

*Guerre di torri: Violenza e conflitto a Roma tra 1200 e 1500.* Alberto Di Santo. La corte dei papi 28. Rome: Viella, 2016. 370 pp. €32.

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Ubiquitous and unrelenting violence marked the civic life of most medieval Italian communes. Late medieval Rome was no different, yet compared to Florence, Siena, and other north-central cities, it has received much less scholarly attention. In *Guerre di torri*, Alberto Di Santo has provided a detailed study of this violence and the variety of forms it took in the streets of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century papal city. Equal parts description and analysis, Di Santo provides a much-needed synthesis of violence in late medieval Rome while adding his own insights on the subject. His most original arguments center on the urban turf wars that took the forms of building and equipping fortified towers (structures now lost due to papal absolutism and concomitant city planning). The violence associated with the raising of towers included fierce battles involving members of noble *famiglia* and even the use of siege engines. Di Santo reads this violence as a reflection of factionalism based less on political ideology than on lineage loyalty. Roman families in the broadest sense of the term, he argues, laid claim to precious real estate through the violence.

Lacking extensive archival materials for his study, Di Santo mines the chronicles and diaries from the thirteenth to fifteenth century to draw forth his conclusions. Acknowledging the lineal and factional prejudices inherent in the chronicle literature of Rome, he nevertheless finds them valuable in reconstructing events and reifying contemporary attitudes despite the potential for chroniclers to distort facts. The first three chapters serve as an introduction by offering a sort of typology of violent and ritual acts in Rome. Chapter 1 examines the ludic violence associated with chivalric culture (jousts, tournaments, and duels). The key element unifying these disparate forms of play was their performative aspect, which tended to channel and deflect their inherent violence into more socially legitimate activities. The following two chapters investigate violence in the form of raids on property and assaults against people, livestock, and towers and other buildings. These two forms of violence—raids and attacks—constituted a form of vendetta, one grounded in lineal loyalty.

The next three chapters are perhaps Di Santo's most methodologically and intellectually stimulating parts of the volume, as they ask important questions about urban violence in medieval Italy beyond the Roman context. Chapter 4 seeks to understand how *rumore*, meaning a noisy street confrontation rather than the modern use of the term, worked in causing tumults and uprisings. Di Santo shows how popular and elite uprisings often grew out of these *rumori*, which in turn took on life as acoustic rumor running through the streets of the city. The following chapter, a case study of a violent feud between the baronial family the Conti, relatives of reigning pope Innocent III, and the former senator Giovanni Capocci and his allies among the Frangipane family. Using the *Gesta Innocentii III*, in which the prolonged conflict of 1204 is recorded, Di Santo analyzes the *guerre di torri* in closer detail, arguing that there were in fact skirmishes be-

tween powerful clans and their allies with the goal of acquiring urban real estate. Hence the title of this chapter is “Guerre di immobili” rather “Guerre di torri.” Roman families waged wars from towers with the aim of dominating huge swaths of urban space. The last chapter of the section continues this argument by placing the violence in the context of the vendetta and the resulting battles that pitted rival lineages in contests over real estate in the city, influence at the papal court, and monopolies of ecclesiastical benefices and offices.

In the final chapters, Di Santo makes broader statements about violence in Rome as well as medieval Italy in general—namely that its use was seen as legitimate, justified, and metabolizing (in the sense of assimilating groups). This latter term is ill defined, but Di Santo suggests, of course, that the violence gathered men from all sorts of social ranks in great lineal blocs. Moreover, he wants to recast violence in a more positive light. However, one cannot ignore that factional violence was divisive, disruptive, and destructive. From a reading of his tome, one can imagine how much daily life in medieval Rome was suddenly and frequently interrupted by a shower of catapult stones and *ballistae* bolts.

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*Maiestas: Politica e pensiero politico nella Napoli aragonese (1443–1503).*  
Guido Cappelli.

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Guido Cappelli’s carefully reasoned argument for the Aragonese state as a work of conscious construction has a long pedigree. Burckhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* contextualized “the state as a work of art” in the same open-ended flux of material and political turmoil that Cappelli attributes to the rise of the modern state in the Regno of Naples. With both imperial and papal claims to legitimacy discredited and actively defeated, political entities throughout Italy sought new means of expressing and reinforcing legitimacy. By the late Trecento, royal blood, *beata stirps*, and divine will no longer held potency, and the emergence of a new humanist discourse, based not on medieval categories but directly on the works of the ancients, provided the framework for this new kingship expressed by Alfonso the Magnanimous and his successors.

Cappelli traces how the virtues of the ruler embodied in Alfonso I now became identified with the well-being of the emerging nation-state. Working within the parameters of the “education of the prince,” Neapolitan humanists harnessed the political wisdom of the ancients to bolster a consistent concept of political majesty based upon justice and equity in a realm bound by consensus. Cappelli analyzes Panormita’s *De Dictis et Factis Alfonsi Regis*, Giovanni Brancato’s *Orationes ad Ferdinandum*, Diomedes Carafa’s *I doveri*