

Laura Manzano Baena. *Conflicting Words: The Peace Treaty of Münster (1648) and the Political Culture of the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Monarchy.* Avisos de Flandes Series. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011. 282 pp. \$49.00, paper, ISBN 978-90-5867-867-6.



Reviewed by Robert Tiegs

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

The ambitious aim of *Conflicting Words* is to examine the reasoning behind the Dutch Republic and Spanish Monarchy's truce in 1648, which seemingly went against the political cultures of both states. Baena successfully employs a broad approach, analyzing the peace talks from both viewpoints, while utilizing a methodology that stretches the bounds of traditional political history. Her hope is that a study of the years 1618-50 from a cultural practices perspective will not only illuminate the Dutch and Spanish diplomacy of the period, but also simultaneously deconstruct some of the barriers in the historiography and subfields, which she feels have been artificially erected. Above all, she is interested in understanding how these two political cultures could form a peace treaty in practice when the ideologies of the two developed largely in opposition to each other.

Six chapters comprise the work, each focusing on a specific contentious issue. Chapters 1 and 2 trace the lines of thought surrounding the ideas of rebellion and tyranny that prevented earlier

peace talks and blocked international treaties. In the view of the Spanish Monarchy, the Dutch Revolt was a rebellion, and thus an internal or dynastic issue. Conversely, because the Dutch viewed the Spanish Monarchy as tyrannical, and thus untrustworthy, international talks forced the Spanish to honor their oaths. The third chapter treats the issue of authority. The leaders of the Spanish Monarchy based their authority on their indivisibility of their dynastic and hereditary lands, bound together in the figure of the monarch. The ruler served as a moral reference point for society being the "sole source of right and justice" (p. 111). Alternately, the authority in the Dutch Republic was clearly divisible, with power shared between the provinces, towns, and stadholders. Chapters 4 and 5 examine how the Dutch and Spanish ignored the overly contentious issue of sovereignty in order to open up peace talks. In the latter chapter, Baena covers the issue of religious coexistence which proved particularly divisive. She details how Frederick Hendrick's capture of 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629 created fur-

ther administrative and religious issues relating to the rights of Catholics to openly worship the newly conquered territory. In the end, Spain had to acquiesce to the Dutch position, allowing the church land to become secularized. The final chapter, aptly titled “An Invalid Conclusion or a Peace Not Meant to Last (But Which Did)” offers welcome concluding observations.

Baena’s core achievement is her ability to blend the internal and international considerations of the two states, and demonstrate that events finally forced the belligerents to the talks at the Peace of Münster. She notes how the Spanish were able to defend their negotiations with the Dutch along the lines that it served the greater benefit of Catholicism. Particularly important were the Catalan and Portuguese rebellions, which threatened the Spanish Monarchy internally. The rebellions in Iberia prompted the Spanish to reconsider their view that openly linked heresy with rebellion, as the Catholic Catalans and Portuguese opposed Spanish rule. In the end, the Spanish conceded that it was better to give into Dutch demands for the greater good of Catholicism, because if Spain (the Defender of the Faith) would fall, it would be to the detriment of Christianity overall. Internal considerations also compelled the Dutch to reconsider their political beliefs, as the strength and prerogatives of the provinces, Holland towns, and stadholder shifted throughout the 1630s and 1640s threatening instability. Importantly, the possible French acquisition of the Spanish lands in the Low Countries urged the Dutch to the negotiating table, forming the idea of France as a better ally than neighbor already by 1648.

Baena bases her work on a broad range of primary sources. Since part of her goal is to analyze how political ideology played out in practice, she focuses on plays and poetry to complement her exhaustive examination of political tracts. In this regard, the work is a great success demonstrating how culture and practical demands af-

fected the high political ideology of the two states. While one cannot underrate the amount of primary research that Baena has uncovered, the organization of the work could be improved. Often she needs to repeat herself due to the book’s format, which is particularly noticeable in the discussion of religious considerations of the area surrounding ‘s-Hertogenbosch. Baena, however, was not well served by her publisher, as the book also suffers from numerous typographical errors. In short, this is an excellently researched and analyzed work which ably serves to fill a gap in the historiography, but one that could have benefited from another round of editing.

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