

François Bougard, Le royaume d'Italie de Louis II à Otton I^{er} (840–968). Histoire politique, Leipzig (Eudora-Verlag) 2022, 376 p., 11 ill. (Italia Regia, 5), ISBN 3-938533-80-3, EUR 99,00.

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The history of the *regnum Italiae* in the era of the Carolingian and Ottonian Empires is fascinating but sometimes also bewildering. That is especially the case in the »in-between« period on which François Bougard's masterful and extremely welcome new book primarily focuses. Until quite recently the history of these decades was relatively neglected, and even (thanks not least to the lurid distortions of the fullest contemporary account by Liudprand of Cremona) held up as a high-water mark of pre-modern political disorder. Modern attempts to contextualize the sources and embed them in an organized scholarly narrative are usually said to have begun with Gina Fasoli's still-useful »I Re d'Italia 888–962«, published in 1949. Fasoli's work was animated by an interest in the period as one of »national« self-rule sandwiched between centuries of Frankish and Saxon domination, but academic interest over the last couple of decades responds to a different set of agendas. New interpretations of the intellectual and documentary cultures of the period, and of the place of Italy in the Frankish and Mediterranean worlds, have transformed the way we interpret the rich but difficult sources surviving from the late 9th and 10th centuries. The present book brings together and builds on this recent work (much of it written or inspired by Bougard himself). Neatly sidestepping traditional debates over »national kingship« and periodization, Bougard instead presents a closely argued account organized chronologically around key subdivisions of the era.

The first chapter offers a detailed analysis of the reign of Louis II, which Bougard persuasively argues can be understood as setting the framework for everything that came after. What came after was generally characterized by conflicting claims to the kingship coming from various native and transalpine families, sometimes even extending to competition between more than one king at a time. Somehow, Bougard tames this complexity into a clear and coherent narrative built especially on careful analysis of the numerous surviving charters.

Chapter 2 deals with the playing-out of the complex politics around the succession to Louis II, providing the most comprehensive analysis yet of the maneuverings of the various East and West Frankish protagonists and their interactions with parties south of the Alps. The complicated story of the two »Widonid« kings and their rivalries with Berengar of Friuli and Arnulf of Carinthia in the 890s is the subject of the next chapter. Berengar's own reign is then discussed in detail in chapter 4. Chapter 5 is concerned with the »Provencal moment«, in other words the reign of Hugh



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of Arles, while chapter 6 takes readers through the tribulations of Berengar II to the definitive arrival of the Ottonians in 962.

This broadly chronological organization contains some state-of-the-art treatments of major topics in the political history of the period based on new readings of the sources, including the succession to Louis II, the attitude of Kings Guy and Lambert to the Carolingian past, tensions between Pavia and Rome, and the later reign of Berengar I. The chapters often broaden out at opportune moments into highly instructive thematic discussions of topics such as royal property and political geography. On the latter, Bougard stresses the variety of contemporary perspectives and the porousness of Italian political frontiers in all directions.

One theme which emerges particularly clearly is the significance of queens and aristocratic women, and there are substantial discussions here relating to Engelberga, Ageltrude, Bertha of Tuscany, Adelheid and others, rightly integrated into the main discussion. The final chapter pulls together some of the running themes to draw attention to change over time – here, for example, developments in the royal itinerary, legal culture and ideas of royal legitimacy are reframed in comparative perspective. The book is enhanced by the inclusion of numerous maps and images of seals and charters. The appendices include an 18-page German summary, comprehensive lists of office holders, counts and bishops, and several genealogies. The book will serve as a new starting point and framework for all future research on the political history of this period. Only Bougard could have written this book, and all historians of Frankish Europe will be grateful that he did.

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

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