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Agency and Ancestry: Women, Memory and Ethnic Identity in the German and Norman Realms (c.900–1250)

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For medieval authors ethnicity was a significant element in memorialising and maintaining group identities. While this discourse was predominantly male-centric, often confining female members of an ethnic group to gendered stereotypes, female heritage was of more consequence to medieval authors than has been recognised. Female ancestors are often noticeably present in texts that memorialise family history and noblewomen had significant roles in commemorating and maintaining ethnic heritage as rulers, family members and elite patrons in their own right. This paper represents the culmination of a research project that explores the ethno-gendered identities of elite women in the Anglo-Norman/Angevin and Holy Roman Empires as examples of complex political and familial networks of the central Middle Ages that intersected with other ruling families throughout Europe. In order to outline the importance of women's roles in constructing medieval identities, it investigates contemporary representations of female ancestors and expressions of their identities in familial histories; expressions of identity concerning, as well as by, foreign brides and their efforts to integrate into a new ethno-political group; and personal expressions of identity by elite women as rulers and patrons of historical texts and religious institutions.

Thomas Chadwick, Dr., is a Lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Exeter where he also completed his PhD in 2018, which is to be published in Brepols Publisher's Medieval Identities: Socio-Cultural Spaces series under the title *Reconsidering Norman Identities: Ethnicity, Masculinity and the Writing of History*. From 2020–2023 he was a guest researcher at the Institut für Mittelalterforschung, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna working on the project *Agency and Ancestry: Women, Memory and Ethnic Identity in the German and Norman Realms, c.900–1250*, funded by The Leverhulme Trust's Study Abroad Studentship.

Moderation: Sandra Wabnitz