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Renaissance et Réforme**

# Social Mobility in Medieval Italy (1100–1500)

## Jennifer Mara Desilva

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cartography, makes it a fascinating read and provides readers with an overall picture of a distant world that became progressively more familiar to an Italian literary public over several centuries.

JAMES NELSON NOVOA
University of Ottawa

**Carocci, Sandro, and Isabella Lazzarini, eds.**
*Social Mobility in Medieval Italy (1100–1500).*
Viella Historical Research 8. Rome: Viella, 2018. Pp. 430 + 8 ill. ISBN 978-88-6728-820-5 (hardcover) €75.

This volume is the result of a conference held in Rome (26–28 September 2016), which marked the culmination of a research project entitled La mobilità sociale nel medioevo italiano (secoli XII–XV). Financed by Italy's Progetti di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale grant system (2014–16), this project brought together researchers from four universities who coordinated a larger group of participants over three years, and was influenced by a previous collective investigation focused on the *conjecture de 1300* that produced a conference and multi-authored volume (2010). In this new undertaking, participants used economic and social lenses to launch a large-scale investigation of social mobility from the twelfth through the fifteenth century.

In such a limited space it is challenging to do justice to the breadth of knowledge and scholarly commitment found in this volume. As a spur to further research, this book provides a compendium of historiography, analytical approaches, new questions, and energetic offerings by experts in the field. While many of the authors focus on the Italian peninsula, the discussion also embraces England, France, the Low Countries, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Iberian Peninsula. The volume is divided into three sections: "Frameworks," which offers geographically oriented overviews; "Surveys," which explores specific questions related to medieval social mobility; and "Themes," which offers thematic and historiographical discussions. The volume begins with an introduction by the editors, Sandro Carocci and Isabella Lazzarini, and ends with a concluding chapter by Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, both of which aim to

put the project and the resulting chapters in context *vis à vis* its development and relationship to current scholarship.

All twenty-one research contributions offer discussions of valuable subtopics by European scholars, most translated into or written in English, with two in French. The first section, "Frameworks," offers authors an opportunity to comment on medieval social mobility as it has been discussed in their own geographical areas. Notably, several scholars emphasize the implicit conflict between the traditional view of rigid stratification implied by the model of the three estates (clergy, nobility, and everyone else) and movement between classes. François Menant notes that this movement was a commonplace of French medieval scholarship without using the term "social mobility." Christopher Dyer and David Igual Luis lament the slow progress on this topic in English and Iberian scholarship. Interestingly, many chapters note a recent increase in interest, perhaps spurred (as Maire Vigueur suggested) by current concerns about global inequality.

In the second section, "Surveys," Carocci situates the Italian church as a channel for social mobility, discussing the important connection with nepotism and the later perspective of offices as property. Andrea Gamberini explores office-holding as a path to advancement through an investigation of Lombardy under the Visconti and the Sforza, noting the value of mobility achieved through clientalism or patronage, and the membership of the chancery and ducal secret council as sites for new men. Giuseppe Petralia argues against the notion of a late medieval crisis in Italian communes prompting prolonged economic and social stagnation, instead citing political office-holding as a route to new resources. Lorenzo Tanzini's discussion of notaries and lawyers presents a complementary perspective, indicating how internal collegiate organization can illustrate reaction to external social, political, and professional forces. The two chapters by Simone M. Collavini and Maria Elena Cortese together offer an informative analysis of how the legal and socio-economic categories of lord, *miles*, *colonus*, and peasant animated the Italian countryside and its small towns. Both authors identify the supportive social and economic relationships between individuals of various classes and groups that connected warfare, trade, and agriculture in this period. Likewise, the chapters by Sergio Tognetti and Alma Poloni re-focus the narrative of Italian trade around examples of geographic and social mobility, the importance of cities as international markets, and new additions to urban governing groups spurred by merchant

wealth. Both scholars offer valuable examples to illustrate their arguments, emphasize the need for contextualization, and, as Tognetti states, avoid allowing the teleological perspective to dominate empirical analysis.

The third section, "Themes," includes several chapters exploring less well-studied parts of the Italo-Mediterranean world. Francesco Senatore and Pierluigi Terenzi connect chapters on the northern and central Italian peninsula with examples from the kingdom of Naples. In particular, they argue the need to broaden the discourse and to acknowledge that the ultimate goal of social mobility, admission to the nobility, could only be confirmed by a monarch. Bianca de Divitiis complements this argument with a valuable discussion of how palace architecture and building plans can reveal incremental social advancement in Milan and Naples. The two chapters by Alessandro Silvestri and Olivetta Schiena on Sicily and Sardinia, respectively, shift the reader's view to territories that hosted ports for late medieval international trade. As part of the larger contemporary campaign of Aragonese conquests, both territories played important roles in the movement of goods and administrators, and consequently in the ongoing quest for social advancement by merchants and office-holders. In combination with earlier work by other contributors to this volume, and Lazzarini's chapter on Italian diplomacy as a channel for mobility, these chapters show the variety of paths, but also their potential for encounter and intersection in this period.

Notably, beyond the odd reference as brides or widowed investors, women play a minor role in this collection. Serena Ferente's perceptive chapter notes the strong scholarly production on women's work and mobility since the 1980s, but there is precious little of that apparent in the rest of the volume. Using literary, legal, and social evidence, Ferente situates women amid the quest for upward mobility. Although, there is ample attention paid to rural and poor communities, in this collection there are few obvious efforts to discuss women, non-Christian communities, or other seemingly invisible groups in late-medieval society. As this collection succeeds in moving the historical discussion past some outdated social models, perhaps future contributors can integrate women further into this energetic and revealing research.

JENNIFER MARA DESILVA
Ball State University