BETWEEN OSTROGOTHIC AND CAROLINGIAN ITALY

Survivals, revivals, ruptures

edited by
Fabrizio Oppedisano

Reti Medievali E-Book

43

Ruling in hard times
Patterns of power and practices of government
in the making of Carolingian Italy

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Front cover: Nicholas and workshop: *Theodoric hunts in hell*, c. 1100-1150 (Verona, facade of the basilica of San Zeno). Photo credit: Fabio Coden, by permission of the Ufficio per i beni culturali ecclesiastici, Diocese of Verona (17 Jan. 2023).

Ruling in hard times.
Patterns of power and practices of government
in the making of Carolingian Italy

Project Coordinator Giuseppe Albertoni

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Index

Abbreviations

AE = L'Année épigraphique
CCCM = Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCM = Chronicon Moissiacense Maius
CCSL = Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CDS = Cross Database Searchtool
ChLA = Chartae Latinae Antiquiores
CIL = Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CIMAH = Corpus Inscriptionum Medii Aevi Helvetiae
CSEL = Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.
CSHB = Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
EDCS = Epigraphische Datenbank Clauss-Slaby
EDH = Epigraphic Database Heidelberg
EDR = Epigraphic Database Roma
FSI = Fonti per la Storia d'Italia
ICI = Inscriptiones christianae Italiae septimo saeculo antiquiores
ICUR = Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo
ILCV = Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres
InscrIt = Inscriptiones Italiae
LLT = Library of Latin Texts
LP = Liber pontificalis
MGH = Monumenta Germaniae Historica
  AA = Auctores antiquissimi
  Capit. = Capitularia regum Francorum
  Conc. = Concilia
  Fontes iuris = Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi
  LL = Leges Langobardorum
  Poetae = Poetae Latini medii aevi
  Epp. = Epistolae III-VIII (Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini aevi)
  SS = Scriptores in Folio
  SS rer. Germ. = Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi
  SS rer. Lang. = Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum, saec. VI-IX
  SS rer. Merov. = Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum
MHP, SS = Monumenta historae patriae, Scriptores
MLW = Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch bis zum ausgehenden 13. Jahrhundert
NGML = Novum glossarium mediae Latinitatis ab anno DCCC usque ad annum MCC
PIB = Prosopografia dell'Italia bizantina
PL = Patrologia Latina
PLRE = The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire
RF = Regesto di Farfa
RIS = Rerum Italicarum scriptores.
RS = Regesto di Subiaco
RT = Regesto di Tivoli
SC = Sources Chrétiennes
SupplIt = Supplementa Italica. Nuova Serie
SPV = Le antiche carte dell'archivio capitolare di S. Pietro in Vaticano

The Imperial Image of Theoderic:
the Case of the Regisole of Pavia*

by Carlo Ferrari

The contribution intends to retrace the history of Pavia's famous equestrian statue, known as the "Regisole", destroyed in 1796. The statue, in gilded bronze, represented a Roman emperor and was transferred from Rome to Ravenna, most likely by Theoderic. At a certain point, probably between the eighth and tenth centuries, the Regisole arrived in Pavia, even if it is difficult to establish who was responsible for that. The most logical solution is to attribute the transfer of the monument to a Lombard king, specifically to Aistulf, who conquered Ravenna in 751. It is possible to argue that by transferring the Regisole – which was believed to represent Theoderic – to the capital of the Lombard kingdom, Aistulf intended to promote an imperial image of himself, at a time when the virtual conquest of the whole of Italy raised him to the rank of "new Theoderic".

Early Middle Ages; Ravenna; Pavia; Theoderic; Aistulf; Regisole.

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Abbreviations
CCCM = Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis.
CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, consilio et auctoritate Academiae litterarum regiae Borussicae editum*, Berlin I-XV, 1863-.
FSI = Fonti per la storia d'Italia.
LP = *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, Paris 1886-1892.
MGH, AA 5, 1 = Iordanis, *Romana et Getica*, ed. Mommsen, Berlin 1882 (Auctores antiquissimi, 5, 1).
MGH, AA 11 = *Chronica minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII.* (II), ed. Mommsen, Berlin 1894 (Auctores antiquissimi, 11).
MGH, Epp. 3 = *Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini aevi* (I), ed. E. Duemmler *et al.*, Berlin 1892 (Epistulae [in Quart], 3).
MGH, SS rer. Germ., 25 = Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. G.H. Pertz – G. Waitz, Hannover-Leipzig 1911 (Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi, 25).
SS rer. Lang. 1 = *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI-IX*, ed. G. Waitz, Hannover 1878 (Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum, 1).
Placiti I = *I placiti del Regnum Italiae. 779-945*, I, ed. C. Manaresi, Roma 1955 (FSI 92).
RIS = Rerum Italicarum scriptores.
MHP, SS 3 = Jacopo d'Acqui, *Chronicon imaginis mundi*, ed. G. Avogadro, Torino 1848 (Monumenta historae patriae, Scriptores, 3).
SC = Sources Chrétiennes.

1. *Introduction*

Regisole, Radiasole, or even Girasole, was the name given to the gilded bronze equestrian statue that had stood on a column in Pavia's Piazza del Duomo since the eleventh century, and for centuries was the symbol of the city[1]. Stolen in 1315 by Matteo Visconti's Milanese, and again in 1527 when the city was taken by Francis I's troops, the Regisole was recovered in both cases and put back in its place, although the parts lost during these traumatic movements had to be replaced[2]. On 16 May 1796, the statue was removed for the last time: on the wave of enthusiasm for the arrival of Napoleon's army, it was decided to bring down what the Jacobins of Pavia saw as the «simulacrum of a tyrant», whose presence could not be tolerated in the same square where the Tree of Liberty had been erected[3]. Despite the protests of many, the Regisole was overturned and torn to pieces: the remains, kept for some years in the town hall, were sold and finally destroyed in the early nineteenth century; in 1811 the base of the column – the last remaining trace of the monument – was eventually demolished[4]. In 1937, on the occasion of the celebrations for the Bimillenium of the emperor Augustus, the then director of the Brera Academy, Francesco Messina, made a bronze equestrian statue similar to the lost one, which was placed at the entrance to what is still today Vicolo Regisole, in front of the Duomo (Figg. 1-2)[5].

While the history of the Regisole in Pavia can be reconstructed in some detail, very little is known about the events that brought the equestrian statue from Ravenna (the city – as we shall see in a moment – from which it came) to the ancient Ticinum. Scholars have identified three moments when the transfer of the Regisole could have taken place: 1) at the time of Theoderic the Great; 2) in the eighth century, under the Lombard kings Liutprand or Aistulf; 3) in the ninth or tenth century, as a consequence of a war between Ravenna and Pavia. In the following pages I will put forward some arguments

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[1] Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 25.
[2] Bovini, *Le vicende del "Regisole"*; Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 31-41; Lomartire, *La statua*, pp. 43-44 and 50-51.
[3] These words seem to have been spoken by the French general Augerau: see Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 45-47.
[4] Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 47-49; Lomartire, *La statua*, pp. 54-56.
[5] Lomartire, *La statua*, pp. 31-32.

Fig. 1. The Regisole today (photo by C. Ferrari).

in favour of the second hypothesis: in particular, I will argue that the transfer of the Regisole from Ravenna to Pavia can be attributed with some certainty to Aistulf, who carried it out in some unknown year between 751 and 756 – that is, after occupying the capital of the Exarchate and before being finally defeated by the Frankish king Pippin, who forced him to hand the city over to the Pope.

Fig. 2. The Regisole today (photo by C. Ferrari).

Although the question has already been addressed several times – even quite recently[6] – I believe that it is not entirely unjustified to consider it once

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[6] Cesare Saletti's book, *Il Regisole*, published in 1997, is currently the most complete study, and includes all the evidence directly or indirectly concerning the equestrian statue: we will therefore refer to it several times in the following pages, even if in more recent years there have also been very detailed contributions such as Lomartire, *La statua*.

more, since a solution in the sense proposed here could add some significant elements to our knowledge of the image of Theoderic (to which the Regisole is closely related) and, above all, to the reception and use of this image in Lombard and Carolingian Italy. I will start with the sources concerning the Regisole.

2. *Ravenna, Aachen, Pavia*

In the early fourteenth century, the notary and chronicler Riccobaldo of Ferrara mentions Ravenna for the first time as the place of origin of the Regisole, and adds that the monument was transferred to Pavia by none other than Charlemagne, who intended to take it across the Alps – a feat which did not succeed in achieving[7]. As several scholars have pointed out, however, Riccobaldo here erroneously refers to the Regisole on the basis of the information found in Agnellus of Ravenna, which concerns another equestrian group also coming from Ravenna. On his way home after the imperial coronation, Charlemagne was struck by the beauty of a bronze statue of Theoderic on horseback, holding a lance in his right hand and a shield in his left, placed in front of the main entrance to the palace of Ravenna, and had it transferred to Aachen. We can be sure that this statue actually arrived in Aachen because it was seen there by Walahfrid Strabo, who composed the poem *De imagine Tetrici* about it in 829[8].

The statue described by Agnellus, which reached Aachen, is clearly therefore not the statue that arrived in Pavia – our Regisole. A few years after Riccobaldo, the chronicler Benzo d'Alessandria also mentions the Regisole and its provenance from Ravenna; although he says nothing about who was responsible for bringing the statue to Pavia, he claims to have read in the chronicles of the Church of Ravenna that the equestrian monument had been

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[7] Riccobaldo of Ferrara, *Compendium*, 10, 51, p. 647: «Ereum quoque equum aureatum (...) Karolus rex Francorum et augustus inde substulit ut transferret in Franciam, sed Papie nunc visitur»; Riccobaldo of Ferrara, *Compilatio*, pp. 98-99: «ipse [scil. Theodoricus] construi fecit Ravenne egregia opera (...) equum ereum cum equite qui nunc habetur Papiae, quem Karulus rex Francie abduxit Ravenna, ut portaret in Franciam». See Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 32.

[8] Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, 94 (pp. 259-260): «In aspectu ipsorum [i.e. of the mosaics just described "supra portam et in fronte regiae quae dicitur Ad Calchi", see *infra*, note 27] piramis tetragonis lapidibus et bisalis, in altitudinem quasi cubiti sex; desuper autem equus ex aere, auro fulvo perfusus, ascensorque eius Theodoricus rex scutum sinistro gerebat humero, dextro vero brachio erecto lanceam tenens. (...) Quis enim talem videre potuit, qualis ille? Qui non credit, sumat Franciae iter, eum aspiciat. (...) Et nunc paene annis .xxxviii., cum Karolus rex Francorum omnia subiugasset regna et Romanorum percepisset a Leone tertio papa imperium (...) revertens Franciam, Ravenna ingressus, videns pulcherrimam imaginem, quam numquam similem, ut ipse testatus est, vidit, Franciam deportare fecit atque in suo eam firmare palatio qui Aquisgranis vocatur». On Walahfrid's poem, see Herren, *The "De imagine Tetrici"*; Herren, *Walahfrid Strabo's De imagini Tetrici*; Smolak, *Bescheidene Panegyrik*, as well as Oppedisano in this volume. *Tetricus* should be understood as a play on words between the Latin *taeter* ("ignoble", "frightening") and the Germanic pronunciation of the name of the Gothic king, about whom Walahfrid – heir of the Catholic tradition opposed to the heretical ruler (see note 56) – expresses a very negative judgement.
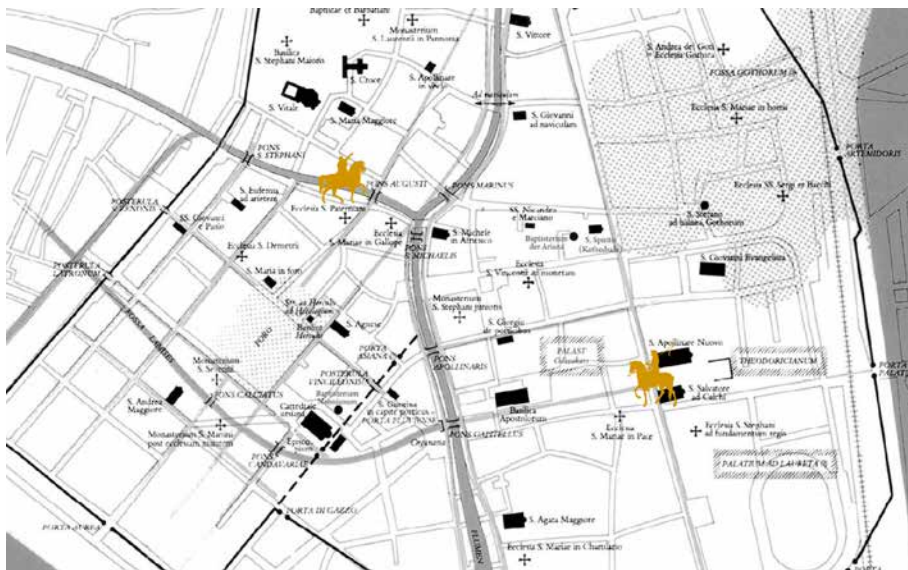
Fig. 3. Map of Ravenna (from Lusuardi Siena, *Sulle tracce della presenza gota in Italia*, pp. 542-543).

commissioned by Theoderic and placed «in ponte Austri» – that is, on the Augustus Bridge, so called because it connected the Capitol and the Forum with the *regio domus Augustae* (*Austri* is probably a misunderstanding of the abbreviation *Austi = Augusti*)[9]. Benzo is the first to report the name by which the monument was known – *Rez Solium* (which is not attested later), while *Regit solem* is the form reported in the mid-fourteenth century by the Dominican Jacopo d'Acqui, who says that the statue was provided with a mechanism (later attributed to Boethius) that made it move in the direction of the sun: «For this reason it was said to direct the sun»[10]. Like Benzo, Jacopo

[9] Benzo d'Alessandria, *Chronicon*, 14, 137 (pp. 168-169): «Legi eciam in cronicis ecclesie Ravennatis hoc simulachrum fabricari fecit rex Italie Theodericus apud Ravennam et in ponte Austri Ravenne locari et sicut in Pontificali libro eiusdem ecclesie legitur Karolus Rex Francorum et Romanorum Augustus inde eum sustulit ut transferret in Franciam» (see Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 16-17; Lomartire, *La statua*, pp. 34-35). On the *pons Austri/Augusti*, see Hoffmann, *Die Aachener Teoderichstatue*, p. 322; Frugoni, *L'antichità*, p. 42 (who mistakenly believes that *in ponte Austri* stood the statue that was later transferred to Aachen by Charlemagne); Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 17, note 8.
[10] Jacopo d'Acqui, *Chronicon*, coll. 1429-1430: «Theodoricus rex supradictus Gothorum qui tunc generaliter in Ytalia dominabatur cum Gothis fecit fieri in Ravenna civitate unum equum ereum pulchrum cum milite qui super illum sedebat et vocabatur Regit solem, et stabat super unam columpnam marmoream iuxta forum platee. Et iste equus cum suo sessore volvebatur cum manu elevata sicut sol currit per meridiem versus occidentem, et per artem continue faciebat die et nocte. Ita quod dicebatur solem dirigere». See Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 103-104; Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 37.

also attributes the creation of the Regisole to Theoderic, specifying that the monument stood on a column near the Forum, an indication that – although generic – seems to agree with the *pons Austri* (that is, *Augusti*) mentioned by Benzo, also in the vicinity of the Forum. That this was indeed the position of the Regisole in Ravenna is also suggested by the fact that the district near the Forum and adjacent to the Augustus Bridge was still called in the Middle Ages "Radiasole" – as attested by a contract of 1002 concerning a house «in regione q. v. Radiasole non longe sed prope basilica S. Paterniani», and by another of 1127, which reads «in regione Radianti Soli a primo latere Platea publica»[11] (Fig. 3).

It seems possible at this point to conclude that there were two distinct equestrian monuments in Ravenna related to Theoderic: one in front of the main entrance of his palace, portraying the king with shield and lance (the one that Charlemagne took with him to Aachen), and one near the Augustus Bridge and the Forum, known as the Regisole or Radiasole.

3. *The Regisole: how it looked and who it represented*

The few reproductions of the Regisole that have been drawn over the centuries show a bearded horseman in parade attire, with a short-sleeved tunic and a cloak fastened on the right shoulder by a buckle; his left hand holds the reins of the animal, which is trotting, while his right hand is raised in the typical gesture of *adlocutio*, which recalls the Marcus Aurelius of the Capitoline Museum (Figg. 4-5)[12]. And it is precisely with this emperor that the Regisole is more or less unanimously identified today, on the basis not only of the pose of the figure but also of other significant analogies, such as the presence of the caparison, «an element» according to Saverio Lomartire «(…) of Persian origin (…) not common in equestrian statuary»[13] – although several proposals for different identifications have been made since the Renaissance, including for Antoninus Pius, Commodus, Septimius Severus, and even Theoderic[14]. In fact, the presence of stirrups and spurs (which seemed incongruous for a Roman imperial statue) has led some scholars to argue that the Regisole should be dated to the late fifth or sixth centuries[15], without however taking into consideration that these elements were probably late antique or medieval additions – as is undoubtedly the case with the small rampant dog under the

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[11] Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 25 and 142; Heydenreich, *Marc Aurel*, p. 148, note 3. The name of the Ravenna district seems to prove that the form "Radiasole" is older than "Regisole", and referred to the brilliance of the statue rather than its posture.
[12] For images of the Regisole, see the plates at the end of Saletti, *Il Regisole*, as well as Lomartire, *La statua*, passim.
[13] Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 62.
[14] Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 90-97.
[15] Heydenreich, *Marc Aurel*, p. 156. For Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 85, the stirrups and spurs were added by Theoderic.

Fig. 4. Silvestro Maria Curleti, *Il Regisole*, mid-17th century. Pavia, Musei Civici (from Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 55).

horse's left front leg, which took the place of what must have been the figure of a crushed barbarian or the personification of a subjugated province[16].

The hypothesis that the Regisole originally represented Theoderic is therefore very unlikely. Nevertheless, in written – albeit rather late – sources, the Gothic king is insistently associated with the Regisole, with expressions such as

[16] Lomartire, *La statua*, pp. 61-62. A fragment of an equestrian statue from the second century A.D. from Turin attests, however, to the use of spurs even before the late antique and medieval periods: see Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 87-90.

Fig. 5. Equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius. Rome, Musei Capitolini.

«astrui fecit», «fecit fieri», «fabricari fecit» or «fecit construi», which, according to Cesare Saletti, «are not necessarily to be interpreted as "had it made", but can be understood as "had it elaborated", "had it arranged" (...), in the sense that the Gothic king adapted a previous statue to his intentions»[17]. Saletti goes on to say that the expertise with which the Regisole was made, the abundance of equestrian statues still available in Rome, as well as Theoderic's habit of bringing valuable materials and works of art from the ancient to the new capital, make it plausible that Theoderic also had the Regisole transferred from Rome to Ravenna[18]. Moreover, if the Regisole was indeed a copy of the equestrian monument of Marcus Aurelius (even if smaller in size, as indicated by the weight of the metal recorded after the demolition of the monument), it is possible that by transferring the Regisole to Ravenna Theoderic intended to emphasize, through the «possession of a symbol whose double remained in Rome», the character of "second Rome" to which Ravenna aspired in the fifth and sixth centuries[19].

A further piece of evidence may be added to this reconstruction. Thanks to Master Gregory's testimony, we know that in the twelfth century pilgrims used to call the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius "Theoderic", and not "Constantine" as it was known in Rome[20]. Considering the similarities between the two statues, it does not seem too far-fetched to hypothesise that it was the presence of the Regisole in Pavia – evidently identified with Theoderic – that led the pilgrims (at least those coming from the North) to recognise the Gothic king in the likeness of Marcus Aurelius[21]. This hypothesis seems to be supported by another, rather exceptional document. Among the admirers of the Regisole was Leonardo da Vinci, who visited Pavia twice (in 1488 and 1490) and thus had the opportunity to observe the statue at close quarters[22].

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[17] Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 83.
[18] *Ibidem*, pp. 84-87. The hypothesis that the Regisole had been transferred from Rome to Ravenna was already expressed in 1474 by Bartolomeo Platina in his *Liber de vita Christi*, where he also suggested that the arrival of the monument in Pavia was a consequence of the sack of Ravenna by Liutprand (in his *Chronicon Placentinum* from the beginning of the fifteenth century, Giovanni de' Mussi attributed its transfer to Desiderius): see Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 107-108; Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 38. Theoderic's habit of using *spolia* from various parts of Italy – including Rome (Cassiodorus, *Variae*, III, 9; 10) – for the embellishment of his capital is well known: see Franzoni, *Spolia*, pp. 87-88. One might wonder why Theoderic preferred to transfer the Regisole from Rome to Ravenna rather than have a new equestrian monument made – especially since there were several statues of him in Rome (as attested by Procopius, *Bella*, VII, 20, 29, and Isidore of Seville, *Historia*, 39). However, the great majority must have been made of marble (Isidore mentions only one gilded bronze statue offered to Theoderic for restoring the walls of Rome), and none was an equestrian statue: the very high cost and the technical expertise required must have convinced Theoderic to be satisfied with the re-use of an earlier monument. Johnson, *Art and Architecture*, p. 352, and Gehn – Ward-Perkins, *Constantinople*, p. 138, point out that in the Byzantine capital the practice of erecting statues – even of gilded bronze – continued in the fifth and sixth centuries, when it had long since disappeared in the rest of the Roman world.
[19] Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 63.
[20] Master Gregory, *Narratio*, 4: «Aliud signum eneum est ante palatium domni pape, equus videlicet inmensus et sessor eius. Quem peregrini Theodericum, populus vero Romanus Constantinum dicunt». See Frugoni, *L'antichità*, p. 41; Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 17-18.
[21] See Nardella, *Il fascino di Roma*, p. 87; Accame – Dell'Oro, *I "Mirabilia urbis Romae"*, p. 61.
[22] Peroni, *Residenza signorile*.

He particularly appreciated the animal, whose drawing appears in the *Codex Atlanticus* among the preparatory studies for the equestrian monument of Gian Giacomo Trivulzio (which was never made)[23]. On one of the pages of the codex, Leonardo (or someone in his circle), wrote down the following words: «Theodoricus Rex semper Augustus bono reipublicae», which may have been copied – as Müller-Walde already suggested at the end of the nineteenth century – from an inscription on the column[24].

Obviously, it is not possible to establish the exact moment when the Regisole began to be seen as a representation of Theoderic (although Master Gregory provides us with a valuable *terminus ante quem*); however, it is more than likely that the identification had already been made at an early stage in Ravenna, where the memory of Theoderic remained vivid long after his death, and where the other statue of the king was also present before Charlemagne transferred it to Aachen[25].

4. *The arrival of the Regisole in Pavia in the 8th century*

Since the figure of Theoderic eventually imposed itself on that of the originally represented emperor, the transfer of the Regisole to Pavia should be interpreted in a similar way to the transfer of the other statue of Theoderic to

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[23] Clark – Pedretti, *The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. XXXVIII-XLI; Lomartire, *La statua*, pp. 71-73. Leonardo left the following note about the Regisole horse: «di quel di Pavia si lalda [loda] più il movimento che niuna altra cosa; l'imitazione delle cose antiche è più laldabile che quella delle moderne; non può essere bellezza e utilità come appare nelle fortezze e nelli omini; il trotto è quasi di qualità di cavallo libero; dove manca la vivacità naturale bisognia farne una accidentale».

[24] Müller-Walde, *Beiträge*, p. 82, note 1; of the same opinion are also Von Roques de Maumont, *Antike Reiterstandbilder*, p. 63; Golinelli, *Quando il santo non basta più*, p. 387, note 64. These words seem to recall the famous inscription written around 512 to celebrate the reclamation of the swamp area of Decennovio, between Treponti and Terracina (CIL, X, 6850-6852): «The<o>-dericus vict(or) ac tri/umf(ator) semper Aug(ustus), bono r(ei) p(ublicae) natus, etc.» (on the inscription, see Giardina, *Cassiodoro politico*, pp. 73-99).

[25] Saletti (*Il Regisole*, p. 85) believes that the identification of the Marcus Aurelius/Regisole with Theoderic was made by the Gothic sovereign himself, who had his name added to the statue: if the words in the *Codex Atlanticus* correspond to the ones on the statue, we might have some more information on when Theoderic would have done it – probably around the same years of the Decennovio inscription, when Theoderic's government assumed a more explicit imperial character following the conquest of Provence and the assumption of the regency of the Visigothic throne in Spain (I owe this hypothesis to the kind suggestion of Marco Cristini). Interestingly, Agnellus says that also the other equestrian statue in Ravenna was not originally a statue of Theoderic but of emperor Zeno, which the king appropriated by writing his own name on it (*Liber Pontificalis*, 94), whereas Jordanes (*Getica*, 289) affirms that it was Zeno who honoured Theoderic in 483 with an equestrian statue placed in front of the palace in Constantinople (where it seems there was already a statue of Theodosius I or II, whose horse was later used by Justinian: see Johnson, *Toward a History*, pp. 87-88). It is difficult to establish the relationship between the Constantinopolitan statue and the one in Ravenna, provided that they were indeed two different statues and not just one, erected in Constantinople by Zeno and then transferred to Ravenna, probably by Anastasius, on the occasion of the restitution of the imperial *insignia* in 498, as suggested by Longhi, *La statua equestre*, p. 196.

Aachen – that is, as an intentional appropriation of the image of the Gothic king[26]. We need to keep this in mind if we are to find an answer to the questions of when, by whom and why the Regisole was brought to Pavia.

After what has been said, the hypothesis that it was Theoderic himself who had the Regisole transferred from Ravenna to Pavia (after having it transported from Rome) seems very unlikely[27]. Let us therefore consider the other two hypotheses we referred to at the beginning – namely the transfer of the statue in the eighth century on the initiative of a Lombard king, or in the ninth or tenth century as a consequence of a war between Pavia and Ravenna. The difficulty in choosing between these two possibilities stems from the fact that in his *Liber Pontificalis* (written in the 830s and 840s) Agnellus never mentions the Regisole, not even when he deals – albeit briefly – with Pavia and the palace built there by Theoderic, which he visited, and where he had the opportunity to admire a mosaic of the king on horseback. The lack of references to the Regisole in this passage seemed to some to prove that the Regisole was not yet in Pavia at the time, since Agnellus would certainly not have failed to compare the mosaic and the equestrian statue in the same way as he – immediately afterwards – compares the mosaic on the pediment of the palace of Ravenna (where Theoderic was represented with shield and lance) and the equestrian monument of the king in front of the same palace (also with shield and lance, as we already know)[28]. However, it should be borne in mind that Agnellus does not mention the Regisole even in reference to his beloved city. To justify this silence, Cesare Saletti wrote that «Agnellus's text is not a description of Ravenna, but an exposition of the history of the local Church through the lives of its bishops (...). Therefore, Agnellus's silence is not sufficient to prove the non-existence of the statue *in ponte Austri*: he evidently had no way – or interest – in mentioning it»[29]. Fair though it may be, this is an argument that can easily be overturned: if the Regisole was already in Pavia when Agnellus was writing, his silence would indeed be much more justified, since Pavia was certainly not the centre of Agnellus's interests as Ravenna was. Rather than an argument against the presence of the eques-

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[26] On this, see Ferrari, *La statua di Teoderico.*
[27] For this hypothesis, see Golinelli, *Quando il santo non basta più*, p. 387.
[28] Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, 94: «Post vero depredata a Longobardis Tuscia; obsiderunt Ticinum, quae civitas Papia dicitur, ubi et Theodericus palatium struxit, et eius imaginem sedentem super equum in tribunalis camerae tessellis ornatam bene conspexi. Hic autem similis fuit in isto palatio quod ipse aedificavit, in tribunale triclinii quod vocatur Ad mare, supra portam et in fronte regiae qui dicitur Ad Calchi istius civitatis, ubi prima porta palatii fuit, in loco qui vocatur Sicrestum, ubi ecclesia Salvatoris esse videtur. In pinnaculo ipsius loci fuit Theodorici effigies, mire tessellis ornata, dextera manu lanceam tenens, sinistra clipeum, lorica indutus. Contra clipeum Roma tessellis ornata astabat cum hasta et galea; unde vero telum tenensque fuit Ravenna tessellis figurata, pedem dextrum super mare, sinistrum super terram ad regem properans». This is followed, after a small lacuna, by the description of the statue of the king on horseback already given *supra*, note 8. See Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 23; Agnellus of Ravenna, *The Book of Pontiffs*, pp. 73-75 and 206, note 7.
[29] Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 18.

trian monument in Pavia, therefore, the lack of references to the Regisole in Agnellus's work should be considered, if anything, as an argument against the presence of the statue in Ravenna in the first decades of the ninth century.

A safer *terminus ante quem* for the arrival of the Regisole in Pavia may be provided by a diploma of Berengar I from the years 906-910, where the phrase «in laubia magiore ubi sub Teuderico dicitur» appears in reference to the palace of Pavia[30]. For some, these words would refer to the mosaic of Theoderic on horseback already described by Agnellus almost a century earlier[31]; for others – who distinguish between *laubia* ("porticoed courtyard") and the expression *camera tribunalis* in Agnellus's text – the diploma would instead refer to the Regisole, located in the main portico of the palace of Pavia where meetings and hearings were held[32]. An unexpected confirmation of this second hypothesis may come from the geographical lexicon by al-Ḥimyarī, who lived in Ceuta between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and who – for his information about Italy – made use of the work of the geographer al-'Udri (who, in turn, drew on the travel report of the Andalusian ambassador Ibrāhīm b. Ya'qūb al-Ṭurṭūšī, sent by the Umayyad caliph to the court of Otto I around 960-965)[33]. Regarding Pavia, al-Ḥimyarī says that the city has «a fine palace, at the gate of which stands a bronze statue of a horseman mounted on horseback of imposing size»[34]. According to Giuseppe Mandalà, this text «offers the oldest reference to the Regisole in the city of Pavia. The description of the city (...) can be dated after 774 (...) and before 1024, the year of the destruction of the palace (...). If we want to specify the chronology of the source more precisely, (...) around the middle of the tenth century, a date that fits in well with the chronology proposed for the journey of Ibrāhīm b. Ya'qūb [al-Ṭurṭūšī] (...)»[35]. The transfer of the Regisole to Pavia must therefore have taken place before the embassy of al-Ṭurṭūšī to Otto I in the 960s, probably even before Berengar's diploma at the beginning of the tenth century. Can we be more precise?

In his *Libellus de descriptione Papie* (1330), the Pavia cleric and historian Opicinus de Canistris traces the arrival of the Regisole back to a war fought between Pavia and Ravenna a long time before, adding that on that occasion the remains of the blessed Bishop Eleucadius were also stolen[36]. It seems easy enough to recognize in this war one of the two military campaigns conducted

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[30] Placiti I, n. 122, p. 456.

[31] Frugoni, *L'antichità*, p. 46, note 72; Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 32.

[32] Heydenreich, *Marc Aurel*, p. 148; Gasparri, *Pavia longobarda*, p. 60; Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 25-26.

[33] Mandalà, *La Longobardia*, pp. 354-355.

[34] *Ibidem*, p. 356.

[35] *Ibidem*, pp. 360-361. After the destruction of the palace, the Regisole was moved to the Piazza del Duomo, where it stood until it was torn down at the end of the eighteenth century.

[36] Opicinus, *Libellus de descriptione Papie*, p. 213: «Hanc autem statuam antiquitus et corpus beati Eleuchadi episcopi abstulerunt Ravennatibus Papienses, contra quos habebant inimiciciam atque bellum». See Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 153.

by the Lombard kings Liutprand and Aistulf against the capital of the Exarchate, conquered in the 730s and again in 751[37]. In addition, Opicinus's text appears to be further clarified by an anonymous source from the middle of the tenth century, which attributes to Aistulf the translation of Eleucadius's body, that was deposited in the basilica of S. Michele in Pavia, where it can still be found today[38]. Against this reconstruction, Cesare Saletti argued that the lack of references in the *Liber Pontificalis* to the translation of the relics proves that they were still in Ravenna at the beginning of the ninth century[39] but, after what we have said about Agnellus's silence regarding the Regisole, this can hardly count as strong evidence. Furthermore, even if it is true that Agnellus mentions the place («outside the walls of Classe») where Eleucadius was buried in the second century, and the church that was built there and still standing in his time, he says nothing about the relics, so his text does not contradict the information about their translation to Pavia at the behest of Aistulf[40]. Finally, it should be noted that while the conquest of Ravenna by the Lombards in the mid-eighth century is a precise and relatively well-known event, those who claim that the transfer of the Regisole and Eleucadius's body took place at a later time are not able to specify in any way the historical circumstances under which this would have happened[41].

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[37] See Gasparri, *Italia longobarda*, pp. vii and 101.

[38] *Spicilegium Ravennatis Historiae* (RIS, I, 2), p. 556: «Eleucadius autem ab Italorum Rege Aistulpho ad Ticinensem delatus est Civitatem». See Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 27 and notes. 85-86.

[39] Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 27.

[40] Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, 4: «Defunctus est autem xvi. kal. Martii et sepultus est extra muros Classis, ubi usque hodie ad laudem nominis eius ecclesia aedificata et Deo est consecrata». Even Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 27, note 87, feels obliged to admit it: «*usque hodie* va riferito soltanto alla chiesa, (...) quindi Agnello intendeva dire che al tempo suo sussisteva ancora l'edificio, non la sepoltura in esso di Eleucadio».

[41] Saletti, *Il Regisole*, p. 24: «Certo l'"impresa" non risulta collocabile con precisione nel tempo, e viene così a mancare quell'aggancio cronologico di cui sempre si vorrebbe disporre all'interno di un discorso che voglia proporsi come storico». It should be added that Benzo d'Alessandria (*Chronicon*, 14, 137, p. 169) also traces back to the struggles between Pavia and Ravenna the theft of the gilded bronze plates of an ancient city gate located near the basilica of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro in Pavia, which cannot be dated precisely (it is not clear, however, why the citizens of Ravenna did not take back their statue on that occasion, unless – as suggested by an inscription in verse still visible in Pavia in the sixteenth century – the siege of the two cities and the theft of the respective works of art happened, by chance, almost at the same time, which is not very credible): see Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 21, 118-120. The bronze plates were, in any case, returned to Pavia in 1438 by Duke Filippo Maria Visconti following the heroic deed of Captain Nicolò Piccinino (Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 38). Conversely, the theft of the Regisole in 1527 (already mentioned at the beginning of this contribution) is well documented: after the French troops bombarded Pavia, Cosimo Magni from Ravenna – the first soldier to enter the city – asked to be allowed to return the Regisole to his city, a request he was granted for the courage he had shown. The statue was taken on board, together with the bronze plates recovered almost a century earlier by Piccinino, but was intercepted by Captain Annibale Picenardo at Cremona, where it remained until 1531 due to delays in the payment of the ransom; the bronze plates «invece proseguiranno per Ravenna, dove rimarranno fino al XIX [secolo], quando il comune di Ravenna restituirà a Pavia l'unica transenna sopravvissuta, oggi nei Musei Civici» (Lomartire, *La statua*, pp. 50-51; see also Saletti, *Il Regisole*, pp. 38-41).

5. *Aistulf in Ravenna*

Thus several indications strengthen our hypothesis that the transfer of the Regisole to Pavia should be attributed to a Lombard king – to Aistulf in particular[42]. What we know about this ruler – whose brief reign (749-756) meant so much to the history of Italy and the Lombards – is perfectly in line with this hypothesis, although it has never been sufficiently stressed.

With Aistulf the dream of a unified Italy under Lombard power seemed to come true. In the prologue to his laws, the new sovereign made his plans for conquest explicit by adding to the title of «king of the Lombard race» («rex gentis Langobardorum») the formula «having been delivered to us by God the people of the Romans» («traditum nobis a Domino populum Romanorum») – a direct challenge to the authority of the Byzantine empire in Italy and, at the same time, a clear reference to the Roman imperial tradition[43]. Soon after, Aistulf inflicted a series of crushing defeats on the Byzantines, which allowed him to occupy Comacchio, Ferrara, and finally Ravenna, «for generations the real and symbolic centre of Byzantine power in Italy»[44]. In the attempt to impose his authority on all those territories that had so far escaped Lombard control, Aistulf even tried to collect a tribute of a solidus *per caput* from the population of Rome[45], «a way of proceeding which indicated the progressive assumption of a new dignity whose contents [were] clearly inspired by Roman imperial tradition», as did the decision to mint gold coins with his own image in Ravenna[46].

It seems that Aistulf intended to move the seat of his government to Ravenna[47], which may explain the major building works the king undertook there, such as the construction of the so-called "Theoderic's palace" (also known as the "Palace of the Exarchs", in the current via di Roma, on the corner of via Alberoni)[48] and the restoration (which remained unfinished) of the Petriana Church, the largest place of worship in Classe[49], which had been destroyed by an earthquake a few years before the Lombards conquered the city[50]. On the basis of this information, Gianfranco Fiaccadori suggested that Aistulf's

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[42] See Lomartire, *La statua*, p. 34; Ranaldi – Novara, *Karl der Große*, p. 116.

[43] Gasparri – Azzara, *Le leggi dei Longobardi*, pp. 280-281. See Harrison, *Political Rhetoric*, pp. 250-252; Gasparri, *Italia longobarda*, pp. 101-102.

[44] Jarnut, *Storia dei Longobardi*, p. 112.

[45] LP, I, p. 441.

[46] Gasparri, *Italia longobarda*, pp. 102-103; see also Jarnut, *Münzbilder als Zeugnisse*, pp. 287-288; Harrison, *Political Rhetoric*, p. 251; Gennari – Rossini, *La monetazione di Astolfo*.

[47] After the conquest of Ravenna, Aistulf took up residence in the palace of Theoderic, as indicated by a document issued in 751 «Ravennae in Palatio» in favour of the Abbey of Farfa: see Jonhson, *Toward a History*, p. 81, note 91; Cirelli, *Palazzi e luoghi del potere*, p. 289.

[48] Thordeman, *Il cosiddetto palazzo*, pp. 23-40; Deliyannis, *Ravenna*, p. 292; for Cirelli, *Palazzi e luoghi del potere*, p. 290, it would instead be a ninth-century construction.

[49] Augenti – Boschi – Cirelli, *Il sito della basilica Petriana*.

[50] Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, 155: «Ecclesiam Petrianam, quae funditus eversa est per terraemotum, sponte aedificare voluit, et piramides per in giro erexit, columnas statuit, quae manent usque nunc, sed non consummavit».

hand could also be recognised in some important works in the church of S. Martino in Ciel d'Oro (later S. Apollinare Nuovo), which had been originally built by Theoderic as a palatine church and dedicated to the Saviour. Agnellus says that in his time the inscription commemorating the foundation of that place of worship («King Theoderic made this church from its foundations in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ») was still visible in the apse, which is difficult to explain when one considers how carefully the images of the king and the members of his court were erased after the Byzantines took the city in 540[51]. However, Agnellus also reports that the same earthquake that destroyed the Petriana Church in the mid-eighth century also caused the apse of S. Martino to fall down[52]: it is therefore possible to assume that the inscription, which had been probably erased after the Byzantines entered the city, was restored when the apse of the church was rebuilt, most likely by Aistulf. If this reconstruction is correct, Aistulf's decision to restore the inscription commemorating the great Gothic king must be interpreted as «an intentional appropriation of the figure of Theoderic»[53].

6. *Concluding remarks: the imperial image of Theoderic and the Regisole*

The revival and exaltation of the figure of Theoderic would perfectly fit in with Aistulf's political programme. Just as Theoderic had ruled over both Goths and Romans in the manner of an emperor, so Aistulf explicitly referred to that model when his military victories raised him to the rank of "new Theoderic", master of Italy and lord of the Lombards and Romans[54]. By transferring the Regisole to Pavia, in the palace built by Theoderic himself[55], Aistulf

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[51] *Ibidem*, 86: «Igitur reconciliavit beatissimus Agnellus pontifex infra hanc urbem ecclesiam sancti Martini confessoris quam Theodoricus rex fundavit, quae vocatur Caelum Aureum; tribunal et utrasque parietes de imaginibus martirium virginumque incedentium tessellis decoravit. (...) In tribunali vero, si diligenter inquisieritis, super fenestras invenietis ex lapideis litteris exaratum ita: "Theodoricus rex hanc ecclesiam a fundamentis in nomine domini nostri Iesu Christi fecit"». See Fiaccadori, *Sulla memoria teodericiana*, pp. 166-167.

[52] Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, 89: «Fontesque beati Martini ecclesiae ipse [scil. beatissimus Agnellus pontifex] reconciliavit et tessellis decoravit; sed tribunal ipsius ecclesiae, nimio terraemotu exagitatum, Iohannis archiepiscopi temporibus quinti iunioris confractum ruit».

[53] Fiaccadori, *Sulla memoria teodericiana*, p. 173.

[54] On the imperial character of Theoderic's power, see Azzara, *L'Italia dei barbari*, p. 46, and, more recently, Arnold, *Theoderic*. The direct reference to the figure of the Ostrogothic king could already be traced back to Authari (584-590), who was the first to adopt the imperial name *Flavius* (which Theoderic had also assumed) – a decision, according to Harrison, *Political Rhetoric*, p. 249, which «is mostly interpreted as a conscious way to strengthen the monarchical institution by linking it to the Ostrogothic and Roman past»; see also Gasparri, *Il potere del re*, p. 107.

[55] In Paul the Deacon's account (*Historia Langobardorum*, II, 27), Alboin's conquest of the city ends with his entry into the «palatium, quod quondam rex Theudericus construxerat»: see Gasparri, *Pavia longobarda*, p. 25, «l'idealizzazione del primo re longobardo d'Italia e il legame implicito con l'esperienza gotica si uniscono, in Paolo e nella tradizione di cui è l'eco, nel caricare di significati simbolici la presa di Pavia».

proclaimed in the clearest possible way his ambition to rule over the entire peninsula, connecting in an ideal unity the traditional seat of Lombard power – Pavia – with the former capital of the empire and the Ostrogothic kingdom – Ravenna – where the other equestrian statue of Theoderic was still present before Charlemagne seized it.

In the light of Aistulf's highly symbolic gesture, even Charlemagne's appropriation of the statue of a heretical ruler condemned to Hell[56] (which in the past has caused some embarrassment among scholars) may acquire a new meaning[57]. If the Regisole was already in Pavia at the beginning of the ninth century, the transfer of Theoderic's equestrian statue to Aachen could be interpreted not only – and most obviously – as a direct reference to the Gothic king (whose fame beyond the Alps was enormous notwithstanding the opposition of the Church)[58], but also as the symbolic link between the capital of the Carolingian empire and that of the Lombard kingdom – a kingdom, it should be remembered, that had only recently been annexed and continued to exist in a formal manner in the new Carolingian state[59].

[56] In a famous passage from his *Dialogues* (IV, 31), Pope Gregory the Great recounts the vision that a hermit from Lipari had at the very moment when Theoderic died in Ravenna: the king appeared to him barefoot, shabby and with his hands tied, as he was being escorted by Symmachus and Pope John I (two of the king's most illustrious victims) to the edge of a volcano, into which he was thrown. This portrayal would have merged with the tradition of the "Wild Hunt", as shown by one of the panels on the right-hand side of the portal of the basilica of San Zeno in Verona, dating from the 1230s, in which the king, naked and on horseback, chases a deer running towards a tall, monstrous figure with a stick in his hand – the devil: see Zimmermann, *Theoderich der Grosse*, pp. 159-161; Goltz, *Das Bild Theoderichs*, pp. 590-595.

[57] Charlemagne's transfer of the statue of Theoderic to Aachen has been variously interpreted. For Hoffmann, *Die Aachener Theoderichstatue*, p. 319, the heroic image of Theoderic (also documented in the Nordic sagas) would have prevailed, in the eyes of Charles and his subjects, over the negative image developed by ecclesiastical circles, a position also defended by Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 236-243, while according to Löwe, *Von Theoderich dem Großen*, p. 70, Charlemagne's gesture had above all the aim of reassuring Byzantium that the new Frankish imperial power would only be exercised over the West. According to Effenberger, *Die Wiederverwendung*, p. 655, on the other hand, the placement of the statue of Theoderic in the palace of Aachen should have represented «die Idee des wiedererstandenen römischen Kaisertums», a thesis also shared by Hammer, *Recycling Rome and Ravenna*, p. 317, who insists on the martial character of the statue, especially suited to celebrate Charlemagne's recent victory over the Avars in 796. Finally, it should be pointed out that a decidedly positive image of Theoderic was also provided by the *Chronicle* of Fredegar, which even claimed a common Macedonian origin for the Frankish *gens* and Theoderic's family, «un motivo nobilitante e di legittimazione al predominio» (Azzara, *Teoderico*, p. 96); see also Borchert, *Das Bild Theoderichs*.

[58] On this aspect, see Ferrari, *La statua di Teoderico*. As is well known, Theoderic is one of the most important characters of the Germanic medieval epic: see e.g. Wisniewski, *Mittelalterliche Dietrichdichtung*.

[59] After the conquest of Pavia in 774 Charlemagne adopted the title of *Rex Langobardorum* together with that of *Rex Francorum*, and continued to use both titles even after his imperial coronation; the title of King of the Lombards was also given by Charles to his son Pippin and his nephew Bernard when they were appointed kings of Italy: see Azzara, *L'Italia dei barbari*, pp. 131-132; Delogu, *The Name of the Kingdom*, pp. 42-43. Unlike Pavia, Ravenna lost its role as an active political centre in the Carolingian empire: see Augenti, *A tale of two cities*, p. 181: «its importance is mainly that of quarry of building materials and architectural elements».

Thus the decision to take possession of the Ravenna statues of Theoderic can also be seen as a response to needs not directly linked to the figure of the Gothic ruler. To the one just mentioned, we could add here the need to assert oneself internationally, by exhibiting unique works of art capable of evoking the Roman past and creating a "topography of power" that could rival that of the great Mediterranean capitals[60]. But the imperial image of Theoderic presumably played a key role in this decision, both for Charlemagne's and – perhaps above all – for Aistulf's, who, in his attempt to extend his control over the whole of Italy, found in the reference to the Gothic king an exceptional rhetorical tool – at least until his dreams of conquest were shattered by the emerging Carolingian power.

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[60] See Nelson, *Aachen as a place of power*, pp. 219-221. Deliyannis, *Charlemagne's silver tables*, pp. 176-177, points out that the position of the statue of Theoderic in Aachen, in front of the imperial palace, closely resembled that of the statues of Constantine/Marcus Aurelius in Rome and Justinian in Constantinople, both of which were located «in central plazas between palace and church» (in Rome the statue was between Saint John and the Lateran, a name that Charlemagne also gave to his palace in Aachen: see Falkenstein, *Charlemagne et Aix-la-Chapelle*, pp. 250-251). Even before the statue of Theoderic was transferred to Aachen, Charlemagne had valuable materials removed from Ravenna for the construction of his capital, as attested by Einhard (*Vita*, 26, pp. 30-31) and a letter from Pope Hadrian I in 787 (*Codex Carolinus*, pp. 614-615), not to mention the fact that the shape and many of the decorative elements of the royal chapel are reminiscent of the basilica of San Vitale: see Franzoni, *Spolia*, pp. 88-89; Nelson, *Charlemagne and Ravenna*, pp. 247-249. According to Brenk, *Spolia*, p. 109, the imitation of San Vitale and the transfer of materials from Ravenna to Aachen should be interpreted as a *translatio artium* «in analogy to the *translatio imperii*».

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