

cated to the royal insignia in 1613. He not only created the first detailed (albeit imprecise) description of the object, but also a narrative in which the Holy Crown had guarded over Hungary under the country's troubled history. He also suggested that concord between the ruler and the Hungarian Estates, the most important fruit of the arrangements in 1608, could best be reached through a common respect for its symbol, the Crown. His work, according to T., was much more decisive for the further developments of the Holy Crown's interpretation in political thought, than that of Werbőczy, as had traditionally been assumed.

In his work, T. introduces a variety of hitherto little studied sources in the debate concerning the most important political symbol of Hungary and perhaps the most peculiar element of Hungarian political thought. Discovering their relevance to the debate around the doctrine helps us take an important step forward, and, as he also points out, further interesting results could be expected from similar studies concerning critical periods in the relationship between the rulers and the Estates in Hungary.

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**Denise von Weymarn-Goldschmidt: Von Konkurrenten und Lieblingen.** Geschwisterbeziehungen im deutschbaltischen Adel des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts. (Veröffentlichungen des Nordost-Instituts, Bd. 28.) Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2022. 219 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-447-11865-1. (€ 35,-.)

The history of the Baltic Germans is usually studied within what, in the absence of a better term, can be called "Baltic Sea area studies." Denise von Weymarn-Goldschmidt's very interesting book on sibling relationships among the Baltic German nobility during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, has a somewhat different point of departure. Instead of the Baltic region being the primary focus, the *raison d'être* and the primary context for the study are family studies and nobility studies, as well as, to some extent, gender history and autobiographical research ("Selbstzeugnisforschung"). After an introduction and a chapter discussing memoirs ("Lebenserinnerungen") as source material, there are seven thematic chapters focusing on different aspects of how siblings refer to one another and their relationships in childhood as well as later in life. The book then concludes with a short summary. The empirical chapters differ somewhat in character, however. Whilst chapters three through six present the basic aspects of sibling relationships, who belonged to the sibling group, what terminology was used and how siblings formed relationships in childhood and as adults, chapters seven through nine are more problematizing as they discuss the issue of incest and marriages between related persons, the aspect of nobility habitus and gender, as well as the role of aunts and uncles, i.e. the siblings of one's parents.

The book has a rather slow start as the first empirical chapter does not present itself until page 64. Part of the reason for this is that W.-G. provides an in-depth presentation of previous research, methodology, and the sources, as well as a good introduction to and description of who the Baltic Germans were and the role they played in the Baltic region. The wait is well worth it but also a bit frustrating at times, especially if one comes to the book from the vantage point of being a scholar of Baltic German history or the history of the Baltic region. Once the empirical chapters commence, however, one is immediately fascinated by the results presented. From the outset, the author convincingly shows in these chapters the advantages of using network analysis since, among other things, it allows one to capture complex family systems that include full, half and step siblings, as well as both legitimate and illegitimate children and their sibling relationships. Getting this complete picture is also a necessity in this case, since it was quite common among male members of the Baltic German nobility not only to have numerous children (according to W.-G., seven on average) but also to have children from several marriages and, in some cases, outside of marriage. One of the more fascinating results presented is that the Baltic

German nobility had a tendency to indirectly acknowledge illegitimate children by giving them a surname that resembled their own or by simply spelling it backwards. There are also examples of illegitimate children being raised together with the legitimate ones. When it comes to what kind of sibling-terminology was used W.-G. shows that the Baltic German nobility only very rarely labelled half-siblings as such, but instead used the term sibling.

Using memoirs as the main source material, and not letters as some of the previous research on sibling relationships has opted for, proves to be a scholarly rewarding approach. There is something to be said for the point that W.-G. puts forward, namely that memoirs (ideally) cover the whole life span and therefore can give a picture of how relationships evolve and change over time. But memoirs also have some weaknesses as they are written retrospectively, with the benefit of hindsight, as well as maybe letting the genre and what intended readers may find acceptable or interesting influence what is described and what is not. It is, for example, more than unlikely that one would find evidence of incestuous relationships between siblings, be they consensual or abusive, in their memoirs. Descriptions of social conventions being stretched can to some extent be included, as W.-G. shows in relation to noble women pursuing a formal education and a career, but blatant transgressions of socially acceptable behavior would most likely be omitted. The memoir genre's limitations is also something that is highlighted and discussed throughout the book, while the question of how the gender of the author influenced both how the memoir was written and what was put into it is expertly problematized by W.-G. A strength with memoirs, on the other hand, is that they allow us to gain insights into aspects of nostalgia and the human tendency to wallow in old memories. This is discussed briefly in chapter five on siblings during the childhood years but it would have been very interesting if this aspect had been highlighted and discussed more.

The study certainly presents some very interesting results. They are, however, to a large degree presented very descriptively. Some passages contain a lot of detailed information from the memoirs but without it leading to any more in-depth analysis. This, together with the absence of a more analytical discussion at the end that could highlight the different findings, relate them to each other, and put them in the context of the Baltic region, in some measure obscures the significance of the study, particularly from the perspective of Baltic Sea area studies. There is, namely, a somewhat limited dialogue with previous research and the research on siblings that the results are discussed in light of are predominantly on Western Europe, more precisely, the German nobility and the English middle class. Especially the latter is perhaps relevant from a family studies perspective, but from a Baltic Sea area studies perspective, as well as from a nobility studies perspective, it would have been far more interesting had the results been discussed in relation to the Russian and Polish aristocracy. It is true that the Baltic Germans in some aspects turned towards the German cultural sphere but many of them, especially the nobility, also had close ties with the Romanov Empire and the Tsar's court. Some Baltic German nobles also married into the Russian nobility. This duality and in-between position in many ways constitute what it meant to be a Baltic German and it would have been interesting if this had been taken more into consideration.

W.-G.'s book on sibling relationships among the Baltic German nobility is highly interesting and a very enjoyable read, and the work put into the network analysis is nothing short of impressive. The objections I have articulated are, first and foremost, made from a Baltic Sea area studies perspective and do not diminish the fact that the book is a welcome contribution to the history writing on the Baltic Germans. It also illuminates a path along which future research could and should venture.

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