

Keynote

Power and territory from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages – Recent results and open questions of the archaeological research

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Introduction

The problem of the *landscapes* or *topographies of power* – a clear reference to the title of two recent contributions on the subject (Heidinga 1999; *Topographies of Power* 2001) – has recently gained wide consideration among both archaeologists and historians, working on the physical and spatial dimension of the dominion (Heidinga 1999, 409). The impact of power on landscape and its material structure does not need to be argued any more, the appraisal of the relationship remains on the contrary an open question, owing to the difficulty in comparing the archaeological data, which is more or less fragmentary and stiff in its very materiality, to power, which in itself is a situational construction, devoid of objective reality and, moreover, exerting itself through rituals and strategies (Rituals of Power 2000) which we do not always have the means to know about (Heidinga 1999; Wickham 2001). In other words, inferring power from archaeological evidence needs to place objects in a behavioural system and to look for their implicit values beside the explicit ones in order to understand their meaning (Geary 1994, 33; quoting Wittgenstein's definition of meaning as a function of use and Mac White's 'patterns of significance'). In many respects, the methodological approach to this decodification has still to be refined (for a discussion with regards to funerary archaeology see Young 1977; see also Geary 1994). At present, we are facing a situation of a 'work in progress', which prevents one from proposing a

synthesis in the exact sense of the word on the subject power/territory, rather suggesting a survey of some of the main lines of the current research, with their results and their open questions.

On the other hand, the multiplicity of the parameters involved in the relation and their variability in the course of the centuries and according to context, make the range of the problem very large, as the papers presented in this section clearly show. It is too large indeed to be covered adequately by only one report for all the long period considered by this conference, all the more so, if one tries to avoid a merely national perspective, that would necessarily limit the value of the survey; therefore I have restricted this contribution to the centuries of the transition from the Roman to the Medieval world and take into consideration the western provinces of the Roman empire, even if Italy has a privileged share, because of my own experience. Rome and its territory have been excluded on purpose, as a totally peculiar situation, that would require an analysis on its own (as a general reference, see Christiana Iacopi 2000–2001; Noble 2001; *Roma dall'antichità al medioevo* 2001). 'Territory' is here understood in the largest sense of the world, as referring to the city and country as a mutual phenomenon (on this point, see Millet 1991; Diaz 2000).

Leaving apart the question of the chronological boundaries of such historiographic categories as 'Late Antiquity' and 'Early Middle Ages' (Giardina 1999), I will consider the period from the fourth through to the eighth century,

when Western Europe underwent the twofold process of dissolution of the Roman system of values and of recomposition of a new social order and accordingly of destructuring/reshaping of the ancient landscape. Our knowledge of this process has been greatly improved by the systematic presentations of archaeological data made as a celebration of the twelve hundredth anniversary of Charlemagne's coronation by Pope Leo the Third under the title of 'Charlemagne and the making of Europe' (799. Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit 1999; Catalunya 1999; Bizantini, Croati, Carolingi 2001), in addition to other recent synthesis on specific aspects as the ones on Franks (Die Franken 1996), Avars (L'oro degli Avari 2000), Lombards (Il futuro dei Longobardi 2000). Various conferences have been the occasion to produce new evidence and to discuss its interpretation: the 'Journées internationales d'archéologie mérovingiennes' (L'environnement des églises 1994; L'habitat rural 1995; La fin de la cité 1996; the Italian national congresses on Medieval Archaeology (Pisa 1997: I Congresso 1997; Brescia 2000: II Congresso 2000); the 'Seminari sul tardoantico e l'alto medioevo in Italia settentrionale' (Il territorio 1992; Edilizia residenziale 1994; Città, castelli, campagne 1995; La fine delle ville 1996; Sepolture 1998; Le fortificazioni 1999; Le chiese rurali 2001); the conferences on 'La storia dell'alto medioevo italiano alla luce dell'archeologia' (Siena 1992: La storia dell'alto medioevo italiano 1994), 'L'Italia centro-settentrionale in età longobarda' (Ascoli Piceno 1995: L'Italia centro-settentrionale 1997); 'Grégoire de Tours et l'espace gaulois' (Tours 1994: Grégoire de Tours 1997); 'Alle origini della parrocchia rurale' (Rome 1998: Alle origini della parrocchia rurale 1999).

It is obvious that this very summarizing account of the most recent bibliography does not have any pretension to be exhaustive; it intends merely to recall the contributions which have been most useful for this report; it is to be stressed in conclusion that a leading rôle in this respect is played by the miscellaneous book on the *sedes regiae* (Sedes regiae 2000) and by some volumes of the series on the 'Transformation of the Roman World' for their specific conceptual and methodological approach to the problems (see in particular Strategies of Distinction 1998; The Sixth Century 1998; The Idea and Ideal of the Town 1999; Rituals

of Power 2000; Towns and their Territories 2000; Topographies of Power 2001).

2. Locations of power

As Chris Wickham has pointed out, the disintegration of the Roman state gave place in Western Europe to weak states and very weak ones, or stateless societies (Wickham 2001, 3), meaning that the sovereignty of any institutional power had to cope with other, even prevailing forces and that the negotiation implied new, specific rules (de Jong/Theuws 2001, 534). More than in the past the real power prevails against the legal one. Accordingly, "the city-based Roman world ... was replaced by societies which resorted to a plurality of 'locations of power'" (Wickham 2001, 1; quoting Mayke de Jong).

The scenery's movement is first noticeable in the tetrarchic period, when the administrative reform and the multiplication of imperial residences involves a change in the existing urban hierarchy (Cantino Wataghin 1998; Liebeschuetz 2000; for the repercussions on the town's planning see also Cantino Wataghin 1992; 1995). The collapse of urban culture that seems to affect most of the cities between the fifth and sixth centuries (abandoning of Roman buildings; breakdown of public utilities such as street maintenance, sewage system, urban cleaning; very simple housing, mostly in wood and/or earth; substantial presence of fields: For synthesis concerning Italy see: Ward Perkins 1984; Brogiolo/Gelichi 1998; similar evidence comes from Gaulish cities, as shown in: Topographie chrétienne 1986–2000; see also: Guyon/Boissavit-Camus/Souilhac 1996; for Spain see: Los orígenes del cristianismo 2000; For the problem of the widespread levels of 'dark earth' see now: Galinié 2002) puts in question their very identity as towns (for the debate on continuity/discontinuity, particularly heated in the past two decades with reference to Northern Italy, see Brogiolo 1987; 1989; La Rocca 1988; Ward Perkins 1988; 1997; 1998; Wickham 1988; more generally Carver 1993; Interest is now focused more usefully on the question of 'what kind of continuity': Wickham 1999; for the special case of Britain see the different views of Esmonde Cleary 1989; Roskams 1996 and Loseby 2000). Although they might be ruralized in

many respects, the function of the *civitates* as 'central places' towards a surrounding territory seems assured by their becoming in general Episcopal seats, the exceptions to this rule being represented by the disappearing cities. In fact, quite a few Roman *civitates* are abandoned between late antiquity and the Middle Ages (for Northern Italy see, although with some cautions, La Rocca 1992; 1994; a conference on the 'Villes éphémères' to be held in Tours is announced for March 2003). The two phenomena are likely to be connected; the lack of an organized Christian community is a possible sign of an advanced process of urban crisis and on the other hand the presence of a bishop seems occasionally to assure a continuity to a town, even long after it has lost its main functions (as an example see Luni: Ward Perkins 1978; Orvietani 1991). Nevertheless no relation of cause to effect can be stated in a general way; too many variables are involved, so that each case has to be studied for its own peculiarities (again, for the special case of Britain see Loseby 2000). However the *civitates* or episcopal towns are central places in a particular way; between late antiquity and the very early Middle Ages, before the Carolingian period, the conception of diocesan territory is rather shaded and the personal connection – for instance the one of the faithfuls with a specific church (Violante 1982) – can be more important than mere topography, as on another level are the ties of monasteries with the founder's family or their exemption from the local bishop (Gauthier 2000). The *auctoritas* of the bishop is in no way of a minor weight than his *potestas* or institutional authority; it gives him a real power (for a 'classical' presentation of the different forms of power see: Tacitus, *Annales*, I, 1–2), that extends progressively from the religious to the civic ambit, generating what has been called the 'episcopal city' of the early Middle Ages ('città vescovile': Tabacco 1987).

The structural development from the first congregational church to the cathedral and their respective relationship with the urban landscape parallel these events (Gauthier 1999). It is not the job of this survey to deal specifically with the architectural aspects of power; but a few points have to be mentioned. In the fourth-fifth centuries the episcopal church with its baptistry, more or less imposing according to the local situation, takes place in

the framework of the Roman town as one among others monumental buildings; its location within the town does not follow any specific rule, being due each time to incidental factors, such as the needs of the community and the availability of an appropriate building site (Cantino Wataghin/Gurt/Guyon 1996; Cantino Wataghin 1999). In time, this unit becomes the new focus of the urban grid and the outstanding architectural component of the urban landscape, all the more so as on one side this landscape comes to be increasingly made up of low wooden buildings and open spaces, on the other the church can develop in monumental complexes by the enlargement of the first building and the addition of other churches, buildings for assistance and administration, episcopal and clerical domestic quarters (for an exhaustive survey see the proceedings of the XIth international congress of Christian archaeology, whose main subject was 'l'évêque et la cathédrale': Actes 1989; see also the monographic section of: *Antiquité Tardive* 4, 1996, on "Les 'églises doubles' et famille d'églises"). If the residence of the bishop was attached to the church since its inception, it is in the fifth-sixth centuries that the episcopal palace takes forms (Actes 1989; a thesis on the subject is under preparation at the University of Padua, directed by Gian Pietro Brogiolo).

According to Nancy Gauthier it is the very idea of a territory that disappears between the fourth and the beginning of the eighth century (Gauthier 2000). This might be true in Merovingian Gaul (but for a different approach to the problem see Fixot 2000). Nevertheless, even there, there is an episcopal control of a territory, although in the beginning this might be devoid of precise boundaries; it is expressed clearly by the foundation by the bishops of baptismal churches, intended to be the center of catechesis and Christian practice in the countryside and in this sense to take the place of private churches functioning as center of *cura animarum* (Brogiolo/Cantino Wataghin/Gelichi 1999). Between the fifth and sixth centuries the premises were laid down of an ecclesiastical organization, that in time developed in the 'parish reality' ('réalité paroissiale': Reynaud 1999) – in Italy the net of 'pievi' (Violante 1982) – of the eighth/ninth century (for the discussion of the evolution in the different European regions see: *Alle origini*

della parrocchia rurale 1999). It is an open question whether the baptismal churches bear in their structure any sign of their dependence from the Episcopal seat to which they belong (Pergola 1999; with special regards to the shape of the baptismal font). At first sight the variety of architectural solutions that emerge from the archaeological excavations (Duval 1991) seems to impose a negative answer; at present is questioned (Guyon 1991; 2000) even the existence of a consistent 'type' for the octagonal baptistry, for a long time (see for instance: De Angelis D'Ossat 1969) considered to be introduced by Ambrose of Milan and spread from Milan in the Western provinces. However, the problem could still be worked out, paying special attention to the liturgical furnishings. The case of the diffusion in the metropolis of Aquileia in the fourth-fifth centuries of the Basilica destitute of the apsis, with inner *synthronos* (Menis 1958), might not be a unique example of the influence of the Episcopal seat on the cult's architecture of its territory (see for instance the presence of a *synthronos* of aquileian type in the baptismal church of Lenta, in north-western Italy, possibly when the region is rattached to Aquileia following the Three Chapters schism: Cantino Wataghin 1997; an updated synthesis of the excavations in Pejrani Baricco 2001). In any case, the evidence justifies the assumption that the urban setting can act in a general way as a model for the countryside (with regard to different areas see Volpe 1998; Guyon 2000): a further good argument on the interconnection between city and country (on this point see also: Fixot 2000; because of objective limits of this contribution, we do not go specifically into the problem of the cult of the saints and of its relations to power and territory: out of a very large bibliography, see Brown 1981; 1982; Pietri 1983; Orselli 1988; Beaujard 2000; Wood 2001). However the same evidence shows that this relation works also independently of territorial boundaries, following ways and links that have still largely to be explained. Up to now there is only one possible example of an Episcopal seat in the countryside, from an urban area; it is as a result of the excavations done a few years ago at San Giusto, not far from Lucera (Puglia), where in the immediate proximity of a late Roman *villa*, the remains of two joined basilicas and a baptistry have been brought to light, whose construc-

tion started around the middle of the fifth century (Volpe 1998; Volpe/Biffino/Giuliani 2001). With a reasonable hypothesis, the site, abandoned in the seventh century, is identified with the *praetorium Lauerianum* of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, an imperial property originated by a *fundus Laberianus* and a part of a larger *saltus Carminianensis* mentioned by the *Notitia Dignitatum* (12.18) and which is supposed to be the seat of a *Probus episcopus Carneianensis*, who takes part in the Roman synods of 501–504 and is possibly the addressee of a letter by Pope Gelasius I (Volpe 1998). While the monumental architecture of the complex could fit even a private foundation, the prominence of the baptistry (Volpe/Biffino/Giuliani 2001) seems to be the best argument in favour of the identification (for the rôle of the baptistry in the architectural setting of the episcopal groups see: Guyon 1991; Monfrin 1999; for the dimensional relationship of urban and rural baptistries in Provence see Guyon 2000).

As far as the secular power is concerned, the formation of the Barbaric kingdoms outlines a new map of royal residences. Although they are central for the exercise of power, they do not deserve automatically the name of capitals: in this respect, the picture differs considerably according to the structure of the power and its ways of asserting itself (Liebeschuetz 2000). The rôle of royal cities like Pavia or Brescia or even Benevento in Lombard Italy (Brogiolo 2000) cannot be compared to the one Toledo played in Visigothic Spain, a true capital, as undoubtedly were the 'towns' which flourished as Mérida and Córdoba (Velázquez/Ripoll 2000; for the meaning in this context of the foundation of *Recopolis* see Arce 2000). If Geneva can be said to function as the Burgundian capital (Bonnet/Reynaud 2000), rural *palatia* are preferred to urban residences by the Merovingian kings (Barbier 1990; Dierkens/Périn 2000). It is doubtful if these might be called 'central places' even if their choice reflects a strategic plan, intended as a better control of a crucial region, their temporary use limits, when it does not exclude an effective impact on the territory. Up to a certain point, it can apply to Merovingian Gaul what has been said for early Anglo-Saxon England, that "power resided in persons rather than places" (Loseby 2000, 345; but see also Violante 1982). From this point of view, in

spite of the appearances, the Carolingian residences show a far from full similarity; also the seats of the Carolingian power are periodic ones, but at least some of the *palatia* are founded with the precise aim to impress on the surrounding area a sign of authority and in time become a permanent center of power, like Paderborn – a military outpost in Saxon's land, then a royal residence, whence the name 'Karlsburg' attested in 779, and finally an episcopal seat (Balzer 1979; 1999; Lobbedey 1986; Gai 2002) – or Aachen, the closest to a capital of the eighth-ninth century, a symbolic one indeed in the Carolingian imperial ideology (Binding 1998; Untermann 1999; see also Grewe 1999; Jacobsen 1999; Renoux 1999; Nelson 2001; Innes 2001).

The royal *villae* well known from the Carolingian sources (for the *Brevium Exempla ad res ecclesiasticas et fiscales describendas* and the *Capitulare de villis* see: 799. Kunst und Kultur 1999, 93), as the suburban palaces of Lombard kings like Monza or Corteolona (Brogiolo 2000), stands out of a net of rural residences pertaining to an aristocracy, whose identity rests on the landed property. The terms of their relationship with the *villae* system, structure of the Roman landscape, is still an open question. The comment of Paul Deacon on the *palatium* of Monza, built first by Theoderic and then by Theodelinda (*Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 21–22) could fit many of the residences of late Roman *possessores*; some (a few? only in some regions?) of these appear to maintain their standing substantially unaltered down to the seventh century (Lebecq 1997); nevertheless there is no doubt that important transformations took place between the fourth and the seventh centuries. A recent contribution has stressed the great variability of this process, and the difficulty in identifying patterns of general validity. It seems clear that the 'end of the *villae*' has to be understood as the changing of the mode of occupation rather than as the end of the settlement, a picture of a change in the system of the exploitation of land, and of the change of ownership brought by the settlement of the 'barbarian' newcomers – either by agreements by pacts or forcibly – finally saw the end of a lifestyle and of a cultural system (Ripoll/Arce 2000; see also: La fine delle ville 1996).

The transformation from the late Roman property landscape to the early Medieval one is

better known in its final results than in its dynamics. From the documents of the seventh-eighth centuries (for the wills see: Ward Perkins 2000, with regards to Gaul; Lusuardi Siena 1997 and La Rocca 1997 for Lombard Italy; see also Geary 1985, on the testament of the founder of the monastery of Novalesa, and Destefanis 1997, on the donation chart of the monastery of Santa Maria di Sesto al Reghena) the landed properties, even the most considerable ones, appear clearly to be extremely fragmented and scattered over large areas, so that it is hard to figure an estate as a center of power in a territory, as is shown in late antiquity by the luxurious residences of the aristocracy. Possibly it is not an accident neither that the word *villa* appears to indicate villages or estates, as a reference to dwellings (Lorren/Périn 1997; La Rocca 1998; Ward Perkins 2000) nor that archaeological evidence of (comparatively, taking into account the features of early medieval constructions) outstanding buildings is lacking in the countryside. On the other hand, the *oratoria* of those same villas often persist and in many cases develop into larger churches after the end of the occupation of the residential quarters; the compound of the villa can be occupied by a cemetery; familiar *mausolea* can be constructed, later converted into chapels (Ripoll/Arce 2000; Lusuardi Siena 1997; Brogiolo 2002). They seem to act as 'strong points' for the surroundings, therefore as an indirect statement of the power of the landowner. As far as the settlement pattern of those surroundings is concerned, generally speaking it consists of isolated farmsteads and villages, in a proportion and with a density that for the moment cannot be precisely indicated, owing to the fragmentary and uneven information at our disposal. The demographic decline is certainly important, but possibly less dramatic in the countryside than in towns; the case of Rome has been taken too often as a model of general value (for a synthesis of the problem see Ward Perkins 2000); and the expansion of the forested areas is not an unequivocal sign of depopulation (Wickham 1990). On the contrary, the distribution of the cemeteries and the high number of churches clash with the image of the countryside as a 'deserted land' (for detailed regional analysis see Settia 1982; La Rocca 1989; 1998; Micheletto/Pejrani Baricco 1997; Micheletto 1998; Fixot 2000; the numerous contributions

in Villes et campagnes 1991; Il territorio 1992; L'environnement des églises 1994; L'habitat rural 1995; Les campagnes 1995; I Congresso 1997; II Congresso 2000).

By the Early Middle Ages major monasteries become possibly the most outstanding land-owners; new donations increase the initial endowment, and a wise policy of acquisitions secures the control of vast territories and their profitability. Unlike the secular properties, the monastic ones have a definite center, the monastery itself; the effects of such a function on the territory, with particular regard to the economic and political implications, are one of the most challenging lines of research in the field of 'monastic archaeology'. The extent of the monastic property does not seem the only important factor; its distribution with regards to the location of the monastery is as relevant, as are other possible values of the foundation. Indeed, urban monasteries might function as a connection between town and countryside (Balzaretti 1996); on the other hand San Vincenzo al Volturno acts as a central place towards its 'terra' (Marazzi 1996), as on a smaller scale the abbey of San Dalmazzo di Pedona towards the surrounding alpine valleys (Uggè, in: Cantino Wataghin/Destefanis/Uggè 2000; Uggè 2001), while the abbey of Novalesa (Cantino Wataghin 1998) never fulfils this function, since its properties, although very large, do not have a territorial connection with the monastery, being located mostly on the other side of the Alps, in the Rhône valley (Geary 1985; Cantino Wataghin/Destefanis/Uggè 2000, also for the effects on the material structure of the monasteries). Novalesa can be better placed in the number of the so-called 'monasteri di strada'; for its strategic location on the border between the Merovingian and Lombard kingdoms it serves as an example of the relationship between monastic foundation and politics. All those functions come together in Bobbio (for another example see Rosenwein 2001), with a differing emphasis that varies in the centuries: As a Lombard foundation of the early seventh century, it controls the route from the central Po Valley to the Thyrrenian coast across the Apennine, therefore utilizing all its possible functions; it is endowed from the Lombard monarchy with consistent and fairly close properties in the surrounding region (Destefanis 2002). Furthermore the monastery acts as a manifold religious center,

towards its territory as well as a larger 'spiritual territory'. The foundation of Colombanus is intended to promote the evangelization of the area; this function is not an hagiographic *topos*, since within centuries the abbey had become a bishopric (Destefanis 2002). The sanctity of the founder and the devotion to his relics make the monastery a sanctuary, all the more popular, because it is on the pilgrim's route to Rome and the Holy Land (Destefanis 2001).

The relics of the saints are an essential component of the reputation of a monastery (Caroli 2000), because of the privileged link that had been established since the early fifth century between monasticism and martyrial *memoriae*; as they strenghted the special power of mediation between earth and heaven that belongs to the monks as is their peculiar charisma (for essential references on monasticism see Prinz 1965; Biarne 1990; 1995; de Jong 1995; Pricoco 1998; Orselli 1998). As a consequence of their radical choice of Christian perfection they are placed in a special land, whose proper dimension is liminality and whose boundaries do not coincide with the ones of the other interacting powers.

3. Borders and frontiers

In a period of moving borders, when instability is the rule and conflicts are nearly permanent, the power cannot but present itself with distinguishing marks of defence; they take different forms, according to the nature of the power and of the challenges that put it in question. City walls and *castra* are the most obvious response to external menaces to the existing balance, but the martyr's churches in the suburbs are thought to be an even more effective protection from any enemy, as are the chapels by the wall's gates (Orselli 1985; 1988). The display of goods accompanying a funeral validates the social status of the deceased and its family as does a testamentary legacy (Young 1977; 1991; La Rocca 1997; see also Paxton 1990). The proximity of one's grave to a saint's tomb or relic, and the prayer are a shield against the uncertainties of afterlife (Brown 1981; 1982; Duval 1988; Treffort 1996). This is in a landscape of 'shifting frontiers' (Mathisen/Sivan 1996) ideological, cultural and political. The walls impress the 'sign' of the imperial power

on the late antique city, so that the walled town is a sort of mirror of the Roman order (Cracco Ruggini 1982; Cavallo 1989; Cantino Wataghin 2002). Indeed it is likely that the construction of a number of city walls was promoted at the end of the third century by the state, according to a program that involved the provinces more affected by the break-down of the *limes* in the previous decades (Johnson 1983; Rébuffat 1986; 1989; Biarne 1994). However the ornamental components of the external surfaces of the walls show that the functional concern is not exclusive (Cantino Wataghin 2002). The construction of walls as well as the intervention of repairing/adapting of the existing ones continue well after this first stage, in relation to specific political events or more generally with the spreading sense of insecurity (Christie 1991 and Gelichi 2000: Ravenna; Cantino Wataghin 1996: Northern Italy; Maurin 1992: South-western Gaul). The picture however is not completely clear, because a satisfactory archaeological evidence for dating the recovered remains of masonry is frequently lacking and the risks of chronologies based only on the arguments of historical likelihood are very high. Recent excavations at Verona have proved that the extension of the walls assigned traditionally to Gallienus and thought to be a response to the Alamannic invasion of Northern Italy was built at the beginning of the sixth century (Cavaliere Manasse 1993), in the years of Ostrogothic rule over Italy, when the defense appears to have been – and not without reasons – a top priority for the government (Settia 1993; for byzantine Italy see Zanini 1998). New *castra* were added to strengthen the late Roman system of the *tractus Italiae circa Alpes*, organized between the fourth and the fifth centuries (a discussion of the chronology in Christie 1989; Gelichi 1997) with the aim of creating a flexible protection to the towns more than of simply barring the alpine routes (Gasparri 1995; Brogiolo/Gelichi 1996). The religious power joined the secular one in this action; there is epigraphic evidence (a. 538–540) of the construction of a *castrum* at Laino d'Intelvi (north of Como) by the sub-deacon Marcellianus of Milan (Brogiolo/Gelichi 1996); Ennodius of Pavia celebrates (*Epigramma* CCLX) the one founded at the end of the fifth century by bishop Honoratus of Novara, unfortunately without mentioning its location (a synthesis of the problem in Cantino

Wataghin 1999a). At the same time new settlements develop on high ground, that, in the absence of fortifications, are not *castra* in the military sense of the word (but the most famous of the Lombard *castra* on the eastern border, *Iblligo*, granting its identification with the settlement of Invillino, does not have walls: Bierbrauer 1987; Gelichi 1997), but show by their very location the concern for protection. They were either enforced by an authority or by spontaneous formations of people living in the countryside (Bierbrauer 1986); in both cases, they represent a different phenomenon from the 'incastellamento' of the Xth–XIth centuries, that affects the social structure and the settlements patterns in a most radical way (for a '*status quaestionis*' on the 'incastellamento' see L'incastellamento 1998; Wickham 1998; Francovich 1998; Settia 1999).

The situation of Italy – the fragmentation of its territory, the instability of political borders – makes the militarization of the landscape particularly manifest (but on this point see Ward Perkins 2000). In the years of Theoderic not only the enclosing walls of Verona were strengthened, but an 'urban *castrum*' was built on the Colle San Pietro, dominating the town from the other side of the river Adige, where a pagan temple had existed (Lusuardi Siena 1989); the walls protected the palace, where later on Alboinus was killed; his grave was placed under a staircase nearby (*Hist. Lang.* II, 28). Verona is not a unique example of this sort of castling of a power, which on the contrary occurs frequently, not only in Italy (further evidence in Pani 1999; see also Pani 1995); it differs from the *castra* built in late antiquity in the immediate proximity of towns (evidence in Duval 1983; Pani 1998) to quarter military units, being intended essentially as a shelter for a power. Which one, is questionable: two bishops were buried there in the first half of the sixth century (Lusuardi Siena 1989), indicating an interference between secular power and ecclesiastical hierarchy; the common element seems to be the appropriation of the strong point and dominant element of the urban landscape.

Political borders are not insuperable boundaries. They do not hinder commercial exchanges (Lombard pottery in the byzantine *castrum* of S. Antonino di Perti: Wickham 1999; 'pietra ollare' on a large area south of the Alps: San-nazaro 1994; diffusion of Roman artefacts:

Ricci 1997; 2001); they can be passed over by a landholding (the abbey of Novalesa, a sort of frankish outpost towards/against Lombard Italy, had properties *infra regnum Langobardorum*: Geary 1985); they do not prevent the travels of the pilgrims, nor the transfer of the relics of Saint Michael from the 'national' Lombard sanctuary of the Gargano to the frankish Mont-Saint-Michel (Otranto 1999; Simonnet 1999), nor the foundation in Sabina by the Frank Thomas of Maurienne of the monastery of Farfa, in the shadow of the Lombard duchy of Spoleto (Marazzi 1996).

4. The power of the landscape

Up to a certain point, the re-use of architectural elements, of buildings, of spaces is physiological to the dynamics of any settlement; but starting at the end of the third century it takes exceptional dimensions, so that it becomes a distinguishing feature of late antiquity (Cantino Wataghin 1999b). Economic, practical and ideological reasons have been put forward in turn to explain the different aspects of this practice, without reaching a consensus on its meaning in the contemporary culture. It is emblematic that the debate is still open on such a symbol-monument as the arch of Constantine (Pensabene 1999; Wilson Jones 1999; Meier 2001?). On the contrary, written sources underline the symbolic implications that the use of Roman *spolia* holds in Carolingian ideology (Binding 1998), to justify the pretension of a provenance from Ravenna of the monolithic column of Ingelheim, which is in fact made of transalpine material (Jacobi/Rauch 1976; 799. *Kunst und Kultur* 1999, II, 59); it is undoubtedly true that the transfer of columns from Ravenna and Rome to Aachen, authorized by Pope Adrian I, as one of the columns

and marbles to the church of *Centula*, is a part of the royal program, that has the Roman model as its main referent (out of a very large bibliography, see Settis 1986; Brenk 1987; Greenhalgh 1989): to be built '*more romano*' is the most prestigious praise a construction can receive (Heitz 1976; Jacobsen 1999b).

The authoritativeness of this model results chiefly from the *auctoritas* of the Roman empire; but the weight of its material remains cannot be underestimated. In spite of centuries of neglect and destruction, the landscape of the early Middle ages, the urban as well as the rural one, was marked by the ruins of buildings (for the long persistence of Roman constructions, well down through the Middle Ages, see examples and bibliography in Cantino Wataghin 1999b); because of their technical quality they looked in any case monumental in comparison with the constructions of the time, in wood or in re-used stone and/or bricks. It is not surprising if on a basis of memories and traditions, legends were built around them: in fact, they represent a frontier towards a past world – all the more remote, as in time the clues to its codes get lost – and a control of them becomes in different ways a source of power. The re-use of ancient buildings has to be understood in this complex perspective of ideology and pragmatism, be it the re-use of Roman ruins by monastery or the transformation in churches of pagan temples in the countryside, that occurs more often in the early Middle Ages than in late antiquity (Young 1997; *contra* Effros 2001). Neither the religious conflict nor the recuperation by a monastic community of abandoned chapels discovered in the site chosen for their setting (Young 1997; Cantino Wataghin 1999b; Destefanis 2002), explains this in a satisfactory way. In many respects, the landscape inherited from the Roman Age is not the last nor the least of the powers that contribute to shaping the Early Medieval territory.

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