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Toby Osborne, *Dynasty and Diplomacy in the Court of Savoy: Political Culture and the Thirty Years' War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xii + 304 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$65.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-521-65268-5.

Review by Matthew Vester, West Virginia University.

With a few exceptions, recent scholars of early modern political culture have engaged in surprisingly little analysis of dynasticism as structure, or if one prefers, as a distinct matrix of concerns, pressures, and interests conditioning the choices made by members of sovereign houses.^[1] Those who have studied diplomacy, court society, rulership, and the like have obviously given some attention to the way in which families manipulated marriage alliances and inheritance claims for political ends in the international environment of late medieval and early modern Europe.

But perhaps because many historians remain unwittingly wedded to assumptions colored by methodological individualism, few analyses have carefully examined what it meant for a dynasty to be a political actor: What kind of logic informed dynastic activity? What dynamics regulated the relationship between members and branches of sovereign houses? What was the nature of the relationship between ruling dynasties and subject dynasties?

Osborne's title leads one to believe that the author intends to fill this important historiographic gap and to do so while shedding light on the political role played by the dukes of Savoy, the least known of the major territorial princes of early modern Europe. While this is clearly part of the author's intention, it is not his main focus. In fact, Osborne makes a wide variety of claims in this book (a revision of his doctoral thesis), most of which outstrip the evidence presented, resulting in a certain thematic mushiness and a thirst for more detail. Osborne, who teaches at the University of Durham, wants to examine the interactions between two families: the sovereign house of Savoy and the Scaglia di Verrua, a "court clan" originally from the provincial town of Biella. But he tries to do this almost solely on the basis of diplomatic correspondence, without reading the family papers of the Scaglia di Verrua located at the state archives of Biella.^[2]

The book is portrayed as a contribution to the "new" diplomatic history, in which the creative agency of individual diplomats is emphasized—a strange focus for a book that also claims to focus on dynasticism. Another theme is that the central figure of the study, the cosmopolitan Savoyard diplomat Alessandro Scaglia, "operated within a coherent conceptual and a moral framework" (p. 11). But this framework is described in unremarkable terms: for Scaglia, deceit was perceived as an occasionally necessary political tactic.

What we have here is a fairly standard diplomatic history of selected developments during the Thirty Years' War that stands as "the first major account in English of Savoy's role" (p. 3) in the conflict. It does so largely by highlighting the interesting, but in many ways unsuccessful, international career of a sophisticated Savoyard cleric. There are seven chapters of diplomacy, one chapter of dynasty, and little detailed analysis of the court of Savoy.

The book's first chapter, based almost exclusively on secondary sources, catalogues the range of dynastic interests that structured the political world inhabited by the sovereign house of Savoy--interests relating to marriage, managing cadets, obtaining cardinalates and other benefices, establishing and maintaining chivalric orders, and above all pressing territorial claims. Osborne argues that the dukes of Savoy were motivated by dynastic priorities such as these, rather than by "material" considerations or "state interests" alone. This distinction is not rigorously developed, nor is it clear in the remainder of the book how attention to these dynastic priorities alters the established narratives of Thirty Years' War diplomatic history.[3]

Chapter two describes the Scaglia di Verrua as a "court clan" that established itself in Turin in 1617. Alessandro Scaglia's father, Filiberto Gherardo, count of Verrua, held a number of key diplomatic and court positions under Charles Emanuel I and was inducted into the house order of the *Annunziata* in 1608. Filiberto Gherardo's eldest son, Augusto Manfredo, succeeded his father as count of Verrua. Alessandro was marked out for an ecclesiastical career, having been named abbot of three important monasteries at an early age and sent off in 1614 (at the age of 22!) to Rome as the Savoyard ambassador to the papal court. Alessandro spent nine years in Rome, where he became friends with a wide circle of artists, writers, and cultural brokers, ranging from his countryman Cassiano Dal Pozzo to Fernand Elle and to Alessandro Tassoni.

Perhaps the most effective point made in the book is how Scaglia's cultural expertise functioned throughout his career as a critical political resource, enabling him to establish and develop relationships with connoisseurs in court cities across Europe. Curiously, this chapter makes no mention of the Scaglia political network, either in terms of detailed accounts of property-holding, legal resources, or systems of clientage and friendship, or with respect to relations between the Scaglia network and court factions in Turin. The author posits that "local loyalties" were not that important "for elite clans who committed themselves to the court and who were thus in close and regular contact with the ruling family" (p. 51), though this contradicts much recent research that underscores the links between provincial resources and court action.[4]

The author's conclusion is not that surprising though, given the book's reliance on diplomatic records: diplomats obviously represented themselves as focused on the sovereign's interests, not their own. It would also be useful for this chapter to explain precisely how the Scaglia fit into the Turinese political world, who their "unnamed opponents" (p. 73) at court might have been, who their allies were, and what key issues (aside from the reductive dichotomies of Savoyard vs. Piedmontese and pro-French vs. pro-Spanish) shaped the factional contours of the Savoyard court.

Chapters three and four settle into the book's chief contribution: a close narrative of Alessandro Scaglia's diplomatic activities between 1624 and the early 1630s. Beginning in 1624 Scaglia was the Savoyard ambassador to France, a post his father had held due to the family's "distinctive identity as a francophile family clan" (p. 91). Scaglia's main task in Paris was to maintain the French and English in an anti-Habsburg coalition. In early 1626 the abbot visited England, where he was received with great honor by the duke of Buckingham, with whom he shared artistic interests. But while he was in England, secret Franco-Spanish negotiations were already underway, and in 1626 those two powers signed the treaty of of Monzón, ending their conflict.

The fact that Scaglia was unaware of these proceedings, which were so detrimental to his master's interests, was clearly a major failure of his diplomacy. Furious at Richelieu's orchestration of these events, Scaglia dedicated himself to undermining the cardinal, continuing his contacts with the English and making initial overtures to the Spanish. The abbot left Paris in March 1627 for Brussels, where he tried to manage Anglo-French peace negotiations and stay abreast of Anglo-Spanish contacts. Osborne highlights the fascinating political role played by the Spanish Netherlands, a kind of "secondary channel" providing access to the court in Madrid and a place where informal negotiations with Spain could be held.

These proceedings were interrupted in December 1627 by the death of Vincenzo II Gonzaga, duke of Mantua and Monferrato, and the next two chapters examine the war of the Mantuan succession and its aftermath. Osborne describes the basis of Savoy's claim to the Monferrato (a set of territories forming a series of enclaves in the Savoyard lands) and how it differed from the claims of the two other chief contenders to Mantua and Monferrato, Charles de Nevers and Ferrante II, duke of Guastalla. On Christmas Day 1627 the duke of Savoy made a deal with Spain to divide the Gonzaga territories, keeping Monferrato (except for the fortress of Casale) and leaving Mantua to the Spanish.

In March war broke out, and following initial Savoyard and Spanish successes, two disasters occurred. The first was the September 1628 murder of the duke of Buckingham, depriving Scaglia (and Savoy) of a key ally at the English court who could keep the pressure on Richelieu and prevent his intervention in northern Italy. The second was the fall of La Rochelle to the French royal army in October (followed by an Anglo-French peace in April 1629), relieving Richelieu of the last obstacle to an invasion of Italy. Once again, Scaglia's diplomatic strategy (keeping Richelieu tied up in France, with English support) was spectacularly unsuccessful.

In early 1629 the French invaded Piedmont and signed a secret agreement with the duke of Savoy, but the war continued nonetheless. Duke Charles Emanuel died in July 1630, and his successor Victor Amadeus I initiated peace negotiations that eventually gave him some territories in the Monferrato. Given the book's stated focus on families and court politics, it would be interesting to know more about the impact of Victor Amadeus' consort, Marie Christine, sister of Louis XIII, on the negotiations that ended the war. One would also hope to understand in greater detail the specific ways in which Victor Amadeus' accession reconfigured the Turinese court and the role of the Scaglia therein.

In chapter six we do learn about Scaglia's dissatisfaction with Victor Amadeus' French policy and that the number of Savoyard subjects who shared this unhappiness grew during the 1630s, leading to a split among the duke's elite subjects. We also learn that the new duke's brothers, Cardinal Maurizio and Prince Tommaso, were courted by Olivares and the Spanish. In early 1631 Scaglia himself was sent to England "as both extraordinary ambassador of the duke of Savoy and diplomatic agent of the king of Spain" (p. 179). At the last minute Victor Amadeus instructed Scaglia not to go, fearing the consequences of his now openly pro-Habsburg stance, but Scaglia went anyway.

Finally, we also learn about the enmity between Scaglia and both Cardinal Maurizio and Marie Christine's Jesuit confessor, Father Monod. But the precise relationship between each of these figures, the various members of the Scaglia di Verrua clan, and other power brokers in Turin remains murky. In late 1631 or early 1632 Alessandro received instructions (precisely when or from whom is not stated) to return to Savoy, but rather than comply the abbot spent the rest of his life in self-imposed exile in the Spanish Netherlands.

The last two chapters discuss Scaglia's exile in Brussels and the role of the Scaglia di Verrua in Savoyard politics during the 1630s. Osborne makes interesting observations about the theme of exile and its political implications. Since exile was reversible, and could be employed as a temporary tool by courtiers, the exiled diplomat could continue to serve his sovereign while awaiting reinstatement. The

duke of Savoy still hoped to benefit from Scaglia's service in some way and did not want to alienate the rest of the Scaglia di Verrua in Turin. While in Brussels, the abbot continued to enjoy a sumptuous lifestyle. Beginning in 1634 he commissioned up to ten works by Anthony van Dyck, including a full-length portrait.

We learn a bit in chapter eight about the role of the Scaglia di Verrua in Savoyard politics during the 1630s, though the author seems uncertain as to whether the family pursued a coordinated strategy. The count of Verrua remained an important pro-French minister and military commander in the service of Victor Amadeus. Of his three sons, the eldest succeeded his father as count, the youngest entered military service, and the middle one (Filiberto) became an abbot and diplomat.

When Victor Amadeus died in October 1637, tensions came to a head as Marie Christine opposed the efforts of her brothers-in-law to assert control over the regency. The duchess tried to build support for herself at court and also sought the help of Alessandro Scaglia abroad while favoring his family in Turin. In March 1639 Prince Tommaso and Cardinal Maurizio formed an alliance with Spain to force the French from Piedmont and seize the regency. Two of Alessandro's nephews fought for Marie Christine in the civil war that followed (one, Maurizio, was killed in combat), while Filiberto tried to maintain ties to both sides. By 1642 French support had given Marie Christine complete victory, and the two remaining nephews continued their service to the house of Savoy.

For readers interested in the diplomatic events leading up to the Savoyard civil war, this book could be useful. The reader should beware, though, because the text contains a significant number of technical and interpretive errors, ranging from mistranslations and misidentifications of persons to failures to cite key pieces of evidence and questionable inductions.^[5] While any work is bound to include some mistakes that slip through the cracks, the level of inexactitude here almost creates a credibility gap that renders the reading of the diplomatic sources (admirably diverse though they may be) questionable.

This book is also flawed in its conception and archival strategy, given its goal of analyzing relations between the Scaglia di Verrua and the house of Savoy. Had the author systematically examined the family archive and other kinds of sources in the incredibly rich Turin archives, there is a good chance that he would have been able to provide a much more convincing picture of the Scaglia network at court and how it interacted with other elite networks. Relying solely on diplomatic correspondence has made it difficult for the author to give a full picture of either how the Scaglia functioned as a dynasty or how their family interests were pursued internationally.

Finally, the author does not seem comfortable with the language that he uses to describe the Savoyard states. He notes that during the seventeenth century these places were known as "*les états du Duc de Savoie*" (p. 3, his italics), but he insists that they were "a north Italian sovereignty" (p. xii). He refers to these lands sometimes as the "ducal states of Savoy," and sometimes as "the duchy" (though, in fact, they comprised four distinct duchies and a number of principalities, counties, and smaller fiefs). The adjective "Sabaudian" is used occasionally without explanation.

There are two problems with these imprecisions. First, they flatten the important regional distinctions that characterized early modern Savoyard political culture, reducing everything to those deceptive categories "Savoyard" and "Piedmontese" that always lurk in the background, prefiguring the nineteenth century. Second, they create more confusion for a scholarly public that knows little about the history of these lands and their people, but that deserves instruction through clear explanation, careful scholarship, and subtle analysis.

NOTES

[1] See, for example, Paula Fichtner, "Dynastic Marriage in Sixteenth-Century Habsburg Diplomacy and Statecraft: An Interdisciplinary Approach," *American Historical Review* 81, 2 (1976): 243-65, and other works; M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, *The Changing Face of Empire: Charles V, Philip II, and Habsburg Authority, 1551-1559* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); works by Robert Oresko including "The Marriages of the Nieces of Cardinal Mazarin: Public Policy and Private Strategy in Seventeenth-Century Europe," in *Frankreich im Europäischen Staatensystem der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Rainer Babel (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1995); and Stuart Carroll, *Noble Power during the French Wars of Religion: The Guise Affinity and the Catholic Cause in Normandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Herbert H. Rowen, *The King's State: Proprietary Dynasticism in Early Modern France* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), but note that Rowen is centrally concerned with the history of the idea that monarchs owned the territories over which they ruled, rather than with the functioning of dynastic politics.

[2] On p. 13 Osborne explains that "the use of ecclesiastical and family records is relatively limited since this is neither a study of Alessandro Scaglia in his role as abbot, nor purely a study of the Scaglia di Verrua as a family clan." He also notes that "there is very little material in the [Biella] archive relating to Alessandro Scaglia." But on p. 16 and elsewhere the book is indeed characterized as a study of the relations between two families, mediated by the court and state service. This book, he claims, is "a study of the court of Savoy through Alessandro Scaglia and his family clan" and "represents a way of reconsidering how foreign policies were formulated as the outcome of the three intertwined strands of state dynasticism, aristocratic family interest and individual creativity."

[3] Those interested in the diplomatic history of the first part of Duke Charles Emanuel I's reign should consult, first of all, the magisterial Domenico Carutti, whose *Storia della diplomazia della corte di Savoia* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1875-80) spans the period from 1494 to 1773 in four volumes. See also Lucien Cramer, *La seigneurie de Genève et la maison de Savoie de 1559 à 1593*, 4 vols. (Geneva: A. Jullien, 1912-50), whose fourth volume was written by Alain Dufour. Dufour's various translations of the writings of the Savoyard diplomat René de Lucinge are also useful for this period—see, for example, *Les occurrences de la paix de Lyon (1601)* (Geneva: Droz, 2000 [1962])—as is Edouard Rott, *Henri IV, les Suisses et la haute Italie, la lutte pour les Alpes (1598-1610)* (Paris: Plon, 1882).

[4] See again Carroll, but also, of course, Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). This chapter inadequately addresses the enormous literature on noble-ruler relations, failing to discuss even the work on the nobility of the Savoyard states by scholars such as Walter Barberis, *Le armi del Principe: La tradizione militare sabauda* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988); Enrico Stumpo, *Finanza e stato moderno nel Piemonte del Seicento* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1979); Roger Devos and Bernard Groperrin, *La Savoie de la Réforme à la Révolution française* (Rennes: Ouest-France, 1985); and the articles on the nobility by Devos and by Jean Nicolas in the volume *Histoire de la Savoie*, ed. Paul Guichonnet (Toulouse: Privat, 1973). Arlette Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte. La noblesse française et la gestation de l'État moderne (1559-1661)* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), is cited in passing, but not discussed.

[5] Two brief examples. First, Osborne states on p. 37 that "the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II (1527-76) had in 1569 elevated Tuscany to a grand-duchy." But it was the pope, Pius V, who granted this title to the Medici, and the very article cited by Osborne in support of his claim (Alessandra Contini, "Aspects of Medicean diplomacy in the sixteenth century," in *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Daniela Frigo [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], esp. pp. 77-81) emphasizes

that a central part of the Medici strategy in seeking this title was precisely "to obtain legitimation from a powerful authority, namely the Pope, which would release him and his dynasty from its dangerous dependence on the Empire" (p. 78). The emperor, in fact, initially rejected the Medici claim, and did not recognize the grand-ducal title until 1576. Second, Osborne translates a description of two tapestries belonging to Alessandro Scaglia as "a 'new French allegory and the other of a Flemish woodland scene [una nuova figurata di Francia, l'altra a boscaglie di Fiandra]" (p. 81). The Italian text clearly refers to a tapestry from France and another from Flanders, the former a new figural one, and the latter of a woodland scene. Given that the book infrequently provides evidence in the original languages, this mistranslation is troubling.

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