

Nickel List and Lips Tullian (Early 18th century)

Abstract

Despite the advance of Enlightenment ideas about human rights and dignity, the penal system continued to follow earlier authoritarian principles well into the eighteenth century. Confessions were extorted by torture and sentencing emphasized punishment and deterrence rather than rehabilitation. Death sentences were carried out in a variety of ways. In addition to the “usual” beheadings or hangings, there were also executions that involved more gruesome methods, such as breaking on the wheel. Corporal punishment often entailed flogging, branding, mutilation, and public pillorying. In the German territories, where Emperor Charles V’s penal code, the Carolina, had been in effect since 1532 (though it was moderated in the seventeenth century), draconian punishment continued well into the eighteenth century, though sentencing became less harsh in the second half of the century, when there was a shift away from executions and toward prison sentences.

The image below, from a publication entitled *Curious Conversation in the Antechamber of the Underworld/ Between Two Great Notorious Thieves, Robbers, and Murderers/ Namely Nicol Listen and Lips Tullian*, imparts the lesson that crime, in its multitudinous forms, simply does not pay. The two featured criminals, Nickel List (left) and Lips Tullian (right), are shown first in their finery and then in their cells, where they await their “well-deserved deaths.” Tullian (c. 1675-1715) was a legendary robber and leader of the Black Guard Gang, which was active in Bohemia and Saxony. After several murders and numerous escapes from prison, he was finally captured in 1711; he was subsequently beheaded in 1715. His execution was attended by a large Dresden crowd that included Saxon elector Frederick August I (later August II of Poland).

In 1698, Nickel (or Nikol) List (c. 1656-99), robber chief and murderer, robbed St. Michael’s Church in Lüneburg of its gold treasures, thereby committing the largest known church theft up to that point. In 1699, he and his companions were apprehended and sentenced to death. Their limbs were smashed, and they were then decapitated.

Source



Source: Copperplate engraving by an unknown artist, early 18th century.

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