A History of the Habsburg Empire 1273–1700

Bérenger

A HISTORY OF THE HABSBURG EMPIRE
1273–1700

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A History of the Habsburg Empire: 1700–1918
Jean Bérenger
Translated by C. A. Simpson

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Translator's Note

Personal names present the historian and translator with a particular challenge; ever present is the risk of imputing the wrong nationality or indeed of bestowing nationality where to attribute any sense of belonging to a particular nation would be quite inappropriate.

As translator, I have presumed to depart from the, it might seem, admirably simple and consistent system of the original text which gives all names in French, and have used instead the native forms of names, e.g. János Hunyadi rather than the awkward hybrid John Hunyadi. While this policy remains appropriate for those rulers whose native origins are too important not to be acknowledged, neutral English forms have been preferred in the case of the Habsburgs, even of those early members of the House before Maximilian I who might be considered to have been unambiguously German.

To avoid pedantry, certain exceptions have been made: Don Carlos, the son of Philip II and hero of Verdi's opera, is too familiar to English readers for the Spanish form of his name to undergo anglicization; the names of rulers not central to the narrative have been given in the English version most frequently encountered, e.g. William the Silent; among the Hungarian 'national' rulers, Matthias Corvinus is too well-known by that name to be referred to as Mátyás Hunyadi.

Foreword

The solemn funeral at Vienna, Easter 1989, of the empress Zita brought the Habsburgs to public attention once again through the media coverage granted by the Republic of Austria. Zita of Bourbon-Parma was born in 1892 and in 1911 married the great-nephew of the old emperor Francis Joseph, the archduke Charles Francis Joseph, who was to become heir presumptive to the imperial crown of Austria and the royal crown of Hungary following the assassination at Sarajevo of the archduke Francis Ferdinand on 28 June 1914. The funerary honours paid to a sovereign who with her young husband had tried to end the vain and bloody slaughter of the First World War might well have seemed a little nostalgic. Yet six months later, there appeared in Hungary a current of opinion in favour of placing the archduke Otto von Habsburg, the son of the late sovereign, at the head of the Hungarian Republic as part of the process of re-establishing the tradition of Hungary as a *Rechtsstaat* while renouncing the epithet 'People's' imposed by the all-powerful Communist Party and the ever-watchful Soviet Big Brother.

These two events showed the world that the House of Habsburg was still alive and that, like the Bourbons of Spain before 1976, it was still interested in politics and in the nations over which it had once ruled. In these circumstances, it does not seem inappropriate to set out the role which the Habsburgs played during the six centuries from 1273 to 1918 when they exercised their sovereign responsibilities.

It would of course be absurd to pretend that this study of political history in the *longue durée* was realized in a few months. Rather, writing it has been a matter of giving substance to the author's long-standing interest in Central Europe and European history. The bibliography is vast, the quantity of documents in archives immeasurable. To aid the reader wishing to acquire deeper knowledge of the themes dealt with here, the author has supplied references to recent works and also to earlier ones available in the large public libraries but not to archival material, which does not have a place in a book such as this.

I wish to pay my respects to the memory of my master Victor-Lucien Tapié, too soon departed from the scene, who opened up the vista with his

magisterial book *Monarchie et peuples du Danube*.* I thank my colleagues and friends, Francis Rapp (Strassburg), Daniel Tollet (Paris) and Charles Kecskeméti (UNESCO), who willingly undertook a critical reading of the manuscript, and likewise record my gratitude to my collaborator in Strassburg, Simone Herry, who carried out the difficult task of completing the index.

* Translator's note: published in English as *The Rise and Fall of the Habsburg Monarchy*, in the translation by Stephen Hardman, Praeger Publishers, New York, London, 1971.

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Introduction

Originally from Alemannic Switzerland,* by the end of the thirteenth century the Habsburgs had extended their possessions in the Danube basin and would go on to affirm in the fifteenth century their European destiny, indeed, in the sixteenth century with Charles V, their pretensions to universal monarchy. It was inevitable, therefore, that after the death of Charles the Bold (1477) the Habsburgs would clash with French interests since they were the heirs of the Burgundian Valois. Apart from short-lived alliances, from 1477 to 1918 it is rare to find France and the Habsburgs on the same side. In France it is difficult to speak of the Habsburgs without passion and hostility.

The French kings accused the Habsburgs of wanting to surround France – this was Richelieu's particular obsession – and later, during the Third Republic, the French charged them with being party to pan-Germanism. At the same time 'liberal opinion' saw the Habsburgs as the defenders of Catholicism, of obscurantism and of reaction in the face of a Prussia with pretensions towards 'enlightenment' and 'progress'. This thesis was put forward repeatedly in government circles from Belle-Isle under Louis XV to Napoleon III. It was in the nineteenth century that mistrust and misunderstanding reached their peak when liberal historians supported the politicians in charging the Habsburgs with having created and maintained in Europe a form of state far removed from the ideals of the French Revolution.

The reason for these accusations was that the Habsburgs have always been indifferent to the idea of the nation-state, preferring instead the concept of a supranational monarchy where loyalty to the sovereign forms the fundamental bond between peoples and takes the place of patriotism.

This concept, which was carefully defended by the successors of Joseph II (1741–90), might seem the very opposite of enlightened but it had the advantage of not identifying the Habsburgs with any one privileged culture

* Translator's note: Alemannia was the territory between the Rhine, the Main and the Danube later forming part of the duchy of Swabia; Alemannic Switzerland is that part of Switzerland inhabited by German speakers.

or nation. Rather it allowed them to respect all the vernacular languages, cultures and the autonomy of the peoples who had voluntarily placed themselves under their tutelage. This attitude was a better guarantee of what is now termed 'the right to difference' of minorities, even though centralization as practised in Spain in the Golden Age could, in theory, have been possible;[1] however if the prestige of the dynasty meant that such centralization was feasible, the wisdom and structure of the government certainly did not permit it.

Whenever the Habsburgs took any steps along the path towards unification, difficulties arose as, for example, in the baroque age when Ferdinand II and Leopold I wanted to impose not a single language but a single confession with a view to adapting to Central Europe and the German world the model which a little earlier had succeeded in the Iberian peninsula. While the members of the orthodox Church in Hungary accepted the union of Brest-Litovsk,[2] the Protestants there took up arms, relying on the Turks and the French for support until they obtained confirmation of their privileges and succeeded in ruining the Habsburgs' plans for confessional unity.[3] Joseph II likewise encountered serious opposition when he decreed the Germanization of all his states.[4] Finally, the arrangement which resulted from the Compromise of 1867,[5] known as Austro-Hungary, was probably an error in so far as Francis Joseph preferred a two-tier centralization – very strict in Hungary, more flexible in Cisleithania – to a federal system more in keeping with tradition. Indeed, the Compromise appeared to favour two cultures, the German and the Hungarian, on the lines of Chancellor Beust's quip, 'You look after your hordes and we'll look after ours'.

This attitude kept the Habsburgs from creating 'an Austrian nation', despite the efforts of the archdukes Charles and John, the younger brothers of the emperor Francis I who, during the Napoleonic Wars, would have liked to mobilize public opinion. Rather the sovereign was content with an imperial hymn, the work of Joseph Haydn. The idea of an Austrian nation – still the subject of debate – became a reality only in the second half of the twentieth century.[6]

The Habsburgs' strength and their weakness was either to rule over nations already in existence – the Castilian, Hungarian, Polish and Bohemian nations[7] – or to govern states which were only fragments of much larger nations – Naples and Milan within the Italian nation, Styria, the Tyrol and Lower Austria within the German. The German nation, Robert Minder has recently shown,[8] was divided between strong particularist tendencies and universalist sentiment which harmonized well with the idea of the Holy Roman Empire and its universalist vocation, desirous of encompassing all the Christian West. A nation of great importance, the German nation was divided in the early Middle Ages into tribes (*Stämme*) – the Bavarians, the Swabians and the Saxons – who formed principalities, were endowed with one language but each used a dialect very different from that of its neighbour. The Habsburgs had to be content with the 'colonies' (Lower

Austria, Carinthia) and with frontier districts (Styria, the Tyrol) since they were never able to lay hold of the duchy of Swabia, which belonged to the Hohenstaufens. For this reason, from 1440 to 1866 the Habsburgs' real vocation was to gather together peoples and princes who retained their autonomy but who for a time would unite to confront an external danger, for example, the Turks and the French. Yet the Habsburgs still had to respect the delicate balance which found its expression in German public right issuing from the treaties of Westphalia and in the German confederation of 1815. Each time the Habsburgs like Charles V and Ferdinand II tried to unify the Germans through religion, they encountered opposition from their most loyal allies – Maurice of Saxony in the sixteenth century, Maximilian of Bavaria in the seventeenth – until finally they were excluded from Germany in 1866 by Wilhelm I of Prussia and his minister Bismarck.

The 'historic nations' existed before the House of Austria.[9] As early as the tenth century, the Poles, Czechs, Hungarians and Croats had succeeded in creating embryo states after the character of the Frankish monarchy, each forged around a national dynasty, the Piasts, the Přemyslids and the Árpáds. Once they converted to Catholicism – to the Latin form of Christianity – these princes were able to give themselves legitimacy in the face of the Empire and the Ottonians. The princes were supported by a service nobility. The peoples continued to use their language whereas the Church and the royal chancelleries converted to Latin. The vernaculars meanwhile were maintained in the oral tradition and reappeared at the end of the Middle Ages when national consciousness emerged among the ruling classes. Marxist theories which are content to bring up to date nineteenth-century ideas that national consciousness is a new phenomenon do not seem to give adequate account of the underlying realities of the past in Europe.[10] A nation's existence was not bound to the creation of a capitalist bourgeoisie. A language, culture, elites (clergy and nobility), and the presence of invasive neighbours (the Germans for example), were enough to develop national consciousness. The weakness of these countries was tied to the progressive enfeeblement of the power of the monarchy, the development of the power of the barons (the great feudal lords) but above all the absence of rigid rules of succession, such as the 'salic law' in France which permitted the easy transmission of the crown to a foreign dynasty, either through election or the marriage of the legitimate heiress. It was precisely through marrying such heiresses that the Habsburgs made their fortune and like twentieth-century multinational companies, they had the wit to take out options in different kingdoms and so were frequently in the position of reaping the fruits of their matrimonial 'investment policy'.

The result was a mosaic of states over which the sun, in the sixteenth century, never set since the Habsburg empire embraced not only their Central European patrimony but also the monarchies of Spain and Portugal and their colonial empires. This arrangement might appear implausible but, allowing for the problems presented by communications and local particularism, it was in fact quite workable. As Pierre Chaunu has repeatedly

observed, among institutions there is only one choice – between a system which does not function and one which functions badly. As long as the Habsburgs admitted the malfunctioning of their empire, they succeeded in their enterprises despite the condescending and pitying remarks of French diplomats. Yet as soon as they wanted, like Joseph II, to introduce rational principals and to imitate the French system – which responded to quite a different logic – everything quickly fell apart; in the case of Joseph II only the rapid departure of this too well-intentioned monarch made it possible to save the whole.

Another tradition of the House of Austria made its mission easier: the German tradition rejected the right of seniority when it came to granting the younger sons (cadets) responsibilities and duties. In the Middle Ages, the Habsburgs long hesitated between two concepts of the law of succession: the exclusion of the cadets and the division of the patrimony. In the end they found a middle way, creating apanages under the firm authority of the head of the family and in doing so they satisfied their subjects' taste for autonomy, eased decentralization and improved the efficiency of the administration, while maintaining the cohesion of the whole. When in the sixteenth century they extended their empire over part of the globe, they were able to overcome numerous administrative difficulties by using Habsburg archdukes and archduchesses for some of the tasks of government. The viceroys created the illusion that the legitimate sovereign, the 'natural lord', was present in the country, whether in the Netherlands, the Tyrol, Styria, Portugal or much later, in Hungary. Serious family disputes were rare, with the exception of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth.[11] That there were sufficient cadets made possible the many marriages with foreign princes (in the eighteenth century this was a fundamental aspect of Maria-Theresa's diplomacy) and the placing of archdukes on episcopal thrones in order to strengthen imperial influence in Germany. This was how it came about in the seventeenth century that many of the bishops of Strassburg were members of the House of Austria.

One of the major departures from traditional dynastic policy was in the nineteenth century, when most of the archdukes were held aloof from the business of government and were restricted to employment in the army in the second rank. This change was the result of the head of the family's mistrust of his cadets because of their divergent politics. The House of Austria had within it strongly contrasting personalities; there were liberals like the archduke Charles,[12] the archduke John,[13] and much later the archduke Maximilian, the future emperor of Mexico, not forgetting the archduke Rudolf, romantic hero of the tragedy at Mayerling,[14] but there were also reactionaries like the archduke Albert, son of the archduke Charles,[15] and Francis Ferdinand, the archduke and heir apparent who was assassinated at Sarajevo,[16] to say nothing of the feeble-minded who could not reasonably be trusted with political responsibilities, such as Francis Joseph's father, the archduke Francis Charles.

One of the secrets of the Habsburgs' success was that they knew how to

cooperate with the dominant forces in society – the Church, the nobles, then the great bourgeois businessmen – while progressively creating a class of new men – functionaries and career officers – and meanwhile accommodating themselves to universal suffrage and the social democrats prepared to maintain the monarchy on condition that it grant more autonomy to the various ethno-linguistic groups.

The collapse of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918 has for a long time seriously begged the question of whether a dispassionate history of the monarchy could be written to the point where Charles Kecskeméti could elaborate the notion that such a history is impossible,[17] that all that has been produced is a collection of chauvinistic histories aimed at settling old scores with neighbours. Such pessimism is perhaps a little extreme. For if it is true that since the Stalinist era, the national schools have, under cover of national history, strengthened the questionable tendencies of the debates initiated in the successor states, these tendencies nonetheless have evolved considerably since 1970 with on the one hand German historians now able to approach the history of Bohemia without resentment,[18] whereas on the other hand Czech historians, like Josef Macek,[19] have developed much greater serenity and take into account their country's diverse schools of history.[20] There has been much of worth also written by historians of the English-speaking world,[21] Americans of Central European origin like István Deak and the late Robert Kann,[22] as well as distinguished British colleagues like R. J. W. Evans,[23] P. G. M. Dickson,[24] and Derek Beales, who is in the process of revising the history of Joseph II. All these historians have in common a deep sympathy for the peoples of Central Europe and their problems and know their languages and archives while maintaining a certain detachment, a 'distance' with respect to the old quarrels and are quite without any of the spirit of 'local politics' which hangs over the current school of Austrian history.

The history of the Habsburgs presents another difficulty; it cannot be simply a collection of biographical notes like the dictionary which does a splendid job at providing such entries.[25] Nor can it be just a history of the family, or to be more precise, 'the House'. Despite the importance of marriages and inheritances in the Habsburgs' remarkable destiny, it would be foolish to write simply a social history since the relations of the dynasty with its subjects need to be taken fully into account. It is in precisely this area that research is growing and becoming more complex and so this present work is not concerned simply with Central Europe and what the French call Austria, but what here will be called, after the practice of Austrian historians, the 'Danubian monarchy'.

Since the House of Austria fostered universalist ambitions, this study will encompass more than simply the House's relations with the Germans of Austria, the Czechs, the Hungarians, the Poles, the South Slavs, the Romanians and Italians. Rather the field of inquiry in the Middle Ages will be extended in order to understand better the universal monarchy of Charles V and the ruling House's collection of possessions at the time

when it reigned both at Vienna and at Madrid, but without going so far as to write a summary of the history of Spain, something which a number of experts have already done splendidly and will continue so to do.[26]

Consequently this social history of a sovereign house doubles as a political history but with due reference to cultural and economic history. The goal is to approach an understanding of why the original construction functioned, contributed to the European equilibrium and eased the evolution of many small nations and why in 1918, without having lost esteem, it was condemned by the victors, who were unable to substitute a system which was either more just or more effective.

This work will be divided into four parts, corresponding to the four phases of the development of the House of Austria: a German monarchy in the Middle Ages; a universal monarchy in the early modern period; a great European power in the age of the Enlightenment; and after Sadowa, a regional power which until the end in 1918 preserved its multinational character.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Origins

Rudolf of Habsburg, at the time of his election as king of Germany in 1273, was head of a House which traced its origins back to the eleventh century and which had considerable possessions in Alemannic Switzerland and Upper Alsace. The heart of these domains was the present-day canton of Aargau, the fortress of Habichtsburg mentioned as early as 1020 and which yields by contraction the name Habsburg. The cradle of the House of Austria is situated in what was once the kingdom of Lotharingia, at the very heart of Europe and the crossroads of commerce and culture.

Shortly after the royal election of 1273, the Habsburgs ordered the deliberate embellishment of their origins since they were pained by their relative humble extraction and parvenu status. For the past century, however, medieval scholars have managed by their patient labours to separate truth from fiction.

MYTHICAL ORIGINS[1]

Since the Habsburgs could not link themselves to the leading German imperial dynasties, the Saliens or the Staufens, the legend gained ground at the beginning of the fourteenth century that they were descended from the Colonna, a Roman patrician family claiming links via the counts of Tuscany with the *gens Iulia* and so with Julius Caesar. As late as 1450, the Habsburgs still believed this legend, which strengthened their claim to the German throne at the time of their exclusion by the House of Luxemburg: it was a theory entirely compatible with the late medieval way of thinking.

In the fifteenth century, another theory appeared which made the Habsburgs the descendants of the Pierleoni, the counts of Aventine, and through them of the *gens Aniciana*. This new legend had the advantage of demonstrating the 'sanctity' of the Habsburgs since the Pierleoni counted among their members pope Gregory the Great (590–604) and St Benedict

(480–543), the founder of the Benedictine order. This theory was first propounded in 1476 by Heinrich von Gundelfingen and was connected to the revival of the political power of the papacy.

During the same period the legend of the House's Frankish origins also appeared. This connected the Habsburgs directly with the Merovingians, going back in a general way through their successors, the Carolingians.* These Frankish ancestors also enabled the Habsburgs to claim that they were descended from the Trojans. This theory was bound up with anti-Roman and anti-Italian prejudices and was not without ulterior political motives. It was championed by the emperor Maximilian I who used it to present himself as the legitimate heir to the Merovingian and Carolingian kingdoms of Gaul and Germany and also to justify his expansion into Western Europe and his claims to the Burgundian patrimony. Maximilian I encouraged numerous works on the subject – illuminated manuscripts, treatises on heraldry and illustrated genealogical tables. During the Renaissance, the theory found a huge response among the first German nationalists, but later went out of fashion as the conflict in Germany between France and the House of Habsburg gave way to Austro-Prussian rivalry.

A theory was then used which first had been developed in 1649 by the French scholar Jérôme Vignier; the Habsburgs were descended from the dukes of Alsace, from Eticho† and his successors, who in the early Middle Ages ruled over Alsace and Swabia. This 'House of Alsace', which dated back to the seventh century and a certain Archinoald, the Mayor of the Palace under Clovis II, was the cradle of the Habsburgs and the dukes of Lorraine. This theory conferred an obvious advantage in 1736 when the Habsburg archduchess Maria Theresa married the duke of Lorraine, Francis Stephen (Francis III) : the new Habsburg – Lorraine dynasty was nothing other than a restoration of the 'House of Alsace' founded by Eticho. Marquard Herrgott (1694–1762), the scholarly monk of Sankt Blasien, compiled a great genealogical history of the House at the request of the emperor Charles VI (16851740), the last male descendant of the House of Habsburg, in order to justify the marriage of his daughter and heir to Francis Stephen of Lorraine. This work, which drew on new methods of textual criticism, was based chiefly on the *Acta Murensia*, the annals of the abbey of Muri in Aargau which date from the twelfth century.[2]

While the theory of the House's Alemmanic origins would later find favour under the climate of social and intellectual conservatism prevailing in the first half of the nineteenth century, the other theories were felled during the age of the Enlightenment, demolished by the critical philosophy which took hold during the reign of Joseph II (1780–90). The pious legend

* Translator's note: the Merovingians, who derived their name from their supposed founder in the fifth century, Merovaeus, were the first dynasty of Frankish kings and rose to prominence under Clovis I (481–511). They were finally supplanted by the Mayor of the Palace, Pepin the Short (751), the father of Charlemagne and first of the Carolingian or (Carlovingian) dynasty.

† Translator's note: Eticho, otherwise known as Adalricus, died *c.*683.

of the Habsburgs' ancestral saint, Morand, and of the saints of the Pierleoni family celebrated during the baroque period collapsed before the advance of rational criticism; duke Eticho alone withstood scrutiny and was evoked in the imperial Schloss Luxemburg outside Vienna which was rebuilt by the emperor Francis I in the style of a medieval German castle: Eticho with the emperor Rudolf head the procession of great ancestors.

During the same period, prince Lichnowsky, the court historiographer, put an end to all these fables with the publication of his great work on the Habsburg family, *Die Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg* (1836). He dismissed the medieval historians' mania for hunting out, regardless of reality, ancestors among the *gens Iulia*, *gens Aniciana* and the Scipios, while some scholars without a qualm even went back as far as Hector. A scrupulous historian, he overlooked the fact that this had been the fashion among humanist scholars; in the sixteenth century, the House of France had itself sought out Trojan ancestors. He concluded that

> For the conscientious historian, one fact should suffice: if since the tenth or eleventh century a family has been classed among the most powerful and most esteemed lines, then it should be counted among the higher nobles and there should be no question but that its ancestors belonged to the earliest Carolingians and that it should be held equal to the descendants of the Mayors of the Palace and their family. All the rest is superfluous, a man belongs to the higher nobility and that is enough.[3]

The Habsburgs' official circle once more went beyond historical evidence to trace the dynasty's origins back to the Carolingian age and the roots of German history.

It took the catastrophe at Sadowa and the unification of Germany to the benefit of Prussia and the Hohenzollerns to make Habsburg historiography keep to a reasonable version of the facts. In 1889 Franz von Krones in his *Grundriss der österreichischen Geschichtsforschung* presented a definitive condemnation of all the fine fables, even if no one managed entirely to disprove the Carolingian origins of the House.[4]

In the twentieth century, the Austrian historian Alphons Lhotsky, the director of the Viennese equivalent of the French Ecole des chartes,* had rejected the whole mishmash of legends, but like his colleague Anna Coreth admitted nonetheless that they had served the Habsburgs' political ends well and had nourished their skilful propaganda in the age of retreat.[5]

* Translator's note: the School of Archivists in Paris.

THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS[6]

Historical scholarship has not succeeded in making the Habsburgs' origins completely clear. They may have been descended from Gontran the Rich, the duke of Lower Alsace, who for being a traitor was deprived of his estates in 952 by Otto the Great. An amnesty might explain why part of the confiscated domains was returned to the Habsburg patrimony. The Habichtsburg domain was an allodial land* within the kingdom of Burgundy which was outside the direct authority of the emperor Otto. The advantage of this hypothesis is that it bolsters the Habsburgs' claims to membership of the family descended from Eticho but it also has the unfortunate result of making their ancestor a traitor and so rather detracts from the illustrious House's distinguished image.

It was, however, in Aargau that Gontran the Rich's son Lancelin (the diminutive of Landolt) was based; possibly he had acquired the Habichtsburg domain through marriage. What is certain is that one of Lancelin's sons, Radbot, married Ita, the daughter of the duke of Lorraine, while another son, Rudolf, married a certain Kunigunde from the family of (Hohen) Zollern and the eldest contracted a marriage with one of the daughters of count Berchtold of Villingen.

The most notable figure of this generation was Werner, bishop of Strassburg, thought by some to have been yet another of Lancelin's sons, and so a Habsburg, but by others to have been the son of the duke of Lorraine and Ita's brother. Certainly, if the latter theory is correct, Werner would have been in a position to obtain an amnesty for the grandsons of the errant Gontran the Rich. Bishop Werner was a childhood friend of the emperor Henry II and took an active part in his election. He supported the policy of expanding the empire towards Burgundy as his interests coincided with those of the Habsburgs and the emperor Henry II.

The Habichtsburg fortress was built at precisely this time (1020), its construction giving rise to the first legend concerning the House of Habsburg. The somewhat bellicose bishop Werner advised his relative Radbot, the feudal lord, to fortify his residence because it was not surrounded by any kind of rampart and Radbot promised to achieve this in one night. The following morning, the fortress was surrounded by his people, knights in armour positioned at regular intervals taking the place of towers. Bishop Werner deigned to show his approval and advised his relative to make the most of this living wall since no other was more trustworthy.

The same legend, scholars have pointed out, was told in connection with the emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–90) and also the landgrave of

* Translator's note: the term allodial, derived from the Old French alôd meaning complete possession, refers to land which, unlike a fief, is the absolute property of its owners, free from feudal dues and taxes.

Thuringia. It was used by the Habsburgs at a time when they were subject to severe criticism in Swabia and throughout the whole Empire. In its original form handed down by Matthias von Neuenburg, the legend concerned neither bishop Werner nor count Radbot but told of two brothers from Rome who had crossed the Alps. The point of the legend remains the same: a prince's best protection lies in the affection and loyalty of his subjects. The Habsburgs, right to the very end, put this maxim into practice and enjoyed a genuine popularity, at least among their German subjects.

The family's power is evident from the advantageous marriage alliances made by the grandsons of Gontran the Rich and is confirmed by the number of religious foundations which its members established in the region during the first half of the eleventh century. While Habichtsburg was being built, Radbot, encouraged by his wife Ita and perhaps also by Werner, the bishop of Strassburg, founded the Benedictine abbey at Muri in Aargau which became the family monastery and guarded the House's *memoria* from its earliest days. Werner, thought to be the founders' son, became abbot of Muri and put it in the van of Cluny reformism.

Rudolf, Radbot's brother, founded the abbey of Ottmarshein in Upper Alsace, between the Rhine and the eastern fringe of the Hardt forest. The church at Ottmarsheim is reminiscent of Charlemagne's palatine chapel at Aix-la-Chapelle. Was this not a manifestation of the already immense ambitions of a rich and powerful family?

For two centuries the Habsburgs did not cease bolstering their position in the region: Alsace, Breisgau, Alemannic Switzerland. Around 1180 they founded the convent at Hermetswyl not far from the abbey at Muri, two foundations which both survived into the nineteenth century.

In 1090 Otto, a grandson of Radbot, was the first to take the title count of Habsburg. As a vassal of the emperor Henry V, he took part in the campaign against the king of Hungary, Kálmán (St Coloman), and is mentioned as 'count Otto of Havichsburg' in an imperial document, which bears a date, from Pressburg (Poszony, now Bratislava). This seems to be the first appearance of the family in that part of Europe.

Alsace continued to be the base of the Habsburgs' power. They secured for themselves the *avouerie** of the abbey of Murbach, which possessed extensive domains in Upper Alsace as well as the landgraviate of Upper Alsace which confirmed their political power over the region.

In the course of the twelfth century their destiny became linked to that of the Hohenstaufens and they appeared increasingly often at the imperial court and took part in military expeditions. The Habsburgs were able to amass untold inheritances with the support of the imperial authorities, because the active policy pursued by the Hohenstaufens entailed the rapid extinction of many lines, including some to which the Habsburgs were

* Translator's note: the term *avouerie* refers to the recognition by the holder of a fief of the feudal lord (seigneur) from whom he holds his land.

heir. They thus found themselves on the way to establishing with the Hohenstaufens' permission what amounted to a principality. The wealth of the 'poor counts' was apparent in 1212 when Rudolf the Old paid the duke of Lorraine 1 000 marks for the account of the young Frederick von Hohenstaufen (Frederick II, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire 1220–1250) whereas of the sum total of 3 200, the archbishop of Mainz, the bishop of Worms and four other lords gave only 700 marks.

Rudolf the Old, the grandfather of the future king of the Romans, Rudolf the Founder, in 1198 took the side of the Ghibellines, abandoning for good the Guelph cause.[7] This change of allegiance finally settled the Habsburgs' destiny. When Frederick left Sicily, Rudolf the Old was among the feudal lords from Germany who supported him without hesitation and Frederick II became godfather to the young Rudolf, who was born on 1 May 1218.

The death of Rudolf the Old inevitably retarded the rise of the House as he followed the custom of the German princes and divided his patrimony between his two sons, Albert IV and Rudolf III. It was the latter who founded the cadet branch of Laufenburg which later rejoined the Guelph party, while Albert IV remained loyal to the Hohenstaufens but died in 1249 after leaving for the crusades and left his son Rudolf the Founder, to become reconciled with the House's cadet branch, or 'branch of counts'. Not until the seventeenth century did the House abandon its opposition to the principle of primogeniture, which was contrary to the old Germanic law, and in the meanwhile proceeded repeatedly to divide its patrimony among its male heirs.

KING RUDOLF I, THE FOUNDER (1218–91)[8]

Rudolf IV, count of Habsburg, who acceded to that title in 1249 upon the death of his father Albert IV, is better known in general history as Rudolf I of Germany and king of the Romans. He is in fact the first of his House about whom very much is known, as much from chronicles as from iconography. One contemporary chronicle describes him thus:

> Tall, he had long legs; of a delicate constitution, he had a pale complexion, a long nose, short hair, long and slender hands; he was a man moderate in his appetites and with respect to food, drink and other matters he was intelligent and wise.

This account agrees with that of another chronicler, who wrote that Rudolf was 'from his youth of great valour, intelligent, strong and favoured by fate; of tall stature, he had a pointed nose, a grave and dignified expression appropriate to his great strength of character'.[9]

The stone effigy on his tomb in the cathedral at Spire where the medieval German kings and emperors are buried agrees fairly with these written descriptions. It breathes energy and integrity, with perhaps a certain severity of expression which is not at all incompatible with a measure of humour – if the stories about him passed down by tradition are to be believed. When the royal remains were exhumed in 1900, those of Rudolf the Founder corresponded to the traditional image: a man of great height, elegant and well proportioned.

The descriptions of his character are similarly attractive for they were idealized after his death: Rudolf was, it would appear, generous, simple, good, pious and modest, in short he embodied all the virtues of the *miles christianus*, of the Christian knight, which concealed his ruthlessness and ambition. The alliance which he concluded with the great cities (in particular Strassburg and Zurich) helped to forge the image of a popular and pious sovereign. This was how he would appear in the Viennese tradition of the nineteenth century; 'half emperor Francis, half saint Florian' is how he was summed up by the creator of the role of Rudolf in Franz Grillparzer's play *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*.[10] He became in due course the model of piety which his descendants aspired to imitate and which Schiller celebrated in his ballad *Der Graf von Habsburg*.

His positive traits – his humanity and piety – have been greatly exaggerated by Habsburg propaganda. Comparison with the emperors of the early Middle Ages and with his son Albert could not but be to Rudolf's favour. A generation after his death a series of anecdotes celebrated his affable character and reflected the burghers' gratitude to the man who had put an end to the 'terrible time without an emperor'. The frugal, rather down-to-earth Swabians appreciated his practical side, illustrated by the story of how Rudolf advised the burghers of Strassburg to sell their fish in Cologne and to buy wine in exchange since fish was scarce in Cologne and wine at that time was short in Strassburg. The Rhineland patricians trusted a prince wise enough to forgo vainglorious campaigns into Italy as being costly and vain. The Habsburgs' enemies, however, were able to develop the image which hardly flattered the feudal aristocracy of 'a king of shopkeepers'. Even Dante (1265–1321), the champion of the Guelphs in Italy and the defender of the imperial cause south of the Alps, reproached Rudolf and his son Albert for having neglected their obligations and, contrary to tradition, for having let their greed keep them north of the Alps: they had neglected 'the garden of the Empire' in order to round off their own patrimony and to establish their own territorial power.

Rudolf I is considered first and foremost as the founder of *pietas austriaca*, that genuine piety which characterized the House right until the end of the Austrian monarchy.[11] Over the centuries, two legends have contributed to the image of a particularly pious prince. The first is an expression of his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and is the basis of the Habsburgs' *pietas austriaca*. It was first recounted in the fourteenth century by a Swiss chronicler, the Franciscan Johann von Winterthur. One day

Rudolf met a priest carrying the *viaticum* to a dying man and he offered him his horse to help him cross the ford of a river which was in full spate. Afterwards he presented his mount to the priest since he no longer dared to ride, let alone hunt with or go to war on, a charger which had had the great honour of carrying the Lord. The legend was later embroidered so that the priest became the future archbishop elector of Mainz. In time the story changed so that Rudolf had dismounted as a matter of course when he recognized a priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament. During the Counter-Reformation, the Habsburg rulers showed special devotion to the Eucharist, the visible sign of the Real Presence: it was not unusual to see the emperor on foot and bare-headed following a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, to see a humble vicar carrying the *viaticum* to the sick. In the nineteenth century, the emperor Francis Joseph maintained the tradition: in 1854 in the Prater he left his carriage and renewed this ancestral gesture. It is probable that Rudolf's surrender of his charger originally signified a renunciation of war and a desire to reign as a just and peaceful sovereign. Much later it came to show an adherence to the Tridentine doctrine of the Real Presence, solemnly reaffirmed in opposition to Protestant theories of Holy Communion.

The second legend tells how Rudolf, after his election as king of the Romans, was to invest the peers of the kingdom of Germany but at that moment, the royal sceptre could not be found. Looking up, he noticed the crucifix on the wall, grabbed and kissed it, declaring 'Here is the sign of our redemption – let it now be our sceptre!'; Rudolf's first act of government thus took place beneath the sign of the cross. He was also associated with a miraculous vision: during the coronation, he saw a cloud in the form of a cross over the cathedral at Aix-la-Chapelle where the ceremony was being held. His contemporaries connected these signs with a desire on the part of the new sovereign to set out on a crusade or, at the very least, to leave for Rome to be crowned emperor and to re-establish his monarchical authority in Italy. The conclusion that was later drawn was that the Habsburgs' rule was placed under the sign of the victorious cross and that the dynasty was the legitimate heir of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor.

Rudolf's contemporaries were convinced that his election, which had put an end to an interregnum lasting a quarter of a century, was a providential sign: until late, simply a feudal warrior from southern Germany, unknown outside Swabia, Rudolf had shown that he intended to live as a Christian prince desirous of establishing within the Empire the rule of peace, order and justice for which his subjects longed after a long period of civil war.

He had already had the chance to learn the trade of a king and to prove himself a shrewd politician. At thirty-two he had succeeded his father as count of Habsburg and was fifty-five in 1273 when he was elected king of the Romans. During his middle age he had strengthened the regional power bases of his House. Loyal to his family's alliances, he did not

abandon the Hohenstaufens and accompanied Frederick II's grandson as far as Verona but was not at the young Conradin's side at the battle of Tagliacozzo which sealed the unfortunate prince's fate. As landgrave of Upper Alsace and master of the western part of Alemannic Switzerland, he alone could guarantee the security of the route leading from Strassburg to Italy through the letters of safe conduct which he issued to protect merchants in times of trouble.

The conflict with his uncle Rudolf of Habsburg-Laufenburg stirred up local wars but Rudolf was sufficiently canny to emerge victorious and to consolidate his possessions in the region. Most importantly he was able to recover part of the inheritance belonging to his mother's family, the powerful counts of Kyburg, despite the opposition of count Peter of Savoy.

He did not hesitate to do battle with the powerful bishops of Basle and Strassburg, Heinrich von Neuenburg and Walter von Geroldseck, in order to appropriate part of the Hohenstaufen patrimony which had been lost after the tragic death of Conradin.[12]

A prudent administrator, he was able to increase resources, introducing new taxes and administering them thoroughly. He was inspired by the model set by the Normans in Sicily and which had been perfected by Frederick II. The sums raised enabled him to purchase fiefs from his neighbours who had been ruined by poor management of their land.

The slow process of unifying the domains of the Upper Rhine remained unfinished, interrupted by the election of 1273. The domains of Upper Alsace, Breisgau and Alemannic Switzerland were not held by one tenant. Rudolf was unable to lay his hands on Colmar, Mulhouse and Kaiserberg, which remained free towns. Moreover, he was obliged to promise the electors, the Rhine princes, that he would restore to them the Hohenstaufen domains which he had appropriated. These feudal estates later presented an insurmountable obstacle to the Habsburgs' expansion in southern Germany.

Why did so great a feudal lord suddenly abandon the wise policy of adding to his patrimony?

THE LONG INTERREGNUM (1250–73)

Frederick II's death in 1250 provoked a major crisis within the Empire and the kingdom of Germany and marked the momentary victory of the papacy in the secular quarrel between the Church and the Empire.

According to the theory which had prevailed since the time of Otto the Great, the king of Germany as successor of the Roman emperor did not accede to his office until he had been solemnly crowned at Rome by the

sovereign pontiff, the pope. This required the king of Germany to travel to Italy (*der Römerzug*) and to cooperate with the pope, who was supposed to hold spiritual power within the Empire while surrendering temporal power, i.e. the investiture of bishoprics and large abbeys, to the emperor. The two spheres were poorly defined, however and since Innocent III (1198–1216), the popes had claimed that the emperors were subordinate to them. The Hohenstaufens meanwhile were extending their influence into the Italian peninsula. At the end of the twelfth century, the Empire extended as far west as the Rhône and the Escaut and to the south embraced the Alps of northern Italy. The emperor Henry VI (1190–6) by his marriage to Constance, the heiress of the Norman kings of Sicily, became master of southern Italy and encircled the patrimony of St Peter menacingly. Henry VI wanted to recover the imperial crown for his own House but he died at the age of thirty-two before he could realize his plan, leaving behind him a three-year-old child, the future Frederick II.

Following Henry's premature death, the initiative rested with the Holy See. Otto of Brunswick, the son of Henry the Lion, disputed the imperial throne with Philip of Swabia, the uncle of Frederick II. The latter was elected king of Germany in 1212 with the support of Innocent III, who could no longer tolerate Otto of Brunswick, who had become too independent. The new king was crowned emperor at Rome in 1220. More concerned with pursuing his policy in the Mediterranean than with German affairs, Frederick II at first bestowed great privileges upon the ecclesiastical, and then the secular, princes (1228). These measures had serious long-term consequences for the constitution of the Empire.

Frederick II was not slow to enter into conflict with the Holy See; Gregory IX (1227–41) excommunicated him for being so slow to carry out his promise of departing for the crusades. Nevertheless he liberated Jerusalem by negotiation and without striking a blow (1229), and married Yolande, the heiress of the kingdom of Jerusalem, who gave birth to Conrad, the last of the Hohenstaufens.

Frederick II, while he had better relations with the patricians of the large towns in Germany, like his grandfather Frederick Barbarossa, clashed with the Italian towns and the League of Lombardy, which was allied with the Holy See and was the principal force of the Guelph party south of the Alps. Gregory IX excommunicated him for a second time in 1239. At the Council of Lyons in 1245, the pope, appealing to the theocratic conception of public right, took the initiative and deposed Frederick II. Despite serious reversals of fortune, Frederick II died undefeated on 13 December 1250 at Castello Fiorentino in Apulia and was buried at Palerma by the side of his parents.

His son Conrad IV (1250–54) continued the hopeless conflict; he had married Elizabeth of Bavaria, who gave birth to Conradin in 1254, while Manfred, Frederick II's illegitimate son, continued the conflict in Italy and Germany suffered a period of anarchy. After Frederick II had been deposed and excommunicated, the Guelph party put forward a succession of

anti-kings, Wilhelm of Holland (king of the Romans 1246–57), Alfonso X of Castile (king of the Romans 1257–72) and Richard of Cornwall (king of the Romans 1257–72), but not one of the three enjoyed any real authority over the German princes.* Italy was the centre of activity.

Pope Urban IV (1261–64) appealed to Charles of Anjou, the brother of St Louis, and invested him with the kingdom of Sicily. Charles fought Manfred relentlessly, eventually defeating and killing him at the Battle of Benevento (1266).

The last hope of the Ghibelline party and the Hohenstaufens rested with the young Conradin, who entered Rome in triumph in 1268. Defeated at Tagliacozzo, he was betrayed to his enemy Charles of Anjou and was executed at Naples.

The German towns and princes were tired of anarchy; once again a suitable candidate had to be found for the throne of Germany after the death of Richard of Cornwall. The king of Bohemia, Otakar II Přemysl,[13] was judged too powerful by the other German princes and at this point Rudolf, the count of Habsburg, began negotiations with the assistance of the burgrave of Nürnberg, Frederick of Hohenzollern. His advanced age by the standards of the time conferred on him authority and his ties with the Hohenstaufens assured a measure of continuity, but most importantly he was neither too rich nor too powerful. Rudolf had the qualities of 'a new man' who would not upset the wealthy princes, jealous of their authority.

Rudolf negotiated expertly. He secured the support of the electors of Saxony, Brandenburg and the Palatinate, giving them his daughters in marriage and pursuaded the others to recognize the acquisitions which he had made, more or less legitimately, during the interregnum. What also proved decisive was that pope Gregory X (1271–76) was determined to re-establish order north of the Alps and Rudolf promised him that he would organize a crusade once he was crowned emperor at Rome.

Rudolf, 'the candidate of the union', was obliged, however, to undertake an altogether different policy since he realized that his power was threatened by the ambitions of the king of Bohemia, Otakar II Přemysl. He forwent the traditional journey to Italy which had marked the death knell for the authority of most of his predecessors. He was never emperor and was satisfied with the royal crown, which was quite an advance for a count of Habsburg. But most importantly he directed his efforts to the east of Germany, abandoning all vain fantasies of taking Italy. This was a decisive choice because in practice he put an end to the universalist aspects of the imperial power and made the Empire essentially a German monarchy. He moved the Habsburg patrimony's gravitational centre towards Danubian

* Translator's note: in the double election of 1257, three of the seven electors chose Richard of Cornwall (1225–72), the younger brother of the King of England Henry III, while the rest elected Alfonso X of Castile (1221–84), the candidate put forward by the Ghibelline anti-papal republic of Pisa. Alfonso continued to press his claim to the imperial title after the election of Rudolf of Habsburg, only finally renouncing it in 1275.

Europe: curtailed in Swabia by the pledges that he was obliged to swear at the time of his election, he pursued his family policy in the eastern marches of Germany, thus sealing the destiny of his House. As for the dreams of Italy, these were not resurrected until the Renaissance and, most remarkably, the eighteenth century.

From 1273 onwards the Habsburgs, with their bent towards financial gain and their taste for conquest, were to come into contact with a world very different from that in which they had originated and the Rhineland lords were to become Danubian princes. The royal election of 1273 set the seal on the Habsburgs' European destiny.

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10. Grillparzer, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, a tragedy in five acts, first performed at the Burgtheater, Vienna, 1825.
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12. Taken prisoner at Tagliacozzo, Conradin was executed on the orders of Charles of Anjou, brother of St Louis, in Naples in 1268. This was the end of the House of Hohenstaufen and the German domination of southern Italy.
13. Jörg K. Hoensch, 'Böhmen als přemysliden Königreich', in *Geschichte Böhmens: von der slavischen Landnahme bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich, 1987, pp. 87–96.

CHAPTER TWO

The Early History of Austria and its Neighbouring Lands

Some account should be given of the lands which the Habsburgs gradually placed under their control. The hub of these lands is the Vienna basin from which radiate the eastern Alps and the Hercynian massifs of Bohemia, then the Danube – the major route of communication in this part of Europe – which has inevitably established a direct link with the Carpathian basin, the most vital part of which is the great Hungarian plain, the Alföld, sometimes Austria's bulwark, sometimes its partner and sometimes set in total opposition.

A transit zone subject to invasion, after the Roman era the region was never really dominated by one ethno-linguistic group: herein lay its weakness when confronted by the ambitions of the Germans and later, though to a lesser degree, by Russian imperialism. The various ethno-linguistic nuclei, however, completely resisted assimilation despite some fleeting attempts at Germanization. It was the Habsburgs' good fortune that it was the most Germanized part of the Danube region – the Vienna basin and the eastern Alps – that they first acquired.

Although this region has always been open to invasion because of the great axes of penetration, the theory so readily put forward of 'backwardness' with respect to Western Europe is not supported by any natural determinism; the natural potential of the region is just as good as that of Western Europe.

DANUBIAN EUROPE: AN OPEN COUNTRY

The region's relief is made up of four major mountain ranges: the Bohemian massif and three alpine chains; the eastern Alps continuing into the Carpathians, and the Dinaric Alps. Alpine pasture is rare, the greater part of the uplands and slopes being covered by forest. The northwest Carpathians are characterized by longitudinal folds so that Slovakia does

not present a barrier but rather serves as a refuge and transit zone. The Carpathians to the south surround the great depression of Transylvania formed by hills 400–500 metres high; the mountain range consists of the crescent formed by the principal chain with the massif of Bihor joining the horns of the crescent. As in Slovakia, agriculture rests within a framework of great forests interrupted by farm clearings and pastures where hamlets have been established. As in the Alps there is a series of craters which causes the Pannonian and Transylvanian basins to be extended and reduces the chain in the sub-Carpathian Ukraine to a thin line no more than 500 metres high. This narrow ridge, called the Mukačevo, has great historic and strategic significance. Volcanic massifs appear in the craters, extend from the metal-bearing Slovak mountains to Transylvania and generally have fertile soil particularly suited to viticulture.

The Dinaric range by contrast is a collection of long stony or wooded plateaux fringed by escarpments which are difficult to traverse; furrowed by folds, in some places crossed by gorges, it ends at the Adriatic in a great wall of limestone. In 1918 a single-track railway crossed the Dinaric range to serve a coastline as long as the Atlantic coast of France. Tall massifs are rare and the inhabitants live concentrated in the depressions or *poljés* and in the great tertiary basin of Sarajevo. To the west the Dinaric range meets the Carinthian Alps around Ljubljana in Slovenia. This configuration has serious results: relations with Mediterranean Europe are difficult, although the inhabitants have always sought to increase cultural contacts with the Graeco-Roman world and its successors; the values of the Latin world have often had to take a circuitous route and since the eastern Alps present a much easier obstacle to cross, have travelled via the Germans before arriving late and much altered.

The Austrian Alps have many longitudinal valleys and cover a surface area of 50 000 sq km (64.4 per cent of the territory of Austria). As the limestone pre-Alps form in effect a pole of repulsion (clear from the toponomy – the Dead Mountain, the Sea of Stones), the two outer ends are better favoured. The Vorarlberg resembles the pastures of the foothills of the Swiss Alps; to the east the Austrian Alps are heavily wooded and since the end of the neolithic period have been an active mining centre. The iron mine of Erzberg in Styria has been worked as an open-cast mine since the third century BC. The Austrian Alps are joined to the Vienna Forest which dominates the Austrian capital. The igneous High-Alps are less wooded but have vast pastures which are the setting for intense pastoral activity. The mass of the population is concentrated in the valleys and basins; the great valley of the Inn, the great Drava basin at Klagenfurt in Carinthia, the small basins of the Mur valley. Innsbruck, a large city with 140 000 inhabitants, is at the west and north–south crossroads of the Austrian Alps (the mouth of the Brenner).

The Danube valley is flanked to the north by a complex collection of ancient landforms – the Bohemian massif. The Austrian part of this complex is the Waldviertel, an area of igneous rock, mostly wooded with

scattered clearings of reclaimed land. As it extends into Czechoslovakia, the Waldviertel becomes the Bohemian Forest, one of the four mountainous massifs which make up the quadrilateral of Bohemia and enclose the great central depression. These four massifs are similar to the German mountain range with wooded summits and the population concentrated in hamlets. The relief is broken by rift valleys and by great depressions filled with lava or loess (the region of Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) in the metal-bearing mountains; Krusné Hory). The mountain range is industrialized with silver mines and uranium at Jáchymov (Joachimsthal) while the inner depressions are the cradle of the Czech textile industry (Librec).

The low regions are the Vienna, Pannonian, Transylvanian and central Bohemian basins and the Moravian depression which links the valley of the Danube through its tributary the Morava to the valley of the Odra and the Great Polish Plain. The basins of Olomouc and Brno are dominated by a succession of basins and mountain chains. These low regions offered better opportunities for development and were the site of the densest concentrations of settlements. The Vienna basin to the east of the capital is a semicircular crater and is simply the extension of the Pannonian basin, with neither the hills of Burgenland nor the Austro-Hungarian political border breaking its unity. To the east of the Danube stretches the great Hungarian plain (Alföld) at an altitude of 120 metres, featureless and covered with great sheets of loess, the source of its fertility. East of the Tisza there are more dunes and the natural vegetation is that of steppe. Transdanubia by contrast offers a great variety of landscapes; hills covered by loess, a little massif (the Mecsek) while the limestone Bakony dominates lake Balaton: a real inland sea within Hungary and a holiday resort, the waters of lake Balaton generate a micro-climate despite their shallowness. The landscape of Transdanubia reoccurs in Slovenia at the foot of the Dinaric range. There once again the political frontier is unrelated to geography or population. The presence of loess gives the region great natural fertility. Only the great river banks of the Tisza and Danube which are badly drained and prone to flooding – sometimes quite catastrophic – have not attracted settlement.

The Bohemian basin is also a complex structure. The ancient underlying plate for the most part has come to the surface, yielding wooded crests and the coal-bearing basin of Kladno, a priceless factor in Bohemia's industrialization. The area to the north-east is covered by marl and loess, producing a countryside of compact and fertile fields where wheat, beet and hops are grown. The ancient underlying plate to the south-west is generally covered by loess and is similarly fertile. With the exception of some peaks, the balance of agriculture in the whole basin is clearly positive. Bohemia and Hungary as well as part of Lower Austria have always been considered a prosperous agricultural region with a continental climate and various slight differences which taken as a whole are favourable to agriculture; cereal crops can be combined with stock-rearing, industrial cultivation and, on favoured ground, viticulture. Although Danubian Europe has

often suffered from wars and plagues, it has dreaded famine far less, at least within the framework of the old economy which, without too much difficulty, provided people with bread, wine and meat. The climate and adequate fertile soils act as a unifying element although there are regional differences according to latitude. The average temperature in January is below zero (1.6°C in Prague) but the summers are hot, the average temperature for July wavering between 21°C and 24°C in the Pannonian plain; it has been possible to attempt cotton-growing in southern Hungary but by contrast the summers in Bohemia are much fresher. Everywhere vine-growing has been successful on well-exposed slopes with favourable soils (the volcanic soils on the northern bank of lake Balaton and the Tokay region). Rain is heavy everywhere in summer but diminishes progressively towards the east. Danubian Europe enjoys a temperate climate; the differences are not extreme but rather more pronounced than on the Atlantic coast.

Fertile plains, a favourable climate, mountains rich in fuel (the wood from forests) and in minerals (sufficient coal for the first industrial revolution) and easy communications (except with Mediterranean Europe): Danubian Europe has always been open not only to invasion but also to multiple cultural influences. The Mukačevo threshold did not always withstand the waves of horsemen from the steppe, attracted by the fertile open spaces of Pannonia; once over the rocky bar at Belgrade the plain has been prey to invaders from the Balkans for whom the final barrier has been the incomplete rampart of the Carpathians. This is why Moravia and Silesia in the very heart of Europe many times broke the flood of Tartar horsemen. If Central Europe has been the route of invaders it has also been the route of fruitful exchanges because of the Danube, which diminished in importance as the region's main artery only after the railway network was established. The two major capitals, Vienna and Budapest, have developed on advantageous sites: Vienna for contact with the plain and the rampart of the Alps, Budapest for contact with the valleys of Transdanubia and the Alföld at a point where the Danube is easily crossed. Since the last century, these two capitals have been the point of departure for a star-shaped railway network, with the premier line of the Austrian network using the Moravian corridor to link Vienna with Berlin via Prussian Silesia. As for the Alps and the ancient massifs of Bohemia, their longitudinal valleys mean that they have never presented an obstacle to the passage of people and goods and with Transylvania have served as a refuge for the Hungarian nation during its greatest misfortunes.

It is human migration which remains the leitmotiv of the region's history, the constant ebb and flow which hardly covered the groups which had settled previously, at least after the collapse of the Roman Empire and the disappearance of the Romanized populations. The invasion of the Huns almost completely eliminated pre-existing cultures. Only the eastern Alps, the Dinaric range and perhaps the Transylvanian Alps have preserved a part of their most ancient heritage: the Celts in Noricum, the Illyrians in

Dalmatia and on the edges of Pannonia, the Dacians in Transylvania. The early attempts at Christianization were swept away by the flood of barbarians and Danubian Europe remained a missionary region to the first millennium. For this reason it is necessary to skip the history of the Celts and Romans and to describe briefly the civilization existing before the great changes brought about by the barbarian invasions.

PATTERNS OF SETTLEMENT BEFORE THE GREAT INVASIONS[1]

Excavations have revealed that the region was occupied before paleolithic times (the cave of Mixnitz in Styria). Finds in Upper Austria show that in neolithic times (3 500 BC) lake towns had been built around the Mondsee. These civilizations were not at the same high level of development as contemporary civilizations in Egypt and the Near East but their communities were already sedentary and were making pottery with a linear decoration.* They knew how to cultivate the land, raise cattle, sheep, pigs and goats, to spin and to weave. They were integrated within the trade route for amber which was collected on the shores of the Baltic and sold throughout Europe.

In the course of the second millennium BC, the Bronze Age, humans abandoned polished stone in favour of bronze weapons and jewellery; finds from this period have been made in Bohemia, Transdanubia and on the fringes of the Vienna Forest and there is an increase in the number of tombs. Towards 1100 BC people stopped burying their dead and instead burnt them, keeping their ashes in urns which were collected together in vast open spaces (the Urnfield culture). Three centuries later, around 800 BC, iron weapons and tools appeared. The golden age of the Hallstatt culture of Upper Austria lasted from 800 to 400 BC and was based on the salt trade which expanded to a scale hitherto unknown. Excavations at Hallstatt, near Bad Ischl, have disclosed more than 2 000 tombs. These seem to have belonged to a Veneto-Illyrian people who came to dominate the whole of Central Europe and northern Italy, leaving their mark in certain place names (Carnuntum, Karawanken, Noricum). Their level of culture seems to have been superior to their political organization since *c.*400 BC these 'Illyrian' peoples became subject to the Celts, who came from Western Europe, followed the route along the Danube and settled first in a block in Bohemia to which they gave their name (Boii). A second wave travelled up the Po valley

* Translator's note: the *Linearbandkeramik* (LBK) is the linear pottery which gives its name to the Danubian culture of the period.

and overran the Austrian Alps while the Illyrian peoples took refuge in the Vorarlberg and the northern Tyrol.

The invasion seems to have had a profound effect upon the anthropological character of the inhabitants of these regions (Bohemia and Austria). What is certain is that these Celts left enduring evidence of their presence in the region's toponomy – the Danube and the Inn rivers for example. They founded numerous small towns – Bregenz, Wels, Vienna (Vindobona). They developed the local mineral resources and established trade links with the Greeks, Etruscans and peoples of the north, along the route of the rivers Morava and Oder, but above all they were agrarian farmers who also practised stock-rearing, hunting and fishing.

In the period immediately after the colony of Aquilea was founded (181 BC), the Celts of Noricum enjoyed good relations with the Romans and allied with them against the invading Cimbri and Teutons (113 BC). During the first century BC, at the time of Julius Caesar, the kingdom of Noricum tried to maintain the balance between the Romans and the Suevi under Ariovistus. This was the time of the Celts' first apparent retreat immediately before the dawn of the Christian era. The Celts from Bohemia settled in Transdanubia in *c.*60 BC and were replaced by a German people, the Marcomanni, whom the Romans knew as formidable neighbours. The Danube, however, with its unstable banks and its marshy fringes, presented a natural barrier which was difficult to cross and which the Romans exploited and reinforced, as they did the Rhine in Western Europe.

The conquest of the Alpine lands by the Romans dated from the reign of Augustus and the inhabitants of Noricum readily opened their land to the legions. The famous disaster of Varus's legions in the Teutoburger Wood (*c.*9 BC) had a decisive effect on the course of European history. The Romans had established themselves in a block to the west of the Rhine and to the south of the Danube but had left the forests of Saxony, Thuringia and Bohemia to the German peoples. Roman civilization never had a direct influence there. When, in the second century AD, Trajan conquered Dacia, the valley of the Tisza, for example, escaped Roman colonization while the lands corresponding to the greater part of present-day Austria, Transdanubian Hungary and the former Yugoslavia were well acquainted with the *pax Romana.*

The Romans organized the regions they had annexed into five provinces, *c.* AD 150, as follows:

1. Noricum, corresponding to the Alpine lands.
2. Pannonia bordered to the north by the Danube, to the west by Noricum and to the south by Dalmatia; it was divided by Trajan into Upper and Lower Pannonia with capitals at Vindobona (Vienna) and Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica) respectively.
3. Dacia, corresponding to Transylvania and Romania, bordered to the west by the Tisza, to the south by the Danube, to the north by the Carpathians and to the east by the Dniester; inhabited by the Thracians

who had achieved a high level of civilization, the kingdom of Dacia constituted a grave threat to the Romans who under Domitian bought peace by paying tribute to the Dacian king Decebalus; for this reason Trajan decided to conquer Dacia and to turn it into a province (*c.*107 AD) where he established the XIII legion, countless auxiliaries and Roman colonies; in 129 AD Hadrian divided the province into Upper Dacia (Transylvania) and Lower Dacia (Lesser Wallachia).

4. Moesia, corresponding to present-day Serbia and Bulgaria.
5. Dalmatia.

Romanization took place slowly and in stages. Funerary inscriptions from the first century AD found in the neighbourhood of Wieselburg (Lower Austria) give Latinized Illyrian and Celtic names alongside Roman ones. In the mountainous regions, the local population kept their own customs and beliefs; Roman influence was strongest in the towns. It was through the towns and their municipal administration that the local populations became assimilated – the imperial functionaries acted as a role model for the local notables – while the principal Romanizing element outside the towns was the army whose legionaries were recruited throughout the provinces of the Empire and were gradually assimilated to Roman ways. In the third century AD, it would seem that the process of Romanization was complete.

The Roman administration's first concern was to secure the safety of the frontiers and links with Rome. For this reason the Romans constructed along the Danube a string of forts which were linked by a road to Lorch, Mautern, Traismauer, Tulln and Klosterneuberg. Particularly important were the forts at Vienna, Carnuntum and Aquincum (present-day Oduba in the northern suburb of Budapest). They were Roman forts constructed to the classic design and were strongly fortified, each protecting a legion (the XIV at Carnuntum, the X at Vindobona). The camps were strictly for the army but were surrounded by the houses of the legionaries' families, merchants and artisans. In the course of the second century AD, the Roman emperors granted these conurbations the rights accorded to cities. A hundred decurions appointed for life formed a kind of patriciate which each year chose a commission of four members and a quaestor in charge of finances. This was why Trajan did not hesitate to cross the Danube and conquer Dacia.

The Roman empire did not restrict itself to defensive action alone. In the first century AD, the prince of the Marcomani became an ally of Rome but after AD 150 the Marcomani found themselves under increasing pressure from the advancing Barbarians; in AD 171 they broke through the Danube line, laid waste Transdanubia, Styria and Carniola, crossed the Alps and attacked Aquilea. It took the emperor Marcus Aurelius eight years to drive them back (171–9) after which the line of defence along the Danube was strengthened. To replace the population lost through the invasion and to rebuild the ruins, Rome for the first time appealed to German colonists, a

move which changed the composition of the population of Pannonia. It was the governor of Carnuntum, Septimus Severus, who in AD 193 marched on Rome, seized supreme power and founded a new dynasty.

At the beginning of the fourth century, Diocletian (emperor AD 284–305) reorganized the Empire, dividing the large provinces and separating civil and military power. He also strengthened the Danubian navy and garrisons, creating a new legion. Constantine (AD 274–337) then divided the vast empire into a hundred provinces, thirteen dioceses and four prefectures. Christianity first appeared in these regions at this time and gradually replaced the old Celtic beliefs and the martial cult of Mithras, which had been brought from the East by the legionaries and protected by their power. Diocletian's persecution of the Christians produced countless victims (including St Florian) but the new religion flourished after 313, when every Roman city became an episcopal see. Recent excavations have revealed countless cult centres – basilicas, chapels and necropoles. The fourth century, however, marked an irreversible decline in these frontier regions; the towns emptied, the countryside fell increasingly under the domination of the German colonists, while the legions were recruited from among the barbarians. The Empire became less and less able to withstand the blows inflicted by the Germans fleeing the pillaging nomads from the steppes. For the next five centuries Danubian Europe was the scene of great upheavals which left little of the Roman past remaining.

THE TRIBES PRIOR TO THEIR SETTLEMENT IN THE DANUBIAN REGION

This section is concerned with the Slavs, Germans and Hungarians who were all considered as 'barbarians' by the more-or-less Romanized peoples of the Empire.

The Germans were the closest and the least restive. Their origin remains uncertain. One theory holds that they were a people from the North who during the Bronze Age adopted an Indo-European language, while another asserts that they were from eastern Russia, the original point of departure for the Indo-European family. On the eve of the invasion they were divided into three groups: the Goths, who moved from the Baltic into the Ukraine; the Vandals, Burgundii, Alemanni and Franks to the west; the Angles, Saxons and Lombards to the north, on the edge of the Baltic. Although a common German culture did exist, the Germans' shared language and culture could not give rise to any 'national sentiment'. The Germans did not have a state or towns but rather communities (tribe, clan, family) which formed the framework of their political and social life. The tribe was governed by an aristocracy based on birth, which owned the

greater part of the land; beneath them was the mass of freemen, who served as warriors; finally there were the slaves, who formed the bottom layer but who could be emancipated. The Germans were chiefly soldiers and peasants. They had a basic love of nature and its forces; their religion was simple, involving various sacrifices on a fixed date near a tree or spring. The warriors did not believe in death and the dead had to keep to hand their tools, weapons and finery. Those who died on the battlefield were certain to share in the life of the gods. Their contacts with the Roman world were longstanding (dating back to the first century AD) and ambiguous. Since the time of the Roman historian Tacitus (*c.* AD 55–117), the author of the *Germania*, a myth of a virtuous 'good savage' had grown up. As they swarmed across the *limes* some were already enrolled in Rome's service, first as auxiliaries, then as legionaries and finally as colonists. Other barbarian peoples, often partly Germanized, came into the regions, which explains the weak resistance presented by the inhabitants.

The Slavs originally came from the region between the Dnieper and Vistula rivers, a land of forests and marshes with little relief. They were bordered to the west by the Germans, to the north by the Finns and to the south by Iranian and Tartar peoples. Their language shows that they were Indo-European but they did not constitute so homogenous a group as the Germans. The South Slavs were very different from the Eastern Slavs (the Russians) and the Western Slavs (the Poles and Czechs): the South Slavs were tall in stature and suggested a southern type. Cut off from the North Sea and isolated from other tribes by vast forests, the Slavs were untouched by Hellenic and Latin culture (and still less by the culture of the steppe peoples, the Scythians and Sarmatians. They were unacquainted with the art and language of their southern neighbours. Their language, however, contains ancient borrowings from the Germans: terms connected with government, commerce, war and agriculture as well as the word for book. These words which are found in all the modern Slav languages were borrowed before the Slavs were scattered, i.e. before the sixth century AD. The Slavs were primarily farmers and according to the Latin chronicler Jordanus were of Goth origin, 'for them the forests and marshes took the place of towns'. They were organized in tribes made up of clans. A Slav clan was a social group consisting of many families and possessing communal means of production. The head of this large family was either the oldest man or the widow of the chief. In certain instances the chief of the clan was obliged to consult the community of freemen. All the patrimony acquired through the group's work belonged to the clan and it could not be disposed of without the consent of all. Through the development of trading links, certain clans became more powerful than others and gathered other clans around them and in this way formed tribes. The oldest name for a tribal chief was *joupan.*

Pagan Slav society was divided into three classes: at the top was an aristocracy composed of clan chiefs and a certain number of their immediate relatives, beneath them came a large class of freemen and peasants, and at