A major interdisciplinary study of the development of hospitals, insane asylums, and prisons in North America and Western Europe, this book resulted from discussions between its two editors about their work on the history of hospitals, poor relief, deviance, and crime, and a subsequent conference held in June 1992 at the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., that attempted to assess the impact of Foucault and Elias. Eighteen contributors from six different countries with backgrounds in history, sociology, criminology, and public health utilize various methodological approaches and reflect the various viewpoints in the theoretical debate over Foucault’s contribution to historical research.
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HOSPITALS, ASYLUMS, AND PRISONS
IN WESTERN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA, 1500–1950

Edited by
NORBERT FINZSCH
and
ROBERT JÜTTE

GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE
Washington, D.C.
Contents

Preface vii
Contributors ix

INTRODUCTION

1 Elias, Foucault, Oestreich: On a Historical Theory of Confinement
   Norbert Finzsch 3

2 Four Centuries of Prison History: Punishment, Suffering, the Body,
   and Power Pieter Spijker 17

PART ONE
HOSPITALS AND ASYLUMS

3 The Transformation of the American Hospital Morris J. Vogel 39

4 The Construction of the Hospital Patient in Early Modern France
   Colin Jones 55

5 Before the Clinic Was “Born”: Methodological Perspectives in
   Hospital History Guenter B. Risse 75

6 Syphilis and Confinement: Hospitals in Early Modern Germany
   Robert Jütte 97

7 Madhouses, Children’s Wards, and Clinics: The Development
   of Insane Asylums in Germany Christina Vänja 117

8 Pietist Universal Reform and Care of the Sick and the Poor:
   The Medical Institutions of the Francke Foundations and Their
   Social Context Renate Wilson 133
## Contents

### PART TWO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Michel Foucault’s Impact on the German Historiography of Criminal Justice, Social Discipline, and Medicalization</td>
<td>Martin Dinges</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The History of Ideas and Its Significance for the Prison System</td>
<td>Gerlinda Smaus</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Prerogatives of Confinement in Germany, 1933–1945: “Protective Custody” and Other Police Strategies</td>
<td>Robert Gellately</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>“Comparing Apples and Oranges?” The History of Early Prisons in Germany and the United States, 1800–1860</td>
<td>Norbert Finzsch</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Reformers United: The American and the German Juvenile Court, 1882–1923</td>
<td>Karl Tilman Winkler</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Medicalization of Criminal Law Reform in Imperial Germany</td>
<td>Richard F. Wetzell</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Prison Reform in France and Other European Countries in the Nineteenth Century</td>
<td>Patricia O’Brien</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Surveillance and Redemption: The Casa di Correzione di San Michele a Ripa in Rome</td>
<td>Luigi Cajani</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>“Policing the Bachelor Subculture”: The Demographics of Summary Misdemeanants, Allegheny County Jail, 1892–1923</td>
<td>Lynne M. Adrian and Joan E. Crowley</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Beyond Confinement? Notes on the History and Possible Future of Solitary Confinement in Germany</td>
<td>Sebastian Scherer</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index**

363
Preface

This book is the result of discussions between its two editors immediately following completion of work on the history of hospitals, poor relief, deviance, and crime. Both of us had also contributed to the current reassessment of Michel Foucault's and Norbert Elias's work, which continues to dominate cultural and medical history as well as the social sciences more generally. While assessing the impact of these two intellectuals in the early 1990s, it became evident that much more work remained to be done. David J. Rothman's book *The Discovery of the Asylum* (1971) and Pieter Spijker's monograph *The Spectacle of Suffering* (1984) pioneered the subject and began to ask the right questions. These in turn provoked further research. It was this need for an even broader interdisciplinary approach, more than any other aspect, that was our main concern as we developed the concept for the conference on "The Prerogatives of Confinement: Social, Cultural, Political, and Administrative Aspects of the History of Hospitals, Carceral and Penal Institutions in Western Europe and North America" held at the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C., June 6–9, 1992.

The chapters in this book are, with one exception, substantially revised versions of papers delivered at this conference. The editors are grateful to the German Historical Institute (GHI) and the Robert Bosch Foundation in Stuttgart for their generous financial support of the conference. The editors also would like to acknowledge the continued support of Hartmut Lehmann, the former director of the GHI. His wide-ranging scholarly interests and his open-mindedness made projects of this kind feasible. The staff of the GHI contributed its time and energy to the preparation of the manuscript. Particular thanks go to Daniel S. Mattern, who rendered the often difficult texts into readable English, and Pamela B. Abraham, who assisted along the way. Finally, we wish to thank the present director of the GHI, Detlef Junker, for his cooperation in the publication of this book.

The editors also wish to thank those who gave papers at the conference and who, for various reason, are not represented here. Finally, we owe a considerable debt to all those who commented on the papers, contributed to the discussions at the various sessions, and have generously allowed us to draw on their remarks in the revised versions of the essays.
Preface

The essays published in this book reflect the vast range of interests, both chronological and topical, represented at the meeting, where social and medical historians together with social scientists and criminologists embarked on a quest to furnish fresh perspectives for examining sources and for reexamining historical assumptions about the relations between hospitals and prisons, thus contributing to the development of the field of interdisciplinary and comparative history. The present book, furthermore, allows comparisons to be made among different methodological approaches to this theme, which in turn will not fail to generate future research.

Stuttgart and Hamburg,                      Norbert Finzsch
May 1996                                    Robert Jütte
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