

THE OFFICE OF *A RATIONIBUS* IN THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT. A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTROVERSY*

by

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ABSTRACT: This article provides a detailed analysis of modern historiographical discourse on the administrative position of the *a rationibus* office in the Roman imperial government, based on the findings of FRIEDLÄNDER, HIRSCHFELD, MOMMSEN, LIEBENAM, CUQ and others, in order to investigate the origins of disparate opinions on the office of *a rationibus*. The author also analyses the process of updating the terminology used to describe the office and comments on two dominant views of imperial administration (bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic) in historiographical works that have shaped the contemporary scholarship on the subject.

INTRODUCTION

The origins of modern research on Roman imperial administration have not received adequate scholarly attention, as many contemporary scholars have either focused on the reception of *Römisches Staatsrecht* (vols. I–III, Leipzig 1871–1888) by Th. MOMMSEN in German historiography¹ or discussed the analysis of key concepts in the Roman constitution also formulated by this author². Without doubt,

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¹ See, for instance, GRZIWOTZ 1986; BEHNE 1999; NIPPEL 2004: 215–228; NIPPEL 2005a: 9–60; NIPPEL 2005b: 246–258; NIPPEL 2005c: 165–184; TIMPE 2011: 127–160. A broader perspective adopted by scholars in studies on Roman administration (with MOMMSEN's work at its centre) both in German and French historiography was already rare at that time, see HÖLKESKAMP 1997: 93–111; cf. SIMON 1988: 86–90. It is worth noting that the international renown of MOMMSEN's *Staatsrecht* contributed to its translation into French and Italian, REBENICH 2006: 99. Other early syntheses devoted to Roman administration, written by scholars such as MADVIG or HERZOG, who followed or competed with MOMMSEN in their theories, did not meet with equal interest among contemporary historians, cf. CHRIST 1982: 78 f.

² It seems that the most widely debated issue related to the political system of the Principate was MOMMSEN's concept of the dual power ("dyarchy") of the Senate and the emperor, see WINTERLING 2005: 177–198; cf. HEUSS 1974: 77–90; WINTERLING 2001: 93–122.