

The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815

Geographically and linguistically diverse, by 1789 the Habsburg monarchy had laid the groundwork for a single European polity capable of transcending its unique cultural and historic heritage. Challenging the conventional notion of the Habsburg state and society as peculiarly backward, Charles W. Ingrao traces its emergence as a military and cultural power of enormous influence. In doing so, he unravels a web of social, political, economic, and cultural factors that shaped the Habsburg monarchy during the period. Firmly established as the leading survey of the early modern Habsburg monarchy, this third edition incorporates a quarter of a century of new, international scholarship. Extending its narrative reach, Ingrao gives greater attention to “peripheral” territories, manifestations of high culture, and suggests links between the early modern monarchy and the problems of contemporary Europe. This elegant account of a complex story is accessible to specialists and non-specialists alike.

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The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815

Third edition

Charles W. Ingrao

Purdue University



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To Jonathan, Caroline, and Michael

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Preface

A great deal of scholarship has appeared in the quarter century since the first edition of this book. Hence my delight when Cambridge University Press invited me last year to present a third edition. Quite aside from the plethora of recent contributions by Anglophone and western European historians, the reader will find in this volume the scholarship of a new generation of Czech, Hungarian, and Yugoslav successor state scholars. As a result, every chapter aside from the introduction has been significantly updated with the fruits of new research. Much of the substance deals with the Czech lands and the multitude of ethnic groups stretching across the monarchy's southern periphery. The volume also focuses on the high culture of the monarchy's elites, particularly their engagement with Enlightenment ideas and the music of the high Baroque, Classical, and early Romantic eras. Finally, the volume epilogue that first appeared in the second edition (Chapter 8) has been much expanded to reflect two decades of engagement with (and, sometimes, against) America's public policy in post-Communist central Europe, including observations and insights on the century-long disaggregation process that led to the monarchy's dissolution.

In light of the American reading public's fleeting interest in the ethnic conflicts of the 1990s, we are wise to recall the words of Neville Chamberlain at the height of the Munich Crisis, when he lamented the prospects of going to war over "a faraway country" inhabited by "people of whom we know nothing." The prime minister was, of course, speaking of Czechoslovakia. But he could have just as easily used these same words to characterize his knowledge – or concern – about the other lands and peoples of the former Habsburg monarchy. Eight decades later even the educated public in western societies like Great Britain and the United States still know very little about the region, and even less about its history. Nor should this come as a surprise. Neither a bygone empire nor the small "successor states" that replaced it can inspire the same interest as great modern entities like France, Germany, or Russia. Yet, even before its dissolution in 1918, the monarchy's diversity made it

much more difficult to comprehend, thereby discouraging anyone from investigating it in the first place. Part of the reason is that the monarchy was really three different countries at the start of the seventeenth century, each nested with several smaller, but distinct subsocieties. In many respects they remained disparate throughout its history. Of course, the same can be said of other European societies. But whereas it is possible to write Soviet or Russian history from the Great Russian perspective, and British history from an English viewpoint, the component states of the Habsburg monarchy were much too numerous, populous, and wealthy to be ignored, either by the Habsburgs or by those who study it. Finally, the monarchy's very diversity created a greater number of problems, many of which demanded solutions different from those applied in major nation states like France or Germany. Fascinating though they were, the monarchy's unique conditions and eccentric development make it a poor choice for anyone searching for a conceptually clean, "typical" example of an evolving nation-state.

What is even more surprising and unfortunate is that the peoples living in the heart of contemporary Europe – including the German-speaking populations of the *Bundesrepublik* and Austria itself – are themselves becoming less and less aware of their common heritage. The apparent diffidence of many modern Austrians may be explained by the country's longtime status as a neutral between rival power blocs. But is also true that the governments of the various successor states – including Austria – have endeavored for a century to instill in their peoples a new political culture modeled after the nation-state model of World War I's victors. Unfortunately, the process of imbuing their citizens with national pride has invariably come at the expense of a meaningful understanding and appreciation of the more complex challenges and achievements of the great Danubian enterprise that preceded them.

Such is the fate of the "losers" of great wars, that history is often written by their adversaries. Yet neither the monarchy's ultimate extinction, nor its complex problems, nor even the current political agendas of the various successor states should deter us from studying it. By the second half of the eighteenth century, it not only had the continent's most innovative government and largest army but was also a leader in public education and the world of music. If the ensuing revolutionary decades laid bare the rotteness of Old Regime France, they also demonstrated the Habsburg monarchy's considerable military, political, economic, and cultural resources, together with a remarkable durability. In a struggle between two systems, it was those of the supposedly "backward" Habsburg monarchy that fought the most land campaigns, weathered the most defeats – and still triumphed in the end. It subsequently played a

leading role in turning back the French Revolution and crafting an international system that remained in place until 1914. When it finally collapsed four years later, it had already outlasted every other major European monarchy in both longevity and dynastic continuity, despite having more natural enemies and less wealth with which to confront them. And, as we now know, the problems it confronted did not die with it, but persist today. Indeed, our ignorance of the Habsburg model and its legacy has inhibited our understanding of the tragic human and demographic catastrophes of twentieth-century *Mitteleuropa*.

This book has striven to overcome some of these obstacles by presenting at the very outset several generalizations that can help unify and give purpose to the factual material, as well as to the monarchy's history beyond the volume's closing date of 1815. In keeping with the original Cambridge series' "new approaches" format, the rest of the volume will supplement the traditional narrative with additional generalizations and analyses that will hopefully give students cause for discussion, and scholars food for thought. Beginning with the first edition I have endeavored to afford social, economic, and cultural themes as much attention as possible, despite the relative dearth of published material on those subjects. By contrast, I have given minimal coverage to military campaigns, despite their immediate importance in defining the course of the monarchy's history. I have found it impossible, however, to write a book about the Habsburg monarchy and its people without devoting a great deal of attention to the political, and even diplomatic actions of its leaders. Indeed, given the highly artificial nature of their state and society, Habsburg statecraft played the most decisive and unifying role in determining virtually all aspects of its history, including its social and cultural evolution.

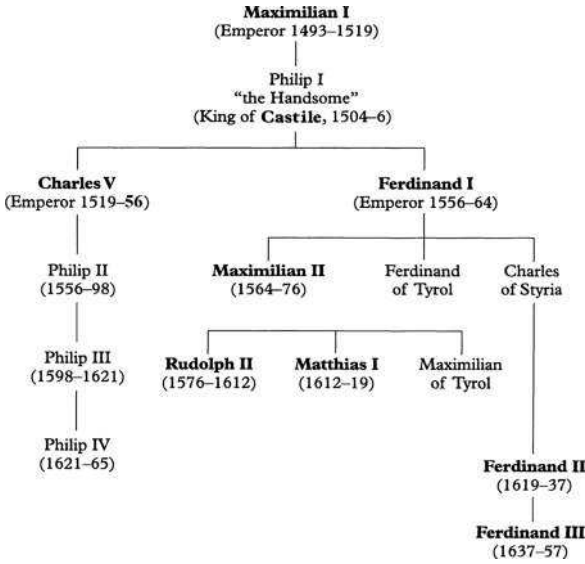
If the Habsburg monarchy is complex, so is its nomenclature. To avoid confusion, the text refers to it as "the monarchy" or "the Habsburg dominions," while reserving the terms "empire" and "Germany" for the lands and peoples of the Holy Roman empire. There are only two exceptions: in Chapter 4, I allude to a "second Habsburg empire" akin to the great dynastic conglomeration of Charles V; in Chapter 7, after the creation of the Austrian empire (1804) and dissolution of the Holy Roman empire (1806), the monarchy is finally accorded that designation. Although the word "Austrian" is occasionally used as an adjective to refer to the Habsburg monarchy's army or foreign policy, "Austria" itself is employed only to represent those provinces that comprise the so-called Austrian lands. Only after the creation of the Austrian empire does the term stand for the entire Habsburg monarchy. Another maddening ambiguity about the monarchy's terminology is the double connotation

attached to the words “Hungary” and “Bohemia.” When referring to all of the Hungarian or Bohemian crownlands, I often employ the terms “greater Hungary” and “greater Bohemia”; by contrast, “Bohemia proper” and “Hungary proper” (or “central Hungary”) allude only to the individual component kingdoms of the same name. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to the problem of place names. Given central Europe’s mixed ethnic composition, many of its cities have two or more names. Whenever possible, the text uses the English-language names for towns, provinces, and geographical expressions. In those instances where there is no English equivalent, I have employed that designation that is most often found in other English-language histories, with other widely used alternative spellings in parentheses.

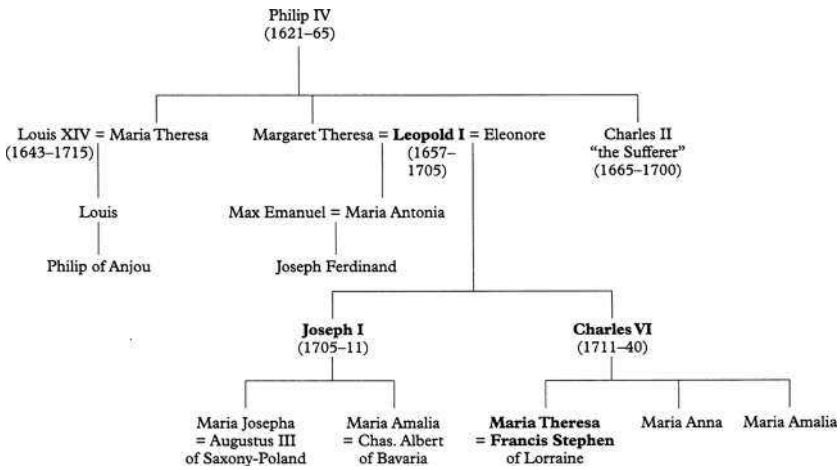
Writing the first edition of this book was, without question, the most difficult writing project I have ever undertaken. Most of the problems stemmed from the conceit that I could address university students, educated laypeople, and my fellow scholars in the same book. The greatest problem was space. Whereas textbook publishers and their readers demand brevity, scholars crave a completeness and sensitivity to nuances that can only be addressed in a longer work. Trying to engineer both probably doubled the amount of time it took to complete that edition. I am, however, grateful to my first editor, Richard Fisher, for his willingness to expand the first edition a quarter beyond its contract length, to Elizabeth Howard for permitting me to add an epilogue to the second edition and, now, to Michael Watson for inviting me to prepare this much-expanded third edition. If the first edition was a difficult challenge, researching and writing this volume was an absolute pleasure to prepare.

Through all three editions, one sacrifice that has carried over is footnotes. Editorial limits on the number of notes make it impossible to give proper credit to all the published authors whose work I consulted. Yet, as I soon found out, citing *some* of these scholars involves making arbitrary decisions that are unfair to those who are left out. It is with this in mind that I have doubled the size of the concluding bibliographical essay to recognize those scholars who have added so much during the last quarter century to our understanding of the early modern monarchy.

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