

Peter Rauscher and Martin Scheutz, eds. *Die Stimme der ewigen Verlierer? Aufstände, Revolten und Revolutionen in den österreichischen Ländern (ca. 1450–1815)*.

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Conferences and conference volumes that are most successful are often the ones that can tap into an important contemporary cultural current and then take this impulse to examine a parallel phenomenon for an earlier historical period. By this measure *Die Stimme der ewigen Verlierer?* is very much a success, for this 2011 conference took place during a period of popular unrest across large parts of the world. This was the beginning of the Arab Spring. North America witnessed the birth of the Occupy Wall Street movement. And closer to home in central Europe, political organizations such as the Pirate Party, which lobbied for direct democracy and the expansion of civil rights, registered impressive wins. Indeed, the German word of the year for 2010 was *Wutbürger* (enraged citizen). In this context, a conference examining issues of uprising, revolt, and revolution in the lands of premodern Austria was sure to touch a nerve. One of the great merits of this volume is how the very notion of rebellion is conceptualized and examined. Scholars most frequently investigate peasant revolts as isolated phenomena. In France there was the Jacquerie of 1358, in England the great revolt of 1381, and in Germany the mother of all rebellions, the Peasants' War of 1525. For the Austrian lands the most famous revolt was the one of 1626 when a peasant army rose against the Bavarian soldiers who had occupied Upper Austria as part of a negotiated settlement with the Habsburgs. Though the 1626 uprising is the best known of these revolts, there were many others in the Habsburg lands of the premodern period; but as the editors of this volume note, although there is literature on these individual events, scholars have done little work examining them as a whole.

In an effort to address this situation, Rauscher and Scheutz arranged these essays to broaden our understanding of Austrian peasant revolts in at least four significant ways. Most obviously, there is the expanded chronological range. At the

one end, essays such as Andrea Pühringer's examination of Austrian cities begin in the fifteenth century, while at the other, Thomas Stockinger situates his treatment of Lower Austria in the first half of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, there is a sustained effort to present a broad and representative picture of the lands of the Austrian Habsburgs and the distinctive character of peasant revolts in its varied regions. Not surprisingly, there is coverage of prominent peasant leaders such as the Tyrolian Michael Gaismair and the Upper Austrian Stefan Fadinger, but there are also essays that take us to Croatian territory and the contested borderlands of the Ottoman Empire, north to Bohemia and Moravia, and then over to Lusatia and Silesia. Special mention should be made of the fine article of Géza Pálffy, who tracks revolts in Hungarian territory between 1514 and 1784 as he questions the traditional nationalist interpretation of these uprisings. Then there is the application of new methodological models to the subject. While Alexander Schunka reflects on the spatial turn and the insights such an approach could offer the field, Elisabeth Gruber considers the potential of memory studies. Finally, the editors worked hard to incorporate these discussions of peasant revolts into broader themes of the period. How, for example, do these uprisings contribute to our understanding of state building, the construction of religious identities, or the process of confessionalization?

Two participants in particular should be singled out here. Peter Blickle, whose pioneering work on peasant revolts has animated the field for well over three decades, revisits his famous communalism thesis, which construes the great revolts of this period as a clash between the antifeudal corporate character of peasant life (*Gemeinde*) and the growing domination of state, church, and nobility (*Herrschaft*). The contribution of Wolfgang Behringer also merits note. Best known for his work on the early modern witch phenomenon, Behringer brings these insights to his examination of panic and unrest in Further Austria. Representative of the strengths of this volume as a whole, Blickle and Behringer help anchor this volume in a broader discourse concerning the momentous social changes of the period.

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