

DIU LINGUAS SUAS INTENDERUNT AR- REM AMARAM UT SA- CITENT IN OCCULTIS INMACULATUM.	DIXERUNT QUI SUI DE- BITEOS.	CONTURBATI SUNT OMNES QUIUIDEBANT EOS. ET TI- MUIT OMNIS HOMO.
SUBITO AGITABUNT EUM ET NON TIMEBUNT. FIR- MAUERUNT SIBI SERMO- NEM NEQUAM.	SCRUTATI SUNT INIQUI- TATES DESECRUNT SCR- UTANTUR IN SCRUTINIO.	ET ADNUNCIAUERUNT OPERA DOMINI ET FACTA INTELLEXERUNT.
VARIAUERUNT UT ABS- CONDERENT LAQUEOS.	ACCEDIT HOMO IT CORALITU- ET EXALTABITUR DUS.	LAE TABITUR IUSTUS IN DOMINO ET SPERABIT IN FO- ET LAUDABUNTUR OM- NES RECTI CORDE.
	SAGITTE PARUULORU FAC- TAE SUNT PLACIDORUM ET INFIRMATAE SUNT CONTRA EOS LINGUA HORU	

# Orbis Romanus

Byzantium and the Legacy of Rome  
in the Carolingian World

Laury Sarti



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LAURY SARTI

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# Preface

The idea for this monograph grew and matured over the years while working on different topics and projects. My studies were facilitated by the help and advice of many friends and colleagues whom I would like to thank here. The research started in Berlin, where I benefited from the scholarship and advice of Stefan Esders and his students. Since 2020, this project has been associated with the *Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus. Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident*. Writing started in August 2019, and the manuscript was completed in Freiburg. Until then, many aspects had been discussed in the framework of different conferences in Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt, Kalamazoo, Leeds, Münster, and Oxford, and the colloquia led in Freiburg by Birgit Studt and Jürgen Dendorfer. The late Dariusz Brodka, Simon Coupland, Anna Dorofeeva, Janel Fontaine, Ryan T. Goodman, Robert Kasperski, Maria-Elena Kammerlander, Rutker Kramer, Rory Naismith, Klaus Oschema, Levi Roach, Christian Rollinger, Marco Stofella, Fabian Stroth, and Ed Shine kindly offered me access to much-needed literature or other material. Many among them are regularly on Twitter, which I found particularly beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the actual writing of this work took place. Cosima von Hohenthal, Paul Manderscheid, and Alexander Schie offered valuable help by providing needed scans and saving me time for my work. I am also most grateful for the scanning service the University of Freiburg offered during the pandemic, which was tremendously efficient and helpful. The same was true for the enormous work that has been undertaken and is still going on today throughout the world to digitalize medieval manuscripts, which allowed me to access the originals despite travel restrictions. I also benefited from the advice from Wolfram Brandes, Nikos Crisis, and, most notably, the supportive exchanges with Evangelos Chrysos, which altogether have improved my thinking and work.

This monograph is a significantly reframed, reduced, and reworked version of my habilitation thesis *Orbis Romanus. Byzantium and the Roman legacy in the Frankish world (7th–11th centuries)*, submitted in June 2021 at the University of Freiburg and accepted in December 2021 based on the reviews by Matthias Becher, Jürgen Dendorfer, and Steffen Patzold. The remaining parts dealing with the Ottonian era have been or will be published as four individual articles, the more extensive discussions of the developments prior to the Carolingian era will be covered in a forthcoming monograph titled *Merovingian connections. The Frankish kingdoms and the Roman empire (476–756)*.

Yaniv Fox, Sihong Lin, Anja Rathmann-Lutz, Till Stüber, and Charles West, at different stages, read and commented on at least one chapter. Hans-Werner Goetz most kindly read the entire provisional manuscript and offered valuable advice on improving my rather Spartan introduction, which was yet inadequate for a German habilitation thesis. The current book again comes with a significantly shorter but different version, which has benefited from the prior expansion. It was Rosamond McKitterick who, after kindly reading an early version of my book proposal, came up with the idea of reframing a much too extensive manuscript to create two well-focused monographs. Matthew Bryan Gillis offered valuable advice with the final book proposal, and Bonnie Effros was most helpful in finding a suitable publisher. My special thanks go to Peter Schreiner, who has accompanied this project since its very beginning and was the first to read the manuscript. He contributed to it with his interest, encouragement, and advice.

My personal thanks go to my husband, François, who always stood by me, and our two sons, Youri and Emil, for immensely enriching our lives. Emil was born in November 2019, and although he did not accord me much sleep during the nights, my fatigue was kindly washed away by the sweet presence of our two boys.

# I

## Introduction

After his imperial coronation in Rome, Charlemagne († 814) called himself “Augustus crowned by God, great and pacific emperor governing the Roman empire” (“Augustus a deo coronatus magnus pacificus imperator Romanum gubernans imperium”).<sup>1</sup> His designation referred to an ancient past and a contemporary empire. By implicitly relating to the empire of Antiquity and its continuation in the east, Charlemagne’s title raises the question about the early medieval meaning of *imperium Romanum* and what ideas of a Roman empire and world it could convey to its contemporaries.

Charlemagne’s rise to emperorship has been regularly interpreted as the apex of a Frankish emulation of the persisting empire (*imitatio imperii*),<sup>2</sup> a concept also applied to define any other prior Frankish attempt to resort to Roman imperial tradition or culture.<sup>3</sup> This notion of imitation implies that the imitator is appropriating what does not belong to him or her, and, thus, that he or she is alien to the model used. This opinion, which is usually not expressed explicitly, is related to the sustained conviction about the inferiority of gentile polities and cultures compared to the remaining Roman civilization of the medieval east.<sup>4</sup>

In this study, I reassess the relation of the Frankish world to the *orbis Romanus* by focusing on the Carolingian era. The Merovingian developments and evidence from the tenth century are included whenever appropriate. Although the term *orbis Romanus* is only sporadically attested in the early medieval evidence, I use the underlying concept to study the sum of what may have been conceived as Roman from a Carolingian perspective. This Frankish vision of Romanness was characterized by the imperial past, the Byzantine present, and genuinely western Roman features belonging to the Carolingian kingdoms. Although the persisting Roman empire in the east was at the heart of the medieval Roman world, the *orbis Romanus* was not limited to what we call the Byzantine empire.

<sup>1</sup> *Dipl. Karol.* nr. 198, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Garipzanov, “The image of authority” (1999), pp. 39–40; Bachrach, *Charlemagne* (2013), p. 239. In other contexts, e.g., Canning, *A history* (1996), p. 71; Smith, *Europe* (2007), p. 275; Johanek, “Die Sachsenkriege” (2000), p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Fanning, “Clovis Augustus” (2002); Hardt, “Gift-exchange” (2013), p. 399; Loseby, “Gregory of Tours” (2015), pp. 483–4. See also Schach-Dörge, “*Imitatio imperii*” (2005); Scholl, “*Imitatio Imperii?*” (2017).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), pp. 10–11; Haenssler, *Byzanz und Byzantiner* (1960); Schieffer, “Karl der Große” (2004), p. 288; Lilie, “Kooperation und Konkurrenz” (2011), p. 76.

The Frankish kingdoms had emerged from inside the Roman world, with a large Roman population and continuity on virtually every level of society, including governance, law, the Church and Christian belief, language, and culture. They smoothly transitioned from what we call Roman to Frankish society by retaining some notable Roman characters and features as part of a gradually transforming world.

I use the above as a starting point to (1) challenge further the significance usually attributed to the caesura between a Roman and a post-Roman west by arguing that the Carolingian world still belonged to the multiethnic *orbis Romanus*. When Charlemagne rose to the status of emperor, he meant to resurrect the tradition of western emperorship as known until 480. The idea that the Franks governed the same *imperium* as the emperor of the east was only abandoned at the time of Charlemagne's successors. The continued participation of the Franks in the *orbis Romanus* was not based on an intense connectivity to the eastern empire, which had ceased by the seventh century, but on the significance attributed to their Roman identity and heritage. (2) The investigation thus restitutes Roman identity to the Frankish west by arguing that although the Franks never designated themselves as Romans, Romanness had remained a constitutive feature of their Frankish identity and world. Comparable to the Romanness of the Byzantine east, Frankish Romanness had evolved and changed over the centuries, which means that both differed in detail. (3) The study also argues that the Byzantines acknowledged that the Franks had their share in the Roman world, which is why they conceived the Carolingians as a connatural people. The special status conceded to the Franks entailed that the Byzantines actively sought to ally with their western brothers.

These and other related cases are made by discussing the following questions: Did the Frankish world belong or conceive itself to appertain to the Roman empire, and if so, how and until when? How did the Franks perceive their belonging to the Roman world once their membership to the empire had ceased? Did the idea of a shared Roman empire persist beyond that period, and if so, when did it end? And lastly: to what extent and until when did the Franks consider themselves as inhabitants of a world conceived as Roman? To what extent was this world understood as identical to the home of the Byzantines, and when and how did this idea of a shared Roman world end?

The above may be divided into two basic questions, which I will address in this order. The first question deals with the Frankish belonging to the empire and the persistence of the idea of an *imperium* shared with the Byzantines. It requires discussing the political relations between the two polities and their respective visions of empire. The second is the question about the positioning of the Frankish world toward the *orbis Romanus*, which is at the heart of the study. It requires dealing with a much broader scope of topics related to the three

elements that defined this Roman world. The first is the relation of the Franks to the ancient Roman past. This is addressed by studying Frankish visions of what we call Antiquity and how the Carolingians related to it. The second element is the relation of the Franks to the Byzantine world. This is approached by studying the connectivity between both worlds, the significance attributed to language, their respective visions of Roman identity, the role of the Church as a potential connecting factor, and the place of Byzantine culture in Carolingian society. The third aspect refers to genuinely Frankish notions and expressions of Romanness. These are essential to understand the Frankish visions of the ancient and Byzantine world and related concepts of Romanness.

Nikolaus Reitter and Herman Fischer first explicitly approached the question of whether the east and the west had remained part of a shared Roman *orbis* beyond the fifth century.<sup>5</sup> In 1958, the Byzantinist Werner Ohnsorge, known for his extensive research on the relations between east and west, declared that all the evidence necessary to study the significance of the Byzantine world in the west had been collected and that it was time to study this topic beyond the well-attested events. Although many subsequent publications addressed relevant specific questions, a thorough monographic study of this topic as a whole, considering its full complexity, has remained lacking until this day.<sup>6</sup> Studies on individual aspects related to the topic addressed here would not be able to challenge modern assessments of the position of the Franks in the early medieval world. Such a project requires an investigation from a wide perspective in the framework of a monograph.

My investigation benefited from a wide range of research on related topics. Attempting to discuss this prior research would mean filling a bottomless pit, which is why I limit myself here to brief mentions of some of the most influential scholars and projects. More elaborate but still exemplary discussions are addressed in the chapters that follow. The international research project *Transformation of the Roman world* (1993–7)<sup>7</sup> had a sustained impact on how modern scholars conceive the end of what we call Roman Antiquity. It showed to what extent the medieval world was born by gradual transformations that impacted virtually every aspect of society, a transition taking place in the framework of a protracted and complex historical process. Significant research from the perspective of a specialist in medieval history was published by Michael McCormick, who investigated the Mediterranean exchanges to argue that the Frankish and Byzantine worlds were connected by comparatively regular

<sup>5</sup> Reitter, *Der Glaube* (1900), whose work was never completed; Fischer, “The belief” (1925).

<sup>6</sup> Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), pp. 4–6.

<sup>7</sup> See Webster/Brown (eds.), *The transformation of the Roman world* (1997), and the volumes in the Brill series, see [brill.com/view/serial/TRW](http://brill.com/view/serial/TRW) (06/05/2021).

travels.<sup>8</sup> Among the most influential Byzantinist scholars working on relevant topics are Evangelos K. Chrysos and Peter Schreiner.<sup>9</sup>

The Frankish visions of Romanness were shaped by the exchange with Byzantium. In this context, Michael McCormick rightly stressed that “interaction between cultures rarely has one society passively undergoing the active influence of another,”<sup>10</sup> to underline the complexity of any such process of change. Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz added that “a continuous taking, giving, and returning is significant of the relations between Byzantium and the west so that it is often difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain whether a usage originated in the eastern or the western part of the empire.”<sup>11</sup> McCormick subjoined by saying of the Frankish and Byzantine world that “though these early medieval societies evolved away from their late antique roots, those common roots are everywhere discernible, and it is easy to mistake residual for recent borrowing. Indeed, the shared matrix could give rise to structural parallels, that is, similar developments that arose independently in each culture.”<sup>12</sup> This complexity of any mutual connection and influence between the Byzantine east and the Frankish west thus implies that attempting to define an element’s origin regularly requires relying on modern definitions, which first of all reveal modern perceptions of what may or may not belong to a medieval *orbis Romanus*. The sources able to inform us about—potentially divergent—medieval assessments of Romanness are often insufficiently explicit, which makes their interpretation or classification challenging. Tentative differentiations between ancient Roman, contemporary western, and Byzantine elements are possible, however, where medieval authors made appropriate attributions or where further and sufficiently reliable information is available.

In this study, I sought to approach the material available by taking the perspective of its medieval contemporaries. The analysis focuses on elements the evidence identifies as “Roman” or “Greek”—the latter designation was preferably used by Carolingian sources to refer to the Byzantines—and aspects related with sufficient certainty to the Roman or Byzantine territories, their respective inhabitants, and culture. Where a synonymous English word is available, I use it to refer to the source terminology, if not, I refer to the Latin or Greek original. An exception is the term “Byzantine.” As it is crucial for this study to make clear distinctions between the different medieval notions of Romanness, I decided to maintain the characterization “Byzantine” to refer to the imperial east postdating

<sup>8</sup> E.g., see McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008); “Byzantium and the west” (1995); and his monographs *Origins of the European economy* (2001), and *Charlemagne’s survey* (2011).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Chrysos, “Byzantine diplomacy” (1992); Schreiner, “*Translatio studii*” (2018); Chrysos, “A war of languages?” (2019); Schreiner, “*Latinité cachée*” (2019).

<sup>10</sup> McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 395.

<sup>11</sup> Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae* (1946), p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 395.

the fifth century. Although the study addresses Carolingian Italy, the particularly complex situation here, resulting from its fragmentation into regions, with loyalties changing between the Byzantines, the Lombards, the pope, the Franks, the Muslims, and other local entities, entails that the peninsula is only considered in further detail when the western empire or apostolic Rome are concerned. Romanness belonging to Italy, with Rome, is identified by unambiguous additions.

The study uses a multidisciplinary approach, combining methods belonging to medieval historical research, including the history of ideas and mentalities, to those appertaining to archaeology, linguistics and semantic studies, the history of art, and architectural history. As it addresses a vast field of research, I chose an approach that affords both unprejudiced analysis of aspects like medieval perceptions and identities and well-founded assessments by focusing only on what is essential. This aims to keep the study at a reasonable length while treating the subject matter as a whole. References to prior research and literature are likewise limited to what seems essential. A densely written piece of research on a wide-ranging subject matter requires keeping any discussion or treatment focused and, if necessary, using particular pertinent and representative examples. Although generalizations cannot be avoided, I also use univocal evidence and case studies to address individual regional, local, and social differences.

As mentioned, the methodology at the core of this study consists in focusing on the medieval perspective attested by the written and material evidence. This approach seeks to avoid modern presuppositions and notions, including modern explanatory models not attested by the evidence. For the same reason, I refrain from using concepts usually referred to as *renovatio* or *imitatio imperii*, which, although occasionally used in the medieval evidence, are not unequivocally attested to have carried the meanings suggested by modern scholars. I take a similar approach in reference to some popular patterns of thinking, like the presupposition of a cultural gap between the alleged civilized Byzantines and the barbarian Franks, or basic notions of epochal distinctions between what we call Antiquity and the Middle Ages. If we want to understand how the Franks related to the Roman world and its heritage, it is essential to abstain from such modern or anachronistic notions and presuppositions, which inevitably carry preconceptions that may prejudice the reading of the evidence, and to focus on the evidence instead.

The Frankish perceptions of the ancient Roman past and the Byzantine present were closely interrelated and affected by genuinely Frankish visions and notions of Romanness. None of these aspects thus should be addressed in isolation. I discuss them in seven thematic chapters (II–VIII), each treating a specific topic by addressing different sets of relevant questions. Chapter II discusses how the Frankish realms related to the Roman and Byzantine *imperium* and the



persistent idea of a shared empire. It simultaneously introduces the reader to the historical context and some essential sources. The subsequent chapters focus on how the Carolingian world related to the medieval *orbis Romanus*. Chapter III discusses the connectivity between the Frankish and the Byzantine world. Chapter IV then treats the Frankish perception of the Roman past and how it was related to the Frankish present. Chapter V further delves into this matter by focusing on the role of the Greek language in the Frankish world and the significance of Latin in the east. Chapter VI analyzes the medieval perceptions and notions of western and eastern identities emerging from exchanges between both regions and how they altered over the period in question. It is followed by Chapter VII dealing with the question of spiritual ecumenicity as a potential factor uniting east and west from a religious and cultural perspective. Finally, Chapter VIII studies the place of Roman and Byzantine culture in the west. These chapters reconstruct differing evolutions that do not always point in the same direction, which confirms the benefits of studying the subject matter addressed by this study from a comprehensive thematic perspective. The complexity underlying relevant processes of change can only be addressed by considering the full range of relevant material and the different evolutions it can reveal. Chapter IX picks up the loose ends and ties them up to create a general overview to answer the questions posed. Any translation, figure, or drawing without further reference is my own.

## II

### *Imperium* in the Carolingian World

In 739, Pope Gregory III († 741) had already faced a long period of Lombard threat, which in 732 had ended with the conquest of Ravenna and the Lombard menace of the Pentapolis. Given the lack of imperial military assistance, Gregory appealed to the Frankish *maior domus* Charles Martel († 741) to receive military support.<sup>1</sup> According to the *Continuations* of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, he did this intending to “leave the emperor’s camp.”<sup>2</sup> It is the first explicit testimony of the papal intention to turn away from the empire and to seek an alliance with the Franks.<sup>3</sup> Gregory III’s appeal was without result, however. The *Royal Frankish Annals*, written yearly only since around 787, report that two decades later, Charles’ son Pippin the Younger († 768), on his part, sought and received Pope Zachary’s († 752) support and approval of the deposition of the Merovingian king and the Carolingian rise to kingship.<sup>4</sup> Unsurprisingly, when Zachary’s successor, Pope Stephen II, renewed the request for Frankish military support, his appeal was successful. This was the beginning of a new era of close relations between the pope and the Franks.<sup>5</sup> It was sealed by the papal grant of the title *patricius Romanorum* to Pippin and his successors. The pope seemingly appropriated this ancient Roman and Byzantine title to provide a basis for the

<sup>1</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 1 and 2, pp. 476–9; *LP, Vita Gregorii III*, 14; *Continuationes Fredegarii* 22, pp. 178–9. *LP, Vita Stephani II*, 15, claims that, like Gregory III, his predecessor Gregory II and his successor Zacharias appealed to the Frankish major (sic) “Carolo excellentissime memorie regi Francorum,” I, p. 444). Further relevant evidence is lacking.

<sup>2</sup> *Continuationes Fredegarii* 22, p. 179: “eo pacto patrato, ut a partibus imperatoris recederet et Romano consulto praefato principe Carlo sanciret.” See also *LP, Vita Stephani II*, 15; Classen, “Italien” (1983), pp. 101–3.

<sup>3</sup> The date of the *Continuationes Fredegarii* was challenged by McKitterick, *History and memory* (2004), pp. 138–40, suggesting a time of composition between 768 and 786. However, her argumentation focuses on sections related to the period of Pippin’s elevation to the status of king, and although she argues that a date of composition after the one suggested until then is possible, it does not refute the thesis of an earlier date. It thus appears more likely that even if these earlier sections of the *Continuationes*, which deal with a period dating before 741, when the *Annales regni Francorum* begin their narrative, were composed in the late eighth century, that they used earlier material.

<sup>4</sup> See *Annales regni Francorum* a. 749, p. 8. These *Annales* erroneously date this event to the year 749, instead of 751, see Schneider, “Die Königserhebung Pippins” (2004).

<sup>5</sup> On this vast subject matter, see, e.g., Fritze, *Papst und Frankenkönig* (1973); Miller, “The Roman revolution” (1974); Strötze, *Der Bund des Papsttums* (2004); Goosmann, “Carolingian kingship” (2019). This shift is also attested in the *Liber Pontificalis*, see Schreiner, “Der Liber Pontificalis” (1998), p. 45.

new role of the Franks as the protectors of Rome.<sup>6</sup> Although the relations between northern Italy and the empire had already deteriorated from the seventh century, Rome only started to substitute in its rituals the references to the eastern emperor with the names of the Carolingian rulers at the time of Pippin.

In 799, another pope depended on Frankish aid: Pope Leo III († 816) requested and received the support of King Charlemagne, who, in exchange, expected papal backing of his imperial aspirations. In December 800, 324 years after the deposition of the last Roman emperor residing in Italy, this western alliance resulted in Charlemagne's imperial coronation, the founding act of a new Roman *imperium* under Frankish leadership. This *imperium* was based on the heritage that came with this term, contemporary notions of an overarching Christianity, and current political necessity and aims, a combination creating a genuinely Frankish concept of empire. It once again comprised northern Italy and the ancient capital of Rome.<sup>7</sup> Except for an almost forty-year-long *interregnum* (924–962), this empire lasted until 1806. The idea to elevate Charlemagne as emperor in the west was neither new nor exceptional, not even in the eighth century. The sources mention 13 instances where the enthronement of an emperor in the west was either planned, attempted, or even realized between 540 and 787.<sup>8</sup> A return to the model of two emperors thus remained conceivable until the later eighth century. The rising Carolingian ruler, however, was much more powerful and could rely on support that was incomparably more significant than any among the prior claimants.

This Frankish *imperium* is usually conceived as an imitation or usurpation of the ancient and/or Byzantine empire, its recognition by the eastern emperor in 812 as a half-hearted concession. In this chapter, I challenge this view by arguing that when the Franks planned to raise an empire under the aegis of Charlemagne,

<sup>6</sup> Against Finck von Finckenstein, "Rom" (1993), p. 34. On the title of *patricius Romanorum*, see Ganshof, "Note" (1950); Ohnsorge, "Der Patricius-Titel" (1960); Deér, "Zum Patricius-Romanorum-Titel" (1965). The pope later used the *Constitutum Constantini* (c. 15, pp. 88–9) to retrospectively gain the right to appoint "patricios atque consules." Hohlweg, "Byzanz und der Westen" (1996), p. 104, suggests that the pope acted on behalf of the emperor. On the title *patricius* in Merovingian Gaul, see Fox, "New honores" (2015).

<sup>7</sup> On Byzantine Italy, see Brown, *Gentlemen and officers* (1984); Guillou/Burgarella (eds.), *L'Italia bizantina* (1988); Cosentino (ed.), *A companion* (2021), and the comprehensive survey by Brown, "Byzantine Italy" (2006). On Lombard and Carolingian Italy, see Delogu, "Lombard and Carolingian Italy" (2006), on Carolingian Italy, see West-Harling, *Rome* (2020); Gantner/Pohl (eds.), *After Charlemagne* (2021). For a more general overview, see Goetz, *Geschichte Italiens* (2010). See also Humphries, "Italy" (2000).

<sup>8</sup> See Classen, "Der erste Römerzug" (1983), pp. 33–4, counting 16 cases, which include the disputable case of Odoacer's son Thela, that of the usurper Kosmas, actually located in eastern Greece, and Heraclius' rise to the throne to depose the emperor Phokas, only because it occurred in his home city of Carthage. It lacks the likewise disputable case of Theudebert I. The mentioned 13 cases exclude these debatable instances. Four among the remaining instances took place in the eighth century. Our main source for the eighth-century usurpations is the *Liber Pontificalis*, see, e.g., LP, *Vita Gregorii*, 91.17 and 23.

they did not intend to found a new *imperium* using the Roman model but to revive western Roman emperorship as known until 480. This means that the initial intention was that the Carolingian *imperium* would belong to the one and only empire. This idea was only abandoned successively after it proved unrealizable. The chapter also argues that Charlemagne was fully recognized as emperor by the Byzantines. The investigation begins with a short survey of ancient Roman and Byzantine concepts of *imperium* and emperorship, followed by a more extended section on the Frankish creation of an empire in the west, the underlying notions, and how both related to the eastern empire. A third section discusses how the Carolingian empire and related ideas evolved until the late ninth century.

## 1. Roman Notions of Empire and Emperor

In Antiquity, the Roman empire defined the geographical dimensions of the *orbis Romanus*. The empire united different regions and people sharing a common Roman identity emanating from the membership to the empire (with a large majority of Roman citizens since 212), the participation in its history, the acquaintance with the Latin language, the application of Roman law, and the adherence to the Roman culture and related traditions. With the end of Roman rule in large parts of those regions that since 395 had been administered from Italy and other western capitals, the *imperium Romanum* as a body holding together the *orbis Romanus* had lost much of its power. Still, the collapse of Roman authority was neither abrupt nor total.

In his *Etymologiae*, Bishop Isidore of Seville († 636) offered the following explanation for the scope of meanings related to the term *imperator*:

For the Romans, the title *imperator* was at first given only to those on whom supremacy in military affairs was settled, and therefore the *imperatores* were so called from “commanding” (*imperare*) the army. But although generals held command for a long time with the title of *imperator*, the senate decreed that this was the name of Augustus Caesar only, and he would be distinguished by this title from other “kings” of nations. To this day the successive Caesars have employed this title.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Isidore, *Etym.* 9.3.14: “Imperatorum autem nomen apud Romanos eorum tantum prius fuit apud quos summa rei militaris consisteret, et ideo imperatores dicti ab imperando exercitui: sed dum diu duces titulis imperatoriis fungerentur, senatus censuit ut Augusti Caesaris hoc tantum nomen esset, eoque is distingueretur a ceteris gentium regibus; quod et sequentes Caesares hactenus usurpaverunt.” Trans. Barney, *The Etymologies* (2006), p. 200.

Although Isidore's word derivations can sometimes be far-fetched, his etymology of *imperator* is rather well-founded and largely conforms to modern assumptions. The related word *imperium*, which initially referred to the authority of the highest magistrates,<sup>10</sup> remained in use in the post-Roman west and was not restricted to the eastern empire.<sup>11</sup> In the Principate, it had become the reference for a geographically defined domain under the authority of an emperor. In the medieval period, *imperator* could also designate rulers who combined sovereignty over two or more people or domains,<sup>12</sup> as in the case of the later Anglo-Saxon kings, who occasionally even used its Greek analog βασιλεύς (*basileus*).<sup>13</sup>

### *Imperium and oikumene*

While *imperium* never forfeited its initial significance as a reference to the authority over an army,<sup>14</sup> as Isidore accurately stressed, it was used more frequently as a reference to power and the political entity that was ruled, in particular suprareginal sovereignty uniting several polities or people.<sup>15</sup> This postrepublican use of *imperium* emerged from its original meaning as a reference to military command, as the *Res Gestae* attests, where the emperor Augustus claimed, "I extended the frontiers of all the provinces of the Roman people which neighbored the *gentes* not under our authority (*imperio nostro*)."<sup>16</sup> The fact that it could refer to specific territories or the authority of their ruler finally allowed applying the term *imperium* to the government that had emerged from inside the Roman world.<sup>17</sup>

The empire's genuinely hegemonic character implied that it was never defined by a specific ethnicity or territory. Already the empire's eponymous Romans were composed of people from different places, who were soon merged with a group of Latins and the Sabines.<sup>18</sup> The character of ancient Roman identity thus was already conceived as political—with major legal implications—never as ethnic.

<sup>10</sup> See Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* I (1876), pp. 22–4.

<sup>11</sup> See Mauntel, "Beyond Rome" (2018), discussing the example of Anglo-Saxon, Spanish, and Mongol uses of *imperium*. See also Moraw, "Kaisertum und Kaisergedanke" (2006), p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., *Annales Fuldenses* a. 869, p. 70: "Se imperatorem et augustum quasi duo regna possessurus appellare." See also Ohnsorge, "Neue Beobachtungen" (1975), pp. 1–5; Fanning, "Emperors" (1992), pp. 295–6.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Bede, *Hist.* 2.5, p. 89. For a list of all major entries, see Palgrave, *The rise and progress*, II (1832), pp. cccxlii–cccxlili. See also the discussion in Mauntel, "Beyond Rome" (2018), pp. 73–8.

<sup>14</sup> See Dreher, "Grundzüge" (2012), pp. 100–3; Freund, "Traditionslinien des Kaisertums" (2012), p. 212; Classen, "*Causa imperii*" (1983), p. 45.

<sup>15</sup> Fanning, "Clovis augustus" (2002), p. 331.

<sup>16</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae* 26, p. 38. See also Classen, "*Causa imperii*" (1983), p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> See related comments in Dreher, "Grundzüge" (2012), p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Isidore, *Etym.* 9.2.84–6. Importantly, Classen, "*Causa imperii*" (1983), p. 46, stresses that the term *imperium Romanum* was unexpectedly uncommon in Antiquity.

These Romans were soon defined by their citizenship and the gradual adoption of a superordinated Roman and imperial culture, which persisted throughout the empire's history alongside a large diversity of local and regional traditions.

As the notion of *imperium Romanum* was not restricted to specific people or territory, the underlying concept was soon meant to imply universal dominance. After Augustus, in his *Res Gestae*, proclaimed to have subjected the entire *orbis* to the Roman people,<sup>19</sup> the known world (*orbis terrarum*/*οἰκουμένη*) was increasingly conceived as *orbis Romanus*,<sup>20</sup> which means that the Roman empire could be considered identical to the world. Jordanes, for example, began his *Roman History* by explaining: "The Romans [. . .] made the world (*orbis terrarum*) their own by the use of arms and laws; with arms they built it, with laws they maintained it."<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Roman *imperium* was conceived as an empire without end ("imperium sine fine"), a concept prominently propagated by Virgil in his *Aeneid*.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the empire could be understood not only to include and dominate the entire known world, the *orbis terrarum* or *οἰκουμένη*, but also to last forever.<sup>23</sup> Over time, these Roman notions of *imperium* bore the idea that there could only be one indivisible empire, a claim of exclusivity the emperors in Constantinople held onto throughout the medieval period.<sup>24</sup> Needless to say, these ideals at no time corresponded to reality.<sup>25</sup>

### *Imperator and βασιλεύς*

The Byzantine concept of a universal *imperium* ruling the *orbis terrarum* or *οἰκουμένη* was genuinely Christian.<sup>26</sup> The emperor's authority and power were based on (the election by) God and its subjects, in particular the population of

<sup>19</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, heading, p. 8: "Rerum gestarum divi augusti. quibus orbem terrarum imperio populi romani subiecit" See also Dreher, "Grundzüge" (2012), p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Classen, "*Causa imperii*" (1983), p. 46; Ando, *Imperial ideology* (2000). See also Vogt, *Orbis Romanus* (1929); Rebenich, "Orbis Romanus" (2003).

<sup>21</sup> Jordanes, *Romania* 6, p. 3: "Romani, ut ait Iamblicus, armis et legibus exercentes orbem terrae suum fecerunt: armis si quidem construxerunt, legibus autem conservaverunt."

<sup>22</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* 1, l. 279, p. 58: "imperium sine fine dedi."

<sup>23</sup> See Pratt, "Rome as eternal" (1965).

<sup>24</sup> See Laurent, "ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΠΟΜΑΙΩΝ" (1940), pp. 199–200; Nicol, "The Byzantine view" (1967), p. 316.

<sup>25</sup> See Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), pp. 263–4; Bullough, "Empire and emperordom" (2004), pp. 377; Stouraitis, "Byzantine Romanness" (2018), p. 188; Dreher, "Grundzüge" (2012), 112. See also Hageneder, "Weltherrschaft" (1984).

<sup>26</sup> See Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), pp. 263–4; Hunger, *Reich der neuen Mitte* (1965); Schmalzbauer, "Überlegungen" (2004), particularly pp. 408–9. On the Christian impact on imperial tradition, see also Ivánka, *Rhomäerreich und Gottesvolk* (1968); Angelov/Herren, "The Christian imperial tradition" (2012), pp. 149–74. On the Byzantine perception of the emperor, see Hunger (ed.), *Das byzantinische Herrscherbild* (1975).

Constantinople.<sup>27</sup> The *Eisagoge* (Επαναγωγή), a legal text issued in 886, but only with a short duration of validity, explains that the emperor and the patriarch head the (body of the) *politeia*;<sup>28</sup> the emperor himself was conceived of as a supreme being who, even though human, was detached from his subjects. This is confirmed by a letter written around 868 by the exiled patriarch Photios († 893) to the emperor Basil I († 886), explaining: “Remember that you are a human being, even though you are emperor. Remember that we are clothed with the same flesh, whether we are kings or private persons, and that we share the same nature. Remember that we have a common master and fashioner and a common judge.”<sup>29</sup>

Christian religion sustained the idea that the empire should not only represent unity but also be expanded to create an orthodox world.<sup>30</sup> Both ideas were at the core of the Byzantine understanding of *imperium* and the underlying ideology of cultural supremacy toward non-Roman people.<sup>31</sup> It allowed to define, and claim, any territory under Roman and Christian influence as a genuine part of the Roman empire.<sup>32</sup> From the time of Constantine the Great, the emperor was also responsible for matters of the Church, with the right to convene and preside over its synods and to appoint new bishops.<sup>33</sup> The emerging connection between *imperium* and *ecclesia* remained a constitutional feature of the Byzantine emperor,<sup>34</sup> whose role as head of the Church goes back to his pre-Christian function as *pontifex maximus*.<sup>35</sup>

The gradual reduction of the western territories belonging to the empire and the fact that Constantinople was its sole capital entailed that by the seventh century, Latin had forfeited much of its importance, as we shall see in section V.2. This evolution also affected the imperial title: while Latin inscriptions with the format *DN (dominus noster) \*emperor name\* PP* (i.e., *pater patriae*) *AVG* were retained on coins until the eighth century,<sup>36</sup> the original Latin imperial title was soon replaced by the much shorter term βασιλεύς.<sup>37</sup> It is first attested in this

<sup>27</sup> Karayannopoulos, “Der frühbyzantinische Kaiser” (1956), p. 381. See also Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser* (2013), pp. 607–8.

<sup>28</sup> *Eisagoge* 3.8, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> Photios, *Epist.* 98, pp. 135–6: “μνήσθητι ὅτι ἄνθρωπος εἶ, καὶ βασιλεύης μνήσθητι ὅτι σάρκα περικείμεθα τὴν αὐτὴν καὶ βασιλεῖς καὶ ἰδιῶται καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς κοινωνοῦμεν φύσεως μνήσθητι ὅτι καινὸν δεσπότην ἔχομεν καὶ πλάστην καὶ καινὸν κριτὴν.” Trans. White, *Patriarch Photios* (1982), p. 164. See also Ostrogorsky, “The Byzantine emperor” (1956).

<sup>30</sup> Similar Kaldellis, “Did the Byzantine empire,” p. 276.

<sup>31</sup> Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), p. 264.

<sup>32</sup> Schmalzbauer, “Überlegungen” (2004); Bullough, “Empire and emperordom” (2004), p. 378. See also Kaldellis, “Did the Byzantine empire,” p. 279, referring to Justinian’s *Novellae constitutiones* 7.

<sup>33</sup> Freund, “Traditionslinien des Kaisertums” (2012), p. 214.

<sup>34</sup> Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), p. 234.

<sup>35</sup> Dreher, “Grundzüge” (2012), p. 99. See also Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), p. 35. Cf. Angelov, “In search” (2014), arguing that *basileus* only successively gained the notion of sacrality.

<sup>36</sup> Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), pp. 155–6.

<sup>37</sup> Classen, “Romanum gubernans imperium” (1952), p. 113; Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), pp. 37–8.



context in the *intitulatio* of a *Novella* issued by the emperor Heraclius († 641) in March 629.<sup>38</sup> On coins, it only appeared after 720.<sup>39</sup> Although the term βασιλεύς could be applied to kings and was prominently used as such, for example, in the Greek translations of the Old Testament,<sup>40</sup> it was increasingly used exclusively to refer to the Byzantine emperor.<sup>41</sup> Only the Persian rulers at times were called “Persian basileus” (“Περσῶν βασιλεύς”),<sup>42</sup> and a comparable terminology is also attested later for the caliph in Baghdad.<sup>43</sup>

The following section will show that when the Carolingians planned to revive western emperorship, they not only resorted to the above Roman and Byzantine notions but also included genuinely Frankish concepts of *imperium*.

## 2. Charlemagne’s *imperium*

Charlemagne’s empire was both new and old. Scholars never cease to ponder how exactly he may have conceived his *imperium* and how it related to the Byzantine empire, topics that will be at the center of the present section. It will first focus on the Carolingian notions of *imperium*, Charlemagne’s understanding of his emperorship, and the pope’s role in the implementation of a Frankish empire. Subsequent sections will discuss the relation of the Frankish monarch to the Byzantine rulers at that time, possible Byzantine involvements, and the eastern counterpart’s recognition of the Frankish empire.

### Carolingian Notions of *imperium*

What can we learn about the Frankish understanding of *imperium*? As may be gathered from Isidore’s definition quoted in section II.1, the meaning of this term was not restricted to empires in general or the Roman empire in particular.<sup>44</sup> This also applies to Frankish usage. Some examples should suffice as a demonstration: referring to the year 688, the *Annales Mettenses priores*, written in the early

<sup>38</sup> “Ἡράκλειος καὶ Ἡράκλειος νέος Κωνσταντίνος πιστοὶ ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεῖς,” Dieter (ed.), *Fontes Minores* (1982), pp. 94–5, cited after Grünbart, “Die Fortdauer Roms” (2012), at p. 202. See also the comments in Ohnsorge, “Das abendländische Kaisertum” (1983), p. 4, and the discussion in Chrysos, “The title βασιλεύς” (1978); Bibikov, “Glanz und Elend” (2007), pp. 25–6; Zuckerman, “On the title” (2010).

<sup>39</sup> Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> Grierson, “The Carolingian empire” (1981), pp. 894–5.

<sup>41</sup> With various exceptions until the ninth century, see Angelov, “In search” (2014), pp. 138–40.

<sup>42</sup> E.g., Theophanes, *Chronicle* 5 a.m. 789, p. 8. Also reflected in Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.5.

<sup>43</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium and the west” (1995), p. 360.

<sup>44</sup> See also Mauntel, “Beyond Rome” (2018).

ninth century, explain that the Merovingian king Theuderic III († 691) would have “ruled the empire (*imperium*)” with the help of his mayor of the palace, Ebroin.<sup>45</sup> Comparably, the probably mid-tenth-century *Life* of the Merovingian queen Clotilde mentions a prophecy according to which her progeny would hold *imperium* over Romans and Franks;<sup>46</sup> the *Life* also uses the term in its concluding sentence in reference to the *regnum* and *imperium* of the Holy Trinity.<sup>47</sup> The word *imperium* thus still could be and was used to designate supreme power and authority more in general,<sup>48</sup> even though it was primarily used to denote the Byzantine or, since 800, the Frankish empire.

Einhard († 840), one of the foremost Carolingian scholars, in his *Life of Charlemagne* written between 814 and 830, largely ignored his king's journey and sojourn in late 800 in Rome. He only noted parenthetically and most prominently: “It was then that he received the title of emperor and augustus, which at first he disliked so much that he stated that, if he had known in advance of the pope's plan, he would not have entered the church that day, even though it was a great feast day.”<sup>49</sup> Although Einhard's report conceals that the rise to emperorship was a significant step for the only second-generation king, it must have appeared important to the author to draw a humble portrait of his emperor as a ruler who had not actively sought these honors for himself.<sup>50</sup> Against Einhard's assertion, the idea of a Frankish *imperium* in the west did not emerge on the day of Charlemagne's coronation, however. A potential source for its prior conception is a mosaic located in the Triclinium of the Lateran Palace (see Figure 2.1) in Rome, given that it appears to have been commissioned by the pope before

<sup>45</sup> *Annales Mettenses priores*, a. 688, p. 5: “Eodem tempore Theodericus rex occidentalium Francorum, quos illi Niustrios dicunt, regebat imperium, habens maiorem domus Ebroinum nomine.” Also noteworthy is the term *res publica* in reference to the Frankish realm in *Continuationes Fredegarii* 18, pp. 176–7: “vir Carolus dux [. . .] Lugdunum Gallie urbem, maiores natu atque praefectus eiusdem provincie sua dicione rei publice subiugavit.”

<sup>46</sup> *Vita S. Chrothildis* 2, p. 342: “Deus enim futurorum previderat ex Chrothilde semen regum nasciturum, eorumque propagine Romanorum Francorumque imperium gubernaturum.” See also Audebrand, “La promotion” (2019), [journals.openedition.org/genrehistoire/4150](https://journals.openedition.org/genrehistoire/4150), sections 5–8.

<sup>47</sup> *Vita S. Chrothildis* 14, p. 348: “Ad laudem et gloriam sancte et individue Trinitatis [. . .] cuius regnum et imperium permanet sine fine in secula seculorum.”

<sup>48</sup> See also Ohnsorge, “Neue Beobachtungen” (1975), pp. 4–6, and on the term *imperium*, see Van Espelo, “A testimony of a Carolingian rule?” (2013), pp. 270–7.

<sup>49</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 28, p. 32: “Quo tempore imperatoris et augusti nomen accepit. Quod primo in tantum aversatus est, ut adfirmaret se eo die, quamvis praecipua festivitas esset, ecclesias non intraturum, si pontificis consilium praescire potuisset.” Trans. Dutton, “The Life of Charlemagne” (2002), p. 33. On Charles' supposed reaction, see Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), pp. 202–5; Schieffer, *Neues von der Kaiserkrönung* (2004), p. 7; Collins, “Charlemagne's imperial coronation” (2005), pp. 52–3. On the coronation, see Folz, *Le couronnement impérial* (1964); Speck, “Zum Vollzug der Krönung” (2000), pp. 100–16.

<sup>50</sup> But see Becher, “Die Kaiserkrönung” (2002), p. 4, rightly opposing Schramm's “Die Anerkennung” (1951), p. 492, thesis of a “Kaiser wider Willen.” On the ideal of the humble king, see Falkowski, “The humility and humiliation” (2010); Strothmann, “Das Augustusnomen” (2014). See also the comment in Patzold, “Die Kaiseridee” (2014), p. 153, and de Jong, “Power and humility” (1992), on the case of Louis the Pious.



FIGURE 2.1 Reconstructed figures of mosaics from the Triclinium of the Lateran Palace. Redrawing of the extracts from Herklotz, “Francesco Barberini” (1995), p. 194, fig. 2.

the imperial coronation. Although the Frankish monarch, following the mosaic’s modern reconstruction, was designated “king” (*rex*), it explicitly compared Leo III with Pope Sylvester I and Charlemagne with the emperor Constantine the Great, attesting to a very early papal vision of a Frankish emperorship. Although this composition associated Charlemagne with the status of emperor, the same was depicted kneeling before St. Peter, who not only invested Leo III with the stola (*vita*) but also Charlemagne with a flag (*victoria*).<sup>51</sup> Thus, the mosaic transpired the message that Charlemagne owed his position to St. Peter, a concept the Frankish ruler undoubtedly disapproved of!<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> The inscription below the image specified: “BEATE PETRE DONAS/ VITA LEONI PP BICTO/RIA CARVLO REGI DONAS.” The mosaic was reconstructed on the basis of early modern drawings, see Davis-Weyer, “Das Apsismosaik Leos III.” (1965), and “Die Mosaiken Leos III.” (1966), pp. 115 and 125–9; Belting, “Die beiden Palastaulen Leos III.” (1978); Herklotz, “Francesco Barberini” (1995); Curzi, “The two Triclinia of Pope Leo III” (2016). A tentative comparison of Charlemagne with Constantine the Great is already contained in *Codex Carolinus* 60, p. 587: “ecce novus christianissimus Dei Constantinus imperator.”

<sup>52</sup> See also Becher, “Karl der Große” (2006), pp. 7–8; and Osborne, *Rome in the eighth century* (2020).

This was not Leo III's only attempt to strengthen his own position to the detriment of the emerging emperor. As it seems, he used the coronation ceremony to this very end. Although Charlemagne was invested according to the Byzantine tradition by acclamation, coronation, the *laudes*, and adoration, as Ohnsorge was right to stress,<sup>53</sup> Matthias Becher argued that Leo introduced a significant change in the chronology of the ritual: he preponed the coronation, now conducted before the acclamation.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the coronation established the acclamation as the constitutive act, a procedure that, from Leo's perspective, was to be executed by the Roman pontiff. Obviously, he intended to make sure that any future imperial enthronement would rely on papal approval, and Einhard's report likely reflects Charlemagne's displeasure when faced with the precedents the pope had created.<sup>55</sup> If Becher is correct, the Frankish monarch may have used his departure to remind Leo III of the help he had received and to express his dissatisfaction: Charlemagne left Rome on April 25th 801, i.e., exactly two years after the pope had been attacked by his enemies in Rome, an incident that had caused Leo's flight to Charlemagne, to be discussed below.<sup>56</sup>

Although these and other indications in the written sources support the impression that the pope was involved in designing a Frankish *imperium*, the idea itself must have emerged north of Alps.<sup>57</sup> The evidence attests that from the earlier 790s, the Frankish ruler had achieved and confidently requested a position equal to the status of the Byzantine emperor.<sup>58</sup> An anonymous poem on Pippin the Hunchback's († 811) campaign against the Avars, written in or shortly after 796, for example, stressed that Charlemagne, with the grace of God, set up a reign as great, wide, and powerful as no emperor or the pagans would have done before him.<sup>59</sup> The *Paderborn Epos* (*Carmen de Carolo Magno*), an anonymous panegyric probably written in 800 describing the meeting between Leo III and Charlemagne held in 799 in Paderborn,<sup>60</sup> already contains many imperial

<sup>53</sup> Ohnsorge, "Die Entwicklung" (1958), pp. 186–7; Ohnsorge, "Das Kaisertum der Eirene" (1963), p. 231.

<sup>54</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 801, p. 112. Becher "Die Kaiserkrönung" (2002), pp. 19 and 32. Cf. Kempf, "Das mittelalterliche Kaisertum" (1956), pp. 227–8; Angelov/Herren, "The Christian imperial tradition" (2012), p. 162.

<sup>55</sup> Becher "Die Kaiserkrönung" (2002), p. 4. See also McKitterick, *Charlemagne* (2008), p. 116, with some well-founded skepticism about Einhard's report, and Delogu, "The post-imperial Romanness" (2018), p. 159.

<sup>56</sup> Becher, "Die Kaiserkrönung" (2002), pp. 18, 24–9, and 36.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Erkens, "Von Paderborn nach Rom" (2002), p. 156, to Becher "Die Kaiserkrönung" (2002), and Jarnut, "799 und die Folgen" (2002), and Ohnsorge, "Neue Beobachtungen" (1975), pp. 1–14. See also Anton, "Beobachtungen" (1990), p. 104, on prior imperial epithets in the *laudes* and liturgy; Ohnsorge, "Neue Beobachtungen" (1975), pp. 1–14.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., the arguments in Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), pp. 260–2.

<sup>59</sup> *De Pippini regis* 15, at p. 117: "ad diem actenus / neque cesar et pagani, set divina gratia."

<sup>60</sup> See Beumann, "Das Paderborner Epos" (1966); Jarnut, "Im Vorfeld" (2003); Erkens, "Von Paderborn nach Rom" (2002); Padberg, "Das Paderborner Treffen" (1999). See also the papers in Stiegemann (ed.), *799—Kunst und Kultur* (1999).

references relating to ancient Roman notions of *imperium* as sovereignty over more than one people.<sup>61</sup> Although the *Epos* does not provide any specific information on the exact nature of this meeting, Charlemagne and Leo III likely used this occasion to discuss a prospective elevation of the Frank to imperial status. This assumption is backed by the fact that the most likely moment when Leo III may have commissioned the mentioned mosaic in the Triclinium of the Lateran Palace was after his return to Rome.<sup>62</sup>

The letters of Alcuin of York († 804), Charlemagne's advisor, contain more explicit evidence for the elaboration of the idea of a Frankish empire. They attest to a progressive development of the concept of a "Christian empire" (*imperium christianum*). Alcuin used the term *imperium* within its full range of meanings, i.e., to refer to the Roman empire of Antiquity and of his own time, the rule of the Frankish and the Anglo-Saxon kings, alongside God's authority.<sup>63</sup> In 797, for example, he addressed an epistle reporting on the education work he was conducting in Tours on his king's orders "to train many for the advance of the holy Church of God and the honor of your imperial kingdom."<sup>64</sup> One year later, Alcuin commented on a book of the adoptionist (a nontrinitarian doctrine considered heretical) bishop Felix of Urgell by stressing that the ideas it contained should be "suppressed before it spreads more widely through the Christian empire ('per orbem christiani imperii') which divine goodness has entrusted to you and your sons to rule."<sup>65</sup> The idea of a genuinely Christian *imperium* was further developed in the subsequent years. In 799, Alcuin addressed Charlemagne by speaking of the "entire Christian empire" ("cuncto christianitatis imperio") and the "government of the sacred empire" ("sacratissimi gubernacula imperii"), expressions he used in both cases to refer to Christian governance.<sup>66</sup> Another year later, Alcuin used this terminology to refer to Christianity under

<sup>61</sup> *Carmen de Carolo Magno*, ed. Brunhölzl. Further discussed in section IV.2.

<sup>62</sup> The chronological coincidence is already highlighted in Anton, "Solum imperii" (2002), p. 238.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., referring to the ancient empire: "lex Romana et antiqua consuetudo priorum imperatorum" (Alcuin, *Epist.* 3, p. 25); the Byzantine empire: "Alia est imperialis dignitas et secundae Romae saecularis potentia" (Alcuin, *Epist.* 174, p. 288); in reference to Charlemagne's kingdom: "decorem imperialis regni vestri" (Alcuin, *Epist.* 121, p. 177; similar *ibid.* 257 and 261); the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms: "regno imperiali contuitorum humilis levita Alchvinus salutem. [. . .] vobis imperii potestas" (Alcuin, *Epist.* 129, p. 191); God's authority: "magni imperatoris thalamum aeterna" (Alcuin, *Epist.* 36, p. 78). See also *Carmen de Carolo Magno* ll. 86–7, p. 64: "scilicet imperii ut quantum rex culmine reges."

<sup>64</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 121, p. 177. Trans. Allott, p. 12: "ut plurimos ad profectum sanctae Dei ecclesiae, et ad decorem imperialis regni vestri erudiam." The concept was later adopted, e.g., by Gerbert of Reims, see Erdmann, "Das ottonische Reich" (1943), pp. 426–33.

<sup>65</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 148, p. 241: "antequam latius spargatur per orbem christiani imperii, quod divina pietas tibi tisque filiis commisit regendum atque gubernandum." Trans. Allott, p. 95.

<sup>66</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 136, p. 205. Similar *ibid.* 200. See also Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), p. 291; Steiger, *Die Ordnung* (2010), pp. 588–89; Van Espelo, "A testimony" (2013), pp. 276–80; Gehlhaar, *Christianitas* (2015), p. 312. See also Alberi, "The evolution" (1998), pp. 3–17; Padberg, "Zur Spannung" (2001), pp. 48–50.

Charlemagne's patronage, and he admonished the latter to protect and expand the Christian realm through his piety.<sup>67</sup> Alcuin's imperial concept was not based on the idea of a strictly physical empire, which is why he used the term *imperium* with its more general meaning to refer to an ideal Christian dominion or authority incarnated by Charlemagne.<sup>68</sup> It was probably in this line of thought that Alcuin regularly called his king "David," a designation we shall return to on several occasions.<sup>69</sup> However, the association between Christianity and the king's rulership remained vague, just like the boundaries of Alcuin's *imperium Christianum*.

Shortly after Charlemagne's coronation in Rome, Alcuin became more explicit by calling Charlemagne the "leader and emperor of the Christian people" ("rector et imperator populi christiani") who received God's commendation.<sup>70</sup> His letters now contain more explicitly imperial addresses for Charlemagne, which according to Christiane Veyrard-Cosme even rivaled Byzantine eulogy.<sup>71</sup> The most remarkable statement, however, predates the event of December 800. In a letter addressed to Charlemagne around June 799, Alcuin wrote:

There have hitherto been three persons of greatest eminence in the world, namely the pope, who rules the see of St. Peter, the chief of apostles, as his successor—and you have kindly informed me of what has happened to him; the second is the emperor who holds sway over the second Rome—and common report has now made known how wickedly the governor of such an empire has been deposed, not by strangers but by his own people in his own city; the third is the throne on which our Lord Jesus Christ has placed you to rule over our Christian people, with greater power, clearer insight and more exalted royalty than the aforementioned dignitaries. On you alone the whole safety of the churches of Christ depends.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 202, p. 336: "veluti armis imperium christianum fortiter dilatare laborat [. . .] ad christiani imperii pacem et profectum vestram regalis gloriae potentiam augere."

<sup>68</sup> Similar Padberg, "Das christliche Königtum" (2005), p. 204; Van Espelo, "A testimony" (2013), pp. 276–80. Cf. Bullough, "Empire and emperordom" (2004), p. 386.

<sup>69</sup> E.g., Alcuin, *Epist.* 245, p. 394: "David imperatoris."

<sup>70</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 217, p. 361.

<sup>71</sup> Veyrard-Cosme, "L'image de Charlemagne" (2003), pp. 145–6, referring to Alcuin, *Epist.* 249.

<sup>72</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 174, p. 288: "Nam tres personae in mundo altissime hucusque fuerunt: id est apostolica sublimitas, quae beati Petri principis apostolorum sedem vicario munere regere solet; quid vero in eo actum sit, qui rector praefate sedis fuerat, mihi veneranda bonitas vestra innotescere curavit. Alia est imperialis dignitas et secundae Romae saecularis potentia; quam impie gubernator imperii illius depositus sit, non ab alienis, sed a propriis et concivibus, ubique fama narrante crebrescit. Tertia est regalis dignitas, in qua vos domini nostri Iesu Christi dispensatio rectorem populi christiani disposuit, ceteris praefatis dignitatibus potentia excellentiorem, sapientia clariorem, regni dignitate sublimiorem. Ecce in te solo tota salus ecclesiarum Christi inclinata recumbit." Trans. Allott, p. 111. See also Bullough, "Empire and emperordom" (2004), p. 377; Van Espelo, "A testimony" (2013), p. 278.

In his letter, Alcuin sketched a constellation of power that would remain constitutive during most of the remaining medieval era. He used it to emphasize Charlemagne's role as the bearer of a throne assigned to him by God and with the responsibility to be a better ruler than the eastern emperor and the pope, as the well-being of the Christian people would rely on him.<sup>73</sup> Alcuin's indication that he knew about what had happened to Pope Leo III shows that the letter postdates the mentioned attack on the same: Leo was seriously injured on April 25th 799 and fled to Charlemagne. In Autumn, he was received in Paderborn.<sup>74</sup> Alcuin's indications related to the Byzantine emperor must refer to the deposition and blinding of Constantine VI by his mother, Irene, two years earlier, when she took her son's place as empress. In retrospect, these two events were decisive for the subsequent developments, including the formation of an apostolic concept of a western *imperium* to be addressed below. They culminated in Charlemagne's rise to emperorship.

### Charlemagne as Emperor

Charlemagne's emperorship was characterized by close ties between his imperial rulership and his patronage of the Christian Church. It was not a mere implementation of Alcuin's concept, however. His full imperial title, as attested in his official documents and correspondence, was "Karolus serenissimus augustus a Deo coronatus magnus pacificus imperator Romanum gubernans imperium, qui et per misericordiam dei rex Francorum atque Langobardorum."<sup>75</sup> Peter Classen argued with good reasoning that this title was probably inspired by some late Roman documents preserved in Ravenna, where Charlemagne had passed through in 801 on his return journey.<sup>76</sup> No comparable title existed in the Byzantine world.<sup>77</sup> The first part of the title corresponded to those already used in Italy in a religious context,<sup>78</sup> while "per misericordiam dei rex" was a new

<sup>73</sup> Further elaborated in Alcuin, *Epist.* 257, e.g.: "His duobus, sancte imperator, muneribus divina vestram incomparabiliter sublimitatem, eiusdem nominis et numinis ante cessoribus gratia superexaltavit" (p. 414).

<sup>74</sup> On the attack, see Schieffer, "Das Attentat" (2002), pp. 75–85.

<sup>75</sup> On Charlemagne's imperial titles, see Wolfram, "Lateinische Herrschertitel" (1973), pp. 19–58. On Charlemagne's empire, see, e.g., Davis, *Charlemagne's practice* (2015).

<sup>76</sup> Classen, "Romanum gubernans" (1952), pp. 117–19. See *Annales regni Francorum* a. 801. A diploma dated to Charlemagne's sojourn in Rome and after his coronation (i.e., March 4th 801) intriguingly bears the title "Carolus gratia dei rex Francorum et Langobardorum ac patricius Romanorum," *Dipl. Karol.* 196, p. 263. *Dipl. Karol.* 197, set down in the Bologna region on May 29th 801, p. 265, is the first to contain the imperial title.

<sup>77</sup> Classen, "Romanum gubernans" (1952), p. 117.

<sup>78</sup> See Brandi, "Der byzantinische Kaiserbrief" (1908), p. 32, n. 1, and p. 43, e.g., already in the Latin translation of the acts of Constantinople of 680: "imperantibus a Deo coronatis serenissimis dominis nostris Flaviis Constantino"; Patzold, "Die Kaiseridee" (2014), p. 154.



formulation.<sup>79</sup> It was preceded by the invocation “in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti,” which may go back to a comparable *invocatio* used from the time of the emperor Leo III in official Byzantine documents.<sup>80</sup>

Charlemagne’s title referred to two different types of rulership: that of an “emperor ruling the Roman empire” crowned by God (i.e., by the hand of Leo III)<sup>81</sup> and, separated by “qui et,” that of a king of the Franks and the Lombards by divine mercy. Steffen Patzold rightly stressed the novelty of this combination of imperial and kingly status, which would have been unthinkable in the ancient Roman empire.<sup>82</sup> Despite the large scope for interpretation and related difficulties, this title is an important source to grasp Charlemagne’s understanding of his own role as a king and emperor, which was inherently that of a Christian ruler and protector of the Church.<sup>83</sup> The significance attributed to religion as a central component of Charlemagne’s understanding of his task as a sovereign is confirmed by the fact that the spiritual aspect referred to in his title was not restricted to his role as emperor (“a Deo coronatus”), given that a mention was also included in the section referring to his kingship (“per misericordiam dei”). An earlier association between imperial and spiritual authority, from a contemporary perspective, is also attested in an entry discovered by Patzold in a booklet from St. Gall dating around 760/80: it explains the term “augustum” with “sanctum uenerabilem” (“holy venerable”).<sup>84</sup>

There has been much debate on the Frankish understanding of *imperium* and its correlation with the Byzantine empire, a subject matter that can only be addressed here on an exemplary basis. Ildar H. Garipzanov suggested that Charlemagne’s imperial title “neither claimed Roman heritage nor pretended to Byzantine legitimacy, but rather attempted to address several main audiences of his realm simultaneously.”<sup>85</sup> In opposition, Eckhard Müller-Mertens used a semantic approach to argue that Charlemagne’s *imperium* was restricted to the newly acquired Roman province, i.e., that it had no bearing on the regal territories and thus should be considered as a mere addition to his Frankish and Lombard kingdoms.<sup>86</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, this thesis is not corroborated

<sup>79</sup> Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), p. 103. Cf. *Vita S. Chrothildis* 2, p. 342: “Romanorum Francorumque imperium gubernaturum.”

<sup>80</sup> Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), p. 118.

<sup>81</sup> Becher, “Die Kaiserkrönung” (2002), p. 37, argued: “Der Verweis auf die Krönung durch Gott schließt den Papst oder den hl. Petrus völlig von der Legitimierung des Kaisertums aus.”

<sup>82</sup> Patzold, “Die Kaiseridee” (2014), p. 154.

<sup>83</sup> E.g., Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), p. 120; Ohnsorge, “*Orthodoxus imperator*” (1958), pp. 64–78; Wolfram, “Lateinische Herrschertitel” (1973), p. 55; Padberg, “Zur Spannung von *Gentilimus*” (2001), pp. 49–53.

<sup>84</sup> Patzold, “Die Kaiseridee” (2014), p. 159.

<sup>85</sup> Garipzanov, “Communication of authority” (2005), p. 61. Similar Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), p. 120; Patzold, “Die Kaiseridee” (2014), p. 154.

<sup>86</sup> Müller-Mertens, “Römisches Reich” (2009), pp. 61–62. Similar Müller-Mertens, “Frankenreich oder Nicht-Frankenreich?” (1997), p. 46; Ohnsorge, “Neue Beobachtungen” (1975), pp. 1–14. See also McKitterick, “Constructing the past” (1997), p. 128.

by the evidence, not only as the term *Romanum* could apply to the entire Christian population of the Frankish world.<sup>87</sup> The *Capitulare missorum generale* attest that in 802, the Frankish emperor requested a general oath of allegiance “in the name of the emperor” (“in nominis caesaris”) from the entire populace under his rulership, which confirms that Frankish emperorship applied to Charlemagne’s entire dominion.<sup>88</sup> Besides, Charlemagne organized in October 802 what the *Annals of Lorsch* call a “universal synod”. Representatives of the entire clergy, the office holders, and the Christian population gathered in Aachen, where all the laws currently in force, both canon and secular, were read out, expounded to those concerned, and amended, where necessary.<sup>89</sup> It confirms that the Frankish empire was meant to encompass the entire Carolingian dominion (Map 2.1). Intriguingly, although Charlemagne renounced his title as patrician, he did maintain his kingly status and titles beyond the year 800.<sup>90</sup>

The divergent meanings of the Carolingian term *imperium* were only one contentious point in modern debates since scholars strive to understand the message of and intentions behind Charlemagne’s title. Other discussions revolved around the nature of this empire,<sup>91</sup> whether the Franks understood their empire in the traditional Roman manner, and whether Charlemagne’s imperial title was anything more than a fancy name for a great king.<sup>92</sup> Countering the assumption of scholars like Percy Ernst Schramm, who argued that Charlemagne’s title was the product of a quandary in the face of the Byzantine rival,<sup>93</sup> Matthias Becher put forward that, quite the contrary, it appears to stress that Charlemagne not only had become emperor but also was actually ruling the Roman empire.<sup>94</sup> Other core questions deal with the nature of the emerging Frankish *imperium* and the

<sup>87</sup> Sarti, “Frankish Romanness” (2016). See also section VI.3 below. Similar Fried, “*Imperium Romanum*” (2006), pp. 11–12. See also Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), p. 119.

<sup>88</sup> *Capitularia Francorum* 33.2, p. 92: “De fidelitate promittenda domno imperatori. Precepitque, ut omni homo in toto regno suo, sive ecclesiasticus sive laicus, unusquisque secundum votum et propositum suum, qui antea fidelitate sibi regis nomine promississet, nunc ipsum promissum nominis caesaris faciat.” Also confirmed by the *Ordinatio imperii* of 817 of Louis the Pious, see *Capitularia Francorum* 136, pp. 270–1: “gratia unitas imperii [. . .] sub seniore fratre regali potestate potantur iuxta inferius.” See also Becher, *Eid und Herrschaft* (1993), pp. 78–87 and 201–17.

<sup>89</sup> *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 802, p. 39. Confirmed by Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 29, p. 33, as part of a large program of reforms. See also Buck, “*Capitularia imperatoria*” (2002). The indiction was only regularly used for dating in Carolingian charters after this, following the Byzantine model. Ohnsorge, “Das Kaisertum der Eirene” (1963), p. 237. The first example is *Dipl. Karol.* 198, dated to September 15th 802, pp. 266–7. See also Davis, *Charlemagne’s practice* (2015), pp. 197–8 and 203–4.

<sup>90</sup> See, e.g., Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.5, p. 8: “Et dixit rex, quod nomen imperii veteribus in usu fuit.” The same author also refers to the Byzantine emperor as “king,” *ibid.* 2.5 and 2.6. See also Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), p. 19; *idem*, “Renovatio regni Francorum” (1958), p. 118; Fanning, “Clovis Augustus” (2002), p. 333; Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), p. 290.

<sup>91</sup> E.g., Schieffer, “Konzepte des Kaisertums” (2006), pp. 45–6.

<sup>92</sup> E.g., Ohnsorge, “Neue Beobachtungen” (1975), pp. 1–14, 100–1.

<sup>93</sup> Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), p. 13. Similar already in Laehr, “Vom mittelalterlichen Imperium Romanum” (1931), p. 126.

<sup>94</sup> Becher, “Das Kaisertum” (2012), p. 268. Similar Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), pp. 119–20.



MAP 2.1 Charlemagne's empire around 800.

claims it implied. While scholars like Schramm suggested that the ancient *imperium Romanum* was restored with Charlemagne's coronation,<sup>95</sup> Ohnsorge argued that the status of the Frankish emperor might be compared to Byzantine co-emperors, given that the title "patrician of the Romans" would have made him "Roman."<sup>96</sup> Becher argued, with good reasoning, that the pope initially sought a quasi-imperial status for himself, with the Frankish ruler as his subordinated co-emperor or *rex Romanorum*, whereas Charlemagne strove for a position of power that corresponded more closely to Roman imperial standards.<sup>97</sup>

Back in Aachen, Charlemagne cut the ropes that had tied his young empire to Rome, a city he had never visited ever since.<sup>98</sup> In 813, he ensured that imperial power would remain independent from papal approval by raising his son Louis to the status of his imperial successor in Aachen, i.e., without papal involvement.<sup>99</sup> Carl Erdmann argued that the Carolingians continued to oppose the papal ambitions by developing a genuinely Frankish concept of empire—sometimes referred to as "Aachener Kaiseridee."<sup>100</sup> The palace of Aachen, discussed in further detail in section VIII.1, from the late eighth century, became the principal residence of the Carolingian ruler, and it was here where a large majority of the personnel and officeholders, the intellectual elite, and visitors like diplomats gathered. New impressive architecture and the many visiting and resident scholars and artists from the different regions of the Frankish realm soon mirrored the significance and extent of what had become the first Carolingian capital of an emerging Frankish *imperium*, a settlement striving to compete with cities like Constantinople and Rome.<sup>101</sup>

In his role as emperor, Charlemagne issued a lead bulla (seal) with the following inscriptions: "D(ominus) N(oster) KAR(lus) IMP(erator) P(ius) F(elix) P(er)P(etuus) AUG(ustus)" on the obverse and, on the reverse, "RENOVATIO ROMAN(i) IMP(erii) / ROMA."<sup>102</sup> Scholars pondered on its medieval meaning

<sup>95</sup> Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), p. 12. Similar Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012). See also Strothmann, "Das Augustusnomen" (2014).

<sup>96</sup> Ohnsorge, "Das abendländische Kaisertum" (1983), pp. 6–7. See also Epp, "499–799" (2002), p. 222.

<sup>97</sup> Becher, "Die Kaiserkrönung" (2002), pp. 29–34.

<sup>98</sup> Patzold, "Die Kaiseridee" (2014), p. 156, suggesting that age may be the main reason.

<sup>99</sup> See, e.g., Beumann, "Das Paderborner Epos" (1966); Epperlein, "Über das romfreie Kaisertum" (1967); Schieffer, "Konzepte des Kaisertums" (2006), p. 47. See also Ohnsorge, "Renovatio" (1958), pp. 119–23.

<sup>100</sup> Erdmann, "Das ottonische Reich" (1943), p. 418; Erdmann, "Die nichttrömische Kaiseridee" (1951), pp. 16–28; Beumann, "Das Paderborner Epos" (1966). See also Beumann, "*Nomen imperatoris*" (1972, first published in 1958), p. 213; Fried, "Imperium Romanum" (2006), p. 12; Schieffer, "Konzepte des Kaisertums" (2006), at p. 47. Against Ohnsorge, "Byzanz und das Abendland" (1958), p. 15.

<sup>101</sup> See Schieffer, "Vor 1200 Jahren" (1997), pp. 14–16; Nelson, "Aachen as a place of power" (2007). See also Davis, *Charlemagne's practice* (2015), p. 339. Cf. Folz, *L'idée d'empire* (1953).

<sup>102</sup> Cited after Classen, "*Romanum gubernans*" (1952), p. 119. See also Erben, *Rombilder* (1931); Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), p. 42 with n. 2.

by focusing on the term *renovatio*, which may either relate to the renewal of the Roman empire more in general<sup>103</sup> or to the reformation of its political or cultural achievements.<sup>104</sup> A plausible thesis was again forwarded by Becher relating the inscription to Charlemagne's legal activity intensified in May 801.<sup>105</sup> However, the evidence does not allow for defining the initial meaning of these much-debated inscriptions beyond educated guesses. As the inscription lacks the "I" for *ROMANI*, we do not even know its exact reading: *ROMAN* could also have referred to *ROMANORUM*. Allowing a wide scope of possible interpretations may also have been intentional, meaning that it is conceivable that these inscriptions never intended to propagate one particular message. Louis the Pious and his successors later used the same term *renovatio* but altered the inscription to become "RENOVATIO REGNI FRANCORUM." The decision to refer to a "reign of the Franks" instead of the initial mention of the Roman empire may be associated with a more Francocentric focus of western imperial politics of that time.<sup>106</sup> The mystery around the exact meaning of *renovatio* itself, however, remains unsolved.

The Carolingian understanding of *imperium* remains challenging to grasp. Any attempt to analyze the Frankish conception depends on historians' assessment of the position of the Franks toward the Byzantines and the apostolic see, and the degree of education, determination, premeditation, and assertiveness they are inclined to attribute to their respective key players, in particular the Franks. This explains the wide range of modern interpretations. The sources also disprove that one concept of *imperium* remained steady and stood the test of time. Instead, Frankish notions of *imperium* not only continuously evolved, but divergent opinions persisted among contemporaries. Relevant notions and concepts were altered or adapted by combining ancient Roman, Christian, and Byzantine ideas and traditions in consideration of current ideas and potentials and to meet individual preferences and needs, resulting in genuinely Frankish concepts of *imperium*. This evolution did not end with Charlemagne, as we shall see.

A question that needs to be discussed in further detail is whether Charlemagne's empire was understood to have emerged from within or whether it was conceived to have its origins from without the persisting *imperium*.<sup>107</sup> A second question is whether the idea of *imperium* as a *corpus unum* persisted beyond the year 800.

<sup>103</sup> Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege" (2001), p. 33; Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), p. 268. Similar Anton, "*Solium imperii*" (2002), p. 259; Fried, "Imperium Romanum" (2006), p. 12.

<sup>104</sup> Müller-Mertens, "Römisches Reich" (2009), p. 53, on the lack of explicit testimony.

<sup>105</sup> Becher, "Karl der Große" (2006), pp. 9–10.

<sup>106</sup> E.g., Semmler, *Renovatio regni Francorum* (1990); Ohnsorge, "Renovatio" (1958), pp. 125–6. Cf. Laehr, "Vom mittelalterlichen Imperium Romanum" (1931), p. 126; Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen* (1954), p. 302.

<sup>107</sup> A question already asked in reference to the Treaty of Aachen of 812 in Ančić, "The Treaty of Aachen" (2018).

Both questions are inherent to the so-called Zweikaiserproblem prominently defined in 1947 by Werner Ohnsorge to have emerged in 802, as a consequence of Charlemagne's emperorship and the deposition of his unacknowledged female counterpart in Constantinople by Nikephoros († 811).<sup>108</sup> A close look at the evidence exposes the difficulties involved in any attempt to provide answers to the questions just raised. The *Annals of Lorsch*, completed around 803, contain a famous section considered the earliest report of the Christmas events of December 800. It was probably written shortly after Charlemagne's return from Italy,<sup>109</sup> and differs from the many subsequent accounts<sup>110</sup> inasmuch as it is the only testimony that provides an elaborate description of the decision-making process. It also contains a notable justification related to Charlemagne's rise to emperorship:

And since the name of emperor was at this time lacking among the Greeks and they had female rule among them, it then seemed to the *apostolicus* Leo and to all the holy fathers present at that council, as well as to the rest of the Christian people, that they ought to bestow the name of emperor upon Charles himself, king of the Franks, who held Rome itself, where the Caesars had always been accustomed to have their seat, and the rest of the seats, which he held throughout Italy, Gaul and Germany; since almighty God had granted all these seats into his power, it seemed to them to be right that, with the help of God and at the request of the entire Christian people, he should have that name. King Charles was himself unwilling to deny this request of theirs and, having submitted with all humility to God and the petition of the *sacerdotes* and the entire Christian people, received the name of emperor, with the consecration of the Lord pope Leo, on the very day of the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>111</sup>

Several elements are relevant for the subsequent investigation. First, the *Annals of Lorsch* reacted to the news about the deposition of Constantine VI, already

<sup>108</sup> Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem* (1947), pp. 46–8. See also Ohnsorge, “*Orthodoxus imperator*” (1958), pp. 71–2. The “Zweikaiserproblem” is often erroneously thought to have emerged with Charlemagne's coronation in 800, e.g., Hehl, “Zwei Kaiser” (2020), p. 41.

<sup>109</sup> Strictly speaking, Christmas was conceived as the first day of the year 801. See Collins, “Charlemagne's imperial coronation” (2005), p. 64–8. For a survey on the manuscript tradition, see *ibid.*, 52–64, and Pokorny, “Die Annales Laureshamenses” (2013), pp. 1–14.

<sup>110</sup> For a short survey of the sources, see Nelson, “Why are there so many” (2007).

<sup>111</sup> *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 801, at p. 38: “Et quia iam tunc cessabat a parte Graecorum nomen imperatoris, et femineum imperium apud se abebant, tunc visum est et ipso apostolico Leoni et universis sanctis patribus qui in ipso concilio aderant, seu reliquo christiano populo, ut ipsum Carolum regem Franchorum imperatorem nominare debuissent, qui ipsam Romam tenebat, ubi semper Caesaras sedere soliti erant, seu reliquas sedes quas ipse per Italiam seu Galliam nec non et Germaniam tenebat; quia Deus omnipotens has omnes sedes in potestate eius concessit, ideo iustum eis esse videbatur, ut ipse cum Dei adiutorio et universo christiano populo petente ipsum nomen aberet. Quorum petitionem ipse rex Karolus denegare noluit, sed cum omni humilitate subiectus Deo et petitione sacerdotum et universi christiani populi in ipsa nativitate domini nostri Iesu Christi ipsum nomen imperatoris cum consecratione domni Leonis papae suscepit.” Trans. King, p. 144.

alluded to in Alcuin's letter, to explain that the imperial seat in Constantinople had been vacant since, thus suggesting that Charlemagne became emperor as the successor of Constantine VI. Ado of Vienne, around 870, suggested a comparable transition when he dated his chronicle by referring to the Byzantine emperors until Constantine V, to proceed with Charlemagne—although failing to mention Leo IV and Constantine VI.<sup>112</sup> Second, the *Annals of Lorsch* claim that there was a general consensus in the west around 800 that Irene should not be accepted as the rightful empress due to her gender, a position already attested in the *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum* (*Libri Carolini*) when referring to Irene and the Byzantine synod of 787 (see section VII.3).<sup>113</sup> As we shall see, however, things were more complex, and the mentioned argument did not prevent Charlemagne from maintaining intensive diplomatic relations with the empress. Third, the quoted section of the *Annals* stresses that the pope and other Church representatives had decided to elevate Charlemagne to the status of emperor during a council held on the day before the coronation ceremony and that the Frankish king had agreed to this. This strongly contradicts Einhard's later claim that the coronation was a spontaneous decision by Pope Leo III and executed without Charlemagne's prior consent. Fourth, the quoted source explains that this decision was taken in consideration of the fact that God had granted Charlemagne authority over the imperial capitals of the west, including the city of Rome, the original seat of the Roman empire, an argumentation that again may have been inspired by the *Opus Caroli*.<sup>114</sup> More importantly, by expounding that Charlemagne merited his new position of power given that God had granted him authority over the western imperial capitals, the above statement locates the Frankish *imperium* inside the persisting Roman empire. The reference to divine conferment of these capitals also implies that the bestowal of the imperial title only settled an existing matter of fact,<sup>115</sup> entailing that *res* and *nomen* now finally corresponded, as Thomas Ertl emphasized.<sup>116</sup> The same pretension also refuted the potential allegation beforehand that Charlemagne had impropriated rights he was not entitled to.

<sup>112</sup> Ado of Vienne, *Chron.*, cols. 23–138, in relation to the year 727: “Constantinus imperator, annos viginti sex” (col. 122) to proceed in reference to the year 800 with Charlemagne (col. 130). See also Patzold, *Episcopus* (2008), pp. 430–4; Lucas, *Vienne* (2016); Goetz, “Unsichtbares” (2021), pp. 214–15.

<sup>113</sup> *Opus Caroli* 3.13, p. 385: “Quia mulier in synodo docere non debet, sicut Herena in eorum synodo fecisse legitur.” However, Becher, “Die Kaiserkrönung” (2002), p. 33, is right that no evidence proves that Charlemagne did not recognize Irene's sovereignty. On the Byzantine disapproval of a female emperor, see Ohnsorge, “Das Kaisertum der Eirene” (1963), pp. 225–30. Cf. Barnwell, “War and peace” (1997), p. 138.

<sup>114</sup> The *Opus Caroli* addresses Charlemagne with: “nutu dei regis francorum, Gallias, Germaniam Italiamque sive harum finitimas provincias domino opitulante regentis” (p. 97). Similar Alcuin, *Epist.* 110, p. 157: “Carolo regi Germaniae Galliae atque Italiae.”

<sup>115</sup> See Borst, “Kaisertum und Namentheorie” (1972); Esders, “Übereinstimmung” (2016).

<sup>116</sup> Ertl, “Byzantinischer Bilderstreit” (2006).



## Charlemagne and Irene

The pope was not the only external authority involved in conceiving a Frankish *imperium*. There was a notable Byzantine contribution that the evidence only barely mentions. An intriguing reference is contained in the Byzantine *Chronicle of Theophanes*: when it reports that Charlemagne was crowned emperor, it adds that the monarch desisted a planned expedition against Sicily after he had decided to marry the empress Irene.<sup>117</sup> In the subsequent chapter, the chronicle returns to the same topic and explains that Charlemagne and Pope Leo III sent legates to Irene, asking her to marry the Frankish emperor and thus “unite east and west.”<sup>118</sup> Theophanes further added that the empress would have agreed if she had not been prevented from doing so. These are noteworthy statements. Although it was the only planned union of two ruling monarchs, it was not the first attempt to ally the Byzantine and the Frankish dynasties through marriage. A prior agreement, for example, intended to unite Charlemagne’s daughter Rotrud and Irene’s son Constantine VI (see section III.2).<sup>119</sup> The diplomatic alliance between Irene and Charlemagne had become conceivable after June 4th 800, when the latter’s wife, Liutgard, had passed away.<sup>120</sup> The plausibility of an exchange at that time is supported by the *Royal Frankish Annals* confirming Theophanes’ report that Charlemagne sent envoys to Constantinople in the tenth indiction (801/2).<sup>121</sup>

Although modern scholars usually challenge the historicity of this marriage plan, there is no cogent reason to doubt Theophanes’ report.<sup>122</sup> His depiction of Irene is nuanced and not characterized by defamation,<sup>123</sup> which makes it improbable that the project was a mere invention by the author aiming to discredit the

<sup>117</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6293, p. 475: “Καὶ βουλευθεὶς κατὰ Σικελίας στόλῳ παρατάξασθαι μετεμελήθη, ζευχθῆναι μᾶλλον Εἰρήνην βουλευθεὶς.”

<sup>118</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6294, p. 475: “Εἰρήνην, αἰτούμενοι ζευχθῆναι αὐτὴν τῷ Καρούλῳ πρὸς γάμον, καὶ ἐνώσαι τὰ ἔφα καὶ τὰ ἐσπέρια.” Similar in reference to the plan to marry Rothrud and Constantine VI: Paul, *Carm.* 11.11, p. 49: “tenenda sceptrā regni transitura properat”; Paul, *Carm.* 12.10, p. 50: “ut per natam regni vires tendantur in Asiam.”

<sup>119</sup> *Chronicle* a. m. 6274 (781/2).

<sup>120</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 800; *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 800. Ohnsorge, “*Orthodoxus imperator*,” p. 72, suggests that this proposal predated Charlemagne’s imperial coronation.

<sup>121</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 802, p. 117: “Herena imperatrix de Constantinopoli misit legatum nomine Leonem spatarium de pace confirmanda inter Francos et Grecos”; Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6293, p. 475: “πρέσβεις εἰς τοῦτο πέμφας τῷ ἐπὶ ὀντι χρόνῳ, ἰνδικτιῶνος ι.”

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Classen, *Karl der Große* (1985), pp. 84–6, who argued that “Dies Eheprojekt ist sicher der abenteuerlichste Gedanke, der im Zusammenhang mit Karls Kaisertum je aufgetaucht ist” (p. 85). Similar Lilie, *Byzanz unter Eirene* (1996), p. 211; Tinnefeld, “Formen und Wege” (2001), p. 27; Schieffer, “Karl der Große” (2004), p. 283; Brandes, “Irene und das Kaisertum” (2007), p. 293. Listed in Schreiner, “Die kaiserliche Familie” (2011) as no. 58 among the “doubtful” projects.

<sup>123</sup> Similar Lilie, *Byzanz unter Eirene* (1996), p. 420. Most critical is Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6289 (796/7). See also *ibid.* 6282 (789/90), and the assessment in Runciman, “The empress Irene” (1978).



empress.<sup>124</sup> The mention in the *Royal Frankish Annals* that Irene was deposed “after the arrival of the Frankish legation” of 802<sup>125</sup> adds further plausibility and suggests that these two events were related. The Frankish offer is likely to have added additional pressure on Irene’s enemies to have her removed, and an unwanted Frankish offer would explain why the empress was deposed at that particular moment. Besides, Irene’s deposition may be what Theophanes had in mind when he explained that she had been prevented from accepting Charlemagne’s proposal.

If we consider Theophanes’ account as referring to a real occurrence, the evidence needs further explanation. After the removal of her son Constantine VI, empress Irene was in a situation of weakness, as a subsequent attempt to have her install a male co-emperor confirms.<sup>126</sup> A strong alliance with the most powerful sovereign of the west may have sufficiently strengthened her authority to secure her position in Constantinople. Although the relations between Irene and Charlemagne had deteriorated in the framework of the Council of Nicaea in 787,<sup>127</sup> good relations with the Franks were vital for the empress after she most ingloriously deposed her son Constantine VI in 797. Given the virtually insurmountable difficulties involved in any project that would have considered the merging of both empires more seriously and the fact that the position of power of both monarchs heavily depended on their physical presence in their respective reigns, precluding a shared household of the two rulers, this marriage is likely to have been mainly conceived as an enhanced political alliance offering additional assurance to the empress. The fact that Irene’s age was close to fifty and thus no children were to be expected to inherit later a united empire must have eased envisaging such an arrangement. Thus, the arrangement would have ended with the death of either of the two sovereigns.

The role of the pope in this plan is difficult to assess. According to Ohnsorge, Leo III expected Charlemagne to use this alliance to realize a papal vision of a unified and universal Roman empire encompassing east and west under Frankish leadership.<sup>128</sup> Although the evidence for this papal intention is insufficiently conclusive, the conceivability of a plan involving that Charlemagne would claim authority over the Byzantine east is confirmed by Einhard. He explained that “when he [Charlemagne] took up the title of emperor, [it seemed] to them

<sup>124</sup> As suggested in Fried, “Papst Leo III” (2001), p. 315. See also Constantine, *DAI* 13; section III.2 below; Ohnsorge, “Das Kaisertum der Eirene” (1963), pp. 236–7; Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), pp. 85–6.

<sup>125</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 803, p. 118: “Herenam post adventum legationis Franciae deposuerunt.” Similar Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6295 (802/3).

<sup>126</sup> See Ohnsorge, “Das Kaisertum der Eirene” (1963), pp. 225–30, p. 230. See also Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6273 (780/1); a. m. 6284 (791/2).

<sup>127</sup> See Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6281 (788/9) and section VII.3.

<sup>128</sup> Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem* (1947), pp. 24–6; idem, “*Orthodoxus imperator*” (1958), pp. 73–4.

[the Byzantines] that he might want to seize their empire.”<sup>129</sup> As Einhard’s statement can not be sufficiently explained in consideration of Charlemagne’s promotion in Rome alone, the author here may have referred to the negotiations between Charlemagne and Irene, and the apprehension among her enemies in Constantinople of a Frankish intervention in Constantinople, a concern that finally led to the empress’ deposition.

The western sources lack explicit references to the mentioned marital project. Irene’s alleged unlawful position on the imperial throne is in the foreground of these testimonies referring to the time around Charlemagne’s imperial coronation. The western evidence that may best match Theophanes’ report is a fragmentary note in a Cologne manuscript. It is a computistic reference in the second paragraph on its fol. 14<sup>v</sup> added to the short *World Chronicle* of Isidore of Seville (fols. 5<sup>r</sup>–12<sup>v</sup>). Referring to the 31 regnal year of Charlemagne (798/9), it explains that “it was in this year that hostages were accepted from a third of the population of Saxony and when legates came from Greece to consign him *imperium*.”<sup>130</sup> The *Royal Frankish Annals* confirm that in 797 and 798, a majority among the Saxons submitted to the Franks by offering a large number of hostages,<sup>131</sup> and the same source mentions that Charlemagne in 798 received a legation in Aachen from Constantinople carrying a letter from the empress Irene reporting the deposition of her son Constantine VI. The *Annals* thus seem to confirm and specify the framework in which the event mentioned in the Cologne interpolation may have occurred. Intriguingly, the *Annals* only add that the embassy’s intention was “merely (*tamen*) peace.”<sup>132</sup> A second potential reference to the same occurrence is contained in a fuzzy account of the *Northumbrian Annals*, mentioning in reference to the Frankish imperial coronation that Byzantine ambassadors offered Charlemagne “sovereignty and empire” (“regnum et imperium”).<sup>133</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 16, p. 20: “Cum quibus tamen propter susceptum a se imperatoris nomen et ab hoc [eis], quasi qui imperium eis eripere vellet.” Trans. P. E. Dutton, p. 26. A reminiscence in Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.26, p. 37. See also the comments in Irmscher, “Otto III. und Byzanz” pp. 222 and 227.

<sup>130</sup> Cologne, Domstiftsbibliothek Cod. 83 II, fol. 14<sup>v</sup>, access [ceec.uni-koeln.de](http://ceec.uni-koeln.de) (18/07/2019): “usque ad istum annum XXXI regni Karoli regis—ipse est annus, quando hospites accepit de Saxonia tertiam partem populi et quando missi venerunt de Grecia, ut traderent ei imperium.” Expanded transcription according to Schieffer, *Neues von der Kaiserkrönung* (2004), pp. 9–10, n. 16. A later scribe had obviously already established the same relation: in the margins, the term *hospites* was amended with *obsides*, probably as this term was also used in *Annales regni Francorum* a. 798, p. 104: “Et rex acceptis obsidibus, etiam et his, quos perfidissimos primores Saxonum consignabant, in Franciam reversus est.”

<sup>131</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 797, p. 100.

<sup>132</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 798, p. 104: “Haec tamen legatio tantum de pace fuit.”

<sup>133</sup> *Annales Nordhumbrani* a. 800, p. 156. This note may have been chronologically misplaced. Fried, “Papst Leo III.” (2001), p. 315, n. 106, suggests that it refers to an unmentioned earlier Byzantine acknowledgment of Charlemagne’s imperial status. Löwe, “Eine Kölner Notiz” (1949), p. 26, argued for a direct channel of exchange between Northumbria and the manuscript’s location, i.e., the Abby of St. Amand, see *Annales regni Francorum* a. 808. See also Pauli, “Karl der Große” (1872).

Given its parenthetical character in a manuscript that probably belonged to the archbishop Hildebold of Cologne, one of Charlemagne's confidants and provost, the significance of the Cologne interpolation should not be underestimated. In 1949, Heinz Löwe suggested that Charlemagne was offered *imperium* by Irene's opponents intending to depose her,<sup>134</sup> whereas scholars like Rudolf Schieffer argued that such a procedure would have been doomed to failure, and that Irene would be a much more likely instigator of such an advancement.<sup>135</sup> The *Royal Frankish Annals* confirm intense interchanges between her and the Frankish court since 798, entailing that Charlemagne indeed could not have been identified as the person most inclined to help her deposition. The peculiar use of the adverb *tamen* in reference to the aims of the embassy of 798 supports the impression that more was at stake than what the Frankish testimony was willing to admit.<sup>136</sup>

If we accept the authenticity of the *Cologne interpolation*, the following questions require further discussion: What *imperium* did the "Greeks" offer to Charlemagne, and for what motives? Johannes Fried, who argued that the Cologne interpolation was an authentic piece of evidence, was right to stress that the chronology of redaction of any related piece of evidence needs to be considered carefully. However, just like most other scholars,<sup>137</sup> Fried persistently translates the term *imperium* with "empire" (German "Kaisertum") and thus is unable to find a suitable answer to the latter question.<sup>138</sup> Given the obvious absurdity of the Byzantines offering their "empire" to Charlemagne,<sup>139</sup> *imperium* needs to be interpreted in consideration of its full spectrum of possible meanings. As argued above, *imperium* could also refer to supreme power and authority in general. Thus, the *Cologne interpolation* may refer to a less specific attribution of power that was not strictly related to the Byzantine empire or its territories. The most plausible solution is that the interpolation refers to the intense negotiations between Charlemagne and Irene since 798 and until 802.<sup>140</sup>

The *Royal Frankish Annals* report that, in 799, a legation from Byzantine Sicily and a monk from Jerusalem were received by Charlemagne in Paderborn.

<sup>134</sup> Löwe, "Eine Kölner Notiz" (1949).

<sup>135</sup> Schieffer, *Neues von der Kaiserkrönung* (2004), p. 11; Schieffer, "Karl der Große" (2004), pp. 154–8. According to *Annales regni Francorum* a. 802, Irene sent a legation to the Franks first, suggesting that she was the initiator of the marital plan. See also Lilie, *Byzanz unter Eirene* (1996), pp. 210–11.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Löwe, "Eine Kölner Notiz" (1949), p. 28. For different interpretations, see Ohnsorge, "Orthodoxus imperator" (1958), pp. 69–71 and n. 23; idem, *Das Zweikaiserproblem* (1947), p. 20. Berschin, "Die Ost-West-Gesandtschaften" (1997), p. 160.

<sup>137</sup> E.g., Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), p. 42.

<sup>138</sup> Fried, "Papst Leo III." (2001), in particular pp. 308–14.

<sup>139</sup> Here most scholars agree, e.g., Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), p. 42; Fried, "Papst Leo III." (2001), pp. 311–12.

<sup>140</sup> See *Annales regni Francorum* a. 797, 798, 799, and 802. For a summary, see Schieffer, "Karl der Große" (2004), pp. 153–4.

The monk handed over the patriarch's blessings and some relics from the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>141</sup> The *Annales Guelferbytani* offer some additional information on the Byzantine embassy. They are only preserved in a 14-leaf manuscript written in Alamannia or Bavaria and in several—rather clumsy—hands around 813.<sup>142</sup> These annals specify that Pope Leo III traveled to Paderborn with 203 companions and that at the same time, legates of the “empress” (*imperatissa*) reached Charlemagne.<sup>143</sup> There is no reason to mistrust the *Annales Guelferbytani* here, which means that this additional information confirms that Charlemagne's exchanges with Irene since 798 must have been particularly intense. This and the presence of Byzantine envoys in Paderborn imply that Charlemagne probably also discussed his intentions to become emperor with Irene's envoys. The fact that this was the empress' second embassy to Charlemagne in a single year supports that the two monarchs were negotiating urgent and vital matters.<sup>144</sup> It seems likely that these exchanges were related to the mysterious “Greeks” mentioned in the *Cologne interpolation* and their consignment of *imperium* to Charlemagne.

Given the vast implications a marriage alliance of Charlemagne and Irene must have had for both domains, this plan hardly came out of the blue and is likely to have been the culmination of preceding negotiations. The *Cologne interpolation* suggests that ambitious projects were already discussed before. It is unlikely that Charlemagne considered becoming emperor in both east and west,<sup>145</sup> a plan whose implementation is difficult to imagine. More probable is a dual model with two separated domains united by the marriage of the two sovereigns. The prime purpose of this marital alliance would have been to strengthen and seal this agreement ritually. The result would have been one empire ruled by two emperors,<sup>146</sup> a plan that may have been fairly close to what Charlemagne and Irene already envisaged before marriage had become an option. The preceding negotiations probably also had already treated the question of coequality, and

<sup>141</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 799. See also Grabois, “Charlemagne” (1981), pp. 792–809.

<sup>142</sup> Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 67.5 Aug. 8°, access [diglib.hab.de/mss/67-5-aug-8f/start.htm](http://diglib.hab.de/mss/67-5-aug-8f/start.htm) (20/07/2019).

<sup>143</sup> *Annales Guelferbytani* a. 799, pars altera (fols. 10<sup>v</sup>–11<sup>r</sup>), p. 173: “karolus plai/davit ad lippihamme. Inde/ perrexit ad phaderprunnin./ [ . . . ] hic venit papa leo ad eum/ et alii romani consiliatores eius/ CC III et missi imperatissa ibi/ fuerunt et iterum ad aquas.” An unobservant scribe mistakenly interpreted CC III to be referring to the entry for this year. See also Garipzanov, “Annales Guelferbytani” (2010); Davis, *Charlemagne's practice* (2015), pp. 193–5.

<sup>144</sup> Similar Fried, “Papst Leo III.” (2001), p. 316.

<sup>145</sup> Similar Ohnsorge, “*Orthodoxus imperator*” (1958), p. 73; idem, *Das Zweikaiserproblem* (1947), p. 26; cf. Latowsky, *Emperor of the world* (2013), pp. 53–4. See also the potential reminiscence in Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.26, p. 37: “Forsitan divitias orientales aut partiremur aut pariter participando communiter haberemus.”

<sup>146</sup> Similar Herrin, *Women in purple* (2001), pp. 117–18, erroneously assuming that the *Cologne interpolation* already implied a marriage alliance.

thus the recognition of Charlemagne's imperial status.<sup>147</sup> The term *imperium* in the *Cologne interpolation* thus may refer to the prospective Byzantine acknowledgment of Charlemagne's future position as a ruler equal to the Byzantine βασιλεύς, a concession Irene must have willingly offered given her difficult situation in Constantinople.<sup>148</sup>

Another challenging question is how these prior negotiations relate to the fact that Leo III finally coronated Charlemagne. If the Byzantine empress approved his rise to emperorship following the negotiations in Paderborn, the pope probably was meant to take the role of the patriarch. Maybe Irene's official consent reached Rome in December 800, together with the envoys of the patriarch of Jerusalem?<sup>149</sup> As we have seen above, Leo III used this occasion to add a small but significant change in the sequence of the rituals performed during the ceremony by starting with the coronation.

The reconstruction of events suggested until here does not correspond to the official Frankish narrative, as attested to by the evidence relating to Charlemagne's coronation. The only Byzantine involvement mentioned is Irene's alleged lack of legitimacy as empress, which requires a plausible explanation. In this context, it is essential to note that none of the Frankish sources available were written before Irene's deposition in 802 and that authentic evidence relating to the foregoing negotiations is lacking—except for the *Cologne interpolation*. It appears that the cards had been reshuffled after this event. The evidence is limited to revised versions written with the benefit of hindsight, testimonies that may have replaced earlier documentation.

It is possible that Irene's role in the deposition of her son was unknown, or at least unconfirmed, in the west until her deposition. The information in Alcuin's letter quoted above and the *Royal Frankish Annals* is limited to what may have been Irene's preferred version of what had happened to Constantine VI: unlike Theophanes' report, these Frankish sources ignore that the emperor was deposed and blinded by his mother. Instead, they report that he was dethroned by "his own people and citizens."<sup>150</sup> It appears likely that in her letter to Charlemagne mentioning Constantine VI's deposition, Irene withheld the information about her own contribution as she apprehended that the truth would impede good relations with the Franks.<sup>151</sup> The missing information probably

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Macrides, "Dynastic marriages" (1992), p. 274.

<sup>148</sup> See Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem* (1947), pp. 18–24.

<sup>149</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 800. Cf. Grabois, "Charlemagne" (1981), p. 801.

<sup>150</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 174, p. 288: "a propriis et concivibus"; *Annales regni Francorum* a. 798, p. 104: "epistolam Herenae imperatricis ferentes; nam filius eius Constantinus imperator anno superiore a suis comprehensus et execatus est."

<sup>151</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 798. In 797, Constantine VI had sent a letter to the Franks, see *ibid.* a. 797.

only reached the Franks together with the news about Irene's deposition when the Frankish embassy arrived home around Spring 803.<sup>152</sup> As it seems, the Frankish historiography ignored this new information and, at the same time, effaced any reference to Irene's relation with the Frankish emperor to protect Charlemagne's legacy.

The chronology of redaction of the Frankish sources thus helps to explain why the Frankish sources do not mention Charlemagne's negotiations with Irene. After Irene had fallen into disrepute, the Frankish scribes resorted to the argumentation related to her gender, which had already been used a decade earlier.<sup>153</sup> The result was the reasoning found in the *Annals of Lorsch*, the earliest known report of the events of December 800. The argumentation found there, stressing the legitimacy of Charlemagne's rise to emperorship given the alleged vacancy of the Byzantine throne, can not reflect the Frankish position before 803, when Irene's gender was no hindrance to her being an essential partner of diplomatic exchange.<sup>154</sup> This entry in the *Annals* thus already represents a reinterpretation in consideration of the changed situation since 803, while its reference to the idea of a universal empire encompassing east and west still seems to reflect the prior negotiations.<sup>155</sup>

Irene's and Charlemagne's projected enterprise ultimately encouraged her enemies to have her removed, and whatever had been at stake since 798 was put to an end in 802, with the enthronement of Nikephoros I. The Frankish diplomatic exchanges with the Byzantine empire continued. Charlemagne's envoys in 803 returned with Byzantine legates. In Salz, they met Charlemagne, offering a peace treaty and a letter.<sup>156</sup> However, Irene's successor was significantly less favorable toward Charlemagne and his empire, as a letter sent in 811 by the patriarch Nikephoros to Pope Leo III attests.<sup>157</sup> The patriarch explained that it took him five years to address the Roman prelate because the emperor—obviously Nikephoros I—had prevented such exchanges.<sup>158</sup> The sender added that the emperor was furious about the “celebration with the *chrismon*,” a statement Peter Classen associated with Charlemagne's coronation.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6295 (802/3); *Annales regni Francorum* a. 803. See also *Annales Mettenses priores* a. 803.

<sup>153</sup> This reasoning does not exclude that the pope had already used the same argument in 799/800.

<sup>154</sup> Similar Brandes, “Irene und das Kaisertum um 800” (2007), p. 293.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem* (1947), pp. 26–9.

<sup>156</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 803.

<sup>157</sup> Classen, “Italien” (1983), pp. 109–10. See Nikephoros, *Epistola ad Leonem*, cols. 169–200.

<sup>158</sup> Confirmed in Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6304 (811/12).

<sup>159</sup> Nikephoros, *Epistola ad Leonem*, col. 197A: “Ἐδόκει γὰρ τῷ εἴργοντι καὶ ἀφορμὴν εὐπρόσωπον προβάλλεσθαι ἐφ’ ἡμῖν τῶν ἐπιτελεσθέντων τοῦ χρίσματος ἔνεκεν, καὶ ὡς ὑμεῖς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἑαυτοὺς ἀπερρήξατε, διεθρύλλει καὶ ἐχαλέπαινε.” On the Patriarch Nikephoros, see Talbot, *Byzantine defenders* (1998), pp. 25–40. See also Classen, “Italien” (1983), p. 110.

## The Byzantine Recognition

Charlemagne's letter and the treaty of peace sent to Nikephoros remained without response, and diplomacy was soon replaced by open war.<sup>160</sup> According to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, six years passed before envoys were exchanged again between the two realms. The first embassy was not officially approved by the Frankish emperor,<sup>161</sup> and a more official legation only reached the west one year later in 810<sup>162</sup> and stayed with Charlemagne until 811. They returned to Constantinople accompanied by a Frankish embassy,<sup>163</sup> received by the emperor Michael I<sup>164</sup> and, in 812, sent back a legation to confirm the peace previously concluded with Nikephoros I.<sup>165</sup> The Byzantines returned together with a Frankish legation confirming the peace on Charlemagne's behalf.<sup>166</sup> The Byzantine legation sent in 814 to Aachen in return, however, was received by Charlemagne's son and successor, Louis the Pious.<sup>167</sup>

In Aachen, Michael's envoys offered Charlemagne Greek laudations according to their own customs and prominently addressed him with the words "imperator et basileus."<sup>168</sup> This act is usually interpreted to have implied the Byzantine recognition of Charlemagne's imperial status.<sup>169</sup> This approval, only granted at the very last minute,<sup>170</sup> had remained one of Charlemagne's prime objectives,<sup>171</sup> the significance he attributed to it is confirmed by the fact that he resigned to his claims on Venetia and the Dalmatian coastline.<sup>172</sup>

The Byzantine implications and the procedure of imperial acknowledgment are difficult to assess. More than a century later, Constantine VII, in his *De cerimoniis*, recorded the course of action to be followed when a western emperor was meant to be recognized by his eastern counterpart. This would have implied the sending of ambassadors and the exchange of laureate portraits.<sup>173</sup> Despite scattered references in this source to more contemporary events, like Romanos

<sup>160</sup> Ohnsorge, "Das Kaisertum der Eirene" (1963), pp. 237–8.

<sup>161</sup> See *Annales regni Francorum* a. 809.

<sup>162</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 810.

<sup>163</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 811. For a letter exchanged between Charlemagne and Nikephoros I, see *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 32, pp. 546–8.

<sup>164</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6304 (811/12).

<sup>165</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 812. For a summary, see Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 23, pp. 352–4.

<sup>166</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 813.

<sup>167</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 814. See also Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 9, p. 190.

<sup>168</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 812, p. 136: "more suo, id est Grecam lingua, laudes ei dixerunt, imperatorem eum et basileum appellantes." See also the mention of a treaty in *Epist. var.* 37.

<sup>169</sup> E.g., Chrysos, "Karl der Große" (2015), p. 11.

<sup>170</sup> See Ohnsorge, "Renovatio" (1958), pp. 122–3; Chrysos, "Byzantine diplomacy" (1992), p. 35.

<sup>171</sup> See comments in Chrysos, "Karl der Große" (2015), p. 9. Against Ohnsorge, "Renovatio" (1958), pp. 127–30.

<sup>172</sup> Wickham, "Ninth-century Byzantium" (1998), p. 252; Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), p. 268.

<sup>173</sup> Constantine, *De cerimoniis* 1.87, p. 393: "ἐὰν ὁ ἀναγορευθεὶς ἐν τοῖς ἄνω μέρεσιν βασιλεὺς ἀποστείλῃ πρέσβεις καὶ λαυρεάτα." See also *ibid.* 1.88.



I's campaign in southern Italy or to people like the author's son Romanos II,<sup>174</sup> the mention of the fifth-century emperor Anthemius in the relevant section suggests that its contents go back to late Antiquity. Still, it remains notable that Constantine VII chose to include it in his work, which suggests that he still considered it somewhat relevant for his own time. Did he assume that a comparable procedure was applied in 812 or might be executed in the future? Although Charlemagne did send ambassadors to Michael's predecessors, there is no mention that a portrait had been exchanged before or after this. Besides, Charlemagne was confirmed in the west, not in the east. So did the Byzantines adopt the late Antique procedure to the current situation, or does the above mean that the official procedure was ignored? There is also no evidence of an official recognition ceremony in Constantinople, which would have involved the joining of Charlemagne's portrait to that of Michael to seal the union of the two domains ritually.<sup>175</sup>

Although there is no evidence proving that the Byzantines used their official procedure to recognize the Frankish emperor, there is sufficient proof that the Greek acclamation in Aachen implied the full approval of his status as emperor, as we shall see. Since around 811, the Byzantine emperors regularly used the qualifier "Roman" to refer to their empire. Silver coins, the so-called *miliarensia*, now bore the inscription reading "Michael and Theophylactos through God emperors of the Romans" ("Μιχαὴλ καὶ Θεοφύλακτος ἐκ Θεοῦ βασιλ[ε]ῖς Ῥ[ω]μαίων"),<sup>176</sup> and the Byzantine emperors increasingly used the title *βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ* with the addition *Ῥωμαῖος*.<sup>177</sup> Modern scholars, therefore, assumed that the treaty that was exchanged in 812—known as the Treaty of Aachen—not only implied Charlemagne's recognition as emperor but also the latter's renouncement to the "Roman" denomination of his empire.<sup>178</sup> This is not corroborated by the evidence. Although Charlemagne refrained from calling himself "Roman emperor" in his subsequent letter to Michael I, he neither used such a qualifier for his addressee.<sup>179</sup> Besides, although Charlemagne had only rarely used the

<sup>174</sup> Constantine, *De cerimoniis* 2.44, 2.48.

<sup>175</sup> Constantine, *De cerimoniis* 1.87, p. 395: "καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας κοινῇ ἀνατίθεσθαι ἀμφοτέροις τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν"; *ibid* p. 396: "τῇ τε αὐτῷ ἡμερότητι ἡμᾶς συνηνώσθαι." See also Hack, "Bildaussendung und Bildeinholung" (2003).

<sup>176</sup> Laurent, "ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ῬΩΜΑΙΩΝ" (1940), p. 204, adding at p. 206 that gold coins did not bear the Greek "P" for ῬΩΜΑΙΩΝ. See also Lafaurie, "Les monnaies impériales" (1978), pp. 167–8, Röscher, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), p. 132.

<sup>177</sup> Stein, "Zum mittelalterlichen Titel" (1930), pp. 182–3; Ohnsorge, "Renovatio" (1958), p. 112.

<sup>178</sup> E.g., Semmler, "Renovatio regni Francorum" (1990), p. 125. See also Harnack, *Das karolingische und das byzantinische Reich* (1880), pp. 54–5; Stein, "Zum mittelalterlichen Titel" (1930), p. 182; Ohnsorge, "Die Entwicklung" (1958), pp. 218–19.

<sup>179</sup> *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 37, p. 556: "Imperator et Augustus idemque rex Francorum et Langobardorum dilecto et honorabili fratri Michaeli glorioso imperatori et augusto aeternam." Unfortunately, the address of Charlemagne's previous letter to Nikephoros, *ibid.* 32, did not survive. See also the comments in Patzold, "Die Kaiseridee" (2014), p. 55.



addition “Roman” in his letters before 812,<sup>180</sup> it may still be found in an epistle written in Aachen in May 813.<sup>181</sup> There is also one correspondence addressing Charlemagne as “ruling the Roman empire,” which was authored around 812 by the Italian patriarch Maxentius of Aquileia.<sup>182</sup> The Greek designation βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων neither was a complete novelty in the Byzantine east: it is well-attested from the mid-seventh century on seals, which were only abandoned under Irene and her son Constantine VI, who, on their part, used the same designation in 787 in their *intitulatio* of an epistle addressed to the Council of Nicaea.<sup>183</sup> Thus, the Roman character of the empire could not have had the significance in 812 that has persistently been premised by modern scholarship.<sup>184</sup>

Scholars like Percy Ernst Schramm argued that Charlemagne’s alleged renunciation of the Roman denomination implied that the Byzantine recognition was an ostensible success (germ. “Scheinerfolg”) and that the Frankish monarch was degraded as the bearer of an unsubstantial imperial title (Germ. “wesenloser Kaisertitel”).<sup>185</sup> The evidence speaks for the opposite. Theophanes, who finished his chronicle in 813, i.e., one year after the Treaty of Aachen, mentioned unperturbed that Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne “emperor of the Romans” (“βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων”).<sup>186</sup> This is not the only remarkable piece of evidence overlooked or misinterpreted. Walter Berschin, in his study of Greek in the west, argued that it would be most unlikely that the laudations offered to Charlemagne in 812, as reported by the *Royal Frankish Annals*, included the title *imperator* as well as the synonymous designation *basileus*. He concluded that this report would be a western interpretation with an attempt to translate the laudations from Latin into Greek.<sup>187</sup> However, the reported terms *imperator*

<sup>180</sup> See Kolia-Dermitzaki, “Byzantium” (2014), p. 361, referring to the three known examples: Amalarius, *Epist.* 1 and 3, pp. 242 and 244, and *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 35, p. 552.

<sup>181</sup> *Dipl. Karol.* 218, p. 291.

<sup>182</sup> *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 27, p. 537: “Augusto, domno Karolo magno imperatori atque Romanum gubernanti imperium.” See also Kolia-Dermitzaki, “Byzantium” (2014), p. 361, n. 18. Intriguingly, the Roman characterization was significantly more regularly used in reference to the earlier title *patricius Romanorum*. See also Amalarius, *Epist.* 14, p. 273, still referring in 811/12 to Charlemagne as *patricius Romanorum*; Garipzanov, “Communication of authority” (2005), pp. 69–82.

<sup>183</sup> Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), pp. 111–16 and 123–4. See also Laurent, “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ῬΩΜΑΙΩΝ” (1940), pp. 205–7, and the assessment in Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), pp. 115–16.

<sup>184</sup> E.g., Grierson, “The Carolingian empire” (1981), pp. 910–12; Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 246; Kolia-Dermitzaki, “Byzantium” (2014), p. 360. See also *LP, Vita Hadriani II* 42–4, c. 43, p. 181: “Grecis vero [. . .] nomenque imperiale nostro Cesari penitus invidentibus,” which clearly does not relate to the Roman element of the imperial name.

<sup>185</sup> Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), p. 14. Similar Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), p. 268. See also Latowsky, “Foreign embassies” (2005), p. 44.

<sup>186</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6289, pp. 472–3: “ὁ δὲ τὸν Κάρουλον ἀμειβόμενος ἔσπευεν αὐτὸν εἰς βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων.” The same expression, e.g., in Constantine, *DAI* 13, p. 70, for the Byzantine empire: “τοῦ μηδέποτε βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων συμπενθερίσαι.”

<sup>187</sup> Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 142–4, pointing to a comparable title in the late Carolingian manuscript Metz, Bibliothèque municipale Cod. 351, fol. 78<sup>r</sup>. See also below section VI.2.



FIGURE 2.2 Imperial coinage of Charlemagne. Redrawing from Lafaurie, “Les monnaies impériales” (1978), table III.30.

and *basileus* resulted from a translation from the original Greek into Latin. The standard Byzantine acclamation was “βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ,”<sup>188</sup> and these terms perfectly correspond to the Latin(ized) *imperator et basileus*. *Αὐτοκράτωρ* is synonymous with the Latin *imperator*, given that both stress the bearer’s autonomous authority. As this designation was unknown in the west, the Frankish author translated it with its Latin correspondent *imperator*. Thus, Charlemagne, in 812, was granted the standard acclamation any Byzantine emperor would have received. There is no indication that it was meant to imply any downgrading of his position as emperor.

The Byzantine concession was significant beyond this important detail: in 812, the Frankish ruler was upgraded from “son” (lat. *filius*) to “brother” (lat. *frater*), a designation used in the mentioned letter to the emperor Michael I<sup>189</sup> and confirmed in the tenth century in Constantine VII’s *De cerimoniis*.<sup>190</sup> Charlemagne’s imperial status is attested on his coinage only after the events of 812: the imperial coins, of which only 45 are preserved, show Charlemagne in Roman style with laureate and either with the inscription “D N KARLVS IMP AVG REX F ET L” or with the more concise alternative “KAR[O]LVS IMP AVG” on the obverse (see Figure 2.2). On the reverse, these coins bear different symbols indicating the location of the mint, for example, a tetrastyle temple going back to the Tetrarchic era that referred to Aachen.<sup>191</sup> This latter element refers to a period when the

<sup>188</sup> The above implies that the term *laudes* in “more suo, id est Grecam lingua, laudes ei dixerunt” did not specifically refer to what western authors called the *laudes regia*, as Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 142, postulated.

<sup>189</sup> *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 37, p. 556. Critical discussion in Brandes, “Die ‘Familie der Könige’” (2013), pp. 272–3. The address *frater* was later used, e.g., in Thietmar, *Chron.* 3.21.

<sup>190</sup> Constantine, *De cerimoniis* 2.48, p. 689. Similar *ibid.* p. 691.

<sup>191</sup> See Lafaurie, “Les monnaies impériales” (1978), p. 167, and on these coins more in general Garipzanov, “The image of authority” (1999); Kluge, “*Nomen imperatoris*” (1999); Coupland, “Charlemagne’s coinage” (2005), p. 226; Coupland, “The portrait coinage” (2014). A critical assessment of Lafaurie in Davis, “Charlemagne’s portrait” (2014), p. 22.



FIGURE 2.3 Coinage including Greek letters in the inscription *XPICTIANA RELIGIO*. With kind permission by Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG Osnabrück, kuenker.com, owner: Lübke & Wiedemann, Leonberg.

same dual imperial model was in force that was also originally envisaged by Charlemagne, if the above interpretation is correct.

Some of these imperial coins contain Greek letters in the inscription (see Figure 2.3, with a Greek *c*-sigma instead of an *s*). These were not the only Carolingian coins with Greek elements: two coins belonging to a royal type minted between 793 and 814 were discovered in Sinzig (south-east of Bonn) and Trier. They carry a monogram with the Greek letters for *Καρωλωσ*, the Greek version of “Charlemagne.” Although these coins are pretty similar to the later imperial coinage, they must have been minted before the coronation of 800, given that they refer to Charlemagne as *patricius Romanorum*. According to the convincing argumentation of Simon Coupland, the mint’s most likely location is Aachen.<sup>192</sup> The Greek letters on these coins might be related to prestige or erudition, and may hint at a more pronounced Carolingian identification with the Byzantine world.

The Byzantines did not consider Charlemagne an usurper.<sup>193</sup> Although Charlemagne never attempted to seize imperial power in the east by conquering the capital of Constantinople<sup>194</sup> to become the head of a reunited empire, as some Byzantines may have expected in 801,<sup>195</sup> his position of power was comparable to that of the eastern emperor, who duly recognized his imperial authority. According to Ernst-Dietrich Hehl, it was Charlemagne’s decision not to take

<sup>192</sup> Coupland, “Zwei Denare Karls des Großen” (2020), pp. 274–7.

<sup>193</sup> Against Ohnsorge, “Konstantinopel” (1983), p. 103; Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), p. 86; McCormick, “Byzantium and the west” (1995), p. 360; McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 417; Groth, “Kaisertum” (2012), p. 38. Less strict Dölger, “Europas Gestaltung” (1943), pp. 212–13; Tsirpanlis, “Byzantine reactions” (1974). See also Speck, “Zum Vollzug der Krönung” (2000), p. 114; Bibikov, “Glanz und Elend” (2007), pp. 31–2; Kapriev, “Vier Arten” (2012), p. 5. Similar Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), p. 397.

<sup>194</sup> See Hehl, “Zwei christliche Kaiser” (2012), pp. 274–5.

<sup>195</sup> See Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem* (1947), pp. 25–6, with a slightly different suggestion in “Das Kaisertum der Eirene” (1963), pp. 232–4.

possession of the Byzantine throne that, in retrospect, put an end to the conception of the empire as a *corpus unum*, at which time the Church became the only remaining universal entity.<sup>196</sup> As argued above, the initial intention of Charlemagne's agreement with Irene probably was to create such a united *imperium*. This vision had not ended with Irene's deposition. In his letter of 813 to Michael, Charlemagne expressed his desire for peace between "the oriental and occidental empire" ("inter orientale atque occidentale imperium") to bring stability to the Catholic Church "spread over the entire world (*orbis*)."<sup>197</sup> Although the letter distinguished the Frankish and the Byzantine dominion, the emperor did not speak of two empires but chose the singular *imperium*.

### 3. Carolingian *imperium* after Charlemagne

The later Carolingian empire was never as vast and powerful as it had been under Charlemagne. While his son and only heir, Louis († 840), or subsequent monarchs like Charles the Fat († 888) still ruled a united Carolingian empire—albeit primarily thanks to biological coincidence<sup>198</sup>—, the emperors that followed the division of Verdun in 843 gradually ceased to be rulers over kings. The authority of Lothar I's son Louis II († 855) was reduced to the Frankish parts of Italy, whereas emperors like Guy of Spoleto († 894) ruled an even smaller part of that same territory. By the end of Frankish emperorship, imperial authority was limited to Rome and the protection of the apostolic see.<sup>199</sup> Consequently, scholars debated whether Charlemagne's successors still merited to be called "emperors,"<sup>200</sup> and the Frankish authors tauntingly called such authorities "emperor of Italy" (*imperator Italiae*), a title attested since Louis II.<sup>201</sup> This restriction impeded any universal claims usually attached to the role of the emperor,<sup>202</sup> and the imperial throne remained vacant after the death of the emperor Berengar († 924) for almost four decades.<sup>203</sup> This section retraces the subsequent evolution of concepts related to *imperium* and how they related to the Byzantine world to show that although the idea of a united empire outlived Charlemagne, differing ideas emerged and coexisted throughout the ninth century.

<sup>196</sup> Hehl, "Zwei christliche Kaiser" (2012), pp. 274–6. A similar line of thought in Ohnsorge, "Orthodoxus imperator" (1958), pp. 74–5.

<sup>197</sup> *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 37, p. 556.

<sup>198</sup> Regino, *Chronicon* a. 888.

<sup>199</sup> Kempf, "Das mittelalterliche Kaisertum" (1956), p. 231.

<sup>200</sup> E.g., Borst, "Kaisertum und Namentheorie" (1972), pp. 237–8, or the pejorative depiction in Regino, *Chronicon* a. 887.

<sup>201</sup> Zimmermann, "Imperatores Italiae" (1974), p. 384.

<sup>202</sup> See Jarnut, "Ludwig der Fromme" (1990), p. 361.

<sup>203</sup> For a short survey, see Groth, "Kaisertum" (2017), pp. 93–6.

## Louis the Pious

Louis the Pious did not adopt his father's imperial title. Instead, he called himself *imperator augustus*, a significantly shorter version lacking reference to the empire's Roman character and the ruler's role as king of the Franks and the Lombards.<sup>204</sup> There has been much debate on the significance of this title. Percy Ernst Schramm explained the omission to refer to the empire's Romanness as a result of the Treaty of Aachen in 812,<sup>205</sup> a suggestion countered by Matthias Becher,<sup>206</sup> whereas Herwig Wolfram supposed that a reference to Louis' kingship may have appeared redundant given that the Franks had acclaimed him emperor,<sup>207</sup> which does not explain the missing mention of his Lombard kingship. Werner Ohnsorge offered a more plausible interpretation by relating it to a more strictly imperial representation,<sup>208</sup> similar to Ildar H. Garipzanov, supposing a return to late Roman practice, a thesis backed by the use of imperial *signum* corresponding to the box monogram of the emperor Theodosius II († 450) used on Louis' diplomas.<sup>209</sup> The title suggests that Louis did not consider the addition "Roman" an essential element of his imperial title, whose Christian nature must have been self-evident to its contemporaries, and, more importantly, it confirms that the Frankish empire was conceived as a supraethnic entity encompassing all the territories and population under Carolingian authority.

Charlemagne's Byzantine recognition does not seem to have been transferred to his son, at least not in equal measure.<sup>210</sup> A letter sent by the emperors Michael and Theophilos in April 824 to Louis the Pious retained some ambiguity. On the one hand, the Frankish emperor was called "dear and honorable brother [. . .] glorious king of the Franks and the Lombards," while, on the other hand, the letter added that the Franks and the Lombards called him "their emperor" ("vocatus eorum imperator"). Referring to themselves, the two eastern rulers used the designation "emperors of the Romans" ("imperatores Romanorum").<sup>211</sup> Thus, this letter expresses quite clearly what scholars have unjustly presumed already for the time of Charlemagne: Louis' emperorship was, if at all, grudgingly

<sup>204</sup> See Müller-Mertens, "Frankenreich" (1997), p. 47; Müller-Mertens, "Römisches Reich" (2009), p. 54. See also Wolfram, "Lateinische Herrschertitel" (1973), pp. 79–162.

<sup>205</sup> Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), p. 14.

<sup>206</sup> Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), p. 269, n. 64.

<sup>207</sup> Wolfram, "Lateinische Herrschertitel" (1973), p. 79; see also *ibid.* p. 82.

<sup>208</sup> Ohnsorge, "Renovatio" (1958), pp. 128–9.

<sup>209</sup> Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), p. 293. See also Brown, "The idea of empire" (2006), pp. 38–9.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Ohnsorge, "Das Mitkaisertum" (1950), p. 313; Ohnsorge, "Die Entwicklung" (1958), p. 225, arguing for a tacit continuation of this recognition until the early 870s.

<sup>211</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, p. 475: "Michahel et Theophilus, fideles in ipso Dei imperatores Romanorum, dilecto et honorabili fratri Hludowico, glorioso regi Francorum et Langobardorum et vocato eorum imperatori." See also Ohnsorge, "Renovatio" (1958), p. 130; Wolfram, "Lateinische Herrschertitel" (1973), pp. 81–2.

acknowledged by the Byzantine emperors, who now emphasized their role as Roman emperors. Although some recognition was implied in the appellation “brother,” the words used to characterize Louis’ status as emperor also seem to express a certain degree of disrespect.<sup>212</sup> An equivalent attitude toward the Byzantines is attested in the Frankish sources, and might be the reaction to the Byzantine irreverence. Einhard, for example, in his *Life of Charlemagne*, twice referred to the Byzantine emperors as “emperors of Constantinople,”<sup>213</sup> once as “emperors of the Greeks,”<sup>214</sup> and only on one particular occasion—i.e., where he described the Byzantine reaction to Charlemagne’s imperial coronation—he did resort to the term “Roman emperors.”<sup>215</sup>

In his early years, Louis the Pious pursued the same path as his father had done. His accession to the throne of 813 took place in Aachen without papal involvement and largely conforming to Byzantine tradition.<sup>216</sup> Louis later used the same procedure when elevating his son Lothar I to co-emperor status.<sup>217</sup> In addition, in his *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817, he abandoned the ancient Frankish tradition of allotting an equal share to every legitimate heir by superordinating the designated emperor Lothar I over his younger brothers.<sup>218</sup> The intention was to ensure that the western empire would retain its status as a suprareginal authority over the sum of the Frankish territories. This was not a new idea, as Charlemagne had already installed similar arrangements in 811 for Louis the Pious who, as emperor, was superordinated over the remaining regal rulers like Bernard, the king of Italy.<sup>219</sup> Although imperial power and the imperial name could be shared between the current holder and his co-emperor, the western empire was conceived as indivisible.<sup>220</sup> This model of empire as an entity subordinated to the Frankish kingdoms, however, could not be established as a future rationale due to the resistance of Louis’ elder sons and the subsequent divisions of the kingdom,<sup>221</sup>

<sup>212</sup> Similar Haendler, *Epoche* (1958), pp. 46–8.

<sup>213</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 15 and 16. Same in *Annales regni Francorum* 821, p. 155. See also Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), p. 201, n. 87; Kolia-Dermizaki, “Byzantium” (2014), p. 370.

<sup>214</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 19.

<sup>215</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 28. See also Sarti, “From Romanus to Graecus” (2018), p. 147. Cf. Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), p. 201.

<sup>216</sup> Ohnsorge, “Renovatio” (1958), p. 121, suggests an inspiration by the coronation in 811 of Theophylaktos.

<sup>217</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 817; Becher, “Das Kaisertum” (2012), pp. 266–9.

<sup>218</sup> *Capitularia Francorum* 136, *praef.* p. 271. See also *Annales regni Francorum* a. 817; Nithard, *Historiarum libri* 1.2, p. 8. Jarnut, “Ludwig der Fromme” (1990), p. 349; Semmler, “Renovatio regni Francorum” (1990), pp. 132–3. Charlemagne’s initial *Divisio regnorum* of 806, see *Capitularia Francorum* 45, did not yet invest the emperor with authority over his brothers, see Hammer, “Christmas Day 800” (2012), p. 19. See also Schlesinger, “Kaisertum und Reichsteilung” (1958).

<sup>219</sup> Classen, “Karl der Große” (1983), p. 228.

<sup>220</sup> See, e.g., *Annales regni Francorum* a. 817, p. 146: “nominis atque imperii sui socium sibi constituit”; Nithard, *Historiarum libri* 1.2, p. 8.

<sup>221</sup> See Boshof, “Einheitsidee und Teilungsprinzip” (1990). See also Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), p. 201.

when the sovereignty of the Frankish emperor was increasingly limited to a small territory.

Warren Brown raised the challenging question of how the Carolingian *imperium* may have been perceived by those who were related to neither the emperor nor his court. He used a well-preserved cartulary from the church of Freising compiled between the 820s and 850s to show that even with only a few more explicit references available, like scattered mentions or short dating references, it is possible to gather some information on local tendencies and even some individual assessments of current notions of empire. Brown argued that the evidence confirms not only that local scribes did understand themselves as the subjects of an emperor ruling an empire but also that these documents largely reflect the official line and current political messages propagated by the court, which means that relevant and up-to-date information was available in the periphery. Derivations from these official lines seem to attest to local and sometimes even individual reflections and opinions.<sup>222</sup> The evidence thus confirms that contemporaries were aware of the existence of their empire, that it was important enough to keep themselves informed about related changes or events, and that people had divergent opinions on this matter.

### The “Emperors of Italy”

The role of the Frankish emperor implicated the protection of the Roman Church, a function the Carolingian kings had already adopted as *patricius Romanorum*.<sup>223</sup> When Charlemagne replaced this title with the imperial name, he retained his responsibility toward Rome, which became a characteristic feature of the Frankish notion of empire. Ildar H. Garipzanov showed how Charlemagne’s heirs gradually supplanted the ethnic references initially contained in the imperial title with elements that emphasized the Christian nature of the Frankish dominion.<sup>224</sup> This tendency is confirmed by the historiographical evidence, where, from the 820s, the Carolingian rulers are regularly characterized as “most pious” (*piissimus*).<sup>225</sup> It may be related to discussions in the 820s among Carolingian scholars like the Archbishop Agobard of Lyon, Hrabanus Maurus, and Einhard

<sup>222</sup> Brown, “The idea of empire” (2006), pp. 37–55.

<sup>223</sup> Still explicit in Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 55, p. 508: “curam sanctae Romane ecclesie simul commisit.”

<sup>224</sup> Garipzanov, “Communication of authority” (2005), pp. 57–68, e.g., *Dipl. Karoli III* 39, a. (May 11th 881), p. 68: “piissimi imperatoris Karoli.” See also Claudius, *Epist.* 4, p. 597.

<sup>225</sup> E.g., “piissimus imperator” in *Annales regni Francorum* a. 821; Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 28, 37, 40, 50, 61, 62; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 49, 58; “piissimus princeps” in Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 44, 45, 55.; Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 20. See also *ibid.* 29. Similar already in *Annales regni Francorum* 787, 788: “piissimus rex”; Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 33: “gloriosissimo atque piissimo domno.”



advocating against the dividing diversity of peoples and laws. According to them, this division should be overcome by the connective nature of the Christian community, Christianity thus becoming the sole reference in a unified Frankish world.<sup>226</sup> In addition, the gradual weakening of the Frankish empire due to its internal crisis,<sup>227</sup> a process in which Aachen lost its prior importance to the benefit of the itinerant court,<sup>228</sup> entailed that western *imperium* forfeited its character as a geographically defined political entity, a deficit increasingly concealed by references to Christian universality meant to emanate from the Roman Church (Germ. “universale römische Kaiseridee”).<sup>229</sup>

The connection of the diminishing Frankish *imperium* to its Christian community entailed that the pope regained influence in related processes.<sup>230</sup> already Louis the Pious, in October 816, and Lothar I, in April 823, were crowned by the pope after their initial investment as emperor or co-emperor.<sup>231</sup> If we follow Matthias Becher’s reasoning, these acts were not yet constitutive, however, as any apostolic legitimation was redundant in the presence of a ruling emperor with authority over the entire Carolingian dominion heading such a ceremony.<sup>232</sup> The gradual gain of apostolic influence emerged from a complex power struggle between the two authorities. Although the Carolingians and the pope were both aiming at a relationship of mutual benefit, the two were also keen on enhancing their position to the other party’s detriment. Louis, for example, in his *Constitutio Romana* issued in November 824, imposed himself as emperor by requesting an oath of loyalty from every pre-elect pope prior to his ordination,<sup>233</sup> a request confirmed in 962 by Otto I in his *Privilegium Ottonianum*.<sup>234</sup> The popes, on their part, further strengthened their constitutive role in the context of the coronation of emperors, and kings. In 844, Lothar I’s son Louis was crowned king by Pope Sergius II and, in 850, it was Pope Leo IV who ritually installed him as his father’s co-emperor and successor.<sup>235</sup> These events marked

<sup>226</sup> See Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), pp. 45–6.

<sup>227</sup> See Nithard, *Historiarum libri* 1.4. See also Ganshof, “Am Vorabend” (1972).

<sup>228</sup> Schieffer, “Vor 1200 Jahren” (1997), pp. 19–20.

<sup>229</sup> Similar Ohnsorge, “Das Mitkaisertum” (1950), pp. 311–12; Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), p. 40.

<sup>230</sup> See already Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 8, p. 188; Semmler, “*Renovatio regni Francorum*” (1990), pp. 140–1. See also Garipzanov, “Communication of authority” (2005), p. 62; Groth, “How to become emperor” (2017).

<sup>231</sup> On Louis, see Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 17; *Annales regni Francorum* a. 816; see also Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 4. On Lothar, see Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 21.

<sup>232</sup> Becher, “Das Kaisertum” (2012), p. 269. See also Jarnut, “Ludwig der Fromme” (1990), p. 354, referring to *Annales regni Francorum* a. 823, p. 161. Cf. Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 36, p. 414.

<sup>233</sup> *Capitularia Francorum* 161, pp. 322–4, at p. 324: “et ille qui electus fuerit me consentiente consecratus pontifex non fiat, priusquam tale sacramentum faciat.” See also *Annales Bertiniani* a. 844, pp. 45–6; Brown, “Byzantine Italy” (2006), p. 331; Groth, “Kaisertum” (2012), pp. 44–6.

<sup>234</sup> *Dipl. Germ.* Otto I, nr. 235; Liutprand, *Hist. Ottonis* 22.

<sup>235</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 850; Becher, “Das Kaisertum” (2012), p. 270. See also Ohnsorge, “Das Mitkaisertum” (1950), p. 312; idem, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), pp. 197 and 224.



the end of the period when the ruling emperor designated his co-emperor independently.<sup>236</sup> When Louis II died without heir, it was Pope John VIII († 882) who decided that not Louis the German († 876) but Charles the Bald († 877) should succeed him.<sup>237</sup> The papal coronation was further institutionalized when, in the late ninth century, it was accompanied by the initial adoption of the candidate by the Roman pontiff.<sup>238</sup>

It was only as a consequence of the reduced geographical scope of the late Carolingian empire that the term *imperium* was restricted mainly to Italy or those domains effectively ruled by a specific emperor.<sup>239</sup> The notion of a universal *imperium* had not entirely disappeared, however. Important evidence confirming the broad spectrum of the late Carolingian notion of *imperium* is provided by a unique letter addressed in 871 by the emperor Louis II to his Byzantine counterpart Basil I, a letter which, for the first time, more explicitly attests to the Byzantine displeasure toward the designation of the western ruler as “Roman” emperor. Its redaction is usually attributed to the Roman scholar Anastasius Bibliothecarius. The letter was transmitted as part of chapter 107 of the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, which survived in a single manuscript from the thirteenth century. The letter is located at fols. 60<sup>r</sup>–7<sup>v</sup> (l. 5).<sup>240</sup>

The letter is a polemical response preceded by at least another letter written by the Frankish emperor and two by Basil I, all now lost.<sup>241</sup> In his second letter, Basil must have criticized Louis for calling himself “Roman emperor.” In his extant response, Louis provokingly addressed Basil as “emperor of new Rome” by reserving the title *imperator augustus Romanorum* to himself.<sup>242</sup> These are not the only contents that define this letter as a singular testimony of a debate by two ruling emperors on their understanding of *imperium*. It was conducted in the context of struggles against Muslims in southern Italy, as we shall see in

<sup>236</sup> Kempf, *Das mittelalterliche Kaisertum* (1956), pp. 231–2. See also Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), pp. 28–32; Zimmermann, “Imperatores Italiae” (1974), p. 383.

<sup>237</sup> *Annales Vedastini* a. 875, p. 41; *Annales Bertiniani* a. 876; Regino, *Chron.* a. 875, p. 110; Becher, “Das Kaisertum” (2012), p. 270; Peters-Custot, “Sancta Romana ecclesia” (2012), p. 245.

<sup>238</sup> See Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), pp. 205–6. See also Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem* (1947), p. 33; Peters-Custot, “Sancta Romana Ecclesia” (2012).

<sup>239</sup> Maleczek, “Otto I. und Johannes XII” (2001), pp. 170–6.

<sup>240</sup> Louis II, *Epist.* See *Chronicon Salernitanum* 107, pp. 107–21. The manuscript is Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 5001, at fols. 3<sup>r</sup>–104<sup>r</sup>, access [digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.lat.5001](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.5001) (06/08/2020). For an excellent English translation by Charles West, see his *The fall of a Carolingian kingdom* (2023), pp. 186–200. Its authenticity was challenged by Kleinclausz, “La lettre de Louis II” (1904), pp. 45–53, refuted by Poupardin, “La lettre de Louis II” (1903), and Henze, “Über den Brief” (1910). See also Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), pp. 218–25; Hehl, “Zwei christliche Kaiser” (2012), pp. 277–81; Peters-Custot, “Sancta Romana Ecclesia” (2012), pp. 244–5.

<sup>241</sup> Louis II, *Epist.* p. 391: “set quoniam nos super hoc pulsasti denuo, nostrum denuo sume responsum.”

<sup>242</sup> Louis II, *Epist.* p. 386: “Lodogicus divina ordinante providentia imperator augustus Romanorum spiritualique fratri nostro Basilio gloriosissimo et piissimo atque imperatori novae Roma.” See also Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 253.

section III.2. Most notably, as Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz pointed out, Louis II and his wife Angilberga were designated “emperor” in a letter attached to the acts of the ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 867, a piece of evidence that implies the Byzantine recognition of their imperial status.<sup>243</sup>

In his letter, five years later, Louis II skillfully refuted Basil I’s prior claim that the title βασιλεύς should be reserved for the Byzantine emperors by arguing that the Greek sources used it regularly in reference to other monarchs, including gentile kings like the Vandals or Goths.<sup>244</sup> Louis further stressed that the “dignity of imperium” would lie in God and the “summits of the glory of piety,” not in the “name’s designation” (“vocabuli nomine”), adding that divine orders had granted him the rule of the Roman empire through the unction and blessings by the hands of the highest priest, i.e., the pope. The letter continues by arguing that Charlemagne had not usurped this dignity as he had received it on divine orders, by the Church’s judgment, and through the papal unction. It also emphasized the significance of this latter ritual by stressing that other emperors had only been raised to imperial dignity by the senate and the people, thus lacking divine consecration by the pontiffs.<sup>245</sup>

Responding to Basil’s critique that the Frankish emperor did not rule over entire Francia, Louis argued that all the Frankish kings were of one heart, of his own kin, and bound by the Divine Spirit. He further explained that he should be called “emperor of the Romans,” not “emperor of the Franks,” as his honor stemmed from the Romans whose capital of Rome the Franks had received by divine mercy and of whose Church they had become the protectors. According to Louis, the Franks received governance over the Roman empire thanks to their good belief and orthodoxy, and they replaced the Byzantines (*Graeci*), who forfeited their right to be emperors of the Romans through their bad belief (*kacadosia*), and because they had left the ancient capital, its people, and its language. At an earlier point, Louis suggested that although there would be only one empire in Heaven, of which the earthly Church would be part, it could be governed by two emperors, provided they acted in full cooperation.<sup>246</sup>

The letter offers a good impression of the different facets of a late ninth-century understanding of *imperium*. The emphasis on the Roman unction is noteworthy, as this ritual is not attested in the context of Charlemagne’s imperial coronation,

<sup>243</sup> Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae* (1946), p. 77 n. 38. Against Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), p. 225. It is part of the *Episola metrophanis* in the appendix of *Conc. Const.* a. 867, cols. 749–1208, the Latin version at col. 1114D: “Imperatorem Ludovicum & Ingelbertam in conflictu synodo acclamavit Augustam.”

<sup>244</sup> Louis II, *Epist.* pp. 387–8. See also Hehl, “Zwei christliche Kaiser” (2012), p. 279.

<sup>245</sup> Louis II, *Epist.* pp. 387–8.

<sup>246</sup> Louis II, *Epist.* pp. 387–90.

apart from Theophanes' erroneous report.<sup>247</sup> A second important point is the significance attributed to God's will, and the characterization of the pope as its executor. Louis' assertion that some emperors had not received this consecration from a western perception must have been meant as a side blow against the Byzantine emperors, who were crowned by the patriarch only after their investiture.<sup>248</sup> In addition, the association of Roman imperial rulership with authority over the city of Rome is noteworthy as it recalls the reasoning of the *Annals of Lorsch* and its early notion of a *translatio imperii* contained in the statement that the Franks replaced the Byzantines in their role as Roman emperor.

Louis II failed, however, to convincingly refute Basil's allegation that the western empire would still encompass the entire Frankish domain. More essential for us is Louis' concept of *imperium*: the earthly empire was understood as part of the heavenly *imperium*, incorporated on earth by the Church.<sup>249</sup> Thus, although there could be two emperors, there was only one empire. The mastering the Latin tongue, authority over Rome and its population, the emperor's papal investiture, a ruler's role as protector of the Church, and, last but not least, righteous belief, were presented as requirements for imperial rulership. Thus, Louis intimately connected imperial status with orthodoxy. The impression that Louis postulated one single *imperium*<sup>250</sup> is confirmed by the fact that, according to the same letter, the Franks were able to replace the Byzantines as rulers of the empire. Still, Louis—like his ghostwriter Anastasius—must have been aware that the Franks had never ruled over the eastern Roman territories and that the Carolingian ruler could not seriously enforce any such claim in front of the Byzantine emperor. Thus, as Harald Zimmermann already argued, this universality could, if at all, be attained through the universal character of the Church.<sup>251</sup> While this helps explain why, by the mid-ninth century, the pope had acquired a crucial role in the installation of emperors, Louis' definition of *imperium* should also be considered a provocative response to a likewise challenging letter.

Further late ninth-century sources attest varying understandings of emperorship, including a growing notion of a Frankish *imperium* unrelated to the Byzantine empire. Some attest to the growing consciousness that two different imperial traditions had emerged: a Byzantine tradition with an emperor installed by the acclamation of the senate, the army, and the people of Constantinople, and

<sup>247</sup> See Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6289 (a. 796/7), p. 473; "χρίσας ἐλαίῳ ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς ἕως ποδῶν." The confusion was probably produced by the royal unction of Charles the Younger on that same occasion, see *LP, Vita Leonis III* 24, p. 7.

<sup>248</sup> Ohnsorge, "Die Entwicklung" (1958), pp. 184–226, at p. 186; Becher, "Karl der Große" (2006), p. 8.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Hehl, "Zwei christliche Kaiser" (2012), p. 279. See also Henze, "Über den Brief" (1910), p. 672.

<sup>250</sup> See also *Gesta Berengarii* 4, ll. 98–9, pp. 354–403, in reference to Berengar's coronation: "Imperii sumpturus eo pro munere sertum / Solus et hocciduo caesar vocitandus in orbe" (p. 398).

<sup>251</sup> Zimmermann, "Imperatores Italiae" (1974), p. 398. See also section VI.3.

a Frankish empire whose head was first invested as a king by the pope in Rome.<sup>252</sup> The Benedictine monk Notker († 912) from the Abbey of St. Gall, for example, in his *Life of Charlemagne* written in the 880s and dedicated to Charles the Fat, retrospectively called Louis the Pious “king and emperor of entire Germany, Raetia and ancient Francia as well as Saxony, Thuringia, Noricum, Pannonia and all the nations of the north.”<sup>253</sup> This betrays an understanding of empire characterized as a rule over more than one people, a notion which, according to Rosamond McKitterick, is also attested in the *Royal Frankish Annals*.<sup>254</sup> A different idea is conveyed by the *Annals of Fulda*, which tauntingly state that when, in 876, Charles the Bald had returned from Rome, where he was crowned emperor, he preferred Greek lavishness to Frankish customs and, therefore, laid down the title of king to have himself called “emperor and augustus ruling over all the kingdoms (*regna*) this side of the seas.”<sup>255</sup> In contrast to Notker, it presumes that kingship and emperorship were mutually exclusive and betrays a stronger association between the western and the eastern *imperium*.

#### 4. Conclusion

This chapter investigates the notions of *imperium* emerging in the Carolingian west and how its empire related to its eastern sibling. It shows that *imperium* could have different meanings and that these changed over time. In most instances, it referred to the political entity headed by one or several emperors as it had emerged in Europe from the time of Augustus. It was defined by its universality and infinitude, concepts that never entirely corresponded to reality. Despite the reduction of its dimensions and political weight in reality, this underlying concept remained significant, particularly in the Byzantine world, where it implied the potential to claim authority over the lost imperial territories in the west.<sup>256</sup>

The Frankish empire was always conceived as genuinely Christian; its emperor was the protector of the Christian populace and the apostolic see. Still, Charlemagne made efforts to prevent the papal coronation in Rome from

<sup>252</sup> Similar Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), pp. 184–6. Cf. Delogu, “The post-imperial Romanness” (2018), p. 161.

<sup>253</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.11, p. 67: “Erat itaque Hludowicus, rex vel imperator totius Germanie Rhetiarumque et antique Francie nec non Saxonie, Turingie, Norici, Pannoniarum atque omnium septentrionalium nationum.”

<sup>254</sup> McKitterick, “Constructing the past” (1997), pp. 121–8.

<sup>255</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 876, p. 86: “Omnem enim consuetudinem regum Francorum contemnens Grecas glorias optimas arbitrabatur et, ut maiorem suae mentis elationem ostenderet, ablato regis nomine se imperatorem et augustum omnium regum cis mare consistentium appellare praecepit.” See also Ohnsorge, “Das Mitkaisertum” (1950), p. 311.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. the discussion in Nicol, “The Byzantine view” (1967), pp. 319–20.

becoming constitutive in the west, attempts that failed in the end. Although the Christian component was a defining feature of the eastern and western empires, the underlying structures of both authorities differed. While the emperor in Constantinople was concurrently head of the Church, the western emperor was crowned by the ancient patriarch, having become head of Christendom in the west. Nevertheless, both emperors considered themselves rulers over an orthodox Christian populace defined by the ecumenical councils.

The idea to reestablish *imperium* in the west never entirely vanished in Byzantium, its realization was finally achieved by the Franks. The birth of a Carolingian concept of empire goes back to the 790s, when Alcuin referred to what he called a Christian empire, and sources like the *Paderborn Epos* or the anonymous poem on Pippin's Avar campaign made the first attempts to describe such an *imperium*. The emerging imperial authority was based on concepts that corresponded entirely to neither eastern nor papal notions, even though the empress and the pope both took pains to enforce their ideas to ensure that the final product would serve their own needs. Instead, Charlemagne's empire was a Frankish creation reflecting western visions of a Roman and Christian empire. This is not unexpected given Charlemagne's strong personality as a ruler and position of power, which equaled, if not surpassed, that of the Byzantine emperor—two significant characteristics defining this genuinely independent monarch. The sources portray him as a powerful monarch cautious about limiting any apostolic or Byzantine influence, attesting that although he considered himself an emperor in the western Roman tradition, he did conceive himself as an authority in his own right. Charlemagne's own design of empire emerges most clearly from his imperial title, which attests to a genuinely Christian understanding of both his kingship and his emperorship, two roles he bore at the same time. His *imperium* merged Franks, Romans, and the remaining inhabitants of his realms to become the Christian people of his Roman empire.

Although genuinely Carolingian, the Frankish understanding of *imperium* had emerged from preexisting models, particularly ancient Roman, Christian, and, to a lesser extent, Byzantine concepts. The Frankish understanding of *imperium* was firmly rooted in the Roman conception of a unique empire whose control and administration could be shared by more than one ruler. Late Roman and Byzantine models were the only templates available when the Franks conceived Charlemagne's imperial promotion and the emerging empire. It appears that in 800, Charlemagne thought to install an empire that was meant not to rival or supersede the Byzantine *imperium* but to emerge from inside the persistent empire, an intention whose implementation must have been discussed during the exchange with the weakening empress Irene, although the exact outcome of these negotiations remains obscure. The location of the Frankish empire inside the persisting *imperium* is confirmed by evidence like the 801 entry in the *Annals*

of *Lorsch*. Although it bears a retrospective rationale, it clearly justifies the emergence of the Frankish *imperium* inside the current empire and as part of a process belonging to western Roman history. It is not the only source attesting to the persistence of the opinion that the Roman empire was a single body that could be ruled by more than one emperor. The envisaged alliance or marriage with Irene and the constitutional union it would have involved further confirm that Charlemagne did conceive his *imperium* as part of the persisting Roman empire. Until 800, the realization of western emperorship was only cogitable inside the persisting empire and what may have been conceived as the *orbis Romanus*; alternative options only became conceivable once the implementation of the standard model had proven unrealizable.

The evidence confirms that the existence of two emperors never posed the issue defined by Werner Ohnsorge as the “Zweikaiserproblem.”<sup>257</sup> Returning to the model of two emperors remained conceivable in the early Middle Ages, its conceivability in the Byzantine east is confirmed by Constantine VII’s inclusion of a recognition ceremony for a western emperor in his *De cerimoniis* (1.87). Although the adoption of the Roman name by the Franks displeased some Byzantine emperors, as Louis II’s response to Basil confirms, a concern that was related to the Byzantine apprehension that the Franks as emperors may become too influential, there is no evidence confirming that the simultaneous existence of two emperors was considered problematic. While the Byzantine emperors clearly disapproved of any rival of equal value and were eager to defend their position as the only emperor, they knew the empire could bear more than one imperial ruler.

What did change after 802 is that the Frankish *imperium* was increasingly perceived as an entity independent from the eastern parts of the empire. Medieval evidence confirming that the Roman designation of the Frankish emperors bothered the Byzantine emperors is only available after 814, most prominently in Louis II’s letter of 871 to Basil I. Although the idea of the empire as a single body outlived Charlemagne, as the same letter confirms, the initial concepts were soon caught up with reality, since which time more realistic expectations prevailed. This process was accompanied by a diversification of available concepts of empire, like those attested in Louis II’s letter, which may not have been too far from what other western contemporaries might have agreed with. Louis defined the Roman empire as including the eternal city of Rome, as ruled by at least one divinely ordained emperor, with a strong Christian identity, and a Latin-speaking populace adhering to orthodoxy. The idea of the earthly empire being part of the heavenly *imperium* incorporated on earth by the Church, already attested in Augustine of Hippo’s *De Civitate Dei* and later

<sup>257</sup> Similar Hehl, “Zwei Kaiser” (2020), pp. 41–2.

adopted in the twelfth century by Otto of Freising,<sup>258</sup> is probably the strongest image of an empire incorporating east and west. Although the potentiality of both emperors being considered as ruling the Christian populace does not seem to have posed a real issue, as both worlds aimed at preserving Church unity, the dogmatic disputes that characterized the relation between east and west, to be further discussed in chapter VII, were rooted in the desire of each party to over-trump the other in matters of the Church.

<sup>258</sup> See Augustine, *DCD*; Otto of Freising, *Chron*.

# III

## Contacts and Exchanges

Much has been written about early medieval Mediterranean exchanges and their influence on the west. Henri Pirenne, in his famous monograph titled *Mahomet et Charlemagne* and published posthumously in 1937, argued that the Muslim expansion in the east represented a significant caesura in the historical developments of the Mediterranean and the western economy as it hindered traffic and commerce.<sup>1</sup> Pirenne's thesis was refuted by scholars like Dietrich Claude, arguing against a long-term impact of the Islamic expansion by stressing that the evidence only attests to short-term obstructions to Mediterranean trade, which was never disrupted.<sup>2</sup> Michael McCormick, in his important study of the *Origins of the European economy*, substantiated the significance of the Muslim world for Mediterranean exchange and the Carolingian economy and confirmed that without Muhammad, there would have been no Charlemagne as we know him, although for reasons opposed to Pirenne's initial argumentation. His study portrays a Mediterranean world characterized by a still modest yet viable and significant interchange connecting the west to the Byzantine world.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding how the Carolingian west was related to what had remained of the Roman empire requires looking more specifically at how the Frankish and Byzantine worlds were connected. To this end, the following reassesses the connectivity between these two regions once belonging to the ancient Roman empire by discussing travel routes and conditions, diplomatic exchanges, and voyages related to the clergy. Connectivity in this context defines the options available to connect two regions, a concept that allows studying the available potentials beyond singular examples. It uses a quantitative approach focussing on the frequency of exchanges and a qualitative perspective by assessing the intensity of any such contact. The chapter argues that although the exchanges between the Frankish west and the Byzantine empire intensified from the second half of the eighth century, the two were never connected by frequent or regular exchanges. This is important for the subsequent study as any relation, influence,

<sup>1</sup> Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (1937), p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Claude, *Der Handel* (1985), with references to the mentioned decree of Umar II at pp. 280–1. Similar Sorg, “Byzanz als Drehscheibe” (2011), pp. 137–68.

<sup>3</sup> McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 797–8. See also McCormick, “Byzantium and the west” (1995), p. 359; McCormick, “Les pèlerins” (2000), pp. 290–2 and 306; Claude, “Orientfahrten” (2000), pp. 245–7 and 253; Borgolte, “Karl der Große” (2013), p. 185.



and exchange between the two relevant regions need to be interpreted and understood in consideration of this reduced connectivity.

## 1. Mediterranean Shipping Traffic

In a letter addressed in 758 to King Pippin the Younger, Pope Paul I mentioned that the Byzantine emperor sent a certain George to the Franks. In Naples, George met envoys of the Lombard king Desiderius to secretly discuss strategies to conquer the cities of Ravenna and Otranto jointly.<sup>4</sup> After visiting Francia, George probably traveled back to Naples by ship, sailing along the Tyrrhenian coasts from Marseille, and planned to take another vessel in Italy to head back to Constantinople. The Byzantine envoys sent to Charlemagne in 812 may have sailed along the Adriatic Sea, as Notker mentioned that they traversed the Alps.<sup>5</sup> One year later, in 813, the bishop of Trier, Amalarius, and the abbot Peter of Nonantola traveled to Constantinople via Rome to deliver Charlemagne's peace treaty and a letter to Michael I. According to Michael McCormick's reconstruction, they sailed along the Dalmatian coast and around Cape Maleas on the Peloponnese, dreaded for its storms, before they reached the Aegean Sea and from there Constantinople.<sup>6</sup> Given that they returned with a Byzantine embassy headed by the *spatharios* Christoforos and the deacon Gregory,<sup>7</sup> they were probably escorted following the Byzantine provisions for the transportation of passengers.<sup>8</sup> Any exchange between the Byzantine east and the Frankish west must have taken place in the framework of comparable travels. The following sections first look at related conditions and routes before discussing what the evidence reveals about more regular ship traffic.

### Travel Routes and Conditions

The contacts between the Frankish west and the Byzantine east never ceased entirely, not even in the seventh century, for which particularly few exchanges are recorded between 630 and 750.<sup>9</sup> Their intensity varied in consideration of current

<sup>4</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 17, p. 515: "Et confestim dirigens Neapolim, idem Georgium imperialem missum, qui ad vos Franciam directus fuerat."

<sup>5</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6.

<sup>6</sup> McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 138–43, map at p. 140. The circumnavigation of the Peloponnese is confirmed by the mention of the isle of Aegina.

<sup>7</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 813, a. 814; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 9, p. 190; Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 23.

<sup>8</sup> See Kaplan, "Quelques remarques" (2000), pp. 91 and 93.

<sup>9</sup> See Sarti, *Merovingian connections* (forthcoming).

political constellations and the aims of those with the means to undertake long-distance travel or communication. The preferred routes for these travels to and from Constantinople changed over time. They either took place by ship or by combining sailing and travel afoot. The Byzantine monk Gregory of Dekapolis († 841/2), for example, in 832, walked from Constantinople to Corinth, where he took a ship to Reggio to attend Rome. He returned to Thrace via Otranto and Syracuse.<sup>10</sup> Although the Roman roads remained in use throughout the medieval period, it is difficult to say anything about their condition or maintenance due to insufficient evidence; the last Roman milestones erected date to the early fifth century.<sup>11</sup> High-sea sailing was dangerous, given the risk of storms and other bad weather phenomena. In 813, for example, Pope Leo III reported to Charlemagne that the Mediterranean sea had virtually swallowed a hundred ships on their way to Sardinia,<sup>12</sup> and Amalarius, who traveled to Constantinople that same year, vividly described the heavy weather when sailing along the Dalmatian coast and the dangers of sailing, when the gale was continually disturbing the waves, making terrible sounds, and instigating fear of bitter death.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, ships usually sailed along the coasts. Amalarius and his companions had been able to escape the perils with a prolonged stop in Dürres.<sup>14</sup> Bad weather was feared throughout the year,<sup>15</sup> which is why travel over land was often preferred.<sup>16</sup> The sources also regularly report that people fell ill or died on the road.<sup>17</sup> During the Frankish embassies exchanged between 797 and 802, for example, the deaths of three voyagers are recorded.<sup>18</sup>

People traveling between the Frankish kingdom and the eastern Mediterranean usually boarded a ship in Italy (Map 3.1). This was preferentially done during the warmer periods,<sup>19</sup> even though almost a fifth of the relevant

<sup>10</sup> Kaplan, "Quelques remarques" (2000), p. 95, referring to his *Life*, c. 11–13, written around the middle or later ninth century, and edited in Dvornik, *La vie* (1926). On the *Life*, see Mango, "On re-reading" (1985), pp. 633–46; for travels using similar routes, see Kislinger, "Reisen und Verkehrswege" (1997), pp. 239–41.

<sup>11</sup> Claude, "Orientfahrten" (2000), pp. 235–7.

<sup>12</sup> Leo III, *Epist.* 7, p. 98: "venissent prope Sardiniam, subito aperta est maris et subglutivit illa centum navigia." See also Drocourt, "La perception" (2015), pp. 96–100.

<sup>13</sup> Amalarius, *Versus marini*, e.g., ll. 20–2: "neque cessant / Salsa vada undarum iugiter turbare procellae, / Et ratis, alta, profunda petens, nimium cito saltat"; ll. 55–7: "Terribilem hinc sonitum fluctus redduntque marini, / Inde trucesque ratem quatunt et viscera vires / Ventris. His maiorque metus cum est mortis amarae."

<sup>14</sup> Amalarius, *Versus marini* ll. 35–6.

<sup>15</sup> See Sarti, "*Totius terrae circulum oceani*" (2017), p. 84; Walz, "Karl der Große" (2001), pp. 234–45. See also Claude, "Orientfahrten" (2000), pp. 237–49.

<sup>16</sup> See also *Epist. var.* 37, p. 556: "cum primum oportunitatem navigandi tempus adveniret"

<sup>17</sup> See *LP, Vita Stephani II*, 28, with Kislinger, "Reisen und Verkehrswege" (1997), pp. 254–5.

<sup>18</sup> Nelson, "Messagers et intermédiaires" (2000), p. 401.

<sup>19</sup> For more details and pertinent tables, see McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 444–68.



MAP 3.1 The Mediterranean around 800.



sailings are recorded for the colder months between November and March.<sup>20</sup> Popular ports on the Adriatic were Venice, Bari, and Otranto; on the Tyrrhenian Sea, Rome and Naples are attested.<sup>21</sup> Reaching these ports from or heading to Francia usually required traveling through Lombard territory, which was strictly regulated: Pope Paul I, in a letter of 758 to Pippin, alluded to difficulties for a Roman envoy to travel through this region,<sup>22</sup> troubles that may have arisen from a regulation issued only a little earlier by King Ratchis. The relevant law declared that anyone aiming to cross the Lombard borders had to carry a sealed royal letter and that voyagers on the way to Rome were checked on their intentions. Other travelers were only allowed to traverse the Lombard kingdom exceptionally, and only after the local judge had granted a sealed passport issued on a wax tablet, together with a royal letter, which was collected on the outbound journey.<sup>23</sup>

An increased pirate presence along the shores further obstructed travel over land and sea.<sup>24</sup> For example, the Frankish embassy of 813 sailing to Constantinople reportedly sought to avoid Slav, and maybe also Muslim, pirates threatening the Dalmatian coast.<sup>25</sup> The *Annales Bertiniani* even record “Greek” pirates who assaulted the city of Marseille in 848.<sup>26</sup> Muslim pirates became increasingly common in the southern Adriatic in the ninth century. Since 831, Muslims are recorded on Italian soil, taking Brindisi in 838, shortly followed by Taranto and Bari, which was only freed in 871. After this, Syracuse was lost to Muslim occupants in 878, followed by Taormina in 902.<sup>27</sup> Thus, sailing from Italy was preferably done from a port on the Tyrrhenian Sea, even though this route was longer as it required the circumnavigation of the peninsula and passing through the still accessible Strait of Messina.<sup>28</sup>

The Balkan road was obstructed by an unfriendly Avar and Bulgarian presence since the time of Charlemagne.<sup>29</sup> The *Via Aegnatia* traversing the Balkans

<sup>20</sup> McCormick, *Origins* (2001), p. 458. See here also table 15.4 at p. 460. Leon of Synada’s trip starting in Constantinople in September 996 and arriving in southern Italy in January 997, to be discussed below, was such an exceptional winter journey, see Schramm, “Neun Briefe” (1925), p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., *Annales regni Francorum* a. 809; *Annales Fuldenses* a. 860 (Venice); *Annales Bertiniani* a. 869 (Bari); *Annales regni Francorum* a. 773; *LP, Vita Stephani II*, 94.43 (Marseille). On the significance of the port of Otranto, see Kislinger, “Reisen und Verkehrswege” (1997), pp. 233–5, on Venice, see *ibid.* pp. 249–51.

<sup>22</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 17, p. 517: “nostri missi ad vos Franciam valerent transire [. . .] nulla penitus ratione per Langobardorum fines transire valuissent.” Cf. the route in *LP, Vita Stephani II*, 23–4.

<sup>23</sup> See *Lex Ratchis* 13, p. 192. Cf. *Annales Bertiniani* a. 848, on permission to traverse Frankish territory.

<sup>24</sup> See also Leo III, *Epist.* 7, p. 98; Kislinger, “Reisen und Verkehrswege” (1997), pp. 237 and 242–4; Fuess, “Muslime und Piraterie” (2013), pp. 175–98.

<sup>25</sup> Amalarius, *Versus marini* l. 60: “Et fugias Mauros, metuas Sclavos rigidosque.” See also Classen, “Encounters” (2013), pp. 1–222, with p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 848, p. 55: “Pyratae Grecorum Massiliam Prouintiae nullo obsistente uastantes.”

<sup>27</sup> Kislinger, “Reisen und Verkehrswege” (1997), pp. 244–6.

<sup>28</sup> Classen, “Italien” (1983), p. 87.

<sup>29</sup> See Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.27, pp. 37–8.

had become impassable since Constantine VI's defeat against the Bulgarians at Markellai in 791,<sup>30</sup> and it only was sufficiently secure on a more permanent basis from the eleventh century onward.<sup>31</sup> There were exceptions, however. In 866, papal legates traversed the Balkans as they hoped to convert the Bulgarians, an attempt followed in 869 by an embassy to Constantinople using the mentioned *Via Aegnatia* through Bulgarian territory.<sup>32</sup> It was only after the situation had further worsened, in the tenth century, as Hungarians (Magyars) blocked the road over land, that travels to the eastern capital were more strictly limited to sailing.<sup>33</sup>

Travel time from Italy to Constantinople thus could vary significantly, ranging between several weeks and months. In the late seventh century, a trip from Ravenna to Constantinople required at least three months.<sup>34</sup> For more precise information, we need to look at examples from the later tenth century: one of the shortest voyages attested in the early medieval sources from northern Italy to the eternal city on the Bosphorus is the twenty-four-day journey from Venice of 949 by Liutprand of Cremona.<sup>35</sup> A few decades later, the Byzantine envoy, Leo of Synada, left Italy, probably starting in Rome in August 997 and reaching Aachen in October. He left Aachen for Italy in November, arriving in January 998.<sup>36</sup> Urgent messages, like the news about the death of a king, could spread in significantly less time. According to Jinty Nelson, a messenger managed to travel in August 869 from Piacenza in northern Italy to Senlis near Paris in only two weeks.<sup>37</sup>

Traveling could be expensive, even with the means of the earlier Middle Ages.<sup>38</sup> Occasionally the sources refer to financial support of the messengers by the Frankish authorities, comparable to the Byzantine provisions for the transportation of passengers. The Frankish laws also stipulated that hospitality should be offered to the king's envoys and other individuals on an official mission,<sup>39</sup> and, in 814, Louis the Pious indeed made sure that the Byzantine envoys of Leo V would receive all they needed while traveling through Frankish territory.<sup>40</sup> Referring to a journey of a messenger sent to inform the emperor about the death of an unnamed bishop, Notker also mentions the travel money such an envoy could expect, which in this particular case amounted to two

<sup>30</sup> Kaplan, "Quelques remarques" (2000), p. 94.

<sup>31</sup> Kislinger, "Reisen und Verkehrswege" (1997), p. 246.

<sup>32</sup> *LP Vita Nicholae I* 70–2; McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 142–4, and the map at p. 140. Similar Leyser, "The tenth century" (1973), p. 29, see *Annales Fuldenses* a. 872 and 873.

<sup>33</sup> Leyser, "The tenth century" (1973), pp. 29 and 32.

<sup>34</sup> Claude, "Orientfahrten" (2000), p. 240.

<sup>35</sup> Liutprand, *Antapodosis* 6.3–5.

<sup>36</sup> Schramm, "Neun Briefe" (1925), pp. 94–5.

<sup>37</sup> Nelson, "Messagers et intermédiaires" (2000), p. 401, referring to *Annales Bertiniani* a. 869.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Drocourt, "L'ambassadeur byzantin" (2017), pp. 191–2.

<sup>39</sup> See *Lex Ribuaria* 68 (65).3, p. 119; *Formulae Marculfi* 1.11, pp. 60–2. See also *Lex Baiuvariorum* 4.31, pp. 335–6.

<sup>40</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 9, p. 190: "ante eos misit missos suos praeparare eis, quicquid desiderabant ad opus eorum, quousque fuissent in regno eius."

pounds of silver.<sup>41</sup> However, this singular testimony raises more questions than it solves: although the sum seems high, it is explicitly characterized as inadequate, and there is no indication whether it was meant to pay the messenger or dues during his travels, or both.

While ships may have sailed specific routes more regularly and could be boarded by individual wayfarers without specific skills, the connectivity between the Byzantines and the Franks usually involved individuals covering long distances over land, between Marseille or Italy heading north of the Alps, which required some geographical knowledge and orientation. For this reason, travel companions who had already made that same journey were much appreciated.<sup>42</sup> Travel maps may have provided further help. However, unambiguous evidence proving their existence is lacking. Einhard, in his *Life of Charlemagne*, mentioned three silver tables decorated with a plan of the cities of Constantinople and Rome, and the world, respectively,<sup>43</sup> and a poem by Theodulf of Orléans describes another table as depicting “the entire world briefly in figures.”<sup>44</sup> However, there is no indication or reason to assume that these maps were any more detailed than the sketch of a world map in a ninth- or tenth-century Vatican manuscript,<sup>45</sup> and, thus, that these maps would have been of any use to plan a voyage. The same was true for the often-imprecise *Encyclopaedia* of Isidore of Seville,<sup>46</sup> which was the basis for the description of a voyage around the world in the anonymous *Cosmography of Aethicus Ister*.<sup>47</sup> The only relevant map known that may have already existed is the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. It is preserved as a 340 × 6,745 mm manuscript from southwestern Germany dating around 1200,<sup>48</sup> which appears to go back to an original from the fourth century. It shows that detailed descriptions with information on the distances between different places did exist. Further potentially helpful material includes the so-called *Ravenna Cosmography*, a detailed description of the world written around 700, with information that essentially corresponds to what a detailed map would have been able to reveal.<sup>49</sup> The *Itinerary of Einsiedeln*, a ninth-century guide to the city of Rome written

<sup>41</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.4, p. 5: “non amplius quam duas libras de argento.”

<sup>42</sup> E.g., Bede, *Hist.* 4.1.

<sup>43</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 33; the third table is also mentioned in Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 9.

<sup>44</sup> Theodulf, *Carm.* 47, pp. 547–8, l. 50: “Totius orbis adest brevier depicta figura.”

<sup>45</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. reg. 123, fols. 143<sup>v</sup>–144<sup>r</sup>; access [digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Reg.lat.123](http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.123) (10/02/2021). See also Freeman, “Theodulf of Orleans” (1957), pp. 702–3.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., referring to Byzantium, Isidore, *Etym.* 14.4.7–8.

<sup>47</sup> Herren, *The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister* (2011), p. xiv.

<sup>48</sup> Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex 324, access [digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL\\_2764184](http://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_2764184) (09/09/2019), and Talbert, *Rome's world* (2010). Albu, *The medieval Peutinger map* (2014), suggests a Carolingian predecessor.

<sup>49</sup> Schnetz (ed.), *Ravennas Anonymus* (1951). See also Schnetz, *Itineraria romana* (1942; reprint 1990). The information was converted into a *mappa mundi*, see Miller, *Mappae mundi* (1898), access [digital.ub.uni-duesseldorf.de/ihd/content/pageview/2557490](http://digital.ub.uni-duesseldorf.de/ihd/content/pageview/2557490) (13/09/2019).



for Christian pilgrims,<sup>50</sup> also suggests that other now-lost travel guides may have existed for other cities, including Constantinople. Language guides and glossaries specifically designed for those traveling to the Greek east, of which a few ninth-century examples have survived,<sup>51</sup> may have provided further help. Still, none of this material could replace a guide familiar with the chosen travel route or the region's language and customs.

The embassies sent to a Frankish monarch also faced difficulties emerging from the western itinerant courts. Although Charlemagne spent most of his later years in Aachen, the Frankish rulers usually traveled from one palatine residence to another, meaning that anyone aiming to meet a monarch first had to find out his whereabouts. This could already be challenging for western envoys, and it certainly was a major issue for those unfamiliar with the Frankish realm, as in the case of some Muslims ("Persians") who only knew the approximate location of their destination in Francia. They first traveled to Rome, from where they were further directed toward Campania, Tuscany, the Emilia, and Liguria, and then to Burgundy and Gaul. Notker explained that it took them one year until, tired and exhausted by the long detours, they finally met Charlemagne in Aachen.<sup>52</sup> When returning home, they were escorted by their hosts until the Frankish borders.<sup>53</sup> A short account referring to Easter 841 in Nithard's *Histories* further illustrates the troubles involved:

Something really strange and remarkable happened to Charles [the Bald] on this holy eve of Easter. Neither he nor anyone else in his entourage had anything with him but their arms, horses, and the shirts on their backs. But when Charles stepped from his bath and was going to put on the same clothes he had taken off, suddenly messengers from Aquitania were standing outside with his crown and all his royal and liturgical attire. Who could fail to be amazed that a few men, strangers almost, had been able [. . .] to arrive at the proper place and on the proper day and hour, although not even Charles himself knew where he and his people were supposed to be.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> See Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 326 (1076), access [e-codices.unifr.ch/en/sbe/0326/bindingA](http://e-codices.unifr.ch/en/sbe/0326/bindingA) (14/09/2019). See also Blennow, "Wanderers and wonders" (2019), pp. 33–88.

<sup>51</sup> See Herren, "Pelagian fountains" (2015), with further evidence at p. 68.

<sup>52</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.8, p. 59: "post anni revolutum circulum apud Aquasgrani famosissimum virtutibus Karolum defessi et nimio defecti reppererunt circuitu." See also Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6.

<sup>53</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.8, p. 62: "Legatos [. . .] ad usque proprios fines deduci praecepit"

<sup>54</sup> Nithard, *Historiarum libri* 2.8, p. 60: "Mira sane ac merito notanda res Karolo in eodem sancto sabbato contigit. Nam neque ipse nec quilibet in suo comitatu quicquam absque quod corpore gerebant et absque armis et equis habebant; cumque de balneo quidem egrederetur et eadem vestimenta, quae exuerat induere pararet, repente ab Aquitania missi pro foribus adstiterant, qui coronam et omnem ornatum tam regium quam et quicquid ad cultum divinum pertinebat ferebant. Quis non miretur paucos et poene ignotos viros tot terrarum spacia [. . .] ad definitum locum vel certe ad statutam diem et horam venire poterant, cum nec idem Karolus ubi se suosque oporteret sciebat." Trans. Scholz, in *Carolingian civilization* (2004), p. 311.



Although none of these stories need to be truthful accounts, they do seem to reflect real experiences. This second short account also suggests that the news about a monarch's itinerary or whereabouts was well disseminated, an impression backed by another rather accidental encounter mentioned in the *Royal Frankish Annals*. They report that while hunting in the Vosges, Louis the Pious met some envoys sent by the Byzantine emperor Leo V († 820).<sup>55</sup> The following section will now look at more regular Mediterranean exchanges.

### Regular Exchanges

In the Merovingian era, the booming eastern Mediterranean significantly differed from the west, whose declining interregional exchanges were dominated by African goods.<sup>56</sup> Relevant Carolingian evidence is far from abundant. A rare mention of merchant ships in the west is contained in Notker's *Life of Charlemagne*. The author explained that at an unspecified moment during Charlemagne's reign, Viking ships headed toward the city of Narbonne and that those who saw them first speculated whether they were the ships of Jewish, African, or Breton merchants.<sup>57</sup> The story offers an idea of what kind of ships ninth-century contemporaries could expect to encounter at a port in southern Gaul. The inclusion of the Frankish coastal ports to the Jewish merchant routes is confirmed by the Persian geographer Ibn Khurradadbeh († c. 912), who portrayed them as multilingual tradespeople connecting Gaul to most of the known world.<sup>58</sup>

In her seminal monograph focusing on the Ottonian and subsequent period, Krijnie N. Ciggaar distinguished six categories of western travelers to Constantinople that would also be expected in the Carolingian era: besides "ambassadors and pilgrims (lay persons and ecclesiastics)," she mentions "refugees and fugitives, mercenaries and merchants, artists (in particular writers) and scholars."<sup>59</sup> Two groups are lacking from her list: the members of the ships' crew and the servants of those who traveled, groups that all together must have been significantly larger than the number of those travelers explicitly referred to by the evidence. According to the records collected by Michael McCormick, merchant ships usually carried around six to twelve crew members,<sup>60</sup> an Egyptian

<sup>55</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 817, p. 146: "cum Vosegi saltum venandi gratia petered, obvios habuit legatos Leonis imperatoris."

<sup>56</sup> Loseby, "The Mediterranean economy" (2005), p. 631.

<sup>57</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.14, p. 77: "navibus alii Iudeos, alii vero Africanos, alii Brittannos mercatores."

<sup>58</sup> Ibn Khurradadbeh, *Book*, translation at pp. 512–13.

<sup>59</sup> Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), p. 21.

<sup>60</sup> McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 417–18.

ship traveling from Taranto to Alexandria in the late ninth century, however, reportedly had a crew of sixty men. It was only one of six ships, each carrying 1,500 Christian prisoners.<sup>61</sup>

The early medieval sources are mainly concerned with exceptional exchanges, in particular pilgrimages and embassies to be discussed below. References to merchant or other routine traffic are virtually lacking, with some exceptional and random information scattered around the extant evidence. The sources thus only provide minimal insight into daily sea traffic, and the vast majority of those who boarded a vessel sailing the Mediterranean remain unmentioned and nameless.<sup>62</sup> Although the lack of significant material does not allow for assessing their contribution to the exchange between east and west, it should be safe to say that ordinary sailors regularly sojourned in the different cities where their respective ships halted and thus that they must have contributed to the exchange of information and the formation of contemporaries' vision of faraway places.

In his study of Mediterranean trade and shipping traffic, McCormick sought to compensate the lack of information emerging from the source problem by considering any overseas exchange as a potential hint to such trade ships. Given the lack of evidence for regular passenger traffic between Constantinople and Italy or Gaul, he presumed that any ambassador, pilgrim, or cleric traveling over the sea must have used the infrastructure already in place by boarding trade ships or any other vessel available, provided the crew was willing to take passengers. The accuracy of this presupposition is confirmed by sources mentioning travelers like ambassadors or pilgrims using merchant or freight ships, as we shall see. Thus, any evidence related to individual travels also potentially records regular trade exchanges. This approach allowed McCormick to convincingly show that the Mediterranean was never empty of vessels and remained an essential platform for exchange, with a period of lower intensity between the mid-seventh century and the 780s.<sup>63</sup>

The Carolingian era thus was preceded by a period when exchanges between the two regions in question had been particularly low. The archaeological evidence brought forward by Jörg Drauschke confirms, however, that trade exchange of the Frankish world with and through the Byzantine world, including goods like red garnet from India, Cowrie shells from the Red Sea, or ivory from central Africa, never dried out entirely and that western Europe had remained "part of a 'globalized' (Byzantine-centred) world in a

<sup>61</sup> *Itinerarium Bernardi* 4–5, p. 117: "naves sex, in quibus erant IX milia captivorum de Beneventanis Christianis [...] prohibiti sumus a principe nautarum, qui erant super sexaginta."

<sup>62</sup> See Claude, "Orientfahrten" (2000), p. 252; McCormick, "Western approaches" (2008), p. 407.

<sup>63</sup> McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 151–73. See also Claude, "Orientfahrten" (2000), p. 240; Kolditz, "Horizonte maritimer Konnektivität" (2015), pp. 76–7.

broad sense” (p. 73) even beyond the early seventh century.<sup>64</sup> This allowed the spread of the bubonic plague in 746 from the Byzantine world to Italy.<sup>65</sup> The frequency of exchanges recovered in the second half of the eighth century, although ninth-century sea traffic was still not competing with ancient Roman commerce.<sup>66</sup> Cities like Marseille, in Gaul, and Naples, Bari, Syracuse, Amalfi, Porto, Ravenna, and Venice, in Italy, were among the most important trade ports for any exchange between the eastern Mediterranean and the Frankish territories.

Sailing was the potentially fastest and cheapest means to travel.<sup>67</sup> Combining travel over land and sea was problematic with a large amount of freight, which entails that the route through the Gulf of Corinth was unpracticable. The majority of commercial voyages were executed by Jewish salesmen traveling between the different ports of the Mediterranean.<sup>68</sup> Their profits depended on factors like the duration of a journey, which entailed that they were interested in keeping travel time reasonably short. Still, dark-age concerns for safety prevailed over profit, as suggested by the preference of early medieval seafarers for routes near the coast, with several stops on land, which were more time-consuming and costly than the dreaded open sea routes. Thus, the usual sea route between the eastern Mediterranean and Gaul was to circumnavigate the Peloponnese and through the Strait of Messina to Marseille, from where the river Rhône could be navigated up to Lyon. Although explicit references are lacking for the period in question, a walk of only 50-km separated the Rhône south of Lyon from the likewise navigable sections of the River Loire, a passage allowing to proceed toward the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>69</sup>

The evidence discussed until here does not allow for a more specific assessment of the connectivity between the Byzantine and the Frankish world. Still, the singular mentions offer an idea of what kind of ships could be encountered on the Mediterranean, what routes were used, and the time such an exchange may have needed. The following sections will focus on the two groups of travelers for which the evidence is most extensive: diplomats and clerics. Although both represent individual travels, they do help to assess further the potential frequency and intensity of these and other exchanges and, thus, to better understand how both regions in question were connected.

<sup>64</sup> Drauschke, “‘Byzantine’ and ‘Oriental’ imports” (2007), pp. 53–73.

<sup>65</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium and the west” (1995), p. 358. See Turner, “The politics of despair” (1990), pp. 419–34.

<sup>66</sup> Dölger, “Rom” (1937), in particular p. 272; McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 434–5. Cf. tables 14.2 and 14.3; McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 406.

<sup>67</sup> Loseby, “The Mediterranean economy” (2005), p. 617.

<sup>68</sup> McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 407.

<sup>69</sup> Campbell, *Rivers and the power* (2012), p. 23.

## 2. Diplomatic Exchanges

There is extensive research on the diplomatic relations between the Byzantine empire and the west.<sup>70</sup> If we take the evidence at face value, ambassadors, who certainly were significant for related information exchanges, were among those traveling most frequently between these regions.<sup>71</sup> This section assesses the significance of diplomatic exchanges for the connectivity between east and west by discussing their frequency and intensity over time and related motives, including military conflicts and marriage arrangements.

### Quantitative Assessment of Diplomatic Exchange

Daniel Nerlich's study on the embassies from 756 until 1002 includes a comprehensive list of relevant diplomatic exchanges. It provides an excellent basis for statistics.<sup>72</sup> Looking at the period until 944, when an embassy was exchanged with the Bosonid king, Hugh of Italy, a matrilineal grandson of the Carolingian Lothar II, a total of 116 exchanges are recorded. The list comprises 71 journeys involving the pope in Rome, be it between Byzantium and the pope or the latter and the Carolingian rulers. As these exchanges do not (necessarily) testify to direct contacts with the Frankish west, they are not considered in the following calculations. The remaining 45 embassies were exchanged between the Franks and the Byzantines. They include 30 legations sent by the Byzantine court, two by the Patriarch, and 13 embassies that went the other way.<sup>73</sup> This roughly corresponds to one embassy every four years. Looking at the temporal distribution of these contacts, 11 of the Byzantine embassies date to the eighth, 19 to the ninth, and three to the first half of the tenth century. On the Frankish side,

<sup>70</sup> E.g., Dölger, "Europas Gestaltung" (1943); Leyser, "The tenth century" (1973), pp. 29–63; the studies in Shepard/Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine diplomacy* (1992); McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994); Berschin, "Die Ost-West-Gesandtschaften" (1997); Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege" (2001). See also Shepard, "Messages" (2000), pp. 375–96; McCormick, "Western approaches" (2008); Schreiner, "Die kaiserliche Familie" (2011), pp. 746–60; Drauschke, "Diplomatie und Wahrnehmung" (2011).

<sup>71</sup> According to McCormick, *Origins* (2001), table 14.1, p. 434, referring to the time between 700 and 900, 43% of the travels recorded were undertaken by ambassadors, followed by letters (14%), pilgrims (13%) and exiles, refugees, and prisoners (10%). On the exchange of information, see, e.g., *Annales regni Francorum* a. 803, a. 815, a. 812, and a. 821 (probably related to 824); *Annales Bertiniani* a. 869; *Annales Fuldenses* a. 896; or the incident of autumn 763 discussed in McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), p. 33. See also Grierson, "The Carolingian empire" (1981), p. 896; Drocourt, "Passing on political information" (2012), pp. 91–112; Sarti, "Byzantine history and stories" (2021), pp. 8–12.

<sup>72</sup> Nerlich, *Diplomatische Gesandtschaften* (1999), pp. 248–305. Cf. calculations in Chrysos, "Byzantine diplomacy" (1992), p. 31, for the time 300–800, and McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), pp. 25–7.

<sup>73</sup> Riché, "Le grec" (1988), pp. 166–8, counts 52 Byzantine embassies received in the west during this period, which includes those involving the pope, with 21 received in Italy.

three embassies are recorded for the eighth, eight for the ninth, and two for the first half of the tenth century. There is a significant discrepancy, as the number of Byzantine legations recorded is higher than their Frankish responses. However, given the mostly unsystematic mentions and the fact that even the more complete Frankish accounts prefer recording the more prestigious foreign visitors, it is pretty likely that references to some, in particular Frankish, embassies are missing from our reports. This is confirmed by several embassies that are only attested by a single source.<sup>74</sup>

The sources do not systematically refer to the purposes of such an exchange, and when they do, the information usually remains vague. Among the exchanges recorded, 16 were related to marriage alliances, another 16 aimed at the conclusion or confirmation of peace, ten dealt with politics—in particular with military alliances or territorial disputes—, three aimed to provide information, mostly related to new accessions to the Byzantine throne, three were related to religious disputes, and two were related to repatriation. Thus, if we also take these records at face value, peace and marriage alliances were most frequently at stake. However, the evidence also appears incomplete in this regard, not least as it was much easier to refer to these particular aims than to explain significantly more complex or sensitive aims.

Envoys (*missi* or *legati*) were selected among the confidants of a ruler and usually belonged to the elite. The majority were clerics, i.e., bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, and sometimes abbots. The civilian envoys included (*proto*)*spatharioi*, *patrikioi*, and *magistroi* on the Byzantine side and counts and *duces* among the Franks.<sup>75</sup> The high status and regard of these heads of embassies are attested by the fact that they were regularly named: Nerlich's list includes the names of 63 ambassadors for the time between 756 and 944.<sup>76</sup> Again, the number of Byzantine representatives is significantly higher: among the Franks, only 17 ambassadors were recorded by name, including ten clerics, five secular men, and three of unknown status. Referring to Byzantine envoys, we have five names.

These envoys were accompanied by unnamed companions and staff whose number Michael McCormick estimated to be approximately 5 to 50,<sup>77</sup> 25 being the number later explicitly mentioned by the Ottonian envoy Liutprand of Cremona.<sup>78</sup> Thus, if we assume an average of 38 companions, approximately

<sup>74</sup> E.g., the embassies recorded for 764, 766, 867, 870, 894, 899, 906, 926/7, and 935.

<sup>75</sup> Drocourt, "Ambassadors as informants" (2018), pp. 81–2. See also Nelson, "Messagers et intermédiaires" (2000), pp. 397–413, and the rich and detailed Drocourt, *Diplomatie sur le Bosphore* (2015).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. McCormick, "Byzantium and the west" (1995), p. 374, counting named 55 ambassadors for the period between 756 and 840.

<sup>77</sup> McCormick, *Origins* (2001), p. 139. See also Liutprand, *Legatio* 29, mentioning twenty-four warships, two Russian, and two Gallic ships, for the embassy of Berengar's son Adalbert; Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), p. 206.

<sup>78</sup> Liutprand, *Legatio* 34.

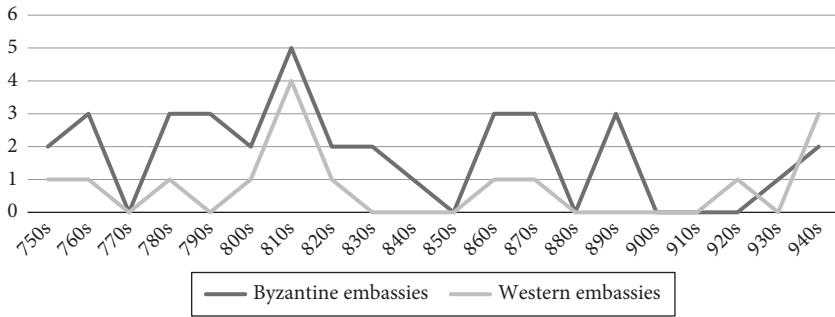


FIGURE 3.1 Diplomatic exchanges from 756 to 944 between the Byzantine and the Frankish world, based on a revised version of the data in Nerlich, *Diplomatische Gesandtschaften* (1999), pp. 248–305.

1,140 members of the Byzantine empire would have visited the west in the context of diplomatic exchange during the Carolingian period. This roughly adds up to six individuals a year.<sup>79</sup> Only around 494 people would have traveled to Constantinople on behalf of the Frankish rulers.

These numbers contrast with those used by Ralph-Johannes Lilie to challenge McCormick's thesis of a comparatively intensive exchange. Lilie stressed that among the approximately 20,000 individuals identified in the framework of the *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit* for the period between 641 and 1025 in the Byzantine world, only 2,215 individuals are located in Italy, and an even smaller number of 126 in the Frankish world.<sup>80</sup> The sources indeed tend to only relate to individuals when their purpose of writing required to do so, in particular, if individuals unrelated to the politically active were concerned. Although these numbers, thus, are an unreliable basis for making further assessments of the intensity of these exchanges, they do confirm that Byzantines were more likely to be encountered in Italy than in Francia. In any case, not only the real amount of legations, but also the number of diplomatic travelers, must have been significantly higher than suggested by the above calculations,<sup>81</sup> and these official exchanges are likely to have only represented the tip of the iceberg of the exchanges that actually took place, as emerges from section III.2.

Despit the incompleteness of the evidence, these numbers and the chronological distribution of the embassies, as represented in Figure 3.1 above, allow some

<sup>79</sup> Cf. McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), p. 27, adds 25 travelers to every named ambassador and argues that a minimum of 442 Franks traveled to the Byzantine and around 936 Byzantines to the Frankish courts between 756 and 840.

<sup>80</sup> Lilie, "Kooperation und Konkurrenz" (2011), p. 68.

<sup>81</sup> Similar Chrysos, "Byzantine diplomacy" (1992), pp. 31–3; McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), p. 26.

further observations. They reveal several periods of more intense exchange: after an initial phase in the 750s and 760s, there is a second phase, from the 780s and until the 830s, with a peak shortly after Charlemagne's imperial coronation in Rome, and a short phase during the religious disputes of the 860s and 870s. These phases correspond with the periods of strong rulership in the west, which seemingly enhanced the Byzantine interest in seeking contact, if not alliance, with the Carolingians.<sup>82</sup> I shall now look at the procedures related to diplomatic missions and how the relations between both entities evolved over time.

## Diplomatic Letters

The evidence for diplomatic negotiations between the Franks and the Byzantines is meager. The exceptions are scattered diplomatic letters like the one Charlemagne sent to Michael I or Louis II's letter to Basil I,<sup>83</sup> which do not offer much explicit information on the discussions during such encounters. Thus, we often have to rely on vague and sometimes inconsistent information from the narrative sources.<sup>84</sup> Karl Brandt set up a list of letters preserved or explicitly mentioned to have been exchanged between the Frankish and Byzantine monarchs between the seventh and the very early tenth century,<sup>85</sup> a list that includes ten letters addressed to Frankish rulers.<sup>86</sup>

The *Austrasian Letters*, exchanged between the Austrasian and the Byzantine courts in the later sixth century, attest that ambassadors could carry more than one epistle addressed to different individuals at the same court.<sup>87</sup> The carrying of written messages is confirmed by the *Royal Frankish Annals*, mentioning that the legate Theoctistos from Sicily forwarded an imperial letter.<sup>88</sup> Diplomatic epistles could also be dispatched via Venice, where the Doge's palace held the right to pass on imperial letters to Constantinople, as Karl Leyser showed.<sup>89</sup> The mention of a letter secretly carried by a pilgrim traveling from Rome to Pippin the Younger further confirms that other carriers were used, if needed.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>82</sup> See Chrysos, "Karl der Große" (2015), pp. 10–11.

<sup>83</sup> Louis II's letter suggests at least two previous exchanges with Basil I, see Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 391: "set quoniam nos super hoc pulsasti denuo, nostrum denuo sume responsum." For letters comparable to the one Louis may have received, see Theodore Daph., *Epist.* 5 and 6.

<sup>84</sup> Similar Chrysos, "Byzantine diplomacy" (1992), p. 36; Grierson, "The Carolingian empire" (1981), pp. 887–8. The most complete list is in the *Annales regni Francorum*.

<sup>85</sup> Brandt, "Der byzantinische Kaiserbrief" (1908), pp. 23–31.

<sup>86</sup> See also Hugh Capet's letter to Basil II, in Gerbert, *Epist.* 111, pp. 139–40.

<sup>87</sup> *Epist. Austras.* 25–30.

<sup>88</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 797, p. 100: "legatus [. . .] nomine Theoctistus venit imperatoris epistolam portans." See also Theodor Stud., *Epist.* 377.

<sup>89</sup> Leyser, "The tenth century" (1973), pp. 29–30. The service may have emerged from the institution of the *tractoria*, see Ganshof, "La tractoria" (1928), pp. 82–6. See also Bachrach, *Charlemagne* (2013), pp. 21–2.

<sup>90</sup> *LP, Vita Stephani II*, 15.

The oldest diplomatic correspondence from Byzantium preserved as an original is a Greek papyrus long stored in the monastery of St. Denis.<sup>91</sup> The *intitulatio*, date, and parts of the margins are now lost, which led to discussions about its date and who was the author and addressee. Clemens Gantner recently reaffirmed the thesis that it was written by the emperor Theophilos and addressed to his western counterpart Lothar I before 842.<sup>92</sup> It appears to negotiate current and future alliances against the Muslims. The fact that its contents are unknown from later copies also further confirms that the total number of imperial letters once dispatched must have been significantly higher than those preserved.<sup>93</sup> The vagueness of the letter's contents is partly related to the fact that the messenger usually recited sensitive information orally.<sup>94</sup> Louis II, for example, in his letter to Basil I, mentioned that his envoy Auprand carried additional information to be delivered orally ("viva voce"),<sup>95</sup> and the so-called Astronomer explained by referring to the embassy of 813 that the envoys Christoforos and Gregorios were sent to the Frankish monarch in order to provide answers to questions that might turn up concerning the written statements they had with them.<sup>96</sup>

### Diplomatic Experiences

A rare more detailed account of a Carolingian mission is Amalarius' *Versus marini*, a poem of 80 hexameters dedicated to his companion Peter of Nonantola. It is a report of their journey to Constantinople. We learn that they were accompanied by a Frank called Wippo and several monks (*fratres*),<sup>97</sup> maybe also from the monastery Nonantola.<sup>98</sup> They sailed down the Dalmatian coast, with halts in Dyrrachium (modern Dürres, Albania) and at the island Aegina in the Saronic Gulf. Whether they actually stayed in Attica is not clear.<sup>99</sup> Constrictive hospitality was regularly applied to foreign envoys upon their arrival in Constantinople, an unpleasant experience described in some detail by

<sup>91</sup> Paris, Archives nationales K7, no. 17.

<sup>92</sup> Gantner, "Kaiser Ludwig II." (2018), pp. 105–7. See also Berschin, "Die Ost-West-Gesandtschaften" (1997), p. 166, and McCormick, "La lettre diplomatique byzantine" (2005), pp. 135–50, suggesting that it was sent in 827.

<sup>93</sup> Same Drocourt, "Ambassadors as informants" (2018), p. 86.

<sup>94</sup> See Scior, "Vergegenwärtigung" (2018), pp. 41–3.

<sup>95</sup> Louis II, *Epist.* 31, p. 394. See also Drocourt, "Ambassadors as informants" (2018), pp. 84–5.

<sup>96</sup> Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 23, pp. 352–4: "super omnibus que scripta fuerant respondentes."

<sup>97</sup> Amalarius, *Versus marini*, pp. 426–8. The edition does not contain the first introductory paragraph, see Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 13581, fol. 243<sup>r</sup>, access [daten.digital-sammlungen.de/0002/bsb00022464/images/index.html](https://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/0002/bsb00022464/images/index.html) (20/08/2019). On his poem, see Düchting, "Amalar, Versus marini" (1989), pp. 47–58. See also Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 141; Wickham, "Ninth-century Byzantium" (1998), p. 251; McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 139–42.

<sup>98</sup> McCormick, *Origins* (2001), p. 139.

<sup>99</sup> Amalarius, *Versus marini* ll. 36: "Tempora laxemus gelida utrique Attica rura."



the Ottonian envoy Liutprand of Cremona, who was only allowed to leave his “guesthouse” when called to see the emperor.<sup>100</sup> In 813, the authorities initially failed to retain Amalarius and his companies,<sup>101</sup> probably due to the chaos following the abdication of the emperor Michael I and Leo V’s acclamation, as McCormick suggested.<sup>102</sup>

In his *Life of Charlemagne*, Notker included the story about how the Franks would have sought to retort this inhospitable attitude: Charlemagne’s embassy to Nikephoros I in 811, headed by the bishop Heito of Basle and the Count Hugo of Tours, received a treatment similar to Liutprand.<sup>103</sup> When the arrival of a Byzantine embassy was announced to the Franks, Charlemagne came up with an idea for how to teach them humility. He advised those Franks sent out to receive the Byzantine embassy to lead them around pathless terrain in the Alps until they had consumed all their provisions. The intention was to put them in a situation where they had to appear empty-handed in front of the Frankish emperor. To further debase the envoys, the Franks staged a fake audience with Charlemagne’s equerry (*comes stabuli*) sitting on a high seat in the middle of his alleged subordinates, pretending he was the emperor. When the emissaries kneeled in front of him (“in terra adorare voluerunt”), as the Franks had anticipated, they were told to get up and proceed. Similar situations were created another three times, and each time the ambassadors were told that the person they were kneeling in front of was not the emperor. The Byzantines would have been overwhelmed when they were finally received in Aachen by Charlemagne and their former guest Heito, together with the Frankish elite. Kneeling before the imperial magnificence and splendor, the envoys would have only dared to get up after the emperor had promised to leave them unharmed.<sup>104</sup> Although Notker’s report is not backed by any further testimony and thus needs to be treated with caution, it does attest to the Frankish displeasure toward the lousy reception and arrogance some Frankish legates must have faced when meeting with representatives of the Byzantine empire.<sup>105</sup>

A second rather unpleasant Byzantine habit was to prevent their guests from traveling home when they wished. The *Life of the abbot Gervold*, which is part of the *Gesta abbatum Fontanellensium* written around 830, for example, reports

<sup>100</sup> Liutprand, *Legatio* 13, 19, 24.

<sup>101</sup> Amalarius, *Versus marini* ll. 37–8: “Postquam Constantinopolim lustravimus urbem, / Bisque quaterque decim hanc noctes possedimus ambo”; and *Annales regni Francorum* a. 812.

<sup>102</sup> McCormick, *Origins* (2001), p. 141, with n. 28.

<sup>103</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6, pp. 55–7. Also mentioned in *Annales regni Francorum* a. 811. Heito also wrote an *Odoporicum* of his journey, now lost, which according to Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 155, n. 48, is reflected in Notker’s report. See also Drocourt, “Ambassadors as informants” (2018), p. 84, and Shepard, “Messages” (2000), pp. 384–5.

<sup>104</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6, pp. 55–7. Also mentioned, with much less detail, in *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 37, p. 556; *Annales regni Francorum* a. 812; Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6304.

<sup>105</sup> See also Shepard, “Byzantine diplomacy” (1992), pp. 57–8, with a similar conclusion.

that the legates Witbold and John, who were sent by Charlemagne to the empress Irene around 786/7 to negotiate issues related to Rotrud's betrothal to her son Constantine VI, were only allowed to return home eighteen months after their arrival.<sup>106</sup> It is probably in anticipation of this habit that Louis II, in his letter to Basil I, stressed that his envoy should not be retained longer than eight days.<sup>107</sup>

## Diplomatic Relations and Military Encounters

What do we know about the diplomatic relations of the Franks with the Byzantine empire before and after Charlemagne's imperial coronation? Following a period of intense contact in the sixth century, the diplomatic exchanges were only resumed more than a century after they had been officially abandoned around 634.<sup>108</sup> As it seems, the Carolingian rise in power caught the attention of the Byzantine emperor, on whose initiative contacts with the Franks were seemingly resumed. The Lombard expansion toward Ravenna and their attempts to reach out for Rome alerted not only the pope but also the emperor Constantine V, who appears to have sent a legation to Pippin the Younger around 755.<sup>109</sup> Since the Frankish conquest of the Lombards in 774 and the victory over the Avars, later in 788, the Franks and the Byzantines shared frontiers in Dalmatia and, with the Duchy of Benevento as an intermediary, in southern Italy.<sup>110</sup> The early Carolingian diplomatic relations, which appear to have been tense already from the initial exchanges at the time of King Pippin, soon deteriorated to the point of open military conflict, struggles in the context of which the Exarchate of Ravenna and Rome increasingly slipped under Frankish authority.<sup>111</sup> Short-term improvements of the relations in the early 780s became void in 787, with the iconodule Council of Nicaea (see section VII.3), after which Charlemagne conquered Istria and intervened militarily in southern Italy, where the Dukes of Benevento unexpectedly fought on the Frankish side and defeated the

<sup>106</sup> *Gesta a. Fontanellensium* 16, p. 85. See also King (ed.), *Charlemagne* (1987), p. 40; Hammer, "Christmas Day 800" (2012), pp. 7–8, suggesting that this was due to the marriage negotiations.

<sup>107</sup> Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 394: "non exceptis octo diebus quaesumus ullo modo retardetur, set celerius." See also McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), p. 29. An embassy of 828 appears to have been spared such a treatment, see Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 42, p. 444: "a transmarinis redeuntes partibus humanissime se retulerunt a Michaele susceptos."

<sup>108</sup> See, however, Sarti, "Byzantine history and stories" (2021), pp. 17–22, arguing for at least another exchange in 662, and Sarti, *Merovingian connections* (forthcoming), suggesting that there may have been consecutive peace treaties until at least 692.

<sup>109</sup> Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege" (2001), p. 25, n. 2. See also *Cont.* 40; Wolf, "Fränkisch-byzantinische Gesandtschaften" (1991), pp. 9–10.

<sup>110</sup> Haendler, *Epoche* (1958), p. 27; Berschin, "Die Ost-West-Gesandtschaften" (1997), p. 157. See also Alcuin, *Epist.* 7, p. 32.

<sup>111</sup> Brown, "The background of Byzantine relations" (1988), pp. 42–4.

Byzantines in Calabria.<sup>112</sup> This was followed by a period of rapprochement and intense exchange between Charlemagne and Irene, already discussed in section II.2, which ended abruptly with the empress' deposition in 802. Four years later, with Nikephoros I on the eastern throne, Byzantine territories in Dalmatia and, in 810, Venice were claimed by the Franks, a procedure interpreted as a step to enforce the Byzantine recognition of the Frankish empire.<sup>113</sup> It was followed by military struggles only ending when, in late 810, Nikephoros sought peace given major Bulgarian threats north of the Byzantine capital.<sup>114</sup> Although Charlemagne, in 812, resigned from Istria and Venice,<sup>115</sup> the Franks remained a significant power in Italy until the end of the century.

Following the death of Charlemagne, another easing of diplomatic relations is perceptible. Maybe the fact that the Carolingian's successors were not so much after an explicit acknowledgment of their imperial status might have had a bearing, although the Muslim presence in the Mediterranean and, since 813, the Bulgarian threat on the capital of Constantinople, certainly were more important factors.<sup>116</sup> These circumstances involved that the Byzantine emperors preferred to consider the Franks as potential allies, which is why the diplomatic relations during the remaining ninth century were largely dependent on current military involvements in Italy and the eastern coast of the Adriatic. In 816, the emperor Leo V sent the envoy Nikephoros to Louis the Pious to discuss the imperial borders in Dalmatia.<sup>117</sup> In 838, Muslims crossed the Strait of Messina, and shortly after this, they occupied Taranto.<sup>118</sup> The subsequent joint struggles in southern Italy are reflected in the diplomatic mission headed by the Patrikios Theodosios sent in 839 to Louis the Pious, on behalf of the emperor Theophilos. According to the Byzantine historian Genesios (early tenth century), it aimed to seek military assistance against the Ishmaelites in the regions between Libya and Asia, following the destruction of the city of Amorion (central Anatolia). Genesios explained that the requested alliance and joint campaign in the east never came into being, as Theophilos' envoy had died.<sup>119</sup> Although it seems unlikely that the Franks would have been willing or able to provide any noteworthy

<sup>112</sup> Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), pp. 28–30; McCormick, "Western approaches" (2008), p. 416. See also Kolia-Dermitzaki, "Byzantium" (2014), p. 380.

<sup>113</sup> E.g., Kolia-Dermitzaki, "Byzantium" (2014), p. 360.

<sup>114</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 806, a. 809, a. 810; Nerlich, *Diplomatische Gesandtschaften* (1999), p. 39; Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege" (2001), pp. 27 and 29; Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), p. 267; Kolia-Dermitzaki, "Byzantium" (2014), p. 360.

<sup>115</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 811; Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 15; Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege" (2001), p. 30; Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), pp. 268–9. See also Chrysos, "Karl der Große" (2015), p. 11.

<sup>116</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 813; *Annales Bertiniani* a. 869. See also Amalarius, *Versus marini*, pp. 426–8, ll. 60–1. Cf. Wanek, "Missa graeca" (2012), p. 47.

<sup>117</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 817; Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 27.

<sup>118</sup> Berschin, "Die Ost-West-Gesandtschaften" (1997), p. 166.

<sup>119</sup> Genesios, *Regum libri* 3.16 and 3.18, pp. 50–2, also mentioned in *Theophanes Cont.* 3.37, p. 194. See also Kaldellis, in *Genesios* (1998), p. 66, n. 303; Davids, "Marriage negotiations" (1995), p. 105.

military assistance, even if this mission had been conducted successfully, given the logistic difficulties involved with the relocation of sufficient troops to the region in question, it is interesting that requesting such aid was conceivable from a Byzantine perspective.

A notable episode attesting to comparatively good relations between the two emperors at the time of Louis the Pious is reported in the *Annales Bertiniani*. Two envoys, the bishop Theodosius of Chalcedon and the *spatarius* Theophanius, sent by Theophilos to Louis in 839 to conclude peace, were accompanied by men claiming to be Vikings (*Rhos*) sent for the sake of friendship. The eastern emperor requested that they be allowed to travel home through the Frankish realm, as he assumed this route would be significantly safer than the one they had taken on their way to Constantinople. However, Louis' investigations on the origin of these men disclosed that they were "Senones," and it appeared to him that the alleged envoys of peace were spying on both empires. For this reason, Louis decided to hold them until he could tell whether these men were trustworthy. Chris Wickham rightly stressed that it is noteworthy that, according to the *Annales Bertiniani*, Louis did not assume foul play by the Byzantines and immediately informed Theophilos of his suspicion instead. Louis stressed that if the travelers were without blame, he would be happy to support their further journey while, in the opposite case, they would be sent back to Constantinople to have Theophilos decide their fate.<sup>120</sup> As the mentioned source is generally considered trustworthy, this seems to betray a moment of exceptional trust and obligingness between the two emperors.

In western Europe, the Viking threat in the north and the Muslim threat in the south, which were particularly significant during the period of reduced diplomatic exchange in the mid-ninth century, probably contributed to impeding diplomatic exchanges with the Byzantine world. In Francia, the Viking raids had increased in intensity and number from the later 830s, and they remained a major issue until the early tenth century.<sup>121</sup> In Italy, Bari, since 847, had become the center of a short-lived Muslim emirate.<sup>122</sup> The Franks and the Byzantines only allied in 869 to face the Muslim threat.<sup>123</sup> Basil I agreed to support Louis II with 400 ships against the Muslims in Bari in return for sending Louis's daughter Ermengarde to Constantinople to become the bride of Basil's son Constantine, as we shall see. However, the situation soon changed due to disgruntlement on Louis II's side—maybe due to the delayed arrival of the Byzantine troops in

<sup>120</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 839, pp. 30–1; Wickham, "Ninth-century Byzantium" (1998), p. 252.

<sup>121</sup> Coupland, "The Vikings" (2006), pp. 190–201.

<sup>122</sup> Musca, *L'emirato di Bari* (1964).

<sup>123</sup> See Nerlich, *Diplomatische Gesandtschaften* (1999), pp. 41–7; Marazzi, "Ita ut facta videatur Neapoli Panormus" (2007), pp. 159–202; Kislinger, "Erster und zweiter Sieger" (2013), pp. 245–58. See also Gantner, "Kaiser Ludwig II." (2018), and his forthcoming monograph.

September 870<sup>124</sup>—, which entailed his refusal to send Ermengarde as agreed. Around that time, the Muslims poured out of Bari and sacked the surrounding area, and Louis continued to fight them.<sup>125</sup> In February 871, he finally managed to capture Bari—with Byzantine help, according to Byzantine sources.<sup>126</sup> In his letter of 871 to Basil I, Louis II mentioned the prior reproach by his addressee that the Franks had failed to assist the “Greeks” when assaulting Bari, an allegation Louis responded to by claiming that, on the contrary, and thanks to the help of God, the Franks had captured Bari and defeated the Muslims in Taranto and Calabria. The Greeks, according to Louis, although greater in number, had lost their bravery soon after their first blow.<sup>127</sup> Still, Louis beseeched Basil to send more warships to help him to strike back against the Muslims and to fight the Neapolitans, who now supported the Muslims in Palermo and Calabria.<sup>128</sup> As both sides claimed authority over southern Italy, the Duchy of Benevento was another major factor for the two in reaching their respective goals.<sup>129</sup> In 871, the Duke of Benevento, Adalgis, fought against Louis II at the instigation of the Byzantines and subjugated cities in the provinces of Samnium, Campania, and Lucania. In reaction, Louis attacked Benevento, and Adalgis submitted to Louis, according to Regino of Prüm.<sup>130</sup> After Louis II’s death in 875, Bari became a significant seat of Byzantine power in Italy, while Calabria and Sicily remained under Muslim authority.<sup>131</sup>

### Marriage Arrangements

Marital alliances were a top issue negotiated in the framework of diplomatic exchanges, if we buy into the numbers referred to above. Again, the Byzantine interest was seemingly stronger. This is particularly significant as the evidence is more reliable here than in reference to the number of embassies exchanged. In sum, the evidence shows that it was always the Byzantines who sent requests for a marital partner to the Franks, and, even more unexpected, all these arrangements were either refused or canceled by their Carolingian receivers. This only changed under the Ottonians. The only exception may be the

<sup>124</sup> See Kislinger, “Erster und zweiter Sieger” (2013), pp. 250–3.

<sup>125</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 869. Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), p. 225; McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 419; Hehl, “Zwei christliche Kaiser” (2012), p. 278.

<sup>126</sup> See Constantine, *DAI* 29; *Theophanes Cont.* 5.55, p. 200.

<sup>127</sup> Louis II, *Epist.*, pp. 391–3.

<sup>128</sup> Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 393: “Nam infidelibus arma et alimenta et cetera subsidia tribuentes per totius imperii nostril litora eos ducunt,” and p. 394: “Isti sunt, qui et Calabritanis Sarrazenis indefesse stipendia praebent.”

<sup>129</sup> McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 419.

<sup>130</sup> Regino, *Chron.* a. 871.

<sup>131</sup> Classen, “Italien” (1983), p. 110.

marriage plan that would have allied Charlemagne and Irene, discussed in section II.2, in reference to which the sources contain diverging information as to who was the initiator. This means that although the Byzantines showed strong interest in a Frankish princess, none of these martial projects was realized.<sup>132</sup> Seemingly, the Byzantines were more interested in connections to the Franks than the other way around.

This openness toward the Franks may be related to an attitude attested in Constantine VII's *De administrando imperio*: in this treatise, he prominently explained to his son Romanos (II) that Roman emperors should never ally themselves in marriage with people of customs different from those of the Romans, in particular infidels and the unbaptized, but with one exception: the Franks. He explained this by relating that Constantine the Great drew his own origin from the Frankish homeland, that there had been much relationship and discourse between the Romans and Franks, and that the Franks were a nation of traditional fame and nobility.<sup>133</sup> As it seems, the Franks were regarded as a people with particularly close historical and cultural ties to the Romans. However, it is difficult to tell to what extent the Byzantines from the previous centuries shared this opinion. The strong interest in marital alliances with the Franks at least confirms the conceivability and comparatively high esteem of such a covenant from a Byzantine perspective.<sup>134</sup> This sense of proximity may have been further supported by the fact that the Franks had been integrated into the Roman empire since ancient times, given that they had settled on Roman soil from the mid-fourth century, and thus were not considered foreigners to the Roman *orbis*, an impression supported by the shared Christian confession, which the Franks had adopted from the time of Clovis (511 †).

No evidence proves that a marriage between the Merovingians and the Byzantine rulers had ever been planned. Byzantine imperial marriage arrangements with a foreign prince or princess were the exception before the eighth century.<sup>135</sup> Marital alliances were important as they involved not only the promise or hope for gifts but also for loyalty and military assistance.<sup>136</sup> Notably,

<sup>132</sup> See also the Byzantine request for a Frankish bride for Michael I's son Theophylaktos, Dölger, "Europas Gestaltung" (1943), p. 720; Schreiner, "Die kaiserliche Familie" (2011), p. 768, no. 40. Kresten, "Zur angeblichen Heirat Annas" (2000), convincingly argues against the execution of a marriage between Louis III of Provence and the Byzantine princess Anna. See also Macrides, "Dynastic marriages" (1992), p. 267.

<sup>133</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 13, pp. 70–2: "Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ ἅγιος, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν γένεσιν ἀπὸ τῶν τοιούτων ἔσχευε μερῶν, ὡς συγγενείας καὶ ἐπιμιξίας πολλῆς τυγχανούσης Φράγγοις τε καὶ Ῥωμαίοις," See also Macrides, "Dynastic marriages" (1992), pp. 266–70; Schreiner, "Die kaiserliche Familie" (2011), pp. 745–6 and 757.

<sup>134</sup> Macrides, "Dynastic marriages" (1992), pp. 268–9.

<sup>135</sup> Ohnsorge, "Das Kaisertum der Eirene" (1963), p. 231; Schreiner, "Die kaiserliche Familie" (2011), pp. 735–45 and 763–5. See, in particular, the marriage of the Persian princess Nike to the son of Heraclius Theodosios in 630, Schreiner, "Die kaiserliche Familie" (2011), pp. 763–5.

<sup>136</sup> Macrides, "Dynastic marriages" (1992), p. 273–4.

the earliest Franco-Byzantine marriage project was initiated only shortly after both worlds resumed diplomatic exchanges, when Constantine V requested Pippin's daughter Gisela as a bride for his son, the future emperor Leo IV.<sup>137</sup> Although the plan was never realized, this was a major privilege that Byzantium until then had only granted in urgent need of military assistance.<sup>138</sup> A second attempt followed in 781, when Irene sought to improve the relations with the Franks with the betrothal of her son Constantine VI to Charlemagne's daughter Rotrud.<sup>139</sup> In a poem written in exchange with Paul the Deacon († c. 799), the Italian scholar Peter the Grammarian stressed that the Frankish princess planned to travel the sea in the company of a certain Michael, and this to "hold the scepter of the empire."<sup>140</sup> The marriage, however, never came into being, as Charlemagne refused to hand out his daughter,<sup>141</sup> an event that was followed by the mentioned military involvements in southern Italy and the Frankish conquest of Istria. There is some dispute about the reasons for the emperor's change of mind. Michael Borgolte assumed that the motives were related to territorial disputes in Italy,<sup>142</sup> while Werner Ohnsorge argued that the decision was rooted in liturgical differences emerging from Irene's shift toward Iconoclasm (i.e., the veneration of icons) and the fact that Charlemagne had not been invited to the 787 Council of Nicaea despite it being considered ecumenical.<sup>143</sup> As I will argue in section VII.3, the failure to invite a Frankish delegation to the synod was an offense aggravated by Charlemagne's current status as the father-in-law-to-be of the future emperor Constantine VI. Only the pope was invited to the Council,<sup>144</sup> seemingly to attend it as the representative of the entire west, including the Franks. However, Charlemagne obviously was unwilling to accept the subordination to the apostolic see implied by this procedure.

This was not the only engagement causing dispute instead of agreement. Around 842, the mentioned emperor Theophilos offered his daughter to Lothar I as a bride for the future emperor Louis II, in exchange for military

<sup>137</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 45, p. 562: "dum Constantinus imperator nitebatur persuadere sanctae memoriae mitissimum vestrum genitorem ad accipiendum coniugio filii sui germanam vestram nobilissimam Ghisylam." See also Ohnsorge, "Das Kaisertum der Eirene" (1963), p. 234; Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege" (2001), p. 25.

<sup>138</sup> Ohnsorge, "Das Kaisertum der Eirene" (1963), p. 231; Herrin, "Constantinople" (1992), p. 100; Macrides, "Dynastic marriages" (1992), pp. 267–8 and 273; Schreiner, "Die kaiserliche Familie" (2011), pp. 763–5. See also the critiques in Constantine, *DAI* 13.

<sup>139</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6274; Paul, *Carm.* 12.10, p. 50; Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 19; Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege" (2001), p. 26.

<sup>140</sup> Paul, *Carm.* 11.11, p. 49: "nostra filia [...] ad tenenda scepra regni transitura properat."

<sup>141</sup> Einhard, *Annales* a. 786, p. 75. According to Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6281, who dates this after the Council of Nikaia, the break was Irene's initiative.

<sup>142</sup> Borgolte, "Karl der Große" (2013), pp. 180–1.

<sup>143</sup> Ohnsorge, "Orthodoxus imperator" (1963), pp. 65–9, followed by Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege des Kontaktes" (2001), p. 26.

<sup>144</sup> Tinnefeld, "Formen und Wege" (2001), p. 26. See also Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 29,



assistance against the Muslims.<sup>145</sup> Nine years after Theophilos' death, in 851, however, Louis II became engaged to Angilberga, a decision that caused much irritation among the Byzantines, who interpreted it as a refusal to marry the Byzantine princess.<sup>146</sup> The Muslim threat continued to influence Franco-Byzantine marital arrangements, as in the case of the mentioned plan to unite Louis II's daughter Ermengarde to Basil I's son Constantine.<sup>147</sup> This was probably canceled in the autumn of 870, i.e., before Louis II's capture of Bari.<sup>148</sup> If realized, this marriage might have had a stabilizing effect on the relations between the Franks and the Byzantines, while Philip Grierson's suggestion that it could have led to "the union of the two empires and the two Churches" appears too optimistic,<sup>149</sup> not only given Louis' empire's significantly reduced dimension but also considering that the bride would not have inherited her father's realm. Maybe this marriage would also have implied Louis II's recognition as βασιλεὺς τῶν Φράγγων, as Ohnsorge suggested,<sup>150</sup> provided this had not already been the case. In any case, it should be noted that while historians regularly interpret marriage alliances sought by western monarchs as a means to seek recognition of their status as emperors by the Byzantines, none of the many Byzantine attempts to arrange for a marriage between an eastern heir or emperor and a Frankish princess has ever been considered as implying the Frankish acknowledgment of the eastern emperor. Ermengarde was finally married to the Bosonid Boso in 876, then count of Vienne, a degradation she could hardly bear, according to the *Annales Bertiniani*.<sup>151</sup> The following section will now turn to travels related to religion and the clergy.

### 3. Pilgrims and Clerics

Throughout the early medieval period, Italy had a solid Greek-speaking community emerging from its close relations to the empire, regular exchanges with other Byzantine metropolises, and the frequent movements of imperial functionaries. In the seventh and eighth centuries, it was also a favorite area for immigrants and

<sup>145</sup> Davids, "Marriage negotiations" (1995), p. 105, with further references at n. 21–2, and Gantner, "Kaiser Ludwig II." (2018), 104. The prospective bride may have been Theophilos' daughter Thecla. Cf. Schreiner, "Die kaiserliche Familie" (2011), no. 47.

<sup>146</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 853, p. 68. See also Davids, "Marriage negotiations" (1995), p. 105.

<sup>147</sup> See also Davids, "Marriage negotiations" (1995), p. 106; Schreiner, "Die kaiserliche Familie" (2011), no. 41.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Davids, "Marriage negotiations" (1995), p. 106, suggesting cancelation in spring 871.

<sup>149</sup> Grierson, "The Carolingian empire" (1981), p. 913.

<sup>150</sup> Ohnsorge, "Die Entwicklung" (1958), p. 220; Ohnsorge, "Die Anerkennung" (1961), p. 46. Similar Henze, "Über den Brief" (1910), pp. 673–4.

<sup>151</sup> See *Annales Bertiniani* a. 879, p. 239. See also Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 34.



refugees escaping from territories threatened by the Muslims, Slavs, and other peoples, and from occasional persecutions in the context of religious disputes (see sections VII.2–3), notably in the Byzantine capital. Several Greek monasteries are attested in Rome and its surrounding areas, including the foundations of St. Sabas, St. Anastasius, and St. Silvester. Many clerics and monks sought papal protection in Rome, which until the ninth century was largely bilingual.<sup>152</sup> Given the proximity of these Greek communities to the Frankish heartland, it is remarkable that the evidence for Greek speakers north of the Alps is relatively sparse, as this section shows. It discusses the comparatively well-documented connectivity of the Frankish religious communities to Constantinople and the Holy Land, and the presence of Byzantine clerics in the west.

### The Franks and the Holy Land

Ambassadors, monks, and clergy members left the majority of the traces referring to travels between the Frankish and the Byzantine worlds. The most detailed evidence on such journeys relates to pilgrimages—an undertaking that is only exceptionally attested, mostly for members of the higher clergy. The relative proximity between the Holy Land and the Byzantine empire—from a Frankish perspective—and the religious significance both attributed to the sacred city, entailed that pilgrims' experience of traveling to Jerusalem and the cities of the Levante also had a significant impact on the western perception of the Byzantine world.

Although only a small number of the pilgrimages left traces in our source material,<sup>153</sup> they appeared to become more frequent after the mid-eighth century.<sup>154</sup> Since then, pilgrims benefited from the exemption of tolls, improved road security, the regal call for hospitality, and the enhancement of infrastructure through the refurbishment and erection of hostels for pilgrims (*mansiones* or *xenodochia/ξενοδοχεία*).<sup>155</sup> As vagabonds, false penitents, and traders sought to abuse this status and the benefits it involved, pilgrims were encouraged to carry letters of recommendation.<sup>156</sup> And, like any medieval wayfarer, they did not travel alone,

<sup>152</sup> Classen, "Italien" (1983), pp. 88–9; McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), pp. 21–4; Hartmann, *Hadrian I*. (2006), p. 175; Noble, "Greek popes" (2014), p. 86. On Greeks, see, e.g., *LP, Vita Donii*, 2; *LP, Vita Leoni III*, 76–7; *LP, Vita Paschali I*, 9; *LP, Vita Leoni IV*, 30; *LP, Vita Hadriani II*, 16.

<sup>153</sup> On otherwise unknown pilgrimages and travels, see Huneberc, *Vitae Willibaldi* 4, p. 94: "vidi homines de illis terre partibus istorum contribulos." See also Külzer, "Handels Güter" (2010), p. 185, with n. 1; McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 131 and 149–73; Hen, "Holy Land pilgrims" (1998), p. 293.

<sup>154</sup> McCormick, "Les pèlerins" (2000), pp. 298–302. See also Külzer, "Handels Güter" (2010), pp. 185–93.

<sup>155</sup> See Hen, "Holy Land pilgrims" (1998), pp. 295–6. Hostels in *LP, Vita Stephani II*, 6 and *LP, Vita Leoni III*, 77.

<sup>156</sup> See Nelson, "Opposition to pilgrimage" (2014), pp. 73–5. On travel passes (*diploma*), see Eichner, "Pilgerwege" (2011), pp. 42–3.

as far as the evidence can tell, even though the sources usually focus on one or two main protagonists, further travel companions being only mentioned coincidentally. This implies that details like names or other information on the different members of a group of travelers are generally missing.<sup>157</sup> Although the total number of pilgrims involved in those voyages attested in our source material can only be roughly estimated, the evidence suggests that these travel groups were comparatively small, with rarely more than two to seven companions.<sup>158</sup> With these reservations in mind, it is not surprising that Michael McCormick could only identify a total of 109 individual pilgrims traveling between 700 and 900 from the west (including Italy) to the Holy Land. Almost half of these stemmed from the Carolingian realm.<sup>159</sup>

Most pilgrims traveling beyond Rome headed toward the oldest pilgrimage destination: Jerusalem.<sup>160</sup> After the Muslim expansion under the Umayyads in the second quarter of the seventh century, which in 638 had conquered the sacred city, these travelers still preferably traversed Byzantine territory. Such a journey usually implied a visit to Constantinople, which by then was equipped with an increasing number of relics.<sup>161</sup> Although the Holy Land had ceased to be part of the Byzantine empire, the ties between the two regions remained important. The office of the patriarch of Jerusalem was maintained, and the local Greek population largely remained in place.<sup>162</sup> According to Yitzhak Hen, early medieval Jerusalem thus was an important place of encounter between pilgrims and the local Christian population.<sup>163</sup>

From the end of the eighth century, a notable change in travel routes is perceptible: travelers now preferred sailing directly from Italy to Africa, continuing from there on foot using the Muslim infrastructure.<sup>164</sup> This may be related to the prescription of unrestricted crossing of the Mediterranean for traders by the eighth Umayyad caliph Umar II († 720).<sup>165</sup> Concurrently, the number of pilgrims increased. Thus, any negative impact of the Muslim expansion on early medieval Mediterranean exchanges or obstruction of individual travels did not sustain. In 867, the Frankish monk Bernard pilgrimaged to the Holy Land using such an itinerary, together with two monks from Spain and southern Italy, and with the blessing and a letter of recommendation from Pope Nicholas I. They

<sup>157</sup> E.g., Huneberc, *Vitae Willibaldi* 3, p. 91: “cum collegum cetu comitantes.”

<sup>158</sup> McCormick, “Les pèlerins” (2000), p. 301. See Huneberc, *Vitae Willibaldi* 4: “erant cum Willibaldo 7 contribuli ilius, et ille ipse fuit octavus” (p. 94).

<sup>159</sup> McCormick, “Les pèlerins” (2000), pp. 295 and 300. See also McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 151–73, counting a total of 95 pilgrims (p. 152).

<sup>160</sup> See Eichner, “Pilgerwege” (2011), pp. 45–6; Türck, *Christliche Pilgerfahrten* (2011).

<sup>161</sup> Külzer, “Handels Güter” (2010), p. 191; Eichner, “Pilgerwege” (2011), p. 53.

<sup>162</sup> See, e.g., the descriptions in Huneberc, *Vitae Willibaldi* 4.

<sup>163</sup> Hen, “Holy Land pilgrims” (1998), p. 306. Cf. Grabois, “Medieval pilgrims” (1988), p. 68.

<sup>164</sup> McCormick, “Les pèlerins” (2000), p. 304.

<sup>165</sup> Claude, *Der Handel* (1985), referring to the decree of Umar II at pp. 280–1.

traveled via Muslim Bari, taking sail from Taranto and reaching Alexandria a month later. Although they had carried a letter assuring safe passage in northern Egypt,<sup>166</sup> they were jailed for six days in Old Cairo because of allegedly invalid travel documents, but were allowed to continue their journey to the Holy Land after the payment of a new set of passes. Their return journey to Italy took sixty days, which was significantly longer and caused by unfavorable winds.<sup>167</sup>

Similar travels are attested for a certain nobleman called Frotmund and his brother. Around 855, they atoned for committing murder by going on two consecutive pilgrimages. Their first journey led them to Rome and the Holy Land with Jerusalem. They spent two years in Egypt and visited the tomb of St. Cyprian near Carthage. Around five years after their return to Rome, in 863, they went on a second pilgrimage leading them to the Holy Land, the Red Sea, the Armenian mountains, and heading south to Mount Sinai, from where they returned to Rome and the Frankish kingdoms, ending in Rennes in 866.<sup>168</sup> Frotmund and his brother had to face rough violence: they were robbed and struck down by “pagans” in the Armenian mountains, escaping barely alive, although the account does not mention that these injuries caused any notable hindrance to further proceed with their journey.<sup>169</sup> It is the only case of physical violence included in these kinds of reports.

Pilgrimage usually implied the importation of relics. An early account that has not received much attention is the early ninth-century *Life of Genesius of Jerusalem*. It was probably written in the Reichenau monastery<sup>170</sup> and reports how, in 797, Count Gebahard sent a *missus* to Jerusalem to pick up relics of the saints Genesius and Eugenius to furnish a newly founded monastery in Treviso. As the sponsor of this undertaking had passed away before their return, the relics were received by the Aleman *ex nobilis* Scrot who later picked up a relic of Genesius for his foundation in Schienen (*Skina*) on Lake Constance. These relics soon came into the possession of the monastery of Reichenau.<sup>171</sup> Genesius’ envoys arrived together with a legation sent out by Charlemagne to the Abbasid caliph Hārūn ar-Rašīd, returning to Gaul in 801.<sup>172</sup> During these exchanges with the Holy Land, the Franks must have been informed about the current situation

<sup>166</sup> Claude, “Orientfahrten” (2000), p. 239, estimating 40 to 70 days for travels from Rome to Alexandria in Antiquity, and a return trip sailing the open sea in only 10 to 14 days.

<sup>167</sup> *Itinerarium Bernardi*, pp. 115–27. See also McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 134–7 and pp. 147–50.

<sup>168</sup> *Gesta sanct. Rotonensium* 3.8, pp. 207–13. Dates by McCormick, *Origins* (2001), p. 931, n. 521. I would like to thank Rutger Kramer for pointing me to this source.

<sup>169</sup> *Gesta sanct. Rotonensium* 3.8, p. 209: “In illisque regionibus tenti sunt a paganis et spoliati, et uerberibus afflicti, usquequo nudarentur ossa eorum acris uerberibus, et paene semiuiui euaserunt.”

<sup>170</sup> *Miracula Genesii*, pp. 169–72. See also Fichtenau, “Genesius” (1971), p. 77; Grabois, “Charlemagne” (1981), p. 802, n. 31.

<sup>171</sup> *Miracula Genesii* 1–2, pp. 169–70.

<sup>172</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 801. See also Borgolte, *Der Gesandtenaustausch* (1976), pp. 45–100.

of the different churches and monasteries, which according to Aryeh Grabois included the awareness that the monastery of St. Sabas would require help to be restored as it had recently been damaged during an assault.<sup>173</sup> Before the envoys' return to Charlemagne, in 799, the patriarch of Jerusalem had sent the legation mentioned in section II.2, which, together with the Sicilian embassy, met the Frankish monarch in Paderborn.<sup>174</sup> In the meantime, Alcuin sent a letter of congratulation to the newly elected patriarch of Jerusalem, George.<sup>175</sup> In 807, another patriarchal envoy, the Frankish native ("cui patria Germania est") abbot George of the likewise Frankish monastery of Mount of Olives, was one of 35 monks living in that same monastery. The same source also mentions 17 nuns "from Charlemagne's empire" who served at the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>176</sup>

Thus, there were significant exchanges with the Holy Land at the time of Charlemagne, who was particularly interested in these regions. Einhard, in his *Life* of the Frankish emperor, stressed that the monarch gave alms not only to the poor and needy in his own realm but also to those abroad, sending charity to Christians in Syria via Jerusalem, Egypt via Alexandria, and Africa via Carthage, which thus includes every major Mediterranean region under Muslim control. Einhard further explained that Charlemagne sought the friendship of faraway monarchs to ensure that the local Christians would receive the help needed.<sup>177</sup> More than a century later, the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII confirmed this by explaining to his son Romanos that Charlemagne "sent much money and abundant treasure to Palestine and built a very large number of monasteries."<sup>178</sup>

The *Basel Roll* is a remarkable testimony of the Frankish commitment to the Holy Land. It comprises two early ninth-century parchment rolls, first critically edited in 2011 by Michael McCormick. These rolls are near-contemporary copies of three different types of notes taken during a survey commissioned in 807/8 by Charlemagne. The intention was to determine the current possessions and potential needs of the orthodox Christian religious establishments in the Holy Land. They include enumerations of the number and functions of their personnel, short descriptions of infrastructural damages, and the calculations of annual expenditures of the patriarchate. If McCormick is right, this information

<sup>173</sup> Grabois, "Charlemagne" (1981), pp. 802–4, also on the embassy sent by the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

<sup>174</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 799.

<sup>175</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 210, p. 350. See Grabois, "Charlemagne" (1981), p. 797.

<sup>176</sup> *Basel Roll* 1, ll. 22–3, p. 206: "Monasteria puellarum xxvi, de imperio domni Karoli quae ad sepulchrum Domini seruiunt Deo sacratas xvii [. . .]; in monasterio sancti Petri et sancti Pauli in Besanteo iuxta Montem Oliueti, monachi xxxv." See also *Annales regni Francorum* a. 807; Borgolte, "Karl der Große" (2013), pp. 181–2; and reference to a Burgundian Peter in Nazareth in Adamnán, *De locis sanctis* 2.26.5, pp. 94–6.

<sup>177</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 27. See also Borgolte, "Karl der Große" (2013), pp. 187–8.

<sup>178</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 26, p. 108: "ὅστις χρήματα ἱκανὰ καὶ πλοῦτον ἀφθονον ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ ἀποστείλας, ἐδέϊματο μοναστήρια πάμπολλα." Trans. Jenkins (1985), p. 109.

was collected orally with the assistance of Greek and Arabic interpreters.<sup>179</sup> These efforts should not be considered isolated from the Frankish relations with Byzantium. Grabois rightly argued: “The rising importance of Jerusalem and the growing rivalry with Byzantium and the Greek Orthodox Church were doubtless part of Charlemagne’s considerations of developing relations with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem,” adding that “this statement should, however, not be opposed to pious motives of the Frankish monarch.”<sup>180</sup> The report on Bernard’s pilgrimage to the Holy Land confirms the longevity of Charlemagne’s investigations. It mentions that in Jerusalem, Bernard and his companions were received in a hospice sponsored by the Frankish emperor to lodge pilgrims and other Christians proficient in Latin traveling for reasons related to devotion. It was located in the vicinity of a church dedicated to St. Mary, with a library sponsored by the same emperor.<sup>181</sup>

### Byzantine Clerics in the West

Evidence for direct exchanges between the Byzantine and the Frankish clergy, comparable to the mentioned letter by Alcuin, is meager. It appears that such contacts were primarily maintained, if at all, with the Holy Land. There is no evidence of an interregional religious community connecting the Frankish and the Byzantine clergy. Sources are limited to scattered indications of Greek-speaking and, thus, potentially Byzantine clerics in the west. These “Greek” monks and other clerics represent by far the most important group of (potential) Byzantines attested in the Frankish world outside of its courts. Given the scarcity of pertinent evidence, a relevant hint in a letter by Notker the Stammerer to an otherwise unknown Lantbert caught the attention of scholars. It ends with a unique greeting only preserved in a single undecorated manuscript with chants, dated around 930. The relevant section is:

The Hellenic brothers [*ellinici fratres*] are greeting you, urging you to care about the calculation of the triennial *embolism*, and in the absence of error thanks to experience you are capable of [calculating the] biennial [*embolism*], contemptuous of the reward of Xerxes’ wealth.<sup>182</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Basel, Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität, N I 2: 12–13, access e-codices.unifr.ch/de/ubb/N-I-0002-12-13/12r (04/05/2020). McCormick, *Charlemagne’s survey* (2011), with pp. 200–17. On the narrative afterlife, see Latowsky, *Emperor of the world* (2013). See also Borgolte, “Karl der Große” (2013), p. 182.

<sup>180</sup> Grabois, “Charlemagne” (1981), p. 798.

<sup>181</sup> *Itinerarium Bernardi* 10, p. 121.

<sup>182</sup> Notker Balbulus, *Epistola ad Lantbertum*, in St. Gallen, Cod. Sang. 38, access e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0381 (20/08/2019), pp. 6–11, at p. 9, access e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/0381/9/0/Sequence-513 (20/08/2020).

There has been much debate on the identity of the *ellinici fratres*: relevant conjectures include that these terms related to monks from St. Gall with some Greek knowledge, Irish scholars proficient in Greek, or Greek natives stemming from the Byzantine world.<sup>183</sup> Recently, Marion Weiß suggested that these theses may be combined, as *ellinici fratres* could refer to anyone in St. Gall who could be somewhat related to the Greek language.<sup>184</sup> Although this little piece of evidence does not suffice to prove any of the above, it should be added that, apart from the matching of *ellinici* with the likely contemporary Byzantine pronunciation noted by Constantine Flores,<sup>185</sup> the term *Ἑλλην* was pretty unusual as a self-designation in the Byzantine world. In the early medieval east, *Ἑλλην* was mainly related to pagans and ancient Hellenic culture.<sup>186</sup> Thus, provided this contemporary eastern meaning was known in St. Gall, it seems more likely that *ellinicus* was used to refer to a group characterized by the mere knowledge of Greek, as Ernst Dümmler already suggested in 1859,<sup>187</sup> and not as a reference to native Greek speakers. The standard western designation for the Byzantines at that time would have been *Gr(a)eci*. In contrast, the Byzantines clearly would have preferred *Romaioi* (*Ῥωμαῖοι*), as we shall see in section VI.1. This piece of evidence thus does not serve as a basis to prove any Byzantine presence in St. Gall.

Outside of Italy, with its Greek communities in places like Rome or Ravenna, where people traveling to Constantinople were relatively common,<sup>188</sup> the evidence for “Greeks” is surprisingly scarce and often lacking names. Among the sources potentially attesting to the presence of Byzantines (“Greeks”) in the Frankish world is a letter by the abbot Lupus of Ferrières. Around 849, he addressed an epistle that was probably directed to the abbot Godescalc of Orbais († 868)—the salutations are missing—where he explained that he could not find explanations for certain words. He added: “I am not unmindful of the fact that exact meanings of Greek words might better be sought from the Greeks.”<sup>189</sup> Although he obviously had been unable to talk to a “Greek” on that specific matter, his statement shows that the availability of Greek native speakers was conceivable. This is confirmed by another letter where Lupus mentioned that he discussed the proper pronunciation of Greek words with “a certain Greek.”<sup>190</sup>

<sup>183</sup> See also Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), 167, with further references.

<sup>184</sup> Weiß, “Zu den Griechischkenntnissen” (2016), p. 15. See also Kaczynski, *Greek* (1988), p. 115; Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2012), pp. 56–9.

<sup>185</sup> Floros, “Notker’s *ellinici fratres*” (2011), pp. 284–9.

<sup>186</sup> Koder, “Griechische Identitäten” (2003), pp. 300 and 306; Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), pp. 137–9.

<sup>187</sup> Dümmler, *St. Gallische Denkmale* (1859), pp. 258–9. A transcription at pp. 223–4.

<sup>188</sup> Kaplan, “Quelques remarques sur les routes” (2000), in particular p. 95.

<sup>189</sup> Lupus, *Epist.* 30, p. 39: “quamquam non sim nescius Graecorum sermonum proprietates a Graecis potius expectandas.” Trans. Regenos (1966), p. 98.

<sup>190</sup> Lupus, *Epist.* 20, p. 27.

Comparable mentions to anonymous “Greeks” can be found, for example, in a letter of the early 800s addressed to Charlemagne, where Alcuin related to a Greek scholar with whom he had discussed a passage from the Bible.<sup>191</sup> Further evidence is contained in the mid-ninth-century *Musica disciplina* attributed to Aurelian of Réôme,<sup>192</sup> and the tenth-century *Life of Brun of Cologne* by Ruotger referred to unnamed “Greek” teachers residing in Cologne before heading back home.<sup>193</sup> Christian of Stavelot and Aeneas of Paris († 870), mentioned another Greek who must have flourished in northwestern Francia in the second half of the ninth century.<sup>194</sup> He was identified as Euphemius, which made scholars wonder whether he was identical to the author of the earliest of three Latin translations of the Greek *Life of Basil the Great* († 379).<sup>195</sup>

Most evidence for the presence of Greek clerics in the Frankish west stems from the monasteries. Bernard Bischoff already pointed to the Greek manuscripts in St. Gall (see section V.1) and Reichenau, alongside some, in my view, insufficiently explicit indications for urban centers of Greek learning in places like Dijon, Cologne, or Liège.<sup>196</sup> Nina-Maria Wanek brought forward additional evidence suggesting that native Greek speakers were somewhat involved in the production of the so-called *missa graeca*, i.e., manuscripts containing Greek chants also further discussed in section V.1.<sup>197</sup> Significant evidence from Reichenau belongs to the ninth century.<sup>198</sup> Some pertinent examples must suffice. The early ninth-century *Confraternity Book of Reichenau* contains a total of 38,232 names of individuals, including monks from other monasteries, visitors, and friends meant to be considered during the daily prayers at the monastery. It bears two noteworthy entries.<sup>199</sup> The first is a list at fol. 65<sup>r</sup> (103), with seven names written in the same hand. It begins with “Basilius patriarcha” and ends with “Cristofolus patriarcha.” The remaining names include a certain Theodosius “qui dicitur sincilo,” a recluse Bonegesius from the Mount of Olives (near Jerusalem), an abbot Salomon, a recluse Gerasius from St. Sabas, and a bishop John (see Figure 3.2). Michael Borgolte argued that this entry should be dated to 837 or shortly after and that it probably

<sup>191</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 307, p. 466: “Quocirca cuiusdam sapientis Greci interrogationem.”

<sup>192</sup> Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 148, fol. 71<sup>v</sup>: “etenim quendam interrogavi grecum in latina quid interpretarentur lingua.” See also Weiß, “Der Graecus” (2016), pp. 7–10.

<sup>193</sup> Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis* 7, p. 8: “Greci, quibus eque magistris usus est.”

<sup>194</sup> Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 162 and 186, n. 19, citing further evidence.

<sup>195</sup> See Nesselrath, “Der heidnische Rhetor” (2009), pp. 22–3.

<sup>196</sup> Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), in particular p. 48. See also Leyser, “The tenth century” (1973), p. 46; and Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), pp. 208–9.

<sup>197</sup> Wanek, “Die sogenannte Missa Graeca” (2013), pp. 173–90.

<sup>198</sup> McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 395. See also *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 182.

<sup>199</sup> Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Ms. Rh. hist. 27, access e-codices.unifr.ch/de/zbz/Ms-Rh-hist0027 (21/08/2019). Edited by Autenrieth/Geuenich, *Das Verbrüderungsbuch* (1979).



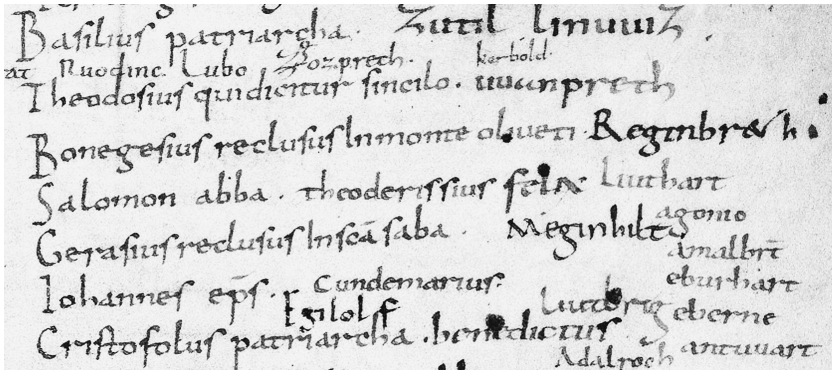


FIGURE 3.2 Extract from Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Ms. Rh. hist. 27, fol. 65<sup>r</sup> (103). Creative Common, source: Reichenauer Verbrüderungsbuch (e-codices.unifr.ch/de/zbz/Ms-Rh-hist0027/65r-103).

referred to the Patriarchs Basil of Jerusalem and Christophorus of Alexandria. In 836, they assembled in the framework of a large synod held in Jerusalem with the Patriarch Hiob of Antiochia to discuss questions related to the veneration of icons. Borgolte suggested that these names were included in the manuscript when a legation visited the monastery sent to inform Louis the Pious about the synod's outcome.<sup>200</sup> If he is right, it is unlikely that this embassy included the patriarch Christophorus, as he was paralyzed then. It also seems unlikely that a prestigious visit like the one by the patriarch Basil to the Frankish west would have remained unconfirmed by other western sources, implying that he neither actually joined the mission. The participation of two recluses is also, to say the least, unexpected.<sup>201</sup> Thus, although it remains possible that this list of names was established in the framework of a visit of a Greek delegation, further individuals related to these travelers may have been added to have them included in the monk's prayers. This would at least help explain the mention of the paralyzed patriarch Christophorus and the omission of the (healthy) patriarch Hiob.

Whether these or other "Greek" clerics mentioned in the western sources were Byzantine refugees seeking safety from the Muslim threat of persecution in the context of a religious dispute, as is regularly suggested by modern

<sup>200</sup> Borgolte, *Der Gesandtenaustausch* (1976), pp. 114–19. The lowercase "theoderissius" in the same line as "salomon abba" does not seem to represent an eighth name but a characterization of the abbot.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Borgolte, *Der Gesandtenaustausch* (1976), pp. 117–18. Geuenich, "Sedulius sive Ilarleh" (2014), p. 210, suggests that the addition "qui dicitur sincilo" defined Theodosius as secretary (σύγκελλος). Geuenich identified Theodosius as the future Patriarch of Jerusalem (864–879).



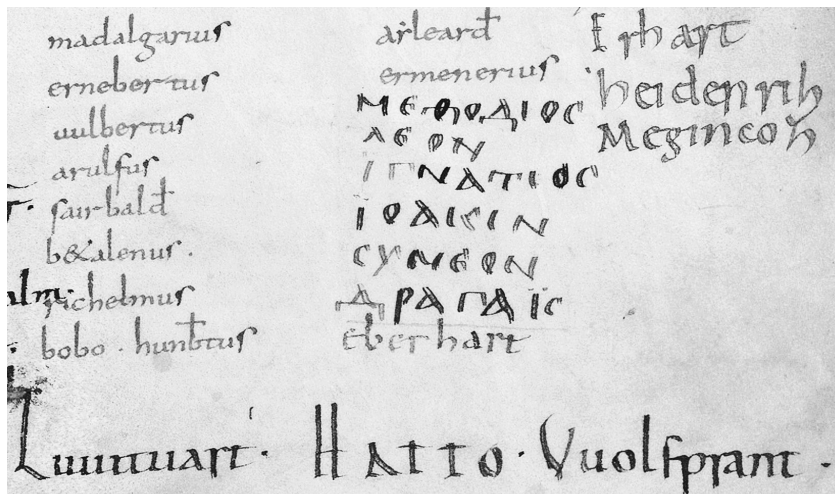


FIGURE 3.3 Extract from fol. 40<sup>r</sup> (53). Creative Common, source: Reichenauer Verbrüderungsbuch (e-codices.unifr.ch/de/zbz/Ms-Rh-hist0027/40r-53).

scholars, is difficult to tell.<sup>202</sup> Comparatively pertinent evidence is provided by another noteworthy entry in that same Reichenau manuscript at fol. 40<sup>r</sup> (53; see Figure 3.3). It includes a list of five Greek and one seemingly Slav names written in Greek letters—maybe by a Greek hand: “MEΘOΔIOC. ΛEON. IΓNATIOC. IOAICIN. CYMEON. ΔPAFAIC.”<sup>203</sup> Alfons Zettler convincingly argued that this list referred to the Slav missionary Methodios, of Byzantine origin, and his companions. As it seems, this group was detained for two and a half years in the Reichenau monastery after Methodios’ conviction in 870.<sup>204</sup>

The same manuscript contains two other names in Greek letters for whom a potential identification is possible: at fol. 55<sup>r</sup> (83) and under the heading “Nomina canonicorum deconstantia,” it bears the name “KOCTANTINOC.” At fol. 15<sup>r</sup> (3), which lacks a distinct heading (but may be related to the “Hec nomina defunctorum” on fol. 14<sup>v</sup>, 2), contains the name “SYMTHON” (see Figure 3.4). Although such detached entries do not suffice for identification, these two names may be related to the *Ex miraculis S. Marci*, a copy of which was preserved

<sup>202</sup> E.g., Leyser, “The tenth century” (1973), p. 46; Classen, “Italien” (1983), p. 88. See also the critical comments in Noble, “Greek popes” (2014), p. 81. Cf. McCormick, *Origins* (2001), pp. 254–67.

<sup>203</sup> The seventh name, “eberhart,” in Latin letters, has never been considered as part of that list.

<sup>204</sup> Evidence supporting that Methodios was in the monastery of Ellwangen is less conclusive, see Zettler, “Cyrill und Method” (1983), pp. 280–98; Ziegler, “Methodius in Ellwangen” (1984), pp. 305–24. See also Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 182.

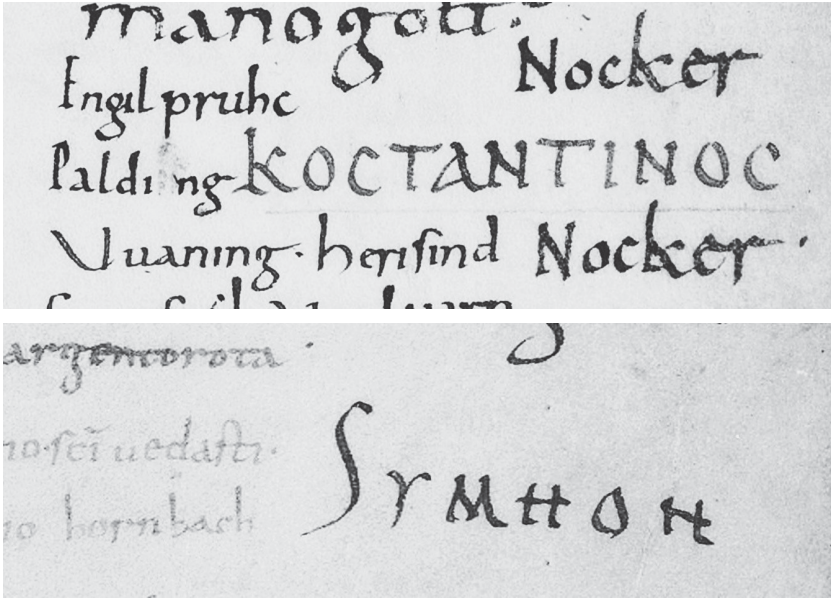


FIGURE 3.4 Extracts from Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Ms. Rh. hist. 27, fol. 55<sup>r</sup> (83) (above) and fol. 15<sup>r</sup> (3) (below). Creative Common, source: Reichenauer Verbrüderungsbuch (e-codices.unifr.ch/de/zbz/Ms-Rh-hist0027/15r-3 and e-codices.unifr.ch/de/zbz/Ms-Rh-hist0027/55r-83).

in a Reichenau manuscript.<sup>205</sup> It is a narration of the translation of the relics of St. Marcus and the subsequent demonstration of their presence at the monastery of Reichenau. In a section dated to the 930s by a previous note,<sup>206</sup> the source refers to the pilgrimage of two monks from Jerusalem, the Venetian Philippus and the Greek Symeon, who, at some later point, were joined by a certain bishop Constantine from Greece. The latter is explicitly identified as Symeon's kin. As the visitors doubted that Marcus was buried in Reichenau, they had to be convinced by divine dreams: the saint appeared and responded using the Greek language: "ΕΓΩ ΗΜΗ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ" ("I am Marcus the Theologian"), a statement that was superscripted in the Reichenau version with "ego sum Marcus evangelista & theologus" (fol. 143<sup>r</sup>).<sup>207</sup> Although Ralph-Johannes Lilie,

<sup>205</sup> Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 84, access [digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/content/titleinfo/166738](https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/content/titleinfo/166738) (23/08/2019): fols. 138<sup>r</sup>–43<sup>v</sup>. Full edition in *Miracula Marci*, pp. 61–7. The edition "Ex miraculis S. Marci" ed. Pertz (1848), pp. 449–52, is incomplete. The suggested identification was forwarded by Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 193, n. 108.

<sup>206</sup> *Miracula Marci* 10, p. 65: "regnante Heinricho rege."

<sup>207</sup> *Miracula Marci* 12 and 13, pp. 65–6.

in his study of this and other reports on Greek saints in the west, may have been too critical when doubting the existence of the two individuals,<sup>208</sup> an identification of the names in the Reichenau manuscript with the two “Greeks” in Marcus’ *Miracula* is indeed problematic, as both entries were written by a different hand and with different ink, which implies that these two entries were made on different occasions (compare images in Figure 3.4).<sup>209</sup>

There is more reliable evidence for the presence of another Greek called Symeon in Reichenau. The same late tenth-century Reichenau manuscript that bears the *Ex miraculis S. Marci* also contains the *Vita Symeonis Achivi*. Both were written in a different hand.<sup>210</sup> The *Vita Symeonis Achivi* was written around 940 and related to the adventurous *Life* of a “Greek” called Symeon or Bardo<sup>211</sup> from Achaia on the Peloponnese who, after supporting Charlemagne against the Muslims, would have entered a monastery in Jerusalem where he received the nuptial vessel of Kana (see John 2.1–11) from the patriarch. As the vessel was stolen from his monastery shortly later, the *Life*’s protagonist sought to find it and, after a long trip, discovered it in the Reichenau monastery, where such a relic is indeed kept today.<sup>212</sup> Although this source is untrustworthy as far as the details are concerned, the existence of such a relic and several entries of the name Symeon in the mentioned Reichenau manuscript suggest that not everything needs to be purely invented.

To conclude, although the number of “Greek” clerics in the Frankish west was far from considerable, the evidence suggests that Byzantines were not entirely exotic as they could be encountered on different occasions. Although exchanges between or at least involving members of the Byzantine and the Frankish clergy are scarce, it appears not only that “Greek” clerics had visited the Frankish realms but also that some decided to stay for good. Language difficulties do not seem to have posed a significant issue, probably as the immigrants soon adopted the local tongue. The same might have been the case the other way around, although here, relevant evidence is lacking—apart from the mentioned entries in the *Basel Roll* referring to Franks in former Byzantine territory under Muslim authority. The pilgrimage reports show that isolated Frankish clergy members spent more extended periods in the Holy Land and the Byzantine territory, particularly in

<sup>208</sup> Lilie, “Sonderbare Heilige” (2008), pp. 250–1.

<sup>209</sup> Although not rare enough to exclude such a coincidence, these names are among the few noted in Greek letters.

<sup>210</sup> Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 84: *Vita Symeonis Achivi* fols. 87<sup>r</sup>–91<sup>v</sup>, with sections blurred due to liquid and three deliberate dark smears hiding the original text at fols. 87<sup>r</sup>–v. Partly edited in “Vita S. Symeonis Achivi,” ed. Waitz (1848), pp. 445–6. The first full edition in “Vita Symeonis Achivi,” eds. Klüppel/Berschlin (1974), pp. 115–24. See also Bayer, “Griechen im Westen” (1991), pp. 335–8; Klüppel, “Vita Symeonis Achivi” (1992), pp. 19–41.

<sup>211</sup> The Frankish name Bardo points to the Frankish abbot George of Mount Olive, see *Annales regni Francorum*, a. 807, who was also called Egilbald, suggesting that the renaming of foreigners was common.

<sup>212</sup> *Vita Symeonis Achivi* 7, p. 40: “Ecce hydria, hydria domini nostri IESU christi.”

the capital of Constantinople. These contacts were exceptional, however, and although the Byzantine and the Frankish clergy served and belonged to the same Christian community, they were not connected.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Carolingian world was connected to the Byzantine empire through individual traveling groups as well as letters and other material exchanges. However, this connectivity was far from tight. Referring to the mid-tenth century, Krijnie N. Ciggaar argued: "Greeks came and lived in the German empire."<sup>213</sup> Although such exchanges had already taken place before and Byzantines could be encountered in the Frankish west, particularly at the Frankish court, their presence remained exceptional throughout the Carolingian period. And although the number of Byzantine visitors increased until the ninth century, we only have sporadic cases where Byzantine natives chose to spend their lives in Frankish territory. However, the sources do not allow us to interpret them as mediators between the two cultures, but mainly as individual immigrants who soon fully integrated into western society.

Diplomatic relations resurface in the sources from the 750s, peaking concurrently with the periods of strong Carolingian rulership. First initiatives were promptly received and soon opened out in a first Byzantine offer for a marriage that would have united a Frankish princess to a Byzantine emperor. Since then, contacts through envoys and letters never ceased. Here it is noteworthy that the Byzantine interest in Frankish military support and marital alliances was significantly more substantial than the other way around, which only changed in the tenth century. This Byzantine attitude and the fact that it was the Carolingians who, in the end, refused or canceled any prospective marriage arrangements are remarkable, not only as they contradict the Byzantine self-perception as a power and culture superordinated to the remaining people but also as this betrays a remarkably self-confident Carolingian kingship who, seemingly unintimidated, faced the Byzantines at eye level.

The evidence referring to contacts is limited mainly to references to the political elite. Exchanges involving the clergy were much less frequent and they were essentially related to individuals moving from one region to the other. Any attempt to assess the connectivity beyond these two groups is limited by the fact that our sources focus on individual and nonrecurring travels. In addition, the evidence usually only mentions one or two protagonists and thus fails to provide information on travel groups, which would help further estimate the number of

<sup>213</sup> Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), p. 210.

people journeying between east and west. Thus, to study more regular exchanges such as those executed in the context of trade or other types of commuting we have to rely on scattered hints, which are insufficient to make further deductions on their frequency and intensity.

Although the sources, thus, are unable to offer an accurate impression of the exact frequency and aims of Mediterranean intercommunication and only allow a rough and minimalist quantification of individuals traveling between the Frankish and the Byzantine territories, it is safe to say that the more regular exchanges were much more common than those explicitly attested by the evidence. It is also noteworthy that the Arab expansion and presence not only did not hinder Mediterranean exchanges but that several pilgrims used the Muslim infrastructure for travel, be it by boarding an Arab trade ship or by walking through Muslim territory to reach Jerusalem. Still, the evidence does not speak for two connected worlds in the sense that frequent, regular, and intense exchanges linked both regions, while our knowledge referring to trade is particularly meager.

# IV

## The Present in the Past

Scholars widely dealt with the Frankish visions of the past by discussing the perception of time emerging from the evidence and how references to Antiquity may have been used to legitimize their position of power. The Roman past is usually conceived as foreign to the Franks, who would have appropriated it to serve their own intentions and needs. However, the Frankish world, as we know it from our sources, emerged from within the Roman empire.<sup>1</sup> Any earlier history belonging to the time before the Franks had entered Roman territory and their convergence with the empire is either lost or was subsequently reframed to fit into the history of the Roman past. Although the descendants of the gentile elite in greater Francia maintained their “Frankish” identity, which was increasingly adopted by the remaining parts of the population,<sup>2</sup> a Frankish historical identity was redesigned to fit into Roman history, which means that the Franks now sought their origins within the Roman Mediterranean. This chapter seeks to understand the place of the Franks in Roman history by assessing the Frankish perceptions of the past and by retracing the origins and further evolution of their historical identity. It argues that while the Franks self-confidently retained their gentile identity and never attempted to call themselves “Romans,” as we shall see in further detail in chapter VI, they considered themselves part of the multiethnic ancient Roman world and its history in which they participated. The first section focuses on the perception of time and history and how the Frankish world was designed to fit into the Roman past. The second discusses the Frankish treatment of Antiquity and its role as a past shared by the Franks and the Byzantines.

### 1. Framing Frankish History

In the late third century, the Franks entered the stage of history. After their establishment in Gaul, first as federates and subjects to the empire, and later as the inhabitants and rulers of the Frankish kingdoms, their commingling with the local Gallo-Roman population and other ethnicities until the eighth century created a mixed population united by a redesigned Frankish identity. These

<sup>1</sup> See Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 389: “Quasi gens Francorum non pertineat ad hereditatem.”

<sup>2</sup> Particularly Reimitz, *History* (2015). See also McKitterick, *History and memory* (2004).

Franks were anxious to establish and maintain their participation in the ancient Roman past.

### The Trojan Legend

The most prominent narrative connecting the Frankish past to Roman history is the medieval Trojan saga.<sup>3</sup> The earliest explicit sources include three different versions, two of which are bequeathed as part of the *Chronicle of Fredegar*. The first version is part of the second book, which bears summaries starting with the legendary Assyrian king Ninus and continues until the time of Justinian, mainly using the *Chronicle of Eusebius-Jerome* and the Iberian *Chronicle of Hydatius*. The final sections of the same book contain several, possibly original, anecdotes relating to figures like the Gothic king Theodoric or the emperor Justinian and his general Belisar. The chronicle explains that the mystical king Priam of Troy was considered the first king of the Franks and that he was followed by Friga, under whose rule the group split: the first was at the origin of the “Macedonians,” the people from which later Alexander the Great descended from, the second group remained under the guidance of Friga. After long migrations, this second group separated again: one half was at the origin of the “Turks,” called accordingly given their leader Torquutus, and the other was designated as “Franks,” in memory of their first chosen leader Francio. At a later moment, these Franks fought against the (Roman) consul Pompeius, who subjected them to Roman authority (“dicione subdidit Romanam”). However, the Franks finally freed themselves and settled on the banks of the Rhine, an event that marked their official entry into Roman history.<sup>4</sup>

The second and slightly shorter version of the Trojan mythology is part of book three of the same *Chronicle of Fredegar*. It relates to Jerome and Virgil to repeat that Priam was the first Frankish king, with the same groups emerging from those initially headed by Friga (here called “Frigians”), i.e., the Macedonians, the Franks, and the Turks. The latter would have separated from the Franks when both had reached the banks of the Danube. The Franks continued toward Europe, where they founded a city on the banks of the Rhine called “Troy.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, although the Franks were free from foreign authority (“liberi ab externa dominatione”), their origins reportedly went back to mythical Troy, the home of Aeneas, the alleged ancestor of the two founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Waswo, “Our ancestors” (1995), pp. 269–90; Giardina, “Le origini Troiane” (1998), pp. 177–210; Plassmann, *Origo gentis* (2006), pp. 116–91; Yavuz, “From Caesar” (2018), pp. 251–90.

<sup>4</sup> *Fredegar* 2.4–6, states that 406 years had elapsed from the fall of Troy, when the Franks settled near the Rhine.

<sup>5</sup> *Fredegar* 3.2.



This link is not made explicit, but several mentions of Virgil in the Merovingian sources<sup>6</sup> suggest that those who received advanced education were familiar with the main plot of his *Aeneid* and thus must have been able to draw this particular connection.

The above assumption is confirmed by the third and notably distorted version of the same narrative contained in the early eighth-century *Liber Historiae Francorum*, which makes the mentioned link explicit: it explains that following the siege and conquest of the city of Troy by the Greeks, its ruler Aeneas fled to Italy, while the two remaining Trojan princes (“quoque ex principibus”), Priam and Antenor, escaped to the north, traveling through Pannonia, where they finally built a city called Sicambria in the memory of their ancestors. At the time of Valentinian, these “Trojans” helped the Romans defeat the Alans, which was when the emperor called them “Franks” by referring to their ferocity. The *Liber* relates to the same event as the second version of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* by mentioning how the Franks revolted when they were meant to pay taxes to the emperor. A battle took place between the Romans and the Franks, which after the death of the Frankish leader Priam ended with the flight of the latter’s subjects toward the banks of the Rhine. Here, they lived under the authority of Priam’s son Marchomer and Antenor’s son Sunno. After Sunno’s death, they decided to follow the example of other people and chose Sunno’s son Faramund to be their first king.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after the completion of the *Liber*, a noteworthy adaption of the Trojan narrative was included in the anonymous *Cosmography of Aethicus*. This is a Latin description of a voyage around the world whose author claimed to be Jerome, although the text was probably written in Gaul and this hardly any earlier than in the second quarter of the eighth century. It introduces the founder of Rome into the narrative by reporting that Romulus fought against Francus and Vassus, two alleged survivors of the Trojan dynasty who migrated to *Germania* via the Meotidan swamps in Raetia, and it relates that the Franks built a city called “Sichambria.”<sup>8</sup>

This is not the place to go into these narratives’ historicity or to discuss the names they mention. What these different stories have in common is the claim that the Franks had Trojan origins, a pretension that seemingly served the purpose of stressing their equivalence with the Romans stemming from Aeneas. It emerges explicitly from the Merovingian versions that although both represent

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 4.46; Fortunatus, *Carm.* 7.8, l. 26; 7.12, l. 27. See also, e.g., Lupus, *Epist.* 34, p. 44. Alcuin, *Epist.* 178, quoted from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, on Alcuin’s knowledge of Virgil, see Veyrard-Cosme, “Saint Jérôme” (2003), p. 349. See also, e.g., Theodulf, *Carm.* 73, p. 571, l. 52.

<sup>7</sup> *Liber Historiae Francorum* 1–4.

<sup>8</sup> *Cosmography* 103, p. 204. See also Yavuz, “From Caesar” (2018), pp. 257–8; Wood, “Contact with the eastern Mediterranean” (2019), pp. 288–9, referring to its wide distribution in Gaul.



two lineages of the same ancient people, the Franks were independent of the Romans. The significance attributed to the Frankish independence is confirmed by an early eighth-century adaptation of Gregory of Tours' tale on Childeric I's exile in the *Liber Historiae Francorum*: referring to the late fifth-century *interregnum*, when Aegidius was king of the Franks, the *Liber* reports that the latter's advisor Wiomad incited the Franks to revolt against their current king by stressing: "Have you forgotten how your people has been dislodged by the oppressing Romans and expelled from your homeland? But you chased away your capable and wise king and elevated this arrogant and haughty soldier of the emperor."<sup>9</sup> Gregory, whose *Histories* were the first to relate to this episode, does not mention the reason why Childeric was called back from exile but reported that Aegidius was sent to Gaul by the empire (*res publica*) as *magister militum*,<sup>10</sup> and, in a previous chapter, he explained that the same was of Roman descent.<sup>11</sup> It appears that the author of the *Liber* used this information to reinterpret the episode to make it the tale about the struggle between the Franks and the Roman empire.

As the Frankish origins expounded in the Trojan legends equal those of the Romans, both were meant to belong to the same ancient world and its history. The similarities between these stories and the relative distortions suggest that they represent different versions of one narrative that had also spread orally. There are reasons to assume that this narrative had not emerged in the seventh—not even in the sixth—century, and that it may go back as far as the late fourth century, maybe even further. The late Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus in his *Res Gestae* mentioned a now-lost report on the origins of the Gauls by the historian Timagenes (first century BC) to relate that:

Some asserted that the people first seen in these regions were Aborigines, called Celts from the name of a beloved king, and Galatae—for so the Greek language terms the Gauls—from the name of his mother. Others stated that the Dorians, following the earlier Hercules, settled in the lands bordering on the Ocean. The Drysidæ say that a part of the people was in fact indigenous, but that others also poured in from the remote islands and the regions across the Rhine, driven from their homes by continual wars and by the inundation of the stormy sea. Some assert that after the destruction of Troy a few of those who fled from the

<sup>9</sup> *Liber Historiae Francorum* 7, pp. 248–9: "Quare non recordatis, quomodo eiecerunt Romani opprementes gentes vestram et de eorum terra eiecerunt eos? Vos vero eiecistis regem vestrum utilem et sapientem et elevastis super vos militem istum imperatoris superbum atque elatum."

<sup>10</sup> Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 1.12, pp. 61–2. The author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* did not know the *Chronicle of Fredegar*.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 1.11, p. 61.

Greeks and were scattered everywhere occupied those regions, which were then deserted.<sup>12</sup>

This short mention of Trojan and Herculean origins attests that, although not necessarily already in the first century BC, an early version of the medieval Trojan mythology existed in Gaul or was related to its inhabitants. This prior version was associated with the Gallo-Roman population. The connection between this origin story and the role of Aeneas as the ancestor of the Romans is implicitly included in a quote by Ammianus from Virgil's *Aeneid* used to start this particular paragraph.<sup>13</sup> The existence of a Trojan legend in Gaul is also confirmed by Sidonius Apollinaris († 480s), bishop of Clermont, who mentioned that the Avernians would have claimed to be the brothers of Latium and of Trojan blood.<sup>14</sup> Both references to a Gallo-Roman predecessor suggest the existence of a more elaborate narrative, transmitted in writing or orally—the latter option appearing more likely given the lack of further evidence. This means that the Trojan narrative, as attested from the seventh century, was not invented by the Franks, who only adapted an existing version to suit their own needs.<sup>15</sup> Maybe the subsequent substitution of the Gauls by the Franks was inspired by a Byzantine source: if Benjamin Gastard was right that a now lost Greek version of an Alexandrine chronicle written in the fifth century reached Gaul as a diplomatic gift, maybe offered to King Theudebert I, the Franks might have stumbled on the reference to a certain leader called Francus enumerated there as a descendant of Aeneas—provided R. W. Burgess was wrong when arguing that the addition of Francus goes back to the chronicle's eighth-century translator.<sup>16</sup>

While the Trojan mythology was particularly successful in the later Merovingian period, further references attest to its subsequent significance. Several Carolingian references to and reworked versions of the narratives

<sup>12</sup> Ammianus, *Res Gestae* 15.9.3–5, p. 61: “Aborigines primos in his regionibus quidam uisos esse firmarunt Celtas nomine regis amabilis et matris eius uocabulo Galatas dictos—ita enim Gallos sermo Graecus appellat—alii Doriensis antiquiorem secutos Herculem oceani locos inhabitasse confines. drysidæ memorant re uera fuisse populi partem indigenam, sed alios quoque ab insulis extimis confluxisse et tractibus transrhenanis crebritate bellorum et alluione feruidi maris sedibus suis expulsos. aiunt quidam paucos post excidium Troiae fugitantes Graecos ubique dispersos loca haec occupasse tunc uacua.” Trans. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus* (1935), pp. 177–9.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ammianus, *Res Gestae* 15.9.1 and Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.44–5. See also Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus* (1998), pp. 96–8; Reimitz, *History* (2015), p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> Sidonius, *Epist.* 7.7.2, p. 110: “Arvernorum [...] se quondam fratres Latio dicere et sanguine ab Iliaco populos computare.”

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Yavuz, “From Caesar” (2018), pp. 254–6, arguing that it emerged at the time of Childeric I.

<sup>16</sup> *Excerpta latina barbari*, pp. 240–2: “Albas Siluius Eneae nepus annos XXXVI / Tittus Siluius regnauit annos XXXVIII / Francus Siluius regnauit annos LIII.” Similar reference in book II, p. 302. See Burgess, “The date” (2013), pp. 41–2; Gastard, “Barbarian interest” (2011), pp. 15–21, arguing that the reference to Francus was purposely included in the Greek version before sending it to Gaul. Burgess’ dating to the 530s does not contradict Gastard’s suggestion; maybe the text reached Gaul via a diplomatic exchange.

survived:<sup>17</sup> Paul the Deacon, for example, in his *Book on the bishops of Metz*, written in the second half of the eighth century, related to Aeneas' migration to Italy and an ancient tradition according to which the high provenance of the Franks would have Trojan origins.<sup>18</sup> Paul foregrounded the Carolingian connection by explaining that one of the sons of the Merovingian bishop Arnulf of Metz († 640s), the first known Carolingian ancestor, was called "Anschisus" (Ansegisel), going back to Anchises, the father of Aeneas, who once had come from Troy to Italy.<sup>19</sup> This is important as, if we follow the reasoning of Rosamond McKitterick, by "describing Charlemagne as the conqueror of Italy and ruler of Rome, he reunites the two branches of the Trojan diaspora."<sup>20</sup> Another reference can be found in an early ninth-century poem by an unknown Irishman preserved in a single contemporary manuscript. It relates to a speech put in the mouth of Charlemagne, who, in 787, and before heading to face Tassilo III († c. 796) in Bavaria, would have motivated his men by reminding them of their Trojan ancestry.<sup>21</sup> The *Chronicle* by Frechulf of Lisieux († 853), written until around 830, contains further references to Troy, including a lengthy narrative on the Trojan wars and Aeneas' escape, and a short story alluding to two potential origins of the Franks: either they would have emerged from the accompaniment of Phrygas (Frigas), the brother of Aeneas, who, at a later time, would have chosen Francio as their king and settled along the Rhine and Danube, or they would stem from the isle of Scanza, the "womb of people" ("vagina gentium"). This latter statement goes back to Jordanes, as Matthew Innes pointed out.<sup>22</sup> Although the evidence is insufficient to prove that "the Carolingians used this tradition inherited from the Merovingians as a means to legitimize their rule over the Franks," as Nurgül Kivilcim Yavuz suggested,<sup>23</sup> the desire for ancestry that equaled that of the Romans is obvious.

<sup>17</sup> See Yavuz, "From Caesar" (2018).

<sup>18</sup> *Liber episc. Mettensibus* 8, p. 264. See also Goffart, "Paul the Deacon" (1986), pp. 80–2 and 92, not always convincing; Yavuz, "From Caesar" (2018), pp. 266–9, and the Fox, *The Merovingians in historiographical tradition* (2023), pp. 29–83.

<sup>19</sup> Paul, *Liber episc. Mettensibus* 8, p. 264: "cuius Anschisi nomen ab Anchise patre."

<sup>20</sup> McKitterick, "Political ideology" (2000), p. 166. Similar Goetz, "Vergangenheitswahrnehmung" (1999).

<sup>21</sup> Hibernicus, *Carmen* 2, ll. 86 and 88, p. 398: "Troiae, nam patres nostros his appulit oris, / [. . .] Subdidit et populous Francorum legibus aequis." Preserved in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. reg. 2078, access [digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.lat.2078](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.2078), which lacks the second part with the relevant fol. 117<sup>v</sup>, cf. [vanhamel.nl/codecs/Vatican\\_City\\_Biblioteca\\_Apostolica\\_Vaticana\\_MS\\_Reg\\_lat\\_2078](https://vanhamel.nl/codecs/Vatican_City_Biblioteca_Apostolica_Vaticana_MS_Reg_lat_2078) (14/02/2020). See also Garrison, "The Franks" (2000), pp. 150–1. Yavuz, "From Caesar" (2018), p. 270, with two further examples.

<sup>22</sup> Frechulf, *Chron.* 1.2.26 (col. 967), at pp. 147–8, ll. 162–8. See Innes, "Teutons or Trojans?" (2000), p. 233.

<sup>23</sup> Yavuz, "From Caesar" (2018), p. 262, adding that the Trojan legend enabled the Carolingians "to actually become one with the Romans," without considering that the Franks did not identify with the Romans.

### The Book of Daniel

The mentioned mythologies staged an ancient past of the Franks and their rulers that not only equaled that of the Romans or Greeks but also implied their participation in ancient Mediterranean history. As we have seen, the Carolingian emperors could be conceived as “Roman.” As such, their rule and empire had also become relevant from an eschatological perspective: the Roman empire was conceived as a constitutive element of the order of time. It was meant to last until the end of history, a concept already inherent in the structuring of time into six world ages (*sex aetates mundi*), according to which the last age was initiated by Christ born within the recently founded *imperium*. The birth of the empire and Jesus Christ were closely tied in this context, and both were connected to the first emperor Augustus. Inherent to this notion is the presumption that the end of the Roman empire comes along with the end of the sixth age. This concept was introduced in the early fifth century by Augustine of Hippo and Orosius,<sup>24</sup> and it was subsequently adopted by historiography.<sup>25</sup> One example is the *Chronicle* of Ado of Vienne, written until around 869: it is organized into six books, each treating one of these ages, while the sixth book, which deals with the time since Christ and until the end of the world, is almost as long as the sections relating to the remaining five.<sup>26</sup>

The Roman empire figured even more prominently in the framework of the concept of the four world empires. It was elaborated in the work of Otto, bishop of Freising († 1158): referring to his *History of the Two Cities* modeled after Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, Otto explained that he would describe the history of the Babylonians/Assyrians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, and their role as the bearers of the four preeminent empires. Otto further explained that the end of the last empire would initiate the end of the world, as would already emerge from Daniel’s vision, and that his task was to document the succession of emperors until his own days.<sup>27</sup> For Otto, the Roman emperors thus succeeded without interruption from the time of Augustus as the respective head of the one empire. Although the concept as exposed here was only elaborated in this manner long after the Carolingian period,<sup>28</sup> the notion that the Frankish empire not only

<sup>24</sup> See Archambault, “The ages of man” (1966), pp. 203–11; Alonso-Núñez, “Die Auslegung” (1993), pp. 197–213.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., Isidore, *Chron.*, pp. 426–81.

<sup>26</sup> Ado of Vienne, *Chron.*, the treatment of the sixth age begins at col. 75. See also Raisharma, “Ado of Vienne” (2021); Goetz, “Unsichtbares” (2021), pp. 209–10. I would like to thank Yaniv Fox for pointing me to this chronicle. The *Chronicle of Fredegar*, which according to its preface to the fourth book was initially also conceived as a six-chronicle composition, does not fit into Augustine’s scheme.

<sup>27</sup> See Otto of Freising’s prepended letter to his friend Reginald, in Otto of Freising, *Chron.*, p. 5, and Otto of Freising, *Chron.*, 2.13, pp. 81–2. See also Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*; Goetz, *Das Geschichtsbild* (1984), and, for the Byzantine perspective, Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), p. 145.

<sup>28</sup> Müller-Mertens, “Römisches Reich” (2009), p. 64.

was called “Roman” but also represented the natural succession of what had come into being on the verge of the birth of Christ went back to much earlier times. Ermold Nigellus, in his panegyric on Louis the Pious, written in four sections, for example, described the pictorial representation of biblical and secular history located in the *aula regia* of Ingelheim, to be further discussed in section VIII.1. The composition of this image, which was probably initiated by Charlemagne and concluded under his son Louis, seemingly adopted the Orosian concept of the four kingdoms, which thus was prominently exposed to any visitor of the palace.<sup>29</sup>

Otto related to the *Book of Daniel*, which may go back to the second century BC. It describes the four empires of the world and how the latter would come to an end, a subject that is presented as a dream: Daniel saw four winds stirring up the sea and bringing forward four beasts, i.e., a lion with the wings of an eagle, a bear with three ribs between his teeth, a panther with four wings of a bird and four heads, and a fourth described as most terrifying, with large iron teeth and ten horns. This fourth animal was succeeded by an aged man in white on a flaming throne whose reign was meant to last forever.<sup>30</sup> The same book also contains a second vision related to the notion of four world empires. It is again exposed to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II in a dream, who saw a large statue with a golden head, silver chest and arms, a bronze belly and haunch, iron legs, and feet made of iron and clay. The figure is reportedly crushed by a stone rolling down a mountain, and the wind blows away its remains. According to Daniel’s interpretation of this dream, the gold referred to King Nebuchadnezzar himself, while the other elements would characterize the subsequent kingdoms. The fourth would subdue the entire world. The iron and clay feet would predict a divided kingdom, both strong like iron and fragile like clay, a situation whose rectification would be attempted, although in vain, by a marriage arranged to unite both sides. The stone would relate to a subsequent eternal kingdom established by God.<sup>31</sup>

The fourth kingdom of the second vision fits intriguingly well with the history of the Roman empire. With its association with the fourth beast or the iron kingdom, the empire’s end was intimately connected with the apocalypse, given that the continuation of the world was only conceivable with a persisting Roman empire. This idea is already explicitly attested in Jordanes’ *Romana*. He used Jerome to enumerate the different kingdoms, and he explained that “Alexander the Great the Macedonian who, having defeated the Parthians, had transferred the reign (*res publica*) under Greek sway.”<sup>32</sup> A little further, he related how

<sup>29</sup> See Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 4, ll. 2062–163, pp. 156–64; Ratkowitsch, “Die Fresken” (1994), pp. 553–81, stressing the literate character of the description at pp. 566–8.

<sup>30</sup> *Daniel* 7.1–7. See Kratz, “The vision of Daniel” (2001), pp. 91–113.

<sup>31</sup> *Daniel* 2.1–3 and 2.31–44.

<sup>32</sup> Jordanes, *Romana* 3, p. 1: “Alexandrum Magnum Macedonem qui, devictis Parthis, in Graecorum dicionem rem publicam demutavit.”

Octavian Augustus incorporated Egypt into the Roman empire by adding that “until today and until the end of the world, following Daniel’s prophecy, the succession of kingdoms is defined by it [the Roman empire].”<sup>33</sup>

Although this did not cause any difficulty in the east,<sup>34</sup> where an individual’s elevation to imperial status was less dependent on his or her membership to the ruling dynasty, claiming the persistence of Roman *imperium* in the west required some further explanation. To bridge the gap caused by the intermission of Roman emperorship in the west and the transition to the Carolingians and subsequent dynasties, medieval authors developed a concept that modern historians relate to as the “transmission of empires” (*translatio imperii*). This concept implies that an empire could be transferred from one dynasty or people to another without changing its original nature or identity. According to an anonymous late ninth-century poem, such a translation had already occurred when Constantinople became the new capital of the Roman empire, whose name and honor were transferred onto the “Greeks.”<sup>35</sup>

An alternative interpretation is contained in Notker’s introductory section of his *Life of Charlemagne*. Referring to the *Book of Daniel*, it stresses that when “the Almighty ruler of all things, steward of kingdoms and time, smashed among Romans the feet of that formidable statue made of iron and clay he set up another statue among the Franks that is not less admirable with a golden head embodied by the illustrious Charles.”<sup>36</sup> Charlemagne’s reign here is not related to Daniel’s four kingdoms but marks the beginning of an entirely new era, of which the Frankish emperor was the first representative characterized by a new statue with a head of gold.<sup>37</sup> The underlying concept compares to the one attested by the Trojan legend stressing the Frankish independence from and equality of the Franks toward the Romans. The *Life* was written around 883/7 and thus belongs to the period characterized by a significantly weakened emperorship. It may be interpreted as reflecting the already advanced abandonment of the idea of a Roman empire shared by the east and the west, a process completed before the imperial elevation of Otto I. in 962.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Jordanes, *Romana* 84, p. 9: “usque actenus, et usque in finem mundi secundum Danielis prophetia regni debetur successio” See also Reitter, *Der Glaube* (1900), p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> See also Kaldellis, “Did the Byzantine empire” (2017), in particular p. 284.

<sup>35</sup> *Versus Romae*, p. 555: “Nobilibus quondam fueras constructa patronis; / Subdita nunc servis heu male, Roma, ruis. / Deseruere tui tanto te tempore reges, / Cessit et ad Graecos nomen honosque tuus.” See also Granier, “À rebours des laudes” (2004), pp. 131–54, on the notion of *translatio imperii*, see the seminal study by Goetz, *Translatio Imperii* (1958).

<sup>36</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.1, p. 1: “Omnipotens rerum dispositor ordinatorque regnorum et temporum, cum illius admirandae statuæ pedes ferreos vel testaceos comminuisset in Romanis, alterius non minus admirabilis statuæ caput aureum per illustrem Karolum erexit in Francis.”

<sup>37</sup> See also Goetz (1981), pp. 69–85; Latowsky, *Emperor of the world* (2013), pp. 41–56; Goetz, “Unsichtbares” (2021), p. 218.

<sup>38</sup> See Sarti, “Imperium in the Ottonian world” (forthcoming).

## The *Apocalypse*

The earliest medieval prediction referring to the Roman empire is contained in an apocalyptic treatise written in Syriac between 685 and 692, probably as a response to the Muslim progression in the east. Its anonymous author claimed to be Methodios of Olympus († ca. 311). The text was soon translated into Greek and Latin, the earliest Latin manuscript dates around 727, and a revised version was written around 732.<sup>39</sup> The *Apocalypse* became one of the most popular treatises of the Middle Ages. The Latin version relates how the Roman empire persists until the end of time (6.9), and it refers to the second letter to the Thessalonians when it describes the last day of the Roman kingdom of the Christians (10.1–3). The “king of the Romans” (*rex Romanorum*) would come to Jerusalem, where the “son of perdition” (*filius perditionis*) would appear (13.21).<sup>40</sup> The Greek version refers to this last ruler as “Hellenic and/or Roman king/emperor” (“βασιλεὺς Ἑλλήνων ἢ τοι Πωμαίων”), a designation which, according to Wolfram Brandes, goes back to the Syriac original, whose terminology may be translated with “King of the Greeks.”<sup>41</sup> In any case, the last “king” of the prophecy could be identified with a ruler in either east or west.

Brandes pointed out that according to the calculations of Jerome, Christ was born 5,200 years after the world’s creation, which means that on the day of Charlemagne’s imperial coronation, exactly 6,000 years had passed. Thus, the sixth world age, which like the previous five should last a thousand years, was meant to end on Christmas day of the year 800—or 801, to be more accurate. From a Carolingian perspective, the day of Charlemagne’s imperial coronation thus would have been a good candidate for the apocalypse.<sup>42</sup> According to Hannes Möhring, Charlemagne’s entourage is likely to have known pseudo-Methodius, which means that the emperor may have been aware of his potential role as part of the prophecy.<sup>43</sup> Several references in Alcuin’s letters confirm the awareness of a possible near end, with allusions pointing to Charlemagne as the last Roman emperor.<sup>44</sup> In addition, as Matthias Becher has shown, the

<sup>39</sup> Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 611, fols. 101<sup>r</sup>–13<sup>r</sup>, access e-codices.unifr.ch/de/bbb/0611/ (09/08/2020). Prinz, “Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung” (1985), pp. 1–23.

<sup>40</sup> *Apocalypse*, pp. vii–ix. See Möhring, “Karl der Große” (1997), pp. 1–5, subsequently comparing the Latin and Syrian versions. See also Magdalini, “The end of time” (2008), pp. 119–34; Palmer, *The apocalypse* (2014).

<sup>41</sup> Brandes, “Tempora periculosa sunt” (1997), p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Brandes, “Tempora periculosa sunt” (1997). Schieffer, *Neues von der Kaiserkrönung* (2004), pp. 20–1, adopted Brandes’ suggestions. If Charlemagne consciously chose this date, this would explain why Charlemagne rejoined Leo III in Rome only more than one year after their meeting in Paderborn.

<sup>43</sup> Möhring, “Karl der Große” (1997), pp. 15–16. Similar Fried, “Papst Leo III.” (2001), pp. 323–4; Gabriele, *An empire of memory* (2011), p. 125; Patzold, “Die Kaiseridee” (2014), pp. 152–9.

<sup>44</sup> Brandes, “Tempora periculosa sunt” (1997), pp. 62–70, stressing that five among the roughly 200 manuscripts date to the eighth century.



late eighth-century sources record several events, like natural disasters, which could have supported the impression that the apocalypse was near.<sup>45</sup> But did the *Apocalypse* have a bearing on contemporary events?

Brandes affirms the above questions by arguing that Charlemagne is likely to have been aware of the potential significance of the date on which he planned his imperial coronation.<sup>46</sup> However, suppose Charlemagne's intention was to slip into the role of the *rex Romanorum* of the apocalypse, it should be noted that his rise to emperorship was not mandatory, given his prior promotion to the rank of *patricius Romanorum* and the reference in the prophecy to Roman king, not an emperor. Only the Greek version of the *Apocalypse* could be read as referring to a last "Roman emperor," given that it used the ambiguous term βασιλεύς. Maybe Charlemagne, unaware of this latter version, chose to rise to emperorship to ensure he would *not* become the Roman king of the prophecy? In any case, it is worth reminding that the last *rex Romanorum* was meant to travel to Jerusalem, and that Charlemagne did have a strong interest in Jerusalem, as we have seen in section III.3. However, Charlemagne never saw the Holy Land—despite later claims.<sup>47</sup>

Although the idea of a Roman king relating to the end of time might have been popular among scholars and parts of the elite, we have no means to study its bearing on the more common people. The *Apocalypse* is not the only medieval context in which the Roman world and empire represent crucial factors of the order of time and history, which betrays the far-reaching importance attributed to the Roman empire as an entity inside which western scholars continued to conceive the world. The Roman *orbis* and history, which emerged from a small kingdom that became a republic, and finally the bearer of an empire that for centuries had been the home of people inhabiting large parts of the known world, had remained an essential feature of early medieval identity most scholars were not yet prepared to leave behind for good.

## 2. Antiquity as a Shared Past

History is an essential element in the definition of identity. Knowing our past not only helps to understand who we are but also where we belong to. In this context, it is not essential that the history that is being told reflects past reality, as a forged past like the Trojan legend can have the same effect—provided people are willing to believe it to be true. The following section aims to study how contemporaries

<sup>45</sup> Becher, "Mantik und Prophetie" (2005), p. 179.

<sup>46</sup> Brandes, "Tempora periculosa sunt" (1997), p. 79.

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., Gabriele, *An empire of memory* (2011), pp. 41–72. See also Bastert, "Heros und Heiliger" (2001), pp. 197–220.



related to the Roman world and its past by further delving into the early medieval treatment of Antiquity and related visions of the past. What significance do the sources attribute to Antiquity, and how does the medieval vision of the past relate to the Roman and Byzantine world? The first section will briefly examine related Byzantine perceptions, which will then be compared to those attested in the west.

### The Byzantine Perspective of Antiquity

A society's use of history betrays contemporary appraisals and interests.<sup>48</sup> George Synkellos († 810s) is a good starting point to look at the Byzantine perception of the Roman origins. He wrote a *Chronicle* later pursued by Theophanes, which, although it was seemingly intended to be continued until his own time, already ended with the early reign of Diocletian.<sup>49</sup> The chronicle begins with the creation of the world, and it relates to sacred history as known from the Bible. Around the middle of the book, it begins incorporating Greek history. Starting with the Trojan War, an event that is referred to on several occasions, it proceeds with early Mediterranean history, including Italy, with the Albanians succeeded by the Latins, with Aeneas becoming their king (a.m. 4340), and the Romans called after Romulus, the founder of Rome (a.m. 4742). The main body contains treatments of quite equal length of major events and rulers in regions like Africa (Carthage), Egypt, the Near East (especially Palestine, Israel, Syria, and the Medes/Persians), Macedonia, and Greece (Athens, Sparta, and Corinth, in particular). The kings of Rome (a.m. 4981 to 5454), the reign of Alexander the Great (a.m. 5156 to 5170), and his successors are prominent events, followed by the installation of the empire, the birth of Christ (a.m. 5500), and a description of the Roman emperors. Gaul and other northwestern regions are only mentioned sporadically if deemed necessary. George's work thus betrays a remarkably wide geographic perspective that focuses on the Mediterranean world by combining the pagan with the Christian past and historiography. Pivotal events George Synkellos considered important enough to help him organize time and history include the conquest of Troy, the foundation of Rome, the birth of Christ, and the reign of Augustus. If the chronicle had been continued, this list certainly would have been completed by events like the Christianization of the empire and the establishment of Constantinople as a new capital under Constantine the Great.<sup>50</sup> Although the Greek *politeia* and the Roman Republic received comparatively

<sup>48</sup> Schreiner, "Geschichte" (2015), pp. 28–9.

<sup>49</sup> Syncellos, *Chron.* See also Huxley, "On the erudition" (1981), pp. 207–17.

<sup>50</sup> See, however, Evagrius, *Hist.* 3.29.

extensive attention from George Synkellos due to the chronicle's detailed treatment of Antiquity, its general focus is on kings and emperors.

The majority of the Byzantine sources share the tendency to prefer those periods of history characterized by monarchic rulership. Democratic or republican eras were often skipped entirely. The Byzantines seemingly tended to focus on polities that compared to their own, and, except for figures like Julius Caesar, Augustus, Trajan, or Hadrian, the eastern historiography also attests to a clear preference for Christian rulers, as Claudia Rapp already noted.<sup>51</sup> Genesios, for example, compared a foreboding of the emperor Leo with Caesar's impression when crossing the Rubicon.<sup>52</sup> A pronounced interest in the literary heritage of Antiquity is only attested from the Macedonian Renaissance,<sup>53</sup> however, as when Constantine VII commissioned the redaction of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*. This is a study focusing on the Roman past by collecting information from the entire body of the historiographic sources available, offering special attention to pre-Christian works.<sup>54</sup>

Johannes Koder argued that a mental distance between the present and what we call Antiquity is already palpable in the Byzantine world in the wake of the disintegration of Justinian's empire. The gradual abandonment of the Latin language strengthened the impression of change and alienation with classic imperial Antiquity. Although ancient Greek mythology and the works of Homer remained important references to the past,<sup>55</sup> the increasing predominance of Greek created an emphasized Hellenic and Christian identity, and the awareness of how both differed from prior identities emerging from this glorious pagan era. Later sources progressively refer to the era of Antiquity with terms like the "old time" (πάλαι χρόνος) attesting to its belonging to the past.<sup>56</sup> The most crucial turning points throughout the early medieval ages remained the birth of Christ and the Christianization of the empire under Constantine the Great, as no comparably important caesura had followed these events. This means that the beginning of a new era leading toward what we call the Middle Ages was already initiated in the fourth century.<sup>57</sup> In the following section, I will now enquire how western perceptions of the past relate to the above.

<sup>51</sup> Rapp, "Hellenic identity" (2008), p. 145. Similar Dölger, "Rom" (1937), pp. 3–4. See also Strothmann, "Caesar und Augustus" (2000), pp. 59–72; Schmalzbauer, "Zum Bild" (2004), pp. 337–419.

<sup>52</sup> Genesios, *Regum libri* 1.2.

<sup>53</sup> Rapp, "Hellenic identity" (2008), p. 139. See also Markopoulos, "Roman antiquarianism" (2006), p. 295.

<sup>54</sup> Németh, *The Excerpta* (2018), p. 256.

<sup>55</sup> See Rapp, "Hellenic identity" (2008), p. 137. Klooster/van den Berg (eds.), *Homer and the good ruler* (2018), lacks a treatment of the early medieval evidence.

<sup>56</sup> Koder, "Die räumlichen Vorstellungen" (2002), 21; Koder, "Griechische Identitäten" (2003), p. 301.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Kaldellis, "Did the Byzantine empire" (2017), p. 284; Kaldellis, "Late Antique" (2018), pp. 557–68.

## Western Visions of Antiquity and Byzantine History

Western visions of the past did not substantially differ from those recorded by Byzantine sources, as the following concise and incomplete survey will exemplify.<sup>58</sup> Comparing the early medieval evidence from the two regions considered here reveals the same historical caesura, like the Christianization of the empire,<sup>59</sup> the same focus on periods characterized by monarchic rulership, and a preference for the same historical figures. Alexander the Great is a case in point. As discussed previously, this pagan ruler played a prominent role in the Frankish Trojan legend. In a chapter dedicated to the emperor Heraclius, the *Chronicle of Fredegar* claimed that Alexander was responsible for the erection of what was called the Caspian Gates (*portas Cypias*).<sup>60</sup> The same gates were mentioned in the anonymous *Cosmography of Aethicus*, with a total of thirteen chapters referring to Alexander.<sup>61</sup> This includes stories about his military exploits and failures, local legends, and the origin of names by stressing, for example, that Alexander significantly expanded Greece and that many noble provinces were added to the kingdom of the Greeks under his leadership.<sup>62</sup> Regino of Prüm quoted an earlier excursus on the history of the Scythians to remind his readers that (in 331 BC) they had successfully fought Alexander the Great and his general Zopyrion.<sup>63</sup> Although a pagan, Alexander thus remained a model figure in the east and in the west.

Basic Greek mythology and literature knowledge also remained part of western higher education. The *Opus Caroli*, which argued against the veneration of images, as we shall see in section VII.3, betrays some good knowledge of the ancient legends, with references to figures like Cybele, Hercules, Medusa, Minerva, Pegasus, Phoebus, or Prometheus.<sup>64</sup> Walahfrid Strabo, in his *On the statue of Tetricus* (*De imagine Tetrici*), related to the Archaic poet Sappho by comparing her to the Germanic goddess Holda,<sup>65</sup> and his poem titled *Metrum Sapphicum* was even composed in Sapphonic verses.<sup>66</sup> Mentions of the Greek poet Homer and elements related to Greek mythology can be found, for example, in a poem of Paul the Deacon, the *Paderborn Epos*, and Notker's *Life of Charlemagne*. Thegan's *Life of Louis the Pious* enumerates several Greek deities

<sup>58</sup> This point becomes clearer by considering the evidence from 600 to 1000 in the survey, as I did in the framework of my unpublished habilitation thesis *Orbis Romanus. Byzantium and the Roman legacy in the Frankish world (7th–11th centuries)* (2021) on which the present monograph is based.

<sup>59</sup> See Goetz, "Unsichtbares" (2021), pp. 205–11.

<sup>60</sup> *Fredegar* 4.66. See also Cary, *The medieval Alexander* (1956).

<sup>61</sup> *Cosmography* 33, 36c, 39, 41a, 41b, 49, 60 (Caspian Gates), 75, 82a, 82a, 82b, 84a, 84b.

<sup>62</sup> *Cosmography* 75, p. 164.

<sup>63</sup> Regino, *Chron.* a. 889.

<sup>64</sup> E.g., *Opus Caroli* 3.23, pp. 443–5.

<sup>65</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine Tetrici* l. 169, p. 128: "O si Sappho loquax vel nos inviseret Holda."

<sup>66</sup> Walahfrid, *Carmen* 75, pp. 412–13. See also Schlesier, "Sappho" (2013), cols. 843–4.

by comparing these to the ancient Saxon gods.<sup>67</sup> The same sources also regularly referred to secular Roman Antiquity: for example, the *Annales Fuldenses* compare Charles the Bald's alleged bribing of the Roman "senate" in 875 to the case of Jogurtha,<sup>68</sup> and the Astronomer, the otherwise anonymous author of a second *Life of Louis the Pious*, explained that the ruler had wished to equal the generals Pompeius and Hannibal.<sup>69</sup>

Most of these Carolingian references to Antiquity were superfluous passing mentions, mainly aiming to give proof of erudition. They do not attest to a more profound knowledge of the original narratives or a pronounced interest in the ancient past.<sup>70</sup> More remarkable are some subtle references to the Roman classics. The ninth-century Carolingian intellectual works and exchanges contain many implicit and explicit references to Roman authors like Virgil and Ovid.<sup>71</sup> Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, most prominently, bears noteworthy parallels to Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* in general and his *Life of Augustus* more specifically.<sup>72</sup> Carolingian scholars liked to stress their acquaintance with the classical works, which was done not least by using the names of prominent ancient authors as a cognomen. We have already met Aeneas, the ninth-century bishop of Paris, and Alcuin, also called "Flaccus," a name that referred to Horace. He corresponded with the noble Agilbert, known as "Homer."<sup>73</sup> Other relevant cognomina include that of the poet Moduin († c. 840/3), referred to as "Naso," in reference to Ovid, and Theodulf of Orléans († 821) was regularly addressed as "Pindar."<sup>74</sup> In a similar line of thinking, Charlemagne was called "David." Although most of these appellations may be interpreted as *imitatio imperii*, they primarily attest to these scholars' deep reverence for the achievements of men they considered their predecessors.

Interest in Byzantine history was much less pronounced in the west. After the mid-seventh century, Frankish historiography ceased considering Byzantine events a natural subject of inquiry. An excursus on Heraclius in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* is the last account of internal Byzantine affairs found in a Frankish source.<sup>75</sup> From then on, events in the east were no longer regarded as part of

<sup>67</sup> Paul, *Carm.* 12.4, p. 49; *Carmen de Carolo Magno*, ll. 72–5, p. 64; Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.31; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 44, p. 236.

<sup>68</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 875, p. 85.

<sup>69</sup> Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 2, p. 288.

<sup>70</sup> Similar Goetz, "Unsichtbares" (2021), p. 203 with n. 8, and pp. 220–1.

<sup>71</sup> E.g., Theodulf, *Carm.* 45, l. 18; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 44; Moduin, *Ecloga* 1, l. 72, p. 84; Strothmann, "Das Augustusnomen" (2014), p. 179.

<sup>72</sup> See Innes, "Teutons or Trojans?" (2000), pp. 237–8, and critical Latowsky, "Foreign embassies" (2005), pp. 31–7.

<sup>73</sup> E.g., Alcuin, *Epist.* 25, 27, 28, 220; Angilbert, *Carmen* 2, l. 9, p. 360; Strothmann, "Das Augustusnomen" (2014), p. 178.

<sup>74</sup> See Strothmann, "Das Augustusnomen" (2014), p. 276, with further examples.

<sup>75</sup> See also Goetz, "Byzanz in der Wahrnehmung" (2016), pp. 77–98.

Frankish history, which became limited to the west. In Carolingian historiography, information about the Byzantine world was mostly limited to diplomatic missions and eastern occurrences that western scholars could relate to. The lack of interest in internal Byzantine history is evident in the manuscript evidence related to the *Historia Tripartita*. In the late ninth century, the Roman scholar Anastasius Bibliothecarius compiled information from the three most important Byzantine histories, i.e., the works of Nikephoros Patriarchos, Georg Synkellos, and Theophanes Confessor, and translated them into Latin under this title. Peter Schreiner's analysis of its reception history reveals that western scholars were barely interested in its contents.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Paul the Deacon's work, which also contains some extensive treatments of Byzantine events,<sup>77</sup> was neither exploited in this regard by other western authors.

Still, the Carolingian sources demonstrate a revived and revised interest in the Byzantine world. In addition to brief reports on legations and significant events in the Byzantine empire found in the annals, most historiographic works make reference to the east at some point, indicating that it had regained the attention of the Franks.<sup>78</sup> While there are several casual references to elements related to the Byzantine empire,<sup>79</sup> major historiographic sources such as the *Life of Louis the Pious* by the so-called Astronomer refer to diplomatic missions to and from the Byzantine world.<sup>80</sup> Genuine information from the Byzantine world is less common,<sup>81</sup> but two narratives in Notker's *Life of Charlemagne* likely arose from ninth-century Frankish embassies to the Byzantine capital. One story describes how a Frankish legate in Constantinople used cunning to escape the death penalty after committing a crime out of ignorance during a feast. The second recounts the treatment of bishop Heito and duke Hugo on their inglorious legation to Constantinople and how the Franks responded after a Byzantine legation was sent to Charlemagne in return. Both stories may belong to this latter mission.<sup>82</sup>

Although those living in what we call the post-Roman era neither had any awareness of living in the "Middle Ages" nor a notion that compares to the modern concept of "Antiquity," western sources do attest to the concept of "ancient times." A felt distance to the classic Roman period is already attested, for

<sup>76</sup> Schreiner, "Translatio studii" (2018), pp. 143–4; see also p. 149. Ewig, "Das Bild Constantins" (1956), p. 38, on the *Historia Tripartita* being used by Frechulf of Lisieux and Haimo of Halberstadt.

<sup>77</sup> Schreiner, "Geschichte" (2015), p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> A rare example with no such mention is Nithard's *Historiarum libri*.

<sup>79</sup> E.g., Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 15, 19; Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.10, 1.27, 2.15, 3.26; Regino, *Chron. praef.*, a. 871.

<sup>80</sup> E.g., Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 16; Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 23, 25, 27, 41, 49; Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.26, 2.5–7; Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 9.

<sup>81</sup> See Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 34. Much more elaborate information in the later work of Liutprand of Cremona, see *Antapodosis* 1.5–10, 2.45, 3.25, 3.26–38, 5.15–16, 5.20, 5.21–23, 5.25, 6.2.

<sup>82</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6. See also Schneider, "Die Geschichte vom gewendeten Fisch" (1971).

example, in Procopius' *Vandal History*, where he referred to the dimensions of the Roman empire in "ancient times."<sup>83</sup> In the ninth century, the *Annales Fuldenses* explain that Louis the German held court in Minden close to a river Tacitus, the "author of a history of the Roman people," had called "Visurgis," even though it was known as "Weser" (*Wisuraha*) in his own time (*modernus*).<sup>84</sup> More interesting is Notker lauding Alcuin of York by stressing that, as a consequence of his teaching in Tours, the "Gauls or Franks" of his own time (*modernus*) would equal the ancient (*antiquus*) "Romans and Athenians,"<sup>85</sup> the latter obviously serving as models.

The Ancient Mediterranean past represented an essential reference point, not least as the bearer of major achievements, including erudition, by which the present was measured. Unfortunately, the evidence does not allow studying the perception of Antiquity of the large majority of individuals that did not belong to the writing elite. If at all, the material evidence can offer a vague impression. The pagan and the Christian past impressively converged in Rome, the key place of memory shaping the medieval perceptions of Antiquity. Lukas Clemens offered a comprehensive study of the use and appreciation of ancient remnants like housing, military forts (*castra*), *villae*, temples, and aqueducts in the regions north of the Alps, to argue that ancient Roman remains were visible and significant throughout the period focused on here. He stressed that the regular confrontation with these vestiges entailed that knowledge about this era persisted among contemporaries and that people remained interested in the Roman past. This only changed from the twelfth century, when ancient monuments ceased to ornate the landscape, given that contemporaries now regularly used ancient components to construct new buildings.<sup>86</sup> Thus, although explicit evidence is lacking, vestiges reminding of an ancient past continued to feature at least in and near urban centers or what was left of them.

Although the late eighth- and ninth-centuries manuscript evidence attests to a pronounced interest in pre-Christian Roman historians like Caesar, Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, or Ammianus Marcellinus, as Rosamond McKitterick has shown,<sup>87</sup> Carolingian authors rarely included pre-Christian history to their narratives—and if so, relevant mentions hardly went beyond sporadic references. McKitterick also illustrated how ancient events were regularly interwoven with

<sup>83</sup> Procopius, *Vandal* 3.1.13, p. 8: "Τοσαύτη μὲν ἡ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ κατὰ γὰρ τὸν παλαιὸν ἐγένετο χρόνον."

<sup>84</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 852, p. 42: "Igitur in loco, qui appellatur Mimida, super amnem quem Cornelius Tacitus scriptor rerum a Romanis in ea gente gestarum Visurgim, moderni vero Wisuraha vocant."

<sup>85</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.2, p. 3: "Cuius in tantum doctrina fructificavit, ut moderni Galli sive Franci antiquis Romanis et Atheniensibus equarentur."

<sup>86</sup> Clemens, *Tempore Romanorum* (2003). See also Clemens, "Römische Ruinen" (2014), pp. 123–40.

<sup>87</sup> McKitterick, *History and memory* (2004), pp. 41–5.

biblical history, a procedure already attested in standard works like the chronicles of Jerome and Isidore.<sup>88</sup> This is important as it further confirms to what extent history and time were conceived in accordance with Christian concepts. Lupus of Ferrières, who in his letters regularly referred, explicitly and implicitly, to ancient authors like Sallust, Cicero, Virgil, or Livy,<sup>89</sup> seemingly considered it appropriate to justify at one occasion why he wrote about things that did not belong to his present:

[. . .] for certainly anyone with the slightest education knows that Sallustius Crispus and Titus Livius narrated not a few things which had occurred long before their time, and which they had learned, partly from hearsay, and partly from reading. And to come to our own writers, Jerome published his life of Paul, a man who certainly lived in a very remote past, and Bishop Ambrose has left us an account of the passion of the virgin Agnes who was surely not his contemporary.<sup>90</sup>

The amalgamation of biblical and secular elements is a common feature of Byzantine and western sources. The anonymous tune *O Roma nobilis*, rediscovered in a tenth-century manuscript in the early nineteenth century and occasionally interpreted as a pilgrims' song, praises the city of Rome as "orbis et domina." However, apart from this, it restricts its role to that of the burial place of martyrs and the Apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>91</sup> Thegan's *Life of Louis the Pious* contains a short section on Charlemagne that clearly echoes biblical models by relating to the Merovingian bishop Arnulf of Metz and claiming, in a biblical style, that Arnulf fathered Ansegisus, who fathered Pippin (the Middle), who fathered Charles (Martel), who fathered Pippin (the Younger), who fathered Charles, who later was crowned emperor.<sup>92</sup> According to Notker, the Church fathers were also an important reference to judge the quality of scholarship: he

<sup>88</sup> In particular McKitterick, *History and Memory* (2004), pp. 273–7 and 281–2, with some noteworthy evidence proving that historiography was read by both secular and clerical literates. See also Hieronymus, *Chron.*; Isidore, *Chron.*, pp. 426–81. For later examples see, e.g., John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*.

<sup>89</sup> E.g., Lupus, *Epist.* 104 (Sallust); 1, 34, 16, 20, 46, 69, 62, 103 (Cicero); 7, 8, 20, 34, 44 (Virgil); 34 (Livy). *Epist.* 46 related to Demosthenes. See also his reference to the emperors Julius Caesar at *Epist.* 37, and Trajan and Theodosius in *Epist.* 93.

<sup>90</sup> Lupus, *Addita*, 1, p. 108: "eruditus, non ignoret Salustium Crispum Titumque Livium non pauca, quae illorum aetatem longe praecesserant, partim auditu, partim lectione comperta narrasse et, ut ad nostros veniam, Hieronimum Pauli sui vitam, quae certe remotissima fuerat, litteris illustrasse et antistitem Ambrosium virginis Agnes passionem, cui profecto contemporalis non fuerat, editam reliquisse." Trans. Regenos (1966), p. 18.

<sup>91</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 3227, fols. 80<sup>v</sup>–81<sup>r</sup>, access [digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.lat.3227](http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3227). The first strophe is accompanied by neumen. See also Traube, *O Roma nobilis* (1891), pp. 299–395, and Wagner, "O Roma nobilis" (1909), pp. 1–16, with musical notes.

<sup>92</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 1, p. 176.



claimed that while Charlemagne was pleased to see that erudition flourishing among the Franks, he had great pains realizing that it had not reached the maturity of the Church fathers like Jerome or Augustine.<sup>93</sup> The following section intends to examine the role attributed to relevant ancient and Christian models.

### Ancient Models for Current Rulers

The most prominent Christian figure in the early medieval sources was, rather expectedly, the first Christian emperor, Constantine.<sup>94</sup> This applies, in particular, to the Byzantine sources. While the emperor received critical treatment until the earlier seventh century, the long time that had elapsed when Theophanes wrote in the early ninth century allowed him to use Constantine as a model for the ideal Christian ruler.<sup>95</sup> First hagiographic depictions are attested from the later eighth century, and they flourished subsequently.<sup>96</sup> At the time of Constantine VII, the Macedonian dynasty was related to both Alexander and Constantine the Great.<sup>97</sup> In addition, as I have shown elsewhere, the name Constantine was consistently given to prospective emperors, provided his respective father did not already carry this name.<sup>98</sup> The probably late tenth-century anonymous *Epistula Synodica*, which pretended to be a letter written in 836 to the emperor Theophilos by the three eastern patriarchs, considers Constantine a model of piety and Christian mission that should be followed suit.<sup>99</sup>

Constantine was also regarded as an ideal Christian ruler in the west. Gregory of Tours referred already to the newly baptized Clovis as *novus Constantinus* (new Constantine),<sup>100</sup> and in Adamnán's *De locis sanctis*, Constantine is regularly referred to when explaining the origin or history of buildings.<sup>101</sup> The *Life of Sadalberga*, whose date of composition is disputed but certainly is no later than the ninth century, explains that its female protagonist imitated Helena, the mother of the first emperor Constantine.<sup>102</sup> Pope Hadrian († 795) also

<sup>93</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.9, p. 12: 98. Another retrospect on Charlemagne in Thietmar, *Chron.* 2.45 and 7.75.

<sup>94</sup> See, e.g., the excellent study by Ewig, "Das Bild Constantins" (1956).

<sup>95</sup> Bibikov, "Glanz und Elend" (2007), pp. 34–5, also on Justinian I, according to the *Chronicon Paschale*.

<sup>96</sup> Berger, "Legitimation und Legenden" (2008), p. 6. See also Amerise, "Das Bild Konstantins" (2008), pp. 23–34.

<sup>97</sup> Koder, "Byzanz als Mythos" (2001), p. 246. See also Markopoulos, "Constantine the Great" (1992), pp. 159–70.

<sup>98</sup> Sarti, "Die Namen" (2019), pp. 151–73. Opposing Berger, "Legitimation und Legenden" (2008), p. 12.

<sup>99</sup> *Epistula synodica* 13, p. 58.

<sup>100</sup> Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 2.31, p. 77. Also in the significantly later *Vita S. Chrothildis* 7.

<sup>101</sup> E.g., Adamnán, *De locis sanctis* 1.6.1; 1.8.1; 2.11.3; 3.2.1 and 3.

<sup>102</sup> *Vita Sadalbergae* 25, p. 64: "Sadlaberga imitata Helenam augustam, Constantini augusti matrem."



occasionally related to Charlemagne as the “new Constantine.”<sup>103</sup> This first Christian emperor further gained importance with the papal forgery known as the *Constitutum Constantini*, which claimed that Constantine had ceded the western territories of his empire to the pope.<sup>104</sup> In a panegyric on Louis the Pious, written around 823/30 by Ermold Nigellus, who had been exiled by the same emperor to punish him for his support of the revolt of Pippin of Aquitaine († 838), claimed that the emperor in Reims 816 had received Constantine’s crown from the hand of Pope Stephen IV.<sup>105</sup> Although the source’s genre and the lack of confirmation in other contemporary sources raise doubts about this assertion, the fact that this poem was dedicated to Louis himself makes it improbable that this assertion was entirely invented, not least as an enhancement of the apostolic position through false assertions would have risked displeasing the monarch further.<sup>106</sup> Thus, it is most likely that Ermold’s claim corresponded to the papal pretension regarding the origin of the crown and that the Franks, except for the panegyrist, preferred not to draw too much attention to this circumstance. Frechulf of Lisieux, in his *Chronicle*, also referred to Constantine, alongside Theodosius, as models for the Carolingian kings,<sup>107</sup> comparable to the Ingelheim frescoes, which according to the reconstruction by Christine Ratkowitsch depicted the same emperors as Louis the Pious’ imperial predecessors.<sup>108</sup> The significance attributed to Constantine may have entailed that his name became popular among the Carolingian population, as suggested by eight occurrences of this name on the polyptych of Saint-Germain-des-Prés dated to the second half of the 820s—although further evidence confirming this possibility is unfortunately lacking.<sup>109</sup>

The ancient empire was important as a reference to stress the imperial nature of medieval rulership. The Frankish sources regularly emphasize the close connection between the imperial past and contemporary rulership, as when the *Life of Solus* († 794) by Ermanrich of Ellwangen, written around 836/42, characterizes Pippin as “emperor” (*imperator*) ruling over *Francia* and *Germania*.<sup>110</sup> Ancient Christian emperors were willingly addressed as models for present rulership, as when the anonymous *Life of Louis the Pious* explained that the emperor followed the example of Theodosius by doing voluntary penitence to free himself of his

<sup>103</sup> See Ewig, “Das Bild Constantins” (1956), pp. 34–6, with further references.

<sup>104</sup> E.g., *Codex Carolinus* 60 and 95.

<sup>105</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 2, ll. 1076–8, p. 84: “coronam Quae Constantini Caesaris ante fuit.”

<sup>106</sup> A lavish crown carried to Reims also in Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 17, uncritically adopted, e.g., Kempf, *Das mittelalterliche Kaisertum* (1956), pp. 231–2.

<sup>107</sup> Ward, “Lessons in leadership” (2015), pp. 68–86.

<sup>108</sup> Ratkowitsch, “Die Fresken” (1994), p. 573.

<sup>109</sup> Goetz, “Unsichtbares” (2021), pp. 224–5. See Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 12832, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84260311 (14/05/2021).

<sup>110</sup> *Vita Suaolonis*, 1, p. 157: “domno Pippino imperatore super Franciam et Germaniam.”

faults.<sup>111</sup> Another good example is the *Paderborn Epos*, the anonymous panegyric describing the meeting between Charlemagne and Pope Leo III in 799. The text is preserved in a single late ninth-century St. Gall manuscript. This copy was written in three different hands, the capital letters of each new line are aligned and written, with four subheadings, in another later hand.<sup>112</sup> Although its exact time of redaction and the provenance of the unknown author remain issues of debate, the fact that Charlemagne was addressed as “king” and that the poem lacks an indication that his wife Liutgard had died (l. 184) both suggest a date of composition between June and December 800.<sup>113</sup> It bears a large variety of imperial references, both implicit and explicit: Charlemagne is famously designated “Father of Europe” (*pater Europae*, l. 504) and “head of the world” (*caput orbis*, l. 92), alongside the usual appellation “David” (ll. 393 and 416), and the poem stresses that Aachen had become second Rome. The poem also refers to a *forum* to do justice and high cupola buildings, probably meaning the famous chapel to be discussed in section VIII.1.<sup>114</sup> The same text also draws a vivid picture of the multicultural character of Charlemagne’s populace stemming from all parts of the known world.<sup>115</sup>

Further mentions in the poem either relate to the ancient past or to the general notion of empire to draw an imperial setting. The first group of mentions involves scattered references to ancient Gods like Mars (l. 466) or Bacchus (l. 531), or the Greek Mount Olympus (l. 518). The second includes, for example, references like the mention of purple attire, which the poet thoughtfully did not relate to Charlemagne himself but only to his daughters, Rotrud and Gisela (ll. 187, 190, 232), further confirming that the text was written before December 800. References belonging to this second group include the king’s association with the terms *imperium* (l. 86) and *augustus* (ll. 64, 94, 332, 406), core Roman virtues like *iustitia* (ll. 49, 63, 91, 449), and characterizations like *clarus* (l. 60), or designations like *inluster* (l. 62). The poem also exaggerates Charlemagne’s eruditeness by putting him on a par with Homer, Marcus Porcius Cato, and Marcus Tullius Cicero (ll. 54, 67–78). This imperial emphasis may imply that the poet knew about or supposed that a rise to emperorship was planned—perhaps as he had learned about related discussions taking place in Paderborn—, or,

<sup>111</sup> Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 35, p. 406: “imitatus Theodosii imperatoris exemplum.”

<sup>112</sup> Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Ms. C 78, fols. 104<sup>f</sup>–114<sup>v</sup>, access e-codices.unifr.ch/de/zbz/C0078/1r. *Carmen de Carolo Magno*. See Schaller, “Das Aachener Epos” (1976), pp. 134–68; Godman et al. (eds.), *Am Vorabend* (2002).

<sup>113</sup> See, e.g., Hammer, “Christmas Day 800” (2012), p. 14, suggesting that, to some extent, it may “reflect Charlemagne’s current thinking” (p. 15); cf. Fried, “Papst Leo III.” (2001), p. 287 and n. 12.

<sup>114</sup> *Carmen de Carolo Magno* ll. 93–94 and 100, p. 66: “Europae venerandus apex, pater optimus, heros, / Augustus: sed et urbe potens, urbi Roma secunda / [. . .] Hic iubet esse forum, sanctum quoque iure senatum.”

<sup>115</sup> *Carmen de Carolo Magno* ll. 496, p. 94: “Miratur gentes diversis partibus orbis.”

alternatively, he may also have considered that Charlemagne equaled the ancient emperors regardless of his current royal status.

In 801, upon his return from Rome, Charlemagne ordered the transportation of the equestrian statue of the Gothic king Theodoric from Ravenna to ornament his palace in Aachen, a statue to be further addressed in section VIII.1. This decision suggests that Charlemagne may have considered the Gothic king, whom he may have known from heroic songs, an important reference to his own rulership.<sup>116</sup> The significance attributed to the Gothic ruler is confirmed by the ninth-century Old High German *Song of Hildebrand* relating to Theodoric represented by the legendary figure of Dietrich (i.e., Theodoric) of Bern (Verona).<sup>117</sup> In 829, Walahfrid Strabo wrote a poem *On the statue of Tetricus*, which includes the dialogue between the poet and his muse, which, according to its editor Michael W. Herren, was modeled on the Virgilian eclogue. The poem is preserved in a St. Gall manuscript from the second half of the ninth century, using capitals to highlight different speakers and topics throughout the text.<sup>118</sup> It is another example testifying to the combination of biblical and secular historical models. Walahfrid drew a negative image of the Gothic king, which may be related to Theodoric's identity as an Arian heretic, and probably also to his role as the executor of Boethius: the poem stresses that Theodoric was considered cursed and to rest amid eternal flames.<sup>119</sup> The mention of Aaron may be associated with Exodus 28 to 32 on the idol of the golden calf, which is why its editor suggested that the statue referred to the idol set up by the Israelites waiting for Moses' return.<sup>120</sup>

Theodoric's depiction contrasts the panegyric characterization of Louis the Pious in the poem's second section.<sup>121</sup> On several occasions the Frankish emperor is explicitly related to Moses and once to King David.<sup>122</sup> The poem also refers to other biblical names related to the ruler's close surroundings: Lothar I as Moses' successor Joshua (l. 129), Louis the German as the son of King Saul of Israel Jonathan (l. 135), Louis' arch-chaplain (*archicapellanus*) Hilduin (of St. Denis) as Aaron, the high priest and brother of Moses (l. 179), and Einhard as the divinely talented craftsman Beseleel (l. 192, see Exodus 35.30–2). The

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 29; Innes, "Teutons or Trojans?" (2000), pp. 242–3; Epp, "499–799" (2002), p. 228. See also Fichtenau, "Byzanz" (1951), p. 51–3; Brenk, "Legitimation" (2002), pp. 153–4; Bredekamp, "Theoderich als König" (2014), pp. 280–4.

<sup>117</sup> See *Hildebrandslied*, pp. 84–5; Goltz, *Barbar* (2008), p. 19.

<sup>118</sup> St. Gallen, Cod. Sang. 869, access e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/0869/2. The sections following l. 128 may be found at pp. 157–63. See also the forthcoming doctoral thesis by Jasmin Damerius on the *De imagine Tetrici*.

<sup>119</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine Tetrici* ll. 35–7, p. 123.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Herren, in Walahfrid, *De imagine Tetrici*, p. 120, suggesting a *bouleversement* ("turnover") of Exodus 28 and 32 on the idol of the golden calf as a biblical typology, with Louis/Moses loving gold and Hilduin/Aaron remaining loyal, i.e., with exchanged roles, and Theodoric being the "golden calf." In my opinion, these two characteristics do not emerge as clearly from the text.

<sup>121</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine Tetrici* (1991).

<sup>122</sup> E.g., Walahfrid, *De imagine Tetrici*, l. 100, p. 125; *ibid.* l. 323, p. 130.

exception is the *magister* Grimoald, who is related to Homer (l. 198). Hence, these individuals were defined according to their relation to Louis, as Moses. The central figure of this poem thus was Louis the Pious, not Charlemagne, who is only mentioned at the beginning to characterize his son as emperor.

The poem neither attests to how Charlemagne perceived Theodoric nor does it help to understand the significance attributed to the equestrian statue thirty years before the poem was written. As Matthew Innes stressed, it contradicts prior evidence suggesting a more positive perception of the Gothic king at the time of Charlemagne. Shortly after 801, the emperor called one of his illegitimate sons Theodoric,<sup>123</sup> and Verena Epp pointed to some noteworthy parallels between Charlemagne's treatment of the situation in Rome after the attack on Leo III in 799 and Theodoric's handling of the situation around the pontificate of Symmachus in the framework of the Laurentian Schism. Epp suggested that these earlier events served as a model for Charlemagne through the mediation of Alcuin.<sup>124</sup>

A prominent biblical figure standing for the ideal Christian ruler was King David, a name already attested as a cognomen for the Byzantine emperor Heraclius and, after Charlemagne, in relation to Basil I.<sup>125</sup> In the west, it was used in the papal correspondence with the Frankish monarchs from the time of Pippin the Younger,<sup>126</sup> and it was subsequently used as a cognomen in the *laudes regiae* and at the Carolingian court to refer to Charlemagne, as we have seen.<sup>127</sup> For example, the nobleman Angilbert († 814) wrote a mirthful poem on his king, which on three occasions concludes that "David loves Christ, Christ is the glory of David."<sup>128</sup> Louis the Pious, who occasionally received the same epithet, was also addressed as the "new Salomon,"<sup>129</sup> just like Charles the Bald after him.<sup>130</sup> While the thesis by Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz that the Carolingians did not consider their history rooted in the Greco-Roman world but "in the sacred tradition of the Old Testament" alone (p. 56) seems too one-sided, these references

<sup>123</sup> Innes, "Teutons or Trojans?" (2000), pp. 242–4, also arguing that Walahfrid, *De imagine Tetrici* l. 34, p. 123, is conclusive evidence that "at court Theodoric was, or had been, seen as a positive figure."

<sup>124</sup> Epp, "499–799" (2002), pp. 219–29.

<sup>125</sup> Zahnd, "Novus David" (2008), pp. 71–88; Tsamakda, "König David" (2010), pp. 23–54; Zuckerman, "On the title" (2010), p. 890.

<sup>126</sup> Referring to Pippin, *Codex Carolinus* 11, p. 505: "Moysen et praeulgidum asseram David regem?"; similar *ibid.* 39 and 43. In reference to Charlemagne, see *ibid.* 33 and 69.

<sup>127</sup> E.g., Alcuin, *Epist.* 245, p. 394: "David imperatoris aequissimi"; Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.19, p. 89: "bellicosissimi David"; Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae* (1946), pp. 56–8.

<sup>128</sup> Angilbert, *Carmen* 2, ll. 31, 92, 108, pp. 360–3: "David amat Christum, Christus est gloria David."

<sup>129</sup> See Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae* (1946), p. 57, n. 148 and p. 69, n. 15; Ewig, "Zum christlichen Königsgedanken" (1956), pp. 70–1, n. 294; in reference to Charlemagne, *Codex Carolinus* 33, p. 540: "cum David atque Salemon regibus"; *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 7, p. 503: "David et Salomon." See also Staubach, "Graecae Gloriam" (1991), pp. 348–9.

<sup>130</sup> Staubach, "Graecae Gloriam" (1991), p. 353.

do attest to the persistence of the notion that these Carolingian rulers revived biblical kingship, an idea also attested by western royal unction.<sup>131</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

When the Franks searched for their pre-Christian foretime, they looked back to the same imperial past that was at the basis of Byzantine history. Although neither the Frankish nor the Byzantine evidence attests to a particularly pronounced interest in this faraway era, the treatment of this shared past in the two regions had more in common than disparities. Both referred basically to the same notions, individuals, and events when relating to their past, which was approached in a similar manner. The city of Rome was not only considered important as the apostolic capital but also had retained its regard in the east and the west for having been the first capital of the ancient Roman empire. The evidence in both cases attests to an identification with a Roman past that betrays a particularly Christian perspective on what we call Antiquity, which in both cases included Hellenic history. For this reason, prime events considered important enough to be conceived as a major caesura in the progression of time and history, in each case, included the birth of Christ and the Christianization of the empire. In each case, the empire's Christianization around the time of Constantine I initiated a new era in the respective region. Closely related to this Christian vision of the past was the amalgamation of biblical and profane history, a feature that is again attested in both traditions, although at varying degrees. More pronounced was the preference for monarchic history, which corresponded to the monotheistic views shared by both societies. In both cases, this entailed the prominence of sovereigns like Alexander the Great or Constantine the Great, even though Latin figures tended to appear more frequently in the Frankish sources, while references to Greek elements and protagonists were more common among Byzantine authors. A noteworthy exception was Homer, who not only was prominent in the east but also was mentioned comparatively frequently in the west. These similarities not only resulted from the fact that both societies had emerged from the same Roman past, they were also genuinely Christian. Obviously, the Christian lens created a comparable image of the past in both regions, and this despite the ongoing estrangement process between the Latin west and the Byzantine east. The treatment of Antiquity thus not only shows that both worlds shared what we call Antiquity as their own respective past, but also bore noteworthy commonality in their ways of perceiving it.

<sup>131</sup> Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae* (1946), pp. 56–8.

Frankish historiography confirms the significance attributed to having a share in the Roman past. This is well attested in the Trojan mythology, which designed a past where the history of the Franks went back as far as the history of the Romans (and the Byzantines), i.e., the exodus of the Trojans, all by retaining an independent identity. The Franks obviously did not consider it necessary to descend from the Romans to participate in the history of the ancient world. The Frankish world was not only considered part of the Roman past but also could be conceived as part of the Roman world, as is attested in the different treatments of the Syrian *Apocalypse*, which was willingly reinterpreted to relate to western monarchs as Roman “kings.” The notions of the six world ages and the four kingdoms represent further examples that, from a Frankish perspective, they could be conceived as part of the Roman *orbis*, if not as plainly Roman. Obviously, there was hardly any need for major adaptations to make related concepts fit into a Frankish frame.

As a side note, I would like to mention that, as we know, the world did not end with the last Roman emperor, neither in 1453 nor in 1806. The most convincing prophecy among those discussed in this chapter, from a modern perspective, thus probably is not the apocalypse, but the Trojan legend: it associated the otherwise largely unknown Turks to the Franks, the Romans, and the Greeks, thus aligning all those entities who, until the present day, have ruled over Byzantium, Constantinople, or Istanbul.

# V

## Language and Community

Language is an essential factor in the creation and maintenance of a community. In the tenth century, Constantine VII, in his *De administrando imperio*, addressed this connection in the following manner:

For just as each animal mates with its own tribe, so it is right that each nation also should marry and cohabit not with those of another ethnic group and tongue but of the same tribe and speech. For hence arise naturally harmony of thought and intercourse among one another and friendly converse and living together.<sup>1</sup>

The seventh-century Byzantine east was characterized by a gradual abandonment of Latin, with some isolated uses maintained for some time. Until the mid-eighth century, the Byzantine empire lost most of its territories inhabited by a majority of Latin-speakers, in the Balkans, Iberia, and Italy. Conversely, although Greek was never in everyday use north of the Alps, it had become remarkably common in Byzantine Italy from the sixth century. There is also evidence of increasing interest in this language among Frankish scholars from the later eighth century. Modern pieces of research dealing with these early medieval languages, which usually focus on either Greek in the west or Latin in the east, however, regularly stress the insufficient respective language skills in the two regions in question.

This chapter looks at both cases to explore the role of language in shaping medieval identities and the relations between the Byzantine east and the Frankish west. The first section argues that in the west, interest in Greek was mainly intellectual. It was primarily learned and used to explore religious texts and concepts. Communication with the Byzantines was of secondary importance outside the regal court. The second section shows that in the Byzantine east, Latin was conceived as a defining feature of imperial Romanness beyond the seventh

<sup>1</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 13, p. 74: “Ὡςπερ γὰρ ἕκαστον ζῶον μετὰ τῶν ὁμογενῶν τὰς μίξεις ἐργάζεται, οὕτω καὶ ἕκαστον ἔθνος οὐκ ἐξ ἀλλαφύλων καὶ ἀλλογλώσσων, ἀλλ’ ἐκ τῶν ὁμογενῶν τε καὶ ὁμοφώνων τὰ συνοικέσια τῶν γάμων ποιεῖσθαι καθέστηκεν δίκαιον. Ἐντεῦθεν γὰρ καὶ ἡ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὁμοφροσύνη καὶ συνομιλία καὶ προσφιλῆς συνδιατριβὴ καὶ συνμίσθωσις περιγίνεσθαι πέφυκεν.” Slightly altered trans. by Jenkins (1985), p. 75. See also Haubrichs, “Differenz und Identität” (2012).



century. Although Greek had become the common language, Latin was defined as the “language of the Romans” until the tenth century. While Latin thus retained some of its significance as a reference to Roman and imperial identity in the east, Greek was only marginally related to the Roman imperial legacy in the west. Comparison between both cases suggests that the Latin language skills in the Byzantine east largely compared to the western knowledge of Greek.

## 1. Greek in the West

In his *Life of Louis the Pious*, completed around 836/7, Thegan recounted that Charlemagne spent his last day improving the four Gospels with the assistance of “Greeks and Syrians.”<sup>2</sup> Despite the unlikelihood that this was a task that the old emperor could do, and in only one single day,<sup>3</sup> this statement is remarkable. It almost parenthetically mentions unnamed scholars from the east and implies that such corrections should be undertaken by referring to the Greek original. Another piece of evidence attesting to the presence of Greeks at the Carolingian court is contained in Notker’s *Life of Charlemagne*, written around 883/7. It refers to the Byzantine legation of 812 sent to Charlemagne when:

After the *laudes* were celebrated for the emperor on the morning of the octave of Epiphany, the Greeks privately sang the psalms in their own language. The emperor concealed himself nearby and was delighted by the sweetness of the singing. He informed his clerics that they should not be eating before they had presented him conversion of these antiphons into Latin. So it happens that all the tones are the same, and in one of them *conteruit* was substituted for *contrivit*.<sup>4</sup>

Although Notker is considered somewhat unreliable in many regards, there is evidence supporting that this is not the case here. He was particularly interested in liturgy and music, as is well attested by his *Liber ymnorum* (c. 884).<sup>5</sup> And, as

<sup>2</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 7, p. 186: “quattuor evangelia Christi [. . .] in ultimo ante obitus sui diem cum Grecis et Siris optime correxerat.”

<sup>3</sup> Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 249, calls these scholars Charlemagne’s “ghost-writers.”

<sup>4</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.7, p. 58: “Cum igitur Greci post matutinas laudes imperatori celebratas in octava die theophanie secreto in sua lingua Deo psallerent et ille occultatus in proximo carminum dulcedine delectaretur, praecepit clericis suis, ut nihil ante gustarent quam easdem antiphonas in Latinum conversas ipsi praesentarent. Inde est, quod omnes eiusdem sunt toni et quod in una ipsarum pro *contrivit* *conteruit* positum invenitur.” Partly amended trans. by Noble (2009), pp. 95–6. On the same legation, see *Annales regni Francorum* a. 811; Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6304 (811/12); Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6.

<sup>5</sup> See *Liber ymnorum*. On Notker and liturgy, see Fassler, “Music and prosopography” (2018), pp. 182–4.

Oliver Strunk and some prior studies have shown, we have Greek originals that perfectly correspond to the mentioned Latin antiphons. The earliest example is preserved in the ninth-century *Antiphone of Compiègne*, which had been in possession of Charles the Bald.<sup>6</sup> The manuscript includes the mentioned confusion between the—rare form—of the third person singular of the perfect indicative of *conterere* (“to crush,” equivalent to *συνέθλασεν*): *conteruit*, and the—common form—*contrivit*.<sup>7</sup> Maybe *conteruit* was used instead of its synonym *contrivit*, as the former could be sung in four syllables, so that “salvator conteruit” matched the seven-syllable “ὁ σωτὴρ συνέθλασεν.”<sup>8</sup> Notker’s report is also noteworthy for the evident admiration expressed for Greek art and for supporting that more than one scholar was available at Charlemagne’s court capable of performing the requested translation on a musical and linguistic basis.

### Greek and the Western Courts

The courts of Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, and Charles the Bald were renowned for their brilliant scholars attracted from different regions. Among them were the Anglo-Saxon Alcuin of York, Charlemagne’s teacher and advisor,<sup>9</sup> and Paul the Deacon, the Lombard scholar who resided at the Carolingian court in his later years.<sup>10</sup> A poem by the Spaniard Theodulf of Orléans lists scholarly works that must have been available there. However, a close look at it shows that the manuscripts were limited mainly to Latin authors and works that had been translated from Greek into Latin, as in the case of the homilies of John Chrysostom († 407).<sup>11</sup> Does this imply that no one at the Carolingian court could devote him- or herself to an original Greek text?

<sup>6</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 17436, access via gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8426787t (03/03/2020).

<sup>7</sup> Strunk, “The Latin antiphons” (1964), p. 418: “Τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ δράκοντος / ὁ σωτὴρ συνέθλασεν / ἐν Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ / καὶ πάντας ἐρρύσατο / ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Ἀίδου φθορᾶς.—Caput draconis / Salvator contrivit / in Jordane flumine / ab ejus potestate / omnes eripuit.” Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 17436, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8426787t (03/03/2020). The correspondence between this text and the Byzantine originals was first noted by Handschin, “Sur quelques tropaïres” (1954), pp. 27–60. On *conteruit* as a rare alternative form of the perfect indicative of *conterere*, see Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious* (2009), p. 96, n. 103. Berschin, “Die Ost-West-Gesandtschaften” (1997), p. 164, suggests that *conteruit* represents an erroneous perfect.

<sup>8</sup> See Strunk, “The Latin antiphons” (1964), pp. 418–19. Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 141, dismissed the use of *conteruit* as “barbarism.”

<sup>9</sup> See Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 25, and Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.2, stressing that Alcuin: “Cuius in tantum doctrina fructificavit, ut moderni Galli sive Franci antiquis Romanis et Atheniensibus aequarentur” (p. 3).

<sup>10</sup> On the Carolingian Renaissance, see McKitterick, “The Carolingian Renaissance” (2005), pp. 151–66.

<sup>11</sup> See Theodulf, *Carm.* 45, p. 543; Gorman, “Annianus of Ceneda” (2012), pp. 100–24. On the readership of early medieval translations, see Forrai, “The readership” (2012), pp. 293–311.

Greek had been comparatively common in the western parts of the Roman empire until late Antiquity.<sup>12</sup> Like Latin, Greek was an essential subject matter of Roman elite education, and with the introduction of Christianity, it further gained in importance, alongside Hebrew and Latin, as a third sacred language of the Church Fathers.<sup>13</sup> In the east, it had become the dominant language in the churches from the late fourth century, and by the early seventh century, it had supplanted Latin as the written and colloquial language.<sup>14</sup> The native languages of the Frankish world included vulgar Latin or Old French in the western regions and Old High German (*lingua theodisca*) in the east.<sup>15</sup> Any knowledge of Greek available there in Antiquity had significantly diminished from the late fourth century,<sup>16</sup> and it was only one century after it had become predominant in the Byzantine east that western scholars regained interest in that language.<sup>17</sup>

A small number of the scholars at the Frankish courts could cope with Greek more skillfully. Several are known by name. They include the author Hilduin of St. Denis († mid-ninth century), the music theorist Aurelian of Réôme (mid-ninth century), the theologians Heiric of Auxerre († 876),<sup>18</sup> and Christian of Stavelot († late ninth century).<sup>19</sup> Remarkably, the majority of the scholars with good Greek linguistic proficiency were Irish natives: Sedulius Scottus († 860), John Scot Eriugena († c. 877), the grammarian Martin the Irishman (lat. *Hiberniensis*, † 875) and, two generations later, Israel Scot († c. 965).<sup>20</sup> This raised the question about the role of insular erudition in establishing Greek schools on the continent.<sup>21</sup> A significant moment in the propagation of Greek learning in the west was Pope Vitalian's decision in 668 to ordain Theodore, a native of the city of Tarsus from Byzantine Cilicia (southern Anatolia), as the new archbishop of Canterbury. Theodore was accompanied by another Byzantine native, Hadrian,<sup>22</sup> and imported

<sup>12</sup> See Palm, *Rom* (1959), pp. 99–100.

<sup>13</sup> Koder, "Sprache" (2012), pp. 16–18; Koder, "Remarks" (2018), p. 118. See also Rapp, "Hellenic identity" (2008), p. 138; Schreiner, "Die Begegnung" (2013), p. 13; and Paul, *Carm.* 11.5, p. 48: "Graeca cerneris Homerus, Latina Vergilius, / in Hebrea quoque Philo."

<sup>14</sup> Koder, "Remarks" (2018), p. 114.

<sup>15</sup> See Haubrichs, "Differenz und Identität" (2012); Goetz, "'Lingua'" (2012), pp. 61–74.

<sup>16</sup> See Racine, "Servius' Greek lessons" (2015), pp. 52–3; Herren, "Pelagian fountains" (2015).

<sup>17</sup> Key publications are Bischoff, "Das griechische Element" (1951); Bischoff, "The study" (1961), pp. 209–24; Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980). A concise summary of the evidence in Ronconi, "*Graecae linguae*" (2016), pp. 368–73.

<sup>18</sup> Marenbon, *From the circle of Alcuin* (1981), p. 114; Smith, "Yet more on the autograph" (1992), pp. 47–70, at p. 67.

<sup>19</sup> Christian, *Expositio*. The editor Huygens suggests that he was not a monk but a teacher. See also Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 161–2.

<sup>20</sup> See Herren, "Sedulius Scottus" (2015), pp. 515–35. I would like to thank Ryan T. Goodman for pointing me to this paper. On John Scot, see Guiu/Lahey (eds.), *A companion to John Scottus* (2020). On Israel, see Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis* 7, p. 8, and Jeaneau, "Pour le dossier d'Israel Scot" (1985), pp. 7–72; Heikkinen, "Poet, scholar, trickster" (2015), pp. 81–110, suggesting a Breton origin. For the presence of Irish monks in St. Gall, see Kaczynski, *Greek* (1988), p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> See Bischoff, "Das griechische Element" (1951).

<sup>22</sup> Bede, *Hist.* 4.1. On Theodore, see Lapidge, "The career" (1995), pp. 1–29.

Greek manuscripts to southern Britain.<sup>23</sup> They ensured that Greek was taught in Canterbury, and it soon became part of scholarship on and beyond the British islands.<sup>24</sup>

In Aachen, Charlemagne was not an ignorant among erudites. If Einhard is to be trusted, he received some Greek instruction himself, although he would have been much better at understanding than speaking Greek. As Charlemagne's literacy was minimal and given Einhard's reference to the ruler reciting ("pronuntiari") Greek,<sup>25</sup> it appears that he only received oral instruction, a procedure that may have been more common among lay learners. Whether the same is true for Louis the Pious is less clear. Thegan's *Life* contains the only related statement. It is so similar to Einhard's claim referring to Charlemagne that it seems that Thegan copied from the former.<sup>26</sup> However, this does not prove the inaccuracy of the statement, which does not seem implausible considering the instructions provided to his father and sister.

In his *Life of Charlemagne*, Einhard also attested to having some knowledge of Greek himself. The most prominent insertion is what he characterized as a Byzantine saying: "If you have a Frank as a friend, you do not have him as a neighbor" ("ΤΟΝ ΦΡΑΝΚΟΝ ΦΙΛΟΝ ΕΧΙΣ, ΠΙΤΟΝΑ ΟΥΚ ΕΧΙΣ").<sup>27</sup> Lupus of Ferrières († 862/3), in several among his 130 letters, confirmed that Einhard was renowned for knowing Greek. In a letter addressed to a certain monk Altuin, related to the monastery of St. Alban near Mainz, Lupus explained that he had been assured by "a certain Greek" that the word *blasphemus* was pronounced with a short penult and that Einhard had been able to confirm this.<sup>28</sup> In a famous letter addressed to Einhard himself, Lupus admitted that he could not grasp the meaning of the Greek term *inmusitaton/enmusitaton* found in Boethius,<sup>29</sup> and he beseeched Einhard to explain the meaning of this and other Greek words.<sup>30</sup> Another letter confirms Lupus and Altuin's interest in accentuating Latin and Greek words: it explains that Greek nouns ending in *on* and Latin words ending in *o* may have either a short or long penult in the genitive, depending on their case.<sup>31</sup> Thus, although Greek proficiency was rather limited, displaying related knowledge was popular at the Carolingian court.

<sup>23</sup> Dumville, "The importation" (1995), pp. 96–119.

<sup>24</sup> Bede, *Hist.* 4.2.

<sup>25</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 25, p. 30: "Grecam vero melius intellegere quam pronuntiari poterat." See also Russell, "An habes linguam Latinam?" (2012), pp. 194–5.

<sup>26</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 19, p. 265.

<sup>27</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 16, p. 20. This translation by McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), p. 22, in my view renders the original better than the usual suggestions. See also Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 27, p. 31; *ibid.* 30, p. 35.

<sup>28</sup> Lupus, *Epist.* 20, p. 27. See *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières*, trans. Regenos (1966), p. 21, with n. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Lupus, *Epist.* 5, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Lupus, *Epist.* 5, p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Lupus, *Epist.* 34, pp. 41–2; *ibid.* p. 43.

## Greek in Italy

In Italy, Greek had remained more common given its Greek-speaking immigrants in the seventh century and a native Greek population, not only in the largely bilingual Byzantine parts of the peninsula.<sup>32</sup> Comparable to southern Italy, the city of Rome harbored a significant Greek-speaking community, which included monks and merchants.<sup>33</sup> Maximalist estimations that up to 50% of the Duchy of Rome's inhabitants were Greek speakers,<sup>34</sup> however, appear implausible given the shortage of relevant evidence for the large majority of the population that neither belonged to the Greek monasteries nor to the curial elite of the Lateran.<sup>35</sup> Einhard, for example, in his *Translatio et miracula*, mentioned a "Greek" monk called Basil who had come to Rome from Constantinople, where he lived in a hostel on the Palatine hill together with four students and other "Greeks."<sup>36</sup> Most popes from the late seventh and until the time of Zachary († 752) were Greek or Syrian natives, as the *Liber Pontificalis* regularly stresses, and their language skills must have been important to connect to the increasingly Greek-speaking parts of the empire.<sup>37</sup> The popes also had extensive libraries at their disposal, with a wide choice of Greek books,<sup>38</sup> and Pope Zachary also had the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great translated into Greek to make them more widely accessible.<sup>39</sup>

It was only after the papal renunciation from the Byzantine empire, in consequence of the alliance with the Franks, that the apostolic chancellery stopped its efforts at maintaining Greek.<sup>40</sup> This does not mean that the popes could not deal with this language after that. For example, a letter written in Greek, which,

<sup>32</sup> See Peters-Custot, "Greco et Byzantins" (2014), pp. 181–92; Peters-Custot, "Qu'est-ce qu'être 'grec'" (2018), pp. 215–33.

<sup>33</sup> See Noble, "The declining knowledge" (1985), pp. 56–62; Delogu, "The post-imperial Romanness" (2018), pp. 162–3; Winterhager, *Migranten und Stadtgesellschaft* (2020). See also Woolf, "Playing games" (2006), pp. 162–78, and *Annales Fuldenses* a. 896, p. 128: "senatus Romanorum necnon Grecorum scola."

<sup>34</sup> Hartmann, *Hadrian I*. (2006), p. 175; Forrai, "Greek at the papal court" (2016), pp. 161–9. See, on bilingual inscriptions and writing, *LP, Vita Leoni III*, c. 13, 84; *LP, Vita Leonii IV*, c. 18; *LP, Vita Benedictii III*, c. 32; *LP, Vita Stephani V*, 14, and the discussions in Mango, "La culture grecque" (1973), pp. 683–721; McCormick, "Byzantium and the west" (1995), pp. 362–3; Ronconi, "*Graecae linguae*" (2016).

<sup>35</sup> See Winterhager, *Migranten und Stadtgesellschaft* (2020), and my review in [hsozkult.de/review/id/reb-93145](https://hsozkult.de/review/id/reb-93145) (11/12/2022).

<sup>36</sup> Einhard, *Translatio et miracula* 1.5, p. 54. Kries et al. (2015) already reproduces the text of a critical edition currently prepared by Carolos Pérez to be published as part of the *Corpus Christianorum*.

<sup>37</sup> Noble, "The declining knowledge" (1985), p. 59.

<sup>38</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 24; Louis II, *Epist.*, probably written by the papal librarian Anastasius Bibliothecarius, mentioning "Graecos etiam noviter editos revolvat codices" (p. 387) and "Graecorum annalium" (p. 389); McCormick, "Byzantium and the west" (1995), pp. 361–2. See also the recent study on the sixth- and seventh-century library in Ravenna, in particular, by Schoolman, "Greeks" (2019), pp. 139–59.

<sup>39</sup> Herrin, "Constantinople" (1992), p. 102; Hartmann, *Hadrian I*. (2006), p. 175.

<sup>40</sup> Herrin, "Constantinople" (1992), p. 102.

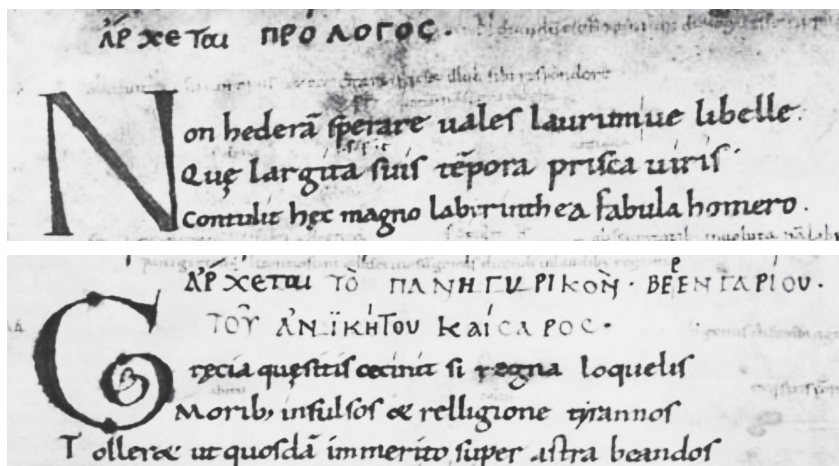


FIGURE 5.1 Extracts from Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. lat. XII, 45 (4165), fols. 1<sup>r-v</sup>. Creative Commons (CC0 1.0). Source: internetculturale.it.

according to Werner Ohnsorge, was written in 805 by Pope Leo III to an unknown addressee, was preserved in Erfurt on *papyrus* until its loss during the Second World War.<sup>41</sup> The same was true for Italic rulers, as the mentioned Greek imperial letter of St. Denis confirms, which the Byzantine emperor addressed to his western counterpart Lothar I in the early 840s.<sup>42</sup> Further evidence from a digraph manuscript attests to the familiarity of the Italians with the Greek language and script. The *Deeds of the emperor Berengar*, a Latin poem in 1090 hexameters written in the early tenth century, for example, was introduced with “λ[read ἀ]ρχεται πρόλογος” (“Preface begins,” fol. 1<sup>r</sup>) and “λ[read ἀ]ρχεται τὸ πανηγυρικὸν βερεγγαρίου τοῦ ἀνίκητου καίσαρος” (“The panegyric on Berengar the invincible emperor begins,” fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, see Figure 5.1).<sup>43</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the western scholars with the most elaborated knowledge of Greek lived in Italy. Anastasius Bibliothecarius, the papal librarian, was known for his language skills beyond the Alps.<sup>44</sup> He translated seventeen Greek texts of interest to the Christian community into Latin, including the *Chronographia Tripartita*, which combined the Byzantine *Historia syntomos* of Nikephoros

<sup>41</sup> Ohnsorge, “Der griechische Papstpapyrus” (1958), pp. 9–37. The letter is only preserved as a photograph.

<sup>42</sup> Gantner, “Kaiser Ludwig II.” (2018), pp. 105–7.

<sup>43</sup> Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. lat. XII, 45 (4165), access internetculturale.it/jmms/iccviewer/iccviewer.jsp?id=oai%3A193.206.197.121%3A18%3AVE0049%3ACSTOR.244.13494 (13/03/2020). It has been edited by Winterfeld, MGH Poetae 4.1 (1899), pp. 354–403.

<sup>44</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 872, p. 187: “Anastasius bibliothecarius Romanae sedis, utriusque linguae, graecae scilicet et latinae.”



Patriarchos, Georgios Synkellos, and Theophanes Confessor,<sup>45</sup> and a *Passio* of the saint Demetrius of Thessaloniki dedicated to Charles the Bald.<sup>46</sup> The *Chronographia Tripartita* was the first and only Byzantine historiography ever available in Latin in the early medieval west.<sup>47</sup> Anastasius was also the presumed author of Louis II's letter to Basil, exposing his profound knowledge of Greek scripture.<sup>48</sup>

## Greek Manuscripts

Greek was available in manuscripts. Several examples are known to have reached the west as gifts, and they were copied either to be stored or for further distribution. The most prominent example is the *Parisinus graecus* 437, the oldest manuscript that contains the entire work of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, dated to the early ninth century. It is an anonymous sixth-century work claiming to go back to a first-century bishop of Athens, who was a pupil of the apostle Paul. In 827, it was offered to Louis the Pious in Compiègne in the framework of an embassy sent by the Byzantine emperor Michael II. The manuscript is still available today and is located in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in Paris.<sup>49</sup> Although the use of minuscule had become common in the east, as mentioned above, this manuscript was written in Greek majuscule, probably taking into account that western scholars had much greater ease in dealing with this script, as Peter Schreiner supposed.<sup>50</sup> Most Greek manuscripts came by detour, mainly either through or from Italy, as those sent by Pope Paul I at the request of King Pippin. According to the relevant letter, the papal gift included “one book of

<sup>45</sup> Anastasii, *Chronographia*. See also LP, *Vita Hadrianii II*, 40 and 42. On his work as translator, see Forrai, *The interpreter of the popes* (2008); Forrai, “Anastasius Bibliothecarius” (2008), pp. 319–37.

<sup>46</sup> Forrai, “Byzantine saints” (2015), pp. 185–202.

<sup>47</sup> Schreiner, “*Translatio studii*” (2018), pp. 143–4.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 386: “neminem appellandum basilea nisi eum, quem in urbe Constantinopolitana imperii tenere gubernacula contigisset,” or, p. 387: “si Graecos etiam noviter editos revolas codices. . . vocitatos et non solum Graecorum. . . βασιλεων appellatione veneratos.”

<sup>49</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, gr. 437, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000953x (21/03/2020). On the manuscript, see Erismann, “On the significance” (2018), pp. 95–102; *Epist. var. i. a m. Caroli* 20.3, p. 330. Further evidence on the embassy, see Schreiner, “Diplomatische Geschenke” (2004), p. 270; *Annales regni Francorum* a. 827; Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 41. On Dionysius the Areopagite, see de Andia (ed.), *Denys l'Aréopagite* (1997), and Irigoin, “Les manuscrits grecs” (1997), pp. 19–29.

<sup>50</sup> Schreiner, “Zur griechischen Schrift” (2003), 316–17; Schreiner, “*Translatio studii*” (2018), p. 143. On Greek majuscule in the west, see also Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), pp. 34–5; Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 42–3. From the early medieval period, only Liutprand of Cremona and Froumund of Tegernsee († 1008/12) are known to have been familiar with the minuscule, Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), pp. 48–9. See also Aerts, “Froumund's Greek” (1995), pp. 194–210. Schreiner, “Die Begegnung” (2013), at p. 17, with n. 10 and fig. 9, also on a now lost fragment of Greek teaching material in minuscule in a manuscript from Metz, now only preserved in photographs.



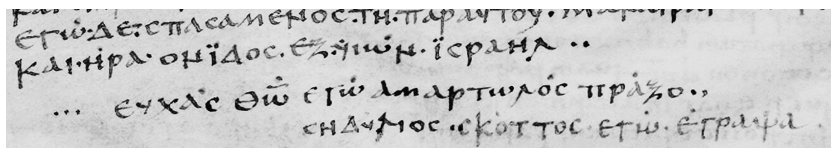


FIGURE 5.2 Extract from Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms 8407, fol. 55<sup>r</sup>. Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b550008210/f115.item.

antiphons and one with responsories, one grammar of Aristotle, the Geometry by Dionysius the Areopagite, one orthography and one [more] grammar, all of them written in Greek, together with a time instrument for night.”<sup>51</sup> The dispatch thus included teaching material that could be used to promote learning Greek and gain the skills necessary to read the remaining pieces of work,<sup>52</sup> although the Greek grammar would have required the assistance of a native speaker with some Latin or Frankish language skills to help western students dealing with the material.

Irish scribes wrote a large number of the Greek manuscripts copied north of the Alps. At the bottom of fol. 55<sup>r</sup> of a psalter written in Greek script, Sedulius Scottus claimed authorship by stressing that “CHΔΥΛΙΟC ΚΚΟΤΤΟC ΕΓΩ ΕΓΡΑΨΑ” (“Sedulius the Scot has written [this],” see Figure 5.2).<sup>53</sup> Another known copyist is the otherwise unknown Eugenia attested in northern Francia at the time of Charlemagne.<sup>54</sup> The most extensive collection of Greek manuscripts known today is preserved in the monastery of St. Gall, located near a route regularly used to travel to and from Constantinople.<sup>55</sup> Its corpus of Greek manuscripts has been meticulously reconstructed with the help of medieval catalogs and studied by Berenice M. Kaczynski, who discovered several ninth- to eleventh-century manuscripts whose Greek texts appear to have been written by Frankish scribes.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 24, p. 529: “Direximus itaque excellentissime praecllentiae vestrae et libros, quantos reperire potuimus: id est antiphonale et responsale, insimul artem gramaticam Aristolise, Dionisii Ariopagitis geometricam, orthografiam, grammaticam, omnes Greco eloquio scriptas, nec non et horologium nocturnum.” Riché, “Le grec” (1988), p. 148–9, supposed that these manuscripts were kept in St. Denis. The passage’s plausibility is questioned in Ronconi, “*Graecae linguae*” (2016), p. 370, n. 217.

<sup>52</sup> Ronconi, “*Graecae linguae*” (2016), pp. 369–70; Gastgeber, “The Aristotle of Pippin III” (2018), pp. 43 and 56, identifying “Aristolise” with Aristotle (pp. 46–8).

<sup>53</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms 8407, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b550008210/f2.image (25/03/2020). Transcription from Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 73. See also Herren, “Sedulius Scottus” (2015), pp. 524–9.

<sup>54</sup> Schreiner, “Kopistinnen in Byzanz” (2000), pp. 35–45.

<sup>55</sup> Kaczynski, *Greek* (1988), p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> Kaczynski, *Greek* (1988); Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 74.

According to Chris Wickham, western scholars “wanted to read Greek, whether they could or not.”<sup>57</sup> The significance attributed to the Greek language in the Carolingian age is indeed well-attested by the evidence. Greek texts written in Roman letters are preserved, for example, in a fragmentary tenth-century St. Gall psalter.<sup>58</sup> These and other examples show that Greek was relevant not only for those who could actually read and write it, particularly in a liturgical context. Several examples of transliteration of Greek into Latin are preserved in the context of the so-called *missa graeca*, a term designating manuscripts with transcriptions of Greek text in Roman letters. They were usually annotated with neumen, i.e., signs related to the medieval system of musical notation. It is used to refer to Greek chants in western manuscripts, mainly in Latin transliteration, which usually comprise at least one of the following four texts: *Gloria* (Δόξα), *Credo* (Πιστεύω), *Sanctus* (Ἅγιος) and *Agnus Dei* (Ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ). They originated from the west, probably around the time of Louis the Pious, and in comparable situations, as when, in 812, Greek legates sang Byzantine psalms at Charlemagne’s court. The chants are preserved in several ninth- to twelfth-century manuscripts, the oldest being the *Paris Codex lat. 2290* dated around 867. It was copied in St. Amand from an exemplar from St. Denis, which contains all four related pieces.<sup>59</sup> These transliterations allowed readers lacking Greek language skills or the ability to read Greek letters to recite a Greek text, for example, during mass, when Greek texts may have been performed to a public with just as little knowledge of Greek as the reader him- or herself. Such an experience may have emphasized the western impression of Greek being a sacred but largely inaccessible language.<sup>60</sup>

Greek was also used in other manuscripts referring to music. Aurelian of Réôme’s *Musica disciplina*, for example, one of the earliest medieval treatises on music, contains two unreadable or unintelligible Greek words (“ἁλωτῆ μλεων”?) as part of an otherwise Latin etymologic reference (see Figure 5.3).<sup>61</sup> Apart from

<sup>57</sup> Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 250.

<sup>58</sup> St. Gallen, Cod. Sang. 1395, pp. 336–60, access e-codices.unifr.ch/de/csg/1395 (27/03/2020). Other Greek glossaries were written entirely in Roman letters, e.g., London, British Library Harley Ms 5642, fols. 1<sup>r</sup>–4<sup>r</sup>, from around 900, access bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley\_ms\_5642\_f001r (27/03/2020).

<sup>59</sup> Most recently, Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2012), pp. 41–74; Wanek, “Die sogenannte Missa Graeca” (2013); Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2018), pp. 113–26. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 2290, fols. 9<sup>v</sup>–120<sup>v</sup>, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8423836x (07/03/2021), from late ninth-century Saint-Denis, is the earliest manuscript with the four mentioned chants, in Latin.

<sup>60</sup> See also the comments in Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2018), p. 123.

<sup>61</sup> Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 148, fols. 60<sup>v</sup>–1<sup>r</sup>: “Musica autem est scientia recte modulandi, sono cantuque congrua. Appellata est autem secundum grecos ΛΠΩ ΤΥ ΗΛ..N id est, a querendo, eoquod per illam sonus visque modulationis quaereretur.” See also *ibid.* fol. 69<sup>v</sup>: “Tetra enim apud Grecos quattuor dicuntur. Unde et nomen dei tetragrammaton eoquod quattuor litteris ascribi dicitur. Inde et tethrarchia, id est quarta pars regni.” Access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8452635b/f126.item (28/03/2020). Etymology was popular topic since Isidore’s work, see Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), pp. 50–2.

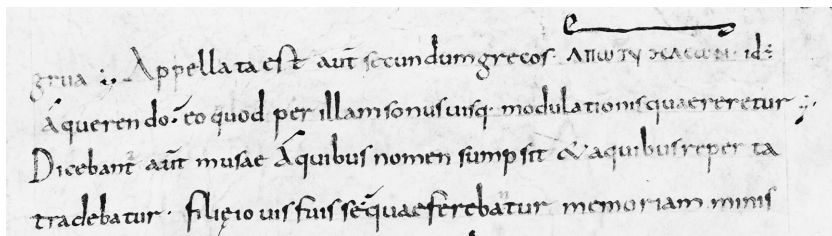


FIGURE 5.3 Extract from Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 148, fol. 61<sup>r</sup>. Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8452635b/f126.

this and other Greek texts, relevant evidence is largely limited to further scattered Greek letters,<sup>62</sup> common and rare Greek words,<sup>63</sup> and references to Greek terminology<sup>64</sup> included in otherwise Latin scripture<sup>65</sup>—as when Lupus of Ferrières explained that *fialae* were made of glass and that this would be called *hialis* in Greek.<sup>66</sup> The tenth- to eleventh-century neumatic manuscripts from St. Gall also use Greek majuscules to refer to the sacred names (*nomina sacra*) “Jesus” and “Christ,” which means that they use the abbreviations  $\overline{\text{IHC}}/\Sigma$  and  $\overline{\text{XPC}}/\Sigma$  instead of  $\overline{\text{IHS}}$  and  $\overline{\text{XPS}}$ .<sup>67</sup>

## Learning and Teaching Greek

The question that requires further discussion to understand the role of Greek in the Frankish west is how this language was learned and why. Greek was mainly taught in a selection of monasteries and at the Carolingian court. Apart from Charlemagne, and maybe his son Louis, the princess Rotrud received Greek instruction to prepare her for her future roles as the wife of the eastern emperor Constantine VI and empress. She was not instructed by western scholars but by the eunuch Elissaios, who had been sent from Constantinople to teach her

<sup>62</sup> Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), pp. 49–50.

<sup>63</sup> Berschin, “Greek elements” (1988), pp. 85–9, stressing that the Bible contributed to the persistence of Greek letters in Latin manuscripts. See also Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), pp. 32–3.

<sup>64</sup> E.g., Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis* 21, p. 22. See also Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 248.

<sup>65</sup> For a survey on medieval digraph manuscripts, with many examples in the appendix, see Schreiner, “Die Begegnung” (2013).

<sup>66</sup> Lupus, *Epist.* 20, p. 28. More examples in Jeuneau, “Jean Scot Érigée” (1979), p. 35; Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 248, n. 9. The fact that Greek letters, according to Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), pp. 38–9, were used as cryptographics attests to some familiarity among scholars with Greek letters and their perceived exotism.

<sup>67</sup> Floros, “Notker’s *ellinici fratres*” (2011), p. 285, n. 577. On the Irish origin of the Greek *nomina sacra*, see also Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), pp. 36–7.

Greek letters and customs.<sup>68</sup> It seems likely that the same eunuch also instructed her father and brother, which would go well with the evidence suggesting that the ruler's command of Greek was limited to understanding and speaking. Exchanges between Paul the Deacon and his friend Peter of Pisa attest that the Lombard scholar supported Elissaios by teaching Greek to the Frankish clergy and Rotrud to help them communicate with the "Greeks." This implies that Paul had received substantial Greek instruction during his time in Italy. Paul's claim that he did this despite his poor knowledge of Greek<sup>69</sup> should probably not be taken as seriously as Cyril Mango did when he wondered why these clerics, which were probably meant to travel to the east as ambassadors, had not received instruction from Greek native speakers like Elissaios.<sup>70</sup> Besides, it appears that the Carolingian court also harbored further Greek native speakers, as Einhard confirms in his *Translatio et miracula*. It incidentally mentions a young "Greek" chamberlain of Louis the Pious who, in the late 820s, would have been miraculously cured of chronic fever.<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, he bore the Frankish name Drogo, which confirms the plausibility of further unattested "Greeks" at the regal court, and elsewhere. His Frankish name also warns us from relying too much on onomastic evidence to define an individual's origins. The evidence for centers of Greek learning outside the court is very scarce, however. Besides some scattered indications pointing to teachers in northeastern urban centers like Laon, Auxerre, or Liège, there have been two major centers in the vicinity of Lake Constance: the mentioned monasteries of St. Gall and Reichenau.<sup>72</sup>

When Pippin requested Greek manuscripts from pope Paul I, the likely intention was to use them to learn and teach Greek, maybe also to prepare his daughter Gisela, should she have been engaged to the emperor Leo IV († 780).<sup>73</sup> Even if it seems likely that the Byzantines, in this case, sent a teacher for her, it is possible that the Frankish court of these earlier days still had to rely on its own resources to acquire the language skills needed. There is also some evidence attesting to

<sup>68</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6274 (781/2), p. 455: "κατέλιπον Ἐλισσαῖον τὸν εὐνοῦχον καὶ νοτάριον πρὸς τὸ διδάξαι αὐτὴν τὰ τε τῶν Γραικῶν γράμματα καὶ τὴν γλῶσσαν, καὶ παιδεῦσαι αὐτὴν τὰ ἥθη τῆς Ῥωμαίων βασιλείας." See also Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 19.

<sup>69</sup> Paul, *Carm.* 10–11, pp. 49–50, *Carm.* 11.10, and *Carm.* 12.6, p. 49. According to Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 25, Peter also taught Charlemagne grammar.

<sup>70</sup> Mango, "La culture grecque" (1973), pp. 693–4.

<sup>71</sup> Einhard, *Translatio et miracula* 4.1, p. 256: "Erat quidam iuvenis inter cubicularios regis, natione Graecus, nomine Drogus."

<sup>72</sup> Most of these alleged centers are only attested for the post-Carolingian era by singular and insufficiently explicit references, cf. Herren, "Pelagian fountains" (2015), pp. 81–2. A permanent school for the teaching of Greek is mentioned for Osnabrück and was connected intriguingly with a potential betrothal between the children of the *imperator Romanorum* and the *rex [sic!] Grecorum* in a document dated to December 804, which has been conclusively identified as an eleventh century forgery, see *Dipl. Karol.* 273, pp. 403–5.

<sup>73</sup> The reference in *Codex Carolinus* 45, suggests that this offer by the emperor was never accepted by Pippin. See also Mango, "La culture grecque" (1973), pp. 692–3.

how Greek was taught in the west.<sup>74</sup> The resources available for that purpose help reconstruct some of the methods and offers an idea of the possible quality of early medieval teaching and learning. An interesting testimony is contained in a letter to Godescalc of Orbais, where Lupus of Ferrières explained that he searched in vain for the meaning of some Greek words.<sup>75</sup> He certainly referred to glossaries, i.e., lists of Greek words and their Latin correspondence, which have been preserved in comparatively large numbers. Franks aiming to learn Greek could not rely on Byzantine material alone, which was not conceived to help people only familiar with Latin or a western vernacular to know the meaning of Greek words, which is why these glossaries were produced in the west.

The most impressive example, *Laon 444*, stems from the third quarter of the ninth century and is now located in the Bibliothèque municipale of Laon. It was set up by Martin the Irishman<sup>76</sup> and contains a Greek–Latin glossary that goes back to pseudo-Cyrril (*Glossarium grecum per ordinem alphabeti*, fols. 5<sup>r</sup>–255<sup>v</sup>), written in eighth-century uncials.<sup>77</sup> It is followed by a short list of Latin words and their Greek correspondants, which are repeated by applying different gender (fols. 255<sup>v</sup>–75<sup>v</sup>).<sup>78</sup> The list ends with a short colophon written in Tironian notes. The remaining pages (fols. 276<sup>r</sup>–318<sup>v</sup>) include different grammatical and lexical treatments, including Greek sentences with verbatim Latin translations in superscription (fols. 297<sup>r</sup>–98<sup>v</sup>). The manuscript also contains three autographs of Martin attesting to his authorship, one of which states that “græcus scripsit litteras istas,” which is followed by its Greek translation “ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚ ΓΡΑΨΕΝ ΜΑΡΤΙΝΟC ΓΡΜΜΑΤΑ ΑΥΤΑ” (“Martin wrote these Greek letters,” fol. 296<sup>v</sup>). A little further, the same referred to himself as “teacher” (“ὁ διδάσκαλος”): “CΤΙΧΟC ΠΡΕΠΙΟC ΔΙΔΑCΚΑΛΟΥ ΜΑΡΤΙΝΟΥ” (fol. 297<sup>v</sup>, see Figure 5.4).<sup>79</sup>

Another glossary is preserved in a manuscript that is now located in Paris. At fols. 113<sup>r</sup>–121<sup>v</sup> it collects short explanations and definitions of Greek related to

<sup>74</sup> On the medieval teaching of Greek, see Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951); Bischoff, “The study” (1961), pp. 211–16; Laistner, “Notes on Greek” (1923), pp. 421–56; Sporbeck, “Froumund von Tegernsee” (1991); Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015).

<sup>75</sup> Lupus, *Epist.* 30 p. 39.

<sup>76</sup> Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Ms 444, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84921401/f645 (01/04/2020). Dionisotti, “Greek grammars” (1988), pp. 45–54, with a summary of the manuscript. See also Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 43–4; Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 67 and n. 13; Lendinara, “The Scholastici” (2011), pp. 301–61, at pp. 328–9, questions the attribution to Martin.

<sup>77</sup> Muzerelle, “Martin d’Irlande” (2003), p. 326. See also Dionisotti, “Greek grammars” (1988), pp. 10–15; Berschin, “Greek elements” (1988), p. 89; Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), pp. 67–8. Access to the glossary by Pseudo-Cyrril, London, British Library Harley, Ms 5792, fols. 1<sup>v</sup>–240<sup>v</sup>, bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley\_ms\_5792\_f001v (04/04/2020).

<sup>78</sup> Similar London, British Library Harley, Ms 5792, fols. 241<sup>r</sup>–59<sup>v</sup>. On these short word lists as part of grammars, see Dionisotti, “Greek grammars” (1988), pp. 15–18.

<sup>79</sup> See Muzerelle, “Martin d’Irlande” (2003), pp. 325–45, p. 328, discussing another example.

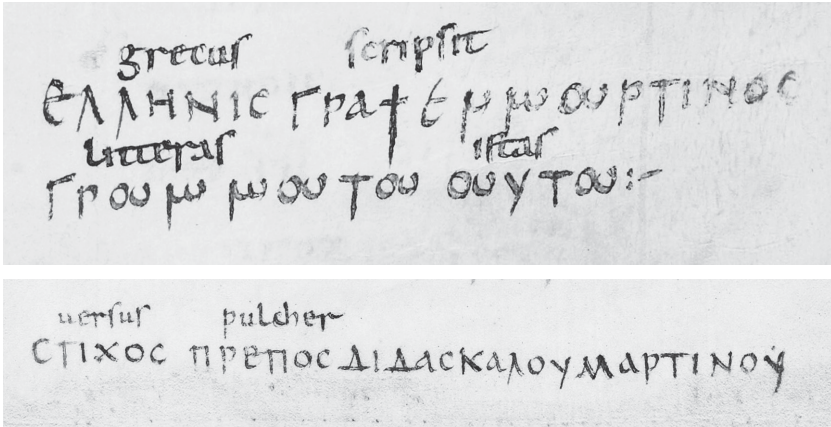


FIGURE 5.4 Autographs of Martin. Extracts from Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Ms 444, fols. 296<sup>v</sup> (above) and fol. 297<sup>v</sup> (below). Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84921401/f597.

the Old and New Testament and mainly extracted from Isidore's *Etymologiae*.<sup>80</sup> It uses Greek letters and short notes, among which the more readable examples include:<sup>81</sup>

- τον βιον: vitam . rem humanam (fol. 116<sup>v</sup>)
- ιδολατρία: idolorum servitus . sive cultura interpretatur (fol. 117<sup>r</sup>)
- επιλληνωναν: in grecus . fortassis (fol. 117<sup>v</sup>)
- οικονομικον οικο: grece . domus latine (fol. 120<sup>r</sup>)
- κακοτεχνια: malam artem (fol. 120<sup>r</sup>)

These lists were never exhaustive and were primarily conceived to explain terms occurring in a specific text. Most of the glossaries available in the Carolingian era were likely composed similarly.

Rare teaching compilations offer more specific insight into early medieval Greek instruction.<sup>82</sup> If Werner Ohnsorge was correct, teaching could imply an oral component with an alternation of dictation and correction.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 3088, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100238563 (08/04/2020). For its relation to the *Etymologiae*, see O'Sullivan, "Isidore" (2020), pp. 554–5.

<sup>81</sup> Greek can be difficult to read in western manuscripts due to occasional confusions between Greek and Roman letters, the mixture of both, and letters being only used by western scribes, see the discussions in Stotz, "Esse velim Graecus" (1993), pp. 435–8, and Herren, "Pelagian fountains" (2015), pp. 70–3.

<sup>82</sup> For a short survey and list of available schoolbooks, the so-called *hermeneumata*, Dionisotti, "Greek grammars" (1988), pp. 26–31.

<sup>83</sup> Similar Ohnsorge, "Otto I. und Byzanz" (1966), p. 225.



A manuscript famously referred to as a school handbook at least marginally alludes to Greek and is related to the same Martin the Irishman from Laon. He compiled and annotated the manuscript. It contains material on Virgil, with his *Life*, some glosses related to his poetry, and a grammar.<sup>84</sup> Another example is the *Reichenau notebook* preserved in a small early ninth-century manuscript. It contains some Greek prepositions at fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, a glossary without recognizable order, at fols. 3<sup>r</sup>–4<sup>v</sup>, and a complete declination of “κίθαρις” at fol. 8<sup>v</sup>. Here, as in most western manuscripts, the Latin “c” is used instead of the Greek “σ” or “ς.”<sup>85</sup> Worth mentioning is also a tenth-century fragment of a Greek translation of Donatus’ fourth-century grammar, seemingly written in Cologne.<sup>86</sup>

This short survey of teaching material raises the question about the potential quality of any instruction that may have been based on the same. Being able to write single Greek letters or words does not yet prove fluency in Greek, not even alphabetical literacy.<sup>87</sup> As Peter Schreiner rightly stressed, it is essential to differentiate between basic knowledge of Greek and actual command of that language, the latter being a requisite for transferring genuinely Greek knowledge and culture (*translatio studii*).<sup>88</sup> As emerges from the above, Greek linguistic proficiency was the exception north of the Alps, where evidence for fluency, as attested for Liutprand of Cremona in the mid-tenth century, is lacking. Michael Herren argued that until the late ninth century, the Irish had a monopoly on the ability to express one’s thoughts in correct Greek, and that even the results from John Scot Eriugena’s efforts in writing Greek poems were far from brilliant.<sup>89</sup> Referring to Sedulius Scottus, Herren concluded that the little Greek he left us does not prove his fluency.<sup>90</sup> The assessment by Denis Muzerelle referring to Martin the Irishman is even more disillusioning: he concluded that while *Laon 444* confirms that Martin was able to deal with questions related to grammar and lexicology, it does not verify that he could write anything more sophisticated

<sup>84</sup> Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Ms 468, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8492139c (09/04/2020), with Greek, e.g., at fol. 5<sup>v</sup>: “arpage [ἀρπαγή] enim grece rapina dicitur [ . . . ] “nam grece georgi agricultores dicuntur.” See Contreni, “Getting to know Virgil” (2016), pp. 26–8. On Greek grammars, see Dionisotti, “Greek grammars” (1988), pp. 21–4; Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), pp. 66–7.

<sup>85</sup> Carinthia, St. Paul Cod. 86b/1 (*Codex Sanblasianus*, Ms. 25.2.31), access hildegard.tristram.de/schulheft (11/04/2020). See also Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), pp. 68–9, and Stotz, “Esse velim Graecus” (1993), p. 435, referring to the use of “c” instead of “ς.”

<sup>86</sup> Aerts, “The knowledge of Greek” (1985), pp. 78–103. Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), p. 209, n. 14, suggests that a Greek rabbi may have lived in Mainz.

<sup>87</sup> See Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 71, with examples from Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 795, f. 19r, access omeqa.qub.ac.uk/files/show/1349 (10/04/2020), to acquire such basic knowledge.

<sup>88</sup> Schreiner, “*Translatio studii*” (2018), p. 142.

<sup>89</sup> Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), pp. 74–5.

<sup>90</sup> Herren, “Sedulius Scottus” (2015), particular p. 532.



than the marginal notes preserved there.<sup>91</sup> Thus, knowledge of Greek among the Carolingian scholars was rather limited, even among the most knowledgeable literati.

## Greek Language Skills

Herren raised the important question, “what precisely is meant by the knowledge of Greek?”<sup>92</sup> Was is possible to teach and learn Greek with the mentioned tools so that a pupil would, in the end, be able to read Greek literature or speak fluently? Anna Carlotta Dionisotti convincingly argued that the available teaching material is insufficient, even to attain fluency comparable to that of John Scot Eriugena: the Greek grammars were insufficient and the word lists incomplete, making her wonder whether any more sophisticated material had been available that is now lost.<sup>93</sup> In her study on the St. Gall manuscripts, Kaczynski noticed that only a few among the scribes writing Greek actually mastered the language, a finding she also explained by the lack of elementary grammars and the few resources available.<sup>94</sup>

It is conceivable that scholars like John Scot Eriugena were extraordinarily talented with languages and that they essentially learned Greek as autodidacts. In his remote monastery of Jarrow, the Venerable Bede attained some remarkable Greek language skills<sup>95</sup> by resorting to the material available to him, an example showing what a talented person can achieve with minimal guidance. Apart from the rare bilingual material, Greek manuscripts with interlinear Latin translations were helpful tools for such studies. They are regularly found in Irish manuscripts, for example in a beautifully decorated Gospel written around 850 by Irish monks from the north Italian monastery of Bobbio.<sup>96</sup> Rare visits by Greek legates, monks, or merchants, such as those discussed in chapter III, would have offered opportunities for such individuals to improve their language through oral practice. This means that although most western scholars must have struggled to learn Greek using the deficient teaching material, the occasional presence of

<sup>91</sup> Muzerelle, “Martin d’Irlande” (2003), p. 343. Cf. the assessment in Dionisotti, “Greek grammars” (1988), p. 48.

<sup>92</sup> Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 70.

<sup>93</sup> Dionisotti, “Greek grammars” (1988), pp. 3–4, 8–9, 24–6, and 30. Similar Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), p. 45; Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 46–7; Berschin, “Greek elements” (1988), p. 90.

<sup>94</sup> Kaczynski, *Greek* (1988), p. 115–16. See also Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2012), pp. 60–1.

<sup>95</sup> Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 78.

<sup>96</sup> St. Gallen, Cod. Sang. 48, pp. 19–395, access e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0048 (13/04/2020). See also Berschin, “Greek elements” (1988), pp. 91–2.

Greek natives in Frankish territory<sup>97</sup> might have allowed exceptionally talented individuals to attain a language ability close to that of John Scot Eriugena.

Peter Schreiner rightly stressed the significance any Byzantine input must have had as a stimulator of Greek learning,<sup>98</sup> and Herren pointed to evidence for some familiarity with contemporary popular Greek language in Byzantine loan words found in western manuscripts. Vulgar Greek is found in manuscripts attesting to the transition of *oi* to *i*, *yu* to *μ*(*μ*), and *ic* and *iv* to *i*, the reduction of *-ioç* and *-ioν* to *-ic* and *-iv* to *-i*—evidence that is largely unknown from the Byzantine sources, where conservative orthography impeded that changes in pronunciation were noted in writing. The evidence discussed by Herren suggests that these Greek texts were recorded based on oral sources or reading,<sup>99</sup> a finding supplemented by glosses that were seemingly noted phonetically from hearing contemporary Greek.<sup>100</sup> Another study by Herren shows that some western scribes adopted Byzantine practices like replacing *eta* with *iota* to adapt to contemporary pronunciation.<sup>101</sup> As seen in section III.3, there is isolated evidence for Byzantines in Reichenau, whose visits may have offered some introduction to Byzantine vernacular and writing practice. Although there is no reason to assume that such visits were a frequent phenomenon, the linguistic evidence from the manuscripts thus confirms that they did take place and that knowledge of Greek could also emerge or be improved during such occasional opportunities to speak with native speakers.

### Knowledge from Greek Manuscripts

So why did scholars learn Greek, and what texts were they interested in reading? Greek was undoubtedly useful for diplomatic purposes. Such exchanges, however, were only of interest to the court. The Greek texts copied in western manuscripts suggest that outside of the Carolingian centers of power, Greek scripts and language were mainly studied to read religious texts. Secular writings were the exception, and pre-Christian or contemporary Byzantine works were virtually nonexistent in western libraries.<sup>102</sup> Rare evidence for now lost

<sup>97</sup> See above and McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), pp. 425–6. Cf. Bischoff, “Das griechische Element” (1951), p. 48.

<sup>98</sup> Schreiner, “Die Begegnung” (2013), pp. 16 and 19.

<sup>99</sup> Herren, “Evidence for ‘vulgar Greek’” (1988), pp. 57–84, in particular pp. 67–71.

<sup>100</sup> See Laistner, “Notes on Greek” (1923), pp. 421–56, at p. 426, with examples. Herren, “Sedulius Scottus” (2015), p. 525, also discovered similar spellings in the psalter of Sedulius Scottus, Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, 8407, access [gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b550008210](http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b550008210) (31/05/2021). Comparable evidence in Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2012), pp. 60–1.

<sup>101</sup> Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 73; Herren, “Sedulius Scottus” (2015), p. 524. See also Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2012), pp. 59–60.

<sup>102</sup> Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 78; Ronconi, “*Graecae linguae*” (2016).

Byzantine material is contained in a manuscript probably from the monastery of Corvey and written in a sixth-century Alexandrine majuscule. If Peter Schreiner is correct, it goes back to Byzantine material that had become available at the monastery, where it served as a guide to writing Greek script.<sup>103</sup>

The exceptionally well preserved documents from the St. Gall monastery provide an excellent sample offering an impression of the material that could be available at a Carolingian monastery. Kaczynski showed that the library of the St. Gall monastery only contained little evidence of direct contact with or manuscripts from the Byzantine empire. The large majority were religious and late antique texts. It supports that the early medieval interest in Greek scripture was related to the Holy Scripture, Patristic literature, exegesis, and liturgy.<sup>104</sup> Being able to read Greek allowed reading the original version of the New Testament, discover authors and works prone to contain new insights into current questions, and thus acquire new knowledge.<sup>105</sup>

As Greek texts were only accessible to a small audience, important works were translated into Latin. The current state of research on the early medieval dissemination and usage of these Latin translations of Greek originals does not allow making any substantial estimations about their accessibility, the adoption of the knowledge they carried, and whether they mainly existed as singular copies stored in a particular library.<sup>106</sup> The majority of these translations and bilingual manuscripts contained biblical texts or psalters.<sup>107</sup> An exception was the Latin translation of the Greek *Life of Basil the Great* († 379) by Euphemius.<sup>108</sup> The theological work of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite was translated soon after it had been gifted to Louis the Pious in 827. The first translation into Latin was conducted by the abbot Hilduin of St. Denis until 835, maybe with the help of unknown Greek natives or western scholars with some good knowledge of Greek.<sup>109</sup> The resulting conversion was verbatim; some sections were almost unintelligible.<sup>110</sup> One generation later, a second and significantly better translation was undertaken by John Scot Eriugena.<sup>111</sup> It was not the only translation by

<sup>103</sup> Schreiner, "Die Begegnung" (2013), p. 18, with figs. 12a–b, discussing *Cusanus* 10, later in the possession of Nicholas of Cusa.

<sup>104</sup> Similar Gastgeber, "The Aristotle of Pippin III" (2018), pp. 60–1. On Greek in Frankish liturgy, see Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 33–6.

<sup>105</sup> Similar Contreni, "The Carolingian renaissance" (2006), pp. 709–57, at p. 732. See also Herren, "Pelagian fountains" (2015), pp. 69–70.

<sup>106</sup> Schreiner, "Byzanz" (2015), p. 19.

<sup>107</sup> Berschin, "Greek elements" (1988), pp. 91–2.

<sup>108</sup> Nesselrath, "Der heidnische Rhetor" (2009), pp. 22–3.

<sup>109</sup> McCormick, "Byzantium's role in the formation" (1987), pp. 219–20.

<sup>110</sup> Théry, *Études Dionysiennes* (1932), pp. 5–22; Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 144–5, challenging Théry's thesis that Greek natives were involved in this translation. See also *Epist. var. i. a. m. Caroli* 20 and 21, pp. 327–37; Atkinson, "Zur Entstehung" (1982), p. 144, with further evidence.

<sup>111</sup> *Epist. var. u. a. m. Karoli II* 14, pp. 158–62.

John, who also worked on the theological scriptures of Maximus the Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>112</sup> In 875, Anastasius Bibliothecarius stressed in a letter to Charles the Bald that even John's translation of the Areopagite was not without fault.<sup>113</sup> Apart from the earlier mentioned translation of the *Apocalypse* of pseudo-Methodius, the translations of the Areopagite are the sole known cases when, outside of Italy, an early medieval western scholar translated an entire Greek manuscript that was not a copy of the Bible. Greek had different roles in the Frankish world. Its prime function was to provide access to original religious scripture, theological scholarship, liturgy, and religious chant. Communication with the Byzantine east was mainly important at the court, where Greek was also taught orally by native Greek speakers. The fact that teaching Greek at the monasteries must have been mainly based on written material may have entailed that, outside of the political centers, Greek was not perceived as the language of the Byzantine world, but that of the Church and Patristic scripture. Through its significance as a vehicle to Christian scripture and the Bible, Greek may have been conceived by the Franks mainly as part of their own western Christian religious tradition. In the Byzantine world, things were notably different regarding Latin, as we shall see in the next section.

## 2. The "Language of the Romans"

In his *Historia syntomos*, the patriarch Nikephoros I explicitly defined the Latin designations *comes excubitorum* and *candidatus* as stemming from the language of the "Romans."<sup>114</sup> A century later, the historian Genesios associated the term *mensurator* with the "Roman language" ("φωνή Ῥωμαίων").<sup>115</sup> These are interesting statements. Although Latin was the language of Byzantine administration and communication with the Frankish west, it had gradually ceased to be used in the empire from the early seventh century, which means that at the time of the above statements, Latin had long ceased to be a common vernacular among the inhabitants of the Byzantine world. The following discussion of the role and significance of Latin in the east will open out into an interpretation of the above statements in their context.

<sup>112</sup> Herren, "Pelagian fountains" (2015), p. 78. See also Jeaneau, "Jean Scot" (1988), pp. 257–76.

<sup>113</sup> Anastasius, *Epist.* 13, pp. 430–4.

<sup>114</sup> Nikephoros, *Hist.* 4, p. 42: "τὴν δὲ ἀξίαν ἦν κανδιδάτον [*candidatus*] Ῥωμαίοις κικλήσκουν ἔθος"; *ibid.* 32, p. 84: "καὶ ἀξία αὐτὸν ἐτίμησαν ἦν Ῥωμαῖοι καλοῦσι κόμητα ἐξσκουβιτόρων [*comes excubitorum*]."

<sup>115</sup> See Genesios, *Regum libri* 4.37, p. 88: "μηνσουράτωρα [*mensurator*], ὅπερ φωνὴ Ῥωμαίων οὕτω προσαγορεύεται."

## Latin in the Byzantine World

The abandonment of Latin in the Byzantine east was a long-term process. Justinian's *Novellae*, published in the sixth century to complement his *Codex*, were already mainly written in Greek,<sup>116</sup> although some contained paraphrases with a peculiar mix of Latin terminology and Greek language.<sup>117</sup> Until the earlier seventh century, Greek had superseded Latin to a significant extent. The abandonment process was supported by the gradual loss of the remaining Latin provinces, for example, as a result of enemy conquests of most territories inhabited by people who did not speak Greek. Although other languages, like Armenian, remained in use in the east, the mentioned events significantly reduced the polyglot character of the Byzantine world, which until then had encompassed large territories with native Coptic, Syro-Aramaic, Hebrew, and Georgian populations.<sup>118</sup> Consequently, the Byzantine empire had become more homogeneous than the Frankish world, which always comprised populations identifying with their respective Germanic, Celtic, and Roman languages,<sup>119</sup> even though Latin was used in diplomatic and ecclesiastical contexts and for writing. Transliterations of Latin text into Greek letters, comparable to the reversed versions attested in the Frankish monastic manuscripts, were produced from the late sixth century, attesting to the gradual disappearance of Latin and the simultaneous need or the desire to read Latin texts among those unfamiliar with the Latin script.<sup>120</sup> From the time of Heraclius, the eastern emperor was called *βασιλεύς*, as we have seen, and he was acclaimed in Greek.<sup>121</sup> Shortly later, in the 640s, the first Greek inscriptions were printed on copper coins.<sup>122</sup>

Latin had not disappeared from the east.<sup>123</sup> Pope Nicholas I († 867), in a letter addressed in 865 to Michael III († 867), mentioned that Latin was still in use in the imperial palace in the context of law and administration, and inside the churches of Constantinople. He added that the *Epistles* and the *Gospels* were first read out in Latin during mass, i.e., before the Greek version.<sup>124</sup> Latin also retained a rather peculiar place in imperial diplomas: in the so-called *Pertinenzzeile*—a

<sup>116</sup> Critical discussion in Kaiser, "Die Zweisprachigkeit" (2012), pp. 392–474. See also Grünbart, "Die Fortdauer Roms" (2012), p. 207; Koder, "Sprache" (2012), pp. 12–13.

<sup>117</sup> See the example from the paraphrase of Theophilus cited in Schreiner, "Latinité cachée" (2019), pp. 448–9.

<sup>118</sup> See Koder, "Remarks" (2018), p. 112, although I do not agree that "[b]ecause of multilingualism, the process of linguistic identification was in Byzantium more complex than in the majority of early medieval nations and politically organized tribes." Similar Koder, "Sprache" (2012), pp. 7–8.

<sup>119</sup> Against Koder, "Sprache" (2012), pp. 7–8; Koder, "Remarks" (2018), p. 112.

<sup>120</sup> Schreiner, "Latinité cachée" (2019), pp. 449–50.

<sup>121</sup> Classen, "Der erste Römerzug" (1983), p. 40.

<sup>122</sup> Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), pp. 131–2; Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), p. 115. On a short re-appearance of Latin script on copper coins in the tenth century, see Koder, "Remarks" (2018), p. 114.

<sup>123</sup> See the comprehensive study by Schreiner, "Latinité cachée" (2019).

<sup>124</sup> Nicholas I, *Epist.* 88, pp. 459–60. *LP, Vita Vitalianii*, 15, mentions Latin mass celebrated during the third Council of Constantinople of 680. See also Kaczynski, *Greek* (1988), p. 111.

stereotyped address directed to the potential readers—Greek terms were often rendered in a mix of Latin and Greek letters.<sup>125</sup> Latin acclamations are attested until the later seventh century,<sup>126</sup> and some rare examples are still known from the tenth century.<sup>127</sup> Numismatic inscriptions, which were mainly Greek from the seventh century, even maintained a mixture of Greek and Latin script until the late eleventh century.<sup>128</sup> And although new legal texts were entirely written in Greek from the ninth century, the Latin codifications continued to be copied, and bilingual glosses explaining legal vocabulary confirm that specialists still resorted to these texts.<sup>129</sup> Latin titles and commands in a military context,<sup>130</sup> and Latin traditions like signing a document with *LEGIMUS*, were maintained throughout the early medieval period.<sup>131</sup>

Absence of Latin is only attested from the late tenth century. Latin inscriptions were abandoned on silver and gold coins, which had increasingly included Greek letters from the late eighth century.<sup>132</sup> The Byzantine emperors now signed their diplomas in Greek,<sup>133</sup> the last evidence for Latin *laudes* dating as late as the eleventh century.<sup>134</sup> It is worth noting that Constantine VII, in the tenth century, was able to point his finger to the moment this process had started to become palpable, as Johannes Koder already noted: in the preface to his *De thematibus*, Constantine correctly referred to the time of Heraclius as the moment since when the Byzantines had disposed of the language they had inherited from their ancients.<sup>135</sup>

## Interpreters and Translations

When, in the 750s, the Franks officially resumed diplomatic contacts with the Byzantine world, Greek had become essential to communicate with the

<sup>125</sup> Schreiner, “Die Begegnung” (2013), p. 23, with some examples at fig. 18. See also Schreiner, “Latinité cachée” (2019), p. 458. On the Byzantine *Pertinenzformel*, see Müller, “Die sichtbare Macht” (2019), pp. 188–9.

<sup>126</sup> *LP, Vita Agatho*, c. 15.

<sup>127</sup> See Basic, “Imperium” (2018), pp. 181–2, referring to Constantine, *De ceremoniis*.

<sup>128</sup> Schreiner, “Die Begegnung” (2013), p. 23, with some examples in fig. 20; Schreiner, “Latinité cachée” (2019), p. 460, with fig. 11.

<sup>129</sup> Schreiner, “Latinité cachée” (2019), pp. 449–51.

<sup>130</sup> Dölger, “Rom” (1937), p. 6. On this (p. 130) and Latin influence on Byzantine Greek, see Kahane/Kahane, “The western impact on Byzantium” (1982), pp. 128–36.

<sup>131</sup> Schreiner, “Latinité cachée” (2019), p. 458, with more examples.

<sup>132</sup> Brandi, “Der byzantinische Kaiserbrief” (1908), pp. 35–6, with examples; Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), p. 116. A comparable adherence to Latin script is perceptible on seals, Dölger, “Rom” (1937), p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> Brandi, “Der byzantinische Kaiserbrief” (1908), pp. 41–2, with examples.

<sup>134</sup> Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae* (1946), p. 27, n. 44, with further evidence. See also *LP, Vita Vitalianii*, c. 15, *LP, Vita Agatho*, c. 15, and Schreiner, “Der Liber Pontificalis” (1998), p. 39, on Latin *laudes* sung in the seventh century Hagia Sophia.

<sup>135</sup> Constantine, *De thematibus, praef.*, p. 60: “καὶ τῆς πατριῶν καὶ Ῥωμαϊκὴν γλῶτταν ἀποβαλόντες”; Koder, “Byzanz als Mythos” (2001), p. 249; Koder, “Remarks” (2018), p. 114. Cf. Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), p. 141.

Byzantines.<sup>136</sup> Language guides, among which some are preserved that include ready-to-use basic phrases designed to help cope with everyday situations, could assist Franks with basic Greek knowledge when traveling to Constantinople. Bernhard Bischoff noted that they rendered Greek words in their vernacular form, which confirms that they were meant to ease oral communication with Greek native speakers.<sup>137</sup> Once in Constantinople, these envoys were at least occasionally assisted by interpreters.<sup>138</sup> Interpreters may also have accompanied Byzantine envoys during their outbound diplomatic missions. The letters of Leo of Synada, the only correspondence preserved from a contemporary Byzantine ambassador, at least suggest that Byzantine legates were not more acquainted with Latin or western vernacular than the rest of their compatriots.<sup>139</sup>

Translation work had become essential in the east to deal with the Latin heritage and to communicate with the west. Latin language proficiency had already decreased in the sixth century. Pope Gregory the Great complained in 597 that in Constantinople, Greek translations of letters dictated in Latin merely rendered the words of the original but failed to render its actual meaning.<sup>140</sup> From the seventh century, diplomatic letters exchanged with the west were either sent in two versions—one original and one translation—<sup>141</sup> or the original was translated by the receiver. At the Byzantine court, such translations were conducted by the Bureau of the Logothete of the Course (“λογοθέτης τοῦ δρόμου”),<sup>142</sup> an office that may have been less affected by the decaying knowledge of Latin than the more freely available translation services in Constantinople.

The Frankish court probably also executed translations of diplomatic pieces. This is suggested in Charlemagne’s letter of 813 to Michael I, who, when referring to a written agreement expected from Constantinople, stressed that “if the written agreement which we have produced and sent to you pleases your beloved and glorious brotherhood, you should deign to give one like it—written in Greek and confirmed in the fashion which we have spoken of

<sup>136</sup> Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), pp. 11–12; Mango, “La culture grecque” (1973), pp. 693–4.

<sup>137</sup> Published by Bischoff, in “Vulgärgriechisches-lateinisches Glossar” (1984), pp. 248–9. See also Herren, “Pelagian fountains” (2015), p. 68, with three examples.

<sup>138</sup> Explicit in Liutprand, *Antapodosis* 5; Liutprand, *Legatio* 37, 46, and 54, mentioning the interpreter Evodisius. See also Srutwa, “The exile and death” (1993), p. 205; Drocourt, “Une diplomatie sans langue?” (2017), pp. 25–61. On bilingualism in diplomatic letter exchange, see Gastgeber, “The Aristotle of Pippin III” (2018), p. 56.

<sup>139</sup> Ševčenko, “Byzanz und der Westen” (1993), pp. 7–9 and 10, noting that the only potential western word in Leon’s letters was *κάρακος* for “prison.”

<sup>140</sup> Gregory, *Epist.* 7.27, p. 474. Similar Anastasii, *Epist.* 5, p. 411. See also Koder, “Sprache” (2012), p. 13.

<sup>141</sup> See the example in Brandi, “Der byzantinische Kaiserbrief” (1908), p. 42.

<sup>142</sup> Gastgeber, “Die lateinische Übersetzungsabteilung” (2005), pp. 105–6. See also Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), pp. 24–5; Shepard, “Messages” (2000), pp. 378–81. Cf. Basić, “Imperium” (2018), pp. 182–3.



above—to our said *missi*.”<sup>143</sup> Although the Franks must have been aware that the Byzantine court could provide a Latin version of the agreement, Charlemagne seemingly mistrusted the Byzantine performance. This is not the only evidence for contemporaries’ distrust in translations.<sup>144</sup> Pope Paul I, in his letter to King Pippin, around 765, warned of deficient renderings,<sup>145</sup> and the correspondence of Pope Nicholas I with Constantinople confirms that the quality of the Byzantine translations could be insufficient and that misinterpretations were always possible. The pope, therefore, alerted his addressee of wrong interpretations by adding that any potential barbarism would be the fault of the interpreters and their tendency to produce word-by-word translations.<sup>146</sup> In the mentioned case referring to Charlemagne, it appears that he preferred trusting in the limited Greek language skills of his Frankish scholars to counting on Byzantine competence and goodwill in providing an accurate Latin translation. As we shall see in section VII.3, the Franks already had experience with unreliable translations from Greek into Latin in the context of the iconoclast controversy when they had to rely on a Latin version of the acts of the Council of Nicaea of 787.

### Latin Language and Roman Identity

A look at the role of the Latin language in the east offers some insight into Byzantine self-perceptions. Even though Latin was gradually abandoned in the east, people remained aware of its significance as the historic mother tongue of the ancient Romans, which had remained a constitutive element of Roman imperial identity. Two ninth-century epistolary debates discussed the inconsistencies inherent in the Byzantine relationship to the Latin language. The first is contained in Louis II’s letter of 871. He teased Basil by stressing that the word *riga* would not be barbarian, as *rex* would be Latin and that the only accurate translation would be βασιλεύς. More significant is Louis’ assertion that the Byzantine rulers would have ceased to be Roman emperors when they abandoned the Latin language. The twofold reference to *lingua* confirms the significance Louis attributed to language for his argumentation.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>143</sup> *Epist. var. Carolo Magno* 37, p. 556: “Quapropter rogamus dilectam et gloriosam fraternitatem tuam, ut, si tibi illa, quam nos fecimus et tibi misimus, pacti descriptio placuerit, similem illi—Grecis litteris conscriptam et eo modo, quo superius diximus, roboratam—missis nostris.” Trans. King p. 329.

<sup>144</sup> Mistrust is also attested in Anastasii, *Epist.* 5; *LP, Vita Hadrianii II*, 42–3. See also Wallach, “The Greek and Latin Versions” (1966), pp. 116–17.

<sup>145</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 36, p. 546. See Mango, “La culture grecque” (1973), p. 692. Another example in Anastasii, *Epist.* 5. Contemporaries were aware of the difficulties related to translation work, see Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.10, p. 66.

<sup>146</sup> Nicholas I, *Epist.* 88, p. 459. See Herbers, “Papst Nikolaus I.” (1993), pp. 64–5.

<sup>147</sup> Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 390–1.



FIGURE 5.5 Redrawing of follis with bust of Michael III, Constantinople, 866/7. Inscription: “mIhAEL IMPERAT” (obv.) and “bASILIVS REX? (rev.).

The idea that Latin would be a constitutive feature of Roman *imperium* is also III inherent to a letter Pope Nicholas I addressed in 865 to the emperor Michael. As Evangelos K. Chrysos already noted, the pope must have been annoyed by the emperor’s characterization of the Latin language as “barbaric and Scytian” given that the author repeated it six times in his response.<sup>148</sup> The similarity of argumentation between this and Louis II’s letter probably goes back to the fact that Anastasius Bibliothecarius authored both epistles. Like Louis II, Nicholas refuted Michael’s prior assertion that Latin would be a barbarian tongue by stressing that God had been praised in Latin and that the only reason his addressee could have called it “barbarian” would be his own ignorance. Nicholas concluded, “You should consider how ridiculous it is that you call yourself emperor of the Romans and [this] although you do not know the Roman language.”<sup>149</sup> A potential Byzantine reaction to this exchange is attested by numismatic evidence. Around a year after this letter, Michael III issued a copper follis with the inscriptions “MIHAEL IMPERAT(or)” and “BASILIVS REX” (see Figure 5.5),<sup>150</sup> which appears to refer, teasingly, to that same discussion. Another potential reaction is a project initiated under Basil I to recompile Roman law and translate Latin survivals into Greek with the ambition to preserve the text’s meaning.<sup>151</sup>

The two letters basically reflect a papal view. Although there is no similar evidence from north of the Alps, a Frankish argumentation would probably have been fairly similar. The relation between Latin and Roman identity, in general, is attested, for example, in an only partly comprehensible equivalence in *Laon 444*

<sup>148</sup> Chrysos, “A war of languages?” (2019), p. 262.

<sup>149</sup> Nicholas I, *Epist.* 88, p. 459: “vos considerate, quia ridiculum est vos appellare Romanorum imperatores et tamen linguam non nosse Romanam.” See also Herbers, “Papst Nikolaus I.” (1993), pp. 62–4; Chrysos, “A war of languages?” (2019).

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Grierson, “The Carolingian empire” (1981), p. 896.

<sup>151</sup> See Fögen, “Reanimation” (1998).

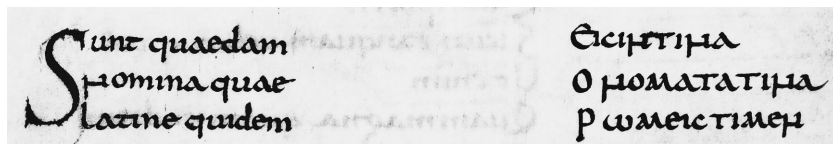


FIGURE 5.6 Extract from Laon 444, fol. 255<sup>v</sup>. Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84921401/f51.

(fol. 255<sup>v</sup>): “latine quidem—Ρωμεις τιμεη” (see Figure 5.6).<sup>152</sup> Unimpressed by the epistolary disputes just discussed, the Byzantines maintained the relation between Latin and eastern Roman imperial identity, which also belonged to eastern Roman history and culture. It was neither abandoned after the formation of a Frankish empire nor with the 812 Treaty of Aachen.

Byzantine evidence, like that from the ninth century quoted at the beginning of section V.2, confirms that Latin was conceived as a constitutive feature of the eastern Roman *imperium*. The seventh-century chronicle of Theophylactos Simocatta contains several instances where Latin terms were related to the “language of the Romans.” For example, Theophylactos explained that the Romans would call the Hebdomon *campus*,<sup>153</sup> and he added that the Latin designations of offices like that of the *quaestor* or *curopalatus* (“κουροπαλάτης”) would derive from the “language of the Romans” (“Ρωμαίοι φωνῇ”).<sup>154</sup> The *Chronicon Paschale*, on several occasions, mentions Macedonian month names and completes them with the respective Latin name in Greek translation (ex. March: “μάρτιος”) by adding that this would be common “among Romans” (“κατὰ Ρωμαίους”).<sup>155</sup> Referring to the victory of Constantine the Great against Maxentius, the same chronicle mentions a commemorative inscription in Rome that would have been written in the “language of the Romans.” Although the text that follows in the *Chronicle* is reproduced in Greek, the context of its erection leaves no doubt that the original inscription was in Latin.<sup>156</sup>

The consistent identification of Latin terms and designations as belonging to the “language of the Romans” disproves that “Greek was now considered as the language of the Romans,” as scholars like Ioannis Stouraitis claim.<sup>157</sup> In the

<sup>152</sup> Similar Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Ms 444 fols. 259<sup>r</sup> and 260<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>153</sup> Theophylactos, *Hist.* 8.12.8, p. 307: “Εβδόμω, ὃν Κάμπον Ρωμαῖοι κατονομάξουσιν”

<sup>154</sup> Theophylactos, *Hist.* 1.1, p. 39: “τοῦτον ἐπιχωρίῳ Ρωμαῖοι φωνῇ ἀποκαλοῦσι κναίστορα”; 3.18, p. 148: “ὃν δὴ κουροπαλάτην Ρωμαῖοι κατονομάξουσιν.” Same Theophylactos, *Hist.* 4.15, in reference to *praepositus*.

<sup>155</sup> *Chronicon Paschale*, olymp. 271, p. 515: “λέγοιτο δ’ ἂν οὗτος μάρτιος κατὰ Ρωμαίους.” Similar *ibid.* olymp. 326, 327, 328, 335, 345, 346, 346, 347, 348.

<sup>156</sup> *Chronicon Paschale*, olymp. 273, p. 522.

<sup>157</sup> Stouraitis, “Byzantine Romanness” (2018), p. 129. Similar Koder, “Sprache” (2012), p. 12; Koder, “Remarks” (2018), p. 117. A notable exception is in the twelfth-century poem *Digenis Akritas*, 1.113–115: “ὁ ἀμυρᾶς [...] ἀκριβῶς γὰρ ἠπίστατο τὴν τῶν Ρωμαίων.” ed. Trapp, 84, cited after Koder,

vast majority where the sources relate to Latin, they do not refer to the “Latin language” but to the “language of the Romans.” This is remarkable as, except for the inscription mentioned in the *Chronicon Paschale*, these mentions refer neither to Rome’s inhabitants nor to the Latin west. The “Romans” these sources referred to were the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the Byzantine empire. The fact that comparable statements referring to genuinely Greek terminology are lacking refutes the thesis that the authors erroneously assumed that the mentioned Latin terms had a Greek origin. The intentionality behind the Byzantine definition of Latin as “language of the Romans” is further confirmed by the fact that the Greek terminology would have easily allowed distinguishing between Greek, as the “language of the Romans,” and Latin. The work of Procopius explains, for example, that the natives had chosen the name of the fort “Septem” (modern Ceuta, north-west Africa) in consideration of its seven hills and that, in so doing, they had referred to the meaning of its name in the “Latin tongue” (“Λατίνων φωνῇ”).<sup>158</sup>

The above terminology, thus, was not chosen at random. These characterizations of Latin as the “language of the Romans” imply a Byzantine identification with the Roman imperial past. Obviously, the significance of the Latin language had not been forgotten until the tenth century, a relevance that was treasured by the occasional use of that same language in the context of imperial features like coinage, the army, and a selection of imperial rituals.<sup>159</sup> The body of evidence discussed in this section thus confirms that, from a Byzantine perspective, Latin had remained inextricably linked to imperial Romanness beyond the seventh century and, despite Basil’s claim in his lost letter to Louis II, it was an important feature of Byzantine “Roman” and imperial identity.<sup>160</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

This part of the investigation rounds up the results from chapter III on the Franco–Byzantine exchanges and the presence of “Greeks” in the west. It confirms that Greek was limited mainly to the Carolingian court and a selection of monasteries, particularly Reichenau and St. Gall. The evidence attesting to the occasional presence of Greek native speakers in these monasteries, discussed

“Remarks” (2018), p. 117. See also Constantine, *De cerimoniis* 1.94, p. 431: “ὁ μὲν δῆμος Ἑλληνιστὶ [. . .] οἱ δὲ στρατιῶμαι Ῥωμαῖστί”; the discussion of *πάτριος γωνή*, referring to Latin, in Koder, “Griechische Identitäten” (2003), p. 304; Stouraitis, “Roman identity” (2014), p. 217.

<sup>158</sup> Procopius, *Vandal* 3.1.6, p. 4: “Τὸ γὰρ σέπτον ἐπὶ τῇ Λατίνων φωνῇ δύματαί.” See also Constantine, *De cerimoniis* 2.40, p. 639: “ἃ Λατίνων φωνῇ.”

<sup>159</sup> Similar Koder, “Remarks” (2018), p. 114. Against Dölger, “Rom” (1937), p. 9.

<sup>160</sup> Similar Schreiner, “Die Begegnung” (2013), p. 23; Schreiner, “Latinité cachée” (2019), p. 458.

in section III.3, is backed by occasional Byzantine loan words and indications of eastern writing practices discovered in the manuscripts pointing to some acquaintance with vernacular Greek. Any prolonged visit of a Greek native speaker, as attested for Symeon in Reichenau, could produce an intense exchange with the monastic community on Byzantine language and culture. However, the majority of those willing to learn Greek must have resorted to the largely insufficient written teaching material, an impression backed by the limited Greek language proficiency, even among the most erudite. This is confirmed by the fact that each time a western bride was engaged to a Byzantine prince, a native Greek speaker was sent to teach her. The virtual inexistence of contemporary Byzantine scripture in the monasteries confirms that the prime intention behind learning Greek outside the court was to access Patristic and other—mostly religious—Greek scholarship. This otherwise inaccessible knowledge belonged to an heritage shared among the Byzantines and the Franks.<sup>161</sup> The majority of the Frankish population could only access related texts through translations or by listening to prayers and liturgy, which may have been just as beautiful as they were unintelligible. Thus, lack of language proficiency was a significant issue that must have contributed to the alienation between east and west.

The court was the only place where spoken Greek could be encountered more regularly. Here it was taught mainly orally by, and in exchange with, native Greek speakers to some members of the ruling family and a selection of scholars. However, Greek remained a feature of erudition and prestige even at the court. This is why it seems unlikely that anyone fit to hold a candle to John Scot Eriugena, the only western scholar at the Carolingian court able to deal with Greek more subtly, existed without leaving any record in the sources. The practice emerging from any exchange with Greek native speakers during the intense negotiations of the late 790s and until 812 may explain Charlemagne's confidence in the Frankish abilities to deal with a Greek treaty.

While the evidence only attests to the presence of Greek in the monasteries and the court, this does not need to be a truthful reflection of reality. Anyone else who, for whatever reason, was prone to regularly come into contact with Greek native speakers, be it due to connections to the court, trade, or proximity to urban centers, like long-distance merchants, may have been able to use conversational Greek.<sup>162</sup> Other than the court and monasteries, where the bulk of the sources has been written, these groups did not leave any relevant testimonies offering more information about them. Still, any more significant language skills must have been limited to individual autodidacts, and there is no reason to

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Mango, "Discontinuity" (1981), p. 57.

<sup>162</sup> The merchant Liutefred from Mainz in 949 was sent by Otto I to Constantinople, probably because he knew some Greek, see Liutprand, *Antapodosis* 6.4, p. 146. Similar Wickham, "Ninth-century Byzantium" (1998), p. 250.

doubt that Greek remained uncommon in the Frankish world. The latter was and remained genuinely Latin—alongside the influence of its regional Germanic and other vernacular languages. Although there is some evidence for the identification with the ancient Greek past and heritage, as seen in chapter IV, the Franks did not identify with the Greek language, not even as a sacred speech. There was no direct connection between Greek and Frankish identity, whereas the Franks easily identified with Latin and its Roman heritage.

More unexpected is that the Byzantines continued to identify with Latin after it was widely supplanted by Greek. Contemporaries must have been aware of—and disturbed by—the discrepancy between their genuinely Roman empire and the role allocated to its traditional Latin language. This confirms that Greek never supplanted Latin in the east as the language of the empire, whose Romanness remained tied to Latin. This disaccord was never amended. While the west thus mainly valued Greek for reasons unrelated to the Byzantine east, the abandonment of Latin was painful for the Byzantines from an ideological point of view. It was the more bitter when western monarchs like Louis II put their finger in the open wound by arguing that imperial Romanness would require knowledge of Latin, a critique promptly disavowed in the face of the Frankish rivals.

# VI

## Identity and Distinction

Early medieval identities reflect the complexity of the societies they emerged from, their relations to other polities, and the significance and role attributed to their heritage. This chapter uses this pivotal topic, already touched on from various perspectives by the previous chapters, to delve further into the Frankish relations to the Roman world and its past. Related research flourished in the early twenty-first century, showing, as scholars around Walter Pohl demonstrated, that individuals never adhered to a single defining feature and that, as in modern societies, they always adopted different identities—references that were and still are prone to change over time.<sup>1</sup> The inhabitants of the Byzantine empire, for example, could identify themselves not only with the empire but also with their native region, theme, city or village, and culture.<sup>2</sup> Thus the citizens of Constantinople, the eastern “Romans” par excellence, were occasionally designated as “Byzantines” (*Βυζάντιοι*), a term reflecting a regional identification referring to the capital’s first historic name.<sup>3</sup> Still, Roman and Frankish identities have been largely studied as two distinct features.

This chapter studies the mutual perceptions of Romanness related to the Byzantines and the Franks as reflected by relevant designations used to define the self and the other. Claudia Rapp suggested that any investigation of past identities has to choose from two options: taking the sources at face value by focusing on the perception of those whose identity is studied or by taking the “role of the objective observer,” which implies the question “whether the historian should place himself or herself ‘inside’ a specific a society of the past or whether to “assume a position ‘after’ it.”<sup>4</sup> As any attempt to define or understand early medieval identities and how they related to each other from a strictly modern perspective would entail assessing a dynamic process of change and continuous redefinition by resorting to anachronistic models, this chapter continues to focus on the medieval perspective. The following sections argue that the relation between the Byzantine east and the Frankish west, and the role attributed

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Pohl, “Romanness” (2014). See also Steinacher, “Zur Identitätsbildung” (2012), pp. 73–124.

<sup>2</sup> Koder, “Griechische Identitäten” (2003), p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Theophylactos, *Hist.* 8.5.11, p. 291. Similar *ibid.* 8.8; Photios, *Epist.* 19, ed. Laourdas/Westerink vol. 1, p. 71: “ἡ τοὺς Βυζαντίους.”

<sup>4</sup> Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), p. 133.



to the former by the latter, were genuinely related to questions of identity and perceptions: both worlds were too close to be alien and too different to be familiar. This entailed that the own identity was always somewhat defined by the other, and vice versa, and that both identities could have an impact on the respective other. These early medieval identities also underwent fundamental processes of change: although the Byzantines considered themselves “Romans,” this identity had become detached from the eponymous capital of Rome. The underlying contradictions already became palpable in the previous chapter on the designation “language of the Romans.” In the eighth century, the west increasingly claimed Roman identity, which was redefined as a reference to ancient and Christian Rome. Western authors distinguished this new notion from the east by labeling the latter *Graeci*—a designation identifying core features that separated both worlds. In addition, the chapter argues that the Byzantine sources are less hostile toward the Franks than vice versa. It begins with a study of Byzantine identities and perceptions of the west, followed by an analysis of the western visions of the Byzantines, and the western notions of Romanness.

## 1. The Byzantine Perspective

The Byzantine sources attest to the attitude that any other authority was subordinate to the empire. This mindset was related to the notion of a Roman, i.e., civilized *orbis* or *oikumene* defining what mattered in the world,<sup>5</sup> opposing the world of the barbarians inhabited by the “gentiles” (ἔθνη).<sup>6</sup> From the fourth century, the term *oikumene* could also relate to the Christian world.<sup>7</sup> This first section intends to understand the eastern perspective on the west by examining Byzantine identities related to notions of Romanness, Greekness, and the empire. It is followed by treatments related to the eastern perceptions of Italy and the Frankish world.

### Byzantine Romanness

Although Byzantine sources occasionally contain ambiguous mentions,<sup>8</sup> Romanness, which had emerged from Rome as an amalgamation of different

<sup>5</sup> Kaldellis, “Did the Byzantine empire” (2017), p. 281. See also Koder, “Die räumlichen Vorstellungen” (2002), pp. 19–21, stressing that although not identical, they are used synonymously.

<sup>6</sup> Kaldellis, “Did the Byzantine empire” (2017), p. 280; Nicol, “The Byzantine view” (1967), p. 317. See also Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), p. 10. The globe symbolized the *orbis*, see Vogt, *Orbis Romanus* (1929), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Arbagi, *Byzantium* (1970), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Against Carlà-Uhink, “Die Differenz” (2020), p. 18.

ethnic groups, was not usually conceived as an ethnicity. According to Antony Kaldellis, the city had become irrelevant to the Byzantine Roman identity.<sup>9</sup> Still, the Byzantine self-designation was “Roman” (*Ρωμαῖος*), a denomination used without disruption since before the days of the Principate and until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and beyond. Although Roman identity was intrinsically tied to what we call the Byzantines,<sup>10</sup> modern scholarship tends to consider their empire as the “continuation” or “heir” of the ancient empire founded in Rome by Augustus.<sup>11</sup> In German research, this opinion resulted in the translation of the Greek self-designation of the Byzantines as “Rhomäer,” marking the alleged break between ancient and Byzantine Romanness.<sup>12</sup> However, the Byzantine empire was only the aged version of that very same *imperium*.

There is general agreement that eastern Roman identity was genuinely civic and defined by an individual’s membership in the empire and his or her loyalty to the emperor.<sup>13</sup> There is debate, however, about how exactly the imperial population related to this Romanness. Anthony Kaldellis argued that Byzantine Roman identity was not limited to its politicosocial elite and that every social stratum, both in Constantinople and in the province, could relate to it. Byzantine Romanness would have implied significantly more than mere questions of birth, legal status, or loyalty toward the emperor and would have largely corresponded to modern notions of “national” identity.<sup>14</sup> Vincent Tremblay responded by arguing that with the consecutive reduction of the Roman empire, following the sixth century and the predominant role of its capital, the attribution of Roman identity in the Byzantine world was increasingly restricted to Constantinople, which significantly protruded from its provinces.<sup>15</sup> Ioannis Stouraitis went even further by stressing that the majority of the imperial population first of all related to local and regional identities, as referred to by self-identifications like “Greek”/”Hellen,” “Syrian,” or “Armenian.” Roman identity would have only been more relevant to the elite. He added that among the remaining Byzantine population, Christian identity, which was not strictly dependent on an individual’s adherence to the empire, may have predominated as a collective identity. Stouraitis thus strongly argued against Kaldellis’ thesis that Roman identity was conceived

<sup>9</sup> Kaldellis, “From Rome to New Rome” (2012), p. 398.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Koder, “Die räumlichen Vorstellungen” (2002), p. 29. See also Dölger, “Rom” (1937), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), pp. 10–11; Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), p. 262; Arbagi, *Byzantium* (1970), p. 4; Burkhardt, *Mediterranes Kaisertum* (2014), p. 85.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., Ohnsorge, “Konstantinopel” (1983), p. 102; Ohme, “Rom und Byzanz” (2011), p. 223. See also Koder, “Griechische Identitäten” (2003), p. 297, n. 1.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Dölger, “Rom” (1937), p. 8; Greatrex, “Roman identity” (2000), p. 268; Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium* (2008); Kaldellis, “The social scope” (2017), p. 207. See also Chrysos, “The Roman political identity” (1996), pp. 8–9.

<sup>14</sup> Kaldellis, “From Rome to New Rome” (2012), p. 390; Kaldellis, “The social scope” (2017), in particular p. 207.

<sup>15</sup> Tremblay, “L’identité romaine” (2016), pp. 25–40. Cf. Kaldellis, “The social scope” (2017), p. 207.

as a quasi-national identity, i.e., as a normative collective identity shared by the empire's population.<sup>16</sup>

Byzantine Romanness was restricted to the empire. When referring to nonimperial Romanness, the Byzantine sources resort to alternative terminology: Constantine VII, for example, in his *De administrando imperio*, reported the case of families from Rome resettled by Diocletian to Dalmatia. The author referred to their descendants as *Ῥωμαῖνοι* (*Romanoi*) by combining the Latin designation *Romani* with the Greek declination.<sup>17</sup> An alternative terminology is attested to designate the Romanness belonging to the city of Rome, as when the Latin language is designated *Ῥωμαϊκή γλῶττα*.<sup>18</sup> Although Rome was renowned for its past and current role, the city was increasingly considered far afield. Nikephoros, in his *Historia syntomos*, for example, explained that in 711, the head of Justinian II († 711) was sent to “a place as far as Rome,”<sup>19</sup> confirming that the first imperial capital was far from “home” from an eastern perspective. Rome was even occasionally selected as the place for exile, as in the case of the patriarch Kallinikos I, who, in 705, i.e., after his deposition, was sent to Rome by the same emperor.<sup>20</sup>

## Greek and Hellenic Identities

The Byzantines were aware of their Greek identity emerging from their Greek mother tongue and their Hellenic cultural background.<sup>21</sup> The ancient empire was the home of a large variety of people of different origins, cultures, and languages, a plurality gradually reduced until the early eighth century.<sup>22</sup> Warren T. Treadgold estimated that around the year 600, only a third of the empire's inhabitants spoke Greek and that two hundred years later, virtually the entire Byzantine population was familiar with it.<sup>23</sup> This linguistic predominance resulted from the empire losing most of its non-Greek-speaking territories in the seventh and early eighth centuries. This process strengthened the association

<sup>16</sup> Stouraitis, “Byzantine Romanness” (2018); Stouraitis, “Roman identity” (2014), in particular p. 204. See also Charanis, “Ethnic changes” (1959), pp. 23–44. On nonimperial Christians, see Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6305 (812/13).

<sup>17</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 29, p. 122: “Ὅτι Διοκλητιανὸς [. . .] ὁ καὶ Ῥωμαῖνοι προσηγορεύθησαν διὰ τὸ ἀπὸ Ῥώμης.”

<sup>18</sup> Constantine, *De thematibus, praef.*, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup> Nikephoros, *Hist.* 45, p. 112: “Πρὸς τοῖς ἐσπερίοις τόποις ἄχρι Ῥώμης ἀπέστειλε.”

<sup>20</sup> Nikephoros, *Hist.* 42.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Vryonis, “The Greek identity” (2000), p. 36. See also Schreiner, “Geschichte” (2015), p. 23, on Maurice as the first emperor of “Greek descent.”

<sup>22</sup> Ball, *Rome in the east* (2002), pp. 446–8, argues not to overestimate the plurality of eastern identities.

<sup>23</sup> Treadgold, “The formation” (2009), p. 326.

between Roman identity and the Greek language and culture, not only in the west, and it enhanced a general feeling of cohesion among the members of the empire.<sup>24</sup>

The reference *Graecus* was uncommon as a self-designation outside of Byzantine Greece. A potential exception includes a specific explanation by Liutprand of Cremona, whose authenticity has been doubted by the editor Paolo Chiesa. Liutprand reports that in Constantinople, a certain Simeon was called a “half-Greek” due to his education that included the syllogisms of Aristotle and the rhetoric of Demosthenes.<sup>25</sup> Simeon’s Greek identity thus may have emerged from his education and his familiarity with Athenian scholarship. More noteworthy is a reference in Leo VI’s *Taktika*. It claims that the emperor Basil I “made” the Slavs “Greek” by having them abandon their own customs, after subjecting them to the empire, and by having them baptized.<sup>26</sup> Here, Greekness was defined by the subordination to the empire and the adoption of the Christian creed, a concept conforming to the Byzantine notion of Romanness.

### Imperial Romanness

Geographically, Byzantine Roman identity was tied mainly to the empire in its respective current boundaries.<sup>27</sup> Although the empire was conceived as eternal and universal, the Byzantines understood the *Ῥωμαίων πολιτεία* and, in the eighth century, more frequently, the *Ῥωμαίων ἀρχή* (both “Roman empire”), as an entity limited in space, comparable to the notion conveyed by the term *ἐπικράτεια* (“sovereign territory”).<sup>28</sup> This is well attested in the word *Ῥωμανία*, which until the fifth century could relate to the Roman world as a whole, the *orbis Romanus*, but was increasingly used after that to refer to the empire and the territories under its authority.<sup>29</sup> Pope Martin I, for example, in a letter of 655, considered it appropriate to explain to his western readers that *Romania* was a term used in the east to relate to the Byzantine empire.<sup>30</sup> From the seventh century, *Ῥωμανία* could be used synonymously to *Ῥωμαίων ἀρχή*,

<sup>24</sup> Koder, “Byzanz” (1990), pp. 106–7.

<sup>25</sup> Liutprand, *Antapodosis* 3.29, p. 81: “Simeonem emiargon [idest semigrecum] esse aiebant,” see p. lxiv.

<sup>26</sup> Leon VI, *Taktika* 18.95, p. 470: “ἡραικώσας.” See also Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), p. 139.

<sup>27</sup> Whether the Roman people or the Roman emperor were at its core remains disputed, cf. Chrysos, “The Roman political identity” (1996), p. 11; Kaldellis, “From Rome to New Rome” (2012), p. 390.

<sup>28</sup> Lounghis, “Some questions” (1997), pp. 12–16. Another ninth-century synonym is *Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονία*.

<sup>29</sup> Wolff, “*Romania*” (1948), pp. 1–34; Koder, “Remarks” (2018), pp. 114–17. E.g., Jordanes, *Getica* 25.131, p. 57.

<sup>30</sup> Wolff, “*Romania*” (1948), pp. 17–18, with n. 80. The relevant section is “ex partibus Romaniae, ut hi qui hic sunt nuncupant, partes videlicet Graecorum Ponticas partes vocantes,” cited after Wolff.

i.e., as a reference to the empire from a territorial perspective.<sup>31</sup> Theophanes Confessor, who seemingly adopted the vocabulary of his sources, according to Evangelos K. Chrysos first used this designation when he referred to the time of Heraclius and, after that, in another 48 occasions, most of which relating to hostile invasions to the empire.<sup>32</sup> While *Ῥωμανία* usually referred to the empire in consideration of its fluctuating boundaries,<sup>33</sup> the anonymous *Epistula Synodica* contains a rare example using anachronistic limits as a reference: referring to the first Muslim conquests of Byzantine land of the earlier seventh-century, it erroneously applied tenth-century reality when explaining that “Romania and Syria” had been plundered, which means that the author did not take into account that at that time Syria still belonged to the empire.<sup>34</sup> The term *Ῥωμανία* is also significant, as it emphasized the Roman identity of the Byzantine empire and its inhabitants. The next subsection will now turn to the role attributed to Italy.

### Byzantine Visions of Italy

In the fourth century, Greek authors could still use the term *Ῥωμαῖος* to refer to the Latin-speaking population of the empire, as Jonas Palm has shown. At the turn of the sixth century, Zosimos even restricted this characterization to Rome’s imperial institutions and inhabitants. At the same time, a gradual differentiation between eastern and western “Romans” may be observed: from the fourth century, eastern sources increasingly defined the inhabitants of the western territories by referring to their Italian homeland or their native Latin language.<sup>35</sup> This attests to an early awareness of a distinct eastern identity characterized by linguistic opposition of Greeks and Latins.<sup>36</sup> Still, Italy—and Rome, in particular—remained an important factor in defining imperial Romanness until at least the late sixth century. Agathias, in his *History*, for example, stressed that when the empire under Justinian had regained control over Italy and northern Africa, the emperor had become one of the first emperors in Constantinople to be “Roman emperor” not only in name but also in fact.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See Lounghis, “Some questions” (1997), pp. 20–1, erroneously claiming that *Ῥωμαίων ἀρχή* was abandoned from the seventh century, see, e.g., Nikephoros, *Hist.* 1, p. 34: “Ῥωμαίων ἀρχήν.”

<sup>32</sup> Chrysos, “The Roman political identity” (1996), p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Stouraitis, “Byzantine Romanness” (2018), p. 189.

<sup>34</sup> *Epistula Synodica* 10.8, p. 40: “Οἱ ἄθεοι Πέρσαι πάσας πόλεις λεηλατέσαντες Ῥωμανίας καὶ Συρίας, καὶ τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν Ἱερουσαλὴμ πυρὶ κατατεφρώσαντες.”

<sup>35</sup> Palm, *Rom, Römertum und Imperium* (1959), pp. 102 and 109–11. See also Gillett, “Ethnography and imperium” (2011), p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> See also Koder, “Griechische Identitäten” (2003), p. 299.

<sup>37</sup> Agathias, *Hist.* 5.14.1, p. 180: “Ῥωμαίων αυτοκράτωρ ὀνόματι τε καὶ πράγματι ἀπεδέδεικτο.” See also Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), p. 113; Cameron, “Agathias” (1968), pp. 95–140.

Rome's subsequent loss was bitterly felt, as emerges from the debates attested by Louis II's letter to Basil and the discussions in the previous chapter. In the ninth century, the Byzantines not only distinguished themselves from the inhabitants of the west but also used a nondistinct terminology to refer to these: Latin speakers like the Iberian Romans or the Gallo-Romans, and Germanic natives like the Franks or the Saxons, were all together termed "Franks" (Φράγκοι), as Liutprand explained in his *Legatio*.<sup>38</sup>

Greg Woolf stressed that the information exchanged between two cultures is somewhat limited when individuals are only confronted in the context of warfare. In contrast, contact zones of trade, shared communities, and intermarriage allow the interchange of much more varied knowledge.<sup>39</sup> The Byzantine and the Frankish worlds were only rarely confronted in war, and if so, this never took place in either the Byzantine or the Frankish heartland, which were only connected by the Franko-Byzantine contact zones in Italy and the Adriatic. Therefore, information about the respective heartland, its people, and culture was mainly transmitted through diplomatic exchange, trade, and other individuals traveling between both worlds. Although the quality and significance of the exchanges in the mentioned contact zones should not be underestimated, the limited immediate confrontation between both heartlands may help explain the persistence of stereotype knowledge, particularly in but not limited to Byzantium. Leo VI's *Taktika* confirms this. Although it occasionally points to noteworthy differences, it treats the Franks and the Lombards in one narrative, attesting that from the author's perspective, both people were considered fairly similar—at least as far as elements related to military procedures were concerned. In addition, the author explained that although the two peoples had started as pagans, they would now be Christians. The significant time gap between the Frankish and the Lombard conversion of almost two hundred years obviously was irrelevant here. The source also contains a lengthy description of both ethnicities characterized by a mix of classical "barbarian" features like the valuation for freedom, bravery and fearlessness, disobedience and lack of patience, greed and the softness of body,<sup>40</sup> which perfectly accord with earlier Roman visions of the barbarian<sup>41</sup> but, if at all, only had very little foundation in the author's own contemporary reality.

<sup>38</sup> Liutprand, *Legatio* 33, p. 192: "ex Francis, quo nomine tam Latinos quam Teutones comprehendit." See also, e.g., Constantine, *DAI* 25, p. 104: "Οἱ δὲ Οὐανδηλοὶ Ἀλανοὺς ἐταιρισάμενοι καὶ Γερμανοὺς, τοὺς νῦν καλουμένους Φράγγους." The same statement already in Theophanes, *Chron.* a. m. 5931.

<sup>39</sup> Woolf, "Saving the Barbarian" (2011), p. 264.

<sup>40</sup> Leo VI, *Taktika* 18.74.76–92.

<sup>41</sup> See, e.g., Chauvot, "Images positives" (1997), pp. 3–14; and several contributions in Bonfante (ed.), *The barbarians of ancient Europe* (2011).

## Byzantine Perceptions of the Franks

Byzantine historiography dating after the works of Procopius and Agathias, which still included comparatively extensive treatments of the west, only refer to the Franks in exceptional cases.<sup>42</sup> Nikephoros' *Historia syntomos* does not contain a single mention related to the Franks,<sup>43</sup> and the comparatively extensive sections in Theophanes' *Chronicle* are limited to a distorted entry related to Pippin the Younger and another six entries referring to Charlemagne's relations with the Byzantines.<sup>44</sup> The longest early medieval Byzantine report on the Frankish world is included in Constantine VII's *De administrando imperio*, written around 952 to serve his son Romanos II as a guideline. Besides 44 chapters on the regions and people in the east, it bears six chapters on the western territories: three deal specifically with Spain (c. 22, 23, and 24) and another three with Italy (c. 26, 27, and 28).<sup>45</sup> Mentions to the Frankish world are restricted mainly to scattered references in eight different chapters, with three comparatively long treatments on ninth-century Italy and the Bosonid king Hugh, the military involvements of the Franks in Venice, and a short mention of Otto I.<sup>46</sup> Also worth mentioning is a more extended section on the military strengths and weaknesses of the Franks and the Lombards in Leo VI's early tenth-century *Taktika*.<sup>47</sup>

The Byzantine perception of the west (*Εσπερία*)<sup>48</sup> was characterized by the eastern conviction of superiority as holder of the one and only empire.<sup>49</sup> Scholars agree that an attitude of arrogance toward foreigners predominated among the Byzantines.<sup>50</sup> However, a close look at relevant sections in the Byzantine sources unfolds a more nuanced picture. Phillip Grierson already noted that when diplomatic relations with the Franks were officially resumed in the mid-750s, they were "carried on without any ideological overtones, and without either power questioning the legitimacy of the other." He adds that the "Byzantines make no claims to world sovereignty, and take no account of the fact that the bulk of

<sup>42</sup> Nicol, "The Byzantine view" (1967), p. 315, explaining it with the Byzantine predilection for anachronism.

<sup>43</sup> As already noted, e.g., by Classen, "Italien" (1983), p. 107. The closest the chronicle gets is a vague reference to unspecified western legations (Nikephoros, *Hist.* 34), two mentions of Rome (c. 42 and 45) and some scattered chapters on southern Italy (c. 55). Cf. Schreiner, "Geschichte" (2015), p. 28, n. 41.

<sup>44</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6216 (723/4: Pope Stephen III and Pippin); a. m. 6274 (781/2), 6281 (788/9), 6289 (796/7), 6293 (800/01), 6295 (802/3), 6304 (811/12), referring to Charlemagne.

<sup>45</sup> Schreiner, "Byzanz" (2015), pp. 14–15.

<sup>46</sup> Sporadic mentions in Constantine, *DAI* 13, 25, 29, 31, 32; comparatively long treatments in 26 (King Hugh), 28 (Venice), and 30 (Otto).

<sup>47</sup> Leo VI, *Taktika* 18.76–92, pp. 465–71.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., Nikephoros, *Hist.* 55, ll. 2 and 20; 34, ll. 32 and 36; 45, l. 91.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), pp. 10–11.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), p. 10; Lechner, "Byzanz und die Barbaren" (1955), pp. 302–4; Arbabi, *Byzantium* (1970), p. 3; Lilie, *Byzanz* (2014), p. 111.



Charlemagne's Frankish kingdom and the whole of his Lombard one existed in provinces that had once made part of the empire of Rome."<sup>51</sup> This goes well with the fact that, as we have seen in section III.2, the initiative for virtually every request to arrange for a marriage between the ruling families of the Frankish and the Byzantine realms was on the Byzantine side. The Byzantine view of the Frankish west thus must have been not that straightforward and requires further discussion.

The mentioned sections in the *Chronicle of Theophanes* represent the earliest more extensive post-sixth-century treatment of the Franks in a Byzantine source. The first relevant entry is a flawed report related to the year 723/4, mentioning the flight of Pope Stephen II to the Franks and the mocking of the Merovingian kings for being powerless and called "Kristatai" (κριστάται) by referring to their "hairy backs." The entry also lauds the *maior domus* Pippin for becoming king with the pope's support and for successfully fighting the Muslims—obviously confounding Pippin with his father, Charles Martel.<sup>52</sup> The entry ends with the first mention of Charlemagne, who is at the center of the subsequent entries on the Franks. The latter include two treatments of the betrothal of Rotrud and Constantine VI,<sup>53</sup> stressing, among other things, that when Irene decided against this marriage, the groom-to-be would have been distressed to cancel his engagement with the Frankish princess.<sup>54</sup> The next relevant entry relates to the flight of Pope Leo III to the Franks, explaining that Charlemagne took vengeance on the pope's enemies. In exchange, Leo crowned Charlemagne emperor. Theophanes adds that Rome remained under Frankish authority ever since.<sup>55</sup>

Modern scholars assumed that the intention behind Theophanes' report about the pope anointing Charlemagne from head to foot was to ridicule the Frankish coronation ceremony.<sup>56</sup> A close look at the relevant sections shows, however, that the author was not mocking the Frankish emperor but the executor of the ceremony, i.e., Pope Leo III. A conceivable reason is not only the pope's gradual dissociation from the empire but also the fact that he resorted to, or usurped, an imperial ceremony to elevate Charlemagne to imperial status. The Frankish monarch, in contrast, received favorable treatment in the chronicle, which lacks

<sup>51</sup> Grierson, "The Carolingian empire" (1981), p. 902. Maybe the relations between the Franks and the Byzantines had been stable due to an consecutive renewal of the 602 "eternal peace" beyond 692, see Sarti, *Merovingian connections* (forthcoming).

<sup>52</sup> Theophanes, *Chron.* a. m. 6216.

<sup>53</sup> Theophanes, *Chron.* a. m. 6274, a. m. 6281.

<sup>54</sup> Theophanes, *Chron.* a. m. 6281. p. 463: "πολλὰ λυπούμενου αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ θέλοντος διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Καρούλου θυγατέρα, τοῦ ῥηγὸς τῶν Φράγγων, σχέσιν, ἣν ἦν προμνηστευσάμενος." As mentioned in section II.2 and further discussed in VII.3, there is evidence that the agreement was first cancelled by Charlemagne.

<sup>55</sup> Theophanes, *Chron.* a. m. 6289, p. 472: "γενομένης τῆς Ρώνης ἀπ' ἐκαίνου καιροῦ ὑπο τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῶν Φράγγων"

<sup>56</sup> Theophanes, *Chron.* a. m. 6289, p. 473: "χρίσας ἐλαίῳ ἀπο κεφαλῆς ἕως ποδῶν." See, e.g., Ohnsorge, "Das Kaisertum der Eirene" (1963), pp. 232–3; Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), p. 84; Berschin, "Die Ost-West-Gesandtschaften" (1997), p. 160; Schieffer, "Karl der Große" (2004), p. 283.

any noteworthy hostility or arrogance expressed toward the Franks.<sup>57</sup> A comparatively positive characterization is also contained in the *Taktika*. In addition to what has already been said above, the author insisted that his intention was not to offer information on how to wage war against the Franks and Lombards. He insisted that some were “friendly while others are subject to Our God-given Majesty” and “at peace and are allies, coreligionists, and subjects.”<sup>58</sup> The two-fold use of the word *ὑπήκοος* (“subject”) used to characterize the Franks, a term which bears the notion of obeying through the combination of subordination (*ὑπό*) and “listening” (*ἀκοή*), is particularly puzzling in this context, as it seems to imply subordination toward the Byzantines.

Nowhere do we come any closer to Byzantine knowledge about the west than in the mentioned work *De administrando imperio* by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos. It uses exceptionally varied and precise terminology to refer to the different peoples in the west,<sup>59</sup> and it addresses the Frankish world comparatively accommodatingly. As we have seen, Constantine VII stressed the western origins of his first imperial namesake, and the empire’s relations and regular exchanges with the Franks, which the fame of nobility would characterize.<sup>60</sup> Lothar I, for example, is referred to as “great” (*μέγας*) and “distinguished” (*περιβλέπτου*), characterizations that are also connected with “Charles the Great,” being “a man much celebrated in song and story and author of heroic deeds in war,” who was “sole ruler over [*μονοκράτωρ*] all the kingdoms,” and “reigned as emperor [*ἐβασίλευσε*] in great Francia.”<sup>61</sup> It is in this same section that the author mentioned the Frankish gifts sent to support the monasteries in Palestine. Constantine’s subsequent treatment of the history of Italy and its rulers ends with the marriage between King Hugh’s daughter Berta (renamed Eudocia) and the author’s son Romanos II. The favorable depictions do not end with the Carolingians: in a subsequent chapter, Otto I is characterized as “the great king of the Franks, also called Saxons,”<sup>62</sup> a reference that betrays some eastern knowledge about the ethnic shift among the western rulers.

<sup>57</sup> See also Theophanes, *Chron.* a. m. 6293, a. m. 6294, a. m. 6304.

<sup>58</sup> Leo VI, *Taktika* 18.74, pp. 462–4: “ὡν τὰ μὲν φίλα, τὰ δὲ ὑπήκοα τῇ ἡμῶν ἐκ Θεοῦ βασιλείᾳ τυγχάνουσι [. . .] πῶς γὰρ τῶν εἰρηνευόντων καὶ συμμάχων καὶ ὁμοθρήσκων καὶ ὑπηκόων.” Trans. Dennis, pp. 463–5.

<sup>59</sup> See the enumeration in Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), p. 204.

<sup>60</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 13.

<sup>61</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 26, p. 108: “ὅτι ὁ ῥῆξ’ Ἰταλίας, ὁ μέγας Λωθάριος, ὁ πάππος τοῦ περιβλέπτου ῥῆξ’ Ὀὐγανός, ἀπο τῆς γενεᾶς τοῦ μεγάλου Καρούλου κατήγετο, περὶ οὗ πολλὸς ἔπαινος, ἐγκώμια τε καὶ διηγήματα καὶ περὶ πολέμους ἀνδραγαθήματα. Οὗτος οὖν ὁ Κάρουλος ἦν μονοκράτωρ πάντων τῶν ῥηγάτων, ἐβασίλευσε δὲ εἰς τὴν μεγάλην Φραγγίαν.” Trans. Jenkins (1985), p. 109.

<sup>62</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 30. See also Constantine, *De cerimoniis* 1.87, p. 394: “ἀρμάτοι δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ βασιλέως οὐκ εἰσέρχονται διὰ τὸ μὴ εἶναι βαρβάρους τοὺς πρεσβευτάς,” with Lechner, “Byzanz und die Barbaren” (1955), p. 304. The *De cerimoniis*’ tendency to refer to the late Roman era makes it difficult to differentiate between elements of the tenth century and those belonging to the past, not least as this text seems to go back to a fifth-century source.

All this is far from being depreciatory characterizations of barbarian rulers considered inferior.<sup>63</sup> Constantine VII reported that the inhabitants of Venice, which he identified as Franks from Aquileia and other parts of the Frankish kingdoms, dwelled on the mainland until they fled from Attila's "Avars." When they were later besieged by Charlemagne's son Pippin, the Venetians would have offered to subordinate themselves to the Byzantine empire, and finally would have paid tributes to the Franks.<sup>64</sup> The only significantly less favorable characterization is contained in a chapter on the Croats of Dalmatia. It explains that the Franks treated some of their Croatian subjects brutally to the point that they murdered infants, and that the Croats would have revolted against the Franks for this reason. A seven-year war followed that opposed the two and ended with a Frankish defeat and the voluntary baptism of the Croats by the pope.<sup>65</sup> In a later chapter, Constantine VII added that an unbaptized group of Croats under the authority of Otto I was frequently plundered by Franks, Turks, and Pechenegs.<sup>66</sup> Although there is no doubt about the unfavorable character of this depiction, it is likely that it was closely related to the tenth-century Byzantine attempts to regain influence in Croatian Dalmatia,<sup>67</sup> and thus should not be overinterpreted.

Evidence for the alleged Byzantine arrogance or disregard toward the Franks thus mainly consists of short and scattered indications whose infrequency and inexplicitness raise the question of to what extent the opinion shared among modern scholars about the Byzantine attitude may be, first of all, rooted in the Frankish depiction of the Byzantines which, as we shall see in the following sections, was indeed significantly more hostile. An early piece of evidence attesting to an adversarial attitude of the Byzantines toward the Franks includes the mentioned *intitulatio* of Michael II's letter to Theophilos, who, in 824, addressed Louis the Pious as "who is called their [i.e., the Franks'] emperor,"<sup>68</sup> and the emperor Louis II, who in the *Life of Basil*, published as part of the *Continuations* to the *Chronicle of Theophanes*, was called "king of the Franks" ("ῥῆγα Φραγγίας").<sup>69</sup> The next section will now turn toward the western perspective.

<sup>63</sup> See also Agathias, *Hist.* 1.2.3–4, on the Franks only differing from the Byzantines by language and attire.

<sup>64</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 28.

<sup>65</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 30.

<sup>66</sup> Constantine, *DAI* 30–1.

<sup>67</sup> See Budak, "Croatian" (1997), p. 18.

<sup>68</sup> *Concilia Karolini* II 44, a. 825, A, a. 825.

<sup>69</sup> *Theophanes Cont.* 5.55, p. 200.

## 2. Western Visions of the Byzantine World

The western evidence about the Byzantine world is much more abundant and significantly more explicit. From the eighth century, the standard western designation for the Byzantines had become *Graeci*, a term we have already encountered on several occasions. This terminology was later also adopted in Old High German, as in a vernacular Psalter of Notker the German († 1022) using the term *grece*, a term subsequently glossed with the Germanising derivative *chriêchiscun*.<sup>70</sup> These words referred to the Greek language and Hellenic culture shared from the mid-seventh century by the majority of the inhabitants of the Byzantine empire. They were foreign designations that corresponded neither to the Byzantine self-perception nor to their self-designation as “Romans.”<sup>71</sup> This section aims to take a closer look at the western perception of the Byzantines to understand how the Franks related to the former.

### Western Assessments of Greekness

In the west, the term *Graecus* was occasionally used to refer to Greek natives, comparable to other western ethnic designations. In early medieval Italy, *Graecus* was used freely, including neutral connotations, to refer to anyone from the east<sup>72</sup> or Greek native speakers, as in the case of the 12 late-seventh- and early-eighth-century popes born in the majority in Sicily or continental Italy.<sup>73</sup> From a western perspective, the inhabitants of the Italian peninsula thus could either be *Romani*, referring to the population of the former Exarchate, *Langobardi*, or *Graeci* (i.e., Byzantines).<sup>74</sup>

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Greek language was much esteemed among the western elites and a source of regard.<sup>75</sup> Chris Wickham rightly stressed that at the Carolingian court, Greek was not only a mark of erudition but also a ticket to success.<sup>76</sup> References to Greek could also be used to

<sup>70</sup> Notker, *Psalm* 31.9, p. 105: “uuanda camzr grece [glossed: ‘in chriêchiscun’]. curuum chit latine [glossed ‘in uuâlescun’].” Also mentioned in Pohl pointed, “Walchen” (2017), p. 12.

<sup>71</sup> Kaldellis, “From Rome to New Rome” (2012); Peters-Custot, “Greco et Byzantins” (2014), p. 188. Cf. Chrysos, “The Roman political identity” (1996), p. 16, on the terms *Ἑλληνία* and *Graecia*, on the roots of *græc* and *hellen*\*, see Koder, “Remarks” (2018), pp. 118–21. Cf. the definition in Isidore, *Etym.* 14.5.7.

<sup>72</sup> Peters-Custot, “Greco et Byzantins” (2014), pp. 185–91.

<sup>73</sup> Noble, “Greek popes” (2014), p. 81. See the list in Todt, “Die letzte Papstreise” (2002), pp. 30–1.

<sup>74</sup> See, e.g., Einhard, *Vita Caroli* 15, p. 18; *Annales regni Francorum* a. 788; *Annales Fuldense* a. 896; Regino, *Chron.* a. 871.

<sup>75</sup> See Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 31–58, and the comments in Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), pp. 248–50; Koder, “Byzanz als Mythos” (2001), p. 248.

<sup>76</sup> Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 248. See also Schieffer, “Zum lateinischen Byzanzbild” (2008), pp. 19–20.

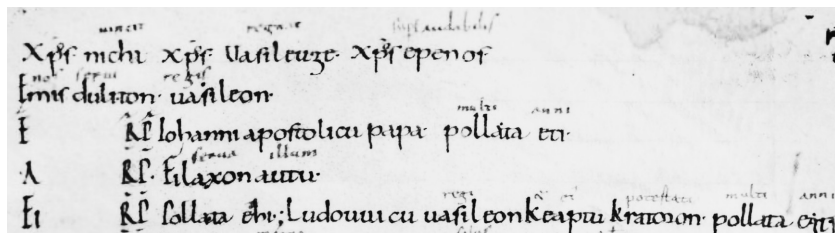


FIGURE 6.1 Extract from Metz, Bibliothèque municipale Cod. 351, fol. 78<sup>r</sup>. Creative Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0). Source: [bvmf.irht.cnrs.fr/iiif/22956/canvas/canvas-2135365/view](http://bvmf.irht.cnrs.fr/iiif/22956/canvas/canvas-2135365/view).

gain renown among a wider public. Walter Berschin pointed to a Greek title discovered in a late Carolingian manuscript from Metz (Bibliothèque municipale Cod. 351, see Figure 6.1), which is considered the incomplete copy of a tradition now lost. It shows that western monarchs occasionally resorted to Greek acclamations: at fol. 78<sup>r</sup>, it contains Greek laudations written in Roman letters referring to King Louis III, with their respective Latin correspondence glossed in superscription:

Christos nicha [glossed: *uincit*]· christos Uasileuge [glossed: *regnat*]· christos epenos [glossed: *suplaudabilis*]·  
 Emis duli ton uasileon [glossed: *nos serui regis*]· [. . .]  
 Ei R̄P Polla ta ehi Ludouuicu uasileon [glossed: *regi*] ke aptukratoron [glossed: *et eius potestati*] polla ta [glossed: *multi*] esti [glossed: *anni*].<sup>77</sup>

Berschin stressed the high quality of the translation and the peculiarity that Louis III was referred to as βασιλεύς (“uasileon”) and αὐτοκράτωρ (“aptukratoron”), and this, although he never attempted nor attained the status of the emperor.<sup>78</sup> The gloss of *basileus* with *rex* confirms that the term βασιλεύς is used here as a reference to royalty. Other than the Byzantine laudations offered to Charlemagne in 812, discussed in section II.2, this is a Greek translation of Latin *laudes regiae*. The translation obviously meant to include the original

<sup>77</sup> Metz, Bibliothèque municipale Cod. 351, access [bvmf.irht.cnrs.fr/iiif/22956/canvas/canvas-2135365/view](http://bvmf.irht.cnrs.fr/iiif/22956/canvas/canvas-2135365/view) (15/04/2021), edited in Prost, “Caractère et signification” (1886), pp. 149–320. On the manuscript, see Lipphardt, *Der karolingische Tonar* (1965); Huglo, “Der Metzger karolingische Tonar” (1966), pp. 189–91. Transcription by Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 143, slightly altered according to the original Metz, Bibliothèque municipale Cod. 351, fol. 78<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Berschin suggested that the titles in Cod. Metz 351 were the result from a translation into Greek of the Latin *laudes* found in the *Royal Frankish Annals*. Still, the above does not help explain why genuinely imperial laudations were used in reference to Louis III. See also Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae* (1946), pp. 27–8, suggesting a Greek model for the *laudes*.

Greek title *βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ*, with which the Byzantine envoys had acclaimed the first Frankish emperor. Although the author of this translation and its sponsor were certainly aware of the imperial nature of this acclamation, it is conceivable—although admittedly unsatisfactory as an explanation—that it was considered unproblematic to address these laudations to Louis III, given that hardly anyone would have understood their meaning, maybe intending to provide some Byzantine spark of glory to the king's court.

There is further evidence that prestige was associated with the Greek language, as Paul the Deacon explicitly confirmed in a poem addressed to his friend Peter of Pisa.<sup>79</sup> In addition to what has already been said in the previous chapter, a general interest in Greek is attested, for example, by the fictive account of the enigmatic early eighth-century *Cosmography of Aethicus*. Also worth mentioning are Greek toponyms: already a sixth-century letter explains that the isle of Lérins would also be known as “Christopolis,” and the royal city of Compiègne was probably renamed under Charles the Bald as “Carlopolis.”<sup>80</sup>

### Frankish Visions of the Byzantine World

Prestige was also associated with the Byzantines themselves. The visits by Byzantine legations, for example, were seemingly considered the most reputable, as the sources occasionally explicitly confirm.<sup>81</sup> In his study on Byzantine stories and history in the works of John of Biclaro, Gregory of Tours, and Paul the Deacon, Peter Schreiner stressed that the context and extent to which Byzantine tales and history were adopted in the west presents “an indicator of the esteem and interest that the eastern empire enjoyed in public and what political significance it should have at a certain moment.” Although the consolidation of the Carolingian empire and the western focus on their own emperor and the pope entailed a gradual disappearance of Byzantium from Latin historiography,<sup>82</sup> the tale by Notker the Stammerer on the outrage caused by the turning of a fish on a plate in the presence of the emperor, to be further discussed below in this section,<sup>83</sup> presents a rare but noteworthy revival of Byzantine narratives set down in writing at a moment of particular interest in the Byzantine world. Related to this mindset is the unhospitable treatment provided by the Byzantines to uncongenial guests like Heito of Basle in 811, and maybe also the legates Witbold and

<sup>79</sup> Paul, *Carm.* 11.10, p. 49: “Quam non ante sperabamus, nunc surrexit gloria.”

<sup>80</sup> *Epist. Austras.* 6, pp. 117–18: “insulam Lariensem, quae Christopolis dicitur”; Lohrmann, “Trois palais royaux” (1976), p. 126. Prien, “The copy of an empire?” (2017), p. 314, relates “Carlopolis” to Quierzy.

<sup>81</sup> See Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), p. 9, with n. 31.

<sup>82</sup> Schreiner, “Geschichte” (2015), pp. 28–9.

<sup>83</sup> *Gesta Karoli* 2.6.

John around 786/7, a treatment which, as we have seen in section III.2, would have been retorted by a ruse intending to teach the Byzantines humility.

Although the Byzantines were admired for their exploits and history, their attitude toward other people could rouse resentment, a bearing also attested for the Franks. Despite the positive reception of the Greek language, in particular, Frankish references to anything “Greek” often had a negative ring. The Greeks were renowned for their role in the Trojan Wars, which they prominently ended by perfidiously gifting an enormous equestrian statue to infiltrate their soldiers into the city. A song from Modena written around 900 reminded of this particular episode in the following manner:

O you, who protects these walls with your weapons,  
Do not sleep, I warn you, but watch!  
As long as Hector was a guard in Troy,  
Fraudulent Greece could not take it.  
When Troy rested in its first slumber,  
Synon treacherously opened the trappy hiding place.<sup>84</sup>

It was not necessarily desirable to be associated with what contemporaries may have conceived as “Greek.” A certain glee is contained, for example, in the report of the *Annales Bertiniani* mentioning that Charles the Bald deemed it appropriate to appear in Greek vestments at a synod in Ponthion, whereby he contrasted the papal legates clad in Roman dresses.<sup>85</sup> The *Annales Fuldenses*, which attest to a more hostile attitude toward the Byzantines<sup>86</sup> and Charles the Bald,<sup>87</sup> were significantly more explicit. They recount that when Charles returned from Italy, he:

adopted new and unaccustomed modes of dress: for he used to go to church on Sundays and feast-days dressed in a dalmatic down to his ankles and with a sword-belt girdled over it, his head wrapped in a silk veil with a diadem on top. For, despising all the customs of the Frankish kings, he held the glories of the Greeks to be the best.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> *Carmina mutinensia* 1, ll. 1–6, p. 703: “O tu, qui servas armis ista moenia, / Noli dormire, moneo, sed vigila. / Dum Hector vigil extitit in Troia, / Non eam cepit fraudulenta Graecia. / Prima quiete dormiente Troia / Laxavit Synon fallax claustra perfida.”

<sup>85</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 876, p. 205: “imperator grecisco more paratus et coronatus.” Lilie, “Kooperation und Konkurrenz” (2011), p. 75, erroneously relates the report to Charles the Fat.

<sup>86</sup> Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 254.

<sup>87</sup> Brubaker, “The elephant” (2004), pp. 189–90.

<sup>88</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 876, p. 86: “Karolus rex de Italia in Galliam rediens novos et insolitos habitus assumpsisse perhibetur; nam talari dalmatica indutus et baltheo desuper accinctus pendente usque ad pedes nencon capite serico velamine ac diademate desuper inposito dominicis festisque diebus ad aecclesiam procedere solebat. Omnem enim consuetudinem regum Francorum contemnens Grecas glorias optimas arbitrat.” Trans. Reuter, *The Annals* (1994), p. 80.



The polemic of this statement suggests that in the late 870s, the Franks considered that an emperor should adhere to his own habits and traditions to represent himself as such and that any borrowing from the Byzantines would be inappropriate. Charles the Bald, however, obviously conceived his new imperial status as related to the Byzantine (imperial) customs and traditions, which he must have encountered in Italy. He probably would have further emphasized the Byzantine connections of his emperorship had he not died prematurely in 877. As a Frankish ruler wearing a diadem was nothing new, the main critique by the *Annales Fuldenses* seems to relate to the long dalmatic and the silk veil, two elements that did not belong to western tradition. Still, the fact that the author associated the coronation as emperor and *augustus* with the monarch's enhanced pride<sup>89</sup> warns to be cautious given the source's emphasis on the eastern Frankish territories and its rival king Louis the German. Some contumely also gleams through an account contained in the *Royal Frankish Annals*. They report that, in 806, i.e., during the conflict with Nikephoros I, the legates sent by Charlemagne to Hārūn ar-Rašīd returned safely by "driving right through the anchorages of the Greek ships."<sup>90</sup>

### The *Graeci* in the Western Sources

The ancient Romans were already of two minds about the intellectual and cultural exploits of the Greeks and the inhabitants of the Near East. Related feelings could be conveyed by the designations *Γραικός* or *Graecus*, which could refer to common stereotypes and related negative qualities like envy, weakness, cowardice, perfidy, or hypocrisy.<sup>91</sup> The accusation of "Greek perfidy" is regularly attested, including, to follow the reasoning of Klaus Herbers, contexts of misinterpretation in the framework of translations, sometimes considered intentional, a topic already addressed in the previous chapter.

The geographical separation of the Byzantine and Frankish heartlands entailed that opinions about the respective other were rarely based on personal experiences. Instead, they were often rooted in the literary models offered by earlier authors, as Rudolf Schieffer argued.<sup>92</sup> Although the term *Graecus* used to relate to the Byzantines and its increasingly negative connotation went back to ancient models, the underlying notions had a history on their own that was

<sup>89</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 876, p. 86: "ut maiorem suae mentis elationem ostenderet."

<sup>90</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 806, p. 122: "per ipsas Grecurum navium stationes transvecti."

<sup>91</sup> Duboisson, "Graecvs" (1991), pp. 315–35; Wickham, "Ninth-century Byzantium" (1998), pp. 247–8; Peters-Custot, "Greco et Byzantins" (2014), p. 184. On related complexity in Antiquity, see Hinds/Schmitz, "Constructing identities" (2008), pp. 1–12; Peters-Custot, "Greco et Byzantins" (2014), p. 184.

<sup>92</sup> Schieffer, "Zum lateinischen Byzanzbild" (2008), p. 19.

related to the western abandonment of the designation “Romans” as a reference for the Byzantines, a process I have reconstructed in further detail elsewhere.<sup>93</sup> Some pertinent evidence suffices to confirm that the ancient stereotypes of the *Graeci* and related western terminology were not entirely disconnected.<sup>94</sup> For example, the letters of the bishop Avitus of Vienne provide several late-fifth-century testimonies for the depreciatory use of the term *Graecus* to relate to the Byzantines, including the designation *Caesar Graecorum*, which implicitly also seems to criticize the emperor Anastasius I for his monophysite position.<sup>95</sup>

Paolo Delogu brought forward that when Pope Stephen II and his successors aimed to set up their own *respublica*, as the Roman heirs of authority over alleged Roman territories, they adopted imperial terminology and symbolism. In this context, they would have started to “deny the ‘Roman’ nature of the Byzantine empire,” increasingly associated with heterodoxy since then.<sup>96</sup> Clemens Gantner argued that although *Graeci* is occasionally attested with a negative connotation before the eighth century,<sup>97</sup> the habit of using this term as a pejorative designation to refer to the Byzantines only emerged in the mid-eighth century in papal Rome and in the context of the very same apostolic emancipation efforts toward the emperor.<sup>98</sup> The terminology and its connotations are noteworthy given that, as we have seen, Rome had a significant Greek-speaking population occasionally labeled as *Graeci*. The earliest relevant pieces of evidence to which Delogu and Gantner refer are contained in the letters of the popes Stephen II and Paul I. The first among these letters dates to the year 757 and was written in reaction to the Byzantine failure to invite the pope to the Council of Hieria (754) and to provide military support against the Lombards.<sup>99</sup> Pope Stephen II wrote to Pippin praying that “the holy catholic and apostolic faith remain unharmed and unshaken for all time and the holy Church of God, as from the others, from their [the Greek’s] perfidious wickedness.”<sup>100</sup> His successor Paul I wrote to the

<sup>93</sup> Sarti, “From *Romanus* to *Graecus*” (2018).

<sup>94</sup> Against Haenssler, *Byzanz und Byzantiner* (1960), p. 108.

<sup>95</sup> Avitus, *Contra Eutychianam*, pp. 15–16. See Shanzer/Wood (eds.), *Avitus of Vienne*. (2002), p. 90. Further examples in Amory, *People and identity* (1997), pp. 119–20.

<sup>96</sup> Delogu, “The papacy” (2000), pp. 215–16. Cf. Kapriev, “Vier Arten” (2012), p. 6, according to whom religious connotations of *Graecus* are only attested since 863; Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), p. 679.

<sup>97</sup> See also Salvian, *De Gub. Dei* 7.20, p. 184; Avitus, *Epist.* 42 (88) p. 71. Avitus, *Epist.* 41, to King Clovis I, designates Byzantium as *Grecia*, while stressing the orthodoxy of the Frankish and Byzantine monarch.

<sup>98</sup> Gantner, *Freunde Roms* (2014), pp. 108–18; Gantner, “Romana urbs” (2014), pp. 461–75.

<sup>99</sup> See *Codex Carolinus* 17, p. 515. Similar *Codex Carolinus* 30, p. 536. See also Pope Stephen II, *Codex Carolinus* 11, p. 506: “de parte Grecorum.” The earlier *Epistolae Langobardicae* 13, p. 703, still refrained from using *Greci*. See also Gantner, “The label ‘Greeks’” (2013), pp. 303–49.

<sup>100</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 11, p. 506: “ut fides sancta catholica et apostolica per te integra et inconcussa permaneat in eternum et sancta Dei ecclesia, sicut ab aliis, et ab eorum pestifera malitia.” Similar *Codex Carolinus* 38, p. 551: “pro Grecorum malitia.”

same Pippin about the “nefarious Greeks, the enemies of the holy Church of God and enemies of the orthodox faith.”<sup>101</sup> Like these, several other epistles were written in the context of the Lombard expansion that vitally threatened papal Rome, which contained comparable defamatory statements directed against the Byzantines and their emperor.

This apostolic notion of *Graecus* may have been significantly older, however. Bede, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, explained that when Theodore of Tarsus was sent to Canterbury, Hadrian not only accompanied him because he knew the way but also as he “should not introduce anything contrary to the true faith to the Church he was meant to preside as is the custom of the Greeks.”<sup>102</sup> As Bede here expressed the pope’s concerns, he probably relied on a papal source that already used the term *Graeci* with a negative connotation implying heterodoxy to reference the Byzantines. A comparable terminology thus might have already been used in Rome, at least occasionally, in the earlier eighth century, if not already around 680. Another turning point was the year 776, since when, according to Florian Hartmann, Pope Hadrian I showed a marked tendency to almost irrational Graecophobia. This attitude appears to have aimed to legitimize retroactively the ongoing papal alienation from the east and prepare the dissociation of a “Roman” from a “Greek” empire.<sup>103</sup>

The mutual perceptions of the Byzantines and the Franks have been intensively debated. In 1970, Martin George Arbabi argued that “with the exception of the papacy, there was no systematically hostile sentiment in the west toward the Byzantines until the First Crusade,” and that the westerners were rather indifferent and “did not mean to be hostile.”<sup>104</sup> Comparably, Walter Berschin opined that neither the quarrels between Byzantines and Franks in the framework of mutual diplomatic exchanges nor the occasional military conflicts caused considerable hostility toward the Byzantines in the west.<sup>105</sup> Clemens Gantner, however, argued that the Franks regularly used *Graeci* as a largely pejorative reference for the Byzantines from the ninth century.<sup>106</sup> These and other relevant assessments largely depend on the weight historians are willing to attribute to the evidence and whether pertinent singular references are understood to attest to a general tendency or should be regarded as exceptions. Surely reality was more complex than the often oversimplified portraits offered by the sources, and Michael

<sup>101</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 30, p. 536: “nefandissimi Greci, inimici sanctae Dei ecclesiae et orthodoxae fidei ex-pugnatores.” Later again: “ipsi nefandissimi nos persequuntur Greci.”

<sup>102</sup> Bede, *Hist.* 4.1, pp. 202–3: “ne quid ille contrarium ueritati fidei Graecorum more in ecclesiam, cui praeesset, introduceret.” Gregory, *Epist.* 6.14, p. 393: “Romani autem codices multo ueriores sunt quam Graeci, quia nos uestra sicut non acumina” is still rooted in classical stereotypes.

<sup>103</sup> See Hartmann, *Hadrian I.* (2006), p. 172.

<sup>104</sup> Arbabi, *Byzantium* (1970), pp. 1 and 5.

<sup>105</sup> Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 40.

<sup>106</sup> Gantner, “The label ‘Greeks’” (2013), pp. 306–7.

Rentschler was certainly right when stressing that a binary model of positive and negative characterizations does not suffice to adequately describe the multilayered facets of the mutual perceptions of the Byzantines and the Franks, including diverging tendencies belonging to different groups of opinion within a specific polity.<sup>107</sup>

The designation of the Byzantines as *Graeci* remained standard throughout the period focused on here. In September 865, Pope Nicholas I, in a letter to the emperor Michael III, even used it to refer to the Byzantines as the holders of imperial authority.<sup>108</sup> By designating the Byzantines as *Graeci*, the Franks made a clear distinction between east and west and, as Michael McCormick has rightly pointed out, the same term, from a Frankish perspective, also implied the negation of “the uncomfortable political implications of eastern imperial continuity.”<sup>109</sup> The *Annales Bertiniani* contain rare examples where this separation was made explicit from a linguistic perspective as they differentiate *Latini* from *Graeci*.<sup>110</sup> Although the primary criterion for this differentiation was language, even when the sources relate to *Romani* and *Graeci*, these terms did refer to much more, including cultural and ecclesiastical traditions, as we shall see. A mental distinction between western “Romans,” in particular those from Rome, and eastern “Greeks,” i.e., the Byzantines, is already perceptible from the earlier eighth century: Boniface, for example, in a letter addressed in 747 to Cuthbert of Canterbury enumerates Anglo-Saxons, Franks and Gauls, Lombards, Romans, and Greeks.<sup>111</sup> Here, *Romani* may relate to papal Rome, given that *Graeci* can only refer to the Byzantines. The same is true with Einhard’s claim that the *Graeci* and *Romani* distrusted the *Franci*,<sup>112</sup> or when Notker, referring to chant, explained that the *Romani* and the *Graeci* had always been envious of the Frankish “glory.”<sup>113</sup> It is important to note here that, although all these references mention a begrudging attitude of the Byzantines toward the Franks, they, first of all, betray a Frankish animosity toward the Byzantines.

<sup>107</sup> Rentschler, “Griechische Kultur” (1978), p. 354.

<sup>108</sup> Nicholas I, *Epist.* 88, pp. 479–80: “non innumeras Graecis subiectas provincias obtinuimus.”

<sup>109</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium and the west” (1995), p. 350. Similar Koder, “Remarks” (2018), p. 116.

<sup>110</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 867, p. 139: “dicentes ipsi Greci, quod chrisma ex aqua fluminis Latini conficiamus.” See also Nicholas I, *Epist.* 88, 486: “Latini Graecique doctores.”

<sup>111</sup> Boniface, *Epist.* 78, p. 171. Similar *Annales Mettenses priores* a. 692, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 16, p. 20: “Romanis et Grecis Francorum suspecta potentia.” Cf. Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), arguing at p. 203, n. 96, that *Romanus* refers to the Byzantines.

<sup>113</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.10, pp. 13–14: “semper omnes Greci et Romani invidia Francorum glorie carpebantur,” relating to ecclesiastical rivalries, see Levy, “Gregorian chant” (2003), pp. 12–13.

## Hellenic Identity

We already met the Greek glossary of the manuscript *Laon 444* (see section V.1). At fol. 255<sup>v</sup>, it contains the following equation: “grece autem—ελληνικτιδε,”<sup>114</sup> putting Hellenic on a level with Greek identity. The same equivalence was premised when Notker the Stammerer greeted the “*ellinici fratres*” in St. Gall (see section III.3). In the Greek east, this twofold identity is mainly limited to the inhabitants of Greece. When this region was Romanized, Hellenic identity was not abandoned but persisted within Roman identity.<sup>115</sup> Apart from this, Hellenic identity remained related to the memory of Athenian scholarship, with its literature, history, scientific treatise, and philosophy, cherished in the east and the west far beyond its heydays.<sup>116</sup>

The early medieval evidence occasionally attests to the latter notion of Hellenic identity being associated with ancient scholarship: According to the lexicon of Photios, “being Hellen” (ἐλληνίζειν) did not only imply speaking Greek but also being in the manner of a Hellen.<sup>117</sup> In a letter to the emperor Basil I, the same Photios in 868 juxtaposed “Hellens” and “barbarians” as the two main groups meant to represent humankind.<sup>118</sup> Although the Latin term *Graecus* and the Greek term Ἑλλην (Hellenē) could be used synonymously in Antiquity, both had gained a negative connotation until the medieval era.<sup>119</sup> As “Hellenē” was related to Attic Greek and its culture,<sup>120</sup> Hellenic identity was increasingly associated with paganism.<sup>121</sup> Photios’ epistles again include some relevant examples: in a letter to a certain Alexander, he explained that his addressee’s prominent namesake would be “a pagan [Ἑλλην], and a ruler of Hellens.”<sup>122</sup> In another letter addressed around November 869 to the Metropolitan Ignatios, Photios even explicitly equated Hellens with barbarians—in contrast to the first example mentioned above.<sup>123</sup> The potential interpretation of the early medieval

<sup>114</sup> Similar equation in a short composition by Martin the Irishman: John Scot, *Carm.* 12.3, p. 697: “ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝ ΛΑΜΠΕΙ ΝΥΝ ΛΙΥΔΔΟ CEBACTOC,” translated with “Graecorum Graecus fulget nunc Liuddo colendus.” See also the peculiar equation in St. Gallen, Cod. Sang. 907, access e-codices.unifr.ch/de/csg/0907/1 (08/08/2020), at p. 111: “greci goti.”

<sup>115</sup> Palm, *Rom, Römertum und Imperium* (1959), p. 107.

<sup>116</sup> See the discussion in Schreiner, “*Translatio studii*” (2018), p. 142.

<sup>117</sup> “Ἑλληνίζειν· οὐ τὸ διαλέγεσθαι μόνον ἑλληνιστί, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ τρόπῳ εἶναι Ἑλληνα,” cited after Koder, “Sprache” (2012), p. 10, n. 31.

<sup>118</sup> Photios, *Epist.* 18, vol. 1, p. 133: “πάνδες γὰρ καὶ βαρβάρων καὶ Ἑλλήνων.”

<sup>119</sup> See Koder, “Byzanz” (1990), p. 104, suggesting that *Ἰπαικός* was conceived as a Latin borrowing.

<sup>120</sup> Koder, “Sprache” (2012), pp. 14–15. See also Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), p. 133.

<sup>121</sup> Koder, “Byzanz” (1990), p. 104; Vryonis, “The Greek identity” (1999), p. 29; Koder, “Griechische Identitäten” (2003), pp. 299–300; Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), pp. 136–8; Kapriev, “Vier Arten” (2012), pp. 6–7; Stouraitis, “Byzantine Romanness” (2018), p. 208.

<sup>122</sup> Photios, *Epist.* 47, vol. 1, p. 93: “ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν Ἑλληνα, καὶ ἐν Ἑλληνισμῷ, καὶ βασιλεὺς.” Cf. the translation by White (1982): “He was a pagan, a Greek, and ruled over Greeks.”

<sup>123</sup> Photios, *Epist.* 116, vol. 1, p. 154: “Ἑλληνικὸν τε καὶ βάρβαρον.” See also, e.g., *Epistula Synodica* 10.6, p. 38: “Ἰουδαῖοι τε καὶ Ἕλληνες.” The translator Gauer renders the latter with “non-Christian Greeks.”

designation “Hellene” as a reference to paganism entailed that being called this way could be considered an insult,<sup>124</sup> which is why it was only used very sparingly in Byzantium.<sup>125</sup> The only exception was, as mentioned above, when it referred to natives from the Greek heartland. In this context, even the term *Γραικός* was occasionally used, as when Constantine VII employed it to relate to the inhabitants of Patras and the Peloponnese.<sup>126</sup>

The term “Hellene” was not much more common in the medieval west.<sup>127</sup> Gantner pointed out that this designation was used in the Greek version of the *Apocalypse* of pseudo-Methodius to translate the Syriac term *yawnaye*, which referred to the emperor. The Greek translator added the explanation “or [the emperor of the] Romans” to “Hellene,” seemingly, as he was worried that it could otherwise be erroneously related to paganism. The Latin version then translated the Greek version with “the king [i.e., emperor] of the Greeks [translating ‘Ελλήνων’] or the Romans [translating ‘Ρωμαίων’].” Gantner concluded that “both Syriac and Latin speakers regarded the population of the core area of the empire as ‘Greeks’ while the Greek speakers preferred ‘Romans.’”<sup>128</sup> The fact that the early eighth-century Latin translator used the term *Graecus* instead of “Hellene” suggests that he or she was aware of the ambiguity of the Greek *Ἕλλην*, and, for this reason, wanted to make sure that it would not be mistakably related to the pre-Christian emperors. This translation is another early example of *Graecus* being used to refer to the Byzantines.

The apostolic notion of *Graecus* discussed above, implying a negative connotation to refer to the Byzantines, was soon adopted by the Franks. Their relations with the Byzantines had deteriorated in the aftermath of the Council of Nicaea in 787, to be further discussed in section VII.3: the council was prominently slandered in the *Royal Frankish Annals* as “pseudo-synod of the Greeks, falsely called the seventh [ecumenical council],” and a comparable statement is contained in the relevant entry of the *Annales Fuldenses*. It explains that the synod held in Worms in 868, aimed to respond to the “Greek idiocy.”<sup>129</sup> Here as in the previous papal letters, the designation *Graecus* was closely associated with the western reproach of eastern heterodoxy. As it seems, the negative

<sup>124</sup> Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), p. 138.

<sup>125</sup> This changed until the later medieval period, see Vryonis, “The Greek identity” (2000), pp. 32–3; Malamut, “De l’empire des Romains” (2014), pp. 165–80.

<sup>126</sup> Koder, “Griechische Identitäten” (2003), pp. 306–7; Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), p. 140; Kaplanis, “Antique names” (2014), pp. 81–97. See also Vryonis, “The Greek identity” (1999), p. 32; Stouraitis, “Roman identity” (2014), p. 208.

<sup>127</sup> E.g., Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6, see below.

<sup>128</sup> *Apocalypse* 13.11, p. 56: “βασιλεὺς Ἑλλήνων, ἦτοι Ῥωμαίων”; Latin version: p. 126: “rex Gregorum sive Romanorum.” Gantner, “The label ‘Greeks’” (2013), p. 306, with n. 15.

<sup>129</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 794: “Pseudosynodus Grecorum, quam falso septimam vocabant, pro adorandis imaginibus fecerunt, reiecta est a pontificibus”; *Annales Fuldenses* a. 868, p. 67: “Grecorum ineptiis.” See also Herbers, “Papst Nikolaus I.” (1993), p. 51.

connotation of this term was soon known in the Byzantine east: it is striking that *Γραικός*, which until then was used as a neutral regional self-designation, fell into disuse soon after 800.<sup>130</sup>

## The “Emperor of the Greeks”

The western designations of the eastern emperors reflect the negative attitude toward the Byzantines. The Franks willingly used degrading denominations to refer to the Byzantine emperors, comparable to the Byzantine designations used for the Frankish monarchs. The appellation “emperor of the Greeks” was most common,<sup>131</sup> less frequent were designations like “emperor of Constantinople.”<sup>132</sup> From a Byzantine perspective, being “Roman” implied belonging to the *oikumene*, whereas being “Greek” involved a reduction, given that the Greeks were only one among many peoples inhabiting the empire. These varied Frankish appellations for the Byzantine emperors were neither meaningless nor neutral.<sup>133</sup> They were a western response to Byzantine designations like that of “emperor of the Franks” (*τῶν Φράγγων βασιλεὺς*), used in reference to Charlemagne, or “king of the Franks” (*ῥήγα Φραγγίας* or *ἄρχοντα Φραγγίας*), as in the case of monarchs like Louis II.<sup>134</sup> Comparable to the Byzantine wording, these western appellations related either to a reduced territory or scope of the populace under the respective monarch’s authority: while “Franks” only applied to one part of the inhabitants of the territories under Frankish authority, the Frankish characterizations of the eastern emperor as “Greek” or as “Constantinopolitan” restricted the emperor’s authority either to the Greek-speaking east or its capital. In so doing, they challenged the Byzantine claim to universal emperorship. In a similar line of thought, Theodulf of Orléans in the *Opus Caroli*, consistently restricted the term “emperor” to Constantine the Great.<sup>135</sup> Although this is not the only example dating

<sup>130</sup> Kaplanis, “Antique names” (2014), p. 87.

<sup>131</sup> E.g., Nicholas I, *Epist.* 84, pp. 441 and 442: “Graecorum inclitus imperator,” “imperator Graecorum”; *Annales Fuldenses* a. 872, p. 75: “Basilii Grecurum inperatoris legati”; *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 894, p. 125: “Leonis imperatoris Grecurum”; Einhard, *Vita Caroli* 19, p. 24: “Constantino Grecurum imperatore.” Similar *Annales Mettenses Priores* a. 803; *Annales Bertiniani* a. 867, a. 869; *Annales Fuldenses* a. 896.

<sup>132</sup> E.g., Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 15, p. 18: “Constantinopolitanum imperatorem”; *Annales Bertiniani* a. 853, p. 68: “filiam imperatoris Constantinopolitani”; Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.26, p. 35: “imperator Constantinopoleos.” Ado of Vienne, *Chron.* col. 133, around 870 mirrored such references to Nikephoros I and Charlemagne with: “Imperator Francorum Carolus, cum Nicepboro Constantinopolitano imperatore.”

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Kolia-Dermitzaki, “Byzantium” (2014), p. 370, and Herbers, “Papst Nikolaus I.” (1993), pp. 63–4.

<sup>134</sup> Kolia-Dermitzaki, “Byzantium” (2014), p. 369.

<sup>135</sup> Clauß, “Imports and embargos” (2017), p. 100. See, e.g., *Opus Caroli* 4.13, p. 520: “quoque domum a Grecurum regibus legimus fuisse profanatam.”



to the time before Charlemagne's imperial coronation,<sup>136</sup> they only become more frequent after that and, in opposition to Annick Peters-Custot's assessment in relation to Italy,<sup>137</sup> they were meant to be condescending.

The degrading intention behind these designations is confirmed by further evidence: Thegan, for example, in his *Life of Louis the Pious* opposed the "bone memoria" of Charlemagne to the lack of "memoria" related to the "princeps of the city of Constantinople," whose name he claimed not to remember.<sup>138</sup> The western sources also include designations implying a minor status of the ruler, which corresponds to the Byzantine references of an emperor as "king": Notker, in his *Life of Charlemagne*, for example, characterized an unnamed emperor as "rex Constantinopoleos," in contrast to the *imperator* Charlemagne.<sup>139</sup> The *Life* consistently refers to Charlemagne as *imperator*, with the exception where Notker compared the Carolingian as earthly ruler to God as the heavenly king ("rex per regem cęlorum iuraret").<sup>140</sup> On another occasion, the same author used the singular designation "rex Byzantinus" to refer to the emperor Constantine VI.<sup>141</sup>

Notker's reference to an unnamed "king of Constantinople" belongs to a report on a legate sent by Charlemagne from the Saxon battlefield to the imperial capital: The Byzantine emperor, characterized as a "man immersed in idleness and useless for any warlike deed," inquired about whether his "son" Charles lived in peace. The legate responded by reporting about the troublesome Saxons, which the emperor called "insignificant enemies without either name or virtue," by claiming that he would offer the Saxons to Charlemagne. When the "most warlike" Frankish monarch heard about this, he smiled and responded to his legate, that the eastern emperor would have served him much better if he had offered him a pair of linen trousers for his journey.<sup>142</sup> The tale presents an eastern emperor who pretends to be subordinated to the Franks and able to benevolently delegate authority over a faraway people, an arrogance countered by Frankish indifference.

The purposefulness of the designation of an emperor as "king" is confirmed by Notker's tale about the turning of a fish on a plate in the emperor's presence. The Frankish legate would have dishonored the eastern emperor out of ignorance of this being prohibited at his table (*mensa regis*), and was meant to be executed.

<sup>136</sup> See the examples in Sarti, "From *Romanus* to *Graecus*" (2018), p. 149.

<sup>137</sup> Peters-Custot, "Grecs et Byzantins" (2014), p. 185.

<sup>138</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 9, p. 190. "Inter quos venerunt legati Grecorum cum Amalhario Treuerensi episcopo, qui erat legatus bone memorię Karoli ad principem Constantinopolitanum, cuius nomen modo memoriae non occurrit."

<sup>139</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.5, p. 53.

<sup>140</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6, p. 57.

<sup>141</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.26, p. 37: "Et maxime, quia pridem magnanimus Karolus, cum legati regis Bizantini venirent." Cf. Evagrius, *Hist.* 2.17: "Ἀέων ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν Βυζαντίῳ."

<sup>142</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.5, p. 53: "Multo melius tibi rex ille consulisset, si unum lineum femorale ad tantum iter tibi tribuisset." See also Wickham, "Ninth-century Byzantium" (1998), p. 248.

The emperor offered a last wish to the poor man, although excluding to have his life spared. The Frankish legate, nonetheless, managed to use this offer to save himself by wishing that everyone who saw him doing the alleged crime would lose his eyesight. Notker again consistently referred to the emperor as “king,” and he only switched to “emperor” when his protagonist addressed the same in direct speech.<sup>143</sup> This shift thus was part of the story. Notker finally commented on its happy ending with: “Thus this clever man of Francia managed to overcome vain Hellas at its own residence and returned to his homeland a victor and in safety.”<sup>144</sup> It confirms that this tale intended to express Frankish superiority toward the Byzantines.

The Frankish appellation *Graecus* implied a debasement of the Byzantines. Interestingly, such negative depictions of the Byzantines by the Franks were significantly more common and diverse than the other way around. Arbagi's thesis that the westerners related to the Byzantines out of ignorance is refuted, for example, by several instances proving that the Franks were familiar with Byzantine etiquette. When Einhard explained in his *Life of Charlemagne* that the newly crowned emperor bore the hatred of the Byzantines with great patience, which he conciliated by regular embassies and letters addressing the eastern emperors as “brothers,” the author did not call them “Greek” but “Roman emperors.”<sup>145</sup> Again, this is significant, as by referring to the Byzantine disapproval of the Frankish imperial title, the author referred to the Byzantine self-perception as “Romans,” which means that he was aware of it. As we have seen, Einhard had some knowledge of Greek, skills he probably improved during the many visits of Byzantine legates at the Frankish court between the early 790s and 830. This probably was when he learned about the Byzantine saying he quoted in Greek about not having a Frank as a neighbor.<sup>146</sup> Thus, although Einhard knew about the Byzantine self-designation, he consistently referred to the Byzantines as *Graeci*—with the mentioned exception—, a terminology that had already become accepted in the west before his time. Also noteworthy is Notker's *Life of Charlemagne*: in a rather confused section where he confounded Pippin the Younger with his son Charlemagne, the author referred to the Byzantines as *Romans*, but he immediately corrected himself by explaining that people would actually call them “Constantinopolitans.”<sup>147</sup> The acts of the Council of Paris in

<sup>143</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6, p. 54: “Tunc parumper deliberans cunctis audientibus in hæc verba prorupit: ‘Obsecro, domine imperator [. . .]’ Et rex ait: ‘Postula, quodcumque volueris, et impetrabis.’”

<sup>144</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.6, p. 55: “Tum sapiens ille Francigena vanissima Hellade in suis sedibus exsuperata victor et sanus in patriam suam reversus est.”

<sup>145</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 28, pp. 32–3: “Invidiam tamen suscepti nominis, Romanis imperatoribus super hoc dignantibus, magna tulit patientia. [. . .] in epistolis fratres eos appellando.” Cf. Wickham, “Ninth-century Byzantium” (1998), p. 248, n. 9. Another example in Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.15, p. 79.

<sup>146</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 16.

<sup>147</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, 2.15, p. 79: “Romanorum, immo ut verius loquar Constantinopolitanorum.”

825 contain another example where the Byzantine designation was used: in a section that presents a letter of Pope Eugenius II to the Byzantine emperors Michael and Theophilos, the latter two are addressed as “imperatores Romanorum.”<sup>148</sup> The third section will now study the incomparably more complex evolution of Roman identities in the west.

### 3. Western Romanness

In his study on Frankish history and identity, Helmut Reimitz argued that the first Frankish kings considered themselves rulers of a realm of different ethnic groups, comparable to the imperial model. The kingdom’s Frankish identity was only emphasized from the later sixth century. Gregory of Tours, in his works, presented an alternative vision of an integrative Christian realm. This vision of a Frankish kingdom was further developed until the early eighth century. The early Carolingians politicized the Christian character of Frankish identity, soon incorporating into a more integrative concept paving the way for a Carolingian vision of a Christian empire<sup>149</sup> already discussed in chapter II. Although Frankish identity had emerged from an ethnic concept, it thus evolved to become inclusive as it could be applied to all subjects of the Frankish kingdom. This means that in the Carolingian era, Gallo-Romans, Burgundians, Alemans, and individuals belonging to other ethnic groups could be conceived as “Franks,”<sup>150</sup> while their regional identity was maintained.<sup>151</sup> Hence, Frankish identity did not differ significantly from Byzantine Romanness in that both represented an identity shared by all the Christian subjects of a particular realm, as an inclusive identity adopted alongside other more regional identities.

From the early eighth century, a gradual differentiation between eastern and western Franks is perceptible, as emerges from the *Liber Historiae Francorum* that restricts the designation *Francus* to the Franks of Neustria.<sup>152</sup> Eastern Franks were soon increasingly distinguished from their western counterparts

<sup>148</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, p. 523. Similar in Hugh Capet’s letter to the Byzantine emperor, Gerbert, *Epist.* 111, p. 139: “Et enim nobis ostantibus nec Gallus nec Germanus fines lacesset Romani imperii.”

<sup>149</sup> Reimitz, *History, Frankish identity* (2015). See also Nelson, “Frankish identity” (2008), pp. 71–86.

<sup>150</sup> Reimitz, “*Omnes Franci*” (2008), in particular pp. 57–8. See also the inclusive definition in Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 15, p. 18: “Saxoniam, quae quidem Germaniae pars non modica est et eius quae a Francis incolitur.” Similar evolutions for the Romans under Lombard rule, see Borri, “Romans” (2014), pp. 39–71.

<sup>151</sup> See, e.g., Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.10, p. 13: “Galli et Aquitani, Edui et Hispani, Alamanni et Baioarii non parum se insignitos gloriabantur, si vel nomine Francorum servorum censeretur.”

<sup>152</sup> Reimitz, “*Omnes Franci*” (2008), pp. 60–2.

by designations like *Franci australes* or *Franci, qui citra Carbonariam*.<sup>153</sup> The ninth-century *Royal Frankish Annals* confirm this tendency toward a more regional identification, which not only uses the designation *Francia* to refer to the Frankish heartland, being conceived as one region besides others, like Saxony, Aquitania, or Italia.<sup>154</sup> At the end of the evolution of Frankish identity following the kingdom's division in 843, only the inhabitants of the western *regnum* retained their explicitly "Frankish" identity, as "French," while those living in the eastern realm were understood as "Franci Teutonici" or "Teutons."<sup>155</sup>

### The Romans of Rome

The origin of Roman identity was Italy. The city of Rome was venerated throughout the medieval period, be it because it was the first imperial capital, the head of the world (*orbis*), the burial place of the Apostles, the papal see, or all of this together.<sup>156</sup> For a long time, Rome was the city of all cities, and it may be no coincidence that the Latin term *urbs* ("city") itself is etymologically related to *orbis*.<sup>157</sup> The prestige of the Roman identity emerging from it is well attested by a quote attributed to the Gothic king Theodoric: "A miserable Roman imitates a Goth, a respected Goth imitates a Roman."<sup>158</sup> Since late Antiquity, this overarching Roman identity also gradually detached from its origin city of Rome in the west, allowing a distinct local Roman identity to emerge along the Tiber. Bronwen Neil argued that the second half of the seventh century marked the transition toward Rome ceasing to consider itself and being conceived as part of the Roman empire, a process that engendered a new sense of Roman identity.<sup>159</sup> The resulting urban Romanness was a local feature related to Rome's gradual defection from the emperor, which only became more pronounced in the later eighth century, when apostolic Romanness had become dislodged from imperial Roman identity.<sup>160</sup> Later in the ninth century, Ratramn of Corbie († c. 868),

<sup>153</sup> Reimitz, "Nomen Francorum obscuratum" (2010), p. 294.

<sup>154</sup> Eggert, "Zu Inhalt" (2001), pp. 131–2. Evidence diverging from the above: Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.10, p. 13: "Franciam vero interdum cum nominavero, omnes cisalpinas provincias significo." See also McKitterick, "Constructing the past" (1997), p. 127, on the meanings of *Franci* in earlier sources.

<sup>155</sup> Already attested, e.g., in Liutprand, *Antapodosis* 1.5, p. 8: "Francis Teutonicis"; Liutprand, *Legatio* 33 and 37; Wolfram, "Lateinische Herrschertitel" (1973), pp. 135–40; Petersohn, *Franken im Mittelalter* (2008), pp. 78–9; Lubich, "Einmal fränkisch" (2008), pp. 71–4.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), pp. 29 and 36–7.

<sup>157</sup> Vogt, *Orbis Romanus* (1929), p. 17.

<sup>158</sup> *Anonym. Val. post.* 12.61, p. 80: "Romanus miser imitator Gothum et utilis Gothus imitator Romanum."

<sup>159</sup> Neil, "Narrating" (2017), p. 83. See also West-Harling, "The Church of Ravenna" (2016), pp. 199–210.

<sup>160</sup> See also Wickham, "The Romans" (2000), pp. 159–68; McKitterick, "Romanness" (2018), pp. 143–56, on residues of ethnic notions of Romanness; Delogu, "The post-imperial Romanness" (2018), pp. 157, 171.

in his treatise against the Greeks, made this particular notion of Romanness explicit: Speaking of religious customs, he differed between the “westerners” (“occidentales”), the “easterners” (“orientales”), and the “Romans.”<sup>161</sup> Thus, two different notions of Romanness had developed, now coexisting in Italy, i.e., imperial Romanness and another related to papal Rome.

Regional identities also gained importance among the Greek-speaking population of the southern parts of the Italian peninsula, and they increasingly prevailed over the overarching imperial Roman identity, as Annick Peters-Custot pointed out.<sup>162</sup> Maya Maskarinec compared the adaptations of *Romanus* in Lombard Italy, to argue that this label was conceived here in an ethnic manner and within its Christian frame of interpretation,<sup>163</sup> comparable to notions of local Romanness attested in the Frankish world until the late seventh century.<sup>164</sup> The Frankish sources, on the other hand, consistently referred to the inhabitants of southern Italy under imperial authority as *Graeci*.<sup>165</sup>

While early Byzantine authors like Agathias still acknowledged the imperial significance of Rome, an importance Charlemagne and his successors later referred to in order to legitimize the coronation of a Roman emperor in the west,<sup>166</sup> the inhabitants of Rome seemingly preferred to have the city associated with its ancient past. Michael Grünbart put forward that Procopius, who had visited the eternal city along the Tiber himself, noticed how much its inhabitants cared for its ancient monuments and sought to maintain the city’s glory, a concern the author did not relate to Constantinople.<sup>167</sup> With the rise in importance of the pope, however, the imperial past took a back seat from the perspective of the city’s inhabitants to the benefit of its martyrs, and many ancient monuments were dismantled for new constructions.<sup>168</sup> Although Rome had already long ceased to be the head of the world, its role as the apostolic see now involved the city’s rise to the status of a spiritual capital of supraregional significance, a process allowing notions of western Romanness to remain attached to Rome. Thus, the anonymous late ninth-century poem *Versus Romae* rightly stresses:

<sup>161</sup> Ratramnus, *Contra Graec.* 4.2, pp. 309–10: “nec Romanos, nec occidentales discrepare, quandoquidem orientales multimoda separentur varietate.”

<sup>162</sup> Peters-Custot, “Grecs et Byzantins” (2014), p. 182. See also Schoolman, “Greeks” (2019).

<sup>163</sup> Maskarinec, “Who were the Romans?” (2013), pp. 297–364.

<sup>164</sup> Sarti, “Frankish Romanness” (2016), pp. 1043–8.

<sup>165</sup> E.g., Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 15, p. 18: “deinde Italiam totam, quae ab Augusta Praetoria usque in Calabriam inferiorem, in qua Graecorum ac Beneventanorum constat esse confinia.”

<sup>166</sup> Schramm, *Kaiser* (1929), p. 21, stressing in reference to Rome that “Es beherrschte nicht mehr den Erdkreis, aber um ihn zu beherrschen, musste man Macht über Rom haben.”

<sup>167</sup> Grünbart, “Die Fortdauer Roms” (2012), p. 209.

<sup>168</sup> Delogu, “The post-imperial Romanness” (2018), p. 159.

If the merits of Peter and Paul would not hold you,  
Rome, misery would already have transfixed you since a long time.<sup>169</sup>

Rome was never the capital of a medieval empire, as Gerd Tellenbach noted.<sup>170</sup> The coincidence of the role of Rome in the curricula of the Apostles Paul and Peter entailed that the ancient imperial metropolis could shift toward becoming the capital of the Latin Church.<sup>171</sup> Yitzhak Hen rightly stressed in reference to postimperial Rome that the city's "importance did not depend on its glorious pagan past or its political position, but on the fact that it became a Christian center founded by two apostles."<sup>172</sup> Naturally, the popes emphasized the apostolic character of their city, which was increasingly associated with its Roman name. The singularity of this identity was put forward by denying "Roman" status to the eastern empire, called *Graeci* ever since, as we have seen in the previous section. The Roman character of the apostolic see was particularly emphasized from the papacy of Hadrian and the subsequent apostolic promotion of a universal western "Roman empire," as Paolo Delogu argued.<sup>173</sup> A letter to Pippin the Younger by Pope Paul I of 766 referring to the "Roman Church, the head of the entire Church of God," is an early testimony of this evolution.<sup>174</sup> The underlying process of alienation and independence of papal Rome was accompanied by the elaboration of a vision of an apostolic *res publica* attested from the time of Stephen II. It was based on the territories gifted in the framework of the so-called *Donation of Pippin*, which were roughly identical with what Stephen III, in a letter to Charlemagne and his brother Carloman, referred to as the "Province of the Romans."<sup>175</sup>

The region of Rome is probably that which the title *patricius Romanorum* referred to, and the same that, in 754, was conferred on the Frankish kings. Although *patricius* was a Byzantine honorific title and its bestowal a prerogative of the emperor,<sup>176</sup> the addition *Romanorum* was unknown in the Byzantine east in this particular context. This and its allocation by the apostolic prelate suggest that it was meant to relate to the people of the city of Rome, and that the pope usurped the imperial prerogative to make such a grant.<sup>177</sup> The title

<sup>169</sup> *Versus Romae*, ll. 13–14, p. 556: "Non si te Petri meritum Paulique foveret, / Tempore iam longo, Roma, misella fores."

<sup>170</sup> Tellenbach, "Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio" (1982), p. 240.

<sup>171</sup> On the efforts involved in the redesign of Rome as the capital of saints, see McKitterick, "Transformations of the Roman past" (2015), pp. 225–44; Maskarinec, *City of saints* (2018).

<sup>172</sup> Hen, "Compelling and intense" (2018), p. 64.

<sup>173</sup> Delogu, "The papacy" (2000), p. 219.

<sup>174</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 37, p. 549: "matris vestrae Romane ecclesiae, caput omnium ecclesiarum Dei." Also in *ibid.* 60, p. 587: "sancta Dei catholica et apostolica Romana ecclesia"; *ibid.* 95, p. 637.

<sup>175</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 45, p. 562: "hanc nostram Romanorum provintiam."

<sup>176</sup> See Heil, *Der konstantinische Patriziat* (1966). On the Merovingian title *patricius*, see Lewis, "The dukes in the Regnum Francorum" (1976); Fox, "New honores for a region transformed" (2015).

<sup>177</sup> On the debate about the *patricius Romanorum*, see Ganshof, "Note" (1950); Ohnsorge, "Der *Patricius*-Titel Karls des Großen" (1960); Deér, "Zur Praxis der Verleihung" (1977), pp. 424–38.

defined the Carolingian role as protector of the apostolic Church of Rome and its people, although, as it seems, in a strictly territorial sense. This changed with Charlemagne's coronation of 800, when this role was expanded to the entire Frankish domain. The question about the meaning behind the Carolingian and subsequent imperial titles in the west once again is incomparably more complex, a topic we shall turn to now.

### Carolingian Notions of Romanness

The *Annals of Lorsch* argue that Charlemagne was entitled to be emperor through his authority over Rome and the other western imperial capitals, and Louis II, in his letter to Basil, stressed that his title “emperor of the Romans” would stem from the Roman capital, the Latin language, and their orthodoxy.<sup>178</sup> A comparable argumentation was also used by Pope Nicholas when he addressed the emperor Michael III, related to a debate to be further discussed in the following chapter.<sup>179</sup>

The unusually intensive and, at times, subtle discussions related to Romanness attest to the significance attributed to the Roman name in both east and west. Although the title of “Roman emperor” was never used consistently by Charlemagne or his successors, it was never abandoned and figured prominently with emperors like Louis II. Charlemagne himself may have been, to some extent, considered a Roman. Ohnsorge suggested that when Charlemagne was acknowledged as *patricius* of the Romans, he had become a Roman in the sense of the *Constitutio Antoniana* of 212,<sup>180</sup> although Walter Pohl argued against this by stressing that “Charlemagne may have become a Roman emperor, but that hardly meant that he also became a Roman.”<sup>181</sup> While the evidence indeed does not suffice to define Charlemagne's Romanness with sufficient certainty, the question that requires further discussion is what meanings the “Roman” addition to his imperial name was meant to carry in the west more in general, and how it related to the Byzantine empire.

From the fifth century, terms like *fides Romana* referred to Nicene Christianity.<sup>182</sup> Related terminology originated a new interpretation of Romanness that would gradually become predominant, not only in the west. In

<sup>178</sup> Louis II, *Epist.*

<sup>179</sup> Nicholas I, *Epist.* 88. See also Bougard, “Entre Latins et Grecs” (2019), pp. 72–7, stressing the commonness of these argumentations. The two exchanges are discussed in Chrysos, “Ἰπτακοὶ καὶ Ρωμαῖοι” (2019), pp. 91–117.

<sup>180</sup> Ohnsorge, “Das Kaisertum der Eirene” (1963), pp. 231–2; Ohnsorge, “Das abendländische Kaisertum” (1983), p. 6.

<sup>181</sup> Pohl, “Romanness” (2014), p. 407.

<sup>182</sup> Conant, *Staying Roman* (2012), p. 6.



the later sixth century, Gregory of Tours, in his *Glory of the Martyrs*, explained, in a context where he quoted people characterizing other contemporaries as “Romans”: “by Romans they call men of our belief.”<sup>183</sup> It is one among few rare occasions where the Frankish sources used this designation explicitly to refer to “Christians.” A similar meaning of *Romanus* is contained in the *Life of Eligius*.<sup>184</sup> I have argued elsewhere that the Franks probably adopted this notion of *Romanus* from Arian Spain, where it was first used to refer to orthodox Christians as those adhering to Chalcedonian Christianity, comparable to the terminology subsequently propagated by the Roman prelate.<sup>185</sup> The assumption that this notion was not yet common in seventh-century Gaul is confirmed by Jamie Kreiner. She stressed that several Merovingian early seventh-century *Lives*, like the *Life of Gaugerici of Cambrai*, characterized their protagonists as being “of Roman descent” and of “Christian religion.” While she is right that “the two identities were meaningfully linked,” the same evidence also shows that Roman identity not yet necessarily implied Christianity.<sup>186</sup>

Until the later eighth century, the Christian connotation of *Romanus* was adopted by authors related to the Frankish court. The letters of Alcuin of York illustrate the spectrum of possible meanings of this designation around 800: it was used to refer to ancient Romans, the city of Rome and its inhabitants, the pope, Christian religion, and the Church in an essentially spiritual manner. There is hardly a source using it to refer to the Byzantines or other individuals from outside Italy.<sup>187</sup> Similar terminology is attested, for example, by the *Royal Frankish Annals*, the *Annales Fuldenses*, or the *Annales Bertiniani*, which only use *Romanus* to refer to elements located in Italy and, more particularly, the papal territories.<sup>188</sup> There is further evidence for it alluding to elements related to Christian religion and its ecclesiastical institutions, which once more could include the papal see.<sup>189</sup>

The notion of Christian Romanness referring to Chalcedonian orthodoxy was not a western peculiarity. As indicated above, it was also key to Byzantine Roman identity<sup>190</sup> and eastern imperial traditions, which were inextricably tied

<sup>183</sup> Gregory, *Gloria Mart.* 24, p. 502: “Romanos enim vocitant nostrae homines religionis.” Similar *ibid.* 78.

<sup>184</sup> *Vita Eligii* 2.20, p. 712: “Numquam tu, Romane [. . .] consuetudines nostras evellere poteris.”

<sup>185</sup> Sarti, “From *Romanus* to *Graecus*” (2018), p. 144.

<sup>186</sup> Kreiner, “Romanness in Merovingian Hagiography” (2018), pp. 315–18, quote at p. 318. See *Vita Gaugerici* 1, p. 652: “Romanis nationes, christianitates vero religionem.”

<sup>187</sup> Further details in Sarti, “Charlemagne’s empire” (2016), pp. 1050–2.

<sup>188</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 767, a. 773, a. 800, a. 815, a. 817, a. 824, a. 827; *Annales Fuldenses* a. 850, a. 875, a. 878, a. 882, a. 885; *Annales Bertiniani* a. 853, a. 864, a. 867, a. 869, a. 878. Similar, e.g., Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 6, 28.

<sup>189</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 753, a. 773, a. 808, a. 821, a. 823, a. 826; *Annales Fuldenses* a. 833, a. 863, a. 865, a. 867, a. 868, a. 874, a. 878, a. 882, a. 885. *Annales Bertiniani* a. 837, a. 844, a. 858, a. 859, a. 864, a. 865, a. 867, a. 868, a. 869, a. 872, a. 876, a. 877, a. 878. Similar Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 1, 3, 6, 19, 23. See also Hen, “Compelling and intense” (2018), p. 67.

<sup>190</sup> Greatrex, “Roman identity” (2000), pp. 277–8; Stouraitis, “Byzantine Romanness” (2018), pp. 203–5.

to Christian religion.<sup>191</sup> It emerged gradually, a development that only ended after the sixth century, when pagans could still be considered “Romans.”<sup>192</sup> Once the empire was genuinely Christian and orthodox, individuals could be considered members of the Roman empire once baptized, an evolution that has become palpable from the time of Justinian.<sup>193</sup> François Bougard argued that after that, Christian universalism at times surmounted in importance the strictly Roman character as an imperial feature, particularly in the context of the rivalries between the authorities in east and west.<sup>194</sup> One reason certainly was the different potential readings of the Roman name and the entitlements it could carry. Delogu is probably right in this context that Charlemagne consciously chose a title that did not refer to the “Romans” but one characterizing his empire as “Roman” to avoid any unwanted interpretation, in particular in reference to the inhabitants of Rome, which had been allowed a key role in the bestowal and legitimacy of the Carolingian empire.<sup>195</sup>

In the Carolingian era, the only inhabitants of the west the term *Romanus* was commonly used to refer to were those of papal Rome and its territories,<sup>196</sup> and the Romans living in Lombard territory<sup>197</sup>—alongside some occasional references to Byzantines from Italy.<sup>198</sup> I showed elsewhere that the term’s association with the city of Rome, the pope, and the Latin Church entailed that *Romanus* could refer to orthodox Christianity.<sup>199</sup> Although the term *Romanus* may have been first used to refer to Christians in Spain, the idea to relate it more specifically to western orthodoxy seemingly originated from the apostolic capital where, as we have seen, the popes emphasized their “Roman” identity to strengthen their particular position toward the Franks and the Byzantines. In this context, scholars pondered whether the pope had forced a “Roman” empire onto Charlemagne, as Einhard would have suggested in his report on the coronation of 800.<sup>200</sup> However, this was not the case. Leo III was not very insistent on the “Roman” characterization of Charlemagne’s empire—quite the opposite. The description of his coronation in Rome in the *Liber Pontificalis* only mentions Charlemagne’s title as “emperor of the Romans” outside the acclamation,<sup>201</sup>

<sup>191</sup> Ohnsorge, “Das abendländische Kaisertum” (1983), p. 4; Rapp, “Hellenic identity” (2008), p. 144.

<sup>192</sup> See Treadgold, “The formation” (2009), pp. 322–3.

<sup>193</sup> Esders, “Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitungen” (2010), pp. 25–6.

<sup>194</sup> “Entre Latins et Grecs” (2019), pp. 65–77.

<sup>195</sup> Delogu, “The post-imperial Romanness” (2018), p. 159.

<sup>196</sup> E.g., *Annales Fuldenses* a. 896; Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 25; *Annales Bertiniani* a. 869.

<sup>197</sup> See, e.g., the works of Paul the Deacon and the eighth-century Lombard laws.

<sup>198</sup> Peters-Custot, “Grecs et Byzantins” (2014).

<sup>199</sup> Sarti, “Charlemagne’s empire” (2016).

<sup>200</sup> E.g., Grabois, “Charlemagne” (1981), p. 799, arguing for Charlemagne’s dissatisfaction with his *nomen imperatoris*.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. *LP, Vita Leonis III*, 23, vol. II, p. 7: “Karolo, piissimo Augusto a Deo coronato, magno et pacifico imperatore, vita et victoria!”

and the pope also consistently refrained from addressing the new empire as such.<sup>202</sup> This is particularly striking as, before December 800, he used to refer to the Frankish kings as “patricius Romanorum.”<sup>203</sup> Although the popes certainly had an interest in a “Roman” empire in the west, it thus appears that it was Charlemagne’s decision to become the founder of a “Roman” empire.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, the question requiring further discussion is what the designation “Roman emperor” may have meant to the Franks.

Apart from the respective coronation reports, the Frankish narrative sources do not characterize the western emperors or the empire as “Roman.” The same applies to the inhabitants of the Frankish world outside of the former Exarchate in Italy. This means that neither the emperor, the empire, nor its subjects were commonly referred to as “Roman(s).” Peter Classen argued that although the Carolingian empire had no capital city, it derived its name from such a metropolis,<sup>205</sup> a reference Matthias Becher more specifically related to the city of Rome and the pope.<sup>206</sup> The reference to the empire’s Roman character also potentially carried a genuinely Christian notion, as emerges from the above. The uncommonness and selectivity of using the Roman name in the Frankish sources to refer to the western empire are remarkable. Two explanations are conceivable: either the “Roman” nature of the western empire was considered to emanate naturally and thus implicit in relevant designations or it was not considered important enough to be mentioned on every occasion. While the latter option would be in contradiction with the significance attributed to the Roman name in the debate between the eastern and the western authorities, the first would imply that the western terminology compared to the Byzantine usage, even though, in the east, the “Roman” characterization of the empire had already been comparatively common in the narrative sources from the sixth century.<sup>207</sup>

In the earlier tenth century, the Bulgarian Zar Symeon I († 927) called himself “emperor of the Romans.” The Byzantine emperor would have responded in a letter written by the secretary Theodore Daphnopates: “seizing some of our people prisoner through your raids and conquests will not make you emperor of the Romans. [. . .] Of which Romans do you call yourself the emperor?”<sup>208</sup> The same question

<sup>202</sup> E.g., Leo III, *Epist.* 1, p. 87: “Karolo Augusto Leo episcopus servus servorum dei.”

<sup>203</sup> E.g., *Codex Carolinus* 11, p. 504: “Pippino regi Francorum et paritio Romanorum.” See also Müller-Mertens, “Römisches Reich” (2009), p. 59.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Anton, “Beobachtungen” (1990), p. 117; Kempf, “Das mittelalterliche Kaisertum” (1956), p. 232.

<sup>205</sup> Classen, “*Causa imperii*” (1983), p. 45.

<sup>206</sup> Becher, “Die Kaiserkrönung” (2002), pp. 29–30.

<sup>207</sup> See the examples in Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), pp. 111–12.

<sup>208</sup> Theodore Daph., *Epist.* 5, p. 59: “Μὴ τοῦτό σοι λογιζέσθω, πνευματικὲ ἀδελφέ, πᾶσαν τὴν Δύσιν καταλῆσαντι καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ κατοικοῦντας αἰχμαλώτους λαβομένω, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ τοιοῦτου τρόπου βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων κατονομάζη. [. . .] Ποίων δὲ Ῥωμαίων ἑαυτὸν ἀποκαλεῖς βασιλεῖα”; Kaldellis, “From Rome to New Rome” (2012), p. 390.

must be applied to the Frankish emperor: whom did the title “emperor of the Romans” refer to? Peter Classen argued that when Charlemagne, in his imperial name, referred to the “*imperium Romanum*,” i.e., not its inhabitants, he adopted the usual Italian title, and that this would express his entitlement to the empire toward Byzantium.<sup>209</sup> Herwig Wolfram pointed out that the Franks adapted their imperial titles to their respective addressee and should be studied in the relevant context.

An example worth discussing is the *Divisio regnorum* issued in 806 by Charlemagne to establish the division of the Frankish realm among his sons after his death. It contained the following addition: “to all the catholic population of peoples and nations of the present and the future who are subservient to our empire and authority.”<sup>210</sup> This *intitulatio* may have attempted to avoid referring to papal Rome, given the papal attempt to establish the coronation as the constitutional act (see section II.2). Wolfram argued that this version is likely closer to the original and that the emperor addressed the different ethnic subgroups of the entire Christian population, including the inhabitants of the Byzantine empire, given that “catholic” was still synonymous with “orthodox.”<sup>211</sup> Considering the final part of the quoted section and the context, it seems more probable that it was only addressed to the population of the Carolingian empire, however. It confirms to what extent Charlemagne considered himself the ruler of a Christian population, regardless of its different ethnicities.<sup>212</sup> The Roman character defined the empire, not its inhabitants, as an empire integrating the sum of the Carolingian domains, an understanding of *imperium* confirmed by Louis the Pious’ short imperial title (see section II.3). The Carolingian “Roman empire” thus was understood to harbor a multiethnic population of Christians, which implies a conception fairly close to the Byzantine understanding of empire.

Any reference to “Romans” as a people under Frankish authority would have been more conceivable before Charlemagne’s coronation, relating to any parts of the population considered descendants of “Romans.” A short historiography from Lorsch known as the *Annales Nazariani* contains a rare example of Charlemagne’s kingdom being referred to as “*regnum Francorum atque/et Langobardorum Romanorumque*.”<sup>213</sup> This title is used in the context of the monarch’s voyage to Italy, which was succeeded by the reinstatement of Tassilo III in 787. A similar title is attested in a Formulary dating between 774 and 791, probably from the

<sup>209</sup> Classen, “*Romanum gubernans imperium*” (1952), pp. 119–20.

<sup>210</sup> *Capitularia Francorum* 45, in Codd. 2 and 3, p. 126: “*omnibus fidelibus sanctae Dei aecclesiae et cuncto populo catholico praesenti et future gentium ac nationum que sub imperio ac regimine nostro*.” See Schlesinger, “Kaisertum und Reichsteilung” (1958), p. 16; Patzold, “Die Kaiseridee” (2014), p. 55.

<sup>211</sup> Wolfram, “Lateinische Herrschertitel” (1973), pp. 55 and 80.

<sup>212</sup> Similar Nelson, “Frankish identity” (2008), p. 79.

<sup>213</sup> *Annales Nazariani* a. 786, pp. 161–2: “*regnum francorum / atque langobardorum romanorumque*.”

monastery of Murbach in Alsace.<sup>214</sup> It reminds of the title Charlemagne used in his first imperial document issued in Rome in March 801, with the only difference being that the reference to the “Romans” precedes that of the “Franks.”<sup>215</sup>

The meaning of the “Roman” addition to the Frankish title has been much debated. Werner Ohnsorge, who opined that Charlemagne in 781 was granted the patriciate with Byzantine consent, argued that his emperorship mainly referred to the monarch’s authority over Italy and Rome. He would have given up calling his empire “Roman” after 812/13, when his imperial status was confirmed by Byzantium.<sup>216</sup> As seen in section II.2, Eckhard Müller-Mertens argued for an even more restricted notion of “imperium Romanum” only referring to the region of Rome. The “imperium Romanum” would be conceived as a *regnum* on equal par with the Carolingian kingdoms, representing the Frankish realm only in their sum.<sup>217</sup> I have argued elsewhere that this could not be the case.<sup>218</sup> If the Frankish “imperium Romanum” was restricted to Italy, or Rome, Charlemagne’s rise to emperorship would have borne no significant benefit compared to his prior status of *patricius Romanorum*. More importantly, the imperial status would not have applied to the remaining Carolingian territories. Evidence like the 802 oaths requested by the entire population of the Frankish realm to the “emperor,” already mentioned in the same section II.2, confirm that Charlemagne’s empire applied to the sum of the Carolingian domains.

Who belonged to the imperial *populus*? Peter Classen, in 1952, argued that “the Franks neither conceived themselves to be Romans nor to be members of the *imperium Romanum*.”<sup>219</sup> Gerd Tellenbach, in contrast, in 1982 suggested, referring to the late Ottonians, that the “Romans” of the western empire were neither the Saxons, Franks, “Germans” (Germ. “Deutsche”), Italians, Burgundians, nor all the Christians belonging to the Roman Church, but the sum of its subjects. The Roman law and medieval empire would have been genuinely rooted in ancient Roman tradition and thus conceived to apply universally, meaning that its *Romani* corresponded to the global heirs of the ancient Romans, i.e., the founders of Rome and the *orbis Romanus*.<sup>220</sup>

None of these theories are conclusively backed as such by the evidence which attests, on the one hand, to the strong connection between Roman and Christian

<sup>214</sup> *Formulae Morbacenses* 5, p. 331: “regi Francorum et Langobardorum Romanorumque.” See also Rio, *Legal practice* (2009), pp. 150–1.

<sup>215</sup> *Dipl. Karol.* 196, p. 264: “rex Francorum et Langobardorum ac patricius Romanorum.” See also Herwig, *Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel* (1967), p. 235.

<sup>216</sup> Ohnsorge, “Neue Beobachtungen” (1975), pp. 9–12.

<sup>217</sup> See Müller-Mertens, “Römisches Reich” (2009). Similar Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), p. 482.

<sup>218</sup> See Sarti, “Charlemagne’s empire” (2016).

<sup>219</sup> Classen, “*Romanum gubernans*” (1952), p. 120: “die Franken fühlten sich weder als Römer noch als Glieder des imperium Romanum.”

<sup>220</sup> Tellenbach, “Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio” (1982), p. 244.

identity and, on the other hand, to the persistence of Frankish and other more regional identities. They were never explicitly superseded by an overarching Roman identity. As we have seen, Charlemagne's imperial title referred to his empire as well as his kingship, while the former was meant to encompass the latter. In consequence, any inhabitant of the Frankish realm was a member of the Roman empire. Under Louis the Pious, this key concept was maintained, as his official title referred to the empire without any further specification.

Although the Carolingian empire's multiethnic and genuinely Christian nature was well reflected by the imperial titles, the remaining evidence is not entirely consistent. An anonymous elegy written to deplore the death of Charlemagne stresses, for example:

Franks, Romans, and all believers  
 feel painful grief and great suffering.  
 Woe, miserable me! [. . .]

Woe to you, Rome, and the Roman people,  
 the highest glorious Charles is lost!  
 Woe, miserable me! [. . .]

That all the Christian people of the entire world [*orbis*]  
 carries to death the venerable prince.  
 Woe, miserable me!<sup>221</sup>

The Franks and the Romans are two major peoples belonging to the monarch's Christian subjects. Here, not the Romans, who are associated with the city of Rome, but the "Christian people," represent the sum of Charlemagne's (former) subjects.

Helmut Reimitz noted that following Charlemagne's imperial coronation, the Frankish sources increasingly used ancient Roman territorial designations like *Gallia* or *Germania* instead of referring to the empire's inhabitants as "Franks."<sup>222</sup> This finding may be interpreted as a symptom of uncertainty about dealing with the empire's Roman nature. Concurrently, we have evidence of a strong Frankish self-consciousness, as attested in Ado of Vienne's *Chronicle*, calling Charlemagne "the first emperor of Frankish descent."<sup>223</sup> Evidence for related Frankish and

<sup>221</sup> *Planctus de obitu Karoli* 3, 11 and 16, pp. 435–6: "Franci, Romani atque cuncti creduli / luctu punguntur et magna molestia. / Heu mihi misero! [. . .] Vae tibi Roma Romanoque populo / amisso summo glorioso Karolo! / Heu mihi misero! [. . .] Quae cuncti orbis christiano populo / vexit ad mortem venerandum principem. / Heu mihi misero!"

<sup>222</sup> Reimitz, "Omnes Franci" (2008), pp. 58–9.

<sup>223</sup> Ado of Vienne, *Chron.* col. 130: "Carolo imperator primus ex gente Francorum, annis quadraginta quinquē." See also his reference as *imperator Francorum* (col. 133).

Christian self-awareness becomes more abundant for the ninth century. This also emerges from the liturgy. Gerd Tellenbach, in his study on the role of the Roman and Christian empire, and the ensuing work by Ildar H. Garipzanov,<sup>224</sup> show that already the Merovingian liturgy related to the *imperium Romanum* in the *Good Friday* prayers and that, in the Frankish north, *Romanus* was increasingly completed and, from the mid-ninth century, often substituted, with *Francus/Francorum* or *Christianum/Christianorum*. Sometimes, *Romanus* was left out entirely. The evidence altogether attests to a remarkable regional diversity of the terminology used.<sup>225</sup> Concurrently, Carolingian sacramentaries, like the mid-eighth-century *Gelasium*, show that “Frankish” or “Roman” and Christian identities had converged to the point that they could occasionally be used interchangeably.<sup>226</sup> Other ninth-century sacramentaries include references to the “generous Christian empire of the Franks and the Romans” (“Christianum Francorum Romanorumque benignus imperium”).<sup>227</sup>

Any piece of information gathered from the sources is only able to provide an elitist glimpse into medieval thinking and ways to conceive the world. The reality was much more complex than what may be reconstructed from the evidence. The large majority of the opinions and contradictions related to the Roman empire and its significance that once must have been available are now lost. Related opinions are also likely to have varied in a single person, who, like today, may have changed over time, for example, in consideration of altered circumstances or new sponsors. The last section will now take a closer look at Roman identities in the Frankish legal evidence, which was even more complex than what we have seen until now.

### “Romans” in the Frankish Legal Evidence

The legal evidence conveys a significantly different concept of Romanness. This already emerges from what modern scholars call the *Long Prologue*, added to the

<sup>224</sup> Tellenbach, *Römischer und christlicher Reichsgedanke* (1934), with a critical edition of relevant evidence at pp. 45–71; Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), pp. 43–100, with a critical discussion of Tellenbach at pp. 48–9, and an edition of relevant sources at pp. 323–33.

<sup>225</sup> Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), pp. 85–7, and the summary table at p. 333. E.g., the *Post communionem* in the *Missa pro regibus* (Vatican Sacramentary): “aeterni regni evangelio Romanum imperium praeparasti.” Cf. Ninth-century *Missa pro regibus* (Gregorian Sacramentary): “Deus regnorum omnium et Christiani maxime protector imperii,” cited by Garipzanov, pp. 329–30. Cf. Tellenbach, *Römischer und christlicher Reichsgedanke* (1934), pp. 19–21, 31–4, and 40–1, and Haenssler, *Byzanz* (1960), pp. 70–1, dating this shift to the mid-eighth century.

<sup>226</sup> See Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), p. 85. See also Wilson (ed.), *The Gelasian Sacramentary* (1894), the earliest manuscript is Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. reg. 316, access [digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Reg.lat.316](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.316) (12/12/2020).

<sup>227</sup> See Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), p. 333; Dales, *Alcuin* (2013), pp. 274–5, n. 35.



*Salian Law* in the framework of its D-version issued by Pippin the Younger in 764. The *Prologue* stresses that the Franks “fought to shake off the heavy Roman yoke from their necks,” and that “after their baptism, the rediscovered bodies of the holy martyrs, which the Romans had burned with fire or garbled with iron or threw in front of the beasts to be torn apart, was decorated by the Franks with gold and precious stones.”<sup>228</sup> Eric Goosmann commented on this with the words: “No longer merely Rome’s successors, Pippin’s Franks had superseded them in both warfare and faith,” suggesting that this part of the *Prologue* “served to present Pippin as a new Clovis.”<sup>229</sup> The statement testifies to the Franks’ pre-eminence based on their quality as believers toward the “Romans,” a term that this time seems to refer to its ancient representatives. This means that we have here an identification of the Franks with the orthodox Christians, a concept that compares to the notion of Romanness that was soon to be adopted from papal Rome. The *Prologue* attests to a remarkable Frankish confidence that compares to that emerging from the Trojan legend characterizing the Franks as equal, although not identical, to the ancient Romans.

The remaining relevant legal evidence is even more intriguing. Ancient Romanness had always implied adherence to Roman law, which defined the status of a Roman.<sup>230</sup> The legal status of a “Roman” could be acquired not only by birth but also by manumission. Stefan Esders defined three distinct methods of manumission, all of which involved a significantly different legal status of the freedman: in the case of the “*civis Romanus*,” it implied a status of limited freedom of an individual being judged according to Roman law, the other options involved a free status where either the Church or the king took the role of guarantor.<sup>231</sup> Roman law was available thanks to several abbreviations of the *Theodosian Code*, most prominently the Visigothic *Breviary of Alaric*, which was probably reissued by Charlemagne in 787/8, alongside other compendia like the Burgundian *Roman Law*.<sup>232</sup> In the eighth century, a summary of the *Breviary* was set up in the Frankish world known as the *Epitome Aegidii*. It was subsequently well diffused throughout the realm.<sup>233</sup>

<sup>228</sup> *Lex Salica*, prol., 3, pp. 7–8: “Haec est gens ualida, quae Romanorum iugum durissimum de suis cervicibus excusserunt pugnando, atque post agnitionem baptismi sanctorum martyrum corpora, quem Romani igne cremaverunt vel ferro truncaverunt vel bestis lacerando proiecerunt, Franci [reperta] super eos aurum et lapides preciosos ornaverunt.” See also Eckhardt, *Lex Salica. 100 Titel-Text* (1953); Ubl, “Die erste *leges-Reform*” (2014); Faulkner, *Law and authority* (2016), with pp. 222–31; Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen* (2017). The topics addressed in this section are further discussed in Sarti, “*Romani* in den fränkischen *leges*” (forthcoming).

<sup>229</sup> Goosmann, *Memorable crises* (2013), p. 32.

<sup>230</sup> See, e.g., Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 25, p. 358: “lege Romanorum in id conspirante.”

<sup>231</sup> Esders, “Roman law” (2018), pp. 327–9, adding the acquisition through *professio iuris*.

<sup>232</sup> Bothe, “From subordination” (2018), pp. 346–7, with n. 18. The evidence relating to the reissue of 787/8 is now lost, see Liebs, “Geltung kraft Konsenses” (2017), p. 80.

<sup>233</sup> Faulkner, *Law and authority* (2016), pp. 225–6, with a partly edition at pp. 234–42. Most recently Trump, *Römisches Recht* (2021).

The Frankish world, however, was characterized by legal pluralism, which means that different parts of the population adhered to different laws.<sup>234</sup> The earliest Frankish law, which according to Karl Ubl's assessment is likely to have been issued between 475 and 486/7,<sup>235</sup> mainly addressed the Franks and other "barbarians" and thus only related to "Romans" in a few specific cases, most prominently in the framework of compensations for homicide (*wergild*). For everything else, including cases of homicide that did not involve individuals living according to Frankish law, any "Roman" had to adhere to Roman law. The concurrent application of Roman and "barbarian" law was first explicitly stipulated in the earlier seventh century. The *Ripuarian Law*, which was probably written around 633 and meant to apply to the Rhineland region between Cologne and Metz, explains that inside the Ripuarian land, Franks, Burgundians, Alemans, and other foreigners shall be punished according to the law applicable in their native region, a notion modern historians designate as the "principle of the personality of law."<sup>236</sup> As this particular regulation does not mention "Romans," this group may have been excluded from this particular stipulation. Still, "Romans" were meant to live and to be judged according to their own law. This is attested by a capitulary generally dated to the time of Chlothar II, and another stipulation in the *Ripuarian Law*.<sup>237</sup> The omission of *Romans* in the section relating to the principle of the personality of law thus may have been intentional. As the latter stipulation defines the law applicable to a particular individual by his or her native region, the omission of "Romans" may imply that this did not apply to this group. In consequence, the application of "barbarian" law would have been defined by an individual's homeland, whereas those who were meant to live according to "Roman" law were defined by birth. This would imply that while the law applicable to "barbarians" could change from one generation to another, after a family's relocation to a different region, a "Roman" had to live according to Roman law regardless of his or her place of birth.

The concurrent application of different laws is attested by a number of manuscripts containing both Frankish and Roman law. One example is the mid-eighth-century *Wolfenbüttel Code* (Cod. Guelf. 97) from northern or eastern Gaul with the early 65-title version of the *Pactus legis salica* and some Merovingian capitularies, followed at fol. 37<sup>v</sup> by the mentioned *Breviary of*

<sup>234</sup> On *Romani* in Frankish laws, see Bothe, "From subordination" (2018), pp. 345–68.

<sup>235</sup> Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen* (2017), p. 96.

<sup>236</sup> *Lex Ribuaria* 35 (31).3–4, p. 87: "Hoc autem constituimus, ut infra pago Ribvario tam Franci, Burgundiones, Alamanni seu de quacumque natione commoratus fuerit, in iudicio interpellatus sicut lex loci continet, ubi natus fuerit, sic respondeat," and "Quod si damnatus fuerit, secundum legem propriam, non secundum Ribvariam damnum sustineat." On the date, see Bothe, "From subordination" (2018), p. 357.

<sup>237</sup> See *Capitularia Merovingica* 8.4, p. 19: "Inter Romanus negotia causarum romanis legebus praecepemus terminari"; *Lex Ribuaria* 64 (61).2, p. 117, see below.

*Alaric*.<sup>238</sup> Another example is the famous early ninth-century manuscript now in Paris (lat. 4404) which, in addition, and starting at fol. 198<sup>r</sup>, contains the Ripuarian and the Aleman law.<sup>239</sup> The ongoing application of Roman law to legal “Romans” is attested by a stipulation issued in 768 by Pippin. Based on the *Ripuarian Law*, it confirms that “every man shall have his own law, Romans as well as Salians.” In opposition to the seventh-century stipulation, it adds that “if he comes from another province, he shall live according to the law of his homeland.”<sup>240</sup> Like its Ripuarian precursor, this second part of the stipulation of 768 is noteworthy: it implies that the future children of any foreigner settling in Ripuarian land were to be judged according to *Ripuarian Law* and thus became “Ripuarians” from a legal point of view. As “Romans” were explicitly included in the Carolingian law, the above interpretation must be either false, as the original stipulation was already applicable to “Romans” even though they were not explicitly mentioned, or the Carolingian provision was a conscious decision made in consideration of changes that had meanwhile occurred. A conceivable reason for such a change would be that “Roman” and “barbarian” law, by now, were both conceived mainly as regional legislation for reasons I will further address below. Besides, when Einhard, in his *Life of Charlemagne*, explained that the Franks had two significantly different laws, this statement probably did not relate to the *Salian* and the *Ripuarian Laws*, but to the two different legal systems of the Frankish realms: Roman and “barbarian” law.<sup>241</sup>

The relevant regulations explain that the territory where foreigners were “living” (*vivere*) defined the applicable law. This means that these laws were not aimed at travelers involved in a crime on the road but at coordinating the application of varying laws among different parts of the population. Concurrently, the evidence suggests that these laws applied to different territories, just as specific Burgundian, Aleman, and Baiuvarian laws were issued consecutively. This means that legal Romanness applied, first of all, to the inhabitants of one particular region. The region that would most likely have qualified as “Roman homeland” was greater Aquitania, with the Auvergne, and probably also the Provence and the Narbonnensis, areas with a substantial Roman population, as far as the evidence can tell. The *Continuations* to the *Chronicle of Fredegar* confirm this by characterizing, in relation to the year 742, the region south of the Loire, around Orléans and Bourges, as the home of a “Roman” population.<sup>242</sup>

<sup>238</sup> Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 97 Weiss., access [diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=97-weiss&catalog](https://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=97-weiss&catalog) (22/11/2020).

<sup>239</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 4404, access [gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8426042t.image](https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8426042t.image) (23/11/2020). See also Siems, “Zur Rolle” (2006), pp. 231–55.

<sup>240</sup> *Capitularia Francorum* 18.10, p. 43: “si de alia provincia advenerit, secundum legem ipsius patriae vivat.”

<sup>241</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 29, p. 33: “Franci duas habent leges, in plurimis locis valde.”

<sup>242</sup> *Continuationes Fredegarii* 25, p. 180: “Liger alveum Aurilianis urbem transeunt, Romanos proterunt.” (2018), p. 360.

The capitulary issued by Pippin the Younger in 768 explicitly refers to the region of Aquitania, confirming that large parts of the population continued to live according to the laws of the Roman empire.<sup>243</sup> This is further supported by some most notable sections in the *Edictum Pistense* issued in 864 by Charles the Bald. Similar to the earlier legislation, it stipulates that in those “regions” (*regio*) where “Roman law” would be applicable, any offender to the mentioned crimes should be judged according to that same legislation. On one occasion, it adds that “neither our ancestors nor we have issued whatever capitulary supplanting that law or against this law.”<sup>244</sup> This is important as it confirms that the plurality of law remained applicable until at least the later ninth century. It also proves that Roman law was not only conceived as applying to a fraction of the inhabitants of the Frankish kingdoms as a whole but first of all applied to the population of a specific region or regions. As this law was issued in the western parts of the Frankish kingdom, it also confirms that this region was located in the west, i.e., in a territory that had been part of the Roman empire and was with near certainty located in southern Gaul. This may also explain why, although Roman law remained in place in Capetian France, we do not have any comparable stipulations applying to the Ottonian territories. In France, in contrast, the early medieval situation reconstructed up to this point is still reflected by the distinction between the northern “lands of ancient customs” (“pays de coutumes”) and the southern “lands of written law” (“pays de droit écrit”), with a strong Roman influence, attested from the twelfth century.<sup>245</sup>

Roman law also remained applicable outside of southwestern Gaul. It was applied to individuals manumitted as freedmen living according to Roman law and other legal “Romans” inhabiting other regions of the Frankish realms. Unfortunately, we do not have the evidence necessary to assess whether the mentioned principle of the personality of law involved a decrease in the number of legal “Romans” outside of Aquitania due to the birth of children in territories where the place of birth defined what law was to be applied. Such a process would have strengthened the territorial nature of legal Romanness.<sup>246</sup> This is not the only question that remains open to debate. Although the above suggests that the Latin- or Romance-speaking population, which Wolfgang Haubrichs identified in the eastern parts of the Frankish kingdoms,<sup>247</sup> lived according to the *Ripuarian*

<sup>243</sup> *Capitularia Francorum* 18.10, p. 43.

<sup>244</sup> *Capitularia Occidentalis* 273.20, pp. 318–19: “In illis autem regionibus, in quibus secundum legem Romanam iudicatur iudicia, iuxta ipsam legem committentes talia iudicentur.” Similar ibid. 273.13, 273.16, 273.23, 273.28, 273.34. See also Trump, “Römisches Recht” (2016), pp. 322–71; Esders, “Roman law” (2018), p. 339.

<sup>245</sup> Lauranson-Rosaz, “Des ‘mauvaises coutumes’” (2020), p. 25.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Esders, “Roman law” (2018), pp. 334–6.

<sup>247</sup> Haubrichs, “Kontinuität und Ansiedlung” (2017), pp. 59–85. See also relevant finds in Hartl, “Walchen, Vlachs and Welsh” (2018), p. 398; Wiesinger/Greule, *Baiern und Romanen* (2019).

Law, the evidence lacks any further confirmation. No “barbarian” law is known that was issued in Churraetia, another region likely to have been inhabited by a Roman majority. Here, a compendium of the *Breviary of Alaric* was set up in the eighth century, known as the *Lex Romana Curiensis*. We may have here another territory where Roman law prevailed in some manner.<sup>248</sup> Further regulations add to the difficulties in reconstructing the early medieval legal system. The question of whom the legal sources meant to identify as “Romans” more particularly has been much debated in the past. The concomitant application of different legal codes and concepts required regulations for cases where people adhering to both systems were involved. As indicated above, the Frankish laws did include such regulations, like the case where a “Roman” raided a “Frank.” Related stipulations altogether aimed at consolidating the significantly different legal systems in place.<sup>249</sup>

The application of Roman law and the existence of Roman legal status in the Carolingian era is also confirmed by documentary evidence. An early eighth-century formulary from northern Burgundy explains that in the case of a manumission into the status of a “civis Romanus,” the benefactor was meant to gain full mobility and freedom from service or tribute payment, and probably also full legal self-determination.<sup>250</sup> A probably mid-eighth-century formulary from Tours contains a similar stipulation that stresses that the freed person and his children shall have the same liberties as if born free.<sup>251</sup> Most remarkable is a third example written around 820 in the monastery of St. Servatius (Maastricht) by Einhard himself. It mentions the manumission of an ecclesiastical serf, Meginfrid, to the status of a “cives Romanus,” obviously by adopting *Ripuarian Law*.<sup>252</sup> All these and other comparable examples confirm that “Roman” legal status remained relevant and applicable beyond the Merovingian age and that it could be applied to the status of a freedman (*ingenuum*). Another rare explicit reference to Roman law is contained in Pope Nicholas I’s reply of 866 to Lothar II’s pledge to divorce Theutberga, where the pope responded by referring not only to canon law but also to the “venerable laws of the Romans.”<sup>253</sup>

<sup>248</sup> See Esders, “Roman law” (2018), p. 334, suggesting that *Lex Alamannorum* may have been applicable.

<sup>249</sup> *Pactus legis salicae* 14.2, p. 64: “si uero Romanus <homo> barbarum Salicum expolauerit.” Also *ibid.* 14.3, and maybe *ibid.* 39.5, 41.8–10, 42.4.

<sup>250</sup> *Formulae Bituricenses* 9, p. 172: “Dum lex Romana declarant [. . .] quia civis Romanus ipsos eos esse precipio, [. . .] ut civis Romani porte aperte vivant ingenui.” See Esders, “Early medieval use” (2012), p. 61.

<sup>251</sup> *Formulae Turonenses* 12, pp. 141–2: “cives Romani [. . .] filiorum vel filiarum [. . .] similiter vivat ingenua.”

<sup>252</sup> *Formulae Ludovici* 35, p. 313: “hunc famulum ecclesie nostre nomine Meginfridum [. . .] civem Romanum statuo et per huius paginae, quae ob confirmandam eius ingenuitatem a me conscripta est.” Cf. *Lex Ribuaria* 64 (61) 1, p. 117. See also Bothe, “From subordination” (2018), pp. 363–4.

<sup>253</sup> Regino, *Chron.* a. 866, p. 87: “Romanorum legibus in huiusmodi controversiis requiruntur.”

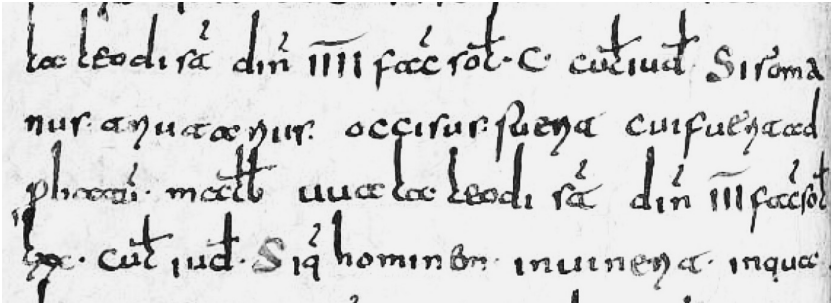


FIGURE 6.2 Extract from Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 97 Weiss., fol. 20<sup>v</sup>. Creative Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0). Source: [diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=97-weiss&catalog](http://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=97-weiss&catalog).

Although the concept of legal Romanness had significantly evolved inside the Frankish world, the difficulties in further describing this group already emerge from the *Salian Law*. It only mentions “Romans” when referring to cases where individuals adhering to both legal systems were involved: both the *Salian* and the *Riparian Laws* attest that “Romans” were considered less accountable.<sup>254</sup> The fine requested to compensate for the homicide of a “Roman” was consistently half the amount that would have been due if a “barbarian or Frank” had been killed.<sup>255</sup> This implies a discrimination of the “Romans” that speaks against the thesis of a strictly territorial definition. The early A2 types of manuscripts represented by the mentioned *Wolfenbüttel Code* confirm this assumption. At fol. 20<sup>v</sup>, referring to section 41 (here 40) of the *Pactus*, it glosses *Romanus* with “uuala leodi,” a term applied to the two lower social categories, i.e., the *Romanus possessor* and the *Romanus tributarius*, not the *conviva regis*. It is linguistically related to other words of Germanic origin, designating the Latin-speaking population (see Figure 6.2). This is a strong indication that here the term *Romanus* was meant to refer to the Latin-speaking and/or the Gallo-Roman population of the Frankish kingdom—or a fraction of the same.<sup>256</sup> Assuming that any descendant of a Gallo-Roman lived according to Roman law and that the death of a Gallo-Roman was fined with only half the *wergild* due in the case of a killed Frank, however, seems to contradict the narrative evidence lacking hints toward such discrimination.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. *Pactus legis Salicae* 14.2, p. 64, with *ibid.* 14.3, pp. 64–5, *ibid.* 6.3.7, p. 269; *Lex Ribuariorum* 40 (36) 3.

<sup>255</sup> See *Pactus legis Salicae* 39.5, 41.8–10, 42.4, 104.9, pp. 145, 156–7, 164, 261; *Lex Ribuariorum* 61.8, 68 (65) 1–3, 90 (87); *Pactus legis Salicae*, capit. VI, c. 3.7, p. 269: “Romanus VII semis solidos componat.”

<sup>256</sup> See *Pactus legis salicae* 41.9–10 (A2), p. 156. On its meaning, see Olberg, *Die Bezeichnungen* (1991), p. 65, n. 28: “Wala < uualha, ahd. walh ‘Romane,’ ags. wealh ‘Kelte,’ germ. \*Walhos ‘Volcae,’” its meaning having changed over time from “Celt” to “Roman”; Pohl, “Walchen” (2017), pp. 11–12.

Several references to “Romans” in the *Ripuarian Law* pose further challenges of interpretation. While the stipulations mentioned up to this point only suggest discrimination of “Romans” in matters of liability and *wergild*, the seventh-century evidence implies a further evolution of legal Romanness. Numa D. Fustel de Coulanges noted that this law does not make any ethnic distinctions,<sup>257</sup> which suggests that such a notion was not inherent to its use of the term *Romanus*. The evidence indeed confirms that the “Roman,” as conceived in this particular law, was mainly defined by a legal status that was significantly inferior to that of the “Frank.” The *Ripuarian Law* contains several stipulations where the “Roman” is situated between a Ripuarian freeman and a Ripuarian slave, and thus is associated with a half-free status.<sup>258</sup> It was applied to the king’s or a specific church’s “men” who seemingly stood under some secular or ecclesiastical authority.<sup>259</sup> Hence, *Romanus* in the *Ripuarian Law* merely referred to a specific legal category, which according to Lukas Bothe included recently manumitted freedmen under the extended authority of the person or institution that freed him.<sup>260</sup> Noteworthy in this context is also an entry in the so-called *Glosses of Kassel* discovered in an early ninth-century manuscript written in Bavaria. It juxtaposes Latin and Old High German words and expressions and, at fol. 17<sup>v</sup>, it attempts to illustrate the difference between “smart” (“sapiens” — “spahe”) and “stupid” (“stultus” — “toler”) by claiming that the “Romans—uualha” are “stupid” while the “Bavarians—Paiori” are “smart,”<sup>261</sup> a statement that seemingly confirms an inferior standing or regard of the “Roman” or Romance-speaking population.

The discrepancy between the “Romans” mentioned in the legal and those from the narrative sources has been intensively debated.<sup>262</sup> Any solution needs to be significantly more complex than S. Stein’s suggestion that “[t]he ‘Romani’ of the legal sources are not the ‘Romans’ of our narrative sources,”<sup>263</sup> or that by Fernand Vercauteren assuming that “[w]e simply have to consider the *Romanus* of the

<sup>257</sup> Fustel de Coulanges, “Recherches” (1891), p. 384.

<sup>258</sup> *Lex Ribuaria* 61 (58) 10, 11, 19; 68 (65) 3; 69 (66) 2. The increasingly inferior status of legal “Romans” somewhat reminds of Liutprand, *Legatio* 12, claiming that *Romanus* could be an insult in the west.

<sup>259</sup> See *Lex Ribuaria* 68 (65) 2, p. 119: “si autem Romanus aut regius seu ecclesiasticus homo.”

<sup>260</sup> Bothe, “From subordination” (2018), p. 366.

<sup>261</sup> Kassel, Hessische Landesbibliothek, 4<sup>o</sup> Ms. theol. 24, fols. 15<sup>r</sup>–17<sup>v</sup>, access orka.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/viewer/image/1296741392003/1/ (15/05/2021). Usually rendered with: “stulti sunt Romani, sapienti sunt Paiori, modica est sapienti[a] in Romana plus habent stultitia quam sapientia. Tolesint uualha, spahe sint Peigria; luzic ist spahi in uualhum, merahapent tolaheiti dennespahi,” e.g., in Glück, *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (2002), p. 68. The manuscript, in contrast, alternates between the Latin and the Old High German versions. Cf. Steinmeyer/Sievers, *Die althochdeutschen Glossen* (1895), pp. 9–13, with p. 13.

<sup>262</sup> For an excellent research summary, see Bothe, “From subordination” (2018), pp. 353–7.

<sup>263</sup> Stein, “Der ‘Romanus’” (1929), pp. 12–13: “Die ‘Romani’ der Rechtsquellen sind eben nicht die ‘Römer’ unserer erzählenden Quellen.”



Frankish legal sources as ‘Gallo-Roman.’”<sup>264</sup> A conceivable explanation would be that the Frankish laws referred to two different groups of “Romans”: those living in “Roman” territories, like Aquitania, where Roman legal status was acquired by birth and “barbarian” law was only applied in cases where an individual living according to another law was involved. A second group would include the “Romans” living in any other territory, where this status was mainly acquired by manumission or immigration. At least in the latter case, and in Ripuarian land, the second generation would have lived according to the local and territorial law. Most of the “barbarian” stipulations referring to “Romans” would have applied to this latter group.

The enhanced association of Roman legal status with manumission and the status of freedmen in the territories with a predominant gentile law would help explain why legal Romanness could be increasingly conceived as a status of reduced freedom here. Several sixth-century stipulations with further references to “Romans” approaching half-free status support the impression that this was a gradual process.<sup>265</sup> This does not yet explain the consistent half *wergild* due as a punishment for the murder of a “Roman.” It also remains intriguing that the label “Roman” associated with the majority of the population of Merovingian Gaul—including the senatorial elite and related bishops—<sup>266</sup> could evolve to become the label for a legal subcategory of reduced liberty.

Further unsolved questions emerge from the concurrent application of two different laws in cases involving individuals from both legal systems. While the Frankish laws largely used monetary sanctions, Roman law was based on corporal and capital punishments. Although a “Roman” was to be judged according to Roman law, his violent death had to be fined with the 100 *solidi* stipulated for such a crime by the Frankish law.<sup>267</sup> If this was the case, a Frank who killed a “Roman” would only have to pay 100 *solidi*, whereas a “Roman” killing a Frank would have to pay 200 *solidi* and was condemned, in addition, for the same crime according to the Roman Law. Although it seems possible that “barbarian” law alone applied in the case where individuals adhering to both legal systems were

<sup>264</sup> Vercauteren, “Le ‘Romanus’” (1932), p. 88: “Il faut voir simplement dans le Romanus des sources juridiques franques un Gallo-romain.”

<sup>265</sup> The potentially earliest is in an addition to the *Lex Salica* with a difficult date, maybe close to the time of Clovis, see Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen* (2017), pp. 104, and 109–10. The same *wergild* should be applied to the free “Roman” and the half-free “tributarium aut militem,” see *Capitula legi Salicae addita* 5.117, p. 263. Another relevant but problematic piece was recently dated around 558, see *Pactus legis salicae* 104.9, p. 261: “de militunias vel letas sive Romanas.” See also Sarti, “Der fränkische miles” (2018), p. 104, with n. 22.

<sup>266</sup> See Gilliard, “The senators” (1979), pp. 685–97.

<sup>267</sup> *Lex Ribuaria* 64 (61).2, p. 117: “secundum legem Romanam iudicetur.” Cf. Carolingian glosses in a ninth-century manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 4416, fol. 50<sup>v</sup>, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85287653/f1 (28/09/2020), in Bothe, “From subordination” (2018), p. 362, adding to the *Epitome Gai*, with extracts from the *Novellae*, glosses on the respective *wergild* of the “cives Romanus” or the “Romanus possessor.”

involved—the opposite is disproved by the many mentions in the “barbarian” legislation of how “Romans” should be punished—, given that “barbarian” law implied regulations how to punish both “Franks” and “Romans,”<sup>268</sup> this seems to contradict the stipulation that “Romans” should live according to their own law. Thus, such a procedure would imply another type of legal discrimination toward the “Romans” in need of an explanation that would add to the reduced *wergild* attributed to this group. The confusion is perfected by a single stipulation in the *Salian Law* mentioning a case where the offender and the victim were both “Romans.”<sup>269</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The medieval notions of Romanness reflect a complex reality emerging from an ancient Roman world in motion, and they attest to the sustained attractiveness of Roman identity not only in the east but also in the west. It was a compelling label lacking a real alternative. Rome, the birthplace of any Roman identity, remained a pivotal factor in its medieval development thanks to the coincidence that the apostles Peter and Paul had died as martyrs in Rome. It allowed the city to maintain a vital role beyond its function as imperial capital. The “Roman” character of the empire and its citizens had remained untouched by the emergence of other capitals like Constantinople, Trier, or Ravenna, which is why, after the Frankish takeover of Rome, at the latest, the eastern empire had become a “Roman” empire without Rome. This entailed that when papal Rome defected from the empire, the west appropriated and redefined the Roman name by relating it to the apostolic see, the Christian faith, and its community. The loss of most territories inhabited by a Latin-speaking population to the empire from the seventh century entailed that its “Greek” characterization became the new standard in the west, despite the persistence of Roman identity shared by those inhabiting the east. The western designation *graecus* related to the Hellenic culture and the Greek language, which both had become predominant in the Byzantine world, whereas the negative connotations it could have since Antiquity helped reframe it to become a means of distinction in matters of dogmatic conflict. Hence, the terms *Romanus* and *Graecus* are important testimonies to the gradual process of estrangement and alienation of the east and the west, and the different factors this process was based on. As this new terminology was only adopted in the Frankish west after the middle of the eighth century, i.e., after official exchanges between

<sup>268</sup> E.g., *Pactus legis Salicae* 14.2 (Roman offender, Frankish victim), 14.3 (Frankish victim, Roman victim), 42.4 (Roman offender).

<sup>269</sup> *Pactus legis Salicae* 16.5, p. 74: “5. Si Romanus hoc Romanum admiserit et certa proba(t)io non fuerit.”

east and west had become more regular, it was hardly adopted blindly from papal Rome, but is likely to have corresponded to current Frankish opinions around that time.

The new terminology was adopted north of the Alps in the framework of the enhanced exchanges with the apostolic see from the mid-eighth century, and it was further developed during the subsequent exchanges with the Byzantine world and related religious controversy, a topic further discussed in the next chapter. In 800, the reappropriated Roman name helped define the Carolingian empire. It was not a one-to-one adoption of the ancient concept of *Romanus*, which Carolingian scholars may have known from relevant ancient sources. The designation *Romanus* was not dead but had evolved, and it was and needed to be understood in consideration of its current meaning: as *Romanus* meanwhile was strongly related to the apostolic see and Christianity, the designation “emperor of the Romans” associated ancient glory with current ideals of devotion. Charlemagne designed his imperial title only after he had left Rome in 801. Although he intended to create his own vision and interpretation, it appears that alluding to the persisting empire and its Christian character was crucial for the monarch. Besides, as we have seen in chapter II, it appears that when Charlemagne was crowned emperor, his empire was still conceived as belonging to the persistent *imperium*, an arrangement seemingly negotiated in preparation with Irene. The initial Carolingian title was valid to emphasize Charlemagne’s role as head of the empire in the west. The intended affiliation, if not association or even integration, of Charlemagne’s *imperium*, also helps explain the significance Charlemagne attributed to the Byzantine recognition of his imperial status, which must have become particularly important after Irene’s deposition in 802. Although we do not know the exact arrangements made in 812, the Carolingian *imperium* was never joined to the Byzantine empire, a fact that led to a gradual process of Frankish regress and toward a more francocentric concept of empire, even though the idea of a universal *imperium* persisted until the later ninth century.

The Roman name of the Carolingian empire also referenced the pope, who had proven his determination to take as much control over Frankish emperors as he could and whose influence Charlemagne sought to minimize. However, designations like “Christian empire” would have had similar implications, whereas the term “Frankish empire” would have been problematic given the latter’s multiethnic character. The best alternative with regard to the papal implications would have been the simplified title, without the Roman name. As seen in section II.3, it became standard under Louis the Pious, and may reflect a new vision less closely related to the empire in the east. The regress to the Roman imperial title under Louis II may reflect the increased papal influence, although it is more likely related to the enhanced confrontations in Italy. A comparable

tendency to resort to the Roman name is attested under similar circumstances at the time of Otto II,<sup>270</sup> which means that these confrontations may have created the desire or necessity to characterize the western empire as “Roman.”

What do self- and foreign designations tell us about medieval identities and the strategies of distinction emerging in their wake? Clearly, the relationship between the Frankish and the Byzantine worlds was more complex than mere resentment or admiration. The Roman name became an issue of debate in the confrontation between east and west, a conflict sometimes mediated, at times even driven, and occasionally controlled by the apostolic prelate residing in its eponymous city. It was the papal alienation from the empire and the pope’s desire for more independence that led to the design and propagation of new designations emphasizing the differences between the “Greeks” in the east and the west, which redefined and appropriated the Roman name. Referring to the Byzantines as *Graeci* created a caesura between the Byzantine present and its Roman past. At the same time, the Franks adopted the Roman name to stress the Christian nature of their rulership, their entitlement to imperial status, and their equal rank with the Byzantine world. Hence, the terms *Romanus* and *Graecus* reflected what was at stake. On the one hand, they referred to core features shared by both worlds, i.e., their Hellenic and imperial past and history, the Roman law, and Christian religion, but, on the other, they also identified relevant differences related to confession, language, and culture. Although both worlds considered themselves representatives of Romanness, they did not share the same views on what this implied. The notion of Greekness, contrariwise, had only changed insubstantially. Ancient Greeks were valued for their skills and learning and unappreciated for being pagans, whereas the Byzantines were despised for their cunning and lack of orthodoxy but again valued for their skills and culture. Like *Romanus*, *Graecus* thus had also gained a religious connotation.

While eastern Romanness was conceived as encompassing the entire Byzantine empire and its different peoples, also adhering to more local or regional identities, western Romanness, through its redefinition as a reference to the Christian community presided by apostolic Rome, was not limited to the native inhabitants of Italy, or Rome, but could be used as a global reference implying anyone Christian. This posed potential issues from an eastern perspective, as the Byzantines likewise strongly identified with the Christian faith. The foundation of Constantinople under the first Christian emperor, Constantine I, was not only the origin of a new and major imperial capital but also the birth of a genuinely Christian empire where Romanness and Christianity had become virtually synonymous. While the western connection to Christianity emerged from the city of Rome, its apostolic prelate, and the Christian community, eastern Romanness

<sup>270</sup> See Sarti, “Imperium in the Ottonian world” (forthcoming).

remained connected to the empire but had lost its relation to Rome. Despite its different history and concepts, Romanness in both regions thus remained closely connected to Christian identity.

The debates about the Roman empire and related titles between the Frankish and Byzantine authorities were rooted in these common notions of Romanness and their different backgrounds. From a Byzantine perspective, a Roman empire in the west could imply the claim of authority over the entire Christian world, and thus could be understood as a threat to Byzantine authority, whereas, from a western perspective, the reference to Rome—at times—could, but did not necessarily have to, imply reference to what would later be the Latin Church. Although Byzantine Romanness had progressed without Rome, the city's loss in the eighth century was bitter, as emerges from related debates with western representatives. The same was true for the Byzantine abandonment of the Latin language, which had remained closely related to eastern imperial identity.

While modern historians tend to stress that the Byzantines were particularly arrogant toward anyone else, the evidence discussed in this chapter shows that the Franks were significantly more hostile toward the Byzantines than the other way around. As it seems, the stereotypes used in the western sources to characterize the Byzantine east were not only effective on their medieval readers but remained so until the present day.<sup>271</sup> While the Byzantines had to deal with many neighboring nations that represented a vital threat to them, the Byzantines were the most important and only relevant opponent to the Franks, a matter of fact that helps explain why explicit mockery was mainly on the Frankish side. The Byzantines, on their part, only wrote about the Franks in a significantly more neutral manner, while their attitude toward the Franks appears remarkably complaisant. It appears not only that the Franks considered and wanted to be conceived as emerging from the same ancient world as did the "Romans" but also that the Byzantines actually shared this opinion. This helps explain why the Byzantines willingly offered marriage alliances to the Franks as soon as they had become powerful enough to be of some interest to them, and why the Byzantines were remarkably considerate, despite some founded skepticism, in accepting a Frankish emperor in the west.

Although the Frankish empire was characterized by ethnic and legal diversity, the underlying concepts remained largely unchanged. While its inhabitants were labeled "Franks"—with the exception of Lombard Italy, whose inhabitants preserved its singular identity—, they belonged to an *imperium* that could be characterized as "Roman." And comparable to the civic Romanness of the ancient empire, medieval Romanness could be related to membership in the

<sup>271</sup> The inhabitants of Rome were also repeatedly characterized as arrogant, see Seidlmayer, "Rom und Romgedanke" (1956), pp. 397–9.

Frankish *imperium*. By the eighth century, the ethnic nature of Frankish identity had been superseded by an overreaching political and cultural notion, whereas civic Romanness had evolved toward religious and legal means of identification. There is no indication, however, that the Roman characterization of the western empire was somewhat related to Roman law. Still, this continuity between imperial Gaul of Antiquity and the Frankish realm is noteworthy, just like the number of structural consistencies and similarities between the Byzantine and the Frankish worlds: both were based on an imperial tradition and culture going back to the Roman empire of Antiquity, both were headed by a genuinely Christian emperor ruling a multiethnic population, and with an elite that seemingly adhered more strongly to Roman identity than the common local population. In addition, Roman law was applied in both regions—at least partly.

Did “Roman” law apply to most of the descendants of the Gallo-Roman population? As the label “Franks” could relate to the sum of those inhabiting the Frankish realms, these “Romans” by legal status would have been “Franks,” from a political perspective. As we have seen, the evidence suggests that there were two different types of legal Romanness: those living according to Roman law, which was predominant at least in southern Gaul, and those labeled *Romani* in the late Merovingian and Carolingian gentile laws by relating to half-free “Romans” as a phenomenon limited to regions with a predominant gentile law. If this conjecture is correct, these two groups were largely distinct, and the context of each law would have sufficed to know what group a specific law related to. It is probable, however, that the early sixth-century stipulations, defining that *Romani* would receive half the *wergild* usually due, were applied to both groups. The percentage of those living according to the Roman law in regions where a “barbarian” (territorial) law applied likely decreased in the long run, as emerges from the regulation on the principle of the personality of law and the lack of evidence suggesting that cross-ethnic marriages were uncommon. Any children emerging from such a union would have lived according to “barbarian” law. The concurrent shift of legal Romanness, as a status of reduced *wergild* toward half-freedom in these regions, seems to confirm that legal Romanness had become less common here—and also less desirable. This process may be related to the alienation from anything Roman since around the late sixth century, which involved a repositioning of Frankish identities and values, an evolution backed by the abandonment of pseudo-imperial coinage around 580, the concurrent adoption of the title “King of the Franks,”<sup>272</sup> and the confident depiction of the Franks in the Trojan legend. This chapter thus not only sets out to what extent Romanness and related features belonged to the Frankish world but also confirms a remarkable Frankish assertiveness. The Franks were very clear

<sup>272</sup> See Sarti, *Merovingian connections* (forthcoming), chapter “Kings of the empire”.

about their own Frankish identity, which in the eighth century could encompass the entire population of the Frankish realm. Frankish self-consciousness also emerges from their negative characterizations of the Byzantines, the reactions to Charles the Bald's "Greek" bearing, and the legal evidence stipulating a privileged status for Franks and other "barbarians."

The Franks never called themselves "Romans"—at least not outside the mentioned legal context. Although this designation was used freely to refer to elements related to faith and, most prominently, to refer to the Carolingian empire, it never became a self-designation outside Italy. The title "empire of the Romans" (*imperium Romanorum*), which related to its subjects as "Romans," was only used by Louis II in his letter to Basil I,<sup>273</sup> probably intending to mirror the Byzantine imperial title teasingly. It may imply that the inhabitants of Rome, i.e., the pope's subjects, granted emperorship to the Franks. Although western emperorship had soon become dependent on the papal coronation, despite Charlemagne's contrary efforts, this and similar titles that could imply that the "Romans" were those ruled by the western emperor only became more common under the Ottonians, for whom the potential apostolic implications had ceased to be problematic.

Explicitly Byzantine references in the context of the Frankish empire remained rare. A prominent exception was Charles the Bald, who was particularly interested in the Byzantine world and,<sup>274</sup> in 875, ostensibly related his new dignity to Byzantine imperial culture. The empire of the Franks was conceived as a genuinely Christian realm going back to an ancient tradition, and it was this character that the Roman name was meant to convey. This concept was fairly close to the Byzantine understanding of empire, which had emerged from the same past and history and was likewise understood as genuinely Christian. The more denigrating was any designation of the Byzantine emperors other than the canonical "emperor of the Romans." It not only reduced their authority to the Greek-speaking territories, or even the eastern capital, but also the western *Graecus* increasingly bore the connotation of heterodoxy, a notion that emerged from the appellation's relation to the ancient Hellenes and their paganism. Concurrently, the western rivals referred to their alleged orthodoxy as a primary criterion for the rightful emperorship.

The divergent western appellations of the Byzantine emperor were meant to enhance the status of the Frankish monarchs. The few Carolingian instances when *Romanus* was used to designate the Byzantines are related to a context where the alleged Byzantine envy toward the Franks was addressed. This implies

<sup>273</sup> Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 386: "Lodoguicus divina ordinante providentia imperator augustus Romanorum"

<sup>274</sup> See Bougard, "Entre Latins et Grecs" (2019), p. 75.



a certain ridicule associated with the term “Roman” when used in reference to the Byzantines, and it confirms the intention to assert the western nature of the same designation. In sum, the evidence does not relate to the confrontation of two entirely distinct societies. It reveals an ongoing alienation that still took place inside the same world with a shared past, cultural background, concepts and terminology, and values. In the following chapter, I shall look at the role of the Church and notions of orthodoxy, which were potentially the most important factors of unity.

## VII

# Orthodoxy and the *oikumene*

When the Roman world turned Christian, the emperor became the keeper of orthodoxy. The fourth century saw the birth of a genuinely Christian *oikumene* whose inhabitants considered themselves adherents to righteous belief. The two designations used then to refer to this unifying Christian creed were later divided among the heirs of the ancient Roman world. While Catholicity today relates to the Latin Church headed by the Roman prelate, Orthodoxy refers to Christianity as known in the Byzantine world. Although both designations point to the Christian schism related to the year 1054, they were initially used almost synonymously to characterize the two core ideas that defined the notion of a unified Christian community:<sup>1</sup> “orthodoxy” combined the ancient Greek terms *ὀρθός* (“correct”) and *δόξα* (“belief”) to characterize the righteous creed, whereas *καθολικός* with “catholic” related to the doctrinal interpretation on which the entire Christian community was meant to have agreed. Hence, both terms aimed at a fundamental consensus of faith and a universal Church that united all Christians.

This chapter looks closely at the role of the Church, the significance of Christian belief, and doctrinal controversy in the relationship between the Frankish and the Byzantine worlds. The sources focus on religious disputes, a topic that also dominates modern scholarship, mainly concerned with the gradual divergence and alienation of the two religious communities. This chapter argues that the basis of these medieval controversies was a strong desire for religious consensus and unity, a commonality whose persistence and relevance were never fundamentally challenged throughout the period discussed here. It was the pretension to uniformity, inherent to Christian belief, that was likely to cause dissent, as the aspired orthodoxy was fragile, entailing that even details could cause discord. The Byzantines and the Franks considered themselves united by a shared Christian world and its Church until the ninth century, regardless of any current or prevalent disagreement. Both societies were genuinely Christian, their rulers were considered protectors of the Church, and they characterized their Christian empire as Roman. The following also shows that east and west could still meet at eye level when discussing questions of faith and that the often-claimed allegation

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., the close connection of both notions in *LP, Vita Theodorii*, 6, p. 333: “ad hortodoxam fidem catholicae ecclesiae remearet”

of a largely overextended Frankish world confronted with the sophistication of Byzantine eruditeness has stronger foundations in modern assumptions than in the medieval records. In this context, the discussion of the iconoclast controversy demonstrates that the Carolingians made significant advances that soon allowed them to catch up with the Byzantines. To this end, the sections that follow will now turn toward the significance of orthodoxy for imperial rule, the role of the pope as an intermediary, and religious controversy.

## 1. Orthodoxy and the Emperor

The Byzantine empire and its inhabitants were genuinely Christian, an identity naturally tied to their Romanness.<sup>2</sup> The patriarch Nikephoros, for example, in his *Historia syntomos* emphasized the connection between Christians and the empire when explaining that Phokas' violent rise to power in 602 had done so much damage to the Christians (“ἐπὶ τοσοῦτο κακώσεως Χριστιανοῖς”) that contemporaries claimed that he harmed the Roman empire (*Ρωμαίων ἀρχήν*) more from within than the Persians had done from without.<sup>3</sup> Roman emperors had emerged from Antiquity as a genuinely Christian type of rulership, and since that time, its officeholders were the representatives of their empire and Christianity. The connection between religion and empire was rooted in ancient Roman emperors, which implied the function of the *pontifex maximus*, the office of the high priest. Although this title was gradually abandoned by the emperor, starting in the fourth century, it was adopted in the subsequent century by the Roman apostolic bishop who, since then, has maintained it until the present day.<sup>4</sup> This section focuses on the relation between orthodoxy and empire in the east and the west and related notions and ideas.

## Christianity and Empire

The emperor was considered the elect of God, the representative of Christ on earth, and the head of the *ecclesia* and the *politeia* or *basileia*.<sup>5</sup> This was regularly made explicit by the imperial title, which from the sixth century could include words like *fidelis in Christo* or *πιστὸς ἐν Χριστῷ* (“faithful in Christ”)

<sup>2</sup> See also Koder, “Remarks” (2018), pp. 120–1. Although Kaldellis, “From Rome to New Rome” (2012), p. 395, is right that Romanness and Christianity were not entirely synonymous.

<sup>3</sup> Nikephoros, *Hist.* 1, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Cameron, “Pontifex Maximus” (2016), pp. 139–59. See also Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> Ohnsorge, “Konstantinopel” (1983), p. 102; Russell, “One faith” (2012), pp. 122–30; Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), pp. 480–4.

or *ex Deo* or *ἐκ Θεοῦ* (“through God”). A lead bull by Constans II and his son Constantine IV of the years 654/9 contains the inscription “Constantine and Constans through God Roman emperors” (“Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ Κώνσταντε ἐκ Θεοῦ βασιλεῖς Ῥωμαίων”)<sup>6</sup> and Justinian II even referred to himself as “generous peaceful autocrat Flavius Justinian, faithful in Jesus Christ emperor through God” (“Αὐτοκράτωρ, εὐεργέτης, εἰρηνικός, Φλαύιος Ἰουστινιανός, πιστὸς ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ βασιλεύς”).<sup>7</sup> The idea of God’s elect was expressed with a variety of more or less explicit designations, including the increasingly common characterization “crowned by God” (“*a Deo coronatus*” or *θεοστεφής* or *θεόστεπτος*). As it is attested from the time of the emperor Leo I († 474), Gerhard Rösch suggested that its emergence may have been related to the patriarch’s first-time involvement in the imperial coronation.<sup>8</sup>

Charlemagne’s role as a Christian emperor compared mainly to that of his eastern counterpart. When Leo III crowned the Carolingian, he took the traditional role of the patriarch as the enforcer of the divine, an act which only differed from the eastern ritual and became the constitutive act due to the pope’s willful change of the ritual’s chronology discussed in section II.2. In the east, the coronation of an emperor was executed from the seventh century by the patriarch in the Hagia Sophia and was subordinated to the constitutive acclamation by the senate, the army, and the people.<sup>9</sup> Like the Byzantine counterpart, the western emperors considered themselves genuinely Christian rulers by the will of God. This is clearly expressed, for example, in their titles. Charlemagne had himself called “crowned by God” (“*a Deo coronatus*”), and we have already encountered the inscription “XPICTIANA RELIGIO.” Comparable Christian references predominated in the Carolingian imperial titles. Louis the Pious and Lothar I, for example, both were “emperor by divine orders” (“*divina ordinante*” or “*divino nutu*”), and Ermold, in his poem, flattered Louis the Pious with the words “Francia bore me, Christ granted [me my] rank of honor, Christ made me have my father’s kingdom.”<sup>10</sup> Such Christian references already featured prominently in the royal designations. Comparable to Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, Charles the Bald, or Louis the German, the Merovingian Childebert II († 596) had already claimed to rule “by the grace of God” (“*gratia Dei*”), and Charles the Fat was “king through God” (“*ex Dei . . . rex*”), similar to Lothar II, whereas Louis

<sup>6</sup> Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), pp. 62–4, citing it at p. 64. See also Karayannopoulos, “Der frühbyzantinische Kaiser” (1956), p. 383.

<sup>7</sup> Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), pp. 170–1. See also, e.g., in Theophylactos, *Hist.* 4.16.

<sup>8</sup> Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ* (1978), pp. 66–7, with further examples. See also Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), pp. 62–3.

<sup>9</sup> Louth, “The Byzantine empire (2005), p. 309. See also Angelov/Herren, “The Christian imperial tradition” (2012), pp. 163–9.

<sup>10</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 2, p. 56, ll. 714–15: “Francia me genuit, Christus concessit honorem, / Regna paterna mihi Christus habere dedit.” See also, e.g., Déer, “Das Kaiserbild” (1977), pp. 125–77; Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), p. 291.

the Stammerer was king “by the mercy of God our Lord” (“misericordia domini Dei nostri”). Arnulf of Carinthia had himself called the “son and defender of the catholic Church” (“ecclesiae catholicae filius defensor”).

By the dawn of what we call the Middle Ages, the Church (*ecclesia*) had been conceived to encompass the *oikumene*. The imperial civilization was superseded by Christian orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup> In consequence, Byzantine *Romania* could be identified with the *oikumene* and the Christian world.<sup>12</sup> The *ecclesia* had become a pivotal element preferentially identified with the Christian empire. The identification of the *oikumene* and the Church is attested most clearly in the notion of “ecumenical councils” which, from the First Council of Nicaea in 325 and until the Fourth Council of Constantinople in 869/70, were organized roughly once every century to discuss current issues and to seek consensus defining orthodoxy. From the time of Constantine the Great, the emperor presided over these ecclesiastical synods, an imperial prerogative that implied that the Byzantine emperor was conceived head of the Church.<sup>13</sup> In the Frankish west, the kings adhered to a similar role by regularly convening and heading the Church councils.<sup>14</sup> The western emperors were acclaimed at the end of these synods in a manner that compared to the synodal *multos annos* acclamations offered to the eastern emperors, which on their part went back to the ancient Roman senatorial acclamations.<sup>15</sup>

Like the late Roman and the Byzantine empire, the dominion of the Frankish *imperium* was meant to unite a most heterogeneous population as one Christian people.<sup>16</sup> The Carolingians, since Charlemagne, were particularly concerned with emphasizing the uniformity of the Church, an aim emerging most clearly from the sources of the time of Louis the Pious.<sup>17</sup> Several synods were held in Aachen between 816 and 819 to regulate a distinct rule for monastic life, the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, and another distinguished rule for canonical orders.<sup>18</sup> Rutger

<sup>11</sup> See Ohme, “Rom und Byzanz” (2011), p. 220, and Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), pp. 420–3.

<sup>12</sup> Kaldellis, “Did the Byzantine empire” (2017), p. 279.

<sup>13</sup> Dölger, “Die Kaiserurkunde der Byzantiner” (1939), p. 232. On their reception in Byzantine historiography, see Scott, “The treatment” (2015), pp. 364–84.

<sup>14</sup> See *Conc. Merov. Cabilonense* a. 639/54, *prae*., p. 208: “ex evocatione vel ordinatione gloriosissimi domni Chlodouei regis”; *Conc. Merov. Latunense* a. 673/5, p. 217: “nos Latina in praesentia gloriosissimi principis nostri domni Childerici regis congregati eramus.” Similar, e.g., *Conc. Merov. Burdegalense* a. 663/75, *prae*., p. 215; *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 800, a. 802; *Annales regni Francorum* a. 813; Adalbert., *Cont.* a. 963, p. 173. See also Desiderius, *Epist.* 2.17; *LP, Vita Leonis IV*, 90; Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), pp. 430–8.

<sup>15</sup> Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae* (1946), pp. 68–71. See also Hirsch, “Der mittelalterliche Kaisergedanke” (1965).

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 802, p. 39: “congregavit duces, comites et reliquo christiano populo.”

<sup>17</sup> Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), p. 39. See also Treadgold, “The formation” (2009), p. 326.

<sup>18</sup> See *Concilia Karolini I*, 39, completed by *ibid.* I 40, and II 41. See also *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 802; Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), p. 38.

Kramer stressed the central role of the Carolingian *ecclesia* as a community with a “shared understanding and practice of liturgy” that is key to the Carolingian conception of rulership, and that, while the *ecclesia* bound society horizontally, the *imperium* did so vertically, a connection making the *ecclesia* a significant factor in shaping Frankish ideas about *imperium*.<sup>19</sup>

## Orthodoxy

Despite the religious controversies between the Franks and the Byzantines, to be further discussed in the subsequent sections, the primary concern of these disputes remained the maintenance of ecclesiastical and dogmatic unity.<sup>20</sup> The definition of “orthodoxy” could vary, however, and it could cause significant dissent, as we shall see. The notion of “community” largely persisted these controversies. The Frankish council acts regularly stressed the wish to maintain orthodoxy, which included the struggle against heresy on a more local and regional basis.<sup>21</sup> A letter written by the bishop Nicetius of Trier to the emperor Justinian before 565 is an early testimony from the Merovingian world for the idea of a shared ecclesiastical community. The bishop urged the emperor to abandon the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches, probably responding to a current rumor that remains unconfirmed by the evidence.<sup>22</sup> In the eighth century, Boniface, in his letters, addressed “Greeks” and “Romans” as the two representatives of a common religious tradition,<sup>23</sup> a list to which early ninth-century Bavarian council *Acts* added the “Franks.”<sup>24</sup> This unity of the Christian Church was also symbolized, according to scholars like Amalarius of Trier by the conjunction of Greek and Latin in the manuscripts and their concurrent performance in the context of the liturgy, as it was meant to account for the unanimity of the Christian people and the Christian Church.<sup>25</sup> Hans-Werner Goetz already stressed that Byzantium was not alien to the Christian west, which both remained two parts of one Church, as confirmed by the fact that the sources did not refer to religion as a preeminent factor of distinction between east and west.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Kramer, *Rethinking authority* (2019), in particular pp. 34–40.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Herbers, “Papst Nikolaus I.” (1993), p. 57.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., *Conc. Merov. Clippiacense* a. 626/7, c. 5, p. 197; *Conc. Merov. Latunense* a. 673/5, p. 217; *Concilia Karolini* 44, a. 825, p. 475. Similar *Conc. Merov. Burdegalense* a. 663/75, *praef.*

<sup>22</sup> *Epist. Austras.* 7. On the veracity of Nicetius’ claims, see Meier, “Eschatologie und Kommunikation” (2008), pp. 67–70. The vision of coreligiousness is also confirmed in the *Austrasian Letters*, see Gillett, “Ethnography and imperium” (2011), p. 74.

<sup>23</sup> Boniface, *Epist.* 73, pp. 148–9: “Apud Grecos enim et Romanos lex est.”

<sup>24</sup> *Capitula episc. Bavarica*, p. 196: “et Greci et Romani seu et Franci omni dominico communicent.”

<sup>25</sup> See Kaczynski, *Greek* (1988), pp. 111–13, with further references.

<sup>26</sup> Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), pp. 691–705 and 768–9.

The concept of orthodoxy implied the pretension of representing righteous belief. In his famous letter to Basil I, Louis II defined it as a key precondition for Roman emperorship. As exposed in section II.3, he argued that the Byzantine emperors had forfeited their claim to emperorship due to their alleged heterodoxy. A comparable notion of a genuinely orthodox Christianity tied to the empire, as the home of God's only righteous Christians, is also known from the Byzantine east.<sup>27</sup> Louis' allegation goes back to the notion of "Greekness" emerging from the papal alienation from the empire, in the process of which, as we have seen, the popes stressed the Byzantine heterodoxy to strengthen their "Roman" orthodoxy, shared with the Franks. This strategy is particularly pronounced in the papal epistles to the Frankish kings. In a letter of 757, Pope Stephen urged Pippin with the words:

And that is why we sincerely ask your sublime goodness: that enlightened by God and his blessed prince of the apostles Peter we want to proceed, as far as the Greeks are concerned, that the holy catholic and apostolic faith remain unharmed and unshaken permanently and that the holy Church of God, if not by others, is freed by you from their corrupting wickedness and brought to safety.<sup>28</sup>

In subsequent letters, his successor Pope Paul I underlined the legitimacy of his claims by characterizing his position as catholic and orthodox, terms also used in the east to refer to the Byzantine emperor.<sup>29</sup> In a letter dated around 761, Paul called on the "good, orthodox king Pippin" to protect the "catholic and apostolic Church" and the "holy orthodox faith and the traditions of the holy fathers" from the "impious malice of the heretic Greeks." In this letter, the term *orthodoxus* was used on six occasions.<sup>30</sup> From a papal perspective, Romanness thus had become closely tied to orthodoxy, as a letter by Hadrian I addressed to the bishops of Spain around 785/91 confirms.<sup>31</sup> Paolo Delogu commented on this and other relevant pieces of evidence that already in the second half of the eighth century, the Byzantine emperors would have lost their "Roman" character, in the sense of universal rulers and according to the papal perspective, a circumstance that would have allowed Paul I to transfer the qualification of "orthodox king" and the imperial function of defender of the catholic faith to the Frankish king Pippin.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Dölger, "Rom" (1937), p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 11, p. 506: "Et hoc obnixe postulamus praeelsam bonitatem tuam: ut inspiratus a Deo et eius principe apostolorum beato Petro ita disponere iubeas de parte Grecorum, ut fides sancta catholica et apostolica per te integra et inconcussa permaneat in eternum et sancta Dei ecclesia, sicut ab aliis, et ab eorum pestifera malitia liberetur et secunda reddatur." See also Freudenberg, "Unus grex" (2013).

<sup>29</sup> Röscher, *ONOMA BASILAEIAS* (1978), p. 67.

<sup>30</sup> See *Codex Carolinus* 32, p. 539. See also *Codex Carolinus* 36, calling Pippin "christianissime rex amantissime fili et spiritalis compater" (p. 544).

<sup>31</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 95, p. 637: "contra Romanam et orthodoxam fidei tradicionem."

<sup>32</sup> Delogu, "The papacy" (2000), p. 216.



## Imperial Rivals of Faith

Charlemagne and his successors characterized their *imperum* as “Roman empire,” not “empire of the Romans,” as noted in section VI.3. This is significant as it confirms that the Roman qualifier primarily related to the nature of the empire, not its subjects. This empire was genuinely Christian, and the genitive alternative only became more common after the pope’s role as “maker of emperors” was a matter of course. From a Byzantine perspective, the Carolingian imperial titles could be problematic as they potentially claimed leadership over all Christianity. In this context, Charlemagne’s interest in Jerusalem was of particular importance. As mentioned in section III.3, Charlemagne took charge of the Christians in Syria, Egypt, and Africa, and in Palestine,<sup>33</sup> and, according to Einhard, the Abbasid Caliph Hārūn ar-Rašīd would have allowed the Holy Land under Charlemagne’s authority (*potestas*). Consequently, Charlemagne could consider himself as the protector not only of the Christians and orthodoxy in the west but also those in the east.<sup>34</sup>

Charlemagne also appears to have been on good terms with the patriarch of Jerusalem: according to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, a monk of St. Sabas and another from the Latin monastery Mount of Olives arrived in Rome only shortly before Charlemagne’s coronation. Their timely arrival suggests that the patriarch was aware of Charlemagne’s plans, further supporting the impression that related arrangements were projected long before the prospective emperor arrived in Rome. The patriarch had the legates offer Charlemagne the keys to the sacred burial, the holy city, and Mount Zion,<sup>35</sup> a meaningful symbolic gesture likely to have required the consent of the Caliph as the ruler over the Holy Land. Thus, Jerusalem was of growing significance, and the Frankish rivalry with Byzantium certainly played its part in Charlemagne’s decision to enter into diplomatic relations with the patriarch of Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup> After the recognition of Charlemagne’s emperorship, the Byzantine emperors strove to gain more control over the Holy Land and, for example, willingly accommodated Christians from Muslim Syria, Egypt, and Africa fleeing to Cyprus and Constantinople (*Βυζάντιον*).<sup>37</sup>

The rivalry between Byzantium and Francia is confirmed by the intensified use of biblical references. In both regions, King David was hailed as a model for

<sup>33</sup> See Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 27; the *Basel Roll*. See also the critical comments in Latowsky, “Foreign embassies” (2005), p. 27; Borgolte, “Karl der Große” (2013), pp. 183–7.

<sup>34</sup> Similar Clauß, “Imports and embargos” (2017), p. 99. See also Classen, “Romanum gubernans imperium” (1952), p. 120.

<sup>35</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 800, p. 112. See also Grabois, “Charlemagne” (1981), pp. 808–9.

<sup>36</sup> Grabois, “Charlemagne” (1981), pp. 798 and 806.

<sup>37</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6305 (812/13). The same terminology is used to relate to the Muslim realms as when referring to the Byzantine empire: “ἀναρχίας γὰρ καθολικῆς κατασχούσης Συρίαν καὶ Αἴγυπτον καὶ Αφρικὴν καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦς ἀρχήν” (p. 499).

the emperor, and the Franks even considered their rulership as the revival of David's kingship, a circumstance that further explains the Carolingian interest in Jerusalem.<sup>38</sup> The underlying concept was not a Carolingian novelty. The earliest relevant Frankish analogy is attested in a mid-sixth century poem by Venantius Fortunatus, who compared King Charibert with David, besides Salomon and the emperor Trajan.<sup>39</sup> Another Merovingian example is in the preface to the acts of the *Council of Clichy* held in 626/7 relating to Chlothar II as David.<sup>40</sup> A probably mid-seventh-century letter addressed to an unnamed king also referred to David and Salomon as the models for the ideal ruler.<sup>41</sup>

The Byzantine notion of a "new David"—in analogy to the idea of a "new Constantine"—is already attested in reference to the emperor Heraclius, who propagated this biblical model since his victory over the Persians and the recovery of the True Cross in 630. In this context, six silver plates showing events of David's early life are noteworthy. While official control stamps approximately date them around 613 to 629/30, Suzanne Spain Alexander convincingly argued that they were probably produced closer to the later part of this period, maybe following Heraclius' victory over the Persians and on the orders of the emperor himself.<sup>42</sup> The evidence is completed by the Frankish seventh-century *Chronicle of Fredegar*, which sets Heraclius' victory in the context of a duel meant to be fought with the Sasanian ruler Chosroes II († 628) and reporting that the emperor entered the battleground like a "new David."<sup>43</sup> Further evidence includes the acclamation of the emperor Michael III as "new David" during a chariot race, and similar comparisons became particularly important during the reign of the usurper Basil I.<sup>44</sup> A Frankish response to the Byzantine identifications with biblical figures is attested in Louis II's famous letter to the same emperor, comparing Charlemagne to David and, notably, the pope to the latter's son Samuel.<sup>45</sup> The letter further stresses that the papal unction and blessing of the emperor would underline the Frankish legitimacy as rulers meant to act on behalf of God.<sup>46</sup>

Ueli Zahnd pointed to another potential rivalry moment between the Byzantines and the Franks. He argued that the Byzantines responded to criticism

<sup>38</sup> Grabois, "Charlemagne" (1981), pp. 796–8; Borgolte, "Karl der Große" (2013), p. 182.

<sup>39</sup> Fortunatus, *Carm.* 6.2, l. 78, p. 133: "tibi Daviticae mansuetudo vitae."

<sup>40</sup> *Conc. Merov. Clippiacense a. 626/7, praef.*, p. 196: "David et regni imperium"

<sup>41</sup> *Epist. coll.* 15, p. 457: "Rex enim David sapiens humilisque [...] filiusque suus Solomon."

<sup>42</sup> Alexander, "Heraclius" (1977), pp. 217–37. See also Grünbart, "Die Fortdauer Roms" (2012), p. 203; Leader, "The David plates" (2000), pp. 407–27.

<sup>43</sup> *Fredegar* 4.64, p. 152: "Aeraclius imperatur arma sumens [...] ut novos Davit, proccedit ad bellum."

<sup>44</sup> Zahnd, "Novus David" (2008), pp. 86–7, with further references.

<sup>45</sup> Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 389: "Samuel, quod spreto Saule, quem ipse unxerat, David in regem."

<sup>46</sup> Louis II, *Epist.*, p. 387: "set ad unctionem et sacrationem, qua per summi pontificis manus impositione."

in the Frankish *Opus Caroli* related to the eastern notion of an emperor “ruling with God” by stressing that even David had not dared to express such presumptuousness. In 795, Constantinople would have responded with an equivalent reference in a coronation prayer comparing the new emperor to David.<sup>47</sup> However, conclusive evidence proving that both events were related is lacking, which is particularly problematic given that the *Opus Caroli* was never published and knowledge about its contents, if at all, could only have reached Constantinople via an earlier version which, in 792, had been sent to Rome, as we shall see in section VII.3. Provided the mentioned Byzantine reference was indeed a reaction to a prior Carolingian pretension, it is much more likely that it responded to the designation of Charlemagne as “David” more in general. According to Christiane Veyrard-Cosme, this appellation had become popular at the Frankish court around the time of the *Council of Frankfurt* of 794, which may have inspired Charlemagne’s identification with the biblical model king.<sup>48</sup> Significantly more conclusive is further evidence related to Salomon’s throne. In Aachen, Charlemagne had a throne made of white marble, with an armrest, a round back, and six stairs offering access, which corresponds to the Salomonic model. Around 830, the emperor Theophilos had himself a throne constructed that appears to have been inspired by Charlemagne’s version in Aachen.<sup>49</sup>

Zahnd erred, however, when arguing for a shift in the papal letters from biblical to imperial models after Charlemagne’s coronation, a change he explained by referring to the notable difference between the biblical and the Roman models of rulership.<sup>50</sup> The papal letters never explicitly identified Charlemagne as “David,” as known from the Frankish sources and most prominently Alcuin’s letters, even though they occasionally used David as a model for Charlemagne.<sup>51</sup> More important is that Leo III never used the designation “Constantine” in reference to Charlemagne, the only relevant association being the mentioned Lateran mosaic. Only his predecessor, Hadrian, once related to Charlemagne as “Constantine,” a reference made in the framework of a hypothetical and prospective acclamation.<sup>52</sup> Thus, any papal reference to Charlemagne as “Constantine” dates to the time before the latter’s rise to imperial status, which means that the biblical and the imperial models were not applied consecutively but, if at all, simultaneously.

<sup>47</sup> Zahnd, “Novus David” (2008), p. 86, referring to *Opus Caroli* 1.1.

<sup>48</sup> Veyrard-Cosme, “L’image de Charlemagne” (2003), pp. 145–6.

<sup>49</sup> Fichtenau, “Byzanz” (1951), pp. 25–6; Zahnd, “Novus David” (2008), p. 86. See also Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), pp. 129–36; Garrison, “The Franks” (2000), pp. 154–6.

<sup>50</sup> Zahnd, “Novus David” (2008), p. 86. Papal references to a king as “(new) David” were already rare before, see *Codex Carolinus* 68, and *ibid.* 11, 39.

<sup>51</sup> See *Codex Carolinus* 33, 68, 99.

<sup>52</sup> The only instance I could identify is in *Codex Carolinus* 60, p. 587: “quia ecce novus christianissimus Dei Constantinus imperator his temporibus surrexit.” See Ewig, “Das Bild Constantins” (1956), pp. 35–6. *Codex Carolinus* 60, p. 587: “piissimo Constantino” only relates to Constantine the Great.

Charlemagne's personality was crucial not only for his role as the first Frankish emperor but also for his remarkable position as a Christian monarch and protector of the Church, making him a new model king and emperor. This role was facilitated by what seems to be a genuine devoutness of the monarch. Besides what has already been said, Einhard stressed Charlemagne's particular devotion by referring to his education, and the fact that he would have attended mass and gone to church in the morning, in the evening, and to the nocturnal hearings. The same author mentioned the emperor's sponsorship of the building of churches and their furnishment with precious art and accessories, that the emperor took great care of the dignity of the services by keeping the churches clean, by providing particular clothing for all the clergy involved, and by making sure that the reading and singing in the church would be improved.<sup>53</sup> The anonymous elegy deploring Charlemagne's death, already partly quoted in section VI.3, claimed that the entire Christian world was mourning his death, calling him the "prince of the Christian people of the entire *orbis*."<sup>54</sup> Also important is Alcuin's concept of the three central powers quoted in section II.2, which addressed the Byzantine emperor as the worldly and the pope as the spiritual authority. Charlemagne here was conceived as ruling over the Christian people whose safety depended on him,<sup>55</sup> meaning he was meant to combine spiritual and political authority. In this sense, Alcuin wrote to Charlemagne shortly after his coronation that his imperial authority was granted to him by God, not only to govern the world but also, most of all, to protect the Church.<sup>56</sup> The intention of the following section is now to take a closer look at religious controversies that shook the early medieval Christian world and the role taken by the pope in this regard, two aspects that will allow discussing further how the Frankish and the Byzantine worlds were related from a religious and ecclesiastical point of view.

## 2. The Pope and the Empire

The city of Rome, the dethroned capital of the ancient world empire, had remained part of the empire that bore its name. This only changed after 756, when the Frankish king Pippin the Younger, in the framework of the *Donation of Pippin*, endowed the pope with the Duchy of Rome and several other major regions of Italy. This act stood at the origin of the Papal States. The Franks'

<sup>53</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 26.

<sup>54</sup> *Planctus de obitu Karoli* 1, 5, 16, 20, pp. 435–6, here 5: "quae cuncti orbis christiano populo / vexit ad mortem venerandum principem"

<sup>55</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 174. See also Ewig, "Zum christlichen Königsgedanken" (1956), p. 71.

<sup>56</sup> Alcuin, *Epist.* 308, p. 471: "non tantum imperatoriam vestrae prudentiae potestatem a Deo ad solum mundi regimen, sed maxime ad ecclesiae praesidium et sapientiae decorem conlatam."

involvement in Italy and their confrontation with the Lombards in 774 ended with the Frankish conquest of the Lombard territories and those remaining under Byzantine jurisdiction in the north. Although southern Italy remained part of the eastern empire, the imperial territories in the north and center were now mainly limited to coastal cities and their respective hinterland inhabited by a majority of a Roman population.<sup>57</sup> They included Venice, which had entered the Frankish sphere of influence in the eighth century but managed, with the help of the Byzantine fleet, to resist militarily until 810. It subsequently established an autonomous position inside the Byzantine community.<sup>58</sup> Comparably, Naples remained nominally Byzantine but strove toward administrative independence from the late eighth century, reaching out toward a more autonomous status from the ninth century.<sup>59</sup> The southern parts of Calabria and Apulia, and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia, remained Byzantine until their gradual Muslim takeover in the ninth century—even though the empire could retain significant parts until the eleventh century.<sup>60</sup> The same fate of a temporary Muslim presence also befell the Lombard Duchy of Benevento, which, in opposition to the Duchy of Spoleto—which increasingly slipped under papal and then Frankish authority—had maintained some autonomy from the Frankish power from the late eighth century. The Duchy of Benevento, since 849, was divided into several principalities.<sup>61</sup>

### The Pope and the Byzantine Empire

The pope had emerged from inside the Byzantine empire. He was one among five imperial patriarchs confirmed by the emperor Justinian I, with the four remaining representatives seated in Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria.<sup>62</sup> Although the patriarchies of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria were not abandoned after the Muslim conquest of Egypt and the Levant, between 634 and 642, they significantly lost importance. The ecclesiastic prelates of Constantinople and Rome became pivotal, a circumstance contributing to the

<sup>57</sup> See von Falkenhausen, “Die Städte” (1989). See also Noble, “Greek popes” (2014), pp. 80–1.

<sup>58</sup> See Berto, “Under the ‘Romans’” (2016), pp. 118–20. See also Brown, “Byzantine Italy” (2006), pp. 338–41; Balzaretto, *Dark Age Liguria* (2013); Gelichi/Gasparri (eds.), *Venice and its neighbors* (2018).

<sup>59</sup> See Brown, “Byzantine Italy” (2006), pp. 341–3; Paul, “Naples” (1991), p. 761–6. See also Bruzelius/Tronzo, *Medieval Naples* (2011).

<sup>60</sup> Brown, “Byzantine Italy” (2006), pp. 331–2 and 342–7. On Sicily, see also Nef/Prigent (eds.), *La Sicile byzantine* (2010); Davis-Secord, *Where three worlds met* (2017). On Sardinia, see Cosentino, “Byzantine Sardinia” (2004); on Apulia, see Stranieri, “Un limes bizantino” (2000).

<sup>61</sup> Delogu, “Lombard and Carolingian Italy” (2006). See also Classen, “Italien” (1983), p. 93; Vocino, “Looking up to Rome” (2018), pp. 197–216 and pp. 217–30.

<sup>62</sup> Schieffer, “Der Papst” (1991).

emergence of an oppositeness between a western and an eastern Christendom.<sup>63</sup> In opposition to the pope, the patriarch of Constantinople was always subordinated to the emperor, who appointed the patriarch<sup>64</sup> and was considered the patron of the Church, a remnant, as mentioned, of the emperor's ancient function as *pontifex maximus*.<sup>65</sup> In consequence, the empire was increasingly identified with the Christian Church, which entailed that, as in the west, the ecclesiastical hierarchy became important as a model to think about the empire.<sup>66</sup>

The pope increased his authority in the west and expanded his influence beyond the emperor's range. Around 740, the emperor Leo III transferred Rome's ecclesiastical jurisdiction over southern Italy and Illyricum to the patriarchate of Constantinople,<sup>67</sup> probably as penalization of the papal opposition to Iconoclasm to be discussed in section VII.3. This and the concurrent Lombard conquest of the Exarchate of Ravenna entailed that the Roman Church ceased sharing a significant number of subjects with the empire.<sup>68</sup> In consequence, the Roman prelate chose the western kingdoms to become his new basis of authority. Under Pope Stephen II († 757), the concept of *res publica* with the addition *Romanorum* was created, which now referred to the altered papal domain (i.e., not the empire) composed mainly of the territories gifted by the Frankish king Pippin in the framework of the so-called *Donation of Pippin*. The papal adoption of imperial terminology was further emphasized under Stephen II's brother Paul I († 767), under whose papacy the forged *Donation of Constantine* (*Constitutum Constantini*) may have been created.<sup>69</sup> Its date remains disputed, however: while, for example, Werner Ohnsorge's 1951 thesis for a compilation around 806<sup>70</sup> was challenged by scholars like its editor Horst Fuhrmann,<sup>71</sup> Johannes Fried—rather unconvincingly—pleaded for a Frankish origin at the time of Louis the Pious. He located its creation in the milieu of Louis' opposition seeking around 830/3 to reform the empire.<sup>72</sup> Florian Hartmann argued that the forgery was written

<sup>63</sup> See Meier, "Nachdenken über "Herrschaft"" (2014), p. 189. See also McKitterick, "The papacy" (2016).

<sup>64</sup> Liutprand, *Legatio* 62, p. 215: "imperator filium suum Theophylactum eunuchum patriarcham constituit."

<sup>65</sup> Pratsch, "Stationen" (2012), p. 16; Bibikov, "Glanz und Elend" (2007), p. 24. He later explicitly used the title *pontifex maximus*.

<sup>66</sup> Haenssler, *Byzanz und Byzantiner* (1960), p. 76.

<sup>67</sup> McCormick, "Byzantium and the west" (1995), p. 363.

<sup>68</sup> Classen, "Italien" (1983), pp. 99–100. Similar Delogu, "The papacy" (2000), pp. 210–212. See also Noble, "Greek popes" (2014), p. 79.

<sup>69</sup> E.g., Delogu, "The papacy" (2000), pp. 212–18; Delogu, "The post-imperial Romanness" (2018), pp. 157–8. See also McKitterick, "The popes" (2018), pp. 71–95; Scholz, "Das Papsttum" (2012), pp. 11–26.

<sup>70</sup> Ohnsorge, "Die Konstantinische Schenkung" (1951), pp. 78–109. Later, in Ohnsorge, "Das Kaisertum" (1963), pp. 240–1, the same scholar implied a date of origin around 803/4. See also Ewig, "Das Bild Constantins" (1956), pp. 29–37, and, critical, Nelson, "Kingship and empire" (1994), p. 54.

<sup>71</sup> Fuhrmann, "Das frühmittelalterliche Papsttum" (1973), pp. 257–329.

<sup>72</sup> Fried, "Imperium Romanum" (2006), p. 5; Fried, "Donation of Constantine" (2007), pp. 111–12.

between 776 and 778.<sup>73</sup> A remarkable indication in a letter by Pope Hadrian I of May 778 to Charlemagne, which can (and often has—as in the case of Hartmann’s argumentation) been interpreted as a direct reference to the *Constitutum*,<sup>74</sup> is a strong indication that the latter was already written down before that date. What is important: the *Constitutum* claimed that the emperor Constantine I had transferred imperial power onto Pope Silvester I and his successors (termed “principatus sacerdotum et christianae religionis caput,” c. 18) and thus put him in the position of the legal heir of the western emperors.<sup>75</sup> This implied locating the papal domain outside the Byzantine empire, as the “Constantine” of the forgery claimed to limit his sphere of influence to the east.<sup>76</sup> The creation of this document thus was, in any case, a significant step toward papal autonomy.<sup>77</sup>

Although the papal defection and emancipation from the empire was a gradual process, the actual “switch from Constantinople to Francia,” according to Judith Herrin, took place between 714 and 746.<sup>78</sup> While the *Liber Pontificalis*, in the context of the seventh-century Monothelite controversy, still portrayed the emperor’s doctrinal decrees as decisions made by the patriarch of Constantinople, not the emperor himself, the same compilation, when referring to the eighth-century iconoclast controversy, explicitly blamed the emperor for doctrinal deviation.<sup>79</sup> The Roman opposition toward Constantinople was supported by the emergence of a sense of local Italian identity and a heavy tax load inflicted on Italy by the empire.<sup>80</sup> It becomes manifest, e.g., in the *Liber Pontificalis*, when referring to Pope Constantine’s († 715) confrontation with the emperor Philippikos Bardanes († 713). Philippikos was considered a heretic due to his Monothelite tendency, opposing orthodoxy as re-established in the framework of the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680. The *Liber* explained: “The Roman people had determined never to receive the name of the heretic emperor, his letters or the gold coins with his image—so his picture was not brought into Church, nor was his name mentioned at the ceremonies of mass.”<sup>81</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Hartmann, *Hadrian I*. (2006), pp. 157–95, in particular p. 186. On the same text, see also Miethke, “Die ‘Konstantinische Schenkung’” (2008), pp. 35–108.

<sup>74</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 60, p. 587: “temporibus beati Silvestri Romani pontificis a sanctae recordationis piissimo Constantino.” See also the recent translation in *Codex epistolaris Carolinus*, eds. McKitterick et al. (2021). Another potential reference is in Liutprand, *Legatio* 17, p. 194: “Constantinus imperator augustus [. . .] sanctae apostolicae Romanae ecclesiae [. . .] multa donaria contulit [. . .] in omnibus pene occidentalibus.”

<sup>75</sup> *Constitutum Constantini* 17, p. 93: “Romae urbis et omnes Italiae seu occidentalium regionum provincias, loca et civitates saepefato beatissimo pontifici, patri nostro Silvestrio, universali papae.”

<sup>76</sup> *Constitutum Constantini* 18, p. 94: “nostrum imperium et regni potestatem orientalibus transferri [. . .] nostro civitatem aedificari et nostrum illic constitui imperium.”

<sup>77</sup> See also Freund, “Traditionslinien des Kaisertums” (2012), p. 224.

<sup>78</sup> Herrin, “Constantinople” (1992), p. 94.

<sup>79</sup> See the discussion in Schreiner, “Der Liber Pontificalis” (1998), p. 38, with further references.

<sup>80</sup> Herrin, “Constantinople” (1992), p. 97.

<sup>81</sup> *LP, Vita Constantini*, 10, II, p. 392: “Hisdem temporibus cum statuisset populus Romanus nequaquam heretici imperatoris nomen aut chartas vel figuram solidi susciperent, unde nec eius



The confrontation advanced when the emperor Leo III took action against the veneration of icons, which soon led to open conflict, and finally to pontifical autonomy from the empire.<sup>82</sup> The emancipation became palpable from the pontificate of Gregory II († 731), who, according to the *Chronicle of Theophanes*, refused to pay taxes to the empire when he heard of the emperor's doctrinal decree. The chronicler adds that the pope wrote a letter to the emperor explaining that he considered it improper for his addressee to make changes in doctrinal matters.<sup>83</sup> Already before, until 720, a gradual decline of the finesse of coins minted in Italy occurred, going down to 60%, an evolution Alessia Rovelli associated with a Byzantine fiscal collapse in the west, and probably a papal influence on local minting.<sup>84</sup> According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the Pentapolis and the Venetians joined the pope's antagonism against the imperial decree. However, an Italian plan to overthrow the emperor would have been refuted by the pope, who still hoped to convince the emperor to change his mind.<sup>85</sup> The papal renunciation of the empire was manifest in 757, when Pope Paul I was elected to the apostolic see and notified not the emperor, but the Frankish king Pippin.<sup>86</sup> The imperial tradition of sending the image of a new emperor to Rome, where he was to be acclaimed, however, only ended at the time of Charlemagne's imperial coronation.<sup>87</sup>

Pope Hadrian I was no more willing to make concessions to the emperor.<sup>88</sup> In the papal *Good Friday* liturgy, the pope had the words *Romanorum imperator* substituted by *rex Francorum*.<sup>89</sup> Pope Sergius I († 701) was the first to issue silver coins with his initial, and Pope Hadrian now did so using his name, soon also adding his portrait.<sup>90</sup> These coins followed imperial tradition but lacked any mention of the emperor. As Armin Hohlweg accentuated, the pope therewith appropriated the imperial coinage prerogative for himself, given that he did not replace the emperor with a Carolingian.<sup>91</sup> On his coins, Hadrian had the letters "IB" added to the papal portrait, which are commonly interpreted as "Jesus and emperor/king" ("Ἰησοῦς καὶ βασιλεὺς") and may stress his

effigies in ecclesia introducta est, nec suum nomen ad missarum solemnias proferebatur." Trans. Davis, TTH 6, p. 89.

<sup>82</sup> Similar Finck von Finckenstein, "Rom" (1993), pp. 35–6.

<sup>83</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. 6217 [a. 724–5]. *LP*, *Vita Gregorii III*, 2, and *LP*, *Vita Zacharias*, 20, mentions comparable letters by Pope Gregory III and Pope Zachary; see also section VII.3.

<sup>84</sup> Rovelli, "Monetary circulation" (2000), p. 93–4.

<sup>85</sup> *LP*, *Vita Gregorii II*, 17. See also Schreiner, "Der Liber Pontificalis" (1998), p. 37.

<sup>86</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 11, pp. 504–7.

<sup>87</sup> Hack, "Bildaussendung und Bildeinholung" (2003), p. 177.

<sup>88</sup> See the discussion in Hartmann, *Hadrian I*. (2006), particularly p. 163.

<sup>89</sup> Hirsch, "Der mittelalterliche Kaisergedanke" (1965), p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Herrin, "Constantinople" (1992), p. 102; Hartmann, *Hadrian I*. (2006), pp. 158 and 169.

<sup>91</sup> Hohlweg, "Byzanz und der Westen" (1996), p. 105. Some among these coins refer to Hadrian as *Dominus noster Adrianus Papa*.

autonomy toward the emperor. If Florian Hartmann is right, who argued that the letters “IB” should be read as “priest and emperor/king” (“ἱερεὺς καὶ βασιλεὺς”), which would imply that the pope attributed the sacerdotal and the secular power to himself, Hadrian had even superseded the emperor’s authority in Rome.<sup>92</sup> Further notable evidence is the papal dating habit. Hans Hubert Anton pointed out that the first synodal acts dated by referring to the year of the indiction alone, i.e., without mentioning the emperor, belong to the year 732,<sup>93</sup> whereas the papal charters continued to adhere to the Byzantine dating model until March 772. The next surviving document with an explicit date is from 781. It was addressed to the abbot Fulrad of St. Denis and attests to a noteworthy change in the method of dating retained ever since by referring to Christ and the apostolic see alone.<sup>94</sup> According to the plausible argumentation by Hartmann, the last imperial coinage in Rome was minted in 776, which implies that the decision to officialize the papal separation from the empire must have been taken shortly after the Carolingian conquests in Italy, i.e., when the Franks were able to protect Rome. Hartmann also pointed to the death of Constantine V in September 775, which may have been regarded as an opportunity for Hadrian to change his relationship with the empire.<sup>95</sup> This is suggested by the papal resentment against the Byzantine “Greeks” attested by the *Codex Carolinus* letter collection.<sup>96</sup>

Although the Roman prelate was meant to strive toward a unified Church comprising the Byzantine world, he usually tended to significantly contribute to its divergence by claiming orthodoxy solely for himself.<sup>97</sup> The geographical distance between Rome and Constantinople and the particular significance attributed to the apostolic see allowed him to evolve toward an independent power in central Italy. Thomas F. X. Noble argued that already the Greek native-speaking popes of the late seventh and the mid-eighth centuries were not more loyal to the emperor and his empire than the Latin natives, stressing that “all the popes routinely defended themselves, their see, and their people against every sort of Byzantine challenge.”<sup>98</sup> While the popes had their own agenda and mostly played according to their own rules and aims, they had risen to become a pivotal central authority also connecting the Frankish west with the Byzantine empire, and vice versa.

<sup>92</sup> Hartmann, *Hadrian I.* (2006), pp. 173–8; see also *ibid.* 180–181.

<sup>93</sup> Anton, “Beobachtungen” (1990), p. 98.

<sup>94</sup> *Dipl. apostol.* 6, p. 79: “anno pontificatus nostri in sacratissima sede beati apostoli Petri.”

<sup>95</sup> Hartmann, *Hadrian I.* (2006), pp. 165–9.

<sup>96</sup> Hartmann, *Hadrian I.* (2006), p. 172.

<sup>97</sup> See Lilie, “Kooperation und Konkurrenz” (2011), p. 71; Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), p. 787.

<sup>98</sup> Noble, “Greek popes” (2014), p. 85.

## The Pope and the Carolingians

The Roman and the Constantinopolitan prelate completed and balanced the secular powers as supreme spiritual authorities, while their exact constellations between the worldly and ecclesiastical authority differed in detail. Their respective relationship was particularly complex in the west. As seen in section II.3, the Frankish emperors requested an oath of loyalty from any prospective pope before ordination, which sealed the papal defection from the eastern empire. The popes, on their part, used occasions like Charlemagne's death in 814 to reclaim full autonomy, while situations like Leo's factual deposition in 799 and his reinstatement one year later showed that the Roman prelate could not always do without a secular ruler.<sup>99</sup>

The rivalry between the popes and the Carolingians characterized the relations between Rome and the Franks. The *Life of Stephen II* in the *Liber Pontificalis* argued for the pope's superiority toward the Carolingians by claiming that when, in 754, the Roman prelate had traveled to Ponthion, Pippin with his family and officials would have prostrated themselves in front of him.<sup>100</sup> His successor Hadrian underlined his intention to rule independently from any other secular authority not only with the abbreviation IB already discussed but also by characterizing the apostle Peter as a disposer of Charlemagne's kingship and his Church as the "head of the world" ("caput totius mundi"). The popes used other "emulations of the empire" (*imitatio imperii*) to strengthen their position, as when Pope Gregory IV renamed the ports of Ostia "Gregoriopolis" or when Pope Leo IV founded a place called "Leopolis" near Civitavecchia.<sup>101</sup> Fictive parental relations were another means used to emphasize the papal position, as when the *Life of Leo IV* designates the emperor Lothar I as the pope's "spiritual son."<sup>102</sup> When Lothar II, in 860, sought to divorce his wife Theutberga, Pope Nicholas I used the occasion to demonstrate his authority by obstructing the king's plans.<sup>103</sup>

There is also evidence of moments of trust between the Frankish monarchs and the popes, although we should consider that waters probably were deeper than what the sources expose at their surface. In a letter dating around March 767, and thus shortly after the Frankish council of Gentilly near Paris, Pope Paul I thanked King Pippin for sending him a copy of his correspondence with

<sup>99</sup> *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 800; Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), pp. 263–4. See also Schreiner, "Der Liber Pontificalis" (1998), p. 34; Anton, "Solum imperii" (2002), p. 272.

<sup>100</sup> *LP, Vita Stephani II*, 25, p. 447: "descendens de equo suo, cum magna humilitate terrae prostratus, una cum sua coniuge, filiis et optimatibus, eundem sanctissimum papam suscepit."

<sup>101</sup> Brown, "Byzantine Italy" (2006), p. 333.

<sup>102</sup> *LP, Vita Leonii IV*, c. 33, ed. Duchesne, p. 114: "spiritalis filii sui domni imperatoris Lotharii."

<sup>103</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 864 and 868. See also, e.g., d'Avray, "Emotional persuasion" (2015), pp. 48–63.

the emperor on a specific matter. The pope's letter specified what solution the emperor had suggested, how the Carolingian responded, and who was sent and received to convey these messages.<sup>104</sup> Around 760, Paul I sent another letter to Pippin, together with a copy of a letter from the eastern emperor to the pope. Paul I reported that a large Byzantine fleet was on its way to Rome and the Franks, claiming that he did not know their aims apart from their intention to stop in Rome and Francia.<sup>105</sup>

The reduction of the Carolingian power in the late ninth century weakened the papal position in Italy. In consequence, the pope tended to avoid conflicts with Byzantium.<sup>106</sup> In 886, the emperor Leo VI issued his *Eisagoge tou nomou* ("Εἰσαγωγή τοῦ νόμου"), a legal text consisting of 40 titles, whose redaction was initiated by his father Basil I and which was meant to replace the *Ecloga* issued in 741 by the iconoclast Isaurian emperors. In its prologue, the *Ecloga* characterized the emperor as a ruler whose empire was entrusted to him by God and, for the first time in Roman civil legal discourse, as an emperor who, like the apostle Peter, was the shepherd of his flock.<sup>107</sup> This notion was abandoned by the short-lived *Eisagoge* from 886, which stipulated that the emperor and the patriarch would rank at equal heights in the *politeia*.<sup>108</sup> The famous sections two, entitled "on the emperor" ("Περὶ βασιλέως"), and three, "on the patriarch" ("Περὶ πατριάρχου"), contain descriptions of the competences of these two dignitaries as the secular and spiritual powers. They are unique in the Byzantine evidence for their distinctiveness, as Marie Theres Fögen stressed. The presence of this concept of the distribution of power in a Byzantine legal text roused much debate about whether it may go back to western notions of separation of secular and profane authority, as represented by the "two swords" ("Zwei-Schwerter-Lehre"), or whether the sharp separation of responsibilities was the work of Photios in his power struggle with Basil I. In the latter case, the patriarch would have aimed to challenge the papal primacy, which would help explain why the *Eisagoge* was abandoned and replaced soon after its publication.<sup>109</sup> However, this latter thesis is unlikely given that, as Francis Dvornik convincingly showed, the evidence disproves that Photios, to which we shall turn now, was particularly opposed to the papal primacy.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>104</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 36, p. 545. On the letter's date of redaction, see VII.3.

<sup>105</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 20.

<sup>106</sup> Lilie, "Kooperation und Konkurrenz" (2011), p. 73.

<sup>107</sup> *Ecloga*, prol., p. 10: "κατὰ Πέτρον τὴν κορυφαιοτάτην τῶν αποστόλων ἀκρότητα." See Humphreys, in *The laws of the Isaurian era* (2017), p. 35, n. 5. *Acts of the Council in Trullo* of 691/2, contains the first related mention in imperial legal discourse.

<sup>108</sup> *Eisagoge* 3.8.

<sup>109</sup> *Eisagoge* 2–3; Fögen, "Armist et legibus gubernare" (2007), p. 18.

<sup>110</sup> Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy* (1979), pp. 109–17.

## Religious Controversy

The Patriarch Photios was at the center of a major schism characterizing the relationship between the eastern and western Church. According to the *Life of Pope Nicholas I*, it emerged with Ignatius' deposition as Constantinople's patriarch and his replacement by the Neophyte Photios. The latter was criticized for being a layman and a soldier who had received tonsure against canon law.<sup>111</sup> The controversy, which ended in 867 with the mutual deposition of Pope Nicholas and Photios, and the pope's death that same year, is well attested by a collection of letters exchanged in 860 and after. The said *Life* refers to these letters exchanged between Nicholas, on the one side, and the emperor Michael III and his patriarch Photios, on the other, and underlines the papal disagreement with Ignatios' deposition, a case lacking a legal conclusion.<sup>112</sup> The *Annales Bertiniani*, written by Hincmar of Reims around 862, report that their author met Nicholas in Rome and that he was in bad condition given his conflict with the "Greek emperors Michael and Basil," adding that they sent a letter to the bishops of the Frankish empire to inform them of the imperial "slanders" against the "Roman Church." What follows is a list of reproaches allegedly made by the Byzantines, which is interesting, as Hincmar used it to stress the distinction between east and west from a religious perspective:

[the Byzantines reproach] the entire Church that uses the Latin language, that we fast on the Sabbath, that we say that the Holy Spirit emanates from the Father and the Son, that we forbid the marriage of priests, and that we also prohibit priests to apply holy water to the foreheads of the baptized. The Greeks also say that the Latins use river water for anointment, and they blame us Latins for not abstaining, as is their habit, from eating meat during the eight weeks before Easter, and abstaining from eating cheese and eggs during the preceding seven weeks. They also say that we celebrate Easter according to the custom of the Jews [. . .]. Furthermore, they reprimand us that our clergy shaves their beards, and they [falsely] say that a deacon may be ordained as a bishop without having received the priesthood.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> *LP, Vita Nicolai I*, c. 19–20 and 38. See also Chrysos, "Rome and Constantinople" (2019), pp. 24–46.

<sup>112</sup> *LP, Vita Nicolai I*, c. 41. See, e.g., Nicholas I, *Epist.* 84. See also Chadwick, *East and West* (2003), pp. 95–103.

<sup>113</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 867, pp. 138–9: "calumniari sanctam Romanam ecclesiam, immo omnem ecclesiam quae latina utitur lingua, quia ieiunamus in sabbatis, quod Spiritum sanctum ex Patre Filioque procedere dicimus, quia presbiteros sortiri coniuges prohibemus et quoniam eosdem presbiteros chrismate linire baptizatorum frontes inhiibemus; dicentes ipsi Greci, quod chrisma ex aqua fluminis Latini conficiamus; reprehendentes nos Latinos, quod viii ebdomadibus ante Pascha a carnium et vii ebdomadibus a casei et ouorum esu more suo non cessamus; dicentes etiam quod in pascha more Iudaeorum super altare pariter cum dominico corpore agnum benedicamus et offeramus; succensentes etiam nos, quia clerici apud nos barbas suas radunt; et dicentes quia

The ecclesiastical structures and traditions had increasingly differed in east and west, distinctions that were based mainly on the eastern foundations of the Byzantine ecclesiastical structures. The most important features included, according to Peter Schreiner, the interlinkage of state and religion, the norms of eastern Church doctrine rooted in ancient Greek philosophy, the maintenance of free monasticism according to early Christian tradition, the predominant veneration of eastern saints, and the creation of a distinct liturgy in Constantinople.<sup>114</sup>

Klaus Herbers offered a detailed discussion of Nicholas' exchange of the 860s, arguing that the Roman prelate, since his first letters, stressed his wish to maintain Church unity ("unitas"), that he deplored the Byzantine violations, and wished to restore the previous norm ("antiquus mos" or "ordo catholicus"). Nicholas I, who declared himself "father" to his "son," the emperor, underlined the outstanding role of the Roman see and its Church as the head of all Churches, the remaining Churches presenting the limbs of the body. Herbers convincingly argued that the language from the beginning of the controversy was distinctive, as when Nicholas spoke of "our Church" ("nostra ecclesia").<sup>115</sup> In his lengthy letter of 865, for example, which also contains a discussion of the role of the Latin language already referred to in a previous chapter, Nicholas emphasized that "we" (*nos*) had neither invaded the Byzantine territories nor harmed in any way the eastern churches, in opposition to the "pagan" Muslims.<sup>116</sup> The letter distinguishes the western Christian community from the eastern Church, conceived as two disputant brothers who should get along with each other on the grounds of a shared basis. Herbers argued that the author's invocation against the "Greeks" aimed to produce a feeling of togetherness (German "Wir-Gefühl") of the west with the Franks as a countertype of the Byzantines by referring to the common Latin language against the (Byzantine) "other," depicted as an enemy to be fought against.<sup>117</sup>

Although the controversy revolved around Photios's position and legitimacy, it also touched on further disputes related to the *filioque*-addition and the mission to the Bulgarians.<sup>118</sup> The *filioque*-controversy was related to the definition of the Trinity, whose discussion had a much longer history going back to the Merovingian age and lasting beyond the period focused on here.<sup>119</sup> The controversy itself emerged in 809, after Greek-speaking monks had heard Franks in

diaconus non suscepto presbiteratus officio apud nos episcopus ordinatur." See also Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), pp. 736–48.

<sup>114</sup> Schreiner, "Brücke zum Osten" (2015), pp. 23–4.

<sup>115</sup> Herbers, "Papst Nikolaus I." (1993), pp. 57–8, 66, and 72, with further evidence.

<sup>116</sup> Nicholas I, *Epist.* 88, pp. 479–80: "Quid mali fecimus nos? Certe non Cretam invasimus [. . .]."

<sup>117</sup> Herbers, "Papst Nikolaus I." (1993), pp. 70–1.

<sup>118</sup> *LP, Vita Hadriani II*, c. 46–7 and 50–2, 56, 62–4. See also Pratsch, "Stationen" (2012), pp. 18–21.

<sup>119</sup> Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse* (2002); Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), pp. 714–30.

Jerusalem singing the *Credo*, with an addition they would have heard previously at Charlemagne's court in Aachen. The problematic section implied that the Holy Spirit emerged from the Father *and* the son, i.e., "ex patre filioque procedit," a reading common in the Frankish west but different from the papal and Byzantine tradition.<sup>120</sup> As the pope refused the said addition, it was only maintained among the Franks.<sup>121</sup> The question of who should mission the Bulgarians remained an issue until the time of Pope John VIII.<sup>122</sup> Hincmar of Reims addressed a letter to Pope Nicholas I, which emphasized the alleged Byzantine envy toward the papal success with the mission of the Bulgarians, claiming that this would be the reason for the Byzantine reproach of heresy against the Latin Church.<sup>123</sup>

The *Liber Pontificalis*, and its *Life of Pope Hadrian II* in particular, contains lengthy discussions of the Photian Schism and, more specifically, the anti-Photian Synod of Constantinople in 869/70. It was in this context that the eastern empire received its last extensive treatment in the *Liber Pontificalis*.<sup>124</sup> The *Life of Pope Nicholas*, included in the same collection, reports that in 867, Photios organized a synod to declare the papal see and the Latin Church as heretic. Nicholas, who refused his consent to Ignatios' deposition,<sup>125</sup> on his part, requested Frankish support to organize a synod to rebut the excommunication inflicted onto him by Photios. The *Annales Fuldenses* report referring to the following year that Nicholas addressed a letter to the bishops of "Germania" to this end and that a synod was finally held in Worms in the presence of King Louis aiming, among other things, to find a solution to the "stupidities of the Greeks."<sup>126</sup>

Hincmar of Reims commissioned two Frankish treaties related to the controversy, both written in 868/9: the *Liber adversos Graecos* ("Book against the Greeks"), authored by Aeneas of Paris, and the *Contra Graecorum opposita* ("Against the Greek opposition"), by Ratramn of Corbie. Both titles emphasize the distinction between east and west from a religious perspective.<sup>127</sup> Ratramn's work comprises four books retorting "Photios" attacks and lengthy treatments of the *filioque*-addition. It argues that the Byzantines would lead the Church toward

<sup>120</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 809; Borgolte, "Papst Leo III." (1980), pp. 401–27; Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse* (2002), pp. 143–4; Chadwick, *East and West* (2003), pp. 83–94; Chadwick, "Theodore of Tarsus" (2006), pp. 94–5; Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), p. 264; Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), pp. 715–17. See also Hen, "Holy Land pilgrims" (1998), p. 305.

<sup>121</sup> See *Epistolae selectae* 7, p. 66; Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse* (2002), pp. 144–5; Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), pp. 264–5.

<sup>122</sup> Lilie, "Kooperation und Konkurrenz" (2011), p. 73.

<sup>123</sup> Herbers, "Papst Nikolaus I." (1993), p. 70. Cf. *LP, Vita Nicolae I*, c. 70–2.

<sup>124</sup> Schreiner, "Der Liber Pontificalis" (1998), p. 43. See in particular *LP, Vita Hadriani II*, c. 23–6, 30–4, 38–9 and 46–7.

<sup>125</sup> *LP, Vita Nicolai I*, c. 42.

<sup>126</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 868, p. 66–7: "Synodus apud Womatiam mense Maio habita est praesente Hludowico rege, ubi episcopi nonnulla capitula de utilitate aecclesiastica conscribentes Grecorum ineptiis congrua ediderunt responsa."

<sup>127</sup> Herbers, "Papst Nikolaus I." (1993), p. 52.



heterodoxy by propagating customs like the alleged false date of Easter, the lack of tonsure and celibacy, and objections toward Roman primacy, by pleading for Church unity.<sup>128</sup> Aeneas of Paris refuted Photios in 210 chapters with citations from different authorities. Like Ratramn, he also dealt with Byzantine religious traditions, as those mentioned by Hincmar in his *Annales Bertiniani*, alongside aspects like the papal primacy or the question of whether deacons may be ordained pope.<sup>129</sup>

After the death of Michael III in September 867, Photios was deposed, and Ignatios was restored to his previous position.<sup>130</sup> This happened in the framework of the eighth Council in Constantinople in 869/70, which according to the *Annales Bertiniani* settled the conflict. The synod was attended by papal legates, including Anastasius Bibliothecarius, whose bilingual qualifications are emphasized in the same historiography.<sup>131</sup> The *Life of Hadrian II* reports that a copy of the *Acts* was handed over in Constantinople to Anastasius, and that in examining the documents, he discovered that some passages, including a section praising Louis the Pious, were missing in the papal letter. Consequently, the papal legates refused to sign the acts unless the entire letter was restored. In the end, they were signed, but only after a vague restriction was inserted, limiting the papal consent to the prelate's will. This was later criticized in Constantinople by deploring that the vagueness of this agreement would imply that their Church had become subject to Rome, given that now anything in the acts could be overturned.<sup>132</sup> Although the schism ended with the deposition of Photios, it thus had a long-term effect in strengthening the opinion about the tendency toward heresy of the respective other.<sup>133</sup> The harm inflicted on the relations between Rome and Constantinople is confirmed by the fact that Nicholas' successor, Pope Hadrian II († 872), in his correspondence, still included a cumulation of insults addressed against Photios, as Ralph-Johannes Lilie pointed out.<sup>134</sup>

### 3. Iconoclasts and Iconodules

Religious controversy was an important factor of identification and source for conflict, even long after the relevant disputes had been settled or a heresy

<sup>128</sup> Ratramnus, *Contra Graec.* 4.1, 4.4–6, cols. 303–6 and 317–32; Haendler, *Epoche* (1958), pp. 54–5; Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), pp. 718–20 and 741–4.

<sup>129</sup> Aeneas, *Adversus Graecos*, cols. 683–762. See also Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), pp. 720–1 and 743.

<sup>130</sup> *LP, Vita Nicolai I*, c. 76.

<sup>131</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 872.

<sup>132</sup> *LP, Vita Hadriani II*, 42–4. Cf.

<sup>133</sup> Kapriev, “Vier Arten” (2012), p. 6.

<sup>134</sup> Lilie, “Kooperation und Konkurrenz” (2011), p. 80, with further references.

had ended. In the tenth century, Liutprand of Cremona reported a discussion he had in Constantinople when he explained that he would have claimed in front of his Byzantine respondent that every heterodoxy originated and grew among “them” (*vobis/vos*) and that each time it had to be overcome by “us, that is the westerners” (“nobis, id est occidentalibus”).<sup>135</sup> His assertion about western orthodoxy was not without foundation, at least from a western perspective. The Cremonan bishop further argued that Gregory the Great had actively contributed to combatting Eutyches, the “heretic patriarch” (“patriarcham haereticum”) of Constantinople, by burning his scripts. The Saxons, on their part, would never have made themselves guilty of any heresy since their conversion to the Christian creed.<sup>136</sup>

Most prominent and influential was the iconoclast controversy. This dissension significantly contributed to creating a negative perception of the Byzantines in the west, leading to the terminology discussed in chapter VI. Although Iconoclasm was a genuinely Byzantine phenomenon, it touched on elements of faith that were not entirely alien to the west. The controversy resurfaced several times and marked the relations between the east and the west. Still, in the late ninth century, when Photios and Michael III sent their first embassy to Nicholas I, their intention was to request papal support for a synod meant to deal with Iconoclasm to reinstall orthodoxy. Thomas F. X. Noble published a valuable monograph focusing on the Carolingian responses and reflections on images to argue that they were rooted in genuinely Frankish late eighth-century concerns of the court.<sup>137</sup> Iconoclasm is an excellent example to study the Frankish autonomy toward the Byzantines and the popes claiming their share in a complex theological debate. This section focuses on the controversy between the Franks and the Byzantines. Discussions of the papal perspective are limited to what is necessary to understand the former.

<sup>135</sup> Liutprand, *Legatio* 22, p. 196. The reproach that heresies would usually emerge from the east was regularly made in the western sources, see Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), pp. 760–7.

<sup>136</sup> Liutprand, *Legatio* 22, p. 197: “saxonum genus [...] nulla est haeresi maculatum.”

<sup>137</sup> Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (2009). Other important work also relating to the west include McCormick, “Textes” (1994), pp. 95–158; Thümmel, “Die fränkische Reaktion” (1997), pp. 965–80; Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), pp. 55–74; Neil, “The western reaction” (2000), pp. 533–52; Thümmel, *Die Konzilien* (2005). On Iconoclasm more in general, see Runciman, *The eastern schism* (1955); Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium* (2001); Chadwick, *East and west* (2003), pp. 71–7. For a short survey of the older history of research, see Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), pp. 13–17. For a comparative treatment of the different Frankish and Italian synods, see Hartmann, *Die Synoden der Karolingerzeit* (1989). See also the excellent discussion in Brown, “A Dark-Age crisis” (1973), pp. 1–34.

## Origins and Early Iconoclasm

The iconoclast controversy was rooted in the ancient eastern tradition of icon veneration. The term “icon” (εἰκών, i.e., image/picture), from a modern perspective, can be ambiguous, as in the early medieval period it related to any image and was not limited to genuinely holy depictions, i.e., holy devotional images considered to share in the sanctity of what was pictured and before which cult acts could be performed—a significance with a Russian origin that only emerged at a later period.<sup>138</sup> In Byzantium, images could be revered by resorting to a large variety of rituals and traditions, including kissing, kneeling, and extending the arms before them.<sup>139</sup> In the eighth century, this cult gained significance and quality to the point that contemporaries could worry about its orthodoxy.

The *Historia syntomos* of Nikephoros Patriarchos explained that Iconoclasm was instigated by the emperor Leo III. In 726, a volcanic outbreak on the Aegean islands of Thera and Therasia darkened the sky, a celestial spectacle that impressed the emperor to the point that he took it as a sign of divine anger. He pondered possible reasons for the divine displeasure, which he related to the habit of venerating holy icons. It was promptly prohibited.<sup>140</sup> The chronographer Theophanes added that the emperor’s men thereupon took down an image of the Lord (“κυρίου εἰκόνα”), which until then had hung above the Great Bronze Gate of Constantinople.

Iconoclasm had emerged from a period of instability and major insecurities due to the short successions of emperors and threats to the empire’s borders. The last Muslim siege of Constantinople had only ended less than ten years before, in 717. Leo III was the first emperor who reinforced a more stable position of power. The volcanic eruption certainly was not the main or only reason behind the introduction of what would become Iconoclasm. The Islamic rejection of images<sup>141</sup> and the wish for divine help against the bubonic plague raging in the mid-740s<sup>142</sup> are other likely factors contributing to the spread of iconoclast thinking.

The question of whether and how icons should or should not be venerated divided Byzantine society for more than a century—at least those elite and clerical

<sup>138</sup> Thümmel, *Die Konzilien* (2005), pp. 6–7; Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (2009), pp. 28–9. Iconoclast actions are already attested before the eighth century, among others, in the framework of the *damnatio memoriae*, see Theophylactos, *Hist.* 3.2.

<sup>139</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, pp. 475–80; Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), p. 70; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 33–4 and 36–9.

<sup>140</sup> Nikephoros, *Hist.* 59–60. See also Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6218.

<sup>141</sup> Herrin, “What caused Iconoclasm?” (2014), pp. 857–66.

<sup>142</sup> Turner, “The politics of despair” (1990).

parts of society the sources relate to. It opposed the iconoclasts, which defended the radical opinion that icons should be removed to prevent any attempt at veneration by pointing to the second commandment prohibiting the depiction of the divine (Exodus 20.4), to the iconodules, the adherents of icon veneration. The controversy shook the Byzantine world for over a century, with a first period between 727 and 787 and a second lasting from 815 until around 842/3. The persecution of iconophiles and the destruction of images did not have the intensity and frequency as has often been claimed. Historians today agree that although Leo III was probably its main initiator, he was hardly the destroyer of images and prosecutor of iconophiles, earlier researchers had supposed.<sup>143</sup> Noble rightly noticed that it is striking that Huneberc's *Hodoeporicon* on Willibald's journey, which included a prolonged stay in Constantinople from 727 to 729, i.e., only shortly after Leo III had initiated Iconoclasm, does not refer to any issues related to icons in any manner. The text only mentions one single image.<sup>144</sup> Even at the time of Constantine V, Iconoclasm did not seem to have been as destructive as has often been assumed, and this also applies to the persecution of iconophiles. According to Noble, only around 25 pieces of art may be identified with certainty to have been destroyed throughout the entire iconoclast period. He concluded that "there was no wholesale destruction of art in the eighth century, any more than there was a wanton persecution of iconophiles" (p. 70).<sup>145</sup> He concluded that there probably were only a few brief periods of active hostility to images and their venerators, with a first phase around 730, a second around 752/4, and a third between 765 and 767.<sup>146</sup>

The first reactions to Iconoclasm recorded from the far western borders of the empire came from Rome. It is contained in the *Life of Gregory II* († 731) as part of the *Liber Pontificalis*, which mentions how imperial mandates were issued to prohibit Church images of the saints, the martyrs, and the angels by requesting papal acknowledgment while threatening the Roman prelate with the deposition from his office, should he dare to refuse:

So the pious man despised the prince's profane mandate, and now he armed himself against the emperor as against an enemy, denouncing his heresy and writing that Christians everywhere must guard against the impiety that had arisen.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>143</sup> See the discussions in Turner, "The politics of despair" (1990), p. 421; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 52 and 58–61; Brandes, "Byzantinischer Bilderstreit" (2018), p. 63.

<sup>144</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 137.

<sup>145</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 65–70.

<sup>146</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 109–10.

<sup>147</sup> *LP, Vita Gregori II*, 17, p. 404: "Despiciens ergo vir profanam principis iussionem, iam contra imperatorem quasi contra hostem se armavit, rennuens heresem eius, scribens ubique caveri se christianos quod orta fuisset impietas." Trans. Davis.

Any papal opposition against Iconoclasm implied resistance against the empire. Iconoclasm, therefore, contributed to the alienation between Constantinople and Rome. Paolo Delogu rightly argued that it was difficult to blame the patriarch for what the pope conceived as another eastern heresy, as was done a century earlier in the context of the Monothelite controversy,<sup>148</sup> given that the emperor now clearly was to be held responsible. The *Life of Gregory II* continued that following the pope's opposition, the Italians planned to raise an emperor themselves ("sibi eligerent imperatorem") and to bring him to Constantinople. The pope would have opposed it, a decision Gregory II's *Life* explained with its protagonist's hope for the emperor's conversion. This did not prevent the Italians from major opposition to the emperor's decree.<sup>149</sup> Theophanes claimed that Gregory II thereupon withheld the taxes due from Italy, including Rome, and the same source mentions that the pope wrote a letter to the emperor to express his dissatisfaction about the latter interfering in doctrinal matters.<sup>150</sup>

These and other events related to this early phase of Iconoclasm have recently been challenged, most vehemently by Wolfram Brandes. He argued that the pope withheld the taxes for a reason unrelated to Iconoclasm.<sup>151</sup> The same is true for two letters that survived as part of the *Acts* of the Second Synod of Nicaea held in 787, one of which may be identical to the one mentioned by Theophanes by referring to Gregory II. They only survived in a Greek translation. There is general agreement among modern scholars that these letters were, to the least, contaminated to the extent that any assessment related to their period of redaction or the views initially expressed by their author is problematic.<sup>152</sup> However, it is difficult to imagine that this correspondence, which must have existed given that other Italian and Byzantine sources also mentioned it, was entirely forged later to replace the extant letter. Therefore, it appears much more likely that they go back to an authentic original.<sup>153</sup> If this assumption is correct, the extant letters still do confirm that Gregory criticized the emperor Leo III for what the pope considered a presumptuous decision and that he probably did so by underlining the emperor's role as defender of the faith. The second letter responded to Leo III's refusal to change his mind and underlined his priestly role by stressing the differences between the worldly and the spiritual authority.<sup>154</sup> A likely later

<sup>148</sup> Delogu, "The papacy" (2000), p. 211.

<sup>149</sup> *LP, Vita Gregori II*, 17–18.

<sup>150</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6217.

<sup>151</sup> Brandes, "Byzantinischer Bilderstreit" (2018), p. 66.

<sup>152</sup> Brubaker/Haldon, *Byzantium* (2001), p. 277; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 56–7; Brandes, "Byzantinischer Bilderstreit" (2018), pp. 66–7, arguing against the opinion mostly held that the letter goes back to an authentic original.

<sup>153</sup> Similar Grotz, "Beobachtungen" (1980), pp. 9–40; Hack, "Bildaussendung und Bildeinholung" (2003), pp. 160–2; Gantner, *Freunde Roms* (2014), pp. 80–1, all tentatively arguing for their authenticity.

<sup>154</sup> Gregory II, *Epist.*

addition was Gregory's claim in the first and more elaborate letter that images would be necessary as a means to inspire and that the emperor would have confounded the veneration of icons with idolatry (*εἰδωλολάρτης*). The use of images would not correspond to idolatry, given that any prayer offered in front of such an item would be dedicated to God, not to the image.<sup>155</sup> The letter thus adopted a point that was already elaborated in July 599 by Pope Gregory the Great in a letter addressed to Serenus, who at that time was the bishop of Marseille:

Furthermore, we indicate that it has recently come to our attention that your Fraternity saw some people adoring images, and you smashed those images and threw them out of the churches. And we certainly applauded you for having had the zeal not to allow anything made by human hands to be adored, but we judge that you ought not to have smashed those images. For a picture is provided in churches for the reason that those who are illiterate may at least read by looking at the walls what they cannot read in books. Therefore, your Fraternity should have preserved them and should have prohibited the people from their adoration, so that both the illiterate might have a way of acquiring a knowledge of history, and the people would not be sinning at all in their adoration of a picture.<sup>156</sup>

Unfortunately, Gregory's letter does not indicate whether the mentioned icon venerators were foreigners or natives, which is particularly unfortunate given the receiver's location in Marseille, a seaport that certainly also attracted eastern Christians. A second and more elaborate treatment by Gregory I on the same matter in a subsequent epistle addressed to the same bishop at least lacks a hint suggesting that the author assumed to relate to a phenomenon alien to Gaul.<sup>157</sup> Evidence from the Frankish world confirms that images could be conceived in Gaul in a manner somewhat comparable to what we know from the Byzantine

<sup>155</sup> Gregory II, *Epist.* 1, p. 440. Whether image veneration would compare to pagan idolatry was important in this context, see, e.g., *Conc. Const.* a. 754, 273 B–D and 277 C–E, p. 48. On pre-iconoclast discussions about images and idolatry, see Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 11–45. See also McCormick, "Textes" (1994), p. 137.

<sup>156</sup> Gregory, *Epist.* 9.208, p. 195: "Praeterea indico dudum ad nos pervenisse, quod fraternitas vestra quosdam imaginum adoratores aspiciens easdem ecclesiis imagines confregit atque proiecit. Et quidem zelum vos, ne quid manufactum adorari possit, habuisse laudamus, sed frangere easdem imagines non debuisse iudicamus. Idcirco enim pictura in ecclesiis adhibetur, ut hi qui litteras nesciunt saltem in parietibus videndo legant, quae legere in codicibus non valent. Tua ergo fraternitas et illa servare et ab eorum adoratu populum prohibere debuit, quatenus et litterarum nescii haberent, unde scientiam historiae colligerent, et populus in picturae adoratione minime peccaret." Trans. Martyn, vol. 2, p. 674.

<sup>157</sup> Gregory, *Epist.* 11.10. Similar Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 43–4. On these two letters, see also Feld, *Der Ikonoklasmus* (1990), pp. 11–14, arguing that Serenus' motives lay in Exodus 20.5. The icon probably was a mosaic. See also Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 1.32, 2.16, 5.45. More elaborate on early image veneration, Kitzinger, "The cult of images" (1954), pp. 83–150.

east. Two consecutive sections in the *Glory of the Martyrs* by Gregory of Tours are particularly noteworthy. The first is a story about an image of Christ stabbed and stolen by a Jew to be burned. The image finally bled by its wound, and this to the extent that the perpetrator was soaked wet. He could be identified by the red traces he had left when leaving the church. The second is the story of another image of Christ located in a church in Narbonne, which, in a dream, would have beseeched the priest Basil to free it from nakedness by covering it up.<sup>158</sup> An icon of the Virgin Mary, which Arculf claimed to have seen during his stay in Constantinople in the late seventh century, was allegedly violated in a significantly more disgraceful manner, and according to the author Adomnán, the perpetrator would have gone away without any known punishment.<sup>159</sup>

Noble rightly stressed that the exceptionality of these pieces of evidence should make us cautious about overinterpreting these. Narbonne was again located in the very south of Gaul, and the Greek name of the priest Basil should further remind us that exchanges with the Byzantine world were easier, and probably more common, there than anywhere further north in the remaining parts of the Frankish territory.<sup>160</sup> More importantly, there is no further evidence from the Frankish west that somewhat compares to these or relates in any other manner to divinely active images, at least none postdating the sixth-century examples just mentioned. Still, it is notable that the Frankish cult of relics largely corresponded to the eastern cult of images, including the expectation that they may help one receive support in battle or to be cured. For example, the drinking of dust collected from a martyr's tomb perfectly resembled the eastern tradition to admix the scraping of an icon to the Eucharist.<sup>161</sup> Procedures like kneeling, kissing, and extending the arms in front of an image, well known from the east, are attested for the ninth-century west in connection to crosses.<sup>162</sup>

In Rome, icons were not consistently considered mere images. The *Life of Pope Stephen II* of the *Liber Pontificalis* contains a remarkable description of the process meant to translate the holy image of Christ known as the *acheiropoieta* (ἄχειροποίητα) to Rome—the source calls it “*acheropsita*.” The name itself may be translated with “not made by hands,” thus stressing its divine origin.<sup>163</sup> The *Life* reports that the pontiff carried the image on his own shoulders and that he and all

<sup>158</sup> Gregory, *Gloria Mart.* 21 and 22.

<sup>159</sup> Adomnán, *De locis sanctis* 3.5.6, p. 118. Two further relevant stories in Adomnán, *De locis sanctis* 3.4. See also Brubaker, “Representation” (2009), pp. 41–2.

<sup>160</sup> See Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 39–41, with some further evidence.

<sup>161</sup> Relics helping in battle, see, e.g., Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 7.31; see also *ibid.* 3.29. Cf. Theophylactos, *Hist.* 3.1. Dust as a cure, see, e.g., Gregory, *Gloria Mart.* 49 and 61. Compare to Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 33–4 and 369.

<sup>162</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 369.

<sup>163</sup> See Davis, *The lives* (2007), p. 56, n. 22; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 33. A comparable image is mentioned in Theophylactos, *Hist.* 3.1. On images in Rome, see Nordhagen, “Constantinople” (2000), pp. 113–34.



those attending entered the church barefoot and with ashes on their head.<sup>164</sup> The icon's transportation to Rome during imperial Iconoclasm and the procession visualized the papal opposition to the empire and its religious policy. A comparable translation of an image of Christ from iconoclast Constantinople to Rome is mentioned in the anonymous ninth-century *Epistula Synodica*. In this case, the image was reportedly responsible for several miracles following its arrival in Rome.<sup>165</sup> It was also the custom of the Roman Church to anoint the holy images with holy oil before the believers worshipped them.<sup>166</sup>

In the east, Iconoclasm had gradually intensified from the 730s, although more regular destructions of images and the persecution of iconophiles were only explicitly recorded from the regency of Leo's son Constantine V († 775).<sup>167</sup> The *Life of Pope Gregory III*, which claimed that the emperors Leo III and Constantine V were both responsible for the removal and destruction of sacred images of Christ, the Virgin Mother, the Apostles, and the saints, reported that the mentioned pope made further attempts to change the emperor's minds.<sup>168</sup> This was also when southern Italy, Sicily, and Illyricum were removed from the papal jurisdiction, a procedure usually interpreted as an imperial punishment in reaction to the papal opposition to Iconoclasm.<sup>169</sup> An alternative reading has been offered by Wolfram Brandes, who argued that the loss of these territories to the papal authority was a gradual process already initiated in the later seventh century in the framework of mutual agreements from which every party had its share, and that this process had only been completed around 750.<sup>170</sup> In any case, the forfeiture of these territories involved the restriction of the papal authority to northern Italy and, together with the Carolingian conquest, set the seal on the defection of the pope from the Byzantine empire.

The views expressed according to the mentioned epistolary evidence, related to the two first popes called Gregory, were widely maintained in the west throughout the early Middle Ages: that images could move their beholder and may offer access to the history of salvation to the unlearned, that they could relate to the invisible, that the image would never be identical to the depicted and that, therefore, any veneration would be addressed to the latter.<sup>171</sup> The Franks adopted similar positions, even though they used several occasions to oppose the papal

<sup>164</sup> LP, *Vita Stephani II*, 11, p. 443.

<sup>165</sup> *Epistula Synodica* 10.14.

<sup>166</sup> Feld, *Der Ikonoklasmus* (1990), p. 24.

<sup>167</sup> On this first phase, see Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 52–70.

<sup>168</sup> LP, *Vita Gregori III*, 2. Cf. Schreiner, "Der Liber Pontificalis" (1998), 37–8.

<sup>169</sup> E.g., Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), pp. 17–8; Neil, "The western reaction" (2000), p. 538; Thümmel, "Karl der Große" (2009), p. 59. See also Ohme, "Rom und Byzanz" (2011), p. 225.

<sup>170</sup> Brandes, "Byzantinischer Bilderstreit" (2018), pp. 68–76. Scholz, "Das Papsttum" (2012), p. 18, considered the thesis "plausible."

<sup>171</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 111–57, esp. p. 156, noting, at p. 35, that Paulinus of Nola already argued that images may instruct the unlearned.

views on specific points. This is why, although the Roman prelates and the Franks were natural allies against the Byzantines, the mid-eighth-century popes could not be too sure about the Frankish support, as suggested by the mentioned papal letters to Pippin, which regularly emphasized the common ground of Rome and Francia.<sup>172</sup> We shall now turn to the Frankish views and related synods.

### The Early Icon-Related Synods

From a Frankish perspective, Iconoclasm does not seem to have been a significant issue, and it is noteworthy that none of the Frankish narrative sources explicitly relates to this particular controversy.<sup>173</sup> Although the Franks did know the concept of worshipping material things like the cross, the Gospel, or relics, the veneration of images was largely unknown during the period focused on here.<sup>174</sup> Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch suggested that the understanding of this type of worship was hindered by the fact that the Carolingian world looked back on a tradition characterized by scarcity of pictures and that the script, therefore, had prevailed over images, which were mainly meant to illustrate the former.<sup>175</sup> There have been discussions related to icon veneration, particularly in preparation and the framework of the synods held in Gentilly, 794 in Frankfurt and 825 in Paris. The first meeting was preceded by two synods organized in 754 and 787, the latter by two held in 815 and 821, to which another in 869/70 could be added, which all took place in or around Constantinople. Two additional synods took place in Rome in 731 and 769. Thus, five councils on the subject of icon veneration were organized in the east and five in the west, while the first event of each set of meetings took place in Rome, followed by Byzantium and the Carolingian world. The first synod on this topic thus had not taken place in Constantinople but in Rome (see Figure 7.1).

In 731/2, the pope used a local synod to emphasize his opposition toward Iconoclasm.<sup>176</sup> The *Liber Pontificalis* explains that it condemned anyone who, “despising the faithful use of those who held the ancient custom of the apostolic Church, should remove, destroy, profane and blaspheme against this veneration of the sacred images.”<sup>177</sup> During its fourth session, the second papal synod of 769, attended by twelve Frankish bishops, alongside another 41 attendees,

<sup>172</sup> E.g., *Codex Carolinus* 36, p. 546.

<sup>173</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 165. The earliest evidence related to Iconoclasm north of the Alps, most intriguingly, is attested by Bede in northern England, see McCormick, “Textes” (1994), pp. 111–12.

<sup>174</sup> Thümmel, “Karl der Große” (2009), p. 61.

<sup>175</sup> Saurma-Jeltsch, “Zur karolingischen Haltung” (1994), pp. 69–112.

<sup>176</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium and the west” (1995), p. 364.

<sup>177</sup> *LP, Vita Gregori III*, 3: “ut si quis deinceps, antiquae consuetudinis apostolicae ecclesiae tenentes fidelem usum contemnens, adversus eandem venerationem sacrarum imaginum.” Trans. Davis, p. 20.

ROME	BYZANTIUM	FRANCIA
731 in Rome		
	754 in Hieria	
		767 Gentilly
769 in Rome		
	787 in Nicaea	
		794 in Frankfurt
	815 in Constantinople	
	821 in Constantinople	
		825 in Paris
	869/70 in Constantinople	

FIGURE 7.1 Geographical distribution and chronology of the synods on Iconoclasm.

confirmed the decisions taken during the first icon-related papal convention and stipulated that the images of Jesus, his virgin mother, and the saints should be venerated.<sup>178</sup>

The first Byzantine synod to deal with icon veneration was held in February 754 and, thus, almost 28 years after the initiation of Iconoclasm. It was not the first Byzantine council to address the topic of images. The *Acts* of the Sixth Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 680/1 contain three relevant paragraphs: canon 73 prohibits the placement of images of the cross on the floor, a stipulation that may have mainly applied to mosaics, canon 82 argues that Christ should be depicted as a human figure, not as a lamb, and canon 100 prohibits pictures that might stimulate immoral pleasure.<sup>179</sup>

The earliest explicit pieces of evidence for image destructions, apart from the removal of the image hanging on the Great Bronze Gate around 726, date

<sup>178</sup> *Concilia Karolini Romanum* a. 769, p. 87; Levison, "Die Akten" (1912), pp. 249–82; McCormick, "Textes" (1994), p. 132; Thümmel, "Die Stellung" (1999), pp. 59–60; Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 19; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 159, speaking of thirteen Frankish attendees.

<sup>179</sup> Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians* (2009), pp. 26–7, adding that canon 73 mainly repeated an edict that had been issued in 427 by Theodosius II. Louth, "Byzantium transforming" (2007), p. 247, missed canon 73.

to the time shortly before the first Byzantine council of 754 on that matter. It was held in Hiereia, east of Chalcedon. The synod started in February and was convened by the emperors Leo and Constantine as the Seventh Ecumenical Council, with 338 delegates attending.<sup>180</sup> Despite its ecumenicity, the pope was not invited, probably because he had already previously demonstrated his opposition toward Iconoclasm, as we have seen.<sup>181</sup> The synod marked an important apex in the Byzantine iconoclast movement.<sup>182</sup> The *Acts*, which contain the earliest evidence for Byzantine image policy,<sup>183</sup> argue that the devil would have wickedly reintroduced idolatry under the auspices of Christianity by instigating their veneration (*προσκυνεῖν*) and adoration (*σέβεσθαι*).<sup>184</sup> It decreed that any image should be regarded despicable<sup>185</sup> and that, “as of now” (“ἀπὸ τοῦ παρόντος”), any bishop, deacon, or priest creating, displaying, hiding, or venerating (“προσκυνήσαι”) an image should be deposed, while any monk or layman doing so should be anathematized and judged according to the imperial laws (“βασιλικοῖς νόμοις”).<sup>186</sup> It stressed the significance of the invisible and unrepresentable divine nature of Christ and that what is known in the heart and what may be said with the mouth should not be modeled and subsequently called “Christ.”<sup>187</sup> The said probation was not restricted to the divine but included the Virgin Mary, the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs.<sup>188</sup> Noble rightly stressed that these decrees were rather moderate and thus did not correspond to the harshness later accounts willingly attributed to this phase of Iconoclasm. The remaining source material neither contains evidence for any major subsequent icon destruction that would have followed the council nor for implementing any relevant council rules.<sup>189</sup>

The Synod of Hiereia, which took place only shortly before the diplomatic exchange with the Franks was officially resumed, remains unmentioned in the Frankish records. The first explicit Frankish note on Iconoclasm is contained in the *Royal Frankish Annals*, which, referring to the year 767, mentions that King Pippin held a great synod in Gentilly that was attended by “Romans and Greeks”—i.e., papal and Byzantine delegates—and that this convention dealt

<sup>180</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 754, 232 E, p. 34.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Ohme, “Rom und Byzanz” (2011), p. 225.

<sup>182</sup> On the Hiereian synod, see Krannich/v. Stockhausen, *Die ikonoklastische Synode* (2002).

<sup>183</sup> Thümmel, *Die Konzilien* (2005), pp. 63–78; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 62–4.

<sup>184</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 754, 221 C/D, p. 32: “ἀλλ’ ἐν πορσῇματι Χριστιανισμοῦ τὴν εἰδωλολατερίαν κατὰ τὸ λεληθὸς ἐπανήγαγε, πείσας τοῖς ἰδίοις σοφίσμασι τοὺς πρὸς αὐτὸν ὀρώντας μὴ ἀποστῆναι τῆς κτίσεως, ἀλλὰ ταύτην προσκυνεῖν, καὶ ταύτην σέβεσθαι, καὶ Θεὸν τὸ ποίημα οἶεσθαι τῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ κλήσει ἐπονομαζόμενον.”

<sup>185</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 754, 324 D–E, p. 56: “πᾶσαν εἰκόνα ἐκ παντοίας ὕλης καὶ χρωματουργικῆς τῶν ζωγράφων κακοτεχνίας πεποιημένην.”

<sup>186</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 754, 328 C.

<sup>187</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 754, 248 E–252 A/B and 256 A/B, p. 40. Similar *ibid.* 340 C.

<sup>188</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 754, 272A/B and D.

<sup>189</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 64.

with “the holy Trinity and the images of the saints.”<sup>190</sup> A relevant reference in Ado of Vienne’s *Chronicle* of 870 is a little more explicit: it explains that the delegates discussed the question of whether the Holy Spirit emerged from the Father *and* the Son,<sup>191</sup> which means that he assumed that alongside the question of image veneration, the synod also dealt with the *filioque*-controversy discussed in section VII.2. Unfortunately, the acts are now lost, and the chronicles do not provide any further information about either the attendees or the discussions held during this first Frankish synod on these matters.

The Synod of Gentilly stands out from previous Frankish councils by the fact that delegates from Rome and Constantinople attended it. It focused on two issues that were of concern to these two invitees, which is why their presence was probably motivated by at least one of these topics.<sup>192</sup> The convention may have been the first occasion when the Franks came into contact with Iconoclasm, even though this seems improbable given that they had already been through intensive exchanges with the empire and Rome for more than a decade. The iconoclast emperor and the iconodule pope in 767 were opponents in matters of icon veneration. The Franks, on their turn, were on good terms with the two. This constellation must be considered when trying to understand what happened in Gentilly.

There is evidence providing additional information on this otherwise most insufficiently documented synod. Michael McCormick conclusively redated two letters by Pope Paul I to Pippin included in the *Codex Carolinus* collection. They shed some light on the possible intentions behind the council. McCormick argued that letter 37 must date around late 766, while letter 36 should stem from around March 767, i.e., shortly after the synod, which he dated around late February or very early March of that same year. The association of these letters with the said synod allows the reconstruction of its general context and the names of some of its attendants.<sup>193</sup>

Letter 37 mentions that papal and imperial legates were sent to the Carolingian court, and that the Byzantine envoys were to be withheld by the Franks until the end of the mentioned meeting in early 767 to discuss an unspecified matter that had been brought forward by and was dear to the pope.<sup>194</sup> Joint admonitions of the pope and the Franks against the Byzantine position in reference to image veneration are explicitly confirmed by letter 36.<sup>195</sup> Letter 37 suggests that the Byzantine legates had initially traveled to the Frankish

<sup>190</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 767, p. 24: “Tunc habuit domnus Pippinus rex in supradicta villa synodum magnum inter Romanos et Grecos de sancta Trinitate vel de sanctorum imaginibus.”

<sup>191</sup> Ado of Vienne, *Chron.* col. 125.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse* (2002), pp. 78–80, arguing that the evidence would not suffice to argue that the synod did deal with the *filioque*-addition.

<sup>193</sup> McCormick, “Textes” (1994), pp. 116–25.

<sup>194</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 37, p. 549.

<sup>195</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 36, p. 546.

kingdom for reasons unrelated to the unspecified papal suit, which implies that it probably was the pope, and maybe also the Franks, who after their arrival in Francia, invited the Byzantines to attend the meeting in Gentilly. The subject matter that is most likely to have been chosen by the pope to be discussed during this convention was image veneration, a controversial topic relevant to Rome and Constantinople. This assumption is supported by letter 36, which relates to discussions in Francia between the papal and the imperial legates aiming "to uphold the orthodox faith and the pious tradition of the Fathers,"<sup>196</sup> a statement likely to apply to the discussion on image veneration. The good relations of the Franks with both parties and their comparatively neutral position in matters of image veneration would have made them a suitable arbitrator to pursue such negotiations, and Gentilly presented a potential neutral ground. The conceivability of the Franks being approached to act as mediators between Rome and Constantinople is confirmed by the fact that later, in 824, the emperor Michael III approached the Franks under Louis the Pious to adopt such a mediative function in the rapprochement of the Byzantines with the pope in the same matter, as we shall see.<sup>197</sup>

Letter 36 identifies the heads of the Byzantine legation as the *spatharios* Anthes and the eunuch Synesios, information that backs the assumption that their initial mission was not to participate in a synod on image veneration. Although the title *spatharios* had ceased to designate military officers by the mid-eighth century, there is no reason to assume that Anthes had received any significant theological education allowing him to represent the Byzantine position in this matter in Gentilly adequately. There is also no indication that Synesios was significantly more qualified in this regard. A likely mission would be to negotiate a marriage that would have united Pippin's daughter Gisela to the future emperor Leo IV.<sup>198</sup> Maybe the eunuch Synesios, who, unlike Anthes, remained in the Frankish realm for some time, was assigned to instruct the bride-to-be, comparable to the education Rotrud received almost two decades later in view of her engagement to the future emperor Constantine VI.<sup>199</sup> This would imply that Pippin initially had accepted Constantine's V marriage offer.

For the Frankish hosts, the visit of the Byzantine legates presented an excellent occasion to forward and negotiate the unspecified issue related to icon veneration referred to in the mentioned papal letter. The matter seems to have been rather urgent, maybe because it was related to the synod planned to take place

<sup>196</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 36, pp. 544–5: "de observatione fidei orthodoxe et pia patrum traditione in vestri praesentia disputantes altercati sunt."

<sup>197</sup> See Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy" (1985), p. 106; Haendler, "Der byzantinische Bilderstreit" (1993), p. 190.

<sup>198</sup> McCormick, "Textes" (1994), p. 130.

<sup>199</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 36, p. 545: "Anthi nempe spatarium [. . .] Sinesium eunuchum"; McCormick, "Textes" (1994), p. 130.

in early 769 in Rome as, otherwise, the Franks would probably have preferred to send a proper invitation to Constantinople so that an expert in theology could be sent to Francia. An alternative reading of the evidence is that the primary intention of the convention in Gentilly was to check things out in view of further prospective discussions. Maybe the pope saw the potential for a rapprochement in the image controversy and needed to find answers quickly for an unknown reason.

It is difficult to assess to what extent the Frankish court contributed to initiating the rapprochement of Rome and the Byzantines by opening negotiations in 767. In 787, this evolution would open out into the reinstitution of icon veneration in the east, with papal consent. The synod thus offered the Franks the opportunity to present themselves and their potential as a rising power with influence reaching toward the Mediterranean. Supposing that Ado of Vienne was right about the *filioque* problem being treated in the framework of that same meeting, the Frankish engagement may also be interpreted as a statement of independence and power, given that within this particular controversy, the Franks opposed both the papal and the Byzantine position.<sup>200</sup> It is not unthinkable that the Franks intentionally created this constellation. Emphasizing their opposition in the *filioque* controversy would have strengthened the community of Rome and Byzantium, creating a new constellation that could have positively affected the Frankish negotiations on image veneration.

The two papal letters portray a cautious pope eager to keep control over the negotiations. The second apostolic letter, nr. 36, betrays the papal apprehension that the negotiations may take an unwanted turn and end with an association of the Franks and the Byzantines. This becomes particularly clear in the papal request that both parties should never talk without the presence of a papal legate.<sup>201</sup> It seems probable that the pope sent a bilingual legate to Gentilly, who was meant to monitor such discussions. Given the many Greek-speaking monastic communities in and around Rome and the epistolary mention of the presence of an abbot John in Gentilly, McCormick may be right that John was skilled in Latin and Greek.<sup>202</sup> Thus, it may have been John's function to keep track of and control the discussions between the Byzantines and Franks. The Franks were seemingly willing to comply with the pope's extravagant wishes.

Letter 36 mentions an epistle addressed by the emperor to the Carolingian king and that the Franks handed over a copy of this letter to the pope. It affirms that the pope was satisfied that his suspicion toward the Franks was unfounded and his displeasedness about the contents of the imperial letter, which he

<sup>200</sup> Cf. McCormick, "Textes" (1994), p. 115.

<sup>201</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 36, p. 544.

<sup>202</sup> McCormick, "Textes" (1994), p. 128.



characterized as “lies.”<sup>203</sup> This and the fact that the marriage plan to unite Pippin’s daughter Gisela and Leo IV was never realized<sup>204</sup> suggest that the negotiations between the imperial and the papal legates in Gentilly were not very successful in promoting a rapprochement of Rome and Constantinople. As Synesios remained in Gaul, the betrothal may have been canceled some time later, which implies that the negotiations during Gentilly, in the long run, had a rather negative effect on the relations between the Franks and the Byzantines. Given the temporal proximity between the council of Gentilly and the second icon-related Roman synod of 769, it appears that the discussions on images in Rome were related to or a continuation of the negotiations in Gentilly. This assumption is backed by the comparatively high number of twelve Frankish delegates attending the synod. As the synod confirmed the papal position of 731, the Franks may have allied with the Roman prelate, who continuously opposed Byzantine Iconoclasm. There have been no further consequences, however, as Iconoclasm seems to have vanished into thin air after 769, only to resurface two decades later, in the late 780s.<sup>205</sup>

The period that followed the Roman synod of 769 was comparatively quiet. There is no evidence of specific action against icons under Constantine’s son Leo IV. The matter was resumed only after the emperor’s death in 780, when his widow Irene sought to end the Byzantine isolation from other Christian reigns.<sup>206</sup> The regent empress soon planned to convene a synod meant to replace the council of 754 in its role as the Seventh Ecumenical Synod. In 784, the patriarch Paul IV († 784) declared Iconoclasm a misapprehension, a decision David Turner considered to reflect a more general uneasiness with the intemperance that had occurred in the past.<sup>207</sup> This time, the pope was meant to attend the synod: in August of that same year, Hadrian received Irene’s letter of invitation, which is preserved with the council acts. Hadrian immediately responded by applauding her intention to restore the images by calling the empress and her son Constantine “new Constantine and new Helena” (“nouuum Constantinum et nouam Helenam,” p. 121). He also did not hesitate to make his own claims: he stressed that the apostolic see had always been persistent in its position to request, among other things, the restitution of the Roman patrimony that had been confiscated and the restitution of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Illyricum, Calabria, and Sicily.<sup>208</sup>

<sup>203</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 36, 546.

<sup>204</sup> McCormick, “Textes” (1994), p. 130. Cf. Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 140–9, who argued that the Franks were interested in having icons discussed in 769.

<sup>205</sup> Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 27.

<sup>206</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 70–3.

<sup>207</sup> Turner, “The politics of despair” (1990), p. 434.

<sup>208</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 787, II, pp. 118–173, with an excellent discussion in Price, *Acts of the Second Council* (2018), pp. 142–8. The case may be related to the information provided in reference to the year 731/2 in Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6224, see Scholz, “Das Papsttum” (2012), pp. 15–16. See

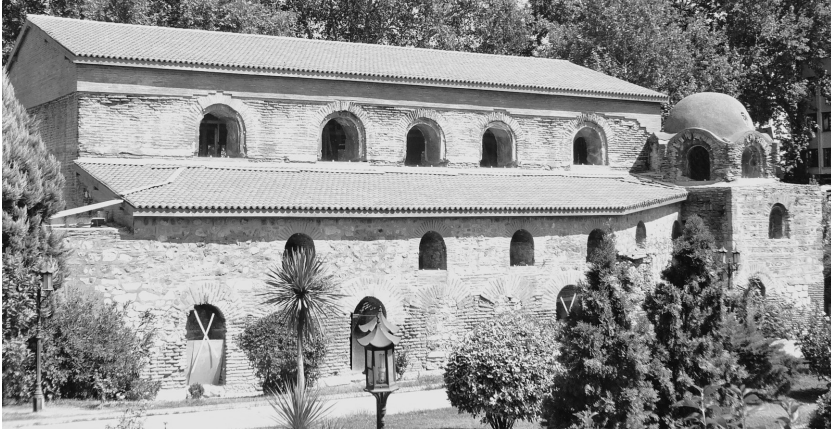


FIGURE 7.2 Hagia Sophia, İznik, locality of the Council of 787. Grayscale detail of the image by QuartierLatin1968. Creative Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0). Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ayasofya\_Iznik\_902.jpg.

Hadrian I's letter was translated in preparation for the synod to be read in Greek during the second session. It has long been discussed whether this translation rendered the original truthfully, as the still extant version skips the displeasing passages, particularly the mentioned papal requests,<sup>209</sup> and given that Hadrian later deplored that the emperor had ignored his requests.<sup>210</sup> Erich Lamberz compared the Greek with the Latin version and argued convincingly that no significant rewriting of the Greek version had occurred before the synod, given that neither Hadrian nor pope Nicholas I, in the ninth century, complained that these particular suits had been skipped. Thus, these changes seem to have been made significantly later, probably in the context of the Photian Schism, but before 873, when Anastasius Bibliotecarius, who translated the synodal *Acts* of 787, received a Greek copy of the acts.<sup>211</sup>

The synod took place in 787 in a church in Nicaea, on the Anatolian side southeast of Constantinople (see Figure 7.2). The initiators aimed to restore the

also Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), pp. 24 and 31; Wallach, "Pope Hadrian I's Synodica" (1977), pp. 1–42; Thümmel, "Die Stellung" (1999), pp. 61–2; Neil, "The western reaction" (2000), pp. 537–8 and 546–7.

<sup>209</sup> E.g., Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 25.

<sup>210</sup> Haendler, "Kirchenpolitische Rückwirkungen" (1993), p. 184; Neil, "The western" (2000), p. 538.

<sup>211</sup> Lamberz, "Falsata Graecorum more?" (2001), pp. 213–30, responding to a question that had remained unsolved in Lamberz, "Studien zur Überlieferung" (1997), pp. 1–43. See Price, *Acts of the Second Council* (2018), p. 143, n. 7, suggesting that in opposition to Lamberz's earlier assessment, there would be no reason that these changes need to date after 873.

images by seeking a compromise to reunite the Christian Church. Its success is confirmed, for example, by the fact that the Byzantine iconophile *Chronicle of Theophanes* largely adopted the position expressed in Hadrian's letter when it explained that what the council did was not to introduce a new doctrine but to return to the teachings of the Fathers (“πατέρων δόγματα”).<sup>212</sup> The different council sessions were attended by at least 252 and up to 365 delegates. In the seventh session, the synod decreed in reference to the images:<sup>213</sup>

We therefore decree with all care and precision that venerable and holy images, made in colors or mosaic or other fitting materials, in the same way as the figure of the honorable and life-giving cross, are to be dedicated in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, on walls and panels, in houses and in the streets—[namely] the image of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our immaculate Lady the holy Theotokos, and of the honorable angels and all the holy and sacred men. For it is to the extent that they are constantly seen through depiction in images that those who behold them [the images] are spurred to remember and yearn for their prototypes.

They are to be accorded greeting and the veneration of honor, not indeed the true worship [*λατρεία*] corresponding to our faith, which pertains to the divine nature alone, but in the same way as this is accorded to the figure of the honorable and life-giving cross, to the holy gospels, and to other sacred offerings.

In their honor an offering of incensation and lights is to be made, in accordance with the pious custom of the men of old. For the honor paid to the image passes over to the prototype, and whoever venerates [*προσκυνεῖν*] the image venerates in it the hypostasis of the one who is represented.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>212</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6280; Scott, “The treatment of ecumenical councils” (2015), pp. 374–5. For a more detailed treatment of the synod and the western reactions, see, e.g., Wohlmuth (ed.), *Streit um das Bild* (1989); Thümmel, *Die Konzilien* (2005), pp. 87–198 and 215–30. For a short survey of the sources available and those lost, see Neil, “The western reaction” (2000), pp. 536–41.

<sup>213</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 77.

<sup>214</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 787, p. 826: “ὀρίζομεν σὺν ἀκριβείᾳ πάσῃ καὶ ἐμμελείᾳ παραπλησίως τῷ τύπῳ τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ ἀνατίθεσθαι τὰς σεπτὰς καὶ ἁγίας εἰκόνας τὰς ἐκ χρωμάτων καὶ ψηφίδος καὶ ἐτέρας ὕλης ἐπιτηδεύας ἐχούσης ἐν ταῖς ἁγίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίαις, ἐν ἱεροῖς σκεύεσι, καὶ ἐσθῆσι, τοίχοις τε καὶ σανίσιν, οἴκοις τε καὶ ὁδοῖς, τῆς τε τοῦ κυρίου καὶ θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰκόνα, τῆς ἀχράντου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου τιμίων τε ἀγγέλων, καὶ πάντων ἁγίων καὶ ὁσίων ἀνδρῶν – ὅσα γὰρ συνεχῶς διὰ εἰκονικῆς ἀνατυπώσεως ὁρῶνται, τοσοῦτον καὶ οἱ ταύτας θεώμενοι διανίστανται πρὸς τὴν τῶν πρωτοτύπων μνήμην τε καὶ ἐπιπόθησιν—, καὶ ταύταις ἀσπασμὸν καὶ τιμητικὴν προσκύνησιν ἀπονέμειν – οὐ μὴν τὴν κατὰ πίστιν ἡμῶν ἀληθινὴν λατρείαν, ἣ πρέπει μόνῃ τῇ θεῇ φύσει, ἀλλ’ ὃν τρόπον τῷ τύπῳ τοῦ τιμίου καὶ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις εὐαγγελίοις καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἱεροῖς ἀναθήμασι—καὶ θυμαμάτων καὶ φώτων παραγωγὴν πρὸς τὴν τούτων τιμὴν ποιεῖσθαι, καθὼς καὶ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις εὐσεβὺς εἴθισται. ἡ γὰρ τῆς εἰκόνης τιμὴ ἐπὶ τὸ πρωτότυπον διαβαίνει· καὶ ὁ προσκυνῶν τὴν εἰκόνα, προσκυνεῖ ἐν αὐτῇ τοῦ ἐγγραφομένου τὴν ὑπόστασιν.” Trans. Price, *Acts of the Second Council* (2018), pp. 564–5.

The *Acts* decree that images of Christ, the Virgin Mother, the angels, and the saints may be set up in churches to inspire those who look at them. It stresses that they may be venerated in the manner that is due to other holy items, like the cross, by specifying that this does not compare to the worship due to the divine. A third important aspect is that the canon explicitly explains that any veneration provided in front of an image would not be addressed to the item but to what it depicts. The Council of Nicaea thus adopted core notions previously advocated by Gregory the Great, and maybe also Gregory II, including the idea that images could have a mediating function and that the veneration offered to an image should not compare to the devotional act addressed to Christ. Thus, Noble appears correct when concluding that “east and west may not have seemed so different on the eve of II Nicaea.”<sup>215</sup>

The translation of the *Acts* was soon available in the west. The *Northumbrian Annals*, which deplore that over 300 eastern bishops had agreed to the heterodox adoration of images, report that Charlemagne received a copy from Constantinople relatively soon after the council, probably referring to a Latin translation. The Carolingian would have forwarded his copy to Britain, which was probably addressed to Alcuin, who, from 790 until 793, was on a prolonged stay in England. Alcuin was expected to respond, but any reply he may have sent is now lost.<sup>216</sup> This information is worth some further discussion. Although it is conceivable that the *Annals* omitted to mention that the translation traveled via Rome, as Hincmar would later claim and which still corresponds to the modern consensus,<sup>217</sup> there is no evidence disproving that this was a second translation sent directly from Constantinople to Charlemagne. As Noble rightly noted, it is noteworthy that the acts lack Hadrian’s cover letter, which would be expected if he were the sender. There is also no record of such a dispatch in the *Codex Carolinus* documenting the correspondence between the Carolingians and the popes.<sup>218</sup> As the Franks had not been invited to the synod, a translation sent by the Byzantine court is at least conceivable in the framework of a strictly informative measure, or maybe even as a reconciliatory gesture. This act would not have soothed Charlemagne’s displeasedness about the missing invitation to what the Byzantines had conceived as an ecumenical council, however, as it still failed to give the Franks a voice in this context, a circumstance that might have encouraged the Carolingian ruler to contest the decisions these acts contained.

<sup>215</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 157. See also *ibid.* pp. 102 and 111–57.

<sup>216</sup> *Annales Nordhumbrani* a. 792, p. 155: “Contra quod scripsit Albinus epistolam ex auctoritate divinarum scripturarum mirabiliter affirmatam.” Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 162–3.

<sup>217</sup> Scholars also agree that the translation used by the Franks was produced in Rome, see, e.g., Freeman, “Carolingian Orthodoxy” (1985), p. 105; Thümmel, “Karl der Große” (2009), p. 61; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 158–60.

<sup>218</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 160–2, with reference to Hincmar at p. 403, n. 6. See also *ibid.* p. 163; Neil, “The western reaction” (2000), p. 549.

An alternative scenario that seems just as plausible is that Charlemagne sent an envoy to Constantinople himself, with the mission to attend the council as an observer or at least to arrange for a copy of its acts, and maybe also its translation. It is inconceivable that Charlemagne did not know that the council of 787 was planned, given the regular correspondence exchanged around that time to organize both the betrothal of his daughter Rotrud to the underaged emperor and the king's visit to Rome in 787.<sup>219</sup> As the aim to restore icon veneration is attested since around 784, there was sufficient time for the Franks to gain certitude about the lacking intention to invite them and to take further measures. As we have seen, the Carolingian court harbored several erudites with at least basic knowledge of Greek, and Greek glossaries were available in the Frankish monasteries. Thus, it is possible that the Franks did their own translation. This scenario would not only correspond to the mentioned Constantinopolitan origin of the dispatch but would also help explain the bad quality of the translation subsequently used by the Franks. In both alternative scenarios suggested here, two Latin translations of the acts of 787 would have been available in the late eighth century<sup>220</sup>—provided the pope had not received his copy from the Franks. The first Latin translation, the one that circulated from the 780s in the west, is only known from scattered citations by other sources, like the *Opus Caroli*,<sup>221</sup> which is why our knowledge about this text is not incompatible with the above.

### The *Opus Caroli* and the Council of Frankfurt

From a Frankish perspective, it was a matter of course that images were made by man and thus should not be considered holy, even though such art honored God and would be able to inspire and teach the unlearned.<sup>222</sup> Iconoclasm, in its strict sense, was rather unpopular among the Franks, however.<sup>223</sup> Theodulf of Orléans and Claudius of Turin († c. 829), two of its most vehement spokespersons, to be further discussed below, still were comparatively moderate. Thus, the Franks were not indisposed to use images in a religious context. Notwithstanding, Charlemagne vehemently opposed the council of 787 by having it refuted by his court theologians.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>219</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 787.

<sup>220</sup> The claim contained in the *Northumbrian Annals* is generally considered implausible, see Price, *Acts of the Second Council* (2018), p. 68, n. 241, with further references. See also Freeman, "Carolingian Orthodoxy" (1985), pp. 105–6.

<sup>221</sup> Price, *Acts of the Second Council* (2018), p. 18. As far as I can see, no philological study of these citations has been undertaken that would disprove the existence of two early Latin translations. See also Riedinger's edition, *Conc. Const. a. 787*, p. 827, which in the *apparatus* refers to fragments of the deficient translation.

<sup>222</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 111–57, esp. p. 156, and p. 369.

<sup>223</sup> Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 48.

<sup>224</sup> Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), p. 260.

The question at the center of modern discussions is: why? The sources contain hints pointing out that Charlemagne had some reservations about the veneration of icons.<sup>225</sup> McCormick also pointed to the military engagement in 788 between the Byzantines and the Lombard Dukes Hildebrand of Spoleto and Grimoald, promoted to the rank of Duke of Benevento by Charlemagne, a conflict that ended with a Frankish victory and probably did not help to improve the Franco-Byzantine relations.<sup>226</sup> Comparably, Neil argued that in the later eighth century, political considerations had gradually outweighed theological concerns about images, given unresolved questions related to the papal patrimonies and Rome's lost jurisdiction over Illyricum, Calabria, and Sicily. She added that the relationship between the Franks and Constantinople had also deteriorated due to Irene's attempts in 787/8 to regain control over some Frankish territories in Italy.<sup>227</sup> However, this does not suffice to explain what happened.

The failure to invite the Franks to the council of 787 probably played a significant part in the decision to refute the same. Charlemagne, in 781, consented to an engagement meant to unite his daughter Rotrud to Constantine VI. The Byzantines were not in the habit of inviting the Franks to their councils, who until then may have been considered sufficiently represented by the pope. In the context of the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680, the latter had organized regional synods in the west in preparation of the general council to be held in the imperial capital. Notwithstanding, Charlemagne, ruler over large parts of Italy and prospective father-in-law of the emperor, must have expected such an invitation. He would not have considered himself appropriately represented by Hadrian's envoys. The correspondence between the two western authorities leaves the impression that both considered themselves on an equal footing, and Charlemagne's conquest of northern Italy is likely to have entailed that the king at times considered himself the pope's superior. The Carolingian certainly was not willing to take the role of the pope's subordinate.<sup>228</sup> The same attitude may have entailed that Charlemagne would not have accepted a papal invitation to the imperial council and that he expected to be addressed on this matter by the eastern emperors instead. What is more, the pope this time had neither requested the organization of local councils in the west in preparation for the ecumenical convention in the east nor had he invited Frankish envoys to join his representatives traveling to Nicaea. Although it is possible that the empress, and maybe also the pope, considered the Frankish agreement a matter of course, it is difficult to

<sup>225</sup> See the indications collected in Ohnsorge, "Orthodoxus imperator" (1958); Brenk, "Legitimation," (2002), pp. 163–4.

<sup>226</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 788; McCormick, "Textes" (1994), pp. 135–6.

<sup>227</sup> Neil, "The western reaction" (2000), pp. 547 and 552.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 29. See also Goosmann, "Carolingian kingship" (2019), pp. 341–2.



imagine that they assumed that the Franks were less interested in the iconoclast controversy than they had been in ending Monothelitism.<sup>229</sup>

A significant factor behind the Frankish attitude toward Nicaea II thus may have been Charlemagne's self-understanding as a Christian ruler of equal rank to the eastern emperors. As emerges from what has been said until here, the Frankish king was self-confident about his role as an interregional authority. Thus, being refused a say in such an important matter as an ecumenical council meant to restore Church unity must have offended him. This is particularly true if this council was meant to resort to a position that, in 767, had already been advocated by the Franks—provided the above reconstruction referring to the Council of Gentilly is correct. The *Opus Caroli*, to be further discussed below, confirms the Carolingian displeasure about the absence of a Byzantine invitation, as it explicitly reprimands the Byzantines for not inquiring about the opinions among the surrounding provinces in preparation for the synod of 787. And, as it seems, Charlemagne himself commented on a relevant statement with the word “probe” (“fair”).<sup>230</sup>

The lack of an invitation to the Franks is difficult to understand, even from a modern perspective. The Franks had already proven their interest in the controversy in 767 when they may have taken a mediative role in that same context, as I have argued above. More importantly, there was no reason to believe that the Franks would have opposed the reinstallation of image veneration in 787 if the Byzantine cause had been forwarded adequately. In addition, the Byzantines seemingly were interested in good relations with the Franks. If the council had been scheduled at shorter notice, it would be legitimate to ask whether the invitation or its messenger had been lost on their way to the Frankish court or whether Hadrian was meant to forward it but preferred not to do so, for example, as he apprehended the strengthening of the Franco-Byzantine alliance. However, there would have been ample time for the Byzantines to renew a lost invitation.

The Byzantine decision against inviting the Franks implied Charlemagne's degradation to the position of a subordinate toward both the emperors and the pope, only worthy of being informed of the ecumenical decision and this without having been heard or involved in the process. From a Frankish perspective, it may also have implied that the Byzantines took sole credit for an accomplishment to which the Franks had actively contributed in Gentilly. Accepting the council acts would have meant ignoring this insolence and condoning the downgrading it implied. It does not surprise that Charlemagne was not willing to do so, regardless of how close his convictions on images might have been to the

<sup>229</sup> For a detailed discussion of related exchanges, see Sarti, *Merovingian connection* (forthcoming).

<sup>230</sup> *Opus Caroli* 3.11, p. 376, referring to fol. 137<sup>v</sup>. The note is lacking or invisible on the digital facsimile of the Vatican manuscript. See also McCormick, “Textes” (1994), pp. 136–7.



canons of 787. Thus, Charlemagne's opposition to the synod of 787 was mainly political. It meant to put forward the Carolingian entitlement to make decisions on religious matters or at least to be involved appropriately in any important decision-making processes.

The earliest potential response to the synod is attested when, in 786/7, delegates arrived in Italy to bring Rotrud to Constantinople, whereupon Charlemagne seemingly canceled the agreement and refused to let his daughter join them.<sup>231</sup> If this interpretation is correct, Charlemagne must have taken this decision before the council had taken place in Nicaea, which would go well with the thesis that the main reason behind the Carolingian dissatisfaction was not the decisions taken during the meeting, but a fact that had already come to the emperor's attention before.

The rudimentary Latin translation, either produced in Rome or by Frankish scholars, was the basis of the subsequent Frankish response to the decisions of the synod of 787. The result was an elaborate treatise known as the *Libri Caroli*, whose original title was *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum*. It was not only a theological treatise but also a demonstration of Frankish authority. The address stresses Charlemagne's role as sovereign over Gaul, Germany, and Italy in an imperial manner that recalls the early ninth-century justification of his emperors in the *Annals of Lorsch*.<sup>232</sup> It comprises several hundred pages in four books with 120 chapters, which, among other things, criticize the Byzantines for "daring to anathematize the catholic Church in their synod."<sup>233</sup> Although it explicitly referred to Charlemagne as its initiator, there is general agreement since Ann Freeman that it goes back to the Spaniard Theodulf of Orléans.<sup>234</sup>

Even though it argued against the iconodule synod of 787, it was not an iconoclast treatise in a more strict sense, as it only argued against the claim that images would correspond to the Holy Script. It does not more specifically deal with images.<sup>235</sup> Most exceptionally, the actual working draft, a Vatican manuscript, is still extant. However, the preface, the opening of book one and all of

<sup>231</sup> Einhard, *Annales* a. 786, p. 75. Similar Ohnsorge, "Orthodoxus imperator" (1958), p. 67; Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 29 and p. 38. Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6281 (788/9) depicts this change as a decision taken by the empress Irene.

<sup>232</sup> *Opus Caroli*, p. 98: "Incipit opus inlustrissimi et excellentissimi seu spectabilis viri Caroli, nutu dei regis francorum, Gallias, Germaniam Italiamque sive harum finitimas provincias domino opitulante regentis." Becher, "Das Kaisertum" (2012), p. 260. Similar also *Annales regni Francorum* a. 794.

<sup>233</sup> *Opus Caroli* 3.11, p. 375: "Quod inutiliter et incaute Græci ecclesiam/ catholicam anathematizare conati sint/ in eorum synodo." See also Freeman, "From the *Libri Carolini*" (1999), pp. 131–47.

<sup>234</sup> Freeman, "Theodulf of Orleans" (1957), pp. 663–705; Freeman, *Theodulf of Orleans* (2003). Wallach, "The *Libri Carolini*" (1977), pp. 59–122, argued that Alcuin was the author. See also the discussion in Brubaker, "The elephant" (2004), pp. 178–80; Brubaker, "Representation" (2009), p. 50.

<sup>235</sup> Kleybolte, "Ein Ikonoklast" (2011), access [aventinus-online.de/no\\_cache/persistent/artikel/9070/](http://aventinus-online.de/no_cache/persistent/artikel/9070/) (20/12/2020), with further evidence.

book four are lacking in this original. It contains around 3,400 corrections by at least four hands. In addition, it bears around 81 Tironian notes in the margins, 28 of which are unreadable, and some more have been destroyed during a new binding in the nineteenth century. They mainly comprise one- and two-word notes with comments like “bene,” “catholice,” or “sapienter”—including the comment “probe” already quoted above—which, according to Noble, may “record either the actual reactions of Charlemagne as the work was read in his presence or the collective reactions of his key courtiers” (p. 166).<sup>236</sup>

In 792, an early and shorter version of 85 chapters against icon veneration, known as the *Capitulare adversus synodum*, was publicly assessed in Regensburg and sent to Hadrian in Rome.<sup>237</sup> As it seems, the Franks expected it to be persuasive and that, even if Hadrian could not provide unrestricted approval, subsequent exchanges would lead toward a compromise.<sup>238</sup> Certainly, they did not expect the reaction they finally received, i.e., the pope’s straightforward refutation of their position and his defense of the Byzantine synod.<sup>239</sup> Haendler noted that when doing so, Hadrian neither related to Byzantine image dogma nor to the christological arguments provided by the council acts, suggesting with further arguments that the underlying theological concepts may have remained alien to the pope.<sup>240</sup> If this was the case, the papal refutation could not have been rooted in personal conviction, which means that the reasons behind insisting on the legitimacy of the Byzantine synod were again mainly political, and related to the restoration of Church unity implied in the decisions of 787.

The *Opus Caroli* was filed away soon after its completion in 794.<sup>241</sup> Most speculations about the possible reasons behind this decision suggest that it was done in consideration of the papal agreement to the council of 787 and out of respect for the pope, even though the Franks maintained their position.<sup>242</sup> This is confirmed by the *Opus Caroli* which, as Noble has convincingly shown, each time a position maintained by the pope and the Byzantines was refuted, referred

<sup>236</sup> See Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 7207, access [digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.lat.7207](http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.7207) (0712/2020); Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 158–68; McCormick, “Textes” (1994), p. 136. See also Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), pp. 31–2; Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), p. 67; Herrin, “What caused Iconoclasm?” (2014), p. 862. The sections missing in the original are preserved in a copy commissioned around 870 by Hincmar of Reims, see Thümmel, “Karl der Große” (2009), p. 62.

<sup>237</sup> McCormick, “Textes” (1994), pp. 139–42; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 166. Cf. Feld, *Der Ikonoklasmus* (1990), p. 22.

<sup>238</sup> Similar Schedler, “Die ‘Libri Carolini’” (2002), p. 36. See also the reservations in Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), pp. 66–7; Thümmel, “Karl der Große” (2009), p. 63; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 162.

<sup>239</sup> *Epistolae selectae* 2, pp. 5–57. See also Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 159–60 and 163–5. On the role of the Greek Patristic evidence provided by Hadrian in the decision to withdraw the *Opus Carolis*, see Alexakis, “The source” (1994), pp. 14–30.

<sup>240</sup> Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 31.

<sup>241</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 170.

<sup>242</sup> Freeman, “Carolingian Orthodoxy” (1985), pp. 107–8; Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), pp. 66–9.

to an equivalent statement in the Byzantine *Acts* to direct its opposition against Constantinople, not Hadrian.<sup>243</sup> Thus, the Franks had made their choice of allies. This Frankish decision, to discard their refutation of the decisions of 787, is also attested in the mentioned Vatican manuscript. Although it was written until around early 794, the manuscript attests to a caesura in the working process, starting with chapter 3.13, when the quality of the work is noticeably inferior. It probably marks the moment when the Franks realized or decided they could not use the work as planned, as they had received Hadrian's refutation.<sup>244</sup>

As we have seen, the Greek acts differentiated between the *latreia* (λατρεία) as the worship only due to God and the *proskynesis* (προσκύνησις) relating to the prevalent minor form of veneration to be granted to anything related to the holy, including church images. Scholars argued that the Franks misunderstood the Byzantine stipulations and that this, to a significant extent, went back to the poor quality of their Latin translation of the acts of 787. The Franks would also have failed to understand that this mistake could not have been included in the Greek original. Thus, Walter Berschin argued that the *Opus Caroli* was no “moment of fame of occidental theology” (Germ. “kein Ruhmesblatt der abendländischen Theologie”).<sup>245</sup>

The *Opus Caroli* lacks a hint suggesting that its author considered that he was working on a translation or that he doubted the precision of the same. If so, there would have been occasions at the Carolingian court to discuss the matter with a Greek native speaker, be it with a Byzantine legate or, for example, the brother of the patriarch Tarasius, Sisinnius, captured around 788 in Italy and who until ten years later may have resided at the Carolingian court.<sup>246</sup> Exploring the Greek differentiation between the relevant terms without the help of a native speaker would have been significantly more challenging. Although the Franks did have some appropriate glossaries, as seen in section V.1, the translations offered were often unsatisfactory. Laon 444, for example, translates “λατρεω” with “servio,”<sup>247</sup> “προσκυνηω” is rendered more accurately with “adoro venero,” and “προσκυνημα” is equated with “veneratio”—although here the alternate translation with either *venerari* and *adorare* attests an imprecise conceptional distinction (see Figure 7.3).<sup>248</sup> Glossaries providing Latin translations of Greek terms

<sup>243</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 164, with further evidence.

<sup>244</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 160–8, with further evidence. See also Brubaker, “The elephant” (2004), p. 178, arguing that the Carolingians already before the synod of 794 had discovered “that the translation they had used was faulty.”

<sup>245</sup> Berschin, “Die Ost-West-Gesandtschaften” (1997), p. 159. See also Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), pp. 72–3.

<sup>246</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 798; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 161–2.

<sup>247</sup> Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Ms 444, fol. 146<sup>v</sup>. The gloss adds “exuuiæ uero pt dectin,” which is unintelligible.

<sup>248</sup> Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Ms 444, fol. 202<sup>r</sup>.

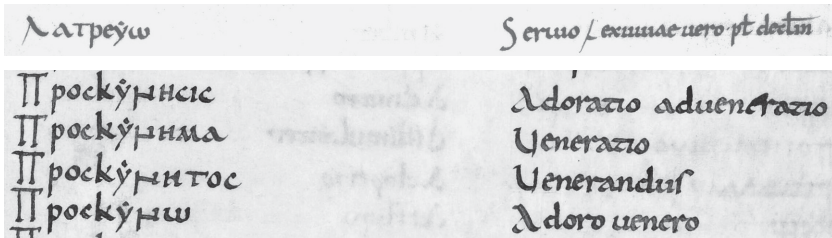


FIGURE 7.3 Extracts from Laon, Bibliothèque municipale Ms 444, fols. 146<sup>v</sup> (above) and 202<sup>r</sup> (below). Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84921401/f297

usually were significantly shorter, as the one contained in the same Laon manuscript. It lacks entries for relevant terms. Other lists were not ordered alphabetically, making it difficult to check up on a specific word even if an entry were available.<sup>249</sup>

The deficient Latin translation of the *Acts of Nicaea* seemingly used the Latin term *adoratio* to refer to any type of veneration.<sup>250</sup> Hans Georg Thümmel challenged the opinion that the Franks had been unable to understand the complexity of Byzantine religious practice by arguing, with good reasoning, that they, unlike Hadrian, did understand Byzantine theology and, thus, that their refutation was not merely founded on a flawed translation. Although the terminological distinction in the *Opus Caroli* is not as straightforward as Thümmel's rather sketchy discussion would like to suggest,<sup>251</sup> a look at the *Opus Caroli* confirms that the deficient Latin translation did not prevent the Franks from differentiating between *proskynesis* and *latreia*, notions that were adequately rendered with designations like *salutare*, *colere*, or *osculari* and *adorare*, respectively.<sup>252</sup>

The *Opus Caroli* is the most comprehensive testimony of Frankish opinions about image veneration. It argues that words are superior to images to convey

<sup>249</sup> Laon 444, fols. 255<sup>v</sup>–75<sup>v</sup>. Similar London, British Library Harley 5792, fols. 241<sup>r</sup>–59<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>250</sup> Haendler, *Epoche* (1958), p. 40; Thümmel, "Die Stellung" (1999), p. 55, with n. 3; cf. *ibid.*, p. 69: "Das Wechseln der Dokumente mit Rom zeigte auch einen Tiefstand römischer Theologie an," and the references in Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 34 and 87. The distinction between *latreia* and *proskynesis* is also explicit in the Greek version of Matthew 4.10. On the distinction between *proskynesis* and *latreia*, with a particular emphasis on John of Damascus, see Narinskaya, "On the divine images" (2012), pp. 141–2.

<sup>251</sup> See, e.g., *Opus Caroli* 2.24, p. 282: "Ceterum illi, qui intra sanctam ecclesiam in sacro eloquio solum Deum adorandum solumque colendum praedicant et, ut imagines adorentur."

<sup>252</sup> E.g., *Opus Caroli* 1.9, p. 152: "Qui loquendi modus tanto eis<sup>c</sup> peculiaris est, ut et 'habere' et 'salutare' et 'osculari' et 'venerari' pro 'adorare' et ipsi ponant et ab aliis / positum accipiant et, ut ita dixerim, pene omnia eis huiusmodi verba in 'adorare' conversa sint." See the discussions in Thümmel, "Die Stellung" (1999), pp. 60–2, with n. 26 and 64–70; Thümmel, "Karl der Große" (2009), p. 61; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 368. The notion of *latreia* is already attested in Gregory, *Epist.* 9.147. Against Neil, "The western reaction" (2000), p. 533.

spiritual knowledge and it relates icons to paganism.<sup>253</sup> It also underlines the fictitious nature of images, which would not correspond to the “truth” and thus would never be able to represent reality adequately.<sup>254</sup> The cross is mentioned as the only exception, as it would relate to the divine in a manner that would, to a significant extent, compare to the iconoclast understanding of the Byzantines.<sup>255</sup> The Franks thus made an additional difference between images and holy items like the cross.<sup>256</sup> A more general awareness of the underlying distinctions between the different forms of veneration is also attested later in a letter Einhard in 836 addressed to Lupus of Ferrières, also known as the *Quaestio de adoranda cruce* (“Question about the adoration of the [Holy] Cross”). Here the author stressed:

But this you should know, that the Greeks make a differentiation between prayer [*oratio*] and adoration [*adoratio*], while they call prayer *proséuchin* and adoration *proschínusin*, and this distinction is meant to demonstrate that the former relates to the spirit and the latter to the body.<sup>257</sup>

While *proséuchin* may be related to *προσευχήν*, it is unclear what the term *proschínusin* was meant to refer to. The closest correspondence seems to be *πρόσχυσιν*, meaning “sprinkling upon.” However, Einhard probably had *προσκυνεῖν* in mind, which would imply that he at least partly related to the terminology that was used in the relevant Byzantine treatise. None of the above relates to the Greek notion of *latreia*, which is essential to understand the Byzantine dealing with icon veneration.<sup>258</sup>

The Frankish opposition to the Nicaean synod is confirmed by the historiographic evidence. While the report about the discussion on images during the synod of Gentilly of 767 in the *Royal Frankish Annals* was comparatively neutral, the tone changes when it comes to speaking of the Second Council of Nicaea. The synod had remained unmentioned in reference to the year 787. It is only noted in the context of the Frankish synod held in Frankfurt in an unidentified

<sup>253</sup> E.g., *Opus Caroli* 2.30, p. 304: “Unde imaginum usus, qui a gentiliū / traditionibus inolevit, sacre legis libris aequiperari nec debet nec valet, quia in libris non, in imaginibus doctrinae spiritualis / eruditionem discimus.”

<sup>254</sup> *Opus Caroli* 1.2, p. 117: “Inter hominem autem pictum et verum hoc principaliter interest, quod unus illorum est verus, alter falsus, nec uspiam nisi in nominis societate iunguntur.”

<sup>255</sup> *Opus Caroli* 2.28–9. Following the interpretation by Feld, *Der Ikonoklasmus* (1990), pp. 18–19.

<sup>256</sup> See also *Opus Caroli* 4.23, p. 544.

<sup>257</sup> Einhard, *De adoranda cruce*, p. 148: “Illud tamen nosse debes, quod Greci inter orationem et adorationem talem differentiam faciunt, ut orationem *proséuchin*, adorationem *proschínusin* appellant, idque huiusmodi differentia demonstrari, quod horum alterum ad mentis, alterum ad corporis spectat officium.” See also Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 161–2, with further evidence from Stablo around 865.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. McCormick, “Textes” (1994), p. 157; Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), pp. 711–12.

location almost seven years later to deal with the matter:<sup>259</sup> referring to the year 794, the *Annals* report concisely that “a pseudo-synod of the Greeks, held in favor of the worship of images, wrongly called the seventh, has been rejected by the bishops.”<sup>260</sup> The reference was added by a later hand as an interpolation to that year’s entry.<sup>261</sup>

Although the *Opus Caroli* had been filed away, the issue of image veneration remained a minor point for discussion during the Frankish synod,<sup>262</sup> which mainly dealt with the adoptionist controversy emerging from Spain and the case of Tassilo III.<sup>263</sup> Iconoclasm was only addressed in the second paragraph of the *Frankfurt capitularies*. It is a comparatively short entry dedicated to this topic. The canon claims that the “synod of the Greeks,” which is erroneously located in Constantinople instead of Nicaea, requested under pain of the anathema to venerate religious images in the manner due to the divine Trinity, and that the attendees of the Frankish council now condemned that regulation.<sup>264</sup> A similar connection between the images and the Trinity is contained in section 3.17 of the *Opus Caroli*, written shortly after the reception of Hadrian’s refutation,<sup>265</sup> raising the question of whether this combination may be related to the synod of Gentilly, the first Frankish convention to address these two in the framework of the same council.

The *Acts* of 794 confirm that the Franks assumed that the Byzantines failed to differentiate between the veneration of an object, the holy and the divine. As we have seen, the Council of Nicaea, however, was cautious in emphasizing that the veneration allowed with regard to images was not identical to the worship due to the divine. Although scholars assumed that the false allegations of the *Frankfurt capitularies* went back to the poor Latin translation,<sup>266</sup> the relevant statement in the acts of 787 does not refer to the Trinity, which means that the western assertion can not be explained by a flawed translation alone.<sup>267</sup> It supports that instead of reacting inexpertly, the Franks confidently forwarded their own positions.

<sup>259</sup> Untermann, “Frühmittelalterliche Pfalzen” (2015), pp. 117–18.

<sup>260</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 794, p. 94: “Pseudosynodus Grecorum, quam falso septimam vocabant, pro adorandis imaginibus fecerunt, reiecta est a pontificibus.” The term *pontifex* is often related to the pope. However, given the plural use and the fact that the pope approved the acts of 787, it seems more probable to translate it here with “bishops.” Cf. Einhard, *Annales* a. 794.

<sup>261</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 170.

<sup>262</sup> *Concilia Karolini Francofurtense* a. 794. On the synod, see in particular Hartmann, “Das Konzil” (1988), pp. 307–24; Fried/Saurma-Jeltsch (eds.), 794—*Karl der Große* (1994); Berndt (ed.), *Das Frankfurter Konzil* (1997); Mordek, “Bemerkungen” (2000), pp. 193–204.

<sup>263</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 165–8.

<sup>264</sup> *Concilia Karolini Francofurtense* a. 794, capit. 2, p. 165. See also *Opus Caroli* 4.13, p. 516. See also Freeman, *Opus Caroli regis* (1998), pp. 24–5; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 170–1.

<sup>265</sup> *Opus Caroli* 3.17, p. 413.

<sup>266</sup> Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 170–1.

<sup>267</sup> Similar Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse* (2002), pp. 88–9.

The concise and inaccurate statement in the *Frankfurt capitularies* of 794 attests to Frankish disregard toward the Byzantines. More surprising is the fact that the Franks seemingly remained considerate toward Hadrian even after he unexpectedly refuted their theological work on the question of image veneration. The Franks must have believed that good relations with the pope were crucial, probably as his support would be vital for their forthcoming synod in Frankfurt. The readapted Frankish strategy appears to have been successful. Referring to the convention in Frankfurt, the *Annals of Lorsch* report that this “universal synod” presided over by Charlemagne was attended by envoys of pope Hadrian, the patriarch of Aquileia, the archbishop of Milan, the other archbishops and the remaining upper clergy of the Frankish realm.<sup>268</sup>

The characterization of the Council of Frankfurt as “universal” is noteworthy. The *Opus Caroli* criticized the Nicaean claims to universality,<sup>269</sup> whereas the *Frankfurt capitularies* of 794 suggested that they related to a universal convention.<sup>270</sup> The Carolingians thus not only opposed but also attempted to replace the ecumenical imperial synod of 787, which had been supported by the pope, an act that may be interpreted as a Frankish statement of authority and independence.<sup>271</sup> The *Opus Caroli* confirms the imperial entitlement implied in Charlemagne’s proceeding and his challenging of the eastern emperor when it relates to Constantine V as “king” (“rex”).<sup>272</sup>

Although the Frankish attempt to convoke a universal synod passed unmentioned in the roughly contemporary Byzantine chronographies, it had not been forgotten. In the tenth century, the Ottonian legate Liutprand of Cremona reports how Nikephoros II asked him which councils the Franks would recognize and that he would have responded by mentioning Nicaea, Chalcedon, Ephesus, Antioch, Carthage, Ancyra and Constantinople. The emperor would have replied by teasingly claiming that Liutprand had omitted the “Saxon Council,” a statement that almost certainly referred to the Council of Frankfurt in 794.<sup>273</sup> This impression is supported by a second reference to the iconoclast debate in the same text. When Liutprand of Cremona tauntingly reproduced the

<sup>268</sup> *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 794, p. 35: “Sed estivo tempore congregavit universalem synodum.”

<sup>269</sup> *Opus Caroli* 4.28, p. 557: “quod frustra suam synodum universale nominant, quam tamen constat ab universali non fuisse adgregatam ecclesia”; Haendler, “Der byzantinische Bilderstreit” (1958), pp. 37–8; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 169; Clauß, “Imports and embargos” (2017), pp. 99–100.

<sup>270</sup> *Concilia Karolini Francofurtense* a. 794, p. 143: “cum omnibus episcopis Germaniae, Galliae et Aequitaniae et toto catholicae pacis clero praesulibus Hispaniae et ceteris ibidem christianitatis nomen habentibus in domino Dei.” Similar *Opus Caroli, praef.* p. 101. See also Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), pp. 65–7; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 160 and 243. Against Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 39.

<sup>271</sup> Similar Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), pp. 37–8; Becher, “Das Kaisertum” (2012), p. 260.

<sup>272</sup> *Opus Caroli, praef.* p. 99. See also Clauß, “Imports and embargos” (2017), p. 99.

<sup>273</sup> Liutprand, *Legatio* 21, p. 196.



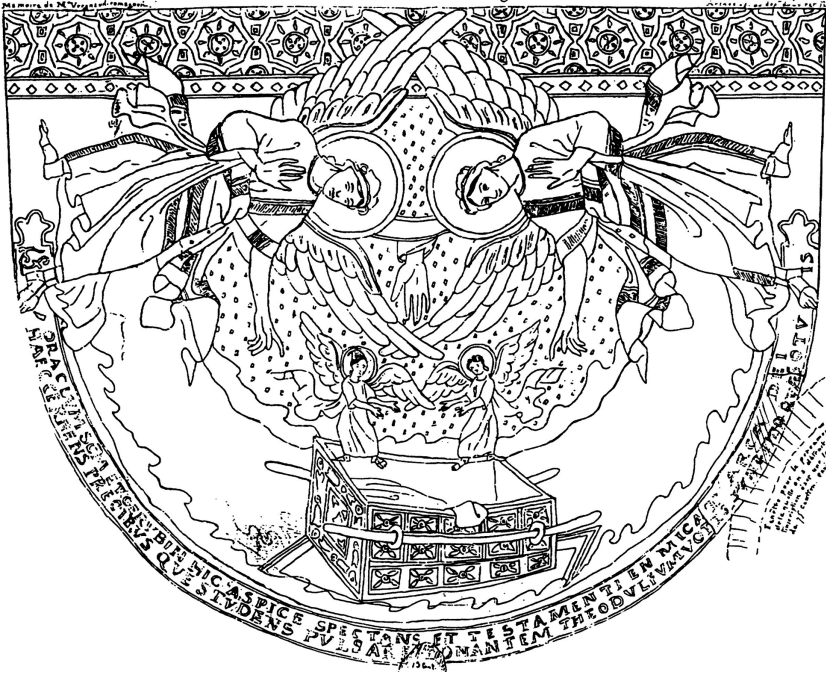


FIGURE 7.4 The mosaic of Germigny-des-Prés after a drawing by Théodore Chrétin from 1847, published in Vergnaud Romagnesi, “Addition à la notice sur la découverte, en janvier 1847, de deux inscriptions dans l’église de Germigny-des-Prés (Orléans, 1850), fair use copy from Freeman/Meyvaert, “The meaning,” 2001, p. 130, figure 2.

laudations to Nikephoros II, he used the words *adorare* and *colere*, probably to stress the impropriety of adoring the emperor.<sup>274</sup>

The Carolingian views on images are also reflected in an exceptional ecclesiastical decoration. It is found in a reconstructed image located in the church of Germigny-des-Prés east of Orléans, a rare Carolingian mosaic that survived north of the Alps (see Figure 7.4). The church was consecrated in 806 by Theodulf of Orléans, who has been identified as the author of the *Opus Caroli*. A depiction in the church apsis appears to be a Carolingian version of an iconoclast image.<sup>275</sup>

<sup>274</sup> Liutprand, *Legatio* 10, p. 191: “Gentes, hunc adorate, hunc colite, huic tanto colla subdite!”; Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), p. 703.

<sup>275</sup> Vieillard-Troiekourov, “Nouvelles études” (1967), pp. 103–12. See also Brubaker, “Representation” (2009), pp. 50–2. For a more detailed discussion of the Frankish attitudes, including pictorial evidence, see Saurma-Jeltsch, “Zur karolingischen Haltung” (1994). On the mosaics in Aachen, see Wehling, *Die Mosaiken* (1995).

It shows two angels pointing toward the *Ark of the Covenant*, opened and empty and with two further but significantly smaller angels above it. The mosaic relates to the Old Testament,<sup>276</sup> the ark seemingly replaced the Byzantine Pantocrator, who usually was depicted in the apse.<sup>277</sup> A hand reaching the ark in the middle of the picture represents God's work. An inscription surrounding the mosaic relates to the ark and characterizes the angels as cherubs, and it requests the beholder to include the sponsor Theodulf in his or her prayers.<sup>278</sup> The *Ark of the Covenant* may relate to Christ, its exposed emptiness to the precedence of the invisible toward the material, showing how Christian thinking could be conveyed through symbolism.<sup>279</sup> Although the image does lack a depiction of God, Christ, or the saints, it does show angels, which, according to the earliest report on iconoclasm in the *Liber Pontificalis*, had been prohibited.<sup>280</sup> Maybe the artist added these anonymous angels as symbols, which would entail that the work would have conformed to the stipulations of Hierieia, which did not explicitly prohibit the depiction of angels.

## Second Iconoclasm

Iconoclasm resurfaced in the east shortly after the death of Charlemagne. The iconophile historian Genesios reported that the emperor Leo V, who, once again in contrast to his predecessor Michael I, had iconoclast tendencies, refused to sign a declaration of orthodoxy by the patriarch Nikephoros and ordered the destruction of icons. In 815, he convened a synod in Constantinople, intending to prohibit icon veneration. According to Genesios, its attendants were forced to acknowledge the synod under the threat of severe punishment, adding that earthquakes, plagues, and other misfortunes may have been related to this.<sup>281</sup> Genesios added that Theophilos' general Manuel, who had evaded death from sickness, beseeched his emperor's wife, Theodora, to restore the icons in the name of orthodoxy.<sup>282</sup> The iconodules were immediately alarmed.

<sup>276</sup> *Conc. Const.* a. 754, 284 C. See also Exodus 25.18–22, and the discussion in Brubaker, "The elephant" (2004), pp. 281–2.

<sup>277</sup> Feld, *Der Ikonoklasmus* (1990), p. 21.

<sup>278</sup> "Oraculum scm et cerubin hic aspice spectans et testamenti micat arca dei haec cernens precibusque studens pulsare tonantem Theodulfum votis iungito quaeso tuis." On the mosaic, see, e.g., Grabar, "Les mosaïques" (1954), pp. 172–84. See also the excellent study by Freeman/Meyvaert, "The meaning" (2001), esp. pp. 125–39; and Brenk, "Legitimation" (2002), pp. 161–3; Poilpré, "Le décor intérieur" (2019), pp. 1–19.

<sup>279</sup> Freeman/Meyvaert, "The meaning" (2001), p. 129–31; Kessler, "Filled to the brim" (2013), p. 181.

<sup>280</sup> *LP, Vita Gregori II*, 17.

<sup>281</sup> Genesios, *On the Reigns* 1.22. See also Thümmel, *Die Konzilien* (2005), pp. 231–47; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 244–60.

<sup>282</sup> Genesios, *Regum libri* 4.2, p. 56.

The iconophile scholar Theodore the Studite († 826), exiled in the stronghold of Metopa in northern Anatolia, in a letter addressed around 817 to Pope Paschal I reported that some iconophiles had fled, many of them to the west, that icons were destroyed, and that the patriarch had been deposed.<sup>283</sup> A subsequent letter mentions that the pope refused to receive the imperial legates and thus took sides with the iconodules.<sup>284</sup> Leo's synodal decisions, however, were not actively implemented by his successor Michael II, which means that after 820, private worship was possible again, and most exiles were recalled.<sup>285</sup> This is confirmed by a letter of the same Theodore the Studite addressed in early 821 to Leo V's successor Michael II, attesting that the new emperor was beseeched to reconcile the Christian Church.<sup>286</sup> Although the intense period thus was relatively short-lived, Second Iconoclasm lasted another two decades, and the iconoclast position remained strong among the Byzantine elite until around 843.<sup>287</sup>

Neither was the west spared. This time, the Byzantine position was closer to that of the Franks than iconophile Rome. The *Royal Frankish Annals* report that, in 824, legates sent by the emperor Michael II (and Theophilos) arrived from Constantinople in Rouen with letters and gifts to confirm peace. The envoys were meant to visit Rome on their return journey to confer with the pope about the question of image veneration.<sup>288</sup> Around November 824, Louis the Pious received a letter preserved in a single manuscript in Latin<sup>289</sup> that contains a short report of the eastern events. The last third of the letter bears a long list of infringements attributed to the iconodules. It included references to the replacement of crosses by images, which since would have been venerated in the manner that was only customary for the cross. Further allegations included that images were used in the east as the sponsors in the framework of baptism, that their paint was mixed with the holy wine, and that images were used as altars to celebrate mass outside the consecrated churches.<sup>290</sup> The comparison by Vladimir Baranov with contemporary letters of the iconodule Theodore the Studite suggests that these offenses were largely authentic.<sup>291</sup> Still, it is remarkable that

<sup>283</sup> Theodor Stud., *Epist.* 271, pp. 399–401, with a summary at pp. 313–14. See also Theodor Stud., *Epist.* 406 and 407, and 273 and 274, explicitly mentioning some iconophile refugees in Rome, confirmed in *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, p. 479. On Theodor and iconophile reactions, see Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 250–60.

<sup>284</sup> Theodor Stud., *Epist.* 272. Similar *ibid.* 274.

<sup>285</sup> Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 44.

<sup>286</sup> Theodor Stud., *Epist.* 418.

<sup>287</sup> Lilie, "Kooperation und Konkurrenz" (2011), p. 66.

<sup>288</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 824.

<sup>289</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 1597A, fols. 5<sup>r</sup>–9<sup>v</sup>, access via [gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8479002m/\(03/01/2021\)](http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8479002m/(03/01/2021)); *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, pp. 475–80; McCormick, "Textes" (1994), p. 145. For a summary and excellent analysis of the letter, see Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 260–3.

<sup>290</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, pp. 478–9.

<sup>291</sup> Baranov, "Constructing the underground community" (2010), pp. 230–60.

the letter to Louis does not contain any iconoclast justification and that the list of infringements is restricted to procedures the Byzantines could be sure would be considered repudiative by the Franks.<sup>292</sup> The letter's content thus confirms the sincerity of the Byzantine desire for an agreement with the Franks. Michael II, in his letter, further explained that the "orthodox" emperors and bishops decided to hold a "local" council decree that images now may be hung high so that their veneration would be prevented while ensuring that they could serve for instruction.<sup>293</sup>

Michael II's imperial letter shows that the Byzantines, meanwhile, had made efforts to understand the Frankish perspective on images. At the same time, the eastern emperors emphasized that they would stick to the six ecumenical councils.<sup>294</sup> In so doing, they omitted the two supposedly "seventh ecumenical" councils, which both had been subsequently refuted in the west and, tentatively, replaced by a third "universal" synod in 794. This is particularly remarkable as the Byzantine council of 815 had confirmed the iconoclast Council of Hieria. The intention of the letter, thus, apparently was to produce the impression that both empires shared one opinion regarding icon veneration, a procedure directed against Rome. The letter concluded by expressing the emperor's wish for Louis' support by requesting him to address the pope on their behalf to find a compromise.<sup>295</sup> If the above reconstruction of the synod of Gentilly is correct, this was the second occasion where the Franks were invited to mediate between Byzantium and Rome. However, it appears that the intended meeting of the three parties never took place.

The Frankish response was a synod or colloquy organized in Paris. It was held in November 825 with the prior permission of Pope Eugenius II and confirmed the western position between Iconoclasm and Iconodulism.<sup>296</sup> The result was another treatise, the *Libellus synodalis Parisiensis*, which collected relevant quotes.<sup>297</sup> The council *Acts* also included a letter by the bishops of Paris from 825 to be sent by Louis the Pious to Constantinople and a section the pope was meant to present to the Byzantines.<sup>298</sup> It shows that the attendees of the Parisian convention made efforts to balance Frankish, papal, and Byzantine views by emphasizing their common traditions. In sum, they argued that images were

<sup>292</sup> See related comments in Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 47; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 261.

<sup>293</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, p. 479.

<sup>294</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, p. 479: "Quicquid aliud a beatissimis apostolis traditum et a sanctissimis patribus in eisdem sex synodis constitutum est et confitemur et tenemus."

<sup>295</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, A, p. 479: "beatissimi apostolorum principis Petri, qui intercedat pro nobis et vobis."

<sup>296</sup> O'Brien, "Locating authorities in Carolingian debates" (2011), pp. 177–8.

<sup>297</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, B, pp. 480–532. It was probably established by Jonas of Orléans, Thümmel, "Die Stellung" (1999), p. 70.

<sup>298</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, B, pp. 523–32.

neither essential nor prohibited and, thus, should neither be worshiped nor destroyed.<sup>299</sup> This moderate form of Iconoclasm now corresponded to a significant extent to the position the Byzantine emperors had now taken, at least as far as the Franks could learn from Michael's letter.

An abridged and slightly reworked version of the *Libellus* was sent to the pope. The text sent to Rome was probably identical to the *Epitome libelli synodalis Parisiensis* preserved in Rome.<sup>300</sup> It was accompanied by a letter addressed to Pope Eugenius II, also contained in the *Acts*, which suggested sending a joint embassy to Constantinople.<sup>301</sup> In September 827, another Byzantine delegation arrived at the court of Louis the Pious in Compiègne carrying the Greek works of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite already mentioned in a previous chapter. Michael McCormick, who assumed that this embassy was related to the previous, suggested that it aimed to realize Church union by inviting the west to adopt the new and significantly more moderate form of Iconoclasm. A connection between the two legations is indeed suggested by the person of the deacon Theodoros Krithinos, who took part in the two visits to the Frankish court,<sup>302</sup> and the fact that the *Royal Frankish Annals* report that a treaty was "confirmed" ("foedus confirmandum").<sup>303</sup>

Michael II's letter reached the Frankish court at a time when discussions about images were already common among Carolingian scholars. The controversy was initiated by Claudius, who seems to have been a former student of the adoptionist Felix of Urgell. He was the western bishop with the strongest iconoclast tendency. Following his appointment around 816 as bishop in Turin, Claudius took action against icons in his diocese, which, according to his own testimony, were improperly placed and worshipped. This attitude was subsequently criticized by the abbot Theudemir of Psalmody in the Camargue.<sup>304</sup> In his response to Theudemir, Claudius argued against "false images" ("falsas imagines") by tauntingly stressing that it would be wrong to venerate anything related to Christ, as this would imply that not only wooden crosses should receive this

<sup>299</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, B, p. 481: "ut erigerentur et adorarentur et sanctae nuncuparentur, cum eas erigere licitum, adorare vero nefas sit"; Thümmel, "Die Stellung" (1999), p. 71; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 263–86.

<sup>300</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, E, pp. 535–51; Haendler, *Epochen* (1958), p. 49.

<sup>301</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, D, pp. 533–35, at p. 534: "et si vestrae sanctitati placet, ut pro hac ipsa legatione missi nostri simul cum vestri illas in partes dirigantur."

<sup>302</sup> McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), pp. 31–2. See also the discussion Magdalino, "Evaluation de dons" (2011), pp. 110–16, with a critical approach to the thesis that this manuscript was meant to support the iconoclast perspective in Erismann, "On the significance" (2018), p. 98; "Theodoros Krithinos, 7675/corr.," in *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit Online*, access db.degruyter.com/view/PMBZ/PMBZ18921.

<sup>303</sup> *Annales regni francorum* a. 827, p. 174.

<sup>304</sup> O'Brien, "Locating authorities in Carolingian debates" (2011), p. 178, with further references.

honor but also any virgin, crib, old rag, donkey, or anything else that may be related to the life and deeds of Christ.<sup>305</sup>

In or shortly after 827, Claudius was rebuked by the Carolingian scholar Dungal of St. Denis. He represented the iconodule extreme of Carolingian image theology.<sup>306</sup> Further works on images were written by Amalarius of Metz, whose *Liber officialis* probably dates around 823, and Agobard of Lyon, whose *De picturis et imaginibus* was based mainly on Augustine. Joshua M. O'Brien argued that the *De picturis* was written prior to Claudius of Turin's work and that it served as a basis for the Council of 825.<sup>307</sup> This would explain why, as Hans-Werner Goetz noted, Agobard, in his discussion on images, did not relate to the Greeks,<sup>308</sup> and it supports the impression that the Franks were more interested in questions related to images than what most scholars supposed until now. Agobard was also responsible for the mentioned *Epitome libelli synodalis Parisiensis*, together with Jeremiah of Sens.<sup>309</sup>

Jonas of Orléans, Hrabanus Maurus, Einhard, and Walahfrid Strabo presented additional treatments of the question of image veneration. They primarily argued in favor of a moderate use of images that mainly corresponded to the path initiated by Gregory the Great. Dungal, who argued that images could have some religious significance, and the mentioned iconoclast Claudius, represented the extremes inside the relevant Frankish theology.<sup>310</sup> Their positions confirm that the Carolingians remained advocates of a middle way. The sheer number of works dedicated to this topic attests to the significance attributed to images. Although most of these works were written to respond to the Byzantine request or to discuss related councils, a single treatment would have sufficed to dispose of this question if it had been of no genuine concern to the Franks. McCormick, who emphasized the role of diplomacy in this debate,<sup>311</sup> showed that the controversy continued after the redaction of the mentioned works. Obviously, questions related to images and their role in the context of worship continued to occupy intellectuals at the Carolingian court, and beyond, as later works, including poetry and miracles, attest.<sup>312</sup>

<sup>305</sup> Claudius, *Epist.* 12, pp. 611–12. See Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), pp. 71–2; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 288–312; Nelson, “Opposition to pilgrimage” (2014), pp. 71–2. On Claudius, see Boulhol, *Claude de Turin* (2002).

<sup>306</sup> Dungal, *Responsa*.

<sup>307</sup> O'Brien, “Locating authorities” (2011), pp. 176–206.

<sup>308</sup> Goetz, *Die Wahrnehmung* (2013), p. 711.

<sup>309</sup> *Concilia Karolini II* 44, a. 825, C, pp. 532–3.

<sup>310</sup> Further discussions in McCormick, “Textes” (1994), pp. 145–53; Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), pp. 71–3; Chazelle, *The crucified God* (2001), pp. 120–3; Noble, *Images* (2009), pp. 312–28, with further evidence.

<sup>311</sup> McCormick, “Textes” (1994), p. 158.

<sup>312</sup> See the examples in McCormick, “Textes” (1994), pp. 149–53 and 157–8, e.g., on a miracle involving an image of the Virgin Mary and her son in *Annales regni Francorum* a. 823.

The Franks matured theologically during the iconoclast debate.<sup>313</sup> When Photios in the mid-860s excommunicated Nicholas I on grounds of various traditional charges, which did not include images, the pope wrote to Charles the Bald and Louis the German to request their help. It may have been the third time the Franks were asked to mediate and the first time a pope explicitly aimed for Frankish assistance in a doctrinal matter. Besides political motivations, which certainly played their part, this decision shows that the Frankish efforts and their theological achievements were recognized and obviously well-received in Rome, and maybe also in Constantinople. The controversy only ended after the Byzantines adhered to a position previously advocated in the west, particularly among the Franks. In 869/70, the Patriarch Ignatios presided over the Fourth Council of Constantinople, whose sixth canon embraced papal teaching on images.<sup>314</sup> This was noted in the Frankish annalistic: the *Annales Bertiniani* report that during this synod, regulations were decreed regarding the veneration of images that differed from those of the previous councils and that these would now be in favor of Rome, who acknowledged them.<sup>315</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The process of religious alienation between east and west was related to politics, culture, and identity. The accusation of erroneous belief coming to the fore in the process was closely connected to the claim and pretension inherent in the Christian faith for universal validity and community. It was carried by essentially equivalent notions of orthodoxy and catholicity, defined and redefined by the consensus of the Christian community. Being part of it depended on the reconcilability of their own views with this consensus, which means that belonging to the orthodox community also hinged on individual choices. Although the desire for uniformity predominated and remains tangible in the sources, the notion of orthodoxy implied that the slightest deviations or divergences could and did become fundamental issues leading toward division. The rifts exposed in the framework of religious controversy were not related to religious discord alone but also to the political and cultural disagreements lying below the surface, which could be tied to the former.

Rudolf Schieffer ascertained, “[t]here is no trace of a Frankish–Byzantine solidarity under the sign of a common Christianity towards the surrounding pagan world.”<sup>316</sup> Although Schieffer was right that this was not a harmonious

<sup>313</sup> See the assessments in Thümmel, “Karl der Große” (2009), p. 64; Thümmel, “Die fränkische Reaktion” (1997), p. 980; Schedler, “Die ‘Libri Carolini’” (2002), pp. 36–7.

<sup>314</sup> See Thümmel, “Die Stellung” (1999), p. 74; Noble, *Images* (2009), p. 367.

<sup>315</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 872, p. 187.

<sup>316</sup> Schieffer, “Karl der Große” (2018), p. 289.



community, this chapter shows to what extent religion had remained a factor of unity. Religion probably was the strongest cohesive factor, as Christianity bound Byzantium to the west, in opposition to other neighboring regions. It tied together two worlds despite the largely nonexistent connectivity between their local religious communities, as section III.3 showed. The joint Christian faith and the fact that both worlds had their share in this community and the ecumenical Church were features with a powerful connective impact on the Franks and the Byzantines. The Christian community bound the two not only on a spiritual but also on a cultural and political level, a supraregional community that did not rely on physical connectedness.

Religion was closely connected to rulership. The eastern emperor was the head of the Church, and his western counterpart was a foremost Christian authority. The empire was conceived as genuinely Christian and, in the ideal, as encompassing the whole of Christianity. The emperor was also the keeper of orthodoxy. The underlying notion, which was genuine to imperial ideology, was implied in the Carolingian concept of Romanness. It was related to the doctrine conceived as “orthodox” or “catholic,” which usually corresponded to the papal position. Only the orthodox emperor, in the sense of a sovereign of “righteous belief,” could be considered legitimate. The inhabitants of both regions were members of this only Christian community. Despite significant losses in the south and some gains in the north, it still encompassed large parts of the ancient Roman territories. The medieval concept of a unique and universal empire was intrinsically tied to the notions defining the orthodoxy of the Church and its Christian community, which is why both empires strove to expand their authority to encompass the entire Christian world. The present chapter thus confirms Louis II’s—or Anastasius Bibliothecarius’—allegation that the empire was conceived as mirroring the one *imperium* in Heaven, even if two emperors governed it.

The evidence leaves no doubt that the Franks considered themselves and were conceived to be a genuine part of the Christian community and the universal Church. There is no indication that they were somewhat considered Christians of an inferior status at the fringes of the empire, or similar. When, in the eighth century, the Franks reentered the Mediterranean stage, they acted as rulers co-equal to the Byzantines. They soon made efforts to also be on a par with their eastern rivals on a theological level, an ambition that certainly played its part in the Carolingian refutation of the Council of Nicaea. Since then, they strove to have a say in dogmatic matters, an effort recognized, as repeated requests for Frankish support in the context of theological controversy seem to confirm. The Franks confidently advocated their position on images by confronting the Byzantines and the pope. It is also noteworthy that in the few cases of immediate rivalry between eastern and western rulers, as in the case of Charlemagne’s

and Theophilos' throne discussed in section VII.1, Byzantium was seemingly inspired by the Franks, not vice versa.

Several occasions occurred where Church unity was at stake. Although religion was primarily a connecting factor, it also had a divisive function. The popes who strove toward independence were not the only troublemakers; the Byzantine monarchs, in particular, also had their share. Iconoclasm and the ordination of Photios, just like Monothelism a century before, had been initiated by the eastern emperors, considering oriental tendencies. The Byzantine attitudes toward image veneration, for example, were rooted in ancient oriental concepts inconceivable in the west. Any opposition to such imperial dogma implied opposition against the eastern emperor. The Frankish rulers were not as innocent as western sources would like to suggest. Although Charlemagne conceived himself as the protector of the universal Church, he did prove his willingness to set his own ambitions above current prospects of Church unity in the 790s. The pope also regularly followed his own agenda—which implied his claim for primacy—and he preferably made alliances that served his ambitions, often bringing him close to the Franks. Maybe the best evidence for the overall significance the Byzantines attributed to the “barbarian” west, or western determination, persuasiveness, and assertiveness, is that every controversy finally ended with the Byzantine Church resorting to a dogma that until then had been advocated, pertinaciously, by western authorities.<sup>317</sup>

Although the iconoclast controversy produced a more pronounced alienation than Monothelism, there is no reason to believe, as Bronwen Neil suggested, that it involved the departure of the Franks from the *oikumene*.<sup>318</sup> Any dogmatic dispute occurred strictly inside a shared Christian Church and community. The fact that Michael III addressed Louis the Pious to interfere and help to cope with iconodule Rome shows that even in this particular context, the relations had remained on relatively cordial terms. The secondary significance attributed to factual differences is confirmed by the fact that east and west refrained from focusing on the perceptible cultural differences such as those related to monasticism, the veneration of saints, or liturgy. Although they were noticed, they were mainly addressed to polemicize. When more specific issues of disagreement were debated, this was done without seriously putting the shared Christian bases at risk.

<sup>317</sup> Cf. Richards, *The popes and the papacy* (1979), pp. 199–200.

<sup>318</sup> Neil, “The western reaction” (2000), p. 552.

# VIII

## Roman Cultural Heritage

Religion strongly characterized early medieval western culture, implying more commonality with the Byzantine east than distinction.<sup>1</sup> It belonged to the Roman culture and heritage shared by the inhabitants of the former and the current Roman imperial territories, which included the Franks. This does not mean these societies composed a cultural unity, as Dietrich Claude was right to stress, given that both also integrated other elements, in particular Hellenic and Oriental influences in the east, and Celtic and Germanic elements in the west.<sup>2</sup> As regards religion, similarities stirred up criticism that focused on differences.<sup>3</sup>

In 1900, Nikolaus Reitter argued that Roman culture lived on long beyond the fading of its empire in the west.<sup>4</sup> Although Jonathan Conant may have been right that “cultural assimilation was not a prerequisite of Roman citizenship,”<sup>5</sup> an overarching Roman culture did exist in what we call Antiquity. Walter Pohl offered a useful attempt to characterize cultural and symbolic ways to express Roman identity, which may include:

a rich Latin literature, an impressive architecture of power, almost omnipresent statues, funerary monuments and inscriptions, a lavish variety of civic or rural cult sites, refined household objects such as terra sigillata, glass or silver wares, extensive infrastructure such as streets, aqueducts or bridges, the Roman legal tradition, and not least what we could call the corporate identity of the Roman army, its uniform, its standards and its stereotypical fortresses.<sup>6</sup>

This, of course, is a static definition focusing on the time of the Principate that does not consider that any expressions of Roman culture could change over the centuries. We should be cautious not to rely on anachronistic definitions when studying Roman culture in the early Middle Ages and instead focus on what the evidence can reveal. Not every element of ancient Roman culture

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Schreiner, “Byzanz als Begriff” (2010), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Claude, *Der Handel* (1985), penultimate page of his “Zusammenfassung.” Cf. Ohnsorge, “Konstantinopel” (1983), p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gantner, “The label ‘Greeks’” (2013), p. 313: “a Constantinopolitan *Romaioi* and a Roman *Romanus* already had quite different cultural backgrounds.”

<sup>4</sup> Reitter, “Der Glaube” (1900), pp. 1–2.

<sup>5</sup> Conant, *Staying Roman* (2012), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Pohl, “Romanness” (2014), pp. 406–7. See also Conant, *Staying Roman* (2012), p. 7.

survived into the medieval period in its ancient form, and the most ostensible elements usually belonged to the sphere of the upper social strata. Still, ancient Roman culture retained its attractiveness beyond Antiquity and remained important as a model and inspiration for medieval creations. The same applied to Byzantine culture, with which the west remained largely familiar given the shared ancient foundations, considered worth imitation thanks to its richness and sophistication.<sup>7</sup> Although Byzantine culture, according to Peter Schreiner, was not limited to features related to the imperial court, as there is also relevant evidence from the monastic, the clerical, and the popular sphere (“Volkskultur”), cultural influences from the east on the west were largely restricted to the elite, meaning that popular Byzantine culture never really touched Frankish ground.<sup>8</sup>

The aim of this final chapter is less to define mutual influences or parallel developments which, as McCormick already stressed, could occur in different contexts and without any intercultural exchange necessarily being responsible,<sup>9</sup> but to investigate the role and significance of Roman and Byzantine culture in the Frankish realms. This requires dealing with a range of uncertainties. Whether an image, its composition, particular knowledge, or a tradition was adopted from the Byzantine east as a consequence of exchanges or whether it belonged to the residual Roman culture in the west, is not always clear and occasionally needs to be conjectured based on the evidence available—for example, using a comparative approach, which again often requires relying on material bearing other uncertainties.<sup>10</sup> The following sections focus on questions related to the significance and role attributed to cultural elements of the Roman past and the eastern present to understand to what extent the said Roman culture and its heritage were conceived to belong to the Frankish world. As Byzantine material and intellectual culture are generally considered to have prevailed over the Frankish in matters of magnificence and subtlety,<sup>11</sup> which could explain why Byzantine influence tended to be more significant in the west than vice versa,<sup>12</sup> the question arising from the previous chapters of how the Frankish achievements compared to those of the Byzantines will also be discussed further.

The approach used to study the role of Roman culture in the Frankish west is to focus on the medieval perspective. The investigation considers cultural

<sup>7</sup> Schreiner, “Kulturkonkurrenz” (2015), p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> See Schreiner, “Kulturkonkurrenz” (2015), p. 12. See also Hen, *Roman barbarians* (2007), pp. 153–76.

<sup>9</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium’s role” (1987), pp. 215–16.

<sup>10</sup> Similar McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 429.

<sup>11</sup> See Schieffer, “Karl der Große” (2004), p. 288.

<sup>12</sup> See Altripp, “Anmerkungen” (2011), p. 343.

elements that are either explicitly identified as Roman or may be related geographically and chronologically to the Roman past or the Byzantine east. Besides Roman remains and Byzantine imports, it also considers genuinely western features with a “Roman” character. It excludes any further ascriptions based on modern assumptions. This allows considering genuinely medieval visions of Romanness and helps avoid making false attributions by applying modern or anachronistic definitions. The following also, whenever possible, attempts to differentiate between elements related to genuinely western Roman heritage and early medieval eastern influences. Besides, and in opposition to the topics addressed in the previous chapters, among which a majority have already filled books by themselves, the availability, development, and significance of Roman and Byzantine cultural features in the Frankish west still lack a comprehensive monographic treatment. This entails that the basis of what follows is much more heterogenic. Comprehensive treatment will not be possible in this context, which is why the analysis needs to focus on a selection of significant examples.

The chapter shows that late Roman and Byzantine features were virtually ubiquitous, at least among the Frankish elite. These features were not mere appropriations and copies introduced as alien features but belonged to the western culture inside which they evolved. The analysis therewith confirms the authenticity of Roman elements in the Frankish culture, which did not rely on poor imitations of superior ancient and eastern models or “originals” but adopted, adapted, and advanced preexisting and current examples and concepts to serve western ideas and needs. Roman culture thus remained a living feature evolving in exchange and in consideration of the Roman heritage and the Byzantine present. The first section focuses on cultural elements related to politics and the exertion of power, an aspect largely limited to the elite and thus best attested by our evidence. As a majority of the material remains had a political component, this first section mainly concentrates on features that served for monarchic representation to a wider public, including architecture and regal iconography, and the rituals and traditions used to legitimize and enforce authority. The second section deals with aspects of Roman culture in the early medieval material heritage by looking at elements like art or architecture and other features, provided they did not have the purpose of representing the monarchy to a larger public. The final section discusses nonmaterial aspects of Roman culture.<sup>13</sup> It goes without saying that these distinctions are not always straightforward, which is why a stringent implementation has not been attempted.

<sup>13</sup> For a similar approach, see Drocourt, “Ambassadors as informants” (2018), p. 87.

## 1. Political Culture

Our knowledge about early medieval culture is limited, given that the sources mainly focus on the small group of individuals who belonged to the elite, including the rulers. Consequently, most information gathered on early medieval culture somewhat relates to this minority of major importance, while local popular culture and its regional variances remain largely obscure. This first section looks at political culture as presented by features like imperial architecture, representation, and rituals as major elements of the Frankish elite culture.

### Aachen and Other Places of Power

At the time of Charlemagne, Aachen was not only a pivotal place of power but also a thriving center of cultural prosperity. By attracting some of the most renowned scholars and skilled artisans from most parts of the Mediterranean world, it also became a major place of intellectual exchange and artistic encounter unprecedented until then in the regions north of the Alps.<sup>14</sup> Although the Carolingians remained itinerant kings accompanied by their respective courts and many key scholars were located in the realm's different urban, monastic, and ecclesiastic centers, Aachen became important as a political and cultural center. Its significance was emphasized by the fact that, from the mid-790s, Charlemagne spent most of his winters there and by the concurrent emergence of a palace complex of palatine edifices. This included a royal palace (*aula regia*) that probably served as a meeting room, banquet hall, and courtroom, and a palatial chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. These edifices were connected by a two-storeyed roofed passage (see Figure 8.1), in the middle of which a double-floored building was added in the second half of the ninth century, which may have contained the court *schola* and the garrison.<sup>15</sup>

In his *Life of Charlemagne*, Notker explained that the monarch's intention behind these constructions was to set up a monument that would "outperform the work of the ancient Romans."<sup>16</sup> The Carolingian complex was indeed unprecedented by any prior medieval regal place of power north of the Alps. Aachen itself was seemingly chosen because of its thermal source, which was much appreciated by the king, as Einhard confirmed.<sup>17</sup> The name Aquae Granni

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Jacobsen, "Herrschaftliches Bauen" (1999), pp. 91–4; Untermann, "Frühmittelalterliche Pfalzen" (2015), with a survey on the history of research at pp. 108–112.

<sup>15</sup> See Nelson, "Aachen as a place of power" (2007); Beuckers, "Imperiales Bauen" (2012), pp. 302–12; Pohle, *Die Erforschung* (2015); Ley, "Aquis palatium" (2015), pp. 127–46; Prien, "The copy of an empire?" (2017), pp. 315–18.

<sup>16</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.28, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 22.

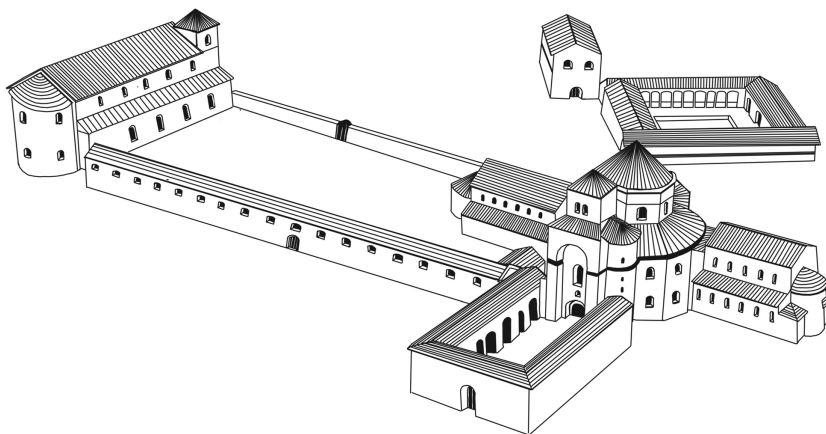


FIGURE 8.1 Palatial site of Aachen around 800, according to the current state of research, reworked version of an outdated representation under the GNU Free Documentation License (GFDL), Version 1.2, source: [mittelalter.fandom.com/de/wiki/Aachener\\_Kaiserpfalz?file=Aachener\\_Pfalz\\_Modell.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aachener_Kaiserpfalz?file=Aachener_Pfalz_Modell.jpg).

went back to an earlier adjacent settlement where an earlier thermal bath had been erected in the first century,<sup>18</sup> which was abandoned around the fourth century. The fact that Aachen already bore a small Roman settlement with some functional infrastructure, including the remains of a Roman fortification,<sup>19</sup> whose material was partly used to fill the foundations of the Carolingian constructions,<sup>20</sup> does not seem to have been decisive for the choice of location given that the Carolingian constructions did not take account of these structures. The orientation of the new edifices even ignored the roads available. Its specific location inside the Frankish heartland thus appears to have been of secondary significance,<sup>21</sup> not least as Aachen was only connected to the ancient highway joining Cologne and Maastricht through secondary roads. The Carolingian settlement also does not seem to have been characterized by any noteworthy continuity with the Roman past or an impressive size, given that Einhard referred to it as *vicus*.<sup>22</sup>

The Carolingian regal representation could seemingly do without a metropolitan context. The palace complex of Aachen itself was designed to represent the Carolingian monarchy in an imperial manner, by resorting to Roman models.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., the contributions in Cüppers (ed.), *Aqvae Granni* (1982).

<sup>19</sup> Ley, “*Aquis palatium*” (2015), p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> Marksches, “*Herrlicher als*” (2018), pp. 57–61.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Kleinbauer, “Charlemagne’s palace chapel” (1965), p. 2; Ley, “*Aquis palatium*” (2015), p. 132.

<sup>22</sup> Einhard, *Translatio et miracula* 2.4, p. 74. See also, on the architecture: Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.30.



Although the overall layout of the complex remains debated, we know that it comprised several courts, like the *atrium* prepended to the chapel, whose impression on visitors may have compared to the ancient Roman *fora*, with their temples and *basilicae*.<sup>23</sup> Contemporary sources emphasize the Roman character of the site, for example, by using designations like “new Rome” for Aachen, a concept Carl Erdmann reinterpreted as “new Byzantium.”<sup>24</sup> Several architectural elements known from ancient Roman buildings are attested in the palatial complex, like apse-additions to the nave constructions, the central position of the royal chapel, the vault rooms, or the use of Corinthian pillars.<sup>25</sup> The Roman and imperial character is further attested in the chapel’s measurements. The meticulous study by Jan Pieper and Bruno Schindler, in fact, demonstrates that the entire construction was measured using the ancient Roman Capitoline Foot (*pes capitolinus*) of 29.57 cm, a scale unit also used to design Charlemagne’s throne.<sup>26</sup> The *aula regia* was built according to contemporary Roman models, maybe by using the remains of an earlier Roman building at the same location.<sup>27</sup> Its plan adopts models from other medieval edifices attested in Rome and earlier edifices, like the fourth-century *aula* in Trier.<sup>28</sup>

The laying of the palatial chapel’s cornerstone has been dated to 796, its completion around 804, dates roughly confirmed by dendrochronology.<sup>29</sup> Once completed, it was the first postantique arched building north of the Alps. It was a colorful edifice with an impressive height of 31 m, probably with a notable red character referring to imperial porphyry.<sup>30</sup> According to Einhard, it was decorated with gold and silver, candles and iron grids, doors, columns, and marble collected in Rome and Ravenna.<sup>31</sup> Arne Effenberger already pointed out that Charlemagne would have been able to find ancient Roman pillars and marble nearer to his construction site, be it in Cologne, Trier, and probably even in Aachen, where the majority of the remaining material had been taken. The fact that such material was imported from Italy implies that the provenance of these *spolia* was purposely chosen because it was considered important.<sup>32</sup> A letter

<sup>23</sup> Marksches, “Herrlicher als” (2018), pp. 66–7.

<sup>24</sup> Erdmann, “Das ottonische Reich” (1943), p. 418. See Prien, “The copy of an empire?” (2017), p. 321.

<sup>25</sup> Ley, “*Aquis palatium*” (2015), p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> Pieper/Schindler, *Thron und Altar* (2017).

<sup>27</sup> Endemann, “Wollte Einhard ‘römisch’ bauen” (2016), p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> See Prien, “The copy of an empire?” (2017), p. 318. Critical Ley, “*Aquis palatium*” (2015), pp. 127 and 139–40. Further suggestions in Effenberger, “Die Wiederverwendung” (1999), pp. 643–61, at p. 650.

<sup>29</sup> Prien, “The copy of an empire?” (2017), p. 316.

<sup>30</sup> Marksches, “Herrlicher als” (2018), p. 69.

<sup>31</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 26. See also Ranaldi/Novara, “Karl der Große” (2014), pp. 114–21; Ley, “*Aquis palatium*” (2015), p. 127.

<sup>32</sup> Effenberger, “Die Wiederverwendung” (1999), p. 650; Endemann, “Wollte Einhard ‘römisch’ bauen?” (2016), pp. 56–7.



FIGURE 8.2 Interior of San Vitale in Ravenna (left, author: Velvet, Creative Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0. Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aix\\_dom\\_int\\_vue\\_cote.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aix_dom_int_vue_cote.jpg)) and the chapel of Aachen (right, author: Thoodor, Creative Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0, [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Basilica\\_di\\_San\\_Vitale\\_cupola\\_2.jpg?uselang](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Basilica_di_San_Vitale_cupola_2.jpg?uselang)).

of 787 adds that the Carolingian king received Hadrian's written permission to gather some mosaics, marble, and other "examples" from the then deserted *palatium* in Ravenna, which were probably integrated into the constructions in Aachen.<sup>33</sup> In sum, the Carolingian interior of the chapel was beautifully decorated to reflect imperial splendor in a manner that largely compared to the styles known from Byzantine architecture (see Figure 8.2).<sup>34</sup>

The Franks not only used ancient Roman material but also adopted structural designs they had encountered elsewhere. Charlemagne's confidant Einhard and anyone else responsible for the supervision of the constructions, in particular the builder Odo of Metz, may have been acquainted with Vitruvius' *Ten books on architecture*, whose models and construction techniques would have proved helpful for the project. This supposition is confirmed by a later letter addressed to a young man whom Einhard sent a list of words and names contained in

<sup>33</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 81, p. 614. See also Deliyannis, *Ravenna* (2013), pp. 55–8; Ranaldi/Novara, "Karl der Große" (2014), pp. 114–15; Marksches, "Herrlicher als" (2018), pp. 61–4.

<sup>34</sup> Ranaldi/Novara, "Karl der Große" (2014), p. 120. See also Effenberger, "Die Wiederverwendung" (1999), arguing that Italian *spolia* "entsprach dem Hochgefühl erlangter Ebenbürtigkeit" (p. 650).

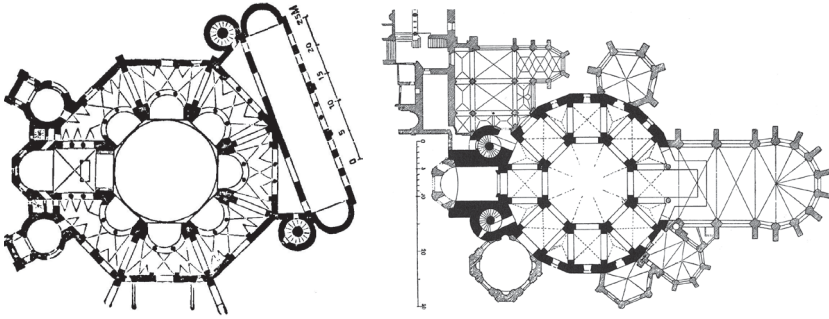


FIGURE 8.3 Comparing San Vitale in Ravenna (left) to the chapel of Aachen (right). Ravenna, Public Domain. Source: [runeberg.org/nfbd/0387.html](http://runeberg.org/nfbd/0387.html). Aachen below, Public Domain. Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aachen\\_De\\_hio\\_1887.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aachen_De_hio_1887.jpg).

Vitruvius' work to look them up.<sup>35</sup> The Carolingian chapel was further inspired by prominent octagonal-shaped architecture, like the late sixth-century ceremonial room in the Great Palace of Constantinople, the Chrysotriklinos and, in particular, the church of San Vitale in Ravenna (see Figure 8.3). Charlemagne and his companions probably visited the latter during their stays in Ravenna in 787 and 801, which would explain the close similarities between the ground structure and size of this church and the Frankish chapel in Aachen.<sup>36</sup>

The church of San Vitale prominently displays the mosaics of Justinian and his wife Theodora, which were prone to suggest a direct sponsorship of the prominent emperor. For this reason, Klaus Gereon Beuckers argued that, from a Carolingian perspective, this edifice was primarily related to the empire and, more specifically, to its last successful unification in the second third of the sixth century.<sup>37</sup> If Beuckers was right, the decision to integrate elements seen in Ravenna into the palatial chapel in Aachen must have referred to Charlemagne's initial vision of his role as the reinitiator of an empire ruled by two emperors. Another import from Ravenna was the equestrian statue of the Gothic king Theodoric, mentioned in section IV.2, which according to the written evidence, held a lance and a shield. Probable reasons why Charlemagne chose to bring it to Aachen were its ostensible Roman style, the quality of its finishing, and the fact that the Franks had seen a similar equestrian statue in the Lateran complex.

<sup>35</sup> Einhard, *Epist.* 57, p. 138. See also *Einhard's Briefe*, eds. Grabowsky et al. (2018), pp. 138–41. The Reichenau library stored a copy of Vitruvius' work on architecture, Merkel, "Die Antikenrezeption" (1992), p. 25. On Odo of Metz, see Endemann, "Wollte Einhard 'römisch' bauen?" (2016), p. 56.

<sup>36</sup> Papastavrou, "The influence" (2002), p. 219; Beuckers, "Imperiales Bauen" (2012), pp. 305–6 and 310–11; Ley, "*Aquis palatium*" (2015), p. 136. Critical Marksches, "Herrlicher als" (2018), pp. 71–2, and Brenk, "Legitimation" (2002), pp. 153–4 and 157.

<sup>37</sup> Beuckers, "Imperiales Bauen" (2012), pp. 310–11. Similar Effenberger, "Die Wiederverwendung" (1999), p. 650. More critical, Prien, "The copy of an empire?" (2017), p. 317.

Although this latter shows Marc Aurel, it was considered then to represent Constantine the Great.<sup>38</sup> In 829, Walahfrid Strabo explicitly related Theodorik's statue to the palace complex in Aachen, although without explaining its exact location there.<sup>39</sup>

The resemblances between the Frankish chapel and the other octagonal-shaped edifices were discernible enough to be recognized by visitors from other faraway Mediterranean places.<sup>40</sup> Besides the similarities with San Vitale and the Chrysotriklinos, there were manifest borrowings from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Anastasis, and the Hagia Sofia in Constantinople. It is not unlikely that Frankish envoys traveling to Constantinople and Jerusalem visited these places during their stays and later reported what they had seen. Besides, the late seventh-century report on the travels of Arculf offered detailed descriptions and graphs that may have been used as an inspiration.<sup>41</sup> According to Judith Ley, the first floor of the palatial chapel adopted the model of the church of San Vitale, and the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was used to design the chapel's ground floor. If she is right, the intention behind this combined inspiration would have been to create an enhanced concept meant to surpass the inimitably larger edifices in Constantinople, at least from a conceptual perspective.<sup>42</sup>

The site of Aachen obviously reflected Charlemagne's vision of Roman and Christian rulership and *imperium*. Its models and forerunners in Jerusalem and Constantinople were occasionally referred to as *templum Salomonis*, and it is no coincidence that this designation was also used to refer to Charlemagne's chapel.<sup>43</sup> Notker, for example, explained that "Caesar Augustus and emperor Charles" built the edifices in Aachen "closely following the example of the wise Salomon."<sup>44</sup> As he aimed to excel over the "ancient Romans," he would have called for artists and craftspeople from all the regions "this side of the sea."<sup>45</sup> Charlemagne's *aula* was also conceived as a *sacrum palatium*, a notion already

<sup>38</sup> Effenberger, "Die Wiederverwendung" (1999), pp. 651–6. Ranaldi/Novara, "Karl der Große" (2014), pp. 115–16.

<sup>39</sup> On possible locations, see, e.g., Bredekamp, "Theoderich als König" (2014), pp. 283–9; Nash, "Demonstrations of *imperium*" (2011), p. 159. See also Epp, "499–799" (2002), p. 228; Brenk, "Legitimation" (2002), p. 154.

<sup>40</sup> Marksches, "Herrlicher als" (2018), p. 74; Ley, "*Aquis palatium*" (2015), pp. 131–4.

<sup>41</sup> Papastavrou, "The influence" (2002), p. 219; Ley, "*Aquis palatium*" (2015), pp. 136–7. Critical Brenk, "Legitimation" (2002), p. 156.

<sup>42</sup> Ley, "*Aquis palatium*" (2015), pp. 136–7. See also Brenk, "Legitimation" (2002), pp. 154–6; Beuckers, "Imperiales Bauen" (2012), pp. 305–6.

<sup>43</sup> Ley, "*Aquis palatium*" (2015), p. 130, with references in n. 14 and 15, and pp. 131–4 and 136.

<sup>44</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.27, p. 38: "si prius de edificiis, quæ cesar augustus imperator Karolus apud Aquasgrani iuxta sapientissimi Salomonis exemplum." See also Garrison, "The Franks" (2000), pp. 154–5.

<sup>45</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.28, p. 34: "Ad cuius fabricam de omnibus cismarinis regionibus magistros et opifices omnium id genus artium odvocavit." See also Marksches, "Herrlicher als" (2018), pp. 56–78.

attested in relation to the Palace of David and the Great Palace in Constantinople. This notion reflects celestial Jerusalem as described in Revelations 21.15–17.<sup>46</sup> All these indications point to a biblical conception and interpretation of the palatine complex in Aachen.

Charlemagne's throne was located on the first floor to the west, a position from where he could see the altar of the Virgin Mary and the fresco of Christ positioned above her, both located on the opposite side on the lower floor.<sup>47</sup> According to Helen Papastavrou, this composition of the throne and the altar, which she interpreted as the throne of Christ, implies that "Charlemagne saw himself as the incarnation of Christ."<sup>48</sup> Although this construal may be debated, it is clear that the palatial chapel was designed to emphasize the Carolingian vision of rulership rooted in equal measure in Roman imperial and Christian biblical thinking.<sup>49</sup> This is corroborated by the mentioned investigation of Pieper and Schindler, which also confirms the importance attributed to biblical kingship as a model for Charlemagne. Their study shows that the construction implemented a large number of symbolic and numeral biblical references that related Carolingian rulership to Jerusalem. This included measures that corresponded to the model of the Salomonic temple. In addition, Charlemagne's throne, its stairs, and the marble footing bear a large number of pre-Carolingian graffiti, many of which are crosses, whose stylistic analysis has revealed that they must be the work of generations of pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. Pieper and Schindler argued that these graffiti and the traces of wear on the same material thus must result from several centuries of veneration prior to its change of function, which means that the material used to build the throne had probably already been used as a relic, or at least was related to a holy site prior to its arrival in Aachen. The material used to build the throne thus not only was imported from Jerusalem, it also related to a particular relic or holy site that still needs to be identified to convey its message.<sup>50</sup> While the mentioned Roman Capitoline Foot used to measure Charlemagne's throne seemingly referred to ancient palatine Rome, the material used thus pointed to the biblical kings.

The palatial complex of Aachen, and the chapel, in particular, therewith combined references to the notion of a new Jerusalem with the idea of a Second Rome,<sup>51</sup> defining a vision of rulership that perfectly corresponds to the models

<sup>46</sup> Ley, "*Aquis palatium*" (2015), pp. 132–3 and 138–42. See also Ley/Wietheger, "Der karolingische Palast" (2014), pp. 236–45.

<sup>47</sup> Nash, "Demonstrations of imperium" (2011), p. 160. Opposing thesis in Corsepius, "Der Aachener 'Karlsthron'" (2005), pp. 359–76, at p. 372.

<sup>48</sup> Papastavrou, "The influence" (2002), p. 219.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Fichtenau, "Byzanz" (1951), p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Pieper/Schindler, *Thron und Altar* (2017). See also Brenk, "Legitimation" (2002), p. 156; Nash, "Demonstrations of imperium" (2011), p. 160. Cf. Garrison, "The Franks" (2000), p. 155.

<sup>51</sup> Ley, "*Aquis palatium*" (2015), p. 144.

already encountered in the previous chapters. The biblical and imperial models were not applied consecutively, as Penelope Nash suggested,<sup>52</sup> but simultaneously. The concept of Roman and biblical rulership was not a Frankish invention, given that comparable notions of Christian rulership are already attested earlier in the Byzantine world. It is noteworthy in this context that the architecture in Aachen confirms that Charlemagne saw his responsibility as a Christian ruler spanning beyond the borders of his own domain and that he already considered himself equal to the Byzantine emperors before his coronation in 800. All in all, Aachen thus appears as a self-conscious Frankish site in a primarily late Roman dress. Although it combined several appropriate features to create a Christian version of an ancient *palatium* in a way that the underlying message was intelligible to a wide audience, the architecture of Aachen also betrays a genuinely Frankish vision truthful to its constructor's traditions and concepts of rulership.<sup>53</sup>

With all the above in mind, Roland Prien was probably right that the Frankish constructions were never meant to be mere copies of any particular buildings but genuine designs combining Roman models with current ideas and needs. Prien stressed that we should consider that orthogonal and centrally planned designs, in particular, are already attested since Antiquity and in Merovingian Gaul by pointing, in particular, to the case of the centrally designed late Roman edifice of St. Gereon in Cologne used as a church from the sixth century. He adds that we hardly have any archaeological or written evidence referring to any earlier Merovingian palatial site that would allow us to know whether and, if so, how the Carolingian architecture related to earlier Frankish models. He therefore argued that although the chapel “stands in the tradition of late antique domed buildings [. . .] [it] was designed not as a copy of an existing church, but as an enhancement of a concept that had already existed for a long time.”<sup>54</sup> In addition, many high-quality architectural sculptured decorations and bronze work considered ancient Roman *spolia*, like the pilaster capitals from the chapel's facade or the late antique bronze doors resembling the entrance to the temple of Romulus on the *Forum Romanum*, have turned out to be Carolingian pieces of art, which again underlines the genuinely Frankish character of the chapel.

Charlemagne's obvious plan to elevate Aachen to the rank of a new permanent capital was never realized. After 822, the site gradually lost its intended role as a capital, first due to Louis the Pious' weakened position and, after 843, as the city's location lost its significance as a central place of power, a process accompanied

<sup>52</sup> Nash, “Demonstrations of imperium” (2011), p. 160. See also Beuckers, “imperiales Bauen” (2012), p. 308.

<sup>53</sup> Ley, “*Aquis palatium*” (2015), p. 143. Similar already Fichtenau, “Byzanz” (1951), pp. 53–4; Ranaldi/Novara, “Karl der Große” (2014), p. 119. See also Greenhalgh, *Marble past* (2009), p. 525.

<sup>54</sup> Prien, “The copy of an empire?” (2017), p. 318.



by an enhancement of the itinerant court. During the remaining decades of the ninth century, the prime urban center changed with almost every monarch. Under Louis the German, for example, this role was attributed to Frankfurt. It is important that the few remaining palatial sites whose plans are better known, i.e., Nijmegen and Ingelheim, which Einhard considered most important after Aachen,<sup>55</sup> and Paderborn, confirm that Aachen was not the only Carolingian palace complex that combined Roman models, which means that this feature was not exclusive to Aachen but was also adopted when designing other places of power.

In Ingelheim, located 15 km west of Mainz near the Rhine, the remains of a monumental *aula* of  $14.5 \times 33$  m, a moon-shaped *portico*, and an aqueduct-like structure 8 km in length have been discovered.<sup>56</sup> Although the plan of the *aula* compares to those in Aachen and Trier, it differs from the former in several regards: there is no evidence for any significant prior Roman settlement, although recent excavations have shown that there must have been a Roman *villa rustica* on the site. It is even possible that the construction of the round portico was already a feature of this earlier building.<sup>57</sup> There is also no evidence of a large palatial church belonging to the initial complex, although a comparatively small building may have been used for worship. Should the moon-shaped *portico*, the feature that stands out most, be a Frankish creation, it is unique not only for Ingelheim but for the entire Carolingian realm. Even though the portico makes an “ancient Roman” impression, we do not know of anything close to a perfect match. Prien suggested that the only example of an earlier edifice with a comparable round shape may be a feature of the Forum of Trajan,<sup>58</sup> although the similarities are limited to the combined use of a round shape and a portico. In fact, there is a much better match: according to the newest reconstruction of the Roman *forum* of Cologne (see Figure 8.4), this complex included a large round portico with pillars that indeed seems to have compared to the construction in Ingelheim, although not in size. This and the proximity to Ingelheim make this a much more likely source of inspiration, regardless of whether this model was already implemented in the framework of an earlier construction of the Roman *villa* near the Rhine or only later at the time of Charlemagne.

Ermold Nigellus’ panegyric on Louis the Pious is the most detailed piece of written evidence for the palatial site of Ingelheim. It exaggerates its magnitude by claiming that the palace was ornated by a hundred columns, large numbers of doors and quarters, gates and entrances, innumerable chambers, and small

<sup>55</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 17.

<sup>56</sup> Untermann, “Frühmittelalterliche Pfalzen” (2015), pp. 112–14 and 116–17.

<sup>57</sup> See Endemann, “Wollte Einhard ‘römisch’ bauen?” (2016), p. 55.

<sup>58</sup> Prien, “The copy of an empire?” (2017), pp. 321–2.



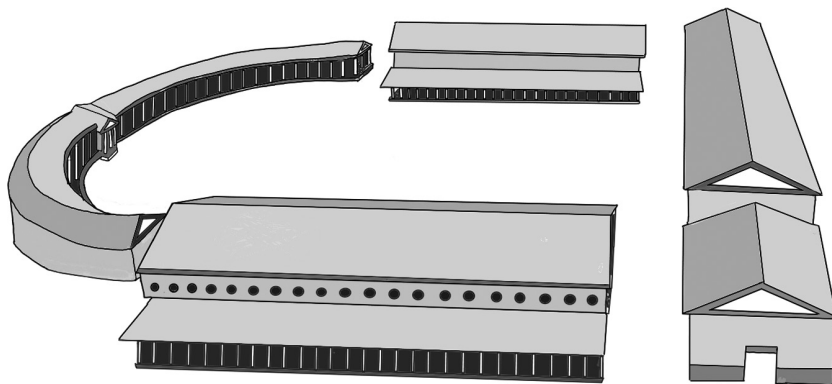


FIGURE 8.4 Simplified reconstruction of the forum of Cologne, according to the model created by COLONIA/3D 2010, colonia3d.de.

golden doors.<sup>59</sup> The same poem relates to frescoes skillfully “singing” the “great deeds of men.”<sup>60</sup> Ermold located these depictions, dated by Eugen Ewig to the early 820s,<sup>61</sup> inside the “regia domus,” which may refer to the palace, the *aula regis*. The poet explained that the frescoes on the one side displayed the wicked deeds of men, like the Sicilian tyrant Phalaris (sixth century BC), Romulus killing his brother Remus, the “one-eyed” general Hannibal, Alexander’s conquests, and what he considered the worldwide expansion of Rome.<sup>62</sup> The opposing wall would have shown the “admirable deeds of the fathers” who were “closer to the pious faith,” adding to the acts of the Caesars of Rome the “applaudable deeds of the Franks.”<sup>63</sup> This set of images would have related to the foundation of Constantinople, the deeds of Theodosius, Charles Martel’s victory over the Frisians, Pippin restoring the law to Aquitania, Charlemagne wearing a crown, and being victorious against the Saxons.<sup>64</sup>

The frescoes were not unique to Ingelheim. Ermold Nigellus, in the same poem, mentioned a comparable set of images located in an unknown church in or near Ingelheim, with scenes from the Old Testament opposing those from the

<sup>59</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 4, ll. 2063–9, pp. 156–8.

<sup>60</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 4, ll. 2126–7, p. 162: “Regia namque domus late persculpta nitesit/ Et canit ingenio maxima gesta virum.”

<sup>61</sup> Ewig, “Das Bild Constantins” (1956), pp. 44–5.

<sup>62</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 4, ll. 2128–147, pp. 162–4.

<sup>63</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 4, p. 65, ll. 267–70: “Parte alia tecti mirantur gesta paterna / Atque piaie fidei proximiora magis. / Caesareis actis Romanae sedis opimae / Iunguntur Franci gesta que mira simul.”

<sup>64</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 4, ll. 2152–63, p. 164. The above significantly differs from the sophisticated reconstruction by Lammers, “Ein karolingisches Bildprogramm” (1972), p. 286. See also Hauck, “Der Missionsauftrag” (1990), pp. 290–5. For a recent attempt of reconstruction, see karolinger-route.de (25/01/2021).

New Testament.<sup>65</sup> Another piece of architecture that needs to be mentioned in this context is the so-called Gatehall (Germ. “Torhalle”), to be further discussed in section VIII.2, which was part of the monastery of Lorsch. Until recently, the date considered most likely was close to or before 800, an estimation recently proven false through radiocarbon dating, placing it around 900.<sup>66</sup> It is another impressive and unique edifice with three arches on the ground floor and a room with architectural and figurative frescos of distinctly ancient Roman character one floor above. The building has often been associated with ancient Roman triumphal arches, but its exact purpose remains unknown.<sup>67</sup>

Einhard related the building of Aachen and other palatial sites like Ingelheim to a comprehensive and ambitious building program executed to “the reign’s ornament and benefit.” It would have included the restoration of old and the construction of new churches and the establishment of a network of marine bases and a fleet to secure it against the Northmen. The remarkable ambitiousness somewhat recalls the programs known of emperors like Augustus,<sup>68</sup> although the evidence does not make any such relation explicit. Beat Brenk underlined the creative and innovative independence of the Frankish interpretation of ancient Roman models in Ingelheim and Aachen, which he considered a particular characteristic of these Carolingian complexes.<sup>69</sup> Prien also argued that none of the Carolingian palatial sites, as far as we know them, were conceived as copies or imitations of ancient Roman edifices, even though these new designs were inspired by late antique and contemporary medieval Mediterranean architecture.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the plans of any remaining palatial sites are less well known than those in Aachen and Ingelheim. In Paderborn, only some traces of a two-floored *aula* of 10 × 31 m and a stone church have been discovered.<sup>71</sup> Other places of power seem to have adopted architectural features also attested in Aachen, as in the case of Germigny-des-Prés, Liège, Nijmegen,<sup>72</sup> or Charles the Bald’s Compiègne<sup>73</sup> and Quierzy.<sup>74</sup> However, the evidence is too scarce for certainty.

<sup>65</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 4, ll. 2073–98, p. 158 [Old Testament] and ll. 2099–123, pp. 160–2 [New Testament]. Liutprand, *Antapodosis* 2.31, p. 49, mentions another wall image in the hall of Merseburg commemorating Henry I’s victory against the Hungarians.

<sup>66</sup> Papajanni, “Mit einem Eichenkeil” (2015), pp. 32–44.

<sup>67</sup> Merkel, “Die Antikenrezeption” (1992), pp. 32–42, suggests it was a library.

<sup>68</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 17, p. 20: “ad regni decorum et commoditatem.” Cf. Augustus, *Res Gestae* 19–21. See also Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.30; see, e.g., Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), pp. 37–8.

<sup>69</sup> Brenk, “Legitimation” (2002), pp. 159–60 and 165–6.

<sup>70</sup> Ingelheim Prien, “The copy of an empire?” (2017), p. 322.

<sup>71</sup> Untermann, “Frühmittelalterliche Pfalzen” (2015), pp. 114–15. For Paderborn, see also Hauck, “Karl als neuer Konstantin” (1986), pp. 513–40, arguing that this site was built to provide a Frankish response to Orosios’ depiction of Constantine’s foundation of Constantinople.

<sup>72</sup> See Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 17; Kleinbauer, “Charlemagne’s palace chapel” (1965), pp. 2–6.

<sup>73</sup> Renoux, “Du palais imperial” (2015), pp. 94–5 and 102–5; Kölzer, “Schwindendes Zentrum” (2014), p. 397.

<sup>74</sup> Prien, “The copy of an empire?” (2017), p. 314.

The palatial site of Aachen adopted ancient Roman and Byzantine models to create a Frankish vision of Roman rulership. Like the underlying concepts, the architecture discussed here was conceived as emerging from Roman tradition, which since late Antiquity had become genuinely Christian. As in the Byzantine east, notions of Romanness and Christianity thus had converged, without becoming identical, creating a Christian vision of Romanness. The site and the regal concepts it conveyed attest to the potential sophistication of Frankish handlings of cultural elements related to politics. At the same time, the remains show that the Franks must have been rather comfortable using Roman models, which were not adopted one-to-one as an alien quote with a message but embraced and adapted as part of a Frankish way of expression. A comparable attitude is attested for the Christian models adapted to become genuine features of the Frankish understanding of their Roman culture.

### Images of Power

Roman and imperial features were prominently displayed in art and other pictorial contexts. At the end of his life, Charlemagne had silver coins struck according to ancient Roman style, mentioned in section II.2, with the monarch's portrait in profile, a laurel wreath, and the *paludamentum* on the obverse.<sup>75</sup> The laurel wreath and *paludamentum* were already prominently displayed on coins struck at the time of Constantine the Great, mints that may have served as a model to create the Carolingian image of the victorious Christian Roman emperor.<sup>76</sup> It was part of a new iconography also attested in other media adopting the ancient Roman model of the military emperor as *pacificus imperator* introduced as an image of authority.<sup>77</sup> Ildar H. Garipzanov noted that the Carolingian imperial coinage reflects ancient Roman style and that it does not correspond to any Byzantine model as both differ, among other ways, in the type of the imperial dress and the fact that the Frankish rulers were shown in profile, in contrast to the Byzantine habit known from the late sixth century presenting a frontal portrait of the emperor. Less convincing is Garipzanov's reasoning that the Carolingian seals, which do bear indications that at least some were meant to present realistic representations of a particular ruler—in contrast to the Byzantine tendency to provide ideal schematic images—that this was a conscious adoption of ancient Roman styles. There is no evidence supporting with sufficient certainty that

<sup>75</sup> Garipzanov, "The image of authority" (1999), pp. 208 and 215–17. Cf. Schramm, *Die zeitgenössischen Bildnisse* (1973), pp. 20–9, on two other insufficiently preserved examples.

<sup>76</sup> Garipzanov, "The image of authority" (1999), pp. 211–15. See also Ewig, "Das Bild Constantins" (1956), p. 36.

<sup>77</sup> Garipzanov, "The image of authority" (1999), pp. 215–18.

the Franks knew these ancient models and that they identified them with a glorious imperial past considered worthy of being imitated.<sup>78</sup> Also unpersuasive is Jennifer R. Davis' argument that, given that portraits had already been used on Merovingian coinage, the Carolingian numismatics would relate to not only the Roman but also a "Germanic" past. Merovingian sixth-century pseudo-imperial coinage differed from the Carolingian models by the fact that they did not use the portrait of the actual Frankish ruler but added the emperor's portrait instead. This means that the Carolingians need not necessarily have related these coins to their Merovingian predecessors and, therefore, could have considered these as purely imperial. Davis was right, however, that elements like the imperial inscription or the temple on the reverse of the Carolingian coinage were prone not to have carried ancient Roman significance alone but were, first of all, filled with Carolingian meaning. She added that conscious Romanizing and a more consistent imperial ideology only became more prominent at the time of Louis the Pious, a tendency that gradually faded after 818.<sup>79</sup>

The combination of Roman imperial and Christian elements was also prominent in the depiction of rulers, as is attested in the archival evidence. The *Codex Aureus* of St. Emmeram, dating around 870, for example, contains a complex illustration with a predominant purple, gold, and blue tone showing Charles the Bald wearing a chlamys and his crown, sitting on a throne under a canopy or, if Ildar H. Garipzanov is right, a religious *fastigium* (Figure 8.4). An angel is located in each upper corner, and the hand of God reaches from under the canopy toward the monarch. The iconography of the divine hand reaching from above is attested since late Antiquity, for example, in the framework of the sacrifice of Abel and Melchisedec, in one of the apsidal mosaics of San Vitale.<sup>80</sup> In the relevant picture of the *Codex Aureus*, a military man is standing on each side of the throne, behind each of them a crowned female figure as the personifications of *Francia* and *Gotia* carrying a cornucopia, as the accompanying poem reveals. The dedicatory poem on that same page also stresses the ruler's connection to and support by the divine, further emphasized by explicit references to David and Salomon.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Garipzanov, "The image of authority" (1999), pp. 209–11, failing to note that the frontal depiction of the emperor is already occasionally attested for Constantine I. Similarities between the face of Charlemagne and Constantine I, and the large variance of the depictions of Charlemagne, do not sufficiently support the thesis that these images were consistently meant to depict a living person. See also Keller, "Zu den Siegeln" (1998), p. 403.

<sup>79</sup> Davis, "Charlemagne's portrait coinage" (2014), pp. 19–21. See also Garipzanov, "The image of authority" (1999), pp. 203–9 and 217; Coupland, "Great David's greater son?" (2018), p. 39, counting 45 known portrait coinages of Charlemagne and 333 of his son Louis.

<sup>80</sup> See also Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), pp. 250–4, with n. 177. Further examples in Siede, "Abkopiert—ummontiert—uminterpretiert" (2020), pp. 113–15.

<sup>81</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>, access daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0009/bsb00096095/images (26/01/2021), with *Biblioth. psalt. versus* 4.1, p. 252: "Hic residet Karolus divino munere fultus, / Ornat quem pietas et bonitatis amor. / Hludowic iustus erat (quo rex

## The Emperor's Clothes

Attire, prominently displayed in these and other illuminations, was also used in real life as a means for self-definition and to enhance or display authority. Roman symbolism in the written evidence is explicitly restricted to emperors. Einhard, for example, explained that Charlemagne preferred the “Frankish” vesture of his fathers, adding:

[Closest] to his body he put on a linen shirt and underwear, then a silk-fringed tunic and stockings. He wrapped his lower legs with cloth coverings and put shoes on his feet. In winter he covered his shoulders and chest with a vest made of otter or ermine skin, above which he wore a blue cloak [*sagum*]. He was always armed with a sword, whose handle and belt were made of gold or silver. On occasion he bore a jeweled sword, but only on special feast days or if the representatives of foreign peoples had come [to see him]. He rejected foreign [*peregrina*] clothes, however gorgeous they might be, and never agreed to be dressed in them, except once in Rome when pope Hadrian had requested it and, on another occasion, when his successor Leo had begged him to wear a long tunic, chlamys, and shoes designed in the Roman fashion. On high feast days he normally walked in the procession dressed in clothes weaved with gold, bejewelled shoes, in a cloak fastened by a golden clasp, and also wearing a golden, gem-encrusted crown. But on other days his attire differed little from people's usual attire.<sup>82</sup>

Thegan offered a comparable, although much less detailed, description referring to Louis the Pious, who, just like his father, would have used to dress like anyone else, except on high feast days. Then, he wore fabrics knitted with gold, including

non iustior alter), / [. . .] Hic David vario fulgescit stemmate regis / Atque Salomonica iura docentis habet.”; Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), pp. 254–5; Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), p. 441. Detailed discussion in Pizzinato, “Vision and Christomimesis” (2018), pp. 145–70. On the *fastigium*, see Garipzanov, “*Fastigium*” (2003), pp. 5–26.

<sup>82</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 23, pp. 27–8: “Vestitu patrio, id est Francico, utebatur. Ad corpus camisam lineam, et feminalibus lineis induebatur, deinde tunicam, quae limbo serico ambiiebatur, et tibialia; tum fasciis crura et pedes calciamentis constringebat et ex pellibus lutrinis vel murinis thorace confecto umeros ac pectus hieme muniebat, sago veneto amictus et gladio semper accinctus, cuius capulus ac balteus aut aureus aut argenteus erat. Aliquoties et gemmato ense utebatur, quod tamen nonnisi in praecipuis festivitibus vel si quando exterarum gentium legati venissent. Peregrina vero indumenta, quamvis pulcherrima, respuebat nec umquam eis indui patiebatur, excepto quod Romae semel Hadriano pontifice petente et iterum Leone successore eius supplicante longa tunica et clamide amictus, calceis quoque Romano more formati induebatur. In festivitibus veste auro texta et calciamentis gemmatis et fibula aurea sagum adstringente, diademate quoque ex auro et gemmis ornatus incedebat. Aliis autem diebus habitus eius parum a communi ac plebeio abhorrebat.” Trans. Dutton, p. 31. See also Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.17; Hack, “Ritual und Zeremoniell um 800” (2014), p. 272.



FIGURE 8.5 Redrawing of Louis the Pious after Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. reg. 124, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>.

a golden tunic, a golden belt and a sword shining with gold, gold greaves, a gold-interwoven chlamys, a golden crown, and holding a golden staff in his hand.<sup>83</sup> Ermold Nigellus, in his poem on Louis, described a procession where the emperor seems to have been dressed accordingly.<sup>84</sup> The only relevant contemporary miniature has been dated around 825. It shows the emperor wearing a tunic and a short blue cloak tied with a knot, clothing that indeed appears to correspond to the everyday wear of his father (Figure 8.5).<sup>85</sup>

Garipzanov related Charlemagne's second and third dress to the Frankish revival of imperial tradition and stressed that the *sagum* is similar in form to the *paludamentum*, corresponding to two Roman versions of the chlamys. The

<sup>83</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 19, p. 266: "lembo aureo, balteo aureo precingebatur, ense auro fulgenti, aureas ocreas, clamidem auro textam atque coronam auream in capite gestans et baculum aureum in manu tenens."

<sup>84</sup> Hack, "Ritual und Zeremoniell um 800" (2014), pp. 272–5, with further references in n. 45.

<sup>85</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. reg. 124, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>, access [digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Reg.lat.124](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.124) (06/02/2021).

long tunic and chlamys were part of what Garipzanov called the “Roman imperial state costume.” As Thegan only mentioned one festive costume, which included a tunic and chlamys, Garipzanov assumed that this costume combined Charlemagne’s festive and his Roman vestment, uniting “Frankish and Byzantine traditions”<sup>86</sup> However, Einhard does not provide details on the type of garment Charlemagne wore as a festive dress, apart from it being “weaved with gold,” a statement that corresponds to the description of Louis’ wear and does not exclude that it also was a long tunic. As the term *sagum* relates to a cloak that is largely comparable to the chlamys and given that the Roman vestment never was an official Frankish costume, it appears more likely that Louis’ dress was identical to his father’s festive wear. Although Garipzanov is right that Louis’ dress combined Byzantine and Frankish styles, the Byzantine element is not related to the mentioned imposed Roman dress, which seems to have been comparatively sober, but emerges from Charlemagne’s festive dress, given that it appears already to combine these two styles, as the prominent display of gold and jewels suggests. Gold weaving was a manifest feature of Byzantine imperial dress, also found on the mosaic of San Vitale, where Justinian wears jeweled shoes.

The Byzantine character appears to have been reduced in the style of Louis’ dress, as no jewels are mentioned in this context, and the same impression emerges from a miniature depiction of Lothar I in the Gospels of around 850. Although Garipzanov argued that it is the earliest visual testimony of the new official festive dress, combining Byzantine and Frankish elements,<sup>87</sup> the gold element is already markedly diminished compared to Louis’ festive dress, if we follow Thegan’s description. Only the cloak, the fibula, and, of course, the crown, contain this precious metal. Maybe the king also had golden bandages around his red tights or shoes. There is no indication of jewels, and the cloak, which should be a chlamys, is wrapped around both knees as if it were a toga<sup>88</sup>—a dress uncommon in Byzantium. The Byzantine element in the dress of Charles the Bald, for which the number of more or less contemporary miniature depictions is exceptionally high, is once again more pronounced. As seen in section VI.2, he reportedly appeared at a synod in Ponthion wearing “Greek” attire, a dress that contrasted the “Roman” wear of the papal legates. The *Annals of Fulda* describe him as “dressed in a dalmatic down to his ankles and with a sword-belt girdled over it, his head wrapped in a silk veil with a diadem on top,”<sup>89</sup> a description that does not correspond to the Byzantine dress discussed thus far. The depiction

<sup>86</sup> Garipzanov, “The image of authority” (1999), pp. 216–17.

<sup>87</sup> Garipzanov, “The image of authority” (1999), pp. 215–17. For Lothar I’s image, see Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 266, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8451637v (06/02/2021).

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., the statue of sitting Caligula wearing a toga, Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités, Paris, inv. nr. MA 1267–CP.6406, image access fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait\_de\_Caligula#/media/Fichier:Caligula\_MBALyon\_2018.jpg (16/02/2021).

<sup>89</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 876, p. 86.



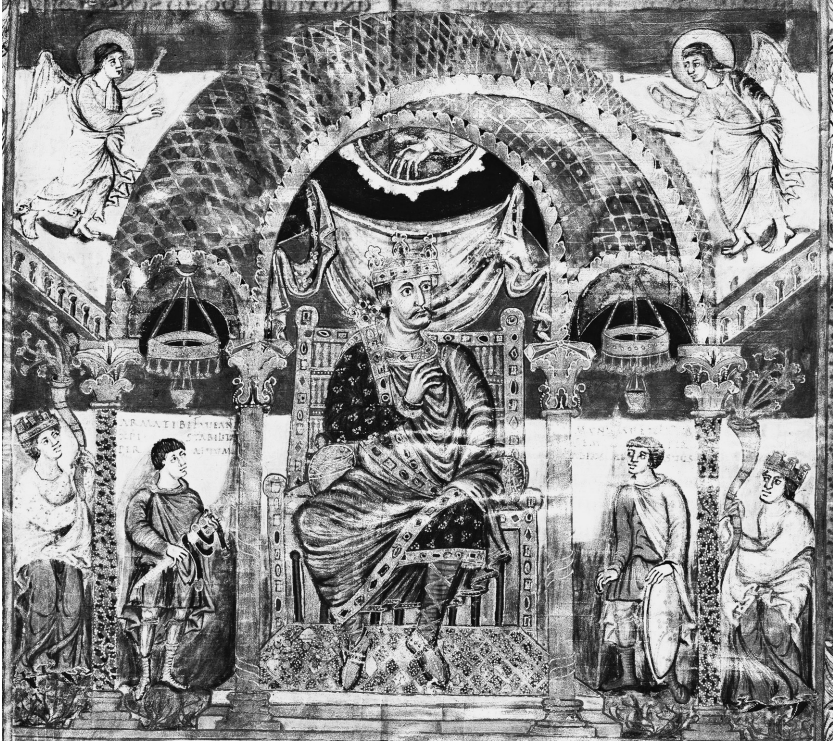


FIGURE 8.6 Charles the Bald in the *Codex Aureus* of St. Emmeram, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>. Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). Source: [digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00096095?page=10](https://digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00096095?page=10).

in the *Codex Aureus* of St. Emmeram already addressed above (see Figure 8.6), however, shows him in a lavish blue tunic and golden chlamys, both with a large border decorated with gold and gems, red tights with a golden bandage and golden jeweled shoes, a dress that indeed largely corresponds to the Byzantine style addressed above. The wrapping of the cloak around his left knee reminds of Lothar I's dress, whereas his right knee is free.

Josef Déer discussed the attire and *insigna* of the Frankish rulers on these and other contemporary depictions to argue that ancient Roman or Byzantine clothing had remained in use and was a common feature of the representation of rulers throughout the medieval period, elements which he interpreted as related to the western rivalry with Byzantium.<sup>90</sup> Although his argumentation is not always compelling, he is certainly right that there was no break between a Roman

<sup>90</sup> Déer, "Byzanz und die Herrschaftszeichen" (1977), pp. 42–69, relating to rivalry at p. 53.

toward a “Germanic” representation, given that the Frankish rulers from very early on had resorted to Roman styles, at least occasionally, as in the prominent case of Clovis’ festive appearance in Tours in 508.<sup>91</sup> Déer characterized Charles the Bald’s appearance of 876 as genuine “Byzantine *προέλευσις*,” in the sense of a ceremonial procedure, and supposed that Charles wore a *loros* (“*λῶρος*”), a term that relates to a long, embroidered, scarf wrapped around the torso and over the left arm.<sup>92</sup>

Although the monarchic attire discussed here reveals several features related to ancient Roman or Byzantine tradition, like the inclusion of gold, this was combined with Frankish styles. The result was a genuinely western vestment. The evidence thus further completes the impression gained in previous sections on the Frankish understanding of emperordom by confirming that the Franks did not copy their models but adopted specific features to create their own vision of a Roman emperor. The negative attitude toward Charles the Bald’s “Greek” attire affirms that the Franks were not interested in copying their eastern counterpart but self-confidently insisted on their own tradition and style.

### Enforcing Power and Authority

Roman and Byzantine features and procedures are also attested in many other contexts related to the exertion of authority. Gold and purple, the Roman imperial colors par excellence, remained important symbols, as is well attested by the different extant types of material culture.<sup>93</sup> Besides its regular use as part of the imperial attire, where the gold and purple (and red, at times used instead) catch the eye of the beholder, the significance attributed to purple as a chiffré for the emperor in the east and the west is attested, for example, in the abundant use of purple-colored porphyry for representative architecture, as in Aachen.<sup>94</sup> As we shall see, Charles the Bald was the first Frankish monarch to subscribe in purple,<sup>95</sup> and the western emperors also issued lavish purple documents written in gold under the Ottonians, a procedure common in the Byzantine east long before it may have been known in the west through diplomatic exchanges.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 2.38.

<sup>92</sup> Déer, “Byzanz und die Herrschaftszeichen” (1977), p. 47. I would like to thank Peter Schreiner for helping me with the interpretation of this term in this particular context.

<sup>93</sup> See, e.g., Bibikov, “Glanz und Elend” (2007), p. 29.

<sup>94</sup> See also Liutprand, *Antapodosis* 1.6, p. 8; Effenberger, “Die Wiederverwendung” (1999), pp. 649–50.

<sup>95</sup> Scholl, “Imitatio Imperii?” (2017), p. 32.

<sup>96</sup> Dölger, “Die Kaiserurkunde der Byzantiner” (1939), p. 249; Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), p. 42. See also Maleczek, “Otto I. und Johannes XII.” (2001), p. 176.

These examples of appropriations of the color purple, in particular, demonstrate the large variety of contexts where western rulers could resort to features related to the Roman imperial culture to emphasize imperial status and authority. Byzantine studies have long argued for major eastern influences and more or less conscious imitations of Byzantine borrowings in the western administration, liturgy, and culture, adoptions which appear to attest to the significance attributed to the east in the west.<sup>97</sup> The term often used to refer to such appropriations is *imitatio imperii*, the “imitation” of imperial features.<sup>98</sup> Matthias Hardt, for example, argued that “barbarian rulers tried to imitate imperial *largitio* by giving and using tableware from ancient times,” as when Charlemagne, following his imperial coronation, offered several lavish gifts to his apostolic benefactor, gifts that included a large gold paten decorated with various jewels and the inscription “Charles.”<sup>99</sup> An interesting question to which, unfortunately, no reliable answer may be offered, would be whether Charlemagne made this present because he had learned that this was what emperors should do—which could indeed be characterized as an act of *imitatio imperii*—, or whether he did so because he considered making such gifts appropriate and because this corresponded to his own tradition and culture.

The Frankish and the Byzantine monarchies shared important commonalities, despite noteworthy differences. For example, eastern emperorship lacked a legal basis for or regulation of succession. Hans-Georg Beck showed that Byzantine rulership remained an elective monarchy throughout its existence, a circumstance that became crucial every time a dynasty had faded and a new emperor, unrelated to the previous, had to be chosen. In addition, the administrative apparatus and other officials remained much more dependent on the individual, which implied opportunities for advancement for virtually anyone, irrespective of his or her family background.<sup>100</sup> Mikhail V. Bibikov argued that the Byzantine emperors, therefore, were particularly vulnerable by pointing to the fact that among the 107 emperors who ruled from the reign of Theodosius and until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, only 34 died of a natural cause or due to an accident. Bibikov explained that a significant factor responsible for this vulnerability was the fact that virtually anyone could become emperor and that the only means for an emperor to favor a specific successor was to raise him as co-emperor. This position was not necessarily granted to the eldest son, and sometimes not even to a next of kin.<sup>101</sup> The only Byzantine notion that somewhat compared to the

<sup>97</sup> Chrysos, “Otto der Große” (2001), pp. 487–8; Höfert, *Kaisertum und Kalifat* (2015), p. 441.

<sup>98</sup> E.g., Hunger, *Reich der neuen Mitte* (1965), p. 382. The phrase stems from the *Constitutum Constantini*, see Fried, “Donation of Constantine” (2007), pp. 44–5. First used by Schramm to relate to papal Rome, Scholl, “Imitatio Imperii?” (2017), pp. 19–20.

<sup>99</sup> *LP, Vita Leoni III*, c. 24, p. 8: “et patena aurea maiore cum gemmis diversis, legente KAROLO, pens. Lib. XXX”; Hardt, “Gift-exchange” (2013), p. 399.

<sup>100</sup> Beck, “Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen” (1965), pp. 3–32.

<sup>101</sup> Bibikov, “Glanz und Elend” (2007), pp. 31–2.

Frankish dynastic principle of legitimation is that of being “born in the purple” (*πορφυρογέννητος*), which defined a person born while his or her father was the ruling emperor.<sup>102</sup> The potential weakness of the legitimacy emanating from this status is attested by the fact that there have been situations, e.g., after the death of Romanos II in 963, where men unrelated to the imperial dynasty could win recognition even though princes “born in the purple” would have been available to succeed their father. Thus, dynasties were not the rule and, as in the case of the Macedonians, they could even be interrupted. In contrast, kinship was the prime basis for succession in the Carolingian west. Thus, while in the west the ruling family was the key factor of continuity and stability, the empire as an institution had this role in the east.

Another significant difference pertains to the Byzantine central government, which contrasts with the Frankish itinerant court. The latter was related to the fact that in the west, personal exchange and presence were key for exerting power and government, whereas western emperorship had become increasingly dependent on the papal coronation. Rulership thus had a significantly different basis in the east and the west, distinctions which had evolved over centuries and necessarily also affected the strategies that emerged in both regions as a common means to enforce power and authority. The mystification and inaccessibility of the Byzantine emperor were probably a combined product of the emperor’s vulnerability and the role of Constantinople as the sole imperial capital. As Rene Pfeilschifter argued, the dialogue between the emperor and his people was, if at all, limited to communal expressions of dissatisfaction made in the Hippodrome.<sup>103</sup> In contrast, the Frankish kings and emperors were significantly more mobile and accessible, as Einhard’s description of Charlemagne’s bathing habits illustrates best: the monarch was reportedly joined, at least occasionally, in communal bathing by up to a hundred men.<sup>104</sup> And while the Byzantine empire was based on procedures and institutions with a century-long tradition, Frankish rulership was significantly more prone to reform and adaptations, including moments of enhanced trial and error.<sup>105</sup> Western emperorship, in contrast to its eastern counterpart and with the possible exceptions of Louis the Pious, Lothar I, and Louis II, also depended on kingship, meaning that a minor emperor was inconceivable among the Franks.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Similar Peters-Custot, “Sancta Romana Ecclesia” (2012), p. 256.

<sup>103</sup> Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser* (2013), p. 608. In the itinerant court, see Rouche, “Entre civitas et sedes regni” (1997), pp. 179–84; Dierkens/Périn, “Les sedes regiae” (2000), pp. 267–304.

<sup>104</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 22. See also Nelson, “Aachen as a Place of Power” (2007), pp. 1–2; Davis, *Charlemagne’s practice* (2015), pp. 337–8. The bath is also mentioned in Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.15.

<sup>105</sup> See Davis, *Charlemagne’s practice* (2015). See also Shepard, “Byzantine diplomacy” (1992), pp. 48–50.

<sup>106</sup> Hehl, “Zwei christliche Kaiser” (2012), pp. 286–7.

The Frankish and the Byzantine government and administrations had common origins. I argued elsewhere that the Merovingians absorbed the Roman military structures, which they subsequently adapted to current needs and requirements, meaning that the transition from a Roman toward a Frankish government was comparatively smooth.<sup>107</sup> This observation does not only apply to the military, as Roman elements can be observed in virtually every domain of what modern scholarship calls post-Roman society. Many elements persisted until beyond the eighth century, when some were unitized, centralized, and systemized under Charlemagne, be it related to the Church, culture, law, administration, the military, or coinage.<sup>108</sup> This is why Carolingian society, in so many ways, reminds us of the ancient Roman world.

A good example is coinage. Rudolf Schieffer noted that the capitulary of the Council of Frankfurt in 794 mentions the introduction of a new measure of grain capacity (“*modius publicus*”), alongside a recently introduced silver *denari* to be accepted “at every place, city, and market” without restriction inside the empire’s boundaries, a coinage well attested by archaeological finds.<sup>109</sup> Similar adoptions of ancient Roman procedures are documented for early medieval tax levies which, as Matthias Hardt showed, could be performed by Merovingian officials like the *referendarius* and, in particular, the *thesaurarius*. He seemingly acted in continuity with the ancient Roman *comes sacrarum largitionum* by administering incoming taxes and other dues and by the stamping of incoming luxury goods like silverware. This proceeding is attested at least until the time of Dagobert I’s sons.<sup>110</sup>

The acclamation of the army, the senate, and the people of Constantinople, which usually took place in the Hippodrome, was the constitutive act that made emperors in the east.<sup>111</sup> From the second half of the fifth century, it was followed by the coronation executed by the patriarch,<sup>112</sup> a course of action whose significance increased after the seventh century.<sup>113</sup> Among the Merovingians, the late Roman tradition of elevating an individual to a shield remained in use to raise him to the status of a king.<sup>114</sup> The coronation was introduced in the Frankish

<sup>107</sup> Sarti, “The military” (2020), pp. 254–77.

<sup>108</sup> See Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), p. 33.

<sup>109</sup> Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), p. 42, on *Concilia Karolini Francofurtense* a. 794, G.4, p. 166: “denario uno, modio ordii denarius duo, modio sigalo denarii tres, modio frumenti denarii quatuor,” and *ibid.* G.5, p. 166. See also Coupland, “Charlemagne’s coinage” (2005), pp. 211–12.

<sup>110</sup> Hardt, “Was übernahmen die Merowinger” (2013), in particular pp. 328–35.

<sup>111</sup> Ohnsorge, “Das Kaisertum der Eirene” (1963), p. 231; Wendling, “Die Erhebung” (1985), p. 222; Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), p. 63; Becher, “Die Kaiserkrönung” (2002), p. 18; Mohr, “Cultural exchanges” (2004), p. 94; Peters-Custot, “Sancta Romana Ecclesia” (2012), pp. 243–4. See also Yannopoulos, “Le couronnement” (1991), p. 73.

<sup>112</sup> Boak, “Imperial coronation ceremonies” (1919), pp. 37–47; Yannopoulos, “Le couronnement” (1991), pp. 71–92. Cf. Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), p. 62.

<sup>113</sup> Wendling, “Die Erhebung Ludwigs” (1985), p. 214.

<sup>114</sup> E.g., Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 2.40, 4.51, 7.10.



west only at the time of Charlemagne. It was preceded by the introduction of and was later combined with the anointment, a ritual conceived of as ancient tradition and may either go back to Merovingian or biblical precedence. The first Frankish coronation explicitly attested is the royal elevation of Charlemagne and his brother Carloman in 781. It was followed by the enthronement of the former's sons Louis the Pious and Pippin.<sup>115</sup> Their older brother, Charles the Young, was crowned as king shortly after his father's coronation in Rome in December 800, a ritual that differed from the foregoing in that it implied the unction of the crowned monarch.<sup>116</sup> As seen in section VI.1, Theophanes claimed that Charlemagne was crowned emperor by "anointing him with oil from head to foot and investing him with imperial robes and a crown,"<sup>117</sup> an act which modern historians have falsely interpreted as mocking the Frankish emperor. It is likely that Theophanes confounded father and son, both called "Charles," which he or his source considered the same person, and that Theophanes, therefore, assumed that the imperial ritual had implied the anointment, a procedure contrary to the Byzantine ritual. As argued above, Charlemagne's coronation by Leo III appears to represent a Roman adaptation of the Byzantine ritual usually carried out by the patriarch,<sup>118</sup> and whose change in the chronology involved that, in the west, the pope could become "maker of emperors."<sup>119</sup>

The Franks also adopted the Byzantine tradition of elevating a co-emperor, another procedure in the context of which the coronation was the constitutive act.<sup>120</sup> In Byzantium, the rite could either be performed by the patriarch or by the senior emperor.<sup>121</sup> In the latter case, the legitimacy of the ruling emperor was decisive for the acceptance of the elevation of his co-emperor.<sup>122</sup> The first occurrence of such a ceremony in the Carolingian world was in 813, when Louis the Pious was elevated as his father's coruler. The most elaborate report stems from Thegan's biography. He reported that Louis was called to Aachen and that after his arrival, Charlemagne requested the army, the clergy, and the officials to be faithful to his son, and that they were asked permission to bestow the imperial name onto Louis. Following their agreement, preparations were made

<sup>115</sup> Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), p. 63; Mohr, "Cultural exchanges" (2004), p. 94; Hack, "Ritual und Zeremoniell" (2014), pp. 269–70.

<sup>116</sup> *LP, Vita Leoni III*, 24, p. 7: "pontifex unxit oleo sancto Karolo, excellentissimo filio eius, rege"; Hammer, "Christmas Day 800" (2012), pp. 1–2.

<sup>117</sup> Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6289, pp. 472–3: ὁ δὲ τὸν Κάρολυν [. . .] χρίσας ἐλαίῳ ἀπὸ κεφαλῆς ἕως ποδῶν καὶ περιβαλὼν βασιλικὴν ἐσθῆτα καὶ στέφος, μηνὶ Δεκεμβρίῳ κέ, ἰνδικτιῶνος θ." Trans. C. A. Mango et al. (1997), p. 649. Cf. *LP, Vita Leoni III*, c. 23.

<sup>118</sup> Ohnsorge, "Das Kaisertum der Eirene" (1963), p. 232; Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), pp. 62–3; Clauß, "Imports and embargos" (2017), p. 80.

<sup>119</sup> Kempf, "Das mittelalterliche Kaisertum" (1956), pp. 229 and 232.

<sup>120</sup> Wendling, "Die Erhebung Ludwigs" (1985), pp. 214 and 220.

<sup>121</sup> Classen, *Karl der Große* (1986), p. 63.

<sup>122</sup> Classen, "Der erste Römerzug" (1983), p. 30.

for the following Sunday, and the ritual—as in the case of Lothar I, four years later—took place in the imperial chapel of Aachen. Louis was ordered by his father to take a golden crown from the altar dedicated to Christ and to put it on his own head.<sup>123</sup> Other sources, like the *Royal Frankish Annals*, contradict the above inasmuch as they stress that it was Charlemagne who put the crown on his son's head,<sup>124</sup> a procedure that would have corresponded to the Byzantine rite.<sup>125</sup> Wolfgang Wendling was probably right that Thegan's report here resulted from a misinterpretation. Wendling also provided a thorough reconstruction and discussion of the event, including a study of comparable elevations in Byzantium and how the Carolingian procedure related to Byzantine models, to argue that although there had been co-kings before, the ritual of 813 was based on contemporary eastern models. Like many Byzantine elevations of co-emperors before, the Frankish act was performed when the ruling emperor had reached the end of his life. Other resemblances with prior Byzantine coronation rituals include the fact that all major groups of society approved it, and this before it took place in the most important church—as seen, the Hagia Sofia was an important model used to design the chapel of Aachen—and that, before the junior emperor was crowned by his senior, the latter offered a speech to his successor. There were also some differences: while in Byzantium the ritual was performed with the assistance of many officials, and the patriarch crowned the senior emperor before the latter bestowed the second crown onto his junior, Charlemagne performed the act himself, and there is no mention of the vestment of the new emperor with a chlamys, which was usually part of the Byzantine ritual.<sup>126</sup> Still, the similarities prevail, not least as the missing participation of the pope in the role of the patriarch appears to have been intentional and does not suffice to argue against a Byzantine origin of the ritual itself.

The Franks had gathered up-to-date information on the act during the elevation of Michael I's son Theophylactos two years earlier, an event probably attended

<sup>123</sup> Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 6, pp. 180 and 184: "vocavit filium suum Hludouuicum ad se cum omni exercitu, abbatibus, ducibus, comitibus, locopositis. [. . .] ut fidem erga filium suum ostenderent, interrogans omnes a maximo usque ad minimum, si eis placuisset, ut nomen suum, id est imperatoris, filio suo Hludouuico tradidisset. [. . .] Tunc iussit ei pate, ut propriis manibus eleuasset coronam, quę erat super altare, et capiti suo inponeret ob recordationem omnium praeceptorum, quę mandauerat ei pater."

<sup>124</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 813, p. 138: "Ac deinde habito generali couentu, euocatum ad se apud Aquasgrani filium suum Hludowicum Aquitaniae regem, coronam illi inposuit et imperialis nominis sibi consortem fecit." For a detailed discussion of this and other relevant reports on the event, see Wendling, "Die Erhebung Ludwigs" (1985), pp. 202–5.

<sup>125</sup> McCormick, "Diplomacy" (1994), p. 19; Becher, "Die Kaiserkrönung" (2002), pp. 18–19; Schieffer, "Konzepte des Kaisertums" (2006), p. 47; Becher, "Das Kaisertum Karls des Großen" (2012), p. 266. See also Classen, "Der erste Römerzug" (1983), p. 32, and the detailed discussion of all known Byzantine elevations of co-emperors in Wendling, "Die Erhebung Ludwigs" (1985), pp. 207–17.

<sup>126</sup> Wendling, "Die Erhebung Ludwigs" (1985), pp. 206–38.



by Heito and the other Frankish envoys returning from Constantinople in early 812.<sup>127</sup> The first Frankish title of a co-emperor is attested for Lothar I, as Herwig Wolfram showed, crowned in 817 and for whom the tile *Hlotharius augustus invictissimi domini imperatoris Hludowici filius* is first attested in 822. Until then, the differentiation between senior and junior emperor was made by renouncing the designation “imperator” in the latter case, a procedure abandoned soon after, given that Louis II already used the title *imperator* in his role as co-emperor. The initial procedure perfectly corresponded to the Byzantine habit of restricting the equivalent term *αὐτοκράτωρ* to the senior emperor.<sup>128</sup> The same is true for the confirmation of Louis the Pious as *autokrator*, with another coronation shortly after his father’s death, as Franz H. Tinnfeld pointed out.<sup>129</sup> However, Pippin had already introduced corulership in his role as king, and, as this probably was a means to secure his succession following the deposition of the Merovingians, it seems unlikely that when his son later resorted to this procedure in the context of his emperorship, that he did so first of all as an act of rivalry addressed against the Byzantines, as Hans Hubert Anton suggested.<sup>130</sup> The same is true for the adoption of the Byzantine proceedings in either imperial coronation itself, given that this was not only the sole model available for the Franks to use but also belonged to the imperial tradition that the Franks intended to pursue. If contemporaries did understand it as an act of rivalry, this was likely only an (unintended?) secondary effect. Wendling argued that, in opposition to the elevations of co-kings, the aim of Louis’ co-emperorship was not the safeguarding of his succession, given that at that time he was the only conceivable successor.<sup>131</sup> However, this assumption does not consider that the transfer of the emperor status from Charlemagne to his son was not a matter of course. Thus, Louis’ elevation in all likelihood was meant to secure the succession of a new and thus insecure type of government, which once again corresponded to the Byzantine procedure.<sup>132</sup>

The *proskynesis* or *adoratio*, a gesture of partial or complete submission of Near Eastern origin already encountered in the framework of icon veneration, is also occasionally attested among the Franks, although mostly when meeting the pope.<sup>133</sup> As mentioned before, the *Life of Pope Stephen II* claims that in 754,

<sup>127</sup> Ohnsorge, “Renovatio” (1958), p. 121; Wendling, “Die Erhebung Ludwigs” (1985), p. 221; McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), pp. 424–5.

<sup>128</sup> Wolfram, “Lateinische Herrschertitel” (1973), pp. 85–7. See also Dölger, “Das byzantinische Mitkaisertum” (1936), pp. 114–20. In the east, the title *caesar* had lost its imperial meaning. Wendling, “Die Erhebung Ludwigs” (1985), pp. 212 and 219.

<sup>129</sup> Tinnfeld, “Formen und Wege” (2001), p. 29.

<sup>130</sup> Anton, “Solum imperii” (2002), p. 273. See also Wendling, “Die Erhebung Ludwigs” (1985), p. 227.

<sup>131</sup> Wendling, “Die Erhebung Ludwigs” (1985), pp. 227–8.

<sup>132</sup> See Dölger, “Das byzantinische Mitkaisertum” (1936), p. 129; Wendling, “Die Erhebung Ludwigs” (1985), pp. 213 and 227.

<sup>133</sup> Angelov/Herren, “The Christian imperial tradition” (2012), p. 158.

on his way to Ponthion, Pippin, his family, and officials prostrated themselves before the prelate. A comparable gesture is attested in the *Paderborn Epos* relating to Charlemagne and Leo III.<sup>134</sup> A half-century later, on December 25th 800, according to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, the pope offered the same gesture to Charlemagne “according to the custom of the ancients,” an expression Matthias Becher related to the ancient Roman emperors,<sup>135</sup> while Paul Speck argued that it was first of all related to the contemporary Byzantine tradition.<sup>136</sup> It is noteworthy that Ermold Nigellus in his panegyric on Louis the Pious mentioned a comparable gesture by Einhard in front of Charlemagne,<sup>137</sup> which confirms that it was not entirely alien to the Franks.

Charlemagne had an organ installed in Aachen, probably located in his palace, where it seemingly had a function very similar to the organs in Constantinople.<sup>138</sup> In the eastern capital, this instrument was used in secular ceremonies like court receptions in support of imperial majesty.<sup>139</sup> In 757, only shortly after the official reopening of diplomatic relations, Constantine V sent an organ to Pippin.<sup>140</sup> Leslie Brubaker suggested that this gift aimed at emphasizing the Byzantine claimed superiority to the Franks,<sup>141</sup> while Manfred Schuler assumed that the emperor used it to acknowledge Pippin as a king.<sup>142</sup> Besides, the gift appears to express Byzantine interest in the Franks, and maybe even unease toward their alliance with Rome, as Herrin suggested.<sup>143</sup> Looking at it from a comparable point of view, McCormick stressed that the organ would have had the potential to strengthen the position of the Franks and that this could have been intentional.<sup>144</sup> Erik Goosmann argued that the Franks indeed must have attributed some significance to this instrument given that Constantine’s gift was also recorded in several minor chronicles, even though the fact that it features more prominently in the historiographic records, composed around 800, may suggest

<sup>134</sup> *Carmen de Carolo Magno* p. 94, ll. 497–8: “Extimplo properans Karolus veneranter adorat, / Pontificem amplexens magnum, et Placida oscula libat.”

<sup>135</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, a. 801, p. 112: “ab apostolico more antiquorum principum adoratus est.” Becher, “Das Kaisertum Karls des Großen” (2012), p. 262. See also Ohnsorge, “Die Entwicklung” (1958), p. 203.

<sup>136</sup> Speck, “Zum Vollzug der Krönung” (2000), p. 113.

<sup>137</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 2, ll. 682–4, p. 54: “Tunc Heinardus erat Caroli diletus amore, / Ingenioque sagax et bonitate vigens, / Hic cadit ante pedes, vestigia basiat alma.”

<sup>138</sup> Herrin, “Constantinople” (1992), p. 106, referring to the organ offered to Pippin; Hentschel, “Byzantinische Orgelschenkungen” (2016), pp. 36–8. Very critical Schuler, “Die Musik” (1970), pp. 35–7. On the organ and its origin, see also Degering, *Die Orgel* (1905). For a comprehensive study of the Byzantine evidence, see Maliara, *Die Orgel* (1991).

<sup>139</sup> Herrin, “Constantinople” (1992), p. 104.

<sup>140</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 757.

<sup>141</sup> Brubaker, “The elephant” (2004), p. 175.

<sup>142</sup> Schuler, “Die Musik” (1970), p. 36.

<sup>143</sup> Herrin, “Constantinople” (1992), p. 104.

<sup>144</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium and the west” (1995), p. 365.

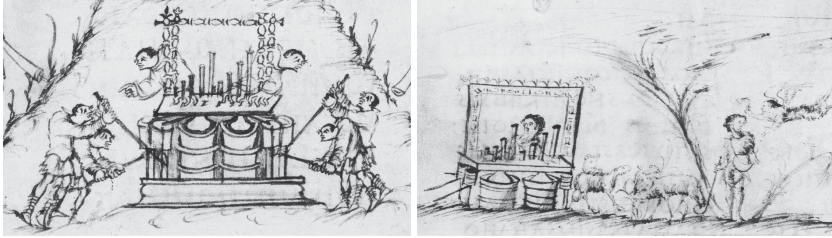


FIGURE 8.7 Organ, Utrecht Psalter: Utrecht University Library, Ms. 32, fols. 83<sup>r</sup> (left) and 91<sup>v</sup> (right). Source: [psalter.library.uu.nl/page/173](http://psalter.library.uu.nl/page/173) and [psalter.library.uu.nl/page/190](http://psalter.library.uu.nl/page/190), with permission, reference number M221217477.

that its symbolic potential was only fully realized at the time of Charlemagne<sup>145</sup>—maybe given its installation and use in Aachen, if Herrin was right.

This was not the only organ in the Frankish world. Notker later reported that, in 812, Byzantine envoys carried several music instruments on their way to the Frankish court, among which an “extraordinary organ of the musicians, with its great bronze tanks, leather bellows filled with air, and amazing bronze pipes with their rumbling air that could equal the roaring of thunder, the tinkling of a lyre, or the sweetness of a cymbal,” a description that may relate to a pneumatic organ. Charlemagne thereupon would have taken the occasion by the forelock by asking his craftsmen to inspect the instruments carefully and discreetly, and to use what they had learned to reproduce them. Notker closed his report with an enigmatic statement that clarifies that the copy emerging from this undertaking was no more extant at the time of his writing—if it was ever completed.<sup>146</sup> The famous *Utrecht Psalter*, which dates to the second quarter of the ninth century, contains two pictures that seem to show organs of different types, one large being handled by six men—two of them seemingly musicians—and a significantly smaller example that only required one operator (Figure 8.7).<sup>147</sup> The latter may have corresponded to the type carried to the Frankish court in 812.

Charlemagne’s initiative to have copies made of the Byzantine organ implies that either the one offered to Pippin was no more available and no records allowing a proper imitation had been kept, or that these differed from the one offered to Pippin, e.g., that it was smaller and thus more mobile, and that its new features caught Charlemagne’s interest. The Franks could not have been

<sup>145</sup> Goosmann, “Carolingian kingship” (2019), pp. 338–9.

<sup>146</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.7, p. 58: “illud musicorum organum praestantissimum, quod doliis ex ęre conflatis follibusque taurinis per fistulas ęreas mire perflantibus rugitum quidem tonitruui boatu, garrulitatem vero lyre vel cymbali dulcedine coęquabat.” Trans. Noble, p. 96.

<sup>147</sup> Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek Hs 32, fols. 83<sup>r</sup> and 91<sup>v</sup>, access [psalter.library.uu.nl/page/190](http://psalter.library.uu.nl/page/190) (08/02/2021); Goosmann, “Carolingian kingship” (2019), p. 339.

too successful in copying Byzantine organs given that this craft remained a task for specialists. Einhard, in his *Translatio et miracula*, reported that the Venetian priest George traveled to Aachen, where he constructed an organ the Byzantines called *hydraulica*. This hydraulic organ was installed in the palace (“palatio”).<sup>148</sup> According to the anonymous *Life of Louis the Pious*, the emperor rejoiced and thanked God once he learned that George had offered to build an organ in the manner of the “Greeks” by anticipating that he would provide “what had been uncommon in his realm.”<sup>149</sup> This is also confirmed by Ermold Nigellus, who, in his panegyric probably also related to George’s organ when explaining that such an instrument, characterized as the pride of the “Pelagian land”—probably relating to Byzantine Monothelitism—, had never been built among the Franks, and that it would now ornate the palace (“aula”) in Aachen. Through this, Louis would gain the precedence that until then had been on the Byzantine side.<sup>150</sup> This reference in Ermold’s poem is a rare testimony of explicit rivalry toward Constantinople. Both statements also seem to indicate that Pippin’s organ, which probably was initially installed in Compiègne, never made it to Aachen, and that the only organ installed there before was the copy commissioned by Charlemagne. The performance of this latter duplicate probably was a disappointment, as such a copy could hardly have met expectations defined by the original.<sup>151</sup> The impression such an organ could make among the Franks is attested in Walahfrid’s *De imagine Tetrici*. It associates this instrument with “Greek” pride and provides a dark portrait of the organ as being able to mislead simple minds, adding that a woman was so overwhelmed by its sound that she fainted and died.<sup>152</sup> The sum of the evidence thus attests to the persistent interest of the Franks in this particularly impressive instrument and the intention to use it in the imperial palace, probably as a means to impress those attending the court ceremonies and thus to illustrate imperial majesty in the manner of the Byzantines.

There is further evidence for the adoption of Byzantine procedures. Under Charlemagne, the Carolingians resorted to the Byzantine custom of using lead

<sup>148</sup> Einhard, *Translatio et miracula* 4.10, p. 122, also in *Annales regni Francorum* a. 826. See also McCormick, “Diplomacy” (1994), pp. 23–4.

<sup>149</sup> Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 40, pp. 432–4: “presbyterum quendam Georgium nomine, bone vite hominem, qui se promitteret organum more posse componere Grecorum. Quem imperator gratanter suscepit et, quia Deus illi quae ante se inusitata erant regno Francorum attribuebat, gratiarum actiones reddidit.”

<sup>150</sup> Ermold, *In hon. Hludowici* 4, ll. 2520–4, p. 192: “Organa quin etiam, quae numquam Francia crevit, / Unde Pelasga tument regna superba nimis, / Et quis te solis, Caesar, superasse putabat / Constantinopolis, nunc Aquis aula tenet. / Fors erit indicium, quod Francis colla remittant.”

<sup>151</sup> The allegation that Hārūn ar-Rašīd offered an organ to Charlemagne, found scattered throughout modern historiography, is false, see Bittermann, “Harun Ar-Raschids” (1929), pp. 215–7.

<sup>152</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine Tetrici* ll. 211–20, p. 129. See also Herren, “De imagine Tetrici” (1991), pp. 119–20, erroneously supposing that the organ was a Byzantine gift granted to the Franks in 826.

seals applied to their documents for authentication instead of wax seals, although Michael McCormick was right to note that they did adhere to the Frankish-style profile portraits instead of the Byzantine front representations.<sup>153</sup> The Byzantine habit of adding the Latin confirmation *LEGIMUS*, written in red ink, may have been introduced in the west from the east, or Italy, around the same time, and no later than 803.<sup>154</sup> Its Frankish adoption seems somewhat related to the use of the gold *bullā*, given that among the more than 400 documents preserved from the chancery of Charles the Bald, half of the seven examples bearing the annotation *LEGIMUS* seems to have had such a bull attached. The earliest Byzantine example known to have reached the west dates around 841, i.e., it is younger than the first known western examples. The Byzantine imperial letter of St. Denis, already mentioned in section III.1, shows significant paleographic similarities with the inscription found on a document from the time of Louis the Pious. As it dates to 839 and thus before the Byzantine letter, Michael D. Metzger argued that the prototype for the earlier Carolingian letter may be an earlier Byzantine letter now lost, which was probably written by the same scribe identified as Theoctistos, and reached the Frankish court during one of the diplomatic exchanges attested for the period after 824. This would imply that the documents from the chancery of Charles the Bald depended either on one of the Byzantine examples or preceding Carolingian documents.<sup>155</sup>

Further noteworthy similarities with Byzantine habits may have resulted from mutual inspiration or plagiarism. The exchanges between the Byzantines and Franks involved inspiration on different levels. Most noteworthy is the virtually simultaneous implementation of military reforms in the first decade of the ninth century. Salvatore Cosentino noted that the military obligation introduced around 805/7 by Charlemagne in the west and around 809/10 by Nikephoros I in the east bore analogies that cannot be explained by mere coincidence.<sup>156</sup> Both legislations defined military obligation based on a family's landed possession, which in both cases amounted to the same sum and requested service from those with sufficient wealth to either act as a military or take a share in the equipment and provision of a soldier. The relation between these stipulations is confirmed by the north Italian *Capitulare Olonnense mundanum* issued by Lothar I in 825, and a related section in the tenth-century *De cerimoniis*. Both contain similar wording to explain that in this context, the very poor, unable to serve or to

<sup>153</sup> See McCormick, "Byzantium's role in the formation" (1987), pp. 216–17. For a list with further potential Frankish adoptions from Byzantium, see Ohnsorge, "Konstantinopel" (1983), pp. 114–15.

<sup>154</sup> Ohnsorge, "Legimus" (1958), pp. 51–7.

<sup>155</sup> Metzger, "The *legimus* subscription" (1972), pp. 53–8. See also Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen* (1954), pp. 297–9.

<sup>156</sup> See Cosentino, "Land and military service" (2017), pp. 211–20. The dates emerge from *Capitularia Francorum* 44.6, p. 123; 48, pp. 134–5, and Theophanes, *Chronicle* a. m. 6302, p. 486.

provide provisions, should be spared until their situation has improved.<sup>157</sup> Even though the *Theodosian Code* contains a potential forerunner in a stipulation of June 375 (*CTh* 7.13.7), with noteworthy parallels already used to argue for continuity since Antiquity, Cosentino is probably right that this is unlikely to have been the case here—not excluding that it may have served as an inspiration. The simultaneity of the mentioned stipulations thus implies that one party was inspired by the other. Given the hostile relations at the time of Nikephoros I's reign, it is conceivable that this exchange of ideas already took place prior to Irene's deposition in 802, or that it was the result of espionage. It is noteworthy, in any case, as Cosentino already stressed, that it is impossible to define whether the Franks copied from the Byzantines, or vice versa. In addition, it is interesting to see that similar procedures could be implemented in either case, in particular, as this may have implied the reinstallment of general liability to military service, an obligation that had been abandoned in both regions around the earlier sixth century.<sup>158</sup>

## 2. Material Culture

Although every piece of evidence that has come to us may be somewhat related to early medieval culture, this topic has many unknowns. This is particularly true for the common people, for whom our sources are very meager. Speaking of elements belonging to “Roman,” “Greek,” or imperial culture, this entails that most relevant evidence is somewhat related to the court and the representation of authority, with some exceptions, mainly from the monasteries.<sup>159</sup> For the same reason, anything we might be able to say about political and early medieval culture tends to have notable overlaps, as is the case of the miniatures and other examples discussed in the previous section. It seems safe to say, however, that Romanness and related features were less prominent in early medieval popular culture or folklore, which, as in any other period of history, tended to have a stronger local or regional character and, thus, to be less liable to change or to depend to a significant extent on current supraregional trends. This means that the culture of the more common

<sup>157</sup> Cosentino, “Land and military service” (2017), p. 214, referring to *Capitularia Francorum* 165.1, p. 330, and *De cerimoniis* 2.49, p. 696.

<sup>158</sup> Cosentino, “Land and military service” (2017), pp. 217–18; Sarti, “The military” (2020), pp. 258–63. On the Byzantine military, see also Rance, “Soldier and civilian” (2021), pp. 31–47, on the Carolingian, see Haack, *Die Krieger der Karolinger* (2020), in particular pp. 83–94.

<sup>159</sup> The topic has already been treated in short surveys on Byzantine influences and specialized studies, see, e.g., Staubach, “Graecae Gloriam” (1991), pp. 343–68; Papastavrou, “The influence” (2002), pp. 219–29; Mohr, “Cultural exchanges” (2004), pp. 85–98; Brubaker, “The elephant” (2004); Koenen, “Zur Rezeption” (2011), pp. 309–28; Drocourt, “Ambassadors as informants” (2018); Koenen, “Kulturelle Missverständnisse?” (2020). See also Brather et al. (eds.), *Antike im Mittelalter* (2014), with an excellent introduction by Steuer, “Die Gegenwart der Antike,” at pp. 1–26.

people—particularly in rural areas—was prone to evolve largely independently of those who ruled and the latter’s politics.<sup>160</sup> The assessment also applies to ancient Roman and Byzantine societies. As Peter Schreiner has made clear, Byzantine culture as we know it largely belonged to its elite,<sup>161</sup> which implies that no particular “Byzantine” influence is to be expected among the common western population. This is another reason why the following discussions will inevitably concentrate on evidence closer to court and elite culture.

Arnold Esch suggested studying the medieval use of *spolia* by distinguishing between “survival” (Germ. “Überleben”) and “afterlife” (Germ. “Nachleben”). As Heiko Steuer pointed out, this is also a useful differentiation for studies with a broader thematic scope. While the first group includes elements that persisted until a certain moment in time, the second includes ongoing transformations of an element remaining “alive,”<sup>162</sup> as they emerge from the dynamics of the new present. As it does not suffice for this investigation to ascertain that remains of Antiquity had persisted until the early Middle Ages,<sup>163</sup> the latter group will be of particular interest.

Three types of objects require consideration here: ancient Roman artifacts (dating before the sixth century and thus not contemporary), Byzantine imports (i.e., largely contemporary), and objects and pieces of art that might be characterized as western imitations. Again, the discussion uses a selection of representative and significant examples, and it does not apply the three mentioned categories too strictly. The uncertainty of date or interpretation, the complex history of an object, and other circumstances occasionally entail that the assignment to any among the said categories is ambiguous or that more than one may apply. Still, this distinction is helpful, as each among these three groups relates to different kinds of contexts and intentions, requiring different approaches or focusing on specific aspects offering unique insights into early medieval perceptions of what may have been conceived as Roman culture.

### Ancient Roman Artifacts

The Frankish world emerged from inside the Roman empire, and Roman artifacts belonged to its everyday landscape (see section IV.2). Roman roads and bridges were used continuously, and more recent excavations showed that the continuity of settlement in urban spaces was more substantial than supposed

<sup>160</sup> See, e.g., on popular culture, Butt, *Daily life* (2002), in particular pp. 53–74 and 145–152.

<sup>161</sup> Schreiner, “Kulturkonkurrenz” (2015), p. 20.

<sup>162</sup> Esch, *Wiederverwendung* (2005), p. 21; Steuer, “Die Gegenwart der Antike” (2014), p. 10.

<sup>163</sup> Referring to the titles of Boockmann, *Die Gegenwart des Mittelalters* (2010).



before.<sup>164</sup> The Roman *villa* experienced a more significant caesura, a process perceptible from the late Roman era. Although many questions regarding the continuous use and reuse of ancient Roman architecture north of the Alps remain unanswered, the variety of uses and treatments of structures available is remarkable. Ancient architecture could be adapted to serve current needs, for example, by adding or removing walls, but we also have many ancient *villae* complexes where significantly more modest housing was constructed or, even more unexpected, where cemeteries were erected—maybe because individual ancient buildings were reused as a church?<sup>165</sup> Not every ancient country residence shared such a fate, however, and Ross Samson showed that *villae* and *civitates* remained important infrastructures throughout the Merovingian period, not least as regal seats. These royal *villae* differed from the Carolingian palaces, like those discussed in the previous section, inasmuch as late Roman edifices tended to have several small- and medium-sized rooms, while the Frankish constructions usually had only one large hall or a small number of spacious rooms.<sup>166</sup>

The Roman monuments were not necessarily recognizable as the remains of a glorious ancient Roman past, and we have increasing evidence for their reuse for the construction or refurbishment of new constructions starting in the tenth century. Remarkable is the example of the burgh of Mayenne, north of Le Mans and Rennes, which, according to Lukas Clemens, was constructed by the orders of the local count in the early tenth century, a project for which ancient building material was collected from the remains of the nearby ancient Roman town of Jublains. This new building project did not only incorporate the antique material, it also imitated the original construction.<sup>167</sup> However, this is a most exceptional case. Significantly more frequent were instances where ancient remains were used to construct buildings with a newer design, like churches, a type of structure increasingly built of stone. Consequently, religious edifices were regularly erected at places where stone buildings had been before, meaning that continuity could be limited to the material used.<sup>168</sup> There is also evidence for the survival of individual fragments of ancient Roman architecture as *spolia*, included, for example, in constructions like churches, where they could serve as proof of age and tradition.<sup>169</sup> Ancient constructions were also reused as they were. For example, parts of the thermal baths in Baden-Baden seemingly persisted beyond

<sup>164</sup> Merkel, “Die Antikenrezeption” (1992), p. 26; Steuer, “Die Gegenwart der Antike” (2014), p. 22, both with further references.

<sup>165</sup> Merkel, “Die Antikenrezeption” (1992), p. 26; Ripoll/Arce, “The transformation” (2000), pp. 63–114; Chavarría Arnau, “The fate” (2020), pp. 640–56.

<sup>166</sup> Samson, *The residences* (1991), with an excellent conclusion at pp. 366–72. See also Dierkens and Périn, “Les sedes regiae mérovingiennes” (2000).

<sup>167</sup> Clemens, “Römische Ruinen” (2014), p. 135.

<sup>168</sup> Eismann, “Kirchen” (2014), pp. 235–48.

<sup>169</sup> Endemann, “Wollte Einhard ‘römisch’ bauen?” (2016), p. 53.

the tenth century when they were used for purposes other than bathing.<sup>170</sup> Other monuments, like the Porta Nigra in Trier or the ancient burial construction in Gereon near Cologne, were maintained and thus preserved because they served as churches.<sup>171</sup>

Ancient artifacts and pieces of art were not necessarily sought-after for their age or relation to the Roman empire, but for their usefulness or high quality.<sup>172</sup> Precious ancient objects could be used for the same purpose they had been designed for. A potential example of such a reuse of an ancient object is the famous bronze throne now in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris, which was repeatedly associated with the Merovingian King Dagobert I. Its date of creation, however, remains debated, and the range of interpretations spans from late antique, as W. Martin Conway argued, to Carolingian, given that comparable thrones are attested on miniatures of that same period.<sup>173</sup> We do not know whether and how exactly it was used in the early medieval period. Likewise unsecured is the thesis that Charlemagne was buried initially in a sumptuous early third-century marble sarcophagus with impressive figures related to the mythology of the robbery of Proserpina by Pluto, the God of the Underworld.<sup>174</sup> The burial in a sarcophagus of the Principate would not be a unique occurrence given that we know of another twelve comparable examples from the eighth and ninth centuries. More unexpected is the possibility that Charlemagne was buried in a sarcophagus with a pagan frieze. Maybe Arne Effenberger is right when suggesting that the emperor's contemporaries interpreted the ancient depictions as symbolizing the escape from death and resurrection.<sup>175</sup> A comparable message of salvation and triumph over death seemingly emerged from the iconography of the late fourth-century sarcophagus of Louis the Pious, which showed the biblical Crossing of the Red Sea. Although it was heavily damaged during the French Revolution, its iconography partly survived in five larger fragments and some early modern drawings. It seemingly compared to the Proserpina sarcophagus by its markedly Roman style and composition, which included relief figures on the entire front.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Beck, "Deinde" (2014), pp. 347–8.

<sup>171</sup> Steuer, "Die Gegenwart der Antike" (2014), p. 10.

<sup>172</sup> Koenen, "Zur Rezeption" (2011), p. 310; Siede, "Abkopiert—ummontiert—uminterpretiert" (2020), p. 112. See also Steuer, "Die Gegenwart der Antike" (2014), pp. 16–19.

<sup>173</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de Paris, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, nr. 55.651. For images and up-to-date information, access [medaillesetantiques.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/c33gbd4qs](https://medaillesetantiques.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/c33gbd4qs) (11/02/2021); Conway, "The abbey" (1915), pp. 120–1. See also Weidemann, "Zur Geschichte" (1976), pp. 257–60, arguing for a Merovingian origin.

<sup>174</sup> Schmidt, "Der Proserpina-Sarkophag" (1999), pp. vi–xiii. See also Steuer, "Die Gegenwart der Antike" (2014), p. 10, noting that the myth was probably known by Carolingian scholars.

<sup>175</sup> Effenberger, "Die Wiederverwendung" (1999), pp. 655–9.

<sup>176</sup> Noga-Banai, "The sarcophagus" (2012), pp. 37–50. Otto II and Otto III were buried in sarcophagi of red porphyry and red sandstone, respectively. Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), p. 214, with n. 30.

Charlemagne's testament, which Einhard partly quoted, provides a vague idea of the wealth that must have been available at his time. Among this, a not insignificant fraction ended up as part of his treasury, which included the three silver tables with maps of Constantinople, Rome, and the known world, respectively, already mentioned in section III.2. The testament also confirms the prominent role of the Church as the receiver of such wealth,<sup>177</sup> a matter of fact that significantly contributed to the preservation of medieval artifacts. Comparable wealth was not entirely exceptional, as the testaments of other individuals that did not belong to the royal family confirm. One was issued by Desiderius of Autun in 614. According to calculations by Effenberger, it related to a total of 177 kg of silverware, goods that again were willed to the Church.<sup>178</sup> A particular sumptuous vessel of antique provenance is a two-handled cantharus also kept in the Cabinet des Médailles and made of sardonyx with carved Bacchic motives known as the *Cup of the Ptolemies*. It was dated around the first century before or after the Common Era. Although the mount of the cantharus, with an inscription added by Suger of St. Denis in the early twelfth century, was lost in 1804, its content is known from an early modern drawing: it claimed that the cup was dedicated to Christ by the "third among the Frankish rulers [named] Charles," a reference that is likely to refer to Charles the Bald.<sup>179</sup> If this was the case, the said monarch might have offered the cantharus to the church of St. Denis. Although the cantharus must have been considered a precious gift, the evidence does not allow for assessing the significance the king or those who received it attributed to it.

A poem by Theodulf of Orléans offers more explicit evidence about the worth that might have been attributed to such an object. It is a work addressed "against the judges" which deplored that many among those executing this function would have accepted precious goods like eastern gems, crystal, gold Arabic or silver Latin coins as bribery. It goes into further detail when referring to an occasion where a silver vase was offered to that end. The poem explains that this vessel bore ancient (*vetus*) figures engraved, showing, among others, the deeds of Hercules, which Theodulf described in some further detail, an occasion he used to expose his knowledge of ancient mythology.<sup>180</sup> The briber's expectations confirm the enormous worth he must have attributed to the vase: Theodulf pretended to quote the briber explaining that several families with their children had been freed after his parent had died and that he would like to have the

<sup>177</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 33.

<sup>178</sup> Effenberger, "Die Wiederverwendung" (1999), p. 643.

<sup>179</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de Paris, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, *camée*. 368, images and further up-to-date information access [medaillesetantiques.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/c33gbcvcw](https://medaillesetantiques.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/c33gbcvcw) (22/03/2021); Conway, "The abbey of Saint-Denis," pp. 119–20, supposing that it may have belonged to Charlemagne before. The inscription reads: "hoc vas Christe tibi mente dicavit/Tertius in Francos regmine Karlus."

<sup>180</sup> Theodulf, *Carm.* 28, p. 96, ll. 86–7 and, *ibid.* p. 98, ll. 171, 173–5, 179–80, and 185.

records of this case—obviously kept safe by the judge—falsified, as he wished to have his parents' will withdrawn, so that he could once again come into the possession of these families.<sup>181</sup> The reference to precious Muslim coats (*pallia*)<sup>182</sup> in a subsequent story of bribery shows that the vase was not necessarily considered particularly precious because it was of Roman origin but for being exceptional and of high quality. Still, the mythical images carved on the vase did catch the interest of the poet. What is more: the procedure described by the poem, i.e., to free the domestic slaves by testament (*manumissio testamento*), was a common ancient Roman procedure that obviously persisted into the medieval period and it was also still in use in the Byzantine world.<sup>183</sup>

These random examples suggest that ancient Roman remains were still quite common in the Frankish world, where they could be received in different manner. The few examples discussed here also show how difficult it is from a modern perspective to assess the role of such objects or artifacts in the early medieval period and the significance contemporaries might have attributed to these.

### Byzantine Imports

Byzantine goods like cloth, jewelry, vessels, relics, or manuscripts could reach the west through travelers and trade, a topic already addressed in section III.4, but also thanks to gift exchange, for example, in the framework of diplomatic embassies, such as those discussed in section III.1. Diplomatic missions always involved the exchange of gifts,<sup>184</sup> presents meant to reflect the appreciation of the giver and the status of the receiver. Most prominent presents include the organ offered by Constantine V to Pippin in 757, already discussed in section VIII.1,<sup>185</sup> and the pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite manuscript offered by Michael II to Louis the Pious in 827, discussed in section V.1. Manuscript gifts were comparatively rare, as far as we can tell.<sup>186</sup> The pseudo-Dionysian manuscript was of particular symbolic importance, as it was seemingly chosen because the Byzantines knew about a Frankish saint with the same name: the martyr Denis of Paris. This choice is noteworthy, as it premises that the givers had gathered information as

<sup>181</sup> Theodulf, *Carm.* 28, p. 499, ll. 205–10.

<sup>182</sup> Theodulf, *Carm.* 28, p. 499, ll. 211–12.

<sup>183</sup> Barschdorf, *Freigelassene* (2012), pp. 31–2. See also Matovic, “A contribution” (2016), pp. 238–59.

<sup>184</sup> E.g., Theophylactos, *Hist.* 6; *Annales regni Francorum* a. 800, a. 824; Einhard, *Vita Caroli* 16. See also Schreiner, “Diplomatische Geschenke” (2004), with a list of recorded diplomatic gifts; Daim, “Diplomatische Geschenke” (2011), pp. 75–7; Kaldellis, “Did the Byzantine empire” (2017), pp. 289–90.

<sup>185</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* a. 757; Herrin, “Constantinople” (1992), p. 100.

<sup>186</sup> Magdalino, “Evaluation de dons” (2011), p. 105, no such gift is attested as being offered to Byzantium, 12 cases are known where the Byzantines made such a gift.

they wished to make a present to its Frankish receivers would particularly appreciate. And the gift was indeed well received by the Franks. Following the first translation of the Areopagite manuscript by Hilduin of St. Denis, around 835/40, the same scholar wrote two passions, a prose in 36 chapters and a verse version in four books, which both explicitly identified the two namesakes as the same saint Denis.<sup>187</sup> This involved a significant up-value of the saint, now belonging to an apostolic cult, and Saint Denis' increased importance entailed that he soon became the patron saint of the Frankish rulers.<sup>188</sup> The plausibility that the Byzantines carefully weighted their presents is confirmed by Constantine VII's *De cerimoniis*. It contains a list of gifts meant to be sent under Romanos I to Hugh of Italy, provided he would manage to subdue the rebellious Lombard prince Landulf of Benevento and his associates. The destined gifts included not only cash, garments, and precious vessels to be offered to the king but also some goods meant to be handed out to his counts ("κόμητες"), bishops, and some other confidants of the court.<sup>189</sup> Another precious present was handed over by Basil I's envoys at the court of Louis the German in Regensburg in 871/2. In addition to a letter and other gifts, they carried a large crystal decorated with gold and gems, and a fragment of the True Cross.<sup>190</sup>

Until the early eighth century, the large majority of Byzantine or eastern Mediterranean finds,<sup>191</sup> like jewelry, as in the case of a late-seventh-century silver pectoral cross found in Bavarian Friedberg, textiles, as in the case of a silk garment found in Chelles (France), or gold braid textiles combined with silk, particularly common in late-seventh-century high-end Austrasian burials, stem from furnished graves. Their number gradually declined from the earlier seventh century. They seem to have mainly reached the Frankish west through interpersonal exchanges, like travels, gift exchange, tribute, and booty, while trade, intriguingly, appears to have become more important only from the later sixth century.<sup>192</sup> The number of Byzantine artifacts found in Merovingian burials peaked between the last third of the sixth and the first third of the seventh century, and there are still a comparatively large amount of Byzantine finds dated to the eighth century, despite the concurrent abandonment of the tradition to furnish burials. These goods were used as envisaged by their makers and thus still

<sup>187</sup> Hilduin, *Pass. Dionysii*.

<sup>188</sup> McCormick, "Byzantium's role in the formation" (1987), pp. 218–19; Staubach, "Graecae Gloriam" (1991), p. 345; Brubaker, "The elephant" (2004), pp. 182–3; McCormick, "Western approaches" (2008), p. 424; Schreiner, "*Translatio studii*" (2018), p. 143. The embassy of 827 is mentioned in *Annales regni Francorum* a. 827; Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 41.

<sup>189</sup> Constantine, *De cerimoniis* 2.44, p. 661.

<sup>190</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 872, p. 75. See also Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.8; LP, *Vita Benedictii III*, c. 33.

<sup>191</sup> Their exact provenance is difficult to identify, see Drauschke, "Byzantine" (2007), pp. 69–70.

<sup>192</sup> Drauschke, "Byzantine" (2007), pp. 65–6. See also Drauschke, "Zur Herkunft und Vermittlung" (2008); Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschen* (2011).

related to ancient tradition, as Susanne Wittenkind noted.<sup>193</sup> The same is true for deathbeds and chairs occasionally discovered in some Frankish high-end burials from the mid- to late-sixth century which, as Helga Schach-Döriges showed, may be either Byzantine imports—similar objects are best attested from Egypt—, or western imitations. The burial finds largely compare to what we know of equivalent eastern settings, and, given the rare preservation of such finds, it is possible that this tradition persisted in the west beyond the sixth century without leaving evidence proving it.<sup>194</sup>

Relics were another important type of import from the Byzantine world, among which the True Cross, taken to Constantinople at the time of Constantine the Great, was the most prestigious. The cult of relics is widely attested from the fourth century in both east and west. It initially focused on the veneration of the bodies of the saints, increasingly mutilated for distribution. Contact relics, as a subcategory, became particularly popular in the west.<sup>195</sup> Holger A. Klein argued that the Byzantine emperors used such prestigious relics to increase their reputation and authority, and, for this same reason, controlled their further distribution.<sup>196</sup> The earliest relevant gift attested after the sixth century is another fragment of the True Cross offered by Basil I to Louis the German in January 872. The relic was contained in a reliquary which, according to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, included a “crystal of admirable magnitude ornamented with gold and precious gems with a not modest fragment of the health-bringing cross.”<sup>197</sup> Klein noted that the description seems to correspond to a rock crystal pendant, the so-called *Talisman of Charlemagne*, a Carolingian reliquary now kept in Reims, which has been interpreted as an attempt to copy a Byzantine original,<sup>198</sup> but may also be a Byzantine import.

In the Carolingian era, the reinterpretation and adaptation of Byzantine objects became more common. Late Roman and Byzantine ivories were appropriated by reworking them to serve new purposes, and from the mid-ninth century, we have evidence for their reuse as raw material by ignoring their quality as an ancient piece of art, to create a new one, for example by using the back side. This fate was not limited to religious objects, as profane eastern items were also regularly converted to serve a spiritual purpose, for example, as a reliquary or to decorate a particularly rich manuscript like Gospels. Wittenkind

<sup>193</sup> Wittenkind, “Die mittelalterliche Verwendung” (2008), pp. 291 and 315.

<sup>194</sup> Schach-Döriges, “Imitatio imperii” (2005), pp. 127–50.

<sup>195</sup> Carlà-Uhink, “Die Differenz als Argument” (2020), pp. 15–17. For the notion of contact relics, see Gregory of Tours’ use of the saint’s tomb dust, e.g., Gregory, *Virt. Martini* 1.37, at p. 155.

<sup>196</sup> Klein, “Eastern objects” (2004), pp. 283 and 289.

<sup>197</sup> *Annales Fuldenses* a. 872, p. 75: “xenia cristallum mirae magnitudinis auro gemmisque praeciosis ornatum, cum parte non modica salutiferae crucis obtulerunt.”

<sup>198</sup> Reims, Musée du Palais du Tau, inv. nr. G 7; Klein, “Eastern objects and western desires” (2004), pp. 290–3, with fig. 4; see also *ibid.* pp. 294–5.

argued that such radical reworking, which could involve the destruction of the previous art through snagging—a fate not restricted to nonreligious imagery—, may imply that ancient works were perceived as “foreign” and that such ancient art was not necessarily conceived to be more valuable than new creations.<sup>199</sup> Repurposing earlier pieces of art, like ivories, was a genuinely western tradition given that no comparable approach is attested in the east.<sup>200</sup> These objects were obviously appreciated mainly for their material value and artistic sophistication, but there is no evidence supporting that they were valued more particularly for their Roman or Byzantine provenance. The discrepancy between the initial purpose and their medieval use also betrays cultural differences entailing that these objects had to be reappropriated to become useful in a new context.

### Western Imitations?

Speaking of western imitations, we have to distinguish between those relating to the past, i.e., reproductions or adaptations of ancient Roman or significantly earlier Byzantine elements, and those inspired by (near) contemporary Byzantine models—even if this distinction is not always strictly applicable. The latter is closely related to the so-called *Byzantinische Frage*, which, from the nineteenth century, discusses the Byzantine impact on the west from the perspective of the history of art. More recently, Michael Altripp reacted to Michael McCormick’s study on the *Origins of the European economy* by suggesting there may have been more Byzantines in the west than previously assumed, and that the eastern influence on western art should therefore be reassessed. Altripp added that the Byzantine influence may have been significantly more subtle and that we should not always presume a Byzantine behind every piece of art of eastern style.<sup>201</sup> Another distinction that needs to be made is the one between late Roman and contemporary Roman (i.e., papal) models, which occasionally proves difficult, as in the case of the abbey church of St. Denis: Judson J. Emerick conclusively argued that it was not conceived according to Constantinian models, as previous scholars had presumed, but by resorting to St. Peter’s in papal Rome.<sup>202</sup>

The western imitations were never mere copies, comparable to the examples already discussed in the previous section, but, first of all, the results of adaptations

<sup>199</sup> Wittenkind, “Die mittelalterliche Verwendung spätantiker Elfenbeine” (2008), pp. 295–316. See also Effenberger, “Die Wiederverwendung” (1999), pp. 647–9; Koenen, “Zur Rezeption” (2011), pp. 314–28; Koenen, “Vier byzantinische” (2012), pp. 75–86; Koenen, “Kulturelle Missverständnisse?” (2020); Siede, “Abkopiert—ummontiert—uminterpretiert” (2020), pp. 110–13.

<sup>200</sup> Siede, “Abkopiert—ummontiert—uminterpretiert” (2020), p. 112.

<sup>201</sup> Altripp, “Anmerkungen” (2011). See also, e.g., Dobbert, “Zur Byzantinischen Frage” (1894), pp. 125–59; Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), pp. 7–16.

<sup>202</sup> Emerick, “Building ‘more romano’” (2011), pp. 127–50.





**FIGURE 8.8** Gatehall of Lorsch, frescoes in the first-floor hall, partly restituted in 1997. Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). Grayscale detail of the picture by Whgler. Source: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Torhalle\\_Lorsch\\_Innenraum.jpg](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Torhalle_Lorsch_Innenraum.jpg).

inspired by their earlier models, which were adopted to serve current needs and intentions. The result of this process usually was a genuinely western product.<sup>203</sup> This corroborates the impression that Roman material culture was not foreign but belonged to the Frankish heritage, and that western artists did not resort to these models as a quote of a foreign past or world, but because they belonged to their own repertoire. Good examples are the frescoes in the hall of the mentioned Gatehall of Lorsch (see Figure 8.8). Their layout and integrated pillars, with Corinthian acanthus capitals at the outside and architectural wall decoration, with pillars structuring the entire hall in a style known from ancient Roman housing, on the inside, clearly point to Roman models. The wall paintings include a band on foot level followed by two rows of dark and light blue and yellow squares in alternated order to create a pattern of squares. A horizontal red line separates this and the following section, with Corinthian pillars holding what seems to represent some horizontally sculptured stonework.

Kerstin Merkel showed that in the ninth century, Roman architecture with frescoes was still widely available and accessible in the Carolingian heartland, for example, in several *villae rusticae* in Ahrweiler and Schwangau. They contained frescoes with similar use of squares and pillars, combining colored square fields, pillars, and other architectural elements considered standard not only in Italy but also north of the Alps. The Gallo-Roman artists freely adapted and combined these elements according to their intentions and abilities. The composition in Lorsch in three main sections and the use of pillars suggest that the responsible artist was familiar with these Roman wall paintings, which he or she must

<sup>203</sup> See, e.g., Crivello, “Eine neue Antike” (2019), pp. 159–86. Similar already Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), p. 49.

have used as an inspiration to create a new piece of work.<sup>204</sup> It appears probable that ancient-Roman-style wall paintings had remained more common in the Carolingian world than expected, as a poem by Sedulius Scottus seems to confirm. It relates to a lavish house (*domus*) whose walls were painted in bright colors shining in gold, purple, blue, red, and green, a description that again recalls the ancient *villae* of Antiquity.<sup>205</sup>

The representative architecture at the time of Charlemagne was monumental. Richard Krautheimer noted that among relevant buildings, those “which had, or could have [...] a Christian connotation” were at the heart of the Carolingian revival of ancient Roman architecture (p. 38).<sup>206</sup> One example is the church of Rathgar in Fulda, which was conceived according to the model of St. Peter’s in Rome. It was carried by enormous pillars of around 1 m in diameter and some lavish ancient-Roman-style capitals that even outperformed the Aachen chapel in size. Under Louis the Pious, significantly smaller cross-constructions became the habit with a central and two side apses. This tendency ended rather abruptly around 830, when, for example, Einhard in Seligenstadt built the first Carolingian church planned after Charlemagne’s death. It was again conceived according to the model of St. Peter’s,<sup>207</sup> and is the first Carolingian edifice implementing the ancient Roman technique of using bricks shaped as regular small cuboids.<sup>208</sup>

Many Carolingian manuscripts and their illustrations were also notably Roman in style. These manuscripts are generally related to the so-called Carolingian Renaissance, a phenomenon also attested in the east for the time of Irene.<sup>209</sup> Classicist tendencies were common in Byzantine art of the Macedonian dynasty, although the number of surviving manuscripts is significantly smaller than in the west.<sup>210</sup> Among the Carolingian works, the *Vienna Coronation Gospels*, which dates before 800 and was produced at the Carolingian court school, is characterized by its purple-colored parchment with gold uncial letters, and a comparable ancient Roman representation is obvious in the

<sup>204</sup> Merkel, “Die Antikenrezeption” (1992), pp. 23–32. On the wall paintings, see also Hangleiter/Schopf, “Untersuchung historischer Oberflächen” (1998). The angels in the upper part of the arch are not particularly late Roman in style. On the wall decoration of Ahrweiler, see, Gogräfe, “Wand- und Deckenmalerei” (1991), pp. 219–25, on the paintings of Schwangau, see Zahlhaas, “Die Fresken” (1978), pp. 13–23. See also the reconstruction of similar frescoes in Ostersheim, c. 35 km south of Lorsch, Gogräfe, “Die Wandmalereien” (2017), at p. 67, fig 76, p. 74, fig. 86, p. 81, p. 100.

<sup>205</sup> Sedulius Scottus, *Carm.* 32, ll. 5–12 and 15–20, p. 59, e.g., l. 15: “Aureus ac uiridis, croceus color aereusque.”

<sup>206</sup> Krautheimer, “The Carolingian revival” (1942), pp. 1–38.

<sup>207</sup> Jacobsen, “Allgemeine Tendenzen” (1990), further examples at pp. 641–2 and 652–3, with figs. 67, 68 and 81.

<sup>208</sup> Endemann, “Wollte Einhard ‘römisch’ bauen?” (2016), pp. 83–90. Further examples in Nussbaum, “Antike Bautechnik” (2008).

<sup>209</sup> Hen, *Roman barbarians* (2007), pp. 166–9.

<sup>210</sup> Mavropoulou-Tsioumis, “Die Illustration” (1997), pp. 94–6.

depiction of the four evangelists.<sup>211</sup> The Roman attire and the style of many figures found in the Carolingian miniature are remarkable. They are clad with tunics and chlamys, willingly draped in a manner that resembles the wear of ancient Roman attire, as already noted in section VIII.1 referring to the depictions of the monarchs.<sup>212</sup> The *Godescalc Evangelistary*, which dates a little earlier and likewise contains gold uncial on purple parchment, at fol. 3<sup>v</sup> shows a picture interpreted as the *Fountain of Life* an image combining several birds with floral and architectural elements (Figure 8.9).<sup>213</sup> This combination was popular on ancient Roman frescoes, as some examples from Pompeii illustrate, like the depiction of a fountain, birds, and garden in the House of the Venus or the House of the Golden Bracelet.<sup>214</sup>

The miniatures in the mentioned *Utrecht Psalter* are remarkable for their quality and the ancient Roman world they depict to illustrate its biblical contents. The images contain Roman architecture like pavilions (e.g., fols. <sup>v</sup>, 5<sup>v</sup>, 7<sup>v</sup>), an aqueduct (14<sup>v</sup>), a fountain with a lion sculpture (14<sup>v</sup>), urban architecture (38<sup>v</sup>, 46<sup>v</sup>), palatial structures (26<sup>r</sup>, 30<sup>r</sup>, 75 <sup>v</sup>), and a large number of temples with an altar prepended (2<sup>v</sup>, 6<sup>v</sup>, 8<sup>r</sup>), Roman furniture and tableware like amphorae (14<sup>v</sup>, 43<sup>v</sup>), typically Roman table and drinking vessels (58<sup>r</sup>, 73<sup>v</sup>), Roman attire with figures with tunic and chlamys (3<sup>r</sup>), the toga (12<sup>r</sup>), and Roman soldiers in uniform (13<sup>v</sup>), as well as other recognizably Roman elements like string instruments (37<sup>v</sup>), statues (56<sup>v</sup>), military tents (15<sup>v</sup>), or Roman ships (38<sup>v</sup>).<sup>215</sup> These depictions attest that at least some Carolingian scholars must have been sufficiently familiar with the ancient Roman world. The remarkably accurate depiction of elements that are recognizably Roman, even to an untrained modern viewer, implies that relevant ancient Roman images must have been readily available at that time, which the artist could use as an inspiration.

Carolingian works of Roman or Byzantine style could be of significantly high quality.<sup>216</sup> A diptych showing the personified Roma and Constantinopolis, long considered a piece from the fifth century, recently emerged to be a Carolingian copy, obviously following an earlier example. The sixth-century Magnus-Diptych

<sup>211</sup> Mutherich/Gaehde, *Carolingian painting* (1977), p. 24, and plates 8–10. Vienna, Weltliche Schatzkammer; Papastavrou, “The influence” (2002), p. 220. The manuscript is not accessible as a whole online, the four evangelists are at fols 15<sup>r</sup>, 76<sup>r</sup>, 117<sup>v</sup>, 178<sup>v</sup>. Euw, “Der Einfluß des Ostens” (1993), p. 178, suggested that it may be the work of Byzantine traveling artists.

<sup>212</sup> See, e.g., Mutherich/Gaehde, *Carolingian painting* (1977), plates 5, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 30, 32, 33, 35, 37, 38. Similar Euw, “Der Einfluß des Ostens” (1993), p. 195.

<sup>213</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 1203, fol. 3<sup>v</sup>, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000718s (19/02/2021); Mutherich/Gaehde, *Carolingian painting* (1977), p. 24 and plate 2. Papastavrou, “The influence” (2002), p. 220, argues that Christ enthroned on fol. 3<sup>r</sup> compares to Byzantine works in Rome.

<sup>214</sup> See Watson, “Birds” (2002), pp. 357–400, lacking pictures of the entire wall paintings.

<sup>215</sup> Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek Hs 32. The above list and examples could be easily expanded.

<sup>216</sup> Further examples in Koenen, “Zur Rezeption” (2011), pp. 322–8.

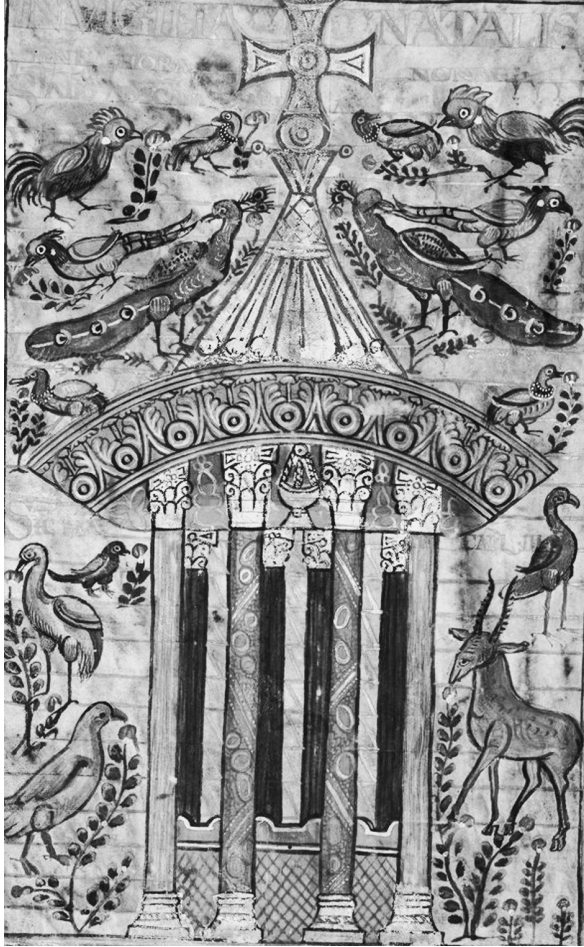


FIGURE 8.9 “Fountain of Life” in the *Godescalc Evangelistary*, fol. 3<sup>v</sup>. Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000718s/f6.

is of comparable quality, its central figure was reworked to transform the head of the consul to become the head of an apostle. It was later copied several times using animal bone.<sup>217</sup> A more prominent example of such exceptional quality is the ivory cover of the *Lorsch Gospels* produced at Charlemagne’s court between 778 and 820 (Figure 8.10). It has the same composition as the prominent sixth-century Barberini ivory, with a central plate showing the seated Virgin Mary and

<sup>217</sup> Effenberger, “Die Wiederverwendung” (1999), pp. 648–9, referring to cat. nr. X.1, another example is cat. nr. XI.32.





FIGURE 8.10 *Lorsch Gospel* cover. Creative Commons (attribution 2.5 Generic, CC BY 2.5). Grayscale version of a picture by Marie-Lan Nguyen (2012). Source: [de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Cover\\_Lorsch\\_Gospels\\_VandA\\_138-1866.jpg](https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Cover_Lorsch_Gospels_VandA_138-1866.jpg).

four border plates with two saints on both sides. Two angels support the bust of Christ in a medallion in the upper part, the nativity and the annunciation to the shepherds are depicted in the lower section.<sup>218</sup> Another prominent example

<sup>218</sup> Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, pal. lat. 50, and Alba Iulia, Biblioteca Documenta Batthyaneum, s. n.; Nash, "Demonstrations of imperium" (2011), p. 163. See also Longhurst/Morey, "The covers" (1928), pp. 64–74, with further examples.

is a three-piece ivory with the standing Virgin Hodegetria—i.e., Mary holding Christ, a popular motive—in the middle, surrounded by the busts of six saints. They are located in boxes, three to the right and three to the left, three wearing a cloak with and two without a fibula, and another wearing a stola. The middle figure on both sides overlaps the border of the box. As this is unattested for Byzantine originals, this is usually considered conclusive evidence that this ivory has a western provenance.<sup>219</sup> Another early eleventh-century western ivory copy of an existing Hodegetria is preserved as part of the treasury of the cathedral of Osnabrück, as its Latin inscription suggests. It was also used as a cover decoration.<sup>220</sup> Koenen argued that one purpose of these and other western ivory relief copies was to replace a lost or damaged original, for example, to use them as lavish covers of manuscripts, and that although the adoption of the Byzantine iconography had its flaws, from a Byzantine perspective, these copies would have been conceived in the west to be of equal value compared to their older originals.<sup>221</sup>

Reliquaries represent another category occasionally built according to Roman models. A rather unique example is what seems to be a Carolingian miniature reproduction of a Roman monument offered by Einhard to the monastery of St. Servatius in Maastricht around 820/30. It is a reliquary modeled in the style of a Roman triumphal arch, with some similarities with the first-century *Arch of Titus*, an item now lost but known from a seventeenth-century drawing that also provides some details of its initial decorations. Galit Noga-Banai assumed it was made of wood and had a riveted silver cover. It bore the inscription: “Einhard, a sinner strove to set up and dedicate to God this arch to support the cross of eternal victory,” which, together with the iconography, seems to indicate that it contained a relic of the True Cross.<sup>222</sup> It appears that this was not the only reliquary made by Einhard. In a letter already mentioned where Einhard referred to Vitruvius, he also seems to refer to another reliquary fabricated by an unnamed “lord E,” maybe referring to himself, and which he described as being “fashioned with ivory columns in the likeness of ancient artifacts.”<sup>223</sup> Interestingly, he used the term “antiquus” (“ancient”), which betrays a temporal distance between the author’s time and the one the mentioned style belonged to.

<sup>219</sup> Paris, Musée de Cluny, inv. Nr. CL 1399; Koenen, “Zur Rezeption” (2011), p. 322–3; Koenen, “Kulturelle Missverständnisse?” (2020), p. 134.

<sup>220</sup> Siede, “Abkopiert—ummontiert—uminterpretiert” (2020), pp. 110–11.

<sup>221</sup> Koenen, “Zur Rezeption” (2011), pp. 326–8; Koenen, “Kulturelle Missverständnisse?” (2020), pp. 133–4.

<sup>222</sup> Noga-Banai, “Architectural frames” (2019), pp. 70–4, although I do not agree that the imagery on the Carolingian reliquary is not imperial, at least not if we consider the Carolingian perspective. The original inscription is: “AD TROPÆUM AETERNAE VICTORIAE SUSTI / NENDUM EINHARDUS / PECCATOR HUNC AR / CUM PONERE AC DEO / DEDICARE CURAVIT.” Trans. Noga-Banai.

<sup>223</sup> Einhard, *Epist.* 57, p. 138: “eburneis ad instar antiquorum operum fabricavit.” Trans. Dutton, p. 143.

### 3. Intellectual and Living Culture

George Ostrogorsky suggested that Byzantine society was composed of Roman politics, Greek culture, and the Christian religion.<sup>224</sup> In contrast, the medieval world of western Europe has been regularly characterized as a combination of Roman heritage, barbarian culture, and Christian belief. Although these definitions, of course, are simplifications, they do adequately illustrate that both societies had more in common than distinguishing feature. Drawing by distillation the “Greek” and “barbarian” elements of each culture to compare them to assess to what extent the underlying societies compared to each other would not only be impracticable in the context of this study, but would also be unproductive. Of course, there were differences, while both societies comprised significant elements belonging to Roman culture, which had partly developed in close connection to the Greek world. Instead, this final section focuses on nonmaterial aspects related to the Roman heritage and Byzantium, the material once more needs to be approached on an exemplary basis.

Only little research has been done on Roman nonmaterial culture in the Frankish west. The following will attempt to draw an overall impression by discussing a selection of examples combined with some more general establishments related to the subject. The result will, hopefully, roughly correspond to medieval reality and thus help to further understand the role of anything Roman in the Frankish world. In this particular context, we need to differentiate between influences from the contemporary Byzantine world and parallels between the Frankish and the Byzantine world that, according to Michael McCormick, belonged to the “pan-Mediterranean” culture emerging from the same ancient Roman heritage.<sup>225</sup> In what follows, I shall first look at relevant proficiencies in the west, followed by a discussion of intellectual culture, the role of religious traditions, and monastic archives. The chapter is concluded with a survey of Roman and Byzantine features attested in Frankish attire.

#### Knowledge and Techniques

The Frankish world was characterized by personal and institutional continuity able to carry the Roman heritage on different levels, be it on the basis of the population, the urban centers (*civitas*), the Church, or Roman law. From the perspective of the majority inhabiting the Frankish world, Roman law may have

<sup>224</sup> Ostrogorsky, *Byzantinische Geschichte* (2006), p. 1. See also Chrysos, “The Roman political identity” (1996).

<sup>225</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium’s role in the formation” (1987), p. 214.



been the most important element of Roman culture. As seen in section VI.3, a large portion of the Frankish population was subject to it, particularly those inhabiting southern Gaul, and the Frankish realms also knew a particular legal category labeled “Roman.” Although many questions remain as to how the two significantly different Roman and “barbarian” laws<sup>226</sup> have been applied simultaneously, the Roman legal system was also an important source of inspiration for Frankish legislation. Jinty L. Nelson, for example, showed that Theodosius was a particularly important model emperor and lawgiver for Charles the Bald, whose *Edictum Pistense*—probably written or influenced by Hincmar of Reims—with important references to the “Romans” of Aquitania, was substantially inspired by the *Theodosian Code*.<sup>227</sup>

Ancient Roman culture entered medieval societies through the many remains that had persisted. This included knowledge related to techniques remaining available continuously since Antiquity. A good example is floor heating (*hypocaustum*), which is attested from the ninth century in new Carolingian constructions. Related technique discovered in the monastery of Reichenau still largely corresponds to ancient models. The fact that the technology was advanced from the twelfth century toward warm air convection heating, as found in the monastery of Wedinghausen in Arnsberg near Dortmund,<sup>228</sup> suggests that it was never entirely lost throughout the period under consideration here.

Language is another source for the study of Byzantine knowledge in the west. Walter Berschin pointed out that several Byzantine loan words adopted in the west came with new techniques or items.<sup>229</sup> McCormick suggested that most of these new designations, like *icon* or the term *cendatum* referring to silk cloth, maybe of Persian origin, had reached the Frankish world through Italy.<sup>230</sup> Berschin added the term *chelandon* (χελάνδιον) to the list, which relates to a Byzantine type of warship.<sup>231</sup> Marcin Böhm argued that this is likely to be a variation of the Latin word *salandria*,<sup>232</sup> which according to a later source was a ship of “stupendous” (*mirus*) length and speed, with two rows of oars and scullers on both sides, bearing 150 sailors and the Greek fire only to be extinguished with vinegar (*acetum*).<sup>233</sup>

Influence and inspiration not only traveled from east to west. Evidence for contacts between eastern and western manuscript production includes a jingle

<sup>226</sup> See the examples in Esders, “Roman law” (2018), pp. 336–9.

<sup>227</sup> Nelson, *The Frankish world* (1996), pp. 90–7.

<sup>228</sup> Essling-Wintzer/Holtfester, “Eine hochmittelalterliche Warmluftheizung” (2018), p. 115.

<sup>229</sup> Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 46.

<sup>230</sup> McCormick, “Western approaches” (2008), p. 430.

<sup>231</sup> Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), p. 46.

<sup>232</sup> Böhm, “Byzantine ship” (2009), pp. 9–13.

<sup>233</sup> Thietmar, *Chron.* 3.23, p. 127.

which, according to McCormick, was regularly used by Greek scribes to conclude their work: “A calm port is no sweeter for sailors, than the last line for scribes.” McCormick mentioned that a nearly identical Latin version was discovered in a Merovingian manuscript. It is remarkable that this western manuscript is two centuries older than the earliest comparable Greek piece of evidence. However, McCormick is certainly right that we should be cautious about drawing conclusions as to who inspired who, given the significantly smaller number of seventh-century manuscripts from Byzantium preserved until today. The same scholar also pointed to a comparable statement in Cassiodorus that may refer to a common origin of the later references, even though both may also result from an independent parallel development.<sup>234</sup>

Although the tradition of enlarging and decorating initial letters goes back to Antiquity,<sup>235</sup> the western habit of including elaborated painted initials in a text is only attested in the Byzantine east after the conclusion of Second Iconoclasm in 843. The exact transmission cannot be assessed. John Osborne and Leslie Brubaker argued that Greek language *scriptoria* in Italy, particularly in Rome, were important intermediaries in this development.<sup>236</sup> Brubaker showed that painted initials are attested from the late eighth century in Latin manuscripts, and there is some evidence that this habit was adopted in Greek manuscripts from the turn of the ninth century. The first example attested in Constantinople is a lavish manuscript issued around 880, with 1,445 gold initials, now preserved in Paris (Figure 8.11).<sup>237</sup> However, Byzantine tradition did not compare to the Carolingian manuscripts, given that the eastern ornaments were restricted until the ninth century to elements like crosses, with chapter headings drawn in red, and occasional larger initials in red or brown. This is the style of the Dionysian manuscript offered to Louis the Pious in 827.<sup>238</sup> More elaborate decorations are only rarely attested in the east from the ninth century. They have been interpreted as the result of western impact on the Byzantine tradition through the Mediterranean exchanges via papal Rome.<sup>239</sup> Another comparable influence from west to east is the technique to produce cloisonné enamel.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>234</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium’s role in the formation” (1987), pp. 213–14.

<sup>235</sup> Brubaker, “The elephant” (2004), p. 184.

<sup>236</sup> Osborne, “The use of painted initials” (1990), pp. 76–85; Brubaker, “The introduction” (1991), pp. 22–46.

<sup>237</sup> Brubaker, “The introduction of painted initials” (1991), referring to Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, gr. 510, access gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84522082 (09/03/2021), dated around 879/83, with notable miniatures at, e.g., fol. 310<sup>v</sup>, and the earlier Roman manuscript Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 1666, access digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\_Vat.gr.1666 (09/03/2021), dated to the year 800.

<sup>238</sup> Brubaker, “The elephant” (2004), p. 183.

<sup>239</sup> Brubaker, “The elephant” (2004), pp. 183–7, one example is the *Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzos* dating around 879/82, with more than 1,600 painted or gilded initials, and some full-page miniatures.

<sup>240</sup> Buckton, “Byzantine enamel” (1988), pp. 235–44.



FIGURE 8.11 Sample of gold initials in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, gr. 510, fol. 35<sup>r</sup>. Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84522082/f83.

A more significant innovation that made the same path is the Carolingian minuscule, a script that markedly contributed to our own modern writing. Tino Licht showed that the Frankish *scriptorium* of Corbie might have had a significant role in the development and distribution of the Carolingian script, and this since as early as the first half of the 760s.<sup>241</sup> Rudolph Schieffer stressed that we do not have any evidence for the central implementation of this script, whose spread and success are only attested by the manuscripts and thus does not appear to have been an innovation pushed and spread by the orders of the Carolingian court in the framework of its striving toward standardization.<sup>242</sup> A comparable development toward Greek minuscule script is attested since around 830 in Asia Minor and Palestine, regions that remained in loose contact with Constantinople and Rome.<sup>243</sup> The first testimony is in a manuscript dated around 835, now kept in Saint Petersburg, produced by an otherwise unknown monk called Nikolaos.<sup>244</sup> A noteworthy obituary added by the same scribe on the last manuscript fol. 344, which relates to the deaths of individuals called Plato, Theodore, and Joseph, according to G. Cereteli, is likely to refer to Theodore the Studite, his uncle Plato, and his brother Joseph,<sup>245</sup> who indeed were in close contact with Rome.

The origins of this parallel development in the east and the west have been debated among scholars. McCormick supposed that minuscule script was the

<sup>241</sup> Licht, “Die älteste karolingische Minuskel” (2012), pp. 334–5.

<sup>242</sup> Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), pp. 36–7.

<sup>243</sup> Tinnefeld, “Formen und Wege” (2001), p. 32.

<sup>244</sup> St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, gr. 219, access csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA\_461 (09/03/2021); Cereteli, “Wo ist das Tetraevangelium” (1900), pp. 649–53; Mango, “La culture grecque” (1973), p. 716.

<sup>245</sup> Cereteli, “Wo ist das Tetraevangelium” (1900), pp. 649–50, the notice partly reading “ἐτελείωθη ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ ὁ ὁσιος (καὶ) θεοφόρος π(α)τ(ή)ρ ἡμῶν Πλάτων ὁ τοῦ Χ(ριστοῦ) ὁ μολογι.”

product of parallel innovation in both regions in the framework of “similar social factors [. . .] contribut[ing] to producing analogous results in the two separate but sibling cultures,”<sup>246</sup> whereas Evangelos K. Chrysos characterized it as a “mutual development” emerging and maturing mainly in the monastic centers in the east and west at the same time and facilitated by the regular contacts between both worlds.<sup>247</sup> For Cyril Mango, in contrast, this Greek innovation, like other elements related to the concurrent renaissance in Byzantium, benefited from the contact and inspiration with other regions, including the Frankish west.<sup>248</sup> Given the intensive exchanges between the Franks, the Byzantine world, and Palestine, from the late eighth and until the early ninth century, largely performed via Italy, which may have involved further exchanges of manuscripts, a Carolingian contribution to the Byzantine development appears rather likely. The Carolingian innovations related to manuscript production thus confirm the high sophistication of the Frankish monastic *scriptoria*, which seemingly equaled, if not surpassed, related eastern traditions and methods. This is thus another and far from insignificant example of western performance that did not rank behind the Byzantine east.

### Intellectual Culture

Modern research largely bought into the Byzantine opinion about its own cultural superiority by assuming that the west must have considered itself inferior in the face of the splendor and scholarship of the “true heir” of the ancient Roman world.<sup>249</sup> As section VII.3 on icon veneration has shown, for example, this was not necessarily the case. Cyril Mango already noted in 1973 that the Byzantine world did not excel over the west on a cultural basis to the extent often claimed.<sup>250</sup> No Byzantine scholar outperformed western erudites like Alcuin, Theodulf, or Einhard, and, to provide another example, seventh-century historiography in the west had never ceased for a period as long as it did in the east. And although the western command of Greek was deficient, to say the least, it still may have surpassed the Byzantine knowledge of Latin.

The language barrier was a major hindrance to the exchange of knowledge and other elements related to Byzantine culture, as Peter Schreiner pointed out, and

<sup>246</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium” (1997), p. 13. McCormick, “Byzantium’s role in the formation” (1987); McCormick, “Textes” (1994), 99–100.

<sup>247</sup> Chrysos, “Karl der Große” (2015), p. 8.

<sup>248</sup> Mango, “La culture grecque” (1973), pp. 717–18.

<sup>249</sup> E.g., Haenssler, *Byzanz und Byzantiner* (1960), p. 9); Lilie, “Kooperation und Konkurrenz” (2011), p. 76.

<sup>250</sup> Mango, “La culture grecque” (1973), pp. 720–1.

a significant factor impeding the transfer of genuinely Byzantine knowledge and culture in the sense of a *translatio studii*. For this reason, elements belonging to Church culture were most prone to be shared with the west. The term *translatio studii* does not relate to the simple exchange of knowledge or imitation but to the conscious and uncompelled adoption of theoretical and applied knowledge in another cultural and geographical area, an exchange that does not imply the adaptation of the same to a new context or foreign requirements but in its original form and for the same purpose. This again requires adequate linguistic and intellectual skills, foundations that since around the sixth century were hardly available in the Frankish west, with very few potential exceptions, as we have seen.<sup>251</sup> The imperial character of Byzantine culture, its relation to the Roman empire of Antiquity, and the fact that the exchange of knowledge between the Frankish and the Byzantine worlds took place mainly in the context of individuals traveling, as in the case of diplomatic embassies—while the exchange of manuscripts or other pieces of writing seems to have been significantly less important—entailed that the west was particularly interested in adopting or adapting elements related to eastern political culture.<sup>252</sup> In addition, given that ambassadors were often scholars, as in the case of Anastasius Bibliothecarius, they were exceptionally prone to act as intellectual mediators, which again could involve the transfer of manuscripts.<sup>253</sup>

The most prominent example of the transfer of cultural knowledge from Byzantium to the Frankish world through a manuscript took place in the framework of diplomatic exchange, when a copy of the complete work of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite was offered to Louis the Pious in Compiègne.<sup>254</sup> A work by the same Areopagite, designated as *Geometry*, had already been offered to Pippin the Younger in 758, together with some Greek teaching material.<sup>255</sup> It appears that this material had not sufficed to acquire the necessary language skills to benefit from this work, however, which would explain the lack of evidence related to this earlier copy or to any notable impact.<sup>256</sup>

The complete works of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite were translated rather promptly after their arrival at the court in 827, and this first attempt was substituted by two successive and improved translations one generation later (see section V.1).<sup>257</sup> According to Christophe Erismann, the Byzantine

<sup>251</sup> Schreiner, “*Translatio studii*” (2018), pp. 141–2 and 149. Similar Schreiner, “Kulturkonkurrenz” (2015), p. 20.

<sup>252</sup> Similar Ohnsorge, “Byzanz und das Abendland” (1958), p. 10.

<sup>253</sup> Drocourt, “Ambassadors as informants” (2018), pp. 89–90.

<sup>254</sup> See McCormick, “Byzantium’s role in the formation” (1987), pp. 218–20; Staubach, “*Graecae Glorae*” (1991), pp. 345–6; Erismann, “On the significance” (2018).

<sup>255</sup> *Codex Carolinus* 24, p. 529. See also the offer of 827, Gastgeber, “The Aristotle of Pippin III” (2018).

<sup>256</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium’s role in the formation” (1987), p. 219.

<sup>257</sup> Brubaker, “The elephant” (2004), p. 183; Ronconi, “*Graecae linguae*” (2016), pp. 371–2.

gift intended not only to relate to the influential Frankish cult of St. Denis of Paris (see section VII.1) but also to support the iconoclast tendencies in the west. This helps explain why it largely lacked decoration, meaning it could only be appreciated as an erudite gift, as Leslie Brubaker asserted.<sup>258</sup> McCormick argues that Hilduin first used the manuscript as a relic to strengthen the cult of St. Denis, as is attested in his *Passions*, and that the text itself had only become significant after the emperor had ordered its translation.<sup>259</sup> Although it failed to strengthen Iconoclasm in the west, as far as we can tell, the work was widely received and influenced Frankish works, in particular that of John Scot Eriugena, who, among others, adopted the notion of complete transcendence of the Divine, partly rooted in the Platonic philosophy.<sup>260</sup> Charles the Bald also proved particularly interested in the Dionysian cult, which he used to propagate his erudition and patronage.<sup>261</sup> If McCormick is right, the Areopagite manuscript therewith remained the prime source of medieval knowledge about eastern philosophy.<sup>262</sup>

Greek literature was predominant in the Byzantine east from the seventh century. After that time, interest in and the capability to produce translations of works authored in other languages likely to provide new knowledge drastically decreased. Byzantine education, however, differed from western training as it was based on profane literacy, alongside Christian authors, which also applied to theological formation, while western scholarship was largely monastic and focused on religious erudition.<sup>263</sup> There were also significant differences in manuscript production and, thus, the choices made as to which works should be copied. In the west, ancient and current books were mainly copied collaboratively in the monastic *scriptoria*, while in the east this was a task usually undertaken by individuals who did this for a living. This distinction impacted the stock of manuscripts available in the monastic libraries. An exemplary comparison of the library inventories of the Byzantine monastery of Patmos and the western library of the monastery of St. Gall revealed that although further comparable evidence is hardly available for the Byzantine east, it appears that libraries were much less important for the eastern monasteries, whose stock of manuscripts was notably smaller than those in the west and that they mainly hosted patristics, prayers, liturgical,

<sup>258</sup> Brubaker, "The elephant" (2004), pp. 182–3.

<sup>259</sup> McCormick, "Byzantium's role in the formation" (1987), pp. 219–20.

<sup>260</sup> Carabine, *Unknown God* (2015), in particular pp. 33–4, 282–5 and 309–14; Erismann, "On the significance" (2018), p. 100. See also Staubach, "Graecae Glorïae" (1991), pp. 346–7.

<sup>261</sup> Staubach, "Graecae Glorïae" (1991), pp. 346–9, relating it to Charles the Bald's rivalry with Byzantium.

<sup>262</sup> McCormick, "Byzantium's role in the formation" (1987), p. 218; Schreiner, "Kulturkonkurrenz" (2015), p. 19.

<sup>263</sup> Schreiner, "Translatio studii" (2018), p. 149.

and other exegetical works, profane work being the exception. In the west, the genres of manuscripts stored in the monastic libraries were much more diverse and included a large number of didactic material, alongside medical treatises, *miraculae*, monastic *regulae*, legal texts, and an increasing number of profane works.<sup>264</sup>

### Monastic and Religious Tradition

Among the manuscripts copied and stored in the western monasteries, a small proportion contained “Roman” and “Greek” chants. Notker stressed the differences between related Roman and Frankish traditions of his own time and explained that Charlemagne attempted to harmonize the ecclesiastical laudations in his realm’s different provinces and cities. To this end, he requested Pope Stephen to send him some clerics with experience in singing, and indeed received twelve clerical vocalists. However, the endeavor would have failed due to the evil intentions of the “Romans” who, like the “Greeks,” would have been envious of the glory of the Franks and therefore took care to keep the chants as heterogeneous as possible.<sup>265</sup> The *Admonitio generalis* appears to confirm the Carolingian aim to introduce a standardized Roman chant, as it claims that Pippin the Younger ordered the *cantus Romanus* to the benefit of the concord with the apostolic see.<sup>266</sup> Although modern research was able to confirm the introduction of Roman tradition and a unified rite in the Frankish realm based on manuscript evidence, the fact that Frankish liturgy still remained heterogeneous does not necessarily imply that “no general Romanisation of the entire Frankish practice was desired” (p. 122), as Yitzhak Hen suggested,<sup>267</sup> but that Carolingian harmonization was only possible to a limited extent.

The Carolingian Roman liturgy allowed emphasizing authority by including the invocation of the ruler in the manner of the Byzantine emperors, a proceeding that appears to have been particularly important at the court of Charles the Bald. If Ildar H. Garipzanov was right, it represented “both a renewal of late Roman and early Byzantine liturgical traditions and the result of indigenous Frankish developments.”<sup>268</sup> Other borrowings were more recognizably Byzantine. Greek chants like the *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*, i.e.,

<sup>264</sup> Schreiner, “Klosterbibliotheken” (2009), pp. 19–29.

<sup>265</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.10, pp. 12–14.

<sup>266</sup> *Capitularia Francorum* 22.80, p. 61; Schuler, “Die Musik” (1970), pp. 31–2; Schieffer, “Die Einheit” (2005), p. 36.

<sup>267</sup> Hen, “The Romanization” (2011), pp. 111–23. Similar Kreiner, “Romanness in Merovingian Hagiography” (2018), p. 321.

<sup>268</sup> Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), p. 97.



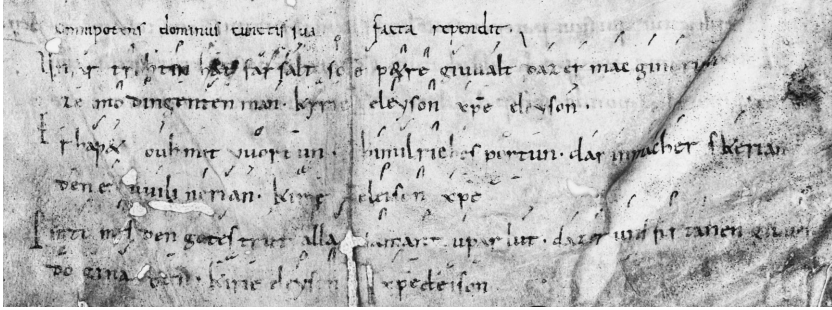


FIGURE 8.12 Old High German song on St. Peter, Munich. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6260, fol. 158v. Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). Source: [digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00047199?page=320](https://digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00047199?page=320).

the *missa graeca* already discussed in section V.1, are attested in the west from the time of Louis the Pious, even though, according to Notker's testimony, they were already introduced at the time of Charlemagne.<sup>269</sup> The earliest testimonies of these Greek chants in a Frankish manuscript date to the third quarter of the ninth century and belong to the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Amand. Except for the mentioned Paris manuscript lat. 2290, which is the first to contain all four chants, and like all the ninth-century evidence originating from the western Frankish region, the remaining complete sets stem from the eastern parts of the Frankish realm.

These were not the first Greek chants known in the west. The *Kyrie Eleison* was already established as part of Latin liturgy before, and it was very popular.<sup>270</sup> These two words were also adopted as part of vernacular songs, as in the Old High German song on St. Peter added in the early tenth century to the last page of a late-ninth-century manuscript with exegetical work by Hrabanus Maurus. Its refrain includes “kirie eleison, christe eleison” (see Figure 8.12).<sup>271</sup> A more prominent example is the *Hymnos Akathistos*, which may have been the work of Romanos the Melodist († mid-sixth century). It was sung in the east on a yearly basis to thank the Virgin Mary for the liberation of Constantinople against the pagans, first in 626 facing the Persians and Avars, and then, in 677 and 718, against the Muslims. In the ninth century, the text was partly translated into Latin, maybe once again by Hilduin of St. Denis. In this context, a noteworthy prologue has its first appearance, generally dated around 825, although it

<sup>269</sup> See Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.7.

<sup>270</sup> Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2012), pp. 43–53; Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2018), pp. 113–17.

<sup>271</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6260, fol. 158v, access [digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00047199](https://digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00047199) (15/05/2021).

remains unclear whether it is an original western creation or the translation of a Greek original.<sup>272</sup>

Whether the *missa graeca*, with its melodies, emerged in Gaul prior to the seventh century, based on eastern models or, which is significantly more probable, whether they actually reached Gaul via Rome, be it as genuinely western creations or inspired by Byzantine originals, is not entirely clear. The *missa* were most popular after around 930/50 and until the mid-eleventh century, and most evidence stems from St. Gall and Aquitania.<sup>273</sup> For example, the *Kyrie Eleison* and the *Gloria* were reportedly sung in 876 during the synod of Ponthion, together with the antiphon *Exaudi nos Domini*, where Charles the Bald appeared in “Greek” dress.<sup>274</sup> Nina-Maria Wanek compared examples of the Byzantine and western versions of the *Sanctus*/*Ἄγιος-missa* and discovered that although the melodies were significantly different, suggesting that the western chants were not mere copies of Byzantine originals, there must have been some direct exchange that is yet difficult to grasp but is likely to have involved Greek natives.<sup>275</sup> Maybe several scenarios applied at a time, not least as more options seem conceivable than those mentioned by Wanek, who only considered the exchange of manuscripts, Church singers, and official legates.<sup>276</sup> As it happens, Church songs could be transmitted by any individual hearing them during mass and able to reproduce them somewhere else by singing. Aurelius of Riôme, in his *Musica Disciplina*, referred to a potential context of such an exchange by reporting a discussion with a certain “Greek” about the meaning of words employed to relate to the intonation of chants.<sup>277</sup> The Greek term *paraphonista* used to relate to the head of the choral of an unidentified Frankish church, further attests to the transmission of Byzantine knowledge related to music.<sup>278</sup> Singing accompanied by the organ, which does

<sup>272</sup> Winterfeld, “Ein Abendländisches Zeugnis” (1904), considers it to go back to a Greek original. Berschin, *Griechisch-lateinisches Mittelalter* (1980), pp. 164–6, remained undecided as of the original’s language, pointing to the monk Methodios of Sicily as a possible author. See also McCormick, “Diplomacy” (1994), p. 19, with n. 13.

<sup>273</sup> Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2012), pp. 45–56; Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2018), pp. 114–19.

<sup>274</sup> *Annales Bertiniani* a. 876, p. 201. See also Liutprand, *Antapodosis* 2.30.

<sup>275</sup> Wanek, “Die sogenannte Missa Graeca” (2013), pp. 173–90. The Byzantine liturgy only contains the melody of this and the *Gloria missus*. Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2018), p. 119. On reconstructing these melodies, see Morent, “Musikkultur des Mittelalters” (2015), pp. 131–62.

<sup>276</sup> Wanek, “Missa graeca” (2018), p. 119.

<sup>277</sup> Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 148, fol. 71<sup>v</sup>: “etenim quendam interrogavi grecum in latina quid interpretarentur lingua [. . .] Memoratus denique · adiuncxit grecus · huius modi, iniquis nostra in lingua uidentur habere consimilitudinem qualem arantes sive angarias minantes exprimere solent · Excepto quod haec letantis tantum modo sit uox · nihilque aliud exprimentis estque tonorum in se continens modulationem”; Weiß, “Der Graecus” (2016), p. 10.

<sup>278</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.8 p. 10: “Ad quem paraphonista levato peniculo ictum ei, nisi caneret, minabatur,” see Schuler, “Die Musik” (1970), pp. 27–8.

not correspond to Byzantine practice, is suggested in a poem by Walahfrid Strabo.<sup>279</sup>

The cult of the eastern martyr Pantaleon of Nicomedia († c. 305) reached the west with relics arriving in Cologne in the early ninth century. It is attested in northern Africa from the sixth century, reached Rome in the eighth century, and it is mentioned since 802 in Lyon. In Cologne, a church was dedicated to the said martyr, a cult to which empress Theophanu († 991) was later attached, which may be why she had herself buried there.<sup>280</sup> The dedication to the Virgin Mary of the chapel in Aachen may have already been inspired by Byzantine customs,<sup>281</sup> a cult later supported by the same Ottonian queen, Theophanu, who was of Byzantine origin.<sup>282</sup> Another example, only attested comparatively late, is the cult of St. Margarete of Antioch († c. 305). A late-tenth-century manuscript with the *Passion* of the same saint, from Fulda, now in Hanover, on the dedication page shows the Virgin crowning the saints Margareta and Regina in the style of Byzantine coronation scenes, with the inscription “Maria Theotokos, Margareta, Regina” (“ΜΑΡΙΑ ΘΕΩΔΕΚΩC/ ΜΑΡΓΑΡΕΤΑ ΡΕΓΙΝΑ”).<sup>283</sup>

### Clothes and Accessories

The monastic looks mirrored the differences between the monastic culture in the east and the west: as is still perceptible today, eastern monks wore beards while western monks were tonsured.<sup>284</sup> Apart from this, the western habits only partly varied from those common in the west. In his late seventh-century *Life*, for example, bishop Audoin of Rouen was lauded for having “under his belt surrounded with the glint of gems, and beneath his purple robe shining with gold, a rough hair shirt pressed against the frame of his body for the ardor of faith.”<sup>285</sup> As in the Byzantine east, purple cloth was obviously also a common

<sup>279</sup> Walahfrid, *Carmen* 50, entitled “ΔΙΣΤΙΧΟΙ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΑΡΧΟΝ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΑΘΩΝ,” ll. 7–11, p. 397. The evidence is not too clear given that the references to music could also relate to the tones produced by the organ, see Schuler, “Die Musik” (1970), pp. 29–30.

<sup>280</sup> Ristow, “St. Pantaleon in Köln” (2011), pp. 57–61.

<sup>281</sup> Garrison, “The Franks” (2000), p. 154; Nash, “Demonstrations of imperium” (2011), p. 160.

<sup>282</sup> Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), p. 219.

<sup>283</sup> Ciggaar, *Western travellers* (1996), p. 216, referring to Hanover, Provinzialbibliothek, Ms. I 189, fols. 11<sup>v</sup>–32<sup>v</sup>, which unfortunately is not accessible online. See also the PhD thesis by Katharina Reihl on “Hagiographie und Heiligenkult” funded by the Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus, byzanz-mainz.de/en/research-byzanz/details-projects/article/hagiographie-und-heiligenkult-entstehung-rezeption-und-transfer-zwischen-ost-und-west (14/02/2021).

<sup>284</sup> Peters-Custot, “Greco et Byzantins” (2014), pp. 187–8. See also Bede, *Hist.* 4.1; Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.32.

<sup>285</sup> *Vita Audoini* 3, p. 555: “Plerumque etenim sub balteo gemmarum fulgore consepito atque sub purpura auro nitente contexta pro fidei ardore propria corporis.” Trans. Fouracre/Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France* (1996), p. 155.

item of prestige in the west, not only for bishops, a luxury good imported via Venice.<sup>286</sup>

Attire is a visible means to express identity and distinction. Antony Kaldellis stressed that from a western perspective, the Byzantines had distinctive attire that, together with their language and customs, “formed a package of ethnic indicia which proved that they were not Romans as they claimed.”<sup>287</sup> Byzantine clothing could be clearly distinguished from Frankish attire, already discussed above when referring to the regal dress, and which largely consisted of animal skin, wool, and linen cloth—which Notker, in a tale, characterized as the choice preferred by Charlemagne. The emperor reportedly mocked those wearing lavish clothes, which could be made of red dyed cloth or with gold and silver decorations.<sup>288</sup> Other differences and similarities in looks were notably subtle, and they did not only involve the style of clothes but also the habits related to their wearing. Hats were also used in the west, as Notker confirmed relating to a poor man ashamed of his red hair and who, as he had no cape (“pilleum”) to cover them, would have done so with his “red footwear” (“rufo gallicula”).<sup>289</sup> In addition, the anonymous *Life of Louis the Pious* describes particular Basque attire, which apparently was partly worn by Louis the Pious and his peers, and comprised a round cloak, puffed-up sleeves and trousers, and boots with spurs.<sup>290</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Roman culture belonged to the Frankish world and its heritage. It represented a characterizing feature of early medieval Frankish society and was perceptible in the representation of rulership, attire, architecture, art, and language. Related features may be found in very different contexts, implemented in various ways, attesting to the wide integration and complex relation of the Frankish world to its Roman background. If we compare the evidence discussed above with Walter Pohl’s definition, the only elements that were missing (almost) entirely are the omnipresence of inscriptions and statues—the equestrian monument in Aachen being an exception—refined household objects, and urban infrastructure like aqueducts or bridges, with exceptions in the Rhine valley.<sup>291</sup> As it emerges from

<sup>286</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.17.

<sup>287</sup> Kaldellis, “Ethnicity and clothing” (2019), p. 50. On distinguishing “Roman” dress from a Byzantine perspective, see *ibid.* pp. 43–4.

<sup>288</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 2.17, p. 88: “O te bis aureum eccum, o te argenteum, o te totum coccineum!”

<sup>289</sup> Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.18, pp. 22–3, with note 1 at p. 23 of the said edition.

<sup>290</sup> Astron., *Vita Hludowici* 4, p. 296.

<sup>291</sup> See Einhard, *Vita Karoli* 17.

our sources, the medieval Roman culture was an elite phenomenon. It belonged to the palaces of kings and emperors, not to the huts of the common people, to the imperial costumes, not the rags of the craftspeople and peasants, who lacked a notably "Roman" label. But did the huts and rags of the common inhabitants of the ancient Roman empire really differ significantly from those belonging to the Frankish empire? One defining feature, the Roman *villa rustica* and related infrastructures, indeed were largely replaced by new types of housing and small rural settlements, but the little relevant evidence is insufficient to know how contemporaries perceived related changes and what significance they attributed to these. The lower-scale culture of premodern societies appears comparatively similar throughout the world and is characterized mainly by local differences and adaptations to regional conditions related, e.g., to weather or soil properties. The replacement of one king or dynasty by another had very little effect on this large part of a population. No evidence proves that Frankish popular culture shared or conveyed any consciousness about belonging to a supraregional culture united by a world-encompassing Romanness. Besides, not every element that would be labeled as "Roman" from a modern perspective would have been identified as such in the Middle Ages. This must have been particularly true for the less learned, who, even if they recognized related characteristics like an object's high quality, were not necessarily able to or interested in identifying an object as "Roman," whereas Byzantine objects increasingly tended to be conceived as exotic and thus as alien to their own culture. Still, given that the elite tended to represent what people could aspire to, its culture had a bearing on those who looked up to its material and immaterial exploits and commodities, which means that elite culture also characterized the identity and culture of the local population more in general. Thus, studying an elite culture also helps to understand those parts of society that have only left little traces in our records.

Roman and Byzantine cultural features were important sources of inspiration and prestige in the west. It is unfortunate that we do not have more Merovingian evidence from palaces and other elements of court life, allowing us to understand better the evolution from ancient Roman to Carolingian elite culture and the role of this era in the process studied here. Byzantine models were willingly used to represent imperial authority, which attests to the significance attributed to the eastern empire as a paradigm of imperial authority. However, neither ancient Roman nor Byzantine objects were necessarily appreciated for their origin, as their quality and finishing were often the criteria defining their use and usefulness, their repurposing, and why they were chosen for ostentation. The copies of late Roman and Byzantine goods, in particular from the Carolingian era, not only attest to the skills of the western craftspeople but also the demand for comparable pieces of art. The foreignness of objects like the mentioned ivories is attested by their reworking to fit new needs, in the context of which a more

pronounced strangeness is attested for Byzantine objects, suggesting that they were more prone to misconception or to being repurposed. The stronger connection to the late Roman and western objects, with less prior readaptation, attests to the relatedness of the Frankish world to its local Roman heritage and the gradual alienation from its eastern sibling.

The repurposing and differences between Frankish and ancient Roman material and usages do not suffice to imply that the Frankish society was detached from its Roman predecessor, i.e., that the past and present had ceased to belong together. The time gap was considerable. The Frankish world and Byzantine society had evolved and were not identical to that of the Roman past. Although there is evidence for more significant change, including rupture, as the end of the Roman *villae* and the introduction of poor housing or cemeteries demonstrate, this evolution does not need to be the result of societies that have transformed to the point that they had become a different one. How common is it even today that rich houses or neighborhoods degenerate and become the homes of the less wealthy, who cannot keep the construction in the same condition or even change parts of it to serve their needs? Moreover, a reduction in the quality of the art is already perceptible since late Antiquity. Thus, we should attempt to reassess the complexities of early medieval societies and how they evolved and cease using too simple models. Even though they can appear useful, they chiefly dehumanize the societies we aim to know better.

Both societies differed by their Frankish or Hellenic and “Greek” cultural backgrounds, distinctions that, unsurprisingly, were emphasized in the framework of mutual assessments, as seen in chapter VI. They certainly were not only useful tools where foreignness needed to be emphasized but also significant factors in the process of mutual alienation. Mutual imitations and borrowings are difficult to interpret, however, when seeking to assess whether and how two societies felt connected or as belonging together. McCormick rightly stressed that the “hunt for identical institutions or elements of reality” is not helpful by pointing out that “ill-considered application of one civilization’s concepts and institutions to another’s can hinder as much as help understanding.”<sup>292</sup> Parallel developments and other analogies are only insignificant pieces in the puzzle that need to be set together to understand how the Franks related to the Byzantine world. The isolated adoptions of preexisting features and similarities discussed in this chapter thus are to be expected, given that both societies were based significantly on the same imperial and Christian foundations with similar ideological and iconographic notions and ideas emerging from a common past.

Evidence points to a cultural rivalry between the Frankish east and the Byzantine west. Aachen may be interpreted as an attempt to surpass the eastern

<sup>292</sup> McCormick, “Byzantium” (1997), p. 13.

empire through an enhanced concept combining ancient Roman and Byzantine models with Frankish theological ideas. It is also conceivable that the organ was not only meant to impress westerners but likewise to underline the equality and imperial identity compared to the eastern empire. Several examples discussed in this investigation confirm, however, that we should not suspect rivalry or *imitatio imperii* for legitimation whenever the Franks used or adopted Roman or Byzantine models.<sup>293</sup> They were not copied one-to-one by the Carolingians as the dead quotes of an ancient past or the imitation of a foreign archetype. These forerunners were the only known sets of relevant examples or sources of inspiration, which were appropriated as part of the own culture by adapting and advancing these. In Aachen, there was no intention to copy an ancient Roman city or to use the persisting urban infrastructures of an ancient capital like Trier or Cologne to claim continuity with the ancient Roman empire in the west. The Franks conceived a new capital and infrastructure corresponding to their contemporary ideas and requirements. Although Roman ruins were used in the framework of this building process, their availability was not a decisive factor. Roman and Byzantine models were also a natural basis and source of inspiration for anything related to the Frankish representation and the exertion of imperial and regal authority. Thus, the constructions in Aachen and other short-lived capitals combined recognizably Roman features like marble or porphyry columns, for which Ravenna was a welcome source. Whether the architecture and iconography of San Vitale indeed was the important model suggested above, or whether the noted parallels are mainly a coincidence, is impossible to tell.

This chapter and the foregoing show that the Franks and the Byzantines were much more equal in cultural and intellectual quality and sophistication than most scholars tend to suggest. Although a real *translatio studii* was impeded by lacking language proficiency on both sides, western education, the introduction of classical Latin, the minuscule, the study of Greek, and the flourishing of Carolingian erudition, were impressive demonstrations of the intellectual potentials of the Frankish world. The early modern conviction about the incomparable inferiority of the “barbarians” compared to the Byzantines, as the keepers of civilization, continues to influence the assessment of scholars who, for any reason, did or do not challenge this view by looking closer at the evidence. The same is true for the modern notion that anything Roman among the Franks is to be labeled as “imitation,” an act usually related to attempts of legitimation or rivalry. It tacitly presumes the conviction of the Franks being “barbarians”—unconcerned by the process of acculturation and progress they had gone through since entering the imperial stage—together with the indestructible idea of an epochal transition

<sup>293</sup> Cf., e.g., Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee* (1956), p. 236; Ewig, “Das Bild Constantins” (1956), pp. 44–5; Garipzanov, *The symbolic language* (2008), p. 291.



from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, implying a caesura between the medieval present and the ancient past necessarily considered unattainably gone and superior. Such statements and related assessments usually fail to consider who would have been the addressee of such imitations aiming to produce legitimization. Instead, the theses forwarded by modern scholars regularly presuppose, inadvertently, that people living in what we call the early Middle Ages had a clear notion of an ancient Roman past and that its imitations could be recognized, without considering that this required transporting ancient Roman meaning to a medieval present to produce the idea that current rulers would equal these long-past ideals. Comparable erroneous presuppositions rooted in the notion of western civilization having vanished in the face of barbarian intruders are implied where rivalry is supposed to be a central aim to resort to Byzantine models. Rivalry requires that the opponent knows about the act performed to this end. However, the throne of Salomon being copied by Charlemagne and Theophilos (see section VIII.1) is an exceptional case, as we usually lack even implicit evidence proving such competition. How probable is it that the Franks could assume that the Byzantines kept track of anything happening in the west so they could be bothered by related actions?

Further important questions to which insufficient sources impede secure responses include how different early Merovingian society was from that of fifth-century Gaul and what happened in the comparatively dark seventh century, from which the Carolingian world emerged. The late Merovingian material is still quite abundant thanks to the practice of furnishing burials. The Carolingian material includes evidence for significant adaptations of Roman material, procedures conditioned by the large time gap, and an advanced estrangement. We do not know to what extent this impression results from lacking Carolingian burial goods, which entails that the distribution of preserved object types has changed. The archival evidence gradually emerging from the eighth century in the Carolingian endeavor of copying and distributing relevant manuscripts confirms that ancient Roman scholarship and knowledge had remained available throughout this period. The production and storing of knowledge differed in the sense that, in the east, this was more an individual phenomenon related to profane education, whereas, in the west, this was a genuinely monastic task. Profane knowledge was also more common in western monasteries, given that eastern monastic institutions were more focused on ecclesiastical and liturgical texts, which altogether implies a stronger separation between the monastic intellectual and the profane in the east.

How did the Frankish west relate to Roman and Byzantine culture? And did the Franks conceive their own culture as Roman? The evidence shows that this relatedness was ambiguous. Probably a Frankish contemporary would have needed time to think about these questions. A conceivable answer would be that

they did understand themselves as Frankish but that this Frankish identity had a strong Roman element related to Rome and Christian belief, on the one hand, and the imperial heritage, on the other. This Roman factor thus was not a revival of a long-elapsed past but a living element of Frankish culture, in the sense of an “afterlife,” evolving in exchange and considering the Roman heritage and the Byzantine present. Although an ancient Frankish regal or elite culture unrelated to the Roman empire must have existed, as the Merovingian royal tradition of wearing long hair or later evidence pointing to an oral vernacular culture confirm, the Roman heritage and culture had its own place in Frankish culture and identity. Many other aspects that may appear to belong to a genuinely Frankish elite culture, like the emphasis on warrior culture, the rise of royalty, or the prominent role of followings, were rooted in late Roman history and culture.

# IX

## Conclusion

The Frankish world emerged from inside the Roman empire. This study argued that the Franks had not ceased to belong to the Roman world and that although Carolingian society maintained a distinctive Frankish character, it was composed of a large variety of regional traditions and a Roman supraculture with a strong emphasis on features related to governance, representation, and other elements belonging to the elite. The Frankish population was an amalgamation of the descendants of Gallo-Romans and other inhabitants of the Roman empire, with a significant Frankish ethnic minority governing northern Gaul from the late fifth century. The process that followed the appearance of the Franks on the imperial stage has long been conceived along the lines of hostile “barbarians” taking control of the civilized Roman territories, followed by a long decay at the end of which the “barbarian” king Charlemagne pretentiously usurped the title of emperor to enhance his reputation. The relation of the Carolingians to the ancient Roman world is regularly conceived as a “Renaissance” that more or less consciously copied ancient Roman models naturally recognized as superior to pretentiously claim the status of successor. Although the Franks would have been hardly able to understand the Byzantine subtleties, they thus would have reproduced these to “legitimate” themselves as the heirs of Rome by producing deplorable imitations of Roman or Byzantine “originals.” The relationship of the Franks to the contemporary Byzantines was considered mainly in terms of rivalry, where the militarily weak easterners were offended by the overbearing pretensions of the western “barbarian” kings. Although scholars have regularly pointed out that the views more or less congruent with this admittedly simplified and exaggerated sketch need to be reconsidered, statements that fit into the above line of thinking persist in both popular and scholarly works.

This study aimed to assess how the Frankish world related to what has been defined in the introduction as *orbis Romanus*. If we want to better understand past societies, their relation to their history, and concurrent cognate societies, we need to focus on how contemporaries may have seen the world. Many terms we use, including basic characterizations like “Frankish,” “Roman,” “medieval,” or other like “renaissance,” “renovatio,” or “imitatio,” carry heavy baggage filled with conscious and unconscious bias and predefined ideas and valuations that make it difficult to take a fresh look at the evidence. The same is true for explanatory models regularly offered to describe past realities. Although they tend to

be appealing as they are prone to provide plausible explanations, we should consider that they necessarily represent simplifications that, in most cases, do not offer enough room for contradictions and those complexities that have always characterized reality. Other paradigms, like the epochal division into Antiquity and the Middle Ages, remain preponderant in modern historical treatments despite intense challenges since Peter Brown's definition of a long "Late Antiquity."<sup>1</sup> Historians could still make further efforts to divest themselves of any such ideological baggage.<sup>2</sup> Although objectivity will remain an unattainable goal, a helpful remedy is to look at other eras and societies from within by abstaining from relying on modern models and criteria or anachronistic concepts and terminology. Therefore, this study intended to approach its topic by rereading and reassessing the sources by focusing on the early medieval perspective. This procedure has proven enjoyably beneficial as it afforded not only a complex and largely consistent impression of the studied subject matter but also several new interpretations on relevant topics.

Modern historians have always looked at earlier periods with hindsight. With regard to the period studied here, this meant the idea of a caesura separating Antiquity from the Middle Ages was never entirely absent from relevant treatments. However, the Byzantines were not the "heirs" of the Roman empire, as modern historians regularly claim, but its ongoing inhabitants. Although a matter of course, it appears important to recall that people living in early medieval Europe had no notion that they had entered an era that would later be called the "Middle Ages" or that their own society would be considered to have put to an end an (allegedly?) more glorious past that would be termed "Antiquity." They lived in continuity with this past, even if it must have appeared particularly remote given that relevant knowledge was significantly less accessible for them than for us. The medieval term "antiquus" therefore related to anything old or ancient, whether it belonged to "Antiquity" or the "Middle Ages." Any opposing attributions do not correspond to late antique or early medieval thinking and are, first of all, based on modern concepts or classifications. Still, change took place persistently, which means that things were different at the time of Constantine the Great compared to the era of Augustus, just as society had further evolved at the time of Charlemagne's reinstatement of western emperorship. Similarly, in the Byzantine east society and culture had undergone significant changes throughout the centuries. Nevertheless, what we call "Antiquity" is the only far away past people living in the early "Middle Ages" knew and could relate to.

Frankish conceptions of a current Roman world were different from corresponding ideas in Rome at the time of Augustus, those in Constantinople at the

<sup>1</sup> Brown, *The world of late Antiquity* (1971).

<sup>2</sup> See Steuer, "Die Gegenwart der Antike" (2014), p. 7.

time of Constantine the Great, or those later under his Macedonian namesake in the tenth century. Although contemporaries in each case may have thought to relate to the same Roman world, its definition differed in detail in view of regional circumstances and the political, social, and cultural changes that had taken place throughout the centuries. Jonathan Conant studied such a process of change leading to a significantly redefined notion of Romanness using the example of Vandal Africa.<sup>3</sup> The changes to an earlier corresponding notion do not make any subsequent variants less accurate, real, or relevant. The Frankish conception of the Roman world they inhabited was defined by features like their historical origins going back to Troy, their imperial past, their ties to the ancient Roman empire, their use of the Latin language, their orthodoxy, the Roman identities as those related to their Christian identity and papal Rome heading the Church, and their Roman cultural heritage. Although the ties between the Frankish and the Byzantine realms were never close enough to speak of two connected worlds, the sources suggest not only that the Franks continued to regard themselves as belonging to the same *orbis* but also that the Byzantines acknowledged their particular role as a people and polity sharing the basis on which both societies were built on. From a Frankish perspective, this Roman world was genuinely Christian, with a predominance of “Franks” and “Greeks.”

### 1. A Frankish *orbis Romanus*

How did the Franks relate to the Roman world? Approaching this question allowed reconstructing a complex relationship and its ongoing processes of change defined by a Roman heritage, the Byzantine present, and genuinely Frankish ideas and concerns. The Byzantine empire was intrinsically tied to its Roman history and legacy, a heritage also belonging to the Frankish world. The Frankish understanding of Romanness was neither identical to the corresponding ancient Roman notion nor its Byzantine equivalent, which both were notably urban and focused on the empire. Frankish identity was never dependent on Roman citizenship, which in the east had retained its capacity to connect the different aspects related to origin, legal status, or Christianity the term *Romanus*/*Ῥωμαῖος* could carry. Although notions of Romanness persisting in the Frankish west were much more subtle and complex, as the different scopes of meaning had been separated by fragmentation, Romanness remained a defining feature in the west. It could relate to elements like the ancient and contemporary empire, and all this implied; the quasi-ethnic identity of those inhabiting the Frankish world, at least by the seventh century; the native legal status of a large minority

<sup>3</sup> Conant, *Staying Roman* (2012).

of its inhabitants; the Latin Christian community headed by apostolic Rome and the religious positions it stood for. The Roman heritage and present could be encountered in various contexts like Church rituals, the representation of power, or art. This complex set of notions could apply together or separately and is attested more or less prominently in virtually every context of Frankish society. Although these different aspects were hardly ever conceived as belonging to one uniform notion of Romanness—which indeed must have ceased to exist in most western regions no later than by the end of the fifth century—they had become related to Frankish identity.

Although the Frankish society emerging from within the Roman empire could not avoid change, it retained markedly Roman characteristics. Frankish identity remained intrinsically tied to medieval notions of Romanness.<sup>4</sup> It remained a significant reference for the Franks, whose self-understanding was defined, and grew, in confrontation with their own Romanness. Although a majority, if asked to define their identity, probably would have designated themselves as “Frankish,” their historical and religious identity was largely “Roman.” It is not without reason that, except when referring to the pope or papal Rome, western evidence attesting that Frankishness and Romanness were conceived as mutually exclusive is lacking. This is why in the mid-sixth century, the Austrasian major of the palace Gogo could still refer to “our Roman forefathers,”<sup>5</sup> and when Charlemagne reinstated western emperorship, he naturally conceived it to govern the Roman empire. The connection between Roman and Frankish identity is also confirmed by the fact that the Roman nature of the western empire was never overly emphasized in the Frankish world, explicit designations being limited mainly to the coronation reports and official letters exchanged, seemingly implying that it was considered a matter of course, not requiring any further explicitness. This Frankish Romanness was multiethnic and Christian, and a central identification factor that could relate to different areas of life.

Charlemagne’s identification with David, his relations to the Holy Land, and the Frankish understanding of Romanness applied to the empire attest to the emperor’s intention to reach beyond the sphere of Carolingian authority. The large body of evidence, like the concepts exposed in Aachen discussed in section VIII.1, confirms the close connection drawn by the Franks between ancient imperial and Christian Romanness by recurring to biblical models, concepts at the core of the Frankish understanding of empire. This genuinely

<sup>4</sup> This is why I would be cautious not to lump together the Franks with any other among the “barbarian” kingdoms, as Goffart, *Barbarian tides* (2006), did when he argued: “Western lands under Gothic or Frankish or even English kings, and underpinned by a Latin church, were as credible offshoots of late Rome as was the East Rome of Byzantium; they were as pure or impure in their Romanity as the city of Constantine” (p. 39).

<sup>5</sup> *Epist. Austras.* 48, p. 152: “parentibus nostris Romanis.”

Christian understanding of (imperial) rulership, largely comparable to the Byzantine concept of emperorship, does not seem to have emerged thanks to a significant eastern contribution but as the result of a genuinely western parallel development. Surprisingly, the imperial advances by the Carolingians did not lead to more enmity in the east, which was limited mainly to the retreat of Nikephoros I after Irene's deposition. What followed in 812 was the full recognition of the Frankish emperor by Michael I, and comparatively amicable relations under Louis the Pious.

The Frankish relation to the Byzantine world is more difficult to grasp. The western and eastern notions of Romanness had common origins, and they both implied a genuinely Christian understanding of Roman identity. When the Franks revived western emperorship, Romanness and Christianity were essential features of its conception. The fact that the Franks around that time started calling the Byzantines "Greeks" indicates that they did not necessarily identify their own Romanness with that of the Byzantines, who had become increasingly alien to them. Byzantines and Franks only met occasionally, and there is no evidence that easterners were encountered in the Frankish west regularly or that they could have represented any significant minority that would have made a notable difference in the west, at least not outside Italy. The Frankish people's deep ties to the Roman and Byzantine world were not based on the frequency or regularity of exchanges, but rather on a shared set of political, religious, and cultural assumptions persisting until the ninth century. In contrast to the impression emerging from Michael McCormick's fundamental investigation of the Mediterranean connections, the Frankish participation in the *orbis Romanus* was determined not by the quantity but by the quality of related connections.<sup>6</sup>

It is indicative that in the west, Greek was not primarily learned to speak with other Greek native speakers—although there certainly were exceptions at the court, including diplomatic envoys, alongside merchants and other groups largely remaining unattested in our sources—but to gain access to Greek texts, primarily patristics and other religious treatises. The impression emerging from the evidence that the presence of Byzantines in the Frankish west was limited mainly to the court and the monasteries may, however, be to some extent the product of the fact that most sources were written by clerics and monks and concerned the elite, as there may have been significantly more exchanges than those few attested by the sources. Even with this in mind, the evidence does not allow arguing that the two worlds had ever reunited. The presence of Byzantines never became the "normality" in the Frankish west, as Chris Wickham suggested—although he was right that they were never conceived as entirely foreign.<sup>7</sup> Their

<sup>6</sup> I thank the anonymous reviewer, who said this so well that I hope he/she forgives me for using a similar way of summarizing this important outcome of the study.

<sup>7</sup> Wickham, "Ninth-century Byzantium" (1998), p. 252.



relatedness and common history bore two societies with notable similarities and parallel developments, which could not be disguised by emphasizing the differences.

The position of the Franks inside the Roman world was significantly more complex and is a story that needs to be told with every party meeting much more at eye-level. No doubt, material refinement occurred largely on the Byzantine and certainly on the ancient Roman side. But the deterioration of art, architecture, and infrastructure had already begun in the late Roman period and thus should not only be regarded as a genuinely Frankish contribution. Frankish historiography and erudition, their handling of complex religious questions, the implementation of intricate theological concepts in the chapel of Aachen, their innovation in fields like manuscript production, their open-mindedness toward ancient knowledge, their refined art productions, and, not least, their confident handling of marriage alliances with the eastern emperors, altogether show that the Carolingians, in particular around the time of Charlemagne, largely met the Byzantines on an equal footing. The consciousness of a shared history helps explain the comparatively high esteem of the Franks in the Byzantine world. This is confirmed by authors like Agathias or Constantine VII<sup>8</sup> and the fact that the eastern emperors willingly offered a marriage alliance to unite both ruling families as soon as the Franks had manifested themselves on a supranational level. This and other pieces of evidence show that the Franks, in many ways, were conceived as a people particularly close to the empire, in opposition to other gentile groups like the Lombards who only entered the imperial stage at a much later period. The Byzantine willingness to ally with the Franks also illustrates to what extent the interest in a people's history and its stories, which was significantly less pronounced in the east, did not need to correlate with contemporary political interests. Although the Byzantines were interested in a strong western ally, they were largely focused on their own empire and culture.<sup>9</sup> The Franks, on their part, had a strong position of power and were seemingly led much more by curiosity. Still, the Franks had their own understanding of what connected the two worlds. The Frankish visions of Romanness, the Roman world, and their heritage, were genuinely Christian, with a strong ancient Roman foundation. As mentioned above, the *orbis Romanus* created by this genuinely western notion of Romanness was comparable but not entirely identical to its Byzantine equivalent, whose worlds had become increasingly estranged. The terms "Greek" and "Frankish" thus not only defined the two predominant groups of the Roman world but also were meant to express that the respective other was increasingly conceived as not belonging to the same *orbis Romanus*.

<sup>8</sup> Agathias, *Hist.* 1.2.3–4; Constantine, *DAI* 13.

<sup>9</sup> Schreiner, "Translatio studii" (2018), p. 149.

## 2. The Franks and the Roman World

Any attempt to precisely assess until when the Franks could be considered to belong to the Roman world would be dependent on modern attributions, as its outcome would need to rely on the criteria previously defined to this end. The alternative, which corresponds to the approach of the present study, is to focus on related processes of change as they emerge from the evidence. Although the sources lack information on the exact relation of the Franks to the empire of late Antiquity, there is no reason to assume that the Franks were granted Roman citizenship, which had become standard in 212, an impression supported by the fact that they maintained their gentile laws. The Frankish laws betray a significantly different relation to “Romans” and Roman identity, as an element that was to be either dominated or overcome. After a long period of gradual alienation and silence,<sup>10</sup> the Byzantines in the mid-eighth century encountered a notably independent and self-conscious Frankish kingdom. Both societies, meanwhile, had evolved in different directions, an increased alienation confirmed by the material evidence and the Frankish adoption of the papal designation “Greeks” to refer to the Byzantines.

Although there is no reason to believe that the Frankish kingdoms remained affiliated with the empire beyond the sixth century, not even loosely, the idea of Roman imperial unity persisted beyond that date. Despite the drastic reduction of exchanges with the Byzantine world after the 630s, the Franks and the “Greeks” do not appear to have resumed contact in the mid-eighth century as complete strangers.<sup>11</sup> The Byzantines were notably interested in good relations, as emerges from the gift of an organ and the marriage offers. The Franks, on their part, remained more reserved toward the Byzantines and, at the same time, cultivated their Roman heritage. Concurrently, the Franks allied with the pope, which was at least partly directed against the empire, as the developments during the iconoclast controversy suggest. The Franco–papal relationship was discontinued, however, and the Frankish king was soon reapproached by the Byzantine emperors. As it seems, Charlemagne’s rise to the status of emperor was preceded by intense negotiations not only with the pope but also with the eastern emperors, and maybe also the patriarch of Jerusalem. The outcome of these discussions remains largely unknown. The initial plan to reinstate an emperor in the west appears to have followed a combination of ancient Roman and current imperial models. Any further questions referring to its intended implementation remain open. It

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed study of the developments of this period, see Sarti, *Merovingian connections* (forthcoming).

<sup>11</sup> See Sarti, “Byzantine history” (2021), and Sarti, *Merovingian connections* (forthcoming), arguing for a prolongation of diplomatic relations, at least until around 662, which may have persisted beyond that time.

was hindered by the deposition of Irene in 802, given that Nikephoros I refused further negotiations. With hindsight, this may be understood as the moment when the idea of two separate “Roman” empires was born. Pope Leo III probably was meant to act in his role as the patriarch of Rome, which entails that the enhanced papal role in the ritual resulted from his initiative to change the chronological order of its components by prepending the coronation—the reason for Charlemagne’s indignation. The Frankish relationship with Rome degraded after this. The subsequent justification for Charlemagne’s rise to emperorship in the *Annals of Lorsch*, Louis II’s letter, and, more particularly, Charlemagne’s acclamation in 812 by Michael’s delegates using a title that, as shown in chapter II, corresponded to the Byzantine imperial address, confirm that the idea of a unified empire encompassing east and west but potentially ruled by two emperors was not yet abandoned. Thus, the process of alienation between Byzantines and Franks, which had become perceivable no later than in the eighth century, had been initiated long before the idea of a shared Roman world or empire was abandoned.

The ninth century was a time of consolidation and gradual decline. A real unity with the eastern empire was never celebrated, and both entities went along their own paths. The western empire soon lost its authority and support due to the consecutive partitions of the regal domains performed since the Treaty of Verdun in 843. The contacts with Byzantium appear to have stimulated western interest in Greek language and culture, which led to an increased interest in the learning of Greek, the import and copying of Greek manuscripts, the introduction of Greek chants, and the adoption, adaptation, and reproduction of Byzantine pieces of art. These occupations, however, appear to have been mainly a western phenomenon, as they were focused mainly on western interests and not particularly dependent on or concerned with further exchanges with the Byzantine world. What followed was another period of silence. The western empire shrunk until it disappeared entirely, and the exchanges with the Roman empire had significantly reduced, although not to the same degree as in the later seventh century.

Western rulership would slowly regain strength in the tenth century and, concurrently, the exchanges with the Byzantine world reintensified. Evidence referring to any sort of notion of unity is now lacking. When the Ottonians reinitiated western emperorship, they resorted to the Carolingian model; a union or affiliation with the eastern empire was never envisaged.<sup>12</sup> The idea of two largely independent empires consolidated. If we would like to define a moment when the idea of a universal Roman empire had disappeared in the Frankish world, and east and west had ceased to consider themselves part of the same Roman world,

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed treatment, see Sarti, “Imperium in the Ottonian world” (forthcoming).

it should be sought somewhere between the later ninth and the earlier tenth century, even though it remains impossible to point the finger at a particular aspect, event, or date. Thus, the dissociation of the Frankish and Byzantine worlds was on the whole a very gradual process characterized mainly by periods of silence and alienation, which alternated with decades of strong rulership and intense contact.



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