
Simon MacLean’s *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicles of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* provides translations of selected sections of these chronicles together with a comprehensive introduction to the texts. Regino of Prüm considered himself a historian of the Franks. He stated “I have compiled from works about our own times and those of our forefathers, so that it may be either approved or condemned by your perspicacious judgement” (61). Regino’s *Chronicle* consists of two books. Book I is entitled “Here Begins the Little Book on the Times of the Lord’s Incarnation,” and as the title suggests it begins with the incarnation of the Lord instead of commencing with creation, which was an unusual beginning at the time. Regino was the first historian to do this. The book concludes with the death of Charles Martel in 741. MacLean carefully considers the narrative and the structural sources of book I. He notes that the work is not politically neutral and that Regino knew where his narrative was going and he “cut and pasted” from the appropriate sources. In book I Regino moves from the defined reign of Roman emperors to the defined reign of the Frankish kings, providing “an imperial past for the Carolingian dynasty to inherit” (23). Book II, entitled “On the Deeds of the Franks,” continues this narrative from Charles Martel to the last entry in the text of 906. While the Frankish theme is implicit to the structure of book I it is explicit to that of book II. This book is divided into three sections: first the time of Louis the Pious (814–840); second the time of the multiple heirs to the empire of Emperor Lothar and his brother (840–c875), which divided the empire; and the third section is of his own time. Regino clearly distinguished between events that he had read and heard of and events to which he had been a witness. Prüm was one of the Carolingian empire’s economically and politically important institutions. As abbot of Prüm and with his close connection to the royal family, Regino was near to the kingdom’s political centre until his fall in status in 899. His work provides an essential account of the empire’s collapse in the ninth century and the account between the years 892–906 provides an important insight into major feuds that evolved after the end of the empire.

Adalbert of Magdeburg’s *Chronicle* is a much shorter continuation of Regino’s text. However, in contrast to Regino’s account of the decline of
the Carolingian empire in the eighth and ninth centuries, Adalbert documents the rise to power of the Ottonians, the first German dynasty in the tenth century. He begins with the death in 911 of King Louis [the child], the last of the Carolingian line. His continuation of Regino’s chronicle was written in 967/968 at Wissembourg. He witnessed and documented the high Ottonian period of the mid-tenth century. Both Regino and Adelbert’s chronicles provide important accounts of a time of widespread political crisis and activity. MacLean’s *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe* will be a significant research tool and appeal to a wide audience who are interested in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. This book is available for purchase in Australia from Footprint Books or from any good bookseller.

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**Mellor, Scott A., Analyzing Ten Poems from The Poetic Edda: Oral Formula and Mythic Patterns**

(Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008) hardcover; 321 pages; RRP £74.95; ISBN 9780773448568

An apparently unrevised version of the author’s 1999 University of Wisconsin-Madison doctoral dissertation (“Function and Formula: An Analysis of Ten Poems from *Codex Regius*”), this is an intriguing but often vexing book. Seeking to judge the applicability of the oral-formulaic theory of Milman Parry and Albert Lord to Eddic poetry, Mellor’s study is notable both for its original and undeveloped nature. Many of the problems associated with unrevised dissertations are present in this sometimes awkward, always searching book—too much repetition, needless signposting, significant omissions, and a general sense of expository immaturity. But despite the lateness of its appearance in monographic form, Mellor’s study can scarcely be criticised for being out-of-date. Central to Mellor’s book is an analysis of the syntactic make-up of the half-lines of the Sigurd or Volsung poems—indeed much of the book is dedicated to a formal listing of his data (134 pages) rather than expository analysis. Yet the idiosyncrasy of his study is here at its loudest—Mellor does not situate his work within any recognisable genre of modern syntactic study, calling his approach (instead) “semantic”. It is rather odd to see prepositional phrases and the like being called “semantic strings” (was Mellor a computer