

H-France Review Vol. 16 (April 2016), No. 47

Sarah Alyn Stacey, ed., *Political, Religious and Social Conflict in the States of Savoy*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014. xiii + 317 pp. Notes and index. \$72.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-3-0343-0831-1.

Review by Brian Sandberg, Northern Illinois University.

Over the past several decades, Sabaudian studies (as the history and literature of the Franco-Italian duchy of Savoy are known) have grown significantly and matured. The duchy of Savoy, situated in the Piedmont (Piémont or Piemonte) region of the Italian peninsula, has become an important case in work on state development. The duchy offers a key example of a small European state with a multilingual (Franco-Italian) and mixed confessional population. During the early modern period, the dukes of Savoy engaged in the Italian Wars and the European Wars of Religion through diplomatic and military activity, attempting to navigate between the Spanish, Imperial, and French spheres of influence in Italy. Savoy thus offers fascinating evidence on religious conflict and political culture for the broader histories of early modern Europe and of European state development.

Political, Religious and Social Conflict in the States of Savoy, edited by Sarah Alyn Stacey, comes from a conference on “Les Conflits en Savoie 1400-1700 / Conflict and Society in Savoy 1400-1700,” held at Trinity College Dublin in May 2010. The conference was sponsored by Trinity’s Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, which is directed by the volume’s editor, who also provides an introduction for this conference proceedings.

The volume’s essays all examine polemical literature written in or about the duchy of Savoy. The principal sources are manuscript and printed pamphlets, treatises, histories, judicial opinions, inquisition records, and peace treaties, in addition to related correspondence and framing sources. A number of the authors refer to their sources as constituting propaganda. For example, Blythe Alice Raviola studies “propagandist texts” about the Wars of Succession of Mantua and Monferrato as part of a larger “grey literature” that circulated among early modern diplomats (p. 55). Many of the essays offer case studies focused on a particular legal or polemical text. Sarah Alyn Stacey publishes a transcription of *Apologie de Marc-Claude de Buttet pour la Savoie* (1554) along with a chapter appraising the debates surrounding this polemical text.

Dynastic rule, political culture, and Savoyard identity emerge as central themes in the book. Toby Osborne traces the Savoyard political campaign to achieve royal status, focusing on the 1632 ducal edict known as the *trattamento reale* (royal treatment), which sought to confirm recognition of Savoyard royalty. Osborne argues that “Savoy’s royal campaign affords an excellent case study both of the ways in which a dynasty sought to change its status, and of the limits of its success on the stages of domestic and international politics” (p. 17). Osborne draws on Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger’s influential studies of symbolic communication in the Holy Roman Empire to analyze Savoyard political culture and ritual.[1] He concludes that the royal campaign had some success in enhancing the dynasty’s princely status, despite “Savoy’s failure around Europe to give a convincing ‘performance’ of its royalty” (p. 33). Several essays consider Savoy as a vital intermediary in international politics during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Cornel Zwierlein thus refers to Savoy as “a symbolic hinge between the Empire,

France and Italy” (p. 139). The essays by Sarah Alyn Stacey and Blythe Alice Raviola demonstrate some of the techniques that Savoyard polemicists used to promote and defend official ducal policies during wartime.

The problem of heresy figures significantly in the volume, and a number of essays present new research on the Waldensians, or *vaudois*, who practiced an unorthodox form of Christianity that had been declared heretical in the thirteenth century. Marina Benedetti and Federico Bo assess specific manuscript collections on the medieval Waldensians that were compiled in the seventeenth century and eventually found their way into the Old Library of Trinity College Dublin. Using these collections, they present new findings on Waldensian *barbae* (preachers), sermons, and inquisition records. Some sixteenth-century reformers embraced Waldensians as forerunners of the Protestant Reformation movement, and surviving Waldensians in Savoy and the Alps often became associated with the broader Lutheran, Zwinglian, and Calvinist movements. Early modern Waldensians and Protestants were targeted by Counter-Reformation conversion campaigns within the staunchly Catholic duchy. Alessandro Celi argues that a ban on preaching in the Valley of Aosta in the 1520s slowed the spread of the Reformation movement there, ensuring that the local residents embraced Catholicism. Despite such local successes for Catholic revival and the zealous leadership of the dukes of Savoy, the Waldensians survived, and the duchy as a whole remained bi-confessional.

Duke Emanuele-Filiberto’s attempt to suppress Waldensians in his territories produced a serious religious conflict in Savoy in 1560-1561, and gradually led to Savoyard involvement in the French Wars of Religion (1562-1629). Cornel Zwierlein analyzes the treaty of Cavour of 1561, which ended the conflict in Savoy and seems to have provided a model for later religious peace agreements in France. Zwierlein argues that “during the ‘Pourparlers’, one of the several attempts by the French monarchy to prevent violent confrontation or civil war between 1560 and 1562, the Peace of Cavour was central to the negotiations” (p. 151). Fabrice Micallef explores diplomatic language and disinformation during the Savoyard military intervention in Provence in the 1590s, finding that the failure to master information was a key factor in the military and diplomatic reversals that Duke Charles-Emmanuel suffered (p. 51).

The rulers of Savoy sponsored conversion efforts and often acted aggressively to suppress heresy in the duchy. This Savoyard Catholic Reformation was closely associated with contemporaneous Catholic revival movements in France. Marco Battistoni surveys the attempts of two Catholic abbeys to deal with dissenting communities and heretical tenants in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. François de Sales directed Catholic missionary activity aimed at converting Savoyard Protestants. Jill Fehleison’s essay emphasizes the importance of erections of crosses during Catholic public devotions in Savoyard territories that had previously suffered from iconoclastic attacks by Protestants. She demonstrates the ways in which the veneration of the cross took on added significance in the polemical debates between Catholic missionaries and Genevan ministers (pp. 266-274).

In addition to the constant pressure of missionaries, Savoyard Protestants periodically faced military occupation and forced conversion efforts by the forces of the dukes of Savoy. Numerous religious conflicts erupted in Savoy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Cornel Zwierlein sets the 1561 peace of Cavour into a broader European context of religious peacemaking efforts. Despite this peace, Waldensians repeatedly complained of persecutions well into the seventeenth century. Elisabetta Lurgo’s essay investigates an early seventeenth-century treatise on monsters that associated deformed and monstrous beings with the menace of heresy. The treatise’s author portrayed monstrous births as omens that conveyed specific warnings from God about the wickedness of false Christians and the danger of compromising with such heretics. Antonella Amatuzzi explores the polemical literature produced at the time of the *Pâques piémontaises* (Piedmont Easter) of 1655, when a Savoyard military occupation of Waldensian valleys prompted a civil war.

Political, Religious and Social Conflict in the States of Savoy will interest specialists in Sabaudian studies and historians of early modern state development, but the narrow documentary focus of many of the essays limits the potential audience for this collective volume. The book nonetheless confirms the significance of Savoy as an important case by situating the duchy within major religious and political developments in early modern Europe. Early modern French historians will be especially interested in the volume's findings on Savoy's connections to the French Wars of Religion and the Catholic Reformation in France.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Sarah Alyn Stacey, "Introduction"

Toby Osborne, "Language and Sovereignty: The Use of Titles and Savoy's Royal Declaration of 1632"

Fabrice Micallef, "L'Impossible Désinformation: la diplomatie savoyarde et la présentation de la situation provençale en Italie et en Espagne, 1590–1592"

Blythe Alice Raviola, "Sabaudian Propaganda and the Wars of Succession of Mantua and Monferrato, 1613–1631"

Sarah Alyn Stacey, "Marc-Claude de Buttet's *Apologie [...] pour la Savoie* (1554): Conflicting Perceptions of the 1536 French Invasion of Savoy"

Sarah Alyn Stacey, "An Edition of the *Apologie de Marc-Claude de Buttet pour la Savoie* (1554)"

Cornel Zwierlein, "The Peace of Cavour in the European Context"

Marina Benedetti, "'Documentary Adventures': The Waldensian Inquisition Manuscripts in Trinity College Dublin"

Federico Bo, "The Waldensian Manuscripts in Trinity College Dublin: The Sermons and Lectionary of MS Du 267"

Marco Battistoni, "Waldensians, the Reformation and Abbatial Domains in Western Piedmont and in the Marquisate of Saluzzo in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries"

Alessandro Celi, "The Ban on Liturgical Practice in Antey and Torgnon, 1525–1530: New Perspectives on a Confessional Controversy"

Antonella Amatuzzi, "Les Libelles vaudois sur les Pâques piémontaises: des armes et finances dans le conflit avec la cour de Savoie (1655)"

Jill Fehleison, "The Place of the Cross: The Pamphlet Battle between François de Sales and Antoine de La Faye"

Elisabetta Lurgo, "Monstrous Births, Prophecy and Heresy in Savoy and Piedmont: The 'Trattato dei monstri' by Guglielmo Baldessano"

NOTE

1. Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Emperor's Old Clothes: Constitutional History and the Symbolic Language of the Holy Roman Empire*, trans. by Thomas Dunlap (New York: Berghahn, 2015); Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, "Le Rituel de l'investiture dans le Saint-Empire de l'époque moderne : histoire institutionnelle et pratiques symboliques," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 56 (2009): 7-29.

Brian Sandberg
Northern Illinois University
bsandberg@niu.edu

Copyright © 2016 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution of individual reviews for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the H-France website. The Society for French Historical Studies reserves the right to withdraw the license for edistribution/republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. Neither bulk redistribution/ republication in electronic form of more than five percent of the contents of H-France Review nor re-publication of any amount in print form will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. The views posted on H-France Review are not necessarily the views of the Society for French Historical Studies.

ISSN 1553-9172