



# **Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate: Gifts and Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World**

*Doris Behrens-Abouseif*

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Elaborate and sensational gifts were the hallmark of Mamluk diplomacy. From Cairo, where they controlled the medieval spice trade and the holy sites of Christianity and Islam, the Mamluk Sultans-conscious of their humble slave origins-augmented their claims to legitimacy through brilliant displays of diplomatic gift-giving, creating a celebrated reputation for the Sultanate from Europe to the Far East. From spices, ceremonial textiles, and military objects, to elephants and giraffes, and even humans-either living or as severed heads. The offerings varied in combination and emphasis according to the status and circumstances of giver and receiver, but always created a sensation. Through an unparalleled study of primary sources and rigorous fieldwork, this original book-richly illustrated in colour-explores the unpredictable and nuanced art of the regal gift in the Mamluk Sultanate from 1250-1517. Doris Behrens-Abouseif not only provides the first study of this subject, but makes an important contribution to the study of diplomacy, economics, visual arts, and material culture in the medieval period.

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