Christine Göttler and Mia Mochizuki, eds.

The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early Modern Religious Art. Leiden: Brill, 2017. Pp. 613 + xxxvi. Hb, \$229.

The Nomadic Object contains nineteen essays derived from a conference held by New York University Abu Dhabi between January 18 and 21, 2016. Each contribution answers in its own way the question of how religion interacted with the global exchange of objects that flourished during the early modern period. Sixteen of the essays, when taken together, reveal from different perspectives the variety of things shipped to and from the four corners of the globe that disseminated and altered the foundations of Catholic belief. In the three remaining essays that consider exchanges outside the Catholic networks there is to be found potential for a truly global history of art, de-centered from Rome to include multiple regional centers measured at different scales.

Each essay concentrates on so distinct a kind of object or question, approachable only through the writer's expertise, that it would be fruitless to summarize them all, one after the other. It may be useful instead to find those issues and concepts that link the different contributions with each other and with broader developments in the writing of early modern history. One of the co-editors, Mia Mochizuki, points in this direction by starting her introduction to the whole volume with Athanasius Kircher's famous Museum of the Society of Jesus that he assembled in Rome. Collections, Jesuits, the relationships between sacred images and diabolical idols, exemplified in Kircher's museum, all furnish organizing topics for a number of the essays. Mochizuki observes that the volume can be viewed as "a virtual *Kunstkammer* of religious objects" (25).

Christine Göttler, co-editor as well, in her "Extraordinary Things: 'Idols from India' and the Visual Discernment of Space and Time, circa 1600," introduces us to a list of objects, some from the New World and Asia, that Benito Arias Montano sent in 1596 from his "theater of nature and art" outside Seville as gifts for the "museum" of his friend Abraham Ortelius in Antwerp. In this transaction of friendship, knowledge, and value, Arias Montano, the Catholic priest and biblical humanist, recompensed Ortelius, the geographer, for sending a new edition of his *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. From macrocosm in the atlas to microcosms in the collections, mediated by trans-European, trans-Atlantic, and global trade routes, by the "world cities" in which the correspondents lived, and by the books they wrote and read, Göttler has traced the different concepts that gave meaning to these "extraordinary things." Closer up, she scrutinizes the shifting significance of "barbarian idols" from the "Indies" in which precious and rare

materials were opposed to artless forms, and whose diabolical evil could be neutralized in the new settings of European collections. Yet she also observes that these pagan gods, displayed in *kunstkammers*, were separated from their Catholic sacred reliquary counterparts housed in church treasuries. And she shatters the blinkered Catholic view by also including Protestant voices who attacked reliquaries as idolatrous. Visual information found in Antwerp *kunst-kammer* paintings by Frans Francken the Younger are set alongside inventory records and other sources to document the classifications and values by which strange objects, such as Indonesian *kris*, were integrated into changing European patterns of thought.

Kunstkammers likewise establish important points of reference in Margit Kern's "Cultured Materiality in Early Modern Art: Feather Mosaics in Sixteenth-Century Collections." She presses further the question of what purposes these images from New Spain (Mexico) served in their new European homes. Indigenous artists produced them with pre-Hispanic technique and precious New World materials turned artfully under the instruction of Franciscan missionaries to represent Christian subjects. As Göttler indicated for the Indonesian *kris*, Kirn argues for Mexican feather mosaics, that their religious meaning was suppressed in *kunstkammers*, while their play between nature and artifice was valued, marking a "semantic shift" in this change of what was valued (337).

Kunstkammers, attentive discussion of materials, and change in values intertwine together in themes that recur throughout the book. Beate Fricke for example, in "Making Marvels—Faking Matter: Mediating *Virtus* between the Bezoar and Goa Stone and Their Containers," weighs the changing value of bezoar stones, encrusted hairballs found in the stomachs of ruminants and thought to possess medical virtue as the antidote to poisons. Fricke charts their movement from princely tables to *kunstkammers*. She pays attention as well to how Jesuits in Goa manufactured fake bezoar stones which they encased in elaborate containers that symbolized their astrological virtues. How containers defined the objects inside is a question that Urte Krass also addresses in her "Naked Bones, Empty Caskets, and a Faceless Bust: Christian Relics and Reliquaries between Europe and Asia during Early Modern Globalisation." Bezoar stones appear as well in the list of objects sent by Arias Montano to Ortelius with which Göttler begins her essay. It is evident that the different contributions to this volume reinforce one another, and together they amount to more than the sum of their parts.

As a cumulative affirmation of their leading role in the global ramification of missions and the exchange of objects to support evangelization around the world, the Jesuits win recognition for disseminating and using "nomadic objects." Krass in her essay on reliquaries, Rosemarie San Juan in her essay "Virgin

Skulls,” and Ines Županov in her study of “Relics Management” all credit the Jesuits as leaders who mined and exported the rich cache of bones uncovered in a Cologne graveyard that were identified as the earthly remains of St. Ursula and her ten thousand martyred virgin followers. San Juan questions how these human bones exported to the Bahia in Brazil were employed by the Jesuits in their strategy of accommodating indigenous practices, “in ways that go beyond what is usually revealed to officials in Rome” (425). And Županov charts the countermovement from Asia back to Europe of relics supplied by the bodies of Jesuits who had been martyred while trying to spread the faith. Jesuits participated as well in the dissemination of cults such as the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin that Dagmar Eichberger follows through its gradual expansion in tandem with Hapsburg gains of territory. James Clifton returns to the macrocosm of maps in his essay which convincingly balances the Chinese and European traditions of viewing landscapes accommodated by the Jesuit Matteo Ricci in the woodcut world maps he made for his Chinese audiences. Walter Melion explores the Jesuits’ theoretical foundation for using visual images to convert all nations and the fundamental reasons for why they would carry all these things abroad with them. His argument is illuminating for grounding the presence of reason through recognition of natural law impressed by images in every human soul. By this natural law, communicated through images, the Jesuits were guaranteed a universal audience. For current historians it is very useful to understand the assumptions from which the Jesuits proceeded; why they were convinced at least in theory that pictures of the joys in heaven and punishments in hell would exert equal effect on indigenous peoples in Paraguay and on peasants in France.

Of course the Jesuits’ use of images abroad participated in a longer and deeper history. Tristan Weddigen in his exemplary essay, “Materiality and Idolatry: Roman Imaginations of Saint Rose of Lima,” reconstructs the Dominican campaign to beatify, canonize, and disseminate the cult of this new American saint. At the center of their enterprise stood Melchiorre Cafà’s masterpiece, *Blessed Rose of Saint Mary* (1665), carved in white marble with Bernini’s *St. Teresa* in mind and anticipating Bernini’s *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*. Weddigen sets Cafà’s work in the context of the paintings, celebrations, testimonies, prints, sketches, politics, and responses that shaped the public, Roman image of Rose. And then, after recounting its festive reception when the sculpture arrived at Lima in 1670, Weddigen draws the important conclusion of its failure to generate fervor in the new land where it came to rest. Marble was an exotic material in Peru and what moved the urban elite of Rome fell on eyes in Lima accustomed to a very different kind of devotional art. Silver, marble, and pigment entered into a material and ideological exchange

between Rome and Lima. One further quality to note about Cafà's *Rose* is that it is smaller than life-size, and all the more graceful for that.

Franciscans in sixteenth-century Mexico trained indigenous artists to combine New World techniques and materials with European, Christian imagery drawn from easily transportable prints. Kern points out that Brother Pedro de Gante supervised the production of Mexican feather mosaics. Jeanette Favrot Peterson, in her "Translating the Sacred: The Peripatetic Print in the Florentine Codex, Mexico (1575–1570)," explores the tensions between Christian and Aztec words and pictures put together by indigenous artists under the supervision of the Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún. It is notable that both Pedro de Gante and Bernardino de Sahagún stood as leading innovators in the uses of visual communication they hoped would bring indigenous populations closer to Christian truth.

Close attention to the materials from which objects were made cuts across and brings together in subject and method several contributions to *The Nomadic Object*. Scientific conservation analysis of the materials and techniques used to weave metal thread enables Denise-Marie Teece, in "Arabic Inscriptions in the Service of the Church: An Italian Textile Evoking an Early Christian Past?," tentatively to date before the sixteenth century and locate in Italy the production of a textile that imitated earlier Middle East models. Ralph Dekoninck in his essay "*Propagatio imaginum*: The Translated Images of Our Lady of Foy," documents the exchange of materials between Dinant and Quebec, managed by Jesuits, that heightened devotion to the miraculous Our Lady of Foy. Wood from an oak tree where the image was found near Dinant was incorporated into replicas sent to Quebec for worship by the Huron. Wampum with Christian inscriptions were sent back to Dinant and the Dinant Jesuits in turn presented the Quebec Our Lady of Foy with robes to adorn her. Dekoninck stresses the value of the original material in the surrogate images. Margit Kern examines the relationships between material, nature, and art in her study of Mexican feather mosaics. Kern estimates as of "immeasurable value" the boxes containing relics, made from new and exotic materials, such as tortoise shell (401).

A good number of these essays use value as a term to measure exchange and symbolic attachment to objects across geographical distances, durations of time, and cultural divisions. Evonne Levy, in "Mass' Produced Paintings in the Andes: Mobility, Flexibility, Visual Habitus," for example, questions the separation between religious and economic value in the production of multiple sacred images painted on one canvas and meant to be cut up and sold one at a time. She connects the value of materials (scarce European canvas) with the organization of work. And she perceives—through the surviving multi-image pictures now serving as altarpieces or hanging in museums—that someone, at

a time undocumented by any written source, awarded these works a new value for repeating the holy person or for documenting processes of manufacture. I already have noted how Ralph Dekoninck measures the changing value in miraculous images from incorporation of original materials to the later widespread dissemination of visual likenesses in different media. Christiane Hille, in “Gems of Sacred Kingship: Faceting Anglo-Mughal Relations around 1600,” separates out different components of value that are more or less translatable across cultures. Beate Fricke considers the role played by what she calls the “aesthetics” of the objects and their containers in determining the value placed on bezoar stones. Ines Županov explicitly asks the question of value in sacred objects, important because they could “be endowed with an exorbitant value at one point and none or very little at another.” Like money, relics depend on consensus for their value and thus provide “the only tangible and quantifiable currency available” to the Catholic “spiritual empire” (451).

Jeffrey L. Collins and Meredith Martin, in “Early Modern Incense Boats: Commerce, Christianity, and Cultural Exchange,” concentrate on one standard object used in the Catholic liturgy. This universal presence allows them to spot local differences that accent uniformity across the breadth of this “spiritual empire.” They introduce well-chosen case studies from Mexico and Thailand which anchor their broader survey.

Several essays in this volume focus on sacred objects outside the Catholic network, or in comparison with it. Christine Hille presents the mutually uncomprehending exchange of gifts between Anglican Stuart England and what she calls the “syncretistic” court of the Muslim Mughal empire in India. Yoriko Kobayashi-Sato in her essay, “The Value of *Misinterpretation* in Cultural Exchange: The Transfer of Christian Prints from the West to Japan,” meticulously reconstructs the late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century Japanese pursuit of *rangaku* or Dutch studies. Within this context the painter Yasuda Raishi closely adapted the composition of Arnold Houbraken’s black and white engraving of *The Adoration of the Shepherds* for Yasuda’s own watercolor depicting *The Revenge of the Ako Retainers*, in which the virgin holding Jesus is replaced by the leader of the retainers who cradles in his lap the head of his enemy. So gruesome a change is the product, according to Kobayashi-Sato, of the Japanese shogunate’s prohibition since the seventeenth century against the importation of any Christian books. Japanese artists were ignorant of Christian doctrine and so could misinterpret and alter the content of those prints that they could obtain. Different kinds of willful or ignorant misunderstanding in the reception of objects are noticed as well by Göttler, Weddigen, and Hille.

Even further outside the Catholic orbit, and working on a smaller, regional scale is the exchange that Dipti Khera follows in her essay “Arrivals at Distant

Lands: Artful Letters and Entangled Mobilities in the Indian Ocean Littoral.” Khera purposefully concentrates on messages, including illustrated letters, exchanged between Jain merchants and monks, sent across the islands and coast of northwest India. She insists on the significance of local knowledge. This compression of scale suggests the enormous potential for further research outside the European and Catholic worlds. Akira Akiyama’s “Relic or Icon? The Place and Function of Imperial Regalia” introduces a comparative method of similar cases applied by economic historians to understand similarities and differences in, for example, the economies of early modern China and Europe. In this case, Akiyama places side by side the histories and symbolic uses of key objects associated with the emperors of Japan and the Holy Roman emperors.

In total, the essays of *The Nomadic Object* present more of a changing slideshow and diverse sequence of lectures than a virtual *kunstkammer*. Some of these essays will become immediately indispensable for further research. There is so much knowledge and expertise invested in each essay that it would be impossible to find a common denominator to unite them all. Collins and Martin suggest a promising model for future research in their pinpointing of local differences against a ground of global uniformity. Khera proves the vast potential for research on smaller regional scales of exchange outside the Catholic sphere. Due recognition of formative innovations conceived by Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans pulls attention back to the institutions and individuals who were the actual agents, the ones who carried nomadic objects and directed their uses.

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