

# Sacred Cities: Religion, Violence and the Origin of the Italian City-Republics

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The eleventh century was a period of rapid transformation in Europe. Religious reform, the legal revolution, rapid population growth, increasing trade and urban development are only some of the century's features. The eleventh century also provides our earliest evidence for the crowds and citizens that form the "communes" of the emerging Italian republics. This communal revolution has traditionally been described as conflicting with ecclesiastic authorities.

In *A Sacred City: Consecrating Churches and Reforming Society in Eleventh-Century Italy* (Manchester University Press, 2010), I argue that the evidence suggests a more fluid dynamic. The earliest political activities of these, often violent, citizens and crowds formed around religious rites and reform efforts, and were often supported by the popes against the wishes of local religious and lay authorities.

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