

appreciated, opening a new era in which information and communication were themselves weapons of war. Better at defining and creatively deploying the concept of propaganda, she has provided us with a stimulating and rewarding text of great value to students of the Renaissance, regardless of specialty.

Paul Solon, *Macalester College*

*La legittimità contesa: Costruzione statale e culture politiche (Lombardia, XII–XV sec.).* Andrea Gamberini.

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In recent years, scholars have turned their attention away from the study of institutional developments as sole indicator of the growth of state structures. Instead, there has been a new historiographical emphasis on the different political systems and actors that coexisted and competed within the same polities. Gamberini's book moves toward this direction, and aims to demonstrate that more often than not, rulers and ruled did not speak the same "political languages." As a consequence, incomprehension, tension, and conflict often shaped the relationship between the various political actors at play, thereby making the building of legitimacy a continuously contested aspect of contemporary politics (9). Gamberini applies this approach to the study of Lombardy in the long period that goes from the emergence of the city communes after ca. 1100 (part 1), to the *signorie* of the Visconti and Sforza dynasties in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (part 2).

Part 1 compares the similarities and differences between the political cultures that developed in the city communes and those existing in the countryside. In particular, Gamberini focuses on the consequences of the expansion of the cities into their surrounding territory (*contado*). This process was not always carried out through armed intervention: often, cities established feudal ties with rural lords, something possible thanks to the cultural similarities between urban and rural elites, who shared the same chivalric lifestyle. Moreover, urban governments expanded their authority by offering tribunals and law experts through which rural lords could settle their often-complex territorial disputes. The increasing collaboration between jurists and urban governments (especially from the late twelfth century onward) led the latter to develop sophisticated legal systems that enabled them to claim the "monopoly of legitimacy." Thus civic governments began to carry out attacks against those who upheld different systems of power. Among these were rural lords, who based their legitimacy not so much on the use of Roman or canon law, or indeed on the granting of prerogatives from superior universal powers, but on practices that ranged from the use of cohesive force to varying degrees of feudal dependence. Most importantly, the relationship between rural lords and their subjects was often structured, negotiated, and legitimized through lists of recipro-

cal duties. Thus, from the thirteenth century onward, urban governments often promulgated laws that sought to weaken or even dissolve feudal links between lords and subjects, thereby generating conflicts and contrasts.

In the second half of the thirteenth century, similar dynamics took place within the walls of many city communes. *Popolo* governments (especially in Central Italy, where they were stronger) sought to exclude urban *milites*, as their political culture was presented as incompatible with the common good of the *res publica*. This was indeed one of the pillars of the political ideology of the *popolo*, as presented by contemporary intellectuals such as the Florentine Brunetto Latini and Remigio dei Girolami. Nevertheless, whether the *popolo* of Lombard cities developed the same political culture as their Central Italian counterparts, as Gamberini seems to suggest, is not clear. While comparative analysis between different cities is not one of the aims of this volume, further studies will shed more light onto the political ideology of the Lombard *popolo*, and help us understand what the similarities and differences with the remainder of communal Italy were, and why.

In part 2, Gamberini demonstrates that during the *signorie* of both Visconti and Sforza, the various political entities that emerged during the preceding period did not disappear but “amplified the magnitude of the debate around the legitimization of power” (125). Here the author discusses a wealth of different examples, ranging from the various attempts to build political legitimization in response to ideological challenges faced in the course of the fourteenth century; the shifting relationship between prince and jurists; and the model of government through the use of local elites, and the different outcomes that this produced both in the cities and in the *contado*.

This book, which covers an ambitiously large chronological period and geographical area (especially in part 1), is not itself based on the analysis of new material, but builds upon numerous case studies (many of which are by Gamberini himself) carried out in the last two decades. Thanks to its clear argument, multitude of convincing examples, and rich bibliography, Gamberini’s book will be a particularly useful “conceptual tool-kit” and state-of-the-field work for scholars not particularly familiar with late medieval (Northern) Italy. Therefore, the potential outreach of this volume would be greatly enhanced by an English translation, possibly together with an introductory chapter to help the reader situate the themes, area, and period investigated within a wider Italian and European context.

Lorenzo Caravaggi, *Balliol College, University of Oxford*