

# Townspeople, Group Belonging, and Collective Agency in Post-Carolingian Historiography

**Abstract** This article deals with depictions of townspeople in tenth- and early eleventh-century narratives. It argues that during the tenth century the narrative function of these groups in historiography changed fundamentally. In Carolingian and earlier tenth-century narratives, townspeople tend to play largely tangential and passive roles; from around the middle of the tenth century, authors began to increasingly accord agency and a more central role to townspeople. Although these mentions of townspeople in post-Carolingian histories have traditionally been approached as providing a window into processes of ‘embryonic’ urbanisation, this paper suggests that the shift in their narrative function must also be understood in the context of the changing nature of diocesan identity politics created through the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire.

**Zusammenfassung** Dieser Aufsatz widmet sich der Darstellung von Stadtbewohnern in Narrativen des 10. und frühen 11. Jahrhunderts. Die erzählerische Funktion dieser Gruppen in der Geschichtsschreibung hat sich im 10. Jahrhundert grundlegend verändert. In historiographischen Erzählungen aus der Karolingerzeit bis zur ersten Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts stehen die Stadtbewohner am Rande des Geschehens; ihre Rolle ist überwiegend passiv. Ab der Mitte des Jahrhunderts beginnen Autoren den Stadtbewohnern zunehmend Handlungsmacht und eine zentralere Rolle in ihren Narrativen einzuräumen. Obwohl diese Erwähnungen von Stadtbewohnern in nachkarolingischen Geschichten traditionell vorrangig als Beleg für einsetzende Urbanisierungsprozesse betrachtet

## Contact

**Dr. Jelle Wassenaar,**  
FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, Department  
Geschichte, Lehrstuhl für Geschichte  
des Mittelalters, Kochstraße 4,  
91054 Erlangen,  
jelle.wassenaar@fau.de

wurden, wird in diesem Aufsatz argumentiert, dass die geänderte erzählerische Funktion der Stadtbewohner auch im Zusammenhang mit der veränderten diözesanen Identitätspolitik infolge der Auflösung des Karolingerreichs verstanden werden muss.

## Introduction

The anonymous author of the early eleventh-century ‘Gesta pontificum Cameracensium’ set off his narrative with a remarkable reflection on the beginnings of cities:

the walls of cities were constructed in order that men could gather together as one and learn to cultivate trust, preserve justice, become accustomed to obey others willingly, and believe not only that labours should be taken upon on behalf of the common good, but even that it might be worth losing their lives in such a cause.<sup>1</sup>

The Cambrai author portrayed the town as a place especially conducive to the formation of cohesive and assertive groups. This challenges current scholarly assumptions on how collective agency and group belonging functioned in early medieval historical writing. It has recently been suggested that early medieval authors “shifted collective political agency to the *gens*”.<sup>2</sup> Unlike their predecessors, early medieval historiographers, so it is assumed, no longer envisioned the town as a locus of collective agency.<sup>3</sup> As Charles WEST has noted, medievalists more generally “privilege questions relating

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- 1 Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium, I, c. 1, ed. by Ludwig BETHMANN (MGH SS 7), Hannover 1846, p. 402; English translation: Bernard S. BACHRACH, David S. BACHRACH and Michael LEESE, Deeds of the Bishops of Cambrai. Translation and Commentary, London, New York 2018, p. 33. Throughout this article I refer exclusively to the contents of the first two books of the ‘Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium’, written by a single author around 1024/1025: Erik VAN MINGROOT, Kritisch onderzoek omtrent de datering van de ‘Gesta episcoporum cameracensium’, in: Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire 53 (1975), pp. 281–328; Theo RICHES, The Function of the ‘Gesta Episcoporum’ as Archive. Some Reflections on the ‘Codex sancti Gisleini’ (ms Den Haag kb 75 f 15), in: Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis 10 (2007), pp. 7–46, here esp. pp. 17–23. On the Cambrai author’s urban origin narrative see BACHRACH et al. (this note), n. 9 to the introduction.
  - 2 Walter POHL, Historiography and Identity. Methodological Perspectives, in: Walter POHL and Veronika WIESER (eds.), Historiography and Identity, vol. 1: Ancient and Early Christian Narratives of Community (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 24), Turnhout 2019, pp. 7–50, here p. 19.
  - 3 Hans-Werner GOETZ, *Gentes*. Zur zeitgenössischen Terminologie und Wahrnehmung ostfränkischer Ethnogenese im 9. Jahrhundert, in: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 108 (2000), pp. 85–116, here pp. 94–95.

directly or indirectly to the emergence of national or quasi-national groups”.<sup>4</sup> This has been particularly true for scholarship on post-Carolingian Europe, which has traditionally been approached as a period of national origins for Germany and France.<sup>5</sup>

Although cities and their inhabitants have been largely ignored in studies of post-Carolingian historical writing and group identity, another strand of scholarship has paid some attention to mentions of townspeople in tenth-century narratives. Urban historians have long discussed post-Carolingian mentions of urban inhabitants.<sup>6</sup> Their studies have focused on the question of what ‘actual’ groups, socially, economically, or legally defined, might have hidden behind tenth-century depictions of townspeople. Additionally, urban historians have placed mentions of town inhabitants in a longer narrative of medieval urbanisation, debating whether some of these groups were of a ‘proto-communal’ nature.<sup>7</sup> It has, however, proven notoriously difficult to tie historiographical mentions of townspeople to social groups. As a result, modern scholars have found a bewildering variety of groups behind the *cives* of towns described in single post-Carolingian histories, ranging from “merchants” “Herrenbürger”, “proto-communal militias”, to “the vassals of the local bishop”.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, this approach to post-Carolingian mentions of townspeople fails to explain the roles of urban groups in the broader narratives of post-Carolingian authors. Nor does it answer why particular authors chose to frame certain groups in ‘urban’ terms in the first place.<sup>9</sup>

Instead of principally trying to pinpoint the economic, social, legal or ‘proto-communal’ nature of the groups supposedly hiding behind post-Carolingian uses of a term like *cives*, this article aims to trace and then contextualise the salience of ‘belonging to the diocesan town’ in post-Carolingian historical narrative. The first part of the article discusses a series of annals, chronicles, and ‘Gesta’ produced in Reims and various

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4 Charles WEST, *Group Formation in the Long Tenth Century. A View From Trier and its Region*, in: Christine KLEINJUNG and Stefan ALBRECHT (eds.), *Das lange 10. Jahrhundert. Struktureller Wandel zwischen Zentralisierung und Fragmentierung, äußerem Druck und innerer Krise* (Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum. Tagungen 19). Regensburg 2014, 167–178, here 167–168.

5 Carlrichard BRÜHL, *Deutschland – Frankreich. Die Geburt zweier Völker*, Köln, Wien 1990; Bernd SCHNEIDMÜLLER, *Nomen patriae. Die Entstehung Frankreichs in der politisch-geographischen Terminologie 10.–13. Jahrhundert* (Nationes 7), Sigmaringen 1987.

6 Peter JOHANEK, *Merchants, Markets and Towns*, in: Timothy REUTER (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 65–94, here p. 83.

7 See e.g. Frank. G. HIRSCHMANN, *Die Anfänge des Städtewesens in Mitteleuropa*, 3 vols. (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 59, 1–3), Stuttgart 2011, p. 393.

8 See e.g. the long-running debate on the nature of the 958 Cambrai uprising: Rudi KÜNZEL, *Beelden en zelfbeelden van middeleeuwse mensen. Historisch-antropologische studies over groepsstructuren in de Nederlanden, 7de–13de eeuw* (Memoria. Cultuur- en mentaliteitshistorische studies over de Nederlanden), Nijmegen 1997, pp. 192–193.

9 For a suggestive study making a similar point but based on eleventh-century charter evidence see Robert HOUGHTON, *The Vocabulary of Groups in Eleventh-Century Mantua*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 24 (2016), pp. 448–477.

Lotharingian dioceses. It suggests that these texts reveal a fundamental shift in the logic of historical writing over the tenth century, through which townspeople acquired newly central and active roles: whereas in earlier texts they functioned as ‘patients’, as passive groups acted upon by others, in later post-Carolingian historiography they began increasingly to function as ‘agents’.<sup>10</sup> The second part of the article turns to the question of the relationship between narratives of townspeople and social dynamics. It will be argued that narratives of post-Carolingian townspeople should be seen not only as linked to socio-economic processes of ‘urbanisation’, but also in the context of the changed nature of diocesan identity politics created by the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire. In the final and third part of the paper, it will then be suggested that narratives of diocesan-urban peoplehood were not only promoted by bishops to further their own authority; some local lay communities pushed their own, competing, narratives of what it meant to belong to the diocesan town.

### From Patients to Agents

Of all the diocesan centres of historiographical writing discussed below, Reims is the only one that produced multiple annals and chronicles from the late ninth to the early eleventh century, allowing us to trace historiographical change over time in a single locality. The earliest of the Reims texts discussed here, the ‘*Annales Bertiniani*’, still originated outside of the diocese.<sup>11</sup> Up to 843, they were essentially a ‘palace product’, first started at Louis the Pious’ court and then resumed, after a brief break, by a single annalist or multiple authors at the court of Charles the Bald after Louis the Pious’ death.<sup>12</sup> In late 843, the recently installed bishop of Troyes, Prudentius (d. 861) left Charles the Bald’s court for his see and took the manuscript with him. He then became the sole author of the ‘*Annales Bertiniani*’, although he might well already have been involved in the writing of the annals at the court of King Charles before.<sup>13</sup> After Prudentius’ death in 861, the manuscript was acquired by Hincmar, archbishop of the diocese of Reims, sometime between 861 and late 866.<sup>14</sup>

In both the parts of the annals written by Prudentius in Troyes, as well as those added by Hincmar in nearby Reims afterwards, the inhabitants of towns are only rarely mentioned. In the few cases where these authors do describe such groups,

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10 On the basic dichotomy between ‘patients’ and ‘agents’ see Claude BREMOND, *The Logic of Narrative Possibilities*, in: *New Literary History* 11, 3 (1989), pp. 387–411, esp. pp. 407–411.

11 I quote the Latin text of the ‘*Annales Bertiniani*’ from the *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, ed. by Félix GRAT, Jeanne VIELLIARD and Suzanne CLÉMENCET, Paris, 1964, pp. 224–225; the English translation is based on the edition of Janet NELSON, *The Annals of St-Bertin*, Manchester, York 1991.

12 On the still disputed earliest authorship of the ‘*Annales Bertiniani*’ see NELSON (note 11), pp. 5–7; the term “palace product” is hers.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

the terms used are generally not of a specifically ‘civic’ nature (as can be the case with the word *cives*, or, as we will see, with group names based on the name of the diocesan town itself), but rather the same as those generally used to refer to those larger collectives understood by contemporaries to have made up Christian society at large: inhabitants of towns are simply the *populus*, or the ‘clergy and laity’. Finally, these groups almost always occupy passive roles in the text.<sup>15</sup> In 843, a court annalist, perhaps already Prudentius, narrated how “Northmen pirates attacked Nantes, slew the bishop and many clergy and lay people of both sexes, and sacked the *civitas*”;<sup>16</sup> under the year 852, Prudentius describes how the Saracens killed “all Christians” in the *urbs* of Barcelona;<sup>17</sup> and in 859, he wrote that the Norsemen invaded the *civitas* of Noyon, destroying the city and taking its bishop along with *aliis nobilibus, tam clericis quam laicis*.<sup>18</sup> In his part of the annals, Hincmar similarly describes the inhabitants of towns as victims of the Norsemen’s attacks and as passive subjects of the king, who, for example, ordered them to fortify their cities to defend them against the Norsemen.<sup>19</sup>

After Hincmar’s death in 882, it took around 40 years for another annalist to work from Reims. From 922 onwards, Flodoard of Reims started writing his ‘Annales’.<sup>20</sup> The role of urban inhabitants in this text differs in four ways from the earlier annals of St Bertin. Firstly, where the ‘Annales Bertiniani’ usually refer to the populations of towns either by using generic terms like “inhabitants” or “laypeople and clerics”, Flodoard more often uses words specific to groups inhabiting towns: they are either named *cives* or after the name of the town in question.

Secondly, while the ‘Annales Bertiniani’ only once describe a Frankish city’s population as a collective agent, Flodoard does this quite frequently.<sup>21</sup> In Flodoard’s account as a whole, the *cives*, more so than the local bishop or count, control access to the city.<sup>22</sup> Yet the townspeople appear not only as defenders of the walled town:

15 A possible exception can perhaps be found in Hincmar’s mentions of the ‘Beneventans’. This is, however, a community outside of the Frankish *regnum* proper, while Hincmar’s use of the term seems to have dual connotations instead of urban or diocesan ones: *Annales Bertiniani* (note 11), pp. 182–183.

16 *Multis clericorum atque laicorum sexusque promiscui*: *Annales Bertiniani* (note 11), p. 44; English translation: NELSON (note 11), p. 55.

17 *Annales Bertiniani* (note 11), p. 64.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 81; English translation: NELSON (note 11), p. 99.

19 *Annales Bertiniani* (note 11), pp. 166–167; English translation: NELSON (note 11), p. 173.

20 On Flodoard’s ‘Annales’ see now Edward ROBERTS, *Flodoard of Rheims and the Writing of History in the Tenth Century* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4,113), Cambridge 2019, pp. 75–103.

21 Hincmar introduced the *Pictavenses* or townspeople of Poitiers as a collective agent; they drive off a group of Northmen in 868: *Annales Bertiniani* (note 11), p. 151. On Flodoard’s terminology relating to towns see Ryan LAVELLE, *Controlling and Contesting Urban Spaces. Rulers and Urban Communities in Southern England and Northern France from the Later 9th to 11th Century*, in: Hajnalka HEROLD and Neil J. CHRISTIE (eds.), *Fortified Settlements in Early Medieval Europe. Defended Communities of the 8th–10th Centuries*, Oxford 2016, pp. 158–174.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

they also function as a group protecting the wider diocese and proper canonical procedure. At times they do this with the help of a group called the *milites*. For example, in his entry for 932 Flodoard narrates that after the Bishop of Noyon died, the local count, Adalelm of Arras, tried to have his own candidate elected as bishop to the see. Although the *milites* of Noyon were driven out of the *urbs* by the count's men, the next day these *milites* collected "some men" from the suburbs and launched a counterattack. Helped by "those inside the walls", they were successful, culminating in their killing of the count and his men. Yet at the end of the narrative, the *cives*, not the *milites*, regained the town: "Thus the *cives* of Noyon regained the *urbs*", so concludes Flodoard.<sup>23</sup> He thus implies that the local fighting body of the town, the *milites*, were either themselves simply a subgroup of the *cives* responsible for the town's defence, or perhaps a distinct group that was nevertheless acting in the interests of the *cives*.

Flodoard's *cives* could also defend the town and local diocesan interests without the involvement of *milites*. Flodoard narrates that when King Charles the Simple began "to raid and burn *villae* of the church of Reims", the *cives* of the *urbs* sallied out and stole many of the horses belonging to the king's rapacious army.<sup>24</sup> When the king sought to attack the *urbs* in retribution, his forces were repelled with heavy losses. Flodoard thus describes the *cives* of Reims as belonging to the walled *urbs*, even though they also protect the property and rights of the diocese as a whole – much like the *milites/cives* of Noyon in 931 belonged to their walled *urbs* but got into a conflict with the count's forces because the latter violated proper canonical procedure, which pertained to the diocese as a whole.

In addition to his 'Annales', Flodoard wrote a history of the Church of Reims, the 'Historia Remensis ecclesiae', in the middle of the tenth century (948–952).<sup>25</sup> At the beginning of his work, Flodoard describes the origins of the *urbs* of Reims and its people, the *Remi*: according to him, the town was founded by the *milites* of Remus. After his death at the hands of his brother, so relates Flodoard, Remus' *milites* were forced into exile, where they would go on to found the *urbs* of Reims and the people named after it.<sup>26</sup> Flodoard goes on to describe the military exploits of the *Remi*; they were "mighty warriors" who, in *amicitia* with the Romans, supported the latter in

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23 Flodoard of Reims, *Annales*, ed. by Philippe LAUER, Paris 1905, p. 52; English translation in: *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919–966*, edited and translated by Steven C. FANNING and Bernard S. BACHRACH (*Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures* 9), Peterborough 2004, p. 22.

24 Flodoard, *Annales* (note 23), p. 9; English translation: FANNING and BACHRACH (note 23), p. 6. According to Bernard S. BACHRACH and David S. BACHRACH, *Early Saxon Frontier Warfare. Henry I, Otto I, and Carolingian Military Institutions*, in: *The Journal of Medieval Military History* 10 (2012), pp. 17–60, here p. 38, these *cives* were "the locally based militia forces [...] from Reims".

25 Michel SOT has shown the importance of the local sacral topography in this regard: *Un historien et son église. Flodoard de Reims*, Paris 1993.

26 Flodoard of Reims, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae*, ed. by Martina STRATMANN (MGH SS 36), Hannover 1998, I, c. 1, p. 62. The purpose of this story is to connect the history of Reims to that of Rome and thus the papacy. On this see SOT (note 25), pp. 358–360.

their wars against the other peoples of Gaul.<sup>27</sup> After having been converted to Christianity, not only the *urbs* and its bishops but also the “people of the *Remi*” enjoyed an excellent reputation amongst both the gentiles and the apostles.<sup>28</sup>

In the following parts of Flodoard’s ‘*Historia Remensis*’, however, the town’s inhabitants play a more tangential and passive role in the narrative.<sup>29</sup> After he discusses the origins of the *urbs* of Reims at the beginning of his ‘*Historia*’, Flodoard is more interested in narrating how the ensuing bishops of the diocese acted towards the *populus* of the diocese as a whole, as well as towards the many non-urban groups living within the diocese, primarily the *incolae* of the villages surrounding the *urbs*.<sup>30</sup> All these groups, including the population of the *urbs* of Reims proper, are overwhelmingly described passively, specifically as the beneficiaries of episcopal agency.<sup>31</sup>

The *cives* of Reims again appear as a very different group in the final text produced in the diocese discussed here, Richer of Reims’ ‘*Historiae*’ (c. 991–998).<sup>32</sup> The work builds extensively on Flodoard of Reims’ ‘*Annales*’, although Richer often modified those parts he took over. Richer’s portrayal of the inhabitants of towns differs markedly from Flodoard’s in two main ways. For one, townspeople are simply mentioned more often: in many instances, Richer adds the involvement of *cives* or *urbani* to events that in Flodoard’s rendering completely lacked mention of these groups.<sup>33</sup> A particularly striking example can be found in both authors’ narratives of the capture of King Louis IV (r. 936–954) in 945: where Flodoard describes how he was captured by ‘Norsemen’ in Rouen, to Richer the king was instead captured by ‘the *cives*’ of Rouen.<sup>34</sup> The effect of this is that towns are no longer simply named as places where other agents like kings, bishops, and *gentes* act. Instead, they are now defined by the agency of the local *cives*.

27 Flodoard, *Historia Remensis*, I, c. 2 (note 26), pp. 63–64.

28 *Ibid.*, I, c. 3, p. 66: *Remorum populum*.

29 On the genre see Michel SOT, *Gesta episcoporum, gesta abbatum*, vol. 1 (Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental 37), Turnhout 1981, pp. 33–36.

30 See e.g. Flodoard, *Historia Remensis* (note 26), I, c. 17, pp. 94–95 (rebellious inhabitants of the village Sault, punished by St Rémi); I, c. 20, p. 108 (St Rémi transported the inhabitants of other villages to two new small villages); pp. 108–109 (St Rémi protects inhabitants of village against rapacious *custodes* of the king); III, c. 8, p. 204 (*incolae* from a village near to the *urbs* suffer bad crops due to one year not having travelled to the city of Reims and paying the respects to the saints, as had been their custom).

31 See e.g. *ibid.*, I, c. 6, p. 72, and I, c. 2, pp. 115–116.

32 Richer of Reims, *Historiae*, ed. by Harmut HOFFMANN (MGH SS 38), Hannover 2000; English translation by Justin LAKE, *Richer of Saint-Rémi. Histories*, 2 vols. (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 10), Harvard 2010.

33 See e.g. Richer of Reims, *Historiae* (note 32), I, c. 19, p. 56; II, c. 5, p. 102; II, c. 22, p. 113; II, c. 55, p. 137; II, c. 62, p. 143; III, c. 3, p. 172; and III, c. 5, p. 173.

34 Flodoard of Reims, *Annales* (note 23), p. 97: *Cum quo Rodomum veniens comprehensus est ab aliis Nordmannis*, cf. Richer of Reims, *Historiae* (note 32), p. 132: *Urbemque ingressus, a civibus eo quod cum Baiocensibus conspirassent, captus ac tentus est*.

Secondly, Richer more than Flodoard portrays the *cives* or *urbani* of Reims in particular as collective agents central to the narrative. A poignant example of this can be found in both authors' narratives of King Raoul's successful attempt to force the people and clergy of Reims to elect a new bishop in 931, even though they already had an elected prelate, the young Hugh. The latter had himself been imposed on the *civitas* by his father, Count Heribert II of Vermandois. The context for King Raoul's intervention in Reims was formed by a wider conflict between this count, the king, and several other magnates.<sup>35</sup> Flodoard's rendering of the events is very straightforward. The king demanded that the "clergy and people" of Reims elect a new bishop; they refused, but after a short siege were forced to yield. The king then "had ordained as bishop there Artald".<sup>36</sup>

In his much more elaborate account, Richer pointedly modified the role of the inhabitants of the town as well as the terminology referring to them. In contrast to Flodoard's mention of the "clergy and people", which has stronger diocesan (specifically evoking the language of proper, canonical, episcopal election) than urban associations, Richer exclusively uses the term *cives*, and in one case *urbani*, to refer to the king's opponents in Reims.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, where Flodoard suggests that the king simply imposed his will on the *cives*, Richer implies that their eventual election of a new bishop was conditional on their reasoned agreement, in part based on self-interest. After entering Reims, the king gave a speech to the collected *cives* that "private property here within the walls [...] is every day diminished by the cruel actions of Heribert".<sup>38</sup> Thereafter the *cives* were allowed to deliberate to come to a "common agreement" and were finally "persuaded" by the king's speech. One of the other reasons why the *cives* might have been persuaded by the king, as implied by Richer, is that in his speech the king admitted to having incurred "greater guilt" in his conflict with the town's *cives*.<sup>39</sup> This brings us to the third difference between Flodoard's and Richer's version of events, which is that only the latter explicitly posits the agency of the *cives* as morally just in contrast to both that of the king, who is made publicly to repent in front of the gathered *cives*, and to Heribert, who had plundered their property.

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35 For the context on this conflict see now ROBERTS (note 20), pp. 29–47.

36 Flodoard's account of the same event in his 'Historia Remensis' is slightly different, in that the gates are opened not by "those who were in the city" but specifically by the *milites ecclesiae*: Flodoard, *Historia Remensis*, IV, c. 24 (note 26), p. 416; Justin LAKE, *Richer of Saint-Rémi. The Methods and Mentality of a Tenth-Century Historian*, Washington DC 2013, p. 106.

37 For a more recent overview of the early medieval development in the notion of the 'clergy and people' electing the bishop in the early medieval period see Anna M. CIARDI, *Per clerum et populum? Legal terminology and episcopal appointments in Denmark, 1059–1225*, in: *Traditio* 71 (2016), pp. 143–178, here pp. 147–151; Richer of Reims, *Historiae*, I, c. 59 (note 32), pp. 91–92; translation by LAKE (note 32), pp. 141, 143.

38 Richer of Reims, *Historiae*, I, c. 60 (note 32), p. 92; translation by LAKE (note 32), pp. 143, 145. This speech specifically is indebted to Richer's knowledge of classical rhetoric, on which see LAKE (note 32), pp. 222–224.

39 Richer of Reims, *Historiae*, I, c. 60 (note 32), p. 92; translation by LAKE (note 32), p. 145.



This episode exemplifies Richer's depiction of the Reims *cives* in his 'Historia' as a whole: they consistently appear as groups endowed with agency and a degree of autonomy in Frankish politics, closely connected to the walled town yet also understood as the main collective associated with the diocese, and are almost exclusively a force for good in the moral economy of the work.<sup>40</sup> The notion that townspeople were active participants in Frankish regnal history, much like kings and *gentes* had traditionally been in earlier Frankish historiography, was already cautiously taken up by Flodoard in his 'Annales', but only came to its full fruition in Richer's 'Historiae'. In post-Carolingian Reims, regnal historiography thus appears to have undergone a fundamental shift: to Richer, and to a lesser degree also to Flodoard, writing the history of the Frankish *regnum* also meant narrating the many deeds of urban collectives, a notion that appears to have been largely foreign to Hincmar and Prudentius.

A similar change in the naming and narrative function of urban inhabitants in the Reims historiography is visible in a number of texts produced in nearby Lotharingian dioceses. In Regino of Prüm's 'Chronicon', written in the first decade of the tenth century (900–908), the inhabitants of towns do not appear all that often. When they do, they normally function as the passive victims of external agents, principally Norsemen and kings.<sup>41</sup> Regino also describes the destruction of several bishoprics at the hands of Norse plunderers without naming the fate of the local inhabitants.<sup>42</sup> Regino only twice embeds the *cives* as a collective agent in his narrative. In 888 the *cives* of Yonne repulse a Norse attack, and in 890 those of Paris do likewise.<sup>43</sup> Although Regino used the term *cives* more often than the authors of the 'Annales Bertiniani', on the whole townspeople are still described passively and occupy a marginal role in regnal politics.

Urban inhabitants also function passively in a narrative written only a few years after Regino wrote his 'Chronicon': this is Berthar's short history of the diocese of Verdun, written in that same diocese around 916.<sup>44</sup> In Berthar's narrative, the inhabitants of the town function as the passive beneficiaries of just bishops. After the *cives* rebelled against Clovis in the year 500, the *presbyter*, who would become bishop a short

40 A single exception can be found in Richer, *Historiae*, II, c. 22 (note 31), p. 210.

41 Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon*, s.a. 869, quoted from *Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, ed. by Friedrich KURZE (MGH SS rer. Germ. 50), Hannover 1890, p. 99; see also *ibid.*, a. 871, p. 103 and a. 888, p. 130.

42 See e.g. Regino, *Chronicon*, a. 882 (note 41), p. 186, and the description of the Norse raids on Angers and Tours, *ibid.*, a. 853, pp. 76–77.

43 Regino, *Chronicon*, a. 890 (note 41), pp. 134–135.

44 On this source see Theo M. RICHES, *The Changing Political Horizons of 'gesta episcoporum' from the Ninth to Eleventh Centuries*, in: *Patterns of Episcopal Power. Bishops in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Western Europe. Proceedings of a workshop held in April 2009 at the University of Bayreuth and of a session of the International Medieval Congress held in 2009 in Leeds, England* (Prinz-Albert-Forschungen 6), Berlin 2011, pp. 51–62, here pp. 55–56.

while later, managed to obtain “peace with the king and prosperity for his *cives*”;<sup>45</sup> and when in the first half of the sixth century the *civitas* was hit by a famine and the citizens “were in the greatest affliction”, Bishop Desideratus went to King Theudebert I and borrowed 500 gold coins from him, which he then distributed amongst his *cives* in such a way that its value was multiplied through trade, allowing the bishop to repay the king promptly.<sup>46</sup> The *cives* do not at all appear as agents in their own right. Berthar’s depiction of the inhabitants of Verdun thus closely resembles how Flodoard portrayed the *cives* of Reims in his ‘Historia Remensis’: in both histories, the inhabitants of the town proper function as the passive beneficiaries of their bishops, not as agents acting on their own.

A later text produced in the bishopric of Utrecht around 1020, Alpert’s ‘De diversitate temporum’, endows a wholly different role to the inhabitants of the diocesan *civitas*.<sup>47</sup> After Bishop Ansfrid of Utrecht (d. 1010) died in a monastery that he had founded outside of the *urbs* (but still within its diocesan territory), so narrates Alpert, the *Traiectenses* or ‘Utrechtians’ went there to reclaim the corpse of their prelate. Arriving, they demanded that the monks release the bishop’s body so that it could be taken back to the *civitas* proper. The monks refused, so the Utrechtians started praying for God’s help. When they did so, “either by accident or divine providence”, a fire broke out in one of the buildings of the monastic complex. The ensuing confusion allowed the Utrechtians to snatch the body of their prelate and put it on a barge. When the local inhabitants saw this, “they grabbed their weapons” and prepared to prevent the Utrechtians from escaping. Only the timely intervention of the local abbees prevented open combat, upon which the locals miraculously decided to lay down their arms and join the Utrechtians in a joyful procession to the town, where the bishop was buried in the presence of a great crowd.<sup>48</sup>

Alpert’s depiction of the *Traiectenses* differs subtly from that of the local *cives* in the earlier post-Carolingian texts discussed thus far: in both Flodoard’s ‘Annales’ and Richer’s ‘Historiae’, there is never an indication that the belonging of the inhabitants to their town could potentially conflict with a sense of belonging to the diocese as a whole. Nor are there any similar examples of local challenges, by monastic or rural communities, to the *cives*’ claim to belong to and represent the diocese in its entirety. Alpert, conversely, depicts the *Traiectenses* unequivocally as the one collective agent most closely connected to the diocese and its prelates, in contrast to other named groups who clearly belonged to the diocese as well, if not

45 Berthar, *Gesta episcoporum Viridunensium*, c. 4, ed. by Georg WAITZ (MGH SS 4), Hannover 1841, pp. 36–45, here p. 41.

46 *Ibid.*, c. 5, p. 41.

47 Generally on the author and text see Hans VAN RIJ, *Alpertus van Metz. Gebeurtenissen van deze tijd. Een fragment over bisschop Diederik I van Metz en de mirakelen van de heilige Walburg in Tiel*, Hilversum 1999, pp. 9–34; and for the manuscript context Hans VAN RIJ, *Alpertus van Metz, Gebeurtenissen van deze tijd. Een fragment over bisschop Diederik I van Metz en de mirakelen van de heilige Walburg in Tiel*, Amsterdam 1980, pp. xlv–lii.

48 Alpert of Metz, *De Diversitate Temporum*: ed. by VAN RIJ, 1980, I, c. 16 (note 47), pp. 34–36.

to the walled *civitas*: the *cives*' claim to the body of their bishop was legitimate, even though they attempted to steal it from a nearby monastic community that was itself integral to the diocese, and even founded by the very bishop whose corpse they sought to return to the *civitas*.

What all authors' depictions of the inhabitants of diocesan towns discussed so far again have in common is that the agency of these groups is described in a morally positive light.<sup>49</sup> This is very different from the final Lotharingian text discussed here, the 'Gesta Cameracensium' (c. 1025). Only when the *cives* function as the passive beneficiaries of their bishops are they described positively.<sup>50</sup> But as soon as they begin to act, the Cambrai author condemns them. In 958, Bishop Berengar of Cambrai (d. 962/3) was faced with a revolt amongst the *cives* of Cambrai, who "bound themselves to keep the bishop from entering the city".<sup>51</sup> The standoff would end in a bloodbath. The bishop gained support from Count Arnulf of Flanders and the Archbishop of Cologne; intimidated, the *cives* soon relented and let Berengar back into the town. The latter, feigning forgiveness but seeking revenge for his perceived humiliation at the hands of the *cives*, launched a surprise attack on the former after he had been allowed back in the city. The bishop's men killed many of the *cives*, after which the survivors were blinded.<sup>52</sup> Even though Bishop Berengar is the 'Gesta's only unequivocally 'bad bishop', and his act of revenge after the revolt of the townsmen is portrayed as particularly cruel and unjust, the author of the 'Gesta' still ultimately lays the blame with the *cives*: "there is no doubt that we can attribute these troubles to the insolence of his citizens rather than to the bishop because we have heard that they, due to their ferocity, were always disobedient and rebellious toward all of their bishops".<sup>53</sup>

Besides being framed negatively, the portrayal of the inhabitants of Cambrai as a collective agent differs from how Alpert, Flodoard, and Richer depicted the inhabitants of their own diocesan towns in a second way: more than all these other authors, the Cambrai author describes the Cambrai *cives* as a group with certain innate characteristics. Their agency is timeless in its depravity: the local *cives* had "always been" rebellious, "towards all their bishops". Moreover, the author's portrayal of the townsmen appears to follow the same narrative strategies that earlier authors had used to identify ethnicised *gentes*. The traits of ferocity and savagery he applies to the inhabitants of Cambrai were a mainstay of Carolingian ethnic vocabulary

49 For example in *Gesta Cameracensium*, I, c. 84 (note 1), p. 432, where the *cives* are oppressed by the local castellan, Walter; on this see KÜNZEL (note 8), p. 193.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

51 *Gesta Cameracensium*, I, cc. 80–81 (note 1), p. 431; translation by BACHRACH et al. (note 1), p. 89.

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*, c. 80, p. 431; translation by BACHRACH et al. (note 1), p. 89; on Berengar as the only unequivocally 'bad bishop' in the 'Gesta' see Theo RICHES, *Bishop Gerard I of Cambrai (1012–51) and the representation of authority in the 'Gesta episcoporum cameracensium'*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2005, p. 206.

and continued to be used by authors to stereotype particular *gentes* into the tenth century.<sup>54</sup>

Here the Cambrai author went beyond prior portrayals of town inhabitants as collective agents. Already in Flodoard's and Richer's works, the inhabitants of towns entered the stage of regnal politics. Yet the Cambrai 'Gesta' take this a step further: by framing the Cambrai *cives* as a quasi-ethnic group, their author also applied a type of collective agency to these townsmen that was formerly reserved for that most archetypical of collective agents in Frankish historiography, the *gens*.<sup>55</sup> Where the inhabitants of diocesan towns in earlier Carolingian historiography fell victim to ferocious peoples and had to be protected from such external aggression by their bishops and kings, in the narrative of the Cambrai author the townsmen had now become just such a ferocious people themselves, functioning as a threat to episcopal authority.

### Diocesan Identity Politics

It is tempting to read the shift in depictions of urban inhabitants sketched above as a textual by-product of processes of tenth-century urbanisation, as a 'proto-communal' phenomenon. Traditionally, scholars have principally seen a link between these groups and the rise of merchant communities.<sup>56</sup> Around the time that Alpert and the Cambrai authors wrote their narratives, other texts and archaeological finds do indeed point to the establishment of new merchant communities in both authors' diocesan towns.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, it is often difficult to draw a direct link between such evidence for the rise of new (or the growth of existing) merchant communities and the shift in tenth-century narratives of townspeople suggested above. First of all, none of the town inhabitants described by the Reims authors, Alpert, or the Cambrai 'Gesta' are clearly identified as merchants (or any other more specific urban group), but rather are described as representing the population of their respective diocesan town as a whole. Secondly, while many post-Carolingian towns certainly saw the rise of

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54 Thus Regino of Prüm called the Hungarians a *gens ferocissima*, and his continuator lauded how King Henry of East Francia pressed back the "savage" Slavs: Regino, *Chronicon* (note 40), respectively a. 889, p. 131, and Adalbert, *Continuatio Reginonis*, ed. by KURZE (note 41), a. 921, p. 156.

55 Walter POHL, *Ethnonyms and Early Medieval Ethnicity. Methodological Reflections*, in: *The Hungarian Historical Review* 7 (2018), pp. 5–17, here p. 11.

56 See e.g. Adriaan E. VERHULST, *The rise of cities in North-West Europe (Themes in International Urban History 4)*, Cambridge 1999.

57 Cees VAN ROOIJEN, *Utrecht in the early medieval period. An archaeological analysis of its topography and a discussion of the location of the Stathe vicus*, in: *Medieval and Modern Matters* 1 (2010), pp. 155–196, here esp. p. 164. A charter issued by Otto III in 1001 in Cambrai granted the merchants of Câteau-Cambrés, "the same *pax* of the kind rightly held by the merchants in the market of the *civitas* Cambrai": Otto III, *Charter no. 399*, ed. by Theodor SICKEL (MGH DD O II. / O III.), Hannover 1893, p. 832.

new merchant communities, Carolingian Europe did not lack lively urban centres either.<sup>58</sup> Like many other towns in north-west Europe, Cambrai had already been an important trading centre from the eighth century onwards.<sup>59</sup> Several ninth-century diocesan towns were clearly populated not only by clergymen and merchants but also by an aristocratic, urban elite.<sup>60</sup>

However, the Carolingian period constitutes a remarkable caesura in the depiction of townspeople in the historiographical narrative. Up to the seventh century, townspeople still appear very often as political actors in historiography.<sup>61</sup> In what follows, it will be argued that the reappearance of townspeople in post-Carolingian writing, while undoubtedly tied up with urbanisation processes, must also be understood in the context of the new political and ideological world spawned by the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire.

In a stimulating study on the changing “political horizons” of the ‘*Gesta episcoporum*’ written from the Carolingian period into the eleventh century, Theo RICHES has suggested that the collapse of Carolingian authority spurred a fundamental reconceptualisation of the diocese. Whereas earlier Carolingian ‘*Gesta episcoporum*’ understood the bishopric and its history in relation to the court and *regnum*, post-Carolingian authors who intended their texts to participate in this genre began to portray it increasingly “as a historical unit autonomous from current wider political concerns”.<sup>62</sup> This shift was, so suggests RICHES, made possible by the new political situation that bishops and the authors writing for them found themselves in: as the Carolingian world fractured, bishops remained “to maintain the roles it had given them”.<sup>63</sup>

It is easy to see how the depiction not only of the diocese and its bishops, but also of the inhabitants of its *civitas* in the sources discussed above might have functioned as part of this process. The Reims *cives* of Flodoard’s ‘*Annales*’ and Richer’s ‘*Historiae*’ could be used as a helpful narrative device when, as often happened, the bishop was either absent or deemed unsuitable by the author.<sup>64</sup> In these situations, such as in the 931 conflict with their king while their bishop was still underage, the Reims *cives* remain as the agent protecting proper canonical procedure (or at least trying to do

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58 Thomas LIENHARD, *La royauté et les élites urbaines: Charlemagne face aux villes de Bavière et à Rome*, in: François BOUGARD, Dominique IOGNA-PRAT and Régine LE JAN (eds.), *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale dans l’occident Médiéval (400–1100)*, Turnhout 2008, pp. 277–292.

59 HIRSCHMANN (note 7), p. 398; more generally on towns as places of trade in this period see *ibid.*, pp. 1204–1207, pp. 1216–1219.

60 E.g. Noyon, note 17 above.

61 On which see Javier MARTÍNEZ JIMÉNEZ, *Urban Identity and Citizenship in the West between the Fifth and Seventh Centuries*, in: *Al-Masaq* 32 (2020), pp. 87–108.

62 RICHES (note 44), p. 59.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

64 On Flodoard’s judgement of the Reims archbishops of his day and age, see ROBERTS (note 20), pp. 29–35.

so), enabling Flodoard and Richer to portray the diocese as a free-standing organism even when the prelate could not fulfil this role.

Alpert likely attempted to frame the *Traiectenses* as the diocesan collective most tightly connected to the bishops and thus diocesan identity for a more specific reason. In 857, faced with a Viking threat to the town, Bishop Hunger of Utrecht had moved the seat of the diocese from the town of Utrecht to Sint Odiliënberg. Later in the ninth century, one of his successors, again faced with Viking attacks, moved the seat of the bishopric to Deventer, some 80 kilometres to the east of the former metropolitan town of Utrecht.<sup>65</sup> By the beginning of the tenth century, this arrangement seems to have acquired something of a permanent character: Deventer began to function more as a cathedral town instead of just a temporary refuge, becoming a centre for saints' cults traditionally cultivated by communities in or near the town of Utrecht.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, as early as the 920s Bishop Balderik again moved the seat of the diocese back to the walled town of Utrecht.

Despite this, Deventer appears to have continued to function as a rival diocesan town centre to Utrecht. The body of Balderik's predecessor Bishop Radbod had been buried in Deventer after his death in 917, and afterwards he was never translated to Utrecht. The *elevatio* of Radbod still took place in Deventer, sometime between 964 and 975. The 'Vita Radbodi', likely written in the context of the bishop's *elevatio*, nevertheless stressed the enduring connection between the bishop and the inhabitants of the town of Utrecht.<sup>67</sup>

It was around the time that Alpert wrote his 'De diversitate temporum' that the local bishops appear to have broken with the notion of Deventer as a possible alternative episcopal residence or diocesan *civitas*. As Kaj VAN VLIET noted, Bishop Folcmar (d. 990) was still described as *Traiectensis seu Dabentrensis aeccliesiae pontifex*, yet this nomenclature does not reappear afterwards.<sup>68</sup> Alpert therefore likely described the inhabitants of Utrecht proper as the legitimate claimants to the body of their deceased bishop as part of a wider project to support this walled town's now nominally exclusive but still tenuous claim to be the episcopal seat of the diocese against the rival status of Deventer. Alpert's promotion of the Utrechtians as the people representing the bishopric as a whole also points to the wider context of the 'reconceptualisation' of the bishopric in post-Carolingian Europe proposed by RICHES. While Utrechtian diocesan identity had before been slightly ambiguous, in Alpert's narrative it acquired a single clear centre, inhabited by a population named after the diocese and closely linked to Utrecht's past and present bishops.

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65 This was probably Odelbald: Kaj VAN VLIET, In kringen van Kanunniken. Munsters en kapittels in het bisdom Utrecht 695–1227, unpublished PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2002, p. 145.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., p. 177; Vita Radbodi. Het leven van Rabod, ed. and transl. by Peter NISSEN and Vincent HUNINK, Nijmegen 2004, c. 5, p. 40; hereinafter cited as Vita Radbodi.

68 VAN VLIET (note 65), p. 168.

Notably, Alpert's narrative was also read beyond Utrecht. Alpert had dedicated his 'De diversitate' to Bishop Burchard of Worms, and the latter praised it in a letter he sent back to Alpert after having read the work.<sup>69</sup> Alpert's construction of the *Traiectenses* as the 'bishop's people' would have been of particular interest to Burchard: just after or during the time that he read Alpert's text, he himself drew up a well-known law tract for the episcopal *familia* dealing in some detail with the inhabitants of the diocesan town of Worms. While this 'Lex familiae' (c. 1023) is a source very different from Alpert's 'De diversitate', it does suggest that Burchard was pursuing a kind of diocesan identity politics not dissimilar to those promoted by Alpert in Utrecht.

The *familia* of Worms consisted of people living throughout the entire diocese, and thus encompassed both rural and urban populations.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, some regulations pertain only to the town and its population.<sup>71</sup> One chapter of the 'Lex familiae' accords a set of inhabitants of the town a *lex* of their own.<sup>72</sup> The stipulation in question starts by noting that "[t]his should be the law for the *concives*".<sup>73</sup> The latter term, it becomes clear, here refers to all the inhabitants who were in possession of heritable rights to property within the town.<sup>74</sup> Burchard granted this group considerable privileges: the *concives* were only at risk of losing their rights to property in the city if they had failed to render their dues to the bishop for at least three years, and only after three court proceedings.<sup>75</sup> Burchard also appears to have granted the *concives* a role in judicial proceedings.<sup>76</sup>

These *concives* have traditionally been placed in the context of the longer history of urbanisation in Worms and been seen as an early form of 'proto-communal' urban solidarity.<sup>77</sup> Gerold BÖNNEN has in this context drawn attention to the many

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69 Alpert, *De Diversitate Temporum*: ed. by VAN RIJ, 1980 (note 47), pp. 1–4.

70 Gerold BÖNNEN, *Bischof, Stifte, Stadt, Bevölkerung. Burchard von Worms und seine Civitas am Beginn des 11. Jahrhunderts*, in: Wilfried HARTMANN (ed.), *Bischof Burchard von Worms 1000–1025 (Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelhheinischen Kirchengeschichte 100)*, Mainz 2000, pp. 311–348, here pp. 339–345; Gerhard DILCHER, *Die genossenschaftliche Struktur von Gilden und Zünften*, in: Gerhard DILCHER, *Bürgerrecht und Stadtverfassung im europäischen Mittelalter*, Köln 1996, pp. 183–242.

71 BÖNNEN (note 70), p. 340, with older literature in note 77 there; Knut SCHULZ, *Das Wormser Hofrecht Bischof Burchards*, in: Wilfried Hartmann (ed.), *Bischof Burchard von Worms 1000–1025 (Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelhheinischen Kirchengeschichte 100)*, Mainz 2000, pp. 251–278; Burchard of Worms, *Lex familiae Wormatiensis ecclesiae*, ed. by Ludwig WEILAND (MGH Const. 1), Hannover 1893, pp. 96, 98.

72 DILCHER (note 70), p. 82.

73 Burchard, *Lex familiae Wormatiensis* (note 71), p. 643; SCHULZ (note 71), p. 30.

74 Burchard, *Lex familiae Wormatiensis* (note 71), p. 643.

75 *Ibid.*

76 On this see BÖNNEN (note 70), p. 344. It is unclear whether a reference to a *conventus concivium* refers to a regular meeting of the *concives* or to the marketplace: SCHULZ (note 71), p. 30; cf. however BÖNNEN (note 70), p. 344.

77 See e.g. SCHULZ (note 71); BÖNNEN (note 70), p. 192; see also the references to older literature provided by Christian HENKES, *Lex familiae Wormatiensis ecclesiae. Das Hofrecht des Bischofs*

building projects organised by Burchard, of which his rebuilding and expansion of the cathedral is probably the most notable. The building projects themselves would, so suggests BÖNNEN, have fostered a new sense of community amongst the elites of the *familia* through the long-term cooperation required.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, BÖNNEN has noted that Burchard's cathedral became an important centre for a newly invigorated sense of urban-diocesan solidarity even before construction was finished.<sup>79</sup> This is implied by a 1016 charter, recording a property grant from Burchard to the monastery of Nonnenmünster near Worms.<sup>80</sup> The proceedings, so describes the charter, took place in the cathedral on its patron saint's feast day, and present were not only Burchard, various named clerics and lay notables, but also "almost all of the *urbani*".<sup>81</sup>

It is indeed likely, as suggested by BÖNNEN, that the appearance of the *concives* and *urbani* in the 'Lex familiae' and the 1016 charter relate to urbanisation, more specifically to the socio-economic effects of Burchard's building projects. That the *concives* were given a set of far-reaching rights certainly suggests the rise of an increasingly assertive urban elite, able to plead for their shared interests, in Worms at this time.<sup>82</sup> But, like other legal texts, Burchard's 'Lex familiae' and his 1016 charter can also be read "as skilful translations of irreducibly specific circumstances into a schematic and universalised form of narrative".<sup>83</sup> In both texts, the townspeople of Worms are portrayed as a cohesive group while being particularly privileged by, or close to, the bishop.

The context for this construction of the *urbani/concives* can likely be found not only in 'urbanisation', but also and perhaps more specifically in the context of a long-running political conflict between the bishops of Worms and the Salian counts. The bishops of Worms had officially been granted comital rights, traditionally held by the Salian count of the Wormsgau, over the *civitas* in 979, but this was still contested at the time Burchard took over the episcopate in March 1000. During Burchard's episcopate, this conflict between the Salian counts and the bishops of Worms played itself out dramatically within the *civitas* proper. With the support of Henry II, Burchard managed essentially to expel Salian influence from the town in 1002. That same year, he had the old comital palace in the town destroyed and started

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Burchard von Worms, unpublished Inauguraldissertation, Universität Mannheim, 2012, p. 35, n. 182.

78 BÖNNEN (note 70), p. 344; more generally beyond Worms see also HIRSCHMANN (note 7), p. 1199.

79 BÖNNEN points to the enduring importance of the cathedral as a meeting place for the urban community from Burchard's episcopate onwards (note 70), p. 328.

80 Urkundenbuch der Stadt Worms, vol. 1: 627–1300, ed. by Heinrich Boos (Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Worms 1), Berlin 1886, pp. 35–37.

81 Ed. by Boos (note 80), p. 37.

82 SCHULZ (note 71), p. 29.

83 Charles WEST, Meaning and Context: Moringus the Lay Scribe and Charter Formulation in Late Carolingian Burgundy, in: Jonathan JARRETT and Allan S. MCKINLEY (eds.), Problems and Possibilities of Early Medieval Charters (International Medieval Research 19), Turnhout 2013, pp. 71–88, here p. 81.



building a new church in its place.<sup>84</sup> However, still in 1014, Henry II appears to have seen the need to again confirm the limitation to the Salian count's jurisdiction within the *civitas*, suggesting that tensions had continued to simmer within the city walls long into Burchard's episcopate.<sup>85</sup> The same is implied by the great concern shown by Burchard in his 'Lex familiae' for the issue of episcopal and comital jurisdiction in cases where violence had been committed within the town.<sup>86</sup> Finally, as noted by BÖNNEN, the 1002 transfer of Salian property and subjects to the Church of Worms would itself have created new potential for conflicts and disunity.<sup>87</sup>

Seen from this context, the *concives/urbani* of Burchard's episcopate certainly tie into socio-economic processes relating to the town's expansion. We should, however, also be careful not to read the appearance of these groups exclusively as evidence of the emergence of a new, wholly cohesive 'proto-communal' body of citizens. Conflict appears to have simmered in the town of Worms, both as a result of Salian-episcopal conflicts concerning comital rights within the town and the transfer of property and people to the Church of Worms in 1002. In light of this, particularly the 1016 charter recording the presence of the *urbani* in the cathedral can be read as a narrative "constructed deliberately and carefully in order to supersede recollection".<sup>88</sup> It suggests an orchestrated performance of diocesan-urban unity in a time of potential division and conflict. Burchard's *concives* and *urbani* can therefore not only be linked to 'urbanisation'; they also point to Burchard's attempts at defining and solidifying an in reality likely still slightly fragile and divided urban community as the 'bishop's people'.

## Competing Narratives

To RICHES, the fracturing of secular authority after the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire above all brought new chances to bishops, in that it "left the bishops to create instead an imagined self-identity where they each stood at the centre of their historical narrative".<sup>89</sup> However, as the example of Burchard's granting of rights to the *concives* of Worms suggests, lay groups might themselves also have become more assertive and powerful at this time, and benefited from the diocesan identity politics pursued by their bishops. More than that, they could construe their own narratives

84 This is not only suggested by the slightly later 'Vita Burchardi', but also by archaeological finds. For this and further context see BÖNNEN (note 70), p. 329.

85 Die Urkunden Heinrichs II. und Arduins (Heinrici II. et Arduini Diplomata), ed. by Harry BRESSLAU and Hermann BLOCH et al. (MGH DD H II.), Hannover 1903, no. 319, pp. 399–400; SCHULZ (note 71), p. 28.

86 Burchard, *Lex familiae Wormatiensis* (note 71), p. 643; on this see SCHULZ (note 71), p. 28.

87 BÖNNEN (note 70), p. 340, also for further context.

88 Sarah FOOT, Reading Anglo-Saxon Charters. Memory, Record, or Story?, in: Elizabeth M. TYLER and Ross BALZARETTI (eds.), *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages 16), Turnhout 2006, pp. 39–66, here p. 65.

89 RICHES (note 44), p. 60.

of diocesan-urban peoplehood, which could potentially compete with the ‘official narrative’ promoted by diocesan authors. This should perhaps also be placed in a wider context of changed, post-Carolingian, identity politics. Simon MACLEAN has suggested that the dissolution of the Carolingian empire, specifically the dilution of the authority traditionally tied to the concept of Frankishness, intensified the search by rulers, bishops, and regional power brokers for “new identifications [...] to describe and shape a rapidly changing world”.<sup>90</sup>

One such new identification appears to have been claimed by some amongst the townspeople of post-Carolingian Utrecht. Alpert’s narrative of the return of Bishop Ansfrid’s body to Utrecht by the *Traiectenses* seems to have been aimed at other, competing, stories, spread by the *Traiectenses* themselves. This is suggested by Thietmar of Merseburg’s (d. 1018) recounting of this episode, which he penned some years before Alpert wrote his ‘*De diversitate*’. Thietmar’s version of the story presents a markedly different view of what took place when the *Traiectenses* attempted to return the body of their deceased bishop to the town:

the *Traiectenses* arrived, tearful and barefoot but with weapons in their hands [...]. Matters went so far that armed men from both sides confronted each other threateningly. Many would have lost their lives if the abbeß had not prostrated herself in their midst and asked God to establish peace among them, at least for the moment. Meanwhile, the *milites* [belonging to the abbey] wanted to carry his sarcophagus from the outbuildings of the brothers in the Eembach to the mountain above. But while they were engaged in this, the body was seized by the *Traiectenses*, and, as they still swear, easily transported across the water. So, with the Lord’s agreement, the stronger party of the *milites* was tricked.<sup>91</sup>

Thietmar’s narrative differs from Alpert’s in two main ways. First of all, Alpert portrayed the Utrechtians as a peaceful crowd who acquired the body of their bishop through praying and divine intervention. In Thietmar’s version of events, however, the Utrechtians appear as an armed crowd who manage to seize the body just as the local *milites* tried to carry it away. In this they do not make use of confusion caused by a fire, as in Alpert’s narrative, but by abusing the well-meant intervention of the local abbeß. Secondly, where Alpert attempts to turn the culmination of the episode into a vision of diocesan solidarity, having both the Utrechtians and the inhabitants of

<sup>90</sup> Simon MACLEAN, Who were the Lotharingians? Defining Political Community after the End of the Carolingian Empire, in: Walter POHL and Daniel MAHONEY (eds.), *Historiography and Identity IV. Writing History Across Medieval Eurasia* (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 30), forthcoming 2021.

<sup>91</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon sive Gesta Saxonum*, ed. by Robert HOLTZMANN (MGH SS rer. Germ. N.S. 9), Berlin 1935, p. 175; translation by David A. WARNER, *Ottoman Germany. The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester Medieval Sources Series), Manchester 2001, p. 178.

the monastery and its environs freely join together to bring the body of their bishop to the *civitas* in a joyful procession, Thietmar instead suggests that the Utrechtians managed to trick the monks and their “stronger party” of *milites*. The conflict between the two diocesan groups is not, as in Alpert’s narrative, resolved by divine providence and peaceful agreement, but by brave, near-violent action on the part of the outnumbered Utrechtians.

Thietmar’s remark that the Utrechtians “still swear” that the body of their bishop was easily taken to the town certainly implies that this narrative originated there, among the inhabitants of the walled town proper and its immediate environs. Alpert sought to portray the Utrechtians as the one group symbolising the identity of the diocese of Utrecht while still maintaining an ideal of diocesan-wide solidarity, yet some of the Utrechtians appear to have had a much less harmonious – and at the same time arguably more heroic – memory of what they had done.

A similar rivalry between a diocesan author’s view of the history of the townspeople and competing narratives promoted by some amongst the local laity themselves might also have played a role in the writing of the Cambrai ‘Gesta’. The author’s positive depiction of the town as a place of solidarity and collective agency in his urban origin narrative at the beginning of his text stands in stark contrast to the moralised invectives against the misdeeds of the Cambrai *cives* that follow in the ensuing chapters. To the Cambrai author, the local townspeople had clearly failed to live up to the original function of cities as places of mutual support, trust, obedience, and the preservation of justice. In this he was probably reacting to (or perhaps anticipating) the very different narratives some of the inhabitants of Cambrai would have formed about their past opposition to a ‘bad bishop’ like Berengar. Yet instead of attempting to co-opt their agency as Alpert did with the Utrechtians, the Cambrai author sought to subvert the agency of the *cives* wholesale by stereotyping it as inherently corrupt. Only when channelled through the diocese and its bishop could their actions be just.

## Conclusion

Over the course of the tenth century, the role of the town and its inhabitants in historical writing changed fundamentally. In early tenth-century histories, they functioned as passive victims, peripheral to regnal politics. By the early eleventh century, townspeople had acquired a completely different role in Reimsian and Lotharingian historiography. The local *cives* were no longer passive victims of kings and *gentes* but had become central collective agents, who themselves now influenced diocesan and regnal politics.

As the example of Burchard’s *conciues* and *urbani* suggests, this shift can at least in part be seen as an attempt on the part of bishops and their clergy to deal with socio-economic processes in their dioceses. Yet at the same time, these group names do not in themselves offer an unproblematic reflection of ‘actual’, perhaps ‘proto-communal’, collectives living in post-Carolingian towns. Peter JOHANEK WAS

thus probably right when he wrote that when post-Carolingian authors portrayed townspeople as a cohesive group “we are not yet dealing with an incipient citizens’ collective. We must reckon rather with different groups, legally distinct from one another, even within the *civitas*”.<sup>92</sup> This observation does not, however, answer why authors like Alpert and Burchard chose to apply terms such as *Traiectenses* and *cives* to “different groups, legally distinct from one another” in the first place.

Alpert’s careful rewriting of local narratives in vogue among the *Traiectenses*, Burchard’s promotion of the *concives/urbani* as the ‘bishop’s people’, and the Cambrai author’s attempts at discrediting the agency of the local *cives* suggest that by the early eleventh century ‘belonging to the town’ had become a matter of acute political importance to bishops and other diocesan authors. Whatever their legal or social background might have been, some inhabitants began to be imagined and probably imagine themselves as groups bound first and foremost through their shared belonging to the diocesan town. Post-Carolingian narratives and their contexts suggest that in many situations – particularly in the context of diocesan politics – laying claim to these local diocesan-civic identities could well bring more political clout or simply make more sense than an appeal to ethnicised identities. To Alpert, ‘Utrechtian-ness’ certainly appears to have been as meaningful and politically controversial as ‘Lotharingian-ness’ or ‘Frankish-ness’ were to other contemporary authors.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mateusz Fafinski, Andreas Fischer, Simon MacLean, Jakob Riemenschneider and the two anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. All remaining errors are my own.

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<sup>92</sup> JOHANEK (note 6), p. 83.