

Markus Friedrich, *The Maker of Pedigrees. Jakob Wilhelm Imhoff and the Meanings of Genealogy in Early Modern Europe*, Towcester (The Johns Hopkins University Press) 2023, 312 p., 20 fig., ISBN 978-1-4214-4579-3, EUR 60,00.

rezensiert von | compte rendu rédigé par
Marcus Stiebing, Stuttgart

Family history remains integral to historiography, with genealogy being one approach to its study. Markus Friedrich's monograph fits within this context. He examines the Nuremberg patrician Jakob Wilhelm Imhoff (1651–1728), whom he analyses from a history of knowledge perspective. He explores how Imhoff created and visualised genealogical knowledge, how it illuminated individual noble histories and the nobility as a social estate, and its significance in Europe's cultural, social and political history circa 1700. At the outset, it should be emphasised that the author masterfully succeeds in bringing out the complexity of genealogical knowledge production and its interconnection with European history.

Friedrich's point of departure is the War of the Spanish Succession, which broke out following the death of Charles II, who left no male heirs. This »dynastic disaster« (3) and the ensuing genealogical debates in Madrid profoundly influenced Imhoff. In this light, the author traces the development of genealogy up to 1700. Chapter 2 situates the genealogist in his socio-cultural environment. Circa 1700 the imperial city of Nuremberg was a hub of literary production. The approximately 43 patrician families of the city served as »conduits of knowledge« (67). Imhoff's upbringing, family status, networks and access to resources enabled his largely autonomous genealogical research. At the same time, his membership in the patriciate provided him access to the nobility. Chapter 3 illustrates, therefore, Imhoff's collaboration with the nobility as his »prime source of knowledge« (77), both within and beyond Nuremberg. It becomes clear that his work contributed to consolidating individual dynastic identities and the nobility as a coherent estate. Chapter 4 shifts focus to Imhoff's extensive network, which included city councillors, diplomats, historians, genealogists, booksellers and librarians from the Holy Roman Empire, France, Florence, and Naples. Imhoff obtained his information from various »places of knowledge« (142), ranging from universities to council chambers, and synthesised it. Hence, Chapter 5 is devoted to his concrete working practices and how he processed genealogical information into »comprehensive narratives and visual representations« (171). In meticulous detail, the author traces how Imhoff located, organised, and visualised genealogical information, particularly through family trees and diagrams. Finally, Friedrich examines the material practices of the Nuremberg genealogist, such as printing, cutting, and writing



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen
Historischen Institut Paris |
publiée par l'Institut historique
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

using the 1702 publication *Corpus Historiae Genealogicae Italiae et Hispaniae* as an example. In Chapter 6, the author investigates the position of Imhoff's publications in the book market, how his works were utilised and what significance his writings and the knowledge they generated held in the broader context of literary production. Imhoff responded to literary trends and made the genealogical knowledge he generated accessible not only to the nobility, but also to a broader audience. Moreover, it becomes evident that he earned a reputation as a »living archive of genealogical information« (198) through his works.

Friedrich concludes that Imhoff significantly contributed to the recognition of genealogy as a discipline of knowledge. Genealogical knowledge was fluid, not static. It was more »than a set of ideas, a »mentality«, a »perceptual grid«, or »»pattern of thought«« for understanding and ordering kinship relations and social life«; rather, it constituted a »sophisticated and diversifying knowledge practice« (207). Imhoff's works and methods underscore the dynamic and processual nature of knowledge production. Furthermore, Friedrich demonstrates that the Nuremberg patrician did not merely address individual families through the genealogical knowledge he produced but wove together their numerous family histories into a »vivid portrait of the everyday life and social influence of »the« nobility« (206-207) in book form, which circulated within the European scholarly community.

The Maker of Pedigrees is an insightful, well structured, and conceptually meticulous study that is highly readable, consistently well-argued, and untangles the complexity of genealogical practice. It stands out due to its exceptionally broad source base – unpublished records from 25 national and international archives, libraries, and museums, over 100 printed works, and countless correspondences – as well as its concise interpretation of the material. The book is a key work not only for the new, practice-oriented history of knowledge but also for the history of the Ancien Régime, and it will undoubtedly inspire further studies.



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen
Historischen Institut Paris |
publiée par l'Institut historique
allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)