



**Patrick Schmidt, Horst Carl, eds.** *Stadtgemeinde und Ständegesellschaft: Formen der Integration und Distinktion in der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt.* Berlin: Lit, 2007. 260 pp. ISBN 978-3-8258-9673-7.

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## Representing Social Organization in the Early Modern German City

Patrick Schmidt and Horst Carl's edited collection draws its contributions from a 2005 conference entitled "Ständische Erinnerungskulturen in der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt." The authors set out to test the utility of the related categories of integration and distinction. The contributors prefer these terms to the more common (and binary) distinction between integration and disintegration. The latter pair carries unhelpful normative assumptions and fails to account for the integrative function of distinction in hierarchical early modern society. In the realm of social ideals, each social group within the early modern city had distinctive characteristics that positioned it in a natural hierarchical relationship to other groups in an integrated social order. At the level of social reality, groups attempted to distinguish themselves to improve their rank in the civic rituals that presented a symbolic representation of the integrated social order. The volume emphasizes the importance of symbolic communication as a way for groups to negotiate and contest issues of rank and status in a hierarchical society where social position was fixed in principle but not in reality. The authors divided the essays into two sections. The first four essays consider the role that symbolic performances and representations of the social order played in effecting social integration and distinction. The second four essays explore social acts in daily life that produced distinction and integration. Taken together, and with some reservations, the essays effectively demonstrate the utility of this particu-

lar grouping of terms for understanding the early modern city.

In the first essay in the section on symbolic representation of social order, Marian Füssel chronicles the struggles of Freiburg to assert its authority over the university and student nobility during the city's annual Corpus Christi procession. As Füssel notes, processions in early modern cities represented the social order dynamically and had to be constituted anew every year to reflect shifting social realities. Processions were unambiguous, zero-sum events. Only one person or group could occupy a position in the assemblage, and the elevation of one party required the demotion of another. These factors combined to produce intense competition among social groups over proximity to the consecrated host at the center of the procession. Füssel documents how (except for a brief period when the French occupied the city) the city council consistently lost in this struggle. The university's status as a wealthy, legally autonomous corporation challenged that of the city council, and the growing power of territorial lordships constituted political and economic realities too strong for the city council to resist. Ritual representation ultimately had to bow to social reality, and the city council, much to its chagrin, eventually found itself marching behind the gymnasium students, barely in front of the guilds.

Focusing similarly on ritual, Ulrich Rosseaux opens up a relatively new area of research into the integrative

rituals of residence towns in early modern Germany. A complex series of rituals was created to emphasize the differences between citizens and the members of princes' legally autonomous households. Princes, however, were well aware of the value of social harmony, and in Dresden, the Saxon elector helped establish a festival that served to integrate the disparate social groups. The *Vogelschießen* was a carnivalesque fair that centered on an archery competition in which all those paying the entry fee attempted to shoot apart wooden birds. The elector often took part in person and mixed freely with other competitors, whose place in the shooting order, after the elector and the victor of the previous competition, was determined by lot. Artisans who could not afford the fee played games of chance for household items. Even peasants from the city's administrative jurisdiction could play rustic games of skill. Although the festival emphasized the themes of equality and integration, at the same time it symbolically strengthened the reality of social distinction. The presence of a fool spouting egalitarian sayings, the clown-like *Pickelhering* figure, and grotesque, rude characters from rural life all mark the festival as a carnival, as a world-turned-upside-down. The carnival-world of the *Vogelschießen* thereby represented only a temporary suspension of the genuine world of hierarchy and social distinction.

In a further contribution on ritual that incorporates texts and images as well, Ruth Schilling explores the relationship between the magisterial trajectory of early modern city councils and communal representations of contemporary civic life. Using Venice and a trio of Hanseatic cities as examples, she seeks to uncover the relationship between cultural representation and social reality in cities that preserved their civic liberties in the face of the growing power of neighboring territorial states. In both Venice and the Hanseatic cities, Schilling identifies a deterioration of group solidarity over the course of the sixteenth century. In the former case, the development stemmed from intense competition for status among the patrician classes and a common resentment of the monarchical trappings the doge assumed during the ceremonial crowning of his wife. In the latter, strife between older and younger guild members and the Reformation's undermining of civic confraternities led to a fragmentation of social groups. Given that integration in early modern society generally assumed the existence of distinct, cohesive social groups placed in proper relation to each other, this disintegration changed the nature of integrative images and rituals. Emphasis shifted from representations of individual social groups to representations of the so-

cial body as a whole. This change did not reflect attempts by early modern magistrates symbolically to undermine semi-autonomous corporations within the city in order to create an undifferentiated mass of subjects. Rather, internal tensions coupled with a desire to present an outward image of united military, economic, and technological strength produced a shift by the end of the sixteenth century in the ways these cities represented their societies.

Further exploring the specific role of artisan groups in social representations, Patrick Schmidt describes how guilds used forms of collective memory to achieve integration and distinction, both within their ranks and with respect to the social order. Artisans received their position in the social hierarchy through guild membership, which was relative both to other guilds and to broader social groups. Schmidt devotes the largest part of his analysis to the founding stories guilds used to assert their distinctiveness and antiquity and thereby integrate into the social order at a favorable rank. In some stories, the group had received a special privilege or insignia from the emperor as a reward for services. Other stories traced the origins of the handicraft to a mythological or biblical origin. In part, these stories should be considered within the context of status struggles among the guilds. Schmidt emphasizes that guilds from cities that had integrated them into the political system generally did not develop such histories; guilds in cities that excluded them from political life did so. Although it is risky to make a positive argument based on negative evidence, Schmidt suggests that guilds developed these stories to assert their social value and dignity in the face of civic elites that accorded them minimal respect.

Concluding the first group of essays, Patrick Oelze focuses on border conflicts between Schwäbisch Hall and neighboring territorial lords to emphasize the role that dramatic or symbolic events played in negotiating and asserting rights in early modern jurisdictional conflict. The city council contended with lords who asserted the right to patrol areas under common jurisdiction, attempted to establish hunting rights within the city limits, or insisted that jurisdiction over a border river should be divided in mid-stream. Oelze argues that the expense and hassle of lawsuits channeled border claims by Schwäbisch Hall and its neighbors into competitions via public acts intended to solidify their claims (such as a local count attempting to hunt through Schwäbisch Hall, or an urban official preventing a lord's subjects from rescuing a drowning man in a boundary river). Such dramatic gestures created precedent within the collective mem-

ory that could be used to bolster one's position in subsequent negotiations or assertions. Oelze concludes that this process helped Schwäbisch Hall integrate its territorial subjects into a single sociopolitical order enclosed by defined boundaries. Indeed, in the examples cited villagers emerge as vigorous defenders of the city's jurisdictional claims, strangely developing a trans-local identity centered around the jurisdictional rights of the city council.

Philip Hoffmann's contribution starts off the second group of essays, which center on the theme of daily life. Hoffmann documents changes in L beck's mechanisms of political integration as evidence that the city's political structure underwent substantial alteration between the early fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries. He argues that in a complex social system, integration cannot be equated with concord or harmonious cooperation. Rather, it means reducing the autonomy of social sub-systems and mitigating uncertainty about the outcome of their internal communications by creating a communication network and negotiation norms. He applies this model to seventeenth-century L beck. When L beck faced a blockade by the Denmark in 1612 and a need for more tax revenue, the city council eventually felt compelled to call together representatives of the city's merchant and large artisanal corporate bodies. After being informed of the situation, the representatives returned to their corporations, where they established consensus among the members and then returned individually to notify the city council. An early fifteenth-century conflict over additional taxation demonstrates that L beck had once employed a very different mechanism of integration. In this earlier crisis, a communal assembly had been called to function as the central organ for communication, deliberation, and decision making. Distinct corporate bodies played only a marginal role in the process. Under this system, the whole political body was integrated as a unit through the assembly, which also communicated directly with the city council. In considering the factors that precipitated a transition from this form of integration to one built on networks of communication and negotiation among discrete corporate bodies, Hoffmann points a bit vaguely to the Reformation. He also suggests that structural weaknesses inherent to the fifteenth-century system (when a communal assembly was in session, economic life ceased, but when it dissolved, political life came to a halt) precipitated the development of corporate bodies whose leaders could communicate members' interests.

Writing similarly about the negotiation of intra-

urban conflict, Thomas Weller seeks to account for a pronounced increase in status conflicts in mid-seventeenth-century Leipzig. While conflicts between city council and university (as well as within these bodies) remained constant throughout the early modern period, Weller asserts that territorial state-building injected a new element into the mix. Over the latter half of the seventeenth century, the Saxon electors imposed on Leipzig's city council the obligation to elevate the civic rank of an increasing number of court administrators. The electors thereby created a new source of symbolic capital to bestow on those entering their service and simultaneously asserted ultimate authority to arrange Leipzig's hierarchical order as they saw fit (a claim made explicit in 1701). The result of this decision was a sharp increase in the scope and intensity of the conflict surrounding urban ritual events.

New social groups vying for status are also the subject of the essay by Christian Hochmuth, who offers a status report on an ongoing research project on the varying approaches that the Dresden city council and the Saxon territorial administration took towards the presence of Italian merchants selling colonial goods in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dresden. Whereas territorial officials generally supported the sale of colonial products (especially coffee) and their consumption by local residents, the city council (with the support of local merchants and dealers) sought to limit the presence of foreign merchants and the consumption of foreign products. Using arguments also employed against Huguenots, it maintained that foreign merchants harmed local shopkeepers and took money out of local hands, as well as objecting to the foreign, exotic nature of the products. The council articulated fears that coffee was harming local industry by replacing beer as the preferred drink and that the common man was disrupting the social order by freely consuming a status-conferring product. Territorial officials, however, valued the expertise of the foreign merchants and maintained that their contacts helped expand the market for Saxon goods. By the end of the eighteenth century, tensions dissipated as Italian merchants integrated into society to such an extent that they were able to join with local merchants to lodge a common complaint against "foreign" lemon dealers from Austria.

Although a few of these authors were forced to make a strenuous, if nonetheless good faith effort to tie their articles to the theme of integration and distinction (Oelze, Hochmuth), most contributors use the concept fruitfully as the central interpretative device in their articles. This result allows us to answer in the affirmative the ques-

tion posed in the introduction—whether this pairing of terms can be useful for early modern historians. They are useful because their relationship to each other is flexible and ambiguous, representing at times clashing social forces, at times co-operating social forces, and sometimes both simultaneously. However, it is challenging to separate early modern city dwellers' attempts to effect integration and distinction from symbolic commu-

nication. Even the last four essays, which were to focus on daily social activity, could not avoid discussing symbolic communication. This volume demonstrates clearly (although perhaps not intentionally) that symbolic discourse was the primary mechanism through which residents of early modern cities negotiated questions of integration and distinction.

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