

the focus for Michael Talbot's essay on the Ottomans, and Christina Antenhofer's essay combines that interest with a subtle exploration of visual art at the Mantuan court. Jonathan Spangler's essay on France offers a sociology of those who controlled access to the king; they were generally from the high nobility, Spangler shows, but that apparent success weakened connections between the *grandees* and the provincial nobles, thus weakening the order as a whole.

As the editors explain, the authors have deliberately avoided social or political theorizing, and the collection includes no attempt to compare early modern cultures of access with examples from other times and places. That interpretive reticence extends to some purely early modern issues as well. For instance, only two of the authors directly address the question of princely absolutism, a question that lurks in any discussion of early modern states, and they offer opposing views: Mark Hengerer, in a subtle account of the Habsburg court, dismisses the concept as inappropriate to early modern realities, whereas Fabian Persson (in his equally impressive account of Swedish developments) treats the installation of absolute rule as a fundamental reality. *The Key to Power?* leaves theorizing and comparison to the reader—but its finely crafted examinations of specific situations offer abundant encouragement for doing so.

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*La mobilità sociale nel Medioevo italiano: Competenze, conoscenze e saperi tra professioni e ruoli sociali (secc. XII–XV)*. Lorenzo Tanzini and Sergio Tognetti, eds. I libri di Viella 220. Rome: Viella, 2016. 458 pp. €44.

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In recent years, social mobility has been at the forefront of historical research, notably in Continental Europe. Scholars working on the late Middle Ages, in particular, have started to explore the dynamism of medieval society with renewed interest, often drawing from more fluid notions of social spaces provided by anthropologists and sociologists. This has brought specialists to adopt more flexible interpretations of the factors that led to social promotion, while also reflecting on the interplay between individual agency and social structures, and on the performative role of social representations. Italian historiography has been playing a prominent part in this revived interest in social mobility, largely thanks to a national research project of which the volume in question represents but the first outcome (<http://prin.mobilitasociale.uniroma2.it/en/>).

The volume collects papers that were delivered over the course of one year at the University of Cagliari. The papers were presented at different seminars, but they are all concerned with assessing how and to what extent intellectual knowledge, professional expertise, and technical skills functioned as channels of social mobility. This is evident from the very structure of the book, which is divided into four subsections, each focusing on the theme of a single seminar. In the end, this makes the volume very ac-

cessible and informative not just to scholars working on social mobility, but to a wider audience whose interests overlap only with one of these four subthemes.

The first one is the world of craftsmanship, which is addressed in two comprehensive essays in relation to both cities (Franceschi) and rural centers (Pinto). Together, the two essays show that artisans, builders, and textile workers did climb the social ladder, but only within the boundaries of their own social group. To undergo a more substantial ascent, urban workers had to specialize in luxury goods, while rural laborers had first to move to the city. Spatial mobility was central also to the promotion of highly specialized technicians, such as the mining experts tracked down over the whole of Italy—and beyond—by Degrassi. In contrast, a more static social condition is outlined by Zanoboni in respect to women, whose extensive involvement in medieval crafts is now being studied in full detail.

Part 2 considers the cities of Southern Italy to explore the correlation between upward mobility and the intervention of superior powers—notably, the king of Aragon. Feniello and Terenzi demonstrate that the intensity and reach of royal intervention varied markedly across the kingdom, with Naples and its court being a fertile ground for personal advancement and peripheral centers such as L'Aquila featuring more autonomous social structures. In the two major islands of the Mediterranean, by contrast, the dynamics of social mobility seem to have been very much alike: in Cagliari (Oliva) as well as in Messina and Palermo (Tocco), new merchant families—sometimes coming from continental Italy or even from overseas—were continually seeking to carve out a position for themselves in both the urban patriciate and local royal offices.

By looking at the men of diplomacy and of legal professions, part 3 brings the focus of the volume back to the both practical and intellectual knowledge that was conducive to social promotion. Luongo argues that notaries could see a rise in status not just because of their technical abilities, but because of the social capital they accumulated by building ties with their (institutional) clients. Forms of both social and cultural capital, which were often previously acquired by exercising trade, were also key to the success of diplomatic careers, as explained by Lazzarini with respect to the Florentine court. Jurists were another professional group that centered on the court: Covini shows that these legal counselors often came from provincial families, but managed nonetheless to integrate themselves among the elites of the state due to their proximity to the prince.

Part 4 completes this rich and varied book by examining the mobility of foreigners in Italy and of Italians elsewhere. With the exception of Veratelli's original study on the commissioning of Flemish portraits by Tuscan travelers, this leads the last three papers to explore social mobility in connection with processes of integration. Employing an impressive array of primary sources, the essays by Soldani and Böninger both highlight the importance of conjunctural factors (economic slowdown, increased competition) in limiting the advancement and inclusion of Spanish merchants in Sardinia and German artisans in Florence. However, by outlining the various fates of different Italian groups in Andalusia, the final essay by González Arévalo reminds us that personal choices also

played an important role: while Genoese merchants were prone to settle and integrate, many Venetians sought to return home and take up office at the end of their journey. This challenges us, by way of conclusion, to consider the potential of both structural and individual factors in shaping patterns of integration and social promotion.

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*The Forgotten Story: Rome in the Communal Period.*

Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur.

Trans. David Fairservice. Viella History, Art and Humanities Collection 2. Rome: Viella, 2016. 398 pp. €50.

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Rome's communal archives perished in the sack of 1527. Except for churches, the medieval city has mostly vanished, with little remaining to evoke Rome's communal period (1143–1398), which for many cities of Northern and Central Italy was a glorious era. One result of this loss has been the stubbornly entrenched view of medieval Rome as little more than a wasteland, with idle Romans huddled in the bend of the Tiber, eking out an existence within the walls of a once-magnificent city overrun with weeds, its ruins doomed to the lime kilns. Rome, too, was a commune manqué because the papacy never allowed Romans full autonomy that other Italian communes held. The city's historical importance seemed little more than a stage for the political drama of pope and emperor.

Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur's superb study (French title, *L'autre Rome: Une histoire des Romains à l'époque des communes [XIIe–XIVe siècle]* [2010]) lays these fictions to rest. Drawing on his impressive research on Rome and on contributions from eminent historians of medieval Rome, such as Maria Andaloro, Serena Romano, Sandro Carocci, Richard Krautheimer, Massimo Miglio, Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, and Pierre-Yves Le Pogam, he produces a synthesis of first-rate scholarship and a probing analysis of surviving, scattered source materials, such as notarial records, wills, church charters, and archaeological remains. Approaching communal Rome as an *Annales* historian, he lays out the economic and social structures as the essential condition for understanding the history of the city as a whole. Each chapter, as it were, adds layers of rich detail to his portrait of communal life: we catch the extensive physical, economic, and social vitality in the forest of towers (some 200–300), which were the mainstay of the baronial compounds; the spectacular expansion of *casali* (the indigenous agricultural enterprises of various sizes that allowed Roman families ready access to grains, livestock, wine, vegetables, and fruits) in the Roman Campagna; and the flourishing economic enterprises like banking, merchants' commercial networks throughout Italy and Europe, and fish and meat production. As a society, Rome's commune, in fact, appears astonishingly similar to other rival Italian communities but for a few significant inflections.