



Normalisation of Place Dates in Regesta Imperii Online

Francesco Gelati

francesco.gelati@alumni.unive.it

<https://github.com/fgelati>

<https://adwmainz.academia.edu/FrancescoGelati>



Regesta Imperii Online is one of the biggest archival records repositories. It records medieval sources (especially charters) of the Roman-German kings/emperors and other princes of the Holy Roman Empire.

It contains more than 170 000 regesta (scientific abstracts), written in German.

The Academy of Sciences and Literature of Mainz is the central host of this research project.

<http://www.regesta-imperii.de/unternehmen.html>

An essential aspect of a regestum is the **place date**, i.e., the name of the place where the charter was issued or the event took place (de.: Ortsangabe, Ausstellungsort).

The regesta have overall 11.700 different place dates, of which 7.500 have only one occurrence. Our working goal is currently the normalisation of place dates with at least 5 occurrences and their variations.

Normalising requires to find a unique and definitive denomination, by means of shared normalisation rules. Place names are to translated in our case to modern German toponyms:

Frankenfurt uff dem Moyne ---> Frankfurt am Main

Cracovie ---> Krakau

vor Kreuzburg (im Lager) ---> Kreuzburg (an der Werra)

Normalising necessary requires **permanent identifiers**. We adopted **wikidata** and **geonames** (the latter being linked inside the former URL):

Köln. <https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q365> ;

<http://www.geonames.org/2886242/koeln.html>

As long as **identification** is concerned, some place dates are not unequivocally identifiable:

eg.: Montem sancti Jhannis; Neustadt

Sometimes they are voluntary generic:

eg.: trans Rhenum; in Frandia.

For some other entries, the commentary of the regestum proposes an identification:

Jham ---> *Gioia del Colle* <https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q51827>

http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1222-11-22_1_0_5_1_1_2109_1410

In other cases, some practical thinking can help too. In case we are not sure of the location of the place date, an unequivocal place date that immediately precedes, or follows, our charter will be helpful, e.g.:

In http://www.regesta-imperii.de/id/1418-08-10_1_0_11_1_0_3863_3409
the place date is Weil. Is it „Weil am Rhein“ (near Basel) or „Weil der Stadt“ (near Stuttgart)?

Coming to toponyms normalisation, a specially complicated issues is represented by cities and villages in **previous German-speaking regions of central Europe**, e.g. Silesia, Bohemia, Hungary. While earlier volumes did not realise the problem, it is now faced and discussed by the Regesta Imperii office in Brno.

http://www.boehlau-verlag.com/download/162910/978-3-205-78762-4_1_OpenAccess.pdf, p. 27.

The place dates normalisation has many goals. First of all, it aims to ensure a **better researchability**: today, the research query “Köln” as place date does not give the results “Coloniae” or “Colonia civitate”.

Normalised (and permanently identified) data are the precondition for all digital humanities data manipulation, e.g. geo-information systems, data visualisation and information modelling.

On the long run a model in the field of **geo-visualisation** may be the interactive map of Deutsche Biographie.

<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/>

In order to conclude, some **open problems!**

The project Regesta Imperii started around 1830, and the first volume was issued in 1877, while some volumes are still to be published; such a long-running, multicentric, international, cooperative editorial project presents many problems, e.g.:

- changing scientific approaches and editorial standards;
- interoperability between paper-born and digital-born editions;
- countless addenda and corrigenda...

No definitive answers!



Thanks for your attention!

<http://www.regesta-imperii.de/>

<http://www.adwmainz.de/>

Francesco Gelati

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