ROUTLEDGE

The Histories of a Medieval German City, Worms c. 1000–c. 1300

Translation and Commentary

Translated by
David S. Bachrach

THE HISTORIES OF A MEDIEVAL GERMAN CITY, WORMS c. 1000–c. 1300

To the Memory of David Warner, An Excellent

Medievalist and a Generous Colleague.

The Histories of a Medieval German City, Worms c. 1000–c. 1300

Translation and Commentary

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Preface

Over the course of my career I have been fortunate to make the acquaintance of a number of scholars whose work has an important impact on my understanding of the medieval world. Among them, David Warner stood out as an exceptionally generous colleague, who gave of his time and wisdom to a junior member of the small society of English-speaking specialists in Germany history. His excellent translation and commentary on Thietmar of Merseburg's *Chronicon* opened the way for numerous subsequent translations of texts that were focused on the history of the medieval German kingdom and empire, including this present volume. It was therefore with shock and sadness that I learned of his all-too-premature death in May 2013. As a small measure of my gratitude to David, I dedicate this book to his memory.

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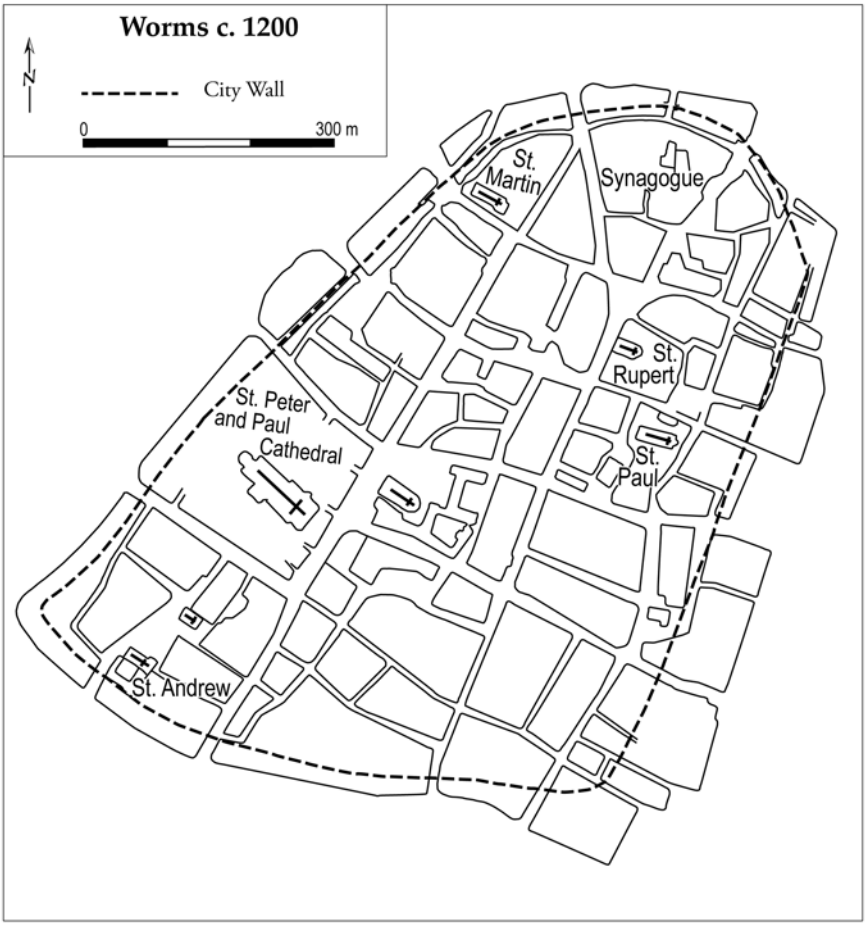
Worms c. 1200
N
City Wall
0
300 m
St. Martin
Synagogue
St. Rupert
St. Paul
St. Peter and Paul Cathedral
St. Andrew


Hochheim
Main
Mainz
Rhine
Ingelheim
Ober-Olm
Nieder-Olm
Oppenheim
Dienheim
Bechtolsheim
Odernheim
Alzey
Mühlheim
Ibersheim
Stein
Mauchenheim
Westhofen
Rheindurkheim
Osthofen
Pfeddersheim
Gundheim
Lorsch
Löwenstein
Kriegsheim
Hohen-Sülzen
Worms
Heppenheim
Niedesheim
Bobenheim
Dirmstein
Hirschberg an der Bergstraße
Laumersheim
Frankenthal
Schriesheim*
Höningen
Maudach
Lautern
Neckarshausen
Wolfsberg
Speyer
Phillipsburg
Worms and its Region c. 1250
N
0
10 mi
0
10 km


Denmark
Baltic Sea
North Sea
Elbe
Wese
Poland
Saxony
Friesland
Oder
England
Magdeburg
Rhine
Merseburg
Thuringia
Meuse
Cologne
Fritzlar
Aachen
Lower Lotharingia
Franconia
Bohemia
Mainz
Frankfurt
Trier
Laon
Rouen
Upper Lotharingia
Metz
Worms
Rheims
Regensburg
Danube
Paris
Augsburg
Swabia
Sens
Seine
Bavaria
West Francia
Burgundy
Kingdom of Italy
Milan
Pavia
Hungary
Adriatic Sea
Ligurian Sea
German Empire c. 1000
N
0
250 mi
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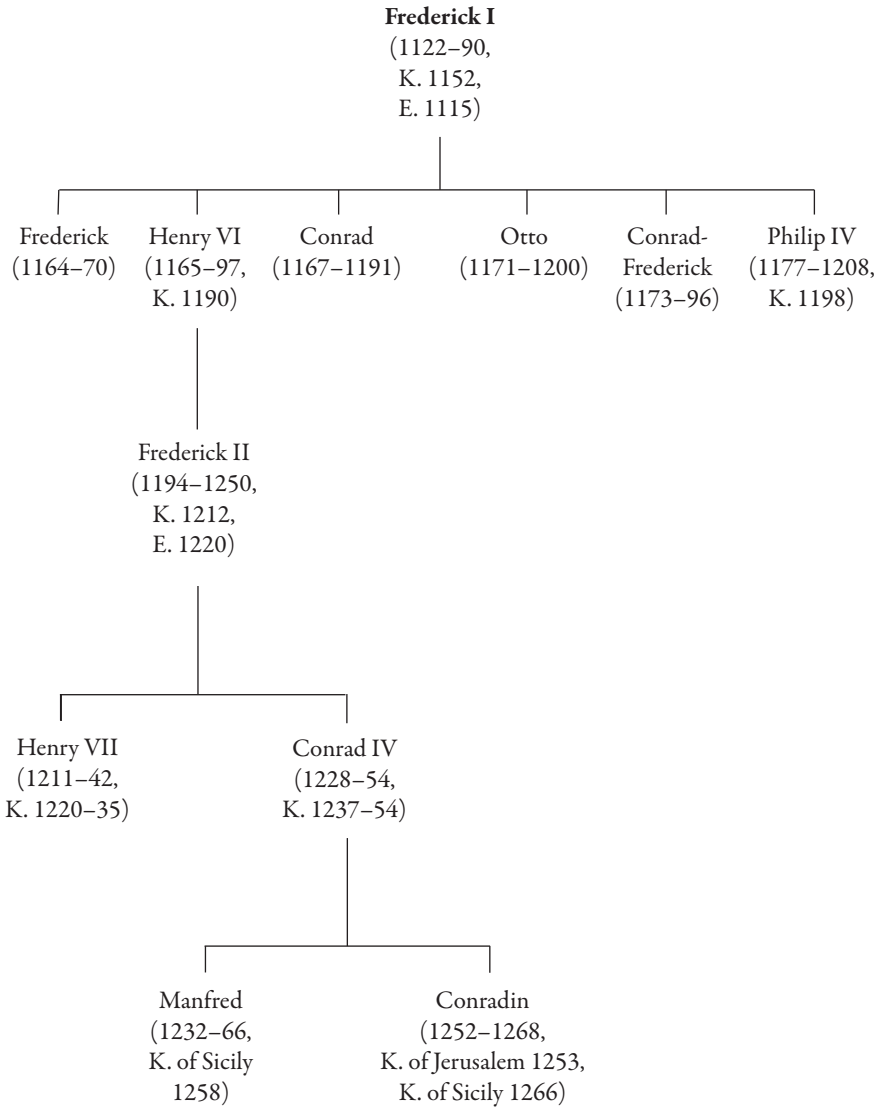
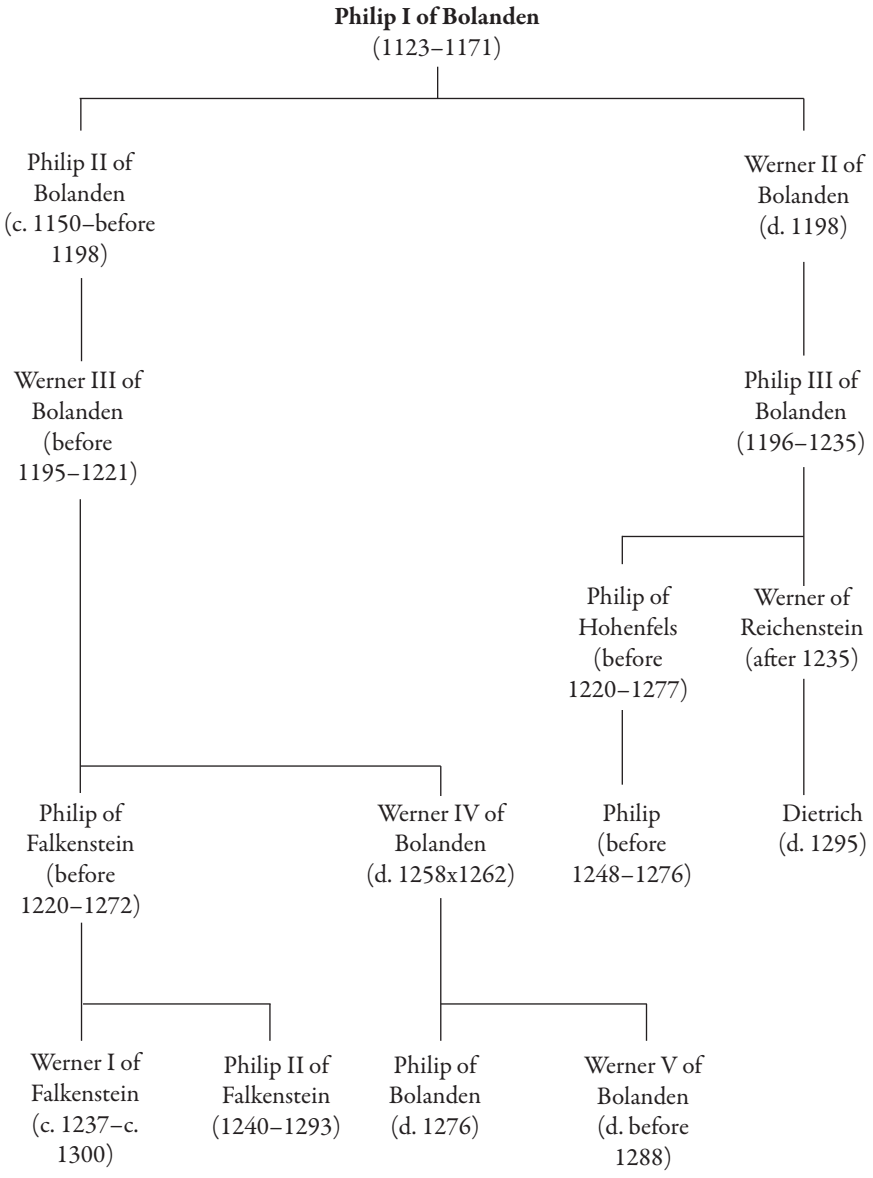
250 km
Corsica
Rome



Key: E. = emperor; K. = king

G.1 Simplified Genealogy of the Staufen dynasty



G.2 Simplified Genealogy of the Bolanden-Falkenstein-Hohenfels Family

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Introduction

The study of cities and city life during the High Middle Ages offers an opportunity to examine a particularly vibrant part of European culture in an age when the vast majority of the population was tied to a grinding existence on the land that changed with glacial slowness over the centuries. Cities, by contrast, were comparatively effervescent foci of change, experimentation, and development. Urban centers were home to the greatest concentrations of people, wealth, learning, art, technology, and architectural development throughout the medieval millennium. They housed the leadership of the Church, and often served as seats of secular government as well. It was in cities that merchants from throughout the western world, as well as the Islamic Caliphate and Byzantium, congregated, sold their wares, introduced new foods and languages, and generally broadened the horizons of the urban dwellers with whom they were in contact. Urban spaces provided the crucial meeting points for clashes, and occasional fruitful interactions, between Christians and Jews. Cities, and the records that were stored there, also illuminate the roles of women in society in a way that simply does not exist for the countryside. In sum, cities, with their small minority of the general population, played an oversized role in charting the course of medieval history.[1]

During the High Middle Ages, the inhabitants of cities also played a central role in the development of new ideas about government, freedom, and liberty. It was during the High Middle Ages, from the eleventh through the thirteenth century, that the concept *Stadtluft macht Mann frei* (city air makes a man free) had its first flowering. City men across Europe established communes, chose their own leaders, expelled their ruling bishops, established military and economic alliances with other cities, and negotiated on virtually equal terms with kings

[1] The scholarly treatment of medieval urban history is vast. For some useful starting points, see John Mundy, *The Medieval Town* (Princeton, NJ, 1958); Fritz Rörig, *The Medieval Town* (Berkeley, CA, 1969); Susan Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977); Daniel Philip Waley, *The Italian City Republics*, 3rd edn (New York, 1988); David Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City, 1300–1500* (New York, 1997); and idem, *The Growth of the Medieval City: From Late Antiquity to the Early Fourteenth Century* (London, 1997).

and emperors. City law and city judicial institutions provided a framework for the development of citizenship as a contrapositive of status as a subject. It was this struggle for political liberty, perhaps even more than economic, social, or religious matters, that drove men to war in their own self-interest.

The City of Worms

Worms provides a particularly valuable and illuminating point of entry for the study of urban history, not only in the German kingdom, but in the Latin West as a whole. From its foundation as a Roman legionary camp during the reign of Augustus (31 BC–14 AD), Worms played a central role in the economic, political, and social history of the Middle Rhine region (see Map 2), and in the broader kingdoms and empires to which it belonged (see Map 3). Because of its propitious location along the left bank of the Rhine, with easy riverine access to Mainz and Frankfurt, Worms enjoyed substantial population and economic growth throughout the early medieval period.[2] Perhaps the site of a royal palace in the sixth century, by the mid-eighth century, Worms certainly was among the most important political centers in the Carolingian empire of Charlemagne (768–814). It regularly hosted both royal assemblies and armies during the first two decades of Charlemagne's reign, with eleven attested stops there between 770 and 790.[3] It would be fair to characterize Worms in the period before 790, and the catastrophic fire that it suffered in that year, as playing the same role in Charlemagne's empire as Aachen was to play after 800, namely as a de facto capital.[4] Worms maintained its position as a leading economic center under the later Carolingians and Ottonians (919–1024), the first dynasty of the nascent German kingdom, during the ninth and tenth centuries. The city served

[2] For an overview of the history of the city and its urban development, see Carlrichard Brühl, *Palatium und Civitas: Studien zur Profantopographie spätantiker Civitates vom 3. bis 13. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Cologne, 1975 and 1990), II: 113–32. For the earlier period of Worms' history, also see Thomas Kohl and Franz Josef Felton, "Worms. Stadt und Region im frühen Mittelalter von 600-1000," in *Geschichte der Stadt Worms*, ed. Gerold Bönnen (Stuttgart, 2005), 102–32.

[3] Brühl, *Palatium und Civitas*, 115–16.

[4] This observation first was made by Friedrich Maria Illert, "Forum Germanum. I. Grundrisse zur Geschichte der Wormser Königspfalz," *Der Wormsgau* 2.3 (1938): 11–125, here 113; and affirmed by Brühl, *Palatium und Civitas*, 116.

as the host for important synods, royal assemblies, and mobilization points for royal armies on no fewer than 28 occasions.[5]

In addition, during the tenth century, Worms was on the forefront of the decision by the kings of the Ottonian dynasty to begin a wholesale transfer of public authority from counts to bishops.[6] Indeed, the bishops of Worms were among the earliest prince-bishops in the German kingdom, and played a leading role in what scholars have denoted as the "imperial church system."[7] In this system of government, the German kings delegated considerable authority to the bishops, transferring to them vast resources in return for extensive service obligations. It is during this period in the late tenth and early eleventh century that the bishops of Worms assumed authority for administering justice, managing royal estates, and mobilizing military forces.[8]

The political and military power of the German episcopate, as it developed under the later Ottonian kings and subsequently during the Salian dynasty (1024–1125) is exemplified in the career of Bishop Burchard I of Worms (1000–25).[9] As bishop, Burchard undertook numerous legal and political reforms, with royal support, that assured episcopal control over the law courts

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5 Brühl, *Palatium und Civitas*, 116–17.

6 Regarding the increasing importance of the bishop as the public or royal official in the city of Worms and its associated administrative district, see Heinrich Büttner, "Zur Stadtentwicklung von Worms im Früh-und Hochmittelalter," in *Aus Geschichte und Landeskunde. Forschungen und Darstellungen. Franz Steinbach zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Freunden und Schülern* (Bonn, 1960), 389–407, here 397–401, and Andreas Urban Friedmann, *Die Beziehungen der Bistümer Worms und Speyer zu den ottonischen und Salischen Königen* (Mainz, 1994), 84–100.

7 The classic treatment of the imperial church system is Leo Santifaller's "Zur Geschichte des ottonisch-salischen Reichskirchensystem," *Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 229.1 (1954): 1–54. The heuristic value of the imperial church system model was challenged by Timothy Reuter, "The 'Imperial Church System' of the Ottonians and Salian Rulers: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33.3 (1982): 347–74. This provoked a significant response and defense of the model by Josef Fleckenstein, "Problematik und Gestalt der ottonisch-salischen Reichskirche," in *Kirche und Reich vor dem Investiturstreit*, ed. Karl Schmid (Sigmaringen, 1985), 83–98.

8 The first ruler of the Ottonian dynasty to appoint German bishops as counts was Otto III (983–1002). See the discussion by Hartmut Hoffmann, "Grafschaften in Bischofshand," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 46 (1990): 375–480.

9 Regarding the central importance of Burchard's *Decretum* for the development of canon law, see Greta Austin, *Shaping Church Law Around the Year 1000: The Decretum of Burchard of Worms* (Aldershot, 2009). For the political as well as pastoral work of Burchard, also see the collection of studies in *Bischof Burchard von Worms 1000–1025*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann (Mainz, 2000).

within the city.[10] Burchard also asserted direct control over the military duties that formerly had been the responsibility of the count, including both the maintenance of the city's wall, and the mobilization of the troops who were owed for royal military campaigns.[11] Burchard combined these secular aspects of his office with a deep commitment to pastoral care, which resulted in his compilation of a handbook (the *Decretum*) detailing the proper duties of priests and bishops, which was intended for the use of the clergy in Worms, and his own episcopal successors. Burchard's biography (Latin *vita*), which was composed shortly after his death in 1025, provides a clear image of what contemporaries considered the ideal bishop who served both the pastoral and political needs of his diocese.

The remarkable and enduring success of Worms as a center of economic and political power continued and even grew over the course of the eleventh century. The city was at the forefront of rapid urban development along the entire Rhine corridor, with a concomitant expansion of its wealth and importance in the politics of the German kingdom.[12] In the second half of the eleventh century, Germany was convulsed by the investiture controversy between King Henry IV (r. 1056–1106) and Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073–1085). These two leaders of the western world were engaged in a titanic struggle over who had the dominant position within the Catholic Church and subsequent control over the appointment of churchmen to high ecclesiastical office. The men who were appointed as bishops, and the men (and women) who were appointed to lead monasteries, assumed control over the vast economic resources that had been granted to their institutions by German kings and others over the previous centuries. Consequently, their loyalty was crucially important to both the king and to the pope.[13]

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[10] See Knut Schultz, "Das Wormser Hofrecht Bischof Burchards," in *Bischof Burchard von Worms*, 251–78.

[11] Gerold Bönnen, "Bischof, Stifte, Stadt, Bevölkerung, Burchard von Worms und seine Civitas am Beginn des 11. Jahrhunderts," in *Bischof Burchard von Worms*, 311–48.

[12] The economic history of Worms would repay further investigation in light of the extensive archaeological excavations undertaken in recent decades. See, for example, the recent synthesis by Mathilde Grünewald, *Unter dem Pflaster von Worms: Archäologie in der Stadt* (Lindenberg, 2012). However, the increasing economic power of the city in the eleventh century, building from an already strong base, was recognized by Büttner, "Zur Stadtentwicklung," 389–407.

[13] For a valuable overview of the topic of the political, moral, and military conflict between royal and papal power, see Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*, translated from the original German by the author (Philadelphia, PA, 1988).