

# **Writing for aristocrats, writing as aristocrats: notarial strategies and graphic self-representation in the documentation of the elites of the *regnum*\***

by Gianmarco De Angelis, Laura Pani

Was there, in the Italic kingdom during the early and high Carolingian age, a type of documentation that is identifiable as aristocratic not only by genesis? That is, did there exist, in the charters produced at the request of counts and bishops (these are the “aristocrats” at the center of attention, the upper echelons of an official and ecclesiastical aristocracy defined on the basis of the *Königsnähe*), peculiar and consciously distinctive graphic-formal solutions and practices of self-representation? Moving into a well-established strand of scholarship, the essay offers some considerations on the forms and functions of written culture as a reflection (and definition, interpretation) of political dynamics and forms of power, particularly investigating moments and degrees of penetration of the new Carolingian minuscule into the highest levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as an adherence to the Carolingian political program.

Middle Ages; ninth century; Italy; kingdom of Italy; Carolingians; counts; bishops; charters and archives; caroline minuscule; documentary culture.

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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).
- ChLA, XXVII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, ed. A. Bruckner, R. Marichal, part XXVII, Italy VIII, Asti, Cremona, Novara, Piacenza, Torino, publ. J.-O. Tjäder, Dietikon-Zürich 1992.
- ChLA, XXVIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, ed. A. Bruckner, R. Marichal, part XXVIII, Italy IX, Genova, Milano, Trieste, publ. R. Marichal, J.-O. Tjäder, G. Cavallo, F. Magistrale, Dietikon-Zürich 1988.
- ChLA, XXXVI = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, ed. A. Bruckner, R. Marichal, part XXXVI, Italy XVII, Lucca, publ. G. Nicolaj, Dietikon-Zürich 1990.
- ChLA, XXXVII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, ed. A. Bruckner, R. Marichal, part XXXVII, Italy XVIII, Lucca, publ. P. Supino Martini, Dietikon-Zürich 1990.
- ChLA, XXXIX = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, ed. A. Bruckner, R. Marichal, part XXXIX, Italy XX, Lucca, publ. F. Magistrale, Dietikon-Zürich 1991.
- ChLA, XL = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, ed. A. Bruckner, R. Marichal, part XL, Italy XXI, Lucca, publ. M. Palma, F. Bianchi, Dietikon-Zürich 1991.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LIV = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LIV, Italy XXVI, Ravenna 1, publ. G. Rabotti, F. Santoni, Dietikon-Zürich 2000.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LV = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LV, Italy XXVII, Ravenna II, Vaticano, Roma, publ. R. Cosma, Dietikon-Zürich 1999.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LVII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LVII, Italy XXIX, Novara, Torino, publ. G.-G. Fissore, A. Olivieri, Dietikon-Zürich 2001.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LVIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LVIII, Italy XXX, Pisa, Volterra, publ. A. Mastruzzo, Dietikon-Zürich 2001.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LX = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LX, Italy XXXII, Verona 2, publ. F. Santoni, Dietikon-Zürich 2002.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXVIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXVIII, Italy XL, Piacenza 5, publ. P. Degni, Dietikon-Zürich 2006.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXII, Italy XLIV, Lucca 1, publ. C. Gattagrisi, Dietikon-Zürich 2002.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXIII, Italy XLV, Lucca 2, publ. F. Magistrale, Dietikon-Zürich 2003.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIV = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part LXXIV, Italy XLVI, Lucca 3, publ. F. Magistrale – C. Gattagrisi – P. Fioretti, Dietikon-Zürich 2004.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXXVIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XC = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XC, Italy LXII, Arezzo, publ. G. Feo, G. Nicolaj, M. Calleri, C. Tristano, Dietikon-Zürich 2011.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCII, Italy LXIV, Parma 1, publ. F. Santoni, Dietikon-Zürich 2014.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G. Nicolaj, part XCIII, Italy LXV, Parma 2, publ. C. Mantegna, Dietikon-Zürich 2014.

- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G.Nicolaj, part XCIV, Italy LXVI, Milano 1, publ. M. Modesti, Dietikon-Zürich 2015.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCVIII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G.Nicolaj, part XCVIII, Italy LXX, Bergamo, publ. M. Modesti, Dietikon-Zürich 2017.
- ChLA<sup>2</sup>, CXVII = *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile-edition of the Latin Charters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, ed. G. Cavallo, G.Nicolaj, part CXVII, Addenda 1, Italy, publ. S. Allegria, C. Drago Tedeschini, M. Galante, C. Gattagrisi, C. Mantegna, P. Massa, A. Mastruzzo, F. Santoni, G.E. Unfer Verre, Dietikon-Zürich 2019.
- MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II = *Die Urkunden Lothars I. und Lothars II.*, ed. T. Schieffer, Berlin-Zürich 1966 (MGH, Diplomata Karolorum, 3).
- MGH, DD Lu II = *Die Urkunden Ludwigs II.*, ed. K. Wanner, München 1994 (MGH, Diplomata Karolorum, 4).
- Placiti I = *I placiti del "Regnum Italiae"*, vol. 1, ed. C. Manaresi, Roma 1955 (FSI, 92).

## 1. Introduction

Using the term “aristocracy” in a very broad sense – that is to say not limited to the evidence linked to family ancestry, social profile or lifestyle<sup>1</sup> – we will be focusing, in this paper, specifically on the documentation of comital and episcopal genesis (and/or pertinence). We will therefore look at the upper echelons of the aristocracy of the Italian kingdom, essentially defined on the basis of the *Königsnähe*<sup>2</sup>, in its two components, official and ecclesiastical; and we will try to follow the documentary traces of their activities, the ways and forms in which they present themselves or are represented by notaries. The research questionnaire revolves around a few, essential questions, and aims to verify whether, in the self-representational ways of counts and bishops, as well as in the solutions devised by the writers of charters pertaining to them, it is possible to trace signs of distinction with respect to the rest of the contemporary documentary production.

We will therefore focus on just two of the aspects that Cristina Carbonetti, in the conference on *La nobiltà romana nel medioevo*, had already identified as essential to the study of the links between written documentation and social prominence. In addition to the processes and mechanisms of production/self-representation, we should also consider, indeed, «l’ambito della conservazione e della trasmissione della memoria documentaria, vista come componente essenziale e imprescindibile del patrimonio e dell’identità familiari»<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Airlie, *The Aristocracy*, pp. 431-432. For a wider historiographical discussion see Bougard, Bühner-Thierry, Le Jan, *Les élites du haut Moyen Âge*.

<sup>2</sup> On the importance of relations between aristocratic groups and the court and for the very identity definition of the former see Airlie, *Semper fideles?*.

<sup>3</sup> Carbonetti Vendittelli, *Documentazione scritta*, p. 323. The question was later taken up, for the entire Early Middle Ages, in relation to the broader scenario of the *regnum* and for a wider clientele, by Bougard, *Notaires d’élite* («En quoi, d’autre part, les notaires peuvent-ils contribuer à la distinction de l’élite, c’est-à-dire fournir des produits documentaires à même d’exprimer la qualité et le prestige de leurs clients?», p. 440), in an essay focused more on the reconstruction of social profiles and even official links with powers and institutions.

Here, it must immediately be said that there is really no direct evidence to be found within the geographical expanse and the chronological span examined (Central-Northern Italy during the early Carolingian age, from the conquest of the Lombard kingdom in 774 to the death of the Emperor Lothar I in 855). The earliest attestation I find in the documentation in which we are interested is very well known but later than the chronology considered here, namely that in the last will of Elbunc, bishop of Parma and former arch-chancellor of the Emperors Guy and Lambert, dated April 914. The issuer himself took care to establish that, in addition to the original, four *exemplaria* should be drawn up, to be deposited in the royal palace of Pavia («in testimonio»), as well as in the episcopal seats of Piacenza, Modena and Reggio Emilia<sup>4</sup>. This practice, at least in Parma (still in a testamentary disposition and in relation to a complex of assets that extended over a large part of the kingdom), may have had some significant antecedent in the *post obitum* donation of Wibod, powerful bishop of the city from 860 to 895<sup>5</sup>: although in the absence of a multiple drafting formula such as that in the later Elbunc charter, the original Parma will and its contemporary copy, preserved *ab antiquo* in the archive of the cathedral of Piacenza, point decisively in this direction.

Undoubtedly the proximity to the court, to the entourage and to the chancellery mechanisms of these foremost episcopal figures are elements that could justify such choices, as well as a strong awareness of the importance of archival preservation (which seems to recall Louis the Pious's provisions regarding the ways of preserving and disseminating certain capitularies)<sup>6</sup>. It is a cultural proximity, certainly, but also a physical, material proximity (Wibod, already *fidelissimus* of the Empress Angelberga, had been a key figure in the entourage of all the Carolingian sovereigns from Louis II to Charles III, maintaining a strong position even during the reign of Guy of Spoleto, whose arch-chaplain he was to become)<sup>7</sup>. And, moving on to the central theme of our reconstruction and still taking Carbonetti's words as a reference, the same contiguity can certainly also explain, those «significati volti a caricare la scrittura documentaria della funzione di esprimere e comunicare il potere, il prestigio, l'autorevolezza di coloro al cui nome i documenti stessi sono intestati»<sup>8</sup>. This, it seems to me, is the case of Autramn's *libellum dotis* for his wife Adelburga, issued in Gondreville by the *notarius* Reinricus, from which our reconstruction can undoubtedly take a cue.

<sup>4</sup> *Le carte degli archivi parmensi*, p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCII, n. 24 (892 VII 5); copy in ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXX, n. 37.

<sup>6</sup> See the discussion in McKitterick, *Zur Herstellung von Kapitularien*. Also Pössel, *Authors and recipients of Carolingian capitularies*, in particular pp. 259-264.

<sup>7</sup> Lazzari, *Tra Ravenna e regno*. See also Provero, *Churches and dynasties*.

<sup>8</sup> Carbonetti Vendittelli, *Documentazione scritta*, p. 324.

2. *Between cartule and decreta: agency, communication, writing patterns*

The new edition of Autramn's *libellum dotis* for the *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*<sup>9</sup> has had the merit of placing its redaction, moving it forward by 20 years, to 14 August 843, when in «Gundulfo palacium regis» – one of Lothar's favourite residences<sup>10</sup> – where we know that the emperor was surrounded by some of the magnates of the Italian kingdom (Bishops Hagan of Bergamo, Notting of Verona, Amalric of Como also abbot of Bobbio, Eberhard of Friuli), who had travelled beyond the Alps to obtain diplomas or act as intercessors, cementing relations with the court in the complicated days of the reorganisation of Verdun<sup>11</sup>. Among these *supporters* of Lothar was also Autramn, and it is fairly easy to suppose that the goods donated to his wife Adelburga «perpetualiter ad possidendum» – a *curtis* with 30 mansi in the territory of Vercelli plus 90 servants and *ancillae* – represented a high-profile landed property set up by the emperor himself for the benefit of one of his *fidelis* who, already a few months earlier, in March 843, with the lofty title of «comes in Dei nomine», had made his appearance on the scene of the *regnum*, purchasing various properties in the territory near Sala Bolognese<sup>12</sup>. This is not the place to dwell in detail on the territorial rootedness of this man (who, from 848, would appear in a notarial charter as Count of Cittanova)<sup>13</sup>, on his land investment strategies in the area close to, and in addition to, his complex of fiscal properties, nor on his exceptionally – and significantly – rich life (he would follow Louis II as *signifer* of a *scara* of the army headed against the Saracens, and that title of *comes gloriosus* that notaries sometimes give him may perhaps allude just to his military merits). This has already been investigated by Andrea Castagnetti and recently, with greater breadth and depth, by Edoardo Manarini, and their research should certainly be referred to with profit<sup>14</sup>.

I therefore return to the *dotarium* of 843 and its undoubted peculiarities, both from the textual point of view, and in its visual presentation (Fig. 1). The drafting, as is evident, stands out for its remarkable accuracy. It is solemn in its editorial solutions, right from the beginning of the text, with a very broad arenga that, in the legitimation and celebration of the conjugal union, skill-

<sup>9</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCII, n. 3 (843 VIII 14, Gondreville).

<sup>10</sup> Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium regis*, I, pp. 24, 31.

<sup>11</sup> At Gondreville, some ninety kilometres south of Verdun, and then (between 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> August) at Remiremont, Lothar granted five diplomas exclusively to Italian recipients (one to Ortinus, vassal of the bishop of Verona Notting, to the patriarchal Church of Aquileia, to Amalric of Como, two to the episcopal Church of Arezzo): see MGH, DD Lo I / Lo II, nn. 75, 76, 77, 78, 79. On the granting of diplomas by Lothar after the battle of Fontenoy see Screen, *The importance*, pp. 39-43; on the value of these sovereign concessions as a means of strengthening the power networks between the two sides of the Alps in the later Lothar age see also Mersiowsky, *Towards a reappraisal*, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXVIII, n. 29 (844 III 12).

<sup>13</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCII, n. 5 (848 IX 22).

<sup>14</sup> Castagnetti, *Le aristocrazie*, pp. 610-611; Manarini, *Politiche regie e attivismo*, pp. 40 ss.

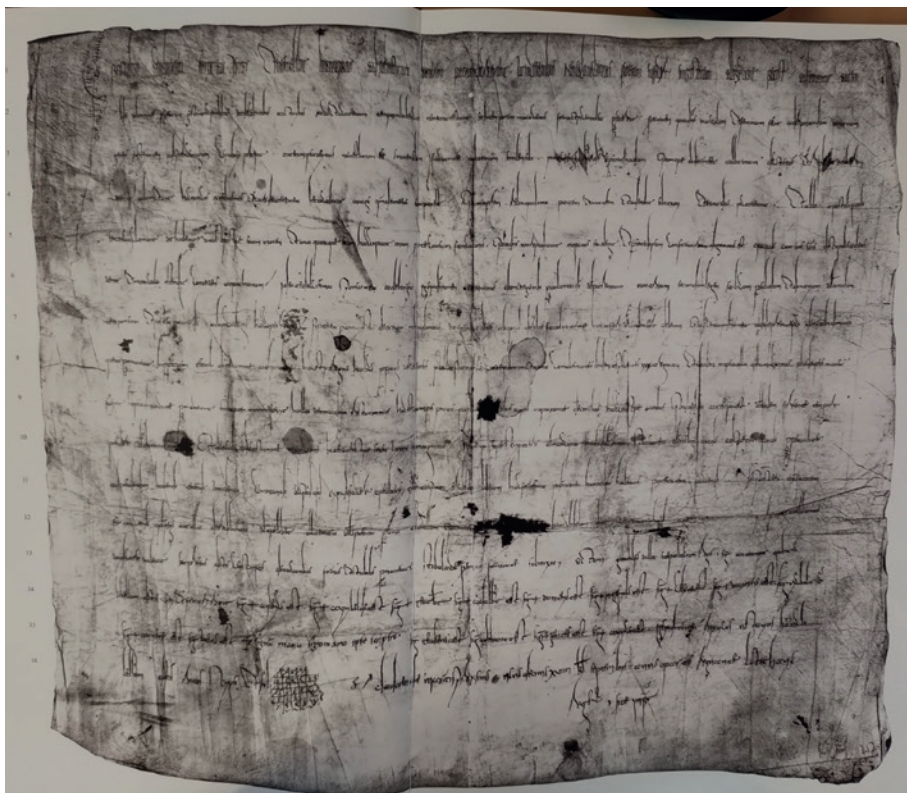


Fig. 1. ChLA2, XCII, n. 3 (843 VIII 14, Gondreville).

fully assembles literal quotations from biblical passages (the creation of Eve *ex ossibus* by Adam) and passages from Paul (the *First Letter to the Corinthians*), with a freer take on the Gospel episode of the Wedding at Cana<sup>15</sup>. It is visually distinctive, thanks to a balanced, airy layout, a first line in *litterae elongatae* and the use of a clearly chancery style of writing that imitates that of the contemporary royal and imperial *precepta* in the prolongation of the

<sup>15</sup> Rightly La Rocca, *Les cadeaux nuptiaux*, p. 513, underlines the absence of a similar effort of rhetorical elaboration in the *dotaticium* of Louis II for Angelberga (MGH, DD Lu II, n. 30, pp. 125-127; ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII, n. 5 [851 and 860 X 5, Marengo]), where the arenga, much shorter and simplified, without any reprise of religious motives to legitimize the conjugal union, limits itself to sanctioning the *consortium* thus constituted by recalling that «quisquis sibi legitimo tradere uxore maluerit sociari et nubendi copulam honesto decore sortiiri»: a demonstration of “normality”, that of the royal couple, which is, however, traced back to (and legitimized by) the tradition of the Frankish sovereigns, and endorsed by the ostentatious presence of the magnates of the kingdom at the time of the juridical action. For a political reading of Angelberga’s *dotarium*, in the light of the conflicts between the *proceres regni* at the court of Louis II, see Manarini, *Sex, Denigration and Violence*, pp. 205-242.

auctions, in the artificial rendering of the “bridge” ligatures *et* and *ct*, and in the use of the abbreviation sign intertwined with knots. Also unsurprising is the scribe’s use of a “hash” *signum* close to his signature, a customary feature in chancery *recognitiones* and widespread in contemporary transalpine customs<sup>16</sup>. In general, what I would like to emphasise is the strong and conscious project of solemnising the documentary event by a notary who was not a chancellor and not otherwise known.

I have found no similar examples, beyond the Alps, in documents of comital origin (where, if anything, a possible model of writing – and yet with equal distinctive force – could have been represented by the reference to the minuscule caroline with an evident librarian matrix, as in the later *libellum prelatorium* granted by Count Rudolf, lay abbot of Saint-Maurice of Agaune, to the Empress Angelberga in 878)<sup>17</sup>. And not one such, especially in Italy, where the dominant notarial practices and the tenacious cursive tradition allow so few chances for similar operations and may, if anything, show some scruples of balance and a straightening of writing in documents of high commission. This is the case, for example, for a *traditio* of 816 by Audelinda «relicta quondam Auterami, qui fuit comis cives Bergomensis»<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 2), which Armando Petrucci has already noted as being distinguished «per l’alta qualità della scrittura cancelleresca del rogatario (...) e per la correttezza della sua ortografia latina»<sup>19</sup>. Fluid and straight, with the ascenders terminating “in a club” and the descenders of *p* and *q* ending with elegant swirls, well aligned on the line, the writing of this *notitia* and its textual structure itself – one of the first examples of the clear importing of transalpine legal-documentary models into the *regnum*<sup>20</sup> – finds significant convergences with another, almost contem-

<sup>16</sup> An example, undoubtedly simplified, as a personal elaboration of the *s(ub)s(crip)s(i)* compendium, closes the sub-scripture of Count Oliba of Carcassonne at the foot of a charter of precaria of 820: see *Chartes originales antérieures à 1121*, n. 3770; digital reproduction at <<http://www.cn-telma.fr/originaux/charte3770/>>. A not very different *signum* was to be found at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century in Bergamo – not by chance in the signature of an individual, Leotricus, who professed Salica law, and in that of a certain Arno, on whose geographical origin and ethnic-juridical characterization we are not informed, however: see, respectively, Bergamo, n. 49 (910 X, Bergamo, *Foro*), and n. 42 (906 VII, Bergamo).

<sup>17</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII, n. 22 (878 III 25). We do not know the graphic layout of the original, but the copy – almost contemporary – of the charter of August 865 with which Count Ermenulf (perhaps son of Erembert, *fidelis* of Louis II and recipient of a diploma issued by the latter in August 865) begged Angelberga to intercede with her husband the emperor to confirm the granting of the benefit of the monastery of Massino (ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII, n. 6 [865 VIII 14, Stabio]) is similarly in a beautiful and well-composed caroline minuscule. A different option is the one – individually pursued in the *Comtat de Ribagorça* at the height of the Carolingian era – of a certain scribe called *Langobardus*, who in 848 or 849 drew up a diploma on behalf of the Count and Marquis Frédélon for the abbey of Lavaix «à l’imitation d’un précepte royal aussi bien par son contenu que par sa forme externe, jusque dans la présence d’un sceau» (Bougard, *Notaires d’élite*, pp. 439-440).

<sup>18</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCVIII, n. 4 (816 VII 19). On Auteram and, more generally, on the introduction of the Carolingian comital institution in Bergamo, see Jarnut, *Bergamo 568-1098*, pp. 32, 87-91. See also Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 36, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Petrucci, Romeo, «*Scriptores in urbibus*», p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> Mantegna, *Documento privato*, p. 117.

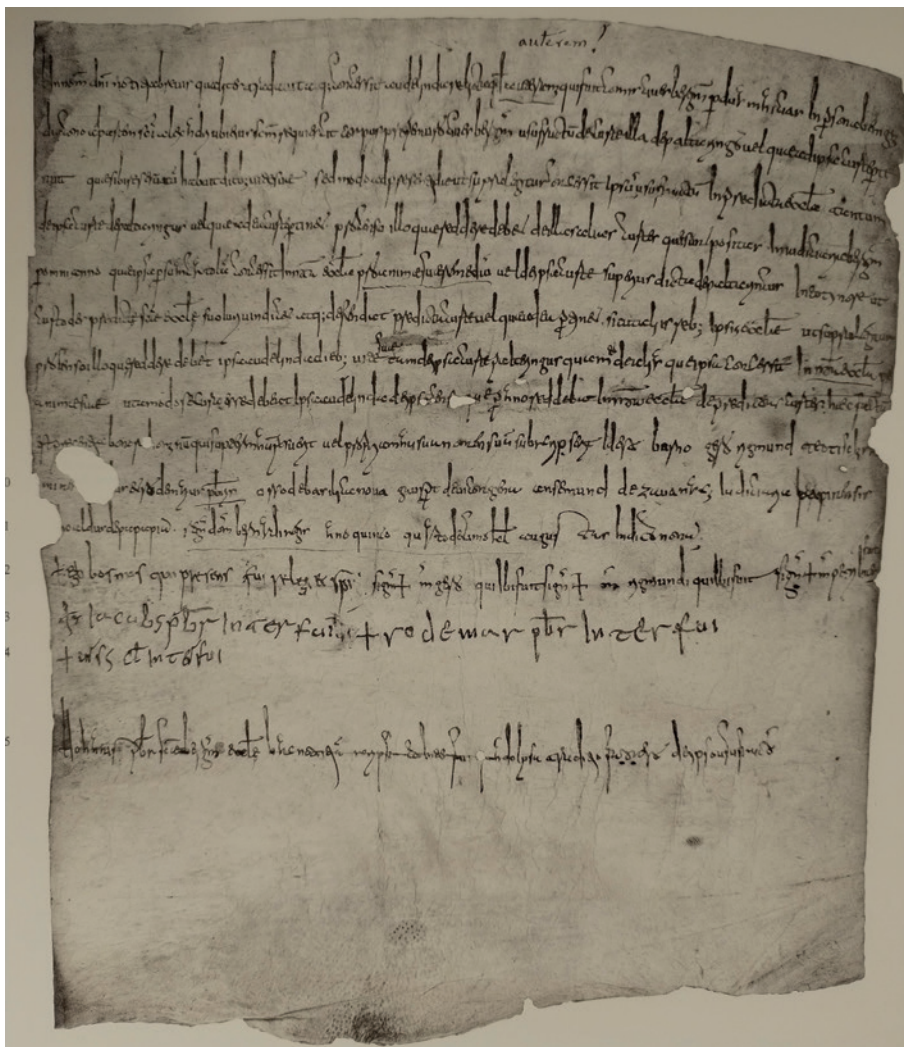


Fig. 2. ChLA2, XCVIII, n. 4 (816 VII 19).

porary charter of “aristocratic” matrix: the testamentary disposition of Cunegonda, widow of Bernard king of Italy, given in Parma in June 835<sup>21</sup> (Fig. 3). Beyond its regular and composed *mise en page* – in a much softer cursive and better aligned on the line than the other known document of its writer, *Aresindus notarius*<sup>22</sup> – Cunegonda’s *cartola traditionis* stands out for two

<sup>21</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII, n. 2 (835 VI 16, Parma)

<sup>22</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCII, n. 8 (853 VI 26, Parma).

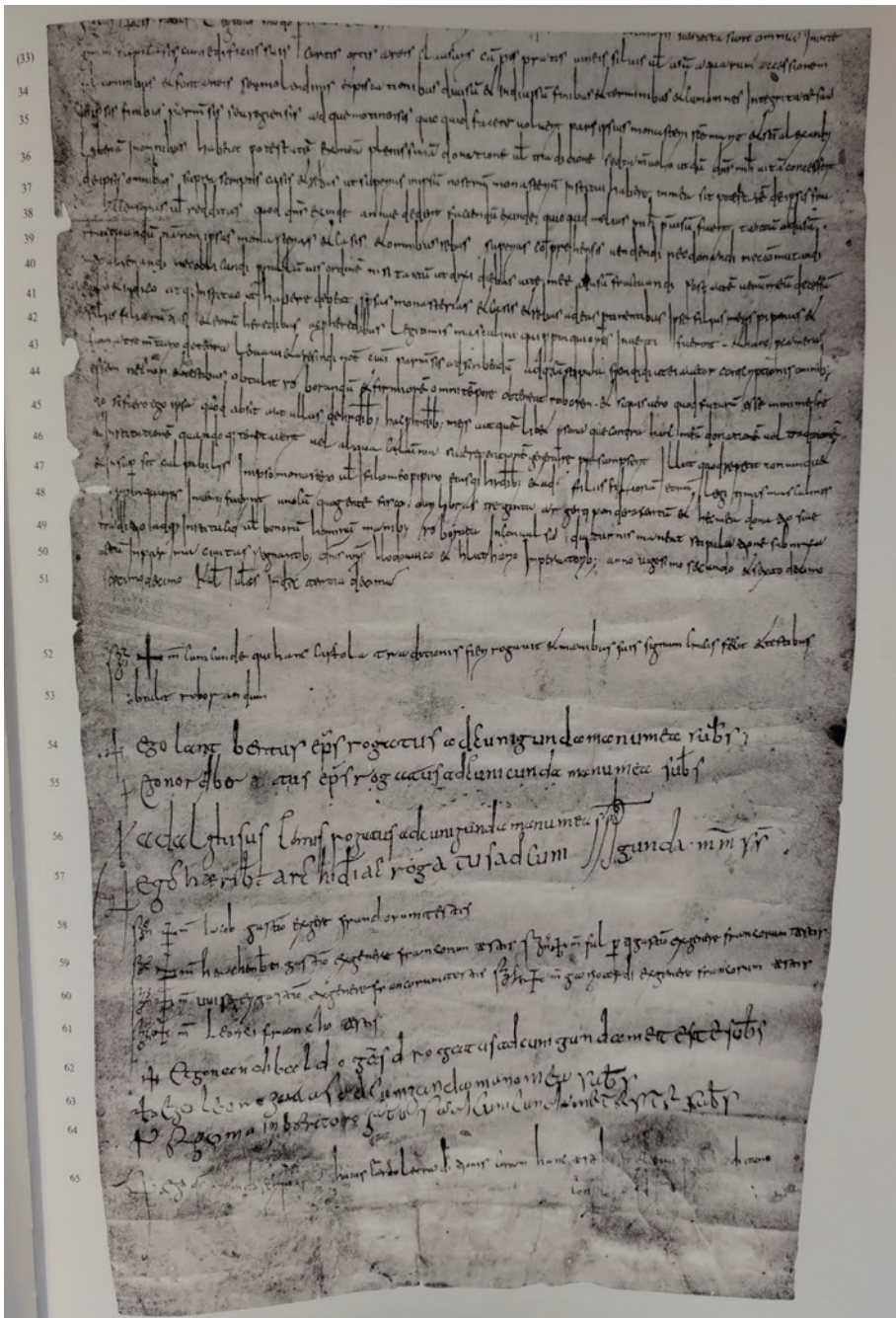


Fig. 3. ChLA2, XCIII, n. 2 (835 VI 16, Parma).

highly distinctive elements. Firstly – and representing an absolute *hapax* in Italian documentation of the time outside the production of diplomas<sup>23</sup> – for the presence of a wax seal in the lower right-hand corner of the parchment: now lost, it is impossible to say whether it was affixed by the notary himself in imitation of chancery models or later, for greater *securitas* of the transaction, when the assets subject to the bequest were “sucked” into the complex patrimonial transactions of Angelberga, who belonged to the powerful Supponide clan of Parma<sup>24</sup>. Secondly, visually strongly characterising the charter is its extensive corroboration apparatus, rich in no less than thirteen testimonial subscriptions (seven of which are autographs), in the hands of, successively, the bishops of the area (Lampert of Parma and Nordbert of Reggio), the powerful Count Adalgis, the Archdeacon Heribert, many *gastalds ex genere Francorum*, plus a couple of other laymen with no titles.

In Cunegonda’s charter, the dense eschatocol (Fig. 4) raises a further type of question: can one find in the corroborating apparatuses of the charters requested by members of the secular aristocracy a distinctive behaviour aimed at reflecting and communicating a certain image of power? Do the eschatocols of diplomatically private charters become, in short, «privileged places of writing», as in the case of the *placiti*?<sup>25</sup> And, if so, in what way are they conceived and materially achieved? Can one discern in them an aspiration towards order and rationalising, giving the sense of a hierarchical arrangement of the witnesses’ subscriptions?

The conclusions, again, seem to me to point in a negative direction. Beyond the constraints imposed by the dynamics of the early medieval documentary tradition, there is, additionally, a lack of truly solemn occasions for counts and countesses to require the convergence of a large and socially qualified number of presences at the location where the agreement was issued.

Apart from the *placiti* (59 up to the year 855, 16 of which were presided over or co-chaired by counts), the documentary traces refer to (a few) ordinary operations of land accumulation (the most extensive dossier is that, already mentioned, of the *comes* Autramn) and to donations of no great size (although of a certain political importance). Amongst these, the charter of October 810 with which Count Wicheram and his wife Mona donated *pro anima* to the church of the Salvatore they had built in *Vetruniana*, near Lucca, the land on which the building stands, two *massaricie* houses and some lands in the surrounding area, seems almost emblematic<sup>26</sup>. Among the witnesses we find

<sup>23</sup> With the notable exception of the use of the wax seal in epistolary communication, an example of which (a letter of recommendation for a priest from Lucca sent to the bishop of Pisa) can be found edited and discussed in Mastruzzo, *Una littera formata*. New edition in ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LVIII, n. 14 (827 IX 1 – 828 VIII 31, Lucca).

<sup>24</sup> See the introduction to the edition in ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII, n. 2, p. 19; for a comprehensive survey of Angelberga’s estate, see Cimino, *Angelberga*.

<sup>25</sup> The famous expression is in Petrucci, Romeo, *Scrivere in “iudicio”*, p. 39 (the essay was later partially republished in Petrucci, Romeo, *Scriptores in urbibus*, pp. 195-236).

<sup>26</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIII, n. 36 (810 X 13).

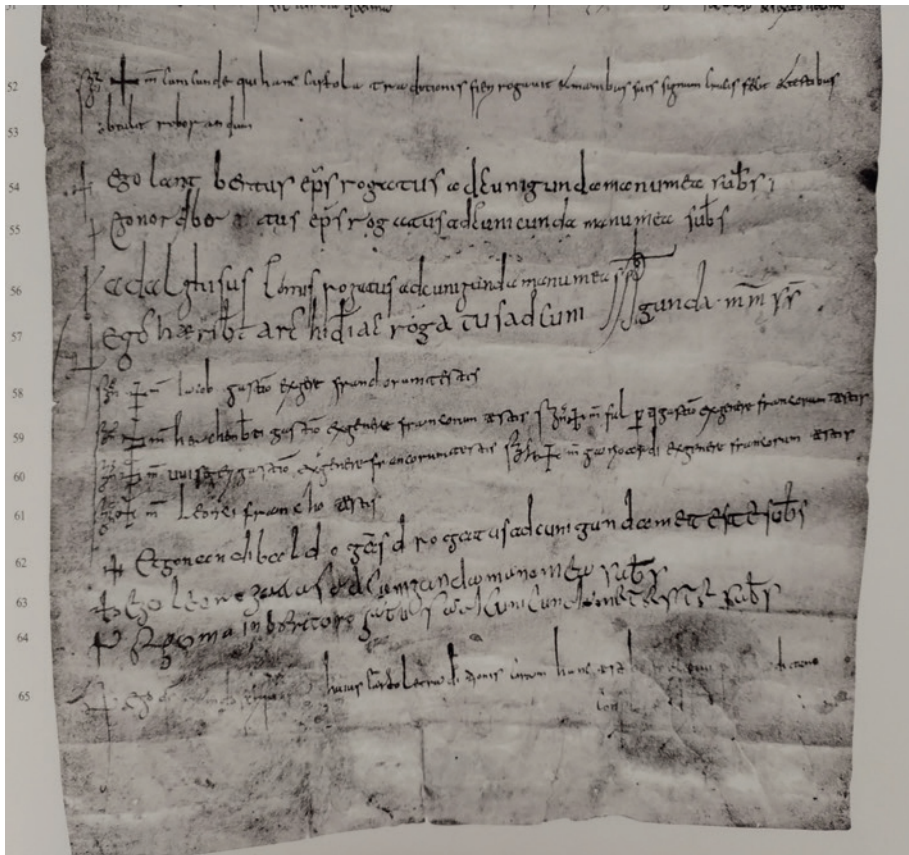


Fig. 4. ChLA2, XCIII, n. 2 (835 VI 16, Parma). *Escatocol*.

three *homines Francisci* at the head, then a couple of laymen with no titles (all of whom very probably *illitterati*) and an equal number of local priests. No particular «mostra dell'eminenza sociale», therefore, as for many *escatocols* of charters linked to important members of the political structures of early medieval Italy<sup>27</sup>; significant, rather, is the presence of three Franks who, beyond respecting the practice that, in the charters of transalpine individuals, advised the summoning as witnesses of men of the same ethnic-juridical profession, perhaps indicates recent emigration and a recent territorial rooting.

An exception, in terms of the quality and quantity of the subjects present with testimonial functions, is the donation performed in 809/810<sup>28</sup> (Fig. 5)

<sup>27</sup> The expression is in Bartoli Langeli, *Notai*, p. 56.

<sup>28</sup> For a more precise chronological determination of the complex document promoted by Rattold and Hucpald, as the dispensers of the assets of the deceased Veronese count Adumar, see *Le carte antiche*, pp. LXXI-LXXIV, and pp. 1-7.

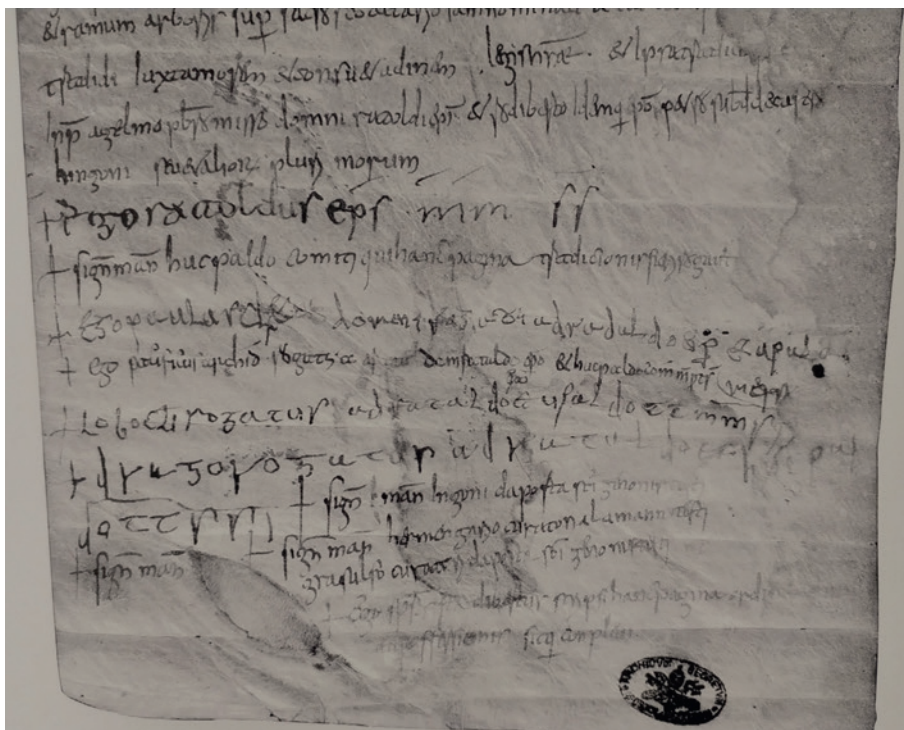


Fig. 5. ChLA2, LV, n. 2 (809 V 13, Verona).

by the bishop of Verona Ratold and the count of the city Hucpald (after the two, in hierarchical succession, we find the *vicedominus*, then the archdeacon Pacificus, a *clericus*, and various laymen including two *curatores*)<sup>29</sup>. But this is an exception that can be explained by the sensitivity of the situation (the executing of the will of the late Count Adumar) and, indeed, in the light of the direct involvement (and interest) of the city's highest ecclesiastical authorities. There is no doubt, in fact, that it is to the episcopal institutions that, from the very beginning of the Carolingian age a greater ability to attract the social and political elites in the documentary operations pertaining to them needs to be attributed. This is made clear, first of all, in the charters of exchange – a legal and documentary instrument that, in itself, by virtue of the numerous cautions to the advantage of the *pars ecclesiastica* put in place by the legislation since the Lombard age<sup>30</sup>, favours a broad convergence of various personages on the place of stipulation, from episcopal *missi* to *extimatores*

<sup>29</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LV, n. 2 (809 V 13, Verona).

<sup>30</sup> Bougard, *Commutatio, cambium, viganeum, vicariatio*, in particular pp. 73-82. Still fundamental, for a juridical view, Vismara, *Ricerche sulla permuta*.

to witnesses, and urges a strong attention to the hierarchical arrangement in the presences in the eschatocollar apparatuses<sup>31</sup>. But there are also significant examples of this in the testamentary dispositions of the bishops themselves, from Peredeus of Lucca (778)<sup>32</sup> to Tachimpald of Bergamo (806)<sup>33</sup> to Atto of Novara (829)<sup>34</sup> up to – and with particular prominence – Billong of Verona (846)<sup>35</sup>, whose *pagina ordinationis* saw the participation of no less than 15 witnesses, ecclesiastical and lay, including a vassal of the city's Count Bernard and one of the bishop's himself.

These are also clear signs, reproduced into the forms of communication entrusted to legal writings, of that episcopal capacity for social coordination and growth in political power that would come to its peak in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century, in what Giovanni Tabacco called the «sintesi istituzionale di vescovo e città»<sup>36</sup>.

On the other hand, according to what the documentation allows us to observe, it is only in the episcopates that intellectual resources are concentrated that are capable of strongly linking legal writing and self-representation, even delineating a specific field of documentation concerning acts of internal jurisdiction characterized by the adoption of graphic styles, corroborative methods and distinctive attitudes of extra-notarial matrix that do not involve the participation of personnel from outside those same ecclesiastical institutions<sup>37</sup>. There is, for the first half of the ninth century, very little and scattered evidence (in addition to the lucchese *littera formata* already mentioned, I refer to the charter of foundation of the canonical chapter of Arezzo by Bishop Peter)<sup>38</sup>, but they are destined, however, to grow in number in the following century and to be endowed with formal structures and textual features that were gradually more stable, and above all shared, certainly also due to an increasingly clear approximation of these episcopal *decreta* to the model of the royal diploma<sup>39</sup>. Stabilization and standardization reveal common cultural schemes and the maturing of the political and ideological consistency of the ecclesiastical leadership, but do not, on the other hand, refer to the functioning of any bureaucratic body within the episcopate: historians agree

<sup>31</sup> Those apparatuses considered not by chance, in the charters of exchanges involving episcopal hierarchies, as «nuclei fondanti del documento» by Fissore, *I documenti cancellereschi*, p. 283. Significant examples in the documentary production of Asti in Fissore, *Problemi della documentazione vescovile*, pp. 41-94 and – even further back in time and abundant in quantity – of Bergamo in De Angelis, *Poteri cittadini*, in particular pp. 23-25, 63-69.

<sup>32</sup> ChLA, XXXVI, n. 1065 (778 III 16, Lucca) and n. 1066 (second original).

<sup>33</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCVIII, n. 3 (806 I 26, Bergamo).

<sup>34</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LVII, n. 1 (829 XII 29, Novara).

<sup>35</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LX, n. 26 (846 XII 12, Verona).

<sup>36</sup> Tabacco, *La sintesi istituzionale*.

<sup>37</sup> General overview in Nicolaj, *Note di diplomatica vescovile*. Bibliographical updates in Baitieri, *Politics and documentary culture*.

<sup>38</sup> The foundation charter – considered a forgery by Calleri, *Latto di fondazione* – has been edited as an authentic act in ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XC, n. 8 (835 X 6 – 843 VIII 29).

<sup>39</sup> Ghignoli, *Istituzioni ecclesiastiche*, pp. 660-661. Abundant examples, in relation to the case of Bergamo, in De Angelis, *Poteri cittadini*, pp. 153-185.

that there were no structured episcopal chanceries, nor a single centralised office for the production of diplomas. In the complete overlap – in terms of personnel and functions – between the major ecclesiastics of the *regnum* and the writers of those formidable instruments of political communication described by Wolfgang Huschner<sup>40</sup>, the episcopal churches found, however, a further channel for asserting their centrality, being thus capable of influencing directly or indirectly even the self-representative strategies of the (few) civil institutions that would later show sensitivity in imprinting the solemn mark of their own political initiatives in legal writings<sup>41</sup>.

### 3. *Writing as aristocrats*

My research has started from a census of the aristocrats' – i.e., as we established, bishops' and counts' – subscriptions in the documents issued in the *Regnum Italiae* from 774 to 855. The census has been based on the first and second series of the *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* but was limited to the volumes devoted to Italian libraries and archives, and particularly to the institutions located in the former *regnum* – a proximity between the place where documents were issued (and the geographical area they concerned), and their present place of conservation being taken for granted or at least mostly probable. I have excluded diplomas, forgeries and documents in a poor state of preservation, particularly when the eschatocol is damaged and therefore illegible. ninth century copies edited in the *ChLA* have been occasionally taken into consideration when the original documents contained aristocrats' subscriptions.

The research aimed to answer to the following questions, some of which have already been addressed by Gianmarco De Angelis in paragraph 2 of this paper:

How many aristocrats' signatures are now extant for the time span 774-855?

Among them, how many are autographs? How many are counts', and how many are bishops'?

What kind of documents do counts and bishops sign?

Do they sign together with other people, if so with whom, and what kind of relationship do they seem to entertain, at least as far as a hierarchy of the subscriptions is concerned?

What is their graphic culture? What kind of script do they use, and at what level of graphic competence do they manage it?

Is it possible to verify, through these signatures, the penetration of the Caroline minuscule in the *regnum Italiae*?

<sup>40</sup> Huschner, *Transalpine Kommunikation*.

<sup>41</sup> The reference is to Tomei, *Una nuova categoria documentaria*.

The study of the signatures and subscriptions to original documents of the Early Middle Ages, with paleographical and/or prosopographical intents, and in the perspective of the history of graphic culture is certainly not new. It has been the subject of research *in primis* by Armando Petrucci. Firstly, in 1972, he took a census of the subscriptions to the original documents of the seventh and eighth centuries, to investigate the different degrees of literacy and graphic competence of the subscribers, whether clerics or laymen, and the types of script taught, learnt, and used specifically in Lombard Italy at that time<sup>42</sup>. Petrucci's essay was then republished in 1992, as a chapter of his and Carlo Romeo's «*Scriptores in urbibus*», a book entirely devoted, as its subtitle shows, to the literacy and graphic culture in early medieval Italy, and their relation to the social status of the writers, with chapters concerning specific areas – Milan and Bergamo, Lucca, Pisa, to mention only those within the chronological and geographical scope of this research<sup>43</sup>. Meanwhile, Paola Supino Martini explored the subscriptions – either autograph, partially autograph or allograph – in the private charters of Lucca from the eighth century, and related the habit of subscribing in one own's hand to the scribes' role in the documentary process, and to the documentary practices, more than to their graphic ability<sup>44</sup>. The graphic culture of the members of Tuscan comital families forming the so called “office aristocracy”, and the relation between their graphic skills, their role as rulers and the fluctuations in their social prestige have been the subject of an article by Simone Collavini<sup>45</sup>. Antonio Ciaralli in 2007 – and again in 2010 with Massimiliano Bassetti – has focused on the writing of Count Leo I of Seprio and his sons, investigating the possible connections between writing and nationality – or rather, between writing and place of birth – and, following in the wake of Collavini, the graphic culture of members of the same family<sup>46</sup>. In recent years the completion of the second series of *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*, by making available editions and photographic reproductions of many documents from the ninth century, has made possible larger-scale explorations, which Gianmarco De Angelis, and Nino Mastruzzo and Gaia Elisabetta Unfer Verre undertook, dealing with the graphic culture of minor public officials in Lombardy and in Lucca respectively<sup>47</sup>.

The outcome of my census was not very satisfactory, particularly as far as the 21 volumes (XX to XL) of the first series of the *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* are concerned. Just 5 out of 202 documents dating 774-800, among which 187 are exploitable for this research, have aristocrats' subscriptions:

<sup>42</sup> Petrucci, *Libro, scrittura e scuola*, particularly pp. 323-330.

<sup>43</sup> Petrucci, Romeo, «*Scriptores in urbibus*», chapters I, III, IV, V, VIII.

<sup>44</sup> Supino Martini, *Le sottoscrizioni testimoniali*, pp. 87-108.

<sup>45</sup> Collavini, *Aristocrazia d'ufficio e scrittura*, pp. 23-51 and particularly pp. 25-26, 29-35.

<sup>46</sup> Ciaralli, *Osservazioni paleografiche*, pp. 127-149; Bassetti, Ciaralli, *Sui rapporti tra nazionalità e scrittura*, pp. 285-311.

<sup>47</sup> De Angelis, *Scabini e altri ufficiali pubblici minori*, pp. 57-114; Mastruzzo, Unfer Verre, *Pubblici uffici*, pp. 107-145.

three by the bishop of Lucca Peredeus (*ante 755-post 779*)<sup>48</sup> and two by his successor John I (*ante 781-post 800*)<sup>49</sup>. A sixth subscription, by the count of Piacenza Aroin (791-823) is not autograph<sup>50</sup>. The perusal of the volumes LIV-XCIX, CXVIII<sup>51</sup> of the *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series was somewhat more encouraging, at least in terms of numbers. There are 51 documents with aristocrats' subscriptions out of 747 documents dating 800-855 and usable for the purposes of this research; the subscriptions are 64, the subscribers are 37, those signing in their own hand numbering 28.

	Documents exploitable for the research	Documents with aristocrats' subscriptions	Subscriptions	Subscribers	Autograph subscribers
ChLA	187	6	6	3	2
ChLA <sup>2</sup>	747	51	64	37	28

Regarding the distribution of subscriptions between the two categories of bishops and counts throughout the period under consideration, the situation is as follows:

	No. by category	No. of subscriptions	Autograph subscriptions / subscribers
counts	13	15	6 (4)
bishops	26	54	54 (26)
other <sup>52</sup>	1	1	0

The subscriptions of 13 counts and 26 bishops are attested, totaling 15 and 54 subscriptions respectively. Of these, those of bishops are all autographs while only 6 subscriptions of counts are autographs: two each for Adalgis I<sup>53</sup> and Leo I<sup>54</sup>, counts of Parma and Seprio respectively; 1 by Adelrad count of Siena<sup>55</sup>; 1 by Leo I son's John<sup>56</sup>. This suggests some reflections.

<sup>48</sup> ChLA, XXXVI, nn. 1064 (777 VII 24, *Valeriana*), 1065-1066 (double original, 778 III 16, Lucca).

<sup>49</sup> ChLA, XXXIX, n. 1035 (792 IX 30, Lucca); ChLA, XL, n. 1159 (797 V, Villa Basilica [Pescia]). A subscription of John I was also present in two documents dating 783 I 16, Lucca, now a contemporary copy (ChLA, XXXVII, n. 1085) and 800 VII 27 (ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXII, n. 5), respectively. A copy of ChLA, XL, n. 1159 is now ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXII, n. 2.

<sup>50</sup> ChLA, XXVII, n. 830 (791 VI 6, Carpeneto).

<sup>51</sup> Volumes L to LIH concern documents preserved and issued in Southern Italy.

<sup>52</sup> Cunegonda, widow of Bernard king of Italy, was included in the census. For this document (ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII, n. 2 [835 VI 16, Parma]), see above § 2.

<sup>53</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIII, n. 2 (835 VI 16, Parma); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LIV, n. 1 (838 V 1, Ravenna).

<sup>54</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXXVIII, n. 32 (824 XII, Reggio); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIV, n. 29 (834 VIII – 840 VI 20, Milan).

<sup>55</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XC, n. 5 (833 X, Siena).

<sup>56</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIV, n. 33 (844 IV, Milan), on which see also below. The subscription of Stefanus son of the late Iffo count of Sovana, able to subscribe but not necessarily a count himself, has not been included in the census: ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXII, n. 16 (833 I [01-27], Frisilone).

First is the level of literacy of the two categories. Judging from the numbers surveyed, one could infer that if counts only rarely signed in their own hand the documents in which they were involved, while bishops always did so, the former were presumably illiterate and the latter in general capable of writing or at least of signing. In this regard, however, it has been noted elsewhere that the absence of an autograph signature does not of itself prove an inability to sign but rather depends on the specific role played in the legal action and the level of solemnity of the document<sup>57</sup>, when not on contingent reasons<sup>58</sup>. In the Veronese donation performed in 809/810<sup>59</sup> by the bishop Ratold and the count Hucpald discussed above, only Ratold subscribes in his own hand; the subscription of Oddo count of Mantua in a placitum from 818 is not autograph except for the *signum crucis*<sup>60</sup>. Among the documents of this census, those with counts' subscriptions are mostly *placiti*, presided over by them (9 out of 10); they are followed by 3 donations and an exchange, in which the count is the issuer, and finally by the famous donation of Cunegonda, widow of King Bernard, in which Count Adalgis I serves as witness along with the bishops of Parma and Reggio<sup>61</sup>. Counts' autograph subscriptions are found in 4 *placiti* and 2 donations; in four cases the count has a prominent role (presiding judge, donor), in the remaining two – as well as in the one from 820 – he is a just member of the court or a witness. These are small numbers, from which it does not seem possible to assert a correlation between type of document, role played in the legal action and autograph signature or lack thereof.

A second consideration concerns what seems to be a more extensive participation of bishops, as opposed to counts, in the documentation processes. In this regard, there always remains the doubt that the channels of preservation through which the documentation itself has come down to us may have favoured a greater survival of documents issued by ecclesiastical authorities or in which ecclesiastical authorities were in some way involved, as opposed

<sup>57</sup> Supino Martini, *Le sottoscrizioni testimoniali*, pp. 90, 106 (and Bassetti, Ciaralli, *Sui rapporti tra nazionalità e scrittura*, p. 287).

<sup>58</sup> In 829 Atto bishop of Novara, after laboriously tracing the *signum crucis* and writing, in an uncertain and disassociated cursive script, «Atto episcopus», yielded his pen to the *scriptor*, who specified: «Atto episcopus qui propter infirmitate manus nemine scribere potuit nisi tantum nomen suum scripsit» (ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LVII, n. 1 [829 XII 29, Novara]).

<sup>59</sup> See *supra* note 28.

<sup>60</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXXVIII, n. 31 (818 I 28 – VIII 31, Revere). Both Hucpald and Oddo, along with Ratold, seemed to have signed in their own hands a *placitum* from 820. The original document, «alquanto guasto» already in 1955 according to Manaresi, was examined by Armando Petrucci (Placiti I, n. 31, pp. 95-98 [820 III 31, Pozzuolo sul Mincio]), who identified in the writings of Hucpald and Oddo the earliest appearance of caroline minuscule in the *regnum Italiae* and defined Hucpald's hand «particolarmente sicura», Oddo's one «con qualche impaccio da semialfabeta» (which, however, would allow to rule out the count's illiteracy); Petrucci, Romeo, «*Scriptores in urbibus*», p. 211. It was then proved to be a forgery, and so excluded from vol. LXXXVIII of the *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*, on palaeographic, diplomatic and historical grounds: ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXXVIII, pp. 8-9, with reference to previous bibliography; Castagnetti, Ciaralli, *Falsari a Nonantola*, particularly pp. 203-216.

<sup>61</sup> See also above, paragraph 2.

to those issued by – or involving the participation of – secular authorities. As a matter of fact, the dossier of documents issued by/to/in name of Count Auteram, now kept in the Chapter Archive of Parma, constitutes a notable exception<sup>62</sup>.

What was the graphic culture of these subscribers? To what graphic tradition can it be referred back to? Can it reveal, in its type, style or even just dimensions, an ethnicity, a particular graphic education, a desire for self-representation, a conscious adherence to a specific graphic model? With the exception of the magnificent subscription in capital letters of the archbishop of Ravenna John VIII, issuer of a donation of 852 – a *hapax*, to be in any case evaluated in the light of the Romanistic tradition of the document itself and alongside the curial script used by the *tabellio*<sup>63</sup> – the autograph subscriptions of the counts and bishops, the latter significantly more numerous than those of the former as I said above, are distributed among three different graphic poles.

The first one is the new Roman cursive, which may seem perfectly mastered or, conversely, practiced at an elementary level, and so appear dissociated, free of ligatures and uncertain in *ductus* and alignment, an indisputable sign of unfamiliarity with the writing<sup>64</sup>. Not only does John I bishop of Lucca, also a copyist of books according to Luigi Schiaparelli<sup>65</sup>, use a confident and regular cursive script, but his Latin is also uncommonly correct (Fig. 6). His successor Iacobus (*ante* 801-818), one of the most highly-represented among the bishops subscribing to the corpus of documents considered for this research<sup>66</sup>, uses a cursive of a fairly good standard, characterized by the large size – a possible sign of a desire for self-representation as much as one of graphic insecurity – and rounded body of letters, but resorts to a more solemn version of this same script, with an elaborated *signum crucis*, elongated ascenders, “crested” *c*, a teardrop-shaped *o*, and original ligatures, for documents of some importance such as the *placitum* from 813, where his name is first declared in an *intitulatio* and he is the first of 42 subscribers (Fig. 7-8)<sup>67</sup>. The successive bishop of Lucca Peter I (*ante* 819-*post* 834) uses a much more basic level of cursive<sup>68</sup>, and so does, in 833, the bishop of Siena Anastasius, whose script is very uncertain in the alignment and in the proportions and

<sup>62</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCII, nn. 3 (843 VIII 14, Gondreville), 4 (848 V 16), 5 (848 IX 22), 6 (850 [VI 15- IX 23], Sabbione), 7 (851 I 15, Bologna). On Auteram, see above note 18.

<sup>63</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LV, n. 5 (852, Ravenna).

<sup>64</sup> Petrucci, Romeo, «*Scriptores in urbis*», pp. 25-26.

<sup>65</sup> Schiaparelli, *Il codice 490*, pp. 30-32. For the documents issued and undersigned by John see above, note 49.

<sup>66</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXII, nn. 6 (801 VII, Lucca), 24 (803 VII, Lucca), 33 (805 IX 17, Lucca), 50 (807 II 12, Lucca); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIII, nn. 22 (808 VIII, Lucca), 23 (808 VIII, Lucca), 37 (810 XI 3, Lucca), 50 (813 IV, Lucca); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIV, nn. 6 (814 IV 20, Lucca), 23 (816 IX 3, Lucca), 28 (817 VIII 12, Lucca), 30 (818 III 10, Lucca), 34 (818 VII 18, Lucca; copy).

<sup>67</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIII, n. 50 (813 IV, Lucca).

<sup>68</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LVIII, n. 14 (827 IX 1 – 828 VIII 31, Lucca); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIV, n. 40 (819 VI 28, Lucca); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXV, n. 7 (821 X 17, Lucca); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXVI, n. 28 (831 II 1, Lucca).

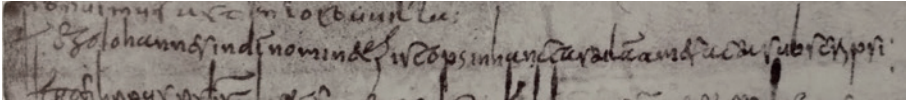


Fig. 6. ChLA2, XL, n. 1159 (797 V, Villa Basilica).

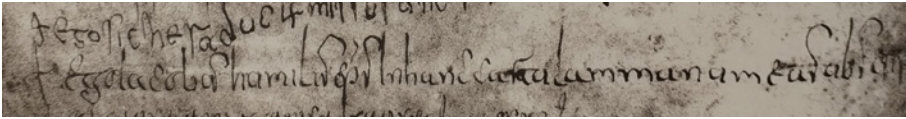


Fig. 7. ChLA2, LXXIII, n. 22 (808 VIII, Lucca).

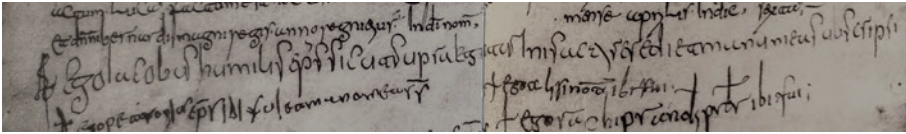


Fig. 8. ChLA2, LXXIII, n. 50 (813 IV, Lucca).

size of the letters, all separated from each other as well as in their tracing and form (omega-shaped *a*, uncial *G*, *t* with an unnaturally upward stroke)<sup>69</sup> (Fig. 9). As for the bishop of Novara Atto, who merely writes his own name and title, the uncertainty is probably due to his declared infirmity rather than to graphic inexperience<sup>70</sup>.

In numerous cases, the adherence to chancery models is open: the script is enriched with elongated and ascenders and descenders, a general lateral compression, high and “crested” *cs*, teardrop-shaped *os*, complicated bridge or loop ligatures, and sometimes specific features of the Merovingian documentary writing. This is the case of the subscriptions of Count Leo I to two *placiti* of 824 and 834, already the subject of Antonio Ciaralli’s investigations, and of Adalgis I count of Parma to two other *placiti* of 835 and 838<sup>71</sup>. Both counts use a cursive writing with an adherence to the Merovingian chancery scripts, which is particularly evident in Adalgis’s windling ascenders and in the *cs* beginning with a loop, and in Leo’s *a* of «concordans» elevated above the baseline and rotated 45° to tie with the following *n* (Fig. 10-11). Not surprisingly, it is also the case of Witgar, bishop of Turin (*ante* 832-*post* 838) and previously Lothar’s chancellor, in memory of which he kept also using the *signum recognitionis* with Tironian notes<sup>72</sup>.

Many other bishops opted for a script with chancery features, whether they were experienced writers or let slip uncertainties in the use of writing:

<sup>69</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XC, n. 5 (833 X, Siena).

<sup>70</sup> See above, note 58.

<sup>71</sup> For a reference to the editions see above notes 53 and 54.

<sup>72</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LIV, n. 1 (838 V 1, Ravenna).

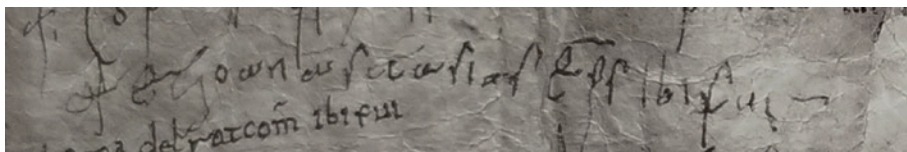


Fig. 9. ChLA2, XC, n. 5 (833 X, Siena).

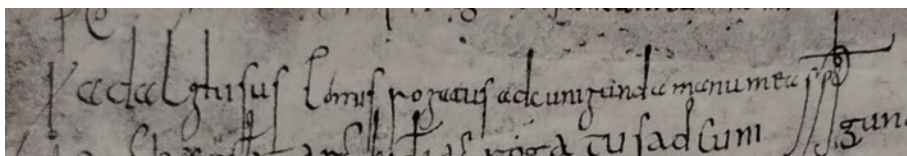


Fig. 10. ChLA2, LIV, n. 1 (838 V 1, Ravenna).

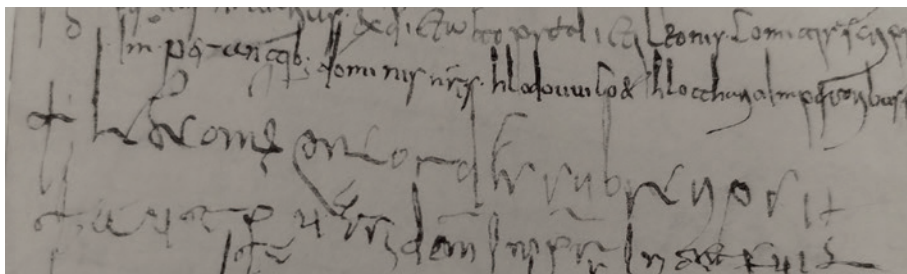


Fig. 11. ChLA2, XCIV, n. 29 (834 VIII – 840 VI 20, Milan).

Peredeus, the first of the bishops of Lucca appearing in this *corpus*, quite insecure in his attempts artificially to prolong the ascenders or execute cursive ligatures as *Eg* in «Ego» or between the two strokes of *x* (Fig. 12)<sup>73</sup>; the archbishop of Milan Odilbert (803-813) in a document from 806 in the form of a precept, with the *ls* terminating with an horizontal stroke on the baseline and cusp-shaped bowls of *ps*<sup>74</sup>; the bishop of Luni Peter (816?-826?), in a fascinating though uncertain script, rich in not-well-mastered ligatures, among which the elaborate *crip* in the amazing «SUSCRIPSI» written in large form and partially capital letters (Fig. 13)<sup>75</sup>; and finally, Seufredus, bishop of Piacenza (839?-870?), with his unusual abbreviations (see *-d(us)*) and contrast between small bowls and long ascenders and descenders<sup>76</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> See above note 48.

<sup>74</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIV, n. 3 (806 I). Another Odilbert's subscription, still as a subdeacon of the Milanese Church, is found in a document of 777 and shows the same features as well as the Merovingian *a* written above the baseline and rotated 45°: ChLA, XXVIII, n. 855 (777 III 8, Milan).

<sup>75</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIV, n. 24 (816 IX, Luni).

<sup>76</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXVIII, n. 38 (853 V, Piacenza); a second document with Seufredus' subscription is ChLA<sup>2</sup>, CXVII, n. 23 (851-866).

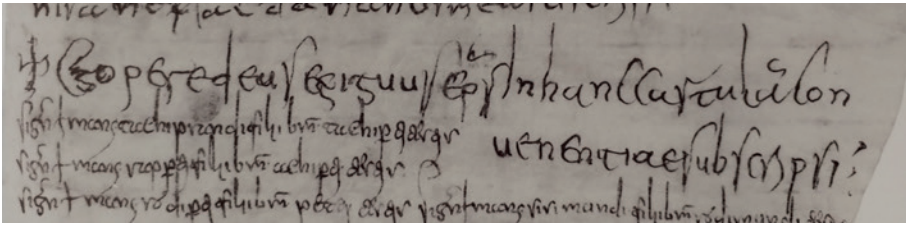


Fig. 12. ChLA, XXXVI, n. 1064 (777 VII 24, Valeriana).

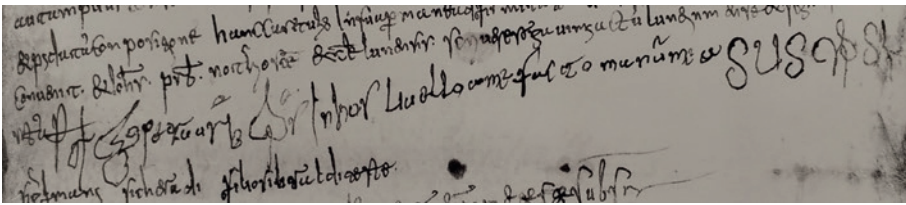


Fig. 13. ChLA2, LXXIV, n. 24 (816 IX, Luni).

Finally, the other graphic pole is that of the caroline minuscule, not without relapses into the cursive graphic tradition even by those who, from some time on, seem to know it well or at least want to adopt it. According to Armando Petrucci, it was the aristocrats themselves who were the first in the *regnum* to use scripts referring to this new reformed writing<sup>77</sup>. As a working hypothesis, we can define a subscription in caroline minuscule when not only the letters are detached from each other and the common ligatures of the cursive script are avoided, but also at least the *as*, *gs* and *ns* have the morphology that will form the canon of this script, i.e. the uncial shape for *a*, the closed upper bowl for *g*, the minuscule form for *n*. In that sense, the subscription of the Alamannic bishop of Verona Ratold, in the above-discussed donation from 809/810, shows the features of a caroline minuscule quite precociously practiced, though at a very elementary level: the tracing of the letters appears very insecure, but *a* is caroline in its morphology and so is *g*, the upper bowl of which tries to be closed. As it is the only Ratold's surviving subscription<sup>78</sup>, one cannot not ascribe these elements to an early attempt to practice a new type of script – meanwhile, however, the *t* has a loop on the left as in the cursive-based scripts – or, more plausibly, to general poor writing skills (Fig. 5).

We have to wait until the 830s to find more aristocrats' subscriptions in caroline minuscule. A *placitum* held in Siena in 833 was signed by three bishops and one count: apart from the bishop of Siena Anastasius, whose inexperienced cursive script was discussed above, the two presiding judges Agiprand

<sup>77</sup> Petrucci, Romeo, «*Scriptores in urbibus*», p. 211.

<sup>78</sup> See above, note 70.

bishop of Florence (823-*post* 833) and Peter II bishop of Volterra (823-845) make an evident effort to make their writing free of ligatures and to use the letters from the caroline minuscule (*a*, *g*, *n*), but these seem to be grafted onto a graphic education based on other models, as evidenced by the many cursive ligatures, including the alamannic *nt* of Agiprand, found in the subscriptions of both. On his part, the count of Siena Adelrad seems to practice a “pure”, however uncertain, caroline minuscule (Fig. 9)<sup>79</sup>.

At the end of the decade the number of subscriptions in caroline minuscule increases: disregarding an *ri*-ligature at the very end, that of the bishop and pontifical legate Theodore is entirely in caroline<sup>80</sup>, and so are the ones by the bishop of Lucca Berengar I (837-*post* 843), with some chancery features<sup>81</sup>, Rodingus bishop of Florence (840?-852)<sup>82</sup>, Peter I bishop of Arezzo (828-845)<sup>83</sup>. It is worth noting that at least Berengar among them is allegedly of Frankish nationality<sup>84</sup>. His successors Ambrose (843-852)<sup>85</sup> and Jeremiah (852-867)<sup>86</sup> also write in caroline minuscule, but the high loop of *es*, half-uncial *g*, long *Is*, upward flagging *r* and *ep* ligature in the former and the open *as* and “crested” *cs* in the latter, along with the Tironian note at the end, betray a graphic education that must have had its roots elsewhere (Fig. 14-15).

A similar case was that of John, the son of Count Leo I of Seprio, as Ciaralli pointed out. In subscribing to a Milanese *placitum* in 844, he uses a script decidedly less well defined than his father’s, in which various elements are mixed: cursive, such as the *esc* ligature (similar to his father’s *eoc* one), pre-caroline, such as the half-uncial *g* of «Ego» and the upward flagging *r*, but also caroline minuscule, such as the general separation of the words and the morphology of the *a*, which however does not yet appear to be spontaneously traced. As Ciaralli has noted, this is a writing – and thus a graphic education of the writer – based on the new Roman cursive, into which elements of the new graphic tradition are inserted, seeming more “picked up” than dominated<sup>87</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XC, n. 5 (833 X, Siena). According to Petrucci, the writing of Agiprand is «una pura ed elegante carolina posata», that of Peter a «semicorsiva sostanzialmente altomedievale», and Adelrad writes «elegantemente» (Petrucci, Romeo, «*Scriptores in urbibus*», pp. 216 and 211 respectively).

<sup>80</sup> For references see above, note 72.

<sup>81</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXVII, nn. 18 (838 XII 16, Lucca), 26 (839 VI 14, Lucca), 38 (840 III 24, Lucca).

<sup>82</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXVII, n. 35 (840 II, Lucca),

<sup>83</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XC, n. 8 (835 X 6 – 843 VIII 29).

<sup>84</sup> Castagnetti, *I vassalli imperiali*, p. 230; Bassetti, Ciaralli, *Sui rapporti tra nazionalità e scrittura*, p. 308; Tomei, *Writing*, pp. 160, 163.

<sup>85</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXVIII, n. 21 (844 I, Lucca); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXIX, nn. 6 (846 IV 1, Lucca), 17 (847 V 6, Lucca); ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXX, n. 5 (850 VI 22, Lucca).

<sup>86</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, LXXX, n. 45 (855 IV 15, Lucca).

<sup>87</sup> ChLA<sup>2</sup>, XCIV, n. 33 (844 IV, Milan). Ciaralli, *Osservazioni paleografiche*, pp. 143-145; Bassetti, Ciaralli, *Sui rapporti tra nazionalità e scrittura*, pp. 309-310.

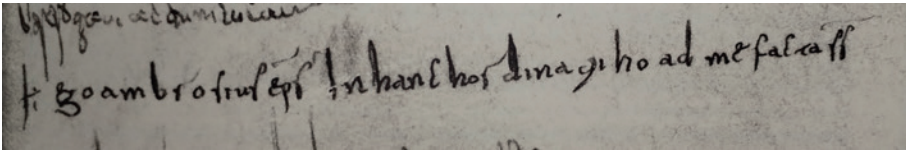


Fig. 14. ChLA2, LXXIX, n. 17 (847 V 6, Lucca).

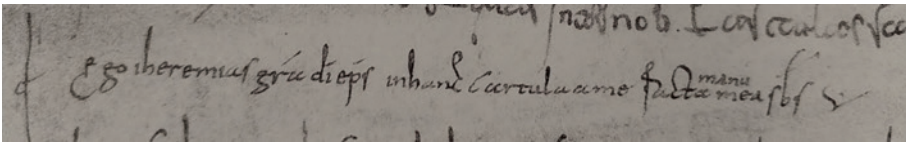


Fig. 15. ChLA2, LXXX, n. 45 (855 IV 15, Lucca).

#### 4. Conclusions

The census of aristocrats' subscriptions carried out as a part of this research has made it possible to collect a decidedly scarce number of examples of counts' signatures, and just an adequate number of bishops' signatures. The bishops' always autograph subscriptions allow us to know better their graphic culture. In this sense, the rich documentation from Lucca offers a privileged perspective of observation, for we have at least one – and in several cases more than one – autograph subscription of the entire series of bishops from the last quarter of the eighth century to the middle of the ninth. On the other hand, the scarcity of documentation bearing counts' either autograph or non-autograph subscriptions seems to suggest their limited participation in documentation processes, due to – as shown in the first part of this essay – a lack of interest in forms of self-representation, as opposed to the bishops' and their group's investment in this. In any case, the possibility of the bias related to the channels by which the documentation itself has been preserved remains.

However, the presence, both in the few counts' autograph subscriptions and in many of the bishops' ones, of chancery features inserted into a cursive or caroline script, when not of an adherence *tout-court* to chancery writing models such as the Merovingian, suggests a desire to solemnize the document while emphasizing the role and personality of the subscriber. As for the caroline minuscule, its use among the aristocrats seems to settle in – or is at least well documented – from the fourth decade of the ninth century onwards, and to be linked, when not to a generational change (whereby the writer practices it as the main if not the only writing model he has learned), to a willingness to adopt or imitate what was evidently spreading as the common writing model and therefore also to a precise political-cultural programme.

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