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Die römischen Repertorien: Neue Perspektiven für die Erforschung von Kirche und Kurie des Spätmittelalters (1378–1484). Edited by **Claudia Märrtl, Irmgard Fees, Andreas Rehberg** and **Jörg Voigt**. Bibliothek des Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Rom 145. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2023. 159,95 € cloth; ebook.

My PhD supervisor passed on to me a pearl of wisdom that her mentor had once shared with her: not all medieval documents have been studied, but German scholars have done their very best to catalogue them. This wisdom applies to the comprehensive volume *Die römischen Repertorien*, based on the papers presented in 2018 at an international conference marking the publication of volume 10 of *Repertorium Germanicum* (RG) and the completion of the series *Repertorium Poenitentiariae Germanicum* (RPG), both series published by Deutsches Historisches Institut (DHI) in Rome.

These series deserve a brief introduction. RG is one of the oldest research initiatives of the DHI. The series aims to publish all mentions of persons, institutions and places of the medieval German empire in all papal registers and documents from 1378 to the Reformation in the form of heavily abbreviated lemma or ‘vita’. The first ‘test volume’ was published already in 1897. With the volume 10, the series reaches the papacy of Sixtus IV (1471–84). The younger sister series, RPG, includes, with similar criteria, all mentions in the supplication registers of the papal penitentiary. RPG was started in 1992 under the direction of Ludwig Schmugge and covers the years 1431–1523 in eleven volumes. The amount of data is impressive: the two series contain information about ca. 100,000 persons that lived between 1378 and 1523. Their data is now available and searchable in the open RG Online database.

The volume has nineteen chapters in almost 600 pages, and it is not possible to discuss them individually in this review. As the subtitle promises, the focus is on recent and ongoing research utilising these repertories and the future research prospects. The contributions treat topics beyond the Roman repertories and church history, reaching towards social, cultural and economic history.

The book has four sections. In the first, two respected senior scholars, Arnold Esch and Ludwig Schmugge, explore the possibilities and challenges of RG and RPG. Both emphasise that the repertories provide information about ordinary people seeking dispensations, privileges and benefices from the pope. Combined with other sources and databases, the repertories open possibilities for studying the lives and careers of these people.

The second section focuses on linking the data of RG and RPG with other databases, such as *Germania Sacra* and *Repertorium Academicum Germanicum*. I want to stress the importance of this section, which contains highly insightful contributions by some of the leading experts in their fields. Sharing the best practices on how to reuse and link existing datasets is crucial at a time when digital humanities projects are too often reinventing the wheel. I especially recommend the chapter by Georg Vogeler, who gives a comprehensive overview of the standards and data models currently used in biographical and prosopographical databases, including their strengths, limitations, and overlaps, and proposes a programming interface for an integrated infrastructure. Anyone aspiring to build a historical person database should first read this chapter.

The third section, with six essays, has a transnational and regional perspective. For those academics working on non-German regions, who likely are the least familiar with RG and RPG, the following three chapters are worth consultation: Daniela Rando on using German

repertories on Lombard history, Claudia Märkl on North-European clerics in Siena and Sienese clerics north of the Alps, and Jessika Nowak on France and Burgundy in the RG of Sixtus IV's papacy.

The final section of the volume offers four chapters on new cultural and social historical approaches to the history of the Church and the papal curia. Christian A. Neumann uses RG and RPG to study old age and ageing people and applies a gerontological perspective to medieval history, which he coins as 'gerontological medievalistics'. Andreas Rehberg explores an understudied topic, papal involvement in heraldic issues. Granting heraldic privileges has been regarded as a prerogative of secular courts, above all kings and emperors, but the ongoing work on the RG has revealed that individuals and cities could also turn to the pope in heraldic matters in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Such novel insights reveal an important aspect and value of a systematic work aiming for repertories, registers and other source publications: the renewal of scholarship through discoveries that no one would have thought to look for.

The volume delivers what its title promises and more: an overview of what has been and currently is studied through DHI's grand repertory projects. The contributions are of very high scholarly quality. *Die römische Repertorien* is obligatory reading for those studying the late medieval history of the papacy and the curia, clerical careers and the Holy Roman Empire. The chapters on digital prosopography and linking person data across databases make the volume a valuable contribution beyond church history. Unfortunately, the language might deter some potential readers. Except for one Italian and one English chapter, the book is in German. If anything, it demonstrates that German remains a language that medieval historians should master.

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