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Migrations, Ethnogeneses, Romano-Germanic Kingdoms

MIGRATIONS, ETHNOGENESES, ROMANO-GERMANIC KINGDOMS

In Paolo de Vingo's historic-ethnographic and archaeological reappraisal, the ethnogenesis of Franks, Burgundians, Goths and Langobards and their integration in Late Antique society, of which they represented a fundamental and transformative element (like other populations such as the Vandals, Thuringians, Bajuvars and Alemanni), appear to be substantially complementary, despite their lack of homogeneity. Referring to an extensive literature, de Vingo identifies cultural integration as the culmination of the process of formation of *gentes* who were to be particularly important in the history of the early Middle Ages, pointing out that their modes of settlement in the western European areas were conditioned by their ethnogenesis itself. In point of fact, the author distinguishes four different types of formations resulting from the demographic-social characteristics of the areas of origin, from the stability (or lack thereof) of each group in its context of origin, from the events connected with the movements dictated by the circumstances, from the situation of the areas in which the various *gentes* settled from the 3rd to the 4th century, and from the roles they played.

In the border territories of the empire, from the 3rd to the 4th century (and even more from the 5th century) the changes in the demographic-social structure were caused by the introduction of internally diversified and non-homogeneous groups from the Germanic cultural area, like the Burgundians, Goths, Thuringians and Alemanni, who had played in the past an increasingly important role in the defence of the empire; previously, contacts between Germans and Romano-provincials had been fostered by the commercial and production activities in which Roman citizens were engaged also beyond the *limes*, in workshops that had been purposely established to expand trade beyond the exchange and export of artefacts which were often produced within the borders as well as far away from them. Furthermore, the judicious policy of migratory flows which had introduced into the state territory a number of different communities (*inquilini, laeti, gentiles*), with different duties and obligations (also fiscal and military), had triggered, from the 2nd century, the integration of Germanic groups, populations from the steppes and even communities of Iranian and Middle Eastern origin into the territory, political organisation and society, all for the purpose of repopulating and economically stimulating depressed areas and of increasing military resources and strengthening state defences. In this context of initiatives aimed at developing relations in the overall interest of the *res publica*, the kingdom of the Franks, which was to absorb the Burgundian community, emerges as one of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms in which the Roman state was to find an opportunity for defence and survival.

Thanks to the diverse composition of the Germanic *gentes*, large unsettled groups, opened and continuously changing, could form and grow. The cohesion of these groups was ensured not so much by the adoption of exterior elements such as language, law, religion, customs and traditions, but by the profound belief of their members that they had had, in an obscure past, common ancestors and were part of the same community. According to Reinhard Wenskus, the scholar who introduced a new view of the Germanic *gentes*[1], considered static entities between the beginning of the 20th century and the 1930s[2], the bearers and propagators of this faith - which was, however, a shared pretence arising from the need for cohesion and defence of a population battling for survival, in particular during migration - were the politically, socially and economically strongest groups in the community, defined as *Traditionskerne* or 'bearers of tradition', understood as *élites* (not necessarily political) able to control the formation of new collective identities and larger units.

The attraction capacity of a 'nucleus of tradition' (a closed high-ranking group) was based on a myth which conferred prestige on the 'ethnic communion' traced back to its remote origins and from which rules and requirements of collective behaviour had descended: *lex* and *origo* are therefore closely linked and were transmitted to the Langobards together[3]. Theorising the conventionality of the aggregations of Late Antique and early medieval peoples which he defined as 'tribes', Wenskus relativised all the other elements of ethnic membership, such as language, culture, justice and political structure, in an elitist model which, however, was unable to demonstrate the formation of an ethnic identity «as a

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1   WENSKUS 1961, pp. 14 ff., 583.
2   SCHMIDT 1934[2].
3   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber I.21*; WOLFRAM 1994; POHL 2000a, p. 7.

communion growing from small scattered groups»[4]. Hence the 'decentralised' processes of ethnogenesis, like those found in the Slavic world, are not represented in this model which, despite its ingeniousness and originality, is unable to fully explain the formation of broad groups, generated by the dynamism of open communities and not by the initiatives of limited bodies such as religious associations gathered, for example, in a sacred wood.

It is known that aggregation phenomena accelerated significantly in the Migration Age (as a result of political and military rather than sociological dynamics) to the extent that the Migrations themselves are considered processes of ethnogenesis. While Wenskus had considered the *gens* as a community fictitiously founded on descent, Herwig Wolfram, in numerous works, one of the most widespread of which was the *Geschichte der Goten*[5], saw in this community a polyethnic-based federation open to any contribution and possibility of aggregation in relation to the developments generated by the wave of migration (the *Wanderlawine*), the unity of which manifested itself essentially as *exercitus*, while the faith in a common descent was maintained as a pretence. In a recent interview, the distinguished Austrian historian underlined that the aim of his school within the context of the debate on ethnic groups is to contribute to knowledge of the peoples of the early Middle Ages. The purpose is to avert any nationalistic or chauvinistic approach to a remote past[6] which has been intentionally heroized and that in the 1930s and 1940s degenerated into the aberrant mythology of the 'Aryan race' and the purity, superiority and integrity of the Germanic peoples. Leaving aside the extremes of Nazism, on a strictly cultural level, extolling the historic heritage of a people as a sign of distinction is thought to have been favoured by the reigning dynasties for political purposes[7], to the extent that the mythography of origin has been considered an invention – some historians have referred to the invention of tradition[8] – with the consequence that the early medieval historiographic works should be studied only as literary texts and not used as historical sources[9].

The many successful attempts to affirm the concept of transformation of the Roman world as opposed to the theory of discontinuity caused by the disruptive role of extraneous and various ethnic groups, which have their distant origins in the inspired work by Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, have become progressively consolidated in the innovative reconstructions proposed by the school of Peter Brown[10]. In assimilating them, the project of the European Science Foundation, significantly entitled *The transformation of the Roman world* (between the 3rd and the 8th centuries)[11], has proposed the end of the Western Empire as a non-event, a non-end, regarding it as a slow process of transformation in which the Barbarian peoples, by that time integrated, took part: in this regard Walter Pohl who, together with his students, represented the Vienna School in the project, recalled that «in terms of the theory of systems, the Barbarians were not 'outside' the system». «Niklas Luhmann» – he continues – «has underlined that the conflicts do not constitute a crisis, or a breakdown in communication, but a period of intense, albeit specific, communication via which a system is transformed. The military actions were only a part of this multifaceted and contradictory communication, in which alliance and hostility, exchange and dependence were mixed; a fascinating model for the search for systems of conflicts»[12]. Even during raids and armed clashes, communication did not cease, remaining within the system of relations - already theorised by Wolfram[13] - formed by both Romans and Barbarians.

The rewriting of the history of the relations between the empire and the Germanic populations in the terms summarised above and below, upsetting the traditional model[14], has substantially denied the devastating and disintegrating consequences of the raids of armed bands and invasions as a whole, downgraded from catastrophic events to operations agreed upon with the imperial authority and often with the Roman society of the occupied territories or with parts of it, in a perspective of a continuation of the Late Antique administrative structures which would seem almost too optimistic, especially just after the Greek-Gothic war. It has been observed that the most successful Barbarian chiefs were those who better knew how to play in the political games of the empire, acting as kings of their people and together as delegates of the imperial authority: therefore, rather than being aggressions aimed at denying the existence of the Roman state, the invasions were, albeit not exclusively, manifestations from within it at a given time, according to a relationship in which opposition is considered part of the constitutional structure and which resulted in the inclusion into the late Roman state

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4   Pohl 2000a, p. 8.
5   Wolfram 1985, pp. 17-19.
6   Albertoni 2008, p. 17.
7   Munro Chadwick 1945, p. 94.
8   Hobsbawm, Ranger (eds.) 1987.
9   Goffart 1988.
10 See at least Brown 1980.
11 See, for example, Bowersock, Brown, Grabar 2000[2].
12 Pohl 2000a, pp. 203-204.
13 Wolfram 1989.
14 Jones 1964.

of the 'blond peoples' with whom Rome had to come to terms[15].

Hovering on the edge of a system which shaped and influenced them in various ways, and linked to the empire by contractual relationships (the *foedus* was a flexible juridical form, suited to governing relations[16]), the Barbarian *gentes*, settled within or outside its borders but attracted as enemies or allies, inevitably bound their destiny with that of Rome. Hence, not all the wars during the period of the 'transformation of the Roman world' were fought between Romans and Barbarians, as indicated by the almost total absence of clashes with the Merovingian kingdom. Instead, the conflicts could be considered part of a 'common late Roman system' of which even the Huns were part, although they provided «a model contrary to the integration of the Goths (and of some Huns) in the territory of the empire»[17]. This is a perspective not entirely shared by de Vingo who, although he cannot be defined as a discontinuist, appears inclined to interpret the late Roman world and the initial period of the early Middle Ages as a political-social and cultural environment marked in any event by the catastrophic effects of the invasions[18], by numerous hiatuses and by the recently emphasised differences with respect to the common identities[19].

The history of the Langobards provides a good example of the formation of an early medieval people and de Vingo illustrates this via a balanced reappraisal of the sources and related interpretative problems, pointing out the twofold ethnogenetic process already identified in relation to the movements that occurred[20]: the first ethnogenesis took place during the phase of migration from Scandinavia, under the guidance of two young leaders, the legendary princes *Ybor* and *Agio* (linked to the myth of youth). They benefited from the advice of their wise mother *Gambara*, a priestess who was able to mediate with the divinity (Frigg, wife of Odin-Wotan) when the route to the continent was obstructed by the Vandals, the true power of Europe in the Iron Age; the victory won thanks to the favour granted by Wotan, a warlike divinity, and the consequent adoption of the ethnonym *Langbärte*\Langobards, men with long beards (the long beard is one of the attributes of Odin-Wotan)[21], marked the transition from the religious beliefs of a peasant population, based on the cult of fertility of the earth and female divinities, to a warlike religion, typical of migrating people perpetually battling for survival[22].

After this fundamental reconfiguration of the Langobard identity expressed by the myth, which should be considered not without foundation even though it was adapted for the purpose, the second ethnogenesis took place after a few centuries of settlement along the lower Elbe. It reached a conclusive stage when, at the beginning of the 560s, Alduin (of the Gausian dynasty) died and was succeeded by his son Alboin, considered the leader of the Balkan-Danubian area owing to his prestige as an able condottiere, consolidated by his victory over the Gepids in 567, during the third conflict with this people, and by his slaying of King Cunimund in a duel. The war, fought shortly after the defeat inflicted on the Langobards by the Gepids in 565 with the support of Byzantium[23], was won also due to the close alliance with the Avars who, in the event of victory, were to be given the kingdom of the Gepids between the basin of the Tisza River and Transylvania. Having stipulated with the Avaric *kahn* a new treaty which guaranteed the Langobards the possibility of a return to the Danubian provinces in the event of failure of the migration into Italy, on 2nd April 568 (or 569 according to Bertolini's calculations[24]) Alboin advanced towards the peninsula which he reached through the Vipacco valley in the Julian Alps and along the Roman roads following a regular route from Savogna on the Isonzo River, via *Forum Iulii,* along the via Postumia to Verona and from there, along the via Gallica, to Milan, which was taken on 3rd September 569.

Alboin was the head of a large Langobard-dominated army which also comprised a number of defeated Gepids in addition to Bulgarians\Huns, Sarmatians, Saxons, Thuringians, Swabians and Romans from the Danubian provinces[25]. The entire population took part in the expedition[26] followed by large herds of animals: probably less than 200,000 units (and current estimates tend to lower the figure), but a significant number considering that the Ostrogoth presence in Italy is estimated to be slightly more than half this figure, or a few tens of thousands less than half[27]. The diverse composition

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15   Wolfram 1989.
16   Wolfram 1999⁴, p. 166.
17   Pohl 2000a, p. 203.
18   Ward, Perkins 2008.
19   Modzelewski 2008.
20   Rotili 2004, p. 874.
21   *Origo*, 1; *Historia Langobardorum, Liber I.8-9.*
22   Rotili 2001, pp. 225-232.
23   Schmidt 1934², pp. 539 ff., 583.
24   Bertolini 1968.
25   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber II.26.*
26   *Origo*, 5; *Historia Langobardorum, Liber II.6.*
27   Jarnut 1995², p. 30; Wolfram 1985, pp. 484-485; Delogu 1980, pp. 12-16.

of the *gens Langobardorum* had permitted a considerable increase in the *gens* as mentioned previously, constituting at length an open formation as demonstrated by the fact that Agilulf, Duke of Turin and then king and husband of Theodelinda, widow of Authari, was a Thuringian. The Thuringians had joined ranks with the Langobards almost certainly after their kingdom had been overthrown by the Franks in 531[28] and had settled in the area of Turin perhaps because it was a convenient base from which to oppose the Franks who had settled just over the Alps. The Dukedom of Turin was therefore of considerable strategic importance and, moreover, could be controlled from the nearby capital of the *regnum*, Pavia. Indeed, it is no accident that the four dukes referenced by the sources, Agilulf, Arioald, Garibald and Raginpert[29], were involved in the struggles for the throne: only Garibald did not succeed in becoming king, although in 661-62, through military betrayals and successes, he exercised a strong influence over the destiny of the crown.

With respect to these events and the formation processes of the *gens Langobardorum,* de Vingo's approach follows a line which the latest historiography would consider 'revisionist' but which as a whole appears to be prudent and not without foundation. On the basis of the observation that a Langobard culture appeared in the lower basin of the Elbe at the threshold of the 1st century B.C., imposing itself in the area as an effect of the migration of a people from outside, the author of this introduction had suggested that the territory of origin was that indicated by Paul the Deacon[30], who draws on the *Origo* with a formula having the character of a mythicised literary *topos* and which the inaccuracy of the geographical description (Scandinavia, a great originator of peoples, is considered an island) makes improbable; the reason for the shift to the Baltic area is generic, since Paul the Deacon attributes it to the overpopulation of Scandinavia which obliged the Langobards, at the time called *Winniles*, to seek new abodes[31]. Having abandoned the region of Schonen in southern Sweden, corresponding to the island of *Scandanan*[32], they reached Scoringa[33], i.e. the 'land of the spiky rocks' which can be identified with the island of Rügen and then, after the victorious clash with the Vandals propitiated by Frigg, Mauringa, the 'marshy region' corresponding to the coastal area of western Mecklenburg; they then reached Golanda, which can be identified with the lower basin of the Elbe, the geomorphological configuration of which was very different from what it is today. In the river Elbe area, the Langobards were known to the classical writers who refer to them as such and not as *Winniles*: Strabo, who witnessed the failed attempt of Rome to create a Germanic province along the Baltic Sea, indicates their centre to be the region of the lower Elbe[34], also borne out by the subsequent evidence of Tacitus[35], who refers to the Langobards as belonging to the Swabian stock that settled in northern Germany. This is corroborated by Ptolemy[36], who indicates them as one of the Swabian peoples of Germany, by Velleius Paterculus, field officer and historian of Tiberius[37] who was the first to record the presence of the Langobards in 5 A.D., and by Cassius Dio[38].

The exclusively mythical nature of the Scandinavian origins, testified by the sources[39], appears to be contradicted by the analogies between Langobard law and that of the Scandinavian peoples, by the characteristics common to the Langobard mythology and that of the Nordic peoples (correspondences between the Viking *berserkir* 'which has a bearskin' and the *úlfhedhnar* 'which has a wolfskin' and the *cynocephali,* Langobard warriors who wore ritual totemic-type masks in the form of a dog's head), by the Nordic roots of the aristocratic designations *Gausi* and *Harodi* of the Langobard dynasties, and by the fact that in the 6th century there is evidence of a Scandinavian people called the *Winuwiloth*[40], who are believed to have come (from the part of the *Winniles* that had not emigrated from their land of origin. The meaning of 'combatants' or 'mad dogs' or 'raging' or 'victorious dogs', attributed to the ethnonym can be referred to the military type of canine cult which developed when the *Winniles*, changing identity, switched from the worship of a goddess in the form of a dog (animal ancestor of supernatural origin as she was the mother of King Lamissio, therefore the *totem* of the dynasty), to that of Wotan, i.e. from a female divinity, a symbol of fertility, like the goddess Nerthus, worshipped according to Tacitus by many peoples who had settled along the Baltic[41], to a warrior divinity in relation to the needs of the migration. This led to a reappraisal of the role of women in the social structure of

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28   Jarnut 1995², p. 17.
29   Gasparri 1978, pp. 45-46, 51-52, 56, 60.
30   Rotili 2004, p. 874.
31   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber I.1-2.*
32   *Origo*, 1, 2.
33   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber I.7, 10.*
34   Ὑπομνήματα τῆς γεωγραφίας, VII, 291.
35   *De origine et situ Germanorum*, 40.
36   Γεωγραφικὴ Ὑφήγησις, II, 9, 17.
37   *Ex Historiae romanae libris duobus quae supersunt*, II, 106.
38   Ῥωμαικὴ ἱστορία, LXXI, 3.
39   *Origo*, 1; *Historia Langobardorum, Liber I.1, 7.*
40   *Getica, III, 23.*
41   *De origine et situ Germanorum*, 40.

tribes which for the first time joined forces, giving rise to an embryonic state-like military organisation. The change in religious beliefs and the 'militarisation' of the ancestral mythological culture appear to be correlated by the sources to the migration to the Baltic area, which can be dated around 100 B.C. However, it was believed that the warrior cults took shape only in the 5th century, in relation to the migration from the territory of the Elbe and the resulting condition of permanent belligerence. Considering that the sources document the *Langobardi* and not the *Winniles* along the lower Elbe, as already pointed out, it is likely that the latter took on the new ethnonym when migration towards Bohemia began.

The movements and the actions of the Langobards within the Swabian confederation which successfully opposed the attempt of Augustus and Tiberius to set up a Germanic province along the Elbe also involved the Rhine basin, where there is evidence of some communities; while the participation of forces in the exploits of Arminius (which led to the annihilation of the legions of Varus) and in the war against the Marcomanni of 166-167 is recorded, the capacities and force emphasised by Tacitus appear to be confirmed despite the small numbers of the Langobards («*Langobardos paucitas nobilitat: plurimis ac valentissimis nationibus cincti non per obsequium sed proeliis ac periclitando tuti sunt*»).

The idea that a *gens* could constitute a polyethnic political unit, understood as such in the etymological sense (*ethnos = gens = thinda*, in Gothic = *populus*, a social group characterised by the same rights and a common social conscience), and not a community of race, led to the belief that the peoples of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages were not branches of one single original people and, insofar as they were the final products of changes and fusions resulting in a 'homogeneous' identity, that they prefigured the nation in a modern sense. However, as regards the tribal structure attributed to Franks, Saxons and Langobards and the 'formations of tribes' understood as components of the future nations of Germany and France, Wenskus is now outdated: a Germanic 'people' (obviously understood as a complex ethnic union) has been considered unacceptable for the early Middle Ages, while it is true that Late Antique and early medieval peoples, such as Franks, Langobards, Bavarians and Saxons were autonomous and that some of them were later to take part in the long process of formation of the German and French nations[42]. In the relationship between the Franks of the Merovingian period and the French of the late Middle Ages no «completely different quality, which would justify a terminological distinction» has been observed; rather «a gradual shifting of accents in the direction of territoriality and strengthening of power» has been identified[43]. We can therefore talk about 'medieval nations', recognising in them the roots of the modern nations; it should nevertheless be remembered that while all the components of a national community existed in the Middle Ages, such as language, law, religion, state, territory (in France two languages existed, the *langue d'oc* and the *langue d'oïl*), the overall result of their combination was different from that produced in the following centuries. Hence, there is a tendency to consider the 'medieval nations' as 'purely vegetative nations', i.e. with an 'internal temperature' different from that of the modern nations, from the French Revolution onwards. Thus, in the Italian medieval context, the Langobards represent one of the protagonists within a particularly complex ethnic setting, but they were one of the 'nations' that were unable to develop autonomously and were sucked into the melting pot that formed Italy: in fact in the Risorgimento their pale image appears only as a prefiguration or metaphor of Austrian oppression. Moreover, while it was the period of formation of part of the European states in political-institutional terms, according to a perspective that cannot be applied to Italy, the Middle Ages were above all the age of complete change within the ethnic framework of Europe. This is shown, for the eastern part, by the result of the great migration of the Slavs who marked the frontier of the Germanic world to the east and, with the Balkan settlements of the southern Slavs, definitively severed the unitary nature of the Roman world, separating from it the Greek-Byzantine context. The settlement of Asian peoples, such as Bulgarians and Magyars, was to further enrich the ethnic situation, but while the former were completely absorbed by the Slavic world, the latter were to maintain their identity, constituting an *enclave* in the Slavic world like the descendants of the Romano-provincials of Dacia, who are the modern-day Rumanians.

In the context of the complex debate on the formation of the *gentes* of the period of the Migrations, the ethnogenesis of the Germanic populations has been attributed to the extraordinary capacity of the Roman state to configure the Germanic ethnography with its administrative provisions and to integrate various ethnic groups of uncertain and vague identity, settled also beyond the frontiers (not comparable with the modern state frontiers), in its socio-cultural and institutional structure: the Germanic world was - according to Patrick J. Geary - the most important and long-lasting creation of the political and military genius of Rome, due to the patient commitment, over the centuries, of emperors, generals, soldiers, landowners, traders (in slaves and other goods) to giving the chaos of the Barbarian world a comprehensible and possibly controllable political, social and economic form[44]. This modelling action was so incisive and convincing that it was impossible for many peoples, like the Goths, Franks and Burgundians, to consider themselves and their past

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42   Pohl 2000a, p. 7 and bibliography referenced therein; Pohl 2003.
43   Pohl 2000a, p. 7; Gasparri 2001³, pp. 13-16.
44   Geary 1988, p. VI.

independently of the categories of ethnography, politics, usage and customs outlined by the political-administrative and economic culture of Rome[45].

Within this problematic context the ethnogenesis of the Franks has been attributed to the initiative of Chlodowech: he brought together in the *regnum Francorum*, organised in Roman territory on this side of the Rhine, Merovingians, Franks and their neighbours, i.e. *gentes* without kings governed by oligarchies and by now lacking «groups who were bearers of tradition» who could hand down the *memoria* of the *gens* and aggregate new peoples, according to a model of social constitution 'by fragmentation of groups' as outlined in the *Bellum Gallicum* by Caesar and in the *De origine et situ Germanorum* by Tacitus. The latter work, establishing the cornerstones of Germanic ethnography anticipated by Caesar and other authors, appears to foretell the transition from hereditariness of kingship «*ex nobilitate*» to its elective character «*ex virtute*»[46] possibly in relation to the development of polyethnic groups, as a result of successes in war determined by military valour, and all requiring appropriate government. The formation of the Frankish state, on the administrative and productive framework of an underpopulated area of the empire, transformed a small political head into the founder of a dynasty which was to play a dominant role in western Europe for approximately two hundred and fifty years. It also gave the ethnogenesis of the Franks, despite their low numbers, an importance such that the region they inhabited became France and being a Frank was a pre-condition for achieving high social status. In the territory beyond the Rhine the Alemanni, limited by the defeat inflicted on them by Chlodowech, achieved a lasting but not uninterrupted ethnic development. A similar phenomenon was to occur in Langobard Italy, to the extent that the defeated Romans, with evident reversal of positions, integrated into the new structure of the state and cooperated, as far as possible, in its management owing to their administrative skills.

The ethnogenesis of the Langobards, on the other hand, concerns a social formation which, like Goths, Vandals, Angles and Saxons, still recognised the institution of monarchy, founded or restored, in the case of the former, in relation to the events characterising the two previously mentioned migrations, from Scandinavia and the area of the Elbe, and to the need for affirmation in territories bordering with the empire and in economic and commercial relations with it, as demonstrated by the fact that artefacts were imported from its territories, including Italy. The decisive transition towards a monarchical system, albeit still in a diarchic form (the princes *Ybor* and *Agio*) and towards a political constitution open to outside influences and transformations, is linked to the military successes in the context of the two migrations, the adoption of the Odinic-warlike religious framework and the integration of groups from different ethnic backgrounds into an extended structure. After the migration from the Elbe area and the further widening of the 'ethnic' base, such a structure was to be fuelled in the empire's territories not by expropriated land but by a tax reserved for the Roman army[47], thus implying the existence of the Late Antique fiscal system and the officials able to run it. More realistically, however, application of the *tertia hospitalitas* would appear to have involved the assignment of one third of the land, under the existing legislation[48], with allocation of areas in which the new Langobard *possessores* took over from the defeated Goths who, in turn, had taken the place of the Romans. This dynamic, common also to the Burgundians, was to provide the peninsula with a settlement continuity model from the 4th-5th century up to the 7th-8th century, thus justifying the gradual assimilation of the Germanic components into Roman society, which in itself was multiethnic, in particular in the ruling class. This also refutes the theory of the radical political-religious conflict between immigrants and the resident population which has long provided the reference framework for archaeological-topographical surveys of settlement forms.

The penetration of Germanic peoples into the territories of the empire, especially in the 5th century, was, on the other hand, marked by violence, struggle and destruction for the Romano-provincials, as we are told by the accounts of the contemporaries Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and St Jerome. The former, on the basis of the news coming from the Danube area, wrote with drastic simplicity «[…] the Huns attacked the Alans, the Alans attacked the Goths and the Taifals, the Goths and the Taifals attacked the Romans. And it is not over yet […]»[49]. After a horde of Germanic peoples had crossed the frozen Rhine on the icy night of 31st December 406 and overcome the Roman defences, St Jerome expressed with despair the trauma caused by the event: «[…] innumerable and very fierce peoples occupied all of Gaul. Quadi, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alans, Gepids, Heruli, Saxons, Burgundians, Alemanni and Pannonian tribes devastated, woe is us, anything they found in their way between the Alps and the Pyrenees, between the Rhine and the Ocean […]»[50]. Despite this, in Late Antiquity, the settlement of *gentes* from beyond the border was not always the product of such bloody

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45 GEARY 1988, p. VI.
46 *De origine et situ Germanorum*, 7; DE VINGO, NEGRO PONZI 2005, p. 915.
47 GOFFART 1980, pp. 58-60.
48 SZIDAT 1995.
49 *Expositio*, 10, 10.
50 St Jérôme, *Letters*, 6, 123, pp. 28-30.

actions because in many cases the Roman authorities managed to reach a political agreement, recognising the status of the *gentes* as *foederati* according to a strategy not wholly dissimilar to that which, from the 2ⁿᵈ-3ʳᵈ century, the Roman public administration, much stronger at that time, had succeeded in establishing to govern the flow of people requesting to be admitted within the borders of the empire, in search of work and better living conditions. However, the inability to exercise coercive power vis-à-vis the migratory flows and the decreasing possibility of countering the attacks in military terms led to a general lack of confidence, fatigue and distrust at all levels among the citizens of the empire; in various cases, for the local aristocracies the Germanic conquerors were actually less demanding than the Roman authorities to the extent that conditions occurred for agreement and cooperation like those, in the mid 5ᵗʰ century, referred to by Salvianus of Marseilles «[…] Many of the provincials, although of noble birth and well-educated, take refuge with the Barbarian enemies in order not to succumb to the oppression of a state persecution, in search of the Roman *humanitas* in the Barbarians, as they are not willing to tolerate Barbarian *inhumanitas* in the Romans […]»[51].

Germanic peoples, such as the Franks and Burgundians, who had settled in areas of the empire and in the Roman towns, supposedly would have lived according to the Roman model, contributing to maintaining the state administrative structures thanks to collaboration of the *élite* ruling class and to guaranteeing operation of the infrastructures (roads, aqueducts, drainage systems) or the protection of monuments. The coexistence of ethnic groups which resulted from the meeting of Romans and Germanic peoples entailed tolerance of the Catholicism of the provincials (with the sole exception of the Vandals) and coexistence with the bishops and church structures. Abandonment of the Aryan heresy and the conversion to Christianity were to be, between the 5ᵗʰ and 8ᵗʰ centuries, further signs of integration expressed, above all, through the gradual Latinization of the Germanic peoples, as demonstrated by the adoption of Roman laws, the drafting of extensive legislation in Latin, the transmission of the historical memory and the very construction of ethnic identity in the language of the «defeated».

In this perspective some forms of coexistence pursued by the church are easier to explain, while it is more realistic to see the Germanisation of the territories of the empire and the peninsula in particular as a dialectic element in the process of integration which, in the latest interpretations, has replaced the model of acculturation of the conquerors-immigrants with respect to the Roman-Mediterranean context. This acculturation has not been seen positively due to the prevailing idea of a passive change in customs and traditions, which should be still considered the first step taken towards integration. While we cannot ignore the shocking number of incredibly violent episodes, which point to a complete breakdown, early archaeological indicators of the complex and – it could be said – inevitable process of integration are, for example, for the Langobards, the *Folienkreuze* which give a Roman-Christian slant to the grave goods, in which the Late Antique belts, the Roman-Byzantine circular brooches and artefacts typical of the Franco-Merovingian area, such as the *seax* and the *francisca,* a typical throwing axe used as a weapon, reflect the changes recorded by the figurative composition of Agilulf's plaque. This is acknowledged by Paul the Deacon when he declares that the costumes of the Langobards depicted in the frescoes of Theodelinda's palace in Monza, dated approximately two centuries earlier, were by that time outmoded. In this sense the grave goods of Castel Trosino in the case of the Langobards and certain treasures, such as that of Desana in the province of Vercelli, relative to the Ostrogoth period, testify to the osmosis with the provincials also through mixed marriages between Germanic and Roman individuals.

The factor that constantly emerges in the processes of formation of the Romano-Germanic kingdoms, despite everything, is therefore the desire to integrate with the Roman population which, originally, the empire's demographic policy had pursued to achieve the cultural and political amalgam essential for management and control of the most extensive state formation in Antiquity; the 'Roman spirit' of the subjugated provincials is not easy to define as it was the result, appropriately engineered by the public administration, of the centuries-old meeting between Hellenistic-Roman civilisation and native cultural substrata. The Romano-Germanic kingdoms were a fertile medium for multicultural experiences, and therefore marked the culmination of the ethnogenesis of many peoples whose cultural and ethnic identity, when they were incorporated within the confines of the empire, was much vaguer and more complex than indicated by the traditional Latin names; they were consequently also the place where, with the structuring of the identity process in the new language, a defined form was given to traditions, legends and myths in a dimension not without originality in which the values and models of the Late Antique-Mediterranean tradition were brought together. What Orosius wrote about the figure of the king of the Goths, Ataulf, therefore illustrates a choice which other peoples would have shared concerning the desire for inclusion in the organisation of the Roman state «*[...] At ubi multa experientia probavisset neque Gothos ullo modo parere legibus posse propter effrenatam barbariem neque reipublicae interdici leges oportere, sine quibus respublica non est respublica, elegisse saltim, ut gloriam sibi de restituendo in integrum augendoque Romano nomine Gothorum viribus quaereret habereturque apud posteros Romanae restitutionis auctor,*

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51   *De gubernatione Dei*, V, 21-23.

postquam esse non potuerat immutator»[52].

The inclusion of communities from different ethnic backgrounds and their progressive integration, which was to take the processes of ethnogenesis to their extreme consequences, was expressed, in the western European areas, also via the effect of the 'imported' processes on the funeral rites of the local populations, which could no longer be considered as conflicting with the former but rather integrated with them: the Germanisation of the provincial communities was expressed, in particular after the middle of the 5th century, via the deposition, in numerous graves, of personal goods (weapons, jewellery, beautifully crafted clothing accessories worn by the deceased during his/her life for festivities and public rituals) which began to take on a value indicative of the social and possibly political standing and wealth of the deceased and his/her family. Mirroring this change in mentality due to changed composition of the *élites* is the different perception of the towns where, in a Europe that was undergoing a marked process of 'ruralisation', investments in the construction of stone buildings and monuments as tools of political propaganda became increasingly rare.

The new configuration of the cemeteries resulting from the above changes meant that the graves of members of the aristocratic class were no longer surmounted by structures, not even wooden elements, according to the custom of many Barbarian peoples and as found in graves 47-48-49, which can be referred to the oldest phase of the cemetery of Collegno, near Turin[53], since the new rituality favoured the deposition, beside the body of the deceased, of goods with a high artistic and economic value. Graves were no longer designed to impress by their external appearance but by their content, which could be seen only during the funeral rites and the quality of which had to impress the participants. It followed that the commemoration of the deceased was no longer entrusted to the written word but to the receipt of symbols of power, wealth and wellbeing, often concealed in deep graves in order to prevent theft.

The Piedmontese cemeteries examined by de Vingo, the most significant and best-preserved of which is the one located in Collegno, follow a precise logic in the choice of grave goods and their arrangement in the graves. The weapons and composite battle belts, together with other artefacts of high artistic quality, were placed in the tombs of adult men and women, the first to be buried in the cemetery. Graves 48, 49, 53 can be interpreted as those of the 'founder forebears' of the settlement, whose role was underlined by the value of the artefacts. The other members of the community, according to their degree of kinship with the leading exponents and their social status, were arranged around the hegemonic group with much simpler goods, indicating that they were separate burial groups while, at the same time, highlighting membership of the family group and their descent from the founders.

This transformation of the *élites* and the reconfiguration of the social and economic structure must be related to the formation of a new aristocratic-military class that would have assumed also civil, administrative and, in the long term, religious powers. This is evident in Ostrogoth and Langobard Italy where new models prevailed between the 6th and the first part of the 7th century in particular owing to the Langobards, who in the first decades of their settlement, and despite moving progressively nearer the culture of the Mediterranean area, were still bearers of the values of the Germanic or Merovingian-oriental culture. This is testified by the accounts of the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* and Paul the Deacon, and corroborated by archaeological data: the latter highlight, among other things, the substantial presence of the aristocratic-military class in the Pannonic-Danubian area, the formation of which, going back to the 2nd century in the Elban area, is testified by the princely burials of Apensen and Marwendel which reflect funerary rites different from others in the region during the same period which were based on cremation[54].

Confirmation of the above is the fact that, within the context of a body of people seeking new self-assertion which, *a posteriori*, would contribute to further developing the identity of the *gens*, in the last period of the Danubian phase, Alboin, to augment his charisma as an army leader, when he slew Turismond, son of the king Turisind, in the first war against the Gepids and then when he eliminated Cunimund in the third war against the same people[55], celebrated rituals to induce the magical assumption of the qualities of the deceased by the victor, thus demonstrating great political communication ability. To make himself worthy of sitting at his father Alduin's table, the army leader went to the court of Turisind with only forty men, during a banquet occupied the place of Turismond, whom he had killed, and asked to be given the arms of the same Turismond in a process of identification accepted with grief and respect by Turisind, the father of Turismond[56]. After the beheading of Cunimund, Alboin fashioned his skull into the famous goblet to suck the

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52 *Paulus Orosius, VII.46.3.*
53 Pejrani Baricco (ed.) 2004.
54 Rotili 2004, p. 874.
55 *Origo*, 5; *Historia Langobardorum, Liber I.27.*
56 *Historia Langobardorum, Liber I.24.*

vital forces from it[57] rather than to cruelly deride the Gepids and his wife Rosemund, the daughter of Cunimund whom he married in order to create blood ties with the stock of the valiant defeated king. The conservation of the skull (which Paul the Deacon declares he had personally seen in the hands of king Ratchis[58]) and the ritual cannibalism (which in this case is not testified) are aspects of a magical act aimed at acquiring the virtues and force of the defeated enemy, therefore all the more desirable the stronger the enemy slain[59]: in particular, adoption of the first custom can be referred to the period in Pannonia and relations with the Avars who were known to make skulls into goblets[60]. Cannibalistic practices, although no longer used at the highest level of Langobard society from the time of their migration to Italy, cannot be ruled out in the case of isolated groups, for instance. Just slightly less than one and a half centuries after the *Edictum Rothari* which, while not excluding witchcraft and its rituals and considering the former on a par with fornication[61], assumes a Christian and incredulous position, regarding these practices as absurd[62], the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxoniae* indicates, in a famous chapter[63], the practice of cannibalism for magic-ritual purposes in a population in many respects similar to the Langobards, pointing to cannibalistic rituals being still possible in the Langobard society of 643.

Even in Christianised Langobard contexts, according to values established in the Langobard cultural anthropology, weapons maintained their sacred value for quite some time. This is shown by the episode of Giselpert, Duke of Verona, who around 760 had the grave of Alboin opened in order to seize his arms which were even more important than jewellery and ornaments, as they were considered to have a magical force: in fact, the first object the duke laid his hands on was the sword[64].

The initially strictly military mentality of the monarchy and the occupants was expressed by the equivalence between *gens* and *exercitus* and by the formation of a military structure organised on the basis of closed cohering kinship groups, a *Fahrtgemeinschaft* or *expedition*. In other words a travelling community of warriors and their family entourage in search of new lands (a community that occupied a position below the *gens* and above the family and which was characterised by the allegiance of its members to a leader indicated by the sources as *dux*)[65]. These communities, known as *farae,* understood in a narrow sense as «*generationes vel lineas*»[66], whose operation enabled the Langobards to conquer, in the space of a few years, almost all of northern Italy as far as Tuscia, albeit in a far from painless manner, are at the basis of the army structure as testified also by the so-called «Pseudo-Maurizio», the Byzantine military treatise which at the beginning of the 7th century documents the custom of the 'blond peoples' (especially Franks and Langobards) to fight in family groups[67].

Immediately after the occupation of the peninsula, intervention on the urban layout of the conquered centres was substantially limited; the occupants re-used public constructions from the imperial age, such as the *praetorium*, installing the 'cordusi' of Milan and Pavia and the *curs ducis* of Benevento in the area of the *Planum Curiae* where in the 8th century Arechis II built the *Sacrum Palatium*[68]. Specific and also innovative urban changes were introduced later when detachment of the peninsula from the empire, brought about by the conquest, was gradually reduced, in particular due to the commitment of the church in drawing the Langobards closer to the Late Antique culture and to Christian civilisation: in his continuous evangelising work, Gregory the Great had at his side Theodelinda, an able mediator with respect to the politics of her two husbands, the kings Authari and Agilulf, just as, later on in the South, Theoderada mediated with respect to the politics of Duke Romuald I[69].

Theodelinda was entirely Christian[70], and had built the basilica of San Giovanni[71] in Monza in addition, as already mentioned, to the palace with the frescoes depicting some of the Langobardic exploits and the national costume, in particular the hairstyle which originated from the cult of Wotan, the god with the long beard[72]. This episode shows

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57   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber I.27.*
58   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber II.28.*
59   Delogu 1980, pp. 11-12.
60   Andree 1922; Gasparri 1983, p. 44.
61   *Edictum Rothari*, 198.
62   *Edictum Rothari*, 376.
63   *Capitulatio*, 6.
64   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber II.28.*
65   Bognetti 1948, pp. 64-65.
66   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber II.9.*
67   Pertusi 1968, pp. 673, 680.
68   Rotili 1986, pp. 107-109.
69   Gasparri 1978, pp. 89-90.
70   Bognetti 1948, pp. 179-302.
71   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber IV.21.*
72   *Historia Langobardorum, Liber IV.22.*

that, despite the contacts with Roman-Christian society and initiatives such as the later foundation of San Salvatore by Desiderius in Brescia and, in 758, of Santa Sofia in Benevento (national temple of the *gens Langobardorum* and Langobard shrine) by Arechis II[73], the duke who renewed Benevento by building the *Civitas nova*[74], for a long time the Langobards felt the need to maintain close connections with their sources of power which originated from the tradition of the conquering people and their anti-Roman, warrior and pagan history, constructing an identity in this sense. Even the Benedictine Paul the Deacon[75] re-proposed the traditional culture, confirming and reiterating the myth of the origins as a value with which the conquering people of Italy could identify: the nationalism of Paulus[76], fuelled also by his anti-Byzantine spirit, rejoices in the libertarian character and military abilities of the Langobards in whom, nevertheless, he identifies, rather than in the Byzantines, the true continuers of classic civilisation, due to their ability to assimilate the ancient cultural heritage via the mediation of Christianity and the church[77]. Completing the second ethnogenesis, in the *Historia Langobardorum*[78] he exalts Langobard sovereigns and nobles who had adhered to the Roman orthodoxy, providing concrete proof of their cultural integration and the new faith: he recalls for example that Theodelinda and her husband Agilulf were Catholic and generous in donating works and gifts to the church with which they consequently established good relations[79]; that in Langobard society, now officially Catholic starting from the royal triad Aripert-Pertarit-Cunicpert, sovereigns and dukes competed in constructing religious building works and in establishing and endowing monasteries[80]; that the Langobards of Spoleto and Tuscia defended the Pope from the hostility of the exarch Paul[81]; that the Catholic Liutprand took up arms against the army of the iconoclast emperor Leo[82], redeemed at a high price the bones of St Augustine from the Saracens who had sacked his tomb in Sardinia[83], rushed to the aid of Charles the Hammer against the Saracens who had invaded Provence[84] and founded a chapel in his palace in Pavia, establishing a special college of clerics responsible for religious services in the palace[85]. Arechis II is presented by Paulus as a scholar of biblical texts, promoter of culture and constructor of buildings and Adelperga, daughter of king Desiderius and his wife, as a connoisseur of historiographical works and biblical comment and as a woman of elegance and eloquence[86].

In contributing to the construction of the identity of his people by completing the second ethnogenesis, Paul the Deacon essentially configures the same mixed model, Roman and Germanic, of ideology of the monarchical power as the one represented on Agilulf's plaque, in which the costume, arms and appearance of the warriors[87] present traits that liken them to the reconstructions made possible thanks to the grave goods. In this context, during the 7th century, artefacts and ornaments of pre-Italian tradition are progressively replaced by others that denote the gradual shifting of the Langobard culture away from these models, in particular from the Merovingian-oriental model that developed over a period of sixty years in the Danubian area.

There are doubts as to whether the new identity of the Langobards, and other populations, after the process of integration, can be ascertained from the grave goods[88], in the context of the recent historiographical debate on migrations and invasions. In terms of the settlement of peoples and the establishment of kingdoms in Roman territory, these migrations and invasions are now understood by some, according to the new interpretation mentioned above, at least as regards the upper levels of the Barbarian world (i.e. sovereigns and segments of the aristocracy), as political operations developed in the context of agreements, in collaboration with the imperial authority and often with the Roman society of the occupied territories or with parts of it, not necessarily and not only in terms of conflict and confrontation.

The invasions and settlement of Germanic peoples, who had had relations with the empire for some time, occurred within a context of a territorial and settlement-oriented transformation to which they made a significant contribution, but without playing a decisive role: in fact, the Late Antique public administration was in charge of defence of the

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73 Rotili 1986, pp. 107-109, 143-155, 184-201.
74 Rotili 1986, pp. 143-155.
75 Leonardi 2001; Capitani 2001.
76 Pohl 2000b; McKitterick 2000; Luiselli 1994.
77 Luiselli 1992, pp. 795-798.
78 Chiesa 2001, pp. 45-66.
79 *Historia Langobardorum, Liber IV.5, 6, 8, 40.*
80 *Historia Langobardorum, Liber IV.41, 47, 48; Liber V.33-34; Liber VI.1, 17.*
81 *Historia Langobardorum, Liber VI.49.*
82 *Historia Langobardorum, Liber VI.49.*
83 *Historia Langobardorum, Liber VI.48.*
84 *Historia Langobardorum, Liber VI.54.*
85 *Historia Langobardorum, Liber VI.58.*
86 Rotili 1986, p. 201.
87 Gasparri 1983, pp. 60-61.
88 Pohl 2005, pp. 561-566.

territory[89] and the towns[90] as part of the more general defensive withdrawal strategy implemented in the Alpine regions following the civil wars of 383-94 and the fall of the Rhenish *limes* in 406-07. The remodulation of the settlement forms, expressed above all by the nucleated hilltop settlements in the Late Antique-early medieval period, was supported by the local communities before the Germanic peoples. The stratigraphic method in medieval archaeology, first used approximately thirty years ago, gives us the first 'live' images of these changes, integrating the reconstruction of a reality which previously could only be glimpsed from written sources: both the settlements, constructed using very simple techniques which from the 4th-5th century had started to replace villas and *domus*, the splendour of which had been widely documented by classic and Late Antique archaeology, and the towns themselves which, due to the difficulties of the times, had to be adapted in order to defend and control the territory.

The new political-military balances originating in the 5th century from the strategic importance acquired by the Alpine and pre-Alpine regions increased the importance of towns like Verona, Trento, Pavia and Cividale, a small municipality that found itself in a key position in relation to the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*. Strategically located in the Po Valley river network, Pavia became the centre of the defensive system of Milan, consisting also of the castles located along the rivers Adda and Ticino and to the north between Lario, Verbano and Canton Ticino. The consolidation of the urban defences and the network of castles that defended the routes of the Val d'Adige and those between Garda Lake, the Giudicane and the Val di Non led to the success of Verona and Trento from the time of the Goths. In Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta, the defence was centred on some fortified towns (Susa, Ivrea, Turin) located along important road connections, at the end of the Alpine valleys; castles like Belmonte and S. Giulio d'Orta were the exception. The route at the base of the Alps along which the most important towns arose (Cividale, Treviso, Verona, Brescia, Milan, Pavia, Asti, Turin) therefore dates back to the 5th century, although it became consolidated after the Langobard conquest which split the political unity of the Po Valley, consequently fragmenting control of the river network which formed, from the Ostrogoth age, with the Po and its tributaries, the other great communication route of northern Italy. According to Cassiodorus[91], the river route between Ravenna and Pavia required 5 days' navigation with a stop at Ostiglia, a *locus* which, fortified, was to become the *castrum Revere*; the journey then continued with horses towing from the river bank[92].

In contrast to the success of some towns and castles connected with them was the crisis of centres that became marginalised such as, in the eastern part, numerous coastal towns and Aquileia, which in the 4th century had played an important role in relations between Milan and the Adriatic. The towns of the Po Valley that found themselves in territories disputed between the Byzantines and Langobards, like Padua, Mantua, Cremona and Modena, underwent a temporary eclipse. The decadence of the urban centres of southern Piedmont, before the arrival of the Langobards, was perhaps a result of their marginalisation in the context of the strategic equilibriums at the end of the 4th - early 5th century: in these areas the lack of workshops producing weapons, which were present in Lombardy and Veneto, is due to the limited investment in the fortifications of the western Alps. This territory was on the edge of the great road communication routes which ran along the base of the Alps and through the centre of the Po Valley, and in the Langobard age only Asti and Turin and the castle of Isola di S. Giulio d'Orta were the seats of dukedoms, while a Germanic presence is concentrated in Vercelli, Turin, Novara and Tortona and in only a few other areas[93]. In southern Tuscany the transformation of Cosa/Ansedonia and Roselle into Byzantine military posts took place against the background of an early urban crisis which, at the end of the 6th century, was to be aggravated by unrest at the frontier with the Roman dukedom, hence the transfer of some sees, for example from Tarquinia to Tuscania, from *Ferentis* to Bomarzo, and from *Volsinii* to Orvieto[94].

In the context of the general tendency towards urban reorganisation, fortification works were constructed also in Southern Italy, slightly later since, due to its geographical position, the area was not on the front line. Although the Juthungi, who had pushed farther south than other Germanic peoples, had been halted at Fano by Aurelian in 271 and the attack by the Visigoths under Alaric occurred only in 410, the construction of walls around some towns is recorded as early as the 4th century. In Benevento, recent surveys have dated to the 4th century the extensive rebuilding carried out after abandonment of the flat area of Cellarulo, between the rivers Calore and Sabato, resulting in a concentration of the settled zone in the hilly part which was enclosed by walls and building of the early Christian cathedral[95]: the 56 identical

89   Brogiolo, Gelichi 1996, p. 8.
90   Brogiolo, Gelichi 2007⁷, pp. 5-7.
91   *Cassiodori Variae*, IV.45.
92   *Cassiodori Variae*, II.31.
93   Micheletto, Pejrani Baricco 1997, p. 308.
94   Ciampoltrini 1994, pp. 615-633; Kurze, Citter 1995, pp. 159-186.
95   Rotili 2006; Rotili (ed.) 2006; Rotili 2008.

columns with relative bases and capitals[96], re-used in the Romanesque cathedral which marked the transformation of the early medieval episcopal church, can only have been taken all together from an ancient monument (perhaps the theatre or the demolished amphitheatre dating back to the period of Hadrian or even the *Capitolium*), when they were still part of the overall structure. This would not have been possible in the 8th century, when the bishop David consecrated the building on which work was carried out in the 9th century. The author of this introduction therefore believes that the 8th-century church reflects a Late Antique layout in which the 56 columns had been re-used for the first time. Facilitated probably by the effects of the earthquakes of 346 and 375 referred to in an epistle[97] by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus[98], which praises the commitment of the optimates in the reconstruction, the reorganisation of the town (although the words of Symmachus pale in comparison with archaeological documentation) testifies to the driving force of the municipal *elites* with respect to the public administration.

In the 5th century Naples' defences were strengthened to protect it against incursions by the Vandals, and in the second half of the century the city, due to its fortifications, replaced Pozzuoli as the main harbour for the Campania region: an inscription, dated to between 425 and 450 based on the names of Valentinian III (425-455) and Theodosius II (eastern emperor, 408-450) tells us that Valentinian had restored the walls and towers of Naples[99] increasing the defensive capabilities of the western and southern quarters. At the same time the villa of Lucullus was also transformed into a fortress which comprised a large section of the rocky coast around Castel dell'Ovo; the *Castrum Lucullanum* or *Castellum Lucullanum* (which is also located on the hill of Pizzofalcone), in which Romulus Augustulus, the last emperor deposed by Odoacer, was confined in 476, is thought to have been even more extensive than the construction of the classical age[100]. The archaeological data on commerce and trade confirm that Naples, a 'consumer' town in Roman times, became a city-state in the early Middle Ages, characterised by continuous settlement and market-based activities, that acted as an international trading centre which was also able to supply the Langobard hinterland. In the early Middle Ages the seafaring and Mediterranean traditions of Naples were gradually taken over by Amalfi which, according to records, became an exporter of agricultural products, linen fabrics, material for naval equipment, timber and slaves to the Muslim countries and the Byzantine area thanks to the investment of capital accumulated by the albeit limited agricultural activity of its inhabitants[101].

The examples cited delineate an urban landscape still characterised by monumental constructions – that of the defence structures and buildings defining the new Christian dimension – against the backdrop of a rural countryside significantly deteriorated with respect to the classical age. In the towns the walls define a space separate from the territory, constituting a *topos* of the collective imagination of the early medieval world. For defensive purposes, in the 4th century the quartering *infra moenia* of soldiers began, which became normal practice under the Goths, and with serious effects on urban building activities. After the events of the Greek-Gothic war, this tendency was confirmed by the Langobards who, in addition to locating their royal and ducal courts in the towns, contributed to the selection of a new hierarchy of power centres: successful towns were those that took on a dominating political-administrative function with respect to the reference area as in the case of Cividale, Spoleto and Benevento, but further examples are Lucca and Chiusi from which, at the end of the 6th - early 7th century, attacks were organised against the maritime province controlled by the Byzantines. The early medieval town is a military, administrative, religious, productive or commercial centre, as required according to circumstances. At the lowest level are the towns without a seat of power and with a limited reference territory, while at the highest level are capitals like Pavia, Benevento and, to a lesser extent Spoleto, in which the presence of the authority and the aristocracy and the consequent concentration of resources facilitated maintenance and improvement of the ancient urban structures and the persistence or increase in elite consumption, which probably also stimulated local artisan activities: aqueducts, public baths, drainage systems, fabrics, furnishings and other quality products are testified by both archaeological and literary sources. In particular, as already mentioned, in the Langobard towns that were the seats of dukedoms, a court quarter was established, transforming a public structure pertaining to the Roman age, as in Pavia, Brescia, Verona, Cividale and Benevento.

After the collapse of the distribution systems, the main Roman communication routes and the Late Antique settlements, people in rural areas had to be self-sufficient in order to meet their primary needs and settlement processes were therefore driven by completely different dynamics from those that had contributed to the formation of the landscape in ancient times.

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96   Pensabene 1990, pp. 107-109.
97   *Symmachi Epistulae, III,* a. 375.
98   Seeck 1883, p. LXXIV.
99   *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, X,* 1485.
100   Beloch 1989, pp. 98-100.
101   Del Treppo 1977, pp. 3-175.

The excavations carried out over the last forty years in many cases highlight settlement of the Late Antique and early medieval countryside by structured population groups, both in the areas influenced by Roman tradition and in those typical of Germanic settlement models based on the hut villages that extended from Scandinavia to the Carpathian basin: in this area, nomad and semi-nomad peoples of Eurasian origin, like the Sarmatians, Avars and Magyars also settled in clusters, building wooden dwellings which did not last, thus making archaeological identification difficult.

Rather than dispersing among the woods and uncultivated areas, the rural population, significantly reduced, rapidly grouped into new settlements often on the edges of the areas used up to that time; the socio-economic conditions and political-military uncertainty that characterised various regions in the course of the 5th-6th centuries meant that village organisation went back to meeting the subsistence needs of the rural population, contributing to the formation of a social aggregation mentality closely bound to an inhabited centre with a specific identity, albeit fragile due to the construction materials used. The centralisation of settlements also allowed an adequate 'biological mass' to be achieved, i.e. roughly one hundred inhabitants, below which it would have been difficult for community solidarity and subsidiarity to achieve agricultural production effective for survival[102]. The villages represented the place where food stocks were accumulated, a preferential area for the production, repair and exchange of tools and, last but not least, the best context for conservation and transmission of the wealth of technical knowledge. However, they also constituted a natural reference for the Germanic peoples who migrated into the peninsula and for whom the villages provided just as many opportunities for meeting and development as towns did; in fact the interest of Late Antique society in the towns had been diminishing, and an oligarchy less closely bound to the urban world than in the past had assumed control of the western European areas.

Recently, the contribution made to the development of the nucleated settlement from the 5th to the 6th century by the Germanic groups which had migrated to Italy has been underlined[103]; the broad review proposed can be usefully integrated by the data which the archaeology of the early Middle Ages has made available for some areas of the south of Italy characterised also by the construction of castles for defensive purposes within the context of the conflict between Byzantines and Langobards. After spreading at the end of the 6th century to Liguria, Tuscany and central Italy and in the first decades of the 7th century to the Po Valley area, this political framework led to the building of structures to control and defend the territory also in the central-southern Apennine areas of Abruzzo, Campania, Puglia and *Bruttium* where the Byzantines were opposed by the Langobard dukes of Spoleto and Benevento and where hilltop settlements going back to the 4th-6th centuries were consolidated by mighty walls, thus also reflecting the power dynamics of the Langobard aristocracy. In the case of Montella, in Irpinia, fortification of the manorial centre of the 8th century is recorded, i.e. of the *pars dominica* built over a previous hut village of the 5th-6th century which evolved in the 7th-8th into less fragile building forms, testified by masonry houses which were covered by the boundary wall in the 8th-9th century. This fortification was connected with attribution to the manorial system, which had probably become the village seigniory, of functions making it a centre of the gastaldia: this is corroborated, in the middle of the 9th century, by the *Radelgisi et Siginulfi principum divisio ducatus*[104], the treatise which, in decreeing the division of the dukedom of Benevento into the principalities of Salerno and Benevento, attributes the gastaldia of Montella to the principality of Salerno. The robust boundary 'ad *emplecton*' wall (thickness 150-160 cm), encloses a village with numerous houses and service structures (grain pits, cisterns for the water supply, limekiln) and, at the highest point of the settlement, the gastaldaga area, the remains of which, including the cistern with a capacity of over 120,000 litres, were incorporated in the *magna turris*, the reduced residence of the 12th-century castle[105], probably built by the Norman feudal lord Symon de Tivilla and renovated at the end of the 13th century by Charles II of Anjou. The latter also created the «*nemus seu parcum*», «*pro nostris solaciis*»[106] on the model of the Islamic park-garden with aqueducts and fountains, according to a design thought to have been followed (or already implemented) in Hesdin, by his cousin Robert II of Artois who had held the Neapolitan throne during the years of imprisonment of Charles II the Lame following the war of the Vespers. The formation of the hilltop settlement of Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi, motivated by the need to protect the population from the dangers of the nearby Via Appia, dates back to the 3rd-4th century and is testified by numerous burials that can be referred to a nearby settlement, excavated in 1987-88 during archaeological work on the residence of the Caracciolo del Sole family, feudal lords of Sant'Angelo from 1428: they incorporated in the building constructed after the earthquakes of 1456[107] and 1466[108] (a noble residence rather than a castle) both the Norman castle structures and the cathedral dating to the period of

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102 Francovich 2004, p. XIV.
103 Valenti 2009, pp. 27-29.
104 D*ivisio ducatus.*
105 Rotili 1999.
106 Scandone 1916, p. 187, doc. 31 dated 23rd December 1293.
107 Figliuolo 1988; Boschi (ed.) 1999, p. 30, no. 154.
108 Baratta 1901, p. 78 no. 325; Figliuolo, Marturano 1996, pp. 93-109.

Gregory VII. Grave 119, radiocarbon dated to the 3rd-4th century, had been sealed by the beaten earth floor of the south nave of the Romanesque church.

The relationship developed by the Germanic peoples with the Roman territory and institutions was indicative of their approach to the culture of the empire, favoured by the public administration, but the integration would not have been possible without adequate construction of the identity and social cohesion which it was able to produce and express. Therefore important political goals (supremacy, power, organised kingdoms) were achieved more easily by peoples who succeeded in rapidly constructing an ethnic identity based on their past, evoked and re-experienced in the mythical forms handed down to us, modelled according to the need for stabilisation which was to characterise the route followed by each *gens* in the contexts of Late Antique tradition and culture. This produced the 'Romano-Germanic' political model which was not the only result of transformation of the Roman world but which, through a painfully intermittent process, combined in the most effective way the integration achieved and the incipient domination. The product of this complex development consisted of peoples and kingdoms which – underlines de Vingo – animated the whole of the Middle Ages, thus determining a 'dynamic movement with continuous action' which was to contribute to the formation of the modern national states: the result was even more substantial and long-lasting in the case of ethnogenesis relative to groups which, over time, grew in number and visibility more than groups that developed in reduced settlements and were progressively assimilated into the social framework of a new settlement. Thus, as regards the Franks, initially settled by the administration to separate the Roman world and *barbaricum* and then to favour contacts, the strong competition between oligarchic groups entailed the occupation of parts of territories proportional to their capacity for conquest. Peoples with greater political cohesion and fewer opportunities for expansion, like Burgundians, Ostrogoths and, in some respects, Langobards, would have been settled in defined areas, with official attributions within the framework of the current laws. This reconstruction is not quite as clear-cut in the case of the Langobards whose destructuring force prevailed over the reduced organisational abilities of other authorities, while their monarchy was significantly conditioned by an aristocracy with strong internal divisions, not bound vertically to the king by feudo-vassal relations as in the Franco-Carolingian world, expressing expansionist tendencies which were to determine a lack of homogeneity and increased conflicts, chronicled by the sources as plots against the king.

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