

**B. Ann Tlusty.** *The Martial Ethic in Early Modern Germany: Civic Duty and the Right of Arms.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 384 pp. \$125.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-230-30551-9.

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This monograph is part of a growing body of research on early modern Germany's military history. Over the last twenty years, these works on the Holy Roman Empire have finally laid to rest the old drum-and-bugle accounts of yesteryear. Researchers since the 1990s have also gone beyond the focus on social history common since the 1960s and 1970s.[1] Indeed, Tlusty's work fits squarely into what has recently been described as cultural military history.[2]

The author examines in detail the relationship of men to their weapons--keeping, bearing, and resorting to arms "as daily practice"--in several southern German towns from the fifteenth through the eighteenth century (p. 7). That way, the book takes an in-depth look at the martial values of this period. Most of the author's findings focus on free imperial cities such as Augsburg, Nördlingen, Frankfurt a.M., Nuremberg, Rothenburg ob der Tauber, or Memmingen. The author, however, also compares her findings in these cities to what happened in other areas governed by territorial princes.

The book also sets itself apart from a long historiography primarily concerned with professional soldiers and their standing mercenary armies. Recruitment, social composition, garrison life, and other similar topics have been the focus for many military histories of the early modern period

since the 1960s. Tlusty broadens our view because she focuses on individual weapons ownership and civic defenses in cities. But she does so not from an institutional perspective. Rather, she asks, "Who had the right to bear arms, who was required to do so, who was forbidden or discourages from using weapons?" (p. 3). Answering these questions leads her to a convincing and complex argument, subtly laid out over nine well-written chapters (plus a conclusion) bursting with information gleamed from countless original sources. Additionally, the entire account is richly illustrated.

In short, Tlusty argues that few households in German cities were not stocked with arms. Few men walked the streets without a sword at their side in this period. Mostly for defensive purposes, cities had required the heads of households for a long time to maintain and keep weapons. Men who failed to bear arms were fined, even banished, or imprisoned. They could also lose their citizenship. In other words, ownership of weapons actually went beyond mere security and policing purposes. Tlusty describes a developing weapons culture that was associated with "householding, citizenship, and a martial ethic" (p. 2).

This focus on individual men and the practice of arms keeping and use opens our eyes to the fact that weapons were much more than just tools

or means to resolve violent conflicts. What we see in Thusty's work is that weapons were also a means to negotiate with those above and below in society, as well as laterally. Weapon ownership strengthened gender ties, forged communities, provided confessional bonds, and fostered local patriotism. Thereby, it also slowed the consolidation of absolutist power and "underscored individual and civic autonomy" (p. 9).

This "bourgeois culture of the sword" (and other arms) also questions our established master narrative of an early modern military revolution during which individuals and militias lost out against states and their powerful standing armies (p. 5). The common picture of a demilitarized civic populace which was dominated by economic interests and "subject to ever greater efforts at disciplining and policing on the part of their rulers" might not be correct after all.

Furthermore, Norbert Elias's thesis about the civilizing process during the early modern period, as Thusty shows, also demands renewed attention. It certainly seems that he oversimplified the tensions that existed between the state and citizenry. Only by the eighteenth century was the individual's right to bear arms truly under attack. Even then, it was a remarkably slow process and had to do more with the states' realization that armed individuals were actually a check on local authority. Garrisoning professional standing armies throughout the realm, on the other hand, strengthened the state's reach. Initially, restrictions of the right to bear arms came by limiting the right to bear swords to members of the elite. That way, the sword also became a symbol for enforcing the social hierarchy.

The first two chapters in Thusty's excellent and thought-provoking study deal with urban defense and attempts to control violence in cities. The reader learns that bearing arms was not just about defending the city against inside and outside foes but also about socializing men to build

communities around certain values, particularly martial skills and civic pride.

In chapter 3, the author details one of her core arguments. When tensions arose between the need for an armed male citizenry, on one side, and the authorities' attempts, on the other side, to control violence, the right to bear arms generally took precedence over any restrictions. Those restrictions, if enacted, usually had to do less with the individual's misuse of arms but rather with the community's concern over individuals who did not live up to the expectations of male, armed citizenship.

The fourth chapter focuses on the sword, the iconic side arm of the period. The reader learns that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the height of the association of the burgher class with the sword. Commoners, however, did not just "ape" the aristocracy when owning and using swords. It was really the military of the time that set fashion standards and both commoners and the nobility took their cues from armies and soldiers. Wearing the sword became a male status symbol, the "public expression" of a man's right to defend his name (pp. 130-132).

Chapters 5-7 further explore these patterns. Thusty shows how the sword became the weapon of choice for men in early modern cities (as opposed to, say, guns or crossbows) and looks at the gendered dimensions of such weapon ownership. For instance, no actual law existed preventing women from owning swords but "women wielding blades presented a challenge to early modern notions of proper gendered behavior" (p. 165). This kind of male martial ethic also excluded other inhabitants of early modern cities such as Jews and clerics. University students, however, were driven by a particularly heightened sense of superiority and expressed that through an "exaggerated sense of martial honor" which persisted even into the twentieth century (p. 188). Martial skill was the foundation for this behavior and Thusty explains in detail how shooting societies, sword-

fighting schools, and sword dances served to train boys and turned men into “martial citizens, and citizens into brotherhoods” (p. 221).

Two case studies in chapter 8, one from a village near Rothenburg in 1578 and one from the city of Nördlingen in 1633, examine the ever-present problem of conflicting jurisdictions in the fragmented Holy Roman Empire. Here, the author is able to challenge the widely accepted notion of an early modern military revolution and its top-down perspective. Her findings instead show how much the “changing attitudes about the value of civilian defense systems” were actually “a reaction to grass roots action” (p. 244).

Chapter 9 leads the reader into another case study, the 1584 calendar uprising in Augsburg. Although less bloody than expected for this period of religious upheaval, this example shows how men in the city responded quickly to a perceived threat and rushed to defend their families, property, households, and the city. In fact, we see these men truly “living up to the demands of early modern citizenship” and the masculine ideal of the period (p. 264).

In sum, Thüsty's work succeeds in challenging much of what we took for granted when considering weapons ownership in early modern cities of the Holy Roman Empire. It is an immensely readable account of a complex era and topic. Thüsty forces us to rethink our understanding of military ethics and how these relate to gender hierarchies, the decline of the city militia, and the rise of state power in this era.

#### Notes

[1]. Ralf Prüve, "Die frühneuzeitliche Militärgeschichte in den letzten zwanzig Jahren (1990-2010): Konzepte, Methoden und Arbeitsfelder," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Law and Politics* 39 (2011): 31-41.

[2]. Anne Lipp, "Diskurs und Praxis: Militärgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte," in *Was ist Militärgeschichte?*, ed. Thomas Kühne and Ben-

jamin Ziemann (Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag, 2000), 211-227; and Robert M. Citino, "Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (2007): 1070-1090.

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