

material of the book illustrating how the basis in reality of the myth of Venice in the early Renaissance and Middle Ages changed because of the attractive power of the central authority in which patricians had a monopoly on power leads naturally to the concluding chapter "From Community to Hierarchy." More examples would strengthen the important — and I am convinced correct — conclusions offered by Romano. The number of individual studies is too small — occasionally almost anecdotal — and the corroboration offered by wider readings of documentary (such as testamentary or *scuole* membership lists) too diffuse. It is in many ways a relief to see an important contribution to historical research argued in fewer than 200 pages of text and notes; but, the supportive material within the text can equally be stripped too thin.

Still, Dennis Romano has written an impressive book. It is clearly and effectively written, well considered and an important addition to the ever growing bibliography on the social history of the Italian city-states of the Renaissance. The few comparative comments about contemporary Florence or Genoa are useful and remind the reader how the experience of the Italian polities varied from state to state, and one must never generalize about the peninsula, only about the specific place under study at a given moment in its history. Romano has done this with Venice between 1297 and 1423 and he has done so with consummate skill.

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David Warren Sabean — *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Pp. x, 250.

Oral traditions and the sources for popular culture are often difficult to locate as to a precise time and place. What persists in one locale is often absent in a neighboring one. Under the best of circumstances attempts to tie together diverse sources encounter massive roadblock. In this stimulating and challenging book David Sabean has faced formidable tasks. The six incidents featured here took place over more than two centuries, from the second part of the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. All six occurred in Württemberg and the accounts of these incidents can be found in the archives in Stuttgart. The varied subject matter of these events ranges from attempts to enforce attendance at the Lord's Supper to cases of false prophecy, witchcraft, and problems with pastors and culminates in a massive exercise of superstition.

The author's primary emphasis centers on the individual as understood by state and local officials and on how the individual perceived those in authority. In the process of analyzing the individual two important strands become evident. The first focuses on the development of the modern state with its need for the fiscal and human resources that were essential for internal security and for survival in a Europe filled with marauding armies and seemingly endless warfare. Sabean's concept has merit, but most of the evidence presented in the course of this study deals with local officials who are but one part of a complex structure of authority and rule.

The second, and in many ways the more successful strand, came out of the Reformation and the need to reform character. An effective way to accomplish this, it was often asserted, was to celebrate publicly the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. In this way religious practices were used to enhance secular discipline. More than simple, external compliance was demanded of parishioners. Those who abstained from taking the sacrament were placed on the fringes of society. Normal justice would no longer be available to these people.

Additionally, pastors utilized the sacrament as a means of settling disputes or resolving complaints. Villagers often refused to go along with this interpretation because they saw conflict as a civil matter that had to be settled in the court. To these villagers no reconciliation or solution of

the dispute was possible by taking the Lord's Supper when a civil settlement was still pending. Those in authority tended to view the sacrament as one of personal, individual salvation while those who refused to celebrate communion viewed it as a clear attempt at social control. Sabean has demonstrated effectively that this complex series of interrelationships made resistance to authority difficult to accomplish.

Sabeian's creative and imaginative use of archival sources adds significantly to the quality of the book. Utilizing the church visitation records from the Duchy of Württemberg from the 1580s, the author gleaned information about village discourse through disputes between pastor and parishioners. In a series of simple accounts, often in the works of the individual, the author presented stories of those who refused to take communion or to recite the Lord's Prayer on the grounds of being unable to do so for reasons of enmity, that is, of being unable to forgive one's enemies or forgive those who had wronged the villagers. Clearly, these were not matters of private devotion or inner spirituality, for many of them lived otherwise exemplary lives. Public worship in front of the local dignitaries created the difficulties. Time after time the villagers refused to forgive the authorities, the village leaders, or the local agents of the duchy who had wronged them or who continued to wrong them.

From the criminal files Sabean has presented the reader with a complex analysis into the ways in which popular attitudes and values influences how villagers dealt with authority. One incident elaborated upon involved a vintner who saw a vision on a hillside while tending his grapes. According to this prophet the angel has instructed him to take his demands right away to the duke. Eight general areas had to be improved upon, ranging from cursing and adultery to vanity, usury, the clergy, and hunting on the Sabbath. The prophet called for immediate change in behavior and threatened swift punishment in the secular world if change did not occur. Several of the sins outlined by the vintner applied to all classes, but most were restricted to the aristocracy or at least to the well-to-do. Normal avenues for protest against the existing order had not brought results. Only the spectacular sight of blood flowing from grape vines might attract attention to his demands.

The final incident in this study took place in 1796. Referring again and again to the more than two hundred pages of testimony taken by officials of the duchy, the author told an incredible tale of massive superstition engaged in by hundreds of members of the community. In trying to deal with the effects of a deadly epidemic of hoof and mouth disease the villagers turned away from rational knowledge and enlightened thought and deliberately chose instead superstition and ignorance. Most of the local officials had known something of the decision to bury a communal bull alive as a sacrifice to the disease, but no one took responsibility for it. After discussion the villagers had acted in their own way.

By no means does this book represent the final word on the subject. Much more remains to be done. Through a detailed examination of a delightful collection of incidents, David Sabean has introduced a myriad of possibilities for further research. Skillfully he has brought alive villagers from earlier centuries and has given them a dignity not usually accorded to them. We await further studies.

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Howard P. Segal — *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985. Pp. x, 301.

Howard P. Segal's *Technological Utopianism in American Culture* is the published version of a Ph.D. thesis in history which he completed a decade earlier. The topic, according to the author himself, "plugs few scholarly holes, complements no earlier case studies and suggests few future