

Early Modern Globalized World: Gifts, Trifles, and Friendship

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The progress of the history of globalization is uneven depending on the time and place. This article addresses a specific moment of the development of globalization in the early modern period. It analyzes varieties of exchange systems in representations of encounters in America and Asia described by a number of early modern authors, such as Columbus, Caminha, Cortés, Pigafetta, De Léry, Xavier, Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, and Ixtlilxochitl. Examples from Mexico, Sonora, Texas, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India, Japan, the Philippines, and the Caribbean, among others, coexist. The need for an intellectual framework in the field of Hispanism that accepts this type of analysis as legitimate is imperative, since the humanities in academia are increasingly engaged in global exchanges.

Keywords: globalization patterns, gift exchange, friendship, potlatch, early modernity, Iberian Studies, Columbus, Caminha, Cortés, Pigafetta, De Léry, Francis Xavier, Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Ixtlilxochitl.

CACIQUE: !Cómo! Y por habernos hecho tan gran merced en mostrarnos aquel camino derecho para el cielo, y tal provecho, ¿se entiende que han de asolarnos?

Miguel de Carvajal, *Las cortes de la muerte*.¹

This article makes an attempt at encompassing different regions of the globe through examining the exchanges of presents, bibelots and expressions of amity in the early modern narratives of exploration. In its global scope, it analyzes nuances and varieties of exchange systems in representations of encounters in America and Asia described by a number of authors. In 2011, Justin Jennings referred to these variations in the phenomenon of globalization as ‘plural globalizations’ (Kardulias 2014: 114). In accordance with the spirit of analyzing early modern globalization as a plural and uneven phenomenon, the authors studied in this essay address a variety of Iberian undertakings in the early modern period, such as those reflected by Columbus, Caminha, Cortés, Pigafetta, De Léry, Francis Xavier, Cabeza de Vaca, and Ixtlilxochitl. Therefore, for the purpose of this article, examples from Mexico, Sonora, Texas, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India, Japan, the Philippines, and the Caribbean, among others, cohabit. This multiplicity of authors who come from different fields of Hispanism is necessary for a better understanding of the mul-

¹ Miguel de Carvajal, *Las cortes de la muerte*, in *América en el teatro clásico español: Estudio y textos*. Pamplona: Eúnsa, 1993, p. 264.

ti-faceted processes of globalization in the early modern period because, as Thomas D. Hall indicates, they are huge and multifaceted topics:

Both world-systems and globalization processes are huge topics, multi-faceted, and encompassing insights from all social and historical disciplines. It is only by scouting the overall range of each that one can make intelligibly restricted comparisons. Narrow comparisons should not be eschewed. They are one of the best ways to get into details, nuances, and subtleties of social processes. But those details, nuances, and subtleties need larger contexts within which they may be understood (Hall 2014: 5).

In fact, following Thomas D. Hall's call to build larger contexts to better understand local particularities, in Hispanic Studies there is a need for the intellectual framework that helps to understand, analyze and legitimate the global dimension of the Iberian early modern literature. Furthermore, the Humanities in academia are increasingly engaged in global transactions, and affected by the global projects of higher education institutions. Before going any further, I would like to add a disclaimer. According to today's demarcations of fields of study in Hispanism, the sources used as examples seem disparate. However, since this essay is concerned with globalization in the early modernity under the Iberian Habsburgs, we cannot tackle the complex issues under the process of globalization with isolated specialties based on geographical demarcations and national projects.

At times, early transoceanic exchanges can resemble fairy tales, engage in unexpected actions, or talk about ineffable horrors. At the same time, they can either convey subtle meaning for interactions or unspeakably crush the identity of entire cultures. The totalitarian quality of the gift exchanging system between unequal societies, such as a metropolis and its colony, is very well expressed in the first play written in Spanish concerned with America. A cacique in the nineteenth scene of *Las cortes de la muerte* (1557), by Miguel de Carvajal, expresses his grievances to the *muerte*, as the supreme authority in the hearings about social injustice in early modern Spain.² He states as a fact that in exchange for 'Christian' salvation the colonizers are demanding the totality of their lands, goods, bodies, and spirit.³ In return, —, should — asks the cacique — should the colonizers feel entitled to enslave, rape, dispossess, and decimate them?: '¿se entiende que han de asolarlos?' (Carvajal 1993: 264).⁴ By the 1550s, and even earlier, it is obvious that the colonial global project is totalitarian and uncompromising in its nature, with nuances about the treatment of the newcomers into the *república*, a Western variation of the concept of civility. As Serge Gruzinski expresses it, Westernization is complex and 'includes all tools of domination employed in the Americas by Renaissance Europe: the Catholic religion, market mechanisms, cannon, books, and images' (Gruzinski 2002: 53).⁵ Yet this totality of the imperial

² Published and edited by Luis Hurtado de Toledo in 1557.

³ Some critics see the influence of Las Casas defense of the native Americans in Carvajal's nineteenth scene of *Las cortes de la muerte*. See Jáuregui y Ruiz Pérez (1988).

⁴ In these remarks there is a concept of empire as a form of exchange. See similar concepts of empire as an exchange system in Condorcet and Kipling (Pagden 2001: 139).

⁵ Gruzinski elaborates about this topic of Westernization and globality in several books. His main concern is the creation of a decentered cultural history beyond local historiographies, alterity rhetoric, national historiographies, *World History*, European history, and finally that kind of parochialism called Eurocentrism (Gruzinski 2010: 40–43).

gift had forms of expression around the world, even though most of the times these modalities were imposed upon the cultures that the Iberians encountered; the Westernization was not always successful or predictable.

This paper analyzes a number of these nuances and varieties of exchange systems based on descriptions of gift exchange policies and friendship rhetoric found in accounts, books and images related to America, Africa, and Asia. The axes of the essay follow the aspects that the historian Serge Gruzinski has proposed as the heart of the justification for the *filipino conglomerado planetario*. For this historian, the Empire since Philip II elaborates a self-justification based on its global markets (first-world economy), institutions (bureaucracy, church, and crown), networks (mendicant orders, Jesuits, bankers, *marrano* business men), and arts (literature, visual, architecture, music) (Gruzinski 2010: 46). Here I shall complement Gruzinski's framework of early modern globalization with a literary analysis. My database is a wide selection of texts of what we normally would consider colonial literature, but are not restricted to Latin America. The focus is the rhetoric of friendship and its associated gift-exchange system, since both constitute a common factor in the literary representations of global markets, institutions, networks, and arts in early modernity.

1. Market and Gift Economies in the West Indies: Self-Serving Anthropological Analysis of a Slave Rider

As proof of their goodwill, explorers and conquerors speak persistently of giving red hats to the indigenous peoples they encounter. Of his first interaction with the natives of the Bahamas, Columbus relates that he gives them red hats because he wants to create a friendly relationship with the good Christians-to-be that he senses in the Lucayan Indians. Like Columbus, Caminha, in his letter to the king Dom Manuel (1500), reports that Nicolao Coelho in the first contact with the inhabitants of the Brazilian sea-shore offered them a number of hats: one red, one black, and one made of linen. The red caps became a constant symbol of the Iberians' attempt to build pacific bonds with the indigenous cultures they stumbled upon during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and beyond. According to Portuguese shipwreck literature in the seventeenth century and certain paintings from the eighteenth century, the gift of trifles, such as red hats, had been standing for centuries. The red hat gift and the expected friendliness and service of the local peoples, were a cultural way of organizing status and predicting results. In fact, Columbus and Cortés, among many others, made a constant use of what would become the cliché of friendly and serviceable natives – ‘Y como por mi tuvieron noticia de Vuestra Alteza y de su muy grand y real poder, dijeron que querían ser vasallos de Vuestra Majestad y mis amigos’ (Cortés 1993:163).

One explanation at hand for these unsettling interactions between the Bronze Age groups of America and the Iron Age culture of the Europeans is Marcel Mauss's concept of a ‘system of social services in archaic societies.’ Mauss's examples and cases convey a cross-cultural character to this ‘system of social services.’ In fact, his gift-giving system is not restricted to exchanges within a single society.

Mauss describes the gift as a social system where the triple obligation to give, to receive and to reciprocate the gift constitutes both a legal tie and a way to create social networks. The first two of these duties, giving and receiving, are based on the creed that pos-

sessions must be offered as presents to another person, who is, in turn, obliged to accept and to pass the gift on to a third person in the future. The expectation to reciprocate is characteristic of this system: 'The most important feature among these spiritual mechanisms is clearly one that obliges a person to reciprocate the present that has been received' (Mauss 1950: 7). The individual who either does not pass on the wealth or does not reciprocate the gift risks appearing dishonorable and weak. Accumulation of goods goes against the rules of the 'total service system.' Mauss offers several explanations of the disappearance of this 'anti-economic' system. One is the creation of the concept of sale among Greeks, Romans and Semites of the North and West (Mauss 1950: 53–54).

Over time, the difference between a sale and a gift in European cultures had become so profound that many European explorers, conquerors, and clerics in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries seemed to fail to grasp the significance of their own gift exchanges with native peoples. For instance, in *Naufragios* (1542/1555) by Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, a somewhat under-explained kind of gift system is described, a sort of potlatch.⁶ In the Southwest, whenever the four survivors move on in order to find the 'Christians,' the whole tribe moves with them and takes all the belongings of the next encountered group, which, in its turn, will inflict the same loitering upon the next tribe farther West. This becomes an unavoidable ritual of exchange of gifts.

First, the ritual is obligatory, because each group wants to recover what it has lost and because of the belief that in not doing so the tribe shall suffer hardships. The group's beliefs concerning this point are so strong that the last tribe does not abandon Cabeza de Vaca and his companions before encountering the 'Christians,' though they suffer from hunger and fear enslavement in the wasteland decimated by slave raids.

It could be argued that this is not a European gift exchange with native peoples, that this is Cabeza de Vaca being assimilated, without comprehending, into a native gift exchange system. The counterargument could be, since Mauss is valuable for understanding that Cabeza de Vaca is describing accurately a system standing even nowadays, that he might have been able to reflect about it, as a servant at the service of the Crown's global conglomerate, when he made a stand as a writer. The question, hereafter, will be to assess to what extent Cabeza de Vaca was able to understand the gift-economy of the potlatch, to his advantage both in the field, and in his own account.

Second, it is a rite of exchange of gifts, in that the habit of looting becomes a voluntary handing over of all tribal possessions – close to the so called potlatch by Native Americans in the Northwest today (Mauss 1950: 6). Gift-giving is described several times in *Naufragios*, but the first of such descriptions relevant to the history of potlatch is that of the gift exchange between members of the two linguistic groups of the 'Isla de Malhado,' in Galveston Bay:

Habitan en ella dos maneras de lenguas: a los unos llaman Capoques, y a los otros de Han; tienen por costumbre, cuando se conocen y de tiempo a tiempo se veen, primero que se hablen estar media hora llorando, y acabado esto, aquel que es visitado se levanta primero y da al otro todo cuanto posee, y el

⁶ Potlatch: 'a ceremonial feast of the American Indians of the northwest coast marked by the host's lavish distribution of gifts or sometime destruction of property to demonstrate wealth and generosity with the expectation of eventual reciprocation' (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 10th ed. 1996: 912a).

otro lo rescibe y de ahí a un poco se va con ello, y aún algunas veces después de rescebido se van sin que hablen palabra (Mauss 1950: 109).

This first description of what will develop into one of the characteristic traits of the Indian tribes stands out as one of the high points of the learning process in which Cabeza de Vaca is immersed. Moreover, Cabeza de Vaca and his companions will build, by acting like these Han and Capoque individuals, an image of extreme generosity in order to gain honor and power among the Native Americans. This potlatch system evolves in *Naufragios*.

The potlatch passes through three phases until it is completely established as such: in chapter twenty eight of *Naufragios*, this ritual is reported as an improvised one; in chapter twenty nine, it is described as pure looting; in chapter thirty, it is completely recognizable as potlatch and, during the rest of the journey, forms part of everyday life for Cabeza de Vaca's group and hundreds of Native Americans, who follow them through the Southwest. It must be said that the successful surgical extraction of an arrowhead by Cabeza, in chapter twenty-nine, might have something to do with the increased respect that the tribes show them. In the same chapter, after the extraction, the number of Cabeza's followers grows to three or four thousand.⁷

Cabeza de Vaca and his shipwrecked companions viewed what doubtless was a religious procession staging the sacred rite of escorting the so-called Sons of the Sun up to the next settlement,⁸ in a very different light. If, in this potlatch, the first tribe passes on the biggest of the possible gifts – the gift passed on being these shamans and gods – the second tribe has the obligation to receive them and to reciprocate the gift. What possessions on earth could equal such a gift? None, and if any, it may only be composed of the totality of the clan's belongings. For me, Cabeza's narration fails to express awareness of the fact that he is dealing with a highly complex system – which in Mauss's terms is a 'total social fact.' As a consequence, his accounts of these rituals imply that the natives' actions are capricious and aimless, except for the fact that Cabeza claims to have cured and resuscitated people. From the way they are presented by Cabeza, it may be deduced that the peoples with whom the Spaniards interact are either self-destructive or gullible, but Cabeza is writing to an audience accustomed to reading religious narratives, such as miracle narratives and hagiographies. Neither of these explanations is positive for the colonized subject. Self-destructive, because they know that the supposed Sons of the Sun are looking for the 'Christians,' who are enslaving entire human groups.⁹ Gullible, because they believed that Cabeza and the others would protect them from the horses and the swords with their shamanic power. This gullibility makes Cabeza pronounce that:

para ser atraídos a ser christianos y a la obediencia de la Imperial Magestad, han de ser llevados con buen tratamiento y que este es camino muy cierto y otro no (Cabeza 2006: 160).

⁷ Rolena Adorno's interpretation, in 'The Negotiation of Fear in Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios*' (1991), does not underline the importance of the exchange system as much as I do and does not arrive to the identification of it with the potlatch. This might be because the scope of her work is the entire book of *Naufragios*.

⁸ The question of the messianic beliefs is of great debate. For example, see Adorno (1991: 196, n. 34), Townsend (2003), and Restall (2003).

⁹ As Trinidad Barrera explains in her edition of *Naufragios*: 'Todo este territorio recibe el nombre de Nueva Galicia. La actuación allí de Nuño Guzmán había sido especialmente cruel' (159).

This utterance reveals the allure of expertise that Cabeza desires to accord to himself in order to ask for royal favor. Statements full of condescension are common among the writers of these accounts. Columbus, Caminha, Cortés, Las Casas, and Francis Xavier express similar opinions about the locals of different parts of the Globe, often showing the position of superiority they accord to themselves.¹⁰ Cabeza, speaking from this point of view, expresses how useful this potlatch ends up being for the Spaniards, because each tribe is able to communicate with the next, passing on to the new tribe the instructions received from the previous one.

Now and again, in Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios*, one misses any attempt of cultural explanation or recognition of the economic and social value of gifts among Capoque and Han peoples in Malhado, and tribes in the deserts of the Southwest. Moreover, when one thinks of his experience as an itinerant merchant for five years, Cabeza de Vaca's carefully selected silences become evidence of the self-fashioning purpose of *Naufragios*. The writings of Cabeza de Vaca invoke again the transoceanic use of the gift rhetoric to the advancement of an administrative carrier. In fact, this was not new. Columbus, Caminha, and Cortés made use of what would become the cliché of friendly, gift-giving, and serviceable natives brought into the *república* by amity and force. In *Naufragios*, the slave, merchant, and wanderer Cabeza de Vaca inserts himself at the center of the symbolisms of a vast gift-giving economy among a number of tribes of the American Southwest.¹¹

Cabeza de Vaca, as I said above, expresses how useful this potlatch turns out to be for the four survivors. Each tribe is able to communicate with the next. They pass on to the new tribe the instructions received from the previous one. Such communication would be impossible for Cabeza's group because, as he asserts, they have encountered a countless number of linguistic groups (2006: 157). The potlatch is positively portrayed for even enemies can overcome their enmity through this rite of exchange:

Throughout all these lands, those that were at war became friends, in order to come greet us and bring us all that they had, and in this way we left all the land at peace (Cabeza 2006: 157, – translation mine).¹²

According to this quote, the narrator of *Naufragios* seems completely oblivious to the reason for this behavior. After traveling for nine years and allegedly learning six local languages, Cabeza de Vaca has not grasped the nature of such a system. Either he makes the ritual seem like a trick devised by one tribe to justify the shameless looting of another, or he gives a description in which his focus is that of an external narrator, entirely alien to the culture. On the whole, he must prove himself to be a true reporter to His Majesty and a pure Christian who has not been corrupted by a decade in the wilderness, surrounded by idolaters. On the one hand, the reader must contend with such a narrator's cultural ignorance, which makes the natives' actions seem absurd. On the other hand, Cabeza's use of native customs to his advantage stands out. In consequence, the meaning of the natives' actions and the use that Cabeza makes of them show the cultural gap between both worlds.

¹⁰ Y como por mi tuvieron noticia de Vuestra Alteza y de su muy grand y real poder, dijeron que querían ser vasallos de Vuestra Majestad y mis amigos' (Cortés 1993: 163).

¹¹ In *Comentarios* he is portrayed similarly, as a sort of valuable cultural broker between the indigenous peoples, and the conquerors, in Paraguay.

¹² Por todas estas tierras, los que tenían guerras con los otros se hazían luego amigos para venimos a reseibir y traernos todo cuanto tenían, y desta manera dexamos toda la tierra en paz'.

It is in this split that one can see, as in the case of the red hats, the difference between European and indigenous perspectives relative to the gifts of the empire and native systems of gift-giving.

Despite Cabeza de Vaca's artificial estrangement, he must understand quite well the profound universal symbolisms of a gift-giving economy, since in order to present himself as a loyal vassal and a good Christian, Cabeza stresses his supposed conversion of foes into friends, thus creating peace among peoples who will easily become subjects of Charles V. Cabeza de Vaca insists on the fact that as a powerful shaman and a peaceful man, he is able to create collaborative networks among the native tribes. The peoples of the Southwest bestow great importance upon the rite of accompanying these shamans, who cure people, who come from the east, and who will protect them from the so-called 'Christians,' the slave riders farther west.¹³ Additionally, Cabeza is a practically oriented man, who, as an officer of the crown in Pánfilo de Narváez's expedition to Florida, reports on the economic resources of the different regions through which he passes, in order that the emperor can evaluate his service to the empire. The last tribe, during the encounter between the four shipwreck survivors and the 'Christians,' points out that not all Europeans are the same, because some – the shipwreck survivors – are generous, while the others – the 'Christians' – are greedy. Generosity is what distinguishes Cabeza's group from the Christians. In fact, all of them are Spaniards ('Christians'), but the natives do not identify Cabeza's group as 'Christians,' as their last observation indicates in the book *Naufragios*.

For the Native Americans, the Christians are armored, covetous, murderous, and riders from the West. Cabeza and the other survivors are naked, on foot, harmless, munificent, and children of god. Their authority is derived from the fact that they can cure people, and they do not keep anything for themselves. Since great men must be openhanded in the potlatch, the sumptuary characteristic of the gift makes Cabeza and the others sublime. The four survivors of Pánfilo de Narváez expedition, especially Cabeza de Vaca, understand the workings of these cultural symbolisms, and capitalize on them in the Peninsula, and in America. Although in *Naufragios* the narrator in his dry tone does not explain the meaning of these exchanges, he clearly recognizes their existence and their importance for the men's survival. Such a technique of cultural estrangement makes his narration about the West Indies more exotic, and more admirable the fate that made them survive their travails. But there are other aspects of the gift economy that Cabeza de Vaca does not reflect on. Gifts and exchanges always come at a price, as was clear in Calicut and the Moluccas, and generally speaking in the East Indies.

2. Trifles and Cannons in the East Indies

As Mary Douglas notes, gifts are never truly free (Mauss 1950: vii). Contrary to what Cabeza de Vaca pretends to convey in his under-stated description of the potlatch system, gifts are never naïve. Taking it to the extreme, according to Derrida, in *Give the Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1992) – an answer to Mauss – the mere nature of the gift can be disputed, since there is no such a thing as a 'gift.' In fact, during the first circumnavigation of the world some exchanges were rejected because native leaders thought they could not

¹³ A parallel could be established with other situations where the native Americans have a particular way of classifying colonizers according to giving and taking away patterns: 'Whereas the English bestow gifts upon the Indians, the Spaniards take from them, using Indian women "for the satisfying of their own lusts"' (Montrose 1993: 196).

correspond, in the case of El Cano and his crew in the Moluccas, or because the gift was not valuable enough, like in Calicut, India, or because it was perceived as dangerous and unimportant, like in Japan and China.

According to Pigafetta's diary of the first circumnavigation, on the 8th of November 1521, in the Moluccas, the king of Tidore expresses that he had dreamt of the arrival of the Iberian expedition and that he was looking forward to welcoming the representatives of the king of Spain, his lord and good friend.¹⁴ In their eagerness to foster this positive environment, El Cano's sailors, coveting the spices of the island, bestow an excessive number of gifts on the king and his followers. So many gifts are given that the king ought to stop them because he does not have enough to reciprocate honorably the king of Spain.¹⁵ These rejections reveal the contractual nature of the gift exchange, against face value of the self-serving anthropological analysis built by the early modern slave riders, sailors, notaries and merchants. Nevertheless, for today's readers, this early modern trading custom, practiced and reported as it was, is both astonishing, even shameful, as a reflection of unbalanced commercial relationships of the incipient capitalist Europe.

Vasco da Gama's expedition to the East Indies is an example of how stereotypical the Europeans' pretensions could be. According to the anonymous *Roteiro da Primeira Viagem de Vasco da Gama*, the Portuguese, who were looking for a new trade route to import Indian spices, tried to hide their real aim in order to avoid the attacks of the Muslim spice traders. Their first contact is in Calicut (Kozhikode) with Samudri Raja, or *Samorim* as the Portuguese called him. The excuse they gave Samudri Raja was that they were looking for Christians who had been cut off from Rome by the Muslim world.¹⁶ During the second audience, the Samudri Raja finds Gama's claims to be untrue, because the Portuguese captain does not present him with gold or other gifts of value. As a result of this miscalculation, the commercial contract is never established and Gama's fleet endures hardship (Subrahmayam 1997: 136–139).¹⁷ Like Cabeza de Vaca, in their first encounter, they did not fully understand native gift practices. For the Portuguese, the conclusion of the journey is that the Muslim merchants have poisoned the communication with the

¹⁴ 'Nos dio la bienvenida, diciendo que desde hacía mucho tiempo había soñado que algunos navíos debían venir de países lejanos, y que ,para asegurarse de si el sueño era verdadero había examinado la Luna, en la cual había notado que efectivamente, arribarían, y que era a nosotros a quienes esperaba... Cuando supo quiénes éramos y el objeto de nuestro viaje, nos dijo que él y todos sus pueblos tendrían gran alegría siendo amigos y vasallos del rey de España' (Pigafetta 2003: 283).

¹⁵ 'Le regalamos la silla donde estaba sentado y la túnica que tenía puesta; una pieza de paño fino, cuatro brazas de paño escarlata, una túnica de brocado, un paño de damasco amarillo, otros paños indios bordados en oro y seda, una pieza de *berania*, que es una tela de Cambaya muy blanca, dos bonetes, seis hilos de cuentas de vidrio, doce cuchillos, tres espejos grandes, seis tijeras, seis peines, algunos vasos de vidrio dorado y otras cosas... hasta que el rey nos advirtió que no diésemos más. Dijo que estaba disgustado por no tener nada que regalar digno del rey de España, mas que le ofrecía su persona' (Pigafetta 2003: 283–284).

¹⁶ 'And the captain told him he was the ambassador of a King of Portugal, who was Lord of many countries and the possessor of great wealth of every description, exceeding that of any king of these parts; that for a period of sixty years his ancestors had annually sent out vessels to make discoveries in the direction of India, as they knew that there were Christian kings there like themselves' (A Journal... 1898: 58).

¹⁷ For some, the Portuguese made several diplomatic mistakes: 'he was asked for gold, and it was precisely this that the East African ports provided, drawing on the trade of the inland caravans that arrived there from the Munhumutapa kingdom. But, once again, the problem was of what to sell in East Africa to "ransom" (*resgatar*) the gold'" (Subrahmayam 1993: 61).

Samudri Raja and that a war fleet must be sent to assert Portuguese power in the region. But the reasons for this fiasco are that the Samudri Raja, the Muslim merchants, and the Portuguese were communicating through culturally fluent translators, and that the Calicut leader, as part of the world economy, was used to conduct exchanges with foreigners from the West and the East. In fact, trifles would insult the Samudri Raja.

Disrespect put commercial exchange with the Portuguese out of the question. The *zamorin* of Calicut asked for gold in exchange for his favors, but the Portuguese, trusting their military superiority, brought technology – cannons and firepower – as an answer to the rejection of the imperial trifles.¹⁸ Following Da Gama's assessment, Cabral in the next fleet was fully armed and prepared for creating a factory, engaging in war, and developing trade. For Portugal, the cost of this transoceanic enterprise was enormous, but the benefits could be greater if the vessels would make their trip back to Lisbon.¹⁹ All in all, once the rhetoric of friendship and its associated barter, as signifiers of the superiority of the Europeans, do not work smoothly, the logic of hard politics to ensure business becomes explicit. As many scholars have pointed out, in the empire enterprise business, military and spiritual realities collide; therefore the analysis of the connections of the spiritual mechanisms with the rhetoric of friendship and gift-giving complete this view of the syntax of globalization.

3. Spiritual Gift, Books and Images in the Globalized Christian World

In Cabral's fleet there are clerics, and their mission would be to start the creation of the spiritual dimension of the gift. As Mauss mentioned, the gift has a religious aspect: gods make presents to the humans that must be returned, and vice versa. Behind these transcendental exchanges there is a theory of sacrifice, alms, and it is the origin of charity (Mauss 1950: 14–18). Surely, preaching of salvation during the early modern period can be associated to these concepts of transcendental gift exchanges. Mauss's gift exchange system, according to Mary Douglas, is 'a total system in that every item of status or of spiritual or material possession is implicated for everyone in the whole community' (*Ibid.*: viii). Mauss, when including the religious aspect of the gift, described the gift of the potlatch in terms of 'total services of and agonistic type' (*Ibid.*: 7). One can imagine the agonistic nature of cultural exchanges where material possessions, family members, and local institutions, are taken away in exchange for an imposed religion. The spiritual gift of salvation, as the Cacique in Carvajal's play states in the sixteenth century, is the justification for all the misdeeds of the *conquistadores* and *encomenderos* in America and it is also one hundred years after the conquest.

Carvajal's play is just one of the documents that invokes how agonistic is the imposition of religious gifts in the Iberian early modern globalized world. During the *Pax hispan-*

¹⁸ 'Da Gama learned that even if peaceful trade should not be possible, the Portuguese vessels with their artillery were more than a match for the frail and unarmed vessels that plied the routes of the Indian Ocean' (Lach 1965: 98).

¹⁹ 'can only be understood by appreciating how expensive and scarce spices were at the end of the fifteenth century. At Venice in 1499, the absolute price of pepper was as much as 80 ducats per hundred-weight... Da Gama meanwhile learned that pepper could be purchased at Calicut for as little as 3 ducats. In Venice certain of the spices were apparently not available at all during the final years of the fifteenth century' (Lach 1965: 99).

ica period, Fernando Álva Ixtlilxochitl, in his mestizo chronicle *Decima tercera relación de la venida de los españoles y principio de la ley evangélica* (1608), articulates the Christian creed as the justification for all the sufferings of his friends and enemies during and after the conquest of Mexico.²⁰ This chronicle is a byproduct of the native intelligentsia formed at the *Colegio Santa Cruz* at Tlatelolco, founded in 1536 (Llanos 1995: 5). Almost one century after the facts, this *relación* had the objective of making one of Alva Ixtlilxochitl's ancestors and his Texcocoan vassals the main protagonists of Tenochtitlan's subjugation (Calvi 1992: 623–624). For this reason, the writer of this *relación* portrays Cortés somewhat aside and, more importantly, as the best friend of the Texcoco lord Ixtlilxóchitl, who is glorified as the conqueror of Tenochtitlan for Cortés and the Christians, when in fact he joined the invasion forces to overthrow his half-brother Cacamatzin and govern Texcoco.

The gift exchange action would be negligible in this version of the conquest of Mexico, unlike in Cortés's *Cartas de relación*, if the gift of Christian faith were not present from the title throughout the whole book:

estos nuestros amigos los hijos del Sol, nos trajeron la luz verdadera, la salud de nuestras almas y la vida entera, que tan lejos estábamos de ella, gozando la gloria del mundo con las horribles tinieblas; haciendo lo que nuestros falsos dioses nos mandaban, sacrificando nuestros próximos, entendiendo que acertábamos en estas nuestras antiguas costumbres, e íbamos a los abismos del infierno (Ixtlilxochitl 1938: 81).

All of the misdeeds were negligible compared with the good of receiving the *Ley Evangélica*, and the opportunity to spread it among his people (Ixtlilxochitl 1938: 82). The gift of the new god in heaven and the new friend in arms was so valuable that Ixtlilxochitl could endure the slander of his kin enemies, proselytize his mother and wife, perpetrate the beheading of his old gods, and finally destroy the Triple Alliance.²¹ In this 'alternative' chronicle, the Imperial Gift – Christian religion – is represented as a priceless acquisition, and the ultimate justification for conquest and cultural annihilation. Nevertheless, the spiritual gift on the Europeans was not always assimilated in America, as well as in many other parts of the world. This created a dissonance between Christian teleology and world realities that had to be addressed and explained.

In fact, some decades earlier, José de Acosta in his *De Procuranda indiorum salute* (1588) had recognized the dystopic results of the conversion to the *Ley Evangélica*, and the necessity to analyze the global theater in which the new soldiers of Christ – the Jesuits – had to operate. He created a rational classification of the global population with respect to their future conversion. Acosta was after the universal method for proselytizing effectively 'the innumerable indigenous groups whose customs were so diverse' (Del Valle 2014: 5).

By the end of the sixteenth century, José de Acosta was right in the recognition that the early global world was not homogeneous. In most of the Asia that Iberians and Jesuits

²⁰ Concerning the concept and definition of mestizo chronicles, see Lisa Voigt's summary of arguments (Voigt 2006: 4, 17), Lienhard (1983: 105), and Velezco (18–33).

²¹ In the few instances women are painted in this chronicle, he appears protecting them first from their own 'idolatry' and second from the fury of Txacalan warriors. According to Alva, his predecessor proselytized his mother and his wife, who accepted after a violent conversation, but they had the honor of being the first converts after Ixtlilxochitl (1938: 68).

were going to engage, cultures and societies were resilient; not even fully armed fleets like the second India Armada sent by the king of Portugal would be successful. Many local societies kept the upper hand in the multicultural exchanges. Some Jesuit missionaries would even recognize their failure in the complementary project of Christianizing India. Francis Xavier, at times, in his letters asserts that natives from India are unsuitable for Christianity, since they are weak and changeable. When Patricia Seed indicates that early modern colonizers had their distinctive ‘ceremonies of possession,’ one assumes there is an implicit recognition that their language of apprehension was unilateral, and at the best had the purpose of feeling communication blanks in uncharted territories and unknown cultures. In Bourdieu's terms ‘categories of appreciation and perception’ between colonizers and colonized were at odds, and their disparity became obvious and somewhat insufferable when the colonized Other would not accept its passive, and collaborative, role in the new concert of peoples, this concert of ‘colonial regimes for a Globalized Christian World,’ as Ivonne del Valle describes it (Bourdieu 1994: 183–185; Del Valle 2014: 3).

Francis Xavier, for as much he became a saint, was an eloquent example of the lack of understanding of why gentiles would not accept the word of missionaries. He painfully describes his own bursts of insanity when his preaching is unappreciated in India. In the end, he might not have assessed wrongly some peoples from India, since his work has been assimilated into one more of the rituals of the Hindu cosmology:

But the abundant visual representations of the saint, combining a reassuring feminine gaze with a youthful man's body, have served to present another, partial aspect of the saint among many that complete one another. Xavier's image is another medium of the Hindu *darsan*... Perhaps the highly pictorial nature of the Roman Baroque and that of Hinduism had too much in common (Conrod 2012: 112).

Today, it is ironic that Francis Xavier's theological rigidity has been absorbed by a notoriously flexible system of beliefs that has made of Xavier one more of the gods in the Hindu pantheon; while the letters of this icon of Hinduism ought not to be read, and as a matter of fact they are nearly impossible to find in Goa (Conrod 2012: 113).

The cultural Other that Xavier encountered rejected a colonial double replicating the metropolitan *Ley Evangelica*.²² As a reaction, Xavier, in his letters, talks down the local peoples and their religious leaders:

Y vos, mi Dios, me hicisteis a vuestra semejanza, y no los pagodas, que son dioses de los gentiles en figuras de bestias y alimañas del Diablo. Yo reniego de todos los pagodas, hechiceros, adivinadores, pues son cautivos y amigos del Diablo (Javier, *Cartas* 84).

Moreover, he calls for ‘a necessary and strategic religious invasion of India (or the alternative of a complete abandonment of it)’ (Conrod 2012: 106). This religious war, imposing the gift of the *Ley Evangélica*, upon the Indian belief systems parallels the naval war that Da Gama advised to the king of Portugal to impose Imperial Gift. The *padroado da India* and the spice monopoly cannot be secured but by force. The spiritual gift of the word of Jesus Christ gets diluted in the immensity of an inclusive system of beliefs. Moreover,

²² Here I follow freely the ideas expressed by Marina Brownlee (2006: 74).

the commercial trifles are unappreciated in the vastness of the business networks of South Asia. Both spiritual gifts and commercial trifles are rejected.

Some missionaries in the seventeenth-century Far East express a similar discontent with the dubious results of their proselytizing efforts. Some get completely swamped with the overwhelming wealth of local cultures, geographies, habits, and courts; though they are never integrated or in control.²³ Missionaries in sophisticated political systems and 'self-satisfied courts' – in the words of Joe Cutter – such as in China and Japan, where, in the view of the locals, they are no more than 'virtual blanks' (Marina Brownlee's terminology), in the best of cases get assimilated as a collective other. But as soon as they do not double the 'cultural dominant' they get rejected. In this way we can understand how Xavier, in life, expressed the impermeability of Indian beliefs, while in death the unconquerable cultural Other metaphorically substitutes and usurps his extreme orthodoxy for a fluid hybridity. Xavier's religious gift came at a price, this time not by the usurpation of the lands and women of the 'Indians,' but by getting enthroned in the Hindu pantheon. This was thanks to the baroque images of Xavier that, for local viewers, could have had a substantial proximity to Hindu art.

4. Globalizing Art: Writing a Book as a Gift

As Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton (2000) have proved, another important element of expression for this globalized reality was art, and the gift of artworks as part of the rhetoric of friendship. When Matteo Ricci's Mandarin portraits awe us as expressions of multiculturalism, anachronism might be underneath this admiration. What I see is a performance of amity and gift giving that allowed him to gain some respect in the most populated court of the world. Perhaps, his Chinese depictions were nothing but another self-fashioning serving his religious commitment, not that far from the broker image created by Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, or Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl. However, Ricci's posturing cannot completely mask the fact that he was the extreme representation of a calculated effort to fill up a communication blank in a quasi-nonsensical enterprise.

Nonsensical since the spiritual gift, the *Ley Evangélica*, seems to be successful when in support of military and economic intrusions in need of justification, which never was the case in China. In a sense, fortunately for his project of approaching the ruling class, Matteo Ricci opted for an immersion in the Chinese debates on friendship. Besides, in Nanchang, he wrote a book on friendship as a gift dedicated to a powerful patron that opened the doors of the Mandarin state to him. One of his Chinese books of the Nanchang period has a strong theological content, but another deals with theories of *amicitia*. His 交友論 (Jiaoyou lun) [*On Friendship: One Hundred Maxims for a Chinese Practice*] (1595) became a success in Chinese culture, and was included in anthologies, quoted by local intellectuals, and incorporated into collections of books sponsored by the Emperor. Ricci's book was a gift

²³ Hsia's biography about Matteo Ricci ends with the bittersweet reference to his seclusion and heritage: 'I caught sight of a small plaque to my left. Erected in 1998 by the municipality [of Zhaoqing], it commemorates the site where the Jesuit residence formerly stood and where Ricci once Lived. His head shaven, dressed in Buddhist robes, despised by locals as a barbarian monk ignorant of their tongue, and a world away from home, Ricci would have found comfort in these words that show he would not be forgotten, even in the beautiful provincial backwater of Guangdong' (Po-Chia Hsia 2010: 308).

to an imperial prince, and granted him the entrance into the heart of literati academies of the time including the White Deer Grove Academy, at Lushan.

Ricci, as much as Cabeza de Vaca, must have apprehended the high appreciation of practices and gestures of friendship in the local culture. Ricci participated in the arguments about theories of *amicitia* that were the focus of great debate during the late Ming Dynasty, as well as in Renaissance and Baroque Europe. These theories were so in vogue that Zhang Huang, a famous neo-Confucian and Ricci's intellectual partner, composed the objectives of the White Deer Grove Academy in 1592, stressing in the second point the connections between the neo-Confucian academy, learning, and friendship: 'The main aim of learning is to gain friendships that will help us in the path of virtue' (Hsia 2010: 161). Ricci's knowledge of the topic, and the convenient insertion within the literati, became a stepping-stone. Over time, Ricci evolved into a sort of foreign curiosity, a 'minister,' that Mandarins and scholars would visit in Beijing, as a wonder and as the holder of a place of tranquility in the midst of the examinations and triennial evaluations (*Ibid.*: 268). Nevertheless, while his gift of a book on friendship opened him to another level of the Chinese society, the results were a mixed blessing. A good number of his powerful and sophisticated interlocutors chose which aspects of the complex gift of empire to accept. Theory on friendship, astronomy, mathematics, cartography, books, paintings, theological debates, and so forth, were welcome, while the spiritual, commercial and military aspects of the Westernization enterprise were neglected as unnecessary.

Grandiose frustration would be the label for paintings of Ricci related to this Eastern adventure. If there is one emotionally appealing image of Francis Xavier, it is his recurrently painted death in 1552 at the door of Mainland China. This evocative depiction of the soldier of Christ fighting until his last breath returns in the martyrdom of the Jesuits in Japan and runs through the backstage of Ricci's portraits 'à la mandarin.' But, this frustration became transformed through a long history of hagiographies, and was surrounded by silence. Transformations, silence, and (pseudo-)hagiographical portraits were the successful recipe used by Hernán Cortés, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, Alva Ixtlilxochitl, and Matteo Ricci, among others to incorporate their tribulations into a large frame of early modern exchanges. In fact, this is part of a globalization that had surprising expressions, like convent biographies, which cannot be explored here for lack of space, that extended around the world as a behavioral model for women.²⁴

5. Conclusion

From a global perspective the imperial gift had shades of expression; most of the time these modalities were imposed upon the cultures that Iberians encountered around the world. Conversely, in other instances, the metaphorical usurpation that colonial symbolism is based on was impossible, and I would say that the colonial usurpation and substitution was imposed upon the Westerners and their religion. The Europeans appear, at moments, as impossible 'avatars,' 'virtual blanks,' at the mercy of non-European global realities, while wandering in a globe that they could not control. The political closing of Ethiopia, China, and Japan might be examples of the acute understanding that elites could have of the global offering of friendship behind the Westernizing gift. China and Japan retained trade under strict control, and persecute Western religious and political influence in their territories to the point of annihilation. Whereas Cabeza de Vaca inserts himself at the cen-

²⁴ See the works by Jodi Bilinkoff (2005), and J. Michelle Molina with Ulrike Strasser (2009).

ter of the symbolism of a vast gift-giving economy among a number of tribes of the American Southwest thanks to a healing performance; for some, Ricci even becomes accepted by neo-Confucian scholars and aristocrats into their friendship-oriented academies, thanks to a gift, a book on friendship. This book and the healings were the first steps to the successful integration of these two Europeans in the symbolic worlds of Southwest tribes and Chinese literati and Mandarin. North American potlatch practices and neo-Confucian Chinese friendship theories seem to be in opposite extremes of the anthropological definition of culture. Nevertheless, early modern globalization put them in contact through two 'virtual blanks,' namely Ricci and Cabeza de Vaca. This contact showed that the variety of exchanges of the global Imperial Gift in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had many shades, often shaped by a concept that Gruzinski has overlooked: the theory of friendship, and its performance in the imperial gift exchange system around the globe.

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