

Imperial Villages

Cultures of Political Freedom in the German Lands c. 1300-1800

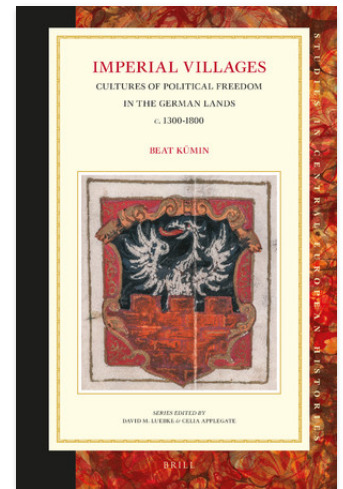
Author: Beat Kümin

Hundreds of rural communities tasted political freedom in the Holy Roman Empire. For shorter or longer periods, villagers managed local affairs without subjection to territorial overlords. In this first book-length study, Beat Kümin focuses on the five case studies of Gochsheim and Sennfeld (in present-day Bavaria), Sulzbach and Soden (Hesse) and Gersau (Switzerland). Adopting a comparative perspective across the late medieval and early modern periods, the analysis of multiple sources reveals distinct extents of rural self-government, the forging of communalized confessions and an enduring attachment to the empire. Negotiating inner tensions as well as mounting centralization pressures, *Reichsdörfer* provide privileged insights into rural micro-political cultures while their stories resonate with resurgent desires for greater local autonomy in Europe today.

Readership

Students, researchers and a wider public interested in the history of the Holy Roman Empire, late medieval / early modern rural communities, centre-periphery relations, local autonomy and popular politics.

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