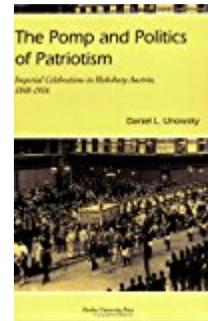


Daniel L. Unowsky. *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916*. Cohen. Central European Studies. Edited by Gary B. Cohen and Charles W. Ingrao. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005. xiii + 263 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55753-400-2.

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## How to Do Things with Monarchs: Franz Joseph as State and Symbol

The late Habsburg Monarchy proves to be a rich and engaging topic for studies of political culture. In the last thirty years, historians have challenged the idea that the monarchy was on the path of inevitable decline and that its economy, society, and polity remained hopelessly impervious to modernization. Instead, there has been increasing emphasis on the dynamism of the political and social life in the Monarchy.[1] In his first book, Daniel Unowsky adds to this revisionist literature with a study of the uses and abuses of Franz Joseph's image and public persona during his long reign as Emperor of Austria. Unowsky shows how the dynasty and the central government in Vienna presented and celebrated the emperor as a living symbol of a common Austrian identity during a time when nationalist political movements threatened the unity of the Austrian state and thus the formation of an Austrian identity.

*Pomp and Politics* emerged out of Unowsky's dissertation, published in 2000 at Columbia University under István Deák (no relation to this reviewer). In this book, Unowsky seeks to demonstrate that the House of Habsburg was much more than a vestigial component of the monarchy; he finds that it occupied an important role as a "building force" during the reign of Franz Joseph. Moreover, he demonstrates that Franz Joseph and his court proved to have an amazing capacity to adapt to the expanding political life of the Monarchy.

Unowsky presents us with chronologically arranged

studies of imperial spectacles and celebrations in Austrian Galicia and in Vienna. In both places, celebrating the emperor was a way in which "the dynasty and its supporters—government, nobility, church, army—took steps to publicly demonstrate the continued relevance of the dynasty to the lives of all its subjects" (p. 5). In these studies we see both the politics of planning and managing the imperial image by the emperor and his court as well as how these celebrations were acted upon by local politicians and received by the local populace. As such, the book shows us how much we can learn by studying both the formation of policy in the center and its reception in the provinces and at the local level.

Unowsky begins his study of imperial celebration during the reign of Franz Joseph with a chapter on the Habsburg revival of court ceremony and public spectacles immediately following the revolutions of 1848. Here the author explains the organization of the Kaiser's court, complete with the descriptions of the important posts in the court administration—which were much more than mere ceremonial positions. We see how the court and Kaiser revived or reinvented ceremonial traditions to emphasize the connections between the Catholic piety of the monarch and *Herrschaft*. Two ceremonies in particular, the Corpus Christi procession, in which the Kaiser followed the Eucharist in a procession which wound through the streets of Vienna, and the Easter foot-washing ceremony, where the Kaiser washed the feet of twelve elderly men, presented the emperor's sub-

jects with both the piety of the ruler and the sacredness of his rule. While the Kaiser and his court officials publicly showcased the emperor in these ceremonies, the rules of court ceremonial were simultaneously tightened. Rules of decorum and dress at court were reinstated or rewritten while access to the person of the emperor was restricted to the highest nobles of pure aristocratic ancestry. The combination of the efforts to showcase the young, virile emperor publicly while also restricting general access to him all served to control and regulate the public persona of the emperor. Franz Joseph himself became a symbol of state power, piety, and unity. All of Franz Joseph's interactions with his subjects were completely scripted—and purposefully left unchanged or unrevised to increase the sense of the emperor as a timeless ruler who simultaneously was and was not of this temporal world.

For the next two chapters, Unowsky takes us away from the imperial capital of Vienna to the imperial tours of the province of Austrian Galicia. Chapter 2 covers the Galician *Kaiserreise* in 1851—during the period when Franz Joseph and his ministers were busy creating a new absolutist governmental system. Unowsky concludes this chapter with a discussion of the plans for 1868 tour of Galicia, which the Kaiser eventually cancelled. Chapter 3 then describes the Emperor's trips to Galicia in 1880 and his official 1894 visit to the Galician Exhibition in Lemberg. Unowsky admirably demonstrates, through his extensive use of Galician archives and newspapers, that over the course of the nineteenth century the Kaiser and his court advisors adapted their presentation of the imperial image to the changing political landscape in Galicia. While the Kaiser's 1851 tour presented the administrative dominance of Vienna over Galicia—a dominance that Neo-absolutism openly expressed—Unowsky finds that the planning stages of the Kaiser's cancelled 1868 tour of the province showed both a concern with local and regional politics and a flexibility to adapt to local conditions for the best possible effect. In addition, and more importantly, the expansion of political participation and the increase of power at the local and regional levels also began to encroach on the ability of Kaiser and court to fully control the public image of the emperor. Essentially, as Galicia experienced its own modernization, complete with an expansion of suffrage, literacy, and popular political involvement, the emperor himself became a contested space between Galician political factions. As such, Unowsky suggests that Franz Joseph's usefulness as a symbol of unity became more uncertain.

Unowsky trades chronological breadth for depth in

chapters 4 through 6, in which he discusses the emperor's Great Jubilee year of 1898. Chapter 4 presents the various official messages in which the court, government and Church emphasized the Kaiser as a "symbol of stability and as a focus for a common supranational patriotism" (p. 78). Chapter 5 looks at how the Kaiser and the government tried and failed to hold onto full control of the emperor's public image. The jubilee year increased the ubiquity of the emperor as a symbol as humanitarian funds and organizations were founded in the emperor's name and consumer products and publishing houses tried to tap into the marketplace with commemorative goods and books. Here Unowsky stresses that the growth of civil society in Austria, with its accompanying rise of participation in local government and voluntary associations, simultaneously loosened the grip of the emperor around his own public image. Moreover, public celebrations of the emperor encroached upon the ability of the court to control their presentation and influence their reception. Unowsky stresses that the official and unofficial events of the jubilee year "illustrated ... the widespread acceptance of the Emperor as a symbol of Austrian patriotism" while also moving "far beyond the controlled world of the court" (p. 114).

The last chapter offers an illustration of how, once the Kaiser and court lost full control of the emperor's public image, that image was left vulnerable to political manipulation. During his Great Jubilee year, celebrations of Franz Joseph became an opportunity for the Christian Social Party to create spectacles that both announced their loyalty to the state and denounced their political rivals. Importantly, Unowsky finds that the self-promotion and grandstanding of the Christian Social Party during the jubilee year in many ways conflicted with the official message of the Kaiser and his court—which wanted to showcase an "ideal monarchy of tolerance [and] adherence to legitimate authority" (p. 145). While the court and government wanted celebrations of the emperor to reflect ideas of tolerance and progress, the image of the emperor could now be spun by political parties "to present their own interpretations of the Habsburg past, present, and future to potential voters" (p. 174).

The overall strength of this work makes it puzzling that Unowsky ends his treatment of imperial celebrations in 1898. This omission weakens a strong book that could have been much stronger. To be fair, Unowsky does discuss the celebrations of the Kaiser's Jubilee Year in 1908 in his conclusion. But such a topic warrants its own chapter and would have allowed Unowsky to engage with other works on imperial celebration which not

only treat the jubilee year of 1908, but which also present contrary arguments to his own interpretation.[2] Additionally, such a chapter on the 1908 celebrations would have enabled Unowsky to address the continuing efforts of the monarch to demonstrate his relevance to Austrian society and how that message continued to be received. Unowsky writes in his conclusion that “Franz Joseph had become largely irrelevant” by the First World War, when Austrian citizens were “preoccupied with survival” (p. 182). The author would have better served his own argument and his own purposes had he brought his readers up to this point by continuing his narrative and analysis into the twentieth century.

In the end, Unowsky presents a well-fashioned argument that shows how modernization and the expansion of Austrian civil society increased the difficulty that Austria’s emperor, court, and government had in managing how the persona, image, and figure of the emperor was presented to the public. Far from being a “prison of the peoples” the Austrian monarchy allowed—though in some cases against the will or perhaps the better judgment of Franz Joseph—unofficial messages in which the symbol of the emperor could be used, seen, touched, tasted (in the case of imperial jubilee beer) and heard. Although the government could no longer control the public reception of the emperor, imperial celebrations allowed a multitude of peoples, parties, and distinct voices to proclaim loyalty to the dynasty and, by default, to “the existence of an imagined community of ‘Austria’ ” (p. 184). This book thus offers us a deeper understanding of the complexities and the ambiguities of old Austria’s political culture.

Unowsky’s work will be significant for the growing field of Habsburg studies, not only because it offers new material and a new perspective on the politics of the emperor and his governments. It also treats the figure of Franz Joseph in the context of his role as a public and

political figure. This work reminds us that any spectacle that showcased the emperor, or his image, as symbol was indeed a performative act. As such it showcases the strength of scholarship that Purdue University Press is attracting to its relatively new series, *Central European Studies*, while also highlighting the richness of the empire’s complex political culture. Unowsky’s book is also yet another addition to recent studies which show how profitable it is to study the interaction between Vienna and the provinces and towns.[3] This book demonstrates by example how imperial celebrations, public ceremonies and exhibitions, and imperial tours provide a wealth of information waiting to be examined and interpreted. It is especially gratifying to see Unowsky’s use of Polish and Ruthenian sources and archives which he uses to explain the evolution of the center’s attitude to the provinces (as well as the reverse).

#### Notes

[1]. For the best synopsis of this literature, see Gary B. Cohen, “Neither Absolutism nor Anarchy: New Narratives on Society and Government in Late Imperial Austria,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 29 (1998): part 1, 37-61.

[2]. For instance, Steven Beller, “Kraus’s Firework: State Consciousness Raising in the 1908 Jubilee Parade in Vienna and the Problem of Austrian Identity,” in *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*, ed. Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001), 46-71.

[3]. Two studies come to mind instantly: Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

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