

The Habsburg Mediterranean 1500–1800

Edited by Stefan Hanß and Dorothea McEwan. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2021. Pp. 403. Paperback €119.00. ISBN: 978-3700188094.

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This edited volume identifies important but neglected interactions between the Mediterranean and the Habsburg Empire, in particular the domains ruled or influenced by the Austrian branch of the family, in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. As the editors explain in the introduction, the purpose of volume is to fill a “pressing gap in both Mediterranean history and the history of the Habsburg Empire” (12), by using “Habsburg thalassography, a Habsburg-centred study of the sea and a sea-centred study of the Habsburg world, which encompasses the early modern Mediterranean” (11), as well as assemblage theory. Next to the introduction, the book has twelve chapters grouped into three parts.

The first part, titled *Negotiating the Habsburg Mediterranean*, closely explores Habsburg power and its limits. The three chapters in this section use three case studies to show how dependent were the Habsburgs on local forces and local elites to project their power and influence and that outcomes were shaped both by dynastic and by local interests. The chapter by Michael J. Levin on the Republic of Genoa explains why the Emperor Charles V Habsburg (r. 1519–1556) insisted that formal independence of Genoa would better serve his interests in Italy than direct Habsburg rule. The chapters by Eric R. Dursteler and Alexander Koller focus on the narrow section of the eastern Adriatic Sea coast under Austrian Habsburg control and its Venetian neighbourhood in Dalmatia. Dursteler shows how Habsburg influence could reach far, inspiring the capture in 1596 of an Ottoman provincial seat, the fortress of Klis, far from Habsburg dominions but close to Venetian Dalmatia. Koller explores the limits of Habsburg control over Uskoks, the Habsburg coastal militia also engaged in piracy. In both cases, the Habsburg presence and influence in the Adriatic challenged not only Ottoman rule but also the Venetian hold on power. The Republic of St Mark was forced to join forces with the Ottomans to restore peace and (territorial) sovereignty.

The second part, *Flows of People*, made up of six chapters, covers diverse themes, spaces, and periods. Emanuel Buttigieg analyses the links between Habsburg Central Europe and Malta, in particular the participation of noblemen from Habsburg lands in the Knights Hospitaller, who ruled the island. Katherine Bond explores the military career of a Central European nobleman from Ljubljana, Christoph von Stermsee, who served Charles V in various theatres of war, from the Low Countries to Tunis. Géza Pálffy studies the career of the military commander Sforza Pallavicini, who served both Charles V and his brother Ferdinand I Habsburg (r. 1526/1556–1564), helping to extend Habsburg control in Hungary and to establish a defensive military frontier against the Ottoman Empire there. As Pálffy shows, Habsburg-Ottoman wars on the Mediterranean and in Central Europe were part of the same struggle. Two branches of the Habsburg family closely coordinated their military response, in particular in the Kingdom of Hungary, the focus of Ottoman attacks in the sixteenth century. In crucial moments, Hungary and Austria were defended with Spanish funds and Spanish troops.

The next two chapters are dedicated to pilgrimages. Sundar Henny analyses the nuanced pilgrim experiences of Bartholomaeus Gorgievits, a nobleman from Hungary who, after escaping Ottoman captivity, first went to Jerusalem before continuing home. Mordechai Lewy studies the ambivalent position of Protestant pilgrims in the Holy Land, who resisted

attempts to be grouped together with the Catholics with different levels of zeal and success. The section's last chapter, by Tobias P. Graf, explores the phenomenon of Arabian princes in the eighteenth century, usually Maronite migrants from notable families on Mount Lebanon, who got licence to collect alms in the Holy Roman Empire. The only chapter in the volume that is not fully or partly focused on the sixteenth century, Graf's contribution excavates an early version of the narrative that migrants in need are not what they claim to be.

The final part, *Flows of Material and Intellectual Culture*, is made up of three chapters. Stefan Hanß describes the interest in Ottoman written and material culture in the Habsburg envoys' entourage at the Ottoman court. Václav Bůžek studies the presence of elephants at events organised by Maximilian II Habsburg (r. 1564–1576). Finally, the last chapter in the volume, by Dorothea McEwan, analyses the legal concept of church protectorate, giving a historical overview of Habsburg ambitions to serve as protectors of Catholics in the Holy Land, using older literature.

The themes this volume covers indeed merit greater attention. The greater focus on the collaboration of the Spanish and German branches of the Habsburg dynasty, on the interdependence of the war against the Ottomans in the Mediterranean and in Central Europe, is necessary and welcome. Individual careers of soldiers and commanders, who fought for their Habsburg masters in very different and distant yet connected theatres of war, is a good example of that. Similarly promising is the exploration of the reach and limit of Habsburg dynastic power on the Adriatic and in Genoa, of the role of elites, of individual pilgrim experiences of the Mediterranean. The Holy Land receives considerable attention (three chapters), perhaps because the book was created under the auspices of the Habsburg family (Karl von Habsburg-Lothringen and his brother Georg Habsburg-Lothringen, who wrote a very short preface). The book shows that Central Europe and the Mediterranean were connected in many ways and were very interested in each other. Many contributions are based on research using primary sources.

The volume's ambition to shed light not only on the Spanish Mediterranean of Charles V but also on the Mediterranean of the Central European Habsburgs is successful only to a certain degree. The chapters by Dursteler and Koller narrate the history of the Habsburg Adriatic, but this story stops early, in the early seventeenth century. Later history, in particular after 1719, when Trieste and Rijeka (Fiume) became major Habsburg ports and a homemade merchant navy experienced rapid growth, is mentioned but not studied in depth. The choice to focus, despite the volume's title, on the sixteenth century also means that a reader who hoped to learn more about the parts of the Mediterranean ruled by the Austrian branch of the dynasty in later periods, in particular in the eighteenth century, will be disappointed. Except for Genoa, which was not formally Habsburg, other Italian provinces do not receive any attention, even those that were under the direct rule of the Austrian Habsburgs in the eighteenth century (Sardinia 1714–1720, Sicily 1720–1735, Naples 1714–1735), sometimes for a very long time (Tuscany 1737–1860, with its important free port of Leghorn/Livorno). The great diversity of topics covered is a strength but also a weakness of the book. Some chapters' connection to the Habsburgs (Lewy, Graf) or the Mediterranean (Bůžek) is tenuous. Despite these shortcomings, the volume opens a conversation about an important and neglected topic, the Habsburg Mediterranean world. Let us hope that this conversation will continue soon.

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