

Giuliano Ferretti (dir.), L'État, la cour et la ville. Le duché de Savoie au temps de Christine de France (1619–1663), Paris (Classiques Garnier) 2018, 712 p. (Histoire, 3), ISBN 978-2-406-06711-5, EUR 59,00.

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Marie Christine, second of Henry IV of France's three daughters, and, from 1619, wife of Vittorio Amedeo, had, in effect, four lives. First, she was a Savoyard princess, and secondly duchess, from 1630; thirdly, she was regent from 1637 following her husband's death while her two sons were infants; and lastly she was dowager duchess, at least formally from her younger son's majority in 1648 until her death in 1663. Each of these had their own political and cultural dynamics, and also particular challenges. As a French consort, she was a bridge between her natal country and Savoy, as was true throughout her life; as regent her position was inherently problematic, given Savoy's civil war over control of the regency from 1638–1642; as a dowager, she had to negotiate her identity in relation to her ducal son as he assumed personal power.

These multiple identities and challenges lend themselves to profitable scholarly reflection, not least as the composite state of Savoy itself, as Giuliano Ferretti rightly states early on, occupied a deeply ambiguous place in Europe's political geography. Savoy was not a power of the first-rank, but nor was it marginal. Wedged between France and Spain's Italian territories, it had a key strategic position, along with a highly important place in the dynastic map of Europe. Marie Christine thus occupied a fascinating series of liminal political, dynastic and cultural spaces. These issues of liminality effectively underpin this collection of twenty-two essays, the third on the theme edited by Ferretti. It opens with a lengthy treatment by Ferretti himself of Marie Christine's marriage in 1619 and her move to Turin, serving as a prologue to the collection as a whole. The volume then deals, in three sections, successively with Savoy's European political and diplomatic context; Savoy's court during her lifetime; and lastly, the House of Savoy's architectural achievements, and development of the city of Turin.

The first section, »L'édification de l'État absolu« (whatever »absolute« might mean), presents a clear picture of Savoy's place in Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century, with an understandable focus on relations with France. As Lucien Bély argues, the duchy had a distinctive role as a second-rank power in the European »society of princes«, negotiating its variable relationships with France in particular. That theme is continued in Sven Externbrink's contribution that focuses more closely on Franco-Savoyard relations, effectively between the outbreak of formal war between France and Spain in 1635 and the 1659 Peace of Pyrenees.

For his part, Matthias Schnettger considers Savoy's equally variable relations with the Holy Roman Empire – the duchy, after all, was an imperial power, and one which occasionally meddled in the empire's politics. Perhaps further consideration might have been given to relations with Spain and England too in this first section, alongside Savoy's ambivalent relations with other Italian powers. Attention switches to



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court personnel and politics in the contributions of Pierpaolo Merlin, who examines the political configurations of several court families during the period of civil war, and Frédéric Ieva, who focuses on Savoy's diplomats and diplomacy from Marie Christine's regency until her death.

The second section addresses the court, focusing less on structural questions of its administrative organisation, than on specific case studies of individuals and groups – perhaps the valuable essays by Merlin and Ieva might equally have been placed here. It begins with some wider observations about the court from Andrea Merlotti, who concludes with some thought-provoking reflections on Franco-Savoyard interactions: while much of the historiographical focus, hitherto, has been on the influence exerted by France on Marie Christine's Savoy (though this is of course debatable), more attention should be given to the reverse, that is, of Savoyard elites carving-out their own interests and careers in France. Subsequent essays address valuable themes of the clergy and Marie Christine's devotional habits (Paolo Cozzo), and of those in military service at court (Paola Bianchi).

From these broader essays, the section then focuses on more particular issues. Florine Vital-Durand's contribution on portraits raises interesting points about Marie Christine's place in European dynastic politics, not least through the exchange of paintings with her younger sister, Henrietta Maria, queen of England. As noted above, this theme might have been explored further elsewhere in the volume, and more indeed might have been said about Marie Christine's relationship with her mother, Marie de Médicis, exiled from France from 1631 until her death in 1642, not least as during the 1630s there was the possibility of the French queen mother relocating to Turin.

Themes of cultural and political liminality, and of Savoy's dynastic reach, are, in effect, continued in Saniye Al-Baghdadi's essay on Marie Christine's daughter, Henriette Adélaïde, electoress of Bavaria. Perhaps a little more tangentially, Paola Caretta focuses on a medical expert of the period, who also had a prominent role as a collector, while the contributions of Andrea Rosselli, Maria Luisa Doglio and Paolo Luparia bring to the fore literary contexts of court culture and Marie Christine's identity by examining, in turn, her entry into Turin in 1645, as regent (mirroring Ferretti's prologue, albeit for a different entry), Emanuel Tesauero's panegyrics and, more generally, genres of literary homage.

The last section focuses attention on architectural achievements. Again, the contributions switch between broader contributions and more specific case studies. Building was perhaps the most magnificent and expensive peacetime articulation of princely identity. Given that early-modern princes tended more commonly to be male and that female princes, especially as consorts, perhaps had less access to the resources required to build on a large scale, Marie Christine's changing identities, not least as duchess and regent, afford a valuable alternative case study.

In some respects, she appears to have continued her predecessors' practices in using architecture to enhance ducal authority, as Cristina Cuneo effectively argues in her essay on regency Turin – after all, as regent (and French by birth) she needed to buttress her regime's potentially fragile power. That focus on Turin, and the negotiations between court and city required to build a court-capital, are explored further in Elena Gianasso's fruitful contribution. But Marie Christine also had more distinctive projects too, stamping her natal identity on the castello of Valentino, as Costanza Roggero examines, while Paolo Cornaglia presents



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an engaging essay on garden design, a theme that again reveals Marie Christine as a bridge between French and Italian cultural practices.

Cecilia Castiglioni extends the themes of Marie Christine's architectural impact through her essay on the ducal residence and town of Fossano, to the south of Turin, where she stayed in 1643–1644, with a documentary appendix produced by Valentina Burgassi. The contributions of Chiara Devoti and Maria Vittoria Cattaneo range more widely from the section's focus on Marie Christine's architectural endeavours, addressing first her engagement with the order of SS. Maurizio and Lazaro, raising pertinent question of gendered authority and devotional sensibilities, and the architectural projects of Maurizio of Savoy and his wife, Ludovica Maria (also his niece and a daughter of Marie Christine), through Maurizio's favoured architect, Giovanni Pietro Tosetto.

This is a wide-ranging and engaging volume examining the remarkable Marie Christine from a variety of perspectives and methodologies. There is plenty of valuable food for thought, though I have a few minor quibbles about the placement of particular contributions – perhaps an inevitable challenge in giving coherence to a relatively diverse volume. As noted above, I for one would also have liked a little more on Marie Christine's roles in Savoy's web of affiliations that encompassed also her royal sisters and mother. After all, as this volume amply demonstrates, she is perhaps best understood through her multiple identities, as a bourbon princess, and as duchess, regent and dowager duchess in Savoy, and also as a key dynastic player connecting, through her siblings and children, Savoy with France, though also with Spain, England, Bavaria and, later, Parma.



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