

# Discord & quarrel between lay judges, councilmen and guild masters in Magdeburg

**I**n dem .xj. .cc. .xxij. iar volhof sit twy dracht vnd krich in duffer stad vnd wart grt wandelinge vnd twy dracht beghan vor vnser vrowen daghe lechtmissen do makeden disse meyster hang van honstern der wnt synder meyster Tyl wessen der forsinwerchten meyster vnd wesse vnd bete konig der kremer meyster vnd ch de hert westual de makede emen brief vnd nye gesette dat satten se vnder anderen gesetten in dit sturte we in der forsten rade wer eader ore tleydingh neme eader or winner were den stholde men vorwysen uth dem ra de vnd vorwysen driuen So se den brief gesat had den do gingh hang van honstern Tyl wesse lertze

bont vnd volter van Eland stede type des hylgen gastes hoff to heming ians vnd to Conen syme broder vnd wy seden onden brief vnd spraken wy meyne tw noch jurven broder nicht hin me de wente wy wolden tw halen to Colne men dat wy tw vorwysen wolden uth dem rade Dar na to hant des eersten donredages in der vasten do men de ratmanne los do worden gekorn hang honstern Conen ianes vnd bete koning do to handes vorwyseden se Conen ianes uth dem rade vme olde hates willen als he des nu vorstult hadde Dar na vor vnser heu hymeluart Ganden de ratmanne na den sithpen vnd beden se dat se on wolden laten de kamern de der sithpen do was se antworden dat se on de gherne wolde late vnd hen do wolden de ratmanne der kamern nicht Dar na des sponuendes vor siue peters vnd parwels dage sunden de ratmanne vnd der jninge mester na alle sithpen vnd spraken to on sy sithpen sy schullen vns rimen de kamern wil ke wy hebben do antworde de sithpen sy heren de Cam is vuse de wernisse wy der stad vnd we hebben de ghe burwet mit vnser penninge des bidde wy dat gy vns de

laten wente se is vuse mit rechte des rypen de rath manne vnd mester up vnd spraken den sithpen ser vnd besithpedene wort to vnd spraken se wolden de boke ok hebben dar de giste jme stunden men sitholde de to sithoren vnd to braken So antworden de sithpen gar lustherdeliken dat se dar anders vnd beth up dechte Eft eo der stad mitte were Dar na petri vnd pauli was de grote braut vnd sinte Jehans kerke vnde thoren vnd de loue vny branden Dar na in siue Calutus auende ghingen to samene de ratmanne Cone van wellen der stad mester hang van honstern der wantshyder mester Tyl van dodelege der kren mester Tyl wessen der for sinwerchten mester Henning wale kenneke tot ves der lnyevant synder heming haurer der sithwerchten mester vnd westual vnd sunden naden sithpen ge meynliken vnd beden de dat se des anderen dages na missen vnyvobodet wolden to on komen se ant werden dat se dem gernie se don wolden do sprak Cone van wellen der stad mester sy heren welt furver moy ne hin nicht kinnt vnyvobodet de sthal hin vnyvobodet geer moer sin do sprake de

in the year 1293

sithpen wor to is tw der wort not sy mochten vns dat wol besithpedeliker serst hebben do ryp up Tyl van goddege der kremer meyster vnd sprak to den sithpen de dor staden open se mochten ghan war se wolden se mochten der sithpen wol enberen do ant worden de sithpen dat mach wol sin weret wy nicht so we rent ander lude Des anden dages quemen de sithpen up de louen to rechtster tyd als on besithpeden was do hadden de ratmanne vnde mester alle dor besat dat dar nymant uth mochte vnd quemen mit wapender hant to den sithpen do sprak hang van honstern van aller meyster wegen sy heren sy sithpen we spreke tw to van der meynheyt we ghen dat gy mit vorrade vnd mit vorfate vnd nyt valsthen bizen de gy seden dat de keyser hadde her sant vme synen tynd den gy hebben up genomen em sthot vnd hebben dat der stad ent ferret dat wille wy va ny wedder hebben Eft sprake wy tw to dat gy mit jurve fronden hebben te samene sworen vnd maket eyne vor palmghe wedder de stad do gy weldich waren als dat nemannt mochte meyster noch ratman noch sithpe werden noch to der louen komen sinder den gy dar

to hebben willen Eft gene wy tw schult dat gy in der dinen tyd koffien ganze sithpe mit korne up twe hus vnd lesen dat wedder uth vorn an orlof des kamers van der louen Eft se hebbe gy kofft lodich siluer up der stad schaden to jurve frunde vnd togthen dar mede in flanderen vnd strassiden jurven vromen Eft se hebbe gy by teyn iaren nym schot geyenken Ehenie gy dat se neme gy dat nyt gewalt wedder De sithpen wolden sit vor antworden vnd boden sit to rechte do rypen de mester up vnd wolden se to nymen antworde komen laten vnd spraken se sitholde nimmer van on kome se enwedder dedent der stad vnd noch meer Des quemen de rath manne dar twisthen vnd vnderveughen de mester vnd de sithpen vnd vnder degedingden dat guchken also dat de mester grbt vnd deryne vnd ratman vnd sithpen wolden wesen eyner lude vnd eyndrechtich vnd alle siue scholden neder sagthen vnd vorgett wesen Dat sworen se mit enander up de hylghen vnd braken dar van stund wente de mester vnd ratman spraken den sithpen the se wolden de boke hebben dar de giste jme stunde schreue

Des antworden de sithpen dat wer wedder recht dat se de boke volleyten dar se se sworn hadden do sprake de ratmanne vnd mester sy heren sy sint hin ghevanghen sy schulle van hin nicht komen we enhebbe de boke do antworden de sithpen sy heren wy louen des nicht dat gy walt an vns beghan vnd breken de eyt den gy vns gestwor hebbe vnd wy tw wedder do ryp wesse kefelmgh waren de boke in gunt de helle gy moten se noch in den he vor bringhen Des wold se de slot to saen do de sithpen sen for vnsithpeden hevt dat eo anders nicht wold se sin se sloten up vnd lesen se to den boken vnd de sithpen behelden de slot tele do loueden on de rath manne vnd mester on twi we dat se neme walt wold beghan an den boken se en wolden ok nicht don se en deden dat nyt ginst eod mit rechte dar mede sithpe deden se sit tw do tot tyt Dar na des donredages na sinte katherinen daghe besonden de rathmanne vnd mester de sithpen vnd vathvngeden se efft me rht mochte de giste de me geue vnder konniges bane in des ginen vnd sithulrete gezeche rht mochte geue in dem bur dinghe Des

antworden de sithpen se wolden dar gherne up dencken wente an den sommanent do quemen se wedder vnd ant worden alsus se hedde sit bevinget by wyren lereu vnd papen eo mochte mit rechte nicht sin vnd wer dat se vulbor dar to geuen se worden rechttes los vnd or ghit wunde den heren ledich vnd los vnd se vellen in des rytes achte do sprake hang honstern vnd wesse kefelmgh eo moege sin eader nicht do sthal doch sin de sithpen spraken dat is walt vnd nicht recht Dar na in siue katherinen dage Genden de ratmanne na den stoffelen to den boken do de sithpen on de nicht sander se nimen se mit ge walt dar do de loue was wedder burwet vnd de rath manne dar wedder up toge de ghingen de sithpen vnd beden siuiliken dat me on ore kamere wold wedder laten werden de se on mit willen hedde galeghen Des bekanden de ratmanne . Auer den sithpen konde doch nym antwerde wedder wde Eft se on de kamere wolden wedder laten eader nicht Dit was de kamere dat mi der mester kamere is by den derydorie

In the year **1293**, discord and quarrel arose in this city. Great changes and discord began before Candlemas (February 2nd). Then, these masters—Hans von Honstein, the tailor; Til Weske, the furrier; Weske and Bete König, the merchants; and one named Westphal—drafted a document and new laws. Among other things, they stipulated that anyone who sat on the Prince's Council, wore their clothing, or profited from it (beneficiary) should be expelled from the council. After drafting the document, Hans von Honstein, Til Weske, Lenze Bonik, and Wolter von Schlanstedt went to the Holy Spirit Court to Henning Jans and Cones' brother, pointed to the document, and declared, We do not mean your brother with this, even if we hate him in Colne (?), if we wish to expel him from the council.

On the first Thursday of Lent, when the councilors were elected, Hans Honstein, Cone Janes, and Beteke König were chosen. They expelled Cone Janes from the council because of old grievances he had instigated. Before Ascension Day, the councilors sent word to the lay judges, requesting that they be given the lay judge's chamber. The lay judges replied that they would gladly lend it to them. The councilors refused.

On the Saturday before the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the councilmen and guild masters sent for all the lay judges and told them they should vacate the chamber they wanted. The lay judges replied, Gentlemen, the chamber belongs to us, and we built it with our own money. We beg you to leave it, for it is ours by right. Then the councilmen and masters called out and spoke very immodestly to the lay judges, demanding the ledgers in which the dissolutions (transfers of ownership) were recorded. They demanded they be torn up and broken. The lay judges replied very modestly that this was not the case and asked them to consider that these ledgers would benefit the city.

On the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (June 29th), a great fire broke out, destroying St. John's Church, the town gates, and the town hall. That evening, on the Feast of Saint Calixtus (October 13th), the councilmen, including Mayor Cone von Wellen, master tailor Hans von Honstein, master grocer Till von Dodeleben, master furrier Till Weske, Hennig Wale, linen cutter Reineke Rolves, master shoemaker Henning Hauwer, and Westphal, gathered. Together, they sent for the lay judges, requesting that they appear unannounced the following day. The lay judges replied that they would gladly comply. Then Mayor Cone von Wellen declared that those gentlemen who failed to appear would no longer be citizens of the town.

Then the lay judges spoke, asking what value you placed on their words; surely you would have preferred us to explain it more clearly. At this, the shopkeeper Til von Dodendorf called out to the lay judges, saying that the doors were open and they could leave whenever they wished. They could do without the lay judges. The lay judges replied, That may well be, but if it weren't for us, it would be someone else.

The next day, the lay judges arrived at the town hall at the appointed time. The councilmen and master craftsmen had blocked all the doors to prevent anyone from leaving and approached the lay judges armed. Hans von Honstein then spoke on behalf of all the master craftsmen: Gentlemen lay judges, we speak to you in the name of the community, accusing you of treason, intent, and false claims that the Emperor had sent for his dues, which is why you levied a tax and withheld the city's money. We demand this money back from you. We also accuse you of conspiring with your friends and forming an alliance against the city. What you truly want is to prevent anyone from becoming mayor, councilman, or lay judge, or even from entering the town hall, except for those you choose. We also accuse you of purchasing entire shiploads of grain during the time of famine, bringing them to your house, and then having them shipped out again from the town hall without the permission of the chamberlain. You have also bought vast sums of silver, to the detriment of the city, for your friends, and used it to conduct business in Flanders for your own benefit. Finally, you haven't paid a single tax for ten years, and when you do pay it, you take it back by force.

The lay judges wanted to answer for their actions and offer their due. Then the masters called out and refused to let them answer, declaring they would never escape, neither within the city nor beyond. The councilmen intervened and brokered an amicable agreement between the masters and lay judges, stipulating that the masters, both great and small, and the councilmen and lay judges would be of one mind and united, and that all the matter should be settled and forgotten. They swore to this by the saints and would break it immediately if the masters and councilmen demanded the books in which the succession of fiefs was recorded. The lay judges replied that presenting the books would be against the law they had sworn to. Then the councilmen and masters said, Gentlemen, you are imprisoned here; you shall not leave unless we have the books. The lay judges replied, Gentlemen, we do not like it when you commit violence against us and break the oath we swore. Then Wesseke Keseling cried out, Even if the books were in the depths of hell, you must bring them forth today! They then tried to break the locks. Seeing their immodesty, and that there was no other way, the lay judges unlocked the doors and allowed them access to the books. The lay judges kept the keys. The councilmen and masters promised them faithfully that they would not commit any violence against the books. They also pledged to do nothing unlawful. And with that, they parted ways.

On the Thursday after St. Catherine's Day (November 25th), the councilmen and masters sent word to the lay judges, asking for their advice on whether the succession to the fief, which had been placed under the royal ban and the jurisdiction of the count and mayor, should not be decided in the Burding (citizens' assembly/court). The lay judges requested time to consider the matter until Saturday. They then returned and replied that they had consulted legal experts, laymen, and priests, and that it might not be right. If they gave their permission, they would be left without rights, their property would be confiscated from the lords, and they would fall under the imperial ban. Hans Honstein and Wesseke Keseling then spoke, saying that whether it was right or wrong, it should be. The lay judges replied that this was violence, not justice. After St. Catherine's Day (November 25th), the councilmen sent for the keys to the ledgers. When the lay judges refused to send them, they took them by force.

After the town hall had been rebuilt and the councilmen had moved back in, the lay judges went and politely requested that their chamber be returned to them, which they had willingly lent them. The councilmen acknowledged this, but no answer could

be given to the lay judges as to whether or not they would return the chamber. This was the chamber that is now the master chamber at the clothing depot.

Note:  
Among the lay judges of that time was [Heine von Schartow](#) (1215-1294), who was from 1261 a lay judge at the Imperial Court of Lay Judges in Magdeburg.

In **1294**, the citizens purchased the office of burgrave from the Duke of Saxony for nine hundred marks and the office of mayor from the Lords of Egersdorf for five hundred marks, entrusting these to the church, stipulating that the office of burgrave should not be granted against the will of the citizens, and the office of mayor should be bestowed by the bishop upon a citizen of their choosing. (...) The mayorship was first held by a man named Til Weßke, who was a master furrier in the same year.

**I**n dem m. c. x. iij. iare  
des anderen midwetes  
in der vasten sanden  
de rathmanne na de scthepe  
vnd spreken wy sint to rade  
worden mit vnser wittigesse  
borgeren dat wy dat sctht  
alsus hebben wente vele  
lude komen to vns vnd wet-  
ten nicht war se rechts war-  
den schullen dar vme so  
schulle gy richten ou wille  
ouer schulde ouer not vnd  
ouer heymesken vnd ouer  
laghe vnd dat eygen schal  
me vor vns gheuen In dem  
burdinghe dar ouer wyl  
wy richten vnd dat entsey-  
den vnd herwede vnd ra-  
delene de scthepen antwor-  
den wat se don wolde dat  
mochten se nicht wedderstan  
ed wer aner wedder des key-  
seris recht vnd wedder dat  
recht dar de stad mede be-  
gripen were vnd besatt des  
koren de rathmanne nye  
scthepen vnd satten de in de

band wente der scthepe was  
eyn deyl verformen des be-  
den de olden scthepen dat  
se des nicht deden wedder  
de stad vnd wedder dat gäze  
lant wente ed wer vntit  
ed en mochte nyman scthepe  
kefen wen de scthepen vnd  
beden de rathmanne dat se  
onreden wen se wolde hebbe  
se wolden se gherne hebbe  
kefen se wolden anders  
nemannde kefen vpe dat  
de stad vnd dat land bleue  
in rechts dat halp al nicht  
dar na in sinte Johanes  
daghe des lichten also bis-  
schop Erke vnd de borchghe-  
ne hyr omghen wolden  
do mosten de scthepen afl-  
ten de de rathmanne gesat  
hadden vnd de olde scthepe  
koren to sit nye scthepen der  
suluen eyn deyl de de rath-  
manne satt hadden vnd ey-  
deyl ander dat men den  
scthepen de bote nam des  
weren se eyn deyl sake wesen  
dar an dat men alle lude  
nicht lyke reid de giste to  
stende vnd to losende als  
ik hebbe horen seggen vnd  
dat se dar to vele vor neme  
dar vme wart do ghesatt  
dat men nicht mer scholde  
gheuen to losende vemin  
vor de giste xijij penninge  
also holt men dat noch

In the year **1295**, on Wednesday of Lent (March 2nd), the councilmen sent word to the aldermen, declaring, We have consulted with our most important citizens and decided that we have the right to do so when many people come to us, unsure of their rights before the mayor (judge). Therefore, you shall judge cases of wounds, debts, violence (self-defense), trespassing, and highway robbery. Property rights, on the other hand, shall be decided before us in the BurDing (court assembly). We shall judge and decide on these matters, as well as on military wagers and the regulations governing peasant inheritance and marriage.

The lay judges replied that they could not resist what they intended to do. However, it would be against the emperor's law and against the law that had been granted to the city and that it possessed. The councilmen elected new lay judges and installed them on the bench, as some of the lay judges had died. The old lay judges begged them not to do this for the sake of the city and the entire country, for it would be unjust, since no one may elect lay judges but themselves. They asked the councilmen to tell them whom they wanted, and then they would gladly elect them and would not elect anyone else, so that the city and the country would remain within the bounds of justice.

None of this helped. When Archbishop Erich and the Burgrave wanted to hold court on St. John's Day (June 24), the lay judges appointed by the councilmen had to step down, and the old lay judges elected new ones, some appointed by the councilmen and some others\*. The fact that the books were taken away from the lay judges was partly due to their own complicity. This stemmed from the fact that not everyone was equally permitted to search for and clear inheritances, as I have heard it said, and that they had charged too much for it. It was then decreed that no more than 14 pfennigs should be paid for clearing an inheritance, and this rule is still in effect.

\* Among the newly elected lay judges was the knight [Heinrich Heynemann von Schartow](#) (c. 1240-1304). He served as a lay judge from 1295 to 1304.

Magdeburger Schöppenchronik (Handwriting): Ms. boruss. fol. 172, pp. 215-216

Translation from Middle Low German by Dr. H. Haase, 2026

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