



The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire (Regents Studies in Medieval Culture)

Paul Edward Dutton

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Between the reigns of Charlemagne and Charles the Fat, Europe underwent a series of alarming and unsettling changes. Civil war broke out, royal authority was divided, and the brightest of men and women began to entertain nightmarish thoughts of the corruption and collapse of their world.

Amidst the ruin of their shaken and shattered assumptions, Carolingian intellectuals wrote down a series of dream texts. The Carolingian oneiric record, though dark with confusion and immoderate emotion, supplies us with a more subjective reading of this formative period of European history than the one found in standard histories. Carolingian dream-authors criticized and complained because they hoped to reform a royal society that had lost its way.

This study begins by surveying the sleep of kings and the status of royal dreams from the classical period to the ninth century. Then it runs to an examination of individual dreams and the political disruption that informs them. The reader will encounter a variety of surprising dreams: of Charlemagne's lust, demons and archangels, a sorrowful prophet, disputed property and bullying saints, magical swords and mad princes, and Charles the Fat's journey through an awesome otherworld towards an uncertain constitutional future.

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