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## THE LANGUAGE OF PAPAL GIFT-GIVING IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES: AN EXAMPLE OF SOFT POWER?

### Abstract

In the seventeenth century, the practice of handing diplomatic gifts was on the rise among European sovereigns. A certain number of treatises intended for ambassadors specifically refer to this practice. These gifts, brought by the nuncios, his ambassadors, were selected, not only by the pope, but also by great figures in the papal court, like cardinals' nephews or relatives. They were able to recognize which works would be the most appreciated by the Stuart King, the emperor or the kings of France or Spain. The letters sent by the nuncios or the newspapers which tackle events that had occurred in foreign courts constitute precious sources to identify and review such presents. Moreover, papal gifts were dual. The Supreme Pontiff was a religious sovereign and, as such, he offered reliquaries, blessed swaddling clothes and Golden Roses which were holy objects able to sustain Catholicism and maintain the faith. If these types of offerings were conventional, the pope also sent secular objects such as paintings, which represented profane themes, antique statues and small *galantries* such as fans, gloves and perfumes, which is more surprising. As a matter of fact, the pope played a political role as a peacemaker between the other great European powers and defenders of the territories over which he had full jurisdiction: the Supreme Pontiff exercised both spiritual and temporal power. This dual nature can be seen in the different objects given. How did presents become instruments of power which served the pope's interests? How did gift-giving rituals help him persuade the other sovereigns to follow his will and to maintain him as the greatest sovereign in Western Europe?

**Keywords:** Early modern diplomacy, Papacy, Western Europe, gifts, clothes, Golden Roses, gift-giving

## INTRODUCTION

In the seventeenth century, the practice of handing diplomatic gifts was on the rise among European sovereigns. A certain number of treatises intended for ambassadors specifically refer to this practice. In *The Prince* (1532), Machiavelli deals with the importance of liberality and with the fact of acting with generosity in politics. With *The Embaxador* (1620), written by Juan Antonio de Vera y Figueroa, such practices became even more prominent. In fact, all the great Western European sovereigns spent large sums of money offering and exchanging objects and animals to retain friendly or at least cordial relationships. These presents had an instrumental objective; they became a part of an exchange.<sup>1</sup> This is the reason why, even though the pope did not travel anymore in that period, the Papacy still sent some fabulous works of art to foreign courts. These gifts, brought by the nuncios, his ambassadors, were selected, not only by the pope but also by significant figures in the papal court, like cardinals' nephews or relatives. They were able to recognize which works would be the most appreciated by the Stuart king, the emperor or the kings of France or Spain. The letters sent by the nuncios or the newspapers which tackle events that had occurred in foreign courts constitute precious sources to identify and review such presents.

Moreover, papal gifts were dual. The Supreme Pontiff was a religious sovereign and, as such, he offered reliquaries, blessed swaddling clothes and Golden Roses which were holy objects able to sustain Catholicism and maintain the faith. If these types of offerings were conventional, the pope also sent secular objects such as paintings, which represented profane themes, antique statues and small *galanteries* such as fans, gloves and perfumes, which is more surprising. As a matter of fact, the pope played a political role as a peacemaker between the other great European powers and defenders of the territories over which he had full jurisdiction: the Supreme Pontiff exercised both spiritual and temporal power.<sup>2</sup> This dual nature can be seen in the different objects

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Mauss, 'Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques', *L'Année sociologique*, n.s. 1 (1925), 30–186.

<sup>2</sup> Paolo Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982).

given. How did presents become instruments of power which served the pope's interests? How did gift-giving rituals help him persuade the other sovereigns to follow his will and to maintain him as the greatest sovereign in Western Europe?

I shall produce some examples of papal gift-giving to assess how gestures and etiquette dramatized this ritual and turned a material object into the carrier of a message. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how presents became a true means of persuasion for the Papacy, a strategic challenge in European politics and an essential element of soft power.

#### GIFT-GIVING RITUALS: A WAY TO SINGLE OUT PAPAL GIFTS?

On Tuesday 25 December 1618, King Philip III of Spain (1578–1621) organised a ceremony in honour of the arrival of the papal nuncio Francesco Cennini. The nobles of the Court followed the carriage of the nuncio, which was carrying the Golden Rose, and which was preceded by the chaplain who moved with the rapier. These two papal gifts were put on display on the altar of the church, and the nuncio celebrated the Mass. In the end, the chaplain read the papal letter to the sovereigns, and the prince went up to the altar with his *majordomo*, the Duke of Uceda. Following a specific ceremonial, the nuncio bestowed him the papal rapier (*estoc*) and the hat. The princess was given the Golden Rose after another ceremonial.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the seventeenth century, this ceremonial was not fixed and was different depending on the courts. This ceremonial became more and more complex as well as codified at Versailles at the end of the century. For instance, when the nuncio Delfino came to Paris on 13 August 1696, he had to follow a specific sequence. He first made his entrance into the city where the luxury of his carriages drew applause. Afterwards, he visited princes

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<sup>3</sup> Rafael Ferreira Rabasco, *La representación pontificia en la Corte española: Historia de un ceremonial y diplomacia* (Madrid: Editorial Sanz Y Torres S.L., 2017), p. 200, fn. 378; Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, MS/10169, *Etiquetas de Palacio che han de observar los criados de la casa de S.M. en el uso y egercicio de sus oficios*, vol. 2, pp. 51–61.

and princesses of royal blood.<sup>4</sup> When he had agreed to pay a visit to the king, he used the sovereign's carriage and, accompanied by the Introducer of Ambassadors, was asked to go through both courtyards of the castle, to walk to the Ambassador Room before being allowed to enter the king's room where he was expected.<sup>5</sup> At that moment, the nuncio gave him the letter written by the pope and delivered a short complimentary speech.<sup>6</sup> The nuncio visited the Dauphin, the Duke of

<sup>4</sup> *Le Mercure galant*, August 1696, pp. 282–83: 'Monsieur Delphino, Nonce du Pape, ayant été averti que Sa Majesté lui donneroit audience publique le 13 de ce mois, fit son entrée à Paris le 12 & quoiqu'il ait été obligé de la faire en deuil, pour se conformer à la Cour, qui l'a pris pour la feu Reine-Mère d'Espagne, la beauté de ses Carrosses, jointe au grand nombre de Valets de pied & de Pages avec ses livrées, lui attirera les acclamations de tout le monde. Il se rendit donc incognito le 12 après-midi au Couvent des Pères Mineurs de l'Observatoire de Picpus, où estant en habitant de Prêlat, il reçut les compliments des Princes & Princesses de sang & de la Maison Royale [...] ('Mr Delfino, *nuncio* of the Pope, after being advised His Majesty would give him public audience on the 13th of the month, made his entry in Paris on the 12th and, even if he had to be in mourning in conformity with the Court etiquette after the death of the Queen Mother of Spain, he attracted attention with his carriages' luxury, the number of footmen and pages with their liveries. He went *incognito* to the Fathers Miners, convent of the Picpus Monastery, where he got compliments from Princes and Princesses of blood and from the Royal Family').

<sup>5</sup> *Le Mercure galant*, August 1696, pp. 296–97: 'Le lendemain, le 13, l'introducteur des ambassadeurs accompagna le nonce dans le carrosse du roi, et les neveux du nonce dans le carrosse de Monsieur. Il fut conduit à son hôtel. Le 14, le nonce fut conduit en compagnie de M. de Sainton et du comte de Brienne à Versailles dans le carrosse du roi. Il traversa les deux cours du château, arriva à la salle des ambassadeurs avant d'être conduit à la chambre du roi qui lui fait audience. C'est le moment où le nonce lui remit le bref du pape accompagné d'un compliment'.

<sup>6</sup> *Le Mercure galant*, August 1696, p. 289: 'Sire, Questo è il momento più prezioso della mia vita, il più invocato da miei voti, il più temuto, solo giusto s'ammira, che in una somma fortuna, solo vuole una somma virtù & in cui al bene universale di suoi Soggetti la Maestà & l'amore perfettamente convergono. Da questo trono dunque, anzi dall'anima sublime di *Vostra Maestà* ancor più alta di suo altissimo foglio, imploro alla mia servitù, quel benefico sguardo, col quale *Maestà Vostra* per la sua maggiore e più vera felicità, spero che vorrà fare anco me, come fa gl'altri felici' ('Sir, it is the most delightful moment of my life, the most expected of my dreams, the most feared: I can just admire that, in Your Majesty, virtues, mercy and love are brought together. That is why, from this throne, I beg Your Majesty's soul, higher than your title, to look at me with kindness for your happiness; I hope you will continue to do that as you do for others').

Burgundy and the Dukes of Anjou and Berry subsequently. During these visits, they all received offerings. These two examples emphasise the way presents were handed out after various steps. Even if gift-giving became a habit in the great European courts, these rituals made papal gifts especially valued.

#### WAITING FOR THE GIFT

The gift-giving ritual was part of an elaborate ceremonial whose goal was to draw attention to the patron and the recipient who symbolically competed through visual display. Their goal was to showcase their wealth and their power.<sup>7</sup> The procession of the nuncio was a way to show the wealth of the papal Court while the sovereign rivalled by receiving the nuncio with the most lavish largesse. Thus, can the moment of gift-giving be reckoned as the pinnacle of this display of wealth? Could we deem that the long wait, the etiquette, the gestures, the compliments and the box containing the gift contributed to the establishment of the present as a sample of Holy splendour?

Months, and sometimes years, elapsed between the order, the payment and the reception of a gift. On 30 January 1636, the nuncio in London, Gregorio Panzani, wrote to the cardinal-nephew Francesco Barberini (1597–1679) to tell him how impatient King Charles I was. Indeed, he was waiting for the gifts in his royal bedroom:

The pictures came in time, because just as Father Philip [the Queen's confessor] brought the news to the Queen, the King asked if the pictures were coming, and the Queen, to tease him, answered that they would not be coming any more. The King responded with great concern, why are they no longer coming; the Queen said, because they have already arrived; at which the King was very pleased. I then presented [the pictures] to the Queen, having them carried to her bed one by one, and she greatly appreciated them, and the room being full all the principal ladies approved of the pictures.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Catherine Fletcher, "‘Those who give are not all generous’: Tips and bribes at the sixteenth-century papal court", Max Weber Programme (2011/15), European University Institute Working Papers, pp. 2–10.

<sup>8</sup> Gregorio Panzani and Joseph Berington, *The memoirs of Gregorio Panzani; giving an account of his agency in England. Tr. (by an eminent prelate). To which are added, an intr. and a suppl., exhibiting the state of the English Catholic Church* (Birmingham:

The long wait was part of the performance and increased the value of the presents which were expected. Sovereigns sometimes demanded particular types of gifts and waited for them. On 23 March 1630, Nuncio Giovanni Battista Maria Pallotto asked the Cardinal-nephew Francesco Barberini to send rosaries to Empress Maria Anna (1606–46) who wanted to dispense them to newly converted gentlemen and ladies of the court. The empress identified herself as one of the pope's daughters who obeyed his authority.<sup>9</sup> It was not until 18 January 1631 that she received these rosaries after several requests at dinnertime in the presence of the emperor, the queen of Hungary and all the ladies of the courts who wanted to see the gifts.<sup>10</sup> Besides, gifts were seen by

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Swinney and Walker, 1793), p. 251; cit. after: Rudolph Wittkower, Inigo Jones, *Palladio and English Palladianism* (London: Hardcover, 1983), pp. 211 ff.; Christopher Llyold, *The Queen's Pictures: Royal Collectors through the Centuries* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1991), p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Pallotto to Barberini, Vienna, 23 March 1630, in Giovanni Battista Pallotto, Ciriaco Rocci, and Rotraud Becker, *Nuntiaturen des Giovanni Battista Pallotto und des Ciriaco Rocci (1630–1631)*, vol. 4, no. 26.1 (Tübingen: Nuntiaturbereichte aus Deutschland: nebst ergänzenden Aktenstücken, M. Niemeyer, 2009), p. 126, &7; also in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter cited as BAV), Barb. 6962, fols 123r–v, 126r–27v; in Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Segreteria di Stato, Germania 120, fols 112v–15r: 'La Maestà dell'Imperatrice mi ha hoggi mandato a dire per il suo primo confessore, che in suo nome vogli pregar *Nostro Signore* a mandargli alcune corone benedette da poter dare a questi cavalieri e dame che si convertono alla religione cattolica, poiché una sola, che gli n'era rimasta, l'haveva data ad un barone hora convertito, cacciator maggiore di Stiria; e che in questa sua confidenza riconosce la figlia osservanza e divotione che porta alla *Santità Sua*' ('Her Majesty the Empress sent her first confessor to tell me she would like some holy rosaries from our Lord; thus she could give these rosaries to the gentlemen and ladies who convert to Catholicism. She had already given the last one to a lord recently converted, a well-known fighter of Styria; she made her request casting herself as an obedient and devotional daughter of the Pope').

<sup>10</sup> BAV, Barb. 6968, fols 12r–v, 18r–19r, Letter from Rocci to Barberini, Vienna, 18 January 1631; also in Pallotto, Rocci, Becker, 2009, vol. 4, no. 149, p. 399, &3: 'La cassetta delle corone, mandata da *Nostro Signore* all'imperatrice, è stata da me presentata a *Sua Maestà* insieme coi brevi delle indulgenze, et assicuro *Vostra Eminenza* che sono state gratissime. E la sera dopo cena fu portata la medesima cassetta sopra la tavola dove erano l'imperatore, l'imperatrice, il re d'Ungheria con tutte le dame di corte, per voler veder tutte le corone' ('The box containing the rosaries, sent by our Lord to the Empress, was shown to her with the indulgence briefs; I can tell your

the crowd while they were transported, and they were the object of admiration. Sovereigns waited for their offerings and carefully prepared the entrance of the nuncio as a representative of the Papacy. Even if this long wait was more due to transport problems and material reasons than to the will of the pope, it increased the sovereigns' excitement. Delay can also be explained by the desire to find the perfect presents for the ruler. That quest could sometimes become tough and troublesome to handle due to the sovereigns' desires. They sometimes coveted antique statues and rare paintings that were unavailable on the market. The Papacy could exploit the sovereigns' interests to retain good relations with them during the long wait: if rulers did not remain subordinated to the pope, they knew that they would not obtain what they had requested. At the arrival of the nuncio, the gift-giving ritual was the zenith of the performance after the long wait.

#### Gift-Giving Rituals: Codified Gestures, Speeches and Luxurious Boxes

The etiquette was also a way to distinguish papal gifts from other gifts. In fact, the nuncio took precedence over the other ambassadors as the pope was superior to other sovereigns. This is the reason why the presents offered by the pope were picked out carefully to enhance his power. Furthermore, could we argue that gestures and speeches turned the gift-giving ceremony into a codified ritual emphasizing the power of the Papacy?<sup>11</sup> In 1616, legal expert and scholar Giovanni Bonifacio published a treatise on the symbolism of gestures or *cenni*. According to him, gestures were *muta eloquenza* or mute eloquence. In Chapter XXVII of the treatise, he focuses on *mani* or hands and concentrates on gift-giving in the eighth part of that chapter. He concludes that displaying gestures were similar to an oblation to God.<sup>12</sup> Ambassadors

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Eminence she was very pleased. In the evening, after dinner, the box was brought to the table of the Emperor, the Empress, the King of Hungary and the ladies of the Court who all wanted to see the rosaries').

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Furlotti, 'The Performance of Displaying. Gesture, Behaviour and Art in Early Modern Italy', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 27, no. 1 (2014), 1–13 (p. 3).

<sup>12</sup> Giovanni Bonifacio, *L'arte de' cenni con la quale formandosi fauella visibile, si tratta della muta eloquenza, che non è altro che un facondo silentio. Diuisa in due parti*

gave details of gestures and curtseys in their letters to their sovereigns; these details put the limelight on the importance of these gestures. The expert Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657), a member of the entourage of Francesco Barberini, sent as nuncio to Madrid in 1626, described the royal audience during which gifts were given:<sup>13</sup>

Monsignor Pamphili helped by ordinary nuncio in Madrid, Panzirolo, gave the order to the servants, who wore cloaks but no hats and carried swords, to bring the gifts. Panzirolo went to the small corridor. The honourable Domenico Giovanni Gomez de Mora went to meet him and asked permission for the nuncio to enter because they came in from the wrong entry, not the usual one. Two riders escorted dal Pozzo to the antechamber. He bowed low with one of his knees almost touching the floor and the other half bent, close to the King who remained seated. The King told him to stand up and the cardinal-nephew, Francesco Barberini, bowed again and said that according to the custom he sent him some devotional things which were particularly suitable for him and begged him to take them. The King stood up with his elbows on a chair. [...] The gift was already in front of the King: a painting which was quite big and carried by three servants. The guards opened the wooden box, covered with gold-stamped red leather with velvet finished by gold passementerie, so that the King could see the painting.<sup>14</sup>

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... di Giovanni Bonifaccio giureconsulto, & assessore. *L'Opportuno Academico Filarmonico, appresso Francesco Grossi* (Vicenza: Presso Francesco Grossi, 1616), part 1, chapter XXVII, 'Delle mani', & 8 'Offerir doni', p. 285: '[...] Nella medaglia di Antonino è una figura, che tiene la mano destra aperta, e con la sinistra porge sopra un'altare il donario, cioè l'oblatione fatta à Dio; E nella medaglia di L. Celio Cesare è una figura humana, che tiene la mano destra aperta, e nella sinistra un dono con questa inscriptione PIETAS' ('[...] On the medal of Antoninus there is a figure with her right hand open, and with her left hand she hands out the gift over an altar, that is the oblation made to God; and on the medal of L. Celius Caesar there is a human figure with her right hand open, who holds a gift in her left hand with this inscription PIETAS']

<sup>13</sup> See also Simon Díaz, 'La estancia del cardenal legato Francesco Barberini en Madrid el año 1626', *Anales de Estudios Madrilenos*, 17 (1980), 159–215.

<sup>14</sup> BAV, Barb. Lat. 5689, fols 78–80: 'Monsignore Panfilio con l'Auditor del Cardinale Nuntio il Signor Giovanni Iacomo Panzirolo ordinarono detto regalo e lo fecen portare dagli Aiutanti di Camera con Cappa e Spada senza Cappello. Si portò per il Passadizzo, al fondo del quale si fè massa. Venne meco il Signore Domenico Giovanni Gomez de Mora che serviva come sopra s'è detto assiduamente nelle stanze il Signore Cardinale, esso apri le Porte e in Palazzo andò a procurar, che si potesse essere introdotto come seguì subito perché arrivati non per la porta ordinaria, ma per l'altra banda a un'Anticamera del Re vennero due Cavalieri che servivano alla Camera del Rè e m'Introdussero alla Porta, si fè una profonda riverenza col ginocchio destro quasi



There was a *mise-en-scene* as the box was opened like a theatre curtain. Gestures and genuflections acted as an introduction to this opening to draw the audience's attention to the gift. Attention was also paid to containers to reinforce the power of the gifts. On 30 September 1702, a sum of 6,50 *scudi* was paid to Lorenzo Perfetti *cassaro di Palazzo* for a small box covered with red leather from Cordova and Morocco and adorned with golden *putti*, flowers and the papal blazon. The package was designed to enclose a stoup for King Philip V of Spain.<sup>15</sup> A red-leather box containing a plate in agate given on 23 October 1708 to the Dauphin of France can still be seen today in the Museo Nacional of Prado.<sup>16</sup> The box helped protect the plate, but it was also a luxurious receptacle. Holy swaddling clothes were also put in wooden boxes covered with velvet.

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che in terra, a mezza un'altro, e due passi discosto dal Sua Maestà un'altra restando inginocchiati, esso subdetto fece cenno, e disse Levantos ò Levantese, che così feci dicendoli che il Signor Cardinale Legato mio signor faceva humilissima riverenza alla Maestà sua e che in segno dell'Osservanza e riverenza del suo affetto gl'inviava alcune cose di devotione come le più proportionate e corrispondenti che havesse saputo scegliere alla devotione e somma pietà della Maestà sua, la qual suppliva a gradire questa sua affettuosa volontà. Era Sua Maestà in piedi appoggiata a una sedia. [...] Già la robba tutta era entrata a vista di S. M[ae]stà, e il quadro particolarmente che per essere assai grande, era sostenuto da tre aiutanti, che aperta la Custodia, in che era di Legno coperto di Cuiro rosso stampato d'oro, e foderata di drappa terminato da parsamano d'oro diede agio a Sua Maestà che lo potesse vedere [...].

<sup>15</sup> *Archivio di Stato di Roma* (hereafter cited as ASR), Camerale I, Registri mandati camerali, no. 1051, fols 513 and 521: 'A Lorenzo Perfetti cassaro di Palazzo *scudi* sei danari cinquanta moneta. Se gli fanno pagare per prezzo di una cassa coperta di cordovanno e morlacco cremisi con vari putti, fregi, fiori et arme di Sua Santità dorata per porvi l'Acqua Santa d'argento mandata a donare da Nostro Signor Principe Borghese, ambasciatore straordinario della Maestà di Filippo V. Re delle Spagne doppo l'Udienza di congedo havuto da Sua Beatitudine in conformità della retroscritta attestazione di Monsignor Maggiordomo di Sua Santità' ('A sum of 6,50 *scudi* was paid to Lorenzo Perfetti *cassaro di Palazzo* for creating a small box covered with red leather from Cordova and Morocco and adorned with golden *putti*, flowers and the papal blazon. The box was designed to enclose a stoup for Prince Borghese ambassador of King Philip V of Spain, after his audience of leave. The object was verified by the papal *majordomo*'); after: Alvar González-Palacios, *Arredi e ornamenti alla corte di Roma: 1560–1795* (Milano: Electa, 2004), pp. 144–45.

<sup>16</sup> Letizia Arbeteta Mira, *El tesoro del Delfin: alhajas de Felipe V recibidas por henrencia de su padre Luis, gran Delfin de Francia* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2001), no. 38, p. 171; Museo Nacional del Prado, MNAD 389.D.

On 9 July 1724, Marco Antonio Ravasi, *maestro falegname del Palazzo*, was paid 28,85 *scudi* for designing several boxes to protect luxurious velvet-covered boxes, destined for the young Prince of Brazil, during the travel.<sup>17</sup> The pope seemed to have understood the importance of this *mise-en-scene* which turned gifts into samples of his power in Europe.

### Getting the order and the timing right

The nuncio also had to follow a specific order by bestowing the offerings first to the person present with the highest rank. Cassiano dal Pozzo provided many details about the etiquette in Spain: recipients were offered their gifts according to their ranks. After visiting King Philip IV, the Nuncio Francesco Barberini asked to meet his wife, Queen Elizabeth of France (1602–44):

Gomez was sent to see if we could visit the Queen and came back telling Monsignor Pamphili she was with the young Infanta and the Queen of Hungary. Pamphilj said that if he had known that he would have been ready to give the gifts, but he had to go back to a man assigned to pack, who was waiting for him in a small hallway, to check the boxes and make sure they were ready to be given together. I gave the order to transport them to the room, paying attention to the fact that they would not get mixed up. Those who carried the Queen's gift were on my right-hand side, those for the Queen of Hungary on my left, and those for the Infanta in the middle.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> ASR, Cam. I, Registri dei mandati camerati, vol. 1061 (1712–25), fol. 138: 'Illustrissimo Reverentissimo Monsignore Tesoriere Generale di Nostro Signore si conpiacerà d'ordinare che sia spedito mandato à favore di Mastro Marco Antonio Ravasi falegname del Palazzo di 28,85 *moneta* sono per saldo d'un suo Conto di diverse Casse fatte per incassare le casse ricamate delle fascie, mandate da Sua Santità alle Principe del Brasili Primogenito della Maestà del Re di Portogallo, et altro, come distintamente dal *Sudetto* Conto esistente in comodia, e gli bacio le mani. Di Palazzo li 9 Luglio 1724, Oliviero Promaggiordomo; P. Antonio Personelli computista'; fol. 138: 'Illustrissimo Signore Francesco Montorioni le piacerà di pagare a Mastro Marco Antonio Ravasi falegname del *Sacro Palazzo* 28,85 *moneta* se gli fanno pagare per saldo d'un Conto di diverse Casse fatte per incassare le casse ricamate delle fascie, mandate da Sua Santità alle Principe del Brasili Primogenito della Maestà del Re di Portogallo in conformità della retroscritta attestazione. Di Monsignore Olivieri Promaggiordomo di Sua Santità, che così pagati con ricevuta di Casa questo di 23 Luglio 1724'.

<sup>18</sup> BAV, Barb. Lat. 5689, fol. 79: 'Si mandò a veder da detto Gomez, se si poteva andare dalla Regina, tornò dicendo che haveva ritrovato, che era con l'Infantina,

The same etiquette was required again and the nuncio bowed three times in front of every member of the royal family before speaking:

Their Majesties were in the gallery where the cardinal was received in audience, and they were standing between two windows with the Queen in the middle, the Queen of Hungary on the right and the Infanta on the left in the arms of the countess of Salvatierra. I bowed three times to the Queen, who immediately told me to stand up, and I did the same before the Infanta. I decided to speak to her before speaking to the Queen of Hungary because she was their first child and sole heir.<sup>19</sup>

The same exchange of courtesies took place before the gift-giving ceremony. However, Cassiano Dal Pozzo left the room after three curtsies and was not there for the opening. An incident occurred because the servants had mixed up the presents and Dal Pozzo had to put everything back in order. Their Majesties left before it was over.<sup>20</sup>

e Regina d'Ungheria se ne dé conto à Monsignor Panfilio, che disse, che se loro havevan saputo che se fusse comparso a questo effetto, che era da andar venne al ritorno che facemmo dal Passadizzo dove esso stava aspettando Imballatore che s'andasse, che Le Maestà Loro si contentavano, che si presentassero, se bene stavano insieme onde m'incaminai a quella volta facendo camminare I Regali con questo ordine, acciò non si confondessero. Venivano qui che portavano quel della Regina a man dritta, quello d'Ungheria a man manca, e quelli dell'Infantina nel mezzo'.

<sup>19</sup> BAV, Barb. Lat. 5689, fol. 80: 'Erano Le Loro Maestà nella Galleria dove fu data l'udienza p.a al Signor Cardinale n.ro e erano quasi che a mezzo tra due finestre in piedi, La Regina in mezzo, La d'Ungheria a man dritta, L'infantina alla manca in braccio alla Contessa di Salvatierra feci le tre sudette riverenze inginocchiandomi alla regina, e La Regina per subito fè cenno che io, mi Levassi come feci, esponendoli l'Ordine del moi Signore come anco feci all'Infantina, essendosi risoluto che prima a Lei che alla d'Ungheria si parlasse, come Primagenita e per allora unica herede, e poi alla d'Ungheria'.

<sup>20</sup> BAV, Barb. Lat. 5689, fol. 80: '[...] rispose Sua Maestà che ringrazia il Signore dell'affetto al quale havrebbe corrisposto all'occasioni. La Regina d'Ungheria, ò fusse per essere alla presenza della Regina ò per essere ancor familiare non rispose, mà con la benignità, e hilarità del volto dé segno d'haver aggradito. Per l'Infantina né anco fù risposto, non vedendo che si dicesse altro, e vistasi già la robba da dette Maestà mi ritirai camminando all'adietro, come pur s'era fatto in Camera del Rè con le sudette tre riverenze, nel parlare all'Infantina si dava dell'Altezza Serenissima, gli Aiutanti lasciarono i Bacili che furono riposti, e confuse le robbe onde appena ero arrivato su Le Loggie che La S.a Duchessa di Gandia e La Salutierra mi fecen chiamare, acciò Le rimettessi per ordine, come feci, passando a questo effetto nella stanza, dove l'havevano posate, che era al piè di detta Galleria essendosi ritirate detta Maestà' ('His Majesty

This event shows how gestures and speeches created an organised code analysed by Judith Butler and Jonathan Culler.<sup>21</sup> The gift-giving ritual was well planned with a particular order and gestures that were carefully chosen to draw attention to papal gifts.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, in his treatise, Bonifacio attached great importance to finding the right moment: he said that the commissioner had to pay attention to time and people because ‘small things which are handed out at the right time are truly appreciated while big things handed out at the wrong time are left aside’.<sup>23</sup> In fact, nuncios often chose the second public audience to offer their gifts. Nuncio Marescotti wrote to nuncio Salvio Mellini, his successor in Madrid. Mellini gave him advice and told him that the first public audience in the foreign Court was the right moment to offer gifts.<sup>24</sup> However, it was not an obligation. A private audience could be deemed more appropriate. For example, at the Court of King Charles I,

answered, thanking the Lord for the affection to which he would have responded at the occasion. The Queen of Hungary, maybe because she was in the presence of the Queen, and because she was not yet on familiar ground, did not answer, but showed kindness, and satisfaction on her face. The Infantina did not answer either; Because nobody else spoke and the gifts were brought, I retired walking backwards as I had done in the King’s Chamber, with three bows. The Infanta was called Serene Altess; The Servants left the boxes and the gifts were mixed up. That is why when I had just arrived to the lodges, the Serene Duchess of Gandia and La Salutiera asked for me in order to put them back in order, going to this effect to the room where they had been laid, which was next to the Gallery, the Majesties having left’.

<sup>21</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 136; see also Jonathan D. Culler, ‘Philosophy and Literature: The Fortunes of the Performative’, *Poetics Today*, 21, no. 3 (autumn 2000), 503–19 (pp. 512–15). He notes: ‘acts and gestures [...] create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender code’.

<sup>22</sup> See: Andrew Ladis, William Eiland, and Carolyn Wodd, *The Craft of Art: Originality and Industry in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque Workshop* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Bonifacio, chapter XXVII, p. 287: ‘Quando il picciolo dona la grande non si considera la ricchezza del dono, deve però il donatore haver riguardo al lungo, al tempo, & alle persone; percioche sicome alcune cose picciole opportunamente donate riescono gratissime, così altre senza questa opportunità sono benche grandi, noiose’.

<sup>24</sup> David García Cueto, *Seicento bolognes y Siglo de Oro español. El arte, la época, los protagonistas* (Madrid, 2006), doc. 64, p. 340; *Relación de los regalos entregados por el nuncio Marescotti en Madrid después de su primera audiencia pública*, 1670, Biblioteca de la Iglesia Nacional Española en Roma, MS 447, fol. 11r.

gifts were privately offered by the pope in front of just a few nobles in a tense period between Catholics and Protestants. Etiquette was less strict. When nuncio Panzani gave paintings to the queen of England, the ritual took place in her bedroom without specific etiquette rules:

Especially pleasing to the Queen were the ones by Vinci, and by Andrea del Sarto... I said that Your Eminence had done his best to seek out the said pictures to serve Her Majesty and that now your Eminence would be pleased, to hear that they please Her Majesty... She replied very courteously, thanking Your Eminence and often repeating that they pleased her much, but that she would not be allowed to keep them, because the King would steal them from her... The King came rushing in to see the pictures the moment the Queen informed him that they had arrived and called Jones the architect, a great expert of pictures, the Earl of Holland, and the Earl of Pembroke to be present [...].<sup>25</sup>

The nuncio sent to the Imperial Court in 1634 also wrote to cardinal-nephew Francesco Barberini that he had privately granted the Golden Rose to Maria Anna wife of the Elector of Bavaria.<sup>26</sup> These various gift-giving rituals should be analysed. If some objects were publicly given in front of the whole Court, others were granted secretly in private. How did these rituals turn material objects into message-bearers, and did these objects have an efficient role in politics?

#### GIFT-GIVING RITUALS: AN EXAMPLE OF PAPAL SOFT POWER?

##### Material objects serving diplomacy

In 1706, the imperial nuncio Marcantonio Santini wrote to the pope that someone had told him that ‘on 2 [June] the internuncio Guarienti had made his solemn entrance in Belgrade and that the vice-king gave him some precious things as the internuncio gave himself some offerings

<sup>25</sup> Wittkower, Jones, p. 211; Llyold, p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> BAV, Barb 6992, 47r, Letter from Baglioni to Barberini, 1634; AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Nunziature diverse 10, fols 319v–20v, published in: Baglioni et al., vol. 7, Letter 74.1, p. 420: ‘Presentai la rosa alla *serenissima* arciduchessa elettrice, ma privamente [...]’ (‘I gave the rose to Her most Serene Electress Archduchess, but in private [...].’); See also: AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Principi 61, fols 13r–14v, Letter from Carpegna to Barberini, 28 juillet 1635.

in exchange'.<sup>27</sup> This letter demonstrates how the Papacy kept an eye on gift-giving. In fact, the nuncio gave the pope all the information about gift exchanges, thus showing considerable interest in the objects endowed and the people involved. Objects began to testify to the relationship between sovereigns. It was also crucial to know which items were particularly valued in a foreign court. Gift exchanges helped maintain good relations and seemed to serve the cause of the pope. In 1659, Cardinal-nephew Francesco Barberini sent a bas-relief representing the encounter between Attila and Pope Leo the Great by Ercole Ferrata, a box for the king, two paintings of Venice and Neapel for the Infanta Marguerite, a reliquary for her sister and an unknown painting for the duke of Terranova to the king of Spain in Madrid.<sup>28</sup> He wanted to recover his ecclesiastical goods confiscated by King Philip IV, and these gifts helped him advance his cause.

Another telling example is worth mentioning. After the Corsican Guard Affair, during which soldiers of Pope Alexander VII's Corsican Guard came to blows with the Frenchmen guarding the French embassy in Rome on 20 August 1662, Cardinal-nephew Flavio Chigi (1631–93) brought many gifts to France to resolve the diplomatic incident. If Flavio Chigi's apologies were indeed able to resolve the incident, papal presents helped him too. Fréart de Chantelou, a connoisseur in the French court, described papal gifts to the Royal Family on 2 August during an audience in Fontainebleau. Twelve Neapolitan horses, coins, paintings, reliquaries and small Italian gifts like fans, gloves and perfumes were dispatched to the members of the Royal Family.<sup>29</sup> Cardinal Chigi was

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<sup>27</sup> AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, t. 243, fol. 436v, Letter from Marcantonio Santini to the Apostolic Chamber, Vienna, 12 June 1706: 'Scrivono da Belgrado esservi alle 2 del passato solennemente entrato l'Internunzio Cej. Guarienti, ch'il giorno seguente abbi avuto solenne audienza da quel vicere, à fui regalato diverse cose preziose mandate da questa Corte, e che poi regalato anch'Egli con la sua Corte proporzionalmente da d. visire [...]'.  
<sup>28</sup> BAV, Arch. Barberini, cardinale Francesco Barberini senior, Giustificazioni, no. 7883; BAV, Barb. Lat. 9854, fols 28, 22 March 1659. See: Luigi Cacciaglia, *Le 'Giustificazioni' dell'Archivio Barberini. Inventario*, vol. 1: *Le giustificazioni dei cardinali* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2014; Studi e testi, no. 485).

<sup>29</sup> Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Archivio Magalotti, 224; Venezia, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, codice Cicogna, 1697, fols 306–23: 'Inventario delli quadri nobili' in

sure to satisfy the king by choosing Bolognese paintings and paintings of battles. A procession of gifts followed the nuncio. It was a show to display the power of the pope even in difficult times. This procession is represented in various engravings, which shows how memorable it was for contemporaries.<sup>30</sup>

Gift-giving associated with apologies solved diplomatic problems: they can thus be considered examples of soft power like economic resources, able to convince and to display wealth. Gifts helped defuse tension after diplomatic incidents, even if they were not a perfect solution to alleviate the situation and policy measures or hard power were more efficient. However, there is an ambiguity in this profusion of offerings which can be regarded as an example of generosity but also a way to show that the Papacy remained intact after this incident. A coin representing the triumphal entrance of Flavio Chigi in Paris in 1664 can be considered a telling object of this ambiguity as it illustrates the unweakened power of the pope even after the diplomatic incident and the economic crisis.<sup>31</sup> Gift-giving became an example of soft-power, an instrumental way to unify Europe under pontifical domination by using the artistic and cultural identity. Even if Versailles became an important place in the seventeenth century, Rome remained the historical birthplace of Antiquity and the home of artistic creation.

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'Inventario di tutte le robbe imballate qui in Roma per servitio dell'Eminentissimo et Reverentissimo Cardinale Chigi legato nell'andata che farà in Parigi'; Daniela Del Pesco, *Bernini in Francia: Paul de Chantelou e il Journal de voyage du cavalier Bernin en France* (Napoli: Biblioteca Electa Napoli, 2007), p. 120.

<sup>30</sup> See for example: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, Collection Michel Hennin, no. 4296: 'LA POMPEUSE ET MAGNIFIQUE ENTREE DE FLAVIO CARD.AL CHIGI | Legat a Latere en France, faite a Paris le 9.e d'Aoust 1664, sous les auspices et par les ordres | de sa Maj.te tres-Chrestienne, ou se voit son Eminence accompagnée de Mr le Prince de | Condé, de M.r le Duc d'Anguien, precedée du Clergé, de la ville, et de la Noblesse, et | suivie des Prelats Italiens, et Evesques François'.

<sup>31</sup> Beatrice Cacciotti, *La collezione di antichità del cardinale Flavio Chigi* (Roma: Aracne, 2004), p. 2.

### The dangers of gift-giving: corruption and spies in politics

In 1626, Cardinal Ascanio Filomarino sent a gift of two boxes filled with rosaries made of stone and amber with two small paintings and crystal reliquaries to the Spanish countess of Olivares but ‘she refused, saying her husband had told her not to take presents which were from the Cardinal legate [...]’.<sup>32</sup> The countess’s fears were justified. In fact, Cassiano Dal Pozzo wrote that the names of all the women from the Court and Meninas who had taken offerings would be recorded. If they were to be useful later for diplomatic purposes, the pope knew he could use gifts to persuade them to take his side.<sup>33</sup> In his book about the Roman Court, D.S. Chamber suggests a way to distinguish ceremonial gifts from bribes: ‘the performance of just and necessary services in good conscience, for which the labourer was worthy of his hire – in distinction from manipulating the machine and silencing consciences to assist sinister ends’.<sup>34</sup> Gifts given during public rituals were included in inventories while the others were rarely mentioned. Papal gift-giving was a type of secret language: whoever took the presents after a codified ritual became a debtor. Gifts conveyed political and religious messages thanks to the ritual and became very efficient soft power tools. If amounts of money are mentioned in archival sources, offerings were a more discrete element to obtain the support of a prince.

<sup>32</sup> BAV, Barb. Lat. 5689, fol. 81: ‘il *Signor* filomarino inviò a donare alla *Signora* Contessa di Olivares un regalo di due Bacili di Corone parte Camaldoli, parte d’altra sorte con tre ò quattro di gioia, e Ambra gialla con due Quadretti in pittura e alcuni Reliquari di Christallo che refusò con dire che non teneva dal suo marito d’acccettar se non dal *Cardinale Legato* tiene q[uan]to in sommo rigiro il Conte d’Olivares, e la sua famiglia di non accettar [...]’ (‘Sir Filomarino sent a gift of two boxes filled with rosaries, some from Camaldoli some of another sort with three of four of them decorated with jewels, and yellow amber, with two small paintings and crystal reliquaries to the Spanish Countess of Olivares but she refused, saying Count Olivares had told her and her family not to take presents which were from the Cardinal legate [...]).

<sup>33</sup> BAV, Barb. Lat. 5689, fol. 81: ‘il Con occasione del sudetto regalo da farsi a Dame e a Menini s’hebbe nota de nomi Loro, che qui a basso si porranno’ (‘When the ladies and the meninas received this gift, their names were noted for all intents or purposes’).

<sup>34</sup> David Sanderson Chambers, *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1970), p. 310.



In 1659, to avoid being blamed for corruption when Cardinal Francesco Barberini sent him books and a small painting representing *The Adoration of the Magi* by Pietro da Cortona, Don Luis de Haro chief minister of the King of Spain Philip IV refused to take the painting for himself and gave it to the king.<sup>35</sup> He only kept the less precious books.<sup>36</sup> He was, in fact, perfectly aware that this amounted to attempted corruption. Therefore, gift-giving was particularly observed by ambassadors and politicians who knew the symbolism behind gift exchanges. The presents had an instrumental intention and generated a debt. The price of the object was often detailed by the ambassador who gave more importance to the economic value than to the artistic value. In a letter to d'Antin, head of the Bâtiments, written on 13 February 1720, Charles-François Poerson director of the French Academy in Rome writes about a diamond cross 'of the value of fifty thousand ecus' bestowed by the nuncio Albani to the emperor.<sup>37</sup> Handing out an

<sup>35</sup> Yves Bottineau, 'L'Alcázar de Madrid et l'inventaire de 1686. Aspects de la tour d'Espagne au XVIIe siècle', *Bulletin Hispanique*, 58, no. 4 (1956), 421–52 (p. 452): 'Otra Pintura en piedra color de agata de dos tercias de alto y media vara de ancho del nacimiento de nuestro Señor y adoraion de los Pastores de mano de Guido [this word was replaced by 'P. de Cortona'] con su marco de media cana y agallones de plata y embutidos de Lapis Lazuli, y le faltan otros adornos que se conoce tenia este marco' ('Another two-metre-high stone painting in agate, half the same size in width as the Birth of Our Lord and the Adoration of the Pastors by the hand of Guido [this indication was replaced by P. de Cortona] with a bevelled frame inlaid with silver and lapis-lazuli and other missing inlays').

<sup>36</sup> BAV, Barb. Lat. 9854, fol. 42, Letter from Niccolò Ricci to Francesco Barberini, 7 April 1659: '[Haro] rispose [...] che si compaceva delli libri e che gl'haverrebbe letti con particolare gusto. Poi discorse sopra il regalo della pittura del Cortona dicendome che cosa simigliante non poteva star meglio quanto ch'in mano di tenersi solamente i libri inviati dal cardinale' ('Haro said he was very happy with the books and that he would read them with singular pleasure. Then he spoke about the painting of Cortona which he had received as a gift, saying he could not keep such a thing and that he would only keep the books sent by the cardinal').

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Poerson to d'Antin, 13 February 1720, in *Correspondance des directeurs de l'Académie de France à Rome avec les surintendants des bâtimens*, vols 5–6 (Rome: Accademia di Francia, 1895–96), Charavay frères, 1895, letter no. 2214, p. 299: '[...] L'on assure aussi que M. Albano porte, de la part de Sa Sainteté, une croix de diamant de la valeur de cinquante mille écus et un petit portrait de l'empereur Charles Quint, enrichi de gros diamants, pour Sa Majesté Impériale' ('They also say

object was more discreet than giving hard cash but can be considered a symbolic language enhanced by certain specific rituals.

#### A WAY TO UPHOLD THE SUPREMACY OF ITALIAN ART? HOW GIFT-GIVING BECAME AN ARTISTIC CHALLENGE

During his first public audience in 1670, nuncio Marescotti gave the Royal Family in Madrid a commode with a clock, a bas-relief which represented a Virgin, jewels, gloves, fans and small bars of soap ordered specially from Rome.<sup>38</sup> The Papacy only sent typical Italian offerings produced by the best artisans or Italian paintings by well-known artists. These gifts were often put together to create a *bel composto* or an ideal composition of several artefacts. For example, when nuncio Fabrizio Spada went to France in 1674, he brought with him a painting by an Italian master, a porphyry table, an antique urn and some *galanteries*.<sup>39</sup> These objects were selected to appeal to the senses, not only sight but also smell. In fact, the power of a sovereign was shown by the material and artistic value of the presents. The rituals helped these gifts become a fragment of the papal Court: they reflected the Roman Court in a foreign Court and had to be particularly luxurious. Papal gifts were specific because they mixed profane and religious concerns, for example, a reliquary with marble inlay or a painting with an earthly scene, but they were accompanied with a brief from the pope. These gifts were subordinated to the dual power of the Papacy. Gifts were chosen to show Italian culture in the Great European Courts as French theatre would be used later, in the eighteenth century, to celebrate French culture: a way to seduce pleasantly.<sup>40</sup>

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M. Albano brings from the Pope a diamond cross of the value of fifty thousand ecus and a small portrait of Emperor Charles Quint enhanced with big diamonds to Her Imperial Majesty’).

<sup>38</sup> García Cueto, doc. 64, p. 340.

<sup>39</sup> Ségolène de Dainville, ‘Maison, dépenses et ressources d’un Nonce en France sous Louis XIV, d’après les papiers du Cardinal Fabrizio Spada’, *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire*, 82, no. 2 (1970), 919–70; AAV, Nunziatura di Francia 435, fols 122–23, 218v, 221r.

<sup>40</sup> Rahul Markovits, *Civiliser l’Europe. Politiques du théâtre français au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

Although the efficiency of the presents should not be overstated, they constituted a boon to diplomacy. Offerings contributed to the image of the pope as a pacifist and a connoisseur. This is why the originality and the variety of the gifts given by the pope were renowned in great European Courts. Bestowing an object was not enough: it had to be accompanied with rituals including processions, gestures, speeches, boxes which made the present convey a message. Private or public rituals seem to have changed the significance of the offering: in fact a gift given in secret was an attempted bribery. Speeches were calculated in order to suit perfectly the occasion and to avoid a misstep. A brief of the pope always gave more value to the present than just an economic equivalence. The considerable number of papal offerings also illustrates his fragile situation in Europe and his willingness to increase his political and religious power. The choice of the gift according to the Court for which it was intended helped gift-giving become a real example of soft power.

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