

Abstract: Why Germania Was Armed, but Still Couldn't Vote: On the Construction of Gender and Gun Rights in the 19th Century

Why Germania Was Armed, but Still Couldn't Vote: On the Construction of Gender and Gun Rights in the 19th Century In the years of the bourgeois revolution in Germany, the right to bear arms and political rights – voting rights in particular – were closely related to each other. He who risked his life for King and country should conversely get the right to vote and thereby the right to decide on the fate of his country. At the same time, images of armed women were widespread and prominent in the 19th century. This raises the question of why an armed Germania did not succeed in placing women centre stage in the field of political rights. This question can be answered in three steps. Firstly, the gender bias of discourse on weapons in the revolutionary years will be analysed. It is thereby demonstrated that in the years of revolution, a newly invented tradition of weaponry rights was constructed exclusively for men. Secondly, it is argued that weapon practices in everyday life were not gender segregated. Women as well as men carried firearms. It thus follows that the rhetorical exclusion of women from supposedly exclusively male weaponry rights mainly served to exclude women from the franchise. Thirdly, it will be argued that this arbitrary and rhetorical linking of weaponry and voting rights ended with the German defeat in the First World War.