

# Himka, John-Paul, and Franz A. J. Szabo, eds. *Eastern Christians in the Habsburg Monarchy*

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This stimulating collection, edited by eminent historians John-Paul Himka and Franz A. J. Szabo, seeks to prompt “the conception of a new field” combining Eastern Christian and Habsburg studies (xi). By focusing primarily on the Orthodox and Greek Catholic confessions, the collection examines the kaleidoscopic Habsburg monarchy from a new perspective. Highlighting the monarchy’s Eastern Christians balances the attention typically paid to Catholic-Protestant dynamics in Habsburg lands. Furthermore, Central European Eastern Christianity, unlike its Byzantine and Russian examples, offers a wealth of fascinating intercultural and East-West interactions for study. In examining these confessions’ “shared experience of empire,” the editors wish to transcend the more typical “inward-looking national approach” to Habsburg Eastern Christianity (xii). The study thus joins existing recent perspectives in Habsburg studies, as scholars strive to avoid the distortions of focusing either on the imperial whole or on constituent political and national entities. In another innovation, the collection’s art history contributions draw attention to Eastern Christianity’s distinctive cultural legacy in Central Europe.

The volume’s historical chapters richly embody the effort to capture both local particularities and the larger context. Paul Robert Magocsi’s overview of the monarchy’s Eastern Christian populations

serves as a useful reference point. Sever Cristian Oancea argues that in the Transylvanian district of Bistrița, amid unrest caused by two Orthodox monks in the mid-eighteenth century among weakly confessionalized Greek Catholic Romanians, the imperial authorities settled the religious identity question, on paper at least, by fiat and by extending the conditions of the Military Frontier into the area. Ciprian Ghișa examines the heated discourse of Greek Catholic-Orthodox polemics, also in eighteenth-century Transylvania. Marija Petrović portrays the interplay between the state and Orthodox bishops in her case study of church reforms pursued by Maria Theresa (especially) and Joseph II among one branch of the Habsburg Orthodox population, the largely Serbian community of the Karlovci metropolis. Joel Brady applies immigration studies' concept of transnationalism to his intriguing transatlantic study, calling for greater attention to the influence in Habsburg lands of conversions to Orthodoxy among Greek Catholic migrants to America in the years from 1890 to 1914.

While the historical chapters detail Eastern confessions' interaction with Habsburg governance and with each other, the chapters on Eastern Christianity's cultural legacy in the region (four of them translated from Ukrainian) focus on the cultural intersections of Central Europe, with accompanying illustrations. Bernadett Puskás surveys trends in iconography in the multiethnic Greek Catholic eparchy of Mukachevo (in northeastern Hungary in the eighteenth century) under the influence of Western baroque art, Catholic developments such as the rise of Marian devotion, and Galician and other regional painters. Roksolana Kosiv's description of Western Ukrainian church, guild, and military banners likewise notes iconographic developments; also interesting are the glimpses of nineteenth-century political events in the empire, such as a ribbon donated by Archduchess Sophie for a Ruthenian Mountain Riflemen battalion banner (1849), and the banners of Ukrainian organizations. The last three chapters trace the "invention of tradition" (xiv) in Galicia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Andriy Zayarnyuk illuminates the quest for a "distinct local artistic style" (174) by architects and intellectuals in multiethnic Lviv, resulting in the incorporation of Eastern Christian and Byzantine architectural references. Olesya Semchyshyn-Huzner examines similar efforts by Modest Sosenko, known for his icons and ornamental church painting, as he fused his Central and Western European artistic training with deep knowledge of Byzantine, medieval Kyivan, and local artistic traditions. Finally, Natalia Dmytryshyn describes the turn to folk motifs in sacral needlework (liturgical items, clerical vestments, and church decorations), some of the women and enterprises that disseminated this craft, and the personal piety of some of the craft's practitioners.

Overall, the collection succeeds in achieving an enriched knowledge of the monarchy through its detailed, comparatively local studies and revealing vignettes while retaining the sense of interacting with the wider region and empire. Very rarely, more information would have been desirable. For example, Ghișa suggests yet does not clearly specify additional factors explaining the clergy's loyalty to church union besides the privileges they acquired. Should one infer that Uniate leaders' defensive educational efforts succeeded among the parish clergy? It would also be interesting to learn more about what prompted conversions to Orthodoxy among Greek Catholic migrants to America, although Brady does give hints (such as evidence of Russophile advocacy [92–93]). Magocsi also notes American Catholic leaders' hostility toward Greek Catholicism's divergent practices, which spurred some migrant clergy and parishioners to turn to Orthodoxy (19–20). But space considerations may well explain these minor quibbles, and the convenient footnotes offer relevant additional sources (with some available in English).

Specialists in religious studies, Habsburg studies, art history, and the monarchy's national histories will find much of value here. And those new to Habsburg studies will come away drawn even more to this region's incredibly multilayered history.