

chapters deal with the arts, architecture, and music. Here, too, religious change played a role, as a secular art market emerged after the Reformation and musical culture separated into Catholic and Protestant forms. Ecclesiastical patronage was replaced by civic and patrician patronage, with considerable investment in public fountains and the new city hall.

The volume's greatest strength is its long chronological perspective. The Protestant Reformation brought a major change to Augsburg, but there were important continuities and gradual changes from the late fourteenth through the early nineteenth century that are obscured by the traditional division between medieval and early modern. The chapters are synthetic, and each has a lengthy bibliography of primary and secondary sources at the end, making the volume ideal for both graduate students starting their research and scholars looking for detailed treatment of a specific topic. Although the book concerns Augsburg, much of what is written about that city sheds light on urban history in Germany more generally, and its broad coverage of economic, social, and cultural topics makes it valuable for readers in a variety of historical specializations.

Amy Nelson Burnett, *University of Nebraska–Lincoln*
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Imperial Villages: Cultures of Political Freedom in the German Lands c. 1300–1800. Beat Kümin.

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One remarkable feature of the Holy Roman Empire was the sheer variety of political authorities that made up its fabric. While the empire's principalities, independent cities, and self-governing ecclesiastical institutions have long received scholarly attention, one polity has often been ignored: *Reichsdörfer*, or imperial villages. These rural communities claimed no overlord except the emperor, which gave them a status akin to the much better-known imperial cities. Beat Kümin's new book seeks to remedy this situation. In this "microhistory of politics" (4), Kümin provides a nuanced analysis of popular political culture in imperial villages that adds an important perspective to our understanding of how political structures evolved during the early modern period.

Kümin focuses on five villages as case studies: Gochsheim and Sennfeld in Franconia, Sulzbach and Soden in Hesse, and Gersau in the Swiss Confederation. Analysis of the case studies is interwoven throughout the text, which adopts a thematic approach. After an introduction that sets the historiographic context and a chapter that lays out the empire's structure, the heart of the book begins with chapter 3, which analyzes the institutions and decision-making bodies in the five villages. Kümin differentiates between aristocratic rural regimes, where power was concentrated in the hands of a closed group, and democratic regimes, where the wider community took part in

decision-making. Elements of both types of regimes existed in all five villages, with some leaning more toward one than the other. Regardless of their orientation, each village experienced high levels of popular political participation, as most governmental offices were filled with individuals from the community itself.

Chapter 4 examines patterns in each village's external relations. Like other self-governing entities, imperial villages used imperial courts to defend their autonomous status, although they proved less interested in forming alliances with other authorities than cities or princely territories did. Overall, Kümin observes an erosion of the legal and political position of imperial villages over the course of the early modern period, with village officials ever intent on asserting their traditional rights against encroachment from larger authorities. For Kümin, this need to constantly defend themselves led village authorities to turn inward and focus on preserving their status rather than seek to build extensive external networks with other political authorities.

In chapter 5, Kümin turns to the ordering of religious life in his five villages. He finds that each imperial village developed a strong confessional culture with high levels of religious enthusiasm. Village authorities also exercised a good amount of jurisdiction over local religious affairs, both in Catholic Gersau and in the four Lutheran villages in the empire. Kümin argues that these conditions created "micro state churches" (153) in all five villages. Ultimately, he concludes that his case studies conform to the model of "Communal Christianity" proposed by David Mayes for the Hessian countryside.

The final substantive chapter examines symbolic communication in the political life of imperial villages. Representations of the five villages tended to project themes of communal freedom, emphasizing the distinct status and corporate rights of each village. For Kümin, these patterns formed part of an "informal 'free state' theory" (197) that undergirded each village's political identity. A concluding chapter summarizes the book's findings, while two appendixes list all polities that claimed imperial village status and the various officeholders in Kümin's case studies, respectively.

Kümin's book does a great service by focusing attention on the importance of smaller political entities. His analysis of each case study is persuasive, and his effort to integrate them into the broader history of early modern political development shows the need to include states of all sizes when evaluating the state-formation process. Given the relative dearth of studies on imperial villages, Kümin's book also has the potential to open up a new field of study for scholars of early modern politics. As Kümin makes clear in the conclusion, communities with parallel sets of rights to his case studies existed across Europe. Accordingly, Kümin's study will be of interest to anyone studying state formation, rural history, or politics at the local level during the early modern period.

Christopher W. Close, *Saint Joseph's University*
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