Creating Patriotism

Imperial Celebrations and the Cult of Franz Joseph

Despite the role of the dynasty in the creation of the Habsburg state and the continued power and influence of the emperor in domestic and foreign affairs (even after 1867), little scholarly attention has been paid to Habsburg celebrations under Emperor Franz Joseph I. My work-in-progress, a study of the creation, dissemination, and reception of the image of Franz Joseph as a potential symbol of common identity within the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy (Cisleithania), addresses this gap in the historiography. I concentrate on the official presentation of the imperial cult, as well as on the use or rejection of the image of the emperor by regional social and ethnic factions. By looking at both the production of the cult of the emperor and its reception, this project analyzes the tension between national and supra-national identity in an age of mass political participation.

The Habsburgs and their supporters were not alone in redefining and expanding the role of royalty for the creation of state-oriented political identities in the second half of the 19th century. As Eric Hobsbawm and others have noted, the four or five decades preceding World War I witnessed the 'invention of tradition' on a massive scale.

Many European states introduced public holidays and built monuments venerating the ruling house and cultivating state and dynastic loyalty. Promoters of dynastic celebrations often competed with national movements, which commemorated events of allegedly crucial significance in the development of the nation and extolled national rather than dynastic heroes. During dynastic celebrations, government figures, aristocrats, and members of the ruling houses themselves publicly equated national and state interests in order to counter and to harness popular nationalism.

The Habsburgs, however, could not claim to embody the spirit of the German nation without alienating the non-German majority in the monarchy. In any case, such an association of the dynasty with the interests of a 'nation' would have been an admission that sovereignty arises from the people, independent of the historic rights of the dynasty – an unlikely concession from this most traditional of ruling families. The Habsburgs and their
supporters instead promoted the emperor as a living symbol of state unity.

Habsburg invention and alteration of tradition is at the center of my study. I examine the principal apparatus of monarchical representation—the court—as well as the display of imperial ritual, ceremony, and celebration to the population of Cisleithania. The project is divided into three main sections. I begin by looking at changes in the presentation of the emperor in the early decades of Franz Joseph’s rule. In the wake of the revolutions of 1848/1849, the Habsburg court sought to renew old traditions that could help legitimize the neoabsolutist system. The second section analyzes the major imperial inspection tours of Galicia. The emperor’s tours of the provinces brought the theater of court ritual to the masses outside of Vienna. This case study illustrates how the appropriation of the dynastic cult could affect local politics. The third section looks at celebrations marking the emperor’s fiftieth and sixtieth Jubilees in 1898 and 1908 respectively. Although the focus here is largely on the court and Karl Lueger’s Christian Social city government in Vienna, I also consider how the Jubilees were celebrated in the provinces and how information about the great festivities in Vienna was conveyed to the population outside the imperial capital. The project also briefly considers the presentation of the Empress Elisabeth, imperial celebrations in World War I, and the burial of Franz Joseph.

While there is an extensive literature on European medieval and absolutist courts and court society, neither the persistence of court ritual and ceremony, nor the presentation of the ruling house as a symbol of state unity in the 19th and 20th centuries have received as much scholarly attention. This gap is all the more glaring in the case of the Habsburg monarchy, a heterogeneous patchwork of territories acquired largely through the ambitious marriage politics of the ruling house. Few scholars treat supporters of the dynasty as actors in the public sphere or look at the use of dynastic symbols to justify various political programs. Habsburg historiography has traditionally focused on nationality and nationalism rather than on imperial loyalty. The concern with nationality is understandable to all familiar with the history of the monarchy, yet historians often too readily assume that imperial and national identities were by definition mutually exclusive. Certainly, the post-1848 period witnessed economic transformations leading to the rise of peasants’ and workers’ movements and the radicalisation of ethnic politics, but the diversity of the monarchy’s regional political structures allowed for alternative routes to the definition of national identity, some of which were compatible with imperial loyalty. In fact, socialist agitation and nationalist confrontation coexisted with an unprecedented increase in official and popular manifestations of imperial loyalty in the last decades of Habsburg rule.

My study of the court, the presentation of the emperor, and the use, manipulation, and rejection of the mythic narratives of Habsburg power, which were created and bolstered during imperial celebrations, reveals much about the workings of the state. The study examines government attempts to build support for its programs, the place of the court in politics and society, and the ways local
political elites strove to defend and expand their power positions through the manipulation of the imperial cult. I utilize records from the imperial court, documents from the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Education and Culture, police reports from Vienna, Lemberg (the provincial capital of Galicia, now Lviv, Ukraine), and Krakow, the papers of the Lower Austrian and the Galician provincial administrations, memoirs, newspapers, and pamphlets.

Court, Church, Dynasty
From the moment Franz Joseph ascended the throne on December 2, 1848, the neoabsolutist regime placed great emphasis on the representation of monarchical grandeur through ceremony and ritual. This Habsburg appeal to 'tradition' became necessary in part because of dynastic discontinuity and the rejection of tradition: Ferdinand abdicated and the rightful heir was passed over in favor of Franz Joseph. The dynasty had broken with its own (relatively new) tradition of primogeniture, something Franz and Metternich had refused to do when securing the succession for the debilitated Ferdinand.

Franz Joseph's court moved swiftly to revitalize the Catholic ceremonial role of the Habsburg monarch. Once symbolizing the baroque alliance of Church and Dynasty, public expressions of the Catholic piety of the Habsburg ruler, like the annual Foot Washing and Corpus Christi processions, had diminished in importance under Joseph II. and his successors. In 1849 Franz Joseph participated in his first Corpus Christi procession as emperor. Its origins in the legendary Habsburg reverence for the Host, this ceremony offered an opportunity to display the majesty of the court and the semi-sacred character of the emperor. The bishops of Austria joined in the procession. Franz Joseph, head uncovered in a gesture of humility, walked behind the priest bearing the Host from Stephansdom to four stations in Vienna's inner city. At each stop, excerpts from the New Testament were read. Yet the Corpus Christi Procession was never merely a display of Habsburg humility. Imperial guards in colorful uniforms and the highest aristocrats of the realm clothed in the robes of the various Habsburg House Orders surrounded the emperor. An imposing military parade followed the 1849 procession, in sharp contrast to that of 1848, when Vienna's citizens had organized their own procession in the absence of the imperial family and without army participation. On Holy Thursday 1850, in another display of Habsburg piety, for the first time the new emperor knelt in the Ceremonial Hall of the Imperial Palace to wash the feet of twelve old men in imitation of Christ. These Catholic ceremonies demonstrated the return to order and the renewal of stability after the chaos of revolution.

The annual Foot Washing ceremony and Corpus Christi procession, presented to the broader public through newspapers, commemorative publications, and sermons, portrayed the emperor as a devout son of the Church whose rule and new order were sanctioned by Heaven. Even after the cancellation of the Concordat with Rome in the early 1870s, Franz Joseph rarely missed either celebration and regularly kissed relics, at-
tended church services, and was blessed by Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Islamic clergy. The exhibition of Habsburg religious devotion had regained its earlier prominence, but Habsburg public piety now projected a very different meaning. The Catholic bigotry of the Habsburg past had been transformed into a general respect for organized religion as a source of stability against the threat of revolution. The Habsburgs now used Catholic ritual to create internal unity rather than to define non-Catholics as enemies. Public demonstration of the ruler’s special Catholic ceremonial role bolstered the sacred aura of the emperor and the dynasty’s claim to rule in Central Europe by historic right.

Franz Joseph performed his ceremonial roles with the same doggedness that characterized his legendary administrative stamina. The exactitude and consistency of ceremonial presentation, maintained with only modest alterations throughout Franz Joseph’s reign, must be seen as an important qualitative alteration of court procedures. Imperial Zeremoniell enhanced the prestige of the monarch, separating him from those around him and from the population as a whole, thereby increasing the importance of his occasional interaction with lesser mortals.

Imperial Inspection Tours of Galicia
No celebrations brought the image of the emperor to the provinces more effectively than imperial inspection tours and visitations (Kaiserreise). The claims by the court and government to be the defenders of stability and order in a chaotic world received physical manifestation during these frequent travels. On inspection tours the emperor became, as surely as he did when performing Catholic ceremonies in Vienna, a living symbol promoting dynastic loyalty and identification with the state he ruled. The second section of my project is a case study of Franz Joseph’s three major visits to Galicia (1851, 1880, 1894) and the aborted 1868 Kaiserreise—my study will touch only briefly on the 1855 inspection tour undertaken during the Crimean War. This case study examines alterations in the presentation of the emperor and illustrates the growing mutual dependence between regional elites and the Vienna government.

Almost equal numbers of Poles and Ruthenians (Ukrainians) as well as a large number of Jews populated the Habsburg slice of the Partitions of Poland, known officially as the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. Poles constituted the majority in the west, and Ruthenians in the east—although even in eastern Galicia, Poles and Jews outnumbered Ruthenians in many urban centers. Polish nobles controlled most of the land throughout this overwhelmingly agrarian province. The emperor’s first inspection tour of Galicia in October, 1851, was one in a series of inspection tours undertaken by Franz Joseph in the years following the revolution. The government mobilized police and military forces to assist the court apparatus in turning these post-revolution inspection tours of the crownlands into public affirmations of the victorious ‘Monarchical Principle.’ For three weeks, Franz Joseph viewed military parades, visited fortresses, and made triumphant entrances into Galician towns while troops and police lined the streets.
The court and the government deter-
determined all aspects of the inspection tour, ignoring the appeals of the Polish nobil-
ity for a greater voice in the administra-
tion of the province. Polish nobles par-
ticipated in the festivities only as pas-
sive courtiers in the emperor's entourage.
In the 1860s, conservative Polish mag-
nates played important roles in the devel-
opment of the October Diploma, though
their preference for a more federal recon-
struction of the monarchy eventually lost
out with the creation of the Dual Monar-
chy in 1867. The 1868 trip to Galicia—
called off after the Galician Diet (Sejm)
passed a resolution calling for constitu-
tional changes in favor of autonomy—
was to have been an acknowledgment of
the leading role of the Polish elites in Gali-
cia. The cancellation of the Kaiserreise
demonstrates that the presentation of the
emperor no longer depended on the will of
the court and central government alone.
In the constitutional era, with its political
and press freedom, imperial celebration
and the display of the majesty of the court
could not be separated from regional and
monarchy-wide political disputes.
To a far greater degree than was the
case in 1851, or would have been the case
in 1868, the 1880 Kaiserreise was a public
event. In the first three weeks of Septem-
ber, from Biala to the Bukovinan border,
enthusiastic crowds greeted the emperor
as he knelt before relics of Polish saints
held aloft by Roman Catholic priests or as
he signed his name in Polish in gymnasia
guest books. The scenes repeated them-
selves: cannon fire, chiming church bells,
massive crowds, peasant bands on horse-
back, school girls in white dresses laying
flowers along the emperor's path, torch-
light parades, mountain top bonfires, city
illuminations, serenades, court dinners,
aristocratic balls, early morning prayers
at cathedrals and synagogues. During the
1880 imperial tour of Galicia, one can be
sure that nearly every inhabitant either
saw the emperor, talked with someone
who did, read about his visit in the pa-
per, or heard about it at a village reading
hall or from the local Priest or Rabbi.
Three factors contributed to the suc-
cess of the 1880 Kaiserreise to Galicia.
First, widespread celebrations of the im-
perial wedding in 1854, the 25th anniver-
sary of Franz Joseph's ascension in 1873,
and the 25th wedding anniversary of the
imperial couple in 1879 had enhanced the
growing popularity of the emperor. Sec-
don, with the fall of the Liberal gov-
ernment in 1879, Cisleithanian Minister-
President Eduard Taaffe relied on Pol-
ish participation in his Iron Ring Reichs-
rat coalition. Finally, in Galicia, Krakow
conservative nobles (Stanczyks) and their
Bürger and east Galician magnate al-
lies had solidified their control of Galici-
a. Their policy of loyalism had secured
the use of Polish in schools, courts, and
local government in the late 1860s and
early 1870s and now seemed poised to
gain even greater de facto autonomy for
Galicia. The imperial visit promised to
serve the interests of both Taaffe's govern-
ment and the Polish conservatives. Taaffe
had to confront German Liberals who
viewed provincial autonomy and the de-
pendence of the government on a largely
non-German parliamentary coalition as
threats to the unity of the state, while the
Polish elites needed to establish their Pol-
ish national credentials in the face of crit-
icism from a democratic opposition dis-
satisfied with the alleged servility of the Polish elites and conservatives' rejection of the Polish revolutionary tradition.

Not content to mutely attach themselves to the emperor's entourage, the confident Polish elites initiated the preparation of massive celebrations. The Sejm approved large sums of money and appointed a committee of leading politicians and nobles to organize every detail of the visit, ignoring the emperor's desire to avoid extravagant expenditure. The Polish dominated Statthalterei encouraged local notables to inspire the peasant population to cheer the emperor's train along the entire planned route. Police and security forces quietly cleared towns of street urchins and watched the gathering places of undesirables. Citizens' Guards provided security, and newspapers touted the apparent lack of police and army measures as proof of Franz Joseph's popularity. Nobles vied for the honor of hosting the emperor, eagerly making costly renovations to their palaces to meet the tastes and needs of the imperial entourage.

The court and central government worked closely with the Polish conservatives. The court accepted provincial governor (Statthalter) Alfred Potocki's requests to relax court etiquette in order to honor important figures who did not possess imperial titles or sit in the provincial parliament with invitations to imperial dinners, soirees, and theater productions. Taaffe granted representatives of the official Vienna and Galicia government press special access to all events and seats in the emperor's train in order to guarantee "authentic and direct" coverage of the Kaiserreise. The Statthalterei and Taaffe's government censored all speeches, many of which were written not by local mayors and notables but by Polish Statthalterei officials, who also penned most of the emperor's responses.

The conservatives used the Kaiserreise to define a series of Polish national symbols, all of which had been gained and supported due to the close relationship between the emperor and the Polish elites. Franz Joseph acknowledged cultural progress by visiting the Galician Diet, the Krakow and Lemberg Universities, and the Krakow Academy of Sciences, all of which were dominated by Polish conservatives. In a central symbolic moment, Franz Joseph agreed to return Wawel Castle to the people of Galicia and to designate this former home of Polish kings an official imperial residence. Conservatives praised the emperor for his support of Polish interests at these and other carefully orchestrated events. Editorials compared the oppression of Polish culture in neighbouring Russian Poland to the relative freedom under the Habsburgs and lauded the emperor for allowing the Poles use of their own language in schools, church, and government. The crowds who cheered the emperor and the speeches of the Polish elites appeared to confirm the conservatives' definition of national symbols.

However, not all the 1880 events conformed to the will of the Polish conservatives. Franz Joseph made sure to visit Ruthenian institutions as well—he himself had set the foundation stone of the Ruthenian National Home during his 1851 visit to Lemberg. Ruthenian associations set aside bitter disagreements over their national identity and produced a unified reception for the emperor. The
emperor also insisted on entering Lemberg's two main synagogues, where he, the attending generals, and Polish nobles were blessed by liberal and orthodox Rabbis. At every turn, peasants and widows of soldiers and government workers knelt in the mud before the emperor's carriage to plea for help or threw petitions for financial and legal support into the imperial coach. The thousands of petitions for imperial assistance attested to the fact that all was not as harmonious as the ideal Galicia created in media accounts of the inspection tour. Polish democrats criticized the conservative monopoly over the Kaiserreise, and rhetorically separated loyalty to the emperor from support of conservative policies.

Despite the grumbling of the Polish democrats, the emperor's respectful treatment of non-Polish institutions, and the presence of thousands of dissatisfied Galicians, the inspection tour ultimately benefited the Polish ruling elites. The conservatives had mobilized the autonomous Galician institutions to control most aspects of the visit. Vienna's main German liberal newspapers, usually critical of Polish participation in the Iron Ring, praised Polish commitment to a strong imperial state. The Vienna government acknowledged its dependence on the Poles, fortifying the political position of the Polish conservatives in the Reichsrat and in Galicia.

There were, however, limits to the conservatives' success. In the months following the inspection tour, Polish and Ruthenian factions organized public celebrations that directly challenged the Polish elites. At the same time that the upcoming imperial visit had been announced in July, Polish democrats and veterans of the January Uprising of 1863 made public their intent to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1830 November Uprising. However, their ambitious designs failed to inspire much enthusiasm, and the provincial elites were able to counteract or suppress most of the planned events. The Catholic Episcopate forbade the holding of any church services beyond mourning for those who lost their lives in the uprising. Conservative newspapers denounced the glorification of events that cost Polish lives and damaged Polish interests, proudly juxtaposing the fruits of a policy of accommodation with futile martyrdom.

In the final analysis, the Polish democrats could only claim to represent the small number of Galicia's educated urban Poles. The Ruthenians on the other hand, posed a much more serious threat to the attempt by the Polish elites to portray themselves as the rightful and natural leaders of Galicia. Polish nobles and intellectuals often defined Ruthenians as Polish peasants who spoke an eastern dialect of Polish. The most important Ruthenian organisations, though divided by many issues, were united on one: Ruthenians were not Poles. In an attack on Polish hegemony, the same Ruthenian institutions that had produced a reception for the emperor in September convened an all-party Ruthenian Meeting in the National House in Lemberg, in conjunction with commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the ascension of Joseph II to the throne. On November 29th, the day Polish democrats celebrated an uprising for Polish independence, Ruthenians honored the emperor-
liberator who had freed the Ukrainian
serfs from the clutches of Polish overlords
and praised Franz Joseph as the heir to
Joseph II's alleged pro-Ruthenian sympa-
thies. The Ruthenian reception for Franz
Joseph, the Joseph II commemorations,
and the subsequent Ruthenian Meeting
proclaimed to the Poles and public opin-
ion in the monarchy as a whole that Gali-
cia was not, and could never be, a purely
Polish province.

In 1894, Franz Joseph visited the Gali-
cian Exhibition in Lemberg. Once again,
cheering crowds, censored speeches, and
government and conservative newspapers
underscored the attachment of Galicia
and its elites to the emperor and the state
he embodied. By 1894, however, the con-
vergence of factors which led to the suc-
cess of the 1880 tour had broken down.
Although peasants and Bürger continued
to line the streets and cheer the emperor,
outside of the festivities themselves the
Polish elites could no longer unify soci-
ety behind their vision of Polish iden-
tity and imperial loyalty. Ever larger sec-
tions of Galician society organized into
political groupings which were no longer
content to seek fulfillment of their inter-
ests through the mediation of the con-
servative elites. New Polish peasant, so-
cialist, and Ukrainian nationalist organ-
isations defined their programs in direct
opposition to the ruling elites and their
narrative of Galician unity and state loy-
alty. Although the personal popularity of
Franz Joseph increased in the last decades
of the 19th century, the contrast between
the secure and legitimate hierarchy of or-
ders presented during imperial rituals and
ceremonies and the reality of Galician
interest group politics was too great to
make effective propaganda in the politi-
cal context of 1894.

The 1898 and 1908 Imperial Jubilees
Orchestrated expressions of patriotism
and popular participation in Habsburg
imperial celebrations reached their apogee
in the great jubilee years of 1898 and
1908. In the late 19th century the rul-
ing houses of Europe competed to pro-
duce impressive displays of monarchical
splendor. At the same time, many dynas-
ties, including the Habsburgs, strove to
instill loyalty in the politicized population
through public celebrations.

In 1898, inspired by Queen Victoria's
1887 and 1897 Jubilees in Britain, the
Habsburg court itself planned massive
festivities for November and December.
Previously, Franz Joseph had insisted
that money not be wasted on celebrations
in honor of the imperial family. In 1888,
for example, the emperor had prevented
official celebrations of his fortieth Jubilee
apart from the long-planned unveiling of
the Maria Theresia Monument between
the new Court Museums across the Ring
from the Hofburg. 1898, however, was
to be different. Although eventually can-
celed due to the September 10 assassina-
tion of Empress Elisabeth, the court fes-
tivities were to have included a gala the-
ater performance, church services in Vi-
enne's Stephansdom, and a “Homage of
the Peoples” (Huldigung der Völker) in
the Winter Riding School. The planned
court celebrations offered imperial loy-
alty as a means to overcome the ethnic
and partisan strife that had paralyzed
the Reichsrat. Perhaps the clearest ex-
ample was the planned gala theater perfor-
ence. The Festspiel was to depict scenes
from the heroic Habsburg past, culminating in the “Apotheosis” of Franz Joseph. The play portrayed Franz Joseph as the most illustrious descendant of a glorious family, who alone united the diverse population of the monarchy in peace, harmony and prosperity. The 1908 court festivities revived the 1898 program, with the addition of a visit by Wilhelm II and most of Germany’s princes to pay homage to the Habsburg ruler.

The government, army, Church, and imperial family acted to bolster dynastic loyalty. Government newspapers heightened the importance of the Jubilees by printing daily notices about heroic events in Habsburg history. Millions of members of the armed forces and government ministries received commemorative medals in official ceremonies throughout the monarchy. In 1898, the Ministry of War issued a brochure to remind all members of the armed forces of their personal fealty to the emperor, juxtaposing an ideal, ethnically neutral and kaisertreu army with the irresponsible demagogy of nationalist politicians. The Catholic Church appealed to imperial loyalty as a cure-all for the social and ethnic problems confronting the state with a special Hirtenbrief to be read from all pulpits in November, 1898. The episcopate denounced nationalism and offered a Christ-like Franz Joseph as a model for all good Austrians. Members of the imperial family sponsored the production of beautiful commemorative books filled with articles on culture, economy, ethnography, the army, and the imperial family written by scholars, aristocrats and military officers, and illustrated in pen and ink by prominent artists.

In 1898, Mayor Karl Lueger’s Christian Socials were the only major German-Austrian party that did not attempt to claim the mantle of the revolutionaries of 1848/1849 by sending a delegation to the Tomb of the Fallen. Instead, Lueger chose to juxtapose social democratic and German nationalist adoration of the revolutionaries with his party’s celebration of the dynasty. The Christian Social Party could not compete with the Social Democrats’ spontaneous demonstrations in support of universal suffrage or with the annual May-day rallies. However, Lueger could and did use the Vienna city government to create displays of organized patriotism. In both Jubilee years, Lueger orchestrated a Procession of the Children. In 1898, 70,000 school children marched around the Ring to the glory of the emperor — and of Lueger. In 1908, Lueger’s city council conveyed 80,000 children on the expanded city transportation system to Schönbrunn. In the palace gardens, actresses from the Burgtheater portrayed Vindobona and Austria and 1,000 children sang music written for the occasion, while the other 79,000 children cheered the teary-eyed emperor. All participants received commemorative medals and pamphlets. In their party newspapers Social Democrats fiercely denounced Lueger’s use of the imperial cult, and Schönerer’s nationalists denied the possibility of a German-Austrian state patriotism, proving themselves enemies of stability and opponents of the state. The Christian Socials used the Jubilees to assert that only their party could defend the middle-classes against social democracy, and that only the Christian Socials stood
for the unity of Austro-German identity, state loyalty, stability, and dynastic patriotism.

The most elaborate single Jubilee event of either year was Vienna's 1908 Kaiser-Huldigungs-Festzug. Over 12,000 marched around the Ring in this colorful extravaganza. The first part of the procession depicted scenes from Habsburg history, with characters often portrayed by their direct descendants. Delegations from each province of Cisleithania, dressed in decorative versions of peasant and national costumes and many riding horses or perishing on lavishly adorned wagons, participated in the 'ethnographic' section. The Galician and the Bosnian delegations elicited the most enthusiastic response from the crowds. The message was clear: all the peoples of the monarchy could enjoy the security to develop their national cultures under the watchful eye of the Prince of Peace, Franz Joseph. Financial deficit, a boycott by the Czechs, and some controversies surrounding the delegations from Galicia marred what was otherwise a great triumph for the dynastic ideal. 300,000-500,000 witnessed the Festzug, thousands drawn to Vienna from all parts of the monarchy by advertisements in provincial newspapers offering Ringstrasse views of the Festzug and hotel rooms at discount rates. Programs, brochures, commemorative books, and souvenirs were produced and sold throughout the monarchy. Provincial newspapers spread details about this and other events to millions outside the Cisleithanian capital.

Though the events in Vienna were the most grandiose, millions celebrated the Jubilee throughout Cisleithania. Military bands paraded through the streets of larger towns, waking the population before dawn with the imperial hymn and the Radetzky March. Church bells summoned millions to special religious services. Town governments, voluntary organisations, academic institutions, and military veterans' associations sponsored Volksfeast, founded charitable institutions, self-help organisations, and insurance funds, and built Franz-Joseph-Jubilee schools, hospitals, churches, and synagogues. In Galicia, hundreds of thousands of peasants bought inexpensive portraits of the emperor to hang in their windows during the ubiquitous illuminations held on December 2. In Bohemia and elsewhere, dozens of local communities unveiled statues and monuments to the ruler. In Vienna, among hundreds of small-scale celebrations, in 1898 the Nicotine Society of Vienna held a Kaiser smoke-in, while the Christian Women's Association sponsored what can only be described as a combination dynastic festival and anti-Semitic rally.

The Jubilee also furnished opportunities for enterprising businesses to cash in on the image of the popular emperor. Publishing houses produced books and brochures praising the emperor in the hope of receiving the official recommendation of the Ministry of Education for the use of their publications in the school system. Kaiser-Jubilee-Exhibitions showcased the development of everything from the fine arts to rabbit-breeding during Franz Joseph's reign. Manufacturers produced scores low-cost, including mass produced portraits, busts, and statues of the emperor, as well as postcards and medals. Many, perhaps hoping to use im-
perial approval as a marketing tool, sent requests to the court to have their products accepted as gifts for the emperor. At the same time, the court and government attempted to channel interpretations of the Jubilee and to protect the honor of the imperial family. The Interior Ministry issued rules for accepting and rejecting requests to name buildings, foundations, and products after Franz Joseph. Makers of Kaiser cakes, Kaiser cigarettes, and other "unworthy" products did not receive permission to use the imperial name, while hundreds of schools, charitable foundations, newly built churches, synagogues, and other institutions did. Government newspapers throughout the monarchy attempted to define and heighten the importance of the Jubilee by printing daily notices about heroic events in Habsburg history. The Ministry of Education issued instructions for schools to hold pageants, plays, assemblies, and parades. In the end, however, though few political parties and voluntary organisations ignored the Jubilee, they often defined the significance of the symbol of the emperor in terms contradicting the message conveyed in official publications.

Preliminary Conclusions

My project is a study of the reassertion of Habsburg charisma under Franz Joseph. Clifford Geertz defines charisma as "a sign of involvement with the animating centers of society", and argues that rulers and political elites use mythic histories, "ceremonies, insignia, formalities, and appurtenances (...) crowns and coronations" to "mark the center as center and give what goes on there its aura of being not merely important but in some odd fashion connected with the way the world is built". Under Franz Joseph, the Habsburg court endeavored to reassert the charisma of the emperor, to symbolically return him to the "center of things" from where he had been banished by revolution. The renewal of court ceremony reaffirmed the sacred nature of the political authority wielded by the pious emperor whose right to rule had been acknowledged by God and Church. Imperial rituals and celebrations were opportunities to reinforce imperial loyalty and to communicate ideas about the unity of the state via the promotion of the imperial image. In the first decades of his rule, the court and government allowed relatively little public competition to define the symbol of the emperor. Censorship and police controls limited the development of a public sphere and retarded the growth of political movements. The print media celebrated the youthful emperor whose strong hand guaranteed order and peace. After the institution of constitutional government, the dynasty had to confront the increasing political mobilisation of society. Both the Liberals and the dynasty claimed to control the fate of the monarchy and to exercise the power to ensure its unity and stability. Under Taaffe, faced with the rise of national movements, the court and government presented imperial loyalty as complementary with, rather than as an alternative to, ethnic identity. This vision meshed well with the goals of the Polish elites, and in many ways the imperial inspection tour to Galicia in 1880 represented the ideal monarchy Taaffe's system sought to create: a working political system based on the mutual
interests of the dynasty, its government, and of provincial elites secure in their own power. However, this ideal political system never existed in practice. Facing constant pressure from below to deliver on national and social demands, the Polish conservatives used the presence of the emperor to symbolically confirm their own political authority. With the increasing political mobilisation of society and the expansion of the electoral franchise, the dissemination of the image of the emperor as a symbol of unity became less tied to the actions of the provincial ruling elites and more open to competing interpretations.

During the great Jubilee celebrations the court, government, church, and army presented narratives associating Franz Joseph, and through him the state, with the fulfillment of all social and ethnic interests and the maintenance of peace. Imperial propaganda emphasized the moral and quietly heroic qualities of Franz Joseph, the tireless and self-sacrificing Father of all the monarchy's ethnic and social groups. Official celebrations and publications presented both his larger-than-life ceremonal persona and his hard-working and simple nature to reconfirm the central importance of the dynasty. Local and provincial elites also sought political advantage, cultivating the image of the emperor to bolster their own positions. The Christian Social party, for example, used imperial celebrations to define German identity within a context of dynastic loyalty. The Polish conservatives and Lueger's party claimed to be the loyalist representatives of their respective ethnic groups and defenders against the threats of radical nationalism and the socialist challenge. By supporting and using the imperial cult, these regional ruling groups legitimized their own power and demonstrated their reliability to the court and the central government.

At the same time, peasant, nationalist, and socialist leaders increasingly felt compelled to offer competing interpretations of imperial celebrations, incorporating Habsburg or other heroes into alternative narratives of the monarchy's past, present, and future. In 1898, for example, in Vienna, Schönerer's German nationalists denied the possibility of German-Austrian imperial loyalty and publicly declared their refusal to participate in patriotic manifestations. Nationalists, socialists, and liberals praised the revolutionaryies of 1848 rather than Franz Joseph, the beneficiary of the conservative reaction. In Galicia, Ruthenian and Polish factions tried to convince peasants to purchase only those portraits of the emperor produced by their respective groups; turning imperial loyalty into a plebiscite on national identity. In Bohemia, German communities often unveiled busts of the emperor in public spaces in elaborate ceremonies in order to counter the threat of Czech encroachment on what they viewed as German prerogatives and territory.

The decision in 1898 to break with the emperor's own reticence and appeal directly to the population for imperial loyalty reflected the perceived danger of ethnic tensions. Official publications did not denounce national culture and identity, but offered respect and loyalty for the emperor as a means of fulfilling legitimate ethnic interests and ameliorating national conflicts. The outpouring of voluntary expressions of imperial loyalty all
over Cisleithania suggests that much of the population hoped that national tensions could be overcome. National movements had to acknowledge the continued popularity of the emperor and of the state he symbolized. Those who prayed for the emperor's health on his birthday, traveled many miles to witness the imperial visage passing by on a train, donated money to build churches and fund charitable institutions in the name of the ruler, bought postcards, cups, pamphlets, portraits, and stamps on the occasion of imperial Jubilees, also constituted the potential base of all the monarchy's national movements and the constituencies of all the parties represented in the Reichsrat.

The organisation of national politics was often couched in the language of dynastic loyalty, the same language disseminated in countless editorials in government newspapers, school texts, and sermons delivered by thousands of clergymen. Although the constitutional government, court, church, and army could no longer monopolize public discussion of the importance of the dynasty, imperial celebrations grounded the dynasty in the natural order of things and seemed to confirm, at least for a moment, the existence of an imagined community of "Austria".16

Notes:
1 I exclude the Hungarian half of the monarchy (Transleithania) for several reasons. First, Franz Joseph was officially crowned King of Hungary in 1867 and the Hungarian noble elites viewed imperial Jubilees as holidays in a neighbouring country. In addition, though Cisleithania moved toward universal male suffrage, the franchise in Transleithania remained essentially unchanged from 1867 to 1918, guaranteeing the political domination of the Hungarian nobility. Because I am interested in the assertion of imperial power and prestige in the context of increasing democracy, Hungary remains outside the scope of my research.


10 Kriegsarchiv, GA 1880/82/15 (Statthalter Alfred Potocki to Minister President Eduard Taaffe, August 18, 1880).

11 Christiane Thun-Salm, Des Kaisers Traum, Wien 1898. The play was canceled in 1898 and performed as part of the court celebrations in 1908.

12 Gedenkschrift für die Soldaten anlässlich des 50-jährigen Regierungs-Jubiläums S. M. des Kaisers Franz Joseph I., Wien 1898; Wiener Diöcesanblatt, Nr. 22 (1898).


14 Grossegger, Kaiser-Huldigungs-Festzug, see note 4, 89.
