

home in Samoa, they were able to redefine their tours as cultural and diplomatic *malaga*. Chapter 4 investigates the challenges and opportunities presented by the expanding infrastructure in Samoa. Samoan workers welcomed an additional space to earn cash and appreciated the connectivity that roads and ports presented, offering more regular and consistent ways of interacting with the wider world. Finally, chapter 5 explores the indigenous intermediaries (usually mixed-race) who navigated the precarious spaces between colonizer and colonized as police, translators, secretaries, and nurses.

While the thorough research and incisive analysis of *Coconut Colonialism* should be commended, there were instances where the book could have been stronger. . Droessler often mentions how workers were vulnerable to environmental and ecological concerns but fails to go into much depth about those concerns, or the impact of coconut colonialism on the bodies of its diverse workforce or the Samoan landscape. This would have been a rich opportunity to engage with promising and important work on labor in the history of science and the environment. Likewise, a brief glance at the secondary literature reveals only light engagement with recent work on German colonialism. Although Droessler's work makes a necessary contribution to the rather deficient literature on German Samoa, the study of German colonialism has recently become one of the most vibrant fields in imperial history. Why some landmark texts were excluded, let alone more specific studies which address similar issues of labor, race, and identity in German colonies, is unclear.

In *Coconut Colonialism*, Holger Droessler crafts a thoughtful narrative on how local people in small spaces reacted to large-scale processes like colonialism and globalization through labor. His original contribution and unique transnational and trans-imperial approach illustrate how future scholarship can overcome traditional methods to untangle complex global stories. Importantly, his focus on collaboration and resistance in response to Euro-American encroachment demonstrates the essential roles of agency and identity in these processes. For the workers of Samoa, *malaga* stands at the center of globalization, enabling them to construct a shared, cooperative vision of Oceanian globality.

doi:10.1017/S0008938923000924

Blood Inscriptions: Science, Modernity, and Ritual Murder in Europe's Fin de Siècle

By Hillel J. Kieval. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022. Pp. x + 298. Hardcover \$65.00. ISBN: 978-0812253764.

Jay Geller

Vanderbilt University, emeritus

Hillel Kieval's cogent new book examines the sudden spate of trials propelled by ritual murder accusations between 1882 and 1902 in Central Europe. This work, the culmination of two decades of research, draws upon interrogation protocols, medical examination reports, trial records, press accounts, polemical tracts, apologetic responses, contemporary reappraisals, and other Czech, German, Hebrew, and Hungarian documents in archives across Europe, Israel, and the United States. Kieval devotes individual chapters to the four accusations in which formal investigations resulted in judicial prosecutions: Tiszaeszlár (Hungary, 1882–1883), Xanten (Prussian Rheinland, 1891–1892), Polná (Bohemia, 1899–1900), and Konitz (West Prussia, 1900–1902). Brief discussions of the two other accusations in Imperial

Russia during this period that went to trial frame those analyses textually (Kutaisi in the introduction; Kiev in the conclusion) as well as chronologically (1879; 1911–1913). A chapter assessing the cultural, historical, and social contexts—local, regional, and national—and populations (Jews and Gentiles) of each case precedes the analyses of the trials.

The introduction summarizes the preceding history of ritual murder accusations in its three aspects of ritual desecration, host desecration, and blood libel: emerging in Norwich in 1144, it reached a high point in West and Central Europe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Even as they virtually disappeared there, with change in the symbolic universe sparked by the Reformation, accusations began to thrive further east, e.g., in Poland-Lithuania, where the Counterreformation held sway—until torture-generated confessions became inadmissible as evidence in the 1770s—only to return to European public awareness with the 1840 Damascus affair. Though Kieval notes that hundreds of accusations entered the Central European public sphere (criminal complaints, newspaper reports, parliamentary speeches) during the late nineteenth century, his focus is less on why ritual murder accusations re-emerged then, than on the seemingly “astonish[ing]” and “outrageous” (17) happenstance that in modern Central European states the charges in these four instances were not simply dismissed as products of superstition, religious intolerance, and ignorance, but resulted in trials. More astonishing, the cases took place within legal systems that were structured by modern criminal codes and rules of procedure, where most participants recognized the operative epistemological rules of modern forensic science and criminology, and where scientific, medical, and academic expert testimony played an outsized role.

Rather than endeavor to characterize these four accusations and their subsequent investigations and trials as instances of a single underlying phenomenon, Kieval situates each in the specificity of its locality. These cases did not readily correlate to national or regional histories of antisemitism or local patterns of antagonistic Jewish-Gentile interactions. Indeed, in these four towns Jewish residents were rooted in their communities, had a strong sense of belonging, and felt entitled to the protection of the state. Further, explanations that focus on the accusation as cultural atavism, or on the appeal of irrationality as a return of the repressed in a disenchanted world, or in reaction to the social disruptions caused by modernization, do not jibe with how the legal process itself unfolded.

Kieval first analyzes how each of these accusations emerged from local systems of knowledge and social interactions, and then turns to what made these accusations reputable to social elites and self-consciously “modern” individuals, such that they “would expend so much time, energy, and prestige” (6). While recognizing how these local narratives gained momentum through their exploitation by antisemitic and nationalist journalists and politicians, Kieval details how the tensions, especially between the local, quasi-rural communities and the major urban, national, or academic centers over matters of authority/expertise (political, juridical, medical, forensic) and prestige, and, often, between the investigating judge and the public prosecutor played out in the ensuing, competing forensic and medical investigations. As a consequence of these competing forces, delays in definitive official determinations of the nature of the crime allowed the narrative of ritual murder to become tenable. While judges and prosecutors attempted to frame the trials within the modern juridical order and therefore to keep the “ritual murder accusation” out of the proceeding, the charge nevertheless seeped in through the forensic judgments presented as evidence—such as the possibility of multiple perpetrators, the alleged ritualized “butcher’s cut” of the victim, and claims of exsanguination as cause of death—as well as in witness testimonies, antisemitic press reports, and in comments by attorneys representing the victim’s family.

Kieval also delineates how each trial shaped the narratives and increasing plausibility of its successors; he implies a tipping point had not yet been reached when the rumors surrounding the 1884 murder of a Skurz, West Prussia youth did not impede the Prussian Interior Department investigator from putting on trial the chief promulgator of the ritual murder accusation and not the suspected Jews. He then addresses what contributed to the apparent end to staging such trials: the internal contradictions of the trial process itself.

Kieval traces the eventual incompatibility of certain narratives of Jewish criminality—local (social) knowledges about Jewish difference that drew upon Christian texts and traditions and that were then mobilized to serve political ends—with “discourses of modern legal procedure, scientific method, and the self-consciousness of political and social elites” (223). While those narratives facilitated the initiation of the process, the attempts to appropriate the authority of scientific culture and expertise to sustain the accusations ultimately ran into the inability of the evidence, repeatedly subjected to forensic examination, to confirm them. Drawing upon Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s concept of sociology of knowledge, Kieval concludes that while the narrative of ritual murder could still serve as a clarion call of Jewish danger and immutable Jewish difference, it had to accommodate the new rules of the juridical order to confront that danger and difference. Once the narrative of Jews’ alleged need to murder non-Jews became naturalized, severed from its salvific meaning, the accusation became a “most impoverished vessel” (228) to explain the world the accusers inhabited and, by implication, to mobilize a counter-worldview to the rule of the scientific and bureaucratic order. *Blood Inscriptions* is a worthy addition to the extensive scholarship on these trials specifically and on ritual murder accusations more generally.

doi:10.1017/S0008938923000997

Der Rathenaumord und die deutsche Gegenrevolution

By Martin Sabrow. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2022. Pp. 334. Cloth €30.00. ISBN: 978-3835351745.

Larry Eugene Jones

Canisius College

Commissioned to memorialize the hundredth anniversary of Walther Rathenau’s assassination on June 24, 1922, Martin Sabrow’s book is a revised version of the dissertation and short book he published in the mid-1990s. Here Sabrow takes advantage not only of the secondary literature that has appeared since then but also of new archival sources in the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History in Moscow. Sabrow’s central thesis is that the assassination of Rathenau, a prominent German Jew who had been serving as foreign minister since the previous October, had less to do with the wave of antisemitism that swept Germany since the last years of World War I than with the conspiratorial ambitions of a small group of right-wing activists whom Hermann Ehrhardt had assembled under the aegis of a secret organization known as the Organization Consul (*Organisation Consul*, O.C.).

Rathenau was not the only prominent German to be targeted for assassination by the handful of terrorists who had been recruited by the Organization Consul. In late August 1921, two assassins had murdered Matthias Erzberger, a former Reich minister of finance who was reviled by the Right for having signed the armistice in November 1918. This was followed in June 1922 by an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Philipp Scheidemann, a prominent Social Democrat who had earned the wrath of the radical Right by virtue of his strong support for Germany’s new republican system. And Rathenau’s assassination would be followed by an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the prominent Jewish publicist Maximilian Harden, who had attracted the enmity of the Right by switching his loyalties from the monarchy to the republic as editor of the highly regarded journal *Die Zukunft*.