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The Rent Books of Absdorf and Intzlesdorf
In German, manuscript on paper
Austria, near St. Polten, dated 1529 and 1549

52 leaves, complete in 2 parts: 1) 26 leaves of soft double-ply paper originally sewn in gatherings but now mostly detached, written in red and black ink in various sizes in a large formal book hand, in 2 columns, 11 lines, in a frame, c. 170 x 118 mm., notations in other hands, edges frayed, and some leaves separating into their constituent layers, slight thumbing, wrapped in a stronger sheet of paper with the inscription "Grimmpuech der Zins und Gult zu den Guet Abstorff gehoring/ Renovirt 1528 had der gleichen Hofmaister zu Abtsdorff"; and 2) 24 leaves of strong single-ply paper (watermark: a gothic P with an armorial shield, close to Briquet 8792, Budweis, 1531, with variants, Innsbruck, Linz, and Vienna), complete (collation i-ii6, iii12, the last 8 leaves cut away to make a thumb-index), written in brown ink in various cursive hands, headings in an angular book hand, some thumbing and signs of use, stitching broken, edges rather battered, wrapper of contemporary paper with inscription, "Grunntbuech Geen Intzlestorff, hern Jorgen Grabner zuegehorig angefangen 1549," together in a folder. Dimensions c. 220 x 150 mm.

With their lists of rents, tithes, and taxes, this pair of documents provides a detailed history of village life in two sixteenth-century Austrian towns. They are of special interest not only for the social and economic particulars they contain, including currency values and the limited survival of a barter economy, but also for their textual layout and physical structure.

PROVENANCE

1. Undoubtedly written in the towns of Absdorf and Intzlesdorf (today Inzesdorf) located in southern Austria in the region of the lower Danube. The two parts must have been combined at a later date and kept together in a nineteenth- or early twentieth-century binding folder.

TEXT

These two rent books offer a remarkable insight into village life of the sixteenth century and an unrivalled source of local history for southern Austria. They contain a list of all the rents

due in the villages of Absdorf and Intzlesdorf, northwest of Vienna in the lower Danube region. In the Absdorf book there are around 18 leaves with one or more entries on each side of the following nature:

Mathes Wolfel Von ainer hoffstat

Dient	15d
Kaes	4
Vaschang henn	1
Schnit pfenig	4
Vom gartl(ein)	20d
Vo(n) aine(m) Gartl(ein)	5d
Dem vogt henn	1
Vo(n) aine(m) Gartl(ein)	5d
Und Ain hendel	

Matthew Woft, one of the more prosperous residents, was taxed 55 pence a year and one hen, in contrast to the less well off inhabitants, such as Jorg Freysiner and Hainrich Chlasner, who were taxed only 5d and 4d respectively on service. The book contains a mass of information about the size of land holdings, the produce grown on them, and the relative prosperity of the people who looked after them. After the rents are the tithes, taxes in kind on produce (literally a tenth of what was produced), consisting mainly of wine, cereal, and saffron for Absdorf. Other items listed are hens (particularly at *Fasching*, the carnival time of Shrove Tuesday), cheese, hay, and garden produce, valued in pence.

At the end are several lists of persons who are liable to pay a tithe from the village of Absdorf and its surrounding hamlets.

The second book contains similar information for the village of Intzlesdorf, this time written in continuous paragraphs with many additions and corrections.

LITERATURE

Spufford, Peter. *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.