

The final case is one of “Plackerei,” that is, regimental officers supplementing their salaries via extortion and fraud. A sergeant and his colonel accepted bribes to grant soldiers leave or permission to marry, or to discharge local peasants or exempt them from conscription. This practice was common, but its illegality had been reiterated repeatedly. Rischke-Neß focuses here on the tensions between officers who accepted bribes and issued privileges in the names of others, and between “norms” and “rules” (especially given the insistence of the officers that they had done nothing out of the ordinary).

There is little to criticize here. The book claims to be a cultural history of criminality in the Prussian army, but given the admittedly anecdotal empirical basis, it might be better understood as a survey of the Prussian military justice system with several case studies. The issues of masculinity, honor, and group identity that are repeatedly raised seem to beg for a gendered analysis, but Rischke-Neß mentions “gender” only regarding illicit sex and rape. It is frustrating for the reader — though hardly the author’s fault — that the sources do not reveal the outcomes (verdicts, sentences) of a couple of the cases under study. The author focuses on the training of soldiers as indicative of their value (and the incentive to rehabilitate them or never prosecute them at all), though it is clear that often it was simply their height (as in the case of the recent Bavarian recruit who accidentally killed a civilian). The book is generally well-written but sometimes repetitious, and it would have benefitted from another round of editing.

Otherwise, this book is well-conceived and well-executed. It should be of interest to anyone concerned with early modern criminality (and its punishment), legal history, military history, the history of Prussia, etc.

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Battling Smallpox before Vaccination: Inoculation in Eighteenth-Century Germany

By Jennifer D. Penschow. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022. Pp. xv + 295. Cloth \$150.00. ISBN: 978-9004465138.

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Compared to the great attention paid to vaccination, German medical history has treated inoculation against smallpox as a poor relation. This form of immunization against one of the most dreaded and lethal epidemic diseases of the early modern period is usually covered as a precursor of the real thing, a small step for humankind before the giant leap that would ultimately lead to the eradication of smallpox in the 1970s. Jennifer D. Penschow’s book tries to shift this disbalance and give inoculation its due. Published 300 years after the first inoculations performed in Europe in 1721, she aims to explore the cultural and social attitudes towards preventive measures against smallpox, from the introduction of inoculation in Germany in the 1720s to the emergence of vaccination as a superior alternative in the first years of the nineteenth century.

Penschow relies exclusively on printed material, as she found archival sources to be too few in number and of little use, and she turns to vast numbers of medical dissertations, articles in the periodical press, and literary works that fill two bibliographical appendices covering almost thirty pages. On this basis, Penschow develops her history of inoculation

in eighteenth-century Germany. After a short introduction setting out her argument, the first chapter deals with general attitudes towards inoculation – and by extension smallpox – in the population. Chapters 2 and 3 focus each on a specific social group who played important roles as early adopters and propagandists for the new prophylactic practice: the ruling class and nobility as well as academics and physicians. While many noble families were open to inoculation as a means to protect their lineage from an unpredictable menace, some monarchs saw it also as a means to improve the numbers and quality of their subjects and decided to propagate the practice. For that they relied on experts, whom they found at German universities.

The next two chapters deal with the role of the print media for spreading knowledge about and encouraging the use of inoculation. First Penschow traces the presence of inoculation in the periodical press and finds that attitudes were mostly positive but unevenly spread by region and religious denomination. The fifth chapter is dedicated to the presence of women in literary works about inoculation. As mothers, they were considered crucial targets for health advice, while younger women had to be protected from disfigurement, loss of beauty, and bleak prospects on the marriage market. Authors tried to reach this audience by using female protagonists in novels and plays.

The sixth chapter shifts the focus back to a specific social group, pastors. Often the only educated persons in rural settings, they had an important role as intermediaries between the state and the local population, communicators of governmental health advice, and authority figures. Although not all pastors were comfortable with endorsing inoculation and enthusiasts often met resistance from the peasant population, some were effective in convincing their parishioners and helped spread inoculation to the countryside.

The seventh and final chapter portrays a shift in attitudes towards inoculation among its proponents during the last decades of the eighteenth century. Due to a growing medical consensus regarding the contagiousness of smallpox as opposed to its supposed innateness, the prospect of eradicating the disease appeared for the first time realistic. This resulted in a reevaluation of inoculation, as it regularly caused local outbreaks and contributed to the spread of the disease.

Penschow paints a rich panorama of inoculation in eighteenth-century Germany based on an enormous number of printed sources. She includes elite, learned, and popular attitudes towards inoculation and provides a special focus on women and their representation in literature. Yet, despite those achievements, Penschow's book left this reviewer slightly unsatisfied.

This is mostly due to conceptual issues. First, the geographical scope of the book is uneven. Despite its title, it deals mostly with Protestant northern Germany. Penschow mentions southern and Catholic states sporadically, while Austria is, apart from a look at Empress Maria Theresa and her family's troubles with smallpox, mostly absent. This is probably due to the geographic slant of the printed sources on which the book is based, but never properly addressed. Second, the author's position towards the book's subject would have required further consideration. This is particularly evident in the first chapter, on the public's attitudes towards smallpox and inoculation. To declare the ineffectiveness of folk medicine, including the use of magic as based on "misconceptions" (39) of smallpox reveals – a misconception. To measure past medical theories and treatments by today's medical standards can only result in evaluating them as deficient but does not explain their purpose and underlying worldviews. Third, Penschow at times lacks the required critical distance from her sources. Thus, she takes the biases of the authors of those texts at face value and reproduces them. Of course, learned and enlightened physicians would describe the attitudes of the rural population towards smallpox as superstitious and those peasants as unenlightened. This says more about them and their position towards the people they were paid to serve than about the peasants' views. Fourth and finally, Penschow fails to engage with much of the scholarly discourse on medicine in eighteenth-century Germany and its role in the broader process of state formation, such as medicalization or the medical

police. Those concepts are almost entirely absent from the book, but they would have provided valuable context for the interpretation of sources and drawing connections between the different chapters. They would have offered an opportunity to gain more profound insights into the history of inoculation and connect Penschow's book more firmly with the existing historiography. Thus, *Battling Smallpox before Vaccination* offers a broad but at times superficial contribution to the cultural, social, and medical history of early modern Germany.

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The Rebirth of Revelation: German Theology in an Age of Reason and History, 1750–1850

**By Tuska Benes. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022.
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Whereas some scholars have looked at the period from Spinoza (and before) as a steady march toward secularism, there are inevitably those who have (and will) try to defend the perseverance of faith and dogma, albeit in a different shape and form. As its title suggests, the book under review falls into the latter category. According to Tuska Benes, the onslaught of Enlightenment philosophy and the ascent of reason during the eighteenth century created a crisis of traditional revealed religion that forced intellectuals to either abandon or reinvent revelation. This struggle and the intellectual debates surrounding this resurgence of revelation are at the center of Benes's book. Benes focuses on the period between 1750 and 1850 in the German lands, which boasted some of the most important intellectual minds of the period. They include Lessing, Mendelssohn, Kant, Herder, Schleiermacher, and Hegel. The most intriguing part of Benes's book, however, is not the responses of these intellectual giants; rather, her approach is. She provides a much broader picture, including the religious struggles that haunted Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish intellectual communities at the time.

Of course, Benes goes down some well-trodden paths as well. Her first chapter reiterates a familiar albeit important story that no serious treatment of the German Enlightenment can leave out and that sets the tone for the entire book: Lessing's ugly ditch, namely the divide between revelation and reason. Lessing's dilemma came to the fore in the context of the publication of excerpts from Reimarus's *Apologie*, culminating in the *Fragmentenstreit*. Lessing offered a solution to this dilemma in his *Education of the Human Race* (1780), where he proposed that, historically, divine revelation advanced progressively, contingent with the intellectual capability of human communities. Just as problematic as the rationalist biblical criticism exemplified by Reimarus was the comparative study of religion, which inevitably raised issues of the prevalence of primordial polytheism and its relationship to the Judeo-Christian faith tradition. These debates were always complex in nature, and practitioners frequently arrived at very different positions. Whereas Johann Gottfried Herder, for instance, found traces of primordial revelation in the astral worship of the Sabians, Christoph Meiners advanced a racialist hierarchy of religion that favored the ancient Greeks.