



*Sons and Heirs:  
Succession and Political Culture in  
Nineteenth-Century Europe*

Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi  
Mehrkens (eds.)

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*Sons and Heirs: Succession and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Edited by Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi Mehrkens. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. ISBN 978-1-137-45496-6. 288 pp. €69,99.

Frank Müller and Heidi Mehrkens christen the new Palgrave Studies in Modern Monarchy series, in which they serve as series editors alongside Axel Körner and Heather Jones, with this exciting collection of sixteen essays on the long nineteenth century's many royal sons and heirs. Approaching the matter from a European perspective, Müller and Mehrkens organize these essays into five themes that range from dynasticism and court life to succession crises and royal deaths. Accompanying many of these chapters are historical photographs of the princes and their families, which adds a welcomed level of intimacy to the study. The book ends by discussing the role of royal heirs in the Great War.

Müller begins this volume with a brief introductory essay that discusses the general themes found throughout the book. He notes that this book “takes the notion of a pan-European model of monarchical constitutionalism as the starting point for its analysis of the meanings of succession within the political culture of nineteenth-century Europe” (3). However, Müller also makes clear that the constitutional forms used throughout Western Europe were not clones of each other and had important variants, many of which the contributing authors address.

The first section, *Dynasties as Royal Families*, begins with Sir Christopher Clark's broad look at the history of father-son relationships in the Hohenzollern dynasty since it came to rule Prussia in the seventeenth century. In addition to providing an entertaining romp through three centuries, Clark introduces the theme of father-heir rivalry that is developed further by later contributors. The other two chapters in this section, written by Axel Körner and Daniel Schönplüg, focus on royal heirs and their wives, specifically Savoyard and Hohenzollern marriages. Whereas Körner discusses specifically the marriage politics that preceded Umberto I's accession to the Italian throne in 1878, Schönplüg gives a broader summary of the marriage relationships of the Hohenzollern heirs from 1793 until 1905.

The second section, *Courtly Contexts*, is undoubtedly the most unique. Eberhard Fritz springboards this section with an analysis of the differences in education obtained by three heirs to the Württemberg throne. This study is followed by an entirely different study by Sophie Gordon on the adventures of the young Edward, Prince of Wales, and how photographers captured and capitalized on his travels. The final entry swings in yet another direction, this time focusing on the housing preferences of five Habsburg heirs. Richard

Kurdiovsky skillfully merges architectural history, cultural studies, and dynasticism together to achieve this interesting, albeit somewhat brief, analysis of imperial stylistic tastes.

Jes Fabricius Møller spearheads the third section, *Overcoming Succession Crises*, with an in-depth essay on the election and popular acceptance of the German prince Christian of Glücksburg (Christian IX) as the Danish king in 1853. Unlike with other chapters, this one's primary subject is the king rather than a royal heir, but the circumstances preceding his election do feature prominently in the narrative. The next succession crisis, that of the posthumous birth of Alfonso XIII of Spain, is tackled by Carmina López Sánchez, who balances political intrigue, popular revolt, dangerous factionalism, and a long regency to produce an accessible chapter highlighting the merits of constitutional monarchism. Valentina Villa, meanwhile, continues where Kröner left off, describing the difficult political decisions that were made to endear the future Vittorio Emanuele III to the public and secure his succession to the Italian throne.

Section four deals with the macabre subject of *The Impact of Dynastic Deaths*, beginning with a series of premature deaths in the Belgian royal family. Christoph De Spiegeleer navigates this subject with three interconnected studies that focus on how the death of an heir can endanger a new monarchy, imperil generational continuity, and threaten domestic stability. Heidi Mehrkens agrees with all of these points in her discussion on the death of Ferdinand-Philippe d'Orléans, convincingly arguing that his death essentially led to the downfall of the July Monarchy in 1848. Focusing specifically on political opposition, Günther Kronenbitter showcases two Habsburg heirs, Rudolf and Franz Ferdinand, and explores the ways in which their subversive personalities set them each on a path of self-destruction.

That self-destruction becomes rather the theme of the final section, *Heirs in the Great War*. Heather Jones explores the many ways in which the future Edward VIII of England sought to directly involve himself in World War I, often risking his life out of a desire to relate to the common soldier. In stark contrast, the life of Crown Prince Wilhelm of Germany, researched by Katharine Anne Lerman, is that of a military-trained heir desiring nothing but war prior to 1914, but wishing only for the fighting to end thereafter. Lerman reveals that Wilhelm's contrary attitude, intemperate nature, and opposition to his father's policies led not only to his public shunning, but to his virtual disinheritance in 1918. Müller and Mehrkens conclude this volume with the unfortunate saga of Max von Baden, the last chancellor of the German Empire. Lothar Machtan expertly tackles this rather mediocre man, exploring the ways in which he deflected personal responsibility when he could possibly have saved monarchism in Germany. It is an apt conclusion to a book that

charts the trajectory of monarchy in Europe from its nineteenth-century heights to its ultimate collapse in the aftermath of the Great War.

Despite the well-organized framework provided by the editors, this book is essentially split between two localities: Germany and Western Europe. To some degree, this makes sense, especially when one considers that most of the publication focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Germany was ascendant. The dominance of Germany in the book is reflected by three chapters on the Hohenzollerns of Germany-Prussia, two on the Habsburgs of Austria, and one each on the Württemburgs, the Holstein-Glücksburg king of Denmark, and the Zähringen prince, Max von Baden. The Germanic influence extends to three chapters on the Saxe-Coburg family, who in this period ruled England and Belgium. The remaining four chapters, therefore, have the impossible task of expanding the scope of this project beyond Central Europe. Although focusing on the Savoyards of Italy, the Borbóns of Spain, and the Orléans of France gives readers some hint of this pan-European theme, the lack of any discussion of Eastern European monarchies or, indeed, other Scandinavian, Low Country, or Iberian monarchies leaves this volume wanting. Indeed, if this book fails in any way, it is in its attempt to embrace all nineteenth-century Europe when perhaps it should have focused more specifically on Central European monarchies of the era.

Nevertheless, these various essays by sixteen different historians form a remarkably cohesive whole that both satisfies and leaves the reader desiring more. Fortunately, two more books in the series are already planned that will build upon the foundations presented here.

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