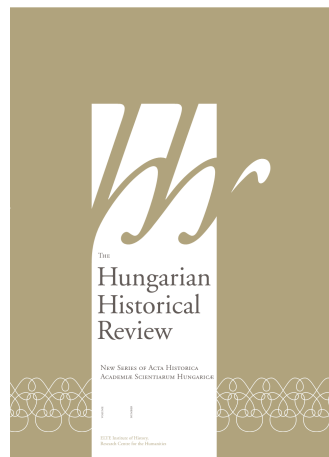


Citation style

Scheer, Tamara: Rezension über: Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, in: *Hungarian Historical Review*, 2016, 2, S. 427-429, DOI: 10.15463/rec.648334929, heruntergeladen über Website



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Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria. By Laurence Cole. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 376 pp.

Laurence Cole is known for his expertise on the late Habsburg Monarchy and topics such as military culture, national identities and loyalties, and civil, military, and imperial relations. In his first monograph, *“Für Gott, Kaiser und Vaterland:” Nationale Identität der deutschsprachigen Bevölkerung Tirols 1860–1914*, which was published in 2000, he looks behind the curtain of national belonging as a stable category. Drawing on the writings of Rogers Brubaker, Cole describes nationality as a process in which several agents are involved. He focuses on the example of the German speakers in Tyrol, who became increasingly aware and were pushed to become increasingly aware of their Germaness. In *Glanz-Gewalt-Gehorsam: Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1800 bis 1918)*, which was published in 2011 and edited by Cole, Christa Hämmerle, and Martin Scheutz, several authors present fresh insights into “new military history.” In other words, they deal not with operations, uniforms, and wars, but rather with different aspects of civil-military relations in the late Habsburg Monarchy and the Habsburg Army.

Cole’s recent book also adopts this approach. He focuses on a specific group of military Habsburg/Austrian actors. Veterans and their associations, although important in numbers as well as in their impact on commemoration, have hitherto been neglected in the historiography. It might be that veterans were not warriors enough to make military historians want to deal with them. On the other hand, to deal with veterans does require insight into the structure of the army, so perhaps the topic seemed overly “military” for cultural historians. Cole, however, offers an exciting combination of military and cultural history. He describes military actors as part of the local civil society, examining not simply how, as a consequence of compulsory conscription, male civilians became part of the army for a time, but also how veterans’ organizations (often together with the local garrisons) played roles in local cultural life. Cole deals mainly with peace-time veterans, who certainly differed from war-time veterans in their understandings of themselves. Most of the veterans Cole describes, especially in the later years, had never experienced a war (with the exception of the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878).

Many historians use the term “Habsburg” in the titles of their books or articles, in spite of the fact that often they deal exclusively with the Austrian half

of the empire or with one nationality only. From the outset, Cole emphasizes that he is dealing with an assortment of regions within the empire. Most of them were circumscribed by “language borders,” in the sense of Pieter M. Judson’s 2006 book, *Guardians of the Nation*. These selected examples of multiethnic and multilingual regions are Tyrol/Trentino (populated mainly by German and Italian speakers), Istria/Trieste (populated mainly by Slovene, German, and Italian speakers), and Littoral (adding Croats). To focus on Austria makes sense, as veterans’ associations in Austria, given their spheres of action, often had to negotiate with local civil authorities as well as ministries. They therefore all acted within a comparable legal and administrative framework. Nevertheless, Cole describes the interactions between local military associations and civilians, and this feature of his book makes his inquiry a history from below, which often takes imperial responses into account.

One might ask whether the efforts of these veterans’ organizations to engage in local public life, what Cole calls “popular patriotism,” were solely expressions of imperial loyalty. Cole offers examples in support of his contention that the purpose and aim of these veterans’ societies reflected a diverse array of interests. On the one hand, these associations served social purposes, e.g. supporting invalid soldiers and their families. They often organized cultural festivities in order to collect money. But these festivities often served as means of self-representation, too.

Cole also focuses on the transnational nature of these veterans’ associations. Members came from all parts of the monarchy, all nationalities, and all social classes. Nevertheless, most of the influential figures were retired officers of the common army, who therefore brought their understanding of imperial loyalty and its forms of public expression into the daily work and duties of the associations. It would have been interesting to consider the extent to which these veterans’ organizations had conflicts with one another. I assume conflicts arose not only because of national or regional patriotic issues, but also because of a kind of outbidding, i.e. attempts to outdo one another in their expressions of patriotisms. The associations were competitors in the end, competing for financial support, but also public attention. Cole offers several examples demonstrating this. Veterans jealously monitored one another’s festivities, failures, and successes. Who got more media attention? Who was able to invite the better known public figures? With regards to the associations’ attempts to influence public perceptions, it mattered whether they had the support of a Habsburg archduke or archduchess or merely an “ordinary” retired general. Thus, Cole’s book also

sheds light, through the lens of the cultural endeavors of veterans' associations, on the ways in which members of the Habsburg family participated in public events, sometimes as imperial agents. This includes refusals by members of the Habsburg family to participate and the reasons underlying these refusals.

Since the publication of Nancy M. Wingfield's 2007 *Flag Wars and Stone Saints* and Daniel Unowsky's 2005 *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism*, the community of historians has known a great deal more about the importance of everyday interactions in different parts of Austria when it came to public commemorations. One of the most prominent military-historic figures across all of the territories of the Monarchy was certainly Field Marshal Radetzky. Cole describes the role of the veterans in shaping perceptions of Radetzky and contributing to his emergence as a figure of such symbolic importance.

In addition to offering an outstanding analysis, Cole also draws attention to the organization of these associations, their activities, and their composition, meaning the professional, social, and cultural backgrounds of their members. Although mostly supranational, they were not unaffected by local nationalisms, to which they had to react. Cole offers an interesting insight concerning the ways in which former soldiers and officers dealt with language issues. Were depictions of Radetzky on memorial plaques described in other languages than in German? Which languages did veterans use when communicating internally and externally? Were public announcements always printed in all local languages, or just in German? Cole also breaks with the assumption that some nationalities were consistently loyal while others were consistently disloyal to the empire, emperor, and army.

Laurence Cole has published an important work on the relationship between different local communities, military veterans, and high administrative institutions in Vienna. The book is easy to read, though it remains analytical. Due to the structure of the chapters, it is highly suitable for use in teaching. Cole bases his study on an impressive range of archival sources, including central institutions in Vienna and numerous local archives. Here I may point to one shortcoming of the book: although I am aware of the fact that it is always a matter of available space, but it would have been good to include the original version of archival texts, and not to provide only English translations.

*Military Culture and Popular Patriotism* certainly fills a gap, not only in Habsburg historiography, but also in our understanding of the roles played by veterans during peacetime in a multiethnic, multilingual country.

Tamara Scheer