

**Charles W. Ingrao.** *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618-1815*. New Approaches to European History Series. Third edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 324 pp. \$105.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-108-49925-5.

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Some twenty years have passed since the second edition of this indispensable title appeared in the year 2000. The first edition was published in the midst of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, which were in part a tragic legacy of the Habsburg monarchy's dissolution at the end of World War I. This third edition marks in effect the centenary of that momentous event. For historians, the collapse of 1918 raised the acute question of the monarchy's viability over time. Had it been doomed for much of its (later) history? In the last generation, many historians have come to share the view that the end was not inevitable, the monarchy continuing to be vital until at least 1914. In the 1990s, Charles W. Ingrao was among the first to argue in a concise and convincing way that the early modern Habsburg monarchy was not the retrograde anomaly of legend but rather one of Europe's most fascinating and successful states.

Major Anglophone overviews of the monarchy's history are associated with the names of Robert A. Kann, C. A. Macartney, R. J. W. Evans, Alan Sked, Barbara Jelavich, Robin Okey, Paula Fichtner, Pieter Judson, and Martyn Rady, among others. Even in this distinguished company, Ingrao's third edition stands out auspiciously, as it is still the only survey focusing on the Habsburg monarchy at high tide. Its history is convention-

ally divided into two main segments—early and late modern—with the ostensibly decisive shift placed somewhere in the eighteenth century (often 1740 or 1790). The result is sometimes a foreshortening, in particular of the monarchy's history during the revolutionary era. Ingrao's timeframe clearly manifests the coherence of the period from the Thirty Years' War through the Napoleonic Wars, when the Habsburgs were consistently one of Europe's leading military and cultural powers. Habsburg history between 1526/7 and 1918 can usefully be divided into three longer phases. Ingrao lucidly guides both student and specialist through the second of these.

The lens of political history, which brings the fundamental interconnectedness of the monarchy's international and domestic pasts into focus, also distinguishes this book. In fact, the author gives due coverage to economic, social, and cultural change, but the major foreign challenges (Thirty Years' War, Ottoman Empire, Louis XIV, Prussia, and revolutionary and Napoleonic France) and the ramifications of these for domestic life structure the narrative in this edition as well. This emphasis in turn reflects two basic conditions of the monarchy's early modern existence that can only be ignored at risk. First, it participated in armed conflict in every decade between 1620 and 1820 ex-

cept for the 1720s, on some occasions having to juggle multiple fronts and enemies at once. Second and in consequence, the upkeep of armies and defense facilities as well as the fiscal extraction that this activity entailed constituted the central government's chief concerns. This was as true in the early 1800s as it had been in the 1620s. The government's recurrent attempts to reform the agrarian world and protect the peasantry, which bore much of the tax burden, are accordingly one of this volume's recurring themes.

Resting as it does on the international specialist literature, this new edition incorporates the findings of recent scholarship, especially in regard to the Czech lands and high culture. Ingrao's expert knowledge of the areas and peoples on the monarchy's southern periphery enrich the text in many places, as in the passages on the relationship between Vienna and the far-flung south Slav populations. In a survey of this kind, the reader expects to find basic data and information. Here too expectations are met. For instance, the population figures by territory are produced where available (pp. 135, 182, 241–2). And we learn that 738 of the monarchy's 2,047 monasteries, including 55 percent of those in the Bohemian-Austrian lands and 75 percent of those in Hungary were seized in the ten years of Joseph II's personal rule (p. 224).

But facts of this kind are fully embedded in a broader set of interrelated arguments that already shaped the first edition. Ingrao identifies five basic factors "that were influential in determining the distinctive course of Austrian history" (p. 2). First, he attributes the monarchy's longevity in no small part to the needs of the international community. By nature, according to Ingrao, the monarchy was itself "highly artificial" (p. xiii). Second, the monarchy's decidedly diverse territorial and national composition resulted in a fundamental "lack of unity" (p. 16). But, third, the dynasty evinced a persistently close identification with Germany. Fourth, the Habsburgs displayed a marked willingness to govern by consensus that is seen as having both

weakened and strengthened them. The argument here is that the elites often voted for the taxes asked of them but also hindered a more effective overall integration of the monarchy's lands. Finally, the dynasty itself was instrumental at decisive moments in holding the inheritance together. Only Charles VI is dismissed as a "hopeless mediocrity" (p. 145). Surely another factor that would merit inclusion on the list is the monarchy's long association with the Catholic Church, which by no means ended with Joseph II. Even under this ruler, the authorities continued to use the church "as an instrument of social control," while toleration did not translate into genuine equality for a long time to come (p. 224).

If the late eighteenth-century Habsburg monarchy possessed "the continent's most innovative government," the use of the terms "bureaucratization" and "bureaucratic state" to characterize it nonetheless appears questionable in view of the large scholarship now existing on the nature of early modern government (pp. xii, 219, 246, 260). Yet as this volume also shows, the early modern perspective offers a stimulating view of Habsburg history further down the road. The author takes advantage of an expanded epilogue (now chapter 8) to add another early modern voice to the skepticism expressed about the almost euphoric reappraisal of the late Habsburg monarchy that has taken place in recent years. On the one hand, Ingrao continues to perceive a "process of disaggregation" as the monarchy gradually shed the attributes that had earlier sustained it (p. 274). On the other hand, he calls thought-provoking attention to what he sees as the scholarly failure "to highlight ... the pivotal role that the democratization process played in the monarchy's destabilization and ultimate delegitimization" (p. 278). It is not just for such reflections that this learned and gracefully written book can be recommended to those interested in any period in the history of one of Europe's great political experiments.

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