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In Search of a Shared Language: The Goan Diplomatic Protocol

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the *Ceremonial de que uzão os VReys [Vice-Reys] quando escrevem aos Reys da Azia*. The *Ceremonial* was a manual of etiquette that aimed to help the Viceroy in his contacts with local rulers such as the Persian and Mughal emperors, the principdoms of Kanara, Sonda, Tannor, and the Sardessais of Sawantvandi. It will be argued that by selecting specific words to address local rulers, inspired by Indo-Persian ideas of kingship and diplomacy, the Portuguese authorities used some elements of the local political culture to facilitate the negotiations between Goa and the Indian courts and develop a comprehensible image of the Portuguese Crown to most South Asian rulers.

Keywords

Portuguese *Estado da Índia* – Mughal Empire – Safavid Persia – Marathas – cross-cultural communication – ritual greetings

Introduction

On April 17, 1721, the Secretary of State of King João v of Portugal, Diogo de Mendonça Corte-Real, informed Viceroy Francisco José de Sampaio e Castro that the recently founded Royal Academy of History needed several

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documents regarding the history of the Portuguese in Asia. The members of the academy were particularly interested in “notable letters of some Asian princes to the viceroys, the replies made by the latter and any other letters regarding some relevant businesses, and if they still exist, the instructions given to ambassadors.”¹ One of the documents sent by the viceroy to Lisbon was the *Tratado das Paxes*, a collection of peace treaties signed between the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* and different Asian rulers between 1615 and 1696.² This volume includes an appendix entitled *Ceremonial de que uzão os VReys [Vice-Reys] quando escrevem aos Reys da Azia (Ceremonial used by the Viceroys when they write to the Kings of Asia)*. This document could be defined as a sort of manual of etiquette that established precise forms of address and greetings that aimed to help the viceroy and other senior officials of the *Estado da Índia* in their correspondence with local rulers. The *Ceremonial* was probably written between the 1710s and 1720s.³ Indeed, the document mentions the Maratha Chhatrapathi Shahu I, who ruled between 1708 and 1749.

The forms of address proposed by the *Ceremonial* followed a ranking of local polities where Safavid Persia and the Mughal Empire occupied the leading positions, followed by the Marathas, the minor principedoms of Kanara, Sonda, Tannor, and the *Sardessais* of Sawantvandi. Although this ranking of South Asian powers reflected the vicissitudes of the *Estado da Índia* in the first half of the eighteenth century, it is impossible to analyze the *Ceremonial* without having in mind the chronological evolution of Portuguese diplomatic activities from the arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1498 until the late seventeenth century.

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Throughout the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, the Portuguese went through a long period of “diplomatic apprenticeship” in Asia, to paraphrase Zoltán Biederman, which allowed them to develop a diplomatic language that aimed to be easily accepted (or interpreted) by Asian rulers and diplomats.⁴ This “apprenticeship” often required the employment

1 “Carta do Secretario de Estado ao V. Rei sobre as noticias que se pedem para a Academia” in *O Chronista de Tissuary*, Vol. 4, ed. Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara (Nova Goa, 1869), 14-15.

2 Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, (BNP), Cod. 257, *Tratado das Paxes*, unpagged.

3 António Vasconcelos Saldanha, *Iustum Imperium: Dos Tratados como Fundamento do Império dos portugueses no Oriente: estudos de história do direito internacional e do direito português* (Lisbon, 2005), 267.

4 Zoltan Biedermann, “Portuguese Diplomacy in Asia in the sixteenth century—A Preliminary Overview,” *Itinerario* 29 (Summer 2005): 13-37.

of native Hindu and Muslim collaborators, who played a key role as cultural mediators, using their language skills, knowledge of local customs and contact networks to facilitate the contacts between Goa and the South Asian polities. Following a perspective close to the model of language games proposed by Joan-Pau Rubiés,⁵ the partnership with local collaborators and the continuous exposure to local diplomatic and courtly practices allowed the Portuguese to learn the cultural codes (or language-games) which regulated the local diplomatic scene, and to establish analogies between the political worlds of early modern Europe and Asia. João de Barros, for example, mentioned in his *Decadas da Asia* that the term “shah” meant “Governor or Captain and is used together with one’s first name, and the Persians give this name to their kings who are regarded by them as emperors.”⁶ Barros also explained that the term “raja” was used in South and Southeast Asia with the same meaning as king in Europe.⁷ The analogies presented to the readers of the *Decadas* reveal a perception of the political world of Asia as one dominated by monarchical forms of government and structured by different types of relations of vassalage or political interdependence that resembled the feudal relationships of medieval Europe. These similarities, according to António de Vasconcelos de Saldanha, allowed the Portuguese to adapt with more or less difficulty to local diplomatic practices.⁸

Nonetheless, the history of the early modern Portuguese diplomatic activities in South Asia is full of almost tragicomic episodes of misunderstandings of local political etiquette and erroneous interpretations of the ranking of local powers.

The definition of the status of petty rulers was particularly problematic. As Pietro della Valle observed, the Portuguese in order to “magnify their affairs in India, or else to honour the persons that rule there (...) give the title of king to all these petty Indian princes who have smaller dominions than a feudatory marquis in Europe.”⁹ One cannot eliminate the possibility that this attitude towards Asian rulers, as Vasconcelos de Saldanha suggests, was the result of the application of “exclusively legal-political criteria” that considered that “the numerous communities which had a minimum level of political organisation” enjoyed the status of a sovereign state.¹⁰ However, for a contemporary observer

5 Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes 1250-1625* (Cambridge, 2000).

6 João de Barros, *Da Ásia*, Vol. IV, Pt. I (Lisbon, 1777), 461-463.

7 *Ibid.*, 461-463.

8 Saldanha, *Iustum Imperium*, 376.

9 Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle in India, il Pellegrino*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1663), 178.

10 Saldanha, *Iustum Imperium*, 313-312.

like della Valle this strategy was as an error which, instead of enhancing the reputation of the Portuguese Crown, exposed the difficulties faced by the Portuguese in affirming their power.

The Italian traveller based his arguments on his experience in 1623 as an escort of a Portuguese embassy to Ikkeri, the capital of the nayaka of Keladi, Hiryia Venkatappa. The modesty of the nayaka's court, the small size of his territory and his status as a tributary of the Mughal Empire made him, in the words of della Valle, a "royolet," a ruler who had "neither state, court or appearance befitting a true king."¹¹ Keladi was, indeed, one of the territories ruled by prominent feudatory families that were originally subordinate to the emperor of Vijayanagara. After the disintegration of the empire, these territories were able to enjoy different degrees of political autonomy from the independent nayakas of Keladi (or kings of Ikkeri) to the semi-autonomous rajahs of Sonda, who paid tributes to Bijapur, the Portuguese, the Mughals and the Marathas. Although these rulers modelled themselves after the ideal-type of dharmic ruler of Vijayanagara kingship, they were very distant from the power and splendour of the Savafid shah and the Great Mughal. The *Estado da Índia*, however, was willing to accept Venkatappa's claims to kingship, especially after his victories against the Portuguese in 1618 and 1619.¹² As della Valle noted, the "notable defeat" suffered by the *Estado's* troops transformed the nayaka into a potential friend who needed to be honored with an embassy sent in the name of the Portuguese monarch.¹³ Through the course of della Valle's description of the embassy, a clear contradiction emerges between the ceremonial exchange between the ambassador and the nayaka, based on a shared language of honour, and the inability of the Portuguese to impose their interests during the negotiations. Indeed, the outcome of the embassy was nothing more than a humiliation for the *Estado* at the hands of a presumptuous petty ruler who demonstrated that "the Portuguese of India understand little, are little courtiers and politically ignorant."¹⁴

If the Portuguese authorities were willing to concede a status of kingship to petty rulers, their attitude towards the great military and territorial powers of South Asia was no less problematic. As Zoltán Biedermann observed, one of the great concerns of the *Estado's* diplomacy was to develop the Portuguese Crown's reputation in Asia based on "a larger-than-life image of political

11 Della Valle, *Viaggi*, 178; Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, 360-362.

12 N. Shyam Bhat, "Political Interaction between Portuguese Goa and Karnataka," *Portuguese Studies Review* 16 (2008): 33-34.

13 Della Valle, *Viaggi*, 153.

14 *Ibid.*, 187.

greatness and military power in order to be taken seriously.¹⁵ However, the military and economic superiority of great territorial powers such as Persia or the Mughal Empire undermined the *Estado's* efforts to establish an image of greatness. Furthermore, the success of the Portuguese commercial and military activities often required the collaboration of these powers. Indeed, the diplomatic activities of the *Estado da Índia* had to solve an uneasy tension between the need to enhance the prestige of the Portuguese Crown and the existence of local powers that enjoyed a superior status.

One episode involving the reception of Muqarrab Khan, the Mughal ambassador sent by Jahangir to Goa in 1611, offers a good example of the problems faced by the Portuguese in addressing this tension. The embassy was a key moment in a series of intense contacts between Goa and Agra that coincided with the arrival of the Dutch and English companies, who also sought to obtain the support of the Great Mughal to their activities. Besides, Jahangir's interest in developing the naval capacity of his empire posed a serious risk to the Portuguese interests in the Indian Ocean. It was therefore of the utmost importance to establish close ties with the Timurid ruler. Aware of the importance of the embassy, the Jesuit missionary Manuel Pinheiro, who accompanied the Mughal ambassador, alerted Viceroy Rui Lourenço de Távora to the difference of status (*qualidade e valia*; quality and worth) and wealth (*renda e fazenda*; revenues and estate) between the Mughal emperor and the other South Asian rulers. Pinheiro advised the viceroy to grant more honors to Muqarrab Khan than the ones usually offered to the diplomats of the *Reis Vizinhos*.¹⁶ In a letter to Philip II of Portugal (III of Spain), Lourenço de Távora mentioned the recommendations made by Pinheiro and recognized that the Mughal ambassador should be received and treated with special honor, "but not to the point of compromising the respect due to the authority of the *Estado* and to Your Majesty's service." To satisfy a "rather vain" ruler like Jahangir, who "thinks he is more honourable [*honrado*] than all the other kings," the viceroy decided to adopt the protocol followed during contacts with Safavid diplomats.¹⁷ Indeed, the Portuguese regarded Persia as one of the most powerful and civilized Asian polities. João de Barros, for example, praised Persia "for being the most political people among the Orientals (excepting always those

15 Zoltan Biedermann, "Portuguese Diplomacy in Asia in the Sixteenth Century," 22-23.

16 *Reis Vizinhos* was the name given by the Portuguese authorities to the potentates who neighbored the *Estado da Índia*.

17 Jorge Flores, *Nas Margens do Hindustão: O Estado da Índia e a expansão Mogol, ca. 1570-1640* (Coimbra, 2015), 282-283.

of China),” a vision that was much influenced by an association between early modern Iran and the ancient Persian Empire.¹⁸

Távora’s reluctance to concede a special status to the Mughal ambassador seems to illustrate the critical comments made by Father Fernão de Queiroz about the incomprehensible “contempt” displayed by Portuguese officials towards Asian rulers. The Jesuit believed that this attitude was a product of past experiences with African rulers and a profound misunderstanding of South Asian political culture. In Queiroz’s own words, the Portuguese “for seeing some affinity in colour, they did not pay heed to what they were, but to what they seemed somehow to be.”¹⁹ Furthermore, the initial naval supremacy enjoyed by the *Estado da Índia* favored the development of a sense of superiority that was responsible for a “foolish” neglect of “courtesy and valour” in the diplomatic dealings with the *Reis Vizinhos*. This discourteous approach contrasted with the Portuguese diplomatic practices in Europe where, “every independent Prince is addressed as Highness, and venerated with respect, be the years of his dominion many or few” and “the difference of feelings was never expressed by the tongue.”²⁰ The Jesuit father, who was writing during a period of worrying signs of Portuguese decline in Asia, was, in fact, making the case for a more careful approach to the local diplomatic scene, one based on the respect for the “greatness and wealth and power of Asiatic Princes.”²¹

To support his point of view, Queiroz made a brief description of the main Asian powers that had regular contacts with the Portuguese Crown:

The Persian Monarchy was in all ages vast and mighty, and that nation was in all respects like a European one; most vast and rich was the Mogol Monarchy when we came to India, and today its territories vie with those of Turkey, and it is aid they muster 900,000 horses besides elephants and lascarins; The Kings of Dekan and Balagate place on the field each more than 100,000 men, and Idalxa led against Goa 150,000; The Samory began to be an Emperor of Malavar before our redemption, and his own State is not so small as to be despised; Bisnaga was a large and most opulent Monarchy (...) That of China is by itself equal to the whole of Europe

18 Barros, *Da Ásia*, Vol. IV, Pt. I, 461.

19 Fernão de Queiroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, trans. S.G. Perera (New Delhi, 1992), vol. I: 297.

20 Ibid., 297.

21 Ibid., 297.

more populous and more rich, and today in continuous territory it is the largest Lordship in the world.²²

The contrast between the power and wealth of the great Asian powers and the fragilities of the *Estado da Índia* was so obvious that Queiroz questioned if there was any reasonable reason to despise these rulers and deny them “title of Majesty, or (...) that of Highness.” One of the most embarrassing examples of the contempt and diplomatic *faux pas* of the *Estado da Índia* detected by the Jesuit father was the style adopted by the Portuguese Crown in its correspondence with the *Reis Vizinhos*. For instance, the letters from Portuguese kings addressed to their Asian counterparts were often “improved in India, which however never sufficed to Secretariats of the Kingdom change their style, for in them ‘You’ is most common a ‘Highness’ very rare and ‘Majesty’ unheard of.” From such neglect for the local rules of diplomatic courtesy, concluded Queiroz, the Portuguese “had no other profit than the reputation of being proud and destitute of politeness.”²³ As Stefan Halikowski-Smith observed, during the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, the Portuguese usually addressed local rulers in a rather simplistic way. Afonso de Albuquerque, for example, only addressed the Persian shah as the “Very great and powerful lord amongst the Moors.”²⁴ Philip II of Portugal (III of Spain) greeted Jahangir as “The Very powerful Mughal King.”²⁵

The *Ceremonial* seems to have been written to address the problems detected by Fernão de Queiroz and Pietro della Valle. The institutionalization of greeting rituals, as Esther Goody noted in an essay dedicated to the relationship between greetings and respect, led their participants to “act out their respective and unequal statuses,” contributing to define or establish relations of superiority and dependence.²⁶ By establishing specific forms of address based on a ranking of local polities, the *Ceremonial* aimed to protect the status of equality or superiority of the Portuguese Crown vis-à-vis the local powers. In this way, the *Ceremonial* allowed viceroys and other Portuguese officials to act

22 Ibid., 297.

23 Ibid., 299.

24 Stefan Halikowski-Smith, “The Friendship of Kings was in the Ambassadors: Portuguese Embassies in Asia and Africa during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Portuguese Studies* 22 (2006): 126; Braz de Albuquerque, *Comentários do Grande Albuquerque* (Coimbra, 1923), 355.

25 Doc. 233, 15 Fevereiro 1612, *Documentos Remetidos da Índia*, vol. 2 (Lisbon 1884), 163.

26 Esther Goody, “Greeting, Begging, and the Presentation of Respect” in *The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honour of A.I. Richards*, ed. J.S. La Fontaine (London, 1972), 49.

according to the balance of power in South Asia, as well as avoid embarrassing situations such as the embassy described by della Valle.

The *Ceremonial* also aimed to help viceroys during a period of dramatic transformations of South Asian geopolitics caused by the decline of the Mughal Empire, a traditional strategic partner of the *Estado*, the gradual ascendancy of the English East India Company (EIC) and the expansionist ambitions of the Marathas. Besides these threats to the Portuguese presence in India, the *Estado* faced serious structural military and economic problems. Dramatic reports from viceroys complaining about the lack of men and funds were usual throughout the history of Portuguese India. However, the spiral of commercial and territorial losses initiated in the seventeenth century, after the arrival of the Dutch East India Company (Vereeningde Oost-Indisch Compagnie, abbreviation VOC) in the Indian Ocean around 1603, deepened the shortage of soldiers, men, warships and money. The *Reis Vizinhos* were also aware of the problems of the *Estado*. As Viceroy Count of Ericeira, D. Luís Carlos Inácio Xavier de Menezes (t. 1717-1720; 1740-1742), mentioned in a report to his successor, Francisco José de Sampaio e Castro, the growing perception of Portuguese decline in India exposed the *Estado da Índia* to the ambitions of “all rulers and rebel leaders” of the region.²⁷ The Maratha conquest of the *Provincia do Norte* (Bassein, Salsette, and Chaul) in 1739, for example, was not only motivated by the strategic position of the territories controlled by the Portuguese but above all by the perception that the *Estado* would not be able to retaliate against the attacks of the Maratha troops.²⁸

This scenario of uncertainty and crisis forced the Portuguese to adopt a neutral position that would secure the survival of the *Estado da Índia*. The success of this strategy, however, relied on the capacity of the Portuguese authorities to maneuver in the South Asian diplomatic scene. In this way, the *Ceremonial* was a useful instrument that allowed viceroys to understand the regional balance of power, as well as the epistolary ceremonial used by the *Reis Vizinhos*.

Despite the troubled relation between the *Estado* and Safavid Persia throughout the seventeenth century, the *Ceremonial* was extremely deferential towards the Persian rulers. Furthermore, the loss of Hormuz to Shah Abbas in 1622 reinforced the prestige of the Safavids in the *Estado da Índia*. The *Ceremonial* reflected this perception of Persia as a sophisticated power by instructing the viceroys to address the shah as the “very high and very powerful

27 BNP, Cod. 1445, *Instrução que deixou o Conde da Ericeira Dom Luis de Menezes Vice Rey e Capitam General da India A Francisco Jozé de Sampayo e Castro que lhe foy succeder no dito emprego no anno de 1721*, 37.

28 Alexandre Lobato, *Relações Luso-Maratas* (Lisbon, 1965).

Monarch of Persia, Defender and Protector of the Muslims, and heir of the Expanded and always great Monarchy in fame and greatness of the always immortal Shah Abbas. Greetings.”²⁹ This form of address was followed by a note that reminded the viceroy that the Persian sovereign should be treated as Majesty (*o tratamento he por Majestade*), and the subscript destined to “The King of Persia” (*El Rey da Persia*).

The inclusion of Safavid Persia in the *Ceremonial*, a document that is more concerned with polities who shared borders with the *Estado*, was probably motivated by the Portuguese perception that Persia could join the *Estado*'s attempts to curb the ascent of the Omanis in the Gulf and the Swahili Coast. Indeed, the Omani attacks on Persian possessions and ships, and the disputes between Shiites (Persia) and Yaurubid (Oman), made the Safavid rulers suitable partners to the Portuguese plans of recovering Mombasa (lost to Oman in 1698) and expelling the Omani from the Swahili Coast.³⁰ Throughout the 1710s, the *Estado* made several infructuous attempts to establish a Luso-Persian alliance against Oman. However, after the Omani occupation of the Persian territories of Bahrain, Qeshm and Larak (three territories previously controlled by the Portuguese) in 1717, Shah Soltān-Hosayn sent an embassy to Goa in 1718 to explore the possibility of joining the *Estado*'s efforts against the Omani. Viceroy Count of Ericeira's insistence in negotiating the return of Hormuz and new privileges for the Portuguese trading post at Bandar Kung's rapidly dissuaded the Persian authorities from establishing an alliance with the *Estado*.³¹ As the failure of the Persian embassy reveals, the Safavid shahs had serious reservations regarding the *Estado da Índia*. In fact, Soltān-Hosayn only initiated contacts with Goa after the refusal of the more powerful Dutch and English companies to participate in a campaign against Oman. Moreover, the Safavid court regarded the regular Portuguese interferences in the Gulf as a potential long-term threat to Persian interests.³²

As in the case of the Persian shah, the Mughal emperor received the title of “Majesty,” and the subscript address to *El Rey Gram Mogor* (To His Majesty the

29 BNP, Cod. 257, *Tratado das Paxes*, unpagged.

30 Patricia Risso, “Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 2 (2001): 306.

31 Doc. 282 (15/12/1719), *Arquivo Português Oriental*, Vol. III, Pt. II, ed. A.B. de Bragança Pereira (Bastorá, 1940).

32 Rudi Mathee, “Blinded by Power: The Rise and Fall of Fath ‘Ali Khān Dāghestāni, Grand Vizier under Shāh Soltān Hōseyñ Şafavi (1127/1715-1133/1720),” *Studia Iranica* 33 (2004): 208-209; Kaushik Roy, *Military Transition in Early Modern Asia, 1400-1750: Cavalry, Guns, Government and Ships* (London, 2014), 138.

Great Mughal). However, when dealing with the Great Mughal, viceroys were instructed to use a much more elaborate and respectful form of address:

To the very high, and very powerful, and magnificent Prince, Most Precious object of all mortal men, born and emerged from the throne, and shining ornament of the Universe, King of the first order, first noble, and from the ancient nobility, Distributor of Crowns, and thrones, Conqueror of many Empires, Fount of Justice, and Universally Respected.³³

Before addressing directly the Mughal emperor, and following the Indo-Persian etiquette, the letter opened with an invocation of the name of God: "In the name of the Holy Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons, and only one true God, True Creator of the skies, and earth, and Saviour of the Humankind."³⁴ The mention of the existence of "only one True God" allowed the Portuguese to surpass the previous reference to the Holy Trinity, which was criticized by Muslim theologians, and probably aimed to suggest the existence of a common ground between Catholics and Muslims. Indeed, this invocation of the divine was very similar to the descriptions of God's unity made by chapter 112 of the Koran: "Say God is one God, the Eternal God; He begetteth not, neither is He begotten. And there is not any one like unto Him."³⁵ The religious elements of this greeting seem to be inspired by the interest revealed by emperors such as Akbar and Jahangir in Christianity, as well by the presence of Jesuits at the Mughal court.

The elaborate form of address destined to the Great Mughal was symptomatic of the importance of the Mughal Empire to the Portuguese interests in the subcontinent. Indeed, by the 1710s and 1720s, the Portuguese authorities could use an alliance with the Great Mughal as an interesting dissuasive element against the increasing Maratha pressure over Goa and the *Provincia do Norte*. It was thanks to a Mughal military intervention in 1683 that the Marathas cancelled their invasion of Goa. Besides, the expansionist campaigns promoted by Aurangzeb resulted in a rather dangerous proximity of the Mughal territory to the lands of the *Estado*. Despite the political instability and military decline faced by the Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the *Estado* still regarded the Mughals as the main power of the region. In 1714, Viceroy Vasco Fernandes César de Menezes (t. 1712-1717), alerted João v "to maintain all

33 BNP, Cod. 257, *Tratado das Paxes*, unpagued.

34 *Ibid.*, unpagued.

35 *The Koran; Commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed*: translated from the original Arabic, Volume 2, trans. by George Sale (London, 1801), 517.

the attention and good correspondence with this monarch,” even though the “power of the Mughal is only formidable in India because of the greatness of his empire.”³⁶

The dangerous proximity of the Mughal territories, and the apparently vast financial and military resources at the disposal of the Mughal emperors, led João v to instruct his viceroys to maintain a close relation with the emperor, as well as with the nawabs and other senior officials. Hence, the inclusion in the *Ceremonial* of a less elaborate form of address destined to the Mughal Viceroy of Deccan, Nizam ul-Mulk, and his son, Nasir Jang Mir Ahmad, who were particularly active against the Marathas during the early 1720s.³⁷ Besides the development of close contacts with relevant Mughal officials, the *Estado* sought the collaboration of several Portuguese personalities who lived at the Mughal court. Individuals such as the Jesuits missionaries António Magalhães, José da Costa and João de Abreu, or Juliana Dias da Costa, a Portuguese woman who lived most of her life at the Mughal court as a protégé and maid of honor of the imperial family, often represented the interests of the *Estado*.³⁸

If the Portuguese viewed the Mughals as a declining but still powerful empire, the Mughal perspective on the *Estado da Índia* was that of a minor regional power whose influence depended on its naval capacity. Indeed, one early eighteenth-century Mughal chronicler, Khafi Khan, focused his description of the *Estado* on the maritime activities of the Portuguese and the importance of the *cartaz* system.³⁹ In the words of the Mughal chronicler, unlike the English, the Portuguese “do not attack other ships, except those ships which have not received their pass according to rule, or the ships of Arabia and Masqat, with which two countries they have a long-standing enmity, and they attack each other whenever opportunity offers.”⁴⁰ The Mughal court

36 Doc. XII, “Carta do Vice-Rei a Sua Magestade, 11/01/1714” in *Uma Dona Portuguesa na Côte do Grão-Mogol: Documentos de 1710 e 1719 precedidos d’um esboço histórico das relações políticas e diplomáticas entre o Estado da Índia e o Grão-Mogol nos séculos XVI-XVII*, ed. J.A. Ismael Gracias (Nova Goa 1907), 124.

37 Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas, 1600-1818* (Cambridge, 1993), 114-117.

38 For a detailed information on these actors see for exemple *Uma dona portuguesa na Côte do Grão-Mogol: documentos de 1710 e 1719 precedidos d’um esboço histórico das relações políticas e diplomáticas entre o Estado da Índia e o Grão-Mogol nos séculos XVI-XVIII*, ed. J.A. Ismael Gracias (Nova Goa, 1907), and the several letters published in the *Boletim da Filмотeca Ultramarina Portuguesa* (BFUP), 46 (1984).

39 The *cartaz* was naval passport granted by the *Estado* to non-European ships and merchants.

40 Quotation taken from Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700* (London, 1993), 198.

probably regarded the Portuguese attempts to control the Indian Ocean as an illusion, especially after the naval defeats faced by the *Estado* at the hands of the Dutch and English companies. However, as Khafi Khan suggested, despite the progressive decline of Portuguese naval power, the *cartazes* issued by the *Estado* were a necessary nuisance to protect Mughal seafaring activities. In fact, well into the 1720s, the Mughal merchants continued to acquire *cartazes*, and the Portuguese viceroys regularly offered naval passports to the Mughal emperors as a proof of the “good friendship” between the Portuguese Crown and the Mughal Empire.⁴¹ Besides, the prestige of the Portuguese Crown suffered serious damage after the Mughal occupation of the Portuguese settlement of Hughli in 1632. Nonetheless, Goa and Delhi shared a common enemy, the Marathas. Although the military capacity of the *Estado* was rather questionable, the Portuguese were still an annoying obstacle to the Maratha ascendancy in the Konkan.

While the *Ceremonial* treated the Mughal and Persian emperors with deference, the Maratha ruler and the minor potentates were to be addressed by the viceroy with words of indifference that meant to expose their inferior status vis-à-vis the Portuguese.

The Marathas were the immediate neighbours of the *Estado's* territories. In the 1630s, the relations between the Portuguese authorities and the Maratha potentates were rather friendly. Indeed, the *Estado* welcomed the first stages of the Maratha insurgency against the Mughals as an interesting counter-weight to Mughal power, despite the increasing frequent border skirmishes between Portuguese and Maratha troops. However, the Maratha conquests in the Deccan and the Konkan under Shivaji (r. 1674-1680) forced the Portuguese to revise their position. In 1683 Shivaji's successor, Sambhaji (r. 1680-1689), sieged Goa and only failed to conquer the capital of the *Estado da Índia* thanks to the military intervention of the Mughals.⁴² This traumatic experience led the Portuguese authorities to regard the Marathas as the main threat to the survival of the *Estado da Índia*. After 1683, the Portuguese initiated a long and intermittent conflict with the Marathas that culminated with the loss of the *Província do Norte* in 1739. The regular skirmishes between Portuguese and Marathas were reflected by the *Ceremonial* which instructed

41 Historical Archives of Goa (HAG), Cartazes, 1363, “Cartaz ao Rey Mogor, 3/09/1726,” f. 81v.

42 Glenn Ames, *Renascent Empire? The House of Braganza and the Quest for Stability in Portuguese Monsoon Asia ca. 1640-1683* (Amsterdam, 2000), 155; A.R. Kulkarni, “Portuguese in the Deccan Politics: A Study of New Marathi Documents from Lisbon” in Teotonio de Souza, *Indo-Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions* (New Delhi, 1985), 115; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700*, 205.

the viceroy to address the Maratha *Chhatrapati*⁴³ as “the very illustrious and very Excellent Prince Xao Raja, Dominator of Fortune.”⁴⁴ In a similar way to the polite letters sent by the Portuguese monarchs to their aristocratic officials, the *Ceremonial* established that the *Chhatrapati* should be treated as a “lordship” (*Senhoria*). However, the use of *Senhoria*, despite being the form of address of the Portuguese upper-nobility, revealed a distance and the concession of a non-royal or minor status to the Maratha ruler. This apparent second-rate treatment given to Marathas might also be related to their ambiguous status before the Mughal Empire, which claimed that the Maratha rulers were rebel vassals. The Portuguese authorities seemed therefore to adopt a cautious attitude towards the Marathas in order to avoid an attitude of hostility from Delhi.

For the rulers of Sonda, Keladi and Tanur, there was no such concern with an elaborate address.⁴⁵ According to the *Ceremonial*, the viceroy should begin his letters “with no preamble” presenting immediately the issues he wanted to address with these rulers. The only act of courtesy was a brief invocation of prayers for the rajahs at the end of the letter (*Deos ò alumee com a sua Santa Graça*; “may God enlighten you with His Holy Grace”). To the Rajaput Rajah of Amber, Sawai Jai Singh II, a Mughal vassal who had regular diplomatic contacts with Goa, the *Ceremonial* established a different and more elaborate form of address: “To the very illustrious [and] powerful Rajah, and [the] greatest among the Rajas of Hindustan Great King and Loyal to the Powerful Mughal King. May God help you, and send you His grace.”⁴⁶ Like the other three above-mentioned rulers, Sawai Jai Singh, who was also erroneously identified by

43 *Chhatrapati* was a royal title equivalent to emperor. The word *Chhatrapati* means the lord of the *chhatra*, the Hindu ceremonial canopy which symbolized both the divine and kingship. (Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge, 2001), 59).

44 BNP, Cod. 257, *Tratado das Paxes*, unpagued.

45 Sonda, a small principedom located at Karnataka that shared its borders with the *Estado* and paid tribute to the Portuguese Crown, was ruled by a branch of the Aravidu dynasty of the Hindu Empire of Vijayanagara that settled at Sonda in the 1570s. The principedom of Tanor (or Tanur) was located at the Malabar Coast in the modern day state Indian state of Kerala. It was since the sixteenth century a close partner of the *Estado*. Keladi was ruled by the Nayaka clan who controlled a considerable part of the Malnad region in modern-day Karnataka. The Nayakas of Keladi were Goa's main supplier of rice and were regarded by the Portuguese authorities as tributaries, after several treaties which established that Keladi should send an annual tribute of rice to Goa in exchange for Portuguese protection to the Kanarese port city of Mangalore.

46 BNP, Cod. 257, *Tratado das Paxes*, unpagued.

the *Ceremonial* as the king of Indarseri (Sheopur), after his marriage with a member of the Sheopur ruling family, should be treated as Highness (*o tratamento por Alteza*). Concerning the rulers and chieftains who paid tribute to the *Estado*, like the *sardessais* of Sawantvandi and the *dessais* of Goa, the *Ceremonial* instructed that “one should write with no greetings, and the treatment should be impersonal.” Such use of impersonality aimed to expose the dependence and submission of these petty rulers and reflected the model of foreign relations used by Asian powers such as China, Persia or the Great Mughal, who approached their tributary princes on the terms of a relationship between sovereign and subject.⁴⁷

One of the main concerns of the *Ceremonial* was to present the King of Portugal to the major Asian powers in an effective and compelling way. João V, as well as other Portuguese monarchs, was a distant and unknown monarch for most Asian rulers, who only had a direct contact with the Portuguese Crown through the mediation of the viceroy at Goa. This problem was particularly acute in the diplomatic dealings between Goa and the Safavid or Mughal courts, since the *Estado* suggested the existence of a relation of equality between the Portuguese king and their Persian and Mughal counterparts. The solution to this problem seemed to be the royal *ditado*, the list of royal and imperial titles used by Portuguese monarchs. For example, the *Ceremonial* instructed viceroys to mention all the titles used by Portuguese monarchs in their correspondence with the Mughal emperor:

By the grace of the same God, reigns in Europe the Very High, and Very Powerful and Magnificent Dom João the Fifth, Lord of the Four Parts of the World, King of Portugal and the Algarve on this side and the other side of the sea in Africa Lord of Guinea and the conquest, navigation, commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, and India, Brazil and Coast of America.⁴⁸

Viceroys should also present their aristocratic titles and the list of titles associated with their post when addressing the Mughal emperor, in order to present the prestige and might of the main representative of the Portuguese monarch in Asia:

I name with all the titles Viceroy and Captain-General of all the Coast of Africa, Kingdoms of Monomotapa, Sofala, Mozambique, Quiloa, Ampari,

47 Saldanha, *Iustum Imperium*, 109.

48 BNP, Cod. 257, *Tratado das Paxes*, unpagged.

Mellinde, Mombassa, Persian Sea, Red Sea, India, Siam, China, and of the Kingdoms of Manabao, Bataviao, Amarrassi, Liphao, Islands of Sollar, Sumba and Timor.⁴⁹

The titles enlisted by the *ditado* and the viceroys were exaggerated and very distant from the reality of the Portuguese presence in Asia, but they played an important role in the diplomatic activities of the *Estado da Índia*. As Charles Alexandrowicz and António de Vasconcelos Saldanha pointed out, Asian rulers were more eager to accept a relation of inter-sovereignty with the Portuguese Crown—despite the mediation of the viceroy—than to concede a relation on the same terms with a commercial company like the EIC or the VOC.⁵⁰ For example, Balaji Baji Rao, the Maratha *Peshwa* (Prime-Minister) between 1740 and 1761, praised Goa for being ruled by a king that was “a worthy soldier, and not a merchant as the English.”⁵¹

Although the royal sovereignty of the *Estado da Índia* seemed to have been positively valued by South Asian rulers, the reality was that it was far from being enough to support the claims that Goa enjoyed a leading status in the region. In a letter from Shah Allam (r. 1707-1712) to João V, dated July 12, 1710, the Portuguese king is addressed as the “Keeper of the world, the great [monarch] of greatest fame, possessor of happiness, the supreme [ruler] of the greatest place of the Portuguese nation, his residence of greatest quality, the very illustrious palace of the beautiful land of Portugal, where he is the supreme holder of the greatest throne, Lord Dom João v.”⁵² Although Shah Allam accepted the royal sovereignty of João V, the Portuguese king was not addressed as the imperial ruler suggested by the royal *ditado*. In fact, the Mughal emperor presents João V as the minor ruler of “the very illustrious palace of the beautiful land of Portugal,” a perception that echoes Kafi Khan’s description of the *Estado* as a minor regional power.



49 Ibid. unpagged.

50 C.H. Alexandrowicz, *An Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies*, (Oxford, 1967), 31; Saldanha, *Iustum Imperium*, 350.

51 “Tradução da Carta de Ballagi Bagi Ráo (Nana) escripto ao Dessay Visnú Naique, e Madgi Panta, seus enviando que se acham nesta côrte” in *Collecção de Tratados e Concertos de Pazes que o Estado da Índia fez com os Reis e Senhores com que teve relações nas partes da Ásia e África Oriental desde os Princípios da conquista até ao fim do século XVIII*, Vol. VII, ed. Júlio Firmino Júdice Biker (Lisbon, 1885), 198.

52 Doc. v, “Tradução da carta de Xallam El-Rey Mogor escrita ao Sr. El-Rey de Portugal” in J.A. Ismael Gracias, *Uma Dona Portuguesa na Corte do Grão-Mogol* (Nova Goa, 1907), 116.

One interesting aspect of the forms of address established by the *Ceremonial* is its resemblance to some elements of the traditional configuration of the *inshā*, the Indo-Persian diplomatic letters. The principal structural elements of the *inshā* included the titles (*alqāb*), salutations (*salām-i-tahīyat*) and a praise of the addressee, an expression of yearning for him (*ishtiāq*), and the desire to see or meet him personally (*talab-i-mulāqāt*). These elements were usually followed by a mention of the sender's self and welfare (*i'lām-i-ahwāl*), an inquiry of the addressee's health and recent news or developments since the last exchange of letters (*shauq-I istimā'i akhbār*), and an invocation of prayers for the addressee. Indo-Persian letters usually ended with an expression or request for the maintenance of correspondence, as well as an invocation of prayers for the addressee (*du'ā*). For example, the *Ceremonial* instructed the viceroy to conclude his letters to the Maratha ruler with the blessing "may God enlighten you in His Holy Grace, and have you under His Protection."⁵³ The correspondence between Viceroy Count of Ericeira and the *Reis Vizinhos* often invoked God and expressed a desire for the continuation of the prosperity and success of the addressee which were very similar to the *du'ā* and the *shauq-I istimā'i akhbār*.⁵⁴

The presence of these elements seems to illustrate the argument developed by Gagan D.S. Sood that the "arenas of circulation and exchange" of Islamicate Eurasia contributed to a shared aesthetic, rhetorical and epistolary structure based on "pragmatism, sensitivity to cultural differences, and openness to alternative conceptions of social hierarchy and relationships."⁵⁵ However, as the criticisms expressed by Fernão de Queiroz concerning the *Estado's* diplomatic

53 BNP, Cod. 257, *Tratado das Paxes*, unpagged.

54 For an overview of the diplomatic correspondence of the *Estado da Índia* see for example: *The firangis in the Mughal chancellery: Portuguese copies of Akbar's documents, 1572-1604*, ed. Jorge Flores and António Vasconcelos de Saldanha (New Delhi, 2003); Panduranga Pissurlencar, *Agentes da diplomacia portuguesa na Índia: hindus, muçulmanos, judeus e parses*, ed. Paduronga Pissurlencar (Goa, 1952) or *Ásia Portuguesa no Tempo do Vice-Rei Conde da Ericeira*, ed. Charles Boxer (Macaol, 1970). Muzaffar Alam and Seema Alavi's work on the correspondence of Antoine-Louis Henri Polier offers a good description of the Indo-Persian rules for letter-writing: Muzaffar Alam and Seema Alavi, *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient: The I'jāz-i Arsalānī (Persian Letters, 1773-1779) of Antoine-Louis Henri Polier* (New Delhi, 2007), 16-17.

55 Gagan D.S. Sood, "Correspondence is Equal to Half a Meeting': The Composition and Comprehension of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Islamic Eurasia," *Journal of the Economic & Social History of the Orient* 2-3 (2007): 211; Gagan D.S. Sood, "Circulation and Exchange in Islamicate Eurasia: A Regional Approach to the Early Modern World," *Past & Present* 212 (2011).

practices suggest, the Portuguese had a rather hesitant attitude towards the local political culture, one which oscillated between adhesion and rejection, according to interests and fragilities of the *Estado da Índia*.

Although the presence of Indo-Persian elements could help the Portuguese authorities to develop a familiar image to the *Reis Vizinhos*, the adoption of South Asian diplomatic practices often raised some questions in the Portuguese court. João V, for example, was particularly suspicious of the *sagoate*, a formal form of gift exchange that took place in most diplomatic exchanges with the *Reis Vizinhos*. The king advised Viceroy Vasco Fernandes César de Menezes that it was inconvenient “to repeat these ceremonies, in order to avoid the appearance of tribute.”⁵⁶ Indeed, some years later, João instructed Viceroy Count of Ericeira to restrict the *sagoate* to “important businesses.”⁵⁷

In fact, it would be more appropriate to analyze the *Ceremonial* based on arguments close to Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s vision of inter-imperial commensurability as a process shaped by moments of approximation, improvisation and eventually change in the position of all those involved.⁵⁸ In this way, the *Ceremonial* was a by-product of the diplomatic and commercial exchanges established by the *Estado da Índia* with South Asian polities, not to mention the vicissitudes of the Portuguese presence in the region, which aimed to create a platform of communication based on a selective adoption of local practices. Indeed, it is possible to make an interesting parallel between the adoption of local practices or cultural elements by the *Estado da Índia* and the “Islamicization” of the Hindu empire of Vijayanagara in the sixteenth century. Both powers seemed to have adopted a more “universal” cultural framework (in the Portuguese case, the Indo-Persian culture of the Mughal Empire, and in the case of Vijayanagara, the pre-Mughal Islamic culture) to facilitate their interactions with other polities. Like the Vijayanagara’s rulers who promoted the adoption of Islamicate forms of courtly dress and modes of political language, the *Estado da Índia* included some features inspired by the Indo-Persian diplomatic protocol such as the *melinandar* (official escort), a

56 Doc. XXVIII, *Uma dona portuguesa na Côte do Grão-Mogol: documentos de 1710 e 1719 precedidos d’um esboço histórico das relações políticas e diplomáticas entre o Estado da Índia e o Grão-Mogol nos séculos XVI XVII*, ed. J.A. Ismael Gracias (Nova, 1907), 151.

57 Historical Archives of Goa (HAG), Livro das Monções do Reino (MR) 83, “Carta de Sua Magestade ao Vice-Rei Conde da Ericeira, 18/3/1718,” f. 27.

58 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Par-delà l’incommensurabilité: pour une histoire connectée des empires aux temps modernes.” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 54 (2007): 34–53; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2012), 29.

ceremonial exchange of gifts (the *sagoate*), or public audiences staged in a special room, similar to the Mughal concept of *diwan-i'amm*.⁵⁹ However, as Phillip B. Wagoner noted in his essay on the Islamicization of Vijayanagara culture, this strategy did not imply that the cultural forms adopted from the Islamic world would replace other cultural traditions, since some practices or ritual performances based on the original culture (Portuguese or Hindu) were essential to legitimate the holders of political power.⁶⁰ In the Portuguese case, the articulation between the liturgy of the Catholic Church and the viceregal ceremonies played an important part in the construction of the viceroy's image as the true doppelganger of the Portuguese monarch.⁶¹

By the end of the eighteenth century, the dramatic changes in the sub-continent triggered by the Battle of Plassey (1757) and the Third Battle of Panipat (1761) meant that the ranking of South Asian powers presented by the *Ceremonial* had become out of date. In 1805 this document was replaced by the *Modo de Escrever aos Reis Vizinhos* ("Ways of writing to neighbouring rulers"), an updated version of the *Ceremonial* which established a new ranking of powers. The leading positions were now occupied by the governors of the East India Company's presidencies of Bombay and Bengal, who were followed then by the Maratha rulers of Pune, Scindia, Holkar, and Kolhapur, the nawabs of Surat and Sanur, the rajahs of Travancore, Corga, Sonda, Mandvi and Panganor, and finally the *Sardessais*. Although the correspondence with the governors of the presidencies of Bombay and Bengal followed the European diplomatic protocol, the forms of address for the other rulers replicated the same greetings recommended by the *Ceremonial*.⁶² Indeed, despite the problems associated with the use of local diplomatic practices, the *Modo de Escrever aos Reis Vizinhos* suggests that the *Ceremonial* had provided an important platform of communication between the *Estado da Índia* and its neighbours.

59 João Vicente Melo, "Respect and Superiority: the Ceremonial Rules of Goan Diplomacy and the Survival of the *Estado da Índia*, 1707-1750," *Portuguese Studies* 28 (2012): 143-158.

60 Phillip B. Wagoner, "Sultan Among Hindu Kings': Dress, Titles and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture and Vijayanagar," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55 (1996): 854.

61 Catarina Madeira Santos, "*Goa é a chave de toda a Índia*": *perfil político da capital do Estado da Índia* (Lisbon, 1999).

62 "Modo de Escrever aos Reis Vizinhos" in *Collecção de Tratados e Concertos de Pazos que o Estado da Índia fez com os Reis e Senhores que teve relações nas partes da Ásia e África Oriental desde os Princípios da conquista até ao fim do século XVIII*, vol. x, ed. Júlio Firmino Júdice Biker (Lisbon, 1885), 307-311.

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