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Sven EXTERNBRINK, Jörg ULBERT (Hg.), *Formen internationaler Beziehungen in der Frühen Neuzeit. Frankreich und das Alte Reich im europäischen Staatensystem. Festschrift für Klaus Malettke zum 65. Geburtstag*, Berlin (Duncker & Humblot) 2001, 550 p. (Historische Forschungen, 71).

This Festschrift is a worthy celebration of Klaus Malettke's pivotal role in the study of early-modern European international relations, more specifically Franco-German relations in the seventeenth century. This list of contributors, which includes Heinz Duchhardt, Jean Meyer, Lucien Bély, Jürgen Voss, Bernard Vogler, Georges Livet, Jean Bérenger and Anton Schindling, itself demands attention, but so also does the range and quality of the contributions. One or two are very narrow in focus, although there is still much of interest to be gleaned from an account of the visit of Wilhelm VI of Hessen-Kassel to Paris in 1647 (Eva BENDER) or the more lengthy treatment (supported by the publication of three documents) of the role of the Elector of Brandenburg in the French candidature for the Empire in 1519 (Wilhelm Ernst WINTERHAGER), a piece that indicates the difficulty of deciding how best to respond to the rise of both Habsburg and French power. In another skilful miniature, Georges LIVET uses the career of Marc Otto, Strasbourg's representative at the Congress of Westphalia, to illustrate the range of issues that were discussed at the congress. One or two pieces are somewhat disappointing. Ilya MIECK's treatment of France and the First Partition of Poland is thin and offers little in the way of archival research. The majority of essays however are more wide-ranging and Malettke will be justifiably pleased with this collection. There is a pleasing interaction of diplomatic detail with a broader assessment of the culture of international relations. The latter ranges from the award of papal decorations to European princes, a characteristically skilful piece by Lucien BÉLY that opens up an important topic for an understanding both of the role of prestige and of the nature of papal diplomacy, to a consideration of the changing reception of Montesquieu in eighteenth-century Germany (Horst MÖLLER). The latter piece throws interesting light on Frederick the Great. Other writings and writers considered include the *Encyclopédie* (Peter SCHRÖDER), August Ludwig von Schlözer (Martin PETERS), Jean Royer de Prades's *L'Histoire d'Allemagne* (1677), an important work in French understanding of Germany (Jürgen VOSS), and the *Abrégé de l'histoire de France* written for Louis XV in 1717–1718 (Chantal GRELL). In the latter, the Capetians were presented as saving France from German tutelage. Bernard VOGLER presents a different account of Franco-German relations, by considering the Protestant University of Strasbourg, which maintained close links with the Empire.

This fascinating collection fulfils two functions. It amply vindicates the role of the Festschrift, a form of scholarship that has suffered badly in the Anglo-American world as publishers, even major university presses such as Cambridge and Oxford that enjoy powerful tax exemptions, are now very reluctant to produce them. Secondly, the collection amply indicates Malettke's belief that Franco-German relations are not only important in their own right but can also serve as a fulcrum for first-rate scholarship and as a means to probe the political culture of early-modern Europe. There are obviously many topics that still require examination, and the placing of France and the Empire in a European states system is in part dependent on the evaluation of the latter. In particular, it is far from clear that the systemic perspective is a helpful one. This raises the issue of how best to conceptualise the »Western Question«: the related issues of whether any power was to dominate Western Europe and, if so, which; the response to France of her neighbours; and the particular issues of France's expansion into the Empire, Italy and the Low Countries. This excellent volume provides much that is of value for understanding these issues.

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