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Gerhard Oberkofler, **Peter Goller**. *Geschichte der UniversitÖ¤t Innsbruck (1669-1945).* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996. 371 pp. $63.95 (paper), ISBN 978-3-631-30853-0.

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The History of the University of Innsbruck (1669-1945)

It is not easy to write a book about the history of a provincial university such as Innsbruck. The challenge of compiling and analyzing institutional data and the work of professors and students is by any measure a daunting one. Professor Gerhard Oberkofler, the director of the university archives, and his assistant Peter Goller have now published a long-overdue history of *Alma Mater Oenipontana*, also known as the University of Innsbruck. Their research was helped by the proximity of the well-known Tyrolean Landesarchiv (the provincial archives) which in many respects rivals Vienna's famed Staatsarchiv.

There is a shortage of works on the university. Only four histories, two of which are quite dated, have been written: by Ignatz de Luca (1782) *Jakob Probst* (1869),[1] and now by Gerhard Oberkofler and Peter Goller (1996).[2] The fourth is a useful compendium entitled *300 Jahre Universitas Oenipontana* (1970).[3] There are a number of doctoral dissertations which can be obtained through interlibrary loans, but these are, in general, written on a given period, or are about the work of individual professors.

The *Geschichte der Universitt Innsbruck (1669-1945)* comes at an opportune time. Its authors trace the university from its humble beginnings in 1669 as a Jesuit run, one faculty (philosophy) institution to the inglorious end of the short-lived Nazi *Alpenuniversitt* in 1945. The other faculties were established very early, the faculties of law (1671), theology (1671) and medicine (1674). Throughout the first two hundred years of its existence, the Oenipontana endured an uncertain history. In 1782 it was demoted for financial reasons to a 'Lyzeum' (secondary school) by Emperor Joseph II, and again, in 1810, by Bavaria. In 1827, Emperor Francis I upgraded the 'Lyzeum' to a two faculty university, ie., philosophy and law, and it became known as the *Leopold-Franzens Universitt*. Not until 1857, when the faculty of theology was reestablished under Jesuit administration, and 1869, when the faculty of medicine was fully reinstated, did the university finally come into its own.

The book traces the four faculties over a period of three hundred years. Its authors stress the emergence of a three year study of philosophy. Such a study included courses in logic, physics, metaphysics, mathematics and (from 1735) the study of history (universal history and *Landesgeschichte*). The third year of philosophy was optional, and included the study of literature, rhetoric, and as history.

The book has many strengths and weaknesses. Most important, the authors use original ministerial and university documents, and the private letters and diaries of professors and students. This is most welcome and represents a first-rate research effort. The secondary literature that was consulted consists mainly of articles written by distinguished scholars such as the historian Franz Huter (the founder of Innsbruck's university archives), the legal historian Nikolaus Grass, the historian Grete Klingenstein of the University of Graz, and many others. Oberkofler and Goller describe historians such as the well-known medievalist Julius von Ficker, the founder of the historical school of Innsbruck, Hans von Voltelini, and Hermann Wopfner with understandable pride but do not dwell inordinately on such luminaries. Still, their analysis is not always balanced. In the case of the conservative church historian Ludwig von Pastor, their remarks are tinged with occasional sarcasm, and their opposition to his views is all too evident.

The major drawback of the book is its never ending list of names. As a result, the reader unfamiliar with Habsburg intellectual history is likely to be confused. It would have been far more effective to limit the focus to the contributions of preeminent professors and highlight the impact of the university reforms of Count Leo Thun und Hohenstein (1849-1860). Although Thun is mentioned in general terms, little is said about the pivotal 1848 revolution and the ensuing modernization of the

Austrian universities. This lack of a detailed analysis of the new *Bildungsuniversitt* (based on Humboldt's reforms of 1809-1812), is a serious limitation to the work. Furthermore, the authors overstate their criticism of the conservative Thun, the minister of education and religion, whom they see as a reactionary because of his strong support for the Catholic Church and the Concordat (1855).[4] This tends to minimize the reform of the Habsburg universities altogether.

The University of Innsbruck is perhaps best known to many North Americans for its faculty of theology. The Alma Mater Oenipontana has taught students from all over the world (the U.S., Latin and South America, Central, Northern and Eastern Europe, particularly Slovenia and Poland). Its faculty produced famous graduates, such as Bishops Johann Tomazic of Maribor (Slovenia), Josef Slipyj of Lwow/L'viv (Poland, today Ukraine), and the Jesuits Ignacio Ellacuria and Segundo Montes, who espoused the struggle of the peasants in El Salvador and were murdered by the army in 1989. Innsbruck, one has to recall, was a hub of Catholic activity. Many a Tyrolean student was staunchly opposed to nationalist German clubs.

The description of anti-semitic *Burschenschaften* such as Athenia, Germania, and others, is a fascinating portrayal of the recent political past. Little attention has been paid by modern scholars to the development of such groups and their effect on Austrian society in the late nineteenth century. By then the university was in the forefront of political events and Innsbruck was in the midst of German-Italian language convulsions. The fact that Vienna did not prosecute xenophobic students holding sway over academe led to open violence and death; one person was killed. As a result, the Italian law faculty which should have opened its doors did not, and many an Italian speaking student left the city to complete their studies in nearby Padova or Pavia (1903). Far too few theologians or, for that matter, members of the Catholic Church spoke out against the rising wave of intolerance.

The case of Richard Fuchs, M.D., is a symbolic reminder of nationalist hysteria and academic cowardliness. He was called from Prague to the post of Assistant in General and Experimental Pathology, but was forced to resign because of his Jewish faith in 1900. There were many others who at one time or another shared a similar experience: the chemist Josef Herzig, the jurist Armin Ehrenzweig, the philosopher Oskar Kraus, and the meteorologist Victor Conrad (pp. 189-91).

Most of the students of the university came from the Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Salzburg, a few from Vienna, and some from northern Italy and Switzerland. As a consequence, the Jewish student population of the university was small. In 1921, it was barely around one percent of a total population of 2,015 students (p. 304).

While the University of Innsbruck should not be seen as a bastion of Austrian Nazism–after all, Innsbruck had a population that was traditionally pro-Habsburg and devoutly Catholic–its rector and deans were nonetheless cowed by nationalist hysteria long before 1918. They were simply afraid to speak out. The dissolution of the monarchy in 1918 left the university chronically underfunded. Its faculties were understaffed, the laboratories were underequipped, and its libraries were left without adequate means to buy books and journals.

After the Anschluss in 1938, the university was quickly integrated into the Nazi state and turned into an openly racist *Alpenuniversitt.* A dozen professors (including a Jesuit) were dismissed. Those opposed to the Third Reich were eventually found, tried, and murdered.

Still, on the day of the annexation, the Catholic student union called for an independent Austria and the faculty of theology went into a self-imposed exile to Sitten, in Switzerland (1938-1945). This is a particularly worthwhile theme to focus on. Whereas Oberkofler and Goller have admirably centered on the main issues of the university and its life, much work still needs to be done to do justice to a period of recent history which seemingly many an Austrian prefers to ignore.

The book is by no means an even work, as it attempts to deal with too many issues in its 329 pages of text. Still, it is a most useful addition to intellectual history. Its strength lies in its original documentation, which makes for some fascinating reading. Unfortunately, the quality of the book binding leaves much to be desired. After repeated use, many of its pages simply fell out. This is a shortcoming for which the publisher should be held responsible. The *Geschichte der Universitt Innsbruck (1669-1945)* is to be highly recommended in a hard cover edition since it contributes significantly to a sadly neglected area of university history.

Notes:

[1]. Ignatz De Luca, "Versuch einer akademischen gelehrten Geschichte von der Kaiserl. koeniglichen Leopoldinischen Universitt zu Innsbruck," *Journal der Litteratur und Statistik* (Innsbruck, 1782).

[2]. See Jakob Probst, *Geschichte der Universitt in Innsbruck seit ihrer Entstehung bis zum Jahre 1860* (Innsbruck: Wagner'sche Buchhandlung, 1869).

[3]. This is a most useful book with a wealth of information. *300 Jahre Universitas Oenipontana: Die Leopold-Franzens-Universitt zu Innsbruck und ihre Studenten. Zur 300- Jahr-Feier* (Innsbruck: Tiroler Nachrichten, 1970). See pp. 15-264.

[4]. See Peter Wozniak, "Count Leo Thun: A Conservative Savior of Educational Reform in the Decade of Neoabsolutism," *Austrian History Yearbook* 26 (1995), pp. 69-72.

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