



Günther Schulz, Markus A. Denzel. *Deutscher Adel im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Büdinger Forschungen zur Sozialgeschichte 2002 und 2003.* St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 2004. 540 S. EUR 48.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-89590-145-4.

Reviewed by J. Trygve Has-Ellison (University of Texas at Dallas)

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It's Still Alive! BÜDINGER GESPRÄCHE after Thirty-seven Years

Günther Schulz and Markus Denzel's edited volume evaluates nobles' encounters with and mediation of change from the Napoleonic era through the first half of the twentieth century in Germany and Austria. This volume continues the work started by Heinz Reif, and furthered by other academics, many of whom are represented in this volume. The overall theme—the relationship of the central European nobility to modernization—is explored in two interrelated ways: by considering the influence of the normative landscape of noble family institutions on today's society and by examining the internal and often transformational process that forced many different nobles into an accommodation with the bourgeois world. Many themes reach beyond the specific German/Austrian experience with modernity, and suggest other European-wide possibilities, while some of these essays are recapitulations of specific themes in previous research. Besides the aforementioned inclusion of Austrian historians in the volume, the contributions vary between a focus on the former ruling houses, the mediated high nobility and the lower nobility. Further, various regional nobles (Bavaria, Mecklenburg, Saxony) are treated as well as the usual Prussian suspects.

Eckart Conze begins the volume with a chapter outlining the major theoretical concerns of researchers in the field. Consistently with his own work, Conze argues that research on the nobility only attains historical significance when related to broader social history. In other words, any historical investigation of the nobility needs to be anchored in larger processes, and in-

formed by the same methodology used to great effect by social and cultural historians of the middle and working classes. Hannes Stekl's chapter on the Austrian nobility steps away from theory and methodology to outline the history of the Austrian nobility after World War I. Stekl's article is particularly noteworthy for its ability to bring together disparate research on the high and low nobility during the first Republic, National Socialism and the Cold War. It is also a case study of the survival techniques of a former elite disenfranchised in a hostile political climate.

After Conze and Stekl's introductory essays, the rest of the volume is divided into three sections. The first, and most cohesive section, entitled "Ästhetik," elucidates the theme of noble culture in Prussia during the Napoleonic era. Ewald Frie, in a superb article on aristocratic culture in Brandenburg, starts from the premise that nobles and culture in the Hohenzollern lands has been considered a "phantom" (p. 84) at best, and laughable at worst. By investigating the life and literary output of Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, Heinrich von Kleist and Ludwig von der Marwitz, Frie asserts that nobles in Brandenburg were grounded in a military mentality, but this could be transcended through a will to leadership in other fields. Frie confirms what many modern aristocratic autobiographies have always stated: one's profession did not matter as much as one's position of leadership within the profession. It was permissible for a Prussian noble to be a novelist, but artistic mediocrity was unacceptable. Likewise, Jochen Strobel's article on nobles and authorship in 1800 posits the notion of "defensive modernization"

(p. 108) in relation to nobles and culture. This meant, among other things, an accommodation with *Bildung*, as well as an attempt to link tradition with modernity. According to Strobel, the Janus-faced quality of the nineteenth century noble can be clearly interpreted in Heinrich von Kleist's *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* (1811).

The book's second section, "Vermögen und Einkommen," revolves around the themes of nobles, land ownership, and finances. Ilona Buchsteiner's study of land ownership among the Mecklenburg nobility in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century concludes that a slight majority of estates were in the hands of the middle class by 1867. This state of affairs divided the nobility into a landed, wealthy minority and a landless majority. Although Mecklenburg was the feudal and reactionary German state par excellence in the nineteenth century, nobles there experienced the same separation from the land and the same growth of a small elite of large landowners as in many other German states, such as Bavaria, an informal pattern of landholding that mirrored the English system. Axel Flügel comes to the same conclusion in his article on noble estates in Saxony before 1866. Marcus Ventzke's work on the evolution of the finances at the court of Saxe-Weimar between 1806 and 1849 theorizes that the image of classical Weimar was consciously propagated and financially supported by the grand ducal family, so much so that eventually the state finances needed to be reformed. Siegfried Grillmeyer's essay on the Thurn und Taxis asserts that the *Standesherren* adapted to the changes of mediatization by retreating to the countryside or former capital cities (villages generally) in order to shore up their symbolic capital. This tactical retreat was balanced with a practical involvement in the political realm of their respective states, in an attempt to protect their remaining assets and rights. Karl Heinrich Kaufhold concludes this section with a discussion of the attempted expropriation of the former ruling families' property during the Weimar Republic.

The trials, tribulations and strategies that informed the parameters of aristocratic experience with various modernities comprise section 3, "Soziale Einbindung und gesellschaftliches Selbstverständnis." This section is the least cohesive, and to me, the pairing of essays about the interpretation of noble diaries and letters (by Josef Matzerath and Silke Marburg) with the situation of the former ruling families of Austria-Hungary and Bavaria during the Republican and National Socialist eras (by

Matthias Stickler and Dieter Weiss) fails the logic test. Karina Urbach, Christoph Franke, Konstantions Raptis and Stephan Malinowski's essays have all appeared in one form or another elsewhere. Although their articles consider various strategies of maintaining status and power, the essays do not blend well together. Arguably, Urbach's, Raptis's and Marie-Emmanuelle Reytier's essays (on southern German *Standesherren*, the Austrian Princes Harrach and the Princes Löwenstein, respectively), could have been grouped together in a section with Grillmeyer's work. If, after all, the mediatized imperial families continued to try and maintain political, economic, social and cultural capital after 1806, what difference does it make if one author writes about the nineteenth century and the other three on the twentieth? Similarly, Matzerath's analysis of the mental world of a nineteenth-century noble would have worked well with Frie and Strobel's work on noble culture: mentality history is cultural history. Malinowski's essay on the radicalization of the noble proletariat in the Weimar Republic is marooned in this volume. Where is the context that will give it resonance? It is true that historians of the nobility need to anchor their work in greater society, but who will care if we cannot cohesively and clearly organize our own findings and tell a story that makes teleological and theoretical sense?

Edited volumes have their idiosyncrasies. This book is no exception. The inclusion of Austrian specialists with German historians helps bridge the artificial divide between the nobility of both empires. Too often, historians of the nobility have internalized a Borussian perspective long after its usefulness as a paradigm has evaporated. Schulz and Denzel are to be congratulated for extending the boundaries of philosophic enquiry to an expansive central European milieu. Likewise, the volume starts off well with the first two essays by Conze and Stekl— unquestionably experts on nobles in Germany and Austria during the twentieth century. After this promising start, however, the volume meanders down many paths, without a satisfactory premise that binds the essays together. This problem is due to the organization of the volume, rather than the intrinsic merits of the authors' contributions. That said, many articles in this volume are either further elaborations or repackaged versions of ideas that have appeared in other settings. If one has already purchased Conze's or Matzerath's edited volumes on the nobility, few new insights remain to be garnered here. I would recommend this volume to specialists only.

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