

2014/2015 Graduate Research Grant Report
Religion and Diversity Project

Sara Ludin

University of California, Berkeley

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With the generous support of the *Religion and Diversity Project's* Graduate Research Grant, I traveled to Germany from January to March 2015 to undertake archival research for my dissertation. My dissertation investigates how the Protestant Reformation unfolded in German civil law courtrooms between 1520 and 1555. Through close readings of case files and related sources, the dissertation offers a genealogy of “religion” as a modern legal category, informing contemporary debates on law, religion and secularism by unearthing both the complexity and unruliness of this inherited category.

At the heart of the dissertation are case files from the *Reichskammergericht* (Imperial Chamber Court, RKG)—the highest judicial instance in the German lands. My main task while in Germany was to read and/or gather (through digital scans) case files relevant to my topic.

I spent the first week of my trip in Cologne, where I went first of all to make contact with the University of Cologne which provided part of my funding for the trip. While there, I also explored the holdings of the city archive, and their plans for digitization following the 2009 building collapse.

I then traveled to the Center for the Study of the RKG in Wetzlar, where I spent several days for an informal orientation on reading RKG case files. There, from the Center's director (Anette Baumann) and its full-time research fellow (Stefan Xenakis), I learned about the structure of a case file, oft-repeated terms of art, dating and titular conventions, etc. I also spent time improving my ability to read sixteenth-century German handwriting. One of the things I consulted with them about was a sound principle of selection for case files; not every case that emerges from the early sixteenth century theological divide is indexed by archivists as a “religious dispute,” though some are. So we began with a list published in 1961 by a scholar named Dommasch. Dommasch was one of the few scholars to try to build a list of RKG religion cases before 1555 based on references in correspondences, imperial diet minutes, etc. Importantly, he attempted this *before* the RKG cases were even inventoried—therefore the list in his book cites not actual case files, but documents that contain some reference to a case. So on one of the days of my visit, Prof. Baumann and I went through this list and—using her library of finding aids as well as her expertise regarding where cases would have been dispersed in the nineteenth century reorganization of the RKG archive—identified the corresponding case files in finding aids. This would have been a huge undertaking if I had had to do it on my own—and

watching her do it taught me how. I also learned from Prof. Baumann that she had just days before published an online finding aid for a cache of sixteenth-century judges' notes she had discovered in 2009. This dissertation will be the first academic use of these notes, some of which reference the Reformation cases I am studying.

I then traveled to Munich, where I spent the remainder of my three-month trip at the main state archive. There, I spent each day in the archive, gradually improving my paleographic knowledge, and transcribing relevant case files. In that period, I also traveled to Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Marburg, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Hannover, Berlin, Wernigerode, gathering approximately 80 case files relevant to my project.

Thanks to the progress the research grant facilitated on this trip, I was able to return to Germany in August and September 2015 to gather several dozen more case files from nine other archives. I am hugely grateful to Professor **Winnifred Fallers Sullivan** and the *Religion and Diversity Project*'s for their support!