

## Conference Report

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SYMPOSIUM TITLE: CULTURAL MEMORY OF THE RESOURCES OF THE PAST, 400-1000 AD

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### CULTURAL MEMORY AND THE RESOURCES OF THE PAST, 400-1000 AD

The Early Middle Ages are the first period of history from which many thousand original manuscripts survive. Ancient literature and scholarship, the Bible and patristic writing have come to us through this filter. This rich material has mainly been used to edit texts as witnesses of the period in which they were written. But it also constitutes a fascinating resource to study the process of transmission and transformation of texts and other cultural contexts. It can shed new light on the codification and modification of the cultural heritage and its political uses, and constitutes an exemplary case study for cultural dynamics in general.

This two-day international conference was held at the British School at Rome (<http://www.bsr.ac.uk/>) on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> and Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013 with the purpose of bringing together the participants of the CMRP project (<http://cmrp.oeaw.ac.at/>) in order to highlight particular aspects of their work and to preview the forthcoming volume which will contain updated versions of the papers given. The conference marks the culmination of the

previous two and a half years of work and provided an opportunity to bring together the now apparently quite divergent strands of the four sub-projects.

Fourteen papers were given over the two days, as well as a Round Table discussion at the end of the second day and, although the audience turnout was not as high as had been hoped for, the discussions which took place proved to be fruitful and emphasised the many connections and similarities of themes and finding between the papers. The sessions were as follows.

### SESSION ONE

**WALTER POHL** (ÖSTERREICHISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN), *POLITICAL LANDSCAPES OF THE PAST: CREATING CULTURAL RESOURCES FOR CAROLINGIAN RULE*

In this paper Walter addressed the issue of how the Carolingian community functioned on an imperial scale by looking at how the Carolingians inherited and used the ideas of Roman Empire and Christianity. Yet the crucial point which was made in this paper is that there was a variety of different models which authors could build upon, and a variety of ideas on how to approach the issues of empire, rulership and communal history. This is shown not just in the complex and ambiguous nature of Charlemagne's imperial title, but also in the way in which the emphasis on the nature of the empire shifted from its Frankishness to more inclusive ideas about the *populus Dei*. Likewise, the use of such divergent authors as Orosius, Jordanes, Eusebius and Bede in the eighth and ninth centuries shows that Carolingian authors could obtain models for Roman-Christian imperial rule from texts which appear quite contradictory.

**DESIRÉE SCHOLTEN** (UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE), *CASSIODORUS'S HISTORIA TRIPARTITA BEFORE THE EARLIEST EXTANT MANUSCRIPT*

Desirée attempted to analyse what we can know about the transmission of the *Historia* between its composition in mid-fifth century Italy and the first extant manuscripts of the early-ninth century. She admitted straight away that this can only ever be speculative, as it is impossible to determine the route of transmission, even by using the evidence of authors who knew the source. Nevertheless, Desirée outlined two possible groups from which the text could have spread: Cassiodorus's personal circle – including Liberius, Pelagius and Sevandus – and schismatics such as Liberatus of Carthage. She also pointed out that Isidore of Seville clearly knew the *Historia* and used it for his own *Chronicle*.

**ERIK GOOSMANN** (UNIVERSITEIT UTRECHT), *FROM SAINT TO SINNER: TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE CAROLINGIAN PERCEPTION OF THE CONVERSION OF CARLOMAN (747)*

Here Erik demonstrated the great variety in the Carolingian sources which narrated the abdication and monastic conversion of Charles Martel's son Carloman in 747. Erik argued quite convincingly that Carloman's actions and their presentation represent a shift in perceptions of abdication and conversion which was closely tied to the growing importance of public penance that peaked during the reign of Louis the Pious. This was done primarily through comparison with the apparently unwilling abdication of the last Merovingian Childeric III and the willing but shameful abdication of Charlemagne's cousin Tassilo of Bavaria. The main point of Erik's argument is that the language used to describe abdication and monastic conversion was changing, and that by the beginning of the ninth century the idea of 'forced conversion' had become a contradiction in terms.

**GRAEME WARD** (UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE), *REPRESENTATIONS OF IMPERIAL RULERSHIP: CONSTANTINE AND THEODOSIUS I IN FRECULF'S HISTORIES*

Graeme's paper showed how much emphasis the Carolingians put on their place in history by providing a case study of how Freculf of Lisieux used the resources of the past in his *Histories*, focussing on his accounts of the emperors Constantine and Theodosius. Freculf's accounts were based entirely on sources which had been recommended by Cassiodorus, but the Carolingian author modified what he found to make the material more relevant to his audience. The story of Theodosius's penance was cut down to stress Bishop Ambrose of Milan's rebuke and the emperor's response, while the presentation of the Council of Nicea emphasises the close relationship between emperor and bishops, thus highlighting characteristics which were desirable in Carolingian rulers. The crucial point, however, is that even though Freculf did not write about his own time, his work still has a lot to say about his contemporary society.

## SESSION TWO

**MAYKE DE JONG** (UNIVERSITEIT UTRECHT), *REPERTOIRES OF IDENTIFICATION: VISIONS OF THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY AND THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE CAROLINGIAN WORLD*

This paper raised two points that have long been taken for granted in studies of the Carolingians, but rarely addressed directly: 'the Carolingians' recovered almost entirely the patristic legacy; and they felt like part of a new Israel. But who were these 'Carolingians' and did they envision their world as a 'New Israel'? To the first question Mayke explains that we must answer the Carolingians were not just the churchmen, but also their lay contemporaries. The second question

requires a more complex answer. While the *topos* of a ‘New Israel’ could be and was used in the Carolingian period, the Old Testament was usually understood through a New Testament interpretation. Biblical commentaries and exegesis do not show an explicit link between contemporary *gens* and the Biblical Israel, but there was a thirst for authoritative texts on which to base a new kind of society, and the Bible contained both law and exemplary *historia*. Nevertheless, borrowings from the Old Testament were always eccentric and inconsistent.

**SVEN MEEDER** (RADBOD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN), *BIBLICAL PAST AND CANONICAL PRESENT: THE CASE OF THE COLLECTIO 400 CAPITULORUM*

Sven’s paper focussed on one particular case study – the *Collectio 400 Capitulorum* – in order to highlight wider trends in the development of canon law collections in the eighth century. Prior to c.700 the Bible had been notably absent from canon law collections, despite an awareness that it was a source of legal precedent, as shown by Isidore of Seville. In the eighth century, though, collections show an increasing reliance on Biblical examples from both Testaments, even where such examples were apparently contradictory. At the same time, compilers of these collections began to show a preference for a systematic arrangement of canons, rather than the chronological arrangement which had previously dominated. *Collectio 400* represents this in the way it contains a wide range of sources including papal decretals, pastoral texts, patristic writings and the Bible arranged thematically. Nevertheless, the aim of systematic compilations was not to provide an exhaustive collection of authoritative texts, so the Bible was not seen as just another authority, even if it was the preeminent one.

**MARIANNE POLLHEIMER** (ÖSTERREICHISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN), *DIVINE LAW AND IMPERIAL RULE: THE CAROLINGIAN RECEPTION OF JUNILLUS AFRICANUS*

This paper provided an analysis of a rather obscure late antique text and its reception in the Carolingian world. Despite having been a *quaestor* and receiving a mention in Procopius’s *Secret History*, Junillus Africanus is a little known figure, but his *Institutiones* – written in the sixth century – was one of the texts recommended by Cassiodorus, and has been transmitted to us via several Carolingian monasteries. A large portion of the text’s first book is dedicated to the nature of God and Scripture, but its main focus is the distinction between different kinds of law – especially natural, human and divine. The text also outlines the basic principles of Biblical exegesis.

## SESSION THREE

GIORGIA VOCINO (UNIVERSITEIT UTRECHT), *FRAMING AMBROSE IN THE RESOURCES OF THE PAST: THE LATE ANTIQUE SOURCES OF THE CAROLINGIAN LIFE OF ST AMBROSE*

The Carolingian *Life of Ambrose* – composed most likely in the mid-ninth century– is preserved in only one manuscript. The text is clearly too long for liturgical use and Giorgia argues that it was most likely conceived of as a ‘mirror for bishops’, similar to the ‘mirrors for princes’ which became popular in the Carolingian period. Giorgia’s focus here was on the myriad of borrowings displayed by the *Life*, which shows its wider significance beyond its Milanese context. The inclusion of a story about Valentinian I’s attempt to introduce a law allowing a man to have two legal wives does not involve Ambrose in any way, but does reflect Lothar II’s divorce case. Likewise, the story of Ambrose’s refusal to hand over his church to the Arians appears to be used as a way to comment on who should decide upon ecclesiastical jurisdiction and the management of church property. Finally, there is a direct comparison between Saints Martin and Ambrose which appears to make the latter superior.

IAN WOOD (UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS), *WHO ARE THE PHILISTINES? BEDE’S READINGS OF OLD TESTAMENT PEOPLES*

In this paper Ian argued that not only were early medieval authors aware of the inherent contradictions within the Bible, but that they found ways to use these contradictions to make their points. Bede’s Biblical commentaries and exegesis show his knowledge and use of contradictions to serve different purposes. For example, his Biblical commentary shows a much more complex discussion of Saul than the relatively simple image found in the introduction to the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Bede did not equate the Anglo-Saxons with the Israelites and the Britons with the Philistines in his commentary on Samuel, but he did equate the Philistines with pagans, heretics, Jews and false brothers *bodie*. Despite this, in the commentary the Philistines become the *gens salvandas* when David joins them, and Saul’s dead sons are equated with the heretics of the fourth century. Ian’s conclusion is that Bede was clearly aware of the flexibility of peoples, but what was more important to him than their histories was their salvation.

## SESSION FOUR

RICHARD BROOME (UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS), *PAGANS, REBELS AND MEROVINGIANS: OTHERNESS IN THE EARLY CAROLINGIAN WORLD*

This paper focussed on three groups which particularly dominated the early Carolingian presentation and understanding of their recent past. While each of these groups was in some way

‘other’ to the Frankish audience of the late-eighth and early-ninth centuries, Richard argues that members of these groups were not inherently ‘other’, and much depended on their roles within the narrative sources. Peripheral peoples were consistently labelled as pagans and rebels, a discourse which allowed Carolingian authors to explain why wars were undertaken against these people even though they were theoretically part of the Frankish realm. Likewise, the later members of the Merovingian dynasty were presented as last and useless kings who relied on out-moded methods of rule, in stark contrast to the vigorous and warlike Carolingians. By also showing that Muslims, Slavs and earlier members of the Merovingian dynasty were not subjected to this discourse, though, Richard makes his central point: the idea of ‘otherness’ was only applied to those closest in time and space to the Carolingians themselves.

**ROBERT FLIERMAN** (UNIVERSITEIT UTRECHT), *BETWEEN EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION: THE CLAIM OF SAXON UNFAITHFULNESS IN FRANKISH HISTORICAL WRITING*

This paper was concerned with the claim of Saxon infidelity as it developed in Frankish history-writing of the eighth and early-ninth centuries. Firstly, Robert demonstrated that we should understand the wide-spread accusation of Saxon infidelity within the context of a more general Carolingian preoccupation with ‘faith’ or *fides*, a complex and loaded concept that carried at once political and religious overtones. But while this was an approach which the Carolingians applied to those within the Frankish realm and without, Robert also argued that the incorporation of the Saxons presented an exceptional case, in which the Carolingian discourse on (in)fidelity reached an exceptional intensity and longevity. This was due not least to the long draw-out and bloody nature of Charlemagne’s Saxon Wars, in which victories and treaties failed to be definitive, and in which staged mass-baptisms were seldom a guarantee for lasting conversion. Charging the Saxons with infidelity, to king as well as to God, was one way for Frankish commentators to negotiate this unsettling reality.

**TIM BARNWELL** (UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS), *FRAGMENTED IDENTITIES: OTHERNESS AND AUTHORITY IN ADAM OF BREMEN’S HISTORY OF THE ARCHBISHOPS OF BREMEN*

This paper considered the issue of identity in Adam of Bremen’s *Deeds of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* in terms of the contradictions and inconsistencies in Adam’s work. It began by discussing Adam’s attitude towards literary authority and its influence on the text before moving onto a discussion of Adam’s representation pagans and barbarians. Tim argued that Adam’s presentation of those he describes as ‘pagans’ and ‘barbarians’ was far more fragmented and

contradictory than is usually assumed. Adam used both terms to evoke a range of often contradictory ideas, meaning we should ultimately see each moment in Adam's work as being, in some sense, unique. This allows for new opportunities of analysis, but also raises the problem of how to reconcile this approach with existing paradigms. Tim suggested that the solution may be to imitate Adam's own approach to consistency, and to recognise that our understanding of an issue may come from accepting a paradox and its contradictions, rather than trying to resolve the issue into a single, definitive perspective.

## SESSION FIVE

**CLEMENS GANTNER** (ÖSTERREICHISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN), *THE EIGHTH-CENTURY PAPACY AS CULTURAL BROKER BETWEEN EAST AND WEST*

In this paper Clemens approached the eighth-century papacy as a broker of both culture and power attempting to position itself between the imperial east and the Latin west and between Rome's imperial past and the present. He argued that these endeavours peaked during the eighth century, while acknowledging that the popes before and after used similar strategies and worked with essentially the same cultural capital. This capital consisted of Rome's antique, pagan past, the late Roman Christian empire, the contacts with the existing Roman Empire in the east and the increasingly autonomous 'republic' the popes ruled in Central Italy. Clemens argued that due to a relative lack in military and political power, the papacy had to establish a position as monopolist in the cultural field. Concluding that the papacy exploited its position as a cultural broker fairly effectively, establishing itself among the most powerful players in Italy and the Latin West during the eighth and ninth centuries.

**ROSAMOND MCKITTERICK** (UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE), *TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE ROMAN PAST: CULTURAL MEMORY AND ROMAN IDENTITY IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES*

The final paper explored the active role of the city of Rome itself in the *Liber pontificalis* and in the *Chronicon* of Eusebius-Jerome, and the degree to which both sources articulated or helped to shape perceptions of a specifically Roman and Christian identity. Rosamond showed that both texts present the Roman imperial past and Christianise it by juxtaposition rather than replacement. Both the *Chronicon* in Jerome's translation and the *Liber pontificalis*, moreover, had the potential to transform the understanding of Rome's past. Jerome's original translation of Eusebius's *Chronicle* text in the late fourth century reoriented the themes of Eusebius's original text in order to highlight aspects of Rome's past in the context of universal history from the Creation and the formation of a Christian Roman identity. The *Liber pontificalis* authors in the

sixth century, and those who continued the original core text into the late eighth and the ninth centuries in the context of the history of Rome, presented the popes as the successors of St Peter, prince of the apostles and leaders from Rome of the entire Christian church. Rosamond concluded by discussing the implications of the inclusion of both texts in the *Lucca codex, Biblioteca capitolare 490*. The manuscript confirms that these texts were not passively received. Active engagement with them resulted in further transformations of the presentation of the Roman past and of the way in which Rome and Roman identity might be both perceived and incorporated into a wider sense of the Christian past and Christian identity in the early middle ages.

### SUMMARY

The conference ended with a roundtable discussion at which several of the key over-arching themes were drawn out. These will become more apparent as the papers are collected and edited for publication, but some of the themes explored during discussion at the conference itself were:

- The ubiquity of scripture in the Carolingian intellectual world. This makes the Carolingian mind-set somewhat alien to us and we can risk missing many of the implications in the texts. A key aspect of this ubiquity which we can notice, however, is that by using the Bible authors brought it into their own present, rather than keeping it separated in the past. Another prominent feature of the Carolingian use of the Bible is in their Christian appropriation of Jewish tradition and focus on the Old Testament rather than the New.
- Early medieval authors had a potentially wide range of resources but did not have access to the texts in the ways we have them: they had to make choices based on what they had available. It is important to stress the nature of the choices made by these authors, but also to emphasise the exceptional nature of the Carolingians in coming up with a variety of answers and responses to a common pool of resources. This is particularly prominent in the lack of single Carolingian ideology or idea of what *ecclesia* was and meant.
- All the papers presented highlight the sense of ambiguity and ambivalence in the ways the authors dealt with and approached their resources and subjects. There was no single early medieval approach to any of the issues dealt with at this conference, and even a single author could change his attitude to fit different circumstances: this is a problem which has often been overlooked in modern scholarship.

Finally, the participants would like to thank the British School at Rome for hosting the conference and providing excellent support and facilities.