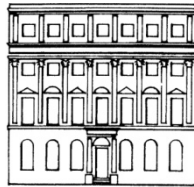


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Hannes Ziegler:

Fourteenth Workshop on Early Modern German History

Conference Report

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Fourteenth Workshop on Early Modern German History, organized by the German Historical Institute London in co-operation with the German History Society and the German Historical Institute Washington, and held at the GHIL on 11 May 2018. Conveners: Bridget Heal (University of St Andrews), Katherine Hill (Birkbeck, University of London), David Lederer (NUI Maynooth), Alison Rowlands (University of Essex), and Hannes Ziegler (GHIL).

This workshop on early modern German history—the fourteenth since 2002—was held at the German Historical Institute in London and brought together scholars from England, Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Israel, and Germany. As in previous years, an open call for papers was issued and a few invitations were extended to scholars from Germany. The one-day workshop was attended by as many guests and discussants (including visitors from Oxford and Nottingham universities) as active participants. True to the ideals of the workshop, the setting was fairly informal and focused on the open discussion of ongoing research, methodological problems, and projects (as well as books) in the making. Rather than being pressed into a coherent framework, the ten papers presented were loosely organized into thematic sections around topics such as news and the newspaper, political culture, religious cultures, and communal cultures. One particularly welcome feature was that several papers also ventured outside the period usually denominated as early modern and thus presented the opportunity to discuss transformations and changes from the late medieval to the modern period.

The day started with a session on news chaired by Alison Rowlands (Essex). Richard Calis (Princeton) presented part of his doctoral dissertation in a paper on the credibility of news from the Ottoman Empire in the micro-historical setting of the household of the Tübingen scholar Martin Crucius (1527–1606). Drawing on the extensive documentation of Crucius’s interviews and conversations with travellers and pilgrims from Ottoman-controlled Greece, Calis developed the notion of an ‘economy of trust’ that regulated—through various formal and informal codes and conventions, often in written form—the exchange of news in cross-cultural encounters within the

The full conference programme can be found under ‘Events and Conferences’ on the GHIL’s website <www.ghil.ac.uk>.

Crucius household. Calis focused on material culture in particular because, he suggested, it indicated the ways in which Crucius aimed to establish trust in individual Greek travellers and the news they brought. Calis concentrated especially on Crucius's astonishing scrutiny of personal appearance (dress, language, and so on) and material evidence, such as seals and letters of recommendation.

The exchange of news was also the focus in Jan Hillgaertner's (St Andrews) paper, albeit in the more formal setting of printed newspapers. In recounting the history of written newspapers from their invention in early seventeenth-century Strasbourg, Hillgaertner aimed to emphasize the often overlooked advantages of newspapers as historical sources while highlighting the limitations of working with these documents. After presenting a statistical analysis of the spread and development of newspapers throughout the seventeenth century and patterns in the reporting of British news in German and Dutch newspapers, Hillgaertner emphasized potential problems and limitations. These included the subsequent loss of seventeenth-century newspapers and obvious omissions and errors in reporting at the time. Errors, however, also present an interesting starting point for further research as they are indicative of the speed of travelling news, patterns of reporting, reader experiences, and potentially even orchestrated false news campaigns.

The second session, chaired by David Lederer (Maynooth), evolved around symbolic communication and political culture. Ulrike Ludwig (Frankfurt/Main) presented a synopsis of her recently published monograph on the duel in the Holy Roman Empire. She argued that the concept of the duel familiar to modern observers is a product of the nineteenth century rather than a suitable model for early modern conflicts of honour. Thus the duel as an analytical concept is of little use in making sense of the varieties of these conflicts, as it denotes a narrow idea of conflict with highly standardized and formalized features that fails to grasp early modern realities. Ludwig therefore chose to start from the word itself rather than applying a problematic analytical concept. She pursued the idea of the duel from early sixteenth-century Italy to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany, highlighting French influences in narrowing the legal definition of a duel. This subsequent narrowing and formalizing of the concept in the nineteenth century went hand in hand, she argued, with the invention of a tradition that is still influential in current debates.

Crawford Matthews (Hull) presented part of his ongoing research on British–Prussian relations in the context of the acquisition of royal status by Frederick I of Prussia. In a close focus on the ‘Dreikönigstreffen’ held in Potsdam and Berlin in 1709, Matthews argued that Frederick aimed to use the occasion of a visit by the kings of Denmark and Poland to enact his royal status in the presence of the two visitors. In doing so, he relied especially on the British ambassador, Baron Raby, who developed various ceremonial occasions to highlight the king’s royal rank, such as a christening in Potsdam, seating arrangements at the dinner table, and the presentation of valuable objects in the residence of the ambassador. In addition to demonstrating Frederick’s equal rank vis-à-vis the two other monarchs, Matthews argued that the ceremonial expenditures at Raby’s residence, and his status as a representative of the British monarch transformed the meeting – albeit only temporarily – into a meeting of four monarchs.

The final paper of this session also focused on a Prussian monarch. Adam Storing (Cambridge) analysed the motives of Frederick the Great of Prussia in portraying himself as personally in charge of the leadership of his army throughout his early reign, especially during the Silesian campaign in 1740 and in the War of the Austrian Succession. He argued that Frederick followed ideas of traditional kingship, as represented particularly by Louis XIV of France, while at the same time reacting to Enlightenment ideas formulated and transmitted by Voltaire. Beyond his well-known emulation of Louis’s cultural patronage, Frederick was also influenced by military ideas of traditional kingship discussed by Voltaire. In seeking to achieve Voltaire’s notion of the *grande homme*, Frederick explicitly sought recognition on the basis of his military success, which was most explicitly attached to the idea of personal leadership in battle.

Catherine Hill (London) opened the third session of the day with a focus on religious cultures in early modern Germany. Ahuva Liberles Noiman (Jerusalem) presented findings from her ongoing Ph.D. research on the problem of conversion to Christianity in the fifteenth-century Jewish community of Regensburg. She asks how conversion affected the relationships between Jews and Christians in a late medieval urban microcosm and how the converts’ ties with their social networks changed and were re-arranged through the act of converting. Through the micro-historical lens of a biographical study

of Kalman, the cantor at Regensburg before 1470, Noiman illustrated the difficulties faced by converts on the threshold of baptism. In a liminal position between Christianity and Judaism, Kalman was perceived as a spiritual threat to the Jewish community. Yet his position also offered distinct advantages, for example, as a composer of religious polemics based on his intimate knowledge of both religions. Cases such as Kalman's thus offer valuable insights for understanding Jewish community life and the problems of religious and social belonging in the midst of a predominantly Christian society.

Social and religious ties in the context of a religious community were also the focus of Edmund Wareham's (Oxford) paper. Drawing on a unique collection of surviving letters written by the Benedictine nuns of Lüne, comprising a corpus of 1,800 letters dating from between 1460 and 1555, Wareham analysed the reaction of the Lüne nuns to the introduction of the Reformation by the Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg in the 1530s. Apart from providing valuable insights into women's writing in relation to the Reformation, this process also sheds light, Wareham argued, on the problematic concept and critical status of religious vows in the tumultuous years of the early Reformation period. Looking at various aspects such as the performative and transformative function of vows, especially in the context of religious life in sixteenth-century Germany, Wareham ultimately outlined first ideas for a broad study of vows in early modern Germany drawing on various social contexts that can be fruitfully analysed by looking closely at how vows were conceptualized, rejected, or re-affirmed.

The final paper in this session, delivered by Yanan Qizhi (Pennsylvania State University), focused on dreams and dream interpretations in early modern Lutheranism. Following the career of individual Lutheran preachers from six generations of German Lutheranism, from the early Reformation period to the late Pietist movement of the mid eighteenth century, Qizhi proposed to study dreams within the cultural and historical contexts of these writers and their everyday experiences rather than in a grand narrative of a history of ideas as in existing research. One aim of her research is to explore the discrepancy between the public dismissal of the value of dreams by early reformers (Luther and Melancthon, among others) and the immense value these writers attached to dreams personally. For the purpose of her study, Qizhi highlighted the value of ego-

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documents for researchers studying the meanings and interpretations attached to individual dreams as this type of writing was particularly relevant to the Lutheran communities.

The final session on communal cultures, chaired by Bridget Heal (St Andrews), opened with a paper by Philip Hahn (Tübingen) on a forthcoming book about sensory communities. Taking the early modern town of Ulm as a case study, he illustrated how discussions in both urban and sensory history can benefit from a micro-historical analysis of urban sensory cultures. The 'urban sense-scape', Hahn argued, was highly instrumental in ritual performative community-building. He stressed the importance of understanding senses as subject to historical change, and not only embedded in specific contexts but intricately connected to each other in a way that could be termed 'inter-sensoriality'. Hahn then outlined the structure of his monograph, in which he highlights the changing patterns of perceiving and sensing the city, changing forms of sensory perceptions, especially in terms of perceived dangers, and the community's reactions to this in matters of policy. The senses, Hahn concluded, thus not only contribute to the understanding of urban community-building, but also offer opportunities to study long-term changes beyond established chronological boundaries of historical research.

Finally, Ansgar Schanbacher (Göttingen) offered insights into his post-doctoral project on natural hazards and resource management in early modern cities. In explicitly combining scholarly discourses on technical and medical solutions and everyday practices of city authorities and inhabitants, Schanbacher aimed to evaluate the reactions of various actors to natural hazards and scarcity. As a focus of his research, Schanbacher chose the three medium-sized cities of Braunschweig, Utrecht, and Würzburg, whose different social, economic, and political settings offer opportunities for comparisons. While the project encompasses issues such as gardens and urban agriculture, and natural disasters such as floods, fire, storms, and disease, Schanbacher presented his initial findings concentrating on the supply of firewood and peat. Here he showed how the authorities of the three cities reacted to problems of scarcity in very different ways during the same period, from 1650 to 1800, ranging from free trade policies to specific ordinances and regulations in times of crisis. Schanbacher ultimately portrayed early modern cities as eco-systems subject to specific contexts and historical change.

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All told, the papers presented at the workshop reflected different phases of research from the very early stages to recently completed projects and monographs. At the same time, they indicated major findings, addressed methodological problems, or pitched new conceptual ideas. In doing so, they fully lived up to the basic idea of the workshop, which is to provide a platform for discussing ongoing research on early modern Germany and encouraging exchange between scholars working on different areas and themes. Unsurprisingly, this focus helped to stimulate an open and lively discussion that highlighted connections and contradictions between the papers in a critical and fruitful way. As in previous years, it was an interesting and productive day providing much food for further thought and debate.

HANNES ZIEGLER (German Historical Institute London)