



The Habsburgs: Dynasty, Culture and Politics

Paula Sutter Fichtner

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The death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914 not only sparked the beginning of World War I—it also initiated the beginning of the end of the six-hundred-year-old Habsburg dynasty, which fell apart when the war ended, changing Europe forever. But how did the Habsburgs come to play such a decisive role in the fate of the continent? Paula Sutter Fichtner seeks to answer this question in this comprehensive account of the longest-lived European empire.

Tracing the origins of the house of Habsburg to the tenth century, Fichtner identifies the principal characters in the story and explores how they were able to hold together such a culturally diverse and multiethnic state for so many centuries. She takes account of the intertwining of culture, politics, and society, revealing the strategies that enabled the dynasty's extraordinarily long life: its dazzling mix of cultural propaganda, public performances, and cunning political maneuvering. She points out the irony that one of the crowd-pleasing performances that had enabled the Habsburg success—visiting beds of the injured—led to Ferdinand's death and the empire's downfall. Breathing fresh life into the history of the Habsburg reign, this accessible and authoritative history charts one of the pivotal foundation stories of modern Europe.

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