

Reviews of books

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David S. Bachrach, *The Histories of a Medieval German City, Worms c. 1000–c. 1300*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014. 175pp. 3 maps. 2 tables. Bibliography. £65.00 hbk.

doi:[10.1017/S0963926814000625](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926814000625)

David S. Bachrach is a recognized authority on the political and military history of the German lands during the early and high Middle Ages. Bachrach's latest contribution to the field is a collection of sources, four in total and edited and translated by himself, which principally concern the history of Worms. The high quality of Bachrach's scholarship is clear throughout the work, and he has succeeded in producing a source edition that will not only be the first port of call for undergraduates and researchers interested in the history of medieval Worms, but one which will also appeal to a much broader academic readership.

Bachrach's introduction is a thorough one, which seeks not just to introduce the texts which he has translated, but also to provide an introduction to the city of Worms and its role in the history of the German kingdom and of the Latin west during the early and high medieval periods. Though Bachrach's introduction largely synthesizes the existing state of research, it is still nevertheless a highly useful one as he introduces a great deal of scholarship in the German language to an English readership. His four chosen sources, two works of hagiography and two chronicles, together span the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The *Vita Burchardi*, written c. 1025, details the life of Bishop Burchard I of Worms (c. 950–1025), an influential clergyman and patron who enjoyed close contact with several of the German kings of his time. The *Vita Sancti Eckenberti*, written c. 1132, records the life of a certain Eckenbert (1079–1132), who rejected the wealth and secular influence afforded by his family's position and sought instead to lead a religious life. The other two works, the *Chronicon Wormatiense* and *Annales Wormatienses*, both written towards the end of the thirteenth century, stem from a different literary tradition. Though the *Chronicon Wormatiense* does partly resemble a hagiographical work in that it was probably written by a cleric and focuses on the lives of the various bishops of Worms, the work often deals at length with the actions and attitudes of the citizens of the city, even when they did not directly involve a bishop. It therefore bears a close resemblance to the *Annales Wormatienses*, a town chronicle perhaps produced by a notary of the city, and one of the earliest urban chronicles to be written north of the Alps. Bachrach emphasizes in his introduction the various themes upon which the history of Worms in this period can shed light,

including the development of urban areas and governance in the high Middle Ages, the manners in which urban elites interacted with royal and ecclesiastical authority, and Christian–Jewish relations, to name but a few. Bachrach is certainly correct, and he is to be commended for the engaging choice of sources which he included in the edition and which touch upon so many different themes. Furthermore, from a broader historical perspective much has been written on the history of the Italian communes in the high Middle Ages, and the chronicle sources translated here provide the opportunity to compare the development of such urban areas with a lesser-studied example north of the Alps.

Bachrach's translations are clear and engaging, and his decision to include a detailed commentary for each work will undoubtedly make this source edition a great tool for the teaching of medieval German history to undergraduates. His commentary includes a wealth of material designed both with the undergraduate and the more advanced researcher in mind, including general geographical and historical information, comments regarding the topography of Worms and its surrounding area, and discussion of dates and terminology, as well as references to other sources and further reading. Furthermore, the works included in this volume frequently stray beyond the environs of Worms, which only serves to broaden the book's appeal. While the first two pages of the *Chronicon Wormatiense* concentrate only on the various conflagrations which afflicted the city, the rest of the chronicle thankfully has a less fiery focus, and records events which occurred throughout Christendom. To take just a few examples, the chronicle records the crusading campaigns of Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250), the Mongol invasions of the 1240s and the activities of Richard of Cornwall (1209–71) in Germany, who was King of the Romans from 1257. As such, this volume would make a very useful addition to any university library where medieval history is taught. Overall, in producing such an accessible and engaging edition of sources Bachrach has done a great service to the study of urban history in the high medieval period, as well as to the history of medieval Germany in general.

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W.A. Champion and A.T. Thacker (eds.), *A History of Shropshire*, vol. IV, part 1: *Shrewsbury: General History and Topography*. London: Boydell and Brewer/Institute of Historical Research, 2014. 344pp. £95.00 hbk.
doi:[10.1017/S0963926814000650](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926814000650)

This well-written and thoroughly researched new volume from the Victoria County History series focuses upon the English border town of Shrewsbury. As the authors acknowledge in their introduction, defining a town and encapsulating the totality of experiences over such a long period is a complex task, and one rendered even more difficult by the unique geographical characteristics and status of Shrewsbury through time. Located on the River Severn between two English kingdoms, and an important defensive centre on the border with Wales, Shrewsbury's administrative history is daunting but the editors and authors are to be commended for their diligence in maintaining a manageable, coherent and lively narrative. Throughout, the book is well illustrated and supported with useful statistical evidence.