

BOOK REVIEW

## Tammaro, Silvia. *Theatrum Sabaudiae. Das Kupferstichwerk der Herzöge von Savoyen: Entstehung, Rezeption, Funktionswandel (1660–1740)*

In Reihe: *Hermathena*, Band 4. Vienna: Böhlau, 2022. Pp. 300.

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The two-volume *Theatrum Statuum Regiae Celsitudinis Sabaudiae Ducis, Pedemontii Principis, Cypri Regis* presents large-scale architectural and city-scape engravings of the territories of the Dukes of Savoy in the late seventeenth century. While previous studies of the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* have examined images and text, Silvia Tammaro's extensive treatment of all aspects of production and reception offers a fresh look at the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* as she uncovers important new primary sources and tracks down editions and owners. Through meticulous research, she places the tome within its original context as a tool of courtly diplomacy but also establishes its later importance to princely collectors, libraries, and erudite print specialists. Tammaro's study of the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* goes beyond analysis of images and text to reveal the means of production and the complex relationship between the patron and the Amsterdam publishing house of Blaeu.

As Tammaro reveals, the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* is more than a mere description of the architectural achievements and geographical territories of Piedmont and Savoy; it was also intended to establish the House of Savoy as an up-and-coming European power that nevertheless had a formidable pedigree. Images are accompanied by panegyric texts, while engraved portraits of the commissioning rulers provided a history of the dynasty. Tammaro rightly points out that the use of the word *theatrum* is not just a convention of the day. The term hints at a stage-managed choreography of elements whose audience will experience a visual and textual spectacle of political power and geographic scope. To this end, she reveals that many of the plates illustrate buildings that either had not yet been completed or—in a few cases—were never built in the first place. The *Theatrum Sabaudiae* presents an idealized view of the dynastic reach of the duchy reaching beyond a mere presentation of visual facts, reinforcing its function as a tool in a culture of diplomatic gift giving.

The first section introduces the historical context of the duchy, the Dukes of Savoy as patrons, and the Blaeu publishing house in Amsterdam that would take on the enormous task of producing the early editions. Tammaro analyzes the structure of the various editions that appeared between 1682 and 1726. The second section reveals the format of the *Theatrum Sabaudiae*. Tammaro also discusses the artists in Turin and elsewhere who were tasked with creating the illustrations, as well as the engravers and colorists in Amsterdam who turned drawings done in a wide variety of expertise and talent into a cohesive set ready for publication. She also posits that subtle variations in perspective throughout point to different intentions. For example, choosing a bird's eye view for some of the smaller towns creates the illusion of a more imposing and orderly city. In the third section, Tammaro follows the dispersion and reception of the *Theatrum Sabaudiae*, and finally, four appendices provide support materials and extensive color illustrations of many of the most striking engravings.

The truly contextual nature of this study is revealed through some wonderful excursions into historical figures and events that led to, and occasionally delayed, the production of the volumes. Looking at the means of production both on the ground in Turin and in Amsterdam leads to the print workshops and warehouses of Blaeu Publishers who, despite a devastating warehouse fire in 1672, were able

to save many of the original plates and continue with a production schedule. There are fascinating insights into the logistical obstacles faced by printing house and patron alike as Tammaro digs deep into correspondences, many of them cited here for the first time. For example, she traces the back and forth between drawings and proofs that had to be approved from afar, the negotiation of prices, and pleading for the payment of bills. Most astonishing is the production of two seagoing ships, built specifically for the *Theatrum Sabaudiae*, that brought the finished editions to Savoy because an overland route was felt to be too fraught with danger. We also learn that two of the most important ducal patrons, both financially and intellectually, were women, duchesses of Savoy who continued oversight of the project on the death of their husbands while projecting a savvy understanding of its political importance.

The afterlife of the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* intersects with major architects, such as Johann Fischer von Erlach, whose drawings Tammaro connects directly to their source in buildings illustrated in the *Theatrum Sabaudiae*. Tammaro has meticulously tracked down numerous exemplars of the *Theatrum Sabaudiae* in library collections of print connoisseurs and architects throughout Europe and northern America to contextualize its later reception. Tammaro's *Theatrum Sabaudiae* shows how one object can become the spring point for understanding a wide variety of cultural, political, and artistic traditions. This study will appeal to specialist in early modern architectural prints and encyclopedias, as well as those interested in cultures of collecting and patronage in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Europe.