Call for Papers: Informal spaces and practices of diplomacy, 1750–1850

21st-22nd of September 2023, The Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities (TORCH)

Diplomacy is not always, nor solely, performed at formal summits with (mostly male) actors seated around a table of negotiation. The 'Sattelzeit' of change in the decades before and after the French Revolution saw a formalization of diplomacy, yet diplomats and ministers still met in the salons of the Congress of Vienna. Recent research has indeed shown that premodern diplomacy was frequently practised on an informal level, through personal relations and by actors 'beyond ambassadors' — including women, whose roles have received increased attention. Moreover, the importance of the material environments of premodern diplomatic encounters at all levels is receiving increased historical attention.

But where did these informal practices take place, and did they change with the transformation to a new international order?

Uncovering the informal spaces of diplomacy in this transformative time in history may lead us to reconceptualize what constitutes diplomatic practices.

This two-day symposium will seek to stimulate discussion on the spaces and practices of diplomacy in the time of transition from c. 1750–1850. Therefore, we invite proposals related (but not limited) to the following topics:

- Methodologies for examining informal spaces and practices of diplomacy
- The diplomatic household and wider family networks, including women and staff
- Women's agency and female-dominated spaces as arenas for diplomatic practice
- Spaces and practices of masculine performance in diplomatic contexts
- Material culture and the materiality of diplomatic spaces
- Artistic or literary works as 'spaces' for diplomacy
- Consular offices; banks and financial spaces; clerical spaces, networks and practices

Keynote Speaker: Glenda Sluga (European University Institute)

Presentations on any geographical area are most welcome. Abstracts of no more than 250 words should be sent to kristine.dyrmann@history.ox.ac.uk by 15 July 2023. Successful applicants will be notified by 1 August 2023. All queries should be directed to Kristine Dyrmann.

A registration fee (standard = £40; students = £25) for non-university members will be charged to help towards the costs of lunch and refreshments. A conference dinner will be offered at the participants' own expense. Travel expenses will not be reimbursed.