Representations of Lothar I in the *Liber pontificalis Ravennatis*

by Edward M. Schoolman

Lothar looms large in the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna, an episcopal *gesta* composed after 846 by a local cleric of that city named Agnellus. In its prefatory verse, Lothar was tied to the memory of his grandfather Charlemagne, and afterwards was presented as an ally of the city and its church, a relationship sealed by the service of the bishop George (837-846) as godfather to Lothar's daughter Rotruda. Furthermore, upon the death of Louis the Pious, as part of an embassy attempting to resolve the conflicts between Lothar and his brothers, George sought to affirm Ravenna privileges on the eve of the battle of Fontenoy, an event described quite differently from other sources. Completed following these struggles, the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna used this image of Lothar to further claims of the special status of the city, especially in its independence from Rome and longstanding imperial connections, and actively sought to legitimize Lothar's own position through a juxtaposition with Charlemagne. Although preserved in the accounts of the bishops of Ravenna, the singular efforts to elevate and memorialize Lothar differ from other contemporary institutional chronicles, and underscore the tension inherent in the narrative.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Italy; Ravenna; Lothar I; Agnellus of Ravenna; *Liber pontificalis Ravennatis*; civic memory.

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Abbreviations

ChLA^{2}, LV = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo – G. Nicolaj, part LV, Italy XXVII, Ravenna II, publ. R. Cosma, Dietikon-Zürich 1999.

1. *Introduction*

The only narrative source to emerge from ninth-century Ravenna was the *Liber pontificalis* of a local cleric Agnellus, who not only recorded the institutional history of the local church, but used the serial biographies of its bishops to reframe the city's recent history against its illustrious and tumultuous past[1]. During his own lifetime, the arrival of Lothar in 834 made these efforts all the more important, as the return of an emperor with interest in the city mirrored many moments of its former life as imperial, royal, and exarchal capital. Despite Lothar's rebellion against his father Louis the Pious, and later conflicts with his brothers, Agnellus generally portrayed the Carolingian ruler in a positive light, following in the footsteps of his grandfather Charlemagne; however, Agnellus also incorporates anxieties about the status of Ravenna, the errors of its bishops, and the difficulties faced by the city and church during Lothar's reign[2]. Exploring this tension, as well as the episodes featuring Lothar that appear in the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna, will be the primary goal of this chapter.

The other major figure in Agnellus's narrative was George, who served as bishop from ca. 837-846. On the surface, there is great animosity towards the bishop for his various misappropriations and his unsuitable character, but the *Liber pontificalis* also traces his efforts to legitimize the city's imperial status through a close alliance with Lothar. In placing Lothar as central to contemporary Ravenna, Agnellus also must configure his own appropriation of sources and the methods by which he composed his set of serial biographies, taking from older (now lost) accounts, the *Liber pontificalis* of the Roman Bishops, and various eyewitness accounts, including, presumably, those close

[1] Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*. Trans. from Agnellus of Ravenna, *The Book of Pontiffs*. The Italian translation appears in Pierpaoli, *Il Libro di Agnello*. The bibliography for Agnellus's use of history and narrative is considerable, and includes: Brown, *'Romanitas' and 'Campanilismo'*; Martínez Pizarro, *Writing Ravenna*; Borri, *Nightfall on Ravenna*.

[2] An overview of the roles Ravenna's bishops played in the eighth and ninth centuries by extending their local authority through allying with Frankish rulers and offering the symbolic value of a past imperial capital appears in Brown, *A Byzantine Cuckoo*. On the Italian narrative sources for this period, see also: Noble, *Talking about the Carolingians*; Brown, *Louis the Pious and the Papacy*. For Lothar's reign in Italy, a recent major study has reviewed the most critical sources: Sernagiotto, Spes optima regni.

to Bishop George, and especially his own experiences in serving the bishops of Ravenna[3].

Addressing the representations of Lothar, however, also lend themselves to further questions about the ways in which the text of the *Liber pontificalis Ravennatis* negotiated with the city's contemporary situation. That is, how did Agnellus try to balance the disreputable nature of George, the bishop of Ravenna who was allied to the Emperor Lothar in much of the narrative, with the efforts to elevate the city's "imperial" status within its own history and community memory? How did the Carolingian civil wars of the early 840s impact the historical memory of local Italian institutions? And, finally, how does the unique position of Ravenna and its relationship to Lothar manifest when placed in comparison with similar contemporary parallels, such as the *Gesta episcoporum neapolitanorum* and other institutional chronicles? Exploring these issues illuminates the inconsistencies in how local communities responded to and commemorated Lothar's complex reign[4].

2. *Emperors in Ravenna*

Lothar was not the only medieval emperor to visit Ravenna in an effort to legitimize political ambitions, following the model of both the late Roman emperors and the Ostrogothic king Theodoric. Both Charlemagne and Louis the Pious visited the city before Lothar, and there was continued activity from late- and post-Carolingian rulers claiming the imperial title[5]. For example, in 877 Charles the Bald held a synod in Ravenna two years after his own imperial coronation and shortly before his death[6]; in 882 it was the site were Charles the Fat issued six charters, important for their legislative materials[7]; and in 892, the city played host to the coronation of Guy and Lambert of Spoleto as co-emperors by Pope Formosus[8]. For the first half of the tenth century, the regular appearance of emperors (or claimants) slowed to a trickle, with the exception of Berengar I, who issued a charter in Ravenna in 916. Yet with the arrival of Otto

[3] On the sources and methodology used by Agnellus, see Deliyannis's introduction to Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, pp. 20-52; on Agnellus's use of the Roman *Liber pontificalis*, see: Deliyannis, *The 'Liber pontificalis' of the Church of Ravenna*.

[4] I have purposefully only addressed contemporary texts and those not already analyzed in Sernagiotto, Spes optima regni. Other evidence, such as the charters, have been expounded in Screen, *Lothar I in Italy*.

[5] There is significant difference in the quantity and quality of visits by Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. For Charlemagne, Ravenna was a regular stop on his Italian itineraries, and the city likely served as a model for his own imperial capital in Aachen: Deliyannis, *Charlemagne's Silver Tables*. Louis the Pious, on the other hand, may have only visited the city once, in 793, as part of a campaign of his brother Pepin of Italy: Brown, *Louis the Pious and the Papacy*, p. 301. On visits to Ravenna as part of Carolingian itineraries, see: Brühl, Fodrum, Gistum, pp. 400-403.

[6] Savigni, *I papi e Ravenna*, pp. 350-351.

[7] MacLean, *Legislation and politics*.

[8] Brown, *A Byzantine Cuckoo*, pp. 193-194.

I in 951 and the establishment of the Saxon dynasty, Ravenna became one of the most important imperial sites in Italy once more (rivaling Pavia and Rome)[9].

These visits did not just concern the city, but the political role of its bishops and the reciprocity of legitimation and support of the emperors in equal measure, a pattern that had been continually replicated and rehabilitated since Late Antiquity[10]. As early as the fifth century, those living in the city of Ravenna, and especially its bishops and clergy, promoted their connections to the emperors living in their midst. Peter Chrysologus, who served as bishop from 433 to 450, made mention of the imperial family of the house of Theodosius when they were in attendance at his sermons, highlighting both the family's faith as well as their patronage of the local church[11]. In the sixth century, the decorative schema of the church of S. Vitalis linked together parallel images of bishop Ecclesius, who served as bishop from 522 to 532, with that of the Emperor Justinian, both depicted as donors, but with the clear primacy of Bishop Ecclesius in the apse[12]. The idealized donor form presented here remained a significant source for this tradition with its eastern roots, but one which was readily adopted in Italy for later imperial figures like Otto I, perhaps even through these very appearances in Ravenna's mosaics[13].

It is worth considering the imperial panels from S. Vitalis on their own. In the famous scene of the imperial court with Justinian, a prominent space is dedicated to Maximian, who according to the *Liber pontificalis* was hand selected by the emperor to serve as bishop of Ravenna. If we can trust the inscription and its identification, he might have been the only member of that retinue to have even seen this mosaic, which was described in the 840s by Agnellus in the *Liber pontificalis* as «Eiusdem Maximiani effigies atque augusti et augustae tesselli ualde comptitatae sunt. Quamdiu possumus de hoc sancto uiro tantam bonitatem referre, deficit michi tempus narrationis. Iste plus omnibus laborauit quam ceteri pontifices predecessores sui»[14]. To those serving the church of Ravenna or seeking imperial legitimacy, the visibility of such a relationship must have served as a constant reminder of its benefits, perhaps even to George and Lothar as Agnellus's contemporaries.

[9] Schoolman, *Rediscovering Sainthood*, pp. 84-85; Brown, *Culture and society*; Brühl, Fodrum, Gistum, pp. 473-474.
[10] Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*.
[11] Schoolman, *Rediscovering Sainthood*, pp. 6-7; Sivan, *Galla Placidia*, pp. 74-75 and 161-162. Tom Brown has pointed out that despite this connection and Peter's popularity, there is little later cult activity: Brown, *The 'Political' Use of the Cult of Saints*, p. 57.
[12] On the design and interpretation of the apse mosaic in S. Vitalis, see: Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, pp. 236-243. On Ecclesius's image, see: Deliyannis, *Ecclesius of Ravenna*.
[13] Schoolman, *Rediscovering Sainthood*, pp. 110-114. The long hiatus from imperial politics in Italy during this period has been attributed to Ravenna's political recentering towards its local aristocracy: West-Harling, *Rome, Ravenna, and Venice*, p. 86.
[14] Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, 77 («the image of this same Maximian and of the emperor and empress are beautifully created in mosaic» going on to note that «however long we could tell of the goodness of this holy man, the time for narration is lacking to me. He labored in all things more than the other bishops his predecessors»; trans. Deliyannis).

Some of Maximian's successors as bishops also labored to maintain connections – or at least the appearance of connections – to the emperors now in Constantinople. For example, this mosaic panel from S. Apollinaris in Classe «came to represent the various functions of the archbishop, from his liturgical role to his political importance to his status as heir of Apollinaris» who was also prominently featured on the apse[15]. Although a rough parallel in design to the panel in S. Vitalis, the imperial figures in the mosaic of S. Apollinaris have been heavily restored, but enough remains to suggest that this panel commemorates the granting of privileges to Ravenna's church. The panel includes a bishop and his episcopal retinue receiving a physical copy of the *privilegia* from a Byzantine emperor (or group of emperors), perhaps Emperor Constantine IV (668-685) and his brothers Heraclius and Tiberius with Bishop Reparatus (671-677) as described in the *Liber pontificalis* (and whose names are later inscribed in mosaic during a medieval repair)[16]. Through the images manifested in the physical environment of the city of Ravenna, and in its history as understood in the ninth century, Ravenna's bishops protected and promoted the city by means of their relationships to emperors. Along with the career of Agnellus and his personal grievances, it is this context that the representation of Lothar in the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna also must be understood.

3. *The* Liber pontificalis *as a source for Ravenna and Lothar*

The *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna has a limited and late manuscript tradition. It was written by Agnellus, who refers to himself within the text also as «Andreas», along with the methodology he used:

> Hunc praedictum Pontificalem, a tempore beati Apolenaris post eius decessum paene annos .dccc. et amplius, ego Agnellus qui et Andreas (...) composui. Et uni inueni quid illi certius fecerunt, uestris aspectibus allata sunt, et quod per seniores et longaeuos audiui, uestris oculis non defraudaui[17].

Agnellus refers back to himself, his family, his activities in the church, and his practice in composing the *Liber pontificalis* in 17 other passages, along with his animosity to a number of bishops caused by both personal slights and perceived shortcomings of morals and leadership. As noted above, Agnellus extended the work from Ravenna's first bishop Apollinaris to his contempo-

[15] Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, p. 274.
[16] *Ibidem*, pp. 271-272; Carile, *Production, promotion and reception*, pp. 70-74; Carile, *Piety, Power, or Presence?*.
[17] «I, Agnellus, also known as Andreas (...) have composed this abovementioned pontifical book from the time of blessed Apollinaris and after his death lasting almost 800 years and more. And when I found out what they certainly did, these deeds were brought to your attention, and what I heard from elders and old men I have not stolen from your eyes»: Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, 32; trans. Deliyannis.

rary George; what survives in the manuscript tradition does not preserve the end of George's life, nor does it include the life of George's immediate predecessor, Petronax, who served from 818-837, and contains another lacuna for the bishop Valerius (c. 789-810)[18].

Like many contemporary texts, the original ninth-century manuscript of Agnellus's work does not survive. We must be content with significantly later copies of the fifteenth and sixteenth century suggesting one limit on their circulation, but with the knowledge that two of the lives Agnellus wrote, that for the bishops Severus and Peter Chrysologus, began circulating in the late ninth or early tenth century in response to the illegal translation of the relics in the first case, and the growing status of the sermons in the second[19]. Despite this uneven history, and its relatively minor influence in the medieval historical canon until the sixteenth century, the *Liber pontificalis* of Agnellus remains a crucial witness to the events of the ninth century, and on Lothar in particular. First, it sets Lothar as a parallel to his grandfather Charlemagne in both positive ways and under more critical light; second, it highlights the nearly familial relationship between Ravenna's bishop, George, and Lothar; and finally, it offers a decidedly pro-Lothar view of his defeat at the battle of Fontenoy.

It is within the first few lines of the *Liber pontificalis*, written by someone else before Agnellus's final work was complete, that we begin to see the framework for setting up Lothar following the footsteps of Charlemagne[20]. The verse reads:

> Tempore apostolicus Gregorius alta salubris
> Soluendi et contra almifici quo numina Petri
> Compte habet, et sceptra imperii augustus tenet almus,
> Armipotente satus Magno Karolo, Lodouicus,
> Pacificus, natusque suus Lotharius acer,
> Belliger, Itala regna tenens Romaque potitus,
> Regibus et populis lectus solio imperiali[21].

The section of the verse, which continues on for another 75 lines, establishes the importance of inheritance, setting up Pope Gregory IV "in the place" of Peter, and extending to Lothar a similar legitimacy as heir of Charles through Louis.

[18] Despite the lack of a *vita* for Petronax, Agnellus does include instances from his episcopate, notably the instance of translations of a number of relics under Agnellus's own supervision, but especially those of the bishop Maximian. Schoolman, *On moving relics and monastic reform*; Schoolman, *Reassessing the Sarcophagi of Ravenna*.

[19] See Deliyannis's introduction to the *Liber Pontificalis*, pp. 58-67.

[20] The reference to the Pope Gregory IV and bishop Petronax is the clear indication that the verse predates the completion of the text to sometime between 827 and 835.

[21] «At the time when Pope Gregory holds the high powers as is fitting / of loosing and binding, in place of gracious Peter, and the kindly / emperor Louis holds the scepter of the empire, peaceful descendant of / mighty Charles the Great, and his son, fierce Lothar, war bringer, holds the / Italian kingdoms and possesses Rome, chosen for the imperial throne by kings and people»: Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, Prefatory verse, 19-25; trans. Deliyannis. A literary analysis of this passage appears in Sernagiotto, Spes optima regni, p. 115.

Yet this is just foreshadowing of closer parallels. Later in his narrative, Agnellus describes objects taken from Ravenna by Charlemagne during his visit to that city in 801, notably the equestrian statue of Theodoric, which was taken and set up in Aachen[22]. Missing from Agnellus's reports are the other spoliated materials that we know from Einhard's *Vita Karoli* and letters of Pope Hadrian, which enumerate other gifts or treasures taken from the city and may have been strategically omitted in the *Liber pontificalis*[23]. To offer a parallel with the removal of Theodoric's statue by Charlemagne, Agnellus reports on «a large piece of polished porphyry in the church of S. Severus, which was taken to Francia on the order of Emperor Lothar and used as a table in the church of S. Sebastian; Agnellus knows this because he himself was the one who supervised its packing, "but with [his] heart full of grief"»[24]. In comparing this to the images of emperors we have in churches like S. Vitalis and S. Apollinaris in Classe, there seemed to have been a difference between earlier Byzantine imperial «patrons» and later Carolingian «despoliators» – beneficent and legitimate as they may have been. Despite this perspective on Ravenna's material goods, the fact that Agnellus composed the *Liber pontificalis* over an extended period, possibly even more than a decade, might be why the treatment of Lothar is uneven, incorporating both his deprivations of the church and his marshal valor at the Battle of Fontenoy.

Agnellus's own participation in the removal of the porphyry slab was not the only time that he played a part in the relationship between emperor, bishop, and city. From the very first lines of his description of the bishop George, we find personal animus towards the bishop in reporting key details about his participation with George in the baptism of Rotruda[25].

> Georgius .xlviii. Iste iuuenis aetate, capillo crispo capitis, grandes oculos. Ab Gregorio quarto papa Romanus consecratus fuit. Sed postquam sacramentum a corpore beati Petri praebuit, egressus Romam, statim contrarius ordinatori suo extitit. Hic postquam accepit regimen, omnes gazas ecclesiae confregit et criptas disrupit et thesauros praedecessorum pontificum extraxit. Et ut filiam Lotharii de fonte leuaret, magnas opes exinde expendit. Eo anno iuit Papiam; et post omnia exenia augustali tributa, emit ex palatio eiusdem imperatoris uestimenta baptismalia quingentos aureos, ex auro ornata, bissina alba; et suscepit filiam praedicti augusti nomine Rotrudam, quam

[22] This spoliation is described in Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, 94, but had lasting implications for Charles and his legacy; Thürlemann, *Die Bedeutung der Aachener Theoderich-Statue*; Hellgardt, *Agnellus von Ravenna und Walahfrid Strabo*.
[23] Nelson, *Charlemagne and Ravenna*, pp. 250-251.
[24] From Deliyannis's introduction to Agnellus of Ravenna, *The Book of Pontiffs*, p. 79. The description appears in Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, 113.
[25] On the event itself, see: Sernagiotto, Spes optima regni, pp. 465-466. The *Liber pontificalis* is the only source to mention Rotruda with any certainty, and there has been some debate if she survived into adulthood and was married to one of Lothar's allies. Settipani remains skeptical, but Hlawitschka argued that she married Landbert/Lambert II, count of Nantes, based on a donation from 870 of a certain Witbert who names his parents as Lambert and Rotrudis. Settipani, *La préhistoire des Capétiens*, p. 265; Hlawitschka, *Waren die Kaiser Wido und Lambert*, pp. 367-369.

> michi porrexit, et manibus meis uestiui et calciamenta in pedibus decoraui auro et iacintho ornata, et postmodum missas ad augustum celebravit[26].

Despite the success of the gifts and the baptism, the baptismal mass itself reflected George's unacceptable temperament, as Agnellus further reports, «et ante introitum missarum fatebat, se exardescere siti, et bibit occulte plenam fialam uini peregrini», although nothing further about this event was mentioned [27].

For George, serving as *compater* during baptism, especially for the daughter of the emperor, formed powerful bonds even beyond those between natural parents and godparents[28]. In Agnellus's description, George's actions would have been in imitation of popes like Stephen and Hadrian, who actively sought to forge relationships with the Carolingian dynasty through baptism and its associated patronage, as noted in the work of Arnold Angenendt[29]. A key difference between the baptism of Rotruda and those performed by the popes was in the location: while George had to travel to Pavia, the popes typically used spaces in Rome[30]. Pavia would have been a powerful choice for Lothar, selecting the site of the former Kingdom of Italy and a bishop from one of Rome's diminished rivals, and also for George, for whom standing among the new imperial family might have seemed in imitation of the actions of his predecessors preserved in mosaic.

A few other items stand out about this account beyond the fact that Ravenna's bishop stands in as *compater* for a daughter of Lothar. The first was that in order to manage the cost associated with the imperial sponsorship, George raided the church's treasury and the tombs of his predecessors, in parallel with typical activities of the Carolingians. The second is that Agnellus de-

[26] «George, the forty-eighth bishop. He was young in age, with curly hair on his head, big eyes. He was consecrated by the Roman Pope Gregory IV, but after he had received the sacrament from the body of blessed Peter, having left Rome, at once he stood in opposition to the one who had ordained him. After he received the authority, he destroyed all the treasures of the church and broke open the crypts and dragged out the treasures of his episcopal predecessors. And he paid out great wealth from them so that he might raise the daughter of Lothar from the font. In that year he went to Pavia; and after having given all the gifts to the emperor, he bought baptismal vestments for fifty gold pieces from the palace of the same emperor of fine white linen decorated with gold; and he received the daughter of the said emperor, by the name of Rotruda, whom he handed to me, and with my hands I clothed her and decorated her feet with shoes ornate with gold and jacinth, and afterward he celebrated mass for the emperor»: Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, 171; trans. Deliyannis.

[27] Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, 171 : he «confessed that he was burning with thirst, and he drank secretly a vial full of foreign wine»; trans. Deliyannis).

[28] Lynch comments that in the Carolingian period, «the baptismal sponsor became a spiritual parent to the child as well as a coparent to the child's father and mother», which served to reinforce both practical and religious bonds; Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship*, p. 288. In this case, it also mirrored the typical position that the popes took as well.

[29] Angenendt, *Das geistliche Bündnis*.

[30] Charlemagne's third wife Hildegard visited Rome twice for the baptism of her children, and a number of later baptisms coincided with royal visits: Story, *The Carolingians and the oratory of Saint Peter*, pp. 269-273.

scribes the role he himself played in dressing little Rotruda. This does not seem to be an official role, but rather something that Agnellus was invited to do because of his relationship with George (which at the time seems to have been positive), or perhaps was indicative of Agnellus playing a role in the baptism ceremony as a member of the clergy[31].

The final item that stands out is the composition of the imperial party. Agnellus mentions Lothar, his wife, the empress Ermengarde, and a daughter named Rotruda who appears in no other narrative sources. According to Eduard Hlawitschka, it is possible that the very same Rotruda eventually married Lambert II of Nantes, and even if her marriage into the family of one of Lothar's western allies played a role in later family strategies, they were significantly outshone by the conflicts between her brothers[32].

As to the event itself, the timing of Lothar in Pavia between 837 and 840 was early in George's tenure as bishop, and before the death of Louis the Pious and the ensuing chaos. This was a time when Ravenna faced other strains from external forces, including the loss of relics of saint Severus, which were taken to Germany by a professional relic thief in 837 and left a legacy of fear over the possible pilfering of other relics[33].

The eyewitness account of this baptism, and the noteworthy cost of Ravenna's participation in the gifts provided by George, highlights the tension that Agnellus must have felt between supporting George's pro-imperial and anti-papal stance, and the bishop's depredation of the tombs of his predecessors and his later failures at the battle of Fontenoy.

4. *The* Liber pontificalis *on the Carolingian civil wars*

The Battle of Fontenoy was the turning point in the conflict among the three Carolingian brothers and kings[34]. Following the death of Louis the Pious in 840, whose demise coincided with a number of unfortunate portents as recorded by Agnellus, Lothar faced threats from both inside and outside his realm. The greatest and most immediate existential danger was in the ambitions and intentions of his younger brothers, Charles the Bald and Louis the German. In Ravenna, Agnellus depicts George seizing the opportunity presented by this unrest, but also the way in which he positions Lothar as central to the narrative, while the wider conflict amoung the Carolingians appears

[31] A ninth-century version of the baptismal liturgy mentions the role of the clergy as drying-off of baptized infants and dressing them in white, but shoes are not mentioned. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship*, pp. 302-303.
[32] Hlawitschka, *Waren die Kaiser Wido und Lambert*.
[33] On the contexts for the theft of the relics of Severus in 837, see: Geary, Furta Sacra, p. 58. On the anxieties over later relic thefts and the protections that appeared following the theft, see: Schoolman, *On moving relics and monastic reform*.
[34] On the importance of and sources for Lothar at Fontenoy, see: Sernagiotto, *Lotario I e la guerra tra fratelli*; Screen, *The importance of the emperor*.

through the lens of the church of Ravenna as an institution. According to the *Liber pontificalis Ravennatis*, after obtaining papal authorization, George travels to Frankia with a treasure taken from his church (and the privileges obtained by earlier bishops) in an attempt to forge a peace between Charles the Bald, Louis the German, and Lothar, but arrives when the brothers are still preparing for war but the open hostilities had yet taken place. Agnellus describes the battle and its outcome for Lothar:

> Sonant arma, humeris uentilantur splendida scuta, tremebant multi animo, se terga dabant, pauida corda et gemitos immensos, cadebant corpora ferro. Lotharius armatus se medium mersit in hostes, uidens uictos suos fugientes passim undique, nec erat quies secantium gladiis membra. In media inimicorum, ut dixi, arma deuentus, non ex eius lateri qui posset auxilium erant praebere, sed solus acer multa demoliuit cadauera hasta. Bella solus uicit, sed sui omnes terga dederunt. Crinito sedens sonipede, pictas ornatus faleras ostro, calce equo percutit, inimicos morsibus uastans. Qualis in hoste solus, decem sicut ille fuissent, <ut> imperium diuisum non esset, nec tantos in sedilia reges. Interea versa est victoria in manus Caroli. Adiuuabat eum Lodouicus, frater suus, Baioariorum rex[35].

Agnellus described next the arrival of the aid of Pepin, but despite the renewed forces, Lothar's army was defeated, and George, who had no business near the battlefield in the first place, was captured and abused by those under the command of Charles the Bald, although according to the account in the *Annales Bertiniani*, he was detained by Lothar himself and sent back «cum honore»[36]. Agnellus, however, goes into great detail about the possible mistreatment of George, and especially the privileges he wished to have imperially reconfirmed that were then destroyed, divine justice for his ignominious actions, but says nothing further about Lothar, and the work ends imperfectly with George's death in 846.

Despite Lothar's acknowledged defeat at the Battle of Fontenoy, echoed in the other major contemporary sources for the conflict, the *Annales Bertiniani* and *Annales Fuldenses*, Agnellus presents him in overtly heroic tones, not just fierce but *acer* (the same adjective used in the prefatory verse), and also *bella solus uicit*, that Lothar «alone, he conquered in war». This was the embodiment of marshal valor, as expected by a king or emperor, and further

[35] «Weapons resounded, splendid shields were brandished on shoulders, many trembled in spirit, gave their backs, fearful hearts and immense sighs, their bodies fell by the sword. Lothar, armed, plunged into the midst of the enemy, seeing his followers, conquered, fleeing everywhere, nor was there a respite from the slaughter of bodies with swords. Having arrived, as I said, in the midst of the weapons of his enemies, there were none from his side who could offer aid, but alone, fierce, he destroyed many corpses with his spear. Alone, he conquered in war, but all his followers fled. Sitting on a crested horse, decorated with trappings colored with purple, he struck the horse with his heel, devastating his enemies with its biting. Thus alone among the enemy, [he fought] as if he were ten men, so that the empire might not be divided, nor [have] such kings on its thrones. However, the victory turned into the hands of Charles. Louis, his brother, king of Bavaria, aided him»: Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, 174; trans. Deliyannis.

[36] «In quo proelio Georgius, Ravennatis episcopus, a Gregorio Romano pontifice ad Lotharium fratresque eius pacis gratia directus, sed a Lothario detentus neque ad fratres venire permissus, captus est, et cum honore ad propria remissus»: *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 841.

reinforced by his depiction in imperial purple on horseback. For Agnellus, it was the failure of Lothar's army, and not a loss of his innate bravery and skill in battle, that led to Lothar's defeat. If anything, the description offered by Agnellus reconfirms his own allegiances, if not those of the church of Ravenna, to the eldest son of Louis the Pious.

5. *History and memory of Lothar I in and beyond Agnellus*

Although most concerned with the effects of broader events and relationships on the church of Ravenna (or at least its urban clergy), in his account Agnellus balanced the disreputable nature of George, a despoiler of church treasuries who was punished and embarrassed at the hands of an enemy king, with the fact that he was aligned with the ultimately heroic Emperor Lothar. In the same vein, the narratives about Lothar served in essence to re-elevate the city's "imperial" status within its own present, history, and community memory.

Because of this connection, the animus against George was tempered by the association with an emperor who showed favor to the city, and who, unlike his father, was personally invested in Italian affairs, lending to the possibility of Ravenna reasserting its independence from Rome[37]. Despite Agnellus's searing personal dislike of George, the connections reflected back on four centuries of interaction, going back to Ravenna's position as imperial capital in the fifth century. Simply by becoming emperor, a moment that is not described in Agnellus or any other Italian source, Lothar served to restore the city's imperial status, even if obliquely, through his appearance with George.

This also connects to Ravenna's complicated relationship with Charles the Great. While there are significant differences between the reigns of Charles and his grandson, with respect to Ravenna, they shared crucial features: both were emperors; they were essentially absent from the city's governance and affairs; they were spoliators of the church and city, rather than donors; and they were fierce victors (although this is more tenuous). And in fact, the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna was not so different in its application from other contemporary and near-contemporary sources concerning Lothar, which could claim a relationship to Lothar and redraft their own institutional histories to suit various needs, often through connections across the Carolingian dynasty.

For example, the *Gesta episcoporum* of Naples offers three instances where Lothar is mentioned, although often removed from the events around the city, and ultimately promoting a relationship with his son Louis II[38]. In

[37] While the bishop George was unable to increase Ravenna's autonomy during the reign of Lothar, his activities set the stage for further efforts at independence from the papacy later in the ninth century. Simonini, *Autocefalia ed Esarcato*, pp. 174-182.

[38] *Gesta episcoporum Neapolitanorum*. For the editions and history of the *Gesta*, which extends in an anonymous original text covering the history of Naples's bishops through 763 and

the first instance, the *Gesta* records an appeal was made by Duke Andrea of Naples for aid from the emperor in dealing with a siege of the city by Sicardus of Benevento, an instance in which the call for help went unanswered and Lothar remaining a distant figure[39]. That conflict progressed, influenced nominally by a treaty between Benevento and Naples in 836, and lasted until Sicardus's assassination in 839. There was not immediate resolution, as the situation was made worse by the arrival of a Frankish general, Contardus, who killed Andrea and married his daughter[40]. Now weary of Frankish interventions, other threats remained for Naples, especially in the form of various groups of Saracens from North Africa who also served intermittently as Neapolitan mercenaries.

This situation would bring about the next appearance of Lothar in the *Gesta*, when it was reported that he was later moved to supply aid by sending troops to address the rising threats of and damage caused by Saracens in Italy. In 846, Rome itself was targeted by a raid from Muslim forces, likely those that had been established in Sicily in the decades before[41]. In response to this attack, the *Gesta* describes the events the following way: Lothar sent a force that pursued the Saracens south as far as Gaeta, where the Saracens set a trap along the steep paths and were able to soundly defeat the Franks who were unaccustomed to this type of warfare[42]. Like the first episode, Lothar remained physically distant from these events. Although he is seen taking action by sending an army, the reality was that he was unable to improve the situation for the Neapolitans, who during this conflict were able to rout the Saracens by sea under the leadership of Cesarius, the son of Duke Sergius of Naples.

In a final episode concerning Lothar recorded in the *Gesta*, it was through the supplication of Sergius that Louis II was installed in Italy, specifically to deal with the Muslim forces still plaguing both the Lombard and Neapolitan territories. While Lothar is given the credit for promoting Louis II to co-emperor, it was Louis himself who personally «ex illis Hismahelitis triumphavit. Et sagaciter ordinans divisionem Beneventani et Salernitani principum, vic-

extended by two known hagiographers through 898, see: Achelis, *Die Bischofchronik von Neapel*; Granier, *La difficile genèse*; Granier, *Transformations de l'église*; Granier, *Le peuple devant les saints*; Berto, Utilius est veritatem proferre.

[39] «Mox autem Andreas consul Franciam direxit, deprecans domnum Lhotharium, ut saltem eius preceptione a tantis malis sopiretur Sichardus»: *Gesta episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, 57.

[40] West, *Communities and* pacta, p. 388. On the author of the *Gesta*'s attitude towards Sicardus, see: Berto, *The Others and Their Stories*, pp. 46-47. On Contradus, see: Whitten, *Franks, Greeks, and Saracens*, p. 267.

[41] Lankila, *The Saracen Raid of Rome*, pp. 98-99.

[42] «Lhotharius rex Francorum, ferocem contra eos populum misit; qui celeriter properantes, eos usque Caietam sunt persecuti. Hic autem Saraceni solitam molientes stropham, in locis angustis et arduo calle nonnullos audaciores absconderunt. Franci vero ignorantes calliditatem eorum, conabantur viriliter super eos descendere. At illi de latibulo exilientes, irato Deo, primum ipsorum percutierunt signiferum; quo perempto, cunctis terga vertentibus, validissime occidebantur»: *Gesta episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, 60.

tor reversus est»[43]. In each of these episodes, rather than considering larger political interests, the *Gesta* positions Lothar's actions as in some way responding to Naples but in keeping a great distance, finding the resolution to conflicts in other figures.

This is the opposite of the relationship invoked between Lothar and the community of Novalesa in northern Italy's piedmont, found in the eleventh-century chronicle of Novalesa's monastery[44]. In that recounting, a highly embellished text that included an imaginary son of Charles the Great who became the monastery's abbot, Lothar is presented as a patron: «Lotharius vero de eadem valle abbati Ioseph preceptum faciens, et insuper adcrevit Pagnum, quondam ditissimum et regalem monasterium, quod olim Aystulfus rex ambidexter condiderat»[45]. Not only was Lothar's grandfather tied directly to the development of the monastery, but Lothar himself was both reestablishing longstanding claims and contributing to the monastery's growing wealth.

What is more remarkable is the Chronicle of Novalesa's creative description of the Battle of Fontenoy. While Lothar's defeat goes unmentioned in the *Gesta* of Naples, and is used to cast Lothar as a valiant hero against insurmountable odds in the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna, the chronicle refashions the history of internal Carolingian conflicts, both confusing the main actors of the civil war following the death of Louis the Pious as well as the outcome of Fontenoy and its Italian implications:

> Circa igitur haec tempora, cum non inter se aequaliter divisissent filii Caroli regna patris sui, ortum ilico bellum inter eos. Nam in campo quodam, ubi fontes nonnulle oriuntur, unde et nomen accepit videlicet Fontaneto, ibi quoque conglobati quattuor reges cum chuneis suis fortiter invicem dimicarunt; ubi occisa nonnulla milia hominum, non modicam ibi stragem dederunt. Qui licet multi ex utraque parte occubuerint, constat tamen Hludowicus cum Lothari filio, superatis fratribus, campum optinuisse cum victoria. Sicque victores effecti, regnum Italicum potiti sunt[46].

For the later abbots and community of Novalesa, the connection (although fictious) proved to be what mattered, and in these cases, it was with the ruling

[43] *Ibidem*, 61 («triumphed over the Ishmaelites» and «wisely ordered the division of Benevento and Salerno»).
[44] *Chronicon Novaliciense*, ed. Bethmann; *Chronicon Novaliciense*, ed. Combetti. Trans. in *Cronaca di Novalesa*, ed. Alessio; Clark, *The Chronicle of Novalese*.
[45] *Chronicon Novaliciense*, 3.26 («Lothar ordered that valley to be made the possession of the Abbot Joseph, which also included Pagnum, at one time a most rich and regal monastery, which long ago King Aistulf had also founded»; trans. Clark).
[46] «So about this time, when the sons of Charles [a mistake for Louis] had not divided equally among themselves the kingdoms of their father, war rose up immediately among them. For, on the plain where several fountains arise (whence its name "Fontaneto"), there also gathered the four kings with their battle lines, and clashed sharply; several thousand men were killed there; they brought about no small slaughter. Although many from each side died, nevertheless it is agreed that after his brothers had been defeated, Louis, with his son Lothar, gained the field and the victory. And thus having become the victors, they controlled the realm of Italy»: *Chronicon Novaliciense*, 3.28; trans. Clark.

powers rather than some semblance of imperial authority or legitimacy that reinforced that community's claims.

Finally, although the appearance and exclusion of Lothar in the narrative of Rome's *Liber pontificalis* has been well reviewed by Sernagiotto and others, it is worth quickly revisiting how that text that served as the model for so many institutional histories in Italy relied on similar types of refashioning and reinvisioning, often through omission of imperial activities that elevates the papacy[47]. Little attention was paid to events outside of the scope of papal reach, such as the Battle of Fontenoy; instead, Lothar appears as a distant figure, completely absent from the *Vita* of Gregory IV, and appearing in the *Vita* of Sergius II only in sending Drogo of Metz and his son Louis as delegates to Rome following Sergius's election[48]. As in the other two cases discussed above, the institutional needs took precedence over placing Lothar's reign and relationship with Italy at the forefront.

6. *Conclusion*

Along with the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna, what these other accounts from Rome, Naples and Novalesa demonstrate is a substantially uneven presentation of Lothar's Italian activities. In Tom Noble's article on *Talking about the Carolingians* in the recent volume on *After Charlemagne: Carolingian Italy and its Rulers*, he makes the argument that the sources from the time of Lothar «have more to say [than for Louis]... but what they say is often wrong and rarely helpful». This culminates in the fact that «Lothar's imperial coronation in Rome is mentioned in no Italian source and we receive no reports about his activity in Italy» at that time[49].

There may be a further layer impacting the inconsistent nature of institutional response, at least in the case of Ravenna, on account of the complex alliance between the Carolingians and Rome. Early in his reign, Lothar and his father Louis issued the *Constitutio Romana* in 824, notably the same year that Agnellus undertook the removal of relics and materials under the order of bishop Petronax. This edict ratified the rights of the papacy and their responsibility to the emperors (among other administrative features, including oaths made by Rome's citizens to the emperor personally), but also may have worked against Ravenna's ambitions for greater autonomy in highlighting the pope's power in dispute settlement[50]. That it was executed during the time

[47] Sernagiotto, Spes optima regni, pp. 102-108.
[48] *Liber pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, Sergius II, 8.
[49] Noble, *Talking about the Carolingians*, p. 24.
[50] Noble argues that the *Constitutio Romana* was a product of Lothar under the direction of his father, and that rather than a reframing or reasserting of imperial rights, it followed on earlier efforts by Louis, notably the *Ludovicianum* of 816-817, to formalize the relationship between Frankish rulers and the papacy. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*, pp. 308-322.

of Petronax may have been part of the motivation for Agnellus's failure to include his biography in the *Liber pontificalis*, as Petronax clearly sought to affirm Ravenna's privileges through Rome rather than from the emperors, either Byzantine or Carolingian, activities that did not fit with the overall aims of Agnellus[51].

While the sources may be wrong, or at the minimum conflicting, they can be extremely helpful in making sense of those living in the confusion following the revolts against Louis the Pious and the wars among his children, especially in making sense of their allegiances and why those allegiances mattered. In the case of Agnellus's *Liber pontificalis* and the city of Ravenna, Lothar was the last emperor to grace the city – and his legacy connected to his grandfather Charles – reconfirming the centuries-old links between the city's bishops and imperial favor. But even here, the appearance of Lothar served to strengthen the city's claims of special status despite his military failures and despoliation, further underscoring the incompatibilities within the medieval narratives.

[51] In 819, Petronax received a confirmation of the privileges of the church of Ravenna from pope Pascal that omitted any mention of the role of contemporary Carolingians; the privilege appears in: *Le carte ravennati*, ed. Benericetti, pp. 21-23; ChLA², LV, n. 1. On Pascal's relationship with the Franks, see: Goodson, *The Rome of Pope Paschal I*, pp. 30-33; Verardi, *Il papato alla prova dell'impero*.

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