

*Pavia citta regia. Storia e memoria di una capitale medievale* (Altomedioevo 6). By Piero Majocchi. 14x21 cm. 382 pp, 16 b&w pls and figs. Rome: Viella srl, 2008. isbn 978-88-8334-281-3. Price: € 35.00 pb.

by **Marios Costambeys**

The capture of Pavia by Galeazzo II Visconti, *signore* of Milan, on 13 November 1359, is recounted near the end of this book, though in one sense it is also its starting point. The Visconti were interested in Pavia above all because of its past as capital of the Lombard and Italian kingdoms between the 6th and the early 11th centuries, an association which boosted their own aspirations to royalty. As others had done, they sought both to benefit from that history and to shape it, so that Majocchi's task here is to sift those accretions in order to reconstruct (in chronological order, fortunately) the genuine story of Pavia's experience between the era of Theoderic and the turn of the 15th century. Ironically, the Visconti's own architectural interventions, as well as those of recent centuries, have made more than usually scarce the material remains of medieval Pavia, despite the fact that recent archaeology has uncovered an early medieval stratigraphy with less 'dark earth' than is typical for Italian cities at that date, suggesting extensive and continuous habitation. The palace begun by the Ostrogothic king Theoderic was famously obliterated by the citizens in 1024 and the best surviving attestations of the contribution to the city's fabric of Theoderic's Lombard successors, for whom

Pavia was the sole capital from the reign of Adaloald (616-26) to the end of the kingdom in AD 774, are inscriptions detailing their patronage of churches. Only fragments remain of the three circuits of walls documented by Opicino de Canistris in the 14th century.

Pavia's status as royal capital emerges rather in texts, not least the *Dal Verme* codex, a collection made in the cultural circle of Gian Galeazzo Visconti (d 1402) of around 20 historiographical writings, including the famous *Honorantie civitatis Papie*, an account of the Pavia-centred administrative practices of the kingdom, based on a 10th-century nucleus. The entire codex is published here for the first time, in an appendix. These sources allow Majocchi to expose the critical contribution to civic status of two factors: the physical presence of the king and the rituals that helped affirm civic distinctiveness, in particular royal coronations. The emergence by the late 11th century of alternative coronation venues at Milan and its satellite Monza is one indication of the heightening at that time of what was to be a centuries-long struggle for 'capital' status, ended decisively in Milan's favour by Pavia's capture in 1359

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