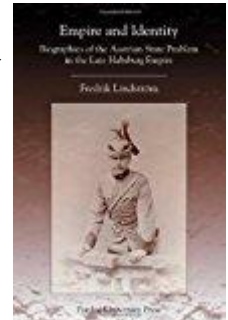


Fredrik Lindström. *Empire and Identity: Biographies of the Austrian State Problem in the Late Habsburg Empire.* Central European Studies Series. West Lafayette: Purdue University, 2008. 248 pp. \$34.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-55753-464-4.



Reviewed by Daniel L. Unowsky (Department of History, University of Memphis)

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Two Sides of the Austrian State Problem

"*Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria, nube!*" ("Let others fight wars--you, happy Austria, marry!") [1]

The Habsburg monarchy came into being through dynastic marriage politics and, although ignored by the author of the famous late medieval poem quoted above, via military victories that glorified the House of Habsburg. The state underwent many economic, social, cultural, and political transformations over the course of its final century of existence; yet, until its ultimate collapse after four years of the most devastating war Europe had yet experienced, the Habsburg monarchy was marked in many significant ways by its origins as a dynastic construction. The Habsburg state remained, Fredrik Lindström argues in this volume, an *Obrigkeitsstaat*.

Lindström aims to explore the two sides of what he terms the "Austrian state problem": the challenges that democratization and nationalization posed to the political institutions of the

Obrigkeitsstaat; and the related problems created by the features of Austrian and imperial culture and identity. While scholars have long approached the Austrian state problem through studies of various nationalisms, Lindström instead emphasizes the multinational state as such. He limits his study to the Vienna-based German elite, and provides three sets of paired biographies, each focused on one main and one secondary figure. The first section centers on bureaucrat and politician Ernest von Koerber, who is analyzed along with historian Heinrich Friedjung; the second section considers the writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal and his friend, diplomat and director of the court theaters Leopold von Andrian; the final section focuses on historian and liberal politician Josef Redlich, who is paired with socialist politician Karl Renner. Each of the six men was deeply committed to Austria. Lindström asserts that all six experienced the Austrian state problem as a personal

identity crisis. Each sought to strengthen and preserve Austria and Austrian culture for the future.

The first paired biography presents Koerber, a career administrative official and twice minister president, as the quintessential Habsburg-loyal bureaucrat. Lindström overviews Koerber's early twentieth-century program to revive the central administration and forge a strong *Rechststaat*, which Koerber hoped could serve as the framework for a modern multinational Habsburg state. Austro-German nationalist and liberal historian Heinrich Friedjung, who saw the Austrian mission as carrying German civilization to the east, supported Koerber's Josephist project.

The second section develops Lindström's critique of Carl Schorske's elegant interpretation of Viennese culture around 1900. Schorske considered Hofmannsthal an example of an intellectual who, when confronted by the failure of political liberalism, turned away from positive and practical engagement with politics and fled into the realm of aesthetic cultural production. In contrast to that interpretation, Hofmannsthal emerges here as an artist allied with and not alienated from the state. Lindström asserts that Hofmannsthal's early affirmation of Habsburg Austria did not fade away. In the 1890s, Hofmannsthal engaged with state structures directly; from 1906 he turned his efforts to independent cultural work; and during the Great War Hofmannsthal again came into direct contact with the state by producing propaganda and working energetically to promote Habsburg patriotism. In each phase, Hofmannsthal remained an adherent of the Austrian state idea. Andrian makes an effective foil for exploring the paths of Hofmannsthal's engagement with the Austrian idea. For Hofmannsthal, Austro-German cultural identity was a border identity, more open and flexible than the Prussian version of Germanness. After World War I, Andrian became an Austrian nationalist and supporter of Austro-Fascism.

The final section, like the first, pairs a historian with a politician. Redlich and Renner were both dedicated to Austria; however, unlike Koerber and Friedjung, Redlich and Renner strove much more seriously to combine a commitment to democracy, multinational citizenship, and state loyalty. Both considered Austria superior to Prussia/Germany, because the former offered space for the development of a multiplicity of national cultures and identities. Redlich, originally a strong supporter of centralization, viewed with trepidation the turn toward an increasingly Germanizing wartime military administration and the resultant anti-Austrian reaction by many Habsburg subjects. For his part, Renner, an Austro-German nationalist, Austrian patriot, Josephist state-oriented reformer, and social democratic leader, became increasingly supportive of German-oriented centralization before and during the war. After the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, Renner carried this sentiment to its logical conclusion with his advocacy of joining small Austria to a greater Germany.

The paired biographies succeed in offering convincing new interpretations of these significant figures. Habsburg historians will find the discussions of Hofmannsthal and Koerber especially illuminating. At the same time, some critical comments must be made here. The six figures discussed are all Austro-German men. On the one hand, this selection allows us to see how some of those who took seriously the mission of the state thought and acted in ways intended to strengthen the bonds that united the diverse peoples and lands of Austria-Hungary. At the same time, as Lindström himself admits, this focus is limited. The reader will wish for dual biographies of women, Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, and so on, to explore more broadly how Habsburg citizens defined and defended (or attacked) Austria, Austrian culture, and Austrian/Habsburg identity. The book is also at times a heavy read, its language too

often awkward and far less lively than the subject matter it describes.

Still, these shortcomings do not undermine Lindström's achievement. Scholars and students of the Habsburg monarchy will learn much from this book about the complex relationship between Habsburg state and society, loyalty and patriotic action, and Austro-German identity in the last decades of Austria-Hungary.

Note

[1]. W. Francis H. King, *Classical and Foreign Quotations* (London: J. Whitaker and Sons, 1904), 28.

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