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Rosen. Cameralism and the Concept of Medical Police, In Bull. of the History of Medicine, 1953 [photocopie]

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- [\[anonyme ou collectif\] Bulletin of the history of medicine](#)
- [Rosen, Cameralism and the Concept of medical police, In Bull. history of medicine 1953](#)

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Within the framework of cameralism, the idea of *police* is a key concept in relation to problems of health and disease. Derived from the Greek *politeia*, the constitution or administration of a state, the term police (*Policey*) was already employed in a related sense during the sixteenth century by several German writers who deserve to rank as forerunners of the seventeenth and eighteenth century cameralists. One of these was Melchior von Osse (1506-1556) who, in 1556, at the command of the Elector of Saxony prepared a monograph containing his reflections and observations on the proper conduct, organization, and function of a "Christian magistracy."¹³ This document, known as Osse's *Testament*, begins with the following paragraph:

It is among all wise people beyond dispute, [says Osse], that every magistracy (*Obrigkeitt*) may prove and make evident its virtue and aptitude in two ways. First, in time of war, through manly deeds, good sagacious projects, and protection of their lands and subjects, second, in time of peace, through ordering and maintaining of good godly righteous government, judiciary and Policy.¹⁴

In Osse's time administration was unspecialized and not systematized. Governmental activities were relatively inchoate and confused. In keeping with this situation, Osse's presentation of the police concept is general and diffuse. A good *Policey* of a state or city requires a ruler, wise counsel, unpartisan judiciary, and a pious obedient people.

Everything should be directed toward keeping these four parts in good condition, if one is to maintain a good *Policey*, for a lord and ruler is in three respects under obligations to the people divinely intrusted to him; namely, that he should maintain the same in good prosperous circumstances, which occurs when the people (*das Volck*) lives virtuously, and some among them are promoted to learning, and to good arts, and many wise and learned people are in their number, from whom the rest may receive good instruction, and they are not left to wander in the darkness of ignorance, and everything through which such promotion of things useful to the community is hindered is either prevented or averted by the ruler.¹⁵

This statement is significant in that it contains in embryo the assumptions of cameralism.

Another early form of the police concept appeared some sixty years later in a posthumous work by Georg Obrecht (1547-1612), professor of law at Strassburg.¹⁶ Written at the request of his friend Emperor

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-25.

¹⁴ Cited by Small, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

¹⁶ See Roscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-158; Small, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-59; Axel Nielsen: *Die Entstehung der deutschen Kameralwissenschaft im 17. Jahrhundert*, Jena, 1911.



