



Steven Fanning, Bernard S. Bachrach, eds. *The "Annals" of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966.* Orchard Park: Broadview Press, 2004. xxxv + 120 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55111-650-1.



Reviewed by Anna Lisa Taylor (Department of History, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

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An Archivist In Medias Res

The tenth-century historian and poet Flodoard of Reims was uniquely placed to write the annals of western Francia from 919 to 966. Although Reims had declined in importance since the days of its famous archbishop Hincmar (842-82), it still housed the library Hincmar had assembled and remained a center of political activity. From 946, Flodoard was the chief archivist at Reims, a role which, as Fanning and Bachrach note, gave him access to information from both documents and important individuals. His writing was informed by "a combination of his personal acquaintance with many of the major protagonists (both in terms of understanding their motivations and their ability to divulge information), [and] the 'paper trail' that crossed his desk" (pp. xi-xii).

In a brief biographical sketch, Fanning and Bachrach tell us that Flodoard, born in 893 or 894, was educated at the cathedral school of Reims, before becoming a priest and, at some point, a canon there, serving under Archbishops Herverus and Seulfus. From 925 to 948, two archbishops, Hugh, whom his father Count Heribert II of Vermandois first installed when he was a small child, and Artoaldus, candidate of Hugh the Great, struggled for control

of the see. During their alternating reigns, Flodoard variously suffered suspicion and imprisonment at the hands of Heribert, and the confiscation of his benefices and properties.

In addition to the Annals, Flodoard wrote several other important works. In the 930s, he composed three long epic poems together called *De triumphis Christi*, and in the 950s he wrote a *History* of the Church of Reims. Flodoard began the *Annals* in 920, with an account of the previous year, and the reports continue until his death in 966. Flodoard's year-by-year account, which includes political and ecclesiastical events, intrigues, invasions, miracles, and prodigies, is a major source for the poorly documented history of the tenth century. Although biased against anyone whom he saw as threatening the autonomy of Reims's church, Flodoard is regarded by most modern scholars, including Fanning and Bachrach, as an accurate source. Understandably, he focuses on events in Reims. His account of the tumultuous events there in the second quarter of the tenth century, culminating in its capture by King Louis IV and King Otto I of Germany in 946, are particularly detailed and fascinating. Fanning

and Bachrach argue that Flodoard was also particularly well informed about Neustria, Austrasia, and Lotharingia because of his connections and his intermittent work as a diplomat. His brief accounts of events present incidents such as Norman attacks and the political maneuverings of the house of Vermandois in clear prose, which is carefully rendered in Fanning and Bachrach's lucid and readable translation.

In addition to their brief introduction to Flodoard's life, Fanning and Bachrach give a short overview of the political divisions of western Europe from Charlemagne's time up until the tenth century. They also provide overviews of the political situations among the Frankish kingdoms and their neighbors. Although these dense summaries are a useful primer on the period's tangled history, their brevity means that they present a deceptively certain narrative that does not engage controversies over the reconstruction of the turbulent tenth century. Fanning and Bachrach briefly mention the work's significance for considering the contested no-

tion of the "feudal revolution," but they do not locate Flodoard's work in the wider historiography of tenth-century studies or in the context of recent works on Carolingian history and memory. Particularly relevant here is Michel Sot's re-evaluation of Flodoard as a historian intent on creating a memory for his church in Reims.[1]

The notes to this translation are extremely helpful, allowing the reader to keep track of the various figures who appear in Flodoard's narrative. Likewise, the maps and genealogical tables assist the reader in following the political and dynastic struggles Flodoard documents. Fanning and Bachrach's well-documented translation makes this important source accessible to a wide range of readers, including undergraduate students of medieval history.

Note

[1]. Michel Sot, *Un historien et son Église au Xe siècle: Flodoard de Reims* (Paris: Fayard, 1993).

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