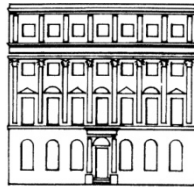


# German Historical Institute London



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Hannah Briscoe and Rebecca Lott:

*Thirteenth Workshop on Early Modern German History*

Conference Report

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*Thirteenth Workshop on Early Modern German History*, organized by the German Historical Institute London in cooperation with the German Historical Institute Washington and the German History Society, and held at the GHIL on 6 May 2016. Conveners: Bridget Heal (University of St Andrews), David Lederer (NUI Maynooth), Jenny Spinks (University of Manchester), and Michael Schaich (German Historical Institute London).

The thirteenth workshop on early modern German history, hosted by the German Historical Institute London in early May, brought together thirty-four historians from Austria, Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the USA. Participants ranged from Ph.D. students at various stages in their research to early career and established scholars. The ten papers included cultural, economic, environmental, and transnational histories, and studied a wide range of social classes, confessions, and practices from the fifteenth to the late eighteenth century, both across continental Europe and in the German Atlantic. Though diverse, the papers were organized into four thematic sessions which stimulated interesting questions and compelling dialogue amongst the participants.

The day began with a session on 'Social Elites and Learning', chaired by Jenny Spinks (Manchester). Jill Bepler (Wolfenbüttel) opened the workshop with an insightful examination of how early modern German dynastic women used the content and physical features of books for personal devotion and to exert both confessional and political authority. Women directly influenced their sons by commissioning and writing books with specific content, sometimes personalized with inscriptions or even a portrait. They also hoped that their influence would continue over later generations, and therefore created books as valuable heirloom objects with elaborate bindings, and preserved them in archives, *Kunstkammern*, libraries, and family collections. For these women, books offered a gendered space,

The full programme can be found under 'Events and Conferences' on the GHIL's website <[www.ghil.ac.uk](http://www.ghil.ac.uk)>.

documented family and social networks, and were revered as sacred objects and evidence of miracles.

Shiru Lim (UCL) gave an overview of her ongoing research regarding the public and private correspondence between monarchs and men of letters in the late eighteenth century. She explored the potency of publicness as seen through Frederick II and highlighted the presence and rivalry of multiple, sometimes oppositional publics. She looked at Frederick II's secret role in writing *Anti-Machiavel*, heavily edited by Voltaire, and how he desired to stop its publication when he became king. The open secrecy of Frederick's involvement led to criticism when his actions did not match his theory of governance. As demonstrated through his writing, correspondence, and the prize essay competition at the Berlin Academy, he desired to be both monarch and *philosophe*.

After a short break, Michael Schaich (GHIL) chaired the second session, which explored 'The Worlds of the Nobility'. Ben Pope (Durham) began the session with an outline of his recently-completed Ph.D. research on relations between townspeople and the rural nobility in late medieval Germany. He first described the movement of patricians to rural areas and underscored the significance of their resulting animosity and rivalry with townspeople. He considered the hypothesis that the perception of increased hostility gained momentum initially as part of a political programme of princes and nobles, only later becoming a common model for understanding these dynamics. He then posed questions regarding the process of identity formation, and proposed a further project to study the development of the ideas of antagonism between town and nobility in the hopes of providing new perspectives on town, nobility, and wider society.

Elena Taddei (Innsbruck) examined the relationship between the Este Dynasty in the Po valley and the Habsburgs, emphasizing their entanglement and dense network in early modern times. Her study focused on the significance of geography, cultural transfer, self-perception, and awareness of others. She described the complex network of relationships between dynasty and empire as created and maintained by material and cultural exchange through marriage, correspondence, ambassadors, visits, and gifts. Her paper was followed by an interesting discussion on the themes of strategy, gendered correspondences and presents, the relationship of the Este dynasty with France, and early modern linguistic barriers.

Christian Gepp (Vienna) provided the perspective of economic history to the workshop in his examination of eighteenth-century noble entrepreneurship in the establishment of factories. He outlined his ongoing dissertation that investigates the development of the estates Holíč and Šaštín in the Habsburg monarchy and their economic rise under Francis Stephen of Lorraine (Emperor Francis I, 1745–65). The administrations of both estates were structurally similar, and both factories had a positive economy. He stressed that the development of manufacturing was not autonomous, but should be viewed in light of a mercantilist perspective by studying accounts as a whole, rather than by year.

After enjoying a refreshing lunch and conversation, we reconvened for a session on ‘Social and Religious Practices and Attitudes’, chaired by David Lederer (NUI Maynooth). Markus Friedrich (Hamburg) presented the framework of a future project conceptualizing and writing the history of obedience. Previously studied in the context of social discipline, obedience, Friedrich alternatively suggested, has a broader and an older history, with specific early modern manifestations. Obedience in the early modern period was viewed principally as a positive value that enhanced freedom, and could be separated into three types: good (not forced), childish, and bad (mercenary) obedience. Furthermore, disobedience was sometimes a form of higher, or super-obedience—viewing oneself as obedient to God above princes. The study of obedience can thus contribute to understanding the early modern world, and provides a cross-cultural focus for the study of people in their different social constructs.

Ryan Crimmins (Oxford) presented from his ongoing research into the role of religious conviction and confession in a military context through the generalship of Gustav II Adolf and Johann Tserclaes von Tilly in the Thirty Years War. In response to both overtly confessional and religious historiography, he addressed the extent to which armies can be seen as confessional. By examining the religious infrastructure, observance, and practice in these armies, he illustrated the influential role that confession, authority, law, and morality played in battle and military structure. Religion affected the military through the piety of generals, the army consistory and chaplains, and the confessional practices of singing or chanting when entering battle. He hopes to continue to study a wide range of armies in order to understand the overall role of religion in the military during the Thirty Years War.

Contributing further to the scope of the workshop, Sky Michael Johnston (University of California, San Diego) discussed society in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century German lands as seen through people's perceptions of weather and the relationship between groups connected by weather. He suggested five potential structural themes for his research: theological views, scientific and proto-scientific understandings, popular belief and practices, actual weather events, and a comparative view of Catholic and Protestant beliefs and practices. Johnston closed with a case study of Luther's view of weather, including his lectures on Genesis as the framework of nature and his view that weather was overall a blessing that revealed God's goodness. Luther saw storms as a cosmic struggle between angels and demons who lived in clouds, rainbows as a result of God's hand, and bad weather as a curse tied to the increase in sin and the coming apocalypse.

Bridget Heal (St Andrews) chaired the fourth and final session, which centered on 'The German Atlantic'. Benjamin M. Pietrenka (University of California, Santa Cruz) examined the private and public dynamics of the Moravian *Gemeintag* (Congregation Day) services and correspondence networks throughout the early eighteenth-century Atlantic world. The *Gemeintag* service was a dialogue between preacher and congregation, and blended traditional elements of corporate worship with nontraditional personal elements, such as letters, diaries, and testimonies. In a case study of Moravian missions to Greenland, a female indigenous convert had written a letter regarding her faith. The letter, which focused on Christ as a blood-sacrifice, was then shared with Moravian congregations during their *Gemeintag* services. This blood and wounds piety served as an evangelical method for conversion, and gives insight into the spirituality, hierarchy, and communication practices of the Moravians.

James Boyd (Cambridge) concluded the workshop with his paper on the creation of German networks in the early modern Atlantic, and examined whether their impetus was religious or secular in nature. Although previous studies have argued that religion was the main influence on migration until the 1730s, he maintained that religious networks provided assistance to major commercial modes and did not drive later migration. Post 1709, Germans migrated more for economic reasons, and went to Pennsylvania because of the established government and trade hubs. He emphasized the importance of

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credit-based travel available to German immigrants, largely promoted by Johann Christoph Saur in Germantown and supported by Caspar Wistar, who bought land and instituted a commercial transit system. He therefore concluded that it is not suitable to generalize the importance of religious networks.

This was another successful and rewarding workshop, with engaging contributions from all participants on diverse topics, geographies, and chronologies. Each paper was followed by lively discussion and stimulating questions that both challenged and encouraged the presenters. Overall, the day provided an insightful survey of both recent scholarship and developing approaches to early modern German history and drew on common themes such as material culture and power relations. After its September 2016 meeting at the University of Newcastle, the German History Society will meet next in September 2017 at the University of St Andrews. We are hoping for a very strong early modern presence. For further details, see the website <<http://www.germanhistorysociety.org/conference/>>.

HANNAH BRISCOE (St Andrews)

REBECCA LOTT (St Andrews)