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**Gottfried Mraz, Henrike Mraz, Gottfried Stangler, eds.** *Kaisertum Ö?sterreich 1804-1848.* VÖ¶slau: NiederÖ¶sterreichische Landesregierung, 1996. xxxii + 447 pp. No price listed (paper), ISBN 978-3-85460-154-8.

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**The Austrian Empire: 1804-1848**

In recent years Austrian scholars have developed considerable expertise in producing catalogues to accompany major historical exhibitions. Virtually without exception, the handsomely-produced volumes offer well-informed introductory essays and a complete list and numerous photographic reproductions of the items on display. Ironically, the catalogues have become so extensive that they can be well-nigh useless at the exhibitions themselves. Motivated by media hype, attendance is often so great that it is difficult for visitors to get close to many of the items they are expected to admire. Under such circumstances, standing for any length of time before a showcase while simultaneously juggling a hefty catalogue, reading descriptions, and avoiding the elbows of energetic tour group leaders and their followers is out of the question. Unless fortunate enough to arrive at off-peak hours or to receive a private tour, visitors will have little choice but to wait until they have returned to the comfort of their own homes to consult one of these volumes in detail. Here, most are likely to concentrate on the photographs of objects only seen at the exhibition from afar. The scholar, however, will also be tempted to pay close attention to the catalogue's essays. As an acquaintance once explained while hiking through one of these impressive Austrian exhibits, her husband, a distinguished German historian, found catalogues especially valuable for the information they provided for class lectures he needed to prepare on topics on which he did not consider himself an expert.

This is not to say that the chief criterion for evaluating a catalogue should be its suitability for lecture-hall plagiarism. It is to suggest that evaluation of a catalogue may vary according to the prior knowledge one brings to the topic. Such is the case with the present volume, which accompanied an exhibition presented last year at the Schallaburg in Lower Austria under the leadership of Gottfried Mraz, director of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv and the Finanz- und Hof- Kammerarchiv in Vienna. Thematically, the exhibit's focus on the creation of the Austrian imperial title in 1804 can be considered a complement to exhibitions also held in 1996 at Neuhofen/Ybbs and St. Plten in commemoration of the centennial of the first documented use of the term *Ostarrichi* in 996. One thousand years ago that name referred to a restricted area in the eastern reaches of the Ottonian Reich. In contrast, in 1804 the name "Austria" was attached for the first time in international law to the totality of the extensive territories ruled by the head of the House of Habsburg–Francis, the second monarch of that name to serve as Holy Roman Emperor, and the first to bear the Austrian imperial title.

The scope of the exhibition at the Schallaburg can be best conveyed by a brief survey of the twelve scholarly essays that form the first section of the catalogue under review. In a lengthy essay on "Das Kaisertum sterreich–Die Vollendung des Gesamtstaatsidee" (p. 1), Gottfried Mraz first traces the development of the concept of the monarchy as a "totum," giving special attention to Emperor Charles VI's oft-maligned Pragmatic Sanction. He then discusses in some detail the creation of the Austrian imperial title in 1804 and Emperor Francis's unilateral dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire two years later. In the second essay, Horst Haselsteiner's "Die Aussenpolitik des Kaisertums sterreich 1804-1848," much of the material will be familiar, but the author renders a valuable service by drawing attention to the impact of events in eastern Europe upon Metternich's diplomatic efforts to maintain the territorial and political status quo.

Three subsequent essays focus on those territories which had not been part of the Habsburg hereditary lands prior to 1804 and which therefore only became "Austrian" in 1804: Hungary, Galicia, and Lombardy-Venetia. Gabor Pajkossy's essay on "Das Kaisertum sterreich und Ungarn 1804-1848" offers an admirable overview of Hungarian history in the first half of the nineteenth century, while Stanislaw Grodziski's "Das

Knigreich Galizien-Lodomerien und die Bukowina im Kaisertum sterreich (1772-1848)" emphasizes the administrative problems the Habsburgs encountered in incorporating the Polish territories they acquired in the partitions of 1772 and 1795. To the authors' credit, they succeed in a comparatively brief space in highlighting significant developments and in providing the reader with an understanding of the background to the disturbances that afflicted their respective territories in the 1840s. In contrast, "Das Knigreich Lombardo-Venetien im Vormrz" by Henrike Mraz concentrates first upon the transition from French to Austrian rule in northern Italy early in the century and then leaps forward to the coronation of Emperor Ferdinand as king of Lombardy-Venetia in September 1838. She says little, therefore, about the political, social, and economic conditions that occasioned the very population that celebrated Ferdinand's coronation early in his reign to rebel against Habsburg rule only ten years later.

The next seven essays shift attention from high politics to topics that often border on the antiquarian. Georg Kugler's essay on "Der Hofstaat des Kaisers Franz" thoroughly describes the organization and function of the Habsburg court, while Karl Schutz's authoritative "sterreichs Whrung in der Neuzeit" provides virtually all the information most mortals are ever likely to need on Austrian coinage. The following two contributions–Gerhard Sailer's "Franz–Ein Biedermeierleben in der Hofburg" and Ulrich Graf Arco-Zinneberg's "Kaiser Franz II. in seiner Zeit"[1]–concentrate on the personality, the lifestyle, and the family of the monarch, whom both authors interpret as a Biedermeier figure representative of the post-Napoleonic era. The next essay, Gnther Driegl's recycled "Die geschichtliche Stellung Wiens 1790-1848,"[2] contains a number of perceptive observations but unfortunately goes over much ground already covered earlier in the volume by Gottfried Mraz and Haselsteiner. Even the most devoted disciple of diplomatic history is likely to tire during yet another rehearsal of the terms of the treaties of Campo Formio, Luneville, Pressburg, and Schnbrunn.

The first section concludes with two essays that are based on consid-erable archival research and can be considered the most original in the catalogue. In "Ein Stil fr den Kaiser–Die Entstehung eines imperialen Einrichtungsstils unter Kaiser Ferdinand I," Eva B. Ottillinger discusses the interior decoration of the imperial apartments in the Hofburg and traces the transition from the Biedermeier style of the early nineteenth century to the neo-rococo style (called the *blondel'sche Styl* after the French architect Jacques-Francois Blondel [1705-1774]) characteristic of the quarters occupied by Emperor Francis's successor. In a closing observation that rises above her essay's dominant empiricism, the author suggests that the court was moved to decorate in a white-gold-red neo-rococo style evocative of the age of Maria Theresa in an attempt to legitimize the rule of Francis's intellectually handicapped eldest son, who was destined to succeed to the throne upon the death of his father. Finally, "Die Franzensburg im Schlopark von Laxenburg," a collaborative effort by Anna Brgler, Lieselotte Hanzl, Ms. Ottillinger, and Hubert Winkler, discusses the origins of the Franzensburg as an early-Romantic testimonial to the knightly ideal and traces the building's subsequent transformation into a dynastic monument to the Austrian Empire and the House of Habsburg.

Capsule summaries can scarcely do justice to the detailed information that is contained in the aforementioned twelve essays. Similarly, in a limited space it is impossible to do more than suggest the wealth of material contained in the catalogue's second section, which comprises 204 color photographs of the more important objects that were displayed at the Schallaburg, and in its third, which lists and describes each of the exhibition's 693 items. These include such varied materials as oil paintings, portraits, lithographs, aquatints, watercolors, drawings, manuscripts and printed materials, coronation robes and insignia, crowns (albeit in reproduction), robes and insignia of various Habsburg orders, busts and other sculptures, coins and commemorative medals, coats of arms, porcelain, and assorted *objets d'art*. Since many of the items that are not reproduced in color in part two appear in black-and-white photographs elsewhere in the volume, readers who did not attend the exhibition can nevertheless benefit from the prodigious effort that went into assembling materials from a wide variety of sources in central and eastern Europe.

These materials were displayed in seventeen rooms, each devoted to a single theme: the Pragmatic Sanction and the Holy Roman Empire, the age of Maria Theresa, the accession to the throne of Emperor Francis, the French Revolution and the War of the First Coalition, the Napoleonic wars, the Austrian Empire and the end of the Holy Roman Empire, Emperor Francis and his family, the fall of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna, Austria and Lombardy-Venetia, gifts of homage to Emperor Francis and Empress Caroline Auguste, the Haupt- und Residenzstadt Wien, Emperor Francis in the Hofburg and in Schnbrunn, the Hungarian coronation of 1830, the Bohemian coronation of 1836, the coronation in Lombardy-Venetia of 1838, and Austria in the Vormrz.

All twelve of the catalogue's articles are stronger on description than they are on analysis. From the wealth of detail and the many illustrations that confront the reader, however, at least two themes emerge that merit special recognition. The first concerns the dynasty's use and manipulation of symbols to strengthen monarchical absolutism against the challenges posed by the modern ideology of popular sovereignty. One of the most important of these symbols was Emperor Francis himself, who, as Arco-Zinneberg observes, effectively sought to divorce himself from the political system of police supervision that was closely associated in contemporaries' minds with the foreign minister, Prince Metternich. It was, of course, a masterful piece of deception, since that system was the logical consequence of the monarch's own personality and political principles. As such it would most certainly have existed even had Metternich never held high office–a point that the author would have done well to stress.

In discussing the court's public relations efforts, Arco-Zinneberg ably draws attention to the court's use of artists such as Peter Fendi, Friedrich von Amerling, Johann Peter Krafft, and Johann Stephan Decker to impress upon the emperor's subjects that he and his family, like them, led a life not of unrestrained luxury but of bourgeois simplicity. In this connection, it is instructive for anyone who has ever been awed by Amerling's famous portrait of a stern and regal Emperor Francis that hangs in the Schatzkammer in Vienna to be exposed to less familiar paintings that depict a far more human and humane ruler–most notably a portrait by Amerling from 1832 in which Francis appears in civilian clothing without any indications whatsoever of rank or station (p. 428). On the basis of the catalogue's illustrations, Arco-Zinneberg's interpretation of a court that was well attuned to the demands of political propaganda seems justified. Regrettably, however, he offers no documentation or bibliographical citations to substantiate his insight, and he provides no information on which figures at court played a role in formulating and executing the dynasty's public relations policy.

A second important theme to emerge from the catalogue's three sections concerns the court's recognition of the problems created by the plan to allow Emperor Francis's eldest son to succeed to the throne.[3] Undoubtedly the mentally limited Ferdinand, who ruled from 1835 until his abdication late in 1848, was not quite the "noodle" that the late A. J. P. Taylor made him out to be many years ago in a particularly egregious footnote in his well-known history of the monarchy.[4] As is clear from the catalogue's depictions and discussions of coronation ceremonies in Bratislava in 1830, Prague in 1836, and Milan in 1838, Ferdinand was able to meet the physical and mental challenges of these ceremonies without embarrassing himself or the dynasty.

Nevertheless, the worries of the imperial family and its advisors over the possible consequences of the planned succession to the throne of the epileptic crown prince must have been enormous. Hence the conscious evocation of the great days of the Empress Maria Theresa to which Ottillinger refers in her discussion of the interior decoration of the imperial apartments, and hence also, perhaps, the transformation of the Franzensburg into a dynastic monument during the 1820s and 1830s, in preparation for Ferdinand's succession to the throne. For surely the numerous portraits that appear in the catalogue leave little doubt of Ferdinand's lack of intellectual acuity, especially if one assumes that artists presented their subject in the most favorable light possible. Ferdinand's uniformly vacuous facial expression is both striking and revealing. Indeed, the reader is almost tempted to conclude that a portrait by Francesco Hayez which shows Ferdinand in the Lombardo-Venetian coronation robes (p. 418) is a caricature that intentionally sees the monarch as a resplendently outfitted court jester. Either that, or it is an uncharacteristically honest depiction of a figure who brought to the throne no ability to reach independent judgments.

Particularly poignant is a lithograph entitled "Gesegnet bleibe das Reich!" which is reproduced at the very beginning of the catalogue's first section (p. xxxii). From a cloud in heaven an ethereal but imposing Emperor Francis blesses a kneeling and helpless-looking Ferdinand who is surrounded by the trappings of his office, including all of the many crowns he was entitled to wear. In an entry in his diary in November 1845 the American *charge d'affairs* in Vienna, William Stiles, referred directly to the problem the court faced as far as Ferdinand's succession to the throne was concerned. After relating a particularly painful example of the then monarch's mental debility, Stiles observed: "What a single rebuke to the idea that one can be born to rule, as is the supposition in all Monarchies, does not the Emperor of Austria furnish!"[5] Materials in the catalogue suggest that the court was fully aware of the possibility of such a response and did everything within its power to counteract it.

Because the central figure in this well-produced catalogue is Emperor Francis, readers may wish that it contained an essay specifically devoted to the monarch's political ideas and to his psychology. To be sure, in their essays both Sailer and Arco-Zinneberg do see Em-

peror Francis as a quintessential "Biedermeier" figure, a concept they define primarily in terms of "simplicity". Though there is much to commend this interpretation, attention to the no less important Biedermeier characteristics of "resignation" and "renunciation" might have lifted their essays to a higher level of analysis. In dealing with Francis's complex relationship with Emperor Joseph II, both authors are right to stress the nephew's rejection of his uncle's reforming impulse. They fail, on the other hand, to recognize the degree to which the former inherited the latter's reliance upon the secret police and his insistence upon the concentration of power in Vienna. Curiously, moreover, despite all that this volume has to say about Francis, readers are likely to find that he remains an opaque figure. One has the uncomfortable feeling that there is more–or perhaps less–to the last Holy Roman Emperor than meets the eye.

Notes:

[1]. Mraz' essay draws heavily upon his *sterreich und das Reich 1804-1806: Ende und Vollendung* (Wien: Verlag Dr. A. Schendl, 1993).

[2]. The essay first appeared in the exhibition catalog *Wien 1800-1850: Empire und Biedermeier* (Vienna: Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, 1969).

[3]. The view that Metternich engineered Ferdinand's succession to the throne in the hope that the reign of a weak-willed monarch would enable him to dominate internal as well as foreign policy surely gives the chancellor more influence in dynastic matters than the strong-willed Francis would ever have allowed him to exercise.

[4]. A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948), p. 47.

[5]. Cited in Christopher Lee Harwell, "William Henry Stiles: Georgia Gentleman-Politician," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Emory University, Atlanta, George, 1959), p. 119.

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