

zeitenblicke 1 (2002), Nr. 1

About this issue

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The first issue of **zeitenblicke** is dedicated to research into witchcraft. The contributions published here account not only for the fact, that the debate on the European witch-hunts has in the meantime become one of the most lively and productive fields of research into Early Modern History, but are simultaneously the result of an intensive communication network that has sprung up over the last two years between the "Portal Hexenforschung" (Portal Witchcraft Research) of the Munich "Server Frühe Neuzeit" (Early Modern History Server) and the "Mailingliste Hexenforschung" (Mailinglist for Witchcraft research) the virtual branch of the "Arbeitskreis Interdisziplinäre Hexenforschung" (AKIH; Interdisciplinary Study Group for Witchcraft Research). With a functioning information infrastructure jointly created by both projects as a backdrop, we decided to dedicate the debut issue of the new online journal **zeitenblicke** to a topic that not only offers many interdisciplinary links but is also particularly suited for electronic publishing due to the variety of media used: Unlike a printed anthology the individual articles are linked with webpages providing additional information - such as the digital dictionary of the history of the witch-hunts. Illustrations, printed wood cuts and photos can be viewed in diverse sizes, which incidentally is part of the programmatic conception of **zeitenblicke**.

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Day by day the "Mailinglist Hexenforschung" bears witness to the continued growth of academic knowledge in this historic field, which has long since become inestimable. It records how books and articles come into being or how conferences and exhibitions are announced - all of which is relevant for the researcher. Is there still an Ariadne's thread that leads through the impenetrable labyrinth of witchcraft research? The overviews of research that have been published again and again since the inception of modern witchcraft research in the 1980's and other bibliographical attempts to clear a path show the pressing need to make information, buried in countless case studies, accessible. To service this need we present a number of summarising texts in "current witchcraft research".

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Obviously there are two levels of dealing with the early modern witch hunts: A large gap separates academic research - far too often stuck in an ivory tower - and popular presentations of the subject, often associated with sensationalism and historically questionable marketing of "the Witch". "Witchcraft sells" - whether through the dark fascination of burning pyres or the fulfilment of esoteric desires. To counter such a distortion it is necessary to critically examine the mechanisms of mythogenesis reaching back to the 18th and 19th century. The view of witchcraft through the ages and modern presentation of witches in museums are therefore also important components of this issue of **zeitenblicke**.

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Interviews with two prominent protagonists of witchcraft research form the start. Carlo Ginzburg, one of the most famous historians alive, remembers the beginning of his studies about the "Benandanti" in an anecdotal conversation with Gudrun Gersmann. At the same time he gives fascinating and witty insights into his view of history and his research. A brief summary of witchcraft research is attempted in a virtual interview conducted by Klaus Graf with Wolfgang Behringer, the leading German witchcraft researcher. His comments on the relationship of German and international witchcraft research are particularly interesting. Both texts show that - although research is abstract - one cannot completely discount the researchers personalities and their love for there subject generated by attractive source material.

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The inception of the modern witch trials at the beginning of the 15th century in the Western Alps has been the subject of much research over the last few years. Georg Modestin and Kathrin Utz Tremp summarise the intensive work centred at the University of Lausanne about the archival transmission of the proceedings of the Inquisition, specifically by the Dominican Ulrich von Torrenté in the 1430's, as well as the earliest treatises dealing with witches. Closely interrelated to this welcome bibliographical guide to the mainly francophone studies on the subject conducted in the last few years is Nikolaus Schatzmann's plea for the greater consideration of Upper Italian sources since the end of the 14th century. He also provides valuable indications on sources and studies.

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An intensive examination with varied kinds of sources is at the foreground of three articles: The text provided by the Australian researcher Charles Zika offers multiple conceptional accents. Firstly, the fact that the article is written in English is designed to further integrate German witchcraft research into international research. Secondly, his topic, the role of the iconography of the ancient sorceress Circe, especially in printed wood cuts, in the formation of the discourse on witchcraft in the 15th and 16th century, shows the importance of "historico-cultural" dimensions in witchcraft research and their necessarily interdisciplinary orientation. Zika's sound and heavily illustrated article continues his series of vivid works on witchcraft iconography. Here, pictures once again convincingly come into their own as historical sources.

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Hermann Löher was a juror in Rheinbach, where he took part in trials of witches, before he fled to the Netherlands, where he later wrote his memoirs about this chapter in his life. Thomas Becker's article on this important and rare source serves as a useful introduction to the digital edition at the "Server Frühe Neuzeit" of Löher's "Wehmütige Klage", printed in Amsterdam in 1676. Thomas Lange's presentation of two exemplary documents of the witch-hunt in Hesse-Darmstadt in 1582 can simultaneously be understood as a didactic school source. The confessions of the juvenile delinquents allow an inside perspective of the view of witches and the devil at that time. Sources from the State Archive Darmstadt are made available in facsimile and in transcription.

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The question of point of view on the witch trials through the ages and their standing in the memory of society are discussed in two articles. Jürgen Scheffler, Director of the "Hexenbürgermeisterhaus" in Lemgo, a local museum, starts from a project in Lemgo, the torture chair, to engage in a fundamental thinking process on the presentation of alleged torture instruments in museums - a must-read not only for museologists, but for anybody interested in the view on the topic in the 19th and 20th century. Torsten Reimer visited the American Salem Witch Museum and reports vividly on the intensely commercial adaptation of the infamous Salem Witch trials of 1692.

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The last section of this issue is devoted to the introduction of relevant institutions and projects. Jürgen Michael Schmidt portrays the "Arbeitskreis für Internationale Hexenforschung"; Klaus Graf introduces the "Mailingliste Hexenforschung" as its administrator, Gudrun Gersmann explains design and content of the "Portal Hexenforschung" of the "Server Frühe Neuzeit" and last but not least Gerd Schwerhoff presents his "Dresdener Auswahlbibliographie zur Hexenforschung - DABHex" (the Dresdener bibliography of witchcraft research). Gunther Franz' extensive article on the "Trierer Arbeitsgemeinschaft" has to be particularly taken note of, as it could equally have been placed among the research reports in the first section.

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Today it is not yet to be expected of a historian to publish the results of his work in an electronic journal. For this reason we are particularly happy to be able to present a number of stimulating articles for **zeitenblicke** no.1 within a relatively short period of time. We thank all authors for the close collaboration and for the willingness to take part in this experiment! We hope that the articles will be of interest for witchcraft researchers but also for "interested laymen". The articles present the diversity of approaches in research and also the possibilities of academic multimedia publishing in the - cost-free - Internet.

Gudrun Gersmann / Klaus Graf

Translation: Giles Bennett