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Italy and Early Medieval Europe

Papers for Chris Wickham

EDITED BY **Ross Balzaretti,**
Julia Barrow and Patricia Skinner

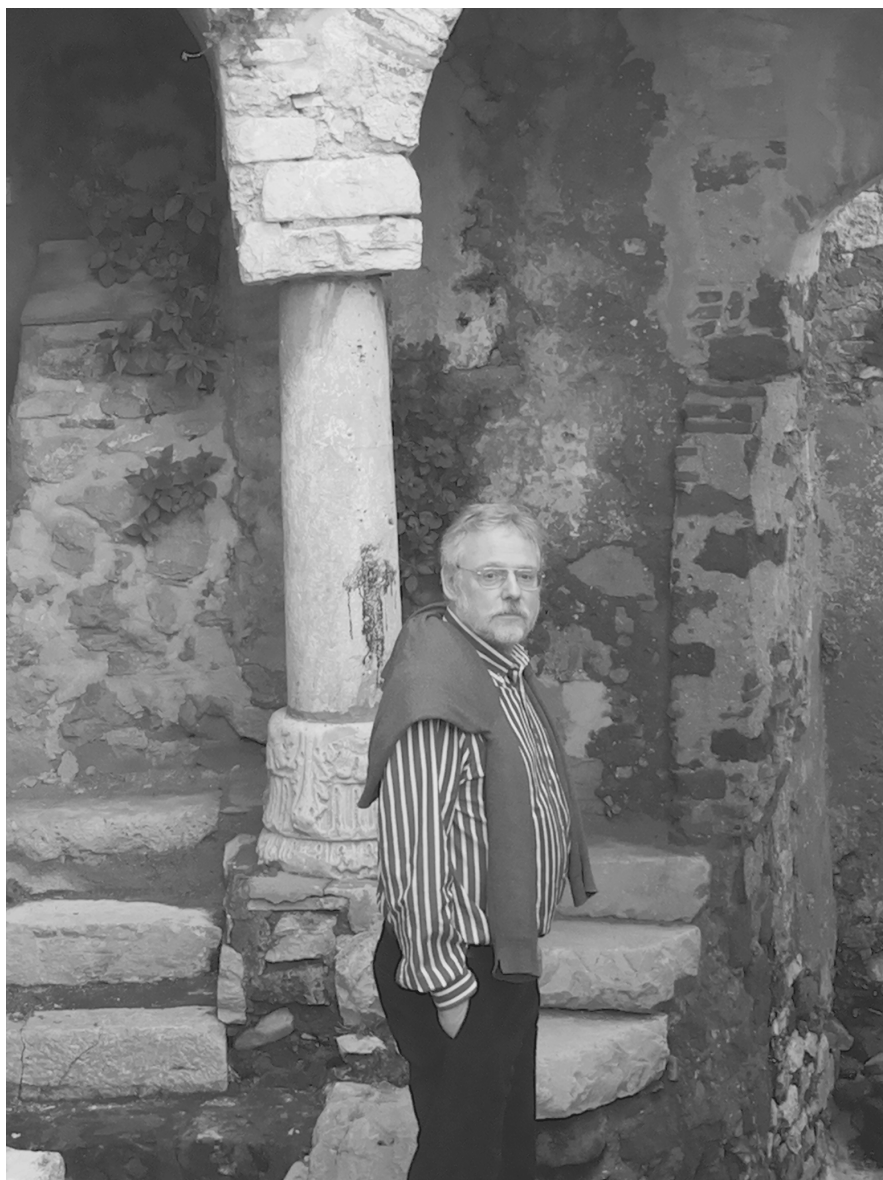


THE PAST & PRESENT BOOK SERIES

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Italy and Early Medieval Europe



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Papers for Chris Wickham

Edited by
ROSS BALZARETTI, JULIA BARROW,
and
PATRICIA SKINNER

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Tabula Gratulatoria

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Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	xi
<i>List of Common Abbreviations</i>	xiii

Italy and the Early Middle Ages: A Journey through Time and Space <i>Ross Balzaretti, Julia Barrow, and Patricia Skinner</i>	1
---	---

Chris—An Appreciation <i>Jinty Nelson</i>	5
--	---

Lodare ‘il Wickham’ <i>Cristina La Rocca</i>	14
---	----

I. LORDS AND PEASANTS: FRAMES FOR THE MIDDLE AGES

1. Social Cohesion, Breaks, and Transformations in Italy, 535–600 <i>Walter Pohl</i>	19
2. The Roman Origins of the Northumbrian Kingdom <i>Ian Wood</i>	39
3. Longobardi in the Sixth Century without Paulus Diaconus <i>Patrick Geary</i>	50
4. <i>Boni homines</i> in Northern Iberia: A Particularity that Raises some General Questions <i>Wendy Davies</i>	60
5. Gender and the Gift: The Giving and Receiving of Women in Early Medieval England <i>Pauline Stafford</i>	73
6. Still Fussing about Feudalism <i>Susan Reynolds</i>	87
7. Travail, salaire et pauvreté au moyen âge <i>Laurent Feller</i>	95
8. Bastard Feudalism and the Framing of Thirteenth-Century England <i>Peter Coss</i>	110
9. Changing Rural Settlements in the Early Middle Ages in Central and Northern Italy: Towards the Centralization of Rural Property <i>Marco Valenti</i>	123
10. Between the City and the Countryside: The Aristocracy in the March of <i>Tuscia</i> (Late Tenth–Early Twelfth Centuries) <i>Maria Elena Cortese</i>	140

11. Riflessioni sulle economie dei secoli X e XI: Palermo e Roma a confronto 155
Alessandra Molinari
12. Reframing Norman Italy 171
Sandro Carocci
13. Labour Services and Peasant Obligations in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Southern Italy 182
G. A. Loud

II. TEXTS AND MEMORY

14. An Arena of Abuses and Competing Powers: Rome in Cassiodorus's *Variarum* 201
Cristina La Rocca
15. Topographic Memory 213
Elizabeth Fentress
16. The *Damnatio Memoriae* of Pope Constantine II (767–768) 231
Rosamond McKitterick
17. Fame and its Vagaries in the Middle Ages 249
Antonio Sennis
18. Archives and Social Change in Italy, c.900–1100: The Evidence of Dispute Notices 261
Marios Costambeys
19. Disputed Possession, Legal Process, and Memory in Thirteenth-Century Lombardy: The Case of Guastalla and Luzzara (1193–1227) 274
Edward Coleman
20. 'To Destroy a City so Great and Remarkable': Lamentation, Panegyric, and the Idea of the Medieval City 291
Paul Oldfield

III. ECONOMIC RESOURCES

21. 'Framing' and Lighting: Another Angle on Transition 305
Paul Fouracre
22. Lands and Lights in Early Medieval Rome 315
Joanna Story
23. Garden Cities in Early Medieval Italy 339
Caroline Goodson
24. Chestnuts in Charters: Evidence for Specialized Production in Tenth-Century Genoa and Milan 356
Ross Balzaretti

25. The 'Life Aquatic' on Athos in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries 372
Rosemary Morris
26. Public Powers, Private Powers, and the Exploitation of Metals
for Coinage: The Case of Medieval Tuscany 384
Giovanna Bianchi
27. Coinage and the Tributary Mode of Production 402
Eduardo Manzano Moreno
28. Comparing Medieval Iceland with other Regions: Problems
and Possibilities 416
Chris Callow
29. Early Medieval Wales and Calabria: A Mountain of Problems? 430
Patricia Skinner

IV. THE SPIRITUAL ECONOMY

30. Devozione longobarda 441
Paolo Delogu
31. Cursing and Curing, or the Practice of Christianity in
Eighth-Century Rome 460
Julia M. H. Smith
32. Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Views on Islam and on *Jihād*,
c.900 CE: A Papal Connection? 476
John Haldon
33. The Two Republics: *Ecclesia* and the Public Domain in
the Carolingian World 486
Mayke de Jong
34. Developing Definitions of Reform in the Church in the
Ninth and Tenth Centuries 501
Julia Barrow
35. Memory, Gift, and Politics: Matilda of Tuscany and her
Donations to St Peter 512
Régine Le Jan
36. Como and Padua 525
Frances Andrews
- Chris Wickham Bibliography* 539
Index 551

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

9.1. Abandonment and re-uses of <i>villae</i> in Italy: quantitative data (4th–7th centuries)	126
9.2. Poggibonsi (Siena): graphical reconstruction of part of the 7th-century village	132
9.3. Poggibonsi (Siena): graphical reconstruction of part of the 8th-century village	132
9.4. Miranduolo (Chiusdino—Siena): the power nucleus of the 8th-century village (a palisade enclosed an area of many granary pits, a house, and a wooden church)	135
9.5. Poggibonsi (Siena): graphical reconstruction of part of the 9th-century manorial estate (the centre of the village is a large longhouse that dominates the whole settlement)	137
9.6. Miranduolo (Chiusdino—Siena): graphical reconstruction of the power nucleus of the 9th–10th-century village (a palisade enclosed an area of many granary pits, a large house, and several productive activities)	138
11.1. La ceramica da un contesto del X secolo di Casale San Pietro (Castronovo di Sicilia). Le ceramiche invetriate e le anfore sono di produzione palermitana	159
11.2. Alcune delle anfore siciliane ritrovate a Sabra al-Manşūriyya (da Soundes Gragueb et al., ‘Jarres et amphores de Sabra al-Manşūriyya’, modificato)	161
11.3. Gettone di vetro di età fatimida da Casale San Pietro (Castronovo di Sicilia)	162
14.1. Distribution in Italy of the tiles bearing Theoderic’s name (after Guerrini, fig. 21)	205
14.2. Distribution in the area of Rome of tiles bearing the inscription ‘Regnante domino nostro Theodorico Bono Rome’ or ‘Felix Roma’ (after Guerrini, fig. 20)	206
15.1. Watercolour of the upper fresco on the gatehouse of the Abbey of the Tre Fontane, Barb Lat. 4402 fi. 36r, showing the dream of Charlemagne and Pope Leo III	215
15.2. Map of the area of Orbetello, showing Ansedonia and the church of S. Biagio; the inset is redrawn from an 18th-century watercolour of the church (EF)	218
15.3. The Abbey of San Sebastiano, near Alatri (EF)	220
15.4. The plan of the 6th-century abbey, and the elevation of the east wall of the narthex (Caroline Goodson)	221
15.5. The inscription on the altar (EF)	222
15.6. Volubilis, the medieval town and the 2000–5 excavations (Fernanda Palmieri)	225
15.7. The headquarters of Idris, reconstruction	226
15.8. The plan of the area outside the north-west gate (redrawn after Eustache) (EF)	227

15.9. The town of Moulay Idris seen from Volubilis (EF)	228
22.1. Gregory's letter to Felix, inscribed, in the Lapidario Paolino, at S. Paolo fuori le mura	320
22.2. Gregory's donation set in the wall of the Lapidario Paolino, in a photograph by J. H. Parker taken between 1869 and 1877	321
22.3. Fragment of the Epitaph of Gregory the Great	323
22.4. Gregory II, Grant of olive groves for lights for SS Peter and Paul; portico of St Peter's, Rome	326
23.1. Map of Crescentius' properties in Rome (CG)	341
23.2. Tenth-century documents from Rome (CG)	344
23.3. Map of Berengar's gifts of urban properties in Verona (CG)	347
23.4. Map of Maru and Barbaria's property in Naples (CG)	351
26.1. The Colline Metallifere area, and location of sites referred to in the text	385
26.2. Aerial photo of Vetricella site before archeological excavation	388
26.3. Production area at Cugnano during excavation	390
26.4. Hill-top area of Rocchette Pannocchieschi	391
26.5. (a) The borgo of Montieri; (b) Reconstruction of castle in 13th century; (c) La Canonica di San Niccolò at Montieri	392–3

Tables

7.1. Éléments de la rémunération des travailleurs employés à la commanderie de Beaulieu en 1338. Le <i>loquerium</i> , l'habillement et le <i>companagium</i> sont toujours en numéraire. Les <i>expensa</i> , le <i>salarium</i> et la <i>pensio</i> en nature	102
24.1. Land-use in Molassana (GE), 955–988	365
24.2. Chestnuts in the Milanese region, 812–999	368
36.1. Como: the language of the statutes	527
36.2. Offices and duties held by <i>fratres</i>	528
36.3. <i>Fratres Canevari</i> in Chiavenna	533

List of Common Abbreviations

<i>AESC</i>	<i>Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations</i>
<i>CCCM</i>	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
<i>CCSL</i>	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
<i>CDL</i>	<i>Codice diplomatico longobardo</i> , vols. i and ii, ed. Luigi Schiaparelli (<i>FSI</i> lxii–lxiii, Rome, 1929–33)
<i>CDV</i>	<i>Codice diplomatico veronese</i> , ed. Vittorio Fainelli, 2 vols. (Venice, 1940–63)
<i>ChLA</i>	<i>Chartae latinae antiquiores</i> , ed. Albert Bruckner and Robert Marichal (Olten, 1954–)
<i>CIG</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , 4 vols (Berlin, 1828–77)
c.s.	in corso di stampa/in press
<i>DBI</i>	<i>I diplomi di Berengario I</i> , ed. Luigi Schiaparelli (<i>FSI</i> xxxv, Rome, 1903)
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EME</i>	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
<i>FSI</i>	<i>Fonti per la Storia d'Italia</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>MEFRM</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome, Moyen Âge</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>MGH AA</i>	<i>Auctores Antiquissimi</i>
<i>MGH DD</i>	<i>Diplomata</i>
<i>MGH LL</i>	<i>Leges</i>
<i>MGH SSRG</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i>
<i>MGH SSRG n.s.</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, Nova Series</i>
<i>MGH SSRL</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum</i> (Hanover, 1878)
<i>MGH SSRM</i>	<i>Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</i>
<i>OGL</i>	<i>Origo Gentis Langobardorum</i> , ed. G. Waitz, <i>MGH SSRL</i> , 2–6
<i>PBSR</i>	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
<i>PDHL</i>	<i>Pauli Diaconi Historia Langobardorum</i> , ed. L. Bethmann and Georg Waitz, <i>MGH SSRL</i> , 45–187
<i>P.Ital.</i>	<i>Die nichtliterarischen lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445–700</i> , ed. Jan-Olof von Tjäder (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Rom, xix, 1, 2, 3, Lund and Stockholm, 1954–82)
<i>QFIAB</i>	<i>Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken</i>
<i>RN</i>	'Regesta Neapolitana', in <i>Monumenta ad Neapolitani ducatus historiam pertinentia</i> , ii.1, ed. Bartolommeo Capasso (Naples, 1885)
<i>RS</i>	<i>Il Regesto sublacense dell'undecimo secolo</i> , ed. Leone Allodi and Guido Levi (Rome, 1885)

- SS CDMA Pietro Fedele, 'Carte del monastero dei SS. Cosma e Damiano in Mica Aurea, secoli X e XI', *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria*, xxi (1898), 459–534, xxii (1899), 25–107, 383–447, reprinted in Paola Pavan, *Codice diplomatico di Roma e della regione romana*, i (Rome, 1981).
- TRHS *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*
- Wickham, *EMI* Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society, 400–1000* (London, 1981)
- Wickham, 'Forme' Chris Wickham, 'Le forme del feudalesimo', in *Il feudalesimo nell'alto medioevo*, 2 vols. (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, xlvii, Spoleto, 2000), i, 15–46
- Wickham, *Framing* Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford, 2005). Italian edition: *Le società dell'alto medioevo. Europa e Mediterraneo, secoli V–VIII* (Rome, 2009)
- Wickham, *Incastellamento* Chris Wickham, *Il problema dell'incastellamento nell'Italia centrale: L'esempio di San Vincenzo al Volturno (Studi sulla società degli Appennini nell'alto medioevo II)* (Florence, 1985)
- Wickham, *Inheritance* Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400–1100* (London, 2009)
- Wickham, 'Justice' 'Justice in the Kingdom of Italy in the Eleventh Century', in *La giustizia nell'alto medioevo (secoli IX–XI)*, 2 vols (Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, xlv, Spoleto, 1997), i
- Wickham, *Legge* Chris Wickham, *Legge, pratiche e conflitti. Tribunali e risoluzione delle dispute nella Toscana del XII secolo* (Rome, 2000). English edition: *Courts and Conflict in Twelfth-Century Tuscany* (Oxford, 2003)
- Wickham, *Mountains* Chris Wickham, *The Mountains and the City: The Tuscan Apennines in the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988)
- Wickham, *Roma* Chris Wickham, *Roma medievale. Crisi e stabilità di una città 900–1150* (Rome, 2013). English edition: *Medieval Rome: Stability and Crisis of a City, 900–1150* (Oxford, 2014)
- Wickham, *Sleepwalking* Chris Wickham, *Sleepwalking into a New World: The Emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 2015)
- Wickham, *Valva* Chris Wickham, *Studi sulla società degli Appennini nell'alto medioevo: Contadini, signori e insediamento nel territorio di Valva (Sulmona)* (Bologna, 1982)

Italy and the Early Middle Ages

A Journey through Time and Space

Ross Balzaretti, Julia Barrow, and Patricia Skinner

This essay collection is somewhat larger than most, and like all large projects it has taken some considerable time to come to fruition. But its size and extent were necessary to try to capture, and pay tribute to, the achievements and continuing influence of Chris Wickham on the international stage. And it could have doubled, tripled in size, such are his reach and impact on the field of history.

Chris Wickham's work has always broken through borders, especially those imposed by the nation state. His career reminds us how richly and deeply medieval history benefits from not drawing lines across maps, from disentangling the linguistic complications introduced by 'modern' scholarship, from comparisons across cultures to explore transitions and continuities that happened at different times in different places. He has always been aware that medieval scholarship should be open to interdisciplinarity, and in particular owes a debt to the increasing wealth of archaeological data that confirms, or more often, challenges, assumptions built on written texts. As Jinty Nelson and Cristina La Rocca both highlight in their tributes, Chris has always tried to rub out dividing lines, has (like his great friend Tim Reuter) played with linguistic complications and tried to make sense of them (for example the vexed case of feudalism),¹ and has never shied away from addressing larger, overarching, comparative questions. Susan Reynolds, Pete Coss, and Sandro Carocci provide appropriately robust responses to the feudal question in the present volume.

The most fearsome question Chris has always asked his students is the infamous 'So what?' He demands that a piece of work *matters*, and has always led by example. He enjoys being asked to summarize major conferences, he says, more than actually giving a paper.² For him, the challenge lies in drawing the threads together. For us as editors the challenge has been to gather, organize, and summarize papers by thirty-seven scholars, all of whom give evidence of having read deeply in different parts of the Wickham *oeuvre*, and of having been inspired by a particular aspect, or an approach, or even just a turn of phrase that Chris has invented. Consulting the bibliographical list of Chris's works, the editors have to a certain

¹ Wickham, 'Forme'.

² See Bibliography for a full list of Chris's 'Conclusions'.

extent worked backwards: if Chris's huge framing books have come at the more recent end of his output, they have provided us with guidelines for how to group papers that offer new frames, new paradigms to test. The transition from the Roman world (remembering that the 'The fall of Rome will not happen'³) to the medieval is explored by Walter Pohl, offering a new paradigm of informal, but no less powerful, models of social cohesion (revisited later in Antonio Sennis's contribution) in place of top-down governmental frames; by Ian Wood and Marco Valenti, who remind us that 'continuities' and 'changes' are often contingent on archaeological evidence and its interpretation; by Patrick Geary, who highlights new archaeological work on Lombard identity; and by Mayke de Jong, who offers a sustained discussion of how the Carolingian 'church' and 'state' might be reconceptualized as less discrete entities.

Frames of other kinds, inspired by social anthropology,⁴ inform several chapters on disputes and their negotiation between the tenth and thirteenth centuries: Wendy Davies in her study of *boni homines* considers Iberian dispute settlement in its wider context, while Marios Costambeys and Edward Coleman examine legal cases from central and north-eastern Italy, complementing Chris's own series of close readings of often protracted cases.⁵

Laurent Feller, meanwhile, suggests that such framing necessarily requires a closer, more critical reconsideration of the written records upon which most of these paradigms—transformation, feudalism, origin myths, gift exchange, and economic, religious, and social interactions (friendly or fraught as they may be)—have been built. Cristina La Rocca reconsiders Cassiodorus's letters for the Ostrogothic kings, written against a background of increasing privatization of public assets; Julia Smith views Rome through the *spia* of an eighth-century miracle text;⁶ and Rosamond McKitterick examines the unfortunate history of Pope Constantine II. John Haldon, meanwhile, examines the somewhat different western and eastern Christian responses to the rise of Islam.

Access to economic resources, and their use, is central, as Chris has long argued (and Eduardo Manzano Moreno acknowledges directly in his contribution).⁷ Several

³ Chris Wickham, 'La Chute de Rome n'aura pas lieu. A propos d'un livre récent', *Le Moyen Âge*, xcix (1993); English translation 'The Fall of Rome will not Take Place', in L. K. Little and B. H. Rosenwein (eds), *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings* (Oxford, 1998). See also Chris's classic article, 'The Other Transition: from the Ancient World to Feudalism', *Past and Present*, ciii (1984), which appeared in translation as 'La otra transición: del mundo antiguo al feudalismo', *Studia historica: Historia medieval*, vii (1989).

⁴ Chris Wickham, 'Comprendere il quotidiano: antropologia sociale e storia sociale', *Quaderni Storici*, xx (1985); idem, 'Historical Materialism, Historical Sociology', *New Left Review* (Sept/Oct 1988); 'Syntactic Structures: Social Theory for Historians', *Past and Present*, cxxxii (1991).

⁵ Chris Wickham, 'Ecclesiastical Dispute and Lay Community: Figline Valdarno in the Twelfth Century', *MEFRM*, cviii.1 (1996); idem, *Legge*.

⁶ For *spie*, see Chris Wickham, 'Problems in Doing Comparative History', *The Reuter Lecture* (Southampton, 2004), rev. ed. in Patricia Skinner (ed.), *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter* (Turnhout, 2009), 12.

⁷ Besides the large-scale works, cf. Chris Wickham, 'Pastoralism and Underdevelopment in the Early Middle Ages', *Settimane di Studio*, xxxi.1 (1985); Wickham, 'El problema del mode de producció esclavista a l'Alta Edad Mitjana', *L'Avenç: història del paísos Catalans*, cxxxi (1989); Wickham, 'Overview: Production, Distribution and Demand', in R. Hodges and W. Bowden (eds), *The Sixth Century*:

chapters therefore explore neglected angles of this problem: Paul Fouracre and Joanna Story focus on lighting, which drove the acquisition and exploitation of olive groves, but also featured as a relatively cheap gift to churches by laypeople; Ross Balzaretto makes a case for more attention to chestnuts as a valuable crop; an overlooked element of the urban economy, the produce of urban gardens, is explored by Caroline Goodson; whilst Rosemary Morris starts from a basic resource, water, to explore monastic life on Mount Athos.

The destination of much wealth, as some of these chapters make explicit, was often the Church. In his own work Chris has often stood back from close involvement with ecclesiastical matters: indeed, one of his reviewers remarked of his book on Rome 'I did find myself wondering if the papacy was too ghostly a figure in this book'.⁸ The chapters surveying ecclesiastical topics here are nonetheless a homage to Chris, stressing economic activity, transformation, and above all Italy. Paolo Delogu explores Lombard gift-giving as a form of devotion, and Régine Le Jan traces Matilda of Tuscany's practical assistance to the church of Rome in the late eleventh century. In between, the church itself underwent changes, and the reconceptualization of these transformations in the tenth and eleventh centuries is discussed by Julia Barrow, while the failure of the church to disentangle itself from secular life is epitomized by Frances Andrews' exploration of the role of clergy as city office-holders in Como and Padua in the thirteenth century.

The focus on Italy in Andrews' chapter, and the bulk of the volume, is self-explanatory: from his first published paper Chris has continually returned to the peninsula's documentary and archaeological record (particularly, but not exclusively, in Tuscany) to tease out broader problems of economic structures, peasant identity and, latterly, to engage with the historiographical traditions that have shaped generations of scholarly work on Italian cities in the central Middle Ages. Labour services and peasant obligations in southern Italy thus form the focus of Graham Loud's chapter (profitably read in conjunction with Sandro Carocci's). Turning to the towns, Chris's book on Rome, and his series of lectures now published as *Sleepwalking*, form the basis for several responses.⁹ Maria Elena Cortese offers a comparative overview of the journeys of the Tuscan cities to forms of autonomy, which can be read in dialogue with Giovanna Bianchi's piece on the material resources available to certain Tuscan lords. Alessandra Molinari is rather more sceptical of Chris's image of Rome, in particular, bringing archaeological evidence into play in her comparison of that city and Palermo. Paul Oldfield inverts the traditional notion of Italian city panegyrics with his study of

Production, Distribution and Demand (Leiden, 1998); idem, 'Overview: Production, Distribution and Demand II', in I. L. Hansen and C. J. Wickham (eds), *The Long Eighth Century* (Leiden, 2000); Wickham, 'The Mediterranean around 800: On the Brink of a Second Trade Cycle', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, lviii (2004); Wickham, 'Rethinking the Structure of the Early Medieval Economy', in J. R. Davis and M. McCormick (eds), *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies* (Aldershot, 2008); idem, 'Productive Forces and the Economic Logic of the Feudal Mode of Production', *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory*, xvi (2008).

⁸ T. F. X. Noble, review of Wickham, *Roma*, in *Speculum*, xci (2016), 572.

⁹ Wickham, *Roma*; Wickham, *Sleepwalking*; as introduction to the themes explored in the latter, idem, 'The Feudal Revolution and the Origins of the Italian City Communes', *TRHS*, 6th ser., xxiv (2014).

lamentation texts; the commemoration of what has been lost is explored archaeologically by Elizabeth Fentress.

Italy was always connected, politically and economically, with the wider European, Middle Eastern, and North African worlds, as Chris recognizes in *Framing* and *Inheritance*. But Chris has also sought to include the whole of Europe in his considerations.¹⁰ Patrisha Skinner and Chris Callow acknowledge this with their contributions on Wales and Iceland respectively, whilst Pauline Stafford reflects on the exchange of women and gifts (and women *as* gifts) between England and the continent from the fifth to the eleventh centuries.

Inevitably, in bringing these contributions into dialogue with each other, there are opportunities for comparison and areas of research that remain unflagged. *Festschriften* are often consulted (egregiously) for specific chapters, but the present volume encourages dipping of a different kind, a richer, comparative consumption of papers that, valuable in and of themselves, are best read as an ongoing and exciting conversation between two generations of outstanding medieval scholars. And Chris, through his extensive output, though he would not admit it, has largely made that conversation possible.

¹⁰ Chris Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry', *Past and Present*, clx (1998) includes a lengthy discussion of Icelandic society, for example; and see *idem*, 'Poesia, prosa e memoria: la letteratura medievale islandese', in *Storiografia e poesia nella cultura medievale. Atti del Colloquio (Roma, 21-23 febbraio 1990)* (Rome, 1999).

Chris—An Appreciation

Jinty Nelson

This is a *Fest* for Chris, and therefore Rome is the very place it should be happening.¹ For Chris has made over a hundred working visits to this eternally interesting city and recently intensified his own research on it. A *Fest* is, by definition, joyful. This one too is joyful, but it is at the same time serious. I want to start with some serious words of Chris's written in December 1992, in the introduction to the wide-ranging pieces that comprised *Land and Power*, which link joy and seriousness:

Writing these articles prevented me from getting entirely lost in the joys of archival research and local historical reconstruction, and from forgetting that historians have to understand how their own research fits into wider historical patterns.²

The articles, then, are not *counterposed* to the joys but necessarily complement, even overlap with, them, in a different kind of historical work, which is differently serious. They constitute a research programme of their own, characterized by systematic comparison, theoretical problems taken from the social sciences, and effective generalization based on local social realities. These are indeed signature traits of Chris's entire output. I will use them in a different order—borrowed from the three Parts of *Land and Power* itself, as headings under which to organize my appreciation. And organizing has been necessary, for Chris's output is very large, as, thanks to the bibliography made by John Haldon, all of us now know. The 130 items consist of fourteen single-authored books plus one co-authored; five edited or co-edited books; and 111 articles and papers.³ I'll group my comments on select bits of this oeuvre, roughly chronologically.

First, a few words on the big articles of the 1980s in *Land and Power*, Part I: 'The Roman Empire and After'. Here, in the first four chapters, debating and theorizing come with large-scale generalization. This is a prominent feature of Chris's argumentative papers on transition from ancient to feudal worlds, the non-transition in the East attributable to empires' recuperative fiscal powers, contrasted with the

¹ This contribution is presented in the verbal form in which it was delivered, in Rome in January 2015.

² Chris Wickham, *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400–1200* (London, 1994), 1.

³ See pp. 539–50.

West's land-based fragmentation, and the bringing of archaeology into as many discussions as possible. There had already been much theorizing, usually explicit, in the forthrightly socio-political and secular first book *Early Medieval Italy*.⁴ (I recall a conversation at an early meeting of the Bucknell Group in which Patrick Wormald said: 'Only you, Chris, could have written a book about early medieval Italy without ever mentioning St Benedict!') Then there would be even more explicit theory, and a challenge to the urban focus of so much Italian historiography, in *The Mountains and the City*, 'a book about the countryside' that generalizes, and then criticizes the generalizations.⁵ Chris doesn't just plumb the depths of the archives: following Marc Bloch, he brings political history (aristocrats, *signori*) into a dialogue with social and economic conditions on the ground (peasants): theorizing with boots on. We readers are enjoined not just to imagine varied landscapes but to 'Go and *look* at them.... Surely there must be differences between a scattered but prosperous village in the rich river-mud of the Lucca plain.... and a small huddle of houses at the bottom of a steep wooded hill-slope on the winding road up to the high pass over to Modena'.⁶ Keep in mind, too, the paper Chris offered to the *Festschrift* for Ralph Davis in 1985, showing how urban lawyers' sense of past time made them memory-bearers of the concept of the public in pre-communal and communal Italian history.⁷

Second, in the 1990s, there opened a much much-widened scene of debates, infused now by more interdisciplinary and international investigations, and further stimulation from the 'Transformation of the Roman World' project in whose volumes and conferences Chris naturally played a key role as writer and editor and summer-up.⁸ On such quintessentially Italian questions as *incastellamento*, archaeology loomed larger. So too did anthropology and cultural theory. *Social Memory*, co-written with James Fentress, not a big book to hold but measured by its methodological importance, huge.⁹ This is a book to enthuse students—and the article that enthuses is 'Gossip', which then, and now nearly twenty years on, *mutatis mutandis*, supplies thoughtful students with weapons in debates about how universities should work.¹⁰ Comparison goes on fulfilling its promise here.

Third, the twenty-first century so far has seen the production-curve rising faster and further. The bibliography tells the tale. Amid an ever-growing list of articles, and written in more languages, there have been two very large books of synthesis,

⁴ Wickham, *EMI*. ⁵ Wickham, *Mountains*, xiv. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 357–8.

⁷ 'Lawyers' Time: History and Memory in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Italy', in H. Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (eds), *Studies in Early Medieval History presented to R.H.C. Davis* (London, 1985), reprinted in *Land and Power*, which ends on a note of irony.

⁸ On this project, familiarly known to its participants as TRW, see Ian Wood, 'Report: The European Science Foundation's Programme on the Transformation of the Roman World and the Emergence of Medieval Europe', *EME*, vi (1997); and cf. idem, 'Landscapes Compared', *EME*, xv (2007). For Chris's contributions, see esp. his 'Overview', in the TRW volume he co-edited with I. L. Hansen, *The Long Eighth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden, 2000).

⁹ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past* (Oxford, 1992).

¹⁰ Chris Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry', *Past and Present*, clx (1998). Chris starts, naturally, in Tuscany, and after detours via Iceland and the University of Birmingham Faculty of Arts Staff coffee lounge, returns to Tuscany.

bringing together so much of the earlier work, and going beyond it. *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, covering 400–800, is history with a difference: wondrously archaeologically informed. Its systematic comparisons show regional diversity, along with shared patterns of weakened aristocracy and—logically—improved prospects for peasants. Stirring debate was what Chris asked for, and got; but he had explicitly left some major questions of cultural and political history for another project and a still longer timespan: *The Inheritance of Rome, from 400–1000*. What, I wonder, did Chris think of the review in which he was likened to Edward Gibbon?¹¹ No one had seen any such resemblance in the author of *Framing*. But *Inheritance* is, like *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, packed with interesting people. Chris is of course himself, unique. Both these volumes have, as Chris might put it, changed paradigms. Yet both show a changed Chris: a Chris more seriously—and joyfully—concerned than ever before with connecting empirical research and wider structures and patterns across socio-economic and cultural-political history, and in *Inheritance*, introducing us to individuals high and low. To borrow from Marc Bloch: ‘As for *homo religius*, *homo oeconomicus*, *homo politicus*, and all that rigmarole of Latinized men, . . . there is a grave danger of mistaking them for something else than they really are: phantoms which are convenient provided they do not become nuisances. The man of flesh and bone, reuniting them all simultaneously, is the only real being’.¹² In *Inheritance*, Chris does just that: reunites them all simultaneously.

Chris’s latest two books also join what had been sundered. *Medieval Rome* is a study of a city over a crucial 250 years from the standpoint of secular political history rather than separately boxed and teleologically pre-wrapped ecclesiastical history. For a taster, read the paper Chris wrote for Hagen Keller’s Festschrift in 2008, published in 2011, musing profoundly on the practice and practicalities of a dual system of papal and senatorial courts.¹³ In *Sleepwalking into a New World*, Rome is a case-study, compared by Chris with Milan and Pisa in the world of nascent communes.¹⁴ We’ll all wish we’d been flies on the wall when the Princeton lectures that made this exhilarating book were given. But now we have instead in our hands ‘a work of huge analytical and explanatory power that can be read for sheer intellectual joy’ (and in this case a puff-writer did not exaggerate). In Chris’s own lexicon of praise-words, two are notable: ‘interesting’, and ‘coherent’. In both *Framing* and *Inheritance*, Chris, with his comparative, connective, theoretically informed, and culturally sensitized approach, is consistently interesting and coherent, as well as capable of sustaining those qualities over many hundreds of pages. Chris can write ironically, but in *Inheritance* writes, arrestingly, and without irony: ‘The ninth century matched the French Revolution as a focus for collective intellectual activity.’¹⁵

¹¹ The reviewer was Dominic Sandbrook, in the *Daily Telegraph*, 2 February, 2009.

¹² Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l’histoire, ou Métier d’historien* (written 1941–2, publ. Paris, 1949), English translation Peter Putnam (Manchester, 1954), 125.

¹³ Wickham, *Roma*; and see for a perfect taster Chris’s ‘Getting Justice in Twelfth-Century Rome’, in C. Dartmann, T. Scharff and C. F. Weber (eds), *Zwischen Pragmatik und Performanz. Dimensionen Mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur* (Turnhout, 2011).

¹⁴ Wickham, *Sleepwalking*.

¹⁵ Wickham, *Inheritance*, 411.

To any claim that Chris is now at the height of his career, my reply would be, to borrow Chou En Lai's gnomic assessment of the outcome of the French Revolution: 'it is too soon to say'.

Soon or late, I want to say something *now*, however premature the judgement, on *Inheritance*, and on the parts that, connected together, have both impressed and surprised me most, which are in chapters 10, 16, and 17. Of these, the pages on Charlemagne in chapter 16, 'The Carolingian Century', were for me when I first read them, and have been in the years since when I've kept returning to them, particularly thought-provoking. Chapter 16 opens, like the rest of the chapters in the book, with a vignette that brings out the specificity of a time and a place, and to my mind this is among the best chosen of all. It's a letter from Charlemagne (768–814) to Fastrada, the fourth of his five successive wives.¹⁶ They married in 783, when Charlemagne was 35 and she probably a good deal younger; and she died in 794. 'There is no reason to think that [the letter] tells us much about the personal relationship between the couple', Chris comments pointedly.¹⁷ Of course Chris is absolutely right to insist that 98 per cent of this letter is not intimate in tone, and, instead, that 'it reads like a ruler communicating with a high-ranking subordinate, which a queen indeed was'. The letter communicated two things: first, news from the war-front where Charlemagne's son (and Fastrada's stepson) Pippin had won an important victory against the pagan Avars to the east of Bavaria; second, reports on the Christian rituals Charlemagne had deployed in the field to secure victory and a request for Fastrada to perform similar rituals at Regensburg.¹⁸ Here in the Bavarian capital Fastrada was now based and here she and Charlemagne would stay together, barring a winter visit by her to Frankfurt in 792–793 (where she issued a royal judgment as, in effect, a regent), more or less continuously for the ensuing two years: an exception to every rule of royal itinerancy and any trend of preference for prolonged stays in Middle Francia. Chris sums up the letter's message thus: 'in its mixture of military action and religious ritual it reflects what else we know of the tone of early Carolingian politics. It also shows that Charlemagne... received and expected up-to-date and detailed information from his generals', among whom, and in a strategic sense, was the queen. This is the *ex officio* aspect of early medieval queenship.

But another aspect and another tone are apparent in the remaining 2 per cent of Charlemagne's letter, which I would describe as personal and even intimate. The letter addresses *dilecta nobis et valde amabilis coniuga nostra*, and the salutation

¹⁶ *Epistolae variorum Carolo Magno regnante scriptae*, MGH Epp. Karolingi Aevi, II, ed. E. Dümmler (Berlin, 1895, repr. Munich 1994), 528–9.

¹⁷ *Inheritance*, 375, rebutting wishful-thinkers like me who have suggested that it might tell us something...

¹⁸ These included, Chris comments, *Wickham*, *Inheritance*, 375, with (I imagine) an ironic smile, 'a prohibition on eating meat and drinking wine, which however people could buy out of with a graduated payment according to wealth': 'Et a vino et carne ordinauerunt sacerdotes nostri, qui propter infirmitatem aut senectudinem aut iuuentudinem abstinere potebant, ut abstinisset; et qui redemere uoluisset, quod vinum licentiam habuisset bibendi ipsis tribus diebus, maiores et potentiores homines hunaque die solidum hunum dedissent, minus potentes iuxta possibilitatem ipsorum; et qui amplius dare non potebat et vinum bibere volebat, saltim vel unum dinarium donasset.'

formula that follows is to *tu* and *dulcissimae filiae nostrae* ‘along with our other faithful ones who are staying there with you (*tecum*)’. The ‘darling daughters’ (David King’s happy translation) surely were Fastrada’s Theoderada and Hiltrud (born, probably, 785 and 787 respectively) but may also have included the three daughters of Hildegard, Rotrude, Bertha, and Gisela, who were older.¹⁹ At the letter’s end is a reference to Fastrada’s illness (*infirmitas*), an expression of regret that she has not yet sent a messenger or a letter from Regensburg, and a request that she send information more often about her health (*sanitas*). A passage in the *Miracles of St Goar* written up in 839, but supported by a charter of Charlemagne showing the royal family at Mainz in June 790, mentions the queen’s visit to the saint’s shrine (some 60 km downriver from Mainz) seeking a cure for toothache.²⁰ Whether or not a miracle gave her relief from that agonizing condition, she seems to have been in poor health in 791. These comments certainly don’t detract from the force of Chris’s, but complement them, just as the personal complemented the political in Charlemagne’s life.

Chris offers other insights into how this regime worked. First, it worked through wealth. The Frankish royal treasury had been augmented by the treasuries of the Lombards (774) and the Avars (796), by the ducal lands of Aquitaine and Bavaria, and by lands confiscated from rebels, or aristocrats out of favour, in all the regions of the empire. The very considerable wealth of the Church was also de facto at Charlemagne’s disposal in the form of temporary assignments—*beneficia*—to the men he favoured. These grants augmented not only the elites’ wealth but their self-confidence: ‘the Franks were proud of their greed and aggrandizement, and regarded it as a proof of their virtue’.²¹ Far from running into difficulties as expansion slowed and frontiers stabilized, ‘Charlemagne’s last decade was one of relative peace, and unheard-of prosperity for the ruling elite of Francia by earlier medieval standards’.²² ‘Given the rooted power of aristocracies both large and small’, the regime worked now as ‘an immense oligarchy’.²³ Some historians express this reality in terms of consensus politics and a kind of power-sharing more or less institutionalized in assemblies at the levels of the realm, the region, the county. Government action was punctuated by distributions of wealth brought in by successful wars and take-overs.

A second fresh insight comes from Chris’s awareness of ‘the power of the visual’, which though present in several of his earlier books, gets a whole chapter (10) to itself in *Inheritance*. Whereas up to now I have been quoting almost exclusively from chapter 16, I shall soon be looping back to chapter 10, and finding connections there while following in Chris’s footsteps. Especially from the mid-790s onwards, Aachen became a capital: ‘a stable political and administrative focus for the first time in Frankish history’, and ‘a natural backdrop for politics’.²⁴

¹⁹ P. D. King, *Charlemagne: Translated Sources* (Kendal, 1987), 309.

²⁰ Wandalbert, *Miracula Sancti Goaris*, c. 12, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SS*, xv.1 (Hanover, 1887), 367; Charlemagne D. 165, in E. Mühlbacher (ed.), *Diplomata Karolinorum* I (Hanover, 1906, rep. Munich, 1991), 222–4. I am much indebted to the paper of the late Franz Staab, ‘Die Königin Fastrada’, in R. Berndt (ed.), *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794*, 2 vols (Mainz, 1997), i, 188–201.

²¹ Wickham, *Inheritance*, 381.

²² *Ibid.*, 380.

²³ *Ibid.*, 389.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 382.

Charlemagne, in his various palaces, ‘was offering his visitors a visual and spatial experience... which had no recent parallels in northern and western Europe, and which was intended, doubtless successfully, to mark him out as unique, at least to people who had no experience of Constantinople’. Chris further observes that ‘the intervisuality of architectural style is one of the most powerful conveyers of meaning and visual effect’.²⁵ Recent research, mainly archaeological and art-historical, has only served to sharpen Chris’s point. Among the models of Aachen’s church and palace were equivalents in Italy.²⁶ Chris has opened my eyes to what I now see as Charlemagne’s moments of individualization: at the church of Santa Sophia in Benevento in 786, where he can hardly have avoided recognizing influences of the Lombard King Liutprand’s church at Pavia and, at least by repute, of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and at Ravenna in the early summer of 787, where the exarch’s palace and the church of San Vitale powerfully evoked memories of Theoderic and Justinian. At Charlemagne’s behest, mosaics and marbles and columns followed him northwards, to Aachen.²⁷ There, while the *Admonitio generalis* was being put together in the winter of 788–789, he was already planning to build a palace-and-church complex. Stretching somewhat the point about intervisuality would be a further project: the digging of a great canal linking the Danube (from its affluent the Altmühl) and the Main (from its affluent the Rednitz) in the summer of 793—evoking other impressive *grands travaux* from antiquity. Papal envoys were brought by boat up the Altmühl to see the site. Though the project proved a failure, archaeologists today, who have found oak-piles in situ shoring up the canal-bank, and dendro-datable to 793, reckon that, with just a bit more luck, it could have succeeded.²⁸ And, to return to Chris and a final intervisual monument, still standing at Germigny-des-Prés on the Loire south-east of Orleans, was the proprietary church built c.806 by the court scholar Theodulf with, in its apse mosaic, Old Testament imagery of two angels holding the ark of the Covenant, evoking the triumph of the Frankish *via media* between iconophile and iconoclast art.²⁹ Only when writing this appreciation of Chris did I realize how much I’ve owed recently to his clear signalling of the power of the visual.

Theodulf’s religious views lead into the heart of the *correctio* desired by Charlemagne and endorsed by the scholars assembled at his court. A look ahead to chapter 17, ‘Intellectuals and Politics’, yields a third insight. ‘The importance of intellectuals for the political practice of the ninth-century West was as great as or greater than it would ever be again in the Middle Ages’, Chris writes. Remember

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 250.

²⁶ J. L. Nelson, ‘Dendrochronology and Early Medieval Historians’, in O. Kanu and J.-L. Lemaître (eds), *Entre texte et histoire: Festschrift for Shoichi Sato* (Paris, 2015), 243–9. See further, John Mitchell, ‘Karl der Grosse, Rom und das Vermächtnis der Langobarden’, in C. Stiegemann and M. Wemhoff (eds), *799: Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit* (Mainz, 1999), and Mitchell, ‘St. Johann at Müstair—The Painted Decoration in Context’, in H. R. Sennhauser (ed.), *Wandel und Konstanz zwischen Bodensee und Lombardei* (Zurich, 2013).

²⁷ See J. L. Nelson, ‘Charlemagne and Ravenna’, in J. Herrin and J. Nelson (eds), *Ravenna: its Role in Change and Exchange* (London, 2016), 248–9.

²⁸ See P. Ettl et al. (eds), *Großbaustelle 793. Das Kanalprojekt Karls der Großen zwischen Rhein und Donau* (Mainz, 2014), 15–32, 95–8, and 113–20.

²⁹ Wickham, *Inheritance*, 241, with Plate 9.

his matching of the ninth century's intellectual political activity with that of the French Revolution: a judgement which ninth-century specialists may endorse but on which people who know nothing about the ninth century ought to reflect seriously.³⁰ A good deal of Charlemagne's legacy can be appreciated only by looking at the theological texts and works of art he commissioned, and by considering the implications of the imperial title and crown ritually conferred by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day 800, but actually planned and brought about by Charlemagne himself. Coronation enhanced Charlemagne's legitimacy and his charisma, but it was the outcome of 'a conscious and ambitious political project'. The project, driven forward by serial opportunism, was grounded firmly in religion. As success succeeded success, the project became increasingly well publicized. 'The Carolingian elite cared about theology, or had to pretend they did.' Charlemagne himself had become convinced that 'he was special, and that he had a mission, not just to rule the Franks and their neighbours, but to save their souls'.³¹

A fourth insight exposes another dimension to the legacy, one well under way since the 780s, which was to combine Old Testament conceptions of law with the legislative enthusiasm of the Christian Roman Emperors, especially Theodosius and Justinian. This combining of legal traditions inspired the administrative orders of Charlemagne: his capitularies.³² Not all were issued at great assemblies, but the most important of them were, and the discussions and decisions of great assemblies trickled down to regional and county ones. All this 'powerfully reinforced a sense of collective participation in public affairs', as did the regular offering of gifts by participants, and the recycling of gifts from the ruler to elites: a virtuous circle. These processes of canalizing and devolving and supervising power required the mobilization of human resources on a very large scale. Palaces where great assemblies met, which after c.800 very often meant Aachen, but which were replicated in miniature at local and county courts, were the focuses of 'a particularly large amount of collective and increasingly moralized ritual'.³³ In these places, on these occasions, 'Carolingian justice' was sought.³⁴ If only by dint of 'constantly innovating and retouching', Chris going as usual to the heart of the matter asks 'did this complex network of instructions and accountability actually work?' . . . or was it 'all a sham?' His answer is that both views 'are largely accurate'.³⁵ I have a lot of sympathy with that judgement. Yet I would venture a qualified yes to the first rather than the second question, and not only on the commonsensical grounds that St Augustine added a condition to *his* government question: 'If justice is removed, what are kingdoms but bands of robbers writ large?' Though, as Chris remarks, and here ironically, 'aristocrats are always violent, corrupt and greedy',

³⁰ Ibid., 411. ³¹ Ibid., with quotations in these lines at 382, 383, 384.

³² See Matthew Innes, 'Charlemagne, Justice and Written Law', in A. Rio (ed.), *Law, Custom and Justice in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London, 2011); Jennifer Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire* (Cambridge, 2015); and see D. Ganz, 'Charlemagne's Lawbook', forthcoming.

³³ Wickham, *Inheritance*, 386–7, for the quotations.

³⁴ See P. Fouracre, 'Carolingian Justice: the Rhetoric of Improvement and Contests of Abuse', in *La giustizia nell'alto medioevo, Settimane di studio sull'alto medioevo, XLII*, 2 vols (Spoleto, 1995), ii; reprinted in Paul Fouracre, *Frankish History: Studies in the Construction of Power* (Farnham, 2013).

³⁵ Wickham, *Inheritance*, 390–1, for the quotations.

they were *not*, as no one knows better than Chris, ‘always’ so. They were subjected, certainly, to threats of divine punishment, and forms of public shaming, to which some, sometimes, paid heed. Victims of officials’ injustice brought complaints against individual officials, and demands for protection, to the ruler himself often enough to generate form-documents, *cartae munburiales*, in which indignant voices echoed.³⁶ Groups of peasants occasionally voiced grievances that are still audible imaginatively through the archival dust and were surely audible then. As Chris himself sees, the very fact that peasants, whatever odds were stacked them, still sometimes took cases to court indicates their belief that they *might be* heard, and might win.³⁷ As for the powerful: however violent or venal, once challenged, they might be open to negotiation, as suggested by form-documents leaving open that option.³⁸

Chris is, as I’ve said, serious about work. But he doesn’t take himself too seriously: a sense of humour underlies his book dedication to three cats! And somehow this connects with his strong sense of place and feel for the visual: he does a lot with this in the two big books, where the pictures contribute so much to the stories. Next, Chris is a terrific team player, which is to say colleague, discussant, and conversation partner: witness, from the 1970s, Chris’s thirty-year stint at Birmingham, where the School was the team; witness, from the early 1980s onwards, the team that was and is the Bucknell Group, and in the 1990s the team that was TRW project; witness his recent Oxford years: not every academic leader is good at herding cats, but Chris, as you gather, has form in that department; witness his associations with scholars all over Europe and the anglophone world and in the New World too; witness throughout his working life the close collaborations with Italian scholars. I think everyone here present falls into one or more of these groups, and so can endorse my view. Chris is intellectually as well as personally generous: look at his prefaces and acknowledgements, and look at everyone else’s acknowledgements and thanks for his advice and support. Chris has *magnanimitas*, largeness of spirit. Of the impact of Christianity in Late Antiquity, he wrote not long ago, ‘Christian writers tell us more about the peasant majority than pagan writers had ever done’.³⁹ If Patrick had only lived to read that, he’d have been among the first to recognize Chris’s *magnanimitas*.

As Joe E. Brown said in another context, ‘Well, nobody’s perfect’. I have two minor quibbles to raise with Chris: one is that when reflecting at the end of *Inheritance* on early medieval writers he ‘could imagine meeting with any real pleasure’, Chris selected a revealing five. There was Theodoret of Cyrrhus, who collected some great stories about eastern holy men, especially stylites—one named Daniel, asked how he defecated, replied, ‘very dryly, like a sheep’.⁴⁰ The rest were

³⁶ For the so-called Formulary ‘of Bourges’, no. 14, ed. K. Zeumer, *Formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi*, MGH LL, v (Hanover, 1886), 174. See A. Rio, *Legal Practice and the Written Word in the Earlier Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2009), 112.

³⁷ Wickham, *Inheritance*, 392.

³⁸ A. Rio, ‘Freedom and Unfreedom in Early Medieval Francia: the Evidence of the Legal Formularies’, *Past and Present*, xciii (2008), and eadem, ‘High and Low: Ties of Dependence in the Frankish Kingdoms’, *TRHS*, 6th ser., xviii (2008).

³⁹ Wickham, *Inheritance*, 67.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

Gregory the Great, Einhard, ‘maybe Braulio of Zaragoza’—three great letter-writers—and finally ‘with less enthusiasm’ Augustine.⁴¹ The list is interestingly attractive, but my quibble is that they’re all men! Of course there aren’t that many women writers, but Chris, Dhuoda was one, and the way you cited her in *Inheritance* suggested not just interest but some admiration.⁴² And, if you’d allow the extension of the word ‘writer’ to cover a charter, you seemed to relish the performance of Anstrude of Piacenza, a peasant breaker of gender moulds.⁴³ The more I think about this, the surer I am that you’d hardly have been able to tear yourself away from an evening’s conversation at Uzès with Dhuoda, or at Piacenza with Anstrude. So: not much of a quibble. My second quibble is a little more serious: your claim that ‘what was funny to [early medieval people] (largely mockery and dreadful puns) by no means makes them seem closer to us’.⁴⁴ Speak for yourself, dear! I personally find the *Waltharius* poet’s portrayal of Hiltgund, a heroine with a sense of *ironia*, seriously appealing, while some of Notker’s stories bring people like *imperfect* bishops, hilariously close, and close to home, as does some wicked repartee in the plays of Hrotswitha, a woman who as you said, Chris, was ‘formidably educated’, yet, I’d add, with a formidable sense of humour too.⁴⁵ Well, having brought in a few women, I want finally to include another one, a brilliant visualizer and photographer, and a historian likewise blessed with *magnanimitas*, namely Leslie. I speak for everyone here, and many more who can’t be here, Chris, in letting you and Leslie know how very much we appreciate you, and in what great affection we hold you. Please, everyone, join me now in wishing Chris and Leslie health and happiness, with a tried and true acclamation: *polla ta ete!* For many years!

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 553.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 383, 414.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 203–4, 212–13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 552.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 445. *Gallicanus*, for instance, is one that twenty-first-century postgrads enjoy performing in the original Latin: see now for this and other seriously entertaining works, *The Plays of Hrotswitha of Gandersheim: Bilingual Edition*, trans. L. Bonfante (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2003).

Lodare ‘il Wickham’

Cristina La Rocca

Caro Chris, cari colleghi,

Quando Trish mi ha chiesto di preparare questo discorsetto mi sono sentita contemporaneamente onorata, intimidita, ma soprattutto molto vecchia. Facendo un rapido conto degli anni da cui ti ho conosciuto ho infatti realizzato che sono effettivamente moltissimi, nonostante a me—così come credo anche a voi tutti—Chris sembri sempre lo stesso: lo stesso taglio di capelli (nella sua fase ‘crinita’ degli anni ’70 ancora non lo conoscevo), gli stessi occhiali, lo stesso amore per camicie a righe e rigone, per i colori rosa e bordò declinati in tutte le sfumature possibili. Lo stesso quando ancora non aveva la patente e guidava un avventuroso motorino a Birmingham e ovunque si trovasse per visitare di persona i luoghi che stava studiando, a quando, dopo l’impresa di ‘civilisation’ operata da Leslie, al volante di una macchina presa a nolo a Buenos Aires aveva guidato per *circa* 1300 chilometri per visitare il santuario della Difunta Correa, una donna morta di stenti attorno al 1850 sulla strada per San Juan, venerata soprattutto dai camionisti di tutta l’Argentina. Tutto ciò, ovviamente, scatenando grandi perplessità dei colleghi argentini.

Parlando con gli amici italiani miei e di Chris ho potuto capire che non si tratta solo di una mia percezione, ma piuttosto di un comune sentire: ognuno di noi ricorda e vuole bene a Chris per uno o più aspetti che lo rendono unico, per certi versi immutabile e sempre circondato da una grande e unanime ammirazione. Per la mia generazione, infatti, incontrare Chris è stata allo stesso tempo una rivelazione e uno shock: rispetto alle relazioni normalmente imbalsamate, spesso timorose, con i nostri professori italiani, Chris era completamente diverso: ci dava del tu, pareva interessato a quello che avevamo da dire, correggeva minuziosamente le pagine che gli mandavamo che arrivavano per posta, normalmente in buste marroni. Inoltre, sapere che Chris rispediva soltanto le pagine su cui aveva annotato delle critiche poteva far prevedere, dallo spessore della busta, ancor prima di aprirla, il grado di revisione dei nostri lavori. La generosità con cui Chris ha sempre letto, corretto, discusso i lavori di tutti noi, fornendo bibliografia, indicazioni è certo uno degli aspetti più straordinari della sua personalità, che ha avuto pure un essenziale valore formativo su molti di noi. Credo che lavorare con Chris ci abbia insegnato a essere non solo disponibili e generosi, ma anche a considerare i nostri studenti e dottorandi prima di tutto come persone potenzialmente interessanti.

Così come ognuno di noi ha avuto e ha una idea di Chris ampiamente condivisa, formata da ricordi particolari, bisogna dire che allo stesso modo Chris ha ammantato la sua persona di segreti e misteri. Il più impenetrabile dei quali è certamente la sua capacità di addormentarsi—oppure di fingere molto realisticamente di dormire—seduto ai convegni in prima fila e poi di riaprire gli occhi e fare una domanda totalmente pertinente alla relazione appena conclusa.

Chris è sempre riuscito a entrare all'interno dello spirito del posto in cui si trovava, non da semplice turista, ma da membro della comunità, qualsiasi essa fosse. In Italia in particolare. E' in questo spirito penso che, contrariamente a molti anglosassoni, Chris si è avvicinato con estremo entusiasmo alle diverse lingue dei paesi in cui ha soggiornato, per poco o per molto tempo, fino a padroneggiare non solo varie forme dialettali, le canzoni ma anche l'ampio spettro di gesti per cui gli italiani sono giustamente famosi. Non solo. In Italia Chris ha seguito con estremo interesse il dibattito politico e vi ha attivamente preso parte, come quando partecipava ai lavori del congresso del partito comunista a Firenze, dichiarando con orgoglio di appartenere alla 'corrente Bassolino'.

Ed è certo questa volontà di comprendere e di impadronirsi della comunicazione locale che gli ha permesso di diventare, all'interno della comunità dei medievalisti italiani, ben più che l'illustre accademico, ben più che il Professor Wickham prima di Birmingham e poi di Oxford, soprattutto Chris, con cui si può parlare di tutto e soprattutto, che sa tutto di tutti. Chi lo conosce sa che Chris è stato ed è tutt'ora il ricettacolo di discorsi molto seri, ma anche di lamenti e di confidenze accademiche e personali, che lui ha sempre ascoltato con grande pazienza, partecipazione ma anche con grande interesse, consigliando, esortando, oppure facendo da paciere nei casi più disperati. Quelle confidenze e quella prospettiva dal basso e dall'interno gli hanno allora permesso di conoscere molte pieghe della situazione e dello stato di salute dell'archeologia e della storia medievale in Italia, in una prospettiva globale e complessiva quale credo che nessun italiano possa avere davvero. Come dicevamo in questi giorni con Antonio Sennis e Sandro Carocci, Chris è davvero riuscito a diventare italiano, pur restando assolutamente inglese e forse costituisce in sé un ottimo caso per la bipolarità o multipolarità dell'identità etnica su cui tanto ci affanniamo! D'altra parte è anche vero che queste due sfere, l'Italia e l'Inghilterra, sono rimaste nettamente distinte e difese da Chris in quanto tali, molto tenacemente, quasi facessero parte di due sfaccettature lontane e diverse del suo privato. Fino a questo convegno, in cui i membri di questi due gruppi diversi e separati—le due comunità emozionali potremmo forse dire—si sono incontrati, si sono osservati anche con qualche stupore e penso si siano infine riconosciuti nelle relazioni di questo convegno.

Caro Chris, chiudendo questo saluto, non ti nascondo che so perfettamente che oggi, al mio posto, ci dovrebbe essere Riccardo Francovich, l'amico con cui hai condiviso tante ricerche, tante riflessioni, tante litigate e una vera fratellanza. Tutti noi sappiamo il modo straordinario con cui hai ricordato Riccardo a Siena, parlando della rudezza rurale del suo linguaggio, cioè il costante e molto colorito intercalare di bestemmie e imprecazioni che costellavano i suoi discorsi. In quella

occasione hai fatto notare come Riccardo usasse con veemenza ‘coniugare ogni genere di animali con invocazioni alla divinità’. In questo modo non certo molto convenzionale, ma certo molto efficace, ci hai fatto capire l’affetto e la stima profonda che provavi per lui e il rimpianto infinito per la sua scomparsa. Ed è proprio pensando a Riccardo, alla sua ideale presenza qui oggi tra noi, che voglio chiudere con un sorriso questo saluto per te, ricordando insieme a te la vostra amicizia che è stata così importante non solo per stimolare nuove ricerche di storia e di archeologia medievale, ma soprattutto per la vitalità e la forza del vostro rapporto speciale che costituisce noi tutti un esempio da ricordare e da imitare.

Per tutte queste cose, grazie Chris.¹

¹ Questo contributo è presentato nella forma in cui è stato letto a Roma, gennaio 2015.

I

LORDS AND PEASANTS: FRAMES
FOR THE MIDDLE AGES

1

Social Cohesion, Breaks, and Transformations in Italy, 535–600

Walter Pohl

This chapter owes several inspirations to Chris Wickham.¹ First, his book on *Early Medieval Italy*, published in 1981, accompanied and informed my emerging interest in late antique and Lombard Italy.² Second, his insistence on the economic and social basis of historical developments provided essential points of reference for my own research about partly more elusive subjects. Third, I appreciated his serene and judicious position in the heated controversies about the fall of Rome and the role of the barbarians, in which I became involved more deeply than he was: paradoxically, I was accused of defending the importance of barbarian invasions and of Germanic-German ethnic continuity by one party in the polemic, and of denying any ethnic continuity or role for the barbarians in the transformation of the Roman world by another.³ These polemics have tended to squeeze the manifold results of inspiring research back into old dichotomies: continuists versus catastrophists, and Germanists against Romanists.⁴ Neither of these paradigms matches the complexity

¹ The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–13) under the ERC grant agreement No. 269591; title of the project: ‘Social cohesion, identity and religion in Europe, 400–1200 (SCIRE)’; and from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) Project F 42-G 18—SFB ‘Visions of Community’ (VISCOM). I would like to thank Andreas Fischer, Gerda Heydemann, and Helmut Reimitz for their comments.

² Wickham, *EMI*.

³ Walter A. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia, 2006), 274: ‘Pohl is, of course, committed to the existence of his subject, a coherent “Germanic” people foreshadowing the “Deutsche” of today’. Marco Valenti, ‘Ma i barbari sono veramente arrivati in Italia?’, in Giuliano Volpe and Pasquale Faria (eds), *V Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Medievale* (Florence, 2009), 26: ‘Pohl denies the existence of biologically compact peoples, who should rather be understood as much more fluid and malleable than those of today, and whose composition was influenced by contingent and logical decisions... After destroying the concept of a Germanic nation and Germanic peoples... the analysis passes to the problems of cultural contact between barbarians and Romans’ (my translation from the Italian).

⁴ For the debate about the role of ethnicity, see Andrew Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002); for a return to the ‘catastrophist’ paradigm of the Fall of Rome, Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: a New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford, 2005); Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford, 2005). Other contributions include Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West: 376–568* (Cambridge, 2007); Julia M. H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History 500–1000* (Oxford, 2005). And cf. Geary, this volume.

of the evidence.⁵ The ‘fall of the Roman empire’, as Chris Wickham has written, is a ‘potent symbol’ to which too many ‘idées fixes’ have been attached.⁶ A first step might be to agree that these debates are not about right or wrong, they are about helpful or unhelpful, or rather, about more or less helpful and adequate models and interpretations.

TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE ROMAN WORLD—SOME ISSUES OF METHODOLOGY

I therefore agree with Wickham’s diagnosis in *Framing the Early Middle Ages*: much excellent research has been done on Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, in particular since the ESF programme on the ‘Transformation of the Roman World’ in the 1990s. ‘What has not developed, however, is a set of interpretative paradigms that fully reflect this flowering of scholarship.’⁷ The following 990 pages of the book offer a consistent set of paradigms that we all can work with, and that have inspired new discussions.⁸ What the book has achieved was, crucially, the departure from overall explanations for the fall of an empire, and the insistence on regional differences. The regions were then assessed individually according to a set of criteria; notably, Western, Byzantine, and Islamic transformations of Roman provinces were all included. This wide-ranging comparison, then, allowed the construction of a model centred on the transition from tax-based to land-based states and societies, a transition that happened in different ways and to a very different extent in different parts of the Roman world. In parallel, aristocratic wealth and power diminished, with implications for the demand of goods and the intensity of exchange networks. Regionalisation and the fluidity of societies increased, the position of peasants became stronger, and military identities prevailed among the aristocracy.⁹

Brent Shaw has warned us that ‘whatever the story, it is not susceptible to framing’.¹⁰ Yet Wickham’s book provides a frame (or perhaps, a matrix) that we can work with, while he acknowledges that this frame is incomplete: intellectual culture, but also to an extent ‘values, attitudes, representations, discursive strategies, material culture, imagery’, which constitute a ‘wider conception of culture’, receive

⁵ Walter Pohl, ‘Rome and the Barbarians in the 5th Century’, *Antiquité Tardive*, xvi (2009), 93–102; Walter Pohl, ‘Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West: Introduction’, in Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (eds), *Post-Roman Transitions: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West* (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, xiv, Turnhout, 2013), 1–46.

⁶ Wickham, *Framing*, 10.

⁷ Wickham, *Framing*, 1.

⁸ Some contributions to the debate following the book: John Haldon, ‘Framing Transformation, Transforming the Framework’, *Millennium-Jahrbuch*, v (2008), 327–52; Brent Shaw, ‘After Rome: Transformations of the Early Mediterranean World’, *New Left Review*, li (2008), 89–114; Ian Wood, ‘Review Article: Landscapes Compared’, *EME*, xv (2007), 223–37. See also my review in *Speculum*, lxxxv (2010).

⁹ Wickham, *Framing*, 825–31.

¹⁰ Shaw, ‘After Rome’, 110.

no full-fledged analysis in *Framing the Early Middle Ages*.¹¹ One could add gender, family, religion, identities, emotions or other factors. This wider horizon remains a challenge, more than ten years after the book has appeared. Since the 1970s, different schools in the humanities and social sciences have to a large extent converged in looking for ways to think theory and practice, discourse and interaction together.¹² In historical research, we are aware that the phenomena we study are interconnected, but we still tend to keep them separate on the paradigmatic level. Many handbooks are structured in clear-cut parts: overview of the events; government and institutions; economy and society; the regions; religion and culture.¹³ That is a reasonable choice for a handbook but leaves little room to let the sparks fly on a paradigmatic level.

One methodological problem lies in assessing the intricate relationship between the spread of Christianity and Islam, and the transformation of the Roman world: both conversion and the erosion of Empire took hundreds of years, in close chronological proximity, first in the West and then in the East. Christianity and Islam constituted powerful frames for interactions and attitudes which we do not understand sufficiently—in a sense, they are ‘false friends’ too readily understood through their later developments. Christianization and the ‘fall of Rome’ have usually been treated as two separate phenomena, even though Edward Gibbon, A. H. M. Jones, and others made too many idle monks responsible for the fall of the empire.¹⁴ A direct relation between Christianity and the decline of empire will be hard to prove. The ‘revolution of Constantine’ arguably first boosted the potential of the empire to build new loyalties, and indeed for a while it seemed that empire and Christianity could become almost coterminous.¹⁵ The ages of Justinian and of Charlemagne saw the most ambitious attempts to construct an empire that could claim the loyalty of its subjects and hope for political success because it was pleasing to God. Yet there were many reasons why such grandiose ideological constructs never quite worked in practice. It is striking, for instance, how few Christian emperors receive a positive treatment in the *Liber Pontificalis*.¹⁶

Christianity created a new dynamic, but also new tensions and contradictions in Roman society. In recent decades, scholarship has provided many new insights into

¹¹ Wickham, *Framing*, 7.

¹² See Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Transformation der Kulturtheorien: Zur Entwicklung eines Theorieprogramms* (Weilerswist, 2000).

¹³ This is the structure of Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, xiv: *Late Antiquity, Empire and Successors, 425–600* (Cambridge, 2000)—I have chosen one of the best of its kind as an example.

¹⁴ Edward Gibbon, ‘General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire’, in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 7 vols., ed. J. B. Bury (London, 1897), iv, 160–9, attached to ch. 38; A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964), ii, 1046 (‘idle mouths’); see also David M. Gwynn, ‘Idle mouths and solar haloes: A.H.M. Jones and the conversion of Europe’, in David M. Gwynn (ed.), *A.H.M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2008), 225–6.

¹⁵ Cf. Raymond van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge, 2007); Paul Veyne, *Quand notre monde est devenu chrétien (312–394)* (Paris, 2007).

¹⁶ Walter Pohl, ‘Creating Cultural Resources for Carolingian Rule: Historians of the Christian Empire’, in Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeder (eds), *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2015), 15–33.

this process.¹⁷ Mass conversion provoked a crisis of identity in which new models of community could emerge.¹⁸ Christianization was not a coherent process which can find a comprehensive explanation, but eventually, it led to the ‘identification of Christianity with authority’.¹⁹ Christian ‘totalizing discourse’ increasingly provided ‘both the framework within which most people looked at the world and the words that they used to describe it’.²⁰ Roman secular values came to be regarded as ‘transient and relative’, not least through the work of Augustine.²¹ Mothers stopped teaching Roman civic values to their children and promoted Christian spiritual values instead.²² The power and authority of bishops assumed a dynamic of their own, which could serve to integrate polities but also disrupt them.²³

How well the results of ‘classical’ socio-economic analysis may go along with such studies of religious discourse becomes clear in Peter Brown’s book *Through the Eye of a Needle*. Wickham has demonstrated the dwindling wealth and the loss of supra-regional property of post-Roman aristocracies.²⁴ Peter Brown argues that, in contrast to its more ascetic currents, the late antique Church offered a conditional acceptance of wealth as long as it was not excessive, and some of it was used for pious donations. He describes how ‘a new conglomerate of notions about the use of wealth, about the nature of the Christian community, and about the destiny of the Christian soul slid into place’ between 500 and 650. We still do not understand sufficiently how the two sides of the process may have been connected. But this has implications on the way in which, in the Latin West, Christian institutions could acquire what is estimated as up to one third of the landed wealth in many regions of Latin Europe.²⁵ Brown’s book is a showcase study of the impact of discourse on social practice; but it also demonstrates what a massive long-term deployment of seductive words, moral exhortation, and communal pressure was necessary to make new notions ‘slide into place’. And this change could only happen because

¹⁷ The work of Peter Brown has been central to this vibrant field of scholarship: Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (London, 2006); idem, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity AD 200–1000*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2003). See also Walter Pohl, ‘The Transformation of the Roman World Revisited’, in Jamie Kreiner and Helmut Reimitz (eds), *Motions of Late Antiquity: Essays on Religion, Politics, and Society in Honour of Peter Brown* (Turnhout, 2016), 45–61, and other contributions in the same volume.

¹⁸ Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990).

¹⁹ Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge, 1995), x–xii.

²⁰ Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford, 1991), 222.

²¹ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), 309; new edition with an epilogue (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000).

²² Kate Cooper, ‘Gender and the Fall of Rome’, in Philipp Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2009), 187–200.

²³ Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 2005); Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2001).

²⁴ Wickham, *Framing*, 153–258.

²⁵ Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ, 2012), 527; Ian Wood, ‘Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400–750’, *TRHS*, 6th ser., xxiii (2013), 37–73; id., *The Transformation of the Roman West* (Kalamazoo, MI, and Bradford, 2018).

the old elites were gradually losing their social power and cultural hegemony. Some rich aristocrats (such as Paulinus of Nola) converted to a properly Christian outlook of their own accord; for others, embarking on an ecclesiastic career was the result of failure. When Sidonius Apollinaris, who had aspired to high imperial office, became bishop, this was ‘a comedown’, as Peter Brown has remarked.²⁶

Late ancient and early medieval Christianity was perhaps the most ambitious experiment of social engineering that the world had seen to date, a massive effort to change peoples’ lives using all available media: preaching and writing, images and light, ritual and architecture, dress and music, detailed norms for behaviour and punishment. This was not simply a result of putting Christian ideas into practice, but also of shaping them according to the needs of the social field. Unsurprisingly, we have more traces of norms and negotiations than of what they meant to broader populations. The problem is to reconstruct the role of discourse in the social fabric on the basis of the fragmentary evidence. Conceptualizing ‘ideology’ as a separate sector of society or ‘source of social power’ may be a useful analytic distinction, but it tends to dissect just the connection at stake here.²⁷ The Foucauldian link between power and discourse can provide one guiding line. Material interests, attitudes, and identities constitute relevant criteria. The question can also be framed differently: how can social cohesion be maintained, or lost?

The term ‘social cohesion’ has mostly been used in the social sciences in the study of small communities.²⁸ Here, I employ it as a shorthand term for the degree to which large societies overcome their internal tensions and contradictions and find some balance that allows for their functioning.²⁹ Social cohesion certainly does not mean absence of conflict or of inner contradictions in a society. Inner cognitive dissonance is in fact necessary for the long-term success of a group, because it enables creative responses to contingency and changing circumstances. Several mechanisms may help to integrate a heterogeneous community or society. Integration may be the result of common interests held by a majority or by powerful elites. It may be achieved by institutional mechanisms, such as successful government, bureaucratic administration or regulated participation. Shared values and identities can have a cohesive effect, especially in a community under pressure from outside. A common cultural profile, mediated through shared language, beliefs, symbols, rituals, and social memories is essential for long-term integration that goes beyond temporary ‘task cohesion’. A good indicator for the degree of cohesion in a society certainly is the frequency and inclusiveness of communication and interaction, and the amount of cultural flows within the social group. Networks capable of bridging the local and global levels are vital in drawing large communities together.

²⁶ Brown, *Through the Eye*, 404–6; Jill Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome AD 407–485* (Oxford, 1994), 13.

²⁷ E.g. Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, i: *A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge, 1986), 22–3.

²⁸ For a social science approach to the social cohesion of nations, see, for instance, Albrekt Christian Larsen, *The Rise and Fall of Social Cohesion: The Construction and De-construction of Social Trust in the US, UK, Sweden and Denmark* (Oxford, 2013).

²⁹ See Walter Pohl and Andreas Fischer (eds), *Social Cohesion and its Limits* (Vienna, forthcoming), especially the introductory contribution by Andreas Fischer.

Thus, the concept of ‘social cohesion’ is closely linked to the concepts of connectivity and reciprocity, integration, consensus, solidarity, and loyalty, but it also has strong implications for the construction of identities.³⁰ In the following, I can contribute just a few observations to address these big issues, focusing on sixth-century Italy.

ITALY IN THE SIXTH CENTURY

Italy from the beginning of the Gothic war in 535 to the consolidation of Lombard rule in northern Italy under King Agilulf and Queen Theodelinda in *c.*600 has several advantages as a paradigmatic case. Continuists like to talk about the Frankish or the Visigothic kingdoms, catastrophists about Britain or the Balkans; Italy is a more complicated case. A century after what is still often regarded as the ‘Fall of Rome’—the narrative of Peter Heather’s *The Fall of the Roman Empire* ends in 476—Rome was obviously still falling.³¹ The decisive blow to the ancient order in the Italian peninsula was not dealt by barbarians, but by a Roman invasion, and by the twenty-years’ war that ensued.³² Its effects were increased by the Justinianic plague that struck repeatedly from the 540s onwards. That was soon followed by the greatest failure among the successful barbarian invasions of the period. Within years of their arrival in Italy in 568, Alboin’s Lombards split into four parts: those who continued to build an area of Lombard rule in northern Italy, those who attacked Frankish Gaul, those who founded the duchies of Spoleto and Benevento and those who were bought over by the Byzantines, at least temporarily. ‘It was Lombard weakness, not “barbarism”, that prevented the sort of quick and easy conquest that characterized the Vandal entry into Spain or that of the Ostrogoths into Italy itself.’³³ As a result, Italy became part both of the Roman Empire and of the sphere of post-Roman ‘barbarian’ kingdoms. Surprisingly (as should become clearer for the seventh century) the two parts did not develop so differently.³⁴ These features indicate how paradoxical the process of post-Roman transition could be.

The sixth century in Italy certainly was no dark age: it is better documented by written sources than some of the classical centuries. Admittedly, our knowledge of Lombard history would be poor without Paul the Deacon’s eighth-century *Historia Langobardorum*. Nevertheless, we have Cassiodorus’ and Gregory the Great’s letters and their other texts, the *Liber Pontificalis*, the Ravenna papyri, the *Pragmatica sanctio*, some Frankish historiography and letters, Procopius and Agathias and other texts quite rich in circumstantial detail about life in Italy. This is complemented by remaining buildings and quite good archaeological evidence. Yet there is still

³⁰ For the concept of identity, see Walter Pohl, ‘Introduction: Strategies of Identification: A Methodological Profile’, in Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (eds), *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2013).

³¹ Heather, *Fall*.

³² Wickham, *EMI*, 25.

³³ Wickham, *Framing*, 37.

³⁴ Still fundamental: T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy A.D. 554–800* (Rome, 1984).

some disagreement on the overall picture that this information adds up to: the extent of population decline and of the collapse of urbanism, the impact of the Lombard invasion, or the status of Romans under Lombard rule remain in discussion.³⁵ Perhaps there was no clear overall picture? Due not only to the regionalization and political fragmentation of the peninsula, social change could happen at a rather different pace in different places. Like a representative Roman building in slow decay, it took time for the grandiose edifice of Roman *res publica* to come down.

I am going to probe briefly into three different representations of Italian society in the sixth century: the letters that Cassiodorus wrote as praetorian prefect in the Gothic war; the Ravenna papyri of the mid-sixth century; and Gregory the Great's early letters (and his *Dialogues*). All three sources were originally functional, but the letter collections use literary stylization to convey messages or suggest a background narrative—to a different degree, because Cassiodorus edited the *Variae*, whereas Gregory's letters were only compiled long after his death. All these texts allow both analytical and hermeneutic approaches. That seems adequate for the question how social practice and discourse were interrelated. They represent three different institutions of late antique Italy: the central government, urban administration, and the Roman Church. Thus, they raise the question how institutions could shape social cohesion, or reflect its malfunction. All three texts affirm the relative security of correct bureaucratic practice in troubled times. Perhaps more than similar texts from other periods, they betray fundamental tensions and contradictions. They also allow tracing networks, but only from the perspective of three principal nodes in the social tissue of sixth-century Italy, a perspective that should not be taken for granted.

CASSIODORUS

Cassiodorus became *praefectus praetorio* in 533, and the letters he wrote during that period are collected in volumes 11 and 12 of his *Variae*.³⁶ As he explains in the preface to these two books, so far he had mainly written letters of state for the Gothic rulers (*ore regio*), which are assembled in books 1–10; now the letters were written from his own person (*ex persona propria*).³⁷ Of course, a main aim of his collection was apologetic ('a thorough exoneration of the Italian bureaucratic elite',

³⁵ See, for instance, Stefano Gasparri (ed.), *Il regno dei Longobardi in Italia: Archeologia, società, istituzioni* (Spoleto, 2004); Gian Pietro Brogiolo, *Le origini della città medievale* (Mantua, 2011), and Patrick Geary's chapter in this volume.

³⁶ *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori Variarum libri XII*, ed. A. J. Fridh, CCSL, xcvi (Turnhout, 1973) [hereafter *Variae*]; *The Variae of Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator*, trans. S. J. B. Barnish (Translated Texts for Historians, xii, Liverpool, 1992); Flavio Magno Aurelio Cassiodoro Senatore, *Varie*, 6 vols., ed. Andrea Gardina, Giovanni Alberto Ceconi, and Ignazio Tantillo (Rome, 2015–18), a new collaborative Italian bilingual edition with extensive commentary. See also James J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley, 1979).

³⁷ *Variae*, preface to Book xi (ed. Fridh, 421).

as Shane Bjornlie has put it).³⁸ His difficult choice to remain in office when the war broke out and the legitimacy of the regime that he served became contested was well known; but he would hardly have included material compromising him beyond that.³⁹ Some administrators and senators, such as his elder colleague Liberius, quit Gothic service much faster, and were rewarded by comparable office by Justinian. Still, the overwhelming impression of the letters contained in books 11 and 12 of the *Variae* is that of bureaucratic legality and regularity, and of moral high ground. Many of the letters, dated '533/37' by Fridh, give no clue whether they were written before or during the war. Several further letters address routines of tax collection, only datable by the indiction and without emphasizing that the war had to be financed.⁴⁰ Roman administration, the letters imply, worked as ever under the expert guidance of Cassiodorus. Only a few letters refer directly to the war, for instance the one written to Valerianus, probably governor of Lucania and Bruttium, a province crossed at the time, 535/536, by Belisarius' troops, which is only vaguely mentioned; but the Goths were near: 'Now, a large army has arrived, known to be assigned to the defence of the *res publica*'. The tenor of the letter is that public order should be kept, and the war ignored as far as possible: 'While the Gothic army wages war, let the Roman be at peace.'⁴¹ At that point, it still seemed possible to move cautiously and treat the war as an issue between two armies both linked to the *res publica*, and to wait for the outcome.

It is not too difficult to detect the cracks in the smooth rhetoric of the *Variae*. The letter to Valerianus, who was responsible for Cassiodorus's native province of Bruttium, appealing to his skill to handle problems that Cassiodorus downplays for most of the letter, only betrays the author's deep preoccupation at the end: 'However, I am certainly not commending my own people to you beyond others, since I hope what will befall to my home, I wish to happen to all. For, since I gave thought to guarding the whole public, my personal concern has slipped away.'⁴² Later, the urgency with which the praetorian prefect fires a whole series of letters at different addressees in *Venetia et Histria*, to make sure that taxes were duly delivered in 537/538, betrays his preoccupation with feeding Ravenna and the army. The province was fertile and studded with great villas that 'shine out far and wide' like pearls, he argued.⁴³ In all the bucolic rhetoric, there was no indication that the war raged on, and several regions already suffered from famine. Soon after these letters

³⁸ M. Shane Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae 527–554* (Cambridge and New York, 2013), 162.

³⁹ The traditional position is that Cassiodorus had compiled the collection after retiring from office in 537/538 in Ravenna. See O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus*, 105–7; S. J. B. Barnish, 'The Work of Cassiodorus after his Conversion', *Latomus*, xlviii (1989), 157–87. Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, 19–26, has argued that it was only put together in Constantinople after 540, with an eye to issues relevant there.

⁴⁰ *Variae*, xii, 16 (ed. Fridh, 483); xii, 22 (ed. Fridh, 488–90); xii, 23 (ed. Fridh, 490–1); xii, 26 (ed. Fridh, 494–5).

⁴¹ 'Dum belligerat Gothorum exercitus, sit in pace Romanus.' *Variae*, xii, 5 (ed. Fridh, 469–70, trans. Barnish, 163–4).

⁴² *Variae*, xii, 5 (ed. Fridh, 470–1, trans. Barnish, 165).

⁴³ *Variae*, xii, 22 (ed. Fridh, 488–90, trans. Barnish, 176); see also *Variae*, xii, 23–4 (ed. Fridh, 490–2); xii, 26 (ed. Fridh, 494–5).

had been sent, King Witigis, exasperated by the long siege of Rome, gave orders to kill the Roman senators kept in Ravenna as hostages.⁴⁴

Whether Cassiodorus retired from office at the same time, in 537/538, as has usually been assumed, is unclear. The very last letter in the collection seems to indicate a later date.⁴⁵ It is addressed to the citizens of Emilia and Liguria to highlight the clemency and munificence of the (unnamed) *princeps* and *rex noster*, undoubtedly Witigis, for opening the *horrea* after raids and famine in the province: ‘Rejoice, provinces, and rather be grateful for your afflictions, because thus you can verify the spirit of your prince who would not give up in the face of adversity!’ The context is the extension of the Gothic war to the western Po basin. As we know from Procopius, Bishop Datius of Milan had travelled to Rome to ask Belisarius for troops to effectuate the secession of Liguria from the Gothic kingdom. Belisarius could only spare 1,000 soldiers who, in the spring of 538, took Liguria almost without resistance. Witigis asked the Frankish King Theudebert for help, who dispatched 10,000 Burgundians to reinforce the Gothic army led by Witigis’ nephew Uraias. Soon his army laid siege to Milan, which was defended by (according to Procopius) only 300 Byzantine soldiers and its citizens for considerable time.

Only in early 539, the Byzantine troops surrendered under an agreement for safe conduct—but only for the army.⁴⁶ This was a routine arrangement in the Gothic war—soldiers of the enemy who surrendered received safe conduct or joined the victorious army ‘on equal terms’, while the civilian population suffered all the hardship of war—plunder, arson, slavery, or even death.⁴⁷ Before the final attack on Naples, for instance, Procopius presents a very pensive Belisarius who feels bad about not being able to protect the Roman civilian population of the city.⁴⁸ Milan, however, was a particularly deplorable case. According to Procopius, the male population was slaughtered, the females given to the Burgundians and sold as slaves.⁴⁹ The city had suffered so much that Bishop Datius never returned. Two pretorian prefects appointed by Justinian—Cassiodorus’s direct rivals—lost their lives in the Ligurian rebellion. The first, Fidelius, had been *quaestor* under Athalaric, and fell at Pavia.⁵⁰ When the Goths caught the second, Reparatus, after the fall of Milan, ‘they cut his body into small pieces and threw his flesh to the dogs’.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Procopius, *Bella*, v, 26, ed. Henry B. Dewing (London and Cambridge, MA, 1961), iii, 246.

⁴⁵ *Variae*, xii, 28 (ed. Fridh, 496–8, and ed. Giardina, Cecconi, and Tarantillo, v, 115–18, commentary at 296–7).

⁴⁶ The chronology results from Procopius, *Bella*, vi, 12, ed. Dewing, iii, 384–97, and vi, 21–2, ed. Dewing, iv, 45–65; see Ernst Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire: De la disparition de l’Empire d’Occident à la mort de Justinien (476–565 n. Chr.)*, 2 vols. (Brussels and Paris, 1949), ii, 354.

⁴⁷ Walter Pohl, ‘Perceptions of Barbarian Violence’, in H. A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Aldershot and Burlington, VA, 2006).

⁴⁸ Procopius, *Bella* v, 9, 22–30, ed. Dewing, iii, 88–91.

⁴⁹ Procopius, *Bella* vi, 21, 39, ed. Dewing, iv, 54; Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, 1988), 345–6; Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, 26–7.

⁵⁰ Cassiodorus had written the letter of appointment as *quaestor* in 527/28: *Variae*, viii, 28 (ed. Fridh, 322–3).

⁵¹ Procopius, *Bella*, vi, 21, 41, ed. Dewing, iv, 57.

Did Cassiodorus share that anger against the disloyal and rebellious Roman population and its imperial officials? Any sense of a common 'Roman' cause in Italy must have been lost at that point. His letter was most likely written after the reconquest of Milan, in 539.⁵² Cassiodorus's rhetorical exuberance 'rejoice, province adorned with the corpses of the adversaries' sounds cynical in that context.⁵³ He employed a whole arsenal of propagandistic distortion, going so far as styling the Burgundians as the main enemy overcome by Witigis, not mentioning the Byzantines at all (a probable result of later editing) and only incidentally referring to the rebels that had been destroyed. It is possible that Witigis had to put some pressure on the Burgundians to make them go home; the Franks did have an interest in dominating northern Italy. Making the point that the Goths were essentially defending Italy against barbarian attacks may be an attempt to re-establish some consensus in Liguria. Witigis' fortune as a warrior also needed stressing in 539; there is no mention of Uraias. Cassiodorus, who issued the Edict, claimed a share in fighting famine, and likened himself to the biblical Joseph relieving Egypt of the famine. Then he extends the biblical simile to the king, who unlike Joseph had not been more generous to his brothers, but equally provided for all.⁵⁴ Thus, the letter and thus the *Variae* end with an image of social cohesion, and with the admonishment that 'from this' (the king's generosity) 'the general public should learn what is good for it'.⁵⁵

Unlike many other senators, Cassiodorus survived the increasingly bitter conflict between the Gothic regime and the imperial armies—blemished, but basically unharmed. He even kept his family estates in Bruttium, the future Vivarium. The war fragmented Italian society. However, it had not created the rifts and contradictions that now came to seem so unsurmountable. It only brought out the traditional tensions between the late Roman civil elite and the military, which had only temporarily been alleviated in the institutional cohabitation of a Gothic kingdom with a senatorial aristocracy and a Roman administration. Both Odoacer and Theoderic had carefully nourished senatorial loyalty and provided an attractive alternative to the increasingly unstable military regimes of the last decades of the Western empire. German scholars have even spoken of a 'third spring' of the senate under

⁵² Fridh dates the letter to 535/536, the Giardina edition to 537/538; the observations regarding this dating by Arnaldo Marcone, in Cassiodorus, *Varie*, ed. Giardina, Cecconi, and Tarantillo, v, 296–7, are somehow confusing because he attributes the references to the Burgundians to an incursion in 490 in which Witigis could have taken part as a young man, 'mentre nessuna menzione diretta della guerra greco-gotica... si trova nelle *Variae*'. There are references to earlier victories over barbarians in the letter, but it is unlikely that Witigis had already fought Burgundians fifty years before, and that this is the only reason the Burgundians are mentioned in the letter. Uraias' army and the Burgundians probably arrived in the early summer of 538 (Stein, *Bas-Empire*, ii, 354), and the letter could have been written shortly after that in the early stages of the siege of Milan, while the rest of Liguria was being retaken. The famine already raged in 537/538. But the text talks about the war in Liguria as a thing of the past ('*caesa est rebellium manus*', xii, 28, 3, ed. Fridh, 497), the Burgundians seem to have gone; and Milan only fell in March 539. As we have no indication when Cassiodorus quit his office but the date of the last letters in *Variae*, it does not seem unlikely that Cassiodorus served until 540, and was deported to Constantinople with Witigis in 540, as Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, 19–26, argues.

⁵³ 'Exulta, adversariorum cadaveribus ornata provincia': *Variae*, xii, 28, 3 (ed. Fridh, 497).

⁵⁴ *Variae*, xii, 28, 7 (ed. Fridh, 497).

⁵⁵ *Variae*, xii, 28, 10 (ed. Fridh, 499): 'Hinc bona sua discat universitas'.

Theoderic.⁵⁶ Cassiodorus, in his preface to the *Variae*, had put his attitude to Gothic rule like this: ‘Employ the king’s authority to correct evil characters, shatter the insolence of the transgressor, restore respect to the laws.’⁵⁷

Like many other members of the Roman elite, Cassiodorus may have overrated his leverage on the Gothic regime. Symmachus and Boethius were the first prominent casualties of this contradiction between Gothic displays of *civilitas* and the logic of military rule. Roman senators had been used to this type of confrontation since the late republic and had been exposed to rather brutal imperial regimes in the course of the centuries of empire. Factionalism among the senatorial aristocracy had also been a constant, and political choices could always have fatal consequences. As in other ‘kingdoms of the empire’, many among the Roman elites thought that a Gothic kingdom would be easier to deal with than an imperial authority entrenched in Italy. These hopes faded, and the Gothic war put an unprecedented pressure on all the political fault-lines between military rule and civil administration, imperial and royal legitimists, senatorial factions and aristocratic interests. At some point, keeping options open was not an option anymore. It is obvious that repeated killings of senators, the end of appointments to the senate, and the ascent of military officials had destroyed the institution, and the respective social group, by the end of the sixth century.⁵⁸ The senators failed to find a response to the political and social challenges of the war as a group. Perhaps it is emblematic that the last prominent expression of senatorial values was a collection of official letters of a regime that had already collapsed, and that had been responsible for the cruel deaths of many senators. As a consequence, much of what Cassiodorus advocated in his *Variae* disappeared from Italy within the rest of his lifetime.

THE RAVENNA PAPYRI

Roman administration did not come to a standstill in the course of a Gothic war. A rather different type of source attests to its continuing function, at least in some regions: the Ravenna papyri, documents about sales and other legal business conducted at and archived by the urban offices of the *Gesta municipalia*.⁵⁹ Sixth-century papyrus documents have mainly been preserved for Ravenna and for some cities around it, but also for more remote places such as Rieti.⁶⁰ They show that even during and after the Gothic war, land transactions continued to be documented according to a sophisticated formal procedure. Some rather small property transfers

⁵⁶ Peter Eich, ‘Senatoren, welche Senatoren? Rechtliche und soziologische Präzisierungen einer politischen Chiffre im gotischen Italien’, in Hans-Ulrich Wiemer (ed.), *Theoderich der Große und das gotische Königreich in Italien*, forthcoming.

⁵⁷ *Variae*, Preface (ed. Fridh, 5, trans. Barnish, 3).

⁵⁸ Mark Humphries, ‘Italy A.D. 425–605’, in Cameron, Ward-Perkins, and Whitby (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, xiv, 539.

⁵⁹ Jan-Olof Tjäder (ed.), *Die nichtliterarischen lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445–700*, 2 vols (Lund, 1955). For a comparison between the *Variae* and the Ravenna Papyri, see Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, 212–14.

⁶⁰ Papyrus 7 (Rieti 557) ed. Tjäder, i, 224–34: a guardian appointed for the sons of a Gothic widow.

were also recorded. Quite a broad social scale was involved, peasants, soldiers, merchants, manufacturers, government officials, clerics, and *argentarii*, bankers. Unlike in early and high medieval charters, there is no systematic bias in the written transmission of documents in favour of ecclesiastic institutions, although churches were involved in quite a few of these transactions. Many of the transfers recorded in the sixth century went up the social scale, although senators and top officials feature little in them. Most of them regard city-based landowners who bought or sold virtual parts of estates (*fundi*) calculated in *unciae*, twelfths. This presumes a system by which these estates were run by *actores* or other personnel, and their proceeds distributed to the owners. We find complaints that in these hard times it had become difficult to control distant estates, and that slaves or agricultural labourers had left, but there were buyers who felt capable of facing this challenge. The relative lack of agricultural producers after the demographic decline in the second half of the sixth century certainly strengthened their position, yet the extraction of surplus by landowners remained crucial.⁶¹

One observation that can be made on the basis of the surviving papyri is how deeply the Goths had penetrated into the social tissue of Italy. In spite of their formal distinction, they interacted with the majority population in many ways. As far as we can go by Gothic or Latin names, their estates were interspersed with those of 'Roman' landowners. This emerges, for instance, from Papyrus 30, a transaction processed in 539, while the war came closer to Ravenna. The *fundus* Concordiacos near Faenza, sold by the *honesta femina* Thugilo and her daughter Domnica, was surrounded by properties of the *dromonarius* Secundus, of the *scutarius* Witteric, of Andreas, a former commander of the *dromonarii*, and by public land.⁶² Most of these landowners were military men, therefore members of the *exercitus Gothorum*, but some of them had Latin names. The social distance between the Roman population and the Gothic army, and eventually also the Lombard army, was hardly greater than in a Byzantine army largely composed of barbarians.

Overall social boundaries and identities expressed in personal names did not quite coincide in the Arian Church of Ravenna either. Papyrus 34 from 551 documents the sale of a large piece of wetland by the clerics of the Arian church of S. Anastasia to the *defensor* of (probably) a Catholic church, who had previously given them a large loan. From eighteen names of the Arian clerics, twelve are Gothic, four Latin, and two are listed with a Latin/biblical name and sign with a Gothic name.⁶³ In the subscription, four of them sign in Gothic, among them the senior cleric, *Optarit presbyter = Uftahari papa*. Ten subscriptions are autographs, among them, the four in the Gothic language. The Arian churches were called *ecclesiae legis Gothorum*, and thus marked off from the Catholic/Roman sphere.⁶⁴ However, after half a century of Gothic rule, the distinctions between Goths and Romans, the military and civilians, Catholics and Arians, literacy and orality, did not coincide any more. And in Ravenna, more than ten years after

⁶¹ See Wickham, *Framing*, 533–50.

⁶² Papyrus 30, ed. Tjäder, ii, 55–61.

⁶³ Papyrus 34, ed. Tjäder, ii, 95.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Papyrus 33, ed. Tjäder, ii, 79–90: *clericus legis Gothorum*.

the Byzantine conquest, that had not changed. With some confidence, the Gothic clerics of S. Anastasia could give the formal promise of indemnity from the income of their church in the case of infringement of their sale.⁶⁵ That there was some pressure on the Arian side could only be deduced from the fact that the clerics renounced to being present at the *traditio corporalis*, the physical transfer of their property. Yet the insistence with which some of these clerics signed in Gothic in Byzantine Ravenna at the moment when the Gothic war reached its climax may surprise. Their Gothic and Arian identity clearly was not simply (as Patrick Amory has argued) an ‘ethnographic ideology’ that could procure privilege,⁶⁶ it was publicly displayed at a moment when it had already ceased to bring benefits. Ethnic and religious distinctions continued to exist within society at large, and could be accommodated, not least, thanks to a bureaucracy used to operating on an inclusive level. What Cassiodorus had mostly expressed rhetorically is attested here in routine administrative documents. Inner differences and the existence of particular groups and identities did not necessarily indicate a lack of cohesion of the larger social whole.

However, the mechanisms that could integrate a multipolar society were crumbling. The Roman bureaucracy was maintained in Ravenna and other imperial possessions but was already in decline. And Gothic Arianism was soon suppressed in Byzantine Italy. In the 560s, the property of the Arian churches—called *Gothorum substantias* by Agnellus—was confiscated and handed over to the Catholic side.⁶⁷ A document from the later 560s about the value of (as it seems, part of) these revenues has also survived, which calculates it as over 2,000 gold *solidi* a year, from which more than half was deducted as taxes.⁶⁸ However, Catholic unity could not be established so easily after more than half a century of heterodoxy. The Arian Church was again promoted by some Lombard rulers (much to the displeasure of Pope Gregory I), and we may assume that its roots were more Italian than Lombard. Besides, there was the Three Chapters Controversy, which expressed a strong anti-Justinianic sentiment in Italy.⁶⁹ Confessional distance between Italy and the East had grown, and each of these divisions was to make itself felt in Italy as well. It is remarkable how negatively Justinian is presented in the *Liber Pontificalis*, where he is twice dubbed as Diocletian, persecutor of the Church.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Papyrus 34, ed. Tjäder, ii, 100.

⁶⁶ Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge, 1997).

⁶⁷ Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, lxxxv, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger, *MGH SSRL*, 334: ‘Temporibus istius (i.e. archbishop Agnellus, 557–570) Iustinianus... omnes Gothorum substantias huic ecclesiae et beato Agnello episcopo habere concessit, non solum in urbibus, sed in suburbanis villis et viculis etiam, et templa et aras, servos et ancillas, quicquid ad eorum ius vel ritum paganorum pertinere potuit.’

⁶⁸ Papyrus 2, ed. Tjäder, i, 178–83; Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, ii, 821; Walter Pohl, ‘“Per hospites divisi”’: Wirtschaftliche Grundlagen der langobardischen Ansiedlung in Italien’, *Römische Historische Mitteilungen*, xlii (2001), 179–226.

⁶⁹ Celia Chazelle and Catherine Cubitt (eds), *The Crisis of the Oikoumene: The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean* (Turnhout, 2007).

⁷⁰ *Liber Pontificalis*, lix and lxi, in *The Book of Pontiffs: The Ancient Biographies of the First 90 Roman Bishops to AD 715*, trans. Raymond Davis (Liverpool, 1989), 53 and 58.

Many of the surviving papyri date to periods of war and conflict. A series of land transactions among prominent citizens—mainly officials and bankers, *argentarii*—in Ravenna is documented between 539 and 541.⁷¹ A further group of papyri was written around the decisive expedition by Narses in 552.⁷² In 572, shortly after the Lombard invasion, a *bracarius*, a trouser merchant, gave substantial properties to the church of Ravenna, with the explanation: ‘How transient are property and house’.⁷³ In the same year 572, the *agellarius* (smallholder) Domininus sold parts of two properties for the very modest price of five solidi; the buyer was *palatinus sacrarum largitionum*, an official of the imperial revenue, who already owned the rest of these estates. These clusters of documents in wartime may be a coincidence. Yet they seem to show that some people (and the Church) had the capacity to profit from troubled times, at the expense of others.

POPE GREGORY THE GREAT

The second major letter collection from sixth-century Italy, that of Pope Gregory I, still displays a functioning ecclesiastic and political network, although most letters concern regions still under imperial control.⁷⁴ Gregory operates within a, however reduced, imperial framework, in which Constantinople is the centre; he had had the opportunity to build up his personal network there. However, things had changed in the more than half-century that had passed since the end of the *Variae*.⁷⁵ It is obvious that the letters written by a lay administrator would mainly be directed to lay addressees, those of the pope to eminent clerics. Gregory’s letters are also the expression of what Peter Brown has called ‘the new connectivity of Christianity’ which would soon have to operate in a western Europe without a centre.⁷⁶ They point to a shift in positions of social authority and responsibilities. Some of the last letters in the *Variae* had dealt with food supplies for Ravenna and other cities; most of them were addressed to laymen, only one, remarkably, to Bishop Datius of Milan.⁷⁷ Now it was the bishop of Rome who was concerned with the grain supplies of the City of Rome. Gregory’s Register begins with letters written in September 590, in which supplies from Sicily are a central issue: ‘If anything less is sent here, then not any one man perishes but the whole population

⁷¹ Papyrus 30 (539); Papyrus 31 (January 540), ed. Tjäder, ii, 55–61; Papyrus 32 (21 March 540), ed. Tjäder, ii, 73–8; Papyrus 33 (July 541), ed. Tjäder, ii, 79–90.

⁷² Papyrus 34 (551), ed. Tjäder, ii, 91–103; Papyrus 13 (4 April 553), ed. Tjäder, i, 300–8.

⁷³ Papyrus 14 (572), ed. Tjäder, 308–17, line 9: ‘res et domum quam sunt periturae.’

⁷⁴ See the map in Robert Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), xx–xxi.

⁷⁵ The bibliography on Gregory the Great is huge; see, among others, Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988); Sofia Boesch Gajano, *Gregorio Magno: Alle origini del medioevo* (Rome, 2004); Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*; John C. Cavadini (ed.), *Gregory the Great: A Symposium* (Notre Dame, 1995); Lucia Castaldi (ed.), *Scrittura e storia: Per una lettura delle opere di Gregorio Magno* (Florence, 2005); Claudio Leonardi (ed.), *Gregorio Magno e le origini dell’Europa: Atti del convegno internazionale Firenze 2006* (Florence, 2014).

⁷⁶ Brown, *Rise*, 13.

⁷⁷ *Variae*, xii, 22–25 and xii, 26 (Datius) (ed. Fridh, 488–96).

at once.⁷⁸ One addressee is the praetor of Sicily. The background of the first three letters is the conflict between him and the churchmen, but also between the bishops, whom the first letter calls to a council. As Gregory underlines, hate, nourishing crime, internal envy and discord should be absent from this encounter.⁷⁹ Obviously, the Sicilian bishops had to be reminded.

Gregory is usually pictured in a context of Lombard threats, spiritual concerns, and eschatological musings. That is not wrong, although, as I have argued elsewhere, the representation of the Lombards in the letters and the *Dialogues* is much more nuanced than usually assumed.⁸⁰ Repeatedly, Gregory rhetorically maintains that he is worried more by the unruliness of the army and the pressure of the Byzantine administration than by the ‘swords of the Lombards’.⁸¹ Lombard Arianism also emerges as much less consistent and threatening than often thought. One of the main anti-Arian miracles in the *Dialogi* happens in Spoleto under the rule of a Lombard duke.⁸² A Lombard bishop, *Langobardorum episcopus, scilicet Arrianus*, arrives there and searches a church for *sollemnia sua*. He does not, as one would expect, require one from the duke, but goes to ask his catholic colleague, who flatly refuses. Then the Arians force the door of a disused Catholic church, and here the miracle happens: all the lights go on, and the trespassing bishop is blinded. The story is told in a polemical tone, but in fact the only aggressive act of the Arian barbarians is breaking into one of the many churches of Spoleto.

Barbarian violence certainly was endemic in late sixth-century Italy, and it is a strong theme in the *Dialogi*. The concern here are barbarian attacks on holy men: how can they have power over the men of God, and to what extent does divine force intervene in such situations? Gregory methodically assembles an impressive sample of very similar stories with slightly different outcomes. Goths break into an oratory, but miraculously cannot see saintly Fortunatus.⁸³ Lombards want to kill the monks of the monastery of Equitius but are immediately vexed by malign spirits so that they abandon their plan.⁸⁴ When Bishop Fulgentius is surrounded

⁷⁸ *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum*, 2 vols, ed. Dag Norberg (CCSL, 140 and 140a, Turnhout, 1982) [hereafter *Registrum*], I, 2 (Sept. 590), ed. Norberg, i, 3: ‘De frumentis (...) si quid minus hic transmittitur non unus quilibet homo sed cunctus simul populus trucidatur.’

⁷⁹ *Registrum*, I, 1, ed. Norberg, i, 1–2: ‘A quo concilio procul absint odia, facinorum nutrimenta atque invidia interna tabescat et nimis execrabilis animorum discordia.’

⁸⁰ Walter Pohl, ‘Gregorio Magno e il regno dei longobardi’, in Claudio Azzara (ed.), *Gregorio Magno, l'impero e i regna* (Florence, 2008), 15–28; Walter Pohl, ‘Gregorio Magno e i barbari’, in Leonardi (ed.), *Gregorio Magno*, 171–80.

⁸¹ *Registrum*, I, 3 (590), ed. Norberg, i, 4; *Registrum*, v, 38 (595), ed. Norberg, i, 312–14; *Registrum*, v, 40 (595), ed. Norberg, i, 319: ‘ita ut benigni videantur hostes, qui nos interimunt, quam reipublicae iudices, qui nos malitia sua, rapinis atque fallaciis in cogitatione consumunt.’ *Registrum*, VIII, 2 (597), ed. Norberg, ii, 516: ‘Quae autem mala barbarorum gladiis, quae a perversitate iudicum patimur, beatitudini vestrae narrare fugio.’ *Registrum*, x.15 (600), ed. Norberg, ii, 842: ‘Foris a gentibus et intus a iudicibus conturbemur.’

⁸² Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogi*, III, 29, ed. Adalbert De Vogüé and P. Antin, 3 vols (Paris, 1978–1980), ii, 376–7. See Walter Pohl, ‘Deliberate Ambiguity—The Lombards and Christianity’, in Guyda Armstrong and Ian N. Wood (eds), *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals* (Turnhout, 2000), 47–58.

⁸³ Gregorius, *Dialogi*, I, 2, 4, ed. De Vogüé, ii, 26.

⁸⁴ Gregorius, *Dialogi*, I, 4, 21, ed. De Vogüé, ii, 56–8.

by armed Goths, these are dispersed by heavy rains, while the bishop remains dry.⁸⁵ A Lombard tries to cut off the head of Sanctulus, who ‘immediately hastens to his arms’ and starts to pray, and the barbarian remains immobilized.⁸⁶ But the holy men are not always saved. Alternatively, their death is marked by a miracle. A Lombard kills a deacon, and at the same moment collapses at his feet.⁸⁷ When the Lombards cut down Saint Soranus of Sora, an earthquake shakes the surroundings.⁸⁸ Sometimes miracles take a little longer: Totila, after the conquest of Perugia, has Bishop Herculanus beheaded; only after forty days it is discovered that the head of the buried bishop is firmly attached to the body.⁸⁹ The almost scientific survey put together by Gregory demonstrates that the forms of divine intervention are unforeseeable; the only reassurance that the stories give is that barbarian triumphs are ultimately ephemeral, and God will acknowledge those who have suffered in his service in some way. To make that point, Goths and Lombards can equally be cast in the part of the cruel barbarians. It is remarkable that at that time, Gregory’s insistence on living holy men already had become controversial; other Church leaders rather supported the veneration of saints’ relics at the expense of living ascetic saints, for instance Pope Gregory’s contemporary, Gregory of Tours.⁹⁰

However, barbarians were not the real problem, as Gregory has Saint Benedict say in the second book of the *Dialogues*, on the occasion of Totila’s conquest of the city of Rome: ‘Rome will not be exterminated by the barbarians, but exhausted by tempests, lightning, whirlwinds and earthquakes, and will rot in itself.’ And now, as Gregory comments, one saw the truth of this prophecy.⁹¹ Much of what Rome once had meant was now a thing of the past. This passage delivers the message using meteorological signs, and the metaphor of the decay of buildings. In a letter to Patriarch John of Constantinople, Gregory employs the image of the old and battered ship that he had been entrusted with, in which the planks are broken and mouldy, and water enters everywhere in daily storms.⁹² ‘We join our sins with the barbarian forces, and our guilt sharpens the swords of the enemies’, as Gregory wrote to the Emperor Maurice in 595.

Throughout his letters, Gregory used a remarkably strong language of social dissonance. To give only a few examples from the letters written after his elevation

⁸⁵ Gregorius, *Dialogi*, III, 12, 3, ed. de Vogüé, ii, 298.

⁸⁶ Gregorius, *Dialogi*, III, 37, 13–17, ed. de Vogüé, ii, 420: ‘venerandus igitur vir, inter armatos deductus, ad sua arma statim cucurrit.’ Cf. the very similar story in Gregorius episcopus Turonensis, *Decem libri historiarum*, VI, 6, ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, *MGH SSRM*, I, 1 (Hanover, 1951), 272; *PDHL*, III, 1–2, 93–94.

⁸⁷ Gregorius, *Dialogi*, IV, 24, 1, ed. de Vogüé, iii, 80.

⁸⁸ Gregorius, *Dialogi*, IV, 23, 2, ed. de Vogüé, iii, 80.

⁸⁹ Gregorius, *Dialogi*, III, 13, 2–3, ed. de Vogüé, ii, 300.

⁹⁰ Matthew Dal Santo, *Debating the Saints’ Cults in the Age of Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2012).

⁹¹ Gregorius, *Dialogi*, II, 15, 2, ed. de Vogüé, ii, 184: ‘Roma a gentibus non exterminabitur, sed tempestatibus, succis et turbinibus ac terrae motu fatigata, marcescet in semetipsa.’ Cuius prophetae mysteria nobis iam facta sunt luce clariora, qui in hac urbe dissoluta moenia, eversas domus, destructas ecclesias turbine cernimus, eiusque aedificia, longo senio lassata, quia ruinis crebrescentibus prosternantur vidimus.’

⁹² *Registrum*, I, 4, ed. Norberg, i, 4: ‘Sed quia vetustam navim vehementerque concontractam indignus ego infirmusque suscepi,—undique enim fluctus intrant et cotidiana ac valida tempestate quassatae putridae naufragium tabulae sonant.’

in 590 (I leave out repetitions): *odium, facinus, invidia, discordia* (I.1); *simultatio, dissensio, lucra, iniustitia, insidia* (I.2), *amaritudo, seditio, periculum* (I.3), *confusio, tribulatio* (I.4), *timor, pavor, tumultus* (I.5), *iniquitas, tempestates* (I.7), *desolatio, paupertas* (I.8), *causatio, calumnia* (I.9), *scandalum, tumor, scripta contraria* (I.10), *maeror, ruina* (I.11), *gravamina* (I.12), *molestus, inquietare* (I.13), *dubietas, ambiguitas* (I.14). These were Gregory's first months in office, and letters written in rather different matters. Sometimes, the language of discord was balanced with admonitions to concord (as in the first letter to the Sicilian bishops), but compared with the flowery rhetoric of Cassiodorus, Gregory paints a rather bleak picture of his time. The rhetoric in these passages serves particular purposes, but that does not invalidate its strong imagery.⁹³ Behind that, there was a powerful moral discourse, but also an acute perception of social tensions.

CONCLUSIONS

How do we explain the dramatic changes in Italy in the second third of the sixth century, a period that was calmer and more prosperous elsewhere? Were these just effects of war, plague and perhaps a harsher climate? Or do they tell us something about the decrease in resilience in Italian society of the time? John Haldon has recently studied 'the empire that would not die', Byzantium in the seventh century. Among several interlocking reasons for the survival of the empire in Anatolia, he has discussed 'identities, divisions and solidarities'.⁹⁴ I hope that our brief probes into the sources have shown that this is also a productive approach for our problem. It seems that in the later sixth century Italian society had fallen slightly out of sync: contradictions deepened, for instance, between Greek and Italian Romans, between senatorial factions, between perceptions and realities, between pretensions of status and their acceptance, between the representation of power and its resources, between Christian teachings and ecclesiastic practice. There is no society without such tensions, but later sixth-century sources on Italy betray a lot of them. What had been coherent elements in classical Roman society became dissociated: a Roman army that was not composed of Romans, as Procopius and Agathias repeatedly complain; a senatorial aristocracy that lost many of its members, its political arena, and much of its revenues; popes and bishops who felt persecuted by Roman emperors and officials, and were divided about how to read the sign of the times; the insecure alternative for the elites between loyalties with the empire or with post-Roman kingdoms; barbarian armies that split into smaller units and were very volatile in their loyalties; three competing currents of Christianity and some pagan cults that coexisted in Italy; uneasy choices between Roman and Christian, ecclesiastic and ascetic moral standards; increasing gaps between revenues

⁹³ *Registrum*, v, 37, ed. Norberg, i, 308: 'Peccata nostra barbaricis viribus sociamus, et culpa nostra hostium gladios exacuit, quae reipublicae vires gravat.' This letter uses drastic images of barbarian destruction in order to argue against the claims of Patriarch John, which infringed the prerogatives of the bishop of Rome.

⁹⁴ John Haldon, *The Empire that Would Not Die* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2016), esp. 120–58.

needed and actual tax proceeds. At least some of these elements of disjuncture were specifically Italian and had been resolved in one way or the other both in the East, and in Gaul and Iberia.

The Roman Empire had established some measure of coherence between political power, economic foundations, social status, and cultural manifestations, at least on an elite level. Social status, economic means, career options, and cultural canon overlapped to a large extent, and alimanted imperial representation and the enforcement of power. This accounts for the recognizable flavour that the written and material remains of Rome had for a long time. Up to the 530s, the Italian elites held on to the afterglow of this hegemonic Romanness, an attitude best represented by Cassiodorus, who published his *Variae* to demonstrate that Gothic rule, senatorial office, Roman law and administration, classical erudition, *civilitas*, and the Christian religion still formed a meaningful whole. We may wonder to which extent they really did in Italy while he was in office. In Constantinople, Justinian's rule represented an apex of orthodox empire; but this ambitious programme also prompted considerable dissent.⁹⁵ In Italy, Byzantine restoration faced continuous adversity, and, just as the Lombard conquest, it failed to re-establish a measure of unity.⁹⁶ By the end of the sixth century, the social pretensions and the cultural profile advocated by Cassiodorus the administrator had almost disappeared, even from the parts of the peninsula that had remained Roman. Cassiodorus himself had turned to a different idiom of Christian discourse. Long gone were the musings about friendship and the leisurely exchanges between peers which add flavour to earlier senatorial letter collections.

Gregory the Great's letters speak to an Italy that had lost much of its sense of interconnectedness and common purpose. The self-assured cultural idiom by which its elites had long asserted their superiority, and had convinced many others that it was in their own interest to accept it, had faded out. Gregory operated within a solidly imperial context.⁹⁷ Yet he tried to construct his pastoral power along rather different lines of ecclesiastic governance that did not fit smoothly into the imperial frame.⁹⁸ Office, he insisted, was a burden that impeded a spiritual life, not, as for earlier senatorial generations, an honour interspersed with more leisurely pursuits. His language of authority based on ascetic values in fact betrays the insecurity of his position.⁹⁹ This remedy to an Italy in turmoil was controversial as well. Powerful as it was, Gregory's severe pastoral discourse did not even serve to create cohesion among the ecclesiastic elite; its impact was stronger in the long term. The tightly knit professional body of the Roman clergy was sceptical at best.

⁹⁵ See, most recently, Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, 82–123.

⁹⁶ Brown, *Rise*, 192: 'Beneath the labels of "Roman" and "barbarian", different groups of Italians, in different regions, opted tacitly for different styles of rule.'

⁹⁷ Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 83–96.

⁹⁸ See also Conrad Leyser, 'Pope Gregory the Great: Ego-trouble or Identity Politics', in Richard Corradini et al. (eds), *Ego Trouble: Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2010), 67–78.

⁹⁹ Conrad Leyser, 'Expertise and Authority in Gregory the Great: The Social Function of *Peritia*', in Cavadini (ed.), *Gregory the Great*, 54–5; cf. Peter Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (London, 1970).

Not even his biographer in the *Liber Pontificalis* was convinced by Gregory's policy; he starts his rather brief Life with the triumphalist account of a military expedition by the exarch, which Gregory had openly condemned in a letter to the Emperor Maurice.¹⁰⁰ Whereas Cassiodorus had, at least until the Gothic war became serious, used a self-assured language of state adorned by traditional education and the reference to shared moral values, Gregory deployed a rhetoric of urgency and an insistent moral exhortation in order to overcome the many conflicts and excesses in what remained of the Catholic Church and the empire in Italy. Christian interconnectivity operated quite efficiently, but a sense of insufficiency and precariousness had crept into its veins.

I have argued that the tensions that threatened social cohesion in Italy were not simply the result of wars and invasions, but also emerged from deeper fault-lines. Wars (and the plague) had indeed destroyed a considerable part of Italy's resources and infrastructure and had reduced the means to fulfil the needs and hopes of many inhabitants of the peninsula. Yet that does not quite explain why conflict remained endemic in the rest of the sixth century. There was a logic of protracted conflict fuelled by the insufficiency of the productive base, by the presence of large groups of ambitious soldiers and freelance warriors and by the erosion of public authority in many parts. Grand designs for a better future were not lacking. Justinianic imperial ideology was an imposing construct, but it came at a high cost for the tax-payer and was perhaps less suited for a centre-turned-periphery under difficult conditions. Cassiodorus and Gregory the Great also had some high-sounding perspectives to offer. Both, in different ways, invoked high expectations in good governance, moral conduct, royal/imperial clemency, and divine grace: Cassiodorus more in the affirmative mode, Gregory with a stronger sense of urgency. But none of these visions of community could create sufficient consensus.

The Byzantine regime in Ravenna did what it could to continue business as usual, and the Ravenna papyri are a reminder of the high level of sixth-century bureaucratic routines. However, it met with frequent adversity from Frankish and Lombard invaders, rebellious officers, citizens complaining about unfair taxes, religious dissent, episcopal resistance, and intellectual discontent. In fact, Italy had never been ruled by the 'Greeks' from Constantinople before the fall of the Gothic kingdom. Few people were committed to defending the remains of Roman glory, apart from professional warriors proud of their barbarian background who complied with their duties as long as their pay arrived—increasingly it did not because the means lacked. The letters of Gregory the Great transmit a vivid image of these worries. He blamed the imperial administrators more than the Lombards. Such an attitude was not new in the Roman Empire; but what had eroded was the consensus about Roman values and political standards that could serve as a point of reference, and the solid material basis on which it had rested. However much had been destroyed by wars, barbarian invasions, plagues, demographic decline,

¹⁰⁰ *Liber Pontificalis*, lxvi (trans. Davis, 61); *Registrum*, v, 36, ed. Norberg, i, 503–7.

and economic devolution, something else was also lost—a sense of common purpose alimeted by a cultural profile attached to Italy, the old heartland of the empire.

This makes it much harder for us to grasp the ways in which different aspects of the social whole were still connected. It is easier to understand how classical Roman or medieval economy, society, politics, and culture were interrelated than how that worked in later sixth-century Italy. People may have had more options in that period than in more coherent systems. Power, according to Niklas Luhmann, is the capacity to reduce the contingency of events, and to make the actions of the people that one rules more predictable.¹⁰¹ In that respect, the period after 535 was more contingent than many others. We can assume that political and social actions were driven by complex sets of motivations, not only by either material interests or social identities or political loyalties or Christian values. The ‘totalizing discourse’ of Christianity, which was already firmly entrenched by the late sixth century, suggests a unity of purpose and attitudes that may be misleading. Gregory’s letters are a valuable reminder of the many contradictions within a hegemonic Christianity. There was no Italian ‘micro-Christendom’ at the time, as there was in Gaul and Iberia.¹⁰² If we want to discover peoples’ attitudes and motivations, it is hardly on the level of canonical Christian discourse. Where our paradigms therefore need sharpening are the ways in which actions, power structures, economic developments, social practices, cultural changes, and religious beliefs were related.

Ultimately, the question is what makes people act according to certain patterns, and what explains their commitment or lack of commitment: ‘the social and cultural (including religious) environment inside which men and women made political choices’, as Chris Wickham wrote in the introduction of *The Inheritance of Rome*.¹⁰³ Why do people act as they do, and not always in what we would consider their best interest? How are resources invested? And to what extent do these actions add up to some sort of social cohesion, or tend to disrupt it? This is a fuzzy issue that implies a lot of further questions. And these are mostly questions that our sources neither ask nor answer. Scholars often assume that people acted as they did because they were Christians, Romans, senators, or barbarians, because they ‘had’ this or that identity, or were part of this or that network. However, that is not a satisfying solution. Identities are an important question, not the answer. Many approaches in recent research can be very helpful in shedding light on these issues. This contribution was intended to test whether the concept of social cohesion could be helpful in understanding the changes of the sixth century in Italy. However, we should not expect comprehensive answers from any one approach, but look out for ways in which their results can be connected: let the framing continue.

¹⁰¹ Niklas Luhmann, *Macht* (Stuttgart, 1975); English translation: *Trust and Power* (Chichester, 1979).

¹⁰² Micro-Christendom: Brown, *Rise*, 355–79.

¹⁰³ Wickham, *Inheritance*, 10.

2

The Roman Origins of the Northumbrian Kingdom

Ian Wood

Writing in the late 820s, the author of the *Historia Brittonum* recalled that the English, following the successes of King Arthur, 'sought help from Germany, and continually and considerably increased their numbers, and they brought over their kings from Germany to rule over them in Britain, until the time when Ida reigned, who was the son of Eobba. He was the first king of Bernicia, that is Berneich'.¹ In recent decades we have learnt to treat the *Historia Brittonum* with extreme caution, and to see it as a propagandist work, written in Gwynedd in the late 820s, during the reign of King Merfyn, partially in response to Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* written a century earlier.² Certainly the *Ecclesiastical History* contains part of the information recorded in the later Welsh source, for Bede relates in the Chronicle which concludes his work that in the year 547 that, 'Ida began to reign, from whom the Northumbrian royal family trace their origin. He reigned for twelve years'.³ We should note that Bede does not use the word Bernicia here to describe the northern part of Northumbria, nor indeed does he ever do so: he talks elsewhere of a people called the *Bernicii*, but he never uses the regional name—and it may well be that we should think of a tribal group rather than kingdom with fixed boundaries, despite the fact that the British sources do use the term 'Bernicia' or a variant thereof.⁴ The same point applies also to Deira, which appears as a geographical unit in Welsh sources, but which Bede describes as the Province of the *Deiri*.⁵ Such names matter, and deserve attention.⁶

Bede's account was apparently expanded in a slightly later Northumbrian chronicle, of which fragments survive in a manuscript from Bern. From this we

¹ Nennius, *Historia Brittonum*, 56, in J. Morris (ed. and trans.), *Nennius: British History and Welsh Annals* (Chichester, 1980).

² D. N. Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', *History*, lxii (1977), 173–92, reprinted in idem, *Histories and Pseudo-Histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1990); idem, 'The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*', *Arthurian Literature*, vi (1986), 1–26; N. J. Higham, *King Arthur: Myth-making and History* (London, 2002); Guy Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur: Facts and Fictions of the Dark Ages* (Oxford, 2013).

³ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v, 24, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969).

⁴ Ian Wood, 'Monasteries and the Geography of Power in the Age of Bede', *Northern History*, xlv (2008), 11–12.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Wickham, *Framing*, 5, n. 5, notes the importance of regional names.

learnt that Ida began his reign in 547, and that he was the son of Eoppa, son of Oessa.⁷ There is little that we can take from this, except the fact that Ida was thought of as the earliest Northumbrian king, that he was thought to rule in the mid sixth century, and that his genealogy was remembered—which is not to say that it was accurately remembered.⁸ Perhaps equally worthy of consideration is the fact that Ida was not presented as having recently arrived in Britain at the time that he established his kingdom, and that Bede makes no attempt to indicate when or whether his ancestors had crossed from the continent. It is important to note the absence of any migration story other than Bede's general statement on the origins of the English in the early sources of the history of the Bernicians, or indeed of the Deirans: even the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle provides no account of a migration to Northumbria, although the A, B, and C manuscripts all elaborate the genealogy, while the E manuscript says more about Ida's establishment, and fortification of Bamburgh.⁹ We should beware of blindly envisaging that the legend of Hengest and Horsa can be seen as a model for what happened throughout Britain.¹⁰ And in any case there is evidence for internal migration, as for instance implied by the place-name Lindisfarne, which would appear to imply a connection between the tidal island opposite Bamburgh and the region of Lincoln.¹¹ Internal migration within what would become England has also been demonstrated archaeologically in the analysis of stable isotopes from West Heslerton, which suggests that in the Vale of Pickering there were as many incomers from across the Pennines as from across the North Sea.¹² An even more elaborate picture of internal migration is emerging from the seventh-century layers at the Bowl-Hole site at Bamburgh.¹³

The archaeology of Northumbria is, of course, notably different from that of the early Anglo-Saxon south-east, or even from Lincolnshire, in terms of the quantity of evidence (largely cemeterial) indicative of immigration. There is much less of it. Among the *Deiri* of the southern part of Northumbria we have cemeteries in Humberside and York,¹⁴ and we have a cluster of material from Teesside: the cemeteries of Saltburn and Norton, a 'royal burial' from Loftus, cremations from Yarm, individual finds from Maltby and Brierton and the monastic site at Hartlepool—not all of these, of course, belong, strictly speaking to the period in which the Northumbrian kingdom was created.¹⁵ The archaeology

⁷ D. N. Dumville, 'A New Chronicle Fragment of Early British History', *English Historical Review* lxxviii (1973), 312–14, reprinted in idem, *Histories and Pseudo-Histories*, at 314.

⁸ D. N. Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', in P. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (eds), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), 72–104, reprinted in idem, *Histories and Pseudo-Histories*.

⁹ Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, s.a. 547, trans. D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, vol. 1 (London, 1955), 145.

¹⁰ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 25.

¹¹ Barbara Yorke, 'Lindsey: The Lost Kingdom Found', in A. Vince (ed.), *Pre-Viking Lindsey* (Lincoln, 1993), 143.

¹² Paul Budd et al., 'Investigating Population Movement by Stable Isotope Analysis', *Antiquity*, lxxviii (2004), 134–6.

¹³ S. E. Groves et al., 'Mobility Histories of 7th–9th Century AD People Buried at Early Medieval Bamburgh, Northumberland, England', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, cli (2013), 462–76.

¹⁴ Bruce N. Eagles, *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement of Humberside*, BAR British Series 68 (Oxford, 1979).

¹⁵ Sam Lucy, *The Early Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries of East Yorkshire: An Analysis and Reinterpretation*, BAR British Series 272 (Oxford, 1998); eadem, 'Changing Burial Rites in Northumbria, AD 500–750',

of the *Deiri*, in other words, does not suggest an influx of people equivalent to what might be argued from the cemetery sites of Kent, Essex, Sussex, and East Anglia.

The archaeological evidence for the northern, Bernician, part of Northumbria can be read as indicating even lower levels of immigration. From the seventh and eighth centuries there are, of course, the great royal sites of Yeavering and Millfield (the former having a significant pre-history), as well as Bowl-Hole cemetery at Bamburgh.¹⁶ And to these one can add the halls at Thirlings, the settlement site at Sprouston, the Grubenhäuser at New Bewick, as well as the post-Migration period cemeteries from Newcastle and Seaham.¹⁷ Of course, there is always the possibility that new discoveries will affect our understanding, but none of these at present forces us to read Bede's account of the establishment of Ida in terms of a history of conquest associated with substantial migration.

Nor does the place-name evidence force a particular reading of events: all the problems which have been raised in the context of the use of place-names to estimate the scale of the Viking settlement in England are present when we try to use toponymic evidence to understand the establishment of Northumbria. The interpretation of the chronology and meaning of the names is disputed. But above all, we cannot tell whether a place acquired its Old English name because the majority of people living there were Anglian, or simply because the property holder was of Germanic descent. We can be certain that names tell us something about lordship, but not that they tell us about the origins of the population.

When David Dumville examined the sources for the origins of Northumbria in 1989 he pointed in passing to the supposed alliance of Picts and Saxons in the *barbarica conspiratio* of 367 recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus, and noted that one should keep in mind the 'possibility of Picto-Saxon political interaction',¹⁸ while also arguing that the British use of Saxons against the Picts, mentioned by Gildas, provides 'one partial framework for the beginnings of sub-Roman history in the North'.¹⁹ What is surely important here is the recognition that Northumbrian history does not simply begin with Ida in 547, and that there are the periods of Roman and sub-Roman history to be taken into account.

in Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (eds), *Northumbria's Golden Age* (Stroud, 1999), 12–44. The most notable new addition is from Loftus: Steve Sherlock and Mark Simmons, 'A Seventh-century Royal Cemetery at Street House, North-East Yorkshire, England', *Antiquity*, lxxxii (2008), 316.

¹⁶ Brian Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering: An Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* (London, 1977); Paul Frodsham and Colm O'Brien (eds), *Yeavering: People, Power and Place* (Stroud, 2005); Groves et al., 'Mobility Histories'.

¹⁷ Colm O'Brien and Roger Miket, 'The Early Medieval Settlement of Thirlings, Northumberland', *Durham Archaeological Journal*, vii (1991), 57–91; Tim Gates and Colm O'Brien, 'Cropmarks at Millfield and New Bewick and the Recognition of Grubenhäuser in Northumberland', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 5th series, xvi (1988), 1–10; Lucy, 'Changing Burial Rites'.

¹⁸ D. N. Dumville, 'The Origins of Northumbria: Some Aspects of the British Background', in Steven Bassett (ed.), *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* (Leicester, 1989), reprinted in D. N. Dumville, *Britons and Anglo-Saxons in the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1993), Essay III, 4. For the *barbarica conspiratio*, Ammianus Marcellinus, xxvii, 8, ed. J. C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, vol. iii (Cambridge, MA, 1939).

¹⁹ Dumville, 'Origins of Northumbria', 3.

Commenting on the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, Chris Wickham noted that 'the relatively small-scale Anglo-Saxon communities who crossed the sea into eastern Britain from c.450 onwards found communities whose social structure was more like that of the Anglo-Saxons themselves than of their Roman ancestors'.²⁰ Here Wickham, adopting a term employed by Simon Esmonde Cleary,²¹ clearly envisaged that post-Roman Britain had been de-Romanized. Arguably, this hypothetical process of de-Romanization would have followed a different pattern in the largely militarized north than in the civilian south, not least because of the unquestionable presence of Germanic peoples in the northern parts of the Roman province of Britannia even before the *barbarica conspiratio* of 367, singled out by Dumville. Stephen Oppenheimer's work has raised the possibility that Germanic peoples had formed a significant element in the population of Britain for a very long period.²² But even without pursuing his line of argument, it is clear that the Romans had made use of Germanic troops on Hadrian's Wall throughout the third and fourth centuries. Among those setting up inscriptions on the Wall, there are men who describe themselves as *Germani*, alongside Batavians, Frisians, Toxandrians, and Tungrians, four Germanic peoples from the both sides of the lower Rhine.²³ Most famously there is the inscription set up by the *Numerus Hnaudifridi* at Housesteads.²⁴

Hnaudifrid's squadron may have been part of the Tungrian forces known to have served on Hadrian's Wall from the second century onwards.²⁵ They are listed as still being at Housesteads in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which also lists Batavians at Carrawburgh.²⁶ The *Notitia* is, of course, notoriously difficult to date. Some of the entries would seem to refer to late fourth-century arrangements, although the final stage of compilation would seem to belong to the 420s, when much of its information on Britain would no longer have been valid.²⁷ Even so, it confirms the importance on the Wall in the late Roman period of troops who continued to be identified by Germanic ethnic names—and this is of particular importance given the fact that our inscriptions come from the third century or earlier.²⁸ The inscribing habit comes to an end at least a century before the end of Roman rule. It is also important, because it refers to the situation in existence after the military reforms

²⁰ Wickham, *Framing*, 47.

²¹ Simon Esmonde Cleary, 'Summing Up', in Tony Wilmott and Peter Wilson (eds), *The Late Roman Transition in the North: Papers from the Roman Archaeological Conference, Durham 2009*, BAR British Series 299 (Oxford, 2000), 92.

²² Stephen Oppenheimer, *The Origins of the British: A Genetic Detective Story* (London, 2006).

²³ I. N. Wood, 'The Crocus conundrum', in E. Hartley et al. (eds), *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor* (London, 2006), 80; Fred Orton, Ian Wood, and Clare Lees, *Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments* (Manchester, 2007), 114 and 231.

²⁴ R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1995), i, 501, n. 1576.

²⁵ Alan Rushworth, 'Franks, Frisians and Tungrians: garrisons at Housesteads in the 3rd century AD', in A. Morillo, N. Hanel, and E. Martin (eds), *Limes XX: XX Congreso Internacional de Estudios sobre la Frontera Romana* (Madrid, 2009), iii, 1147–56.

²⁶ *Notitia Dignitatum*, ed. O. Seeck (Berlin, 1876), c.40, 39–40.

²⁷ Peter Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1981), 476, n. 2.

²⁸ Orton, Wood, and Lees, *Fragments of History*, 114.

of Diocletian and Constantine, and thus implies that the Tungrians of Housesteads, for instance, had become part of the *limitanei*. Of course, given the recruitment of troops from among the sons of serving soldiers, and given the likelihood that a percentage of their women would have been local northerners, biologically these troops would have been increasingly divorced from their Germanic origins. Nevertheless, they continued to be identified by non-British ethnic labels.

In addition to the evidence of the *Notitia* and the inscriptions there are several references in various chronicle and literary texts that mention the transfer of Germanic troops to Britain during the Roman period: thus, according to Zosimus, Probus sent Burgundians and Vandals to Britain in the third century;²⁹ in the *Panegyrici Latini* there is reference to the fact that Allectus employed Frankish mercenaries on the island at the end of the century,³⁰ and in the middle of the fourth, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, Valentinian I transferred a squadron of Alamans under Fraomar.³¹ We cannot be sure that these troops were stationed in the North: one Germanic commander, Nectaridus, was *comes litoris Saxonici* in 367.³² On the other hand the Wall or the garrison centres to the south of it would have been the most obvious place for them to be employed. One other Germanic soldier may be worthy of consideration in this context: Crocus, the Alemannic king who was supposed to have played a role in the elevation of Constantine to the imperial dignity at York in 306, may have accompanied Constantius Chlorus from the Rhineland to *Britannia*, but he may equally have been one of the leading military figures of the garrison of the insular province.³³

In short, while the *barbarica conspiratio* of 367 and the fifth-century employment of Saxons against the Picts, mentioned by Gildas,³⁴ may have some relevance for an understanding of the origins of Northumbria, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that a significant number of the troops stationed on the Wall throughout the period from the second to the early fifth century were labelled as Germanic (however distanced they may have been from any continental origin)—though, of course, there were plenty of troops who claimed other continental origins. The question that arises is whether this situation would have ended in 407, when Constantine III supposedly took troops from Britain. Certainly Constantine is likely to have removed most of the mobile *comitatenses*, but the soldiers stationed on the frontier itself, the *limitanei*, would surely have been left in situ,³⁵ and even if the serving troops were removed, the retired veterans would most likely have stayed where they had settled after being discharged from the army. The majority

²⁹ Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, I, 68, 3, in F. Paschoud (ed.), *Zosime, Histoire Nouvelle* (Paris, 1971).

³⁰ *Panegyrici Latini*, VIII 16–17, in C. E. V. Nixon and B. S. Rogers (eds, and trans.), *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley, 1994).

³¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIX, 4, 7: Wood, 'Crocus conundrum', 81: Orton, Wood, and Lees, *Fragments of History*, 114.

³² Ammianus Marcellinus, xxvii, 8, 1.

³³ Wood, 'Crocus conundrum': John F. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome, 213–496* (Oxford, 2007), 146, has a sceptical assessment.

³⁴ Gildas, *De excidio Britonum*, xxiii, in M. Winterbottom (ed.), *Gildas, The Ruin of Britain and other Documents* (Chichester, 1978).

³⁵ Orton, Wood, and Lees, *Fragments of History*, 112.

of them would have had partners and children. The situation in the Wall zone, in other words, may have more closely resembled that in north-eastern Gaul, where Franks already had a military role before the collapse of imperial authority,³⁶ rather than that in Noricum, where we do hear of the withdrawal of Roman troops, leaving the population to the mercy of the neighbouring Rugi.³⁷

When we assess the origins of Northumbria we should certainly bear in mind the fact that the Wall, and indeed much of its hinterland, as far south as York, had been a military zone,³⁸ and that there would certainly have been soldiers or ex-soldiers in the region, who would have been very much better placed to look after themselves than, say, the civilian population of southern Gaul, Spain or Italy: or indeed the south of Britain. When we add to this the fact that there appear to have been comparatively fewer incomers in the northern parts of *Britannia* than in the south in the fifth century, we clearly have to take very seriously the possibility that Northumbria owed at least as much to its Roman military past (including as it did numbers of barbarian soldiers) as it did to any fifth- or sixth-century Germanic settlement.

To pursue this line of approach we need to look at late Roman rather more than early Anglian archaeology, and here Ken Dark's 1992 list of sites on the Wall provides a useful starting point.³⁹ As Dark noted, 'eight fourth-century fort sites on, or close to, the line of Hadrian's Wall have produced, albeit sometimes slight, evidence of fifth- to sixth-century use', and he listed Benwell, Birdoswald, Castlesteads, Carvoran, Chesterholm, Chesters, Housesteads and South Shields (*Arbeia*).⁴⁰ To this list O'Brien has added Maryport, Old Carlisle, Carlisle, Stanwix, Bewcastle, Great Chesters, *Vindolanda*, Corbridge, Newcastle, and Wallsend,⁴¹ while Brian Roberts has further investigated the evidence for early Anglian activity on the Wall and the surrounding territory.⁴² Perhaps the most interesting addition to Dark's list is Bewcastle—a fort which had played host to a legion of *Germani* in the third century⁴³—for even if the site as excavated has so far not yielded material of the fifth to sixth centuries, the great eighth-century Anglo-Saxon monument for which it is justly famous was very clearly placed on the pavement of the *via principalis*, almost opposite the entrance to the bath-house.⁴⁴ It is very difficult to believe that the site was not exploited between the fourth and the eighth centuries.

³⁶ Edward James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), 38–58.

³⁷ E. A. Thompson, *Romans and Barbarians: The Decline of the Western Empire* (Madison, 1982), 113–33.

³⁸ Wickham, *Framing*, 306–7.

³⁹ K. R. Dark, 'A Sub-Roman Re-defence of Hadrian's Wall?', *Britannia*, xxiii (1992), 111–20.

⁴⁰ Dark, 'Sub-Roman Re-defence', 111.

⁴¹ C. O'Brien, 'The Emergence of Northumbria: Artefacts, Archaeology, and Models', in R. Collins and L. Allason-Jones (eds), *Finds from the Frontier: Material Culture in the 4th–5th Centuries* (York, 2010), 110–19.

⁴² B. Roberts, 'Northumbrian Origins and Post-Roman Continuity', in Collins and Allason-Jones (eds), *Finds from the Frontier*, 120–32.

⁴³ O'Brien, 'Emergence of Northumbria', 116; Orton, Wood, and Lees, *Fragments of History*, 20–1, with nn. 57–8 on 208–9.

⁴⁴ Orton, Wood, and Lees, *Fragments of History*, 29.