

economic analysis. The breadth of Montchrestien's vision is impressive and his work is dotted with interesting insights and anecdotes. But the fact remains that, for the reasons Laudet outlines, the treatise represents a more or less stillborn tradition of analysis, and readers will probably find it more valuable as a guide to a kind of alternate history of French social thought than as a text that exercised a force of its own.

Laudet provides explanatory notes, glossaries of places and names, a bibliography, and an index, all of which are of high quality (even if a few of the explanations are slightly redundant: it seems either unduly optimistic or unduly pessimistic to think that a reader of this text might not know who Bacchus was). One highly distracting peculiarity, though, is that the introduction is absolutely rife with typographical errors—mostly bad homophones, as if it were transcribed from voice by software and then insufficiently proofread. The actual edition, thankfully, is in much better shape, but readers may have lost some confidence by the time they reach it.

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Wir, Vogt, Richter und Gemeinde: Städtewesen, städtische Führungsgruppen und Landesherrschaft im spätmittelalterlichen Württemberg (1250–1543).
Nina Kühnle.

Schriften zur Südwestdeutschen Landeskunde 78. Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2017. x + 534 pp. €58.

Württemberg is a family name that has become a regional identity. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the counts of Württemberg rose from a localized lordship to hegemony in an area of southwestern Germany otherwise known as the central Neckar Valley. The unfamiliarity of this appellation is testimony to the success of the dynasty, whose territory was elevated to a dukedom in 1495. It was long believed that this dynasty had forged not only a regional identity, but also a peculiar political and social elite: a class named the *Ehrbarkeit* (honorable persons) by the regional historian Hansmartin Decker-Hauff, who described with genealogical precision (although not always factual accuracy) an elite that was “created” by the ruling dynasty through investment with certain honorable official posts (12).

This historiography fundamentally shapes Nina Kühnle's new study of Württemberg's urban elites. Decker-Hauff's ideas were propagated not so much by critical engagement with his original research (his dissertation on the subject was never published) as through his many students and popular lectures. Only in the past decade has his model been criticized as a reductive and formalized depiction of complex social groups and processes. Thus Kühnle takes up the question of what should replace

Decker-Hauff's *Ehrbarkeit*, and offers a subtle and vivid study of Württemberg's urban ruling groups that is appropriately short on grand structures but nonetheless marshals its wealth of detail into a coherent and comprehensive picture of these groups and their dynamics.

This picture is much more than a critique of Decker-Hauff, and the necessary revisions to his model are dealt with efficiently. By taking a broad view of Württemberg's urban landscape, which included over fifty towns in 1500, Kühnle shows that it is more helpful to think of multiple (although interconnected) urban elites than of a single *Ehrbarkeit*. Kühnle also shows that the counts and dukes could do little to shape (let alone create) local elites through investment with administrative offices. Princely patronage was naturally important, but local elites were mostly self-perpetuating through the co-option of new members to the town magistracy and through the importance of kinship networks in officeholding at all levels. These elites were founded on control of local land and viticulture, and their leading members developed their cultural and social capital through representative foundations and memorial culture and by sending their sons to university. Some of these families occupied a "transitional zone" (176) between the small-town elite and the lower nobility, as shown through marriage ties and ennoblements by both imperial decree and the steady accumulation of markers of noble identity. Kühnle identifies the relationships between urban elites and the lower nobility as an area in need of further work (446).

This general outline of the urban elites is complemented by four case studies of towns of different sizes, in different parts of the territory, and with different development histories (Stuttgart, Brackenheim, Nagold, and Münsingen), which illustrate the varied ways in which the urban elites were manifested. The comparative analysis of elite social structures is flanked by two sections that explore the relationships between these elites and Württemberg's territorial lordship. The first shows how the counts extended their territory primarily by purchasing towns and that the importance to smaller towns of hosting local administrative organs meant that the counts and dukes of Württemberg had a significant role to play in determining which towns within their territory would thrive. The final section charts the increasing importance of the urban elites at the political center of Württemberg through their participation in the territorial estates (*Landschaft*) during a series of dynastic crises that rocked Württemberg between the 1450s and 1530s.

All of this takes Kühnle's work far beyond its initial engagement with Decker-Hauff's *Ehrbarkeit*. But Kühnle's book cannot be properly evaluated without this background: its principal achievement consists of deftly dismantling this theory of Württemberg exceptionalism while also proposing a cogent and viable alternative, but the specter of the *Ehrbarkeit* is never fully banished in that the discovery of the largely unexceptional nature of Württemberg's urban elites may not capture the attention of historians of other regions. This would be unfortunate, however, as Kühnle's

findings make Württemberg available for meaningful comparison, and through assured handling of the commonalities and individuality of so many towns she leads by example in the field of comparative urban history.

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Wirtschaftserfolg zwischen Zufall und Innovativität: Oberdeutsche Städte und ihre Exportwirtschaft im Vergleich (1350–1550). Beat Fumasoli.

Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte—Beihefte 241. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017. 580 pp. €82.

This book is a revised version of a PhD thesis that the faculty of philosophy and history at the University of Bern accepted in 2015. The author examines which factors contributed to the success of those towns in late medieval upper Germany where export production played a large role. Fumasoli begins by discussing potential causes of success and explains how he selected the towns and cities he investigates. Chapter 2 examines those branches of manufacturing that produced for export, while chapter 3 looks at how the success of these branches was influenced by the factors introduced before. Fumasoli considers the absence of disasters, factor endowment, the structure and techniques of trade, technologies, and urban economic policies. He finds that the cooperation between producers and merchants who organized export was particularly important.

Economic historians typically consider a piece of research original if it provides new historical insights in at least one of three ways: by utilizing hitherto unexploited primary sources; by placing known evidence in a new social-theoretical framework, thereby generating testable hypotheses; or by applying new methods in the analysis of the evidence. How does Fumasoli stand up to these criteria? He does not draw on any explicit theoretical approach—in fact, he openly rejects economic theory (47). This limits the scope of his arguments in a large number of places. To give just one example, he repeatedly uses the term “path dependency” in order to explain the persistence of inferior technologies (238, 499). However, why path dependencies existed remains vague. Had Fumasoli been aware of the economic literature, where they are analyzed as the outcome of specific investments and network effects, he would have been able to approach his evidence with the question in mind of whether such investments and effects prevented the adoption of superior technologies in late medieval upper Germany. In that case, we might actually have learnt something about causalities. As it is, we don't.

Neither does Fumasoli use a new method to analyze familiar evidence. In recent years, the new methodology that has been applied most fruitfully in economic history has been based on econometrics; in principle, this approach is applicable in the author's context, too. In fact, he does collect and present quantitative data on, for example, the