CAROLINGIAN FRONTIERS: ITALY AND BEYOND

edited by

Maddalena Betti, Francesco Borri, Stefano Gasparri

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48

Ruling in hard times

Patterns of power and practices of government
in the making of Carolingian Italy

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Front cover image: Main Rampart of the southern Boundary of Denmark (Danewirke), 8th-9th Century, nordwest of Kurburg (Schleswig-Holstein, Germany)

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Project Coordinator Giuseppe Albertoni

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Carolingian frontiers: Italy and beyond. An introduction

by Stefano Gasparri

In this short introduction, I will cover two topics. The first is a presentation of the research project on Lothar's rule in Italy, which is behind the conference from which this volume originated. The second is a brief discussion of the way in which the problem of the early medieval frontier has been dealt with in Italian historiography, accompanied by an equally brief focus on the concept of frontier, which has been further developed by historians over the last thirty years, starting with the work of Charles Whittaker.

High Middle Ages; *regnum Italiae*; Italian peripheries; Lothar; Carolingian rule; early medieval frontiers.

The present volume is the fruit of a conference held in Venice in April 2022, sponsored by the PRIN project *Ruling in hard times. Patterns of power and practices of government in the making of Carolingian Italy*. The focus of the project is most specifically on the long period of Lothar's rule in Italy, but it is also interested in the whole of Carolingian Italy, a topic that has long been neglected in the historiography until recently. However, between 2016 and 2018 there were three conferences, two in Vienna and one in Trento, the first of a very general nature, while the other two were focused on the important reign of Pippin; all three have finally shifted the focus towards the role that

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Italy played within the Carolingian world[1]. As a result, even within German historiography – as in the very recent book by Paul Predatsch – the results of Eduard Hlawitschka's old book, which had totally devalued the original contribution of Italian society, suggesting the complete replacement (*die Entausschung*) of the Lombard ruling class and the full "frankisation" of Italy, are now being questioned[2].

The Venetian conference focused on the areas which made up the periphery of the kingdom of Italy during the Carolingian period, particularly during the reign of Lothar I and Louis II. Actually, studying Carolingian Italy means dealing with the entire complexity of its territorial framework, which goes far beyond the direct domination of the Carolingian rulers. The latter had inherited the situation of their predecessors, the Lombard kings, who had never succeeded in exercising complete control over Italy, although they had come very close, particularly with Aistulf, after the capture of Ravenna and before Pippin's wars[3]. The Frankish intervention then changed everything.

These peripheral zones were centred around two main areas. The first was traditional Byzantine Italy: the duchy of Venice and its Lagoon, Istria, Ravenna and the old Exarchate, Rome and its duchy[4]; while the second was the *Langobardia Minor*, with its own Lombard political tradition[5]. Carolingian political strategies varied with regard to these two areas, which belonged only in part to the *Regnum*, but were strongly connected to it[6].

Of course, the Carolingians had many more means to cope with the situation than the Lombard kings: an undisputed military supremacy, together with a now marginal presence of Byzantine authorities, if we exclude Sicily, and, above all, the support and alliance with the Church of Rome. However, a true unification of Italy under the authority of the Carolingians was never achieved. This means that the different areas which were not fully – or not at all – part of the kingdom continued to develop societies with their own characteristics, partly different from those of the area under direct Carolingian control[7]. Even within the latter, there was a difference (as a recent book by Igor Santos Salazar has shown) between Carolingian Lombardy, which was the core of the *Regnum*, and other areas south of the Po[8]. The impact of Carolingian rule on regions like Tuscia and the duchy of Spoleto was slower to

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[1] *Carolingian Italy and its Rulers in the Ninth century: Was there a Carolingian Italy?* (Vienna, April 2016; the conference proceedings are published in *After Charlemagne*); *Spes Italiae. Il regno di Pipino, i Carolingi e l'Italia (781-810)* (Trento, November 2016); and *Pippin's Königreich. Die Karolinger und Italien* (Vienna, November 2017). The proceedings of these two latest conferences are in press.

[2] Predatsch, *Migration im karolingischen Italien*; Hlawitschka, *Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunder*.

[3] Gasparri, *Italia longobarda*.

[4] West-Harling, *Rome, Ravenna and Venice*.

[5] Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*.

[6] Gasparri, *The Government of a Peripheral Area*.

[7] Gasparri, *The Dawn of Carolingian Italy*.

[8] Santos Salazar, *Governare la Lombardia carolingia*.

make itself felt, and more difficult to assess. In those areas, also the appearance of migrants from north of the Alps during the ninth century happened later than in Northern Italy.

Moreover, in Central Italy, the longest-lived Byzantine areas, the Roman duchy and the Exarchate of Ravenna, maintained an ambiguous position within the overall framework of the kingdom. In the case of Rome, the relations of Carolingian power with the city were made more complex on account of the role of the papacy. Rome had more points of convergence with Ravenna than with the rest of the kingdom. The urban landscape of the two cities shared a visible Roman past; also common to both cities was the use of late Roman titles as *consul* or *dux*, or the vocabulary relating to the leases of land or to the properties. Rome and Ravenna also had much in common (for example the titles of honour or offices) with Venice, which, however, not only had no Roman past, but in the ninth century was not yet a city; its position in respect to the Carolingian government was also quite different from those of Rome and Ravenna[9].

Indeed, the duchy of Venice, together with Lombard Southern Italy, the *Longobardia minor*, was one of the two areas that were most alien to Carolingian power. The small Venetian duchy, which had almost no territory on the mainland, was under the constant control of Byzantium, which was connected to it by sea. This situation created the premises for the only direct confrontation between the Franks and Byzantium following the Carolingian conquest of Italy, because in the Northeast of Italy the Carolingians attempted to govern in a unified way the whole area from the Po plain to the Adriatic coast, a strategy clearly related to the area's political importance (for its links with Byzantium), commercial role (in terms of maritime and river trade) and military position (on the Slavic frontier). However, Byzantium remained in control of the Adriatic Sea and of Venice, with the exception of the years 806-807, when Charlemagne summoned to Aachen the leaders of the Venetian duchy and those of Dalmatia, with the ambition of subduing them and thus assuming control of the Adriatic, and the years 809-810, when Pippin militarily occupied the duchy, albeit for a very short time. This state of affairs was confirmed by the Peace of Aachen (812). Charles had to be content with the unstable control of Istria[10].

The second, much larger, area remaining outside the direct Carolingian domain was the ancient semi-autonomous duchy of Benevento, which resisted the attacks by the Franks by allying itself with its ancient Byzantine enemies, and by creating a new political system, no longer subordinate to the king of Pavia, which was sanctioned by Arichis II's assumption of the title of prince after 774. During the first years of the ninth century, the principality of

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[9] West-Harling, *Rome, Ravenna and Venice*, and Brown, *A Byzantine Cuckoo in the Frankish Nest?*
[10] Gasparri, *The First Dukes and the Origins of Venice*, pp. 5-26, and Gasparri, *The Origins of Venice*, pp. 98-110.

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Benevento was, however, progressively drawn into the Carolingian orbit, even if its recognition of the authority of the Frankish king or emperor was always very ambiguous and subject to frequent crises, as it was seen blatantly in 871 when prince Adelchis II captured emperor Louis II[11].

In such a complex political and territorial framework, the theme of frontiers immediately comes to scholarly attention. Before addressing this topic, it should be however useful to stress some general points. The very concept of frontier, or border, is not a neutral one, from a historical point of view. As Lucien Febvre had shown many decades ago, the idea of a military frontier, of a linear type, does not predate the nineteenth century[12]. It is the offspring of the national states, then applied by French and British imperialism over a century ago to colonial possessions in Asia and Africa, where linear frontiers, resting or not on natural elements, were drawn. These frontiers, by dividing ancient tribal territories, are at the root of many of the ethnic tragedies of the contemporary world. It was the idea of a defensive line that held back beyond it the indistinct and dangerous tide of barbarism. As lucidly explained by Charles Whittaker about thirty years ago, this concept was applied by historians to the Roman empire: the Romans would have identified the great rivers Rhine and Danube as their limits for the same reasons that guided the European states: because they were natural, linear and military borders, and at the same time were a symbol of conquest, an assertion of dominance over barbarism. Such was the Roman ideology, which fitted well with that of European imperialism[13].

On the contrary, we owe the idea of the Roman empire as an open space, potentially in movement, to the United States, which were literally shaped by the frontier: the reference is obviously to the late-nineteenth-century famous frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner, but also (and above all) to Walter Prescott Webb, who wrote in 1931 that a frontier is not «a line to stop at, but an area inviting entrance». According to his view, the border was a place where ethnic and cultural mixing took place, producing new social realities[14]. This same concept of permeable frontier could be applied to the Roman borders of the very late period, where – despite the existence of the *limes* – relations between Romans and barbarians were intense and brought together two worlds that were in no way clearly distinct from one another, creating new communities. In this way, the issue about the ethnic identities intertwines with the study of borders; as Florin Curta has written, «one of the most fascinating aspects of the current state of research is the study of political frontiers

[11] See above, note 5, and Thomas, *Jeux lombards*.
[12] Febvre, *Il Reno*.
[13] Whittaker, *Les frontières de l'Empire romain*. This issue is developed in Pohl, *Soziale Grenzen*, pp. 11-18, and in Curta, *Introduction*, pp. 1-9.
[14] Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (Turner's thesis was presented for the first time in 1893); Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains*.

as key elements in the *creation*, as opposed to *separation*, of ethnic groups»[15]. To quote Walter Pohl: «boundaries do not "naturally" exist between peoples and states, between social groups and religious confessions»; this is «the new paradigm in the study of frontiers»[16].

It is therefore necessary to be aware of the ways in which the idea of the linear frontier in its various forms (limit of civilisation, military barrier, natural-geographical element) arose in order to address the problem of frontiers, even on the relatively small scale of Carolingian Italy. In this perspective, how Italian historiography dealt with the problem of early medieval frontiers?

Despite its politically complexity, in the Early Middle Ages the Italian territory was not divided by natural and/or artificial militarily manned barriers. In Italy, there is only one trace of such a border in the Alpine area, where it was based on the remains of the ancient *Tractus Italiae circa Alpes* of the late Roman period, described in the *Notitia Dignitatum*[17]. The first certain mention of the existence of border territories in the Alpine area, identified as such by royal powers, dates back to the Lombard period, in the two famous chapters of the laws of Ratchis and Aistulf, in which the two Lombard kings established, in the wake of the conflict with the Franks, strict rules to control the movement of people entering the kingdom[18]. The military and perhaps even more psychological importance of the Alpine frontier is also stressed by Notker the Stammerer, who, one hundred years later the breakthrough made by Charlemagne's army at the *clusae* of Susa Valley in the autumn of 773, still wrote that «only a wall» (*una macheria*) divided the Italians from the Franks: it were the remains of the ancient *Tractus*[19].

This statement needs to be downgraded. The *clusae* represented punctual rather than linear boundaries, they were «Grenzen als Punkte», as defined by Walter Pohl, who pointed out that this was a typical situation in Italy[20]. The network of castles in Friuli mentioned by Paul the Deacon, on the occasion of the Avar raid in 611, should be interpreted in the same way. Despite the incorrect name of *Langobardische Limes* sometimes given to it by the historiography, it was not a fortified linear defense system, but a system of in depth-defense, aiming to control the passage from the Alps to the Friulan plains, through fortified points (*castra*) located far inland in the Lombard territory[21].

Nevertheless, the Alpine area remains an exception. Within Italy, the frontiers have long been sought in vain by historians and archaeologists. The classic example comes from one of the most famous theories of Lombard

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[15] Curta, *Introduction*, p. 5.
[16] Pohl, *Frontiers and Ethic Identities*, pp. 255-265, cit. p. 265.
[17] Settia, *Le frontiere del regno italico*, pp. 155-169.
[18] Gasparri, *La frontiera in Italia*, pp. 9-19; Pohl, *Frontiers in Lombard Italy*, pp. 117-141.
[19] Notker the Stammerer, *Gesta Karoli Magni* I, 24.
[20] Pohl, *Soziale Grenzen*, p. 16.
[21] Štih, *Die Ostgrenze Italiens*; Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 37, p. 129.

historiography, that of the *arimanniae*. It originated more than a hundred years ago, and later developed in a contradictory way by Gian Piero Bognetti. This theory postulated the existence of particular military settlements, the *arimanniae*: i.e. colonies of Lombard warriors, called *arimanni*, placed by the king on fiscal land, on the borders but also within the kingdom, in every area of strategic value, for garrisoning and defence purposes. According to this theory, traces of *arimanniae* could still be found in the Carolingian and post-Carolingian periods. Today it is well known, from the studies of Giovanni Tabacco, that this theory had no real documentary evidence, based as it was exclusively on misinterpretations of very late sources. Italy was never dotted with military frontiers manned by the Lombard *arimanni*, opposed to the equally imaginary fortified garrisons of the Byzantines[22].

On the basis of this erroneous reading of the sources (and with a superficial use of toponomastic data), Italian historiography has multiplied military frontiers within Italy, wherever Lombard and Byzantine territories bordered each other, towards the Venetian plain, towards Byzantine Liguria, the Exarchate, or in Southern Italy, in search of strategic motivations even where they lacked any plausibility[23]. Frontiers and borders were identified everywhere[24]. However, most of these reconstructions did not go beyond the Lombard period. This is due to the fact that Italian historians (and archaeologists) have always thought of the frontier as linear, because it had to separate civilisation and savagery, i.e. the Italo-Byzantines (heirs of the Romans) from the Lombards. According to this reasoning, when the Franks replaced the Lombards, the linear frontier was no longer needed and therefore it essentially disappeared from historical narrative (that also was the only place where it existed).

Today we have overcome these incorrect interpretations. Therefore, we can examine Italy's internal and external borders, be they political, economic or cultural, without preconceptions, to try to establish whether they have contributed to the creation of real frontier societies. All these problems should, of course, be treated always bearing in mind similarities and differences with what happened outside Italy, in the North, East or West of the Carolingian world. Which is what, albeit in a limited way, we have precisely tried to do in this volume.

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[22] Tabacco, *I liberi del re*, and Gasparri, *La questione degli arimanni*, pp. 121-153.
[23] Classical examples of this kind of historiography are two essays by Fasoli: *Tracce di insediamenti longobardi*, pp. 303-315, and *Inizio di un'indagine sugli stanziamenti longobardi*, pp. 3-12. More recent examples: Magno, *Il* limes *di Serravalle*, pp. 783-807; Stranieri, *Un* limes *bizantino nel Salento?*, pp. 333-355. For a correct framing of these problems: Settia, *L'alto medioevo ad Alba*, pp. 23-55, who effectively criticizes the existence of a Byzantine *limes* between southern Piedmont and Liguria.
[24] Gasparri, *I Germani immaginari*, pp. 3-28.

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On empires and frontiers

by Francesco Borri

Empires are theoretically limitless, given the difficulty in determining the nature, or even the existence, of their frontiers. This paper discusses some general issues on the perception, role, and function of imperial boundaries, using examples from the Carolingian Empire and from other imperial formations through history.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Italy; Carolingians; empires; comparative studies; frontiers.

Abbreviations
LP = *Liber pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, *Le* Liber pontificalis. *Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vols, Paris 1886-1892.
MGH, AB = *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, Hannover 1883 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 5).
MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses Maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 6).
MGH, Capit. I = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 1, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883 (MGH, LL).
MGH, VK = Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Hannover-Leipzig 1911 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 25).
MGH, RGS = Widukind of Corvey, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri tres*, ed. P. Hirsch – H.-E. Lohmann, *Die Sachsengeschichte des Widukind von Korvei*, Hannover 1935 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 60).

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An empire is a universally recognized political organization, suggesting rich variety and several associated ideas[1].There is disagreement on what an empire is: an extended debate on the role and identity of empires has provoked a vast literature on the topic, cutting across disciplines, characterized by a strongly diachronic approach and by specific terminology, which differs slightly according to context[2].

Surveys generally highlight structures common to empires in world history, only subsequently focusing on distinctive case studies: «[o]ne benefit of comparison is that it helps to clarify phenomena and to sharpen the distinctive nature of the objects under scrutiny»[3]. It is suggestive that, if all surveys on empires cover the Roman and the British, the Carolingian Empire is seldom included, or at least it was not until a few years ago; in a paper in 2006, Susan Reynolds still lamented this omission[4]. It seems to have reflected the perceived anomaly of the Carolingian Empire (together with its later incarnations), which led scholars to doubt the imperial nature of Charlemagne's polity. Reasons were found in diverse structural features, ranging from the empire's *Mittellage* to the rudimentary fiscal system, through to its ephemeral life[5]. Geoffrey Barraclough notably wrote that «Charles himself became an emperor; but the lands over which he ruled did not became "an empire"»[6].

In the past few decades, however, important studies have appreciably altered this picture. Two volumes have been published in Vienna on the role of early Medieval *Staatlichkeit*, with the Carolingian Empire as part of the debate, especially in its relation to *ecclesia* as a comprehensive concept denoting a multi-ethnic polity[7]. The new developments on the empire's conceptualization were visible in numerous publications, such as the important textbook *The Carolingian World*, or edited volumes and monographs where the centrality of empire features already in the title; a recent issue of «Studies in Church History» was dedicated to the topic of Church and Empire; one of «Medieval Worlds» focused on empires in comparison, with the Carolin-

[2] Bang, *Empire – A World History*, pp. 18-20; Münker, *Imperien*, pp. 11-34; Nolte, *Kurze Geschichte*, pp. 41-43; Gehler – Rollinger, *Imperien und Reiche*; Colás, *Empire*, p. 14. For a minimal position: Doyle, *Empires*, p. 45. See also: Kahn, *The Caliphates*.
[3] Vasunia, *The Comparative Study of Empires*, p. 223; also: Runciman, *Empires*; Bang – Bayly, *Tributary Empires*; Hurlet, *Introduction*.
[4] Reynolds, *Empires*, p. 152: «[m]ost surveys of Empire tend to jump over the middle ages».
[5] Bührer-Thierry, *Centres et périphéries*; Pohl, *Editor's Introduction: Empires*, p. 2; De Jong, *The Empire*; Bernhardt, *Concepts and Practice of Empire*; Münkler, *Imperien*, p. 63; Runciman, *Empires*, p. 100; Burbank – Cooper, *Empires in World History*, p. 87. There have been, however, general surveys: Muldoon, *Empire and Order*; Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire*; Weinfurter, *Das Reich*; Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire*; Heer, *Das Heilige Römische Reich*.
[6] Barraclough, *The Crucible*, p. 49.
[7] *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*; *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat*; moreover: de Jong, *The Penitential State*.

gian formation featuring prominently[8]. Jinty Nelson's recent monograph also highlights Charles' imperial dignity[9]. In the most recent survey on empires, an important article by Rosamond McKitterick focused on the Carolingian *imperium* and its high medieval successors[10].

In the following discussion, I shall focus on the Carolingian Empire, but I shall also look at its eastern Roman predecessor, together with the Ottonian and Hohenstaufen successors, relying on both the vast literature on empires and the more focused studies of Medieval Europe.

1. *Brief anatomy of a concept*

Empires stretched back in history for thousands of years, flourishing across the globe, rising, as pointed out by Michael Mann, on account of their superior military power and economy[11]. Ian Morris wrote that «the history of empire is the history of organized violence»[12]. They happen by chance; their success being determined by «luck» according to W.G. Runciman[13].

Expansion seems semantically bound to the very notion of empire and imperialism[14]. In fact, empires rule over territories outside their original one, stretching from a dominant core, called in scholarly discourse "metropole", to the more or the less distant peripheries: «they involve the exercise of domination by the rulers of a central society over the populations of peripheral societies without either absorbing them to the point that they become fellow-members of the central society or disengaging from them to the point that they become confederates rather than subjects»[15].

Generally, empires aim to co-opt local elites in order to lead them to recognise the value of imperial ideology for their own advantage; they penetrate the fabric of their society in an uneven manner: some regions are loosely ruled, while others are firmly controlled. Peripheries are governed emphasising difference, rather than assimilation, so that imperial frontiers do not include a culturally and politically homogeneous and coherent space, as ideally

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[8] Costambeys – Innes – MacLean, *The Carolingian World*; *Charlemagne*; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*; Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice*; *The Church*; *Empires: Elements of Cohesion*.
[9] Nelson, *King and Emperor*.
[10] McKitterick, *Charlemagne*.
[11] Mann, *The Sources*, p. 22; Burbank – Cooper, *Empires in World History*; Nolte, *Kurze Geschichte*; *Imperien*.
[12] Morris, *Empire and Military Organization*, p. 155; also: Burbank – Cooper, *Empires in World History*, p. 2.
[13] Runciman, *Empire*, p. 101: «luck – the contingencies, that is, of individual ability and temperament, or of the location and accessibility of valuable mineral resources, or of the nature and timing of technological advances in the means of waging war».
[14] Ludden, *The Process of Empire*, p. 134.
[15] Runciman, *Empire*, p. 99.

modern nation states do; Alexander Motyl compared empires to a wheel with a hub and spokes, but no rim[16].

Among empires, military power is fuelled by a strong ideology and superior claims to non-imperial neighbours. This imperial mission is the main element which defines empires. To use a tautology, empires are such because they act in an imperial manner. Political acts seek to achieve prestige, which Max Weber would have called *Prestigestreben*[17]. It does not mean that, as political entities, they are not driven by strategic considerations, but ideology is securely embedded in their actions[18]. Imperial actors see their power legitimized through their mission, so that cosmologies, foundation myths and myths of military glory, together with clearly manifested destinies, are shaped to justify the imperial order. Claims for superior right to rule, a world-encompassing mission such as peace, religion, celestial harmony, civilization or democracy, generally follow the early conquests: they are all ideologies of just or benevolent rule[19]. These «Visions of Empire», to quote Krishan Kumar, are rooted in an asymmetric relationship between that empire and its surrounding polities. Asymmetry means a hierarchy of authority and legitimacy between empire and states. If relationships between nation-states are ideally based on equal rights and sovereignty, empires claimed higher status toward their neighbouring polities. Herfried Münkler wrote: «Staaten gibt es stets im Plural, Imperien meist im Singular», states are always in the plural, empires mostly in the singular[20]. Yet, an empire may adopt different strategies in order to relate to another, such as China and Rome, or Iran and the Steppe powers[21].

To measure empires, alongside the self-representation of the actors ruling them, scholarly attention generally concentrates on external, measurable, characteristics, which may comprehend lifespan and expanse, both central to the empires. Yet, there are no absolute requisites[22]. As we shall see, empires are generally seen as ancient institutions; in Japan, empire was said to be as old as history itself[23]. In fact, there are major exceptions to this rule: Alexander the Great's conquests disintegrated into battling realms shortly after the king's death, but very few would contest the imperial nature of his polity[24]. Similarly, we can agree that empires are large, however vague this may be as an analytical concept[25]. The multi-ethnic nature, which is sometimes evoked as the clearest separation between modern nations and empires, is an obvious

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[16] Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, pp. 12-24.
[17] As maintained by Münkler, *Imperien*, pp. 51-52; and Kumar, *Visions of Empire*, p. 31.
[18] *Ibidem*, p. 6.
[19] Kagan, *The Benevolent Empire*; also: *Il potere del mito*.
[20] Münkler, *Imperien*, p. 17.
[21] Di Cosmo – Maas, *Introduction*.
[22] See i.e. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire*, pp. 3-5.
[23] Imatani, *The Strange Survival*, pp. 15-17.
[24] On the issue of short-lived empires: *Short-Term Empires*.
[25] Woolf, *Rome*, pp. 24-25.

reflection of this vast expanse[26]. In fact, extent is not a reliable parameter: years ago, Moses Finley complained about the tendency to define as empire every very large territorial state[27]. A good example is the huge democracy of Canada, the second largest country on the planet, which by no means is an empire[28]. The Empire of East Rome, progressively losing its borderlands through its history, never saw its imperial status challenged. The Holy Roman Empire furthermore, a pale reflection of the Roman one in size, claimed its status up to the nineteenth century[29].

2. *Imagining frontiers*

Imperial frontiers are an elusive notion. In fact, different kinds of frontiers – military, institutional, religious, or cultural – could coexist, overlap, or vary in their range, character and longevity in the borderlands. Diocesan borders and areas of ecclesiastical jurisdiction may overstep political frontiers, linguistic frontiers could run elsewhere as the political ones. «Military, political, institutional, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, social and economic frontiers move spatially and temporally at their own pace, so that empire cannot be contained within definite parameters»[30]. As a concept, moreover, "empire" derives from the Latin *imperium*, which means the authority to command, exercise violence and judge; only in the end did it come to denote the territories militarily conquered by the Romans[31]. Dick Whittaker, in a book often quoted in this volume, showed how the frontiers of the Roman Empire were no more real than meridians and parallels[32]. Since Rome was the «parent of empire», the «archetypal one», or «das paradigmatische Imperium», its example was emulated over the following centuries[33].

Their dimensions notwithstanding, empires could more properly and ideally be defined by a lack of frontiers, representing an unbounded, universal rule[34]. Imperial actors generally shared a vocation to world dominion because of their mission and higher stance[35]. According to the geographical imagination, empires encompass the complexity and diversity of the world, thus representing an ideal balance where the kaleidoscope of creation is made whole. Imagining and managing space become crucial in the making of empires[36].

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[26] Colás, *Empire*, p. 19.
[27] Finley, *Empire*.
[28] See, however: Findlay – Lundahl, *The Economics*, pp. 78-80.
[29] Folz, *Idée d'Empire*; see, however: Münker, *Imperien*, p. 23.
[30] Ludden, *Process of Empire*, p. 136.
[31] Bang, *Empire*, p. 12; Burbank – Cooper, *Empires*, p. 28.
[32] Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*.
[33] Kumar, *Visions of Empire*, p. 37; Woolf, *Inventing*, p. 312; Ruffing, *Rom*.
[34] Colás, *Empire*, p. 19; Münkler, *Imperien*, pp. 22-29.
[35] Pagden, *Lords of All the World*; Woolf, *Inventing Empire*.
[36] Colás, *Empire*, p. 31.

Frontiers represent, thereafter, an ostensibly static imagery needing to be constantly adapted to shifting realities; while modern states survive only with firmly demarcated borders, imperial frontiers are volatile[37].

Clear lines of demarcation for imperial borders are exceptions; «no matter how physically demarcated, the edges of empire and the edges of the unmeasured "barbarian" realms outside mesh in many ways, and the walls are osmotic membranes establishing a flow of influences and interaction» in the suggestive and rich phrasing of Charles Maier[38]. Frontiers appear, in fact, as deep regions covering the wide spectrum of direct imperial rule, including both satellite polities and hostile ones. Among the Romans, the conception of *limes*, referred to as administrative districts, could «co-exist without problem with subject peoples beyond the frontier», to quote Benjamin Isaac[39]. The imperial-style villa in Oberleiser Berg, a late Roman settlement north of the Danube, illustrates this complexity[40]. Elva Johnston has discussed Ireland, famously an island beyond the imperial reach, as a frontier society of Rome[41]. Chinese emperors or Sasanian kings were able to project authority from the Ocean or the Mediterranean onto Inner Asia[42].

Carolingian aristocracies shared similar expectations with authors keen to portraying their empire as boundless[43]. Great interest was shared in the measuring and representation of the world, a subject thoughtfully discussed by Rosamond McKitterick a few years ago[44]. The Irish scholar Dicul may be the most know case, but Emily Albu notably suggested that also the *Tabula Peutingeriana* should be considered a creation of Charlemagne's court, an empire's depiction modelled on the glorious ages of Augustus and Theodosius[45]. Einhard recorded the existence of silver tables in the emperor's treasure: on one was engraved a depiction of the world in three concentric circles: a precious artefact whose imperial symbolism was straightforward[46]. This was an ideology developing tropes already present during the Merovingian period: in a revealing entry, the Metz Annalist described the *nationes* once subjected to the Franks: although beyond the frontiers, they owned loyalty to the emperor.[47] Tom Noble depicted the Carolingian frontier as «a rich, diverse

[37] *Ibidem*, p. 62.
[38] Maier, *Among the Empires*, p. 81; Münker, *Imperien*, p. 16: «[s]olche präzise Trennungslinien sind im Fallen von Imperien eine Ausnahme».
[39] Isaac, *The Meaning*, p. 134; also: Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy*.
[40] Stuppner, *The Oberleiserberg*.
[41] Johnston, *Ireland in Late Antiquity*.
[42] Canepa; *Sasanian Iran*; Di Cosmo, *The Relations*.
[43] See, however, Müller-Mertens, *Römisches Reich*, suggesting that in the Carolingian and Ottonian era, *Romanum imperium* referred to the imperial rule over Rome and Roman Italy only.
[44] McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 372-380.
[45] Dicuil, *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*; Albu, *Imperial Geography*.
[46] MGH, VK, 33, p. 37.
[47] *Annales Mettenses Priores*, pp. 12-13, *ad annum* 691; Noble, *Louis the Pious*, pp. 336-338; Werner, *Les principautés périphériques*, pp. 483-484. Fischer, *Fredegars Welt*. Moreover, on the annals: Hen, *The Annals of Metz*.

and dynamic region with complicated relationships both with the heartlands and with the external borders»[48]. Brittany was a province constantly negotiating its balance of power with the Carolingian heartland[49]. Recent studies have forcefully framed Dalmatia and Southeastern Europe as a Carolingian frontier[50]. In a thoughtful discussion of the eastern frontiers of the Franks' kingdoms, Matthew Innes wrote how their: «rule shaded away at the edges, from aristocratic frontier commanders through clients who were in a sense part of the Frankish Empire to more independent rulers subject to Frankish influence»[51]. I will return below on this topic.

Beyond the empires' reach stretched the territory of the barbarians; empires are symbiotic to the concept of barbarian[52]. Boundaries often became loaded with ethnic and moral significance, as a shift between civilization and savagery, between our world and theirs[53]. Carolingian intellectuals inherited some of this vision: in the 840-entry of the *Annales Fuldenses*, we read how Louis the Pious persecuted a contender of his «usque ad terminos barbarorum»[54]. For the previous year, the *Annales Bertiniani* narrated the perils beyond the empire reported by the legates from Constantinople: «inter barbaras et nimiae feritatis gentes inmanissimas»[55]. As a concept, barbarism was adjusted, both spatially and chronologically: the further the empire stretched, the more distant the barbarians were cast. In the *Vita Karoli Magni*, we find barbarians only at the very fringes of empire, between Rhine and Vistula and north of the Danube[56]. The inclusion of new subjects into the empire changed their barbarian condition. Yet, in the Carolingian Empire, imperial actors were conscious of their pluralistic origins and even Einhard defined himself as barbarian in one among the most official imperial narratives[57]. Ian Wood showed how, during the Middle Ages, monstrous creatures inhabiting the borders of civilization became an increasingly central topic as the imperial boundaries advanced[58]. In Carolingian discourse and imagination, imperial territories could overlap with those of Christianity, barbarism could collide with paganism; the dichotomy between creeds had become stronger than the divide between the civilized and the barbarians.

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[48] Noble, *Louis the Pious*, p. 338.
[49] Smith, *Province and Empire*.
[50] *Migration, Integration and Connectivity*; Gioanni, *Gouverner le monde*.
[51] Innes, *Review article: Franks and Slavs*, p. 202.
[52] See Heather, *Empires and Barbarians*; Dueck, *The Augustan Concept*; Burbank – Cooper, *Empires*, pp. 11–12; Nolte, *Kleine Geschichte*, p. 43.
[53] On the Roman Empire: Dueck, *The Augustan Concept*. Moreover: Colás, *Empire*, pp. 30-31; Pohl, *Frontiers and Ethnic Identities*; on the moral significance: Pohl, *Conclusion*, p. 252; on the Danube: Gandila, *Cultural Encounters*, pp. 20-32. See also: Kulikowski, *Ethnicity*.
[54] MGH, AF, p. 30, *ad annum* 840; Goetz, *Concepts*, p. 80.
[55] MGH, AB, pp. 19-20, *ad annum* 839.
[56] MGH, VK, 15, p. 24: «deinde omnes barbaras ac feras nationes, quae inter Rhenum ac Visulam fluvios oceanumque ac Danubium positae».
[57] MGH, VK, prol., p. 4: «homo barbarus».
[58] Wood, *Categorising the Cynocephali*.

3. *Reaching frontiers*

Notwithstanding imperial ideologies and missions, empires were constantly «in a state of tension between imperial pretences and limited means»[59]. If imperial discourse portrayed an empire without limits, borderlands had always to be established[60]. These became fundamental to understanding empires, conflating the chronological and geographical dimensions of their existence. Empires adopted different strategies to gain and control borderlands, most recently discussed in a comprehensive comparative analysis by Ronald Findlay and Mats Lundahl[61].

As W.G. Runciman wrote, empires «are easier to acquire than to retain»[62]. In fact, reaching the peak of territorial expansion and establishing frontiers have been seen as among the most fragile phases in the process of empire building. This was the moment when the military drive at the start of great imperial formations began to lose momentum, giving way to radical change, and confirming the transition from a phase of expansion to a stable, long-enduring empire. This moment has been called the «Augustean Threshold» by Michael Doyle[63]. It is both a spatial and chronological shadow line to be crossed for an empire so that it can survive the end of military expansion. The name clearly echoes the first Roman emperor Octavian, as his reign is taken as a watershed between Republican Rome, characterized by constant conquest, and the imperial stability which followed. The Roman and Chinese Empires are the most emblematic among those able to survive this transition, while the Steppe Empires of Central Asia, although with notable exceptions, are generally given as examples of empires unable to make this transition[64].

In the Middle Ages this trajectory could be observed in the Islamic Empire. After the rapid expansion led by Muhammed's successors and the Umayyad caliphs, the new rulers from Baghdad were able to maintain a shrinking, although prestigious empire, for almost three generations, while the ideological legitimacy shaped during the conquest lasted until 1258, and even beyond[65]. Yet, notwithstanding Louis the Pious' succession to his father's realm and adoption of the essential title «imperator Augustus», it has been questioned if the Carolingian Empire survived the end of conquest. Here, a long shadow has been cast by two highly influential articles of Tim Reuter, published almost fifty years ago, where the «end of Carolingian expansion» was seen as the prelude to the empire's breaking apart, as in the great survey of Geoffrey

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[59] Pohl, *Editor's Introduction: Empires*, p. 2.
[60] Smith, *Fines imperii*, p. 176.
[61] Maier, *Among the Empires*, pp. 78-111; also: Maier, *Die Grenzen des Empire*, pp. 126-137; Findlay – Lundahl, *The Economics of the Frontier*, pp. 27-95.
[62] Runciman, *Empire*, p. 99.
[63] Doyle, *Empires*, pp. 93-97.
[64] Burbank – Cooper, *Empires in World History*, p. 93.
[65] Kennedy, *The Caliphate*.

Barraclough[66]. This relations between the closing of a frontier and loss of political power have a venerable tradition in medieval studies: Archibald Lewis, building on Walter Prescott Webb's studies, saw the year 1250 as a watershed in the history of the Medieval world, as the end of expansion signed the «crisis of a suddenly frontierless society»[67].

Yet, the idea has been thoughtfully nuanced in the last years. Tom Noble discussed the continuity of Carolingian frontier politics since Pippin II as a constant effort to integrate the peripheral *regna* into the Frankish heartland; and showed that Louis the Pious was no exception[68]. Simon MacLean demonstrated how the paradigm of an empire that was always decaying influenced historiography for decades, bringing to question the very notion of a Carolingian imperial mission; instead, he showed how the imperial title remained central for competing members of the later dynasty[69].

4. *Ruling frontiers*

Once established, frontiers may have been visible in the landscape: many might immediately think of the Great Wall of China or Hadrian's Wall as barriers separating the empire from the outside; a monument to greatness and majesty. The Carolingian empire and its later incarnations, however, were seldom characterized by the monumentality of the *limes*. Certainly, fortifications were built on the river Elbe, as elsewhere: Matthias Hardt suggested the *limes Saxoniae* was a system of hillforts erected thirty or forty kilometres from each other, as «a large region protected by a system of fortresses and sanctuaries on both sides of the boarder», which may have echoed Rome's masonry – although the reality of this fortified frontier has been debated[70]. In the North, we learn, there was a «vallum» open by one gate, a fortification built by the Danes[71]. *Castella* dotted the border between the Saxon march and the land of the Sorbs, while another «uuallum» signed the entrance in the territory of the Avars[72]. Often demarcations were far less spectacular; they nevertheless maintained a function in controlling people's movements[73]. Ba-

[66] Reuter, *Plunder and Tribute*; Reuter, *The End*; Barraclough, *The Crucible*, p. 36.
[67] Lewis, *The Closing*, p. 483; quoted by Noble, *Louis the Pious*, pp. 334-335. Webb, *The Great Planes*. See moreover: Burns, *The Significance*.
[68] Noble, *Louis the Pious*.
[69] MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, p. 9; De Jong, *The Empire*, p. 13. See also: Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*.
[70] Hardt, *Hesse, Elbe, Saale*; Hardt, *The* Limes Saxoniae; *Der* Limes Saxoniae; and Marco Franzoni's contribution in this volume. See also: Squatriti, *Moving Earth*, for rich evidence of ditches and barriers in Southeastern Europe.
[71] MGH, ARF, p. 126, *ad annum* 808; Goetz, *Concepts*, p. 79.
[72] MGH, AB, p. 23, *ad annum* 839; *Epistolae variorum*, n. 20, p. 528.
[73] Gasparri, *La frontiera*.

varian eastern borders were defined in terms of precisely named places, *loca*; *villae* may have marked the border between Saxons and Abodrites[74].

Authority in the borderlands made them much harder to cross when entering the imperial territory than when leaving it[75]. Entering the empire required harsher conditions; leaving it was generally much easier, because of the perceived difference between imperial and outside-the-empire life according to the above-mentioned asymmetry. The Carolingian capitulary of Thionville (805) refers to the regions of Saxony and Bavaria, in Lauriacum where strongholds and royal officials to control exchange and the merchants travelling to the territories of the Slavs and Avars, forbidding the commerce of some wares, while permitting the exchange of others. Such an outpost was still the «limes certus» at the eve of the Avar campaigns and further conquests in the East[76]. The control of merchants and travellers was not peculiar to the West: the *Itinerarium* of Bernard the Monk suggestively shows the great complexity of entering the Caliphate at the end of the ninth century[77].

Subsequently, frontier regions were places of military power and tax extraction, which could have been marked by defensive structures: powerhouses of imperial authority. The Carolingian rulers left a certain autonomy to the various kingdoms of the empire, while trying to enforce direct authority on the borderlands[78]. Emperors themselves throve on these liminal spaces; fourth century Roman rulers seldom abandoned them, making the strongholds at the empire's very fringes their abode. In the middle of the seventh century, Constans II remained for years in Syracuse to oppose the Arab conquests in the Central Mediterranean[79]. Charlemagne, although growing older, nevertheless undertook voyages to the Western and Northern frontiers in 810 and 811: his horse fall, with the consequent loss of sword and brooch, became the omen of imminent end[80]. Widukind of Corvey narrated how it was on the frontier, in the aftermath of the battle at the Lechfeld, that Otto was proclaimed emperor by his army[81]. Rulers despised in the metropole could have been acclaimed at the frontiers, such as Phocas or Justinian II[82].

Emperors could not simultaneously be on each frontier with authors developing the fantasy of omnipresent rulers. Notker of Saint Gall imagined a window in Charlemagne's palace in Aachen from which every location around him could have been scrutinized, even inside the buildings; an all-seeing eye

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[74] *Loca*: MGH, ARF, p. 87, *ad annum* 790 (an entry in the revised version of the annals). See Walter Pohl's contribution in this volume. *Villae*: MGH, AB, p. 17, *ad annum* 839.
[75] Münkler, *Imperien*, p. 16.
[76] MGH, Capit. I, nos 43-44, cc. 23-24, pp. 120-126. Steinacher – Winckler, *Merowinger und Karolinger*, see also the contribution of Walter Pohl and Katharina von Winckler in this volume.
[77] *Itinerarium Bernardi*.
[78] Štih, *Pippin*; Bührer-Thierry, *Centres et périphéries*.
[79] Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion*, pp. 166-199.
[80] MGH, VK, 32, p. 36; Fichtenau, *Das karolingische Imperium*, p. 186.
[81] MGH, RGS, III, 49, p. 128.
[82] Brown, *Officers and Gentlemen*, pp. 148-150.

to keep the empire firm in grasp at the moment of its break apart[83]. In Chris Wickham's words the story reflected «the concrete operation of [...] power, that is, knowledge, and, when necessary, coercion based on that knowledge»[84]. In the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, we read how once, «olim», the Romans possessed seventy-two bronze statues, held in the Capitol, each representing a people subject to them: if one of these *gentes* rebelled the statue representing it began to vibrate, «commovebatur», and a little bell, «tintinnabulum», on them rang, so that the Romans could intervene in no time[85]. Dreams born by the insurmountable difficulties of ruling imperial vastities.

In fact, when the emperors were too far away, frontier control may have been delegated to powerful persons rooting to the territory. Lords in charge of boundaries were traditionally among the wealthiest and militarily powerful, such as the governors of Merv, the *strategoi* of Anatolikon, the dukes of Friuli and Bavaria. Charlemagne was himself a product of the frontier because of his Austrasian origin. «The existence of great military commanders along the frontiers, with powers far in excess to the ones of the counts» made them the empire's masters after the Carolingians' demise[86]. Imperial frontier regions could, thereafter, become a reason for the instability for the imperial core[87]. Under given circumstances, frontier officers escaped the metropolitan authority in many ways, as in terms of fiscal indiscipline, secessionist projects, or refusing to obey the ruler's rally and deserting the battlefield. One example is duke Cadolah of Friuli during Bernhard's revolt in 817; another is Henry the Lion three hundred years later during Barbarossa's last descent into Italy in 1166[88]. Often usurpers emerged from the frontiers. The story of Byzantine Italy in the seventh century is dotted with *tyranni* whose race for the imperial title demonstrates the strong bonds of frontier societies with the centre, as well as the strength of the empire's lure at the frontiers[89]. The short duration of each Exarch's service was a deliberate imperial precaution to enable them controlling the frontier regions. It eventually became among the reasons for local armies' lack of effectiveness[90]. This is what has been called the principal/agent problem[91]. Agents have their own priorities and agendas and were often resistant to do as they were told, so that rulers in the imperial frontier regions developed their own agency[92]. A suggestive example is that of the incident concerning the exarch Olympius, who was supposed to persuade

[83] Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 30, p. 41.
[84] Wickham, *The Inheritance*, p. 245.
[85] *Chronicon Salernitanum*, 132, p. 143.
[86] Barraclough, *The Crucible*, p. 109.
[87] Ludden, *The Process of Empire*; Runciman, *Empire*, p. 103.
[88] Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 183-185; Gasparri, *Istituzioni e poteri*, pp. 118-119; Lyon, *Princely Brothers and Sisters*, pp. 89-119.
[89] Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, pp. 159-163.
[90] See the similar considerations on the *Varusschlacht*: Münkler, *Imperien*, p. 44.
[91] Morris, *Empire and Military Organization*, p. 166.
[92] Münkler, *Imperien*, p. 47; also: Mudden, *Process of Empire*.

the Italian army to the eastern emperor's cause before imprisoning the pope. Loyalty was by no mean to be taken for granted: Olympius ended up proclaiming himself as emperor, with the local forces refusing to obey the ruler of Constantinople[93].

It was in the frontiers that the very idea of empire could have been claimed, questioned, or challenged. Borderland areas could put forward a poignant symbolic language. In Italy, we read of rituals and liturgy, and we can still admire the remnants of monuments meant to enforce allegiance, as in Torcello or in Rome; the *Liber pontificalis* provides examples of the means by which Constantinople displayed authority on the Italian peripheries in an effort to ingratiate itself with the local aristocracies in a richness of imperial imagery[94]. The *Libellus de imperatoria potestate in urbe Roma* was probably composed in Spoleto during the second half of ninth century and the middle of the tenth, at the imperial southern frontier aiming to assess Louis II's lordship in Central Italy[95]. Frontiers could also host imperial quarrels[96]. In the famous words of Tacitus, before the battle at the *mons Graupius*, Calgacus, chieftain of the Caledonian confederacy, questioned the very idea of *pax Romana*, thus turning upside-down the Roman claim to universal rule[97]. In a similar though less dramatic fashion, the same critic of the empire came from the Syrian frontiers in the Monty Python film *Life of Brian*. In the delightful "what have the Romans ever done for us" scene, the zealots meet to discuss the overthrow of the Roman government:

> REG: All right, but apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, a fresh water system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?
> XERXES: Brought peace.
> REG: Oh. Peace? Shut up[98]!

The borderlands of empire were the first to seek various degrees of autonomy, such as Umayyad Al-Andalus, the first region of the Caliphate to escape Baghdad's authority[99]. The second version of Gregory II's life collected in the *Liber pontificalis* narrated the riot of the imperial armies spreading across Byzantine Italy in 727[100]. The idea of promoting a new emperor was mooted, but eventually the project abandoned, and the frontier provinces fragmented

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[93] LP, I, p. 337; Stratos, *The Exarch Olympius.*
[94] See LP, 1, pp. 363, 392, on this: McKitterick, *The Papacy and Byzantium.* On the *Liber pontificalis*: McKitterick, *Rome.* See moreover Borri, *The Lagoons as a Distant Mirror.*
[95] *Libellus.*
[96] See here: Shepard, *Countering Byzantium's Shadow.*
[97] Fraser, *The Roman Conquest of Scotland.*
[98] *Monty Phyton's Life of Brian.*
[99] Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal.*
[100] LP, vol. 1, p. 408. On the different versions of the life: McKitterick, *Rome*, pp. 207-210.

into increasingly autonomous polities, the imperial symbols and lexicon of power bent to local realities, as in Rome, Ravenna or Venice[101].

After 774 and the conquest of the Lombard kingdom by the Franks, Carolingian authors highlighted the peace following the conquest of Italy, whereas dissonant voices from the frontiers told a different story during the succeeding decades[102]. In 983 the newly conquered regions beyond the Elbe revolted, and the very idea of empire was dramatically challenged: a new allegiance was formed, relying on non-imperial patterns of power, and pagan in religion[103]. Agnellus wrote in Ravenna in the ninth century, a town at the crossroad of empires, where privileges and punishments are evoked in a continuum, even as the imperial centre shifted from the Byzantines to the Carolingians; the empire could be a divine source of authority or a poisonous dragon rising from the sea[104].

Empires needed loyal peripheries to survive. Payments, dignities, and prestige goods were, together with violence, among the means used by the imperial centre to achieve this aim. Harsh punishments emerge from our evidence. Powerful and rebelling officers were dealt with publicly and mercilessly; reports survive of surrendering barbarians brutally executed in the frontier regions, such as at Cannstatt, Verden or in the aftermath of Stoinef's defeat[105]. Steppe powers, notably the Mongols, adopted violence as a strategy of rule, using concentrated military power as leverage to assuage defiance[106].

Yet coercion was only one of the tools, though an extreme and unwieldly one, that empires had in their armoury; co-option was the favoured choice. Charlemagne's Saxon wars reached an end when local aristocracies finally joined the imperial cause. Einhard was bluntly outspoken on this imperial policy of assimilation, recording a «union with the Franks to form one people»[107]. Saxon aristocracies were eventually won for the empire, crushing the *Stellinga* revolts of the mid-ninth century[108]. Other than coercion, empires paying standing army could rely to other tools. Since a failure to pay soldiers was among the first causes of riots, Henry I of Saxony seem to have dealt with this problem by building a line of fortifications on the eastern edges of the empire, assigning land to the men in charge and making them self-sufficient[109].

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[101] West-Harling, *Rome, Ravenna, and Venice*. See also: Borri, *The Lagoons as a Distant Mirror*; Noble, *Louis the Pious*, p. 347.

[102] Gasparri, *Italia longobarda*, pp. 172-176.

[103] Fritze, *Der slawische Aufstand*; Lübke, *Das östliche Europa*, pp. 232-252.

[104] Martínez Pizarro, *Writing Ravenna*; Schoolman, *Representations of Lothar*.

[105] *Annales Petaviani*, p. 11, *ad annum* 746; MGH, ARF, p. 62, *ad annum* 782; MGH, RGS, III, 55, pp. 134-135.

[106] Münkler, *Imperien*, pp. 89-90; also: Burbank – Cooper, *Empires in World History*, pp. 97-99, 105.

[107] MGH, VK, 7, p. 10: «unus cum eis popolus efficerentur».

[108] Goldberg, *Popular Revolt*; Rembold, *Conquest and Christianization*, pp. 85-140.

[109] MGH, RGS, I, 35, pp. 48-51; Henning, *Civilization versus Barbarians?*; Schlesinger, *Zur Gerichtsverfassung*.

It was a traditional method for cutting military costs. Yet, all granting autonomies, inevitably led to the empires' loss of leverage in the frontier regions.

5. *Living frontiers*

In many narratives the space beyond empires was the adobe of the unknown and the weird, as Marlow met in Joseph Conrad's novella *Hearth of Darkness*. A wonderful medieval example stems from Bruno's letter to Emperor Henry II where the progression from the imperial frontier became a descent into barbarism and paganism[110]. In recent times boarder zones were places of colonial adventure as in many fictions of Rudyard Kipling; perhaps the Epic *Waltharius* is an early example of this attitude; Mary Garrison suggestively wrote of Carolingian «frontier literature»[111].

These fringes could have been characterized by specific cultures, possibly militaristic and exotic, contrasting or similar to the barbarians' one. Eric Goldberg suggestively described the Christian and military habits of the eastern kingdom of Louis the German, in constant conflict with Slav and Hungarian neighbours[112]. On the other hand, when looking at the late Roman frontier on the Rhine, it becomes difficult to disentangle the origin of peculiar habits, appearances and identities which seem to mix cultural elements of both Roman and barbarian origin[113]. In borderlands «"the language of power" can be multiple, creolised and available only in translation or indirectly»[114], a middle ground, where different cultural elements merged into a new discourse of power characterized by «creative misunderstandings»[115]. Strategies of identity were possible due to the deep knowledge of the barbarians. Frontier regions were places of cultural encounters: Latin epigraphy on the Rhine and in other frontier regions documents the exchanges taking place there; in 782 the embassies of distant polities joined at the emperor's war-camp close to Paderborn, bringing gifts and knowledge, such as the names of the Saxon ruler or the dignities of the Avar leaders[116]. The first appearance of Rhos in Ingelheim was followed by a keen investigation, meant to gather information on the new *gens*[117].

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[110] Bruno of Querfurt, *Epistola*; Fałkowski, *The Letter*.
[111] *Waltharius*; on the narrative as a Carolingian product: Stone, *Waltharius*. Quotation is from: Garrison, *The Emergence*, p. 134.
[112] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*.
[113] Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, pp. 101-110.
[114] Ludden, *The Process of Empire*, p. 136.
[115] White, *The Middle Ground*.
[116] Lee, *Information and Frontiers*; MGH, ARF, pp. 58-60, *ad annum* 782: «Saxones venientes, excepto rebellis Widochindus [...] Nordmanni missi Sigifridi regis, id est Halptani [...] Avari [...] missi a cagano et iugurro».
[117] MGH, AB, pp. 19-20, *ad annum* 839; Shepard, *The Rhos Guests*.

Imperial armies were often a product of the exchanges running through the border regions[118]. Indeed, "ethnic soldiers" recruited in distant frontiers became a feature of empires[119]. It was because of this relationship to the frontier regions and the barbarian world that imperial armies often gained an aura of invincibility, with soldiers ideally originating from harsh regions thought to increase their fighting capabilities and resilience[120]. The late Roman army recurred to ethnic groups, such as Illyrians and Goths, and eventually Isaurians, stemming from the cold mountainous regions of central Asia Minor[121]. The efficient armies of the Caliphs were settled in Merv, in the open frontiers to Transoxiana and the nomadic powers of Central Asia; the inclusion of the Turks in the Abbasid armies and their conversion to Islam was among the momentous episodes in medieval history[122]. The British Empire shaped the reputation of the Gurkhas, a brigade raised in Nepal, fighting the imperial battles from 1857 to the Malvinas/Falkland campaign and Afghanistan[123]. Ethnic soldiers, with one foot in the imperial military tradition and the other in their barbarian heritage, rose to legendary status through history; empires manipulated ethnic identities, celebrating diversity, and enforcing hierarchy.

The feared *scarae* mostly stemmed from the imperial heartlands. Nevertheless, newly conquered people joined the Frankish armies in pushing forward the conquest, Carolingian armies were designed after ethnic names, as an indication of the territory where they were risen. In the annals is normal to find *Alamanni, Gothi, Langobardi* or *Saxones*. Groups were recruited even further fighting imperial wars by proxy[124]. Frontier elites were enticed into taking positions unreachable times of peace; joining imperial enterprises offered the chance for satellite polities and other ethnic groups to climb through the ranks[125]. The presence of the duke of Istria in the Avar campaign of 791 is revealing; on some occasions, the burden of war was left to the bordering aristocracies, as in the case of successive campaigns against the Avars, one led by the reclusive Vojnomir; or in 788, when the fight against the Eastern Empire was delegated to the Lombards of Spoleto and Benevento led by the duke Grimoald, although observed by trusted Frankish men[126].

Imperial agency worked in the shaping of frontier identities, as in Bavaria or Dalmatia[127]. Max Diesenberger has shown how the Saxons' forced transfer

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[118] Morris, *Empire and Military Organization*, p. 161.
[119] Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers*; Bang, *Empire*, p. 39; Burbank – Cooper, *Empires and the Politics of Difference*.
[120] Bang, *Empire*, p. 9; Cólas, *Empire*, p. 9; Morris, *Empire and Military Organization*.
[121] Amory, *People and Identity*, pp. 277-313; Van Driel-Murray, *Ethnic Soldiers*; Feld, *Barbarische Bürger*.
[122] Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*; Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*.
[123] Caplan, *Warrior Gentlemen*.
[124] On the organization of Carolingian armies, see now: Haack, *Der Krieger der Karolingier*; moreover: Halsall, *Warfare*, pp. 40-133.
[125] Münkler, *Imperien*, p. 43.
[126] MGH, ARF, p. 82, *ad annum* 788, p. 82; p. 98, *ad annum* 796. Borri, *The Duke of Istria*.
[127] Reimitz, *When the Bavarians Became Bavarian*; Lienhard, *Les combattants*.

and settlement was conceived as imperial policy[128]. Tenth-century emperors acted in similar ways: in a story of Widukind of Corvey, Henry I installed in Merseburg a band formed of rogues and robbers: he remitted their punishment and instructed them to plunder the neighbouring Slavs[129].

6. *Imperial awe*

An imperial sense of mission, aspiring to ultimate authority, made it imperative for the emperors to intervene beyond their comfort zones. The rulers of empires tended to act outside their territory, while outsider intrusions into their own were unthinkable[130]. Empires seem to prosper in their status with political and military action validating the asymmetric relationships between them and neighbouring polities; failure to act then becomes a loss of authority and creates a potential danger of defeat. In some cases, empires extended their moral authority through coercion, in others through hegemony cast beyond their armies' reach.

It seems that intervention on the frontiers stretched imperial resources and often backfired. We could see it in different occasions: the episode of Pope Martin's capture in 649, which must have deeply embittered the relationships of Constantinople with Rome; likewise the events of 788, when Byzantine forces incurred a major defeat at Lombard and Carolingian hands in Southern Italy: it was not an economic move, but a confrontation between the old empire and a rising one in Central Europe[131]. Otto II's inglorious defeat at the Battle of Stilo was the consequence of the imperial drive to assert authority in the frontier regions of the empire, confronting the other empires in the region: its consequence was a major loss of prestige and the downfall of the Northeastern frontiers[132].

More frequently, empires held sway beyond their borders with only marginal military intervention; taking «their superiority for granted» and projecting it «down the ranks and out into peripheries, to generate consensus that leaders lead because they are more enlightened, and that better off people naturally have privileges and responsibilities to lead lesser folks»[133]. This could be seen as «the acceptance of that dominance by the dominated, the internalization of the value-system of the ruling class, including those parts of the system which allow rulers to punish the dominated for not obeying the rules»[134]. Between the fifth and eighth centuries, kingdoms and other polities

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[128] Diesenberger, *Die Zwangsumsiedlungen der Sachsen*. See also: Melleno, *Between Borders*.
[129] MGH, RGS, I, 38, pp. 48-51.
[130] Münkler, *Imperien*, p. 30.
[131] On the 649-happenings: Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 290-312; sources are collected in: *Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs*. For the clash of 788: MGH, ARF, p. 82, *ad annum* 788.
[132] Bernhardt, *Concepts and Practice*, p. 153; Banaszkiewicz, *Ein Ritter flieht*.
[133] Ludden, *The Process of Empire*, p. 134.
[134] Wickham, *Framing*, p. 440.

around the Mediterranean adapted forms of authority, at least to some extent, from imperial patterns of power, contributed to the formation of the Mediterranean, then European, political entities, often recognizing the emperor in Constantinople as the head of a hierarchy of sovereigns, able to grant gifts and imperial dignities to affirm his superior stance[135]. The Caliph was, until 1258, the highest authority of the Muslim world. Different emirs and sultans, although politically independent, recognized Baghdad's primacy[136]. Garth Fowden portraited a Mediterranean world of empires, as the Byzantine and the Muslim with its hierarchies of rulers, where monotheism became strongly embedded in imperial visions[137].

Also in Carolingian Europe and the Mediterranean imperial authority reached distant peripheries from the metropole. The famous fifteenth chapter of Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni* listed Dalmatia, the two Pannonias and even Dacia, the land north of the Danube, as the eastern fringes if the Carolingian realm. We grasp imperial echoes from the past, but also distant, ill-defined frontiers[138]. As in Roman times, imperial power overflowed the *limes*; it became intertwined with eschatological expectations early on, with Charlemagne claiming the ultimate secular authority in the Christian world[139]. In the following chapter of his work, Einhard claimed that the emperor's dominance extended to Alfonso, king of the Asturias and Galicia, and the kings of Ireland[140]. We know that Alfonso sent Charlemagne spoils he collected from pillaging Lisbon, a stronghold even further in the Iberian Peninsula[141]. In the same narrative, we read of Charlemagne's money, sent «trans marina» to support the churches of Africa, Egypt and Syria, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Carthage[142]. The Basel Roll, a list of Jerusalem's Christian foundations, composed at the beginning of the ninth century, shows the deep imperial involvement in the Holy Land[143].

Louis the Pious offered military alliance to the people of Mérida in the Guandiana River Basin, a town under Muslim authority deep in the Andalusian southwest[144]. This kind of intervention could also be seen in the imperial kingdom of Italy. In the famous letter in which Lothar's son Louis II wrote to his eastern colleague Basil a few years later, the western emperor lamented the Greeks ravaging of the «Sclaveni nostri», probably settled on the Dalmatian coast, well beyond the kingdom's boundaries[145]. The successors of the

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[135] Wolfram, *Das Römerreich*; Esders, *In the Shadow*; Scholl, *Imitatio Imperii*.
[136] Kennedy, *The Caliphate*.
[137] Fowden, *From Empire to Commonwealth*; Sarris, *Empires of Faith*; Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat*. Also: Burbank – Cooper, *Empires and the Politics of Difference*, p. 4.
[138] MGH, VK, 15, p. 18.
[139] Alberi, *The Evolution*; Bührer-Tierry, *Centres et périphéries*, pp. 146-147.
[140] MGH, VK, 16, p. 26: «Scottorum quoque reges».
[141] MGH, ARF, 798, p. 104.
[142] MGH, VK, 27, p. 40.
[143] McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey*.
[144] Einhard, *Epistolae*, 12, pp. 115-116. Conant, *Louis the Pious*.
[145] Louis II, *Epistola ad Basilium*, p. 392.

Carolingians shared similar visions. In the tenth century, Widukind of Corvey narrated how Henry, the father of his Emperor Otto, became overlord of the Danes, extending his (proto)imperial authority on a territory beyond the German kingdom's borders[146]. In the twelfth century, John of Salisbury denounced the arrogance of the Teutons pretending to rule over all the nations, reflecting at the same time the emperor's claims of higher authority[147]. A letter often attributed to King Henry II of England similarly suggested the emperor's wide-reaching authority[148].

Emperors, moreover, were willing to see themselves as the incarnation of political authority. Even on the eve of Pippin III's rise to kingship, the emperor of Constantinople saw his own role as the fundamental source of power: in a revealing brief entry in the *Annales regni Francorum*, Emperor Constantine V gave an organ as a gift to the Frankish *major*: it was an ancient symbol of kingship[149]. His ability to grant artefacts, whose technology was not available to recipients, aimed to demonstrate the sender's higher stance. This action also responded to the imperial «informelle Zwang» to excel in every field in which power and prestige are expected[150]. Emperor Constantine chose to represent himself as the ultimate source of authority at the very moment when Pippin III was closing his alliance with the bishops of Rome[151]. Yet, recipients could read the exchange differently, nuancing or altering the power relations that the gifts were meant to affirm; after all, «the more important the gift, the more easily, its gift could be contested» and «[d]iplomatic gifts were open to all sorts of readings»[152]. The Franks were glad to see Constantine's gift, as many others, as a tribute and a reflection of *their* own greatness. In turn, Carolingian emperors often eased or endorsed the rise to power of neighbouring rulers, as in 805 with Venice and Dalmatia, or in 817, when the emperor appointed the rulers of different polities at the empire's frontiers[153]. It is suggestive that in different Slavic languages, the word "king" – *kral* – stems from the name Charles (Germ.: *Karl*), the ruler *par excellence*[154].

The Gospel book known to scholars as the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000) features two full-page miniatures representing the enthroned Charles the Bald in his imperial aspiration[155]. For the first time in Western art, the illumination represents the

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[146] MGH, RGS, I, 40, p. 59.
[147] Fuhrmann, *Quis Teutonicos constituit iudices nationum?*.
[148] Leyser, *Frederick Barbarossa*.
[149] MGH, ARF, p. 14, *ad annum* 757: «[m]isit Constantinus imperator regi Pippino cum aliis donis organum, qui in Franciam usque pervenit».
[150] Münkler, *Imperien*, p. 54.
[151] Herrin, *Constantinople*.
[152] Wickham, *Conclusion*, p. 240.
[153] MGH, ARF, pp. 120-121, *ad annum* 806: «[e]t facta est ibi ordinatio ab imperatore de ducibus et populis tam Venetiae quam Dalmatiae»; p. 147, *ad annum* 817.
[154] Lübke, *Das östliche Europa*, p. 52.
[155] Many art historians have discussed this iconography. See most recently: Pizzinato, *Vision and* Christomimesis. Moreover: Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 14.

personifications of provinces paying homage to the rulers; inscribed verses run «Francia grata tibi, rex inclite, munera defert» and «Gotia te pariter cum regnis inchoat altis»[156]. As Charles authority reaches the western provinces of the Carolingian Empire, an iconography portraying the ruler in a Christ-like fashion suggested limitless authority. The *Reichskrone*, today in the *Schatzkammer* of Vienna, is one among the most important of the imperial *regalia*; the artefact was crafted between the tenth and eleventh centuries, and, since the reign of Conrad II, used in the imperial coronation rituals. One of the eight arched plates is inscribed with «per me reges regnant» (by me kings reign), a quotation from Proverbs (8:15) of the Vulgate Latin Bible: the emperor too was a maker of kings.[157] Otto III at Gniezno in 1000 may have created the king of Poland, although the meeting's significance is debated. On this occasion, a copy of the Holy Lance, which the emperor had given to the Polish ruler Boleslaw, symbolized his authority[158]. In a similar fashion, it was after the destruction of Milan that Emperor Barbarossa developed the cult of the biblical Magi as part of the imperial theology[159]. The Three Magi were kings of distant lands, who recognized the superior authority of the Saviour; like them, the rulers of Europe, which Friedrich loved to call *reguli* or *reges provinciarum*, were ideally supposed to obey to the emperor's authority[160]. Marc Bloch tersely wrote how frontiers did not halt the aspirations of the Hohenstaufen emperors willing to present themselves as lords of the all world: «[m]ais précisément les frontières de l'Empire, au sens étroit du mot, ne bornent pas les aspirations de l'Empereur. Successeur des maîtres du monde antique, il est, comme eux, *dominus mundi*»[161].

7. *Conclusion*

Only a tentative conclusion can be offered on this vast subject.

Imperial authority was theoretically unlimited, but regions remained beyond it; in any case manifestations of imperial authority were not permanent. Frontier regions represented the balance between this world encompassing authority and a circumscribed political order. It was a temporal as well as a spatial divide. In a context of fluctuating frontiers, empires thrived.

We can by now agree that imperial frontiers were not clear-cut lines. On the contrary, they represented deep zones with diverse functions, a complexity of entities enriched by the assorted interpretations of the thin divide between empire and hegemony – a concept diversely interpreted by different

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[156] Dutton – Jeauneau, *Verses of the Codex Aureus*, p. 91.
[157] Kugler, *Die Reichskrone*. Also: Erdmann, *Das ottonische Reich*.
[158] Grabowski, *The Construction of Ottonian Kingship*; Erdmann, *Das ottonische Reich*.
[159] Cardini, *I re magi*, pp. 83-86.
[160] Weinfurter, *Das Reich*, p. 121.
[161] Bloch, *L'Empire*, p. 552; also: Monnet, *Le Saint-Empire*.

scholars[162]. In the opening lines of his fundamental book on the subject, Michael Doyle wrote: «Empires are relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies. They include more than just formally annexed territories, but they encompass less than the sum of all forms of international inequality»[163].

Michael Maier recalled the peripheries' importance to understand the metropole's role and identity: «[p]recisely because it constitutes the edge of empire [...] the frontier is critical for the center»[164]. Indeed, imperial frontier regions play a crucial role: although permeable, they separate the empire and the other, on the backdrop of whom the empire was defined. Within a Mediterranean discourse, it was the barbarian other; during the medieval centuries, it gained a religious dimension. The Carolingians were able to create an ideology, indebted to the Christian Roman Emperors' theocracy which, progressively enriched and reframed, was the backbone of imperial conceptions until the nineteenth century[165]. The empire was the home of the Christians; pagans dwelt beyond it. Helmut Reimitz has shown how the proper baptismal rite ensured membership of the imperial community; Mayke de Jong has demonstrated how the empire as a whole was conceived as a moral project for the realization of God's plan[166]. Carolingian narratives seem to stress this identity multiple times: in verses such as the *De Pippini regis victoria Avarica* the imperial subjects are called *Christiani*, while their antagonists are dismissed as *pagani*[167]. The Royal Annalist went as far as to depict the heathen Abodrites as Christians because of their alliance with the empire[168]. Among the strongest later usage of this rhetoric, we can place Widukind of Corvey's account of the Battle of Lenzen[169].

Yet, the Ottonian emperors, together with their successors, became increasingly surrounded by kingdoms sharing similar Christian identities, political languages, and cultural traits. Christianity was never an imperial prerogative, but through the Middle Ages all the European rulers legitimated their authority through the Christian religion; the Church headed by the pope was bound to clash with imperial convictions concerning their power and role. This undermined the imperial mission and the emperors' prestige. Around the year 1000, we see control of Italy and Rome as an essential element of the emperor's role. In fact, the investiture controversy demonstrated how even the emperor's moral primacy inside Christianity was bitterly contested. It is too big a debate to be addressed here, but ecclesiastical authority

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[162] Münkler, *Imperien*, pp. 35-77.
[163] Doyle, *Empires*, p. 19.
[164] Maier, *Among the Empires*, p. 79.
[165] Weinfurter, *Das Reich*; Moreland, *The Carolingian Empire*; Folz, *Idée d'Empire*. Bührer-Thierry, *Centres et périphéries*.
[166] Reimitz, *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen*.
[167] *De Pippini regis victoria Avarica*; Pohl, *Pippin*.
[168] Rembold, *Conquest and Christianization*, pp. 45-46.
[169] MGH, RGS, I, 36, pp. 51-54.

could have been a tool of imperial authority as well as a strong oppositional force to same[170]. Still around 1000, the Ottonian Empire was, in Chris Wickham's reading, the strongest military power in Europe[171]. This supremacy may have remained intact until the twelfth century: Frederick Barbarossa tried to enforce his authority through different means, the holiness of the Roman law and the cult of Saint Charlemagne among them; all became part of an imperial theology for the high Middle Ages[172]. Yet, the Empire increasingly acquired similar character to that of its neighbouring states, as its power declined.

Lucien Febvre showed how social relations are spatially projected, with frontiers reflecting ideology[173]. Carolingian border regions reflected the nature of an empire built on Roman and Christian models, its universal authority and majesty. Decades later, it became clear that the empires of the Ottonians and the Salians, like the twelfth-century Holy Roman Empire, were limited both north and south by *marcae*: the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic were sealed by Denmark, the boundary of the Danes, while dozens of marching days south, the limits with the Greek, Islamic, Lombard and Norman South were signed by the *marca par excellence,* gaining this name between the tenth and the eleventh century, which survives in the one modern regione Marche[174]. *Imperium*, nevertheless, maintained more than a purely territorial connotation: the orb, sometimes known as the *Reichsapfel* – imperial apple – held firmly in the left hand of every emperor, accurately represents the endless expanse of their dominions[175].

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[170] It has even been suggested that the whole Empire of the medieval West was a construct of Rome's bishops: Ullmann, *Reflections on the Medieval Empire.*
[171] Wickham, *Medieval Europe*, p. 101.
[172] Görich, *Frederich Barbarossa*, pp. 633-635.
[173] Febvre, *Limites et frontières.*
[174] Borgolte, *Das Reich.*
[175] Schramm, *Sphaira.*

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Frontier practices in the early Carolingian Period

by Walter Pohl

Focusing on early Carolingian frontier's practices, the paper opens discussing the topic's significant scholarship, debating influential work of the past up to the developments of the last years. Afterwards, the frontier's role between Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages is discussed in detail, focusing on fortifications, violence, and terminology. Finally, the Alpine *clusae* at the end of the Lombard rule, as well as the Carolingian expansion to the east are taken in exam. Due to a fortunate conjuncture of different sources, the two case-studies enable to enlighten important aspects of early medieval frontiers.

Middle Ages; 7th-9th centuries; Frontiers studies; Alpine frontiers; Avar frontiers; Carolingian conquest.

Abbreviations
Capit. it. = *I capitolari italici. Storia e diritto della dominazione carolingia in Italia*, ed. C. Azzara – P. Moro, Roma 1998.
LP = *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, *Le* Liber Pontificalis. *Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vols, Paris 1886-1892; transl. R. Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs. The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, Liverpool 1989 (Translated Texts for Historians, 6).
MGH, AQDE = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ, 6).
MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 6).
MGH, Capit. I = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 1, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883 (MGH, LL).
MGH, LL = *Leges Langobardorum*, ed. F. Bluhme, Hannover 1868 (MGH, LL, 4).
MGH, Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii* = *Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldo*, ed. W. Levison, Hannover-Leipzig 1905, pp. 1-58 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 57).

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In June 1985, the Schengen treaty fixed the abolition of regular border controls at the frontiers between the participating member states of the European Union. In 1989, the Iron Curtain collapsed, which so far had run across much of Central Europe, one of the most elaborate and divisive frontier lines ever constructed. It may be no coincidence that around the same time, the concept of frontier came under discussion in Ancient[1] and Medieval Studies[2]. The notion of "the frontier" in these periods was questioned, debated and in many cases deconstructed. Were the polities and communities of the past bounded entities at all, or were their peripheries first of all zones of exchange and interaction? These were important and productive questions, and they helped to historicise the notion of "frontier", which obviously meant different things to different people at different times. In some cases, deconstruction was perhaps pushed too far, culminating in a kind of retrospective utopia in which boundaries, identities and differences between humans did not matter. In many cases such a noble vision does not correspond to the evidence of the sources. Recent experiences in our own time have also somehow dimmed the optimistic view that "hard" boundaries between polities had only been established by the modern nations and could gradually be softened with the demise of nationalism. Even within the European Union, the wave of asylum seekers in 2015 and the pandemic in 2020/21 have demonstrated that the re-introduction of border controls is still seen as the best solution for problems perceived as originating outside one's own country. New nationalism is gaining ground in many places in Europe and elsewhere. Perhaps the recent interest in frontiers among medievalists and ancient historians has been prompted, to some extent, by the observation of how new frontiers are being drawn across and around present societies.

The questions we are asking now are still essentially the same as in the debates of the 1990s. Was there a concept of the frontier in Antiquity and the Middle Ages that resembled our own, as historical maps seem to suggest? Or do we only project modern notions of bounded territories into the past? Did pre-modern people in Europe conceive of the boundaries between polities as linear frontiers, or were they rather used to border zones where control from both sides was situational or faded out altogether? Can the concept of frontier help us to understand the constitution of bounded social groups, polities and empires? What has changed is perhaps that the interest is in many cases more global and comparative. A glance at some 2022 conference topics also shows some concern with confronting ancient and modern/contemporary frontiers. In Houston, "Naming the Natives" juxtaposed Roman perceptions of the barbarians with attitudes towards indigenous peoples in eighteenth/

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[1] *Shifting Frontiers*; this first conference in Kansas 1995 started a series, reaching "Shifting Frontiers XIV" in 2021. Increasingly, "frontiers" was also understood metaphorically, and the focus shifted to crossing frontiers in scholarship.

[2] See, for instance, *Medieval Frontier Societies*; *Medieval Frontiers*; *Frontiers in the Middle Ages*; *Borders*.

nineteenth-century North America. A conference in Bregenz (Austria) had the wide-ranging topic "Contextualizing Imperial Borderlands (9th*c*. BC–9th*c*. AD and Beyond)". In Jerusalem, certainly a place where disputed frontiers constitute a particularly intricate problem, "Walls, Borders, and Frontier Zones in the Ancient and the Contemporary World" were discussed.

For the transition period between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the notion of a "transformation of frontiers" was in many respects a fruitful approach[3]. I would like to mention a few fundamental contributions in which authors of this volume were involved. Stefano Gasparri addressed the topic of early medieval frontiers from a critical perspective in an article published in 1995, *La frontiera in Italia (sec. VI–VIII)*[4]. It was directed against the habit current among archaeologists and regional historians to attribute fortifications and settlements throughout Italy to some kind of hypothetical frontier defence system. In Vienna, we published a collaborative volume entitled *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter* in 2000, containing a long article by Helmut Reimitz, *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen im karolingischen Mitteleuropa*[5]. The book about "The Transformation of Frontiers", published in 2001, was a result of the ESF programme on the Transformation of the Roman World[6]. At the Settimana di Studio in Spoleto on "Le relazioni internazionali nel Medioevo" in 2010, I tried to sum up the state of the art on early medieval frontiers, at a point when the wave of interest in the topic had more or less subsided[7].

1. *Shifting frontiers, shifting concepts*

The study of Carolingian frontiers had long been overshadowed by ideological concerns. One issue was the division of the empire between a Germanic east and a Romance west, which played a role in the struggles over the shifting frontier between France and Germany in the Modern Period[8]. In this context, research on the *Sprachgrenze*, the language boundary, between the two countries also played a role[9]. At least as controversial was the question of «die Ostgrenze des karolingischen Reiches», the subject of a fundamental article by Ernst Klebel in 1928[10]. The debate focused, not least, on the etymology of place names, thus positing "Germanic" settlement continuity especial-

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[3] *The Transformation of Frontiers*; *Shifting Frontiers*.
[4] Gasparri, *La frontiera in Italia (sec. VI–VIII)*.
[5] *Grenze und Differenz*; Reimitz, *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen*.
[6] *The Transformation of Frontiers*.
[7] Pohl, *Trasformazione delle frontiere*.
[8] Haubrichs, *Franken*; Schulze, *Deutschlands „natürliche" Grenzen*.
[9] Haubrichs, *Über die allmähliche Verfertigung von Sprachgrenzen*.
[10] Klebel, *Die Ostgrenze des Karolingischen Reiches*. For a more ideological treatment, see e.g. Aubin, *Die Ostgrenze*; Mühle, *Für Volk und deutschen Osten*. For a brief history of research on the eastern frontier of the Carolingian Empire, see Hardt, *Linien und Säume*, pp. 39-40.

ly in Eastern Austria. The question whether Germanic, Slavic or Hungarian settlers had been first in a region was seen as relevant for an ancient right of the Eastern Central European nations to these territories. German scholars also styled Carolingian expansion as a civilising process and conceptualised German *Ostsiedlung*, settlement in the East, as a historical mission of their nation. For some German historians, the engagement of Charlemagne, Otto I and many of their successors in Italy had been a wrong choice, detracting energies from the "natural" expansion zone in thinly-settled Eastern Europe[11].

This notion of a frontier between barbarism and civilisation and of the "historical mission" of the higher civilisation to push forward its boundaries into the wilderness in order to spread culture among its "primitive" inhabitants was not limited to nationalists in Europe. It also served as an ideological prop to European colonial expansion[12]. Perhaps the most explicit interpretation of the significance of the frontier in this paradigm was developed in the USA at the turn of the twentieth century. That was the so-called "Turner Thesis" or "Frontier Thesis", which cast a long shadow on later research on frontiers in America[13]. Turner's idea was that the development of freedom, democracy and a pioneer spirit in the USA had been prompted by the many independent men who had pushed forward the frontier into the wilderness. It had helped the United States to free themselves from the more hierarchical society in Europe, and created an American national spirit. The ongoing tension between civilisation and wilderness, with all its challenges, in a "frontier society" could serve to bring out the best in a superior civilisation. In the meantime, it has become obsolete to regard the genocide of the indigenous population in America as a positive model of a "frontier society"[14]. Whether the Turner Thesis can help to understand the pioneer spirit of Franks and Bavarians in the wilderness of what is now Eastern Austria after the fall of the Avar Khaganate is doubtful, although the general resentment against a "pagan" and "barbaric" indigenous population may be comparable to some extent.

An important point of reference for the debate about the Turner Thesis was ancient Rome, which had already served as a historical model in earlier discussions about the westward expansion of the USA. Therefore, Turner's views also provided a starting point for a critical debate about the Roman *limes* among anglophone ancient historians in the 1990. Was it really the for-

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[11] This was the issue in the "Sybel-Ficker controversy" in the 1860s, which evolved in the context of the rivalry between Prussia (where Heinrich von Sybel taught) and Austria (Julius von Ficker's vantage point). Von Sybel, *Die deutsche Nation und das Kaiserreich*; Wippermann, *Der „Deutsche Drang nach Osten"*.

[12] Bitterli, *Die „Wilden" und die „Zivilisierten"*.

[13] Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier*; see also Turner, *The Frontier in American History*; Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage*; *Turner and the Sociology of the Frontier*. For Turner's influence on current debates, see Elton, *Frontiers*, p. 1 («one of the most famous frontier theories»); Whittaker, *Frontiers*, pp. 4-9.

[14] See *Naming the Natives*.

midable, fortified line of defence that generations of scholars had believed it to be[15]? *Limes* studies had so far concentrated on military architecture at the Roman frontier and its function within the defence system of the empire. Against this bias, Benjamin Isaac in 1990, C.R. Whittaker in 1994 and Hugh Elton in 1996 argued that the *limes* was not equipped to stop any large-scale barbarian invasions, or even the crossing-over of smaller groups of raiders or immigrants[16]. In reality, they maintained, it rather protected the routes of communication that ran along Rhine, Danube and other parts of the frontier, and helped to maintain control over the population in the frontier provinces of the empire. It also served as a symbolical frontier and demarcated the boundary between civilisation and the barbarians[17]. Indeed, in the many armed conflicts between the Roman Empire and the barbarians we have relatively little evidence that barbarians were stopped by the *limes*, or had to force their way into imperial territory by breaking through it, or by besieging or conquering *limes* fortresses.

It may be that Hadrian's wall in Britain with its 320 towers, 96 fortresses and a height of up to 4,5 meters constituted a more solid line of defence. It surely sufficed to curb raids by smaller groups of *Brittunculi*, as they are called on the "Vindolanda tablets", a precious set of texts about daily life on this remote part of the Roman frontier[18]. But even this wall, almost 120 km long, could hardly withstand a concentrated attack. A late example that the Danube limes served as a lateral route of communication rather than as a defence line protecting its hinterland is provided by the repeated Avar incursions into the Balkan provinces from the 580s onwards[19]. At the time, many *limes* fortresses along the Danube east of Singidunum/Belgrade were still in use. They did not stop the Avar armies from crossing the Save or the Danube near Singidunum, nor from marching downstream on the comfortable *limes* road as far as the Scythia minor, whether or not they attacked the forts or passed them by. On the other hand, Roman armies marching against the Avars repeatedly used the chain of fortifications on the Danube for logistic support.

The discussions of the 1990s and 2000s about the concept of the frontier were closely linked to the perceptions of space also debated at the time. The "spatial turn" in the Humanities and the Social Sciences around 1990 also affected medieval studies[20]. A number of pioneering studies addressed the spatial concepts and geographical knowledge in the Roman Empire and the

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[15] Many aspects of the *limes*, but most of all its military architecture, have been discussed at the International Limes Congresses, first organised in 1949: *The Congress of Roman Frontier Studies 1949*.
[16] Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*; Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*; Elton, *Frontiers*.
[17] As already argued by Alföldi, *The Moral Barrier on Rhine and Danube*.
[18] Bowman, *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier*.
[19] Pohl, *The Avars*, pp. 89-100.
[20] *Spatial Turn*.

Early Middle Ages[21]. As the *Tabula Peutingeriana* shows, ancient cartographers and the educated elite mainly perceived of the space of the empire as a network of routes connecting cities and fortresses. That was not a neutral geographical space, but a frame for human movements and nodes of settlement. The frontier of the empire is not indicated on the *Tabula*, it just becomes obvious where spaces beyond the borders are only filled by names of rivers and peoples[22].

One of the theoretical tools employed to understand the limits between inside and outside, mainly in German scholarship, was Niklas Luhmann's systems theory. In his *Soziale Systeme*, published in 1994, Luhmann had argued that a system is defined by its difference to its environment. Its boundaries are in the first place «Sinngrenzen» – a term not easily translatable into English because *Sinn* carries stronger philosophical overtones and covers a different semantic field from "sense", "meaning" or "significance"[23]. According to Luhmann, territorial frontiers are only one form of *Sinngrenzen*, and boundaries between social systems may be linear, or overlap in hybrid zones, and they have to be demarcated by fixed or mobile symbolical objects. They contribute to one of the structural goals of complex systems, that is to reduce contingency and to raise the probability of expectations.

The underlying challenge for contemporary scholarship on frontiers has received too little attention so far: can Western scholars, whose education is still deeply-rooted in the classical and Judaeo-Christian tradition, escape the dichotomy between (our) "civilisation" and "wilderness/barbarism" that still shapes the prevailing narrative about the frontiers of the late antique and the early medieval Roman Empires? We should be aware that Late Rome, Byzantium and the Carolingian realm owed their power to, sometimes excessive, violence. The last Eastern Roman army ever to march deep into the Middle Danube region in 599 massacred peaceful Gepid villagers who were asleep after a feast; and Charlemagne's armies also committed atrocities against Saxons who had relapsed into paganism. Behind that, there was a deep-seated animosity against "barbarians" and "pagans" that may to some degree be described as "racial thinking"[24]. On the other hand, we need not gloss over the destruction of Roman towns or Carolingian monasteries by Vandals, Huns, Avars, Normans or Magyars either. Overall, we should not try to minimise the role of violence, conflict and divisive social boundaries to provide ourselves with a more comfortable history consonant with our hopes and values. It is important to emphasise that early medieval frontiers were not only about

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[21] Brodersen, Terra Cognita; Nicolet, *L'inventaire du monde*; *Space in the Roman World*; Lozovsky, *The Earth is our Book*; *Uomo e spazio nell'alto Medioevo*.
[22] Liccardo, *Geography of Otherness*.
[23] Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, p. 266.
[24] Subsuming Roman attitudes towards barbarians under racial thinking: Lopez-Jantzen, *Between Empires*. On the appropriation of barbarian stereotypes by ruling "barbarians": Pohl, *Appropriating the discourse*.

defence and military conflict; but they were not exclusively about cultural exchanges and peaceful encounters either.

As with other concepts applied to the study of the distant past, "frontiers" should be historicised and balanced with the respective notions of the period under study. The early medieval terminology of the frontier and its uses are essential for tracing the concepts of frontier current in the period. We should not forget that even modern terminology is not very precise, differs considerably between languages, and allows for wide-ranging metaphorical uses. In English, we have the words frontier, border and boundary, which overlap to a considerable degree; limit can also be used in certain contexts. This is similar in Italian, with *frontiera*, *confine*, and in some cases *limite*. Germans mainly use *Grenze*. In Latin, there are *fines*, *limes*, *confinia*, *terminus*, *litus* and some other terms. What makes the interpretation of many passages difficult is that in early medieval Latin, for instance, *fines regni* can mean the frontiers or frontiers zones of the kingdom, but also its entire bounded territory. And as Benjamin Isaac has argued, *limes* rarely refers to the built-up frontier as we understand it: «In no single case is a *limes* described as something made or constructed»[25]. The different terms can also be combined in sometimes opaque ways in the sources. For instance, Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii* states that Boniface was sent by the pope to the «incognitos Baguariorum et confines Germaniae terminos»[26]. When Boniface travelled to Rome through Burgundy, he crossed the Alps and then the borders: «collibus Alpium transcensis limitum fines militumque terminos transmigravit»[27]. If this phrase makes sense at all, it distinguishes between a border zone (*limitum fines*) and the fortified control posts guarded by soldiers (*militum termini*), the *clusae*, which will be discussed below. We may ask ourselves why Willibald used such an exaggerated rhetoric of frontiers – was it to stress Boniface's many hardships and unfailing commitment?

In Old High German, the frontier was called *marca*, and that carries the notion of a boundary that is demarcated in some way[28]. However, in most cases it was used for a frontier zone, and thus developed, in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, into the designation of a march, a relatively definite frontier area administered and defended by a *marchio*, a margrave[29]. In consequence, the German language adopted a Slavic loanword for the border line, Polish *granica* (Czech *hranice*), *Grenze*[30]. The early medieval frontier was a shifting concept in which the boundary and the bounded space were

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[25] Isaac, *The Meaning*, p. 146; Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, p. 409; Arce, *Frontiers of the Late Roman Empire*, p. 9.
[26] MGH, Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii*, 5, p. 22. Reimitz, *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen*, pp. 134-140.
[27] MGH, Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii*, 6, p. 37.
[28] Tiefenbach, *Studien*, pp. 74-78 and p. 113.
[29] Wolfram, *The Creation*. Arguing for a more consolidated Carolingian system of marches: Stieldorf, *Marken und Markgrafen*.
[30] Böckler, *Grenze*.

hardly separable, and which had to be used both for definite borderlines, for indefinite border zones over which no clear control had been established, and for bounded territories. To recover this ambiguity, it surely was important to deconstruct traditional notions of the frontier in Early Medieval Studies. However, we should not end up concluding that frontiers did not matter, that they were totally permeable or only imagined and culturally constructed. Roads crossing the frontier were points at which the efforts of the early medieval kingdoms to establish some control on the movements of their subjects could be put into practice, building on Roman precedent, as the first example shows.

2. *The* clusae *at the Alpine pass roads, Lombards and Franks*

To make these points clearer, I would like to discuss two examples from the early Carolingian period, in which a number of practices are prescribed or described. The first one concerns the so-called "pass law" issued by the Lombard king Ratchis (744–749), just before Pippin III became king of the Franks[31].

> Hoc autem statuere previdimus: ut marcas nostras Christo custodiente sic debeat fieri ordinatas et vigilatas, ut inimici nostri et gentes nostre non possint per eas sculcas mittere aut fugacis exientes suscipere, sed nullus homo per eas introire possit sine signo aut epistola regis. Propterea unusquisque iudex per marcas sibi commissas tale studium et vigilantiam ponere debeat et per se et per locopositos et clausarios suos, ut nullus homo sine signo aut epistola regis exire possit. Et dum ad ingrediendum venerint peregrini ad clusas nostras, qui ad Romam ambulare disponunt, diligenter debeat eos interrogare unde sint; et si cognoscat, quod simpliciter veniant, faciat iudex aut clusarius syngraphûs et mittat in cera et ponat sibi sigillum suum, ut ipsi postea ostendant ipsum signum missis nostris, quos nos ordaenaverimus. Signum post hoc missus nostri faciant eis epistola ad romam ambulandi; et con venerent da romo, accipiant signo de anolo regis.

The clause has been interpreted in the general context of an alliance of the pope with the Franks directed against the Lombards, which had begun under

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[31] MGH, LL, Ratchis 13, p. 192: «It is our command that, with the help of Christ, boundaries will be maintained and guarded in order that neither our enemies nor our people can send *scouts* through them or *receive outgoing* fugitives, *but* that no man can enter *through* them without *a sign or a letter* by the king. Every *iudex* (judge) should use such care and vigilance with regard to the frontier committed to him both in his own actions as well as in those of his local officials (*locopositi*) and gate wardens (*clusarii*) that no man can go out without *a sign or a letter* by the king. When *pilgrims* who plan to go to Rome come to our border *posts (clusae)*, the judge shall inquire diligently whence they come. If he recognizes that they come without evil intent, the judge or the gate warden shall issue a passport (*syngraphus*) placing it on a wax tablet and setting his seal to it, in order that afterward the travellers may show this notice to our appointed agents. After this *sealed document* (*signum*), our *envoys* shall give the travellers a letter to enable them to go to Rome; and when they return from Rome, *they will receive a seal from the king's ring*». English translation: Fischer Drew, *The Lombard Laws*, pp. 223-224 (I have marked in italics where I depart from her translation).

Ratchis's predecessor Liutprand and had gathered momentum under his successors Aistulf and Desiderius[32]. Ratchis had started his reign on a different note, concluding a 20-year peace agreement with Pope Zachary soon after his accession[33]. Only in 749, probably under pressure from a more ambitious faction at his court to which his brother Aistulf seems to have belonged, did he resume the offensive against the exarchate and besiege Perugia, but lifted the siege upon papal intervention and stepped down, later becoming a monk at Montecassino[34]. His laws are dated to 746, but clause 13 and 14 were only copied into the lawbook by mistake by a scribe who also faithfully copied the provision in his template that only the laws written above (that is, 1 to 12) were to be included into the edict, while the two following chapters should only be circulated in a *breve*, which here is best translated as "capitulary" (the two clauses are called *capitula* in the text). Possibly, they were part of the preparations for the attack on Perugia. More likely, Ratchis desperately tried to extend control over his own kingdom, as two previous laws show: in clausa 9, he forbade any *iudex* ("judge", a leading official in the duchies) or other man to send envoys to Rome, Ravenna, Spoleto, Benevento, Francia, Bavaria, Alemannia, Raetia or Avaria under the threat of a death penalty. And clausa 12 is directed against spies in the palace or people who transmit confidential information to foreign provinces. Ratchis must have felt surrounded by enemies and traitors in and around his kingdom.

However that may have been, Ratchis 13 tells us a lot about eighth-century frontier practices. It seems obvious that Ratchis did not simply reconfirm standard procedures; however, his provisions must have seemed practicable, and relied on existing infrastructure on the ground. This basis was constituted by the *clusae*, which had remained from the *Tractus Italiae circa Alpes*, the ancient Roman system of fortified posts at the south end of the Alpine pass roads[35]. This defensive system is mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, the military handbook compiled in the early fifth century[36]. In the list, it was the only area assigned to the *comes Italiae*; unfortunately, no details are mentioned. Part of the *Tractus* were the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* that should bar access to Italy from the east, in modern Slovenia, where a number of defensive walls are still traceable or have been excavated[37]. Most likely, the *Claustra* already ceased to be fully functional after Alaric I's invasion of Italy at the beginning of the fifth century. We hear more about the western parts of the *Tractus* in later centuries. In the Gothic period, sixty soldiers were stationed *in Augustanis clusuris*, in the *clusurae* of Aosta, deemed to bar, «as through

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[32] Tangl, *Die Paßvorschrift des Königs Ratchis*; Pohl, *Frontiers*.
[33] LP, I, p. 431; transl. Davis, pp. 43-44; Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*, pp. 56-57; Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung*, pp. 183-185.
[34] LP, I, pp. 433-434; transl. Davis, pp. 47-48.
[35] Settia, *Le frontiere del regno italico*; Brogiolo – Gelichi, *Nuove ricerche*, p. 12.
[36] *Notitia Dignitatum*, Occ. XXIV, p. 173.
[37] First mentioned in Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, vol. 3, 31.11.3, p. 458. Poulter, *An Indefensible Frontier*; Kos, *Barriers*; Ciglenečki, *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*.

some gate of the province, the entry of pagan peoples», as Cassiodorus puts it in his flowery administrative rhetoric[38]. A later letter by Cassiodorus in the name of Theodoric addressed to «all Goths and Romans and those who are at ports or *clusurae*» requires them not to let a group of slaves who had murdered their master escape[39]. Procopius mentions several fortifications, *frouria*, in the Cottian Alps between Gaul and Italy, mostly manned with men from the local population[40]. With Brogiolo and Gelichi, I would differentiate between several types of fortifications[41]: first, those barring the way in straits of Alpine valleys, the *clusae* or *cl(a)usurae*; second, the major fortified towns along Alpine roads, such as Susa or Aosta; and third, hillforts and other fortifications on or along the foothills of the Alps, such as Monte Barro or the Isola Comacina[42]. The provisions of Ratchis only concerned the first type.

In the eighth century, a number of *clusae* were obviously still in place. Paul the Deacon, who wrote in the early 790s, calls them *claustra* and mentions them when King Perctarit after Grimoald's coup in 662 escaped first to Turin and then crossed the *claustra Italiae* to Gaul; when he returned after Grimoald's death, the courtiers already expected him at the *claustra* and greeted him as king[43]. When Ratchis issued his *breve*, the fortified control posts were guarded by *locopositi et clausarii*, for instance, at S. Michele near Susa or in the Valley of Aosta. They stood under the authority of a *iudex* who must have resided in the nearest major town, most likely in Turin and in Ivrea. The controls relied on communication in writing, and on the notion that free movement in and out of the kingdom, and even inside the kingdom, was something that required permission and control. That clerical travellers needed letters of introduction, *epistolae formatae*, from a superior of their place of departure had been established practice in the Church since Roman times[44]. Similar letters for laymen are not attested from the Carolingian period, but that may well be due to the very slight chances of their transmission. Ratchis 13 does not mention such letters either, but it surely included clerics who would have had them. What exactly the *signum* was that was required to enter or leave the kingdom, alternatively to the king's letter, is unclear – a signature or a seal

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[38] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 2.5, p. 60: «Praecipimus sexaginta militibus in Augustanis clusuris iugiter constitutis annonas […] praestare […] Decet enim cogitare de militis transactione, qui pro generali quiete finalibus locis noscitur insudare et quasi a quadam porta provinciae gentiles introitus probatur excludere». S. Bjornlie, *The Variae*, p. 85, translates that the soldiers should «bar the passage of peoples from the provinces», but I assume that the *porta provinciae* should mean the "gate of the province", the kingdom of Italy.

[39] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, II, 19, p. 70.

[40] Procopius, *Bella*, VI, 28, IV, pp. 120-125.

[41] Brogiolo – Gelichi, *Nuove ricerche*, p. 12.

[42] *Ibidem*, pp. 12-13. They include further types of fortified hilltop settlements and urban castles not relevant here. I doubt that "type 3" hill fortresses, such as Monte Barro (*ibidem* pp. 22 – m 31), were intended to bar the way to invaders; rather the intention may have been to station small garrisons of soldiers at easily defensible sites and offer protection to the population.

[43] Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, V, 2 p. 144; V, 33, p. 155: «ac post claustra Italiae transgressus» and «cum ad claustra Italiae venisset».

[44] Fabricius, *Die* Litterae Formatae; Mastruzzo, *Un'epistola formata*.

of recognition on an *epistola formata*, or the sealed wax tablet mentioned below? In any case, quite a complicated procedure was required from pilgrims going to Rome. The *clausarius* or the judge had to question the travellers, and if they did not seem suspicious, he issued a *syngraphus* on a wax tablet closed with his seal. *Syngraphē* is a term sometimes used for private charters and other documents in the early medieval West[45]; the ninth-century copyist did not understand the word anymore and wrote *socropus* instead. This document had to be handed over to a royal *missus*, an envoy (the terminology is already Carolingian), who provided a letter of approval for the journey to Rome. On their way back, the pilgrims had to obtain a royal seal on this letter which would grant them passage through the *clusae*.

The *iudices*, the secular authorities (mostly dukes and gastalds), were responsible for the controls involved, and neglect of this duty could have dramatic consequences, at least in the rather paranoid context of Ratchis's laws of 746. The clause also contains provisions for places where no fortified border posts were available, which regards the roads to Rome leading through Tuscany. Here, the judges had to control their entire district for travellers crossing it without the king's permission. It is remarkable that these provisions do not only concern foreigners entering the country, but also *gentes nostrae*, spies, and fugitives going into both directions. Mobility of the king's own subjects could be as suspicious as foreigners moving into the country. Interestingly, the Germanic word *marca* is used here for the area of responsibility of the *iudex*, which does not differentiate between the border itself and the town or district administrated by the judge. This also foreshadows Carolingian and post-Carolingian usage, like much else in Ratchis's capitulary.

Ratchis's capitulary provided for extraordinary measures, and the main intention clearly was to control traffic between the Frankish realm and Rome, the partners of the anti-Lombard alliance, but also to monitor the mobility of potentially suspicious subjects of the king. We cannot assess how efficient they were, and whether they were carried out at all. In any case, Aistulf, already in his first year, reaffirmed Ratchis 13 in a more general manner[46]. Again, both incoming and outgoing movements are explicitly covered, and penalties for neglect by the responsible *clusarii* foreseen. That some of the *clusae* lay in ruins certainly helps to put Ratchis's provisions in perspective. Trade inside the country, by land or water, was also forbidden if not licensed by the king or judge[47]. In particular, clause 4 banned any business with Romans in times of war. If an *arimannus* should do so, he was to lose his possessions and be shav-

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[45] Thür, *Syngraphe*.
[46] MGH, LL, Aistulf 5, p. 197: «De clusas, qui disruptae sunt: restaurentur et ponant ibi custodiam, ut nec nostri homines possint transire sine voluntate regis nec extranei possint introire in provincia nostra similiter sine voluntate regis vel iussione. Et in quale clusa inventus fuerit, tali pena subiaceat clusarius, qui custodire neglexit, a iudice suo, qualis ipse iudex a rege anteposito. Nisi iudex pro utilitate regis miserit missum suum, aut receperit tantummodo pro causa regis».
[47] MGH, LL, Aistulf 6, p. 197.

en, *decalvatus*, under shouts of: «Sic patiatur, qui contra voluntatem regis cum Romano homine negotium fecerit, quando lites habemus»[48]. Neglect that led to the escape of thieves through the *clusae* was explicitly threatened with sanctions[49]. All these laws were issued in 750/751, before Aistulf attacked and conquered Ravenna. These were, then, mostly specific measures. The entire section of Aistulf's laws of 750 was not copied into several of the ninth-century manuscripts[50].

Yet much of what was prescribed here also corresponded to normal practice. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, there were «Francorum clusae»[51] (on the road over the Great Saint Bernard Pass) and «clusae Langobardorum»[52]. In 754 (or 755), Aistulf made a surprise attack on the Frankish *clusae* on the Mont Cenis road, but was pushed back by a small garrison[53]. In 756, Pippin III broke through the *clusae* on the Longobard side[54]. When Charlemagne marched into Italy in 773, he divided his army and led his part across the Mont Cenis, while his uncle Bernhard crossed the Great Saint Bernard Pass; both armies stopped at the *clusae*, where King Desiderius blocked Charlemagne's advance until the Franks sent a unit across the mountains[55]. When King Bernard of Italy rebelled against Louis the Pious in 817, he reputedly blocked all access routes to Italy at the *clusae*[56]. In the course of the Middle Ages, Italian forces repeatedly sought to block the roads to a Frankish or German army marching south, usually without much success[57]. The *clusae* in the Val di Susa could also serve as a border in the *Divisio Regnorum*[58]. The Val di Susa down to the chiusa di San Michele belonged to Louis the Pious's part in Southern Gaul to Italy. Interestingly, the *Divisio* also fixed three different routes between Italy and the Frankish heartlands for the three heirs of Charlemagne: Louis through the *vallis Segusiana*, Charles the Younger through the *vallis Augustana*, and Pippin of Italy through the Norican Alps and Chur[59].

[48] MGH, LL, Aistulf 4, p. 196: «Those who conduct business with a Roman contrary to the king's wish, as long as the Romans are our enemies, suffer thus» (transl. Fischer Drew, p. 229).
[49] MGH, LL, Aistulf 9, p. 197: «De furonibus qui neglexerit inquirere aut sollicitare, vel qui eos transire permittunt foris clusas, ita subiaceat, sicut edicti continet pagina, et intra presentem indictionem fiat inquisitio».
[50] Pohl, *Frontiers*.
[51] LP, I, p. 447, p. 450; cf. *Chronicon Salernitanum* 4, p. 5.
[52] LP, I, p. 452, p. 495.
[53] LP, I, p. 450.
[54] LP, I, p. 452.
[55] LP, I, p. 495; MGH, ARF, p. 36, *ad annum* 773.
[56] MGH, ARF, p. 147, *ad annum* 817: «omnes aditus, quibus in Italiam intratur, id est clusas, impositis firmasse praesidiis».
[57] E.g. MGH, Liudprand, *Antapodosis* I, 5, p. 7; Lampert of Hersfeld, *Annales*, p. 285, *ad annum* 1077 (in these two cases, with the explanation: «quas clusas nominat vulgus», or similar). Cf. Schneider, *Alpenpolitik*, p. 36.
[58] MGH, Capit. I, no. 45, 1, p. 127 (806): «montem Cinisium, vallem Segusianam usque ad clusas, et inde per terminos Italicorum montium usque ad mare».
[59] MGH, Capit. I, n. 45, 3, p. 127 (806).

On a more individual and everyday level, letters of conduct were also a well-known practice, although there is legislation that reminded Carolingian subjects to follow it. An Italian capitulary of 787 states: «Sicut consuetudo fuit sigillum et epistola prendere et vias vel portas custodire, ita nunc sit factum»[60]. Of course, 787 was again characterised by a delicate political situation, as Charlemagne prepared for the final blow against the Bavarian duke Tassilo III. Yet Carolingian capitularies continue to express concerns with people crossing the borders without permission. Much of the former Italian frontier now lay within the Carolingian realm, but the preoccupations of law-givers remained the same. Charlemagne's capitulary probably issued for Italy in the 780s deals with those who were prepared to launch raids against the enemies and extend the march («illos qui parati sunt inimicis insidia facere et marcam nostram ampliare») – another early example for a spatial conception of *marca*[61]. The result could be hate, *odium*, of the people living in border areas (*confinales nostri*) against those who launched raids against the enemies[62]. Even in Charlemagne's Empire, such activities would spur retaliation bound to make the *confinales* suffer, whereas the undefined and most probably quite uncontrolled *illi*, the Frankish raiders, would long be gone[63].

3. Limes certus *and the Carolingian expansions to the east*

My second example are the frontiers between Bavarians/Franks and Avars. As the *Annales regni Francorum* remark, the border between Bavaria and the Avar realm had been fixed by a treaty at the lowest stretch of the Enns river before it flowed into the Danube, near the ancient town of Lauriacum[64]. «For this river, which flows through the middle of the border area between the Bavarians and the Huns, serves as a sure frontier (*limes certus*) for the two realms»[65]. One might regard this as an example for a linear frontier, but the decisive point surely was where the old Roman road crossed the Enns river. After the Bavarian duke Tassilo III had submitted to Charlemagne in 781, Avars envoys appeared at Lippspringe in July 782 «for the sake of peace». At the same time a considerable Avar army drew up on the Enns but did no damage, as the Bavarian annals note with relief[66]. In 788, when the Franks removed Tassilo III and took direct control of Bavaria, there were clashes between Franks and Avars, who also raided in Friuli but were beaten there and close

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[60] MGH, Capit. I, n. 95, 17, p. 201 (c. 790); Capit. it., no. 7, 17, p. 70.
[61] Capit. it., no. 8, p. 70; MGH, Capit. I, n. 101 (790-810?), p. 208.
[62] Capit. it., no. 8, p. 70; MGH, Capit. I, n. 101 (790-810?), p. 208.
[63] For *confin(i)ales*, see MGH, ARF, p. 36, *ad annum* 773; cf. Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, p. 180, with note 452; p. 183 with note 465.
[64] Pohl, *The Avars*, p. 372.
[65] MGH, AQDE, p. 89, *ad annum* 791.
[66] *Annales Iuvavavenses*, p. 734, *ad annum* 782; MGH, *Annales s. Emmerami maiores*, p. 735, *ad annum* 783. Pohl, *The Avars*, p. 378.

to the Danube[67]. Carolingian propaganda accused Tassilo and his Longobard wife to have sought an alliance with the Avars against the Franks. Charlemagne, who had come to the Bavarian capital Regensburg, took measures to protect the Bavarian frontiers («fines vel marcas Baioariorum») against the Avars[68]. Avar envoys appeared in Worms in 790. The revised version of the *Royal Frankish Annals* defines the subject of the negotiations as «the borders (*confinia*) of the kingdoms and where they ought to be»[69]. One thing that emerges from these passages is that the *Royal Frankish Annals* had no fixed terminology to describe the Avar frontier. The three passages cited here for the years 788, 790 and 791 cover practically the entire semantic field for "frontiers": *limes, fines, marcas* and *confinia*.

Charlemagne now decided to cross this frontier to attack the Avar realm[70]. In early September 791 he reached Lauriacum at the Enns river with his army, where they pitched camp. In order to win heavenly blessing for the campaign, three days of fasting and prayers were held accompanied by ceremonious masses. A letter from the king to his spouse Fastrada provides more detail[71]. The priests, the king wrote, had banned the consumption of wine and meat, excepting those whom the *infirmitas* of their age or their youth excused. It was permissible to buy oneself free of the ban on wine, the *potentiores* at the cost of one *solidus* a day, the poorer soldiers «each according to his own good will and in proportion to his means». During this time each priest had to say a mass and the clerics had to sing psalms and recite litanies: «Thus our priests considered proper». The liturgical spectacle says a great deal about the hesitation to cross the Avar frontier into regions where Frankish troops had not yet operated, and about securing God's protection for the ambitious campaign against the pagans. Before the beginning of the actual attack, warriors and non-combatants again united and sought to prepare for this venture.

While at Lauriacum, the king received the news of a victory of the Italian army over the Avars. There the *scara*, the troop of young Pippin of Italy under the leadership of Duke Eric of Friuli and of the *dux* of Istria, had crossed the

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[67] MGH, ARF, pp. 82-84, *ad annum* 788; Pohl, *The Avars*, pp. 378-379.
[68] MGH, ARF, p. 84, *ad annum* 788: «Post haec omnia domnus rex Carolus per semet ipsum ad Reganesburg pervenit et ibi fines vel marcas Baioariorum disposuit, quomodo salvas Domino protegente contra iamdictos Avaros esse potuissent». Pohl, *The Avars*, pp. 378-379.
[69] MGH, *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, p. 87, *ad annum* 790: «Agebatur inter eos de confiniis regnorum suorum, quibus in locis esse deberent». See Wolfram, *Conversio Bagoariorum*, p. 256.
[70] MGH, ARF, pp. 86-88, *ad annum* 791; *Annales Mettenses priores*, pp. 78-79, *ad annum* 791; Pohl, *The Avars*, pp. 379-382.
[71] *Epistolae variorum*, no. 20, pp. 528-529: «Nos autem, Domino adiuvante, tribus diebus letania fecimus, id est nonis septembris quod fuit lunis die incipientes, et martis et mercoris; Dei misericordiam deprecantes, ut nobis pacem et sanitatem atque victoriam et prosperum iter tribuere dignetur, et ut in sua misericordia et pietate nobis adiutor et consiliator atque defensor in omnibus angustiis nostris existat. Et a vino et carne ordinaverunt sacerdotes nostri, qui propter infirm[itatem au]t senectudinem aut iuventudinem abstinere potebant, ut abstinuisset (...) Et sacerdos unusquisque missam specialem fecisset, nisi infirmitas inpedisset. Et clerici, qui psalmos sciebant, unusquisque quinquaginta cantasset».

border of the *partes Avariae* on August 23. After some skirmish, an Avar fortification (*uualum*) was captured, and «a great number» of Avars killed; «many say that for a long time no greater massacre had been committed among the Avars». That was probably correct, after almost 200 years of largely peaceful relations of the Avars with their western neighbours. About one hundred and fifty of them were captured «and spared», according to a general order issued by Charlemagne: this is, as the letter specifies, as things should be handled in the future. The fortress was plundered, the Frankish troops spent the night there and returned home on the next day. Obviously, there was no intention to march deeper into Avar territory. The Avar *uualum* seems to have been close to the frontier, most likely on the Hrušica Plateau, where the late Roman fortress *Ad Pirum*, a part of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* had once guarded a mountainous tract of the main road from Aquileia to Emona/Ljubljana and on to Pannonia[72]. It is not unlikely that the Avars actually used the remains of the ancient Roman border fortifications. In the campaign of 791, the Frankish armies also encountered fortifications along their march, rather deep in Avar territory: one on the western slopes of the Vienna Woods, and the other north of the Danube at the Kamp River (and these were hardly Roman structures). Perhaps warned by the failure to defend the *uualum* against the Italian army, the Avars had abandoned these structures. It seems surprising that the steppe riders would withdraw behind walls, but that is no exception. Like the Bulgars, the Avars had constructed long walls which somehow surrounded the core of the Avar settlement area, especially towards the east, the so-called Csörsz Dyke (or Devil's Dyke). It had long been attributed to the Sarmatians, but recent finds point to the Avar period[73]. As many other fortifications of the early Middle Ages, they were not constructed close to the border, but more inland.

4. *Some conclusions*

What do these examples tell us about frontier practices in the Carolingian period? Both concern relatively short-term political activities focused on frontiers, one to step up control of movements across the border, and the other to negotiate, emphasise, and then cross a frontier with armed forces. These political efforts did not create new practices, but could rely on a set of established features on the ground, on current usage and on specialised personnel. There were border points and defence structures, mostly fortifications, often based on previous Roman buildings, although their military function often remains vague in the sources. We can assume that the Avar

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[72] Ciglenečki, Claustra Alpium Iuliarum.
[73] Fiedler, *Nochmals zur Datierung der Wall- und Grabenzüge*; Curta, *The Current Stage of Research*; Pohl, *Frontiers and Ethnic identities*, p. 257; on Bulgar dykes, see Squatriti, *Moving Earth*.

uualum near the Italian frontier had been equipped and manned for defence against the Franks. Its conquest in August 791 was a rare case in which fortresses along the border were actually besieged and stormed.

There was a specific type of border fortifications, which are the remains of the Roman *tractus Italiae circa Alpes.* These are the structures that were conveniently used for the border controls that the laws of Ratchis and Aistulf and then Carolingian capitularies regulate. They had been built to be used for defence against invaders, as, not least, the impressive remains of barrier walls and towers of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* indicate. Still, Andrew Poulter has called this line of fortifications «an indefensible frontier», because anything less than a large army could and did not protect its wide-ranging structures blocking several access roads in different valleys in case of a major invasion[74]. The *claustra* could be effective against bandits and small raiding parties, and were useful to control (and tax) normal traffic. The same more or less applies to the *clusae* in the Western Alps, although the landscape with its long, often narrow valleys and higher mountain ranges is more favourable to efficient control. No barrier walls of comparable length were necessary there, and stationing an army at the appropriate *clusa* could actually block access from one of the major pass roads. This is what Desiderius tried with some effect in 773, and managed to stop Charlemagne's army for a while with a force that could not have resisted the Franks in an open battle. Still, eventually Charlemagne sent some of his troops across the mountains, and Desiderius had to retreat to Pavia. This was the strategy that the Lombards had always employed against Frankish invasions since the sixth century: they closed themselves into their walled towns and smaller hillforts and hoped that the Franks would not engage in protracted siege warfare. Charlemagne did just that in 773/774, besieged Desiderius in Pavia, and won. In general, in Late Antiquity it did not make much sense to defend frontiers. This also concerns Late Rome and Byzantium with its standing armies: the so-called *Strategikon of Maurice*, compiled around 600 CE, maintains that one should not risk a battle against an invading army that was equal or stronger, but keep one's own army intact and seek ways to weaken the invaders by ambushes, surprise attacks and cutting off supplies[75].

Overall, the *clusae* were surely less important for large-scale defence operations than for the day-to-day control of movements. Pilgrims, merchants, messengers, fugitives, spies, itinerant folk, and sometimes small-scale plunderers crossed the borders, and could raise different problems that tighter control could be expected to keep in check. This becomes obvious in Ratchis's and Aistulf's clauses that, even under tense political circumstances, do not address any defensive measures to be taken, and just target a more elaborate control of travellers. These controls were not specific to cross-bor-

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[74] Poulter, *An Indefensible Frontier.*
[75] *Das Strategikon des Maurikios*, X, 2, p. 340.

der traffic, but relied on the principle that the authorities of the kingdom had to be aware of long-distance movements, whether within the realm or across its frontiers, and had to be able to curb transgressions. This system was most of all maintained by the Church which had begun to issue travel permits for its clerics, the *epistolae formatae*, early on in its process of institutionalisation, a practice that could fairly easily have been generalised in early medieval kingdoms. A second strong interest in keeping travellers under control was the need to catch runaway slaves or dependent workers, also a late antique heritage in the early medieval period[76]. Third, efforts were made to detect fugitives of all sorts, from murderers and thieves to rebels and deserters, and most of all keep them from leaving the country. Fourth, there was an interest in monitoring trade, protecting the merchants, steering them in the right direction and imposing levies on them. Fifth, pilgrims who entered Italy were mostly going to Rome, and in the last decades of the Longobard kingdom, when relations with the Franks and the papacy were often tense, such movements could trigger suspicions.

Besides these and other issues that required regulating mobility by the authorities of the kingdom throughout its territory, there were a few elements that were in some ways specific for frontier zones. First, as Charlemagne's capitulary from the 780s shows, one could expect a higher degree of low-level violence, brigandage and raiding in the peripheries of the kingdom, where raiders could swiftly withdraw across the borders[77]. It is remarkable that plunderers from one's own side going out seemed at least as much of a problem as those coming in, because they could provoke retaliation. Such incidents therefore triggered the hate of the *confinales*, the border folk. Second, at least in conflictual situations, the king obviously worried about defectors, conspiracies, spies and in general critical intelligence being passed on to enemies. As the wording of Ratchis's and Aistulf's precautions shows, this was not simply a question of "us vs. them", in which the borders had to be guarded against suspicious people coming into the country, but as much an issue of controlling one's own subjects and of curbing their potential cooperation with the enemy. Only the Alpine routes, and perhaps river traffic in the Po Basin, gave a chance to channel and control such exchanges. But even there, control posts could be situated far from the frontier. In all the measures introduced by Ratchis and Aistulf, the terms for "frontier" were hardly used (except for *marca* for the judge's district). It was taken for granted, and the respective measures implemented without employing a rhetoric of the frontier.

Our second example is in fact one of the cases in which frontiers as such were politicised and constructed as an issue to be resolved. Paradoxically, what was at stake between 782 and 791 was the *limes certus* at the Enns, a secure frontier first publicised as a problem and then swept away by the Car-

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[76] Nehlsen, *Sklavenrecht.*
[77] MGH, Capit. I, no. 101 (790-810?), p. 208.

olingian offensives. Frankish propaganda linked the Avars, who had large-ly been peaceful neighbours for almost 200 years, to Attila's Huns and their devastating invasions of Gaul and Italy[78]. A frontier so close to the Bavarian heartland could therefore be regarded as risky, which Charlemagne, a rul-er stronger than the deposed Bavarian duke Tassilo III, would now be able to remove. This would also allow to carry the Christian mission deep into the pagan neighbouring regions. On the whole, though, most conflicts in the Carolingian period were not, like in the Modern Age, about pushing forward one's frontiers. In the early Carolingian period, the Franks aspired to the con-quest of entire countries. With the victory over the Avars, they had reached the stage in which they did not have the capacity to control and integrate all newly-won territories any more. The former Avar lands now largely were an open, often thinly-inhabited land with rather indefinite boundaries, in which Slavic princes ruled in the name of a distant Frankish king or emperor. The Capitulary of Thionville, issued in 805 and banning the export of arms to Slavs and Avars, still states that merchants were not allowed to take arms for sale beyond Lauriacum, the former *limes certus*[79]. Bans of the export of weap-ons and also slaves were a repeated concern of Charlemagne's capitularies[80]. Lauriacum remained a border post: in 900, the Hungarians crossed the Enns and invaded Bavaria, which still began at the river.

In spite of some attempts at general precautions for the eastern frontier of the Carolingian Empire, no coherent strategy of managing the new boundar-ies and frontier regions east of the now pacified Saxony and in the former Avar realm are discernible; a consistent «Markenorganisation», organisation of the marches, was slow to emerge[81]. Still, there were differences between the rath-er open frontier of the conquered Avaria and the better-demarcated border region along the Elbe between Saxony and the unconquered Slavs. In 819, the *Annales regni Francorum* speak of «praefecti Saxonici limitis», commanders of the Saxon frontier, who led a campaign against the Abodrites[82]. This was not yet a "march" led by a margrave as in later centuries, but a frontier zone under the responsibility of several regional commanders; and it should not be seen as a *limes* in the Roman sense, although there were fortified places at the main crossing points, which are enumerated in the Thionville Capitulary[83]. In the Elbe region, the archaeological evidence displays a wide variety of set-tlements and fortifications of different types and uses, without any recognis-

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[78] Pohl, *The Avars*, pp. 376-377.
[79] *Capitulare missorum in Theodonis villa datum secundum, generale*, in MGH, Capit. I, n. 44, 7, p. 123.
[80] For instance, Herstal, Capit. I, n. 20, 19, p. 51 (779; sale of slaves *foris marca*).
[81] Cf. Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, pp. 175-192; Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, pp. 263-266.
[82] MGH, ARF, p. 149, *ad annum* 819; Wolfram, *The Creation*, pp. 238-239.
[83] MGH, Capit. I, n. 44, 7, p. 123. For the controversy about the existence of an organised *limes Saxoniae*: *Der Limes Saxoniae*. But see also Hardt, *Hesse, Elbe, Saale*.

able overall plan[84]. However, Saxony had much more swiftly been integrated into the Frankish kingdom than the land between the Enns and the Vienna Woods and beyond. The defeated Saxons, after so many years of bitter struggle, had become Christians and «united with the Franks to form one people», as Einhard claims in his *Vita Karoli*[85]. In 819, an army of «Saxons and eastern Franks» already defended the Saxon frontier against Abodrites[86].

The former Avar territory, conquered at about the same time as Saxony, was slow to be Christianised and was never integrated in a similar way[87]. The largely Slavic population was hardly regarded as *unus populus* with the Bavarians. Even the terminology remained vague, and the conquered lands were variously called Avaria, *regnum Hunnorum*, *oriens*, *marca nostra*, *provincia*, *terra* or *plaga orientalis*, *partes orientales* or Pannonia[88]. None of these terms were clearly demarcated, and did not even allow to distinguish between the region between Enns and Vienna Woods or perhaps Lake Neusiedl, in which settlers from the west and Bavarian monasteries acquired property and which was mostly administrated by Bavarian/Frankish counts, and vast regions to the east in which Slavic princes under Frankish suzerainty ruled[89]. There was no clear boundary between the two parts, which the inhabitants of these regions, who continued to be perceived as *confin(i)ales*, border folk, could regard as "their" frontier. What had been treated as an open expansion zone gradually turned into an exposed area controlled by ruthless warlords and threatened by Moravian or Bulgar attacks[90]. Carantania was a more consolidated region with a territorial identity of its own[91]. When the Hungarian mounted warriors established a new centre of power in the Carpathian Basin in c. 900, Frankish/Bavarian control over the former Avar territories evaporated fast. Investments in the region were limited in the Carolingian century, with the partial exception of the land between the Enns and the Vienna Woods. No new symbolical order and no durable frontiers, one could say: no resilient identities emerged in these regions[92].

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[84] Schmauder, *Überlegungen zur östlichen Grenze*.
[85] Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7, p. 10: «Christianae fidei atque religionis sacramenta susciperent et Francis adunati unus cum eis populus efficerentur».
[86] MGH, ARF, p. 149, *ad annum* 819.
[87] See also Džino – Milošević – Vedriš, *A View*, p. 2.
[88] Wolfram, *The Creation*, pp. 242-243.
[89] Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, pp. 84-86; Wolfram, *The creation*; Reimitz, *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen*.
[90] Johanek, *Die Raffelstettener Zollordnung*.
[91] Štih, *Integration*.
[92] Reimitz, *Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen*, pp. 165-166.

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A blurred frontier:
the territories between the kingdom of Asturias and al-Andalus (eighth and ninth centuries)*

by Iñaki Martín Viso

The Islamic conquest of the kingdom of Toledo brought about the disappearance of central authority in certain regions of the Iberian Peninsula. This is what happened on the Duero Plateau, which, between the eighth century and the mid-ninth century, was an area bereft of any type of complex political structure. The paper provides an analysis of certain elements of political organization during that period, defined by fragmentation and the existence of numerous small-sized territories that were associated with the management of common lands. It was in an area on the fringes of Asturians and Andalusians that a blurred frontier was drawn, where some influences of al-Andalus can be identified. After the second half of the ninth century, the kingdom of the Asturias spread across these territories at the same time as the county of Castile became consolidated. This increase in complexity created formerly non-existent struggles against the Muslims, and gave rise to a new frontier, although the areas south of the Duero generally remained outside the scope of Asturian, Castilian and Andalusian authority.

Middle Ages; 8th-9th centuries; Iberian Peninsula; Duero Plateau; al-Andalus; Asturias; frontier.

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1. *The Islamic conquest and its consequences*

The *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754* laconically mentions the demise of the kingdom of Toledo as a result of the Muslim conquest[1]. The account is especially interesting, since – except for the very brief *Byzantine-Arabic Chronicle* – it is chronologically the closest one to the events, and was drafted from the point of view of an author who was unrelated to the conquerors, probably a priest from Toledo[2]. Surprisingly, the chronicler never mentions northern areas, where new Christian political leadership emerged, such as the Asturias. From the perspective of Toledo, they were faraway lands about which there was no accurate information. Besides, the chronicler does not present the subsequent political evolution as struggle between Christians and Muslims. In spite of this, in the ninth century, the Asturian monarchy fostered an image that depicted them as guardians of the Christian faith and heirs of the Gothic kingdom, an ideology that legitimated a new power[3].

News about Northern Iberia in the eighth century can be mainly found in Andalusian accounts from the tenth and eleventh centuries onwards, which locate this place, identified as *Yiliqiya*, outside the *Dar-al-islam*. Nevertheless, there was a marked internal diversity. The Asturian centre, initially a military chiefdom that gradually spread across the northernmost territories, became consolidated as a monarchy that steadily incorporated new areas, especially in the ninth century. The Asturian chronicles, drafted around 880-885, reveal this royal ideology[4]. Hence, there is mention of a series of campaigns carried out by King Alfonso I and his brother Fruela in the mid-eighth century against a large number of places to the north of the Central System[5]. As a consequence, the inhabitants of the area would have moved to Asturias leaving vast depopulated areas. Later, in the second half of the ninth century and the first half of the tenth, these territories would have become part of the kingdom, being "repopulated", since they were deemed "deserted".

A large part of the historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries endorses this account, especially because of the work of Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz[6]. However, research in the last 50 years has dismantled these ideas[7]. One of the keys lies in the fact that there are large areas for which there is no written documentation about these centuries, so historians turn to texts produced after Asturian rule became established. Nonetheless, such texts – especially chronicles – should be regarded as instruments of ideological legitimization. The example of the campaigns engaged in by Alfonso I is

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[1] *Crónica Mozárabe de 754*, 8. 51.
[2] López Pereira, *La Crónica Mozárabe de 754*.
[3] Barbero – Vigil, *La formación*; Deswarte, *De la destruction*; Isla Frez, *Monarchy*.
[4] Isla Frez, *La Crónica*.
[5] *Crónica de Alfonso III*, *Rotensis*, § 13 (*Crónicas asturianas*).
[6] Sánchez-Albornoz, *Despoblación y repoblación*.
[7] Barbero – Vigil, *La formación*, pp. 220-225; Estepa Díez, *Estructura*, pp. 66-68; Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla*; Mínguez, *La despoblación*; Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*.

especially significant, since they were not mentioned in any other sources. It could be understood as a narrative to demonstrate that native settlers of these supposed deserted regions were the Asturians, given the fact that they were descendants of those who had headed for Asturias[8]. The gradual disengagement from the "depopulation" perspective gave way to a series of approaches that may be defined as "colonizing", according to which the peasants from the North who began to settle there in the ninth century reactivated the economy and generated more complex socio-political structures[9]. But in recent years, several researchers have begun to advocate a different idea, which is, basically, that there was never a depopulation, and that these areas were inhabited although outside the scope of control of any type of central authority[10].

However, the challenge is to understand how these spaces were structured. This study is focused on a broad area, the Duero Plateau (Figure 1), although other areas such as Southern Galicia, the north of Portugal or areas south of the counties of Northeastern Iberia, the Carolingian *Marca Hispanica*, experienced similar situations. The political dynamics generated by the Islamic conquest did not entail the creation of two opposing political blocs (Christian and Muslim), but rather a variegation of very diverse situations, one of which resulted in a complete absence of political control. It happened in some areas located on the fringes of different polities.

2. *The dynamics of a stateless region*

The main problem is the lack of a solid corpus of information. Firstly, written texts, previously scarce, vanished. This effect could have been the result of a lack of institutions to preserve them. A widespread literacy reappeared in the late ninth century, just when some monasteries and episcopal sees that have preserved their archives emerged. This fact might be used as an argument to support the idea that it was not the writing which vanished, but the institutions where those texts could have been preserved. It is necessary to turn to information found in later documents (from the late ninth and early tenth centuries) and try to carry out cautiously a retrospective reading. Secondly, the archaeology of the period is still "work in progress", with important gaps, although the picture that is beginning to emerge highlights two aspects: the continuity of some rural landscapes, though with changes, and the absence of monumentality, a characteristic that once again stresses the weakness of the elites[11].

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[8] Escalona, *Family memories*.
[9] García de Cortázar, *Del Cantábrico* and *Las formas*; Mínguez Fernández, *Innovación*; Martínez Sopena, *La Tierra de Campos*.
[10] Escalona – Martín Viso, *The life*.
[11] Martín Viso, *Colapso*.
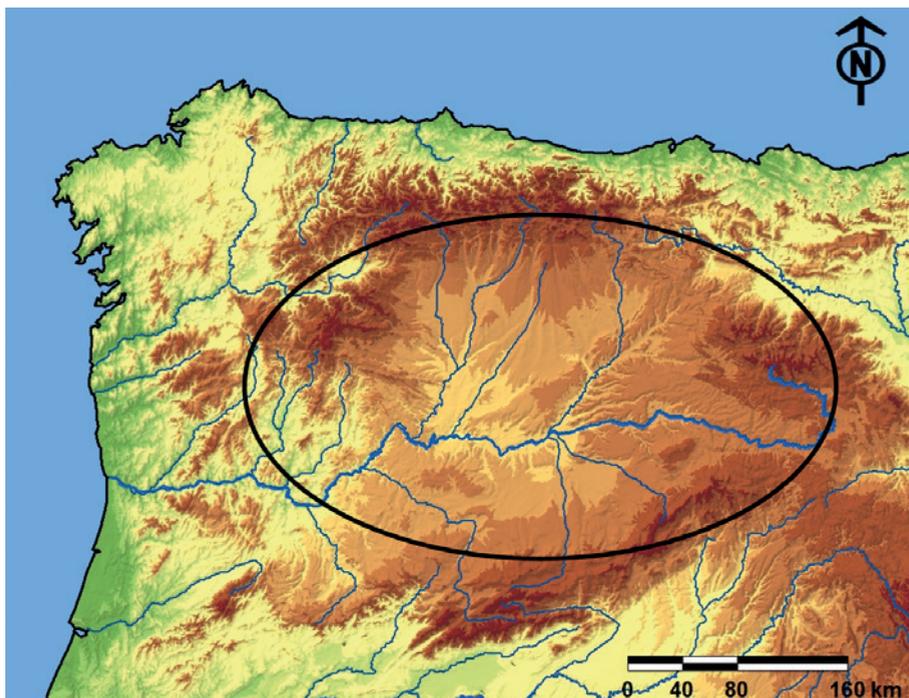
Figure 1. The Duero Plateau.

The negligible role of cities is significant; their influence was already very weak in the post-Roman centuries, when it was almost always associated with bishops. From an archaeological view, the only place that can be trusted to be more or less accurately described is León. Here the sequence is defined by the continuity of settlement without any investment in monumentality. The existence of common pottery, most likely produced by locals, would be proof of the presence of inhabitants, although their standard of living would have differed little from that of rural communities[12]. The situation in other cities must have been similar[13]. Interestingly, Muslim chronicles mention campaigns against cities, like Astorga in 795 and León in 845[14]. However, for over a century, they are only referred to on those two occasions, which suggests that they were not frequent targets. Perhaps the attacks were related to the symbolic value of both places, thanks to their Roman and Visigothic past; or maybe such mentions were simply a way of labelling the most recognizable

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[12] Gutiérrez González – Miguel Hernández, *Cerámica altomedieval*; Miguel Hernández, *La estructura urbana*.
[13] Gutiérrez González, *Procesos de formación*, pp. 38-40.
[14] Ibn Hayyan, *Al-Muqtabis II-1*, pp. 119 and 322.

sites (a way to define a whole region) for Andalusian chroniclers who were not familiar with the area.

The political geography of the Duero Plateau was already so complex because of the proliferation of settlements that were halfway between a well-defined "central place" and a village since the sixth and seventh centuries. Some of these sites are mentioned in the Asturian chronicles, as is the case with Amaya. But here there is no archaeological data that proves the site would have been densely populated in the eighth-ninth centuries, so its mention might have been the result of a political geography that drew on the past[15]. A different case is that of Zamora, which played a certain role in the hierarchical organization in the sixth and seventh centuries without yet being a city. The interventions carried out in recent years have revealed the existence of small settlements located in the area that is immediately outside the medieval walls, especially in the quarter of Olivares, which could be identified as signs of occupation in the eighth and ninth centuries. Material remains include sunken-featured buildings, and pottery, especially kitchenware, of local production[16].

None of these places was an eighth-ninth century bishopric. The only accurate data about a bishop is the reference to Etherius of Osma, who took part in the Adoptionist dispute in late-eighth century. He supported the position of Beatus of Liébana, a representative of the Asturian Church, against the Elipandus, archbishop of Toledo. This option seems to place him in the political environment of the kings of Asturias. He could not be a bishop located in Osma, but one with an honorific title in the entourage of the Asturian kings[17]. Since bishops had been a crucial instrument in the consolidation of Visigothic royal authority in local settings, creating a node that connected localities to the political center, the demise of the kingdom of Toledo involved the vanishing of a pattern that strongly depended on the royal authority.

The lack of social and spatial hierarchization brought about a deep fragmentation that should be the adaptation to a framework where there were no effective central authorities over the region, rather than as a malady of the system. The recent decades analyses have revealed the presence of small territories that structured regional or even micro-regional areas, and which had not been created by a centralized authority. The best example are the Castilian *alfoces*, districts that encompassed a handful of rural sites, and became the axis around which the authority of the tenth century Count of Castile revolved[18]. In this region, the formation and consolidation of power arose from the competition among different political leaders without the direct intervention of the Asturian kings. So, counts were in practice the central authority in the North-Eastern Duero Plateau. Nevertheless, higher authority over the

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[15] Quintana López, *El castro.*
[16] Martín Carbajo *et al.*, *El Campo de la Verdad.*
[17] Martínez Díez, *Los obispados*, pp. 456-457; Pastor Díaz de Garayo, *Castilla*, pp. 132-136.
[18] Estepa Díez, *El alfoz*; Álvarez Borge, *Monarquía feudal*; Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio.*

alfoces, which were a lower level of political action, was fundamentally in the hands of counts[19]. However, it is also possible to find traces of such territories in other areas.

A first example is Sublancio (Figure 2), near the city of León, where there is documentary confirmation of the existence of a small fortress, although, according to the evidence found, it cannot have been built before the late ninth century[20]. Sublancio appears as a territory in several ninth- and tenth-century charters and, thanks to the identification of several of the places mentioned as part of it, it is possible to reconstruct an area located on both sides of the Esla River. Late-ninth and early-tenth century documents reveal the existence of a set of *sernas* that are directly associated with such territory, and which were donated by the kings to some powerful aristocrats and ecclesiastical institutions[21]. *Sernas* can be defined as lands arranged into two levels: a lower level, where the members of a group – most likely the inhabitants of a place – had the right to use some parts of the *serna*, perhaps by drawing lots; and a higher level related to the presence of a power that ensured the protection and correct management of *sernas*[22]. Given the prominent role played by the kings of Asturias-León in the control of *sernas* between 850-950, it might be assumed that authority over such *sernas* was one of the most common resources of the elites of the Duero Plateau, which was transferred to the monarchs as a means of legitimizing their new rule[23]. The *sernas* would have been one of the main factors of local rule in Sublancio before its integration into the kingdom of Asturias, and also a key element of its identity. That said, the *sernas* documented in such period were not the only common lands, since in 1014 there is mention of a land «de omines de Solancio», meaning an area over which a specific group identified with the inhabitants of a certain territory exercised their rights[24].

Dueñas is the second example[25]. In the early-tenth century, it is described as a territory with a *castellum*, which must have been located on a nearby hill to the north of the current village. Unfortunately, the information available for the tenth century does not provide clues for the identification of the places included in the district, although later data allow the identification of the territory with the valley of Carrión and Pisuerga Rivers, enclosed by the contiguous high moorland. Once again, the evidence of the charter proves the presence of several *sernas* within this territory, all of them owned by kings who transferred them to the monastery of San Isidro de Dueñas. There is once again a noticeable association between territory and common lands, which is

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[19] Álvarez Borge, *Monarquía feudal*; Estepa Díez, *La Castilla primitiva*; Escalona, *In the name.*
[20] Gutiérrez González, *Poblamiento*, p. 109.
[21] Martín Viso, *Pervivencias,* pp. 83-87.
[22] This hypothesis is more thoroughly developed in Gómez Gómez – Martín Viso, *Rationes.*
[23] Martín Viso, *Las propiedades.*
[24] *Colección*, doc. 734.
[25] Justo Sánchez – Martín Viso, *Territories.*
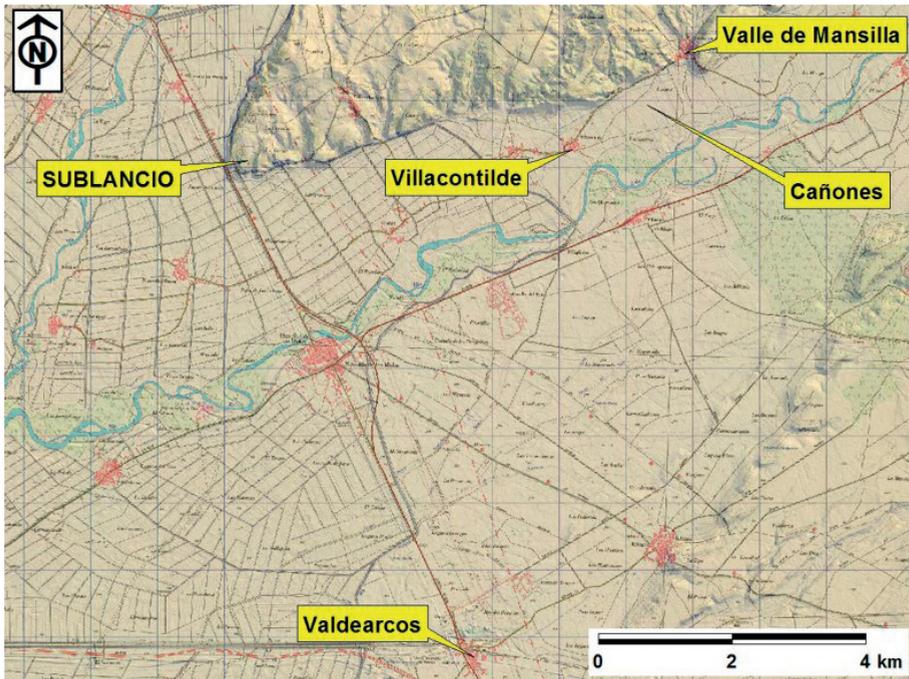
Figure 2

not constrained to the role of *sernas*: in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there are references to the *monte* of Dueñas, a wasteland used by people of the whole territory.

The third example is a Castilian *alfoz*: Ausín or Los Ausines, to the southeast of the current city of Burgos. It was a small district closely linked to a river network structured as several small valleys whose main axis was the river Lara or Los Ausines[26]. There is an interesting document from the cartulary of the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña dated in 972. The inhabitants of the *concilio* of Los Ausines (*Agosyn*) delivered the pasturelands of La Lomba to the Count of Castile, García Fernández, in exchange for being exempt from working in the castles. The text is validated by forty individuals, a number that suggests that they were people related to various settlements[27]. In this case, *Agosyn* referred to a territory linked to common land.

These three examples are proof of the existence of territories associated with the presence of areas for collective use. The management of such lands could play an essential role in the eighth and ninth centuries political organization of the Duero Plateau. However, this does not mean that it was always

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[26] Escalona, *Sociedad y territorio*, pp. 94-96.
[27] *El Becerro Gótico,* doc. 3.

so. A good counterexample is Coyanza, where there is evidence of fifth and sixth centuries occupation. The reconstruction of the territory that surrounded this fortified site (*castrum*) in the tenth century outlines a wider area that spread beyond the Esla river valley. This situation could be proof of a greater capacity for hierarchical organization. Whether there were common lands directly related to this territory is unknown. Everything suggests that its pattern was different, based on a relevant post-Roman core, and from which political authority of a different nature was exercised[28].

Some of these territories are identified with the presence of fortifications (*castros*). There is practically no archaeological data about them, but, according to the information available, there was a gradual monumentalization. In spite of clear chronologies, the most ancient archaeological evidence nowadays visible could be dated to the tenth century, when the region was incorporated into encompassing polities[29]. However, a possible explanation could be that those *castros* were simple structures, perhaps small towers made of materials such as wood or sun-dried brick prior to the intervention of Asturian kings. It is very likely that some of these places would have been an object of interest for the authorities that became established as of the second half of the ninth century. For example, the location of the *castrum* of Sublancio has been identified with a site where there used to be a tower with a square floorplan, built with large stone blocks. This architectonical pattern has been related to the Umayyads, but it is probably a kind of fortification promoted by Asturian kings[30]. Although there is no evidence of a previous edification, before this monumentalization, the *castro* appears early in the written record, a clue of a prior origin[31].

The geographical spread of these *castros* might be regarded as a sign that there was the result of the construction of a militarized frontier. The location of those fortifications reinforced the idea of a control of some districts, much of them small pieces of valleys. They were socio-political control instruments that included a variety of combinations: buildings linked to local elites previous to the Asturian rule, places created by central authorities, sites re-used by kings and counts, and fortifications built by local elites during the Asturian rule, but without any mediation of a central authority. In every case, these *castros* were tools of power, related to control over small-scale political arenas, and they are likely to have been widespread in the eighth and ninth centuries across the Duero Plateau. Nevertheless, there were also territories with no hierarchical sites, as is the case with Los Ausines.

The strong fragmentation deprived the elites of the Duero Plateau of the means to increase their scale of action. This assertion admits a significant

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[28] Martín Viso, *Pervivencias*, pp. 87-90.
[29] Palomino Lázaro – Negredo García, *La investigación*, pp. 59-60; Palomino Lázaro, *El territorio*, p. 215.
[30] Gutiérrez González, *Poblamiento*, p. 109; Martín Viso, *Pervivencias*, pp. 84-85.
[31] *Albeldensis*, XV, 12-33 (*Crónicas asturianas*).

exception: Castile. This north-eastern region of the Duero Plateau was characterized by the emergence of a series of governances headed by individuals identified as counts, a term that was merely the acknowledgement of a higher authority. These authorities competed against each other in the late-ninth and early-tenth centuries, resulting in the shaping of a single count of Castile as of approximately 930. Indeed, the county of Castile was where such authority was recognized, holding the effective powers of central authority, even though it was part of the Asturian-Leonese kingdom[32]. Nevertheless, such authorities could have emerged earlier, as suggested by some pieces of evidence. The so-called *fuero* of Brañosera, dated 824, refers to Count Muño Núñez, who granted the inhabitants of that settlement, which was really a small local territory, a series of rights. The county action is outside the scope of any royal authority, working as an autonomous power acting on a territory. He was an individual invested with a higher capacity for leadership[33].

Despite the absence of any form of central authority, there must have been political and cultural influences. It is not easy to perceive potential Asturian influences prior to the second half of the ninth century. That assertion seems paradoxical considering that a large part of the Duero Plateau became later integrated into the Asturian-Leonese kingdom. The unquestionably Christian character of the native populations would lead to think, from the perspective of the traditional confrontation between Christians and Muslims, of the existence of connections. Nevertheless, such religious rivalry was actually a political legitimation tool for the Asturian kingdom. Therefore, the political dynamics of the period cannot be explained as part of an often non-existent opposition in which the people of the Plateau took no part. In fact, the Asturian polity was a regional leadership whose scope of action did not reach the Duero Plateau.

By contrast, al-Andalus was at the time the most powerful society in political terms, and the most prestigious as regarded culture. Tenth-century charters include a wealth of Arab anthroponyms, as well as certain place names of the same origin[34]. However, archaeological evidence is quite feeble. Most of the scarce pottery remains that have been found must be dated to the Caliphate (tenth century) and the Emirate (eighth-ninth centuries) archaeological contexts are very scarce and questionable[35]. There are also references to fortifications made in an Umayyad fashion, but they would belong to a later date (Caliphate) and perhaps be the work of specialists employed by Asturian kings and Castilian counts[36]. Although some researchers have suggested

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[32] Escalona, *In the name*; Santos Salazar, *Competition*.
[33] *El fuero*. Although the documentary transmission of the text is complex, the most recent edition considers it to a large extent truthful.
[34] Fernández Conde, *Los mozárabes*; Reglero de la Fuente, *Onomástica*.
[35] Zozaya Stabel-Hansen *et al.*, *Asentamientos andalusíes*; Gutiérrez González, *Oviedo*, p. 403.
[36] Aymerich – Dovao – Zamora Canellada, *Las murallas*, pp. 132-133; Zamora Canellada, *El castillo*, pp. 103-119 and 196-197; Muñoz García, *Las murallas*, pp. 73-74. For a critical view, see Martín Viso, *Integración*, p. 217.

the presence of Berber settlers on the Duero Plateau, as well as the existence of an initial distribution of lands, there is hardly any solid evidence for that assertion[37]. The arguments that sustain such assumptions are based on place names that often belong to a much later date. The hypothesis is difficult to accept if it is compared to the situation of some areas with a strong Arab presence, such as the valley of the Guadalquivir River, where there is no evidence of such a distribution. The Duero Plateau was a marginal region, outside Islamic lands, according to the Arab chroniclers. In addition to this, people with Arab or Berber names, or those who lived in places with names of such origin, seem no different from the rest of people of the Duero Plateau in tenth-century texts. If there ever was a Berber population, their identity had already vanished and had no significance as a socio-cultural marker.

It would be more accurate to assess these pieces of evidence as proof of cultural and perhaps political connections with al-Andalus. People in these areas took names that connected them to the more prestigious culture, perhaps as a result of an informal political relationship between some of them with emiral power. After all, there is documentary evidence of Umayyad campaigns against Asturias that must have inevitably crossed the Duero Plateau and would have required logistical support. In such a fragmented framework, this connection could have raised an interest in the imitation of some superficial elements of the Arab culture, which was a much more powerful actor. Indeed, the individuals who boasted Arab or Berber names did not follow the Arab onomastic pattern[38]. Neither did these relationships involve particularly relevant trade exchanges, given the scarcity of pottery from al-Andalus and the absence of silver *dirhams* coined by Umayyads.

The image conveyed is that of a peripheral area, outside the scope of any centralized political authority, a sort of buffer area controlled by local elites[39]. It seems that Umayyads had no interest in a direct subjugation of this region, that the Arab Chronicles always located out of the Islamic lands (*Dar-al-islam*)[40]. So, the frontier of the Muslim political sphere was placed on the southern foothills of the Central System. The Christian polities were in fact a set of chiefdoms without any ability to carry out decisive interventions in the region.

3. *The process of affirmation of Asturian power*

The gradual consolidation of Asturias as a kingdom, and the construction of a far more complex and strong polity in the ninth century, altered the previous balance. A decisive fact was the territorial spread of the kingdom, which

[37] Peterson, *Quintana*, gathers all the arguments of several authors.
[38] Aguilar Sebastián – Rodríguez Mediano, *Antroponimia*.
[39] Mínguez Fernández, *Poderes locales*; Martín Viso, *Colapso*.
[40] Maíllo Salgado, *Acerca de la conquista*.

moved towards the Duero Plateau. The process was accomplished in different ways; the most noticeable was the *populatio* of some places, especially cities with a long tradition, such as Astorga (854) and León (856). But other places were also the target of this process. A reference to Zamora, dated in 893, provided by the chronicler Ibn Hayyan, which, in turn, refers to al-Razi, describes what the *populatio* entailed. King Alfonso III integrated Zamora into his kingdom, constructed buildings, fortified the site, and promoted the arrival of settlers, some of them seemingly from Toledo, meaning Christians of the Central March of al-Andalus[41]. Archaeological data suggest that Zamora was an already inhabited site, so that *populare* would really means to organize, in this case in political terms[42]. The new settlers must have been a small group that, nevertheless, ensured the links between Zamora and royal power. These *populationes* created anchoring points for centralized political authority, thus drawing a political geography composed of a series of "islands of authority" that emerged in a very diverse political landscape, where there was room for areas where the presence of central power was less effective or even non-existent (Figure 3).

As part of the same process, there is a clear policy of property redistribution, seeking to reward those who had participated in the territorial expansion. A dispute dated 915 allows us to identify the appropriation of water for the mills of one Vimara in the context of the *populatio* of León – including the mention to an edict issued by Alfonso III. The action involved the creation of new landmarks before witnesses[43]. But the most revealing case comes from Astorga, where in 878 the sons of one Catelino and Bishop Indisclo of Astorga had a dispute because of the control of the village of Brimeda. The representative of Catelino's sons claimed that the latter had obtained Brimeda during the *populatio* of Astorga, and that such ownership had been acknowledged by the bishop, who was perhaps in charge of the redistribution of properties. The bishop, on the contrary, said that he and his men had received Brimedo as *presura* or *scalido* when those of El Bierzo left for Astorga with Count Gatón, which could perhaps suggest that he was a native authority[44]. The text proves the existence of a process of appropriation and delimitation of properties, not without conflict. These and other cases show that *populationes* involved the appropriation of lands, including its demarcation and redistribution among collaborators. The beneficiaries seem to have been members of a local or foreign elite, but the native population was not stripped of its properties, since the appropriation and distribution was limited to only part of the local space.

A frequent legal tool to legitimize the new properties was the *presura*. Contrary to the central role given to it by the historiography as a legal means

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[41] Ibn Hayyan, *Al-Muqtabis III*, pp. 204-205.
[42] Menéndez Pidal, *Repoblación*.
[43] *Colección*, doc. 34.
[44] *Colección*, doc. 5. For two different interpretations of the text see Reglero de la Fuente, *La ocupación*, p. 140, and Martín Viso, *Authority*, pp. 127-128.
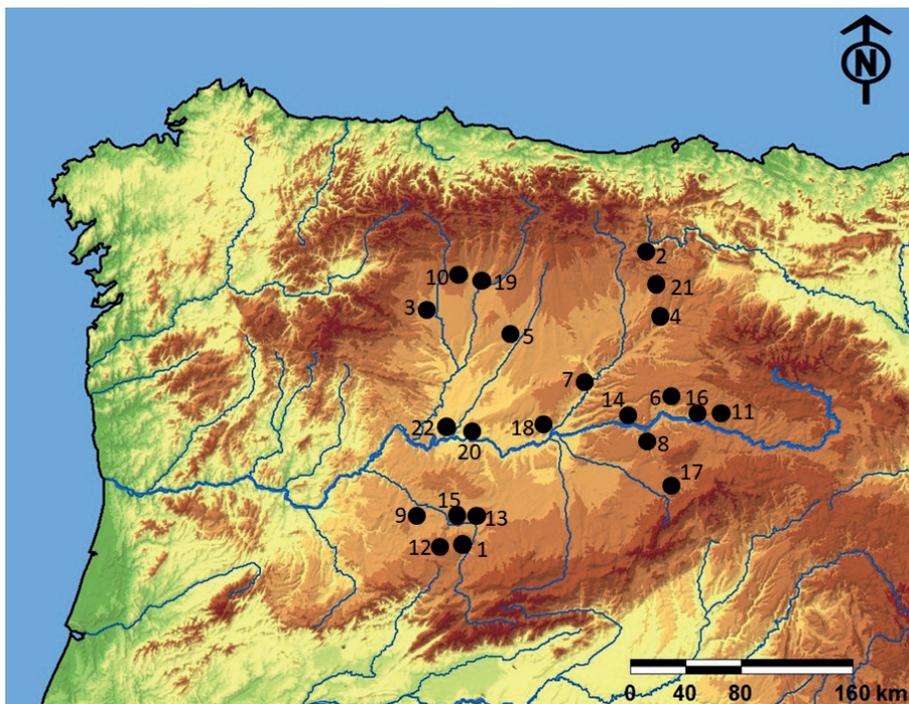
Figure 3

for people to settle in uncultivated areas, a review of the documentation reveals that, before 950, the total number of references amounts to a meagre 4.65% of the preserved texts[45]. These *presuras* were undertaken by individuals of high social standing on already occupied areas. The purpose was to create a new domain that was, above all, associated with control over uncultivated lands or certain spots of particular relevance, such as churches, which would also allow the *presor* to become part of a group that had access to commons[46]. Land redistribution as a result of *populationes* was sometimes channelled through *presura*, as can be observed in León[47]. Nevertheless, its use was more widespread and not only limited to these contexts. Its beneficiaries

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[45] This is the author's quantification. Quantitative data differ from those of other authors who have used different chronological and regional samples as a basis. Nevertheless, there is a coincidence in terms of the paucity of references; Reglero de la Fuente, *La ocupación,* p. 139, and Mínguez, *Innovación*, pp. 60-61.

[46] The concept of *presura* has been addressed in many studies since the 1980s (E. Peña Bocos, J.Á. García de Cortázar, J.Mª. Mínguez, P. Martínez Sopena), but the study by Larrea, *Construir Iglesias*, is central to our argument.

[47] Here there are nine references to *presuras* until 950, although, in several occasions, the documents of the fourth decade of the tenth century really refer to situations of the last third of the ninth century. *Colección*, docs. 24, 28, 34, 53, 58, 89, 100, 146 and 167.

were not necessarily individuals who came from other areas, but also native elites whose social status was thus endorsed.

These policies were supplemented by the appropriation of property by kings, which allowed its redistribution, a basic mechanism in the weaving of political networks. The analysis of royal grants reveals how kings mostly owned *villas* – which should be understood as rights on the group of inhabitants and lands related to a village –, *sernas*, which were crop and livestock farming areas for collective use, and local churches, over which they exerted patronage, which could perhaps be related to control over the communities that were attached to such churches[48]. These are all elements that are associated with a higher power, not merely with property, and which, by being delivered to individuals or ecclesiastical institutions, also allowed the shaping of a superior authority linked to the king.

In this context, previous territories did not disappear, but they acquired a new meaning. Sometimes, small defensive enclosures that became markers of royal authority must have been created or renovated. There is also evidence of how kings took over the control of collective-use spaces, such as *sernas* and others, that became part of the circuit of property that could be redistributed, a process that was the result of political dynamics, as is revealed in Los Ausines. Some of these territories – as all the previously mentioned – became part of the royal political network, although it was never a consistent territorial organization with homogeneous units distributed across the whole region.

In general, it seems that native groups collaborated in this process of political integration, and that elites could adapt themselves to a framework where their authority could be legitimized[49]. But there was also resistance, such as that mentioned in a charter dated 909, where Alfonso III notes that he had to send his warriors to stand against *gente barbarica* near Tordesillas[50]. Although it is hardly more than a conjecture, these displays of resistance must have been the target of a *damnatio memoriae,* as were the oral stories and accounts associated with leadership in the eighth and ninth centuries.

The integration brought with it two new elements: on the one hand, the consolidation of a new authority defined as Christian and as the heir to the Goths; on the other hand, the kings used the implementation of military duties to some local elites as a way to assert and reinforce their political network[51]. Likewise, the increasing assertion of the political authority of monarchs and counts was regarded as a threat by the Umayyads. They, as caliphs, sought to maintain their hegemony in the Iberian Peninsula, which under no circumstance involved conquering these territories, but only that their leaders be subjected to paying tax. It is at such times, and not before, that the number of al-Andalus and Christian campaigns increased, with purposes fo-

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[48] Carvajal Castro, *Bajo la máscara*, *passim;* Martín Viso, *Las propiedades regias.*
[49] Carvajal Castro, *The monarchy.*
[50] *Colección*, doc. 9.
[51] A situation that is well attested in Castile; Escalona, *Comunidades.*

cused on spoils in the Christian case, and on maintaining the *statu quo* in the case of the Umayyads.

Nonetheless, the process of political integration was very uneven. A central region, such as Tierra de Campos, was characterized in the first half of the tenth century by a strong fragmentation and an under-representation of royal authority[52]. Wide areas in the southern part of the Plateau – a zone which started to be known as *Stremadura* – continued outside the control of any central authority; other were integrated into Christian polities but it was a weak and ephemeral situation[53]. In any case, the consequence of such integration was the definition of a boundary in the fullest sense of the term. The Duero River became the marker of the limits of the Asturian-Leonese kingdom. However, it was not al-Andalus that was on the other side, but a politically undefined area: *Stremadura*.

4. *By way of conclusion*

From the mid-eighth century onwards, the Duero Plateau became an undefined area. The complete absence of centralized political authority, added to fragmentation, local horizons and the role of commons, were essential features that materialized in the territories. The Duero Plateau served as a blurred frontier, barely defined, and connected, although not very clearly, to al-Andalus. However, from Cordoba it was perceived as foreign to Islamic territory. To understand the period adequately, more attention should be paid to small-scale dynamics. It was a wide frontier, controlled by its own leaders, between complex polities, such as the Islamic state and the Christian chiefdoms, and with a less complex but far more heterogeneous socio-political pattern.

The situation changed after the mid-ninth century with the consolidation of Christian polities. The influence of such authorities grew, and a new social pattern emerged. The Duero worked as a political frontier, although it was never fully defined as such: it was neither a defensive line nor an impassable limit. On the other side of the river, informal ties with the authorities of northern areas were gradually established, and there continued to be a wide buffer area. Nonetheless, the changes led to an increase in military activity in this sector, which became much more evident in the communities that were to the south of the Duero and in Castile. The struggle did not revolve around religious differences, but around the prize to be obtained: control over the territory and political hegemony. It was a society that lived on the border, but not a frontier society.

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[52] Martínez Sopena, *La Tierra de Campos*, p. 83; Carvajal Castro, *Bajo la máscara*, p. 96.
[53] Martín Viso, *Integración*.

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Italian boundaries I:
northern frontiers

Waiting for the barbarians:
the frontiers of the Ostrogothic Kingdom during the reign of Theoderic

by Marco Cristini

Several letters written by Cassiodorus deal with Ostrogothic borders, describing the forts that guarded the Alpine passes, discussing the administration of frontier areas or lingering on the virtues and the vices of the people who inhabited them. The evidence provided by the *Variae* indicates that frontiers were a crucial part of the Ostrogothic Kingdom during the reign of Theoderic, not only because they were the gates of Italy and had to be garrisoned to prevent hostile incursions, but also because they became a cornerstone of his political communication, stressing the difference between "Romanized" Goths and the "savage" tribes who lived beyond the Alps.

Middle Ages; 5th-6th centuries; Italian frontiersin the 6thcentury; Ostrogoths; Theoderic; Cassiodorus; *Variae*.

Abbreviations
ThlL = *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, Lipsiae 1900-.
Varie II = Flavio Magno Aurelio Cassiodoro Senatore, *Varie*, dir. A. Giardina, ed. by A. Giardina, G.A. Cecconi, I. Tantillo, with the coop. of F. Oppedisano, vol. 2, Roma 2014.
Varie III = Flavio Magno Aurelio Cassiodoro Senatore, *Varie*, dir. A. Giardina, ed. by A. Giardina, G.A. Cecconi, I. Tantillo, with the coop. of F. Oppedisano, vol. 3, Roma 2015.

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1. *Introduction*

During Antiquity, the defence of Italy's land borders represented an essential necessity for achieving a stable control of the peninsula, especially from the second half of the fifth century onwards, when the Alps once again marked the border between the Roman world and territories occupied by populations that were regarded as barbarians[1]. The gradual transition from the imperial hegemony to a multipolar international order that occurred in Europe during these years was accompanied by the appearance of new political entities (e.g. the kingdoms of the Franks, Visigoths, Burgundians, Gepids), which were based in the former provinces of the empire and often had little internal cohesion, a feature that made it more difficult to prevent attacks and incursions through diplomatic initiatives.

The risks arising from this situation became evident between 489 and 493, during the conflict between Odoacer and Theoderic when, in the space of four years, the Alps were crossed by Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Burgundians, not to mention the smaller contingents of other peoples that probably took part in the conflict[2]. After defeating his rival, Theoderic gradually consolidated his power through military and political initiatives aimed at securing the support of the senatorial aristocracy and of the Italian population[3]. One of the pillars of Theoderic's political programme was the defence of Italy from the peoples living beyond the Alps who, in recent decades, had represented a factor of increasing insecurity, especially for the inhabitants of Northern Italy. The military dimension of the defence of the Italian borders was soon complemented by a careful political communication strategy, which made use of traditional concepts such as the savage barbarian or the soldiers considered as the shield of Italy, and by a set of administrative measures, which enabled Theoderic's troops effectively to guard the main strongholds of the Alpine border. This paper will examine the borders of the Ostrogothic Kingdom in the light of these three perspectives (i.e. from a military, administrative, and ideological point of view) by focusing on a few letters taken from Cassiodorus' *Variae*. Before proceeding further, however, a brief contextualisation of this work is in order. The *Variae* is a collection of 468 letters, edicts and formulas written by Cassiodorus on behalf of the Ostrogothic rulers between 507 and 537/538, when he left the Court. Cassiodorus had probably already started collecting the letters that he considered most significant during the last years of his public activity and circulated his collection

[2] On the war between Odoacer and Theoderic, see Caliri, *Praecellentissimus rex*, pp. 151-160; Wiemer, *Theoderich*, pp. 180-192.
[3] On the relationship between Theoderic and the senatorial aristocracy, see most recently La Rocca – Oppedisano, *Il senato*; Eich, Quod prosperum; Salzman, *The Falls*, pp. 248-258.

before the conquest of Ravenna by Belisarius (540). Recently, there has been a lively debate on the circumstances leading to the publication of the *Variae*. It has been suggested that Cassiodorus worked on his collection of letters while living in Constantinople after 540 and that he edited several documents to facilitate his return to the political fray in either Italy or Byzantium[4]. However, these conjectures do not take into due consideration both Cassiodorus' will to devote himself entirely to the writing of religious works after leaving the Court of Ravenna, and the preface of the *Variae*, from which it can be deduced that Cassiodorus' main intention was to stress the fundamental political importance assumed by the rhetoric and style in the Ostrogothic Kingdom, as argued by Giardina[5]. It is highly unlikely that Cassiodorus made major revisions of several letters by altering official documents with the aim of obtaining personal advantages, which are incompatible with what all of his works written after 538 unanimously state, namely that he regarded his public career as something shameful and only desired to seek salvation by turning to Christ[6]. Therefore, it is conceivable that the letters included within the *Variae* are mostly a faithful transcription of the royal correspondence, and Cassiodorus' revisions concern almost only the exclusion of those formulaic expressions that opened and closed each document, as well as (in some cases) the names of the persons mentioned in the letters.

2. *The military dimension of Ostrogothic frontiers*

The frontiers of the Ostrogothic Kingdom played a role of paramount importance in the defence of Italy. The military and logistical challenges that Theoderic faced in securing the borders of his kingdom are well summarised in *Variae* II, 5, a letter sent to the Praetorian Prefect Faustus between 507 and 511. In this document, the king orders foodstuffs (the *annona*) to be delivered without delay to the sixty soldiers guarding the Clusurae Augustanae, probably in the Aosta Valley[7]. These were strategic places to prevent an invading army (in all likelihood the Burgundians) from reaching Northern Italy, yet only sixty soldiers were assigned to guard this stronghold[8]. Such a small num-

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[4] Bjornlie, *Politics*. Bjornlie's reconstruction has been met with considerable scepticism, see for instance the reviews by Wiemer and Heather.
[5] Giardina, *Cassiodoro*, p. 39: «quello di porre in risalto (...) il fondamentale rilievo politico assunto dalla forma – patrimonio di immagini, di concetti e di espressioni persuasive – nel regno ostrogoto».
[6] Cristini, *Oblivio*.
[7] See Cassiodorus, *Variae* I, 9, a letter sent to the bishop of Aosta, who had been charged with treason («proditio patriae»). See also Schwarcz, *Die Restitutio*, p. 790. For other conjectures concerning the localization, see Christie, *Ostrogothic Italy*, p. 146 (Chiusa di Pesio near Cuneo, or Chiusa di San Michele, located in Val di Susa).
[8] For a comparison, see e.g. Procopius of Caesarea, *Bellum Gothicum* II, 11, 1–3: during the Gothic War, Vitiges left a garrison of 1,000 men at Chiusi, 400 at Todi and Petra Pertusa, 4,000 at Osimo, 2,000 at Urbino, and 500 at Cesena and Monteferetra.

ber was primarily due to the numerical weakness of the Ostrogothic army during the first two decades of Theoderic's reign. In 489, the king arrived in Italy at the head of about 40,000 people, so he could count on less than 10,000 warriors, a number which dropped considerably after the bloody battles with Odoacer's troops[9]. After gaining full control of Italy, Theoderic found himself having to garrison the whole peninsula and the Alps with a much reduced army. The strength of his forces certainly grew following both the natural demographic increase of the Gothic population and the arrival in Italy of mercenaries and other groups of warriors from other parts of Europe, but it is likely that, even a decade later, Theoderic could not realistically count on more than 15,000 soldiers[10]. It was also for this reason that he decided to concentrate his troops in strategic locations, close to the main centres of his kingdom, and deployed only a limited number of warriors to the strongholds located along the borders.

Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that large-scale incursions by populations coming from beyond the Alps were rare during the reign of Theoderic and his immediate successors, and always occurred during periods of political instability, so it is unsurprising that the Ostrogoths opted for a defence in depth, the same strategy that had been adopted by the western emperors from the first decades of the fifth century[11]. The garrisons placed along the frontiers of the kingdom could intervene effectively only in the case of low-intensity conflicts, which were often difficult to distinguish from the episodes of banditry that were endemic in the peripheral territories of the ancient world[12]. In the face of larger incursions, it is likely that the main task of the border garrisons was immediately to warn Ravenna and slow down the enemy, while allowing the Ostrogothic army to gather enough forces to repel the attack[13].

In addition to providing valuable information on the numerical strength of the garrison of an Alpine fortress, *Variae* II, 5, also sheds light on the victualling of the outposts. As is well known, Theoderic redistributed one third of the land or, less likely, of the tax revenue deriving from it among his follow-

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[9] Usually, the Ostrogoths who came to Italy have been estimated to number *c.*100,000 (thus, 20-25,000 warriors); see already Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, p. 152; more recently Heather, *The Goths*, p. 236; Wolfram, *Die Goten*, p. 279; Wiemer, *Theoderich*, p. 180. However, these estimates are often based upon Procopius of Caesarea, *Bellum Vandalicum* I, 8, 12, a passage which is not trustworthy, see Cristini, *Il seguito*; a more likely estimate is that offered by Burns, *Calculating* (40,000 people), who takes into consideration the evidence about the number of warriors who fought under Theoderic and the other Gothic chieftains before 488.
[10] See Schäfer, *Theoderic*, p. 248. For other estimates of the strength of the Ostrogothic army, see Hannestad, *Les forces*; Kaegi, *The Capability*, p. 89. More generally on the Ostrogothic army, see Halsall, *The Ostrogothic Military*.
[11] See e.g. Christie, *From Constantine*, pp. 331-348.
[12] Shaw, *Bandits*.
[13] Settia, *Le fortificazioni*, p. 130; Grundmann, *The Ostrogothic Defence*, pp. 215-218.

ers after his arrival in Italy[14], thus providing the Ostrogoths with a constant and secure source of income. This system was conceived for the Ostrogoths stationed around Ravenna, in the Po Valley or in Central Italy, whereas the troops who guarded the Alpine borders had to resort to a more traditional way of obtaining supplies, as the letter on the Clusurae Augustanae clearly indicates. The border garrisons were often located in remote places, thus the system of the *tertiarum deputatio* was unsuitable to meet the needs of the soldiers quartered there, who may have owned estates nearby, but were unable to obtain from them sufficient food for their subsistence. Therefore, the task of providing them with supplies fell to the praetorian prefect, who had to take charge of the needs of the entire Alpine defence system[15]. Evidently, it was common practice, especially after the War of Provence, to send food supplies to the border garrisons, which also housed the soldiers' families, as reported by Procopius of Caesarea[16].

What did these Alpine fortresses look like? The *Variae* includes a suggestive description of an Ostrogothic border stronghold, namely the *castellum* of Verruca, which has been commonly identified with Doss Trento, although the fortress mentioned in the letter might have been located closer to the Raetian border, perhaps at Fragsburg in Merano[17]. Cassiodorus writes that:

> Est enim in mediis campis tumulus saxeus in rotunditate consurgens, qui proceris lateribus, silvis erasus, totus mons quasi una turris efficitur, cuius ima graciliora sunt quam cacumina et in mollissimi fungi modo supernus extenditur, cum in inferiore parte tenuetur[18].

The letter goes on to report that Verruca holds the *claustra provinciae*, an expression that can be translated either as "the bulwark of the province" or "the lock of the province". The frontiers of the kingdom are compared to a door and the Ostrogothic garrisons to a bolt, in language that highlights the contrast between what is within Theoderic's kingdom and what is outside it.

The structure and location of a few Ostrogothic frontier fortresses can also be studied relying on archaeological evidence. In fact, excavations car-

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[14] Porena, *L'insediamento*. There is an ongoing debate about the so-called "techniques of accommodation", since some scholars argue that tax proceeds and not landed property were sometimes awarded to individual barbarians in the West. See Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*, and Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, pp. 119-186. Goffart's hypothesis has been much debated during the last few decades; for a summary of the criticism, see Halsall, *The Technique*.

[15] See Cassiodorus, *Variae* II, 5, 1: it is suggested by the sentence «sicut aliis quoque decretae sunt».

[16] Procopius of Caesarea, *Bellum Gothicum* II, 28, 29. For the receipt of the *annona* by soldiers see also Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 42; V, 11; V, 13; V, 23; XI, 16.

[17] See the commentary of Marcone in *Varie* II, p. 290, who mostly follows Settia, *Le fortificazioni*, pp. 112-114.

[18] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 48; «In the middle of the plain there is a rising rocky hill with a rounded top and steep slopes, devoid of woods, which makes the whole relief look like a sort of tower. At the base, it is narrower than at the top and the top widens like that of a very soft mushroom, while it shrinks in the lower part».

ried out in recent decades in several Alpine localities have revealed traces of fortifications dating back to the fifth and sixth centuries. It is often impossible to ascertain the actual occupation of the sites during the Ostrogothic period but, for some settlements, scholars agree that they were used during the reign of Theoderic or his immediate successors[19]. A case study is represented by Monte Barro, a site that sheds light on the frontier garrisons of the Ostrogothic Kingdom.

Monte Barro is a hill about 900 metres high south of Lecco. A fortified complex of about six hectares defended by a wall has been excavated on the southern slopes of the mountain[20]. During the excavations, several late antique coins were found, none of which seems to have been struck after the reign of Vitiges (536–540). There are also the remains of a residential building destroyed by fire. In the absence of literary sources, it is difficult to reconstruct the function of these structures. According to Settia, the settlement served as a refuge and was not directly linked to the defence of the roads leading north of the Alps[21], whereas Martínez Jiménez considers it the residence of an Ostrogothic official in charge of the defence of the Alpine *limes*[22]. However, it seems difficult to imagine that such an imposing fortification was erected only to accommodate an Ostrogothic official and his entourage, or to offer shelter to the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, who could easily have sought safety in the nearby mountains. As argued by Brogiolo, it seems more likely that Monte Barro served as the centre of a complex system of strongholds, which included outposts located at some distance, and at the same time was part of a network of fortifications that protected Milan and its countryside from the raids of peoples such as the Alamans or Burgundians[23]. The relatively large size of the site was due to the necessity to host the Ostrogothic warriors of the garrison and their families, as well as to accommodate the soldiers guarding the peripheral outposts, who withdrew from the less defensible places to the main fortress in the case of large-scale raids. Of course, this does not rule out the possibility that the local population might have taken refuge in the *castrum* of Monte Barro, or that a high-ranking Ostrogothic official might have lived there, but it is conceivable that the main function of the settlement was a military one, as indicated by its violent destruction during the Gothic War, which was not followed by any reconstruction.

Turning from a specific fortress to the overall geographical distribution of the garrisons defending the northern border of Italy, Settia has convincingly argued that there are considerable differences between the western and central Alps on the one hand, and the eastern Alps on the other[24]. In fact, several

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[19] See: Christie, *Ostrogothic Italy*.
[20] *Archeologia*; more recently: Martínez Jiménez, *Monte Barro*.
[21] Settia, *Le fortificazioni*, pp. 118-122.
[22] Martínez Jiménez, *Monte Barro*.
[23] *Archeologia*, vol. 1, pp. 56-57.
[24] Settia, *Le fortificazioni*, p. 109.

garrisons are attested near the borders with the Franks and the Burgundians, and they are almost always located in the foothills, at the entrance of valleys leading to the Alpine passes. On the other hand, there are fewer fortresses in the eastern Alps, and they are located farther from the Po Valley, as in the case of Verruca, for the Ostrogoths controlled a large part of Raetia, Noricum, and Dalmatia, and could therefore set up a more advanced line of defence[25].

3. *The administrative dimension of Ostrogothic frontiers*

The borders of the Ostrogothic Kingdom should be examined from an administrative point of view as well. Under Theoderic and his successors, provinces were ruled by both civil governors, often of Roman origin, and *comites* or *duces*, who were above all entrusted with border areas. There is no need to dwell on the competences of each of these officials, which often overlapped. Suffice it to say that *comites* and *duces* performed both judicial and military functions[26].

Around 510, a border province like Dalmatia was governed by a *comes* of illustrious rank named Osuin, who was appointed by Theoderic to procure the necessary weapons for the soldiers stationed at Salona[27]. Colosseus, another *comes*, was in charge of Pannonia Sirmiensis. The *Variae* includes the letter with which Theoderic instructed him to take charge of the province, as well as the letter sent to the inhabitants of Pannonia to inform them of Colosseus' arrival. He was instructed to «commissam tibi provinciam armis protege, iure compone»[28]. Once again, the military duties of the governor of a border region are placed in the foreground and precede his judicial duties, which represented the most important part of the activity of those governors who had been charged with the administration of the Italian provinces. Cassiodorus offers a lively portrait of Pannonia Sirmiensis, which takes on the aspect of a sort of late antique Far West. Its inhabitants were seemingly used to settle their disputes with arms, so that losing a case was often equivalent to losing their life. Cassiodorus urges the new governor to take measures to ensure that «litigation in the courts does not cause more deaths than wars»[29] and concludes with an unflattering reference to the wild minds and violent souls of the Pannonian provincials[30].

[25] See also: Gatto, *Le frontiere*.
[26] See the commentary by G.A. Cecconi in *Varie* III, pp. 181-182, as well as Maier, *Amtsträger*, pp. 218-222 and 235-237, and Arnold, *Ostrogothic Provinces*.
[27] Cassiodorus, *Variae* I, 40.
[28] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 23, 2: «protect the province entrusted to you with arms and govern it with laws». See the commentary by G. Zecchini, in *Varie* II, pp. 243-245.
[29] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 23, 3.
[30] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 23, 4: «consuetudo nostra feris mentibus inseratur, donec truculentus animus belle vivere consuescat». See also *Variae* III, 24, 3-4. On the provincial society of Pannonia, see Gračanin, *Late Antique Dalmatia*, pp. 256-262.

On the other hand, Raetia was governed by a *dux*, as can be seen from the *formula ducatus Raetiarum*, a model to be used to draft official letters announcing the appointment of a new governor of the two provinces into which Raetia had been divided after the reforms of Diocletian. Cassiodorus praises the newly appointed official, writing that:

> Multum his creditum videtur quibus confinales populi deputantur, quia non est tale pacatis regionibus ius dicere, quale suspectis gentibus assidere, ubi non tantum vitia quantum bella suspecta sunt nec solum vox praeconis insonat, sed tubarum crepitus frequenter insultat[31].

Here too, the governor's judicial tasks are mentioned only to emphasise his military duties. The contrast between *vitia* and *bella*, as well as that between the voice of the public herald and the trumpets of the army, suggests that the *dux Raetiarum* had to take care above all of the security of the territories entrusted to him[32]. With an effective metaphor, Cassiodorus writes that «gentilis impetus vestra venatio est»[33] and exhorts the *dux* to patrol the borders of the province with his soldiers[34]. Other officials were asked to check the tax-collection process or the observance of the law, but the governor of Raetia was first and foremost required to watch the borders of the kingdom.

One of his tasks was to control cross-border movements. Cassiodorus admonishes him not to welcome groups of barbarians (*gentiles*) without proper controls and, at the same time, not to allow Ostrogothic subjects to move to neighbouring peoples because of his neglect (*incuriositas*)[35]. This statement is ambiguous at first sight, but should be properly contextualized. In peripheral regions such as Raetia, the process of ethnogenesis that led to the emergence of coherent groups and stable political entities was still in its infancy in the early sixth century. It was not uncommon for bands of barbarians (and in all likelihood for Roman provincials as well) to cast in their lot with a charismatic leader and then possibly serve as mercenaries or *foederati* under a Germanic sovereign or even the emperor[36]. These warrior companies could cover

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[31] Cassiodorus, *Variae* VII, 4, 1; «Much confidence is given to those to whom populations of border areas are assigned, since administering justice in peaceful regions is not the same as guarding fearsome peoples in places where one must fear not so much vice as war and where not only the voice of the herald resounds, but frequently the thunderous signal of battle trumpets breaks out». See the commentary by G.A. Cecconi, in *Varie* III, pp. 196-199. More generally on Ostrogothic Raetia, see Heuberger, *Das ostgotische Rätien*.

[32] On the *dux Raetiarum* during the Ostrogothic period, see Zerjadtke, *Das Amt*, pp. 132-143.

[33] Cassiodorus, *Variae* VII, 4, 2: «the incursions of the barbarians are your quarry».

[34] Cassiodorus, *Variae* VII, 4, 3: «milites et in pace regas et cum eis fines nostros sollemni alacritate circueas».

[35] Cassiodorus, *Variae* VII, 4, 4: «Quapropter responde nostro iudicio, fide nobis et industria placiturus, ut nec gentiles sine discussione suscipias nec nostros ad gentes sub incuriositate transmittas».

[36] For an overview on the Alpine regions and their peoples during late antiquity, see Steinacher, *Rom und die Barbaren*.

considerable distances, sometimes moving from Sweden to Italy, as recently pointed out by Fischer[37].

Of course, such migrations entailed risks, as warriors from other ethnic groups could easily turn into raiders or spies in the pay of neighbouring populations, so the *dux Raetiarum* had to exercise the utmost caution. There was also the opposing risk, namely that the *incuriositas* of the Ostrogothic governor would spur some provincials to move outside the territories controlled by Theoderic, thus depriving him of valuable soldiers. It is not perfectly clear what Cassiodorus meant by the term *incuriositas*, but it should probably be interpreted in the sense of "carelessness, lack of initiative"[38]. Warriors had to be motivated by offering them the chance to acquire glory and booty, hence the references to hunting barbarians. A *dux* with little inclination towards martial activities risked losing several soldiers, especially those enlisted locally, who might prefer to cross the border and follow a more enterprising leader. In addition to the traditional judicial and military tasks, a governor of a border area was thus required to have a certain amount of experience in managing "human resources".

4. *The ideological dimension of Ostrogothic frontiers*

The third, and last, dimension of the borders of the Ostrogothic Kingdom is ideological. Theoderic's political communication focused mainly on two aspects of borders, namely the defence of the provinces and the contrast between civilisation and barbarism.

Cassiodorus often describes the border regions as the bulwark of Italy. For example, the aforementioned *formula ducatus Raetiarum* posits that «Raetiae namque munimina sunt Italiae et claustra provinciae»[39]. The latter expression is also present in the letter concerning Verruca, once again defined as «claustra provinciae»[40], while the Clusurae Augustanae are called «porta provinciae»[41]. The language used by the Court of Ravenna conveys a static image of the frontiers, which are perceived as a barrier interrupted only by a few well-guarded strongholds, acting as access points to the Ostrogothic Kingdom.

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[37] Fischer, *From Italy*.
[38] There are only two occurrences of *incuriositas* in classical and late antique Latin literature. Besides the passage from the *Variae*, see Salvianus, *De gubernatione Dei* I, 1, with the comments of *ThlL* 7.1, 1081, ll. 81-84. The adjective *incuriosus* is attested in *Variae* VII, 44 («incuriosa vetustate»), and has a similar meaning, see the commentary by G.A. Cecconi in *Varie* III, p. 286.
[39] Cassiodorus, *Variae* VII, 4, 2: «Raetiae are the bastions of Italy and the bolts of the province».
[40] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 48, 2.
[41] Cassiodorus, *Variae* II, 5, 2: «the gate of the province».

The ultimate purpose of the border garrisons was to ensure the peace and security of Italy. Cassiodorus refers to the welfare of the state and the tranquillity of Theoderic's subjects in his letter on the Clusurae Augustanae[42], while in the *formula ducatus Raetiarum* he alludes to their freedom, a concept of paramount importance in the Ostrogothic Kingdom[43]. The soldiers stationed in Raetia are described as the shield of Italy, as those who allow the inhabitants of the peninsula a happy and free life[44]. The image of the shield is perhaps the best summary of the role of the garrisons placed along the borders, in places like Monte Barro or Verruca. Beyond their actual military role, they served to substantiate the representation of Theoderic as the defender of Italy.

The surveillance of borders is often connected with the virtues of caution and prudence, which were indispensable for a good sovereign, who must provide for the security of the state even in the absence of obvious threats[45]. Cassiodorus dwells on this aspect in his letter to Verruca, writing that «munitio tractanda semper in otio est, quia tunc male quaeritur, quando necessaria iudicatur»[46]. We find similar advice in *Varie* I, 40, written to an official entrusted with the procurement of arms for the soldiers stationed in Dalmatia: «discat miles in otio, quod perficere possit in bello»[47]. Troops garrisoning border fortresses had to be ready for the outbreak of a conflict, since the peoples who lived beyond the frontiers could attack them at any time.

These letters indicate that Theoderic and his successors fully adhered to the traditional representation of the *limes* as a barrier between barbarism and civilisation. They did not hesitate to use the repertoire of stereotypes and prejudices about barbarians that had also been employed when dealing with the Goths during previous centuries. Notably, the very term "barbarian" (*barbarus*) was carefully avoided by Cassiodorus when addressing Theoderic's people[48], but he used it, for instance, to refer to the enemies that the garrison of the Clusurae Augustanae was supposed to keep at bay. The letter argues that for such populations loyalty (*fides*), a virtue of capital importance in the Roman world, does not count; only fear (*metus*) is able to stop their incursions[49]. This document most likely refers to the Burgundians, who are compared to animals in another letter of the *Variae*[50].

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[42] Cassiodorus, *Variae* II, 5: «utilitas rei publicae, generalis quies».

[43] See Moorhead, Libertas; Cristini, *La* libertas.

[44] Cassiodorus, *Variae* VII, 4, 3.

[45] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 48, 1-3. See also *Variae* III, 23, 3 (the Ostrogoths adopted the prudence of the Romans while possessing the courage of *gentes*), with the comments by Arnold, *Theoderic*, pp. 127-129.

[46] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 48, 4: «defences should always be prepared in time of peace, because one acts badly when in a state of necessity».

[47] Cassiodorus, *Variae* I, 40: «a soldier should learn in peace what he will perform in war». See La Rocca, *Cassiodorus*, pp. 15-16.

[48] Viscido, *Sull'uso*.

[49] Cassiodorus, *Variae* II, 5, 2.

[50] Cassiodorus, *Variae* I, 46, 3: «beluarum quippe ritus est ex ventris esurie horas sentire et non habere certum, quod constat humanis usibus contributum».

Similar concepts can be found in the document concerning the *castellum* of Verruca. Here the enemies are called «ferae gentes»[51], while the *formula ducatus Raetiarum* depicts the neighbouring populations as «ferae et agrestissimae gentes»[52]. As already mentioned, this letter once again compares the barbarians to wild beasts, since their attacks should be treated as hunts according to Cassiodorus. This comparison had enjoyed a lasting success during the imperial age, as is indicated for instance by the anonymous treatise *De rebus bellicis*, which mentions the peoples who howl around the dominions of Rome («nationes circumlatrantes»), and by Prudentius, according to whom a Roman and a Barbarian are as different from each other as the four-footed creature and the two-footed[53].

The border between civilisation and barbarism is seemingly clear: Theoderic's kingdom is inhabited by Ostrogoths and Romans, who are the heirs of classical culture, whereas savage peoples resembling animals live in the lands beyond the borders[54]. However, the frontier provinces were an intermediate space, since their inhabitants did not fully master the norms regulating a Roman, or rather Post-Roman lifestyle. The provincials of Pannonia tended to settle their disputes by force of arms, while there were «suspect peoples» in Raetia, and Theoderic felt obliged to admonish the provincials living in the Gallic provinces occupied by the Ostrogoths after 510 to follow again «customs clad in a toga» and put aside barbarism and cruelty[55]. The rhetoric of the clear-cut otherness of the barbarians who lived beyond the Ostrogothic borders was useful to legitimate Theoderic's power, but it often clashed with a reality that was difficult to fit into such rigid patterns. Border provinces such as Raetia and Pannonia undoubtedly included a significant component of inhabitants of non-Roman origin, who were often linked by ties of linguistic or ethnic affinity to the populations living on the other side of the border[56]. What Cassiodorus presents as exceptional situations were actually the norm in border areas, where the political frontier rarely coincided with the thin red line that the Court of Ravenna had drawn to separate Roman civilization from barbarism.

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[51] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 48, 2: «ferocious peoples».
[52] Cassiodorus, *Variae* VII, 4, 2: «most ferocious and primitive peoples».
[53] *De rebus bellicis* VI, 1: «imperium Romanum circumlatrantium ubique nationum perstringat insania»; Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* II, 816-817: «Sed tantum distant Romana et barbara, quantum / Quadrupes abiuncta est bipedi, vel muta loquenti». On late antique prejudices against the Barbarians, see e.g. Gillett, *The Mirror*.
[54] On the political communication strategy of Theoderic, see Giardina, *Cassiodoro*, and Arnold, *Theoderic*.
[55] Cassiodorus, *Variae* III, 23, 3; VII, 4, 1; III, 17, 1 («vestimini moribus togatis, exuite barbariem, abicite mentium crudelitatem, quia sub aequitate nostri temporis non vos decet vivere moribus alienis»).
[56] See Gračanin, *Late Antique Dalmatia*, pp. 264-265.

5. *Conclusion*

Borders were an essential component of the Ostrogothic Kingdom from a military, administrative, and ideological perspective. Theoderic had come to Italy by crossing the Alps and was undoubtedly aware that another people might follow in his footsteps, so he paid particular attention to reinforcing the borders of his kingdom with a network of strongholds. Although the garrisons manning these fortresses were small in number, they were still able to guarantee the security of Italy under normal circumstances. During late antiquity, there was endemic conflict in frontier areas, often resulting in raids or acts of banditry unrelated to a specific war. The task of the Ostrogothic garrisons was to prevent such incursions from endangering the northern regions of the peninsula, where many of Theoderic's followers had settled, and from which a significant part of the kingdom's tax revenue came.

Cassiodorus' letters concerning the border provinces show that the governors' military duties outweighed their judicial tasks. The *comites* and *duces* who were entrusted with the defence of these regions had to look after their soldiers in the first place, dealing not only with the distribution of foodstuffs and arms, but also with their morale, since disaffected warriors could easily have crossed the borders and cast in their lot with "barbarian" warlords, if they had not been adequately motivated. This concern indicates that the clear-cut separation between Romans and Goths on the one hand, and the barbarian tribes living north of the Alps on the other, was an ideological construction that often did not correspond to reality, since the border populations possessed many of the traits of the "ferocious peoples" who inhabited the lands beyond the frontiers of the kingdom.

The threat posed by groups of hostile barbarians ready to invade Italy was one of the main justifications for Theoderic's rule over the peninsula, and required a careful strategy of political communication, aimed at emphasising the Romanness of the Ostrogoths and, at the same time, at depicting the peoples living beyond the Alps with all the attributes that were typical of the barbarians in the traditional world-view of late antique authors. To contribute to ensure the stability of the Ostrogothic Kingdom, it was helpful to focus the fears of the population, and especially of the senatorial aristocracy, on a credible threat, which only the Ostrogoths were seemingly able to overcome. To borrow a famous line by Kavafis, the barbarians represented a good solution.

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From passageway to frontier:
the Alps in Carolingian times

by Katharina Winckler

The article focuses on the Carolingian frontiers within the Alps: starting with their origins in Roman times and the changes in the Merovingian era, it focuses on the broader developments of the Carolingian period, when many areas of the Alps were reframed into new spatial entities, such as the Eastern Alps eventually becoming part of the Eastern Frankish kingdom.

Middle Ages; 6th-9th centuries; alpine frontiers; Carolingians; alpine passes; alpine strongholds; alpine roads.

Abbreviations
MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses Maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 6).
MGH, Capit. I = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 1, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883 (MGH, LL).
MGH, Conc. II/1 = *Concilia aevi Karolini (742–842)*, vol. 1*: (742–817)*, ed. A. Werminghoff, Hannover 1906 (MGH, Con., II/1).
MGH, DD Karol. I = *Pippin, Karlmann und Karl der Große*, ed. E. Mühlbacher, Hannover 1906 (Die Urkunden der Karolinger, 1).
MGH, DD Lo I. / Lo II. = *Die Urkunden Lothars I. und Lothars II.*, ed. T. Schieffer, Berlin 1960 (*Die Urkunden der Karolinger*, 3).
MGH, HL = Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. G. Waitz – L. Bethmann, Hannover 1887 (MGH, SS rer. Lang.), pp. 11-187.
MGH, VK = Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Hannover-Leipzig 1911 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 25).
Trad. Fr. = *The Traditions of Freising*, in *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising,* vol. 1: *744–926*, ed. T. Bitterauf, Aalen 1967².

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The Alps appear as a natural boundary that divides the Italian peninsula from the rest of Europe. Yet history tells us that these mountains did not discourage anyone from crossing them. From barbaric tribes to military leaders like Hannibal, Charlemagne or Napoleon, the mountains were a nuisance but not actually a barrier. And it is not by chance that Hannibal lost his eyesight in a winter storm in the Apennines and not in the Alps, which were conceived as less dangerous than the Apennines. The myth of the Alps as a natural frontier is also vivid in Carolingian sources. But even the heroic narrations surrounding Charlemagne's conquest of the Lombard kingdom could not hide the fact that the crossing of the Alps was one of the easiest parts of this conquest. Thus, the image of the Alps as an unsurmountable natural boundary is a *topos* that was used throughout history up until modern times[1].

For day-to-day life and politics, there were numerous options for communication, trade, and for armies to cross the Alps. These passageways were as much shaped by politics and power as by the specific topography of the mountains. It was the control (or loss of control) of these routes that determined the borders running through the Alps. Therefore, a closer look at the specific alpine geography may help us to understand why some frontiers emerged, why some stayed fluid or were fast changing, whereas others did not change for centuries.

In short, and as already observed by the Romans, the Alps are much steeper on their southern slopes[2]. Also, in the western and central parts of the Alps, the summits can reach altitudes of over 4000 metres. In contrast to that, the last ridge of the Eastern Alps stretching 3000 metres and above is the High Tauern, with the mountains east of the Tauern being significantly below that height. As a consequence, one obstacle for trans-alpine travel cannot be found there: the glaciers. The eastern and northern slopes usually fade out into densely wooded hill land. Additionally, the Western Alps are not as wide and broken up as the Alps east of the Raetian passes. This is significant for human traveling: whilst in the west there is just one, generally high, pass to be crossed, in the east there are two or more, lower passes. Thus, the actual time spent in the mountains is lengthened by many days. These natural features, in combination with the cultural factor that was the importance of the Roman and early medieval centres west of the Rhine and in the Rhône valley, meant that the main trans-alpine traffic went over the passes of the Western and Central Alps: the Montgenèvre/Mont Cenis, Great and Little St. Bernard, and the Raetian (Julier, St. Bernadino, Septimer) passes. Further to the east, the Reschen and Brennerpass were also continually used, partly because they

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[1] MGH, VK, 6, p. 9. Desiderius left the alpine *clusae* when he saw that they were not efficient enough to block the Frankish army and preferred to retreat to Pavia. MGH, ARF, p. 36, *ad annum* 773; Winckler, *Die Alpen*, pp. 100-110.
[2] Livy, XXI, 35. For the sake of simplicity, I will call the Italian side of the Alps "southern" although this is not actually true for the Western Alps.

are of such low altitude that the additional crossing of the rainy pre-alpine heights was an acceptable nuisance[3].

In contrast to modern conceptions of the high areas, peaks and ridges of the Alps as being a natural boundary, this perception was not shared by the ancient dwellers of the Alps. They used both sides of a mountain range for their economic sustenance, using the mountain pastures for livestock and as hunting ground. This ranging back and forth across the high ridges of the Alps can be observed from prehistoric times onwards, with the most famous example being the 5,000 year old mummy called Ötzi at the Tisenjoch, at an altitude of 3,200 metres[4]. Therefore, political entities in the Alps tended to extend from the entrance to the Alps to the exit at the other side, with one or more interconnected pass-routes – in German a "pass-system" – between them. This specific alpine political organisation took shape already in antiquity, for example in the realms of king Cottius in the Western Alps, or of the Noricans in the Eastern Alps. Continuing this spatial organisation, the Roman administration of the Alps created many provinces that lay solely in the mountains and wore their respective names: the *Alpes Maritimae*, *Alpes Cottiae*, *Alpes Graiae* and *Poeninae*. In the east, the provinces of Raetia and Noricum at first reached beyond the Alps, over the Bavarian plains up to the Danube. But the late Roman administration changed that and divided both provinces into two parts, with the only the southern part being located in the mountains. Thus, ancient boundaries were usually positioned at the foot of the Alps and not, like in modern times, on their summits. Another factor in this arrangement were the specific geological conditions of the Alps. The southern alpine valleys have steep rock faces, that were much easier to fortify than the (mostly) mellow hills of the central and north-eastern sides. Thus, we find alpine frontiers and frontier fortifications of Roman and early medieval times mainly on the southern slopes of the Alps, at the exits of the main valleys and traffic routes to the Po plains.

Frontiers and realms of the Alps are closely connected with these alpine roads and passes. It is notable that although, generally, Roman roads, especially over the Alps, were still very much in use in Carolingian times, some important alpine connections changed. The sixth and seventh centuries saw the growing importance of the Mont Cenis over the Montgenèvre. In Roman times this connection between the Rhône valley and the Po valley went through the valley of the Durance, past Embrun over the Montgenèvre pass. At some point in the sixth century, due to the increased traffic from and to the Frankish centres in northern Gaul, the Mont Cenis pass became more important and with it the Maurienne valley. One factor for this was the increasing importance of early medieval pilgrimage and other religiously motivated

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[3] Winckler, *Die Alpen*, pp. 62-71 and 114-126.
[4] Gambicorti – Salzer, *Über Gletscher + Grenzen*, pp. 11-12.

travels (for example by bishops) to Rome and further[5]. This had consequences for the economic, political, and ecclesiastical structures in these areas and ultimately also for the borders here (see below). Several Rhaetian passes gained importance for the same reason. It is no coincidence that our knowledge of the use these passes in early medieval times stems from many journeys to Rome by saints and high-ranking officials of the Church. The Great St. Bernard and the Reschen and Brennerpass preserved their importance, although the Brenner route was less used because the road in the narrows of the river Eisack was not usable anymore. Finally, the incursions of Slavs and Avars in the Eastern Alps at the end of the sixth century meant a significant reduction of the traffic on the passes of this part of the mountains.

Man-made factors also shaped the medieval alpine frontiers. One has its roots in Roman times. In the Roman empire important internal frontiers between the toll districts of Illyricum, Gallia and Italia went through the Alps[6]. The Alps were not seen as part of Italia, with a notable exception being Raetia that, according to the late antique order of provinces, was part of the *Italia annonaria*. According to this order, the *Alpes Cottiae* were also part of Italia – but it seems that the position of this province had changed significantly to the southeast, now reaching from the exit of the Alps into the Apennines. Therefore, seemingly, the *Alpes Cottiae* of Late Antiquity were not part of the Alps anymore. This late Roman spatial order of things is curiously re-used by Paul the Deacon, although at the times of his writing the region of Raetia, now parted in Churraetia and Alemannia, had long belonged to Francia[7]. At several points along the main roads crossing the Alps internal tolls very levied, preferably at or near the narrows of the main valleys on the southern side of the Alps. Many of those toll stations lived on in Merovingian and Carolingian times[8]. Therefore, if those stations can be identified, they can serve as a point of reference for the position of early medieval alpine frontiers. For example, the *statio Maiensis* near modern Töll, was located a few kilometres west of Meran[9]. Occasionally, those points were also on the northern side of the Alps, one such example being the monastery of St. Maurice d'Agaune in the Valais, that is, not coincidentally, also positioned at a narrow in an otherwise wide valley[10]. Those narrows proved to be useful for the control of merchants and, later, also for the defence against armies and other intruders. In Late Antiq-

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[5] Cantino Wataghin, *"Luoghi di Strada"*, p. 273, no. 18; Winckler, *Die Alpen*, pp. 127-128.
[6] France, *Quadragesima Galliarum*, pp. 153-156 and 331-336; De Laet, *Portorium*, pp. 144-160 and 177-192.
[7] MGH, HL, II, 15-16, p. 82; Kaiser, *Churrätien*, pp. 19 and 225-228, hypothesizes that the pattern of seventh-century coins found in Curia might mean, that Churraetia temporarily belonged to the Lombard and not the Merovingian "currency-zone".
[8] Kaiser, *Steuer und Zoll*, pp. 4-5, 9.
[9] France, *Quadragesima*, pp. 153-156, 331-336; De Laet, *Portorium*, pp. 153-159; Inscription: < http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:epsg.424 >; < https://edh.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD058369 > (accessed on June 2nd, 2022). Albertoni, *Die Herrschaft des Bischofs*, p. 60.
[10] France, *Quadragesima Galliarum*, pp. 93-96 and pp. 332-334.

uity a new name for the fortified narrows was born: *clusa*, also *claustra* or *clusura*. The late antique Romans used these words for fortifications in the mountains in general, also in areas like the Pyrenees and in South-Eastern Europe. From the early Middle Ages on, it became a widely used, specific term for the fortified narrows in the valleys of the Southern Alps, mostly near or at the borders[11]. The references to these points can thus also serve as an indication for early medieval alpine frontiers.

1. *Early medieval alpine frontiers before 788*

Generally speaking, on many occasions the frontiers consisted of well-defined frontier points, mainly castles and *clusae*. They were surrounded by areas that remain uncertain to us. But we have many local sources which show that, on a local level, the exact extent of the realms seems to have been known precisely. This was especially true in areas where the borders were frequently contested, for example the Bavarian Border, that was positioned at different times in different places in the Vinschgau and the Etsch valley. In the second half of the eighth century Bishop Arbeo of Freising recounts the life of the St. Corbinian in his *Vita Corbiniani*. He tells us that at the beginning of the eighth century St. Corbinian was held by Bavarian guards at the *castrum maiense* (today the so-called Zenoburg in Mais, part of Meran), which means that the fortification was then part of the Bavarian territory. When the saint died a while later in Bavaria, he wished to be buried in the *castrum maiense*, near the body of St. Zeno. When his body was brought there, it was Lombard guards who ruled over this place and, initially, thought of the request as a Bavarian trick to enter the castle. Some years later, at the time of Arbeo, this had changed again, and the castle was back in Bavarian hands[12]. Paul the Deacon confirms this by mentioning in the final sentences of his *Historia Langobardorum* that the Lombards seized many castles in that area[13].

In the context of the border with Bavaria, Paul the Deacon tells another story about alpine frontiers. His account of the marriage of the Bavarian "king's" daughter Theodelinda with the Lombard king Authari reminds one of medieval epic traditions and is largely anecdotal. But Paul includes a remark on how the frontiers of the realms were marked with the symbolic throw of an axe, so that the king marks a tree that stands at the frontier, with the axe being left there[14]. Similarly, and just two chapters after this statement, Paul recounts a *fama* on how Authari defined the border in the south: he touched a pillar with the tip of his spear and said: «Usque hic erunt Langobardorum

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[11] Pohl, *Frontiers*, pp. 118, 123-125; Duparc, *Les cluses* pp. 6-8; Winckler, *Between Symbol of Power*, pp. 114-116.
[12] *Vita Corbiniani* 23, 27, 42-43, pp. 128, 146, 152-153.
[13] MGH, HL, VI, 58, p. 187.
[14] MGH, HL, III, 30, pp. 109-110.

fines»[15]. In such cases, the territory and borders were, on a local level, well-known and defined. Furthermore, in the last two examples, the borders of the realm are marked like property, as defined in many law codes of the time[16].

Yet another source of the time seems to describe a ducal frontier being defined like the marking of property. In 769, the monastery of Innichen was founded on the initiative of the Bavarian duke Tassilo (III). It was positioned at the sources of the Drava in the Puster valley, then the southeasternmost point of the Bavarian duchy. Here, we have a surprisingly precise definition of the frontier to the adjacent Slavic realm: «a rivo quae vocatur Tesido usque ad terminus Sclauorum, id est ad rivolum montis Anarasi»[17]. In this case the frontier of the realm marked at the same time the extent of the property. Here, a stream serves as a well-defined and linear marker – like the *limes certus* against the Avars (see below).

Many alpine monasteries were located at or near the borders – not only the above mentioned Innichen. Sometimes the monasteries even had property beyond the borders. The testament of Abbo, written in 739, records properly that this Frankish noble made a donation of land to the newly founded monastery of Novalesa in the Susa valley. Since Roman times this valley had belonged to Gallia, up until the exit of the valley into the Po-plains. In the testament we read that Abbo also had property «infra regnum Langobardorum» and «infra fines Langobardorum»[18]. We do not know how the monks of Novalesa administered a property that was located beyond the frontier, for example, how they dealt with the tolls and border-controls? A diploma of Carloman of the year 769 frees Novalesa of every sort of toll[19], but this did not refer to the Lombard tolls, that were certainly collected. We know from other sources, that in the eighth century the border points at the major roads over the Alps were kept under close observation by the respective authorities. One famous example are the laws of king Ratchis. How and if these laws were administered is not clear, but sources talk about people being stopped at the Lombard border in the Alps[20]. From the Bavarian side we also see a border management at roughly the same time, again recorded in the *Vita Corbiniani*.

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[15] MGH, HL, III, 32, p. 112.
[16] The *Lex Baioariorum* XIII, 4, p. 113, mentions signs on stones and trees «quae antiquitus constituta sunt».
[17] Trad. Fr., AD 769, no. 34, pp. 61-62.
[18] *The Testament of Abbo*, 8-9, in Geary, *Aristocracy,* p. 44, for property in the Susa valley and the valley of Dubbione, further to the south.
[19] Charter of Carloman, MGH, DD Karol. I, no. 47, pp. 66-67; Castelnuovo, *Les monastères et leurs alpes*, p. 13; Cantino Wataghin, *"Luoghi di Strada"*, p. 282; Ripart, *La Novalaise*, p. 101. The monastery explicitly did not have to pay tolls for their sheep. This hints at a wider-ranging economic activities, maybe even large-scale transhumance, that crossed several administrative borders within the Western Alps.
[20] Pohl, *Frontiers*, pp. 124-126; Albertoni, *La politica alpina*, pp. 55, 60; MGH, ARF, pp. 34-35, *ad annum* 773. According to MGH, ARF, p. 12, *ad annum* 755, King Pippin went over the Alps against King Aistulf of the Lombards, who went to the *Clusae Langobardorum* – however, they (as always) proved to be ineffective.

The *Vita* mentions «auctores montani» who controlled the border in the Vinschgau, near the *castrum maiense*. Those mountain guards accompanied the saint to the border between the Lombard kingdom and the Bavarian duchy. They were also instructed to intercept him in case he wanted to return to Bavaria[21].

In addition to these heightened military activities of Bavarians, Lombards and Franks at the alpine borders, we see a growing interest in gaining control over alpine areas via ecclesiastical institutions at or near the borders. Some rulers used bishoprics and monasteries to administer and to take care of the roads over the passes and in alpine areas. Other bishops aimed to gain control for themselves, excluding the worldly powers as much as possible. One example is the monastery of Bischofshofen. It was founded at the beginning of the eighth century near the border with hostile Slavic groups, maybe the Carantanians, where the road from Salzburg went over the Alps to Italy. The destruction of the monastery by the «vicinis Sclauis» shortly after its foundation indicates the proximity to the frontiers. After this, it stood empty for a time, according to the *Breves Notitiae*, also because of the «imminentes Sclauos et crudeles paganos»[22]. Eventually it was rebuilt and subsequently stood at the centre of a bitter fight between the bishop of Salzburg and the local family of the Albina, who were supported by Duke Odilo[23]. Even under Carolingian rule, when the whole of the Eastern Alps was part of the empire, the dispute between worldly and ecclesiastical powers was still alive – and, surprisingly too, was the old frontier. In the wake of the rise of Liudewit in 820, the monastery was – again – burned down by its Slavic neighbours: «impii Sclavi incendebant hoc monasterium»[24].

2. *Early medieval alpine frontiers after 788*

When Charlemagne started his military campaign against the Lombards in 773, we learn that the fortifications at the narrows of the Southern Alps were no obstacle at all to his advance, although the Lombard rulers, as we just saw, had put much effort in reinforcing them. According to the account of the *Annales regni Francorum*, an envoy of Pope Hadrian met Charlemagne in Francia to ask for help against the Lombards, but he had to use the Mediterranean for his travel. This, for the narrator of the Annals, was not the preferred way, but the envoy had to use the sea because the «viae clausae fuerunt Romanis a Langobardis»[25]. So, we see that although the roads over

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[21] *Vita Corbiniani*, 9, pp. 110, 128; Winckler, *Grenzen*, p. 23; Jahn, *Ducatus,* pp. 388-391.
[22] *Breves Notitiae*, 3.15, p. 92.
[23] Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, pp. 132-135; Štih*, Der heilige Maximilian von Celeia*, pp. 44-50.
[24] Bischoff, *Salzburger Formelbücher*, p. 28.
[25] MGH, ARF, p. 34, *ad annum* 773.

the mountains could block a single person and his/her entourage, there were still enough other options to reach the destination. When Charlemagne decided to act against the Lombards, it became clear that for a whole army the *clusae* were no obstacle. According to the account, Desiderius had fortified the barriers, but Charlemagne stopped his main army before the *clusae* and simply sent troops over another part of the mountains («mittens scaram suam per montanis»). This supposedly brought Desiderius to leave the fortifications – which were now described as being "open"[26].

With the overthrow of Duke Tassilo in Bavaria, the Alps where once again united under one rule, that of Charlemagne. We might wonder what this one rule over all alpine territories meant for the borders within, since they were now interior borders. Yet, on a local level, there does not seem to have been much change: the tolls at the former borders were still levied as before. This is illustrated by a letter of Alcuin to the bishop of Curia: he asks the bishop, a friend, to free his merchant (negotiator) of the tolls «in montium claustris», a reference to the fortifications that were already present in Cassiodorus[27]. The *clusae* were still maintained as military fortifications. As usual, they proved not to be very efficient: when Bernard rose against his royal relatives in 817, according to the *Annales regni Francorum* (which has a strong bias against him), he had command over all the *clusae* – but left the fortifications before the actual fight[28]. In contrast to local interests to maintain the frontiers, Charlemagne, on an imperial level, seems to have worked towards re-arranging the alpine territories as a unifying element and not as an obstacle. Firstly, he strengthened the ecclesiastical control over many alpine roads and border posts, giving much administrative power to alpine monasteries and to some bishoprics like Salzburg[29]. We have already noticed that, well before the rule of the Carolingians, some ecclesiastical institutions of the Alps could accumulate much power by using their position along major transalpine roads. Examples of this are the bishop of Churraetia or the monastery of St. Maurice d'Agaune. But it does not seem that this had been a directed plan of the Merovingians – on the contrary, it appears that this was the result of these churches being far away from the centres of power. In that position, they were able to gain considerable autonomy – too much for the taste of Charlemagne, who restricted the powers of the Churraetian bishop[30].

[26] MGH, ARF (*Annales q.d. Einhardi*), p. 35, *ad annum* 773, p. 37, mention two armies, one over the Great St. Bernard and the other over the Mont Cenis, but does not describe any fight in the mountains at all.

[27] *Alcuini sive Albini Epistolae*, no. 77 (*c*.791–796), pp. 118-119; Cassiodorus, *Variae* VII, 4, p. 203; Ganshof, *Het Tolwezen*, p. 17; Winckler, *Grenzen*, p. 23.

[28] MGH, ARF, p. 147, *ad annum* 817: «iam omnes aditus quibus in Italiam intratur, id est clusas, impositis firmasse praesidiis». Pohl, *Frontiers*, pp. 126-127.

[29] Here, the close relations of Arn with Charlemagne also played a role. Dopsch, *Salzburg,* pp. 35-36.

[30] Kaiser, *Churrätien*, pp. 53-55.

One example of the Carolingian enhancement of the ecclesiastical structures in the Alps is the monastery of Müstair, founded near the summit of a pass in the later eighth century. The legend attributes the foundation to Charlemagne, but it is possible that Duke Tassilo of Bavaria had already initiated the establishing of this monastery. However, we have no sources talking about this, and the buildings date from the Carolingian era[31]. The monastery was positioned at an interior, political (though not ecclesiastical) border between Bavaria and Churraetia, near the summit of the Ofenpass[32]. This was an old, local connection between Curia, the upper Inn valley and the Vinschgau. This connection had gained importance in the ninth century, when traffic between the Rhine valley area north of the Alps and Italy had increased significantly[33]. At the foot of this pass in the Vinschgau at Mals a further church was built. In this church we have a unique fresco of a Carolingian noble and an ecclesiastical church founder, who worked together for this church and, possibly, also the roads connecting the different realms. This Carolingian noble is of very high rank, and Herwig Wolfram presumes that it may even be King Pippin of Italy himself[34]. The connection of the alpine monasteries with worldly powers and transalpine routes is also apparent in the *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum* of 817, in which we see that the monasteries of Mondsee, Kremsmünster and Novalesa, all located at important routes over the Alps, had to deliver *dona et militia*[35].

When Charlemagne decided to divide his empire in 806, the text that records his plan – the *Divisio regnorum* – encapsulates the idea of the connecting Alps. In this regard, the text stands in stark contrast to the other passages and documents that deal with the partitions of the Carolingian empire. In the *Divisio regnorum,* the Alps play a most prominent role, appearing in the very definition of the two kingdoms for Louis and Pippin. Furthermore, the third clause stated explicitly, and in addition to the definitions of the three realms, that the three sons should each have a route to Italy that belongs to their part of the empire: «viam in Italiam quae ad regnum eius pertinent», that is Charles through the Aosta valley and Louis through the Susa valley. Those valleys were also the border zones. Remarkable is the statement that the Aosta valley belongs to the north-alpine realm of Charles, an indication that this idea was possibly disputed at this time. Pippin was explicitly granted the *noric* – that is the Reschen and Brenner – and Churraetian passes, al-

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[31] Some wooden parts are dated by dendrochronology in the late eighth century, Sennhauser, *Kloster Müstair*, pp. 137 and 148-149, sees the «strategisch bedeutende Funktion» (strategical important role) of the monastery mainly in the years around 800, under Charlemagne's rule and as a monastery built to host *missi* and other official travellers.

[32] Kaiser, *Churrätien*, pp. 145-149.

[33] Kaiser, *Churrätien*, pp. 223-228.

[34] Wolfram, *Pippin von Italien*, pp. 249-252.

[35] *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum*, MGH, Capit. I, p. 350.

though they were positioned well within his realm[36]. The realm, that Charlemagne shaped for his son Pippin in this text, that is Bavaria and Italy, including the whole of the Eastern Alps, is obviously inspired by some late antique spatial ideas, either the late Roman praetorian prefecture of *Italia* or its successor, the realm of Theoderic[37]. Pippin's realm lasted only a short time, but we will meet this idea of one realm that reaches from the heartland of Italy far beyond the Alps to the Danube or even the North Sea reoccurring for the next decades. Unfortunately, the idea of keeping the passageways free for the kings to "help their brother" was wishful thinking, and the partition was never fully accomplished as Pippin and Charles both died before their father[38].

After the *Divisio regnorum*, we increasingly find text passages describing alpine frontiers. Additionally, we see the emergence of new frontiers cutting through the Alps. We owe most descriptions of alpine frontiers to disputes: the frontiers within the Carolingian kingdoms were contested not only by the different successors of Charlemagne but also by counts and bishops aiming at extending their power. One example is the re-orientations of the Eastern Alps to the north-alpine realms. In late Roman times, the Eastern Alps were part of the prefecture of *Italia*. But although being part of the Roman empire for almost half a millennium, even in late Roman times the province Noricum was perceived as a somewhat backwards region[39], although the material culture and buildings in the Drava valley and its surroundings prove otherwise. The church structure and building styles show a remarkable richness and demonstrate a cultural attachment to the regions south of the Alps[40]. When the area had become Slavic from the end of the sixth century on, it is again the south, that is Friuli, that first mentions the names of the Slavic groups in this region – the Carantanians and the Crainians. Paul the Deacon speaks of a broad frontier zone running along the Karawanken and the Slovenian Alps[41].

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[36] *Divisio regnorum*, MGH, Capit. I, pp. 126-130: clause 1 for Louis «Morienam, Tarentasiam, montem Cinisium, vallem Segusianam usque ad clusas et inde per terminus Italicorum montium usque ad mare»; clause 2 for Pippin «et inde per Hrenum fluvium sursum versus usque ad Alpes» and clause 4 for Charles «ita ut Karolus et Hluduwicus viam habere possint in Italiam ad auxilium ferendum fratri suo, si ita necessitas extiterit, Karolus per vallem Augustanam, que ad regnum eius pertinent, et Hludowicus per vallem Segusianam, Pippinus veri et exitum et ingressum per Alpes Noricas atque Curiam».

[37] Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume*, p. 158; Albertoni, *La politica alpina*, p. 68; Kaiser, *Churrätien*, pp. 57-58. Furthermore, this idea might have reflected the Lombard influence sphere of the early seventh century, with Bavaria connected to the Lombard kingdom via marriage (Theodelinda). Another connecting element might have been the Aquilean Schism, common in the Church of the Lombard kingdom, Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 69-71. It might have reached over the Alps and included the Bavarian Church.

[38] Fried, *Elite und Ideologie*, pp. 80-82. For the *Divisio Regnorum* see also Kaschke, *Die karolingischen Reichsteilungen*, pp. 298-323.

[39] See, for example, the description of the wild Noricans in Florus, *Epitome Rerum Romanorum*, II, 22, xii; Winckler, *Die Alpen*, pp. 101-102.

[40] Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 68 and 73-74; Wolfram, *Die Goten*, p. 323; Ladstätter, *Die Spätantike*, pp. 345 and 365-368.

[41] Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich* pp. 74-75; Štih, *Carniola, Patria Sclavorum*, pp. 127-128; Winckler, *Raumwahrnehmung*, pp. 43-46; MGH, HL, IV, 37, pp. 130-132.

Around the year 800, after the conquest of the Avar realm, Archbishop Arn of Salzburg, the head of the Bavarian Church, had a vital interest in securing power over these areas. He probably used his influence on Charlemagne to settle a decade-old dispute with the Patriarchate of Aquileia over the ecclesiastical affiliation of this area. In Late Antiquity the patriarch of Aquileia was head of the Church of the valleys of the Eastern Alps, but he could not exercise his power when the region was in the hands of (probably) pagan Slavic rulers. From the beginning of the eighth century on, the Bavarian rulers and, shortly afterwards, the Bavarian bishops, started to extend their power over the alpine regions[42]. And soon, if we believe the account of the so-called *conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, the Salzburgian Church had sent missionaries to the area and was also granted the right over this area by the pope[43]. A dispute between the Churches followed and at the latest when both dioceses became part of one empire, a solution to the problem became necessary. The result was an arbitrary verdict that survives in a charter issued by Charlemagne in June of the year 811[44]. The charter assigned the Eastern Alps north of the Drava to Salzburg, and the part south of the river to the Patriarchate of Aquileia. While Aquileia argued with their ancient rights, it was enough for Salzburg to state that the popes of the mid-eighth century had given the young Church of Salzburg the rights over this area[45]. However, these charters no longer exist. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the popes gave Salzburg the right over a *provincia Carantana*: the name Carantania was not even used at that time in Bavaria and Salzburg, then under the rule of Bishop Virgil, was not yet an archdiocese. This means that either of the older bishoprics of Passau and Säben or Freising, with the frontier-monastery of Innichen, were equally valid candidates for a papal grant over this ecclesiastical territory. It seems quite unlikely that only Salzburg received such a decree. Curiously, no other Bavarian Church has any contemporary discussion about papal decrees dealing with the mission of the Carantanians. All things considered, this argument seems rather questionable.

But the contemporaries were certainly aware of this. So, why was Salzburg able to win Charlemagne over to creating this frontier? The whole arbitrary verdict reflects the situation of the beginning of the ninth century when, at the court in Aachen, the view on those eastern areas changed. A new political situation had emerged after the death of Pippin and made a substantial reshaping of the area possible. This verdict stands in contrast to the order of the Carolingian realms as expressed in the *Divisio regnorum*. It is not a coincidence that the charter was issued not even a year after the death of Char-

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[42] For the sixth and seventh centuries Frankish and Bavarian policy towards the Alps see: Jahn, *Ducatus*, pp. 7-9 and 17-18.
[43] Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 73-74; Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, pp. 276-285.
[44] Charter of Charlemagne, MGH, DD Karol. I, no. 211, p. 282; Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 166-168; Winckler, *Raumwahrnehmung*, pp. 48-51.
[45] Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, p. 284.

lemagne's son Pippin in 810. The highly influential and powerful patriarch of Aquileia, Paulinus, had died in 802[46]. His successor, Ursus, was not able to attend the discussions on the verdict and had to send a representative, his successor Maxentius. As Bishop Ursus died in the same year, in 811, this could mean that Arn pressed for the verdict in a time when the Patriarchate of Aquileia was between leaders. Archbishop Arn and his supporters thus changed the older perception of that territory under King Pippin and the patriarchs of Aquileia. They wanted to re-create a realm based on late Roman models, with the alpine provinces being southward-looking to the Italian peninsula. Yet, after their deaths, the "northerners" won, and the orientation of the Eastern Alps was changed to look towards Bavaria. Perhaps Louis the Pious had already ideas for the realm of his younger son, Louis, later called "the German". We note this in the *ordinatio imperii* of 817, where Louis received the parts north of the Alps including the eastern areas. But it can certainly be seen as a move against Bernard of Italy[47]. The verdict of 811 demonstrates that in Carolingian times borders were newly-drawn regardless of ancient rights or traditions, based on the political influence of the actors and their political purpose. In this case, the goal had been the strengthening of the Salzburgian Church and, ultimately, the influence of the eastern Frankish kingdom over this area.

The *ordinatio imperii* of 817 between Louis the Pious and his sons saw his eldest son Lothar acting as a co-ruler over a realm that extended from the North Sea to the Apennines, with the central part of the Alps in the middle. The text does not mention either the Alps or the passageways anymore. The new shape of the core area of the empire required numerous journeys over the Alps – not only by imperial administrators but also by the rulers themselves. In post-Carolingian times, starting with Otto I, these journeys were to be known as the famous *Italienzüge*. But in the first half of the ninth century such travels were narrated in a matter-of-fact way, with the Alps mostly not even being mentioned – apparently there was no glory in business travels[48]. In contrast to this omission of the Alps, the text names other parts of the empire more precisely, notably the ones in the east, such as Carantania. This area was now part of the realm of Louis "the German". That means that, only six years after the ecclesiastical organisation as expressed in the charter of Charlemagne of 811, the political organisation had followed.

However, on a local level that organisation is not that clearly visible. The local secular administration seems to have remained just as in the times of King Pippin. According to the *Annales regni Francorum* the province of the Carantanians was, as late as in 828, ruled by Balderich, duke of Friuli, and

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[46] He was the only bishop mentioned at the *conventus ad ripas Danubii* that was held in 796 when the Frankish army (under Pippin) went against the Avars – a sure sign that it was he who was seen as the superior to all the bishoprics in the area. *Conventus episcoporum ad ripas Danubii*, MGH, Conc. II/1, p. 176; Wolfram – Diesenberger, *Arn und Alkuin*, p. 87.

[47] *Ordinatio imperii*, MGH, Capit. I, p. 270; Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, p. 184.

[48] For example, in MGH, ARF, p. 165, *ad annum* 824, when Lothar: «in Italiam profectus est».

attached to his duchy[49]. He shared the command over the Bavarian eastern frontiers in Pannonia with Count Gerold of Bavaria[50]. However, the shape and extent of their territory in the east, as well as the exact nature of their co-rulership, is not at all clear and is the subject to many theories[51]. This might be more than just a lacuna in the sources: it seems, that there was also a lack of knowledge (and interest) at the Carolingian court of that time, as reflected in the *Annales regni Francorum*. Explanatory sentences in the text show that knowledge of the administration of these new areas was not common and that the situation in these eastern parts of the realm was even for the contemporaries somewhat confusing[52].

Alternatively, those who knew how painfully small Carolingian influence in the eastern areas really was, might not have talked about this openly. As a consequence, we have sources that express an imperial idea of vastness when describing the eastern frontiers, for example, in the poem by Patriarch Paulinus of Aquileia, celebrating Duke Eric of Friuli after his death in 799[53]. We can assume that Paulinus of Aquileia knew those areas quite well, nevertheless he chose to extend the empire far into the imaginary. The eastern alpine frontiers, as visible in the charters, show an area of influence that was much smaller than anticipated after the victory against the Avars. It probably reached not beyond the area between Bavaria and Carnuntum. This might also have played a role in the deposition of Duke Balderich in 828[54]. The lack of knowledge of the eastern frontiers in the *Annales regni Francorum* is also evident in the description of a campaign against Liudewit in 820: one of the three armies travelled «de Italia per Alpes Noricas» to reach Liudewit's stronghold in Siskia. Usually, this name is used for the Reschen or Brennerpass – see for example in the above mentioned *Divisio Regnorum* of 806. But it is not possible to reach the Save via the Brenner/Reschenpasses when coming from Italy. Therefore, in this context the *Alpes Noricas* can only mean one of the passes that lead into the Carniola and Pannonia via modern Slovenia, most likely the old Roman road *Ad Pirum* (today Hrušica). The paths of the other two armies are narrated quite precisely: one travels from Bavaria along the Danube and through Pannonian swamps to the Drava, and the other through Carantania, along the Drava and then further on to the Danube at Siskia, where all three armies meet[55].

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[49] MGH, ARF, p. 174, *ad annum* 828.

[50] MGH, ARF, p. 143, *ad annum* 824, the emperor sent a count: «ad Baltricum et Geroldum comites et Avarici limites custodes in Carantanorum provincia», Wolfram, *Conversio,* pp. 168-173; Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 192-197.

[51] This uncertainty is visible in the different modern cartographical visualisations of this area – mostly, the eastern frontier is positioned far in the east, at the Danube Bend. When reading the sources, it seems unlikely that any Frankish official ever went that far.

[52] MGH, ARF, p. 118, *ad annum* 819: in this year Balderich goes to Carantania: «quae ad ipsius curam pertinebat».

[53] Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 153-158, esp. p. 157.

[54] MGH, ARF, p. 174, *ad annum* 828. Wolfram, *Conversio*, pp. 182 and 262-266.

[55] MGH, ARF, pp. 152-153, *ad annum* 820. Krahwinkler*, Friaul*, pp. 189-190.

An insufficient understanding of the Carolingian realms and its frontiers was shown even by Lothar himself: two different sources narrate that, in course of the planning of yet another division of the empire in 839, Lothar asked someone else to define his part because he did not know the territories of the empire[56]. This story was used to enhance the negative image of Lothar that runs consistently through the texts – but nevertheless, it was deemed believable for the audience. Regarding the south-east of the empire, it probably was the uprising of Liudewit against the Carolingian rulers that finally spread local knowledge of the territory and frontiers to the Carolingian "headquarters". After this event, the descriptions and affiliations of the region become less nebulous in the sources. According to them, it seems that in 828 the worldly re-orientation of the Eastern Alps to the North was completed. The south-eastern regions of the empire were divided into four parts, with the Eastern Alps being assigned to Bavaria[57].

In other areas of the Alps old associations also changed. Churraetia was already from the seventh century on attached to the Merovingian realms, albeit loosely. But ecclesiastical affiliation from Milan to Mainz only changed in Carolingian times, at the latest in 843[58]. As indicated above, the Western Alps consisted, in Roman times, of the provinces *Alpes Maritimae* as well as the *Alpes Graiae* and *Poeninae*, that were in the later empire part of the praetorian prefecture of Gallia. The attachment of the *Alpes Cottiae* is not that clear, because late antique lists of provinces view this province (like Raetia) as part of Italia. However, the province seems to have not been within the Alps anymore, but to have consisted mainly in the north-western part of the Apennines[59]. According to Roman inscriptions, the toll district of Gallia had ended at the exit of the Susa valley to the plains of the Po[60]. Early medieval sources mostly see the area as belonging to Merovingian Gallia, as expressed most prominently in Abbo's testament, where the *limites Italiae* also lie at the exit of the Susa valley[61]. We already wondered what the monks of Novalesa did with the revenue of the property beyond the borders in the Lombard kingdom, as they presumably had to pay the tolls to the Lombard kings. An indication that this was an issue is visible in a peculiar succession of charters. In 773 Charlemagne as *rex Francorum* confirmed the *immunitas* of the monastery for property «in regno nostro», that is, in Francia[62]. Only six years lat-

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[56] Nithard, *Historiarum libri III*, I, 7, p. 11: «ignorantia regionum», and Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, 60, p. 530: «propter ignorantiam locorum».
[57] For Liudewit see Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 186-192. According to the *Annales regni Francorum* in 828, Duke Balderich was deposed and the eastern march «inter quartuor comites divisa est», Krahwinkler, *Friaul,* pp. 194-197; Wolfram, *Conversio*, p. 182 and esp. pp. 262-266.
[58] Kaiser, *Churrätien*, pp. 13, 58 and 101-103.
[59] *Laterculus Veronensis*, in *Geographi Latini minores,* pp. 127-128. A reminiscence of this survives in MGH, HL, II, 16, p. 82, see note 7 of this article.
[60] France, *Quadragesima Galliarum*, pp. 326-328.
[61] Although ecclesiastically that was not clear, see below.
[62] MGH, DD Karol. I, no. 74 (773 III 25), p. 107.

er, in 779, after the conquest of the Lombard kingdom, a confirmation of the *immunitas* was issued. But this time, Charlemagne was also «rex Francorum et Langobardorum» and in the text he explicitly included Italy into the immunity: «infra regna deo propicio nostra Franciae, Italiae»[63]. The *immunitas* for the Italian parts of the empire was only the first step towards a wider change that associated the whole Susa valley up to the summit of the Mont Cenis to the kingdom of Italy. A first hint for this is a charter of the year 825, issued by Lothar for Novalesa. It deals with the building of a hospice at the summit of the Mont Cenis, by order of Louis the Pious. The hospice was endowed with property that belonged to Novalesa and, as compensation, Novalesa received the monastery of Pagno, located in the kingdom of Italy[64]. Another charter of 845, again by Lothar for Novalesa, concerned the valley of Bardonecchia. It stated that the *comes* of Turin was responsible for some criminal cases[65]. This verifies the assumption that the valley and the monastery now belonged to the kingdom of Italy. So, these frontiers were, quite uniquely for the time, positioned near or at a mountain pass, but still within economically usable land, and not on the high ridges[66]. In 845 another charter issued by Lothar confirms the exemption of all kinds of tolls for the monastery. Here, the position near the frontier fortifications is defined with one specific term for a duty that was levied at the narrows, the *clusaticum*[67]. Significantly Joseph, the abbot of Novalesa, was at the same time bishop of Ivrea (844-855), a bishopric that lies at the exit of the Aosta valley near a *clusa* – he might have been an expert on what we would call today "frontier management".

The situation in the Western Alps is complicated further by the complex history of the affiliation of the bishop's seat in St. Jean de Maurienne. This bishopric lies in a valley to the west of the Mont Cenis in Frankish territory, and was disputed between the (arch-) bishops of Vienne, the Tarentaise and Turin from Merovingian times on – not least because of the passes of Mont Cenis and Montgenèvre that were claimed by their respective bishops[68]. In the times of Gregory of Tours, the association of the Maurienne seems to have

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[63] MGH, DD Karol. I, no. 125 (779 V 23), p. 175. The monastery of St. Denis was faster: already on March 14, 775 it was exempt from the tolls that were levied at the cluses: «telloneo nullo exclusatico infra regna Francia et Italia»: MGH, DD Karol. I, no. 93, p. 134; Ganshof, *Het Tolwezen*, pp. 11-12.

[64] MGH, DD Lo I. / Lo. II., no. 4 (825 II 14, Marengo, in Italy), pp. 60-62; Ripart, *La Novalaise*, p. 106; Cantino Wataghin, *"Luoghi di strada"*, pp. 293-294.

[65] MGH, DD Lo I. / Lo II., no. 92 (845 X 10, Aachen), p. 225: the *immmunitas* is explicitly limited, for cases of criminal justice had, according to the charter, to be handled by the count of Turin «pro criminalibus culpis de quibus sacerdotis et monachis non est Licitum iudicare, [...] Unde volumus ut [...] veniant ante comitem in civitate Taurinis».

[66] *Chronicon Novaliciense* for AD 972, p. 122: «fere alpes Sigusiae civitatis quae est confinis Italiae»; Ripart, *La Novalaise,* p. 104.

[67] MGH, DD Lo I. / Lo II., no. 91 (845 VI 14, Aachen), p. 223.

[68] Mazel, *L'évêque*, p. 186.

been with the see of Turin[69]. The dispute ended in 794 when, in an attempt to solve this problem, at the council of Frankfurt, a new diocese was created: the Tarentaise. It had three suffragans, the Maurienne, Aosta and Sion. The archbishopric of Embrun was also reinstated, after its disappearance in Merovingian times[70]. But even after this solution was put in place, the frontiers remained unstable for the next centuries[71].

The power struggles between the various Carolingian kings in the following decades saw a frequent change in the association of alpine territories with the different kingdoms. But although the borders between the kingdoms ran directly through the mountains, and in contrast to the text of 806, the Alps were never specifically mentioned again. That means that the exact locations of those alpine territories and their borders is not known, although, at least in the main valleys, they seem to have been known to the local rulers fairly precisely. Alas, most charters of that time do not provide exact descriptions. Due to the transmission through later copies, some charters carry interpolations that are difficult to interpret. To present an example: in 824 Lothar issued a charter confirming various rights to the Church of Como. However, the remarks about the tolls and *clusae* of Chiavenna are, according to the editor of the MGH edition, Theodor Schieffer, a later interpolation[72].

3. *Conclusion*

On a local and regional level, in the first half of the ninth century, some areas of the Alps changed their political and cultural orientation for good. The most prominent example is the Eastern Alps with the *provincia Carantania*, that was attached to the north-alpine realm of Louis "the German"[73]. Here, local ambitions had separated the region both from the late antique order of space that connects Noricum with Illyricum and Italia, and the early medieval one, when it looked southwards to the duchy of Friuli and south-eastwards towards the Slavic polities. The change in orientation took some decades and was only finalised after the uprising of Liudewit in 820 and the deposition of Duke Balderich, apparently because of his inabilities to exercise Carolingian authority in the south-eastern areas of the Empire. Due to the strong interest of Louis the German in this area, and the weak rulers of the kingdom of Italy, the area became a confirmed part of Eastern Francia. We can see similar

[69] Gregory of Tours tells us in his *Liber in Gloria martyrum*, c. 13, pp. 47-48, that the Maurienne belonged to the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Turin. Cantino Wataghin, *"Luoghi di strada"*, pp. 271-272, no. 14.
[70] *Concilium Francofurtense* a. 794, MGH, Conc. II/1, p. 167.
[71] Mazel, *L'évêque*, pp. 39, 81-83 and esp. pp. 198-200; Poole, *The See of Maurienne*, p. 3.
[72] MGH, DD Lo I. / Lo II., 824, pp. 54-59. See also a similar charter for the rights of Como in DD Karol. I, no. 202, p. 271.
[73] For Churraetia: Kaiser, *Churrätien*, pp. 13-14.

disputes in the Central and in the Western Alps, although there the disputes lingered on even after Carolingian times.

On an imperial level, the idea of one realm extending far beyond the Alps to the north and to the south was prevalent in early-ninth century Carolingian ideas of the shape of the empire's core area. One of the last implementations of this idea is in the treaty of Verdun in 843, when the middle part ruled by the emperor, Lothar, extended from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, with the Alps in the centre. Supposedly, these spatial ideas had their roots in the Carolingian interpretation of a Roman order of space, where the Alps were also located in the (geographical) centre of the empire. They were perceived as a passageway and a connecting element. Ultimately, such a kingdom expanding from the North Sea or the Danube to the Apennine and beyond, proved not to be administrable. One reason is that the regional particularism in the Alps was very strong, a development that saw local rulers (re-)gain strength and even royal honour. But it is also due to the fact that, though the Alps are not a barrier, they are an obstacle that makes quick travel impossible, for both natural as well as human reasons. If one passageway is blocked, it is possible to use another one, but this detour normally takes significantly more time and effort. Furthermore, the administration of mountainous areas, as well as their economic structures, are fundamentally different from those of other areas of Europe and therefore administered best by locals. This resulted in the development of administrative units that – like in Roman times – usually stretched from one entrance to the Alps to the exit, thus covering one area of connected passages over the mountains. In this way, the whole Alps became a border zone that was broken up in several administrative subdivisions – a development that gained momentum in the later Middle Ages with the appearance of so-called pass-states. These polities owed their existence to the position on a main route over the Alps and their frontiers were drawn at the point where the routes left the Alps to enter the flat lands[74]. Thus, after the Carolingians, the imperial policy changed: it became more important and efficient for the crossing of the Alps politically to control these territories than to organise and control fortifications and frontier posts directly.

[74] For the term see Seelmann, *«… zu einer Bestendigen»,* p. 57, esp. note 7 for the term. Early examples are Curia and Carantania, later Savoy, Tyrol, Salzburg and, finally, Switzerland.

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Serving two masters. Istria between Venice and the Franks in the 8ᵗʰ and 9ᵗʰ centuries

by Annamaria Pazienza

The essay is divided into two parts. The first part portrays the Upper Adriatic, from Ravenna and Venice to the coastal towns in Istria and Dalmatia, as a unified peripheral area. Despite the shifting political context, the socio-cultural composition of the local communities shows similar features because of the ecology of the region and its common Byzantine legacy. Simultaneously, the institutional apparatus demonstrates a high degree of hybridization with the political regimes in the mainland. Some considerations about the impact of international policy on the area are made here. The relevance of the Treaty of Aachen is rethought, and the internal fights for power of the emerging Venetian elites are explained in the light of the building-process of an independent duchy where the control for strategic local resources was a priority. Drawing on older and newer literature, the second part describes the multiple connections between the newly established Venetian political entity and the Istrian peninsula. Patrimonial, commercial and institutional links are considered, and the twofold administrative dependency of Istria from the Church of Grado, i.e., the metropolitan see of Venice, and the Lombard and Frankish rulers is reviewed. What emerges is the agency of an unruly Istrian aristocracy and, above all, the on- and off- control exerted by the Carolingians. In this frame, and in the frame of the above-mentioned Venetian-Istrian connections, the essay moves on to considering the enigmatic figure of the duke John of the Plea of Rižana. In contrast to the traditional interpretation, set of evidence is provided in support of the thesis of his local origin. Even more so, the brand-new hypothesis that he might have come from the nearby duchy of Venice is put forward for future debate.

Middle Ages; 9ᵗʰ century; Italy; Venice; Istria; Carolingians; duke John; Plea of Rižana.

Abbreviations
Documenti = *Documenti relativi alla storia di Venezia anteriori al mille*, ed. R. Cessi, 2 vols, Venezia 1991 (Testi e documenti di storia e di letteratura latina medioevale, 1, 3).
IV = Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, ed. L.A. Berto, Milano 1997 (Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, 2).

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MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ, 6).

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1. *Introduction*

In a previous work about the sources of the mid-eleventh-century *Istoria Veneticorum* by John the Deacon, I demonstrated that the chronicler was likely aware of the Plea of Rižana and other documents to which, as they were housed in the patriarchal archives, he had free access[1]. Likely dated to 804, and set in an unknown locality in Istria, the *Placitum* is well known, and there is no need here to present it in its totality. It concerns a dispute involving Istrian people, the local bishops and the Frankish representative present, i.e., a certain duke John. John is the main defendant in the court case wherein local inhabitants make several hateful allegations against him.

John the Deacon's knowledge of the *Placitum* is indirectly confirmed by his harsh statement about the rulership of the Venetian duke John Galbaio. The author seldom interrupts the narrative to speak out in the first person, and therefore, the passage under scrutiny is quite unique. It reads as follows: «quem (i.e., John Galbaio) neque scripto neque relatione experti sumus suae patriae commode bene tractasse», where – as I argued – the hint at the written documentation must be read as a reference to the Plea, and the poor opinion concerning the duke's deeds as a case of mistaken identity. In other words, John the Deacon would have misinterpreted the sources at his disposal, confusing the duke John of the Plea of Rižana with the duke of Venice, John Galbaio.

Building on this, and questioning my previous conclusions, in this essay I wish to verify whether John the Deacon was actually right, and if the two Johns were, therefore, the same person. To this purpose, I will analyse first the features of the Upper Adriatic as a whole, and the impact of Charlemagne's policy on this peripheral area. I will then continue by focusing on the political developments of Venice and Istria which, although dissimilar in many ways, show a common thread, because of the economic and administrative interests of Venice in Istria, as well as the simultaneous but precarious control exerted on this latter by the Franks. Finally, I will conclude by showing how such a political situation transformed Istria into an actual political laboratory and

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[1] Pazienza, *Archival Documents as Narrative*.

a liminal area between two powers, i.e., into a scenario in which my working hypothesis can gain ground and take form.

2. *Commonality and hybridization in the Upper Adriatic*

In recent years, our understanding of the history of early medieval North-Eastern Italy has been revised based on the study of archaeological finds and a fresh critical interpretation of traditional written sources. A new vision of the entire area, stretching from Ravenna to Zadar, and embracing Venice and the Istrian peninsula, has found itself at the centre of scholarly debate. This revolves around two major aspects: a wider super-regional Adriatic identity formed beyond the shifting political borders, and the profound influence exerted on local societies by the institutional developments of the Italian mainland.

The identity linking the settlements scattered throughout the Upper Adriatic was self-perceived as much as it was acknowledged by external observers. As Francesco Borri points out, its foundation was grounded in a few central elements: first, the links between the local elites and Constantinople; and second, the dual economic nature of their wealth, derived from extensive landholdings and the maritime trade alike[2]. The link with Constantinople was engendered through the several non-commercial trips taken by Istrians, Dalmatians and Venetians to the eastern capital. Frequently attested in our sources, these trips served to obtain imperial dignities and titles. Personal honours, such as *tribunus, ypatus, spatharius*, were powerful tools of prestige and power, in the same way personal wealth was. Like their peers on the Italian peninsula, Adriatic aristocrats possessed fields and vineyards, but also marshes and swamps plus the facilities for fishing and hunting sea animals and the production of salt. Above all, they were used to own ships and boats. The experience of seafaring and raising a crew, along with the ecology of certain lagoon environments, were instrumental in shaping a commonality marked by a strong sense of belonging[3].

An interesting example of this commonality comes from archaeology, which records a specific funeral habit widespread across the area, but absent simultaneously in the neighbouring territories in Friuli. Sarcophagi and tombstones dating to the eighth and ninth century have been obtained from several sites in the Venetian lagoon (Torcello, Sant'Ilario, Jesolo, Murano, and Venice itself), further south in Ravenna and to the East in the Istrian-Dalmatian region. These are similar in shape and decorations and employ the

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[2] Borri, *"Neighbors and Relatives"*; Borri, *Gli Istriani e i loro parenti*, and again Borri, *Dalmatian Romans and their Adriatic Friends.*
[3] Gasparri, *Une communauté à la fois maritime et territoriale*, and Borri, *The Waterfront of Istria.*

local Istrian stone[4]. While there is no direct evidence for the reopening of the Istrian-Dalmatian quarries in this period, the hypothesis is reasonable enough, especially in the light of the enduring relation between Ravenna and Dalmatia on one hand[5], and Venice and Istria on the other[6]. As I will point out in detail later, even after the political disruption of the old Roman province of the *Venetia et Histria* in the aftermath of the Lombard (768?)[7] and Frankish conquest (788?-791)[8], the Venetian-Istrian connections never vanished[9].

Art and craftsmanship, on the other hand, also testify to the many similarities to the general northern Italian cultural backdrop. This is the case of residential constructions, which show many parallels, and even more so of glazed pottery. In the ninth and tenth centuries, Constantinople was the production centre of a type of ceramic ware associated with urban elites and known as Glazed White Ware. This type of pottery is very rare in the Upper Adriatic, where instead imported tableware produced in the North-East of Italy does appear for the same period and up until the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The cultural shock brought about by the Byzantine bride of the Venetian duke using forks at dinner is revealing of the distance from the eastern customs, at least in the domestic sphere and everyday life[10]. Indeed, notwithstanding the already mentioned ideological attachment to Constantinople as a source of prestige, institutional developments are largely paralleled between the Upper Adriatic and the rest of Northern Italy. Specifically, these include the relevance of the local civic assembly which emerges in both territories from the ninth century onwards[11]; and the founding and endowing of monasteries, which is adopted in the lagoon and continued in Istria as a tool of social distinction and patrimonial management in the traditional Carolingian way[12].

The twofold nature of the political and economic makeup of the Venetian and Istrian aristocracy and the society at large must be ascribed to the dense network of contacts extended across the shores of the Adriatic, and from here towards the kingdom of Italy and beyond[13]. This connectivity was nourished by the high mobility of people and commodities travelling for political and

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[4] Gelichi, *Venice in the Early Middle Ages*, and Gelichi – Ferri – Moine, *Venezia e la laguna tra IX e X secolo*.

[5] Brown, *Ravenna and Other Early Rivals of Venice*.

[6] See further below in the text.

[7] Apparently, the Lombard occupation of the area was ephemeral. On this, see Margetić, *Sul passaggio del potere sull'Istria da Bisanzio ai Franchi*, and Ferluga, *L'Istria tra Giustiniano e Carlo Magno*.

[8] Many uncertainties exist about the timing of the Frankish conquest. For an overview of the surviving evidence see Štih, *L'Istria agli inizi del potere franco*.

[9] De Vergottini, *Venezia e l'Istria*.

[10] The anecdote is narrated by Peter Damian, who learnt it – as he himself states – from «a truthful and upright man». The passage is commented by La Rocca, *Foreign Dangers*, pp. 412-415.

[11] Gasparri, *Venezia fra l'Italia bizantina e il regno italico*.

[12] Gasparri, *I testamenti nell'Italia settentrionale*, and Rapetti, *Il doge e i suoi monaci*.

[13] West-Harling, Venecie due sunt, and Gasparri, *Un placito carolingio*, where the agrarian and mercantile nature of settlements like Comacchio and Venice is highlighted.

diplomatic reasons, as well as for daily affairs. Written sources are extremely telling here. To begin with, one can mention the biography of Fortunatus II (802-825/826), patriarch of Grado, whose episcopate was marked by frequent and prolonged absences and sojourns abroad. In 803 he was at Charlemagne's court at Salz; from 806 until 810 or 811 he was at Pula; around 814 or 815 he was in *Francia* again; in 821 in Constantinople and in 824 he died in *Francia*[14]. It is worth recalling then the *Pactum Lotharii* in 840[15], where the movement of men and livestock throughout the border towns of Cittanova-Eraclea, Caorle and Grado is a main concern, being the subject of detailed regulation in relation to the grazing rights and the exploitation of woodland and natural resources by the local inhabitants[16]. The *Pactum* give us a glimpse of what was an agrarian society deeply interpenetrated, despite the political-military borders separating the duchy of Venice and the Lombard and later Carolingian kingdom of Italy[17].

This mutual penetration becomes especially clear when one looks at the coexistence of titles and honours which may be ascribed to both political contexts. In 819 the older Venetian archival document handed down to us records some gastalds, i.e., minor officials traditional of the Lombard apparatus, acting in the lagoon territory as public representatives of the duke. It is the donation made by *dux* Agnellus Particiaco (810/811-827/828)[18] to the monks of San Servolo. Agnellus endowed the monks with a plot of land on which to build the new monastery of Sant'Ilario and granted them immunity in order to prevent ducal gastalds from «inquietare vel molestare aut in angaria mittere aut exenia aliqua (...) exigere»[19]. The donation was drawn up by Demetrius *tribunus*, while another *tribunus* underwrites the document as a witness. In the sixth century tribunes were imperial public officials in charge of the local army and, although by the time of the donation they had lost their

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[14] Rando, *Fortunato*; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, pp. 255-258; Berto, *In Search of the First Venetians*, pp. 425-431, and Marano*, Le fortune di un patriarca*.

[15] *Pactum Lotharii*, no. 233, pp. 130-135, and *Documenti*, I, no. 55, pp. 101-108. See Gasparri, *Venezia fra i secoli VIII e IX*; Moro, *Venezia e l'Occidente nell'alto medioevo*, and more generally West, *Communities and Pacta in Early Medieval Italy*.

[16] *Documenti*, I, no. 55, p. 107: «28. Peculiarumque vestrarum partium greges pascere debeat cum securitate usque in terminum, quem posuit Paulitius dux cum Civitatinis novis, sicut in pacto legitur, de Plave maiore usque in Plavem siccam, quod est terminus vel proprietas vestra. 29. Caprisani vero in silva, ubi caulaverunt, in fines Foroiulianos semper faciant reditum, et eam capulent, sicut ante capulaverunt. 30. Et stetit, ut Gradensi civitate secundum antiquam consuetudinem debeat dare reditum et capulas facere, ubi antea fecerunt, in fines Foroiulianos, sicut antiquitus fecistis».

[17] On the nature of the inner borders of early medieval Italy: Gasparri, *La frontiera in Italia*, and again Gasparri, *La frontiera in età longobarda*.

[18] Pozza, *Particiaco, Agnello*; Berto, *In Search of the First Venetians*, pp. 318-319.

[19] The donation, known for being the older Venetian archival document handed down to us, although as a late copy, is published in *Ss. Ilario e Benedetto*, no. 1, pp. 5-17. See also *Documenti*, I, no. 44, pp. 71-75.

military and public functions, their presence in 819 as local elites testifies to the vitality of the Byzantine legacy in the duchy[20].

After the ninth century, however, tribunes are no longer mentioned in Venetian written records, showing their final socio-political disappearance, as well as their biological extinction. On the other hand, tribunes are still present in Istria in the ninth and tenth century, therefore, well after the Frankish conquest of the peninsula. This can be shown in the will of the nun Maru, drawn up in Trieste in 847, where the brother of the nun, named John, and a second John *de Petro*, who both underwrite the charter, hold the title[21]. Finally, the will's writer is a certain Domenicus *tabellio*. This is an occupational identity which, often recorded in Rome and in *Romania* where imperial tradition survived longer than elsewhere, is normally absent in a Carolingian cultural context[22].

3. *Rethinking the Treaty of Aachen and its local outcomes*

All in all, this portrayal of the Upper Adriatic as a unified and hybrid entity fits perfectly into the current research on borderlands. In contrast to Turner's essentialist approach, recent scholarship emphasizes the relational spaces constituting the frontiers. Accordingly, these are now understood as "contact zones"[23], "zones of indistinction"[24] or "zones of interpenetration"[25] between two or several social orders[26]. Far from being neutral, contact zones are frequently characterized by a high degree of violence. The literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt first introduced the concept in 1991, within the framework of colonial studies. According to Pratt, contact zones are «social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power»[27]. The primary notion of frontiers as places of cultural encounters thus goes hand in hand with the idea of places of power-contest and inequality, where social players face each other over the management of people and resources[28].

The control and management of resources is the traditional explanation for the growing interest demonstrated by Charlemagne in the Upper Adriatic

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[20] On tribunes, see Castagnetti, *La società veneziana*, pp. 66-89. A systematic survey of this title has been undertaken by Berto, *In Search of the First Venetians*, pp. 379-380.

[21] The will, known for being the older original charter preserved in the State Archives of Venice, is edited in Migliardi O'Riordan, *Per lo studio di una cartula testamenti*.

[22] For a comment on Maru's will, see Borri, *L'Istria tra Bisanzio e i Franchi*, pp. 313-315.

[23] The idea of contact zones is outlined by Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

[24] The theory of indistinction and indistinctiveness is a key concept of Giorgio Agamben's though, for which see Agamben, Homo sacer. See also: Korf – Hagmann – Doevebspeck, *Geographies of Violence*, p. 40.

[25] Thompson – Lamar, *Comparative Frontier History*, p. 7.

[26] Hughes, *From Enslavement to Environmentalism*.

[27] Pratt, *Arts of the Contact Zone*, p. 34.

[28] Schetter – Müller-Koné, *Frontiers' Violence*.

after his coronation as emperor; an interest that – it goes without saying – led to the direct confrontation with his eastern counterpart and to the final compromise agreed upon in 812 in the Treaty of Aachen[29]. The text of the Treaty has not survived, but its content is known in general terms. In exchange of the recognition of the imperial title and Istria, Charlemagne agreed to let Venice remain under the sphere of influence of Byzantium. Although, as I have pointed out elsewhere, the question of the maritime breakthrough of Venice in this early phase is still open (*pace* McCormick)[30], there is no doubt that already in this period the Upper Adriatic was a dynamic and strategic area – if not for long-distance trade, at least regionally as a gateway connecting the heartland of Western Europe to the Po Plain and further afield to Africa and the Aegean Sea. This is demonstrated by the distribution pattern of ceramics in the first place and, secondly, by the economic relevance of Comacchio as a major *emporium* already in the eighth century[31].

Nevertheless, preoccupation with controlling resources must be reassessed. A rereading of the *Annales regni Francorum* that I undertook with Francesco Veronese reveals how the imperial status had mattered to Charlemagne even more than details about territorial borders[32]. And apparently the Treaty left precise demarcations unclear. Still in 817 the arrival of a Byzantine embassy had the goal of negotiating borders in Dalmatia. The complexity of dealing with them is then suggested by Louis the Pious' acknowledgement that this could only be done on the spot, using the expertise of locally based individuals[33]. The competition over borders and resources, on the other hand, seems to have been central in local political developments. Since the outbreak of the iconoclastic crisis, international issues had profound impacts on imperial peripheries like Venice[34]. It is believed that the first independent Venetian duke, Orso, was elected in 726 or 727 at the time of the general uprising of Byzantine Italy against the Emperor Leo III, a supporter of the iconoclastic heresy[35]. For the occasion, the armies of Byzantine Italy, including the *exercitus Venetiarum,* rebelled and elected autonomous dukes. Also, around 735 the Venetian fleet drove the Lombards away from Ravenna, the capital of the Exarchate, which had been occupied[36]. These were crucial years, marking a divide in the political history of the old Roman province of *Venetia et*

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[29] On the Treaty of Aachen see the contributions in the recent book *Imperial Spheres and the Adriatic.*

[30] Pazienza, *Venice beyond Venice.*

[31] Bibliography is vast, see the newly published book *Un emporio e la sua cattedrale.*

[32] Pazienza – Veronese, *Pipino e la questione veneziana.*

[33] Ančić, *The Treaty of Aachen.*

[34] Gasparri, *The Government of a Peripheral Area.*

[35] Gasparri, *Anno 713. La leggenda di Paulicio*, and Gasparri, *The First Dukes.*

[36] As attested by several sources. These are the *Istoria Veneticorum* by John the Deacon (*IV*, II, 12, pp. 98-100); the *Historia Langobardorum* by Paul the Deacon (Paul the Deacon, *Historia*, VI, 54, pp. 183-184), and two letters of Pope Gregory II or III, one to the duke of Venice (MGH, Epp. lang., no. 11, p. 702) and one to the patriarch of Grado (MGH, Epp. lang., no. 12, p. 702, and *Documenti*, I, no. 26, pp. 40-41). Some scholars believe that the first letter is a forgery.

Histria. Although the evidence for the administrative unity of the province in the eighth century is very weak, we are sure that from this moment on Istria and Venice would take different paths, with Istria under the distant authority of Byzantium first, and then under the tentative control of western rulers, and Venice under the power of local dukes who consolidated its position as an independent political entity[37].

Around 800, according to a well-established historiographical tradition, Charlemagne's interest in the newly formed political entity did cause the splitting up of the Venetian *exercitus* (the army, meaning the people) into a pro- and an anti-Frankish faction. This was followed by a prolonged period of internal fights in the years around the Treaty of Aachen. Events are well known[38]. It is worth reiterating, however, that interpreting them in the light of the pro- or anti- Frankish paradigm is misleading. The shift from one alleged faction to the other of the protagonists involved, first and foremost the patriarch Fortunatus, shows its inconsistency. Traditionally labelled as pro-Frankish, Fortunatus fought the dukes Maurice and John Galbaio of the opposite side, and was then opposed by his former supporters, the new dukes Obelerio and Beatus, often labelled pro-Frankish too. Interestingly enough, the breakup with Obelerio and Beatus was caused by Fortunatus' project of giving back the episcopal see of Olivolo to Christopher, one of the exiled aristocrats who had left Venice as a result of the conspiracy organized by himself[39]. Contingency and internal local dynamics seem more reasonable explanations. As Chiara Provesi suggests, the conflicting patrimonial interests of local elites in the area of the Veneto hinterland must be counted amongst them. This was a key area crossed by waterways of strategic importance for communications and traffic[40].

After all, the pro- and anti-Frankish paradigm has been proved to be inconsistent even in areas of art and architecture. A new interpretation of the ninth-century medieval fragments of a ciborium in Istrian stone from the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie of Grado makes this clear. The fragments with "Carolingian-style" decoration are traditionally attributed to Fortunatus because of his alleged pro-Frankish sympathies. However neither his famous will[41] nor the *Istoria Veneticorum*[42] mention a ciborium as part of Fortunatus'

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[37] Borri, *L'Istria tra Bisanzio e i Franchi*, p. 302.
[38] Events are narrated differently by two sources, the *Annales regni Francorum* and the *Istoria Veneticorum*. Scholars have tried to reconstruct what really happened several times. On this see Berto, *La* Venetia *tra Franchi e Bizantini*, and Borri, *L'Adriatico tra Bizantini, Longobardi e Franchi*.
[39] *IV*, II, 22-29, pp. 106-115; see also Ortalli, *Il ducato e la '*civitas Rivoalti*'*.
[40] Provesi, *Il conflitto tra Coloprini e Morosini: una storia di fiumi* and Provesi, *Disputes and Connections*.
[41] The edition with a commentary of the text is in Brunettin, *Il cosiddetto testamento del patriarca*. A new edition with commentary and an Italian translation is now provided by Yuri Marano in Marano*, Le fortune di un patriarca*, pp. 98-101 (edition); pp. 102-104 (translation); pp. 105-163 (commentary). See also *Documenti*, I, no. 45, pp. 75-78.
[42] *IV*, II, 28, pp. 112-113.

renovation works in the church. As far as we know, Santa Maria delle Grazie was indeed furnished with a new ciborium by John II (806-810)[43], who was patriarch of Grado during the exile of Fortunatus in Pula. Thus, as Magdalena Skoblar has put it, «to attribute the Istrian stone ciborium with Carolingian-style decoration to patriarch Fortunatus is to give the rivalry between pro-Frankish and Byzantine factions an expression in stone», and this in absence of solid documentary evidence[44].

4. *Venetian-Istrian connections*

The circulation of Istrian stone across the Upper Adriatic, which the fragments in Santa Maria delle Grazie and the already-mentioned sarcophagi are witnesses to, hints to the enduring link between Istria and Venice in the period under scrutiny. Indeed, Istria can largely be seen as "an appendage to Venice", even after the Frankish conquest in 791 at the latest. Not even its definitive loss to Frankish rule in 812 as a result of the Treaty of Aachen broke up this link. Until the Council of Mantua in 827, Istria was ecclesiastically under the jurisdiction of Grado, the metropolitan see of the Venetian duchy. In Mantua, one of the arguments advanced by the patriarch of Aquileia in favour of his Church was the re-composition of the institutional unity of the region. As a group of clerics and noble laymen, who had joined the meeting claimed, Istrians could not keep going on serving two masters, that is the Franks and the Byzantines (meaning the Church of Grado and ultimately Venice)[45]. It is worth quoting the entire passage:

> Sed et id non omittendum, quod et clerici et nobiles ex laicis viris electi ab Histriensi populo sanctam synodum supplicantes venerunt, ut eos a Grecorum naequissimo vinculo liberatos ad Aquileiam, suam metropolim, cui antiquitus subditi fuerant, redire concedat, quia electi, qui ordinandi sunt, prius piisimis imperatoribus nostris et postmodum ad partem Graecorum fidem per sacramenta promittunt; ed ideo in hoc facto gravari se asserunt et servire duobus dominis non posse conclamant[46].

As early as the late eighth century, the discrepancy between the political and ecclesiastical administration of the region had generated a few tensions. Owing to the Lombard occupation in 770-772, Istrian bishops, who could no longer go to Grado for consecration, had started consecrating one other. Moreover, the landed properties of the Gradese Church in the area were subjected to the *collectae Langobardorum*[47]. This is a generic term, which does not allow us to know who the tax collectors were. Considering later develop-

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[43] Berto, *In Search of the First Venetians*, pp. 431-432.

[44] Skoblar, *Patriarchs as Patrons*.

[45] Azzara, *Il concilio di Mantova*.

[46] *Concilium Mantuanum*, no. 47, pp. 583-589 (pp. 586-587), and *Documenti*, I, no. 50, pp. 83-90 (pp. 86-87).

[47] MGH, Epp. lang., no. 19, pp. 711-713, and *Documenti*, I, no. 30, pp. 46-49.

ments, it is likely they were the neighbouring dukes of Friuli[48]. Under these circumstances, Patriarch John I (766-802/803)[49], predecessor of Fortunatus, asked pope Stephen III for help by making the same complaint which would be made in Mantua almost fifty years later: Istrian *milites* and *famuli* already pay the Gradese Church identical exactions (*aequales collectae*); it is therefore unthinkable that they must serve two masters («quamque nec potest quispiam duobus servire dominis»).

Pope Stephen intervened without delay. At the very moment when he ordered the Istrian bishops to (re)submit to John's authority, he wrote to the patriarch to offer his support. Like the Venetian duchy, Istria – he argued – was included in the pact agreed upon by the Byzantines, the Franks and the Lombards (i.e., the so-called Donation of Pippin made at Quierzy in 754), a pact through which the *fideles Sancti Petri* (i.e., the Franks) had committed themselves to defending both provinces from any enemy («ab inimicorum oppresione semper defendere procurat»)[50]. We know nothing about the practical effects of Stephen's words. Only a couple of years later, in 774, Charlemagne conquered Italy. It is remarkable, however, that the request for help had come in the name of Patriarch John and in the name of the duke of Venice as well («una cum consensus sanctorum Dei filio, Mauricio, consuli et imperiali duci huius Venetiarum provinciae»)[51].

The duke in question was Maurice Galbaio (764–797)[52]. Both personal interests and broader political aspirations could have underpinned Maurice's commitment to the Istrian cause, a commitment that was all but nominal. Maurice's son and future duke of Venice, John Galbaio (797-805)[53], had been captured sometime before, precisely in Istria, by King Desiderius, probably during a military campaign against the Lombard occupants[54]. Military support to the peninsula remained part of Venice's policy also throughout the ninth century, when Slav and Saracen raids threatened the north-eastern border of Italy and the whole Adriatic[55]. By the year 840 Venice was obligated to send out its war fleet in defence of the Frankish territories by virtue of a clause contained in the *Pactum Lotharii*[56]. However, protection from piracy was cru-

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[48] At the same period the dukes of Friuli were able to obtain from the Slavs settled in the Gail valley the payment of a tribute (see Gasparri, *Istituzioni e poteri nel territorio friulano*). We may infer the influence exerted around this period by the dukes of Friuli on the region from what we know about Marcarius and Eric. On Marcarius and Eric see below in the text.

[49] Bedina, *Giovanni*; Berto, *In search of the first Venetians*, pp. 424-425.

[50] MGH, Epp. lang., no. 20 (Pope Stephen III to the Istrian bishops), pp. 713-714, and *Documenti*, I, no. 31, pp. 50-51; MGH, Epp. lang., no. 21 (Pope Stephen III to Patriarch John of Grado), p. 715, and *Documenti*, I, no. 32, pp. 51-52.

[51] MGH, Epp. lang., no. 19, p. 713, and *Documenti*, I, no. 30, p. 49.

[52] Azzara, *Maurizio Galbaio*; Berto, *In search of the first Venetians*, p. 313.

[53] Bedina, *Giovanni Galbaio*; Berto, *In search of the first Venetians*, p. 314.

[54] *Le* Liber Pontificalis, I, p. 491.

[55] On Saracens' activity in the Adriatic: Ortalli, *Venezia dalle origini al ducato*, pp. 396-399.

[56] *Documenti*, I, no. 55, p. 103: «8. Spondimus quoque, ut nullis inimicorum, qui contra vos vestrasque partes sunt vel fuerint, nos, qui modo sumus vel fuerint, adiutorium ad vestram lesionem faciendam praebere debeamus sub quolibet ingenio infra hoc spatium pacti».

cial to Venice itself. In terms of sea-lanes, Istria was indeed significant. The Adriatic was navigated counter-clockwise. Sailors proceeded very close to the coast and hardly ever ventured out into the open sea. Stops on land were frequent. Istria constituted to be an important stopover for any travellers sailing from the East and aiming to reach the wealthy towns of the Po Valley[57].

The Venetian commercial protectorate established in the following century proves the importance of Istrian ports and harbours. It proves also the institutional liminality of the region, which, despite being part of the march of Friuli, kept a certain degree of autonomy. Three treaties stipulated by the duke of Venice with the *populus* of Koper in 932[58], 933[59] and 976[60] offer an insight of the continuing power relations. Above all the 933-pact, known as *Promissio Wintherii*, demonstrates how an actual authority was exercised by Venice, for the Istrians – albeit under the rule of the marquis of Friuli – promised the duke to pay an honorary tribute annually and not to charge new fees on Venetian ships[61]. Moreover, around this period the archival documentation sheds light on the many patrimonial interests in the area. We know, for instance, that the *palatium* of duke Peter II Candiano (931–939)[62] owned fiscal lands in the diocese of Pula[63] and we also know that in 972 Emperor Otto I[64] donated Izola/Isola d'Istria to Vitalis-Ugo Candiano († 979)[65], brother of duke Peter IV (959–976)[66]. Sometime later, Vitalis-Ugo's estates in Istria were confirmed to his son Dominicus by Otto III[67].

Because of the ecclesiastical authority over Istrian dioceses, one of the major and older landowners in the area was the Church of Grado. In 803 Gradese properties in Istria were granted immunity by Charlemagne through a diploma issued to Patriarch Fortunatus[68]. The outstanding position of the Church of Grado as a major landowner emerges clearly also from the *Placitum* of Rižana in about 804[69]. As I recalled briefly in the opening, the *Placitum* is about a dispute involving Istrian people, the local bishops and the Frankish

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[57] Borri, *The Waterfront of Istria.*
[58] *Documenti*, II, no. 35, pp. 52-55.
[59] *Documenti*, II, no. 36, pp. 55-59.
[60] *Documenti*, II, no. 56, pp. 105-108.
[61] Pazienza, *Venice beyond Venice.*
[62] Bertolini, *Pietro [II] Candiano*; Berto, *In search of the first Venetians*, pp. 335-337.
[63] This is recorded by the *Promissio Wintherii*. See above note 59.
[64] MGH, DD O I., no. 407 (972 I 8, Ravenna), p. 554, and *Documenti*, II, no. 52, pp. 93-94.
[65] Pozza, *Vitale-Ugo Candiano*; Berto, *In search of the first Venetians*, p. 71.
[66] Bertolini, *Pietro [IV] Candiano*; Berto, *In search of the first Venetians*, pp. 339-341.
[67] MGH DD O III., no. 293 (998 X 30, Roma), pp. 717-719, and *Documenti*, II, no. 83, pp. 168-169. Actually, the identification of Dominicus is uncertain. See Berto, *In search of the first Venetians*, p. 73.
[68] MGH, DD Karol. I, no. 200 (803 VIII 13, Salz), pp. 269-270, and *Documenti*, I, no. 38, pp. 58-59.
[69] The *placitum* has come down to us only as a late copy in the so-called *Codex Trevisaneus* (fifteenth-sixteenth century), preserved in the State Archives of Venice. The classic edition of the text is in *I placiti,* I, no. 17, pp. 48-56. The latest edition is in Krahwinkler, "In territorio Caprense loco qui dicitur Riziano", pp. 67-81. See also *Documenti*, I, no. 40, pp. 60-67. Literature on the topic is genuinely limitless.

representative, i.e., a certain duke John. Both John – about whom I will talk shortly – and the bishops were accused of several crimes in administrating the province. Most of the allegations made against the bishops were about ecclesiastical tenants' rights, the respect of agrarian contracts (leases and emphyteuses) and the confirmation of traditional customs concerning *herbaticum*, *glandaticum* and other dues from vineyards[70].

The socio-economic relevance and the political rooting of the Venetian clergy in Istrian society is also emphasised by the role of mediator taken on by Fortunatus in the settlement of the dispute. Listed first amongst the provincial aristocrats presiding over the meeting, Fortunatus was directly involved in the preparation of the *inquisitio*. Not only was the judicial proceeding drafted at his behest (*iussio*), but it also contains a reference to his (diplomatic) missions to the Emperor Charlemagne for the good of the Istrian people (*propter vos*)[71]. In the spring 803 Fortunatus, with a group of Venetians, left Venice and went to Charlemagne's residence at Salz[72]. There Charlemagne issued two charters. The first – which I have already mentioned – grants Gradese ecclesiastical properties immunity wherever in the Empire, and in Istria too[73]; the second gives permission to Fortunatus' ships to call at all ports free of charge[74]. In issuing the charters Charlemagne had been motivated by the special services and merits of the patriarch. And indeed, one must assume that in Salz, Fortunatus and Charlemagne discussed the unstable situation of the newly conquered Istria and scheduled the meeting at Rižana for the following year. Apparently, the emperor was eager to prevent the area from becoming a source of political unrest[75].

5. *John who?*

The kind of authority exerted in Istria by Venice, embodied by Fortunatus' activism and the activism of Venetian dukes, which I have described earlier, is coupled with the on- and off- Frankish control of this borderland, an

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[70] *Documenti*, I, no. 40, pp. 62-63: «III. capitulo: Qaecumque cartulae emphitheoseos, aut libellario iure, vel non dolosae commutations numquam ab antiqum tempus corruptae fuerunt, et ita ut nunc fiunt. IIII. capitulo: De herbatico, vel glandatico nunquam aliquis vim tulit inter vicora, nisi secundum consuetudinem parentorum nostrorum. V. capitulo: De vineis in terzio ordine tulerunt, sicut nunc faciunt, nisi tantum quarto. […] VII. capitulo: Qui terras ecclesiae femorabat, usque ad tertiam reprensionem nunquam eos foras eijciebat».

[71] Krahwinkler, *Patriarch Fortunatus of Grado.*

[72] *IV*, II, 24, pp. 106-109: «Prelibatus siquidem Fortunatus patriarcha acriter dolens interfectionem sui decessoris et parentis, insidias adversus Mauricium et Iohannem duces composuit et, relicta sede et urbe, ad Italiam perexit. Quem etiam secutus est quidam tribunus, Obellerius nomine, Metamaucensis, Felix tribunus, Dimitrius, Marinus seu Fuscarus Gregorii alii Veneticorum maiores, ex quibus solus patriarcha in Franciam ivit».

[73] See above note 68.

[74] MGH, DD Karol. I, no. 201 (unknown date), pp. 270-270, and *Documenti*, I, no. 39, pp. 59-60.

[75] Albertoni, *"si nobis succurrit domnus carolus imperator"*.

on- and off-control due, in the first place, to the modalities of the conquest, whose actual nature and scope remain largely unclear.

Between 776 and 780, a group of Istrian inhabitants, of both Greek and local origins, blinded Bishop Maurice of Novigrad. Maurice was collecting the *pensiones beati Petri* and was accused of planning to deliver (*tradere*) the region to the Franks. Tensions were high, and Pope Hadrian I wrote to Charlemagne demanding the intervention of Marcarius, the duke of Friuli, in order to escort the bishop back to his see[76]. Sometime later in 791 the scenario seems to have changed. That year an otherwise unknown *dux de Histria* with his followers (*cum suis hominibus*) fought successfully the Avars side by side with Charlemagne's army. Recorded in an extremely well-known letter by Charlemagne to his wife Fastrada, the information is traditionally taken as evidence of the definitive submission of the province to the Frankish ruler. In the epistle, the *dux de Histria* is the only commander identified by his territorial district. The other *comites* and leaders are not. The reference to his followers is also unique, as well as the mention to his bravery on the battlefield (*benefecit*)[77].

The duke's military valour is normally thought to have been the reason why Charlemagne commented on his actions and kept track of his domain – information which afterwards the copyist chose to hand down to us. Another explanation, however, might relate to the "halfway" status of the *dux* who had joined the expedition perhaps as a semi-autonomous ally against the common Avar threat rather than as a fully-fledged subordinate to Charlemagne[78]. The shortly-to-follow violent end of Eric, duke of Friuli and Charlemagne's champion, proves how the north-eastern Carolingian border was still a very tense area. The campaign of 791, though successful, was by no means decisive, and Frankish power was internally contested by a riotous local aristocracy[79]. In 799, while busy with a new war against the Avars in Pannonia, Eric was murdered by the inhabitants of Tsart in *Liburnia* (near the present-day Rijeka/Fiume) at the very periphery of the Istrian peninsula[80]. The episode casts some doubts on Paulinus of Aquileia's words, which sound aspirational rather than factual. In his funerary poem in memory of Eric, Paulinus states that the duke ruled over a vast territory, encompassing the towns and cas-

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[76] *Codex Carolinus*, no. 63, p. 590, and *Documenti*, I, no. 35, pp. 54-55. On Marcarius, Hlawitschka, *Franken*, p. 235.

[77] *Epistolae variorum*, no. 20, pp. 528-529. The epistle is quoted by McCormick, *The Liturgy of War*, pp. 8-9; McCormik, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 353-354.

[78] Borri, *The Duke of Istria*.

[79] On the Avar wars, Pohl, *Pippin and the Avars*.

[80] MGH, ARF, p. 108, *ad annum* 799: «Eodem anno gens Avarum a fide, quam promiserat, defecit, et Ericus dux Foroiulensis post tot prospere gestas res iuxta Tharsaticam Liburniae civitatem insidiis oppidanorum oppressus est, et Geroldus comes, Baioariae praefectus, commisso contra Avares proelio cecidit». On Eric, Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 176-177. See also Ross, *Two Neglected Paladins*.

tles of Cividale, Osoppo, Cormons, Aquileia, Ceneda and Pula[81]. The *Annales regni Francorum* does not mention Istria amongst Charlemagne's conquests though. In 806 the region does not feature in the *Divisio regnorum* as part of the realm[82]. On the other hand, the *Vita Karoli* lists it along with *Liburnia* and Dalmatia, but – Einhard stresses – with the remarkable exception of coastal settlements, still out of the king's control[83].

It is precisely this uncertain Carolingian control of the area, which the few sources at our disposal seem to suggest, which makes room for new avenues of inquiry and speculation[84]. One – that I'd like to discuss here and with which I am going to conclude – regards the duke John of the *Placitum* of Rižana. Along with the already-mentioned Istrian bishops, John is the main defendant in the trial. The countless misdeeds committed by him show his rapacity and, at the same time, his great familiarity with the local resources and society. Istrian elites complained, as particularly hateful, of the fact that he used to keep for himself the *solidi* given by the towns and intended for the palace[85]; take possession of the common lands from municipalities and the Church and settle there groups of Slavs[86]; deprive them of their old privileges and positions in society by abolishing administrative customary posts (*tribunatus*)[87]; appropriate their animals (cows and horses)[88] and human workforce (*liberti* and *excusati*) for the advantage of his own relatives, i.e., sons, daughters and his son-in-law[89]; impose new taxes and corvees[90]. And yet, John could count on large assets in Istria. He owned numerous villas and farms, he resided in Novigard on fiscal lands, where more than two hundreds *coloni* worked and a wealthy annual income of oil and wine, plus cereals and chestnuts, was col-

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[81] Paulinus of Aquileia, *Versus*, p. 131: «Herico, mihi dulce nomen, plangite / Syrmium, Pola, tellus Aquilejae / Julii Forum, Carmonis ruralia / Rupes Osopi, juga Cetenensium, / Hastensis humus, ploret et Albingauna».
[82] *Divisio regnorum*, no. 45, pp. 126-130. See Stoffella, *Pipino e la* Divisio.
[83] Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, 15, p. 18: «post quam utramque Pannoniam et adpositam in altera Danubii ripa Daciam, Histriam quoque et Liburniam atque Dalmaciam, exceptis maritimis civitatibus quas ob amicitiam et iunctum cum eo foedus Constantinopolitanum imperatorem habere permisit».
[84] These can be framed in the context of the mechanisms of dynasty- and authority-building outlined by Stuart Airlie in his perceptive recent study on *Making and Unmaking of the Carolingians*.
[85] *Documenti*, I, no. 40, pp. 63: «Postquam Joannes devenit in ducatu, ad suum opus istos solidos habuit et non dixit pro justitia palatii fuisset».
[86] *Documenti*, I, no. 40, p. 64: «Insuper Sclavos super terras nostras posuit».
[87] *Documenti*, I, no. 40, p. 65: «Tribunatus nobis abstulit».
[88] *Documenti*, I, no. 40, p. 64: «Insuper non remanent nobis boves, neque caballi», and p. 65: «tollet nostras autem caballos (...). Nostros autem caballos aut in Francia eos dimittit, aut per suos homines illos donat».
[89] *Documenti*, I, no. 40, pp. 64-65: «Modo autem dux noster Johannes consituit nobis centarchos divisit populum inter filos et filias vel generum suum (...). Liberos homines non nos habere permittit (...); libertos nostros abstulit».
[90] *Documenti*, I, no. 40, p. 66: «Omnes istas angarias et superpositas, quae predicate sunt, violenter facimus».

lected, and received annually fifty *solidi mancusi* and plenty of seafood from the fishing rights[91].

John is an enigmatic figure who has attracted the attention of generations of historians. Notwithstanding the fact that his identification with the *dux de Histria* of the letter of Charlemagne to Fastrada is still debated, a cluster of evidence suggests that he was not a Frankish immigrant, as previously thought[92], but rather a local highborn: first, the anthroponomy – the name John is attested amongst the Frankish officials only once beside this, while it is extremely common in the Adriatic area; second, John's deep knowledge of Istrian society and landscape; third, his family's grounding in the region, as one may infer from the *placitum*. More generally, the ruling policy adopted by Charlemagne in the newly conquered countries must be considered too[93]. It is now very clear that, at least in the first instance, Charlemagne used to rely on local aristocrats for the administration of distant provinces, including Italy[94].

The case of nearby Friuli is particularly illuminating. We do not know if Hrotgoud was already duke of Friuli under King Desiderius. What matters, however, is that, even if appointed by Charlemagne, he was a Lombard, almost surely a native of the region. Only after his rebellion, the Frankish Marcarius and Eric – this latter from an Alemannian family – succeeded him in the office[95]. The recruitment of local experts was crucial even beyond the ordinary administration. Among the envoys sent by Charlemagne to Constantinople in 811 for negotiating the upcoming Treaty of Aachen there was the Lombard Aio. Aio came from Friuli and had taken part in Hrotgoud's revolt. After having fled to the Avars, he was captured by King Pippin and finally forgiven in 799 by Charlemagne. Aio's acquaintance with this north-eastern Italian hotspot explains his involvement in the embassy and, before that, in the Plea of Rižana as Charlemagne's *missus*[96].

Now credited as the most probable hypothesis[97], Harald Krahwinkler hypothesised a local provenience for the duke John. In his view, John could have come from Istria or «un territorio vicino». His position resembles that

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[91] *Documenti*, I, no. 40, p. 63: «Item habet casale Orcionis cum olivetis multis. Item portionem de casale Petriolo, cum vineis, terries, olivetis. Item omnem portionem Iohannis Cancianico, cum terris, vineis, olivetis et casa cum turculis suis. Item possessionem magnam de Arbe cum terris, vineis, olivetis et casa sua. Item possessionem Stephani, magistri militum. Item casa Ierontiacam cum omni possessione sua. Item possessionem Mauritii ypati seu Basilii, magistri militum instar, et de Theodoro ypato. Item possessionem, quam tenet in Priatello, cum terris, vineis et olivetis, et plura alia loca. In nova Civitate habeat fischo publico, ubi commanet, intus et foras civitate amplius quam duos centum colonos; (...) Piscationes vero habet, unde illi veniunt per annum amplius quam quinquaginta solidi mancosi absque sua mensa ad satietatem».
[92] Hlawitschka *Franken*, pp. 211-212.
[93] Borri, *The Duke of Istria*.
[94] Gasparri, *Italia longobarda*, pp. 130-132; Gasparri, *Il passaggio dai Franchi ai Longobardi*; Gasparri, *The Dawn of Carolingian Italy*.
[95] On Hrotgoud, Stoffella, *Rodgaudo*.
[96] On the embassy, MGH, ARF, pp. 133-134, *ad annum* 811; on the exile, capture and forgiveness, MGH, DD Karol. I, no. 187 (799 II 2, Aachen), pp. 251-252.
[97] Predatsch, *Migration im karolingischen Italien*, p. 310.

of a local *princeps* rather than a Frankish official, to the point that «la si può paragonare – e non solo per il titolo – con quella di un doge veneziano»[98]. And in fact, a duke named John is found in the same years in the duchy of Venice. He is the John captured in the early 770s during the Venetian campaign in Istria against the Lombards, the son of duke Maurice, who was so committed to the Istrian cause. That being the case, the possibility that the duke John of Rižana and the duke John Galbaio of Venice are actually the same person is tempting and must be taken into account. The chronology is tricky. First, the list of dukes of Istria for the period is very fragmentary. As already mentioned, it is still an open question whether the anonymous duke of Istria who fought the Avars in 791 alongside the Frankish army should be identified as the duke John of Rižana in 804. Furthermore, between 791 and 804, there is the problematic evidence from Paulinus of Aquileia, who attributes Pula to Eric's domain. Secondly, the exact dating of John Galbaio's rulership in Venice is uncertain. We know he was appointed co-ruler in the thirty-first year of his father's rule (*c.* 795) and, two years later in 797, at his father's death, he became sole ruler. Once in office, he imposed a harsh regime on the duchy. He made his son co-ruler without consent from the local aristocracy. Soon after, he ordered the murder of John II, patriarch of Grado and predecessor of Fortunatus. The rebellion of some Venetians, who elected a new duke, Obelerio, followed. As a consequence, John abandoned the Venetian political stage and took refuge or, as some scholarship claims, was deported to Mantua in the Frankish territory. This happened around 803, right before the *Placitum* of Rižana. From this moment on, narrative sources are silent, and we are left in the dark about the circumstances of John Galbaio's death. At the latest, in 805, the newly elected duke Obelerio held the office.

There are two possible scenarios here: either John was installed in Istria by Charlemagne when he was already duke of Venice following the violent death of Eric in 799, or – as I believe – he was already duke of Istria prior to 797, possibly around 791 when Charlemagne maintained his position. After his father died, John held both offices in Istria and Venice. In this latter case, we may track John's roots in Istria back to the time of the Venetian campaign against the Lombards, when he would have gathered political support for his future domain. Sometime later, owing to this support, he would have been able to participate, almost independently, in the Avar wars and exploit and control the local resources, as we know from the Plea of Rižana. By the time of the Plea in 804, John would have been quite old, and one may question his ability, as an old ruler, to introduce the type of drastic administrative and political innovations that the Istrian inhabitants complain about in the trial. And yet, seeing that he would have been operationally active in the province already some thirty years earlier, we can assume a longer period and an incremental process for the introduction of such innovations. In turn, this would

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[98] Krahwinkler, "In territorio Caprense loco qui dicitur Riziano", pp. 260-264.

explain the fact that official allegations came only toward the end of his life and career, when he was probably in exile in Mantua and the succession of the office was imminent. The lack of any reference in the *placitum* text to the duke John's Venetian connection may be explained by the changing political regime in the lagoon and his deposition in Venice around the same time of the holding of the *placitum*[99].

In both the scenarios outlined above, considering the less-than-secure Frankish hold over the Upper Adriatic, Charlemagne would have tried using a locally based magnate for minding his interests and maintaining hegemony in this peripheral area. Contemporary and reliable evidence about the geopolitical status of the Upper Adriatic around the time of Charlemagne's arrival on the scene is scant. The fact that John Galbaio's appointment turned out to be a serious mistake on Charlemagne's part, on the other hand, makes sense when considering that the appointment was not registered in the *Annales regni Francorum*. It might be interesting to note, however, that during these years, the relations between Venice and the Franks were at their closest. I spoke already of the collaboration between Charlemagne and Fortunatus, and the prominent role played by this latter in the Plea of Rižana. Moreover, it is worthy of note that only a year after Rižana, the new dukes of Venice, Obelerio (805–810)[100] and Beatus, went to Charlemagne's court to offer the emperor their alliance. It is the famous *Ordinatio* that has always intrigued scholars and whose content is unknown[101]. In the context of the old pro- and anti-Frankish paradigm, traditional interpretation accounts for it as Venice's shift from the sphere of influence of Byzantium to that of the Western Empire[102]. On the other hand, in the light of the argument made so far, nothing prevents one to think that the rule of Istria could have been among the issues at stake.

Again, the administrative (re)organization of the entire Upper Adriatic area and the eastern border of Italy would be a leitmotif even in the following years. In this political situation, Istria stands out as a permanent institutional laboratory, where the interplay between external and internal driving forces often led to original compromises and experimentations. Around the years 806-823, a certain Hunfrid is simultaneously attested as *comes Raetiae Curiensis* and *dux Histriae*. One may wonder if the peninsula was tentatively annexed to the northern alpine region. It is a matter of speculation. But the idea that Istria was instead attached to Friuli, and became an autonomous province in 828 after the portioning of Friuli among four *marchiones*, is cir-

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[99] I thank the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of my manuscript and their many insightful comments and suggestions. In this section I respond to each comment in detail. Again, the mention in the *placitum* text of duke John residing in Novigard, odd as it may seem, fits perfectly into multi-residential pattern of the early medieval and Carolingian aristocracy. On this, Patzold, *Verortung in einer mobilen Welt.*

[100] Pozza, *Obelerio*; Berto, *In Search of the first Venetians*, pp. 315-317.

[101] MGH, ARF, pp. 130-132, *ad annum* 806.

[102] On the *ordination*, Ortalli, *Il ducato e la* 'civitas Rivoalti'.

cumstantial too. Nonetheless we know that at the beginning of the tenth century a count named Alboin ruled, albeit poorly, the province[103]. Conversely the already mentioned *Promissio Wintherii* makes it clear that sometime later Istria was under the authority of the duke of Friuli, even though its inhabitants benefitted from a large degree of autonomy, thanks to which they could develop a special link with the by-now flourishing maritime power of Venice. Toward the end of the century, finally, it is apparent that Poreč and Pula were ruled by the *dux* of Carinthia whose authority – established in 976 by Otto II – covered a large territory stretching from the Alps to the Adriatic[104].

6. Conclusions

Around the mid-eleventh century, when writing his *Istoria*, John the Deacon did not have a clear idea of the institutional features of Istria, which he describes in some passages as a *comitatus* and elsewhere as a *marchia*. John the Deacon's perception fits well into the vision of Istria as a political laboratory, a vision which emerges from the little surviving evidence at our disposal and is explained by the most recent theoretical research about borderlands, where two or more social and political orders come together and clash. In early medieval Istria, the coming together and clashing is observable at different levels. Local elites thought of themselves as part of a larger provincial community – the Upper Adriatic – shaped by a common Byzantine legacy and a strong maritime identity. The mobility of people, commodities and knowledge from one shore of the Adriatic to the other, and from there to Constantinople and back, was a key factor to the development of a sense of belonging beyond the political fragmentation of the area. Also, despite the military-political frontiers, mobility was high even to and from the western mainland. The interpenetration of resources and institutions resulted into a liminal and hybrid society where parallels to the Lombard and then Carolingian culture and apparatus are remarkable. Conflicting interests, moreover, transformed the whole area into a trouble spot. Traditionally considered as a turning point, the Treaty of Aachen formalized an already existing process, leading to the consolidation of Venice's position as an independent political entity. Owing to the many economic, commercial and proprietary interests in the region, one of the playgrounds where the emerging Venetian power showed its dynamism was Istria. Here the Venetian political elite's engagement in the area was ample and keen, to the point that the province can be described as an appendage to Venice. The role of mediator assumed by the Gradese patriarch Fortunatus in the notorious Plea of Rižana is best evidence of such engagement.

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[103] On Hunfrid, Alboin and the 828-partition see the bibliographical references in Borri, *L'Istria tra Bisanzio e i Franchi*, pp. 320-321.
[104] De Vergottini, *Venezia e l'Istria*, pp. 97-120.

At the same time, the lack of congruence between ecclesiastical and political borders, which emerges from the Plea, brought about quite a few problems in terms of authority and local resource exploitation. Besides, the twofold dependency of the Istrian inhabitants on Grado and Venice on one hand and the newer Frankish rulers on the other was coupled with the concurrent aspirations to self-government expressed by the local aristocracy. All this accounts for the weak and experimental rulership exerted over the years in Istria by the western sovereigns and, simultaneously, provides food for thought for re-reading the key period 791-804 when, in the aftermath of the Frankish conquest, the network of connections between the Franks, the Venetians and the Istrians grew very tight, perhaps as never again later. Within such a geopolitical framework, the hypothesis of a local origin of the otherwise unknown *dux* John in the Plea of Rižana is strengthened and the proposition that he needs to be identified with the duke John Galbaio, ruling Venice in the same years, gains ground. The fluidity of allegiances of leading elites at the peripheries of the Carolingian domain, as well as the possibility of abrupt changes of the geopolitical situation in border regions, accounts for the Franks' reliance on local magnates for fostering their interests. The Franks' control over the Upper Adriatic was less than secure, and a forceful and opportunistic duke might have seemed useful to Charlemagne for maintaining and consolidating hegemony in the region.

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II

The frontiers of others I:
Saxony and Lothringia

Frontiers and fortifications
in the Carolingian imperial imagination

by Simon MacLean

The relative absence of written references to fortifications in the Carolingian Empire is well known, but seems difficult to square with increasing evidence that such buildings were familiar features in the ninth-century Frankish landscape. I argue that one reason for this is that contemporary narratives participated in a Carolingian "way of seeing" which associated castle building with frontier territories and lands beyond rather than with the imperial heartlands. Fortified residences were linked in the Carolingian imperial imagination with negative characteristics such as secrecy and hiddenness, in contrast to the supposed openness of Frankish royal palaces.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Italy; Francia; Carolingians; empire; castles; fortifications; frontiers; imperialism.

Abbreviations
Ermold, *Carmen* = Ermold, *Carmen in honorem Hludowici Caesaris*, ed. E. Faral, *Ermold le Noir: Poème sur Louis le Pieux et Épitres au Roi Pépin*, Paris 1964.
GSR = *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, ed. C. Brett, *The Monks of Redon*, Woodbridge 1989 (Studies in Celtic History, 10).
MGH, AB = *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, Hannover 1883 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 5).
MGH, AF = *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1891 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 7).
MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 6).
MGH, Astronomer, *Vita* = Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. E. Tremp, Hannover 1995 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 64).
MGH, VK = Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Hannover-Leipzig 1911 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 25).
MGH, Notker, *Gesta Karoli* = Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni*, ed. H.F. Haefele, *Notker der Stammler, Taten Kaiser Karls des Großen*, Berlin 1959 (MGH, SS rer. Germ. N.S., 12).
MGH, Regino, *Chronicon* = Regino, *Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1890 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 50).
MGH, Thegan, *Gesta* = Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. E. Tremp, Hannover 1995 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 64).

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1. *Introduction*

In his classic 1972 book and television documentary *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger argued that looking at works of art objectively is not really possible, for we inevitably and subconsciously gaze through a thick layer of cultural filters. Seeing, for Berger, is a political act – what is seen, and how, is intimately related to the "where" and the "when" of the observer. The implicit assumptions which shape our vision do not necessarily «accord with the world as it is [...] they mystify rather than clarify»[1]. These insights are relevant beyond the world of art history because it is not only individuals who see in this way, but also communities and cultures – including empires. The ways that empires throughout history saw themselves and their colonies were crucial in justifying and sustaining their existence. External territories could be prepared for conquest through depictions of their inhabitants as primitive or corrupt; and their lands as empty or untouched. Imperial characterizations of places and landscapes were never simply descriptive, but always to some degree served as a means for the describers to represent and naturalize their domination of the political or social order. In the evocative expression of William Mitchell, imagining landscapes was an essential part of the «dreamwork of imperialism»[2].

Such considerations apply equally to written sources, since textual descriptions of landscape are just as selective and subject to contamination by the cultural predispositions of the observers as visual art. Accordingly, they can reveal much about authors' mindsets and ways of seeing. Much of the scholarship on this topic deals, however, with empires formed in the past 500 years, and some of it even assumes that imperial definitions of landscape are specific to modern and/or capitalist societies. In the present article, I will argue that we can find examples of this kind of mindset in the narratives produced in the Carolingian Empire of the later eighth and ninth centuries. In particular, I am interested in how the authors of these narratives imagined different landscapes as more or less fortified. Modern historiography on the early history of the European castle usually starts the story in the tenth century, because Carolingian sources refer relatively infrequently to fortified structures in the Frankish heartlands. Nonetheless, there is enough written and archaeological evidence to suggest that fortifications did exist in the European continent's north-west corner in the ninth century, perhaps in considerable number[3]. Could it be that their scarcity in the written sources was not simple evidence of absence, but at least in part a reflection of the cultural assumptions of our texts' authors? Carolingian writers certainly described "foreign" landscapes in ways which reflected their own cultural assumptions

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[1] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*; Gunaratnam – Bell, *How John Berger*.
[2] Mitchell, *Imperial Landscape*, p. 10. Further on these themes see for example: Cosgrove, *Social Formation*; Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*; *Landscapes*.
[3] Kohl, *Befestigungen*; MacLean, *Edict*; Bourgeois, *Recent Archaeological Research*.

and served political purposes – for example, dividing foreign territories into ethnic units as a way of appropriating them to familiar Frankish models that might «facilitate political control»[4]. Such depictions sometimes focused on types of building: as Walter Pohl has shown, surviving early medieval descriptions of barbarian residences in the Eurasian Steppe can only be understood if we take into account the various filters through which they passed before they were recorded and copied, even in cases where they may have begun with a genuine eyewitness report[5]. Taking a cue from these insights, my argument in what follows will be that in the imperial imagination of the northern Frankish elite, fortifications were thought to be primarily a feature of the frontier and the world beyond the frontier, not of the heartlands; and that this contrast was important enough that it could sometimes be rehearsed as a touchstone of Frankish cultural identity. I will go on to suggest two important reasons for this Carolingian way of seeing: that Frankish writers of the ninth century had internalized the narrative tropes of their empire's spectacular eighth-century expansion; and that ninth-century imperial politics had no clear role for private residences or fortifications.

2. *Fortifications and frontiers*

At its full ninth-century extent the Carolingian Empire had a number of frontiers which were quite different from each other. Some of them at least were considered in some sense fortified. The best-known example is the zone of fortifications built or restored along the River Elbe in the course of the eighth century to control Eastern Saxony and the frontier against the Slavs. Some of these structures, for example Büraburg near Fritzlar, are known through excavation[6]. This feature of the north-eastern frontier was also acknowledged in written sources. In the *Vita Karoli*, Einhard talks of Charlemagne «establishing garrisons at appropriate locations» in Saxony to allow him to depart to Spain[7]. References can also be found in the *Annales regni Francorum* and the Astronomer's *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris* to the Slavic (and Spanish) frontiers as characterized by fortifications[8].

The authors of some of the main Carolingian narratives also seem to have imagined the landscapes beyond the frontiers as fortified, and consequently saw them as requiring conquest through sieges and the destruction of walls.

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[4] Reimitz, *Grenzen*; Pohl, Regia *and the* Hring, p. 459. On the "conceptual interdependence" of history and geography in the early Middle Ages see Merrills, *History*, p. 7. On Carolingian notions of imperial geography see Conant, *Louis the Pious*.
[5] Pohl, Regia *and the* Hring, pp. 460-464.
[6] Hardt, *Hesse*; Wolfram, *Creation of the Carolingian Frontier System*; Henning, *Civilization versus Barbarians?*.
[7] MGH, Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, 9, p. 12.
[8] MGH, ARF, pp. 121-122, 127, 130, 147, *ad annum* 806, 808, 809, 817; MGH, Astronomer, *Vita*, 8, p. 308.

The vocabulary deployed in the *Annales regni Francorum*, the most substantial and influential account of the Frankish expansion under the Carolingians, covering the years 741-829, provides a suggestive example. Vocabulary can betray implicit assumptions about the ascribed or assumed nature of particular places or landscapes – where such vocabulary was used consistently, it was often meaningful[9]. In the case of the *Annales regni Francorum* there seems to be a clear division of use between generic place words which imply fortification and defensive function (*castrum*, *castellum*, *firmitates*, *munitiones*, *oppidum*) and those which imply a primarily residential or seat-of-power function (*villa*, *palatium*). We need to acknowledge that none of these words had exact meanings or absolute definitions and their connotations could vary with context, but the broad distinction made here is validated by Hraban Maur's ninth-century encyclopedia *De Universo*, which (closely following Isidore of Seville's influential *Etymologiae*), discusses the word *villa* in a section on rural buildings, separately from his section on defensive structures[10]. Taking the *Annales regni Francorum* and the alternative ("Revised") version of the *Annales regni Francorum* together, there are by my count over 50 uses of each group of words in total, including some examples of multiple use for the same places. With only one exception, the "residential" terms are used exclusively for sites in the heartlands of the empire; while the "fortification" words are used only for sites on or beyond the frontiers (again, with only one exception). The contrast looks especially programmatic in the section of the annals after around 792, when a clear preference can be detected for the words *palatium* and *castellum* standing for sites in the interior and the exterior of the kingdom.

In light of the fact that the *Annales regni Francorum* is a multi-author compilation rather than the product of a single mind (and even allowing for the imprecision of the terminology), this pattern is strikingly consistent. Literary preference is part of the picture here. One of our authors – the so-called "Reviser" – favoured classical terminology and tended to use *castellum* instead of *castrum*[11]. But there are other signs that the choice of words was often contextual. Thus, the only time somewhere beyond the frontier was called *villa* was on an exceptional occasion when Charlemagne spent Christmas in Saxony – in the eyes of the annalist, it was the king's presence that turned a Saxon stronghold into a *villa*[12]. This is paralleled by a later example from the *Chronicle* by Regino of Prüm (*c.* 907), which describes the central place of the frontier command in Carinthia at the south-east corner of the empire as «the very well defended stronghold of Moosburg, so called because of the impenetrable bog which surrounds it and offers very difficult entry to those who approach it». Yet when King Arnulf stayed there in 890, he issued a char-

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[9] For one example see Campbell, *Bede's Words for Places*.
[10] Hraban, *De Universo*, XIV, 30, col. 410-412.
[11] Collins, *"Reviser" Revisited*.
[12] MGH, ARF, p. 68, *ad annum* 784.

ter in which this fortification was labelled instead as a «*regia civitas*» (royal city)[13]. There is also the case of Aquitaine, which during the eighth-century Frankish conquest is portrayed as a landscape of fortresses needing besieged; but once conquered, becomes a landscape of palaces and *villas*, both in the *Annales regni Francorum* and in the Astronomer's *Vita* of Louis the Pious[14]. Unfortunately there are very few contemporary narratives from the perspectives of the societies under Frankish attack, but comparison with the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, a later ninth-century Breton source, is instructive. When the author of this source described Frankish invaders besieging Breton soldiers, the word they used for the building was *villa*, and from context it is clear that a rural residence or farm building rather than a fortification is meant[15]. These observations strengthen the suggestion that the patterns of vocabulary observed in the *Annales regni Francorum* do not simply reflect objective classification of particular kinds of buildings. Rather, they may indicate the projected assumption of an imperial heartland characterized by residences, palaces and assemblies; and a frontier and external territories characterized by fortifications.

It could be objected that because the *Annales regni Francorum* is an account of imperial expansion, one would expect descriptions of the conquests to focus on military confrontation and sieges. Moreover, it is only to be expected that events in the Frankish heartlands of the empire were described in peaceful terms, since there was little significant internal warfare in the period 750-829. On the other hand, there is little sign that Frankish observers saw fortifications as an important feature of the imperial landscape later in the ninth century either, even in times of conflict. Nithard's account of the civil wars between the sons of Louis the Pious in the 840s has little to say about sieges or fortification; and descriptions of Viking raids show them ravaging towns and churches, not castles or aristocratic residences. One of the few detailed accounts of a battle between Franks and Vikings is Regino's story of an encounter at Brissarthe on the Loire in 866. According to him, when the Scandinavians found themselves forced to retreat to a *villa* (here probably meaning something like "village") and looked for a place to defend, they could find only a church fit for purpose. The Franks lost their commander and failed to take the church, which was described as «*locum munitum*» (a well-fortified place), and even as a «*munitio*» (fortification)[16]. Categories, here, were determined by function rather than architecture or original purpose. Regino was writing half a century after the event on the basis of oral traditions, and probably had no accurate information about the clash – sources written

[13] MGH, Regino, *Chronicon*, p. 117, *ad annum* 880; MGH, DD Arn, no. 75, pp. 112-114. Despite the editors' doubts about this phrase, the charter survives as an original and can be plausibly contextualised: Bowlus, *Imre Boba*, pp. 567-570.
[14] MGH, Astronomer, *Vita*, 6-7, pp. 300-306; MGH, ARF, pp. 50, 140, *ad annum* 777, 814.
[15] *GSR*, I, 7, pp. 129-131.
[16] MGH, Regino, *Chronicon*, pp. 92-93, *ad annum* 867.

closer to the event imply that Brissarthe was a straightforward battle rather than a siege[17]. His story is nevertheless useful for what it tells us about how Carolingian intellectuals imagined the dynamics of such encounters and the landscapes in which they took place.

In fact, it was the Vikings themselves who were seen by the Franks as the real fortification builders of the period. According to a late ninth-century entry in the *Annales Fuldenses*, the Scandinavian raiders had bever been defeated in any of their *castra*, while Regino of Prüm said that fortification building was Viking «custom»[18]. When in the 850s Hraban Maur dedicated to King Lothar II an epitome of Vegetius's fourth-century *De re militari*, adapted to the pressing needs of «the present time» in the face of «the very frequent incursions of the barbarians [i.e. the Vikings]», he underlined the need for young Frankish soldiers to be trained to take enemy fortifications quickly. He did not, however, show any interest in the content of Vegetius's fourth book, which contained extensive discussion of how to defend fortified sites[19]. Even when the roles of invader and victim were reversed, therefore, Carolingian authors saw fortification as a practice associated not with the Franks, but with their enemies.

This Carolingian way of seeing fortified and unfortified landscapes was occasionally articulated more directly. Notker of St. Gall's *Gesta Karoli*, a largely apocryphal biography of Charlemagne written in the 880s for the latter's descendant Emperor Charles the Fat, contains a famous description of the Avar Ring – the terrifying series of fortifications (*munitiones*) faced by Charlemagne's armies across their south-eastern frontier. Notker claimed there were nine rings made of walls 20 feet high, and spaces between each equivalent to the distance from Zurich to Constance (in other words, around 70 km)[20]. Although some impressively long early earthworks have been discovered in the Carpathian Basin, Notker's account was a hugely exaggerated riff on terse references to Avar fortifications he had read in earlier sources[21]. What is often not noticed about this story is that Notker made a point of emphasizing how alien the Avar fortification was to his own cultural norms by integrating his own disbelief into the narrative. On hearing about the Avar walls, he says: «I could not imagine any sort of rings except those which usually grow around our grain fields»[22]. Elsewhere in his work, Notker describes Saxon and Lombard enemies of Charlemagne hiding behind fortified walls; and in contrast praises the Frankish king Louis the German for demolishing

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[17] MGH, AB, p. 84, *ad annum* 866.
[18] MGH, AF, pp. 119-120, *ad annum* 891; MGH, Regino, *Chronicon*, p. 122, *ad annum* 884.
[19] Dümmler, *De procinctv*, p. 450. There were other Carolingian copies of Vegetius: Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, pp. 40-42.
[20] MGH, Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, II, 1, pp. 49-51.
[21] Pohl, *Avars*, pp. 370-372.
[22] MGH, Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, II, 1, p. 50; transl. Noble, *Charlemagne*, p. 91.

his own city walls to build churches – and being rewarded with the discovery of hidden gold[23].

Another example comes from Ermold's praise poem to the Emperor Louis the Pious, written in the second half of the 820s. Ermold has much to say about the emperor's conflicts with the Bretons, depicting them like beasts living in the open ready to be hunted and conquered[24]. Their «king» Murman he described as living «in a place with woods on one side and a stream on the other, situated among hedges, trenches and a swamp. Inside was a grand house [*opima domus*] that shone with the splendour of weapons whenever it happened to be filled with different soldiers»[25]. The Breton ruler's love of this «*arx*» (fortress) is portrayed by Ermold as a negative trait. Murman stays in his house worrying about what might happen if he comes out. In this domestic space he is also vulnerable to the influence of his wife, who unwisely prompts him to war[26]. A Frankish ambassador in the text predicts he will lose badly if he fights against Louis: «Don't be deceived», he tells Murman, «just because your house is fenced by a forest and wall»[27]. In the war that follows, the Bretons refuse to fight in the open and go to «hiding places»; while the Franks taunt Murman that «your concealed refuges and your vaunted house are laid open»[28]. By contrast, our only Breton narrative for this period describes the local ruler's residence as a «aula» (hall), a term whose connotations – as pointed out by Hraban Maur – were much closer to "palace" than "fortification"[29].

A third example can be found in texts detailing Frankish relations with the Slavic-speaking peoples to the east. It is notable that the Franks thought of these societies as epitomised by fortifications. A document from the 840s suggests that the court circle of Louis the German understood the make-up of the lands to the east primarily in terms of how many "fortresses" each contained[30]. Authors in Louis's kingdom seem to have viewed such structures with suspicion (despite the Franks' own history of building fortifications to control regions such as Saxony). An East Frankish author writing about Moravia around 869 refers with apparent distaste to an «unspeakable stronghold [*ineffabilis munitio*], unlike those built in past times» which confronted an invading Frankish army[31]. The Moravian "empire" was structured around significant fortified sites in what is now Slovakia and the Czech Republic, but archaeological investigation suggests that the most significant of these were not

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[23] MGH, Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, II, 2, II, 11, II, 17, pp. 51, 68-69, 81-82.
[24] Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks*, pp. 112-114.
[25] Ermold, *Carmen*, p. 104; transl. Noble, *Charlemagne*, p. 158. High-status residences in Brittany at this date were probably rural stockades: Smith, *Province and Empire*, p. 21.
[26] Ermold, *Carmen*, p. 110; transl. Noble, *Charlemagne*, p. 160.
[27] Ermold, *Carmen*, p. 114; transl. Noble, *Charlemagne*, p. 161.
[28] Ermold, *Carmen*, p. 124; transl. Noble, *Charlemagne*, p. 164.
[29] *GSR*, I, 1, p. 109.
[30] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, pp. 135-137.
[31] MGH, AF, p. 69, *ad annum* 869. See Goldberg, *Ludwig*.

upgraded to their full extent until the century's last quarter[32]. This means that it was likely not a recent change in the scale of the stronghold that disturbed the East Frankish annalist, but the nature of the fortress itself. In the year 900, some Bavarian bishops wrote to the pope defending the royal status of King Louis the Child by contrasting the virtues of the Carolingian royal family with the unworthy behaviour of the Moravians. Where the Carolingians fostered Christianity, the Moravians weakened it; where the Carolingians respected Rome, the Moravians despised it; and where the Carolingians were «openly seen by the whole world», the Moravian rulers «hid away in secret lairs and fortresses»[33]. Here again we see a fact of socio-political topography rhetorically twisted into a point of principle about Frankish cultural identity and its supposed contrast with those of its neighbours.

Scattered references in Carolingian narratives imply a connection between fortification and rebellion. In 821, the *Annales regni Francorum* signals the resistance to Frankish authority of the Pannonian leader Ljudewit by the fact that he built fortifications[34]. The Astronomer's biography of Louis the Pious uses a similar shorthand for Aizo's rebellion in northern Spain, which was reportedly inaugurated by his fleeing the emperor's palace and seizing frontier fortifications[35]. Bernard of Italy's so-called rebellion against Louis was represented as beginning with his garrisoning of the passes through the Alps; and a year later, the ending of a Breton uprising was said to have been achieved through the emperor's taking of rebel fortifications[36]. Another author mocked the Bohemians for an attempt to trick East Frankish frontier guards by building a wall with a narrow entrance which would create a bottleneck where they could be trapped and killed. Instead, it was the Bohemians themselves who fell into their own trap, allowing the Frankish army to walk in and steal several hundred now unattended horses[37]. More generally, our sources portray hiding and secrecy in themselves as suspect behaviour, particularly associated with figures not trusted by the Franks. The "Reviser" imagined that the treachery of the Aquitanian leader Hunald was shown by his ability to evade Charlemagne «because he knew places where he could hide from the king's army»[38]. One later ninth-century continuator of the *Annales regni Francorum* described an attempt to commit «a malicious act of slaughter» on the person or entourage of King Charles the Bald, in preparation for which the perpetrator hid in a forest[39]. Another wrote about the secret plots of the Mora-

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[32] Macháček *et al.*, *Dendrochronologische Datierung*; Hladík *et al.*, *Fortification*.
[33] Lošek, *Die Conversio*, p. 148: «illi toto mundo spectabiles apparuerunt, isti latibulis et urbibus occultati fuerunt».
[34] MGH, ARF, p. 153, *ad annum* 820.
[35] MGH, Astronomer, *Vita*, 40, p. 434; MGH, ARF, pp. 170-171, *ad annum* 826.
[36] MGH, ARF, pp. 147-148, *ad annum* 817-818. On the difficulty of fortifying the north Italian frontier as described in this text: Pohl, *Frontiers*.
[37] MGH, AF, pp. 74-75, *ad annum* 871.
[38] MGH, ARF, pp. 28-31, *ad annum* 769.
[39] MGH, AB, pp. 72-73, *ad annum* 864; transl. Nelson, *Annals of St-Bertin*, p. 119.

vian leader Rastiz, furious at his nephew's allegiance to the Franks – only by God's grace were his plans revealed and foiled[40]. Meanwhile, part of Ermold's negative representation of raiders from Spain was their alleged habit of hiding behind palisades after plundering the Franks' open-skied harvest[41].

These accounts were all highly partial, written from a decidedly pro-Frankish and pro-Carolingian perspective, and their versions of events need to be handled carefully. Even to refer to the actions of the Bretons, Pannonians, Aquitanians and the rest as "rebellions" is to assume the imperialist perspective of our texts' authors. The issue here is not, however, the truthfulness or otherwise of these accounts – it is the terms in which their stories were couched, and the values they implied. The fact that they drew attention to the use of fortification by external enemies was a distinctive feature of these short texts, and it was certainly an authorial choice – there were plenty other options for conveying notions of disobedient and dishonourable behaviour. Their shared distaste for fortifications as associated with hiding, secrecy and resistance to Carolingian power – and perhaps by extension with the absence of Frankish manliness – surely reflects a wider current in the intellectualization of Carolingian imperialism.

3. *Picturing the palace*

There are some hints that this attitude stood in a binary relationship with Carolingian ideas about the *palatium*. The palace was not simply a type of building but also one of the governing metaphors for Carolingian political order as a whole. «Adornment» of the kingdom through construction of palaces was a significant element of Charlemagne's achievement in Einhard's eyes. The king's royal persona was associated with these buildings at a fundamental conceptual level, to the extent that damage to the material structures of the palace could be interpreted as a portent of the emperor's death[42]. The physical presence of various royal palaces stood for the dispersal of royal power across the territory of the empire; and as a concept it described the space within which the distribution of political and religious authority was negotiated and allocated[43]. The palace was also, however, imagined as a characteristically "open" place. Take, for instance, Ermold's description of Louis the Pious's palace at Ingelheim, which is well known for its description of the fresco sequence on the walls of the great hall. Less often noted is the way

[40] MGH, AF, p. 70, *ad annum* 870. Cf. MGH, Regino, *Chronicon*, p. 126, *ad annum* 887 on the Frankish general Henry ambushed by hiding Vikings.

[41] Ermold, *Carmen*, pp. 12-20; transl. Noble, *Charlemagne*, pp. 130-133. Further examples of secrecy as negative: MGH, Regino, *Chronicon*, p. 79, *ad annum* 860 (Charles the Bald fleeing in secret at night), and p. 123, *ad annum* 885 (Hugh son of Lothar II plots a rebellion in secret).

[42] MGH, VK, 17-18, 32, pp. 20-21, 36.

[43] Airlie, *Palace of Memory*; MacLean, *Palaces*; De Jong, *Sacred Palace.*

Ermold talks about the architecture of the palace itself: «Supported on one hundred columns, it has various passageways, many kinds of roofs, a thousand entries and exits, and a thousand rooms»[44]. Here there is no mention of walls. The ideal was openness – a thousand entries and exits. This emphasis is all the more pointed in that it appears amidst Ermold's discussion of Louis the Pious's wars against Murman, the Breton leader hiding in his fortified house. That the Franks did not think of their palaces as fortified is further illustrated by an annalist's report of a group of Vikings seizing the palace of Nijmegen and quickly building a rampart and a wall to transform it into a defensible site[45].

Ninth-century descriptions of what happened inside palaces are rare, but those we have broadly complement Ermold's point about openness. *De Ordine Palatii*, a description of palace administration and imperial government written by Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims in 882 based closely on a similar work from the earlier ninth century, depicted the palace (here in the sense of a generic political centre rather than a specific site) as a type of space where the king exercised power as much through sociability and hospitality as formal control. Hincmar claimed that anyone in the realm, no matter how poor, should have access to the palace and its senior officers at any time. At the regular assemblies held in the *palatium*, the king supposedly circulated among the powerful men of the kingdom who had gathered for the occasion[46]. A handful of stories set by Einhard within the royal palace likewise emphasise accessibility and architectural openness. In the *Vita Karoli* we read about Charlemagne mixing with his men in the pool and at dinner; while in the *Translatio SS Marcellini et Petri* there is an anecdote about one of the king's advisers waiting for him on the balcony outside the ruler's bedroom. The two men then stood at a window where they «could look down into the lower parts of the palace»[47]. Notker of St. Gall expanded on Einhard's stories, describing the palace of Aachen as an endless network of rooms, balconies and windows which bamboozled visiting dignitaries. His Charlemagne stood high in the building, looking down and watching what all his officials were up to at all times[48]. This reminds us that open space need not be communal and egalitarian – even in the notionally accessible world of the Carolingian palace, there was a «spatial hierarchy» with the ruler firmly at the top[49]. A *palatium*, in this conception, was a place in which by definition one could not hide, and where you were always seen by the rightful ruler[50]. In this respect, it was the exact opposite of a *castellum*.

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[44] Ermold, *Carmen*, pp. 156-158; transl. Noble, *Charlemagne*, p. 174.
[45] MGH, AF, p. 96, *ad annum* 880.
[46] Hincmar, *De Ordine Palatii*, 25-30, 35-36, pp. 78-86, 92-96.
[47] MGH, VK, 22, 24, pp. 27-29; MGH, Einhard, *Translatio SS. Marcellini et Petri*, II, 1, p. 243.
[48] MGH, Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, I, 30, II, 6, II, 8, pp. 40-41, 55-56, 59-62.
[49] De Jong, *Charlemagne's Balcony*, esp. pp. 284-286; Airlie, *Palace Complex*.
[50] De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 185-187.

4. *The Carolingian imperial imagination*

All of this adds weight to the suggestion that the *Annales regni Francorum* authors' choice of vocabulary (palaces and *villas* inside the empire, fortifications on the frontiers and outside) may stand for a broader set of ideas about political power and political landscapes. If the palace was a metonym for a landscape of righteous Carolingian authority, orderly and supervised, the castle was shorthand for its antithesis – a contested political landscape populated by elusive rebels. Can we say anything about the influences which informed this way of looking at the Frankish imperial landscape? One obvious place to look, given its significance for Carolingian intellectual culture in general, is Roman literature. Recent work has shown that the Roman imperial frontiers were not as uniform as once thought, and they were likely not structured along clearly defined lines chosen for carefully planned military and strategic reasons[51]. As in the early Middle Ages, logistics had a huge influence on where empire shaded into frontier, and where frontier shaded into the world beyond. Ideology was at least as important as architecture or mapping in creating distinctions between the "us/here" and the "them/there". Some Roman texts seem to articulate a perspective broadly similar to the Carolingian texts we have been discussing. In the second century, the panegyrist Aelius Aristides spoke of the armies «enclosing the civilized world in a ring, like a rampart». Writing a few decades earlier, Tacitus in his *Histories* had claimed that Gaul was a «provincia inermis», an unarmed province, as a way of indicating that it had fully accepted Roman rule. These texts were not, however, influential in ninth-century Francia, nor were they even especially representative of Roman thinking. Aelius Aristides's oft-cited statement was a highly rhetorical reflection of a specifically Greek intellectual sensibility, and writers of that period in any case tended to imagine the empire as unbounded and even universal[52]. Still, we do know that Carolingian authors including Ermold, the Astronomer and the so-called "Reviser" who wrote the alternative version of the *Annales regni Francorum* were connoisseurs of works by Roman authors (including Livy, Caesar, Josephus and Vergil) which were full of stories about Roman imperial expansion by siege warfare[53]. Their reading in Roman history certainly influenced their own writings in style and sometimes content, which – transplanted to the very different context of ninth-century Francia – might have completely different connotations from those intended by the ancient authors[54]. The "Reviser", for instance, was a rare early medie-

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[51] Isaac, *Limits of Empire*; Whittaker, *Rome and its Frontiers*, pp. 1-49, 63-87. Qualifications: Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, pp. 138-144; Symonds, *Protecting the Roman Empire*, pp. 131-132.
[52] Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, pp. 31-32; Whittaker, *Frontiers*, p. 299; Isaac, *Core-Periphery Notions*, pp. 101-110.
[53] Collins, *"Reviser" Revisited*, pp. 204-205; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 27-31; Pollard, *Flavius Josephus*.
[54] See on this theme Lozovsky, *Roman Geography*.

val reader of Livy's *History of Rome*, and his clearest citation comes from a passage where Hannibal, one of ancient Rome's archetypical opponents, was besieged in a fortress[55]. And in book 9 of Vergil's *Aeneid*, a text beloved of Ermold and the Astronomer, one can find criticism of the Trojans – with whom ninth-century authors sometimes identified the Franks – for the shameful and ultimately costly behaviour of hiding behind walls[56]. One of the most famous walls of legend, the barrier against the mythical Gog and Magog erected by Alexander the Great, began life as a story of Josephus's which was repeatedly copied and elaborated in the centuries following[57]. Carolingian intellectuals were also, of course, deeply influenced by Biblical texts, and it would be interesting to investigate the evidence for traces of the Book of Joshua and its account of the conquest of Jericho. We do not need to imagine that ninth-century annalists borrowed mechanically from these ancient authorities to acknowledge that their world view (or at least their way of narrating history) was deeply influenced by them.

At another level, Carolingian thinking about the nature of the frontier is similar enough to examples from other periods that we might see it as something approaching an anthropological constant. The *Annales regni Francorum* descriptions of Saxony as a land of «swamps and pathless places» and Brittany as one of «castles and fortifications in swamps and forests» are strongly reminiscent of later imperial enterprises which saw target territories as ripe for conquest and incorporation into civilization[58]. This kind of discourse «negated» the society and landscape of the colonized by seeing only what was unfamiliar or different to the eyes of the observer, or by characterizing them as literally empty[59]. The idea of the frontier as fortified or even walled as a bulwark of civilization against barbarism, or vice versa, also seems to have been a recurrent metaphor (and occasional reality) in numerous empires throughout history[60]. The early Middle Ages is no exception. A century or so after the Carolingian period, the missionary Bruno of Querfurt's report that the kingdom of the Rus was completely surrounded by a massive fence recalls Notker's account of the Avar "Ring"[61]. The *Annales regni Francorum*, meanwhile, says that the Jutland peninsula was completely sealed off by a wall except for one gate allowing access. This is a reference to the undeniably impressive *Danevirke* begun in the earlier eighth century, but the annalist's exaggerated account reveals as much about his own mental landscapes as it does about the actual extent of the earthwork[62].

[55] MGH, ARF (*Annales q.d. Einhardi*), p. 63, note 5, *ad annum* 782 (referring to Livy, *History of Rome*, XXI, 59).
[56] Virgil, *Aeneid*, pp. 226-227. In general, see Innes, *Teutons or Trojans?*.
[57] Frye, *Walls*, pp. 77-79.
[58] MGH, ARF, pp. 100, 72, *ad annum* 797, 786 respectively.
[59] Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, pp. 93-96.
[60] Frye, *Walls*.
[61] Wood, *Missionaries*, pp. 209-210.
[62] MGH, ARF, p. 126, *ad annum* 808.

Whether or not these background influences had an impact on the imaginations of eighth and ninth-century authors, the most important factors shaping Carolingian ways of seeing were surely those generated by the dynamics of the empire itself. One element of this was the way the Franks told the story of their expansion to themselves, via the *Annales regni Francorum*. In this conquest narrative, the repetitive cycle of kings sending armies out from *villas* to attack "castles", then spending Christmas and Easter holding assemblies back at the *villas* and palaces, was not merely incidental information – it was the central organizing motif of the text's year-by-year structure. The historiographical template set by the *Annales regni Francorum* became in the ninth century the canonical way of narrating the empire's creation, influencing almost all subsequent Carolingian histories in form as well as content[63]. It was not only imitated but also continued by the annalists who narrated the history of the Frankish empire after 830. Their engagement with the text was active, not passive. Some of them literally copied it out and treated it with apparent reverence – Regino of Prüm, for instance, who incorporated it as the centrepiece of his own history, intervening only to improve the Latin of the copy he was using and insert a couple of additional stories of his own[64]. These later authors had their own ideas about imperial landscapes (beyond the scope of the present article), but their reception of the *Annales regni Francorum* reified its mnemonic out-and-back structure and canonized its constructed vision of how the expanding imperial core shaded into the territory of the conquered. It is also worth noting that some specific sieges took on iconic status to Carolingian authors. The siege of Barcelona in 801 was obviously very important to Louis the Pious, in whose reign many of our key sources were written. Louis had taken the city for the empire while a young man. The significance that he ascribed to this achievement is indicated by the fact that Ermold's praise poem to Louis collapsed his early life into an extremely long triumphal account of the city's fall; and by the emperor's own furious reaction when a Frankish army he had despatched failed to protect the city from an attack in 828[65].

Second, the binary of openness vs hiddenness was not just an abstract idea, but was sometimes played out in the performance of Carolingian elite masculinity[66]. Kings were certainly expected to be seen in public by those who mattered. When King Arnulf fell ill at the end of 896 and retreated to «hidden places», this was taken by one contemporary observer as an indication that things were sliding out of control. The contrast to the behaviour of Louis the German, who in 870 kept the show on the road by faking good health to maintain his public image, could not be clearer[67]. Regino's anecdotes about Rudolf

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[63] McKitterick, *History and Memory*; Corradini, *Die Annales Fuldenses*.
[64] MacLean, *History and Politics*, pp. 16-17.
[65] Costambeys – Innes – MacLean, *Carolingian World*, p. 214.
[66] On which see Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks*.
[67] MGH, AF, pp. 71, 130, *ad annum* 870, 897; MGH, AB, p. 110, *ad annum* 870.

of Burgundy hiding «in high places» normally only accessible to goats, and Charles the Bald having to hide because he had lost control of his kingdom following an invasion by his brother, turn on his implicit assumption that hiding stood in an inverse relationship to the exercise of correct royal authority[68]. Aristocratic males were also expected to operate in public. They certainly had houses which presumably reflected their status, but these are mentioned rarely in our sources, and then usually only when functioning as defensive structures in the context of disputes[69]. The more important markers of participation in Carolingian politics were effective networking in the right circles and the management of *honores* – offices distributed by the ruler[70]. In 868 the *Annales Bertiniani* report an armed feud between two counts called Egfrid and Gerald, both of whom are reported to have possessed fortified residences. But these residences are mentioned only in passing: the annalist thought it more important to emphasise that Egfrid's power was based on his control of *honores*, especially the monastery of St. Hilary in Poitiers. And when Gerald lost the king's favour as a result of the feud and vanished from the pages of history, it was his benefices which were confiscated – not his «strongholds», which he apparently kept[71]. A famous negative example of this idea appears in Thegan's description of Count Hugh of Tours being mocked every time he tried to leave his house after his disgrace for failing to come to the aid of Barcelona in 828. The moral of this story (which is quite similar to Frankish mocking of the Breton leader Murman in Ermold's poem) was that Hugh was trapped in domestic space and unable to emerge into and participate in the public world[72]. To be left with only houses, like Gerald and Hugh – or like the last Merovingian in Einhard's *Vita Karoli*, or like the Emperor Charles the Fat after his deposition in 887 – was in Carolingian eyes to be left with nothing that really mattered in ninth-century elite politics[73].

5. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, a few caveats are necessary. We cannot take the vocabulary of the texts cited in this article as accurate reports of conditions on or beyond

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[68] MGH, Regino, *Chronicon*, pp. 90, 130, 142, *ad annum* 866, 888, 894.
[69] MacLean, *Edict*, pp. 50-51.
[70] Airlie, *Aristocracy*; Airlie, *Power and its Problems*; Innes, *Framing*; Costambeys – Innes – MacLean, *Carolingian World*, pp. 271-323.
[71] MGH, AB, pp. 90-91, 115, *ad annum* 868, 871 (the wording here implies that Gerald lost Vienne to the king and gave hostages to the *missi* for his «other *castella*», though it is not clear whether these were residences as opposed to centres he had taken control of during the conflict). Cf. MGH, AF, pp. 70-71, *ad annum* 870 on the Moravian leader Rastiz having to give up his *castella* in defeat.
[72] MGH, Thegan, *Gesta*, 28, 55, pp. 216, 250; Costambeys – Innes – MacLean, *Carolingian World*, p. 298.
[73] MGH, VK, 1, p. 3; MGH, AF, pp. 115-116, *ad annum* 887; MGH, Regino, *Chronicon*, p. 128, *ad annum* 887. Contrast the role of the Roman *domus*: Cooper, *Closely Watched Households*.

the frontiers. Our sources represent the views of intellectuals based primarily in northern Francia who saw the world from the imperial heartlands, and there is every likelihood that those on the frontier itself, or in other parts of the empire such as southern Francia or northern Italy, would have seen the world differently. On top of that, not all frontiers were seen as equal. Most of the examples used here relate to the various eastern frontiers and the one with the Bretons – in other words with the peoples who were most aggressively "othered" by the Franks. Descriptions of Italy, a *regnum* seen as fundamentally more civilized than those to the Franks' east, were quite different. Even from northern Francia, the Italian landscape looked like one characterized by cities (*urbs*, *civitas* – terminology outwith the scope of the present article) rather than fortifications *per se*. In view of these qualifications about the accuracy of the sources, it is also important to stress that I am not arguing that the Carolingian way of seeing landscapes was fictional, or purely a textual artifice. Carolingian palaces were indeed unfortified and, as far as we can tell from those whose architecture can be recovered, quite sprawling and open in plan[74]. Frankish fortifications did play a role in the conquest of Saxony, and the expansion of the empire surely did involve a lot of sieges. As Guy Halsall has argued, one of the primary goals of early medieval warfare was precisely to force enemy leaders to retreat to strongholds rather than fight in the field, in the hope of undermining their authority in the eyes of those they led by making them seem fearful[75].

Ideologies do not, however, have to be conjured from thin air in order to operate as such, nor do they have to be explicit or policed from above. Setting aside the question of how accurate or otherwise their information was, the fact that most of our authors had probably never been to the frontiers they described makes their choice of vocabulary more, not less, revealing of their own cultural filters. It remains striking that even through the Franks sometimes built fortifications, Carolingian authors were reluctant to think of their empire as a fortification-building culture. These Carolingian ways of seeing landscapes hardly saturated the texts we have been using, but nonetheless represented a tendency in the ninth-century imperial mindset. Imperial discourses are repetitive, but not necessarily totalizing or programmatic[76]. The question here is not whether or not Frankish depictions of cross-frontier conflict were true and accurate – it is whether they were narrated in such a way as to reveal assumed points of principle which fed into a Carolingian concept of proper Frankish behaviour. This argument has implications for how we read early medieval descriptions of frontier landscapes and accounts of how conflict was handled in them. This could be a factor in debates about how and why early medieval authors were influenced by classical authors when describing

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[74] Lobbedey, *Carolingian Royal Palaces*.
[75] Halsall, *Predatory Warfare*.
[76] Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, p. 2; Mitchell, *Imperial Landscape*, p. 10.

military matters. It also has relevance to the early history of the medieval castle, which is traditionally analysed using the paradigm of public vs private power. The alternative binary of open/public vs closed/secret/hidden has not been accounted for in the scholarship on pre-tenth century fortifications. The arguments presented in this article may therefore have further implications for the way we write the early history of the castle, and how we conceptualize the change from the empire of the ninth century to the post-Carolingian landscape of the tenth[77].

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Frontiers as zones of public overinvestment: fortresses, ditches, and walls in the northern frontier of the Carolingian Empire

by Marco Franzoni

The aim of this article is to analyse the infrastructural investments made by the Franks to pacify Saxony, and to secure the control of the Elbe River territories. I will mostly use the written sources of the Carolingian era that described, in various forms, the construction of new infrastructures and the conquest of the enemies'. I will also utilize the archaeological data, so as to be able to confirm the accounts of the written sources. Through this analysis I will highlight the central authority's constant effort to control, protect and rule the newly conquered territories of Saxony and the Elbe.

Middle Ages; 8th-9th centuries; Saxon Frontier; Carolingian Empire; Danevirke; Franks; Slavs; Danes; Saxons; fortresses; ditches; walls.

Abbreviations
MGH, AP = *Annales Petaviani*, ed. G.H. Pertz, MGH, Hannover 1826, pp. 7-18 (MGH, SS, 1).
MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses Maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS Rer. Germ., 6).
MGH, Capit. I = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. H.G. Pertz, Hannover 1835 (MGH, Legum, 1).

Frontier zones are usually studied in order to highlight the differences that distinguished the centre from the periphery, so as to be able to understand how central power manifested its control over these regions. From another point of view, focusing on border areas has allowed historians to observe the centre from a new, and different, perspective. Then, if it is true that an «Empire looks different from different angles»[1], one of the most interesting ways to study a medieval state is through the lens of its peripheral regions. These are places of clashes and inclusion; zones where the political vision of the centre is usually imposed through a large variety of actions and investments. Therefore, border zones are the places where imperial rhetoric broke down, and led them to adapt to the local political and social situation[2]. The purpose of this article is to focus on the different infrastructures that the Franks and their neighbours created during the course of the eighth-ninth centuries in Saxony and the region of the Elbe River. The building of new fortresses, as the coordination and limitation of commerce, were direct answers to the new threats and the new challenges that the Franks had to manage to consolidate their power over Saxony and the Saxons. The frontier zone was the stage where the ruler was committed to spreading his authority through investment in movable and non-movable wealth, manpower, political and religious capital. At the frontier zone of Saxony and the Elbe, the Franks built fortresses, churches, markets and centres of power to improve their control over these areas. These investments were made to bind a fragmented and disunited region in a web of political and economic interests and infrastructure of power, that were meant to erase the differences and to subject them to the central authority. In the Middle Ages, borderlands were places of "public overinvestments", quoting Pierre Toubert's sentence, where the efforts of the central authority became manifest through the building of infrastructures and the reorganization of the topographies of power[3]. As Toubert wrote, the main functions of castles have been precisely to mark borders and border areas, to give them materiality, to master them, to protect them and, in short, to insert their presence in the long-term historical landscapes. With the construction of castles and other infrastructures, the Franks manifested their power over a region or a population; they were performing an «opération de prise de possession symbolique de l'espace»[4], a procedure reflecting the symbolic takeover of possession of space.

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[1] Ludden, *The Process of Empire*, p. 135.
[2] Smith, Fines Imperii: Ead., *The Marches*, p. 176.
[3] Toubert, *Frontière et frontières : un objet historique*, p. 13: «surinvestissment de puissance publique».
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 9.

1. *Saxon and Frankish fortresses*

At the dawn of Carolingian history, Pippin of Herstal, Charles Martel, Carloman and Pippin III all fought against the Saxons who, since the sixth century, had colonized the valley of the Lippe and the region of southern Saxony[5]. This vast region of political and religious collision, and probably economic exchange, was vividly depicted by Charlemagne's biographer Einhard, years after the end of the Saxon wars and the death of the emperor himself. This description, written in the *Vita Karoli*, is very useful to help us imagine the reality of this frontier and its landscapes. Of course, the author's aim was apologetic towards Charlemagne and, consequently, not completely objective. Anyway, this description appears to be very close to what the Saxon border zone looked like: «There were regions too which might at any time cause a disturbance of the peace. For our boundaries and theirs touch almost everywhere on the open plain, except wherein a few places' large forests or ranges of mountains are interposed to separate the territories of the two nations by a definitive frontier, so that on both sides murder, robbery and arson were of constant occurrence»[6]. In their neighbourly relationship, the Franks were usually satisfied with the payment of a tribute, but the attitude towards the Saxon tribes was about to change with the rise of Charles, the son of King Pippin, becoming the only king of the Frankish kingdom[7]. In fact, since Charlemagne's first invasion of Saxony in 772, the Franks had pursued the conquest of the land between the Rhine and the Elbe Rivers, and the submission of all the Saxon peoples[8]. From the sixth to the eighth century, the Franco-Saxon border was a region of clashes and encounters, a permeable zone that ran across the present-day Länder of Hesse, Nord Rhine Westphalia and Lower Saxony. This frontier zone, as defined by Matthias Hardt, was «structured around a system of hillforts, which lay within thirty to forty kilometres of one another»[9]. There was no frontier line – this is, in fact, a modern concept – but instead, a large region protected and connected by a web of fortresses and sanctuaries «on both sides of the border»[10]. Archaeological data and the written sources show us that the Saxon frontier zone was a deep region controlled on both sides by a web of fortresses that served to protect fields, flocks, herds, wealth and the human presence in the area. From the Franks' side there were different well-known fortresses, such as the already cited Büraburg in northern Hesse, the Kesterburg and the Amöneburg. On the Saxon side, the best-known fortress was the Eresburg. There were also the castle of Sigiburg, or Syburg, not too

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[5] *Annales Laureshamenses*, pp. 24-26, *ad annos* 718, 720, 738; MGH, AP, pp. 7-9, *ad annos* 718, 720, 728, 729, 738.
[6] Grant, *Early Lives of Charlemagne by Eginhard and the monk of St. Gall*, quote on p. 16; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, 7, p. 9.
[7] McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 45.
[8] Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, p. 281.
[9] Hardt, *Hesse, Elbe, Saale*, p. 221.
[10] *Ibidem.*

far from Eresburg, a castle on a hill called Gaulskopf, south of Warburg[11], and Sythen, probably a fortified place that Pippin captured in 758, and which then disappeared from the annals[12]. These were all fortified centres densely settled during the eighth century, as is revealed by archaeological finds[13].

In 772 Charlemagne marched into Saxony, conquered Eresburg, starting, *de facto*, an escalation of violence that ended only in 804 after the subjugation of all the Saxon tribes from the Rhine to the Elbe River[14]. It is possible that, to secure his new position on the Lippe valley and the control of Eresburg, Charles built a new *castrum* on the west bank of the Weser River. This strategic measure, only mentioned in the *Annales Mettenses priores*, can be understood since it was already used in the previous campaign in Aquitaine[15]. In fact, during his first campaign as king of the Franks in 769, Charlemagne dealt with the revolt of the Aquitanian noble Hunald. On his way to southern Aquitaine, the king built a fort at Fronsac, on the Dordogne River, as a military base to support a further advance, and to secure his retreat[16]. It is therefore credible that Charlemagne acted in the same way in the 772 military campaign. The exact place of this fortified camp, as Bachrach explains, remains a matter of debate, but a possible place is Herstelle, at the confluence of the Diemel and the Weser Rivers[17]. This fortification is later mentioned in different annals under the year 797 in the *Annales Petaviani*, and in the *Annales regni Francorum*[18]. Charlemagne's offensive continued in 775, when the Franks conquered the other strategic fortress of Sigiburg. The importance of the fortresses of Sigiburg and Eresburg is attested by the fact that Saxons tried to reconquer both of them the following year. It is interesting to note that, despite the war that erupted in the Saxon border zone, the Franks did not only build military buildings. We can see this while reading the lines that describe the Saxon siege of Sigiburg of 776 in the *Annales regni Francorum*. The chronicles reported that «cum bellum praeparasset adversus christianos, qui in ipso castro residebant, apparuit manifeste gloria Dei supra domum ecclesiae»[19] («while they [the Saxons] prepared for battle against the Christians [the Franks] in the castle, God's glory was made manifest over the castle church»[20]). It is possible to believe, therefore, that the Franks, once they captured the fortress, built a church to satisfy the religious needs of the new residents[21]. Such a *modus operandi* was perhaps adopted by the Franks in ev-

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[11] *Ibidem*, p. 222.
[12] MGH, ARF, p. 16, *ad annum* 758; Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns (768-777)*, p. 209.
[13] Schlesinger, *Early Medieval Fortifications in Hesse*, pp. 43-44.
[14] MGH, ARF, p. 32, *ad annum* 772.
[15] *Annales Mettenses priores*, p. 59, *ad annum* 772.
[16] MGH, ARF, pp. 28-30, *ad annum* 769.
[17] Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, p. 235.
[18] MGH, AP, p. 18*, ad annum* 797; MGH, ARF, p. 102, *ad annum* 797.
[19] MGH, ARF, p. 44, *ad annum* 776.
[20]   *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 55.
[21] Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, p. 435; MGH, ARF, p. 48, *ad annum* 776.

ery one of the Saxon fortresses and fortified centres that they captured during the entirety of the war. The construction of fortified camps and churches is a strong proof of the fact that King Charles intended to control Saxon lands and integrate them into his kingdom.

Anyhow, the largest construction investment of the Carolingians in Saxony was the creation of the city of Paderborn. The centre of Paderborn, earlier known as *urbs Caroli* in the *Annales Maximiniani*[22], *Urbs Karoli* in the *Annales Petaviani*[23], and *Karlesburg* in the *Annales Mosellani*[24] and only mentioned as «alium castrum super Lippiam»[25] («another castle on the river Lippe»[26]) in the *Annales regni Francorum*, was built in 776, not too far from Eresburg and close to the sources of the Lippe River. The identification of Karlsburg with the city of Paderborn – only mentioned for the first time with this name in the *Annales regni Francorum* under the year 777[27] – is agreed on by different historians[28]. Founded in a strategic location for both military and missionary activities, Paderborn became the most important Frankish building site in the region. The importance that Charlemagne and his court gave to this newly founded city is confirmed by the fact that it became the stage of Charles' first assembly in Saxon territories in 777. The modern city of Paderborn has undergone various archaeological excavations during the twentieth century, which uncovered the different buildings erected by the Franks, helping us to understand its history[29]. Paderborn, as the annals recall and the archaeological data confirm, was already attacked and destroyed by the Saxons in 778[30]. This destruction was followed by a new phase of construction and rebuilding of the city, where the Franks most probably built a new wall made out of stones[31]. Years later, in 799, the Franks completed the construction of a new three-aisle basilica, that Pope Leo III himself consecrated the same year[32]. The case of Paderborn exemplifies the concept of overinvestments that the central authority undertook in border zones. Central investments are a focal point in the process of conquest and integration of a peripheral region. These investments have a huge impact on the surrounding

[22] *Annales Maximiniani*, p. 21, *ad annum* 776: «Franci civitatem fecerunt in Saxonia quae dicitur urbs Caroli et Francorum».
[23] MGH, AP, p 16, *ad annum* 776: «aedificaverunt Franci in finibus Saxanorum civitatem quae vocatur Urbs Karoli».
[24] *Annales Mosellani*, p. 496, *ad annum* 776: «Et aedificavit civitatem super fluvio Lippiae, que appellatur Karlesburg».
[25] MGH, ARF, p. 48, *ad annum* 776.
[26] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 55.
[27] MGH, ARF, p. 48, *ad annum* 777.
[28] McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 165; Landon, *Economic incentives*, p. 43; Rembold, *Conquest and Christianization*, p. 49; Smith, *Europe after Rome*, p. 269.
[29] Gai, *Nuovi elementi sull'architettura palatina*; Gai, *Tradizione o innovazione?*; Gai, *La construction des palais royaux à l'époque de Charlemagne*; *Medieval Archaeology: an Encyclopaedia*.
[30] MGH, AP, p. 16, *ad annum* 772.
[31] Gai, *Nuovi elementi sull'architettura palatina*, p. 100.
[32] *Chronicon Moissiacense*, p. 304; McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 166.

area and the local population; buildings and military constructions do not only manifest the presence of a new authority, but often create new economic and social development[33]. The project of Paderborn, for example, probably made a great impression to the Saxons living in the neighbouring area. The creation of such a city surely attracted a large variety of craftsmen, needed to build the church and *the aula regia*, that the Franks built of stone, with all their ornaments like stained glass, gold furnishings, mosaic pieces and tapestry. In a panorama largely dominated by wood buildings, the king's stone constructions underlined Paderborn's high rank in an environment of frugal landscape[34]. Thus, Frankish penetration into Saxony was characterized, from the very beginning, by an effort of integration and control through the classic tools that empires utilize in the frontier zones: military control, economic integration and religious penetration.

The first phase of the Saxon war, that goes roughly from 772 to 785, was focused on the conquest of the Valley of the Lippe, the occupation of Saxon fortresses, and the submission of the Saxons who lived south of the Weser and the Aller Rivers. As we have seen, during this part of the war the largest investment of the Carolingian authority was the creation of the stage-city of Paderborn, and the conquest and reconstruction of the key-Saxon forts along the Lippe River. The only fortified camp built by the Franks was Herstelle, on the Weser River, then the conquerors focused on the building of churches in the Saxon-occupied forts, and on the founding of the central city of Paderborn. The second phase of the Saxon war goes from 789 to 804, when the Emperor Charlemagne destroyed any further resistance by deporting most of the Nordalbingian Saxons into the kingdom[35]. It is during the second phase of the war, and after the end of the war itself, that the Franks concentrated their infrastructural efforts on the newly-conquered peripheral region of northern Saxony and the Elbe River. In these regions, as is clear from the archaeological data and from the written sources, the presence of Saxon fortresses was very rare or completely absent. This situation obliged the Franks to invest time, energies, manpower and money into the construction of bridges, fortifications and control points, from 789 to 822, when the creation of the Frankish fort of Delbende, ordered by Louis the Pious[36], is recorded. The complete absence of Roman infrastructures, the lack of Saxon ones, and the distance from the heart of the Frankish kingdom obliged the Carolingians to protect the lands west of the Elbe with a vast building investment. In 789, Charlemagne invaded the land of the Wilzi, a Slavic tribe that lived on the other side of the Elbe. During this campaign, the Franks built two bridges on the Elbe

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[33] Ludden, *The Process of Empire*, p. 139.
[34] Gai, *Tradizione o innovazione?*, p. 166.
[35] MGH, ARF, p. 118, *ad annum* 804: «Imperator Aquisgrani hiemavit. Aestate autem in Saxoniam ducto exercitu omnes, qui trans Albiam et in Wihmuodi habitabant, Saxones cum mulieribus et infantibus transtulit in Franciam et pagos Transalbianos Abodritis dedit».
[36] MGH, ARF, p. 158, *ad annum* 822.

River, one of which was protected by «fortifications of wood and earth at both ends»[37]. This was the first time that a Frankish army crossed the Elbe to impose Carolingian authority on the other side of the river.

2. *The Danes and the* Danevirke

At the end of the eighth century, while Charles was occupied with the Avar Campaign, the building of the *Fossa Carolina* and various political matters, the threat of Viking piracy became more dangerous. Thanks to the letters of Alcuin, we are informed that the Franks were well aware of the Viking menace, and also of the sack of the British island of Lindisfarne[38]. Thus, we should not be surprised to read in the *Annales regni Francorum* that Charlemagne ordered in the year 800 to build a fleet on the Gallic Sea, «that was infested with pirates», and that he ordered to «set guards in different places»[39]. The threat posed by the raids of the Danish pirates to the northern coast of the Frankish kingdom and to the sea trades, was very concerning for the Carolingians[40]. In fact, at the beginning of the ninth century, the Franks had to respond to the new threats that were triggered by the Frankish reorganization of the northern regions of the empire. Towards the end of the Saxon war, Charles decided to use the instrument of deportation to eradicate Nordalbingian resistance in the land east of the Elbe[41]. This measure was followed by the installation of the Abodrites Slavic allies into the «district beyond the Elbe»[42]. With this decision, Charlemagne planned to create a sort of buffer state that, in theory, should protect Frankish interest from the neighbouring Danes[43]. Danish response to Carolingian plans did not wait and, while the emperor was settling the Abodrites into the lands north of the Elbe River, the annals report that King Godfrid of the Danes «came with his fleet and the entire cavalry of his kingdom to Schleswig on the border of his kingdom and Saxony»[44]. This show of strength by the Danish king was a reminder to the Franks that now they were in a region that was traditionally part of the Danish sphere of influence.

The existing manifestation of the power of the Danish kingdom is the Danevirke. Still standing in the southern of Jutland, the Danevirke, or Danaewirchi, literally "Work of the Danes"[45], is a series of interrelated defensive earthworks that goes from one side to the other of the peninsula. The total length of the various ramparts of the Danevirke is about 30 km, and it

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[37] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 68; MGH, ARF, p. 84, *ad annum* 789.
[38] MGH, *Alcuini sive Albini epistolae*, no. 20, p. 57, *ad annum* 793.
[39] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 78; Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power*, p. 172.
[40] Landon, *Economic incentives*, p. 50; Nelson, *The Frankish World 750-900*, p. xv.
[41] MGH, ARF, p. 118, *ad annum* 804.
[42] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 83.
[43] Melleno, *Between Borders*, p. 361.
[44] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 83; MGH, ARF, p. 118, *ad annum* 804.
[45] *Medieval Archaeology: an Encyclopaedia*, p. 71.

consists of two defensive lines, the Danevirke itself and a smaller one, called Kovirke[46]. Frankish written sources affirm that it was Godofrid himself who built this large-scale system of rampart to protect and fortify the southern border of his kingdom[47]. However, archaeological excavations and studies demonstrated that the Danevirke is older than 808 and that the real date of construction of the wall is around 737[48]. Nevertheless, this formidable medieval infrastructural work went through almost three or more phases of constructions, so it is very probable that Godfrid decided to reinforce it with new fortifications of a section of the long wall[49]. The Danevirke was an impressive infrastructure that requested the work of thousands of manpower; thus, it is realistic to believe that in Jutland existed a centralised authority capable of imposing on its subjects the obligation to participate in public works. Therefore, the Franks were not the only political actor committed to the erection of infrastructures with the aim of controlling and protecting the territory. The Danevirke, as the others long rampart and ditches works of the Early Middle Ages, such as the Offa's Dyke, in Mercia and Wales, and the *Fossa Carolina* in Bavaria, were not only a military tool, but rather an instrument to control the movements of merchants, to control the surrounding area, concretely to manifest the power of the centre in peripheral areas and to impose the monarch's authority over his subjects. The purpose of the Danevirke was not evidently military, and this is proved by the strategy adopted by the sons of Godfrid during the Carolingian invasion of the Jutland peninsula in 815. The kings of Denmark deliberately decided to abandon the mainland and to seek refuge in a close island, as the *Annales regni Francorum* report, proving, *de facto*, the ineffectiveness of this long-moated rampart as a military fortification[50]. As Paolo Squatriti suggests, the real nature of this kind of «frontiers overinvestment», quoting Toubert's phrase, such as the Danevirke, was more related to the «miniaturization» of the central authority and the imposition of royal authority over the king's subjects[51].

3. *Fortresses and control points on the Elbe River*

As the Danish threat intensified, Frankish building investment in the region became more widespread: from the archaeological data, and from the written sources, we know that from 805 the Franks started to build a series of forts along the Elbe River, and beyond it. Since the year of the Abodrites settlement in southern Jutland and the previously mentioned comings and goings

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[46] Crabtree, *Medieval Archaeology*, pp. 71-74.
[47] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 89; MGH, ARF, p. 126, *ad annum* 808.
[48] Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings*, p. 73; Dobat, *Danevirke Revisited*, p. 38.
[49] *Ibidem*.
[50] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 815; Mathisen – Sivan, *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, p. 46.
[51] Squatriti, *Digging Ditches in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 18.

of the Danish army with their king at the new Frankish-Danish frontier, the Franks undertook the building of a new landscape of power in Saxony and in the Elbe region. Charlemagne was deeply involved in the new organization of the Saxon lands. One of the first measures taken by the Carolingians was the creation of a series of control points on the eastern frontier, governed by royal *missi dominici*[52]. These centres, listed in the *Capitulare Theodonis,* were the only places where trade with Slavs and Avars was permitted[53]. As we can read in the *capitulare*, three of them were in Saxony, on the western side of the Elbe River: they were Bardowick, Schezla and Magdeburg. Then there were several more in Hesse and Bavaria, such as Erfurt, Forcheim, Lorch and Regensburg. These trade centres were controlled by the king's envoys and probably garrisoned by Frankish forces. The *Capitulare Theodonis* did not only indicate who was the *missus* charged of the administration of these centres, like Hredi in Bardowick, Madalgaud at Schezla and Aito at Magdeburg, but also prohibited the trade of swords and armour between Frankish merchants and the peoples that lived on the other side of the border zones[54]. Anyone caught selling dangerous weapons to neighbouring peoples, enemies or allies, would have seen all the supplies confiscated by the guards. Then the stock, as the *capitulare* explains, would have been divided half to the palace and half to the *missus* or whoever discovered it. We have to imagine, therefore, a stringent control over merchants that were obliged to sell their goods only in few well-controlled places, under the supervision of the royal envoys[55]. One year after the capitulary itself, the Franks built two castles on the frontier zone: one on the bank of the Saale River and the other one on the Elbe[56]. The one on the Elbe was built on the eastern bank of the river, right in front of the city of Magdeburg, as the *Chronicon Moissiacense* reports: «Et mandavit eis rex Karolus aedificare civitates duas, unam ad aquilonem partem Albiae contra Magadaburg, alteram vero in orientalem partem Sala, ad locum qui vocatur Halla»[57]. The location of this city was strategically important because it faced one of the main routes going from the West into Slavs territories[58]. As far as we know from reading the written sources, the fortification built to protect the control point of Magdeburg was the first fortress created by the Franks on the eastern side of the Elbe River. In 808 Charlemagne's son, Charles the Younger, was ordered to lay waste the lands of the Slavic tribes allied with the Danes. To march into enemies' lands, Charles built a bridge on the Elbe and then built two castles on the same river, «for the defense against the attack of

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[52] Hardt, *Hesse, Elbe, Saale*, p. 228; Landon, *Economic incentives*, pp. 52-53.
[53] MGH, Capit. I, no. 44 (805), p. 123.
[54] *Ibidem*: «Et ut arma et brunias non ducant ad venundandum; quod si inventi fuerint portantes, ut omnis substantia eorum auferatur ab eis, dimidia quidem pars partibus palatii, alia vero medietas inter iamdictos missos et inventorem dividatur».
[55] Nelson, *King and Emperor*, p. 427.
[56] MGH, ARF*,* p. 121, *ad annum* 806.
[57] MGH, *Chronicon Moissiacense*, p. 308, *ad annum* 805.
[58] Hardt, *Hesse, Elbe, Saale*, p. 228.

the Slavs»[59]. One of these castles was very probably the fort of Hohbuoki, built on an island in what is called today the Hannoversches Wendland[60]. Surprisingly for the period and for Frankish architecture, the Hohbuoki fort is rectangular[61]. This castle was lost in 810, when the garrison of East Saxons that occupied it and the emperor's envoy Odo were captured by the Slavic tribe of the Wilzi[62]. Just a year later, the fort was reconquered and restored, but then disappeared from the annals. Another very important fortified settlement built by the Franks was the castle of Esesfeld, in today's Schleswig-Holstein, on the Stör River. The emperor himself in 809 ordered Count Egbert to find a strategic place in which to build a fort north of Hamburg, so as to be able to protect the city and defend it from Danish incursions[63]. Once the duke found the location, as the *Annales regni Francorum* report, he occupied the site with his troops and began to fortify it[64]. This strategic fortress was already besieged in 817, when an army of Danes and Abodrites rebels ravaged the bank of the Stör River and attacked Esesfeld[65]. The castle was defended by Count Gluomi, commander of the Norse border, that repelled the invaders and preserved this position.

The Franks did not only defend themselves from the incursions of the neighbouring peoples, they also went on the offensive. In fact, in 815 Louis the Pious ordered the imperial emissary Baldrich to march with an army of «all Saxon counts and all troops of the Obodrites»[66] against the Danes, to help the exiled King Harald Klak to reconquer the kingdom of Denmark. The campaign was a failure, with the Danes unwilling to fight in battle the Franks on the mainland, and the Franks unable to reach the Danish army that remained on an island three miles off the shore. The Franks were only able to lay waste to the neighbouring districts and to receive hostages, while there is no mention of the Danevirke fortifications and ramparts. One of the last offensive actions taken by the Franks under the rule of Louis the Pious on the northern frontier of the empire was the capture and occupation of Delbende. In 822, Emperor Louis ordered the Saxons to build a castle at Delbende, on the other side of the Elbe River, and to expel the Slavs that lived there[67]. The fortification of this site in Slavic territory illustrates how much the relations between the Franks and the Abodrites have deteriorated since the death of Charlemagne. In fact, the *Annales* explicitly report that this fortification was built to prevent Slavic incursions. From Esesfeld, north of the Elbe River, to Bardowick, Hohbuo-

[59] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 89.
[60] Hardt, *Hesse, Elbe, Saale*, p. 226; Schneeweiss – Schatz, *The impact of landscape change*, p. 23.
[61] Hardt, *Hesse, Elbe, Saale*, p. 226.
[62] MGH, ARF, p. 131, *ad annum* 810.
[63] *Ibidem*, p. 129, *ad annum* 809.
[64] *Ibidem*.
[65] MGH, ARF, p. 146, *ad annum* 817.
[66] *Carolingian Chronicles*, p. 99.
[67] MGH, ARF, p. 158, *ad annum* 822.

ki, Schezla, Delbende, Magdeburg and its bridge, the Franks built a series of fortresses, bridges and fortified centres to protect their interests and their authority in northern Saxony. These forts were usually protected by a simple moated palisade, not very different from those of the Saxons or the Slavs[68]. This lack of technological differences underlines the fact that the Saxony and Elbe border zones were not places defining sharp lines of exclusion, where a civilized and superior kingdom had to face barbarian and uncivilized neighbours, but rather a permeable periphery of clashes and encounters, exchanges and political interconnections[69].

4. *Overinvestment at the frontier zone*

The evidence tells us that, in southern Saxony, there was no problem of lack of fortresses: in fact the Franks fought hard to occupy those of the Saxons like Sythen, Eresburg or Sigiburg. The real lack of infrastructures was further north, on both sides of the Elbe River, and the real menace that obliged the Carolingians to build new infrastructures such as castles, fortresses, and even a fleet, were the Danes and the Slav tribes north and east of the Elbe River. These peoples were the real threat that worried the Frankish court, once all the Saxon tribes had been defeated and subjugated. As the Roman army on the famous and infamous *limes*, the Franks built several infrastructures for defence and control, for trade and administration. These buildings and control points did not have as their purpose to create an impenetrable wall, but rather to expand the authority of the centre and to project this authority as far as possible, deep into the neighbouring lands. The real problem was about control, on both sides of the river. Frankish power had to be made manifest in practice, to ensure its presence on the subjected people, on the tributaries and even onto the allied people. The northern frontier zone of the Carolingian Empire is a region of widespread central authority overinvestment. Not only did Charlemagne spent most of his life fighting against the Saxons, but he also built a large number and variety of infrastructures to ensure his authority and to pacify the newly conquered territories. Therefore, Saxony and the trans-Elbe region were a place of intense public overinvestment, where the Franks invested a large amount of manpower, time and resources. Frontiers, in fact, required investment to protect and defend them, to control and to organize the movement of people and goods. These investments were usually in form of money, military buildings, churches, administrative buildings, political capital, manpower, administrative and religious organizations. The building of a chapel, of a palace, the construction of fortresses along rivers, the creation of archbishoprics, just like the effort to control movement and commerce

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[68] Henning, *Civilization versus Barbarians*, p. 29.
[69] *Ibidem*, p. 34.

through the frontier, were all concrete expression of a taking of possession. The conqueror needed to build infrastructures of power necessary to control the newly subjected peoples and to defend the interest and the properties of their allies, of the subjects, of the co-opted aristocracies, and of the Franks who decided to live on the fringes of the empire. As far as we are aware, it is interesting to note that the efforts carried out by the Franks in the northern border zones of the kingdom, in terms of manpower, political capital, military and diplomatic activities, infrastructural investments and religious proselytism, have no parallel in any one of the other border regions of the Frankish dominion.

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III

Italian boundaries II: southern frontiers

Representing the space of papal government at the time of Lothar I: the claim of *fines Romani*

by Maddalena Betti

Studying the extent of the physical space over which papal policy was implemented between the late eighth and ninth centuries is extremely complex. The sources are ambiguous and difficult to interpret: the territory over which the popes claimed to exercise their jurisdiction was not necessarily that over which they actually managed to enforce their authority, especially after the fall of the Lombard kingdom; the practices of papal government on their territory are elusive and lacking continuity. Historiography oscillates between an either overplaying or underplaying both the papal political activity in this territory, and the consistency of papal policy. I will deal with the problem of the representation of physical boundaries of papal territory in the biographies of the popes included in the *Liber pontificalis* during the years of the Emperor Lothar I's rule. Before doing so, I will dwell on the break represented by 774, the year when the lives of the popes lose their narrative sections and are reduced to a list of reports on building interventions and papal donations for the benefit of Roman churches. From 774 onwards, therefore, the action of the popes is limited to the Roman urban space. I will then deal with the lives of Paschal I (817-824), Sergius II (844-847) and Leo IV (847-855), to show how the authors of the three lives attempted, first covertly and then more openly and clearly, to address the question of how the papal territory outside Rome is actually defined in political terms.

Middle Ages; 8th-9th centuries; Rome; Italy; Lothar I; Pope Paschal I; Pope Sergius II; Pope Leo IV; *Patrimonium sancti Petri*; *Liber pontificalis*.

Abbreviations
LP = L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vols, Paris 1892.
MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 6).
MGH, DD LdF = *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, ed. T. Kölzer – J.P. Clausen – D. Eichler – B. Mischke – S. Patt – S. Zwierlein, Wiesbaden 2016 (Diplomata Karolinorum, 2).
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1. *Introduction*

Reviving the question of the "political" borders of the territory subjected to papal authority during the years of the Emperor Lothar I means, first of all, dealing with highly debated and controversial historiographical issues. The subject of my essay is indeed a main part of the complex question of the origins of the "State of the Church" (Stato della Chiesa), familiar to Italian historians since the sixteenth century, an issue which emerges at regular intervals, provoking diverging interpretations[1]. We can legitimately refer to the "State of the Church" with complete certainty only from the pontificate of Innocent III onwards – on this point the consensus is unanimous. Everything else has been questioned, beginning with the legitimate definition of the "State of the Church" before the "State of the Church" (*Patrimonium sancti Petri*? Republic of Saint Peter? *Terra sancti Petri*?), and continuing with periodisation, which is the identification of the fundamental stages of a presumably linear and coherent process through which the popes would have assumed temporal power over a specific territory[2].

In recent decades, if on the one hand the narrative of the origins of the "Papal State" proposed by Thomas Noble[3] has in some respects been affirmed itself as the dominant account, on the other, epistemological and methodological critical aspects have been reasserted The legitimacy of the notion of "Papal State" itself before the twelfth or thirteenth century has been debated, and the idea of the papacy as an institutional reality with a stable identity, capable of broad, linear and enduring political programmes, has been disputed[4]. On several occasions, we read of an overestimation of the pontiffs' political capacity and of the stability of the Papal state formation[5].

This is the opinion of Marios Costambeys, who more than others seems to have been able to seek new approaches, to investigate the sources differently and, hence, to attempt new reconstructions of the history of Central Italy, especially in the years of the Carolingian transition[6]. In particular, Costambeys emphasised the inadequacy of the *Liber pontificalis*, a source on which – in his opinion – the reconstruction of events up to the year 774 relies recklessly and excessively, and he reiterated that the Franco-papal agreements are not to be considered constitutional acts of political status (and thus defining papal borders) but rather the expression of the papal claims that had already emerged in the *Liber pontificalis* and papal letters[7]. Instead, he focused on the records of the abbey of Farfa, emphasising how the trends of donations

[1] See Arnaldi, *Origini del dominio.*
[2] See Arnaldi, *Lo stato della chiesa.*
[3] Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter.*
[4] See Classen, *Karl der Große*, and Classen*, Italien zwischen Byzanz.*
[5] For instance, Nelson, *Making a difference in eighth-century politics*, p. 179, or Bolton, *Papal Italy.*
[6] Costambeys, *Power and Patronage.*
[7] *Ibidem*, pp. 306-307.

to the monastery, before and after the immunity granted by Charlemagne, actually allow us to understand the changes in the political balance of the border region of Sabina, and also to reflect more cautiously about the supposed papal territorial expansion in Sabina, a privileged area for its documentary richness but also for the stimulating contributions of Pierre Toubert that have enabled a prolific cycle of regional studies[8]. Costambeys reassesses the idea of a papal territorial expansion in Sabina, supposedly developed during the pontificate of Hadrian I – with a real definition of the political border with a "Carolingianised" Duchy of Spoleto – and then curbed, from 817 onwards, due to the diplomas in favour of Farfa issued by the Emperor Louis the Pious[9]. He rather assumes that individual pontiffs, especially Hadrian I, together with Roman families, acted as «"private" patron-proprietar(s)»[10] towards Farfa through competing with the dukes of Spoleto and the local aristocracies to obtain additional property rights (but also public control of the territory) in Sabina. Here the drawback becomes apparent: the general ambiguity in the sources, firstly the papal ones, which bring together on the one hand the theme of *restitutiones* of patrimonies donated to the Roman Church, and then illegitimately usurped by new owners (Lombards?), and on the other territorial claims (with the configuration of borders)[11]. Are we facing a planned "patrimonial" or political expansion? Can we distinguish between these two types of expansion?[12] And finally, how is this expansion managed (if at all), and on which territories?

My essay stands at the margins of the major issues I have tried to outline in this brief introduction. Moreover, its purpose is not to define the borders of the territories governed by the popes in the first decades of the ninth century[13]. The aim is rather to offer a reflection on how the territory claimed to be papal territory was represented during a specific period, namely the decades following the death of Charlemagne, with a focus on the years of the Emperor Lothar I (822-850). This reflection will be based, despite Costambeys' warnings – though these refer to the decades before the advent of Lothar – on the papal biographies of the *Liber pontificalis*, which I have systematically investigated when taking part in the creation and implementation of the LaCPI database (Languages and Agents of Carolingian power in Italy), a prosopographical database created as part of the research activities promoted by the

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[8] Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*.
[9] See Arnaldi, *Alle origini del potere temporale*, pp. 47-56; Gasparri, *Il ducato di Spoleto*; Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*, pp. 941-945 and 950-953; Marazzi, *Un laboratorio della dialettica*.
[10] Quotation from Costambeys, *Power and Patronage*, p. 288.
[11] On this ambiguity see Bertolini, *Il problema delle origini del potere temporale* and Arnaldi, *Alle origini del potere temporale dei papi*.
[12] This distinction is unacceptable according to Costambeys, *Power and Patronage*, p. 307.
[13] A definition of the borders in Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*, pp. 938-960; Toubert, *Il Patrimonio di San Pietro* e Arnaldi, *Le origini del patrimonio di San Pietro*. See also Sennis, *Un territorio da ricomporre*.

2017 PRIN project *Ruling in Hard Times. Patterns of power and practices of government in the making of Carolingian Italy.* The biographies I found most useful for my purpose are those of Paschal I (817-824), Sergius II (844-847) and Leo IV (847-855).

2. *The* Liber pontificalis*: the silence after 774*

First of all, it is necessary to start with a general consideration of the *Liber pontificalis.* The collection of the lives of pontiffs before 774[14] – and so up to the first part of the biography of Pope Hadrian I (772-797) – represents a source characterized by a great abundance of historical data, especially in relation to the Lombards[15]. In particular, the authors of the first part of the life of Hadrian offer an account of Charlemagne's victorious campaign in Italy and its consequences in Central Italy. They insist on the presentation of a Lombard kingdom collapsing internally and providing important chances for the Church of Rome: foremost among these is the report that the Spoletini submitted to Hadrian I and that the entire Duchy of Spoleto was subjugated «sub iure et potestate beati Petri»[16]. The historical section of the life ends with an account of Charlemagne's visit to Rome at Easter 774, culminating with the description of his donation to the Church of Rome, related to the donation Pope Stephen II had received twenty years earlier from Pippin, and with the bare news of the capture of Pavia by Charlemagne[17].

What is interesting to note is that the editors of the life of Hadrian I (772-797) did not hesitate to report the alleged contents of Charlemagne's donation, apparently with the intention of preserving its memory. It was therefore a specific choice aimed at connecting the biography of Hadrian I to a real constitutive act of a new papal territoriality, shared both at the Lateran and at the centres of Frankish power[18].

What is even more important is that, after the somewhat unclear description of a remarkably vast territorial dominion – *civitates* and *territoria* south of a "border" designated by the line Luni-Monselice, the Exarchate of Raven-

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[14] See Gandino, *La storiografia, prima e dopo il 774*, p. 366.
[15] This is true for the lives from Pope Zachary to Hadrian I (until 774) (with the exception of the life of Paul I). See Gasparri, *Italia longobarda*, pp. 154-160.
[16] LP, I, pp. 495-496. The story of Hildeprand appointed duke by Hadrian I is presented in Gasparri, *Il ducato longobardo di Spoleto*, pp. 112-114. Costambeys is very critical about the veracity of the information, which in his opinion was completely manipulated. See Costambeys, *Power and Patronage*, pp. 301-302.
[17] LP, I, p. 498. The life of Hadrian I is the only source of the territorial claims of the Church of Rome – neither the diploma of Charlemagne (774) nor the *promissio Carisiaca* of Pippin (754) have reached us. The contents were partly included in the interpolated *pactum Hludovicianum*, a diploma issued by Louis the Pious to Paschal I (817). On the pact and further territorial confirmations see Stengel, *Die Entwicklung des Kaiserprivilegs für die römische Kirche*.
[18] Biographies of eighth-century popes are especially intended for a Carolingian readership. This is well demonstrated by Verardi, *The* Liber Pontificalis *in the age of Charlemagne.*

na, the provinces of Venetia, Istria and the Duchies of Spoleto and Benevento (as well as Corsica) – the life of Hadrian I changes completely in its tone: the historical account comes to an end, whereas the biography is reduced to a list of donations made by Hadrian to Roman churches, his restoration projects and administrative initiatives[19].

Such an interruption of the historical account is not limited to the second part of the life of Hadrian I. Later lives, except for that of Leo III, are almost devoid of consistent historical accounts, at least until the life of Sergius II (844-847). This marks a clear change of course, coinciding with the presentation, however simplified, of an important territorial expansion project that claimed to be validated by official documents but which – as we know from other sources – was completely disregarded.

The possible reasons for the silence of papal biographers after 774 are a topic of debate. What is clear is that the *Liber pontificalis* no longer seems to be the place to preserve the memory of the territorial achievements or alleged achievements of the Roman Church. There is no evidence, for example, of the negotiations for the political control of Sabina, a priority topic in the correspondence between Hadrian I and Charlemagne between 774 and 781, nor of the related conflicts with the abbey of Farfa, resolved in favour of the latter by Louis the Pious and Lothar in the first decades of the ninth century[20].

3. *The life of Paschal I (817-824): the space of the donations*

We now turn to an analysis of the biography of Paschal I. Only through non-Roman sources do we know that Paschal I had rather sustained international relations with both the Frankish and the Byzantine world. His policy also caused tensions within the Roman urban society involving the highest members of the Lateran administration[21]. All this is omitted in the biography; there is no mention even of Lothar's coronation in Rome (823) nor – and this is even more surprising – of the so-called *pactum Hludowicianum*, which is the diploma that Louis the Pious issued in favour of the newly-elected Paschal. In that diploma, the «provinces, urbes et civitates, oppida atque castella, viculos ac territoria simulque et patrimonia» – located in the Roman duchy, in Roman and Lombard Tuscia, in Campania (the historical region that coincides with southern Latium) and in Sabina[22] – were placed under papal jurisdiction (with the expression in «iure, principatu atque ditione»).

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[19] According to L. Duchesne, the second part of the life was written in later editions, drawing on and selecting information from the registers of the papal *vestiarium*, while the first part is considered as completed in 774: LP, I, pp. CCXXXIV-CCXLV.

[20] On papal control over Sabina and the tensions with Farfa, see Marazzi, *Un laboratorio della dialettica.*

[21] On Paschal I, Delogu, *Profilo di Pasquale I.*

[22] MGH, DD LdF, n. 125, pp. 312-320.

The life of Paschal has been supposed to be an institutional "narrative", written under the influence of the officials involved in the revolt against the pontiff. In order to avoid inevitable negative judgments on Paschal I, his life would therefore have been drawn up with an emphasis on his munificence, and thus by selecting data from the records of the *vestiarium*, the office in charge of managing the papal treasure[23]. The hypothesis is entirely sustainable[24]. Nonetheless, the absence of any mention of the *pactum Hludovicianum* seems strange, especially considering the space that the account of Charlemagne's donation occupies in Hadrian I's life. Moreover, it is certain that the archives of the Roman Church included a copy of the *pactum Hludovicianum*, clearly because it was recognised as having great founding value, but it did not reappear until the eleventh century, undoubtedly interpolated (after being incorporated) into the *Collectio canonum* drafted by Cardinal Deusdedit. Maybe the text read at the Lateran in 817 was different from the interpolated one that has survived to this day, and did not meet the territorial expectations of Paschal and his closest collaborators? Or was it a deliberate choice not to make public those documents that set boundaries claiming to be still subject to negotiation? Unfortunately, this question is destined to remain unsolved, not least because the original contents of the *pactum* remain hypothetical.

It seems, therefore, that the life of Paschal I is the least appropriate source to add useful elements to the issue of the extent of a papal territory still being defined. The biography, in fact, appears as a list of news on the building activities and donations ordered by the pontiff for the benefit of the Roman basilicas, structured in editorial blocks that follow the indictional cycle[25]. Therefore, the sphere of action of Paschal I is made out to be the city, both urban and suburban.

However, I would like to focus on a few reports in the life, which are usually barely mentioned by scholars, but which are interesting for my purpose. In the list of churches receiving gifts from the treasury, kept at the *vestiarium*, there are at least three non-Roman (i.e. non-urban) cases that are worth reflecting on.

The first information concerns the donation of a chalice and paten of great value to the church of St. Peter in Centumcellae (Civitavecchia)[26]. This report can be related to a specific context: the embassy to the Franks in 821, led by Bishop Peter of Civitavecchia and the *nomenclator* Leo[27]. The memory of Paschal's donation would thus testify to a special relationship of the Church of Rome with the Church of Civitavecchia. However, it also confirms a strong

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[23] On the writing process of the papal biographies, see among others Geertman, *Documenti, redattori*; Bougard, *Composition, diffusion* and more generally McKitterick, *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy*, pp. 1-19.
[24] Verardi, *Il papato alla prova dell'impero*, pp. 28-29.
[25] In detail, Ballardini, *Dai* gesta *di Pasquale I secondo il* Liber pontificalis.
[26] LP, II, p. 59 (indiction 821-822).
[27] See MGH, ARF, p. 155.

connection of the papacy with the centre: in the life of Gregory III (731-741), we read that the pope had the collapsed walls of Civitavecchia raised[28]; and in a letter from Hadrian I addressed to Charlemagne in 776, we read that the pontiff, in order to combat the plague of merchants known as *Graeci*, who traded in Christian slaves, did not hesitate to have their ships anchored «in portu civitatis nostrae Centumcellensium» set on fire[29].

The news of the special donation to the church of Civitavecchia is not neutral: the centre and its church are included, improperly but functionally, in a network of exclusively "Roman" beneficiary institutions, created by the munificent action of the pope, to reaffirm the "Romanity" of the precious maritime port of Civitavecchia, located on the border between Roman and Lombard Tuscia.

Even more interesting are the other two examples of non-Roman donations: not surprisingly, they are both connected with the controversial territory of Sabina. The first concerns a large donation of precious textiles to adorn the church of the monastery of San Salvatore Maggiore, located – it is explicitly stated in the source – «in territorio Reatino»[30]. The monastery, like Farfa, founded by the Lombards and benefiting from immunity by Charlemagne, is already mentioned in the *Liber pontificalis* as the place where the powerful primicerius Christopher, protagonist of the troubled election of Pope Stephen III (768-772), was supposed to have retired[31].

The other report, placed before the traditional close of life, concerns the donation of a valuable *vestes* to the church of Santa Maria in Vescovio in Sabina, the very seat of the episcopal church of Sabina[32].

The two reports betray the great attention Paschal I paid to the Sabina region. However, the biographers do not explain the circumstances of such extraordinary donations which, in a forceful but symbolic way, juxtapose the Sabine episcopal church and the Lombard monastery of San Salvatore Maggiore with the Roman churches.

It is evident that we are in the context of an intense dispute with the abbey of Farfa, as the Farfa documents testify. Unfortunately, the compilers of the life of Paschal do not go any further; their objective, deliberate and not accidental, is to leave a trace of papal action on the territory of Sabina in its broadest sense. This may have been the manifestation of a certain intolerance with respect to the *terminatio*, set in 781 by Charlemagne's legates, the abbots Itherius and Magenarius, between the Roman and Lombard Sabina (that of Rieti, which remained part of the Duchy of Spoleto) of which Hadrian I wrote

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[28] LP, I, p. 421. On Gregory III, Delogu, *Gregorio III*.
[29] MGH, Epp. III, ep. 59, p. 585; Gasparri, *I mercanti nell'Italia longobarda e carolingia*, p. 42.
[30] LP, II, p. 59 (indiction 820-821).
[31] LP, II, p. 63 (indiction 823-824).
[32] LP, II, p. 63 (indiction 823-824).

to Charlemagne,[33] and besides, a *terminatio* specifically reiterated and described in detail in the *pactum Hludowicianum*[34].

In conclusion, in the life of Paschal I we identify information that goes beyond the dominant narrative strategy, typical of the lives following that of Hadrian I, which assumes the action of the pontiff to be entirely Roman-centric. Through the instrument of extraordinary donations, we step out of the urban context to identify beneficiary agents located on an alleged northern border which was particularly disputed during the pontificate of Paschal I.

4. *Sergius II, first and second redaction: the space of invasions (and that of avidity)*

We now proceed to the life of Sergius II (844-847), clearly different from those preceding it. Indeed, the text, at least in the first part, is characterised by historical narration. The editors of the life provide an extensive account of the expedition to Rome of Louis II, sent by Lothar to investigate the legitimacy of the election of Sergius II, the council organised to judge the pontiff, then the coronation of Louis II as king of the Lombards and, finally, the oath sworn by the Romans to the Emperor Lothar[35]. After the historical section follows the information on the special donations that the pontiff made to the churches, deaconships and monasteries of Rome.

The narrative of the expedition of Louis II is useful for our purpose. The journey to Rome of a ruler or emperor, with either peaceful or hostile intentions, is a recurring theme in the *Liber pontificalis* and a somewhat standardised one, according to a precise rituality that takes place in both urban and extra-urban space. The hostile arrival of Louis II in 844 recalls the arrival of Charlemagne in Rome at Easter 774, as described in the life of Hadrian I[36]. Starting from Pavia, Charlemagne crosses the districts of Tuscia and then encounters the *Roman iudices*, sent by the pontiff, thirty miles away; one mile from the city, the *scholae* of the Roman militia and the crowd acclaiming him as an exarch or patriarch, and finally, the pontiff, at the top of the stairs of St. Peter's, with whom he moves inside the basilica to the *confessio* of St. Peter's, the final stage of the journey. The interesting thing is that, before the meeting

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[33] MGH, Epp. III, ep. 69, p. 599 (May-September 781); on *terminatio* in Sabina, Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*, II, pp. 942-943. Gasparri, *La frontiera in Italia*.

[34] MGH, DD LdF, n. 125, p. 317-318: «Eodem modo territorium Sabinense, sicut a genitore nostro Karolo imperatore beato Petro apostolo per donationis scriptum concessum est sub integritate, quemadmodum ab Itherio et Magenario abbatibus, missis illius, inter idem territorium Sabinense atque Reatinum definitum est». This insertion was removed from the text of the *privilegium Ottonianum* (962).

[35] This report in LP, II, pp. 87-89.

[36] On the *adventus* of Charlemagne in Rome, see LP, I, pp. 496-497. On the stages in the *adventus* of Charlemagne in 774 and Louis II in 844, compared to those of Berengar in 915 (in the *Gesta Berengarii*), see Bougard, *Le couronnement*, pp. 336-341.

at thirty miles, a frontier enabling the Roman officials to probe Charlemagne's intentions, the information about the crossing of Tuscia is completely neutral. However, in the case of Louis II's journey, we are faced with a different situation[37]. Louis' army does not have a starting point but enters *in oras Bononiae civitatis* and, from there, proceeds to devastate the territory by perpetrating violence on the inhabitants of the city and the countryside[38] after he meets the Roman *iudices* sent by the pontiff nine miles from the city, and again one mile away, the *scholae* of the Roman militia; Louis II is greeted by the pontiff at the top of the stairs of St. Peter's Basilica and then the two of them cross the gates together to reach St. Peter's *confessio*. What is interesting here is the fact that the *adventus* of Louis is represented as a punitive military expedition; in this context, the editors of the life describe the episodes of violence resulting from the violation of a real political frontier that is claimed to coincide with the *civitas* of Bologna.

Bologna is never mentioned in the lives of the popes prior to Sergius II but is explicitly mentioned in the *pactum Hludovicianum* among the civitates of the Exarchate of Ravenna returned to papal authority[39]. Furthermore, Bologna appears several times in the *Codex epistolaris Carolinus*, especially in reference to the alleged plots, denounced by Pope Hadrian I to Charlemagne, hatched by the Archbishop of Ravenna Leo to gain control of the cities of Emilia, particularly Bologna and Imola[40]. It is important to point out that, for the first time in the life of Sergius II, Bologna is mentioned as a *civitas* marking a supposed frontier between the *regnum Italiae* and papal political lands. It is therefore the narrative of an expedition/invasion that generates the evocation/creation of a frontier.

There is also a second version of the life of Sergius II, the so-called Farnesian version probably written during the pontificate of his successor, Leo IV[41]. This second text offers an original narrative section regarding the alleged misrule of Pope Sergius II and his brother Benedict, and the Saracen invasion culminating in the sack of St. Peter's Basilica[42]. Once again, the account of the invasion provides territorial consistency to papal dominion, the *respublica* as it is defined, which is no longer just a city but a political territory violated and plundered[43]. In addition to the island of Corsica, ruled by Count Adalbert, who restrained the Saracen threat on behalf of Rome (it should be recalled that Corsica was among the territories promised and/or granted by Pepin, Charlemagne and Louis the Pious to the popes), the text refers to a generic network of *subiectae civitates* suffering the Saracen threat; the *litus*,

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[37] On the expedition of Louis II to Italy see Gantner, *A King in Training?* and Noble, *Talking about the Carolingians*, pp. 27-34.
[38] LP, II, p. 87.
[39] MGH, DD LdF, no. 125, p. 317.
[40] *Codex carolinus*, ep. 49, p. 568; see Savigni, *I papi e Ravenna*, p. 336.
[41] See Betti, *The Two Versions*.
[42] Published in LP, II, pp. 97-101.
[43] LP, II, p. 99.

i.e. the coast near the *civitas* of Ostia, is specified as "Roman"; the cities of Ostia and Porto, which the Romans, together with the *scholae* of the Saxons and Frisians, tried to recover in vain, are considered Roman as well. Thus, the Saracen invasion sheds light especially on the space affected by the military operations put in place, belatedly, to deal with the raids that preceded the attack on the Roman basilicas outside the walls.

A generic territorial consistency is also mentioned several times in the previous section, dedicated to the misrule of the pontiff and his brother Benedict. The editors denounce the forced expropriations of the properties of both monasteries and private individuals, *aut infra Romam aut extra*. «Extra Romam» is the papal territory, deprived of its riches due to the greed of the pontiff's brother: it is a vast *spatium* containing *urbes illi subditas et castella et maritima et finitiva illorum*. The spatial dimension that characterises the Farnesian version of the life of Sergius II is further developed in the life of Leo IV.

5. *Leo IV (847-855): a territory to be defined*

The life of Leo IV contains more articulate narratives[44], interspersed with extensive reports on the restorations and donations to Roman churches[45].

The traumatic episode of the desecration by the Saracens of the basilicas of Peter and Paul (846) is among the main themes of the life. At each indiction, biographers detail the restoration work, embellishments and lavish donations in favour of St. Peter's that Leo IV provides – it is constantly repeated – to compensate for the outrage suffered by the basilica. This extraordinary munificence does not exhaust the pontiff's action against the Saracens. Biographers also write that Leo IV personally attended to the restoration of Rome's city walls and ensured the protection of the saints over the city by supervising numerous saints' body translations within the city walls. They continue by adding that he was able to withstand a new Saracen attack by sea, intervening in person at the naval battle in front of Ostia that sanctioned the victory of the Neapolitans over the Saracens (848-849); finally, they mainly attribute the credit to Leo IV for the construction of the walls in defence of St. Peter's basilica (*civitas Leonina*).

Leo IV is credited with a very dynamic attitude: he generates city spaces by taking part in building sites and leading ordinary and extraordinary processions. Leo IV is also described on the move outside Rome: this narrative element, original if compared to the lives of his immediate predecessors, serves to emphasise papal jurisdiction over the visited centres. He is also seen in Ostia, praying while the naval battle between the Saracens and the Neapol-

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[44] The theme of the *Patrimonium Petri* in the life of Leo IV in Herbers, *Leo IV.*, pp. 274-296.
[45] LP, II, pp. 106-133.

itans – sided with the Roman cause – rages: a stratagem to claim victory and to emphasise the Romanity of the coastline threatened by the Saracens.

Along with the news of the battle of Ostia, due to their geographical contiguity, can be connected the more extensive narrative concerning the *civitas* of Porto. As early as 848, the interest of the pope towards the site is confirmed by the news of a rich donation to the church of Santa Ninfa. Around 852, the centre is the subject of a complex manoeuvre hatched by the pontiff: provided with new defensive walls and gates, Porto was ceded, along with a whole series of properties belonging to the Roman Church, to Corsican refugees, chased from their territories by the Saracens, in exchange for full loyalty to the successors of Peter and the Roman people[46]. The episode firstly allows us to portray the pontiff exercising public powers equal to those exercised by the Roman emperors. I also mark the pontiff's interest in the population of an intended "papal" Corsica; and it indicates a desire to rationalise and to control the Roman littoral space through the identification of a centre to which the Apostolic See attributes a special *status* through a *concessio* for the benefit of the newly settled community[47].

In the life of Leo IV, the pontiff's actions also define part of the northern frontier of the papal dominion by focusing on the border centres between Roman and Lombard Tuscia.

What is interesting here is the episode of the *ex-novo* foundation of the *civitas*, Leopoli-Cencelle, which was supposed to receive refugees from the port of Centumcellae (Civitavecchia), by then in decay, according to biographers, because of continued Saracen raids[48]. The new centre was located in the Tolfa mountains, an inland area, twelve miles from Civitavecchia[49]. The biographers of the life of Leo IV write then that the centre was provided with two churches, to which the pontiff donated liturgical furnishings and books, and with fortified walls and gates. They also report that Leo visited Leopoli-Cencelle and celebrated the dedication of the *civitas* by carrying out a procession along the walls, blessed with holy water (the rite, which took place on 15th August 854, is the same as the one for the dedication of the *Civitas Leonina*). The financial investment on the one hand, and such a symbolic representation on the other, suggest that the new centre was perceived to be crucial in the

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[46] LP, II, pp. 216-217. On the episode Herbers, *Leo IV.*, pp. 246-252; see also Marazzi, *Le città nuove*, p. 268.

[47] There is an interesting hypothesis suggesting that the choice of Porto was conditioned by the memory of its election to the municipal rank of *Civitas Flavia Constantiniana* by the Emperor Constantine (Marazzi, *I nuovi insediamenti*, p. 268).

[48] LP, II, pp. 131-132. See Marazzi, *Le città nuove*, pp. 266-267.

[49] Since 1994, the Sapienza University (Rome) has conducted regular excavation campaigns in the archaeological area of Leopolis-Cencelle. Extremely useful, historical and archaeological summary: Bougard – Pani Ermini, *Leopolis-castrum Centumcellae*.

control of the frontier which separated Roman Tuscia from the former Lombard one, later belonging to the *regnum Italiae*[50].

The northern border was already the main concern of Leo IV at least two years before the foundation of Leopoli. In fact, the biographers of Leo IV write that between the 27th of June 852 and December 853, the pope financed the renovation of the walls of Orte and Amelia, damaged by the threat of generic *latrones*[51]. They also account for the donation of a very precious robe to a church in Blera, a *civitas* that is repeatedly mentioned in the lives of the eight-century popes as a relevant border centre dispute with the Lombards[52]. In conclusion, the life of Leo IV reveals his strong interest in the north-western frontier of papal dominion. This interest is expressed in a variety of ways, through the valorisation of places perceived as frontiers, genuine access points to papal territories. Further confirmation of Leo IV's interest in the north-western frontier can be found in a diploma of the pontiff – lost in its original form and probably a forgery, but handed down in a diploma of Innocent III of 1207 – to Bishop Virobono of Tuscania, in which the boundary line between Roman and Lombard Tuscia is clearly drawn[53].

Further traces of a territorial issue beyond the northern frontier can be found, again taking into account the places mentioned in the life, outside the Roman urban space. It is interesting to note the multiple donations for the benefit of Subiaco[54]. The interest, confirmed by the news of Leo IV's journey to Subiaco, mentioned in the *Chronicon Sublacense*, is not motivated in the life. It has been related, however, to the attention the pontiff showed towards the sanctuaries sacked by the Saracens in 846, but also, possibly, to the strategic position of the monastery, located on the eastern border of the papal territorial domination[55].

Finally, two other donations seem to be associated with the definition of the southern frontier, in the wake of the narrative strategy developed in the life of Paschal I. Generous papal gifts are in fact destined for the churches of the *civitates* of Terracina[56] and Fondi[57], which become the last Roman-papal bastions in the south, and will actually be at the centre of the territorial quarrels with Gaeta from the second half of the ninth century[58]. One needs to emphasise here how the biographers, by introducing Terracina and Fondi, betray

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[50] The same applies to Bougard who emphasises the proximity of the Leopolis site on the one hand to the bishopric of Tuscania and on the other to Corneto (Tarquinia) in Bougard – Pani Ermini, *Leopolis-castrum Centumcellae*, p. 132.

[51] LP, II, p. 127.

[52] LP, II, p. 125.

[53] Gasparri, *Le frontiere*. Innocent III's diploma is published by Migne in *Patrologia Latina*, CCXV, col. 1236-1242.

[54] LP, II, pp. 117, 122.

[55] Herbers, *Leo IV.,* p. 278.

[56] LP, II, p. 122. Terracina also expresses its strong Roman-papal identity in its graphic culture. See De Luca, *La scrittura curiale*.

[57] LP, II, p. 12.

[58] See Toubert, *Les structures du Latium*, pp. 948-950.

the pontiff's interest in political events concerning southern Italy. Moreover, in the same biography, Leo IV is represented as the leader of a coalition of the Tyrrhenian cities of Naples, Amalfi and Gaeta as part of an anti-Saracen fight[59]. The interest of the pontiff is justified by the political context, notably the crisis of the Duchy of Benevento, weakened by civil war; the increasingly widespread Islamic presence; the anti-Saracen military campaigns of the Emperor Louis II leading to the recognition by the Lombards of some kind of political authority of the Carolingians in the South of Italy[60]. It was in fact a favourable context in which to revive the ancient papal claims on the south Lombard territory, strengthened by an initial recognition by Charlemagne[61], though later completely set aside. While the biographers of Leo IV do not hesitate to indicate the last papal centres on the border with the Byzantine Tyrrhenian principalities, it is rather peculiar that they do not mention the possible centres that should define the demarcation line with the Duchy of Benevento. The specific desire not to define an alleged "open" frontier would therefore indicate that, at the turn of the 840s and 850s, Leo IV saw an ideal moment for returning to claim, this time successfully, Benevento and its territory, already promised by Charlemagne to Pope Hadrian I.

6. *Conclusions*

The analysis of the lives of Paschal I, Sergius II and Leo IV allows us to observe the increasingly articulated resumption of a territorial issue that had been interrupted in 774, in the middle of the life of Hadrian I. The inclusion in the pontiffs' biography of a patrimonial-territorial donation by Charlemagne, then openly disregarded, makes papal biographers cautious, preferring to limit the historical narrative to a list of building interventions, restorations, embellishments and gifts by the popes for the benefit of strictly Roman churches and monasteries: a rather restricted city space, protagonist of papal biographies, which is reshaped and re-hierarchized with each pontificate.

From the life of Paschal I onwards, biographers have moved beyond the exclusively Roman-centric dimension, while remaining anchored in the narrative structure of the list of special papal donations. Among the beneficiaries of gifts traditionally offered by the pope to a network of Roman churches and/or monasteries are entities located in the border area of the Roman Tuscia and in the disputed Sabina. In the first version of the life of Sergius II, the historical narrative is immediately an occasion for polemics, in a context of the tension with the Emperor Lothar, and indicating the *civitas* of Bologna as the extreme limit of the papal political dominion. In the second version

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[59] LP, II, pp. 117-118. See also Gantner, *New Visions of Community*.
[60] See Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, pp. 240-246.
[61] Bertolini, *Carlo Magno e Benevento*. Also Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, pp. 111-128.

of the life of Sergius II, the Farnesian version, the territorial dimension is very present – that is, *civitates* and territories under papal responsibility are mentioned – but more specific geographical references are completely absent. The only clearly visible space is that of the mouth of the Tiber, theatre of the conflicts with the Saracens in 846.

Finally, the life of Leo IV. Here, again, there is a lack of an organic narrative in which the supposed borders of papal political domination are established. However, it is possible to identify the intent to establish a more precise territorial memory by locating border *civitates* involved in different ways in papal action: the pope founds them; the pope visits them; the pope restores their defensive walls; the pope offers special gifts to their churches. The northern border, the extreme limit of Roman Tuscia, is thus clearly visible, delineated through the identification of new and ancient civitates; an eastern frontier is mentioned with the repeated indication of Subiaco, and the southern Tyrrhenian frontier is defined with the *civitates* of Terracina and Fondi. The silence concerning the frontier with the Duchy of Benevento, on the other hand, appears to be strategic. It betrays in fact the aspiration to gain at least part of those *civitates* and territories promised by Charlemagne to Hadrian I, thereby taking advantage of the changed political contingencies.

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Border pacts and frontier areas in Carolingian Italy

by Stefano Gasparri

Border pacts are an Italian peculiarity in the early Middle Ages. They indicate the existence of a traditional and specific practice of agreements between different powers coexisting on the Italian territory, which is much older than the Carolingian age. This paper, however, focuses only on the latter period, examining first of all the pacts between the Lombards of Benevento and the Neapolitans, then, in the North, the pact of Lothar with the duchy of Venice (840). All these pacts concern rural life and commercial activities and give rise to interesting situations, such as the *condominium* on the lands and the peasants of *Liburia* (a land between Naples, Caserta and Capua), or the recognition of commercial activities that took place across the borders, under the protection of political powers (both in the South and in Venice). None of these texts proves the existence of military frontiers. On the contrary, the most important element that has emerged is the existence of border areas of a politically mixed character, in which the daily life was not conditioned by the existence of a frontier, but by the needs of the agricultural and commercial work.

Middle Ages; 8th century; Carolingian Italy; duchy of Naples; duchy of Venice; southern Lombards, Lothar; boundary pacts; frontier areas.

Abbreviations
MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 6).
MGH, Capit. II = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 2, ed. A. Boretius – V. Krause, Hannover 1897.
MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II = *Die Urkunden Lothars I. und Lothars II.,* ed. T. Schieffer, Berlin-Zurich 1966 (MGH, DD Kar., III).
MGH, Leges IV = *Leges Langobardorum*, ed. G.H. Pertz, Hannover 1868 (MGH, Leges, IV).
MGH, HL = Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. G. Waitz, Hannover 1878, pp. 12-187 (MGH, SS rer. Lang.).
LP = *Le* Liber Pontificalis. *Texte, introduction et commentaire*, ed. L. Duchesne, 2 vols, Paris 1886-1892.

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1. *The legacy of the eighth century*

Boundary pacts are an Italian peculiarity within the Carolingian world. They indicate the existence of a traditional and specific practice of agreements between different powers coexisting on the territory of the peninsula. It was the politically fragmented geography of early medieval Italy that forced to alternate between competition and collaboration. To try to interpret this situation, one must take a step back and go back at least as far as the eighth century, in the Lombard period. From the time of Liutprand to that of Aistulf, a series of significant acts can be enumerated: the first and second pacts with the Venetians;[1] the famous donation of Sutri, which could also be considered a territorial agreement between the papacy and the Lombard kingdom[2]; finally, the pact with the inhabitants of Comacchio, even though it had no frontier value[3]. Moving on to the Carolingian period, and leaving aside the partly different case of the difficult attempts to identify the borders of the Roman Tuscia and Sabina with respect to the Lombard ones[4], we can add the other Venetian pacts and the southern ones.

This list of boundary agreement proves that their history is much older than the Carolingian age, which in this field, as in many others, stands as a continuation of the earlier tradition of the Lombard kingdom, to the point that we are in doubt whether to call the pacts of this latter period Carolingian pacts or – rather – Italic pacts. In any way, in this essay I would like to outline their internal characteristics and try to identify, where it exists – as Geoffrey West has recently done[5] – their common agenda.

2. *Arichis' pacts for the* Liburia

The most ancient pacts of the Carolingian age concern the *Liburia*, an area which corresponds more or less to today's Terra del Lavoro, a land stretching between Naples, Caserta and Capua, known since antiquity for its fertility[6]. According to Jean-Marie Martin's convincing reconstruction, the pacts were issued on two occasions by Arichis II of Benevento: the first in 784, during a

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[1] See below, § 5.
[2] LP, I, p. 407; MGH, HL, VI, 49, p. 182.
[3] The pact was edited by Hartmann, *Zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte Italiens*, pp. 123-124.
[4] The Sabina's dossier is discussed in Gasparri, *La frontiera in Italia (sec. V–VIII)*, pp. 15-16. Borders like that of Sabina under the Carolingian government were internal to the kingdom, but so close to the very heart of the embryonic territorial domination of the Church of Rome as to represent authentic boundaries between different powers.
[5] West, *Communities and* pacta, pp. 367-393. West also takes into consideration what he calls the "papal pacts", i.e. the *Ludovicianum* of 817 and the *Constitutio Romana* of 824, which, however, fall outside the scope of this essay, as the former cannot be considered as a mere border pact, and the latter does not have a border nature at all.
[6] The classical edition of Arichis' pact is MGH, Leges IV, pp. 213-215; in the notes below I shall refer to the new edition of Martin, *Guerre*, pp. 179-184 (the same for the other southern *pacta*).

war against the Neapolitans, to whom the prince tried to impose a pact, which was refused by them as they were victorious on the field; and then the second, in a milder form, perhaps in 787, when the prince tried to protect one's back through an agreement with the Neapolitans in the face of the threat of invasion by Charlemagne. This time the agreement was found and the result was a text – the *Pactiones de Leburiae* – that, although it consists of two distinct parts, for our purposes we can nevertheless consider a single text and consequently analyse it as a whole. The text, very incorrect and sometimes difficult to understand, was only handed down from the famous manuscript 4 of Cava dei Tirreni[7].

The pact regulated the rights of the Lombards and Neapolitans over the lands of *Liburia* and those who worked it, who were mostly unfree peasants. Although the pact was the result of an agreement between two different and autonomous powers, its trend reminds the regulation of conflicts between private individuals, since it dealt precisely with the rights that the individual owners had over the land.

One of the most interesting aspects of the pact is the name of *tertiatores* given to some of the workers of the lands of *Liburia*[8]. In this definition there is a distant echo of the famous chapters of the *Historia Langobardorum*, where Paul the Deacon told the story of the Lombards' settlement in Italy by the *tertia*, an echo that cannot be entirely ignored. Moreover, in the pact there is the recourse, in two cases, to the word *hospitatica*, which also refers back to those famous chapters[9]. We are faced with two words from the early days of the Lombard kingdom, authentic fossils, perhaps not just linguistic ones. As proof of its persistence, the term *tertiatores* reappears, as we shall see, in Sicard's pact of 836.

The *tertiatores* are also mentioned in the oldest private document of the duchy of Benevento, issued in Nola in March 703, where the widow Selberada sells half of two *tertiatores* to the monastery of the Sts Theodor and Sebastian, dependent on the Neapolitan Church, which already owned the other half[10]. This is proof of the existence at the beginning of the eighth century, in a territory not distant from the *Liburia*, of the same mechanisms of Lombard-Neapolitan common management that would be regulated eighty years later by Arichis' pacts for the *Liburia*. We can therefore legitimately backdate the start of this situation, although we are unable to say from when, whether from the early days of the establishment of the duchy – and this would be the

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[7] *Ibidem*, pp. 3-21. An analysis of the south Italian pacts can be found in West, *Communities and* pacta, pp. 384-389.

[8] A proof of the importance of the *tertiatores* is that the content of the pact was defined at the beginning as «pactum [...] de servis et de ancillis et de terris et de Legurias, et de tertiatoribus que communes est inter partes» (Martin, *Guerre*, p. 179).

[9] MGH, HL, II, 32 and III, 16, pp. 90 and 101. On the *tertia*, see the classical book of Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*, pp. 176-205; more recently, Pohl, Per hospites divisi, and Gasparri, *Le basi economiche del potere pubblico*.

[10] *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo*, V, no. 1, pp. 343-348.

most suggestive interpretation – or later. On the other hand, the text of the pacts refers to previous divisions, *per scripta* or *per capitulare*, of lands and serfs between Lombards and Neapolitans[11].

Two collective actors are acting within the pacts, the *pars Neapolitanorum* and the *pars Langobardorum*, referring to the different political dominations in the region. From the point of view of content, the pacts of *Liburia* are a conservative instrument, aimed at preserving, or perhaps better to re-establish – after years of war –, the existing balance, against any possible variation, preventing one of the two sides from expanding to the detriment of the other, both in terms of land and the possession of serfs. It is declared that the Neapolitans must retain ownership of what they had *in dominicatum* for twenty years without paying census to the Lombards, and the same applies to the other side. There are lands, with or without workers, on which no one has claimed ownership, and which must be divided between the two parties[12]. Finally, changes to the status quo are made very difficult, for example by providing for complex procedures to validate *cartulae* testifying to the purchase of land by a Lombard when the *pars Neapolitanorum* disputes this[13]. Moreover, it is forbidden to sell to one party what was due to the other as a quota (the word used is *sors*)[14].

The properties of the two parties therefore intersected with each other, and no boundary line is identified. The *Liburia*, precious for its fertility, was managed in *condominium* between the Benevento principality and the Neapolitan duchy, and the pacts sought to protect both the political status quo and the rights of the owners of their part. All this took place within an area that was the remnant of an incomplete conquest by the Lombards long before, and where – despite repeated periods of war between Beneventans and Neapolitans – a slow interpenetration of private owners from different political dominations had taken place.

Numerous chapters of the pacts concern land labourers, whose status is difficult to define, due to a very varied terminology: not only *tertiatores* are mentioned, but also *massari, censiles homines*, serfs. As for the *tertiatores*, their importance is proven by the fact that, if a dispute arose about the property of funds without workers, it was necessary to establish which *tertiatores* had previously been allocated to those specific funds, in order to be able to trace their pertinence to one or the other of the two *partes*; to this end, one had to carefully investigate «to which *hospitatica* they were pertinent in ancient times»: *hospitatica*, here and in another chapter, should mean "land on

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[11] Martin, *Guerre*, p. 180.
[12] *Ibidem*, p. 179.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 182.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 180.

which *tertiatores* are settled"[15]. *Hospitatica* and *tertiatores* indeed seem to constitute the basic framework of the local agricultural society.

The mention of *servi* or *tertiatores communes* poses another serious problem of interpretation[16]. It is not easy to understand how one could have serfs in common, unless we intend them as servants who, although belonging to different estates, nevertheless had to manage activities on common parts, such as grazing on uncultivated land; or servants who, more generally, had to perform collective servitudes at village level. Thus, at least for certain labour services, they could refer to masters on both sides. Perhaps, the condition of the *tertiatores* was different: it is possible that they were personally free, since in the Arichis' pacts they are distinguished from workers explicitly defined as servants; moreover, in Sicard's pact they appear to be subject to tax obligations, thus of a public nature, which were incompatible with a servile legal condition. If the *tertiatores* were indeed free labourers, in the above-mentioned case of the two *tertiatores,* whose half Selberada had sold to the Neapolitan monastery, it could have been the sale of half of the annuity owed by them rather than that of half of their person[17]. Moreover, the common functions connected with agricultural work could explain the need to prevent the flight or leaving of the peasant labour force, to ensure the agricultural production of a key territory for the supply of both the Benevento principality and the Neapolitan duchy. This latter concern barely leaks out from Arichis' pacts and is much more evident in Sicard's later pact, in which the *tertiatores* were explicitly protected, prohibiting the Neapolitan side from imposing further tributes on them besides those they were already paying according to the ancient custom[18]. In this case, too, these workers were evidently common to both parties.

3. *Sicard's peace with the Neapolitans*

Compared with Arichis' pacts, the content of Sicard's one of 836 is much richer. The pact is presented as a «concession of peace by land and sea», for five years, made by Sicard, prince of Benevent, to John, elected bishop of Naples, to the *magister militum* Andrew and to the inhabitants of the duchies of Naples, Sorrento and Amalfi, at the end of a long period of almost uninterrupted military conflict between the Lombards, who were pressing towards the Tyrrhenian coast, and the Neapolitans[19]. Peace was at the heart of the

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[15] *Ibidem*, pp. 182-183 (esp. cc. 1-2-3); (c. 2): «ad qualia hospitatica fuerunt pertinentia antiquitus».
[16] *Ibidem*, p. 179 (*tertiatores*) and c. 5, p. 183 (*servi*).
[17] This is the thesis of Di Muro, *Stratificazioni sociali*, pp. 552-555, who also highlights the possible correspondence between *censiles* and *tertiatores*.
[18] Martin, *Guerre*, c. 14, pp. 194-195.
[19] Edition of Sicard's pact: MGH, Leges IV, pp. 216-221; Martin, *Guerre*, pp. 185-200. For a recent comment on the pact, see above note 7.

pact: the Beneventans promised to prevent and give notice of attacks against the Neapolitans, to give no support to the attackers and to make no requisitions; and the same applied to exchanged parties[20].

As part of the pacification, rules were established to guarantee the freemen who had taken refuge in Benevento. Other rules particularly protected the *exercitale*s (on the Lombard side) and the *milites* (on the Neapolitan side), who represented – each for his part – the entire class of free men[21]. However, peace had a price: in fact, the Neapolitans undertook to pay the customary tribute to have peace, for the entire five years[22].

The sea then breaks into the pact, and with it trade. The text states the prohibition for the Neapolitans to buy and sell the Lombards as slaves *super mare*, and this latter prohibition also applies to *tertiatore*s bought by the Neapolitans from a Lombard master: in this way we learn that the Neapolitans were trading in slaves[23]. However, within the borders of the Benevento principality, merchants from both sides were present, and they could "run their business" («negotium suum peragere») without the risk of suffering seizure or other injury. According to the same logic, free transit on the rivers of the Capuan territory was granted to *negociantes*, *milites* or any other inhabitant of the Neapolitan duchy, and, if the merchants' boat was damaged, the duke renounced the right of shipwreck, thus demonstrating his desire to boost Neapolitan trade within the principality[24].

War, justice and repression of violence, an attempt to encourage and at the same time regulate trade, and finally protection of the common labour force: these are the strong themes of Sicard's pact. Within it, the influence of Lombard law is dominant, and it is interesting that the clauses concerning penalties are similar to those that can be found in private law, reflecting the hybrid nature of this type of negotiation. However, many chapters of the pact have been lost and we only have the titles of them, so we can hardly imagine their content: many of them concerned *tertiatores*, whose importance is thus confirmed.

4. *The division between Benevento and Salerno*

The last southern pact of the Carolingian period is the *pactum divisionis* of the Benevento principality of 848/9, which has the form of a precept, issued by the Beneventan prince Radelchis to his counterpart of Salerno, Siconulf, at

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[20] *Ibidem*, c. 1, pp. 186-187.
[21] *Ibidem*, c. 6, p. 190, for the free fugitives (the servants, however, had to be returned to their masters); for *exercitales* and *milites*, cc. 7, 9, 19, pp. 191-192 and 198.
[22] *Ibidem*, c. 2, pp. 187-188: moreover, if they have violated the pact, or have opposed the levying of the tax, the Neapolitans will have to pay the large sum of 3,000 *solidi*.
[23] *Ibidem*, cc. 3-4, pp. 188-189.
[24] *Ibidem*, cc. 5 and 13, pp. 189-190 and 194.

the end of a long civil war that split the southern Lombard aristocracy in two parties. This pact is less significant for the discourse I am conducting here, and furthermore, it has recently been thoroughly examined, so I can be very brief[25]. In the pact, the prevailing requirement, alongside that of determining the territories of the two principalities, is that of dividing, in equally clear ways, everything concerning the properties, including the dependencies of the churches. The usual rules concerning the exercise of justice are listed, in cases that involved the inhabitants of the two principalities, and the spoils of civil war are also healed. The pacification rules include those concerning the restitution of refugees and, above all, those relating to Radelchis' promise not to rely, in fighting the Salernitans, on the Franks and Saracens, both representing threatening presences within the two principalities[26]. Actually, an alliance with the Franks was possible, albeit a dangerous one. Behind the division itself one could glimpse the action of Louis II, who at the time of Radelchis' precept was still in the south of Italy[27].

The actual division is made by first listing a series of gastaldates that are granted to Salerno, and then a series of boundaries between Benevento on one side and the three large territorial areas, Capua, Salerno and Conza, into which the other principality was divided. But these fines are indicated in a very generic way, naming a series of localities where the boundary signs would be, which only in one case, at Frigento, between Benevento and Conza, are characterized by a concrete sign, a *stafilum*, i.e. a pole[28]. Too little to infer the existence of real borders, and even less of borders guarded by armed men, even if Radelchis mentions, on two occasions, the *marcae* and once the officers in charge of them, the *marchani.* Thus the *Divisio* partly resums, at a distance of about a century, the terminology used by Ratchis in his laws of 746[29]. This is the evidence of a certain archaism – also revealed by the use of the term *waregang* to indicate foreigners –, linked to its proximity to the rules of the Lombard edict, which characterizes the precept of division, as, moreover, had characterized the more ancient pact of Sicard[30].

Many doubts remain, because the texts of the southern *pacta* are often obscure, due to a difficult manuscript tradition. But what we can certainly rule out is the existence of "military lands" of the Neapolitan duchy, which would date back more or less to the origin of the organisation of the lands of *Liburia*, at the time of the Lombard's conquest. This, however, was Jean-Marie Martin's influential opinion, which was mainly based on a misreading of the

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[25] Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, pp. 225-231. Edition of the pact: MGH, Leges IV, pp. 221-225; Martin, *Guerre*, pp. 201-217.
[26] Martin, *Guerre*, c. 3, p. 202.
[27] Zornetta, *Italia meridionale longobarda*, pp. 240-265.
[28] Martin, *Guerre*, c. 10, p. 206. On the meaning of *stafilum*: Toubert, *Les structures*, vol. 1, p. 309.
[29] Martin, *Guerre*, cc. 16-17, p. 208; *Le leggi dei Longobardi*, Ratch. 13, pp. 272-273. For an analysis of the Ratchis' laws, see Pohl, *Frontiers in Lombard Italy*.
[30] *Ibidem*, c. 12, p. 207 (*waregang*); *Le leggi dei Longobardi*, Roth. 367, pp. 106-107.

documentation, and which has recently been criticized[31]. Martin interpreted the repeated mentions of *militia* or *pars militiae* in the very late documents of *Liburia* (as well as in the Sicard's pact) as references to lands granted to the Neapolitan army, facing similar lands granted to the Lombard warriors, the *arimanni*. Actually, these expressions indicated only lands belonging to owners of the Neapolitan duchy, given the well-known general definition of *milites* referring to the male inhabitants of Italic regions of Byzantine tradition: *pars militiae*, in short, is equal to *pars Neapolitanorum*. Moreover, Martin's starting assumption, that of the presence, on the Lombard side, of the so-called *arimanniae* was wrong, because the non-existence of the latter is now proven beyond doubt[32]. And just as the *arimanniae* did not exist, Neapolitan military lands did not exist. This is not to deny that the confrontation, in *Liburia* and other areas of friction between Lombards and Byzantines, was also of a military nature, but there is no trace of settlements of military colonies. However, it is not possible to exclude the existence of strong points of control along an albeit uncertain boundary line between the principality and the Neapolitan duchy[33].

5. *A treaty with ancient roots: Lothar's pact with the Venetians*

This is the complex picture of the southern pacts. If we move north, there we find the most important pact of the Carolingian era, the Lothar pact of 840, which (like that of Sicard) was intended to last only five years and instead formed for centuries the basis of the relations between the Venetian duchy and the powers of the mainland[34]. The pact concerned in particular the relations between the Venetians and the neighbouring inhabitants of the Italic kingdom; the Frankish emperor Lothar had ordered it to be put in writing at the humble request of the Venetian duke Peter Tradonico[35].

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[31] Martin, *Guerre*, pp. 101-137. Recent criticism: Di Muro, *Stratificazioni sociali*, pp. 558-562.
[32] See what I wrote in the introduction of this volume, with related bibliography.
[33] This the opinion of Di Muro, *Stratificazioni sociali*, pp. 555-558, who considers standing «un più o meno organizzato sistema di controllo della frontiera» (p. 557), especially after 815, when an almost permanent state of war between Lombards and Neapolitans was reactivated, and explain in this way the change in terminology between Arichis' and Sicard's pacts: actually, while the former referred only to Lombards and Neapolitans, the latter mentioned instead *exercitales* (or Lombards) and *milites*. Even if we admit this interpretation, this does not mean necessarily considering *exercitales* and *milites* as groups permanently engaged in border control operations and deeming them, therefore, different from the other freemen, as Di Muro himself seems to assume (*loc. cit.*) on the basis of P. Delogu, *Ritorno ai Longobardi*, pp. 34-35. In any case, Di Muro avoids falling back on the classic theory of the *arimanniae* and specifies that *milites* and *exercitales* are to be understood only in the sense of frontier guards (p. 559). However, another explanation for the change in terminology, without calling into question overly defined border controls, is that the latter was a simple reflection of the war climate of those years.
[34] MGH, Capit. II, no. 233, pp. 130-135. See West, *Communities and pacta*, pp. 367-379.
[35] MGH, Capit. II, no. 233, p. 130: the pact was issued «suggerente ac supplicante Petro, gloriosissimo duce Veneticorum».

Lothar's pact is the result of a temporal stratification, at three main levels, of the agreements between the Carolingian sovereigns and the Venetian duchy, starting from 807 and reaching as far back as 840. There is also an older level, dating back to the eighth century, before the Carolingian conquest of northern Italy, because within the pact the clauses of all the agreements made in the past between the Byzantines and the powers of the Italian mainland were recovered, namely those – which I have already mentioned at the beginning – with the Lombard kings Liutprand and Aistulf, referring to the years 713 and 750-751[36]. Then, in succession, there are the agreements made by the *Graeci* with Pippin in Ravenna in 807, of which the Frankish Annals also give us news, and the agreements that were probably part of the peace made by Charlemagne in 812 with the emperor Michael I, the so-called peace of Aachen. The exact content of this treaty is not known, but from the Frankish Annals we know that part of it concerned Venice[37]. Finally, there are the chapters added by Lothar in 840. To identify exactly all the layers of the pact, chapter by chapter, is evidently an illusion, which has been long, in vain, pursued in the past[38]: but its internal stratification is beyond dispute.

The proof that the pact was the result of Lothar's benevolence is also given by the granting, the following year, of a *praeceptum* from the emperor confirming to the Venetians all their possessions within the Italic kingdom[39]. If interpreted on the basis of the power relations that actually existed, Lothar's pact thus acquires its concreteness, losing the mythical contours of the first proof of Venetian independence, which the local historiography has long attributed to it.

Discussing this theme, the so-called "independence" of Venice, is not, however, part of what interests me here, namely the fact that the pact of 840, with all its stratifications, reveals to be at its base a pure and simple frontier agreement. This emerges clearly in the two chapters, where the borders, along the river Piave, between the kingdom and the Venetian duchy, defined at the time of Liutprand and later of Aistulf, are confirmed, and the movements of the flocks are regulated, confirming that they can graze undisturbed up to the borders mentioned earlier[40].

If the Lombard layer of the pact is easy to identify, it is difficult if not impossible to distinguish exactly the different layers of the Carolingian age. It is probable, however, that the clauses providing for mutual pacification belonged to the age of Charles and Pippin, and the same goes for the commitment not to raid each other's territory, to return prisoners, runaway servants

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[36] MGH, Capit. II, no. 233, cc. 26 and 28, p. 135.

[37] *Ibidem*, c. 2, p. 131, for the precise reference to Pippin's pact; MGH, ARF, p. 124, *ad annum 807* (pace of Pippin with the Byzantines); p. 133, *ad annum 810* (return of Venice to Byzantium), and p. 136, *ad annum 812* (general treaty of peace between the Franks and the Byzantines).

[38] Cessi, *Pacta Veneta*, pp. 175-237.

[39] MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II, no. 62 (841 IX 1, «Teudonis villa palacio regio»), pp. 170-171.

[40] See above, note 37.

and murderers on both sides and to guarantee the resumption of normal life in the border territories of the kingdom and the duchy after the war phase closed by the Peace of Aachen. The analogy with the Pact of Sicard is obvious[41]. In addition, the Venetians pledged to come to the aid of Lothar *cum naval exercitu* in the event of attacks by the Slavs[42].

War was only one phase within the life of the region. In the pact appear other regulations that concerned the rural populations and provided for the possibility of harvesting and then flowing timber into rivers and the protection from any possible seizure of herds of mares and pigs. Read together with those dating back to the Lombard period on the free grazing of flocks, these rules outline a pact that, in addition to the aim of maintaining order – which was not easy, especially in the years of open conflict that ended with the peace of Aachen – had at its core the protection of the rural populations and the very needs of Venice, which was then facing its real dawning phase as a city and which required a lot of timber to consolidate the land and construct the buildings of the new *civitas Rivoalti*[43]. Lothar's pact did not erect boundary walls or castles, but regulated the daily life within a vast area that remained largely unified beyond its various political dependencies.

In Lothar's pact there are also hints of regulation of trade movements, the *negotia inter partes*, as we found them in the pact of Sicard. Of great importance is chapter 17, which authorised the movements of the Venetian merchants on the rivers of the Italic kingdom, and the movements of the merchant of the kingdom on the Adriatic Sea, and which tended to prevent abuses by the officers in charge of collecting duties on goods: duties which, on the Po rivers, were certainly linked to the pact stipulated at the time of Liutprand with the Comacchiesi[44]. What emerges is a dense web of agreements, solidly implanted on bases dating back before the Frankish conquest, that regulated the major points of possible friction, along borders that were completely permeable, and that concerned the populations for both their agricultural and commercial activities. From this latter point of view, it is no coincidence that Lothar's pact was contemporaneous with the Venetian commercial take-off, which was now firmly underway. And it is interesting to note that in the pact also appears the prohibition to "make" eunuchs, which could be an indicator of an activity of the Venetians linked to the slave trade[45].

[41] MGH, Capit. II, no. 233, cc. 1-6, p. 131; West, *Communities and* pacta, p. 385.
[42] MGH, Capit. II, no. 233, c. 7, p. 132.
[43] *Ibidem*, cc. 24-25, p. 134; on this phase of Venetian history, Gasparri, *The Origins of Venice*.
[44] MGH, Capit. II, no. 233, cc. 16-17, p. 133. See also above, note 3; on the pact with Comacchio, Gasparri, *Venezia fra i secoli VIII e IX*.
[45] MGH, Capit. II, no. 233, c. 33, p. 135. Sull'importanza del commercio degli schiavi in età carolingia, McCormick, *New Light on the 'Dark Ages'*.

6. *Border agreements in early medieval Italy*

Some concluding remarks. Denying the existence of linear borders, guarded or not by armed soldiers, or castles (as, for example, has been sometimes assumed for the Venetian lagoon), does not mean that there could be no boundary marks on the ground. Material boundaries were traced by means of excursions over the terrain made by experts, often elders, supported by emissaries of the powers involved, as was also the case for internal boundaries within the kingdom, between private territories or between civitates or dioceses. Limiting ourselves to the Carolingian period, we know that in the age of Charlemagne, in Sabina, *fidelissimi ac seniores testes annorum plus minus centum*, i.e. "faithful hundred-years-old witnesses", indicated the boundaries of the *territorium Savinense* that belonged to the Church of Rome, delimiting it with respect to the Lombard Sabina that was part of the duchy of Spoleto. It is probable that in 713 duke Paulicius and the *magister militum* Marcellus, mentioned in the oldest layer of Lothar's pact, established in a similar way the limits of the territory of Civitanova, accompanied by elders from both sides. These limits could be marked, as was the case for private land, with stubble dummies, marks on trees, with stakes or stones[46]. The mention, in a diploma of Pope Leo IV, of the existence of a *pes Leuprandi*, almost certainly a specially marked stone, placed to mark the boundary between Norcia and Blera, the former Lombard, the latter Roman, is a proof of this; and so is the *staphile* mentioned twice in the sources, in the South and in Tuscia[47].

However, by far the most important element that emerged from the analysis of the pacts is the existence, on the margins of the different political realities existing on Italian territory, of border areas of a politically mixed character, in which daily life, linked to the needs of agrarian and commercial work, took place in a unitary manner, ignoring the existence of an internal border, if there was one (see the Lothar pact), or doing practically without any border, as was the case in *Liburia*, as we have seen. Moreover, in the border areas there were similar rules regulating trade relations, which always (except for brief moments of war), ignoring borders, had held the various parts of Italian territory together, albeit through sometimes cumbersome and difficult negotiations. The unimportance of borders is also demonstrated by the fact that geographical indications, in the pacts I have analysed, were in fact non-existent (with the obvious exception, of course, of the division between Benevento and Salerno).

The creation of border areas capable of peacefully managing the conflicts and the interests at stake, on either side of the borders themselves, is an activity that characterizes the sovereign or quasi-sovereign powers of the Ital-

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[46] For the Sabina and the *terminatio* of the borders of Civitanova, see above, notes 4 and 37. In general on the boundary marks, Lagazzi, *Segni sulla terra*.
[47] Gasparri, *La frontiera*, pp. 13-14; see also above, note 28.

ian peninsula over the course of some two centuries of its history. The many similarities between the pact of Sicard and that of Lothar, one in the Lombard area, the other in the Carolingian one, further support this conclusion. Activities and negotiations that had undoubtedly been stimulated by important and contingent political events: Aistulf's imperial ambitions, the Frankish conquest, the war and then the peace between the Franks and Byzantines, the end of the civil war between Benevento and Salerno; however, they were grafted into the background that I have tried to describe, and which explains the particularity of Italy's situation within the wider Carolingian world into which it had been inserted, without losing, however, its most peculiar characteristics.

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Cultural boundaries, epigraphic boundaries

by Flavia De Rubeis

The concept of borders, examined from the point of view of the epigraphs, reveals how the use of inscriptions was a well-established strategic device among the elites: in particular, the knowledge of the value and efficacy of the writing displayed (as the cases of Venice and Croatia demonstrate), especially when considered within horizontal and vertical borders, indicates great attention to the epigraphic forms and formalisms employed. Such knowledge of epigraphic practice thus contributes to the construction of a lasting and widespread *epigraphic landscape*.

High Middle Ages; epigraph; epigraphic landscape; Latin palaeography; Venice; Croatia.

1. *Cultural boundaries, epigraphic boundaries*

In order to be able to speak of boundaries in the field of graphic culture – and more specifically with reference to the writing of epigraphs High Middle Ages – it is necessary to resort to the concept of graphic area. A graphic area identifies those territories where one graphic system prevails over other coexisting ones. Such a writing system is characterized by morphologically stable elements. From this point of view, it seems correct to place epigraphic production within a graphic area, considering the frequent relations that scripts may establish with the system (or systems) to which the book and documentary scripts refer.

Thus, in places where different graphic areas come into contact, hybrid scripts may emerge. As a result, different types of writing, which are not consistent among themselves, participate in the creation and stylization of these

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hybrid writings. These are, in other words, contaminations that generate extremely fluid systems, frequently not stylized and subject to morphological variations (in terms of the appearance of the letters).

Based on the palaeographical study that defines the graphic forms and from which the concept of graphic area derives, we have the notion of linguistic landscape, of which writing is one of the main instruments of multilingualism and multiculturalism, i.e. «the study of the linguistic landscape (LL) focuses on the representations of language(s) in public space. Its object of research can be any visible display of written language (a "sign") as well as people's interactions with these signs»[1].

But even in these terms it would be reductive to circumscribe the message it transmits to the materiality of the text alone. And here too, still resorting to the interpretative tools of the notion of linguistic landscape, it is necessary to extend to the content of the epigraphic text Bakhtin's observation that «language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others»[2].

In the field of epigraphy, the linguistic landscape finds further specification in the epigraphic landscape, narrowing to some extent the very productive field of the linguistic landscape. When considering the epigraphic landscape, an inscription is not just a document or a text produced according to certain types of writing, but rather the outcome of a process in which several elements come into play that are distinct and at the same time strongly dependent on each other.

In examining some case studies in the Scottish area according to what is the interpretative model linked to the concept of epigraphic landscape, Kelsey J. Williams has proposed «a model for understanding epigraphic objects by reading along two axes: visual-symbolic-textual and stone-space-landscape, each of which influence the other and each of which are productive of new and entangled meanings»[3].

An epigraph is not just a text destined to last, but a true vehicle of intent. The messages are numerous and layered, expressing the intentions of a single individual or a group of individuals; they indicate a common feeling or a specific intention. All these elements are entrusted to the writing (understood here as graphic expression, signs), the medium, its location and visibility. In other words, it is a strategy of visibility that draws heavily, more or less consciously, on graphic, formal and physical repertoires to best convey text and paratext.

Within the graphic areas, therefore, the use of more or less coherent writing systems (whatever their field of use: book, document, epigraph) can also

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[1] Van Mensel – Vandenbroucke – Blackwood, *Linguistic Landscapes*, p. 423.
[2] Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel*, p. 294.
[3] Kelsey Jackson, *Towards a Theoretical Model of the Epigraphic Landscape*.

be seen as a conscious instrument of cultural and social expression of the groups, or of the individual, who determined their creation, according to one of the aspects of the epigraphic landscape, with the meaning seen here.

From this point of view, one can also speak of graphic particularism, according to Giorgio Cencetti's expression in reference to early medieval book writings, covering both a territorial space (different writings according to different territories) and the type of society that produced the writing, i.e. writings linked to categories of writers[4].

2. *Graphic areas and epigraphic boundaries*

It therefore seems obvious to imagine boundary zones between the so-called graphic areas where hybrid systems exist, consisting of a mixture of forms derived from several scripts in use along the boundary lines themselves. Within these systems, there are also differences dictated by different patrons with different requirements.

In contrast to graphic particularism, the concept of boundaries does not examine an area within which one script is active (or at least dominant), but rather the areas of use split between several systems and social components that use the script.

If we now focus our attention not on a graphic area, but on a single place within it (such as an urban or rural space, an abbey, a monastery or a church), it is not uncommon to find writing borders that could be defined as both horizontal and vertical, real boundaries that sometimes cannot be crossed between several graphic systems used in the same context (such as the epigraphic one, for example). By horizontal boundaries, I am referring in particular to the use, within the same timeframe, of several graphic systems in the same social context. These horizontal boundaries are characterized by the use of scripts that do not communicate with each other, or are unable to evolve into a single writing system. Vertical boundaries are, within the same writing system, the graphic forms that are morphologically differentiated and adapted to the needs of different patrons (such as the epigraphic capital E and the uncial E). Looking at a single place, or scriptural context, a fragmented context that, when considered by individual scriptural witness – be it epigraph, manuscript or document – may sometimes appear incoherent. Conversely, if we consider the different manifestations of writing as a whole through the filter of horizontal and vertical boundaries, the resulting picture may appear more cohesive. The concept of horizontal and vertical boundaries can provide useful and important indicators of the value that is assigned to the writing form and its use, in the direction indicated by the interpretative model of the linguistic landscape and thus by its extension into the epigraphic landscape.

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[4] Cencetti, *Dall'unità al particolarismo grafico*, pp. 236 ff.

3. *Epigraphic landscape*

From this point of view, I have used the case of Venice and the surrounding area, due to its position in an area of confluence between different graphic systems and extending the investigation to contemporary Croatian production.

The questions are: given the different epigraphic writings documented in the Venetian territory during the 7th-11th centuries with the focus on the 9th-11th centuries, how able are these writings of interfering with each other? What are the elements that make it possible to circumscribe the cultural areas, i.e. the social groups to which the epigraphic productions refer, and thus to define an epigraphic landscape?

The chronology involving this group of inscriptions starts from the mid-7th century and reaches the end of the 10th century, and concerns artefacts that are referable to the Venetian lagoon and the city itself. However, before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the inscriptions mentioned, I would like to focus on a particular aspect of production in the lagoon area and on the mainland limited to the territories affected by the Venetian presence.

From a reconnaissance carried out in view of the publication of the volume of *Inscriptiones Medii Aevi Italiae* dedicated to Venice and its province[5] the first fact that clearly emerges is the marked difference between the production of the 6th-10th centuries and that of the following 11th-12th centuries: of the total 446 inscriptions surveyed (between direct and indirect sources), the distribution of inscriptions in Latin script is as follows: 30 inscriptions for the 6th-10th centuries; 224 in the 11th-12th centuries. Of the epigraphs in Greek script, 16 belong to the 6th-9th centuries, 130 to the 10th-12th centuries.

Now examining the materials from the point of view of their provenance, for the 6th-10th centuries an initial distribution throughout the Venetic territory is followed for the 8th-10th centuries by an initial convergence on the islands of Torcello and Murano. Starting from the end of 9th century the provenance shifts towards Venice, to reach an almost complete concentration on the city from the end of the 12th century.

This numerical variation, which also corresponds to a tendency towards territorial concentration, makes the data as a whole significant, highlighting and confirming a trend that finds a similar response in the remaining Italian and transalpine territories from the 11th century onwards[6].

With the 12th century (notwithstanding the forward thrust linked to the epigraphs in the mosaics of San Marco's basilica which for the 12th century alone count 112 Latin and 19 Greek inscriptions, to which are added 38 Latin and 100 Greek inscriptions in the Pala d'Oro)[7], the trend confirms the growth

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[5] The volume, by the author of this essay covers the city of Venice, the islands, and the entire province of Venice from the 6th century to the 12th century.
[6] De Rubeis, *Scritture nazionali*, pp. 549-580.
[7] Data from *La Pala d'oro*, and Andaloro *et al.*

already highlighted since the 10th century and indicates a surge along the 11th and 12th centuries with 112 Latin inscriptions (I recall for a better understanding of these differences the small number of 30 inscriptions alone between the 6th and 10th centuries) and 30 Greek inscriptions (compared to a total of 16 inscriptions between the 6th and 10th centuries)[8].

In terms of the writing and the types of characters used, and taking into account the long chronology examined here, the area is characterized by the presence of numerous systems. In particular, there are 255 inscriptions in Latin characters, 146 in Greek, 4 in Kufic, 4 in Hebrew and 1 Runic.

In terms of content (again, notwithstanding the fact that many epigraphs have survived in a fragmentary state for which the identification of type and function is not possible), inscriptions with captions stand out due to their high number. These are followed by funerary inscriptions, many of which are on reused material (slabs, sarcophagi); dedicatory inscriptions (mosaic, slabs and ecclesiastical furniture); and temporal indications (dates on ecclesiastical floors). Graffiti for the chronology examined is poorly represented, although it is present in Torcello as well as in Venice for the 12th century.

Turning now to the Latin texts, there is a preponderance of inscriptions with captions or exegetical texts, and with a funerary function. The most represented Greek texts are captions or exegetical, with a preference for *nomina sacra*.

Latin is predominant in dedication inscriptions, with a large concentration for the 9th-11th centuries (with the exception of the Torcello inscription of the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, which is dated to the year 639)[9]. The funerary inscriptions come from various areas of the lagoon, but here too it is worth emphasizing the concentration of materials related to Torcello and Murano (for the first production, sarcophagi, reused, and slabs)[10]. Among these, for the 9th century, I would like to point out the nucleus composed of materials from the Benedictine monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto on the western edge of the lagoon, currently housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Venice, to which we will return in a moment. Among the materials from the lagoon, I would like to emphasize the frequent use of sarcophagi[11] frequently accompanied by funerary inscriptions, such as the sarcophagus fragments conserved at the Museo Provinciale in Torcello and originating from the mon-

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[8] Of course, the framework is partial, taking into account how much has been lost at present, but it nevertheless indicates a trend.

[9] De Rubeis, *L'iscrizione del 639 di Santa Maria Assunta di Torcello.*

[10] For example, the sarcophagus fragment from the monastery of Sant'Ilario of Ammiana, preserved at the Museo Provinciale in Torcello; for Murano, reference is made to the inscriptions preserved at Santi Maria e Donato and at the Museo del Vetro: a survey is in Agazzi, *Sarcofagi altomedievali.*

[11] Sauro – Moine – Ferri, *Venezia e la laguna tra IX e X secolo.*

astery of Santi Felice e Fortunato in Ammiana (Venice), such as the sarcophagus of Giovanni Villari from the late 9th century (Fig. 1)[12].

This is the general overview for the Venice area and the mainland. Looking now at writing for Venice and the lagoon, it is necessary to point out that epigraphic production started from a point of notable lack of experience in terms of writing continuity from the late antique tradition, as opposed to what was the case in the inland areas of Veneto, and more generally in the upper Adriatic.

Nearby Altino, with its artefacts from the Roman period, although late, does not in fact seem to constitute a precise point of reference for the development of writing in the area. Nor can Padua and Rovigo be brought into the equation for their writing production, for which the census of the *Inscriptiones Medii Aevi Italiae*[13] indicates a significantly reduced number of inscriptions for the 6th-9th centuries, with an irregular rise up to the 12th century. Specifically, the distribution table indicates a total of 49 inscriptions. Of these, 5 for the 6th century; 3 for the 7th century; 7 for the 8th century; 5 for the 9th century; 2 for the 10th century; 4 for the 11th century; 23 for the 12th century.

The comparison with Vicenza, Treviso and Belluno, which are not particularly rich in written testimonies for the centuries prior to the 9th century (with the exception of the 30 graffiti in the basilica of Santi Felice e Fortunato in Vicenza, whose dating covers a chronological span from the 7th to the 9th century), shows the following trend, starting from the catalogue of the volume of the *Inscriptiones Medii Aevi Italiae* dedicated to the three provinces[14]. An initial substantial production (12 inscriptions for the entire area for the 6th to 7th centuries) is followed by a progressive decline during the 8th century (6 epigraphs, excluding the graffiti of the basilica of Santi Felice e Fortunato). A further decrease occurs in the following centuries (5 inscriptions for the 9th century, 4 for the 10th century, 5 for the 11th century) and it is only from the 12th century onwards that the trend is definitely reversed with 15 epigraphs in the catalogue. In the 12th century, the increase in epigraphic production is maintained and can be set in relation to two different events: the revival of epigraphic production that affected not only the area but the whole of Europe and, for the specific territory of north-eastern Italy, the earthquake of 1117.

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[12] Preserved in fragments in the Torcello Museums, Provincial Museum, Murano, Galleria Franchetti, Venezia Ca' D'Oro, n. inv. 330: «[--- in n](o)m(ine) D(omi)ni n(ost)ri Ie(s)u Chr(isti) [---] Am(en). In huc tumuli claustra requie[scun]t Ioh(ann)i Vyllari me[m(bra)---]. Om(ne)s qui legitis orate D(ominu)m pro eo. Am(en)». See Agazzi, *Sarcofagi altomedievali*, p. 570.

[13] The data is taken from the volume currently being printed of the *Inscriptiones Medii Aevi Italiae (VI–XII centuries)*, dedicated to the cities of Padua and Rovigo and their respective province. I would like to thank Nicoletta Giovè, editor of the volume, for having allowed me to see the data before publication.

[14] For the catalogue of inscriptions, see *IMAI*, 3. That the increase of 15 inscriptions must be put down to reconstruction activities following the 1117 earthquake does not seem to be entirely excluded, as the dating of all the artefacts after the mid-12th century seems to indicate: see the chronology in *IMAI*, 3.

In particular, the inscriptions that belong to the 12th century are essentially found in the second half of the century, many linked to the reconstruction of churches, monasteries and basilicas, such as the basilica of Santi Felice e Fortunato in Vicenza, where the inscriptions (now partly removed and preserved in the current Museo Diocesano overlooking the basilica itself) unequivocally testify to the work carried out on the portal, crypt and gates[15].

In terms of writing, for these areas and in general for the entire production in the provinces of Padua, Vicenza, Treviso, Belluno and Rovigo[16], the trend would seem to be quite similar to what we can observe for Venice. In this area, in fact, after an initial phase that was predominantly non-specific in terms of the morphological aspect of the letters (with the exception of the artefacts in Santa Giustina in Padua, commissioned by the praetorian prefect Rufus Venantius Opilio ante 524, whose writing appears extremely close to the coeval models of Ravenna, and today located in the atrium of the *sacellum* of San Prosdocimo)[17], production does not seem to be defined in a stable manner by graphic characterization, at least until the 9th century. This trend actually places the entire hinterland quite close to what was happening in the Venetian area.

The scriptural framework, and in general the epigraphic landscape of the entire area, are substantially coherent in their graphic and textual expressions and in the distribution of production over the centuries covered.

4. *Venice and its epigraphic landscape*

From this all in all regular and even fairly homogeneous trend in the extended territory examined so far, starting from the end of the 8th century, and especially during the course of the 9th, Venice moves on in a different direction with respect to the area mentioned, modulating and characterizing the inscriptions at different levels of production.

In this, in my opinion, two elements come into play: a first one, linked to the emerging groups that made writing an element of self-representation (I am thinking of the *pergulae* or, more generally, of the ecclesiastical furnishings of the Torcello and Murano area, where the lay component played a significant role); a second one, directly linked to the first, to the possible existence of lapidary workshops to which these groups referred.

The quality of artefacts linked to patrons belonging to the family groups of the emerging elites, produced in the lagoon area first and then later more closely linked to the city of Venice, indicates a close and growing relationship

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[15] Cfr. *IMAI*, 3, nos. 58-62.
[16] For the areas of Belluno, Treviso and Vicenza, see De Rubeis, *Introduzione paleografica*, pp. 7-10.
[17] See De Rubeis, *Note epigrafiche*, no. 39, p. 149, tav. XVIII; no. 52, pp. 162-163, tav. XXI; no. 53, pp. 167-168, tav. XXI.

between writing quality and the elites themselves. On the basis of this relationship, starting from the end of the 8th century and with the first half of the 9th century, production was articulated according to stylizations that differed in the morphology of the letters, and by the patrons.

Apart from graphic products of a very poor level of writing, such as the 8th century dedicatory inscription to San Lorenzo found in Venice[18], the writing used is, on the whole, characterized by a series of stable elements from the 8th century onwards. These elements are: the working technique with a well-defined triangular groove; the absolute respect for the bilinear system; the module of the letters tending towards the square; the horizontal strokes of the letters extended; the morphology of the letter D in delta, of the letter G in double Cs opposite each other. These are indicators that refer to the Lombard capital script in use in northern Italy and, more specifically, to that typology that Nicolette Gray calls «popular school»[19].

An example of this is the dedicatory inscription of Santi Maria e Donato in Murano, made on reused material, and currently walled into the church façade. The text of the epigraph, which is in a serious state of deterioration, bears the dedication of the presbyter «Iohannacius: [de] donis D(e)i eg(o) || Iohannaci p(res)b(iter)o̧ || fier[i] pre[cepi]»[20] (Fig. 2). The same presbyter is probably also responsible for the inscription preserved today in the Murano Glass Museum, bearing a dedication on a *ciborium,* also from Santi Maria e Donato in Murano, and attributed to the 9th century: «[in]dignus Iohannaci p(res)b(ite)ro̧ [---]»[21]. This epigraph – in a very poor state of preservation – is very close to the reused pillar dedication inscription mentioned here, and to the artefacts in the same church[22]. The closest comparison is the inscription of *Domenicus tribunus* and his wife *Constancia*, with their son, dedicatees of the artefact: «[---]t s(an)c(t)e Marie D(e)i genetricis et beati Estefani martiri ego indignus et peccatur Domenicus t[ribunus---][--- Cos]t[a]ncia et filius meus timporibu[s---]»[23].

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[18] Torcello, Museo Provinciale, inv. 660; *Museo di Torcello*, no. 14. The handwriting of the artefact shows considerable irregularity in the form of the letters, with strongly unequal sizes, misalignment on the staff, as well as processing technique.

[19] Gray, *The Palaeography of Latin Inscriptions*, pp. 38-167.

[20] «De donis D(e)i ego// Iohannaci pr(es)b(iter)// *f*ieri pre[cepi?]»: for Calvelli, *Reimpieghi epigrafici,* p. 126, the patron would probably be of Byzantine origin.

[21] I do not accept the edition of the text in Vecchi, *Sculture*, no. 153, p. 104: «DIGNUS IOHANNA CIPR D».

[22] For the dating of the decorative motifs of the inscription in the Torcello Glass Museum relating to *Iohannacius*, I refer to Agazzi – Valenti, *Corpus della scultura alto medievale. La diocesi di Altino-Torcello*, no. 15-09 (provisional numbering), currently in press. I would like to thank Michela Agazzi for allowing me to see the results of the research and publication in advance.

[23] Gray, *The Palaeography of Latin Inscriptions,* p. 113, no. 95, which integrates the bricked-in fragment with «torcellanus episcopus»; the reading of Agazzi, *Un ciborio altomedievale*, no. 12: "Domenicus tribunus" is accepted here. The inscription is preserved today in two fragments, the first walled outside the apse of Santi Maria e Donato, first register, north wing: «[---] t s(an)c(t)e Marie D(e)i genetricis et beati Estefani martiri ego indignus et peccatur Domenicus t[ribunus---]»; on the fragment see Agazzi-Valenti, no. 13-49 (provisional numbering). The sec-

(Fig. 3). The entire group of inscriptions is characterized by the module tending to the square, the peculiar shape of the letter D with a "delta" angled on the staff, the G consisting of two opposing Cs, the extension of the letter strokes, the shape of the nasals M and N with the crossbars high and not grafted to the vertices of the staffs and finally the O of reduced module. The affinities with the two inscriptions of *Iohannacius,* and also consistent with the sculptural apparatus, lead to a dating within the first half of the 9th century, excluding the dating to the 7th century for the dedication on the reused pillar in Santi Maria e Donato mentioned above.

5. *The Carolingian script in northern Italy*

The first changes in this script, a "Lombard capital type", can already be seen in the first half of the 9th century. These changes correspond to what was also happening in other areas of northern Italy. An example of this is well represented by the epitaph of Abbot Magnus[24], where elements in Lombard capital are flanked by letters already in Carolingian capital epigraphy. Among the most relevant elements are the square form of the M, the rediscovered extension of the strokes, the O again tending to a round shape and no longer oval.

The changes in the field of epigraphy are matched by the transformations we find in both book and document scripts. Without going back over the stages of the arrival of the Carolingian minuscule and the transformations it produced, through the book, on the book and epigraphic scripts present in central-northern Italy, we can however observe how in these territories, at different times, but in any case by the end of the second half of the 9th century, the contributions of Carolingian culture brought about a radical substitution of the existing types of writing in all contexts of use, i.e. books, documents and epigraphs.

With the first half of the 9th century, we were on the threshold of a phase of repositioning of epigraphic writings, during which production was characterized – as in other parts of Italy and Carolingian Europe – by the presence of graphic elements recovered through the manuscript book from the early Carolingian period, with particular reference to distinctive scripts[25]. This is

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ond fragment, integral with the previous fragment of dedication, is kept in the Museo del Vetro in Murano and bears the mention of *Constancia*: «---][--- Cos]t[a]ncia et filius meus timporibu[s---]»; for the dating of the sculpture, see Agazzi – Valenti, no. 15-07.

[24] Brescia, Musei Civici di Arte e Storia, funerary inscription, mid-9th century; to be identified with an abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Leno (BS). See Sgarzi, *Iscrizioni bresciane*, no. 36, pp. 88-89.

[25] On the distinctive scripts in manuscripts of the Carolingian area see the context of the overall production in Kessler, *Die Auszeichnungsschriften in den Freisinger Codices*; examples of Carolingian epigraphic capital writing are offered by *Die Inschriften des Landkreises Bergstrasse*, nos. 1-8. On the restoration of the epigraphic capital between the 8th and 9th centuries

the use of distinctive scripts that, echoing the idea of the graphic hierarchy of late antiquity, placed within an ideal order the epigraphic capital as the main script, followed (in order) by the rustic capital, then the uncial, the semi-uncial and finally the text script. This order, extremely rigid in the fixed hierarchical position of the scripts, could not be reversed and, consequently, the first script in importance was the epigraphic capital – the first to be seen and imitated.

Among the earliest evidence of this renewed interest in distinctive writings in epigraphic capital is the Evangeliary of Godescalc assigned to the years 781-783[26]. The manuscript is written with high quality apparatus scripts characterized, among other letters, by the presence of the C in the square form, as in the captions of the evangelists Mark, Matthew and Luke on cc. 1r and 1v and 2r[27]. The distinctive script of the Evangeliary still appears to be in a stabilization phase (cf. the use of the square C destined to be abandoned in the course of the 9th century in the book context), especially when compared with the later production in Carolingian script. The point of comparison for the evolution of the distinctive script is with the manuscript preserved in Bern, cod. 250[28], from the first half of the 9th century. In this manuscript, an epigraphic capital alphabet appears on c. 1v, that seems to imitate models of imperial epigraphy. The full restoration of the square form, the contrast between thick and thin strokes, the very slight apex on shafts and strokes, as well as, of course, the morphology of the letters (which excludes the square C) refer to this script. When compared to the alphabet of the Bern Codex, the capital used for the distinctive script of the Godescalc Evangeliary presents the form of the letters still slightly compressed laterally and the apexes on strokes and staffs are executed in the double form of a triangle and a curvilinear apex.

The presence of the square C in this early production, most likely linked to the scriptoria of Tours for the first attestations, was destined to find an important following in epigraphic scripts, where it would remain attested even after its increasing rarity in the book context at the end of the 9th century.

This process of transferring writing models from the manuscript book to the graphic systems in use for epigraphs appears fairly early. The few writing experiments of the Merovingian period were quickly abandoned in favour of the reintroduction of the epigraphic capital proposed by the Carolingian book, and the Carolingians themselves, as Cécile Treffort demonstrates, quickly grasped its significance not only from a graphic point of view, but also and above all from a social point of view[29].

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in northern Italy, and the influence of Carolingian epigraphic culture, see De Rubeis, *Modelli impaginativi*.

[26] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAL 1203. CLA V 681 (< https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000718s >).

[27] < https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000718s/f1.item >.

[28] Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 250. The manuscript is dated 823 for cc. 1-13v (< https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/it/list/one/bbb/0250 >).

[29] Treffort, *Mémoires carolingiennes*.

The process of diffusion, or imitation, of the Carolingian book and its distinctive script was thus soon destined to affect all areas of the kingdom, even where previous epigraphic experiences continued to be used without any particular changes, at least by the first half of the 9th century.

Among the earliest evidence of this newfound interest in distinctive scripts in epigraphic capital is the Evangeliary of Godescalc[30].

From these writings, the transition to epigraphic production was very rapid, and imitations of these forms also appeared in Italy from the first half of the 9th century onwards. An important case in point is the group of inscriptions coming partly from the monastery of San Salvatore in Brescia and partly from the monastery of San Benedetto in Leno, today preserved in Brescia at the Civici Musei di Arte e Storia. These include the group of epitaphs of nuns and abbesses of the women's monastery of San Salvatore[31]. The entire group is characterized by the use of a script that is clearly derived from Carolingian models: the C in the square form, the extended strokes, the traverses of the M placed on the base line, the square module of the letters. Among the materials from the monastery of San Benedetto of Leno, I would like to mention the epitaph of Abbot Magnus, the inscription in elegiac couplets of the priest Tafo from 897[32] (one of the earliest testimonies of dating to the year in Italy and among the earliest in Europe) and the epitaph of Abbot Alberic[33]. The three artefacts testify to the transition not only in terms of graphics, but also in terms of the renewed textual repertoire, from the Lombard to the Carolingian tradition. Abandoning the rhythmic structure of the text, typical of Lombard inscriptions, the use of the elegiac couplet returns in this group; references to Alcuin, beloved of Carolingian epigraphic production, appear.

Thus, with the textual and writing change in northern and central Italy, even the more eccentric areas with respect to *scriptoria* where Carolingian writing was already fully deployed on all levels (documents, books, epigraphs, as is the case in Verona) indicate the progressive entry of this script.

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[30] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAL 1203. CLA V 681 (< https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000718s >).

[31] Sgarzi, *Iscrizioni bresciane*, nos. 31-33, pp. 75-81.

[32] *Ibidem*, no. 38, pp. 93-99. De Rubeis, *La tradizione epigrafica*. Robert Favreau (Favreau, *Epigraphie*, pp. 296-297) expresses a substantially negative opinion, considering Tafo's inscription to be a kind of agglomeration of quotations that is not particularly successful. It is a product in elegiac couplets arranged over 10 lines (originally), with internal quotations that denote textual knowledge of numerous authors, through mnemonic textual composition, and this, in my opinion, leads to a reassessment of its cultural significance, thus leading me to disagree with Favreau's judgement.

[33] Sgarzi, *Iscrizioni bresciane*, no. 34, pp. 82-84.

6. *Venice and its graphic landscape*

This is the case of Venice and the arrival of the epigraphic capital. We do not know much about the existence and circulation of manuscripts related to the new Carolingian script in the Venetian sphere during the 9th or early 10th century. Help in this direction is offered by the presence of the Benedictine monasteries that, from the first half of the 9th century, found hospitality in and around the nascent city of Venice. These included the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto on the edge of the lagoon, founded in 819 by the Particiaci Doges, and the female monasteries of San Zaccaria and San Lorenzo[34].

The Benedictine monasteries were to be endowed with manuscripts not only for the liturgy, but also for daily reading practices as required by the Rule. In fact, we know clearly from the Rule itself how reading is an integral part of monastic life, with the defining of reading times and references to texts for community readings[35].

It would, therefore, seem logical to imagine for the nascent monasteries in the lagoon and the city itself an initial endowment of manuscripts. We must imagine a library about which we cannot speculate in terms of the overall consistency for general textual types. We can, however, be certain of the presence of manuscripts related to the liturgy and the functions that the Rule itself indicates for reading, manuscripts containing the Old and New Testament at the very least[36]. An example of a monastic library is offered by the catalogue of the monastery of Montecassino preserved on c. 69*r* of the Cavense Cod.2, dated to the end of the 8th century[37]:

> Brebe facimus de ipsi codici: in primis Regum I, Salomon, storiale, Prophetarum, Homelie Bede, Homelie de dibersis doctores, colectariu de dibersis doctores, Scintillu, Danihel, Eptaticu codex betere I, collectaru minores I, Cronica I, Psalteriu I, Etthiomoligiaru I, Istoria longobardoru I, lectionaru I. Insimul totidem sunt cotdici XVII[38].

As at the monastery of Montecassino, and in general in the early medieval monasteries, the monasteries in the lagoon had to be provided with specific texts from the Old and New Testament. And thus the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto also had to be endowed from its foundation with a library dedicated to liturgy and education.

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[34] Rapetti, *Il doge e i suoi monaci.*

[35] On writing and reading in the monastic sphere, see most recently Bassetti, *Cultura e scuola.* References to the Rule in *La Regola.*

[36] *La Regola* 9: «Codices autem legantur in Vigiliis divinae auctoritatis tam Veteris Testamenti quam Novi, sed et expositiones earum, quae a nominatis et orthodoxis catholicis Patribus factae sunt».

[37] The catalogue is transmitted from manuscript 2 of the Monumento nazionale della Abbazia Benedettina della Ss. Trinità di Cava De' Tirreni, Cod. 2, containing Isidore's *Etymologiae*; it was made in the Montecassino *scriptorium* between the third quarter and the end of the 8th century: De Rubeis *Un diacono, un codice, una storia.*

[38] The inventory is published in Traube, *Textgeschichte*, p. 107; Inguanez, *Catalogi*, p. 3, no. 2. On the dating to the 8th century: De Rubeis, *Un diacono, un codice, una storia*, pp. 121-126.

Where these manuscripts might have come from to the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto is a question to which we cannot give a certain answer, even taking into consideration its foundation links to the community of San Servolo[39]. In fact, we know that the first monks moved to establish the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto the year 819 precisely by moving from San Servolo. However, we do not know the content of the library itself, on account of the vicissitudes of the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto whose decline began as early as the 11th century, and whose existence ended in 1214 when the monks moved to San Gregorio, their dependency in Venice since 989.

Despite the difficulty in finding possible manuscripts in the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto from its origin, we have indirect information that suggests a possible provenance. An indirect clue is offered by the funerary inscriptions from this monastery. The inscriptions, in fact, show the use of scripts that do not seem fully in line with the production of the first half of the 9th century documented at Santi Maria e Donato in Murano, to give an example, or in the lagoon area in general.

The variation in writing, with respect to the artefacts, that prove to be closer to the forms of the Lombard capital found in the area, is already documented in the funerary inscription of *Lantfridus* datable to the 9th century, preserved today in the Scamozzi Courtyard, Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Venice, and coming from the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto[40] (Fig. 4). Here the writing, while on the one hand partially referring back to the Lombard capital system, at the same time already presents those elements that indicate the entry into the area of the epigraphic capital of Carolingian recovery. The morphology of the letters E and M with the form tending to the square, the C in the angled form, the development of the strokes and the support of the M's crosses on the base line refer to the script in use in Carolingian manuscripts. The inscription is also characterized by the use of different forms for the same letters, such as the letters C (now angled, now lunate), N (now Lombard capital type, now epigraphic capital), and R (with an oblique stroke, now concave, now convex, depending on the morphological reference to the Lombard capital or the epigraphic capital). The use of letters with a double form is not, however, an exception in the broader northern Italian panorama of the first decades of the 9th century. I recall, for example, the case of Brescia and Leno (cited above) where the arrival of the epigraphic capital re-proposed by the Carolingian writing tradition disrupted pre-existing traditions. With the arrival of this new script, we observe the formation of medium to long graphic oscillations destined to last until the second half of the 9th century. The second half of this century marks the start of the stabilization of the use

[39] *Ss. Ilario e Benedetto*, no. 1 (819). On the overall dynamics between Venice and the monastery, see Rapetti, *Il doge e i suoi monaci*.
[40] «V k(alendae) sept(embris) | obiit Lantfrid|us in pace. Qui legit unc / versiculum oret pro me / ad Dominum Deum nostrum»: Venezia, Museo Civico Correr, inv. M. Correr, cl. XXV-160, M. Arch. 854.

of the epigraphic capital at the expense of the Lombard capital, which will only be maintained in Lombard southern Italy[41].

Going back to the inscription of *Lantfridus*, I should point out the presence of letters that can be related to contemporary book scripts and, more specifically, to the distinctive lettering found in manuscripts. The punctual reference to book writings is represented by the large A of *Lantfridus* on the second line, with the oblique crossbar that cuts the left-hand shaft, executed with doubled hatching along the entire body of the letter; by the letter C in angled form, alternating with the lunate form; by the letter M with thin, divaricated shafts completed at the ends by ornamental apexes in the form of a stroke and with the crossbars grafted below the vertexes of the shafts. The set of letters finds exact correspondences in manuscripts from the late 8th century and the first half of the 9th century, such as the manuscript Clm 6279, assigned to the late 8th century[42].

Also from the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto is the funerary inscription of the *ancilla Constancia*[43] (Fig. 5), made on a sarcophagus and also preserved in the Scamozzi Courtyard, Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Venice. The sarcophagus fragments present the text distributed on a bipartite mirror, correctly aligned on the very evident line. In this inscription, as with the text of *Lantfridus*, I note the oscillations between forms of epigraphic tradition and those derived from book writings, although, it should be pointed out, such borrowings are much more marked. The letters A and E (also present in epigraphic capital) are punctual takes from the uncial script, as is the M, in both uncial and capital forms. Unlike the *Lantfridus* inscription, the references appear more decisive and, in my opinion, closer still to the Carolingian book. I refer, in addition to the above-mentioned uncial script, in particular to the form of the letter M, with the traverses presenting a marked extension at the intersection of the strokes down to the base line, an element that appears with great frequency in Carolingian manuscripts from the end of the 8th century onwards[44].

Also common to the epitaph of *Constancia* and the inscription of *Lantfridus* are the C in the square form (alternating with the lunate form), the module tending towards the square of the letters, as well as the carving of the script which, in both inscriptions, appears rather neat, with a deep groove and triangular section. Both artefacts are characterized, as already noted, by intrusions of letters from book scripts, by references to Lombard and epigraphic capitals, as well as by the accentuated tendency to use double forms for the same letter.

A third sarcophagus from the same monastery, again assignable to the mid-9th century, also preserved in the Scamozzi Courtyard, Museo Archeo-

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[41] De Rubeis, *La produzione epigrafica.*
[42] München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6279, sec. VIII ex.: Kessler, *Die Auszeichnungsschriften*, no. 10.
[43] Venezia, Museo Civico Correr, inv. M. Correr, cl. XXV-606, M. Arch. 851.
[44] Kessler, *Die Auszeichnungsschriften.*

logico Nazionale in Venice, presents Donato's funerary inscription[45]. The very poor state of preservation does not allow for a precise analysis of the individual letters, but from what can be discerned, the text is in capital letters of the epigraphic type, with the form tending towards the square. Among the few letters that are still visible today, the morphology M with the square form and the R with a descending stroke down to the base line should be emphasized.

However, these are exceptions, as already mentioned, with respect to the contemporary production in the area, but exceptions that are linked by the context of origin, i.e. the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto, a foundation associated, as previously mentioned, to the emerging Venetian elites.

Within the framework, therefore, of the epigraphic landscape, the artefacts examined here consistently fall within a specific conscious strategy of using well-selected materials on which to have inscriptions engraved (Roman reused materials, *pergulae*, dedicatory slabs, sarcophagi). In this way, the patrons ensured, on the one hand, visibility and lasting enjoyment of the written text, and on the other hand, precisely through the selection of valuable materials and forms, underlined the importance of their social position.

7. *The scriptural strategy*

In this perspective of visibility, a recent important discovery expands the epigraphic and scriptural strategy to include the linguistic landscape. I refer in particular to the discovery in 2020 of early medieval frescoes in the basilica of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello, dating to the 9th century[46].

During restoration and consolidation work on the structures of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, or the Diaconicon (Fig. 6), the upper spaces of the counter-vault were emptied to allow the consolidation of the medieval masonry (Fig. 7). Once the wall had been removed from the rubble that prevented it from being visible, several fragments of a fresco, hitherto completely unknown, surfaced.

This is a cycle obliterated during the reconstruction of the chapel and directly intersected by the 11th-century vaulted ceiling of the chapel itself. The covering of the frescoes thus finds a *terminus ante quem*, prior to the 11th

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[45] «Donatus et G[---]esrg[---]se[---]muscaveso[---]arc[---]r[---]n[---]». The text in its current state of preservation is severely damaged and no easier to read than in Polacco, *Marmi*, p. 27, no. 12 (with reproduction). Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Venezia, inv. n. 384.

[46] The study of the inscriptions, in anticipation of their edition, is being carried out by the writer for the corpus of *Inscriptiones Medii Aevi Italiae*. I would like to thank Diego Calaon, to whom we owe the archaeological survey that brought the frescoes to light, for the information and the images. The discovery took place during the archaeological survey and restoration supported by Save Venice Foundation, directed by Paolo Tocchi, in coordination with the Patriarchate of Venice and under the supervision of the Soprintendenza, and with the scientific archaeological collaboration of Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia. Reference to < https://www.unive.it/pag/14024/?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=9235&cHash=5083a549eb7d3be36da411d-0ffb18dd3 >.

century. The cycle, severely damaged by the earthquake of 1117, as well as by the previous construction of the chapel, is currently partial, with the loss of considerable portions of plaster.

The frescoes consist of scenes framed by festoons, at least in the parts that survive, composed of cornucopias, pomegranates and fantastic animals. The scenes in the panels depict an enthroned Virgin, perhaps an annunciation, and a portrait that unequivocally depicts St. Martin, as the *picta* captional inscription near the portrait states (Fig. 8): *sanctus Martinus*.

Apart from the clear reference to the saint, the other scenes must have been accompanied by captioned texts, as confirmed by the presence of fragments of inscriptions now reduced to a few letters.

The documented writing is an epigraphic capital linked entirely to the Carolingian tradition, devoid of references to earlier epigraphic traditions in the area, as already reported for the inscriptions previously discussed. Unlike these, in fact, which, as we have seen, are the result of a mediation between Lombard and Carolingian scripts, the frescoed inscriptions are devoid of references to the Lombard script and indicate the epigraphic capital of Carolingian revival as the pole of attraction for the morphology of the letters. It has been suggested, for the cycle of frescoes and the elevation on which they are located, a possible connection with the renovation works commissioned by Bishop Deusdedit II (864), a fact that fully corresponds with the frescoed inscriptions.

In particular, the caption inscription of the saint presents the letters in a square module (e.g. M, S, C), the strokes are extended again, chiaroscuro appears on the letters, and there are apices at the endings of shafts and strokes. With regard to the morphology of the letters, the C is round and not vertically developed and laterally compressed, as in the Lombard capital; the M and the N bear the traverses grafted to the ends of the rods (unlike the Lombard script characterized by the attachment of the traverses in the body of the rods); the R has a wide and rounded loop that is not compressed on the rod; the S has a wide central portion that is horizontally extended. In a second fragment of the fresco, three letters appear, one of which is a P (only the *occhiello* is present, but along the portion of the rod that is still preserved no *occhiello* or trait can be seen to indicate B or R, respectively), with a wide, rounded *occhiello*. In both inscriptions, the letters have apexes made by grafting a curvilinear apex on the shafts and tracts, an element that appears in book script and is far removed from the apexes on letters of the Lombard period, which consist of straight tracts.

We are therefore in the presence of a script that has completely eliminated possible reminiscences of the Lombard capital or elements derived from local stylizations of this script. The graphic system used fully corresponds to Carolingian type epigraphic writing, with the exclusion (as far as it is possible to verify from the fragments visible today) of the C in the square form that appears in the inscriptions from the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto, particularly in the epitaph for *Lantfridus*.

The writing documented in the Torcello frescoes, as well as the inscriptions from the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto, all of which can be dated to the mid-9th century, are of ecclesiastical commission, but not only. They are the product of a high cultural sphere, receptive to the new book scripts and epigraphs that were expanding in northern Italy; they are the fruit of commissions linked to the city's ecclesiastical aristocracies, a fact that is by no means negligible, as will be seen below.

Unlike these, the inscriptions associated with the nascent secular aristocracies seem to be indifferent to the new suggestions coming from Carolingian graphic culture. The scripts in use by the Venetian elites, such as the already mentioned case of the *pergula* of Donato and his consort *Constancia* in Santi Maria e Donato in Murano, from the first half of the 9th century, seem to be rather more firmly established in writing forms circumscribed within a local tradition, than to a welcoming approach to the new incoming script.

With the end of the 9th century and in the 10th, writing was destined to change, with the definitive abandonment of all reminiscences of the Lombard tradition. It is therefore a sort of internal boundary in which the spaces of the ecclesiastics and the spaces of the laity seem to be distinct from each other, also in terms of epigraphy. While the former welcome the new script, the latter keep the one already in use as their own without excessive changes at least until the second half of the 9th century.

The placing on parallel tracks of two productions differentiated by the will – as I believe – of the patrons, highlights a conscious use of well-defined graphic forms, according to a well-documented practice in the rest of Italy (from the Lombards to the writings of papal Rome), recognizing a significance to certain scripts well beyond the mere vehicle of text. The inscriptions, which are assigned an apparently unique value as exposed writings and, as such, vehicles of written messages, at a closer look thus indicate precise formal strategies from which the commissioning figures seem unlikely to be able and willing to evade.

In order to verify the incidence of writing strategies – meaning graphic sign, support and their visibility – on the epigraphic production, and the existence of these strategic boundaries, a comparison with the neighbouring Croatian area will be useful, since within the same chronology, it is characterized by a significant production of inscriptions, both in numerical and qualitative terms. There are 22 inscriptions found from the Croatian area assigned to the 9th century. This is a considerable number, especially when set in relation to the territorial extent of this production and distribution framework. From the point of view of patronage, an examination of the catalogue data of Vedrana Delonga[47] allows us to identify who the protagonists of this production were, so rapid in its growth: in fact, it should not be forgotten that the appearance of

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[47] Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*.

early medieval epigraphic writing in Croatia is dated to the second half of the 8th century and increased decisively during the 9th century.

As has already been discussed for the Venetian area, the presence of lay patronage in ecclesiastical furnishings is active, especially in the act of dedication and donation, if not in the foundation of ecclesiastical or monastic structures. In the Upper Adriatic area, and Dalmatia in particular, this presence acquires proportions worthy of mention. Between the 9th and 10th centuries, the laity turn out to be commissioning numerous elements of liturgical furnishings, as can be deduced from dedicatory inscriptions, which account for almost 70% of the total production[48]. A closer look at their chronological distribution over the above-mentioned centuries, i.e. the 9th and 10th, reveals that 17 out of 22 inscriptions were due to the intervention of laymen in ecclesiastical structures, and executed within materials intended for liturgical furnishings[49]. Texts where individuals belonging to the family group, such as spouses and children, are also mentioned can be traced back to the lay elites.

From a chronological point of view, the most significant numerical concentration can be traced back to the second half of the 9th century, i.e. to the period after 879, a date of particular importance due to the recognition of Duke Branimir by John VIII. The datum is not negligible, as has been observed by Vedrana Delonga, according to whom such growth and concentration between the 9th and 10th centuries could be the result of a strategy of visibility on the part of the newly recognised Croatian ruler and his elites[50].

In the inscriptions of the Upper Adriatic area in the 9th and 10th centuries, the scripts in use present numerous and surprising affinities with the epigraphic tradition of the northern Italian Lombard area of the 8th century, and in particular with the inscriptions seen for the eastern Veneto area. I refer in particular to letters such as the almond-shaped O, the A with broken crosses – which Nicolette Gray had suggested was used for Italian productions as a distinctive element of the so-called popular school – here play the role of a characterizing element of the writing.

The inscription from the church of Santa Marta di Sgombrate[51], attributed to the first half of the 9th century, bears a surprising number of elements similar to what we have seen in northern Italy. These are the letters A with the oblique descending transversal, the M and N with high transversals, the almond-shaped O. Beyond these strictly graphic data, I would like to underline the frequent use of di-graphism (e.g. for the E), the misalignment of the letters and the use of discontinuous forms.

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[48] *Ibidem*, pp. 285-286 and 307-309.
[49] Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*.
[50] Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*, pp. 341-342. On Croatia, see Borri, *Francia e Chroatia*; Borri, *Captains and Pirates*.
[51] Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*, pp. 50-51, cat. n. 1; Archaeological Museum of Split, inv. 1136.

These phenomena do not change in the following century, as we saw for the eastern Veneto area. On the contrary, the graphic forms tend to consolidate and stabilize exactly as in the previous century, and with the same characteristics (di-graphism, accentuated misalignment and irregular modulus, plus the morphology of letters such as E, D, Q, as well as M and N that refer to the first production in eastern Veneto). There is no change in the module (which remains vertical), nor in the execution technique of the letters (which tend, where possible, to accentuate the thickening of the hatching through the depth of the furrow), nor in the morphology (such as the M, whose crossbars remain high as in the Lombard type, whereas in nearby Venice, on the contrary, they return to being resting on the base staff, as in the epigraphic capital seen, for example, in Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello or in the inscriptions of the monastery of Santi Ilario e Benedetto. This system, together with increasingly developed apices and the thickness of the hatching becoming completely devoid of contrast between thick and thin elements, remained constant at least until the 10th century. In the inscription of Prince Svetoslav dated between 969 and 986 or 997, from the royal monastery of St. Bartholomew[52], in addition to the usual layout that is not perfectly framed within the mirror, one observes the further development of the apexes, as well as the hatching made with a deep furrow and lacking chiaroscuro contrast. We are almost at the end of the 10th century and the same variations which are documented in northern Italy are – on the contrary – not present. I refer in particular to the adaptation to the forms of the Carolingian script, which already in the course of the 9th century had led to the gradual abandonment of the previous epigraphic script now more or less characterized as Lombard.

The real first changes can only be perceived with the first half of the 11th century, although it will be the second half of that century that will clearly indicate the changes in writing that affected the whole area. An example of these early changes can be found, for instance, in the dedicatory inscription of Abbot Moses from the first half of the 11th century from the Church of Saints Peter and Moses in Solin[53]. Here, the script used, while overall retaining the morphology of the letters, is nevertheless executed with greater respect in the alignment of the letters on the line and greater control of the letter form, which here tends towards the square.

The dedicatory inscription of Lubimiro Tepçi of the Church of St. Nicholas in Podmorje or St. Peter in Koblucac from 1089[54] is executed with the letters correctly aligned to the major side within the mirror. The epigraph shows the text executed with a shallow groove and reduced thickness; the letters are slightly apical and compressed laterally with accentuated vertical development. In this inscription, we can observe an important change, namely the

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[52] *Ibidem*, pp. 118-119, cat. n. 73; Archaeological Museum of Split, inv. 1076.
[53] *Ibidem*, p. 146, cat. n. 99; Archaeological Museum of Split, inv. 2552.
[54] *Ibidem*, p. 102, cat. n. 60; Archaeological Museum of Split, inv. 2559.

introduction of letters that correspond to the distinctive script of manuscripts in the Beneventan minuscule script, i.e. the book script and epigraphic script in use in southern Italy since the 8th century. In Lubimiro Tepçi's inscription, the stroked forms of the O and G correspond perfectly with the initial letters of manuscripts in the Benevento script, as for example in the ms. Casin.148 dated 1010, where on c. 236 a large illuminated G appears with a broken central curvature[55].

This is the first true innovation in epigraphic script brought about through direct borrowing from the manuscript book. The phenomenon has been linked to the arrival of southern Italian Benedictine monasticism and the spread of writing practices related to this, especially in the epigraphic sphere, for the Dalmatian area[56]. One of the earliest attestations of the Benedictine presence in the area is offered by a passage from *De praedestionatione* by Godescalc de Orbais[57], dated 852, in relation to an episode concerning the Croatian king Tripmir. In this passage – which is, however, not very clear – reference is made to the construction of the monastery of Rizinice near Klis, directly requested by the sovereign, for the Benedictine community. The construction of the monastery is also remembered by a dedicatory inscription that still exists today, in which the Croatian sovereign is mentioned[58].

This testimony, in addition to referring to the presence of the Benedictine community in the area, provides a useful indication of the relations that were immediately established between the Croatian sovereigns and Benedictine monasticism. These relations, while having their ups and downs, were stable. It is probably due precisely to these political ties that not only monasticism, but also the writing imported by these Benedictine monks from southern Italy, where the custom of transferring graphic forms from the distinctive scripts of manuscripts to epigraphs was an established practice, was spread. Thus, because of these political and also cultural relations, in the space of a few years, we see the introduction into epigraphic practices of elements deriving from manuscripts of the Cassinese type of Beneventan script, as in the abovementioned ms. Casin.148, produced at Montecassino in the early 11th century.

The persistence in the period prior to the 11th century of a script that remained always the same, and one not very receptive to suggestions from other and different systems (as in the specific case of the Carolingian and the restored epigraphic capital), seems to be, as it was for Venice and its area, a precise and conscious choice. Indeed, I believe that this choice was directed towards maintaining a well-defined script status at least until the 11th century. This choice kept alive a practice and its external forms (the writing) derived

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[55] On the decorated initials of the ms. Casin. 148 see Orofino, *I codici decorati*, pp. 21-24, tav. VII d.
[56] De Rubeis, *Tra Dalmazia e Italia*, pp. 247-253.
[57] Godescalc de Orbais, *De praedestionatione* IX, 6: Lambot, *Oeuvres théologiques*.
[58] Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*, p. 138; Archaeological Museum of Split, inv. S 54.

from the needs of visibility to be consolidated, especially in the light of Vedrana Delonga's observations, who sees precisely in the recognition of Branimir by John VIII in 879 one of the possible strong motivations for the numerical increase of epigraphic production in the area. Hence the need not to vary the writing, fixing a model and keeping it as an index of a well-defined social status.

8. *Conclusions*

In conclusion, the concept of boundaries, examined from the point of view of epigraphs, indicates a long and articulated pathway, with outcomes that are not entirely similar to each other; the concept of boundaries, likewise, indicates common general trends and similar attitudes found over vast areas, even across different chronologies; the concept of boundaries indicates the emergence of lay elites that deployed every strategy to gain visibility, but with different dynamics here too.

For Venice and its area, starting from a production of poor quality, both the development of texts and the consolidation of writings, as well as the progressive increase, in numerical terms, of epigraphs, indicates the growing recourse to the "main" instrument for visibility by local elites, differentiated by cultural and social groups. While the secular elites maintained the scripts that had marked their epigraphic production from the very beginning, the ecclesiastics moved towards a script much closer to manuscript writing, transmitting these cultural contacts to the inscriptions. For the Croatian area, the political establishment of the elites is manifested not only through the surge in the secular epigraphic production, but also through the maintenance of a script that becomes an element of status recognition.

The epigraphic instrument thus proves to be an effective device, to which the elites frequently resorted, even in the absence of a consolidated writing system. This latter element indicates full awareness of the value and efficacy of the writing displayed, as the cases of Venice and Croatia demonstrate, and especially when considered within horizontal and vertical boundaries, they indicate great attention to the epigraphic forms and formalisms employed, contributing to the construction of a long-lasting and widespread epigraphic landscape.

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Figure 1. Torcello, Museo Provinciale, inscription of Giovanni Villari (photo: Flavia De Rubeis): su concessione di Città Metropolitana di Venezia - Museo di Torcello.

Figure 2. Murano, Chiesa dei Santi Maria e Donato, inscription of *Iohannace* (photo: Flavia De Rubeis): su concessione di Curia Patriarcale di Venezia, Ufficio Beni Culturali.

Figure 3. Murano, Chiesa dei Santi Maria e Donato, inscription of *Domenicus* tribuno (photo: Flavia De Rubeis) : su concessione di Curia Patriarcale di Venezia, Ufficio Beni Culturali.

Figure 4. Inscription of *Lantfridus*: Venezia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Direzione regionale Musei Veneto, su concessione del Ministero della Cultura; su concessione di Fondazione Musei Civici Venezia.

Figure 5. Inscription of *Constancia*: Venezia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Direzione regionale Musei Veneto, su concessione del Ministero della Cultura; su concessione di Fondazione Musei Civici Venezia.

Figure 6. Torcello, Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, chapel of the Diaconicon (3D: Diego Cala-on): Save Venice.

Figure 7. Torcello, Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, chapel of the Diaconicon (3D: Diego Cala-on) : Save Venice.

Figure 8. Torcello, Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, inscription of St. Martinus (3D: Diego Calaon) Save Venice.

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Carolingian *koinè* and documentary frontiers of the kingdom of Italy

by Gianmarco De Angelis

Even in relation to the history of documentation – given its nature as legal history, social history, history of institutions and ideas – we encounter the theme of frontiers, since the latter is inseparable from that of exchanges. From the beginning of the ninth century, when Europe was, economically and politically, Carolingian, cultural ties (and thus also the circulation of documentary models) were always assumed to have been active from the Frankish area to the newly-conquered regions. Lombard Italy, as one of the many *Urkundenlandschaften* of the Empire, does not appear to have been an exception. If the changes to written instruments (diplomas and *notitiae iudicati*) directly instrumental to political communication from the top, as well as dispute resolution according to the scheme of the *placitum,* were evident and nearly immediate, even the composite panorama of private charters began to be standardised and typified and the inclusion of ruling elites from across the Alps established in the peninsula a legal pluralism previously unknown. The aim of this contribution is to evaluate the rhythms of that change, their form and importance and, in particular, the areas to which they refer, and the possible maintenance – in terms of creation and/or consolidation –, in the face of the new Carolingian *koinè*, of "borders" internal to the kingdom. Leaving aside all the constraints placed on this research by sources with diverse structures among the various territorial sets, such a plurality of situations must be evaluated from the degree of penetration of the imported material, and of the response models of traditional documentary cultures, thus assigning the right value to the undoubted peculiarities, without giving up on the verification of crossovers between environments which are very clearly far from impermeable.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Italy; kingdom of Italy; Carolingians; legal history; charters and diplomas; notarial formularies; royal manumissions.

Abbreviations
Carte S. Maria Novara = *Le carte dell'archivio capitolare di S. Maria di Novara*, ed. F. Gabotto – A. Lizier, A. Leone – G.B. Morandi – O. Scarzello, I (729–1034), Novara 1913.

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Carte ravennati = *Le carte ravennati dei secoli ottavo e nono*, ed. R. Benericetti, Faenza 2006.

CDL II = *Codice diplomatico Longobardo*, II, ed. L. Schiaparelli, Roma 1933 (Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, 63).

CDLang = *Codex Diplomaticus Langobardiae*, ed. G. Porro Lambertenghi, Torino 1873 (Historiae Patriae Monumenta, XIII).

ChLA XXI = *Chartae latinae antiquiores: Facsimile-Edition of the Latin Charters Prior to the Ninth Century*, ed. A. Bruckner – R. Marichal, XXI: Italy 2, ed. A. Petrucci – J.-O. Tjäder, Dietikon-Zürich 1983.

ChLA XXVII = *Chartae latinae antiquiores: facsimile-edition of the Latin charters prior to the ninth century*, ed. A. Bruckner – R. Marichal, XXVII: Italy 8, ed. J.-O. Tjäder, Dietikon-Zürich 1992.

ChLA XXIX = *Chartae latinae antiquiores: facsimile-edition of the Latin charters prior to the ninth century*, ed. A. Bruckner – R. Marichal, XXIX: Italy 10, ed. G. Cavallo – F. Magistrale – J.-O. Tjäder, Dietikon-Zürich 1993.

ChLA² LX = *Chartae latinae antiquiores: 2nd Series, Ninth Century*, ed. G. Cavallo – G. Nicolaj, LX: Italy 32, Verona 2, ed. F. Santoni, Dietikon-Zürich 2002.

ChLA² LXXVIII = *Chartae latinae antiquiores: 2nd Series, Ninth Century*, ed. G. Cavallo – G. Nicolaj, LXXVIII: Italy 40, Piacenza 5, ed. P. Degni, Dietikon-Zürich 2006.

ChLA² LXXI = *Chartae latinae antiquiores: 2nd Series, Ninth Century*, ed. G. Cavallo – G. Nicolaj, LXXI: Italy 43, Piacenza 8, ed. C. Mantegna, Dietikon-Zürich 2007.

ChLA² XCVIII = *Chartae latinae antiquiores: 2nd Series, Ninth Century*, ed. G. Cavallo – G. Nicolaj, XCVIII: Italy 70, Bergamo, ed. M. Modesti, Dietikon-Zürich 2017.

DD Ber I = *I diplomi di Berengario I*, ed. L. Schiaparelli, Roma 1903 (Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, 35).

MD = *Il Museo Diplomatico dell'Archivio di Stato di Milano*, ed. A.R. Natale, 2 vols, Milano s.d.

MGH, Capit. I = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, I, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883.

Pap. Tjäder = *Die nichtliterarischen lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445–700*, 3 vols, Lund-Stockholm, 1955.

1. «scriptum est quod partibus Etalie usus capeat»*: a Lombard juridical-documentary Province?*

In August 773, in Lucca, a certain David drafted in his own handwriting a detailed testament, with the aim of allocating various rights to his wife Ghiserada and his daughter Eutroda[1]. When he came to spel out the clauses, he wanted first of all to clarify – no doubt to shield Eutroda from any claim by male children[2] – that he reserved for himself the right of usufruct to the full share of the properties in question. He did this through a reference to the usage then in force within the kingdom, thus displaying the clearest awareness of legal consistency that we have in the diplomatic documentation from that time:

> uerumtamen dum ego aduiuere meruero, ego qui supra Dauit, omnia suprascripta res, quem uobis suprascripte filie mee hauendum dixi, gubernandi, inperandi et usufructuandi in mea sit potestate tantum; post uero decesso meo, reuertat in potestate tua suprascripte filia mea, sicut supra adnixum est. Et nonnulli liceat nolle quod semel

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[1]   CDL II, no. 287 (Lucca, August 773), pp. 416-420.

[2]   Who are in fact prevented, with an unusual emphasis (as regards deeds of non-ecclesiastical orders) on the *sanctio spiritualis*, from objecting in any way to what has been stipulated: «et nullum de filii mei contra hanc meo iudicio aliquando agi presumat, et qui agi presumpserit, in Dei incurrat iudicium». On this point cf. Pohl-Resl, *"Quod me legibus contanget auere"*, p. 216.

uoluit; sed, sicut pater iudicat, in eo moderamen persistat eo quod scriptum est quod partibus Etalie usus capeat, non solum Etalie sed omnis prouincie. Et nullus de filii mei contra hoc meo iudicio aliquando agi presumat, et qui agi presumserit, in Dei incurrat iudicium[3].

What is remarkable, in this passage, is not just the use of the formula of irrevocability of the donation («nonnulli liceat nolle quod semel uoluit»), which, already attested in the Ravenna practices, and evidencing the late antique provisions relating to manumission deeds, reappeared in the territory of Piacenza, in Varsi, in 736, then spreading in Lucca precisely in those years[4]: what proves to be of primary interest for the central theme of this intervention is exactly that hint at the prerogative of the *mutatio voluntatis*, which, in testamentary documents, was said to bring the legal uses of *Etalia* – i.e. *Langobardia* – in line with those of the other provinces of the kingdom[5].

In terms of displaying a self-awareness of specificity, this is nothing comparable, surely, with what would subsequently be found in a privilege issued by Pope John X for St Gallen, where the Roman documentary *consuetudo* (not limited to the papal chancellery, as we know from other sources, since it extended to the workshops of *tabelliones* and *scriniarii* as well) appears to form a single whole with the uninterrupted use of the papyrus writing support[6]. It nevertheless seems to me a good starting point to reason about the existence (and the self-recognition) of *Urkundenlandschaften* within the Italian peninsula of Lombard tradition before and after the Carolingian conquest. It would have been of far greater value, it must be said, had we possessed evidence similar to that of Lucca chronologically postdating the 801 Italian capitulary that eventually enjoined on the subjects of the kingdom intending to draw up a donation document in anticipation of death to stop doing what had been customary until then («sicut actenus fieri solebat»)[7] and to manage any usu-

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[3] CDL II, no. 287, p. 419.
[4] Nicolaj, *Il documento privato italiano*, p. 166, with reference to the sources. For the origins of the formula in the context of manumission deeds, see Frezza, *L'influsso del diritto romano*, p. 63.
[5] Cf., on the *Italy/Lombardy* equivalence: Delogu, *The Name of the Kingdom*, pp. 35-36.
[6] «in hoc etiam petitionibus religiosi episcopi, venerabilibus legatis hoc subnixe supplicantibus, ut contra consuetudinem nostram, carta Romana cum scriptis notariis permutatis, conscribi haec in pergameno, quod secum detulerant, concessimus; et ut non dubitaretur de ipsis, quae scripta sint, annulo nostro subtus sigillari iussimus»: *Regesta pontificum Romanorum*, I, p. 311. In the same years as the papal privilege, a similar, proud identity claim is shown by the glossator of verse III, 55 of the *Gesta Berengarii* («Fortia iussa cito, scribe, sulcate papyris»), where, in correspondence with the last word, he explains that the poet «secundum Romanum morem dicit, qui in papiro scribere solent». See, on this point, Carbonetti Vendittelli, *I supporti scrittorii della documentazione*, p. 43 (note 32). On these Roman peculiarities, the timeframe and the reasons of the switch from papyrus to parchment in Western Europe, we now have the insightful research of Internullo, *Du papyrus au parchemin*.
[7] There is a clear, albeit tacit, reference to chapters 173 and 174 of the *Edict of Rothari*.

fruct reserve by means of *precarie*, specially drawn up documents requesting the temporary enjoyment of immovable assets[8].

It is certainly a good starting point to try to verify whether that identification of territorially-based legal configurations referred to in the will of David from Lucca reflects to some degree of faithfulness the concrete perceptions and distinctions in the documentary space during the Carolingian century. A distinction between parts of the kingdom and its "frontiers" (*Langobardia*, indeed, as well as *Tuscia*, *Romania* and *fines Beneventani*) is clearly evidenced in terms of political-institutional spaces, to which specific military and governmental functions are extended (or aspired to be extended) in public and legislative documentation. It is a topic recently investigated by Paolo Delogu, and his contribution is certainly worth referring to, because of the abundance of illustrating examples and the subtle analysis of the available sources[9]. Are there, however, within this framework, and in a more or less direct connection with political timeframes and initiatives, recognisable spaces where we can place the documentary elaborations of notarial practices? Put differently, what type of evidence can be associated with the topical *acta* of charters, apart from their obvious (and necessary) function of geographical contextualisation[10]? Which and how many, within a panorama that in the course of the ninth century discloses undoubted tendencies towards normalisation and standardisation, are the documentary frontiers of the kingdom of Italy? A separation with the area of Roman tradition – which itself, however, is far from having unified features[11] – is taken for granted. Yet it might be interesting to verify the existence of more or less extensive spaces of "contam-

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[8] MGH, Capit. I, no. 98 (801): «De cartis donationum faciendis. Si quis Langobardus statum humanae fragilitatis praecogitans pro salute animae suae de rebus suis cartam donationis cuilibet facere voluerit, non, sicut actenus fieri solebat, ius sibi vendendi, commutandi et per aliam cartam easdem res alienandi reservet, set absolute faciat unusquisque de rebus suis quod velit, et noverit sibi a nostra autoritate penitus interdictum duas de eadem re facere donationes, set postquam unam de rebus suis traditionem fecerit, aliam de ipsis faciendi nullam habeat potestatem: ita tamen, ut usum fructuum per precariam et res traditas usque in tempus diffinitum possidendi sit concessa facultas».

[9] Delogu, *The Name of the Kingdom*, in particular pp. 40-42.

[10] It is not an issue that can be dealt here, but those topical indications that, in the documents of the time, do not limit themselves to the generic mention of the *actum* but add further contextualisation elements deserve a specific research; this is especially so in the case of transactions relating to assets lying far away from the place in which the charter had been drawn up – possibly located, additionally, beyond both geographical and political borders –; such data might provide precious information on how the spaces internal to the *regnum* were named and how they were perceived by the various participants in the documented event. We find an example in the substantial 819 donation to the church of Freising by Andrea, bishop of Vicenza of Alemannic origin. It concerned some properties of him situated in Bavaria, where the specification that the deed was drawn up «in Italia, in civitate Vincencia» is certainly justified by the recipient's identity: edition in *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising*, I, no. 400a; on the charter, see first of all Castagnetti, *Transalpini e vassalli*, p. 40. The same remark, however, holds true for assets situated this side of the Alps («hic ltalia finibus Sepriensis»), likewise held by an Aleman, Alpcar, that were donated to the monastery of S. Ambrose of Milan: CDLang, col. 146.

[11] «dal punto di vista della cultura e della prassi giuridica, l'idea di un'unitaria 'provincia diplomatica' si fa sfuggente, e forse anche per la storia della documentazione è opportuno ragionare

ination", and measure the way, if any, in which the Carolingian conquest facilitated the circulation of certain drafting models across divergent contexts.

These are, quite evidently, vast issues, which I do not claim to cover exhaustively in the pages below, besides the fact that these issues have enjoyed a certain amount of historiographic attention for some years. I would rather consider this contribution as being essentially an opportunity to take stock of the state of studies in the field. Lastly, I will accompany the remarks emerging from the other contributors' analyses with some elements of original reflection inspired by the perusal of documents, especially of those parts of the formulary which, though less defined and conspicuous, seem to me worth bringing up as a suggestion for delving further into the issue of borders and circulation of documentary models in the early Italian Middle Ages.

2. *Documentary regions and border porosity*

A few years ago, during her intervention at a conference titled *Le Alpi porta d'Europa*, Antonella Ghignoli conducted an extensive reinterpretation of the available studies on the «relazioni fra le forme documentarie in uso nei territori posti al di qua e al di là delle Alpi – franco, alamanno, bavaro, retico, longobardo – nel periodo precarolingio»[12]. Her conclusive synthesis, reinforced by some original remarks on the existence of a common language (*koinè*) of Roman derivation (more or less direct, more or less contaminated as it might have been), focused on an indisputable movement of texts both along the side north of the Alps and across it. Such a movement was, however, taking place in two directions: from west to east in the first case, as an undeniable projection of Frankish hegemony, and from south to north for transalpine relations *sub specie scripturarum* between Lombard, Rhaetian and Alemannic territories. Here, thanks to the researches conducted by Alexandra Kanoldt, we were also granted the exceptional chance of assigning a name to the intermediary behind such imports – namely, Arbeo, a cleric employed for a long time at the court of Pavia during the age of King Ratchis, later a notary in the episcopal chancellery of Freising, and, lastly, a bishop himself[13]. The permeability of the Lombard kingdom to transalpine influences would only manifest itself after the fateful year 774. Naturally – as recalled by François Bougard in the conference titled *Ipotesi su una transizione*[14] –, this did not happen throughout the territories of the *regnum* with the same degree of pervasiveness. The movement followed different chronologies, with sometimes quite marked differences, and above all affecting the documentary

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non di Italia romanica *tout court*, ma di tante e diverse realtà locali»: Santoni, *Il documento privato di area romanica*, p. 73.
[12] Ghignoli, *Koinè, influenze*, quote on p. 83.
[13] Kanoldt, *Studien zum Formular*; Ghignoli, *Koinè, influenze*, pp. 102-110.
[14] Bougard, *Tempore barbarici?*, p. 332.

expressions in varying ways and forms depending on the juridical fields and the geographical regions involved. Thus, if the changes were full and almost immediate at its strongest area of penetration, among those writings (the diplomas) directly instrumental to political communication, the standardisation of the formulary for the *notitia* of *placitum* was a slower process (with three areas – the North of the peninsula, Tuscia and the Duchy of Spoleto – quite clearly identifiable at least until the 820s)[15]. After all, the "specialisation" of written deeds (and of the personnel) pertaining to the procedural sphere becomes particularly significant for our discourse, considering that it keeps pace with a general dynamics – discernible throughout the Carolingian world, not only in the Italic *regnum* – of abrupt divorce, at the beginning of the ninth century, between *praecepta* and *iudicata*[16].

Although, the events that characterised the composite setting of the so-called "private" charters (a definitional label that fails to satisfy us, and yet remains irreplaceable)[17] prove to be even less linear, it is still undoubtedly possible to discern some general trends. I will try to summarise them as follows on the basis on previous studies:

a) a decrease in typological variety compared to the Lombard age (increasingly rare presence, followed by complete disappearance, for example, of the *cartae de accepto mundio*);

b) an introduction of new deeds indebted to transalpine legal usages (the *precariae* and the *notitiae traditoriae* first and foremost)[18];

c) a set of timely changes to documentary structures and pre-existing uses through the inclusion of formulas and conceptual nuclei. The *libellus* attains maturity and gains a stable name as a solution devised to adhere to the reality of agricultural contracts[19]; while the *traditio chartae* becomes standardised and generalised in notarial subscriptions, linking the uncertain «eredità di una formula giustinianea» – to quote Giovanna Nicolaj's words – to the «bagaglio mentale e culturale» of the conquering Franks, to their repertoire of «negozi e obbligazioni compiuti per simboli, ossia con atti rituali consistenti nella consegna di simboli»[20].

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[15] Bougard, *La justice*, pp. 119-137.

[16] Bougard, *Diplômes et notices de plaid*, pp. 15-16; Kano, *La disparition des actes de jugement*.

[17] Bartoli Langeli, *Notai*, p. 56. In the same way, the moment she deems that definition unsatisfactory as a tool for reproducing the heterogeneous scenario of "private" documentation, Ghignoli, *Koinè, influenze*, p. 84, rightly vindicates «la legittima approssimazione di un concetto storico, dall'evidenza semantica immediata [...] per il periodo in questione», serving to operate a distinction in respect of royal/imperial privileges and the writings of papal origin.

[18] On the *precaria* charters, their introduction in Italian practices and their role in the management of land assets, see again the study by Feller, *Précaires et livelli*. As regards *notitiae*, with a focus on the important Piacenza case alongside broader remarks and a historiographical discussion, see Mantegna, *Tra diritto romano*.

[19] Due to the wide availability of sources, Tuscany is undoubtedly the reality most extensively investigated in this regard: cf. Ghignoli, Libellario nomine; Nishimura, *When a lease acquired its own name*; Tomei, *«Censum et iustitia»*.

[20] Nicolaj, *Il documento privato italiano*, p. 165.

In general, as was done by Cristina Mantegna, we could sum things up by saying that we witness «il progressivo dominio di caratteri che finiscono per tipizzare i diversi documenti, a seconda del negozio giuridico contenuto»[21], without however entirely cancelling formulary differentiations with a local and/or regional basis. Some of these peculiarities do not seem to survive the eighth century (as is the case of the *prescriptio*, which, amply attested in the Ravenna practice from late antiquity, preceded the mechanism in many Lombard charters from Milan to Emilia and Tuscia, and whose latest example known to me comes from Bergamo, in a *cartola vinditionis* of the year 795)[22]. Others, albeit in restricted territories, manifest a slightly higher degree of tenacity (it is the case of the donations characterised by an epistolary style at the beginning of the text, vanished in Lucca early on, and preserved only in the Amiata charters until the second decade of the ninth century)[23]. The most macroscopic and lasting of these peculiarities (and possibly the best known one, since the legal studies of Pier Silverio Leicht and Guido Astuti, recently refined from the Diplomatic perspective by Cristina Mantegna) concerns the possibility of isolating two standard formularies, as regards sales-related charters, respectively south of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines (in the area documentarily dominated by the overflowing episcopal archive of Lucca and by the monasteries of Amiata and Farfa) and in the heart of the Po basin, between Bergamo, Cremona, Milan, Parma and Piacenza (and further up west all the way to the cities of Asti and Novara). In this area lay people, both individuals and groups, managed large sums of money and were actively engaged in alienations and acquisitions of landed property, generally of medium size. In their documents of sale, from the end of the 8th century onwards, the formulary places particular emphasis, from the beginning of the text, on the declaration of *accepto pretio*, which thus seems to give the transaction the force of an obligation that produced immediate and real effects. Conversely, in the Tuscan and Farfa area, the cornerstone of the mechanism was represented by the landed assets, and the sum agreed upon in order to complete the exchange is found diluted in the text, mingled with the many clauses aimed at providing the buyer with guarantees for their rights and at defining the terms of the future sale of assets[24].

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[21] Mantegna, *Il documento privato di area longobarda*, p. 58.

[22] «Scripsi ego Ropertus diaconus rogatus ad Audoaldo et Audulfo, quem Fradello vocitatur, germanis filiis quondam Aboni de Cantobernas, ipso presentem adstantem mihique dictantem qui ad subter manus suas proprias signum fecit testibusque obtulit roborando quique fatetur feinito bone fedei contractum hanc sub dublis bone conditionis rem meliorata sub extimationem pretii vindedissit et vindederunt»: ChLA², XCVIII, no. 1 (795 V 10, Monte Orfano).

[23] Mantegna, *Il documento privato di area longobarda*, p. 59. Quite exceptional – and confined solely to the acts performed by individuals professing Salic or Alemannic law and no doubt hailing from areas in which, instead, the epistolary model had endured for a long time – is the reappearance of that writing style in Piacenza, in the last twenty years of the ninth century: Mantegna, *Tra diritto romano*, pp. 13-14.

[24] Cf., concerning all this, along with the works of the jurists above mentioned (particularly Astuti, *I contratti*, pp. 224-228), Mantegna, *Il documento privato di area longobarda*, pp. 62-

Both formularies were already present in ancient and late antique times and updated during the Frankish age by notaries operating in geographic areas quite clearly associated with specific social and economic contexts, the Po area being one of greater monetary circulation, while Tuscia and the Spoletino are more traditionally associated with land transactions. To me, therefore, a central feature for the identification "of documentary frontiers" internal to a kingdom that was undergoing a standardisation process, from the institutional and cultural viewpoint within the Carolingian *koinè*, is the weight exercised by the strong poles of documentary attraction, capable of producing a deep impact on the definition of the ownership structures of the territory, on the forms taken by exchanges and, thus, on the social structure of economic actors – even though this was naturally done in close connection with the notarial traditions called upon to lend recognition and stability to such configurations.

Leaving aside the unknown chance survival in the documentary tradition[25] and the archival selection by the very institutions responsible for storing documentation, which might no doubt result in the over- or under-representations of specific types of deeds, depending on the different economic strategies pursued, it is indisputable that a clear-cut distinction exists between the Po Valley area and central Italy. This distinction is reflected in a more pronounced predilection for the instruments of a dynamic economy (sales and exchanges), whether or not characterised by monetary circulation, in the Po valley, and in a strong vocation for the management of large-scale landed assets essentially built by successive aggregations (donations) and managed through temporary concessions (*livelli*) in central Italy. Once again, it is François Bougard who provided an excellent summary of the issue («les archives lombardes sont celles d'une économie en pleine activité, là où les fonds toscans reflètent plutôt la gestion de portefeuille ou la spiritualité donatrice»)[26]. Bougard called for a recognition of all possible differences/peculiarities within such a bipartite division: an emblematic case, among the great monastic foundations of central Italy, is represented by the documentation transmitted by the *Liber instrumentorum* of S. Clemente in Casauria, «seul de son espèce à en avoir gardé systématiquement copie car il s'est construit son patrimoine à coup d'achats massifs, sans bénéficier comme d'autres d'un flux de donations spontanées»[27]. However, differences in the documentary "histories" can also be observed within the same local area, as evidenced in

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64 and 68-70. Certain formulary differences between the Po Valley area and the central part of Italy are not confined, of course, to sales charters, as they also involve other documentary types, which, between Lucchesia and Farfa, appear to be characterised by «forme brevi e semplificate, meno erudite e meno inclini a incorporare apporti esterni, e in cui prevalgono una sorta di uniformità formulare, quasi generalizzata, e una precisa concentrazione del testo intorno al dispositivo del documento»: Mantegna, *Il documento privato tra* regnum Italiae *e Oltralpe*, p. 115.

[25] Esch, *Überlieferungs-Chance und Überlieferungs-Zufall.*

[26] Bougard, *Actes privés*, p. 546.

[27] *Ibidem*, p. 543.

the medium-term by the case of the two main archives of Piacenza (Tables 1-2). Compared to the fundamental equilibrium in percentage terms, in the ninth century, between donations and sales charters in the archives of the Cathedral and the Church of S. Antonino, already at the end of that same century (with a decisive "jump" in the very first years of the following century) we witness a surge in temporary concessions, set within the frame of the *libellus*. This becomes an almost exclusive instrument for managing the landed assets of the Church of S. Antonino, whose situation henceforth showed itself to be far more similar to the Tuscan one (particularly that of Lucca) than to other realities of Po Valley Italy (Tab. 3).

Starting from the ninth century, as we well know, an element which complicates our scenario consists in the documentarily significant action of transalpine individuals and groups (Franks, Bavarians, Alemannic and Burgundians) that established in the peninsula a legal pluralism unknown during the previous period[28]. Here, politics would seem to have played a definite role, given that it is only in the aftermath of a more massive introduction of ruling elites from the 820s onwards that the phenomenon came to acquire substantial weight. In practice, this saw the elements of a new formulary, certainly imported from north of the Alps, emerge. This formulary aimed, above all, at witnessing a transaction by means of a procedural transfer of an object endowed with an immediate symbolic value. Of these objects, however, only two – the *festuca* and the *andilanc* (or *wandilanc*) – are attested in the formularies from the North side of the Alps (specifically in the *Formulae Lindenbrogenses*, drawn up at the end of the eighth century and widespread especially in the Bavarian area). Others (the knife, the clod of earth or grass, the glove), far more frequent in the documents of the peninsula authored by transalpine individuals, must ostensibly be attributed to autonomous elaborations by Italian *notarii*, with wide margins of inventiveness and often with a set of elements that Harry Bresslau had already interpreted as a search for a guarantee in the face of a largely novel picture and, therefore, as a conscious emphasis on drafting schemes as yet hardly familiar[29].

It must be said, however, that in the extension of this formulary to the *regnum*, we fail to discern a single direction that only politics could have provided. There are considerable regional differences (between the subalpine area investigated years ago by Renato Bordone, and the Farfa area, for in-

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[28] At least for the eighth century, Gasparri, in *Identità etnica e identità politica*, pp. 161-164, emphatically insists on the fundamental value of Lombard law (capable of reverberating even on the archaic imprint of the Rotharian *corpus*) and, accordingly, on the non-existing ethnic-legal contraposition between Lombards and Romans. On the same line Pohl-Resl, *Legal practice*, according to whom «in the last century of Lombard rule both Lombard and Roman legal practices existed, but the boundary between them, like so many frontiers, had become *incertaine* and *toujours perméable*», p. 219.

[29] Bresslau, *Manuale di diplomatica*, pp. 751-752. On all this, see the remarks in the very recent Bougard, *Cartularium Langobardicum*.
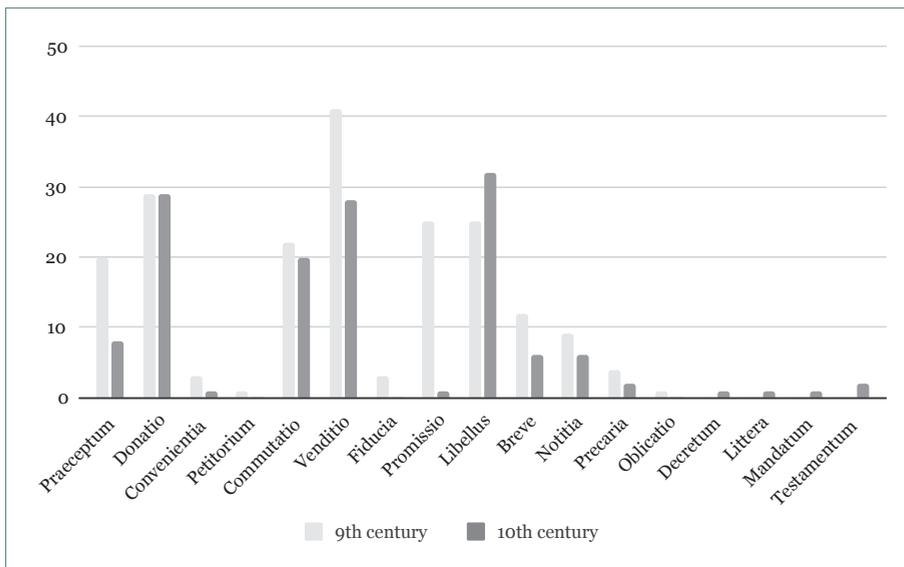
Tab. 1. Piacenza, Archive of the Cathedral.
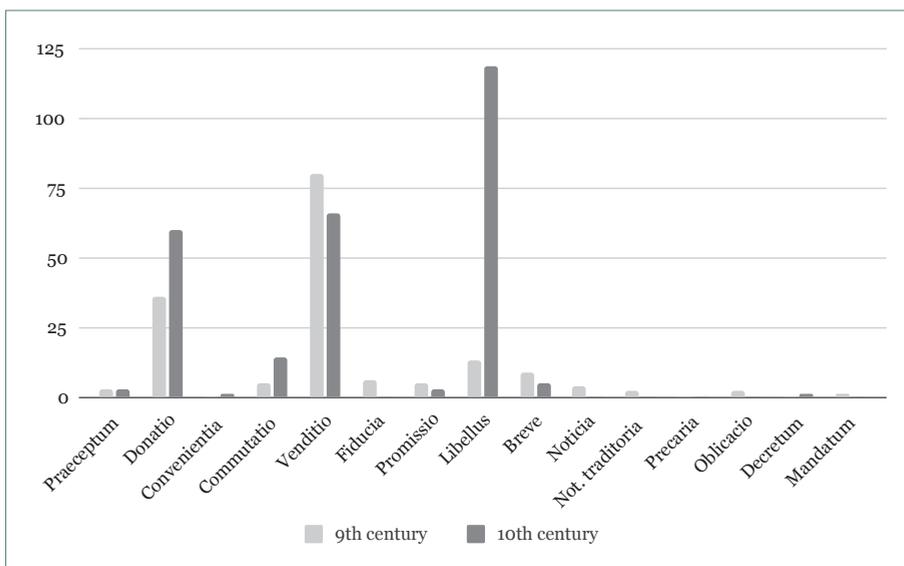
Tab. 2. Piacenza, Archive of S. Antonino.
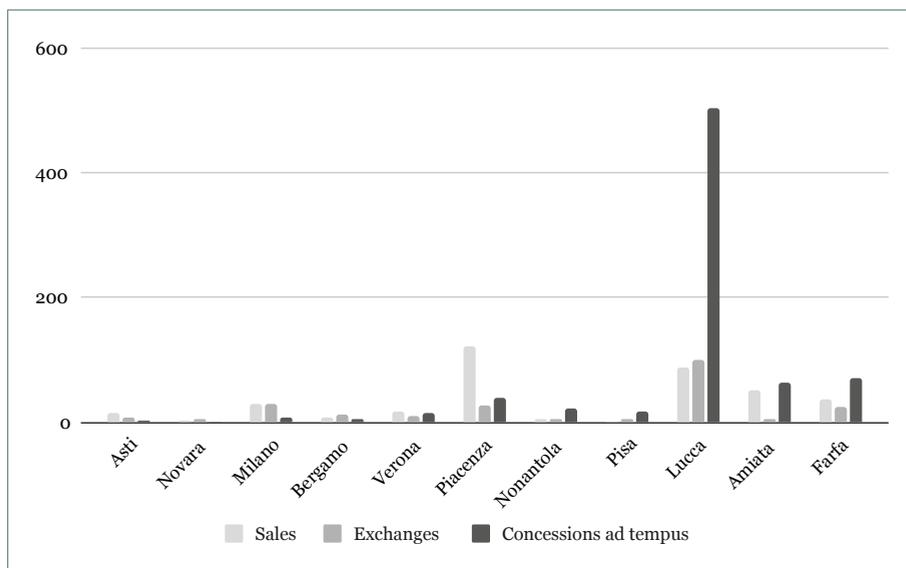
Tab. 3. The main documentary typologies in the archives of the *regnum* (774-900).

stance)[30]. Even where the phenomenon is precocious and abundantly documented (in the Lombard area studied by Andrea Castagnetti and then especially in Piacenza), the recourse to typical ideas of the transalpine tradition does not impose a new documentary model – except for the *notitiae* – but is grafted onto the very precise partitions of the documentary mechanism, by then consolidated, of the Roman-Lombard *cartula*. One can refer, in particular, to some phrasing of the formal bestowals of possessory rights (*vestiture*), very close to Marculf's formulary and to some documents of the practice in the Frankish area[31], or to the guarantee clause by which, in acts of alienation performed by individuals subject to Salic or Alemannic law, the *multa quod est pena*, laid down in the event of objection by the author or his heirs, might sometimes find itself expressed in charters and diplomas *consociante fiscus* (in association or, perhaps, "consociation" with the fisc) as per the original meaning of penalty paid to the *pars publica*, amply attested in transalpine *leges* and subsequently in Carolingian capitularies[32]. Above all, however –

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[30] Bordone, *Un'attiva minoranza etnica.*
[31] De Angelis – La Rocca, *Spectating Communities?*, pp. 49-51.
[32] It is no coincidence that, on this side of the Alps, that formula – already extensively witnessed in the Frankish area and in the St. Gallen charters – is encountered for the first time in Abbo's well-known will: «et insuper inferat ad ipsum sanctum locum heredem meam sociantem fisco auri libras quinquaginta» (*Monumenta Novaliciensia*, no. 2, p. 37). In the *regnum*, it seems that the first cases dates back to the 840s, in Alpcar's donation to the monastery of Saint Ambrose of Milan (CDLang, no. 146, 842 VIII 26, Milan = MD, I/1, no. 71) and in the testament of Billong, bishop of Verona, likewise an Aleman (ChLA², LX, no. 26). In the Farfa charters, I find

which is what concerns us the most, given our viewpoint –, what is lacking is the possibility of grasping the precise shifts in the geographical evolution, the exact links between the regions of origin of certain novel writing schemes and the politically and socially hegemonic groups responsible for the circulation of such models. Attempting to carry out such work would not be made easy by the notorious lack of formulary collections assembled in Italy[33]. Nevertheless, it could be carried out, at least with some approximation, through a closer comparison than has been done so far, of the documentary texts produced South and North the Alps. These texts are now available, with near-complete coverage, and in critically unimpeachable editions – at least as far as the originals and the contemporaneous copies are concerned – thanks to the series of *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*. Nevertheless, such an undertaking, even if we leave aside the specificities of the history of the documentation («storia di cultura della prassi [...], ricca, peculiare e pregnante»[34]) and all its possible deviations from the norm, is worth attempting. It would then be worth setting it next to the line of studies represented by the "New Legal History", which for some years has been offering convincing reinterpretations of legal codes of post-Roman kingdoms and collections of Carolingian capitularies, profitably exploring their chronologies, production and tradition contexts, and potential areas of usage in the service of public officials (first of all in the arena of conflict resolution then as part of the complex scenario of the new legal pluralism)[35]. This could give rise to a valuable integrated picture of acquisitions, considering the all-political clientele (and the mobility) of *libri legales* on the one hand, and, on the other, the substantial indifference on the part of Carolingian officials for the defining of concrete and technical aspects of documentary production.

It is in fact known that, if Frankish politics is in any way active in that area the circumstances in which it does so are mainly those associated with legal precedents[36]; and more generally, as remarked by Francesca Santoni, when talking at the conference around *Die Privaturkunden der Karolingerzeit*, when politics intervenes in the field, it dictates «norme di sapore più ideologico che deontologico»[37]. Certainly, that was also the case in one of the very few but most significant of interventions, the capitulary by which Emperor Lothar, from Corteolona, called to order the notaries operating *in finibus Tusciae*, accused of writing documents «absque mense et die mensis»[38]: capitulary in which, however, the distant Theodosian example – mediated by

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a first occurrence in 884, in a donation to the monastery by two spouses living under Salic law: «tunc inferamus, una cum distringentibus sociis fisci, auri libram unam, argenti pondera duo coacti exsoluemus, et quod repetit uendicare non ualeat»: *Regesto di Farfa*, III, no. 332, p. 34.

[33] For those of the Frankish world, we have the excellent research by Rio, *Legal practice*.

[34] Nicolaj, *Sentieri di diplomatica*, p. 320.

[35] Emblematic, in this sense, is the work by Esders, *Deux* libri legum.

[36] Ansani, Notarii *e* cancellarii, pp. 145-146.

[37] Santoni, *Il documento privato di area romanica*, p. 74.

[38] *Liber legis Langobardorum Papiensis*, p. 555.

the Breviary of Alaric and shifted from *leges* to *cartule* –, no doubt present as an influence, was updated and immersed in an objective reality, that of Lucca in the first two decades of the ninth century, which must have appeared to the legislator as possessing some peculiar features[39].

If we reverse the perspective, and observe the phenomenon from the angle of those materially responsible for the documentary production, we reach a not very different conclusion. Carolingian "standardisation" would also appear to reduce the numerous titles used by the writers of charters in the Lombard age (*scriva*, *scrivane*, *scriptor*, *notarius*, etc.). More specifically, one can note the phenomenon customarily referred to as secularisation of the notarial profession[40], in the sense of its adaptation to certain (never fully clarified) capitulary provisions on the exclusion of clerics from the production of documents[41]. It was such a phenomenon which, precisely during the years of conclusive entrenchment of Frankish domination – essentially coinciding with the start of Lothar I's reign –, experienced a marked widening. Nevertheless, even the new *notarii* of the *regnum* – at least those operating in "border" areas – could still manifest a steadfast attachment to "other" traditions, ancient and strongly characterised, as did the scribes in the employ of Nonantola, who reiterated the formulary of the *tabelliones* active in the Ravenna exarchate, and the *notarii sancte Ecclesie Motinensis,* who reserved such formularies for the emphyteusis petitions addressed to the bishop[42]. Undoubtedly conscious choices could be made, modulated on the specific representativeness of the documentary event and on the needs of a special clientele.

[39] Bougard, *L'empereur Lothaire*. Tuscan peculiarities in dating systems had emerged since the fateful 774, with an emphasis laid on the Frankish conquest of *Langobardia* (alternatively, on the capture of the capital Pavia) almost entirely alien to the Po Valley world (Gasparri, *Italia longobarda*, pp. 164-168), and would then resurface with similar territorial compactness (involving, that is, the northern and central part of the Marca di Tuscia, while excluding the Siena and Amiata area politically and culturally gravitating around the papal *Patrimonium*) at the beginning of the tenth century, when Adalbert II's stubborn opposition to Berengar I led to a total absence of references to the king in the local documentation. Bougard, *Le royaume d'Italie*, p. 499, speaks in this regard of a «discipline collective» of Tuscan *notarii* and of the strong «conscience d'appartenir à une même zone de production documentaire».
[40] According to the way the issue had been raised already by Hagen Keller, the first to observe its development especially in the conspicuous Lucca documentation: cf. Keller, *Der Gerichtsort*, pp. 9-11, and Keller, *La marca di Tuscia*, p. 122ff; on the case of Lucca, see also Schwarzmaier's monograph, *Lucca und das Reich*, in particular p. 266ff (with some ad hoc perspective adjustments indicated by Ghignoli, *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e documentazione*, p. 630ff). With a supra-regional slant, Bougard, *La justice*, p. 66ff, and Meyer, Felix et inclitus notarius, p. 72ff, reverted to the topic.
[41] However, on the well-known prescription of the 813 Italic Capitulary («Ut nullus presbyter cartas scribat nec conductor sui senioris existat»), see also Petrucci's interpretation, «An clerici artem notariae possint exercere», in particular pp. 561-568, anything but aligned with the previous historiography. The interpretation of the provision, caught «in its entirety, as a provision concerning the relationship between the priest of a rural or private church and his master», subsequently seeks to circumscribe the scope of its destination and to avoid seeing it as an imperative prohibition addressed to all clergymen belonging to the various religious orders.
[42] Santoni, *Il documento privato di area romanica*, pp. 74-75.

Francesca Santoni is absolutely right when she writes that «La prassi giuridica [...] non ha troppo riguardo per i confini tracciati dalla politica, ha sue proprie regole, e sue movenze, e tempi diversi da quelli della norma»[43]. An exception to that is represented, of course, by dating formulas in notarial documents, so precious for their ability to let us understand the forms taken by the circulation of news, the reaction times to the changes of regimes or specific political affiliations of the territories, or the embarrassment felt by scribes when facing the confusion of difficult times. An eloquent case is that of a Ravenna charter dating from 8th January 877, which blatantly (and consciously) ignores the name of the reigning sovereign[44], when in Lombardy and in Piacenza, in the same period, documents were dated to the second year of Charles the Bald, officially acknowledged in February 876 in Pavia[45]. And truly solomonic is the solution devised by that Bergamo notary who, in April 896, with the full awareness that he was operating at a delicate political-institutional juncture, instead of opting for a choice in favour of Arnulf of Carinthia, escaped the predicament by recovering as *post quem* deadline the date of death, by then quite distant, of the last universally recognised sovereign, Emperor Charles III («Facta hanc comutacio post obitum bone memorie domni Caroli imperatori condam Ludovici rege filius anno nono»)[46].

As for the rest, we saw it already, practice follows autonomous paths, far more closely interwoven with the traditions and needs of locally hegemonic powers than with the rhythms of top-level politics. Above all, practice appears to us capable of traversing spaces and times both at the level of legally irrelevant phrasing and with regard to weightier aspects of the documentary device. In the next section, we will have a closer look at this, through illustrating examples for each of these developments.

3. *Mobility of documentary formulas in time and space*

Only a few words will be said on the first example, relating to an expression that the notarial culture of the early Middle Ages, via unspecified and unspecifiable intermediaries, ostensibly drew from an extra-documentary repertoire adapted, in different times, places and contexts, to similar communicative functions. I am referring to an expression with a very ancient history, dating back to the turbulent start of the fifth century, during which, in the Carthage occupied by the Vandals, a bishop – perhaps *Quodvultdeus* – "pho-

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[43] *Ibidem*, p. 73.
[44] «Anno Deo propitjo pontificatus domni Iohannis summi pontifitjs et universalis pape in apostolica sacratissima beati Petri apostoli Domini sede sexto, imperatore nesimus, die octava mensis ianuarii, indicione detima, Ravenne»: *Le carte di Ravenna*, I, no. 31. On the Ravenna context in the years following the death of Louis II, cf. West Harling, *Rome, Ravenna, and Venice*, pp. 83-86.
[45] CdLang, no. 269; ChLA² LXV, no. 22 (876 X 27, Piacenza).
[46] ChLA² XCVIII, no. 28 (896 IV, Bergamo).

tographed" his age in two sermons titled *De tempore barbarico*[47]. Having surfaced in documentary practices in a 553 donation to the Church of Ravenna, towards the end of the Gothic War[48], and being revived in May 774 in the Piacenza Apennines traversed by Charlemagne's conquering armies[49], that same expression, by then clearly an integral part of a shared formulary repertoire[50], is encountered again in identical terms in Lombard Apulia, among the charters kept at the monastery of San Benedetto of Conversano, in the year 992[51]:

> Ego Petrus (…) declaro enim quia preteritis annis, quando ordinabi ipsi filii mei Castelmanno et Leo et dedi illorum uxoribus, tandem erat tempora pacis et causa mea salvam habebam, sic dedi tandem ad Castelmanno filio meo (…) solidos decem (…) et ad predicto Leo filio meo iterum dedi solidos decem (…). Modo vero perveni ad senectute et tempus varbarice et non habeo iam aliquit de causa mea nec pretium quod dari debeam ad istum Alexander qui est posteriore minumus filius meus (…)

However, the "barbaric" time here does not coincide with a military context: the drama is not collective, but rather fully immersed in an individual dimension. It describes the situation of a by then elderly man who compared a peaceful phase of his own life, during which he could see more than honourably to the maintenance of his children (each one gifted 10 gold coins), with the later phase during which he found himself in dire economic straits, unable to bequeath his youngest son anything other than a modest house with a small plot of land around it.

I should like to dwell a little longer on the second case, given that, to my knowledge, it has never attracted scholarly attention. I am referring to a guarantee formula that emerged suddenly in the 760s, with perfect synchronism and with a similar function, among the charters of the newly established monastery of San Salvatore of Brescia and the archiepiscopal Church of Ravenna. The only variation is the typology of the document: in eastern Lombardy, it consisted of a typical *cartola promissionis*, whereas, in the exarchate area, the little formula was called upon to reinforce the clause rendering the donation irrevocable (being, significantly, wedded to the phrase *quia legibus cautum est*, which appeared for the first time in a papyrus from the year 600, no doubt to sanction a reference to the late empire and Justinian legislation meant to protect donations to the Church)[52]:

[47] Quodvultdeus Carthaginensis, *Sermo XI* and *Sermo XII de tempore barbarico*. The problems of its ascription to the Carthaginian cultural milieu on the eve of the Vandal invasion have been conclusively resolved by Van Slyke, *The Devil and His Pomps*, in particular p. 59 thereof. See also Kalman, *Two Sermons* De Tempore Barbarico.

[48] ChLA XXIX, no. 880 (= Pap. Tjäder, I, no. 13).

[49] ChLA XXVII, no. 827 (= CDL II, no. 291).

[50] To the same context also refers the use of this expression in the ending clause of a papal privilege of 1012 issued for the monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno: «tam pacis quam barbarici temporis firma stabilitate decernimus sub iurisditione Sancte Ęcclesie nostre permanendum» (*Chronicon Vulturnense*, III, p. 8).

[51] *Le pergamene di Conversano*, I, no. 26 (XI 992).

[52] ChLA XXI, no. 717 (= Pap. Tjäder, I, no. 20).

et si ego suprascriptus Godolus subdiaconus vel mei heredes in aliquo disturbationem ex ipso curriculo fecerimus aut quocumque tempore oportuerit ad recooperandum eum interdixerimus, in quo superius decernutum est, et contra hanc cartulam promissionis ire quandoque tentaverimus, per nos aut subpositam aliam vel qualemcumque personam principi aut iudici suplicandum, per quemvis modo manifestum fuerit, componamus ad partem monasterii tibi Anselpergę abbatissę vel successoribus tuis auri solidos quinquaginta	non per me neque per aliquamcumque oppositam personam procuratorisque personas, non adeundum iudicium et non suplicandum principibus, neque per ullam interpellacionem ullo modo ullaque ratione contraire, quia legibus cautum est ut quod semel donatum vel concessum fuerit a maxime in venerabilibus locis nullo modo revocetur .

Apart from the different enunciation of the sentence, what is striking is the declination in the plural of the term *princeps* in the Ravenna formulary: a form recognised by Karl von Savigny as typical of Romanesque texts from the early Middle Ages – more specifically the *Lex Romana Curiensis* – which, through the Breviary of Alaric (*Breviarium Alaricianum*), reinterpreted the Theodosian Code (*Codex Theodosianus*) and adapted it to the changed context[53]. It is, in any event, clear that we are facing an erudite echo with a Roman law flavour (*principi erit supplicandum*, we read in Ulpian, D. 49.5.5pr.-1 [4 app.] with regard to the rules governing appeal proceedings)[54], which is now reused to evoke the commitment to keep loyal to the action just performed, without pretending to approach any public authority to oppose the terms agreed upon.

The odd thing is that, in Lombardy, the use of such a formula died out throughout the Carolingian age: I know of only two "peripheral" occurrences, in Piacenza, in as many *cartole promissionis*, and moreover in a very simplified form[55]. I also came across another case in post-Carolingian age, in Novara in 927, again in a *cartula promissionis*, followed by a further such occurrence in Imbersago, Brianza, in March 985[56], while it is traced to Zevio near Verona,

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[53] Savigny, *Storia del diritto romano*, I, p. 276ff.

[54] Pergami, *L'appello*, p. 249.

[55] ChLA² LXVIII, no. 9 (IV 816, Ottavello); ChLA² LXXI, no. 3 (VIII 893, Pomaro), where it is combined with the clause of *restitutio in duplum* of any disputed goods: («si amodo nos qui supra (…) contra vos (…) agere aut causare presumbserimus, anteposito que superius intermissum est, ante principis vel iudicit et omni tempore exinde tacitis et contemptis non permanserimus, et causa probata fuerit, tunc duplas suprascriptas rebus unde agere aut causare presumbserimus vobis restituamus». I would only point out that in both of these cases the authors are – in the first case by membership of the ecclesiastical *ordo*, in the second by express declaration – of Roman law, which, however, does not occur in the later Lombard examples from the tenth century and is frankly impossible to demonstrate for the late eighth century, in the light of what was said above.

[56] Carte S. Maria Novara, no. 43: «Si a modo aliquando tempore ego qui Imelbertus aut meis heredes contra te aut contra tuis heredes vel cui tu dederis agere aut causare presumpserimus aut ad agentibus consentierimus per nos aut per nostra summissam personam suplicandum principes aut iudices seu qualibet potestati»; CDLang, no. 826, coll. 1445-1446: «si aliquando tempore ego qui supra Wilielmus aut meos heredes aut nostra submisaque persona contra te qui supra Saidoaldus abbas aut contra vos successoresa aut contra cui vos legibus dederitis, de istis

in an *extra-placitum pactum* sealing a *causacio* between private individuals, precisely in the short timespan at the end of the period, in January 883[57].

Ascribed to the ninth century (though actually a forgery from the twelfth century), the formula is also present in the Amiata charters (significantly, as additional proof of the cultural proximity of this area to the "Roman" world, in forms mirroring the original Ravenna phrasing)[58], and above all, with the same variation/extension to an *ecclesiastica interpellatio*, again in Ravenna, where it is always and exclusively used in donation charters written by official scribes of the city[59].

In Lombardy, it would seem to resurface only well into the eleventh century (a period in which, in any event, its use was going to extend elsewhere as well, in a very vast area stretching from Rome to Genoa), once again, as in its early days, in *cartule promissionis*. In one of these, from the archive of S. Vittore of Varese, finally, greater clarity is shed on its meaning, it seems to me, through the inclusion of a specific clause sheltering the opposing party from any proceedings (*per placitum*) the authors might institute:

> ut si unquam in tempore nos corum supra Ingesinda et Adila aut nostris heredibus aut per nostra subnixa persona de iamdicta vinea cum area sua agerimus aut causaverimus, vel si de nostrum datum aut factum vel quolibet scriptum exinde in alia parte aparuerit datum aut factum cui nos dedisemus aut fecisemus et te quiette ac pacifice a proprium abere et detinere non permanserimus, vel si per placitum exinde fatigaverimus suplicantes principes aut iudices vel ulla potestas et claruerit, tunc componamus nos qui supra Ingesinda et Adila aut nostris heredibus tibi predicti Amizoni presbitero tuisque heredibus seu cui tu dederis pro pena nomine dubla ipsa vinea cum area sua qualiter superius legitur, sicut pro tempore fuerit meliorata aut valuerit sub

pertinentibus vel de suorum filiis vel filiabus agere aut causare presumpserimus, suplicandum principes aut judices, dicendum quod nobis exinde aliquit pertinere deberet et vos seu pars ipsius monasterii quiete et pacifice abere non permiserimus».

[57] ChLA² LX, no. 3: «Unde nunc spondeo adque repromitto me ego Austrebertus vel meis heredes tibi Andreani presbitero vel ad tuis heredes, aut cui tu dederis, ut si aliquando tempore de ipsis rebus quas tibi in pacto interlaxavi plus agere aut causare voluerimus per me vel subpositas personas suplicantem principem vel iudicem aut ipsa res tibi tollere aut contendere aut minuare voluerimus, tunc tantum quantum contendutum aut minuatum fuerit in illo tempore melioratum valuerit duplari promitimus».

[58] *Codex diplomaticus Amiatinus*, I, no. +84: «non ad eundum iudicium, non supplicandum principibus, neque neque enim per ecclesiasticas interpellationes ullo modo ullaque racione auferre voluntate, quia et legibus cautum est, ut quod semel donatum vel quoquo modo collatum fuerit, nullo modo revocetur, set involubile modis omnibus hanc mea donationem conservare et custodire promito».

[59] Carte ravennati, no. 22 ([851 IX 1-867 XII 31]); Carte ravennati, no. 30 (850 IV-877 I 8); Carte ravennati, no. 47 (893 VI 18); Carte ravennati, no. 54 (896 IX 8). In a donation of a Marozia deaconess written by Benedict *scriniarius et tabellio urbis Rome*, the promise not to appeal to an ecclesiastical authority is formulated with direct reference to the pope and, significantly, to the emperor, in the Roman area at the beginning of the Ottonian age: «numquam a me neque ab heredibus et successoribus meis aut a me submissa magna parvaque persona qualibet <*sic*> modo per cuiuscumque occasione specie seu quod novella et antiquę legimus <*sic*> constitutionem beneficia, seu privilegia adversum predictis monachis, non interpellandum iudices, non sublicandum principibus vel exortando pontificem sive alie potestatibus intervenientes, aut per imperialem interpellationem facere ...» (*Il regesto sublacense*, no. 123 [963 V 19], p. 173).

estimacione in eodem loco et insuper argentum denarios bonos libras quatuordecim, et, post pena composita, exinde homni tempore tacitis et contentis cum nostris heredibus esse, permanere debeamus[60].

4. *From one kingdom to another*

This limited history of a concise formula, shared early on by notaries of the Lombard kingdom with Ravenna's *tabelliones*, can thus tell us something about the permeability of borders, which from this perspective, too, appear to us to be far less rock-solid than the traditional division of areas on a political-institutional basis would lead us to assume. It is only one of a great many elements – and certainly among minor ones as well – of a broad picture that, through this secondary route too, is criss-crossed by intersections, nuances, hybridisations and adaptations. It informs us about the circulation of models and notarial practices that are formed, become entrenched, fade away and then regain force on the strength of the availability (or temporary unavailability) of authoritative texts or small formulary collections, more or less consolidated schemes or working drafts, which politics, in the ninth century, does not seem capable of directing. In the specific case of the *principi aut iudici supplicando* formula, we could think of the erudite echo coming from some epitome shaped by the model of the *Lex Romana Curiensis*, which, in the exarchate area might have had greater chances of continuous use, and periods of partial oblivion in the rest of northern Italy. It is therefore interesting to discover that, when that formula reappears in territories over the Po River, in the last quarter of the ninth century, it is precisely in a territory where both Bischoff and Mordek locate the production of a manuscript in which even the *Lex Romana Curiensis* – together with other Roman law texts – is copied[61].

Based on what we have been observing, and the examples put forward, it seems therefore as if a negative reply could once again be given to the central question from which we began: that is to say the ascertaining of a direct influence of politics in determining, or at the very least in having an impact on, shared solutions in the evolution of the documentary practices of Carolingian Italy. Once again, it is rather the specific communication tool between the top ruling echelons that we must turn our attention to with a view to detect, in significant forms capable of leaving a durable imprint on the practices, the reasons for the solidity and self-representation of politics. The renewed form of the Carolingian *praeceptum* and some of its precise formulas represented for the Italic kings a reservoir which might be tapped into, as if it were, for a vast and sym-

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[60] *Le pergamene della basilica di S. Vittore di Varese*, no. 15 (1070 IV, Galliate); also in *Codice diplomatico della Lombardia medievale*, < https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/cdlm/edizioni/mi/varese-svittore/carte/vittore1070-04-00b/ >.
[61] Ms. Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Haen. 8 + 9. Cf. Mordek, *Bibliotheca capitularium*, p. 661.

bolic repertoire (not merely one with a rich visual dimension)[62]. In this case, too, I will limit myself to a small example, taken from a comparative reading of diplomas distributed between the middle and the latter part of the ninth century.

In June 843, as evidenced by a diploma transmitted as an original in the Archivio Capitolare of Arezzo, Lothar I emancipated a servant of his named Adalbaldus:

> notum sit quia nos, pro mercedis nostre augmento, in procerum nostrorum presentia servum nostrum Adalbaldum nomine manu propria excutientes a manu eius denarium secundum legem Salicam liberum fecimus et ab omni iugo servitutis absolvimus[63].

It was the first act of that kind on the part of the emperor (followed, in 851, by the manumission of the *ancilla* Doda)[64], and one of the very few (four in total) from the central segment of Carolingian territories to be modelled on the ancient formulary of the *preceptum denariale*[65]. According to the prescriptions of the *Lex Salica*, in fact, the enfranchisement rite was carried out *per excussionem denarii*, in a form totally unknown in pre-Carolingian Italy, and distant both from the "Roman" practices of *manumissio in ecclesia* or *per cartam,* and from the complex (and no less symbolic) ritual evidenced in the *Edict of Rothari*[66]. That, however, was precisely the model eventually followed in the only other two similar deeds available to us for the post-Carolingian *regnum* (a charter issued by Guy of Spoleto, in 892, and one from Berengar I, dating from the year 912), albeit with the significant shift on the semantics of the *consuetudo regia* of what, as seen earlier, had originally been an action performed *secundum legem Salicam*[67]:

Notum esse volumus cunctis nostris fidelibus, qualiter interventu Amolonis sacrosanctae ecclesie Taurinatis venerandi presulis seu Anskerii nostri strenuissimi marchionis, prout legalis ordo atque prisca consuetudo regum deposcit, per denarium de manu eius excussum quendam Martinum filium Mauri de civitate Vercelli ab omni vinculo servitutis vel condicione liberum et apsolutum civemque Romanum esse concedimus atque sancimus.	Noverit igitur omnium fidelium sanctae Dei Aeclesiae nostrorumque presentium scilicet ac futurorum industria, nos pro Dei amore et remedio animae nostre quendam servum nostrum nomine Aregisum cum uxore sua Adelinda et filio suo Adelardo et filia eius nomine Ingeza ab omni servitutis ligamine liberos et ingenuos dimisisse et a manibus eorum secundum regiam consuetudinem publice monete denarium excusisse.

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[62] A topic for some time at the centre of researches on charters as tools of political communication: suffice here, as an illustrating example dispensing with others, the reference to Huschner, *Transalpine Kommunikation.*

[63] DD Lo I, no. 74 (843 VI 11, Aachen).

[64] DD Lo I, no. 113 (851 IV 19).

[65] A careful examination of legislative references and a complete filing of documentary attestations are found in Kano, *Configuration d'une espèce diplomatique*; see also Bothe, *From Subordination to Integration*, pp. 361-364.

[66] Esders, *Early Medieval Use of Late Antique Legal Texts.*

[67] On the meaning of such an expression in documentary deeds from the Carolingian age, cf. Kano, *La loi ripuaire.*

This is, in my opinion, a further interesting testimony of the hybridisation and mobility of documentary formulas. Another form of "crossing" of "borders", if you like; and, certainly also, in its adherence to the *prisca consuetudo,* a significant ideological model in the new political context in which the Carolingian kings seemed to be constantly searching for the legitimation of their power.

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IV

The frontiers of others II:
from Catalunya to the Danube

Fiscal resources and political competition
on the periphery of the Carolingian empire:
some Catalan examples (9th century)

by Igor Santos Salazar

By analysing *diplomas* and judicial documents recording disputes in the Carolingian counties located in the eastern Pyrenees, this chapter aims to analyse how fiscal assets constituted an important political resource for the creation of a system of government on the south-western periphery of the Carolingian empire. The study of these documents also helps to decode the way in which those public lands were used by Carolingian officials (*comites*) to build loyal clienteles from among competing military aristocracies.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Carolingian empire; Catalonia; eastern Pyrenees; Carolingians counts; Carolingian justice; fiscal resources.

Abbreviations
ChLA² 112 = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin charters. 2nd series, Ninth century*, ed. G. Cavallo – G. Nicolaj, CXII, *Spain I*, ed. J. Alturo – T. Alaix, Zurich 2017.
DCII = *Recueil des Actes de Charles II le Chauve, roi de France*, commencé par A. Giry, continué par M. Prou, terminé et publié sous la direction di F. Lots par G. Tessier, III, Paris 1955.
Justícia = *Justícia i resolució de conflictes a la Catalunya Medieval. Col·lecció diplomàtica. Segles IX-XI*, dir. J.M. Salrach – T. Mantagut, Barcelona 2018 (Textos jurídics catalans. Documents, 2).
MGH, AB = *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH, Hannover 1883 (SS rer. Germ., 5).
MGH, Capit. I = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, I, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883 (Legum sectio, II).
MGH, DK = *Pippins, Karlmanns und Karls des Grossen*, ed. E. Mühlbacher, München 1906 (Diploma Karolinorum, 1).
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In this article I analyse an area situated on the western periphery of the Carolingian world, in order to address important questions relating to the role played by fiscal assets (i.e. the material bases of public power, basically land) in the construction of governing strategies between kings, counts and local élites. My analysis will focus on the period ranging from the reign of Charlemagne to that of Charles II, and in the southern counties that Frankish annalists defined, for a very brief period, as the Spanish March[1]. In so doing, I will consciously distance myself from some of the main historiographical issues that have characterised the last half-century of studies on Carolingian Catalonia (whose borders are very different when compared to those of the modern Spanish region): the debates on the ethnic identity of the *Hispani*, on the meanings of legal concepts such as *aprisio* and, above all, on the sterile, ideological and anachronistic efforts to discover the phantasmagorical roots and contours of the Catalan nation. Thanks to recent researches by authors such as Cullen J. Chandler and Jonathan Jarrett[2] about the *Hispani* and the extensive legal use of *aprisio* – which is nothing more than a tool to identify land clearance in Catalan charters –, I can move forward and concentrate in these pages on the study of a *dossier* of public documents – *diplomas* and the judicial proceedings known as *placita* – in relation to recent developments in the study of public assets and the royal fisc, taking into account lands characterised by their belonging to the public fisc, over which social élites and publics officials were in dispute[3].

1. *Land, courts and political peripheries: Carolingian conquest and governance*

Once Gerona (785) had been conquered, Carolingian rule spread across the southern side of the Pyrenees slowly, until the fall of Barcelona (801), over a mosaic of authorities that were (and indeed are) difficult to characterise both for the Carolingian authors and for modern scholars. The areas under Frankish control are defined in ambiguous ways in the charters: labels such as *territorio, pagus, valle*, describe a landscape in which only Girona and Barcelona

[1] Zimmermann, *Le concept.*
[2] Chandler, *Between Court*, and Jarrett, *Settling.*
[3] In recent years, the analysis of the economic foundations of power in the early medieval kingdoms of Western Europe has increasingly focused on fiscal assets, see at least: *Spazio pubblico* and *Biens publics*. For Catolonia see now Salrach, *Catalunya carolíngia and the public nature.*

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could be called *civitates*[4]. Moreover, the references to *comitati* are consistent but intermittent, while mentions to the Spanish March appear only in narrative sources[5]. In fact, the territory supposedly organised within the March is described with great ambiguity in the Carolingian normative sources[6].

Furthermore, the complete set of written sources preserved for the period between the end of the eighth century and the first half of the ninth – mostly preserved as later copies from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries – shows a large group of public officials, mostly counts, acting within the geographical space of what has come to be called, with a useful anachronism, Carolingian Catalonia. From Roussillon to Barcelona, and from Ampurias to Urgell, there are about twelve men described as counts during the time between the Carolingian conquest and the age of Bernard of Septimania, to which at least another ten counts must be added for the time between Bernard's execution (844) and the last years of Charles II's government (from 870 onwards)[7].

The inclusion of the Iberian *comitati* and territories within the Carolingian political construct led to the imposing of a new brand of political and economic exploitation which can be seen in other European spaces controlled by the Frankish emperor, such as Northern-Central Italy and Dalmatia. In this sense, a diploma from Charlemagne dated to 812 and addressed to some counts (among them Bera and Gauselm, active in the areas of Barcelona, Conflent, Rossellò and Ampurias) – designed to respond to the complaints of forty-two *Hispani* who had denounced in Aachen the injustices committed against them by public officials – is very interesting. The document, preserved as a copy in a twelfth-century Narbonne cartulary, is clear in highlighting the role of the counts and other public officials linked to them (such as the *saiones*), accused of illegally imposing censuses, and acting with force taking land and properties recognized as possession of the *Hispani* by the Carolingian authority, in which one can recognize land considered by the Carolingian rulers as part of the fisc[8]. The document also shows that the resolution of the conflict fell to Archbishop John and the king of Aquitaine and son of Charle-

[4] «in villa Borraciano, in territorio Bisildunenese», Justícia, no. 2 (817 IX) 15: «in pago Ruscilione [...] et in pago Confluente villa que vocatur Prata [...] seu etiam in pago Cerdanie villa que vocatur Montelianos», DCII, no. 17 (843 I 23).

[5] As, for example, MGH, AB, *ad annum* 844. For the memory of "Spain" in Carolingian narrative sources see Latowsky, *Carolingian Imperial Biography*, pp. 123-148.

[6] See the *Ordinatio Imperii*, c. 1: «Volumus ut Pippinus habeat Aquitaniam et Wasconiam et markan Tolosanam totam et insuper comitatos quatuor, id est in Septimania Carcassensem et in Burgundia Agustudunensem et Avalensem et Nivernensem», MGH, Capit. I, no. 136, pp. 270-273.

[7] Reference texts for political history of the area include D'Abadal, *Dels visigots*, Salrach, *El domini*, and, more recently, Chandler, *Carolingian Catalonia*. For the comital family links, see Aurell, *Les noces*, *passim*.

[8] The diploma is clear in recognising that the wastelands were granted to the *Hispani* by the Carolingian authority and that they can therefore be considered as fiscal lands: «ad nostram fiduciam de Ispania venientes per nostram datam licentiam erema loca sibi ad laboricandum propriserant et laboratas habere videntur», MGH, DK, no. 217 (812 IV 2).

magne, Louis, who had to impose order on social groups that had been under Carolingian rule for a relatively short time.

This type of problem linked to the government of fiscal resources, which developed in Catalonia shortly after the Frankish conquest – although the diploma does not indicate the geographical areas in which the counts' actions had taken place, the presence of Bera and Gauselm link the lands to Northern Iberia –, can also be seen on the eastern periphery of the empire, in Istria. In 804, in a place called Rižana, Charlemagne's *missi* listened to the complaints of one hundred and seventy-two *homines capitaneos* – a term which can be understood to denote the elite of possessors of the Istrian territories, both rural and urban – denouncing the behaviour and illicit actions of the patriarch of Grado, Fortunatus, several bishops, and the highest Frankish authority in the area, the duke John[9]. All of them were accused of not maintaining the old Byzantine uses and customs after the conquest of Istria by the Frankish armies. Indeed, the patriarch of Grado is criticized for not having met the tax obligations owed to the public authority, and for replacing them with levies on the lay possessors of the area. Along with other charges, the *homines* gathered at the court also accused the Frankish duke of having appropriated the sums that should have served, or at least once served, for the financing of the public authority[10].

The example of the *Hispani* is very different from that of Istria, of course. However, in both documents it is possible to follow the imposition of the Carolingians' political system, and the violence that came after through the arbitrary imposition of some charges by the public officials. Likewise, it is possible to follow the negotiation mechanisms (basically imperial justice) that were implemented to heal the social and political fractures that the actions of counts, duke and lesser agents such as the *saiones*, had provoked in these two peripheral regions of the empire. In addition, in both cases it is possible to see the centrality of public assets and resources (land, censuses...) as the main features of the conflict[11].

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[9] Placiti, no. 17, pp. 48-56.

[10] On Rižana see Borri, *Neighbors and Relatives*, with further bibliography.

[11] A diploma issued by Louis the Pious shortly after, already acting as the new emperor, confirms the public origin of the lands worked by the *Hispani* «quando idem Hispani in nostrum regnum venerunt et locum desertum quem ad habitandum occupaverunt, per praeceptum domni et genitoris nostri ac nostrum sibi ac successoribus suis ad possidendum adepti sunt», MGH, DLP, no. 88 (816 II 10). Much later, a diploma of Charles II is even more explicit – and in this case we do know the territory to which it refers (Roussillon, Conflent, Cerdagne and Urgell) – when it points out the fiscal nature of some lands granted to a certain Sicfridus: «concedimus cuidam fideli nostro nomine Sicfrido et per hanc nostram auctoritatem largimur ob devotionem servitii seu compendium quasdam res juris nostri que ita noscuntur fore, in pago Ruscilione videlicet que vocatur Kanoas cum suis omnibus appendiciis, et in pago Confluente villa que vocatur Prata cum mancipiis que ad idem Cofluente pertinent, seu etiam in pago Cerdanie villa que vocatur Montelianos et Hencurrio, in pago Orjel villa que vocatur vallis Andorra cum suis omnibus appendiciis, totum ad integrum», DCII, no. 17 (843 I 23).

2. *The quest for fiscal resources: local elites, counts and political competition in the 9ᵗʰ century*

We have to wait few years, until the reign of Charles II over West Francia, in order to observe locally (and with some continuity) the development of controversies between those who held control over the land and the Carolingian counts. Thanks to a small group of judicial records – almost all of which were copied in the seventeenth century and are today preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France –, we can gain an insight into the fierce competition that was established in the Pyrenean counties between certain social élites and the counts for the control of lands whose nature, whether public or private, was at the centre of the dispute.

On a winter's day in the year 843, before a tribunal summoned in «loco Acusiano» (nowadays Agusà, located about five kilometres west of Perpignan) and presided over by the *vicedominus* Witiza on behalf of the count Suniarius of Roussillon, Odoacre, the count's representative («mandatarius de comite») questioned Wimera, the representative of a woman named Revella, with the intention of proving that some land located «in loco Baxiano» formed part of the fiscal estates controlled by the count. Indeed, Odoacre testified that such assets had to be «beneficius seniori meo». The case was settled through the testimony of a group of witnesses who swore before the court that the disputed lands had belonged to Revella and her husband Protasius for more than thirty years, even before Suniarius came into office: «habentem iamdicta loca ad proprio per XXXᵃ annos seu amplius, quieto hordine, in facies de antecessores de Suniario comite vel in faciem ipsius Suniarii»[12].

Fifteen years later, in front of a tribunal summoned in the basilica of Saint Peter of Elna (about fifteen kilometres north of modern Spanish-French border of La Junquera), a new lawsuit was heard. Therein, a man called Recemirus was involved against the will of the *vicecomes* of Roussillon Richelmus – who was represented by his advocate, Danhiel –, who pledged to take back into the comital fisc the lands placed in the village of «Tresmalos». These lands, located in the territory of Elna, were, according to Recemirus, claimed to be its property. The testimony offered by the men called to testify before the tribunal is of great importance in decoding the mechanisms discussed in the previous paragraph. Let us listen to their voices:

> Sapemus et vidimus occulis notris et auribus audivimus et de presentes fuimus in predicta villa Tresmalos, quando venit avius istius Ricemiri, condam nomine Wadamirus, et pater ipsius idipsi Ricemiri, nomine Witigisus, et prendiderunt iamdictas terras prius per illorum adprisionem, sicut ceteri Spani, vel per preceptum domini imperatoris, et possiderunt eas infra hos legitimos annos, usque dum Suniarius comes eas tulit ad supradicto Witigiso, patre istius meminiti Ricemiri, sua fortia et inbe-

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[12] Justícia, no. 10 (843 II 7), p. 46. The day before, the witnesses cited in the charter had gathered in the church of Agusá, defending again Revella's full ownership of the disputed property: Justícia, no. 9 (843 II 6.)

neficiabit eas ad homine suo condam Tructerio. Et hodie magis pertinent ad istum Ricemirum pro partibus avii sui condam Wadamiro et patri suo condam Witigiso pro illorum adprisione ad habendum per supradictas terras, quam ulli homini ad benefitio, ad cuius vocem Danhiel advocatus Richelmo vicemcomite eis repettet. Et ea quae scimus recte et veraciter testificamus per supra adnixum iuramentum in Domino[13].

The document could not be richer in the nuances it offers on the fierce competition for land conducted by Carolingian counts: first of all, once again, there is the recourse to public recognition of the exploitation of land – with the use of the *aprisio* sanctioned by a diploma –, which gives to those lands a character not too different to the lands identified as belonging to the imperial fisc. Secondly, Suniarius, already the protagonist of the judicial proceedings celebrated in 843, took the land by force from Witigisus, the father of Recemirus, in order to grant it to Tructerius, one of his followers. From that indeterminate day onwards, the public officials saw the village of «Tresmalos» as a public asset (i.e. within the county's availability) and for this reason they fought again to maintain the village as a *beneficium* against the reasons given by Recemirus.

This case recalls certain contemporary examples documented in the kingdom of Italy, in particular the cases concerning the monastery of San Bartolomeo in Pistoia and the Cathedral of Cremona. Both ecclesiastical institutions received from the Carolingian emperors fiscal lands and assets (such as the tax revenues from the ports on the river Po, in the case of Cremona) that were, successively, occupied by public officials who, remembering the fiscal nature of such resources, chose other recipients for them in order to favour their own patronage interests[14]. The problems created by such strategies were solved in the same way in two places as different as Roussillon and the heart of the Italian kingdom: the Carolingian justices heard the deposition of numerous witnesses, lay and ecclesiastical, who solved the cases against the interests of the public officials[15].

A diploma from Charles II addressed to Frodoin, the bishop of Barcelona, may serve to clarify both the public nature of the *beneficia* mentioned in the judicial proceedings in the territory of Roussillon, and the ways in which those assets finished, often, into private hands. In the year 862, the king granted as private property to the bishop the assets which «prephatus [Suniarius] ad suum beneficium visus eas fuit abere, sicut in scripto quando ad fiscum nostrum redacte sunt legitime vel scriptum esse dinoscitur»[16]. It is possible that the Suniarius mentioned in the diploma was not the same man mentioned as a count in Rousillon. In spite of this, the diploma is an example of the circulation of land and resources from the fisc towards private patrimonies and of the competition between different social agents for the control of such lands.

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[13] Justícia, no. 13 (858 VI 5), pp. 50-51.
[14] For these cases see now Santos Salazar, *Governare, passim*.
[15] For a similar case near Narbonne see, Justícia, no. 4 (834 IX 11).
[16] CDII, no. 245 (862? VIII 19).

The situation was not very different in the territories of Cerdanya and Gerona. Salomon, the count active in Urgell-Cerdanya, presided over a court composed of several *iudices*, including his viscount Adalelmus, with the intention of clarifying a dispute between Witisclus and Sonnane about the legal nature of the village of «Setteretto», today Tor de Querol, located near the church of Sant Martí d'Aravó, in a territory now divided by the modern boundaries created after the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659) between the province of Gerona and the Department of the Pyrénées Orientales. This charter offers new, extremely interesting details on the mechanisms by which the relationship between local élites and Carolingian power was created through the exploitation of land granted through diplomas (and therefore characterised by an obvious public quality); the mention to the *aprisio*, and the successive controversy surrounding the ambiguous legal nature of the same lands generations after its first concession and exploitation.

The history of Witisclus is easily told: the *villa* he claimed as his own had been inherited from his aunt Ailo, who was in turn heir to these lands by virtue of the inheritance obtained after the death of her father, the count of Aragon Aznar Galindo, who had obtained it much earlier (but we do not know how much earlier) «per sua ruptura et aprisione per preceptum domni imperatoris». Conversely, Sonnane defended himself by saying that he had the village «per beneficio de seniore meo Salomon comes»[17].

Once again one can see the ambiguous juridical characterization of the lands (public or private) in a highly competitive social and economic environment. The Catalan counties were dominated by the contrast between, on the one hand, the "hunger" of the *comites* over lands associated with some form of public origin (not by chance the exploitation of those assets were always confirmed by *diplomas*), lands much needed by public officials to strengthen their clienteles, and, on the other, the realities on the ground, where family groups defended the possession of those same patrimonies using witnesses capable of proving that they had owned the land for more than thirty years as required by Visigothic law (and Lombard and Roman law, of course). Sonnane lost the case despite the fact that the president of the court was the same count who had granted him the land in *beneficium*. The strength of the public consciousness of Carolingian counts engaged in such courts is clearly shown in this kind of judgements.[18]

Another example of the struggle to keep some assets in the *publicum*, for interests linked to comital politics, is found in another trial presided over by Count Salomon in 868. The case had, once again, to delineate the nature of three villages, Canavelles, Entrevalls and Ocenyes, that had once been part of the patrimony of Count Bera (one of the *comites* present in the diploma

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[17] Justícia, no. 14 (862 VIII 26), p. 52. On the counts of Aragon see Sénac, *Estudio sobre*.
[18] These procedural mechanisms and their results can be observed in many other areas of the Carolingian world, particularly in Italy. As an example see Bougard, *La justice*, *passim*.

issued by Charlemagne in 812), disputed by the monastery of Eixalada (situated on the river Têt, in the Conflent). Reconsidus, *mandatarius* of the count, renounced his claim to retain as part of the comital fisc and returned to abbot Witiza and presbyter Protasius the lands of the villages because the lands were not public. Count Bera had bought and inherited the villages and then passed them to his daughter Rotruda. Later, Rotruda gave them to her daughter Anna who, together with the abbot Eldebertus, donated the lands in dispute to the monastery of Eixalada[19]. The court showed that being owned by a count was not enough to consider those villages as part of the fisc because they were part of his private wealth.

Furthermore, in Gerona it is possible to document the action of ecclesiastical institutions which were, little by little, occupying spaces that seem to have been, once, those of the fisc in a process well documented in other areas of the Carolingian empire during the first half of the ninth century[20]. This was the case of the lands disputed by Leo and the bishop of Gerona Gondemarus. In this trial, which is preserved in copy in the thirteenth-century *Cartoral de Carlomany* of the cathedral of Girona, it is possible to read, as we have already seen several times, the complaints of a layman, Leo, who accuses the bishop of having unjustly occupied the village of Fonteta (Gerona) that his father of «heremo traxisset sicut ceteri ispani». As can be seen, recourse to *aprisio* was typical of the *Hispani*, of which there remained ample memory in the charters.

Leo complained to Charles II, who sent some documents («litteras») for the bishop's attention. The answer of Gondemarus' *mandatarius* was clear: everything that Leo's father had been able to control in the village and its lands was done exclusively «pro beneficio hoc habuit de quondam Gaucelmo comiti»[21]. The judgment shows, then, that the fate of what was once within the lands which formed the comital fisc could pass without trouble into the episcopal patrimony, as was also seen in the case of the episcopate of Barcelona in 862[22].

All these examples show the strong competition for the control of lands which the *comites* considered a duty of their office (i.e. the administration of public assets). But it would be wrong to think that all land obtained through *aprisiones* was always subject to dispute in courts. Fragmented as it is, the documentation provides examples of this type of land being patrimonialised and sold without major problems or claims by any public official. This is the case of a sale dated in the year 900, in which four people sell the land they

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[19] «Bera comis abuit ipsum alodem ex comparatione vel alode parentorum suorum, et quiete possedit et dimisit filia sua Rotrude», Justícia, no. 16 (868 VIII 18), p. 58. For the family of Bera see Aurell, *Les noces*, p. 42.

[20] Santos Salazar, *Fiscal Lands*.

[21] Justícia, no. 12 (850 I 22), p. 49.

[22] See note 15. For a characterisation of the differences between the imperial and comital fisc, see Bougard, *Les biens et les revenus publics*, pp. 109-110.

have in Bas (Besalù) to a married couple «terra nostra que nobis advenit per aprisione nostra vel nos tenemus per preceptum regis, sicut ceteri Spani»[23]. Probably, by the year 900, the fiscal memory of the lands, in a political horizon in which fewer counts were already active, was weaker, and could have favoured privatisation processes that had been more difficult to interpret only two generations earlier. But this is a problem that needs further investigation.

3. *Conclusion*

The small dossier of charters studied here testify to the complex mechanisms existing behind the exploitation of lands of public origin. From this point of view, the documents cited are even more significant because they offer data on land-tenure based on lay examples within documentary horizons usually characterised in the Early Middle Ages by the predominance of testimonies coming from ecclesiastical institutions (both monasteries and bishoprics, with the exception of the comital archive of Barcelona)[24]. Although the Carolingian authorities favoured a good number of people with the concession of wastelands by means of diplomas (which characterised such lands as public), the passage of time favoured their privatization in the hands of the families that received them. This did not prevent the public officials, perhaps endowed with inventories or lists of goods of which we know nothing, from claiming some of these assets as belonging to their office, sometimes even taking by violence the lands they needed to satisfy their own clients and *fideles*.

This sort of race for the control of lands sustained by very different kind of *possessores* documented in the eastern Pyrenees, and especially by the *comites* – thanks to the type of documentation that we have preserved, which gives us a view of the upper strata of society –, can be interpreted as the fruit of a strong political competition between the aristocracies, who needed resources to face periods of political instability with sufficient means to satisfy the loyalty of their followers. Not by chance, most of the examples that we have come from moments of strong crisis between the holders of the offices, as was the case with the failed rebellions of Bernard of Septimania (844) and his son William (850). These led to the appointment of new counts in the area, as was the case of the aforementioned Suniarius and Salomon[25], although the counts' interest in knowing, defending and reorganising the fate of public assets located in their *comitati* had to be always present among their main objectives of government. This can be seen from the guidelines on *beneficia* included in the capitularies directed to the *comites*[26].

[23] ChLA[2] 112, no. 19 (900 III 15).
[24] On documentary culture of Carolingian era see *Documentary Culture*, and on the characters of Catalan archives see Salrach, *Catalunya carolíngia and the public nature*, p. 22.
[25] Chandler, *Carolingian Catalonia*, pp. 107-113 and 120.
[26] MGH, Capit. I, n. 99 (a. 806-810).

In all this, the charters document strategies for the articulation of fiscal lands observable in other areas of the Carolingian world, without the situation of Carolingian Catalonia on the frontier with al-Andalus, or its legal diversity (due to the importance of the Lex Visigothorum), having any influence on well-known experiences related to the management of land and justice. The supposed Catalan exceptionality, therefore, disappears as soon as its reality is studied in the context of the Carolingian empire.

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The Carolingian south-eastern frontier

by Neven Budak

Carolingian influences on the east of Istria and Carniola can be traced since the beginning of the wars against the Avars and the conflict with Byzantium. Papal undertakings in Dalmatia, regarding the revival of ecclesiastical organisation, should not be seen to have been a result of a cooperation between Rome and Charlemagne, but as an independent action by Pope Hadrian. After a successful victory against the khanate and the Treaty of Aachen, Dalmatia (excluding the remaining Byzantine possessions) as well as the parts held by the Serbs and Pannonia to the south of the Drava river were incorporated into the march of Friuli under their own dukes. At the beginning, their position towards Cividale might have been the same as the position of Istria, but the latter became integrated into the western Empire, while Croatia and southern Pannonia remained outside its borders. Such a development prevented the evolution of a Barbarian identity in both Istria and Lower Pannonia, which remained outside the Empire, but was more integrated into its frontier structures than Croatia. Since the time of Trpimir, Croats were only loosely linked with the Carolingian governing structures, that resulted in their gradual creation of their own identity. We might guess that the growing influence of Byzantium on Croatian rulers played its part, as had the Hungarian invasion for Pannonia.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Dalmatia, Croatia, Lower Pannonia; Charlemagne; Hadrian; Leo III; Ljudevit; Borna; frontier; march; *ducatus*.

Abbreviations
Codex diplomaticus = Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae I *Diplomata annorum 743-1100 continens*, ed. J. Stipišić – M. Šamšalović, Zagreb 1967.
MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ, 6).

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1. *The establishment of the frontier*

The question of the Carolingian frontier towards the southeast today seems to be solved, leaving little possibility for further discussion. We need only briefly to recall the steps of creating the defence system, which was more a basis for further expansion than a bulwark for repelling enemy invasion. Its beginnings fall into the period between the death of Hrodgaud and the establishment of the Italian sub-kingdom under Pippin in 781. The former Lombard duchy of Friuli was put under the command of a Carolingian *dux*, and the same happened to Istria, conquered possibly in 788, where a *dux de Histria*, mentioned already in 791, replaced the Byzantine *magister millitum*[1]. The Istrian *dux* was subject to the *dux* of Friuli, as was Carniola, the region between Friuli and Pannonia, which probably had a *dux* of its own, although he is not mentioned in our sources[2]. Because of the Carolingian-Avar wars at the time when Charlemagne was occupied fighting the Saxons, the region of Friuli, and so its Duke Eric, gained in importance[3].

After the victorious campaigns against the Avars, the preconditions had been created for the annexation of Byzantine possessions in Venice and Dalmatia. Partly through attracting supporters from among Byzantine subjects, and partly through exercising military pressure, Charlemagne and his son Pippin temporarily acquired control over Venice and Zadar/Iadera, the Byzantine capital of Dalmatia. Very soon, however, after the appearance of the Byzantine fleet in the Adriatic, the renegades returned under the authority of the eastern emperor[4]. The conflict ended with the Treaty of Aachen in 812, according to which the Carolingians could keep Istria and most of Dalmatia, whereas Venice and the coastal Dalmatian towns, together with the adjacent islands, remained Byzantine[5]. Dalmatia was thus divided in the way that the eastern Empire kept only isolated strongholds on the mainland in Lower Dalmatia, namely Zadar, Trogir and Split, but held control over the maritime route towards Venice[6]. In Upper Dalmatia, the situation of Dubrovnik and Kotor was similar, though, immediately after 812, somewhat less clear. We do not know how deep into the mainland of *Dalmatia superior* did the imperial authority extend, but we are justified in believing that the local elites in the immediate hinterland recognized the sovereignty of the emperor in Constan-

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[1] Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 119-197. On the creation of the Kingdom of Italy and the frontier system towards the Avars and Byzantium, as well as on the ideology which supported these actions, see Borri, *A Great, Vast, and All Mighty Kingdom*.

[2] Štih – Simoniti, *Slovenska povijest*, p. 51.

[3] On Eric see Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 152-158.

[4] Ančić, *The Treaty of Aachen*, p. 28. Štih, *O novi knjigi*, pp. 473-475, stresses the fact that no actual military conflict between the two empires took place in the Adriatic, but that those possible conflicts, otherwise not mentioned in our sources, were conducted by local elites in Dalmatia, Istria and Venice.

[5] *Imperial Spheres.*

[6] On borders in Dalmatia/Croatia – not only political, but also ecclesiastical and cultural – in the ninth-eleventh century: Budak, *Early Medieval Boundaries.*

tinople⁷. Findings of Carolingian provenance in the late antique *castrum* in Mogorjelo near Čapljina (close to the Neretva river) and in the *castrum* of Gornji Vrbljani near the source of the Sana river (both in today's Bosnia and Herzegovina) could be seen as marking the outreach of Frankish influence, i.e. the easternmost strongholds of the indigenous elites recognising Carolingian authority⁸.

The newly gained territory in Dalmatia, which also included the former province of Liburnia, was organised in the same way as other Slavic (or Avar) *regna* along the eastern border of the Carolingian Empire. A local *dux* was entrusted with its government, having the title of *dux Dalmatie et Liburnie*. But this did not happen until 817, when a Byzantine delegation arrived in Aachen in order to settle some disputes about the border between Slavic and Roman Dalmatians⁹. The Friulian *dux* Cadolah, «ad quem illorum confinium cura pertinebat», was sent to Dalmatia to help resolve the matter. As no other local official was mentioned, we should suppose that at that time there was no indigenous representative of the Carolingian Empire in the province¹⁰. The first one we know of was Borna, who was also described as *dux Guduscanorum*, obviously a *gens* he originated from. Borna most likely owed his position to his engagement in the Carolingian-Byzantine conflict. However, his appointment may have been a consequence of Louis' anticipation of Ljudevit's revolt, because he was first mentioned in 818, when he attended the assembly in Aachen, the same one on which Ljudevit was suspected of initiating «res novas» because he accused Cadolah for committing atrocities¹¹.

In the region to the north of Dalmatia, in southern Pannonia, there was another local *dux*, the aforementioned Ljudevit, installed as a representative of Carolingian authority. However, there is no Barbarian name attached to his title. Like Borna, he was subordinate to the duke of Friuli and carried the title of *dux Pannonie inferioris*. He became infamous among the Franks because of the rebellion he raised in 819 against Cadolah, the duke of Friuli, and which lasted for four years, requiring a huge Frankish military effort to quell the uprising¹².

2. *The* regna *between the Adriatic and the Drava River*

There is no contemporary description of either of the two *regna* which formed some kind of buffer zone between the duchy of Friuli, the Bulgari-

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⁷ Budak, *Die südslawischen Ethnogenesen*; Budak, *Kroatien*, pp. 870-873.
⁸ On the findings in Mogorjelo and Gornji Vrbljani see Milošević, *Karolinški utjecaji*, pp. 112-116.
⁹ MGH, ARF, p. 145, *ad annum* 817.
¹⁰ Budak, *Croats*, p. 15.
¹¹ Budak, *Croats*, pp. 15-16; Ančić, *From Carolingian Official*, pp. 7-8.
¹² Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, pp. 268-272 and 355-357; Budak, *Kroatien*, pp. 874-875; Ančić, *From Carolingian Official*, pp. 10-11.

ans, Serbs and other Slavic *gentes* and Byzantium. We have to draw our conclusions from indirect information, as well as from the description provided by Constantine Porphyrogenitus in *De administrando imperio*. The latter has given us the first description of Croatia (the former Carolingian Dalmatia and Liburnia) and Byzantine Dalmatia[13]. According to Constantine, the north-eastern border of Croatia lay along the Vrbas river in what is today Bosnia, while the south-eastern border was on the Cetina river. We can assume that the situation at the beginning of the ninth century must have been much the same, except that the frontier of Carolingian Dalmatia towards the eastern neighbours lay further to the South-east, on the Neretva river (judging by the findings in Mogorjelo). The Frankish annals inform us that part of Dalmatia was Serbian territory. It could approximately be identified as the eastern and northern part of today's Bosnia, about which we know nothing apart from the information once again provided by the *Annales regni Francorum* that this Serbian territory was split into small units ruled by several *duces*[14]. They obviously did not recognise Frankish authority because Ljudevit had taken refuge with one of them, before killing him and taking over his *civitas*. From there he had offered Louis the Pious to submit to his rule, but received no answer. As Herwig Wolfram rightfully noticed, Louis thus missed the opportunity to extend his rule over eastern Bosnia/Dalmatia[15].

The question of the eastern borders of Ljudevit's *regnum inter Savum et Dravum* is also not clear. We can draw conclusions from the reports on his uprising. Since he was joined by the Timociani, a tribe originally settled by the Timok river in today's eastern Serbia, who decided to secede from the Bulgarians and submit to the Franks, we must conclude that Ljudevit's authority must have stretched eastwards to the Danube and the region of Sirmium[16]. That is in accordance with Patriarch Paulinus' lamentation in honour of Duke Eric, in which he mentions the ancient city of Sirmium as one of Eric's conquests, but also with the toponym *Francohorion*, the Frankish Mountain (Fruška gora) in today's Srijem (in Serbia), which reminds us of the Frankish presence in the region[17].

In 822 the Diet met in Frankfurt, where the emperor received emissaries from all the eastern Slavs: the Abodrites, the Sorbs, the Wilzi, the Boehemians, the Moravians, the «Praedenecenti» and the Avars residing in Panno-

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[13] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, pp. 122-153, cc. 29-31.

[14] MGH, ARF, p. 158, *ad annum* 822.

[15] Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, p. 272.

[16] MGH, ARF, p. 150, *ad annum* 819.

[17] Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, pp. 262-263, believes that Eric's conquests might have reached the Morava river in today's Serbia, but that they were short-lived. On the other hand, on page 522, footnote 14, he stresses that there is no evidence for Eric ever reaching Moesia. However, I would argue that the direct or indirect (with Ljudevit's intermediation) Frankish rule in the region of Sirmium too lasted until 828. For Paulinus' lamentation see Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 154-156. For the interpretation of the name Francochorion see Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 154-155. On Bulgarian-Frankish relations in southern Pannonia see Filipec, *Donja Panonija*, pp. 143-148.

nia[18]. All of these resided outside the borders of the empire and to the north of the Drava river. Why is there no mention of the region between the Drava and the Adriatic? Is it because at that time both Lower Pannonia and Dalmatia with Liburnia were considered integral parts of the empire and their dukes had no reason to send embassies with gifts to the emperor? If that was so, then when did the relation between the two provinces and the empire change? Was it after the dissolution of the march of Friuli?

However, the described borders were the region within which Carolingian political influence could have spread between the Drava, the lower Danube and the Adriatic. But secular politics could not be separated from ecclesiastical. So how did Charlemagne use the Church to strengthen his authority in Dalmatia and Lower Pannonia?

3. *Charlemagne and Hadrian I*

Recently, the thesis was presented that the pope and Charlemagne jointly undertook the action of strengthening Frankish influence in Istria and Dalmatia through establishing or reviving bishoprics, or by imposing bishops favourable to the king of the Franks[19]. The best-known example is that of Bishop Maurice of Novigrad/Cittanova, whom Charlemagne around 780 ordered to collect taxes in Istria for the Church of Rome[20]. By that time Istria was officially still Byzantine and the «nefandissimi Graeci», in the pope's words[21], blinded Maurice, believing he was an agent of Frankish imperialism, though we might presume that the Istrians were more concerned about having to pay new taxes.

In Dalmatia, there are no such obvious cases of bishops advocating the Carolingian cause. Indeed, the first credible mentions after around 600 of prelates from Split, Rab, Osor and Kotor date from 787, when their presence was registered at the council of Nicea[22]. In the opinion of some researchers, this was the sign of a renewal of older bishoprics like Kotor, Rab or Osor, and the establishment of the bishopric of Split, which considered itself to be heir to the archbishopric of Salona[23]. This revival of ecclesiastical organization in Dalmatia is also documented by the activity of a masons' workshop,

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[18] MGH, ARF, p. 159, *ad annum* 822.
[19] Basić – Jurković, *Prilog opusu*; Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 149, 152-155.
[20] Jurković, *Il ciborio*; Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, p. 149.
[21] *Codex Carolinus*, no. 63, p. 590 (available in *Fontes Istrie*, I, doc. 776, < https://fontesistrie. eu/776_HPC > [last access: May 27th, 2022].
[22] Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 152-153. The position of the Dalmatian bishops at the council of Nicea was recently discussed by I. Basić, *The Inscription*, pp. 96-97. Basić concludes that «Consequently, the re-establishment of the Salonitan bishopric at Split reveals a Roman rather than Byzantine initiative, with the Holy See pursuing its own political goals as well as those of the Carolingians».
[23] Jurković – Basić, *Élites ecclesiastiche*.

maybe even several, which produced furniture for the cathedrals and other churches in the aforementioned dioceses. The style of these decorations can be compared to the products of the so-called Liutprand Renaissance[24]. In the opinion of Ivan Basić and Miljenko Jurković, the action of ecclesiastical renovation was initiated from Rome, with the pope and Charlemagne coordinating efforts, just like in Istria, to organize a pro-Frankish party in Byzantine Dalmatia, which would thus enable the Carolingian takeover of the province.

This analogy with Istria is tempting, but if we recall the relations between Charlemagne and the pope in the few years before 787, we may recall that they were not idyllic[25]. The king refused to fulfil his promise, given to Hadrian in 774, regarding the territorial expansion of the papal state, which was a great disappointment to the pope[26]. Among other things, this meant that Hadrian had to give up the idea of acquiring Venice and Istria for his "Republic". The dissent between the two continued after the Council of Nicea because of their different attitudes towards either the actual, or possibly the badly translated, conclusions of the council[27]. Keeping this in mind, it does not seem highly probable that Hadrian and Charlemagne coordinated their actions in Byzantine Dalmatia by reviving old bishoprics or establishing the new one in Split.

There are other arguments that speak against such a cooperation. Had Charlemagne counted on the Church of Rome as a supporter of his expansionistic policy in Dalmatia, why would he allow his son Pippin to hand over to the patriarch of Aquileia in 796 the jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters over all the territories south of the Drava river, including Dalmatia, thus depriving the pope of a chance to spread his own influence further into the Balkans[28]? Apart from that, when looking at the broader picture, would it be realistic for the king to start planning taking Dalmatia from Byzantium as early as 780s? With the Avar Khanate still a power of unknown strength, Bavaria and Istria still not subjugated, and Saxon revolts still continuing, could he have occupied his thoughts with plans against Dalmatia?

It is more probable that the action of Rome was the result of an independent papal policy, provoked by the loss of the vicariate of Thessaloniki and

[24] Jakšić, *Riflessi*.
[25] Schimmelpfennig, *Das Papsttum*, pp. 100-103.
[26] Collins, *Charlemagne*, p. 64; McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 69; Riché, *Die Karolinger*, pp. 122, 126, 127.
[27] It is still not clear on exactly what terms Charlemagne and Hadrian had been, from their first meeting in 774 until Hadrian's death in 795. There is little doubt that generally their relation was amicable, but that does not mean that the pope was always satisfied with Charlemagne's decisions and his treatment of Hadrian's requests and expectations. On their relation and especially on the question of their agreement of 774 see Noble, *The Republic*, esp. pp. 138-148.
[28] Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, p. 261; Filipec, *Donja Panonija*, pp. 243-249. On the other hand, it is true that the division of 796 came one year after Hadrian's death, and a few years before the conflict with Byzantium over Dalmatia, when St. Peter's chair was occupied by the weak Leo III. This could mean that neither Pippin nor Charlemagne trusted the new pope to support their policy. Had Hadrian lived until the war against the Avars, Pippin's decision might have been different, considering also the pope's interest.

the southern Italian territories[29]. The episode with the Istrian bishop Maurice may be telling us more about papal efforts to increase incomes by collecting taxes in an area where this had not been previously possible, rather than attempting to hand over the province to the Franks, especially since he wanted the peninsula for himself. This, of course, would not exclude cooperation with Charlemagne: it is simply a matter of priorities in papal policy.

4. *Missionary activities from Aquileia*

However, it seems that the Carolingians did not make much use of the patriarchate of Aquileia in order to promote their interests in southern Pannonia, while traces of the activity of Aquileian missionaries to Dalmatia are also scarce. There is not one single source reporting on missionary activities in both regions[30]. Once again we have to rely on art historical evidence, showing that decorations on stone furniture in Croatian churches of the ninth century reveal influences spreading from Cividale and northern Italy in general. The most convincing argument is the use of the Westwerk in some of the churches erected by Croatian dignitaries, followed by the installation of three altars necessary for performing the western liturgy[31]. The connections of the Croatian *regnum* and the patriarchate of Aquileia or the archbishopric of Milan may be also traced through the spreading of saints' cults, like that of St. Ambrose, St. Martha, or St. Martin[32]. In some cases, we might add to these cults also the cult of the Holy Cross, popular with the Carolingian dynasty. As another piece of evidence for Carolingian missionary efforts in Croatia, scholars frequently cite the appearance of Germanic names of ecclesiastical dignitaries preserved mostly on epigraphs, like Abbot Theudebert, Deacon Gumpertus or Bishop Aldefreda (the latter mentioned in a charter)[33].

Regarding the Pannonian region to the south of the Drava river, two important centres can be detected either in sources, or in the archaeological evi-

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[29] Prigent, *Les empereurs isauriens*.

[30] The only exception might be the legend of Ursus the Confessor, according to which Ursus, a young Frankish nobleman, arrived in Dalmatia where he converted the ruler of the province, married his daughter and replaced him on the throne after the death of his father-in-law. After accidentally killing some members of his family, in order to repent, he went to Rome and approached Pope Hadrian. Although it is tempting to see this legend as evidence for missionary activities in Dalmatia already during Hadrian's pontificate, there are arguments against it. At the time of Hadrian, the only dignitary who could be defined as the ruler of Dalmatia would have been the Byzantine governor of the province who – obviously – did not need to be converted. But actually, the first ruler of Dalmatia was the one appointed by the Franks after their conquest of the larger part of the province, sometime at the beginning of the ninth century, when Hadrian was already dead. See Budak, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 227. For the interpretation of the legend as a valid source for Frankish missionary activities see Basić, *Natpis*, pp. 164-165, and Basić, *New Evidence*, pp. 277-278.

[31] Maraković – Jurković, *"Signatures"*.

[32] Jakšić, *The Installation*; Budak, *Hrvatska povijest*, p. 147; Vedriš – Maraković, *Bursa*.

[33] Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*, pp. 50-53, 218; *Codex diplomaticus*, p. 23.

dence. Siscia, an important industrial, ecclesiastical, and administrative centre of Roman Lower Pannonia retained (or regained) some of its significance as Ljudevit's stronghold. The acts of the synod of Split, held in 928, state that Siscia has a sufficient number of both priests and worshippers[34]. This is most probably the result of the mission from Aquileia, though some continuity of the antique Christian population should not be excluded[35]. The other important centre was the church of St. Mary in Lobor, in today's north-western Croatia, close to the Slovenian border, and another missionary centre in Svete Gore, in Slovenia[36]. We could assume, though very cautiously on the basis of the saints to whom they were dedicated, that missionary bases were established also in Samobor (St. Anastasia), again close to the border of Carniola, and in Križevci (Holy Cross), where in the High and Late Middle Ages both the town and the church enjoyed a high reputation in the Kingdom of Slavonia, by far exceeding the economic importance of the settlement[37]. The reason for this could have been the long existence of the ecclesiastical centre. It is also possible, according to the archaeological evidence, that the mission in Sirmium lasted even under Bulgarian rule[38]. However, all in all, it seems that Aquileian patriarchs were not very dedicated to the evangelization of Lower Pannonia[39]. The reasons for this were manifold, but the main one was a lack of interest in a region distant from Cividale, as well as the political insecurity[40]. Neither should we neglect the language barrier[41].

It took time for the establishment of the first bishopric on Croatian territory to happen. The exact dating of the establishment of the diocese in Nin remains an open question, but scholars agree that it happened some time during the rule of Duke Trpimir or his successor Domagoj, i.e. around the middle of the ninth century[42]. The establishment of this bishopric was a major blow to the Dalmatian bishops of Rab, Zadar and Split, whose dioceses were now reduced to the territory of their towns and islands, while before they had covered broader areas of Croatian territory. If this had happened before Photius' schism, during which Dalmatian bishops opted for the patriarchate

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[34] *Codex diplomaticus*, p. 37.
[35] Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 268-269.
[36] Filipec, *Donja Panonija*, pp. 250-269.
[37] Budak, *Križevci*.
[38] Jeremić, *The Relationship*; Filipec, *Južna Panonija*, p. 256.
[39] However, Filipec believes that it was possible that a chorepiscopus with the title of bishop of Siscia was appointed for the region of southern Pannonia. His argument is based mainly on comparative examples regarding the frontier region from Nitra over Pannonia to Croatia (Nin), but also on the fact that the bishopric of Siscia is mentioned in 928 as vacant, but well populated and with sufficient number of priests. See Filipec, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 309-310. For the mention of the bishopric in 928 see *Historia Salonitana maior*, p. 104.
[40] Bratož, *Die Geschichte des frühen Christentums*, pp. 508-550; Bratož, *Vpliv*, pp. 52-53; Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, p. 269.
[41] An interesting comparative example could be the Nitrian principality in today's Slovakia. However, I did not have the opportunity to consult the most recent book on early medieval Slovakia: Steinhübel, *The Nitrian Principality*.
[42] Budak, *Hrvatska povijest*, pp. 152-153.

of Constantinople[43], then we could interpret it as a move against the pope. This would not be surprising, given the tense relations between Lothar and Louis II on the one side, and the popes on the other. If the establishment of the bishopric of Nin occurred after the beginning of Photius' schism, it should be understood as a step towards preventing the spread of possible influences from Constantinople.

5. *The dissolution of the march of Friuli and the emergence of the Croats*

After the disintegration of the march of Friuli in 828 there is no mention of any direct intervention of Frankish officials in Croatia. The march was divided into four counties, but the author of our source failed to name them, opening up the possibility for long-lasting debates. Nowadays the prevailing opinion is that these counties were Friuli, Istria, Carantania and Carniola, which means that both Croatia and Pannonia to the south of the Drava river were left outside the borders of the empire[44]. However, some authors suggested that one of the counties could have been Istria with Liburnia or even Liburnia by itself[45]. In my opinion it was not impossible that Croatia, i.e. Dalmatia and Liburnia, was one of the counties, but Peter Štih is probably right in criticising my suggestion, on the grounds that it was ruled by domestic dukes and not by Frankish *comites*[46].

The dissolution of the march of Friuli and the loosening of the Carolingian grip, as some of us believe, opened the way for a clan which named itself Croats, to take over the duchy of Dalmatia and Liburnia.[47] The first known ruler to call himself *dux Croatorum* was Trpimir[48]. By dating his charter with the years of Lothar's reign in Italy, he made it clear that he recognised the king of Italy as his sovereign[49]. All other sources imply that he acted as an independent ruler. His ties with Italy are supported by evidence of his pilgrimage to Cividale[50], and the war he fought against the Greeks and their *patricius* in 846/7, presumably in the vicinity of Split, confirms his loyalty to the Carolin-

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[43] Budak, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 226; Budak, *Hrvatska povijest*, pp. 152-153.

[44] Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 194-196.

[45] *Ibidem*, 195, note 418. On the meaning of Liburnia, which underwent substantial changes from the third to the ninth century, see Turković – Basić, *Kasnoantička*, pp. 45-53. While in certain periods the province encompassed a much larger territory, around 800, according to the Anonymous from Ravenna, it was reduced to the surroundings of Tarsatica (today Rijeka/ Fiume). See *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia*, pp. 223-225.

[46] Štih, *O novi knjigi*, pp. 481-482.

[47] Budak, *Handbuch*, p. 877.

[48] *Codex diplomaticus*, p. 4.

[49] For the different opinions about the dating of the charter, which varies from 840 to 852, see Lujo Margetić, *O nekim pitanjima*, pp. 7-8; Matijević Sokol, *Studia diplomatica*, pp. 88-89; Budak, *Hrvatska povijest*, pp. 46, 106.

[50] Kumir, *For the Salvation*, pp. 57-60.

gian cause[51]. Trpimir's successor Domagoj, who took the throne by force, acted even more independently, attacking Istrian towns which were part of the Kingdom of Italy[52]. At the same time, however, he responded to the request of Louis II to join the Frankish and Byzantine forces at the siege of Bari[53]. Further distancing from the western Empire happened during the one-year reign of Trpimir's son Zdeslav, who acquired the ducal position with the support of Byzantium[54]. This drastic change was forcefully interrupted by Branimir who again acknowledged Charles the Fat as his sovereign[55]. Croatian-Carolingian political relations ended with the dissolution of the empire in 888. Very soon after, the Croats would approach the eastern Empire[56].

In the region of southern Pannonia, the first interruption of Carolingian authority over the local dukes after the suppression of Liudevit's revolt happened in 827/8, when the Bulgarians replaced local lords with their own men[57]. After their withdrawal from Pannonia, Ljudevit's successor Ratimir provoked a military intervention of the Bavarian prefect of the East in 838 by accepting the former count of Nytra on his territory[58]. The final end of Carolingian influence came with the Hungarian invasion. Braslav, the last known *dux* whose seat was in Siscia, fell probably defending his *regnum*. In 884 he pledged an oath of fidelity to Charles the Fat, and in 896 Arnulf granted him the territories north of the Drava river with Mosapurg as the centre. This made Braslav the first Frankish official to govern areas on both sides of the Drava river. But even that could not repel Hungarian raids[59]. However, Braslav's career shows that Carolingian/Frankish authority in southern Pannonia has been felt some two decades longer than in Croatia.

6. *Churches and swords*

A final element of Carolingian influence to be considered is the material culture. On the territory of Croatia, and to a lesser extent in southern Pannonia, there is a relatively large number of finds of Carolingian swords, spurs, lances and other objects. This phenomenon was explained in three ways: either as equipment of Slavic/Croatian troops who settled in Dalmatia during the course of the Carolingian wars against the Avars and Byzantium; as objects imported by trade; or as gifts given by the Carolingians to members of

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[51] Katić, *Saksonac Gottschalk.*
[52] Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, p. 188.
[53] *Ibidem*, p. 175.
[54] Budak, *Croatia and Byzantium*, p. 213; Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 175, 177.
[55] Budak, *Croatia and Byzantium*, p. 213; Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, p. 187.
[56] Budak, *Croatia and Byzantium*, pp. 213-214, 221.
[57] Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, p. 273; Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 176-177.
[58] Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, pp. 276, 356; Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 175-177.
[59] Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, p. 366, 374-375; Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 189-195; Budak, *Slavic ethnogenesies.*

the local elite. In my opinion, the first explanation should be rejected, because there is no satisfying argument that there was a migration around the year 800[60]. Whether as gifts or as imported goods, these objects document close relations between Croatia and the lands under Frankish rule. Although we have Byzantine coins and jewellery in the same territory[61], these findings either slightly precede the Frankish ones or they are less numerous and less impressive. The new elite from the beginning of the ninth century saw their role models in the Carolingian aristocracy. As Zbigniew Robak has recently shown, artefacts of Carolingian origin in the Carpathian Basin, as well as in Dalmatia/Croatia, are found in areas where also the presence of Carolingian troops has been attested. This is especially true for the regions south of the Drava river and already in a very early stage, from the end of the eighth century[62].

Material culture combined with burial practices, the implementation of the Westwerk and the organisation of the ducal court as shown in the two preserved ninth-century charters[63] reveal a process which could be defined as *imitatio regni* or maybe *aemulatio imperii*, as Ivan Majnarić described it, following the pattern proposed by Evangelos Chrysos[64]. This, of course, is true for , because of lack of evidence, or even only indications, almost nothing can be said about southern Pannonia. This is not surprizing, given the difference between the two political units: while Croatia grew into an independent regnum with its own ethnogenesis, the *regnum inter Dravum et Savum* could not produce a *gens* of its own, nor did it have a chance, in spite of attempts made by Ljudevit or Ratimir, to free itself from the Frankish grip before it dissolved around 900. We can compare these two *regna* with Istria, which was also a political unit of its own, following – or better to say preceding – for a while the destiny of Croatia and Lower Pannonia. Unlike the latter two, Istria was firmly incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy (until 952) and thus into the Empire[65]. Such a development prevented the evolution of a Barbarian identity. Lower Pannonia remained outside the Empire, but was more integrated into its frontier structures, as shown by the case of Braslav. Croats were, since the time of Trpimir, if not his predecessor Mislav, only loosely linked with the Carolingian governing structures, which resulted in their gradual emancipation and the creation of their own identity.

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[60] Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 156-165, offers a brief, but informative, overview of grave goods and other archaeological evidence for ninth-century Croatia. See also *Hrvati i Karolinzi*; Bilogrivić, *Carolingian weapons*; Bilogrivić, *Formation of Identity*.
[61] Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 155-156; Petrinec, *On Jewellery*.
[62] Robak, *Chronology and Periodisation*.
[63] *Codex diplomaticus*, pp. 4-6, 23-24.
[64] Majnarić, *Aemulatio imperii*.
[65] It would be interesting to draw a comparison in this respect also with Carantania and Carniola.

7. *Conclusions*

Carolingian influences on the east of Istria and Carniola can be traced since the beginning of the wars against the Avars and the conflict with Byzantium. In my opinion, papal undertakings in Dalmatia with regard to the revival of the ecclesiastical organisation, should not be seen as a result of a cooperation between Rome and Charlemagne, but as an independent action by Pope Hadrian I. After a successful Carolingian victory against the khanate and the Treaty of Aachen with the eastern emperor, Dalmatia (excluding the remaining Byzantine possessions) and Pannonia to the south of the Drava riverwere incorporated into the march of Friuli under their own dukes. At the beginning, their position towards Cividale might have been the same as the position of Istria, but the latter became integrated into the western Empire, while Croatia and southern Pannonia remained outside its borders. The reasons for this difference need further discussion, but we might guess that the growing influence of Byzantium on Croatian rulers played its part, as did the Hungarian invasion for Pannonia.

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Divided by the Danube?
Political boundaries and cultural continuities

by David Kalhous

Based on the material culture, combined with Frankish and Bavarian written evidence relating to the royal court and Bavarian bishoprics, the ninth-century Bavarian Eastern March and its surroundings is being used as an example for analyzing the imperial imagining of frontier areas, their integration into the Carolingian realm, and the local reaction on those processes.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Bavarian Eastern March; Salzburg; Danube; Carolingians; Moravians; Annals of Fulda; political boundaries.

Abbreviations
Die Traditionen Regensburg = Die Traditionen des Hochstiftes Regensburg und des Klosters S. Emmeram, ed. J. Widemann, München 1943 (Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen Geschichte N.F., 8).
MGH, AF = *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1891 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 7).
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MGH, Capit. I = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, I, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883 (Legum sectio, II/1).
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MGH, DD Arnolf = *Die Urkunden Arnolfs*, ed. P.F. Kehr, Berlin 1940 (MGH, Die Urkunden der deutschen Karolingern, 3).
MGH, *Die Conversio = Die «Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum» und der Brief des Erzbischofs Theotmar von Salzburg*, ed. F. Lošek, Hannover 1997 (MGH, Studien und Texte, 15).
MGH, Epp. VII = MGH, *Epistolarum Tomus VII*, ed. E. Caspar, Berlin 1928 (Epistolae Karolini aevi, 5).

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David Kalhous

1. *Introduction: some theoretical remarks*

«… and the blood-filled footprints which have been left in the course of centuries by migrations and the clash of conflicting civilizations…», was the way Claudio Magris characterized the river basin of the Danube in his famous biography of the river.[1]

This also serves to underline the undisputed importance of rivers for medieval polities. Although we now often perceive them as «natural barriers/borders»[2], during the period when the system of road communications was not well developed, especially behind the Roman Limes, they were the most effective and efficient trade routes.

In this paper, I will analyze the role that the Danube played in contemporary texts as both a barrier and a point of contact in the ninth century, after the Carolingians firmly attached Bavaria to their empire and crushed the Avar khaganate in the former Roman Pannonia. First, there will be brief discussion about the problem of borders in general and linear boundaries and frontier zones in the early Middle Ages in particular. This will become the basis for a second step: a comparison between the areas now defined as Austria, Moravia, Slovakia and Hungary from the perspective of the material culture, the administration and politics of the ninth century. Therefore, it will be necessary to define key aspects of the regional material culture first. Second, it will be essential to examine the role that the Danube played in contemporary narratives – primarily the *Annales regni Francorum* and their East Frankish continuation. Third, this perception of the Danube will be compared with social practice based primarily on the narratives of conflict between the Carolingians, their deputies and the peripheral warlords in the contemporary narrative sources and charters, deeds, administrative documents.

Before discussing these three aspects in more detail, it is necessary to consider the concept of borders in the Middle Ages. Already at the time, scholars were aware of the importance of borders, whether it be crossing them or breaking them down. The subsequent integration of barbarian ethnic groups even reached Carolingian writing through the classical discourse and social practices[3]. The border is an important concept even today, and modern sociology in particular deals with the issue of creating boundaries between human communities[4]. Therefore, the related aspects regarding the degree of intensity of communication, organizational structures and identification strategies have been intensively addressed e.g. by Stefano Gasparri, Walter Pohl and

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[1] Magris, *Danube*, p. 253.
[2] The concept of a "natural barrier/border" was introduced into the political discourse in relation to the expanding kingdom of France in the second half of the seventeenth century, for a critical view of this, see Toynbee, *The New Europe*, pp. 37-39. I am grateful to Jiří Macháček, Šimon Ungerman and anonymous reviewers for their critical comments.
[3] Reimitz, *Conversion and control*, pp. 195-197.
[4] Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, p. 266; Texler Segal, *Spanning Borders and Boundaries*, pp. 341-354; *Grenzsoziologie*.

others among the historians of the early Middle Ages[5]. Boundaries have been defined not only in terms of space i.e. between physical areas, but also in order to differentiate social groups on the basis of their territory, and to separate some groups from others, even when these are all based on an imaginary difference – an expression of difference is an important element in the development of identities, in which material culture can also play an important role[6]. Finally, the border must be understood as an organizational issue, as evidence of the ability to integrate and incorporate, as well as to exclude[7]. The historical disciplines with the help of other humanities and social-science disciplines can provide valuable clues to that general problem[8].

Borders were not natural, they only existed because they were named and visualized – one good example is the organization of the meeting of rulers between their lands in the frontier area[9], or the establishment of a toll station exacting payments from merchants and travelers, often somewhere deep within the area under control. Through the imagining of borders were created the differences among diverse social groups – which could then become one of the sources of their (self-)identification.

We tend to believe that people in the Middle Ages did not understand the concept of lineal borders and that we should only speak of frontiers as marcher areas[10]. However, people were able to define clear boundaries for different pieces of land[11], especially in the regions where the land was intensively used for agriculture, and where the locals knew every stone and piece of straw in their surroundings. After all, the institution of *circumventio* of the land, *Umrit* in German, or *objezd* in Czech, seems to be omnipresent in European medieval charters and deeds. And yet the definition of a border was less clear cut in areas with lower population densities or where the borders of more extensive territories, such as bishoprics or principalities, were to be defined. Here the line of the border was often blurred, and neighbors shared a frontier zone, where an element of connection prevailed. Instead of "border", "Grenze", "granitza", "marka", "march" is the right word, often accompanied by a network of "gate areas" on the important communication routes[12]. The scrutiny of the imagined borders of the Carolingian empire based on the example of the Danube will help to recognize the relationship between social practice and

[5] Pohl, *Frontiers in Lombard Italy*, pp. 117-142; Gasparri, *Istituzioni e poteri*, pp. 105-128; Gasparri, *La frontiera in Italia*, pp. 9-20.
[6] Cf. note 16.
[7] Prinz, *Die Grenzen des Reiches*, pp. 159-160.
[8] Pohl, *Soziale Grenzen*, pp. 11-18.
[9] For a summary see Voss, *Herrschertreffen*.
[10] See already Helmolt, *Entwicklung*, pp. 235-264. The term is based on Latin *margo/margin*, see Wolfram, *The Creation*, p. 233.
[11] Schneider, *Lineare Grenzen*, pp. 51-68.
[12] Schmidt-Wiegand, *Marca*; Pohl, *Frontiers*, pp. 127-128; Měřínský, *Jihomoravská hranice*, p. 7.

theoretical claims, that could have been expressed through the frontier area on one side, and the clearly defined border line on the other side.

2. *Materiality and difference*

The Danube Valley was in the early Middle Ages the main axis of "Bavarian colonization" and the colonized area was usually called *Provincia Avarorum*, or *Sclavinia*[13]. As these labels indicate, the ethnicity of the inhabitants was a mixture of different elements. The Carolingians cleverly motivated their ecclesiastical elites with donations of land in these areas. In that area, the Carolingian elites often based their power also on still usable remnants of the Roman fortifications (e.g., Mautern[14], Traismauern and Tulln[15]).

Firstly, let us now take a very brief look at three aspects of regional material culture[16]: 1) weaponry[17]; 2) ecclesiastical architecture; 3) settlement structures[18]. The situation is complicated by the unevenness of our archaeological understanding of the regions of the Czech Republic, Austria, and Hungary. The comparison of the material culture in East Central Europe and in the core of the Carolingian empire is further complicated on account of the limited information from the Carolingian lands. Whereas in the East, the transformation of the funeral rites (*c.*800), which started to stress the display of social status, provides us with rich information, in the East of the Frankish kingdom, comparable *Reihengräberfelder* disappeared at the beginning of the eighth century[19], and our knowledge of the dress of the elites is limited to visual culture, mainly from book illuminations.

Despite the Carolingians' attempts to prohibit the export of weaponry and armour[20], the elites on both banks of the Danube seemed to be using similar

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[13] See lately Sedlmayer, *Transformationen*.

[14] Sedlmayer, *Transformationen*, p. 205.

[15] Wawruschka, *Frühmittelalterliche Siedlungsstrukturen*, pp. 144-147.

[16] For the importance of material culture as a possible sign of ethnicity see Pohl, *Archeology of Identity*, pp. 9-23, here especially 17-23, or Pohl, *Telling the difference*, pp. 99-137, here especially 105-122 and Curta, *Ethnicity, archaeology and nationalism*, pp. 227-242. See also Williams, *Review article*, pp. 195-217.

[17] Szameit, *Karolingerzeitliche Waffenfunde*, vol. 1, pp. 385-411; Szameit, *Karolingerzeitliche Waffenfunde*, vol. 2, pp. 155-171; Sedlmayer, *Transformationen*, pp. 195-196 (points out that they are primarily from Danube Valley); Košta – Hošek, *Early Medieval Swords*, here esp. pp. 47-53; Luňák, *Velkomoravské sekery*; Kouřil, *Frühmittelalterliche Kriegergräber*, pp. 67-99.

[18] Wawruschka, *Frühmittelalterliche Siedlungsstrukturen*, pp. 149-156; Kühtreiber – Obenaus, *Burgen*, pp. 173-181; see also *Frühmittelalter in Oberösterreich*; Nowotny *et al.*, *Thunau am Kamp*.

[19] Brather, *Anfang und Ende*, pp. 217-234.

[20] MGH, Capit. I, pp. 122-123, no. 44, § 7: «De negotiatoribus, qui partibus Sclavorum et Avarorum pergunt, quousque procedere cum suinegotiis debeant, id est: partibus Saxoniae usque ad Bardaenowic, ubi praevideat Hredi; et ad Schezla, ubi Madalgaudus praevideat; et ad Magadoburg praevideat Aito; et ad Erpesfurt praevideat Madalgaudus; et ad Halazstat praevideat item Madalgaudus; ad Foracheim et ad Breemberga et ad Ragenisburg praevideat Audulfus, et ad Lauriacum Warnarius. Et ut arma et brunias non ducant ad venundandum. Quod

weapons. Most of the swords were either manufactured in the Frankish kingdom or, at the very least, based on Carolingian models[21]. In Moravia, most of the finds are related to central places such as Mikulčice, Staré Město, and Břeclav-Pohansko. However, local finds of swords (and battle axes) help to identify the subtle social structures below the level of the prince's family and its retinue(s)[22]. Popular on both banks of the Danube was also the winged spear[23]. On the contrary, the combination of winged spear and axe seems to be rare in the Frankish milieu and even the finds bearded axes usually do not cross the Danube[24]. Three detailed analyses of different types of jewelry also on one side support the continuity between the areas on the left and right bank, sometimes spanning from Carantania[25]. On the other side, the analyses demonstrate that not every type of jewelry that crossed the Danube reached Moravia[26]. After the fall of Mojmirids, the region of the Middle Danube split into two spheres from the perspective of the jewelry, which more, or less respected the political borders between Moravia and Bavarian Eastern March[27]. Finally, Moravian ceramics seems to have been used in today's Lower Austria[28]. Similarly, the ecclesiastical architecture is based on models from Bavaria and the Adriatic[29]. Apart from a comparison among the churches excavated in this region, where our situation is complicated by the lack of fully preserved buildings[30], there is a short comment in the *Conversio*, the manifesto of the Salzburg archbishopric from the 870s, about building experts sent by the Archbishop of Salzburg, who helped to introduce new building techniques and technologies (stone, bricks) to the periphery[31]. It seems that it only worked in the central places, as we do not have any evidence for ecclesiastical buildings apart from these. In this context, the second church in Břeclav-Pohansko deserves to be mentioned. Whereas the other ninth-century churches from Mojmirid Moravian principality were built from stone, this one, although it looks similar, is built from timber, but covered by stone to

si inventi fuerint portantes, ut omnis substantia eorum auferatur ab eis, dimidia quidem pars partibus palatii, alia vero medietas inter iamdictos missos et inventorem dividatur»; MGH, Capit. I N.S., Ansegisus, III, c. 75, pp. 607-608; MGH, Capit. II, *Edictum Pistense*, pp. 310-328, no. 273, § 25.
[21] Košta – Hošek, *Early Medieval Swords from Mikulčice*.
[22] Štefan, *Great Moravia, the Beginnings*, pp. 151-186, or Štefan, *Great Moravia, Statehood and Archaeology*, pp. 333-354; see also Kalhous, *Some observations*, pp. 40-47.
[23] Kouřil, *Frühmittelalterliche Kriegergräber*, pp. 67-99.
[24] Sedlmayer, *Transformationen*, pp. 199-200.
[25] Ungerman, *Tzv. karantánské náušnice*, pp. 181-236; Ungerman, *Frühmittelalterliche Ohrringe*, pp. 107-124; Ungerman, *«Karantánsko-köttlašský» šperk*, pp. 11-48.
[26] *Ibidem.*
[27] Ungermann, *Frühmittelalterliche Ohrringe*, p. 118.
[28] Kühtreiber, *The pottery*, pp. 435-474.
[29] For different theories see Pošmourný, *Církevní architektura*, pp. 187-202; Richter, *Anfänge*, pp. 121-360; Štefanovičová, *Príspevok*, pp. 43-55.
[30] For the only acknowledged exception related to Mikulčice see Baxa, *Die Kirche St. Margarethen*, pp. 135-147.
[31] Cf. note 36.

look like the stone churches. It may be that the founder, perhaps not wealthy enough, nevertheless attempted to imitate his richer peers using cheaper or at least less sophisticated building techniques[32].

Finally, archeologists such as Jiří Macháček are convinced that it is possible to identify some patterns in the structure of the central palaces that are comparable to the Carolingian royal palace complexes («Pfalzen»). In Břeclav-Pohansko we find a manor house with a church and farming structures protected by a palisade[33]. According to Austrian scholars, the central area of Gars-Thunau in today's Lower Austria was organized along similar lines[34]. (We lack any other central place in Austria, which would be comparable with contemporary Moravian central places)[35]. However, the alleged princely complex in Břeclav-Pohansko is situated in the center of this Moravian stronghold, unlike Carolingian palaces, and is also exceptional in contemporary Moravia. Although we do not necessarily believe that the Carolingian royal palaces were a direct model due to the incomparable size, the structure of a noble residence in Břeclav-Pohansko could have been mediated through the local Frankish nobility[36].

While the difference between the core areas of the empire and its peripheries existed from the perspective of (material) culture, that difference was, however, merely quantitative and not qualitative.

3. *The Danube in the* Annales regni Francorum *and their East Frankish continuation*

Whereas from the perspective of the material culture, Carolingian and East Central European territories could be perceived as a continuum, in the second part of this work, it will be necessary to confront this image with the imaginary of the Danube as a political border of the Frankish empire[37]. Here the main source of information are the *Annales regni Francorum* and their East Frankish continuation, the so-called Annals of Fulda. Both usually reflect the perspective of the Frankish royal court, although their relationship to the court is more complex since they do not seem to be written by royal courtiers and/or based on royal commissions[38]. When mentioned the first

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[32] Macháček – Balcárková – Čáp – Dresler – Přichystal – Přichystalová – Schuplerová – Sládek, *Velkomoravská rotunda*, pp. 87-153.
[33] Macháček, *The rise*, pp. 33-64, 431-518.
[34] Herold, *The Fortified Hilltop Site*, pp. 519-528. See Nowotny *et al.*, *Thunau am Kamp*.
[35] Macháček – Eichert – Brundke, *Grenze – Kontaktzonen – Niemandsland*, p. 64.
[36] Ettel, *Karlburg*, pp. 319-340.
[37] Decisive for a modern understanding of the Bavarian East Frankish March is Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, or Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume*. See also his *Die ostmitteleuropäischen Reichsbildungen*, pp. 49-90.
[38] McKitterick, *Constructing the Past*, pp. 101-129. For their critical perspective in the 880s see Keller, *Zum Sturz Karls III.*, pp. 333-384.

time, the *Annales regni Francorum* mention of the Danube helps to localize an assembly point determined by Charlemagne (AD 787)[39]. Three of the other six recordings only helped the author geographically to determine certain phenomena too.

Only a year later, in AD 788, the waters of the Danube proved to be lethal for the defeated Avars, who tried to escape the Frankish army, when those who «wanted to swim across the Danube were sucked down by the whirlpools of the river»[40]. As a skillful war leader, Charlemagne also used the Danube as an axis for his military expedition, which would have helped to make the logistics of moving his numerous troops much smoother. However, according to the annalist, the Avars were prepared for him and even erected fortifications on both riverbanks to prevent Charlemagne from moving into the heart of the khaganate[41]. We are also told that Charlemagne used the southern bank, probably to keep his army together in an enemy area, though it was only sparsely populated. Later records refer to the inhabitants of that part of the Danube's basin as Slavs[42].

Most of the ten records in the Annals of Fulda have military connotations. The record from AD 855 mentions a military expedition by Louis II the German, who had, without any substantial success, attacked the Moravians and their duke, Rastiz. In revenge, Rastiz allegedly «devastated the places near to the border across the Danube»[43]. To reach Moravian territory, Louis had to cross the Danube again in AD 864. (As in the previous case, according to the annalist, the fortifications played an important role in the defense of the Moravians)[44]. The Danube also provided the Franks and Bavarians with a safe base and a logistic channel during the conflicts, and the annalist states that in AD 872 «Zwentibald sent a large army in secret against the Bavarians who had been left to guard the ships on the bank of the Danube»[45]. The role of the Danube as a boundary between the Moravians and the East Frankish kingdom was also indicated in a note about Zwentibald's revenge on Count Engelschalk's family. The annalist emphasized that «scouts [were] sent across the Danube»[46]. For the Magyars who crossed it violently, it became a grave following their defeat – just as it had done for the Avars several decades previously[47].

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[39] MGH, ARF, p. 78, *ad annum* 787 (transl. Scholz 65-66); see also *ibidem*, p. 83, a*d annum* 793 (transl. Scholz 71); *ibidem*, p. 157, *ad annum* 821 (transl. Scholz 110); *ibidem*, p. 166, *ad annum* 824 (transl. Scholz 116).

[40] *Ibidem*, pp. 82, 84, *ad annum* 788 (transl. Scholz 67).

[41] *Ibidem*, p. 88, *ad annum* 791 (transl. Scholz 69-70); see Pohl, *Avars*, pp. 351-352.

[42] MGH, ARF, p. 135, *ad annum* 811 (transl. Scholz 94).

[43] MGH, AF, p. 46, *ad annum* 855 (transl. Reuter 37).

[44] *Ibidem*, p. 62, *ad annum* 864 (transl. Reuter 51-52).

[45] *Ibidem*, p. 76, *ad annum* 872 (trans. Reuter 68).

[46] MGH, AF Regen., p. 111, *ad annum* 884 (transl. Reuter 108-109): «...insuper ultra Danubium missis speculatoribus...». The trouble resulting from the actions of the aforementioned children lasted for about a year; see also MGH, AF Regen., p. 125, *ad annum* 894 (transl. Reuter 129); MGH, AF Altah., p. 135, *ad annum* 900 (transl. Reuter 141).

[47] MGH, AF Altah., p. 135, *ad annum* 900 (transl. Reuter 141).

David Kalhous

4. *Practicing differences, practicing inclusion*

Although the previously discussed stories present the Danube as a border of the Carolingian world, the situation was much more complicated. The tributes from Bohemia evidently became part of the inheritance divided among the Carolingians[48]. A fragment of the letter with instructions for Count Aribo confirms that Moravians paid such a tribute as well[49]. The Frankish annalists also clearly declared the subjection of the elites "from beyond", who were under the jurisdiction of the Frankish kings and their officials. Finally, we read the stories about the Frankish kings and their deputies settling disputes across the Danube. For example, in AD 805,

> the capcan, a prince of the Huns, approached the emperor because of the predicament of his people and asked him to give them a place to settle between Szombathely and Petronell. The Huns could not stay in their previous dwelling places on account of the attacks of the Slavs. The emperor received him graciously – for the capcan was a Christian by the name of Theodore – agreed to his request, and permitted him to return home with presents[50].

Later, Charlemagne agreed to the request of the khagan and restored his full power over the kingdom of Avars[51].

The lands beyond the Danube and the Bohemian mountains were also perceived as being subjugated, as the story of Prince Slavitah, who allegedly «rebelled» against the king, suggests. We are told that King Louis II the German sent his men to expel him. Slavitah found refuge with the Moravian prince Rastiz and, in his place, the king installed his loyal brother[52]. Even the terminology used by the annalist thus confirms the claims of the Carolingians.

The story of Prince Rastiz, who was arrested in 870 «by the just judgment of God» with the help of his nephew Zwentibald, and imprisoned in Eastern

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[48] MGH, Capit. I, p. 271, no. 136: «Item Hludowicus, volumus, ut habeat Baioariam et Carentanos et Beheimos et Avaros atque Sclaves, qui ab orientali parte Baioariae sunt, et insuper duas villas dominicales ad suum servitium in pago Nortgaoe: Luttra of et Ingoldesstat»; Bohemians, first named 805, means at least in the first half of the ninth century "people from Bohemia". It is doubtful that this name reflects self-identification of these people; rather, it is a common name that reflect the Frankish need to organize the frontier zone. However, the situation changed with the establishment of Přemyslid principality, see Kalhous, *Bohemi*. Interestingly, the ethnic denomination was used primarily for Frankish counts responsible among other things for Bohemia, see Hasil, *Les élites franques*, pp. 50-61.

[49] Schwarzmaier, *Ein Brief*, pp. 55-66. The Moravians, first mentioned in 822, were most probably at the beginning Slavs from the river basin of the Morava, who became a self-conscious political and ethnic unit after the establishment of Mojmirid principality.

[50] MGH, ARF, pp. 119-120, *ad annum* 805 (trans. Scholz, p. 84): «Non multo post capcanus, princeps Hunorum, propter necessitatem populi sui imperatorem adiit, postulans sibi locum dari ad habitandum inter Sabariam et Carnuntum, quia propter infestationem Sclavorum in pristinis sedibus esse non poterat. Quem imperator benigne suscepit – erat enim capcanus christianus nomine Theodorus – et precibus eius annuens muneribus donatum redire permisit».

[51] *Ibidem*, p. 120, *ad annum* 805 (trans. Scholz, p. 84).

[52] MGH, AF, p. 47, *ad annum* 857 (trans. Reuter, p. 39): «ab multis annis rebellem».

Francia, is instructive. The annalist tells us that the king, who left Aachen for Bavaria, decided that Rastiz would «brought in heavy chains» in front of his eyes. In an assembly held by Franks, Bavarians, and Slavs, who presumably represented the *gentes* of the empire, Rastiz was sentenced by them to death. However, annalists add, the king showed mercy and ordered Rastiz to be blinded instead of executed. For understanding the status of the Mojmirid princes in 860s in the Carolingian political thinking, comparison with a similar court held with Tassilo III promises to provide us with important clues[53].

Annales regni Francorum, 788: «Tunc domnus rex Carolus congregans synodum ad iamdictam villam Ingilenhaim, ibique veniens Tassilo ex iussione domni regis, sicut et ceteri eius vassi; et coeperunt fideles Baioarii dicere, quod Tassilo fidem suam salvam non haberet, nisi postea fraudulens apparuit, postquam filium suum dedit cum aliis obsidibus et sacramenta, suadente uxore sua Liutbergane. Quod et Tassilo denegare non potuit, sed confessus est postea ad Avaros transmisisse, vassos supradicti domni regis ad se adortasse et in vitam eorum consiliasse; et homines suos, quando iurabant, iubebat, ut aliter in mente retinerent et sub dolo iurarent; et quid magis, confessus est se dixisse, etiamsi decem filios haberet, omnes voluisset perdere, antequam placita sic manerent vel stabile permitteret, sicut iuratum habuit; et etiam dixit, melius se mortuum esse quam ita vivere. Et de haec omnia conprobatus, Franci et Baioarii, Langobardi et Saxones, vel ex omnibus provinciis, qui ad eundem synodum congregati fuerunt, reminiscentes priorum malorum eius, et quomodo domnum Pippinum regem in exercitu derelinquens et ibi, quod theodisca lingua harisliz dicitur, visi sunt iudicasse eundem Tassilonem ad mortem. Sed dum omnes una voce adclamarent capitale eum ferire sententiam, iamdictus domnus Carolus piissimus rex motus misericordia ob amorem Dei, et quia consanguineus eius erat, contenuit ab ipsis Dei ac suis fidelibus, ut non moriretur. Et interrogatus a iamfato clementissimo domno rege praedictus Tassilo, quid agere voluisset; ille vero postolavit, ut licentiam haberet sibi tonsorandi et in monasterio introeundi et pro tantis peccatis paenitentiam agendi et ut suam salvaret animam».

Annales Fuldenses, 870: «Rastiz autem videns denudatum consilium suum nepotem cum militibus quas comprehensurus insequitur; sed iusto iudicio Dei captus est laqueo, quem tetendit: nam ab eodem nepote suo comphrehenditur, ligatur et Karlmanno praesentatur; a quo sub militibus illum, ne laberetur, observantibus in Baioariam missus usque ad praesentiam regis servandus in ergastulum retruditur. Karlmannus vero regnum illius nullo resistente ingressus cunctas civitates et castella in deditionem accepit; et ordinato regno atque per suos disposito ditatusque gaza regia revertitur.

...

Zuentibald nepos Rastizi apud Karlmannum infidelitatis crimine insimulatus in custodiam missus est. Sclavi autem Marahenses ducem suum perisse putantes quendam presbyterum eis(dem) ducis propinquum nomine Sclagamarum sibi in principem constituunt, ei minantes interitum, no ducatum super eos susciperet.

...

Et post paululum (King Louis II) inde transiens circa Kalendas Novembris in Baioriam profectus est; ibique cum suis colloquium habens Rastizen gravi catena ligatum sibi praesentari iussit eumque Francorum iudicio et Baioariorum necnon Sclavorum, qui de diversis provinciis regi munera deferentes aderant, morte damnatum luminibus tantum oculorum privari praecepit»

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[53] For the usefulness of conflict descriptions and conflict outcomes for reconstructing the status of the contesting parties, see Kalhous, *Anatomy*, pp. 173-186.

Comparison between the description of this trial and that held in 788 with Tassilo III shows some similarities[54]. First, neither Tassilo, nor Rastiz came willingly – Tassilo received an order, whereas Rastiz had already been arrested. Second, it is not the king himself who judged both allegedly rebellious dukes. Their fate was in the hands of assembled representatives – the annalist probably wants to demonstrate that they were condemned by the whole kingdom. Third, both annalists also stressed the respective kings' mercy and forgiveness, though the punishment of Rastiz was much more severe than Tassilo's at the end. Neither do we read about any uprising of the Bavarians on behalf of the Agilolfing dynasty – the *Annales regni Francorum* explicitly mention that Tassilo was sentenced with their agreement.

The difference between the narratives of the two trials signals that at least some of the Frankish elites perceived Moravia as a region beyond the direct control of the king and the Church. On one side, the prince of Moravia was blinded, on the other side, his dynasty kept control over Moravia at the end, although the Carolingian kings had similar plans and intended to integrate their territory as well[55]. Why was his punishment more severe compared to Tassilo III? One possible explanation might be the family relationship between Tassilo and Charlemagne, Tassilo's cousin. However, the end of Carolingian Bernhard of Italy, sentenced to death by Louis the Pious, another Carolingian, in 818 warns before simplifications[56]. Therefore, it seems that the Franks perceived Mojmirid status as lower compared to e.g., Tassilo III. From the perspective of the Annals of Fulda, they and their principality were subjects of the Carolingians. In the 880s, the status of Mojmirid princes had risen – Zwentibald of Moravia met Charles the Fat «on the Bavarian-Slav border» and not only negotiated with Arnulf near the border again but also intervened for the pope[57]. However, other sources again make this dynamic image even fuzzier[58].

There is, after all, also an account from 852 of the Council of Mainz, adding to the punishment of a certain Albigis, who allegedly kidnapped the wife of a man called Patricius and fled to Moravia. In addition to imposing a life of repentance and celibacy, the synod reportedly divested him of his military belt. Intriguingly, reference is made to the fugitive escaping «to the very borders of the kingdom inhabited by the uncultivated Christian peoples of Moravia»[59].

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[54] Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft*.
[55] The establishment of the Frankish stewards comparable to the installment of Gerold in Bavaria, MGH, AF, p. 71, *ad annum* 870; *ibidem*, p. 73, *ad annum* 871 (transl. Reuter, p. 62, 65).
[56] Patzold, *Zwischen Gerichtsurteil und politischem Mord*, pp. 37-54.
[57] MGH, AF Regen., p. 111, *ad annum* 884; *ibidem*, p. 118, *ad annum* 890 (transl. Reuter, pp. 96, 110, 119).
[58] According to Macháček – Eichert – Brundke, *Grenze – Kontaktzonen – Niemandsland*, p. 56, we cannot decide who controlled Weinviertel.
[59] MGH, Capit. II, p. 189, no. 249, c. 11: «ad extremos fines regni duxit in rudem adhuc christianitatem gentis Maraensium»; cf. for this ambivalent position also Třeštík, *Vznik Velké Moravy*, p. 161.

A similar case occurred four decades later, when an East Frankish noble-man kidnapped King Arnulf's daughter, born by a concubine, and found refuge in Moravia. Later, he obtained the king's mercy and became a margrave in the East. However, after he was blinded by part of the nobility, some of his relatives betrayed the king and were sentenced to death. Again, one of them went into «exile among the Moravians»[60].

However, almost contemporaneously, a remarkable privilege issued by King Arnulf states that the people from the «Marauorum regno» could come to the county court and gave to the *comes terminalis* Aribo the right to deliver a verdict[61]. Aribo was the same man who was made responsible for collecting the tribute from Moravia[62].

Despite lack of the data that would clarify the family relationships of the Mojmirids, later sources provide us with convincing indicia of their embed-dedness into the local elite networks similar to those known from the Eastern Saxon marches, or from Brittany[63]. Typical Mojmird names attested in the later sources also confirm that these family links saved at least some of the Mojmirids "biologically", although the dynasty ceased to exist[64].

Another local insight is provided by the *Conversio Bagoariorum and Carantanorum* defending its claims against, among others, Archbishop Methodius, insisting that the emperor reorganized the administration of the land between Bavaria and former Avaria. Below the margrave and counts were also local leaders, *duces*, whose names were partially Slavic and who were slowly replaced by counts of Bavarian origin[65]. But we only have their names without

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[60] MGH, AF Regen., p. 122, *ad annum* 893 (transl. Reuter, p. 125): «Hinc etiam et Willihelmus filius patruelis eis missos suos ad Zwentibaldum ducem dirigens reus maiestatis habebatur, capite detruncatus est. Frater quoque eis cum Maravanis exul delatiscens insidioso cosilio ducis cum aliis quam plurimis interfectus est. Arrepto itaque rex itinere iterum regnum Zwentibaldi ducis ingreditur cum exercitu, maxima parte illius regionis expoliata propter insidias positas magna cum dificultate itineris in Baioaria ad reginam curtem Otingam reversus est».

[61] MGH, DD Arnolf, pp. 47-48, no. 32/NÖUkB 6b, 16/5-13/7/888 (Arnulf gives a present to his loyal servant Heimon), pp. 76-79, 78: «Et si forsan de Marauorum regno aliquis causa iustitiae supervenerit, si tale quidlibet est, quod ipse Heimo vel advocatus eius corrigere [ne]quiveriti, iudicio eiusdem comitis potenter finiatur. lnsuper etiam statuimus ipsique Heimoni, praestiti-mus, ut universa debita legalia de gente inibi in proprio suo residente terciaque pars bannorum sub eodem hereditarii iurisi tenore sibi in propriu[m] ex integro persolvantur, qui dicuntur civ-iles banni; caeteraque debita cuncta ad integrum sine alicuius partitione de eodem populo ae-ternaliter illum successoresque eius pertineant».

[62] Cf. note 35.

[63] Zehetmayer, *Studien*, pp. 34-57; see for Saxon Eastern Marches, Ludat, *An der Elbe und Oder*; for Brittany, Smith, *Province and Empire*.

[64] Mitterauer, *Slawischer und bayerischer Adel*, pp. 693-726; lately also Wihoda, *The Second Life*, pp. 94-109.

[65] MGH, *Die Conversio*, c. 10, p. 120: «Interim vero, dum praedicti comites orientalem procura-bant plagam, aliqui duces habitaverunt in illis partibus ad iam dictam sedem pertinentibus. Qui comitibus praefatis subditi fuerunt ad servitium imperatoris; quorum nomina sunt Priwizlau-ga, Cemicas, Ztoimar, Etgar. Post istos vero duces Bagoarii coeperunt praedictam terram dato regum habere in comitatum, nomine Helmwinus, Albgarius et Pabo. His ita peractis Ratbodus suscepit defensionem termini. In cuius spacio temporis quidam Priwina exulatus a Moimaro duce Marauorum supra Danubium venit ad Ratbodum. Qui statim illum praesentavit domno

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details, except for the case of Priwina and his son Chozil, where the *Conversio* and papal letters provide us with some information. We are told that Priwina was linked to Nitra, one of the Moravian centers, which in the 870s became the seat of a bishop. Most of the archeological excavations now suggest that this central place developed in the last third of the ninth century and that its importance was thus limited in the first third of the ninth century[66]. The position of Priwina before he was «exiled over the Danube» by Moimir, prince of Moravians, also remains unclear – scholars see him either as Moimir's deputy or the head of some rival dynasty with its own sphere of power[67]. More recently, Matej Harvát has suggested that he was just an ordinary member of the local elites, as neither contemporary nor later written evidence mentions his special status[68]. We only know – thanks to one sentence which might be a later interpolation – that he founded a church «on his properties», *in sua proprietate* (and not in his principality), which was allegedly consecrated by Adalram, Archbishop of Salzburg.

The issue of Priwina, Chozil and their power base before and after Priwina's exile takes us back to the previous categories already discussed, that of (material) culture and the strategies of ethnicity and identification. The *Conversio* confirms that, at least from an administrative point of view, Priwina and his family were fully integrated into the Carolingian empire, as Priwina was installed as count in the Eastern frontiers of the empire near the Lake Balaton. Apart from being named as counts, both Priwina and his son supported Bavarian sees through several donations[69]. The author of the *Conversio* refers to the lands the king have given to Priwina in Lower Pannonia near the river Sala, where Priwina had founded a new church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, consecrated by the Archbishop of Salzburg[70]. In later years, Priwina founded several other churches[71]. According to *Conversio*, his service to the church of

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regi nostro Hludowico, et suo iussu fide instructus baptizatus est in ecclesia sancti Martini loco Treisma nuncupato, curte». See *Conversio*, with excellent historical comments.

[66] Lately Bednár – Ruttkay, *Nitra*, pp. 229-244.

[67] Lysý, *Moravania, Mojmírovci a Franská ríša.*

[68] Harvát, *Úteky, vyhnanci a renegáti*, pp. 40-58.

[69] *Die Traditionen Regensburg*, p. 43, no. 37: «...Chozil, humillimus comes...»; *Die Traditionen des Hochstiftes Freising*, I, p. 696, no. 887: «comes de Sclavis nomine Chezul»; *Die Traditionen Regensburg,* pp. 78-79, no. 86: «...quod Chezil dux quondam pro remedio animae suae ad predictum sanctum condonavit...»; MGH, DD Arnolf, pp. 286-288, no. 185 (891): «in partibus Sclauiniensibus vero in comitatu Dudleipa vocato in loco Ruginesfeld, sicut Chocil dux quondam inibi ad opus suum habere visus est et veluti Reginger in eodem comitatu iuxta aquam, que dicitur Knesaha, in beneficium habebat; ad Lauentam quoque, sicut Lorio in beneficium habuerat, ad Peiniccaham ergo, sicut Ysaac miles Erinberti in beneficium tenuit».

[70] MGH, *Die Conversio*, c. 11, p. 122: «Aliqua vero interim occasione percepta rogantibus praedictis regis fidelibus prestavit rex Priwinę aliquam inferioris Pannoniae in beneficium partem circa fluvium, qui dicitur Sala. Tunc coepit ibi ille habitare et munimen aedificare in quodam nemore et palude Salae fluminis et circumquaque populos congregare ac multum ampliari in terra illa. [Cui quondam Adalrammus archiepiscopus ultra Danubium in sua proprietate loco vocato Nitrava consecravit ecclesiam.] Sed postquam praefatum munimen aedificavit, construxit infra primitus ecclesiam...».

[71] *Ibidem*, c. 11, pp. 124-126.

Salzburg gained him the favour of the king[72]. The role of Chozil is also remarkable. In 861 he inherited his father's position as the local Frankish deputy with his seat in Blatnohrad-Zalavár-Mosaburc[73]. According to papal letters, at least in the 860s he, however, seemed to have been a supporter of Methodius' mission, initiated by Rastiz from Moravia[74].

5. *Conclusions*

Let us shortly summarize our insights into the political, administrative, and cultural layers in the construction of the Eastern Carolingian frontier. We have seen a cultural continuum from the core regions of the Carolingian empire into the frontier areas on one hand – the elites in these frontier areas at least struggled for being acknowledged as participants on the imperial elite culture. On the other hand, the *Annales regni Francorum* and their continuations often present a clear borderline between the Carolingian empire and the areas outside it – in the ninth century, this is often the Danube. However, the same sources emphasize, as others had done better previously – that the empire has no borders, as they support the claims of the Carolingian kings and emperors to judge and administer even behind the Danube line[75]. These claims seem not to have been only theoretical, as there is some evidence of the Carolingians exacting tributes from those areas. The local answers were also structured. I have previously mentioned that the local elites accepted the Carolingian material culture and started to insert themselves into the marital networks of the Franco-Bavarian nobility[76]. Nevertheless, on occasion, they decided to make the decisions on their own – e.g., when they invited the missionaries from Constantinople, and decided to strive for local bishoprics. Although the establishment of Moravian bishoprics was not necessarily intended against the Frankish power but had to solve a local lack of church administration and strengthen the prestige of Moravian princes, the occasional decisions to invoke ethnicity as a source of the Mojmirid power seem to be evident. Both concepts of a border, the linear and that of a frontier zone, are relevant and reflected specific aspects of this complex political and social, or administrative situation.

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[72] *Ibidem*, c. 12, p. 128.
[73] For later summary, see Szőke, *Die Karolingerzeit in Pannonien*.
[74] *Žitije Mefodija*, c. 8, p. 147; MGH, Epp. VII, p. 282, no. 17.
[75] For dual character of the lower Danube bordering the Byzantine empire and Avar khaganate, which, however, also served as a bridge for cultural transfer, see Kardaras, *The Danube River*, pp. 123-142.
[76] Ungerman, *Carolingian Imports*, pp. 51-57.

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Conclusions

by Giuseppe Albertoni

The summary provides an overview of the essays collected in this volume and places them in the context of research that has innovatively redefined the theme of the "frontier" in the Early Middle Ages in recent decades. In doing so, it shows how the concept of border is used in the essays not only in its political, but also in its ideological and cultural sense. Despite the diversity of perspectives and themes, however, a common feature emerges: the prevalence of "porous" and "blurred" borders that testify to a dynamic political and cultural reality that is constantly being redefined.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Carolingian Empire; Italy; frontiers; borders.

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1. *A question of concepts*

Thirty years ago, when Herwig Wolfram published his book on Austria before its birth, he called it *Grenzen und Räume*[1]. It is a title that sums up very well the thread that runs through the essays in this volume. The history of border or frontier practices in the Carolingian period is in fact a history of demarcations, of the definition of political, territorial and cultural spaces. It is a history that requires conceptualisation and lexical reflection. The idea of the border is in fact a cultural creation that demarcates, polarises and at the same time creates relationships.

From this perspective, Walter Pohl, in his essay, reminded the readers of this volume of the importance that Niklas Luhman's concept of *Sinngrenze* has had for the study of early medieval frontiers, at least since the 1990s, when the pioneering project on *The transformation of the Roman world* was initiated[2]. As is well known, it is a concept that is very difficult to translate into English or any other language, because the German term *Sinn* covers a different semantic field than "sense", "meaning" or "significance". A *Sinngrenze* is in fact a "limit of sense or meaning", within which a territorial frontier can also be placed. In this perspective, the territorial borders or frontiers of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages have also been studied as a case of *Sinngrenze* within a network of relations which in some cases can constitute a system. Only on this basis, Pohl argued, can we examine the particular meaning given in certain contexts to words such as *limes*, *terminus* or *fines*, and the function of fortifications or defensive borders.

From another perspective, Pohl's observations fit very well with the reconstruction of the relationship between empires and frontiers proposed by Francesco Borri in his essay, in which he proposed a comparative analysis of the meaning of imperial frontiers in the Carolingian period, demonstrating their elusiveness, the lack of a clear demarcation line, and the role played in this context by the confrontation with the "barbarian world". From this point of view, Borri reminded us that, on the one hand, the Carolingian Empire was "always decaying"[3] and, on the other, its borders were always moving, even if they were often invisible in the landscape. In any case, borders were the markers of asymmetrical power relations, as the German political scientist Herfried Münkler pointed out in his comparative analysis of empires[4]. According to Borri, the asymmetry between an empire and its surrounding territories and the projection of its frontiers, is clearly represented by the *Reichsapfel*, the *globus cruciger*, one of the main symbols of medieval imperial power.

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[1] Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume*.
[2] Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*; *The Transformation of Frontiers*; *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*.
[3] De Jong, *The Empire that Was Always Decaying*.
[4] Münkler, *Imperien*.

But it was not only in the case of empires that borders could be elusive. Events taking place in the "non Carolingian" Iberian Peninsula were also characterised by the presence of what Iñaki Martin Viso defined in his essay as a "blurred border". Through some specific cases that occurred on the Duero plateau between the eighth and the middle of the ninth century, Viso has shown us how difficult it is to reconstruct what happened in the Iberian territories because of the extremely problematic documentary transmission and the retrospective narratives that were imposed from the ninth century onwards. These narratives have constructed an image of the territories of the Meseta as a "desert" that was reabsorbed and repopulated by the Kingdom of Asturias, which could thus present itself as the legitimate heir of the Visigoths. This image, which dominated Iberian historiography until a few years ago, has only recently been seriously and radically challenged, mainly thanks to new archaeological data. These findings have allowed Viso and other scholars to construct a picture that is very different from the dominant one: the Meseta and the area of the Duero can now be understood as having been a "blurred space", characterised by an extremely fragmented microregional politics. Rather than being a frontier in the strict sense with al-Andalus, it was therefore mainly a "peripheral space", outside any authority, a space of little interest to Muslims until the Kingdom of Asturias took over with its "neo-Gothic" ideology.

2. *Borders between the Alps, the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian Sea*

Even in Carolingian Italy there was a dialectic between the frontiers of the past and the frontiers of the present. From this point of view, the model provided by the borders of the Ostrogothic period, especially those in the Alps, was very important. In particular, the *Divisio regnorum* of 806 was strongly influenced by the memory of the political division of the Alps under the Goths: it assigned to Pippin a vast territory that crossed the Alps from Alamannia to Italy, and this Alpine region is the subject of Marco Cristini's research, presented in his essay included here. On the basis of certain passages from the *Variae* of Cassiodorus, Cristini reconstructed the military, administrative and ideological dimensions of what could be called Theodoric's Alpine policy. His analysis of the military dimension focused on two *castella*, one of which is commonly identified with a *castrum* near Trento, the other with Monte Barro, which he presented as examples of a defensive border system made up of a scattering of garrisons overlooking certain strategic points. From an administrative point of view, Cristini focused on the military duties of the Gothic governors, while from an ideological point of view he highlighted the rhetoric in the *Variae*, which emphasised the clear distinction between the Roman and the 'barbarian' world. This rhetoric was based on the asymmetrical imperial model described in Francesco Borri's paper, which, however, did not prove effective in complex border areas populated by different ethnic groups, such as the Alps.

However, the dynamics in the Alpine regions from Late Antiquity onwards were quite different: Katharina von Winckler's essay pointed out that, ever since Antiquity, the borders that crossed the Alps were often well defined (partly, of course, due to the latter's orography), although they never followed the actual mountain ranges. In fact, both in Late Antiquity and in the Early Middle Ages, Alpine borders always ran along the lower slopes of the mountains, ensuring control of both sides of passes or their access routes whenever possible. This "transalpine" projection was also evident in the extension of the great monastic estates, which often seemed to have no relation to political boundaries, as in the famous case attested by the testament of Abbo for the monastery of Novalesa. This case is also a vivid example of the fact that the monasteries in the Alps often played a role in military defence, even during the long period after the conquest of *Raetia Curiensis* and Bavaria, when the Alps no longer formed a boundary between two or more kingdoms, but were crisscrossed by internal (and also rather "mobile") borders, as shown by the succession of different *divisiones* of the Carolingian Empire between 806 and 880.

The borders of Carolingian Italy crossed the sea as well as the Alps. The picture of the eastern and Adriatic borders, as Annamaria Pazienza has pointed out, is less clear. She focused particularly on Istria, an important contact and competition area between Venice and the Carolingian world, and on two of the principal actors in that area at the beginning of the ninth century: the Patriarch Fortunatus II and the duke of Istria John, the protagonist of the famous Plea of Rižana. Starting from the events in which Fortunatus and John were the main "actors", Pazienza argued that the Upper Adriatic was perceived in the Carolingian age as an area characterised by often violent border disputes and competition for resources, on which the consequences of the iconoclastic crisis had a profound impact. According to Pazienza, this was also the context of the controversy that led to the Plea of Rižana against Duke John. In this context, she suggested that the latter was not a Frankish immigrant, but was of local origin and could be identified with Duke John Galbaio, who ruled Venice in the same years.

Shifting our focus from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian, Maddalena Betti instead examined the question of the southern border of Carolingian Italy from the perspective of Rome and the Papacy, starting from the issue of reclaiming the Roman *fines*. In an analysis based on the *Vitae* of Popes Paschal I, Sergius II and Leo IV in the *Liber Pontificalis*, Betti has shown that the papal interest in territorial issues was revived during the reign of Lothar, after having waned in 774 with the end of the *regnum Langobardorum*, and has pointed out that this interest led to a new territorial projection of the papacy in the Sabina and along the coast of Latium. Furthermore, Betti has reconstructed this change of course by bringing together various episodes related to events such as the Saracen incursions, the construction of new walls in Rome and the ceremonies of the imperial *adventus*, which suggest a spatial definition of the papacy's activities in the surrounding cities and territories.

3. *Frontiers, fortifications and the "others"*

When we think of borders, we often associate them with walls, barriers and fortifications. Was this also the case in Carolingian times? Two essays in this volume attempt to answer this question. Simon MacLean, for example, in his essay on frontiers and fortifications in the ninth and tenth centuries, analysed the role of frontiers in the Carolingian political imaginary as transmitted through some important works of historical narrative, such as the *Annales regni Francorum*, the *Annales Fuldenses*, the Astronomer's *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, the *Gesta Karoli* of Notker of St. Gall or the works of Ermold. He pointed out that these texts tend to polarise between the *palatium*, understood as both the *locus* of political authority and the symbol of the Carolingian political order, and the *castrum*, understood as a structure that stood in relation to an external danger, to the "anti-imperial world", in a context in which the construction of fortresses and fortifications was often associated with the Carolingians' enemies, particularly the Vikings. He thus presented us with a polarised image, in which fortified residences in the Carolingian imperial imagination were portrayed in a negative light because of their "enclosure", while royal palaces were portrayed in a positive light because of their "openness", whether supposed or real.

In the Carolingian period, we find this asymmetry in the border areas outside Italy, and some of our contributors have written about these areas from a comparative perspective.

Marco Franzoni, for example, described the enormous logistical challenges and costs involved in Charlemagne's campaigns against the Saxons and the Danes. He highlighted the role of the new buildings and *palatia* – such as the important outposts of Herstelle and Paderborn – which the Frankish king used, in conjunction with his military campaigns, to project his authority over new lands, and which required enormous investment from the centre. As Simon MacLean also noted, all this activity was mirrored on the other side of the border, with the Carolingians' enemies, in particular the Danes, building their own fortifications.

Although many resources were invested in the infrastructure of the northern frontiers of the Carolingian Empire, the choices made for the frontier of the Iberian Peninsula – where, according to the established historiographical tradition, Charlemagne introduced the *marca hispanica* – were markedly different. In this context, Igor Santos Salazar has analyses the diplomas and legal documents that record disputes in the Carolingian counties of the eastern Pyrenees. On the basis of these documents, he has reconstructs the dynamics of the competition for control of land in this frontier area, where "tax revenues" constituted an important political resource for the creation of networks of *fideles* around the Carolingian comites in the south-western periphery of the Carolingian Empire.

If this was the case in the south-western regions of the Carolingian Empire, what happened in the south-eastern regions? The contributions of Neven

Budak and David Kalhous provide us with an answer to this question. Neven Budak leads our gaze eastwards, to consider the influence of the Carolingians in the Balkans, particularly in modern day Croatia and what was Lower Pannonia. He showed how the Carolingians began to develop their defensive system in this south eastern political space in the 780s, linking up initially with the eastward expansion of Pippin, "king of Italy", in close collaboration with the *dux de Histria* and the duke of Friuli. It was only later, Budak reminds us, that the territories conquered in Dalmatia were organised along the same *limes* as those pursued by the Carolingians in other *regna* situated near the eastern borders of the Empire, with the appointing of two *duces*, known initially as the *dux Dalmatie et Liburnie* and the *dux Pannonie inferioris.* However, he also pointed out that the fact that we have so little information from the Carolingian side makes it difficult to reconstruct the political divisions of the Balkans with any degree of accuracy. In fact, they can best be deduced retrospectively, most usefully from the *De administrando imperio* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, although many key questions remain unresolved, such as the question of the actual size and division of Liudevit's regnum inter *Savum* et *Dravum.* This was the volatile and fragmented political scene in which various actors operated during the ninth century in unceasing competition for territorial control. And this volatility was only partially mitigated by the treaty of Aachen and, not long afterwards, by the redefinition of the political order following the reorganisation of the march of Friuli in 828 and the emergence in the sources of a *dux Croatorum* who dated his letters according to the years of Lothar's reign in Italy, despite the fact that he seems to have operated as an independent political actor. On the other hand, the Carolingian influence, at least on the élite, seems to have persisted in the material culture associated with burial practices, as evidenced by archaeological finds such as swords, lances and other objects which, according to Neven Budak, should be understood as instances of *imitatio regni* or *aemulatio imperii* in relation to the Carolingians.

In the next essay, David Kalhous considered the role played by a great river – the Danube – as both border and contact zone. Starting with Claudio Magris' image of the Danube[5], Kalhous introduced us to the complex reality of the territories through which the river flows, which in many ways is similar to the Catalonia described by Igor Santos Salazar, both in terms of its internal dynamics and in the ideological reconstructions of its history based on present day political claims. Kalhous analysed in particular the ninth-century Bavarian Eastern March and its surroundings in the light of the material sources and the great historical narratives of the Carolingians contained in the *Annales regni Francorum*, the *Annales Fuldenses* and the *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum.* Choosing a few apposite examples, he showed us the multiple functions of the great river, more varied and complex than

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[5] Magris, *Danubio.*

its representation as a frontier in Carolingian sources would have us believe. The Carolingian sources, however, clearly evidence the waterway's logistical importance, particularly in facilitating the projection of Carolingian military power towards the east and against the Avars. The regions around the Danube were territories of contraposition and of contact, although the disparity between written and material sources means that it is not easy to draw comparisons between, or reconstruct the cultural models of the élites, sometimes "manoeuvered" by outside powers, as in the case of the territories that came to be dominated by the Church of Salzburg. Kalhous also pointed out that these cultural models often acted as filters, in particular when the Carolingian sources describe conflicts on the other side of the Danube. They adopted narrative models already present in their rhetorical "arsenal", as in the case of the trial of the Moravian prince Rastiz, whose depiction in the *Annales Fuldenses* is strongly influenced by the model used to recount the deposition of the duke of Bavaria, Tassilo III.

4. *Between visible and invisible borders*

However, as Niklas Luhmann has shown us, and as Walter Pohl has described in his essay, borders cross not only territories but also cultures. They can be "immaterial" and emerge from the documentary tradition, as Stefano Gasparri, Flavia De Rubeis and Gianmarco De Angelis have shown in their essays. From this point of view, Stefano Gasparri has reconstructed the history of the border pacts, an Italian peculiarity in the Early Middle Ages. In his reconstruction, based on a careful reading of the sources, Gasparri highlighted the importance of the Lombard legacy for these pacts. It is therefore no coincidence that the first pact that has come down to us from the Carolingian period concerns the duke of Benevento Arechis II, who, between 784 and 787, tried to reach an agreement with the Neapolitans on the political and economic management of an important territory – the *Liburia* – and its inhabitants. Significantly, no clear dividing line emerges in these pacts, an aspect that seems to have been secondary to the management of the land labourers, whose legal status was often very ambiguous. Compared to these pacts, that signed in 836 by the duke of Benevento Sicard was certainly much more complex and articulated. It appears as a five-year concession, made after a long conflict, in favour of the Bishop of Naples John, the *magister militum* Andrea and the inhabitants of the duchies of Naples, Sorrento and Amalfi. In this context, Gasparri highlighted the concessions made in favour of the *negotiatores*, who were guaranteed the possibility of moving freely from one territory to another. Gasparri was thus able to highlight the existence of border areas with walls, barriers and fortifications, through a careful analysis of these pacts which were subject to "mixed" political and economic control due to the needs of managing agricultural labour and trade. In other words, these were areas without insurmountable linear borders, as confirmed by the last case stud-

ied by Gasparri, the pact of 840 between Lothar I and the Venetians, which formed the basis of relations between the Venetian duchy and the mainland powers for centuries.

In addition to "textual boundaries", the ninth century was also a time of "graphic boundaries". This phenomenon is explained by Flavia De Rubeis in her essay dedicated to the concept of frontiers from the point of view of epigraphy, which contains a number of thought-provoking ideas, starting with the abandonment of the concept of a "graphic area", understood as a writing system that prevails in a territory and is characterised by morphologically stable elements. In this way, De Rubeis reworked Bakhtin's observation that «language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated — overpopulated — with the intentions of others»[6]. Consequently, she focused her analysis not on a graphic area but on a single place. In this context, she has proposed to distinguish between "horizontal boundaries", in the sense of the use of different graphic systems within the same chronology in the same society, and "vertical boundaries", in the sense of graphic forms that are morphologically differentiated within the same writing system and adapted to the needs of different patrons. From this perspective, De Rubeis analysed the specific case of epigraphic communication in Venice and Croatia. The picture that emerges is somewhat unexpected, given the initial poor quality of epigraphic production in Venice and the surrounding area. In fact, De Rubeis highlighted the progressive increase of epigraphy, an instrument of visibility that seems to have been appreciated by local élites, both lay and ecclesiastical, even in the absence of a consolidated writing system. But while the secular élites maintained the scripts that had characterised their epigraphic production from the beginning, the ecclesiastics gradually moved towards a script closer to the manuscript writing. The cases of Venice and Croatia thus testify to a full awareness on the part of the élites of the importance and efficacy of writing, with its epigraphic forms and formalisms.

On the other hand, Gianmarco De Angelis has reconstructed a very moving and articulated picture of the documentary landscapes of Carolingian Italy, which in turn allows us to see general lines behind which many differentiations are hidden. From this point of view, the panorama of "private charters" outlined by De Angelis is particularly complex, with the introduction of new deeds such as the *precariae* or the *notitiae traditoriae*, and changes in documentary structures through the inclusion of *formulae* and conceptual nuclei, as in the case of the *libellus* and the *traditio chartae*. Moreover, De Angelis has highlighted another very important and often ignored question, identifying a "documentary boundary" that allows us to distinguish two standard formularies in the sale related charters in the heart of the Po basin (Bergamo, Cremona, Milan, Parma and Piacenza), where many individuals were active

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[6] Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel*, p. 294.

in the money trade, and south of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, where the cornerstone was represented by the landed assets, while the agreed sum for the exchange was mixed in the text among the numerous guarantee clauses for the buyer and for the possible future sale of the goods.

These dynamics from the beginning of the ninth century were complicated by the increasingly active role of transalpine individuals and groups (Franks, Bavarians, Alamans and Burgundians), who established in the peninsula a legal pluralism unknown in the previous period. Within this new framework, De Angelis also identified an internal documentary boundary linked to the appearance, from the 820s onwards, of elements of new formularies, sometimes characterised by surprising choices in the dating system or the appearance of phrases that appear to be archaic, such as the expression *de tempore barbarico.*

Even from the point of view of the typology of written sources therefore emerges what De Angelis has effectively defined as the "porosity of borders", and it is perhaps precisely this image of "porous borders", together with that of "blurred borders" proposed by Iñaki Martin Viso, that best represents and synthesises the long journey around Carolingian borders – ideological, material, cultural, often imaginary – that this book allows us to undertake.

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