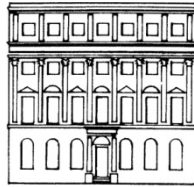


# German Historical Institute London



## BULLETIN

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*Eleventh Workshop on Early Modern Central European History*  
Conference Report

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*Eleventh Workshop on Early Modern Central European History*, co-organized by the German Historical Institute London and the German History Society, and held at the GHIL on 15 November 2013. Conveners: Bridget Heal (University of St Andrews), David Lederer (NUI Maynooth), and Angela Schattner (GHIL).

The German Historical Institute London once again hosted the annual workshop on early modern central European history, which brought together a total of thirty-four scholars working on aspects of early modern German history. Eleven papers, presented by participants from Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the USA, ranged widely thematically and chronologically, covering topics as diverse as micro-republics in Germany and Switzerland, notions of trust and mistrust in the Holy Roman Empire, and the transfer of saints' relics from Rome to Bavaria. Methodologically, approaches were equally broad, ranging from socio-political assessments of mining cities to global aspects of early modern writing, from anthropological analyses of blood and kinship to studies of early modern childhood through children's histories, and from musicology to literary analyses.

The first panel, on Trust, Political Culture, and Spatiality, opened with a paper by Hannes Ziegler (Ludwig Maximilian University Munich) which drew attention to notions of trust and mistrust in the Holy Roman Empire between the Augsburg Peace of 1555 and the beginning of the Thirty Years War in 1618. Trust played an important part in shaping and appropriating religious and political differences in an age of confessional co-existence. As a concept it not only impacted on the perception of others and political discourses, but was utilized to influence politics. Franziska Neumann (University of Dresden) employed tools of the 'new cultural history' and 'cultural history of politics' to analyse mining cities in the East German *Erzgebirge*. Neumann stressed the importance of complicating our understanding of cities and argued that mining cities offered a particularly telling example of the interaction of different power stakeholders whose varied interests and politics influenced the urban fabric. By looking for common 'mining values' and triangulating the

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

political culture of these cities through inclusion of territorial lords, urban authorities, and miners, Neumann argued that we could gain an accurate picture of the complexity of these cities in the early modern period. Beat Kümin (University of Warwick) provided a fascinating account of early modern micro-republics. Drawing attention to their unusual degree of autonomy in places such as Dithmarschen, Gersau as well as imperial free villages in central Germany and shedding light on the foundation, appropriation, and repercussions of this urban independence, Kümin pointed out that these particular examples call into question notions of state-building and confessionalization and concluded by asking whether an alternative 'early modernity' existed within the Empire. Susanne Rau (University of Erfurt) delivered the final paper in the session with an analysis of urban spaces and how spatial relations were perceived by travellers and walkers. Presenting a part of her research project on early modern urbanization as a spatio-temporal process, Rau found that notions of time moving forward in a linear fashion cannot be applied satisfactorily to space and spatiality. Focusing on Barcelona as a case study, Rau argued that notions of space in an urban context, which can be reconstructed through travelogues, can only be studied successfully if attention is paid to narrative constructions and an individual's subjective agenda and background.

The second session focused on religious culture. Noria Litaker (University of Pennsylvania) presented findings of her dissertation project on the practice of moving martyrs' relics from Roman catacombs discovered in the late sixteenth century to Bavaria and other regions of the Empire. She struck a fine balance between the presentation of relics on a local level and the use of catacomb saints in a broader national and international Counter-Reformation. Although requested and bought by local rulers and clerical elites, the saints, frequently presented in splendid manner and adorned with gold, jewels, and silver, were included in local and regional traditions and could form an important part of local identity. In the second part of her paper Litaker also shed light on the visual representation of the saints as Roman soldiers in pamphlets and broadsheets. The evidence presented suggests there was a conscious Catholic attempt to reinforce clerical doctrine by sending catacomb saints in a number of different appropriations and variations to the whole of Europe. Matthew Laube (Royal Holloway, University of London) continued

the session with a paper entitled 'Minding the Gap: Music, Authority, and Confession in Heidelberg, 1556–1618'. He investigated the construction of Calvinist, Lutheran, and Catholic confessional identities through the use of music in a city which experienced a particularly turbulent era between 1556 and 1618. Through the oscillation between Lutheran and Calvinist rulers, Heidelberg was particularly prone to confessional change. Laube argued that the confessionalization thesis has to be refined in the case of Heidelberg as Lutherans, Catholics, and Calvinists borrowed heavily from each other in their hymn books, and religious music was not imposed in order to form a coherent and self-contained confessional society. Linnéa Rowlatt (University of Kent/Free University of Berlin) gave an account of Johann Geiler von Keyzersberg's perception of the weather and environment in Strasburg during the Little Ice Age. By analysing the last recorded sermons of the Catholic preacher von Keyzersberg, Rowlatt traced the preacher's wish to inform and educate his listeners about extreme weather conditions and provide them with remedies for it. In an age of extreme weather (1473–1550), such advice was highly welcome. Strikingly, however, Geiler did not illustrate his sermons with metaphors about weather or point to bad weather conditions as divine punishment.

Allyson Creasman (Carnegie Mellon University) opened the final session of the workshop on Society and Language with an account of insult and slander in early modern Germany. Creasman analysed cases of slander and insult in the criminal and civil courts of early modern Germany, focusing especially on notions of gender, honour, and civic identity. Creasman argued that accusations of insult and slander were normally tried in secular courts of mixed jurisdiction and not clerical ones. Rather than the assumed centrality of women's sexuality for an individual's honour, Creasman found in a representative analysis of civic court records that the reputation of both men and women rested on economic, social, and cultural factors, as well as their sexual reputation. Abaigéal Warfield (University of St Andrews) shared her research on witchcraft, infanticide, and the midwife-witch in the early modern German *Hexenzeitungen*, which formed part of her doctoral studies. Warfield investigated the rumours that witches killed infants for their rituals and used them for spells and magic potions. While recently historians have found that not many midwives were actually tried for witchcraft, Warfield

argued that the stereotype was nonetheless heavily publicized and communicated, especially in news reports (*Neue Zeitungen*). Even if not many midwives were therefore persecuted, the myth of the midwife-witch was a powerful and ever-present stereotype. Discourses of incest were the topic of David Sabeian's (University of California) paper. By applying the concept of 'kinship', pioneered by Sabeian in a historical context, he traced broader societal and cultural changes including sibling relations, families, and ideas about blood. These concepts of familial relations and blood were then traced to legal texts and biblical hermeneutics. Taking the long seventeenth century, Sabeian illuminated how newly constructed notions of kinship revolved around lineages, vertical relationships, and rules of exogamy. Claudia Jarzebowski (Free University of Berlin) concluded the workshop with a paper on 'World Hi/stories for Children in the Eighteenth Century'. World histories for children—the intended audience was both adults and infants—have to be seen in connection with broader Enlightenment education and new perceptions of the world at large. Jarzebowski identified two types of world histories for children: one which depicted European superiority, and one more conciliatory and inclusive kind. Authors of the latter type tended to have travelled extensively and possessed connections around the world, through communication networks, trade, and personal ties; while authors of the former kind usually gained their knowledge from books and second-hand accounts.

A final discussion amongst all participants concluded that the workshop had brought to the fore many important current issues in early modern German and central European research and had been intellectually highly stimulating for all involved. Amongst others, these issues included the continuing popularity of the history of emotions, the return to a focus on individuals' perceptions of religious and political change, and the negotiation involved in many early modern processes. Participants felt that the great variety and diversity of presentations, many of which examined entirely different topics, led to fruitful discussions and the opportunity to approach their own research in novel and innovative ways. It remains to be hoped that the extremely informative and productive workshop will continue for many years to come.

MARTIN CHRIST (Oxford)