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- 1 Blauert and Wiebel present a short, but perceptive contribution to a cultural history of legal and police practices in early modern Germany. They offer new insights into the

practices of identification, surveillance, and detection mainly in the 18th century. The two authors are not interested simply in a genealogy of modern techniques, rather they reconstruct police and legal practices within the context of early modern strategies of classification, communication, and an attempt to 'map' the social world.

- 2 Blauert and Wiebel were already well versed in the study of the early modern penal apparatus when they embarked on a new project, from which this book emerged. In this new project they systematically collected and surveyed lists of wanted persons, which had been compiled and published by magistrates, local prosecutors, and central legal authorities between the late 17th and the early 19th centuries in southwestern Germany.
- 3 The southwestern part of the German Empire is one of the most interesting regions with regard to vagrants and bandits. An abundance of small principalities, each with its own jurisdiction, dispersed settlement, productive farmers and craftsmen, and well-known pilgrimage sites, attracted a large number of beggars, vagrants, and thieves. As individuals they were tolerated by the rural population, for which they also provided important services. Local officials prosecuted them for – mainly – petty crimes. Some prosecutors, however, went beyond solving single crimes and tried to reconstruct a well-connected criminal underworld, which they perceived as a heavy burden on the state and society. From this perspective, the authors' choice of the southwestern part of Germany for the study of the production and usage of lists of wanted people makes perfect sense.
- 4 Under the direction of central legal authorities and/or as a result of their personal initiative, ambitious magistrates collected information about the social and family network of criminals. One of these lists, the famous compilation of names and personal descriptions of almost 700 vagrants and criminals published in 1784 by Georg Jacob Schäffer, is reproduced in facsimile in the appendix of this book. These lists were circulated primarily within the legal apparatus. They provided evidence of the serious threat posed by professional property criminals as well as information to help identify them behind their many masks. In order to fully understand the mindset of 18th century magistrates and penal policy, we need to keep in mind one important observation of Blauert and Wiebel: "It is striking... that the lists of *Gauner* (i.e. professional property criminals) mentioned a significant number of people, mainly women, who were not charged explicitly with any specific crime." (68) The target group thus consisted of people, either who were believed to be particularly prone to commit crimes or whom magistrates suspected of being criminals without yet having sufficient evidence of their crimes.
- 5 In their analysis of the administrative procedures from which these lists emerged, Blauert and Wiebel provide important insights into the workings of the penal apparatus during the early modern period. In short, one could argue that ambitious magistrates of the 18th century were confronted with a completely opposite set of problems than modern police detectives. In the 18th century, magistrates often had suspects in their custody who had been arrested for vagrancy and some petty crimes, but whose identity as professional criminals remained hidden. The published lists of wanted persons played an important role in the identification, i.e. the unmasking, of dangerous individuals. The reflection of Blauert and Wiebel on the penal apparatus and the history of the wanted posters (*Steckbriefe*) offers new insights and a substantial contribution to a cultural history of law and policing.

- 6 Browsing through Schäffer's list, the reader is immediately struck by the richness of evidence concerning the physical characteristics and social circumstances of almost 700 *Gauner*. As we learn from Blauert and Wiebel, the inclusion of anecdotal evidence discredited Schäffer's list in the eyes of more bureaucratically minded people, such as the members of the Austrian government (101). However the richness of information of this and other lists of wanted people attracted social historians interested in the problem of crime and criminals. It is a remarkable strength of this book that Blauert and Wiebel not only focus on the production of these lists and their usage in prevention and detection strategies, but also look at the 'secondary' analysis of these data within social historical research. In fact, this 'secondary' analysis has a rather dismal precursor in the racial biological projects of the Third Reich – a fact that is not systematically elaborated within this book.
- 7 From a cultural historical perspective, the remarks on the clothing and habits of *Gauner* are very interesting. They support fully the assertion that these lists «combined in a specific manner reports and descriptions from the milieu of the vagrants, beggars, and thieves with the attitude of the authorities towards this milieu» (49). The defendants' descriptions of their comrades was put into protocols in a way which made sense to the investigating judge and his comrades as the readers of the publications. The phrasing, too, of the description offers interesting insights into the modes of perception and representation of the time: «*Heinerle* or *Freyämtler* dresses like a peddler in textiles...» (60). This description refers to the existence of a stable regional-professional 'dress code', which was easily decodable by contemporaries but is difficult to decipher for the historian.
- 8 Equally interesting are the authors' remarks on the organization of the criminal underworld. On the basis of their systematic reading of a large number of lists of wanted persons, they caution against the undifferentiated use of the concept of criminal gangs to describe the social and professional networks on the margins of society. Blauert and Wiebel argue very convincingly that there existed collaboration and a rather strong social and cultural cohesiveness between people living on the road. At the same time, they underline that the very concepts used to describe these social and professional contacts reflected the perception of the authorities and their understanding of the 'underworld'.
- 9 This book can be strongly recommended to anyone interested in the history of the penal apparatus and, especially, to those researchers who would like to explore classification practices and physiognomic descriptions in the 18th century. Under the guidance of the brief but thought-provoking introduction, the inquisitive historian will gain many insights from the facsimile reproduction of the list of 1784.

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