

## THE SULTAN'S NEW CLOTHES: OTTOMAN–MAMLUK GIFT EXCHANGE IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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Long before the caliph Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809) sent Charlemagne (r. 768–814) his famous gift of an elephant named Abu 'l-'Abbas in 802, rare and valuable goods—fine garments and precious stones, slave-girls and stallions, relics and eunuchs—had played an important role in diplomatic relations.<sup>1</sup> The artfully chosen gift is an eloquent envoy, capable of imparting a multitude of messages and of engendering diverse and even contradictory sentiments: deference and admonition, allegiance and bravado, submission and disdain. For as long as embassies have visited foreign capitals, gifts have been used to establish and solidify bonds between empires. They also display the magnanimity and fortunes of their givers and compel responses in kind from their recipients.<sup>2</sup>

The exchange of gifts was a significant aspect of the relations between the burgeoning Ottoman empire and the aging Mamluk state, from the earliest contacts between the two polities in the late fourteenth century until the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517. A period of great flux in the eastern Mediterranean, “the long fifteenth century” witnessed momentous shifts in political and military hegemony, diplomatic and cultural relations, and patterns of trade and migration. The history of the relations between the two empires has been the subject of much scholarship in recent years, revealing the intricacies of a complex bond between two Muslim polities that were continuously engaged in a process of self-definition and legitimization vis-à-vis the other.<sup>3</sup> To shed further light on the formation, development, and deterioration of this bond, it is necessary to examine

the political and ideological discourses through which it was expressed and that often depended upon the “language” of gifts.

This study addresses the following questions: Did gift exchanges take place between the Ottoman and Mamluk sultans during the fifteenth century? If so, what shape did the flow of gifts take as the century progressed? Did it proceed in fits and starts, abating during periods of conflict and resuming during periods of entente? What kinds of gifts were sent by each side, and what might this suggest about the availability of, and attitudes toward, different kinds of commodities and materials? Finally, what kinds of diplomatic messages can be distilled from the choices of specific gifts on certain occasions?

In order to answer these questions, I have compiled a corpus of data from six late medieval Arabic historical chronicles and one collection of diplomatic correspondence: *Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madā 'l-ayyām wa 'l-shuhūr*<sup>4</sup> and *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa 'l-Qāhira*<sup>5</sup> by Ibn Taghribirdi (d. ca. 1470); *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa 'l-abdān fī tawārīkh al-zamān*<sup>6</sup> by Ibn al-Sayrafī (d. 1495); *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*<sup>7</sup> by Ibn Tulun (d. ca. 1546); *Münşe'ātü 's-selāṭīn*<sup>8</sup> by Feridun Ahmed Beg (d. 1583); *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr*<sup>9</sup> by Ibn Iyas (d. 1524); and *al-Sulūk li-ma'rīfat duwal al-mulūk*<sup>10</sup> by al-Maqrizi (d. 1442). With the exception of Feridun Ahmed Beg's collection of Ottoman diplomatic correspondence, the remaining works are chronicles written by scholars in the Mamluk empire.

Taken together, these texts provide a wealth of information about the world of diplomatic courtship—such as the dispatch and reception of envoys, the gifts they bore from their patrons, and the language of official letters—allowing us to reconstruct a history of gift

exchange over an extended period. Our sources make reference to a total of sixty-six encounters between Ottoman and Mamluk envoys and rulers during the period under examination (an average of one every two years). About two-thirds of these references contain explicit mentions of diplomatic gifts, often with accompanying descriptions. On the basis of these descriptions— tantalizingly brief though they often are—it is possible to discern some broad trends of exchange, and to make some observations about the ways in which each empire projected a certain political identity on its sometime ally and rival.

The following pages present the corpus of diplomatic visits assembled from the sources listed above. I have included every mention of a gift, including the few cases where all efforts to decipher the object in question have been in vain. The analysis that follows aims, firstly, to provide a bird's-eye view of the flow of gifts and diplomatic encounters as the Ottoman–Mamluk political relationship evolved. Secondly, it attempts to isolate

patterns of gift giving and evidence pertaining to the availability and popularity of different commodities and materials in the fifteenth century.

#### THE CORPUS OF DIPLOMATIC VISITS AND GIFT EXCHANGES

Below is a list of all sixty-six diplomatic encounters mentioned in the historical sources surveyed. Proceeding on the assumption that an official envoy would not likely have appeared in a foreign court without a gift—an insult that, if intended, would probably have been remarked upon by contemporary chroniclers—I have also listed every encounter not accompanied by a mention of gifts. Each record in the list contains the names of two rulers, with an arrow indicating the direction in which the letter and/or gift traveled.<sup>11</sup> This is followed by the date of the encounter (or the date of the official letter), and a description of the gift, if one is supplied. The gifts are emphasized in bold type.<sup>12</sup>

1. Bayezid I (r. 791–804 [1389–1402]) → Barquq (r. 784–791 [1382–89]; 792–801 [1390–99]) (Muharram 790 [January 1388]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>13</sup>
2. Bayezid I → Barquq (6 Shawwal 793 [6 September 1391]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>14</sup>
3. Barquq → Bayezid I (*undated*): Reply to previous letter. No gifts mentioned.<sup>15</sup>
4. Bayezid I → Barquq (Dhu 'l-Qa'da 795 [September 1393]): "News came of the arrival of the envoy of the King of Rum, Abu Yazid ibn 'Uthman, bringing with him **gifts** (*taqādim*) for the sultan. The reason that he came was...to inform the sultan about Timur Lank and to warn him...He also sent a request to the sultan for a skilled doctor (*ṭabīb ḥādhiq*) and medicine suitable for his illness (*adwiya tuwāfiq marādahu*), for he was suffering from joint pain (*ḍarabān al-mafāsil*). When the sultan read Ibn 'Uthman's letter...he appointed [the doctor] al-Rayyis Shams al-Din ibn Saghir to him, and sent two loads of medicines that suited his malady, as well as a **grand gift** with his envoy."<sup>16</sup>
5. Bayezid I → Barquq (Sha'ban 796 [June 1394]): "Next arrived ambassadors of the Ottoman sultan Yıldırım Bayezid, ruler of Asia Minor (*Rūm*), stating that he was sending **200,000 dirhams** as assistance for al-Zahir, and that he would await the sultan's reply so that he might act accordingly...Letters of praise and thanks were written to all three rulers, stating the wishes of the sultan."<sup>17</sup>
6. Bayezid I → Faraj (r. 801–15 [1399–1412]) (15 Dhu 'l-Hijja 803 [27 July 1401]): "And on this day, a large group of envoys arrived from Ibn Yazid [*sic*] b. Murad b. 'Uthman, the King of Rum. Their most senior member was one called Amir Ahmad, and he was one of Ibn Yazid's eminent princes. He was received by the office of the chamberlain...and they lodged him in the home of Amir Qushtamar al-Mansuri, in Bab al-Barqiyya."<sup>18</sup>

“And on [16 Dhu ’l-Hijja], the envoys of Abu Yazid b. ‘Uthman—the King of Rum—presented a gift, consisting of **ten slaves (*mamālīk*), ten horses (*khayl*), ten lengths of broadcloth (*qīṭa‘ min al-jūkh*), two silver cups (*sharibatān min al-fiḍḍa*), ten pieces of silver plates, and other things (*qīṭa‘ fiḍḍa mā bayna aṭbāq wa-ghayrahā*)—and several gifts for the nobles...**”<sup>19</sup>

7. Mehmed I (r. 816–24 [1413–21]) → al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh (r. 815–24 [1412–21]) (middle of Dhu ’l-Hijja 817 [February 1415]): “We have sent to you...intended as a gift, **five *ṭaqūzāt* of various *Rūmī* fabrics (*aqmisha*), three *ṭaqūzāt* of European (*Ifrañjī*) fabric, and two bundles (*būghjatayn*) of Persian (*‘Ajāmī*) fabric...**”<sup>20</sup>
8. al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh → Mehmed I (Sha‘ban 818 [October 1415]): “We have sent **two fine horses (*khayl*), and two saddles (*sarjayn*) made of gold and silver, and five *ṭaqūzāt* of Egyptian fabric (*aqmisha*), and four *ṭaqūzāt* of Indian and Alexandrian wares (*al-amti‘a ’l-Hindiyya wa ’l-Iskandariyya*)...**”<sup>21</sup>
9. Mehmed I → al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh (7 Safar 823 [22 February 1420]): “On Thursday...envoys from Kirishji [Mehmed I] arrived and they had with them **thirty slaves (*mamlūk*), birds (*ṭuyūr*), many beasts of prey (*jawāriḥ*), silk clothes (*thiyāb ḥarīr*), and other things**... On Monday, 25 Safar, the Portico Hall [*īwān*] was in the service of the envoys...and the sultan bestowed a robe of honor upon the chief emissary.”<sup>22</sup>
10. al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh → Mehmed I (17 Safar 824 [21 February 1421]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>23</sup>
11. Murad II (r. 824–48 [1421–44]; 850–55 [1446–51]) → Barsbay (r. 825–41 [1422–38]) (27 Sha‘ban 826 [5 August 1423]): “A large group arrived from the lands of Ibn ‘Uthman, and among them was a man named ‘Umur...And they had brought with them **a gift** from Ibn ‘Uthman, the ruler of Bursa, and they presented it to [the sultan]. And he, too, presented to Ibn ‘Uthman **things of his own...**”<sup>24</sup>
12. Murad II → Barsbay (2 Rabi‘ I 831 [21 December 1427]): “A man named Taghribirdi al-Hijazi al-Khassaki al-Ashrafi arrived from the lands of Rum. The sultan had sent him to Sultan Murad Beg to affirm his friendship and affection...and because a mighty army had arisen in the lands of Rum and met Murad Beg, and the sultan did not know the truth of the matter regarding this. So he sent the aforementioned emissary to discover the news and also convey greetings to Murad Beg...The emissary was absent for about five months, and upon his return he reported Murad Beg’s victory over the Rum and the infidels. He met Murad in the land of Qustantiniyya and Murad was greatly pleased that the sultan had sent him to inquire about the state of affairs. **He bestowed upon him the very cloth that he was wearing (*qumāshuhu*), and even his turban (*‘imāmatuhu*) and his cap (*qubba‘uhu*), which was made of pure gold. The turban was made of silk and very high-quality cloth with gold brocade (*kāna qumāshuhu ḥarīran wa-jūkhan rafī‘an jiddan*), and it was said that each cubit cost two dinars.**”<sup>25</sup>
13. Murad II → Barsbay (end of Jumada II 831 [mid-April 1428]): “...Envoys arrived from Murad Beg...and they were received by the chamberlains and some of the chief officers...And on 2 Rajab...court service was held in the Portico Hall for the envoys from Ibn ‘Uthman and other Turcoman (*turkmān*) envoys, and it was a memorable and well-attended day. Then, when the service was over, Ibn ‘Uthman’s gift was presented and it included: **fifty *Rūmī* slaves; a white eunuch (*ṭawāshī abyad*); fifteen birds and various wild animals, including some that looked like a sable (*sammūr*), a gray squirrel (*sinjāb*), a lynx (*washaq*), and a fox (*fanak*); twenty velvet garments of European make (*al-mukhmal shughl al-Frañj naḥwa ‘ishrīna thawban*). The sultan reciprocated by bestowing upon the nobles some **slaves and fabrics (*qumāsh*).**”<sup>26</sup>**
14. Murad II → Barsbay (Dhu ’l-Hijja 831 [September–October 1428]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>27</sup>

15. Barsbay → Murad II (*undated response*): "...And we have sent [with our envoy] as a gift for your Majesty, **two Cretan (*Chandakī*) slaves, one male and one female...**"<sup>28</sup>
16. Murad II → Barsbay (*undated*, post-conquest of Salonica, Jumada II 833 [March 1430]): In this letter, a *feth-nāme* of Salonica (announcement of the conquest of Salonica), a **gift** is mentioned, details about which are found in another letter.<sup>29</sup>
17. Barsbay → Murad II (*undated response*): In this letter, Barsbay thanks Murad II for the wonderful **gift**, but no details are supplied.<sup>30</sup>
18. Murad II → Barsbay (*undated*): No gifts mentioned.<sup>31</sup>
19. Barsbay → Murad II (*undated response*): Barsbay thanks Murad II for the wonderful **gift**, but no details are supplied.<sup>32</sup>
20. Murad II → Barsbay (*undated*): No gifts mentioned.<sup>33</sup>
21. Barsbay → Murad II (*undated response*): No gifts mentioned.<sup>34</sup>
22. Murad II → Barsbay (Safar 840 [August–September 1436]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>35</sup>
23. Murad II → Barsbay (Jumada I 840 [November–December 1436]): Murad's envoys arrive with a letter and a **gift**, but no details are supplied by Ibn al-Sayrafi.<sup>36</sup>
24. Jaqmaq (r. 842–57 [1438–53]) → Murad II (10 Jumada I 842 [29 October 1438]): "You had requested an **elephant** from Barsbay (may he rest in peace), but it was not so easy to send it during the winter season. However, we have now dispatched it for the service of your throne. Our envoy has placed the elephant on a ship, and it will arrive subsequently, after the winter season, in the land of Turkey..."<sup>37</sup>
25. Murad II → Jaqmaq (18 Dhu 'l-Qa'da 843 [21 April 1440]): "Ibn 'Uthman's envoy presented a **splendid gift of sixty loads of fabric (*shiqaq*), from silk (*ḥarīr*) to sable (*sammūr*) to miniver (*sinjāb*) to lynx (*washaq*), different kinds of garments (*malbūs*), and thirty slaves (*mamālīk*).**"<sup>38</sup>
26. Jaqmaq → Murad II (21 Dhu 'l-Hijja 843 [24 May 1440]): "The amir Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Inal set out for the ruler of the lands of Rum, who is called Murad b. 'Uthman, accompanied by [the latter's] envoy, who had come to Cairo before this date."<sup>39</sup> (Accompanying this envoy were the following twenty-six gifts. In cases where the vocabulary ranges from ambiguous to indecipherable, I have supplied the full text in Arabic script):<sup>40</sup>
  - a. **The noble Kufic Koran**, written in the hand of the Imam 'Uthman b. 'Affan, may God be pleased with him (*al-muṣḥaf al-sharīf al-kūfī bi-khaṭṭ al-imām 'Uthmān b. 'Affān raḍīya Allāh 'anhu*).<sup>41</sup>
  - b. **Two swords, damascened in gold and silver** (السيوف ملحوريه اثنان سقط ذهب سقط فضه)<sup>42</sup>
  - c. **Gold-encrusted weapon (?)** (عجنات سقط ذهب واحد)<sup>43</sup>
  - d. **One steel helmet, inlaid or ornamented with silver** (*khūd fūlād fiḍḍa wāhid*)
  - e. **Two brigandines damascened in gold** (فرفلات محمد بكاري سقط ذهب اثنان)<sup>44</sup>
  - f. **A suit of horse armor** (بركصطوان محمد فلنلي عمار خاص)<sup>45</sup>
  - g. **Four steel axes** (*aṭbār fūlād*)
  - h. **خاص نقش مسمار واحد**<sup>46</sup>
  - i. **درکاس سقط ذهب خاص**<sup>47</sup>
  - j. **Ten turban cloths** in a rosette pattern (*shāshāh shamsī 'ashra*)
  - k. **ساذج قرمزي واحد**<sup>48</sup>
  - l. **Bows made by Ibrahim b. 'Abd Allah** (صمته قوس عمل ابراهيم بن عبد الله)<sup>49</sup>
  - m. **Four carpets with gold thread** (*nakh mudhahhab*)
  - n. **1,000 pieces of Alexandrian velvet** (*qumāsh kamkhā Iskandariyya*)
  - o. **Fifteen saddles** (*sarj*)

- p. **Ten garments** (معصلة شابوري عمل الذلد عشرة)<sup>50</sup>
- q. **A golden saddle** (سرج ذهب وعرفته زركش خاص ورشته ما بهامن الذهب ستمائه مثقال)<sup>51</sup>
- r. **Four silk kerchiefs** (*manādīl nakh arba‘a*)<sup>52</sup>
- s. **Seven kerchiefs and twenty-five leather bags** (مناديل سبع و بهار خمسة وعشرين)<sup>53</sup>
- t. ساذج اربعة<sup>54</sup>
- u. **A golden billhook** (معسه مذهب واحد)<sup>55</sup>
- v. **Balsam oil** (دهن بلسان صمربط)<sup>56</sup>
- w. **Fourteen shawls, camphor-scented (?)** (فوطه كافوري اربعة عشر)<sup>57</sup>
- x. **Seven silk garments** (*tafāṣīl ḥarīr sab‘a*)<sup>58</sup>
- y. **Six garments** (سعديات خاص ستة)<sup>59</sup>
- z. **Three elephants** (*afyāl*)
27. Murad II → Jaqmaq (22 Dhu ‘l-Hijja 848 [1 April 1445]): “One of the emirs of the ruler of Rum arrived with a **cortege of European princes who had been defeated** (*al-umarā’ alladhīna inkasarū min Banī ‘l-Aṣfar*), and they were dressed according to the custom of their country. There were sixteen of them, and their forearms were covered in iron and steel, and on their heads were helmets like basins, and they were on horseback. So the people of Cairo came out to meet them and it was a great day...Murad Beg sent these men to demonstrate his bravery to the Muslims and the Turks, and the bravery of his army. He also sent some of them to Shah Rokh b. Timur Lank, and to the ruler of Tabriz and Baghdad. He sent to Sultan Jaqmaq a splendid gift of **fifty exquisite slaves** (*khamsūna mamlūk min al-ḥisān*) and **five special slave girls** (*khams jawārī ‘l-khāṣṣ*), and other things like fabrics (*qumāsh*) and silk (*ḥarīr*) and velvet (*mukhmal*)....”<sup>60</sup>
28. Mehmed II (r. 848–50 [1444–46]; 855–86 [1451–81]) → Jaqmaq (3 Shawwal 849 [2 January 1446]): “A **gift** arrived from Sultan Muhammad b. Murad Beg ibn ‘Uthman. The occasion for the gift was Murad Beg’s abdication in favor of his son Muhammad, who sent the gift. So they ascended with it to the fortress, [carrying it] in twenty-five crates (*aqfās*): **five crates were full of silver vessels** (*awānin kulluhā fiḍḍa*), from bowls (*aqḍāḥ*) to plates (*suḥūn*) to platters (*sakārij*), and things of that nature; **five crates contained plain clothes** (*thiyāb ṣīrf*); **five contained clothes of gilded velvet** (*mukhmal mudhahhab*); **five contained pieces of silk covered in floral patterns** (*shiqaq ḥarīr muzahharāt*). Accompanying the gift were **five white Rūmī slave girls** (*jawārin biḍ Rūmiyyāt*).<sup>61</sup>
29. Jaqmaq → Murad II (19 Jumada II 853 [9 August 1449]): “Emir Qanim b. Safar Khuja al-Mu‘ayyadi, known as ‘the merchant,’ set out as ambassador to Ibn ‘Uthman, ruler of Asia Minor (*Rūm*), in company with Ibn ‘Uthman’s ambassador, who had arrived before this date.”<sup>62</sup> No gifts mentioned.
30. Murad II → Jaqmaq (18 Safar 854 [2 April 1450]): “Emir Qanim al-Mu‘ayyadi, the merchant, came from Asia Minor (*Rūm*) to Cairo.” No gifts mentioned.<sup>63</sup>
31. Jaqmaq → Mehmed II (*undated*): No gifts mentioned.<sup>64</sup>
32. Mehmed II → Jaqmaq (2 Safar 856 [23 February 1452]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>65</sup>
33. Mehmed II → Inal (r. 857–65 [1453–61]) (*undated*, post-conquest of Constantinople): “[We have sent with our envoy] Jalal al-Din al-Qabuni... a **gift of prisoners** (*asārā*), **slaves** (*ghilmān*), **fabrics** (*aqmisha*), and **other things described in detail in another letter**. And indeed, the relation of these gifts to what is truly incumbent upon us is like the relation of a trickle of water to the ocean....”<sup>66</sup>

34. Mehmed II → Sharif of Mecca (*undated*, post-conquest of Constantinople, pre-Dhu 'l-Qa'da 857 [November 1453]): "...[W]e have sent to you personally **two thousand florins of pure gold** (*alfay aflūrī min al-dhahab al-khāṣṣ al-tāmm al-wazn wa 'l-'iyār*), taken as booty from the conquest, and another **seven thousand florins for the poor**, to be split up as follows: two thousand for the descendants of the Prophet (*al-sādāt wa 'l-nuqabā'*), one thousand for the servants of the two Sanctuaries (*al-Ḥaramayn*), and the rest for those in need in Mecca and Medina... What is hoped for is that you will divide this between them according to their needs and poverty... and that the poor invoke God's blessing upon us in their prayers."<sup>67</sup>
35. Inal → Mehmed II (20 Dhu 'l-Qa'da 857 [22 November 1453]): This is a congratulatory letter from the Mamluks, on the occasion of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. Containing a list much like the one sent by Jaqmaq in 843 [1440], it was presented by Feridun Ahmed Beg in the form of a grid of four columns by four rows: "And we have sent with our envoy a **gift**, to confirm our love and friendship...:"<sup>68</sup>
- a. **One gold damascened sword** (سيف سقط ذهب و بدله مكابن من سمك وسيولق محس)<sup>69</sup>
  - b. **Ten units of damask silk, with gold embroidery** (يمخا سقط ذهب عا.)<sup>70</sup>
  - c. **Maces and steel axes** (ديايبس يرد غايات واطبار فولاد دي)<sup>71</sup>
  - d. **Two hauberks with red velvet and gold embroidery** (چوقلان مخمل احمر بمسما رذهب)<sup>72</sup>
  - e. **Gold-embroidered red velvet curtain (or tapestry) with gold sequins** (*sitr mukhmal aḥmar bi-ṣaffāyih dhahab saqqaṭ dhahab khāṣṣ*)
  - f. **Horse armor with red velvet and gold embroidery** (*barkuṣtuwān mukhmal aḥmar bi-mismār dhahab*)<sup>73</sup>
  - g. **A golden saddle with fine brocade** (سرج ذهب و عرفيه زركش خاص)<sup>74</sup>
  - h. **One hundred pieces of Alexandrian cloth** (*qumāsh Iskandarī*)
  - i. **Gold coins** (بندي لهوعا)<sup>75</sup>
  - j. **Carpets** (رخ حا)<sup>76</sup>
  - k. **Velvet or damask silk** (*kamkhā*)
  - l. **Thirty-one Alexandrian garments or pieces of fabric** (*tafāṣīl Iskandarī*)
  - m. **Two choice stallions** (*khuyūl khāṣṣ-fuḥūl 2*)<sup>77</sup>
  - n. **One choice mare** (*ḥujūr 1*)
  - o. **Two elephants** (*afyāl*)
  - p. **One wild ass** (*ḥimār waḥsh*)
  - q. **Glass unguent bottles, carrying balsam oil** (رطل زجاج ضمهاد هن بلسان)
36. Inal → Mehmed II (end of Dhu 'l-Qa'da 857 [end of November 1453]): This letter from the Mamluks was sent just a few days after the previous one with the seventeen gifts. It mentions the arrival in Cairo of the Ottoman envoy to Mecca—who bears an undetermined **gift**—and assures Mehmed II that "we dispatched your envoy... carrying the florins struck with the excellent new royal seal (*al-aflūriyyāt al-maskūka bi 'l-sikka 'l-jayyida 'l-jadīda 'l-sultāniyya*) that were sent to the Sharif of Mecca... with an Egyptian convoy..."<sup>78</sup>
37. Sharif of Mecca → Mehmed II (*undated*): The sharif thanks Mehmed for "the nine thousand new florins with Mehmed's seal (*tis'at ālāf aflūriyyāt al-jadīda bi 'l-sikka 'l-Muḥammadiyya*)...." As a token of gratitude, the Meccans sent: "the veil of Mecca's door (?) (*burqa' bāb al-Makka*),<sup>79</sup> seven *ṭaqūzāt* of different Indian fabrics (*al-aqmisha 'l-Hindiyya 'l-mutanawwi'a*), and twenty turban cloths (*shāshāh*) soaked in Zamzam water [from the well of Zamzam, located near the Ka'ba], and a dappled mare [as fast as] the pigeon of Mecca..."<sup>80</sup>

38. Mehmed II → Inal (18 Jumada I 860 [24 April 1456]): “The ambassador of Sultan Muhammad ibn Murad Beg ibn ‘Uthman, ruler of Asia Minor, arrived; he was Jamal al-Din ‘Abd Allah al-Qabuni. He went up to the Sultan on Tuesday, bearing the letter of the one who sent him; it contained the tidings of the conquest of Constantinople, and was partly in verse, partly in prose.” No gifts mentioned.<sup>81</sup>
39. Inal → Mehmed II (5 Sha‘ban 860 [9 July 1456]): “The envoy of Ibn ‘Uthman set out in the direction to return to the one who sent him, ‘Uthman, followed by Sultan Inal’s ambassador to Ibn ‘Uthman, al-Sayfi Qani Beg al-Yusufi al-Mihmandar.” An unspecified **gift** is mentioned.<sup>82</sup>
40. Mehmed II → Inal (868 [1463]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>83</sup>
41. Qa‘it Beg (r. 872–901 [1468–96]) → Mehmed II (Dhu ‘l-Qa‘da 878 [March–April 1474]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>84</sup>
42. Bayezid II (r. 886–918 [1481–1512]) → Qa‘it Beg (3 Rabi‘ I 897 [4 January 1492]): “...[T]he Emir Jan Bulat, who was the sultan’s peacemaking envoy to Abu Yazid b. ‘Uthman, returned to Damascus...[He reported that Bayezid] had honored him and the six people with him, and bestowed upon them robes of honor, **slaves (*mamālik*) and slave girls (*jawāri*), camels (*jimāl*), silk fabric (*qumāsh ḥarīr*), gold (*dhahab*), and other things.**”<sup>85</sup>
43. Qa‘it Beg → Bayezid II (Rabi‘ I 899 [December 1493–January 1494]): “And on this day, Ibn ‘Uthman’s envoy left Egypt and returned to Damascus. He had with him many **gifts of different kinds, from horses (*khayl*) to slaves (*raqīq*) to precious metals (*ma‘ādin*) and jewels (*jawāhir*), and weapons (*silāḥ*), and other things.**...”<sup>86</sup>
44. Bayezid II → Qansawh al-Ghawri (r. 906–22 [1501–16]) (Jumada I 908 [November 1502]): “The envoy of the ruler (*malik*) of Rum, Ibn ‘Uthman, arrived at the noble gates and accompanying him was a magnificent **gift** for the sultan.”<sup>87</sup>
45. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Bayezid II (*undated*): Wonderful **gifts** are mentioned, but no details are supplied.<sup>88</sup>
46. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Bayezid II (8 Safar 909 [2 August 1503]): “Emir Azbak arrived in Damascus...accompanied by some Egyptian merchants and others. They had with them many goods...including **four prize horses for Ibn ‘Uthman, with bales of seeds of Egyptian clover or alfalfa (*birsīm*) for the horses’ fodder.**”<sup>89</sup>
47. Bayezid → Qansawh al-Ghawri (11 Jumada II 913 [18 October 1507]): No gifts mentioned.<sup>90</sup>
48. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Bayezid II (19 Muharram 916 [28 April 1510]): A Mamluk envoy returns to Damascus from Istanbul, having been treated well by Bayezid II. No gifts mentioned.<sup>91</sup>
49. Bayezid II → Qansawh al-Ghawri (Rabi‘ I 916 [June–July 1510]): This letter thanks the Mamluks for the wonderful **gifts**, but no details are supplied.<sup>92</sup>
50. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Bayezid II (*undated*): Response to previous letter. No gifts mentioned.<sup>93</sup>
51. Selim I (r. 918–26 [1512–20]) → Qansawh al-Ghawri (Jumada I 918 [July–August 1512]): An Ottoman envoy arrives with a letter announcing that Bayezid II has abdicated in favor of his son Selim. No gifts mentioned.<sup>94</sup>
52. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Selim I (12 Dhu ‘l-Qa‘da 918 [19 January 1513]): The Mamluk sultan designates an envoy to visit Selim and congratulate him on his accession. No gifts mentioned.<sup>95</sup>
53. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (1 Jumada II 920 [24 July 1514]): “And on that day, Ibn ‘Uthman’s envoy came to the palace to meet the sultan...and he had with him a **lavish gift (*taqdima ḥāfila*) comprising twenty-five porters (*ḥammāl*) [bearing] lynx (*washaq*), sable (*sammūr*), ermine (*qāqum*), velvet clothing, and garments from Bursa (*athwāb mukhmal wa-Burṣāwī*), as well as colored pieces of fabric from Samarqand (*shiqaq Samarqandī mulawwan*). A porter carried**

- silver vessels (*awānin fiḍḍa*), and [the envoy's] entourage arrived with **twenty-five beautiful young slaves (*khamṣa wa-‘ishrīna mamlūk ṣiḡhār ḥisān al-ashkāl*)**.<sup>96</sup>
54. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (21 Rajab 920 [11 September 1514]): A Mamluk envoy returns to Cairo bearing a letter from Selim I, greatly glorifying Qansawh al-Ghawri (*bālagha fī ta‘zīmihī*). No gifts mentioned.<sup>97</sup>
  55. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (29 Ramadan 920 [17 November 1514]): An Ottoman envoy arrived bearing news of Selim I's victory over Shah Isma‘il at the Battle of Çaldıran (2 Rajab 920 [23 August 1514]). No gifts are mentioned.<sup>98</sup>
  56. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (1 Muharram 921 [15 February 1515]): An Ottoman envoy arrived with a letter from Selim I informing Qansawh al-Ghawri of the friction between ‘Ali b. Shahsuwar, son of the former ruler of Dhu ‘l-Qadr, and ‘Ala’ al-Dawla, the current Mamluk vassal. Al-Ghawri took umbrage at Selim’s request that he appoint ‘Ali b. Shahsuwar the ruler of Dhu ‘l-Qadr. No gifts mentioned.<sup>99</sup>
  57. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Selim I (25 Safar 921 [10 April 1515]): A Mamluk envoy is sent to Selim I to find out whether he intends to enter Mamluk or Safavid territories. No gifts mentioned.<sup>100</sup>
  58. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (14 Jumada I 921 [26 June 1515]): In this letter, the Ottoman sultan describes the exploits of his forces in eastern Asia Minor, beginning with the conquest of the Qizilbash fortress of Kamakh (5 Rabi‘ II 921 [19 May 1515]), followed by the fall of the Dhu ‘l-Qadrid principality (29 Rabi‘ II 921 [12 June 1515]) and the execution of its leader, the Mamluk vassal **‘Ala’ al-Dawla, whose head was presented** to Qansawh al-Ghawri by the Ottoman envoy. Selim informs al-Ghawri of his determination to continue to fight the Qizilbash forces in the “eastern provinces,” and asks him not to come to their aid.<sup>101</sup>
  59. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (end of Ramadan 921 [early November 1515] [sic]): An Ottoman envoy brings news of Selim’s defeat of **the Persian vassal Qara Khan near Mardin, and presents his head** to the Mamluk sultan.<sup>102</sup>
  60. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Selim I (*undated*): This response congratulates Selim on his defeat of Qara Khan and presents him with **an elephant “given to us by the king of the Indian lands (*malik al-bilād al-Hindiyya*)...and some Egyptian wares (*al-amti‘a ‘l-Miṣriyya*)**.” The letter concludes with a request that the Mamluk envoy be permitted “to purchase wood needed for some of our important interests in Cairo (*ishtirā’ al-khashab al-lāzima li-ba‘ḍ maṣāliḥinā ‘l-muhimma fī ‘l-Qāhira*)” and asks Selim “to dispatch a group of people [who have specialized in] this craft (*irsāl jamm min ahāli tilka ‘l-ṣan‘a*)”.<sup>103</sup>
  61. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (beginning of Jumada II 922 [early July 1516] [sic]):<sup>104</sup> Selim provides the Mamluk envoy with the requested wood but apologizes profusely for not being able to dispense with any of his woodworkers, because he is building “one hundred great ships” with which to fight the Christians.
  62. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Selim I (*undated*): Al-Ghawri informs Selim of his decision to go to Aleppo with his army in order to broker an agreement between the Ottomans and the Safavids (*al-munāsib an nuṣliḥa baynakum*), now that the latter have largely been subdued. He asks Selim not to enter the Syrian territories because “most of its inhabitants are Sunnis... [including] the greatest scholars of this *umma*, and many catastrophes have befallen them in the past, such as the appearance of the Chingizids and the Timurids....” No gifts mentioned.<sup>105</sup>
  63. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (10 Jumada II 922 [11 July 1516]): When Qansawh reached Aleppo on this date—bringing with him an enormous retinue, including the caliph and the four chief judges of Cairo—there were two Ottoman envoys awaiting his arrival. They presented “a

gift of forty slaves, tunics of sable (*abdān sammūr*), velvet clothes (*athwāb mukhmal*), wool clothes (*athwāb šūf*), Ba‘albaki clothes (*athwāb Ba‘albakī*), and other things. [Selim] sent to the caliph two tunics of sable (*badanayn sammūr*), a velvet garment with brocade gloves (*thawb mukhmal bi-kufūf qaṣab*), and two fine wool garments (*thawbayn šūf ‘ālin*).<sup>106</sup>

64. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Selim I (Jumada II 922 [July 1516]): Upon receiving the conciliatory letter borne by Selim’s envoys in Aleppo, Qansawh sent a response in kind to Selim with the Mamluk envoy Mughulbay, along with “one hundred *qinṭārs* of sugar and confectionery in large containers” (*miʿat qinṭār sukkar wa-ḥalwā fi ‘ulab kibār*), per Selim’s request. No gifts mentioned.<sup>107</sup>
65. Qansawh al-Ghawri → Selim I (Jumada II or Rajab 922 [July or August 1516]): Qansawh dispatched a second envoy to Selim, the emir Kurtbay, bearing a **lavish gift of ten thousand dinars**.<sup>108</sup>
66. Selim I → Qansawh al-Ghawri (ca. 20 Rajab 922 [ca. 19 August 1516]): The envoy Mughulbay returns from his visit to Selim after being thrown in prison and humiliated, with the message: “Tell your master to meet me at Marj Dabiq.”<sup>109</sup>

#### ANALYSIS

Two general observations are in order before proceeding with an analysis of the corpus. Firstly, it is necessary to keep in mind that we are analyzing not gifts but descriptions of them, as offered by various authors. Moreover, these descriptions are very rarely rendered in vivid, ekphrastic prose, which poses several challenges for the interpretation of this material. Quite aside from the mundane difficulties of specialized and archaic terminology, manuscript corruptions, and copying errors, there are the conceptual difficulties of picturing what the chroniclers described in words and connecting their descriptions with real objects that remain from the period in question. For the most part, the chronicles provide only general descriptions of gifts, rarely giving away much more than the types and quantities of objects sent. The letters in Feridun Ahmed Beg’s collection are occasionally more elucidatory, since they serve as grandiose introductions to the accompanying gifts. However, much of what we would like to know about the precise nature of a gift is usually impossible to reconstruct on the basis of the description provided.<sup>110</sup>

Secondly, there is an empirical dilemma to bear in mind, namely, that the sources utilized are selective in the information that they provide about diplomatic visits. The records for only about half of such visits mention gift exchanges (see table 2 in the Appendix), but

the proportion must certainly have been higher, given the unlikelihood of an envoy appearing empty-handed before the Mamluk or Ottoman sultan. Furthermore, of the thirty-six visits that mention a gift exchange, only twenty-seven identify what the gift was, often with only the barest of descriptions. For all we know, there may have been far more visits and gifts than the ones alluded to by the sources utilized in this study.<sup>111</sup> Therefore, conclusions of a quantitative nature (e.g., that the Mamluks sent *more* carpets than the Ottomans, or that the Ottomans sent *more* slaves than the Mamluks) should be taken with a grain of salt. This is, after all, an inductive process; drawing precise conclusions on the strength of a limited sample is akin to making pronouncements about the nature of a lake’s ecosystem on the basis of what a few nets may bring to the surface. An alternative approach to the material in the corpus is offered below, along with some suggestions for future research.

Setting aside the conceptual, methodological, and philological hazards endemic to this type of study, we remain faced with a long list of curious items that were sent back and forth across the Mediterranean between two imperial courts: fine velvets and silks, swords, axes, turban cloths, money, unguents, elephants, slaves, political prisoners, severed heads, and more. Several questions come to mind, which can be grouped according to two principal themes. First, we might ask what the timeline of visits and gift exchanges reveals about the

development of the Ottoman–Mamluk relationship. Are the visits evenly dispersed or concentrated within certain periods? Do gift exchanges reach a peak or drop off noticeably at any specific points? Is it legitimate to read into the frequency of visits a sign of the subservience or relative status of either the visitor or the host?

Secondly, one might parse the above corpus by arranging the gifts along two axes: (a) typological categories, and (b) giver/recipient. Proceeding from such an arrangement, one can ask: What were the most common types of gifts (according to our sources)? Were there certain gifts that were given regularly by both sides and others that came exclusively from one court? Along these lines, do large imbalances in the categories of gifts suggest that certain materials were exclusively available to one party or another, as a result of trade routes and spheres of influence?

To address questions of the first theme, I have aligned all of the diplomatic visits along a regnal chronology (see table 1 in the Appendix). The period begins with the reign of Bayezid I, who sent five missions to the Mamluks. During the early part of his reign, the joint concern of both courts was the danger presented by Timur, particularly to the frontier territories of eastern Anatolia and northern Syria. The alliance was breached in 1398, when Bayezid conquered several provinces within the Mamluk sphere of influence; this would have grave consequences for the Ottomans once Timur returned to eastern Anatolia.<sup>112</sup> When Faraj came to power, Bayezid sent an envoy with many expensive gifts (see no. 6 in the list above), attempting to reestablish an alliance with him against the Mongols, but Faraj refused. Bayezid was captured by Timur's forces and died in captivity. A long interregnum ensued, during which there was no contact between the two sides.<sup>113</sup> The Ottomans and Mamluks resumed diplomatic relations during Mehmed I's short reign, when envoys were sent by both courts, and the tone of the letters exchanged indicates that the situation between the two empires had improved.

The most prolific gift giver of the fifteenth century was undoubtedly Murad II, who sent no less than eight envoys to Barsbay and three to Jaqmaq, receiving a combined nine in return. This period represented the height of the Ottoman–Mamluk diplomatic relationship: united and successful in their struggle against various

infidel forces, the two powers rarely infringed upon each other's territory.<sup>114</sup> These good relations continued during the early part of Mehmed II's reign, especially after the Ottomans' successful conquest of Constantinople, but Mehmed's expansionist policies against the Qaramanids and Dhu 'l-Qadrids created friction between him and his Mamluk counterparts, as did his rising status as *primus inter pares* in the Islamic world. Tense relations prevailed up to and after the Ottoman–Mamluk war between 1485 and 1491, but the emergence of the Safavid threat in the early sixteenth century produced a flurry of diplomatic activity.

Although the Mamluk empire met its demise at the hands of Sultan Selim I, the four years between his accession to power and the Mamluk defeat were full of diplomatic visits and gift exchanges. Indeed, up until the declaration of war, the language of the letters sent remained highly gracious, even as the two sovereigns prepared for a seemingly inevitable conflict. Between 1514 and 1516 in particular, as Selim and Qansawh fought a proxy war in the border territories, their official correspondence nevertheless maintained an air of artificial cordiality. When Selim sent Qansawh the head of 'Ala' al-Dawla, the Mamluk-supported ruler of Dhu 'l-Qadr (and Selim's own maternal grandfather), claiming that this offering was meant for Qansawh's "enjoyment" (*li-inbisāṭikum*), the "gift" had its desired effect: Ibn Iyas reported that the sultan did not emerge from his quarters the next day, and quaffed some medicine to calm his nerves (see no. 58). When Qansawh met Selim's envoys in Aleppo and demanded an explanation for their ruler's aggressive behavior (no. 63), they presented him with a huge gift of forty slaves and various kinds of fine clothing, begging Qansawh's pardon for any offense, while politely insisting that Selim was determined to finish off Shah Isma'il.<sup>115</sup> The ploy seemed to work, as Qansawh sent Selim a gift of ten thousand dinars, along with several containers of sugar and confectionery (per Selim's request). Less than two months later, Qansawh was dead and the Mamluk army destroyed.<sup>116</sup>

Turning to the gift exchanges (and bearing in mind the caveats discussed above), we find that certain categories of gifts are mentioned far more frequently in connection with one side than the other (see table 3 in the

Appendix). The Ottomans, for example, sent slaves or prisoners on at least twelve occasions, while there are only three recorded instances of such gifts by the Mamluks. In addition to their great value, gifts of slaves drew attention to the Ottomans' status as ghazis, and served as fitting accompaniments to letters that brought news of their conquests in Europe and Anatolia. With the Mamluks' war-making days mostly behind them—and faced with severe economic conditions for much of the period in question as a consequence of multiple epidemics of bubonic plague and Portuguese inroads into the trade with India—the sultans of Egypt were reduced to sending weapons and armor, rather than slaves, as reminders of their once proud warrior past.

Among the most frequently encountered gifts on the Mamluk side are horses, along with gold and silver saddles, horsecloths, and horse armor, objects that do not appear in the Ottoman embassies. The Mamluks also sent elephants, which they obtained from India, while the Ottomans sent animals found in the Anatolian woodlands such as foxes, lynxes, and squirrels. The most popular gifts, given regularly by both sides, were textiles. In this area, the Ottomans sent Persian (*'Ajami*), European (*İfranji*), and Ottoman (*Rūmī*) fabrics, while the Mamluks favored Indian (*Hindī*) and Alexandrian (*İskandari*) cloths, reflecting the access of the two powers to commodities produced by their respective neighbors, trading partners, and enemies. The Ottomans also seem to have had greater access than the Mamluks to silk broadcloth, as well as to unusual animal pelts such as sable and miniver. The Mamluks, on the other hand, regularly sent decorative household textiles (e.g., carpets, shawls, drapery, etc.). Clothing and silver tableware were types of gifts favored mainly by the Ottomans, who seem to have been particularly fond of velvet garments, and sent them in large quantities (see no. 28). In addition to velvet, silk and wool clothes, as well as tunics of sable (*sammūr*), are mentioned. In 1428, following a year of raiding in the Balkans, the Ottomans sent a large convoy of gifts (no. 13) intended to project the image of an expanding polity at the edge of Christendom. Accompanying the fifty *Rūmī* slaves and a white eunuch were “twenty velvet garments of European make.” Similarly, in Selim's final gift to the Mamluks, a reference to “Ba'albaki clothing” (no. 63) seemed

to send a message of encroaching Ottoman hegemony in the Syrian territories that had long been part of the Mamluk empire.<sup>117</sup>

Two interesting items appear in the sources around the middle of the century. The first was sent by Jaqmaq to Murad II in 1440, one month after Murad's envoy had arrived bearing “a splendid gift of sixty loads of fabric, from silk to sable to miniver to lynx, different kinds of garments, and thirty slaves” (no. 25). In return, Jaqmaq sent Murad a letter declaring his desire that “both countries be as two spirits in one body,” and providing information about a great gift that he hoped would confirm the warm relations between the Mamluks and the Ottomans: in addition to large quantities of fine turban cloths, several carpet runners with gold embroidery, and one thousand pieces of uncut Alexandrian velvet, the Mamluks sent “the noble Kufic Koran, written in the hand of [the third Rightly-Guided Caliph] 'Uthman b. 'Affan” (r. 644–56) (no. 26). Such a gift must have conveyed a message of an entirely different order from the luxury goods that accompanied it. The 'Uthmanic codex is an artifact of legendary stature in Islamic history. According to the traditionally accepted view among Muslims, 'Uthman was the architect of the redaction process that led to the establishment of a single Koranic codex during the early years of the Islamic community.<sup>118</sup> Tradition holds that he had all the other codices destroyed and instructed his scribes to send copies of the canonical text to the administrative centers of the empire in Syria, Iraq, and the Arabian peninsula. Another tradition claims that he was assassinated while reading his own copy of the Koran, which was spattered with traces of his blood. Such a gift would have contained immense symbolic power, the effect of which would not have been lost upon the Ottomans. When Cairo was established by the Mamluks as the new seat of the Abbasid caliphate, the Mamluk sultan assumed the self-designated role of Custodian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina. The gift of the 'Uthmanic codex, on the one hand, would have sent a message of Sunni Muslim solidarity in the face of “infidel” aggression. On the other hand, this may have been simultaneously a subtle reinforcement on the part of the Mamluks of the notion that they remained the ultimate arbiters of political legitimacy in the Muslim world. It was one

thing, after all, to send frivolous and exotic paraphernalia gathered from various rampaging conquests in southeastern Europe, as the Ottomans did; it was quite another to send a priceless piece of sacred history, from the birthplace of Islam.<sup>119</sup>

The second noteworthy gift falls in the momentous year of 1453. When the Ottomans conquered Constantinople, Mehmed II sent an embassy bearing the glorious news to the Mamluk sultan, as well as a separate delegation to the Sharif of Mecca—at the time, a client of the Mamluks. The letter to the Sharif states: “We have sent to you personally two thousand florins of pure gold, taken as booty from the conquest, and another seven thousand florins for the poor...in Mecca and Medina” (no. 34). The evidence from the Sharif’s response to Mehmed (no. 37) suggests that the Ottomans had over stamped these gold coins, as he confirms the receipt of “nine thousand new florins with the seal of Mehmed from the spoils of that great city” (*tis‘at ālāf aflūriyyāt al-jadīda bi ‘l-sikka al-Muḥammadiyya min anfāl tilka ‘l-balda ‘l-‘azīma*). The coins were also noted by the Mamluk sultan Inal, who sent Mehmed a letter after the Ottoman convoy left Cairo for Mecca, expressing his hopes that “the florins struck with the excellent new royal seal” (*al-aflūriyyāt al-maskūka bi ‘l-sikka ‘l-jayyida ‘l-jadīda ‘l-sultāniyya*) reach their destination safely (see no. 36).

This gift is significant for two reasons. Firstly, by patronizing the Sharif of Mecca—a role reserved for the Mamluks—Mehmed II was overtly staking a claim for the political leadership of the Islamic world, and his decision to send gold coins taken as booty from Constantinople and over stamped with his seal suggests that he saw himself as the heir to both the Islamic and Roman traditions. Secondly, while it is known that Turkish gold florins and ducats—Ottoman replicas of the Venetian originals—had been produced as early as 1425, the mention of an over stamped florin from 1453 in the two letters in Feridun Ahmed Beg’s collection (nos. 34 and 36) is an indication that the Ottoman sultans had begun to put their names on gold coins well before the minting of *sulṭānīs* began in 1477–78.<sup>120</sup>

## FUTURE LINES OF INQUIRY

Several additional questions can be raised about the corpus of material presented above, and it is worth gesturing towards a few of these issues by way of indicating some other lines of future inquiry. The approach I have adopted has been to parse the corpus according to different gift categories (textiles, metalwork, slaves, animals, etc.), but one would be equally justified in asking whether there were other assumed hierarchies or typologies of gifts, organized according to different qualitative variables or units of worth. In the bureaucracies of these empires, which structured their diplomatic encounters according to elaborate protocols, was the choice of a gift governed by a set of attitudes about its conventional “meaning”? Do any continuities exist between the “meanings” of gifts in this particular context, and gift exchanges from other geographical and chronological contexts?<sup>121</sup>

The aim of this article has been to reconstruct a preliminary history of gift exchange between two Muslim polities over the course of the long fifteenth century, based on historical sources and chancery documents. Having established a diplomatic chronology and a “skeleton inventory” of gifts exchanged during this period, the incorporation of further sources (particularly from the Ottoman side) could well shed further light on the gift-giving habits and tastes of different rulers, the ways in which diplomatic messages were communicated in the language of gifts, and the availability of various luxury materials in the fifteenth century.

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## APPENDIX

The tables below sort the data gathered from the historical chronicles by date and reign (table 1), level of detail vis-à-vis gift exchanges (table 2), and gift categories (table 3).

Table 1. Diplomatic Envoys Sent by Ottoman and Mamluk Sultans

<i>Ottomans</i>	<i># of envoys sent</i>		<i>Mamluks</i>
Bayezid I	4	0	Barquq
	1	0	Faraj
Mehmed I	2	1	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh
Murad II	8	5	Barsbay
	3	4	Jaqmaq
		5	
Mehmed II	4		
	3		
	1		
	0	3	Inal
		1	Sharif of Mecca
		1	Qa'it Beg
		1	
Bayezid II	1		
	2		
		4	Qansawh al-Ghawri
		7	
Selim	7		

The numbers in this table refer to instances of envoys dispatched by Ottoman and Mamluk courts.

Table 2: Visits and Gift Exchanges

<i>Diplomatic visits and gifts</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Diplomatic visits	66
Visits mentioning gifts	36
Visits with no mention of gifts	30
Detailed gift exchanges*	27
Undetailed gift exchanges	11
Ottoman gift exchanges	23
Mamluk gift exchanges	16

\* A gift exchange is defined as the act of giving one or multiple gifts by one party to another on a single occasion. Note that there may be more than one gift exchange on a single diplomatic visit, if the visiting envoy presents his gift(s) to the sultan and also receives a gift in return.

Table 3. Categories of Gifts Exchanged

<i>Gift Type</i>	<i>Ottomans</i>	<i>Mamluks</i>
<b>Slaves &amp; Prisoners</b>	(6) ten slaves (9) thirty slaves (13) fifty <i>Rūmī</i> slaves, a white eunuch (25) thirty slaves (27) prisoners, fifty slaves, five slave girls (28) five <i>Rūmī</i> slave girls (33) prisoners, slaves (42) slaves, slave girls (53) twenty-five slaves (58) head of 'Ala' al-Dawla (59) head of Qara Khan (63) forty slaves	(13) slaves (15) two <i>Chandakī</i> slaves (43) slaves
<b>Animals</b>	(6) ten horses (9) birds, beasts of prey (13) birds, sable, gray squirrel, lynx, fox (42) camels	(8) two horses (24) one elephant (26) three elephants (35) three horses, two elephants, one wild ass (37) one horse (43) horses (46) four prize horses (60) one elephant

(Table 3 continued on next page)

<i>Gift Type</i>	<i>Ottomans</i>	<i>Mamluks</i>
<b>Clothing</b>	(9) silk clothes (12) Murad II's own clothes, silk turban with gold brocade, pure gold cap (13) twenty velvet garments of European make (25) various garments (28) five crates of plain clothes, five crates of velvet clothes (53) velvet clothing, garments from Bursa (63) tunics of sable, velvet clothes, wool clothes, Ba'albaki clothes, brocade gloves	(26) ten turban cloths, ten garments, four silk kerchiefs, seven kerchiefs, fourteen shawls, seven silk garments, six <i>sa'diyyāt/salāriyyāt</i> (35) thirty-one Alexandrian garments
<b>Carpets</b>		(26) four carpets with gold thread (35) carpets
<b>Leather</b>		(26) twenty-five leather bags
<b>Metalwork</b>	(6) two silver cups, ten pieces of silver tableware (28) five crates of silver vessels	
<b>Saddles</b>		(8) two gold/silver saddles (26) fifteen saddles, one golden saddle (35) one golden saddle
<b>Devotional Gifts</b>		(26) 'Uthmanic Koran (37) Meccan door veil, twenty turban cloths soaked in <i>Zamzam</i> water
<b>Textiles &amp; Furs</b>	(6) ten lengths of broadcloth (7) five <i>ṭaqūzāt</i> of <i>Rūmī</i> fabric, three <i>ṭaqūzāt</i> of European fabric, two bundles of Persian fabric (25) sixty loads of silk, sable, miniver, lynx (27) fabric, silk, velvet (28) five crates of silk in floral patterns (33) fabrics (42) silk fabric (53) twenty-five porters bearing loads of lynx, sable, ermine, colored fabric from Samarqand	(8) five <i>ṭaqūzāt</i> of Egyptian fabric (13) fabric (26) one thousand pieces Alexandrian velvet (35) ten units of damask silk, a red velvet curtain, Alexandrian cloth, velvet or damask silk ( <i>kamkhā</i> ) (37) seven <i>ṭaqūzāt</i> of Indian fabrics
<b>Weaponry</b>		(26) two swords (gold and silver), gold <i>'ajanāt</i> , steel and silver helmet, two brigandines, horse armor, four axes, bows, golden billhook, (35) gold sword, maces and steel axes, two hauberks, horse armor with red velvet (43) weapons ( <i>silāḥ</i> )
<b>Unguents</b>		(26) balsam oil (35) balsam oil
<b>Money</b>	(5) two hundred thousand <i>dīnārs</i> (34) nine thousand gold florins	(35) gold coins (65) ten thousand <i>dīnārs</i>
<b>Precious Metals &amp; Jewels</b>	(42) gold	(43) precious metals, jewels
<b>Misc.</b>		(8) Indian and Alexandrian wares (60) Egyptian wares

The numbers in parentheses refer to the diplomatic visits in which the gifts were exchanged, as enumerated above.

## NOTES

1. *Author's note:* This article was originally written as a seminar paper for Professor Gülru Necipoğlu at Harvard University. It was subsequently presented at the Historians of Islamic Art Association Majlis held in New York City in February 2006. I would like to thank Gülru Necipoğlu and others for their valuable comments: David Roxburgh, Stefano Carboni, Ghada Qaddumi, Wheeler Thackston, Marcus Milwright, Jeff Spur, Andrés Riedlmayer, Lutz Ilisch, and Cihan Yüksel, as well as an anonymous reviewer.  
For Harun's gift to Charlemagne, see the account presented in Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1969), 70, 145. For related studies on gifts of exotic animals, see also Helmut Nickel, "Presents to Princes: A Bestiary of Strange and Wondrous Beasts, Once Known, For a Time Forgotten, and Rediscovered," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 26 (1991): 129–38; Leslie Brubaker, "The Elephant and the Ark: Cultural and Material Interchange across the Mediterranean in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 175–95.
2. The theoretical and anthropological literature on gift exchange begins with Marcel Mauss's seminal work, "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année Sociologique* 1 (1925): 30–186. For studies of gift exchange in the medieval Islamic world and between Muslim and European polities, see A. Beihammer, "Die Kraft der Zeichen: Symbolische Kommunikation in der byzantinisch-arabischen Diplomatie des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 54 (2004): 159–89; Anthony Cutler, "Les échanges de dons entre Byzance et l'Islam (IXe–XIe siècles)," *Journal des Savants* (January–June 1996): 51–66; Anthony Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 247–78; Oleg Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, D.C., 1997), 115–29; Muhammad Hamidullah, "Nouveaux documents sur les rapports de l'Europe avec l'Orient Musulman au Moyen Âge," *Arabica* 7 (1960): 281–300; Eva Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth through the Twelfth Century," *Art History* 24, 1 (February 2001): 17–50. As this article was going to print, Professor Necipoğlu drew my attention to a Turkish article that covers similar ground and identifies some of the same gifts mentioned here: see Cüneyt Kanat, "Osmanlı ve Memlûk Devletleri'nin Birbirlerine Gönderdiği Armağanlar," in *Uluslararası Osmanlı Tarihi Sempozyumu (8–10 Nisan 1999) Bildirileri*, ed. Turan Gökçe (Izmir, 2000), 35–52.
3. See Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman–Mamluk War 1485–91* (Leiden, 1995); Emire Cihan Muslu, "Ottoman–Mamluk Relations: Diplomacy and Perceptions" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2007); Yusuf Ali al-Thakafi, "The Diplomatic Relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Mamluk Empire in the First Quarter of the Sixteenth Century" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1981); Aḥmad Fu'ād Mutawallī, *al-Fath al-'Uthmānī li'l-Shām wa-Miṣr wa-muqaddimātuḥu min wāqī' al-wathā'iq wa'l-maṣādir al-Turkiyya wa'l-'Arabiyya al-mu'āṣira lahā* (Cairo, 1976). Also see Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāytbāy and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt* (Seattle, 1993), 88–119, 173–227.
4. Abu 'l-Maḥāsīn Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghribirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duḥūr fī madā' l-ayyām wa'l-shuhūr*, ed. Kamāl al-Dīn 'Izz al-Dīn, 1st ed., 2 vols. (Beirut, 1990–).
5. Abu 'l-Maḥāsīn Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghribirdī, *History of Egypt, 1382–1469 A.D.*, ed. William Popper, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology 13–14, 17–19, 22–23 (Berkeley, 1909–29). Ibn Taghribirdī lived principally in Egypt. This edition of his chronicle covers the period from 1382 to 1469.
6. 'Alī ibn Dāwūd al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa'l-abdān fī tawārīkh al-zamān*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1970). The chronicle of Ibn al-Sayrafī covers the period from 1382 to 1445.
7. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1962). Ibn Tulun lived in Damascus; his chronicle covers the period from 1479 to 1520.
8. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭīn*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1848). Feridun Ahmed Beg was the head of the Ottoman chancery during the reign of Murad III.
9. Abu 'l-Barakāt Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duḥūr*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, 2nd ed., 9 vols. (Cairo, 1960–62). Also see Ibn Iyās, *Journal d'un bourgeois de Caire: Chronique d'Ibn Iyās*, trans. Gaston Wiet, 2 vols. (Paris, 1955); Ibn Iyās, *Histoire des Mamlouks circassiens*, trans. Gaston Wiet (Cairo, 1945).
10. Taqī al-Dīn Abu 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyāda, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Cairo, 1934–).
11. In some instances, a letter sent by one party may allude to a gift sent by the other party, so it is not always the case that the sender and addressee are always the giver and recipient, respectively.
12. For assistance with gift-related terminology, I have made use of several sources, including: R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Beirut, 1968); R. Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les arabes* (Beirut, 1969); L. A. Mayer, *Mamluk Costume: A Survey* (Geneva, 1952); L. A. Mayer, *Islamic Metalworkers and Their Works* (Geneva, 1959); L. A. Mayer, *Islamic Armourers and Their Works* (Geneva, 1962); D. Nicolle, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition* (henceforth *EI2*) (Leiden, 1960–2004), s.v. "Silāḥ"; Aḥmad ibn al-Rashīd Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts and Rarities = Kitāb al-Ḥadāyā wa al-ṭuḥaf*, trans. Ghāda al-Qaddūmī (Cambridge, Mass., 1996); Robert B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles: Material for a History up to the Mongol Conquest* (Beirut, 1972); Yedida K. Stillman et al., *EI2*, s.v. "Libās"; Yedida K. Stillman et al., *EI2*, s.v. "Ṭirāz"; Yedida

- K. Stillman, *Arab Dress from the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times: A Short History* (Leiden, 2003).
13. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, vol. 1, pt. 2., p. 390. Note that Bayezid I was not yet sultan at the time of this visit, which may mean that the envoy was sent by his father, Murad I. See Muslu, "Ottoman–Mamluk Relations," 34–35 n. 23, for a discussion of an earlier visit by an Ottoman envoy to Cairo in 1366. Muslu argues that it was probably not sent by the Ottomans, as Ibn Iyās, writing 150 years later, thinks, but rather by Orhan, ruler of Menteşe.
  14. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:116–17.
  15. *Ibid.*, 1:117–18.
  16. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 462.
  17. Ibn Taghribirdī, *History of Egypt*, 13:148.
  18. Ibn al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2:118.
  19. al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 3, pt. 3, p. 1069.
  20. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:145. The term *ṭaqūzāt* would appear to be a measurement of quantity based on the number nine (*doḳuz*). The term *Ifranji* does not refer specifically to Franks. This fabric may well have been Venetian or Hungarian, or of some other European origin. As Halil Inalcik notes, this gift-laden visit took place prior to Mehmed's campaign against the Qaramanids, as the Mamluk sultan was considered one of their protectors. See H. Inalcik, *EI2*, s.v. "Meḥemmed I."
  21. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:146.
  22. Ibn al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2:466. The letter accompanying this gift (dated 4 Shawwal 822 [24 October 1419]) is in Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:164–65. The letter informs us that the chief emissary is Khayr al-Din Khalil Beg but it does not mention the gifts enumerated by Ibn al-Şayrafī. Note that in an effort to restrict the scope of my study, I have not included robes of honor among the gifts counted, despite their importance and ubiquity in diplomatic protocol.
  23. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:165–66. This is a short response to the previous letter sent by Mehmed I.
  24. Ibn al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 3:28. Barsbay's gifts are described as "*wa-qaddama huwa aydan li 'bn 'Uthmān ašhyā' min 'indahū*," which may suggest that Barsbay sent some of his personal belongings. See the exchange of 2 Rabī' I 831 (21 December 1427), for an example of this type of gift.
  25. Ibn al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 3:128–29.
  26. Ibn al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 3:131–32. This visit is also documented in Ibn Taghribirdī, *History of Egypt*, 18:55, but with no mention of the gifts: "The Sultan held the court service in the Portico Hall of the Palace of Justice of the Citadel; the ambassadors of Murad Beg ibn 'Uthman, ruler of Bursa, Adrianople, and other places in Asia Minor, were brought there. It was a mighty cortege, in which there were the emirs, Sultan's mamluks, the standing army, and others, in accordance with the usual nature of the elaborate arrangements of the service in the Portico Hall, a service that has not been held in that Hall since the days of al-Malik al-Zahir Jaqmaq; those who knew its arrangements have passed away, so that if any king should wish to perform it, it would not be possible for him to do so."
  27. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:195–97.
  28. *Ibid.*, 1:197–98. *Chandaki* probably refers to the city of Heraklion in Crete, which acquired the name Chandak when it was fortified by surrounding trenches (*khandaq* in Arabic) in the tenth century.
  29. *Ibid.*, 1:198–200.
  30. *Ibid.*, 1:200–201.
  31. *Ibid.*, 1:201–2.
  32. *Ibid.*, 1:202–3.
  33. *Ibid.*, 1:203–5.
  34. *Ibid.*, 1:205–6.
  35. *Ibid.*, 1:206.
  36. Ibn al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 3:376.
  37. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:208.
  38. Ibn al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 4:176–77. The term *shiqaq* refers to pieces of garment-sized fabric: see Stillman, *EI2*, s.v. "Ṭirāz." The letter delivered by this envoy is very likely the one that appears in Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:209–12, which does not mention any gifts. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 2:223.
  39. Ibn al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 4:179.
  40. This list appears in Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'atü 's-selāṭin*, 1:214. The letter is dated 20 Dhu 'l-Hijja 843, i.e., one day before this envoy departed on his journey. The inventory is laid out in grid-fashion, and many of the terms are difficult to decipher. I have compared the list found in the 1848 printed edition of Feridun Ahmed Beg with the 1858 edition, as well as with two manuscripts of the same work (Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ms. Fatih 4126; Istanbul, Ms. Ragip Paşa 1521). I am grateful for the assistance of Norman Stillman, Wheeler Thackston, András Riedlmayer, and Ghada Qaddumi in helping me to decode some of the specialized vocabulary.
  41. It is unclear whether this is the same 'Uthmanic Koran preserved in the Pavilion of the Sacred Relics at Topkapı Palace. See Hilmi Aydın, *The Sacred Trusts: Pavilion of the Sacred Relics, Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul*, ed. Talha Uğurluel and Ahmet Doğru (Somerset, N.J., 2004), 94.
  42. For the term *saqqaṭ*, see Dozy, *Supplément*, for which he gives the definition: "Damasquiner–incruster l'or ou l'argent dans le fer ou l'acier." See also Mayer, *Mamluk Costume*, 44: "The chroniclers make repeated mention of swords damascened with silver (*musaqqaṭa bi-fiḍḍa*) or gold...and inscribed, or inlaid with jewels." The adjective ملحوریه remains a mystery.
  43. I have found no definitions for the gold-encrusted item in this entry. Given its placement in the grid, it would appear to be some kind of weapon.
  44. This is certainly *qarqalāt*, rather than *farfalāt*. A *qarqala* could refer to one of three things: a gown with no sleeves; a cuirasse (Dozy, *Supplément*); or a brigandine, on which see Mayer, *Mamluk Costume*, 40: "At the beginning of the fifteenth century the brigandine was called *qarqal*. This is clear from the definition given by Qalqashandi: the *qarqal*-armor is made of iron laminate covered with red and yellow brocade (*dibāj*). Ibn Taghribirdi made specific mention of brigandines without sleeves." The name given, Muhammad Kabari, may refer to the artisan.

45. Dozy, *Supplément*, glosses this word as *caparaçons*, a kind of horse armor. In the case of both this gift and the previous one, the presence of proper names may indicate that the artifact was signed.
46. The meaning of this listing is unclear. The term *mismār* can mean a nail or a peg. The manuscripts consulted do not contain alternatives to the printed edition.
47. One potential reading of this entry is *zarkash* (brocade), although the misspelling, coupled with the term *saqqat* (which suggests something made out of metal), renders it unlikely.
48. *Sādhij* means “plain,” or “unornamented”; this may be the term used to distinguish solid, colored cloth from patterned or printed cloth. Thus, this entry would refer to a gift of plain red cloth. Alternatively, and given that this entry comes directly after a listing of ten turban cloths in a rosette pattern, *sādhij* may refer to turban cloths again, indicating that a single, plain red one was also sent.
49. Here again, we have an artifact possibly associated with a craftsman. A *qaws* is a bow, but the term *صيته* is less clear. One manuscript (Ms. Ragip Paşa 1521) provides the alternate reading *حسه*, which makes *khamisa* (five) possible, but given that quantities are always provided at the end of each gift entry, this reading is also unlikely.
50. The manuscripts consulted provide a variant for the first word, which looks like the term *tafšila* (a generic word for “garment”). The second word would appear to be *shāpūrī*, so these may have been some kind of Persian garments. An alternate reading would be *shalwār* (trousers). The rest of the description is a mystery.
51. The entry contains a description of two parts of the saddle, the first of which was covered with gold brocade, while the second was made with a large quantity (600 *mithqāls*) of gold. The manuscripts consulted, while containing some slight variants, are not helpful in decoding the description.
52. A *mandīl* is a kind of a scarf, kerchief, or towel. The term *nakh* can refer to a mat, a rug, or a carpet runner, but is more likely to refer here to a kind of silk fabric with gold brocade. See Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé*, 221.
53. Here we have seven towels/kerchiefs, followed by a listing of twenty-five *buhār*, which, according to Dozy’s *Supplément*, means “un sac fait de peau de veau, ou selon d’autres, sac fait de la peau du cou du chameau.”
54. Here, once again, we see the mysterious term *sādhij*. The manuscripts consulted do not provide variants.
55. The first word is likely to be *ma’sha*, which means “billhook,” a kind of polearm.
56. The final words in this description may refer to the place of origin of this balsam oil.
57. A *fūṭa* is a shawl or a scarf, and the word *kāfūr* means camphor, which was regularly used as a perfume. These shawls may have been scented with camphor, just as *mandīls* were regularly scented with musk.
58. The term *tafāṣīl* can refer to garments or pieces of fabric. See Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v. “*tafšila*.”
59. The term *sa’diyyāt* may actually be *sallāriyyāt* (with a poorly-written ‘*ayn*, easily mistakable for a *lām-alif*, and a *dāl* shaped like a *rā’*). A *sallāriyya* was a short-sleeved coat popular among the Mamluks; see Stillman, *Arab Dress*, 69–70. An alternative reading would be *sa’diyyāt*, in which case it might refer to a kind of garment from Yemen, attributed to Sa’id b. al-‘As, a prominent Companion of the Prophet Muhammad. I am grateful to Dr. Ghada Qaddumi for this latter suggestion.
60. Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 4:311–12. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr*, 2:247. The prisoners mentioned may have been taken a few months earlier at the famous Battle of Varna, in which the Ottoman army, led by Murad II, defeated a force of European crusaders. While the source says that the prisoners and the gifts were sent by Murad II, the sultan at the time was officially the thirteen-year-old Mehmed II, who would be deposed a year later, before returning to the throne in 1451.
61. Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 4:324. This only accounts for twenty of the twenty-five mentioned crates, unless we assume that the slave girls were put in cages as well and presented to the sultan, which seems unlikely. This gift exchange takes place during Mehmed II’s brief first reign (1444–46). See also Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr*, 2:252.
62. Ibn Taghribirdī, *History of Egypt*, 19:117.
63. *Ibid.*, 19:125.
64. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe’atü ’s-selāṭīn*, 1:265–66.
65. *Ibid.*, 1:266–68.
66. *Ibid.*, 1:237. These prisoners were, according to other sources, high-ranking Byzantine officials.
67. *Ibid.*, 1:240.
68. *Ibid.*, 1:238–39. In cases of ambiguity, I have compared the printed text with three manuscripts of the same work: Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ms. Fatih 4070, Ms. Fatih 4126; Istanbul, Ms. Ragip Paşa 1521.
69. The manuscripts consulted provide the variant *sakākīn* (knives) for the sixth word, but otherwise do not help to decipher the rest of the description.
70. This may be a corruption of *kamkhā*, which refers to Damask silk. The ‘*ayn-alif* is an abbreviation signifying a quantity of ten units.
71. The first term is a corruption of *dabābīs* (plural of *dabbūs*, which means “mace”).
72. A *chuqal* is a mail hauberk; see D. Nicolle, *EI2*, s.v. “Silāḥ.”
73. See n. 44 above.
74. Here is another reference to a golden saddle, with its (?) *عرفه* made of gold brocade (see gift no. 26–q). The manuscripts consulted provide no helpful variants.
75. The word *bunduqī* refers to a gold coin minted according to the standard weight of a Venetian ducat. The word that follows it is presumably an abbreviation of quantity.
76. The second word is likely an abbreviation of quantity.
77. The printed edition contains corruptions for this reference and the following one that are clarified by the manuscripts consulted.
78. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe’atü ’s-selāṭīn*, 1:240–43.
79. This may be a symbol equivalent to bestowing upon someone the “keys of the city.”

80. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'ätü 's-selāṭin*, 1:243–44.
81. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, 22:57.
82. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, 22:58. The gift is mentioned in Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 2:332.
83. Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī šinā'at al-inshā'*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1964), 4:58–59. See Muslu, "Ottoman–Mamluk Relations," 6–8, for a discussion of the breaches in diplomatic protocol in this letter and the preceding one, and their impact on the deterioration of Ottoman–Mamluk relations during this period.
84. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 3:94. Ibn Iyās erroneously says that the envoy was sent to Abu Yazid (Bayezid II) rather than Mehmed II; the former did not accede to the throne until 1481.
85. Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān*, 1:147. This visit may have been the first conciliatory exchange between the two sides following the Ottoman–Mamluk War of 1485–91. I have found no records of diplomatic visits for the eighteen years prior to this one.
86. *Ibid.*, 1:154. It is unclear why Ibn Tulun says that the Ottoman envoy "returned to Damascus" (*raja'a ilā Dimashq*). The use of the term *qāšid Ibn 'Uthmān* makes it unlikely that this was actually a Mamluk envoy, and would not avoid the problem of his "returning to Damascus" on the way to Istanbul.
87. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 4:46. The letter carried by this envoy, dated Safar 908 (August 1502), is noted in Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'ätü 's-selāṭin*, 1:347–49. No gifts are mentioned in the letter.
88. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'ätü 's-selāṭin*, 1:349–50.
89. Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān*, 1:268–69.
90. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 4:122, mentions that Qansawh bestowed a robe of honor on the envoy and outfitted his companions with short-sleeved coats of lynx and sable (*wa-albasa jamā'atahu sallāriyyāt washaq wa-sammūr*).
91. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'ätü 's-selāṭin*, 1:341.
92. *Ibid.*, 1:354–55.
93. *Ibid.*, 1:355–56.
94. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 4:269.
95. *Ibid.*, 4:289. This decision to send an envoy to Selim was made a few days after the arrival in Cairo of Süleyman, the son of Prince Ahmed (Selim's older brother, who had been Bayezid II's favorite to replace him on the throne).
96. *Ibid.*, 4:383–84. It is not clear from the description whether this gift included live animals or pelts, although the fact that they are followed by other kinds of fabric would suggest the latter.
97. *Ibid.*, 4:395–96.
98. *Ibid.*, 4:402–4. Ibn Iyās notes that Sultan Qansawh did not order the drums to be beaten or the city to be decorated following the news of this victory, nor was the reason for this lack of celebration known at that time.
99. *Ibid.*, 4:435–36. Ibn Iyās points out that the title used to refer to Qansawh (*maqāmukum al-'ālī*), was distinctly less lofty than the one Selim used to refer to himself (*maqāmunā al-sharīf*). This, says Ibn Iyās, represented a form of disdain on Selim's part (*wa-hādhā min naw' al-istikhfāf bi 'l-sultān*). The following day brought news of the battle between the forces of 'Alī b. Shahsuwar and 'Ala' al-Dawla, and the latter's defeat and flight.
100. *Ibid.*, 4:445–46.
101. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'ätü 's-selāṭin*, 1:411–13. This letter is also mentioned by Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 4:462–63, who describes the scene of disturbance caused by the "gift" of 'Ala' al-Dawla's head. The Ottoman envoy arrived in Cairo on 25 Jumada II 921 (6 August 1515).
102. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'ätü 's-selāṭin*, 1:419–21. Note that this letter is dated incorrectly, as the defeat of Qara Khan and the conquest of Diyar Bakr was not complete until 922 (1516): see A. H. de Groot, *EI2*, s.v. "Koc Hışar." This is further corroborated by the statement in the letter that Selim spent the winter at his capital before launching his campaign again in the spring.
103. Feridūn Aḥmed Beg, *Münşe'ätü 's-selāṭin*, 1:421–22.
104. *Ibid.*, 1:422–23. The date of this letter is almost certainly incorrect, as the undated response from al-Ghawri suggests that he received the letter in Cairo before departing for Aleppo in May 1516.
105. *Ibid.*, 1:423–24. In this letter, Qansawh strikes a balance between praising Selim for fighting the accursed Safavids and attempting to convince him that they no longer represent a threat. He urges Selim to turn his attention to the west.
106. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 5:60–61. Selim also sent gifts to the caliph and to some of the *umarā'*.
107. *Ibid.*, 5:60–63. A *qinṭār* was equivalent to 100 *raṭls*, a unit of weight that, in northern Syria during the period in question, was roughly equivalent to 2.22 kilograms. See E. Ashtor, *EI2*, s.v. "Makāyil." I have not designated the sugar and confectionery as gifts because Selim specifically asked for them.
108. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 5:63–64. As Ibn Iyās reports, this gift never reached Selim. When Kurtbay arrived in 'Ayntab, he learned that the sultan had cast Mughulbay in prison and that the Ottoman army had entered Syrian territories and was descending on Malatya. He immediately hurried back to Qansawh to deliver this news.
109. *Ibid.*, 5:68.
110. For a discussion of the difficulty of defining "the boundaries between a written document meant to be read or heard and images or objects meant to be seen or used," see Grabar, "Shared Culture of Objects," 116–17.
111. The choice of sources has also had the effect of providing slightly more information about Ottoman gifts. Although all of the chronicles are Mamluk sources, detailed information about gift exchanges tends to make its way into the history books when the envoy is arriving from, rather than setting out for, a foreign court. Incorporating some Ottoman chronicles and the few Mamluk chancery documents that remain might change the overall picture of the corpus.
112. See al-Thakafi, "Diplomatic Relationship," 57–60.
113. Al-Thakafi, "Diplomatic Relationship," 62. See also Muslu, "Ottoman–Mamluk Relations," 36–37, and Dimitris J. Kasritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–13* (Leiden, 2007).

114. On Murad II's good relations with the Mamluks, see Muslu, "Ottoman–Mamluk Relations," 39–41, 117–26. Muslu notes a period of "harmony from 816/1413 to 855/1451...due to the ongoing menace that Shah Rokh, the successor of Timur, posed to both powers."
115. This, says Ibn Iyas, was a trick designed to turn Qansawh's thoughts away from war. See Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 5:60–61.
116. Caroline Finkel discusses Ottoman "chicanery" in the build-up to war against the Mamluks, noting that "[d]iplomacy between the great powers of the Middle East was a complicated business. The spies and agents of each—Ottoman, Mamluk, and Safavid—were engaged in an endless game of disseminating propaganda and disinformation in equal measure." See Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 2006), 108.
117. For the trade in Ba'albaki silk, see Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540–1834* (Cambridge, 2002), 34.
118. For the canonization process, see John Burton, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden, 2001–6), s.v. "The Collection of the Qur'ān"; Yasin Dutton, "An Early Mushaf According to the Reading of Ibn 'Āmir," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3, 1 (2001): 71–89; Arthur Jeffery, "The Textual History of the Qur'ān," *Journal of the Middle East Society* 1, 2 (1947): 35–49; Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'ān: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments," *Der Islam* 78, 1 (2001): 1–34.
119. An "Uthmanic Koran" can be found today in the Pavilion of the Sacred Relics at Topkapı Palace. It was sent as a gift from Egypt to Istanbul by Mehmed Ali Pasha, the governor of Egypt, in the year 1226 (1811); this is not the one from 1440 mentioned by Feridun Ahmed Beg. However, according to the late curator of the Topkapı Palace Museum, Tahsin Öz, there are *two* copies in the museum that are presumed to have belonged to 'Uthman. Thus, it is possible that the second one is the copy mentioned in our sources. See Aydın, *Sacred Trusts*, 91. The Topkapı Palace Museum has been closed for renovations for the past several years and I have not been able to verify the existence or the provenance of this second text.
120. See N. Beldiceanu and Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "Les informations les plus anciennes sur les florins Ottomans," in *Türk Nüsmatik Derneğinin 20. Kuruluş Yılında İbrahim Artuk'a Armağan (Festschrift Presented to Ibrahim Artuk on the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Turkish Numismatic Society)* (Istanbul, 1988), 49–58. The authors marshal evidence from Ottoman and European sources indicating that the Ottomans produced gold coins of Venetian type—perhaps even bearing the names of sultans—as early as 1425. Also see Franz Babinger, *Reliquiensbacher am Osmanenhof im XV. Jahrhundert: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der osmanischen Goldprägung unter Mehmed II., dem Eroberer* (Munich, 1956), 42–46; Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), 60–61. I am grateful to Lutz Ilisch for his elucidation on this score.
121. In order to restrict the scope of this study, I have not examined the letters between the Ottomans and the Persians found in Feridun Ahmed Beg's collection, which might provide a useful basis for comparison. Nor have I investigated Mamluk sources of gift exchange with other powers, such as the Venetians and Florentines.