

SOVEREIGN MYTHS AND THE REALITIES OF MATERIAL DIPLOMACY: BRITISH
AND PRINCELY INDIAN GIFT-GIVING IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

by

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Abstract

Current scholarship on British and princely Indian gift-giving presents it as at first a negotiation and manipulation in the eighteenth century and then an elimination of the ambiguities of gift-giving by 1858 when India came under the rule of the British Crown. However, through a discursive and symbolic analysis of a diplomatic gift to the Queen of Britain from the titular Maharaja of Mysore and the British precedent set in 1861 for British and princely Indian gift-giving in the latter half of the nineteenth century, this diplomatic and bureaucratic dominance turns into a contested issue of sovereignty wherein the Maharaja subverted colonial expectations and myths of sovereignty within the material and legal spheres while the British sought to conflate treaties, grants, and gifts into the notion of the “true gift.” Gift-giving continued to play a central role in the negotiations around sovereignty in late nineteenth-century colonial India, yet the British efforts to manage the meaning of exchange, such as categorizing ornate objects as tokens or souvenirs of a personal nature, obscured the continuation of the diplomatic practice within the policy of indirect rule.

Lay Summary

This thesis seeks to contribute a greater understanding of the sustained role of material culture and diplomacy within the formal British Empire in India during the post-1858 period, or the modern period. It explores how a diplomatic gift could be manipulated into a legal transaction to transfer sovereign rights and land from an Indian ruler, the Maharaja of Mysore, to the British Crown. It further provides more nuance to the understandings of material cultural and sovereignty regarding the semi-sovereign and indirectly ruled states in the nineteenth century.

Preface

This master's thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Kayla Reddecliff.

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To my mother and brother, who are always proud of me.

1 Introduction

In 1861, as the first step in initiating a legal petition for reinstatement to the administrative rule of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III sent a gift to Queen Victoria of Britain “in testimony of [his] loyalty and devotion to the Throne.”¹ Krishnaraja, the Maharaja of Mysore only in name, wished to send a pair each of elephants, tigers, rhinoceros, horses, and two pairs of both cows and bulls, with full sets of trappings.² Also included in this gift were rich necklaces, bracelets, and rings set with diamonds, rubies, and pearls and royal Indian emblems of power consisting of a number of fans, parasols, walking sticks, and a palanquin. Finally, the most important item that Wodeyar sent was a large portrait of the Duke of Wellington.

This last item, the Maharaja felt, would catch the Queen’s attention. In 1799, the Duke, leading a British East India Company army, defeated the ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan, at Seringapatam. Wellington subsequently placed the recreated and semi-independent state of Mysore under the rule of the territory’s old Hindu royal family, the Wodeyars. As the Maharaja explains, this portrait was painted “soon after the Siege of Seringapatam whilst His Grace was yet a young man” and was then gifted to the five-year-old Maharaja, presumably to mark the signing of the Subsidiary Treaty of Mysore.³ Krishnaraja Wodeyar III’s right to rule was recognized within this otherwise largely disadvantageous agreement with the Company that gave the British control over the state’s foreign policy and imposed heavy tributary payments upon the state. In fact, Mysore’s tribute payment made up almost half of the British Government’s annual tributes from

¹ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26; Variations on spelling: Wodeyar, Wadiyar, Wodiyar, Odeyer.

² The elephants, tigers, and rhinoceros were not sent to London as requested by the Viceroy, Viscount Charles Canning.

³ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26.

198 princely states.⁴ In the event of a default, the treaty authorized the temporary assumption of Mysore territory to secure payment.⁵ In a bold political move, Krishnaraja stressed that he had “always highly prized” this portrait, which once gifted to the Queen, was intended to act as a physical reminder of the Maharaja’s treaty rights.⁶ In re-gifting a portrait, the Maharaja went against the British and princely Indian gift-giving practices established during the eighteenth century, in which gifted portraits transmitted the presence of the giver as a form of personal or ‘inalienable’ tribute.⁷ In returning a portrait that represented territorial conquest and colonial power, Krishnaraja contested the British East India Company’s claim to the territory of Mysore.

At sixty-seven years of age and without an heir, the Maharaja desired to secure the future of his royal house and the independence of his state and time was limited. In 1831, the East India Company had assumed control over the Maharaja’s territory on the grounds of his maladministration, namely his tendency to amass debt. The British claimed that this misgovernment resulted in a rebellion in the Nagar region of the Maharaja’s territories. For the next thirty years, a British Commissioner ruled Mysore while Krishnaraja acted as a titular monarch with authority only within his personal sphere. As the Maharaja sought to prove, this measure was undertaken despite his compliance with the treaty obligations, thus its legality was in question. Although Krishnaraja made several appeals to the Company for his reinstatement over the years, the British never seriously considered the issue until he submitted a formal petition to

⁴ Sebastian Joseph, “Mysore’s Tribute to the Imperial Treasury: A Classic Example of Economic Exploitation,” *Quarterly Journal of Mythic Society* 70, No. 3 (1979), 154. I use the term “British Government” to refer to various levels of British authority with respect to South Asia, including the Crown, the Secretary of State for India, the India Office in London, the Government of India, the Governments of various British Indian provinces, and British political officers in the princely states.

⁵ Mihir Kumar Ray, *Princely States and the Paramount Power, 1858-1876* (New Delhi: Rajesh Publications, 1981), 95-99.

⁶ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26.

⁷ Natasha Eaton, “Between Mimesis and Alterity: Art, Gift, and Diplomacy in Colonial India, 1770-1800,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, No. 4 (Oct., 2004), 817-818.

Lord Canning on 23 February 1861, a month after sending his gift to the Queen. Along with his gift, the Maharaja had sent Dr. Campbell, the Durbar surgeon, as his representative to London to put forward a claim to Parliament and to the Queen.

By this time, the legal landscape of colonial rule had altered. The Crown had assumed control over India, entering into the British East India Company's treaty relations with the Indian rulers, who now came under the suzerainty of the Crown. Following the Indian Rebellion in 1857-58, the Company surrendered all of its holdings and was disbanded.⁸ The Crown, fearing another uprising, replaced the Company's objectionable policy of annexing princely territory with a policy of conciliating the Indian native rulers. Upon appointing Viscount Charles Canning as Viceroy of India, the Crown charged him with the task of placating the discontented, yet loyal, Indian rulers by making a number of concessions and gifts of land, titles, and rich objects.⁹ Queen Victoria further issued a Proclamation in 1858, assuring the Indian rulers that any treaties made under Company Rule would be "scrupulously maintained," that "their rights, dignity and honour" would be respected, and more importantly that the native rulers' territories would be protected from British annexation.¹⁰ Beginning in 1859, Canning, and the successive Viceroys Elgin, Mayo, and Lord Lawrence held "diplomatic summits" with the various Indian rulers, travelling to each individual state in order to renegotiate terms of allegiance, explain the transfer of power, and issue *sannads*, or treaty agreements, that upheld princely titles, properties, and succession in the event that a successor was adopted.¹¹ This "adoption dispatch" which Canning issued to all the Indian

⁸ While referred to here as the Indian Rebellion, the nomenclature of the uprising in 1857-58 is contested within the historiography. Other names include the First War of Independence, Indian Freedom Struggle, and Great Rebellion on one side, and on the other as the Sepoy Mutiny, the Indian Mutiny, the Indian Insurrection, and a Revolt.

⁹ Thomas R. Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 222.

¹⁰ A. B. Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy 1750-1921* (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), 383.

¹¹ Miles Taylor, *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), 103-116; Bernard S. Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 167-168.

rulers, was not extended to Krishnaraja, indicating British plans to annex Mysore upon the Maharaja's death.¹²

After Krishnaraja's official petition, Lord Canning allowed a year to pass before denying his request. However, as a result of the Maharaja's gift and Dr. Campbell's presence in London, the Secretary of State Charles Wood constituted a special committee made up of Indian Office officials and initiated a case for Mysore in 1863. For the next six years, three Viceroys, two Secretaries of State, and a special committee would be split between those who argued for outright annexation and those who proposed maintaining Mysore as a sovereign state. Of the various scholarly studies of this so-called Mysore Case, only one has briefly referenced the diplomatic gift that led to the initiation of both the special committee and the legal case and none have analyzed the annexationists' efforts to conflate the legal functions of treaties, gifts, and grants as equal forms of exchange within the debates recorded in the parliamentary papers.¹³ The debate regarding Krishnaraja's sovereign rights, such as his right to adopt an heir, centred on whether or not the Subsidiary Treaty of Mysore should be considered as a legally binding treaty or as a gift or grant from the Duke of Wellington, since through right of conquest, Mysore belonged to the British. Krishnaraja maintained a form of sovereignty since the Subsidiary Treaty was a mutual recognition of territorial entities that maintained formal juridical independence between two sovereign rulers. His diplomatic gift meant to reassert and affirm these sovereign rights granted through the

¹² Viscount Canning quoted in R.J. Moore, *Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy, 1853-66* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), 164. During the Viceroy Lord Dalhousie's rule (1848-1856), the Doctrine of Lapse was applied as an annexation policy to those princes who were under Subsidiary Treaties, stating that those rulers who were deemed incompetent or died without a natural born heir would have their princely status abolished.

¹³ Taylor, 109-111; Zak Leonard, "Law of Nations Theory and the Native Sovereignty Debates in Colonial India," *Law and History Review* 38, no. 2 (May 2020), 373-407; Lauren Goodlad, *The Victorian Geopolitical Aesthetic: Realism, Sovereignty, and Transnational Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Chpt 2; Moore, 163-176; Moore, 163-175; Donovan Williams, *The India Office 1858-1869* (Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, 1983), 217-226; L.A. Knight, "The Mysore grants, 1860: The appeal of Tippu Sultan's son," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 1:1 (1978), 63.

Subsidiary Treaty in the face of the state of Mysore's destruction through annexation. Since the Queen's Proclamation and Canning's despatch repealed the Doctrine of Lapse, Krishnaraja's lack of a natural-born heir could not act as legitimate grounds for the invalidation of the Subsidiary Treaty. As such, those who supported annexation required legitimate legal means to invalidate such a legally binding document.

Thus, exploring the colonial state's limits is essential to this analysis of gift-exchange, as exchanges do not operate within voids, despite the colonial government's seemingly impenetrable legal policies towards the Indian States that sought to eliminate gift-giving practices and control diplomatic expressions. The narrative of the British bureaucracy and diplomatic dominance that restricted British and princely Indian gift-giving in the post-1858 period is largely described within the historiography of ornamental politics. The arguments for these politics hinge on Britain and its empire constituting a seamless whole, which while useful in understanding the British myth of sovereignty, obfuscates nuanced understandings of princely sovereignty in terms of diplomacy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The strategy of ornamental politics was first described in David Cannadine's *Ornamentalism*, which argues that the British pursued a strategy of "reinforcement and preservation of tradition and hierarchy," making the British monarchy paramount.¹⁴ This hierarchy created a homogenized imperial space that connected the imperial metropolis to its peripheries through a "construction of affinities" in which the indigenous rulers around the empire became linked to the British aristocracy under the Crown.¹⁵ It was through this imperial space that "chivalry and ceremony, monarchy and majesty, were the means by which this vast world was brought together, interconnected, unified and sacralized."¹⁶

¹⁴ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xix.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

Bernard Cohn had earlier laid the groundwork for understanding this imperial space by establishing that this strategy took shape during the Viceroy's "diplomatic summits" following the uprising, where honours and rewards, in the form of titles, gifts, and territory, were presented to those princes who had remained loyal to British rule.¹⁷ As part of this ornamental strategy of incorporation, a new chivalric order was established in 1861 known as the Order of the Star of India, which included both British and Indian knights.¹⁸ This imperial space, or invented ritual idiom of rule, was then fully realized in the three Delhi Darbars of 1877, 1903, and 1911 where the diverse Indian princes were ritually incorporated into a feudal order and ranked via titles, gun salutes, and banners.¹⁹ Finally, as the suzerain, the British controlled the foreign policy for each of the princely states through both the *toshakhana* system and the confinement of all external relations to the Government of India.²⁰ Ultimately the historiography on ornamental politics seeks to demonstrate that these bureaucratic rules and regulations largely restricted and replaced Indian rituals and ceremonials with British invented traditions as well as reduced instances of Indian rulers giving gifts to the British into efforts to impress their colonial overlords.²¹ Through these ornamental politics, the British had, as Nicholas Dirks argues, reduced the princely regimes into theatre states, a charade of the pre-colonial regime where princes became little more than "hollow crowns" obsessed with honour.²²

¹⁷ Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," 167-168.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 181; John McLeod, *Sovereignty, Power, Control: Politics in the States of Western India, 1916-1947* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

¹⁹ Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," 179-207; Alan Trevithick, "Some Structural and Sequential Aspects of the British Imperial Assemblages at Delhi: 1877-1911," *Modern Asian Studies* 24, No. 3 (July 1990), 561-578; Charles W. Nuckolls, "The Darbar Incident," *Modern Asian Studies* 24, No. 3 (July 1990), 529-559; Dick Kooiman, "Invention of Tradition in Travancore: A Maharaja's Quest for Political Security," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15, No. 2 (July 2005), 151-164.

²⁰ Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," 172; L.A. Knight, "The Royal Titles Act and India," *The Historical Journal* XI, no. 3 (1968), 488.

²¹ Kooiman, "Hierarchy and Mobility: States and Castes in Colonial India," *Asiatische Studien* 60, No. 3 (2006), 636-639 and 657.

²² Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

As this paper will demonstrate, these arguments for hegemonic incorporation have been overstated: a culture of honour does not maintain its salience as a motivating factor for the native princes in their attempts to give and receive gifts. Indeed, Cannadine argues that ornamentalism is defined through a “hierarchy made visible, immanent and actual,” yet the focus of the historiography of ornamental politics on ritual, ceremony, a limited number of British chivalric honours, and curious disregard for the most ornamental aspect of these politics, namely the Indian ruler’s gifts, offers room to re-interpret both British and princely sovereignty under indirect rule.²³ As Charles Reed points out, the obsessions British officials showed with ceremony and ritual within India makes it “rather difficult to determine where Indian practices ended and British fantasies began.”²⁴ Aya Ikegame has indicated that it was the Indian princes’ very enthusiasm for the ornamental project that was “betrayed by their own efforts, which ironically revealed that the imperial hierarchy did not function as the hegemonic ruling power had imagined.”²⁵ Therefore, in exploring the contours of the British myth of sovereignty, or their fantasy of hegemonic incorporation concerning Indian rulers, it is important to understand how the British attempted to manage the meaning of any diplomatic gifts that challenged the authority of the British honours, titles, pomp, and ceremony that underpinned ornamental imperial rule in India.

Accordingly, this paper analyzes an instance of friction regarding gift-exchange. It does so by following Gadi Algazi’s argument that there is no “complete theory of the gift” but rather that

²³ Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”; Robert W. Stern, *The Cat and the Lion: Jaipur State in the British Raj* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988); Alan Trevithick, “Some Structural and Sequential Aspects of the British Imperial Assemblages at Delhi: 1877-1911,” *Modern Asian Studies* 24, No. 3 (July 1990), 561-578; Charles W. Nuckolls, “The Durbar Incident,” *Modern Asian Studies* 24, No. 3 (July 1990), 529-559; Fisher, “The Resident in Court Ritual; John McLeod, *Sovereignty, Power, Control: Politics in the States of Western India, 1916-1947* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Dick Kooiman, “Invention of Tradition in Travancore: A Maharaja’s Quest for Political Security,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15, No. 2 (July 2005), 151-164; quote in Cannadine, 122.

²⁴ Charles Reed, *Royal tourists, colonial subjects and the making of a British world, 1860-1911* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 54-55.

²⁵ Aya Ikegame, *Princely India Re-imagined: A Historical Anthropology of Mysore from 1799 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 101.

the semantics of gifts are always particular to specific historical and cultural contexts.²⁶ British and princely Indian gift-exchanges were intimately implicated in a long history of sovereignty, conquest, and treaties that never was resolved following the Crown's assumption of rule in 1858. British attempts to restrict gift-giving and the Indian rulers' refusal to limit their gifts resulted in strategies on both sides to manage the meaning of gifts in the legal and political spheres of the colonial empire.²⁷ British and princely Indian gift-exchanges in the late nineteenth century were "contested constructions of social transactions," as Indian rulers and British officials negotiated, manipulated, and subverted colonial expectations and myths of sovereignty in an interplay between the discursive and material spheres of the legal and political realm.²⁸ Through his gift, Krishnaraja challenged the British legal expectation that Indian rulers would willingly gift their sovereign rights to the colonial government. In turn, British officials were forced to revisit and elaborate their arguments for their right of conquest through the insistence on the "true gift" and the conflation of gifts, grants, and treaties as equivalents to facilitate legal avenues to intervene within the princely state.

The structure of this paper first analyzes the symbolic meanings behind the objects contained within Krishnaraja's gift, demonstrating his nuanced legal understandings and criticism of British rule and their expectation, based on a century of exchanges and conquests, that Indian rulers would give heirlooms and land. The second section examines the historiography of the gift itself as well as the complicated history of material culture, issues of sovereignty, treaties, and unfinished conquest. Finally, the third section explores the British fantasy of the "true" gift that

²⁶ Gadi Algazi, "Doing Things with Gifts," *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 9.

²⁷ Dirks, "From Little King to Landlord: Property, Law, and Gift under the Madras Permanent Settlement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28, No. 2 (April 1986).

²⁸ Algazi, 10.

developed within a bureaucratic system of power, which sought to discursively manage the meaning of British and princely Indian gift-exchanges to deny the influence of those tangible, material, and often alive gifts that reached the Queen in England. In all, these gifts complicate the conventional arguments for absolute British sovereignty or diplomatic dominance in the late nineteenth century and instead call into question the intentions behind the seeming material acts of loyalty and devotion from the princes, which has been a core concern within the historiography of ornamental politics.

2 The Maharaja's Gift: Diplomatic Loyalism, Treaty Negotiations, and Criticism

Through his gift, Krishnaraja manifested the physical representation of his treaty rights, specifically to the Queen, whose Proclamation three years earlier had announced that the Crown would act to both guarantee princely treaty rights and to protect princely territories from annexation. In drawing specific attention to the Duke of Wellington's portrait, Krishnaraja ensured that the British could not misconstrue the meaning of his gift. Traditionally, Indian gift-giving would not have included portraits, but they were the preferred gifts in European diplomacy.²⁹ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, British East India Company Officials attempted to replace traditional Indian gifts of land, jewels, and money with painted portraits.³⁰ This effort to dictate appropriate gifts had a particular purpose: to draw attention to the legality of their expanding empire, the British publicized their treaty-making through paintings that expressed their military glory while at the same time seeking to convey their legitimacy and benevolence through diplomacy and treaty relations.³¹ Rather than gifting a portrait of himself as a sovereign, however, Krishnaraja simply re-gifted the Duke's portrait to physically manifest the Treaty of Mysore and the rights tied to it. Accordingly, the rich symbolism behind the Duke of Wellington's portrait modified the meaning of the rest of the gifts. Most significantly, the presence of the portrait indicated the Maharaja's desire to renegotiate treaty terms with the British monarch as opposed to maintaining treaty relations with Government of India officials, who were illegally withholding the administrative control of

²⁹ Eaton, "Between Mimesis and Alterity," 818.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 820; Not surprisingly, the portrait is the only remaining (or at least the only identifiable) item from the Maharaja's gifts held within the Royal Collection. There are hints that a few other objects may be held there.

³¹ Robert Travers, "A British Empire by Treaty in Eighteenth-Century India," in *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900*, ed. Saliha Belmessous (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 137-138 and 145.

Mysore.³² It is clear that Krishnaraja was not only using his gift to act as a physical reminder of his treaty rights, but to also make an argument for his legal sovereign rights under the treaty, while at the same time criticizing and subverting the colonial government's tenuous narratives of legitimate diplomacy and power.

Nicholas Dirks argues that under the colonial legal system, potential gift-givers could no longer justify their gifts with traditional ideas about honour, kinship, or service, but rather had to couch their justifications in the language of legal terms and arguments.³³ He contends that one of the ways that British officials gained hegemony over the Indian elites was by dictating appropriate gifts within the colonial legal system. Dirks shows that these elites "were barely cognizant of the extent of their displacement," as they became reliant on the colonial legal system in their efforts to give gifts. Accordingly, it appeared to the native rulers that themselves and their gift had "*locus standi* only in the British courts of law."³⁴ Dirks' argument is specific to British legal restrictions on gift-giving as a mode of statecraft within the Indian states themselves, which is outside the particular argument of diplomatic gifts as a form of legal challenge in the imperial sphere, yet it describes how the British attempted to establish hegemony through the colonial legal system. While Krishnaraja only had *locus standi* within colonial law, it was the legal standing gained through the Subsidiary Treaty that also maintained his legal claim to the sovereign rule of Mysore. The Maharaja also did not appear to trust the legal system. He had already been dispossessed of his territory through the Governor-General Lord William Bentinck's prejudicial interpretation of the Treaty of Mysore that proved that the law was on the side of the colonial power.³⁵ However,

³² Taylor, 15-16.

³³ Dirks, "From Little King to Landlord," 332-333.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 332.

³⁵ Parliament. House of Commons, *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government of India relative to Claim to be restored to Government of Territories ceded under Partition Treaty of Mysore, June 1799; Minutes, Correspondence and other Papers* (London: The House of Commons, 1886), 2, 10-18--23, 26-27, 64, 78.

although the Maharaja had to argue his case “in the language of the colonizers,” in terms of the actual Treaty, he was able to draw on traditional expressions of Indian sovereignty to both signal his subordination to the Queen and make his case for reinstatement and for the maintenance of his treaty rights.³⁶

The Maharaja’s gifts represented his sovereignty through objects symbolizing both the state of Mysore and a royal Indian personage, yet the gifts also took the form of *nazar* or *peshkash*, meaning a gift given by a subordinate to a superior (see Figure 1.1). These forms of gifts traditionally consisted of animals, weapons, coins, jewels, jewelry, and other precious objects. Within the Mughal polity, *nazar* or *peshkash* were gifted to superiors in exchange for valuable *khil’ats* (robes of honour). This exchange was an incorporative process into the body politic and it was fundamental to the formation and maintenance of sovereignty since each *khil’at* was carefully graded and associated with specific political grants.³⁷ Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the British negotiated treaties to give this incorporative process a legal basis within a European colonial structure.³⁸ The Subsidiary Treaty of Mysore constituted the territory of the Mysore state as a legal entity that was tied to the person of the Maharaja, and, though British annexationists would later seek to deny this, his heirs. In response to this legal reality, Krishnaraja’s representation of sovereignty was symbolized as a legal argument that sought to prove his capacity to rule the territory of Mysore. Krishnaraja represented his sovereignty territorially through his choice of certain objects and materials that were specifically associated with Mysorian artisanal work and unique fauna.³⁹

³⁶ Dirks, “From Little King to Landlord,” 332.

³⁷ F. W. Buckler, “The Oriental Despot,” *Anglican Theological Review* 10, No. 3 (Jan. 1928), 238-249; Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” 172.

³⁸ Travers, “A British Empire by Treaty in Eighteenth-Century India,” in *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900*, ed. Saliha Belmessous (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 154-155.

³⁹ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26.

Figure 2.1 List of Presents Sent from the Maharaja of Mysore to Her Royal Highness Queen Victoria

List of Jewellery

- 1 Necklace set with Diamonds Rubies and Pearls worn tight around the neck
- 1 Necklace set with Diamonds Rubies and Pearls worn loose round the neck
- 1 Seven row Pearl Necklace
- 1 Pair of Armllets set with Diamonds and Rubies
- 1 Lily flower shaped cut Diamond Ring
- 1 Lily flower shaped cut Ruby Ring
- 1 Pair Pearl and Ruby Bracelets

Indian manufactured Native Insignias of Royalty

- 1 Pair Ivory Fly fans
- 1 Pair sandalwood fans
- 1 Richly Embroidered Parasol
- 1 Perpendicular (aftagheery) parasol
- 1 Pair fly fans (morchha)
- 1 Palankeen
- 1 Pair sandalwood walking sticks
- 1 Pair sandalwood Punkaks or fans

Animals

- 1 Pair of Black Horses born and bred in Mysore, complete with trappings
- 2 Pairs cows, large and small
- 1 Pair bulls large and small
- 1 Pair Guzerat Breed Bulls born in Mysore
- 1 Large portrait of the Duke of Wellington

Figure 2.1
List of Presents sent from the Maharaja of Mysore, Krishnaraja III, to her Royal Highness Queen Victoria
1861
Source: IOR/L/PS/6/511, Coll 81 – March 22, 1861.

Figure 2.2 Portrait of Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington (1769-1852)



Figure 2.2
Robert Home (1752-1834)
1805
Source: Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 407435
<https://www.rct.uk/collection/407435/arthur-wellesley-later-first-duke-of-wellington-1769-1852>

The presence of certain articles of royal regalia indicates that the Maharaja intended that his gift to diverge from that of *nazar* or *peshkash* and the British reception of this specific gift indicates that it established a new and distinct precedent of gifting. Embodying the essence of Krishnaraja's sovereignty was a full set of traditional royal accoutrements that consisted of *chauri* (plume of yak tail hair flywhisks), parasols, *morccchal* (fans of peacock feathers), *punkah* (heart-shaped fans), aftabgirs (sunshades), palanquins and a variety of staffs of power.⁴⁰ Attendants would surround the ruler in *darbar* (a Persian word for court gatherings) settings, holding each one of these items to symbolize the ruler's power and authority. Such displays were part of a larger set of visible symbolic actions that legitimated royal authority in the pre-colonial and colonial Indian states. The relationship between these specific objects and concepts of sovereignty was metonymic, maintaining continuity within both royal and religious ceremonies in India, Persia, and Central Asia throughout the medieval and into the modern period.⁴¹ In fact, the British were aware of these objects' ability to legitimize sovereignty. Anne Murphy's study of the British looting of *toshakhana*s (treasure rooms) during the British annexation of princely states under Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of India, demonstrates "the more general equation of the right to the collection and the right to rule," within both British and Indian terms.⁴² These items were essential within the articulation of power, making whoever controlled these collections of personal royal paraphernalia into sovereigns.

⁴⁰ Joanne Punzo Waghorne, "The Power of Public Splendour," *Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts*, ed. Anna Jackson and Amin Jaffer (London: V&A Publishing, 2009), 87; The British adopted these objects within their own displays of power within India. Lord Curzon, in particular, would adopt the *chauri* as a symbol of royalty from 1899 to 1905. See Victoria and Albert Museum IM. 255-1927.

⁴¹ Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 122; Anne Murphy, "The Guru's Weapons," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77, No. 2 June 2009), 324. Parallels in Europe can be found within the ability of crowns, orbs, and staffs to symbolize power.

⁴² Murphy, 319. In their long dealings with gift-giving in India, the British understood the inherent quality of certain objects as they were seeking to adapt the physical symbolism of gifting precious jewels in the form of the Order of

Alternatively, the Maharaja's presentation could also be read as indicative of his wish to bestow the remainder of his personal sovereignty to the British Crown. Dr. Campbell apparently carried a private letter that conveyed Krishnaraja's intention to bequeath the administration of Mysore upon his death to the Prince of Wales, with the stipulation that the Maharaja be reinstated to administrative rule for the remainder of his life. As the story goes, Wood, for whom the letter was intended, refused to accept the document when he was made aware of it in July 1862. As a result of Canning's decision to deny Krishnaraja's petition, Wood worried that reinstating the Maharaja at this point would encourage him to adopt an heir.⁴³ In analyzing the remainder of the gift, it appears that the Maharaja understood British anticipations that he would willingly grant the British his legal rights to Mysore. To protect his rights, Krishnaraja manipulated this British expectation, countering any criticisms the British could use to justify their continued administration of Mysore.⁴⁴

The presence of multiple sandalwood objects held particular significance to Krishnaraja's legal case, as the carving of sandalwood within India was done almost exclusively in the Shimoga region, which was the capital of the district of Nagar.⁴⁵ In 1831, the revolt in this region had given the Company a reason to assume direct control of Mysore.⁴⁶ In a letter to the Viceroy in 1862, Krishnaraja "rebutted the argument that the state insurrection was connected to his mismanagement" through a comparison between similar rebellions that occurred in the British

the Star of India. Indeed, over the next few decades, the British were specific in their attempt to prevent the gifting of jewels, in IOR/L/PS/18/D68.

⁴³ Moore, 168; Major Evans Bell. *Mysore Reversion, "An Exceptional Case"* (London: Trübner and Co, 1866), IV.

⁴⁴ Eaton 831.

⁴⁵ Edgar Thurston, "Wood-Carving in Southern India," *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry* (Oct., 1904), 43; See examples of Mysorean carving from the Prince of Wales' Tour: RCIN 90629 and RCIN 11429; RCIN 41651 and RCIN 41652 could be the very *chauris* in the Maharaja of Mysore's gift, but there are no documents to make this connection.

⁴⁶ Burton Stein, "Notes on 'Peasant Insurgency' in Colonial Mysore: Event and Process," *South Asia Research* 5, no. 1 (May 1985), 12-13.

territories that bordered Mysore.⁴⁷ Both the territories within the Madras Presidency and Mysore where the rebellions took place had been part of a Maratha little kingdom that was conquered under Haidar Ali. He and his son, Tipu, launched numerous expeditions in the late eighteenth century to subdue the territories, particularly in the Shimoga district, against the ruling family of Nagar.⁴⁸ Krishnaraja made a point of highlighting this fact in his letters, making clear that the district of Nagar had historical ties to the Marathas and both Mysore and the Madras Presidency experienced frequent armed resistances from these old Maratha regions.

In order to incorporate this old Maratha territory into Mysore, Krishnaraja made use of old forms of patronage that tied problematic districts to ruling families. Christopher Bayly has argued that with theories of gifting and consumption, “much has been written of the remittance of land revenue from peasant to official, landlord, or king. But the opposite flow, representing the duty of the notable to consume the natural and human produce of his territories, has been neglected.”⁴⁹ Under Tipu, sandalwood was monopolized and factories were established in the Nagar district in order to process, manufacture, and sell sandalwood and sandalwood products.⁵⁰ Krishnaraja seems to have maintained the same level of involvement in the Nagar district, and his gift demonstrates his attempt to reassert and reaffirm his symbolic “sovereignty over all the petty kings and officials of the realm.”⁵¹ In fact this policy seemed to work for Krishnaraja, as the inhabitants of Shimoga along with a number of other districts petitioned the Viceroy Sir John Lawrence on 4 October 1864

⁴⁷ Krishnaraja Wodeyar to the Viceroy, 20 April 1862 cited in Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 37.

⁴⁸ Stein, 16.

⁴⁹ Bayly, “The Origins of *Swadeshi* (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700–1930,” in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 300.

⁵⁰ B.H. Baden-Powell, *Report on the Administration of the Forest Department in the Several Provinces Under the Government of India, 1872-73* (London: The House of Commons, 1874), 28; Kaveh Yazdani, *India, Modernity and the Great Divergence: Mysore and Gujarat (17th to 19th C.)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 184; Iftikhar A. Khan, “The Regulations of Tipu Sultan,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 53 (1992), 231.

⁵¹ Bayly, “The Origins of *Swadeshi*,” 301; Ikegame, ch. 3.

for the Maharaja to be reinstated.⁵² Krishnaraja's patronage of sandalwood artisans in the Shimoga region would continue throughout the century with two more gifts to the Queen and through multiple orders to decorate the new Mysore Palace at the turn of the century.

The British had taken over Mysore under a second pretext. Lord William Bentick wrote in 1831 that "the subsidy due to the British Government has not been paid monthly, according to the Treaty of 6th July 1799."⁵³ However, Krishnaraja wrote to the Viceroy, noting that "the subsidy was never in arrear [*sic*] by a single day or a single rupee," but had in fact been paid in advance and in full at the time that the British assumed control.⁵⁴ Furthermore, he claimed that this fact could be established from the records of the Commissioner of Mysore or from his own archives.⁵⁵ In addition to setting straight the facts regarding the financial requirements of the treaty, Krishnaraja's gift sought to draw a comparison between his and the British ability to financially manage Mysore. The Maharaja gifted the Queen a number of Zebu cattle and bulls that were from both the Guzerat breed and likely of the Amrit Mahal breed.⁵⁶ The Amrit Mahal breed was indigenous to Mysore and received particular patronage from the royal household.⁵⁷ In the early years of the Commission, the Maharaja's royal herd had been amalgamated with that of the British Commission's herds. However, in 1860 the Governor of Madras, Sir Charles Trevelyan, broke up the Mysore establishment of Amrit Mahal and sold off the herd. This apparently had detrimental economic effects for the public cattle service, since the royal cattle were regularly bred with other

⁵² *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government of India*, 52.

⁵³ Lord William Bentick, letter of 7 September 1831 cited in Bhagavan, 36.

⁵⁴ Krishnaraja Wodeyar to the Viceroy of India, 25 January 1865 cited in Bhagavan, 36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ "Guzerat Oxen," *The Illustrated London News Vol. 34*, Jan 1, 1859, 20. Of note, Guzerat oxen were used in the Duke of Wellington's campaigns against Tipu Sultan and were also connected to Tipu Sultan's campaigns against the British.

⁵⁷ John Shortt, *A Manual of Indian Cattle and Sheep, Their Breeds, Management and Disease* (Madras: Higginbotham and Co., 1889), 4-5; RCIN 923771 A watercolour by Friedrich Wilhelm Keyl depicts one of the bulls and two of the cows in 1871.

local breeds to strengthen the stock of the various districts' herds.⁵⁸ It became impossible for the British Government to repurchase the herd as the price of Amrit Mahal had skyrocketed to R150 per cow. The restoration of the cattle was only accomplished with the assistance of Krishnaraja, who had become one of the main purchasers of the cattle, along with the Pasha of Egypt, when the cattle went on sale. Any cows that still remained in Mysore were repurchased with the Maharaja's help, leading to the re-establishment of the herd by 1866.⁵⁹ Noticeably, Krishnaraja's gift did not demonstrate simple resistance nor mere collaboration, but rather a more nuanced assertion of sovereignty in a "cocoon of loyalism" and legal know-how.⁶⁰ Bayly's description of loyalism during Crown rule emphasizes a continuation of older forms of indigenous expressions of loyalty through which Indian rulers deflected British criticisms of Indian misrule back onto British officials. It was through the language of seemingly "unadulterated loyalism" that Krishnaraja used in his letter, which was a similar strategy used by Indian patriots in the vernacular press during the same decade, that allowed the Maharaja to criticize the British through the contents of his gift.¹⁶¹ The group of objects highlighted traditional themes of critique, including the survival of legitimate Indian rule and the husbandry of local resources, specifically cattle, artisans, and precious metals.¹⁶² It is this seeming loyalty that has been misconstrued in the historiography of ornamental politics, but it allowed Krishnaraja to put forward his own sovereignty based in traditional forms of Indian kingship while underlining the equal or worse record of British rule.

Krishnaraja had taken a gamble of sending out three different appeals to different intended

⁵⁸ IOR/L/PS/6/478, Coll 39: March 1860; Parliament. House of Commons, 10; In 1860, it was proposed that the control of the Mysore Commission would be moved from the Government of India to the Madras Government; however, this upset both the Maharaja and the Commissioner, Mark Cubbon, who resigned from his office as a result, to such an extent that the proposal was quickly abandoned.

⁵⁹ A. Kistnasamiengar and H.T. Pease, *Note on the Cattle of Mysore* (Calcutta: Government Press, 1895), 32.

⁶⁰ Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 89-92.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁶² *Ibid.*

audiences, each of which would receive the messages at different times. He had first petitioned the Viceroy in India, then months later he negotiated with the Secretary of State through a private letter, and finally, sent his splendid gift to the royal household. Conscious of the very real possibility that the British secretly wanted to annex his territory and anticipating the issue over his quasi-sovereign status, Krishnaraja sent highly symbolic emblems that acted as mediums through which sovereignty could be transferred while at the same time making the request to regain that specific sovereign right to bestow his territory.⁶³ The presence of royal Indian jewels as part of this is especially important, since they were traditionally passed down from generation to generation, embodying an uninterrupted link to a ruler's illustrious dynastic lineage.⁶⁴ In their long dealings with gift-giving in India, the British understood the inherent quality of certain objects, since they were seeking to adapt the physical symbolism of gifting precious jewels in the form of the Order of the Star of India.⁶⁵ Through his gift, Krishnaraja communicated his sovereignty as tied to land, symbolic objects, and the Subsidiary Treaty while making a shrewd distinction regarding the moral and legal issues that surrounded the very treaty that affirmed his sovereignty.

⁶³ Cohn, "Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century," 114.

⁶⁴ Bayly, "The Origins of *Swadeshi*," 286-287.

⁶⁵ Indeed, over the next few decades, the British were specific in their attempt to prevent the gifting of jewels, in IOR/L/PS/18/D68.

3 The Legal Status of Gifts, Treaties, and Semi-Sovereign Princes

While the Mysore legal case has garnered sustained scholarly attention, the Maharaja's gift is only referred to in passing in the literature.⁶⁶ Individual instances of the Indian princes' gift-giving to the Crown in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have largely been left unexamined.⁶⁷ This is a significant omission: Krishnaraja's gift and the British response in 1861 set the precedent for British and princely Indian gift-exchanges between the Indian Princes and the British Royal Family in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁸ Scholars have examined the relationship between princely motivations, sovereignty, and gift-giving practices during this period almost exclusively through the lens of "ornamental politics," which maintains that within a policy of "indirect rule," ornamental politics were an invented hegemonic strategy to appeal to the Indian princes' imagined "autonomy," despite their increasing political impotence.⁶⁹ The policy of "indirect rule," then, was colonial rhetoric "that fitted in with the less explicitly aggressive and militaristic tone of governance following the Rebellion of 1857."⁷⁰ Gift-giving within this narrative is perceived as a "hollow pretense," which has made further study of any instances of gift-giving following the Indian Rebellion unnecessary in the minds of scholars.⁷¹ This lack of a more comprehensive understanding of British and princely Indian gift-exchanges

⁶⁶ Taylor, 110.

⁶⁷ Martin, "Fit for a King?"; Kajal Meghani, *Splendours of the Subcontinent: A Prince's Tour of India 1875-6* (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2017); Taylor, esp. ch. 7 and 11. Emily Hannam, "Queen Victoria and the Raj: Gifts for the Queen Empress, in *Eastern Encounters: Four Centuries of Paintings and Manuscripts from the Indian Subcontinent* (The Royal Collection, 2018), <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/publications/eastern-encounters/chapter-3>.

⁶⁸ The British response to gifts that show up in the colonial record following Krishnaraja's gift often refer to the precedent set in 1861. For a few examples, see IOR/L/PS/13/797, Coll 12/4 - March-April 1931; IOR/L/PJ/6/431 - November 19, 1896; File 1842; R/1/4/288 File I A September 1897 6-8; and IOR/R/1/4/287 File S I August 1897.

⁶⁹ Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati, "People, princes and colonialism," in *India's Princely States: People, princes and colonialism*, ed. Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati (Park Square: Routledge, 2007), 4; Martin, "Fit for a King?," 71.

⁷⁰ Ernst and Pati, 4.

⁷¹ Michael H. Fisher, "The Resident in Court Ritual, 1764-1858," *Modern Asian Studies* 24, n. 3 (July 1990), 454 and 457-458.

during formal colonial rule has skewed and constrained perspectives regarding the unresolved issues of sovereignty that defined the relationship between the British and the Indian rulers at this time.

Emma Martin has further shown that the historiography of ornamental politics discounts much of the material aspects of the ornaments exchanged in these political relationships. Yet it was the very materiality of the objects involved in political relationships that unsettled the British.⁷² British and princely Indian gift-exchange in the late nineteenth century, so central within the ornamental fantasy, in fact, contained various objects that, when studied, demonstrate instances of tension and ambivalence, offering insight into the legal reality of princely sovereignty. For this reason, the Maharaja's gift, which set a precedent and subsequently resulted in the Mysore legal case, can serve as an important case study to explore the lines between the British fantasy and the princes' motivations in giving gifts to the British monarch. This exploration of the Maharaja's gift and its reception follows both the recent evolution of scholarly understandings of the gift and current understandings of sovereignty within the British imperial legal context.

The gift has evolved in the historiography from a vestige of pre-modern rituals to an important tool in the negotiation, representation, and articulation of nuanced meanings around sovereignty in both pre-modern and modern settings. Scholars have analyzed specific instances of inter-cultural and diplomatic gifts to explore differences in social structures that gave rise to racial stereotypes despite shared gifting practices in both Ottoman-Habsburg and early Mughal-British diplomatic gift-giving contexts.⁷³ One line of inquiry focuses on the idiosyncratic yet mutable

⁷² Martin, "Tibetan Materiality Versus British 'Ornamentalism': Diplomacy, objects, and resistance in the imperial archive," in *Objects and Frontiers in Modern Asia: Between the Mekong and the Indus*, ed. Lipokmar Dzüvichü and Manjeet Baruah (London: Routledge India, 2019), 70.

⁷³ Kim Siebenhüner, "Approaching Diplomatic and Courtly Gift-giving in Europe and Mughal India: Share Practices and Cultural Diversity," *The Medieval History Journal*, 16:2 (2013), 525-546; Peter Burschel, "A Clock for the Sultan: Diplomatic Gift-giving from an Intercultural Perspective," *The Medieval History Journal* 16:2 (2013), 549-550.

nature of the terms used to describe gift-giving in pre-colonial India, such as the Mughal term *pīshkash*.⁷⁴ Other studies have explored how a common context of value or meaning in intercultural gift-giving is defined. Natasha Eaton demonstrates the ability of gifts to create “a forum for transcultural negotiations,” where converging “regimes of inalienability” allow certain items to become central within diplomacy. In particular, Eaton analyzes portraits as both gift and tribute that communicated the “presence” of the giver within British and princely Indian diplomatic exchanges during the late eighteenth century.⁷⁵ This “presence” of a donor could also extend to embody a country’s essence, as Martin argues in her analysis of a gift from the Dalai Lama to King George V in the early twentieth century.⁷⁶

Gifts could also convey sovereignty, a fact the British understood well. As previously explored, Krishnaraja’s gift sought to communicate his sovereign rights and legal status; however, the British desperately wished to control this particular quality of gifts in the legal sphere. The Regulating Act of 1773 legislated Anglo-British gift-giving, legally forbidding British officials from accepting gifts of money, jewels, and land from any Indian. British officials’ involvement in the gifting rituals of India’s royal courts had caused anxiety for the East India Company’s Court of Directors, who began to view gifting as instances of extortion and bribery inherent to “Oriental despotism.” Specifically, company officials’ actions in threatening indigenous rulers to give more generous gifts often led to charges of corruption, as these gift-exchanges often led to the expansion of the Company territory in the Indian subcontinent.⁷⁷ One such gift, or grant, was foundational for British territorial power in India: the Treaty of Allahabad, concluded in 1765, which granted

⁷⁴ Ann Lambton, “‘Pīshkash’: Present or Tribute?,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 57:1 (1994), 145-158.

⁷⁵ Eaton, 818.

⁷⁶ Emma Martin, “Fit for a King? The Significance of a Gift-exchange between the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and King George V,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25, No. 1 (2015), 71-98.

⁷⁷ Eaton, 819 and 843.

the British the *diwani* of Bengal. This grant consequently forced the British to begrudgingly acknowledge the legal status of gift-giving and its ability to convey sovereignty, or risk delegitimizing their claim to territorial power in India.⁷⁸

Accordingly, gifts remained central to the political process despite the Regulating Act, and historians have indicated that as a result the British sought to legally classify gifts. Harry Lieberson contends that it had become hard for the British to legitimize the use of gifts for administrative purposes due to the adoption of a theory of impersonal, rational administration that stemmed from the Act and, subsequently, the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, the Governor of Bengal.⁷⁹ The trial, Liebersohn shows, revealed a “*principle* that there were licit and illicit forms of exchange,” which centred around the disagreement “about the nature and meaning of the gift.”⁸⁰ Likewise, Dirks argues that gifts had to be justified within the British courts of law, which “proposed new taxonomies of gifts and new ideas of political expediency.”⁸¹ The introduction of new taxonomies, such as portraiture, attempted to discourage the typical gifts of jewels, money, and animals.⁸² In particular, the British legal efforts to classify and define appropriate gifts sought to eliminate the possibility of gifts involving transfers of any additional land. Indian rulers, however, were legally free to give whichever gifts they chose to both British officials, who could no longer legally accept such gifts, and the British monarchs.

⁷⁸ After capturing and coercing the Mughal Emperor, Robert Clive concluded the Treaty of Allahabad. Following this treaty making, Clive seems to have suppressed gifts that the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II, had sent to King George III to oppose the Company’s poor treatment of him. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain, 1600–1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 88–89.

⁷⁹ Harry Liebersohn, *The Return of the Gift: European History of a Global Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 26.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

Nicholas B. Dirks, “From Little King to Landlord: Property, Law, and Gift under the Madras Permanent Settlement,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28, No. 2 (April 1986), 331.

⁸² See the vague category of “indigenous art and industry” that the India Office attempted to impose fifteen years later during the Prince of Wales’ India visit. See IOR/C/138, f. 67 – April 1875.

To remedy their moral dilemma in accepting gifts, and to completely eliminate gifts of land while preserving the continued need for gift-exchanges, the British established the *toshakhana* system in accordance with the Regulating Act. As no individual British official was permitted to accept gifts, all such items were placed within the *toshakhana*. In this system, the British determined each gift's monetary value and sent an equivalent as a return present. The gifts received were stored for future re-gifting or sold in public auctions. Each British Resident, a political agent assigned to individual princely states, and local governments in India had their own *toshakhana*, or special government treasury that was in charge of the receipt and disbursement of presents. While the *toshakhana* system, as the proponents of ornamental politics contend, did signify a changed relationship between the British and the Indian rulers, it did not work as a strategy of hegemonic incorporation.⁸³

The question is why the native princes would continue to give once the Regulating Act legally removed the colonial pressure to do so. As the cornerstone of the argument for ornamental politics, the *toshakhana* system worked to deny gifts' abilities to convey essences by effectively eliminating a recipient and, thus, the reciprocal return demanded by gifts.⁸⁴ However, the *toshakhana* was a system that the Indian rulers often circumvented and the British haphazardly maintained. Therefore, recognizing the system's limits starts to reveal the outlines of the British hegemonic fantasy. In discussing the potential elimination of gift-exchanges with Krishnaraja, a letter from the Mysore Resident to the Madras Presidency in 1822 states that "the native princes regard the giving and receiving of presents as an attribute of sovereignty and that they view our endeavours to discontinuance the custom as manifesting a design to lessen their dignity."⁸⁵ The

⁸³ Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," 172 and 188; Cohn, "Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century," 119-120.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ IOR/F/4/880/23020 – 22nd February 1822.

Resident emphasized the system's deception by concluding that as a result, gift-giving should be continued as it was "in reality a mere ceremonial exchanging of equivalents."⁸⁶ In fact, the indigenous rulers were acutely aware and angered that the gifts sent to the British monarch and various officials were recycled and sold at public auctions.⁸⁷

Immediately following the Maharaja's removal from his throne, gift-exchanges between the Resident and Krishnaraja were abolished and all the gifts in the Resident's *toshakhana* were either sold at auction or sent to the Madras Presidency's *toshakhana*.⁸⁸ The Maharaja did not seem to react to this particular development. When the Mysore Residency was abolished ten years later, however, Krishnaraja was deeply upset, stating that "so long as he had a Resident separately deputed to his Court, he felt he was still considered as one of the Princes of India-by his [Resident's] removal he would be lowered to the level of a Poligar [landholder]."⁸⁹ Clearly gifts sent through the *toshakhana* system did not embody sovereignty in the same manner as did the princely states' interest in maintaining their own Resident. Gifts sent to the Crown, on the other hand, would become a particular problem for the British following 1858. Krishnaraja managed to circumvent the *toshakhana* system by sending his gift directly to the Queen, which allowed him and other native princes to re-establish a line of diplomacy and to appeal to the Crown in a recognized idiom of sovereignty.⁹⁰

A number of recent studies have highlighted the peculiar nature of the treaty system that the British embraced within India. As another development based in the Regulating Act and the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ IOR/L/PS/18/D68 - 29 April 1875-27 May 1875.

⁸⁸ IOR/F/4/13755/4894 - 21st September 1832.

⁸⁹ The Maharaja of Mysore quoted in Fisher, "The Resident in Court Ritual," 453-454.

⁹⁰ Various documents relating to gifting in the India Office Records give evidence for the British government's attempts to block gifts to the Queen by having them deposited in a *toshakhana* at one of the various levels of the British Government in India. Many of these documents also made exceptions, allowing gifts to reach their royal recipient.

impeachment trial, the use of treaties sought to limit the accumulation of land acquired through the Company's campaigns of outright conquest to gain influence over the princely states. The treaties concluded with these states, Lauren Benton argues, formed their own "distinct body of imperial law."⁹¹ This resulted in a patchwork of "variegated legal spaces," or geographical exceptions, that allowed for a unique form of imperial legal sovereignty that Benton describes as "quasi-sovereignty."⁹² Benton's argument contradicts both Dirks and Cohn, who emphasize that the need to give gifts forced the Indian princes to use the imperial legal system in their efforts of statecraft, thus eliminating their sovereign power. Developing a similar argument to that of Benton, Sudipta Sen proposes a notion of "residual sovereignty" that stemmed from the unresolved ambiguities in defining the legal status of the dependent states.⁹³ This notion of sovereignty was particular to the British history of unsystematic conquest by treaty and through coerced gift-exchanges within India.⁹⁴ As such, due to the vital role gifts played within British colonial history in India, they are significant as both the initial source and the ensuing manifestations for the legal ambiguities and ambivalences surrounding the status of princely sovereignty.

Current understandings of the notion of sovereignty consider it more a myth to which political actors appeal when pursuing their international interests than a reality in terms of legal or territorial control.⁹⁵ Priyasha Saksena qualifies this understanding of sovereignty, arguing that both the British and the princely states drew on the language of sovereignty to "support their differing

⁹¹ Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, 242-48.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹³ Sudipta Sen, "Unfinish Conquest: Residual Sovereignty and the Legal Foundations of the British Empire in India," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 9, No. 2 (2012), 234.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), chap. 1; Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 279.

visions of global order.”⁹⁶ Saksena demonstrates that the “double” nature of sovereignty defined the relationship between the British and the princely states as both sides attempted to reconfigure the boundaries of various levels of the law in the national, international, and imperial spheres.⁹⁷ Krishnaraja’s gift eloquently demonstrates his use of the idiom of sovereignty to challenge the imperial legal system concerning gifts, treaties, and land grants, which had never truly eliminated the imperial pressure placed upon the Indian princes to give.

Highlighting the two legal arguments concerning the princely states, Robert Travers identifies treaty-making along with material diplomacy as the central issues of imperial controversy. The first argument centred on the stereotype of the instability of Indian politics, thus justifying military expansionism; the second, on the notion that imperial sovereignty should be governed by reciprocal agreements between “superior” and “inferior” powers under the banner of a universal “law of nations.”⁹⁸ These two arguments, the former disputed and the latter emphasized within the Maharaja’s gift, would become central to Krishnaraja’s legal case. The lynchpin of the British argument denying Krishnaraja’s sovereignty within the Mysore legal case centred on conflating exchange terms such as gifts, treaties, and grants “as equivalent or concurrent sources of authority.”⁹⁹ During the impeachment of Warren Hastings in 1776, the defendant’s sentiment in calling the Mughal emperor’s grant a “presumptuous gift of what was not his to give” would later be revisited in the legal arguments in the Mysore case from 1863 to 1865. The British would

⁹⁶ Priyasha Saksena, “Jousting Over Jurisdiction: Sovereignty and International Law in Late Nineteenth-Century South Asia,” *Law and History Review* (2019), 3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Robert Travers, “A British Empire by Treaty in Eighteenth-Century India,” in *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900*, ed. Saliha Belmessous (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 140; footnote 14 on page 160; 156.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

claim sovereignty through conquest and employ the language of the “true gift” whenever reciprocal agreements between Indian rulers and the British started to sour.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Cited in H. H. Dodwell, “The Development of Sovereignty in British India,” in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire. Vol. 5: British India 1497–1858*, ed. H. H. Dodwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 597.

4 The Response: How the British Managed the Meaning of Exchange

The British sovereign fantasy in the late nineteenth century centred around a monetized bureaucracy through which the material culture that was interwoven in the social politics of colonial subjects became ineffectual or, worse, efforts to win favour from the colonial power. To regulate and stop gift-giving between Indians, particularly Indian rulers, and British officers, the British established legislature in 1773 and 1784 as well as held two public trials of British officials, Hastings (1776) and Colebrooke (1823).¹⁰¹ In 1861, the Secretary of State's response to Krishnaraja's gift followed this British effort to control the narrative of cross-cultural exchanges, and demonstrates the use of the concept of the personal and "true gift" as a means to obfuscate the reality of formal diplomatic demands and legal transfers of land.

On learning of the Maharaja's gifts, Wood sought to forbid each of the Indian rulers from conveying such material expressions of diplomacy. On the 17th of June 1861, Wood sent a political despatch to be circulated to all the local Indian governments, the Political Agents, and their associated courts, commanding British officials to discourage any princely gifts:

Whilst the Queen highly appreciates every mark of the loyalty and affection of the Princes and Chiefs of India, it is not Her Majesty's desire that they should give expression to these feelings by the presentation of costly gifts, the interchange of which is contrary to the established rules and usages generally observed by Her Majesty.¹⁰²

If, after being discouraged, the gifts were still sent, then the local governments were to "dispose of them, and send return gifts, as if presented to [themselves]," as per the *toshakhana* system.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Eaton, "Between Mimesis and Alterity"; H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1765-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ch. 3; Liebersohn; Margot C. Finn, "Material Turns in British History: II. Corruption: Imperial Power, Princely Politics and Gifts Gone Rogue, *Royal Historical Society* (2019), 1-25.

¹⁰² IOR/L/PS/13/797, Coll 12/4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

The British officials in the India Office located in London expected expressions of “loyalty and affection,” but sought to maintain that such expressions were free from the obligations associated with the very materiality of gifts.¹⁰⁴ Not an uncommon practice within Europe, removing the sovereign from reciprocal relationships strengthened sovereignty through a denial of the obligations that constrained the monarch from exercising sovereign power.¹⁰⁵ In cultivating their image of legitimate, yet unconstrained, power in India, the British portrayed themselves as both removed from and in control of gift-exchanges with their Indian subjects. Indeed, Wood’s despatch would set a precedent in a number of instances of princely gift-giving to the Royal Family throughout the nineteenth century; however, as an official precedent, it was only selectively enforced in terms of the British Royal Family accepting material gifts.¹⁰⁶

The *toshakhana* as a system to eliminate gifting-practices, acted instead to label diplomatic gifting as both a licit and illicit form of exchange, subject to varying characterizations that served to both construct and deconstruct an image of legitimacy and sovereignty.¹⁰⁷ Eaton has argued that gifts had to be legally established as valid objects for social transactions in order to avoid the symbolic political or legal death of being sold at the auction house.¹⁰⁸ Jewelry was a particular problem for the British, as indicated by Wood’s emphasis on “costly” gifts, and these heirlooms figured very prominently at the public auctions.¹⁰⁹ Naturally, the jewelry within Krishnaraja’s gift

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁶ For instances of Wood’s precedent see IOR/L/PJ/6/431, File 1842 - November 19, 1896, R/1/4/288 File I A September 1897 6-8, IOR/R/2/720/51-2 File R/C/55/1891, for Bureaucratic Discussions on the precedent. The abundance of Indian gifts in the Royal Collection will attest to legal exceptions and the outright circumvention of the rules, indicating the continued prevalence of the practice. Additionally, the Prince of Wales would visit India fourteen years following Wood’s despatch and leave with two shiploads of extravagant gifts from the Indian rulers, which caused particular embarrassment and generated criticism of British hypocrisy. The precious objects given by the Indian princes were kept as the personal gifts of the Prince while his return gifts were comparatively inexpensive objects. See Meghani; Taylor, 114-115; IOR/L/PS/18/D68 - 29 April 1875-27 May 1875.

¹⁰⁷ Liebersohn, 10-11.

¹⁰⁸ Dirks, “From Little King to Landlord,” 331; Eaton, 820.

¹⁰⁹ IOR/L/PS/18/D68 - 29 April 1875-27 May 1875.

may not have made it past the *toshakhana* system in Calcutta. Nevertheless, Wood was unable to prevent the rest of Krishnaraja's gifts from making it to the Queen, or from becoming heirlooms within the Royal Collection.¹¹⁰

In fact, the evidence scattered through the India Office Records, and the Royal Collection, illustrates that parliamentary legislature and official orders had little impact in stopping the actual practice of cross-cultural gift-exchanges. As Margot Finn states, "the grand narrative of Indian power relations under British rule repeatedly failed to adhere to [the bureaucratic] teleological arc."¹¹¹ Similarly, Harriet Rudolph argues that we should assume that diplomatic affairs in the modern period were overall hybrid in nature and cautions that "we should be wary of diplomatic narratives that give the impression that European actors successfully imposed their own version of diplomatic ceremonial."¹¹² In truth, the British were incapable of completely removing the Queen from reciprocal relationships with the Indian princes, and this increasingly put both the India Office and the Government of India in awkward positions. Of particular concern was the recognition that when it came to princely gifts sent to the Royal Family, selling such heirlooms at public auctions was politically problematic. One postulation in a discussion anticipating gift-exchanges during the Prince of Wales' Tour in 1875 observed that in regard to *toshakhana* auctions, the Indian princes were "educated to look on it with indifference in the case of high

¹¹⁰ See RCIN 11355 in the Royal Collection for a remade necklace that contains a ruby ring gifted from the Maharaja of Mysore (the ring itself cannot be tied to the specific gift from 1861); Other objects from this gift may still be in the Collection, in their original state or remade into new objects, as there are a number of items that could fit the description, yet their provenance is not listed and there is very little detail regarding their description. However, the Queen did record that she had received the cattle from the Maharaja of Mysore in her diary, see VIC/MAIN/QVJ/1862/March 29 and see RCIN 923770 and RCIN 923771 for paintings of these cows by Friedrich Wilhelm Keyl; The horses arrived at the Royal Mews with a new foal see RA MEWS/MAIN1/9/286-7.

¹¹¹ Finn, "Material Turns in British History," 24-25.

¹¹² Harriet Rudolph, "Entangled Objects and Hybrid Practices? Material Culture as a New Approach to the History of Diplomacy," in *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy from the 15th to the 20th Century*, eds. Harriet Rudolph and Gregor M. Metzsig (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016), 28.

Indian officials.”¹¹³ Royal family members, on the other hand, would be required to *keep* the gifts “or the Native Chiefs [would] receive mortal affront.”¹¹⁴ In an effort to avoid gift-exchanges altogether, the India Office would attempt to block the flow of gifts from India to Queen Victoria, transforming the office in the post-1858 period “from postman to the sovereign to censor of the royal mail.”¹¹⁵ Despite these attempts to restrict gifts, the Indian princes’ refusal to adhere to British diplomacy would require the India Office to manage the meaning of both bureaucratically approved gifts and those that circumvented regular lines of communication.¹¹⁶

In the field of new diplomatic history, Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello stress the commensurability of shared gift practices in diplomacy between European and Asian states in the early modern world, in which gifts served as the “social glue” in an emerging global political community.¹¹⁷ In fact, during the post-1858 period, gift diplomacy appears to adhere to this notion of mutual gifts based in reciprocity, defying the British diplomatic order that the India Office and the Government of India tried so desperately to enforce. Mutuality and reciprocity aside, Biedermann, Gerritsen, and Riello acknowledge that gifts “also serve to establish difference and imbalance” and give insight into “the unfolding of political rivalries and the constant shifting of power balances.”¹¹⁸ Despite the legal narrative that sought to put an end to material diplomacy, the “persistent refusal” of Indian royalty to “adhere to British diplomatic

¹¹³ IOR/L/PS/18/D68 - 29 April 1875-27 May 1875.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Taylor, 114-115.

¹¹⁶ For some examples of exceptions see Mss Eur F90/26, no.26 - April 3 1865, Mss Eur F90/26, no. 26 for Patiala; IOR/L/PS/10/964 P 387/21 for Baroda; IOR/L/PS/6/457 p 1431, IOR/L/PS/6/555, Coll 60 - December 9 1867 - January 4 1868 for Bhopal; IOR/R/2/176/321 File 1-P/45 for Rajputana; IOR/L/PS/10/964 P 926/1925, IOR/L/PS/10/964 P 1259/1925 for Rewa; IOR/L/PS/13/797, Coll 12/4 - March-April 1931 for Cooch Behar; IOR/R/1/4/286 - July 1887 for Mysore and Travancore; IOR/R/1/4/287 File S I August 1897 for Hyderabad and other Princely States.

¹¹⁷ Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritson and Giorgio Riello, ‘Introduction: Global Gifts and the Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia’, in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, ed. Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritson and Giorgio Riello (Cambridge, 2018), 24.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

forms made this resistance palpably evident through material objects to the British.”¹¹⁹ Short of ensuring that gifts made it through British controlled channels of communication or the *toshakhana* system, the British had no legal means of stopping the Indian princes from giving gifts. As gifts continued to make their way into the political and legal discourse of the British Empire, then, how did the British manage the very materiality of these gifts? How did they manage issues of reciprocity and representation? Further, how did the British use the language of gifts to re-imagine or entrench their own argument for paramountcy? As the precedent for British and princely Indian gift-exchange in the post-1858 period, the British response to Krishnaraja’s gift makes it a uniquely significant case study to address these questions.

The Queen’s Proclamation offered the princes the possibility of entering into new treaty relationships with the British sovereign, presenting the princes with a means to elevate their status above that of the British officials in both the India Office and the Government of India. This development encouraged various princes to attempt direct communication with the British sovereign, as Krishnaraja did through his representative, Dr. Campbell. Naturally, this was a problem for British officials, who sought to control the Indian princes’ foreign policies and communications.¹²⁰ Krishnaraja’s gift manifested a claim to sovereignty that the Government of India wished to withhold from the old Maharaja. From London, Wood also had plans to annex the state of Mysore; however, Krishnaraja’s gift threatened his plan to smooth over any illegal issues concerning the transfer of the princely territories to the Government of India following the Maharaja’s death. If Wood ignored the gift, he not only risked tarnishing the British treaty system now guaranteed by the Proclamation, but also alerting the Maharaja to the Secretary of State’s plans for annexation. Ultimately, Wood was leery of entering into any illegal dealings concerning

¹¹⁹ Finn, “Material Turns in British History,” 25.

¹²⁰ Taylor, 15-16.

princely territory and had reached the conclusion that the British Government had no “pretence” to withhold the territories of Mysore from the Maharaja.¹²¹ Accordingly, Wood planned to restore Krishnaraja to the throne although this would never actually happen. Curiously, Wood had been prepared to ply Krishnaraja with gifts and honours to persuade the Maharaja into bequeathing his territories to the British rather than to an heir, thus eliminating the need for any illegalities required to bring Mysore under direct colonial rule.¹²² Presumably as a means to mollify the Maharaja’s distrust in the colonial bureaucracy, Wood was compelled to also send return gifts.

To cover the cost of these return gifts, the British Government proposed that the Royal Treasury bear the responsibility, as the Queen had received and accepted the Maharaja’s portrait, objects, and animals. In response, the Treasury stated that “it was to the interest of the Indian Government to conciliate the loyalty and good feeling of the Princes of India,” obligating the British Government to pay for the return presents and indicating that the Queen would not become personally involved in the Mysore Case.¹²³ Regardless of the Crown’s lack of financial or personal contributions in purchasing the return presents, the Queen or at least her presence was central within this gifting relationship.¹²⁴ Wood used the Queen’s image and character within both his written and material responses to Krishnaraja in an attempt to influence the meaning of the exchange, employing a labelling strategy to subtly deny the obligations tied within the Maharaja’s material diplomacy.

It is thus useful to compare the British Government’s attempt to carefully manage the meaning of the exchange in the written record with the types of material objects actually sent between Krishnaraja and the Secretary of State. Gadi Algazi stresses that the *form* of exchange is

¹²¹ Cited in Moore, 166-167.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 166-167 and 171.

¹²³ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26 – 31 March 1862.

¹²⁴ Taylor, 111.

really a semantic field and the terms associated with gifts should be explored through the tensions and ambivalences created within their diverse meanings.¹²⁵ Understanding how gift-exchanges could take various forms within the written record is fundamental to revealing the on-going British and princely Indian gift-exchanges that continued following 1858.

For example, Wood sanctioned the considerable sum of five thousand pounds to purchase return presents to be sent to the Maharaja in 1862, stating that these were a “token of [the Queen’s] friendship and esteem.”¹²⁶ More importantly, in a letter dated the 27 February 1861, Wood acknowledged the Queen’s reception of Krishnaraja’s gifts, stressing the Maharaja’s status as an important ally during the Rebellion, and also meaningfully described the gifts as “tokens of... good will.”¹²⁷ In defining the Maharaja’s gift imbued with multiple symbolical and legal meanings as a “token,” Wood denied the obligations attached to it through an insistence “on the purity of gifts,” and thus attempted to construct an appearance of the legitimate and maternal sovereignty of the British Crown through the language of the “true gift.”¹²⁸ Of note, recent scholarship has begun interpreting earlier anthropologists’ conception of the “true gift,” which negates reciprocity or debt, as part of an intellectual tradition that traces back to the impeachment trial of Hastings that was divorced from historical reality and actual gift institutions.¹²⁹ Reciprocity was never truly eliminated, but rather the meaning of exchange within this intellectual tradition was simply translated into a new meaning.¹³⁰ Both nominal in value and also highly valuable, tokens enable the transference of substance in tangible, verbal, and symbolic forms by “producing and circulating

¹²⁵ Algazi, 14.

¹²⁶ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26 – 31 March 1862.

¹²⁷ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26 – 27 February 1862.

¹²⁸ Algazi, 16.

¹²⁹ Eaton, “Between Mimesis and Alterity,” 817; Liebersohn.

¹³⁰ Lydia H. Liu, “Introduction,” in *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulation*, ed. Lydia H. Liu (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 2.

meaning as value.”¹³¹ By describing the gift-exchange as one of “tokens,” Wood did invoke the sentiments of remembrance that were central within Victorian gifting culture, which engendered the exchange as private and familial in nature. However, Wood did not specifically request the highly personal tokens typically gifted in the Victorian age, but rather stated that the Queen could “receive no such precious gifts from the Princes and Chiefs of India as the good words which they send to her.”¹³² Like the language of gentility, memory, affection, and family that characterized the British gifting institution and bridged together English families scattered across the empire, the meaning of exchange signified within Wood’s letter evoked similar affectionate connections, albeit without the presence of objects within the return gift that could typically be considered tokens.¹³³

Indeed, the material contents of Wood’s return gift follow a more traditional diplomatic form of reciprocal exchange. The gift consisted of “a few specimens of the manufactures of Great Britain and other articles,” which may have included silver objects, scientific technologies, weapons, fabrics and photographs.¹³⁴ Such objects signified a particular form of industrialized and imperial sovereignty that followed the same symbolic logic as Krishnaraja’s gift, which represented his territory’s products and artisanship. Furthermore, images of the Queen were likely

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³² IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26 – 27 February 1862. Amusingly, the Indian princes would indeed send such words of good will to the Royal Family for jubilees, weddings, and births throughout the later nineteenth century in the form of *kharitas* that were encased in such luxurious and expensive casings that British Officers would have trouble categorizing whether or not these “tokens” were acceptable gifts. See R/1/4/291 File 124(4)-G/1937 and the double underlined and then crossed out word “Toshakkhana,” in a letter to the Political Secretary to the Viceroy in 1937. The British Officer writes that he “shall be glad if you will kindly inform me how the *kharita* is to be dealt with.”

¹³³ Finn, “Colonial Gifts: Family Politics and the Exchange of Goods in British India, c. 1780-1820,” *Modern Asian Studies* 40, no. 1 (Feb., 2006), 204; Jasanoff.

¹³⁴ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26 – 31 March 1862. Gifts sent to the Maharaja of Cashmere around the same time, which were attached to the documents concerning Krishnaraja, consisted of specimens of silver work, including a silver fountain; scientific objects, such as telescopes, microscopes, stereoscopes, and watches of particular construction; recent improvements in arms, such as swords and rifles; costly specimens of British textile fabrics, such as brocaded cottons and silks; photographic albums of the public spaces and public character of England; and coloured prints of the principal events in the reign of Queen Victoria.

included in the gift. Of note was a collection of impersonal photographs of the “principal events in the reign” of the Queen, which is a symbolic break from the personal and formal portraiture used in the eighteenth century.¹³⁵ Like the Maharaja, Wood used photographs not as a personalized gift of the “image” of a ruler, but as a broader claim to sovereign rights. Martin has commented on this “diplomatic mimesis,” or the British use of a similar “language of signifiers and symbols” in their return gifts to South Asian rulers.¹³⁶ Through the actual objects gifted, Krishnaraja and Wood sought to carefully create an argument for their own, respective forms of sovereign power: local versus imperial. The British efforts to label these multivalent and diplomatic exchanges as mere “tokens” is significant as it indicates an effort to both stabilize and influence these contested meanings of sovereignty.¹³⁷

Wood’s implication of a personal relationship between the Maharaja and the Queen obscured the competitive and reciprocal nature of the diplomatic gift-exchange, yet also countered the contentious legal challenge for territory posed by the very materiality of Krishnaraja’s gifts, particularly the portrait of the Duke of Wellington. Indeed, Miles Taylor has argued that the British began to use the presence of the Queen to “both [buttress] and [soften] the rule of colonial difference.”¹³⁸ As a result, historians have observed that British rule in the latter half of the nineteenth century was Janus-faced, characterized by two competing ideologies of rule: “Oriental” and Liberal.¹³⁹ Cohn and Cannadine argue that foundational to the balance of these ideologies was the establishment of an ornamental and feudal order, or “construction of affinities,” around the

¹³⁵ IOR/L/PS/6/518, Coll 26 – 27 February 1862. Eaton, “Between Mimesis and Alterity,” 816-844.

¹³⁶ Martin, “Fit for a King?,” 91.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British would continue to characterize princely diplomatic gifts to the British royal family as personal gifts, tokens, or sentiments, rather than physical objects that demanded some form of action from the British or Indian Governments. See IOR/R/2/176/321 File 1-P/45.

¹³⁸ Taylor, 9.

¹³⁹ Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), ch. 5; Taylor, 9; Ikegame, 11.

Queen to effectively turn the British into ritual “insiders” based on the Indian “susceptibility . . . to parade and show.”¹⁴⁰ This approach was balanced with a liberal, supposedly modern and fair, form of rule that would eventually eliminate the need for a feudal order, and ultimately naturalize Indian rulers within an ornamentalized social hierarchy.¹⁴¹ In her analysis of the British literary response to the Mysore case, Lauren Goodlad clarifies this dual approach to rule in India, identifying the inherent liberal expectation of princely Indians to “give” in the rhetorical concept of the “sovereign heirloom,” which represented “forms of individual, communal, and national sovereignty.”¹⁴² As material objects that accumulated “particular ethical and cultural worth in excess of abstract economic value,” sovereign heirlooms that were gifted, sold, or stolen continued to bind individuals and cultures not as a force of liberal individualism, but rather as a force of destruction.¹⁴³ These sovereign heirlooms represent the liberal desire for property that was at the core of British colonial progress and the desire to annex Mysore. However, obtaining these goods and territories bound British sovereignty to the administrative and financial realities of governing subject populations, which threatened to create political problems both within domestic British politics, such as inviting corrupting foreign influences inside London’s chambers of power, and within Indian politics, such as provoking another uprising in India.¹⁴⁴

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, British and princely Indian gift-exchanges had come to symbolize the corruption of the East India Company and its wars of conquest, diplomatic gifts, and bribes, which had placed undue tax burdens on both Indian and British citizens, corrupted colonial politics both in London and in India, and led to the Indian

¹⁴⁰ Cohn, 165 and 188; Cannadine, xix.

¹⁴¹ Cohn, 166; Cannadine, 10.

¹⁴² Goodlad, 8.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 97 and 101.

Rebellion in 1857 due to the liberal drive for property.¹⁴⁵ In formally accepting Krishnaraja's gifts, Wood knew that he would implicate the Queen within this discourse of corruption, undermining his clandestine attempt to annex Mysore.¹⁴⁶ Only a year before Krishnaraja's gift was sent, Tipu Sultan's son, living as a British pensioner in India, personally petitioned the British Government in London to pay off his and his brothers' debts. In response, Wood decided to increase these princes' pensions in 1860 in what became known as the Mysore Grant.¹⁴⁷ Naturally, both British and Indian public opinion was critical of the expense used to placate these potentially hostile and dependent Mysore princes.

Unrest spread in the Legislative Council in Bombay and discussions of the Partition Treaty of Mysore, which included stipends for the maintenance of Tipu's descendants, circulated within the pages of the Times.¹⁴⁸ One scornful letter published on 21 July 1862 listed British statesmen in the India Office in London who disapproved of Wood's decision to pay the Mysore Grant and argued that most British officers within India as well as the Indian subjects condemned the decision since the "grant (made when the Government were announcing themselves on the verge of bankruptcy, as an excuse for imposing the most detested of all taxes) must have been obtained by some improper means."¹⁴⁹ Moreover, during a special meeting at the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, the former Financial Minister for India, Mr. S. Laing, commented on the Mysore Grant, highlighting the issues such princely petitions in England posed for British officers in India:

¹⁴⁵ Finn, "Material Turns in British History," 6; Goodlad, Chpt 2; Finbarr Barry Flood, "Correct Delineations and Promiscuous Outlines: Envisioning India at the Trial of Warren Hastings," *Art History*, 21 (2006), 47-78; Tillman Nechtman, "A Jewel in the Crown? Indian Wealth in Domestic Britain in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 41 (2007), 71-86; Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹⁴⁶ It was this very connection between politically motivated gifts and corruption in the British imagination that had led to Krishnaraja's removal from his throne in the 1830s.

¹⁴⁷ Knight, "The Mysore grants," 63; "The Mysore Grant," *The Times*, 19 July 1862; "The Mysore Princes," *The Times*, 24 January 1861.

¹⁴⁸ Knight, 65 and

¹⁴⁹ "The Mysore Indemnity," *The Times*, 21 July 1862.

The cause of the indignation in India was the unprecedented fact that, when a claim of that sort had been decided twice over by two successive Governors-General with the unanimous approval of their respective councils, and with the advice of eminent lawyers... a Bengal native prince could go home and, behind Lord Canning's back, get a reversal of those decisions and a considerable grant of money at a time when everybody in India was smarting from the effects of the increase of taxation. How on earth was the prestige of the Governor-General to be maintained if things of that sort were done?¹⁵⁰

Accusations of corruption and financial excess and of Wood's administrative overreach in India were levelled at the Secretary of State within the various letters discussing the Mysore Grant published in the Times between 1861 to 1862.¹⁵¹ Clearly, despite the British Parliament's efforts to construct an image of legitimacy and legal sovereignty throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the empire's image of corruption was never eliminated in actual practice or in the public imagination.

Within this context of public interest regarding the Partition Treaty, Mysore, and corruption, the timing of Krishnaraja's gift and petition appear too fortuitous for the Maharaja, who clearly took advantage of these circumstances when he sent his gift in haste in 1861.¹⁵² On the other hand, Wood's insistence on labelling the gifts as tokens, or a "true gifts," in his dealings with Krishnaraja speak to his covert efforts to bribe the Maharaja to give over his sovereign rights. As a trope that literally transformed a gift into a voucher, using tokens as a labelling strategy could also be used as a powerful and fluid tool regarding the transference of sovereignty. The British expectation that reciprocal relationships inevitably led to the British acquisition of territory or sovereignty would remain regardless of the British attempts to censor gift diplomacy through the liberal practice of extensive legal and bureaucratic channels, monetized systems, or labelling

¹⁵⁰ "Mr. S. Laing at Manchester," *The Times*, 19 September 1862.

¹⁵¹ See also: "India," *The Times*, 21 January 1861; "India and China," *The Times*, 28 January 1861; "The Mysore Princes," *The Times*, 28 January 1861; "The Bombay Mail," *The Times*, 5 February 1861; "London, Saturday, April 27, 1861," *The Times*, 27 April 1861.

¹⁵² Knight, "The Mysore grants," 65.

strategies. In fact, this continued expectation is evident in much of the historiographical writings on the conciliatory and contractual relationships that the British imposed on the princely states, such as offering titles or the Order of the Star of India to symbolize semi-sovereignty in exchange for both “good-government” and acts of loyalty.¹⁵³

As “a bargaining tool,” Indian rulers used the Queen to test the India Office’s and Government of India’s expectation that Indian rulers would voluntarily give over aspects of their sovereignty or concede to the will of the British.¹⁵⁴ Krishnaraja’s effort to gain this bargaining power becomes clear within his public reception of Wood’s return presents. The mere fact that his gift was reciprocated signalled an acknowledgement of the Maharaja’s petition for reinstatement. To that effect, Krishnaraja responded with gratitude to the letter and gifts that he received in April 1862:

The letter and the presents were delivered by Doctor Campbell in the presence of Mr. Saunders and all the leading Officers engaged in the administration of my kingdom; and, as Her Majesty’s gracious and queenly words fell upon their ears, I could read their faces that they fully sympathised with the delight I must feel in being so honored, and that one and all hoped I should now be consoled, for very different words from another pen which had been read upon the same spot only a few days before. And I did feel that consolation. I felt that, although Lord Canning’s facts could be (and would be) easily explained, and his arguments refuted, the best answer to the letter of the Viceroy was the letter of that Viceroy’s Sovereign.¹⁵⁵

Importantly, Krishnaraja labelled the gifts as “presents,” thereby characterizing the exchange as a presentation that was conducted publicly with the British Commissioner, Mr. Saunders, in attendance. The Mysore Commissioner was normally responsible for the political communications and exchanges on behalf of the Maharaja to the British government, a role usurped by the *darbar*

¹⁵³ Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” 166-167; John McLeod, *Power, Control: Politics in the States of Western India, 1916-1947* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); McLeod, “The English Honours System in Princely India, 1925-1947,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4, No. 2 (July 1994), 237-249.

¹⁵⁴ Taylor, 111.

¹⁵⁵ IOR/L/PS/6/521, Coll 85/5.

surgeon, Doctor Campbell. The public nature of this exchange galvanized the Maharaja's claim to legal sovereignty or confirmation of his treaty rights. In mentioning Canning's decision in March of that year to deny his petition, Krishnaraja contrasted the British sovereign, and supposed upholder of British and princely Indian treaties, with that of the British officers who sought to dissolve the Maharaja's treaty rights by obscuring the reciprocal nature of the gift in their effort to reshape the meaning of exchange into a personal rather than diplomatic matter.

The Viceroy of India, Charles Canning, insisted on Krishnaraja's inability to reclaim sovereignty over the state of Mysore on the basis of the British right of conquest and the personal nature of the Duke of Wellington's land grant to the young Maharaja in 1799. Canning's letter to the Maharaja of March of 1862 states that "when the grant was made by Lord Wellesley, in favour of your Highness, you did not inherit any patrimony in the soil, you could not claim a single village."¹⁵⁶ In response to Canning's assertion that the treaty was a revocable grant of land held by the British Government through right of conquest, Krishnaraja responded to the Viceroy, asking if "a treaty once signed by the conqueror, is not the *status quo ante* that treaty merely a matter of history? The rights of conquest are swallowed up in its self-imposed obligations."¹⁵⁷ Treaties, like gifts, were part of reciprocal relationships, in which on-going obligations were inherent to their maintenance. After 1776, as part of the legal efforts to curb liberal supporters' tendency to annex Indian territory through coerced land grants, treaties became a self-imposed limitation to British sovereignty within India.¹⁵⁸ The central issue to this unresolved British conquest in Mysore would

¹⁵⁶ Charles Canning to Rajah of Mysore, 11 March 1862 in Parliament. House of Commons, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Maharaja of Mysore to Earl of Elgin, 20 April 1862 in *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government of India*, 8.

¹⁵⁸ Jennifer Pitts describes Edmund Burke's attacks against the Company, and particularly during the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings in 1776, as an effort both to employ "a moralized conception of the law of nations," and to imagine "a loose federal structure of empire in India," similar to the law of nations within Europe. Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 80–82.

come down to the conflation of gifts, grants, and treaties and the inherent expectation of the Indian princes to give and give generously. By June 1862, Krishnaraja had submitted a petition against Canning's decision to Her Majesty's government for deliberation.¹⁵⁹ In July 1863, Wood would open a legal inquiry into the case of Mysore, during which this expectation to give became part of the legal arguments regarding the reinstatement of Krishnaraja as ruler of Mysore.

Of particular importance within the British annexationists' efforts to blur the lines between treaties, grants, and gifts were nineteenth century European lawyers' arguments that grants and treaties could only be valid if they were "procured from Princes who are free from constraint" or who "possessed the legal or actual power of making their concessions good."¹⁶⁰ This appearance of legal legitimacy was particularly important for the annexationists immediately following the Indian Rebellion. Through gift-exchange and their management of that exchange's meaning as tokens capable of transferring sovereignty, Wood and Canning attempted to influence Krishnaraja to voluntarily grant Mysore over to the British government, or at least the appearance of such a gift, as voluntary consent was the most legitimate means to transfer any amount of sovereignty over territories from non-Europeans to European states.¹⁶¹

Recognizing Krishnaraja's sovereign capacity to conduct diplomacy was essential if any legal transfer of land from the Maharaja to the Government of India was to take place. As Wood had been under the assumption that Krishnaraja would present, or unwillingly bequeath, his territory to the Crown, the Maharaja had to hold some form of sovereignty to make any gift of land

¹⁵⁹ *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government of India*, 7.

¹⁶⁰ *An Enquiry into the Rights of the East India Company of Making War and Peace, and of possessing their Territorial Acquisitions without the Participation or inspection of the British Government, In a letter to the Proprietors of East India Stock, written in the year 1769* (London: Walter Shropshire, 1772), 14–15.

¹⁶¹ Saliha Belmessous, *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14; Lord Canning's letter to the Secretary of State, of 30th March 1802 quoted in "Dissent of Sir Frederick Currie," 17 July 1863 in *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government*, 25.

legal.¹⁶² It was this detail that revealed the British plan of annexation to be tenuous when the Maharaja threatened to adopt an heir. In his Minute of Dissent presented during the Parliamentary inquiry into the Mysore case in 1865, Captain W. J Eastwick observed this essential issue of the Indian rulers' sovereignty:

It thus appears, that while we believed that the Maharajah intended to give his country to the British Government he had entire liberty to bequeath it 'in full sovereignty'; but when this illusion is dispelled, we find out that he has not the right to bequeath it to any one, even to a natural or adopted heir.¹⁶³

Central to this challenge, as Antony Anghie explains, was that the non-European, dependent sub-polities were considered non-sovereign since they “lacked international personality and yet necessarily [possessed]” sovereignty if the treaties that both the Europeans and non-Europeans relied upon were to make sense.¹⁶⁴ This contradiction of both possessing and yet not possessing sovereignty is central to what Lauren Benton describes as quasi-sovereignty.¹⁶⁵ Arising through the complicated process of gift-exchange, conquest, and treaties, the intricate legal problem of quasi-sovereignty forced British officials to attempt to define which elements constituted sovereignty in the princely states and clarify “the conditions under which the dominant power might subvert treaties or suspend law in order to intervene in states' internal affairs.”¹⁶⁶ As treaties, gifts, and grants had individually played key historical roles within the legal exchange of land and power within India, the British annexationists' management of the discursive meaning of such exchanges offered a powerfully layered means to conflate gifts, treaties, and grants, forcing Indian rulers to give with or without “real” voluntary consent.

¹⁶² *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government*, 32, footnote Para 27.

¹⁶³ “Dissent of Mr. Eastwick,” 25 July 1865 in *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government*, 77.

¹⁶⁴ Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 81.

¹⁶⁵ Lauren Benton, “From International Law to Imperial Constitutions: The Problem of Quasi-Sovereignty, 1870-1900,” *Law and History Review* 26, No. 3 (Fall 2008), 596.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 599.

British officials who argued that Krishnaraja held sovereignty within Mysore, naturally classified the treaty as legally binding and called on the British to uphold their end of the treaty obligations. On the other hand, Wood, Canning, and their supporters undercut the legality of the Subsidiary Treaty entirely, arguing that the Maharaja had not possessed the actual power to sign a treaty. Instead, the British gifted Krishnaraja with sovereign rights since even the Maharaja admitted that his title rested on “an undoubted right of conquest.”¹⁶⁷ In his dissent within the legal debate, Sir Frederick Currie highlighted the deception in Wood and Canning’s stance:

it has been argued on the one hand that these so-called treaties are only such in name; that, in fact, they are not national engagements, recognizing sovereign rights, but merely deeds of gift, or administrative arrangements, made by the Government of India to meet the political circumstances of the day, liable to be revoked or modified, at any time, at the will of the said Government.¹⁶⁸

In characterizing the Subsidiary Treaty as a gift, the British officials attempted to deflect the legal ramifications of renegeing on an internationally binding treaty. To this effect, the Viceroy Sir J. M. Lawrence called the treaty a “free gift of the British Government.”¹⁶⁹ The conflation of these forms of exchange also offered a pretext to further intervene in Mysore’s internal affairs. R. D. Mangles argued that Lord Wellesley intentionally avoided mentioning any heirs and successors within the “deed of gift called a treaty” for the “donor of this magnificent gift” sought to maintain control over matters of succession within the state of Mysore.¹⁷⁰

Historians have viewed the Mysore Case as the test case for the Queen’s Proclamation to uphold treaties and discontinue the aggressive liberal policy known as the Doctrine of Lapse.¹⁷¹ In

¹⁶⁷ “Sir Charles Wood to the Governor General of India in Council,” 17 July 1863 in *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government*, 16.

¹⁶⁸ “Dissent of Sir Frederick Currie,” 28 July 1865 in *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government of India*, 81.

¹⁶⁹ “Khureeta from Lawrence to Krishnaraja,” 5 May 1865 in *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government*, 70.

¹⁷⁰ “Minute of Mr. R.D. Mangles,” 22 July 1865 in *Correspondence between Maharaja of Mysore and Government of India*, 84.

¹⁷¹ Goodlad; Moore; Taylor.

reality, the case acted as a test case for managing the meaning of diplomatic gifts from indirectly ruled semi-sovereign entities' demanding bilateral power relations. This precedent, however, had considerable ramifications for how power relations were to be constituted between the British and the Indian princes. Throughout the remainder of the British Raj in India, gifts would remain a dynamic arena to negotiate sovereignty between the Indian princes and the British Crown.

5 Conclusion

On the 16th April 1867, an adoption dispatch was released recognizing Krishnaraja's right to adoption after the Mysore Case took a turn with the introduction of a new Secretary of State.¹⁷² Regardless of the British officials in charge, managing the meaning of gifts remained paramount in British and princely Indian relations. Over a decade later, Krishnaraja's heir would be installed on the Mysore throne as Maharaja Chamarajendra Wodeyar X. Under Chamarajendra's rule, as well as that of his successors, Mysore would become one of the most preeminent princely states within the British hierarchy. Chamarajendra would send a number of precious objects to the royal family throughout his reign to mark events such as the Prince of Wales' visit to India in 1875 and the Queen's Jubilees in 1887 and 1897. In stark contrast to Wood's despatch in 1861, the Foreign Department would consult Krishnaraja's great grandson, Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV, on the question of reviving the exchange of *khelat* and *nazar* or *peshkash* at the Delhi Durbar in 1911. This would be the first of these Durbars held in India that the reigning British monarch would attend.¹⁷³

The challenge of these ornaments to the ornamental politics of the colonial state is palpable in the Council of India's anxious debate on the "subject of presents" leading up to the Prince of Wales' visit as they were "at once one of the most difficult and important points relating to Royal visits to India."¹⁷⁴ British officials observed that Indian rulers found the prospect of prohibiting ceremonial presents "so excessively distasteful, as implying a sense of their inferiority."¹⁷⁵ Despite their best laid plans, including a sanctioned list of approved gifts that the Indian rulers could give to the prince, unexpected and costly objects were easily slipped into offerings to the Prince of Wales, such as a jewel encrusted girdle presented by the Ranees of Mysore, acting on behalf of

¹⁷² Williams, 41.

¹⁷³ IOR/R/2/Box33/314 File 19 1911.

¹⁷⁴ IOR/C/138, f.66 – 5th April 1875.

¹⁷⁵ IOR/C138, f.67 – April 1875.

Krishnaraja's child heir.¹⁷⁶ Of note, these particular gifts were labelled as personal souvenirs.¹⁷⁷ As in this case, the Queen did in fact exercise her personal authority, demanding that certain presents to the royal family be "considered private and personal" and were to therefore be accepted.¹⁷⁸

The types of gifts that the Indian rulers gave to the Royal Family, and at times other European Royals, over the century ranged from more traditional *peshkash* or *nuzzar*, such as Krishnaraja's gift, to gifts of "arts and crafts" from various Exhibitions in Europe, books, and countless *kharitas* in priceless and ornate casings.¹⁷⁹ The British attempted to dictate the terms of these gift-exchanges at every turn and their language of sovereignty evolved alongside the princely gifts that flowed to London.¹⁸⁰ As semi-autonomous rulers, the Indian princes were the greatest, and most problematic, allies of the British Raj. The role of gift-giving within this relationship was essential to the fantasies, realities, and reformulations of sovereignty on both sides. With Wood's precedent in 1861, British officials maintained a legal document to manage the gifts that flowed into London while Indian rulers regularly re-interpreted, subverted, and even flouted the British terms for exchange.

While some collections of gifts from various rulers and subjects within the British Empire are catalogued within the Royal Collection, most are not. One day they may be able to shed more light on the material diplomacy within the empire.¹⁸¹ Until such a time, there are a number of instances of princely gifts to the Crown, both successful and unsuccessful, whose study could help

¹⁷⁶ Mss Eur C144/8 - Bombay, *November 12th*, 1875. See <https://www.rct.uk/collection/61971>.

¹⁷⁷ Mss Eur D726/7. These specific "souvenirs" from the 1875 Royal Visit are well catalogued in the Royal Collection.

¹⁷⁸ Mss Eur Photo Eur 466, f83.

¹⁷⁹ For exhibition item as gifts see IOR/R/1/4/286 - July 1887; For *kharitas* as gifts see R/1/4/291 File 124(4)-G/1937.

¹⁸⁰ For a list of the types of gifts that the British Royal Family could not accept: IOR/R/20/A/3544 File 1028 - March 1933.

¹⁸¹ Lauren Palmor, "Queen Victoria's Durbar Room: The Imperial Museum at Home," *Past Tense: Graduate Review of History* 3, 1 (University of Toronto Department of History, 2015), 61-65.

balance the perceived British dominance within diplomatic dealings with India's princely states during the British Raj. One avenue is to consider the many Indian princes who travelled to London in the 1880s to personally present gifts to the British monarch that they had either brought from India or purchased within Europe, although these gifts are at times even harder to trace. Important to this research is the need to explore and clarify Indian forms of diplomatic and tributary exchanges to better understand continuations and transformations under indirect rule. Finally, a more sustained study of indirectly ruled indigenous rulers and their diplomatic gift-giving practices throughout the British Empire would give a fuller understanding of the nature of diplomacy within the colonial policy of indirect rule.

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