



Manfred Groten, ed. *Hermann Weinsberg (1518-1597): Kölner Bürger und Ratsherr—Studien zu Leben und Werk.* Cologne: SH-Verlag, 2005. 302 pp. EUR 19.80 (paper), ISBN 978-3-89498-152-5.

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Once Again: *Das Buch Weinsberg* as a Main Source for the Cultural History of Early Modern Germany

Virtually all of the grand narratives and overviews of early modern German culture, from the works of Georg Steinhausen and Ernst Walter Zeeden to those of Richard van Dülmen, have used *Das Buch Weinsberg* intensively as one of their prominent sources. In addition, a good number of more specialized scholarly articles exploit *Das Buch Weinsberg* on different topics, and recently, Gerd Schwerhoff has resumed research on it.[1] So, one might question the reasons that could justify yet another book about a subject with which most historians of early modern Germany are more or less familiar. At the very beginning the editor, Manfred Groten, points out the main reason: the preparation of a new complete, critical edition of the voluminous writings of Hermann Weinsberg.

What most historians are familiar with or have read was only a select edition of the writings of Weinsberg which was published mainly at the end of the nineteenth century in five volumes under the somewhat mistaken title *Das Buch Weinsberg*. [2] This older edition no longer corresponds with contemporary research interests. The unsuitableness of the selection criteria used by the editors of the first four volumes, published between 1886 and 1898, is indicated by the fact that a fifth volume was published only two decades later as a supplement entitled *Kulturhistorische Ergänzungen*. Indeed, a large portion of Weinsberg's writings, especially those concerned with his everyday life, was not included in the older edition and is thus unknown to any scholar who has not worked with the original manuscript in the Cologne archive. But a solution seems to be in sight. Since March 2002, the

Abteilung für Rheinische Landesgeschichte der Universität Bonn, the former Institut für geschichtliche Landeskunde des Rheinlands, has been working on a new edition of the writings of Hermann Weinsberg, which is now partially available in digital form.[3] In the context of this project, a conference was organized in October 2003, the results of which were published in this volume.

The book itself is divided in four parts; the fourth part consists of a select bibliography about Hermann Weinsberg. Together with this bibliography, part 1 provides under the heading "Zu Leben und Werk Hermann von Weinsbergs" a good introduction for readers less familiar with the topic. While the first contribution, a reprint of an older article by Wolfgang Herborn, gives an introduction to the life of Weinsberg, the second, by Tobias Wulf, provides an overview of the current state of research. Of special value is the latter author's outline and description of the available archival source material, revealing how much material the older printed edition omits. From the 1550s onward, Weinsberg worked on a history of his family, now known as *Das Buch Weinsberg*. In roughly 1560 or 1561, after its completion, he started working on his *Gedenkbücher*, three folio volumes with about 2,000 pages of autobiographical and diary writings, which he continued until his death in 1597. The older edition's editors selected material for this edition from the *Gedenkbücher* and almost totally excluded *Das Buch Weinsberg* as they regarded its genealogical approach as uninteresting, despite the fact that they used its title for the print edition. The nineteenth-century edition com-

prises barely half of the original information contained in the manuscript. In addition, the Cologne archives preserve a memorial book of the parish of St. Jacob that was also written by Weinsberg. Weinsberg was *Kirchmeister* there and started the memorial book in 1562, about the same time he began with the *GedenkbÄ¼cher*. Weinsberg's authorship of the St. Jacob memorial book has in principle been known since 1933, when Theodor Paas discussed it for the first time, but the memorial book has never received the attention it deserves. As recently as 1997, the book was discovered anew during the work on a new inventory for the archive of the archdiocese of Cologne. This process is described in detail by Joachim Oepen in the volume at hand.

The contributions of part 2, "Hermann Weinsberg und seine Zeit–Untersuchungen zu Einzelaspekten," deal with several specific topics for which Weinsberg's writings are a treasure trove. Robert JÄ¼tte addresses some problems of early modern medical history and discusses how Weinsberg's writings could provide evidence for the historian of medicine. Wolfgang Herborn describes life at an early modern university, using Weinsberg's example. This section is dominated by the substantial article of Alexandra Vullo, which is based on her master's thesis and occupies more than one hundred pages. She uses Weinsberg's writings to analyze how the political constitution and everyday reality of the political processes in the free and imperial city of Cologne looked from the perspective of a member of the city elite. Even if she confirms the well-known trends of the concentration of influence and power on a small group of outstanding local family networks, she skillfully uses Weinsberg to illustrate the self-conception of a man who belonged to the local elite, but not to the inner circle, to show how he adapted himself to the circumstances of local power networks. That Weinsberg's writings can be used not only for a better understanding of the local politics of Cologne, but also to gain insight into the history of the Holy Roman Empire, has been proved in a recent article by Peter Arnold Heuser.[4]

The two articles in part 3 are examples of how historical linguistics and onomatology use Weinsberg's writings as source material. What makes Weinsberg so thrilling for linguists, according to Robert Moeller, is the fact that he wrote exactly at the time when the regional dialect of the Rhineland was gradually being replaced by the *neuhochdeutsche Schriftsprache* in written records.

Walter Hoffmann analyzes Weinsberg's reflections about the change of surnames, a contribution largely ignored by most modern researchers. Hoffmann points out the value of these reflections as a rather early and comprehensive document dealing with the alteration of family names.

In sum, even if the comprehensiveness and value of the articles of parts 2 and 3, among which the article of Alexandra Vullo is especially a good piece of historical craftsmanship, differ, the volume at hand proves its merits with parts 1 and 4, which provide a good introduction to Hermann Weinsberg not only as an historic individual but also to his writings as one of the outstanding sources of early modern German cultural history. If this volume entices historians to concern themselves again or for the first time with Weinsberg's writings, it will have met all the requirements one could expect from the published contributions of a conference proceeding.

Notes

[1]. Gerd Schwerhoff, "VerklÄ¼rung und Untergang des Hauses Weinsberg–eine gescheiterte Geltungsgeschichte, oder: Vom glÄ¼cklichen Äberlieferungszufall eines Ego-Dokuments aus dem 16. Jahrhundert," in *Kloster–Stadt–Region. Festschrift fÄ¼r Heinrich RÄ¼thing*, ed. Johannes Altenberend (Bielefeld: Verlag fÄ¼r Regionalgeschichte, 2002), pp. 65-86.

[2]. *Das Buch Weinsberg*, 5 vols. (Leipzig and Bonn: Gesellschaft fÄ¼r Rheinische Geschichtskunde, 1886-1926).

[3]. *Die autobiographischen Aufzeichnungen Hermann von Weinsbergs. Digitale Gesamtausgabe*, <http://www.weinsberg.uni-bonn.de/> (accessed November 11, 2006). See also Manfred Groten, "Die autobiographischen Aufzeichnungen des KÄ¼lner BÄ¼rgers Hermann Weinsberg (1518-1597). Digitale Erfassung, historische Auswertung und sprachgeschichtliche Analyse," *zeitenblicke* 1: 2 (2002), at <http://www.zeitenblicke.historicum.net/2002/02/groten/index.html>.

[4]. Peter Arnold Heuser, "Hermann Weinsberg und das Reich," in *Der Reichstag 1486-1613. Kommunikation–Wahrnehmung–Äffentlichkeiten*, ed. Maximilian Lanzinner and Arno Strohmeyer (GÄ¼ttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), pp. 375-402.

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