

A Great, Vast, and All Mighty Kingdom: King Pippin, the Lombard Past, and the Eastern Frontiers of the Empire 790–810¹

1. In the aftermath of the fall of Avaria during the last decade of the eighth century, the Frankish kings extended their authority to a wide region south (and perhaps north) of the Danube.² The extent of the Frankish conquest is unknown and open to speculation; an issue reflecting the modern difficulties in understanding the eastern frontiers of the Avaric Empire.³ These uncertainties are rooted in the past: the Carolingian authors also described the emperor's authority as looming over a vast and blurred territory, variously called after the ancient Roman provinces (in our documentation we can find names such as Pannonia, Illyricum or Thrace adopted on different occasions). Einhard listed his master's conquest in the East, as extending to Istria, the two Pannonias, Dalmatia and Liburnia, but also to Dacia, a region corresponding to modern-day Romania.⁴ In the years that followed the Carolingian loss of authority in this distant territory, the Astronomer assertively called it *regio nostra*.⁵

Understanding the actual meaning of these labels in the Carolingian context is not easy: in the extensive 791-entry of the *Annales Laureshamenses*, the anonymous annalist recorded Pippin's march through Illyricum in order to reach Pannonia.⁶ The latter was, indeed, generally considered a part of the former. It seems, on the other hand, that the labels were often deployed in ways differing from the Roman usage and that, in this context, ancient nouns burdened with tradition served mental maps of still relatively unknown regions on the eastern fringes of the empire. Writing in the same years, Walafrid Strabo also turned to the ancient division of space (quoting Paulus Orosius) in order to describe the edges of Alemannia and Bavaria, Gallus' stage for missionary activity.⁷ Despite this uncertainty, we can say that vast grazing lands in the East, together with their immense treasures, were captured by the Carolingians.

2. The hero of the Avaric victory was the warlike second son of Charlemagne. Born as Carloman, the boy was baptized Pippin by Pope Hadrian when he was only four.⁸ It was Charlemagne's father's royal

¹ The research for this project was possible thanks to the FWF Project 24823: The Transformation of Roman Dalmatia. I would like to thank Carl I. Hammer, Rutger Kramer and Katharina Winckler.

² On Charlemagne's conquest of Avaria see Walter Pohl, *Die Awaren: Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, 567–822 n. Chr.* (Munich 2002) 312–322; Herwig Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume: Geschichte Österreichs vor seiner Entstehung*, *Österreichische Geschichte 378–907* (Vienna 1995) 233–239. Moreover: Charles Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians and Magyars: The Struggle for the Middle Danube* (Philadelphia 1995) 46–60.

³ Pohl, *Die Awaren* 510f.

⁴ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* 15 (ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, MGH SS rer. Ger. [25], Hanover/Leipzig 1911) 18. Different ideas were expressed by Radoslav Katičić, *Die Anfänge des kroatischen Staates*, in: *Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn I*, ed. Herwig Wolfram/Andreas Schwarcz (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Frühmittelalterforschung 8, Vienna 1985) 299–312. Moreover, on the specifics of Pannonia: Martin Eggers, *Die Verwendung und Bedeutung des Begriffes 'Pannonia' in westlichen (fränkischen) Quellen des Frühmittelalters*, in: *Südost-Forschungen* 65–66 (2006–2007) 1–27; Moreover: Gerald Huber, *Der Begriff Pannonia in den Quellen der Karolingerzeit*. (Diss.Phil., Sazburg 1972).

⁵ Astronomer, *Vita Hludowici* 42 (ed. Ernst Tremp, Thegan, *Die Taten Kaiser Ludwigs; Astronomus, Das Leben Kaiser Ludwigs*, MGH SS. rer. Germ. [64], Hanover 1995) 279–554, at 444.

⁶ *Annales Laureshamenses a. 791* (ed. Georg H. Pertz, MGH, SS 1, Hanover 1826) 19–39, at 34: *Sed et ille tunc eius exercitus quem Pippinus filius eius de Italia transmisit, ipse introivit in Illyricum et inde in Pannonia, et fecerunt ibi similiter, vastantes et incendentes terram illam, sicut rex fecit cum exercitu suo ubi ipse erat.*

⁷ Walafrid Strabo, *Vita s. Galli confessoris* (ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rer. Merov. 4, Hanover/Leipzig 1902) 280–337, at 281.

⁸ *Annales Mosellani* 781 (ed. Johann M. Lappenberg, MGH SS 16, Hanover, 1859) 491–499, at 497: *Perrexerat rex Karolus Romam et baptizatus est ibi filius eius qui vocabatur Karlomannus; quem Hadrianus papa mutato nomine vocavit Pippinum.* Jennifer R. Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire* (Cambridge 2015) 415f. Moreover: Walter Goffart, Paul

name and an augury of the greatness waiting for the young boy.⁹ A shared discourse about his talent and skills may have existed at court, and Alcuin of York chose Charles' son as his dialogue partner for the *Disputatio regalis et nobilissimi iuvenis Pippini cum Albino scholastico*.¹⁰ In the Paderborn Epic, Pippin *bellipotens, animosus heros, fortissus armis*, and whose name evokes memories of his grandfather (*avi sequitur de nomine dictus*), is following Charlemagne at the mystical hunt where the emperor dreamed of Pope Leo covered in blood and tears.¹¹

Given the expectations on him, it is no wonder that Pippin's triumph over the Avars was depicted as an epochal event and one of the greatest military achievements of Charlemagne's reign, second only to the lengthy conflicts in Saxony. Louis, who later became his father's lone successor, was the man behind the siege of Barcelona, a meagre glory when compared to the subjugation of Avaria.¹² Einhard clearly emphasised Pippin's role.¹³ Angilbert praised his homecoming with vibrant words.¹⁴ The Annals of Northumbria described the booty as immense.¹⁵ The treasure of the Huns soon became legendary and in the poem Waltharius its richness was greatly magnified.¹⁶ As if that was not enough, the war against the Avars was remembered as the triumph of Christianity over heathenism: Italian authors were particularly eager to stress this aspect.¹⁷ Pippin thereafter became a soldier of Christ, strong and merciful, but restless against the pagans.¹⁸ In the lay dedicated to his victory against the Avars, the enemies fled the Frankish armies without a fight, because they were afraid of King Pippin's radiant magnificence.¹⁹ The bloodless triumph was an old and trusted trope meant to crown victorious generals as champions of the faith: the *gentes* always run away in terror before the armies of Israel.²⁰

Pippin had been the ruler of Italy since 781.²¹ The authority of the Lombard Kings had, for more than two centuries, stretched across the Po Valley and the Apennine regions, always remaining enclosed by

the Deacon's *Gesta Episcoporum Mettensium* and the early Design of Charlemagne's Succession, in: *Traditio* 42 (1986) 59–93, at 60–64; Carl I. Hammer, *Pipinus rex: Pippin's Plot of 792 and Bavaria*, in: *Traditio* 63 (2008) 235–276, at 250.

⁹ Alcuin of York, *Epistolae* 29 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Epp. 3, Berlin 1895) 1–481, at 71: *O nobilissime iuvenis, quam nobilibus te decet esse moribus, ut sublimitas paternae gloriae appareat in filio, quia iuxta Salomonem filius sapiens gloria est patris. Vive Deo felix, florens virtutibus almis; Spes, decus Italiae, salve per saecula semper.*

¹⁰ *Disputatio regalis et nobilissimi iuvenis Pippini cum Albino scholastico* (ed. W. Wilmanns, in: *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 14 [1869]) 531–544. Martha Bayless, *Alcuin's Disputatio Pippini and the Early Medieval Riddle Tradition*, in: *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Guy Halsall (Cambridge 2002) 157–178.

¹¹ *Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa* 200–212 (ed. Franz Brunholz, in: *Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa, Ein Paderborner Epos von Jahre 799*, ed. Helmut Beumann/Franz Brünholz/Wilhelm Winkelmann (Studien und Quellen zur Westfälischen Geschichte 8, Paderborn 1966) 74. On this, see Francesco Stella, *Autore e attribuzioni del Karolus Magnus et Leo papa*, in: *Am Vorabend der Kaiserkrönung. Das Epos Karolus Magnus et Leo papa und der Papstbesuch in Paderborn 799*, ed. Peter Godman/Jörg Jarnut/Peter Johaneck (Berlin 2002) 19–33.

¹² Mayke De Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814–840* (Cambridge 2011) 16.

¹³ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* 13, ed. Holder-Egger 15f.

¹⁴ Angilbert, *Carmina* 1 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae 1, Berlin 1891) 355–381, at 358–360. See also: Dieter Schaller, *Pippins Heimkehr vom Avariensieg* (Angilbert, *carm.* 1), in: *Arbor amoena comis*, ed. Ewald Könsgen (Stuttgart 1990) 61–74.

¹⁵ *Annales Northumbrani* 795 (ed. Reinhold Pauli, MGH SS 13, Hannover 1881) 155.

¹⁶ Waltharius 260–270 (ed. Karl Strecker, MGH Poetae 6.1, Weimar 1951) 1–83, at 34f. An early ninth-century date for the poem has been suggested by Rachel Stone, *Waltharius and Carolingian Morality: Satire and Lay Values*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 21 (2013) 50–70.

¹⁷ *Conventus episcoporum ad ripas Danubii* (ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH Conc. 2.1, Hanover/Leipzig 1906) 172–176, at 173: *Christianas exercituum legiones per dilectissimum Pippinum suum*; *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani* (ed. Luigi A. Berto, *Testi storici e poetici dell'Italia carolingia, Medioevo Europeo* 3, Padua 2002) 1–19, at 18: *Post haec autem regnum Italiae tradidit magno et glorioso filio suo domno Pippino magno regi et sicut omnipotens Deus patri concessit fortitudinis gratiam, ita et in filio habundavit.*

¹⁸ Alcuin of York, *Epistolae* 119, ed. Dümmler 174: *Esto fortis in adversarios, fidelis in amicos, humilis christianis, terribilis paganis, affabilis miseris, providus in consiliis. Utere consilio senum et servitio iuvenum.*

¹⁹ *De Pippini regis victoria avarica*, ed. Luigi A. Berto, *Testi storici e poetici dell'Italia carolingia*, 67–72.

²⁰ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford 2011) 97f; Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge 1986) 109f.

²¹ On Pippin's rule in Italy: Francesco Manacorda, *Ricerche sugli inizi della dominazione dei Carolingi in Italia* (*Studi storici* 22, Rome 1968) 1–30. Moreover: Giuseppe Albertoni, *Italia carolingia* (Rome²1998) 22–32; Paolo Cammarosano, *Nobili e re: L'Italia politica nell'alto Medioevo* (Rome/Bari 1998) 139–143.

the Alpine ridges in the north and the Istrian Peninsula in the east, although some kings and dukes made claims on Carniola (Krain) and a region called Zellia.²² It seems that, at the turning of a decade, Pippin's kingdom was intended to be much bigger, extending far beyond the boundaries of the Italian peninsula.²³ It was a vast polity resembling that of Theodoric much more than that of Liutprand. In the lay on King Pippin's victory against the Avars, an anonymous poem written around 800, the wide horizons of this Kingdom of Italy and the authority of its ruler were greatly magnified.²⁴

3. And indeed Pippin's domain was big. According the 806 *Divisio regnorum*, the rising star of the young king extended his rule to Alemannia south of the River Danube and Bavaria to the same extent Tassilo had ruled it (*sicut Tassilio tenuit*).²⁵ How long the roots of this political construction were remains an open question. Dieter Geuenich noted that Alemannian charters had begun to be dated to the reign of Pippin since as early as 806, so that the *Divisio*'s dispositions were enforced before the death of Charlemagne.²⁶ At the same time, sparse clues could suggest that the authority of the Italian kings may have reached the transalpine regions even before that date: in the *Annales Alamannici* we read that as early as the last decade of the eighth century, King Pippin led an army composed of Lombards and Bavarians against the Avars.²⁷ The *Chronicon Moissiacense* described his following in the Avar Wars as formed by Franks, Lombards, Bavarians, and Alemmanians.²⁸ Also, in the narrative of the *Annales Laureshamenses*, Pippin joined the 796 campaign with a vast and composite army, which is perhaps revealing of the vastness of his authority.²⁹

It is, however, a much debated issue.³⁰ With more certainty, Pippin was able to extend his authority to vast regions in central and south-eastern Europe. As noted by Herwig Wolfram, the *regnum Italiae* was, in fact, meant to stretch extensively to the east and the south along the Valley of the Danube and the Adriatic shores.³¹ There, Pippin already acted as the ruler during the Avar campaigns: two embassies from him reached Charlemagne from Pannonia while he was waging war in Saxony in 796.³² The first was sent after Pippin was approached by the new lord of the Avars, the second time he sat in the Hring, the fabulous palace of the *qagan*, a place which historians located deep in Pannonia, maybe in the Great Alföld of the Hungarian planes.³³ The *Annales Guelferbytani* recorded that Pippin spent the winter there.³⁴ It was perhaps on this conjuncture that he gathered the synod 'on the banks of the

²² Carniola: Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 52 (ed. Ludwig Bethmann/Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer. Lang., Hanover 1878) 12–187, at 183; Herwig Wolfram, Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich: Die *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* und die Quellen ihrer Zeit (Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 31, Vienna 1995) 82–84. Zellia: Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* IV, 38, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 132; Harald Krahwinkler, Friaul im Frühmittelalter: Geschichte einer Region vom Ende des fünften bis zum Ende des zehnten Jahrhunderts (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 30, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 1992) 45. The region also appears in Carolingian charters: Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume* 225.

²³ Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume* 158.

²⁴ De Pippini regis victoria avarica 43–45, ed. Berto, *Testi storici* 72.

²⁵ *Divisio Regnorum* (806) 2 (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH Cap. 1, Hanover 1883) 126–130, at 127. Davies, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire* 359–361.

²⁶ Dieter Geuenich, Pippin, König von Italien (781–810), in: *Wandel und Konstanz zwischen Bodensee und Lombardei zur Zeit Karls des Grossen*, ed. Hans Rudolf Sennhauser, with Katrin Roth-Rubi/Eckart Kühne (Acta Münstair 3, Zürich 2013) 111–123.

²⁷ *Annales Alamannici* a. 796; a. 797, ed. Pertz 48. The Avars are here called Vandals. Bavarians (together with *Italici*) are also mentioned in the *Annales regni Francorum* [q.d. Einhardi] a. 796, ed. Kurze 99. Rosamund McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame-Indiana 2006) 81–89.

²⁸ *Chronicon Moissiacense* a. 796 (ed. Georg H. Pertz, MGH SS 1, Hanover 1826) 282–313, at 302: *aestatis tempore transmisit rex Carolus Pippinum, filium suum, cum suis quos in Italia habebat, Francos, Langobardos et Bagoarios cum aliqua parte Alamannorum, in finibus Avarorum*.

²⁹ *Annales Laureshamenses* a. 796, ed. Pertz 37: *In ipso aestate transmisit rex Carolus Pippinum filium suum cum suis quos in Italia secum habebat, et Paioarios cum aliqua parte Alamaniae in finibus Avarorum*.

³⁰ See, e.g., Carl I. Hammer's remarks on the forthcoming volume on Pippin of Italy edited by Giuseppe Albertoni and me.

³¹ Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume* 158.

³² *Annales regni Francorum* a. 796, ed. Kurze 98f.

³³ Walter Pohl, The Regia and Hring: Barbarian Places of Power, in: *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Mayke de Jong/Frans Theuvs/Carine van Rhijn (The Transformation of the Roman World 6, Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2001) 439–466. Wolfram, *Grenzen und Räume* 379.

³⁴ *Annales Guelferbytani*, (ed. Georg H. Pertz, MGH SS 1, Hanover, 1826) 23–46, at 45: *Et Pippinum misit in Hunia ad Hring*,

Danube.³⁵ Although we know that Arn of Salzburg was present, Paulinus of Aquileia was the only ecclesiastical authority mentioned, a hint for the future organization of the newly conquered lands.³⁶ Also, the plundering of the Hring and the transfer of the treasure of the ancient kings of the Avars (*thesaurum priscorum regum*) was a display of dominance. If plunder was an essential part of conquest, the formulaic mention of the spoliation that we find in the annals is revealing of the Carolingian will to take possession not only of the wealth of the Avar rulers, but also of their people.³⁷ It has to be noted, however, that the rich treasure of the Avars was brought to Aachen and not to Italy, a clear sign of the power looming large behind the young Pippin.

These are clues of the suggestive process of appropriation toward the newly conquered territories in the East deployed by some Carolingian authors close to the kings of Italy. Clues for interpreting this discourse are sparse and almost unintelligible. Yet, collecting this material may allow some new insight in an age of rapid changes.

4. The Carolingian kings often aimed to legitimize their demands of conquest with illustrious Merovingian precedents. The kings of sixth and seventh century Gaul, in fact, aimed to enforce their authority on their neighbours by presenting themselves as equal in ranking to the emperors and as the hegemonic power in western Europe.³⁸ This has also been true for Italy. In the famous letter where King Theudebert I (533–548) listed the vastness of his dominion, Northern Italy was also included.³⁹ At the end of the sixth century, Gregory of Tours once called the northern part of the peninsula *Italia minor*, suggesting its inclusion in the Merovingian kingdoms.⁴⁰ Moreover, it seems that the Franks could rely on alternative resources in order to legitimize and enforce their rule on the peninsula, and many authors of the age began to show a keen interest in the Goths, which evolved in the great revival of Theodoric's fortune.⁴¹

It would be out of place to list the evidence for this renewed centrality, but it seems to have spread quickly. The Hildebrandslied, a poem perhaps composed in the early years of the ninth century, takes

et duxit inde thesaurum magnum ad Aquas, et ibi hiemavit; et iterum mentiti sunt Huni. On this narrative: Ildar Garpizanov, *Annales Guelferbytani: Changing Perspectives of a Local Narrative*, in: *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift: Frühmittelalterliche Hagiographie und Historiographie im Spannungsfeld von Kompendienüberlieferung und Editionstechnik*, ed. Richard Corradini/Max Diesenberger/Meta Niederkorn (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 18, Vienna 2010) 105–120.

³⁵ *Conventus episcoporum ad ripas Danubii*, a. 796 (ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH Concilia 2.1 Hanover/Leipzig 1906) 172–176. Maximilian Diesenberger, *Predigt und Politik im frühmittelalterlichen Bayern* (Millennium-Studien 58, Berlin/New York 2016) 171–173; Helmut Reimitz, *Conversion and Control: the Establishment of Liturgical Frontiers in Carolingian Pannonia*, in: *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Walter Pohl/Ian Wood/Helmut Reimitz (The Transformation of the Roman World 10, Leiden/Boston/Cologne, 2000) 189–208.

³⁶ *Conventus episcoporum*, ed. Werminghoff 176: *Paulinus licet indignus servorum Domini ultimus servus, valvula sanctae et orthodoxae Aquilignensis ecclesiae sedis, horum venerabilium fratrum socius et auditor fui.* On Arn's presence at the council: Maximilian Diesenberger/Herwig Wolfram, Arn und Alkuin 790 bis 804: *Zwei Freunde und ihre Schriften*, in: *Erzbischof Arn von Salzburg*, ed. Meta Niederkorn-Bruck/Anton Scharer (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 40, Vienna 2004) 81–106.

³⁷ *Annales regni Francorum* 796, ed. Kurze 98. On the episode: Pohl, *Die Awaren* 319f. Role of plunder: Timothy Reuter, *Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire*, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 35 (1985) 75–94; repr. in: *Idem, Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities*, ed. Janet Nelson (Cambridge 2006) 231–250. Significance of the Annals' entry: Stefano Gasparri, *Il tesoro del re*, in: *Tesori: Formulazione della ricchezza nell'alto Medioevo (secoli VI–XI)*, ed. Sauro Gelichi/Cristina La Rocca (Altomedioevo 3, Rome 2004) 47–67, at 51f.

³⁸ Germana Gandino, *Il mondo franco e l'ideologia dell'espansione*, in: *Carlo Magno e le Alpi* (Atti del XVIII Congresso internazionale di studio sull'alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2007) 17–47, at 33–37.

³⁹ *Epistolae Austrasicae* 20 (ed. Elena Malaspina, *Il Liber epistolarum della cancelleria austrasica* [sec. V–VI], Biblioteca di cultura Romanobarbarica 4, Rome 2001,) 136–138.

⁴⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum* III, 32 (ed. Bruno Krusch/Wilhelm Levison, MGH SS rer. Merov. 1, Hanover 1951) 128: *Qui, minorem illam Italiam captam atque in ditionibus regis antedicti redactam, maiorem petiit; in qua contra Belsuarium multis vicibus pugnans, victuriam obtinuit.* On this passage, see the thoughtful considerations of Walter Pohl, Gregory of Tours and Contemporary Perceptions of Lombard Italy, in: *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Kathleen Mitchell/Ian Wood (Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions Medieval and Early Modern Peoples 8, Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2002) 131–144, at 138f.

⁴¹ Edward Dutton, *Charlemagne's Mustache: And Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York 2004) 3–42. Moreover: Norbert Voorwinden, *La fonction de la représentation littéraire du roi Theodoric*, in: *Histoire et littérature au Moyen Âge*, ed. Danielle Buschinger (Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 546, Göppingen 1991) 473–483.

place in the first tense and dramatic moments of the final battle between Odovacer and Theodoric for the dominion of Italy: the clash that later narratives baptized Rabenschlacht.⁴² It seems that in Italy the glorious Goths and their king became a model of authority. Both strategies, praising the Gothic heritage and downplaying the Lombard one, were part of the great awareness in that era of Europe's Germanic past.⁴³

The narratives on the conquest of Avaria could have unfolded along similar lines. Also, Central Europe was indeed among the ambitions of the sixth and seventh-century Merovingian kings. Therefore, while progressing in their 'deep expansion toward the heart of Europe,' the Carolingians followed the aims of the first Theudebert, as suggested a few years ago by the Italian historian Giovanni Tabacco.⁴⁴ Moreover, a Frankish claim on Pannonia could have also relied on illustrious literary antecedents: Gregory of Tours, composing his histories at the end of the sixth century, narrated a brief story about an alleged Frankish origin for Pannonia.⁴⁵ Yet, since late Antiquity, many other barbarian peoples had cast their shadows on the vast planes of the Danube Valley, the ferocious Lombards among them. It was, indeed, the troublesome Lombard heritage that was deployed in order to enforce the Frankish claims on the planes stretching east of Italy.

5. On the eve of the wars against the Avars, Paul the Deacon narrated at length the mythical past of its people in Central Europe. In Paul's narrative, the Lombards moved in an epic journey from the frozen landscape of Scandinavia down to the flat vastness of Central Europe, settling Rugiland; a land descriptively called Feld, that still in modern German means 'field;' and finally reaching Pannonia, the land of their greatest achievements.⁴⁶ In the eastern regions, the Lombards and their kings engaged in the wars against the Heruls and Gepids, dramatically narrated by the deacon. Paul built on the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* in order to tell a new history staged in the lands that the Carolingians were acquiring in the very same years he was writing. In the *Historia Langobardorum* the scant information of the seventh century *Origo* developed into an epic and exhilarating account. It is in narrating these conflicts that Paul seems to have inaugurated the taste for epic of Carolingian literature.⁴⁷ He presents us with a world of larger-than-life kings and warriors, treacherous vixens and bloody battles. The main hero of these conflicts is the warlike king Alboin (c. 560–572) who killed two Gepid kings and countless rivals.⁴⁸ In a famous episode, Alboin was received at the court of the Gepid king after having killed one of his sons in battle. The situation was tense and the Gepids soon began to accuse the Lombards of resembling mares because of the white bands they used to wear on their legs. One of Alboin's men answered that he should go to the plane of Asfeld where the bones of the king's son lay unburied to see how these horses could trample. Men stood up in rage, unsheathed their weapons, looking grim, and preparing to fight.

⁴² Hildebrandslied (ed. C.W.M. Grein, *Das Hildebrandslied nach der Handschrift von Neuem herausgegeben, kritisch bearbeitet und erläutert nebst Bemerkungen über die ehemaligen Fulder Codices der Casseler Bibliothek*, Göttingen 1858). On this, see also Walter Pohl, *Le origini etniche dell'Europa: Barbari e Romani tra Antichità e Medioevo* (Altomedioevo 2, Rome 2000) 151.

⁴³ Matthew Innes, *Teutons or Trojans? The Carolingians and the Germanic Past*, in: *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen/Matthew Innes (Cambridge 2000) 227–249.

⁴⁴ Giovanni Tabacco, *I processi di formazione dell'Europa carolingia*, in: *Nascita dell'Europa ed Europa carolingia: un'equazione da verificare* (2 vols, Sett. 27, Spoleto 1981) I:15–43, at 38f; quoted in Gandino, *Il mondo franco* 22.

⁴⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum* II, 9, ed. Krusch/Levison 57: *Tradunt enim multi, eosdem de Pannonia fuisse degressus*. Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850* (Cambridge 2015) 54; Sami Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past: Studies in Early Medieval Historical Narrative* (Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages 24, Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2016) 101–108. Moreover: Magali Coumert, *Origines des peuples: Les récits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental (550–850)* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes: Série Moyen Âge et Temps Modernes 42, Paris 2007) 284f.

⁴⁶ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 20, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 57.

⁴⁷ See the overview: Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge 1989) 227–232. Moreover: Walter Goffart, *Conspicuously Absent: Martial Heroism in the Histories of Gregory of Tours and Its Likes*, in: *The World of Gregory of Tours* 365–393.

⁴⁸ On Paul's Alboin: Walter Pohl, *Alboin und der Langobardenzug nach Italien: Aufstieg und Fall eines Barbarenkönigs*, in: *Sie schufen Europa: Historische Portraits von Konstantin bis Karl dem Großen*, ed. Mischa Meier (Munich 2007) 216–227; Otto Gschwantler, *Die Heldensage von Alboin und Rosimond*, in: *Festgabe Otto Höfler zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Birkhan (Philologia Germanica 2, Vienna/Stuttgart 1976) 214–254. Moreover: Francesco Borri, *Alboino: Frammenti di un racconto (VI–XI secolo)* (Altomedioevo 8, Rome 2016) 125–183.

Only the old king Thurisind (c. 540–c. 560) was able to calm their spirits and avoid a bloody melee.⁴⁹ It is a passage which clearly echoes the encounter between King Samo and Dagobert's messenger: once accused of ruling over a nation of dogs, he promised that he would show the Franks how dogs are able to bite.⁵⁰ Yet Paul told his audience something more: it was in the new regions in the east that the kings of the Lombard past won memorable victories and died. We begin to recognize topographies of memory made of battlefields, great royal halls, and burial places serving as repositories of meaning in order to support the ninth-century Frankish conquest of the vast regions.

Paul offers us a further suggestive element recording a pact that the Lombards allegedly signed with the Avars on the eve of the Lombard conquest of Italy.⁵¹ A military alliance between Avars and Lombards seems to be recorded by Menander Protector (writing at the end of the sixth century), but no author remembers the modalities described by Paul.⁵² The deacon's words are suggestive. The Avars (in the passage they are described as *Huni*) were allowed to settle the land of the Lombards in Pannonia (*sedes proprias, hoc est Pannoniam*), but the Lombards, in the case of need, could reclaim it once more (*necesse esse reverti, sua rursus arva repeterent*). The actual significance of this story remains obscure. We know that in describing the first decades of the Lombard reign in Italy, Paul relied on Secundus' Short Story, a brief narrative written at the court of Theodelinda.⁵³ The possibility that Paul lifted the information from Secundus' work cannot be ruled out, but it seems improbable because of the alleged structure of this lost narrative.⁵⁴ In my opinion the witness on the provision in the pact between Avars and Lombards was unknown before Paul wrote it.

Finally, while narrating Alboin's march to Italy, the deacon added a further detail to his sources. Mentioning the king's conquest of the peninsula, he related the legend of the *mons Regis*, the Mountain of the King. Approaching Italy from Pannonia at the head of his vast barbarian army, King Alboin climbed a high mountain. It must have been a rather clear day, because the king was able to show to his warriors the land of the future conquest and their next home. Paul continues narrating that on this mountain live kinds of buffalos, which normally dwell in Pannonia. *Nec mirum* adds the Deacon, Pannonia stretches as far as the Mountain of the King, after that comes Italy.⁵⁵ The whole story was never recorded before Paul's days and echoes of Moses and Hannibal have been found for the episode.⁵⁶ That does not necessary make the whole episode an invention of Paul's or of his source. It is also possible that a given mountain in the Eastern Alps, particularly admirable for unknown reasons (its isolation maybe? its visibility from the lowlands of Friuli? its breathtakingly beautiful ridges?), was at some point in its geologic history associated with the memory of King Alboin. I suspect that this moment, if it ever happened, must have been rather close to Paul's and Pippin's days.

The little story, however, had great significance. On the eve of vast conquests in the east, the Deacon maintained that from this corner of Italy, the Alps naturally open to Pannonia facilitating transit between the two regions.⁵⁷ Hence, at the crossroad of central Europe and the Italian peninsula, there was a place

⁴⁹ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 24, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 61f.

⁵⁰ *Chronicarum qui dicuntur Fredegarii IV*, 68 (ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rer. Merov. 2, Hanover 1888) 1–194, at 154. See the contribution of Andreas Fischer in this volume.

⁵¹ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* II, 7, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 76.

⁵² Menander Protector, *Historia* 12.1 (ed. R.C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman: Introductory Essay, Text, Translation and Historiographical Notes*, ARCA 17, Liverpool 1985) 128.

⁵³ Ken Gardiner, Paul the Deacon and Secundus of Trento, in *History and Historians in Late Antiquity*, ed. Brian Croke/Alanna M. Emmett (Elmsford 1983) 147–153; Walter Pohl, Secundus von Trient, in: *RGA* 27 (2004) 638–639. See also: Nicholas Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy c. 568–774* (Cambridge 2003) 85f.

⁵⁴ Alternative views on the nature of Secundus' story have been proposed recently: Carl I. Hammer, 'De Gestis Langobardorum: Queen Theodelinda and Lombard Royal Tradition', in: *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 48 (2014) 237–260; Benjamin Garstad, Authari in Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*: Secundus of Trent and the Alexander Tradition in Early Lombard Italy, in: *Journal of Late Antiquity* 9 (2016) 218–266. I will discuss these readings in the future.

⁵⁵ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* II, 8, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 76.

⁵⁶ On Moses: Krahwinkler, *Friaul* 29f; and many after him. On Hannibal: Dante Bianchi, *Riflessi romani nell'Historia Langobardorum di Paolo Diacono*, in: *Memorie storiche forogiuliesi* 35 (1929) 23–58. On the trope of the Alps-crossing: Katharina von Winckler, *Gemeine Plätze: Die Wahrnehmung der Alpen in (Spät)antike und (Früh)mittelalter*, in: *Berg & Leute: Tirol als Landschaft und Identität*, ed. Ulrich Leitner (*Schriften zur Politischen Ästhetik* 1, Innsbruck 2014) 302–324.

⁵⁷ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* II, 9, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 77: *ab oriente vero, ubi Panonie coniungitur, largius patentem et planissimum habet ingressum*.

loaded with the symbolical capital of the Lombard kingship. When Paul was writing, the Avaric Empire was perhaps still holding, but the winds of war were certainly blowing, and the eventual downfall of the Steppenvolk was probably predictable. Were Paul's stories linked to the military preparations in the kingdom?

6. The newly acquired regions from the Adriatic to the Danube were to be ordered under the direct control of the lords of Friuli. The dukes of Friuli had already been powerful men in the Lombard Kingdom and two kings, Ratchis (744–749) and Aistulf (749–756), were brothers who originally held the prestigious office at the north-eastern fringes of the kingdom. In the aftermath of the Frankish take-over of the kingdom, the authority of the lords of Friuli greatly increased. After the false start of Hrdogaud's, the dukes soon became among the most powerful men of the empire, extending their authority over the neighbouring regions.⁵⁸ Duke Eric of Friuli (c. 789–799) was descended from a powerful Alamannian family and had a major role in the wars against the Avars, also because of Pippin's young age.⁵⁹ The *Annales regni Francorum* recorded that a certain Vojnomir, *quedam sclavus*, served under Eric's command, a further hint of how the authority of the duke stretched to the territories surrounding Friuli.⁶⁰

It was in the days of Eric's rule over Friuli, that Paul the Deacon narrated how the first duke of the region, a man called Gisulf, a relative of King Alboin and his *marphais*, was appointed directly by the king to his office, granting him the best men (*farae*) and sturdy horses (*generosarum equarum greges*) in order to secure the frontiers of the kingdom.⁶¹ Although set in the sixth century, the story of Gisulf may have been a much later creation, when the dukes of Friuli were honoured by the prestigious title of *custos* or *praefectus* of the oriental borders, as in the case of Balderic (815–828).⁶² Paul's story made the aristocracies of Friuli descendants of the great king Alboin and the strongest of his men, coming directly from Pannonia after a major victory against the Gepids. It is questionable whether the veterans of the Avaric campaigns still prided themselves on their lineage and the strong mounts they were riding. We could also speculate whether the latter story may have originated or gained deeper meaning in the aftermath of the equine plague of 791.⁶³ Either way, the elaboration of these myths could be better understood by keeping in mind the rising discourse on the awesome authority of the lords of Friuli.

In 799, Duke Eric fell in battle close to Tsart, the hill above modern-day Rijeka (Hr). The Royal Annalist, and Einhard after him, recorded that the duke was killed by the treachery of the inhabitants (*oppidanei*) of the town.⁶⁴ The city was part of the ancient Roman province of Liburnia, which was a region roughly corresponding to the Kvarner Gulf, a further clue of the authority of the dukes of Friuli. The event must have been rather traumatic and it is possible that Alcuin had Eric and Gerold, who died in the same year fighting the Avars, in mind when he described the strong men (*virī fortissimi*) who died tragically. The scholar commented that not only sorrow for the lost, but also anguish for the safety of the borders of the empire was troubling him.⁶⁵

Eric did not enjoy the pious afterlife of Gerold, who was seen by Wetti in the Heavens.⁶⁶ Yet, Patriarch Paulinus of Aquileia wrote a long lament to honour the memory of the fallen duke, describing

⁵⁸ Krahwinkler, *Friaul im Frühmittelalter* 151; Stefano Gasparri, *Istituzioni e poteri nel territorio friulano in età longobarda e carolingia*, in: Paolo Diacono e il Friuli altomedievale (secc. VI–X) (2 vols, Atti del XIV Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'alto Medioevo, Spoleto 2001) I:105–128, at 122f; Peter Štih, *The Middle Ages between the Eastern Alps and the Northern Adriatic: Selected Papers on Slovene Historiography and Medieval History* (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450 11, Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2010) 210f.

⁵⁹ Eduard Hlawitschka, *Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunder in Oberitalien (774–962)* (Forschungen zur ober-rheinischen Landesgeschichte 8, Freiburg-Bresgau 1960) 176f; Krahwinkler, *Friaul* 143–157. Moreover: James B. Ross, *Two Neglected Paladins of Charlemagne: Erich of Friuli and Gerold of Bavaria*, in: *Speculum* 20 (1945) 212–235.

⁶⁰ *Annales regni Francorum* a. 796, ed. Kurze 98.

⁶¹ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* II, 9, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 77f.

⁶² Philippe Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781–840)* (Instrumenta 1, Sigmaringen 1997) 119; Hlawitschka, *Franken* 146f; Krahwinkler, *Friaul* 192–197.

⁶³ On the plague: Carroll Gillmor, *The 791 Equine Pestilence and its Impact on Charlemagne's Army*, in: *Journal of Medieval Military History* 3 (2005) 23–45.

⁶⁴ *Annales regni Francorum* a. 799, ed. Kurze 108. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* 13, ed. Holder-Egger 16.

⁶⁵ Alcuin of York, *Epistolae* 185, ed. Dümmler 310: *Ecce quomodo recesserunt subito viri fortissimi, qui terminos custodierunt, etiam et dilataverunt, christiani imperii. Non solum hoc damnum plangimus, sed maioris periculi signum timemus.*

⁶⁶ Heito, *Visio Wettini* 802–803 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Poetae* 2, Berlin 1884) 301–334, at 329.

him dying pierced by arrows and javelins under his arms, like a Homeric hero.⁶⁷ Beyond the rhetoric of the genre, Paulinus' lay depicts the wide reach of the duke's authority. In his rhyme, the patriarch listed the cities and the waterways that should join the poet in his cry.⁶⁸ He mentioned the Tsiza, the Sava and the Danube; while among the cities we find the towns of Friuli and Istria, but also the ancient civitas of Sirmium, today Sremska Mitrovica in the Republic of Serbia. We do not know if the Frankish army conquered regions so far abroad, but the symbolic capital of the town must have been clear: Sirmium, the former seat of Roman Pannonia, was one of the (many) *sedes imperii* of the Roman Empire. Moving to the catalogue of the barbarians subjugated by the warlike Eric, Paulinus mentioned the wildest *gentes* inhabiting the regions surrounded by the Danube, the Drave and hidden by the rushes of the Maeotian Swamp, to stretch south to the *terminus Dalmatiarum*: the eastern Adriatic shores.⁶⁹ Afterwards, the lay assumes a titanic dimension, perhaps aiming to express the measureless territory of Eric's and Pippin's domain.⁷⁰ Paulinus recorded the *Turris Stratonis*, the first of all the frontiers (*limitis principium*), which Dag Norberg read as an assonance meant to indicate Straßburg, Eric's hometown and the northern edge of the Danubian frontier; Scythia; and the *cardinis* (axis, chief point) of Thrace, from where south and north divide until the Caspian Gate.⁷¹

The mention of these extreme lands perhaps echoed the conquests of Alexander the Great, who enjoyed great popularity as the hero reaching the farthest places on earth.⁷² Mentions of the king are plentiful, and particularly suggestive are the ones to be found in the Cosmography of Aethicus or the Liber Monstrorum.⁷³ His myth was strong in Charlemagne's years too: Ermold the Black described Alexander the Great as a ruler willing to conquer the entire world.⁷⁴

It is clear how Paulinus' words revealed a political programme rather than an actual situation. Nevertheless, a hegemony of the Italian kings and the dukes of Friuli north of the Danube is apparently attested for (at least) the second decade of the ninth century. In addition to Einhard's witness in the Vita Karoli Magni discussed above, we find the presence of a branch of Abodriti, a barbarian group from Central Europe, among the *gentes* subjected to the emperor, which met the emperor in the aftermath of King Bernard's revolt in 818.⁷⁵ In a later entry, the Royal Annalist described them as hailing from Dacia.⁷⁶ Notwithstanding the extent to which their inclusion reflected the actual extension of Carolingian authority in the East, the patriarch's verses must have found agreement among the military elites of the kingdom. Classical echoes were invoked to enforce the oriental aims of the King of Italy and of the aristocracy of the kingdom.

7. The clearest ideological statement of King Pippin's authority in the East is the Historia Langobardorum now preserved in the Library of Gotha (the narrative which Georg Waitz called Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani). The history was probably written after the 807 Frankish expeditions

⁶⁷ Versus de Herico Duce 10 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae 1, Berlin 1881) 131–133, at 132. See also the commentary: Dag Norberg, L'œuvre poétique de Paulin d'Aquilee: Edition critique avec introduction et commentaire (Filologisk-filosofiska Serien 18, Stockholm 1979) 34–38. Moreover: Krahwinkler, Friaul 154–158; Wolfram, Grenzen und Räume 241; Helmut Reimitz, Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitung im karolingischen Mitteleuropa, in: Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter, ed. Walter Pohl/Helmut Reimitz (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 1, Vienna 2000) 105–166, at 148–150.

⁶⁸ Rivers: Versus de Herico Duce 1, ed. Dümmler 131; cities: ibid. 2, ed. Dümmler 131.

⁶⁹ Versus de Herico Duce 6, ed. Dümmler 131.

⁷⁰ Pohl, Die Awaren 321.

⁷¹ Versus de Herico Duce 7, ed. Dümmler 132. On the *Turris Stratonis*: Norberg, L'œuvre poétique 36; see, however, also the reading of Alessio Peršić and Sandro Piusi, who interpreted the place name as located in the Danube's estuary: Paulino patriarcha di Aquileia, Opere II: Ritmi e carmi (ed. Eidem, Corpus scriptorium ecclesiae Aquileiensis 10.2, Aquileia 2007) 228.

⁷² Reimitz, Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitung 150.

⁷³ Peter Dronke, Introduzione, in: Alessandro nel Medioevo occidentale, ed. Mariantonia Liborio (Rome 1997) xiii–lxxv.

⁷⁴ Ermold the Black, In honorem Hludowici christianissimi Caesaris Augusti IV, 2146 (ed. Edmond Faral, Ermold le Noir: Poème sur Louis le Pieux et épîtres au roi Pépin, Les Classiques de l'Histoire de France au Moyen Age 14, Paris 1932) 164.

⁷⁵ Annales regni Francorum a. 818, ed. Kurze 149: *erant ibi et aliarum nationum legati, Abodritum*.

⁷⁶ Annales regni Francorum a. 824, ed. Kurze 165f: *caeterum legatos Abodritorum, qui vulgo Praedenecenti vocantur et contermini Bulgaris Daciam Danubio adiacentem incolunt*.

in Sardinia and before the king's death in 810.⁷⁷ We are in the years after the Avaric victory and immediately following the *Divisio regnorum* of 806 in the high tide of king Pippin's power. The *Historia* is a well-known text. It is a brief composition building on the structure of the *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, but revealing of a ninth-century context, when the Franks ruled the Kingdom of Italy. In the history of Gotha the royal-list at the back bone of the *Origo* is continued until King Desiderius (759–774) and afterward a second textual section describes the deeds of the Frankish kings in Italy.⁷⁸ Moreover, the author was able to share some of Paul the Deacon's sources, and it has been suggested that he could have had an indirect knowledge of the *Historia Langobardorum*.⁷⁹ The narrative raises many fascinating issues that it would be inappropriate to analyse here.⁸⁰ We can, however, safely assess that Pippin is the valiant hero of the narrative. The author characterized him as the powerful king of Italy, inheriting his father's strength and warlike attitude.⁸¹ The victory against the Avars here becomes the culmination of King Pippin's reign. The whole narrative is indeed triumphalist in tone and viciously abusive towards the Avars. This must have a fragment of a contemporary discourse: in the *Hildebrandslied*, the young and overconfident Haudobrand, in order to mock his rival, addressed him sly, old Hun, *alter Hun*.⁸²

As Paul did, the author of the *Historia Langobardorum* of Gotha recorded an agreement between Lombards and Avars. He maintained the existence of a *carta conscriptions*, according to which the pact was meant to last two centuries. There was no mention of a termination notice in Paul's account of the same events. In the aftermath of the Frankish conquest of Avaria, the alleged alliance between Lombards and Avars was maintained to have expired, furnishing us with a different perspective for Pippin's campaigns.

Moreover, from sparse entries, the author apparently aimed to create continuity between the bygone Lombard victories and King Pippin's conquests. As in the evidence mentioned above, a major concern was to create a Lombard past in the East in order to legitimize the present Frankish expansion. Therefore, continuity was built between the Lombard warriors of the past and the Frankish armies of the author's days, as already noticed by Magali Coumert.⁸³ The author maintained that Agilmund, the first king of the Lombards, once fought the Beovindi, a population seldom mentioned but identified with the Bohemians thanks to a passage of the *Annales Xantenses*, in a land called Patespruna, maybe the region of Paderborn.⁸⁴ The same Beovindi were, according to the history of Gotha, the eastern enemies of King Pippin.⁸⁵ The creation of a common enemy may have been a strategy meant to enforce continuity and cohesion. According to the history of Gotha, the Avars, Pippin's most glorious conquest, had also already been crushed by the Lombards once they moved from Thrace to Pannonia.⁸⁶ All this information was unknown to sixth century authors, and, as in the case of the Beovindi/Bohemians, was mostly anachronistic. In the ninth-century context the victories of the Lombards against the eastern and northern neighbours and their presence in Thrace served as precedents for Pippin's actions. The History

⁷⁷ *Historia Langobardorum codis Gothani*, ed. Berto. On the narrative: Walter Pohl, *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, in: *I Longobardi e la storia: Un percorso attraverso le fonti*, ed. Francesco Lo Monaco/Francesco Mores (Altomedioevo 7, Rome 2012) 105–121, at 12f; Luigi A. Berto, *Introduzione*, in: *Testi storici e poetici dell'Italia carolingia xi–lv*, at xv–xx.

⁷⁸ Coumert, *Origines des peuples* 253f.

⁷⁹ Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550 – 800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Notre Dame-Indiana 2005) 382, n. 163; Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy* 94.

⁸⁰ I hope to deal with this narrative in my contribution to the volume on Pippin I am editing together with Giuseppe Albertoni.

⁸¹ *Historia Langobardorum codis Gothani* 2, ed. Berto 4.

⁸² *Hildebrandslied* 39, ed. Grein 19: *du bist dir, alter Hun, • ummet spaher [you believe, old Hun, to be excessively canny]*.

⁸³ Coumert, *Origines des peuples* 259.

⁸⁴ *Historia Langobardorum codis Gothani* 11, ed. Berto 18. *Annales Xantenses* a. 846, (ed. Bernhard von Simson, *Annales Xantenses et Annales Vedastini*, MGH SS. rer. Ger. [12], Hanover/Leipzig 1909) 1–33, at 15: *Ipse vero cum exercitu suo contra Boemannos perrexit, quos nos Beuwinita vocamus*. Jaroslav Jirik, *Bohemians Barbarians: Bohemia in Late Antiquity*, in: *Neglected Barbarians*, ed. Florin Curta (Studies in the Early Middle Ages 32, Turnhout 2011) 265–319, at 301. On Patespruna and Paderborn: Jörg Jarnut, *Langobarden in Paderborn?* in: *Westfälische Zeitschrift* 136 (1986) 219–233.

⁸⁵ *Historia Langobardorum codis Gothani* 11, ed. Berto 18: *Post haec et Beowindis cum exercitu suo perrexit eamque vastavit et populos terrae eius predavit et captivos adduxit*.

⁸⁶ *Historia Langobardorum codis Gothani* 2, ed. Berto 6: *unde cum Abaris reluctantes seu bella plurima ardentissimo animo ipsam Pannoniam expugnaverunt*.

of Gotha, alone, is explicit in recording the king's conquest of *Tratia*.⁸⁷ As in the *Versus de Herico Duce*, this witness is problematic, but it remains symptomatic of a discourse according to which the lands south of the Danube belonged to the kings of Italy in their entirety.

There is a further subtext in the *Historia Langobardorum* of Gotha. We read, in fact, that the remains of King Wacho's palace (*domus et habitatio*) were still to be seen in the ninth century, perhaps not far from the land of the Beovindi.⁸⁸ Wacho (c. 510–540) was a sixth-century Lombard king. No earlier mention of this architecture is known and it is unfortunate that the anonymous author's entry is so laconic. We may well doubt that Pippin and his soldiers met this crumbling architecture in their march east. Yet, the author's intent is clear. The palace of Wacho was a focus for identity and memory and its mention intended to create a symbol of the past Lombard lordship in the ninth-century Eastland to enforce the royal claims on the region. It was a move consistent with the Carolingian techniques for establishing legitimacy. Stuart Airlie remembered how Louis the Pious (814–840), the bearer of the prestigious Merovingian royal name Clovis, dwelled in the palace of Compiègne, apparently in order to combine the aura of the Merovingians with that of his own dynasty.⁸⁹ Pippin and his counsellors may have sought to achieve similar aims, merging the symbolic capital of the Lombard crown and the Carolingian blood in order to rule the newly conquered territories in the east. The results may have been portentous if time had been more generous with the young ruler. A palace in a faraway corner of the empire implied that the royal authority could reach far and be enforced from that very place.⁹⁰

Why King Wacho must remain a matter of opinion. Like King Hygelac, rulers of the past became powerful symbols for reasons that we do not always grasp.⁹¹ We know, however, that Wacho was remembered as a powerful conqueror ruling a vast polity on the Danube.⁹² His was an ally of the Franks, and he was bound to both them and the Bavarians due to matrimonial allegiances.⁹³ That the character of Wacho may have gained some momentum at the turning of the ninth century could perhaps be deduced from an obscure reference in Paul's history. Narrating the ruler's impressive deeds, Paul felt the urge to address his audience, telling them that those who disbelieve Wacho's action should re-read the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* in order to find a confirmation of his words.⁹⁴ Was it a rhetoric device to introduce a new cycle of narratives linked to the sixth-century Lombard king? It is possible that the memory of King Audoin (c. 546–560), the father of Alboin, the great conqueror of Italy, also acquired meaning.⁹⁵ In the history of Gotha, we are informed about his ancestry due to the mention of his mother Menia and her husband *Pissa rex*, perhaps the Thuringian ruler Bisin (c. 500).⁹⁶ In the narrative we also find the clearest account of his death in Pannonia. Is it possible that in the aftermath of the wars in Avaria a mound visible in the wide Pannonian planes was believed to be King Audoin's burial mound?⁹⁷

The relationship between these eastern regions and the Lombard past could be read in a final piece of evidence: in the 799-entry by the author of the so-called annals of Einhard, he wrote that the Lombards

⁸⁷ *Historia Langobardorum* codis Gothani 11, ed. Berto 18: *Per quem Tratia provincia una cum Abaris ad Francorum servitudinem est redacta.*

⁸⁸ *Historia Langobardorum* codis Gothani 2, ed. Berto 6: *Usque hodie praesentem diem Wachoni regi eorum domus et habitatio apparet signa.*

⁸⁹ Stuart Airlie, *The Palace of Memory: The Carolingian Court as a Political Centre*, in: *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones/Richard Marks/Alastair Minnes (Woodbridge 2000) 1–20, at 14.

⁹⁰ Airlie, *The Palace of Memory* 10.

⁹¹ Corinne Susaneck, *Hygelac*, in: *RGA* 15 (2000) 298–300.

⁹² On Wacho: Jörg Jarnut, *Wacho*, in: *RGA* 33 (2006) 6f. Moreover: Francesco Vianello, *Wer war Wacho?* in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 34 (1995) 389–403.

⁹³ Walter Pohl, *Gender and Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, in: *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker/Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge 2004) 23–42.

⁹⁴ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* I, 21, ed. Bethmann/Waitz 59f.

⁹⁵ On Audoin: Reinhard Wenskus, *Audoin*, in: *RGA* 1 (1973) 475f.

⁹⁶ *Historia Langobardorum* codis Gothani 6, ed. Berto 9. On Menia: Wolfram Brandes, *Das Gold der Menia*, in: *Millennium 2* (2005) 175–227; on the identification of Pissa with Bisin: *ibid.* 181; S. Joye, *Basine, Radegonde et la Thuringe chez Grégoire de Tours*, in: *Francia* 32 (2005) 1–17, at 6. Moreover: Jörg Jarnut, *Thüringer und Langobarden im 6. und beginnenden 7. Jahrhundert*, in: *Die Frühzeit der Thüringer: Archäologie, Sprache, Geschichte*, ed. Helmut Castritius/Dieter Geuenich/Matthias Werner (*RGA*, *Ergänzungsband* 63, Berlin/New York 2009) 279–290.

⁹⁷ *Historia Langobardorum* codis Gothani 6, ed. Berto 9: *et mortuus est Audoin in Pannonia.*

used to call the Hring, the palace of the Avaric rulers, *campus*.⁹⁸ Also on this occasion, a place in the far-eastern regions of the empire was associated with the history of the Lombards. Walter Pohl suggested that it could have meant a homecoming.⁹⁹ *Campus*, in fact, clearly recalls the Feld of the Lombard historiography: the unidentified place in the misty past of Lombard history where the ancient kings fought and died.

8. These efforts were not destined to success. In 810, King Pippin died leaving a sorrowful father and anxious followers in Italy.¹⁰⁰ Laments were written for his death: the Exul Hibernicus lamented him as a great and good king.¹⁰¹ The author of the *Annales Iuvavenses Maiores* or *Salzburger Annalen*, a narrative written in Bavaria, after having recorded the division of 806, linked a solar-eclipse to King Pippin's death.¹⁰² The king's authority was supposed to pass as an inheritance to his son Bernard, who was a young man at the time. In 812 Charlemagne confirmed Pippin's son as his father's successor and this decision was confirmed in his will.¹⁰³ Young Bernard apparently also had some supporters outside the kingdom, as revealed by some clues in the narratives from those years. The *Annals Xantenses* made this succession crystal clear.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the *Annales sancti Emmerammi Ratisponensis*, written in Bavaria before the rise of Louis the German, revealed continued strong connections with Italy. Besides Emperors Charles and Louis, the rulers recorded by the annalist are Pippin and Bernard. In the narrative, a plague ravaged many animals after Pippin's death.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Charlemagne's authority clearly looms over Bernard's kingship.¹⁰⁶ The young King's position nevertheless remained weak and Karl-Ferdinand Werner suggested that he may have been illegitimate.¹⁰⁷

The death of Charlemagne in 814 must have further enfeebled the Italian ruler and his aristocrats, leaving them without any backing. In the 817 *Divisio imperii*, the dissolution of the eastern offshoots of the Kingdom of Italy was ratified. Bernard rebelled against his uncle in the same year. The story is well known to modern historians as it must have been surprising and disgraceful for contemporaries.¹⁰⁸ The author of the *Annales sancti Emmerammi Ratisponensis* seems to create a connection between Bernard's fatality and Ljudevit's rebellion, a *carmula* which troubled Louis for years: it was perhaps a reason for the emperor's decision.¹⁰⁹

⁹⁸ *Annales regni Francorum* [q.d. Einhardi] 779, ed. Kurze 99: *hringus a Langobardis autem campus vocatur*.

⁹⁹ Pohl, *Die Awaren* 307.

¹⁰⁰ Charlemagne's affection for Pippin is described on many occasions. Yet, it seems that we could have a hint of this relationship beyond the rhetoric of the time. In the aftermath of the Avaric campaign of 796, Alcuin wrote to Charles in order to urge him to show mercy to the prisoners. In order to move the king, Alcuin recalled the presence of Pippin at court: Alcuin of York, *Epistolae* 118, ed. Dümmler 173: *dum est Pippinus tuus tecum*; Manacorda, *Ricerche* 7f. Charles II, the emperor's firstborn, may have had a less favorable position: Carl I. Hammer, *Christmas Day 800: Charles the Younger, Alcuin and the Frankish Royal Succession*, in: *English Historical Review* 127 (2012) 1–23; together with the response from Davies, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire* 419.

¹⁰¹ *Hibernicus Exul*, *Carmina* 15 (ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Poetae* 1 Berlin 1881) 393–425, at 405.

¹⁰² *Annales Iuvavenses Maiores* 810 (ed. Georg H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1, Hanover 1826) 87–89, at 88: *domnus Pipinus obiit 8. Idus Iulias. Pridie Kal. Dec. eclipsis solis facta est ab. hora 4. usque in horam 7. die sabbathi*.

¹⁰³ *Annales regni Francorum* a. 812, ed. Kurze 136f; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. Holder-Egger 37–41. Matthew Innes, *Charlemagne's Will: Piety, Politics and the Imperial Succession*, in: *English Historical Review* 112 (1997) 833–855. On Bernard there is an old monograph by Bartolomeo Malfatti, *Bernardo re d'Italia* (Florence 1876).

¹⁰⁴ *Annales Xantenses* a. 812, ed. von Simson 4: *dedit Karolus imperator filio filii sui Bernhardo, filio pippini regis, regnum Langobardorum*.

¹⁰⁵ *Annales sancti Emmerammi Ratisponensis Maiores* a. 810 (ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS* 1, Hanover 1826) 91–93, at 92: *Pippinus obiit 8. Id. Iul. Magna mortalitas animalium fuit*.

¹⁰⁶ *Annales sancti Emmerammi Ratisponensis Maiores* a. 812, ed. Pertz 92: *Bernhardus a domno Carolo rex factus est*.

¹⁰⁷ On Bernard's supporters, see Innes, *Charlemagne's Will* 843–845. On his illegitimate birth, see Karl-Ferdinand Werner, *Hludowicus Augustus gouverner l'empire chrétien, idées et réalités*, in: *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious* (814 – 840), ed. Peter Godman/Roger Collins (Oxford 1990) 3–123, at 34f. Johannes Fried, *Erfahrung und Ordnung. Die Friedenskstitution Karls des Großen vom Jahr 806*, in: *Herrscher- und Fürstentestamente im westeuropäischen Mittelalter*, ed. Brigitte Kasten (Norm und Struktur, 29, Cologne, 2008), pp. 145–192.

¹⁰⁸ Literature on Bernard's revolt saw very important contributions that I will not quote only for reasons of space. See now, with references to previous research: Steffen Patzold, *Zwischen Gerichtsurteil und politischem Mord: Der rätselhafte Tod König Bernhards von Italien im Jahr 818*. In: *Politische Morde in der Geschichte: Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Georg Schild/Anton Schindling (Paderborn/Munich/Vienna/Zurich 2012) 37–54.

¹⁰⁹ *Annales sancti Emmerammi Ratisponensis Maiores* a.818, ed. Pertz 92: *Pernhardus rex carmalum levavit*; *ibid* 819, ed. Pertz 92: *Pernhardus interiit. Hiltipaldus episcopus obiit et Odolfus comis. Liudwit carmulam levavit*.

In the years that followed things went from bad to worse: after a series of frustrating misunderstandings, the Bulgars, perhaps an attractive target for conquest in the days of Pippin's rule, hit back attacking the south-eastern border of the Italian kingdom, replacing the local lords loyal to the Franks with their own.¹¹⁰

Balderic was held responsible for the loss of Pannonia and the authority of the lords of Friuli was split among four *duces*, becoming a miserable office until the advent of Count (*marchio*) Eberhard.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, the newly-crowned King of Bavaria (826) gained increasing influence in many regions formerly controlled by the dukes of Friuli and the Italian king.¹¹² Also Dalmatia, both coastal and inland, was eventually lost: by 840 at the latest, no harbours further east than Istria belonged to the Kingdom.¹¹³ This downfall was reflected in a dramatic loss of information. Pannonia was still mentioned in the Carolingian witnesses, but until the advent of the Hungarians the label mostly referred to Lower Austria.¹¹⁴ Dalmatia instead became increasingly distant from the Frankish centre of powers, with a consequent eclipse from the written evidence. No further mention was ever made of Dacia as part of the Carolingian empire. This was the end of the eastern fringes of the Italian kingdom.

9. Pippin's kingdom vanished in the cracks of history leaving only faint clues in the contemporary literature.¹¹⁵ We know that, in an apparent contradiction, the Frankish rulers relied on the past of the Goths in order to rule Italy, preferring it to the Lombard one, but, willing to enforce their dominance on the south-eastern fringes of the empire, they turned to the memory of the Lombards instead. However, pretending to find coherence in the myth of the Carolingian expansion, as in any myth, would be ill-founded. It seems to have made perfect sense to criticize the Lombard past of Italy, while exalting the bygone Lombard domination in the east. In the discourse alive in King Pippin's court, Pannonia with the neighbouring regions became the stage for the great heroes of the *Völkerwanderungszeit*. It was a place of battles and honour, where the contemporary masculine values of the lay aristocracies were imagined to have been performed long ago. Also, in the poem Waltharius, which many historians dated to the very first years of the ninth century, Pannonia becomes the place where Walter and his companions grew up, battling each other at the Hunnish court, and the land of formidable warriors. It seems that in the Frankish discourse of the time, the Italian Eastland was the graveyard of the mighty rulers of Europe's barbarian past. The snow covered *mons Regis*, the palace of Wacho, the burial of Audoin, and great timber halls of Thurisind were perhaps part of a more conspicuous repertoire, recalling stories told to enforce legitimacy to rule in Central Europe. Moving east, the *scarae* of Pippin and Charlemagne entered a region where greater men had fallen, and whose bones remained unburied. In these vast meadows the ghost of the Lombard past was recalled to enforce a Frankish present.

The brief existence of Pippin's kingdom highlights the shifting nature of the political frontiers and the kaleidoscopic fluctuation of power discourses intended to enforce them. For a transient season the Kingdom of Italy was meant to be great, vast and all mighty (*crande, amplum et potentissimum*), a kingdom extending over lands, springs, rivers and human beings (*terras, fontes, rivos, montes et formasti hominem*), that neither the Caesars nor the Pagans ever conquered.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ *Annales regni Francorum* a. 827, ed. Kurze 173.

¹¹¹ *Annales regni Francorum* a. 828, ed. Kurze 174. Krahwinkler, Friaul 194f; Gasparri, Istituzioni e poteri 122f; Wolfram, *Granze und Räume* 247.

¹¹² Eric Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817–876* (Ithaca-New York 2006) 47–56; Carl I. Hammer, *From Ducatus to Regnum: Ruling Bavaria under the Merovingians and Early Carolingians* (HAMA 2, Turnhout 2007) 201–270.

¹¹³ *Pactum Lotharii* (ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH, Capit. 2, Hanover 1897) 130–135. On this: Francesco Borri, *Captains and Pirates: Ninth Century Dalmatia and Its Rulers*, in: *I tempi del consolidamento: Venezia, l'Adriatico e l'entroterra tra IX e X secolo*, ed. Stefano Gasparri/Sauro Gelichi (SAAME, Turnhout 2017) 9–35, at 18f.

¹¹⁴ Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich* 68–71.

¹¹⁵ Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London 2011).

¹¹⁶ *De Pippini regis victoria avarica* 43–45, ed. Berto 70.