



Dieter Bauer, Matthias Becher, Plassmann Alheydis. *Welf IV. - Schlüsselfigur einer Wendezeit: Regionale und europäische Perspektiven.* München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2004. 472 S. EUR 32.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-406-10665-1.

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The Life and Times of an Eleventh-Century Nobleman

In the year 1055, the young nobleman Welf IV crossed the Alps from his birthplace in Italy to take control of his childless uncle's lordships in the south of Germany. This uncle, Welf III, had intended to donate his extensive lands along the Swabian-Bavarian border to a community of nuns his family had founded. However, following his death, his mother intervened and called on her grandson Welf IV to insure the continuation of the family's power. Her plan proved to be more successful than she could have possibly imagined. Welf IV became one of the most influential nobles of the late eleventh-century German empire. Thanks to Welf IV and his descendants, the Welf dynasty, whose earliest known members first appear in the extant sources during the ninth century, would survive into the twentieth century.

This volume is the product of a conference held in October 2001 to commemorate the 900th anniversary of Welf IV's death, although interestingly, one result of the conference was the redating of his death from 1101 to 1102. The collection of fifteen articles seeks to shed light on various facets of Welf IV's career. As Bernd Schneidmüller notes in his contribution, which introduces the volume, Welf IV is not one of the most famous nobles of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, because he was the first member of his lineage to acquire the title of Duke of Bavaria and because he was one of the leaders of the aristocratic rebellion against Henry IV in the 1070s and 1080s, his career is significant for historians of the eleventh-century German empire. Moreover, his marriage to the Flemish noblewoman Judith produced

heirs who insured the survival of the Welf dynasty and he therefore became a central figure in the memorial strategies of later generations.

Despite the fact that this collection of articles ostensibly has Welf IV as its main subject, analyzing the volume as a unified whole is difficult. The fifteen articles do not combine to form a coherent biography of Welf IV. Furthermore, the rather disjointed organization of the essays means that reading them in the order in which they appear does not produce a clear narrative. Some of the articles that provide basic background information about his career are buried in the middle of the volume, while other articles that do not directly pertain to Welf IV's life appear early in the volume before a reader can gain a firm grasp of Welf IV's place in history. That having been said, the list of historians who contributed to this volume includes several leaders in the field of the medieval German nobility and many of the articles are excellent when read as stand-alone pieces. For the sake of this review, I will divide the articles into two categories, though these categories do not reflect any organizational scheme found in the volume itself: those that discuss aspects of Welf IV's life and career, and those that discuss other dimensions of his family's history.

The first of these categories includes seven of the articles. The aforementioned contribution by Schneidmüller opens the collection by providing an excellent overview of Welf IV's career and legacy. Katrin Baaken considers Welf IV's Italian background and his

connections to Italy even after he crossed the Alps to inherit Welf III's lordships in Germany. Hubertus Seibert focuses on Welf IV's position inside the duchy of Bavaria and discusses his complicated relationship with the Bavarian nobility and the Bavarian church. Johannes Laudage and Helmut Maurer analyze (in their respective articles) various aspects of the role Welf IV played in the papally-sponsored church reform movement inside southern Germany. Thomas Zotz examines Welf IV's leadership of the aristocratic faction that opposed Emperor Henry IV in the closing decades of the eleventh century, and Marie-Louise Favreau-Lilie explores Welf IV's participation in the crusade of 1101-02, from which he never returned.

The second category includes eight articles that focus on other aspects of Welf family history. Alheydis Plassmann, in one of the volume's most creative contributions, compares the twelfth-century *Historia Welforum*, one of the most important sources for the history of the Welf dynasty, to a pair of family histories from Flanders and Anjou. Werner Hechberger uses the *Historia Welforum* and other sources from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to examine how later generations of the Welf family preserved the memory of the events of 1055, when Welf IV came into his uncle's inheritance. Heinz Dopsch explores the career of Welf IV's uncle, Welf III. Matthias Becher analyzes the unusual name "Welf" and considers why it became such a popular appellation within the family. S  nke Lorenz discusses the history of the

monastery of Weingarten, which was founded by Welf IV and remained important for the family in later generations, while Franz Fuchs describes the early history of the Welf family's monastic foundation at Rottenbuch. Karel Hruza considers the earliest evidence for Welf family ministerials in the south of Germany, arguing that the family's ministerialage probably began to take shape during Welf IV's lifetime. Elke Goez discusses the marriage, and subsequent divorce, of Welf IV's son Welf V with the powerful northern Italian heiress Matilda of Tuscany.

Although this volume does not provide a coherent biography of Welf IV, this collection of articles does make valuable contributions to medieval scholarship in other ways. Several contributions touch on the relationship between aristocratic opposition to Henry IV's rule and the papally-supported church reform movement of the later eleventh century. The picture that emerges from these articles of the interplay between reform agendas and imperial politics is a complex and nuanced one that adds much to our understanding of the reign of Emperor Henry IV. In addition, the overwhelming majority of the scholars who contributed to this collection refer to the twelfth-century *Historia Welforum* in their pieces, and many of these articles therefore provide interesting perspectives on this key source for the history and memorial strategies of Welf IV's family. Thus, while this article collection does not bear a cover-to-cover reading, many historians will find the volume useful, especially if they are searching for new insights into the Welf dynasty.

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