

*Prussian Army Soldiers and the Seven Years' War. The Psychology of Honour* by Katrin Möbius and Sascha Möbius. Bloomsbury, 2020, 236 pp., ISBN 978-1-350-24507-5.

Although based on a disappointingly limited trawl of manuscript sources, this is an interesting and important work for three fields, that of its subject, the Prussian army in the Seven Years' War, that of Prussian history as a whole, and that of *ancien régime* warfare. Despite the back-cover claim that the Frederician army is generally known for brutal and strict drill procedures, Dennis Showalter had already drawn attention to the conditional nature of authority, just as Peter Wilson had valuably done for that of Württemberg. Indeed, based on these works, it was possible to argue more generally for German armies as a whole. Important work on Hesse-Cassel should be part of this interpretation, one that can be amplified by considering the role of hired-in officers and soldiers.

Yet, it is very helpful indeed to have this book with its fruitful analysis, not least of soldiers' emotions and thoughts, both in combat and otherwise. There is a careful and judicious account of the methodology, not least arguing that it is difficult to apply the concept of small-group cohesion. Personal and collective concepts of honour are seen as important, and honour, as is explained, was linked to social and material gains. Crucial elements in battle included the overcoming of fear, and, in particular, training in order to keep functioning while fearful. The heat of combat is seen as significant. Yet again, the emphasis is on troops as able and willing to respond, and not as mere automatons. Physical, social and spiritual survival are all seen as important.

These arguments are then marshalled in the summary to provide a brisk survey that is supported by the publication of a very good selection of pertinent letters by soldiers. What is argued will not necessarily surprise specialists, but it is useful to have the thesis made clear for the benefit of others. Yet, there is a measure of disappointment that a chronological range is not introduced, not least in terms of the War of the Bavarian Succession (1778-9) in which the Frederician army was less impressive. Reflections on fighting quality and motivation then would have been pertinent and so even more with extending the work into the reign of Frederick William II. Moreover, it would be useful to know how far there were specific features for the Prussians and, if so, to what effect. There is insufficient consideration of Pietism, while I would have preferred more on the degree to which rumours about campaigning, and the war as a whole, affected attitudes. The authors are correct to argue that their subject is interesting, but there is room for more. Hopefully their methodology can be applied as part of the continuing project, while, at the same time, paying due attention to the more general nature of political culture and society. In particular, the varied consequences of the cantonal conscription system deserve attention. It created a manpower pool deep enough to allow selectivity, a high participation rate among the population, and, thereby, a degree of militarisation, but allowing native troops to return to their families and trades other than for the few weeks of the spring reviews and summer manoeuvres must have come with costs, and, even when stationed at the garrison towns, they were permitted to

pursue civilian occupations. More positively, maintaining a stable and predictable link between regiments and reserves of manpower in specific areas generated significant solidarity in companies and regiments for parish and region, and also encouraged a sense of obligation among the officers. Such factors were important.

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