

Roberta Anderson and Charlotte Backerra (eds.)

Confessional Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe

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THE EDITED collection, *Confessional Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe*, provides a rich assortment of essays, the majority of which began as papers from ‘Splendid Encounters’ conferences, which are organised annually by the Premodern Diplomats Network (PDN). The aim of this volume is to contribute to the under-developed study of confessional diplomacy, helping scholars understand the significant role that religion played in early modern diplomatic proceedings. The carefully researched contributions certainly help fill this gap and the individual case-studies are valuable to the field. Indeed, the presentation of new research is the main strength of this collection. In the foreword, Anna Kalinowska describes the collection as ‘empirically rich’ and it certainly lives up to that expectation. Each contribution is original, as is evident not only from the vast and effective use of primary sources employed in each chapter but from the inclusion of extensive bibliographies, although the volume does leave readers to draw their own overriding conclusions.

The collection is divided into three sections. Part I is concerned with papal diplomacy, examining the diplomatic ambitions and relations of the unequivocally confessional power of the Holy See. This section understandably focusses more on ‘high’ politics than the other two sections. Cristina Bravo Luzano’s chapter in particular stands out as a result of her effective demonstration of the realities faced by Rome in the post-reformation era. Part II focusses on clerics working as foreign diplomats and effectively puts the individual in the limelight. Together, the three chapters in this section efficiently highlight the diverse, unofficial and complex roles that were commonly undertaken during early modern diplomacy. Part III is the largest section, entitled ‘religion as a matter of diplomacy,’ with the chapters discussing ambassadors and chaplains in host countries of different faiths. Contributor and editor Roberta Anderson’s chapter on Catholic ambassadors

in Protestant London emphasises the often-brazen attitude of ambassadors and the difficulties this brought for host countries facing a balancing act between their own religious priorities and maintaining positive foreign relations. Such difficulties are highlighted throughout the section, though in different contexts, with the exception of Gábor Kármán's final chapter which illustrates the legacy of the Protestant cause in early eighteenth-century foreign policy – a less fitting but still interesting contribution.

Although grouped in corresponding sections, each chapter is treated quite independently. If the reader expected the application of broader arguments or conclusions, they might be left disappointed. Admittedly, this is recognised in the afterword, with Gábor Kármán stating that 'collections of essays are not generally designed to carve such conclusions into stone' and, instead, the chapters are designed to shed light 'on specific situations.' Yet a more extensive introduction and conclusion would have drawn together the separate case-studies, which are so revealing of their time periods and locations, for greater engagement with each other and with the relevant historiography. In turn, this would have more helpfully addressed the questions which arise from the complex relationship between religion, diplomacy, social change and politics.¹

Over its three sections, *Confessional Diplomacy* certainly covers a lot of ground. Not only thematically but geographically - one of the refreshing and undoubted strengths of the collection is how it brings together contributors from across Europe to present case-studies from an expanse of various states and archives. The drawbacks of such variety, in this volume, are the grammatical or linguistic errors that naturally occur in work written in a second language. While these editorial oversights disrupt the overall flow of the work at times, they do not detract from the obvious value of the studies that are imbedded in primary source research and are succinct in demonstrating the possibilities of diplomatic history. Just as it has a wide geographical scope, the volume is true to its title in that it is representative of the early modern period, covering from the early-sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth.

Overall, the volume successfully persuades that religion never ceased to be a significant aspect of diplomacy and a central consideration of European powers. Though religious concerns had to be weighed against other issues – whether they were social, cultural or political – confessional diplomacy

1 For an example of a highly useful introduction in the topic of cross-confessional diplomacy, see: 'Maartje van Gelder and Tijana Krstić, 'Introduction to Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean,' *Journal of Early Modern History*, 19, 2-3, 93-105

remained a key part of foreign relations throughout the early modern period. This collection undoubtedly contributes to the existing literature, but it may be best suited to a reader that is familiar with diplomatic history and has an already well-established understanding of the current historiography and theories. Yet those seeking to expand their knowledge through any, or all, of the various studies this volume addresses, will be impressed by the wealth of empirical material they discover.

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