

Call for Papers

Ruling Dynasties in the Age of Revolution (1780-1850)

Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, 13-14 November 2025

Deadline for proposals: 15 January 2025

Notification: 18 February 2025

In 1810, Napoleon Bonaparte famously married Marie Louise of Austria, daughter of Emperor Francis I. This union symbolized the continuing relevance of dynastic politics in the Napoleonic era, as one of the continent's youngest dynasties allied itself with one of its oldest in a strategic play of prestige and power. Despite the upheavals of the preceding decades, ruling houses had never truly disappeared from the political landscape. This suggests that dynastic politics remained central to governance and diplomacy across the continent, coexisting with the revolutionary ideals that sought to dismantle the institutional legacy of the Ancien Régime.

In recent decades, historians have shed new light on the dynamics of European dynasties in the pre-modern period. Moving away from a “vertical” analysis focused primarily on male heads of aristocratic families, the “new dynastic history” has emphasized previously overlooked aspects: the roles of non-ruling family members (both male and female), the importance of family networks, and the social and cultural construction of dynasties. This new perspective reveals a far more complex picture of dynasties as political and social entities, beyond the mere succession of rulers.

However, this historiographical shift has barely affected the study of European dynasties during the Age of Revolutions. Traditionally, the historical focus has been on political, social, and economic change, with dynastic families often viewed as struggling to keep pace with the challenges that arose from revolutions, such as republicanism and nationalism. The processes of democratization and bureaucratization are sometimes assumed to have made dynasties superfluous relics of a bygone era. More recently, the strengthened European monarchies that emerged from the revolutionary era have been drawing scholarly attention, but this has hardly extended to the issue of dynasty.

This workshop seeks to re-evaluate the role of dynasties as family power networks during the revolutionary period. Rather than seeing dynasties as passive holdovers from the past, we aim to explore their functionality and their continued relevance as instruments of power, negotiation, and

governance in states from the lesser German principalities to the great imperial monarchies. The workshop will also assess how dynasties adapted to the changing political landscape, functioning on a day-to-day basis while simultaneously recalculating their sources of legitimacy.

We invite papers that address all aspects of dynasties in this period, whether through case studies of particular families or comparative approaches. The houses of Bourbon (Spain, Naples, etc.), Romanov, Osman, Bernadotte, Bonaparte, Murat, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Wittelsbach are just a few of the many possible dynasties. Possible topics that could be addressed include:

- **Dynasty and Government:** The rise of administrative states in Europe did not necessarily eliminate the political power of dynasts and their relations. On the contrary, our assumption – based on the Habsburg case – is that not only monarchs, but also their family members continued to participate in both the formal and informal structures of government during the transition to the mid-19th century.
- **Dynastic Representation and Identity:** In response to the growing forces of republicanism and new forms of patriotism, European dynasties had to reinvent their symbolic sources of legitimacy to remain relevant.
- **Dynasty in Exile:** The political upheavals and wars of the revolutionary and Napoleonic period produced unprecedented waves of royal political emigration, with dynasties continuing to assert claims to their lost thrones from abroad.
- **Gender and Dynasty:** Studies of early modern Europe have shown that female members of dynasties played crucial roles at virtually all levels of politics. It has been assumed that women were increasingly excluded from the political sphere from the 1790s onwards, hence their influence during the revolutionary age remains under-explored.
- **Relations within and between Dynasties:** Major archival holdings indicate that dynasties remained as engaged in communication and negotiation both within their own ranks and with outside dynastic families, as they had earlier been as well. To what extent these interactions influenced policy and power management in the revolutionary world and beyond is an unanswered question.

Information and Submission Guidelines

Please submit a 300-word abstract and a brief academic biography (max. 100 words) to dynasty@oeaw.ac.at by 15 January 2025. Accepted papers will be notified by 18 February 2025. Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes, followed by a Q&A session.

The organization will cover the travel and accommodation costs for the panellists. This workshop is part of the FWF-funded project, “[Dynastic Continuity in an Age of Crisis? The Habsburgs in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars \(1792–1815\)](#)”. The workshop is organised by Dr. William Godsey, Dr. Stefano Poggi and Dr. Joost Welten.

For any inquiries, please contact dynasty@oeaw.ac.at.