where erudition is worn lightly and sociological jargon rejected in favour of finely-honed plain English. Indeed, in addition to all of its scholarly qualities, *The Tunisia of Ahmad Bey* is the most carefully and gracefully written book that I have read in a long time.

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G. BENECKE. — *Society and Politics in Germany 1500-1750.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.

This work, the author tells us in the Preface, "attempts a new interpretation of the Holy Roman Empire in Germany from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century" (p. ix). It looks at the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation in this period not as the unfortunate legacy of a mythical Hohenstaufen failure, nor as a weak, chaotic conglomeration of competing territories and dynasties crying out for the 19th-century National Liberals' programme of centralization and rationalization, nor as the arena in which Austrian Hapsburgs and Prussian Hohenzollerns waged a power struggle for supremacy, the *kleindeutsche* and *machtpolitische* view. These views distort the picture. Benecke takes the stand that "Federalism is the main theme of German political history" (p. 23). His thesis is that the Holy Roman Empire in the early modern period evolved into a complex federal system, anomalous but viable, its viability arose largely out of the interdependence between the whole and its parts, especially those territories whose smallness precluded development into sovereign states and whose continued existence as independent units hung therefore on the survival of the empire.

This interpretation is not wholly original with Benecke, as he himself acknowledges in his historiographic survey in Chapter III. What is unique to Benecke's study is its foundation of exhaustive research carried out in state archives in north-west Germany. As Benecke proceeds from the assumption that "the federal Empire could only ever be as strong as its component territorial states wished," he concludes that "the parts have first and foremost to be studied in their own right" (p. ix). The latter two-thirds of his book contains the results of his research in the state archives of the county of Lippe. There he explores the relationship between territorial development and the regional and imperial-federal institutions of the early modern Empire. That section is preceded by one in which he examines the development of thirteen territories in north-west Germany, six ecclesiastical and seven lay, studied, he assures us in his Preface, not from the point of view of local history but rather from that of an analyst of a complex federal whole.

The weightiest section of Benecke's book is that devoted to Lippe. After surveying the composition of Lippe society, he examines the evolution of Lippe from an overlord's estate into a territorial state with the development of the machinery of state taxation. In the tug-of-war between Estates and dynastic rulers over taxation, absolutism was precluded, Benecke argues, by the mutual dependence of the contending parties, the ruler upon nobles and burghers as the dynasty's chief creditors, the nobles and burghers upon the ruling dynasty for repayment of their loans as well as for favourable tenure and offices.

Just as Benecke has found a close relationship between territorial taxation and the evolution of the territorial state, so he finds Lippe being drawn into the

federal orbit with the imposition of imperial *Turkensteuer* and *Romermonate* on the county towards the beginning of the 16th century. Benecke identifies as the second pillar of German federalism in the early modern period the Emperors' attempts to establish law and order within the Empire. Various forms of "self-help" justice, *Fehde* (private war), *Feme* (collusive law courts), and vicious campaigns of slander and libel, often resorted to in cases of debt default — all these threatened land-peace. Emperors sought to replace the ancient right of "self-help" with due process before imperial-federal courts. Benecke concludes: "Turks on the frontier and bandits at home remained the backbone of federal politics from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth" (p. 247).

The federal-imperial institution most essential to these "two pillars of German federalism" (p. 247) was the *Reichskammergericht*. According to Benecke, it was "above all a court for enforcing the payment of imperial tax arrears" (p. 248). But it also served the interests of the small state of Lippe. In handling cases "beyond the scope and legal capacity of the Lippe administration" (p. 286), it acted as a constitutional court of appeal, upholding the principle of taxation of consent (of the propertied) and in accordance with fair assessment. In providing "an outlet for peaceful and due process of law" (p. 276) in cases of private debt and bankruptcy, it helped rid the land and society of Lippe of the defamation and violence of "self-help" justice. The great number of cases taken to the *Reichskammergericht* by rulers, officials, nobles and burghers of Lippe between the 16th and the 18th centuries attests to the usefulness of the imperial court to the county.

In addition to federal-imperial institutions, Benecke also studies the role of bodies at an intermediate level between *Reich* and territory. Ten regional *Kreise*, of which the Westphalian circle was one, functioned sporadically between the 16th and 18th centuries principally to organize "federal armies, war taxes and federal executive taxes" (p. 352). As the circle directorship was usually vested in a strong state, the circle director could use too easily the institution of the circle to intimidate and bully weak states like Lippe. Other intermediate bodies, however, such as the Westphalian College of Counts and the *Corpus Evangelicorum*, enabled Lippe to use collective action in the protection and furtherance of the county's interests.

What concerns Benecke principally, then, is the machinery of federalism, how it developed and how it related to a small state like the county of Lippe. Thus the book's title is somewhat misleading. The political and religious issues activating the conflicts and wars which the machinery of war and taxation served lie outside Benecke's scope. Similarly German society between the 16th and 18th centuries is not the main focus of Benecke's book; he does, however, delineate the status system and discuss the role of the various *Stände* in relation to the machinery of government.

In the Preface, Benecke makes certain claims for his study which the study itself does not fulfill. For one, he promises that in Part III "the needs of peasants-plebians are worked out in terms of taxation and finance during the whole early modern period" (p. x). It is not clear what "needs" he has in mind. For although he found no records of peasant revolt in Lippe in the early modern period and mob violence only in Lemgo and Lippstadt occasionally, he points out that the Lippe landlords' sense of responsibility towards the poor diminished from the 16th century onwards and, while the élites of the noble and burgher *Stände* manipulated tax collection to their own advantage and competed in tax-evasion, the bulk of the burden was pushed onto the peasantry.

Another loose claim from the Preface is that his study of Lippe reveals the Holy Roman Empire as providing not only an effective but also a "mature system of government for early modern Germany that was attuned both to its own needs and to the wider needs of early modern Europe" (p. xi). The reader is left in the dark as to what "the wider needs of early modern Europe" are. It also is not clear what is meant by a "mature" system of government. Is he referring to its longevity? Or is he alluding to the point he makes in the chapter on "Rulers' Finances and Estates' Taxation" and reiterates in the Conclusion, that "the Holy Roman Empire worked at small territorial level, guaranteeing a larger number of liberties to a greater number of persons than possible any other system in early modern Europe" (p. 225)? Perhaps.

But my main criticism of the book is that the author lacks a sense of the proper relation between argument and evidence. Too often the text dissolves into a welter of unassimilable particulars. This is especially true of his chapters on the six ecclesiastical and the seven lay territories in north-west Germany, but it also occurs in the chapters on Lippe. The main themes get lost in a procession of detail the mind cannot absorb. In Preface and Conclusion, Benecke argues that because of the lack of a comprehensive central archives for the Holy Roman Empire in the early modern period what is needed for an understanding of the German empire then is "a piecemeal" examination "of each and every German state in turn" (p. 374). According to a survey Benecke cites, the Empire comprised a total of 2,303 territories and jurisdictions. Surely 2,302 more studies such as Benecke's are neither necessary nor desirable. Selection and synthesis are essential to the historians' craft. Had Benecke practiced them more, the contribution his book makes to an understanding of German federalism in the early modern period would have been both more forceful and more accessible.

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STEPHAN THERNSTROM. — *The other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.
JOSEF BARTON. —*Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians and Slovaks in an American City, 1890-1950.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.

These two books exemplify the best of the new urban and ethnic history. By focusing on Boston and Cleveland, and studying their immigrant peoples, Thernstrom and Barton have at long last given us a glimpse of life at the botton of the economic pyramid in cities that have for too long been neglected by American social historians.

Thernstrom's work, which is based on random samples of the careers of 7,965 males who inhabited Boston between 1880 and 1970, presents us with a fascinating look at the life of a city over the last century. Complaining that too many historians in the past have studied the careers of only the privileged few, Thernstrom traces the lives of the "other Bostonians" — the middle and lower classes and their adaptation to the modern world. He finds that Boston, like other American cities, had a tremendous population turnover in the last hundred years, with generally half the people of the city leaving it in each decade, only to be replaced by hordes of newcomers at the same time. Since these population fluctuations preceded even the Civil War, Thernstrom casts doubt upon Robert Wiebe's celebrated theory, presented in his *Search for Order* (1967), that in the 1870's America