

Being an aristocrat in the kingdom of Italy in the age of Lothar I

by François Bougard

After a preliminary reflection on the notions of “aristocracy” and “elite” and the criteria of their definition, an attempt is made to summarise the aristocratic groups in the period under consideration. It mainly deals with the office aristocracy, whose representatives were increasingly of transalpine origin during the reign of Lothar, especially in the northern part of the kingdom of Italy. Imperial vassals and gastalds are also taken into account. The paths of individuals and families also allow us to make some observations on the social practices of the aristocracy and their more or less successful imitation at lower levels. The “Lothar moment”, conditioned by political hazards, must be considered as a time of closure, or of a takeover of the aristocracy holding offices by the transalpine migrants. This closure, maintaining and even reinforcing the ethnic divide, could only slow down the aristocratisation of the Lombard elite. The monopolising of offices also led to a difference in access for the aristocracy: whereas for the transalpine set, the office or membership of the group of vassals was in some way guaranteed by their very settling in Italy, for the Lombards the criterion of wealth was a prerequisite for passing to the *Königsnähe*.

Middle Ages; ninth century; Carolingian Italy; Lothar I; Carolingian aristocracy.

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Abbreviations

- Bergamo = *Le pergamene degli archivi di Bergamo, a. 740-1000*, ed. M. Cortesi, Bergamo 1988 (Fonti per lo studio del territorio bergamasco, 8; Carte medievali bergamasche, 1).
- Böhmer-Zielinski = J.F. Böhmer, *Regesta Imperii. I. Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751-918 (926/962)*, vol. 3: *Die Regesten des Regnum Italiae und der burgundischen Regna*, ed. H. Zielinski, 3, 1: *Die Karolinger im Regnum Italiae 840-887 (888)*, Köln-Wien 1991.
- Casauria = *Iohannis Berardi Liber instrumentorum seu chronicorum monasterii Casauriensis seu Chronicon Casauriense*, 4 vol., ed. A. Pratesi, P. Cherubini, Roma 2017-2018 (Fonti per la storia d'Italia. Rerum Italicarum scriptores, Terza serie, 14).
- CDL = *Codex diplomaticus Langobardiae*, ed. G. Porro Lambertenghi, Torino 1873 (Historiae patriae monumenta, 13).
- ChLA², LIX = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LIX, Italy XXXI, Verona 1, publ. F. Santoni, Dietikon-Zürich 2001.
- ChLA², LX = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LX, Italy XXXII, Verona 2, publ. F. Santoni, Dietikon-Zürich 2002.
- ChLA², LXIX = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXIX, Italy XLI, Piacenza 6, publ. F. De Rubeis, Dietikon-Zürich 2006.
- ChLA², LXXIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXIII, Italy XLV, Lucca 2, publ. F. Magistrale, Dietikon-Zürich 2003.
- ChLA², LXXV = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXV, Italy XLVII, Lucca 4, publ. F. Magistrale, P. Cordasco, C. Drago, Dietikon-Zürich 2005.
- ChLA², LXXVII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXVII, Italy XLIX, Lucca 6, publ. F. Magistrale, C. Gattagrisi, P. Fioretti, Dietikon-Zürich 2008.
- ChLA², LXXVIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXVIII, Italy L, Lucca 7, publ. M. Palma, Dietikon-Zürich 2009.
- ChLA², LXXIX = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXIX, Italy LI, Lucca 8, publ. F. Magistrale, Dietikon-Zürich 2010.
- ChLA², LXXXVIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXXVIII, Italy LX, Modena, Nonantola 1, publ. G. Feo, M. Al Kalak, M. Mezzetti, M. Modesti, Dietikon-Zürich 2008.
- ChLA², XC = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XC, Italy LXII, Arezzo, publ. G. Feo, G. Nicolaj, M. Calleri, C. Tristano, Dietikon-Zürich 2011.
- ChLA², XCII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCII, Italy LXIV, Parma 1, publ. F. Santoni, Dietikon-Zürich 2012.
- ChLA², XCIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCIII, Italy LXV, Parma 2, publ. C. Mantegna, Dietikon-Zürich 2014.
- ChLA², XCIV = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCIV, Italy LXVI, Milano 1, publ. M. Modesti, Dietikon-Zürich 2015.
- ChLA², XCV = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCV, Italy LXVII, Milano 2, publ. A. Zuffrano, Dietikon-Zürich 2016.
- ChLA², XCVII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCVII, Italy LXIX, Milano 4, publ. A. Zuffrano, Dietikon-Zürich 2018.
- ChLA², XCVIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCVIII, Italy LXII, Bergamo, publ. M. Modesti, Dietikon-Zürich 2017.

- ChLA², XCIX = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2nd series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCIX, Italy LXXI, Brescia, Cremona, Udine, Venezia, publ. C. Mantegna, L. Pani, G. De Angelis, Dietikon-Zürich 2018.
- Freising I = *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising, I (744-926)*, ed. Th. Bitterauf, München 1905 (Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen und deutschen Geschichte, N.F., 4).
- LP = *Le Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 3 vol., ed. L. Duchesne, 2nd ed., Paris 1955-1957.
- MDL, V/2 = *Memorie e documenti per servire all'istoria del Ducato di Lucca*, vol. 5, 2, ed. D. Barsocchini, Lucca 1837.
- 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, AX = *Annales Xantenses*, ed. B. von Simson, Hannover-Leipzig 1909 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 12).
- MGH, Capit. I = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 1, ed. A. Boretius, Hannover 1883 (MGH, Legum sectio, II/1).
- MGH, Capit. II = *Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 2, ed. A. Boretius, V. Krause, Hannover 1897 (MGH, Legum sectio, II/2).
- MGH, Conc. II = *Concilia aevi Karolini*, 2 vol., ed. A. Werminghoff, Hannover-Leipzig 1906-1908 (MGH, Conc., 2).
- MGH, Conc. III = *Die Konzilien der karolingischen Teilreiche*, ed. W. Hartmann, Hannover 1984 (MGH, Conc., 3).
- MGH, DD Karol. I = *Die Urkunden Pippins, Karlmanns und Karls des Großen*, ed. E. Mühlbacher, Hannover 1906 (MGH, Diplomata Karolinorum, 1).
- MGH, DD LdF = *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, 3 vol., ed. T. Kölzer, Wiesbaden 2016 (MGH, Diplomata Karolinorum, 2).
- MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II = *Die Urkunden Lothars I. und Lothars II.*, ed. T. Schieffer, Berlin-Zürich 1966 (MGH, Diplomata Karolinorum, 3).
- Placiti I = *I placiti del "Regnum Italiae"*, vol. 1, ed. C. Manaresi, Roma 1955 (FSI, 92).

1. Introduction

«Cosa significa essere aristocratici nell'età di Lotario I?», the issue that I have been tasked with studying, is not an easy one, on account of two specific limitations. The first is chronological: Lothar I and Italy as a topic covers around a quarter of a century if we consider the outside dates of his stays in Italy, the first in 822 and the last in 847. The period is hardly longer if we extend the chronology to the imperial coronation of Louis II in 850. This allows little room for manoeuvre for us to see large-scale movements at work, or to characterise encompassing frameworks such as kinship structures, while running the risk of judging them by the yardstick of longer-term developments that are otherwise known. But it must also be acknowledged that to focus on this limited chronological slice offers some advantages. On the one hand, it brings the reign of Lothar to the fore, whereas it is generally overshadowed by those that precede or follow it. On the other hand, it takes into account the fact that the years 820-840 were politically quite turbulent. While in 822 the taking over of Italy was done under the sign of collaboration with Louis the Pious, with the declared wish of putting behind the unfortunate death of Bernard (818), which had been followed by four years of management by the *missi*, the rebellion of 829 and, above all, that of 833, placed the aristocracy at odds, pressed into choosing sides between the father and the son, while the *regnum* was used as a base by Lothar and

his supporters. The rapprochement put forward from 836 onwards certainly helped to pacify things. In 843, the treaty of Verdun could have signalled a regionalisation of the dominant groups. All these events could not fail to have an impact on the kingdom and its elites. During this time, Lothar himself was in Italy only intermittently, on nine occasions, for stays that never exceeded a few months, with the exception of the so-called “exile years”, from Autumn 834 to Spring 839.

2. *Aristocracy vs elites*

The other difficulty is thematic: using the term “aristocracy” seems to be turning the historiographical page on “elites”, a notion whose very indeterminacy allowed for all manner of dealings and a descent into decidedly lower social levels, but also one where one would always find someone superior to the other. In this sense, the title and subtitle of the conference – *Aristocrazie in rete / Élités e dinamiche sociali* – maintain a form of ambiguity.

On closer inspection, this ambiguity is not new. In fact, the work of recent years has helped to maintain it. One of the chapters of the New Cambridge Medieval History devoted to the Carolingian world, published in 2011, is entitled *Elite society*, but the four parts that make it up deal with the aristocracy without any discussion of other groups¹. Chris Wickham’s 2005 ideal type for the pre-800 aristocracy is very similar to the one he proposed for the elites a few years later, and which he also uses to characterise the Roman aristocracy of the tenth century: by his own admission, the use of a different term to designate the same reality is after all merely an illustration of «the fluidity of the debate»². It is really all a question of where one sets the boundary. While every aristocrat belongs to the elite, and more precisely to the “ruling elite” – adjective whose relevance to the early Middle Ages was rejected by Cinzio Violante³ – not every member of an elite or “dominant group” is part of the aristocracy. In a four-level classification of elites such as that established by Simone Collavini on the basis of heritage and territorial projection⁴, the “*Reichsaristokratie*” and the regional-level elites can be considered as belonging to the aristocracy. Those at the “diocesan” level, which in regions other than Tuscany one might be tempted to call “county”, could be, but there are many examples of them for which aristocratic membership can be questioned. Local elites would be excluded, but this category does not only con-

¹ Costambeys, Innes, MacLean, *Carolingian World*, chapter 6, pp. 271-323, in four sections: *Aristocratic identity, Aristocratic behaviour, Aristocratic families, Aristocratic resources and relationships*.

² Wickham, *Framing*, p. 154; Wickham, *Changing composition*; Wickham, *Roma medievale*, pp. 224-225, esp. note 6 for the «fluidità del dibattito».

³ Airlie, *Aristocracy*; Violante, *Marchesi*, p. 19.

⁴ Collavini, *Spazi politici*.

cern individuals without a title and the corresponding office, but can extend to minor officials such as *scabini* and *sculdascii*, whose social stature must be examined on a case-by-case basis.

That being said, if the notion of aristocracy does not have the vague character of that of the elite, it is no less trapping: for if we do not want to reduce it to the upper stratum, we can soon divide it into three tranches: “small”, “middle” and “high” aristocracy. This quickly brings up difficulties, which are just as quickly circumvented by the lack of studies specifically devoted to the small aristocracy, which is treated by preterition or reunited with the one above it in the expression “small and medium aristocracy”.

The definition of the aristocracy in the early Middle Ages, or the recognition of those who belong to it, has been the subject of many contributions. Those who have attempted to define it have considered at best only two groups. For example, Maria Elena Cortese, in 2017, identified two for Tuscany «the families of the high aristocracy active on a regional scale» and «the intermediate segment endowed with widespread patrimony at least on a diocesan level, and characterised by a broad political action, by direct relations with the higher powers, by access to civil and ecclesiastical offices»⁵. Andrea Castagnetti, on the other hand, embraces the whole category: «individuals, families and family groups who base their social and political status, in addition to the availability of greater or lesser patrimonies, on the foundation of monasteries and churches that ensure moral prestige and religious salvation, on participation in the exercise of power in various forms: the exercise of public offices associated with the government of territories, court service, direct vassal relationships with kings and emperors»⁶. The second definition has the merit of introducing the notion of “prestige” which complements those of power and wealth. To go further, we can rely on the ideal-type constructed by Chris Wickham: an aristocrat is one who exercises a form of power simply «because he is who he is», based on: a) birth (the distinction of ancestors), b) landed wealth, c) position in an official hierarchy, expressed by the use of a title, d) royal or imperial familiarity/favour (*Königsnähe*), e) recognition by one’s peers, f) lifestyle. This framework should be applicable to aristocracies operating in the kingdom as well as to those whose place of action is the city. We thus venture to speak of an urban aristocracy in relation to Rome and Ravenna, which we would not do for other cities of the *regnum*, because during the period we are dealing with, these cities maintained features of their Byzantine heritage, with a more marked and diversified hierarchy than elsewhere.

If, moreover, “aristocracy” is an anachronistic term in relation to the period with which we are dealing, the adjective *nobilis* is not the one which, in the Carolingian sources, best relates to it. It is true that those who are

⁵ Cortese, *Aristocrazia*, p. VII.

⁶ Castagnetti, *Aristocrazie*, p. 539.

nobiles are those who, because they are at the apex of society, exercise a domination that is expressed in terms of possession and holding of high offices; it is a question of nobility by birth, which goes hand in hand with a particular way of being served by physical and moral qualities⁷. But this is the representation given by the narrative sources. The representation given by the charters covers a much wider social spectrum, as indicated by the *notitiae iudicati*, for which the simple fact of participating in a judicial college, i.e. of taking part in some way in the administration of public affairs, is sometimes sufficient to qualify them for the label *nobilis*. One could prefer collective names such as *optimates*, *principes*, *primores*, *proceres* to the adjective, but they have the disadvantage of referring only to the upper segment and of being too largely based on narrative sources. One of the difficulties in dealing with the question is that most of the work on the aristocracy north of the Alps is based on these sources, which are not available for the *regnum Italiae*.

In the following pages, we will confine ourselves to the most obvious elements that characterise membership of the aristocracy and its various levels: the holding of offices identified by titles, mainly those of count, bishop, abbot or aulic office, for the upper segment; the status of vassal of the emperor for the minor or “intermediate” aristocracy. On the fringes of these two clearly identified groups, individual trajectories will enable us to examine the possibilities of joining one or other of these groups, or the aspirations to do so: an observation that takes into account the elite social practices specific to the aristocracy or to those who tried to approach it.

3. *Counts, bishops, and abbots: the immigrant aristocracy, its settlement and its resources*

Let's go back to two of the criteria for defining the aristocratic ideal type: wealth and position in an official hierarchy. In the years 820-840, the upper segment of the secular aristocracy of the kingdom of Italy was in a somewhat peculiar situation in these two respects, compared to the aristocracy north of the Alps, since the majority of office-holders were immigrants⁸. Some of them may have been descended from groups which had settled in Italy during the years of the conquest, but they are not those at the forefront, which is now occupied by others who arrived more recently, such as the Unrochid Alpchar, who was *baiulus* to the daughter of Pippin⁹. The installation of the Adalbertids in Tuscany (at first under the name of Boniface), and of the Supponids in the north of the kingdom, is probably no earlier than the 810s, linked to the beginning of

⁷ Goetz, *Nobilis*.

⁸ Hlawitschka, *Franken*; Bougard, *Laien*.

⁹ On Alpchar, *infra*, note 29.

Bernard's government, when Adalhard and Wala had the management of the kingdom in hand. The political ups and downs, the rhythm of Lothar's stays, and the appointments he made along the way are reflected in the glimpses one has of these men's careers. The Supponids were clearly well-served by their denunciation of Bernard's revolt¹⁰. On the other hand, it is conceivable that the Bavarian Boniface I of Tuscany was dismissed for having supported it, before Lothar put the family back in control of the region when arriving in Italy in the Autumn of 822, or possibly on the occasion of his trip to Rome for his imperial coronation at Easter 823¹¹; the Bavarian origin of the Empress Judith was probably not unrelated to this support¹². The arrival of Leo, mentioned for the first time as count and *missus* alongside Wala at Reggio in December 824¹³, may have coincided with Lothar's second journey in Italy, while that of Eberhard in Friuli does not seem to predate the end of the 820s, i.e. the resumption of control over the area after the deposition of the Marquis Baldericus in 828¹⁴, even though the terrain had been prepared by Alpchar, Eberhard's relative. While it is difficult to associate new appointments with Lothar's first return to Italy in the Autumn of 829 and the three stays that followed until 833, the exile of 834 has been made famous for the list provided in the *Life* of Louis the Pious of those who accompanied him to the peninsula¹⁵. This episode cost Boniface II of Tuscany his office, and he was forbidden to return to the kingdom after he had participated in the liberation of Judith at Tortona in 834¹⁶. It allowed, however, the promoting of Hagano as count of Lucca – Hagano is attested from 838 to 844. Finally, the arrival of Autramnus, placed in *Civitas Nova* (Modena)¹⁷, seems directly linked to the treaty of Verdun, just as we can see as a consequence of the peace of Verdun, the appointment of count Walpertus and bishop Billongus to Verona¹⁸, as well as the return to Lucca of Boniface II's son, Adalbert, followed a little less than a year later by the royal coronation of Louis II. The reign of Lothar was thus in a state of continuous flux, which was also fed by lesser-known figures, such as Birichus, who claimed to be a member of the *gens Alamannorum* "but" had recently taken up residence in the territory of Bergamo in March 829, or the two *de partibus Franciae* who witnessed a donation charter from Alpchar in 842¹⁹.

¹⁰ MGH, Astronomus, *Vita*, cap. 29, p. 382.

¹¹ Boniface I is last mentioned in Lucca in 813; count Hildiprandus (see below), appears in 822; in 823 Boniface II.

¹² Hammer, *Ducatus*, pp. 220-223.

¹³ Placiti I, n. 36 (ChLA², LXXXVIII, n. 32).

¹⁴ MGH, ARF, p. 174; MGH, Astronomus, *Vita*, cap. 42, p. 444; Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 146-147; Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 194-197.

¹⁵ MGH, Astronomus, *Vita*, cap. 56, pp. 512-515.

¹⁶ *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, p. 13, *ad annum* 834; MGH, Astronomus, *Vita*, cap. 52, p. 492.

¹⁷ Hlawitschka, *Franken*, p. 144, where the date of the document where it is first mentioned must be corrected, from 826 to 843: ChLA², XCII, n. 3.

¹⁸ Zettler, *Conti*, pp. 265-266.

¹⁹ Bergamo, n. 11 (ChLA², XCVIII, n. 6); ChLA², XCIV, n. 31; Castagnetti, *Società milanese*, p. 74.

Some of these men represent what could be called a lasting immigration, others were around for a limited time only, either as part of a more or less long-term mission, or because they could not imagine making a home in Italy. There were certainly people among them who had nothing to lose and who seized the adventure as an opportunity to improve their own lot; others for whom coming to Italy, whether freely chosen or imposed, could mean a loss in the long run compared to a more advantageous position north of the Alps. The social origins of the various parties varied. In the 820s, Eberhard of Friuli, son-in-law of Louis the Pious, was at the top of the pyramid, but the position of the Adalbertids and Supponids, who were beginning their ascent, was clearly inferior. The former, who were among the few Bavarians settled in Italy, certainly belonged to the Huosi group, with whom Lothar may also have established contacts during the few years he was in charge of Bavaria²⁰. But they were not its most prominent members. As for the Supponids, there is every reason to believe that they would have remained in the shadow without their passage to Italy. With the group of 834, the situation is different: this time it was the best of the Frankish nobility, starting with Matfrid and Lambert, *principes consules* of Lothar, who were swept away by the epidemic in 836 and 837²¹. But they may also have been those for whom Italy was only a temporary achievement. As for Autramnus, he seems to have been of more modest extraction.

If there is a common point beyond the diversity of individual cases, we can find it in the limited availability of land in the kingdom. In other words, this displaced aristocracy was for a long time more dependent than anywhere else on fiscal resources and, more broadly, on royal largesse, for its economic survival, which presupposed direct or indirect access to the sovereign. The criterion of the *Königsnähe* appears to be more central here than those of wealth or birth: without it, no lasting settlement in the kingdom was possible. Thus, the installation of the first Bosonid in Italy, in 826, was made possible by an exchange of manses and a *casa domnicata* detached for him from the fisc of Biella by Louis the Pious and Lothar with other manses that Boso owned near Nijmegen²². In 845, Count Hagano of Lucca, leaving his office (*olim comes*) to enable the return to power in Tuscany of the Adalbertids, received from the bishop the concession of the church of San Michele in Foro for five years, with this proviso that if, in the meantime, he obtained an additional *beneficium* from the *pars regia* to that which he already had, the contract would be cancelled. We can infer that Lothar had placed a minor figure in Boniface II's place, who then faded away at the end of this transition period. The fact that Hagano thought that he could continue to draw on public resources is less an indication that he was hoping for a reward for the service

²⁰ Stoffella, *Relazioni*.

²¹ MGH, Astronomus, *Vita*, cap. 56, pp. 512-515; MGH, AX, p. 9, *ad annum* 834.

²² MGH, DD LdF, n. 256 (ChLA², XCIII, n. 1); Bougard, *Boson*, p. 40.

he had rendered during ten years or so, but rather that he was returning to his original milieu, that of a second-rate aristocracy closer to the circle of the vassals than to that of the counts. The affair was supervised by the bishop of Reggio Sigifredus, one of the participants in the coronation of Louis II in Rome the previous year, the first witness to subscribe after Hagano: a sign of the importance attached to this agreement in high places and of the fact that the concession had the king's approval²³.

For those whose passage to Italy meant a new start after losing a strong personal position in Francia, as was the case for many of Lothar's companions in 834, who lost both their benefices and their own property²⁴, it was not possible to self-finance their settlement as count Boso had been able to do by means of an exchange. Lothar drew on the fiscal resources for his mother-in-law Ava, as we shall see. For others of his *miliciae coetus* who lacked subsidies in Italy, he had to "borrow" from Church property (*ecclaeiarum predia feneravimus*), as in the diocese of Reggio for the *ostiarus* Richard and in Valtellina for Matfrid of Orléans²⁵. Whether consensually or forced, these levies were not without protests and sometimes legal action²⁶. Obviously, it was not envisaged, because it was not possible, to make a zero-sum game by attributing to the new arrivals the estates and/or offices of those who had joined Louis the Pious: either because there was not enough to achieve a compensation pattern, or, more probably, because Italy remained a waiting position for many. Mobility, or the possibility of it, remained a basic feature, as expressed twenty years earlier by the sister of the bishop of Freising, Hitto, when making a pious donation for the salvation of her son Kernand's soul: since the latter *in Italia regione prolem habuit*, it was appropriate to insert a reserve clause in the event that his children returned to their homeland and asserted their legitimate rights to their father's allodial land²⁷.

A clearer example is perhaps that offered by Autramnus, already mentioned, in his early career. In 843, he brought his wife Adelburga a *curtis* of thirty manses, with ninety *mancipia*, near Vercelli. The marriage took place in the palace of Gondreville, about 600 km away – it is for that reason that a piece of parchment which had been obviously prepared by the chancery for a diploma rather than for a private charter was used to draw up the marital donation²⁸ –, where several representatives from Italy were then present, just after the treaty of Verdun, to which this union is probably directly linked. There is every reason to believe that the future count of Modena was one of the aristocrats who settled in the kingdom at that time, probably encouraged

²³ MDL, V/2, n. 628 (845 XII 2, Lucca); Castagnetti, *Vassalli*, pp. 235-236.

²⁴ Schäpers, *Lothar I.*, p. 300.

²⁵ MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II, n. 40. On Richard, see Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 363-365.

²⁶ MGH, Astronomus, *Vita*, cap. 55, p. 510; Schäpers, *Lothar I.*, p. 307. See also, in 833, the conflict concerning the monastery of San Pietro d'Asso, given by Lothar in benefice to the abbot of Sant'Antimo (Chiusi): Placiti I, n. 42 (ChLA², XC, n. 5).

²⁷ Freising I, n. 352, p. 301 (a. 815).

²⁸ ChLA², XCII, n. 3; *supra*, note 16.

by a donation from the sovereign, a donation of which Autramnus did not actually know the extent very well: a clause specifies that if the number of manses were greater than thirty, Adelburga could keep the whole; if it were less, this would be compensated for with a neighbouring *curtis*. Autramnus did not imagine, then, that he would have to exercise a count's functions in Emilia, far from Vercelli.

It could be deduced from the situations I have just described that this aristocracy transplanted to Italy was fundamentally fragile, in that it appeared to be completely dependent on the king's favour. In reality, things are more complicated, because this fragility was compensated for on other levels. At the time of Lothar, i.e. two or three generations after the conquest, there was no lack of individuals among the holders of honours in Italy who had had time to build up an autonomous patrimony beyond that of just fiscal lands, i.e. whose "properties" had either moved away from their original public nature or which had been obtained from resources other than the fisc.

This is the case of the previously-mentioned *baiulus* Alpchar²⁹. In 807, he had bought a large quantity of land in the territories of Seprio and Stazzona, at the price of eight pounds of *argento fabrito*³⁰ – which could mean cash, ingots or objects, and in any case precious metal. At a time of monetary shortage, one of the characteristics of this aristocracy was to have such metallic wealth at its disposal, which certainly facilitated its installation in a territory with which it was not familiar. But Alpchar had to leave the kingdom before 810 to accompany Adelaide to the court of Charlemagne, who rewarded him for his services with a county in Alemannia, and he was absent for several years. On his return (in 834, in connection with the exile of Lothar?), he found that some of his property had been appropriated and he had to take legal action to recover it³¹. Shortly afterwards, in 842, he ceded it to Saint Ambrose of Milan, who immediately gave it back to him in life usufruct – a legal transfer that was tantamount to an assurance that such misadventure would not happen again. With Alpchar, we have an example of enrichment linked to the exercise of a political career, with the strength linked to the availability of liquid assets and the weakness inherent in the vagaries of *palatina servicia*.

The cases of Alpchar and Autramnus show that, in the kingdom of Italy, the criterion of holding an office, with the economic advantages that this entailed, was more important than that of inherited wealth. This may be one of the elements that help us to understand the rapid expansion of the Supponids in geographically diverse areas in the years 820–840: the palace, Brescia, Spoleto, Parma and Piacenza. The choice made by Suppo I to support Louis the Pious rather than Bernard in 817 paid off for them, and was all the better

²⁹ *Supra*, notes 9, 18. Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 120–121; Borgolte, *Grafen*, pp. 46–48; Castagnetti, *Transalpini*, pp. 25–37; Castagnetti, *Società milanese*, pp. 65–77; Štih, *Raetian-Alamannic connections*.

³⁰ ChLA², XCIV, n. 5.

³¹ Placiti I, n. 45 (ChLA², XCIV, n. 29). Castagnetti, *Società milanese*, pp. 71–73.

exploited as the family was large and could put forward several candidates for different positions at the same time. The strength of their position can be gauged from the fact that, of the seven laymen present in Rome in 844 at the coronation of Louis II, whose names are known, no less than three are Supponids³².

Inheritance was, however, not absent. It is in fact from the reign of Lothar that the first examples of hereditary transmission of lands and/or offices within the immigrant aristocracy can be seen: a sign that “wealth” could not depend on royal favour alone for long. The continuity sometimes applies from the time of Charlemagne, as in Istria with the succession from Hunfrid I to Hunfrid II³³. In 828, the replacement of Baldericus by Eberhard may have been within the same group of Unrochids³⁴. It was especially the case in Tuscany with the passage from Boniface I to Boniface II in 822/823, then from Boniface II to Adalbert in 844/845. If the Adalbertids, as we have seen, had a chequered history, neither the replacement of Boniface I in Lucca by Hildiprandus nor that of Boniface II by Hagano ultimately called into question a succession mechanism considered natural, nor the qualification of their titles: Boniface I and Adalbert were dukes, and *illustrissimi*³⁵. It may be thought that Adalbert gained the upper hand not only because he had retained a position of expectation close to Italy thanks to the fact that he was in charge of the county of Arles during his father’s exile, but also because relatives had remained in the area, and the family’s power in the region had reached the point where it was able to negotiate with from a stronger position than could a freshly immigrated individual³⁶.

This family succession in peripheral regions may be seen as the beginning of dynastic assertions of the same kind as those observed in Spoleto in the following decades. However, they were not confined to the margins, since Pippin, the son of King Bernard, who had also sided with Judith in 834, was in turn prevented from returning, but it was in all probability his son Bernard who was count in Verona from 844³⁷.

If the supporters of Lothar who came with him to Italy in 834 did not have time to settle down because of the epidemic of 836-837 – which simplified the question of reinstallation for those who had lost not only their honours but also perhaps their own property in Francia – their children sometimes had a more lasting presence there. Thus, for the Widonids: Lambert of Nantes did not have the time, nor probably the desire, to occupy any other place than the one he occupied in the first circle, but his son Wido was put in charge of the

³² LP, vol. 2, p. 89 (MGH, Conc. III, n. 5, pp. 25-26).

³³ Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 206-208.

³⁴ Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, p. 192, note 407.

³⁵ Placiti I, n. 25 (a. 812): *Bonifatius dux*; n. 26 (ChLA², LXXIII, n. 50, a. 813): *B. illustrissimus comes*; n. 51 (ChLA², LXXIX, n. 21, a. 847): *Adalbertus illustrissimo dux*.

³⁶ Tomei, *Spazi*.

³⁷ Zettler, *Conti*, pp. 267-269.

duchy of Spoleto in 842, while Haimo, presumably another of his sons, *consiliarius* of Lothar in 837, gave birth to Lambert the Bald, Count of Camerino in the 870s³⁸. Perhaps we should also see a Widonid in the person of the gastald Leodoinus – one of the Leitnamen of the family – who received property from the bishop of Modena in 842, another (or the same?) in the homonymous count who presided over a court of justice in Milan as imperial *missus* in 844, and yet another in Count Milo, probably in charge of Teramo, active in the years 850-860³⁹.

The example of Lothar's parents-in-law, Hugh of Tours and his wife Ava, illustrates how much the investment of family groups in the kingdom of Italy was capable of expanding beyond the individual adventure, unlike what it might have been in the early days of Frankish rule. By giving Ava the *curtis* of Locate in 836, Lothar was not only showing deference to his mother-in-law, he was providing her with an income comparable to a dower in a country where Hugh of Tours did not have the economic basis to provide this guarantee. At the same time, he made Ava's loyalty to him, and the reward it implied, an example for others to follow. But Locate was immediately put at the service of the couple's memorial construction, since it was donated to Saint John of Monza, as if to give economic support to their choice of burial place. This created a lasting link between the collegiate church and the interests of the Etichonids in Italy, a kingdom in which they enjoyed a prominent position without having to be in charge of a particular area: the Etichonid horizon was that of *Francia Media*, starting with that of Hugh and Ava's son, Liutfrid (I), who held ducal rank under Lothar and Louis II, took part in the military expedition of 847-848 to southern Italy, but continued his career north of the Alps. As for his namesake son Liutfrid (II), he held the *curtis* of Monza, while cultivating his interests in the region of origin of the Etichonids, in Alsace⁴⁰.

High as it is, Ava's position is not exceptional. There is no lack of examples of the importance of the female element in the settlement of the aristocracy from north of the Alps. The pious donations made by widows sometimes sound like the final step, lived in a certain isolation, sometimes accentuated by the political failure of the deceased husband: thus, the will of Queen Cunegunda, in 835, by which she relinquished all her possessions in the territories of Parma, Reggio and Modena to her foundation of Saint Alexander of Parma for the salvation of the soul of her *senior*, King Bernard⁴¹. They nevertheless bear witness to the fact that immigration deals with couples, families and, more broadly, groups. For couples, the emblematic document is perhaps the

³⁸ Hlawitschka, *Widonen*.

³⁹ ChLA², LXXXVIII, n. 11; Placiti I, n. 48; Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 220-221; Santos Salazar, *Una terra contesa*, p. 193; Feller, *Abruzzes*, pp. 565-566, 655.

⁴⁰ MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II, n. 29; Veronese, *Un franco*; Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 221-226.

⁴¹ ChLA², XCIII, n. 2; Provero, *Chiese*, p. 46. See also, in 816, the donation to Saint Alexander of Bergamo by Audelinda, widow of the Count of Bergamo Auteranus (ChLA², XCVIII, n. 4); the couple does not seem to have had any descendants.

already mentioned concession for five years of the church of San Michele in Foro in Lucca to the former Count Hagano and his wife Teubergha. Having left office in 845 to make way for Adalbert, Hagano had no intention of leaving the *regnum*⁴². For the families, no less emblematic is the act by which, in 823, in Lucca, Richilda, sister of Boniface II, had already taken over the monastery dedicated to Benedict and Scholastica: after the parenthesis of Count Hildiprandus, the Bavarians' takeover of Lucca was a long-term one⁴³. As for the groups, we will come back to this, the recurrence of the same names among the holders of civil and ecclesiastical offices or in their entourage often suggests a family relationship, even if it is rarely possible to specify the details.

All the names mentioned so far, with the exception of Hildiprandus, who was removed at the time of Lothar's arrival in Italy, are those of Frankish, Alamannic or Bavarian individuals. This is where the criterion of birth can come into play, provided that it is not taken as a reference to prestigious ancestors, which they do not all have, but as an indication of belonging to a dominant ethnic group. If the substitution of secular office-holders of Lombard origin was progressive after the conquest of 774, the government of Lothar probably contributed to accelerating and completing the movement. If it was possible at the time of Pippin to consider the *comites Francisci* and the *Langubardisci comites* as equal⁴⁴, this was no longer the case in the second quarter of the ninth century. The phenomenon was amplified by the presence of transalpine elements in the wake of these leading figures – the examples of Lucca and Bergamo show that there is a close link between the installation of transalpine bishops or counts and the appearance or increase in documentary mentions of Frankish or Alamannic individuals⁴⁵ –, and it was accompanied by the taking into account of legal differences. It is no coincidence that the first individual professions of law, which gradually replaced ethnic mentions indicative of provenance (such and such, *Francus*, *Franciscus*, *Alamannus*, *teotiscus homo*, *de partibus Francorum* etc.) or membership of a people, date from the 820s⁴⁶.

There are exceptions to this general trend, which make it possible to affirm that it is not led by a desire to systematically eradicate all those who may have had some link with the aristocracy of the previous regime. It seems to be more of a “natural” evolution, dictated by the limited number of places to be filled at a given time, in the face of the dual pressure of the passage of generations, which contributes to the rooting of families that were once new to the country, and the arrival of new contingents. There are two or three known exceptions. The first is that of Count Hildiprandus in Lucca, whose name be-

⁴² *Supra*, note 23.

⁴³ ChLA², LXXV, n. 20.

⁴⁴ MGH, Capit. I, n. 91, cap. 7 (a. 782); Bougard, *De Charlemagne à Pépin*, pp. 36-38.

⁴⁵ Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, pp. 175-177; Predatsch, *Migration*, pp. 222-225; Jarnut, *Bergamo*, p. 161.

⁴⁶ ChLA², XCVII, n. 1.

trays his Lombard origin, and whose position may have benefited from a period of disgrace of the first Adalbertids. The second is that of Alboinus, son of the Lombard Friulian Count Aio, whose flight to the Avars after Hrodgaud's rebellion in 776 was sanctioned by the confiscation of his property, before he was reinstated by Charlemagne and his possessions confirmed, first by Charlemagne and then by Louis the Pious⁴⁷. Alboinus in turn became a count and was guilty of *offensio* against Lothar during one or the other of the conflicts that marked his reign, for which he lost his office and was probably killed. In 843, the Church of Aquileia then took care to confirm the property that Alboinus had given it in his will and that Lothar would have been entitled to confiscate⁴⁸. While Alboinus is the last witness of the old world of Lombard officials who, after a period of opposition, managed to maintain their positions by demonstrating their loyalty to Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, Hildiprandus is in all likelihood a representative of a local elite whose services were called upon at a time of political transition. As for the third case, that of *Leo qui tum apud (Hlotharium) magni loci habebatur*, he belongs to the milieu of the vassals, with which we shall deal later.

Before moving further into the world of the vassals, a word on the Church aristocracy, traditionally neglected in studies on the elites for lack of detailed information, is needed. The identity of bishops and abbots is less well-known than that of the counts. There is, however, a consensus that the government of Lothar was characterised by a total control of these offices by transalpine men, over whom the control of elections/appointments was strengthened, as witnessed by the mentions of *vocatus episcopus*, which are a novelty in Italy. Such are that of the Alaman Notingus in Verona, and of the Frankish Amalricus in Como⁴⁹. If, therefore, the ecclesiastical career had been able to serve for some time as a refuge for an aristocracy deprived of political power on the secular side, that time was now over.

As is often the case, these assertions must be weighed up against the fact that Tuscany and the duchy of Spoleto were not included in the field of investigation, but it must also be acknowledged that the data we have is small⁵⁰. However, we find a choice illustration in Berengar in Lucca, who took office between 834 and 837, whose name evokes the Unrochids, and who breaks the line of a continuous series of prelates from the ranks of the local clergy⁵¹. This confirms what has just been said about the lay aristocracy: more than their local roots, which could have ensured, for example, the classical transmission routes from uncle to nephew, what really mattered was royal favour. In this

⁴⁷ Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 113-114; MGH, DD Karol. I, n. 209 (a. 809, first mention of Aio as count); MGH, DD LdF, n. 101.

⁴⁸ Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 116-117; MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II, n. 76.

⁴⁹ Fischer, *Königtum*, pp. 63-68.

⁵⁰ Of the twenty or so bishops present in Rome in 844 for the coronation of Louis II (*supra*, note 32), onomastics tend to consider Gausprandus of Pistoia and Sisimundus of Teramo as Lombards.

⁵¹ Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, pp. 92-94; Predatsch, *Migration*, pp. 222-225; Tomei, *Writing*.

case, it is as if Boniface's removal had resulted in the scales being tipped, with the promotion of an inferior figure, Hagano, to the count's office and the substitution of a representative of the imperial aristocracy as head of the Church of Lucca. Berengar's successor, Ambrose (843-852), was also chosen from among the Frankish aristocracy.

The episcopal offices were thus not immune from political upheavals, as the substitution of Notingus for Ratoldus in Verona in 834 shows even more clearly; like Boniface, Ratoldus could not return to Italy⁵². Everywhere where there is a known succession of bishops who can be presumed, though not always certain, to have been of Lombard origin, Franks or Alamanni were put in place: another Hagano in Bergamo (840-863) after Tachimpaldus and Grasmondus⁵³, Amalricus in Como (844-860) after Perideus, Seufredus in Piacenza (837-869/870) after Podo.

The need to give places to the most eminent members of the chapel or the royal chancery contributed to this movement. The archchancellor Witgarius replaced Claudius in Turin after 827 and his successor Hermenfridus was probably the same person as the bishop (of Tortona?) attested in 842⁵⁴. So did the fact of entrusting different bishoprics to the same person, as we see with Notingus (Verona, then Brescia), even though this was not a case of accumulation⁵⁵. The attribution of abbeys controlled by the king to bishops or personnel from Francia or Alemannia posed the same problem on the monastic side. The most famous case is – albeit with some uncertainty as to the chronology – that of Bobbio, entrusted to Wala and then to Hilduin, the future archbishop of Cologne, to Amalricus of Como and to Ebbo of Rheims (815-845, died 851 abbot of Hildesheim)⁵⁶, but we could mention Novalesa (Joseph of Ivrea) and Farfa (where Bishop Peter of Spoleto replaced Sicardus), while at San Salvatore of Tolla officiated a bishop named Elmericus (826)⁵⁷. San Salvatore in Monte Amiata had a lay abbot in the person of the Widonid Haimo⁵⁸. Only Nonantola may have kept Lombard abbots, judging by the names Ansfridus (825-837), Ratpertus (838-839) and Rotechildus (839-845).

This separate presentation of the civil and ecclesiastical aristocracy, for the convenience of my argument, should not obscure the fact that they are often one and the same from the family point of view. There is a good chance that the bishop of Novara Adalgisus (830-848) was a Supponid. Bishop Ramp-

⁵² MGH, *Astronomus, Vita*, c. 52, p. 492; Hlawitschka, *Ratold*, pp. 24-26.

⁵³ De Angelis, *Aganone*.

⁵⁴ MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II, pp. 15-16; CDL, n. 148.

⁵⁵ Contrary to what is still asserted in the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (t. 78, pp. 778-781), Notingus was not also bishop of Vercelli, they are two homonyms: Schmid, *Sankt Aurelius in Hirsau*, pp. 13-14; Ludwig, *Transalpine Beziehungen*, p. 86. Similarly, Notingus was not abbot of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro in Pavia: Kottje, review of Schmid, *Hirsau*, p. 179.

⁵⁶ Fischer, *Königtum*, p. 144.

⁵⁷ Tiraboschi, *Nonantola*, n. 27.

⁵⁸ MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II, n. 33; Fischer, *Königtum*, p. 33; Keller, *Struktur*, pp. 140-141, 213.

ertus of Brescia (824/825-844), whose brother was named Cunipertus, and Count Walfred of Verona (840), son of Cunipertus of *Sancto Iusto*, are likely to be related and are allied to the group of “founders of Hirsau”, from which the Notingus came; a namesake of Rampertus was a count at Piacenza⁵⁹. Both Notingus have links with the Unrochids, as does perhaps Berengar of Lucca⁶⁰. The recurrence of the name Hagano in the years 820-830 in Bergamo, Lucca and Arezzo, here for a bishop, there for counts, while the name disappears afterwards, may be suggestive of a relationship, as does the presence of a bishop Berengar in Lucca, another who was duke of Spoleto (836-841) and a third – unless he is to be identified with the previous one – who was a count in Camerino at the end of the 840s. It is not impossible, moreover, that Bishop Lambert of Parma (827-835), who subscribed Queen Cunegunda’s will⁶¹, was a Widonid, which would indicate that the Widonid presence in Italy was slightly earlier than the arrival of Lambert of Nantes, while remaining linked to the government of Lothar. In other words, the newcomers of 834 were not all that new and had relatives who already held interests in Italy, such as Count Boso, the uncle by marriage of the *ostiaris* Richard. To return to the Widonids, it was again to one of them, the *consiliarius* Haimo, that San Salvatore at Monte Amiata was entrusted⁶².

These aristocrats naturally formed alliances. The marriage of Adalbert I of Tuscany with the Widonid Rotilda is perhaps the most famous, while other names suggest relationships whose details are not known: in Abruzzo, could Count Milo, probably a Widonid, son of Eberhard, not have some connection with the Unrochids?⁶³ However, they did not cultivate an exclusive ethnic milieu: one of the reasons for the success of the Supponids was perhaps their alliance with the family of the last king of the Lombards, Desiderius, which is echoed in the marriage of Wido I of Spoleto with Ita, the daughter of the prince of Benevento Sico⁶⁴.

Before we move to the vassals, let us summarise. To be an aristocrat at the time of Lothar was first and foremost to be part of a long-standing or, more often, recent immigrant elite. For some, this went hand in hand with high birth, as evidenced by the fact that members of the greatest families such as the Pippinids, Unrochids, Etichonids, Widonids and Hunfridingi were present in the kingdom. But this criterion of “ancestry” was not the main one. Others, perhaps from less prestigious groups, very early on made Italy the main field of their social success, such as the Adalbertids and the Supponids. To this half-dozen families belonging to the “*Reichsaristokratie*” (i.e. 15% of what had been recognised by Gerd Tellenbach) can be attached between a

⁵⁹ Zettler, *Conti*, pp. 265-266; Bougard, *Gandolfingi*, p. 16.

⁶⁰ *Supra*, note 51.

⁶¹ ChLA², XCIII, n. 2.

⁶² *Supra*, note 58.

⁶³ *Supra*, note 39; Casauria, II, n. 1183, p. 1891.

⁶⁴ Bougard, *Supponides*.

third and a half of those holding office that are known to us⁶⁵. The connections within the two hierarchies, secular and ecclesiastical, are becoming increasingly dense: in the absence of a “dynasty”, for which the bases are perhaps lacking, and which is in any case not possible to assess at the scale of a single reign, the group draws its strength from these links. A close examination of the origins of the various groups also reveals, more often than one might think, long-standing interests in the kingdom. The extent of dependence on royal favour depends on the gradual affirmation of this base. Essential at the beginning of the reign of Lothar and at critical moments, it is certainly less so at its end – or at any rate more often the object of negotiation. As to the wealth criterion, it does not pose a problem: even if based on a revocable *beneficium*, it can quickly be complemented by the acquisition of one’s own properties, as shown by Autramnus’ numerous land acquisitions after 843⁶⁶.

4. *The second circle: vassals, gastalds, and others*

If the counts, bishops and abbots belong to relatively homogeneous groups, in spite of a fairly obvious stratification, the same cannot be said of the imperial vassals, for whom the reign of Lothar provides a fairly good harvest of information. The fact that they were part of the aristocracy is not in doubt: on the one hand, their title expresses this proximity to the sovereign, which is essential in the definition, and on the other hand, they are placed on the same level as counts, bishops and abbots in the capitularies, at least in terms of participation in the exercise of the royal *ministerium*. They also shared with them the exercise of war. However, vassalage cannot be considered an office. The same capitularies clearly imply that vassals were in a slightly inferior position, which is confirmed by the narrative sources – no vassal is mentioned by name among the *optimates* who attended the coronation of Louis II in Rome in 844 – even though they were primarily subject to the *Königsnähe*. This could be very theoretical and did not of course imply that they knew the emperor personally or had ever seen him, but the important thing was that it was expressed in a title that distinguished those who bore it from the others.

Unlike the office holders, the vassals cannot be considered as members of an elite that was substituted for another after the Carolingian conquest, with a partial change of name. The Lombard *gasindi* can only be remotely compared with the Carolingian vassals, with whom they share only the link of clientele with the king. They were much wealthier, probably fewer in number, and in particular they did not play the special role in the structure of govern-

⁶⁵ Tellenbach, *Königtum*, pp. 41-69; Tellenbach, *Grossfränkische Adel*. It should be remembered that many are unknown: of the fifteen individuals who *in Italia beneficia habent* have been mobilised for the campaign in southern Italy of 847-848 (MGH, Capit. II, n. 203, pp. 67-68; MGH, Conc. III, n. 12, p. 138), no less than eight or nine have left no further trace.

⁶⁶ Bonacini, *Terre d'Emilia*, pp. 101-103; Santos Salazar, *Una terra contesa*, pp. 166-169.

ment that the Frankish military requirements implied. Those who survived the change of regime were able to retain their title, but without the importance of the role. Although the Frankish vassalic relationship and the group of vassals progressively absorbed what remained of the *gasindi*, the vassals of the ninth century can nonetheless be considered as new⁶⁷. Being part of it could offer the opportunity to distinguish oneself, and/or to progress in a society where the highest positions were taken over by an exogenous elite.

Not all imperial vassals were Frankish or Alamanni⁶⁸. Two ways to access the group can be distinguished. The first is of the same order as that of the counts, and is based on proximity to power, whether that of the sovereign or his immediate delegates, and goes hand in hand with the same form of granting benefices, but also of precariousness, at least initially. Some were members of the comital/episcopal families living in the orbit of their elders who held the posts: thus – but at the chronological limit of our study – in all probability Seufredus in Piacenza (855-898), who not only was a namesake of the contemporary bishop (837-870), but whose direct relatives bore noble names: his father Guarinus, his wife Berta, his son Matfredus⁶⁹. Others, visibly more numerous, do not seem to come from the ranks of an elite that could be considered aristocratic from the outset. For example, the Frankish vassal Ernst, active in the years 810-820 in the immediate vicinity of Milan, was soon at the head of a large landed estate, but was unable to pass it on to the next generation because he had no children with his wife Weltruta. His rank is evident not only from his wealth and his many local connections, but also from the fact that a royal *missus* was present at the mutual donation made with his wife in 823: this is certainly a question of complying with a provision present in the Marculf formulary, but the identity of the *missus*, who, it has been suggested may have been the bishop of Verona Ratoldus, says a great deal about the stature of Ernst⁷⁰.

On the other hand, the criterion for the recruitment of vassals of Lombard origin seems to be based on the strong local position of said individuals: regardless of whose follower he became, a Lombard did not become a vassal without being able to demonstrate a certain pedigree, as required by the Mantuan capitulary of 781, explicitly introducing a criterion of birth (*quomodo natus est*) and fame⁷¹. This is precisely the case of Eriprandus in Lucca, attested from 840 onwards, whose father, Hildebrandus, had gained a strong position⁷². At a slightly lower level and a few years later, the family of the “sons

⁶⁷ Delogu, *Regno longobardo*, pp. 129-130; Gasparri, *Relations de fidélité*, p. 151. The *gasindi* cannot be reduced to «the Lombard version of Frankish *vassi*» (Cammarosano, *Nobili*, p. 161).

⁶⁸ Gasparri, *Relations de fidélité*, pp. 152-153.

⁶⁹ Bougard, *Gandolfingi*, pp. 40-41; completed by Castagnetti, *Aristocrazie*, p. 601-602 and Mancassola, *Uomini senza storia*, pp. 109-110.

⁷⁰ ChLA², XCVII, n. 1; Castagnetti, *Società milanese*, p. 45.

⁷¹ MGH, Capit. I, n. 90, cap. 11: «Ut nullus quilibet hominem Langobardiscum in vassatico vel in casa sua recipiat, antequam sciat unde sit vel quomodo natus est».

⁷² Collavini, *Aldobrandeschi*, pp. 38-50.

of Huscit” is comparable; it acted in the shadow of the future Aldobrandeschi and in turn had two imperial vassals in the years 850-860⁷³. During the reign of Lothar, there would then have been a kind of reverse movement to that of the counts in the recruitment of vassals. The comital group, as we have seen, closed itself off to the Lombard elites, whereas the existence of *Langubardisci comites* was a matter of course at the time of Pippin⁷⁴. Conversely the vassalic group, which was initially very selective at the time of Pippin, was later opened up to the point of considering, for example, the presence of *vassi dominici tam Teutisci quam et Langobardi* in a judicial college convened in Trento in 845 as normal⁷⁵.

In addition to belonging to the sphere of the leading notables that they were able to demonstrate, these vassals from the Lombard elite, whose membership of the group meant that they had to travel at least regionally to accompany the judicial movements of the sovereign’s *missi*, were able to write, or at the very least to subscribe: in Lucca, in addition to Eriprandus, this was the case of Cunipertus (840-851) and Ansprandus (833-840)⁷⁶. The vassals from the duchy of Spoleto who were present at the courts held by imperial *missi* in Norcia in 821 and in Rome in 829, also subscribed with their own hand⁷⁷. The comparison with what can be observed in the northern regions tends to show a cultural difference which perhaps goes hand in hand with a social and/or ethnic difference. Only two of the fourteen vassals present at the *placitum* in Trento in 845 could write and almost all of them, except one from Milan, lived in rural areas. In all likelihood, too, the number of Frankish or Alamanni vassals was proportionately greater in the Po Valley than in central Italy.

The presence of one or more vassals in a family could enable it to rise to a higher rank. For those of Lombard birth, vassalage was thus an opportunity to reach a position that they would probably have reached in a “natural” way if it had not been necessary to make room for the newcomers. If the “sons of Huscit” did not go further, while establishing themselves as the leading notables in the Lucchese area of the Sei Miglia, Eriprandus got the Aldobrandeschi off the ground by placing one son Hildebrandus as count, and the other son Jeremiah as bishop. Similarly Gottefridus may have been the father of bishop

⁷³ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, pp. 225-232.

⁷⁴ *Supra*, note 44.

⁷⁵ Placiti I, n. 49 (ChLA², LIX, n. 17).

⁷⁶ Castagnetti, *Vassalli*. Castagnetti, *Inquisitio*, pp. 180-183, questions the hypothesis that Eriprandus was trained at court, which would explain his mastery of caroline writing (Collavini, *Aristocrazia*, p. 34); rather, it is more likely that he was trained locally in the episcopal church. Cunipertus: Castagnetti, *Inquisitio*, pp. 244-245, who corrects Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, p. 179, on his filiation. Ansprandus was a member of the judicial college of a court of *missi* in 833 (Placiti I, n. 42; ChLA², XC, n. 5), of another in Lucca in 840 (Placiti I, n. 44; ChLA², LXXVII, n. 35); from the fact that another vassal is said in 833 to be from *Sena*, we deduce that he himself is not and is therefore rather from Lucca.

⁷⁷ Placiti I, nn. 32, 38. In Falagrine (Rieti), in 845, the vassal Helperinus and his brother Hildeprandus also subscribed with their own hand (Placiti I, n. 50).

Gerard (869/870-895), who succeeded Jeremiah⁷⁸. It is also likely that Farulfus, who was mobilised with Eriprandus in the military expedition to southern Italy and who, I imagine, had vassalic status like Eriprandus, had a role in the rise of the future Farolfingi⁷⁹. Should we see in him this Farulfus “of the county of Siena”, who died in 864, brother of a bishop named Peter who also died and whose sons, among whom was an imperial chaplain, gave Louis II the *curtis of Palme*, near Florence⁸⁰? For the transalpine migrants active in the north of the kingdom, few have broken through, but at least two cases are equally representative of the ascension between one generation and another, induced by the vassalic quality acquired before or during the reign of Lothar: those of Leo and Erembertus, whose sons were counts.

However, we should not imagine rigorously linear trajectories, as if the entry into vassalage to the sovereign was the first step in an upward trajectory. On the one hand, this trajectory only concerns a small number of individuals: most of them do not seem to have gone beyond this stage. On the other hand, vassalic qualification does not always mean progress. The case of Leo, whose ethnic origin was debated for a long time until Andrea Castagnetti and Antonio Ciaralli proposed, with convincing arguments, to see him as a Lombard, seems to illustrate this well⁸¹. Documented for almost the entire first half of the ninth century, from 801 to 847, probably related to the Totonids of Campione, Leo was first of all a «vassal and judge» (801, 812-814), «vassal and *missus*» (821), and president of the judicial court (823), active both in the Po Valley and in the duchy of Spoleto. In 824, he became a count, alongside Wala, a promotion obviously linked to the takeover of Italy by Lothar and his team, and which he probably owed entirely to his legal expertise. Perhaps it was at the same time that he allied himself with the Franks by marrying the sister of the bishop of Como Amalricus. He remained a count throughout the reign of Lothar in Italy, and also gave his son John the title of count – of Seprio, and that only temporarily⁸². John, who attended the coronation of Louis II in 844, was even briefly count of the Palace. But the last attestation of Leo, in 847, shows him as a «judge and vassal» again, commissioned to resolve a court case⁸³. Perhaps his comital status, directly linked to his proximity to Lothar, without any link to a county, was no longer relevant once the emperor had left for the north of the Alps.

Leo's place in the aristocracy seems to me comparable to that of Hagano of Lucca. Hagano in charge of a district, Leo with an aulic title without territorial reference, as the *ostiaris* Richard had, who became a count during the Ital-

⁷⁸ Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, p. 98.

⁷⁹ MGH, Capit. II, n. 202, p. 68 (MGH, Conc. III, n. 12, p. 139).

⁸⁰ Casauria, III, n. 1191, pp. 1909-1911; Böhmer-Zielinski, n. 214, p. 90; Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, pp. 194 and 202, identifies in the bishop Peter that of Arezzo (Peter I), but several others are possible: in Volterra, Genoa, Spoleto.

⁸¹ Castagnetti, *Il conte Leone*; Ciaralli, *Osservazioni*.

⁸² Castagnetti, *Società milanese*, p. 153.

⁸³ Volpini, *Placiti*, n. 3.

ian years of Lothar⁸⁴, illustrate the same mobility within the milieu of imperial vassals. However, whether it was based on local influence, cultural expertise, close service of the prince or matrimonial alliance, this mobility could be challenged. Hagano, discharged from his count's office in 845, hoped to continue to receive fiscal resources through a benefice, which placed him among the ranks of vassals. Leo's children, John and Sigeradus, remained or reverted to vassals in their turn, without breaking through further. Since ethnic differences are not responsible for the glass ceiling that separates these men from the representatives of the so-called *Reichsadel*, it must be assumed that the difference is due to their social level rather than to their ethnic identity.

In other cases, one cannot help but think of a real downgrading, as in the case of Winigis, the namesake son of the Frankish duke of Spoleto who died in 822, who did not go beyond the vassalic rank⁸⁵. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the family may have returned to prominence a generation later, if we assume a link with these Winigis of Spoleto and the homonymous count of Siena (865-881). As regards the progression of the Aldobrandeschi, in whom we see the very example of the boost given by vassalage to the promotion of a diocesan elite, is it really so clear? If research on the family has not made it possible to place the count of Lucca Hildiprandus, attested in 822, on a genealogical chart, which has led to the rejection, *e silentio*, of his belonging to the Aldobrandeschi, the onomastics nevertheless strongly suggest a kinship – at least the hypothesis cannot be excluded, since it is based on the same reasoning as all those usually formulated for the transalpine names. The group's beginnings in the aristocracy would in this case be less representative of a breakthrough than of a resilience in the face of political hazards, based on the solidity of the local establishment.

However, more than these nuances or uncertainties, what characterises the vassalage link under the government of Lothar is the use to which it was put to distinguish among the elites competences, other than military or fiscal management. In this, Lothar did not innovate, but made perhaps more systematic use of this instrument than in the past, as far as can be judged from the sparse documentation. Vassalage mainly concerned those who were mobilised for judicial functions: the career of Leo, «vassal and judge» from 801 onwards, offers the best known example. But we can also cite Poto, who subscribed a *notitia as causindo regi* in Pistoia in 812 while being presented as a *iudex* by the notary of Pavia who wrote the notice; and the Milanese Autpertus, who sat as an imperial judge towards the end of the 830s but signed as a vassal⁸⁶. The

⁸⁴ Richard died before mid-August 839, when Lothar returned to the Church of Reggio what had been taken from his estate to constitute a benefice for him (MGH, DD Lo I / DD Lo II, n. 40); he is said *quondam comes illuster* in 843 (MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II, n. 68); Depreux, *Prosopographie*, p. 364.

⁸⁵ Placiti I, n. 35 (a. 823).

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, n. 25 e n. 45 (ChLA², XCIV, n. 29); Bougard, *Justice*, p. 192; Castagnetti, *Note*, pp. 24-25.

fact that Poto claims a Lombard title (*gasindius*) suggests that a representative of the elite of the previous political regime was included in the judicial college. And since, like Autpertus, he prefers to refer to his connection with the king rather than to his role as a judge, it must be assumed that individuals with a certain culture were selected from the group of vassals to form a pool for the establishment of a specialised judicial staff.

The vassal Rothari of Vigolzone (prov. Piacenza), attested from 847 onwards, who had the title of judge and fulfilled important functions as *advocatus* of the fisc and president of several courts for about ten years in the county of Piacenza, fits the same profile⁸⁷. On the other hand, the case of Aipo, who sat in Siena in 833 as *scabinus* of the city but subscribed *scavino et vasso domni imperatoris*, is the opposite: it was his legal expertise that enabled him to rise above the group of other *scabini* and join that of the vassals⁸⁸. In another sector of activity, in Lucca, we have the physician Auripertus, active in the years 830-840, who took part in a court session as an imperial vassal in 853 and subscribed a donation as an imperial judge the following year⁸⁹. The vassalic qualification thus functioned as a melting pot, bringing together personalities from different backgrounds, which also gave these Lombard vassals a more varied social colouring than that of the transalpine ones.

Being a minor aristocracy placed under the banner of a diversity that is not only ethnic, the world of imperial vassals brings together the following categories. They include the younger sons of the aristocracy already in place; individuals who were vectors of the upward mobility of their group, some for whom being a vassal was an unsurpassable summit, others at the end of their career; people with no particular base but distinguished for their expertise, some active at the level of the kingdom (Leo), others whose horizon did not extend beyond the county (Rothari).

It should not be forgotten that these lay vassals had their ecclesiastical counterpart in the subordinate staff of the chapel or the royal chancery, for whom the information, even though it is not very rich and hardly illustrates anything other than their ascent or their social reproduction, follows similar lines. The notary Liuthadus, active between 825 and 833, perhaps became bishop of Pavia (841-864). Another notary, Macedo, the man in charge of the “*recognitio*” of three diplomas of Louis the Pious in 820 and another two of

⁸⁷ Castagnetti, *Sepulture*, pp. 95-106; correct Bougard, *Justice*, p. 193 note 222, who wrongly identifies him with the homonymous *vassus et ministerialis* who received from Louis II a *curtis* in the county of Bergamo in 858.

⁸⁸ Placiti I, n. 42 (ChLA², XC, n. 5).

⁸⁹ Castagnetti, *Medici*, pp. 28-30. The relations of another Luchese *medicus*, the cleric Bonifridus (831-843), put him in direct contact with the aristocracy: he held property of the Church of Lucca in benefice and *livellum*, and acquired other property from an imperial vassal (*ibidem*, p. 28). The practice of medicine was not only qualified in Lucca: the vassal Alboinus, a member of the college of courts held by *missi* in 821 in Norcia and in 829 in Rome (Placiti I, nn. 32, 38), could be related to a *medicus* of Rieti of the same name questioned as a witness in 829. The name Alboinus is extremely rare in Farfa's sources.

Lothar in 823-824, was part of the judicial college of the *placitum* held in Lucca by the emperor's *missi* in 840 as abbot of an unidentified monastery⁹⁰. The *palatinus presbyter* Sichardus, present at the Council of Mantua in 827, was perhaps the future abbot of Farfa (830-842)⁹¹. As for the bishop of Cremona, Panchoardus, he placed his nephew Benedict, a deacon, in the chapel of the young king Louis II, where he is mentioned in 841, which was a way of preparing for the transmission of the episcopal chair within the family some ten years later⁹². Only one Lombard is known within this clergy linked to the palace: Teudilascius, deacon, *vicedominus*, archdeacon of the Church of Lucca between 837 and 852, continued his career as chaplain to Louis II before becoming bishop of Luni⁹³. For his family group, the Cunimundinghi, the itinerary is comparable to that of the Aldobrandeschi: in both cases, it is the passage through the court that allows a qualitative leap and the entry into the aristocracy. For the ecclesiastics as well as for the laymen of Lombard circles, it is once again the criterion of the *Königsnähe* that imposes itself, against the background of an already well-established set of local notables.

The group of imperial vassals and lower-ranking palace ecclesiastics forms the second circle of the aristocracy. To them can be added that of the gastalds, or at least a part of them. Among the lower officers, those who were both in charge of the administration of public resources, and therefore responsible for the imperial fisc, and direct collaborators of the counts, were the only ones whose scope of action went beyond the local horizon. There are numerous testimonies of their proximity to the aristocracy. Some of them are inherent to the function or derive from it: their activity in judicial terms leads them regularly to frequent leading figures and they themselves sometimes preside over courts⁹⁴. They sometimes take the lead in communities, such as the gastald Ursus, the head of a group of 174 persons recorded on the last leaf of the manuscript IV/1 of Sankt Paul in Kärnten – the same one, perhaps, was the *fidejussor* of the count of Cittanova (Modena) in 851. The list was probably drawn up in connection with the organisation of the military campaign of 848⁹⁵. Their possessions, when they can be located, are close to those of the fisc. they may have had their own vassals⁹⁶. Finally, the equivalence established in the 850s between the office of gastald of the city and that of viscount, as can be seen in Milan with Waldericus, brings the holder closer to the

⁹⁰ MGH, DD Lo I / DD Lo II, p. 15; Depreux, *Prosopographie*, p. 324.

⁹¹ MGH, Conc. II, p. 587.

⁹² Placiti I, *Inquisitiones*, n. VII; Fleckenstein, *Hofkapelle*, p. 227.

⁹³ Tomei, *Milites elegantes*, pp. 135-136.

⁹⁴ Placiti I, n. 34 (ChLA², XCIV, n. 11b [822, Lucca]); *ibidem*, n. 39 (a. 829, Camerino); *ibidem*, n. 50 (a. 845, Falagrine).

⁹⁵ Bassetti, *Codice*; Esders – Bassetti – Haubrichs, *Treue*; ChLA², XCII, n. 7.

⁹⁶ As Waldericus of Milan in 855 (ChLA², XCV, n. 8). On him Hlawitschka, *Franken*, p. 278; Castagnetti, *Lociservatores*, pp. 69-72; Castagnetti, *La società milanese*, pp. 183-189; Santos Salazar, *Governare*, pp. 198-200. Waldericus witnesses the donation of Alpchar in 842 (ChLA², XCIV, n. 31; see *supra*, note 19).

count's milieu⁹⁷. It is true that the equivalence between gastald and viscount is not verified everywhere: in Lucca, the *gastaldius civitatis* Peter (835-847) gradually replaces his title with that of *scabinus* in the 840s⁹⁸. Nevertheless, as for the links with the Church aristocracy in Lucca, the Frankish gastald Baldericus exchanged possessions with the bishop and subscribed to *livelli* granted by him to other Franks⁹⁹.

As with the vassals, the office of gastald may have been marked by a certain porosity with regard to other functions related to the exercise of justice: thus, in Lucca, for example, Peter was active as gastald in the 830s, then as *gastaldus et iudex* in 840 (where he supervised a group of *missi* representing Eriprandus in an exchange with the episcopal Church), and then as *gastaldus et schabinus* in 842¹⁰⁰. If the phenomenon is of the same order as that which led to vassals also being imperial judges, these mentions also place gastalds at a lower level than the vassals – which would tend to be confirmed by the fact that the previously mentioned gastald of Lucca Peter cannot write. However, there is no shortage of examples indicating that the gastaldate could be a stepping stone to the upper strata. Some families that had multiple gastalds in their ranks, such as the Emilian gastald Muringus (824), father and father-in-law of two gastalds active in the years 840-880, “produced” a count in the third generation, in the person of Gandolfus of Piacenza¹⁰¹. Other family paths could have led to the episcopate, as Tachimpaldus of Bergamo (797-814), the son of a gastald, had shown very early on. This was not necessarily a matter of social progression, but rather of the circulation of offices within the same group, as the example of the bishop of Pisa Raghinardus (796-803), whose namesakes were gastalds in the years 840-850, would tend to show¹⁰². It should also be remembered that a Lucchese gastald mentioned in 848 was called Eriprandus and was sometimes identified with the homonymous vassal¹⁰³; at the very least, a reasonable hypothesis can be made of a family link between the two. The first indication of proximity to the higher aristocracy remains onomastic: we have seen that the name of the gastald Leodoinus refers to the Widonids; that of Muringus (824), also in Emilia, evokes the Supponids.

5. *Social practices: some examples*

I have not discussed the aristocratic social practices themselves and the lifestyle and display issues. I will limit myself to two points. In this field, im-

⁹⁷ Placiti I, n. 64 (ChLA², XCV, n. 16).

⁹⁸ Castagnetti, *Inquisitio*, pp. 115-130.

⁹⁹ Castagnetti, *Vassalli*, pp. 244-245.

¹⁰⁰ ChLA², LXXVII, nn. 1 (a. 835), 10 (a. 838), 41 (a. 840); ChLA², LXXVIII, n. 1 (a. 842); Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, p. 182; Bougard, *Justice*, p. 145; Castagnetti, *Inquisitio*, pp. 115-130.

¹⁰¹ Bougard, *Gandolfingi*, p. 39.

¹⁰² Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, pp. 183-184.

¹⁰³ Schwarzmaier, *Lucca*, p. 183; *contra*, Collavini, *Aldobrandeschi*, p. 44.

itation phenomena probably prevail. Firstly, there is no exclusivity in having one's own vassal clientele, present at all levels. The most complete lists are provided by the record of the *inquisitio* held in Cremona in 841, where fifteen vassals of the bishop and twenty others of the count of Brescia Adalgisus, who presided over the debates, were present¹⁰⁴. Assuming that the bishop and the count had recalled their entire clientele, this allows for an estimate of well over a thousand individuals for the whole kingdom. It is not known what the precise content of their relationship with their *seniores* was, apart from their appearance in full numbers in public meetings, but it is known that among them may have been members of their kin, assigned for example to domestic duties, such as Gerardus, relative, *vassus* and *cubicularius* of the bishop of Verona Billongus¹⁰⁵. They also had a role in the maintenance of the memory: Fulchernus and Gerardus must feed the poor "sufficiently" each month for the soul of Bishop Billongus and his parents, in addition to paying an annual sum of five *solidi* to the *schola sacerdotum* of Verona¹⁰⁶.

The minor aristocracy also had vassals, even if they had to be counted by the unit or a few units: thus, the imperial vassal Ernost and the Milanese gastald Waldericus¹⁰⁷. For others, not considered until now, could the fact of having vassals be an indication of belonging to the aristocracy¹⁰⁸? The question may be asked of the Veronese *sculdassius* Vualtarius who, in the assembly convened in 854, was present in the first place to record the declaration of obedience of a women's abbey to Santa Maria in Organo: he had at least one vassal, Alaman¹⁰⁹. The same attention must be paid to those who had vassals independently of any public office but were not totally alien to that sphere. Thus, for Engelbertus of Erb , of Lombard law (846), who was perhaps more than a simple "big landlord", if only because of his kinship with the abbot of San Zeno of Verona Ebbo¹¹⁰. Or the *monetarius* of Pavia, Theodorus, whose two vassals travelled with him in 849 to Milan for the sale of his property in Saronno, reaching the very high sum of twelve pounds paid in coinage¹¹¹: if his wealth is obviously derived from his function, his social stature is perhaps linked to the fact that coinage was under the direct control of the palace.

¹⁰⁴ Placiti I, *Inquisitiones*, n. VII.

¹⁰⁵ ChLA², LX, n. 26 (a. 846). The fact that Billongus, in his will, gives the usufruct of his estates to two of his relatives, Fulchernus and Gerardus, who are also his vassals, and then that, further on in the document, mention is made of an *alius* Gerardus *vassus and cubicularius meus*, leads Varanini, *Aspetti*, p. 206, to see in the latter a homonym "of low extraction" of the former; but the homonymy could also be an argument in favour of the fact that this Gerardus was also a relative of Billongus.

¹⁰⁶ Gasparri, *Testamenti*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁷ ChLA², XCIV, n. 12; ChLA², XCV, n. 8.

¹⁰⁸ The list provided by Budriesi Trombetti, *Ricerche*, p. 22 (*Vassalli di persone con titoli vari o senza titolo specificato*), is notoriously incomplete.

¹⁰⁹ ChLA², LIX, n. 19.

¹¹⁰ ChLA², LX, n. 25. Gasparri, *Testamenti*, p. 106: «tipico esponente di un'aristocrazia di livello provinciale».

¹¹¹ ChLA², XCIV, n. 41. Castagnetti, *Monetieri*, p. 24.

In other cases, having a vassal is a sign of an ascending career: is it by chance that the Veronese deacon and later archdeacon Audo, Lombard, had vassals who witnessed his land transactions in 829 and 856, when we know that he became a bishop (860)¹¹²?

We can thus guess that vassalage has a double function. On the one hand, it is integrative as an instrument for creating an artificial kinship on which the aristocratic quality of the *senior* rubs off onto the vassal (this is particularly important for the clerics whose natural family is not always an extended one, at least in the direct line). On the other hand, it is imitative of a social practice of distinction. From this point of view, the documentary practice, such as the wills in the first place, offers a good picture of the position of vassals and the spread of the “vassalic model” through the expression of the awareness of the self, awareness of the family group and awareness of those who gravitate around it¹¹³.

Another indicator is the relationship with religious foundations. San Salvatore of Brescia was entrusted as a benefice to the Empress Judith before 825, perhaps as early as her marriage to Louis the Pious in 819¹¹⁴. It is tempting to draw a parallel with the appointment of Richilda, Boniface II’s sister, as abbess of Saint Benedict and Scholastica in Lucca in 823: an initiative of a quasi-princely order, if we think that this monastery, in the immediate vicinity of the ducal residence, could be considered its “palatine chapel”¹¹⁵. As, in another political context, the will of the doge Justinian Particiacus (829) shows, the high aristocracy, although not exclusively linked to these women’s foundations, seems to have played a leading role in most of them¹¹⁶. To find out more, at least in Brescia, the commemorative lists would be the most precious witness, but they postdate Lothar, even if it was he who gave a starting point to the monastic sociability of the transalpine elites in Brescia by entrusting the monastery to his wife Ermengarda and by placing his daughter Gisla there in 848¹¹⁷. The *Liber memorialis* of Reichenau, however, has preserved a list of the nuns of San Salvatore written around 829, but too little is known about the female names for it to be truly usable. At most, it suggests that a significant proportion of the nuns were of Lombard origin, which is no longer the case in the 850s and confirms the ethnic closure of the high aristocracy. The *Liber* of Reichenau also contains a list of the deceased from Saint Peter of Novalesa, dating from the 840s. Among them

¹¹² ChLA², LIX, n. 7 e n. 21. Castagnetti, *Teutisci*, pp. 154-157. Castagnetti, *Minoranze etniche*.

¹¹³ Gasparri, *Testamenti*, p. 113.

¹¹⁴ MGH, DD LdF, n. 246 (ChLA², XCIX, n. 6; Cossandi, *Carte di San Salvatore e Santa Giulia di Brescia*, n. 25).

¹¹⁵ The identification of San Benedetto e Scolastica with the ducal palace church dedicated to Benedict is provided by an 11th/12th century note on the back of the 823 document (ChLA², LXXV, n. 20): «de ecclesia Sancti Benedicti sita ad Palatiu». On the palace, Tomei, *Power*.

¹¹⁶ *SS. Ilario e Benedetto e S. Gregorio*, n. 2; Gasparri, *Testamenti*, p. 110.

¹¹⁷ MGH, DD Lo I / DD Lo II, n. 101.

are Autramnus, Ardingus, Berengarius, Gamanolfus: all names that relate to families mentioned several times¹¹⁸.

At a time when the number of church and monastery foundations was drastically reduced compared to the trend of the eighth century, and at the same time as they were increasingly subject to episcopal control, the initiatives of various people were all the more significant. The geographical proximity of Hugh of Tours and his wife Ava to Saint John of Monza made it unnecessary to think of anything other than a rapprochement in the form of a burial choice with a prestigious sanctuary¹¹⁹, but there was no lack of other initiatives, however few in number. The most significant are those at the lower levels. The foundation of Saint Alexander's of Parma by Cunegonda is part of the "normal" piety of the sovereigns. But the case of the Frankish vassal Erembertus, founder of San Siro in Leggiuno, who was given relics of the martyr by Pope Sergius II, is particularly noteworthy, though quite unique in the documentation¹²⁰. The church is the place where the family memory is maintained with two commemorative inscriptions, one of which states that Erembertus is a *vir illustris*. Above all, it is an instrument for the promotion of the family itself, since it can be assumed that the possession of this status symbol was not unrelated to Ermenulfus, son of Erembertus, obtaining the title of count during the reign of Louis II¹²¹. A comparable example, though one about which there is very little information, could be the foundation in Pavia, before 851, of the *monasterium Sigemarii*, by a certain Sigemarius who, we can assume, was an imperial vassal¹²².

As with the vassalic clientele, the ability to found a church also characterises those on the edge of the aristocracy. Thus we have the Veronese archdeacon Audo, already mentioned, who, in the 850s, founded a church/monastery dedicated to the martyr Lawrence on his lands, in Sezano, where he placed his cousin as abess, and to which the imperial chaplain Hubert was linked, with whom a *precaria* was contracted¹²³; or the Milanese *scabinus* Werulfus-Podo (833-871), who was the executor of the will of the brother of the imperial vassal Ernest, Unger, and founded the urban church of Santa Maria *Podonis* (Santa Maria di Cinque vie)¹²⁴. Werulfus-Podo is the only *scabinus* known

¹¹⁸ *Das Verbrüderungsbuch Reichenau*, manuscript p. IX; Ludwig, *Transalpine Beziehungen*, pp. 161-162.

¹¹⁹ *Supra*, note 40.

¹²⁰ Castagnetti, *Società milanese*, pp. 43-44, considers that the mention of *loca venerabilia* in the mutual donation made by the vassal Ernest and his wife Weltruta in 823 refers to foundations that they would have made (ChLA², XCVII, n. 1: «post tuum ovitum deveniat in loca illa venerabilia, ubi nos pariter consensueremus aut constitueremus»), but nothing of the sort can be derived from this devolution clause.

¹²¹ Castagnetti, *Una famiglia*.

¹²² Settia, *Nella Pavia carolingia*; Bougard, *Minima Ticinensia*. Sigemarius is a rare name; note that a Sigemarius witnesses charters of the vassal Ernest in 812 and 823 (ChLA², XCIV, n. 8 e n. 12).

¹²³ ChLA², LIX, n. 20 e n. 21.

¹²⁴ ChLA², XCIV, n. 23; Castagnetti, *Società milanese*, pp. 253-260; De Angelis, *Scabini*, pp. 59-60; Santos Salazar, *Governare*, pp. 205-206.

to me as *erogator*, which is in itself an indication of social recognition and a manifestation of belonging to an artificial kinship.

6. *Conclusions*

The “Lothar moment”, conditioned by its political ups and downs, should be seen as a time of closure, or of a more pronounced control over the aristocracy holding offices by immigrants from north of the Alps than in the first decades of Carolingian rule. Admittedly, not all the individuals mentioned in the sources can be identified with any precision, and many remain no more than names: but beyond the hypotheses put forward as to the connection between this or that individual or that family group, hypotheses whose fragility will have escaped no one, onomastics is constantly that of the Franks, the Alamanni and the Bavarians, at a time when intermarriages likely to neutralise the ethnic dimension of names were not commonplace. By maintaining or reinforcing the ethnic divide, this closure at the top could only slow down the aristocratisation of the Lombard elite. The monopolising of offices also led to a difference in access to the aristocratic group itself: whereas for the transalpine set, the office or membership of the group of vassals was in some way guaranteed by their very settling in Italy, for the Lombards the criterion of wealth was a prerequisite for passing to the *Königsnähe*. Above all, since county, episcopal or abbatial offices were always reserved as if they were a right for the exogenous aristocracy, it was through vassalage that the Lombard notables were able to occupy positions, thus preparing their ascent during the decades after Lothar. Vassalage also functioned as a melting pot, which led to an “aristocratisation” of expertise: legal – mainly in Pavia, but not exclusively – medical and monetary. This channel of upward mobility ultimately stretched the social reach of the aristocracy. Social practices, on the other hand, encouraged a certain amount of mixing on the fringes of the aristocracy itself through imitation.

Two examples illustrate the phenomena of closure or opening of the aristocratic group during the reign of Lothar. The first is in Abruzzo. At the latest in the early 820s, in Valva, a certain Liutprand gave birth to a son who was named Karolus. The fact that the father was named after the most illustrious of the Lombard kings is already significant: we know of no parents who wished to name their son Desiderius, after the king defeated by the Franks. But the fact that Liutprand made a similar choice for his own child, taking note of the change in political regime, is even more significant. Karolus was thus «at the junction of two political memories»¹²⁵ at the time when Lothar took over the kingdom of Italy. However, it was not a question of expressing membership of the highest strata of society, but of expressing an aspiration to

¹²⁵ Feller, Germain, Weber, *Karol*, p. 54.

enter it. Liutprand's initiative was clumsy, to say the least, for no one in the aristocracy, whether Lombard or Frankish, would have thought of naming their son Charles, a name reserved for the reigning dynasty – the names Pippin and Bernard were of less exclusive use. What we know of Karolus' personal and family history shows that he certainly associated with people who could be considered part of the local aristocracy, that he made alliances with them, but that neither his personal success nor that of his children, which was more contrasted, allows us to see him as an "aristocrat". However programmatic it may be, a name cannot do everything. On the contrary, and this is the second example, having a title in the feminine, at a level generally considered inferior, could well be a sign of belonging to the aristocracy, or of an aristocratisation in progress: thus, in 841, in Verona, is the *sculdarissa* Hermindrut/Ermintrud¹²⁶. Wearing a title equivalent in lexical formation to that of *comitissa* or *ducarissa* was for her a manifestation of distinction on a practical basis. While the aristocratic elite was not intentionally "open" to newcomers, nevertheless it had to accept a degree of upward social mobility entering its ranks.

¹²⁶ ChLA², LIX, n. 15; La Voy, *Hirmintrud*; Bassetti, *Novità lessicali*, pp. 248-252; Betti, *Irmintrude*.

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