

COMPETITION OR ADMIRATION? BYZANTINE VISUAL CULTURE IN  
WESTERN IMPERIAL COURTS, 497-1002.

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The following dissertation reassess previous explanations for the transmission of Byzantine iconography to western material culture that have been classified by the classical canon as being manifestations of a 'barbarian' ruler attempting to legitimize their fledgling culture. The tumultuous relationship between the east and the west during the Late Antique period to the middle Byzantine period and the subsequent visual culture that demonstrates cross-cultural exchange comprises the majority of my analysis. I approach the topic in a case study fashion focusing on five rulers: Theodoric, Charlemagne, and the three Ottos.

The source material chosen for this dissertation varies as it has been selected based on claims by previous scholarship of demonstrating some level of Byzantine influence. My re-examination of these works includes the application of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework first postulated by Robert Hayden: Competitive Sharing. This theory suggests that material culture displaying syncretism was not a reflection of admiration, but of competition.

An implication of this study is that art was an active participant in the relationship between the east and the west, serving as a communicative device, rather than as the more frequently cited passive role of a conduit for iconographical transmission or cultural legitimization.

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## INTRODUCTION

In twentieth-century scholarship, the visual culture produced by the Byzantines is frequently placed, teleologically speaking, as a precursor to the arts of the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> As such, the fledgling cultures of kings and emperors of western Christendom have been viewed as provincial relatives of the Byzantines. Western imperial visual culture is often placed side-by-side with Byzantium to be contrasted and compared until similarities emerge.<sup>2</sup> These similarities are contextualized as an attempt of western cultures legitimizing their culture through the appropriation of the 'superior' Byzantine culture.<sup>3</sup> This reading reduces visual culture to an aesthetically driven practice reflective of our modern-day notions of how art interacts with society. However, visual culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages behaved differently from our preconceived notions and scholars have noted that it played a larger role in the political ideologies of many kings and emperors than previously believed.<sup>4</sup>

A prevailing explanation for western appropriation of Byzantine motifs is legitimacy. Scholars have explained that the purpose of western rulers evoking a Byzantine quality to their art was to legitimize their rudimentary culture. A collection of essays edited by Adelbert Davids on the empress Theophano

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<sup>1</sup> Most notably: Beckwith, 1964 and 1993, Demus, 1970, Kitzinger, 1966, Koehler, 1941, Weitzmann, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Otto Demus, 1970, Weitzmann, 1966, Lewis, 1980, Johnson, 1988, Striker, 1996, Ciggaar, 1985, Lasko, 1964, Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Otto Demus, 1970, Weitzmann, 1966, Voordecker, 1995, North and Cutler, 2003, Rosenbaum, 1956, Wharton, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> See McKittrick, 1992 a, 1995, McCormick, 2001.

published in 1995, provides us with multiple examples of this hypothesis. The arrival of a Byzantine 'princess' to the Ottonian court of the tenth century provides a concrete moment in time in which art historians are able to examine the effect of a prominent eastern figure on the style and iconographical content of art produced by a newly diverse court.<sup>5</sup> Artistic examples of the Ottonian court expressing a Byzantine quality are called upon as examples of a western culture producing less than faithful (and in some cases lower quality) copies of Byzantine models.<sup>6</sup> One such example that is frequently cited as exemplifying a western ruler evoking the powerful and legitimizing iconography of the Byzantine Empire is the ivory depicting Otto II and the newly crowned Theophano (fig.1).

Described by the prominent Byzantine scholar Otto Demus as 'peculiar', 'provincial' and containing errors in both dress and spelling, the ivory plaque has been viewed as an attempt on behalf of Otto II to legitimize his title of *Imperator Romanorum* through the use of Byzantine iconography.<sup>7</sup> Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne suggested that although its iconography is reflective of Byzantine ideas of emperorship, Otto's ivory panel was based on a more general idea of a Christian ruler. She also suggested that the Ottonians were communicating equality to the eastern Christian emperors but did not take the point any further.<sup>8</sup> In fact, she went on to cite John Beckwith and Otto Demus in their assertions that Byzantine art was considered 'sumptuous and refined' by western viewers and

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<sup>5</sup> See: Davids, 1995, especially essays by Lafontaine-Dosogne, Voordecker and Westermann-Angerhausen.

<sup>6</sup> Lasko, 1972, Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 1977, Voordecker, 1995, Demus, 1970, Cutler, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Demus, 1970, 85.

<sup>8</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 212.

that the contents of Theophano's dowry would have had a captive audience at the Ottonian court.<sup>9</sup>

However, the idea that western kings would have been eager consumers of Greek culture becomes less valid if considered in the light of existing contemporary textual sources. The sources we have available to us, written by members of both the Ottonian court and the preceding Frankish court, express a disdainful sentiment towards the Byzantines. For example, Notker of St. Gallen marginalizes Greeks and effectively 'others' them and Orientalises them along with Persians in his writings.<sup>10</sup> Other Frankish writers continue in Notker's footsteps and view the Greeks as having strange customs; they are wary and sceptical of them despite Charlemagne's cultural curiosity.<sup>11</sup>

These writings are but a few examples that demonstrate contempt for contemporary Greek culture and practises. Looking forward to writers of the Ottonian era, writings surrounding the Greek princess who supposedly had an impact on the arts were equally negative and riddled with literary tropes used to marginalize and diminish Greek peoples and women. Albert of Metz (d.1024) described Theophano as 'an unpleasant, talkative woman' who was viewed by others as having a frivolous lifestyle.<sup>12</sup> This stereotype continues even after her death, so much so that a German nun recounts a vision she had to a fellow monk

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<sup>9</sup> Davids, 1995, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Brubaker, 2004, 190.

<sup>11</sup> Brubaker, 2004, 190.

<sup>12</sup> Davids, 1995, 53.

where Theophano pleaded to the nun to pray for her salvation, as she was damned to hell for her blasphemous lifestyle.<sup>13</sup>

Not only is Theophano personally criticized, so too were many of the Greeks with whom Liudprand, a tenth-century western chronicler, came into contact during his visit to Constantinople in 968. Liudprand recorded his account of his mission to communicate to Otto I his negotiations with the Byzantine emperor, Nikephoros Phokas. Described as 'vitriolic anti-Byzantine satire', Liudprand, in chapter 54 of his *Legatio*, gives us a glimpse of the negative stereotypes of the Byzantines held by the Ottonians:<sup>14</sup>

But how unsuitable and how insulting is it that soft, effeminate, long-sleeved, tiara-wearing, hooded, lying, unsexed, idle people strut around in purple, while the heroes, that is, strong men, who know war [i.e. Otto I and his court], full of faith and charity, in submission to God, full of virtues, do not!<sup>15</sup>

Demus as well as a number of contributors to Davids' compilation discussed this discord between the Ottonian use of Byzantine iconography and contemporary preconceptions of the Greeks, but offered no theories that would help bridge the gap, or distinguish a connection between the literary, political and visual worlds. There exists a total lack of explanation as to why Germanic leaders would want to base their cultural legacy on the very culture towards which they seem to harbour contemptuous feelings.

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<sup>13</sup> Davids, 1995, 53.

<sup>14</sup> Squatriti, 2007, 30.

<sup>15</sup> Liud. *Leg.*, 54; Eng. trans. P. Squatriti, 2007, 272.



This disparity between literary culture and visual culture was the initial impetus for the following study. The oversimplification in the scholarship to date as to what exactly western imperial courts sought through the use of Byzantine iconography and a lack of consideration of the social role enacted by visual culture are the main issues addressed. My dissertation asks whether instances of Byzantine iconography in western art of the Ostrogoth, Carolingian and Ottonian empires were platforms upon which they could communicate a message that 'speaks' the same language as their rivals instead of the traditionally held belief of a court attempting to legitimize their culture and their rule through Byzantine tropes.

The following study is approached in a case study fashion by examining the cultural programmes of three significant western empires and rulers: Theodoric the Great (r. 493-526), Charlemagne (r. 774-814), and the three Ottos (r. 919-1002). All three reigns had significant interaction with Byzantium thereby creating an environment conducive for cross-cultural diffusion and thus allowing for the previous hypothesis of cultural legitimization to be plausible. This approach allows for a certain amount of consistency with factors such as culture, geography, and political influence. These three case studies by no means provides an exhaustive list of rulers who had significant interactions with Byzantium, but it represents a cross section of western rulers that demonstrated similar political ideologies and varying degrees of interaction with Byzantium. The rulers considered undertook large cultural programmes and have been well

documented as being personally involved to a certain degree with their various commissions.

Careful attention will be paid when considering personal intervention of these rulers and not overstating their first-hand involvement to avoid the pitfalls of psychoanalysis on their commissions. Evidence of patron/artisan/workshop relationships will be considered and discussed at length to better understand motivations and to determine if the visual culture did play a larger role within their respective political and cultural programmes. For example, we have evidence from Cassiodorus stating Theodoric's direct involvement with various building programmes.<sup>16</sup> We also have evidence from Charlemagne in the form of letters to Pope Hadrian requesting the removal of marbles in Ravenna to adorn his palace in Aachen suggesting a high level of participation on behalf of these rulers in their cultural programmes.<sup>17</sup> However, the Ottonian period is much more complicated with an itinerant court and a new class of patron emerging: the ecclesiastical class. These factors will be taken into careful consideration in order to determine the interconnected relationship between political and artistic endeavours.

This more comprehensive approach will allow for the examination of various different political and social environments to determine any patterns or similarities driving the decision to appropriate a foreign visual culture thereby providing a more in-depth interpretation of cultural appropriations.

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<sup>16</sup> Cass. *Var.*, I.17; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 114.

<sup>17</sup> Brenk, 1987, 108.

## THEODORIC THE GREAT

My first chapter focuses on the building programme of Theodoric the Great. Theodoric the Great's cultural programme is one with clear associations with Byzantium as his rule was defined by his relationship with Byzantium and eventually led to the devastating Gothic Wars (535-554) initiated by Justinian to quell the power and influence of the Goths in Italy. Settling his itinerant court in Ravenna, Theodoric maintained a close but strained relationship with Byzantium. Theodoric himself was exposed to Byzantine culture from a young age having been held hostage by the Byzantine emperor Leo as part of the terms of a peace treaty with his father, Theodemer.<sup>18</sup> Theodoric spent a decade of his formative years in Byzantium, but left to rule over his father's kingdom once he came of age. As Theodoric's power and influence grew, so did his potential to threaten the stability of the emperor in Constantinople. He was directed by Constantinople to overthrow a usurper of the Italian throne and was placed on the Italian throne to act as a viceroy to the Byzantine emperor, where he ruled for the remaining years of his life.

While Theodoric did not commission any illuminated manuscripts that survive and many of the more ephemeral elements of his cultural programme are no longer available for us to study, he did sponsor a massive building programme in Ravenna that rivalled those commissioned by contemporary emperors in Byzantium. The buildings that remain from this extensive undertaking, Sant'

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<sup>18</sup> Jord. *Getica*, 271; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 129.

Apollinare Nuovo, the Arian baptistery and his mausoleum, display a syncretic visual culture. Elements of Italian, Byzantine, and Gothic culture can be found throughout his works, leading many to consider his building programme to be reflective of a political ideology that came to be closely associated with Theodoric: *civilitas*.<sup>19</sup>

The majority of the scholarship to date on Theodoric's building programme has referenced some connection to Byzantium. Typically, most connect Theodoric's time spent in Constantinople and his desire to legitimize his rule in Italy as the impetus behind his various Byzantine cultural appropriations.<sup>20</sup> However, some scholars have contextualized Theodoric's building programme within this concept of *civilitas*, or so to say, tolerance.<sup>21</sup>

In one of the more comprehensive studies of Theodoric's building programme, Mark J. Johnson argued that, through his buildings, Theodoric created an atmosphere of tolerance.<sup>22</sup> Johnson suggested that the apparent appropriation of Byzantine iconography and architectural designs were employed consciously to downplay the differences between the Goths and the Byzantines.<sup>23</sup> This interpretation supposes that Theodoric's building programme reflected his

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<sup>19</sup> Most notably discussed in Johnson, 1988 and to a lesser extent in von Simson, 1987.

<sup>20</sup> See: Bovini, 1961, Breckenridge, 1981, Milburn, 1988, Deliyannis, 2010, Wharton, 1987.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, 1988.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, 1988, 79.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, 1988, 79.

political ideology, identified by Johnson as being rooted in *civilitas*. Similar ideas can be found in Otto von Simson's mid-twentieth century study.<sup>24</sup>

However, more recent scholarship conducted on Theodoric's political ideology has since challenged the extent to which Theodoric applied the concept of *civilitas*.<sup>25</sup> It is with this more recent perspective that I approach a reconsideration of Theodoric's building programme. Central questions of what elements Theodoric did appropriate from Byzantium and how he employed them to express his political ideologies are explored. Architectural styles and mosaics are the chief elements of material culture considered in this chapter.

## CHARLEMAGNE

The second chapter of this dissertation studies the material culture of Charlemagne. In sharp contrast to the Theodoric chapter, the political ideologies of Charlemagne are much more consistent and confident. Charlemagne was not in direct conflict with Byzantium for the majority of his reign, but engaged in a more diplomatic relationship.<sup>26</sup> Despite the presence of Germanic elements in Charlemagne's cultural programme, scholars have still teased out elements of perceived Byzantine culture.<sup>27</sup>

Charlemagne's cultural programme is one that has been studied extensively from many different perspectives. There is a large body of

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<sup>24</sup> von Simson, 1987.

<sup>25</sup> See Amory, 1997.

<sup>26</sup> Noble, 2009, McCormick, 1995 and 2001, Goodson, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, 1980, Beckwith, 1993, Demus, 1970, Rosenbaum, 1956, Swarzenski, 1940, Tselos, 1956, Hoving, 1960.

scholarship, mostly now somewhat antiquated, dedicated to the notion that his cultural programme reflected a political ideology of *renovatio* – or a conscious appropriation of Roman culture to legitimize his role as *Patricius Romanorum*.<sup>28</sup> This scholarship is justified by a distinct shift in visual culture after Charlemagne's coronation in the year 800, which makes the connection to such a political ideology convincing.

A smaller subset of scholarship has concentrated on the Byzantine influence found after this shift occurs. As Charlemagne's interactions with Byzantium increased in frequency and intensity, some have discussed the idea of an increase in Byzantine influence in Carolingian visual culture.<sup>29</sup> Despite these convincing connections, much like the scholarship conducted on the Byzantine influence found in Theodoric's commissions, the impetus for Byzantine appropriation is frequently concluded to be an attempt of legitimization. This somewhat superficial conclusion ignores various aspects of Carolingian culture expressed in other avenues and much like the scholarship conducted on Theodoric, generalizes the political ideology and the social circumstances that informed contemporary visual culture.

The approach to this chapter differs slightly compared to the first, as more consideration is needed to define what exactly can be considered 'Byzantine'. Charlemagne's territory was large and after the year 800 after he took control of

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<sup>28</sup> Mutherich 1977, Koehler 1952, Neuman De Vegvar, 1992, Buchthal, 1961 discuss links to Roman models.

<sup>29</sup> See: Demus 1970, Tselos 1956, Weitzmann, 1966, Beckwith, 1989.

northern Italy from the Byzantines, Charlemagne's empire expanded to a size unfamiliar to Germanic rulers before him. The majority of his reign was not concerned with power struggles with the emperor (or empress) in Constantinople, but with controlling his ever-expanding empire. Charlemagne's political ideology was once described as an attempt towards a *renovatio*.<sup>30</sup> However, the concept of a *renovatio* has more recently been reconsidered and is now discussed as more of a *correctio*, or an institutionalized consolidation and standardization of his empire.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, it is essential to determine what can be considered a Byzantine influence and what is more likely to be an Italian influence informed by a past that was witness to a high level of interaction with Byzantium. This chapter aims to address this issue. In some cases a Byzantine provenance has been ascribed to certain works; however, when a more thorough examination of possible sources and models is conducted, the Byzantine link is weakened and the possibility of an Italian source of inspiration becomes more plausible.<sup>32</sup> The refinement of the origin and sources of works previously classified as Byzantine is essential as this aids our understanding of cultural influences and appropriations.

When discussing appropriations and their possible use as a tool for cultural legitimization, it is essential to determine, if possible, which elements can be determined as a conscious Carolingian use of Byzantine iconography and which

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<sup>30</sup> See: Pirenne, 1939, Braunfels, 1965, Brown, 1997, Collins, 1998, Panofsky, 1972, Hinks, 1935, Demus, 1970, Bullough, 1991.

<sup>31</sup> See: Becher, 2003, McKitterick, 2008, Goodson, 2010 and Nees, 1991.

<sup>32</sup> This is discussed at length in chapter two.

ones cannot. This approach to the study of Charlemagne's cultural productions presents difficulties as the large size of his empire exposed the Carolingians to a wide visual vocabulary and sources contemporary to Charlemagne reveal a misconception between Byzantine and Ostrogothic influences found in Carolingian commissions.<sup>33</sup> For example, correspondence between Charlemagne and Pope Hadrian reveal Charlemagne's confusion with regards to the monuments in Ravenna and their connection to Theodoric.<sup>34</sup>

This chapter discusses the various routes of transmission of iconography as well as the possible motivations behind a specific appropriation to determine what was a conscious appropriation and why that specific appropriation was chosen. Close attention to possible transmission via the increased embassies with Byzantium will be considered alongside the consequences of Charlemagne's empire absorbing other cultures with a strong visual culture such as Italy. These transmissions are closely examined to determine whether or not they can be considered a result of passive transmission, or whether they were deliberate and therefore imbued with a larger significance.

The visual culture associated with Charlemagne is wide and varied and I will not consider all of it due to the space limitations of this dissertation. This chapter considers the instances of visual culture that have already been discussed as examples of Byzantine appropriations so as to keep with the

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<sup>33</sup> Brenk, 1987, 108.

<sup>34</sup> Brenk, 1987, 108.



general theme of the dissertation and to determine if patterns can be discerned in various appropriations of specifically Byzantine visual culture. Illuminated manuscripts and ivories are given special consideration, as these are the elements that display the majority of Byzantine influence. Further study on the architectural commissions of Charlemagne and their possible Byzantine appropriations would in no doubt be a fruitful research topic, but one that will have to be conducted at a later date.

### OTTO I, OTTO II & OTTO III

Initially, the impetus for this dissertation was prompted by a cursory reading of the scholarship surrounding the material culture of the three Ottos. The three Ottos are an interesting case study in the transmission of Byzantine culture to the west as a member of Byzantine royalty was sought after and eventually married into the dynasty. The arrival of Theophano at the Ottonian court in 972 is a crucial moment in the study of cultural transmission as it marks the first marriage between a member of the Byzantine ruling family and a western ruler. Theoretically, Theophano's arrival provided a conduit for a Byzantine influence to assert itself at the Ottonian court, and the period in which she reigned as regent over her infant son, Otto III, serve as a platform upon which she could have potentially instilled Byzantine culture in the west.

Volumes have been published on the impact that Theophano had on Ottonian society, material culture and beyond. The millennial anniversary of her

death saw a flurry of scholarship conducted in her honour that explored her impact on Ottonian society.<sup>35</sup> While there is no general consensus on the extent of Theophano's influence, many suggest that her presence along with the physical objects of her dowry made an impact on Ottonian arts.<sup>36</sup>

The decision to include all three Ottos in this thesis was based upon the paucity of material culture that can be directly linked to imperial patronage. While there is an abundance of material culture that can be securely dated to the Ottonian dynasty, patronage becomes an issue as the ecclesiastical elite grew in power and influence under the Ottonians and began to patronize material arts on an unprecedented level. By observing all three Ottos, it could potentially present difficulties in determining consistencies in motivations behind appropriations as political and social pressures differed throughout all three reigns (i.e. could the appropriations be a result of a political ideology?). However, by observing all three, the greater time period covered allows for the possibility of observing a shift in material culture that correlates with the shifting relationship with Byzantium. All three Ottos had a different relationship with Byzantium and this chapter demonstrates that the fluctuating level of Byzantine influence in Ottonian visual arts corresponds with the changing political relationship with Byzantium, thereby suggesting that visual culture can often be viewed as a physical manifestation of cross-cultural relations.

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<sup>35</sup> Most notably: Engels and Schreiner, 1993 and Davids, 1995.

<sup>36</sup> See: Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, Ciggaar, 1985, Lasko, 1972.

The role of Theophano is given the majority of the consideration in this chapter. However, works that have been discussed within a Byzantine context are examined as well. The central question addressed in this chapter is: did Theophano impact on Ottonian visual culture? In order to answer this question, I address periods before and after Theophano's life to determine levels of Byzantine influence and to address claims of Ottonian predilection for Byzantine culture.<sup>37</sup> As mentioned above, due to attribution issues with Ottonian patronage, no architectural commissions will be considered. Rather I will be discussing a cross-section of the types of commissions securely attributed to the Ottonians and as a result, the majority of the works discussed are illuminated manuscripts with some discussion on reliquaries and ivories.

## METHODOLOGY

The guiding methodology used throughout this dissertation is a framework inspired by Robert Hayden's theory of Competitive Sharing.<sup>38</sup> The appropriation of Byzantine culture is framed within the context of competition over admiration. Where many describe the various appropriations of Byzantine culture by western kings and emperors as a form of legitimization (which I term as 'admiration'), the goal of this dissertation is to contextualize appropriations as an assertion of

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<sup>37</sup> Some have noted that the Ottonians were ready consumers of Byzantine culture. Ciggaar, 1995, Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, Head, 1997, Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, McKitterick, 1995, Berschin, 1988, Lasko, 1972.

<sup>38</sup> Hayden, 2002.

competition.<sup>39</sup> In other terms, I think that we need to ask whether western rulers were employing Byzantine culture because they deemed it to be superior to theirs, or whether the act of appropriation was imbued with more political significance. Too frequently the focus of the scholarly discussion of these works of art has been on the perceived clumsy copying of a Byzantine archetype and not enough focus has been directed to the potential message of the patron and those that are depicted that is being conveyed to the viewer. For example, should we perceive the copying of the Romanos panel by the Ottonians as a clumsy reproduction, or should it be more carefully considered not as an aesthetically motivated copy, but as an element of a political programme that communicated in a shared visual language?

Robert M. Hayden's anthropological framework of competitive sharing in the modern day Balkans and India provides a framework with in which to discuss the role tolerance has on fostering an environment that encourages syncretism. Crucial to Hayden's argument is the actual definition of tolerance. He argues that there are two types of tolerance: passive and active.<sup>40</sup> Hayden defines active tolerance as the complete embrace of the 'Other', while passive tolerance is the negative counterpart defined by non-interference between the two groups.<sup>41</sup> According to Hayden, syncretism should not always be viewed as a result of respect or active tolerance, and he warns the reader that to presume a mutual

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<sup>39</sup> Demus, 1970, Weitzmann, 1966, Whickam, 1981, Beckwith, 1989, Johnson, 1988, Lewis, 1980, Striker, 1996.

<sup>40</sup> Hayden, 2002, 205.

<sup>41</sup> Hayden, 2002, 205.

level of goodwill that must be present to allow syncretism to occur is false.<sup>42</sup>

Hayden views the syncretic products of two competing cultures with a shared claim to a monument or site of religious importance as assertions of equality and argues that syncretism is endangered when the two groups become more equal in power.<sup>43</sup>

Hayden approaches the topic through case studies and examines the interactions of two different religious groups struggling to assert power and authority over one another. He explains that the subsequent syncretic cultural outputs are a result of the competition between the two groups and not a mutual respect or tolerance. Using the Madhi shrine and the saint, Kanifnath (Hindu)/Shah Ramzan Mahi Savar (Muslim), associated with the site as an example of this phenomena, Hayden suggests that the syncretic evolution which the saint and the shrine underwent in the twentieth century was not a result of Hindus and Muslims peacefully absorbing aspects of the other's religion, but was an expression of competition.<sup>44</sup>

Both religions agree upon one fact about the saint: that he was born in 1300 as a Hindu, but converted to Islam later in life.<sup>45</sup> As a Hindu, Kanifnath was taught to fly by his guru and during one of his flights was struck down by the Muslim, Sadat Ali and his shoe, who then taught him and converted him to

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<sup>42</sup> Hayden, 2002, 207.

<sup>43</sup> Hayden, 2002, 205.

<sup>44</sup> Hayden, 2002, 208-210.

<sup>45</sup> Hayden, 2002, 209.

Islam.<sup>46</sup> However, during his life as a Muslim, Kanifnath still held to his Hindu past through his reverence for cows and his refusal to eat beef.<sup>47</sup>

Kanifnath is an apt example of syncretism as he displays both Hindu and Muslim traits simultaneously. Although he was born a Hindu, he converted to Islam. Even his conversion displays the tension between the two groups. He is brought down from the sky in what a Muslim would consider to be a shameful manner – by a shoe.<sup>48</sup> And when he was a practicing Muslim, he still adhered to Hindu practices. Widely known to enjoy playing the flute by a riverbed accompanied by a bovine friend, Kanifnath displayed many similar traits to another prominent Hindu God, Krishna.<sup>49</sup> While the saint himself is an interesting combination of both Hinduism and Islam, it is Kanifnath's temple in Madhi that is a useful parallel to the monuments that Theodoric erected in Ravenna.

The shrine itself was built over a long period of time that saw both the Muslims and the Hindus politically dominant.<sup>50</sup> The main shrine is an excellent example of Muslim architecture. The top of the shrine is adorned with a spire topped with the crescent moon that is so frequently associated with Islam.<sup>51</sup> However, even when the Hindus were in power, all of the subsequent additions made to the temple reflected Muslim style and not their own rich cultural heritage

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<sup>46</sup> Hayden, 2002, 209.

<sup>47</sup> Hayden, 2002, 210.

<sup>48</sup> Hayden, 2002, 210.

<sup>49</sup> Hayden, 2002, 210.

<sup>50</sup> Hayden, 2002, 210.

<sup>51</sup> Hayden, 2002, 210.

of Hinduism.<sup>52</sup> It would seem appropriate for Muslims to build in their own distinctive style when building a monument appropriate for veneration, and with over two thousand years of erecting monuments to their gods, no one can claim that the Hindus did not have an architectural heritage on which to draw upon. So why build in a style associated with the very culture over which they struggled to assert their power, let alone a style that was not their own?

The Hindus have provided an explanation as to why they built in an Islamic style. During a court trial in 1927, which sought to determine which group had a legal claim to the site, the Hindus stated that they built in the Islamic style to protect the shrine.<sup>53</sup> Given the high probability that the site would once again be turned over to Islamic hands, the Hindus felt that if they were to build in an Islamic style, rather than the preferred style of their own religion, then the risk of the Muslims destroying the shrine once they gained control would be minimized.<sup>54</sup>

Another factor that Hayden introduces to the discussion of syncretism is the aspect of time. Hayden suggests that in order to view the syncretic aspects of the shrine at Madhi as a result of tolerance between the Hindus and the Muslims, a certain amount of 'stasis' must be presumed.<sup>55</sup> Hayden states: 'When time is put into the analysis, syncretism seems to be a measure at any given moment of relations between members of groups that differentiate themselves, and to see it

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<sup>52</sup> Architectural elements associated with a Muslim style such as spires and crescent moons were added by Hindu builders. Hayden, 2002, 210.

<sup>53</sup> Hayden, 2002, 210.

<sup>54</sup> Hayden, 2002, 210.

<sup>55</sup> Hayden, 2002, 207.

as tolerance instead of competition is misleading.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, while the shrine displays Muslim architecture, it is not necessarily a reflection of a wider belief system, but rather a reaction to external pressures such as politics and power structures in existence at the time in which it was built.

Hayden's theory of competitive sharing, while not every aspect is completely transferrable to the Middle Ages, includes key elements that build the framework with which I have employed throughout. Understanding the effects of time and changing political structures is essential to this study, along with the notion that syncretism (or the appropriation of another culture) is not necessarily borne out of admiration or tolerance of the other culture, but is often rather is a symptom of a larger, more complex political expression.

The prevailing goal of this dissertation is to determine the extent to which art participated in the larger social and political context of the cultures of medieval western kings. As the study of material culture is expanding to consider the more politicized role of visual culture during the Middle Ages, it is essential to revisit past explanations for the transmission of iconography. It is anachronistic for scholars to place modern concepts of quality and aesthetics on material culture that was produced for the purposes of communication and not solely for aesthetics. Through the application of competitive sharing, this dissertation provides a re-reading of prevailing scholarship and provides a more complex explanation for cross-cultural transmission in the visual arts.

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<sup>56</sup> Hayden, 2002, 207.



## CHAPTER ONE – THEODORIC THE GREAT

### INTRODUCTION

The sixth-century Ostrogothic king, Theodoric the Great, has left an indelible mark on the development of western civilization after the so-called fall of the Roman Empire. In what could be considered an imperial political and cultural agenda (although he was never technically an emperor), Theodoric espoused a programme of *renovatio* before Charlemagne would undertake a similar campaign in attempts to restore the Roman Empire to its past glory.<sup>57</sup> The resulting building programme of Theodoric's *renovatio* has long been considered to be the cultural manifestation of an enlightened political ideology. Contextualized within the framework of tolerance, the three buildings still standing from his programme (Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, the Arian baptistery and his mausoleum) have been touted as examples of a Gothic ruler utilizing past Roman and current Byzantine architectural styles, materials and iconography in order to communicate a message of acceptance.<sup>58</sup>

However, more recent scholarship has shed new light on Theodoric's political ideology that provides a more complex interpretation of his rule.<sup>59</sup> It is from this perspective that we must reconsider Theodoric's building programme. Theodoric patronised a visual culture that portrayed ruler and courtiers with

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<sup>57</sup> The letters written by Cassiodorus on behalf of Theodoric make frequent references to the king's desire for a return to the ideals of Rome. Cassiodorus, *Variae*.

<sup>58</sup> Johnson, 1988 and von Simson, 1987.

<sup>59</sup> See: Amory, 1997.

Gothic physiognomic attributes (long hair and moustache) in a media associated with Byzantium (mosaic) and in building types that emulated earlier Roman imperial precedents. I will argue that through this syncretic visual culture, Theodoric identified himself as a direct competitor with, and not a passive placeholder for, the emperor in Byzantium. The tension embodied in Theodoric's commissions is evident through the alterations of the mosaics at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo made by bishop Agnellus (557-570) and the increasingly volatile relationship between the Goths and Byzantium that culminated in the devastating Gothic wars (535-554), but began with Theodoric and his claims to the title of King of Italy.

Theodoric was the son of a general, Theodemer, in the fifth century. Alongside his two brothers, Valamer and Videmer, Theodemer led a powerful band of Ostrogoths who counted a victory over Attila and his Huns as one of their many military successes.<sup>60</sup> Theodoric's mother, Erelieva, is a more shadowy figure than his father. Unfortunately, like countless medieval woman before and after her, Erelieva's status as recorded by her male chroniclers is of polar opposites. She is referred to as either a concubine or an Ostrogothic princess.<sup>61</sup> Theodoric's birth date has not been universally agreed upon; however, we do know that he was born in Pannonia, a Roman province on the edge of the empire,

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<sup>60</sup> The Ostrogoths alongside the Romans and Visigoths had emerged victorious in 451 after a period of Hunnic rule. Burns, 1984, 46.

<sup>61</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 11.

around the year 454.<sup>62</sup> Spending his early years in his father's army, Theodoric's early life is not well documented. Contemporary descriptions of the Gothic army describe it as ethnically diverse and nomadic. As they moved, Gothic armies had the tendency to adapt to their new surroundings by encouraging locals to join them.<sup>63</sup> Alongside Gothic diversity, Pannonia was a strategic military town that was home to a diverse population and would have contributed to Theodoric's exposure to various cultures. Romans, Goths, Gepids and even the remaining members of Attila the Hun's army called Pannonia home.<sup>64</sup>

Theodoric's home life could have also schooled the young king on the advantages of tolerance in the face of diversity. Theodoric was exposed to the co-existence of two belief systems within one family. His father, like most Goths, was of the Arian faith. His mother, however, has been described as belonging to a faith closer to Catholicism.<sup>65</sup> We will never know whether or not these early life experiences influenced Theodoric's future policies of religious tolerance, but he was to experience another event in his youth that would impact on his future relationships, his ascension to the throne and his artistic preferences.

Given the preferred geography of the Gothic nomadic lifestyle, encounters with Byzantium and its territories occurred frequently for Theodemir and his

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<sup>62</sup> The precise date of his birth is not known, however most scholars place it within the first few years of the 450s as this date is in accordance with Attila the Hun's defeat and the subsequent Ostrogothic settlement in Pannonia. Arnold, 2008, 121.

<sup>63</sup> Pohl, 2002, 14.

<sup>64</sup> Pohl, 2002, 16.

<sup>65</sup> The *Anonymous Valesianus* records that Theodoric's mother changed her name from Erelieva to Eusebia thereby suggesting she was baptised. Anon, *Vales*. 58; Eng. trans. J. Moreau ed., 1961, 16-17.

brothers.<sup>66</sup> Although the relationship between the emperor in Byzantium and the Ostrogoths could have been described as one of a strained civility, the Goths put their relationship to the test when they extended their successful military activities to the previously Hun-ruled Illyricum.<sup>67</sup> Once the Goths gained control of Illyricum, tensions rose when Byzantium failed to fulfill their settlement negotiations.<sup>68</sup>

Theodemer, Theodoric's father, was required to send his son to Constantinople as a 'hostage' in exchange for the gold that was to ensure peace amongst the Goths.<sup>69</sup> At the age of eight years, Theodoric left his family and was held at the Constantinopolitan court for over a decade.<sup>70</sup> The term hostage, for a lack of a better term, describes his status in Constantinople.

Theodoric's experience in Constantinople should not be viewed as one of imprisonment or hardship. Jordanes, a Roman contemporary, records that, being an 'attractive barbarian', Theodoric was well received by Leo's court. Jordanes describes the 'transaction' as follows:

From the Goths the Romans received as a hostage of peace Theodoric, the young child of Theodemer, whom we have mentioned above. He had now attained the age of seven years and was entering upon his eighth. While his father hesitated about giving him up, his uncle Valamir besought him to do it, hoping that peace between the Romans and the Goths might thus be assured. Therefore Theodoric was given as a hostage by the Goths and

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<sup>66</sup> As they were nomadic, the Goths were constantly on the search for lands that could sustain their growing population. While the origin of the Goths remains unclear (some sources, including Cassiodorus, claim a Scandinavian origin), the Goths were a threat to the Roman Empire from as early as the third century C.E. Wolfram, 1988, 48.

<sup>67</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 13.

<sup>68</sup> Burns, 1984, 53.

<sup>69</sup> Burns, 1984, 53.

<sup>70</sup> Burns, 1984, 53.

brought to the city of Constantinople to the Emperor Leo and, being a goodly child, deservedly gained the imperial favour.<sup>71</sup>

One cannot help but speculate on the impact that Byzantine culture would have had on such a young mind and for so many years. Although we can never be sure about the level of cultural influence this stay in Constantinople would have had on Theodoric, we do know that he was given a traditional Byzantine education, including the teaching of the classics in Greek rather than Latin.<sup>72</sup>

Many believe that this time spent in Constantinople shaped and influenced not only to his rise to power, but also his later architectural programme in Ravenna.<sup>73</sup>

It is unknown why Theodoric was released from Constantinople. Jordanes' account of Theodoric's return does not offer any reasons as to why the emperor would have discharged him, but simply states: 'Thence he [Theodemir] returned as victor to his own home in Pannonia and joyfully received his son Theodoric, once given as hostage to Constantinople and now sent back by the Emperor Leo with great gifts.'<sup>74</sup>

The practice of taking peace hostages was one that has been a well-documented practice throughout Roman history.<sup>75</sup> Romans often negotiated for the sons of tributary kings be taken as hostages and educated in Rome.<sup>76</sup> This was seen as an act of goodwill towards the Romans and proved to be a

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<sup>71</sup> Jord., *Getica*. 271; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 129.

<sup>72</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 14.

<sup>73</sup> Scholars such as Mark J. Johnson (1988), James J. O'Donnell (2009), A.D. Lee (1992).

<sup>74</sup> Jord., *Getica*, 281; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 132.

<sup>75</sup> Hammer and Salvin, 1944, 20.

<sup>76</sup> Hammer and Salvin, 1944, 20.

successful tactic during the period of imperial expansion as a way to ensure peace amongst newly conquered territories.<sup>77</sup>

Joel Allen suggests that the practice of taking hostages and providing them with a Roman education was a way to spread Roman ideologies and therefore create a new elite class throughout the Roman Empire that believed and thought alike.<sup>78</sup> Of the varied types of hostages that Allen catalogues that were prevalent during the Roman Empire, it could be assumed that Theodoric was a 'Host-Guest' type of hostage.<sup>79</sup> Given the information that Jordanes provides with regards to the offering of Theodoric as a 'hostage of peace', it stands to reason that his circumstances fit this category. Allen describes this type of hostage as a way Romans brokered peace.<sup>80</sup> Frequently occurring during a period of tense relations between Rome and a tributary, a hostage was given to the Romans and was treated as a guest.<sup>81</sup> It was also a way of ensuring a certain level of indoctrination to the Roman way of life and was thought to be an effective tactic in ensuring peace in future generations as well as simultaneously placing the hostage in debt to the host for the years of hospitality and good treatment.<sup>82</sup>

A.D. Lee notes an increase in this practice in the late Roman Empire as diplomatic missions became more frequent and intense.<sup>83</sup> The emperor Aurelian in the third century and Constantius II in the fourth century both took hostages as

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<sup>77</sup> Hammer and Salvin, 1944, 20.

<sup>78</sup> Allen, 2006, 29.

<sup>79</sup> Allen, 2006, 38.

<sup>80</sup> Allen, 2006, 68.

<sup>81</sup> Allen, 2006, 68.

<sup>82</sup> Allen, 2006, 68.

<sup>83</sup> Lee, 1991, 368.

a method of maintaining peace and spreading the ideology of Roman superiority.<sup>84</sup> The emperor Valens is documented as having taken Goths as hostages in the mid fourth century.<sup>85</sup> While each hostage is documented and treated differently, Lee and Allen postulate that the reason for the return of hostages seems to be dependent on the debt being repaid, or the emperor being satisfied with the state of relations between Rome (or Byzantium) and the hostage's homeland.<sup>86</sup>

The release of Theodoric back to the Goths can be viewed as a diplomatic gesture on behalf of the Emperor Leo. If we accept the reasoning of Lee and Allen, returning such a valuable asset to the Constantinopolitan court must have been a deliberate decision with perhaps the hope that Theodoric would return to the Goths and spread Byzantine ideology and culture.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

After Theodoric's stay in Constantinople, he returned to the Ostrogoths in Pannonia. More speculation has occurred on the mood of Theodoric's reception as some scholars have suggested that Theodoric would have become 'overtly Roman' during his stay in Constantinople and that it would have alienated him from his Ostrogothic brethren.<sup>87</sup> Despite some perceived challenges upon his

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<sup>84</sup> Lee, 1991, 368.

<sup>85</sup> Lee, 1991, 368.

<sup>86</sup> Lee, 1991, 369, Allen, 2006, 69.

<sup>87</sup> Arnold, 2008, Wolfram, 1992 and Heather, 1991 are proponents of this theory.

return, Theodoric began his grooming as an Ostrogoth leader and became well aligned to take the reins of power from his father.

Upon his return at the age of eighteen, Theodoric's early military career was successful. Theodoric built up an army of (as we are told by Jordanes) over six thousand men serving under his father Theodemer and uncle Videmer.<sup>88</sup> Theodoric's first charge as an Ostrogothic general was to seek the people who were responsible for his uncle Valamer's death.<sup>89</sup> Murdered while Theodoric was in Constantinople, Valamer's murderers and their allies, the Sarmatians and Sciri, became Theodoric's first military target and their eradication was his first success.<sup>90</sup>

Jordanes records that Theodoric struck the Sarmatian villages hard and claimed not only the great wealth of the city, but also the actual city of Singidunum for himself.<sup>91</sup> After Theodoric's victory he did not relinquish Singidunum (previously an imperial holding) to the empire, and therefore this action could have been considered as an act of treason against the emperor.<sup>92</sup> Although Jordanes does not report on the empire's reaction to this event, this act of aggression could be considered early evidence of a perceived competition between the Goths and Byzantium. Theodoric had spent over a decade in Constantinople and, if we are to consider the possibility of some sort of assimilation efforts during Theodoric's Constantinopolitan education, the taking of

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<sup>88</sup> Jord., *Getica*, 282; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 132.

<sup>89</sup> Jord., *Getica*, 282; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 132.

<sup>90</sup> Burns, 1984, 56.

<sup>91</sup> Jord., *Getica*, 282; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 132.

<sup>92</sup> Jord., *Getica*, 282; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 132.



Singidunum must not have been the desired outcome of that relationship and seems to indicate a certain level of hostility. These were not the actions of a subordinate to the imperial crown, but the actions of a young and ambitious general. The hopes of the Byzantine emperor of gaining an ally in Theodoric did not seem to materialize immediately.

The Goths were militarily quite successful, but they were not immune to the devastation of famine. Pannonia no longer was a viable home for the growing army and a lack of food and clothing forced the Goths to leave.<sup>93</sup> Jordanes states: 'Then, as the spoil taken from one and another of the neighbouring tribes diminished, the Goths began to lack food and clothing, and peace became distasteful to men for whom war had long furnished the necessities of life.'<sup>94</sup>

Vidimer and Theodemer parted ways; Vidimer and a small troop headed west while Theodoric and his father headed east.<sup>95</sup> Vidimer's expedition proved to be too much of a challenge, and he never reached his destination, dying on the journey.<sup>96</sup> Theodoric and his father, by contrast, were welcomed (most likely at the behest of the emperor) by the Macedonians and were granted seven towns.<sup>97</sup> Shortly after settling in Macedonia, Theodemer had the foresight of naming Theodoric heir to his kingdom, as he died soon afterwards.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Jord., *Getica*, 284; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 133.

<sup>94</sup> Jord., *Getica*, 283; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 133.

<sup>95</sup> Moorehead, 1992, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Moorehead, 1992, 15.

<sup>97</sup> Burns, 1984, 57.

<sup>98</sup> Moorehead, 1992, 15.

Although Theodoric seemed to have the appropriate endorsement for ruling over Theodemer's kingdom, Theodoric's troubles did not end with his father's endorsement. Theodoric Strabo, 'the squinter', had a significant following and powerful allies (one being Basiliskos, usurper of emperor Zeno and Aspar), and was making similar claims to Ostrogothic control as Theodoric (son of Theodemer).<sup>99</sup> However, those allies would fail Strabo after Basiliskos' unsuccessful attempt to usurp Zeno in 475.<sup>100</sup>

The general attitude that Byzantine emperors had traditionally held with regards to 'barbarian' tribes was opportunistic. Whichever relationship was to be most beneficial at the time would be fostered and they would frequently play one tribe against the other.<sup>101</sup> The struggle between the two Theodorics was a political quagmire that was subject to the political aims of both tribes of Goths as well as the emperor in Constantinople.

Theodoric (son of Theodemer) was first to gain favour with the new emperor Zeno. As mentioned above, Zeno was victim to Basiliskos' machinations and was usurped for a period of a year and a half in 475-76.<sup>102</sup> Because of the existing relationship between Theodoric Strabo and Basiliskus, Zeno opted to endorse Theodoric (son of Theodemer) as the leader of the Goths and pronounced him as a 'son-in-arms' and declared him a friend of the emperor.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Moorehead, 1992, 15.

<sup>100</sup> Heather, 1991, 275.

<sup>101</sup> Heather, 1991, 275.

<sup>102</sup> Burns, 1984, 57.

<sup>103</sup> Moorehead, 1992, 16.

Despite having received endorsement from the emperor, Theodoric's rule was still precarious.

The Goths in the year 478 were once again faced with the devastating effects of famine. While the previous famine had resulted in the fractionalization of Theodoric's tribe, this one had the opposite effect. Theodoric Strabo pleaded with Theodoric (son of Theodemer) to join their efforts in providing for their people.<sup>104</sup> The two united Theodorics proved to be a powerful alliance. John of Antioch reported: 'The union of the Theodorics again troubled the Romans, and ravaged the cities of Thrace...'<sup>105</sup> In an attempt to ward off the effects of the famine, the two Gothic leaders petitioned Constantinople for help. Perhaps recognizing the potential threat of a united Gothic army, Zeno's response to the plea can be viewed as divisive. The counter from Constantinople favoured Theodoric (son of Theodemer), at the expense of Theodoric Strabo.

Emperor Zeno awarded Theodoric (son of Theodemer) with generous payments as well as the hand of his daughter, or another woman of Theodoric's choosing from the aristocracy.<sup>106</sup> In return for this generosity, Theodoric (son of Theodemer) was to wage war on Theodoric Strabo on behalf of the emperor; however Theodoric (son of Theodemer) never acted upon this proposal.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> As recorded by Anon. *Vales.* 42; Eng. trans. J. Moreau, 1961, 12.

<sup>105</sup> Heather, 1991, 299.

<sup>106</sup> Heather, 1991, 299.

<sup>107</sup> Heather, 1991, 299.

Because of Theodoric's disregard for Zeno's authority, Zeno's favours turned to the other Theodoric, Strabo.<sup>108</sup>

Although the emperor no longer favoured Theodoric (son of Theodemir) he nonetheless proved himself to be a successful military leader. In what could be considered a bold and aggressive reaction to the emperor's change in favour, Theodoric began to take military action on imperial territory.<sup>109</sup> Even after the threat of Theodoric Strabo was ended with his death in 481, Theodoric (son of Theodemir) continued his military activities in imperial land and took the city of Dyrrhachium.<sup>110</sup>

Recognizing the threat he posed to the Byzantine Empire, Zeno chose once again to endorse Theodoric's rule. The emperor extended many privileges towards Theodoric including gifts, various tracts of land in Dacia and Moesia for his people, official titles (including that of *magister militum*) and in the year 484 Theodoric held the office of consul.<sup>111</sup>

The nature of Theodoric and the emperor's relationship while Theodoric held the consulship in Constantinople is unknown, but what is known is that it was during his stay there that Theodoric undertook the mission of overthrowing the new king of Italy: Odoacer. The primary sources that record this event are varied in their description of the driving force behind Theodoric's decision. While

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<sup>108</sup> Heather, 1991, 299.

<sup>109</sup> Heather, 1991, 299.

<sup>110</sup> The taking of Dyrrhachium also held more significance than just being within imperial territory. As a port city, Dyrrhachium was strategically placed between Greece and southern Italy. Nepos, a challenger to Zeno's throne resided in Dardania and Theodoric's intentions could have been construed as wanting to restore Nepos to the throne. Heather, 1991, 299.

<sup>111</sup> Heather, 1991, 299.

western writers such as Cassiodorus and Ennodius diminish the role of the emperor thereby exalting Theodoric, eastern writers such as Prokopios, Jordanes and the Anonymous Valesianus assert that Theodoric was acting on behalf of the emperor and upon his eventual victory was to act as a 'bench warmer' for Zeno. The Anonymous Valesianus states: '...after the defeat of Odoacer, Theodoric in return for his efforts, was to rule [Italy] for the emperor until he arrived in person.'<sup>112</sup>

What is known is that Zeno perceived a threat from Odoacer, who, although never recognized as the king of Italy by Byzantium, maintained a certain amount of control and power in the west.<sup>113</sup> Zeno held the belief that it was Julius Nepos who was the legitimate ruler of Italy and that Odoacer's claims to the throne were unjustified.<sup>114</sup> Odoacer also made the crucial error of failing to seek official imperial recognition upon his ascension.<sup>115</sup> Another strike against Odoacer was that he was a known ally of Illus, who challenged Zeno's authority.<sup>116</sup>

Illus, an Isurian, had once held a prestigious title at Zeno's court. However, tensions arose between the two, and intensified after Zeno dismissed him.<sup>117</sup> In retaliation for his dismissal, Illus waged war against Constantinople and began to assemble potential candidates to overthrow Zeno.<sup>118</sup> As his previous actions with

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<sup>112</sup> Anon. *Vales.* II, 49; Eng. trans. J. Moreau, 1961, 14.

<sup>113</sup> Heather, 1991, 307.

<sup>114</sup> Heather, 1991, 307.

<sup>115</sup> Heather, 1991, 307.

<sup>116</sup> Heather, 1991, 307.

<sup>117</sup> Heather, 1991, 304.

<sup>118</sup> Namely Marican and Leontius. Heather, 1991, 304.

supporters of Basiliskos proved, Zeno was not kind towards the allies of those who threatened his position.

Theodoric began his march on Odoacer's Italy in 488.<sup>119</sup> With a large group consisting of women, children and soldiers of various groups, such as Rugians, Goths and even some Romans, Theodoric began his campaign by reaching out to Odoacer diplomatically.<sup>120</sup> It is not known if Odoacer responded to Theodoric's diplomatic efforts, but by 28 August, 489 the first of what was to be many skirmishes between Theodoric and Odoacer occurred in Verona.<sup>121</sup>

The fight for Italy continued for five years with victories on both sides, but overall favouring Theodoric as he and his army welcomed reinforcements sent by a fellow Goth, Alaric II, and built what seemed to Odoacer an insurmountable blockade.<sup>122</sup> In an effort to end the fighting, the bishop of Ravenna, John, drafted a peace treaty that allowed Theodoric to enter Ravenna and to rule Italy jointly with Odoacer.<sup>123</sup> The terms were agreed upon by both parties and arrangements were made for a celebratory meal.<sup>124</sup>

According to legend, it was during this meal that Theodoric took advantage of the peace agreement and murdered Odoacer with his own hands.<sup>125</sup> Stabbing him with his sword, Theodoric was recorded to have said: 'This wretch does not

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<sup>119</sup> Wolfram, 1988, 279.

<sup>120</sup> Wolfram, 1988, 281.

<sup>121</sup> Jord., *Getica*, 293; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 136.

<sup>122</sup> Wolfram, 1988, 283.

<sup>123</sup> Wolfram, 1988, 283.

<sup>124</sup> Wolfram, 1988, 283.

<sup>125</sup> Wolfram, 1988, 283.

even seem to have bones in his body.’<sup>126</sup> Theodoric’s treatment of Odoacer’s family and supporters continued in the same ruthless manner. Odoacer himself was prevented from receiving a proper Christian burial, his wife was jailed and starved to death, property restrictions were levied against his supporters and the senate was purged of any of Odoacer’s sympathizers.<sup>127</sup>

The beginning to Theodoric’s reign would not set the tone for the remaining years in Italy. Over the course of thirty years, Theodoric propagated a political ideology of *renovatio* and *civilitas* that earned him a positive reputation amongst contemporary scholars (such as Prokopios) of tolerance and benevolence that, although now questioned by modern scholars such as Patrick Amory, has endured in modern scholarship as well.<sup>128</sup> Tolerance and *civilitas* became synonymous with his rule. Although it would seem that issues of legitimacy defined the beginning years of Theodoric’s rise to power, his years as King of Italy were considerably more stable.

As we shall see, Theodoric’s building programme in Ravenna can be considered to be reflective of his political ideologies. While modern scholars such as Mark J. Johnson (as well as writers contemporary to Theodoric such as Cassiodorus, Ennodius and Prokopios) laud Theodoric for his return to the ideals of the Roman Empire as well as for his religious and cultural tolerance, one cannot view Theodoric’s position as ruler of Italy as completely secure, and his

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<sup>126</sup> Wolfram, 1988, 283.

<sup>127</sup> Wolfram, 1988, 283.

<sup>128</sup> Amory, 1997, 45.

building programme cannot be viewed as a programme constructed in a political and religious utopia.

For example, Johnson, in his 1988 article entitled: 'Towards a History of Theodoric's Building Program', called upon various actions taken by Theodoric as evidence for his desire to equate himself with past Roman Emperors. Actions such as celebrating his *tricennalia* in Rome instead of Ravenna, striking coins with strong Roman imagery and most convincingly, the writings of Cassiodorus, who described Theodoric's building programme as the 'rebuilding of ancient cities', can be cited as examples of Theodoric emulating past Roman emperors. Although it may not have been his intent, Johnson creates a somewhat one-sided reading of Theodoric's buildings through quotes chosen from historical sources. Taking many cues from writers who were not contemporary to Theodoric (such as Theophanes, c. 8<sup>th</sup> century) or from contemporary writers who could benefit from a positive description of Theodoric's reign as king (such as Ennodius), Johnson provides the reader with a positive and retrospective interpretation of Theodoric's programme.

Johnson heavily emphasized Theodoric's *civilitas* and maintains that his building programme is a manifestation of that ideology. When discussing the differences between the Arian baptistery and the Neonian baptistery he states: 'Tolerant of the Orthodox, he attempted to make the buildings of the Arians equal to those of the Orthodox church, thus playing down the differences between the



two sects.<sup>129</sup> This statement is cited as being from von Simson's *Sacred Fortresses*. However, when one looks at the cited page in von Simson's publication, the tone and context are quite different from Johnson's.

von Simson discusses the possible impact of Theodoric's mother's religion in forming his ideology of tolerance, and even states: 'If Theodoric had always been aware of an unbridgeable chasm dividing the Arians and Catholics, such awareness is not evident in his palace chapel.'<sup>130</sup> However, unlike Johnson, von Simson does not ignore the growing tension between Theodoric and Byzantium and suggests that the deteriorating relationship with Byzantium attributed to Theodoric's preference for Roman traditions as opposed to the 'orientalized New Rome' of Byzantium.<sup>131</sup>

While Johnson provides us with a comprehensive discussion of Theodoric's monuments and how they fit into an architectural historical context, he takes a step back from von Simson in placing Theodoric's monuments within a political context. Johnson reconstructs Theodoric's building programme with consideration mostly to past events of Theodoric's life and events leading up to his control over Italy, with little consideration of political matters contemporaneous to the building of Theodoric's monuments.

Although monuments were built and, for the most part, completed during a time of relative stability, they were nevertheless built during a period that culminated in the devastating Gothic Wars (535-552) and in one case their

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<sup>129</sup> Johnson, 1988, 79.

<sup>130</sup> Which, I believe is the quote Johnson is referring to when citing him. von Simson, 1987, 72.

<sup>131</sup> von Simson, 1987, 72.

mosaics were divisive enough in their content to warrant their removal and subsequent alteration.<sup>132</sup> It is from this perspective that Theodoric's building programme will be henceforth considered.

## THEODORIC'S BUILDING PROGRAMME

Mark J. Johnson made the justifiable claim that the works commissioned by Theodoric in Ravenna have not received the recognition they warrant from the scholarly community.<sup>133</sup> With the exception of Otto von Simson's 1948 publication *Sacred Fortresses*, Johnson's article represents the most extensive focus on Theodoric as a patron and the various political and social motivations for his building programme.

Johnson and von Simson laud Theodoric for his tolerant political ideology and suggest that the monuments that Theodoric erected in Ravenna are a manifestation of this ideology. This is hard to deny: after all Cassiodorus records in his *Variae* that Theodoric resurrected the ancient Roman idea of *civilitas* - the coexistence of two distinct groups living side by side in harmony.<sup>134</sup>

Mentioned throughout many different letters written by Cassiodorus on behalf of

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<sup>132</sup> Otto von Simson discusses the action of the removal and alteration of Theodoric's mosaics under Archbishop Agnellus. von Simson chooses to view this action as one of tolerance: the bishop did not remove all of Theodoric's mosaics in Sant' Appollinare Nuovo, and even kept the dedication which names Theodoric as the founder. However, the opposite has been hypothesized: that the procession of figures flanking the nave were once members of Theodoric's court and the floating hands seen in the Palatium mosaic once also belonged to Theodoric and his court, but were removed and altered as the viewer would have easily identified as them as the previous Gothic ruler. von Simson, 1987, 71.

<sup>133</sup> Johnson, 1988, 73.

<sup>134</sup> The first mention of *civilitas* in Cassiodorus' *Variae* appears in book IV, letter 33 where Cassiodorus (on behalf of Theodoric) appeals to two different communities, the Jews and Christians, for peace and tolerance. Cass., *Variae*, IV.33; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 251.

Theodoric, the concept of *civilitas* occurs with the most frequency within the context of domestic diplomacy, and the recipients of these letters are, in the majority, prominent members of Italian society. For example, in chapter thirty-three of book IV of the *Variae*, in an open letter to the Jews of Genoa, Cassiodorus does not fail to remind the Jews of his master's tolerance and reinforces the idea of *civilitas* as one of Theodoric's guiding principles:

The true mark of *civilitas* is the observance of law. It is this which makes life in communities possible, and which separates man from the brutes. We therefore gladly accede to your request that all the privileges which the foresight of antiquity conferred upon the Jewish customs shall be renewed to you, for in truth it is our great desire that the laws of the ancients shall be kept in force to secure the reverence due to us. Everything which has been found to conduce to *civilitas* should be held fast with enduring devotion.<sup>135</sup>

Theodoric certainly maintained peace in what could be a potentially volatile relationship between the indigenous population of Italy and the foreign settlers.<sup>136</sup> Theodoric was so protective of his newly adopted people that, unlike many conquerors, he did not destroy existing buildings that were monuments to other religions, but preserved them and renovated many Latin Christian, pagan and Jewish buildings in Ravenna, Rome, Pavia, and Classe.<sup>137</sup> Cassiodorus evokes the concept of *civilitas* frequently in reference to conflicts regarding appropriation and destruction of property between the Latin Christian Church and Jewish synagogues:

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<sup>135</sup> Cass., *Variae*, IV.33; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 251.

<sup>136</sup> There are many contemporary accounts of the peace that Theodoric's reign brought to Italy. His panegyricist Ennodius (*Panegyricus*, c.93, ed. Vogel, 322) describes Theodoric's rule as so peaceful that the only way people knew of war was through gladiatorial demonstrations of war. The eastern writer Prokopios praised Theodoric for his manliness, wisdom and his sense of justice (Prok. Wars, V.I.; Eng. trans. H.B. Dewing, 1919, 10-13).

<sup>137</sup> Johnson, 1988, 74.

For the preservation of *civilitas* the benefits of justice are not to be denied even to those who are recognised as wandering from the right way in matters of faith.

You complain that you are often wantonly attacked, and that the rights pertaining to your synagogue are disregarded. We therefore give you the needed protection of our Mildness, and ordain that no ecclesiastic shall trench on the privileges of your synagogue, nor mix himself up in your affairs. But let the two communities keep apart, as their faiths are different: you on your part not attempting to do anything *incivile* against the rights of the said Church.

The law of thirty years' prescription, which is a world-wide custom, shall endure for your benefit also.

But why, oh Jew, dost thou petition for peace and quietness on earth when thou canst not find that rest which is eternal?<sup>138</sup>

As suggested by the literary evidence provided to us by Cassiodorus, Theodoric at the very least tolerated and at times encouraged the building and renovating of monuments dedicated to varying faiths. Theodoric himself undertook an ambitious building programme that would elevate Arianism's visibility in Ravenna. Although we have records of numerous buildings constructed under Theodoric, only three buildings still stand from his ambitious building programme. The Arian baptistery (fig. 2), Sant' Apollinare Nuovo (fig. 3), and Theodoric's mausoleum (fig. 4) were all built within the 'imperial quarter' or eastern end of the city.<sup>139</sup>

The imperial quarter was already home to monuments built by various emperors and their family members, such as San Giovanni Evangelista, built by Theodosios' daughter Galla Placidia in the fifth century, and a palace built by Valentinian. Theodoric's palace complex, a basilica dedicated to Hercules and a

<sup>138</sup> Cass. Var. V, 37; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 286.

<sup>139</sup> Johnson, 1988, 79.

city gate have unfortunately not stood the test of time and we are left only with the possibility of speculating as to what they would have looked like.<sup>140</sup> In his discussion of the three monuments that do survive, Johnson stressed the presence of both Byzantine and Roman building styles and extrapolated those same influences to the now destroyed palace complex and gate.<sup>141</sup>

Although the palace complex no longer stands, archaeological excavations and literary evidence allow the modern scholar to make an educated guess as to what it could have looked like in the sixth century and thereby speculate about what inspired Theodoric's architects. Because the Ostrogoths were traditionally a nomadic people, Johnson asserted that they had no building tradition of their own and therefore looked to the Romans and to the Byzantines as the exemplars of imperial building.<sup>142</sup> There has been some confusion as to where exactly Theodoric's palace complex would have been located because of the existence of another monumental building, 'The Palace of the Exarchs'. Previously considered to be Theodoric's palace because of its palace-like architecture, modern

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<sup>140</sup> The basilica dedicated to Hercules, according to Bryan Ward-Perkins (2010), was a civic building. According to Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis no archaeological evidence or textual descriptions of this building exist and its exact location remains a controversial subject. A single marble panel depicting one of the labours of Hercules has been excavated and therefore has been linked to Theodoric's building. However, Cassiodorus' letter (*Variae* I.6) is the only evidence, textual or physical, that the building did exist. Even the use of the word basilica has engendered a debate. Cassiodorus uses the word only once (in this context). In reference to large civic halls he uses the word *aulae*, thereby calling into question Ward-Perkin's interpretation. Deliyannis, 2010, 123-24.

<sup>141</sup> Johnson states that Theodoric's palace resembled the Great Palace in Constantinople through the peristyle courtyard of the palace and gate, whereas evidence of Roman influences can be seen in what is assumed to be the palace's chapel mosaics at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. Johnson, 1988, 83-86.

<sup>142</sup> Although he was not technically an emperor and only referred to himself as *rex*, his building programme, and the scale in which it was completed, was reflective of an emperor. Johnson, 1988, 96.

scholarship has since refuted this possibility as a closer examination of the building techniques have suggested a date of the eighth century or later.<sup>143</sup> Quite possibly built as an addition to an existing palatial structure, the proximity to Sant' Apollinare Nuovo has also contributed to the confusion.<sup>144</sup>

Excavations conducted in the early twentieth century uncovered the foundations of a building complex just east of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo (which makes it likely that the Palace of the Exarchs, located just south of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, would have been a part of the complex).<sup>145</sup> The palace complex has drawn parallels to the palace in Constantinople due to its name (Chalke) and the connection of the main building to a church dedicated to the Saviour.<sup>146</sup>

We do not know much about Theodoric's palace, as modern-day excavations and evidence from primary literature have not produced much information. Comparisons to the palace at Constantinople have been drawn (due mostly to the peristyle courtyard with side aisles) as well as comparisons to local villas (due to the axis of several buildings around a central courtyard).<sup>147</sup>

Evidence from a ninth-century chronicler, Andrea Agnellus mentions an architectural feature of a *triclinium* at the palace, and as Caroline Goodson's 2010 study finds, that the presence of a *triclinium* is in direct reference to imperial buildings found in Constantinople and later popularized by Pope Pascal in the

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<sup>143</sup> Johnson, 1988, 80.

<sup>144</sup> Johnson, 1988, 80.

<sup>145</sup> Ricci, 1920, xv.

<sup>146</sup> Ricci, 1920, xvi.

<sup>147</sup> Deichmann, von Simon, Johnson and Verhoeven make the comparison to Constantinople while Verhoeven also draws parallels to a villa. Verhoeven, 2011, 140-41.

ninth century.<sup>148</sup> Although evidence on the palace at Constantinople in the fifth and sixth centuries and its features is also up for debate, it too has been hypothesized by Cyril Mango as a series of buildings and halls connected by galleries with a central garden.<sup>149</sup>

Theodoric's palace layout has been described as sprawling and non-axial, much like the palace in Constantinople, and it consisted of various buildings such as a guardhouse, a palace church (Sant' Apollinare Nuovo) and an entrance gate named the 'Chalke Gate'.<sup>150</sup>

Possibly the most reliable visual aid that can help scholars in their understanding of Theodoric's palace is a mosaic that survives in the palace church, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo (fig. 5). The so called 'Palatium' mosaic has been interpreted in a number of ways, but perhaps the most agreed upon interpretation is that it is a representation of the main gate of the palace complex with what could possibly be a sixth-century view of the palace complex and the harbour.<sup>151</sup>

The palace fell into disuse after Byzantium regained control of Ravenna; however, in the ninth century, Charlemagne wrote to Pope Hadrian I and asked permission to remove the marbles and mosaics to adorn his palace at Aachen.<sup>152</sup>

Although these works no longer survive, we are fortunate to have two other monuments adorned with mosaics from Theodoric's building legacy: the Arian

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<sup>148</sup> Goodson, 2010, 20-22.

<sup>149</sup> Mango, 1974, 49.

<sup>150</sup> Deliyannis, 2004, 205.

<sup>151</sup> Some scholars have suggested that the mosaic is a representation of a throne room that has been "flattened out" or that it is the façade of the palace. Johnson, 1988, 80.

<sup>152</sup> Johnson, 1988, 81.

Baptistery and Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. As with Theodoric's palace, Johnson remarks on the presence of both Roman and Byzantine influences in both monuments. He once again asserts that these influences exist because of Theodoric's concepts of an emperorship developed during his time spent in Constantinople and his reverence for Roman civil institutions.<sup>153</sup>

### **SANT' APOLLINARE NUOVO**

Johnson remarks that there is nothing ambitious or innovative about the architecture of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo.<sup>154</sup> Its plan is simple: a three aisled basilica with an atrium and polygonal apse. However, when one enters the basilica, the grandeur and significance of the building reveals itself through the mosaics.

The mosaics that remain true to Theodoric's plan consist of three separate bands. The christological scenes of the upper nave display images of Christ's miracles and passion (figs. 6 and 7). Figures of the prophets and the apostles stand between the clerestory windows (fig. 8) along the upper nave. The lower nave wall includes mosaics of: processions of male and female worshippers, Christ on a lyre-backed throne (fig. 9), the Madonna and Child enthroned (fig. 10), the three Magi (fig. 11), the Classe mosaic depicting the city of Classe and its harbour (fig. 12) and the Palatium mosaic.<sup>155</sup>

The mosaics have been classified as both Roman and Byzantine in their iconography and materials and have been long seen as a testament of

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<sup>153</sup> Johnson, 1988, 85-92.

<sup>154</sup> Johnson, 1988, 85.

<sup>155</sup> Johnson, 1988, 85.



Theodoric's Roman cultural appropriation as well as his political ideology of *civilitas*.<sup>156</sup> Although, as we shall see, the mosaics could be interpreted this way, it is a simplistic view that can be extended to provide a more satisfactory interpretation.

The iconography of the christological scenes that are depicted on the upper nave walls of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo has been described as 'typical Roman art' in content.<sup>157</sup> The specific miracle scenes chosen have been discussed as more frequently found in Roman, as opposed to Byzantine, contexts.<sup>158</sup> Robert Milburn offers an alternate interpretation of the mosaics by suggesting that they are reflective of local Ravennate traditions, citing the motivation of the inclusion of specific scenes as scenes that would have related to passages read during Lent.<sup>159</sup> There also exists a literature that argues that the iconography of the mosaics is reflective of Theodoric's Arian beliefs.<sup>160</sup> However, recent scholarship questions whether or not they can be classified as Arian.<sup>161</sup>

Bryan Ward Perkins suggests that they cannot be classified as Arian as they do not diverge iconographically from their Catholic counterparts.<sup>162</sup> The lack of supporting evidence in the form of other Arian monuments leaves this question regrettably unanswerable. However, the fact that the Christological ministry and

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<sup>156</sup> Theodoric's building programme and mosaics have been described as a *renovatio* as one of his political goals was to restore the past glory of the Roman empire. Johnson, 1988, 76. Bovini, 1961, Paolucci, 1971, Johnson, 1988, Verzone, 1967 discusses the Roman aspect of the iconography found at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo.

<sup>157</sup> Bovini, 1961, 20.

<sup>158</sup> Bovini, 1961, 20.

<sup>159</sup> Milburn, 1988, 171.

<sup>160</sup> Bovini, 1961 and von Simson, 1987.

<sup>161</sup> Ward-Perkins, 2010, Verhoeven, 2011.

<sup>162</sup> Ward-Perkins, 2010, 267.

Passion narratives were left untouched by Bishop Agnellus suggests these were not perceived as an outward example of Arian iconography as it is likely they would have been altered to reflect Orthodoxy (this, too is hypothetical).

Mariëtte Verhoeven argues that one cannot view the mosaics of Theodoric as being reflective of his Arian faith due to the lack of knowledge we currently hold on what can be defined as Gothic 'Arianism'.<sup>163</sup> She suggests that the Arianism associated with the Goths differs too widely from that of the Arianism of the fourth century that to attempt to differentiate what is Arian and what is anti-Arian or Orthodox is an 'impracticable exercise'.<sup>164</sup>

Sant' Apollinare Nuovo was dedicated to Christ at the time of its consecration, the majority of the mosaics focus on the moments in Christ's life. The main argument for the mosaics displaying any Arian iconography can be found in the different depictions of Christ in such close proximity to each other. The two different representations are found within the same christological cycle. In the miracle scenes, such as the Multiplication of the Loaves (see fig. 6), Christ is shown as a youthful man. He is beardless and his face betrays no signs of suffering. His gentle expression and rosy cheeks are in stark contrast to the Passion scenes, such as the panel depicting Christ Carrying the Cross (see fig. 7). In this scene, Christ is fully bearded; his brow is furrowed under the mental anguish he is enduring and his body is burdened under the physical strain of the weight of the cross. It has been considered that these two very different

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<sup>163</sup> Verhoeven, 2011, 147.

<sup>164</sup> Verhoeven, 2011, 147.

representations of Christ reflects the Arian belief of the dual nature of Christ that goes against the Latin Christian teaching that the same Christ who performed the miracles was the same Christ who suffered the Passion.<sup>165</sup>

Unlike other monuments, such as San Vitale, that arguably have two different representations of Christ, the variances of the representations at Sant' Apolinare Nuovo are unlike any monument before or after. The differences cannot be attributed to something as benign as artistic license or the changing of styles over a period of time. Studies by Jonas Per Nordhagen have shown that the mosaics were completed at the same time, using the same materials and likely by the same group of artisans, therefore the differences in Christ's appearance were a deliberate iconographical device.<sup>166</sup>

Beginning in the first quarter of the fourth century with Arius, a theologian from Alexandria, Arianism was a rebuttal to those who claimed that Christianity was polytheism disguised as monotheism.<sup>167</sup> The basic tenet of Arianism asserts that because Christ was the son of God, he was a separate entity and therefore was subordinate to God.<sup>168</sup>

Although there is little information as to the specific biblical passages the Arians relied upon as their evidence for the dual nature of Christ (and even less information on the passages most important to Gothic Arians), according to a letter the bishop of Alexandria sent to the bishop of Constantinople, the fourth

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<sup>165</sup> von Simson, 1987, 74.

<sup>166</sup> Nordhagen, 1980, 78.

<sup>167</sup> Gwatkin, 1908, 5.

<sup>168</sup> Gwatkin, 1908, 5.

century Arians heavily relied upon passages from Philippians.<sup>169</sup> The Philippians

(2:5-11) passage states:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The rationale behind Arianism is not at stake here, but motivation of the transition from paganism to Arianism by the Goths is important to outline. The conversion of the Goths began with Ulfila, a recent convert to Nicene orthodoxy, in the mid fourth century.<sup>170</sup> Thanks to one of his followers, the Arian Auxentius, we have some documentation of the conversions in an otherwise highly contested and scantily documented historical event.<sup>171</sup> As bishop of the Goths by 341, Ulfila conducted missions to Gothica in the 340s and so began to convert large numbers of Goths.<sup>172</sup> After seven years of missionary efforts, Ulfila was forced to stop his conversions and fled Gothica as persecution of Gothic Christians by the followers of the Nicene tradition became widespread.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Gregg and Groh, 1981, 2.

<sup>170</sup> Sivan, 1996, 337.

<sup>171</sup> Sivan, 1996, 377.

<sup>172</sup> Sivan, 1996, 377.

<sup>173</sup> Sivan, 1996, 377.

Writing after Ulfila's missionary efforts, Theodoret (ca.393-466) recorded mass conversions of Goths to Arianism by other Goths and suggested the reason behind the conversions was an attempt to foster peace with the Byzantines.<sup>174</sup>

This would seem to have been a wise diplomatic gesture as the bishop of Constantinople, Eudoxius (360-370), and the emperor Valens (364-378) were both Arians.<sup>175</sup> Here it is worth reading Theodoret's thirty-third chapter of the fourth book from his *Historia ecclesiastica* in its entirety:

To those ignorant of the circumstances it may be worth while to explain how the Goths got the Arian plague. After they had crossed the Danube, and made peace with Valens, the infamous Eudoxius, who was on the spot, suggested to the emperor to persuade the Goths to accept communion with him. They had indeed long since received the rays of divine knowledge and had been nurtured in the apostolic doctrines, "but now," said Eudoxius, "community of opinion will make the peace all the firmer." Valens approved of this counsel and proposed to the Gothic chieftains an agreement in doctrine, but they replied that they would not consent to forsake the teaching of their fathers. At the point in question their Bishop Ulphilas was implicitly obeyed by them and they received his words as laws which none might break. Partly by the bribes with which he baited his proposals Eudoxius succeeded in inducing him to persuade the barbarians to embrace communion with the emperor, so Ulphilas won them over on the plea that the quarrel between rivalry and involved no difference in doctrine. The result is that up to this day the Goths assert that the Father is greater than the Son, but they refuse to describe the Son as a creature, although they are in communion with those who do so. Yet they cannot be said to have altogether abandoned their Father's teaching, since Ulphilas in his efforts to persuade them to join in communion with Eudoxius and Valens denied that there was any difference in doctrine and that the difference had arisen from empty strife.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Sivan, 1996, 373.

<sup>175</sup> Sivan, 1996, 374.

<sup>176</sup> Theod., Hist. Eccl., 33; Eng. trans. P. Schaff and H. Wace, 1969, 131.

According to Theodoret, the first wave of Gothic conversions then can be considered conversions of convenience. The early Gothic conversions were not ideal and further alienated the Goths from an already tenuous relationship with Byzantium.<sup>177</sup>

The emperor Theodosios (379-395) went to great lengths to purge the empire of the previous emperor's heretical religion.<sup>178</sup> Despite Theodosios' efforts, Arianism persisted on the periphery of the empire. By the fifth century, Theodosios' efforts seem to have been in vain as there are documented Arian churches being consecrated in Constantinople.<sup>179</sup> The existence of Arian churches such as St. Paul's in Constantinople suggests that there must have been a significant Arian population to warrant a church as well as enough money to patronize an Arian church thereby suggesting Arian integration at all levels of society.<sup>180</sup>

While the average Goth may have held on to the pagan beliefs of his or her ancestors, Arianism provided the Goths with a religious standpoint that differentiated them from the local population.<sup>181</sup> Some scholars believe that Arianism was a tactic used by the Ostrogoths in Italy to remain autonomous from

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<sup>177</sup> For an outdated interpretation that nonetheless remains referential, see Gwatkin, 1900, 228-278.

<sup>178</sup> Theodosios issued several edicts against Arianism. The edicts proscribed the building of churches by Arians in cities surrounding Constantinople, Theodosios amended the definition of orthodoxy, forbade the gathering of Arian assemblies and issued a law decreeing that all men must follow Nicene doctrine and to do otherwise would incite punishments. Gwatkin, 1900, 268-271.

<sup>179</sup> Snee, 1998, 179.

<sup>180</sup> Snee, 1998, 179.

<sup>181</sup> Decorations on personal ornaments such as helmets and belt buckles still demonstrated strong pagan imagery suggest the persistence of pagan iconography. Burns, 1984, 158.

the Romans and was reflective of a persistent Germanic ethnocentricity.<sup>182</sup> It is even noted that Theodoric seemed to actively discourage the evangelizing of Arianism in Italy thereby seemingly isolating the Goths further from the Italian population.<sup>183</sup>

The miracle mosaics at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo do not satisfactorily provide us with material evidence of Arian iconography. Iconographically speaking, Arian monuments typically do not display major divergences from Catholic monuments. Arians and Catholics were also comfortable with each other's visual language as many incidents of Arians re-using Catholic churches (and vice versa) have been recorded.<sup>184</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins suggests that this practise is indicative of the lack of differences between the two sects and therefore the lack of differences in their iconography is reflective of the fundamental lack of differences between Arianism and Catholicism.<sup>185</sup> However, there have been noted incidents of some differences between Catholic and Arian iconography in Ravenna. For example, Dragoş Mirşanu has suggested that although Arian churches seem to be relatively neutral in their iconography, Catholic monuments display anti-Arian images and that an artistic 'battlefield' was laid out on the walls of churches across Italy.<sup>186</sup>

The anti-Arian examples are not obvious and the claim that Latin Christians deliberately using iconography to emphasize superiority over the

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<sup>182</sup> Snee, 1988, 181.

<sup>183</sup> Amory, 1997, 275.

<sup>184</sup> Ward-Perkins, 2010, 267.

<sup>185</sup> Ward-Perkins, 2010, 267

<sup>186</sup> Mirşanu, 2009, 413.

Arians is difficult to substantiate. Citing the Orthodox Archiepiscopal Chapel and San Michele in Africisco as the two monuments that display an 'anti-Arian' sentiment, Mirşanu dismisses the positive relationship between the Catholics and the Arian Goths that has been well documented by other scholars.<sup>187</sup> The Archiepiscopal Chapel contains a mosaic that depicts Christ triumphing over a serpent and a lion while holding a book inscribed with the text (John 14:6) that reads: *Ego sum via, veritas, et vita* (fig.13). Mirşanu has interpreted this image as symbolic of Catholicism triumphing over the Arian heresy.<sup>188</sup> However, since the building was constructed during Theodoric's reign, it is unlikely that this message was intended.

San Michele in Africisco is even more unlikely to contain the anti-Arian imagery Mirşanu suggests as its consecration date (545) places it after the Ostrogoths fell from power. The mosaic in question displays the angels Michael and Gabriel flanking Christ who is holding in his right hand an open book with a passage from John (14:9 and 10:30): *Qui vidit me viditet patrem* and *Ego et Pater unum sumus*. Mirsanu offers no real insight to the mosaic; he merely states that these two statements are clearly anti-Arian.<sup>189</sup> However, if we consider Gothic Arians to follow a similar tenet to their fourth-century predecessors, then the inscription contradicts one of Arianism's main beliefs that Christ and God the

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<sup>187</sup> Patrick Amory notes that there is no textual evidence for the Catholic response to Gothic Arianism. He posits that either the Catholics favoured Theodoric's rule and the differences between the two sects to be politically advantageous or either they viewed Theodoric's rule as a continuation of Byzantine (and therefore another religion) rule. Amory also notes that the popes were more willing to work with Theodoric than the Byzantines as they may have considered Arianism to be less heretical than Monophysitism. 1997, 198-235.

<sup>188</sup> Mirşanu, 2009, 423.

<sup>189</sup> Mirşanu, 2009, 424.



Father were not one and that Christ lacked knowledge of God's presence within himself.<sup>190</sup> Deichmann views this mosaic as an explicit message of anti-Arian sentiment despite the superficial assumption of peace and tolerance.<sup>191</sup>

Given the lack of substantial evidence of Catholic versus Arian iconography, it is difficult to say with any certainty whether or not the mosaics at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo are communicating an outward message of Arianism to their viewers. An opposing argument of Ward Perkins and Mirşanu's suggestion of anti-Arian imagery is provided by Otto von Simson. He claims that the two distinct representations of Christ are examples of Arian iconography. von Simson views the youthful Christ as idealized and claims that the mosaic illustrates the two distinct Christs of Arianism.<sup>192</sup> However, von Simson notes that this is the only example of Arian iconography in the church. The reason for so few differences between Arianism and Latin Christianity, not only in the iconography but in the liturgy as well, was a deliberate political manoeuvre on behalf of Theodoric, according to von Simson. He argues that Theodoric did not want to create a religious distance between the Goths and the Latin Christians, but instead wanted to communicate a common ground and gain allies in the (perceived) inevitable fight against the Orthodox east.<sup>193</sup>

The differences between Arianism, Eastern Christianity and Latin Christianity were certainly cause for major theological debate for the early church.

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<sup>190</sup> Wiles, 1996, 7.

<sup>191</sup> Deichmann, 1974, 203.

<sup>192</sup> von Simson, 1987, 74.

<sup>193</sup> von Simson, 1987, 75.

Although fraught with issues that caused major political upset, the differences iconographically speaking did not make much of an impact at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. We cannot say for certain whether or not the mosaics would have been perceived as overtly Arian, and, if they were, whether this was cause for strife between the Goths and the indigenous population.

The treatment of the mosaics after Gothic rule ended in Ravenna is perhaps the best source of information we have in determining the message and perception of the iconography displayed in Theodoric's palace church. Justifying his campaign against the Goths in a vein similar to Theodoric's political ideology, in 535 Justinian launched a campaign of *renovatio*, but touted the idea of a universal Orthodoxy alongside the notion of an ideal state.<sup>194</sup> By 540 the Byzantines had conquered Ravenna and had begun reclaiming Arian monuments for Orthodoxy. Sant' Apollinare Nuovo was subject to many alterations during this change of hands. However, the mosaics were not altered to reflect the change in religion, but rather the change in power.

Well documented by the ninth-century *Liber Pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, bishop Agnellus was 'legitimately' given Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in 556 by Justinian for the Catholic Church.<sup>195</sup> Agnellus writes:

In his reign the Emperor Justinian of the true faith granted to this church and to blessed bishop Agnellus all the property of the Goths, not only in the cities, but also in the suburban villas and hamlets, and their temples and altars, slaves and handmaidens, whatever could pertain to their jurisdiction or to the rite of pagans, he presented and granted all to him and confirmed it through

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<sup>194</sup> This is well discussed in Amory, 1997.

<sup>195</sup> von Simson, 1987, 69.

privileges and had it handed over physically through a letter, part of which contains the following: 'The holy mother church of Ravenna, true mother, truly orthodox, for many other churches crossed over to false doctrine because of the fear and terror of princes, but this one held the true and unique holy catholic faith, it never changed, it endured the fluctuations of the times, though tossed by the storm it remained unmovable.'<sup>196</sup>

In an act that has been described as tolerant, Agnellus incorporated the so-called Arian Christological scenes into Orthodox liturgy and even kept an inscription attributing the construction of the church to Theodoric.<sup>197</sup> None of the miracle or Passion scenes were altered.

Although we are only left with a portion of Theodoric's mosaics and Agnellus' subsequent renovations because of an eighth-century earthquake that destroyed the apse (which therefore was not intact for ninth-century Agnellus to record in the *Liber Pontificalis*), we cannot know for certain if there were any unquestionably Arian mosaics that Agnellus then altered. However, the images that have been at the root of iconographical debate for modern scholars seemed to not pose any issue for Agnellus.

With religion and the establishment of a universal church being at the very heart of Justinian's political agenda, it seems unlikely that anything overtly Arian would go unaltered. In a letter to the king of Franks, Justinian (as told through Prokopios) writes:

The Goths, having seized by violence Italy, which was ours, have not only refused absolutely to give it back, but have committed further acts of injustice against us which are unendurable and pass beyond all bounds. For this reason we have been compelled to

<sup>196</sup> Agn., LPR, 84; Eng. trans. D.M. Deliyannis, 2004, 198-199.

<sup>197</sup> von Simson, 1987, 71.

take the field against them, and it is proper that you should join with us in waging this war, which is rendered yours as well as ours not only by the orthodox faith, which rejects the opinion of the Arians, but also by the enmity we both feel toward the Goths.<sup>198</sup>

Given Justinian's personal stance (according to Prokopios) on Goths and Arianism demonstrated by this passage in addition to the material evidence we have of the alterations made by incoming clerics of the Orthodox church on monuments such as Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, it would stand to reason that any image overtly Arian or Gothic would have been altered or destroyed during the years that followed the Byzantine occupation of Ravenna.

Perhaps the christological mosaics at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo were not considered divisive enough to warrant their removal after Gothic rule ended in Italy. Or perhaps it is their very location at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo that allowed them to remain untouched. The fact that they are located in such a high place in the nave could have possibly neutralized any polarizing ideology, given that they would not have been as visible as the mosaics that ran along the lower register. However, after Gothic rule fell in Italy, certain efforts were made to alter the message of other mosaics at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. Although the mosaics containing religious messages were left untouched, the mosaics that could link the Goths to claims of authority were altered significantly.

The Palatium mosaic is perhaps the most well known example of post-Theodoric alterations at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. The mosaic (see fig. 5) is located on the south wall of the nave and is the first of three levels of mosaics in

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<sup>198</sup> Prok., Wars; Eng. trans. H.B. Dewing, 1919, 45.

the church. This first level of mosaics consists of three successive panels on both the north and south sides of the church. The panels form a continuous band of mosaics that begins at the entrance of the church and culminates at the altar. These mosaics we believed to have communicated indisputable imperial messages of Gothic supremacy, therefore Bishop Agnellus felt the need for their removal.

The Palatium mosaic is located at the entrance point of the church and is therefore farthest from the altar. The Palatium image is followed by a procession of twenty-six male worshippers seemingly moving towards the apse (fig.14). The band of mosaic ends with an image of Christ on a lyre-backed throne flanked by angelic attendants (see fig.9). On the north side a mosaic of the port of Classe (see fig. 12) begins the band and is followed by a complimentary procession of twenty-two female worshippers and ends in an image of the three Magi presenting their gifts to the Virgin and Child (see fig. 10).

The subject matter of the Palatium mosaic itself has been somewhat controversial in modern scholarship, as the alterations made by Bishop Agnellus have left room for debate. There is some literary evidence that supports the theory that the Palatium mosaic is a representation of the entrance to Theodoric's palace. We know from descriptions given to us by Andrea Agnellus, of the existence of a Chalke gate outside of the palace complex:

Afterward Tuscany was plundered by the Lombards; they overran Ticinum, which city is also called Pavia, where Theodoric built a palace, and I have seen an image of him sitting on a horse well executed in mosaic in the vault of the apse.

There was a similar image of him in the palace that he built in this [Ravenna] city, in the apse of the dining hall that is called By the Sea, above the gate and at the front of the main door that is called Ad Calchi, where the main gate of the palace was, in the place which is called Sicrestum, where the church of the Saviour is seen to be. In the pinnacle of this place was an image of Theodoric, wonderfully executed in mosaic, holding a lance in his right hand, a shield in his left, wearing a breastplate. Facing the shield stood Rome, executed in mosaic with spear and helmet; and there holding a spear was Ravenna, figured in mosaic, with right foot on the sea, left foot on land hastening toward the king. O misery, and everywhere having suffered envy, citizens between themselves with the greatest zeal...

In their sight a base of square stoned and rhombus-shaped bricks, in height about six cubits; on top of it a horse of bronze, covered with gleaming gold, and its rider King Theodoric bore a shield on his left arm, holding a lance in his raised right arm. Birds came out of the spreading nostrils of the horse and of its mouth, and in its belly they built their nests. For who could see anything like it? Whoever does not believe [me], let him make a journey to the land of the Franks, there he will see it.<sup>199</sup>

From this description we know that there was a main gate to the palace complex and that in what Andrea Agnellus calls the 'pinnacle' of the gate there was a mosaic replica of the equestrian statue of Theodoric that Charlemagne took back to Germany around the time of his coronation as Emperor of the Romans in 800.<sup>200</sup> However, as the Palatium mosaic stands today, the pediment is only adorned with gold tesserae and there is no figural representation that would correspond to Andrea Agnellus' description of the physical gate, therefore making the exact subject of the mosaic difficult to identify.

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<sup>199</sup> Agn. LPR, c. 94; Eng. trans. D.M. Deliyannis, 2004, 205-206.

<sup>200</sup> Dutton, 2004, 56.

Most agree that the Palatium mosaic is some representation of an aspect of Theodoric's palace complex.<sup>201</sup> Despite the lack of primary information regarding the Palatium mosaic, Johnson argues that it is a depiction of the Chalke gate in Ravenna. Johnson hypothesizes that Theodoric's court would have begun their procession at the gate and continued into the complex itself during ceremonial processions.<sup>202</sup> This theory is supported by the report given to us by Andrea Agnellus and a small, but revealing amount of material evidence on the mosaic itself.

As previously mentioned, there have been significant alterations made to the lower band of mosaics at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo as compared to the upper christological programme. Bishop Agnellus' alterations to the mosaic can still be seen today. In what would be the pediment of the Chalke gate (if we are to assume that it is the gate) there are vestiges of a figure group (fig.15). Giuseppe Bovini has noted that there is a white line visible in the pedimental area demarcating the alterations made by Bishop Agnellus.<sup>203</sup> The underside of the mosaic further supports the existence of a figure through the different colouration than the rest of the pediment (fig.16).<sup>204</sup> Bovini theorizes that the figure that had been removed from the mosaic was most likely Theodoric on horseback.<sup>205</sup> When

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<sup>201</sup> Johnson outlines multiple theories of what past scholars have posited, such as the mosaic being an abstracted interior such as a throne room that has been flattened out or even a 'dissected basilica'. Johnson, 1988, 91.

<sup>202</sup> Johnson, 1988, 91.

<sup>203</sup> Bovini, 1961, 17.

<sup>204</sup> Bovini, 1961, 19.

<sup>205</sup> Bovini, 1961, 22. However, this is not agreed upon by all scholars as it is debateable whether or not the size of the original mosaic is large enough to display Theodoric on horseback. Deliyannis, 164.

taking Johnson's contextualization of the gate within an imperial setting as evidenced by the order of the mosaics, Bovini's hypothesis of an equestrian figure filling the pediment, and Andrea Agnellus' description, it seems convincing that the Palatium mosaic is indeed the Chalke gate of Ravenna. The very fact that the pediment has been altered may add support this theory as Bishop Agnellus significantly altered other aspects of the Palatium mosaic to neutralize any Gothic expressions of power.

One such portion of the Palatium mosaic that was altered to remove any traces of Gothic rule was the spaces between the columns of the gate. Bishop Agnellus' alterations are still visible fifteen hundred years later through the floating body parts that once were attached to what the scholarly community agrees was full figural representations of Theodoric, Theodoric's family and court (see fig. 15).<sup>206</sup> Hands of the Gothic dignitaries are still visible on the columns and, unlike the christological scenes in the upper level of mosaics, would have been quite visible to those who entered the church. The very fact that the hands still remain have led some to believe that the act was deliberate and sent a message to the few remaining Goths in Ravenna.

Arthur Urbano extrapolates the practice of *damnatio memoriae*, a demoralization tactic used by late Roman leaders to dishonour the memory of a conflicting ideology or rule through a set of penalizing acts, to the acts of Bishop

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<sup>206</sup> Bovini, 1961, 22. Johnson, 1988, 88.



Agnellus and the renovations at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo.<sup>207</sup> Urbano defines *damnatio memoriae* as: '...the destruction of visual images, the erasure of names, and a ban on funeral and mourning rites – that were intended to condemn and abolish the memory of persons deemed unworthy to be remembered by the ruling powers.'<sup>208</sup> Urbano suggests that Bishop Agnellus deliberately left the hands of Theodoric's court still grasping onto their past glory as '...a subtle reminder of the purgation and charge to "remember to forget"'.<sup>209</sup>

Although Urbano does not take this theory past a superficial application, it does seem to hold weight. If we are to consider Theodoric's building programme that of a king with ambitions to be more than a seat filler for the emperor, then it would seem prudent for the Byzantine conquerors to remind the remaining Goths of the dangers of challenging authority. However, Urbano fails to take into consideration the overt imperial iconography of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. He does not sufficiently acknowledge the syncretic nature of the iconography and simply defines the mosaic programme as derivative of Greco-Roman art.<sup>210</sup> If Sant' Apollinare Nuovo contained only what Arthur Urbano describes as Greco-Roman iconography, and not a more politically charged iconography of Gothic power, then would the Byzantines have felt the need to alter so much? They left what is arguably an example of Arian iconography – the christological scenes in the upper register – untouched, yet the lower register, as we shall see, displays the

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<sup>207</sup> Urbano relies on Charles W. Hendrik Jr., 2000, for his definition of *damnatio memoriae*. Urbano, 2005, 95.

<sup>208</sup> Urbano, 2005, 95.

<sup>209</sup> Urbano, 2005, 98.

<sup>210</sup> Urbano, 2005, 105.

majority of Byzantine influence found at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, was altered beyond recognition.

The lower register mosaics are obvious targets for alteration because of the portraits of Theodoric and his court (whereas the christological scenes have no Gothic imperial connotations); however, why over thirty years after his death did the Byzantines feel the need to erase the memory of Theodoric and not a smaller scale alteration to change the identity enough for the observer to not identify the figures with Theodoric? If we consider Theodoric's mosaics at Sant' Apollinare to be communicating competition between Byzantium and the Goths, then it would seem plausible that the bishop Agnellus' renovations would be reinforcing a message of victory over a competing state.

Urbano fails to acknowledge one key mosaic not of Greco-Roman inspiration that would have communicated a clear message to the Byzantines of Gothic ambitions of power: the image of Christ on a lyre-backed throne (see fig. 9). The image in question is of Christ sitting on a grand throne that conveys imperial connections through its ornate decorations, cushion, and sheer size. Christ himself further suggests his imperial identity as he wears the colour of emperors: purple. The throne's shape has drawn the attention of scholars as the shape of the back has a distinctive curve that draws comparison to a lyre. This aspect of the mosaic has been identified by James D. Breckenridge as an overt Byzantine, imperial reference.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> See Breckenridge, 1981, 247-260.

Breckenridge suggests that the shape of the throne is evocative of the throne on which the emperor in Constantinople would have sat.<sup>212</sup> Although Sant' Apollinare Nuovo provides us with the earliest extant large-scale depiction on Christ on a lyre-backed throne (east or west), its popularity not only extended to, but persisted, in Byzantium. Given that a similar iconography appears sporadically in Byzantium, beginning in the late fifth century with a solidi from emperor Leo I and II (473-474), the iconography really takes hold almost five centuries later with multiple iterations found in mosaics, such as in Hagia Sophia (fig. 17) and on the coins of ninth-century emperors such as Basil I and Leo VI (fig. 18 and 19). The lyre-backed throne seems to stand the test of time and continued to provide emperors with imagery that denoted power and royalty.<sup>213</sup>

Whether or not the significance of the shape of Christ's throne is imperial, the message the mosaic evokes is one of supreme authority. As Sant' Apollinare Nuovo is considered to be the palace chapel, iconography that expressed ideas of power and equality to the empire in Byzantium would be appropriate.<sup>214</sup>

Another portion of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo's mosaics that were altered are the processions of female and male figures along both sides of the nave walls (see fig. 14). The figures are believed to be portraits of members of Theodoric's

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<sup>212</sup> Breckenridge, 1981, 248.

<sup>213</sup> Breckenridge, 1981, discusses the lyre-throne in an imperial context while other scholars such as Anthony Cutler (1975) have drawn parallels between the lyre-backed throne and the myth of Orpheus taming the wild beasts, thus the significance in a Christian context would be universal harmony under Christ.

<sup>214</sup> Although it cannot be proven beyond question that Sant' Apollinare Nuovo is the palace chapel, it is widely accepted amongst the scholarly community as such. Johnson, 1988, 79.

court altered later.<sup>215</sup> The procession of the male worshippers along the nave wall creates a link between Theodoric and Christ as the mosaic can be interpreted as a procession beginning at Theodoric's palace (as represented by the Palatium mosaic) and ending at Christ on his throne.<sup>216</sup>

Even the portrait of Justinian located on the western interior entrance wall has been suggested to be Theodoric, but simply with a change of name.<sup>217</sup> As the mosaic stands today, there is a portrait of a king identified as Justinian (fig. 20) however there is an inscription directly above that states: 'King Theodoric made this church from its foundations in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'<sup>218</sup>

Research conducted on the dating of the original mosaics and evidence from Agnellus stating Theodoric's dedication of the church have led some to conclude that as part of Bishop Agnellus' renovations, the name was change to reflect the change in power, but the portrait was originally intended to be that of Theodoric.<sup>219</sup> This suggests that what was considered to be the more divisive representation in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo was not the contentious (albeit minor iconographically speaking) differences between Arianism and Orthodox, but the reminders of past Gothic rule. These alterations will be discussed later within the framework of competitive sharing to suggest that syncretism is often a result of competition, not tolerance.

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<sup>215</sup> Bovini, 1961, 20.

<sup>216</sup> Bovini, 1961, 20.

<sup>217</sup> Bovini, 1961, 20.

<sup>218</sup> Verhoeven, 2011, 152.

<sup>219</sup> von Simson, 1987, 81, Johnson, 1988, 91, Urbano, 2005, 93 and Verhoeven, 2011, 152-54.

## ARIAN BAPTISTERY

The Arian baptistery, located in the Eastern quarter of the city, is visually similar to the Neonian baptistery built a century before Theodoric. We have no contemporary descriptions of the baptistery, save a simple acknowledgment of its existence by Agnellus in the ninth century (however, he refers to the baptistery as St. Mary in Cosmedin, as it was rededicated after Theodoric's death).<sup>220</sup> The baptistery utilizes similar materials as previous monuments in Ravenna, such as Galla Placidia's mausoleum and the Neonian baptistery. It is a simple, red brick centrally-planned building with few exterior adornments. The interior features a large mosaic in the dome that has been dated to Theodoric's reign. Although heavily inspired by the mosaic in the same location in the Neonian baptistery, Theodoric's mosaic is different enough to cause speculation of Arian influences.

The mosaic (fig. 21) is composed of a central medallion displaying the baptism of Christ surrounded by the twelve apostles on a background of gold tesserae. Christ is the youthful Christ, much as he appears in the miracle scenes at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. He stands waist deep in a river provided by an upturned amphora resting beside the full-figure personification of the river Jordan. John the Baptist, standing on a stylized crag, baptises Christ as the Holy Spirit in the form of the dove appears to be performing the actual baptism.

The twelve apostles who surround the baptismal scene are clothed in stiff tunics whose folds are exaggerated and accentuated by thick black contours. The figures themselves are given individualistic facial features but lack identifying

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<sup>220</sup> Agn. LPR; Eng. trans. by D.M. Deliyannis, 2004, 199.

labels. However one particular unnamed apostle has been noted to have a distinctive Gothic physiognomy (fig. 22). The apostle in question sports distinctive facial hair that was unique to Gothic men. The facial hair is the ‘mutton-chop’ style – a moustache connected to the sideburns with no beard.<sup>221</sup> This style is similar to the medallion struck by Theodoric to commemorate his *trincennalia*, although the medallion lacks the sideburns (fig. 23). Scholars have postulated that this use of such an identifying physical characteristic was a way of demonstrating that the Goths were now part of the Christian community.<sup>222</sup>

The figures themselves appear static in their movements and can be described as two-dimensional.<sup>223</sup> Their divinity is emphasized by their haloes, but the colours used for the haloes emphasize Christ’s divinity over the apostles. The apostles’ haloes use blue, white and beige tesserae while Christ’s is completed with the more expensive (and regal) gold tesserae. The apostles are evenly spaced throughout the dome and are each separated by a palm tree.

What is intriguing about this particular mosaic, iconographically speaking, is the inclusion of a throne that punctuates the procession of the twelve apostles, the familiar iconographical device known as *hetoimasia* (its significance is discussed at length further below). The throne is similar to the one in Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo in its opulent decoration and overstuffed cushion, although it lacks the Byzantine connection of the lyre-back. Sitting upon the throne is an ornate cross with a purple pallium resting on the arms of the cross.

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<sup>221</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 186.

<sup>222</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 186.

<sup>223</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 186.

Many comparisons have been drawn between the mosaics in the Neonian baptistery and the Arian baptistery as they are quite similar leaving some to suggest that the Arian baptistery relied heavily on the Neonian mosaics as a model.<sup>224</sup> The Neonian baptistery (fig. 24) also has a dome mosaic of Christ being baptized in the river Jordan by John surrounded by twelve apostles. Built before the consecration of the Arian baptistery by the bishop Neon around 451, the two baptisteries display many differences alongside their similarities.<sup>225</sup>

Set upon a background of blue, the twelve apostles in the Neonian baptistery are rendered in a different style than their Arian counterparts. The apostle's bodies and facial features have been described as more classical as the fabric of their tunics seem to move naturally alongside their body positions, and their figures seem to exhibit more corporeality than their Arian counterpart.<sup>226</sup> The use of gold tesserae in the central medallion versus the blue of the apostles signals the importance of the scene it holds. The body of Christ is not the undefined, soft body at the Arian baptistery, but is a more muscular adult figure. The personification of the river Jordan is given less importance hierarchically as he is shown only from the waist up wading in the water behind Christ. John the Baptist acts as the intermediary between the Holy Spirit and Christ through his blessing.

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<sup>224</sup> Wharton, 1987, 370.

<sup>225</sup> The precise date of the Neonian baptistery is not known. Most scholars feel comfortable placing the date at the time of bishop Neon's accession. Kostof, 1965, 11.

<sup>226</sup> Kostof, 1965, 4.

Unlike the Arian baptistery, in the Neonian mosaic the apostles are not adorned with haloes. The use of haloes as a mark of divinity is saved for the figures of greatest importance: John and Christ. However the swaths of fabric that frame the central medallion reach down to each of the apostles' heads framing them in such a way as to appear as pseudo-haloes. Although the apostles are not given the honour of the halo, their importance is reinforced to the viewer through the writing of their names. Andrea Agnellus describes the mosaic in his chapter on the bishop Neon: 'He [Neon] decorated the baptisteries of the Ursiana church most beautifully: he set up in mosaic and gold tesserae the images of the apostles and their names in the vault, he girded the side-walls with different types of stones.'<sup>227</sup>

One significant difference in the iconography of the two baptisteries is the lack of a throne in the Neonian mosaic. Although the image of the throne with the cross resting on top of the cushion is present at the Neonian baptistery, it is relegated to a lower level of the mosaic decoration (fig. 25). It has been suggested this is due to the lack of ability of the mosaicist to evenly divide the medallion into thirteen equal partitions.<sup>228</sup> While the iconography of the two baptisteries is similar (and therefore dispels any notions of Theodoric's baptistery providing us with unequivocal evidence of Arian iconography), it is the orientation of the mosaics that is the major difference between the two baptisteries.

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<sup>227</sup> Agn. LPR; Eng. trans. D.M Deliyannis, 2004, 125.

<sup>228</sup> Wharton, 1987, 370.



In the Arian baptistery the baptismal scene is oriented not towards the congregation, but instead faces the bishop performing the service (i.e. the mosaic would be easiest to view for a spectator standing in the east of the apse facing west). Annabel Wharton has suggested this orientation is deliberate, and transforms the space into an interactive stage, one where the bishop becomes the Baptist.<sup>229</sup> In the Neonian baptistery the mosaic is oriented so that those being baptised and the spectators in the congregation have an optimal viewpoint.<sup>230</sup> Just as some scholars who debated the inferiority of the craftsmanship of one mosaic over the other, some have suggested that the Arian baptistery was a poor copy of the Neonian mosaic and the orientation discrepancy was due to the lack of skill of the artisans working on the Arian monument.<sup>231</sup>

Whether or not the quality of mosaic is higher in one baptistery or the other is not the issue at stake here. What is worthy of note is the scope of Theodoric's building programme. The baptistery demonstrates Theodoric's desire to elevate Gothic Ravenna to a status worthy of the ruler of Rome. Johnson contextualizes the baptistery within Theodoric's building programme as a physical manifestation of his political ideology. He states: 'This complex offers an insight into Theodoric's religious politics. Tolerant of the Orthodox, he attempted to make the buildings of the Arians equal to those of the Orthodox church, thus playing down

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<sup>229</sup> Wharton, 1987, 370.

<sup>230</sup> Wharton, 1987, 370.

<sup>231</sup> Most notably Nordhagen, 1980 and Wood, 2007, 251.

the differences between the two sects.<sup>232</sup> However, when considering Theodoric's ambitions, outward displays of imperial connections as demonstrated by the mosaics at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo and the removal of the same mosaics after the Gothic Wars, it becomes difficult to contextualize the baptistery as an act of religious and political benevolence as Theodoric seems to be communicating Gothic power as opposed to Gothic equality.

Although we do not have the luxury of viewing the baptistery as it was intended when first consecrated, the similarities between the Arian baptistery and the Neonian baptistery could be explained through the lens of competition rather than tolerance. While this framework does not necessarily dismiss the notion that Theodoric was religiously tolerant, it simply offers a more complex role for Theodoric's building programme to play in Gothic struggle for power with Byzantium. His buildings and mosaics communicated a message of cultural equality in a visual language that was easily interpreted by both western and eastern viewers.

## **THEODORIC'S MAUSOLEUM**

While Theodoric's intended final resting place does not have any mosaics or interior decoration to compare to the Arian baptistery and Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, the mausoleum, through its architecture, communicates a message of power and authority that reinforces the concept of Theodoric's building

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<sup>232</sup> Johnson, 1988, 79.

programme and reflects his imperial ambitions and protestations. Never completed, Theodoric's mausoleum stands on the outskirts of the city of Ravenna proper and remains to this day an enigma for architectural historians.<sup>233</sup>

Scholars argue as to whether it is solely based on Roman imperial precedents, or whether, because of its divergences from the Roman model, it is a true expression of Gothic architecture. However, scholars such as Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis fail to attempt the comparison between Theodoric's mausoleum and that of Constantine's in Constantinople.<sup>234</sup> While there are unique characteristics of Theodoric's mausoleum compared to contemporary mausoleums found in Ravenna (such as being a free-standing, two-storey building rather than attached to a larger building and single storey, and ten sided rather than eight), it is considered as an attempt by Theodoric to communicate a certain level of authority similar to that of Constantine.<sup>235</sup> Gothic, Roman or Byzantine, Theodoric's mausoleum is an impressive, massive structure that made an appropriate resting place for an emperor.

The Roman comparisons to Theodoric's mausoleum made by architectural historians have been many. Most note the influence of previous Roman style buildings such as Diocletian's mausoleum in Split (built c.300), and Constantine's mausoleum in Constantinople.<sup>236</sup> Much like its imperial predecessors, Theodoric's mausoleum is centrally-planned, contained a dome, and composed of

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<sup>233</sup> Johnson, 1988, 93.

<sup>234</sup> Deliyannis, 2010.

<sup>235</sup> Johnson, 1988, 93.

<sup>236</sup> Johnson, 1988, 93, and Mango, 1993, 54.

two levels, the upper level being smaller than the lower. Theodoric's mausoleum further resembled Roman imperial buildings by including a peristyle arcade on the upper level (however this arcade has long been destroyed).<sup>237</sup> Theodoric's architects also used stone masonry, which in context to the other buildings in Ravenna is unique (most contemporary buildings used brick), which some scholars believe to be an allusion to imperial prototypes.<sup>238</sup>

There are also slight differences that set Theodoric's mausoleum apart from the aforementioned Roman counterparts that have attributed to the confusion in placing his monument within a definitive architectural style. The exterior of Theodoric's mausoleum is decidedly Roman, with a few minor exceptions that without close study would likely go unnoticed. The dome is comprised of one massive solid piece of Istrian stone.<sup>239</sup> The single piece of stone is a departure from typical Roman prototypes and has been described as being reflective of a Germanic building heritage.<sup>240</sup> The inclusion of a 'curious tong' decorative frieze that wraps around the exterior of the dome is another inclusion that is outside of the norm of Roman models.<sup>241</sup> The pattern has been described as resembling the interlace patterns found in contemporaneous Germanic jewellery.<sup>242</sup> It is this feature that has caused some scholars to believe

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<sup>237</sup> Swift, 1951, 39.

<sup>238</sup> Johnson, 1988, 93.

<sup>239</sup> Johnson, 1988, 93.

<sup>240</sup> Krautheimer, 1965, 192.

<sup>241</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 132.

<sup>242</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 132.

that the design was to reflect Theodoric's Germanic heritage and political ideology.<sup>243</sup>

Some believe that the differences found in the upper and lower halves of the mausoleum provides another example of Theodoric's building programme perpetuating *civilitas*. The bottom half of the mausoleum is completely reliant upon Roman precedents while the upper half is more inventive. This discrepancy in styles has led to the hypothesis that the mausoleum is a reflection of a syncretic culture – one that honours Roman institutions while also integrating Gothic elements.<sup>244</sup>

While the lower half does resemble Roman precedents, Theodoric's mausoleum displays unique features that some believe reference his culture, court and ideology. Theodoric's mausoleum is ten-sided which has been speculated to be in reference to the works of Boethius, a prominent intellectual member of Theodoric's court.<sup>245</sup> Having studied Pythagorean and Neo-Pythagorean theory, Boethius would have been exposed to concepts of numbers and how they related to geometrical forms.<sup>246</sup> A letter from Cassiodorus to Boethius demonstrates this philosophical notion by stating that the number ten was a symbol for heaven.<sup>247</sup> Therefore would be appropriate for a mausoleum to be built with this reference in mind.<sup>248</sup> If this is indeed true, then it would certainly

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<sup>243</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 134.

<sup>244</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 134.

<sup>245</sup> Boethius' role in his court and subsequent execution, while having a significant impact on Theodoric's later reign, lies outside the scope of this dissertation. Deliyannis, 2010, 128.

<sup>246</sup> Marenbon, 2003, 15.

<sup>247</sup> Cass. Var. I.10. Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 150.

<sup>248</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 128.

be a departure from Roman tradition, and would be more reflective of Theodoric's ideology.<sup>249</sup>

The upper half of the mausoleum contains twelve projecting spurs with inscriptions of the apostles carved on them. Worthy of note are the actual names carved on the dome. The names of the apostles are unusual and do not correspond to names traditionally used in the west.<sup>250</sup> The lack of the names James and Judas have led some to believe that they were written under some eastern influence.<sup>251</sup> Although without the names of the apostles expressly indicated, the number of niches is significant of itself, as it would suggest a strong link to the desire to evoke an apostolic tradition in a similar practice to emperors in Constantinople.<sup>252</sup> However, this detail does not offer us much insight into the actual mausoleum and it has been hypothesized that the names were a later, medieval addition.<sup>253</sup>

The interior of the mausoleum is devoid of any large-scale mosaic programme such as those found in Theodoric's other monuments. There is a small decorative cornice that surrounds the upper portion of the walls where the vaults meet the wall, but otherwise the interior of both the upper and the lower portions of the mausoleum are plain.<sup>254</sup> In the upper level there is a large porphyry 'bathtub' or sarcophagus that dominates the room (fig. 26). It is thought

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<sup>249</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 135.

<sup>250</sup> Mango, 1993, 54.

<sup>251</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 135.

<sup>252</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 135.

<sup>253</sup> Mango, 1993, 54.

<sup>254</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 129.

that the sarcophagus contained the body of Theodoric at one point in time, however it is impossible to say with certainty whether or not this was the case.<sup>255</sup>

Agnellus described the tomb in the chapter devoted to John I:

Theodoric, however, after thirty-four years of his reign, began to close the churches of God and to restrict Christians, and suddenly incurring a flux of the bowels, he dies, and was buried in the mausoleum which he ordered built outside the Artemedorian Gate, which up to today we call At the Lighthouse, where there is the monasterium of St. Mary which is called At the Tomb of King Theodoric. But it seems to me that he has been cast out of his tomb, and that very marvellous vessel lying there, made of porphyry stone, was placed before the entrance of that monasterium.<sup>256</sup>

As Agnellus' description illustrates, not much is known about the tomb at Theodoric's death. We know, because of this description and the three hundred year difference between the two, that Theodoric's body was moved at an early date.<sup>257</sup> We can also say with certainty that a porphyry vessel has been present at the mausoleum since the above description was written. Whether or not the porphyry vessel actually contained the body of Theodoric, we do not know.

There is even debate as to where, during its brief stay, Theodoric's body would have been located in the mausoleum. Deliyannis supposes that the upper level of the mausoleum provided the proper setting, as it would have been safe from flooding.<sup>258</sup> The upper level would have provided a safe resting place for the body (the upper level was not connected to the lower by a staircase thus leaving

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<sup>255</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 132.

<sup>256</sup> Agnellus, trans. by Deliyannis, 2004, 143.

<sup>257</sup> Deliyannis places the writing of the *LPR* circa 827 given the biographical information provided by Agnellus in the text. Agnellus, trans. by Deliyannis, 2004, 7.

<sup>258</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 132.

the upper level inaccessible) whereas the lower level could have acted as a memorial chapel for grievers.<sup>259</sup>

However, Johnson argues that the lower level would have been a more appropriate location for the body of Theodoric. The lower level of the mausoleum has a distinctively different floor plan from the upper level. The upper level stays true to the centrally planned nature of Roman mausoleums, while the lower plan resembles more contemporary mausoleums. The lower level floor plan is cruciform in shape, much like the floor plan of Galla Placidia's so-called mausoleum built c. 450 located just a few miles southwest.<sup>260</sup> Johnson mentions that the lower level of the mausoleum is not as devoid of detail as most scholars claim it to be. He notes a shell motif that runs along the interior of the lower level of the mausoleum (however, he provides no images of these shells and no other publication provides visual evidence).<sup>261</sup> The shell motif would be an appropriate adornment for a funerary context as it is found throughout Roman and Early Christian funerary art. The shell, found on Roman urns, headstones and sarcophagi have been suggested to refer to an afterlife or a 'heavenly grotto'.<sup>262</sup> Monuments such as the Velletri sarcophagus (c. 150) and the urn of Lucius Volusius Diodorus (c. 160) display the varying uses of the shell such as the shell niche behind the bust of Lucius Volusius Diodorus and as a decorative element on the Velletri sarcophagus. While the inclusion of a shell motif is indicative of a

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<sup>259</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, 132.

<sup>260</sup> Johnson, 1988, 93.

<sup>261</sup> Johnson, 1988, 93.

<sup>262</sup> Thomas, 2011, 409-410.



funerary context of the lower chamber of Theodoric's mausoleum, it does not sufficiently prove the location of the tomb.<sup>263</sup>

However, if Theodoric's mausoleum followed not only contemporary mausoleums such as Galla Placidia's mausoleum, but imperial Roman ones as well, then Theodoric's body would have been located in the lower level of the mausoleum.<sup>264</sup>

Johnson concludes his discussion of Theodoric's mausoleum by linking the spurs of the twelve apostles on the dome to Theodoric's political ambitions and connection to Byzantium. He suggests that in having the twelve apostles effectively surrounding him for eternity that Theodoric was emulating Byzantine emperors such as Constantine who in order to follow the life of Christ, constantly surrounded himself with twelve companions.<sup>265</sup>

While the mausoleum is difficult to ascribe perfectly to one distinct influence or style, and how this building reflects his political ideology is debatable, allusions to imperial precedents are obvious. Johnson states:

His two most significant buildings, the palace and mausoleum at Ravenna, were definitely modeled on imperial prototypes, a fact inherent in the buildings themselves. Ambassadors moving from capital to capital could not have helped but notice the similarities of the Ravenna palace with its prototype in Constantinople. Nor could the association of Theodoric's tomb with imperial mausolea escape notice.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Johnson, 1988, 94.

<sup>264</sup> This is keeping in practice with other Roman mausoleums such as the mausoleum of Gallienus and Maxentius. Johnson, 1988, 94.

<sup>265</sup> Mark J. Johnson attributes the anecdote of Theodoric surrounding himself with twelve members of his court in emulation of Christ to Cassiodorus. Johnson, 1988, 95.

<sup>266</sup> Johnson, 1988, 96.

Cassiodorus makes many references to Theodoric's desire not only to preserve, but also to emulate and propagate past Roman ideals. Whether it be political ideology or architecture, the admiration Theodoric held for imperial Rome was clear. In a letter addressed to the Prefect of Rome with regards to the appointment of an architect, Theodoric's desire for *renovatio* is made evident:

It is desirable that the necessary repairs to this forest of walls and population of statues which make up Rome should be in the hands of a learned man who will make the new work harmonise with the old. Therefore for this Indiction we desire your Greatness to appoint A B Architect of the City of Rome. Let him read the books of the ancients; but he will find more in this City than in his books. Statues of men, showing the muscles swelling with effort, the nerves in tension, the whole man looking as if he had grown rather than been cast in metal. Statues of horses, full of fire, with the curved nostril, with rounded tightly-knit limbs, with ears laid back – you would think the creature longed for the race, though you know that the metal moves not. This art of statuary the Etruscans are said to have practised first in Italy; posterity has embraced it, and given to the City an artificial population almost equal to its natural one. The ancients speak of the wonders of the world..., but this one of the City of Rome surpasses them all. It had need to be a learned man who is charged with the care of upholding all these works; else, in his despair, he will deem himself the man of stone, and the statues about him the truly living men.<sup>267</sup>

Theodoric's desire for a *renovatio* seems abundantly clear from the above passage. However, this passage, and all others in a similar vein to this one in Cassiodorus' *Variae*, is in reference to the city of Rome. Can the same ideology that scholars have long thought to have defined not only Theodoric's mausoleum, but also his entire building programme, be extended to Ravenna?

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<sup>267</sup> Cass. *Var.*, VII.15; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 215.

Theodoric was well aware of the power the Roman Senatorial class held over his success as a King in Italy and frequently flattered them in his correspondence.<sup>268</sup> In a letter to the Senate with regards to the recently deceased *Quaestor*, Decoratus, flattery abounds:

When he became *Quaestor* he distinguished himself by his excellent qualities. He stood beside us, under the light of our Genius, bold but reverent; silent at the right time, fluent when there was need of fluency. He kept our secrets as if he had forgotten them; he remembered every detail of our orders as if he had written them down. Thus was he ever an eminent lightener of our labours.<sup>269</sup>

While it would seem, as evidenced by such passages in the *Variae*, that Theodoric held the Senate in high regard, Hodgkin notes that ‘...it is difficult to say where well-acted courtesy ended, and where the desire to secure such legal power as yet remained to a venerable assembly began’.<sup>270</sup> Therefore, Theodoric’s desire to preserve Rome could be seen as a political strategy rather than a pervasive ideology that can be applied to the buildings he erected in Ravenna and subsequently the viewing of his building programme becomes more complex and complicated.

Theodoric patronised a visual culture that portrayed ruler and courtiers with Gothic physiognomic attributes (see fig.22 and fig. 23) in a media associated with Byzantium (mosaics as seen in Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo and the Arian Baptistery) and in building types that emulated earlier Roman imperial precedents.

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<sup>268</sup> In the introduction to Cassiodorus’ *Variae*, Hodgkin notes that the tone of Theodoric’s correspondence with the Senate of Rome was one of respect and flattery. Hodgkin, 1886, 26.

<sup>269</sup> Cass. *Var.*, V.III-IV; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 265.

<sup>270</sup> Hodgkin, 1886, 26.

Theodoric's cultural programme communicates similar messages to those found in other imperial commissions in Italy (such as the Neonian baptistery and various imperial mausoleums), and it is through this syncretic visual culture one could argue that Theodoric identified himself as an imperial power and not a passive placeholder for the emperor in Byzantium.

The tension embodied in Theodoric's commissions is made evident through the alterations made by Bishop Agnellus and the increasingly volatile relationship between the Goths and Byzantium that culminated in the Gothic Wars (535-554) but began with Theodoric and his contestation for the title of King of the Romans.

Mark J. Johnson has described Theodoric as being an enlightened ruler whose commissions were influenced and shaped by an ideology of *civilitas* and tolerance. However, some scholars have noted that this platform of tolerance was not adhered to throughout the entirety of Theodoric's reign. Patrick Amory states: 'I do not agree that at all times during his [Theodoric's] reign he conceived of his kingdom as a new and radically different ethno-social construction', and notes that the concept of *civilitas* appears at a much lower frequency in government documents.<sup>271</sup> What replaced the rhetoric of *civilitas* and co-existence was a stronger sense of Gothic history and independence from the Romans.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Amory, 1997, 45.

<sup>272</sup> Amory, 1997, 45.

There are letters written by Cassiodorus on behalf of Theodoric that confirm the idea of *civilitas* and a tolerance of Roman customs, but those letters are confined to a specific readership. They were royal letters intended for the upper echelons of the Italian population.<sup>273</sup> However, in letters written to other barbarian leaders, the emphasis of a peaceful co-existence with the native Italians is no longer present, let alone stressed, and Theodoric's tone changes significantly.<sup>274</sup> The Gothic military emphasis becomes more evident as the importance and prestige of the Gothic military tradition is valorized.<sup>275</sup>

Theodoric's mausoleum, Arian baptistery and Sant' Apollinare Nuovo are no doubt a testament to the ideals of a King who initiated a building programme unlike any of his predecessors; however the messages communicated by these buildings are not benevolent, but competitive.<sup>276</sup>

## COMPETITIVE SHARING

Much of the previous scholarship has viewed Theodoric's building programme through a static lens, thereby classifying his buildings simply as reflections of a singular ideology. However, Theodoric's building programme becomes more complicated and suggests a more significant role for architecture and its decoration played for Early Christian rulers when considering Amory's

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<sup>273</sup> Amory, 1997, 45.

<sup>274</sup> Amory, 1997, 45.

<sup>275</sup> Amory, 1997, 45.

<sup>276</sup> Johnson notes that one must go back to the reign of Honorius (395-423) to find a suitable comparison to a ruler whose building programme matched the scale of Theodoric's. Johnson, 1988, 96.

interpretation of Cassiodorus' *Variae* (and the possible implications for Theodoric's ambitions and level of tolerance not only for the Italians, but for the Byzantines as well) and when applying Hayden's approach to syncretism.

Although not all aspects of the examples discussed in Hayden's article can be applied to Theodoric's building programme, a basic framework can be discerned and applied to fifth-century Italy in order to discuss the possibility of syncretism occurring out of competition and not tolerance. The framework can be viewed as such: syncretism can be viewed as a cultural output of competition (rather than respect) between two groups. Syncretism displayed in monuments such as Sant' Apollinare Nuovo should be viewed as a contested space, as the syncretism present is the result of a ruler who is asserting his equality by adopting another visual language. This framework can therefore be used to determine if other syncretic visual representations represent more than an aesthetic movement of iconography and artistic practices, but rather signal competition between two cultures.

As Hayden's two case studies suggest, the syncretism displayed on sites or buildings of religious significance as a result of two cultures competing for control of said site frequently results in conflict. In the Madhi shrine case, the conflict played itself out over a series of legal battles (interspersed with the occasional violent skirmish); however not all cases end with such civility.<sup>277</sup> As in his case study in the Balkans, the transformation of multiple Christian sites into syncretic spaces displaying both Christian and Muslim cultural influences is a

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<sup>277</sup> Hayden, 2002, 211-212.

precursor to violence in the form of bombings and outright war.<sup>278</sup> Although Hayden's article then goes on to discuss the implications for twentieth-century democracy and the vestiges of colonialism and how they can help or hinder governments struggling with two competing cultures, the fundamental concept of Hayden's 'Competitive Sharing' theory is applicable to Theodoric's building programme.

The notion of Theodoric championing an ideology rooted in tolerance and past Roman ideals such as *civilitas*, and assumptions that his building programme was an artistic manifestation of that ideology has been the prevailing discourse in scholarship. Theodoric's adoption of Byzantine techniques, iconography, and architecture has been described as a strategy not to compete with the existing populace's belief system.<sup>279</sup> Subsequently, the visual culture that was produced by Theodoric's court has been relegated to a passive production of a static and homogeneous political ideology.<sup>280</sup> However, the prevailing discourse on Theodoric's political ideology has been challenged by scholars such as Patrick Amory. According to Amory's challenge, and framed within an anthropological theory on the relationship between syncretism and tolerance, we should expect that Theodoric's building programme was not syncretic due to an active form of

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<sup>278</sup> Hayden 2002, 213-215.

<sup>279</sup> Johnson, 1988.

<sup>280</sup> See Johnson, 1988.

tolerance (i.e. an embracing of the 'Other'), but syncretic as a result of an expression of competition with Byzantium.<sup>281</sup>

## CIVILITAS IDEOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, Patrick Amory noted that the platform of tolerance that has come to define Theodoric's reign in previous scholarship was not a fundamental ideology adhered to throughout the entirety of Theodoric's rule. Amory relies heavily on the letters contained in Cassiodorus' *Variae* as evidence that Theodoric employed the *civilitas* rhetoric only at specific moments. Amory observes that the concept of *civilitas* is reserved for a select audience and was not as much of a prevailing ideology as scholarship had previously claimed.<sup>282</sup>

The letter cited earlier addressed to the Jews of Genoa is an apt example of the *civilitas* ideology found dispersed throughout Cassiodorus' *Variae*. Theodoric often lauds the Roman institution of *civilitas* and charges the Italian elite of different religions to adhere to this ideological standard.<sup>283</sup> However, in letters addressed to fellow Goths, the rhetoric of the letters alters.

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<sup>281</sup> As discussed previously, the syncretic aspects of Theodoric's cultural programme could potentially be viewed as tolerance, however in my opinion, this viewpoint is inaccurate due to the more recent scholarship of Patrick Amory. Therefore, while there is not necessarily an iconography of competition versus tolerance, the supporting evidence found in a culture's political ideology and social surroundings can inform us as to a more accurate interpretation of iconography and overall cultural programme.

<sup>282</sup> Amory, 1997, 45.

<sup>283</sup> Cass., *Var.*, IV.33; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 251.



For example, in a letter written to the king of the Heruli, adopting him as a son at arms, Theodoric no longer emulates Roman customs, but displays strong Gothic pride:

It has been always held amongst the nations a great honour to be adopted as 'filius per arma.' Our children by nature often disappoint our expectations, but to say that we esteem a man worthy to be our son is indeed praise. As such, after the manner of the nations and in manly fashion, do we now beget you.

We send you horses, spears, and shields, and the rest of the trappings of the warrior; but above all we send you our judgement that you are worthy to be our son. Highest among the nations will you be considered who are thus approved by the mind of Theodoric.

And though the son should die rather than see his father suffer aught of harm, we in adopting you are also throwing round you the shield of our protection. The Heruli have known the value of Gothic help in old times, and that help will now be yours. A and B, the bearers of these letters, will explain to you in Gothic (*patrio sermone*) the rest of our message to you.<sup>284</sup>

These letters are not addressed by Johnson, and therefore he is more willing work under the premise that Theodoric maintained the ideology of *civilitas* throughout his rule. However, when working under this premise, a certain amount of stasis is presumed which is precisely what Hayden warned against. To regard Theodoric's building programme solely within the limiting ideology professed in letters to a select audience rather than to view the buildings as temporal manifestations of relations between cultures is a mistake.

The relationship between Theodoric and Byzantium was not one that is easily defined and subsequently neither is Theodoric's title in Italy. Amory notes

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<sup>284</sup> Cass., *Var.*, IV.II; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 236.

that Theodoric's legitimization as king and relations with Byzantium were 'hazy' and that allusions to Theodoric as emperor occurred with frequency throughout his reign.<sup>285</sup> Amory argues that even *civilitas* had imperial connotations, as *civilitas* was associated with imperial virtue and the positive traits of an emperor who does not overstep his rule.<sup>286</sup> Andrew Wallace-Hadrill closely examined the tradition of *civilitas* and its employment by Roman emperors. He noted that *civilitas* was used by some Roman emperors as an empty gesture, knowing the importance the concept was held in the senatorial classes of Rome.<sup>287</sup> No matter if *civilitas* was employed with good intentions or just a result of an emperor posturing to his people, the word was an established part of imperial rhetoric since the second century B.C.E.<sup>288</sup> While Theodoric may have employed *civilitas* in earnest, given Amory's interpretation of the letters written by Cassiodorus and the shift in rhetoric when addressing different audiences, it could be considered that Theodoric's use of *civilitas* was another communicative strategy.

If we interpret Theodoric's employment of *civilitas* in his correspondence to the Italian elite as not necessarily posturing, but as a way of communicating to the Italian population that he possessed the traits of a good emperor (in the fashion of many preceding Roman emperors), it complicates the interpretation of the message which Theodoric conveyed as a ruler and as a patron. This interpretation further supports the idea that Theodoric not necessarily a tolerant

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<sup>285</sup> Amory, 1997, 58.

<sup>286</sup> Amory, 1997, 58.

<sup>287</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 1982, 45.

<sup>288</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 1982, 43.

ruler who remained loyal to the emperor in Constantinople, but that he envisioned himself to be in competition with the emperors in Byzantium.

Taking the above factors into consideration, then it would seem problematic to regard Theodoric's reign as characterised simply by benevolent tolerance, and the interpretation of Theodoric's building programme becomes more complicated. What becomes plausible is a building programme that reflects a foreign ruler attempting to assert his authority through the implementation of imperial tropes that would have been easily interpreted by his chosen audience.

As previously mentioned, Theodoric's building programme has been discussed as an example of a western ruler influenced by the legacy of the Roman empire and the influence of contemporary Byzantine cultural trends. Theodoric is often the starting point in the discussion of western rulers and the transmission of Byzantine iconography and materials into the west. While it would be imprudent to ignore the influence Byzantium and Rome had on Theodoric's building programme (as we have seen, the evidence of these influences is plentiful) it is the motivation behind using such a visual language and the role that architecture and its decoration played that should be questioned.

As Mark J. Johnson notes, much of the literature surrounding Theodoric's monuments in Ravenna is confined to the description of the buildings themselves rather than to a consideration of Theodoric as a patron.<sup>289</sup> Major works on Byzantine art and Early Christendom, which have discussed Theodoric's

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<sup>289</sup> Johnson, 1988, 73.

monuments as a means of filling in the gaps of knowledge for lost Byzantine works of art, do not question why a western ruler would be employing a visual language that was not his own.<sup>290</sup> While a handful of publications do address the issue of the transmission of Byzantine iconography to the court of Theodoric and how Theodoric's political ideology could have influenced this transmission, these publications do not examine the possibility of syncretism as a result of anything but tolerance and admiration.<sup>291</sup>

If we consider Theodoric's use of a syncretic visual language in light of Hayden's competitive sharing theory, Theodoric's building programme supports the argument put forth by Patrick Amory that Theodoric's reign was more complicated and less tolerant than was previously believed. It is at least arguable that the syncretism - and perceived copying of Byzantine and Roman iconography, materials and architectural forms - illustrated by Theodoric's building programme is not borne out of tolerance, but out of competition.

*Civilitas* ideology does appear in numerous occasions throughout the *Variae* and Theodoric's actions do attest to his respect of past Roman culture and therefore its application seems, on the surface, to be apt. In a letter addressing

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<sup>290</sup> For example, Richard Krautheimer's 1965 publication *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* devotes three pages to all of the monuments in Ravenna (with the exception of San Vitale). Krautheimer does discuss the possible Roman influences on Theodoric's mausoleum and does make allusions to Theodoric's *civilitas* ideology, but does not explore the issue further. Otto Demus' 1970 publication *Byzantine Art and the West* discusses Theodoric even less than Krautheimer, limiting his discussion on Theodoric to his influence on Charlemagne. While this is not necessarily a critique of these two publications, it merely serves as a indication of the lack of consideration of the motivations behind the transmission of Byzantine iconography and therefore the lack of importance placed on the role of art and communication.

<sup>291</sup> von Simson, 1948, Verzone, 1967 and Johnson, 1988 are standouts in the literature as they all explore the interconnectedness of politics and art but fail to fully acknowledge the political environment in which Theodoric's buildings were erected.

the criteria for the hiring of the palace architect, Theodoric (on behalf of Cassiodorus) states:

Much do we delight in seeing the greatness of our kingdom imaged forth in the splendour of our great palace. Thus do the ambassadors of foreign nations admire our power, for at first sight one naturally believes that as is the house so is the inhabitant.

The Cyclopes invented the art of working in metal, which then passed over from Sicily to Italy. Take then for this Indication the care of our palace, thus receiving the power of transmitting your fame to a remote posterity which shall admire your workmanship. See that your new work harmonises well with the old. Study Euclid – get his diagrams well into your mind; study Archimedes and Metrobius.

When we are thinking of rebuilding a city, or of founding a fort or a general's quarters, we shall rely upon you to express our thoughts on paper [in an architect's design]. The builder of walls, the carver of marbles, the caster of brass, the vaulter of arches, the plasterer, the worker in mosaic, all come to you for orders, and you are expected to have a wise answer for each. But, then, if you direct them rightly, while theirs is the work yours is all the glory.

Above all things, dispense honestly what we give you for the workmen's wages; for the labourer who is at ease about his victuals works all the better.

As a mark of your high dignity you bear a golden wand, and amidst the numerous throng of servants walk first before the royal footsteps [i.e. last in the procession and immediately before the king], that even by your nearness to our person it may be seen that you are the man whom we have entrusted the care of our palaces.<sup>292</sup>

In this passage we can see the influence that past Roman traditions had on Theodoric and what many would point to as an example of Theodoric and his tolerance. However, there is a tone to this passage that is frequently overlooked. While Theodoric never attained the title of 'emperor' it would be remiss to ignore that this was an ambition of his. The failure to acknowledge this fact, combined

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<sup>292</sup> Cass., *Var.*, VII.V; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 323.

with the *civilitas* trope, has led to viewing of Theodoric's building programme as one that aimed to downplay the differences between the Arian Goths and Latin and Orthodox Christians. However, as the next section demonstrates, Theodoric's ambitions would suggest that he was not concerned with downplaying the differences between the Goths and the Byzantines but more with Gothic supremacy.

The evidence for Theodoric's ambitions to become emperor can be found in the very text that scholars draw upon for evidence of Theodoric's tolerance. In a letter written to Herminafid, King of the Thuringians, Theodoric states: 'Desiring to unite you to ourselves by the bonds of kindred, we bestow upon you our niece [Amalabirga, daughter of Theodoric's sister] so that you, who descend from a Royal stock, may now far more conspicuously shine by the splendour of Imperial blood.'<sup>293</sup> Possibly downplaying its significance, Hodgkin describes this passage '...as showing that Theodoric did in a sense consider himself to be filling the place of the Emperors in the West'.<sup>294</sup> One could argue that this passage demonstrates that Theodoric considered himself to be an outright emperor.

The relations between Theodoric and Byzantium can be best described as tentative. While some believe Theodoric was completely indoctrinated to the Roman way of life during his stay in Constantinople and maintained a position of clear subordination throughout his reign in Italy, others suggest that a more complicated relationship existed between Theodoric and Byzantium and the last

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<sup>293</sup> Cass., *Var.*, IV.I; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 235.

<sup>294</sup> Hodgkin, 1886, 235.

years of Theodoric's reign were a testament to the deterioration of the relationship.<sup>295</sup>

Over the course of Theodoric's lifetime he came into contact with a total of four Byzantine emperors: Leo I (457-474), Zeno (474-491), Anastasios (491-518), and Justin (518-527) and to a lesser extent the usurper Basiliskos who reigned for one year in 475. As a member of Leo's court at a young age, we are told by Jordanes that Theodoric was well liked and was embraced by Leo. Theodoric's relationship with Leo's successor, Zeno, was far more complicated.

As mentioned earlier, the struggle between Theodoric and Theodoric Strabo for Zeno's favour resulted in a victory for our Theodoric. The two maintained a strained relationship throughout Zeno's rule. Although Theodoric attained the position of consul at Zeno's court in 484 and the emperor even erected an equestrian statue in Theodoric's honour in Constantinople, some suggest that Zeno viewed Theodoric as a threat and sent him to Italy as a way of keeping Theodoric at arm's length.<sup>296</sup>

The prevailing understanding of Theodoric and Zeno's arrangement for Theodoric to overthrow Odoacer and place himself as the emperor's viceroy is that it was Zeno's idea and he fully supported Theodoric's rise to power in Italy.<sup>297</sup> In contrast, John Moorhead argues this could not possibly have happened as

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<sup>295</sup> Scholars such as Lee, 1991, Krautheimer, 1965, Johnson, 1988 and von Simson, 1987 to a lesser extent stress the Romanization of Theodoric's rule. Amory, 1997, Moorehead, 1992, Wolfram, 1988 and Wickham, 1981 suggest a more complicated relationship.

<sup>296</sup> Verzone, 1967, 50.

<sup>297</sup> Jordanes records in the *Getica* that Zeno encouraged Theodoric as king and even suggested he become more integrated with the Italian regal customs of dress in order to reinforce his status amongst the local population. Jord. *Getica*; Eng. trans. C.C. Mierow, 1966, 295.

Zeno died well before this interaction supposedly took place.<sup>298</sup> Moorhead further challenges the arrangement by questioning whether or not the possibility of Theodoric ruling Italy was discussed between Zeno and Theodoric before Theodoric left for Italy in 488.<sup>299</sup>

Theodoric was quick to send embassies to Constantinople seeking imperial support of his campaign once he entered Italy.<sup>300</sup> The first embassy, sent in 490, was unsuccessful due to the timing of the embassy's arrival and the emperor's death.<sup>301</sup> The second embassy, sent in the hopes that Zeno's successor, Anastasios, would recognize Theodoric as the ruler of Italy, is more difficult to date.<sup>302</sup> Although we do not know the precise date of the second embassy, we do know that it, too, was unsuccessful. Anastasios, preoccupied with papal issues, delayed in responding to the Gothic embassy.<sup>303</sup> It was not until Theodoric sent a third embassy to Constantinople in 497 that Anastasios responded, sending back the ornaments of the palace that Odoacer had previously returned, thereby acknowledging Theodoric's rule.<sup>304</sup> To what extent Anastasios acknowledged Theodoric's rule is unknown, but the fact remains that Theodoric had been acting as a regent before imperial acknowledgement.<sup>305</sup>

It is not until the reign of Justin I that relations between Byzantium and Theodoric become more than strained. While Theodoric enjoyed a certain level

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<sup>298</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 38.

<sup>299</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 36.

<sup>300</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 36.

<sup>301</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 36.

<sup>302</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 37.

<sup>303</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 37.

<sup>304</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 38.

<sup>305</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 39.



of favour with the new emperor, as his nephew Eutharic was appointed as consul to Justin, the rising tensions with Byzantium and the Vandals in Africa (with their pro-Byzantine leader Hilderic) led to the deterioration of relations.<sup>306</sup> It is recorded in the *Variae* that Theodoric was mobilizing and raising a fleet that could serve as a potential defence against the Greeks or the Vandals.<sup>307</sup>

Justin and his nephew Justinian were ardent Orthodox Christians and went to great lengths in order to unify the Byzantine Empire under Orthodoxy. Justin enacted a severe anti-Arian legislation that further increased tensions between the Goths and the Byzantines.<sup>308</sup> Theodoric, too, began his own persecution of other religions through a series of hostile acts against non-Arians. Agnellus reports: 'Theodoric, however, after thirty-four years of his reign, began to close the Churches of God and to restrict Christians...'<sup>309</sup> The final years of Theodoric's reign are pock-marked with disappointments, paranoia and the unravelling of relationships. The slaying of Boethius, the imprisonment and murder of his sister Amalafrida at the hands of her husband and once ally to Theodoric, Hilderic, and losing the confidence of the senate in Rome contributed to undermine the tenuous hold the Goths had on Italy.<sup>310</sup>

The religious zeal with which Justin and Justinian ruled combined with the lack of Gothic leadership led to a weakened Gothic state in Italy. Theodoric was unable to produce a male heir and his nephew, Eutharic, died before Theodoric.

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<sup>306</sup> Moorhead, 1992. 246.

<sup>307</sup> Cass. *Var.*, V.XVII; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 246.

<sup>308</sup> Verzone, 1967, 51.

<sup>309</sup> Agn. LPR.; Eng. trans. D.M. Deliyannis, 147.

<sup>310</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 247.

Theodoric was succeeded by his grandson, Athalaric, while his mother, Amalasiuntha, acted as regent.<sup>311</sup> In a letter to Justin, Amalasiuntha (on behalf of Cassiodorus) wrote: 'Love and friendship should pass from parents to their offspring, while hatred should be buried in the tomb.'<sup>312</sup> This would suggest that at the time of his death, Theodoric did not have a good relationship with Byzantium and that Amalasiuntha, possibly realizing her and her son's precarious situation in Ravenna, attempted to reach out to Byzantium to avoid the possibility of war.<sup>313</sup>

Needless to say, Amalasiuntha's overtures were not successful and Justinian, with the help of Belisarios, was able to regain Italy for Byzantium and Orthodoxy. While we may never know without a doubt what Theodoric's intentions were and whether he considered himself to be an emperor or not, there is a body of evidence that suggests a certain amount of competition between Byzantium and the Goths. The treatment of Theodoric's buildings (most notably Sant' Apollinare Nuovo) once Byzantium regained Italy suggests the high degree of competition between the two states. However, not so obvious, but following Hayden's Competitive Sharing theory, the syncretism displayed on the mosaics of Theodoric's building programme reflects the competition between Byzantium and the Goths. This potentially adds more support to theories such as Patrick Amory's that state that Theodoric's rule was not as harmonious and tolerant as previously suggested.

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<sup>311</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 254.

<sup>312</sup> Cass. *Var.*, VIII.II; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 326.

<sup>313</sup> Moorhead, 1992, 254.

## THEODORIC'S BUILDING PROGRAME AND COMPETITIVE SHARING

Of the buildings associated with Theodoric's building programme, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo provides us with the most obvious example of a building reflecting Hayden's competitive sharing theory. The syncretism displayed in the mosaics has been interpreted as admiration and tolerance by those such as Mark J. Johnson. However, a more nuanced interpretation can be discerned when applying Hayden's theory of competitive sharing.

Much like the shrine at Madhi, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo displays a syncretic visual language that would have communicated a message on some level to Roman, Byzantine and Gothic viewers. Some discuss that the Roman influences present at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo (specifically the christological scenes in the upper register in their content and style), while others note Byzantine influences (such as the presence of the lyre-throne and the Christ Pantokrator).<sup>314</sup> Although there exists debate on the exact sources, I agree with Johnson when he states that it is a combination of both Byzantine and Roman influences, they all agree on the unique nature of the figures of Christ that appear nowhere else in early Christian art.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> For Roman influences see; Bovini, 1960, Verzone, 1967, Milburn, 1988. For Byzantine influences see von Simson, 1987.

<sup>315</sup> Johnson, 1988, 86. There exist two other monuments that display two distinctly different portrayals of Christ. One being the previously discussed San Vitale, and another is a sarcophagus from Milan. However, the sarcophagus of Milan differs from Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in that it is portraying the entirety of Christ's life and therefore represents him as a child and young adult, whereas Sant' Apollinare Nuovo is unique in that it displays a different Christ within the same narrative context.

It can be argued that this syncretism, in a similar vein to Hayden's twentieth-century examples, is not born out of tolerance, but borne out of competition.<sup>316</sup> The Roman aspects of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo are relatively benign, suggesting that any Roman iconography was not controversial. Even the iconography that some scholars believe to be Arian – the so-called ageing Christ - remained untouched by Bishop Agnellus and his renovators. However, the Byzantine aspects of the church were more contested, indicating competition between the Goths and the Byzantines.

The systematic removal of any allusion to Gothic power in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo by Bishop Agnellus imparts tension to the mosaics of the lower register. The stripping of the figures of Theodoric's court while allowing their hands to remain as if it were a reminder of the past, serves as a violent reminder of the dominance of the Byzantines over the Goths. Bishop Agnellus' alterations were not contesting Theodoric's attempt to link the Goths to a Roman past, but rather to break the link between the Goths and a more contemporary claim to authority.

If we consider Theodoric's letters to other Goths, his tenuous relationship with Byzantium, and the treatment of his monuments after the Gothic Wars, the idea of Theodoric totally embracing the other falls short. As Hayden states in his paper, syncretism is endangered by equality. Theodoric, in his attempts to rule Italy and establish an imperial presence, built a church that visually communicated messages of authority and power. As with the shrine at Madhi, conflict arose between the two powers fighting for supremacy. Once Justinian

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<sup>316</sup> Hayden, 2002, 205.

regained control of Italy for Byzantium, the visual links to Gothic rule at Sant' Apollinare Nuovo were destroyed. The church no longer was a monument to Arian rule, but was altered to reflect the new dominant power, Byzantium. Therefore, it can be argued that in this situation, the use of a syncretic visual language was employed by Theodoric attempting to assert his power through the adoption of his competitor's visual language and not as an embrace of the other.

Although the other two extant buildings of Theodoric's building programme display a certain number of syncretic features, neither monuments' history is as well documented as Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, and therefore it is difficult to judge the changes made after the end of Gothic rule.

All that remains extant of the mosaics at the Arian baptistery from the time of Theodoric is the dome mosaic. The mosaics, as discussed earlier, are so similar to the mosaics at the Orthodox baptistery that they would not have posed any liturgical, ideological, or political conflicts once it was rededicated to St. Theodore of the Orthodox faith. We cannot speculate as to whether or not the baptistery would have contained any images linking the Goths and their authority in Italy and whether or not those were subsequently altered. However, we can re-contextualize the baptistery and its similarities to its Orthodox counterpart.

Certain aspects of the iconography of the Neonian baptistery are emphasized at the Arian baptistery, while others are diminished in importance. For example, the personification of the River Jordan is given more importance hierarchically in the Arian baptistery. The apostles at the Arian baptistery are

stripped of their individual identities with the exception of Peter and Paul who bear their trademark keys and the scroll. Another significant difference is the important placed on the empty throne or *hetoimasia*.

Flanked by Peter and Paul the throne is occupied by a cross with a purple pallium resting on its arms. While this image is present at the Neonian baptistery, it is given much more importance hierarchically at the Arian baptistery. The image of the *hetoimasia*, while appearing at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, was popular throughout Byzantium.<sup>317</sup> Images of the *hetoimasia* are varied, as sometimes the cross can be replaced with a book (signifying Christ) and from the twelfth century onwards it is often associated with scenes of the Last Judgement.<sup>318</sup> However, the image of the cross, seated upon the throne is frequently associated with ideas of triumph and the supremacy of Christianity.<sup>319</sup>

The placement of the throne has been suggested to be a reflection of the Arian faith as it takes focus away from the bishop and places it on Christ.<sup>320</sup> The Neonian baptistery's inclusion of the *hetoimasia* is placed in such a way that it references the bishop rather than Christ.<sup>321</sup> Its location in the middle-zone of the mosaics under the dome, a band of alternating thrones and liturgical fittings such as altars with the Gospels resting upon them, removes the throne from the sacred space above and places it closer to earth.<sup>322</sup> Placed within a more earth-bound

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<sup>317</sup> Schapiro, 1980, 105.

<sup>318</sup> Schiller, 1972, 186.

<sup>319</sup> Schiller, 1972, 186.

<sup>320</sup> Wharton, 1987, 373.

<sup>321</sup> Wharton, 1987, 373.

<sup>322</sup> Wharton, 1987, 373.

context, the thrones are surrounded by an architectural frame and are rendered three-dimensionally. The Arian throne, by contrast, is placed within the heavenly realm with the apostles.

Also, the thrones at the Neonian baptistery are not rendered quite as grand as their Arian counterpart. The cross is diminutive in comparison and the throne is not as encrusted with jewels. Given the differences of the location and interpretation of the *hetoimasia*, it appears that two different messages are being communicated.

Differences appear in the representation of the apostles as well. More emphasis is placed on Peter and Paul in the Arian Baptistery due to the fact that no other figure in the procession displays any defining characteristics (with the exception of the one anonymous apostle who seems to be displaying Gothic physiognomic attributes) suggesting their greater importance within the group. This interpretation of the differences between the two baptisteries conflicts with past arguments put forth contextualizing the baptistery within Theodoric's political ideology.

Johnson suggested that the similarity between the Arian and Neonian baptistery was a reflection of Theodoric's tolerance. He argues that Theodoric emulated the Neonian baptistery as a way of downplaying the differences between Arianism and Orthodoxy.<sup>323</sup> However, it could be argued that the syncretism of the Byzantine tradition and Roman influences that combine to create the differences between the two monuments can be viewed as an attempt

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<sup>323</sup> Johnson, 1988, 79.

by Theodoric to employ the visual language of his closest competitor in order to assert his authority.

Theodoric is clearly using the Neonian baptistery as a model. However, the differences seem to be deliberate. The theory that the Arian baptistery is a poor copy of the Neonian baptistery falls short as demonstrated by the skill required by the artist to evenly distribute the saints and the throne. It can be no mistake that the throne was moved from the periphery and raised to the dome mosaic. The identification of only Peter and Paul who flank the throne also sends a strong message of a conscious addition and adds further importance to the saints.

Unlike Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, there are no overt messages of Gothic power or authority in what remains of the Arian baptistery mosaics. Although this is probably why the mosaic is still intact, the monument does not embody the same tensions as the Palatium mosaic. However, the Arian baptistery does serve to demonstrate the perceived legitimacy of Arianism and Theodoric's right to rule. By erecting a monument that was of similar grandeur to the one erected by past Orthodox rulers and altering it to reflect a more syncretic communication of the triumph of western rule (that would have been in the vernacular of both Byzantine and Roman viewers), the Arian baptistery could conceivably be conveying competition rather than tolerance.

There is a much more conspicuous linking of Theodoric to imperial assertions visible in Theodoric's mausoleum than the Arian baptistery. As



mentioned earlier, the building's architecture is directly inspired from past Late Roman monuments. Forgoing more contemporary Ravennate architecture of simple brick constructions (such as Galla Placidia's mausoleum), Theodoric opted for a grand monument employing the building materials and style of past Roman and Byzantine emperors (such as the stone construction of mausoleums erected by past Roman and Byzantine emperors like Constantine and Diocletian). The mausoleum displays a few syncretic features, however it is the least decorated of all of Theodoric's buildings. Nonetheless, it is these few features that have complicated the interpretation of the building.

Some have interpreted the odd features of the mausoleum to be an example of Gothic influence. As discussed earlier the minimal decorative friezes both on the interior and the exterior of the mausoleum can be compared to Germanic patterns found in jewellery and thus may have been an expression of Theodoric's Germanic heritage.<sup>324</sup> Without as much decoration from which to analyze possible messages communicated by the building, some have viewed what little decoration there is to once again be a reflection of Theodoric's political ideology.<sup>325</sup> While the minimal decorative patterns found on the mausoleum walls are certainly similar to those found in Germanic jewellery, the overwhelming Roman imperial connotations are much more evident.

Built towards the end (and subsequently height) of his reign, and possibly never finished, Theodoric's mausoleum illustrates Hayden's idea that syncretism

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<sup>324</sup> See Deliyannis, 2010, Johnson, 1988, von Simson, 1987.

<sup>325</sup> Deliyannis, 2010, Johnson, 1988.

is endangered by equality. The mausoleum illustrates this well as it is the one extant monument that displays irrefutable imperial connotations and therefore his cultural programme coincided with his political and social equality with Byzantium. Whether or not it was a perceived equality on Theodoric's behalf, the mausoleum communicates a less indirect message of authority. No longer are his imperial claims couched behind iconography that can be left to personal interpretation, but they are displayed in a manner that would have been easily interpreted by native Italians and Byzantines. It was well documented that towards the end of Theodoric's reign there were escalating tensions between the Byzantines and Theodoric. There was a perceived threat not only from the East, but also from the Vandals in Africa. Many of his previous Gothic relationships were breaking down, forcing him to begin to mobilize a defensive fleet.<sup>326</sup> Cassiodorus writes: 'Now that we have our fleet, there is no need for the Greek to fasten a quarrel upon us, or for the African [the Vandal] to insult us. With envy they see that we have now stolen from them the secret of their strength'.<sup>327</sup>

If we consider the political climate in which the mausoleum was built, it could then be considered an effort to assert authority. If Theodoric claimed equality with the Byzantines, then a mausoleum expressing those claims would be a strategic political statement. The mausoleum was built during a tumultuous time in Theodoric's reign and to view it as a testament to a ruler who was tolerant

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<sup>326</sup> Cassiodorus records that Theodoric was raising a navy for both the transportation of crops as well as to 'combat the ships of an enemy'. Cass. Var. V-XVI; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 274-275.

<sup>327</sup> Cass. Var. V-XVII; Eng. trans. T. Hodgkin, 1886, 276.

is anachronistic. Theodoric was no longer espousing the *civilitas* ideology and no longer attempting to appease the local population. He was, however, attempting to ensure the longevity of Gothic rule in Italy and to defend his legitimacy as king of Italy. Therefore, his mausoleum must not be viewed with a sense of a timeless ideology, but viewed as a monument that is reflective of its time – or as Hayden would state: as a temporal manifestation of relations between social groups.

## CONCLUSIONS

Theodoric's building programme has been long considered to be a reflection of an ideology that was radical for the fifth century. Seemingly a leader with a modern stance on religious tolerance, Theodoric has provided art historians with a respite from centuries of wars and destruction with a grand scale cultural *renovatio*. Theodoric is a fascinating patron as he was a person who experienced a multitude of cultural and religious influences throughout his life and his cultural outputs reflect this complexity. However, in order for his building programme to be viewed in the light it was intended, all cultural-societal factors must be taken into consideration.

Theodoric's reign was complicated. The circumstances surrounding his rise to power are not completely clear and it is not until almost a decade after his ascension that he was recognized by Byzantium. Even the extent of his

recognition by Anastasios is not known with certainty. With a tenuous hold on the throne of Italy, his building programme reflects his ambitions.

Prevailing scholarship has defined Theodoric's building programme as a reflection of his political ideology of tolerance and therefore views the monuments erected during his rule as expressions of a visual vocabulary that is a syncretic homage to his own Gothic heritage, past Roman culture and the dominant culture of his time: Byzantium. However, this contextualization of his building programme simplifies the complexities of not only Theodoric's political ideology but also simplifies the relationships with the varied cultures represented in his building programme, and his ambitions as well.

If Hayden's theory on competitive sharing is taken into consideration, then a much more complex (but comprehensive) interpretation can be discerned. This more complex interpretation finds a parallel in the analysis of Theodoric's political ideology as presented by Patrick Amory in 1997. Theodoric's building programme is not a reflection of a tolerant ruler who continued the political ideology of *civilitas* throughout his rule, but it is an expression of competition. Theodoric is communicating a message of power and equality through the use of a visual language that would have been easily consumed by both the people upon whom he was imposing his rule and his closest competitors in the east.

Mark J. Johnson states: 'In short, Theodoric and his architects deliberately chose building types and artistic motifs that were recognizably imperial. It seems logical to conclude, therefore, that art and architecture were employed as tools of

Theodoric's political propaganda as he sought to justify and define his position as ruler of Italy.<sup>328</sup> While this statement is generally true, one must be careful not to view Theodoric's political propaganda as stagnant. If we view his building programme teleologically alongside of his political ideology, then it would seem prudent to assume that his building programme reflected the flux of Theodoric's political relationships.

In a similar vein to Cassiodorus' *Variae*, that demonstrates Theodoric's celebration of Gothic might, Theodoric's monuments also had the ability to communicate an effective message of Gothic rule. Theodoric utilized various types of imperial tropes in both written and visual communication. Employing a syncretic visual language, not based on respect or tolerance, but simply on the need to communicate effectively, Theodoric's building programme was the physical manifestation of a propagandistic message. The alterations made to Theodoric's Sant' Apollinare Nuovo by Bishop Agnellus supports the theory of tension displayed on the walls of the church.

Theodoric's building programme must not be viewed as a passive output of a singular ideology. It was a dynamic and ambitious programme reflective of its patron's ambitions and the political-societal pressures on him. The syncretisms displayed through his various monuments are not a testament to tolerance, but a signal of competition. As Hayden would predict when analyzing syncretism borne out of competition, conflict erupted and the Goths were overthrown. Therefore, monuments such as the ones belonging to Theodoric's building programme can

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<sup>328</sup> Johnson, 1988, 96.

be viewed as much more than simply material culture. They can help us better understand the culture we are studying and, sometimes, even help us determine and predict potential conflicts.

## CHAPTER TWO: CHARLEMAGNE

### INTRODUCTION

Like Theodoric, Charlemagne was a western Germanic ruler who was in contact with Byzantium and whose cultural products are viewed as products of a sweeping and generalizing cultural *renovatio*.

The cultural programme of Charlemagne, much like Theodoric's, has been frequently discussed within the context of a *renovatio* or a 'Renaissance'.

Scholars often attempt to link Charlemagne's cultural productions with a prototype from another culture, and has been described as a 'magpie' and 'promiscuously eclectic' by Otto Demus.<sup>329</sup> Links to Insular and Roman prototypes are the most heavily cited, with a sub-literature that finds references to Byzantium.<sup>330</sup>

However, underlying all the attempts to connect Charlemagne's cultural productions to a source of foreign inspiration is the notion of legitimization.

By contextualizing Charlemagne's cultural programme within the idea of a *renovatio* or a Renaissance, scholars have (intentionally or not) prescribed a limiting concept of patronage. Applying a singular label such as 'Renaissance' to a cultural programme assumes a certain amount of stasis within a cultural programme. This has led to cultural programmes such as Theodoric's and Charlemagne's being examined through a narrow lens.

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<sup>329</sup> Demus, 1970, 51.

<sup>330</sup> Mutherich, 1977, Koehler, 1952, Neuman De Vegvar, 1992, Buchthal, 1961, Nees, 1991, 2001, 2002 discuss links to Insular and Roman models. Others such as Demus, 1970, Tselos, 1956, Weitzmann, 1966, Goldschmidt, 1928, Hoving, 1966, Beckwith, 1993, Rosenbaum, 1956 examine the Byzantine influences on Carolingian material culture.

Frequently scholars attempt to understand Charlemagne's programme as one that reflects only the ideas and ideals of a *renovatio*.<sup>331</sup> Importance is placed on searching for Roman and Byzantine inspiration and characteristics for most of Charlemagne's court's cultural productions, as the scholarly focus has lingered on the notion of an outward-looking cultural agenda. This emphasis downplays the ever-changing political and social environment in which these cultural products were produced, but also restricts any potential for a change in message. Charlemagne's political world was certainly not linear and singular in direction and if we are to view Charlemagne's visual culture as '*kunstpolitik*' then how can we place an umbrella term over the entire programme?<sup>332</sup>

Examination of contemporary texts and secondary research by modern historians reveal a discord between the political and visual worlds. Historians frequently discuss the relationship between Byzantium and the Carolingians not as a fledgling culture looking to a powerful neighbour for guidance, but as one that required a high level of political manoeuvring to avoid conflict.<sup>333</sup> The power dynamic between Charlemagne and Byzantium was not as one-sided as the dynamic discussed in the previous chapter, thus the notion of Charlemagne requiring cultural legitimization becomes questionable.

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<sup>331</sup> Krautheimer, 1965, Panofsky, 1972, Brown, 1997, Henderson, 1997, Demus, 1970, Hinks, 1935, Garipzanov, 2008.

<sup>332</sup> Otto Demus termed Carolingian art as '*kunstpolitik*' meaning that the art produced by Charlemagne and his successors was heavily influenced by politics and was produced with the intention of sending political messages to its viewers. Demus, 1970, 51.

<sup>333</sup> For an overview of the political relationship between Byzantium and the Carolingians, see Michael McCormick's chapter 'Byzantium and the West, 700-900' in *New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 2, 1995: 349-380.



The questioning of the extent of Byzantine cultural influence is evidenced by primary sources from the Frankish court. Disdainful sentiments towards the Byzantines are expressed in multiple sources. For example, Notker of St. Gallen marginalizes Greeks, effectively 'othering' them, and orientalises along with Persians in his writings.<sup>334</sup> Other Frankish writers, such as Theodulf of Orléans in his major work, *Opus Caroli Regis*, used words such as childish, delirious, demented, reprehensible, silly, and perverse to describe the Byzantines, leaving a strong impression of Carolingian dislike for the Byzantines.<sup>335</sup>

These writings demonstrate contempt for contemporary Byzantine culture and practises and do not correspond with the art historical literature that suggests that the Carolingians desired to utilize a Byzantine visual culture.<sup>336</sup> However, that is not to say that Charlemagne was not interested in the Greek culture. Einhard (who was a contemporary of Charlemagne) recorded in his *Life of Charlemagne* that Charlemagne took the time to learn Greek, and according to Einhard, he was not completely fluent but a competent speaker of the language.<sup>337</sup> The art historical literature suggesting a link to Byzantium is not without its merits either. There are characteristics of Carolingian visual culture that deviate significantly from previous traditions and upon a cursory interpretation would suggest inspiration from Byzantium. However, the issue of extent, intent, and perception are often overlooked.

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<sup>334</sup> Brubaker, 2004, 190.

<sup>335</sup> Noble, 2009, 181.

<sup>336</sup> Beckwith, 1989, Lewis, 1980, Demus, 1970, Buchthal, 1961, Weitzmann, 1965, Hinks, 1935, Mutherich, 1977.

<sup>337</sup> Ein. V.K.M., 2.25; Eng. trans. P. E, Dutton, 2002, 32.

The aims of this chapter are ambitious. I hope to address issues of extent: that is, to what extent did the Carolingians utilize elements of Byzantine culture? Issues of intent will also need to be addressed: was the use of Byzantine visual culture purposeful and deliberate? Did the Carolingians adopt a Byzantine visual language in a similar communicative competitive fashion to the Goths in Ravenna? At the heart of these issues lies the issue of perception and audience. Did the Carolingian concept of Byzantine correlate with our concept of Byzantine? Would the viewer understand that what they were looking at was a departure from a more indigenous iconography or style? By addressing these issues I hope to demonstrate that Charlemagne's apparent appropriation of Byzantine iconography was in fact an appropriation of what was considered by the Carolingian court to be early Christian iconography, in attempts not only to communicate with Charlemagne's new audience of Italian subjects but also to communicate to Francia his new place in Roman history. In order to begin to understand these issues, it is important to understand why scholars have discussed the appearance of Byzantine visual culture in the cultural productions of Charlemagne's court.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Charlemagne's rule has some parallels to Theodoric's in that they were both Germanic kings ruling over vast territories encompassing a wide range of cultural and religious groups. Charlemagne, personally, took an interest in

Theodoric and sought inspiration from the fellow Germanic king and, against popular opinion (as Theodoric was considered to be a heretic due to his Arian religion), brought what was thought to be Theodoric's equestrian statue from Ravenna back to Aachen after his imperial coronation in 800.<sup>338</sup> They both undertook a similar approach to their respective cultural programmes through seeking inspiration from Roman traditions.<sup>339</sup> However, the similarities between the two figures are superficial at best and if we are to apply the same theory of Competitive Sharing to Charlemagne's cultural programme, then the framework must be adjusted accordingly. The purpose of this section is not to re-hash the extensive body of literature that already exists on the subject of Charlemagne's rise to power, but to focus in on Charlemagne's interactions with Byzantium.<sup>340</sup>

In contrast to Theodoric, Charlemagne's authority as a ruler was not contested either contemporaneously or in modern scholarship. Although Charlemagne's rise to power was less controversial and his title less ephemeral than Theodoric's, there exists a debate as to whether Charlemagne actually sought the title of emperor. There is a body of literature that suggests Charlemagne was thrust into the position due to instabilities in Rome.<sup>341</sup> This issue will be dealt with more extensively later. That being said, Charlemagne was not facing the same level of tension between himself and the powers in

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<sup>338</sup> Mayr-Harting, 2010, V 1121.

<sup>339</sup> Although to what extent Charlemagne adhered to a '*renovatio*' is subject to debate. Lawrence Nees, 1991 presents a counter argument to the conventional belief that Charlemagne relied heavily on Rome as a source of cultural inspiration.

<sup>340</sup> For a comprehensive historical analysis on Charlemagne's rise to power see McKitterick, 2008.

<sup>341</sup> This is chiefly due to the wide range of responses and accounts of the coronation in the primary literature. See McKitterick 1992, 114-118.

Byzantium as Theodoric had faced. Although Charlemagne's relationship with Byzantium may not have been as marred by tension as Theodoric's, the Carolingians had their fair share of interactions with their eastern competitors. This interaction warrants a closer examination and, as we shall see, provides the necessary environment for competitive sharing to occur.

## EARLY INTERACTIONS WITH BYZANTIUM

Charlemagne's rule as king of the Franks, Lombards and eventually Romans, was consistently threatened by both internal and external forces. The majority of Charlemagne's imperial life was spent subduing the Saxons who resided on the northern and eastern outskirts of the Frankish kingdom. Charlemagne had inherited a vast amount of territory after the deaths of his father Pippin and brother Carloman. Upon his death in 768, Pippin had divided his territory between his two sons to preside over separately but to rule jointly.<sup>342</sup>

Einhard describes the arrangement as such:

He was survived by two sons, Charles and Carloman, and upon them, by divine will, fell the succession of the kingdom. Indeed, the Franks at a general assembly solemnly established both of them as their kings, but on the condition, agreed to in advance, that they should divide up the entire territory of the kingdom equally. Charles was to take up and govern that part [of the kingdom] which their father Pippin had held and Carloman that part which their uncle Carloman had [once] governed. Both of them agreed to these conditions and each of them received the portion of the kingdom allotted to him by the plan.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>342</sup>McKitterick, 1995, 77.

<sup>343</sup>Ein. V.K.M., III; Eng. trans. P. E. Dutton, 2002, 18.

The joint rule was not harmonious, and there is much speculation surrounding the disdain the two brothers held for each other, following a failed attempt on behalf of Charlemagne to garner support from his brother against an uprising in Aquitaine in 769.<sup>344</sup> Although Einhard records the quarrel in his *Vita Karoli Magni*, he naturally shifts the blame from Charlemagne and suggests the misunderstanding was due to the machinations of others:

That peaceful agreement [the dividing of Pippin's territory and joint rule] of theirs held fast, but with the greatest strain, since many on Carloman's side sought to drive the brothers apart. Some went so far as to plot to turn them [against each other] in war. But the outcome of things proved that the threat [of war] was more suspected than real in this case, and when Carloman died [in 771] his wife and sons, along with some of his chief nobles, took refuge in Italy. For no reason at all, she spurned her husband's brother and placed herself and her children under the protection of Desiderius, the king of the Lombards.<sup>345</sup>

Although Einhard seems to downplay the tension between the two brothers, the fact that after Carloman's death in 771 his wife sought refuge in Italy with Desiderius (whose relationship was contentious throughout Charlemagne's reign) and not Charlemagne, suggests to the weakness of familial ties.<sup>346</sup> While it is interesting to speculate on their relationship, Carloman's death had repercussions that ran deeper than those of a typical feuding family. After Carloman's unexpected death, Charlemagne now controlled an even larger tract

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<sup>344</sup> McKitterick, 1995, 78-80.

<sup>345</sup> Ein. V.K.M., III; Eng. trans. P. E. Dutton, 2002, 18.

<sup>346</sup> While the majority of their relationship was quarrelsome, a peace treaty between the two kings resulted in the marriage between Charlemagne and one of Desiderius' daughters (who was eventually sent back to Italy upon the dissolution of the treaty and was not even named by Carolingian sources). Collins, 1998, 40-41.

of land and an increasingly diverse group of people. The early years of Charlemagne's rule were by no means peaceful. Charlemagne faced a steady stream of conflicts from the Saxons to the north and east interspersed with threats from other groups such as the Bavarians, Avars and the Lombards.<sup>347</sup>

The Saxon struggle was clearly a major issue for the Carolingians, as Charlemagne even saw it necessary to visit the battlefields in person on two separate occasions when he was occupied with other issues.<sup>348</sup> In Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni*, the Saxon war is given precedence and mentioned with more frequency than any other war or event. Einhard writes:

Finally that war [with the Saxons] in its thirty-third year [in 804], but in the meantime a great many serious wars had broken out against the Franks in other lands. The king managed these with such skill, than an observer might easily wonder which deserves more praise, [the king's] persistence or his successes under adverse conditions. For [the Saxon] war began two years before the Italian [conflict] and, although it was waged without interruption, no war that needed to be fought elsewhere was abandoned or [even] postponed in any way on account of that equally onerous war [against the Saxons].<sup>349</sup>

The Italian conflict that is mentioned in the passage above is when interactions between Charlemagne and Byzantium begin to escalate and interactions therefore increase as well. While Charlemagne's relationship with Byzantium was not nearly as volatile as his relationship with the Saxons, it did present a different set of challenges. There are records indicating substantial diplomatic interactions between the Carolingians (starting with Charlemagne's

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<sup>347</sup> Halphen, 1977, 43-74.

<sup>348</sup> Ein. V.K.M., VIII; Eng. trans. P. E. Dutton, 2002, 21.

<sup>349</sup> Ein. V.K.M., VIII; Eng. trans. P. E. Dutton, 2002, 21.

father, Pippin) and Byzantium throughout the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>350</sup>

These diplomatic embassies are invaluable information as they give us insight into the relationship between the two. While relations with Byzantium were not as precarious and dangerous as relations with the Saxons, the record of embassies reveals a relationship of give and take between the two powers. A skirmish would break out and embassies were deployed to resolve tensions.<sup>351</sup> However, as Charlemagne's power (and continued threats from the eastern borders of the Byzantine empire) continued to grow and threaten Byzantium's hold on European Christian supremacy, the concessions made by Byzantium (and at times Charlemagne) became increasingly costly.

It has been argued that taking on the powerful Byzantine Empire was not a goal of Charlemagne's when he began his rule as *rex Francorum*. However, as tensions strained between the papacy and Byzantium, Charlemagne intervened in Italy in response to numerous appeals from the pope.<sup>352</sup> Pope Hadrian requested Frankish intervention in 773 as Pippin's previous attempts to return all the territory taken by the Lombards had been less permanent than Pope Hadrian expected and he still believed that Desiderius unjustly usurped the territories of

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<sup>350</sup> McCormick, 2008, 374.

<sup>351</sup> McCormick, 2008, 367-374.

<sup>352</sup> The relationship between Byzantium and the papacy had been increasingly strained over the eight century as Byzantium levied heavy taxes against Rome, reclaimed prosperous territories in southern Italy and decreased protection (due to channelling available manpower to defend Constantinople from invaders from the east). Iconoclasm served to further alienate the papacy from Byzantium and resulted in the pope looking to the west for protection. Becher, 2003, 82-3.

Ravenna, Ferrara, and Commachio.<sup>353</sup> The *Annales regni Francorum* record

Hadrian's plea:

He [Peter, Hadrian's emissary] came to invite the glorious king and his Franks, to help the Church against King Desiderius and the Lombards for the sake of God's service and the rights of St. Peter. Hadrian could no longer bear the insolence of King Desiderius and the oppression of the Lombards. He resolved to send an embassy to Charles, king of the Franks, and ask him to render aid to him and the Romans against the Lombards.<sup>354</sup>

According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Desiderius supported the naming of one of Carloman's sons (who, like his mother, had sought protection from Desiderius after Carolman's death in 771) as king of Francia as opposed to Charlemagne.<sup>355</sup> This would serve to drive a wedge between the pope and Charlemagne and weaken the Frankish empire.<sup>356</sup>

Charlemagne attempted to resolve the issue through diplomatic manoeuvres, but was unsuccessful as Desiderius was not receptive.<sup>357</sup> The siege of Pavia in 774 was a successful military venture for Charlemagne as he delivered the final blow to the Lombard king Desiderius and his son Adelchis. Charlemagne took a passive military strategy and instead of an aggressive offensive attack, he surrounded the Lombard stronghold and waited eight months to starve the Lombards into submission.<sup>358</sup> The *Annales regni Francorum* states:

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<sup>353</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 110.

<sup>354</sup> *Annal. R.F.*, 773; Eng. trans. B. Scholz, 1970, 49.

<sup>355</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 109.

<sup>356</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 109.

<sup>357</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 111.

<sup>358</sup> Halphen, 1977, 74.



All the Lombards came from every city of Italy and submitted to the rule of the glorious Lord King Charles and of the Franks. Adalgis, the son of king Desiderius, fled, put to sea, and escaped to Constantinople. After subduing Italy and setting it to rights, the glorious Lord King Charles left a Frankish garrison in the city of Pavia and by God's help returned triumphantly to Francia with his wife and the rest of the Franks.<sup>359</sup>

Einhard's version of these events supplements this account with an important piece of information:

Nevertheless, the end result of this war [against the Lombards] was that Italy was conquered, King Desiderius was sent into permanent exile, his son Adalgis was driven out of Italy, and the properties stolen by the Lombard Kings were returned to Hadrian, the head of the Roman church.<sup>360</sup>

Einhard makes the reader believe that Charlemagne returned all of the lost papal territories back to the pope, however less politically charged sources say otherwise. Charlemagne did not return Ravenna to the papacy and instead allowed the archbishop to maintain some independence from Rome.<sup>361</sup>

Although the pope did not obtain the exact results he intended to through his alliance with Charlemagne, Hadrian nevertheless honoured Charlemagne upon his return to Rome. Charlemagne enjoyed an unprecedented prominence with the papacy for a Frankish king. For the first time a Frankish king was addressed by the pope as *patricus Romanorum*, or

<sup>359</sup> *Annal. R.F.*, 774; Eng. trans. B. Scholz, 1970, 50.

<sup>360</sup> *Ein. V.K.M.*, VI, trans. by Paul Edward Dutton, 2002, 19-20.

<sup>361</sup> While Ravenna had long been an exarchate for the emperor in Constantinople, through a military campaign in 756, Pippin took control of Ravenna from Byzantium and handed control over to the Pope in Rome. Collins, 1998, 60.

the protector of Rome.<sup>362</sup> Charlemagne's territory had now expanded alongside of his titles. He was now *rex Francorum*, *rex Langobardorum* and *patricus Romanorum*.

While Charlemagne and Byzantium were not involved in a physical altercation during the siege of Pavia, they were involved indirectly with one another and the next few years of interaction play out as a series of one-upmanship ploys intended to undermine the other's authority. It was during Hadrian's reign that the name of the emperor in Constantinople is removed from papal coinage and documents as Hadrian threw his support from the Byzantines to Charlemagne.<sup>363</sup>

Byzantium sent a message back to the west through bestowing the title of *patricus* on Desiderius' son Adelchis, thereby raising him to the same rank as they recognized Charlemagne to be.<sup>364</sup> Not only did Byzantium provide a safe haven for Adelchis, the emperor also began to mount his own offensive against the growing power to the west. In 776, Hadrian wrote to Charlemagne and revealed that an arrangement between Byzantium, the Lombards, and the dukes of Benevento, Spoleto, Friuli and Tuscany was underfoot in attempts to regain some of the territory lost to Charlemagne, and to reinstall Adelchis as ruler. He wrote:

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<sup>362</sup> Becher, 2003, 84.

<sup>363</sup> After the Carolingians aided the papacy in ending Lombard rule in Italy, Hadrian's favour turned away from Constantinople to the Carolingians. Charlemagne had aided in the conquest over the Lombards whereas Desiderius' son sought refuge (and eventually the title of *patricius*) from the emperor. Becher, 2003, 84.

<sup>364</sup> Becher, 2003, 84.

...for he [Stephen, a *missus* for Hadrian] discovered that *missi* from duke Arichis of Benevento, duke Rodgaud of Friuli and Reginbald, duke of the city of Chiusi, were in Spoleto with Hildebrand [duke of Spoleto] and laying a pernicious plot against us, to the end that, this coming March, they may all, God opposing them, unite with a force of Greeks and with Adelchis, son of Desiderius, and fall upon us by land and sea to give combat. They intend to occupy Rome, this city of ours, to strip bare all the churches of God, to steal the canopy of your patron, St. Peter, and God forbid, to take us ourself [sic.] away captive; further, they want to restore the king of the Lombards and to oppose your royal power.<sup>365</sup>

Later in the same letter, Hadrian urged Charlemagne to intervene.<sup>366</sup>

Although the *Annales regni Francorum* is silent regarding this campaign,

Charlemagne was able to return to Friuli to suppress the rebellion.<sup>367</sup>

Italy continued to be unstable and once again the Byzantines and the dukes who had been ousted from Italy by Charlemagne sought to regain their land.<sup>368</sup>

Hadrian pleaded to Charlemagne for help; however Charlemagne did not acquiesce. Being preoccupied with his continual fight against the Saxons, Charlemagne was not able to aid the pope.<sup>369</sup> Hadrian was able to conquer the Byzantines and the Neapolitans without the aid of Charlemagne, but he once again appealed to Charlemagne to take an offensive stance against the remaining rebellious factions within Italy.<sup>370</sup> However, Charlemagne ignored the advice of Hadrian and initiated diplomatic measures to negotiate peace in Italy. Between 15 March and 25 May of 781 a Byzantine embassy arrived in Rome to negotiate a

<sup>365</sup> Alc. *Epi.*; Eng. trans., P.D. King, 1987, 285.

<sup>366</sup> McCormick, 2001, 877.

<sup>367</sup> Collins, 1998, 63.

<sup>368</sup> This time it was the Neapolitans who together with Byzantium attempted to regain Terracina. McCormick, 2001, 878.

<sup>369</sup> Becher, 2003, 86.

<sup>370</sup> Becher, 2003, 86.

marriage between Charlemagne's daughter Rotruda and Constantine VI.<sup>371</sup>

Arrangements were made for members of the embassy to stay behind to educate Rotruda in Byzantine court life and to teach her how to read and write Greek (this was, in fact, not the first proposal of marriage between the Franks and the Byzantines as a marriage was proposed between Pippin's daughter Gisela and the emperor's son, although this marriage never came to fruition).<sup>372</sup> However, like all other proposals to marry his daughters, this union was never actualized as Charlemagne backed out of the deal when the Byzantines began to threaten Benevento.<sup>373</sup>

The *Annales regni Francorum* cites the dissolution of the marriage between Constantine VI and Rotruda as the catalyst for the next Frankish-Byzantine clash in 788: 'In the meantime Emperor Constantine, enraged because he had been denied the king's daughter, instructed the patrician Theodore, governor of Sicily, with his other commanders to lay waste to the territory of the Beneventans.'<sup>374</sup>

The clash of 788 was similar to the ones that came before. In fact it was Adelchis, the exiled Lombard king, who challenged Charlemagne's authority in Italy. Adelchis returned from his exile to southern Italy where a Byzantine army was being assembled.<sup>375</sup> However, Adelchis' plans were unsuccessful as

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<sup>371</sup> McCormick, 2001, 879.

<sup>372</sup> McCormick, 2001, 874-9.

<sup>373</sup> McCormick, 2001, 882.

<sup>374</sup> *Annal.R.F.*, 788; Eng. trans. B. Scholz, 1970, 67.

<sup>375</sup> Becher, 2003, 88.

Charlemagne had an ally in the duke of Benevento's son, Grimoald, who effectively ended fighting in southern Italy.<sup>376</sup>

The end of this clash marked the beginning of over a decade of peace between Charlemagne and Byzantium. As both had other issues to contend with (Charlemagne had the Saxons and Byzantium had threats from the east as well as a change in power as Eirene effectively took control) neither party had the spare capacity or incentive to quarrel. Charlemagne received an embassy from empress Eirene in 798 that informed Charlemagne of the change in power in Constantinople and resulted in a peace treaty agreed upon by both.<sup>377</sup> The *Annales regni Francorum* states:

When he [Charlemagne] arrived at the palace of Aachen, he received an embassy of the Greeks sent to him from Constantinople. The envoys were Michael, formerly governor of Phrygia, and the priest Theophilus. They carried a letter from Empress Irene, since her son, Emperor Constantine, had been arrested and blinded by his people the year before. But this embassy was only concerned with peace.<sup>378</sup>

While Charlemagne and Eirene were able to agree to the terms of the peace treaty, Charlemagne was to be called upon once again to help protect the pope and to calm rising tensions in Italy. This next intervention in Italy, while not directly involving Byzantium, certainly sent a message of equality (if not a surpassing) of power. The coronation of Charlemagne in the year 800 as

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<sup>376</sup> As payment for previous uprisings against Charlemagne, the duke of Benevento (Arichis) was forced to give Charlemagne his son as a hostage. Arichis died prematurely and was unable to support Adelchis and Irene in their attempts to overthrow Frankish rule in Italy. Grimoald, in an act of thanks for good treatment, claimed allegiance to Charlemagne and did not support the uprising. Becher, 2003, 89.

<sup>377</sup> McCormick, 2001, 887.

<sup>378</sup> *Annal.R.F.*, 798; Eng. trans. B. Scholz, 1970, 76.

*imperator* was the first coronation of a western king since Constantine moved the Roman Empire to the east. This elevation did not go unnoticed by Byzantium and the next decade of relations between the Franks and Byzantium can be viewed, in part, as a struggle for Byzantine recognition.

## CORONATION

There has been a significant amount of literature produced on Charlemagne's coronation, and with good cause.<sup>379</sup> Contemporary accounts of the coronation vary in their interpretation of the impetus behind the historical event, thus creating an unclear understanding in modern scholarship. There are debates as to the extent to which Charlemagne sought the title or whether it was imposed upon him by Pope Leo III.

Most primary sources relating to the coronation, such as the *Annales regni Francorum*, Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni* and Notker's *Charlemagne*, place a heavy emphasis on the role of Pope Leo III by suggesting that it was the pope who actively sought Charlemagne for emperor and not Charlemagne who sought the crown. Although Charlemagne's relationship with Pope Hadrian was at times strained, it is well documented that Charlemagne held the pope in high regard and upon news of the pontiff's death was moved to tears. Einhard described the king's reaction: 'When he was informed [in 796] of the death of Hadrian, the

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<sup>379</sup> Most of the literature focuses on the impact of Charlemagne's coronation on the formation of Europe as well as the extent to which Charlemagne sought the crown. Conflicting primary sources add to the variance in the debates. For a more comprehensive examination of Charlemagne's coronation, see: Folz, 1974, Sullivan, 1959, and a collection of essays edited by von Rüdiger Haude, 2000.

Roman pontiff, he cried so much that it was as if he had lost a brother or a deeply loved son, for he had thought of him as a special friend.<sup>380</sup> Much like Hadrian before him had, Pope Leo III sought Charlemagne's help during a crisis in Italy.

Pope Leo's ascension in 795 was not a popular decision.<sup>381</sup> While the *Liber Pontificalis* states the election was unanimous, by 798 Alcuin was hearing rumblings of Roman dissent.<sup>382</sup> The *Liber Pontificalis* states: 'That was why by God's inspiration all the *sacerdotes*, the dignitaries and the whole clergy, also the leaders and all the people of Rome elected him with one heart and mind by God's bidding, on the feast of St Stephen the first martyr; and next day, the feast of St John the apostle and evangelist, to the praise and glory of almighty God, he was ordained to the pontiff's apostolic see.'<sup>383</sup> However, this sentiment was not shared by a large group of dissenters. Tension came to a head in 799 when Leo was attacked by those who felt his election was unjust.<sup>384</sup> During a procession on 25 April, Leo was attacked by a mob that attempted to gouge his eyes and tongue out of his head.<sup>385</sup> He was then dragged into a monastery where he was beaten and according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, left for dead.<sup>386</sup> The *Annales regni*

*Francorum* recorded the attack as such:

When Pope Leo in Rome was riding on horseback from the Lateran church of the blessed Lawrence, which is called at Roast, to participate in the litany, he fell into an ambush set up by the Romans near his church. He was thrown from his horse, his

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<sup>380</sup> Ein.V.K.M., XIX; Eng. trans. P. E. Dutton, 2002, 29.

<sup>381</sup> Collins, 1998, 141.

<sup>382</sup> Collins, 1998, 141.

<sup>383</sup> L.P.; Eng. trans. R. Davis, 2007, 176.

<sup>384</sup> Collins, 1998, 141.

<sup>385</sup> Collins, 1998, 142.

<sup>386</sup> L.P.; Eng. trans. R. Davis, 2007, 182.

eyes, as it appeared to some observers, gouged out, and his tongue cut off; they left him lying in the street naked and half-dead. On the order of those responsible for this act he was then taken to the monastery of the holy martyr Erasmus, seemingly to recover there. But through the efforts of Albinus, his chamberlain, he was lowered over the wall at night, received by Duke Winigis of Spoleto, who on the news of this crime had rushed to Rome, and escorted to Spoleto.<sup>387</sup>

Although the *Liber Pontificalis* and *Annales regni Francorum* describe a brutal attack, it would seem that the account might have been slightly exaggerated.

After the attack, the pope was imprisoned but was found to be able to both speak and see (something which the *Liber Pontificalis* attributes to a miracle and an obvious sign of Leo's divine endorsement) and by the generosity of the duke of Spoleto, was able to flee Italy to seek the protection of Charlemagne.<sup>388</sup>

The *Annales regni Francorum* notes that Charlemagne was aware of the attack, but was so consumed with yet another rebellion of the Saxons that he did not return to Rome immediately.<sup>389</sup> However, he did agree to meet with Leo in Paderborn after sending his son, Charles, to resolve the Saxon issue.<sup>390</sup> It was during this meeting that Charlemagne agreed to support Pope Leo, so long as he returned to Rome to face his accusers. Charlemagne did not escort the pope back into Rome (although he did send two *missi* to act as protection) and instead returned to deal with the unfinished business with the Saxons.<sup>391</sup> Charlemagne

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<sup>387</sup> *Annal.R.F.*, 799; Eng. trans. B. Scholz, 1970, 77.

<sup>388</sup> Collins, 1998, 142.

<sup>389</sup> *Annal.R.F.*, 799; Eng. trans. B. Scholz, 1970, 77.

<sup>390</sup> *Annal.R.F.*, 799; Eng. trans. B. Scholz, 1970, 77.

<sup>391</sup> Collins, 1998, 143.



returned to Italy in the spring of 800, but sources differ as to the chief reason of his return.

The *Annales regni Francorum* states that Charlemagne returned to Rome to help reinstall Leo as pope but no mention of advance knowledge of the coronation is recorded. In fact, the *Annales regni Francorum*'s account of the coronation is basic in the facts it offers. It states:

On the most holy day of Christmas, when the king rose from prayer in front of the shrine of the blessed apostle Peter, to take part in the Mass, Pope Leo placed a crown on his head, and he was hailed by the whole Roman people: To the August Charles, crowned by God, the great and peaceful emperor of the Romans, life and victory! After the acclamations the pope addressed him in the manner of the old emperors. The name of Patricus was now abandoned and he was called Emperor and Augustus.<sup>392</sup>

Notker and Einhard's accounts of the coronation, while much longer, take a more anecdotal approach of the coronation, but still place the motivation behind Charlemagne's visit to Rome on his promise to reinstate Leo. Along with style, the two chroniclers take a similar tone in their description of the event. What is stressed between the two accounts is the surprise element of the ceremony and the reluctance of Charlemagne to accept the title. Notker's account is as follows:

Charlemagne stayed a few days more in Rome [after clearing Leo's name], in order to rest his army. The Bishop of the Apostolic See called together such people as he could from the neighbouring districts and then, in their presence and that of all the unconquered comrades-in-arms of the glorious Charlemagne, who, himself, of course, expected nothing of the kind, Leo pronounced him Emperor and Defender of the Church of Rome. Charlemagne could not refuse what was offered, the more so as

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<sup>392</sup> *Annal.R.F.*, 801; Eng. trans. B. Scholz, 1970, 81.

he believed that it was pre-ordained by God, but he did not receive his new titles with any great pleasure.<sup>393</sup>

Einhard's version makes a similar claim of ignorance on Charlemagne's behalf, placing more emphasis on the restoration of Leo as the impetus behind his trip to Rome:

These [giving gifts to the Pope and to pray] were not the sole reasons for Charlemagne's last visit to Rome. The truth is that the inhabitants of Rome had violently attacked Pope Leo, putting out his eyes and cutting off his tongue, and had forced him to flee to the King for help. Charlemagne really came to Rome to restore the Church, which was in a very bad state indeed, but in the end he spent the whole winter there. It was on this occasion that he received the title of Emperor and Augustus. At first he was far from wanting this. He made it clear that he would not have entered the cathedral that day at all, although it was the greatest of all the festivals of the Church, if he had known in advance what the Pope was planning to do.<sup>394</sup>

The *Liber Pontificalis*' version of the coronation contrasts the two Frankish chronicler's accounts significantly. The *Liber Pontificalis* provides much more detail of Charlemagne's visit to Rome before the coronation ceremony than the previous two accounts, and places considerable importance on Charlemagne's role in reinstating Leo (and this was the main reason for Charlemagne's visit to Rome), but the *Liber Pontificalis* does not mention that Charlemagne was caught unawares by the coronation. The account of the actual ceremony is considerably shorter than Einhard's and Notker's accounts, and understandably, less emphasis is placed on Charlemagne's emotional response to the event. The account is as follows:

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<sup>393</sup> Not., Char.; Eng. trans. L. Thorpe, 1979, 123.

<sup>394</sup> Ein., V.K.M., XXVIII; Eng. trans. L. Thorpe, 1979, 81.

Afterwards when the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ arrived, they all gathered again in St Peter's. Then with his own hands the venerable bountiful pontiff crowned him with a precious crown; and all the faithful Romans seeing how much he defended and how greatly he loved the holy Roman church and its vicar, at God's bidding and that of St Peter, keybearer of the kingdom of heaven, cried aloud with one accord: 'To Charles, pious Augustus crowned by God, great and pacific Emperor, life and victory! Three times this was said in front of St Peter's sacred *confessio*, with the invocation of many saints; and by them all he was established as Emperor of the Romans. Straightaway the holy bishop and pontiff anointed Charles, his excellent son, as king, on that same birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ.'<sup>395</sup>

The *Liber Pontificalis* also adds an interesting piece of information that challenges the Frankish claim of unawareness of the coronation. The *Liber Pontificalis* states the pope greeted Charlemagne twelve miles outside of the city to be escorted into the city by the pope.<sup>396</sup> What is significant about this meeting place is that it is the traditional entrance of the city made by victorious emperors, thereby potentially suggesting that talks of the coronation had already taken place between Charlemagne and the pope.<sup>397</sup> A letter from Alcuin, written shortly after he learned of the pope's predicament in Rome and Charlemagne's planned intercession, also provides evidence that undermines the Frankish stance of humility. Written in July of 799, the letter states:

O sweet adornment of the Christian people! O defence of the churches of Christ and solace of this present life! It is essential for all to exalt your blessedness with prayers, to assist you with intercessions, to the end that, through your successes, the

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<sup>395</sup> L.P.; Eng. trans. R. Davis, 2007, 188.

<sup>396</sup> L.P.; Eng. trans. R. Davis, 2007, 187.

<sup>397</sup> Folz, 1974, 135.

Christian empire may be protected, the catholic faith be defended and the rule of righteousness become known to all.<sup>398</sup>

The language of this letter indicates that the concept of Charlemagne as the defender of the Christian empire was already being contemplated amongst the prominent members of the Carolingian court. While these sources do not outright state that Charlemagne was seeking the crown (unlike the statements found in Notker and Einhard that explicitly state that Charlemagne did not seek the crown), they are worthwhile to consider as the indirectness of the evidence is less unencumbered by politics or political tropes. These passages may not outright prove Charlemagne's advanced awareness of the coronation, nor do they explicitly describe Charlemagne's feelings on the subject, but they do set a precedent, before the year 800, for a courtly concept of Charlemagne as more than the king of Francia.

As is made obvious by the previous passage, the *Liber Pontificalis* does not give any indication that Charlemagne was hesitant to receive the crown, nor does it mention that the ceremony came as a surprise. But it is the nature of the different texts that lend a difference in the accounts. While the *Liber Pontificalis* embellishes Leo's attack, it did not embellish Charlemagne's coronation. This is most likely because the *Liber Pontificalis'* intention is to celebrate the pope and not Charlemagne, whereas the intention of Einhard and Notker is to celebrate Charlemagne as a king with the noblest of intentions and actions. Some scholars believe that the theme of Charlemagne being uncomfortable with the coronation is

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<sup>398</sup> Alc. *Epi.*; Eng. trans. P.D. King, 1987, 322.

a Carolingian literary trope.<sup>399</sup> Emperors were meant to be reluctant to receive any accolades and to be boastful of such an achievement would be in poor taste.<sup>400</sup>

In contrast to the three above accounts of the coronation, the *Annales Laureshamenses* presents the coronation's motivation in an entirely different light from all the other accounts. Considered to be written contemporaneously with the events in which they record, the *Annales Laureshamenses* have a disputable provenance.<sup>401</sup> While their name would indicate they were written in Lorsch, others have suggested that they were written by a monk in Trier.<sup>402</sup> Provenance aside, the annals present an interesting alternative interpretation. The *Annales Laureshamenses* state that because of Eirene's ascension to the throne in 797, the lack of a male emperor in Constantinople was the impetus for the crowning of Charlemagne. Therefore Charlemagne did not necessarily seek the crown of the emperor, but in order for the Christian world to be appropriately protected, accepted the crown as a sort of last resort. The annals state:

And since the name of the emperor (*nomen imperatoris*) was at this time lacking among the Greeks and they had a female rule (*femineum imperium*) among them, it then seemed to the *apostolicus* Leo and to all the holy fathers present at that council, as well as to the rest of the Christian people, that they ought to bestow the name of emperor upon Charles himself, king of the Franks, who held Rome itself, where the Caesars had always been accustomed to have their seat, and the rest of the seats, which he held throughout Italy, Gaul and Germany; since almighty God had granted all these seats into his power, it

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<sup>399</sup> Folz, 1974, 149.

<sup>400</sup> Folz, 1974, 149.

<sup>401</sup> King, 1987, 20.

<sup>402</sup> King, 1987, 20.

seemed to them to be right that, with the help of God and at the request of the entire Christian people, he should have that name. King Charles was himself unwilling to deny this request of theirs and, having submitted with all humanity to God and the petition of the *sacerdotes* and the entire Christian people, received the name of emperor, with the consecration of the lord pope Leo, on the very day of the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. And his very first action there was to recall the holy Roman church from its internal discord to peace and harmony.<sup>403</sup>

While the accounts of the coronation differ widely in their length and detail, there are common factors. The accounts written by Frankish writers included an aspect of the Greek response to the coronation. Whether or not the coronation's significance reverberated in Constantinople, Einhard and Notker's accounts of the event demonstrate a Frankish concern with the implications Charlemagne's coronation had in Constantinople. Although the Greek reaction is not consistent amongst the two authors, it seems that the perceived Greek response to the coronation was very much at the forefront of the political implications of the coronation.

However, there is an issue with taking the Frankish sources at face value. Even if we read the accounts with the understanding that they were placing Charlemagne in the best possible light, the dates of the texts are problematic. Neither Einhard nor Notker were writing their lives of Charlemagne contemporaneously with the accounts they describe. Einhard produced his work between 829 and 836, well over a decade after Charlemagne's death in 814.<sup>404</sup> Notker, writing later than Einhard, was not even a part of Charlemagne's court

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<sup>403</sup> *Annal. Laur.*; Eng. trans. P.D. King, 1987, 144.

<sup>404</sup> Thorpe, 1979, 15.

and produced his work around between the years 884 to 887.<sup>405</sup> As such, the perception of the Greek reaction must not be considered as an accurate account of the political climate. It is possible that the dynamic between Charlemagne and Constantinople was added to lend more significance and tension to the event.

Notker writes:

His [Charlemagne's] immediate reaction was that the Greeks would be filled with even greater jealousy than before and that they would plan some disaster for the Frankish Kingdom. If nothing more, they would prepare themselves still more carefully against the day when Charlemagne should arrive unexpectedly to subdue their kingdom and add it to his own empire, as he was rumoured to be about to do. Above all, the mighty Charlemagne remembered how the legates of the king of Constantinople had come and had told him that their master wished to be his faithful friend; and that, seeing that they were destined to become nearer neighbours, he was determined to support Charlemagne as if he were his own son, and to relieve his poverty; and how, unable to hide his passionate ambition in his heart, he himself shouted: 'If only that narrow strait of water did not separate us! Perhaps we could divide between us the riches of the East, or else hold them in common and each have his own fair share!'<sup>406</sup>

Once again we have a different interpretation of the coronation. Notker presents us with an image of a tense relationship between Charlemagne and Byzantium. Without completely besmirching the emperor in Constantinople, Notker's account portrays the emperor as considering himself to be father to Charlemagne, if not perhaps a little concerned about his growing power and perceived ability to conquer Constantinople should he choose to.

The Byzantine reaction to the coronation of Charlemagne is not as well recorded as the Frankish counterpart. Perhaps the best indication of the

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<sup>405</sup> Thorpe, 1979, 22.

<sup>406</sup> Not., Char.; Eng. trans. L. Thorpe, 1979, 124.

Byzantine response can be viewed in terms of their actions, or lack thereof. The Byzantines did not immediately recognize Charlemagne's elevation to emperor. By crowning Charlemagne, Rome sent a clear message to Constantinople that it was no longer part of their empire – this, one presumes, was a concept that was not desirable to the Byzantines.<sup>407</sup> Therefore, Charlemagne's coronation could have been viewed as an act of rebellion against Byzantium.<sup>408</sup> The Byzantine historian Theophanes (758-818) mentions the coronation of Charlemagne, however he does not go into much detail or note the Byzantine interpretation of the event:

In the same year, too, the relatives of the blessed Pope Adrian in Rome roused up the people and rebelled against Pope Leo, whom they arrested and blinded. They did not manage, however, to extinguish his sight altogether because those who were blinding him were merciful and took pity on him. He sought refuge with Karoulos, king of the Franks, who took bitter vengeance on his enemies and restored him to his throne, Rome falling from that time onwards under the authority of the Franks. Repaying his debt to Karoulos, Leo crowned him emperor of the Romans in the church of the holy apostle Peter after anointing him with oil from head to foot and investing him with imperial robes and a crown on 25 December...<sup>409</sup>

It has been suggested that the lack of information and even the accuracy of information (it was Charlemagne's son, not Charlemagne who was anointed by Leo) was an attempt by Theophanes to undermine the magnitude of the ceremony.<sup>410</sup> Theophanes also mentions the marriage proposal between

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<sup>407</sup> Folz, 1974, 164.

<sup>408</sup> Folz, 1974, 164.

<sup>409</sup> Theoph., *Chron.*, AM6205, 473; Eng. trans. Mango and Scott, 1997, 649.

<sup>410</sup> Folz, 1974, 165.



Charlemagne and Eirene and suggests that it was Charlemagne who pursued the alliance and places the dissolution of the alliance on the usurper, Aetios.

There also arrived the emissaries sent by Karoulos and Pope Leo to the most pious Irene asking her to marry Karoulos and so unite the eastern and western parts. She would have consented had she not been checked by the oft-mentioned Aetios who ruled by her side and was usurping power on behalf of his brother.<sup>411</sup>

While it may have been Eirene's plan to accept Charlemagne's rise to power, her reign as empress ended in 802, before Charlemagne's embassy to Constantinople with the proposal of marriage had the time to return back to Aachen.<sup>412</sup> Eirene's successor, Nikephoros, had a more negative stance towards Charlemagne.

Nikephoros refused to acknowledge Charlemagne as emperor and from the years 806-810 a renewed animosity between the Franks and the Byzantines developed. In 806 Charlemagne absorbed Dalmatia into his empire.<sup>413</sup> Nikephoros, viewing this as a hostile act, began a counter offensive that lasted four years of on and off fighting, with the Franks being superior on land and the Greeks holding strong on water.<sup>414</sup> This stalemate of sorts came to a head in 810 when Charlemagne's son, Pippin, made a final push on Venice.<sup>415</sup> This final surge resulted in Venice agreeing to pay tribute to Pippin.<sup>416</sup> While in Venice, Pippin, the driving force behind the Frankish offensive, developed a fever and

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<sup>411</sup> Theoph., *Chron.*, AM6205, 473; Eng. trans. Mango and Scott, 1997, 654.

<sup>412</sup> McCormick, 2001, 891.

<sup>413</sup> Becher, 2003, 95.

<sup>414</sup> Becher, 2003, 95.

<sup>415</sup> Becher, 2003, 95.

<sup>416</sup> McCormick, 2001, 896.

was found dead by Nikephoros' envoy Arsaphios.<sup>417</sup> Arsaphios had been on his way to Aachen to negotiate a peace treaty on behalf of Nikephoros, as a rebellion from the Bulgarians was threatening to divert Byzantine resources.<sup>418</sup>

Arsaphios traveled to Aachen to deliver the news to Charlemagne who upon hearing that his son died was eager to resolve the issue without further loss, but with one condition.<sup>419</sup> In return for peace, Charlemagne requested an official recognition from Nikephoros as emperor.<sup>420</sup> Charlemagne was granted his request, not by Nikephoros, but by emperor Michael I, as Nikephoros had fallen in battle with the Bulgarians before Arsaphios could return with Charlemagne's conditions for peace.<sup>421</sup>

The resolution to the Venice issue marked the beginning of a period of extended peace between the Franks and the Byzantines. Diplomats continued to travel between Aachen and Constantinople for many years after Charlemagne's death in 814.<sup>422</sup> Even another marriage proposal, this time between Michael's son and one of Charlemagne's granddaughters, was proposed (but also never actualized).<sup>423</sup>

The political relationship between Charlemagne and Byzantium was one chiefly based on diplomatic communications. Recognition of Charlemagne as emperor from Byzantium was clearly desired from Charlemagne and this would

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<sup>417</sup> McCormick, 2001, 896.

<sup>418</sup> McCormick, 2001, 896.

<sup>419</sup> McCormick, 2001, 896.

<sup>420</sup> Becher, 2003, 96.

<sup>421</sup> Becher, 2003, 96.

<sup>422</sup> McCormick, 1995, 374.

<sup>423</sup> McCormick, 2001, 899.

suggest that Charlemagne held a certain level of respect for the Byzantines. However, the primary evidence presented to us from Frankish sources such as the *Annales regni Francorum*, Einhard and the *Libri Carolini*, is that the maintenance of the relationship between the Carolingians and the Byzantines was not presented as the primary concern of Charlemagne's political objectives. Other issues were often more pressing. Perhaps one of the major issues of Charlemagne's rule was how to cope with his continually expanding territory and population. Faced with an empire larger than any other Frankish ruler had faced before, Charlemagne undertook many different measures to incorporate and consolidate his new empire; his cultural programme is one such undertaking that is a physical manifestation of this priority.

### **CHARLEMAGNE'S CULTURAL PROGRAMME**

There is an extensive body of literature on Charlemagne and his cultural contributions. While the age of Charlemagne was witness to an increased amount of contact between western and eastern Europe, much of the art historical literature discussing Carolingian art focuses on the *renovatio* and the influence of Rome. This literature claims that Charlemagne and his court had an ambitious cultural agenda that claimed to seek inspiration from Rome. Like Theodoric, Charlemagne's cultural programme is associated with the idea of a cultural *renovatio* that not only applied to the visual arts, but also to the liturgy and

language.<sup>424</sup> In 1935 Roger Hinks published a study of Carolingian visual culture that stressed the desire of Charlemagne and his successors to call upon the heritage of Rome to lend their cultural programme a sense of legitimacy and tradition. He states: '...their [Carolingian] illuminators had neither the will nor the means to evolve a satisfactory pictorial tradition out of their inner consciousness and that is why they used fifth and sixth century [Roman] models.'<sup>425</sup> This study was influential and many followed in Hinks' footsteps and framed Charlemagne's cultural programme within the confines of a derivative Roman context.

Any discussion of the influence of external cultures on the arts of Charlemagne would not be complete without a mention of Erwin Panofsky. A frequently cited art historian on the subject of the so-called Carolingian Renaissance, Panofsky viewed Charlemagne and his cultural ethos as a precursor to the Humanists of the *trecento*.<sup>426</sup> Panofsky viewed the reuse of the antique as an undulating curve of influence; a curve whose lowest point was marked by art of the Byzantine Empire and whose zenith was the Italian Renaissance.<sup>427</sup> For Panofsky, the arts of Charlemagne marked a departure from the medieval predilection to employ rigid geometric patterns and antinaturalistic figures found in Insular art, and instead moved towards classical pastoral scenes,

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<sup>424</sup> Brown, 1997, 45.

<sup>425</sup> Hinks, 1935, 111.

<sup>426</sup> Panofsky, 1972, 42.

<sup>427</sup> Panofsky, 1972, 42.

mythological creatures and figures that ‘might have stepped out of a Pompeian mural’.<sup>428</sup>

Although the majority of Panofsky’s focus is on the aesthetic, he too agrees with Hinks when discussing the marriage of art and politics and possible motivations on espousing such a cultural programme. Panofsky describes the goals of the *renovatio* as such:

When Charlemagne set out to reform political and ecclesiastical administration, communications and the calendar, art and literature, and – as a basis for all this – script and language ... his guiding idea was the *renovatio imperii romani*... [it was] a deliberate attempt to reclaim the heritage of Rome, ‘Rome’ meaning Julius Caesar and Augustus as well as Constantine the Great.<sup>429</sup>

The term ‘Carolingian Renaissance’ has since been used by many scholars when discussing the cultural ambitions of Charlemagne.<sup>430</sup> This term is now viewed as anachronistic and has been argued as being an oversimplification and a generalizing statement. Scholars such as Lawrence Nees and Caroline Goodson have challenged the idea of the ‘Carolingian Renaissance’, stating that while elements of Roman antiquity can be found in some cultural elements produced by Charlemagne’s court, the Carolingian concept of what defines ‘antique’ was more fluid than our modern definition.<sup>431</sup> Lawrence Nees states: ‘There is nothing wrong with the term [Renaissance] except its common implications of dependence and a sense of inferiority, entirely inconsistent with

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<sup>428</sup> Panofsky, 1972, 46-49.

<sup>429</sup> Panofsky, 1972, p.44.

<sup>430</sup> Panofsky, 1972, Hinks, 1935, Demus, 1970, Bullough, 1991, Brown, 1997.

<sup>431</sup> See Nees, 1991 and Goodson, 2010.

the Carolingian court's proud insistence upon its superiority to the Roman tradition, seen in the preface of the Salic Law.<sup>432</sup>

For the Carolingians, religion was at the foundation in their cultural and political programmes. Much of the so-called Carolingian Renaissance was about reforming life to facilitate a more unified Christianity over a wider geographic area.<sup>433</sup> Efforts were made to reform the liturgy so that the Carolingian practises mirrored what Frankish theologians imagined the early Christian Roman liturgy had been.<sup>434</sup> Modern scholarship now asserts that the Carolingian court was not attempting to emulate Rome per se, but rather to reform and to correct the discrepancies that existed in religious practises throughout the Carolingian empire.<sup>435</sup> An issue amongst scholars is the lack of evidence of a Carolingian affinity for the antique. For example, the literature favoured in Charlemagne's court does not demonstrate this notion. It is noted that Vergil was read by one of Charlemagne's leading scholars, Alcuin, but Augustine's City of God is mentioned specifically by Einhard as one of Charlemagne's favourite books.<sup>436</sup> Some aspects of ancient Roman culture, such as pagan myths, found their place at Charlemagne's court; however they were frequently used as counter examples to proper Christian morals and virtues.<sup>437</sup> Although the concept of the *renovatio*

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<sup>432</sup> Nees, 2002, 186.

<sup>433</sup> Nees, 1991, 7.

<sup>434</sup> McKitterick, 1995, 15.

<sup>435</sup> Goodson, 2010, 41.

<sup>436</sup> Nees, 1991, 5.

<sup>437</sup> Nees, 1991, 65.

*imperii romani* was employed by the court of Charlemagne, what can be classified as 'Roman' was often reinterpreted into a Carolingian context.

The start of the so-called Carolingian Renaissance is also a debatable subject. While many align the Renaissance with the goals and ambitions of Charlemagne, others place the origins of the Renaissance with Charlemagne's father, Pippin III. Frequent mention is made of the papal gift of ancient Roman and Greek texts given to Pippin from Pope Paul I thus suggesting an interest in scholarship and the classics amongst members of Pippin's court.<sup>438</sup>

There is also evidence that Pippin attempted to Romanize the liturgy before Charlemagne through the dissemination of Roman texts to the more remote locations of the empire.<sup>439</sup> The *Admonitio generalis* of 789 further supports the idea that Pippin attempted to standardize liturgical chant throughout his empire by setting standards that aligned with those of Rome. It declares: 'To all the clergy. That they are to learn the Roman chant thoroughly and that it is to be employed throughout the office, night and day, in the correct form, in conformity with what our father of blessed memory, King Pippin, strove to bring to pass when he abolished the Gallican chant for the sake of unanimity with the apostolic see and the peaceful harmony of God's holy church.'<sup>440</sup>

An anecdote recounted (albeit written more than a century later than when the event supposedly took place) by John the Deacon in his *Vita* of Pope Gregory I describes Pippin's attempts to disseminate Roman chants by sending Frankish

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<sup>438</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 99.

<sup>439</sup> Rankin, 1994, 275.

<sup>440</sup> Rankin, 1994, 275.

cantors to Rome in the hopes of them returning to Metz to help teach and spread them.<sup>441</sup>

With this information in mind, some believe that Charlemagne was not the mastermind behind a well-orchestrated cultural Renaissance, but was merely continuing an aspect of kingship learned from his father.<sup>442</sup> That is not to say that Charlemagne did not have some personal interest in scholarship, the classics and the arts, but simply that there was a conscious effort amongst the Franks to align themselves with the more standardised practises of Rome before Charlemagne's coronation. This would suggest that the intention of ruling the Christian empire was not formulated by Charlemagne but was perhaps instilled in Charlemagne's consciousness by his father.

It is with this fluid definition of 'Roman' and 'antique' that I approach what some claim to be appearances of Byzantine elements in Charlemagne's court's cultural productions. As with most art produced in the early medieval Latin West, there is a subsection of literature that discusses the Byzantine influence. The literature goes back and forth on the issue of Byzantine influence. While some have doubts as to the extent that a Byzantine visual language was deliberately used and think that it is more likely that what Byzantine influence can be found was a result of a handful of artists or the inadvertent transmission of Byzantine

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<sup>441</sup> *MGH Gregorii*, II, c.9.10 *Patrologia Latina* LXXV, col. 91-92; Eng. trans. R. McKitterick, 1992, 121.

<sup>442</sup> Brown discusses Pippin's attempt to regulate liturgy to the practices of Rome. Brown, 1997, 15. Rankin further extends this idea using liturgical chants as evidence that a trend towards a Carolingian Romanization existed before Charlemagne. Rankin, 1994, 275.



elements through Italian prototypes,<sup>443</sup> the dominant narrative seems still to place an importance on the Carolingian desire for legitimization through the use of Roman and Byzantine culture.<sup>444</sup> However, by readdressing and redefining previously held ideas and definitions presented in the existing literature, a pattern emerges of Italian influence in the so-called appearances of Byzantine iconography.

But can we, as modern scholars, apply the label of our definition of Byzantine to elements of Charlemagne's visual arts? Can we say something is Byzantine if only a small detail can be traced back to a Byzantine prototype? How do we tease out artistic license from a deliberate use of Byzantine visual language? And if we can, are a few details sufficient to justify the so-called legitimization of an entire culture?

The definition of what is considered to be a Byzantine influence needs to be refined. Most discussion of Byzantine influence has been limited to stylistic analysis. Historically, scholars have placed manuscripts and ivories within specific 'ateliers' with other works that share a similar style. In 1958 Wilhelm Koehler (chiefly reliant on stylistic analysis) identified two ateliers specifically associated with Charlemagne that produced luxurious manuscripts (and ivories have also been integrated into these classifications): the so-called 'Ada' (or Hofschule) group and the 'Palace' (or Coronation Gospels) group.<sup>445</sup> It is these

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<sup>443</sup> Demus, 1970, 77.

<sup>444</sup> See Panofsky, 1972, Weitzmann, 1966, Beckwith, 1989, and to a lesser extent Mutherich, 1977.

<sup>445</sup> Koehler, 1963.

manuscripts that the majority of the literature cites as loci for Byzantine influence within Charlemagne's cultural programme.

## MANUSCRIPTS

Rosamond McKitterick describes the purpose of creating luxurious manuscripts as a cultural product whose function extends past the aesthetic. She states: '...for the Carolingians, the patronage of book production was primarily for the promotion of their royal power as Christian kings and for the consolidation of the Christian faith by disseminating the key texts on which that faith was based.'<sup>446</sup> Manuscripts produced by the royal ateliers were not simply for consumption at court. The manuscripts were distributed as gifts given to strategically selected recipients.<sup>447</sup> These texts were not relegated to the dusty shelves of monastery libraries to serve only the literate monastic community, but were put on display during feast days and were circulated across the empire.<sup>448</sup> The circulation of consistent texts also aided in promoting literacy kingdom-wide and the institution of Carolingian miniscule made the texts easier to read and easier to copy.<sup>449</sup> Therefore, the giving of illuminated manuscripts served as an excellent source of regulating the liturgy, but also a tool to disseminate an iconographical language associated with the court.

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<sup>446</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 129.

<sup>447</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 116.

<sup>448</sup> McKitterick, 1996, 10.

<sup>449</sup> Robb, 1973, 194.

Although we do not have access to all of the illuminated manuscripts produced by Charlemagne's ateliers, the extant manuscripts reveal a preference for the production of Gospel books. Gospel books contained a set formula of contents. The book typically opens with a letter written by St. Jerome to Pope Damascus describing his compiling of Greek and Latin sources to produce a new version of the Gospels.<sup>450</sup> This letter is followed by the canons of Eusebius and an accompanying letter explaining how to properly interpret the canon table.<sup>451</sup> What typically follows the canons is a commentary on the gospels written, once again, by Jerome.<sup>452</sup> This commentary usually precedes the gospels of Matthew. Then the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John complete the book.

While the contents of the book are usually consistent, the accompanying illustrations can differ. Perhaps the most consistent illustrations in most gospel books are author portraits. Following in a tradition that can be traced to the earliest Roman books and even to portraits of philosophers found on sarcophagi, a full-page portrait of each evangelist accompanies its corresponding text.<sup>453</sup> Besides the author portraits, other illuminations that are included in the gospel book vary and are often dependent on the book's recipient or patron.

Illustrations aside, it is interesting to note that the majority of extant books are gospel books. Rosamond McKitterick notes that it is unlikely that an atelier would have produced multiples of the same book for the same location and

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<sup>450</sup> Walker, 1948, 1.

<sup>451</sup> Walker, 1948, 1.

<sup>452</sup> Walker, 1948, 1.

<sup>453</sup> Rosenbaum, 1956, 86.

therefore it indicates a concerted effort of the atelier (and, of course, by the patron Charlemagne) to disseminate the same book throughout the empire.<sup>454</sup> The concentration on producing a consistent account of the gospels must have been a priority of the court. While some could argue that the fact that they were a gift from the emperor contributed to the manuscripts' survival, the simple fact that so many gospel books survive indicate the dissemination of not only a consistent version of one of the principle books of Christianity, but also the dissemination of images that would be associated with Charlemagne and his court.<sup>455</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the manuscripts associated with Charlemagne are classified into two different groups: Ada and Coronation. The determining factors of classification are based chiefly on stylistic elements - the Coronation group follow a distinctly different style than the Ada group.<sup>456</sup> The manuscripts that can be attributed to the Ada group through some kind of historical documentation are: the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, NA.lat.1203, 781-82), the Dagulf Psalter (Vienna Nationalbibliothek lat. 1861, 795), the Ada Gospels (Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Codex 22, late 8<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> century), the Abbeville Gospels (Abbeville Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms 4, 790-814), and the Soissons Gospels (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 8850 date unknown, but was part of an endowment of Charlemagne's possessions to his son Louis the

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<sup>454</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 110.

<sup>455</sup> While the content of the gospels were intentionally consistent, as we shall see later, the images vary significantly. McKitterick, 1992, 117.

<sup>456</sup> Goldschmidt, 1928, 10.

Pious in 827<sup>457</sup>).<sup>458</sup> Other manuscripts such as British Museum, Harley 2788, the Lorsch Gospels (Alba Julia s. n. + Vat. pal. lat. 50) and a manuscript from Munich (Paris lat. 8849) have been attributed to the Ada group on a purely stylistic basis.<sup>459</sup> The Dagulf Psalter, which according to a dedicatory poem was a gift from Charlemagne to Pope Hadrian, contains no figural representations and therefore will not be discussed at length here.<sup>460</sup>

There is a secondary school of manuscripts associated with Charlemagne's patronage that is classified outside of the Ada school on the basis of stylistic analysis. This group is given the name of the 'Coronation Gospels Group' as the classification is based on the comparison to the so-called Coronation Gospels – a gospel book supposedly found in the tomb of Charlemagne when opened by Otto III in the year 1000.<sup>461</sup> This group is considerably smaller than the Ada group, but makes a significant impact in the stylistic vocabulary of Carolingian illuminated manuscripts. The group is considered to consist of the following manuscripts: the Coronation Gospels (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Schatzkammer, Inv. XIII 18), the Brescia Codex (Biblioteca Civica Queriniana, Ms E.II.9), the Xanten (or Brussels) Gospels (Brussels, Royal Library Albert I, Ms 18723) and the Aachen Gospels (Aachen, Domschatzkammer). It is this group (chiefly with the Coronation Gospels) that

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<sup>457</sup> Robb, 1973, 107.

<sup>458</sup> Goldschmidt, 1928, 10.

<sup>459</sup> Goldschmidt, 1928, 10.

<sup>460</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 103.

<sup>461</sup> Mutherich, 1977, 24. However, this story is now considered largely to be a myth. See: Nees, 2014.

many scholars point to as the divergence from a more Greek-influenced classical style.<sup>462</sup>

While the two separate groups are classified based on stylistic similarities, both ateliers are said to be reflective of a progression towards a more 'Greek' or 'classicizing' illumination tradition. However, as we shall see, when we redefine what is a 'Greek' or 'classicizing' influence this alters the interpretation of the manuscripts and perhaps allows us a more accurate interpretation of the information and message disseminated through these manuscripts.

The Godescalc Gospel Lectionary can be securely dated to 781-83 thanks to the colophon providing us with the impetus for its creation. The colophon states that the Gospel book was patronized to commemorate Charlemagne's son Pippin's baptism in Rome.<sup>463</sup> This date places the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary as the earliest manuscript attributable to Charlemagne's patronage. Traditionally classified in the Ada group, the manuscript is described as still demonstrating a high level of Insular influence while also incorporating some Italian influences. The manuscript consists of the following illuminations: the four evangelist author portraits, a portrait of Christ and an illumination given the name 'the Fountain of Life'.

Scholars point to the border decorations of the manuscript as being reminiscent of decoration found in Insular manuscripts such as the Lindisfarne

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<sup>462</sup> Beckwith, 1989, Lewis, 1980, Demus, 1970, Buchthal, 1961, Weitzmann, 1965, Hinks, 1935, Mutherich, 1977.

<sup>463</sup> Mutherich, 1977, 34.

Gospels or patterns found in Germanic jewellery.<sup>464</sup> Borders of intertwined vegetation and geometric patterns frame the evangelists and Christ. Even a few of the figures display some Germanic physiognomic traits: both Christ and Mark have reddish-blond hair.

There are other decidedly 'western' traits found in the illuminations of the Godescalc evangelists. The portraits are full-paged illuminations, which is another influence of more contemporary Insular traditions.<sup>465</sup> Previous Merovingian manuscripts contained few illustrations and early Carolingian manuscripts such as the Gundohinus Gospels (Autun, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms3) that exhibit Merovingian practices such as minimal decoration save elaborate, large interlace initial designs.<sup>466</sup> All the evangelists are accompanied by their corresponding animal and are standing within a decorative archway (fig. 27). These evangelist figures seem to be a mixture of eastern and western standards as eastern manuscripts frequently show the evangelist standing, however it is a western tradition to add their symbolic counterpart and a decorative archway.<sup>467</sup>

However, it is the figural modelling of the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary that is described as Byzantine in inspiration. If we continue the comparison between the Lindisfarne Gospels and even include early Carolingian manuscripts

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<sup>464</sup> Mutherich, 1977, 35.

<sup>465</sup> While the origin of the full-page evangelist symbol may have been Late Antique, there are other elements borrowed from unique Insular traditions (such as the handling of details such as borders and stylized, flat figures).

<sup>466</sup> Nees, 1987, 29.

<sup>467</sup> Goldschmidt, 1928, 13.

such the Gundohinus Gospels, there is a distinct departure in the figural modelling. The figures in the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary (fig. 28) are much more 'corporeal' whereas the figures in the Lindisfarne (fig. 29) and Gundohinus Gospels have been described as stylized and flat. Some comparisons have been drawn between the Godescalc evangelists and the mosaics at San Vitale in Ravenna as well as Byzantine manuscripts such as the Gospel book 43 Stavronikita (Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, cod. 43).<sup>468</sup>

Otto Demus has discussed at length the Byzantine elements of Charlemagne's manuscripts, specifically referencing the evangelist portraits and their garments. Demus points to the 'crumpled silk effect' of the clothing as a Byzantine element, along with the zig-zag hems of the evangelist's clothing and the overall rich colour schemes of the manuscript.<sup>469</sup> Demus states: 'since this style is a local variant of a provincial Greek style, Charlemagne's court school started with a certain amount of Byzantine ingredients in its iconographic and stylistic raw material.'<sup>470</sup> Demus' statement here is vague. By placing the 'provincial' caveat before the 'Greek' root, he has not come to a very definitive conclusion.

While comparisons to the Stavronikita manuscript may be valid in terms of certain aspects of the evangelist figures, it can be argued that the Byzantine connection is not as cut and dry as it would seem. Due to the lack of contemporary ninth-century Byzantine manuscripts, scholars have turned to tenth

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<sup>468</sup> Mutherich, 1977, 32. Nees 2007, 22.

<sup>469</sup> Demus, 1970, 57.

<sup>470</sup> Demus, 1970, 56.



century examples that appear to have been copied from earlier manuscripts.

Stavronikita 43 is one such manuscript. Housed at the Stavronikita monastery at Mount Athos, the manuscript has elaborate evangelist portraits that have been likened to ancient philosophers (fig. 30).<sup>471</sup>

The evangelists are shown, much in a similar fashion to the Godescalc evangelists, deep in thought and writing at their desks. The Stavronikita portraits also include extra architectural details that are similar to those found in western evangelist portraits, such as the portrait of Matthew in the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary (see fig. 28), and the portrait of John in the Soissons Gospels (fig. 31) to name but a few. Joyce Kubiski argues that the architectural details in the evangelist portraits are representations of a typical Roman household.<sup>472</sup> She posits that the architectural details represent a walled garden (also included in the portraits are individual flowers similar to the few flowers found in Carolingian manuscripts as shall be discussed further below) that effectively places the evangelist in a narrative, similar to that of the author pages of the sixth-century manuscript, the Vienna Dioscurides ([Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis](#) med. gr. 1).<sup>473</sup>

Kubiski concludes that because of this narrative created by the portraits and their environments that the manuscript was not Byzantine inspired, but

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<sup>471</sup> Albert Friend and Kurt Weitzmann have both made this observation. Kubiski, 2001, 21.

<sup>472</sup> Kubiski, 2001, 35.

<sup>473</sup> The Vienna Dioscurides author pages are significant as they connect the author to his workplace environment. Kubiski, 2001, 42.

modelled after a fifth-century Roman manuscript.<sup>474</sup> This brief example is but one of many that demonstrates the problematic assignation of Byzantine influence on Carolingian (or any other culture's) material culture. The manuscript has a Constantinopolitan origin yet has been modelled after a Roman prototype. Can we then say that it is Byzantine? Can the similar elements found in Stavronikita manuscript to those of the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary such as 'crumpled silk' or 'zig-zag hems' be defined as Greek influenced, or does influence point a more significant political/social happening at play?

It is quite possible that many elements found in Carolingian manuscripts did derive from a Greek provincial style, however the Greek province where many elements seem to be coming from (as we shall see further below) is Ravenna. Many of the scholars to date agree that the evangelist portraits of the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary were heavily reliant upon the evangelist portraits at San Vitale (fig. 32).<sup>475</sup> While there are obvious differences between the two examples (such as the San Vitale evangelists are seated on rocky crags in an open field whereas the Godescalc evangelists are seated upon cushioned seats), there are similarities in the figural modelling. Hans Belting cites the strong outlines of the figures, and the abstract schematism of the features of the figures as evidence to Godescalc's reliance on San Vitale.<sup>476</sup> Both examples are seated in a similar fashion with similar body positions. Both examples are dressed in classical clothing and there is a sense of a solid figure underneath their clothes (as

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<sup>474</sup> Kubiski, 2001, 43.

<sup>475</sup> Rosenbaum, 1956, Tselos, 1956, Nees, 2007.

<sup>476</sup> Belting, 1967, 95.

opposed to the previous comparison of the Lindisfarne or Gundohinus evangelists). So while these two examples are not identical and there is room for debate as to the extent of influence is present, there have been plenty of comparisons drawn between the two that have led scholars to believe that San Vitale played an integral role in the production of the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary. This comparison, in turn has led to the inevitable argument of Byzantine influence.

If we look past the figural modelling and stylistic comparisons to a close examination of the surrounding elements of the portraits, it becomes even more difficult to pinpoint a singular source of inspiration. As mentioned earlier, the evangelist's symbols derive from western practice. However, when you compare an evangelist portrait from the Lindisfarne gospels (fig. 29) to the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary (see fig. 28) the differences outnumber the similarities. For example, the backgrounds of the evangelist portraits in the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary are much more detailed (and as mentioned above quite different than the evangelist portraits at San Vitale). Matthew and John's portraits and the portrait of Christ have crenellated architecture in the background of the portrait. This has been noted as an unusual feature and its origin is difficult to determine. In a landmark study of evangelist portraits in the early twentieth century, A.M. Friend Jr. noted that the inclusion of an architectural background was a holdover tradition of classical theatre backgrounds that was typically found in eastern

portraits of the evangelists.<sup>477</sup> As we saw earlier with the discussion on the Stavronikita evangelist portraits, the architectural details could be argued as referencing a walled garden.<sup>478</sup> The difference between the Stavronikita details and the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary is the obvious crenellations. Those would suggest more of a city wall (such as the city wall represented in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo's mosaics of the port of Classe, fig. 12) as opposed to a residential garden.

Lawrence Nees noted that architectural details can be found in Byzantine manuscripts, but no Byzantine example contains the crenellated detail found in the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary.<sup>479</sup> Nees connects the crenellations to the concept of *castra dei*, a theme that was popular in contemporary Carolingian poetry.<sup>480</sup> The emphasis of *castra dei* also fits well with the idea of Carolingian military might being emphasised by Charlemagne's court through other avenues such as the preface of the reinstated Salic law and the popularity of the theme of Christ (or Michael) trampling the beasts.<sup>481</sup> While this may not be the most apt example of *castra dei*, we shall come across a more fitting example further below that suggests this theory of expressing Carolingian military might was present in material culture as well.

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<sup>477</sup> Friend, 1929, 9.

<sup>478</sup> As was Kubiski's argument with respect to the architectural details found in the Stavronikita MS 43. Kubiski, 2001.

<sup>479</sup> Such as we saw earlier with Stavronikita MS 43. Nees, 2007, 30.

<sup>480</sup> Nees connects Godescalc with the abbey of St. Denis, which a few years previous to the Godescalc gospels being created was visited by Cathwulf who spoke of the *castra dei*. Nees, 2007, 30-31.

<sup>481</sup> Nees, 2002, 184.

Ravenna can once again be considered as a source of inspiration for the extraneous details found in the Godescalc illuminations. The landscapes behind each of the evangelist portraits have led some scholars to draw comparisons to the mosaics in Ravenna.<sup>482</sup> Although the few and sparse flowers found in the Godescalc evangelist portraits can hardly be described as what we might consider a 'landscape' to be today, David Wright noted when discussing the fifth-century Vergilius Romanus (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, cod. lat. 3867) that the representation of a few flowers dispersed upon a relatively neutral background is in similar to Roman floor mosaics.<sup>483</sup> Wright also continues his examination of the influence of the Vergilius Romanus on mosaics in Ravenna and subsequently Carolingian and Insular manuscripts.

As mentioned earlier, there are compositional similarities between the evangelist mosaics at San Vitale and the Godescalc evangelists share some similarities with various landscapes found throughout San Vitale (fig. 33 & fig. 34). While the landscapes are present in the minimal form of a few stylized plants and vegetation that hide behind the evangelists' stools and integrate into the borders (as with the portrait of Christ), these details nonetheless establish a classicizing trends as well as a precedent for the inclusion of plant life in Carolingian manuscripts.

It has been noted that the landscape backgrounds found in Carolingian manuscripts contribute to the 'Grecian' quality of the illuminations and that a

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<sup>482</sup> Rosenbaum, 1956, 82 and Tselos, 1956, 13.

<sup>483</sup> Wright, 2001, 63.

'Greek ancestry can be assumed' because of the inclusion of landscapes.<sup>484</sup>

While this specific quote was in reference to the Coronation gospels (to be discussed later), it would seem to be hasty to define the Coronation gospels as more 'Greek' than the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary if the inclusion of a landscape is one of the defining factors.

While some Byzantine manuscripts include landscapes (as do many other manuscripts from various cultures), Goldschmidt notes a specific scriptural connection between landscapes and the evangelists. Goldschmidt links the landscapes to the evangelists waiting on the Mount of Olives for Christ to appear to them.<sup>485</sup> Goldschmidt also notes that landscapes specifically in concert with evangelists can only be found in Ravenna and in Carolingian manuscripts (the Byzantine example given by Dmitri Tselos was the tenth-century Vatican Leo Bible which does have landscapes, but not within a similar context).<sup>486</sup> With this in mind, it would seem more plausible that the Carolingians were drawing upon Ravenna for inspiration rather than on contemporary Byzantine works.

Other evangelist portraits in manuscripts attributable to Charlemagne's court are dissected in a similar stylistic way in order to demonstrate a link to Byzantium. The evangelist portraits from the Soissons Gospels (see fig. 31) are frequently cited as examples of the trend of a continued movement away from the more linear and stylized depictions of Insular manuscripts to the more classical

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<sup>484</sup> Tselos, 1956, 20.

<sup>485</sup> Goldschmidt, 1928, 13.

<sup>486</sup> Goldschmidt, 1928, 13.

figural modelling found in Byzantium.<sup>487</sup> This argument typically culminates with the drastically different evangelist portraits of the Coronation Gospels that seem to deviate stylistically from early Carolingian manuscripts.<sup>488</sup>

While the Soissons gospels are more difficult to date given that we can only be certain that they were produced sometime before 827, stylistically they have been dated to after the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary, but before the Coronation gospels, or the year 800.<sup>489</sup> Like the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary, the Soissons book contains evangelist portraits, a miniature of the Fountain of Life and another miniature unique (in terms of Carolingian manuscripts) to Soissons, the Adoration of the Lamb.

The evangelist portraits of the Soissons gospels (fig. 31) are similar to the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary evangelists (fig. 28) in a few aspects. The full-page portraits of both manuscripts show a seated evangelist with his corresponding symbol. However, the evangelists of the Soissons gospels have fewer details in comparison to the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary. Only the portrait of Mark contains a reference to something that could be considered a landscape in the form of wispy flowers behind his stool (there is also a landscape in the vignette of the Annunciation to Zachariah contained in the upper arch, but the scene is separated from the evangelist by a lunette).

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<sup>487</sup> Mutherich, 1970, 44.

<sup>488</sup> Many discuss the differences between the earlier manuscripts and the Vienna gospels. See Mutherich, 1996 and Nees, 2002.

<sup>489</sup> The year 827 is significant to the manuscript as a monk recorded an imperial gift given to the monastery of Saint-Médard that included the Soissons Gospels. Koehler, 1958, 70.

Architectural details are limited in the Soissons evangelists as well. The only portrait containing an architectural detail is the illumination of John. A multi-arcaded structure comprises the majority of the background of John's portrait. What little architectural detail that can found elsewhere is in the form of the arch that frames each evangelist. The Godescalc Gospel Lectionary framed the portraits in a picture frame fashion – a trait considered to be more 'classical' as it is found in manuscripts such as the Vienna Dioscurides.<sup>490</sup> The arcade is considered to be consistent with contemporary western tradition and can be found in the Soisson gospels' close relative, the Ada Gospels.

The Ada Gospels, Abbeville gospels and Lorsch gospels all exhibit very similar stylistic and iconographic attributes to the evangelist portraits of the Soissons gospels and a significant less amount of scholarship has been conducted on their illuminations. All four manuscripts are dated within twenty years of each other beginning in the last decade of the eighth century and all three display a consistent style and visual vocabulary upon which the artists are drawing.<sup>491</sup> The Lorsch is less securely dated to this period, but shares stylistic and iconographical similarities that support this classification.<sup>492</sup> The Ada school of manuscripts, with the exception of the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary, all follow a similar pattern with their evangelist portraits as the portraits found in the Ada gospels.

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<sup>490</sup> Nees, 2007, 29.

<sup>491</sup> See Koehler, 1958 for detailed dating information on the manuscripts of Charlemagne's court atelier.

<sup>492</sup> Koehler, 1952, 52.



The Ada Gospels contain the statement '*Ada Ancilla Dei*' thus connecting the manuscript's inception to an Ada who is thought to have been Charlemagne's sister (although there is no clear evidence for this).<sup>493</sup> Although the dating is not precise, it has been suggested that it was created shortly before the year 800 due to stylistic characteristics closely resembling manuscripts with a more secure date.<sup>494</sup> The manuscript's evangelist portraits contain the standard iconography for the Ada group. The evangelists are seated within an arcade and accompanied by their corresponding symbol. The backgrounds of the portraits are kept relatively simple and there is a lack of ornamental details found in the earlier Godescalc Gospel Lectionary. Three of the four evangelists are shown in full face; Matthew is in profile.<sup>495</sup>

Much like the evangelists of the Soissons and Godescalc Gospel Lectionary, the space between the arch and the evangelist is filled with architectural details. The portrait of Luke (fig. 35) is an excellent example of the similarities within the group. Behind Luke's elaborate and sizable chair is an exedra with arched windows from which his symbol, a haloed and winged ox, seems to be emerging. The drapery of the evangelists' fabric is treated similarly to that in the Godescalc and Soissons evangelists as it demonstrates the so-called 'zig-zag' hems and rigid lines that Demus classified as being influenced by

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<sup>493</sup> While Ada has been thought of as Charlemagne's sister, it is just as likely that she was a well-connected abbess who bore the same name. McKitterick, 1992 (a), 108.

<sup>494</sup> Koehler, 1963, 11-13.

<sup>495</sup> Rosenbaum, 1956, 86.

fabric patters found in Byzantine manuscripts such as the Vatican manuscript no. 1156.<sup>496</sup>

The Abbeville gospels share a very similar visual language with another member of the Ada group, the Soissons gospels. The manuscript is dated to earlier than 831 as it was documented in the inventory of St. Riquier in that year and was most likely a gift from Charlemagne to Angilbert of St. Riquier (a valued member of Charlemagne's court).<sup>497</sup> Research conducted on the content of the text places the date of the Abbeville gospels between the Harley gospels and the Soissons gospels.<sup>498</sup> The gospel book is purple dyed parchment with gold lettering, elaborate incipit pages, minimally decorated canon tables (by comparison to other members of the Ada group), and evangelist portraits.<sup>499</sup> The evangelist portraits (fig. 36) could be considered simpler in their decoration than the Ada gospels. The typical Ada archway is included in the portrait, however the Abbeville portraits lack background details such as architectural structures with the exception the frontispiece to John. There is an attempt to break up the background through a series of horizontal lines, but the remaining page is simple by comparison to the Gosdescalc, Soissons and, to a lesser extent, Ada gospels. While John's portrait does have an architectural element, it is less elaborate than others we have seen and basically consists of geometric lines that resemble the

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<sup>496</sup> While this is an eleventh-century manuscript, Demus asserts the manuscript was certainly copied from an early Byzantine source. Demus, 1970, 57.

<sup>497</sup> Koehler, 1958, 49.

<sup>498</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 113.

<sup>499</sup> McKitterick 2008, 356.

shape of an exedra. The evangelists' robes have the zig-zag pattern found in the other members of the Ada group.

The Lorsch Gospels have been placed in the Ada group based chiefly on the basis of style.<sup>500</sup> Much study has been conducted on the manuscript's elaborate ivory cover; however, the manuscript's illuminations are noteworthy as well. The manuscript is heavily decorated with gold lettering and features many full-page illuminations. Along with the usual four evangelist portraits, the Lorsch Gospels contain a Christ in Majesty illumination as well as elaborate incipit pages and canon tables.

The Christ in Majesty illumination contains many decorative devices that can be found in the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary. The illumination is framed with the 'classical' style picture frame as opposed to the more ubiquitous Ada archway. The frame itself is highly decorated with interlace patterns and painted jewels. Christ is contained within an interlace circle containing images of the evangelist symbols, angels, and more interlace patterns. The youthful, beardless Christ is sitting upon a throne and is styled in a very similar fashion to other Ada figures. His form is stylized with bold outlines and the hems of his clothes are in the familiar zig-zag pattern.

The evangelist portraits, on the other hand, resemble the Ada Gospel evangelists more than the Godescalc portraits. The evangelists are framed within an archway with minimal extraneous decoration. Their corresponding symbols

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<sup>500</sup> The Lorsch gospels contain a miniature figures, frequently found in the margins of the canon tables, which is an iconographical trait found in other Ada group manuscripts such as the Soissons gospels, Harley manuscript. Koehler, 1952, 52.

inhabit the upper space of the archway and the evangelists are seated and in the act of writing. Three of the four Lorsch evangelists have rudimentary landscapes that fill the background of their portraits. The landscapes are similar to those found in the Soissons gospels as the landscapes are represented by abstract curved lines that break the background into three bands. For example, the landscape behind John is separated into three colour bands that transition from green to beige to blue and seem to correspond with a natural setting (the gradations are separated by a wavy line suggesting rolling hills or mountain tops).

Architectural structures appear in both Mark and Matthew's portrait and both are considerably less elaborate than those found in the Ada and Soissons gospels and more reminiscent of the flat architectural structure found in the Christ in Majesty illumination of the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary (albeit without the added crenellation detail).

The miniatures of all four manuscripts remain within a similar colour palette (Soissons and Abbeville closer to each other, while Ada and Lorsch use a simpler palette, but they are all similar nonetheless). The Ada, Abbeville and Lorsch Gospels contain fewer details than the Soissons gospels in that small details such as the vignette of the Annunciation to Zachariah found above the lunette of the Mark portrait and the images of the Miracle at Cana and the Last supper found in the margins of the John portrait. Details are limited to birds of paradise, simple floral decoration and some architectural details (the portrait of Luke in the Ada Gospels sits in an exedra similar to the portrait of John in the Soissons Gospels).

Florentine Mutherich views the evangelist portraits of the Soissons Gospels as a progression from a more Insular style found in Merovingian manuscripts and earlier Carolingian manuscripts to a more 'classical' style of Carolingian manuscript illumination.<sup>501</sup> This sentiment can also be found in a study of the Ada group manuscripts by Elizabeth Rosenbaum. When discussing the Greek influence in the Soissons Gospels, she states: 'Stylistically, the figure of Mark in the Soissons Gospels is obviously dependent on the 'Greek' model, and the details of the drapery show the affinities to middle Byzantine miniatures perhaps more clearly than any other figure of the Ada School.'<sup>502</sup>

Rosenbaum views the evangelist portraits of the Ada group as a stop-gap in our knowledge of what a contemporary Byzantine manuscript may have looked like. She considers the development of manuscript illumination as a continuous line from early Byzantine (whose stylistic elements can be found in Carolingian manuscripts) to Byzantine manuscripts of the tenth century (whose stylistic elements can also be found in Carolingian manuscripts) and therefore the elements that are similar in middle Byzantine manuscripts to the Carolingian predecessors must have come from contemporary Byzantine illuminations because the Ada group could not have possibly influenced Byzantine manuscript production.<sup>503</sup>

Rosenbaum's one directional influence theory not only discounts the possibility for cross-cultural influence, but also discounts the possibility for an

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<sup>501</sup> Mutherich, 1977, 44.

<sup>502</sup> Rosenbaum, 1956, 90.

<sup>503</sup> Rosenbaum, 1956, 87.

intermediary source of influence. Evidence of western visual and material culture travelling west to east has been established (albeit much after Rosenbaum's article). For example, David Buckton noted that the Byzantine practice of cloisonné enamel in fact was a derivation of a Carolingian practice.<sup>504</sup> And both John Osborne and Leslie Brubaker have effectively demonstrated the transmission of Carolingian painted initials into the Byzantine artistic corpus via Greek manuscript centres in Italy.<sup>505</sup>

The Coronation group of gospel books provides convincing evidence of an intermediary source of inspiration. This group is typically used to demonstrate the Carolingian appropriation of a Greek or classical visual style. The book that scholars believe was the first manuscript to employ a very different visual style is the Coronation Gospels (also called the Vienna Coronation Gospels or the Schatzkammer Gospels: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Schatzkammer, Inv. XIII 18). The Coronation Gospel evangelist portraits (fig. 37) show a major deviation from the Ada group and seem to influence a later gospel book associated with Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious, the Ebbo gospels. The evangelists in the Coronation Gospels are shown at their desks (much like previous representations) but are completely surrounded by nature. The landscapes that surround the Coronation evangelists are not abstract: unlike the flora found in the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary or abstract bands of nature in the Lorsch Gospels, they consist of impressionistic trees and rolling hills. The portraits contain no

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<sup>504</sup> Buckton, 1988.

<sup>505</sup> Osborne, 1990 and Brubaker, 1991.

other details (with the exception of an exedra behind Luke and John) and the evangelists are not accompanied by their respective symbols. The evangelists are framed in a picture-frame style much like the portraits in the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary.

The style of the portraits has led to comments on the possibility of a classical model upon which the Carolingian artist was drawing.<sup>506</sup> The evangelists certainly exude a classical feel, dressed in billowing tunics and placed in 'classical' poses.<sup>507</sup> The figures themselves depart from the flat and abstract figures of the Godescalc and Soissons Gospels. John's receding hairline, Matthew's prominent brow and John's long hair give the evangelists an individualistic feel, so much so that Meyer Schapiro identified the evangelists' heads as 'German'.<sup>508</sup> Dmitri Tselos views the change of style as a deliberate shift reliant upon specific models: '...the early phase of a new school [Coronation group] is likely to be more conscientiously imitative than eclectically synthetic.'<sup>509</sup>

While I agree with the sentiment of this statement, we would probably disagree upon the model and motives behind the new portrait types. However, if the manuscript is held to its traditional dating of close to 800, the political situation

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<sup>506</sup> Nees, 2007, 30.

<sup>507</sup> While the portraits resemble classical manuscripts, Nees has discussed the modern scholar's heavy reliance on this comparison and views the portraits as being influenced more by figures found in monuments in Ravenna. Nees, 2007, 31-37.

<sup>508</sup> Schapiro, 1952, 162.

<sup>509</sup> Tselos, 1956, 25.

between Byzantium and the Franks is considerably different and certainly more contentious (this will be discussed more in depth shortly).<sup>510</sup>

An aspect of the Coronation Gospels that seems to support this theory is an inscription found within the manuscript. The inscription of 'Demetrius Presbyter' written (in Latin) in the margin at the beginning of the book of Luke has acted as an endorsement of Greek influence. The inscription is controversial as it is difficult to know Demetrius' role in the manuscript itself. Some believe that the inscription is an indication that a Greek was involved in both the text and illuminations, while others remain skeptical.<sup>511</sup>

As we have seen, the so-called 'Hellenistic' component to the Coronation Gospels is what many scholars have drawn upon as their evidence for an infusion of Greek culture into the Carolingian court. The natural forms and landscapes of the gospel book have long served as evidence for some kind of Greek presence (whether it was an individual artist or a Carolingian reverence for Greek culture) at the Carolingian court. However, previous scholarship has pointed to evidence in Italy of an artistic style that corresponds to the Coronation Gospels and could potentially indicate a link between Carolingian visual culture around the turn of the ninth century and Italy and not a Byzantine influence. The frescoes in the church

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<sup>510</sup> Florentine Mütherich dates the manuscript to the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. Although it is more difficult to say for certain what relations between the two powers were, her date still pre-dates the peace treaty between Irene and Charlemagne.

<sup>511</sup> Meyer Schapiro identified the hand that wrote the inscription to be different from that of the actual scribe and suggests that Demetrius had no hand in the illuminations themselves. Schapiro, 1952, 162. Tselos believes it was the signature of a scribe who Charlemagne sought to aid in the translation of liturgical texts. Tselos also mentions the location of the inscription is odd as it is not in a typical location on the folio. Tselos, 1956, 17.



of Santa Maria in Castelseprio in Northern Italy display an illusionistic style remarkably similar to the evangelist portraits of the Coronation Gospels.

The frescoes that remain intact place Mary at the centre of the narrative, even when the scene is of a christological nature. Scenes such as the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Trial by Water, Joseph's Dream, the Journey to Bethlehem, the Nativity, the Adoration, and the Presentation at Temple are depicted with Mary dominating the scene physically whether or not she dominates the narrative in the scene's textual counterpart.<sup>512</sup>

The so-called 'Hellenistic' aspect of these frescoes, much like the 'Hellenistic' aspect of the Coronation Gospels, has been defined by the strong modelling of the figures, the elaborate backgrounds and landscaping, and the '...impressive evidence of the vitality of Hellenism...'.<sup>513</sup> For example, the Annunciation (fig. 38) and the Presentation at Temple (fig. 39) contains figures that are similar to the figures in the Coronation gospels as they are rendered in a more 'illusionistic' form. They do not resemble the stiff and flat figures that dominate contemporary Insular art, but are more dynamic in their movement and contain a strong corporeal presence. The haloes of the figures also bear a strong resemblance to each other in both their size and colouring. The haloes seem to be oversized, set somewhat off centre, and strongly outlined in a heavy brushstroke. However, much like the Coronation Gospels, a similar attempt to

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<sup>512</sup> Leveto, 1990, 394.

<sup>513</sup> Schapiro, 1952, 147.

label these frescoes as an example of a Greek or Hellenistic influence as has been attempted, but also has been challenged.

Kurt Weitzmann, in his book *The Fresco Cycle of S. Maria di Castelseprio* (1951), championed the idea that the frescoes were the result of Greek influence in the tenth century, due to a number of factors. Stylistically, he categorizes the frescoes as Hellenistic due to their similarities to the Joshua Roll and the Paris Psalter (both securely dated and identified as tenth-century Constantinopolitan manuscripts).<sup>514</sup> Historically, he places the infusion of Greek style into Italy on the shoulders of a Greek artist who may have travelled west during a series of marriage negotiations between the Byzantine emperor Romanos and the Lombard king Hugo.<sup>515</sup> Weitzmann further supports this date with a graffito found in the apse naming the Archbishop Ardericus who was in power during the years 936-948.<sup>516</sup> However Meyer Schapiro has challenged most of Weitzmann's theory.

Schapiro argued that placing the frescoes at Castelseprio within a similar time frame to the Joshua Roll and the Paris Psalter is a hasty classification. While he agreed that there are striking similarities between the frescoes and the Greek manuscripts, Schapiro suggested that there are more significant similarities between the frescoes and ninth-century Carolingian works, both stylistically and iconographically.<sup>517</sup> For instance, Weitzmann points to the extraneous

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<sup>514</sup> Weitzmann, 1951, p. 28-42.

<sup>515</sup> Weitzmann, 1951, p.92.

<sup>516</sup> Weitzmann, 1951, p.92.

<sup>517</sup> Schapiro, 1952, 147-150.

decorations in the frescoes that separate the narratives as being in the same tradition as the so-called tenth-century 'renaissance'.<sup>518</sup> However, Schapiro notes that this device was utilized in the Utrecht Psalter that (he believed) was based on an earlier model, therefore suggesting that this narrative device was not necessarily an element of a renaissance, but something that remained in practice throughout the centuries (at least in the west).<sup>519</sup>

To further his argument supporting an earlier date (and an argument that later scholars such as Leveto have further elaborated upon) relies on the iconography of the frescoes. The iconography found throughout many of the scenes can find parallels not in Byzantine visual culture, but in Carolingian works. For example, the Annunciation scene would be considered unusual for the Byzantine viewer as it has three figures as opposed to the typical two: Mary and Gabriel. The frescoes include Mary's servant girl who stands at the threshold of a structure watching over the scene. This iconographical element is not typical of Byzantine representations of the Annunciation, but can be found in various Carolingian interpretations.<sup>520</sup> The iconography of the Annunciation in Carolingian works will be discussed in greater length below; however what is to be considered at this time is the similarities between Carolingian and Italian style and iconography that link Castelseprio with ninth-century Carolingian visual culture. If such a link existed, it could potentially serve as an avenue of transmission of style and iconography to the Carolingian court.

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<sup>518</sup> Weitzmann, 1951, 28.

<sup>519</sup> Schapiro, 1952, 148.

<sup>520</sup> Leveto, 1990, 405.

Meyer Schapiro postulated that the frescoes are evidence of an existing artistic tradition in Italy that became a major influence on Carolingian visual culture and that is why the illusionistic style seems to arise from seemingly nowhere in the Coronation gospels.<sup>521</sup> He states: 'From North Carolingian works it is possible, I believe, to infer the existence of an art like that of Castelseprio in Italy during the seventh and eighth centuries.'<sup>522</sup> While he maintains the outdated notion that the style became popular in Italy as a result of Greek artists fleeing iconoclast Byzantium, his observance of the similarities between Carolingian iconography and the iconography at Castelseprio provides convincing evidence of the transmission of iconography as well as style from Italy further west.<sup>523</sup>

While Schapiro and Leveto put forth a convincing iconographical analysis of Castelseprio, the dating of the frescoes have remained somewhat controversial with dates ranging from the seventh to the tenth centuries having been previously considered.<sup>524</sup> However, more recent studies have provided more scientifically based and accurate dating for the frescoes.<sup>525</sup> Recent dendrochronological testing conducted on a roof beam in the eastern apse of the church has produced a date of 960±13.<sup>526</sup> As such, the frescoes cannot no longer be considered to have had direct influence on the Coronation Gospels. However, they can indicate

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<sup>521</sup> Schapiro, 1952, 163.

<sup>522</sup> Schapiro, 1952, 163.

<sup>523</sup> Schapiro, 1952, 162.

<sup>524</sup> Leveto, 1990, 393.

<sup>525</sup> See: Mitchell and Beal, 2013.

<sup>526</sup> Mitchell and Beal, 2013, 312.

a continuing tradition of classicization of pictorial arts that can be argued was supported by earlier Carolingian ideals.

In their article supporting the dating of the tenth century, Mitchell and Leal agree with a certain aspect of Schapiro's iconographical and stylistic analysis by placing the frescoes in context as being Italian in influence as opposed to Byzantine.<sup>527</sup> They point to wall decorations in monuments such as Santa Maria Antiqua, St. John in Müstair and San Salvatore in Brescia as possible sources of inspiration.<sup>528</sup> Mitchell and Leal point to the similarities found in the architectural details and cite them as a trend towards classicization.<sup>529</sup> Much attention in the article is given to the role of Lombard kings and their desire to promote Imperial Roman practices and cite San Salvatore as an example of this desire.<sup>530</sup>

Built by Charlemagne's earlier discussed foe, Desiderius between the years of 750 and 760, San Salvatore in Brescia contains fragmentary frescoes that display similarities to Castelseprio. Mitchell and Leal point specifically to the fresco of the Flight into Egypt where comparisons can be easily made compositionally speaking.<sup>531</sup> Mitchell and Leal discuss the ambitions of Lombard kings as a main avenue of the transmission of Roman Imperial ideals into their artistic commissions much in a similar fashion as I have presented Charlemagne's artistic programme. Their explanation for the Lombard king's

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<sup>527</sup> Although there are similarities to contemporary Byzantine art such as the narrative composition, Mitchell and Leal have argued that the painters of the frescoes relied heavily upon Italian traditions. Mitchell and Leal, 2013, 315-326.

<sup>528</sup> Mitchell and Leal, 2013, 317.

<sup>529</sup> Mitchell and Leal, 2013, 317.

<sup>530</sup> Mitchell and Leal, 2013, 325.

<sup>531</sup> Mitchell and Leal, 2013, 319.

appropriation of Roman Imperial conventions as a way to communicate their power to the papacy and to the elite ruling classes of Italy can be framed within our discussion of competitive sharing and perhaps is could be a fruitful area for further expansion of the framework proposed by this thesis. Mitchell and Leal further their discussion on the trend towards classicization in Italy by including other Carolingian rulers and specifically the very famous Utrecht Psalter (fig. 40; Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 484).

Although the Utrecht Psalter falls outside of the parameters of this thesis (having been produced during Louis the Pious' rule circa 830), I would be remiss not to point to the manuscript as an example of Carolingian material culture demonstrating a high level of classicization. Described as being influenced by Greek culture and demonstrating a high level of 'Hellenistic illusionism', the Utrecht Psalter predates the Macedonian Renaissance in Byzantium thereby suggesting that a market existed for the production and consumption of classical material culture in the west.<sup>532</sup> Mitchell and Leal discuss the connection between the Psalter and Castelseprio in their article and suggest that it demonstrates a continued interest in classical elements in Italy promoted by outside cultures (the first being the Lombards and the second being the Carolingians who continued this revival of sorts).<sup>533</sup> They state: '...the new Carolingian masters of Italy recognized the values and potentials of Lombard court culture and drew freely on the inventions and services of Italian artists in developing their own culture

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<sup>532</sup> Demus, 1970, 67.

<sup>533</sup> Mitchell and Leal, 2013, 326.

strategies and visual paradigms.<sup>534</sup> However, some have noted that the Utrecht Psalter was based upon earlier works and therefore suggests that this classicising style was present (if not prevalent) at the court of Charlemagne.<sup>535</sup> While the majority of their discussion focuses on the rulers of Italy before and after Charlemagne, I believe Charlemagne's cultural programme can also be placed within this cultural context thereby creating continual patronage of classical material culture throughout the eighth and ninth century.

Perhaps another example of a classicizing trend being present during Charlemagne's reign and well within the boundaries of his empire can be demonstrated by the wall paintings at St. Johann at Müstair. Built in a region that bridges Italy and present-day France and Germany, St. Johann at Müstair has been securely dated to 775, or the first half of Charlemagne's reign.<sup>536</sup> While there is no secure written evidence that connects Charlemagne to the church (thereby making connections between secure court productions and Müstair difficult), there is a long-standing legend that connects Charlemagne to the region.<sup>537</sup>

The wall paintings are said to be demonstrative of a classicizing trend in a similar vein to Lombard practice in Italy and also display similarities to the wall paintings at Castelseprio.<sup>538</sup> For example, the Flight into Egypt painting (fig. 41) shares communalities to both contemporaneous Italian works as well as the wall

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<sup>534</sup> Mitchell and Leal, 2013, 326.

<sup>535</sup> Chazelle, 1997, 1056.

<sup>536</sup> Dendrochronological testing conducted on the roof has produced the date (with a minor margin of error) of 775. Mitchell, 2013, 367.

<sup>537</sup> Written documentation of Charlemagne's connection to the church dates back to the twelfth century. There is also a statue on the exterior of the church that is said to be of Charlemagne. Mitchell, 2013, 367.

<sup>538</sup> Mitchell, 2013, 375.

paintings at Castelseprio. Mitchell notes the similarities between facial characteristics of the figures to those of Lombard paintings as well as Carolingian manuscripts (specifically the Lorsch Gospels).<sup>539</sup> The Flight to Egypt also contains elaborate architectural settings which Mitchell has discussed as an example of classicization and draws comparisons to Castelseprio and the tenth-century Paris Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. gr. 139).<sup>540</sup> While Müstair does display architectural details, I would argue that they serve more as an intermediary between early Carolingian and later Byzantine and Italian examples than direct comparisons.

The architectural details of Müstair's wall paintings closely resemble the flattened and stylized details that can be found in contemporaneous Carolingian manuscripts such as the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary. Müstair's architectural details even include crenellations similar to those found in Ravenna's mosaics and on the Godescalc portraits. The archway that Mary passes through closely resembles the archways under which the evangelists sit in many Carolingian manuscripts such as the Ada and Abbeville Gospels (fig. 35 and 36). Not much of an attempt of three-dimensional modelling is made in comparison to Castelseprio (and even more so in comparison to the Paris Psalter) and one can also make out a faint decorative detailing in the archway in a very similar fashion to those found in Carolingian manuscripts.

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<sup>539</sup> Mitchell, 2013, 373.

<sup>540</sup> Mitchell, 2013, 375.



While Müstair's connection directly to Charlemagne may not be absolute, it does provide an interesting case study on the developing classicization trend that is occurring within Charlemagne's lifetime and empire. Mitchell discusses at great lengths Müstair's connection to its eastern borders with Lombard Italy and Castelseprio, but I believe that it also effectively demonstrates the evolution taking place to the west as well. Müstair seems to be filling in a gap stylistically so to say between the heavily stylized Godescalc Gospel Lectionary and the Coronation Gospels. The wall paintings at Müstair serve to demonstrate a more contemporary example to Charlemagne's cultural programme of increased classicization than the wall paintings at Castelseprio while also providing an interesting example of the transition from flattened and stylized figures and architectural settings of early Carolingian works to the more classical and 'Greek' inspired works of later Carolingian and Italian monuments and manuscripts.

The majority of the previous evidence discussed that supposedly proves a Greek influence relies heavily on stylistic analysis. The manuscripts previously discussed contain an iconographical formula that does not deviate much from manuscript to manuscript. As discussed earlier, the major iconographical difference found in the portraits is the presence (or absence) of the evangelist symbol. The absence of the evangelist symbol in the Coronation Gospels is the main iconographical factor that scholars rely upon when attempting to rationalize the shift in style. The lack of the symbol follows an eastern iconographical tradition and this in combination with the Demetrius inscription and the classical

figures have led many to believe this change was due either to an influx of Greek artists, or should be seen as a manifestation of Charlemagne's cultural *renovatio*.

The lack of the evangelist symbol is a feature that can readily be found in tenth-century Byzantine manuscripts. The earlier discussed Stavronikita Ms 43 is one such example. As we saw earlier, the evangelists sit at their desks within a decorative square frame (much like the Vienna Dioscurides) upon a backdrop of elaborate architectural details. Kubiski made the strong argument for a distinct western influence on this manuscript due to the evangelists' setting as well as the decorative frame. When discussing the Stavronikita manuscript as the paragon of the Middle Byzantine era, Kurt Weitzmann also points to earlier Roman fourth or fifth century prototype.<sup>541</sup> While the Coronation evangelists share some similarities to the Stavronikita evangelists (and leaving issues of the varying influences on the Stavronikita manuscript aside), it is limited to but a few details such as the square frame, lack of evangelist symbol, and architectural details thereby making a secure connection difficult.<sup>542</sup>

Some scholars have even examined the flaking of the paint of the Coronation Gospels and have pointed to that as evidence of Byzantine techniques and inspiration.<sup>543</sup> However, as Nees pointed out, the flaking of paint on manuscripts is not relegated to the east and that other Carolingian

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<sup>541</sup> Weitzmann, 1971, 115-117.

<sup>542</sup> Florentine Mutherich argues that the architectural details found in the Coronation Gospels are similar to those found in the Stavronikita Ms 43. However, I would argue that the details are closely related to those found at Müstair or the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary. The architectural details found in the Stavronikita Ms 43, in my opinion, are more closely related to those found in the Soissons Gospels. Mutherich, 1977, 51.

<sup>543</sup> Demus, 1970, 65.

manuscripts such as the Abbeville Gospels also demonstrate the same deterioration.<sup>544</sup> While I tend not to agree with many of Demus' observations, I do agree with his statement that the Coronation Gospels '...have no known parallels in the art of their time.'<sup>545</sup>

While the evangelist portraits of the Coronation Gospels leave little room for iconographical analysis that can either refute or agree with attempts to link them to Byzantium, the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary and the Soissons Gospels contain illuminations other than evangelist portraits that scholars use in their attempts to alternatively link and distance Carolingian manuscript production to Byzantium.

Both of the manuscripts contain a non-figural illumination called the 'Fountain of Life' miniature (fig. 42 and fig. 43). The illumination is of an architectural structure supported by columns and surrounded by various wildlife figures. The main architectural structure is said to mimic the Lateran Baptistery in Rome where Charlemagne's son was baptised.<sup>546</sup> The wildlife included in the image hold symbolic meaning – the peacocks being a well known and well used symbol for Paradise while the stag references Psalm 42: 'As the Hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.'<sup>547</sup> The Adoration of the Lamb miniature in the Soissons Gospels contains another illuminated page that relies heavily on symbolism rather than figural representations or narrative.

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<sup>544</sup> Nees, 2014, 272.

<sup>545</sup> Demus, 1970, 62.

<sup>546</sup> Mutherich, 1977, 34.

<sup>547</sup> Mutherich, 1977, 34.

The Adoration of the Lamb (fig. 44) is apocalyptic in nature as it depicts the second coming of Christ. The illumination consists of an architectural structure of strange perspective with four columns in the foreground. The architectural structure in this miniature is a representation of the Heavenly City and its odd perspective and inspiration are thought to be of Byzantine origin.<sup>548</sup> Along the top of the columns runs a frieze containing roundels of the four evangelist symbols directly above the four columns. The only figures represented in the image are the twenty-four elders who stand above the evangelist symbols and are shown singing Christ's praises. Christ in this image is represented by the lamb, as opposed to a full figure representation; his rays of light radiate towards the evangelists. Although there are figural representations (in the form of the twenty-four elders), some believe that this page is a physical manifestation of a response to events taking place in Byzantium.

This trend towards minimal figures has been argued as an example of the Carolingian response to the Acts of II Nicaea.<sup>549</sup> Theodulf of Orleans' *Opus Karoli Regis* is a document that was important for the Carolingian response to the council's decision for the restoration of icons. The *Opus* was written on the encouragement of Charlemagne and is very critical of the Byzantine decision.<sup>550</sup> Throughout the *Opus* the language used to describe the Byzantines and the council is largely negative.<sup>551</sup> Words such as childish, delirious, demented,

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<sup>548</sup> Mutherich, 1977, 39.

<sup>549</sup> Demus, 1970, 51.

<sup>550</sup> Noble, 2009, 181.

<sup>551</sup> Noble, 2009, 181.

reprehensible, silly, and perverse are peppered throughout, leaving a strong impression of Carolingian dislike for the Byzantines and their theological initiative.<sup>552</sup>

There has been an argument that Theodulf was working with a poor translation of the Acts of Nicaea and that there was confusion between the words *proskynesis* and veneration, leading Theodulf to believe that the Byzantines held an inappropriate amount of regard for idols – an amount that was verging on idol worship.<sup>553</sup> This idea has been widely accepted and many have viewed the *Opus* as a misunderstanding due to poor communication. However, recent scholarship has undermined this position and has provided convincing evidence that this was not the case and that Theodulf's reaction came from a place of complete understanding.<sup>554</sup> Marie-France Auzépy states: 'on the whole, the author of the *Libri Carolini* [*Opus Karoli Regis*] understood perfectly the sense of the argumentation of II Nicaea and even its contorted subtleties.'<sup>555</sup>

However, the link between the Adoration of the Lamb and the Fountain of Life and Theodulf's stance on iconoclasm is tenuous at best. While the *Opus* demonstrates the author's disdain for the Council's decision, it does not condemn figural representations outright. In his 2009 book, *Images, Iconoclasm and the Carolingians*, Thomas Noble provided an extensive examination of the Carolingian response to II Nicaea. While he believes that the *Opus* demonstrated

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<sup>552</sup> Noble, 2009, 181.

<sup>553</sup> Noble, 2009, 182.

<sup>554</sup> Auzépy, 1997.

<sup>555</sup> Auzépy, 1997, 292.

the opinions of Charlemagne's court, he stressed that while Theodulf was responding to Byzantium's reinstatement of images, it is not the images themselves with which he takes offense, but with the inappropriate amount of worship he believes the Byzantines offer images.<sup>556</sup> Noble points to a specific passage of the *Opus* as evidence of this belief: 'We do not speak against images for the memory of past deeds and the beauty of churches, since we know that they were made thus by Moses and Solomon, although as type figures, but we reject their most insolent or rather most superstitious adoration which we cannot discover to have been instituted by the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, or apostolic men.'<sup>557</sup> To which Charlemagne responded: 'Perfect!'<sup>558</sup>

These passages would indicate that the exclusion of images was a concern not only for Charlemagne, but for some members of his court as well. Therefore, it would seem unlikely that two miniatures that have minimal figural representations (the Adoration of the Lamb still includes the twenty-four elders, which, again, I would argue constitute figural representations) in a book with other full-page figural representations is a commentary on II Nicaea. While the *Opus* demonstrates a clear negative opinion of Byzantium, it is difficult to link these manuscripts to a similar sentiment.

When taking the above argument into consideration, the link between Carolingian and Byzantine illuminations is further weakened. Not only are iconographical similarities more abundant in comparison to Italian visual culture

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<sup>556</sup> Noble, 2009, 215.

<sup>557</sup> Noble, 2009, 215.

<sup>558</sup> Noble, 2009, 215.

than Byzantine culture, the fundamental impetus (whether it be politically or theologically motivated) to appropriate Byzantine visual culture does not seem to be present in Carolingian manuscripts.

## IVORIES

Another aspect of Charlemagne's cultural programme that is frequently cited as borrowing elements of Byzantine material culture are the ivories produced in Charlemagne's ateliers.<sup>559</sup> Charlemagne's ateliers produced ivories that frequently acted as book covers for the manuscripts that were being produced in the same ateliers. According to Adolf Goldschmidt, the Ada group of ivories contained over thirty-nine pieces that relied heavily on manuscripts as models.<sup>560</sup> In 1960 Thomas Hoving contributed to the literature on the Ada group significantly with his PhD dissertation. Hoving discussed a significant number of the ivories attributed by Goldschmidt to the Ada group and analysed their sources. Much as scholars have found true of the manuscripts discussed above, Hoving noted a distinct shift that occurs around the beginning of the ninth century and therefore divided the ivories into two groups: Early and Late.<sup>561</sup> The difference between the Early and Late style, in his view, rests upon the artist's adherence to the models from which they are drawing inspiration.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Lewis, 1980, Hoving, 1960, Beckwith, 1989, Demus, 1970, Weitzmann, 1965.

<sup>560</sup> Goldschmidt, 1905, 47.

<sup>561</sup> Hoving, 1960, 221.

<sup>562</sup> Hoving, 1960, 221.

Hoving cited multiple sources of inspiration for the Ada group of ivories. He suggests that a large portion of the Early group are heavily reliant upon fifth- and sixth-century Italian models, therefore making confident attributions to a Carolingian atelier difficult.<sup>563</sup> Ivories such as the Andrew's diptych (fig. 45), although following a similar stylistic formula as the early manuscripts of the Ada group by rendering the figures with flat lines and lending them a quality of 'hardness', are argued by Hoving to have been a fifth-century Italian work.<sup>564</sup>

The Milan diptych (fig. 46) is more confidently classified as Carolingian, chiefly on the basis of iconographical consistencies with Carolingian manuscripts. For example, the oversized basin in which Christ washes Peter's feet is consistent with Carolingian iconography.<sup>565</sup> However, it is the extraneous details of the ivory that Hoving relies upon to draw multiple comparisons to Carolingian manuscripts. The ivory has architectural details similar to many of the Ada manuscripts, such as the arch where Pontius Pilate washes his hands, which is reminiscent of the arches within which the evangelists are framed in the Ada and Lorsch Gospels.<sup>566</sup> According to Hoving, most of the architectural insertions find their iconographical inception in Carolingian visual culture as the filling of empty space is a typical Carolingian, and not Italian or eastern attribute.<sup>567</sup>

While Hoving cites a western origin for the majority of the models from which the Carolingian artists are working, he does note some iconographical

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<sup>563</sup> Hoving, 1960, 7.

<sup>564</sup> Hoving, 1960, 11.

<sup>565</sup> Hoving, 1960, 14.

<sup>566</sup> Hoving, 1960, 14.

<sup>567</sup> Hoving, 1960, 28.



elements that seem to derive from the east. For example, a diptych from Aachen displays a version of the Supper at Tiberias that is closely related to eastern representations.<sup>568</sup> According to Hoving, the Oxford book cover (fig. 47) also contains eastern iconography. But he also questions whether the transmission of eastern iconography was a conscious and direct transmission, or whether it was instead filtered through Italy before making its way further west.<sup>569</sup> He succinctly summarises the problem by stating: 'All one can say is that there is in the Carolingian image the mark of an 'oriental' element.'<sup>570</sup>

The book cover contains many biblical scenes with a large Christ in the centre with a cross sceptre carried over his right shoulder treading on beasts. This iconographical feature is popular in Carolingian courtly productions and can also be found in multiple sites in Ravenna (such as the Archiepiscopal palace and the Neonian baptistery).<sup>571</sup> While Christ trampling the beasts was a popular iconographical device in Carolingian productions, it is the Annunciation scene above Christ that deviates from a typical iconographical tradition.

The Annunciation on the Oxford book cover contains an extra figure that is typically not included in this particular scene, but one that we saw earlier in the frescoes at Castelseprio. The scene consists of a winged and nimbed Gabriel carrying a staff (an unusual feature) approaching a seated Mary and another

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<sup>568</sup> In eastern representations of this scene, Christ is typically shown seated with the apostles whereas western interpretations have Christ standing. The Aachen ivory has Christ seated. Hoving, 1960, 53.

<sup>569</sup> Hoving, 1960, 16-17.

<sup>570</sup> Hoving, 1960, 16.

<sup>571</sup> Hoving, 1960, 40.

woman.<sup>572</sup> Behind Mary and the woman is an architectural structure that resembles a miniature building with a row of columns on the lower register of the facade. Hoving explains the presence of the servant in relation to a passage in the *protevangelium of James*.<sup>573</sup> There is very little information given to us by the canonical texts of the New Testament on Mary and her life and the account of the Annunciation comprises of a little more than ten lines of scripture, providing readers with few details. However, apocryphal texts such as the *protevangelium of James* and *Pseudo-Matthew* gave more detailed account of the Annunciation. The book of James was a popular text (especially in the east) and various iconographical devices were inspired by the text.<sup>574</sup>

The presence of a servant and the architectural structure can be considered one such example where the text is asserting its influence. The text describes Mary's life before the Annunciation as one dedicated to purity and religion.<sup>575</sup> It states:

Now there was a council of the priests, who resolved: 'Let us make a veil for the Temple of the Lord.' And the priest said: 'Call to me the pure virgins of the tribe of David.' And the officers departed and searched, and the found seven (such) virgins. And the priest remembered the child Mary, that she was of the tribe of David and was pure before God. And the officers went and fetched her.

Then they brought them to into the Temple of the Lord, and the priest said: 'Cast me lots, who shall weave the gold, the amiant, the linen, the silk, the hyacinth-blue, the scarlet and the pure purple.' And to Mary fell the lot of the 'pure purple' and 'scarlet'. And she took them and went

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<sup>572</sup> Hoving notes that the wings, nimbus and staff of Gabriel are not seen before the sixth century and therefore the artist must have been working from multiple sources. Hoving, 1960, 33.

<sup>573</sup> Hoving, 1960, 32.

<sup>574</sup> For example, the iconography of Mary sitting outside of the temple and weaving can find textual origins in the book of James. This iconography can be seen in the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore, the ivories of the throne of Maximian as well as others. Lewis, 1980, 73.

<sup>575</sup> Rubin, 2009, 11.

away to her house. At that time Zacharias became dumb, and Samuel took his place until Zacharias was able to speak (again). But Mary took the scarlet and spun it.

And she took the pitcher and went forth to draw water, and behold, a voice said: 'Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.' And she looked around on the right and on the left to see whence this voice came. And trembling she went to her house and put down the pitcher and took the purple and sat down on her seat and drew out (the thread).<sup>576</sup>

This account remained influential in the east, but was omitted from the New Testament and was never considered to have made much of an impact on the west.<sup>577</sup> Therefore, Hoving considers the appearance of details that correspond to the text as evidence of an eastern source.<sup>578</sup> Robert Deshman fundamentally agrees with Hoving in that the servant's presence can be viewed as being reliant upon an eastern textual source, but Carolingians visually interpreted the scene quite differently and the inclusion of the servant indicates a more elevated and interactive role for Mary.

The servant's presence, according to Robert Deshman, is a visual representation of the other virgins, mentioned in the text of James and Matthew, who accompanied Mary to the temple.<sup>579</sup> The inclusion of the servant, while not overly popular in Byzantium at this time, became a popular theme in Carolingian art and can be seen as a testament to Mary's growing popularity in the west.<sup>580</sup> Deshman argues that the inclusion of the servant (while based on text), serves an

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<sup>576</sup> Prot. James, 10-11; Eng. trans. R. McL. Wilson, 1991, 430.

<sup>577</sup> Warner, 1976, 30.

<sup>578</sup> Hoving, 1960, 32. This idea has pervaded through scholarship and is discussed from an eastern perspective by Maguire, 2006.

<sup>579</sup> Deshman, 1989, 53.

<sup>580</sup> Deshman, 1989, 57-61.

exegetical purpose as the servant acts as a representation of the believer that serves to emphasize Mary's intercessional attributes.<sup>581</sup> There are many other examples of western works demonstrating an apocryphal knowledge of the Annunciation.

One of the earliest monuments prominently to feature Mary also displays references to the story of the Annunciation as told by James. The Annunciation mosaic at Santa Maria Maggiore (c.440) in Rome provides us evidence of the book of James' influence in the west. Mary is depicted seated outside of a small, two-columned building. Resting on the ground beside Mary is a basket of scarlet coloured wool that is a direct reference to James' account.<sup>582</sup> These details can be found elsewhere throughout western material culture over the next few centuries.

The Throne of Maximian (499-556), made for the bishop of Ravenna, ascribed a likely eastern origin due to stylistic comparisons to Egyptian ivories, resided in Italy from the sixth-century onwards.<sup>583</sup> The throne is described by Ernst Kitzinger as being made under the direct specifications of bishop Maximian and has subsequently been relied upon by many scholars as a possible model of major iconographical influence on the western Christian artistic tradition.<sup>584</sup> The throne, used chiefly for liturgical purposes, is inlaid with panels

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<sup>581</sup> Deshman, 1989, 57.

<sup>582</sup> Lewis, 1980, 73.

<sup>583</sup> Smith suggested that the throne was either produced in Alexandria or Antioch based on iconographical analysis. Smith, 1917, 23.

<sup>584</sup> Kitzinger, 1995, 94.

of ivory depicting various biblical scenes.<sup>585</sup> The Annunciation is one of the scenes depicted on the throne (fig. 48). In this interpretation of the scene, Mary is depicted with an iconographical feature that links the image to James' account of the Annunciation. Much like the Oxford book cover; the angel Gabriel has wings, a staff and the faintest outline of a halo. Mary is seated in a high-backed wicker chair in front of an architectural structure that has elements of a temple (a foreshortened pediment supported by columns). In her hands Mary holds spindles that reference her spinning activities explained in the book of James. Although the *protevangelium* of James was considered to be an apocryphal text, these examples demonstrate the text's pervasiveness, even in the west. These iconographical themes related to the text are carried out of Ravenna and can be seen in various Carolingian ivories, including the Oxford book cover.

Another example linked to the Carolingians is the Genoels-Elderen ivory panels (fig. 49). Previously the panels were thought to have been the covers for the *Godescalc Gospel Lectionary* after a stylistic comparison to contemporary manuscripts was conducted.<sup>586</sup> However, as Carol Neuman De Vegvar hypothesises, the ivories were a pre-Carolingian Bavarian production reliant upon Italian models and were potentially another avenue of Italian (specifically Ravennate) iconographical and stylistic transmission.<sup>587</sup> If Neuman De Vegvar is

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<sup>585</sup> Smith, 1917, 22.

<sup>586</sup> The figures were considered to be stylised and flat, much like the figures of the *Godescalc Gospel Lectionary*. Neuman De Vegvar, 1990, 12.

<sup>587</sup> Neuman De Vegvar, 1990.

correct, then the ivories could potentially have had a significant impact on Carolingian iconography.

The ivories consist of two panels. One panel shows a theme found in both Carolingian and Ravennate works: Christ trampling the beasts. Christ dominates a whole panel as he seems to leap out of the frame to trample various beasts underfoot. He carries the cross-sceptre over his shoulder and is flanked by two angels. The second panel is divided into two halves and contains two scenes from the Virgin's life. The top half is the Annunciation and the bottom is the Visitation. The Annunciation contains elements similar to the Oxford book cover and the Throne of Maximian. Mary is being visited by a winged, nimbed Gabriel carrying a staff and is accompanied by a second female figure. Mary holds spindles in her hands and the background architecture is once again an abstract rendering of a temple with a discernible pediment and columns. Although Neuman De Vegvar convincingly demonstrated these ivories as being Bavarian and not Carolingian, they do provide us with an example of the James iconography disseminating outwards from Italy, therefore suggesting that iconography associated with the apocryphal text was not limited to the east.

One ivory that has been ascribed to the Ada group by Goldschmidt and Hoving and is considered to be an example of Byzantine iconography permeating Carolingian material culture is the so-called *Virgo Militans* (fig. 50). The panel, now a part of the Morgan collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, is an unusual ivory. The dating of the panel has caused considerable

discussion amongst scholars. Some have dated the ivory to the tenth century, based partially on its similar dimensions to the Gero codex, and therefore its possibility as a cover for the book.<sup>588</sup> However, stylistically speaking, the ivory has been dated considerably earlier than the tenth century and scholars such as Goldschmidt and Hoving place it within Charlemagne's Ada atelier.<sup>589</sup> A more precise dating would certainly shed considerable light on to the possible sources and inspiration for the ivory as the prevailing argument places the ivory at the turn of the ninth century and sees it as heavily influenced by the increasing interactions with Byzantium.<sup>590</sup> However, while this argument is compelling, it leaves room for alternative interpretations.

A comprehensive study on the panel conducted by Suzanne Lewis in 1980 suggested that the unique iconography of the panel could be linked to direct contact between the Carolingians and the Byzantines during a period of increased interaction between the two cultures.<sup>591</sup> She suggests that the unique iconography is in reference to the presence of a Byzantine hymn at the court of Charlemagne. Lewis suggests that Charlemagne appropriated the powerful imagery created by the *Akathistos* hymn of a militarized Virgin to celebrate Charlemagne's triumph over the Adoptionist heresy.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Hoving, 1960, 201.

<sup>589</sup> Hoving, 1960, 201.

<sup>590</sup> Lewis, 1980, 71.

<sup>591</sup> Specifically the embassies of Byzantine delegates sent by Empress Irene between the years 798 and 802. Lewis, 1980, 83-93.

<sup>592</sup> Lewis, 1980, 71.

The ivory depicts a singular female figure dressed in what has been described as imperial and military dress holding spindles in her left hand and a cross-sceptre in her right hand.<sup>593</sup> The figure is seated upon a plush cushion that rests on top of a stool. She is framed by an architectural detail of an archway engraved with acanthus leaves. The panel is relatively free of superfluous decoration save a few animal details of two peacocks and two other well-worn lions.

The iconography of the ivory, as a whole, is an interesting interpretation that does not seem to have a precedent in western or Byzantine artistic tradition and seems to be a mix of different interpretations of the Virgin.<sup>594</sup> The main identifiable features of the panel that provides evidence that this is an image of the Virgin are the spindles she holds in her left hand. According to Lewis, the spindles are most frequently found in eastern representations of the Virgin and it is this iconographical character that leads her to link the panel to a Byzantine hymn: the *Akathistos*.<sup>595</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, the spindles are an iconographical device that is familiar in both eastern and western contexts.

While this panel does not completely illustrate the Annunciation, the spindles seem to make direct reference to James' account. References to Mary spinning can be found elsewhere in the Carolingian court as Alcuin dedicated in his *De fide sanctae et individuae Trinitatis*. He wrote:

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<sup>593</sup> Lewis, 1980, 76.

<sup>594</sup> Lewis, 1980, 75-76.

<sup>595</sup> Lewis, 1980, 76.



She was the purest wool, most glorious in her virginity... of such quality and greatness that she alone was worthy to receive into herself the divinity of the Son of God. For as wool receives the blood of the purple snail, so that from the same wool may be made the purple that is worthy of the imperial majesty... so has the Holy Spirit, coming over the Blessed Virgin, overshadowed her... that the wool might be made purple by the Godhead.<sup>596</sup>

Although the Marian reference of spinning is not unusual as many precedents can be found for this iconography, it is the context of the *Virgo Militans* panel that is distinctly different from all others. Mary is not shown in a full Annunciation context (as the spindles are the only immediate indicator of the Annunciation) but rather her dress and her cross-sceptre allude to a military and imperial context.

Suzanne Lewis suggested that Mary's garments are analogous to those of a Roman general and that the feminine aspects of her dress have been transformed to resemble a masculine military costume.<sup>597</sup> Lewis points to the short-sleeved outer garment as an example of an alteration of a typical female dress into a more militarized dress.<sup>598</sup> She claims that the outer garment resembles that of a tunic that typically is worn over armour and that visual comparisons can be drawn between Mary's dress and the dress of the central imperial figure of the Barberini diptych (fig. 51).<sup>599</sup> The tight sleeves and decorative cuffs under her outer tunic also add to the visual similarities between this panel and representations of military dress. Another aspect of Mary's dress

<sup>596</sup> Alcuin, 3, 14 PL 101.46-47; Eng. trans. S. Lewis, 1980, 76.

<sup>597</sup> Lewis, 1980, 78-79.

<sup>598</sup> Lewis, 1980, 78.

<sup>599</sup> Lewis, 1980, 78.

that is more comparable to that of a male general than that of Marian dress (east or west) is the slight alteration of her veil. Mary's veil has been shifted on her body to no longer cover her shoulders as a typical veil would, but instead it shifts to one side thus giving it an appearance of more of a *chlamys*, as opposed to a *maphorion*.<sup>600</sup>

Another aspect of her clothing that resembles the clothing of a male military figure (which Lewis does not address) is the bunching of the fabric around her knees that gives the allusion of her outer garment being a short skirt. The figure of Christ trampling the beasts in the tympanum of the Archiepiscopal palace in Ravenna (see fig. 13) provides a similar example of a divine figure rendered in a military context. Christ's costume in the mosaic resembles military portraits of non-divine figures and has many similarities to the *Virgo Militans*. The sleeves of Christ's costume are tight and end in a decorative cuff, much like those on the ivory. He wears a short tunic that reveals his legs from the knee downwards. While the Virgin's knees are not completely bare (there are still patterned lines etched on her legs suggesting a thin fabric), the form of her legs is very visible from the knee down – much more so than any other portrait of Mary that typically completely covers her body in swaths of cloth, making her lap the only discernible form under the clothes. The Christ trampling the beasts on the Oxford book cover, while not wearing military dress, still represents ideas of victory and triumph, is wearing clothing that is similar to the *Virgo Militans* panel.

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<sup>600</sup> Lewis, 1980, 79.

His *chlamys* has lifted above his knees to reveal his legs (and like the *Virgo Militans*, his legs are still covered by his tunic that clings to his legs).

Another similarity between Christ at the Archiepiscopal palace and the Virgin panel is the inclusion of a cross-sceptre. The cross-sceptre in her right hand is a more generalized iconography than the spindles. The cross-sceptre is a common iconographical detail that is found throughout Christendom. Lewis draws a few iconographical meanings of the sceptre that alludes to imperial rule as Byzantine coins display similar iconographical devices. The sceptre is found on coins of Byzantine empresses of the fifth century such as Licinia Eudoxia, (although Lewis fails to mention that the practice was still very much in use by Byzantine empress Eirene) and that a military context can be derived from its inclusion.<sup>601</sup> The sceptre was often associated with military triumph.<sup>602</sup> However, the image of the cross sceptre can be found in a multitude of contexts and locations.

Another example of the cross sceptre iconography can be found on a silver reliquary dating to the sixth century from Grado (fig. 52). The small reliquary depicts the Virgin with the Child on her lap with inscriptions of saint's names around the sides of the container. However, there are a few indicators of the imperial connection to this reliquary.<sup>603</sup> The Virgin sits upon a lyre-backed throne, which in the previous chapter was discussed as being an iconography which

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<sup>601</sup> Lewis, 1980, 76. Empress Eirene is depicted on coins holding a cross-sceptre. Grierson, 1982, 158 + Pl. 643.

<sup>602</sup> Lewis, 1980, 79.

<sup>603</sup> Buschhausen, 1971, 249.

Theodoric and Byzantine emperors frequently employed and the cross sceptre is frequently found in imperial contexts. This reliquary demonstrates the persistent use of Byzantine imperial iconography in a Christian setting in Italy.<sup>604</sup> While the iconography may have originated in Byzantium, it was transmitted to western Europe through Ravenna.

The iconography of this ivory appears to be syncretic of eastern and western elements. As mentioned earlier, Mary is depicted in this ivory in imperial military regalia. Lewis suggests that this is unusual for an eastern or Byzantine context, as Mary is only dressed in imperial garb in Roman contexts.<sup>605</sup> Starting with the fifth-century depictions of Mary in Santa Maria Maggiore, there is a tradition in Rome of dressing Mary in increasingly imperial clothing thus lending this type of Marian depictions the title of *Maria Regina*.<sup>606</sup> The *Maria Regina* type can be seen in monuments such as Santa Maria Antiqua; however, a study on the *Maria Regina* type conducted by John Osborne finds that there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that the *Maria Regina* type necessarily began in Rome.<sup>607</sup> The lack of physical evidence makes a claim to a Constantinopolitan origin difficult, but Osborne finds evidence of the idea of Mary as *Maria Regina* existing as early as the sixth century in the east. The sixth-century poet Corripus exclaims: '*Virgo creatoris genetrix sanctissima mundi, Excelsi regina poli*.'<sup>608</sup> The

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<sup>604</sup> While the reliquary contains Byzantine iconography, it has been identified as Italian due to the saints names that are etched on the sides. The saints were particularly popular in northern Italy, especially Ravenna. Árnason, 1938, 215.

<sup>605</sup> Lewis, 1980 76.

<sup>606</sup> Osborne, 1981, 304.

<sup>607</sup> Osborne, 2003, 139.

<sup>608</sup> Osborne, 2003, 139.

expression *Maria Regina* is first seen in the west on a Roman wall painting dated to the patronage of Pope Hadrian I (772-795).<sup>609</sup> There is also evidence of a *Maria Regina* type figure on the palimpsest wall of Santa Maria Antiqua that is dated to c.650.<sup>610</sup>

The majority of depictions of *Maria Regina* dated to earlier than the ninth century are to be found in church frescoes and mosaics. Santa Maria Maggiore (fifth century), Santa Maria Antiqua (seventh century), and San Clemente (eighth century), are all examples of Roman iterations of *Maria Regina*.<sup>611</sup> However, this iconography does not appear frequently outside of Roman contexts. Most of the depictions of Mary on ivories such as the Oxford book cover, the cover of the Lorsch gospels, and the Genoels-Elderen ivories show a Mary in the typical female dress and not covered in regal jewels or clothed in a military-style fashion like our panel.

There does exist a manuscript illumination from the tenth-century Ottonian manuscript, The Lives of Kilian and Margaret (Hanover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek Ms. I 189, fol. 11v) that seems to be an intermediary iconography between the Roman *Maria Regina* and the *Virgo Militans*. The manuscript, made in Fulda, was likely to have been made for a female audience with imperial or noble connections.<sup>612</sup> Mary is seated upon a throne and is

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<sup>609</sup> Osborne, 1983, 304.

<sup>610</sup> Osborne, 1983, 305.

<sup>611</sup> For a more exhaustive list and rationales for dating, see: Osborne, 1983.

<sup>612</sup> Hahn, 2001, 24.

blessing St. Margaret and a companion.<sup>613</sup> Although Cynthia Hahn identifies her as a *Maria Regina*, stylistic similarities to the *Virgo Militans* are evident. The clothing and a pose typically reserved for a male figure or Christ allude to the *Virgo Militans* panel. Much like the ivory panel, it would be difficult to identify the figure as Mary without an additional identifier (with this manuscript it is the inscriptions above the figures that identify Mary).

This manuscript illumination suggests an iconographical tradition existed (even if for a brief period) of representing Mary in a similar visual language as the triumphant Christ. There is more of a context surrounding the Ottonian interpretation, as the donors of the manuscript, Margaret and Regina, are depicted being blessed by Mary, thus the illumination serves as a dedicatory page. Mary is seated upon a large throne and is dressed in masculine clothing. Her veil has been replaced with a diadem and her robes are replaced with a masculine tunic much like the tunic worn by the *Virgo Militans*. Mary does not have any iconographical attributes that are associated with her and the only indication that this is in fact Mary is the inscription at the top of the page with the identifier of '*Maria Theotokos*'.<sup>614</sup> Although the iconography is not identical to the *Virgo Militans*, Mary is nonetheless fulfilling the role traditionally held by a triumphant Christ, thereby suggesting that the Carolingians and their successors, the Ottonians, were comfortable with this elevated status for Mary.

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<sup>613</sup> Hahn, 2001, 99.

<sup>614</sup> Collins, 2007, 92.

Without a contemporary parallel, the apparent syncretic Annunciation and military contexts of the ivory panel may seem to be contradictory and without precedent; however these two elements find their meaning when compared to a piece of Byzantine literature. Although the date and attribution is subject to debate (proposed dates and author have ranged from the early sixth century to Sergios I in 626 to Germanos I in 717-718), the *Akathistos* hymn remained extremely influential in liturgical practices for many centuries as it praised the virtues of the Virgin, seeking her intercession and protection.<sup>615</sup> An example of the poem's praise for the Virgin is as follows:

“Hail, tabernacle of God the Word,  
Hail, holier than the saints,  
Hail, treasure chest filled with gold for the spirit,  
Hail, inexhaustible treasure of life;  
Hail, precious diadem of reverent kings,  
Hail, august boast of devout priests,  
Hail, unshaken tower of the church,  
Hail, unconquered wall of the Kingdom;  
Hail, thou to whom trophies are raised,  
Hail, thou through whom the enemies fall,  
Hail, leadership for my spirit,  
Hail, nurture of my life,  
Hail, bride unwed.”<sup>616</sup>

The hymn may be connected to the seventh-century siege of Constantinople by the Avars, however it does have strong links to the Council of Ephesus in the fifth century.<sup>617</sup> The victory over the Avars was attributed to the Virgin and legend states that the hymn was sung all night at the Blachernai: ‘And the people of Constantinople, who were so dear to God, sang the hymn standing

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<sup>615</sup> ODB, p. 44.

<sup>616</sup> *Akathistos*; Eng. trans by M. Carpenter, 1973, 308-309.

<sup>617</sup> Wellesz, 1956, 142 and Peltomaa, 2001, 29.

and without any respite during the whole night, as a thanksgiving to the Mother of God, as She had kept watch over them and with Her great might had achieved the monument of victory over the enemies'.<sup>618</sup>

A relevant aspect of the hymn is the language used. She is described as the 'precious diadem of reverent kings,' the 'unshaken tower of the church' and the 'unconquered wall of the Kingdom' to name a few. The language effectively creates a link between the Virgin and the state. She is also addressed with the salutation 'hail,' a salutation that was used in addressing a victorious emperor.<sup>619</sup> Therefore the *Akathistos* hymn provides emperors another visual and literary trope with which they can express imperial power and Christian victory.

The hymn is reserved for the feast of the Annunciation that is celebrated on 25 March, therefore making the presence of Annunciation iconography (the spindles) appropriate if we consider the *Akathistos* as inspiration for the Virgin panel.<sup>620</sup> However, in order to consider the *Akathistos* as a possible source of inspiration for the panel, we must consider the availability of the hymn in the early ninth-century west.

Suzanne Lewis suggests that the *Akathistos* hymn arrived at Charlemagne's court in the last years of the eighth century.<sup>621</sup> Lewis cites a passage in Notker that claims that Charlemagne took a special interest in this hymn and had it translated after a visit from a Byzantine embassy that included a

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<sup>618</sup> Wellesz, 1956, 152.

<sup>619</sup> Pentcheva, 2006, 16.

<sup>620</sup> Wellesz, 1956, 141.

<sup>621</sup> Lewis, 1980, 83.



group of chanters who performed the poem for him.<sup>622</sup> However, the passage in Notker can be best described as vague and considering he was writing considerably later than the supposed event, Notker may not be the most reliable source to begin with.<sup>623</sup> The passage which Lewis cites as evidence of the *Akathistos* hymn arriving at Charlemagne's court is the following:

Eight days after Epiphany, when morning lauds had been celebrated in the presence of the Emperor, these Greek envoys secretly sang to God, in their own language, certain responses which had the same chant and subject matter as *Veterem hominem* and what comes after it. The Emperor thereupon ordered one of his chaplains, who had some knowledge of the Greek language, to translate these responses into Latin, with the same chant, and to take special care that every phrase corresponded precisely to the individual notes of that chant, so that, as far as the nature of the two languages permitted, the new version should in no way be dissimilar to the original one. The result is that all the words in the new version have the same phrasing as those in the old, and that in one phrase *conteruit* is found to have been substituted for *contrivit*.<sup>624</sup>

This passage as evidence is problematic, as it does not outright name the *Akathistos* as the hymn that caught Charlemagne's interest. Although the passage does not indicate the exact hymn (and therefore it could possibly have been the *Akathistos*), it does provide extra information that further discredits the theory. The passage states that Charlemagne heard the chanters eight days after the Epiphany. If Epiphany were celebrated in January, then it would seem unlikely that the Byzantine chanters would be singing the hymn, as it is a hymn typically reserved for either 25 March, the feast of the Annunciation or Lent.<sup>625</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> Lewis, 1980, 83.

<sup>623</sup> Thorpe places the date of Notker's work on Charlemagne in 883-884. Thorpe, 1979k, 25.

<sup>624</sup> Notker, II. 7. trans. Thorpe, 1979, 142-143.

<sup>625</sup> ODB, 44.

However, as mentioned earlier, Notker was writing a few decades after this supposed meeting took place and his account may not be accurate.

Aside from the circumstantial evidence cited above, there is substantiated evidence of the *Akathistos* arriving in Francia in the ninth century. A manuscript from the end of the ninth century from St. Gall (Zurich, *Zentralbibliothek* C78) is the oldest Latin translation of the hymn.<sup>626</sup> The translation is incomplete, with a note from the scribe stating his reason: 'we have passed over, because, having been poorly translated from Greek to Latin, it possessed nothing of the truth.'<sup>627</sup> This passage would suggest an earlier date than the late ninth century for the actual translation; however the original translation is no longer extant, leaving scholars to approximate a date of c.825 for the original.<sup>628</sup>

Based on a comparative analysis to other written works, Michel Huglo places the date of the original translation of the hymn to the late eighth to ninth centuries.<sup>629</sup> He narrows the translation further by connecting the translation to historical context provided by a section in the prologue that references the iconophiles. Iconophiles would have been topical at the time as the discussion on images took place during the Paris Assembly (November 825).<sup>630</sup> Given this information with regards to the dating of the translation upon which the St. Gall

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<sup>626</sup> Kaczynski, 1988, 107.

<sup>627</sup> Kaczynski, 1988, 108.

<sup>628</sup> Kaczynski, 1988, 108.

<sup>629</sup> Huglo, 1951, 57.

<sup>630</sup> Huglo, 1951, 57. The Paris Assembly convened in response to a slight from the Byzantine emperor, Michael I, towards Louis and Lothair. Michael failed to recognize the joint rule and accused Franks of increased iconodulism with regards to an increase in cross symbolism. Therefore, the Paris Assembly debated both the legitimacy of Louis and Lothair's rule, and more importantly to our argument, the legitimacy of utilizing the cross as a symbol without it being considered iconodulism. Morrison, 1961, 597.

manuscript was based upon, it seems even more unlikely that the *Akathistos* would have been at Charlemagne's court at the time of the most agreed upon date for the ivory panel. A later date for the panel could be considered if a reliance on the *Akathistos* hymn is insisted upon; however I would argue that interest in the cult of Mary existed in Charlemagne's court and that this interest in combination with Carolingian ivory (and iconographical) practises fostered an environment that produced the peculiar iconography of the panel in question.

Although the dating seems to be inconsistent with the arrival of the hymn to Francia, Lewis constructs a compelling argument that the Virgin described in the *Akathistos*, a military figure and a defender of the religion, would have been a desirable figure for Charlemagne. As she noted, the Adoptionist heresy which was a preoccupation for the Carolingians in the years 794-800 and the Council of Frankfurt (794) which discussed issues such as Adoptionism and II Nicaea would have created a political environment which would have been receptive to imagery such as the *Virgo Militans* (the above passage from Alcuin was in fact written in retaliation against the Adoptionist heresy).<sup>631</sup> There is also evidence of an interest in the cult of Mary within Charlemagne's court, as demonstrated by his honouring the Virgin through dedicating his palace chapel in Aachen to Mary.<sup>632</sup> Empress Eirene also sent a relic of the Virgin to Charlemagne for his chapel.<sup>633</sup> With this information taken into consideration, the presence of the *Akathistos*

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<sup>631</sup> Lewis, 1980, 73.

<sup>632</sup> Ein. V.K.M., XVII; Eng. trans. L. Thorpe, 1979, 71.

<sup>633</sup> Lewis, 1980, 71.

hymn at the Carolingian court need not be necessary for the existence or want to employ such an iconography by Charlemagne.

As mentioned earlier with regards to manuscripts, the theme of *castra dei* was popular in both literature and visual culture. The theme of a triumphant Christ appears more than once in Carolingian manuscripts (both figural as demonstrated by the Godescalc Christ and non-figural as demonstrated by the Adoration of the Lamb in the Soissons gospels) and it also appears more than once in Carolingian ivories. Therefore, the Virgin panel could be a continuation of this theme. If so, the dependence on the *Akathistos* as an explanation for the existence of the iconography wanes.

While the argument that Lewis provides is cogent, and the *Akathistos* hymn does fit nicely with the iconography, there are too many elements of her argument that are based on unreliable evidence. If we take into consideration Carolingian ivory practises of the use of multiple models as discussed extensively by Hoving, it would seem more likely that the *Virgo Militans* is a pastiche of multiple iconographies available to Carolingian artists at the turn of the ninth century.<sup>634</sup> As demonstrated earlier, the iconography of the spindles was not relegated to the east and had already made multiple appearances in western works. The Oxford book cover and the Genoels-Elderen ivories demonstrate a knowledge of the protevangelium of James and its associated iconography in Carolingian and western visual language. A precedence of triumphant figures

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<sup>634</sup> Not only does Hoving discuss the use of multiple sources for the Virgin panel, but effectively demonstrates this practise with other panels such as the Oxford book cover. Hoving, 1960, 225.

dressed in military costume had been set by multiple Carolingian works and even an example of the Virgin carrying the cross sceptre had already appeared in the west. While the ultimate origin of many of these iconographical elements may have been Byzantium, all of the elements found on the Virgin panel had been transmitted to the Carolingian court through Italy as demonstrated by monuments and works found in Ravenna or northern Italy. Therefore the iconography of the panel could potentially have been derived from existing Carolingian and Italian works and not have been inspired by the *Akathistos* hymn directly.<sup>635</sup>

There does not seem to be a consensus of what clearly defines a 'Greek' influence. All of the manuscripts and ivories we have discussed display some small element that can be traced back to a Greek prototype. The works, however, also demonstrate Insular and western traditions and practises. While scholars are not in agreement with regards to the existence or amount of Greek influence in Carolingian manuscripts, they do tend to agree upon a progression of style. However, the reason for the wide array of differences in style is not agreed upon. Some place the shift upon a few Byzantine artists who sought patronage in

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<sup>635</sup> Arguments for a stylistic comparison to Byzantine ivories can be made as well as the *Virgo Militans* ivory does resemble the consular ivories created for Justinian dated to 520-540. For example, the Barberini ivory (fig. 51) mentioned earlier along with an ivory depicting the archangel Michael demonstrate similarities in their figural modeling and propensity for uncluttered backgrounds and decorations. Despite stylistic similarities Hoving describes the *Virgo Militans* as being 'fundamentally non-antique' and that combined with the iconography the panel contains many elements (stylistically and iconographically) that do not correspond with a Late-Antique model. Hoving, 1966, 201-209. For a discussion on the consular ivories see: Wright, 1977 and Cutler, 1984.

a more image-friendly west, but another, more politically motivated explanation can be provided.<sup>636</sup>

The productions of courtly products were not a minor undertaking. While I do not necessarily disagree with the fact that there were artists who travelled throughout Francia, and that there were Greek members of Charlemagne's court, I question their level of involvement in an era where manuscript artists were diligent copyists and that gifts of high value such as manuscripts from Charlemagne's court ateliers would be carefully produced and not left to the artistic whims of a Greek foreigner.<sup>637</sup> Rosamond McKitterick discusses the contrived nature of manuscript production amongst the Carolingian court: 'Royal patronage is emphatically not random aesthetic pleasure or arcane intellectual curiosity, but an organized and determined assembly and deployment of resources to carry out what appear to be specific aims and objectives.'<sup>638</sup>

## COMPETITIVE SHARING

This case study differs considerably from that of the first chapter. While on the surface there are similarities between Charlemagne's and Theodoric's cultural programmes, the political situation between Francia and Byzantium was considerably different from the situation between the Ostrogoths and Byzantium.

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<sup>636</sup> Scholars such as Rosenbaum, 1956, Swarzenski, 1940, Tselos, 1956, and Goldschmidt, 1928 argue that the presence of Greek artists at Charlemagne's court were responsible for the shift in style.

<sup>637</sup> Lawrence Nees examined the role of the artist in the Carolingian court and discusses the amount of travel of artists that occurred between manuscript centres. Nees, 2001, 210.

<sup>638</sup> McKitterick, 1992, 112.

The power dynamic between the Carolingians and the Byzantines did not heavily favour Byzantium. Therefore, we would expect a difference in the motives and frequency behind the appropriation of a foreign visual language. As such, a different mode of transmission of iconographies and style must be considered. Although Hayden's theory does not adequately explain this particular case study, it nonetheless contributes an alternative example of transmission that can contribute to our knowledge of historical cultural appropriations.

As demonstrated earlier, the notion of Carolingian artists employing Byzantine visual culture can be challenged, however that is not to say that there was a major shift in the style of material culture produced within Charlemagne's rule that seems to be heavily influenced by a foreign visual culture. Previous scholars have noted eastern or Greek influences in many different aspects of Carolingian material culture and have explained their appearance following reasoning similar to that expressed by scholars explaining the appropriation of Byzantine visual culture in Theodoric's cultural programme. The typical explanation is that a lack of artistic tradition in the west encouraged rulers to utilize Byzantium's visual culture as they (the scholars) have deemed Byzantine culture as superior to western cultures and therefore the west would naturally seek to legitimize their own culture through the appropriation of a more advanced culture.<sup>639</sup> This theory discounts a strong pre-existing Carolingian culture and it also reduces art to an aesthetically driven practice, which is limiting and an anachronistic approach to the study of material culture. If we consider the cultural

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<sup>639</sup> Scholars such as Beckwith, 1989, Demus, 1970, and Weitzmann, 1965.

programme of Charlemagne to be motivated not only by aesthetics, but also by politics, then we can perhaps better understand the appropriation and transmission of iconography.

Scholars such as Rosamund McKitterick have demonstrated the political nature of Carolingian visual culture and therefore a heavier emphasis on the Carolingian political environment should be considered when examining Charlemagne's cultural programme. If the typical model of Competitive Sharing were applicable to this case study as it was with works associated with Theodoric, we would most likely see an appropriation of contemporary Byzantine iconography to communicate a message of equality. However, this is not the case.

Charlemagne's political situation was more stable than Theodoric's and his relationship with Byzantium quite different. As discussed earlier, Charlemagne and his court propagated a sense of superiority over Byzantium through various media. After Charlemagne gained control of his brother Carloman's territory, he made significant efforts to solidify his rule. The stabilization of Charlemagne's empire was aided by the centralization of his court in Aachen in the year 794, the ratification of law codes and standardization the liturgy across his empire to reflect the Roman liturgy, and the endorsement from the papacy. This stabilization afforded Charlemagne a position of strength over a much weaker Byzantium than Theodoric faced.



Charlemagne's coronation in the year 800 not only marks a significant change in the geography of Charlemagne's empire; it also marks a significant shift in Charlemagne's cultural programme. This shift is easily visible in the manuscripts belonging to the Ada and Coronation groups of illuminators. The change in style has been discussed predominantly in terms of aesthetics, but a few scholars have postulated that this shift was driven by the increased interactions between Byzantium. The record of many embassies between the Carolingians and Byzantium is irrefutable evidence of the regular interactions between the two cultures. However, whether or not these interactions were the catalyst required for the transmission of a different iconography should be further examined.

In order to determine whether or not the increased interaction between Byzantium and the Carolingians caused a transmission of iconography, we must determine if the 'foreign' iconography present in Carolingian works can be defined as 'Byzantine'. As mentioned above, there is a distinct shift in the style of manuscript illumination. Many scholars classify the later manuscripts as 'classical' and therefore look to the east as a possible place of origin of the models the Carolingian artists were working from. However, there is little in terms of iconography to either support or negate the hypothesis of an eastern (or western) model. Charlemagne's manuscript ateliers follow a similar pattern of evangelist portraits from the first manuscript produced by the court, the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary made in the 780s, until the last decade of the eighth

century. The seated evangelist is framed within an archway in the act of writing with his corresponding symbol looking down from above. There are a few deviations in iconography that have led scholars to question the source of the model and postulate a Byzantine origin.

For example, the Fountain of Life miniature in the Godescalc and Soissons gospel books has been considered to be both a Byzantine import and a response to Byzantine iconoclasm. However, the argument that the illumination was a reaction to the iconophiles in Byzantium is not tenable. More realistically, the illumination is in reference to the baptism of Charlemagne's son in Rome. The Godescalc Gospel Lectionary was produced early in Charlemagne's reign during a period of relative peace between the Carolingians and the Byzantines. This was a period when Charlemagne was asserting himself within the borders of his empire. Within a decade of the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary being produced Charlemagne had gained Carloman's territory, aided the pope by defeating Desiderius and fought numerous battles against the Saxons. Charlemagne was facing more struggles from internal battles than from external ones at this time and therefore the need to communicate the concept of Carolingian strength within his borders was most likely a higher priority than communicating equality to the Byzantines.

The inclusion of the Fountain of Life can then be considered a method of expressing the endorsement of Charlemagne (as well as his son) by the papacy and therefore by God. Other examples of expressing Carolingian strength can

also be found if we consider the appearance of crenellated architecture in the evangelist portraits of the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary (something, as mentioned earlier, that is original to Carolingian evangelist manuscripts) as a manifestation of the *castra dei* trope found throughout various Carolingian works.

Arguments in favour of Byzantine influence on the manuscripts of the Ada group are largely based upon stylistic elements. The drapery of the evangelists, the increasing 'plasticity' of the figures and the zig-zag hems have led many to conclude that they were based a Byzantine model.<sup>640</sup> Without any contemporary Byzantine manuscripts, this theory is difficult to prove or negate. The later Coronation group with the Coronation gospels as the cornerstone example of 'classical' or Greek influence cannot be directly linked to the visual culture of Constantinople either. While aspects of eastern traditions, such as the absence of the evangelist symbols, are visible in the Coronation gospels, there exist just as many (if not, more) aspects of western manuscript traditions. However, one source of influence bridges both Ada and Coronation schools: Ravenna.

It is equally viable to consider an intermediary source of inspiration, as it is to explain the transmission of foreign iconographic and stylistic influences on Carolingian manuscripts. When discussing the presence of Byzantine influence in Carolingian visual culture Otto Demus stated: '[Byzantine influence] seems to have occurred without actually being intended.'<sup>641</sup> Perhaps the basic meaning of this statement is true in that Charlemagne and his court did not actively seek to

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<sup>640</sup> Demus, 1970, Mutherich 1977, Koehler, 1952, Tselos, 1956.

<sup>641</sup> Demus, 1970, 77.

appropriate Byzantine culture; however it is plausible that they were seeking to appropriate the visual culture of a newly gained territory that was once ruled by a Germanic leader and whose visual culture was inherently Byzantine.

Ravenna has been demonstrated as being a major influence on Carolingian works. The landscapes behind the evangelists seem to derive from the evangelist mosaics as San Vitale. The mosaic figures of the evangelists have also been compared to the evangelist figures in Carolingian manuscripts. But can we consider iconographic elements from Ravenna as Byzantine? They may have had a Byzantine origin two-and-a-half centuries earlier when Justinian's supporters erected the mosaics, but centuries of transmission from Constantinople to Italy and throughout western Europe dilutes the connection to Byzantium. This dilution (and lack of contemporary Byzantine comparisons to confirm a contemporary appropriation) adds to the issue of whether or not Charlemagne would have considered the iconography associated with Ravenna as Byzantine.

Another aspect of Charlemagne's cultural programme that has been said to have been inspired by Byzantium (but fell outside of the scope of this thesis) are his architectural commissions. However, once again the connection to Byzantium is made via an intermediary: Ravenna. Most notably, Charlemagne's palace chapel in Aachen is often compared to San Vitale in Ravenna (fig. 53 and 54). The palace complex was designed by Odo of Metz, built in 792 and was

dedicated to the Virgin in 805 by Pope Leo III.<sup>642</sup> The palace and its chapel were said to have been intentionally modelled on commissions made by powerful figures, thereby intentionally drawing parallels between Charlemagne's rule and previous (and current) successful Christian rulers.<sup>643</sup> The palace chapel was not only intended to serve the court, but it served the public as well. The church served as a community baptismal church, and according to Janet Nelson, being the baptismal church of the new capital served as powerful symbolism that the Church officials (such as Theodulf) frequently called upon to demonstrate the rebirth of Charlemagne's ever-expanding empire.<sup>644</sup>

Influences not only from San Vitale, but also from the Lateran Palace in Rome, and Santa Sofia in Benevento can be found throughout the palace and its chapel.<sup>645</sup> Although the palace itself no longer stands, the chapel still exists in more-or-less its ninth century form.<sup>646</sup> The chapel is a tall and complex building comprising of an atrium, a monumental entrance with a westwork, a central octagonal space with enough space to accommodate a large crowd.<sup>647</sup>

A cross section of the chapel and San Vitale shows strong similarities between the two buildings in their basic floor plan (although the palace chapel in Aachen has an added monumentality as a massive entrance and westwork – a feature that will come to define Carolingian architecture – were added). The

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<sup>642</sup> Conant, 1990, 47.

<sup>643</sup> Nelson, 2001, 220.

<sup>644</sup> Nelson, 2001, 222.

<sup>645</sup> Nelson, 2001, 220.

<sup>646</sup> Conant, 1990, 47.

<sup>647</sup> Conant, 1990, 48.

decoration of the palace also adds a Ravennate connection as well.

Charlemagne travelled to Ravenna twice between the years 787 and 801 and in his travels supposedly brought back multiple items to adorn the palace at Aachen.<sup>648</sup> Specifically, Charlemagne was in correspondence with Pope Hadrian with regards to removing the marble *spolia* from Theodoric's palace for his own.<sup>649</sup> This would have been a deliberate act as there would have been resources available to Charlemagne in other former Roman centres such as Trier and Cologne.<sup>650</sup> However, the fact that he chose Ravenna, and specifically Theodoric's palace, as his personal quarry serves as a clear political gesture.<sup>651</sup> There is also speculation that Charlemagne took Theodoric's equestrian statue back to Aachen with him as well, although this anecdote is not as substantiated as the marbles (and there is also discussion that the statue could have been Emperor Zeno's equestrian statue).<sup>652</sup>

Whether or not Charlemagne took the statue back to Aachen with him, his actions demonstrate an affinity for *spolia* associated with Theodoric and an interest not in Byzantine commissions, but work commissioned by a fellow Germanic ruler. Otto Demus has even postulated that Charlemagne thought Theodoric built San Vitale and that his palace chapel in Aachen was not meant to evoke a Byzantine influence, but a reinforcement of Frankish supremacy.<sup>653</sup> The

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<sup>648</sup> Brenk, 1987, 108.

<sup>649</sup> Brenk, 1987, 108.

<sup>650</sup> McClendon, 2005, 112.

<sup>651</sup> McClendon, 2005, 112.

<sup>652</sup> Brenk, 1987, 108.

<sup>653</sup> Demus, 1970, 69.

palace and chapel at Aachen serves as another example of Charlemagne utilizing familiar Italian imperial tropes to communicate messages of power to his expanding empire, while maintaining an element of Germanic history and legacy.

Charlemagne's palace has drawn other comparisons besides Ravenna, however one can always find connections back to an Italian source of inspiration. Byzantium and the imperial palace at Constantinople is perhaps the other frequently cited source of inspiration, however Charles McClendon has effectively argued for Italian as opposed to Byzantine influence at play. Architectural elements such as the *triclinium*, *aula* and audience hall can all be found at the palace in Constantinople, however they can all be found in Italy as well.

The *triclinium* was an architectural feature that originated in the Latin west but fell out of popularity by the sixth century.<sup>654</sup> However, Theodoric's palace in Ravenna did have this unique architectural feature, and as Caroline Goodson has demonstrated, the *triclinium* gained resurgence in popularity in Rome in the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>655</sup> McClendon argues that the *triclinium* at Aachen was a rather inventive 'derivative' of the one found at Theodoric's palace and that this would have been deliberate copying on Charlemagne's behalf.<sup>656</sup>

McClendon states that the great audience hall at Aachen would have ultimately originated in Constantinople, however much like other sources of inspiration we have seen in this chapter, it too was filtered through Italy.<sup>657</sup> For

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<sup>654</sup> McClendon, 2005, 120.

<sup>655</sup> Goodson, 2010, 22.

<sup>656</sup> McClendon, 2005, 120.

<sup>657</sup> McClendon, 2005, 121.

example, the exarch's palace in Ravenna had an audience hall and Pope Zacharias added a similar audience hall to the Lateran palace in the eighth century.<sup>658</sup> The *aula* as well seems to have been inspired by somewhere other than Constantinople. Constantine's basilica at Trier has been considered to be the main source of inspiration for Charlemagne's version in Aachen and not the imperial palace at Constantinople.<sup>659</sup>

Out of all the sources of inspiration for Charlemagne's palace at Aachen considered, heavy emphasis is placed on a similar strategy of influence as previously discussed with the manuscripts and ivories. The desire to place himself within a Roman tradition (as shown by his borrowings from Constantine) as well as a strong sense of Germanic heritage (as shown by his continual and deliberate sourcing from Theodoric) is effectively demonstrated by Charlemagne's architectural endeavours.

Of all of the visual culture considered here evidence of an appropriation of contemporary Byzantine visual culture is scanty. The most (theoretically) convincing example of an overt Byzantine influence exists in the Virgin panel, however there is no existing monument or manuscript to suggest it was an iconography familiar to Byzantium (while the *Akathistos* hymn professes ideas that could be translated into a similar iconography, no physical representation of the Virgin from Byzantium exhibits such military qualities). Instead, the Virgin panel's unique iconography was the result of a pastiche of Italian influences

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<sup>658</sup> McClendon, 2005, 121.

<sup>659</sup> McClendon, 2005, 120.



brought together to once again express Carolingian strength and triumph. This continued use of iconography that is more convincingly linked to Italy rather than to Byzantium suggests an alternate explanation for the appearance of foreign iconography in such politically charged material productions.

If, as I have suggested, Charlemagne did not consider the visual language of Ravenna as Byzantine, then we cannot consider this case study to follow similar reasoning as Theodoric's and we need to reassess the possible reasons for appropriating a foreign visual culture. However, Robert Hayden's discussion of time is once again applicable in this case study, much as it was in the Theodoric chapter. The practice of viewing Charlemagne's cultural programme as a static programme reflective of a singular ideology limits our understanding of the motivations behind such a radical shift in visual language. Previous scholarship has noted the shift in Charlemagne's cultural programme, however, as mentioned earlier, this change has been explained due to the supposed influx of Byzantine artists fleeing iconoclastic reform in Constantinople. As Rosamond McKitterick has argued, however, Carolingian artistic production was a political creation and the undertaking of artistic productions such as manuscripts was a strategic event. Therefore, the idea that a single artist was responsible for the message of such an important object is undermined and an alternative interpretation of the transmission of foreign style and iconography should be considered.

The shift in style and the appearance of Italian influences reaches its zenith around the year 800. Previously the visual and material culture produced by Charlemagne and his predecessors exhibited elements that can be considered more 'indigenous' to the Franks. Manuscripts such as the Gundohinus gospels and the Godescalc Gospel Lectionary featured a stronger Insular, Merovingian, and Frankish influence with minimal Italian influences that demonstrate the Carolingian practice of copying previous manuscripts. As Charlemagne's territory expanded, so did the visual language that his cultural productions expressed.

Unlike any previous Frankish ruler, Charlemagne's increasing territorial acquisitions surpassed the Frankish concept of kingship.<sup>660</sup> The previous Frankish tradition was to split territory amongst all male offspring, however with the death of Carloman, Charlemagne was able to gain more territory than any previous Frankish or Merovingian ruler.<sup>661</sup> Charlemagne's territorial gains did not end at Carloman's death and as his empire expanded, his cultural programme responded accordingly. Whether or not Charlemagne sought the crown of emperor as argued by some scholars, he nonetheless did not reject the title and subsequently absorbed Italy into his empire. By taking this acquisition into consideration when interpreting Charlemagne's cultural programme, the motivations for appropriating an Italian visual culture can be better explained than

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<sup>660</sup> Garipzanov, 2008, 275.

<sup>661</sup> Halphen, 1977, 41.

merely as a stylistic event or the result of a handful of Greek courtiers.<sup>662</sup> By integrating an Italian visual language into the Frankish corpus, Charlemagne seems to have communicated a powerful message.

A possible motivation for appropriating Italian visual culture is that it played a role in the integration of the Franks in the Italian tradition. By employing Italian iconography and styles, Charlemagne effectively demonstrated the sophistication of the Franks and placed himself in the tradition of previous Roman rulers. The inclusion of the Fountain of Life miniature in the Godescalc and Soissons gospels supports this theory (and further suggests that Charlemagne did have imperial aspirations) as Charlemagne was placing importance on his (and his son's) connection to Rome.

The coronation of Charlemagne was a significant event in western Europe and had an impact on the relations between Byzantium and the west. By endorsing Charlemagne as emperor, the pope was no longer reliant upon the emperor in Constantinople for protection and it signified the end to the Byzantine claim to *Patricius Romanorum*. Charlemagne was now the undisputed protector of the western church and the protector of the Italian people. After his coronation his attempts to gain more territory in Italy did not diminish. His military actions in Venice demonstrated Charlemagne's aspirations of Italian expansion and that he held hopes that by installing his son in Venice he would ensure the future of the Carolingian dynasty within the borders of Italy. Thus, the use of a foreign visual

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<sup>662</sup> Ildar Garipzanov discusses the increased Italian influence in Carolingian coinage, capitularies and seals and suggests that the increase occurs around the time of Charlemagne's coronation. Garipzanov, 2008, 276.

language would be appropriate and advantageous for Charlemagne to employ. There is a possibility that Charlemagne and his court were motivated by a multitude of factors not spurred by aesthetics, but by politics.

The case study of Theodoric demonstrated a high level of competition with Byzantium as the driving force behind the appropriation of Byzantine iconography. Despite other differences, fundamentally the same can be said about Charlemagne's appropriations. Competition between Byzantium and the Franks over the title of *Patricius Romanorum* may not have been as overt and violent as the competition between the Goths and Byzantium over Ravenna, but competition was nonetheless the driving force. The main difference between the two case studies is the intended audience of the messages being sent through the different appropriations. While Theodoric was concerned with his tenuous position as king of Italy, he selectively targeted his audience through his various commissions to communicate a message of equality to the emperor in Constantinople and legitimacy to the local Italian population.

Charlemagne, however, was not as concerned with the emperor or empress in Constantinople. As demonstrated through his diplomatic dealings with Byzantium, his concern was not with his legitimacy as emperor, but with controlling his new population and securing a place in Roman royal history for himself and his sons.<sup>663</sup> Therefore, his targeted audience would have been the Frankish aristocracy concerned with his growing power as emperor and the

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<sup>663</sup> In 802 every male subject in Charlemagne's growing empire was forced to swear an oath to Charlemagne and the laws of the Frankish empire. Garipzanov, 2008, 282.

appropriation served as a method of reinforcing the concept of the Frankish role in Roman history as well as his new population who might be wary of the change from a Byzantine protection to that of a Frankish rule.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The cultural productions of Charlemagne's court provide scholars with a fertile ground for scholarship. The wide array of styles and the broad, and at times incredibly inventive, use of iconography have left room for multiple interpretations of the motivations behind such a disparate visual language. As a case study in Competitive Sharing, Charlemagne provides an interesting political situation given his seemingly meteoric rise to power. This political situation fosters the perfect environment for a ruler to experiment and to alter messages to respond to his ever-growing population base.

While not directly in competition with Byzantium, interaction (in the form of embassies and their subsequent retinues and gifts) between the two states was high and the potential for Byzantine iconography and style to be transmitted to the west increased as Charlemagne welcomed Greek scholars into his court. However, the Carolingian court continuously propagated a clear message of superiority over not just Byzantium, but most other peoples and cultures through a multitude of different venues. Charlemagne's military, political and social actions suggest a confident ruler concerned not with one specific group, but with the formalization of the Carolingian empire. Thus, his cultural programme reflected

not a confined expression of power and superiority over Byzantium, but instead reflected a politically motivated cultural programme that relied upon the visual language of past Roman rule. In essence, Charlemagne was able to appropriate an Italian visual language while simultaneously propagating Carolingian strength.

While on the surface some of the new visual language employed by Charlemagne around turn of the ninth century seems to display Byzantine characteristics, it was the aim of this chapter to demonstrate that those characteristics, while perhaps originating in Byzantium, were filtered through Italy and specifically through Ravenna. This filtering effectively removes the connection to Byzantium and the iconography and its associated style takes on a different meaning and holds different associations for the eighth/ninth-century viewer. These associations would have led Charlemagne not to view the visual language found on monuments in Ravenna as Byzantine, but potentially as vestiges of a Germanic king who ruled the very people he was now charged with ruling.

Once again, by taking Hayden's theory of Competitive Sharing into consideration, Charlemagne's cultural programme can be better understood as not an expression of an aesthetic shift, but as a cultural programme that reacted side-by-side with a political agenda. While not all of Hayden's theory is applicable to Charlemagne's cultural programme, it is helpful in viewing the material culture produced by this programme as a dynamic one responding to an ever-changing political landscape. This case study further aids us in understanding iconographic

transmission as it provides us with an example of a power dynamic that is not one sided. The internal pressures facing Charlemagne fostered an environment that was receptive to and benefitted from iconographical transmission. The syncretism present in Charlemagne's cultural programme thus is not the result of admiration, or the result of a handful of artists; it is a programme that continued to express ideas of Carolingian superiority to a population in a constant state of flux.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE THREE OTTOS

### INTRODUCTION

The material culture associated with the Ottonian dynasty (approx. 936 C.E. to 1002 C.E.) is frequently discussed in a similar vein as the material culture produced by Charlemagne. The material culture produced by the Ottonians, much like Charlemagne's, reflects a wide range of influences. Indigenous elements, Carolingian influence, Italian influence, and of course Byzantine influence can be found in many different works spanning the different rulers. Similarities abound in the imperial agendas of both the Carolingians and Ottonians as well: both held the imperial crown, both had ambitions to expand the western empire east (and south) of Rome and both had significant interactions with Byzantium.

Although the Ottonians can be compared to the previous Carolingian dynasty, the claim to a Byzantine presence (and its possible subsequent influence) at the Ottonian court can be justified more than any similar claims at the court of Charlemagne. The marriage of Theophano, a member of the ruling Byzantine family, to Otto II in 972 marks a significant moment in east-west relations as no other negotiation between Byzantium and the west had ever actualized. Until this time, with only one exception, no Byzantine princess had



been married into a 'barbarian' clan.<sup>664</sup> The one exception occurred in 927 when the granddaughter of Romanos I married Peter of Bulgaria.<sup>665</sup>

As we saw earlier, there were frequent marriage negotiations between the Franks and the Byzantines, however none came to fruition. Thus, the marriage between Theophano and Otto II was of major significance not because of the prestige a Byzantine princess brought to the Ottonian court, but also, some scholars believe, because the marriage marked a significant moment for Ottonian material culture.

By having such a significant Byzantine presence at the Ottonian court, scholars have pointed to this union as a pivotal moment of transmission.<sup>666</sup> It not only marked a specific moment in history when, potentially, an influx of physical Byzantine artifacts arrived in the west (due to the treasures that were said to have comprised Theophano's dowry), but that this union also facilitated the promotion and patronage of Byzantine influenced material culture.<sup>667</sup>

Despite the irrefutable Byzantine presence at the Ottonian court, the commissions associated with Otto II and his son Otto III, during whose reigns Theophano would presumably have been able to assert her culture most vociferously, remain inconsistent in their demonstration of a Byzantine influence. It is the goal of this chapter to demonstrate to what extent, if any, the Byzantine presence at the Ottonian court influenced Ottonian material culture and what the

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<sup>664</sup> Davids, 1995, 102-103.

<sup>665</sup> Davids, 1995, 103.

<sup>666</sup> Ciggaar, 1995, Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, Head, 1997.

<sup>667</sup> See Adelbert David's 1995 *The Empress Theophano*.

motivations behind any existing appropriations may have been. Did the Ottonians appropriate Byzantine expressions of power to communicate their growing influence in Italy? Did the Ottonians appropriate Byzantine visual culture to legitimize their place in Roman history?

In order to accomplish this, one must first isolate what commissions can be directly associated with the Ottonian court. This must be taken into consideration as the decentralized nature of the Ottonian court and a powerful and growing ecclesiastical class resulted in an increase in material culture beginning to be commissioned not by the imperial court, but by church leaders (whose motivations behind artistic productions would have not necessarily have been consistent with the motivations of the emperor). And once again, one must tease out the differences between deliberate appropriations of Byzantine culture versus an indirect appropriation (as we saw in the last chapter was the case during the reign of Charlemagne).

#### LIUDPRAND OF CREMONA

One cannot possibly think of approaching the subject of Ottonian attitudes towards Byzantium without addressing the works of Liudprand of Cremona. A key member of Otto I and Otto II's court, Liudprand was born into a wealthy family in Pavia in 920.<sup>668</sup> His father and stepfather held positions with high-ranking Italian families that saw both of them working in Constantinople.<sup>669</sup> His family's position

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<sup>668</sup> Wright, 1930, 1.

<sup>669</sup> Berschin, 1988, 175.

afforded him an education and his knowledge of Greek led to his indispensable position at the Ottonian court.<sup>670</sup> However, before he reached the Ottonian court, Liudprand had connections with Spain through Recemund, bishop of Elvira, and it was through this connection Liudprand wrote his first work, *Antapodosis*.<sup>671</sup> Started in 958 (and finished in 962), *Antapodosis* was a history of Italy, the east-Frankish kingdom and Byzantium from roughly the late ninth century to the mid-tenth.<sup>672</sup> Although little attention is given to the Ottonians and Saxons in England with this work, as it was written before Liudprand entered the Ottonian court, it is essential to examine nonetheless as it serves as a sharp counterpoint to his later works – especially concerning his attitudes towards Byzantium.<sup>673</sup>

A significant portion of *Antapodosis* is dedicated to a description of Byzantium and its ceremonies and practices, which suggests that Liudprand had set out with the intention of emphasizing Byzantium in this particular work.<sup>674</sup> Not only is there a historical retelling of major events of Byzantium, but he also offers the reader a first hand description of his first embassy to Constantinople.

Perhaps the most frequently cited passage from this work is Liudprand describing in great detail the pageantry surrounding his first encounter with Constantine VII:

It will be a pleasant task to describe the marvellous and unheard of manner of our reception... Before the emperor's seat stood a tree, made of bronze gilded over, whose branches were filled with birds, also made of gilded bronze, which uttered cries, each according to its varying species. The throne itself was so marvellously fashioned that

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<sup>670</sup> Leyser, 1994, 126.

<sup>671</sup> Leyser, 1994, 128.

<sup>672</sup> Leyser, 1994, 131.

<sup>673</sup> Leyser, 1994, 131.

<sup>674</sup> Leyser, 1994, 131.

at one moment it seemed a low structure, and at another it rose high into the air. It was of immense size and was guarded by lions, made either of bronze or of wood covered over with gold, who beat the ground with their tails and gave a dreadful roar with open mouth and quivering tongue. Leaning upon the shoulders of two eunuchs, I was brought into the emperor's presence. At my approach the lions began to roar and the birds to cry out, each according to its kind; but I was neither terrified nor surprised, for I had previously made enquiry about all these things from people who were well acquainted with them. So after I had three times made obeisance to the emperor with my face upon the ground, I lifted my head, and behold! The Man whom just before I had seen sitting on a moderately elevated seat had now changed his raiment and was sitting on the level of the ceiling. How it was done I could not imagine...<sup>675</sup>

Liudprand goes on to describe the gracious hospitality shown by the Greeks during his stay and remains entirely positive towards Byzantium throughout. However, this positive attitude (which may have been genuine) is informed by the circumstances under which *Antapodosis* was written. As mentioned earlier, Liudprand had connections to Spain through bishop Recemund. The state of Christianity in Spain was considered to be deteriorating because of the influence of a growing Muslim presence and Spain's Umayyad leaders.<sup>676</sup> Many Christians were beginning to adopt Muslim practices such as circumcision and abstinence from pork.<sup>677</sup> As such, the need for literature that celebrated Christian culture and reminded the Spanish Christian population of their heritage was sought and Liudprand's *Antapodosis* would have found a captive audience.<sup>678</sup> The inclusion of, and focus on, Byzantium would have been

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<sup>675</sup> Liud. *Anta & Leg.*, VI. IV-V; Eng. trans. F.A. Wright, 1930, 207-208.

<sup>676</sup> Leyser, 1994, 131.

<sup>677</sup> Leyser, 1994, 132.

<sup>678</sup> Leyser, 132.

particularly apt as Byzantium, much like Spain, was facing external threats from shared enemies (such as the Saracens), yet they remained steadfast in their devotion to Christianity.<sup>679</sup>

It is in this social context that Liudprand's *Antapodosis* must be considered. Whether or not it was factually accurate, the *Antapodosis* served as a career maker for Liudprand and it was through bishop Recemund that Liudprand found a place at the court of Otto I in 956.<sup>680</sup>

Although emulating the court of Charlemagne was in the forefront of the Ottonian imperial strategy, Otto I has been considered by some scholars to have been resistant to the idea of including foreigners in his entourage.<sup>681</sup> However, as his empire and influence grew, the need was inevitable.<sup>682</sup> Liudprand would prove himself to be a valuable addition to the Ottonian court as his experience with Byzantium and knowledge of Greek were essential to his multiple eastern diplomatic missions.

Liudprand embarked on his first Byzantine mission on behalf of the Ottonians in 968. With relations between the Ottonians and Byzantines tense, Liudprand was tasked with the seemingly impossible mission of negotiating a marriage between Otto II and Romanos II's daughter, Anna.<sup>683</sup> Liudprand remained in Constantinople from 4 June until 2 October 968.<sup>684</sup> Like his mission

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<sup>679</sup> Leyser, 1994, 135.

<sup>680</sup> Leyser, 1994, 132.

<sup>681</sup> Leyser, 1994, 131.

<sup>682</sup> Leyser, 1994, 131.

<sup>683</sup> Relations between the two empires were tense due to the Ottonians' encroachment on southern Italy, especially in the region of Bari. Leyser, 1994, 135.

<sup>684</sup> Leyser, 1994, 135.

for Berengar, Liudprand wrote an account of his visit, *De Legatione Constantinopolitana* (also known as the *Legatio*). However, his experience with Byzantium his second time around was much different and his *Legatio* presents a more negative account of the Greeks in Byzantium and their treatment of the Ottonian legation.

Liudprand praised the Greeks and their hospitality in his account in *Antapodosis*, however, in stark contrast, the *Legatio* emphasizes the poor living conditions offered by Nikephorus Phokas:

On the fourth of June we arrived at Constantinople, and after a miserable reception, meant as an insult to yourselves, we were given the most miserable and disgusting quarters. The palace where we were confined was certainly large and open, but it neither kept out the cold nor afforded shelter from the heat. Armed soldiers were set to guard us and prevent my people from going out, and any others from coming in. This dwelling, only accessible to us who were shut inside it, was so far distant from the emperor's residence that we were quite out of breath when we walked there – we did not ride. To add to our troubles, the Greek wine we found undrinkable because of the mixture in it of pitch, resin and plaster. The house itself had no water and we could not even buy any to quench our thirst. All this was serious “Oh dear me!” but there was another “Oh dear me” even worse, and that was our warden, the man who provided us with our daily wants. If you were to seek another like him, you certainly would not find him on earth; you might perhaps in hell. Like a raging torrent he poured upon us every calamity, every extortion, every expense, every grief and every misery that he could invent. In one hundred and twenty days not one passed without bringing to us groaning and lamentation.<sup>685</sup>

Liudprand's description of the emperor is also in stark contrast to the awe-filled description contained in *Antapodosis*:

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<sup>685</sup> Liud., *Anta & Leg.*, I; Eng. trans. F.A. Wright, 1930, 235-236.

On the seventh of June, the sacred day of Pentecost, I was brought before Nikephoros himself in the palace called Stephana, that is, the Crown Palace. He is a monstrosity of a man, a dwarf, fat-headed and with tiny mole's eyes; disfigured by a short, broad, thick beard half going gray; disgraced by a neck scarcely an inch long; piglike by reason of the big close bristles on his head; in colour an Ethiopian and, as the poet says. "you would not like to meet him in the dark"; a big belly, a lean posterior, very long in the hip considering his short stature, small legs, fair sized heels and feet; dressed in a robe made of fine linen, but old, foul smelling, and discoloured by age; shod with Sicyonian slippers; bold of tongue, a fox by nature, in perjury and falsehood a Ulysses. My lords and august emperors, you always seemed comely to me; but how much more comely now! Always magnificent; how much more magnificent now! Always mighty; how much more mighty now! Always clement; how much more clement now! Always full of virtues; how much fuller now! At his left, not on a line with him, but much lower down, sat the two child emperors, once his masters, now his subjects.<sup>686</sup>

The theme of poor hospitality, poor company and poor basic living conditions is spread through the entirety of the *Legatio*. Liudprand recounts arguments with the emperor which end in Liudprand accusing the emperor of trickery and the text even describes his defacing of his 'miserable' house leaving a scathing poem to future guests who should be so unfortunate as to experience what he had:

'Trust not the Greeks; they live but to betray;  
Nor heed their promises, whate'er they say.  
If lies will serve them, any oath they swear,  
And when it's time to break it feel no fear.  
This loft marble house with windows wide,  
That has no well and cannot shade provide  
Against the sun, but lets in cold and heat,  
Was for four summer months my sole retreat.  
I, Liudprand, from far Cremona came  
To the great town that bears Constantine's name,  
A messenger of peace, when my great lord,  
The Emperor Otto, had with fire and sword

<sup>686</sup> Liud., *Anta & Leg.*, III.; Eng. trans. F.A. Wright, 1930, 236-237.

Gone up to conquer Bari, and in haste  
Wrought havoc and laid all the country to waste...<sup>687</sup>

Although the differences between Liudprand's accounts of the Greeks differ drastically in the *Legatio* and *Antapodosis*, neither text should be taken at face value; but should be interpreted within the context of the specific mission Liudprand was undertaking and the intended audience. As mentioned earlier, *Antapodosis* was written with the intent of promoting Christianity within a country whose Christian population was beginning to waver in their devotion. The political and historical context and audience for the *Legatio* was considerably different and these elements must be taken into consideration if we are to read a proper understanding of the *Legatio* is to take place.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The main purpose for Liudprand's mission to Constantinople was to secure a bride for Otto I's son, Otto II. Otto I had been crowned emperor six years prior to the embassy and a marriage between the Ottonians and Byzantines would effectively force the Byzantines to acknowledge Otto I's elevated status.<sup>688</sup> Tensions between the Byzantines and the Ottonians had been growing because of Otto I's encroachment into Italy and the number of influential allies the Byzantines held in Italy was steadily decreasing.<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>687</sup> Liud., *Anta & Leg.*, LVII; Eng. trans. Wright, 1930, 270.

<sup>688</sup> Leyser, 1994, 155.

<sup>689</sup> One of the major allies to the Byzantines, King Hugh of northern Italy, died in 948 thereby effectively severing Byzantine influence in the north. Loud, 2012, 8.



Since being elected as king of the Franks and the Saxons in 936, Otto I promoted an imperial agenda different from that of his fathers but similar to that of Charlemagne.<sup>690</sup> While Otto I's election was not contested, the first years of his reign saw internal conflicts from prominent leaders of duchies in his realm.<sup>691</sup> The years 937-941 were especially trying, as there were multiple rebellions in Bavaria and Saxony.<sup>692</sup> The result of these rebellions led Otto I to seek more control over Franconia, Saxony and Bavaria and to exert more power over the dukes who had previously enjoyed relative freedom under his father, Henry I.<sup>693</sup>

After Otto I successfully quashed the rebellions, his rule was defined more by his missionary work. Much of Otto I's focus was on his attempts to Christianize the northern and eastern frontiers of his empire by building power centres, such as the Magdeburg monastery in the east.<sup>694</sup> However, in 951 at the behest of the wife of the deposed king Lothar of Italy, Adelheid, Otto was called to intervene in Italy.<sup>695</sup>

At the directive of Adelheid, Otto I marched into Italy and enjoyed an easy victory over Berengar (who had taken the throne from Lothar).<sup>696</sup> As Otto I's wife, Eadgyth, had died a few years prior to his march into Italy, Otto I took Adelheid

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<sup>690</sup> This was an intentional imperial strategy as much of Otto's reign moved away from his father's policies and more towards Charlemagne's. Otto's coronation in 936 was deliberately held in Charlemagne's palace chapel in Aachen as a way to create a link between himself and Charlemagne from the outset of his reign. Otto I also followed in Charlemagne's footsteps by establishing a family dynasty and not dividing the empire amongst male relatives. Bernhardt, 1993, 4-18.

<sup>691</sup> Bernhardt, 1993, 16.

<sup>692</sup> Bernhardt, 1993, 16.

<sup>693</sup> Bernhardt, 1993, 18.

<sup>694</sup> Threats from the east by the Magyars made the establishment of Magdeburg a strategic military and religious decision. Bernhardt, 1993, 22-37.

<sup>695</sup> Bernhardt, 1993, 24.

<sup>696</sup> Bernhardt, 1993, 24.

as his wife and it was to her that Otto II was born. Although he was not granted the coronation after his victory, this first Italian campaign set the stage for Otto I's coronation a decade later, and it served as a turning point for the establishment of the Ottonian dynasty.

Although Berengar II was successfully defeated by Otto I and was forced to serve as a sub-king and pay tribute to Otto I, he remained a problem.<sup>697</sup>

Berengar II continued to attempt to assert himself in Italy, and after a series of incursions, forced Pope John XII to seek Otto I's help in 961.<sup>698</sup> Otto I once again entered Italy, and after another successful campaign against Berengar II (this time he was able to force Berengar II into exile), received the imperial coronation on 2 February 962.<sup>699</sup> It was after Otto I's coronation in 962 that he embarked on his relationship with Byzantium.

After Otto I's coronation there occurred a struggle for power amongst the Roman aristocracy and a struggle for Otto I to assert himself as emperor to his new people – a struggle that would endure through his rule and that of his Ottonian successors. The absence of authority left in the wake of a series of changes in power allowed Otto I to assert his rule on a population which had little interest in an imperial authority that was more than ceremonial.<sup>700</sup> Otto I even attempted to control the papacy by installing Leo VIII as pope.<sup>701</sup> This was unsuccessful: Leo VIII was regarded as the 'anti-pope' and soon another pope,

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<sup>697</sup> Bernhardt, 1993, 36.

<sup>698</sup> Bernhardt, 1993, 36.

<sup>699</sup> Bernhardt, 1993, 36.

<sup>700</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 251.

<sup>701</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 252.

John XIII, was elected.<sup>702</sup> While Otto I's efforts to control the papacy were unsuccessful, John XIII was nonetheless quick to call upon Otto I for aid.

John XIII requested Otto I's intervention in Italy after an uprising in Rome threatened his position.<sup>703</sup> Otto I returned to Italy and remained there from 966-972. It was during this third expedition to Italy that relations with Byzantium came to a head for the Ottonians. While mediating relations between the Lombards and the papacy, the issue of overlordship came into question.<sup>704</sup> Otto I, being the emperor of the west, believed that the Lombard principalities fell under Ottonian jurisdiction, while Byzantium held a claim to Capua and Benevento that was not a vestige of old Roman imperial pretensions, but an outcome of more recent negotiations with the Lombards.<sup>705</sup> Conflict erupted between the Ottonians and Byzantium over this issue and after several military advancements in attempts to gain territory in southern Italy, Otto I and the new emperor, John Tzimiskes, reached a compromise: Otto I would control Benevento and Capua and his rule would be officially recognized by Byzantium in the form of a marriage alliance between the two empires.<sup>706</sup>

It is during this period of unrest between the Ottonians and Byzantium that we must place Liudprand's *Legatio*. While Otto I did eventually receive recognition from John Tzimiskes, it was not in response to the first request for

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<sup>702</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 252.

<sup>703</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 253.

<sup>704</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 253.

<sup>705</sup> As a recognition for Byzantium's help in averting a Muslim attack, the Lombard princes awarded them Capua and Benevento. Shepard, 1995, 605.

<sup>706</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 254.

recognition. Efforts in 968 between Otto I and Nikephoros were made to settle the southern Italy disputes, and as part of these negotiations, Liudprand ventured on his ill-fated embassy that would inform the negative perceptions of the Greeks documented in the *Legatio*.

Scholars such as Karl Leyser and Henry Mayr-Harting believe that there was an underlying motivation behind the negative portrayal of the Byzantines in the *Legatio*. As mentioned earlier, the audience for the *Antapodosis* was Christians in Spain who were concerned about an encroaching Muslim faith and would have been receptive to descriptions of well-executed and grand displays of Christian ceremonies. Leyser and Mayr-Harting suggest that the audience for the *Legatio* were the dukes in Benevento and Capua.<sup>707</sup>

The *Legatio* should therefore be viewed as a piece of propaganda intended to ally the southern dukes with the Ottonians and break their previous relationship with Byzantium.<sup>708</sup> Leyser went as far as to describe the *Legatio* as a 'call to war' and argued that it set the stage for Otto's military operations in 969.<sup>709</sup> Perhaps it can be viewed as a successful piece of propaganda as Otto did eventually gain control of the duchies he targeted with the *Legatio*.

A common thread found in both Liudprand's works is the focus on the minutiae of the day-to-day activities of the Byzantines. In *Antapodosis* these details were splendid and enhanced his visit. Lavish gold thrones, excellent wine and food are discussed with frequency. However, in the *Legatio*, the

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<sup>707</sup> Mayr-Harting, 2001, p. 539 and Leyser 1994, p. 136.

<sup>708</sup> Mayr-Harting, 2001, 539.

<sup>709</sup> Leyser, 1994, 136.

splendour found in even the smallest detail has diminished significantly over the three decades since his first visit. The food is awful, his living conditions are unacceptable, and the clothes of even the innocent bystander does not escape Liudprand's scrutiny.<sup>710</sup>

A numerous company of tradesmen and low-born persons, collected on this solemn occasion to welcome and honour Nicephorus, lined the sides of the road, like walls, from the palace to Saint Sophia, tricked out with thin little shields and cheap spears. As an additional scandal, most of the mob assembled in his honour had marched there with bare feet, thinking, I suppose, that thus they would better adorn the sacred procession. His nobles for their part, who with their master passed through the plebeian and barefoot multitude, were dressed in tunics that were too large for them and were also because of their extreme age full of holes. They would have looked better if they had worn their ordinary clothes. There was not a man among them whose grandfather had owned his own tunic when it was new. No one except Nikephoros wore any jewels or golden ornaments, and the emperor looked more disgusting than ever in the regalia that had been designed to suit the persons of his ancestors.<sup>711</sup>

This intense scrutiny of every small detail has led scholars to postulate that Liudprand had the intention of undermining the relationship between the Lombards and the Byzantines by demonstrating their inherent differences and to demonstrate how deep their differences ran.<sup>712</sup> So taking the extreme differences between Liudprand's works, is it possible to consider Liudprand and his *Legatio* as an accurate reflection of the Ottonian opinion of the Greeks circa 968? If it is accurate then can there possibly exist an argument that suggests

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<sup>710</sup> Liudprand criticizes a crowd of bystanders for dressing in what seemed to him to be their grandparent's clothes. Although Leyser notes that they would have dressed in the clothing of their grandparents during celebrations in a way to honour the deceased. Leyser, 1994, 136.

<sup>711</sup> Liud. *Anta & Leg.*, IX; Eng. trans. F.A. Wright, 1930, 240.

<sup>712</sup> Leyser, 1994, 142.

that the Ottonians would have been receptive to Greek culture given how much Liudprand admonishes almost every single aspect of their culture?

It is unlikely that one can answer these questions with absolute certainty, Liudprand's *Legatio* has a political agenda and therefore its value as an authority of Ottonian opinion diminishes. According to Leyser, many of the anecdotes in the *Legatio* that shed unfavourable light on the Greeks mirror those found in Notker's *Gesta*, written approximately a century earlier, therefore providing evidence that Liudprand was utilizing literary tropes used to curry favour.<sup>713</sup>

The purpose of Liudprand's mission may have been publically touted as a first step in marriage negotiations between the Ottonians and Byzantines, but given the tone of the *Legatio*, it would seem unlikely that the Ottonians would have been receptive to Byzantine culture in any form. Although we cannot take the *Legatio* at face value in terms of Ottonian opinions on Byzantines, it still is an indicator of the propaganda that was being circulated within the Ottonian court and could have potentially influenced or responded to the level of interest in Byzantium at court which many scholars claim was present at the time.<sup>714</sup>

Leyser argues that the *Legatio* did not have the same 'literary afterlife' that *Antapodosis* enjoyed, and therefore was not likely to not have been too influential.<sup>715</sup> Although Otto I was successful in gaining control over Benevento and Capua, the *Legatio* does not seem to have had an impact on the desire for a

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<sup>713</sup> Leyser, 1994, 139.

<sup>714</sup> Leyser, 1994, Mayr-Harting, 2001, Ciggar, 1994.

<sup>715</sup> Leyser, 1994, 141.

Byzantine porphyrogennete for Otto II and a marriage contract was included in the compromise of 969.

Although Liudprand did not record the events of the second embassy to Constantinople to negotiate in 969, there is an Ottonian account of the arrival of Theophano at court. Thietmar of Merseburg, a Saxon bishop, was an eyewitness to many of the events that took place at the Ottonian court. His *Chronicon* is one of the only primary documents to describe Theophano's arrival in the west. Thietmar recounted the events surrounding the 969 embassy to Constantinople and did not hesitate to criticize the Greeks while simultaneously celebrating the new addition to the Ottonian court:

Wishing to acquire a wife for his son from the emperor at Constantinople, in good faith, he commended leading men as bearers of this request to an imperial embassy which had been sent for a different reason. But during the trip, the Greeks, with their customary slyness, unexpectedly attacked and killed some of them. Others, having been taken captive, were presented to their august lord. The few who managed to escape related the whole incident to their emperor. Taking the loss of his envoys very seriously, the emperor quickly sent his best warriors, Gunther and Siegfried, to Calabria to take revenge for this outrage. They killed the Danae who, made arrogant by their previous victory, attacked them. They seized others as they fled, and cut their noses off. Then, after forcing the Greeks in Calabria and Apulia to pay tribute, they returned happy and loaded down with spoils. At Constantinople, people grieved over their dead and captured countrymen. Conspiring against their lord, they followed the advice of the treacherous empress in having him killed by a certain warrior whom they then designated in his place as ruler of the entire empire. Immediately, this ruler sent across the sea to our emperor, not the desired maiden, but rather his niece, Theophanu, accompanied by a splendid entourage and magnificent gifts. He thereby absolved his people's guilt and obtained the desired friendship of Caesar Augustus. There were some who tried to dissuade the emperor from this alliance and recommended sending the bride home. He did not listen to them, however, and gave her to

his son, in marriage, with the approval of all the leading men of Italy and Germany.<sup>716</sup>

Thietmar appears to be just as critical towards the Greeks as Liudprand, as he describes the emperor as ‘their lord’ while using the title emperor and Caesar Augustus to describe Otto I. David Warner describes Thietmar’s attitude as a ‘particularly virulent brand of ethnic stereotyping’, yet Thietmar’s tone does not seem out of place or particularly shocking when compared to the *Legatio*.<sup>717</sup> However, there is one detail in this account that scholars have relied on heavily – the mention of Theophano’s dowry. It is Theophano’s dowry treasure that many scholars suggest had an impact on Ottonian material culture (its impact will be discussed at length later). Although Theophano is noted as having an impact on the visual arts, she does not have much of an impact on the literary arts as her presence in written works can be best described as scanty.

## THEOPHANO IN THE WEST

Theophano first arrived in the west as a young teenager (most likely around 12 years of age) in 972 and married Otto II in Rome. As Thietmar’s description states, she was not the ‘desired maiden’ of the Ottonians and there was considerable opposition to her arrival, as members of the Ottonian court did not consider Theophano to have been a worthy partner for Otto II and

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<sup>716</sup> Thiet., *Chron.*, 2.15; Eng. trans. D. Warner, 2000, 102.

<sup>717</sup> Warner, 2000, 3.



encouraged Otto I to 'send her back'.<sup>718</sup> Theophano was not a porphyrogennete and was linked to the emperor John Tzimiskes in a rather indirect way.

Theophano was technically the niece of John Tzimiskies as her father's sister, Maria Sklerania, had been the first wife of the emperor.<sup>719</sup> There is no mention of Theophano in Byzantine sources to substantiate this claim. No source mentions her before the marriage (although it is possible that her name was changed upon her marriage) and no Byzantine source mentions the marriage negotiations of 969.<sup>720</sup>

The lack of mention of Theophano in Byzantine texts is puzzling as mentions of Maria Lekapena (who married Peter of Bulgaria) are present. Constantine Porphyrogennetos mentioned that union in his *De administrando imperio* c. 950.<sup>721</sup> The circumstances surrounding Maria's marriage to an outside group shares similarities to Theophano's marriage and therefore is a viable comparison. Another source that mentions the wedding and contains much more detail and has been used as a benchmark to speculate on the details of Theophano's marriage appears in Theophanes Continuatus.

A description of the goods Maria took to Bulgaria with her is described in Theophanes Continuatus as: '[she brought] all kinds of wealth and innumerable

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<sup>718</sup> Shepard, 1995, 615.

<sup>719</sup> Davids, 1995, 108.

<sup>720</sup> Davids, 1995, 111-120.

<sup>721</sup> Shepard, 1995, 121.

household goods'.<sup>722</sup> This statement has led some to hypothesize that similar wealth and goods were part of Theophano's dowry.<sup>723</sup>

There exist a few mentions of Theophano in Ottonian texts, but not at the frequency one might expect. The few texts that do exist were mostly written after her death in 991. As in all historical accounts of individuals it is difficult to discern any 'truth' from the texts as the political aims of the writers frequently outweigh historical accuracy. The western written accounts of Theophano exhibit gender issues, that while are not within the scope of this dissertation, do affect modern scholar's views on Theophano and therefore can unintentionally inform our perceptions as to the intentions, level of involvement and motivations of Theophano.<sup>724</sup> What we can say is that based on the available texts, the Ottonian opinion of Theophano was more negative than positive.

The main exception is Thietmar of Merseburg, a contemporary of Theophano who generously patronized his bishopric.<sup>725</sup> Thietmar even used the word 'exceptional' (for a Greek person) to describe her.<sup>726</sup> He praised Theophano for her generosity and piety, and noted a positive relationship between herself and Otto II's mother, Adelheid (which is in contrast to other accounts of their relationship that describe a power struggle between the two women).<sup>727</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> Theoph. Cont.; trans. Bekker, 1838, p. 415.

<sup>723</sup> Shephard, 1995, 135.

<sup>724</sup> For a discussion of the perception of western female medieval rulers and their subsequent impact on scholarship, see Nelson, 1978.

<sup>725</sup> Ciggar, 1995, 57.

<sup>726</sup> Ciggar, 1995, 57.

<sup>727</sup> Ciggar, 1994, 57.

The emperor [Otto III], now grown into manhood, put aside childish things, as the Apostle says. Constantly lamenting the destruction of the church of Merseburg, he diligently planned for its restoration and, urged on by his pious mother, remained eager to fulfill this vow as long as he lived. The following things were seen by her in a dream and later reported to me, just as she had related them, by Meinswind. During the silence of midnight, Christ's athlete, St. Lawrence, appeared before her with his right arm mangled and said: 'Why do you not ask who I am?' And she said: 'I do not dare, my lord!' He answered, 'I am...' and gave his name, and said: 'That which you are now contemplating in me was done by your lord, who was seduced by the words of a man whose guilt causes discord among the great multitude of Christ's elect.' Afterwards, she obliged her faithful son to care for the eternal salvation of his father's soul by restoring the bishopric, and this was to be done whether Giseler was living or dead. Although of the fragile sex, her modesty, conviction and manner of life were outstanding, which is rare in Greece. Preserving her son's rulership with manly watchfulness, she was always benevolent to the just, but terrified and conquered rebels. From the fruit of her womb, she offered daughters to God as a tithe, the first called Adelheid, at Quedlinburg, the second, called Sophia, at Gandersheim.<sup>728</sup>

With the exception of Thietmar, the only other notable positive description of Theophano comes to us from Bruno of Querfurt's *Vita* of St. Adalbert (a well-known member of Otto III's inner circle). In the *Vita*, Theophano is praised for her actions after the death of her husband. When Otto II unexpectedly died in 983, Theophano travelled to Rome where she participated in various acts of charity.<sup>729</sup> However, once again the positive attitude that Bruno holds towards Theophano was no doubt in response to her generous donations to the bishop while she was in Rome.<sup>730</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> Thiet., *Chron.* 4.10; Eng. trans. Davids, 2000, 157-58.

<sup>729</sup> Ciggar, 1994, 57.

<sup>730</sup> Ciggar, 1994, 57.

The negative opinions of Theophano are more frequent, but they are as influenced by their extenuating circumstances as the positive portrayals offered by Thietmar and Adalbert. Davids suggests that the negative portrayals (especially posthumously) were a result of western ecclesiastical reformers and their efforts to spread their anti-Byzantine rhetoric.<sup>731</sup> Perhaps the most scathing account of Theophano comes to us from Peter Damian (who was born almost two decades after Theophano's death). Peter Damian was highly critical of another contemporary Greek woman in the west, Maria Argyropoulina. He saw her early death as a result of her sumptuous lifestyle and was heavily critical of her day-to-day routine:

Such was the luxury of her habits that she scorned even to wash herself in common water, obliging her servants instead to collect the dew that fell from the heavens for her to bathe in. Nor did she deign to touch her food with her fingers, but would command her eunuchs to cut it up into small pieces, which she would impale on a certain golden instrument with two prongs and thus carry to her mouth. Her rooms, too, were so heavy with incense and various perfumes that it is nauseating for me to speak of them, nor would my readers readily believe it. But this woman's vanity was hateful to Almighty God; and so, unmistakeably, did He take his revenge.<sup>732</sup>

Peter Damian extrapolated his negative opinion of contemporary Greek women to past figures, and accused Theophano of having an affair outside of her marriage. Peter Damian suggested that Theophano and John Philagathos, a monk from southern Italy, engaged in an inappropriate and salacious

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<sup>731</sup> Davids, 1994, 111.

<sup>732</sup> Petrus Damianus, *Institutio monialis*, 11, PL 145, c. 744 C; Eng. trans. J.J. Norwich, 1983, p. 60.

relationship.<sup>733</sup> However, this account of Theophano must be viewed with a healthy amount of scepticism as Peter Damian demonstrates a pattern of a clear distaste for Greek women (not to mention the fact that he was writing this account considerably later).

Another negative account of Theophano's life that should probably be considered more of an example of rhetoric rather than a factual description is an account from the middle of the eleventh century (approximately sixty years after Theophano's death). The story is in the form of a nun's dream that was documented by a German monk, Otloh of St. Emmeran in his *Liber visionum*.<sup>734</sup> The nun claimed that Theophano came to her in her dream, pleading for her prayers as a lifetime of luxury had doomed her to eternal damnation.<sup>735</sup> There is some debate as to whether or not the nun meant purgatory or actually hell, as the concept of purgatory was not fully developed until the twelfth century and was not an element of Byzantine theology.<sup>736</sup> Whatever the meaning of eternal damnation meant for the nun, this anecdote persisted and historians regarded Theophano in a negative light and assumed she was a woman occupied with frivolity for many centuries afterwards.<sup>737</sup>

There exists a contemporary account of Theophano written by Odilo of Cluny that, perhaps not a product of anti-Greek rhetoric, was largely critical of her.

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<sup>733</sup> The rumour of Theophano's supposed affair with John Philagathos was told to Peter Damian by a Greek envoy to the Ottonian court. Leo Metro.; Eng. trans. M.P. Vinson, p. 20.

<sup>734</sup> Otloh, 13, *Visio* 17, p. 91, lin. 3.

<sup>735</sup> Otloh, 13, *Visio* 17, p. 91, lin. 3.

<sup>736</sup> Ciggar, 1995, 54.

<sup>737</sup> Ciggar, 1995, 55.

When writing Adelheid's (Otto II's mother and Theophano's mother-in-law) epitaph, Odilo was critical of Theophano and insults her by referring to her as 'that Greek woman whom Otto II had married' instead of using her proper name.<sup>738</sup> Much like the relationship between Thiemar and Theophano, Odilo and Adelheid enjoyed a relationship that saw donations to Odilo's church and he therefore had motivation to speak highly of Adelheid.<sup>739</sup>

Adelheid outlived both Otto II (d. 983) and Theophano (d. 991) and was said to have been happy when Theophano died.<sup>740</sup> The negative judgement these primary sources place on Theophano is still seen in modern scholarship. A theory that persists somewhat today is that some scholars believe Otto II's ill-fated advancements on Byzantine controlled southern Italy was a direct result of Theophano's bad judgement and perceived the attempt to control southern Italy as Theophano's master plan to conquer the Byzantine empire.<sup>741</sup> It has been stated that Theophano would have had a vested interest in the regime change in Byzantium and '...introduced the young emperor [Otto II] to the Roman imperial conception and the idea of bringing the whole Italian peninsula under Roman imperial lordship'.<sup>742</sup> However, these accusations are dependent on the assumption of the accuracy of primary sources. The circumstances behind Otto II's invasion on southern Italy were much more complicated than Odilo's descriptions of the machinations of a woman (not to mention the fact that a strong

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<sup>738</sup> Odilo, *Vit.* 8; trans. J. Hourlier, 1964, 134.

<sup>739</sup> Ciggar, 1994, 53.

<sup>740</sup> Odilo, *Vit.* 8; trans. J. Hourlier, 1964, 134.

<sup>741</sup> Ciggar, 1994, 53.

<sup>742</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 255.

presence of a Roman imperial strategy existed in the Ottonian court many years previous to Theophano's arrival, as demonstrated by many of Otto I's actions) and therefore the primary sources listed above cannot be considered as fact. Their contribution to modern scholarship should be limited to the study of gender and wider trends of Byzantine-Ottonian relations and the growing trend of anti-Greek sentiment that flourished after Otto III.<sup>743</sup>

The majority of the beginning of Otto II's reign was spent in Germany attempting to quell uprisings on the frontier as well as internal disputes.<sup>744</sup> It was not until 980 that Otto II returned to Italy. There exist multiple theories behind Otto II's motivations to expand the Ottonian empire further south than his father had. Besides the traditional imperial expansion and *renovatio* theories, one theory is that the Ottonians would have considered the land to be a part of Theophano's dowry and therefore they had a rightful claim to it.<sup>745</sup> This theory suggests that with the regime change in Byzantium and the death of a Lombard ally and southern Italian prince, Pandulf Ironhead, created opportunity and motivation to reclaim the lost dowry.<sup>746</sup>

G.A. Loud states that one should not underestimate the imperial ambitions of the Ottonians, and that the expansion southwards was an element of the

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<sup>743</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 45.

<sup>744</sup> Issues with Western Francia, Lotharingia and the northwest border between France and Germany were some of the areas along the frontier that were in a period of unrest. Internal conflicts from Otto II's uncle, Henry of Bavaria, also threatened Otto II's stability. Loud, 2012, 11.

<sup>745</sup> A monastery founded by Theophano's daughter, Matilda, in Calabria stated that Calabria was the *hereditas* of Theophano therefore suggesting that it may have been a part of Theophano's dowry. Loud, 2012, 13-14.

<sup>746</sup> Engels, 1995, 35.

Ottonian imperial strategy.<sup>747</sup> Otto II did take more interest in a *renovatio* than his father, as demonstrated by his use of the title *imperator Romanorum augustus*.<sup>748</sup> This interpretation provides a different motivation behind southern expansion than the dowry theory. A growing Muslim force preoccupied the eastern empire, thereby providing Otto II with an opportunity to reclaim territory from Byzantium that he viewed as belonging to the western empire.<sup>749</sup> If we trust Thietmar of Merseburg, then the Ottonian stance was that lands such as Matera, Taranto and Calabria were simply paying tribute to Byzantium to avoid any harassment from the emperor in Constantinople and that the lands rightfully belonged to the western empire.<sup>750</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg describes the impetus for the attempted southern expansion in 982:

Meanwhile, the emperor of the Roman Empire rules in such a way that he retained every possession that had previously belonged to his father. When his lands were attacked by the Saracens, he mounted a vigorous defence and compelled them to keep their distance from his borders. On the report that Calabria was suffering severely from the frequent attacks of the Greeks and the ravages of the Saracens, the emperor called upon the Bavarians and battle-ready Swabians to supplement his army. He himself hurried to the city of Taranto, in the company of Duke Otto, the son of his brother Liudolf. Taranto had fallen into the hands of the Greeks who had secured it with a garrison. The emperor managed to conquer the city, after a brief but forceful attack. Because he also wanted to deal with the Saracens, whose powerful army was ravaging his lands, skilful spies were sent to find out more about them. He first surrounded the Saracens in a certain city and then, after defeating them, forced them to flee. Catching up with them in an open field where they had assembled in battle order, he proceeded to kill a large number of them and believed that their total defeat was imminent. Yet, quite

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<sup>747</sup> Loud, 2012, 13.

<sup>748</sup> Shepard, 1995, 616.

<sup>749</sup> Loud, 2012, 12.

<sup>750</sup> Loud, 2012, 11.



unexpectedly, they managed to gather themselves together and launch an attack on our forces, cutting them down with little resistance, alas. All of this occurred on 13 July [982].<sup>751</sup>

Regardless of the motivations behind the attempted advancement, the military initiative was a disaster and Otto II barely escaped with his life. Thietmar included Theophano in his description of the events, however her role does not seem to be a behind-the-scenes manipulation, as Odilo of Cluny suggested, but merely as an innocent bystander. Thietmar describes Otto II's retreat back to Italy in a dramatic fashion:

Along with Duke Otto and several others, the emperor fled to the sea where, in the distance, he spotted a ship of the type known as a *salandria*. He hurried out to it on a horse belonging to the Jew Calanimus but the ship's crew refused to take him in and continued on their way. Returning to the safety of the shore, he found the Jew still standing there, anxiously awaiting the fate of his beloved lord. When the emperor saw that his enemies had also arrived on the scene, he sorrowfully asked this man: 'What now will become of me?' Suddenly, he notices that a second *salandria* was following the first one, and realized that among the ship's occupants was a friend who might be expected to help him. Once again, he urged his horse into the water and hurried out to the ship where he was recognized only by his warrior Henry, whose Slavic name was Zolunta. He was taken on board and placed in the bed of the ship's commander. Eventually, the commander also recognized him and asked if he was the emperor. After denying it for some time, Otto finally conceded and declared: 'Yes, it is I, reduced to this miserable state because of my sins. But best men of my empire and, tormented by his sorrow, can never again set foot in this land and have no further desire to see those who have befriended it. Only, let us go to the city of Rossano where my wife awaits my arrival. We will take her and all the treasure, of which I have an unspeakable amount, and go to your emperor, my brother. As I hope, he will be a loyal friend to me in my time of need.' Delighted at this pleasant conversation, the ship's commander hurried day and night to reach this place. As they approached their destination, the warrior with the two names was sent ahead to summon the empress and Bishop Dietrich, who

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<sup>751</sup> Thiet., *Chron.*, III.20; Eng. trans. D. Warner, 2001, 143-44.

accompanied her, and also fetch the many treasure-laden pack animals. As soon as the Greeks saw the empress leaving the city with so many gifts, they dropped anchor and allowed Bishop Dietrich to come aboard with a few companions. At the bishop's request, the emperor laid aside his vile clothing and put on something better. But then, as he was standing at the bow of the ship, he suddenly leaped into the water, trusting his own strength and skill at swimming. One of the Greeks who were standing near by tried to stop him by grabbing his clothing, but that celebrated warrior Liuppo ran him through with his sword and he fell backwards dead. While the Greeks fled to the other side of the ship, our people followed the emperor in the boats which had brought them there, escaping without any injury. The emperor, safely ashore, was waiting for them and fully expected to fulfill his promises to the Greeks by bestowing rich gifts. The Greeks themselves, however, being both terrified and sceptical regarding the emperor's intentions, departed and sought the borders of their homeland. May all who are accustomed to conquer other nations through craft observe how these Greeks were fooled by similar means. I can scarcely describe the joy with which the emperor was received, both by those already present and by those who arrived later.<sup>752</sup>

After this failure, Otto II remained in Italy with the hopes of a second expedition south, however he died one year later in 983 at the age of 28 in Rome.<sup>753</sup> Otto II's death marks the final attempt of a southern Italian expansion by an Ottonian king.<sup>754</sup>

After Otto II's death Theophano acted as regent for Otto III. While there is not a great deal of attention paid to the decade between Otto II and Otto III (Theophano's rule has been described as 'benign'), there was not a consensus amongst the Ottonian court as to who should act as regent for Otto III.<sup>755</sup> Henry II of Bavaria, Theophano's most vocal opponent, proclaimed himself emperor and

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<sup>752</sup> Thiet., *Chron.*, III. 21-22; Eng. trans. D. Warner, 2000, 144-45.

<sup>753</sup> Loud, 2012, 12.

<sup>754</sup> Loud, 2012, 16.

<sup>755</sup> Shepard, 1995, 617.

was crowned two years after Otto II's death in 984.<sup>756</sup> The *Annales Magdeburgenses* stated that Theophano's enemies were the ones who supported Henry's claim to the throne.<sup>757</sup> It was not until 985 that through the support of Archbishop Willigis of Mainz and Hildibald of Worms did Theophano secure the throne for her son.<sup>758</sup> Theophano acted as queen regent for her three-year-old son until her death in 991. After her death, Adelheid took on the role as regent until Otto III came of age and promptly expelled his grandmother from court.<sup>759</sup> Otto III maintained a strong presence in Italy (spending the majority of his short reign in Rome), but never undertook an imperial expansion political strategy on the same level of his father.<sup>760</sup>

Theophano's eight years as regent were not filled with imperial pretentions or attempts to annex southern Italy. She spent some time in Italy (specifically Rome and Ravenna) mostly in a charitable capacity, and issued a diploma under the title *Theophanu imperatrix augusta*.<sup>761</sup> But she did not extend her imperial power in Italy past diplomatic means and her major intervention was felt along the borders of Slavic territories.<sup>762</sup>

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<sup>756</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 256.

<sup>757</sup> *Annal. Mag.* SS 16, p. 157, 12.

<sup>758</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 256.

<sup>759</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 255.

<sup>760</sup> Loud, 2012, 16.

<sup>761</sup> This odd title has been considered to have been used out of convenience rather than ambition. Engels suggests the use of the title was because Otto III did not travel with his mother to Italy and therefore she was acting on his behalf and required an appropriate title. Engels, 1995, 38.

<sup>762</sup> In cooperation with Duke Miesco of Poland, Theophano organized multiple campaigns against Bohemia and the Elbe Slav territories. Müller-Mertens, 2000, 256.

After Theophano's death in 991, Adelheid took the reigns of the empire and maintained more of a royal presence in Italy than Theophano.<sup>763</sup> Otto III followed in the footsteps of his grandmother and maintained a strong presence in Italy and significantly shifted imperial policy on the *renovatio* of the Roman Empire.<sup>764</sup> Although Otto III reigned for a brief six years, his attempts to establish the Ottonians in Italy have been noted as the most aggressive actions by any Ottonian ruler.<sup>765</sup> Otto III considered himself to be the new Constantine and was tenacious in his attempts to make Rome his royal city. His efforts to establish Ottonian rule in Italy, and his preference for exclusive individual succession as opposed to the more traditional Germanic custom of dividing land amongst all male heirs, has been described as a more Byzantine style of ruling (supposedly inspired from Theophano).<sup>766</sup> However, these elements can all be found in Charlemagne's imperial strategy that, as mentioned earlier, is well documented as a source of inspiration for Ottonian rule.<sup>767</sup>

The sources we have available to us that discuss Theophano are not sufficient to determine whether or not she had an active impact on the politics of her husband or her sons. Some argue that she was active in Otto II's efforts to annex southern Italy and that she influenced her son's attempt to style his rule in that of a Byzantine ruler.<sup>768</sup> However, others would argue that her influence was

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<sup>763</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 256.

<sup>764</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000, 257.

<sup>765</sup> Müller-Mertens, 2000 and Shepard, 1995.

<sup>766</sup> Engels, 1995, 42.

<sup>767</sup> Lasko, 1972, Garrison, 2012, Mayr-Harting, 1999, McKitterick, 1995 and Otto III's admiration for Charlemagne was noted by Thiemar of Merseburg, *Chron.* IV, 47.

<sup>768</sup> Ciggaar, 1995, Müller-Mertens, 2000.

more indirect and that her presence at court was enough to initiate a shift in imperial strategy.<sup>769</sup> Her influence on the arts is as equally illusive. Again, there are those who would argue that she played an integral and active role in the transmission of Byzantine iconography and styles to the west through her luxurious lifestyle and patronage of the arts, while others argue for a more indirect influence and that the objects included in her dowry impacted material culture through their presence in the west.<sup>770</sup>

If we turn to the literary evidence, it would seem unlikely that Theophano had much of a direct impact. The sources that claim she enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle were written with the motive of discrediting her and other Greek women. The only contemporary accounts, if they can be relied upon, praise her for her piety and her generosity. They make mention of 'rich gifts', but all of the riches described in association with Theophano are in reference to her dowry.<sup>771</sup> Therefore, in order to determine if Theophano made an impact (directly or indirectly) on Ottonian art, a stronger influence of Byzantium must be observed in Ottonian material culture after the year 972.

## **THEOPHANO'S IMPACT ON THE VISUAL ARTS**

As demonstrated by the literary evidence, it is difficult to reach any definitive conclusions on Theophano's impact on Ottonian culture. While scholars

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<sup>769</sup> Shepard, 1995, McKitterick, 1995.

<sup>770</sup> For direct influence see: Ciggaar, 1985 and 1995, Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, Lasko, 1972, Head, 1997, Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995. For indirect influence see: McKitterick, 1995, Mayr-Harting, 1999.

<sup>771</sup> See Thietmar.

point to her Byzantine heritage and its possible influence on Otto II and Otto III's imperial policy of a *renovatio*, it is difficult to distinguish her influence from existing imperial strategies of Carolingian emulation.<sup>772</sup> Studies have been conducted on the possible impact Theophano had on the literary culture of the Ottonians, leading to a similar general conclusion: there is little evidence to link Theophano directly to any increased promotion of or interest in Byzantine culture.<sup>773</sup>

Rosamond McKitterick has suggested that Theophano made little impact on Ottonian culture (although the study's parameters did not include visual culture) and even went as far as to negate the presence of an interest in Greek culture at the Ottonian court, which many scholars have previously suggested.<sup>774</sup>

McKitterick suggests, instead, that Ottonian culture reflected a continuation from Carolingian cultural practises and that the Ottonians did not extend their interest in Greek culture past that of their Carolingian predecessors.<sup>775</sup>

Florentine Mütherich concluded that there was a noted absence of Greek culture in her study of Otto III's personal library.<sup>776</sup> There is a notable absence of Greek texts within Otto III's personal library despite his Greek mother and Greek tutor, the monk John Philagathos. The collection is mainly composed of Carolingian texts belonging to Charles the Bald as well as a few gospel books

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<sup>772</sup> As mentioned earlier, some scholars believe that the Ottonian imperial strategy was influenced by Theophano and her concepts of an empire; many of the indicators those scholars cite as evidence can also be found in major cornerstones of Carolingian imperial strategy which the Ottonians had been emulating well before Theophano and Otto II's marriage in 972.

<sup>773</sup> Rosamond McKitterick suggested this conclusion based on evidence from Ottonian scriptoria and Florentine Mütherich's study on Otto III's personal library. McKitterick, 1992 (b), 24.

<sup>774</sup> McKitterick, 1992 (b), 24.

<sup>775</sup> McKitterick, 1992 (b), 24.

<sup>776</sup> Mütherich, 1986, 15.

gifted to Otto III from various ecclesiastical centres.<sup>777</sup> Mutherich concludes that it is difficult to discern any interest in Greek culture and also notes the absence of any texts that may have been included in the oft-discussed dowry of Theophano.<sup>778</sup> The main conclusion drawn from Mutherich's study is an Ottonian affinity for Carolingian texts, and in particular, an interest in texts commissioned by or for Charles the Bald. Mutherich suggests Otto III may have been drawn to Charles, as both were the grandsons of a powerful leader bearing the same name.<sup>779</sup> Otto III may have considered the parallels between them and may have enjoyed the comparison.<sup>780</sup>

These two studies provide little evidence for interest in Greek culture within the Ottonian court, and, more importantly for the purposes of this study, no indication that Theophano personally brought any Byzantine influence to the Ottonians. Despite the evidence provided by Mutherich and McKitterick, however, there are many who maintain that the marriage of Theophano brought about a significant change to the visual arts of the Ottonians and that she personally created an avenue for the transmission of Byzantine style and iconography.<sup>781</sup> I hope to demonstrate in the following pages that, following the pattern established for Ottonian literary culture by Florentine Mutherich and Rosamund McKitterick, there is a paucity of evidence to support Theophano's role

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<sup>777</sup> Mutherich, 1986, 13-22.

<sup>778</sup> Mutherich, 1986, 15.

<sup>779</sup> Mutherich, 1986, 20.

<sup>780</sup> Mutherich, 1986, 20.

<sup>781</sup> See Adelber Davids' *The Empress Theophano*, 1995, particularly Ciggar, Westermann-Angerhausen, and Voordecker.

in transmitting Byzantine culture to the Ottonian court and that what Byzantine elements we do find in the visual arts of the Ottonians are a result of one of the fundamental aspects of Ottonian visual arts: the changing demographic of the patron.

Material culture that can be directly and securely linked to an imperial patron is not as abundant in comparison to the Carolingians. This is due partly to the itinerant aspect of the Ottonian court; however that is not to say there was no art being produced by and for those closely connected to the court.<sup>782</sup> Members of the ecclesiastical community grew in numbers and influence during the tenth century, and it is leaders of this community who became influential patrons of the arts on a scale larger than previous western empires had seen.<sup>783</sup> However, one of the consequences of the decentralization of patronage, and the concomitant decentralization of style, message, and intent, is the difficulty in understanding general trends and influences.

McKitterick noted the lack of a central message behind Ottonian patronage.<sup>784</sup> Unlike the Carolingians who were motivated to regulate the liturgy and disseminated texts in order to achieve this goal, Ottonian imperial patronage does not have a similar motive.<sup>785</sup> This lack of central message contributes to the difficulties of understanding the motivations behind the patronage of culture by Ottonian rulers, leaving behind very few cues from which scholars might discern

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<sup>782</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, 12.

<sup>783</sup> North and Cutler, 2003, 1.

<sup>784</sup> McKitterick, 1992 (b), 16.

<sup>785</sup> McKitterick, 1992 (b), 16.



any kind of consistent cultural programme that can aid us in understanding their culture.

The visual culture that can be associated with the court lacks cohesion and appears to vary widely in stylistic and iconographic influence. Because of these variants, scholars have naturally attempted to find sources of inspiration that could possibly explain the appearance of certain influences. As in the two previous chapters, scholars have noted the appearance of Byzantine stylistic and iconographic elements in certain works associated with the Ottonians. William North and Anthony Cutler discussed the pitfalls to such an approach to Ottonian material culture: 'Such an approach [the Byzantine approach] has led scholars often to undervalue, whether implicitly or explicitly, the creativity and skill of local artisans and almost reflexively to connect developments in many areas of Ottonian art with the benevolent presence of a Greek muse'.<sup>786</sup> While they were not discussing the role of Theophano specifically, I believe this statement applies when attempting to link Theophano personally to the perceived influence of Byzantium on Ottonian visual culture.

Perhaps the most well known example of Ottonian art displaying distinct Greek or Byzantine characteristics that is discussed as being an example of Theophano's growing influence is an ivory panel that commemorates the crowning of Otto II as the emperor of the Roman empire (fig. 1). The panel, now housed at the Cluny Museum, depicts Otto II and Theophano flanking Christ who is blessing them both. The donor, who is thought to be John Philagathos, can be

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<sup>786</sup> North and Cutler, 2003, 2.

seen in *proskynesis* under Otto II's feet.<sup>787</sup> The inscriptions on the panel are in both Latin and Greek, and identify the imperial couple. The mix of Greek and Latin have led some scholars to believe that the panel was made in an area of Italy that had a high level of Byzantine influence.<sup>788</sup> The panel demonstrates clear Byzantine influence through the dress of Otto II and Theophano. Both are wearing a *loros* and the crowns on their heads are reminiscent of Byzantine imperial portraits found on contemporary Byzantine coinage (and consequently quite different from the actual Ottonian crown).<sup>789</sup>

Scholars have made comparisons between this panel and an ivory panel depicting an emperor named Romanos and his wife Eudokia (fig. 55). Both of the panels share similarities in the dress of the emperor and his wife, and the Christ figures in both panels are rendered in a similar fashion, standing on an elevated surface, bearded, with a crossed nimbus. However, the contexts of the two panels differ. The Romanos panel was commissioned to commemorate the marriage between Romanos and Eudokia, whereas the dating of the Ottonian panel securely places it after the marriage between Otto II and Theophano leading scholars to believe the panel was commissioned to celebrate Otto II's coronation in 980.<sup>790</sup>

The similarities between the two are striking, leading many to assume that the Romanos panel served as a model for the Ottonian; however there is

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<sup>787</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 211.

<sup>788</sup> Gussone, 1991, 172.

<sup>789</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 223.

<sup>790</sup> Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 1977, 314.

discussion on which Romanos is depicted on the ivory. A study by Ioli Kalavrezou-Maxeiner postulated that the emperor depicted was Romanos IV (1068-71) as opposed to the more generally agreed upon Romanos II (945-949).<sup>791</sup> Kalavrezou-Maxeiner based her conclusions on the titles associated with Eudokia Makrembolitissa, suggesting that the titles used on the ivory panel are more consistent with the later Eudokia. However, this argument is not widely accepted based on multiple arguments, but it is still accepted by some, including myself.

An earlier dating of the Romanos panel is attributed to the existence of the Ottonian example, as early twentieth-century scholars such as Alfred Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann concluded that a Byzantine source must have been drawn upon for the artist of the Ottonian example to create their panel.<sup>792</sup> Anthony Cutler responded to Kalavrezou-Maxeiner's claims by producing a study on the panel that finds in favour of Goldschmidt's and Weitzmann's earlier study. Cutler deemed Kalavrezou-Maxeiner's reliance on titular evidence to be inconclusive and looked to the epigraphy and carving technique of the panel to find evidence of Romanos II.

While it is not the goal of this chapter to re-hash the above debate, either dating of the panel could have implications on the Ottonian version. If we are to accept the later dating of the Romanos panel, then the issue of the Ottonian version being earlier chronologically poses an issue in terms of models.

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<sup>791</sup> Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 1977.

<sup>792</sup> Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 1977, 307.

Proponents of the later date for the Romanos panel suggest that the Ottonian version should not be considered to be the inspiration for the Romanos panel and propose that the Ottonian panel most likely inspired by a third, now lost, panel of Byzantine origin.<sup>793</sup> This would suggest a wide circulation of similar iconography throughout Byzantium and the west. However, the iconographical pattern in both the ivory panels is found in Byzantine contexts and the iconography does not seem to gain favour in the west.<sup>794</sup>

An earlier dating of the panel does provide a more satisfying explanation when considering models and influence. Dating the Romanos panel earlier provides an obvious model for the Ottonian panel and also provides an explanation for the perceived 'provincialism' for the Ottonian panel. However, an earlier dating of the Romanos panel does raise questions of visibility and range of influence. By suggesting a third, now lost panel that circulated throughout the west enough to influence artistic practices, a logical explanation for the transmission of the Byzantine iconography is provided. However, if we are to follow under the assumption that there is no third panel and the iconography in question was reserved for Byzantine contexts, then how did the iconography make its way to the Ottonian court?

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<sup>793</sup> Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 1977, 307.

<sup>794</sup> As Anthony Cutler notes, there is a miniature in a manuscript (Paris, Coislin 79) with a similar iconography as the ivory panels. Cutler, 1995, 606. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner offers more examples of similar iconography, such as a plaque of Constantine Porphyrogennetos dated to c. 945 and two examples of similar iconography from Eudokia Makrembolitissa and her first husband, Constantine X (a silver reliquary now in Moscow and a miniature in Paris gr. 922 folio 6r.).

It is this question that has led some scholars to point to the growing influence of Byzantine culture in Ottonian circles. It is equally possible to consider the possibility that the Ottonian version was not of western origin, but was made in Byzantium and repurposed into an Ottonian book cover much like the Byzantine ivory of the Dormition of the Virgin that covers the gospel book of Otto III (fig. 56).<sup>795</sup> In a review for Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann's influential *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen* (1934), A.S. Keck and C.R. Morey proposed a Byzantine origin for the Theophano panel.<sup>796</sup> Although Weitzmann and Goldschmidt discuss the possibility that the panel was intended for a Byzantine emperor, their argument does not flesh itself out further from the simple acknowledgment of the possibility.<sup>797</sup> Keck and Morey do so by arguing against Goldschmidt and Weitzmann's categorization of the 'ignorant' inscriptions being a carver unfamiliar with Latin titles.<sup>798</sup> Rather than viewing the inscriptions as a mistake, they hypothesize that the ivory was repurposed into an Ottonian ivory and that the addition of the identifiers of Theophano and Otto II were added later thus accounting for any errors or inconsistencies.<sup>799</sup>

Keck and Morey support this theory with a close examination of the abbreviation marks used on the panel. They note that the abbreviation marks above Christ are not consistent with those above Theophano and Otto II.<sup>800</sup> One

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<sup>795</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4453.

<sup>796</sup> Keck and Morey, 1935, 400.

<sup>797</sup> Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, (1934) 1979, 51.

<sup>798</sup> Keck and Morey, 1935, 400.

<sup>799</sup> Keck and Morey, 1935, 400.

<sup>800</sup> Keck and Morey, 1935, 400.

aspect of the abbreviation marks that remains inconsistent on the panel is the mark itself – while the abbreviation mark above Christ’s head has an additional ‘x’ through the bar, the marks above Theophano and Otto II’s head is free from embellishment.<sup>801</sup> Another aspect of the inscriptions that may point to a later repurposing is the deepness of the inscriptions. Keck and Morey note that the inscriptions above Christ’s head are more deeply incised than those identifying Theophano and Otto II.<sup>802</sup> These factors have led Keck and Morey to suggest that the panel was of Byzantine origin and then repurposed into a book cover.

One frequently overlooked aspect of comparisons conducted on these two panels is the differences in the dress of the imperial couple. There are noticeable differences between the two panels that could potentially enforce the notion of the provinciality of the Otto II panel. The carver of the Otto II panel follows the dress of Christ faithfully from the Romanos panel, however there are some marked differences in the imperial dress of Otto II and Theophano.

Upon first glance, they both appear to be wearing a modified *loros* costume that becomes the standard for imperial portraits during the Middle Byzantine period.<sup>803</sup> Gaining favour over the *chlamys* that was ubiquitous in the Early Byzantine period, the *loros* was especially appropriate for images of imperial figures being crowned by Christ as the garment had taken on spiritual

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<sup>801</sup> Keck and Morey, 1935, 400.

<sup>802</sup> Keck and Morey, 1935, 400.

<sup>803</sup> The *loros* was modified to include an opening for the head so that the wearer could easily slip it over their head rather than needing a cumbersome clasp or wrap. Parani, 2003, 19.

significance in the Middle Byzantine period as being representative of Christ's burial.<sup>804</sup>

While the Romanos panel displays the standard portrayal of a modified *loros* with the bejeweled scarf going over the head and draped over the left arm leaving the arms of the tunic worn underneath exposed, Otto II's dress is slightly different. There is a clear opening for the head, indicating that it is a modified *loros*, however the jeweled pattern continues over his left arm in a manner that almost mimics a *chlamys*. His left hand is hidden and the majority of the left side of his body is draped in the same jeweled pattern as his front. If a side-by-side comparison is made between a traditional portrait of an imperial figure wearing a *chlamys*, such as the portrait of Justinian at San Vitale, and the Otto II panel, similarities in the behavior of the dress can be made (fig. 57). Otto II's garment seems to be a hybrid between a modified *loros* and a traditional *chlamys*.

The dress of Theophano is equally confounding as Otto II's. The empress in the Romanos panel is once again wearing a modified *loros* that is similar to Romanos'. The female modified *loros* was typically depicted in two different ways; one being what we see on the Romanos panel with the extra fabric of the *loros* being drape over the arm, and the other way is to tuck the *loros* under a belt creating a 'shield-like' on the lower half of the body (fig. 58).<sup>805</sup> Theophano's *loros*, however, does not drape over her arm nor does it seem to be tucked under

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<sup>804</sup> The *loros* wrapped around the body of the wearer similar to that of a burial shroud. Parani, 2003, 23.

<sup>805</sup> Parani, 2003, 25.

a belt. While her hands could potentially be hiding a belt, there is no 'shield-like' effect on her lower half to indicate that the *loros* is belted.

The crowns of both Otto II and Theophano seem to follow Byzantine custom, as they are comprised of a solid circlet of gold inlaid with a row of pearls.<sup>806</sup> They both also include two strands of pearls that frame both sides of the face. However, the *prependoulia* (the trefoil ornaments that are typically at the end of the strand of pearls) that can easily be seen in the Romanos panel are not visible in the Otto II panel.<sup>807</sup>

As demonstrated above, there are certainly differences in the dress of the two imperial couples. However, it is difficult to say with certainty if the differences can be attributed to a lack of knowledge of imperial Byzantine conventions, or poor copying skills. Along with the overall quality of the ivory in comparison to the Romanos panel can perhaps be considered that it was an artistic mistake upon the carver's behalf as opposed to a lack of Byzantine ceremonial knowledge. However, it is understandable to believe the opposing argument as the discrepancies in lettering could also potentially be used as further evidence of a lack of knowledge. But when considering the research put forth by Keck and Morey, the theory of a repurposed ivory of Constantinopolitan origin (of perhaps not the finest quality) still holds merit.

The practice of repurposing Byzantine and antique precious objects is a well-established tradition in Ottonian material culture. Another prominent

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<sup>806</sup> Parani, 2003, 28.

<sup>807</sup> Parani, 2003, 28.



example of this practice can be found in the use of an antique cameo in the Lothar cross (fig. 59). There has been significant discussion on the incorporation of the Augustus cameo on the Lothar cross and how it embodied Ottonian historical self-consciousness.

It has been proposed that the use of *spolia* from specifically past Roman and Carolingian rulers was intended to establish a lineage between the Romans, Carolingians and Ottonians (the link to the Carolingians is evidenced by the inclusion of a seal at the bottom of the cross of the Carolingian emperor Lothar II, r.855-869).<sup>808</sup> However, the use of Byzantine material culture has mostly been discussed within the context of personal preference.<sup>809</sup> For example, the Byzantine ivory of the Dormition of the Virgin covering the Otto III Gospels has been contextualized as an example of the growing Byzantine influence at the Ottonian court and is considered to be an expression of Otto III's desire to express his personal beliefs (it is then argued that those personal beliefs were formed by his Byzantine mother and Greek tutor John Philagathos).<sup>810</sup> However, more recent scholarship is being conducted on a more in-depth and less psychoanalytic explanation for the Ottonian appropriation of Byzantine material culture that considers political motivations behind the repurposing of Byzantine objet d'art.

A recent study conducted by Warren Woodfin on the Cunegunda Chormantel in Bamberg has shed some light on possible motivations behind

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<sup>808</sup> See Garrison, 2012, and Déer, 1955.

<sup>809</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 158.

<sup>810</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 158.

Ottonian appropriation of Byzantine material culture.<sup>811</sup> Woodfin's study of a silk garment with a peculiar blend of Byzantine iconography and Latin inscriptions bearing the name of Otto III's successor, Henry II (r.1002-24) suggests that the Ottonians appropriated the Byzantine iconography, but changed the context, therefore stripping it of its original intention as a gift that clearly communicated Byzantine superiority over the west.<sup>812</sup>

The luxurious silk garment (fig. 60) is thought to have originally intended to be a gift from Byzantium to the German emperors, however as relations deteriorated with Byzantium, it was later altered to strip the garment of unfavourable associations.<sup>813</sup> Although the garment has undergone significant alterations since the eleventh century when it was gifted to the west thereby making a definitive conclusion to the garment's country of origin difficult, the alterations associated with Henry II's rule are still visible today.<sup>814</sup> Woodfin argues that the embroidery technique found on the silk is not enough to designate a Byzantine origin for the garment and suggests that only through iconography we can safely categorize the garment as Byzantine.<sup>815</sup> The iconography in question is a repeating pattern of seventy-two portraits of an emperor seated upon a throne.<sup>816</sup> The foundation of Woodfin's Byzantine categorization is based upon on

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<sup>811</sup> Woodfin, 2008.

<sup>812</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 34.

<sup>813</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 34.

<sup>814</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 33.

<sup>815</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 38.

<sup>816</sup> Woodfin 2008, 33.

the appearance of the emperor's throne in the shape of a lyre as well as the costume of the emperor.<sup>817</sup>

Woodfin claims that the lyre throne is an iconographical device that is rarely found in the west and that it appears once in the seventh-century Santa Maria Antiqua frescoes and does not appear again in the west until the thirteenth century.<sup>818</sup> Therefore, the image is linked Byzantium as the lyre throne was found on imperial coinage and on the walls of the Hagia Sophia.<sup>819</sup> However, Woodfin notes that it is never the emperor who sits upon the lyre throne when used in a Byzantine context, as that is a space typically reserved for Christ.<sup>820</sup> Woodfin does remark that Ottonians were not as reserved and stringent with their Christ-associated iconography and frequently the emperor inhabited spaces typically designated for the holy and the Chormantel was unique (if we are to assume a Byzantine origin) as it depicted an emperor on the lyre throne.<sup>821</sup> Despite this peculiarity, Woodfin maintains a Byzantine origin for the garment.

Iconographic peculiarity aside, Woodfin's argument of the lyre-backed throne being an eastern iconographical device is a tenuous argument at best. He does mention one western example (Santa Maria Antiqua) and claims that there are no other western examples to list. However, as mentioned in my previous chapters, the lyre throne makes multiple western appearances.

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<sup>817</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 41.

<sup>818</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 41.

<sup>819</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 41.

<sup>820</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 41.

<sup>821</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 41.

One of the major examples that would have been visible by Ottonians travelling through Italy that Woodfin fails to consider is the mosaic of Christ on a lyre throne prominently displayed in Theodoric's fifth-century Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. The lyre throne also appears on a seventh-century silver reliquary from Grado (as discussed in the previous chapter; see fig. 52) with Mary seated upon the throne. There is a Carolingian example of the lyre back throne on a folio of the Vivian Bible (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 1), commissioned by Charles the Bald (r.843-875).<sup>822</sup> The Christ in Majesty illumination (fol. 329) depicts Christ in a mandorla at the centre of the page surrounded by the evangelists, which three of the four are seated on lyre-backed thrones. While two of the evangelists are in profile making the shape of the throne difficult to discern, the distinct curve of their throne backs can be seen. Mark's throne in the bottom left corner is the easiest to identify as a lyre as he faces the viewer and provides a clear view of the throne and subsequently aids in the identification of the other two thrones.

While the iconographic trope of the lyre backed throne was present in the west from the fifth century onwards, it does appear more frequently in a Byzantine context. This in combination with the peculiarity of the emperor upon the throne as opposed to Christ may somewhat discredit Woodfin's assignation of the Cunegunda Chormantel as Byzantine, however, the dress of the emperor can still be classified as Byzantine. The closest Ottonian representation of an emperor in a similar dress to the emperor on the Chormantel is found on the Theophano and

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<sup>822</sup> Diebold, 1994, 6.

Otto II ivory plaque (see fig. 1).<sup>823</sup> Woodfin argues that the Theophano plaque is simply imitating Byzantine dress (but does not offer specific reasons why the dress is not authentic, but simply alludes to the lower quality of the panel in comparison to the Romanos panel) while the figures on the Chormantel are 'remarkably accurate'.<sup>824</sup> Adding to the accuracy of the dress, Woodfin concludes his defence of a Byzantine origin with the fact that the image itself exists. He argues that no Byzantine craftsman would have been permitted to represent a foreign emperor in such a regal fashion and cites a passage from Constantine Porphyrogennetos' *De administrando imperio* as evidence for this taboo:

These robes of state and the diadems, which you call '*kamelaukia*' were not fashioned by men, nor by human arts devised or elaborated, but, as we find it written in secret stories of old history, when God made emperor the former Constantine the great, who was the first Christian emperor, He sent him these robes of state by the hand of His angel, and the diadems which you call '*kamelaukia*,' and charged him to lay them in the great and holy church of God, which, after the name of that very wisdom which is the property of God, is called St. Sophia; and not to clothe himself in them every day, but only when it is a great public festival of the Lord.<sup>825</sup>

Woodfin argues that this passage that emphasizes the sacral nature of an emperor's clothes is evidence that would suggest the figure depicted on the Cunegunda Chormantel was not intended to be a representation of a western ruler, but a Byzantine emperor as a Byzantine craftsman would not deign to represent a western figure in such a sacred fashion.<sup>826</sup> Despite this passage, Woodfin may be overestimating its lasting effect upon Byzantine craftsmen as

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<sup>823</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 42.

<sup>824</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 42.

<sup>825</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, trans. by Jenkins, 1967, 67.

<sup>826</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 43.

many of Constantine Porphyrogennetos' ideals were ignored in the face of reality and politics. One major example that is even alluded to in Woodfin's paper is the marriage between Theophano and Otto II. Constantine Porphyrogennetos clearly wrote after the marriage between Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria (m. 927), in the very same work that Woodfin quotes from, that no Byzantine bride should be offered to 'barbarians', yet this diplomatic custom was ignored in the face of increasing threats from the Ottonians.<sup>827</sup> As such, Woodfin's evidence of a Byzantine origin for the Cunegunda Chormantel is unreliable. Despite these issues, Woodfin does pose an interesting context for the Chormantel's peculiar iconography and accompanying text.

Because of the Byzantine appearance of the emperor figure on the Chormantel, scholars have been puzzled by the accompanying text that identifies the figure as Henry II. Woodfin argues that the text was added later as relations between Byzantium and the west deteriorated and that such a valuable garment would be better served if the association to Byzantium were to be stripped in favour for an association to Henry II.<sup>828</sup> Henry II had gifted the garment to his favoured see of Bamberg and therefore the inscription would have been appropriate.<sup>829</sup> Woodfin asserts that this action carried more significance than a simple alteration and that 'Instead of allowing the gift symbolically to co-opt the German empire as a tributary of the "Empire of the Romans", the inscription

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<sup>827</sup> Shepard, 1995, 121.

<sup>828</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 45.

<sup>829</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 45.

appropriates the Byzantine image, complete with the trappings of imperial dignity – the lyre-backed throne, *loros*, globe, and *labarum* – for the glorification of the Ottonian power.<sup>830</sup>

It is this context that has implications for the Theophano panel. If the panel was of Byzantine origin as some have claimed, then the panel can be viewed not as a by-product of an increased interest in the exotic, but as an act of appropriation of Byzantine imperial imagery that was repurposed to express Ottonian power. The historical context surrounding the panel discussed above supports this theory of the panel being gifted to the imperial couple during heightened tensions between Byzantium and the Ottonians. The panel then celebrates not the Byzantine heritage of Otto II's bride, but the power that the Ottonians hold over the Italian peninsula and their expanding empire.

When taken in consideration with Liutprand's *Legatio*, the appropriation of the panel and its imagery fleshes out a possible courtly initiative of expressing Ottonian superiority over the Byzantines. Much like the monuments of Theodoric's building programme, the Ottonian cultural programme during heightened tensions between the east and the west reflected a culture embroiled in political and military conflict and subsequently reflected this environment. By appropriating Byzantine imperial imagery, the Ottonians were not expressing an interest in Byzantine culture per say, but they are expressing competition utilizing a visual language that would be easily understood by both the Ottonians and the

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<sup>830</sup> Woodfin, 2008, 45.

Byzantines.

This context provides a plausible example of Ottonian appropriation of Byzantine visual culture as a tool to assert their places as leaders of the Roman Empire. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner suggested that the panel serves as propaganda to advertise Otto II's Greek bride and therefore provided further justification for his rule.<sup>831</sup> However, like most works associated with the Ottonians, the panel was not commissioned by Otto II himself as evidenced by the figure in *proskynesis* (and the inscription identifying him as the patron) and the question of intent behind the appropriation becomes problematic.

With the decentralization of artistic patronage in the Ottonian era one must be careful to avoid blanket proclamations of imperial propaganda when dealing with visual culture associated with the court. Because patrons vary in motivation and geography (important when considering possible indirect artistic influences) teasing out any trends and any possible influence Theophano may have had, personally, becomes difficult.

In order to determine whether or not Theophano had a direct impact on the visual culture of the Ottonians, we must understand two key issues about any object: who was the patron and what artistic influences would they have been exposed to? The final section of this chapter will examine art produced after the marriage between Theophano and Otto II, but will be divided into two sections: art

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<sup>831</sup> Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 1977, 316.



directly commissioned by Otto II, Otto III, and Theophano, and art commissioned by ecclesiastical leaders.

## ART COMMISSIONED BY ECCLESIASTICAL LEADERS

The ivory panel discussed above is an excellent example of the central issues at hand. The panel demonstrates strong links to Byzantine visual culture, which would suggest that this is a clear example of Ottonian appropriation of Byzantine culture to communicate their legitimacy as rulers of the Roman Empire. The historical context of the panel further supports this theory.

The panel is securely dated to after 980 given the inscription on the panel that identifies Otto II as *Imperator Romanorum*.<sup>832</sup> As mentioned earlier, Otto II embarked on his ill-fated southern expansion in 982 and the production of visual propaganda to celebrate the potential Ottonian territory gain would have been appropriate. The panel could even be viewed as an effort to communicate to the Greek dominated population of southern Italy in a visual language they would be familiar with. However, this was not a conscious decision of Otto II to render himself in a Byzantine fashion and was not an effort by Theophano to propagate a Byzantine imperial ideal as the panel was not commissioned by the emperor, but by a man identified as John.

The John on the panel is widely agreed amongst scholars to be John Philagathos.<sup>833</sup> John Philagathos remained a consistent presence in both Otto II

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<sup>832</sup> Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 1977, 316.

<sup>833</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 211.

and Otto III's inner circle. A monk from Calabria, John was elevated to the role as Otto II's chancellor in Italy until 988.<sup>834</sup> After his role within the court of Otto II, John became bishop of Piacenza.<sup>835</sup> John maintained a close relationship with Theophano after the death of Otto II and subsequently became Otto III's tutor.<sup>836</sup> He eventually fell out of imperial favour during Otto III's reign when, with the support of the emperor in Byzantium, he usurped the papal throne and was declared the anti-pope.<sup>837</sup> For his deception, Otto III tortured and blinded his tutor - an act that may resonate in Otto III's psyche and artistic commissions.<sup>838</sup>

The dating of the panel to 982 is further supported by Thietmar's account that places Otto II, Theophano and John Philagathos together in Rossano in that year.<sup>839</sup> John accompanied Theophano to southern Italy during Otto II's attempt to expand in the area.<sup>840</sup> Perhaps the panel was commissioned with the intention to commemorate a victory in the south (although that never happened). This context could possibly explain the repurposing of a Byzantine panel and the differences in the depiction of an empress by comparison to typical western depictions of empresses.<sup>841</sup>

Theophano is given an elevated status through her Greek and Latin

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<sup>834</sup> Engels, 1995, 41.

<sup>835</sup> Engels, 1995, 41.

<sup>836</sup> Engels, 1995, 41.

<sup>837</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, 164.

<sup>838</sup> Otto III's gospel book demonstrate an interest in themes of sin and forgiveness. One illumination depicts the Healing of the Blind Man is thought to be inspired by Otto III's actions against John. Mayr-Harting, 1999, 173.

<sup>839</sup> Thietmar, III, ch. 21.

<sup>840</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, 32.

<sup>841</sup> Voordecker, 1995, 241.

inscription identifying her as ΘΕΟΦΑΝΩ IMP(ERATRIX) A[V]G(USTA).<sup>842</sup>

Theophano was typically referred to as *consors regni* or *coimperatrix* from 974 onwards, which were not common titles for a western empress to use, though both of these titles have western precedent and were occasionally used prior to Theophano's reign.<sup>843</sup> However, the panel does elevate Theophano to Otto II's equal. This has been considered an example of Otto II and Theophano following in the footsteps of previous Byzantine emperors and empresses such as Justinian and Theodora (whose images in Ravenna would have been known to Otto II and Theophano).<sup>844</sup> Some believe that this elevated status is the product of a direct influence that Theophano asserted upon Ottonian imperial traditions, however McKitterick notes that there was no tenth-century Byzantine counterpart who utilized the *augusta* title.<sup>845</sup>

Scholars have noted that the unusual heightened status associated with Theophano, not just on the panel but with diplomas in her name as well, was not due to any Byzantine traditions, but was most likely due to Otto II's death and her acting as regent while Otto III came of age.<sup>846</sup> Thus, the dating of the panel (or the panel's inscriptions) to 982, because of the titles used and the historical accounts that placed all three living figures in the same geographical region, is relatively secure. Therefore, when taking into consideration the possibility that the panel

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<sup>842</sup> Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, 1977, 316.

<sup>843</sup> McKitterick, 1992 (b), 69.

<sup>844</sup> McKitterick, 1992 (b), 69.

<sup>845</sup> McKitterick, 1992 (b), 69.

<sup>846</sup> Erkens, 1991, 253 and McKitterick, 1992 (b), 69.

was of Byzantine origin in combination with the historical context, the peculiar iconography and elevated status of Theophano is understood and should not be viewed as a function of Theophano imposing Byzantine traditions on the Ottonian court, but as a result of historical circumstances.

As mentioned earlier, the Ottonians and the Byzantines engaged in military combat during the early 980s. Under such circumstances, a panel that appropriated Byzantine concepts of imperial strength and divine endorsement, and repurposed an originally Byzantine ivory to communicate Ottonian power would most likely have been a well-received gift from a high ranking member of court. With this interpretation in mind, the panel should not be viewed as a result of a heightened aesthetic interest in Byzantine culture, but as one example (of many) of a culture demonstrating their historical self-awareness and divine right to the title of King of the Romans.

Can this panel then be attributed to a direct involvement of Theophano to transmit Byzantine culture to the Ottonians? Perhaps Theophano indirectly influenced this ivory, as had she not married Otto II, John Philagathos would not have been compelled to gift the panel. One scholar describes the panel as being: '...a clumsy imitation of the ivory of Romanos II and Eudokia is - iconographically speaking – an exception and not at all a representative model for Ottonian conceptions of emperorship'.<sup>847</sup> While I do not agree with some of the adjectives used in this statement, one issue raised that needs to be addressed in terms of a

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<sup>847</sup> Voordecker, 1995, 241.

grander Ottonian cultural programme is that the Theophano and Otto II panel provides the most overt use of Byzantine material culture in the Ottonian oeuvre and does not represent a 'typical' piece of Ottonian material culture. As patronage became increasingly decentralized, motives behind patronage become an increasingly crucial factor in determining and interpreting 'Ottonian' material culture.

An ivory contemporary to the Theophano and Otto II ivory commissioned by another ecclesiastical centre exemplifies this theory of decentralization. The ivory, now in the Castello Sforzesco treasury in Milan, has been dated to roughly the same year as the Theophano and Otto II ivory (fig. 61).<sup>848</sup> The panel, in a very different stylistic fashion more reminiscent of ivories associated with Otto I than any Byzantine ivory, is filled with multiple figures. The centre figure is a seated Christ with a cross nimbus and two angels overhead. Flanking Christ are the figures of the Virgin and St. Mauritius, who was a fitting choice as the ivory was a gift to the Einsiedeln abbey in Switzerland (which was dedicated to St. Mauritius), the abbey of St. Mauritius in Milan, or the cathedral of Magdeburg.<sup>849</sup> Shown prostrate under the feet of Christ are three figures identified as Otto II, Theophano, and Otto III. This identification is supported by an inscription below the three figures reading: OTTO IMPERATOR.

The figures are all dressed in what can be described as typical western

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<sup>848</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 213.

<sup>849</sup> Lasko, 1972, 93.

dress and the overall style of the panel shows striking similarities to an ivory honouring Otto I's consecration of the Magdeburg Cathedral and most likely produced in Milan (fig. 62).<sup>850</sup> This ivory was part of a sixteen-piece antependium that would have been held together by a frame.<sup>851</sup> The ivory depicts Christ in the centre once again, flanked by multiple figures giving the same crowded feel as the Castello Sforzesco ivory. In this ivory, Christ is cross-nimbed and seated on a wreathed orb. Similarities with the Castello Sforzesco ivory are numerous in the features of Christ, including the book on his lap, pleated drapery and even the shape of Christ's beard, similar in its stiffness and angularity.

Along with Christ, Saint Peter (holding his keys), Otto I (presenting a model of the Magdeburg cathedral to Christ), and St. Mauritius (to whom the cathedral is dedicated) are included in the panel. The similar iconographic and stylistic similarities between the two panels and the inclusion of St. Mauritius lend credence to the connection of the Otto II panel with Magdeburg rather than the other proposed ecclesiastical centres. This ivory panel demonstrates continuity from Otto I to Otto II's reigns in terms of iconography associated with the court. Both the panels were commissioned by ecclesiastical centres (perhaps the same centre) and demonstrate a northern Italian iconographical heritage.<sup>852</sup> The ivory panel differs significantly in style and iconography from the Theophano panel and

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<sup>850</sup> Lasko, 1972, 93.

<sup>851</sup> Lasko, 1972, 88.

<sup>852</sup> While there is no direct evidence for the commissioning of these two ivories to be ecclesiastical rather than imperial, scholars have agreed that they were most likely ecclesiastical commissions based on comparisons made to other works that expressly state their provenance. For example, an ivory situla carved in Milan that bears strong resemblance to the above mentioned ivories bears an inscription stating the patron as Archbishop Gotfredus. Lasko, 1972, 91.

either suggests that local artistic factors superseded any imperial iconographical language, or that it lends further support to the idea that the Theophano panel was a repurposed Byzantine ivory.

Another work dated to the reign of Otto II that can be closely associated with the Castello Sforzesco panel is an ivory situla carved in honour of Otto II's visit to Milan in 980 (fig. 63).<sup>853</sup> Possibly carved at the same workshop, if not by the same artist, the situla is intricately carved with scenes from the Old and New Testament.<sup>854</sup> The iconography on the situla is consistent with the proposed origin of Milan, as a diptych surely originating from Milan bears a similar cycle of scenes.<sup>855</sup> Peter Lasko describes the situla as resembling the Castello Sforzesco panel, but claims that it is less 'Byzantine' than the panel.<sup>856</sup> Lasko does not define what makes the Castello Sforzesco panel 'Byzantine', although he does relate it stylistically to another ivory of a standing St. Matthew. According to Lasko, the St. Matthew panel has Carolingian influences but he makes no concrete reference to Byzantium.<sup>857</sup> Perhaps the Byzantine element is to be found in the standing posture of the evangelist (which falls under the classifications of an 'eastern' evangelist type, as laid out by A.M. Friend in 1929), however no specifics are given and the catch-all label of 'Byzantine' is applied

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<sup>853</sup> The figures have been identified as Otto II, Theophano and Otto III as opposed to Otto I, Adelheid and Otto II due to comparisons to another ivory situla that bears an inscription that identifies the figures as Otto II and Theophano. The situla and ivory panel share identical iconographical similarities in the crowns of the figures and were both most likely carved in the same Milanese workshop in honour of Otto II's visit to Milan in 980. Lasko, 1972, 91-93.

<sup>854</sup> Lasko, 1972, 93.

<sup>855</sup> Lasko, 1972, 93.

<sup>856</sup> Lasko, 1972, 94.

<sup>857</sup> Lasko, 1972, 93.

without explanation

With all of the above examples, the visual culture patronized by ecclesiastical leaders associated with the Ottonian court does not reflect an imperial strategy or the influence of a 'Greek muse' (living or perceived), but more reflects the local influences asserted on each workshop. A similar pattern emerges when examining art patronized by ecclesiastical leaders north of Italy. Perhaps one of the most prolific ecclesiastical patrons of the eleventh century was archbishop Egbert of Trier.

Egbert was especially active in the last twenty years of the tenth century, patronizing many different works, most of which celebrated the rising importance of his episcopal see.<sup>858</sup> However, unlike John Philagathos, Egbert did not support Theophano's claim to the regency after Otto II died and instead supported Henry of Bavaria.<sup>859</sup> Thus, his commissions can be used to evaluate the extent artistic commissions were used to demonstrate political affiliations.

Thomas Head suggested that the works reflected Egbert's attempts to secure Trier's primacy amongst ecclesiastical centres within the Ottonian kingdom.<sup>860</sup> Thus they were politically charged, but more for self-promotion than to promote imperial propaganda. The majority of Egbert's commissions were reliquaries, which were a suitable commission if one were attempting to promote

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<sup>858</sup> Head, 1997, 68.

<sup>859</sup> Head, 1997, 76.

<sup>860</sup> Head, 1997, 68.



the apostolic tradition of the see. Some of the reliquaries Egbert commissioned were to house St. Celsus, whose relics, when discovered in 980, prompted an artistic campaign for Egbert that emphasized the antiquity of Trier.<sup>861</sup>

Lavish reliquaries such as St. Peter's staff (fig. 64) and St. Andrew's sandal (fig. 65) demonstrate the high level of craftsmanship available to Egbert. St. Peter's staff, which was used by Egbert during the liturgy, is heavily decorated with enamels connecting the early bishops of Trier to the evangelists and the popes of Rome.<sup>862</sup> Head suggests the staff lays a 'brazen' connection to St. Peter through an inscription that states that Peter personally presented the staff to Eucharius (one of the early bishops of Trier).<sup>863</sup> This close association to St. Peter emphasized the antiquity of Trier; it likened Trier to Rome and therefore would have aided Trier in achieving primacy.

Despite the staff's impressive appearance, the authenticity of the staff is questionable. There is no evidence to suggest that Peter's staff was in Trier prior to Egbert's tenure as bishop.<sup>864</sup> There is also another relic, located in Cologne, that is also said to be the staff of St. Peter, as recorded by Archbishop Brun in 953.<sup>865</sup> However, Archbishop Brun, unlike Egbert, did not utilize the relic to

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<sup>861</sup> Celsus was a previous bishop of Trier who Egbert considered to be a disciple of Eucharius, the first bishop of Trier. Head, 1997, 71.

<sup>862</sup> Head, 1997, 72.

<sup>863</sup> Head, 1997, 71-72.

<sup>864</sup> Head, 1997, 72.

<sup>865</sup> Head, 1997, 72.

fabricate an origin story that would aid Cologne in achieving primacy.<sup>866</sup>

The reliquary to house St. Andrew's sandal is similar in style and extravagance to the staff of St. Peter. The reliquary is dated to the same period as the staff and attributed to the same workshop.<sup>867</sup> The shoe-boxed shape reliquary stands on four decorative gold lions with a gold foot on the top. The reliquary is ornately decorated with gold trim with geometric patterned panels, enamels of the four evangelists, and sporadic jewels and pearls. On one side of the reliquary a coin from Justinian II's reign is mounted surrounded by the evangelist symbols and various wildlife. The inclusion of the coin is suggested to be an evocation of antiquity.<sup>868</sup>

The sandal reliquary conveys a similar message as the staff by emphasizing Trier's apostolic connection.<sup>869</sup> According to Head, St. Andrew, the Constantinopolitan counterpart of St. Peter, would have been a fitting choice for Egbert to memorialize as he represented the rising importance of Byzantine culture in the Ottonian court.<sup>870</sup> Head suggests that Egbert, through this commission, would have been appealing to Theophano's Byzantine heritage (and her growing influence) by celebrating an apostolic figure that would have been meaningful to her.<sup>871</sup> Although on the surface this seems like a plausible reason to promote a figure closely associated with Byzantium, Egbert's actions during the

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<sup>866</sup> Head, 1997, 72.

<sup>867</sup> Head, 1997, 74.

<sup>868</sup> Head, 1997, 74.

<sup>869</sup> Head, 1997, 74.

<sup>870</sup> Head, 1997, 74.

<sup>871</sup> Head, 1997, 74.

succession crisis after Otto II's death allows for another possible interpretation of this commission.

As mentioned earlier, Egbert did not support Theophano after the death of Otto II, although he was a close friend of the imperial family (he was even one of Otto II's children's godfather) and accompanied Otto II on his first campaign into Italy. Due to Egbert's support of Henry II over Theophano, the notion that the reliquary was commissioned as a result of Theophano's presence at court (and his acknowledgement of the growing importance of Byzantine culture at the Ottonian court) is less probable. Given the reliquary's function and audience it is possible that the St. Andrew reliquary, like the staff of St. Peter, was as another claim to primacy rather than being targeted at an individual's presence. The reliquary of St. Andrew could be considered an effort to gain primacy over the east, as Egbert felt the staff of St. Peter gained Trier primacy over the west. This theory is more consistent with Egbert's actions if we consider the act of commissioning reliquaries as an element of a programme of propaganda intended to elevate the status of Trier. However, that is not to say that Egbert did not commission works that were directly intended for the consumption of the emperor.

One of the central figures of Ottonian manuscript production was a beneficiary of Egbert's cultural programme and produced a manuscript that was intended to impress the imperial court. The Master of the *Registrum Gregorii*, whose name is eponymous with a manuscript produced for Egbert circa 983, was a scribe who has been connected with numerous Ottonian illuminated

manuscripts including the marriage charter of Otto II and Theophano.<sup>872</sup> The Master of the *Registrum Gregorii*'s style has been defined by an increased sophistication of spatial organization (as opposed to the crowded scenes that can be seen in the ivories discussed above) and a fundamental understanding of Late Antique style and iconography.<sup>873</sup> Although only a few folios survive from the *Registrum Gregorii*, a portrait of Otto II (fig. 66) from the manuscript provides us with a portrait of the emperor which some have claimed to have Byzantine influence.<sup>874</sup>

The folio is a full-page illumination of an enthroned Otto II surrounded by four female supplicants representing the four provinces of his empire: Germania, Francia, Italia and Alamania.<sup>875</sup> Otto II is seated upon an elaborate gabled throne that is decorated with a green curtain and plush pillow. He is crowned and holds an orb with a cross in its centre in his left hand and a staff in his right. The four female supplicants all offer Otto II golden orbs. Otto II and his throne dominate the page physically. The odd angles of the throne's gable and footstool create the illusion of attempted perspective. Some believe the odd perspective was an intentional conflation of earthly concepts of perspective and that this illusionist technique is a derivation of Carolingian practices that came to define many Ottonian works.<sup>876</sup> Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne claims that Byzantine imperial

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<sup>872</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 249.

<sup>873</sup> Lasko, 1972, 106 and Mayr-Harting, 1997, 31.

<sup>874</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 217.

<sup>875</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 217.

<sup>876</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 31.

protocols were employed in this representation, but does not offer any specific examples of the supposed protocols.<sup>877</sup> However, I would argue that there are strong parallels between Charles the Bald's portrait in the San Paolo Bible (Rome, Abbazia di S. Paolo fuori le Mura, fol. 1), Charles' portrait in the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000) and the Chantilly fragment and that it is a Carolingian influence and not a Byzantine influence that is found in the fragment.<sup>878</sup>

Charles the Bald's portrait in the San Paolo Bible (fig. 67) shares many similarities with Otto II's portrait just discussed. Charles is seated on a large, gabled throne supported by five columns. He sits upon an overstuffed cushion with a curtain behind him and holds a golden orb on his lap. He is flanked by four figures: his wife and a female attendant to his left, and two militarized male figures to his right.<sup>879</sup> Four figures contained by the archways created by the gable are identified as the four virtues: wisdom, justice, temperance, and strength.<sup>880</sup> Two winged angels carrying cross staffs flank the four virtues.

The first similarity worth noting is the clothing of the emperors. Both wear an embellished *chlamys* over richly decorated purple tunics (although of varying lengths). The crowns of each emperor are practically identical; both culminate in three points and are decorated with large jewels. The perspective of the images

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<sup>877</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 217.

<sup>878</sup> Mayr-Harting notes the similarities between Otto III's and Charles the Bald's portraits, however he does fail to compare Otto II's portrait upon which Otto III's portrait is heavily based upon. Mayr-Harting, 1999, 160.

<sup>879</sup> Diebold, 1994, 8.

<sup>880</sup> Diebold, 1994, 8.

are different, causing the throne to appear different upon first glance, but when dissected, many elements of Charles the Bald's throne are echoed in Otto II's portrait. Both figures sit upon a cushioned seat and while Otto II's footstool appears askew to the viewer, Charles' is more consistent with a natural, frontal gaze. However, the marbled pattern found on Charles' footstool can be found on the columns of Otto II's gable. While Charles' curtain surrounds him in a semi-circular fashion, the top of Otto II's throne where the curtain drapes over is rounded alluding to a similar shape while maintaining the Ottonian depth-illusion techniques. The gables of both portraits are supported by corinthian columns and rounded archways. Even the dress of the female figures is similar in both images.

Charles' portrait in the Codex Aureus (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000) shares similarities as well (fig. 68). He is once again the dominant figure seated upon a gabled throne. His dress is consistent with his portrait in the San Paolo Bible and the curtain behind him has now evolved from a circular shape to a more flattened hanging (keeping consistent with the flattening of the gable as well). Charles is surrounded by multiple figures: two military representatives as well as two angels. The iconographic similarity shared between this portrait and Otto II's portrait is the inclusion of two other figures that have been identified as personifications of provinces.<sup>881</sup>

The main difference of these images can be found in the treatment of the

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<sup>881</sup> Porcher, 1970, 147.

space and the background. The portraits of Charles the Bald are more hierarchical and rooted in an earthly reality. While Charles himself dominates the page physically, thus emphasizing his importance, the extraneous details link him to a certain physical reality. The background of the San Paolo portrait contains multiple mounds that have been identified as military encampments that compliment the dedicatory poem under the portrait that lauds Charles' military strength and protector of Christendom.<sup>882</sup> The four virtues and angels occupy the highest zone of the illumination and the transition of colour from green to blue in the background further emphasizes the separation of earth and heavens. Charles himself breaches the differentiation between heaven and earth, but only slightly.

The portrait in the Codex Aureus maintains the same hierarchical divisions as the San Paolo portrait. Charles dominates the page while the military figures and the personifications of the provinces are standing upon solid ground with vegetation. The angels and the hand of God are in the upper half of the page and Charles' figure overlaps both realms.

By contrast, the portrait of Otto II does not appear to be rooted in any earthly reality. The perspective used throughout does not follow earth-bound rules and there are no background details to signify any differentiation between earth and heavens. This major difference can be attributed to Ottonian artistic innovation and the style that comes to define Master of the *Registrum Gregorii's*

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<sup>882</sup> Diebold, 1994, 9.

work rather than influence from an outside source of inspiration.<sup>883</sup>

Similarities and differences aside, it is difficult to assign an imperial intervention to the portrait of Otto II, given that Egbert, and not Otto II himself, was the patron of the manuscript and it has even been suggested that the manuscript was completed after Otto II's death.<sup>884</sup> Therefore, understanding motivations of patronage and motivations behind the chosen iconography become difficult to determine as in this case (and in most ecclesiastical commissions) there is no centralized imperial propaganda formula to follow. David Warner succinctly describes the problems associated with the interpretation of royal portraits in the Ottonian era as: 'Royal portraits could be viewed at best by a small group of people, their effect was passive and even in the case of a royal commission the degree to which they reflected the royal will rather than the artistic community that produced them is far from clear'.<sup>885</sup>

Although Warner raises some valid points, it is not necessarily the size of the audience that can have an influential effect on the transmission of iconography, but the people who comprise the audience. Otto II's portrait is definitely informed by Ottonian imperial concepts. It has been proven that Charles the Bald and Charlemagne were drawn upon heavily throughout the three

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<sup>883</sup> Lasko discusses the increased spatial functionalism and stricter organization that characterizes the manuscripts associated with the Master of the *Registrum Gregorii*. Lasko, 1972, 106.

<sup>884</sup> The dedicatory poem that has been identified as once accompanying this image speaks of Otto II in the past tense thereby suggesting its completion after his death. Garrison, 2012, 13.

<sup>885</sup> Warner, 1999, 15.



Ottos' reigns and the portrait reflects this comparison.<sup>886</sup> This type of portrait, portraying the emperor in an otherworldly context, endured thereby suggesting the effectiveness of the iconography and message it conveyed. This type of ruler portrait can be found in imperial commissions of the Ottonians as well, and thus demonstrates some continuity between ecclesiastical and imperial commissions. However, it is with ruler portraits that many claims of Byzantine influence can be discerned.<sup>887</sup> I will argue instead that the ruler portraits are a continuation of Carolingian practices that were informed by Late Antique and Byzantine models, and that the Ottonian ruler portraits not only continued in their Carolingian predecessor's footsteps, but adapted them to reflect political ideology unique to the Ottonians.

## IMPERIAL ARTISTIC COMMISSIONS

The number of artistic commissions that can be directly linked to the patronage of Otto II, Theophano, and Otto III are less in number than their Carolingian predecessors. The Ottonian emperors were even outnumbered by their ecclesiastical counterparts thus making it difficult to determine any iconographical consistencies or to determine concrete influences. Perhaps one of the most frequently cited imperial commission that is described as displaying strong Byzantine influence is the marriage charter of Otto II and Theophano (fig.

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<sup>886</sup> There are examples of Ottonians borrowing Carolingian culture. Otto III is perhaps the best example of this, as he opened Charlemagne's tomb in the year 1000 and held his coronation in the church where Charlemagne was buried while in Frankish costume. Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 4. Thietmar of Mersberg also records Otto III's desire to model his kingship after Charlemagne in his *Chronicon*. Thietmar, IV, 47.

<sup>887</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 210.

69).<sup>888</sup> The charter was commissioned in Rome to be completed for their marriage in 972.<sup>889</sup> The charter displays strong textile-like characteristics in its rich decoration and colours. The decorations include an ornamental border enclosing medallions portraying various animals and biblical figures with gold text.

Byzantine connections have been made based on the similarities to Byzantine silks and Byzantine imperial charters.<sup>890</sup> A consensus concerning the function of the document has not been reached among scholars. Some suggest that the document travelled with the court and hung in a prominent position so that supplicants to the emperor would have viewed the document.<sup>891</sup> Others have considered the possibility that the charter was hung much like a tapestry.<sup>892</sup>

Despite the belief of some scholars that the tapestry provides an example of Byzantine influence, it is argued that the famous Ottonian scribe, Master of the *Registrum Gregorii*, was responsible for the document, and that, the models available to him at Trier could have served as prototypes for elements found in the charter.<sup>893</sup> Comparisons to Carolingian illuminated manuscripts such as Charles the Bald's Vivian Bible (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 1, fol. 84) reveal similarities between the colours used and decorative patterns.<sup>894</sup> H. Westermann-Angerhausen describes the conflicting Byzantine and Carolingian

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<sup>888</sup> Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv, 6, Urk. 11.

<sup>889</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 211.

<sup>890</sup> Hoffmann, 1986, 113 and Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 211.

<sup>891</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 248.

<sup>892</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 248.

<sup>893</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 250.

<sup>894</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 250.

influences as: 'We are not witnesses to the passive absorption of foreign models. Instead, the local stylistic language proves to be so supple and expansive that it can simulate a foreign idiom by its own means. According to this interpretation, Theophano's presence caused the invention of this extraordinary form, although neither she herself nor her retinue influences its stylistic appearance directly'.<sup>895</sup>

This statement alludes to one of the main issues at hand. Westermann-Angerhausen notes that the marriage charter appears to be a syncretism of Byzantine and Carolingian influences, adapted by Ottonian innovation. This is a continued trend as demonstrated by other Ottonian works. Westermann-Angerhausen places the impetus upon Theophano's arrival, and while that may be indirectly true, there are more complex issues at play. While Theophano's arrival facilitated the commissioning of the charter, the desire to appropriate Byzantine culture and to repurpose it to promote Ottonians has been demonstrated with other works and this charter further supports this practice.

The struggle to negotiate for a Byzantine princess was a contentious diplomatic battle between the Byzantines and Ottonians. The Byzantines were reluctant to go against tradition to send a princess to the barbarians in the west and the Ottonians were determined to extend their influence to the east and to demonstrate their growing clout within Christendom. A commission that celebrated the Ottonian diplomatic victory in a visual language that would have been easily understood by Theophano and her retinue would have been

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<sup>895</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 252.

appropriate. Therefore, the charter demonstrating Byzantine influence should not be viewed as demonstrating a heightened interest in Byzantine culture, but much like the Cunegunda Chormantel and the Theophano and Otto II ivory, should be viewed as a meaningful appropriation intended to convey authority.

While the marriage charter provides an easy imperial association, most works can be associated with the emperor only through dating by style. It is only with Otto III that we are able to securely tie a series of manuscripts to an Ottonian king, mostly due to his patronage of one centre of production: Reichenau.<sup>896</sup> The manuscripts associated with Otto III are: the Gospel book of Otto III (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4453), a book of the Proverbs of Solomon and Song of Songs (Bamberg Staatsbibliothek, Bibl. 22), and a copy of the Book of Isaiah (Bamberg Staatsbibliothek Bibl. 76).<sup>897</sup> Otto III's commissions have been described as being strongly influenced by his mother's Byzantine background (despite her death when Otto III was eleven) and imperial ideals of a Roman *renovatio*.<sup>898</sup>

The Gospels of Otto III (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm. 4453) is a widely discussed manuscript that can be directly linked to the patronage of Otto III. The book was produced in Reichenau and has been dated to the years 998-1001.<sup>899</sup> The lavish book contains many illuminations of biblical scenes along with

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<sup>896</sup> McKitterick, 1995, 175-176.

<sup>897</sup> McKitterick, 1995, 176.

<sup>898</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 157.

<sup>899</sup> Garrison, 2009, 207.

decorated canon tables, evangelist portraits and incipit pages, and a double folio dedicatory portrait of Otto III. The iconography of the gospels as well as the arrangement of the illuminations has been described as being rooted in Late Antique and Byzantine practices.<sup>900</sup> Perhaps the most overt example of Byzantine influence found in relation to the gospels is not found within the book, but on the cover.

The cover of the manuscript is adorned in a typical Ottonian fashion – with an ivory in the center of a richly decorated frame. The ivory is once again a repurposed Byzantine ivory. However, the panel's iconography is not an overt expression of imperialism like the Theophano and Otto II panel, but shows the Dormition of the Virgin (see fig. 56). Henry Mayr-Harting argued that the choice of the Dormition ivory to adorn the cover was most likely a very personal decision dictated by Otto III himself.<sup>901</sup> While the iconography of the Dormition of the Virgin had made its way to the west by the tenth century, the ivory is certain to be of Byzantine origin.<sup>902</sup> Mayr-Harting cites a poem composed for the Feast of the Assumption in Rome in the year 1000 as evidence for Otto III's devotion to Mary: 'Holy Mary, who has scaled the heights of heaven, be kind to your people... Be not slow to spare your Otto III who offers you what he has with a devout heart; let every man rejoice that Otto III reigns, let every man rejoice in his rule'.<sup>903</sup> He further strengthens this argument by pointing out the fact that the panel does not

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<sup>900</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 166.

<sup>901</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 140.

<sup>902</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 140-141.

<sup>903</sup> From Bamberg MS Lit. 54, ff.152v-154. Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 141.

correspond to any text within the manuscript and therefore the decision to use it seems to be motivated by a more personal preference rather than a continuity of a theme.<sup>904</sup>

The double folio portrait of Otto III in the Gospel book has drawn considerable comparisons to Otto II's portrait, as well as to portraits of Charles the Bald and to Late Antique and Byzantine models (fig. 70).<sup>905</sup> The portrait follows concepts of kingship initiated by Otto II and his court of a 'loftier concept of government'.<sup>906</sup> Much like Otto II, Otto III dominates the portrait due to his size. Many of the decorative details are exact copies of the details on the Chantilly fragment. Otto III holds a rounded staff in his right hand and a golden-crossed orb in his left. His crown is identical to Otto II's and even the pattern on his tunic is consistent with Otto II's (although the colours of the tunic and *chlamys* are different).

The main differences between the two portraits are the structure behind the throne and the figures flanking the emperor. Otto III's throne is not covered by an oddly rendered structure, but by a gable and curtain. The corinthian capitals have an added decoration of two male faces on each capital. The perspective of Otto III's portrait is not as confounding as Otto II's, yet the space still adheres to the otherworldly feel through a lack of background details and unnaturalistic colours that have been described as being '...mystically appropriate to

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<sup>904</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 158.

<sup>905</sup> Schramm, 1968, 8.

<sup>906</sup> Beckwith, 1964, 106.

a solemn theme concerned with mysteries, vision and the fulfillment of God's purpose by God incarnate'.<sup>907</sup> While this statement may be superfluous, the mystical characteristic of the portrait is further supported by the figures flanking the emperor.

Unlike the Chantilly fragment, the portrait of Otto III is spread over two folios. The figures directly flanking the emperor are two representatives of the military realm to his left (one grey-haired suggesting a more senior member of the military and a younger soldier carrying a spear and shield) and two representatives of the ecclesiastical realm to his right.<sup>908</sup> On the folio facing the portrait are four personifications of Otto III's kingdom arriving in procession with gifts appropriate for their associated homelands to honour the emperor. The four female figures represent the four territories of Otto III's empire that were of highest importance. The first, and therefore most important, is identified as *Roma*. The importance given to Italy over his native Germania is reflective of Otto III's ongoing imperial ideology of a Roman *renovatio*.<sup>909</sup> Following *Roma* is the personification of *Gallia*, then *Germania* who is followed by the final figure of *Sclavinia*.

The personifications have led some to believe that there were Byzantine influences at play.<sup>910</sup> The artistic period defined as the 'Middle Byzantine' period

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<sup>907</sup> Beckwith, 1963, 108.

<sup>908</sup> Garrison, 2012, 65.

<sup>909</sup> Garrison, 2009, 214.

<sup>910</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 216.

(843-1204) was flourishing in Byzantium, and manuscripts such as the homilies of Gregory of Nanzianzus (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 510) made for Basil I in the ninth century, the tenth-century Paris Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 139) and Joshua Roll (Rome, Vatican Library, gr. 431) demonstrated classically inspired figures and settings.<sup>911</sup> These influences have been thought to have been transferred to the Ottonian court and can be seen in the evangelist portraits and the personification figures in the portraits of Otto II and Otto III.<sup>912</sup> However, both these elements already existed in Carolingian art. The use of personifications was prevalent in many of Charles the Bald's portraits; for example, his portrait in the San Paolo Bible includes four female personifications of the Virtues (Wisdom, Justice, Temperance and Strength).<sup>913</sup>

It is arguably more likely that the influences found in Ottonian art that can also be found in Byzantine and Carolingian art can be traced to a Carolingian rather than Byzantine source of inspiration. Given that the Ottonians expressed a high interest in emulating and honouring their Carolingian predecessors (not to mention the availability of Carolingian manuscripts to copy collected in Ottonian libraries) through various acts such as adopting their titles, promoting similar political ideologies such as a *renovatio*, and referencing them in their major ceremonies, it would not be out of character for the Ottonians to adopt a similar visual language.

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<sup>911</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 216.

<sup>912</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, 216.

<sup>913</sup> Diebold, 1994, 9.



The remaining illuminations of the Gospel book of Otto III demonstrate a high level of artistic innovation. For example, the portrait of Luke (fig. 71) is unlike any Carolingian or Byzantine predecessor. The evangelist is framed within an architectural archway much like previous evangelist portraits, but this is where any similarities end. Luke is rendered in a frontal pose, is encircled by a mandorla and seems to be seated on rainbows or rays of light. Above the evangelist's head are the figures of Old Testament kings hovering in cloud-like shapes with rays of light bursting from the edges of the clouds. The kings are displaying open scrolls and are dressed like Otto III. It is thought that the Old Testament kings represent Otto III's spiritual predecessors.<sup>914</sup> The two lambs drinking from the waters beneath Luke's feet that imply Luke's gospel can be physically taken in.<sup>915</sup>

While elements of more traditional evangelist portraits can be found in this image (the philosopher-type, framed within an archway, evangelist symbol), the cloud iconography is unique and the only relatively similar iconography has been noted in depictions of the Pentecost all originating from the same artistic centre, Reichenau.<sup>916</sup>

The borrowing of iconographies and even physical objects from other cultures and figures is one aspect of Otto III's artistic commissions that remains consistent throughout. Some believe that this is an example of an increased

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<sup>914</sup> Garrison, 2012, 67.

<sup>915</sup> Garrison, 2012, 72.

<sup>916</sup> Garrison, 2012, 72.

interest in external cultures, and almost always that external culture has been identified as Byzantine.<sup>917</sup> Others have defined this borrowing as a manifestation of Otto III's political ideology. Jonathan Shepard states: 'If Otto III borrowed more extensively, this was because he was trying to root his court in a city where such things clearly appealed to some of the leading families and where at the same time elaborate ceremonial trappings and liturgies daily glorified St. Peter and his heir'.<sup>918</sup>

The iconography present in the Gospel book of Otto III does not seem to be deliberately relying on Byzantine practices, but is influenced by Carolingian models and illuminated by Ottonian imagination. The ruler portrait of Otto III demonstrates a high degree of similarity to his predecessor's portraits with only a few alterations. The evangelist portraits utilize a distinctive iconography that has been demonstrated to have originated in the atelier in which the book was composed. Otto III's borrowing of Carolingian and earlier Ottonian iconography is consistent with many of Otto III's other artistic commissions. One such example that fits the mold Shepard described is the Lothar cross.

It is believed that the Lothar cross was commissioned for Otto III's celebration of Pentecost in the year 1000.<sup>919</sup> This year was significant as Otto III travelled to Aachen to celebrate a strengthening in the missionary efforts in the

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<sup>917</sup> Lasko, 1972, Head, 1997, Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, Beckwith, 1964.

<sup>918</sup> Shepard, 1995, 618.

<sup>919</sup> Garrison, 2012, 62.

eastern part of his empire.<sup>920</sup> Part of this celebration included the much-discussed opening of Charlemagne's tomb as a part of a larger plan to elevate Charlemagne to sainthood.<sup>921</sup> Just as Augustus supposedly searched and found Alexander the Great's tomb (as recorded by Suetonius), in an act that reinforced the Ottonian predilection for physically expressing a historical self-consciousness, Otto III reenacted Augustus' actions to honour the Carolingian continuation of the Roman Empire.<sup>922</sup> The Lothar cross reflects the transfer of power from Romans to Carolingians and finally to the Ottonians. The cross (see fig. 59) is highly decorated with jewels a various pieces of *spolia* on the obverse. The reverse of the cross (fig. 72) is plain by comparison. There is a simple etching of the crucifixion that provides a contrast to the obverse's opulence.

The etching on the cross, while simple by comparison to the jeweled side, still conveys imperial undertones. Christ is shown slumped against the cross with a curved back and protruding stomach. His eyes are closed and his wounds are still actively bleeding, suggesting he is close to death. It is not the same victorious, youthful Christ as seen in Carolingian representations of the crucifixion (for example, the crucifixion on cover of the Lindau gospels represents Christ as a youthful and defiant figure gazing directly out to the viewer). Despite Christ's defeated posture, some of the details of the etching convey a message of victory: God's hand is visible in the upper portion of the cross holding a victory wreath

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<sup>920</sup> Garrison, 2012, 62.

<sup>921</sup> Garrison, 2012, 63.

<sup>922</sup> Garrison, 2012, 63.

with the Holy Spirit (as represented by a dove).<sup>923</sup> Henry Mayr-Harting suggests that the wreath echoes the wreath worn by Augustus in the cameo on the front of the cross thus creating a linked theme of imperial victory on both sides of the cross.<sup>924</sup>

The jeweled side of the cross is extremely ornate with inlaid gemstones connected by an intricate golden vine pattern. At the centre of the cross there is an antique cameo of the Emperor Augustus in profile with a laurel wreath on his head gazing at an eagle perched on top of a staff. Towards the bottom of the cross there is a seal of the Carolingian emperor (and grandson of Charlemagne), Lothar II. The inclusion of the seal and cameo enforces the lineage of the Roman Empire and the transfer of power from the Romans to the Carolingians and finally to the Ottonians.<sup>925</sup>

Garrison suggests the connection between Otto III and Augustus lies in the Ottonian mimicry of history and that the exhumation of Charlemagne reenacted Augustus' exhumation of Alexander the Great.<sup>926</sup> Others argue that the Augustan age (r.27 B.C.E.-14 C.E.) would have held significance to the Ottonian audience, as that was the time of Christ.<sup>927</sup> The second chapter of Luke (which specifically mentions Augustus) has been described as evidence that Christ chose to be born during his reign and therefore Augustus provides a link between the Christians

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<sup>923</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 137.

<sup>924</sup> Mayr-Harting, 1999, I, 137.

<sup>925</sup> Nichols, 1982, 42.

<sup>926</sup> Garrison, 2012, 63.

<sup>927</sup> Nichols, 1982, 42.

and the Romans.<sup>928</sup>

Although it is difficult to say definitively which of these factors was the specific driving motivation behind the appropriation of Augustus' cameo, most would agree that it represented the desire to express an Ottonian heritage whose roots could be traced from the Carolingians all the way back to the Romans. This notion is further supported by past Ottonian material appropriations as well as Otto III's political ideology of a *renovatio*.

Despite these connections, some scholars point to the Lothar cross (and specifically the Augustus cameo) as an example of an increased Byzantine influence and appropriation and therefore as an example of Theophano asserting her influence on Ottonian material culture.<sup>929</sup> Many of the assertions of Theophano's influence made by scholars are described as indirect influence and are manifested in an increased 'preciousness' in Ottonian material culture (the Lothar cross being an example of this trend).<sup>930</sup> However, this nebulous descriptive device does not satisfactorily explain the appropriation of both Roman and Carolingian *spolia*. Garrison and Nichols' contextualization of the Lothar cross as an element of a wider political programme to assert Ottonian legitimacy through the evocation of a direct lineage from the Roman emperors through the Carolingians, culminating in the Ottonian dynasty provides a much more compelling argument. In short, the Lothar cross should not be viewed as an

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<sup>928</sup> Nichols, 1982, 42.

<sup>929</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 252-253.

<sup>930</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 252.

example of Theophano's direct (or even indirect) influence, nor should it be considered an example of an increased interest in Byzantium.

As much as it is tempting to argue for a Byzantine influence in the material culture patronized by Otto III and his court, the evidence is simply not present to warrant such a claim. The imperial artistic programme at the turn of the eleventh century was surely a reflection of the political and social circumstances of its time (and some, such as Mayr-Harting, would argue that personal preferences were also present), however what is stressed is not an increased interest in Byzantium, but an interest in the promotion of a Germanic king of the Romans. Much like his grandfather Otto I, Otto III sought a Byzantine *porphyrogenita* and was involved in discussions with Basil II at the time of his death.<sup>931</sup>

However, the desire to unify politically the eastern and western Christian empires does not have a correlation to an increase in the transmission of Byzantine material culture or iconography. This would suggest that the political message expressed was one of a legitimate Ottonian claim to the Roman Empire: by tracing their ancestry from the Carolingians through to the Romans, they effectively by-passed the Byzantines. While the material culture of Otto III does not express a cohesive cultural programme with a clear and centralized message similar to the Carolingians, we can discern some elements of a consistent message.

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<sup>931</sup> Loud, 2012, 16.

## COMPETITIVE SHARING

The case study of the three Ottos as an example of Competitive Sharing presents more challenges than the cases of Theodoric and Charlemagne. The itinerant aspect of the Ottonian court has left little artistic commissions that can securely be attributed to imperial patronage. The emerging ecclesiastical class as a viable source of artistic patronage further undermines the attribution of Ottonian material culture. Scholars have gone as far as stating that the Ottonian material culture lacks a central message.<sup>932</sup> However, by taking all three Ottos into consideration, and through the application of the theoretical framework of Competitive Sharing, I believe a message can be discerned. As relations with Byzantium become more frequent and more intense, material culture evolves accordingly in response to those interactions and apparent appropriations begin to emerge. We can then hypothesize that Ottonian material culture seems to be communicating the message of Ottonian superiority and Ottonian placement in history alongside the Romans and Carolingians as rightful rulers of the Christian west.

Otto I had the lowest interaction levels with Byzantium and his cultural programme demonstrates a visual language that is preoccupied with obtaining the imperial title. Otto I also had the fewest artistic commissions that can be securely dated to his reign and therefore it is difficult to observe any patterns in appropriations (or lack there of). However, Otto I's was witness to literary works

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<sup>932</sup> McKitterick, 1992(b), 16.

that give us scholars a glimpse into contemporary attitudes, influences and possible motivations.

The one artistic commission we have that can be dated to Otto I's reign, the ivory belonging to a larger antependium, demonstrates local influences in both style and iconography. Byzantine influence cannot be found in this one scanty piece of material culture, however what is present is the divine endorsement of Otto I as a ruler. Otto I's literary commissions, however, demonstrate the rising conflict between the Ottonians and the Byzantine's

Liudprand's *Legatio*, unlike his previous work that also highlighted the day-to-day activities of Byzantium, was highly critical of its citizens and ruler. This shift in tone has led scholars to believe the work held a certain amount of political sway and was a tool for Otto I to gain control of previously Byzantine controlled southern Italian duchies.<sup>933</sup> Therefore, as tensions rose between the Ottonians and the Byzantines, the presence of Byzantine 'influence' or simply just a heightened interest in Byzantine culture and life begins to emerge in Ottonian works. However, this increase cannot possibly be misconstrued as admiration, but an overt expression of competition. The *Legatio* served a similar purpose for Otto I's reign as Theodoric's deliberate use of *civilitas*. They both sought out a specific audience, and tailored the rhetoric around that audience in order to garner favour and to assert their authority over a group of foreign and influential peoples.

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<sup>933</sup> Mayr-Harting, 2001, 539.



Much of Otto I's reign was concerned with the validation of his rule and his assertion of power over Italy. The conflict with Byzantium over the southern Italian duchies resulted in a peace treaty that stipulated that Byzantium must recognize Otto I as the western equivalent of the emperor in Byzantium and that a marriage between the east and the west would occur. This demonstrates the idea that a perceived interest (the desire for a marriage and the demand for recognition) arose during heightened tensions and conflict. However, this should not be viewed as admiration, and the cultural programmes of the other two Ottos demonstrate the continuation of a similar mentality: an Ottonian superiority that can be linked back to previous Carolingian and Roman empires.

Interactions between Byzantium and the Ottonians heightened significantly during the reign of Otto II, and not solely due to the marriage alliance negotiated between Otto I and John Tzismiskes. Southern Italy was once again a source of contention between the two empires. Frontier uprisings saw the need for military interventions that subsequently lead to an Ottonian defeat. This period of tension between Byzantium and the Ottonians remained a source of conflict until the death of Otto II shortly after his initial campaign into Southern Italy. This conflict could theoretically foster the type of dynamic that, if we to view Otto II's cultural programme with the framework of Competitive Sharing in mind, we could potentially predict the occurrences of appropriations and instances of syncretic artistic commissions. However, what makes this particular case study unique (and potentially problematic) is the arrival of a Byzantine princess at the Ottonian

court.

The marriage between Otto II and Theophano is a unique moment in history where it has been suggested that a heightened Byzantine influence in the west can be observed. Scholars have suggested that the dowry that Theophano would have brought with her would have had an impact on Ottonian sumptuary arts.<sup>934</sup> However, others have not viewed this to be accurate.<sup>935</sup> The two major pieces that can be securely linked to Otto II's reign that demonstrates Byzantine appropriations or influence are the marriage charter of Otto II and Theophano as well as the ivory panel that so closely resembles the Romanos ivory.

Although these two works display a similar characteristic in that they seem to be influenced by Byzantine styles and iconography, they present a problem that so far in this study, is unique to the Ottonians. The patron of the ivory panel was not imperial, but ecclesiastical, whereas the patron of the marriage charter was imperial. While the impetus for the creation of these two different works may have differed at their outset, they were both created during a political and social climate that was witness to an increased interaction (and conflict) with Byzantium.

The ivory panel commissioned by John Philagathos is arguably the most prominent use of Byzantine style and iconography seen throughout this entire dissertation. The reliance upon a Byzantine model (be it the Romanos panel or an intermediary) is convincing. Putting arguments of origin, and date aside, can

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<sup>934</sup> Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, Voordecker, 1995, Ciggaar, 1985.

<sup>935</sup> McKitterick, 1992(b), 24.

the panel's existence be viewed as evidence of admiration for Byzantine culture at the Ottonian court? I would argue that this is not the case and that its existence is evidence of Competitive Sharing.

When taking historical circumstances into consideration, the environment in which the panel was gifted to the imperial couple was not one that would have been receptive to Byzantine culture. The heightened conflict between Byzantium and the Ottonians over southern Italy and the personal embarrassment suffered by Otto II is an unlikely moment to celebrate Byzantine culture through admiration. Rather, the panel can be viewed as another example of Ottonian repurposing meant to promote historical self-awareness. Much like other works such as the Chormantle of Henry II, and the Lothar cross, the ivory appropriates Byzantine visual language to communicate messages of legitimacy. It is an expression power rather than admiration.

The marriage charter, while perhaps may not be as rife for argument, demonstrates a similar characteristics as the ivory panel. On the surface the charter looks to be inspired by eastern patterns and motifs. However, other scholars have conducted research on the charter that suggests examples of similar patterns were widely available to the Ottonians through not only Charles the Bald's Vivian Bible, but also a number of models readily available at Trier.<sup>936</sup> Once again, this work can be viewed as Ottonian innovation of material culture that appropriated from other cultures, not as admiration, but to communicate

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<sup>936</sup> Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995, 250.

power. The marriage alliance between Otto II and Theophano marked a significant moment in Ottonian history and was part of a peace treaty that forced the emperor in Constantinople to recognize the Ottonian emperor in the west. This marriage charter celebrating such an important shift in power dynamics would then be appropriate to communicate Ottonian supremacy.

Theophano's Greek influence could have theoretically reached farther than just her dowry and presence at court. After Otto II's death in 983 Theophano became regent for a decade while her son, Otto III, came of age. However, there is no perceived increase in Byzantine influence at the court during this period, and there seems to be little influence asserted upon her son, personally, as demonstrated by Florentine Mütherich's study on Otto III's library.<sup>937</sup> This decade of Theophano's rule as regent was also relatively quiet in terms of conflict with Byzantium as issues of internal struggles came to the forefront. There are also no artistic commissions that can be associated with Theophano's patronage for us to analyse. Her son, Otto III in sharp contrast, does commission multiple illuminated manuscripts that continue the Ottonian tradition of historical self-awareness and emulation of Carolingian predecessors.

There is an increase in manuscript production during Otto III's short reign that has provided us historians a better understanding of possible Ottonian cultural ambitions. The Gospels of Otto III demonstrate a close reliance upon Carolingian models of Charles the Bald and Otto II. Aspects of the iconography

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<sup>937</sup> Mütherich, 1986.

and style of the manuscript are borrowed heavily from manuscripts such as the San Paolo Bible.

The Lothar cross, attributed to Otto III's patronage, also references Carolingian works and enforces the concept of Ottonian historical self-awareness. Created for when Otto III exhumed the body of Charlemagne, the cross places Ottonians in a line of rulers that began with the Romans, followed by Carolingians and ultimately ended with the Ottonians. This idea of a transfer of power from within defined most of Otto III's artistic commissions.

Unlike Otto I and Otto II, Otto III had very few interactions with Byzantium. The majority of his six-year reign was spent in Italy attempting to secure the Ottonian dynasty from within the borders of his empire. There were few opportunities to quarrel with Byzantium and therefore his cultural programme reflects a more internal focus. Preoccupied with solidifying Ottonian rule, attempts to place the Ottonians in history alongside the Carolingians and Romans demonstrates a different aspect of Competitive Sharing. Otto III is appropriating the visual language of past successful rulers of Italy and communicating a message of power to his audience. Unlike the previous case studies, his audience was not a combative Byzantium, but rather shifted to an unstable Italy and his cultural programme reflects this shift.

The various appropriations found in all three Ottos artistic commissions illustrate the fundamentals of Competitive Sharing and its subsequent

appropriations. As conflicts and interactions arose with Byzantium, cultural programmes responded in kind. The perceived increase of Byzantine culture cannot be viewed as the result of a single figure arriving at court or admiration, but rather as an increased desire to communicate equality, power, and legitimacy to a formidable opponent.

## CONCLUSIONS

The material culture of the Ottonians provides an interesting case study when applying a Competitive Sharing methodology approach. The dynasty provides compelling evidence that suggests the role of Competitive Sharing had a significant effect on the iconographies transmitted and appropriated and therefore we can better understand the motivations and impetus behind these appropriations. While all three Ottos have a shared heritage and arguably similar motivations (i.e. the preservation of their dynasty), the changing political and social environment prompts us in a more comprehensive reading of each cultural programme.

The arrival of Theophano at the Ottonian court in 972 provides one such change in the political and social environment that could conceivably have an impact on the cultural productions of the Ottonians.<sup>938</sup> Some argue that the physical objects she brought with her as a part of her dowry influenced Ottonian production; others that an indirect influence was exerted by her presence at court

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<sup>938</sup> See Ciggaar, 1995.

and her influence over Otto III (the appointment of John Philagathos to Otto III's personal tutor is an example of this).<sup>939</sup> However, the physical evidence to support these claims is not present in the material culture left for us to study.

Elements of Byzantine culture can be found in some Ottonian commissions, mostly in works associated with Otto II's reign. However, we have seen that what we can safely classify as 'Byzantine' was not employed as a result of an interest in the culture or through the intervention of Theophano, but as an expression of Ottonian power. Through Ottonian innovation, objects or iconographies of Byzantine origin underwent a transformative process, and were stripped of their Byzantine context; these 'Byzantine' elements became Ottonian as a result of this process. While it may be simple to correlate the appearance of a few Byzantine elements with the arrival of Theophano at the Ottonian court, this is an unsatisfactory explanation as Byzantine influence does not extend past a few objects and does not persist alongside of Theophano's rule and influence. Theophano herself remains a strong presence in the Ottonian court until the year of her death, 991; therefore, if she carried Byzantine influence with her, one would expect that the trend of an increased Byzantine presence would manifest itself physically. However, this is not the case.

If we are to approach the few works of Ottonian culture that exhibit some Byzantine influence from a competitive sharing standpoint, then a more complex

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<sup>939</sup> See Lafontaine-Dosogne, 1995, Voordecker, 1995, Ciggaar, 1985 for the argument on the impact of Theophano's dowry and Westermann-Angerhausen, 1995 for arguments on the more indirect impact Theophano had on Ottonian material culture.

interpretation of the motivations behind the appropriation of Byzantine cultural elements can be discerned. As mentioned above, there is an increase of perceived Byzantine influence in the mid tenth century. The commissions (the wedding document of Theophano and Otto II and the ivory panel of Theophano and Otto II being the two major examples) can be contextualized as appropriations with an intention to convey messages of Ottonian superiority.

The marriage document was commissioned during a phase the Ottonian dynasty that when the consolidation of power was a major concern. The diplomatic victory of gaining a Byzantine princess would have called for a commission that celebrated the victory, but in typical Ottonian fashion: through the appropriation of Byzantine visual culture, heavily informed by Carolingian models combined to create an innovative Ottonian work. The ivory panel of Theophano and Otto II was commissioned at the height of Ottonian and Byzantine conflict. The panel would have expressed support for the Ottonian dynasty through the appropriation of their enemy's material culture. This is not an expression of interest or admiration, but a more aggressive communication of power and strength. In consideration with Liutprand's *Legatio*, I have argued that these commissions represent a concerted effort to undermine Byzantine authority in southern Italy.

It is difficult to determine any pattern or propaganda associated with imperial productions in the material culture of the Ottonians. The rising class of ecclesiastical patrons brings along its own set of motivations and internal



competitions within the growing number of influential patrons (the commissions of Bishop Egbert represent this notion well). The inability securely to tie many artistic commissions to imperial patronage has led to the few instances of Byzantine culture observable in Ottonian products being attributed to either a growing interest in Byzantine culture at court or the influence of one woman: Theophano. However, the physical evidence simply does not support this assumption. By relating the material culture more closely to the political and social circumstances in which they were created, a more complex pattern of artistic commissions reflecting political ideologies rather than reflecting personal preferences or trends emerges.

The commissions of the three Ottos reflected the varied political and social pressures facing each king. The works associated with Otto I reflect a western king concerned with expressing equality with his eastern counterpart; the works associated with Otto II are brought to a new level of confidence through the appropriation of Byzantine material culture and the elevation of the king to a Christ-like status; and the works associated with Otto III continue this trend but with a focus on a Germanic presence within Italy. Thus the appearance of Byzantine cultural elements should not be considered admiration or the intervention of a singular figure, but as a tool for a growing empire to communicate a strong western Christendom being guided once again by powerful Germanic kings.

## CONCLUSION

The study of the transmission of iconography from one culture to another provides valuable information on the role of art and communication. Special consideration must be paid to conscious decisions and consistencies in the cultural programmes of rulers as they can inform us about motivations, ideologies, and communications. The appropriation of Byzantine culture specifically has been long viewed as an attempt by western rulers to legitimize their culture through what modern-day scholars deemed to be the superior visual culture. More recently, however, scholars have begun to demonstrate the nuanced political ideologies of rulers and to re-examine previous explanations for cultural transmission, concluding that this must progress alongside its political and social counterpart.

The choice to study the cultural programmes of Theodoric, Charlemagne and the three Ottos was borne out of the similarities in their political ideologies and interactions with Byzantium. Scholars have made a claim to a certain degree of a *renovatio* for all five rulers. The desire to align themselves with the Roman legacy was a strong determinate for the cultural programmes of all five as well. All three case studies involve a foreign (Germanic) king presiding over Italy and eventually all of western Christendom; and in all cases previous scholarship has posited a strong correlation between a political ideology and cultural productions. Many scholars have seen all three as being strongly informed by other cultures (Italian and Byzantine) and as reflective of a political ideology whose goal was to

integrate their culture and heritage within that of previous Roman, as well as Byzantine, emperors. What these studies fail to take into consideration is the strong pre-existing of Frankish culture and the possibility of a dynamic political ideology.

When considering a *renovatio* as a central defining factor for the cultural programmes of these western kings, the issue of legitimacy and admiration inevitably arise. When we place our modern conceptions of quality and aesthetics upon the works of the Byzantines alongside with the idea that the western rulers were attempting to assert their rule over a territory once occupied by the Byzantines, it is attractive to conclude that the appropriations were driven by admiration or the sense that the Byzantine and Italian culture was superior. However, as a better understanding of how material culture was consumed is gained, the motivation behind cultural appropriations becomes more significant.

The trend of viewing political ideologies as much more dynamic institutions than previously believed lends itself well to the application of competitive sharing. As political ideologies are in flux, the material culture that has been deemed to be participating at a high level within those ideologies must reflect this dynamism. Competitive Sharing allows for this flexibility and presents an alternative motivation behind cultural appropriations that were commissioned under constant shifting political and social environments.

The three case studies represented three different levels of interaction with Byzantium and the creators of material culture responded accordingly. Theodoric

was arguably involved in the highest level of competition with Byzantium and his building programme reflected this relationship by accepting Byzantine cultural influences while simultaneously promoting his Germanic heritage. The alterations made by Archbishop Agnellus after the Byzantines regained control of Ravenna and the Goths had been successfully overthrown, demonstrate the power imbued in material culture. The stripping of any Gothic context or allusions to Theodoric from the walls of Gothic-built monuments demonstrates the tension between the two groups and the presence of a high level of competition.

The cultural programme of Charlemagne presents us with an opposing example to that of Theodoric's. The power dynamic between Byzantium and Charlemagne was not as one sided as it was between Theodoric and Byzantium, and his visual culture reflects that dynamic. While it is tempting to view Charlemagne as attempting to legitimize his rule as *Imperator Romanorum* through the appropriation of Byzantine culture, it overvalues Charlemagne's willingness to communicate a Byzantine message to his people. Contemporary literary evidence suggests that his view of the Byzantines was not one of high respect, nor did his political ideology of a *correctio* profess a willingness to communicate with Byzantium. Rather, his desire to communicate to his growing and diversifying empire is manifested in both his political ideology (his reform to reinstate Roman standards) and his material culture (the shift from a heavily Germanic style to a more Italian influenced style with iconographical links to Italy).

The Ottonians, by contrast, provide us with three different levels of competition with the Byzantines and these fluctuating levels of competition are illustrated nicely by the accompanying material culture. Otto I was said to have had a high level of interest in Byzantine culture and scholars have pointed to his desire for a Byzantine bride for his son as evidence of this fact. However, his material culture does not reflect an interest in Byzantium, nor does it reflect high levels of competition with them. The material culture associated with Otto I remained heavily influenced by Germanic and local Italian influences. However, upon Theophano's arrival at court, there is an increase in commissions that bear some Byzantine influence. While some have concluded that this spike in Byzantine influence was a result of Theophano's intervention, this is not likely to be the case, as this trend does not continue into her regency, nor does it linger into Otto III's reign.

Rather, by taking competitive sharing into consideration, the spike in Byzantine influence can be considered a direct result of a heightening in tensions between the Ottonians and Byzantium. As the two cultures were embroiled in a battle for southern Italy, competition between the two had reached its tenth-century zenith. As such, the desire to communicate Ottonian superiority to Byzantium would have been high and would have been received well at Otto II's court.

The material culture of Otto III does not reflect a Byzantine heritage promoted by his mother, but rather reflects a larger political ideology of Ottonian

legitimacy in Italy. As expected when considering political ideologies, Otto III's material culture is concerned with expressing a historical self-awareness through the promotion of an Ottonian heritage linked to the Carolingians and ultimately with the Romans. As Otto III was preoccupied with asserting his legitimacy in Italy, his material culture reflects his desire to communicate to those he was most concerned with establishing control over.

This study has demonstrated the clear link between political ideologies and material culture. Material culture shifted hand-in-hand with political ideologies. It was not a stagnant, aesthetically motivated run-off of a wider political programme, but was dynamic and shifted alongside political ideologies in order to communicate those very ideologies to those who mattered most. These three case studies have effectively demonstrated that the material culture of imperial courts of western rulers in the Middle Ages was not motivated by aesthetics or admiration, but by communication. The desire to communicate equality (or in some cases superiority) was not borne out of admiration of a particular culture, but out of competition.

Reconciling material culture with literary evidence and political ideologies reveals a more complex and integral role of material culture in the Middle Ages. It participated as a powerful communicative device with the ability to elicit destruction, to aid in the building of a unified nation, and even to create a national heritage. While the parameters of this dissertation allowed for only three case studies, the study of material culture would benefit from a continued re-

examination of the transmission of iconography as it is a crucial cornerstone of a full understanding of political ideologies of cultures who embraced the medium of visual arts as not just an aesthetically pleasing pastime, but as a powerful and effective communicative device.

**IMAGES**

Figure 1: Theophano and Otto II crowned by Christ, ivory, Paris, Musée de Cluny





Figure 2: Arian Baptistery, Ravenna.



Figure 3: Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna

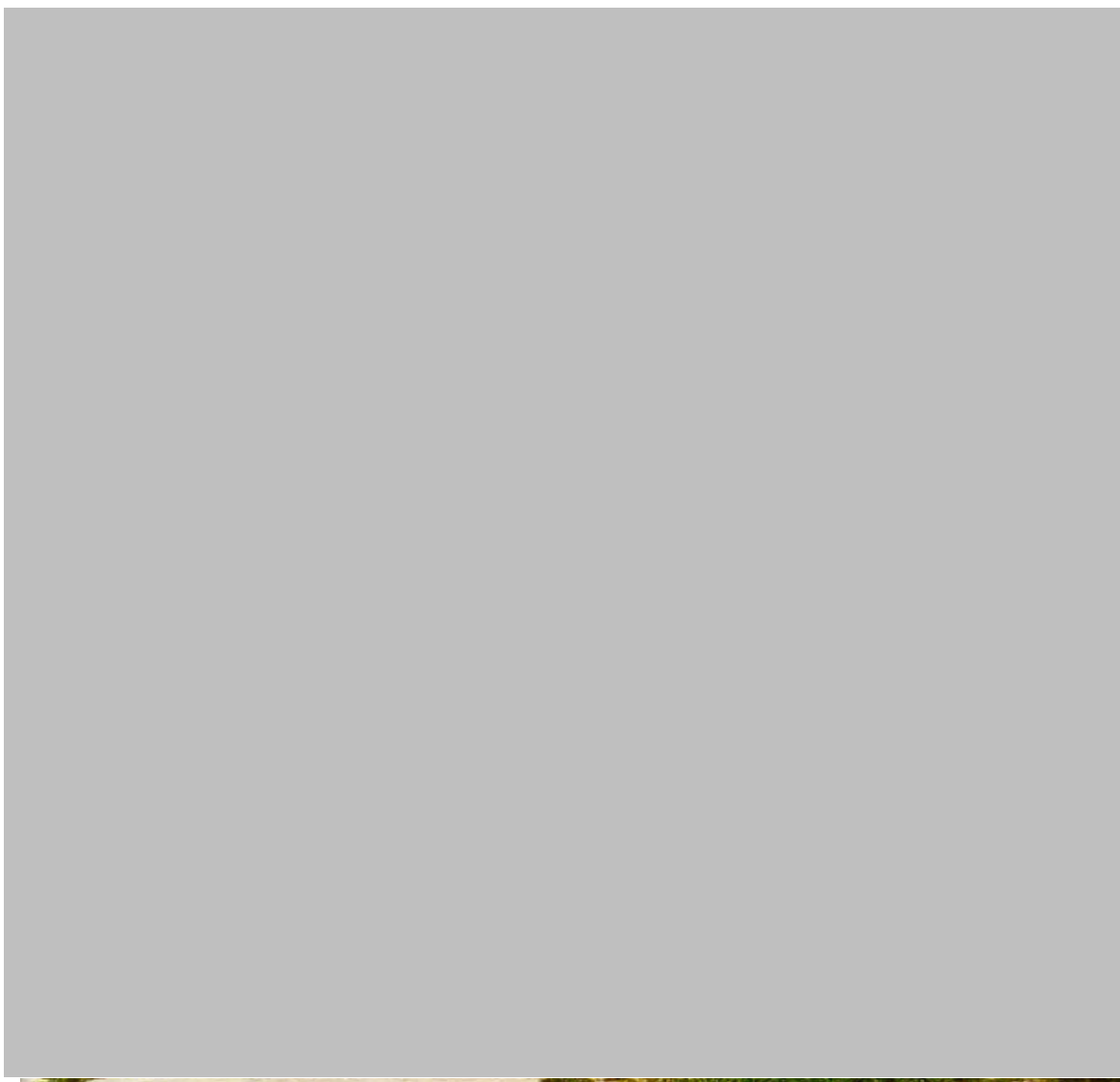


Figure 4: Theodoric's Mausoleum, Ravenna



Figure 5: Palatium mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna

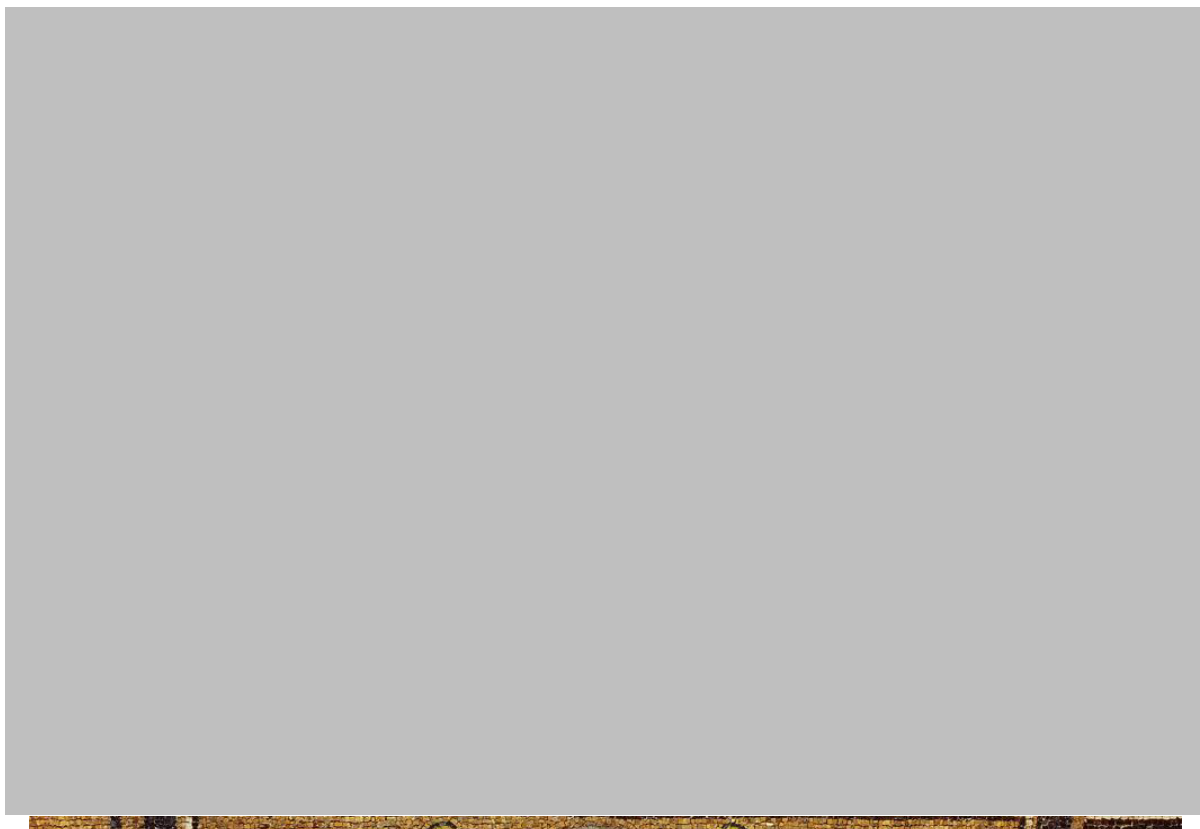


Figure 6: Multiplication of the Loaves, mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna

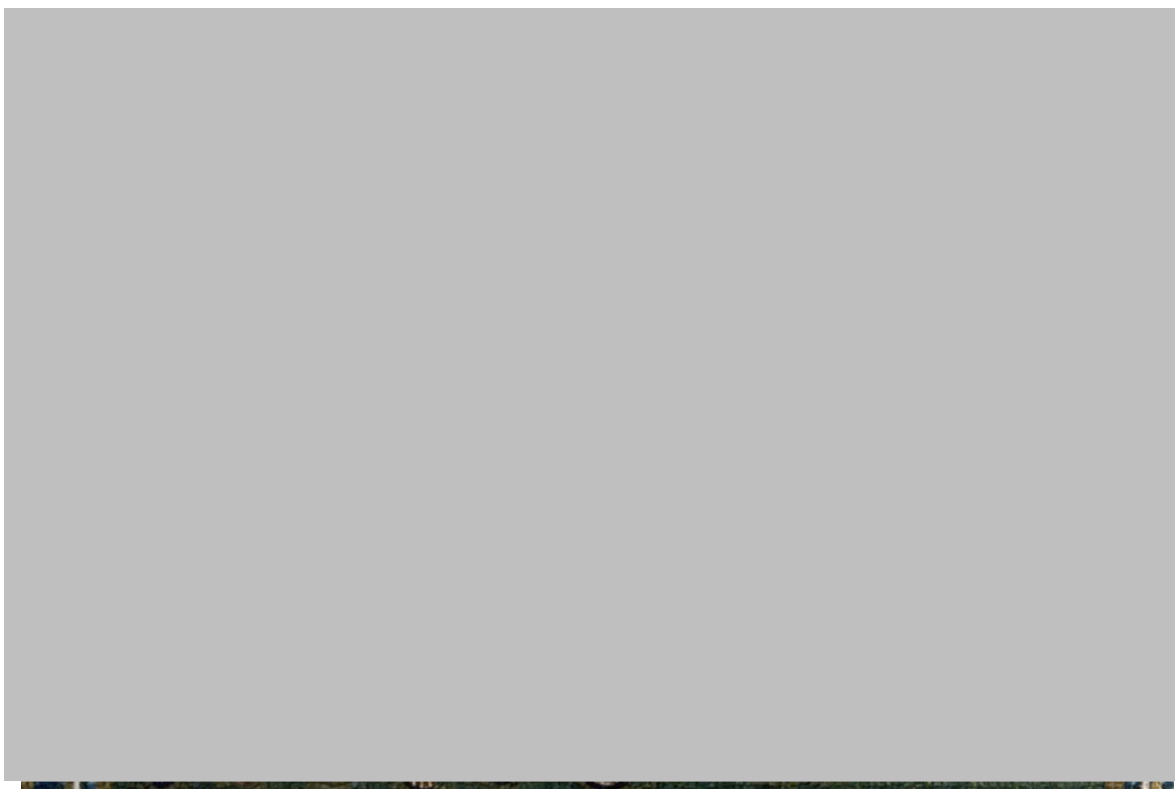


Figure 7: Christ Carrying the Cross, mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna



Figure 8: Prophet, mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna



Figure 9: Christ on a Lyre-backed Throne, mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna





Figure 10: Madonna and Child Enthroned, mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna



Figure 11: The Three Magi, mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna

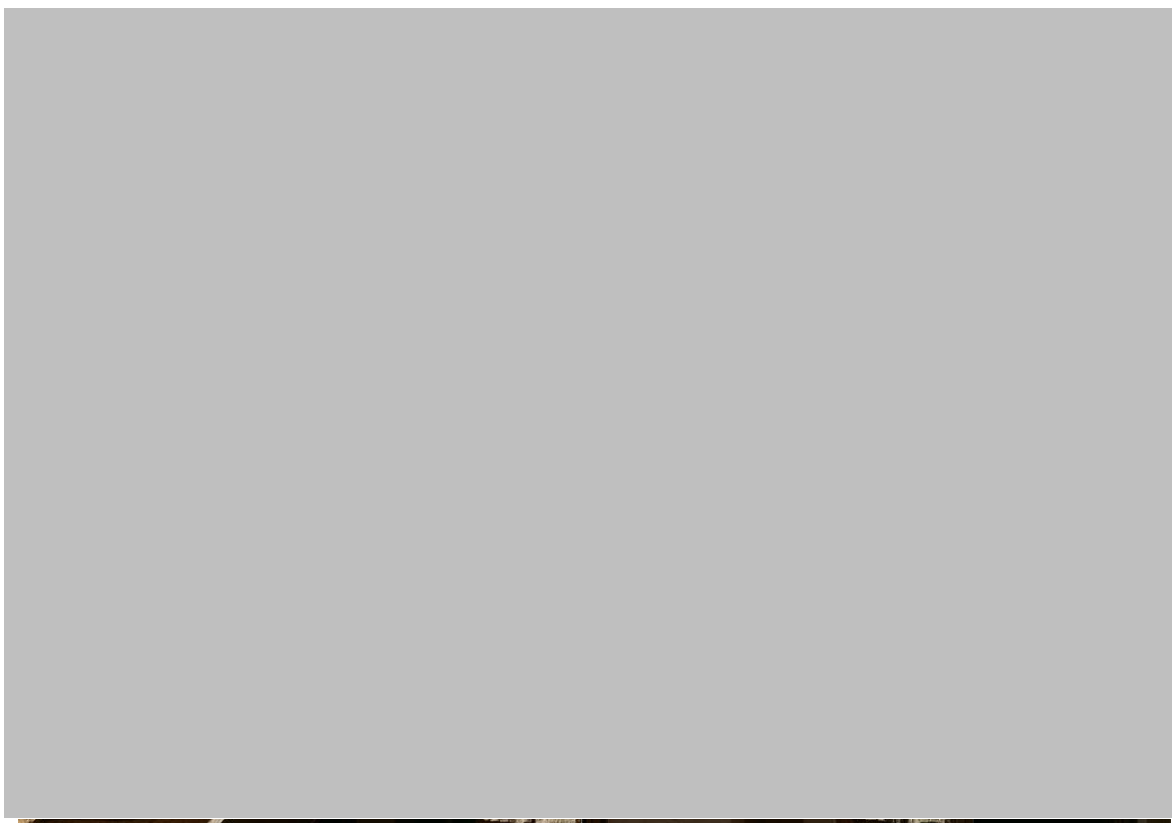


Figure 12: Classe mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna



Figure 13: Christ Treading on the Beasts, Archiepiscopal Chapel, Ravenna



Figure 14: Processional mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna



Figure 15: Detail: Palatium mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna

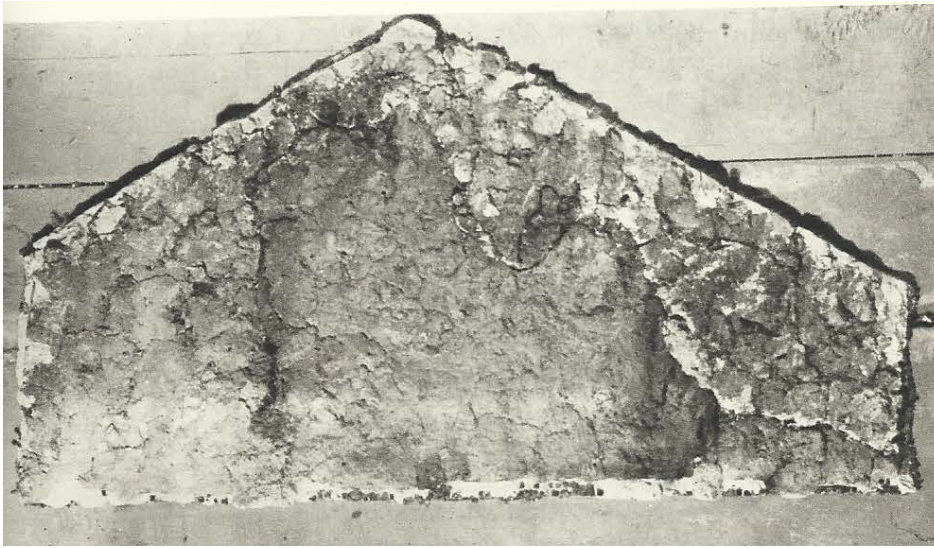


Figure 16: Detail: Reverse of Palatium mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Bovini, Guiseppe. *Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna*, trans. J. Templeton Milan: 'Silvana' Editoriale D'arte, 1961.

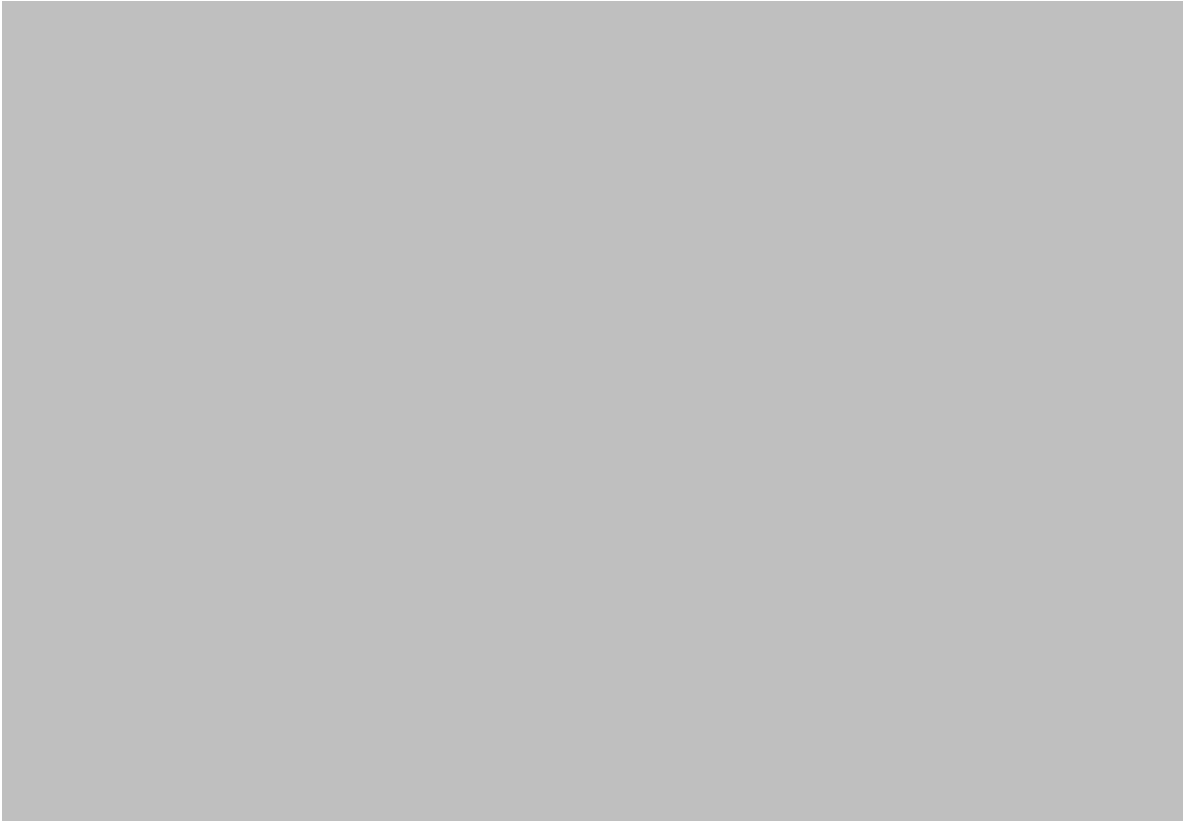


Figure 17: An Emperor Enthroned Before Christ, mosaic, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul





Figure 18: Solidus, Basil I and Constantine, Whittemore Collection, Washington, D.C



Figure 19: Solidus, Leo VI and Constantine VII, Whittemore Collection, Washington, D.C.



Figure 20: Portrait of Justinian, mosaic, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna.



Figure 21: Baptism of Christ, mosaic, Arian Baptistery, Ravenna.



Figure 22: Detail: Baptism of Christ, mosaic, Arian Baptistery, Ravenna



Figure 23: Gold medallion, Deutsche Archäologische Institut, Berlin



Figure 24: Baptism of Christ, mosaic, Neonian Baptistery, Ravenna



Figure 25: Detail: *Hetoimasia*, mosaic, Neonian Baptistery, Ravenna





Figure 26: Porphyry bathtub, marble, Theodoric's Mausoleum, Ravenna



Figure 27: Matthew portrait, Gundohinus Gospels, Autun, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 3, fol. 186v.



Figure 28: Matthew Portrait, Godescalc Gospel Lectionary, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1203, f.1r.



Figure 29: Matthew Portrait, Lindisfarne Gospels, British Museum, ms. Cotton Nero D. IV fol. 25v.



Figure 30: Luke portrait, Gospel Book Stavronikita 43, Mount Athos, Stavronikita Monastery, cod. 43, fol. 12b.



Figure 31: John portrait, Soissons Gospels, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 8850, f.180v.

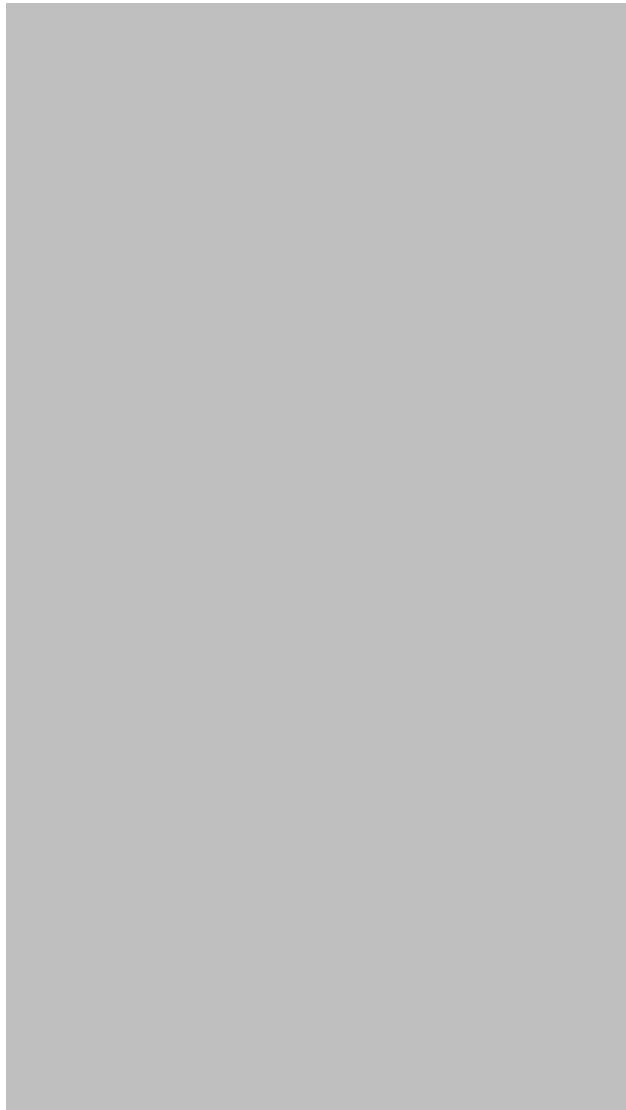


Figure 32: Detail: John portrait, mosaic, San Vitale, Ravenna.



Figure 33: Detail: Mark portrait, Godescalc Gospels, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat.1203, f.1r.



Figure 34: Detail: mosaic, San Vitale, Ravenna.





Figure 35: Luke portrait, Ada Gospels, Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Codex 22, f.85v.



Figure 36: Matthew portrait, Abbeville Gospels, Abbeville, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 4, f. 17v.



Figure 37: John portrait, Vienna Coronation Gospels, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Schatzkammer, Inv. XIII, fol. 178v.



Figure 38: Annunciation, fresco, Castelseprio, Santa Maria foris portas.



Figure 39: Presentation at Temple, fresco, Castelseprio, Santa Maria foris portas.

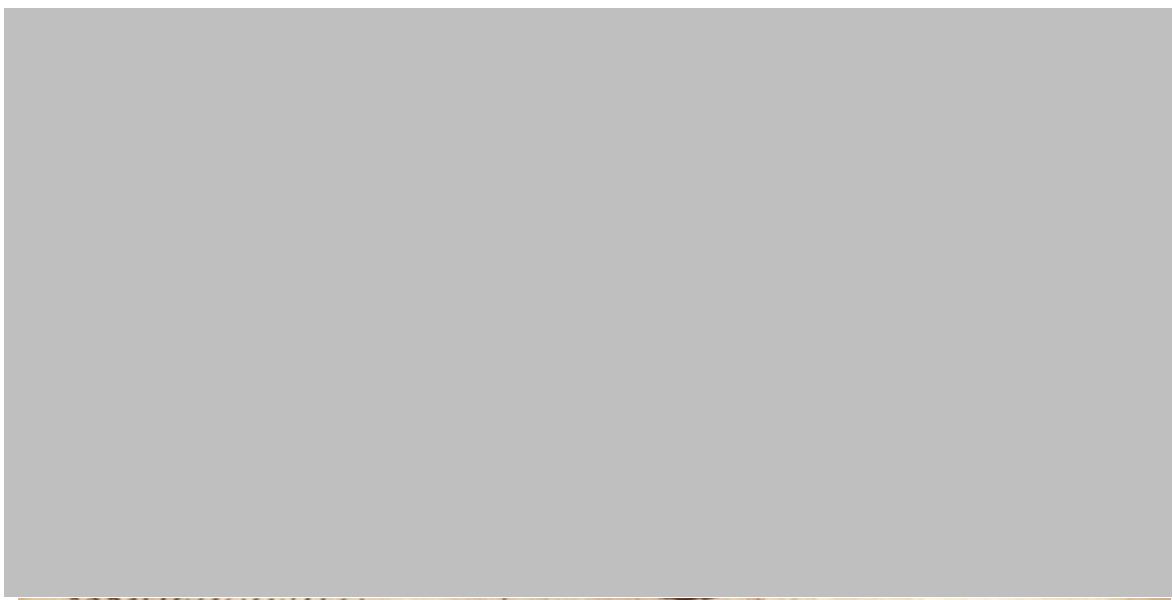


Figure 40: Psalm 27, Utrecht Psalter, Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, ms. 484, fol. 15b.



Figure 41: Flight into Egypt, fresco, Müstair, St. Johann at Müstair.



Figure 42: Fountain of Life, Soissons Gospels, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 8850, f.1v.





Figure 43: Fountain of Life, Godescalc Gospels, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat.1203, f.3v.



Figure 44: Adoration of the Lamb, Soissons Gospels, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 8850, f.6v.



Figure 45: Andrew's Diptych, ivory, London, Victoria and Albert Museum.



Figure 46: Ivory Diptych, Milan, Cathedral Treasury. Photo by: Holly Hayes.



Figure 47: Ivory Book cover, Oxford, Bodleian Library.



Figure 48: Annunciation, ivory, Throne of Maximian, Ravenna, Archiepiscopal Museum.



Figure 49: Christ Triumphant, Genoels-Elderen ivory, Brussels, Musées Royaux d'art et d'histoire.



Figure 50: Virgo Milirans, ivory plaque, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.





Figure 51: Barberini Diptych, ivory, Paris, The Louvre



Figure 52: Grado reliquary, silver, Grado, Basilica di Sant' Eufemia treasury.

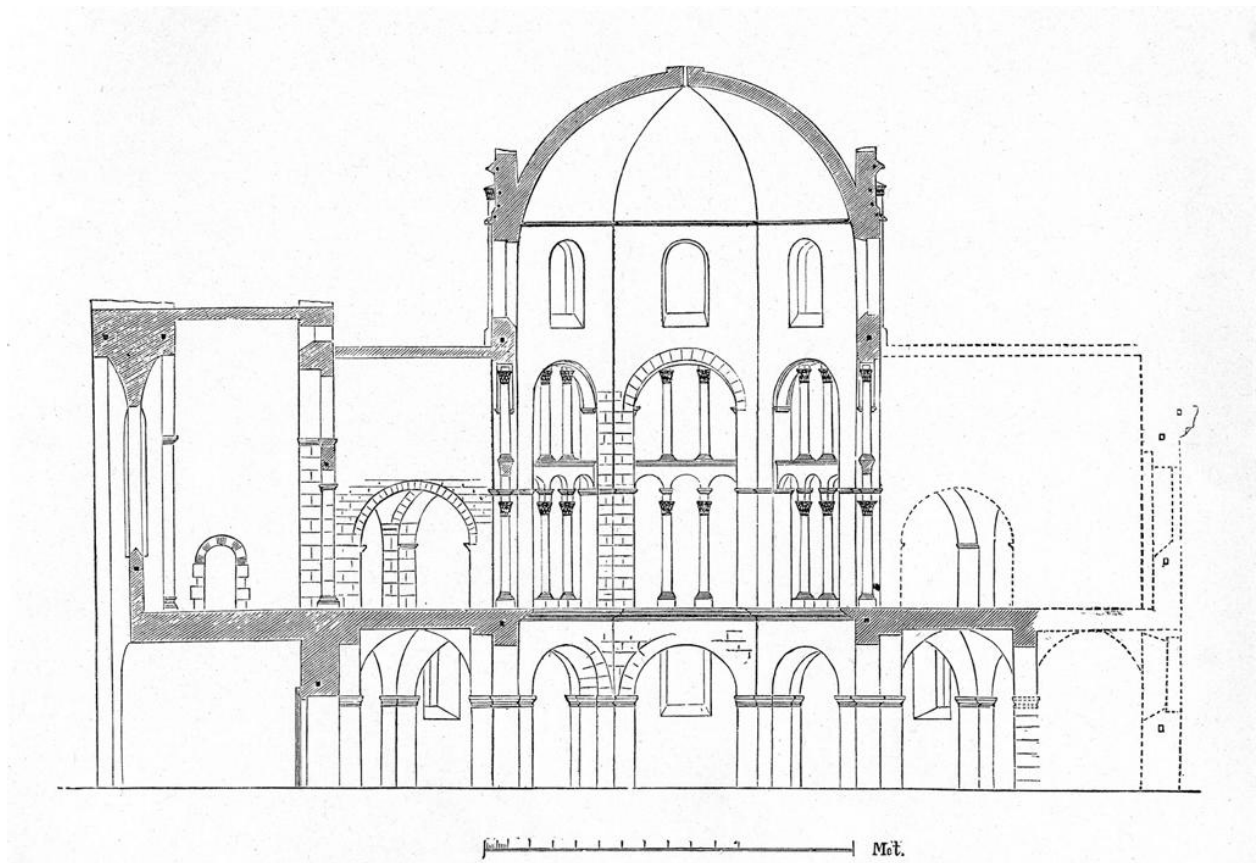


Figure 53 - Palace Chapel of Charlemagne section, Aachen.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Source: S. R. Koehler. *Architecture, Sculpture, and the Industrial Arts Among the Nations of Antiquity*. Boston: L. Prang and Company, 1879. Series II. Plate 49, figure 2.

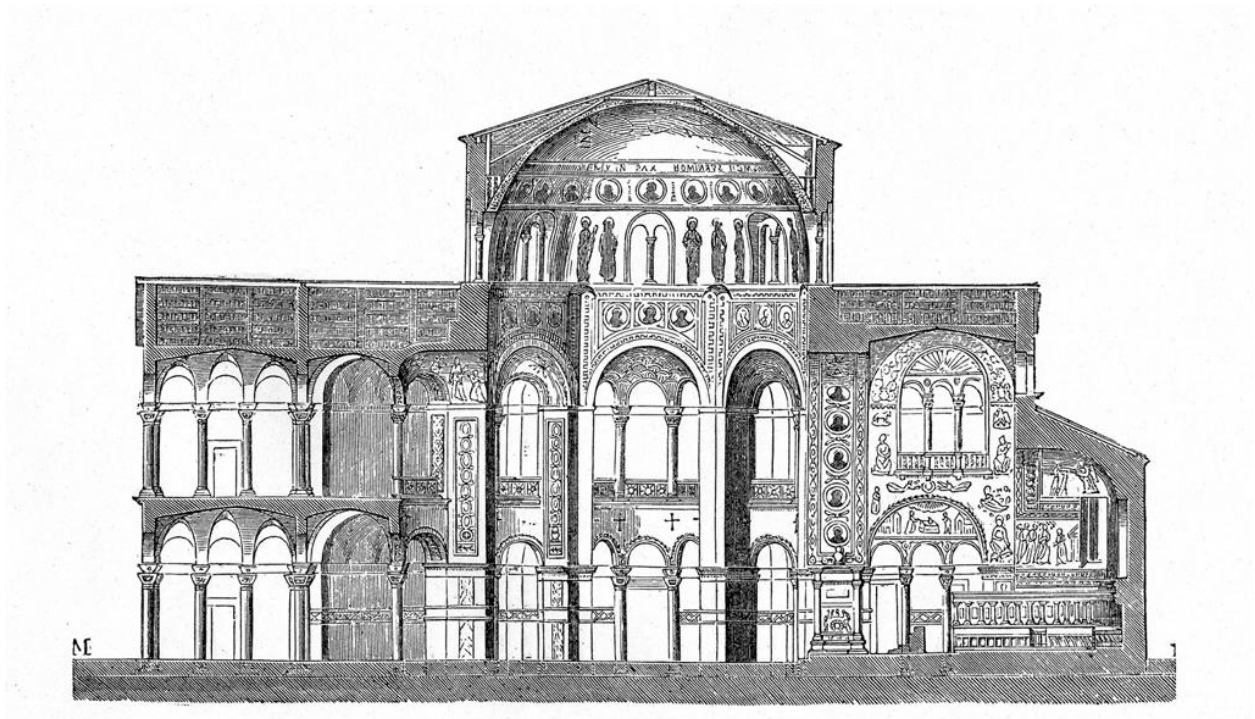


Figure 54– San Vitale longitudinal section, Ravenna.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Source: S. R. Koehler. *Architecture, Sculpture, and the Industrial Arts Among the Nations of Antiquity*. Boston: L. Prang and Company, 1879, Series II. Plate 43, figure 4.



Figure 55: Romanos Ivory, Paris, Cabinet des Médailles.



Figure 56: Dormition of the Virgin, ivory, cover of the Gospel Book of Otto III, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4453.

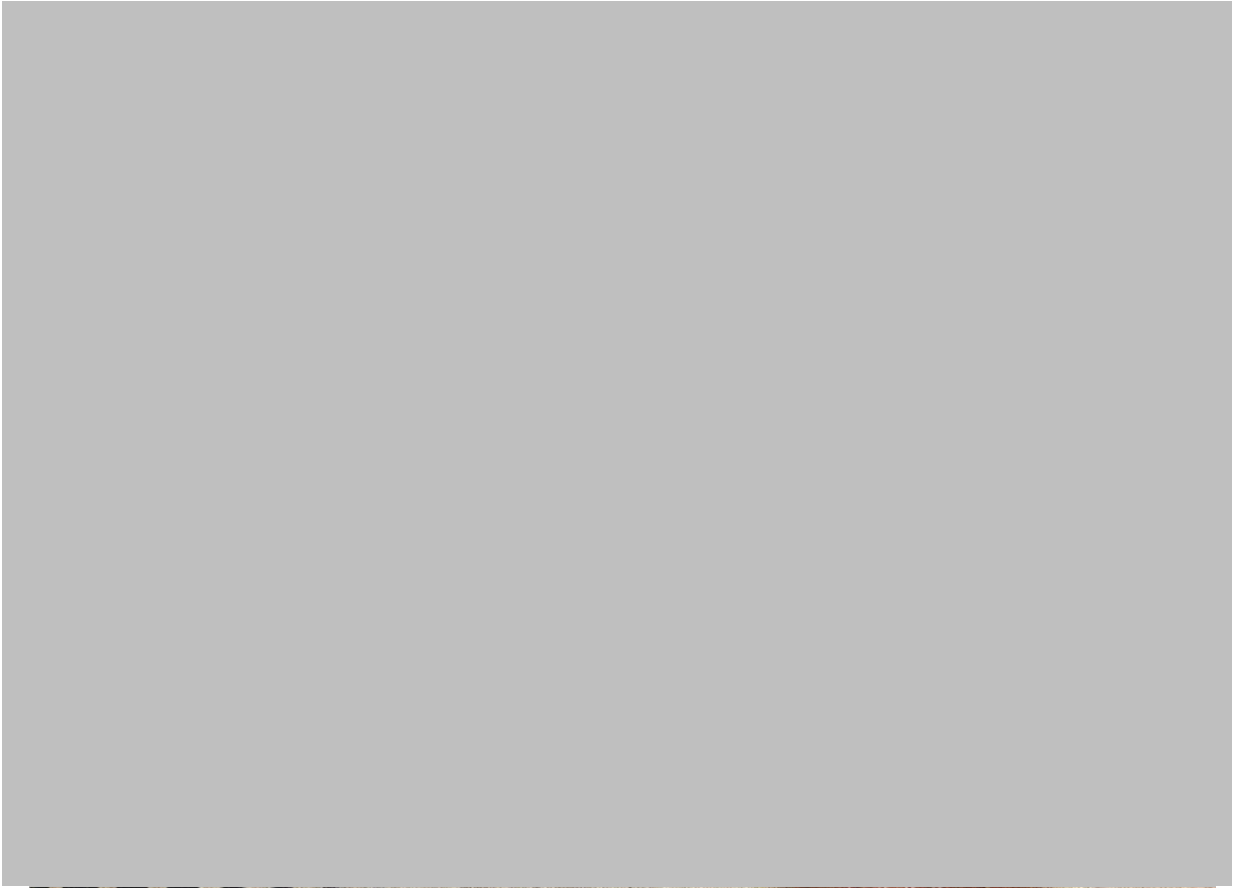


Figure 57: Detail: Justinian, mosaic, San Vitale, Ravenna.



Figure 58: Michael VII Doukas and Maria of Alania crowned by Christ, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Coislin 79, f.1.





Figure 59: Lothar Cross, Aachen, Aachen Cathedral Treasury



Figure 60: Chormantel of St. Cunegunda, silk, Bamberg, Diözesanmuseum.



Figure 61: Otto II, Otto III, and Theophano with Christ and St. Mauritius, ivory, Milan, Castello Sforzesco treasury.



Figure 62: Plaque with Otto I presenting the Cathedral of Magdeburg, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 63: Basilewsky situla, ivory, London, Victoria and Albert Museum



Figure 64: St. Peter's staff reliquary, Limburg-an-Lahn, Cathedral Treasury.



Figure 65: St. Andrew's sandal reliquary, Trier, Cathedral Treasury.



Figure 66: Otto II Enthroned and Provinces, Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms. 14b.





Figure 67: Charles the Bald Enthroned, San Paolo Bible, Rome, Abbazia di S. Paolo fuori le Mura, fol. 1.



Figure 68: Charles the Bald Enthroned, Codex Aureus, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000, f. 5v.

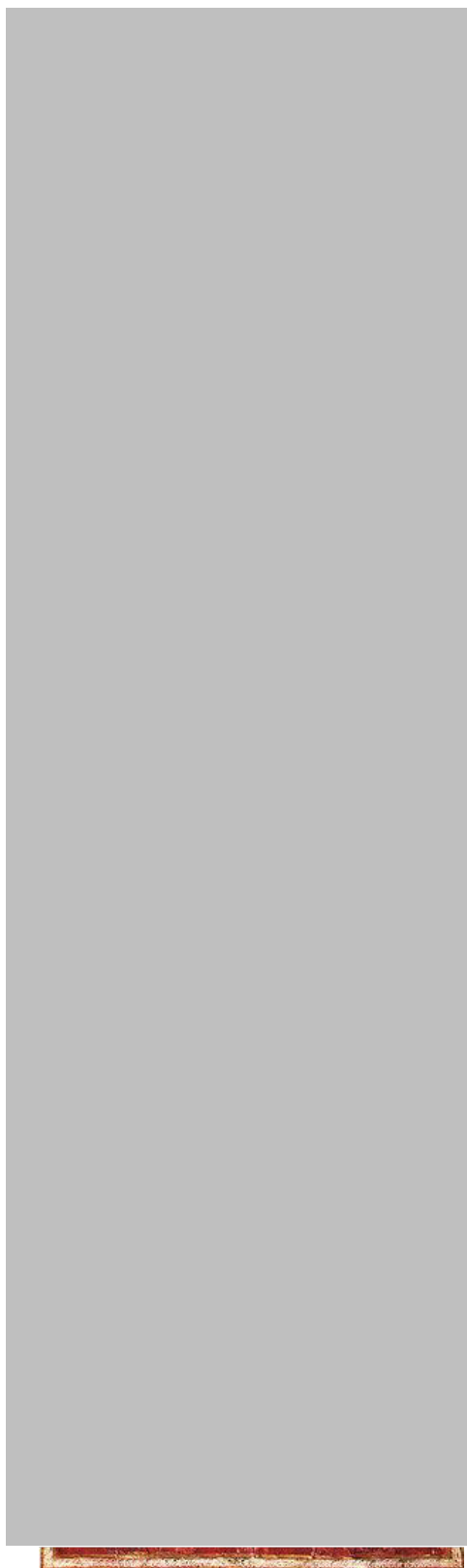


Figure 69: Marriage Charter of Theophano, Wolfenbüttel,  
Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv, 6 Urkunde 11

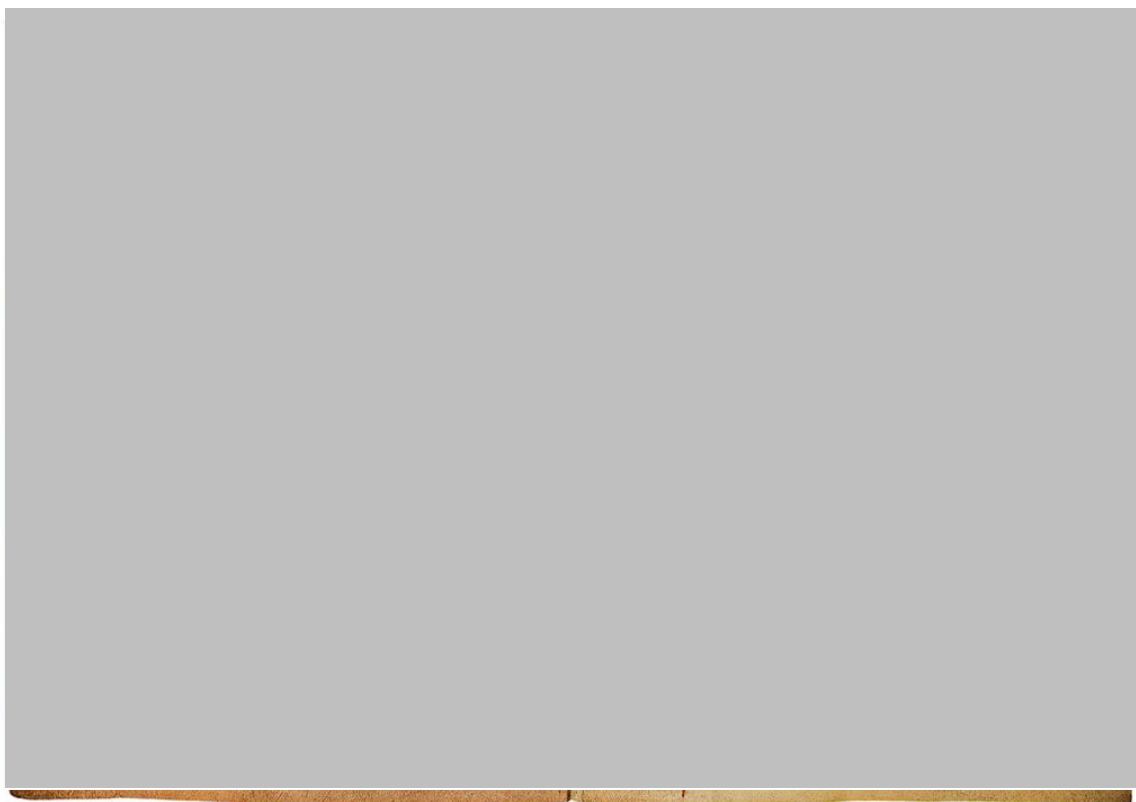


Figure 70: Otto III Seated in Majesty and Personifications of Rome and the Provinces of the Empire approaching Otto III, Gospel Book of Otto III, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4453, f. 23v-24



Figure 71: Luke Portrait, Gospel Book of Otto III, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4453, f. 139v.



Figure 72: Reverse: Lothar Cross, Aachen, Aachen Cathedral Treasury

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