

# **Aristocracy in Ravenna in the age of Lothar I: integration and historical memory**

by Edward M. Schoolman

There remains a significant lacuna in the narrative sources about the aristocracy in Ravenna during the age of Lothar I. For example, the *Liber Pontificalis* of Ravenna offers very little on account of its focus and defective ending, while Riccobaldo of Ferrara, who was able to work in the episcopal archives in the end of the thirteenth century, also leaves only traces in his histories of either Lothar or the city. The charters from the church of Ravenna, on the other hand, demonstrate a significant change during Lothar's 37-year reign in Italy. They are witness to a period of Frankish integration into Ravenna's aristocratic elites through marriages, a phenomenon referenced for later periods in the literary sources. By 855, at the end of Lothar's reign, the charters allude to a shift in the composition of Ravenna's aristocracy, having transformed into an elite admixture of noble Franks and the landholding elites of Ravenna who saw the identity of their lineage as «descended from dukes». The post-dating or even absence of this shift in later narrative sources reveals that it was not the first half of the ninth century but later realignments of Ravenna's urban elite that left a stronger mark on the city's past.

Middle Ages; ninth century; Ravenna; aristocracy; Carolingians; historical memory; ecclesiastical authority

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*Abbreviations*

*Chronicon Faventinum* = *Magistri Tolosani Chronicon Faventinum*, ed. G. Rossini, Bologna 1936-1939 (RIS, n.s., 28/1).

LP = *Liber Pontificalis, Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vol., ed. L. Duchesne, Paris 1886-1892.

MGH, Salimbene, *Cronica* = Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Hannover-Leipzig 1905-1913 (MGH, SS, 32).

1. *Introduction*

The city of Ravenna had seen imperial favor several times in its history. It was the seat of government for the emperor Honorius and Galla Placidia in the fifth century, served as the capital for Theodoric's Gothic kingdom, and later as the center of Byzantine control in seventh century Italy under its exarchs. With the exit of the exarchs in the mid-eighth century and the arrival of Franks shortly afterwards, the city continued to seek imperial notice through various means, primarily in efforts by its church and bishops in securing favor through gifts in exchange for confirmations and privileges, while "new" emperors sought out the city in an effort to use its imperial past as part of their own legitimacy. It was within this latter context that the city's aristocracy – primarily of landholding urban elites – recast themselves into new hereditary positions, primarily through a number of lines of claiming descent from "dukes". In this medieval and post-imperial afterlife, these elite worked to reclaim elements of this past legacy through their connections to alternative sources of power, locally through the patronage of the Church of Ravenna and neighboring monastic institutions, and more expansively through involvement and with the new rulers of northern Italy, the Carolingian Franks.

The focus of this paper is the specific evolution of the aristocracy in Ravenna during the reign of Lothar I, setting as a chronological boundary from his ascension as King of Italy in 818 to his death 855, overlapping with both his father, Louis the Pious, and his son, Louis II. Given the limitations of local contemporary sources and a desire to trace the changes that took place during this period, it becomes necessary to also use later medieval narratives and those beyond the strict confines of Ravenna. This wider range of sources reports on not just the successes and failure of these coeval aristocracies in harnessing new connections, but extends the reach of this study beyond the actual evolution to incorporate how the broader history of the city's urban elites were later imprinted into historical memory.

In practice, however, it is the evidence from charters that fills in the transition of the local aristocracy and the integration of Franks and their allies into the city's elites. Unlike in neighboring communities where Lombards were dispossessed or demoted by the arrival and integration of the Franks within less than a generation, in the case of Ravenna no families were dispossessed in this period and no new hierarchies immediately established. Instead, a small number of outsiders, made up primarily of Franks, married

into the ruling elite post-exarchal families, and with these unions creating new types of aristocratic dynasties.

Between the evidence from contemporary charters and later narratives, not every question can be answered. For example, how were marriages between Ravenna's elites and outsiders arranged during the age of Lothar? What was the impetus for financially imbalanced unions and exogamous marriages, and were they driven by "top-down" or "bottom-up" priorities? What marked the period of the 830s and 840s, when the process began, as different from the earlier periods? And ultimately, how did this integration of Frankish elite affect civic identity in a decidedly post-Roman and post-Imperial city? What our evidence does illuminate is that the shifting nature of the city's aristocracy described here left a long and lasting impact on urban memory, and further contributed to the unique character of the city. This evidence, both through contemporary and later reflections, became central for both what they convey and what they omit about the legacy of Lothar and this transformation of the city's aristocracy.

## 2. Sources

The narrative sources that can offer some insights into Ravenna's ninth century history begin with the contemporary *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, and with a significant lacuna pick up again in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries<sup>1</sup>. Following a brief but illuminating anecdote in the *Cronica* of the Franciscan Salimbene de Adam (which focuses on the history of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries), the *Chronicon Faventinum* of the early thirteenth century Tolosanus and the works of Riccobaldo of Ferrara, composed and centered on activities in the region, are instructive for what they report, and leave out or misunderstand about this crucial period in Ravenna's history. This evidence can be combined with the charters of the Church of Ravenna, for which we have seven with dates aligning with the reign of Lothar that offer small but important windows into the different communities and networks engaged in the production of these documents and support of the church<sup>2</sup>.

For the early Middle Ages, the best source for this history is the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna at least through the early 840s<sup>3</sup>. While it was a serial biography following the model of that of Rome, unlike that project it had a single author, the cleric Agnellus, who offers irregular insights into city's secular elites, the local landholding urban aristocracy, even during his own

<sup>1</sup> On the position of Ravenna in a wider Carolingian (and later Ottonian) historiographic context, see Savigni, *Memoria Urbis*.

<sup>2</sup> On the networks visible in the documents, and especially in the lists of witnesses, see Schoolman, *Local Networks*.

<sup>3</sup> Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*.

lifetime. Instead unsurprisingly he was concerned with the affairs of the city's archbishops and clergy, and its descriptions of Lothar were generally positive – he was indeed the emperor – and his work explored the relationship he purportedly had with the archbishop at the time, George<sup>4</sup>. Unfortunately in this case, the *Liber pontificalis* of Ravenna is problematic because its ending is lost, so the effects of the civil war and Lothar's continued possible relationship with Ravenna is unknown. What is left is only a light imprint of the possible relationships between the city's ecclesiastical administration and its aristocracy, which must have been heavily involved by this point.

Few other sources originate from Ravenna in the following centuries. In part, it reflected the political situation, with Ravenna continuing to face a political decline (even, for example, when received the patronage of the Ottonian emperors), while neighboring cities found their fortunes elevated. The paucity of references to ninth century Ravenna would not end until the thirteenth century, when Riccobaldo of Ferrara, who was able to work in the episcopal archives and library of the city, composed his histories. Even these, however, offer very little of note on either Lothar or the city itself, and instead turning his focus to local events in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. While Riccobaldo is primarily known for general chronicles and other humanistic works, during his time in Ravenna from 1297 to at least 1301, when he served in the administration of Obizzo II d'Este, he composed two works of "local" history, the *Pomerium Ravennatis Ecclesie* (dedicated to a local archdeacon, Michael) and what is known as the *Chronica extracta de archivo ecclesie Ravenne*, both which would in turn serve as preludes for his later chronicles, notably the *Compendium de Historia Romana* and the shorter *Compilatio chronologica*<sup>5</sup>.

The archival sources, on the other hand, demonstrate a significant change during Lothar's 37-year reign in Italy. They consist of charters produced by activities related to the church of Ravenna, and preserved in that institution's archive<sup>6</sup>. In Ravenna, they are witness to the beginning of a period of Frankish integration into the city's aristocratic elites, through the support of the archbishop and marriage alliances, the latter a phenomenon otherwise unrecognized in the literary sources. By 855, at the end of Lothar's reign, the composition of Ravenna's aristocracy was already on its way to becoming an admixture of noble Franks and the landholding elites of Ravenna<sup>7</sup>. This new aristocratic cohort would in the tenth century describe themselves as *ex genere ducum* or «descended from dukes», a form that would remain common in

<sup>4</sup> Schoolman, *Representations of Lothar I*. George of Ravenna was also mentioned as the first of the bishops who sided with Drogo of Metz in 844 during a dispute between Lothar and Pope Sergius II, in LP, vol. 2, pp. 89-90.

<sup>5</sup> On the career of Riccobaldo, see Hankey, *Riccobaldo of Ferrara*, and pp. 10-13 for the specific relationship between his work and the material of Ravenna.

<sup>6</sup> *Le carte ravennati dei secoli ottavo e nono*.

<sup>7</sup> On the history of one early Frankish-exarchal family, the Guidi, see Rinaldi, *Le origini dei Guidi*.

the charts for another century until a more “local” identity become dominant, one that is acknowledged in both narratives and archival documents<sup>8</sup>.

This intermingling of Ravenna’s old post-Roman elite families with the newly arrived Franks and neighboring Lombards has long been recognized, with significant studies by Giulio Buzzi and Veronica West-Harling, although the process has most closely tied to the second half of the ninth century and into the tenth century<sup>9</sup>. My intervention here will be to closely examine the charters for the early evidence of this process under Lothar, offer some explanations as to its onset and the factors that led to its acceleration, propose some further questions, as well as explore why this phenomenon was essentially overlooked in local contemporary and later medieval sources.

### 3. *Lothar, Ravenna, and inconsistent historiography*

Ravenna’s integration into the *Regnum* of Italy was complicated given its eighth-century history, both as the seat of byzantine power in central Italy, and after 751, its continued rivalry with and at times animosity towards Rome. Its central political figures were its bishops, frequently selected from the ranks of the city’s post-exarchic aristocracy – the various *duces* and *magistri militum* of the city –. The *Liber pontificalis* offers the lives of bishop Martin, who served from 810-818, and George, 837-846, but we are missing the biographies of both their predecessors. After George, our best source for Ravenna’s ninth century bishops, is, unfortunately, the *Liber Pontificalis* of Rome – however neither this narrative nor the *Liber* for Ravenna pay much attention to the various groups that formed Ravenna’s evolving aristocracy, something for which we will have to turn to other sources.

At the end of the thirteenth century, the historian and humanist Riccobaldo of Ferrara, according to his own accounts, was able to access the archive of the church of Ravenna during a three year stay from 1297-1300 when he may have served as a church canon. Relying primarily on manuscript accounts of the city’s past, he produced a number of works, including two specifically “centered” so to speak on the city itself: the *Pomerium Ravennatis Ecclesie* and what is known as the *Chronica extracta de archivio ecclesie Ravenne*, which seemed to have been drafted as a prelude or scaffolding for his more comprehensive chronicles<sup>10</sup>. Given the sources he had at his disposal, it might be suitable to examine how he understood the events of the reign of Lothar and the ninth century more generally.

In the *Pomerium*, which begins as a universal chronicle but narrows to a regional history by the period of Frederick II (1194-1250), Riccobaldo pres-

<sup>8</sup> Schoolman, *Inheriting Identity and Constructing History*, pp. 111-115.

<sup>9</sup> West-Harling, *Rome, Ravenna, and Venice*; Buzzi, *Ricerche per la storia di Ravenna; Le carte ravennati del decimo secolo*.

<sup>10</sup> Zanella, *Ferrara*.

ents a rather bland version of Lothar's reign, scoured from the general sources at hand. Appearing in Book IV, chapter 71, is a description of the reign taken almost verbatim from Martin of Opava's enormously popular twelfth century *Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum*, an account which focuses on the conflict between Lothar and his royal brothers, Louis the German and Charles the Bald. Riccobaldo's including his own addition following Martin's text, noting that: «[Following the end of the conflict in 843], Lothar ruled with his son Louis for five years; in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, having divided his kingdom between his sons, he renounced the secular world, moving to the monastery of Prüm, and taking on monastic rites, he died»<sup>11</sup>. What we find in the *Chronica extracta de archivo ecclesie Ravenne* is something even more skeletal (although featuring slightly more information), but nothing to suggest that Riccobaldo was interested or able to include material relating to the local history of the city in whose archives he studied.

This anecdote is telling because the silence of Riccobaldo on the majority of Lothar's reign, not to mention the situation of Ravenna's elites during the middle of the ninth century, is perhaps surprising. Yet, this lack of attention is also indicative of a noticeable *lacuna* given the sources at his disposal, although as Igor Santos Salazar's contribution in this volume articulates, there is significant silence on a number of other fronts as well.

We can see the effects of this historical disinterest in other places, such as in his casual glossing over of Charlemagne's other successors, as a result of the styles and genres which Riccobaldo was emulating. It is possible to reveal more about the policies that Lothar may have taken in Ravenna by first considering his approaches in neighboring places, and following that, how the charters of Ravenna paint the developments of the city's elites – lay, ecclesiastical, and often intertwined – during the period of Lothar's reign.

In the *Chronicon Faventium*, an earlier thirteenth century chronicle written to provide a deep history of city of Faenza by a local canon named Tolosanus, we can see how a different historical approach reveals the shadow of Carolingian policy within local memory and history<sup>12</sup>. Although most of the chronicle is concerned with Faenza's history in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Tolosanus reaches back to reimagine the Roman foundations of the city, and shifts chronology and perspective to try to trace various narratives connected to the city's geographical position. Following an account concerned with destruction of the nearby city of Forlì by the Lombard king Grimoald in the seventh century, the tenth chapter of the *Chronicon* begins with the age of the Carolingians

<sup>11</sup> Riccobaldo, *Pomerium*, IV, 71: «Lotharius mox cum filio suo Lodovico annis V imperavit. Anno imperii XV, partito inter filios regno, renuntiavit seculo et in Promia monasterio, suscepto habitu monachali, obdormivit in Christo. De cuius anima maxima inter angelos et demones altercatio fuit, ita ut cunctis assistentibus corpus distrahi videbatur, sed orationibus monachorum demones fugati sunt».

<sup>12</sup> *Chronicon Faventinum*. The most recent analysis of this chronicle has been Mascanzoni, *Il Tolosano e i suoi continuatori*.

through an abbreviated account of the battle of Roncevaux and continues with a genealogy of Charlemagne's heirs through to Lothar. In the remaining text of that chapter, he includes an item concerning local history: «At that time he [Lothar] was received with honor coming to Rome from Faenza; he placed the area called Acereta under the jurisdiction of Faenza, then he made Lutirano as restitution to the bishop because count Tetgrimo had invaded it»<sup>13</sup>.

This confused statement seems to indicate that after traveling to Rome, Lothar corrected jurisdictional issues which arose in Faenza, offering the Valle di Acereta (which by the time of Tolosanus was home to an important Camaldolensi monastery) to the *comitatus* of the city, while Lutirano, a settlement southwest of the city along a different valley, was given as restitution to the bishop, although the later narrative of this story makes it unclear as to which bishop the settlement was given. Although Tolosanus has scrambled some of the details, placing the late tenth century figure of Tetgrimo back a century, he still positioned Lothar as having the authority to settle jurisdictional issues, and as a leader invested in the region.

These literary sources, both contemporary to Lothar and those following a later tradition, are mostly uninterested in the evolutions of local elites. As noted in the introduction, however, we can find evidence of the development of a new aristocracy within the archival sources from the church of Ravenna – with a warning that we cannot do nearly the prosopographical analysis that is possible with the charters from Lucca, for example, that are analyzed in other contributions to this volume.

As a different category of evidence, Ravenna's charters can illuminate a reflection of networks and relationships in sales, donations, and registers of witnesses to varying degrees of resolution depending on the aims of the various texts. This category must be approached with some caution, however, as while there are 48 charters from Ravenna in the ninth century, only 5 can be positively dated to the reign of Lothar, with a further two dated roughly to the middle of that century. Of these, two are privileges and two are donations, while the rest are single cases: a *placitum*, a record of sale, and a request for an emphyteutic lease. Despite the relatively paucity of evidence for this exact period, under scrutiny these charters reveal much about the evolution of Ravenna's aristocracy.

#### 4. Identifying aristocracy in Ravenna's charters

Here we turn to the specific evidence from Ravenna's charter, and the first of the five positively identified charters from the period of Lothar's reign

<sup>13</sup> *Chronicon Faventinum*, 10, pp. 18-19: «Quodam tempore Romam pergens a Faventinis receptus est honorifice; qui curtem quamdam Aceretam nomine positam Faventino subposuit comitatus; Lautiranum autera, quod comes Tigrinus invaserat, restitui fecit episcopo». This event is also discussed in Schoolman, *Inheriting Identity and Constructing History*, pp. 119-122.

was issued on July 11 in 819 in Rome. In this document, crucial for Ravenna's church, Pope Paschal I confirmed the rights of the church of Ravenna in the granting of a *privilege* outlining not only its status over regional churches and monasteries, but its immunities from other infringements<sup>14</sup>. This was, of course, a clear victory of the archbishop Petronax of Ravenna, who likely won this confirmation in part due to his relationship with the Carolingians, and especially Lothar – one that would continue and deepen with his successor, the Archbishop George<sup>15</sup>. Unfortunately, little is known about Petronax, who served as bishop from 817-837, from the perspective of Ravenna, as his biography was not included (or did not survive) in the *Liber Pontificalis* of Agnellus except for a few anecdotes, including the following inserted into the biography of the bishop Maurus:

But almost twelve years ago, in the time of Bishop Petronax, the Emperor Lothar ordered [the polished lid of the tomb of bishop Maurus] to be removed, and he enclosed it in a wooden chest on wool and carried it off to Francia, and placed it on the altar of Saint Sebastian, as if it were a table. It was commanded me by the bishop, that I go there [the church of Severus in Ravenna], lest the workmen should act carelessly and break it; but since my heart was full of grief I withdrew to a different place<sup>16</sup>.

Although Agnellus's reaction to the despoliation of the tomb of Maurus was negative, the act itself, Lothar taking a monument associated with a popular Ravennate bishop with the approval of Petronax, and installing it in Francia, functioned to elevate the city during a period when the Carolingians were renegotiating their positions and alliances in Italy<sup>17</sup>. Taking the privilege of 819 together with this anecdote from the *Liber Pontificalis*, however, demonstrates how the relationship between the political activities of the bishops and the changing nature of Ravenna's aristocracy is tenuous; for the privilege itself, no locals are named, as was typical in this form of document, but it instead illustrates of the attempts of Ravenna's church to maintain authority, and those selected from the aristocracy to lead it<sup>18</sup>.

The second document, on papyrus and now held in the Vatican library, records a donation to the church of Ravenna in either 823 or 824 of a series of properties in the nearby towns of Imola and Faenza<sup>19</sup>. These cities, formal-

<sup>14</sup> Savigni, *I papi e Ravenna*, p. 343. Benericetti, *Le carte ravennate dei secoli ottavo e nono*, n. 9, pp. 21-23 (819 VII 11, Rome).

<sup>15</sup> West-Harling, *Rome, Ravenna, and Venice*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>16</sup> Deliyannis, *Agnellus of Ravenna, The Book of Pontiffs*, p. 231 (for the original text see Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis*, 113, p. 284: «Sed pene annos .XII., tempore Petronacis pontificis Lotharius augustus tollere iussit et in capsam ligneam super lanam inclausit et Franciam deportavit et super altarium sancti Sebastiani, mensam ut esset, posuit. Praeceptum mihi a pontifice fuit, ut ego illuc issem, ne caementarii incaute agerent, frangeretur; sed corde dolore pleno in partem aliam secessi»).

<sup>17</sup> Schoolman, *Representations of Lothar I*, pp. 125-126; Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*, pp. 308-322.

<sup>18</sup> Ravenna ceased to be a political center in the ninth century, but remained important for Carolingians for its materials and its past status as capital (Augenti, *A tale of two cities. Rome and Ravenna*).

<sup>19</sup> Benericetti, *Le carte ravennate dei secoli ottavo e nono*, n. 10, pp. 23-25 (823 IX 3 - 824 IX 3).

ly under the episcopal jurisdiction of Ravenna, were also under its political way, as made clear by the location of the donors, Stephanus and Digna, who lived in the territory outside of Faenza. The papyrus is incomplete, so we cannot scour the list of witnesses to understand the political, cultural, and even social networks to which Stephanus and Digna belonged. As for their backgrounds, in this case their names themselves are of little help in determining origins, as Stephanus was one of the most common names found in Romagna at this time, and Digna, while rare, was one of the typical “salvation-bringing” personal names<sup>20</sup>.

We must wait until 838, twenty years after Lothar ascended to the throne in Italy, for a charter that illustrates a process the must have already commenced in earnest in the decades prior. In 838, a *placitum* was held in two locations – first Rovigo and later Ravenna – and adjudicated by a three-man panel: Theodorus, bishop and emissary of the pope; Vuitgherius, bishop of Turin and imperial missus; and Adelghis, count of Parma and imperial missus<sup>21</sup>. Adelghis is an important figure – one to whom we will return in our conclusion –, as his activities under Louis the Pious, Lothar, and Louis II illustrate the continuity of his loyalty to and utility within the Carolingian *Regum*<sup>22</sup>.

The details of the case are as follows: George, the archbishop of Ravenna, ally of Lothar, and perhaps even missus of the pope, challenged Bruningo, an imperial vassal, over the ownership of a range of estates that were claimed as the patrimony of Saint Apollinaris. These were effectively estates that had belonged to the church of Ravenna, but had likely been contested in the recent past. In order to affirm the owner, the *placitum* serves to record Bruningo conceding to the claim made by George and recognizing the rights of the church.

As fascinating as these events must have been to attend, our interest lies in the larger perspective of those who are recognized in attendance within the charter. Even though Lothar himself was not present, his Frankish and Lombard vassals and *missi* were there in close proximity to the men who would represent the aristocratic factions closest to the archbishop and those who were part of the retinues of the adjudicating committee. While given few other names, although the following are listed as being in attendance:

G[eogrius] archiep[iscopu]s  
Lauterius, Pe[t]rus germanis  
Romanus, Lauterio fil(io)  
Paulus, La[u]terius ger(man)is  
Africanus

<sup>20</sup> Haubrichs, *The early medieval naming-world of Ravenna*, p. 280; Haubrichs, *Die frühmittelalterliche Namenwelt von Ravenna*, p. 237.

<sup>21</sup> Benericetti, *Le carte ravennati dei secoli ottavo e nono*, n. 11, pp. 25-28 (838 V 1, Rovigo, later Ravenna).

<sup>22</sup> Adelghis (or Adelchis) was a member of the Supponid dynasty, and over time accumulated a number of other positions. While he was first count in Parma in the 830s, he also became count of Cremona and Brescia. Wickham, *Early Medieval*, p. 57.

Constantinus  
Fredhald  
Iohannes  
Martin(us)  
alius Roman(us)  
Theidera  
Vuilliram  
Vitalis  
Petrus  
Stefanus

The onomastics give us some hint of what might be taking place. On the one hand, Paul, Peter, Constantine, John, Martin, and Vitalis are very common in the documentation from Ravenna in the eighth and ninth century. On the other, the names Lauterius and Africanus are rare in Ravenna, and appear only in this charter, although the name Lauterio, a shortened form of Greek Eleutherius, is known from other texts<sup>23</sup>. Others deserve some further discussion. Fredhald, Theidera, and Vuilliram represent, if not uniformly “Germanic” names in origin, at least those that would be understood as decidedly non-Ravennate in this context. Even if we cannot know their connections beyond this document, that they were physically in Ravenna together helps us make sense of the developments of the following decades – that those connected to the Carolingian administration of Italy would continue to be present and over time integrated into the community.

This *placitum* also demonstrates an additional dimension, that the church, and the citizens who supported it, were at a peak of in not political power, a type of cultural relevance. Those who served Lothar directly, or as his *missi*, were also aware of this fact. And unlike the neighboring Lombard territories, Ravenna and Romagna did not yet have a Frankish landholding presence due to its history outside of Lombard control. This also flagged Ravenna’s territory as one which would seem ripe for exploitation, which would offer a rationale for the hypothesis that in the 830s new intermarriages between Franks and locals are beginning to take place<sup>24</sup>.

A roughly contemporary charter, a now-lost interfamilial donation-as-sale from the middle of the century, illustrates the next phase of the growing fusion among the elites in the Romagna. The charter has been dated roughly to the end of Lothar’s reign by the appearance of the titles of *tribunus* found in two of the witnesses, although other internal evidence supports this supposition as well<sup>25</sup>. This original, once kept in Venice but likely belonging to a portfolio of documents relating to salt areas near Comacchio, reports that a

<sup>23</sup> Haubrichs, *The early medieval naming-world of Ravenna*, p. 255.

<sup>24</sup> On this process generally, see Cosentino, *Antroponomia, politica e società nell’esarcato*.

<sup>25</sup> The original charter is lost, but was originally published in the first edition of the papyri documents from medieval Italy in *I papiri diplomatici*, n. 127, pp. 193-194 (10<sup>th</sup> century). The text of the charter also appears in Benericetti, *Le carte ravennati dei secoli ottavo e nono*, n. 14, pp. 31-33 (half 9<sup>th</sup> century c.).

certain Valbesinda (who appeared as Albesina elsewhere), gave to her son the *dux* Martin a house located in Rimini, land in the Montefeltrano and Rimini, and unsurprisingly considering the context, some salt pans in Comacchio in exchange for 270 *solidi mancusi bisanthei*<sup>26</sup>. The most relevant features of this gift are what can be presumed about those involved. Although without further confirmation, it is like that Valbesinda was Frankish, and moreover already in possession of a number of properties in the region (but connected to Ravenna itself)<sup>27</sup>.

Valbesinda then serves critical figure both in this document and in the history of the development of a new aristocracy together with her husband, the *dux* Gregory<sup>28</sup>. Gregory was one of several *duces* serving in Ravenna at the time, and on account of his time and his first appearance in the historical record as a witness to the *placitum* of 838 mentioned above, he was a member of Ravenna's local aristocracy. He was also likely the same *dux* Gregory who was the beneficiary of a formal *renuncia* twenty years later in 858 of which only the subscriptions of participants and witnesses<sup>29</sup>. What these short statements attest was that a certain Atroaldo, the son of the deceased Atrepaldo, renounced in perpetuity the things which were described in the now lost document, acknowledging them as belonging to the duke Gregory, his sons and heirs, in exchange for 300 *solidi mancusi*. The situation seems to have been resolved amicably enough, and suggests that at this point in the middle of the ninth century and following the end of Lothar's reign, Gregory's aim seems to be the preservation of property (in this case at some expense) against those whose names indicate possible Lombard identity, or at least non-Ravennate origins.

Although outside of the chronological focus here, Martin, the son of *dux* Gregory and the recipient of Valbesinda's gift in 838, continued the process of Frankish integration into the local aristocracy of Ravenna. Their son Martin mentioned here, who was also titled as *dux*, found an equal partner in another exogamous marriage with a woman named Ingelrada, the daughter of Hucbald, an ally of Louis the Pious. Both Martin and the newly titled *comitessa* Ingelrada were active in Ravenna's political realm, and after Martin's death in 896, Ingelrada became a conduit in the establishment of convents and in support of the church<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> The appearance of *solidi mancusi* in both this document and in *renuncia* connected to Valbesinda's husband Gregory (discussed below) are interesting, although unique outliers, in that they be indicative of circulation of coins from Byzantine world (although, perhaps originally Sicily rather than Constantinople), reaffirming the cultural connections that Ravenna shared to the southern and eastern Mediterranean. Cosentino, *Ricchezza e investimento della chiesa di Ravenna*, pp. 434-435; Prigent, *Le mythe du mancusi*.

<sup>27</sup> On the exploitation of the area between Comacchio and Ravenna, and the links between them, see Cortese, *Sui sentieri del sale*.

<sup>28</sup> Schoolman, *Nobility, Aristocracy, and Status*, p. 225.

<sup>29</sup> Benericetti, *Le carte ravennati dei secoli ottavo e nono*, n. 18, pp. 42-44 (c. 858). This document is especially notable in that it is the last of the papyri private documents preserved from Italy.

<sup>30</sup> Schoolman, *Nobility, Aristocracy, and Status*, pp. 225-226.

Returning to the middle of the ninth century, the final charter worth considering was a donation put forth in March of 855 just a few months before Lothar died in Prüm, and long after his last venture to Italy. Indeed, it had been 11 years since the coronation of Lothar's son, Louis II, so perhaps it might also be worth considering this particular document as one which belonged to both reigns, or at the very least a transitional period.

The donation will seem familiar, as it again involves the church of Ravenna, whose bishop John X was the recipient of estates in the territories of Bologna, Imola, and Faenza, given by Gisulf, the son of the deceased *dux* Romuald<sup>31</sup>. This family, along with that of the previously mentioned duke Gregory, eventually formed two of the major family dynasties in Ravenna in the ninth, tenth, and even the eleventh century, and given the naming conventions were likely Lombard. The base of Gisulf's family power, or at least their central location, may have been the town of Imola, although by this point they were clearly invested in their relationship with Ravenna, as Buzzi has suggested, that Gisulf and Romuald were related to John X<sup>32</sup>.

Given the strength of the connections to various local ducal families, what marks this document as a departure from the others we have seen is the origins of the names, and likely the origins themselves, of those who served as witnesses to the document. These include the following:

*Dux* Romualdus  
Atilingo the son of Atiliano  
Iohannes, son of the *dativus* Gregorius  
The *consul* Vitalianus  
Vitale, son of Spereindeo

The mixture here of members of local families following Ravenna's naming and honorific conventions, along with others such as Atilingo the son of Atiliano, in a document issued by Gisulf the son of Romuald (both of whose naming patterns are a reflection of Lombard legacies), demonstrates an unsettled moment in the evolution of Ravenna's aristocracy in the early year of the reign of Louis II.

## 5. Conclusion

Although few in number, the Ravenna's charters from the reign of Lothar present a shift in Ravenna's aristocracy towards greater heterogeneity, one that is overlooked in most narrative sources. A different perspective, however, is demonstrated in the thirteenth century chronicler Salimbene de Adam, an

<sup>31</sup> Benericetti, *Le carte ravennati dei secoli ottavo e nono*, n. 16, pp. 35-40 (855 III 7, *apud ecclesia beati Apolenaris*).

<sup>32</sup> Buzzi, *Ricerche per la storia di Ravenna*, p. 109.

early Franciscan with a focus on the regions around Parma and a contemporary of Riccobaldo. In his own *Chronicon*, he reflected on the status of Ravenna's elites:

From ancient times Ravenna has had four noble families, as I have read often in the Ravenna Pontifical during the five years that I lived there. Yet all these great houses, noble and superior as they were, have been reduced to nothing. The last of these, the one that endured the longest, was the house of Lord Paul Traversaria, which was obliterated in my own days<sup>33</sup>.

In reference to the “four noble families” we can assume these are those of the *Duchi*, *Serghi*, *Romualdi*, and *Traversaria*, lines that were established in the ninth century generally with roots going back to Lothar's time. Salimbene remarked about the “end” of the Traversaria line, forced from Ravenna in 1240 by Frederick II, but in doing so suggested that they were of some antiquity after presumably reading the *Liber pontificalis* of Agnellus (although that source does not specify the development of these families). What becomes clear from his account is that Salimbene acknowledged a discontinuity between the noble families of Ravenna's past and those who occupied that position in the thirteenth century, families that we have seen evolved in the reign of Lothar I (and continued through the reign of his son Louis II).

While few in number from this period, the charters of the Church of Ravenna reflect a version of this evolution of Ravenna's aristocracy into these local dynasties. Ravenna's earlier aristocracy formed from landholding military and administrative leaders, who in the late eighth century began to mirror the hereditary patterns of the surrounding communities, into which Frankish and Lombard elites integrated through marriage beginning during Lothar's reign. But this is part of a larger pattern of social and political changes across Carolingian Italy, as noted by Veronica West-Harling in reference to Rome in this volume. With respect to Ravenna in her recent book, she made the following observation:

Just as we see a great permeability of the Roman tradition to the social changes of the *Regnum Italiae*, we also see, from the 830s, an increasing number of Germanic names, rising from about 2 percent of the total in the seventh century to 50 percent at the end of the tenth century – a far greater change than (...) in Rome. The changes comes about on account of the original Romano-exarchal elite increasingly allying itself with the Carolingian aristocracy of the *Regnum*<sup>34</sup>.

But is it also critical in how this integration took place: no families were dispossessed in this period, and instead a number of outsiders, both Lom-

<sup>33</sup> MGH, Salimbene, *Cronica*, p. 166, *ad annum* 1240: «Et nota quod in Ravenna antiquitus fuerunt IIII nobilia casalia, sicut in Pontificali Ravenne pluries legi. Habitavi enim ibi per quinquennium. Et omnia illa casalia, que erant nobiliora et super alia, ad nichilum sunt redacta; quorum ultimum, quod plus duravit, fuit casale domini Pauli Traversarii, quod diebus meis omnino defecit».

<sup>34</sup> West-Harling, *Rome, Ravenna, and Venice*, p. 210.

bards and Franks, man as well as women (as in the case of Valbesinda), married into the ruling elite post-exarchal families, creating a new type of dynasty, some of which would last until the thirteenth century.

The exact process of their formation, and of the latter half of Lothar's reign, however, remain clouded by a disconcerting lack of sources. The slim number of ecclesiastical charters, the irregular conclusion of the *Liber pontificalis Ravennatis*, and the lack of interest reflected in later histories equally contribute to this issue. What remains is a clear indication that Lothar, like his grandfather, had a keen interest in the city for its ecclesiastical (and political) past, and in parallel supported the contemporary bishops of Ravenna; at the same time, the conditions for a more broadly integrated local elite helped to facilitate the change in the composition of the city's aristocracy.

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