

# **Towards a transcultural history of diplomacy**

A Core-to-Core Global History Collaborative workshop



**Tokyo University**

**9-11 December 2016**

Workshop at the **University of Tokyo Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia** (東京大学東洋文化研究所) with a theme-oriented excursion to the **National Museum of Japanese History** (国立歴史民俗博物館).

Keynote speaker: Prof. Matsukata Fuyuko 松方冬子 (The University of Tokyo Historiographical Institute 東京大学史料編纂所)

## Workshop Outline

Over the last decade, both a cultural turn in diplomatic history and the revisionist trend in the study of international relations has stimulated empirically and theoretically grounded transnational research. While cultural historians, notably those in the German-speaking regions, have addressed early modern diplomacy from an actor-based perspective, scholars working on Asia and Africa have challenged national history bias and Western-centric views on political orders and the origins of an international society in turn. We now propose to methodically intersect these micro and macro approaches to strengthen new analyses of early modern diplomacy, as well as to tackle the question of scale.

In this workshop, researchers working on different stages of early modernities in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europa will come together. Combining the insights from working with different themes, and in different regions, it is possible to discern the challenges and interesting outcomes of doing global comparisons of early modern diplomatic relations: How do the diplomatic practices differ not only depending on time but also on which region we study? Which parts of the nineteenth-century vocabulary of diplomacy can be transferred to the early modern era, and which cannot?

Consequently, the workshop aims to address terminological complexities. Many terms become problematic or anachronistic when applied across boundaries of time and culture, while others retain their usefulness. Engaging with early modern diplomacy includes discussing usefulness of conventional and unconventional terms when conducting in-depth studies of early modern foreign relations.

These case studies do not simply offer more detail of cross-cultural negotiations but also shed light on the relevance and irrelevance of material lure, honour and sovereignty as driving forces in early modern diplomatic encounters. It makes it possible to explore the role of the 'soft' skills of individual actors, as well as unconventional arenas – and reasons – for policy making. Indeed, approaching early modern diplomacy from a global perspective will help implement a novel way of understanding the importance of local ceremonial and spiritual practices, gender and hybridization for the study of transcultural diplomacy. Together, these examples of micro-negotiations across the world can paint an image of the local and cultural side of early modern diplomacy.

Conceptualizing diplomatic history as a global micro history could potentially mean establishing new explanatory paradigms for state-to-state relations, pre-modern diplomatic communication, the role of certain individuals and particular embassies, as well as material aspects of these contacts.

**We now invite you to send your abstracts by May 15th 2016.**

Please keep the abstracts to no more than 300 words, and clarify how your example connects to the theme of the workshop. The papers will be divided into panels, each with its own discussant.

Possible connections between your case studies and the theme include:

- Practices of transcultural/non-professional diplomacy
- The epistemology and terminology of early modern diplomacy
- Challenges and opportunities in a global approach to early modern diplomacy
- Material aspects of transcultural diplomacy
- Transcultural diplomacy from below (actor-based, local brokerage, non-state actors, etc.)
- Conflicts of interest between diplomacy and other aims (for example trade)
- Transcultural treaty making and the negotiation of legal aspects
- Information networks and production of knowledge
- Open and furtive modes of communication
- The role of symbolism and ceremonial differences
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In addition, we would like to use our gathering to question semiotic and terminological inconsistencies. Each of us struggles with concrete terms and categories when conceptualizing, discussing, and disseminating our research. Numerous challenges arise when confronting original terms in the language of our source material with the language of academia – or that of popular discourse. What is more, striving for terminological correctness is often at the expense of legibility. All researchers have to make terminological choices regarding the use, re-definition, and conscious abandoning of certain terms and concepts. The organizers believe that the participants' collective, yet thematically diverse, research can be a starting point for a new way of describing and discussing transcultural diplomacy.

A detailed workshop program will be made available as the workshop date approaches.

Language: English and Japanese

**For questions, please email: [transculturaldiplomacy2016@gmail.com](mailto:transculturaldiplomacy2016@gmail.com)**