kind—was appealing.⁵³ A first attempt failed when an Indian elephant sent from Manila in 1773 died soon after its arrival in Cádiz. Well informed about Madrid's elephant mania, it became Goldschmidt's ticket to Manila and Mangalore. To what extent Goldschmidt was involved in negotiating the elephant business in Seringapatam in 1776 is difficult to assess given his sudden disappearance following Ysassi's death. When Haidar Ali ordered an elephant cow (*elefanta*) be sent with the Spanish delegation on the *La Deseada* to Manila in spring 1777 the German merchant had long vanished from the records of the elephant business.⁵⁴

The widely travelled elephants from southern India tied together people of diverse backgrounds whose collaborative knowledge manipulated both local and global supply and demand.⁵⁵ Since the elephant cow was designated as a gift from Haidar Ali to Anda y Salazar, the governor-general's death prior to the delegation's return to the Philippines caused major problems to the Spanish community in Manila. Supply, accommodation, and care for the precious gift were complicated and costly. The deceased governor's nephew Juan Francisco de Anda took responsibility for hosting the elephant in his Manila estate for eighteen months. During that time, he bargained fiercely with the authorities in Spain and the viceroy of Mexico.⁵⁶ Having finally persuaded them to pay for the transportation of the *elefanta*, he personally accompanied her to Cádiz in 1779.⁵⁷ This episode is not only representative of the multiplicity of intermediaries involved but also underlines the importance of the elephant as an actant in cross-regional and interimperial diplomatic relations.⁵⁸

The *elefanta* was the third elephant associated with Anda. His involvement in the elephant business began in 1773, when the first Indian elephant disembarked in Cádiz in July, from where it would walk for forty-two days to King Charles III in La Granja de San Ildefonso. The elephant was sent from Indian nawabs and although directly transported via the Indian Ocean route, Simón de Anda y Salazar took credit for having personally

⁵² Ferdinand Opll, "'ein(e) vorhin in Wien nie gesehene Rarität von jedermann bewundert.'" Zu Leben, Tod und Nachleben des ersten Wiener Elefanten," *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 60 (2004), 229–73.

⁵³ Various authors, *Descripción del elefante, se su alimento, costumbres, enemigos, e instinto* (Madrid: Andrés Ramirez, 1773), 5.

⁵⁴ Some scholars have considered her sex as an indication of elephant breeding plans in Madrid. See Baena, "Regalos."

⁵⁵ AGI Filipinas 390, n. 84 (1778/07/28). Drafted in Cádiz, José Manjón, the president of the Casa de Contratación, informed José de Gálvez about the arrival of the elephant.

⁵⁶ The total costs amounted to 1,258 pesos.

⁵⁷ AGI Filipinas 390, n. 85, Expediente sobre elefanta para el rey (1778/09/17). See also, Carlos Gómez-Centurión, "Treasures Fit for a King: King Charles III of Spain's Indian Elephants," *Journal of the History of Collections* 22:1 (2010), 29–4.

⁵⁸ For the significance of animal trade, see Martha Chaiklin and Philip Gooding, "Introduction: Investigating Animals, Their Products, and Their Trades in the Indian Ocean World," in *Animal Trade Histories in the Indian Ocean World*, ed. Martha Chaiklin et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 1–25.

arranged the shipment to King Carlos III.⁵⁹ The next elephant from India arrived in 1777 on board a certain Pablo Lasaña's frigate (*Juno*). That elephant was accompanied by a professional caretaker (a.k.a. mahout) from the Malabar Coast named José Montoya.⁶⁰ Montoya would stay in Spain for almost three years, before Juan Francisco de Anda accompanied him back to Veracruz after having delivered the *elefanta* from Haidar Ali. Anda's nephew Tomás de Anda welcomed the *elefanta* and her caretaker in Cádiz and thereafter walked them to Madrid.⁶¹ The colonial elite in Manila had been quick in labelling the elephant cow from Mysore a token of friendship offered to "Simón de Anda's sovereign" in return for the weapons that were brought to Haidar Ali.⁶² They insisted that the righteous reception of the gift and its respectful treatment were crucial for maintaining the friendship between the two polities and the ultimate establishment of a trading factory in Mysore.⁶³ Judging from the elephant design surrounding Anda y Salazar's coat of arms on the façade of his palace in his Basque place of birth, Subijana de Álava, the joint efforts were not entirely in vain.

Diverse actors including the Andas and Isaac Goldschmidt acted as brokers on behalf of Madrid's desire for an elephant for the royal zoo.⁶⁴ Reminiscent of China's panda diplomacy since the 1970s, the business with Indian elephants highlights the dual function of diplomatic gifts as harbingers of global commodity trade and clear intentions to control the discourse.⁶⁵ With regard to the second aspect, it is crucial to note that in the Spanish Empire collecting and allocating practices changed in light of the growing interest in institutional natural history in the decades leading up to the Malaspina expeditions (1789–94). Hence, in 1773, scholars licensed by the court in Madrid published the first natural history of elephants in Spanish. For their booklet (*Descripción del Elefante*) they consulted a medley of the available publications, including Pliny, the Comte de Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*, and pseudo-zoological observations made in Versailles and on the ship to Cádiz.⁶⁶ The booklet clearly reflects the reciprocity of local and global dimensions of knowledge production and foreign relations. Repeated remarks on considerable amounts of wine being part of elephants' alimentation at sea and in Europe are more than just trivia, yet will have to be discussed elsewhere.⁶⁷ The intertwined symbolic and material value of these elephants reflects in their glorious afterlives in Bourbon Spain, where their legacies extended from natural history collections and publications to the chinoiserie design of luxury furniture.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ AGI Filipinas 390, n. 50, Testigos sobre elefante para el rey (1773/11/22). The elephant which was kept in the royal zoo caused major attention. Gabriel Sánchez Espinosa, "Un Episodio en La Recepción Cultural Dieciochesca de Lo Exótico: La Llegada del Elefante a Madrid en 1773," *Goya: Revista de Arte* (2003), 269–86. For the transportation to Spain on the *fragata Venus* under the command of Juan de Lángara, AGI Contratación 2437, n. 3 (1773).

⁶⁰ Baena, "Regalo," 499; cf. AGI Contratación 2438, n. 1.

⁶¹ AGI Contratación 5525, n. 1, r. 23 (1780/2/31).

⁶² AGI Filipinas 390, n. 85, f. 5, f. 12 (1778/09/17).

⁶³ AGI Filipinas 390, n. 85 fól. 4–5 (1778/09/17).

⁶⁴ Memorial presentado por Goldsmith al Marqués de Grimaldi. Palacio Real de Madrid, 9 de enero de 1774. AHN Estado 3403, n. 5.

⁶⁵ Martha Chaiklin, "The Merchant's Ark: Live Animal Gifts in Early Modern Dutch-Japanese Relations," *World History Connected* 9:1 (2012), 1–22, <http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/9.1/chaiklin.html>. See also Halvard Leira and Iver B. Neumann, "Beastly Diplomacy," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 12:4 (2017), 337–359.

⁶⁶ *Descripción del elefante, de su alimento, costumbres, enemigos e instinto y explicación del uso que se hace de los elefantes, modo de cazarlos, y utilidades de sus colmillos en la medicina y en los Artes, &c. Sacado de varios Autores de Historia Natural, y añadida una noticia circunstanciada del que se ha remitido de Philipinas para el Rey nuestro Señor. Con licencia* (Madrid: Imprenta de Andrés Ramirez, 1773).

⁶⁷ *Descripción del elefante*, 12, 30.

⁶⁸ See <https://www.smb.museum/nachrichten/detail/neuzugang-fuer-das-kunstgewerbemuseum-prachtvolles-schreibmoebel-aus-der-madrider-hofwerkstatt-von-jose-canops/>. The most spectacular memento of Spanish-Mysorian exchange originated from the royal workshop at the court of Charles III in Madrid: Joseph Knops

The Visual Material Archive of Spanish–Mysorian Diplomacy

A closer investigation of the ethnographic sketches depicting the audience and entertainment in Mangalore (figures 1 and 2) should ideally begin with their authorship. Who created the images of the encounter in Mangalore, who drafted the sketches, who mixed the colour and applied it to the originals, and who provided the detailed annotations with information on both Spanish and Mysorian diplomatic practices?⁶⁹ As is often the case with ethnographic material of that period, there are only inconclusive answers to these questions. The on-the-ground dynamics of multidirectional knowledge gathering and local art productions studied by intellectual historians certainly culminated in collaborative ethnographic knowledge production.⁷⁰ The illustrations contain clear signs of Mughal manuscript culture, as represented in the Gentil Album of 1774.⁷¹ It is noteworthy that the Indo-Persian artwork with its pluralistic epistemologies, which is named after its patron, a French East India Company officer, was crafted in close temporal vicinity to the sketches hosted in the Spanish archive. The metatext provided by the Spanish colonial archive, which attributes the entire set of images as “escrita por Don Miguel Antonio Gómez,” is likely to be inaccurate. There can be no doubt that uncited people helped Gómez with the intellectual task. Both his writings and the illustrations are dependent on the knowledge of local informants and the skills of artists and scribes. It is noteworthy though that both the ornate style and compositional mode are different from ethnographic sketches crafted in Manila by indigenous and Chinese artists.⁷² Hence, by sending clues about what was silenced and excluded in the metatext, the material has a lot to say about ghostwriting and copyright issues of early modern maritime environments.⁷³

Important hints on the vast dimensions of multiethnic collaborations within knowledge construction can be gleaned from two images of the Hindu deities Gowri and Ganesha. Created in Manila in December 1778, the drawings were included in the set of ethnographic sketches sent to Madrid. The visual material supports the hypothesis about the involvement of local Indian artisans, showing skills and techniques consistent with the naturalistic Mughal tradition of illustrated histories and portraits of emperors and nobles.⁷⁴ At second glance they also expose the limits of knowledge-sharing, including explicit knowledge gaps: according to the Spanish annotation at the bottom, one image depicts Gowri (“Govari”). The deity is described as an “idol” adored by a certain indigenous caste called Gauri who were said to be descendants of the ancient Persians, who fled

(José Canops), a German-born *ebeniste*, designed and tailored an exclusive bureau featuring the elephants from India. The legs of the mahogany wood writing desk mimicked the trunks, attributed with eyes reminiscent of an elephant’s leg joints. I am indebted to Dr. Achim Stiegel for generously sharing his research notes with me.

⁶⁹ On indigenous artists, see Stephanie Porras, “Locating Hispano-Philippine Ivories,” *Latin American Review* 29:2 (2020), 256–91.

⁷⁰ Lissa Roberts, “Situating Science in Global History: Local Exchanges and Networks of Circulation,” *Itinerario* 33:1 (2009), 9–30.

⁷¹ Chanchal Dadlani, “Transporting India: The Gentil Album and Mughal Manuscript Culture,” *Art History* 38:4 (2015), 748–61.

⁷² Famous ethnographic artworks produced in Manila include the *Carta Hydrographica y Chorographica de las Yslas Filipinas* by Pedro Murillo Velarde, Nicolás de la Cruz Bagay, and Francisco Suárez in 1734. The late sixteenth-century coloured illustrations by Chinese artists which are nowadays known as Boxer Codex should also be mentioned in this regard. George Bryan Souza, *The Boxer Codex: Transcription and Translation of an Illustrated Late Sixteenth-Century Spanish Manuscript Concerning the Geography, History and Ethnography of the Pacific, South-East and East Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

⁷³ The maritime world created needs for specific knowledge networks. For a well-documented case of local knowledge bargaining, see Kristie P. Flannery and Guillermo Ruíz-Stovel, “The Loyal Foreign Merchant Captain: Thome Gaspar de León and the Making of Manila’s Intra-Asian Connections,” *Vegueta* 20 (2020), 189–215.

⁷⁴ Dadlani, “Transporting India,” 756.

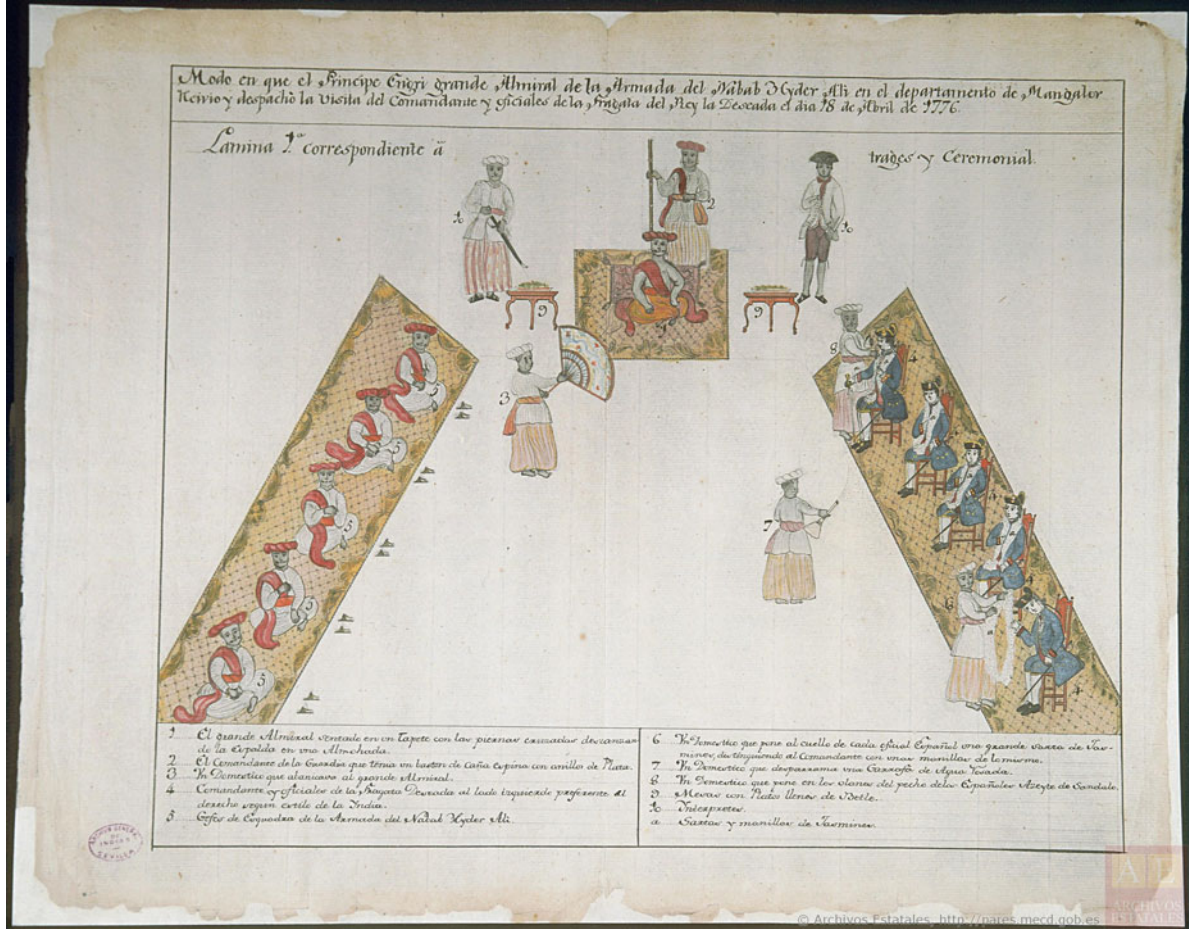


Figure 1. Reception of the Spanish Commander by the Grand Admiral of Nawab Haider Ali's Grand Armada. See Appendix I for the text



Figure 2. Local Dances in the Residence of the Spanish Commander. See Appendix I for the text

their country when Islam (“secta Mohametana”) was introduced.⁷⁵ The superficial description, dated 27 and 28 September 1776 failed to mention the centuries-long importance of the deity Gowri for large populations in Asia. This ignorance points at a Spanish observer. So does the text at the bottom of the second illustration, which features the elephant-faced god Ganesha (“Ganezo”) being worshipped by the local population (“gentiles”) of the Malabar Coast in a ritual/procession held at the fourth day of the September moon. Yet, the minute illustration of the Hindu goddesses and the miniature painting at the bottom of the Gowri pagoda leaves little doubt about the involvement of an experienced Indian hand.

An iconographic approach to the sketches of the audience in Mangalore will allow for a productive integration of both the material and visual archive of the diplomatic encounter. One sheet (*lamina*) of the ethnographic material ascribed to Gómez depicts the ceremonial of the reception of the Spanish commander and other officials by the principal admiral of Haidar Ali. The drawing is supported by a legend on the bottom with descriptions referring to numbers on the illustration. The admiral is seated on a carpet in the centre on the top (1). To his right stands the commander of the Guard holding a stick, while a domestic servant is fanning air at the admiral (2, 3). On the admiral’s left side, the Spanish party, consisting of the commander [Miguel Antonio Gómez] and four officials are seated (“according to the style of India”) on chairs (4). They face a row of the same number of chiefs of Haidar Ali’s squadron seated on cushions (5). An Indian servant is described as rubbing the neck of each Spaniard with jasmines while distinguishing the commander (6). Two other servants are shown, one carrying a carafe with rose water and another one greasing the chests of the Spaniards with sandalwood oil (7, 8). In addition, there were tables full of betel nut (9) and an interpreter (10). Moving away from the purely iconographic description, the symbolic aspects, including distance, bodily comportment, and material aspects provide an intriguing theoretical frame for tracking the wider implications of the event.⁷⁶

The first sheet sends mixed messages when it comes to the ceremonial protocol of the Mangalorean encounter. The different spatial sections in the audience hall are complementary parts of an obviously staged audience. While certain bodily practices such as touching, standing, or fanning were emphasised, the meaningful difference in seating styles of the Indian and Spanish parties was not mentioned in the textual description. What is more, the colour scheme, with the Indian party being dressed in red and the Spaniards in blue, appears to be of relevance.⁷⁷ Indeed, blue was the colour of Bourbon Spain’s elite military uniforms in the eighteenth century. Yet, when looking at the second sheet portraying dress and ceremonial (*baile al use del país*, “dances in the local fashion”) it becomes clear that the colour scheme serves a specific function: Based on three receptions taking place between 7 o’clock in the evening until dawn in the residences of the Spanish delegates in Mangalore,⁷⁸ the second sketch features only the Spanish commander Gómez as dressed in blue, sticking out from the rest of the parties thanks to the noble colour of his uniform.

⁷⁵ AGI MP-Filipinas 92 (1778/11/26).

⁷⁶ Harriet Rudolph, “Entangled Objects and Hybrid Practices? Material Culture as a New Approach to the History of Diplomacy,” in *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy from the 15th to the 20th Century*, ed. Harriet Rudolph and Gregor M. Metzger (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016), 1–18; Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–63.

⁷⁷ For the politics of dress in diplomatic ceremonies in the early modern period, see Tracey A. Sowerby, “Masculinity, Ambassadorial Handbooks, and Early Modern English Diplomacy,” *International History Review* 44:5 (2021), 1–20.

⁷⁸ AGI MP-Filipinas 90 (1778/11/26).

The image of the dance performance features nine female local dancers (“bailarinas gentiles”) and four musicians in the centre of the composition, with seven officials on the bottom, thereby creating the appearance of a room or hall. While the title of the sheet introduces the performing artists as protagonists, they receive little attention in the annotations: boys and girls, dancers, acrobats, and musicians are homogenised and denied characteristic facial expression. The spectators, made up of seven men in official dress, with one exception all seated on chairs facing each other, are all individually introduced: the Brahman (1), the commander of the Brahman’s Guard (2), the commander of the *Fragata Deseada*, Miguel Antonio Gómez (3), the governor of Mangalor, in Muslim style robe (4). These four are staged on the left side of the sheet, which implied that Miguel Antonio Gómez as host was part of the local representatives. On the right, one finds ship commanders: the *arraez*⁷⁹ of the Persian warship (5), the commander of an Arab warship with the imam of Muscat (6), and the commander of Haidar Ali’s warship (7). Hence, as commanders of war they were equal to Gómez.

Gómez’s map of the port and surroundings of Mangalore provides further insights into diplomatic knowledge production.⁸⁰ At first, it seems different from the other images. This impression may be explained by the Spanish history of mapmaking. Since the sixteenth century, maps and geographical surveys had been utilised to first comprehend the world in which the composite monarchy operated and later to demonstrate Spain’s power. However, given a closer look, the map has a lot in common with European ethnographic knowledge gathering of the eighteenth century.⁸¹ Spanish maps represent an attempt to control and comprehend unknown or less familiar polities and their approaches to trade and governance. The map demonstrates geographical preciseness: with its exact layout and indication of scale and detailed references to port facilities and built environment (including mosques, government buildings, and storage) in the text boxes on the bottom: it clearly resulted from regular visits to the facilities. Given the rich detail of the map the question arises as to whether Gómez had been instructed to collect specific information about colonial resources and other useful knowledge. He himself reports about causing suspicion when walking around the city with measuring instruments.⁸²

The map clearly indicates European imperial rivalry in Asia. References to English intervention in the area reveal the Spanish desire to know what their enemies were up to. The indication of the exact location of the house where the Spanish embassy was lodged in relation to other port facilities,⁸³ reveals the Spanish strategy to write its presence into the everyday exchange in the port of Mangalor while exaggerating the impact of the Spanish presence in the region. The latter was moreover motivated by naval competition with the Portuguese Estado da India and animosity with the British Empire. Places of worship and cemeteries were indicated both for Muslims (“Moros”) and what the Spanish of the time considered heathens (“gentiles”).⁸⁴ These cultural “othering” markers

⁷⁹ Term used in Spanish for Arab/Muslim chief or captain.

⁸⁰ The inscription of AGI MP-Filipinas 88 reads as follows: Plano de la Barro, Puerto, Rios y Poblacion y Fortaleza de Mangalor, Corial, y Vlal sobre la Costa Malabar en 13 grados de latitud setentoriente perteneciente al Reyno de Canario que con otros varios posee oy el Nabab Ali Bahader; lebantado de orden superior por el subtheniente de Ynfantería don Miguel Antonio Gómez Comandante de la Fragata del Rey Nra Sra del Carmen alias la Deseada que desde la Bahía de Manila hizo viage a dicha costa el año de 1776 y regreso en la Monzon de 777.

⁸¹ Van Meersbergen, *Ethnography and Encounter*, 2–6. For a discussion of the role of visual illustration techniques in natural history for enlightenment views of race, see Snait B. Gissis, “Visualizing ‘Race’ in the Eighteenth Century,” *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 41:1 (2011), 41–103.

⁸² AGI Estado 45, n. 5.

⁸³ AGI MP-Filipinas 88.

⁸⁴ Michael C. Hawkins, *Making Moros: Imperial Historicism and American Military Rule in the Philippines’ Muslim South* (DeKalb Ill.: NIU Press, 2013).

are the same that were implied in the annotations on the Hindu deities and indicate lingering notions of militant Catholicism at the end of the eighteenth century. Yet it should also be noted that religion played a marginal role in this diplomatic encounter. Both visual and textual descriptions of the diplomatic encounter were in fact products of epistemological and stylistic negotiations between Asian and European actors.⁸⁵

Taking for granted that bodily practices and space mattered in power relations, furniture was likely used to articulate either asymmetry or equality between the meeting parties.⁸⁶ Furniture served a variety of ceremonial, ritual, and material functions in diplomatic encounters.⁸⁷ Indeed, indoor and outdoor spaces were fundamental for receptions, parades, and arrival and departure ceremonies.⁸⁸ In the Ottoman diplomatic encounters with European monarchies, similar practices of controlling space through seating levels stressing difference in rank were common.⁸⁹ The illustration of the audience (Figure 1) includes a lot of information about diplomatic bodily practices. In the first sketch, all seated parties are placed upon carpets and thus include both the Indian and the Spanish attendees in the same diplomatic space. The difference lies in the seating practice, where the Indian side sits directly on the carpets on the ground, while the Spanish delegates sit on chairs. The European-style chairs have an important narrative function: the author of the Mangalore audience wants viewers to believe that the Spanish were treated with all necessary respect and politeness. With the long presence of European traders in the region there is no need to question the availability of such chairs. The question is why the Indian side would have provided them. Either way, the symbolic function of sitting devices should not be overrated. Indeed, physically the Spaniards on their chairs looked down on the Indians placed across the constructed space between them, and yet, ideologically they still met eye to eye: both parties were seated in the way they were comfortable, and both were kept in the belief that their practice was more appropriate or honourable. In symbiosis with the cushion line-up, chairs create a space within the open, undefined room in which the reception took place. For the same reason it is safe to say that the illustrations are not an example of Spanish belief in cultural or political superiority, but an indication of the flexibility that guided cross-cultural diplomatic encounters in the eighteenth century.

Concluding Remarks

This article explored how images and objects were foundational in framing global diplomatic encounters as an interplay between knowledge and actors. First, material visualisation was coproduced by Asian and European imperial artisan practices. Its creation and dissemination were multilayered processes set in motion by the skills and motivations of manifold actors. In the case of the Mysore–Filipino encounter, information was gathered at the same time as reformist forces of Bourbon Spain, including the Minister of the Indies, José de Gálvez, were determined to make state-sponsored Asian trade competitive with private commercial enterprises and to refashion the colonial archive. Reforms

⁸⁵ Kapil Raj, “Go-Betweens, Travelers, and Cultural Translators,” in Bernard Lightman, *A Companion to the History of Science* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2016), 39–57.

⁸⁶ Jordan Sand, “Tropical Furniture and Bodily Comportment in Colonial Asia,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 21:1 (2013), 95–132.

⁸⁷ Nancy Um and Leah R. Clark, “Introduction: The Art of Embassy: Situating Objects and Images in the Early Modern Diplomatic Encounter,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 20:1 (2016), 3–18.

⁸⁸ Arne Karsten and Hillard von Thiessen, eds., *Normenkonkurrenz in Historischer Perspektive* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2015).

⁸⁹ Rudolph, “Entangled Objects,” 15.

were directly linked to scientific institutions, the colonial archive being one of them.⁹⁰ However, the archive of diplomatic exchange was much larger than the repositories of written material. Hence, diplomatic historians must include both material and visual archives in the search for a new master narrative of Eurasian diplomacy. What is more, as the case of the elephants shows, images and objects determined what kind of information was collected and which knowledge would be spread. These complex connections should encourage future research on inter-polity relations to question, or at least to contextualise, the supremacy of written documents such as official letters and treaties for diplomatic history.

Another important finding concerns the nature of inter-polity relations. As for the diplomatic mission of 1776–7, the different rationales behind the costly enterprise convey outward-looking, proactive Asian stakeholders in search of allies and trading partners. The planning and execution of the delegation indicates how colonial officials in Manila and local elites in Mysore linked diplomacy and trade in the Indian Ocean to make the colony economically profitable and geopolitically more stable. The polyvocal and multi-sensory accounts produced during the exchange process provide intriguing insights into cross-confessional diplomacy involving the Catholic king and his colonial staff, a powerful Muslim sultan and his generals, and a Jewish lobbyist negotiating with both sides. And yet, while religion was part of the framework, different beliefs were not a source of conflict. All diplomatic actors were dependent on the services and knowledge of the multiethnic Indian Ocean network operating between the Malabar Coast and insular Southeast Asia. Spanish merchants and officials belonged to this network as much as local artisans and sailors from various areas along the Indian coast. Despite their diverse backgrounds, they all operated in a world where each party negotiated regardless of religion, culturalist assumptions, universalist policies, and hegemonic claims. Together they created the archive of global diplomacy.

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Dr Birgit Tremml-Werner is a senior lecturer in global history at Stockholm University and an associate professor in history at Linnaeus University. Her research interests include the history of colonial encounters, cross-cultural negotiations, early modern Japan, and global intellectual history. She is the co-founder of the Global Diplomacy Network and the author of the open access monograph *Spain, China, and Japan in Manila, 1571–1644: Local Comparisons and Global Connections* (Amsterdam UP 2015).

Appendix I

Original caption of diplomatic illustrations (figure 1 and figure 2) in Spanish

Appendix 1 corresponds to the written text in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Modo en que el Príncipe Engri grande Almiral de la Armada del Nabab Hyder Ali en el departamento de Mangalor recibió y despachó la visita del comandante y oficiales de la fragata del Rey la Deseada el día 18 de abril de 1776.⁹¹

Lamina 1a. Correspondiente a

⁹⁰ Nicolás Bas Martín, “Juan Bautista Muñoz (1745–1799) y la fundación del Archivo General de Indias” (PhD diss., University of Valencia, 2000). In the late 1770s, Juan Bautista Muñoz worked feverishly to promote the Archivo General de Indias so that it would gain the trust of Enlightenment writers who were contesting histories of Spanish overseas performance in the Americas and Asia.

⁹¹ AGI MP-Filipinas 89. The heading translates as follows: The way in which Prince Engri, the grand admiral of Nawab Hyder Ali’s armada of the Mangalorian department received and dispatched the visit of the commander and other officials of the frigate Rey de la Deseada on 18 April 1776. Sheet 1a shows dress and ceremonial.

Trajes y ceremonial

1. El grade Almiral sentado en un tapete con las piernas cruzadas descansando la Espalda en una Almohada
2. El comandante de la Guardia que tenía un bastón
3. Un doméstico que abanicaba al grande Almiral
4. Comandante y oficiales de la fragata Deseada a la izquierda preferente al derecho según el estilo de la India
5. Jefes de Escuadra de la Armada del Nabab Hyder Ali
6. Un doméstico que pone al cuello de cada oficial Español una grande de Santa Jazmines distinguiendo al Comandante con unas manillas del mismo
7. Un doméstico que desparrama una garrafa de Agua Rosada
8. Un doméstico que pone a los olanes del pecho de los españoles Aceite de Sándalo
9. Mesas con ratos llenos de Betel
10. Interprete
 - a. Santas y manillas de Jazmines

Baile al uso del Pais que se tubo en las casas del Comandante y oficiales de la Fragata del Rey la Deseada en obsequio del Bragmani Emisario del Nabab Hyder Ali Bahadar desde las 7 de la noche hasta el amanecer de los días 30 de Noviembre, 1° y 8 de Diciembre de 1776.⁹²

Lamina 2a. Correspondiente a trajes y ceremonial

1. El Bragmani
2. El Comandante de su Guardia
3. El Comandante de la Fragata Deseada
4. El Gobernador de Mangalor y su territorio cuyo modo de vestido es común a todos los Mahometanos de dicho puerto
5. Un Arraez de embarcación de Guerra Persa
6. Un Arraez de embarcación de Guerra Arrabe del Yman de Muscat
7. Un Comandante de embarcación de Guerra de Nabab Hyder Ali cuyo oficiales de Marino son la mayor parte Gentiles aunque se acomodan al traje Mahometano, distinguiéndose solo en el turbante colorado y lo grado por el mayor y menor turbante
8. Mesas con platos proveídos de Betel en que consiste el mayor obsequio que se hace a los personajes
9. Una cuadrilla de Bailarinas Gentiles como lo son todas las de su profesión
10. Una muchacha que doblando el cuerpo hacia la espalad, mete cabeza y pies dentro de plato de cobre y da vueltas como un trompo
11. Una muchacha que haciéndose todo un ovillo rueda velozmente hacia todas partes
 - a. Una especie de Peluca blanda de Vila y Jasmynes con que se adornan las cuadrillas de Bailarinas que ellos tejen en los días de función con arte singular y prenden con firmeza entre las trenzas de cabello que todas lo tienen labio de singular hermosura.

⁹² AGI MP-Filipinas 90. The heading translates as follows: Dances in the local fashion that took place in the houses of the commander and the officials of the frigate Rey de la Deseada to endow the Brahman Emissary of the Nawab Hyder Ali Bahadar, which took place from 7 o'clock in the evening until dawn on 30 November, 1 December and 8 December 1776. Sheet 2a shows dress and ceremonial.

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