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The Body Populace: Military Statistics and Demography in Europe before the First World War by Heinrich Hartmann
(review)

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to speculate: was this because of the particular resilience with which populations resisted changes surrounding the rites of death? Did they defend the dead more fiercely or more effectively than they did the domains of labor, education, or law? Or is it that historians, conditioned to consider the era of the Porfiriato in light of the Revolution that followed it, have tended broadly to overlay the power of the Porfirian state?

Weber is circumspect on such broader questions. But he does excel in the respectful use of the wide body of source materials he has uncovered from Mexico's National Archives (including his examination of patents on coffin construction), the municipal archives, and those of the Secretary of Public Health. With memorable examples and clear prose, *Death Is All Around Us* persuasively makes the case for the relative failure of the Porfirian state of this important realm of popular life (and death).

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Heinrich Hartmann. *The Body Populace: Military Statistics and Demography in Europe before the First World War*. Ellen Yutzy Glebe, trans. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2019. xxiv + 256 pp. Ill. \$40.00 (978-0-262-53632-5).

Heinrich Hartmann's book shows how military statistics arose as an autonomous, transnational scholarly field with its own methods, institutions, and research issues, before the First World War. It focuses on Switzerland, Germany, and France, and demonstrates that military statistics were important for the rise of demography as a scientific discipline. The book explores how the gathering of health data from military conscripts and assessment of their military fitness gave rise to a notion of a national "collective body" that could be measured and analyzed statistically, and how this fed into discourses about the quality and threatening "degeneration" of national populations.

Hartmann situates his study at a meeting point of history of science and military history, focusing on the social impact of the military in an age of modernization, militarism, colonialism, and nationalism. It is written in an accessible language and based on a wide range of archival and published sources.

Hartmann analyzes the military as a sphere for academic knowledge production. He explores how the military doctor's assessments of an individual's fitness for military service were interwoven with the development of statistics and demography as research fields. A very interesting aspect of the book is the detailed investigation of how basic statistical data were produced. Hartmann shows how the gathering and organization of data were affected by the examination situation and the measuring tools, as well as practical, political, economic and academic discussions, negotiations, and various attempts at establishing objective criteria

and standards at a national or international level. The study also shows how the shaping of these basic “objective” data affected the statistical analysis and interpretations of the data and was interwoven with various interrelated public, political, and bureaucratic debates and decision-making processes.

Also highly interesting is Hartmann’s account of transnational relationships. Military statistics, military strength, and national fitness are topics strongly imbued with national interest and national honor. While researchers were strongly involved in nationalistic discourses, however, they also collaborated, met at international conferences, negotiated about international standards, developed transnational networks, and exchanged data across national boundaries. Until the outbreak of WWI, when military statistics became military secrets and international scientific cooperation came to an abrupt end, such transnational connections were a basic precondition for the rise of demography and military statistics as scholarly fields. It was also important for enhancing the professional legitimacy of military doctors.

By exploring the interconnections between discussions about military strength, national health, anthropometrics, and racial anthropology from the point of view of military statistics, Hartman adds a new perspective to the history of anthropology. Chapter 6 would however have gained a lot from a more systematic and thorough attempt at interpreting the primary sources in the light of the existing literature on the history of anthropology.

Hartmann discusses the military doctor Otto Ammon and his struggle for academic recognition for himself and his racial determinist research at the meeting point of social science and (physical) anthropology in the 1880s and 1890s. Hartmann’s discussion of Otto Ammon seems however, to be slightly disconnected from the existing literature and discussions about the development of German anthropology. A key topic in this literature since the 1990s has been to what extent and in what way German anthropology was transformed from a overwhelmingly liberal, anti-racist and humanitarian anthropology in the nineteenth century, to a racial determinist anthropology in the early twentieth century. Otto Ammon’s (changing) relationship to the German anthropological community is an important topic in this discussion. The issue is for instance discussed by Benoit Massin in his seminal work in the 1990s.¹ Hartmann’s analysis of Ammon’s and his international collaborator’s struggles for scientific acknowledgment might have gained more clarity and relevance if it had been more thoroughly related to the existing literature and ongoing discussion on the history of German anthropology. These objections, should however, not discourage anyone from reading this highly recommendable book.

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1. Benoit Massin, “From Virchow to Fischer: Physical Anthropology and Modern Race Theories in Wilhelmine Germany,” in *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Anthropology and the German Anthropological Tradition*, ed. George Stocking, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 79–154.