

REVIEWS

Stefan Weinfurter, *The Salian Century: Main Currents in an Age of Transition*, trans. Barbara M. Bowlus, foreword by Charles R. Bowlus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1999) ix + 233 pp. Originally published as *Herrschaft und Reich der Salier: Grundlinien einer Umbruchzeit* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag 1992).

When it appeared in 1992, Stefan Weinfurter's *Herrschaft und Reich der Salier* was quickly recognized as one of the most insightful and eminently readable studies of the German monarchy to appear in many years. Barbara Bowlus's new English translation makes this book, and the important historiographical arguments which underlie it, accessible for the first time to students and researchers who have had to rely upon translations of long-superseded work if they wished to read original German scholarship.³⁴ Bowlus captures Weinfurter's pragmatic German prose well, and the book remains concise and well presented, including the maps and illustrations that made the original particularly useful. Professor Charles Bowlus, a historian of early medieval Germany, provides an introductory essay that places *The Salian Century* in its historiographical context and explains the ways in which it challenges a number of older, but still prevalent, theories about the place of the Salian dynasty in German medieval history.³⁵

On a basic level, *The Salian Century* is construed as a diachronic

³⁴Until now, the most widely-known monograph on the Salian period by a German scholar in English was Ralph Bennett's translation of Karl Hampe's venerable 1909 classic *Germany under the Salian and Hohenstaufen Emperors* (Oxford 1973). Horst Fuhrmann's more recent *Germany in the High Middle Ages 1050–1200*, trans. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge 1986) and Alfred Haverkamp's, *Medieval Germany 1056–1273*, trans. H. Braun and R. Mortimer (Oxford, 1988) remain two well-received standards, but do not deviate substantially from the essential narrative of politico-religious history laid down by Hampe. A good deal of cutting-edge work on medieval Germany is being done by British scholars like Benjamin Arnold and Timothy Reuter—both protégés of the late German-born Oxford don Karl Leyser. See especially Reuter's *Germany in the Early Middle Ages* (New York 1991) and Arnold's *Medieval Germany 500–1300. A Political Interpretation* (Toronto 1997). A companion volume on the High Middle Ages by Reuter is forthcoming. Recent synthesizing surveys of the German Middle Ages by native scholars conversant with contemporary methods and historiographical debates like Hagen Keller, Friedrich Prinz, and Johannes Fried remain untranslated, making the appearance of Weinfurter's work here all the more significant.

³⁵German historiography's tortuous relationship with its (especially medieval) imperial past is discussed with much insight by Timothy Reuter, "The Medieval German *Sonderweg*? The Empire and its Rulers in the High Middle Ages" in *Kings and Kingship in*

survey of the reigns of the four emperors of the Salian dynasty (Conrad II, Henry III, Henry IV, and Henry V) between 1025 and 1125. But it is not the sort of annalistic overview of the period to which we are accustomed in traditional German scholarship.³⁶ It is an intellectual history of the German empire which uses the creation and evolution of the symbols and techniques of kingship as a framing device. Though never explicit, this mode of inquiry indubitably channels work of scholars like Percy Ernst Schramm and Ernst Kantorowicz.³⁷ This recent turn—or return as it were—in the critical methods of German *Verfassungsgeschichte* is evident elsewhere in the newer biographical studies of individual German monarchs which deal intensively with questions of personality, self-consciousness, and the articulation of royal ideology by the kings themselves and contemporary writers.³⁸ Interestingly, a new study of the reign of Henry IV by the Irish historian Ian S. Robinson is remarkable for its erudition as well as the degree to which it remains, both in structure and style, firmly grounded in the older tradition of German political history.³⁹

Medieval Europe, ed. Anne J. Duggan (London 1993) 179–212.

³⁶In addition to Hampe, cited above, the standard German work on the Salian period has been Egon Boshof, *Die Salier* (Cologne 1986), designed more as a convenient school text than a substantial reassessment of the evidence. A more analytical survey from a wide range of contemporary interdisciplinary perspectives is represented by the three-volume collection of essays edited by Stephan Weinfurter in 1991 in commemoration of the 1000-year anniversary of the birth of Conrad II, *Die Salier und das Reich*, 3 vols. (Sigmaringen 1992). The newer literature is discussed in the review article by Herwig Wolfram, with Eva Stain, “Die Salier. Bemerkungen zu achtzehn Bänden,” *Deutsches Archiv* 49.1 (1993) 171–188. Still indispensable is the classic survey by Gerold Meyer von Knonau, *Jahrbücher des deutschen Reiches unter Henrich IV und Heinrich V*, 6 vols. (Berlin 1890–1909).

³⁷The most famous of these are Kantorowicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957; Princeton 1997) and Schramm’s *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio: Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Erneuerungsgedanken vom Ende des karolingischen Reiches bis zum Investiturstreit* (Leipzig 1929), along with the art-historical survey and analysis of imperial insignia in which he collaborated with art historian Florentine Mütterich, *Denkmale der deutschen Könige und Kaiser*, 2nd ed. (Munich 1981).

³⁸See e.g. Gerd Althoff, *Otto III* (Darmstadt 1996); Stefan Weinfurter, *Henrich II: Herrscher am Ende der Zeiten* (Regensburg 1999); Herwig Wolfram, *Konrad II: Kaiser dreier Reiche* (Munich 2000). Studying the figure of the king as a literary and historiographical creation owes itself in many ways to Ernst Kantorowicz’s controversial *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (Berlin 1927), which caused an uproar among traditional political historians with its highly-stylized literary tribute to Frederick’s personality as a ruler. More recently, the seminal biography by Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Louis* (Paris 1996), was not only important for having broken the longstanding taboo against a “great personality” approach to history within the *Annales* tradition, but has also been influential in reviving interest in royal biography set within a cultural and socio-historical framework.

³⁹Ian S. Robinson, *Emperor Henry IV of Germany 1056–1106* (Cambridge 1999).

Weinfurter is more interested in the cultural structures through which royal authority is translated into political power than in the institutions of royal government itself.⁴⁰ Rather than sifting through diploma or reconstructing itineraries—the *sine qua non* of earlier German studies on kingship—he analyses cathedral architecture, manuscript paintings, the cultivation of royal relic cults, the emergence of courtly literature, church reform movements and the changes in noble self-consciousness which all informed the ways the Salian kings interacted with the world they ruled.

In chapters 1 through 3, Weinfurter traces the origins of Conrad II's family and how it parlayed its control of lands and churches around the Rhenish towns of Speyer and Worms in the tenth century into a political base from which to compete for the crown. Weinfurter focuses in particular on the way Wipo, the palace chaplain and biographer of Conrad II, shaped the history of Conrad's family and its rise to emphasize connections to ancient Merovingian and Carolingian ancestors. Conrad energized the role of king by insisting on a more hierarchical relationship vis-à-vis the regional nobility and rooting his supreme authority in powerful visual symbols, like the new cathedral in Speyer which he richly endowed. Chapters 4 and 5 cover the reign of Conrad's son, Henry III, who built on his father's sense of a strong central kingship that slowly but surely elevated itself above the consensus of the regional princes. Chapters 6 and 7 treat how these issues came to a head under Henry IV as the dukes could no longer tolerate the degree to which the king asserted his authority and rebelled. In some places, I wonder if Weinfurter overstates the degree to which the opposition of the leading bishops in this context was directly related to their support for the Gregorian Reform. While figures such as Siegfried of Mainz, Burchard of Halberstadt, Altmann of Passau, and Gebhard of Salzburg were instrumental in introducing some clerical and monastic reforms in their dioceses, their opposition to the king during the Investiture Controversy was rooted to a far greater extent in their sensibilities as German nobles than in their support for either Pope Gregory VII's reform

While offering some interesting new thoughts on certain aspects of Henry's reign, Robinson's treatment for the most part resists information found in Meyer von Knonau's history.

⁴⁰The landmark studies on royal institutions and prosopography are Josef Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige und Kaiser*, 2 vols., *Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, vol. 16 (Stuttgart, 1968) and Eckhard Müller-Mertens's survey of royal itineraries under the Otto the Great, *Die Reichsstruktur im Spiegel der Herrschaftspraxis Ottos des Grossen* (Berlin [East], 1980).

program or his claims of papal supremacy. Nonetheless, Weinfurter's discussion of the Investiture Controversy and its aftermath is generally judicious and enlightening.

In the final two chapters covering the reign of Henry V, Weinfurter suggests that leading up to the Concordat of Worms in 1122, the king, the bishops, and the princes of the realm created the basis for a new ideology of royal power which acknowledged the rights and prerogatives of the regional princes which Henry III and Henry IV had attempted to constrain. This was a new "feudal order" in Germany where power between the crown and the regional nobility came to be articulated in relational language that gave the princes far greater leverage in administering the affairs of the realm and fostered the creation of local, territorial lordships. Weinfurter cautions, however, that this should not be viewed as a backward step in what might have otherwise been a progressive development of royal government. Instead he suggests the Salian era be understood as a period of radical ideological reorientation that set the stage for more vigorous types of lordship at all levels of society, and which were simultaneously interconnected in a tighter "feudal" (orig. *lehnrechtlich*) framework with the king at the center. Susan Reynolds, fans are going to be disturbed by the vocabulary here, but Weinfurter's conclusions raise some more complex questions aside from mere semantics. One is struck in chapter 8, for instance, with the emphasis placed upon the political activity and power of bishops and the nobility. Thus the extent to which Weinfurter's conclusion credits the Salian kings with ideological innovation in this period is surprising. To be sure, the kings left far more impressive monuments of their contribution to the creation of an imperial ideology and certainly had the resources to impose their will in many ways. But the sources, as he acknowledges elsewhere, are nonetheless replete with instances of nobles articulating their vision for the realm and the strategies they employed to realize it. Here Ian Robinson's book on Henry IV is particularly insightful with a large chapter on the ideology of the Saxon revolt.⁴¹

The Salian Century will hopefully encourage more study, particularly at the undergraduate level, of the unique and exciting problems of the German Middle Ages. Along with the recently re-issued collection of primary sources and commentary in Theodore Mommsen and Karl

⁴¹Robinson, *Henry IV* (n. 39 above) chap. 2.63–104.

Morrison's classic *Imperial Lives and Letters of the Eleventh Century*,⁴² Weinfurter's book makes integrating the study of German medieval history into a class syllabus far easier than it was in the past. Most important, however, students and scholars alike will find here a good example of the kind of interdisciplinary social history now being advanced in Germany and applied to subjects which had earlier been considered only from a political or institutional perspective.

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⁴²Theodore Mommsen and Karl F. Morrison, ed. and trans., *Imperial Lives and Letters of the Eleventh Century*, 2nd rev. ed. (Philadelphia 2000).