

Hillary Zmora. *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*.

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Since the 1990s a relatively large number of studies on feuds in late medieval and early modern Germany have been published, mostly about noble feuds but also about the feud practice of commoners. One of the most important contributions of the 1990s was Hillary Zmora's *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany: The Knightly Feud on Franconia 1440–1567* (1997), where Zmora convincingly substantiated that the countless noble feuds were both cause and effect of princely territorialization and state building. This ran counter to almost all earlier interpretations which had described noble feuds as an obstacle to state building that was, in time, eradicated by the expanding early modern state. Whereas the 1997 book was a regional study of aristocratic feuding in the *Land* of Franconia, Zmora's new book, at first glance, has a broader scope. As the title suggests, the book sets out to cover Germany as a whole, and the first two chapters deal with, respectively, the historiography of German feuding and Otto Brunner's paradigmatic example of a late medieval noble feud that is set in Austria. The remaining four chapters are, however, mainly about Franconia and primarily based on the same source material and hence the same noble feuds as Zmora's first book. The explanation is given in the introduction (chapter 1), where Zmora describes the necessity of detailed reconstruction of relationships within the aristocracy in order to understand aristocratic feuding: "Such a reconstruction is research-intensive to the point of forcing concentration on one regional community and precluding a systematic comparative analysis." This reason is entirely understandable, but it means that this book, with its regional focus and also its social limitations (commoner's feuds are

only mentioned briefly in the introduction), is not the comprehensive synthesis of early modern German feuding that one might have hoped that Hillyar Zmora would write. Instead it offers a variety of new insights on Franconian noble feuds that, along with the reappearance of the main conclusions on Franconia from the 1997 book and also because of the inclusion of non-Franconian cases in the present book, suggest a wider pan-German applicability. These new insights result from the use of various theoretical positions mainly drawn from sociology, psychology, and economics, and also from a certain rearrangement of empirical observations made in the author's previous work.

A novelty of the present book is the coinage of the concept of "inimical intimacy." Zmora shows that most noble feuders were closely related as either neighbors, loaners and guarantors, or through feudal ties. Zmora's results are highly convincing, and "inimical intimacy" is a very useful concept, but the basic observation of feud being an intrasocial phenomenon, which sets it apart from war, has been made by anthropologists and historians before. Another new aspect of the present book is the chronological analysis of the 278 known feuds in Franconia between 1440 and 1567, which offers an interpretation of the fluctuations of feud activities over the decades. Here, Zmora again blends new findings with the results of his earlier studies. The "explosion of feuds" in the 1460s resulted from wars between princely states and can be explained by Zmora's original state-making–feud-making theory. The same goes for the second peak in feuding in 1500–09 with aristocratic communalism and imperial action as additional factors, and the decline of feuding from about 1510 is also accounted for by the same factors that were described in the 1997 book. The peak in the 1470s, however, is interpreted in the light of Zmora's new results regarding an increased demographic pressure on the noble elite stratum. Zmora's diachronic analysis is one of the finest calibrated in the international literature on historical feuding. This reviewer, however, has some minor reservations. Firstly, it may be questioned whether all of the fluctuations are statistically significant. Is it correct to label a rise from thirty-five feuds in the 1450s to thirty-nine feuds in the 1460s an "explosion"? Does a rise from twenty-eight feuds in the 1490s to thirty-four feuds in 1500–09 amount to a "peak"? Secondly, it seems problematic to fixate the demographic explanation exactly in the 1470s. Thirdly, it remains doubtful to what degree the numbers express real trends in feuding, since the author abstains from defining the concept feud and thus does not explain the criteria for including or excluding conflicts into or from the 278 feuds, and since a potential distortion stemming from the random survival of records is not discussed. Fourthly, Zmora's emphasis on feuds between noblemen and between noblemen and princes diverts attention from noble feuds against cities. According to Zmora's list of feuds (appendix), at least forty-eight (17 percent) of the 278 feuds were against cities. In the 1450s, as many noble feuds were waged against cities as against nobles and princes combined. In the 1460s, feuds against cities comprised 29 percent of the noble feuds. Some of these feuds may be explained by the state-making theory since cities took part in the territorialization contest (e.g., Zmora, 1997, 26–32), but the question is to what

degree this is true, and is the concept of “inimical intimacy” at all relevant in analyzing these feuds?

In spite of these minor objections and questions, the present book is a new milestone in scholarship on noble feuds in early modern Germany.

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