

The Ottonians and Italy*

Levi Roach

It may seem counterintuitive to have an article on Italy in a special issue of *German History*, and, in a sense, it is. Already in the middle ages, the Italian realm and its inhabitants were recognized as distinct from their northern neighbours—and interactions between the regions generally served to underline these differences. Nevertheless, on another level, there should be nothing more natural. From the acquisition of the *regnum Italiae* by Otto I in late 961 (and with it the imperial crown in early 962) through to 1806, claims to rule over the northern half of the Apennine peninsula were a constant feature of German (and Italian) politics, leaving a deep and lasting legacy in both regions. Moreover, while active German political involvement in Lombardy was to prove relatively short-lived and episodic, this was by no means inevitable.

Despite this, studies spanning the two regions are few and far between. The grounds are not hard to find. In Italy and Germany, as elsewhere in Europe, the professional study of history emerged within the framework of—and as an accessory to—the nineteenth-century nation state. As a consequence, Italian history is mostly studied by Italians, in isolation from that of its northern neighbours (and rulers), and German history is largely pursued within the Germanophone world, with little consideration of Italy (save *as a setting for imperial dignity*). This trend is neatly illustrated by the most recent scholarly biographies of Otto I (r. 936–972), who secured the Italian realm for the Ottonian dynasty: the older of the two, by Johannes Laudage, boasts only two Italian titles within a bibliography spanning fifty-three sides of small print, whilst the more recent, by Matthias Becher, has none at all in its twenty-two-page bibliography.¹ Such omissions are symptomatic of a deeper problem. Though both of these authors give ample space to Otto I's Italian ventures, they do so from a very 'German' perspective: the Emperor is measured by the expectations of rule north of the Alps, and the possibility of Italian influence on his modes of thought and behaviour is largely left to one side. Yet if German scholars have been guilty of writing Italy out, Italian historians have often collaborated in this venture. They have shown great interest in kingship and royal government during the Carolingian and immediately post-Carolingian era, but by the second half of the tenth century this rapidly tails off; thereafter, the story of Italy becomes one of episcopal authority, local *signoria* and the development of urban associations.

Both perspectives are deeply teleological: German scholarship ignores Italy because in the long run the region was to become a peripheral (and little-visited) part of the Empire; whilst Italian scholarship, concerned with the pre-history of the city

*I would like to thank Len Scales for inviting me to contribute to this special issue, and Sarah Hamilton and Ed Houghton for their comments on drafts. I am similarly obliged to those present at the Workshop on Medieval Germany hosted by the German Historical Institute London in May 2017 for their thoughts.

¹J. Laudage, *Otto der Große: eine Biographie* (Regensburg, 2001), pp. 354–406; M. Becher, *Otto der Große, Kaiser und Reich: eine Biographie* (Munich, 2012), pp. 299–320. Cf. S. MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 222–41, which boasts some sixteen Italian titles.

communes, seeks to identify local power structures at the earliest possible date.² But, as is so often the case, hindsight is a poor guide. For over a century Ottonian and Salian rulers maintained and developed royal authority within the Italian realm, and even as late as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Emperor remained a potent force within the region. Not all scholars have, of course, fallen into this trap. Hagen Keller and Wolfgang Huschner, in particular, have sought to remind their Germanophone colleagues of the importance of Italy in the Ottonian period (even if the former never produced his much-awaited history of the tenth-century Italian realm).³ Likewise, Nicolangelo D'Acunto, Giacomo Vignodelli and Stefano Mangarano, amongst others, have undertaken important analyses of political affairs within Italy, seeking to integrate these into the broader framework of Ottonian rule.⁴ Other historiographical traditions have tended to accord more importance to the region. Scholars of Byzantine diplomacy, for example, have long viewed Ottonian Italy as an integral part of a wider Mediterranean and central European network of contact and communication.⁵ Likewise, historians of church reform see developments in eleventh-century Rome and Milan as part of a broader set of movements, a perspective which has begun to inform studies of the preceding century.⁶ Still, 'Italian' history remains largely beyond the Ottonianist's remit, while the Emperor and the *Reich* north of the Alps tend to be nebulous (if present at all) in considerations of local Italian politics.

The present article presents an alternative approach. It offers not an exhaustive treatment of Ottonian Italy, but rather a synthetic analysis focusing on two related themes: Otto I's conquest of Italy and its immediate aftermath; and the degree to which the region was integrated into the East Frankish realm thereafter. As the title suggests, the focus is on the Ottonian period (961/2–1024 for Italy), with the 'three Ottos' at the

²See L. Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity: Authority and Crisis, 1245–1414* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 79, 192–4, 202, 215–16, 340, 470–1, 534–5; and C. Wickham, *Sleepwalking into a New World: The Emergence of the Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, 2015), pp. 1–20, respectively.

³See, e.g. H. Keller, *Adelsherrschaft und städtische Gesellschaft in Oberitalien (9–12. Jahrhundert)* (Bibliothek des deutschen historischen Instituts in Rom, 52, Tübingen, 1979), mentioning the unfinished monograph at p. xii, and 'Entscheidungssituationen und Lernprozesse in den "Anfängen der deutschen Geschichte": die "Italien- und Kaiserpolitik" Ottos des Großen', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 33 (1999), pp. 20–48; W. Huschner, *Transalpine Kommunikation im Mittelalter: diplomatische, kulturelle und politische Wechselwirkungen zwischen Italien und dem nordalpinen Reich (9.–11. Jahrhundert)*, 3 parts (Monumenta Germaniae Historica [MGH]: Schriften, 52, Hanover, 2003). Cf. A. Haverkamp, *Herrschaftsformen der Frühstaufen in Reichsitalien*, 2 parts (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 1, Stuttgart, 1970–71), on the central middle ages.

⁴N. D'Acunto, *Nostrum Italicum regnum: aspetti della politica italiana di Ottone III* (Milan, 2002); G. Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide: la politica di consolidamento del potere regio di Ugo di Arles', *Reti medievali*, 13, 2 (2012), pp. 247–94; S. Mangarano, 'Protezione regia: i mundebardi degli Ottoni per S. Maria di Farfa (secc. X–XI)', *Annali dell'Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici*, 27 (2012/13), pp. 73–143. See also A. Puglia, 'L'amministrazione della giustizia e le istituzioni pubbliche in "Tuscia" da Ugo di Provenza a Ottone I (anni 926–967)', *Archivio storico italiano*, 160 (2002), pp. 675–733; and R. Houghton, 'The Vocabulary of Groups in Eleventh-Century Mantua', *Early Medieval Europe*, 24 (2016), pp. 448–77.

⁵J. Shepard, 'Aspects of Byzantine Attitudes and Policy towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in J. D. Howard-Johnson (ed.), *Byzantium and the West, c.850–c.1200* (Amsterdam, 1989), pp. 67–118; C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 429–47.

⁶K. G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Change* (Manchester, 2005); C. Leyser, 'Episcopal Office in the Italy of Liudprand of Cremona, c.890–c.970', *English Historical Review*, 125 (2010), pp. 795–817; S. Hamilton, *Church and People in the Medieval West, 900–1200* (London, 2013), pp. 60–119.

heart of discussion (961/2–1002); nevertheless, earlier and (in particular) later developments will be considered where appropriate.

I: Italy and Empire

The one area where Italy has routinely received treatment in German historiography is in connection with imperial dignity. As has long been appreciated, empire was a central concern of tenth- and eleventh-century rulers, and one of the most important legacies of Otto I's accession to Italy was a claim to imperial status. Although earlier scholarship postulated two competing models of empire, one 'Roman' and one 'non-Roman' (often associated with Aachen), more recent work is rightly sceptical. Rome may not have exercised a monopoly on the imperial legacy, but the evidence adduced in favour of a distinctive 'non-Roman concept of empire' (*nichttrömische Kaiseridee*)—thought to be a polemical counterpoint to the 'Roman' one—leaves much to be desired. In particular, it requires reading a great deal into Widukind of Corvey's silence on the subject of Otto I's imperial coronation, now convincingly explained by the suggestion that he drafted the bulk of the *Res gestae Saxonicae* before 962 and only hastily revised it thereafter.⁷ Furthermore, it requires translating ambiguous terms such as *imperium* and *imperialis*—which can mean anything from 'empire' and 'imperial' to 'authority' and 'relating to authority'—in explicitly imperial terms in documents which otherwise studiously avoid addressing Otto I as Emperor.⁸ In short, there can be little doubt that Otto's imperial status was intimately associated with Rome and Italy—and hence that the foundations for the later Holy Roman Empire were laid south of the Alps.

The importance of Otto's imperial coronation at Candlemas (2 February) 962 is clear from a number of sources. It is at this point that his charter draftsmen start to accord him the title 'emperor Augustus' (*imperator augustus*); it is also at this moment that a new imperial seal is introduced. These were not mere niceties. As Helmut Beumann noted, prevailing political theory held that name and nature went hand-in-hand—being termed 'emperor' thus involved a qualitative change.⁹ These developments are reflected in the new seal. This not only bears the imperial title (as we might expect), but also presents Otto in a new manner, replacing portrait presentation with spear and shield—common since the days of Louis the German (r. 843–876)—with the ruler *en face* bearing staff and globe. Italian influence is likely here, not least since the matrix was produced in haste, apparently on Italian soil. **The ultimate model, however, is Byzantine.** As the other ruler with a claim to Rome and its legacy—not to mention significant parts of southern Italy—it was the Byzantine *basileos* with whom

⁷S. Robbie, 'Can Silence Speak Volumes? Widukind's *Res Gestae Saxonicae* and the Coronation of Otto I Reconsidered', *Early Medieval Europe*, 20 (2012), pp. 333–62. See also E.-D. Hehl, 'Kaisertum, Rom und Papstbezug im Zeitalter Ottos I.', in B. Schneidmüller and S. Weinfurter (eds), *Ottotonische Neuanfänge: Symposium zur Ausstellung 'Otto der Große, Magdeburg und Europa'* (Mainz, 2001), pp. 213–35; and D. Warner, 'The Representation of Empire: Otto I at Ravenna', in B. Weiler and S. MacLean (eds), *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany, 800–1500* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 121–40.

⁸H. Hoffmann, 'Zur Geschichte Ottos des Großen', *Deutsches Archiv*, 28 (1972), pp. 42–73, at pp. 66–73.

⁹H. Beumann, 'Das Kaisertum Ottos des Großen: ein Rückblick nach tausend Jahren' (1963), repr. in and cited from his *Wissenschaft vom Mittelalter: ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Cologne, 1972), pp. 411–58.

Otto now had to reckon.¹⁰ A clearer indication of the Emperor's changed horizons would be hard to find.

The first document issued by the newly crowned Emperor is similarly symbolic: on 13 February 962 Otto confirmed the traditional rights of the pope in the so-called Ottonianum. This is framed as a treaty, rather than a typical diploma, and draws heavily on the earlier pacts between Carolingian rulers and the pope. Yet if its form was well established, its presentation was not: the resulting document is the earliest surviving 'purple privilege' from the Latin West, written in gold ink on purple parchment. The ultimate model here too was Byzantine—purple privileges having been used for diplomatic purposes for some time on the Bosphorus—though mediated through Italy. Indeed, in this case there are grounds for believing that a similar privilege had been issued to Sant'Ambrogio in Milan by King Hugh and his son (and co-ruler) Lothar, whose widow, Adelheid, was married to Otto I by this point. A degree of papal influence on the document is also likely. One of Pope John XII's cardinal deacons, another John, had produced a gold-tinted presentation copy of the Donation of Constantine, intended to elicit the Ottonianum, and this may have set the tone for the final pact. Finally, we should reckon with a degree of input from Fulda, whose abbot was intimately associated with Otto's Italian ventures and seems to have furnished the document's scribe.¹¹ The result was a heady mix of old and new, informed by the example of the Carolingian rulers of the eighth and ninth centuries as well as that of the Italian rulers of the early tenth (some of whom were emperors). All indications are that Otto's court saw him in a new light—and were keen to communicate this as widely as possible.

If the seal and papal pact speak more of style than substance, there are other signs that Otto emerged from his imperial consecration a qualitatively different ruler. It was in the aftermath of this event that Otto oversaw a major synod with John XII. At this, efforts were undertaken to raise Magdeburg to archiepiscopal status, initiating a major reorganization of episcopal structures on Otto's eastern frontier. On 12 February 962, the day before the Ottonianum was produced, Pope John issued a bull informing the people of Saxony, Gaul (= Lotharingia), Germany and Bavaria of the decisions of this synod. In particular, he explains how, at the request of Otto, he has raised Magdeburg to metropolitan status and Merseburg to that of Magdeburg's suffragan. These were dramatic changes to Saxony's diocesan structures, clearly occasioned by Otto's victory at the Lechfeld five-and-a-half years earlier. The battle had been fought on the feast day of Saint Laurence (10 August 955), to whom Otto had pledged a foundation at Merseburg should he prevail (now realized), whilst the holy lance—which may

¹⁰H. Keller, 'Ottonische Herrschersiegel: Beobachtungen und Fragen zu Gestalt und Aussage und zur Funktion im historischem Kontext' (1997), repr. in and cited from his *Ottonische Königsherrschaft: Organisation königlicher Macht* (Darmstadt, 2002), pp. 131–66 and 275–97 (notes), at pp. 132–41.

¹¹D O I 235, Vatican City, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, AA. Arm. I–XVIII,18; with C. Brühl, 'Purpururkunden' (1977), repr. in and cited from his *Aus Mittelalter und Diplomatie*, 3 vols (Hildesheim, 1989–97), vol. 2, pp. 601–19; H. Fuhrmann, 'Konstantinische Schenkung und abendländisches Kaisertum', *Deutsches Archiv*, 23 (1966), pp. 63–178, at pp. 128–42; L. Schiaparelli, 'I diplomi di Ugo e di Lotario', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano*, 34 (1914), pp. 7–255, at pp. 152–3, n. 2; H. Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum im ottonischen und frühsalischen Reich* (MGH: Schriften, 30, Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 170–1.

already have been associated with Maurice, the patron saint of Magdeburg—was carried before Otto into battle.¹²

It has been noted that Otto did not strictly ‘need’ papal endorsement for these measures: the foundation of a bishopric or archbishopric could be achieved by the approval of the local episcopate at a synod, and even with papal assistance, Otto was forced to gain local support before his dreams could become reality (a process which would stretch till 968). An earlier attempt had, in fact, been made to achieve this result in summer 955—immediately after victory on the Lechfeld—when Abbot Hadamar of Fulda had secured papal support for the foundation of a set of new bishoprics, to be subordinated to Magdeburg.¹³ Still, a connection between these acts and the imperial dignity is hard to deny. Otto’s plans for empire probably pre-date 955, as we shall see (and thus may have informed Hadamar’s embassy); moreover, it is striking that the next efforts to realize these ambitions came in Rome, with the pope, right after Otto’s consecration.¹⁴ Mission itself was intimately associated with the imperial office. This was particularly so in Saxony, where Charlemagne was remembered above all for his role in the region’s Christianization; following victory over the pagan Magyars, it was only natural for Otto to start seeing himself in a similar light. The connection between these events is highlighted in the privilege for Magdeburg, which states that Otto has come to Rome as a victor—a clear allusion to 955—to receive his crown, the aim being the ‘defence of the sacred church of God’ (*defensio sanctae Dei ecclesiae*).¹⁵ The association between these developments and the earlier victory is underlined by the pallium privileges issued in favour of Salzburg (7 February) and Trier (12 February) at this point: as Beumann first noted, these allow for the wearing of the pallium on the feast days of Laurence and Maurice, in addition to the local patron saints of Salzburg and Trier; the former apparently owe their presence to their role in securing victory half a decade earlier.¹⁶

As these events demonstrate, Otto did not come to Rome unprepared.¹⁷ Extending his rule south had probably always been on the cards. The Italian kingdom was something of a hot potato in the first half of the tenth century, passed from hand to hand with dizzying speed; anyone with sufficient means and support might hope to achieve rule there—as indeed had Otto’s predecessor, Hugh of Provence (r. 924–947; in Italy, 926–947). In this respect, Otto’s interest in the region may have been awakened by the exile of Berengar of Ivrea north of the Alps in the early 940s. Berengar was a leading

¹²H. Beumann, ‘Laurentius und Mauritius: zu den missionspolitischen Folgen des Ungarnsieges Ottos des Großen’ (1974), repr. in and cited from his *Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, pp. 139–76. See also E.-D. Hehl, ‘Merseburg—eine Bistumsgründung unter Vorbehalt: Gelübde, Kirchenrecht und politischer Spielraum im 10. Jahrhundert’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 31 (1997), pp. 96–119.

¹³See *Epistolae Moguntinae* 18, ed. P. Jaffé (*Bibliotheca rerum Germanicarum*, 3: Monumenta Moguntina, Berlin, 1866), pp. 347–50.

¹⁴S. Scholz, *Politik—Selbstverständnis—Selbstdarstellung: die Päpste in karolingischer und ottonischer Zeit* (*Historische Forschungen*, 26, Stuttgart, 2006), pp. 268–93. See also R. Pauler, ‘Giovanni XII’, in *L’Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. 2 (Rome, 2000), pp. 79–83.

¹⁵*Papsturkunden, 896–1046*, ed. H. Zimmermann, 3 vols (Vienna, 1985–89), no. 154.

¹⁶*Papsturkunden*, ed. Zimmermann, nos. 152–3; Beumann, ‘Kaisertum Ottos des Großen’, pp. 435–43.

¹⁷See P. Cammarosano, *Nobili e re, l’Italia politica dell’alto Medioevo* (Rome, 1998), pp. 241–9; Keller, ‘Entscheidungssituationen’; and cf. W. Maleczek, ‘Otto I. und Johannes XII. Überlegungen zur Kaiserkrönung von 962’, in J. Petersohn (ed.), *Medievalia Augiensia: Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 2001), pp. 151–203, which ultimately fails to convince.

opponent of King Hugh and would later be Otto's competitor for the Italian crown.¹⁸ The likelihood of East Frankish intervention increased when the southern duchies of Bavaria and Swabia—whose rulers had long-standing interests south of the Alps—were placed in the hands of close family members: Otto's brother Henry (948) and son Liudolf (949/950). By this point, the East Frankish ruler had also established something of a hegemonic position over his neighbours to the west, famously intervening in the dispute over the archbishopric of Reims at the synod of Ingelheim (948); he was now free to focus his attentions elsewhere.¹⁹ This latter event had also brought Otto into contact with Pope Agapit II, to whom he sent Hadamar of Fulda for the first of many times (winter 947/48).²⁰ Whatever the nature of these early contacts—and we should be wary of back-projecting imperial ambitions too far—in late 950 the subject of Italy and empire suddenly became topical. The unexpected death of the young Lothar on 22 November 950 created a power vacuum. Within weeks, the leading Italian magnate, Berengar of Ivrea (the erstwhile exile), had himself crowned king. Early in the New Year, Otto's own son Liudolf, duke of Swabia, then marched south in response, and in late summer the latter's father and uncle followed suit, taking Pavia by 23 September 951. Lothar's widow, Adelheid, was taken into Otto's custody—an act later **framed as one of liberation—and a marriage between the two ensued**. Otto also sent messengers south to Agapit in Rome. But once it became clear that a warm reception was not awaiting him—probably due to opposition from the local urban aristocracy—Otto changed tack and returned north, accepting the (largely nominal) submission of Berengar in exchange for the latter's de facto control of the realm.²¹

The events of 961–962 are thus best seen as the result of at least ten years of thought and planning. While Otto often had more pressing matters to attend to, he had already shown an interest in Rome and empire. The continuing importance of Italy in this connection can be seen from the fact that all subsequent decisions concerning Magdeburg—Otto's future resting place and something of a pet project—were made in the region, at the Ravenna synods of 967 and 968. It was not just that Otto chose to undertake important 'acts of state' on the peninsula, however; it is clear that his thinking and behaviour were informed by experiences there. The decision to raise the future Otto II to the kingship before his departure south in 961 may already speak of southern influence (mediated through Adelheid). It had not been customary to make children co-rulers in East Francia—Liudprand of Cremona notes that this was undertaken 'against the custom' (*contra morem*)²²—yet this is precisely what Hugh had undertaken with Lothar, Adelheid's first husband. It is possible that such thoughts lay behind the decision to make Otto II co-emperor in December 967, this time on Italian soil. And in the case of Magdeburg, Otto's approach was similarly informed by the

¹⁸P. Delogu, 'Berengario II, marchese d'Ivrea, re d'Italia', *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 9 (Rome, 1967), pp. 26–34.

¹⁹See most recently MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, pp. 50–94.

²⁰See U. Hussong, 'Studien zur Geschichte der Reichsabtei Fulda bis zur Jahrtausendwende II.', *Archiv für Diplomatik*, 32 (1986), pp. 129–304, at pp. 251–4, rightly sounding a note of caution.

²¹Flodoard, *Annales*, s.a. 952, ed. P. Lauer (Paris, 1905), pp. 133–4. See further Maleczek, 'Otto I.', pp. 188–90; and Becher, *Otto I.*, pp. 167–8.

²²Liudprand of Cremona, *Historia Ottonis*, ch. 2, ed. P. Chiesa (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Medievals, 156, Turnhout, 1998), p. 169.

shake-up of episcopal structures taking place in southern Italy, where Capua (966) and Benevento (969) were raised to metropolitan status in these years.²³ Perhaps the clearest effects of Otto's 'Italian experience' can be seen in the changing face of queenship. As Simon MacLean notes, the programmatic title 'sharer in the realm' (*consors regni*) was first adopted for Adelheid at this point under Italian influence, and her prominence in Otto's later years is to be understood in the light of her role in legitimating his conquest of the region (as Lothar's widow).²⁴ Similar influences can be seen elsewhere. When Otto retook Rome from rebellious elements within the city in November 966, he had the leaders killed. North of the Alps, it was rare to execute magnates in this fashion, and the Emperor seems to have been adapting to local custom.²⁵ Finally, the importance of Italy to the Ottonian regime can be seen in the diplomatic contacts made with Byzantium, finding their most lasting expression in the marriage of Otto II to the Byzantine princess Theophanu.²⁶ Appropriately enough, this was celebrated in Rome on the first Sunday after Easter (14 April) 972, with the production of a lavish marriage charter on purple parchment.

The most striking sign of Italy's influence on Otto I, however, can be seen in the fact that he spent over half of his last eleven years in the region. Though there were often pressing grounds for this—not least, the difficulties Otto encountered in maintaining a pro-imperial papal regime in Rome—there can be little doubt that it reflected the Emperor's own desires.²⁷ Nor was this interest limited to Otto: his son spent his last three years on the peninsula, and his grandson spent over two-thirds of his mature reign there.

II: Kingdoms and Identities

Given the amount of time the Ottonians spent in Italy, the question arises as to whether it remained a distinct kingdom after 962. On the face of it, the evidence in favour is strong. For a start, the distinction between speakers of Romance and Germanic was as clear in the tenth century as it is now and there is little sign that political contact led to the kind of mutual linguistic influence so characteristic of post-Conquest Britain.²⁸ Indeed, unlike Anglo-Norman England (or, for that matter, Charlemagne's Italy), the Ottonian takeover of the Apennine peninsula was not followed by any substantial settlement. As a consequence, there would be no trans-Alpine elite worthy of the name.

²³W. Huschner, 'Benevent, Capua, Magdeburg, Salerno: neue Erzbistümer an der Peripherie des lateinischen Europa im 10. Jahrhundert', in A. Ranft (ed.), *Der Hoftag in Quedlinburg 973: von den historischen Wurzeln zum Neuen Europa* (Berlin, 2006), pp. 37–49.

²⁴MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, pp. 95–149.

²⁵A. Nitsche, 'Der mißhandelte Papst: Folgen ottonischer Italienpolitik', in K. Colberg, H.-H. Nolte and H. Obenaus (eds), *Staat und Gesellschaft in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit: Gedenkschrift für Joachim Leuschner* (Göttingen, 1983), pp. 40–53.

²⁶J. Shepard, 'Byzantium and the West', in T. Reuter (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3: c.900–c.1024 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 605–23, at pp. 610–15.

²⁷R. Schieffer, 'Das "Italienerlebnis" Ottos des Großen', in M. Puhle (ed.), *Otto der Große. Magdeburg und Europa*, vol. 1: *Essays* (Magdeburg, 2001), pp. 446–60.

²⁸Cf. R. Sharpe, 'People and Languages in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Britain and Ireland: Reading the Charter Evidence', in D. Broun (ed.), *The Reality behind Charter Diplomacy in Anglo-Norman Britain* (Glasgow, 2011), pp. 1–119.

Otto's conquest certainly led to much rubbing of shoulders between Italian and East Frankish magnates, but if anything, this served to highlight the differences between the two. The earliest uses of the terms *theodiscus* and *teutonicus* for East Frankish magnates come from Italy in these years, and in the early eleventh century there are signs that these terms were starting to take on ethnic (in addition to purely linguistic) undertones.²⁹ This was not a one-way street. The Saxon bishop and historian Thietmar of Merseburg was famously suspicious of Lombard 'fickleness', exemplified by the decision to raise Arduin to the kingship in 1002, whilst others ventriloquized concerns about the amount of time Ottonian rulers spent south of the Alps. Already in 972, Magnus Billung's usurpation of royal prerogatives during a visit to Magdeburg—also reported by Thietmar—may speak of such discontentment, and it was to become more pronounced during the latter years of Otto III's reign, when the court effectively relocated south of the Alps.³⁰ Thangmar records a famous speech in which the Emperor decreed that he had abandoned his Saxon and German homelands only to be betrayed by the Romans; whilst Bruno of Querfurt's *Life of the Five Brothers* remarks—with more than a hint of criticism—that Otto III preferred Rome over 'delightful Germany' (*delectabilem Germaniam*).³¹ Clearly there was a stark north-south divide within the Ottonian realm, one of which contemporaries were well aware.

Political structures would seem to tell a similar tale. As noted, the ruling elite of Italy remained largely distinct from that north of the Alps and, with the exception of a few border regions such as Verona and Friuli, the *regnum Italiae* remained in the hands of those families who had ruled it in previous years (particularly in the reign of Hugh). Charter production tells a similar story: Italy was accorded its own chancellor and arch-chancellor; and diplomas were written by local scribes, retaining elements of traditional Italian diplomatic (most notably in the subscription and dating clauses).³² What is more, local 'private' charters were dated with reference to the ruler's reign in Italy (marked by imperial coronation), suggesting that accession north of the Alps was not a meaningful point of reference here.³³ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the concept of an independent Italian realm did not disappear overnight. John the Deacon, writing in

²⁹C. Brühl, *Deutschland—Frankreich: die Geburt zweier Völker* (rev. edn, Cologne, 1995), pp. 218–19. See also H. Thomas, 'Die Deutschen und die Rezeption ihres Volksnamens', in W. Paravicini (ed.), *Nord und Süd in der deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* (Sigmaringen, 1990), pp. 19–50.

³⁰Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, VII.2, II.28, ed. R. Holtzmann (MGH, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, n.s. 9, Berlin, 1935), pp. 398–9, 72–5; with G. Althoff, 'Das Bett des Königs in Magdeburg: zu Thietmar II.28' (1982), repr. in and cited from his *Insenierte Herrschaft. Geschichtsschreibung und politisches Handeln im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2003), pp. 211–29. See also M. Becher, *Rex, Dux und Gens: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des sächsischen Herzogtums im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Historische Studien, 444, Husum, 1996), pp. 290–8.

³¹Thangmar, *Vita Bernwardi*, ch. 25, ed. G. H. Pertz (MGH: SS. 4, Hanover, 1841), pp. 757–82, at p. 770; Bruno of Querfurt, *Vita quinque fratrum*, ch. 7, ed. H. Karwasińska (Monumenta Poloniae Historica, s.n. 4, 3, Warsaw, 1973), p. 43. The revisionism of K. Görich, *Otto III. Romanus Saxonicus et Italicus: kaiserliche Rompolitik und sächsische Historiographie* (Historische Forschungen, 18, Sigmaringen, 1993), pp. 17–122, is welcome, but overstated. On the *Vita Bernwardi*, see also now M. Giese, *Die Textfassungen der Lebensbeschreibung Bischof Bernwards von Hildesheim* (MGH: Studien und Texte, 40, Hanover, 2006).

³²H. Bresslau, *Handbuch der Urkundenlehre für Deutschland und Italien*, 2 vols (2nd edn, Berlin, 1912–31; 1st edn, Berlin 1889), vol. 1, pp. 428–30, 441–6, 463–6.

³³W. Goetz, 'Das hochmittelalterliche Imperium: Probleme der Integration von Reichsitalien (951–1220)', in W. Maleczek (ed.), *Fragen der politischen Integration im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Ostfildern, 2005), pp. 49–65, at pp. 54–6.

early eleventh-century Venice, describes Otto III as leaving the Italian realm (*regno ... Italico*) to return to the German one (*regnum ... Teutonicum*); clearly these were distinct entities. He also reports that Henry II received the ‘diadem of the realms’ (*regnorum ... diadema*; note the plural) upon his accession, emphasizing the plurality of polities he had inherited.³⁴ It was not only on the ideological plane that Italy remained distinct. Upon the death of the childless Otto III in January 1002, the Emperor’s leading Italian opponent, Arduin of Ivrea, raised himself to the kingship, seeking thereby to detach Italy from East Francia. And, following the death of Henry II (13 July 1024), the Italian crown was offered to Robert the Pious and Duke William V of Aquitaine in turn, in an act reminiscent of earlier efforts to invite favourable rulers from north of the Alps (often from Upper Burgundy or Provence).

Still, it would be dangerous to make too much of the evidence for a distinct Italian polity. For a start, ‘Germany’ was itself far from a coherent and well-defined entity, as Carlrichard Brühl has shown, and there is a perennial danger of putting the cart before the horse.³⁵ The relative stability of East Francia—at least in territorial terms—in the later ninth and early tenth century had doubtless led to some sense of common ‘regnal’ identity, particularly in those regions which had belonged to Louis the Younger (r. 876–882) and went on to form the core of the Ottonian realm (viz. Saxony and Franconia).³⁶ But the boundaries of this kingdom remained fluid: the place of Lotharingia was up for debate (and would be for some time), whilst the degree to which Swabia and Bavaria were a part of it was also far from certain.³⁷ Not only was the extent of Ottonian rule uncertain, but its intensity varied considerably too. Rulers spent much time in East Saxony, Franconia and Lower Lotharingia, but little time in Frisia, Bavaria or Swabia. In the latter regions, royal authority was heavily mediatized by the local dukes, who were significant players in their own right—and who might under the right circumstances become independent rulers (as had Otto I’s father, Henry I). Local identities evidently ran deep, and it is no accident that in later years people were to speak of the ‘German lands’ (*deutsche lande*) in the plural.³⁸ Indeed, it is striking that, upon his return from Italy as Emperor in 965, Otto I was met by his family at Worms in lower Franconia; here, and not at the foothills of the Swiss Alps, was where effective Ottonian rule began.³⁹

There were similar questions to be asked on the eastern frontier: were the Elbe Slavs, Bohemians and Poles independent peoples under loose Ottonian hegemony, or were they an integral part of the East Frankish realm (as the former two would eventually become)? It was perfectly possible for kingdoms to span peoples and languages, as the Carolingian Empire had and Plantagenet domains would, and there were always parts of the medieval German Empire which were linguistically distinct (largely

³⁴ John the Deacon, *Istoria Veneticorum*, chs 44, 64, ed. L. A. Berto (Bologne, 1999), pp. 186, 202. See L. A. Berto, *The Political and Social Vocabulary of John the Deacon’s ‘Istoria Veneticorum’* (Turnhout, 2013).

³⁵ Brühl, *Deutschland—Frankreich*, pp. 353–705.

³⁶ Becher, *Rex, Dux und Gens*, pp. 124–58.

³⁷ W. Giese, *Heinrich I.* (Darmstadt, 2008), pp. 70–93; S. MacLean, ‘Shadow Kingdom: Lotharingia and the Frankish World c.850–1050’, *History Compass*, 11 (2013), pp. 443–57.

³⁸ Scales, *Shaping*, pp. 484–525.

³⁹ H. Keller, ‘Reichsstruktur und Herrschaftsauffassung in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit’ (1982), repr. in and cited from his *Ottotonische Königsherrschaft*, pp. 51–90 and 213–37, at p. 53.

Romance-speaking Lotharingia and Burgundy; Slavic-speaking Bohemia). And while Italy is sometimes referred to as a *regnum*, the term had a much wider semantic range than its modern English (and, for that matter, German and Italian) equivalents: it could refer to a kingdom, a constituent part thereof, or simply the act of rulership.⁴⁰ It was, in other words, perfectly conceivable to have a *regnum Italiae* within a wider Ottonian *regnum*. Indeed, the broader concept of empire allowed for—and potentially encouraged—such pluralism within the Ottonian domains.⁴¹ Much the same goes for charter production. While the region may have possessed its ‘own’ chancery, in practice this meant rather less than nineteenth-century diplomatists and constitutional historians thought: there was considerable contact and cross-fertilization between scribes north and south of the Alps and the degree to which there were clearly defined areas of competence is questionable.⁴² Nor, in any case, was Italy unique in this regard: Lotharingia had enjoyed elements of an independent chancery in the first half of the tenth century, and Burgundy later did too.⁴³ Counterintuitive as it may sound, the existence of a nominally distinct writing office may even have strengthened bonds between Italy and East Francia. Initially, the post of chancellor and archchancellor offered Otto I a valuable opportunity to reward would-be supporters south of the Alps (such as Guy of Modena), whilst in later years these offices often went to East Frankish figures, forming a bridge between the two regions: Otto III appointed Heribert of Cologne chancellor for Italy (later unifying this with the chancellorship of East Francia), whilst Eberhard of Bamberg was chancellor and latterly archchancellor south of the Alps under Henry II.⁴⁴ A separate chancery was, in a sense, like devolved powers in the modern United Kingdom: a sign of distinctiveness, but not of independence.

Perhaps most importantly, there is little indication that rulers treated the Italian realm as qualitatively different from their lands north of the Alps; local customs prevailed, but the royal writ ran undiminished. This is particularly clear in the case of imperial abbey: in both regions, these were recipients of grants of immunity and protection, and in both, the *quid pro quo* was a heightened degree of royal involvement in internal affairs.⁴⁵ This is especially evident in two areas: in the material and military support expected for the ruler and his itinerant court and in the Emperor’s influence over abbatial elections. Just as Otto I could appoint Egilulf abbot of Fulda (968), so too he could

⁴⁰ Cf. H-W. Goetz, ‘Regnum: zum politischen Denken der Karolingerzeit’ (1987), repr. in and cited from his *Vorstellungsgeschichte: gesammelte Schriften zu Wahrnehmungen, Deutungen und Vorstellungen im Mittelalter* (Bochum, 2007), pp. 219–72.

⁴¹ E. Müller-Mertens, *Regnum Teutonicum: Aufkommen und Verbreitung der deutschen Reichs- und Königsauffassung im früheren Mittelalter* (Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte, 15, Berlin, 1970), pp. 121–44.

⁴² Huschner, *Transalpine Kommunikation*, pp. 78–9, 100–47.

⁴³ Bresslau, *Handbuch*, vol. 1, pp. 420–1, 422–3, 446–7.

⁴⁴ G. Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo: il Perpendiculum di Attone di Vercelli e la storia politica del regno italico* (Spoleto, 2011), pp. 250–7 (on Guy); P. Tomei, ‘Coordinamento e dispersione: l’arcicancelliere Uberto di Parma e la riorganizzazione ottoniana della marca di Tuscia’, in A. Ghignoli, W. Huschner and M. U. Jaros (eds), *I sovrani europei e la Toscana nel riflesso della tradizione documentaria (800–1100)* (Leipzig, 2016), pp. 77–85; P. Kehr, *Die Urkunden Otto III.* (Innsbruck, 1890), pp. 63–5 (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 72–83); W. Huschner, ‘Piacenza—Como—Mainz—Bamberg: die Erzkanzler für Italien in den Regierungszeiten Ottos III. und Heinrichs II. (983–1024)’, *Annali dell’Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, 26 (2000), pp. 15–52.

⁴⁵ Mangarano, ‘Protezione regia’; T. Vogtherr, *Die Reichsabteien der Benediktiner und das Königtum im hohen Mittelalter* (Mittelalter-Forschungen, 5, Stuttgart, 2000).

appoint Hubert of Parma to Nonantola (c.968); just as he could expect troops and supplies from Farfa, so too he could expect them from St Gallen. Much the same is true of the episcopate: as they did north of the Alps, Ottonian rulers reserved the right to involvement in episcopal appointments and, as there, material and military support was expected from such prelates.⁴⁶ This is not to say that there were no differences. There were many more bishoprics and fewer imperial abbeys in Italy, and episcopal involvement in the active civic life of the peninsula was very much *sui generis*. Furthermore, the *fodrum* (literally ‘fodder’) owed by Italian abbots and bishops was not identical (at least in semantic terms) to the *servitium* (‘service’, i.e. material support) expected north of the Alps, whilst the tradition of granting legal rights of *districtus* to leading prelates also found no direct parallel in East Francia (though later grants of comital rights in both regions look very similar). Still, these are differences of degree, not nature.

At an ideological level too there is little sense that Italy was distinct. Even before they set foot south of the Alps, Ottonian rulers could issue privileges for Italian recipients, and when they arrived on the peninsula, they did so as rulers in the full sense of the term. Symptomatic of this is the absence of a separate tradition of regnal coronation: when Otto I first claimed the Italian throne in 951, he was not anointed into this role, nor was he in 961–62; the same was true for Otto II and Otto III. Imperial coronation offered something of a substitute, it is true—and certainly furnished a convenient point of reference for the dating clauses of local charters—but there is little sign that the Ottonians were any less lords of Lombardy before this point. The only two rulers reported to have been crowned kings of Italy before the late eleventh century, Henry II (14 May 1004) and Conrad II (late March 1026), serve to underline this point. In the former case, this act was necessitated by the circumstances of Henry’s accession. Following the unexpected death of Otto III in early 1002, the Piedmontese margrave Arduin had staked a claim to the Italian kingship, seeking to dissolve its bond with East Francia. The situation was exacerbated by a succession dispute north of the Alps, from which Henry only slowly emerged victorious. In spring 1004, when the new king first travelled south, he therefore could not afford the time to proceed farther to Rome. Consecration in Pavia offered a convenient stopgap, a means of staking Henry’s claims to the region before returning to more pressing affairs in the north. Quite appropriately, this took the form of an inversion ritual—Henry was consecrated in San Michele, where Arduin had been crowned two years earlier—reinforcing the impression that the act had been necessitated by Arduin’s *coup de main*.⁴⁷ In any case, consecration had little immediate effect on Henry’s standing: he had begun to issue charters for Italian recipients before reaching Pavia, and while the adoption of the new title ‘king of the Franks and Lombards’ (*rex Francorum et Langobardorum*) may suggest a degree of change, with one exception all subsequent documents are dated by reference to Henry’s original

⁴⁶ D’Acunto, *Nostrum Italicum regnum*, pp. 119–58; R. Pauler, *Das Regnum Italiae in ottonischer Zeit* (Bibliothek des deutschen historischen Instituts in Rom, 54, Tübingen, 1982). See also V. Fumagalli, ‘Il potere civile dei vescovi italiani al tempo di Ottone I’, in C. G. Mor (ed.), *I poteri temporali dei vescovi in Italia e in Germania nel Medioevo* (Bologna, 1979), pp. 77–86.

⁴⁷ S. Weinfurter, *Heinrich II.: Herrscher am Ende der Zeiten* (Regensburg, 1999), pp. 231–3. But note that Otto I is not known to have been crowned king of Italy, as Weinfurter implies (cf. Goetz, ‘Imperium’, p. 54).

consecration at Mainz in 1002.⁴⁸ Coronation at Pavia was thus not unlike the symbolic acts undertaken during Henry's earlier perambulation of the realm (*Umrilt*) north of the Alps: it marked the confirmation of a state of affairs already forged some time earlier.

Conrad II was confronted with a similar situation. He too was a newcomer to royal authority, and he too faced opposition in Italy, where there had been much upheaval since Henry II's death. A preliminary act of inauguration upon Conrad's arrival, perhaps modelled on that of his predecessor, may have been an elegant means of securing his position. Still, unlike Henry II, it is far from certain that Conrad was consecrated at all. This event is only recorded in Arnulf of Milan's much later *Liber gestorum* (1070s), a work suffused with local pride, and Arnulf makes much of Archbishop Aribert of Milan's role in the affair, claiming (somewhat disingenuously) that this conformed to local custom. Certainly writers north of the Alps, including the generally well-informed Wipo, know nothing of the event.⁴⁹ Indeed, while Henry had adopted a new title following his Italian coronation, there are no signs of change with Conrad: his titles remain stable throughout 1026 and all diplomas are dated by reference to his original consecration north of the Alps.⁵⁰ In any case, no tradition grew out of these acts: neither Henry III nor Henry IV was crowned king of Italy, and while Henry IV's eldest son Conrad was in 1093, this was in the context of a rebellion against his father.⁵¹ When the future Conrad III revived this custom at Monza in June 1128, it was under similar circumstances: the act was intended to steady his claims against those of the more widely accepted Lothar III (r. 1125–1137)—and indeed the ceremony may have been designed to compensate for the lack of an earlier act of consecration north of the Alps, in which case it was intended to apply there too.⁵²

All indications are therefore that Italy was felt to belong to the Ottonians and their successors by right of succession to East Francia. One should not, however, overstate the case. Memories of a distinct Italian realm did not die overnight, as we have seen, and the possibility that the regions would separate—*de facto* or *de iure*—remained very real. The *regnum Italiae* stood somewhere between the status of a duchy and a client kingdom,

⁴⁸B. Merta, 'Die Titel Heinrichs II. und der Salier', in H. Wolfram and A. Scharer (eds), *Ititlatio III. Lateinische Herrschertitel und Herrschertitulaturen vom 7. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1988), pp. 163–200, at pp. 164–7. For the dating clauses, see DD H II 68–9, 71–4, in H. Bresslau and H. Bloch (eds), *Die Urkunden Heinrichs II. und Arudins* (MGH: DD, 3, Hanover, 1900–3). The exception is D H II 70, which is also the first to bear the new title; however, this is a recipient production and does not survive in its original format.

⁴⁹Arnulf of Miland, *Liber gestorum recentium*, II.2, ed. C. Zey (MGH: SS rer Germ., 67, Hanover, 1994), p. 147 (with commentary at n. 19). However, see Goetz, 'Imperium', p. 55.

⁵⁰See, e.g. DD C II 50–1, 53–63, 65–71, in H. Bresslau (ed.), *Die Urkunden Konards II.* (MGH: DD, 4, Hanover, 1909). In D C II 52 and D C II 64 he is accorded the title *rex Francorum et Langobardorum*, probably under the influence of diplomas of Henry II: Merta, 'Titel Heinrichs II. und der Salier', pp. 172–6.

⁵¹E. Goetz, 'Der Thronerbe als Rivale: König Konrad, Kaiser Heinrichs IV. älterer Sohn', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 116 (1996), pp. 1–49, esp. pp. 25–8.

⁵²J. P. Niederkorn, 'Konrad III. als Gegenkönig in Italien', *Deutsches Archiv*, 49 (1993), 589–600, esp. pp. 589–90. Frederick Barbarossa was crowned at Monza in 1158, but like his earlier coronation at Pavia, this was confirmatory in character: H. C. Peyer, 'Friedrich Barbarossa, Monza und Aachen', *Deutsches Archiv*, 8 (1951), pp. 438–60, at pp. 442–5. See further C. Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium regis: Studien zu den wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des Königtums im Frankenreich und in den fränkischen Nachfolgestaaten Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien vom 6. bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 2 parts (Kölner Historische Abhandlungen, 14, Cologne, 1968), pp. 498–501, 617–21; C. Paganini, 'Incoronazioni di re in Lombardia', in A. Ambrosioni and G. Buccellati (eds), *La corona ferrea nell'Europa degli imperi*, 2 vols (Milan, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 11–43.

more closely tied to East Francia than Bohemia or Poland, but less so than Bavaria or Swabia. Hagen Keller has spoken of a ‘personal union’ (*Personalunion*) between the two, which remained distinct yet associated through the person of the ruler, and this may be along the right lines.⁵³ Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that most contemporaries saw the two as one entity. The Ottonians certainly sought to incorporate Rome and Italy into their domains: as noted, Otto I had his son crowned co-emperor in Rome in 967, and it was also there that Otto II’s marriage to Theophanu would be celebrated in 972. Otto II, for his part, went a step further: he had his son elected not at Worms or Aachen, but at Ravenna; and when the young Otto III was later crowned at Aachen, the archbishop of Ravenna, John, officiated alongside the archbishops of Cologne and Mainz, symbolizing Italy’s involvement.⁵⁴ Certainly the Italian realm was considered an appropriate venue for major gatherings, and magnates from both sides of the Alps were often involved at these events. Such ambitions to foster trans-Alpine solidarity received further impetus under Otto III. Although these efforts found their fullest expression in the lengthy Italian sojourns of the Emperor’s later years, the trend is already visible amongst Otto’s earliest acts. At an assembly at Sohlingen (or possibly Grone) in September 994, which seems to have marked the start of his independent reign, the young ruler made Heribert, the future archbishop of Cologne, chancellor for Italy (the first non-Italian to fill the role), whilst also granting Margrave Hugh of Tuscany land at nearby Ingelheim on which to construct a residence; evidently northern associates were expected to spend much time south of the Alps, and southern supporters much time in the north.⁵⁵

In the long run, these efforts were not maintained. The reigns of Henry II and Conrad II mark something of a watershed here: the first saw imperial presence in Italy reduced to less than two of twenty-two years (compared with over seventeen of forty between 962 and 1002—seventeen of twenty-nine if we exclude the anomalous minority years of Otto III), whilst the second maintained this course, with Conrad spending fewer than three of fifteen years within the region.⁵⁶ It is, therefore, not without reason that Henry II has been termed ‘the “most German” of all early medieval kings’ (with the important caveat that he was ‘certainly not German in the nationalist sense’), and Conrad was not so different.⁵⁷ Thereafter it would be the early 1080s before a ruler spent more than a year on the peninsula. This was in part a product of the insecurity of Henry’s and Conrad’s early years, as we have seen, but it also reflects deeper fissures within the East Frankish realm. Important as Italy was to the Ottonians, it came second to their northern domains (especially Saxony). We can see this in the reign of

⁵³H. Keller, *Zwischen regionaler Begrenzung und universalem Horizont: Deutschland im Imperium der Salier und Stauffer 1024 bis 1250* (Berlin, 1986), pp. 91–4. See also Müller-Mertens, *Regnum Teutonicum*, pp. 375–83, placing a stronger emphasis on unity.

⁵⁴W. Huschner, ‘Erzbischof Johannes von Ravenna (983–998), Otto II. und Theophanu’, *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 83 (2003), pp. 1–40, at pp. 1–5.

⁵⁵J. F. Böhmer, *Regesta Imperii*, vol. 2, 3: *Die Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Otto III.*, ed. M. Uhlirz (Cologne, 1956), nos. 1117–8. See T. Zotz, ‘Königspfalz und Herrschaftspraxis im 10. und frühen 11. Jahrhundert’, *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte*, 120 (1984), pp. 19–46, at pp. 25–8, on the question of Grone. On Hugh, see D’Acunto, *Nostrum Italicum regnum*, pp. 74–92.

⁵⁶G. Tellenbach, ‘Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio: ein Beitrag zu einem großen Thema’ (1982), repr. in and cited from his *Ausgewählte Abhandlungen und Aufsätze*, 5 vols (Stuttgart, 1988–96), vol. 2, pp. 770–92, at pp. 789–92.

⁵⁷J. Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte: die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024* (Berlin, 1994), p. 629.

Otto II: it was only after the Emperor had established himself north of the Alps, overcoming repeated challenges from Duke Henry ‘the Quarrelsome’ of Bavaria, that he was able to extend his sphere of activity to Italy, where he spent his last three years. In the tumultuous early days of Henry II’s and Conrad II’s reigns, it was natural that the region should become a secondary concern. The striking thing is that it never returned to centre stage.

Still, it would be misleading to characterize either of these kings’ reigns in Italy as dysfunctional. Henry and Conrad may have ruled from afar, but rule they did. That this should be so is partly the result of other developments within the East Frankish realm. Both of these rulers hailed from regions farther south than the Ottonians—Henry from Bavaria and Conrad from the Worms- and Speyergau in the Rhineland—and they spent notably more time in their southern duchies.⁵⁸ As a consequence, Henry and Conrad were frequently closer to—and better connected with—Italy than their predecessors had been, a fact reflected in the growing number of charters petitioned north of the Alps by Italian recipients.⁵⁹ Indeed, it was not until the city communes emerged in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries—largely in response to the crisis of authority under Henry IV—that the basis of imperial rule within Lombardy was seriously undermined, and as late as the reign of Frederick II (r. 1212–1250), imperial authority there was far from a dead letter.⁶⁰ Still, one cannot escape the impression that Italy was indeed a lower priority for Henry II and Conrad II (and their successors); there had been a subtle but unmistakable shift in the balance of power and interests within the realm, one which would not be reversed till the time of Barbarossa.

Yet if Italy’s importance in imperial eyes waned, its association with East Francia remained intact. This is reflected in the famous speech of Conrad II to the emissaries of Pavia, as reported by Wipo. In this, the recently anointed king is said to have upbraided the Pavians for their destruction of the imperial palace within the city. In response to the suggestion that since the ruler (Henry II) had died, the palace had no rightful owner, Conrad retorted that just as a ship that has lost its helmsman continues to sail on, so too the kingdom, robbed of its ruler, continues to exist. This anecdote has long been a favourite amongst students of constitutional history and political theory, who see herein evidence of ‘transpersonal conceptions of the state’ (*transpersonale Staatsvorstellungen*). What has less often been noted is that Wipo’s simile presumes that Conrad’s realm consists of a single ship; there is little place here for an independent Italy.⁶¹

⁵⁸E. Müller-Mertens, ‘Reich und Hauptorte der Salier: Probleme und Fragen’, in S. Weinfurter (ed.), *Die Salier und das Reich*, 3 vols (Sigmaringen, 1991), vol. 1, pp. 139–58, at pp. 145–8.

⁵⁹R. Schieffer, ‘Urkunden, die über die Alpen getragen wurden’, in O. B. Rader (ed.), *Turbata per aequora mundi: Dankesgabe an Eckhard Müller-Mertens* (Hanover, 2001), pp. 37–47, at pp. 43–4. See also Huschner, *Transalpine Kommunikation*, pp. 794–913; S. Freund, ‘Kommunikation in der Herrschaft Heinrichs II.’, *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 66 (2003), pp. 1–32, at pp. 19–24.

⁶⁰On the city communes: Wickham, *Sleepwalking*, noting at p. 200 that if Barbarossa had come on the scene in the 1110s, he might have succeeded in reasserting the old political order. On Frederick II: W. Stürner, *Friedrich II. 1194–1250*, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 1992–2000), vol. 2, pp. 98–104, 263–341, 488–96.

⁶¹Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi*, ch. 7, ed. H. Bresslau (MGH Script. rer. Germ., 61, 3rd edn, Hanover, 1915), pp. 29–30. The classic study is H. Beumann, ‘Zur Entwicklung transpersonaler Staatsvorstellungen’ (1956), repr. in and cited from his *Wissenschaft vom Mittelalter. Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Cologne, 1972), pp. 135–74. See also H. Beumann, ‘Das Imperium und die Regna bei Wipo’ (1960), repr. in and cited from his *Wissenschaft vom Mittelalter*, pp. 175–200.

III: Conclusion

From its incorporation into the Ottonian realm in 961–962, Italy was thus an essential part of this, and even when it started to become more peripheral, the two remained a single entity. One should not overlook the region's distinctiveness. Despite occasional inter-dynastic matches—particularly under the Salian rulers—the local aristocracy remained apart from that north of the Alps, and it tended to become if anything more so following the emergence of the city communes of the twelfth century. Indeed, along with tendencies towards unification, there were always ones towards separation. Geography presented particular challenges here, with the Alps forming a major—though by no means insuperable—barrier.⁶² The socio-political make-up of Italy also did not help: its numerous cities, comparatively high levels of literacy and strong antique heritage all set it apart from its Germanophone neighbours to the north. There was, therefore, always a good chance that Italy would go its own way, as indeed it eventually did. Still, this was not inevitable, nor should we dismiss Ottonian and Salian (or even Staufer) rule within the region simply because it was not sustained. Just as David Bates has warned of the dangers of writing the history of the Anglo-Norman realm from the perspective of the loss of Normandy in 1204, so too we must guard against writing the history of the East Frankish-Italian realm from the vantage point of the thirteenth-century inter-regnum and its aftermath.⁶³

In this respect, historians of medieval Germany still stand partly in the shadow of the old Sybel-Ficker debates about empire and Italy: they are all too swift to dismiss or (more often) benignly ignore Italy, even when considering rulers who spent much of their time there.⁶⁴ It is more productive to view Ottonian Italy on its own terms: as a distinctive but integral part of the wider East Frankish realm. Rulers such as Otto II and Otto III did not go on 'Italian expeditions' (*Italienzüge*), as modern scholarship would have it, but rather travelled to Italy as they would any other part of their domain. They may have behaved differently while there—Timothy Reuter once said that the Staufer ruler was 'a completely different beast' south of the Alps, and much the same is true earlier—but this does not make the region any less important for understanding the lives and activities of these individuals.⁶⁵ Indeed, it was this contact with Italy which seems to have led to the gradual adoption of the terms *theodiscus* and (in particular) *teutonicus* for the East Frankish people, establishing the Germanophone–Italian distinction which would later be politically activated during the Investiture Contest.⁶⁶ It is thus a

⁶² Cf. K. Görich, 'Erinnerung und ihre Aktualisierung: Otto III., Aachen und die Karlstradition', in F. J. Felten, P. Monnet and A. Saint-Denis (eds), *Robert Folz (1910–1996): Mittler zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 2007), pp. 97–116, at p. 98, n. 6.

⁶³ D. Bates, *The Normans and Empire* (Oxford, 2013).

⁶⁴ On the Sybel-Ficker debate: T. Brechenmacher, 'Wieviel Gegenwart verträgt historisches Urteilen? Die Kontroverse zwischen Heinrich von Sybel und Julius Ficker über die Bewertung der Kaiserpolitik des Mittelalters (1859–1862)', in U. Muhlack (ed.), *Historisierung und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2003), pp. 87–112.

⁶⁵ T. Reuter, 'Vorn Parvenü zum Bündnispartner: das Königreich Sizilien in der abendländischen Politik des 12. Jahrhunderts', in T. Kölzer (ed.), *Die Staufer im Süden: Sizilien und das Reich* (Sigmaringen, 1996), pp. 43–56, at p. 49.

⁶⁶ Müller-Mertens, *Regnum Teutonicum*. See also Thomas, 'Die Deutschen'.

pleasant irony that the very national categories ‘Italian’ and ‘German’ owe a great deal to a realm which actively ignored such distinctions.

Abstract

The history of the Italian realm between its conquest by Otto I in 961–962 and the death of Otto III in 1002 has been surprisingly neglected. On one hand, Germanophone historians frequently discuss the activities of northern rulers within the region, but do so from the perspective of politics north of the Alps, with little interest in how these experiences shaped Ottonian rule more generally. Italian scholars, on the other, are little interested in royal authority in these years, focusing instead on the growth and development of the local power structures which were to be so characteristic of Italy’s politics in future years. The present article presents an alternative perspective, arguing that Italy was of great importance to the Ottonian rulers, who spent much time on the peninsula and whose efforts at rule there cannot be dismissed as anachronistic and ineffectual.

University of Exeter
L.Roach@exeter.ac.uk