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Introduction: Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean

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Abstract

This special issue, an exercise in integrated Mediterranean history through the lens of diplomacy, demonstrates that diplomatic genres and practices associated with a European political and cultural tradition, on the one hand, or an Islamic tradition, on the other, were not produced in isolation but attained meaning through the process of mediation and negotiation among intermediaries of different confessional and social backgrounds. Building on the “new diplomatic history,” the essays focus on non-elite (e.g. Christian slaves, renegades, Jewish doctors, Moriscos) and less commonly studied (mid- and high-ranking Muslim officials) intermediaries in Mediterranean cross-confessional diplomacy. The issue argues that the early modern period witnessed a relative balance of power among Muslim- and Christian-ruled polities: negotiations entailed not only principles of reciprocity, parity, and commensurability, but these were actually enforceable in practice. This challenges the notion of European diplomatic supremacy, prompting scholars to fundamentally rethink the narrative about the origins of early modern diplomacy.

* All but one of the essays collected here originated as papers presented at a workshop held at Central European University (Budapest, Hungary) in May 2012. We would like to thank Central European University, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for their generous support.

Keywords

Mediterranean – intermediaries – diplomacy – cross-confessional relations – “connected histories” – “new diplomatic history”

Introduction: Mediterranean Diplomacy

This special issue explores how rivaling articulations of imperial and confessional supremacy, both within and between “Christendom” and “Islamdom,” influenced the nature of diplomatic interactions in the early modern Mediterranean world and determined the profile of participants in the diplomatic processes.¹ And vice versa, it looks at how different, often accidental diplomatic intermediaries shaped the tenor and practice of cross-confessional diplomacy in the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mediterranean. The essays collected here confront these questions by studying documented practices and juxtaposing diplomatic genres that are rarely put into dialogue due to language and disciplinary barriers in the study of different Mediterranean polities. In the process, the essays reveal the improvisational nature of diplomatic interactions, as well as a cross-confessional elaboration of diplomatic practices, genres, and political causes that invites a new, less Euro-centric narrative about the evolution of early modern diplomacy.

In addition to answering the questions outlined above, one of the key objectives of the present volume is to provide a connected history of the late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mediterranean.² The early modern Mediterranean was the arena for encounters between the rivaling Habsburg

1 The noun “Islamdom” is used here in the sense proposed by Marshall Hodgson not to designate a specific civilization or culture but a society (or set of societies) in which Muslims and their faith are considered socially dominant, and yet in which “non-Muslims have always formed an integral, if subordinate, element, like Jews in Christendom.” See Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: The Classical Age of Islam* vol. 1 (Chicago, 1975), 58.

2 Recent examples of connected Mediterranean histories, varying in scope and focus, include Nabil Matar, “The English Merchant and the Moroccan Sufi: Messianism and Mahdism in the Early Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 65, no. 1 (2014): 46-65; the special issue *A Forgotten Empire: The Spanish-North African Borderlands* in *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 12, no. 3 (2011), ed. Barbara Fuchs and Yuen-Gen Liang; Jutta Gisela Sperling and Shona Kelly Wray, eds., *Across the Religious Divide. Women, Property, and Law in the Wider Mediterranean (ca. 1300-1800)* (New York, 2009).

and Ottoman empires, with Venice caught in the middle, but also witnessed a growing assertion on the part of the North African principalities. At the same time, the arrival of the French, English, and Dutch maritime empires introduced new dynamics into the Mediterranean political and diplomatic landscape.³ Although the authors of the essays in this volume are not, in the strict sense, diplomatic historians, the volume uses the focus on diplomatic connections to integrate the history, historiographies, perspectives, and sources of the Ottoman Empire, the polities of Tunis, Algiers and Morocco, and various European states. In the context of the often one-sided historiography of the Mediterranean, which has until recently imagined Muslims as disinterested in trade and diplomacy with Europe, this integration is imperative.⁴ Thus the essays, although organized in a roughly chronological order, bounce from one side of the Mediterranean to another, from the diplomatic scene of Ottoman Constantinople, to various political entities and actors in North Africa engaged in diplomatic negotiations with the Dutch Republic or Spanish monarchy, to France, and back. They reveal a host of unexpected strategies of diplomatic mediation enacted by previously invisible or little-studied intermediaries whose actions are context-specific but shed important light on the origins and nature of early modern diplomacy as well as on the negotiation of political loyalties in an age of intense imperial and confessional competition.

3 For the reassessment of the Braudel-inspired theory of Mediterranean decline after the sixteenth century see Molly Greene, "Beyond the Northern Invasion: The Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century," *Past and Present* 174, no. 1 (2002): 42-71; Maria Fusaro, "After Braudel: A Reassessment of Mediterranean History between the Northern Invasion and the *Caravane Maritime*," in *Trade & Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. Maria Fusaro, Colin Heywood and Mohamed Salah-Omri (London and New York, 2010), 2-5; Colin Heywood, "The English in the Mediterranean, 1600-1630: A Post-Braudelian Perspective on the 'Northern Invasion,'" in *ibid.*, 23-44.

4 Fortunately this particular image is now quickly becoming obsolete. See, for instance, Daniel Goffman, "Negotiating with the Renaissance State: The Ottoman Empire and the New Diplomacy," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, UK and New York, 2007), 61-74; Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 2003) and *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727* (New York, 2009); Jocelyne Dakhliya and Bernard Vincent, eds., *Les musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe—I. Une intégration invisible* (Paris, 2011); Jocelyne Dakhliya and Wolfgang Kaiser, eds., *Les musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe—II. Passages et contacts en Méditerranée* (Paris, 2013).

Cultural and Diplomatic Mediation in the Early Modern Mediterranean

Until recently the Mediterranean has been largely ignored as a setting for the study of early modern cultural mediation, despite being the *locus classicus* of Orientalism and despite its centrality to the articulation of early modern European discourses of cultural and religious differences.⁵ Since September 11, 2001, however, the notions of cultural mediation and connectivity have taken center stage in the study of the Mediterranean, which has become a sort of laboratory for historians theorizing new models of cultural and religious interaction, often attempting to obviate the “clash of civilizations” approach.⁶ Hence cultural and other intermediaries in the early modern Mediterranean have begun to receive considerable attention, with captives, renegades, spies, and dragomans becoming the key protagonists of this new wave of scholarly research.⁷ However, the theoretical and methodological approaches to both the specifics of mediation and the notions of cultural difference or sameness

5 The issue of cultural mediation became a particular focus of postcolonial studies, which in turn directed the gaze of scholars mostly towards the Atlantic or Indian Oceans. See E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, 2011), 5-6.

6 Mediterranean Studies is by now a vast field, with an abundant historiography. For the renewed interest in the early modern Mediterranean in general and a useful historiographical overview, see John Marino, “Mediterranean Studies and the Remaking of Pre-Modern Europe,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 15, no. 5 (2011): 385-412; David Abulafia’s introduction “What is the Mediterranean” in *The Mediterranean in History*, ed. David Abulafia (London, 2003), 11-30. On recent trends in the study of Mediterranean cross-cultural contacts, see for instance Francesca Trivellato, “Renaissance Italy and the Muslim Mediterranean in Recent Historical Work,” *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 1 (2010): 127-155; Eric R. Dursteler, “On Bazaars and Battlefields: Recent Scholarship on Mediterranean Cultural Contacts,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 15, no. 5 (2011): 413-434.

7 To name but a few recent studies on the subject: Emilio Sola, *Los que van y vienen: Información y fronteras en el Mediterráneo clásico del siglo XVI* (Alcalá de Henares, 2005); Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe* (Baltimore, 2007); Eric R. Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, 2011); Rothman, *Brokering Empire*; Daniel Hershenzon, “Early Modern Spain and the Creation of the Mediterranean: Captivity, Commerce, and Knowledge” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 2011); Emrah Safa Gürkan, “Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean: Secret Diplomacy, Mediterranean Go-Betweens and the Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry” (Ph.D. Diss., Georgetown University, 2012).

that this mediation implied—especially in the context of the history of diplomacy—leave something to be desired.

As Jocelyne Dakhliya has argued, the current emphasis on cultural intermediaries creates new problems. While postulating the existence of connections, mediated by go-betweens among Muslim and Christian polities, it also “confirms the belief that there *is* a cultural gap to be bridged.”⁸ Dakhliya points out that dragomans, renegades, converts, and various other groups and individuals often described as hybrid dominate recent discussions of diplomacy and other cross-cultural phenomena, whereby their in-betweenness as purported members of “two worlds” is considered a prerequisite for bridging cultural and linguistic divides. As Natalie Rothman also underlines, “a growing tendency among scholars of mediation is to accept intermediaries’ claims to be ‘in-between’ at face value rather than to interrogate that very claim as itself a rhetorical move, part of the process of mediation.”⁹ Furthermore, the intermediaries’ cultural and linguistic brokering is imagined as taking place in various “contact zones;” both these zones and the mediators operating in them are, in turn, often seen as marginal and isolated from the rest of the involved societies.

The essays presented here engage with the recent literature on cultural mediation to interrogate the notions of cultural (dis)continuity across confessional lines, examine the intermediaries’ fashioning of their in-betweenness, and challenge their supposedly marginal social position. For instance, like Jocelyne Dakhliya in her recent work, in his essay Mathieu Grenet points out that the recent emphasis on dragomans, their written output, and their professional investment in the existence of linguistic and cultural difference in need of mediation has obscured the fact that other Arabic and Turkish speakers were already present in France. These Muslim and non-Muslim merchants, slaves, scholars, and travelers could become chance diplomatic intermediaries, thus providing a cultural and linguistic continuum.

Joshua White’s essay draws attention to the fact that diplomatic intermediaries—in his case the *şeyhülislam*, the supreme legal and religious authority of the Ottoman Empire—did not need to be religiously, culturally, or politically hybrid or marginal in order to function as negotiators. At the same time,

8 Dakhliya elaborated this argument in “The Question of Mediation and Defining Cultural Difference in Diplomatic Relations: Islamic Embassies in Western Europe in the Early Modern Period,” the inaugural lecture for the workshop “Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean” (Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, May 2012). For a related discussion see Jocelyne Dakhliya and Wolfgang Kaiser, “Introduction” in *Les musulmans dans l’histoire de l’Europe II*, 9.

9 Rothman, *Brokering Empire*, 6.

the essay by Emrah Safa Gürkan demonstrates how well integrated into the Ottoman elite networks and how central various intermediaries were to the factional struggles within the Ottoman imperial center, whether they were Jews, converts to Islam acting as official dragomans, or informal go-betweens. Similarly, Maartje van Gelder underlines the pivotal role of Dutch converts to Islam in the political and economic structures of the North African regencies of Algiers and Tunis, and Moroccan Salé. These essays contrast the European polities' concern with the social status and reputation of official intermediaries with the Muslim rulers' appreciation of diplomatic intermediaries for their demonstrated loyalty to the political cause. Nevertheless, Natividad Planas and Maartje van Gelder show that Spanish and Dutch treaties were negotiated through the mediation of captives and converts to Islam—often due to the lack of developed diplomatic and information networks in the Ottoman Empire or North Africa—showing the centrality of supposedly marginal actors.

Several of the essays examine the semiotic work of intermediaries in setting the boundaries of membership and belonging, difference and sameness, compatibility and incompatibility. For instance, as van Gelder shows, in the letters exchanged with the Dutch States General, Dutch converted corsairs in Algiers and Tunis matter-of-factly invoked their own “Turkishness” while offering their services to their acknowledged *patria*, the Dutch Republic, ignoring any possible incompatibility arising from their implied confessional loyalties. Rather, they constructed consensus around the political cause of mutual benefit to both negotiating parties. The same is true of Planas' “Christians of Algiers,” a diverse and international collective of Christian captives who simultaneously professed loyalty to the Muslim Lord of Kuko (present-day Kabylia) and His Catholic Majesty Philip II. Despite their subaltern position, these captives appointed themselves intermediaries between the North African ruler and the Spanish monarchy, which officially would have no diplomatic relations with Muslim countries until the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ Together with the renegades, Jewish doctors, dragomans, spies, merchants, and captives discussed by Gürkan as well as Moriscos discussed by Tijana Krstić, these intermediaries fit the profile of early modern “trans-imperial subjects,” a

10 This is not to say, however, that there were no attempts at establishing diplomatic contacts and even alliances with Muslim polities already during the sixteenth century, especially with the Safavid Empire, which was perceived as an important potential ally in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire. For various reasons, these efforts did not result in a lasting alliance. See Enrique García Hernán, “The Holy See, the Spanish Monarchy, and Safavid Persia in the 16th Century,” in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London and New York, 2012), 181–202.

term coined by Rothman to denote individuals who had either experienced a change in their juridical and/or confessional status in the past or whose status was in flux or in question, and who “regularly mobilized their roots ‘elsewhere’ to foreground specific knowledge, privileges, or commitments to further their current interests.”¹¹

Religion and Confession as Analytical Categories in the Study of Early Modern Mediterranean Diplomacy

In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these “trans-imperial subjects” operated in an atmosphere of heightened imperial and confessional polarization. Nevertheless, in recent studies on cultural mediation in the early modern Mediterranean, this larger historical context and its complexities have receded into the background in the face of the almost-unanimous celebration of the intermediaries’ ability to cross political and religious boundaries. In the endeavor to counter the paradigm of “the clash of civilizations,” recent post-Orientalist scholarship has tended to downplay or even ignore religious and political tensions while emphasizing cross-confessional amity and fluidity of identities. Notably, those studies that have focused on the exchange of material goods, art, and architecture have conjured up a Mediterranean world in which battles and violence play no significant role.¹²

The current volume seeks to go beyond the historiographical impasse of imagining the Mediterranean as a zone of either peaceful exchange or permanent conflict or, as Eric Dursteler put it, as a zone of either bazaars or battlefields.¹³ The essays acknowledge the historical reality of religious differences and political tensions without postulating their insurmountability. Rather, they examine specific actors, situations, and causes that enabled the mobilization as well as the suspension or redefinition of confessional boundaries for the purposes of diplomacy, trade, or otherwise.

By using the term “cross-confessional,” the volume moves away from the concept of diplomacy between “East” and “West” or between an undifferentiated “Christianity” or “Europe,” on the one hand, and “Islam,” on the other. Multiple confessional lines of differentiation were articulated in the sixteenth

11 Rothman, *Brokering Empire*, 11.

12 This point is also made by Trivellato, “Renaissance Italy,” 151-155. When Marino signals new avenues of early modern Mediterranean research, religious conflicts and political tensions are conspicuously absent, Marino, “Mediterranean Studies,” 407-409.

13 See Dursteler, “On Bazaars and Battlefields.”

and seventeenth centuries both between and within Christian and Muslim communities.¹⁴ Rifts and tensions along confessional lines became visible at this time not only among Christian but among Muslim polities as well, particularly between Sunni Ottomans and Shi'a Safavids. While confessional differentiation does not explain the conflicts between the Ottomans and their North African principalities of Tunis and Algiers, all of whom were Sunni, the Ottoman sultan's claim to supreme leadership over all Muslims and his unique prerogative to call for *jihad* and *gaza*, discussed by Joshua White in his essay, as well as the politicization of the issues of correct belief and practice, as shown in the essay by Tijana Krstić, certainly contributed to the intra-Muslim tensions.¹⁵ The essays thus engage with the rhetoric of difference across the early modern Mediterranean world in both trans- and intra-communal perspective.

By privileging the notion of confession, rather than religion or culture, we aim to invoke the particular alignment of political and religious spheres—at least on the level of official rhetoric—characteristic of the “age of confessionalization” that affected, on the one hand, the nature of diplomatic alliances, and on the other, the intermediaries' legal status and strategies of mediation and self-fashioning. We refer to the notion of “confessionalization”¹⁶ fully cognizant of the controversy and debates related to it, especially the methodological pitfall of overemphasizing the prescriptive and normative sources that highlight religious boundaries and tell us more about what should have happened than what actually happened. Building on some recent reconsiderations of the confessionalization model,¹⁷ and focusing on the moments of crisis and

14 A similar point is made by Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar in the introduction to their *Britain and the Islamic World, 1558-1713* (Oxford, 2011), 5-6.

15 This politicization has been discussed recently in the framework of an “Ottoman age of confessionalization” or “Ottoman Sunnitization.” On this issue see Tijana Krstić, “Illuminated by the Light of Islam and the Glory of the Ottoman Sultanate: Self-Narratives of Conversion to Islam in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (2009): 35-63; Derin Terzioğlu, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion,” *Turcica* 44 (2012-2013): 301-338.

16 On the history of the concept see Heinz Schilling, “Confessionalization: Historical and Scholarly Perspectives of a Comparative and Interdisciplinary Paradigm,” in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1550-1700—Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. J. Headley, H. Hillerbrandt, and A. Papalas, (Ashgate, 2004), 21-36. For an overview of the debate see Ute Lotz-Heumann, “The Concept of Confessionalization: A Historiographical Paradigm in Dispute,” *Memoria y Civilización* 4 (2001): 93-114.

17 See, for instance, C. Scott Dixon, “Introduction,” in *Living with Religious Diversity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. C. Scott Dixon, Dagmar Freist, and Mark Greengrass (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2009), 1-20.

diplomatic negotiation, the essays acknowledge the impact of the confession-alizing discourse on diplomacy while at the same time exposing a variety of models of political loyalty that emerged in this period precisely due to the proliferation of ever-new lines of religio-political differentiation.

In the spirit of moving beyond the block categories of “Islam” and “Christianity,” Mathieu Grenet, for instance, argues against the notion of “Muslim missions to Europe,” thus challenging both the presumed uniformity among Muslim polities and their diplomatic representatives and a presumed difference along Christian/Muslim lines. He points, first of all, to the political differences among the various Muslim rulers sending diplomatic missions to France, and secondly to the similarities of reception protocol accorded to the ambassadors from countries as different as Persia and Russia prior to the eighteenth century. The point about the lack of uniformity in “Muslim” diplomacy is illustrated well in Joshua White’s discussion of Venetian interventions into Ottoman diplomacy with Tunis. The question of presumed continuities and discontinuities, and sameness and difference along religious and linguistic lines is also brought up by Tijana Krstić in the discussion of the Moriscos and their involvement in Ottoman diplomacy with various European polities.

The New Diplomatic History of the Early Modern Mediterranean

What does this volume contribute to diplomatic history? Once regarded as one of the most conservative historical sub-fields, in its “new” form diplomatic history has begun to incorporate methodological and theoretical insights from social history, cultural history, linguistic anthropology, gender studies, and literary theory.¹⁸ At the same time, these fields have started to focus on diplomacy as a paradigmatic model of cultural encounter, generating a flurry of studies that makes it difficult to succinctly characterize the nebulous field of “new diplomatic history.” Under the influence of post-colonial and transnational studies, the study of diplomacy has also opened up to consider non-European and non-state actors.¹⁹ However, despite new methodological and theoretical

18 For overviews of these new directions, see Jeremy Black, *A History of Diplomacy* (London, 2010), 47, and John Watkins, “Towards a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2008): 1-14.

19 For recent examples of this dialogue among cultural studies, post-colonial studies, and diplomatic history see, for instance, *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550-1700*, ed. Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2009). Another recent edited volume brings performance studies to bear on the questions of early modern diplomatic exchanges between Europe

frameworks, most recent studies on early modern diplomacy *stricto sensu* (as opposed to those focusing primarily on cultural encounters and only secondarily on diplomacy) continue to be focused on relations and diplomatic practices among polities within early modern Europe or, more precisely, the courts of Western Europe.²⁰

The essays' intervention in recent debates in new diplomatic history is twofold. Firstly, when previous generations of diplomatic historians attempted to trace the origins of early modern diplomacy, their search seemingly always and inevitably led back to Renaissance Italy.²¹ This Italo-centric approach was recently convincingly challenged by Daniel Goffman who pointed out the important contributions of the Ottoman Empire to diplomatic innovations; however, this intervention has not produced a sustained scholarly conversation.²² The essays collected in this volume substantiate the argument that the shaping of early modern diplomacy can be understood only in a transnational perspective, with practices and concepts emerging not from specific "European" or "Islamic" diplomatic cultures, but in a process of diplomatic interaction where Ottoman Constantinople, for instance, was as important a laboratory for new practices as Venice.²³

Secondly, the present volume engages with the recent shift in focus of diplomatic history from high politics and the figure of the ambassador to a diverse range of individuals who engaged in diplomatic relations on the ground.²⁴ This

and the "Islamic East," see Sabine Schülting, Sabine Lucia Müller, and Ralf Hertel, eds., *Early Modern Encounters with the Islamic East: Performing Cultures* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2012).

- 20 See, for instance, the essays in Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, eds., *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, (Houndmills, 2011); the special issue on Italian ambassadorial networks in early modern Europe, edited by Catherine Fletcher and Jennifer Mara DeSilva, in the *Journal of Early Modern History* 14, no. 6 (2010); For a broader, more inclusive approach, *Akteure der Aussenbeziehungen: Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler (Cologne, 2010).
- 21 See Garrett Mattingly's overall excellent but now dated, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London, 1955). Other examples are Donald E. Queller, *The Office of Ambassador in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1967); and M.S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy* (London and New York, 1993).
- 22 Goffman, "Negotiating with the Renaissance State," 61-74.
- 23 On the connections between early modern Istanbul, London, and Paris, see John-Paul A. Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull* (Oxford, 2013).
- 24 Black, *A History*, 47; see also Von Thiesen and Windler, *Akteure* and Christian Windler, *La diplomatie comme expérience de l'autre: Consuls français au Maghreb (1700-1840)* (Geneva, 2002).

shift away from nation-states and their ambassadors, which also coincides with the recent surge of interest in cultural intermediaries in the early modern Mediterranean and other contexts, opens up a dizzying world of formal and informal diplomats, different levels of activity, and complex and competing loyalties, in marked contrast to the smooth diplomatic narratives of old.²⁵ As a result, the essays in this volume uncover diplomatic interactions where—at least according to the traditional narrative fixated on high politics and successful treaties—there should have been none, and showcase unexpected alliances.

The prominence of these intermediaries in early modern diplomacy ensured that, as one scholar recently argued, “lines of cooperation and identification as well as diplomatic cleavage did not necessarily fall along the borders between polities, but rather ran amongst and between clusters of individuals spread across states and possessing similar or differing worldviews and a greater or lesser ability to converse in the symbolic language of a common diplomatic culture.”²⁶ While the author of these lines is referring to a common diplomatic culture within a “Protestant Cosmopolis,” the essays in this volume point to a shared diplomatic idiom and even co-production of diplomatic genres by intermediaries of all confessional stripes, across the major religious and political divides in the Mediterranean.

For instance, van Gelder shows how Dutch converts to Islam could combine access to the highest political circles in The Hague with their thorough knowledge of and integration in Algerian and Salentine political realities. White and Krstić both emphasize the Venetian ambassadors’ deep familiarity with the Ottoman diplomatic procedures and genres. As White shows, even such paradigmatically Islamic genres as *fatwas* (Turkish: *fetvas*), i.e. non-binding juridical opinions issued by *muftis* (jurisprudents), could in fact be products of intense negotiations among Muslim and Christian diplomats aiming to limit the sphere of action of other Muslims or Christians. As Natalie Rothman’s Afterword to the volume also suggests, demonstrating the connectedness of the early modern Mediterranean through an analysis of shared diplomatic idioms and the cross-confessional co-production of diplomatic genres is this collection’s most important contribution, made possible by the dialogue, first during the workshop and now through these essays, between scholars trained

25 For the problem of a nation-state-dominated approach to the pre-modern Mediterranean, David Abulafia, “Introduction,” in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Aldershot, 2002), 1-34.

26 Daniel Riches, *Protestant Cosmopolitanism and Diplomatic Culture: Brandenburg-Swedish Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden and Boston, 2013), 7.

in different historical traditions and disciplines, with different sets of linguistic and methodological skills.

Another key contribution of the volume is its attention to the less commonly studied intermediaries. As Mathieu Grenet argues in his essay, building on Nabil Matar's groundbreaking research,²⁷ the study of non-Muslim emissaries of Islamicate polities has obfuscated the prominent role of diplomats and intermediaries who were Muslim. Grenet's essay reveals a discrete presence of diplomats from Islamicate polities in early modern French provincial and metropolitan areas, which has been often overlooked by historians. Van Gelder shows that Dutch converts to Islam—full-time corsairs and occasional diplomatic intermediaries—frequented Dutch ports despite the Dutch government's official ban on their presence. This ties into the larger problem of the erasure of Muslims from the history of early modern Europe, despite their documentable presence as slaves, merchants, travelers, diplomats, and scholars in the households and cities throughout the Italian city-states, France, the Habsburg Empire, and beyond.²⁸ At the same time, however, the fact that Christian rulers made use of the services of various non-Christians—especially Jews and converts to Islam but also occasionally Muslim slaves and Moriscos—in Mediterranean diplomacy is rarely emphasized and studied. In this sense, the essays shed light on unexpected instances of participation in political culture by individuals and groups whose religious or juridical status should have, according to various historiographical orthodoxies, disqualified them from taking part in the diplomatic process.

Although the essays cover a wide range of diplomatic actors and diplomatic practices, the volume does not make a claim for comprehensiveness. Some important topics are only barely touched on, such as women or Jews as diplomatic intermediaries (see Gürkan's essay for both). However, as an exercise in integrated Mediterranean history through the lens of diplomacy, the volume demonstrates that some of the diplomatic genres and practices associated with a European or Christian political and cultural tradition, on the one hand, or an Islamic tradition, on the other, were not produced or elaborated in

27 Matar, *In the Lands of Christians and Europe through Arab Eyes*.

28 See, for instance, Guillaume Calafat and Cesare Santus, "Les avatars du 'Turc': Esclaves et commerçants musulmans à Livourne (1600-1750)," in *Les musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe—1. Une intégration invisible*, 471-522; Wolfgang Kaiser, "Asymétries méditerranéennes. Présence et circulation de marchands entre Alger, Tunis et Marseille," in *ibid.*, 417-442. For an overview see also Tijana Krstić, "Islam and Muslims in Early Modern Europe," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern History*, ed. Hamish Scott (forthcoming).

isolation.²⁹ Rather, they attained meaning and currency only through the process of mediation and negotiation among intermediaries of different confessional and social backgrounds. This, in turn, raises important questions for the social history of Orientalism—a point that is elaborated in Rothman's Afterword to this volume. Furthermore, the period covered by the volume witnessed a relative balance of power among Muslim- and Christian-ruled polities in the Mediterranean, which means that diplomatic negotiations entailed not only principles of reciprocity, parity, and commensurability, but that these were enforceable in practice as well. This aspect of the interactions not only challenges, once and for all, the notion of European diplomatic supremacy, but should prompt scholars to fundamentally rethink the narrative about the origins of early modern diplomacy.

29 On this point see E. Natalie Rothman, "Dragomans and 'Turkish Literature': The Making of a Field of Inquiry," *Oriente Moderno* 93, no. 2 (2013): 390-421; also Dakhli's inaugural lecture.