H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Heide Wunder, ed. *Dynastie und Herrschaftssicherung in der Fruehen Neuzeit: Geschlechter und Geschlecht.* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001. 265 pp. EUR 42.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-428-10814-5.

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Published on H-German (November, 2004)

No Dynasty without Women

This interesting publication covers a lot of ground for a subject often treated in the margins of political history or biographies: how did ruling dynasties go about securing their continuity? In this particular case the question is narrowed down to the role of women in that process. The book has its origins in a 1997 seminar in the context of a research project "Konfession, Religiositaet und politisches Handeln von Frauen vom ausgehenden 16. bis zum Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts" ("Religion, Religiousness and Political Activity from the End of the Sixteenth to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century"). Ten women and one man made contributions. Seven of these address the subject of women and their role and importance in securing territorial dynasties; two focus on the world of the church, where some families managed to occupy positions in which biological inheritance was out of the question. Two contributions provide background information on the complex hierarchy of states and other institutions that made up the German Reich and on the position of the estate of the counts (*Grafenstand*) in those days. To do justice to all these authors I will briefly summarize each chapter.

In her introduction Heide Wunder, editor of this volume, points out that research into the role of women in government and regency in the early modern period is a relatively recent phenomenon, triggered by the interest in gender studies. This is amazing since there is no lack of sources that prove the part played by women in maintaining dominion–a part so important that contemporary scientists, like von Seckendorff, tried to provide a legal basis for the difference they saw between theory (women were subordinate to men) and practice (in certain circumstances women were very well able to play roles normally reserved for men). In fact, women in noble families often received the same education as their brothers, in order to be prepared for a possible future leading role. It is clear that after the death of a ruler, the survival of his dynasty often depended on the way in which his wife continued the government of the land or as guardian prepared a minor male successor for his later role. For a dynasty to increase in importance or to safeguard its existence an appropriate network of relatives and connections was essential. For this reason, a careful policy of marrying off noble daughters could not be neglected. Wunder emphasizes that dynasty involves more

than the legal concept of inheritance of territory in the male line. It also involves social and cultural aspects, in which women played a clear and recognized role.

Many of the chapters in this book focus on the estate of the counts. In her contribution "Der Grafenstand in der Reichspublizistik," Barbara Stollberg-Rolinger explains how this estate was continually active in maintaining and enhancing its position in the Holy Roman Empire's hierarchy, preferably blocking upward mobility for lower levels. The actions of counts of the empire often focused on maintaining a house's "Stamm, Rang und Namen" (p. 29). Important in this respect was *Reichspublizistik*, the legal discipline specialized in formalizing and expanding the written legislation based on Roman and common law. In *Reichspublizistik*, the estate of the counts was defined more and more precisely. Having a seat and voting rights in the imperial diet were decisive criteria in determining whether someone belonged to this estate and as such to the higher aristocracy.

In "Der deutsche Territorialstaat in Veit Ludwig von Seckendorffs Werk und Wirken," Gerhard Menk argues in favor of a biography of this interesting person. His chapter is on the borderline of the scope of the title of this book, but it provides vital theoretical background on constitutional thinking in those days, in particular in the smaller German states. The territorial state was the basis for a noble dynasty, because without Territory there was nothing for it to rule and no means to display itself. Von Seckendorff was influential in many of the smaller states. In contrast to his contemporary, Pufendorf, he was convinced of the importance of the Empire and its internal structure. His views were shaped by the Thirty Years' War. Most of all he strove after peace, which was to be accomplished by, amongst other things, a healthy economy of the state. Although von Seckendorff is usually regarded as a constitutional thinker, Menk emphasizes that he was active in many other fields, such as theology, history, poetry, and education.

Jutta Taege-Bizer writes about "Pietistische Herrscherkritik und dynastische Herrschaftssicherung." For the estate of the counts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, pietism was often of importance. It legitimized a frugal lifestyle, quite suitable for the limited means of the smaller territorial rulers. The rather simple life of the female members of this nobility was made bearable, since the lack of a luxurious court was compensated for by a pious, contemplative attitude. The author uses the example of countess Benigna von Solms-Laubach to show how this pious woman brought up her children, first as a mother and then as guardian and regent. The countess was influenced both by von Seckendorff and the theologian Spener, who taught that all people, even rulers, are equal to God. This fundamental equality was to be reflected in a ruler's reign.

Helga Meise analyzes the many source documents left by Landesgraefin Elisabeth Dorothea von Hessen-Darmstadt (1640-1709), particularly her diary. As guardian for her eldest son she ruled the county for ten years. Meise provides a vivid picture of the daily life of a ruler and also of Elisabeth's ideas about ruling. In the Lutheran tradition, she took her reign very seriously. Judging by the number of books in her library, she was influenced not so much by von Seckendorff as by Lipsius and Pufendorf. But the value she attached to a healthy treasury, as borne out by measures she tried to introduce, is fully in line with von Seckendorff's thinking. After handing over the government to her son, she retired to a castle where she pursued a regime as though she was still ruling the land. She was always focused on being treated with respect, treatment which she did not take as something personal but rather as appropriate to the dignity of the dynasty.

Funeralwerke initially were printed versions of funeral orations. In the course of time, they could evolve into biographical documents detailing the values of the deceased. For the courts in the Holy Roman Empire these values included a man's importance for land and dynasty. In the sixteenth century such works also appeared for women, and Jill Bepler analyzes the development in these *Funeralwerken* for six generations of noblewomen between 1585 and 1745. She shows that the emphasis shifted from a description of her piety (Anna von Daenemark, 1585) to documentation and proof of her pedigree (Sophia Eleonora Graefin Stolberg, 1745). For a noblewoman, collecting data about her genealogy could be a way to underline her importance and that of the dynasty to which she belonged.

Quite another theme is researched by Cordula Bischoff. In "Fuerstliche Damenappartements und ihre Ausstattungen um 1700," she compares some thirty baroque castles to show how the wives of rulers tried to express themselves in the interior decoration of their apartments. This gives an idea of the way in which noblewomen had a share in power. It can be shown that women exercised a pronounced and personal role in determining the decoration of the rooms used for formal occasions in the castle of their ruling spouses, even to the extent that they sometimes supervised the exten-

sion or renovation of a princely residence. At times, ladies' rooms were used for reception of important visitors because this practice was easier in terms of ceremony and etiquette. Such rooms therefore were luxuriously furnished and decorated. However, these rooms could serve more purposes than just to impress visitors with the power and wealth of the host. The paintings and decorations were also used by the lady of the house "to put herself on the map," so to speak. She accomplished this via mythological figures reflecting themes like love, honor, virtues of male and female rulers, as well as display kitchens.

Sabine Stange focuses on portraits of one single princess, Christiane von Waldeck. She and her husband, Prince Carl August Friedrich von Waldeck, had themselves painted several times and Stange investigated how the princess wished to be immortalized. A woman could have herself painted in many ways: with her family, carrying out certain activities, as a ruler, for example. The latter is the case in a number of examples analyzed in this chapter, where dress, attributes and holding an open book all point in this direction. The open book in her hands explains that she is an educated woman of letters, capable of ruling. On a painting where she is depicted with her children, welcoming her husband on his return from the army, it is clear that he is the most important person. Still, certain princely attributes point to her, such as two pillars expressing power and highness. And the fact that she is sitting while her husband is standing indicates that it was she who acted in his place during his absence and not an advisor or eldest son. Stange states that the possibility for a princess to rule in her husband's absence was certainly there, but that her background and personality determined in how far she grasped that opportunity.

An interesting side-step is made in Sylvia Schraut's investigation of "Dynastische Herrschaftssicherung im dynastiefreien Raum." It involves the catholic *Reichsadel* in bishoprics in southwestern Germany in the early modern period. Obviously, in the case of an ecclesiastical office such as that of a bishop, it was not possible to maintain a dynasty as usually defined, with the inheritance in the male line of a crown or title. But some families of lesser nobility did manage to keep certain ecclesiastical offices in the family for many generations, offices held by men without offspring. An example are the Schoenborns, who in three generations provided twelve bishops. To achieve this longevity, special strategies were required. In these offices territory was less important than prestige. And to secure the revenues from such offices, peace was more important than extension of territory. The strategy for securing this type of rule was based on two pillars: the whole family had to put itself in the service of securing the desired office and a network of relations needed to be maintained with the organizations of the chapters that nominated the bishops. Marrying strategically was one of the ways to develop such networks and here daughters played a crucial part. In the families that were active in this kind of rule, daughters were schooled as thoroughly as the sons. Family planning was done differently as compared with territorial rulers.

A comparable area is tackled by Ute Kueppers-Braun, in her chapter "Dynastisches Handeln von Frauen in der Fruehen Neuzeit." She researched nunneries and convents led by women, in particular those headed by ladies of high nobility. Not every woman was admitted into the convents analyzed here. One had to be *stiftsfaehig*, which could mean being able to prove a minimum number of ancestors of the right level of nobility. And again, some families aimed at keeping a particular position, that of the abbess, in the family. Where these abbesses had a seat at the Reichstag they held *hohe Gerichtsbarkeit*, the authority to pronounce the death sentence in their territory. Even when they did not always exercise this power, they were well aware of the weight of their position. Most of them were politically not very active, although their function gave them this possibility.

The last contribution is by Anke Hufschmidt, who claims that religion and religiousness played a significant role in legitimizing female rule. She researched women of lower nobility in the lands of the Weser river, to find out what made up this religiousness and how religiously influenced action influenced the political and social position of their estate. She looked at the effect these women had on positive or negative decisions regarding change of religion in the land of their husband and at the Christian practice in daily life of lower nobility. Hufschmidt gives a well-documented example of a noble widow to prove her point. Women may at times have been puppets in family or church politics; still, in the case of religiously mixed marriages they usually had full freedom to exercise their own religion, a freedom that was legally secured in the wedding contracts. The education of their children often had a strong religious emphasis and, through the public character of the life of a ruling family, these noble women were an important role model for the population. Hufschmidt gives the example of Clara von Canstein who, as guardian and ruler, issued a code of conduct for her sons mostly based on Christian values. For the Protes-

tant church she patronized, she published a set of rules governing church life, belief and worship, even though it was situated within the territory of the bishop of Paderborn.

Altogether we have here an interesting suite of contributions, based on thorough study of many primary sources. Most of them are relatively independent of each other and together they illuminate a variety of aspects of the subject. But what a pity that no attempt is made to come to a synthesis of the material presented in the book. The overall research project that led to it apparently continues. Nonetheless, one can do better than leave it to the reader to conclude that indeed women were a factor that cannot be ignored in securing a dynasty. And yes, their political activities were often colored by religion and piety. But is there any significance in the fact that, in spite of the female influence described here, it went unnoticed for so long? Were the women described here typical for the whole of female aristocracy of the period and therefore we are reading about the tip of the iceberg? Or are they the exceptions that confirm the rule? Stange states that it depended on the personality of a noblewoman whether or not she acted in her husband's place during his absence (p. 204). How is this state of affairs to be reconciled with the traditional picture of subordinate women? Both Wunder and Stange point at von Seckendorff's recommendation that daughters should receive the same education as sons (pp. 9, 199). But both also point to the complaint of a female guardian/regent that such was not always the case (p. 199, n. 72). Although this observation appears to go against the overall gist of the book, it does not get any further consideration. And then there are the trivial questions that often result from the study of primary sources, such as Hufschmidt's casual remark that Margarethe von Canstein jotted down the sermons during the service and later, back home, read them to children and staff (p. 257). The reference is to the year 1639! Did she know shorthand, with a goose-quill?

But these are minor points. Apart from the missing synthesis, the overall book provides welcome and often fascinating insights into a world that, for too long, has been under-exposed or entirely unknown.

Citation: Jaap van Rosse. Review of Wunder, Heide, ed., *Dynastie und Herrschaftssicherung in der Fruehen Neuzeit: Geschlechter und Geschlecht.* H-German, H-Net Reviews. November, 2004.

URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=9998