

REVIEW ARTICLE

Germany and the Papacy in the Late Middle Ages

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Repertorium Germanicum, X: *Sixtus IV, 1471–1484*, 1. Edited by Ulrich Schwarz, Juliane Trede, Stefan Brüdermann and others. 3 vols. Pp. xcvi + 2386. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018. €299.978 3 11 061964 5

Repertorium Germanicum, X: *Sixtus IV, 1471–1484*, 1: Indices. Edited by Sven Mahmens, Hubert Höing, Alexander Maul and others. 3 vols. Pp. xv + 2179. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018. €299.978 3 11 061965 2

Towards the end of the twentieth century much UK public money for research was diverted to collaborative projects with specific research objectives, notably in the field of history. This distinguished the UK from other countries on the cutting edge of historical research, notably the USA which lags far behind, but not from Germany, which had long led the way when it comes to teamwork with a clearly defined theme, and where average budgets for historical research projects are still on a scale unimaginable on this side of the Channel. One of the greatest German historical enterprises is the *Repertorium Germanicum*. The project was conceived in the 1890s, and linked from the start with the German Historical Institute in Rome, from which so much fine work on papal history has emerged, notably by Protestant scholars. The first secretary of the DHI (Deutsches Historisches Institut) had the idea of creating a ‘search engine’ (*Suchmaschine*). It was to be and is organised within pontificates by the names of individuals who appear in documents in the Vatican Archives: a prosopographical structure. Though the individuals need a ‘German’ connection to be included, that is interpreted in the broadest sense, so that dioceses from Poland to Belgium find a place, as do any Germans

who turn up in any other region, if the team happened upon them. Consultation online is now also possible, at <<http://194.242.233.132/denqRG/index.htm>>, though the volumes under review did not seem to have been made available electronically at time of writing – and many will find the paper volumes easier to manage, where they are available. Ludwig Quidde, who conceived of the project, thought that it could be completed up to the end of the fifteenth century by a team of five within three years. He had no idea of the scale of the holdings in the archive. Furthermore, alongside the *Repertorium Germanicum* one must now place its precocious younger sister, the *Repertorium Poenitentiarie Germanicum*, which has (thanks to Ludwig Schmugge and his team) already overtaken the elder sibling with *Repertorium Poenitentiarie Germanicum, XI: Hadrian VI, 1522–1523*, ed. Ludwig Schmugge (Tübingen 2018).

The volumes of the original *Repertorium Germanicum* (RG) under review here – collectively volume X – take the project through the pontificate of Sixtus IV, from 1471 to 1484. The text and index volumes together amount to no less than 4,677 pages. Almost 580 volumes of papal records have been combed, and 37,000 papal documents find a place in volume x. Because papal scribes were not good with foreign names, and their writing in this period is decreasingly easy to decipher, linking all the relevant documents to a given individual has required tremendous skill and patience. Almost 1,000 petitioners were identified by the team's efforts. The work has been the fruit of a collaboration between the DHI and the Archive of Niedersachsen, which has for over five decades sent a series of scholarly archivists to Rome to take part in the project. Each collaborator would be assigned all classes of papal documentary series for a period of two or three years – enabling them to understand the 'diplomatic' of the processes of business at the Curia and to trace the outcome of a given petition. Since the composition of the teams over the years overlapped, the experienced could initiate new arrivals into the complexities of the various archival series. At the front of volume i, pp. xxxviii–lxxix, is an impressive list of all the archival series studied (including a few from outside the Vatican Archives). The starting point was always the great series whose call mark in the Vatican Archives is *Reg. Suppl.* The team had to work through about 100,000 petitions in these registers, then attempt to find out what the outcome of the request was. It is clear (even allowing for human error) that many petitions were not pursued to the end.

The *Repertorium* is arranged alphabetically, starting with Abeko Ewesma and finishing with Zwifeltum. When a number of applicants for benefices appear as a group in a petition, they are combined in one entry, so that the names other than the one which heads the list must be sought through the indices. Since this was a long pontificate, it is possible to trace whole careers through entries in the *Repertorium*.

The entries are at first sight – well, even at second and third sight – off-putting, because they are highly abbreviated. The key is a list of abbreviations at pp. xxiii–xxxvii, which is also available through the website. Even with the help of the abbreviations list, the reader will need time to get used to using this resource. Here are some examples from Band 1, random except that they are unusually short, so as not strain the patience of the readers of this JOURNAL:

Andreas Vaschembergk rect. par. eccl. S. Dionisii [deest locus] Argent dioc.: de disp ut unac. d. par. eccl. aliud incompat. benef. recip. val. etsi par. eccl. ad vitam. c. lic perm. 27. mai. 79 S 782 130^{vs} (no. 418, Band 1, p. 108).

In clear, this tells us that the rector of the parish church of St Dionysius (place not specified) in the diocese of Strasbourg asks for a dispensation that he might be able to receive, together with the said parish church, another benefice incompatible with it according to canon law, even a parish church, for life, with permission to exchange it. 27 May 1479 [Vatican Archives], Register of Supplications vol. 782, fo. 130v and following (this is what the superscript ‘s’ after ‘v’ means).

Barbara de Gonzaga comitissa in Wirtemberg.: alt. port. etiam in locis interdictis c. clausula ante diem, 26. nov. 76, Acquisti 26/1 137^{vs} – Francisci de Gonzaga tit. s. Marie Nove diac. card. Mantuan. vul. nunc. soror: de elig. confess., Et p. breve 21 ian. 83 S 818 245^{rs} (no. 691, fo. 177).

This tells us that Barbara de Gonzaga, countess of Württemberg, asks to be allowed a portable altar even in places under interdict, with the special clause to hear mass even before sunrise (which was forbidden by canon law [26 November 1476]), Archivio di Stato di Roma, Acquisti 26/1/ [Preziosi], Brevia Communia, year range, fo. 137v and following – Sister of Francisco de Gonzaga, cardinal deacon of Santa Maria Nova, nicknamed the Cardinal of Mantua, asks for her to be given the privilege of choosing her own confessor. Granted by a brief of 21 January 1483. Register of Supplications vol. 818, fo. 245r and following.

Eucharius de Hirschorn cler. Wormat. dioc. ex utr. par. de mil. gen. in utr. iur. licent. qui lumine dextri oculi orbatus fuit: de disp sup. d. def. corp. ut ad omnes ord. prom. et quecumque incompat. benef. recip. val. c. lic. perm. 23. ius. 83 S 826 156^{vs} (no. 2095, p. 508).

Here the petitioner from the diocese of Worms makes it clear that he is of knightly lineage on both sides as well as that he has degrees in both civil and canon law. He has lost his right eye and asks for a dispensation from the rule that a major bodily defect is a bar to a clerical career. He wants permission to receive all the orders up to priesthood and to get any benefices, even those that cannot be held together according to canon law, with

permission to exchange benefices. Register of Supplications vol. 826, fo. 156v and following.

Georius Symelwicz can. eccl. Omnium ss. op. Wittenberg [Brandenburg.] dioc. referens quod Nicolaus Wissenfels prep., Matheus Coci pleb., Cristannus Donatus Rozlow, Clemens Golthaym et Conradus Lobinherbust canonici d. eccl. absque ulla legitima causa ipsum fruct. dd. can. et preb. de facto privarunt: m. (prep. mon. s. Thome Lipezen. Merseburg. dioc.) committ. in partibus 5 apr. 80 L 803 (no. 2691, p. 661).

This is the start of litigation. A canon of All Saints Wittenberg in the diocese of Brandenburg reports that the provost of his community, the parish priest Matheus Coci and three named canons of the same community have without legitimate cause, de facto without legal process, deprived him of the proceeds of the said canonry and prebend: there is an order to appoint a judge delegate in the locality, namely the head of the monastery of St Thomas in Leipzig. 5 April Lateran Register 803, fo. 207r and following.

Online searches under ‘committ. partibus’ could be the basis of a study of the continuance of the judge delegate system, the state of which in the late Middle Ages has not been properly investigated (the Georius Symelwicz case is an example). References to noble or knightly descent (as with Eucharius de Hirschhorn) tell us about the importance of social status even in purely ecclesiastical business. Is this preoccupation particularly strong in the German lands? That is a question for future comparative research. The same case lists academic degrees, for which the *Repertorium Germanicum* is a particularly reliable source, as was pointed out by one of its most skilful users (one of the best historians of the later medieval papacy *tout court*), the late Brigide Schwarz (‘Nutzungsmöglichkeiten des Repertorium Germanicum für die Kanonistik’, in M. Bertram [ed.], *Stagnation oder Fortbildung? Aspekte des allgemeinen Kirchenrechts im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 2005, 65–91 at p. 70). Schwarz tries to help users navigate the *Repertorium*. She suggests that anyone interested in the role of jurists in later medieval Germany should look in the ‘Index der Wörter und Sachen’ under names of universities and such keywords as ‘baccalareus in decretis’, ‘secretarius’, ‘cancellarius’, ‘officialis’ etc, and points out that in a recent prosopographical study of around 700 lawyers who studied at Erfurt between 1396 and 1521 around 75 per cent of the references in the potted biographies were to the *Repertorium Germanicum*. For prosopographical research it is obviously a tool of the first order once its complexities have been mastered.

Brigide Schwarz gives other hints on how to get the most out of the *Repertorium*. Though she is writing about preceding volumes her methods should work equally well for the new ones. To access the rich data in Chancery registers about litigation, for instance, she recommends searches

under the keywords *lis*, *litigiosus*, *litig.*, *coram*, *sent. appell.* (p. 72). To find out the geographical scope of papal legates and *nuntii*, which is in turn relevant to understanding the division of late medieval Germany into territorial units, the relevant keywords are *legatus*, *nuntius / facult.* (p. 72). To understand the tactics employed in the course of pursuing appointments to benefices, one may search under *de nova prov.*; *de prov. si enutri / nulli*; *de perinde valere*; *de ref.* Schwarz also explains background that the average researcher might not know. On the one hand, a petition was not registered unless it was successful. On the other hand, success did not necessarily mean complete success: the pope could easily decide to grant only part of what was asked.

More hints on how to get the most out of the *Repertorium Germanicum* are offered in an earlier essay by Schwarz, 'Das Repertorium Germanicum', *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* xc (2003), 429–40. She points out that the links between the Roman Curia and the ecclesiastical periphery took the form above all of personal connections (*Verflechtungen*), referring to Christiane Schuchard's study of Germans at the papal court, which goes up to the start date of the volumes reviewed here (p. 436). They will enable similar research for the period that they cover. Preceding volumes showed marked regional differences: in the western and southern regions of Germany relations with the Curia were much more intensive, the *Repertorium* shows. It will now be possible to see how far that pattern continued. Perhaps above all, the *Repertorium* is a wonderful resource for the history of 'the market in benefices', subject of yet another seminal essay by Schwarz, 'Römische Kurie und Pfründenmarkt im Spätmittelalter', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* xx (1993), 129–52, based primarily on the *Repertorium Germanicum*, one of the most illuminating studies of the whole topic of papal provisions, a frustrating field to study.¹ Schwarz uses the phrase 'benefice market' (*Pfründenmarkt*) to capture the element of exchange. The pope granted a benefice, and received a tax on benefices thus granted; if there was a dispensation (say to hold two benefices incompatible according to canon law, as Andreas W. requested in the first example) there was also a fee for that. So put, it all sounds very corrupt. That might be a misunderstanding of a big fact about later medieval church history: viz., that the law made in the classical era of canon law, impressive though it was as a system, did not do justice to

¹ Frustrating because the large existing literature seems to leave basic questions unanswered. One would expect a straightforward account from G. Barraclough's *Papal provisions: aspects of church history, constitutional, legal and administrative in the later Middle Ages* (Oxford 1935), but it is not up to the standard of the brilliant essays on papal diplomatic from the same phase of his career. Conversely, K. Hitzbleck, *Exekutoren: die ausserordentliche Kollatur von Benefizien im Pontifikat Johannes' XXII* (Tübingen 2009), is so concerned to set Barraclough's interpretation straight as to distract the reader from her (important) positive findings.

the complexity of facts on the ground, especially where benefices were concerned. The *Repertorium Germanicum* will not solve such major interpretative problems, but it undoubtedly vastly enlarges our knowledge of facts on the ground. Nobody interested in later medieval Germany or papal history should be unaware of its research potential.