

Public Lecture Series 2017

European Labor History in Global Context

Commodity Chain and Labor Relations in the Iron and Steel Production of the Innerberg District (Upper Austria/Styria) in the Early Modern Period

by

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At the beginning of the early modern period the area surrounding the Styrian Erzberg was one of the most important iron- and steel-producing regions of Europe. This lecture analyses the technological features, the social relations of production, and the volume and conditions of the trade in steel and steel tools in the northern part of this area, the so-called Innerberg district, during the 16th and 17th centuries, using a commodity chain approach. Particular stress will be laid on the specific forms of labor organization in the single nodes of the chain, the status and the living standard of the laborers as well as the social conflicts arising because of declining real wages and the introduction of new rules of conduct during this period. It turns out that the production of steel and steel tools underwent a major expansion during the 16th century due to significant changes in the structure of the commodity chains in which it was involved.

Erich Landsteiner is a professor at the Department of Economic and Social History of the University of Vienna. His main fields of research are the agrarian, industrial and financial history of late medieval and early modern Central Europe. His publications related to the subject of this lecture include: "Eingepfercht in die Zirkulationssphäre? Die Kaufleute von Steyr und die Stahlproduktion im Umkreis des steirischen Erzberges im 16. Jahrhundert," in: M. Arnoux and P. Monné (eds.), *Le technicien dans la cité en Europe occidentale 1250-1650*, Rome 2004, pp. 315-345, and (with Ph. Braunstein), "The Production and Trade of Steel and Steel Tools in the Early Modern Semi-Periphery," in: Ph. Dillmann, L. Pérez, C. Verna (eds.), *L'acier en Europe avant Bessemer*, Toulouse 2011, pp. 405-446.

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