

Thomas Winkelbauer. *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht: Ländner und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im konfessionellen Zeitalter.* Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2003. 622 + 567 pp. ISBN 978-3-8000-3987-6.



Reviewed by Howard Louthan

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In 1994 Ernst Hanisch's *Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* appeared as the first volume in a new series surveying the history of the Austrian lands. Edited by the eminent medievalist Herwig Wolfram, this thirteen-volume project is now complete with the publication of Thomas Winkelbauer's marvelous overview of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1] In many respects Winkelbauer's imposing two-volume synthesis is the most impressive contribution of the entire series. It is the only multi-volume contribution of the project, and the specialist will be particularly delighted with its scholarly apparatus, for Winkelbauer's grasp of the secondary literature is exceptional. With an exhaustive 170-page bibliography and nearly 150 pages of endnotes, he has produced what will surely be the standard reference work for years to come.

Though Winkelbauer has certainly succeeded in compiling a useful reference tool, there will be more debate regarding the organization and presentation of his material. Eschewing a strict chronological model, he has ordered his subject

matter thematically. Such a decision obviously has both its advantages and disadvantages. On the negative side of the ledger, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht* is not as fluid as shorter surveys such as Paula Fichtner's recent *The Habsburg Monarchy: Attributes of Empire* or Charlie Ingrao's older *The Habsburg Monarchy*, which follow a more traditional chronological model.[2] There is also a problem of repetition. Winkelbauer, for example, discusses Hungary's Bocskai revolt of the early seventeenth century in at least three different contexts. Though at times there is a type of unwieldiness to the text, there are also distinct advantages in working thematically, and in balance, I believe Winkelbauer made a wise decision to focus his undertaking around a set of larger historical issues. He is able both to highlight a series of topics that have often been neglected and to explore at greater depth more familiar issues that need to be reevaluated in the light of recent scholarship.

Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht is divided into four large sections that are introduced by a brief but helpful demographic overview of the

Habsburg lands of east central Europe. Winkelbauer's aptly chosen title reflects his working methodology. The central theme that runs throughout the entire work is the tension between the center and the periphery. The first part of the text is explicitly devoted to the often contested relationship between the estates with their local privileges and the ambitious Habsburgs and their centralizing aspirations. He treats this relationship in three broad geographic contexts: the Austrian hereditary lands, the Bohemian kingdom, and Hungary along with Croatia and Transylvania. Consistently sensitive to the great ethnic and social diversity of this region, Winkelbauer takes great care to highlight the regional differences of the estates both institutionally (various legal traditions) and culturally (local historiography and cartography). He balances these centrifugal forces by considering countervailing developments in the early modern period. Both the growth of the imperial court and the slow development of a more cosmopolitan noble class whose interests extended beyond their regional base were important cohesive factors in this otherwise decentralized polity.

The second major section of the study considers the relationship between the Empire and the hereditary lands of the Austrian Habsburgs. Winkelbauer first presents a useful summary of the Empire's various structures and institutions including the *Reichstag*, the *Reichskreise*, and the *Reichsgerichte*. On the diplomatic front he follows the interaction of the Kaiser and Reich from the troubled Reformation period, through the crisis of the Thirty Years' War, and into the more stable years of the late seventeenth century. Departing from some of the standard themes that one would expect to find in a traditional survey, Winkelbauer also includes an intriguing excursus tracking the development of communication networks in the Empire and hereditary lands. As he rightly observes, scholars are only beginning to understand how an explosion of new printed media in the forms of *Flugblätter*, *Flugschriften*, early

newspapers and periodicals helped transform society, culture and politics in early modern Austria.

In the third section Winkelbauer changes his focus to military and financial innovations. *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht* is especially useful in locating military developments within the Habsburg lands in the broader European context. Conversely, Winkelbauer highlights the often undervalued role played by the Austrian Habsburgs who guarded Europe's most important military frontier. The state endeavored to keep up with its growing military expenditures by more effectively extracting money from its subjects. Winkelbauer reminds us how unevenly spread the tax burden actually was. In 1689 a *Vollbauer* in Bohemia would pay 19.3 florins in direct taxes. His equivalent in Lower Austria would contribute 8.3 to the state coffers while in Hungary the yeoman would be compelled to give the taxman only 1 florin annually.

Of all the different themes that Winkelbauer examines it is religion that receives the greatest attention. The entire second volume is given over to this topic. Here there are no great surprises. The impact of the Protestant reformation, the Catholic response, the consequent religious crisis of the early seventeenth century, and the subsequent state-sponsored program of baroque Catholicism are all examined. Also included is a concise and helpful overview of the witch hunt in the Habsburg lands. Once more it is Winkelbauer's rigorous attention to the diversity of the Habsburg conglomerate that is this section's greatest virtue. From the fascinating peace churches of Silesia to the work of Primus Truber with the southern Slavs, Winkelbauer has put together one of the few religious surveys of this region that truly does justice to the remarkable confessional diversity of east central Europe.

I do have a number of smaller quibbles with his work in this area. While examining the Bohemian lands, Winkelbauer could have devoted more space to the complicated nature of the

Utraquist church. He does not take into account the newer literature that challenges the notion that traditional Utraquism was a weak and feeble movement by the early seventeenth century. His understanding of Catholicism follows Hubert Jedin's classic but dated interpretation of the Catholic/Counter-Reformation. In recent years in the English-speaking context in particular there has been a significant debate regarding the nature of the Catholic side of the Reformation. New insights coming from these conversations could have strengthened this section.

Let me highlight one issue in particular. In his chapter examining the development of a *pietas Austriaca*, Winkelbauer builds on a top-down model where new religious practices are essentially imposed from above. More recent historiography stresses the importance of negotiation in the construction of religious identities. Even in Bohemia, a region where zealous missionary priests frequently resorted to violence to reimpose the old faith, Protestant traditions of the countryside were often creatively amalgamated with new Catholic practices. The great hymns of the Bohemian Brethren were not infrequently directly reproduced in Catholic songbooks. Indeed one of the most important Catholic hymnals of the period used as its cover illustration a woodcut from Jan Roh's 1541 Brethren hymnal that depicted Jan Hus energetically leading the faithful in song.

There is no question that *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht* is a significant achievement. Winkelbauer's seemingly encyclopedic knowledge of the sources with particular strengths in the German and Czech literature is impressive and will be of great value for any serious student of the region. The two volumes are also accompanied with an extensive series of illustrations, charts, and maps that lend to its utility. But with any undertaking of this scope there will inevitably be some debate regarding its contents. Winkelbauer's decision to organize this work the-

matically makes it somewhat easier for certain topics to fall through the cracks. He could well be second-guessed for his decision to devote almost ninety pages to cartography and the writing of history in the Habsburg lands while not including any substantial discussion on art, architecture, and music.

To his credit Winkelbauer does try to incorporate such material while discussing other themes. For example he includes a brief treatment of Vienna's famous *Pestsäule* when considering the religiosity of the Habsburg family. Nonetheless, a more systematic treatment of the arts would have strengthened the volume. Likewise, there is no direct examination of learning and science. The universities play no significant role in the study, and a figure as influential as Johannes Kepler is primarily discussed not for his astronomical contributions but for his influence on cartography. Social historians might be somewhat surprised by the relatively little attention given to the important Jewish communities of this region. The only significant discussion of a Jewish theme is a four-page examination of Jewish historiography.

But as Winkelbauer himself notes in the introduction, one can literally get a stomachache when considering how to include such an array of topics in a history of a region as complex and diverse as the Habsburg conglomerate. After the production of these two splendid volumes, however, Winkelbauer should have no reason to worry about stomach trouble in the future.

Notes:

[1]. Recently, two volumes of the series have been reviewed on HABSBURG: Rudolf Leeb et al., *Geschichte des Christentums in Österreich: Von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2003) <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=272091084898354>; and Karl Vocelka, *Glanz und Untergang der höfischen Welt: Reformation, Reform und Reaktion im Habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat* (Vienna: Ueberreuter,

2001) <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=228881033927366>.

[2]. Paula Sutter Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1490-1848: Attributes of Empire* (European History in Perspective, Basingstoke, New York et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Charles Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1618-1815* (New Approaches to European History 3, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994, second edition 2000).

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