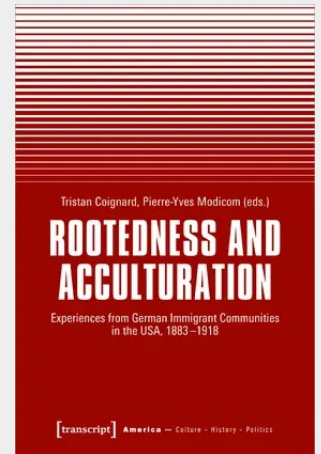


Rootedness and Acculturation

Experiences from German Immigrant Communities in the USA, 1883-1918

German-Americans represent the largest self-declared ancestry group in the United States of America. The period from the 200th anniversary celebration of Germantown's founding in 1883 to the end of the First World War was an age of intense turmoil within the ranks of German-American communities. These decades were marked by a massive political and cultural realignment as well as major contributions to the (self-)definition of German-Americanness. Historians and sociolinguists with backgrounds in German or American studies offer a fresh look at a critical period in the history of German-American communities.

1. Why did you choose this topic? The starting point for the book was a research project on cosmopolitan attitudes in a European, particularly Franco-German context. A socio-historical, sociolinguistic and historiographical dimension has now been added to former priorities in the history of ideas. The thematic complex of German-American communities is productive for this concern. Of particular relevance here are the immigrant's strategies for reconciling adaptation to new circumstances and preservation of German identity. 2. What new perspectives does your book offer? The volume offers new insights into discussions in which assumptions have prevailed for decades that need to be nuanced or questioned on the basis of current research and sources. This applies in particular to the status of the German language, the commitment against slavery, the debates on German-American historiography and the question of the loyalty of German-Americans to the USA during the First World War. Fresh impulses from sociolinguistics and historiography are thus addressed. 3. What makes your topic relevant for current research debates? The book questions the acculturation process in a context of uncertainty between 1883 and 1918: Was there a shift leading to an assimilation model in which the German-speaking communities fully expected to adapt fully to the framework of the dominant culture? What function did the discussion about the cultural origins of the German-American identity play? These issues are still crucial in present times when topics of integration, minority claims and ethnic identity are risen. 4. Your book summary in one sentence: The volume deals with the challenges of identity preservation and integration that immigrants face when their status is perceived as threatened.



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