

Silanos, Pietro; Sprenger, Kai-Michael (Hrsg.): *La Distruzione di Milano (1162). Un Luogo di Memorie*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero 2015. ISBN: 978-88-343-3009-8; XI, 305 S.

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The volume collects the proceedings of a conference organized by the Catholic University of Milan and the German Historical Institute in Rome in December 2012, on the 850th anniversary of Milan's destruction by Frederick Barbarossa. This event is considered a „lieu de mémoire“ and is analysed accordingly.

The first essay by Pietro Silanos (pp. 3–15) summarises the main themes of the volume and explains the fundamental difference between „communicative memory“, that is memory of recent events people have experienced and remember during their lifetime, and „cultural memory“, that is memory of occurrences which happened much earlier and since then have been re-elaborated through specific words, images and rites by secular or religious institutions in order to strengthen the collective identity of a community.

The essay by Pietro Costa (pp. 17–29) concerns the historical and philosophical meaning of the words „identity“, „memory“ and „city“. It studies the role of individual and collective memory in order to build bridges between past and present. Moreover, it analyses the analogies and differences between memory and historiography. It also considers their influence upon the establishment of social identity. In fact literary sources, places and images show that a city can be both a community and a symbol founded on rites and myths.

The essay by Maria Pia Alberzoni (pp. 31–54) begins by pointing out that Milan's destruction was the only event of Frederick's time which is mentioned by several authors living in different cities. She then focuses mainly on Milan. Apart from chronicles, the acts of the commune of Milan offer precious information about Barbarossa's memory among the city's inhabitants, who omitted his name in public and private documents when the relations with the Empire were tense. Moreover, Milan's destruction was often used as a chronological landmark

and this indicates clearly that it was perceived as a turning-point already in the aftermath of 1162.

The essay by Marialuisa Bottazzi (pp. 55–83) is about the importance of the *Porta Romana* for the collective memory of Milan's citizens. The author studies the gate, its low reliefs and inscriptions with great care. By doing so she concludes that the *Porta Romana* symbolises not only the city's reconstruction, but also Milan's love and respect for the Ambrosian Church.

The essay by Alfredo Pasquetti (pp. 85–143) deals with Milan's destruction in the German sources, which do not hide that Frederick's drastic measures against the city were a kind of revenge. At the same time, imperial authors believed that revenge and justice were just the same, as Milan had betrayed its lawful sovereign. Barbarossa's harshness against the city was justified by the hope that, once Milan was subjugated, the emperor could undertake more glorious enterprises. The German authors of the following centuries follow this path and take advantage of Frederick's victory in order to strengthen its myth.

The essay by Alfredo Lucioni (pp. 145–183) concerns the events of 1162 in Milanese sources written from the Late Middle Ages to the 18th century. He analyses the works of Bonvesin da la Riva and Galvano Fiamma examining their account about the behaviour of a few alleged traitors, who helped Frederick to conquer the city. Lucioni then studies a few humanist works, pointing out their relations with Galvano and other previous authors. Finally, he surveys a few historians of the 16th to the 18th centuries, showing how the different political circumstances influenced the memory of Milan's destruction.

The essay by Giuseppe Langella (pp. 185–196) focuses on the events of 1162 in the Italian literature of the Risorgimento, when Milan's destruction was considered a shameful memory, because the city was razed to the ground also by the troops of other Italian cities, such as Lodi, Pavia and Cremona, long-standing enemies of Milan. For this reason the city's destruction was often neglected or remembered very briefly by 19th century Italian authors.

The essay by Camilla G. Kaul (pp. 197–229)

deals with pictures about Frederick and the destruction of Milan which were painted in Germany during the 19th century. Frescoes and paintings were conceived to make German people aware of their past and of their national pride. Barbarossa and the so-called „humiliation of Milan“ were powerful symbols to achieve these results by using contemporary philosophical and political concepts. The purpose was to depict Frederick Barbarossa as a model for all Germans who struggled for national unity.

The essay by Miriam Giovanna Leonardi (pp. 231–253) concerns the fourth portal of Milan's cathedral and its reliefs representing the city's destruction. Milan's enemies are depicted like Germans and their helmets are very similar to *Pickelhauben*, the helmets used by Prussian soldiers during the First World War. Again, cultural memory and present time are closely related. The portal was finally consecrated by cardinal Alfredo Ildefonso Schuster, Milan's archbishop, in 1950 and all people could see the analogies between the destruction of 1162 and that caused by the Second World War.

The essay by Knut Görich (pp. 255–285) briefly summarises each contribution. He then points out that the responsibility of Milan's destruction was not only Frederick's as many Italian writers assume. As a matter of fact, the cities allied with Barbarossa had an important role. Moreover, he shows that politics, then and now, is a complex communicative process consisting of laws, rules, ideals and memories. Frederick, for example, was remembered as a positive political figure by some cities, as for example Lodi, which he refounded after it was destroyed by Milan in 1158. For all these reasons the author concludes that the memory of Frederick and the memory of Milan's destruction are closely related with hopes, problems and ideologies of every author's time.

At the end of the volume there are short English abstracts of each essay and an index of personal names. The book is a well-argued study of Milan's destruction and brings new insights on how people living in the 12th century and afterwards remembered this event. Historical, philosophical and philological contributions, not to mention

those related with art history, offer an interdisciplinary approach to the subject which enables the reader to understand the events of 1162 and their consequences in a wider perspective.

There are, however, a few aspects which could have been investigated a little further. The analysis of Milan's destruction in Milanese and German sources, for example, could have been accompanied by a contribution devoted to sources written in other Italian cities. In fact Maria Pia Alberzoni, citing Lidia Capo¹, points out the importance of Milan's destruction for the communes, but then she concentrates mainly on Milan. An essay focusing exclusively on the memory of 1162 in contemporary and later authors of other Italian cities could have offered a better understanding. Furthermore, it would have been very interesting to add an essay on the memory of Milan's destruction in books composed by secular and regular clergy such as hagiographical works, homilies or theological treatises. Apart from this, there are a few minor omissions and mistakes which can be found in the volume. Marialuisa Bottazzi mentions an inscription positioned on the *Porta Romana* and prints a photo of it at the end of her article (figure 1, p. 80), but she writes neither a transcription nor a translation, which would have been useful. Alfredo Pasquetti briefly cites the etymology of Milan (pp. 125–126) and points out that the „*Chronica S. Petri Erfordensis moderna*“ describes the city as a wild boar („*aper de silva*“), which is a biblical quotation of psalm 79(80),14. In a very similar way Milan's etymology is explained also by Bonvesin da la Riva.² Giuseppe Langella writes that the first performance of Verdi's opera titled „*La battaglia di Legnano*“ was given in January 1949 (p. 189), whereas the correct date is January 1849. These are, however, minor inaccuracies. Altogether, the volume is a well-written and precise study, which provides scholars with useful information about the memory of Milan's destruction in Italian and German sources. Everyone who

¹ Lidia Capo, Federico Barbarossa nelle cronache italiane contemporanee, in: *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo* 96 (1990), pp. 303–345.

² Bonvesin da la Riva, *De magnalibus Mediolani*, ed. Paolo Chiesa, Milano 1997, p. 58.

is interested in the events of 1162 should read it.

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