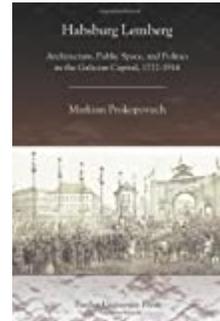




Markian Prokopovych. *Habsburg Lemberg: Architecture, Public Space and Politics in the Galician Capital, 1772-1914.* West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008. 357 S. \$49.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55753-510-8.



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Identities Carved in Stone? Architecture and Identity Politics in a Multi-ethnic Habsburg Town

Two centuries ago, the population of Galician Lemberg/Lwów/Lviv met Polish Napoleonic and Austrian troops with grand mass celebrations as they entered the city. Traditional historiography has argued that the welcome to the Polish troops was of a spontaneous, improvised, and therefore more “authentic” nature than the scripted procession, “imposed from above,” that celebrated the reentry of the imperial troops. In contrast, Markian Prokopovych points out the distinctly similar nature of both events and calls for a reexamination of the history of Habsburg Lemberg, previously written along national lines. In what he calls an “urban biography” (p. 3), Prokopovych uses Habsburg Lemberg’s architectural heritage and public spectacles as a means to investigate imperial and competing nationalizing projects in the city. He concludes that “until the outbreak of the First World War, a sense of loyalty to the empire coexisted with ethnic and religious sentiments for most of Lemberg’s inhabitants” (p. 288). This finding puts Prokopovych’s study squarely in line with other research that points to the continued strength of impe-

rial loyalty in ethnically mixed regions of the Austrian Empire, such as Jeremy King’s study of the Bohemian town of Budweis/Český Budějovice.[1] In contrast to King’s subjects, however, the two major competing nationalizing factions in Lemberg—its Polish and Ruthenian inhabitants—were imagined as “brotherly” Slavic nations rather than as German-Slavic competitors. *Habsburg Lemberg* thus contributes a further dimension to the growth of nationalism in the multi-ethnic Habsburg Empire of the late nineteenth century.

Drawing on a diverse selection of primary sources in German, Polish, and Ukrainian, Prokopovych examines the interplay between cultural politics, rising nationalism, and architectural representation as it manifested itself in a variety of ways. Chapter 1 investigates the Austrian vision of remodeling Lemberg along the lines of a rationally planned, provincial Habsburg capital. As Prokopovych shows, the Austrian officials who had arrived in Lemberg in 1772 intended to “beautify” the city by demolishing old fortification walls and improving sanitary conditions, as well as implementing green spaces

in accordance with Enlightenment and neoclassical ideals. Indeed, imperial city planners, though constricted by continuous financial difficulties, succeeded in transforming at least Lemberg's central area into a city of German character during the *Vormärz*. Public space, restricted to displays of imperial symbolism in this period, only became contested in the 1860s, when first Polish and later Ruthenian nationalizing projects lay claim to it after the establishment of Galician autonomy in 1867.

In chapter 2, Prokopovych traces continuities in German, Polish, and Ruthenian writings on the subject of architecture, arguing that German *Vormärz* thinking profoundly influenced fin-de-siècle Polish and Ruthenian accounts, especially in viewing architecture as representative of ethical beliefs. His careful examination of the writings of high-ranking Austrian officials during the *Vormärz* reveals that they associated new neoclassical structures and green spaces with progress, order, and a healthy urban environment indicative of enlightened Austrian rule, while rejecting existing Baroque structures as disorderly, "Polish," and backwards. At the end of the nineteenth century, Polish writers continued to adhere to the notion of greenery as signifying orderliness and possessing curative qualities. They also viewed architecture as an ethnic symbol, only now they classified neoclassical buildings as bureaucratic and "German," and therefore in bad taste. As Prokopovych demonstrates, architecture remained a symbol of cultural and technical progress until 1905. Only then was it instrumentalized in political programs, as when Vice-Mayor Tadeusz Rutowski successfully politicized the question of a national (Polish) art gallery and the Palace of Art. Prokopovych has a harder time incorporating Ruthenian writings on architecture, however, especially since leading intellectuals and religious leaders of the Greek Catholic Church associated a positive Ruthenian identity with a Byzantine heritage that Lemberg lacked. Therefore, some intellectuals, such as the metropolitan of the Greek Catholic Church, Andrej Ā eptyĀkyi, did not even regard Lemberg as a Ruthenian town. Nevertheless, Prokopovych shows how Ruthenian ideas about architecture adhered to the same conceptual frameworks as those used by German and Polish writers, especially when it came to normative comparisons of Galician towns with west European capitals. In addition, writings by representatives of all three ethnic groups show that they were united in their disregard for the Jewish quarters in Lemberg, which they saw as filthy and a breeding ground for immorality and criminal behavior, especially prostitution.

Chapter 3 is the most successful in illustrating the

book's overarching thesis of continued imperial loyalty despite nationalizing tendencies among Lemberg's populace. In it, Prokopovych examines institutions, parks, and monuments in Lemberg and comes to the conclusion that public space remained "more often than not free of explicit, national statements made in architecture," even in the post-1867 era, and instead "largely reflected a conglomerate of imperial and local values" (p. 134). His exploration of the building process of both the Ossolineum, a literary institute, and the Skarbek Theater—long thought to represent Polish national sentiment carved in stone—clearly highlights the multi-ethnic origins of both structures, which showed their founders' loyalty to Vienna and aimed at coexistence between Polish and German culture before they were appropriated for national causes in the second half of the nineteenth century. His section on nascent commemorative culture in Lemberg also nicely shows that monuments to royal or aristocratic figures such as King Jan III Sobieski or Agenor Gołuchowski, figures connected to both Polish and Habsburg history, found municipal support, whereas the erection of a monument to Polish revolutionary leader Tadeusz Kościuszko, whose commemoration carried clear anti-imperial overtones, had to wait until the creation of an independent Polish state.

While chapter 3 deals with the creation process behind important buildings and monuments in Lemberg, chapter 4 examines shifting symbolic uses of architectural structures in city celebrations, as related to historic preservation, and in late-nineteenth-century provincial exhibitions. Prokopovych argues that public space became increasingly nationalized at the fin de siècle, but that the broad population's participation in public attractions revealed both a general need for entertainment and the existence of multilayered identities among participants. A lengthy section on the construction of the Lublin Union Mound on Lemberg's Castle Hill, which became the first privately initiated commemoration project in the city in 1869, highlights the gradual transformation of public space along Polish national lines, but also demonstrates that although deeply resonant emotionally, nationalizing projects continuously struggled due to a lack of funds.

Overall, Prokopovych's urban biography successfully interprets and distinguishes between the multilayered meanings inscribed in Lemberg's built environment. He clearly establishes that imperial loyalties continued to play a role in the erection and uses of architectural structures well into the late nineteenth century, although his last chapter shows that Polish nationalizing forces were

ascendant in Lemberg after Galician autonomy had been granted. Indeed, Prokopovych is at his best when he interprets the interplay between “German” official views and Polish national aspirations, but the Ruthenian case fits less easily into his narrative. Although Prokopovych tries to establish the Ruthenian minority as a third player in Habsburg Lemberg, and devotes at least one subsection within each chapter to Ruthenian views and actions, he has to concede that Ruthenians were a disunited and increasingly marginalized group whose “national celebrations ... remained limited to religious and cultural organizations” to a large extent, even until the monarchy’s collapse (p. 225). This state of affairs might well have to do with the fact that some leading Ruthenian intellectuals did not even regard Lemberg as a Ruthenian town, as noted above. Yet, due to the Ruthenian national focus elsewhere, Lemberg may not be the best place to analyze competing Slavic-Slavic nationalisms.

Lemberg’s Jewish inhabitants are another ethnic group that fits uneasily within Prokopovych’s analysis. Prokopovych claims that although Jewish residents made up 30 to 35 percent of the city’s population, as opposed to the 15 to 20 percent comprised of Ruthenians, they did not participate in contests for representation between Lemberg’s major ethnic groups. At this point, however,

Prokopovych contradicts himself outright by stating that “Lemberg’s landscape continued to be a contested space until World War I” and that “it was far from obvious to the groups that eventually lost out—these primarily being Ruthenians, Jews, and German speakers—let alone to those that were ostensibly victorious” (p. 4) that “Habsburg Lemberg” was slowly transforming into “Polish Lwów.” This statement implies that these groups, including Jews, did play a role in identity politics in the city up until 1914, yet Prokopovych never follows up on it for the Jewish case. Indeed, Jews only appear as being acted upon, at first by German and later by Polish municipal authorities’ city beautification campaigns, rather than being depicted as actors in their own right. Thus, a full third of the city’s population remains mostly silent in this narrative. A more thorough analysis of Jewish views would have been desirable in this otherwise well-researched and well-argued study of the shifting meanings of architectural sites in a deeply multi-ethnic Habsburg town.

Note

[1]. Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

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