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978-0-521-34778-5 - Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early
Modern Germany

David Warren Sabean

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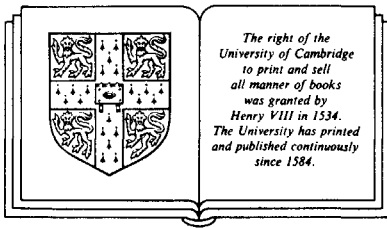
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POWER IN THE BLOOD

*Popular culture and village discourse
in early modern Germany*

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

New York New Rochelle

Melbourne Sydney

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Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1984

First published 1984

First paperback edition 1987

Reprinted 1988, 1992, 1993, 1997

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Sabean, David Warren

Power in the blood.

1. Nürtingen (Germany) – Social life and customs

I. Title

943'.47 DD901.N97/

ISBN 0 521 26455 3 hard covers

ISBN 0 521 34778 5 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

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This book is dedicated

to my mother

MYRNA MAUDE DIXON SABEAN

and to the memory of my father

ELMER CLYDE SABEAN

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Preface

The origins of this book are obscure even to myself, but the occasion of its conception I remember quite vividly. For about fifteen years, I have been piecing together all of the material I can find on the village of Neckarhausen (today part of the city of Nürtingen). The search broadened out several years ago from the rich collection of documents in the Rathaus to include the regional and state archives. About a year ago, I spent a week in the Landeskirchliches Archiv in Stuttgart reading through all of the pertinent information in the church visitation records. At the end of the week, I had three free hours before my train left, which I used to browse through the volumes of the 1580s, looking for more stories of peasant refusal to attend the sacrament of communion to match the two I had found for Neckarhausen. What I discovered makes up the first chapter in this book. It also put me on to the trail of new material to extend the questions and provide new possibilities for experimentation.

The attentive reader will see that although I skip all around Württemberg in this book, I have gained my fundamental understanding of the workings of that rural society through the patient, detailed examination of the mass of sources from Neckarhausen. I have also benefited from daily discussions over the last seven years with my colleagues in the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte. Especially close have been my contacts with Hans Medick, who is spending the better part of his life with his own Swabian village. Together with Alf Lüdtke, we have also been debating the exchange between history and anthropology for a long time. Little of what I have written here could have been done prior to my long 'sabbatical' in Göttingen.

Jürgen Schlumbohm read each chapter as it came fresh from the typewriter and provided me with the necessary encouragement to con-

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tinue. I also argued every line with Vanessa Maher, Gerald Sider, Jonathan Knudsen, and William Reddy, all of whom brought their own work to the Institute to be discussed. They all know how much I learned from them.

An earlier version of chapter 1 appeared in the *Festschrift* for Rudolf Vierhaus, the Institute's director (published by Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht). His comments were valuable for revising the argument, but more important has been his continual support for my work and the superb conditions for research which he has provided.

Several people have read and commented on one or other of the chapters. Particularly helpful have been the remarks by Barbara Duden, David Cohen, Anthony La Vopa, Ivan Illich, Kenneth Barkin, Peter Reill, and Georg Iggers.

Towards the end of work on the book, I had a chance to talk with Martin Scharfe, who put me on to the trail of the broadside depicting the Beutelsbach bull sacrifice. I was received most kindly by Dr Irmgard Hampe at the Württemberg Landesstelle für Volkskunde, who gave me permission to make a copy.

In twenty years of visits to the Hauptstaatsarchiv in Stuttgart, I have spent many hours discovering things. I hope that I have been able to convey some of the excitement I have experienced reading documents. It has not always been easy for the staff to answer my needs, but they have always been helpful and encouraging. A quiet oasis in the archive landscape is the Landeskirchliches Archiv in Stuttgart, whose director, Dr Gerhard Schäfer, has arranged for me to use material from Neckarhausen and given me many useful ideas. Hermann Ott, who presides over the reading room, knows better than anyone else how to help the helpless.

During various stages of the book's production, I received important support from Brigitte Bartels and Monika Hammer, who typed the manuscript, and from Hiltrud Mintenig, who entered it into the computer. Manfred Thaller, who will play a prominent role in the introduction to the Neckarhausen book, introduced me to the mysteries of computerized text processing. The diagrams in chapter 5 were drawn by Stefan Mielke.

One night after I had hurriedly cooked a particularly depressing meal, my wife asked if I thought the peasants were worth it. Her irony has kept me sane.

Göttingen
July 1983