

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).

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*, I, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883 (Legum sectio, II/1).

MGH, Capit. II = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, II, ed. A. Boretius – V. Krause, Hannover 1897 (Legum sectio, II/2).

MGH, Cap. I N.S. = *Die Kapitulariensammlung des Ansegis (Collectio capitularium Ansegisi)*, in MGH, *Capitularia regum Francorum. Nova series*, I, ed. G. Schmitz, München 1996.

MGH, DD Arnolf = *Die Urkunden Arnolfs*, ed. P.F. Kehr, Berlin 1940 (MGH, Die Urkunden der deutschen Karolinger, 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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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 practices³. The border is an important concept even today, and modern sociology in particular deals with the issue of creating boundaries between human communities⁴. 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

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 Ages⁵. 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 role⁶. Finally, the border must be understood as an organizational issue, as evidence of the ability to integrate and incorporate, as well as to exclude⁷. The historical disciplines with the help of other humanities and social-science disciplines can provide valuable clues to that general problem⁸.

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 area⁹, 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 areas¹⁰. However, people were able to define clear boundaries for different pieces of land¹¹, 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, *Umrít* 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 routes¹². 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, *Herrschartreffen*.

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., Mautern¹⁴, Traismauern and Tulln¹⁵).

Firstly, let us now take a very brief look at three aspects of regional material culture¹⁶: 1) weaponry¹⁷; 2) ecclesiastical architecture; 3) settlement structures¹⁸. 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 century¹⁹, 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 armour²⁰, the elites on both banks of the Danube seemed to be using similar

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 models²¹. 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 spear²³. 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 Danube²⁴. 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 Carantania²⁵. On the other side, the analyses demonstrate that not every type of jewelry that crossed the Danube reached Moravia²⁶. 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 March²⁷. Finally, Moravian ceramics seems to have been used in today's Lower Austria²⁸. Similarly, the ecclesiastical architecture is based on models from Bavaria and the Adriatic²⁹. Apart from a comparison among the churches excavated in this region, where our situation is complicated by the lack of fully preserved buildings³⁰, 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 periphery³¹. 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 Ohringe*, pp. 107-124; Ungerman, «*Karantánsko-köttlašský*» šperk, pp. 11-48.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ Ungermann, *Frühmittelalterliche Ohringe*, p. 118.

²⁸ Kühnreiber, *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 techniques³².

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 palisade³³. According to Austrian scholars, the central area of Gars-Thunau in today's Lower Austria was organized along similar lines³⁴. (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 nobility³⁶.

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 empire³⁷. 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 commissions³⁸. When mentioned the first

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 Ettl, *Karlbürg*, 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 khaganate⁴¹. 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 Slavs⁴².

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 previously⁴⁷.

³⁹ MGH, ARF, p. 78, *ad annum* 787 (transl. Scholz 65-66); see also *ibidem*, p. 83, *ad 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 (transl. 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).

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 Carolingians⁴⁸. A fragment of the letter with instructions for Count Aribo confirms that Moravians paid such a tribute as well⁴⁹. 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 presents⁵⁰.

Later, Charlemagne agreed to the request of the khagan and restored his full power over the kingdom of Avars⁵¹.

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 brother⁵². 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

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 de 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 clues⁵³.

Annales regni Francorum, 788: «Tunc dominus 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, vasos 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 permetteret, sicut iuratum habuit; et etiam dixit, melius se mortuum esse quam ita vivere. Et de haec omnia comprobatus, 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 dominus 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 comprehensus insequitur; sed iusto iudicio Dei captus est laqueo, quem tetendit: nam ab eodem nepote suo comprehenditur, 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 Baioariam 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

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 similarities⁵⁴. 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 well⁵⁵. 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 simplifications⁵⁶. 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 pope⁵⁷. However, other sources again make this dynamic image even fuzzier⁵⁸.

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.

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 – Niemandland*, 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 nobleman 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 verdict⁶¹. Aribo was the same man who was made responsible for collecting the tribute from Moravia⁶².

Despite lack of the data that would clarify the family relationships of the Mojmirids, later sources provide us with convincing indicia of their embeddedness into the local elite networks similar to those known from the Eastern Saxon marches, or from Brittany⁶³. Typical Mojmirid 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 exist⁶⁴.

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 origin⁶⁵. But we only have their names without

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 difficultate 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]quiverit, iudicio eiusdem comitis potenter finiatur. Insuper etiam statuimus ipsique Heimoni, praestitimus, ut universa debita legalia de gente inibi in proprio suo residente terciusque pars bannorum sub eodem hereditarii iurisi tenore sibi in propriu[m] ex integro persolvantur, qui dicuntur civiles banni; caeteraque debita cuncta ad integrum sine alicuius partitione de eodem populo aeternaliter 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 procurabant 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 Maravorum supra Danubium venit ad Ratbodum. Qui statim illum praesentavit domno

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 century⁶⁶. 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 power⁶⁷. 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 status⁶⁸. 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 donations⁶⁹. 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 Salzburg⁷⁰. In later years, Priwina founded several other churches⁷¹. According to *Conversio*, his service to the church of

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, *Moravia, Mojmirovci a Franská říša*.

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 Duddleipa 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 Peiniccāham 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 king⁷². 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-Mosaburc⁷³. According to papal letters, at least in the 860s he, however, seemed to have been a supporter of Methodius' mission, initiated by Rastiz from Moravia⁷⁴.

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 line⁷⁵. 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 nobility⁷⁶. 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.

⁷² *Ibidem*, c. 12, p. 128.

⁷³ For later summary, see Szóke, *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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