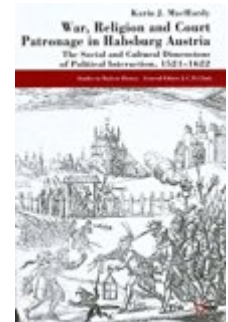


Karin J. MacHardy. *War, Religion and Court Patronage in Habsburg Austria: The Social and Cultural Dimensions of Political Interaction, 1521-1622.* Basingbrooke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 331 pp. \$80.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-333-57241-2.



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Karin MacHardy's recent monograph sheds new light on the origins of the Thirty Years' War. MacHardy argues that the Thirty Years' War really began as a civil war within the Habsburg crown lands between Catholic nobles who benefited from the confessional patronage of the Habsburg courts and the Protestant nobility who were only willing to revolt once their confessional identity was tied to their ability to survive as a class. She also claims that the common designation of the first phase of the Thirty Years' War as the "Bohemian Phase" is inadequate. According to MacHardy, this designation fails to account for the important role of the Austrian Protestant nobility who joined their Bohemian counterparts because they both feared loss of dominance in their respective estates to the newly strengthened Catholic nobility under Habsburg patronage. MacHardy argues further that scholars have likewise failed to recognize that the demise of the Protestant hegemony over the estates was already underway before the Habsburgs rewarded loyal nobles with confiscated lands following the defeat of the Protestants at the Battle of White Mountain. Finally, MacHardy rejects the viability of the term

"absolutism" in general and "confessional absolutism" in particular as a description of the Habsburg monarchy in the early modern period and asserts that the term "coordinating state" better reflects the historical reality. By using this term, she hopes to underscore cooperation and negotiation between monarchs and nobles, which were required for Habsburg policies to be enforced effectively within the provinces.

MacHardy deftly employs Pierre Bourdieu's sociological model of cultural capital to describe the shared anxieties of Protestant nobles in both Bohemia and Austria and explain why they felt compelled to rebel when they did. She demonstrates successfully that the social or cultural capital that Habsburg patronage could provide was intimately related to the nobility's ability to obtain material capital. For example, without the benefits of office it would be far more difficult for families to make successful marriages to perpetuate elite status through the union of financial resources and family ties. A university education or a grand tour offered nobles the ability to acquire cultural capital that demonstrated their suitability

for service at the court and was then transformed into material capital via the acquisition of court positions. She notes that the Habsburgs reduced the number of Protestant nobles by simultaneously favoring Catholics for positions in their administration and making office-holding a necessary precondition for obtaining noble status. After the Habsburgs began to give Catholics preference over Protestants for administrative positions, Protestants were no longer able to convert their cultural currency to a material advantage. Thus, MacHardy cogently states, this potential for material loss (rather than the actual size of Protestant landholdings at the time of revolt) best explains why Protestant nobles revolted in both Bohemia and Austria.

Her analysis also convincingly questions the conceptual value of the common-place designation "Bohemian Phase" used to describe the first years of the Thirty Years' War, because the notion of a strictly Bohemian stage of the war ignores the involvement of the Protestant nobles in Austria in championing the estates' conception of rights. The "Bohemian Phase" has been an important description for analyzing the first stage of the Thirty Years' War since the works of the Czech scholar Josef Polí?enský and some form of it has found its place in preeminent works on the Thirty Years' War written by Geoffrey Parker and Ronald G. Asch. Although the Austrian estates have not been completely ignored in these works, MacHardy is the first to devote so much attention to the similarities and cooperation between the Bohemian and the Austrian estates during the early part of the war. Moreover, she skilfully deploys sociological constructs in conjunction with a critical reading of polemically charged primary sources to elucidate the common plight between Protestant nobles in Bohemia and Austria and force scholars to rethink the adequacy of the term "Bohemian Phase" for the first part of the Thirty Year's War.

MacHardy is less convincing, however, in her attempt to substitute the term "coordinating state"

for "confessional absolutism." She states that the term "confessional absolutism" can be deceiving since it implies that the Habsburgs were able to carry out state-building activities without the support of the nobility. Indeed, she notes that R. J. W. Evans has long recognized that the Habsburg Monarchy managed to forge its identity by uniting the crown, church, and nobles in pursuit of the Counter Reformation. MacHardy thinks that the term "confessional absolutism" is not a very helpful description since Evans acknowledges that this union required the cooperation between the monarchs and the nobility. To eradicate ambiguity in describing the nature of the Habsburg Monarchy during this period, MacHardy proposes to harness Michael Mann's notion of the state into a new model for describing the Habsburg Monarchy as a "coordinating state" rather than an "absolute" state. She argues well that this allows her to demonstrate how the growth of institutions is not necessarily synonymous with the growth of royal power. However, the term "coordinating state" can be just as deceiving as "confessional absolutism" if it is not qualified, because it implies that the Habsburgs simply coordinated the efforts of the various estates like a conductor attempting to draw various parts of an orchestra into harmony. The grand difference is that a symphony conductor is directing musicians who all share exactly the same goals as the conductor and expect him to take the lead. In contrast, the Habsburgs attempted to make a symphony out of a cacophony of competing compositions and self-proclaimed composers who questioned the Habsburgs' prerogatives with regard to state-building.

Although MacHardy does qualify the meaning of "coordinating state" by stressing that hard bargaining took place between the Habsburgs and the nobility "hard bargaining" is not easily consonant with the term "coordinating." Since MacHardy also recognizes that confessionalized patronage served as the catalyst for the Protestant revolt and that the rebels claimed that Habsburgs were attempting to rule as absolute monarchs, it

seems that the term "confessional absolutism," as qualified by Robert Bireley, still has value. Nevertheless, her attempt at resolving the semantic challenges involved in describing the early modern Habsburg Monarchy is admirable. More importantly, MacHardy's book reflects careful scholarship and contributes significantly to our understanding of the nature of the opening phase of the Thirty Years' War in general and the role of the Protestant Austrian nobility in particular.

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