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**“From Gender Constructions to Global State Power Relations, It’s Not Such a Great Leap.”** *Diplomatic History* 43:2 (April 2019): 237-304.

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As I read the essays in this forum I thought: it is time to voice a little more feminist curiosity about the connections between women, their gendered nationalist identities and transnational relationships, and the twentieth-century international world order that was founded on colonial power structures chronicled in these histories by Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Connie Shemo, and Rui Kohiyama.<sup>1</sup> What can these episodes tell us about shifting distributions of global power in the post-World War I era, with global state power analyses being the fundamental focus of diplomatic historians? Linking this preoccupation to major questions posed by gender historians, what can these episodes reveal about gendered constructions of the individual, the nation, transnational relationships, and international relations in the twentieth century, and about how women and men participate in defining these constructions, especially as they relate to the locations and projections of global state power? The approach taken by these transnational histories is a particularly fruitful one that exposes connections between the field of diplomatic history, which has traditionally been male-centric in theory and practice, and gender history and related feminist analyses. As defined in a recent volume edited by Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönplflug, transnational history was previously understood to distinguish historical accounts, which focused on non-government agents and their encounters with other cultures that crossed national borders, from governmental exchanges. Now more broadly defined, transnational histories blend comparative historical studies with:

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<sup>1</sup> The contents of this special issue of *Diplomatic History* are Laura Prieto, “Introduction: Women and Missionary Encounters with Foreign Nationalism in the 1920s,” *Diplomatic History* 43:2 (April 2019) [hereafter *DH* 43:2]: 237-245; Barbara Reeves-Ellington, “American Women Missionaries on Trial in Turkey: Religion, Diplomacy, and Public Perceptions in the 1920s,” *DH* 43:2: 246-264; Connie Shemo, “Imperialism, Race, and Rescue: Transformations in the Woman’s Foreign Mission Movement after World War I,” *DH* 43:2: 265-281; and Rui Kohiyama, “The 1927 Exchange of Friendship Dolls: U.S.-Japan Cultural Diplomacy in the Interwar Years,” *DH* 43:2: 282-304.

the history of bilateral and multilateral connections—such as travelling and border crossing migrations, exchanges, information flows and transfers, mutual perceptions and interactions. This approach, which can be applied not only to distinct individuals and

institutions but also to larger social groups or even entire societies, gives new impulses to the field of international or global women's and gender history.<sup>2</sup>

And based on the essays included in this forum, I would argue that transnational studies open new interpretive avenues for diplomatic histories to follow as well.

The events recounted in these studies take place in a variety of transnational settings: an American-run girls' school in Bursa, Turkey (1928); American Red Cross medical aid stations in Vladivostok, Siberia where anti-Bolshevik Eastern European and Russian refugees were treated by American and Chinese women doctors and nurses (1918-1919); and American-made 'friendship dolls' created in and representing the forty-eight United States that were sent to Japan's Imperial Palace in Kyoto and distributed through the Tokyo-based Ministry of Education to kindergartens in prefectures across the nation, with Japanese friendship dolls sent in return to the United States (1927). These studies expose many hierarchies and asymmetries of power relating to national wealth, and socioeconomic class, race, and gender, and the authors begin to analyze the power plays, competing national perceptions, cross-cultural (mis)interpretations, and translations that take place in these 'transnational spaces.'<sup>3</sup> For instance, these transnational encounters illuminate aspects of 'complicity and resistance' in the relationships that Western women had with their nations' imperialist projects that have troubled feminist scholars for the past several decades.<sup>4</sup> IR scholar Cynthia Enloe, for one, has described some of the specific ways in which Western women missionaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries practiced a 'gendered colonialism' in the foreign mission fields, that was 'not overtly racist'—at least, not by their own calculations. These women missionaries may not have been establishing formal colonies as official government emissaries or as military occupation forces, but they imposed Western cultural values and Western-defined subordinate feminine gender roles on their host populations, applying 'notions of respectability' and 'ladylike behavior' that they believed were superior to the values and practices of native cultures.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönplflug, "Introduction," in *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Biographies, Networks, Gender Orders*, eds. Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönplflug (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Janz and Schönplflug, "Introduction," 4, 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> See: Napur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds. *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), Clare Midgley, ed., *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), Mrinhalini Singha, Donna Guy, and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Feminisms and Internationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 48.

Laura Prieto's introduction to this forum reminds us that articles published in past issues of *Diplomatic History* have also called out American missionaries, male and female, as "agents of U.S. power" (237), who played a role in expanding America's formal imperialist reach in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> In their lives abroad and in their testimonies and publications, American missionaries interpreted both the motives and behaviors of their native Christian converts as well as those of the nationalist resistance they encountered in the mission fields for U.S. government officials and religious audiences as they "informed public discourse and policy" regarding U.S. foreign relations (238). Prieto also identifies broad themes and transformations that characterized American Christian mission work from the late 1800s through the 1920s-era and that provide context for the three studies included here: the emergence of a more liberal "Christian internationalism" linked to postwar international humanitarianism and efforts to promote "world friendship" versus a reinvigorated strain of fundamentalist Protestant evangelism. Among women missionaries, the historical record reveals the transformation from a more matriarchal relationship of "[Western] woman's work for [non-Western] woman" at the turn of the twentieth century to a greater emphasis on promoting native Christian women leaders as partners or sisters engaged in nurturing professions and humanitarian missions by the 1920s (241-242). These transformations, as the authors of the three forum articles explain and as Prieto notes, were not fully realized or without contradictions, and 'old' colonial relationships coexisted with 'new' recognitions of nationalist identities and aspirations (245).

Barbara Reeves-Ellington and Carol Shemo focus on American Christian women who characterized their reception as a welcomed one among their hosts in the mission fields, even as they ignored, naively denied, or downplayed their own racist expressions and chauvinistic behaviors. These American women working in Turkey, China, and Siberia, as Reeves-Ellington and Shemo explain, engaged in mission work at a time of transformation in regard to global politics after World War I, when non-Western nationalists rejected the old Western-defined colonialist international order. This led to a jockeying of power relationships among American and native women in the mission fields as well.

Reeves-Ellington relates the story of three American teachers appointed to positions at a former Christian mission school that was "rebranded" as a "modern school for Muslim girls" in Bursa, Turkey in the early 1920s (248). In a subsequent incident that took place in 1928, the Turkish state authorities accused the teachers, Edith Sanderson, Lucille Day, and Jeannie Jillson, of violating Turkish Republican law by delivering religious instruction on the secular school grounds. The women refuted the accusations, and Reeves-Ellington focuses her study on the general transformation of Christian mission work in Turkey as it responded to the new national laws, on the official trial of the three American teachers, and on the diplomatic fallout that followed the Turkish court's ruling. At the trial, the accused women insisted that their own interpretation of Turkish law—that they could continue to act as "individual witnesses for Jesus," and employ "informal conversion" practices such as distributing Bibles and praying with Muslim students and teachers—should be accepted by state authorities (252, 255). The Turkish state's evidence was provided by a former teacher at the school and several students, that is, by a Turkish woman and five girls, and the judgement pronounced ruled that the American Christian teachers had intentionally broken the law banning religious education. Their case

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<sup>6</sup>Prieto cites the following examples: Joy Schultz, "Birthing Empire: Economies of Childrearing and the Formation of American Colonialism in Hawai'i, 1820-1848," *Diplomatic History* 38:5 (November 2014): 895-925, <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dht108>, Andrew Preston, "Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 30:5 (November 2006): 783-812, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2006.00588.x>.

commanded the attention of U.S. Ambassador Joseph Grew and U.S. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, who tried to pressure the Turkish government to back down and close the case with no further punitive action against the American teachers. They asserted that the unfavorable ruling would anger the American public, particularly women's organizations, and would affect Congressional opinion in regard to relations with Turkey in the future. Asserting their right to interpret their own national laws, the Turkish authorities were more concerned about nationalist backlash in Turkey if they acquiesced to U.S. government pressure and the court convicted the three women. The women were found guilty of spreading religious propaganda, but given token sentences: three days' imprisonment on school grounds and a fine of three Turkish lira each (255-256).

As Reeves-Ellington points out, this incident and its outcome marked a shift in global power that had begun in 1922, when American Christian mission societies re-negotiated their presence in Turkey with the new Turkish government. In the resulting Lausanne Treaty, Christian missions lost some of their past privileges and legal exemptions and agreed to abide by Turkish laws and regulations in operating their schools and other institutions in the new Republic. When the verdict of the 1928 trial was rendered, American newspapers and the mission press both downplayed the significance of the outcome, perhaps because the trial involved women missionaries in a girls' school, whereas prosecution of more powerful male teachers might have commanded more attention (263), or, perhaps because the Christian mission societies were beginning to "re-think their approach to non-Christian faiths" in response to rising nationalist protests in the foreign mission fields (264). The American government, too, had developed a new relationship with the Turkish state. In this instance, the Turkish government did not back down in the face of American pressure even as the two states were negotiating a new bilateral trade treaty.

Shemo's study shifts to Vladivostok, Siberia, where anti-Bolshevik Russian forces and American Expeditionary Forces temporarily controlled a region that became a haven for anti-Bolshevik refugees fleeing from war-torn areas of Eastern Europe and Bolshevik-held Russian territory. The American Red Cross administering medical care to the refugees called for volunteer medical personnel to assist its efforts, and American and Chinese women doctors, nurses, and medical students from Soochow Medical College for Women answered the call. The American doctor who led the all-female mission, Ethel Polk, another American doctor Louise Ingersoll, and two Chinese doctors, Lucille Van and Dao Shushi, all wrote positive accounts of the humanitarian motives behind their mission, emphasizing their desires to relieve the suffering of others. They noted the bonds of common cause that the trip forged among the doctors, another American nurse, a Chinese pharmacist, and ten Chinese students, all of whom were women and were partners in an effort to "rescue" others (266).

The American government's political objectives to defeat the Bolshevik forces and reclaim all territory of the former Russian empire for a 'democratic' White Russian ally—foreign policy goals in contradiction to the Wilsonian principle of respecting self-determination for all nations—do not factor into the various women's accounts of their six-month sojourn, whether written at the time or many years after the fact. Nonetheless, Shemo explains that both these women's accounts and the whole episode itself reveal disturbing features of American imperial power and nationalist ethnocentrism at a time when liberal internationalism was supposed to be reshaping the conduct of global politics and the 'world friendship' model was supposed to be reshaping mission work and person-to-person relationships—so much for global sisterhood! The American Red Cross that ran the medical mission efforts in Vladivostok practiced racial segregation within its organization in the United States, and imposed segregationist policies that separated the American and Chinese women when housing them in Siberia. The American and Chinese women accepted the racial discrimination policies with little comment, even though their own accounts demonstrated that both groups of women considered

themselves to be equals on a “civilizing mission” among the destitute refugees (272). For the American women this missionizing was a familiar role, but for the Chinese women this was something new and they expressed a nationalist pride in providing aid instead of receiving rescue. When they returned to China in April 1919, however, ‘old’ imperialist power relations were reasserting themselves with a vengeance. Western Great Powers were finalizing postwar treaties that acceded Chinese territory to their Japanese imperialist World War I allies. Once again, U.S. government actions failed to live up to the principles of a ‘new diplomacy’ that President Wilson articulated during the war and at the Versailles Peace Conference where a bold-faced betrayal of Chinese sovereignty took place.<sup>7</sup> The Western Christian mission movement in China experienced the wrath of and rejection by embittered Chinese nationalists, Chinese Christians among them, for decades afterwards.

Rui Kohiyama’s essay examining a 1927 exchange of friendship dolls between the United States and Japan illuminates connections that are not often explicitly drawn in histories of diplomatic relations: that is, connections between a gender power hierarchy that privileged masculinity over subordinated heteronormative femininity, and dominant structural hierarchies of the twentieth-century international state system that privileged Western nation-states run by white-raced male elites over non-Western, feminized, and subordinated non-white national peoples. The exchange of “over 12,000 blue-eyed American dolls” with “fifty-eight exorbitantly expensive Japanese dolls” (282), was conceived of by two men, former missionary to Japan and nationally-recognized Protestant Church leader Sidney Gulick and wealthy Japanese entrepreneur Shibusawa Eiichi, in order to assuage bad feelings toward the United States among a rising Japanese imperial government power whose national pride was insulted by the characterization of Japanese immigrants as “unassimilable aliens” in the 1924 U.S. Immigration Act (283). Wow. Here is a transnational historic episode that begs for feminist analysis: female-gendered dolls, “inanimate representations of womanhood,” sent as cultural diplomats in order to cultivate friendly relationships between the male-run governments, to engage “in state-supported cultural diplomacy between the United States and Japan” (283). Wow again.

Many layers of gender, race, class, and national power intersect in Rui Kohiyama’s account of the doll exchange. Sidney Gulick, head of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ, drew upon his “knowledge of Japanese culture and sympathy for the Japanese people” to dream up his plan to send the dolls, “representative of the [female] children of America, bearing messages of friendship and good will.” The dolls “should look like attractive and typical American girls,” but no “colored dolls” need apply, as they might offend Japanese masculine and racist sensibilities (285). Gulick turned over the project to the Committee on World Friendship among Children (CWFC), chaired by Lucy Peabody, a leader in the Baptist women’s mission movement who had married a wealthy merchant. Peabody was a great fundraiser and was able to mobilize the mostly female CWFC to organize a nation-wide campaign to enlist girls’ and women’s organizations to dress the dolls to represent the forty-eight states and “Miss America” (289). Rui Kohiyama asserts that Japanese school children, the ultimate recipients of the American girl dolls, received the dolls “with enthusiasm” (289). But she also explains the Japanese government’s reaction to this gift, which indicates that the Japanese males in charge of the Ministry of Education that initially accepted the dolls interpreted the gift as a challenge to their national honor and to their manhood:

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<sup>7</sup> John Robert Kelley, “The New Diplomacy: Evolution of a Revolution,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21:2 (June 2010): 286-305, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2010.482474>.

In spite of repeated emphasis by the CWFC that return gifts were not necessary, the Japanese Ministry of Education collected a total of 29,000 yen as donations from the pupils at the schools that had received the American dolls, and had highly-skilled professional artisans in Tokyo and Kyoto fashion fifty-eight Japanese dolls to be sent in response to the United States. ... Although there were far fewer Japanese dolls, they were priceless examples of craftwork, symbolizing the refinement and grace of Japanese tradition. Their purpose was to assert the cultivation and civility of the Japanese, in clear contravention (*sic*) of the assumptions behind the 1924 immigration act with its claims that they were “unassimilable aliens” (290-291).

Rui Kohiyama’s rich essay also identifies other examples of ‘friendship gift giving’ in the 1920s and 1930s, as demonstrations of U.S. and Japanese imperial power, each nation asserting their spheres of influence through the various gifts they sent forth in relationships with their colonized territories or otherwise subordinated foreign nations: the United States with Mexico, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico (293); Japan with Formosa, Sakhalin, and Kwantung, China (295). In these cases, the “ultimate purpose” of the “gift giving projects was the strengthening of the imperial identity of the dominant party. ... reforc[ing] the client status of the weaker, and possibly unwilling, party” (297).

In conclusion, a feminist analysis of this particular episode of U.S.-Japanese relations reveals many implications for diplomatic histories of state-to-state relations that examine global hierarchies of power. Feminist IR scholar V. Spike Peterson elsewhere raises some points that are particularly germane to Rui Kohiyama’s study in her analysis of how heteronormative gender power relations intersect with other global power structures.<sup>8</sup> As Peterson has explained, globalized beauty ideals of the heterosexual feminine body reproduce and normalize gender inequalities; that is, the female body may be beautiful but heterosexual female bodies are always subordinated to male power projections. These gender hierarchies often appear so ‘natural’ that they go unnoticed, but they are linked conceptually to many other intersecting structural hierarchies of race, global capitalism, and national power and privilege that determine social relations with the ‘other’ and international state-to-state relations.<sup>9</sup> The salient point here in regard to applying a feminist analysis to examinations of diplomatic histories is that if dominant structural hierarchies are not recognized as being linked to gender power hierarchies, then they will not be dismantled. In fact, those structural hierarchies will be further naturalized, reproduced, and reinforced.

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<sup>8</sup> V. Spike Peterson, “Femininity: Culture, Ideology and Political Economy, An engagement with Angela McCracken,” in *Feminism and International Relations: Conversations about the Past, Present and Future* eds. J. Ann Tickner and Laura Sjoberg (New York: Routledge, 2011), 212-220. Peterson is commenting on Angela McCracken’s feminist analysis of how gender power relations are linked to global capitalist political economic relations in her study of *quinceañera* and ‘white’ wedding ceremonies in the same volume, 194-211.

<sup>9</sup> Peterson, “Femininity,” 219, fn 4. As Peterson explicates her position, and I would like to clarify here: she is “*not* arguing that sexism is the “primary” oppression, but insisting that gender hierarchy is a historically contingent structural feature of social relations, that the subordination of women is not reducible to other structural oppressions (or vice versa), and that the dichotomy of gender underpins—as the *devalorization of the feminine* naturalizes—intersecting hierarchies of ethnicity/race, class, gender, sexuality and geopolitical difference.”

## H-Diplo Article Review

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