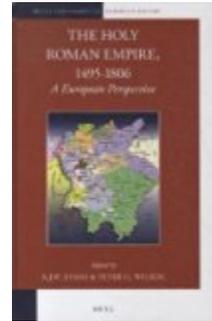


R. J. W. Evans, Peter H. Wilson, eds. *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495-1806: A European Perspective*. Brill's Companions to European History Series. Leiden: Brill, 2012. Illustrations. xiv + 401 pp. \$196.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-20683-0.

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## The Holy Roman Empire and Its Neighbors

This edited collection from R. J. W. Evans and Peter H. Wilson auspiciously inaugurates the new series by Brill titled Brill's Companions to European History. The timing of the work reflects the renewed interest in the Anglophone world for the Holy Roman Empire, especially since 2006 which marked the bicentennial commemoration of the demise of the empire. Thus, this book shares a similar origin to *The Holy Roman Empire 1495-1806* (2011) edited by Evans, Wilson, and Michael Schaich published by Oxford University Press for the German Historical Institute and evolving from a conference held at Oxford in 2006. Both books concentrate on the time period between the imperial reforms under Emperor Maximilian I in 1495 and the dissolution of the empire in 1806. One of the qualities that sets this volume published by Brill apart from the other important recent works is the intention to place the Holy Roman Empire within a broader European context. Another is the intended goal of the books in this series to serve as auxiliary guides for both scholars and graduate students. This book magisterially accomplishes both of these goals.

Wilson and Evans begin the work with an excellent introduction to the general history of the Holy Roman Empire by adroitly presenting the debates associated with the historiography of the region. Wilson and Evans argue convincingly that to understand the character of the Holy Roman Empire more accurately, it is imperative to address the non-German speakers in the empire

as well as the states surrounding it. The first section of the book focuses on "turning points" in the empire. In the first essay, Lothar Höbelt challenges popular conceptions about the Peace of Westphalia (1648) that ended the Thirty Years' War. For example, he dispels as "myth" the notion espoused by some political scientists that it established an international system of "sovereign states." In the second essay, Peter Schröder elaborates further on the impact of Westphalia. He states that Abbé de Saint-Pierre in the early eighteenth century was the first to consider the imperial constitution as a model for European federalism because it was able to accommodate diverse political entities with a sense of common collective security. This section concludes with Wolfgang Burgdorf's essay, which contends persuasively that the demise of the empire in 1806 really was lamented by many individuals. He asserts that it was not indifference but Prussian-dominated historiography as well as censorship in 1806 that explains the contemporary relative silence concerning the end of the empire.

The second section of the book concentrates on the dynamics of Habsburg rule. Olivier Chaline discusses the protean nature of loyalties and identities possible for families offering their services to this international dynastic house. He skillfully traces the French Buquoy family's military services to the Habsburgs in the Spanish Low Countries during the sixteenth century to their transformation into hereditary members of the nobility in Bohemia with provincial loyalties in the eighteenth

century. Jeroen Duindam provides an interesting analysis of the Habsburg court in Vienna. He describes it as a hybrid court because of its dual functionality both as a Kaiserhof and a Reichshof. He claims that over time it became primarily a Kaiserhof and acted as a Reichshof only during special events. Jaroslav Pánek offers an insightful essay examining the historical evolution of attitudes and legal claims regarding Bohemia's relationship to the empire. He maintains that the legal claims became increasingly nationalistic in tone during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as they mirrored ethnic and linguistic tensions between Czechs and Germans. Petr Mařa elucidates the influence of the Habsburgs in shaping the status of imperial princes in Bohemia and Silesia who served as intermediaries between the Habsburgs and the empire. Finally, Thomas Winkelbauer concentrates on the Habsburg Monarchy during the seventeenth century. According to Winkelbauer, this was the time when the critical transition occurred for the development of the Habsburg Monarchy's separation from the empire. He asserts that the postal system, the imperial court, and the creation of an "Austrian" aristocracy were fundamental in this process.

In the third section of the book, the essays focus on the concepts of "cores" and "peripheries." Sven Externbrink offers a fascinating study of the creation of states within the empire by comparing the rise of Brandenburg-Prussia and Savoy-Sardinia as composite-monarchies. Although their fates differed in the nineteenth century, they both reflect the potential of state building within the empire. Similar to Pánek for Bohemia, Nicolette Mout presents with acumen just how complicated the relationship between the Netherlands and the empire could be, especially with identity disputes that continued up to World War II. She also states that the Dutch Republic remained a region on the "periphery" of the empire until the end of its existence in 1795. Blythe Alice Raviola offers a description of the political dynamics associated with the imperial fiefs in northern Italy, such as Piedmont, Liguria, and Lombardia. She then proposes that fruitful comparative studies could be made between the northern imperial fiefs and central and southern Italian regions.

The fourth section moves beyond the regions with legal legacies constitutionally connecting them to the empire, changing the focus to "neighbors." Robert Frost compellingly contends that like the empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has often been too easily dismissed as simply a state that failed to develop into a strong centralized monarchy. He demonstrates that both

states were able to offer flexible means of collective security to defend their respective territories into the seventeenth century. However, unlike the empire, by 1667 Poland-Lithuania could no longer compete with the rising tide of large standing armies as it faced wars within its own borders. Géza Pálffy explores the complex relationship between Hungary and the empire. Unlike Habsburg Bohemia, Hungary never was legally part of the empire, yet it remained a critical region for the security of the empire because of Ottoman expansion. Thus, imperial military and financial assistance to Hungary was significant for much of the early modern era. However, Hungary was also an important supplier of such things as meat and copper for a number of regions in the empire. Adam Perlakowski revisits the legacy of the personal union of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and electoral Saxony from 1697 to 1763 under the Wettins Augustus II and Augustus III. He calls it a "union of missed opportunities" (p. 291). In particular, he argues that the Great Northern War not only resulted in a military and economic disaster for the Polish-Saxon union, but also exacerbated tensions between the ruling elites of both areas. Moving from the eastern to the northern frontier of the empire, Thomas Munck explores the impact of German culture, especially print culture, on the Danish-Norwegian kingdom in the age of the Enlightenment. He challenges the traditional view of seeing the resistance to German cultural influence in the "German Feud" of 1789 as a watershed moment for Danish nationalism.

The fifth and final section of the book covers various aspects of imperial cultural identity. Thomas Da-Costa Kaufmann cogently claims that the Holy Roman Empire benefited from being an empire because it was able to draw on various centers of artistic production and diverse artistic influences coming from the peripheral regions like France, Flanders, Holland, and different parts of the Italian peninsula. Kim Siebenhüner offers a very interesting study on material culture by concentrating on the role of the Fuggers in the creation and dissemination of imperial jewels. She compellingly demonstrates that the entire process reflects the empire's connection to burgeoning global trade networks. Friedrich Polleross then contends that political rather than artistic influences shaped the changing dynamics of imperial court portraiture for the first part of the seventeenth century. For example, the change of imperial court portraiture from high baroque to more austere classicism most likely reflected the impact of the Thirty Years' War.

The book ends with a thought-provoking epilogue by

Heinz Duchhardt concerning the “short” eighteenth century. He asserts that both the old imperial system and the international system established by the Congress of Vienna essentially shared the same fundamental goals of conserving peace, order, and justice. Duchhardt’s epilogue epitomizes the intellectually stimulating character

of all the essays in this work. In sum, by broadening the horizons associated with the empire, this collection offers rich insights into the nature of the Holy Roman Empire in the early modern era that will be very beneficial for both scholars and graduate students alike.

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