

Baldassarre Castiglione diplomatico: La missione del Cortegiano.

Raffaele Ruggiero.

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Florence: Olschki, 2017. xvi + 154 pp. €22.

The book reconstructs the career path of Baldassarre Castiglione (1478–1529) as an ordinary ambassador, extraordinary ambassador, and secret correspondent in the service of a number of Italian popes and princes during the Italian Wars. Drawing on a recent edition of the correspondence of Castiglione (published for the first time in a complete edition), the volume traces Castiglione's professional career almost day-by-day. In the opening chapters his early experiences of diplomacy are reconstructed: after serving the Marquess of Mantua, Francesco Gonzaga, Castiglione went to work for the Duke of Urbino, Guidubaldo da Montefeltro (whose court he later celebrated in his *Libro del Cortegiano*), who sent him to England in 1506 and to Louis XII the following year. During Leo X's pontificate, Castiglione served as permanent ambassador in Rome for the new Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere. While he was on this mission he gradually began to transition into the papal curia's diplomatic service, which, according to Ruggiero, also arose out of a need for the ecclesiastical state to have an authoritative voice to keep Italy at least on par with the European powers. Thereafter Castiglione returned under the protection of the dukes of Mantua who dispatched him to Rome in 1519 as permanent ambassador. In 1524 the new pope Clement VII invited Castiglione to carry out the mission of nuncio to the emperor in Spain.

The longest chapter is devoted to this mission. Castiglione was sent to Spain in 1525 (where he died in 1529) with the task of supporting the pontiff's policy of proclaimed neutrality between France and Spain. In reality, he found himself having to face the emperor's reactions to Clement VII's significant rapprochement with France, which occurred just after he had left Italy. Castiglione's mission was therefore characterized by an ever-widening gap between Clement VII's actions (in 1526 the pope formed the anti-imperial League of Cognac with Francis I) and the position he defended as nuncio arguing for closer ties with Charles V. It was a deep fracture that turned Castiglione into an ambassador without powers.

The final chapter is a general review of interpretations of the *Cortegiano* in light of Castiglione's own professional experience. The author recommends reading the book on two levels: the first is a nostalgic evocation of an ideal court that no longer existed; the second is the necessary historical contextualization of the long time span over which the dialogue was revised. The author's approach is always based on a close scrutiny of Castiglione's professional profile in the texts. In many ways the book is successful in achieving its main aim of relating Castiglione's diplomatic experiences to the contents of the *Cortegiano* and to contemporary literature through its analysis of language and prevalent themes (the reference to Machiavelli is ever present). The second axis of reflection delves

into political-diplomatic processes and is based on Castiglione's experience as ambassador. The author's remarks on the impossibility of "building a behavioral grammar of European diplomacy starting from the *Cortegiano*" are commendable (110). On the other hand, in his analysis on the transition from aristocratic universe (related to the period that had just ended) to "structures of apparatus" (114) (apparently related to the period that was beginning), Ruggiero seems to be reintroducing that regret for the age of liberties that has so much influenced the historiography on Renaissance Italy, dismissing the entire period that followed as one of inexorable intellectual crisis. This vision returns with force in the final pages, when Ruggiero argues that Castiglione speaks from a perspective of decadence.

Recent studies on concrete experiences in the early modern period have offered a different view of the matter. Work by Andretta, Frigo, Sabbatini, Waquet, and others, have shed light on the wealth of diplomatic practices and on the complexity of roles played by emissaries, suggesting we need to go beyond the idea that these figures performed as a mere "apparatus." The post-Renaissance world found new forms of political and intellectual agency, and diplomats, secretaries, and ministers deployed refined strategic skills to carry out their functions and sometimes attain a large measure of prominence and influence.

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The Stoic Origins of Erasmus' Philosophy of Christ. Ross Dealy.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. xii + 408 pp. \$90.

Erasmus is not normally portrayed as a Stoic, nor does there seem to be much of a reason for doing so. It is therefore remarkable, to say the least, to find Ross Dealy, in a very well-documented book on *The Stoic Origins of Erasmus' Philosophy of Christ*, sketching a portrait of Erasmus as someone who, at the turn of the sixteenth century, embraces Stoicism, and from then on "continues to consider himself a Stoic" (339).

The Stoic Origins of Erasmus' Philosophy of Christ is a challenging and thought-provoking book. It is a book that goes to the heart of the philosophical subject matter that is everywhere apparent in Erasmus's writings, but hardly ever studied in serious ways. Dealy's point is that Erasmus was very keen on the two-track type of Stoicism he found in Cicero, whose *De officiis* he edited for publication in 1501. This "two-dimensional" "both/and" type of Stoicism had an eye for the *katorthoma* (*perfectum officium, honestum* norm. f. *kathekon* (*medium officium, utile*) notion of what that habitual