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ARCHIVAL SUMMER SEMINAR IN GERMANY 2016

Seminar in Germany, June 12- June 24. Convener: Elisabeth Engel (GHI). Participants and their dissertation topics: Sheragim Jenabzadeh (University of Toronto), *Iranian Students in Cosmopolitan Germany: From the Kaiserreich to the Nazi Era*; Sky Michael Johnston (University of California, San Diego), *Weather as a Window to Culture in Early Modern Germany: Religion, Science, and Popular Beliefs under the Same Sky*; Claudia Kreklau (Emory University), *Culinary Accounts of the Bürgertum: Studying the German Bourgeoisie through Food, 1815-1870s*; Michal Mlynarz (University of Toronto), *'Monuments and Memory Unmade': The Socio-Cultural Impact of the Post-World War II Mass Population Movements on Urban Space in the Polish Borderlands*; Joseph Nothmann (University of Pennsylvania), *Futures' Pasts: Central European Commodity Exchanges, 1870-1945*; Yanan Qizhi (Pennsylvania State University), *Dreams and Dream Culture in Early Modern Germany (1500-1650)*; Scott Sulzener (University of Iowa), *From Provincial Convent to Imperial Court: Women Nobles and Local Claims to Power in the German Empire*; Troy Vettese (New York University), *Non-conventional Capitalism: The Political Economy of Synthetic Fuel*.

There are many approaches to the study of German history, but none can neglect a profound understanding of German script. With origins in the ninth century, this historical form of German handwriting has evolved across the centuries, shaping and reshaping letters as well as the writing habits of people according to changing usages, tastes, aesthetics, and practical demands. The official end of German script came in 1942, when the Nazi regime abolished it and replaced it with the Latin alphabet. Nonetheless, many people continued to write "German" as they had learned it in school, so that, de facto, German script was in use up to the 1960s. German script thus constitutes both one of the oldest elements of German culture and a challenge historians face when digging into German archives.

The Archival Summer Seminar in Germany of the German Historical Institute is an effort to familiarize American Ph.D. candidates with this peculiarity in the study of the German past. While German studies is a well-established field in North American academia, opportunities to receive training in reading German primary sources remain scarce. In 2016, the Archival Summer Seminar in Germany afforded this opportunity to eight ABD Ph.D. candidates from the United States and Canada. Working on projects in German *Zeitgeschichte*, Imperial

Germany, and the early modern period, the group participated in a two-week archival training program in Germany from June 12 to June 24. As always in the program's more than twenty-year tradition, the seminar addressed two key topics: paleography and archives. One week of the program was dedicated to the study of historical German handwriting, with a special focus on its variants in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. The second week shifted the focus to the techniques by which German archives preserve the past and explored the ways in which scholars can access it.

Proceeding in this order, the archival summer seminar started in Speyer, a small town in Rhineland-Palatinate, with a week of an intensive paleography class. Taught by the head of the local Landesarchiv, Dr. Walter Rummel, this class offered background information on the history of German script, an introduction to the holdings of the Landesarchiv Speyer and, most importantly, guidance for and practice in deciphering, transcribing, contextualizing, and interpreting German handwriting. To this end, Walter Rummel provided the students with a selection of texts from various individuals, institutions, and centuries, and explained their different purposes and writing styles. In addition to thinking about the imponderability of paleography, the group came together for dissertation workshops on two afternoons, presenting and discussing each other's projects on a conceptual and methodological level. The intellectual exercise was rounded out by an evening in the "Alter Hammer," a regional beer garden on the Rhine, where Walter Rummel traditionally meets the group. After completing the class in reading German script on June 17, the participants traveled from Speyer to Berlin.

The second week provided guided introductions to Germany's archives, explaining their structure, (dis-)connections, and various administrative levels. During this week, the group visited the Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv), one of nine branches of the official repository of German government institutions, the Berlin State Archive (Landesarchiv Berlin) as well as the Stasi Records Agency (Stasiunterlagenbehörde), the archive of the East German secret police and foreign intelligence service that only recently became available to the public. These introductions to government-related archives were complemented by visits to archives that originated prior to the formation of the comparatively young German state and its even more recent partitioning. To explore research options for the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the group visited

the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (the official archive of Prussia), the Evangelisches Zentralarchiv (the national repository of the Protestant church), as well as the Staatsbibliothek, which offers not only inviting workspaces but also extensive holdings in secondary literature and primary sources dating back to the Middle Ages.

Visits to these types of governmental and non-governmental archives illustrated how students of German history might approach their topics at the level of primary sources. Participants learned to distinguish traces (*Überreste*) from traditions (*Überlieferungen*) and that archives only dealt with the latter. They also learned to make educated guesses about where to find archives of relevance. Germany operates its historic repositories parallel to its federal government structure, so that researchers may have to visit a number of state archives all across the country to address their individual research question. Correspondingly, students gained an understanding of the *Provenienzprinzip*, the rule of jurisdiction according to which the responsibility of collecting administrative records is distributed. Insights into these overarching principles of navigating German archives tied into understanding the role the *Tektonik* (record groups) and the *Bewertung* (the strategies archives use to select the materials they preserve) play in organizing individual archival holdings. In the end, the group realized, historians work with one to three percent of the historic material that is produced.

A particularly fine feature of this year's archival tour was the great effort archivists made, first, to coordinate their introductions so that they built upon one another and, second, to provide documents for the participants' individual projects. While avoiding redundancies in the explanation of their functions, most of the archives had hunted for records that spoke to the very specific research questions the participants raised in their own projects, such as the role of food, dreams or the weather in German culture. Their successful search for historical material that spoke to such questions nicely illustrated that historians can elicit counter-intuitive findings from presumably dull administrative records, if they approached their jurisdiction creatively.

As always, the archival tour was supported by alumni of the program. This time, Teresa Walch (University of California San Diego) and Brandon Bloch (Harvard University) provided the group with practical advice on how to navigate the German research landscape from the perspective of Americans who do research in Germany for the first time. The get-together with former archival summer seminar

participants offered the opportunity to ask all the profane questions that inevitably occur on research trips, even if they are hardly considered part of the research project itself, such as: how does one register with the Ausländerbehörde, which phone cards work best, and what platforms are there to find housing. While the archival seminar did not necessarily help all participants locate the sources they were hoping for, it did create a better understanding of how to look for them.

Elisabeth Engel (GHI)