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Chapter 10
The Myth of Urban Unity:
Religion and Social Performance in
Late Medieval Braunschweig

Franz-Josef Arlinghaus

The attackers had chosen the moment of their offensive without any scruple. On that Christmas Eve of 1332, almost everyone had gone to church, and only a few were on guard. After the well-armed men had taken the walls, they killed everyone they met in the streets, and then turned to the churches to continue their work. Finally, they burned down all the buildings and did not even spare the houses of God.

Only one of numerous atrocities that history can relate, one might say. But in this case, it was not a foreign army that committed these terrible acts. Attackers and victims alike were citizens of the same town, Hildesheim. On that Christmas Eve, the inhabitants of the old city centre had conquered the neighbouring quarter, called Dammstadt; the people of Dammstadt, who had been expecting such an attack, had already built a wall around their quarter for fear of their 'fellow-citizens', but to no avail. After that burning and killing, the quarter was never rebuilt. It would remain deserted for the next 300 years.¹

The Hildesheim incident of 1332 underlines a problem often overlooked by historians. With some exceptions – Christiane Klapisch-Zuber is one² – the unity of the medieval city, especially the German city, is mostly taken for granted. But the sometimes very far-reaching autonomy (*de facto* and even *de jure*) of guilds

I would like to thank Carol Symes for her very useful comments and suggestions on the revision of this essay, and Anthony Alcock (University of Kassel) who also helped to transform my German version of the Anglo-Saxon language into readable English.

¹ Johannes Heinrich Gebauer, *Geschichte der Stadt Hildesheim*, 2 vols, (Hildesheim, 1922–24), vol. 1, pp. 87ff. A map is printed in Gudrun Pischke, *Geschichtlicher Handatlas von Niedersachsen*, hg. vom Institut für Historische Landesforschung der Universität Göttingen (Göttingen, 1989), map 48/3.

² Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, 'Une identité citoyenne troublée: les magnates citadins de Florence', in *Aspetti e componenti dell'identità urbana in Italia e in Germania (secoli XIV – XVI) / Aspekte und Komponenten der städtischen Identität in Italien und Deutschland (14. – 16. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Giorgio Chittolini and Peter Johanek, *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento / Contributi 12* (Bologna, 2003), pp. 265–76.

and neighbourhood quarters within a city's walls can tell a different story.³ It is true that most cities somehow managed to avoid civil wars, or at least the wholesale destruction of entire city quarters, as in Hildesheim. And after a crisis, most cities were able to reintegrate hostile factions. But how was this accomplished? And why is this a problem with which modern historians should be concerned?

This essay suggests some answers to these questions, in six stages. First, the above-mentioned incident will be set in a wider historical context, with reference to Max Weber's insistence on the unity of the occidental city, a thesis that is very well known and widely taken for granted by most scholars today. Second, I will focus on the city of Braunschweig (Brunswick), the second-largest town in Lower Saxony after Lübeck and (in German-language urban historiography) a city famous for the political and constitutional independence of its five city quarters, which prevailed until the late sixteenth century. Stage three of my argument shows that 'the city within the city' is a widespread phenomenon among medieval towns, and gives some reasons for this. In stages four and five, I will critically examine the assumption that religious processions and other rituals were successful tools for the construction of a unified urban identity, through a comparison of secular and religious rituals in Braunschweig. Finally, in stage six, I will offer some conclusions.

THE UNITY OF THE MEDIEVAL CITY IN A WIDER HISTORICAL CONTEXT

According to Max Weber, the medieval western city, administered by city councils and economically based on long-distance trade, can be seen as a forerunner of modernity. Moreover, according to Weber, the occidental medieval city differs in two central respects from premodern urban centres elsewhere: first, in its growing independence from local lords and the resulting political autonomy of the citizens; and second, in its unity. While in other parts of the world (Weber argued) families, kinships and the court of the sovereign dominated urban centres, in Europe it was the commune that formed the basis of social and civic life. In the East, moreover, identity was accordingly linked to families or to the saints venerated by kin-groups rather than to the town community as such – hence, Weber reasoned, the distinctive structure of the occidental city of modernity is a function of western Christianity, whose meaningful units of organization were the parish and local community, not the family.⁴ Crucial for him is Galatians 2:11,

³ See the various articles in Peter Johanek (ed.), *Sondergemeinden und Sonderbezirke in der Stadt der Vormoderne* (Cologne-Weimar, 2004).

⁴ See the chapter 'Verbandscharakter der Stadt "gemeinde" und ständische Qualifikation des "Bürgers" im Okzident: Fehlen beider Begriffe im Orient', in Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundrisse der verstehenden Soziologie*, ed. Johannes Winkelmann, 5th edn (Tübingen, 1980), trans. as 'The "Commune" and the "Burgher": A Survey', in Max

where the question of a common meal shared by (baptized) Jews and (baptized) Gentiles is under discussion, and Paul strongly emphasizes its importance. For Weber, this is how Christianity surmounted the boundaries of sacral kinship through shared ritual: this incident looks ahead to the development of a parish community centred on a ritualized meal, a community that offers everyone full membership.⁵ For him, this Christian concept of community membership is a cornerstone for the development of medieval towns.

Weber's assumptions – whether right or wrong – do not offer a solution to the problems evident in Hildesheim or (as we shall see) in Braunschweig, because in these cases it was not families or kin groups who were fighting, but rather different quarters within the same city. In short (and I will return to this point later), even if strong family ties did not disrupt the coherence of the European town, associations, guilds and especially autonomous quarters within the same city surely could. For instance, it was not a rare phenomenon for different quarters of one city to join with rival foreign powers and thus to take sides against one another. This clearly undermined the independence of the whole city and thus calls into question Weber's model of the autonomous, self-governed town.

What remains valid in Weber's argument that in terms of independence, self-government and autonomy, the western city is different, and it is evident that the autonomy from the lord of the city requires a certain unity, otherwise the town

Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 1226ff. For a summary of the German reception of this work and some interesting insights into its interpretation, see Gerhard Dilcher, 'Max Webers »Stadt« und die historische Stadtforschung der Mediävistik', in Hinnerk Bruhns and Wilfried Nippel (eds), *Max Weber und die Stadt im Kulturvergleich* (Göttingen, 2000), pp. 119–43. The New Testament offers a number of examples, see for instance Mark 10:28–9, where Peter turns to Jesus saying: 'See, we left everything in order to follow you' and Jesus answers: 'There is no one who has left ... brother .. or mother or father in my name ... who will not be rewarded a hundred times'.

⁵ Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 1243: 'Within the walls [of the southern European city] each noble family had its own fortress. ... Feuds between noble families raged as violently within the city as outside... However, it is most important that there were no residues – such as had still been present in Antiquity – of religious exclusiveness... This was a consequence of the historically memorable event which Paul justly thrust into the foreground in the Epistle to the Galatians: that Peter, in Antioch, had partaken of the (ritual) communal meal with uncircumcised brethren. Ritual exclusiveness had already begun to wane in the ancient city; the clanless *plebs* obtained at least the principle of ritual equality. In medieval Europe, especially in the central and northern European cities, ritual exclusiveness was never strong, and the sibs soon lost all importance as constituencies of the city'. See Hartmann Tyrell, 'Potenz und Depotenzierung der Religion – Religion und Rationalisierung bei Max Weber', *Saeculum*, 44 (1993): 300–47; Paul Schmeller, 'Das paulinische Christentum und die Sozialstruktur der antiken Stadt. Überlegungen zu Webers »Tag von Antiochien«', in Bruhns and Nippel (eds), pp. 107–18.

would have been too easy to defeat. In other words, in order to understand what is specific about the medieval western city, it is fundamental that we understand how this necessary cohesion was formed. What was the glue that kept different quarters together, that helped to build up a sense of community sufficient to defend a city against encroachments? What was the crucial ingredient needed for the maintenance of an autonomous political structure within a society dominated by lords and their vassals?

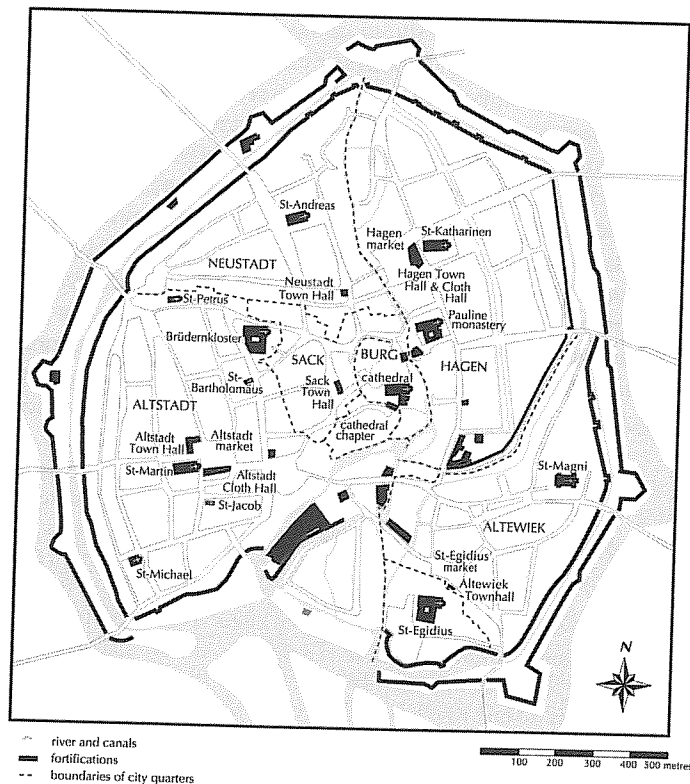


Fig. 10.1 The five city quarters of Braunschweig (*Weichbilde*): Altstadt, Hagen, Neustadt, Altwiek and Sack. Their boundaries (*Grenzen*) are marked by dashed lines. The five different Town Halls are marked. The city council of the whole town had no building of its own, but met in the Neustadt Town Hall. (After Gerd Spies (ed.), *Brunswiek 1031 - Braunschweig 1981. Die Stadt Heinrichs des Löwen von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. Festschrift zur Ausstellung vom 25.4.1981 bis 11.10.1981* (Braunschweig, 1981), p. 95). Scale 1 : 20,000.

FIVE INDEPENDENT QUARTERS, ONE CITY? THE CASE OF BRAUNSCHWEIG

On first view, the map of Braunschweig looks like any other map of a medieval city (fig. 10.1). But the five districts (*Weichbilden*) shown on this map – called Altstadt, Hagen, Neustadt, Sack and Altwiek – were more than administrative sub-units; they were independent cities within the city. They had their own histories and their own rights and administrations. In 1227, for instance, Duke Otto the Child granted different rights to the Altstadt and the Hagen in two different charters. The charters of the smaller Altwiek can be dated back to the 1240s. The Neustadt and the Sack got their charters about 60 years later, around 1300.⁶ Furthermore, each of these five city-quarters had its own council. True, a common city council (*Gemeiner Rat*) was founded in 1269 by the Altstadt, Neustadt and Hagen quarters, joined in 1325 by the quarters Sack and Altwiek. But during these efforts to obtain freedom and independence from the lords of the city – or rather, cities – it was not the common city council that played the decisive role. Rather, it was the city council of the wealthy Altstadt and/or the councils of the individual quarters that bought these rights from their permanently bankrupt lords.⁷ In consequence, with respect to internal affairs, the common council had little to say. It is a telling fact that during the fourteenth century, each of the five councils of the city's subsections built a town hall of its own, while the council of the entire city had at its disposal only a single chamber in the Neustadt town hall. By the end of the fourteenth century, Braunschweig had seven mayors: two nominated by the Altstadt, two by the Hagen and one by each of the other three quarters.⁸ Furthermore, the administrative and political independence of the quarters went hand-in-hand with marked differences in the relative social status of the cities' populations.⁹ While in the Altstadt one would find wealthy merchants and long-distance traders and rich goldsmiths, the dwellers of the Altwiek were mainly agricultural labourers. Craftsmen, among them the wool-

⁶ For a survey of the history of Braunschweig, see Richard Moderhack, 'Abriß der Braunschweiger Stadtgeschichte' and 'Zeittafel zur Geschichte der Stadt Braunschweig', in Gerd Spies (ed.), *Brunswiek 1031 - Braunschweig 1981: Die Stadt Heinrichs des Löwen von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart; vom 25.4.1981 bis 11.10.1981* (Braunschweig, 1981), pp. 1–74. For a detailed analysis, see Manfred R. Garzmann, *Stadtherr und Gemeinde in Braunschweig im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Braunschweig, 1976).

⁷ The story of how and when rights were purchased, impounded, resold by various dukes and councils is not easy to follow; see Garzmann, *Stadtherr und Gemeinde*, pp. 79ff.

⁸ Moderhack, 'Abriß Geschichte Braunschweig', p. 11.

⁹ To paraphrase a statement of Martin Kintzinger: 'The legal inner differentiation in city quarters was always matched by an economic and social differentiation as well' ('Die Weichbildordnung repräsentierte stets auch eine ökonomische und soziale Binnendifferenzierung Braunschweigs'): Martin Kintzinger, 'Handwerk, Zunft und Stadt im Mittelalter', in Kintzinger (ed.), *Handwerk in Braunschweig. Entstehung und Entwicklung vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Braunschweig, 2000), p. 17.

weavers, settled in the Hagen quarter.¹⁰ Thus, I agree with Bernd Schneidmüller, who characterizes the history of Braunschweig as, in essence, the history of five (independent) towns with five city-councils and five town halls.¹¹

What were the effects of this structure, in terms of everyday politics? When in the 1290s, for instance, Duke Albrecht II of Braunschweig fought Duke Henry I, the Hagen and Neustadt quarters, led by their *Gildemeister* (guild-masters), formed an alliance with Henry, while the Altstadt took sides with Albrecht. In fact, during this so called *Schicht der Gildemeister* (Revolt of the Guild-Masters), Braunschweig saw intense fighting between the different parties involved, with the masters attempting to establish a government of their own.¹² Social tensions between rich Altstadt and the poorer or *nouveaux riches* inhabitants of the Hagen and Neustadt certainly did not ease the situation. What is more, Martin Kinztinger has interpreted the intra-city fighting on that occasion as not so much fuelled by economic differences but by quarrels rooted in longstanding social differences among the city quarters; if so, this bodes even worse for any theory of urban unity.¹³ In any case, all historians who have conducted research into this matter agree that the essential conflict came down to the control that the Hagen and the Altstadt quarters tried to exercise over the whole city, a conflict which was interwoven with that between the two aforementioned dukes, with each claiming the city as part of his inheritance.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 17ff.

¹¹ Schneidmüller states that the history of Braunschweig is ‘*eigentlich als Geschichte von fünf Teilstädten mit eigenen Weichbildräten und Rathhäusern geschrieben werden muß*’, Bernd Schneidmüller, ‘*Stadtherr, Stadtgemeinde und Kirchenverfassung in Braunschweig und Goslar im Mittelalter*’, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung*, 79 (1993): 135–88 at 139.

¹² A main source for the revolt is the account of Hermann Bote, ‘*Das Schichtbuch*’, in *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. 16: *Die Chroniken der niedersächsischen Städte*, vol. 2: Braunschweig (Leipzig, 1880), pp. 301ff. For a critical review of Botes’s story (written two hundred years after the event), see Wilfried Ehbrecht, ‘*Stadtkonflikt um 1300: Überlegungen zu einer Typologie*’, in Birgit Pollmann (ed.), *Schicht – Protest – Revolution in Braunschweig 1292 bis 1947–48: Beiträge zu einem Kolloquium der Technischen Universität Braunschweig, des Instituts für Sozialgeschichte und des Kulturamtes der Stadt Braunschweig vom 26. bis 28. Oktober 1992* (Braunschweig, 1995), pp. 11–26. See also Garzmann, *Stadtherr und Gemeinde*, p. 243f.; and Hermann Dürre, *Geschichte der Stadt Braunschweig im Mittelalter* (Hannover-Döhren, 1861; repr., 1974), pp. 112ff.

¹³ ‘*Wesentlich für die “Schicht der Gildemeister” waren also nicht sozial oder wirtschaftlich begründete Änderungsabsichten, sondern ein Rangstreit zwischen den Weichbildern Altstadt und Hagen*’, Kinztinger, ‘*Handwerk*’, p. 21. See also Matthias Puhle, ‘*Die Braunschweiger “Schichten” des Mittelalters im Überblick und Vergleich*’, in Pollmann (ed.), pp. 27–33 at 28.

¹⁴ ‘*[D]ie Forschung ... [ist sich] darin einig, daß die Schicht der Gildemeister vom Ringen um die Einflußnahme auf die Stadtpolitik zwischen den Weichbildern Altstadt und Hagen handelte,*

The ‘*Revolt of the Guild-Masters*’ was by no means the only incident leading to scenes of violent civil strife in Braunschweig.¹⁵ And as seen in the example from Hildesheim, the safety of any city and its survival as an integrated whole was at stake during such times. Even when alliances between individual city quarters and external powers were forged, the autonomy and independence of the town was in danger. Yet a certain degree of unity, it seems, must be a prerequisite for a city’s independence, in order for this experimental urban model of proto-modern society to be realized. So are Braunschweig and Hildesheim merely exceptions to the rule?

THE PEAS-IN-THE-POD PROBLEM

On the contrary, Braunschweig and Hildesheim are more typical of the medieval city than they are anomalous. Looking closely, one finds numerous examples like them: cities consisting not only of two, but often of three or more different internal cities, some very prominent.¹⁶ Recently, Leszek Belzyt called late medieval Prague, and also Krakau and Lemberg, ‘*agglomerations*’ of several different cities. In fact Prague, like Braunschweig, consisted of four towns, or even five after 1476.¹⁷ With respect to Cologne, scholarly discussion of the importance of the so-called *Sondergemeinden* (quarters or boroughs), whose administrations were closely linked to those of parishes (but not identical to them), has been ongoing for almost a hundred years now.¹⁸ Indeed, it has been demonstrated that

ein Ringen, das in Wechselwirkung zum Erbfolgestreit der welfischen Brüder stand’, Ehbrecht, ‘*Stadtkonflikt um 1300*’, p. 14.

¹⁵ For an overview, see Puhle, ‘*Die Braunschweiger “Schichten”*’.

¹⁶ Apart from Altstadt and Dammstadt, we find that Neustadt, which subordinated itself to the Altstadt of Hildesheim in 1383, was able to maintain a certain independence as a result of this alliance; see Eberhard Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt im Spätmittelalter (1250–1500): Stadtgestalt, Recht, Stadregiment, Kirche, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft* (Stuttgart, 1988), p. 45.

¹⁷ ‘*In Prag gab es damals vier Städte, ab 1476 sogar fünf, nämlich Altstadt, Neustadt, Kleinseite und Hradschin (später auch Vyšehrad), in Krakau drei ...*’ See Leszek Belzyt, ‘*“Sondergemeinden” in Städten Ostmitteleuropas im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert am Beispiel von Prag, Krakau und Lemberg*’, in Johanek (ed.), *Sondergemeinden*, pp. 165–72 at 165, n. 2. See also the studies of Robert Jütte, ‘*Das Stadtviertel als Problem und Gegenstand der frühneuzeitlichen Stadtgeschichtsforschung*’, *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, (1991): 235–69; and Jörg Rogge, ‘*Viertel, Bauer-Nachbarschaften. Bemerkungen zu Gliederung und Funktion des Stadtraumes im 15. Jahrhundert (am Beispiel von Braunschweig, Halberstadt, Halle und Hildesheim)*’, in Matthias Puhle (ed.), *Hanse – Städte – Bünde. Die sächsischen Städte zwischen Elbe und Weser um 1500. Ausstellungskatalog*, in *Magdeburger Museumsschriften*, 4/1 (1996): 231–40.

¹⁸ Most recently, see Manfred Groten, ‘*Entstehung und Frühzeit der Kölner Sondergemeinden*’, in Johanek (ed.), *Sondergemeinden*, pp. 53–77. Older studies include

the important tasks carried out by these units generated an intense pragmatic literacy, exemplified by the famous *Schreinsbücher* or property-registers in which the sales of houses in each quarter were recorded.¹⁹ At least until the end of the fourteenth century, these *Sondergemeinden* were able to maintain a certain independence vis-à-vis the city council.²⁰ The (now Swiss) city of Lausanne was also 'composed of two entirely separate municipal administrations, that of the lower Town ... and that of the City,' to quote Clémence Thévenaz-Modestin.²¹ The lower Town was further divided into four *bannières* or quarters, which were themselves highly independent units. The peaceful unification of the two cities, which took place in 1481, was by no means an easy task.²² In southern Germany, Bamberg is an excellent example of a town which consisted of at least two different cities. Gerhard Dilcher, who compares it with Braunschweig, underlines the juridical independence of the different parts of the city.²³

Instead of continuing to catalogue cities like these, it is more interesting to ask why this phenomenon was so widespread.²⁴ In my view, two explanations offer themselves: first, the nature of these cities' origins; and, second, the structure of the city as such. With respect to the first, urban historians have long

Erich Liesegang, *Die Sondergemeinden Kölns. Beitrag zu einer Rechts- und Verfassungsgeschichte der Stadt* (Bonn, 1885); and Konrad Beyerle, 'Die Pfarrverbände der Stadt Köln im Mittelalter und ihre Funktionen im Dienst des weltlichen Rechts', *Jahresberichte der Görresgesellschaft*, (1929/30): 95–106.

¹⁹ Manfred Groten, 'Die Anfänge des Kölner Schreinswesens', *Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsvereins*, 56 (1985): 1–21. For a short description, see Klaus Militzer, 'Das topographische Gedächtnis: Schreinskarten und Schreinsbücher', in Wolfgang Rosen and Lars Wirtler (eds), *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Köln*, Vol. 1: *Antike und Mittelalter von den Anfängen bis 1396/97*, (Cologne, 1999), pp. 165–8. For editions, see Hans Planitz and Thea Buyken (eds), *Die Kölner Schreinsbücher des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar, 1937); and Thea Buyken and Hermann Conrad (eds), *Amtleutebücher der Kölnischen Sondergemeinden* (Weimar, 1936).

²⁰ Groten, 'Entstehung', p. 70.

²¹ Clémence Thévenaz-Modestin, *Un mariage contesté: L'union de la Cité et la Ville inférieure de Lausanne (1481)* (Lausanne, 2006), p. 33.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 59ff.

²³ Gerhard Dilcher, 'Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte, 2. Teil: Die Rechtsgeschichte der Stadt', in Karl Siegfried Bader and Gerhard Dilcher (eds), *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte: Land und Stadt – Bürger und Bauer im Alten Europa. Enzyklopädie der Rechts- und Staatswissenschaft* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 312f.

²⁴ Göttingen and Budapest could be added to the list, as well as Danzig, which consisted of the Altstadt, Reichsstadt, Jungstadt and Neustadt: see Hans Patze, 'Stadtgründung und Stadtrecht', in Peter Classen (ed.), *Recht und Schrift im Mittelalter*, in *Vorträge und Forschungen*, 23 (Sigmaringen, 1977), pp. 163–96 at 166. The Franco-Flemish town of Arras is another example, among many: see Carol Symes, *A Common Stage: Theatre and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca, 2007), especially pp. 27–68; and Symes, 'Out in the Open', in this volume.

been aware that many cities are rooted not in one but in two or more nuclei of settlement. As Edith Ennen and others have pointed out, during the tenth and eleventh centuries, an *Altstadt* (Old Town) frequently came to be built around the seat of a bishop, a monastery or a castle; thereafter, a marketplace and attendant dwellings might come into being, fostered by a secular or ecclesiastical lord. The expression 'topographical dualism', used to label this phenomenon, should not obscure the fact that more than two different settlements are often to be found when looking at such early medieval cities.²⁵ The further differentiation in German urban historiography between this 'topographical dualism' of the early centuries and the so-called *Doppelstädte* (double cities), which are a phenomenon of the twelfth to early fourteenth centuries, need not concern us here.²⁶ The essential points are that (a) a great number of cities consisted of two or more such foundations,²⁷ and (b), even more importantly, all of these different co-existing settlements had 'constitutions' of their own, that is, were granted (or gave themselves) specific rights and held to certain customs that were valid only for those who lived in that city quarter or district.²⁸

With respect to the second point, the structure of the city, one should not overlook the fact that – in contrast to today – the smallest units of a medieval city were not individuals, but corporations. Not only was political participation linked to membership in guilds and other collectives, but these corporations as such united to form the city.²⁹ In this respect, the medieval town resembled

²⁵ Edith Ennen, *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters*, 4th edn (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 97–9 (see the maps of Verdun and Bonn, respectively). Ennen highlights the fact that one often sees more than two *Siedlungszellen*, and a number of examples are given by Ernst Pitz, *Europäisches Städtewesen und Bürgertum: Von der Spätantike bis zum hohen Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1991), pp. 174ff.

²⁶ Wilfried Ehbrecht, 'Doppelstadt', *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 3 (Munich, 1986), pp. 1259f.

²⁷ Isenmann, *Deutsche Stadt*, pp. 44ff. (e.g. Regensburg, Lübeck, Braunschweig, Hildesheim).

²⁸ Dilcher, 'Rechtsgeschichte', pp. 312f.

²⁹ See Knut Schulz, 'Die politische Zunft,' in Wilfried Ehbrecht (ed.), *Verwaltung und Politik in Städten Mitteleuropas: Beiträge zu Verfassungsnormen und Verfassungswirklichkeit in altständischer Zeit*, (Cologne- Weimar – Vienna, 1994), pp. 1–20. Schulz also stresses that being a member of a medieval guild was totally different from being a member of a modern political party: 'Die Zunft im Sinne der politischen Zunft des Spätmittelalters erfaßte und umfaßte so gut wie alle Bereiche der menschlichen Existenz, ja die Erlangung des Zunftrechts wurde die Voraussetzung für die vollberechtigte Teilhabe am bürgerlichen Leben überhaupt', (p. 18). Gerd Schwerhoff states that 'die "Teilhabe" des Bürgers genossenschaftlich [erfolgte], im Medium der Korporation ... und nicht individuell': Gerd Schwerhoff, 'Apud populum potestas? Rats Herrschaft und korporative Partizipation im spätmittelalterlichen Köln', in Klaus Schreiner and Ulrich Meier (eds), *Stadtrecht und Bürgerfreiheit: Handlungsspielräume in deutschen und italienischen Städten des Späten Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 1994), pp. 188–243 at 231. See also Rudolf Schlögl, 'Vergesellschaftung durch Sonderung:

a raw pea-pod more than a well-cooked pea soup, and people were proud of their own 'pea' and defended its integrity within the 'pod'. Hence it may be said that the way independent 'districts' – or rather, different cities – were formed was nothing but an aggrandizement of the peas-in-the-pod structure common to almost every medieval city of central Europe, and in many other European locales. Max Weber's insistence that the occidental city is different from towns elsewhere because of the emphasis placed on community is certainly right in some respects,³⁰ although today we would paint a more nuanced picture.³¹ But as the examples given here in this brief overview of urban structures demonstrates, this emphasis on community did not solve the problem of urban unity. Communities within towns that formed independent entities within the city, or were even founded as independent entities and granted their own rights by a local lord, quite often fostered intra-city tensions, alliances of city-quarters with opposing foreign powers, or even civil wars. It is true that in most cases we do not find the total destruction of a city quarter, as in Hildesheim, or two quarters siding against one another with two competitive dukes, as in Braunschweig. Most cities obviously managed to establish a unity stable enough to avoid this type of conflict – which, it is important to note, would put at risk the whole project of free citizens dwelling in a city independent from external control. The question is, how?

RELIGIOUS RITUAL AS A TOOL FOR CREATING UNITY?

In the search for an 'identity adhesive' that could hold a city together, games, feasts and processions are often held up as excellent candidates.³² Especially those

Zur politischen und sozialen Ordnungsleistung der Gilden und Innungen', in Puhle (ed.), *Hanse – Städte – Bünde*, pp. 200–20.

³⁰ That the family has been less important in the West than in other parts of the world since the early middle ages is the subject of renewed discussion by Michael Mitterauer, *Warum Europa? Mittelalterliche Grundlagen eines Sonderwegs* (München, 2003), pp. 70ff. Social benefits (like social security, education, etc.) that are elsewhere seen as provided by family and kin groups are, in this formulation, attributed to communities (guilds for example) and institutions; see for instance Katherine A. Lynch, *Individuals, Families, and Communities in Europe, 1200–1800: The Urban Foundations of Western Society* (Cambridge, 2003).

³¹ For example, interpretations of family and kinship structures create problems of their own. See Bernhard Jussen, 'Famille et parenté. Comparaison des recherches françaises et allemandes', in Jean-Claude Schmitt and Otto Gerhard Oexle (eds), *Les tendances actuelles de l'histoire du Moyen Age en France et en Allemagne* (Paris, 2002), pp. 447–60; David Warren Sabean and Simon Teuscher, 'Kinship in Europe: A New Approach to Long-Term Development', in Jon Mathieu, David Warren Sabean, and Simon Teuscher (eds), *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to the Long-Term Development (1300–1900)* (New York, 2006), pp. 11–53.

³² Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 232ff.; Andrea Löhner, *Prozessionen in spätmittelalterlichen Städten: Politische Partizipation, obrigkeitliche*

processions that took place to honour the patron saint of a city have seemed to be ideally suited to fostering a feeling of unity in the urban population.³³ Why feasts and processions? If I understand it correctly, there are two different approaches to these allied phenomena that lead to the same argument: performative acts are able to create a feeling of community, a sense of togetherness. The first approach finds its classic articulation in Émile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), in which rituals are viewed as the crucial way to make people identify themselves with a community. Durkheim's position, which emerged from nineteenth-century sociology, is that festivity, play and sport are able to bring together the different social groups and classes of an otherwise fragmented society and that, through these activities, coherence and togetherness are 'manufactured'.³⁴ It seems that many German and Anglophone scholars are, at least implicitly, inclined to this theory.³⁵ The second approach seems to derive from Arnold van Gennep's contemporary *Rites of Passage* (1909).³⁶ In the words of Edward Muir, processions, triumphs and entries project 'the image of a perfectly harmonious government'.³⁷ Through religious rituals, therefore, the premodern city was able 'to transubstantiate ... disparate characteristics of a community into a mystic body, a mystified city', and thus to create a unified urban identity.³⁸ It is not an accident that these theories parallel those dealing more generally with performance, which most of the time forms part of a ritual. Together, performance and ritual not only mirror society, but themselves have the power

Inszenierung, städtische Einheit (Cologne – Weimar – Vienna, 1999). See also Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Ryerson (eds), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1994).

³³ Paolo Ventrone, 'Feste e rituali civici: città italiane a confronto', in Chittolini and Johaneck (eds), pp. 155–91; Klaus Naß, 'Der Auctorkult in Braunschweig und seine Vorläufer im frühen Mittelalter', *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte*, 62 (1990): 153–207.

³⁴ Examining the rituals of the Warramunga tribe in Australia, Durkheim drew the more general conclusion that a given society develops a number of rituals whose only purpose is to foster certain ideas and emotions, to tie the present to the past, the individual to the group: 'Voilà donc tout en ensemble de cérémonies qui se proposent uniquement de réveiller certaines idées et certaines sentiments, de rattacher le présent au passé, l'individu à la collectivité', Émile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris, 1912), p. 541. See Andréa Belliger and David Krieger, 'Einführung', in *Ritualtheorien: Ein einführendes Handbuch* (Opladen, 1998), pp. 7–33.

³⁵ See Löhner, *Prozessionen*, p. 336; Naß, 'Auctorkult', pp. 153ff. See especially the introduction to Brigitte Luchesi and Rolf Bindemann's translation of Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973): *Dichte Beschreibung. Beiträge zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme* (Frankfurt, 1983), pp. 14ff.

³⁶ Arnold van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris, 1909), trans. as *Übergangsriten* (Frankfurt, 1999); see especially the afterword by Sylvia M. Schormburg-Scherff. See also Belliger and Krieger, 'Einführung', pp. 13ff.

³⁷ Muir, *Ritual*, p. 262.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

to create social realities.³⁹ Their analysis is now seen as central to understanding premodern phenomena.⁴⁰ Yet bearing in mind J.L. Austin's 'speech acts', we note that performances have this power without the necessity of involving religion or the invocation of the sacred. I will return to this point.

The patron saint of Braunschweig is the so-called Saint Auctor. In the late fourteenth century, two processions, on the 24th of June and the 20th of August, were held in his honour. The first was to thank him for his help during the plague of 1348, the second to commemorate the victory of the city against King Philip of Swabia in 1200.⁴¹ A representative example of the many interpretations advanced by scholars who have worked on these processions is that of Klaus Naß who, well aware of the autonomy of the Braunschweig city quarters, stated that these processions were 'manifestations of city unity under the protection of the city saint'.⁴² This summation echoes Andrea Löther's fundamental study: analyzing the processions of Nuremberg, Erfurt, Braunschweig and other late-medieval German cities, she sees the production of unity as the most important effect of the procession.⁴³

Prima facie, this seems to be perfectly true, according to a description of the processions found in the *Ordinarius* of 1408.⁴⁴ During the procession on the 20th of August, all city-dwellers went to the monastery of St Egidius, where Auctor's

³⁹ For a general overview, see Doris Bachmann-Medick (ed.), *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Reinbeck, 2007), especially pp. 104ff; and Uwe Wirth, 'Der Performanzbegriff im Spannungsfeld von Illokution, Iteration und Indexikalität', in *Performanz. Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt, 2002), pp. 9–60; Belliger and Krieger, 'Einführung', pp. 7ff; Margreth Egidi, et al., 'Riskante Gesten. Einleitung', in *Gestik: Figuren des Körpers in Text und Bild* (Tübingen, 2000), pp. 11–41. On the complex relationship between medieval performance, public opinion, and politics, see recently Symes, *A Common Stage*, especially pp. 277ff.

⁴⁰ See Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Des Kaisers alte Kleider: Verfassungsgeschichte und Symbolsprache des Alten Reiches* (München, 2008); Marion Steinicke and Stefan Weinfurter (eds), *Investitur- und Krönungsrituale. Herrschaftseinsetzungen im kulturellen Vergleich* (Cologne, 2005); Gerd Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale. Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2003); Hagen Keller, 'Hulderweis durch Privilegien: symbolische Kommunikation innerhalb und jenseits des Textes', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien. Jahrbuch des Instituts für Frühmittelalterforschung der Universität Münster*, 38 (2004): 309–21.

⁴¹ Dürre, *Braunschweig*, pp. 376ff; Wilfried Ehbrecht, 'Die Stadt und ihre Heiligen. Aspekte und Probleme west- und norddeutscher Städte', in Ellen Widder, Mark Mersiowsky and Peter Johanek (eds), *Vestigia Monasteriensia. Westfalen - Rheinland - Niederlande* (Bielefeld, 1995), pp. 197–262 at 225ff.

⁴² 'Die Feier des Auctortages .. war eine Manifestation der Einheit unter dem Schutz des Stadtpatrons', Naß, 'Auctorkult', p. 198.

⁴³ Löther, *Prozessionen*, pp. 333ff.

⁴⁴ The *Ordinarius* is printed in *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Braunschweig*, vol. 1: *Statute und Rechtebriefe 1227–1671*, ed. Ludwig Hänselmann (Braunschweig, 1873), No. 63. See p. 145 for a short introduction to this source, hereinafter cited as *Ordinarius*.

relics were kept. Then, accompanied by singing and prayers, the reliquary was carried around the cloister. Five huge candles, each weighing a hundred pounds, were offered to the saint on this day by the citizens.⁴⁵ During the other procession, on the 24th of July, the saint's holy remains were carried around the city walls, and in the four corners of the city the four gospels were read out. Again, the whole population participated.⁴⁶ Clearly, the city is displayed here as a sacred community (*Sakralgemeinschaft*),⁴⁷ and the purpose of these processions appears to match both of the theoretical models outlined above.

But were these effective tools to foster unity? A closer look will raise doubts. First, it is striking that the council of the whole city does not play an important role during these rituals – perhaps no role at all. With respect to both processions, the sources emphasize that this common council was not allowed to ask the religious institutions of Braunschweig to take part; that right was reserved for the five councils of the five divisions of the city, as the statutes underline.⁴⁸ As for the procession held on the 24th of June, it was the council of the Altewiek district that was supposed to ask St Egidius for the loan of the coffin used to convey the saint's remains around the city walls. In contrast, the men who were allowed to carry Saint Auctor's relics were exclusively members of the Altstadt city council, the most powerful of the five city quarters.⁴⁹ What is more, when all the citizens marched to St Egidius on August 20th, or around the city walls on June 24th, they did not mingle; rather, all the different groups who lived within the city walls, especially the clergy and the guilds, were divided according to the five subsections of the city. The common city council of Braunschweig, moreover,

⁴⁵ 'Wu men sunte Auctoris dach began schal [20 August]', *Ordinarius*, § CXXII, p. 178.

⁴⁶ 'Wanne me myt sunte Auctoris sarke vmme de stad geyt [24 July]', *Ordinarius*, No. 63, § CXXVII, p. 178.

⁴⁷ The term *Sakralgemeinschaft* appears to have been coined by Karl Frölich, 'Kirche und städtisches Verfassungsleben im Mittelalter', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung*, 22 (1933): 188–287. See Enno Bünz, 'Klerus und Bürger. Die Bedeutung der Kirche für die Identität deutscher Städte im Spätmittelalter', in Chittolini and Johanek (eds), pp. 351–87 at 362ff. 'Die Sakralgemeinschaft Stadt konstituierte sich durch gemeinsame Glaubensinhalte und kollektive rituelle Handlungen' (The city as a sacred community constitutes itself by a common belief and rituals, performed collectively): Löther, *Prozessionen*, p. 336.

⁴⁸ 'To dusser processien en darff de rad nycht sunderliken bidden laten de heren to sunte Ylien, in der borch, vnde vp sunte Cyriacus berghe, wente se des in vortyden eyne gheworden synt myt dem rade, sunder de rede in iowelkem wykbelde schullen ore perners, moncke, vnde papen, vnde capellane bidden laten', *Ordinarius*, § CXXII, p. 178. See also § CXXVI, p. 179.

⁴⁹ '[V]nder de wonheyt is, dat de rad in der Oldenwyk biddet de heren to sunte Ylien vmme dat sark to lenende myt dem hillighedome dat dar plecht inne to wesende, vnde dene lenet de heren to sunte Ylien, dar one dat hillighedome vnde de sark wedder werden schal. Vnde de vte der Oldenstad draghen den sark myt deme hillighedome vmme de stad, vnde bringen one wedder in dat munster to sunte Ylien. Vnde wenn me geyt alsus vmme de stad, so leset de heren van sunte Ylien vier evangelia in vier enden der stad vor vier doren', *Ordinarius*, § CXXII, p. 178.

was not to be found marching as a group in that procession.⁵⁰ And the five huge candles that were offered to Saint Auctor in August were donated by each of the five city districts.⁵¹

How should we read these processions? If their main purpose had been to bring about 'unity', the important task of the processions ought to have been carried out by the council of the whole city. In reality, it seems to have been more important for the city-dwellers of the time to highlight the autonomy and individuality of the different quarters and to reveal the hierarchies that governed them. In this effort, the council of the whole city played – at best – a secondary role. Nor is Braunschweig an exception. Richard Trexler, analysing the feast of Saint John in Florence, noted the commune's struggles to gain a prominent position in the rituals, which they were traditionally dominated by private brotherhoods and religious orders.⁵² That said, it is obvious that the whole population of Braunschweig was on the streets to celebrate on these occasions. Walking around the city walls together and listening to the reading of the four gospels in each corner of the city surely could foster a degree of shared identity. What conclusion is to be drawn from this mixed and somewhat puzzling picture? To state my first thesis: religious processions are not designed to, and do not *per se*, create a sense of urban unity. They cannot be seen as a kind of didactic tool to establish togetherness. Rather, the importance of these performative acts is to be seen in their power to *combine* two potentially opposing phenomena typically found in European cities: on the one hand, to display the autonomy of groups and quarters and, on the other, to foster a certain cohesion among these groups.

THE PERFORMANCE OF SECULAR RITUALS

The capacity of ritualized acts to communicate and create *both* the autonomy of the groups that take part in them while *at the same time* fostering togetherness may be attributed to the power of performance as such. But if performance itself is so powerful, what is the role of religion, specifically the Christianity that Weber so influentially considered to be the crucial force for the creation of urban unity? Is it irrelevant that relics were carried in procession, and that a saint was

⁵⁰ The relevant passage in the *Ordinarius* points to the procession held on the feast of Corpus Christi, which is described in detail: § CXXJ, p. 177. See Ehbrecht, 'Die Stadt und ihre Heiligen', p. 231.

⁵¹ 'Darto so hefft de rad ghelouet to offerende alle iuar viff erlike waslechte to sunte Ylien vor deme hillighedome sunte Auctoris to bernende in den hoghesten festen, de me dar in eyner processien alle iar bringhen schal, also vt iowelkem wykbelde eyn lecht', *Ordinarius*, § CXXVIJ, p. 179.

⁵² '[W]hen government did appear in the St John's events, it did so as one of many other groups offering to the patron', Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980), p. 257.

being honoured? We all know that, during the middle ages, performances were not only part of religious communication but occurred in many other contexts. It may thus be useful to compare religious rituals with other performative acts that can be found in legal and administrative contexts in medieval Braunschweig. Do these secular rituals function like religious ones, to promote the mixture of autonomy and cohesion noted above?

Medieval legal proceedings are firmly acknowledged to be highly ritualized acts, closely interwoven with the fabric of both political and religious life, but in their purpose and content different in many ways from religious rituals.⁵³ The so-called *echte Ding* (day of judgment) performed twice a year in Braunschweig took place two weeks after Easter in the spring and the week after Michaelmas in the autumn. The Braunschweig city council had to announce it, but it was the task of each of the five different councils of the city's quarters to execute justice within those five quarters, respectively. And they did so not on a single day, but on five different days in a row: Monday was judgment day in the Altstadt, Tuesday in the Hagen, Wednesday in the Neustadt, and so forth. It was the responsibility of the five councils to call all inhabitants of the quarter on that given day to the square in front of the quarter's town hall. Furthermore, these councils were responsible for summoning (*hegen*)⁵⁴ each court's jury.⁵⁵

When it came to taxation, quite similar procedures were followed. Taxes had to be paid during the week after Saint Martin's day (*Martinstag*, November 11th), starting with the Altstadt on Monday, the Hagen on Tuesday, and so on.⁵⁶ For our purposes, the important event in that context occurs four weeks before taxation, when all councils and all citizens had to swear an oath confirming the information they gave with respect to their property and possessions. The protocols determining how the oaths were taken were carefully articulated: two councillors from the Hagen were to hear the oaths of the Altstadt council, and then two councillors of the Altstadt were delegated to hear the oaths of the councillors from the other quarters. Then the councillors of the different quarters received the oaths of their fellow citizens, and it will come as no

⁵³ See, for instance, Richard van Dülmen, *Theater des Schreckens: Gerichtspraxis und Strafrituale in der frühen Neuzeit*, 4th edn (München, 1995); Franz-Josef Arlinghaus, 'Sprachformeln und Fachsprache. Zur kommunikativen Funktion verschiedener Sprachmodi im vormodernen Gerichtswesen', in Reiner Schulze (ed.), *Symbolische Kommunikation vor Gericht in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2006), pp. 57–72.

⁵⁴ For the *Hegung* as central to the establishment of a medieval court, see Kurt Burchardt, *Die Hegung der deutschen Gerichte im Mittelalter: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1893).

⁵⁵ 'Van dem echten dinghe to kundeghende', *Ordinarius*, § CXIX, p. 176; and 'Van dem echten dinghe noch eyns to kundeghende', § CXXXJ, p. 179.

⁵⁶ 'Wan de schotelyd is wu me dat denne vme dat schotent holden schal', *Ordinarius*, § CXXXVII, p. 181.

surprise that the Altstadt citizens took their oaths on Monday, the Hagen on Tuesday and so on.⁵⁷

There is no need to elaborate on the fact that rituals performed while doing justice or levying taxes have the potential – and are often designed – to display the identity of a community. And it is clear that in these acts, as during religious processions, themes of both diversity and unity can be seen to play important roles. But there are striking differences. In contrast to the religious performances analyzed above, we see that it is not the whole population that gathers to take part in a single act, but rather five different segments of the population that perform five rituals on five different days. Also in contrast to the processions, it was not the space of the whole city that was involved, but rather that of each separate district, centred on its town hall. Hence, rituals performed in the context of urban administration and justice emphasized the autonomy of the different quarters, rather than the unity of the whole city.

Why these differences between civic and religious acts? Is it Weber's Christianity, the power of religion, that is placing the greater emphasis on unity? This is hard to believe, because swearing an oath is also a sacred act and, as we have seen, it was this ritual that underlined the autonomy of the quarters, rather than their unity. At this point, it seems useful to differentiate between the religious aspects of a ritual and religion as the central subject of a discourse. This leads me to my second thesis: when examining the structure of a given communication, it is important to notice whether religion as such, or political administration as such, is at the centre of a performative act. In Braunschweig, politics and administration were directly linked to the quarters' autonomy within the city as a whole. When 'religion' was at the centre of the performance, the constitutional structure of the city and its constituent parts did not disappear, but they did recede into the background. This gave some leeway, or permission, to the whole population to participate in a single performative act – something that was actually avoided in other performative contexts.

A very interesting exception to this rule, or so it seems at first, is provided by the sessions of a special court convened in Braunschweig in the fourteenth

⁵⁷ An exception in this case: residents of Altewiek and Sack both swear their oaths on Thursday, but not together (of course): 'Wan me to dem schote sweret: ... Des morghens schal me vorboden vp dat radhus rad vnde radsworen des wykbelde [= quarter] dar me sweren schal, vnde senden io twene vt orem rade, de schullen dar by wesen wen deienne sweren vp dem wykbelde de dar in deme rade syn. Vnde we dar kumpt van des rades weggen imme Hagen, de schal den radheren in der Oldenstad den eyd stauen, vnde we dar kumpt van des rades weggen in der Oldenstad in de anderen vier wykbelde de schal den radheren in de wykbelde den eyd stauen. ... Wen de radheren vp eynem wykbelde aldus ghesworen hebben, des suluen morghens schal de rad des wykbelde dede ghesworen hefft den suluen eyd vort stauen alse se vor ghesworen hedden. Darna des suluen daghes na middaghe schal de rad des wykbelde vorboden de liude de schotbar syn in dem wykbelde vp dat radhus [of the given quarter] myt der klokken vnde myt boden, vnde staven one den suluen eyd', *Ordinarius*, § CXXXIIJ, p. 180. On the taxation system of Braunschweig, see Dürre, *Braunschweig*, pp. 326f.

century, the *Femegericht* (*Vehmgericht*, or secret tribunal) so precisely analyzed by Frank Rexroth.⁵⁸ To prepare for the court session, the city council met the night before in the graveyard. The next day, all city-dwellers were called together and led outside the city walls. The proceedings took place there, with the citizens sitting on the earthworks while the *Femegraf*, about whom the sources give no details, acted as judge at the foot of the wall. All kinds of conflicts and crimes, most of them petty, were brought before this court. In the evening, when the proceedings were finished, everyone re-entered the city. The conduct of this court indicates that it was more of a ritual intended to cleanse the city from sins and sinners, in order to re-establish internal peace, than a 'real' legal proceeding.⁵⁹ As such, it may have contributed directly to fostering cohesion within the city.⁶⁰

The reason for mentioning this phenomenon here is that it seems to challenge my second thesis, since during this apparently judicial performance, as during religious processions, the autonomy of the quarters seems to be of lesser importance. Yet it is important to note that this *Femegericht* was held only very irregularly between 1312 and 1337, with a short revival between 1345 and 1362.⁶¹ So despite the fact that, in the light of modern theories, it seems an almost ideal tool for producing unity – a population of sinners moves out of the city in the morning and, after a ritualized cleansing, re-enters purified through the city gates – in the eyes of contemporaries, and in competition with other religious and secular rituals, it proved to be unsuitable and not strong enough to establish itself as long-held tradition.

CONCLUSION

Processions, we can conclude, do not foster unity simply because everybody is participating in a festive show that results at the end of the day in a ready-made urban identity. The reality is far more complex. First, performative acts

⁵⁸ Frank Rexroth, 'Die Stadt Braunschweig und ihr Femegericht im 14. Jahrhundert', in Klaus Schreiner and Gabriela Signori (eds), *Bilder, Texte, Rituale. Wirklichkeitsbezug und Wirklichkeitskonstruktion politisch-rechtlicher Kommunikationsmedien in Stadt- und Adelsgesellschaften des späten Mittelalters* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 87–109. This *Femegericht* of Braunschweig is similar in name only to the imperial law courts that became famous in Germany during the fifteenth century.

⁵⁹ 'So kann man das Geschehen ohne weiteres als Inversionsritual begreifen, das einen erwünschten, in der Vergangenheit liegenden Zustand wiederherstellt. Dem Dreierschritt: gemeinsamer Auszug aus der Stadt–Gericht–Wiedereintritt in die Stadt entspricht die Beseitigung derjenigen innerstädtischen Konflikte, die durch Diebstahlsdelikte schwelen': Rexroth, 'Die Stadt Braunschweig', p. 94.

⁶⁰ Rexroth rightly discusses the operations of the *Femegericht* within the perspective of a Braunschweig's five subdivisions: *Ibid.*, pp. 87ff.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 94ff.

make it possible to communicate and create two conflicting elements: diversity and unity. Second, when religion is the central subject of ritual discourse, the city's constitutional structure is allowed to recede into the background. The combination of these two things opens up a certain space that, more so than in other performative acts, allows for cohesion and 'togetherness'. But although it is clear that processions could foster a sense of unity, it remains, in my opinion, very doubtful whether this temporary unity was enough to prevent dissociation and separation. It seems necessary to re-formulate the question of what essentially contributes to urban unity, something that cannot be done here.⁶²

For now, let us return to the questions raised at the beginning of this article. The unity of the medieval city can be seen as a central tenet of urban history. It contributes to the alleged differences between the structure of the occidental city and urban centres in other parts of the world. Weber attributed this to the *content* of a Christian religion that favoured community over family. According to this interpretation, the otherness of occidental citizenship is therefore rooted in Christianity. In contrast, the evidence considered in this essay indicates that it was not the content of the Christian religion but the specific *forms* of religious communication implemented during the high and late middle ages that contributed to the unity of the medieval city. If Christianity itself is not decisive, then the question is: can analogous rituals performed in other urban contexts be found to function in similar ways – and if not, why?

PART 4

Agency and Authority

⁶² See the interesting arguments of Schlögl, 'Vergesellschaftung', pp. 200ff.; and Philip Hoffmann, 'Soziale Differenzierung und politische Integration. Zum Strukturwandel der politischen Ordnung in Lübeck (15.-17. Jahrhundert)', in Patrick Schmidt and Horst Carl (eds), *Stadtgemeinde und Ständegesellschaft. Formen der Integration und Distinktion in der frühneuzeitlichen Stadt* (Berlin, 2007), pp. 166-97.