

Gerhard Ammerer, William D. Godsey Jr., Martin Scheutz, Peter Urbanitsch, Alfred Stefan Weiß, eds. *Bündnispartner und Konkurrenten der Landesfürsten? Die Stände in der Habsburgermonarchie*. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung. Vienna: Oldenbourg, 2007. 592 pp. EUR 54.90 (paper), ISBN 978-3-486-58249-9.

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Beyond “Crown vs. Estates”

This volume is the result of a 2006 conference held in Vienna and sponsored by the Österreichische Gesellschaft zur Erforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts. The conference addressed the complex, dynamic relationship between the rulers of various parts of the Habsburg monarchy and the assemblies or corporate bodies known collectively as “the estates” (*Stände*) in the period between 1648 and 1848. The collection includes a general introduction by the editors and twenty-three contributions (five in English and eighteen in German) by historians, art historians, and one musicologist. The contributors came from six different EU countries, the United States, and Japan, with the largest contingents representing Austria and Germany. The arguments in many of the volume’s contributions relate to the aptly selected title of the collection: *Bündnispartner und Konkurrenten*, with the emphasis on the “und.” The editors and many of the authors are intent on complicating what they see as an outdated and overly simplified dualistic model in which the Habsburg rulers competed and, ultimately, overwhelmed the noble-dominated estates of their realms. It is generally well known that intermediary powers and institutions played a major role in the history of the early modern Holy Roman Empire. The current volume makes a similar point about such powers and institutions within many of the Habsburgs’ holdings. Furthermore, the volume points out that the estates continued to be influential even after their acknowledged “golden age” in the sixteenth and early seventeenth cen-

turies had passed.

According to many historians, competition between monarchs and their nobles prepared the way for “absolutism,” a concept that has begun to wobble in recent years. Pointing to this trend in their introduction, the editors note the role their volume plays as a response to a 2003 conference held at the Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas at the University of Leipzig on the topic of absolutism and the Habsburg monarchy.[1] Participants in that conference emphasized the court and central government; in contrast, the 2006 Vienna conference directed its attention to the intermediary powers through an analysis of seigniorial, noble, and estates records. This center grew out of an attempt to incorporate GDR research agendas into the post-unification German academic landscape and was led by Winfried Eberhard from 1996 to 2007. The volume currently under review can be placed in the context of Eberhard’s interest in the estates of Bohemia. It can also be placed more generally into the long-standing German academic interest in the pre-modern imperial assemblies (*Reichstage*, *Deputationstage*, *Wahlstage*, and so on). This interest continues to result in outstanding publications of source collections and monographs.

This volume discusses many of the areas of competence claimed by the estates. These include, but are not limited to, executive functions, military tasks and

the development of a standing army, health and hygiene regulations, schooling, and, perhaps most importantly, the assessment and administration of taxation. In order to approach these complex issues, the editors organized the volume in four parts. Part 1's nine chapters relate to the estates' structures and organization. Part 2 (five chapters) details many of the estates' tasks. Part 3 (five chapters) discusses discursive images advanced by or attributed to the estates. Part 4's four contributions concentrate on physical and musical representations of the estates' roles.

One theme that unifies many of the heterogeneous contributions is that the exercise of authority in early modern Europe was not a one-way street. This point is made in varying ways by a number of the authors, including Arno Strohmeyer, Petr Mat'a, and Astrid von Schlachta. The emphasis on process and change, conflict, negotiation, performance, and related concepts often reveals a creative and close reading of a variety of primary sources, mostly if not always drawn from archives, though sometimes found in a tapestry, a building's form, or a ceiling painting. With this type of a concept of authority, the roles of the estates come more clearly into focus.

It is not possible to go into detail here about all the contributions assembled in this collection. A few further themes may, however, illustrate the general scene as described in it. These include a refreshing recognition of the variety of solutions to the complexities of the post-1648 political and religious worlds. Marcello Bonazza's piece on the relationship between the estates of Tyrol and the prince-bishopric of Trent is an excellent depiction of what he calls the *Verfassungspanorama* of the Holy Roman Empire. Bonazza shows how the "constitution" of this particular unit of the empire developed over time and as the result of specific situations. The author relates the rising interest in depicting the secular power of the prince-bishops to a decrease in nationalistic orientation among Italian historians, because this has allowed a more open discussion of historic ties to the north. The undertakings of the important Italienisch-Deutsche Historisches Institut/Centro per gli Studi storici italo-germanici in Trent are underlined in this regard.

The variety of constitutional solutions is also illustrated in the chapter by Johannes Dillinger and Claudia Mocek with reference to the estates of Swabian Austria (Schwäbisch-Österreich). In this part of the Habsburgs' holdings (which dated back to their acquisition of various rights in the area in the late fourteenth century), only the

third estate was represented. However, as the authors point out, "[d]as habsburgische Territorium entstand nur durch die Beteiligung der Untertanen" (p. 194). Using sources found in the Hauptstaatsarchiv in Stuttgart and the Generallandesarchiv in Karlsruhe for the Markgrafschaft of Burgau, the Landgrafschaft of Nellenburg, the Landvogtei of Swabia, and the Grafschaft of Hohenberg, the authors evaluate Peter Blickle's famous emphasis on the representative bodies of this part of the Holy Roman Empire with a thorough prosopographical analysis of the deputies. (Since the publication of this collection, the research by Mocek has appeared in book form.[2]) The authors conclude that the estates' representatives were often officials of the princes: "Die Beamten der Herrschaft wurden vor allem in ländlichen Regionen als Deputierte eingesetzt" (p. 209). A similar point is made in reference to the participants in the Bohemian Estates meetings studied by Petr Mat'a: these participants were often crown officials. How does that fact fit into the traditional model of estates/crown dualism that one finds in Blickle?

Using the case study of Lower Austria (Niederösterreich), which he calls the political and administrative center of the monarchy after Vienna again became the imperial residence in the early seventeenth century, William D. Godsey Jr. provides a detailed narration of the ways in which the military demands of the period (beginning with the Peasants' War of 1597 and the Ottoman campaigns of the turn of the century and picking up momentum with the Swedish Phase of the Thirty Years' War in the 1630s) resulted in estates' commissioners being outfitted with a complicated set of responsibilities and competencies that related to defense. The Siege of Vienna in 1683 provided additional impetus to this process. Godsey points out that the process cannot be seen simply as an increasingly large role for the "state" or the central authorities. According to Godsey, it was the estates' lack of enthusiasm for increasing their own military authority in the wake of the War of the Austrian Succession, not the power of the central government, that resulted in the changed (and centralized) administration of military finances: "[h]ier ist deutlich zu ersehen, das von einer landesfürstlichen Entmachtung der Stände keine Rede sein kann; eher könnte von einem Versagen des politischen Willens des Landhauses gesprochen werden" (p. 264).

The legitimacy of the estates was often called into question or asserted in the period studied in this volume. Many of the authors look at the rhetorical strategies employed by their apologists to justify the estates' continued, significant political roles. Two themes in particular stand out: the use of history and of geography.

(Arno Strohmeyer points to other models, too, such as the use of patriarchal family images.) The theme of historical argumentation is found in the articles by Astrid von Schlachta and János Pòor; the first compares the Tyrolean and East Frisian estates in the early eighteenth century, and the second concentrates on the diffuse and difficult-to-determine Hungarian “constitution” as it was hashed out in the decades around 1800. Schlachta sees similarities in the responses of politicians in both territories to what were seen as princely innovations. The comparison reveals that an emphasis on “historical liberties,” in Tyrol, East Frisia, or even Hungary was a rather standard way to respond to the shifting political scene. The liberties were therefore not inherent in the local constitutions, as local historians and apologists were likely to argue. The broader focus of the articles, as of the collection as a whole, reveals this broader pattern.

One of the strengths of the volume is the variety of the territories that it covers. Included are, for example, East Frisia and Bavaria, territories that were ruled, in the first instance, by Hohenzollerns and Wittelsbachs. Hungary, which was outside of the Holy Roman Empire but among the Habsburgs’ central European territories,

is discussed in two chapters. Striking omissions include the dynasty’s Iberian holdings in the Americas, the Pacific, and parts of Europe, such as Italy. The chronological limitation of the conference to the two centuries after the Peace of Westphalia may justify this omission, for many of those holdings would be lost to “the monarchy” seventy years later. As is often the case when Austria is discussed, emphasis is given to the *Kernländer* that eventually became the Austro-Hungarian Empire of the famous *fin-de-siècle*. The Habsburg exceptions in the case of this volume include Swabia, the Austrian Netherlands, and Silesia.

Notes

[1]. Petr Mat’ a and Thomas Winkelbauer, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1620 bis 1740: Leistungen und Grenzen des Absolutismusparadigmas* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006).

[2]. Claudia Mocek, *Kommunale Repräsentation auf den Landtagen Schwäbisch-Österreichs: Eine Prosopographie der Abgeordneten aus der Grafschaft Hohenberg und der Landvogtei Schwaben* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2008).

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