Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia

Comparative Approaches

EDITED BY

Eirik Hovden, Christina Lutter & Walter Pohl

BRILL

Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia

Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages

CONTINUATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION
OF THE ROMAN WORLD

Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia

Comparative Approaches

Edited by

Eirik Hovden
Christina Lutter
Walter Pohl

BRILL

Contents

PART 3
Genealogies as Means for Constructing Communities

PART 4
Spiritual Communities: Texts, Sites and Interactions

Editors' Preface

The present volume is a result of a large-scale collaborative project funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung in Österreich). The SFB (Spezialforschungsbereich) F42-G18 has started on March 1, 2011, and has been approved for a second funding period in December 2014. The project "Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Religion and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, 400–1600 CE (VISCOM)" is located at the University of Vienna (Department of History/Institute for Austrian Historical Research and Department of Eastern and South Eastern European History) and at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Institute for Medieval Research, Institute for Social Anthropology and Institute for the Cultural History of Asia). Our thanks go, first of all, to the FWF, and to all institutions involved. VISCOM consists of five project parts, dealing with early medieval Europe, medieval South Arabia, imperial and post-imperial Tibet, and Central resp. South Eastern Europe in the Late Middle Ages. Contributions in this volume essentially represent research results of the project team and of some associated members and international guests, whom we would like to thank for getting involved in the process. These papers have emerged from intensive interdisciplinary collaboration and debate in transversal working groups, and were presented and further discussed at the midterm conference of the project in November 2013. From these discussions, a number of comparative responses emerged. The thematic structure of the working groups is mirrored by the four sections of this book.

VISCOM addresses the key question of how 'universal' religions shaped the construction of particular communities and identities. It proposes a comparative approach focusing on Christian, Islamic and Buddhist examples in the course of the 'Middle Ages' in order to explore the interaction between religious and political 'visions of community'. Of course, 'Middle Ages' only represents a rough chronological indication here, not a qualitative concept that could measure the development of Asian societies by European benchmarks. All three religions were used to legitimize imperial rule, but they also encouraged other forms of community—local, regional, urban, or ethnic. Here, interesting differences become visible: for instance, ethnicity and kinship played a different role in the three cultural zones. Was that due to different religious configurations, or, in some cases, rather to the lack of impact of religious visions on communities on the ground? How did concepts, perceptions or cultural memories frame the emergence of new communities? How were different forms of community (for instance, regional or ethnic groups and empires)

related to each other? These questions indicate some of the approaches taken in the project, and they are situated between the fields of history and socio-cultural anthropology, of European and Asian studies, between religious and political history, between research on discourse and on practice. This represents a challenge, but also an opportunity to combine intensive source-based disciplinary research with systematic reflection on issues of comparison. This volume offers substantial results of this line of ongoing research without hiding the efforts and debates needed to produce them.

List of Contributors

Mathias Fermer
Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Andre Gingrich
Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences and Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna

Elisabeth Gruber
Institute for Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture at Krems, University of Salzburg

Johann Heiss
Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Gerda Heydemann
Institute for Medieval Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Eirik Hovden
Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Pascale Hugon
Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Birgit Kellner
Cluster of Excellence 'Asia and Europe in a Global Context', University of Heidelberg and Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia, Austrian Academy of Sciences (since Dec. 2015)

Rutger Kramer
Institute for Medieval Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Rüdiger Lohlker
Institute for Oriental Studies, University of Vienna

Christina Lutter
Department of History, University of Vienna

Jonathan Lyon
Department of History, University of Chicago

Daniel Mahoney
Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Christian Opitz
Department of History, University of Vienna

Diarmuid Ó Riain
Department of History, University of Vienna

Walter Pohl
Institute for Medieval Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences and Department of History, University of Vienna

Oliver Schmitt
Institute for East European History, University of Vienna

Steven Vanderputten
Department of History, Ghent University

Introduction: Meanings of Community in Medieval Eurasia

Walter Pohl

The present volume deals with ways in which medieval Eurasian communities were shaped, both by social practice and by writing about them. Which "visions of community", which actions and interactions made them seem meaningful? The book presents case studies from three different religious spheres: Christian Europe, Islamic South Arabia and Buddhist Tibet, and explores comparative perspectives between them. What impact did the ascent of these three religions to a hegemonial position have on these macro-regions? How did they affect the construction, affirmation or transformation of particular communities? Transcultural comparison offers fascinating perspectives to explore these issues, to pose new questions in disciplinary contexts, and to discover unexpected parallels and differences through close interdisciplinary cooperation. The studies in this volume are results of a large collaborative project in Vienna, the SFB (Spezialforschungsbereich) F42-G18 "Visions of Community. Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, 400–1600 CE" (VISCOM) funded by the Austrian Research Fund (FWF), which started in 2011.[1] The papers collected here were prepared in interdisciplinary working groups, presented at a conference in November 2013 and successively reworked, discussed and, as far as possible, linked with each other. This volume thus offers a selection from the broader range of research carried out in VISCOM. A section of the conference that dealt with the social meaning of apocalyptic visions and the significance of the end of times in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism will be published separately.[2]

VISCOM also addresses problems of comparative methodology, and a first collection of articles on the subject was published in a thematic issue of *History and Anthropology* in 2014.[3] Wide-ranging comparison on a Eurasian scale has become a hot topic in Medieval Studies rather recently.[4] It has opened up

---

1 http://www.univie.ac.at/viscom/index_viscom.php. See also the proceedings of an exploratory conference: Pohl/Gantner/Payne, eds., *Visions of Community*.

2 Wieser, ed., *Making Ends Meet*.

3 Thematic issue "Visions of Community", *History and Anthropology* 26,1 (2014), edited by Gingrich/Lutter.

4 An important forum is *The Medieval History Journal*, published since 1998.

exciting new perspectives, although much reflection on the rather specific issues of comparative research based on medieval sources is still needed. Especially studies confronting Christian, Islamic and/or Jewish cultural ensembles are moving fast, and have already produced very interesting results.[5] The first issue of the open-access journal "Medieval Worlds", a spin-off of the VISCOM project, collected both exemplary studies and a good number of project reports in the field.[6] A lot of empirical study has been done in conjunction with Michael Borgolte's *Institut für vergleichende Geschichte Europas im Mittelalter* in Berlin.[7] Medievalists can also rely on experiences and theoretical debates in other fields of history. French intellectual esprit has produced a flaming invitation by Marcel Detienne: *Comparer l'incomparable*, a slender book published in French in 2000 and in English in 2008, synthesizing the results of a project in which ancient Greece was the point of departure for extensive comparison.[8] The state of the art, mostly in relation to modern history, has been summed up very aptly and systematically by Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt.[9] The classical works in 20th-century comparative history, for instance by Barrington Moore Jr., Ernest Gellner, Immanuel Wallerstein, Charles Tilly, or Theda Skocpol have mostly addressed issues of modern or contemporary history. Many of these authors were historical sociologists or influenced by this discipline, such as Max Weber, Michael Mann, Anthony D. Smith or Shmuel Eisenstadt.[10] Sociological approaches also helped developing many of the theoretical and methodological tools in comparative history, such as the so-called "large-N comparisons" which rely on operationalized variables tested by statistical methods or Boolean algebra.[11] Medieval studies, not only because of the dearth of quantifiable material for reliable statistics, are more inclined to what has been classed as "small-n comparisons", that is, narrative or process-oriented comparisons based on extensive in-case studies.

---

5   See for instance the ERC Advanced Grant projects "RELMIN: The Legal Status of Religious Minorities in the Euro-Mediterranean World (5th–15th centuries)" (John Tolan, http://www.relmin.eu/); "FOUNDMED: Foundations in medieval societies' (Michael Borgolte, https://www.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/bereiche-und-lehrstuehle/migei-en/forschung/projekte/foundmed); and Hudson and Rodríguez, ed., *Diverging Paths?* a volume that resulted from an international cooperation project.

6   Thematic Issue "Approaches to Comparison in Medieval Studies", *Medieval Worlds* 1 (2015), doi: 10.1553/medievalworlds_no1_2015; www.medievalworlds.net.

7   Borgolte, ed., *Das europäische Mittelalter*; id., ed., *Integration und Desintegration*.

8   Detienne, *Comparer l'incomparable*; English version: *Comparing the Incomparable*.

9   Kocka/Haupt, "Introduction".

10   For an overview, see Lange, *Comparative-Historical Methods*, esp. 22–39.

11   Ragin, *The Comparative Method*.

That does not mean that we can only deal with historical singularities, and that comparative approaches are better avoided, as has also been argued.[12] But in many cases, a small number of variables will hardly suffice to explain major historical changes such as the underlying transformations that many contributions in this volume directly or indirectly deal with: the expansion of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, the dissolution of the Roman Empire, the rise and fall of the Caliphate and the Tibetan Empire. Thus the aim here is not the construction of transhistorical models, but the transcultural comparison of historical processes and phenomena. This approach to comparison poses a number of methodological problems that need to be addressed. A central issue is the fundamentally European design of our conceptual tools. Can we measure Asian cultures by ideas of progress or ideal types constructed from a European perspective? The debate is open, caution is needed, and we certainly need to reflect on the ways in which we design our criteria of comparison.

Comparative approaches have always been important in social anthropology; however, in the 1980s, comparative anthropology became the subject of serious debate.[13] One reason was that under the influence of post-structuralist currents, the units of comparison in themselves, cultures, social fields or spaces, were deconstructed, and model-building rejected as a method. It was argued that comparison may create the illusion of bounded social entities and thus risk reifying them as coherent units of comparison. Although this critique was often overdone and sometimes almost turned into an automatic reflex towards certain buzzwords or approaches, it was not unfounded. As Andre Gingrich has recently noted, "one of the main failures in the record of anthropological comparison is the temptation to use it for all kinds of universalist theorizing: from evolutionism to diffusionism, and from Marxism to structuralism".[14] A typology that can be applied to all societies is at best so general that it tells us little about them. In recent years, comparative anthropology has made great progress towards a "new diversity" of methods, including historical anthropology. It has acknowledged mid-range theories, as situated between particular and universal, and developed "critical realism" as an alternative to deconstructivism and positivism. As distinct from quantitative methods in the social sciences, "qualitative comparison" characterizes social anthropological fieldwork; it is also adequate to medieval studies.[15] "Thick comparison" seeks to accommodate an

---

12   E.g. Espagne, "Sur les limites"; cf. Pohl, "Comparing Communities".
13   Gingrich/Fox, *Anthropology by Comparison*.
14   Gingrich/Thelen, "Comparative Anthropology", 385.
15   Palmberger/Gingrich, "Qualitative Comparison". This approach is of course different from the algorithm-based analysis of variables that Ragin, *The Comparative Method*, called Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA).

inclusive set of informations, not only where they seem relevant for pre-established criteria, but also data that appear to be circumstantial.[16] "Reflexive comparison" takes into account the construction of its comparative criteria and categories, which should be a methodological standard anyway. "Analytical comparison" seeks to identify independent variables by comparing equivalent units, while "illustrative comparison" aims at verifying a pre-conceived theory or model by referring to a number of empirical cases, which is clearly less relevant for the historical studies assembled here.[17]

In historical research, by tradition more compartmentalized than social anthropology, comparison was long attempted along very general terms, comparing ancient and modern empires, "the" Western and the Islamic city, or the spread of world religions in "the axial age". A critique of such inclusive concepts mostly came in the context of deconstructivism, and was only embraced by a part of the scholarly community. The critique of reified categories and of implicitly employed, time-worn methodological premises was certainly necessary and has remained fundamental. However, little can be gained by a deconstructive reflex that tends to limit the fields and approaches of research, and to leave little space for comparison or model-building. Comparative research, as a methodologically delicate enterprise, has to face this double challenge from the uncritical use of transhistorical axes of comparison on the one side and hypercritical deconstructivist positions on the other. Debate is open about the methodological chances and pitfalls of historical comparison.[18] We have to be aware that we are dealing with past "singularities" in the first place, and that aligning them for historical analysis or narrative is bound to reduce their particularity.[19] It is reasonable to claim, as Chris Wickham has done, that "comparative analysis, as long as it is […] focusing on elements that are really comparable, and employing conceptual categories which make sense internally, can unlock the door into proper, sophisticated, historical explanation better than any other form of analysis can".[20] The problem lies in deciding which categories make sense. That mostly depends on the models and typologies on which comparison is based, and that it is supposed to validate. Is it advisable to reduce the multiplicity of past societies to highly-aggregate

16   Scheffer/Niewöhner, eds., *Thick Comparison*; Gingrich/Thelen, "Comparative Anthropology", 388.

17   Scheidel, "Introduction", 5.

18   For an overview, Kocka/Haupt, "Introduction".

19   Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 56, sees "singularities" as resisting assimilation into historicist discourse and Eurocentric master narratives.

20   Wickham, "Historical Transitions", 19–20.

typologies? Kocka and Haupt propose a balanced view: "While typological comparisons yield considerable benefits, they also create problems. Sometimes, they underestimate the multi-dimensionality, contingency, and openness of historical situations; they marginalize resistance to general trends and cover up the non-realized alternatives that may have been present in historical situations". Paradoxically, as they argue, "the value of comparative typologies lies not least in the way they provoke research and arguments with a critical thrust and thus contribute to the progress of knowledge".[21]

Historians are often sceptical of models and typologies. The most accepted way to construct comparisons around generalizations and thus organize a much more complex range of historical phenomena along relatively simple typologies are still Max Weber's "ideal types". Weber (unlike many historians who appropriated his models) regarded ideal types as a heuristic tool, but not as categories that could then be proven or falsified.[22] This is not to say that Weber's historical-sociological approach cannot be fruitfully employed in historical studies. In a similarly instrumental sense, Weber's approach has, for instance, been advocated for medieval studies by Otto Gerhard Oexle and Chris Wickham;[23] and David d'Avray, for his survey of *Medieval Religious Rationalities* published in 2010, chose the subtitle *A Weberian Analysis*.[24] Ideal types may be a useful tool for a first structuring of a field of research by basic typologies, not least if wide-ranging comparison is on the agenda. They have the advantage of allowing for model-building with an attention to historical variety; but the goal of research should still not be to accommodate the variety within the model in order to make it comparable, but to use the model to structure a complex field in order to advance beyond the typology.[25]

This is particularly important in comparison beyond Europe. Weber, like many of his successors, operated within a paradigm in which Europe offered the standard model of progress. Other "cultures" were measured by their deviance from this "ideal type". The concept of "culture" had become fashionable in eighteenth-century Europe.[26] From an enlightened and ethnocentric European perspective, it could make all cultures comparable and therefore manageable. The humanities and social sciences owe fundamental methodologies to this paradigm. It made cultures formally equivalent, but unequal in the state of

---

21   Kocka/Haupt, "Introduction", 7–8.

22   See Weber, "Die Objektivität".

23   Oexle, *Die Wirklichkeit*; Wickham, "Historical Transitions", 19–20.

24   D'Avray, *Medieval Religious Rationalities*.

25   Cf. Kocka/Haupt, "Introduction", 8; Pohl, "Comparing Communities".

26   Luhmann, *Gesellschaftsstruktur*, 145; Geertz, "Kulturbegriff".

their cultural development, and thus allowed the controlled othering of foreign societies and the comparative description of their cultural and social characteristics from a European perspective of progress. For instance, it promoted the illusion of a coherent Islamic culture with a time-resistant internal logic, essentially locked in its backwardness and intrinsically opposed to a similarly self-identical Christian culture. This perspective has allowed for many forms of Orientalism. Nowadays, "culture" is still often used to distinguish between bounded (often "ethnic") entities and to confine them within the limits of their circumscribed and subaltern cultural identity. At the same time, "culture" with its positive associations of multiplicity and creativity helps to veil the inequality implied in this cognitive pattern, and its European basis.[27] It is little wonder that nowadays "culture" has begun to feature among the terms that some scholars prefer to avoid.

On the other hand, the "cultural turn" in the 1980s and 1990s has productively unbounded the concept of "culture", which has become the broadest frame of reference for many humanities disciplines. In the process, two previously distinctive theoretical strands converged: the (post-)structuralist and semiotic strand, as represented, for instance, by Claude Levi-Strauss, Michel Foucault or Pierre Bourdieu; and second, the tradition of phenomenology and hermeneutics, for instance, Alfred Schütz, Irving Goffmann, Clifford Geertz and Charles Taylor. Both schools gradually overcame the traditional binary opposition "objective vs. subjective" and became interested in the links between knowledge and social practice.[28] Both strands had initially privileged a rather homogeneous view of cultural communities, assuming that they generally tended to reproduce themselves by repeating the same modes of cultural practice and by handing down established systems of knowledge and discourse; but more recent concepts allow a more flexible view of communities.[29] This "transformation of cultural theories" has opened the way for a more nuanced approach to intercultural comparison.

The issue, in any case, is not to avoid the term "culture", but to be cautious about the centripetal logic that may lead to its reification. "Culture" can be used as a descriptive term, but should not become prescriptive; and its explanatory powers may be more limited than we think. To say that people act as they do because of their culture, at best, does not say very much. We have to acknowledge that "cultures" are hybrid in themselves, if to a different degree.

---

27   Noyes, "On Sociocultural Categories"; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.

28   Reckwitz, *Die Transformation der Kulturtheorien*, 542–80.

29   See *History and Anthropology* 26,1, ed. Gingrich/Lutter, with the contributions by Gingrich, Lutter and Pohl.

No doubt the early Islamic world was hybrid—a majority of the population in many of its parts was Christian or Jewish. Medieval Christendom was not monolithic either. One possible research perspective, then, is to aim at *histoire croisée*, and to write entangled histories across presumed cultural divides.[30] In many cases, these cultural areas then come to seem more like a continuum, and certainly, the medieval West, Byzantium and the Islamic world may legitimately be pictured as culturally related in many respects. On the other hand, this promising perspective should not obliterate the distances and differences between them. These distances, we come to realize, neither fully correspond to distances on the map (Fatimid Egypt was closer to Norman Sicily than to Byzantine Anatolia) nor to our basic organizing categories (Syrian "miaphysite" Christians were much better linked to Islamic Baghdad than to "dyaphysite" Christian Constantinople). After centuries of ethnocentric othering we should not simply impose the contrary notion upon these "others": saying that all cultures share the same intrinsic hybridity should not imply denying their being different. Recognizing that "cultures" are not natural units of comparison characterized by a common cultural idiom and an inner logic does not obliterate comparison, but to the contrary, makes it more important. Units of comparison will as a rule be more specific, confronting, for instance, particular regions, social groups, institutions or discourses, and rarely inclusive constructions such as "the" Christian West and "the" Islamic world.

This is a methodologically delicate approach if our subject is "Visions of Community", especially if they project the idea of an inclusive "larger social whole", the *umma* as the community of the faithful or the *populus Christianus* as the growing body of the followers of Christ. Both worlds were also highly self-referential, and therefore we need to take into account the inclusive visions of community they produced, their representing themselves as unities. Paradoxically, their entangled and competing "visions of community" to an extent represent common ground between the religions of the book. This leads to a number of comparative questions: Who designed and propagated such unifying visions? To what extent did many millions of people settling across one or even several continents perceive of themselves as one community, as *Christianitas* or *umma*? How did they relate their real multiplicity to this envisaged higher unity? And in what ways and contexts did Christian or Islamic elites attempt to impose some degree of uniformity on the basis of shared visions? The sacred scriptures were ambiguous, sometimes even contradictory

---

30   Werner/Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison". For the relationship between transcultural/transnational history, *histoire croisée* and comparative history, see Kocka/Haupt, "Introduction", 20.

about these visions, and none as much as the Christian Bible; thus they offered a multitude of options to develop lines of convergence. It is also difficult to grasp the agency behind the inclusive and expansive strategies, in discourses as in policies. There may have been several levels of meanings and overlapping communities that should be taken into account here, and a dynamic balance of effort and achievement. No doubt the Islamic and Christian worlds need to be kept present as a frame of reference in our research; but their unifying visions were produced in much more specific environments, and then adopted and adapted in a great number of other particular contexts.

It is indicative that Christianity, Islam and Buddhism all converged at some point with empires. The late Roman Empire after Constantine I, the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, and the Tibetan Empire of the eighth to tenth centuries all coincided with a period of expansion of the respective religion, and built on this dynamic. However, the historical episode in which shared hegemonies of empire and religion seemed almost co-extensive, and some kind of common outlook and commitment were propagated, soon passed. Political pluralism replaced the elusive imperial unity, although the latter remained a model for imitation by later polities. Again, the imperial frame of reference is necessary for analysis. And yet, as recent comparative research on empires has demonstrated, the impact of empires needs to be assessed on the ground, and not least, by its differentiated relations to smaller communities in its sway.[31] VISCOM addresses this field of tension between broad unifying visions and the shaping of more particular communities. Christian, Islamic and Buddhist worlds were always in some ways under construction (and in some cases, also under deconstruction). The modes of their construction are what we are interested in.

The approach taken by VISCOM can be seen in the context of other (and equally necessary) options to conduct comparative research. Studies by individual authors still seem to be the most frequent way to address wide-ranging comparison. They have the advantage, and perhaps sometimes the disadvantage, of a clear unifying vision. Such studies are often based on the methods of historical sociology, where they continue lines of research initiated more than a century ago by the ground-breaking work of Max Weber, and whose interest is mainly in model-building and typology.[32] Alternatively, specialists in one of

31   Morris/Scheidel, eds., *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires*; Bang/Kołodziejczyk, eds., *Universal Empire*; Drews, *Die Karolinger und die Abbsiden*; Gehler and Rollinger, *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*.

32   Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*; Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*.

the fields involved, who have studied the results of neighbouring disciplines, engage in wide-ranging comparative studies whose horizon is not completely covered by their expertise. The limits of this approach are that relying on secondary literature alone may be problematic. Controversial debates and emerging consensus on certain issues may elude non-specialists. More fundamentally, they may have to confront systematic bias in their material. Much scholarship on Asia was produced with European paradigms in mind; or, more recently, scholars inspired by post-colonial or neo-identitarian positions have tried to reverse them, almost an Orientalism turned upside down. But both "Orientalist" and "counter-Orientalist" attitudes may lead to conclusions that are more pointed than the sources easily support. Interdisciplinary handbooks or conferences are better placed to open a dialogue between disciplines, and to offer first steps to approach new subjects. But once again, in this format comparison mostly has to rely on interpretations that scholars from another field have reached, without engaging much with the ways in which they arrived at them. Only rarely do the routines of academic life offer opportunities for more in-depth comparison. This can be achieved in longer-term national or international scholarly networks.[33] Even more promising are funding schemes for large-scale projects that are provided by the European Union and by some European countries.[34] These allow actual interdisciplinary work in a team of younger researchers funded by the project and supervised by the Principal Investigators. The chance to pursue our joint research programme in VISCOM is owed to one of these generous funding schemes in Austria.

The experience of the first years of joint research in the "Visions of Community" project is encouraging, but also suggests the need for caution about methodology. It takes some time to realize where the problems are. What have seemed to be fairly obvious parallels and differences between cultural spheres often become much less obvious the closer one looks at them. This is in part due to the differences in the sources and in the state of their transmission and accessibility—while most relevant texts that deal with medieval cities and monasteries in Europe have been edited or are at least accessible in well-archived manuscripts, the South Arabian and Tibetan evidence is only partly known and to an even lesser degree edited. Furthermore, a traditional Eurocentric "world history" has already shaped the field in many respects. For

33   For instance, the British Academy network in Britain "Defining the Global Middle Ages" (http://globalmiddleages.history.ox.ac.uk).

34   For instance, the DFG-funded Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context—The Dynamics of Transculturality" at the University of Heidelberg (www .asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de).

instance, our image of Tibetan monasteries or Arabian cities has been produced by European scholars since the 19th century—but were Buddhist monasteries "monasteries" in the European sense? And were civic pride and urban autonomy really absent from Islamic cities? Obviously, one has to work through the different layers of Orientalist and gendered perceptions here, and not all comparative models are equally useful in the course of this research. These layers cannot simply be peeled off to arrive at "authentic" interpretations, or ignored in order to operationalize variables.

Sometimes such heuristic sediments also get in the way of understanding the European evidence; "medievalism" has almost matched "Orientalism" in its prejudiced mix of romantic stylization and modernist contempt.[35] For instance, the Enlightenment model of a separation of religion and state is almost as inadequate for the Frankish realm of the Carolingians (eighth/ninth centuries) as it is for Arabia or Tibet. The same holds true for our scholarly terminology, which has been gradually produced in a Latin/Greek matrix from antiquity to the present day. Are terms such as nation, religion, state, city appropriate for understanding medieval worlds? In this case, the problem is an inverse one. Whereas these terms may be too alien to Asiatic societies to be applied to them without further reflection, the difficulty with using them for the medieval West is that their equivalents in the sources are seductively familiar, "false friends" that suggest misleading analogies. What medieval authors meant by *natio* or *religio* is very different from the significance of the modern terms derived from these words. In ancient and early medieval usage, *religio* means correct cult practice, and not the inner search for transcendental truth or the social field devoted to it. Similarly, *fides*/faith describes as much the loyalty towards worldly authorities as the belief in God and the truth that he had revealed. And *natio* rarely indicates anything like our idea of a nation, but most frequently simply the place of origin (which can also be a small town). The terminological problem becomes more complicated by the fact that many modern English translations of Latin texts translate *gens*, which usually means "tribe", "people" or "ethnic group", by "nation". A non-specialist may easily conclude that nations were already present in the European Middle Ages, but what in fact happens is a terminological confusion between medieval and modern meanings of the term that obscure instead of explaining its conceptual development and multiplicity. That does not mean that we have to avoid the term "nation" in scholarly language altogether; but it should be handled with care. All these loaded terms—nation, state, culture, identity, ethnicity and so on—are important because they indicate key conceptual areas and give

---

35   Cf. Said, *Orientalism*; Geary/Klaniczay, eds., *Manufacturing Middle Ages*.

access to fields of debate and research. They have to be confronted with the terms and their meanings in the society under study, and can thus be historicized. They pose questions rather than giving answers, and represent fields of tension rather than simple labels for a clearly delimited set of phenomena. That is why they cannot be replaced.[36]

The present volume focuses on four comparative issues that constitute its four sections, and which result from extensive interdisciplinary discussions in VISCOM's transversal working groups. The first section, "Terminologies", explores some of the basic terms for broad inclusive communities in the Latin West and in Early Islamic contexts: the Latin *gens* (people, often in the sense of ethnic group) and *populus* (people, mostly in the sense of a political/religious community); and the Arabic *umma* (the most frequent designation for the community of the believers), *jama'a*, which, as Rüdiger Lohlker argues, offered alternative ways to grasp the political significance of "Islamic community" in a flexible way; and *qabā'il* and *'ashā'ir*, terms used for "tribes" in South West Arabia. The contributions in this section combine specific sets of examples with a broader outlook. For Latin usage, Gerda Heydemann relies mostly on Christian biblical exegesis from the third to the sixth century. The advantage of this choice is that Christian authors occasionally reflected quite explicitly about the meaning of the terms that they found in the translation of the Bible, which allows better access to some of the ambiguities and changes of the respective semantic fields.

What makes the use of Christian texts as a source for the language of community difficult is that Christian authors did not only use *populus Christianus* quite consistently for the Christian people (in a definite or indefinite geographical setting); but they also employed *gens* for the Christians, a word derived from the notion of common origin by birth. Likewise, as the companion paper by Eirik Hovden and Johann Heiss demonstrates, the word *umma* could also mean both the Islamic community and tribes and peoples (especially in the plural). In the Christian case, some scholars have argued that if *gens* is used for the Christians then the term cannot have an ethnic meaning.[37] Yet such a reductionist view of late ancient and medieval terminology clearly impedes any nuanced understanding of the ways in which religious, ethnic and political forms of community were entangled in the period. The comparison with the early Islamic language of community makes this apparent. The descendants of the Prophet's family are a case in point, as Hovden and Heiss show: "The *ashrāf* claimed to carry on the true religious orthodoxy and authority

---

36   See a forthcoming article by Walter Pohl, "Loaded Terms".
37   Gruen, "Did Ancient Identity Depend on Ethnicity".

from the Prophet, through the male blood line as individuals making up a group, a concept that fitted well with the way communities at the time were conceived as genealogies".[38] In the West, Christian uses of the term *gens* seem to have reflected back on the ethnic uses of the word.[39] Without a more differentiated understanding of contemporary uses of the terminology of community, our interpretations of the "visions of community" attested to in these contexts will remain schematic. This requires historicizing our terms in two ways: first, attempting to reach a more specific profile of the shifting significance of these terms in particular historical contexts, or even by individual authors; and second, calibrating our modern terms (religious, ethnic, political etc.) with these glimpses of ways in which contemporaries addressed the phenomena that we want to understand.

The second section addresses "Urban Communities". To what degree were urban settlements understood as communities, and how does the sophisticated legal and institutional civic framework of late medieval Europe compare with the cities of South Arabia? One difference between Western European and Asian cities has often been noted since Max Weber: the notion of a civic community regulated by law and administered by autonomous bodies, such as city councils, which was mostly absent from the East.[40] Indeed, as Heiss and Hovden argue, only under pressure from outside would the many different communities inside South Arabian cities feel and act as a single "city". On the other hand, city statutes, civic liberties, separate legal status as a citizen, privileges for cities and often also elaborate forms of self-representation as a commune play a role in the rise of occidental cities from the eleventh century onwards. However, normative texts that establish legal distinctions do not tell the whole story. The contributions by Elisabeth Gruber and Oliver Schmitt are based on documents more anchored in social practice, such as charters and court proceedings, and therefore present complementary points of view based on network analysis, regional studies and microhistory. Gruber underlines the role of kinship and other networks in late medieval northern Austrian and southern Bohemian cities; the landed nobility also played a role within the cities. Schmitt, on the basis of the exceptionally rich documentation of conflicts in the Dalmatian island town of Korčula in the 15th century, argues that "there were multiple layers of communitarian belonging in late medieval Dalmatian communities", and emphasizes the highly complex fault lines of these societies. Patricians and common people could easily clash, but they also shared

---

38   Hovden/Heiss, in this volume.

39   Pohl/Heydemann, "The Rhetoric of Election".

40   Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 727–814.

common interests; the social distance between city and countryside was rela-
tive, and also depended on individual social positions and strategies. Where
conflicts within Korčula could not be settled, the more distant and abstract
notion of "the glorious lordship of Venice" could be invoked or its intervention
sought.

This is a level of analysis on which urban settlements in late medieval
Central Europe or Dalmatia are comparable to those in South Arabia; but that
requires removing several layers of misleading concepts, as Johann Heiss and
Eirik Hovden argue. The concept of "the Islamic city" is hardly adequate as it
suggests an underlying homogeneity both over a vast geographical range from
Cordoba to Delhi, and within urban settlements in which Muslims often con-
stituted a minority among a culturally very heterogeneous population, all the
more so in the early Islamic period. Furthermore, the word "city" is very much
rooted in Western perceptions, and at the heart of a semantic field implying
citizenship, civic autonomy and civilization. Interestingly, the rough Arabic
equivalent, *madīna*, also has strong connotations of "civilization" (*tamaddun*);
but the line between urban and other important settlements is not always easy
to draw. An important difference between the Western and Arabic areas of
study is the notion of freedom linked with Western cities. South Arabian towns
were surrounded by free tribesmen and peasants, and city-dwellers could not
boast of a special status, while the vast majority of the population in the coun-
tryside in many European countries were unfree in some way. However, as
Gruber shows, the process by which city dwellers in Europe acquired personal
freedom, and the city became a demarcated zone of autonomous jurisdiction,
did not proceed at the same rhythm everywhere. There are many promising
lines of comparison that can be further explored on the basis of the studies
about urban communities presented here: functions of an urban centre, rela-
tions with its surroundings, infrastructure and urban topography and, where
possible, relative density of settlements, attitudes towards and identifications
with communities within and beyond the city.

The third section deals with genealogies as expressions of community. How
were genealogical models used to reinforce the sense of identity and the cul-
tural memory of early medieval Christian dynasties, Yemeni tribes, late medi-
eval Catholic monasteries or Buddhist spiritual communities? Genealogical
thinking is one of the most pervasive ways in which humans have structured
social relations and ordered the world. It can be applied, in a narrower sense,
to kinship and descent, but also to a range of other phenomena—as the con-
tributions by Birgit Kellner about the spiritual genealogies of Tibetan Buddhist
lamas and by Christian Opitz about the pictorial representations of the filia-
tion of late medieval Christian orders show. A number of important lines of

comparison can be pursued here. How are genealogies structured formally: as a list, as a straight line of descent, as a complex web of relations, or as a tree? As Opitz remarks, the family tree was a rather rare model in the representation of medieval pedigrees. To what degree did genealogies include women or even female lines? And did genealogies intersect so as to permit the tracing of closer or more distant kinship between families and tribes?

Significant differences emerge between early medieval Europe and the early Islamic world. Daniel Mahoney portrays a cultural context in tenth-century South Arabia where genealogies mattered in many respects, and the scholar al-Hamdānī tried to synthesize a wide range of genealogical knowledge, not without pursuing a certain political agenda. Lineages could be connected with the mythical ancestor of a tribe, which made the notion of common origin of tribes much more visible to its members. The difference from the scarce transmission of genealogical texts in early medieval continental Europe is striking. There, genealogies are mainly transmitted for ruling dynasties, and they can seldom be interconnected (the British Isles, and later Scandinavia, constitute an exception). Individual genealogies were rarely traceable to particular shared ancestors; if at all, a notion of common origin was achieved by means of a distant connection with the sons of Noah. The frequent political uses of ethnicity in the West, and the relative insignificance of genealogical constructions of social relations seem to be in contrast—but as I argue in my contribution to that section, these may be two sides of a coin.

Genealogical thinking did not only help tracing bloodlines, it could also be used as a tool to structure and represent other forms of trans-generational relations, as Birgit Kellner and Christian Opitz demonstrate. Both address spiritual genealogies, if in rather different form. The transfer of knowledge from teacher to pupil, and linked to that the passing-on of spiritual capital between generations within monastic institutions, can be accommodated very well in a genealogical model. This was especially important in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, where initially the transmission of the correct teachings relied very much on the personal relationship between the teacher and his pupil, whereas in the Catholic West, orthodoxy could to a larger extent be guaranteed by the Church. It is no coincidence that late medieval Catholic orders adapted the genealogical model to show their institutional continuity and filiations. Both Tibetan Buddhists and Latin Christians were convinced that successful spiritual transfer between generations was ultimately due to empowerment by superior forces, whether that was the incarnation of a Bodhisattva or God's grace and the working of the Holy Spirit. And in both worlds, spiritual institutions were deeply entangled with the surrounding world, not least, with aristocratic

benefactors. In Tibet, rebirth lineages could thus become a system for regulating succession and made it possible to overcome problems of inheritance and biological contingency—if there was no direct heir, the recognition of a reincarnation offered an option to continue a lineage of spiritual masters, but also of aristocratic patrons of the monasteries. In the late medieval West, spiritual succession and aristocratic genealogies were not entangled so deeply, and the institutional continuity in ownership distinguished monasteries from lay landowners. Rather, genealogical representations of the relations between monasteries, or between the saints of the mendicant orders, sought to reinforce their spiritual legitimacy, being directly modelled on the common motif of the Tree of Jesse, an important model for representing genealogies as trees.

The fourth and longest section addresses "Spiritual Communities: Texts, Sites and Interactions"; for a more extensive discussion of its achievements, I can refer to the introduction and the commentaries in this section. In all regions compared in VISCOM, spiritual communities could become centres of learning and knowledge transfer, such as Christian or Tibetan "monasteries" or South West Arabian *hijras* in Yemen. These *hijras* were areas of distinct legal status named after the retreat from unjust rule that their inmates, who often claimed to be descendants of the prophet Muhammad's family, had found there. The medieval *hijras* are an understudied phenomenon, and have rarely been compared to Western or Tibetan monasteries. This comparison, as it turned out, is very useful to help look beneath the apparent parallels of Christian and Buddhist monasticism and address functional elements. At first glance, parallels between these three forms of community impose themselves: localized, self-styled communities, at least notionally bounded against the outside world, focusing on spiritual practice and the transmission of—mostly sacred—knowledge, concerned with the development of religious doctrine, under the protection of surrounding aristocrats or tribal leaders for whom they fulfil religious, legal and social functions, predominantly funded by pious donations, and connected to but also in competition with similar institutions. But the comparison also runs into problems.

Again, terminology poses a problem. The term monastery comes from the Christian tradition, where it coexists with *claustrum*, cloister, which underlines its boundedness. Already the eighteenth-century Jesuit missionaries in East Asia noticed the striking similarities between Buddhist "monasteries" and Western ones. Tibet, however, has no single term for monastery; apart from *gompa* there are several other terms which underline different aspects of these institutions. *Hijras* are in many respects a functional equivalent, but can hardly be called "monasteries" along these lines. It also has to be taken into account

that all three forms of religious community saw much variation and changed over time, which becomes obvious by confronting eighth/ninth-century and thirteenth/fourteenth-century monasteries in the West.

How can the range of phenomena to be compared be conceptualized and distinguished from similar centres of learning such as cathedral schools or madrasas? What role did the boundedness of these "enclaves of learning" play—how open were the respective communities, legally or pragmatically? In Tibetan Buddhist and European Christian monasteries, membership implied renunciation of the world for life. But that did not impede various contacts with the outside world. Tibetan monks and lamas performed services for the surrounding laity and local rulers and visited their households; similarly, Christian monasteries have been described as "powerhouses of prayer" in a network of exchanges with the surrounding population.[41]

One pragmatic difficulty that arose in our research was the rather different character of the sources, and their very uneven accessibility, which shape our view of these medieval communities. In Tibet as in Yemen, only a fraction of the existent written sources have actually been studied; in both areas, access is currently hampered by the political situation. Early medieval Europe offers mostly well-edited texts, whereas late medieval sources are extremely numerous. A great variety of texts shed light on medieval European monasteries, not least, charters and other documents about their economic basis and their transactions with the outside world, a type of source mostly lacking for the early periods in Yemen and Tibet. What all three cultural spheres have in common are the biographies of founders, members, patrons and holy men, which can broadly be defined as "hagiography". Christian saints' lives often abound in stories about miracles, often also worked at the saint's grave where his bodily relics were revered. Tibetan texts emphasize a saint's previous rebirths and his relations to a master and his spiritual lineage in order to guarantee the purity of spiritual knowledge. The right Islamic tradition, and its defence against other Islamic currents, takes centre stage in many Yemeni biographies. The Asian traditions focus more on the key role of the spiritual teacher than most Western monastic texts. Christian monasteries reflected more about their institution as such, its spiritual practices, its rule and organization and its position in society.

One level of comparison is the role of female spiritual communities, or of female benefactors. The hagiographic production seems to indicate that women attracted much more attention in the monastic sphere in Europe than in the other regions. Many texts deal with female founders and saints, and

---

41   De Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism".

quite a few were demonstrably written by women. Female monasteries could be centres of learning and play a considerable role. Tibetan Buddhism also allowed for the existence of nunneries. In Yemen, women could play a part in the establishment and consolidation of *hijra* communities, and some are highlighted as beneficiaries, although on the whole they are mentioned rather rarely.

As may have become clear, the present volume does not offer large-scale comparative models; that may be a next step. The contributions demonstrate that it is rarely possible to establish clear causal relations or to "tick boxes" in order to operationalize variables. Differences between terminologies of community, the organisation of cities, the significance of genealogies or the role of "enclaves of learning" are mostly of degree, and none of the forms to be found in any of the macro-regions under comparison are clear-cut in their distinctiveness. But that does not mean that we have to accumulate singularities without attempting to compare them. The authors seek to identify perspectives of comparison, similarities and differences as they emerge from their research in clearly circumscribed fields and on the basis of the sources available. These sources hardly make it possible to answer all the questions we might have. Yet in their specific profile of interests and omissions, we can try to trace attitudes and perceptions of the space and time in which they were written. Medieval visions of community were never complete, they represent discourses that are as interesting for what they say as for what they leave unsaid, and the same applies to the history of their transmission.

The contributors to this volume can therefore historicize modern scholarly concepts by taking such contemporary or retrospective perceptions, in short, "native knowledge" into account. They employ broad and perhaps problematic concepts such as community, ethnicity or religion, with the previous scholarship attached to them, as points of reference, but try to avoid using preconceived schemes of interpretation. Comparison thus departs from a close examination of the relevant sources in the different disciplines involved. The methodological ambition was to make the way in which conclusions were reached transparent for all scholars involved in the comparative effort by means of an interdisciplinary dialogue. In this way, a web of mid-range and low-threshold comparisons can be built up that will gradually support more general hypotheses. It is an intellectually demanding and fascinating venture. The authors hope that readers of this volume will be able to share some of the excitement that they experienced in preparing it.

Bibliography

Peter Fibiger Bang and Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, eds., *Universal Empire—A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History* (Cambridge, 2012).

Michael Borgolte, ed., *Das europäische Mittelalter im Spannungsbogen des Vergleichs: zwanzig internationale Beiträge zu Praxis, Problemen und Perspektiven der historischen Komparatistik*, Europa im Mittelalter 1 (Berlin, 2001).

Michael Borgolte, Julia Dücker, Marcel Müllerburg, Bernd Schneidmüller, eds., *Integration und Desintegration der Kulturen im europäischen Mittelalter*, Europa im Mittelalter 18 (Berlin, 2011).

Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000).

David L. D'Avray, *Medieval Religious Rationalites: A Weberian Analysis* (Cambridge, 2010).

Marcel Detienne, *Comparer l'incomparable* (Paris, 2000); English version *Comparing the Incomparable,*. trans Janet Lloyd (Stanford, Calif., 2008).

Wolfram Drews, *Die Karolinger und die Abbasiden von Bagdad: Legitimationsstrategien frühmittelalterlicher Herrscherdynastien im transkulturellen Vergleich* (Berlin, 2009).

Michel Espagne, "Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle", *Genèses* 17 (1994), 112–21.

Patrick J. Geary and Gabor Klaniczay, eds., *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Leiden, 2013).

Clifford Geertz, "Kulturbegriff und Menschenbild (1966)", in *Historische Anthropologie*, ed. Aloys Winterling (Stuttgart, 2006), 47–66.

Michael Gehler and Robert Rollinger, eds., *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte: Epochenübergreifende und historische Vergleiche*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 2014).

Andre Gingrich and Richard G. Fox, eds., *Anthropology: by Comparison* (New York, 2002).

Andre Gingrich and Tatjana Thelen, "Comparative Anthropology: Achievements, Failures and Future", *Ethnologie française* 42, 2 (2012), 385–390.

Andre Gingrich and Christina Lutter, eds., *Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Medieval Forms of Identity in Europe and Asia. Thematic Journal Issue: History and Anthropology* 26,1(2014); http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2014.930739.

Erich Gruen, "Did Ancient Identity Depend on Ethnicity? A Preliminary Probe", *Phoenix* 67, 1,2 (2013), 1–22.

John Hudson and Ana Rodríguez, eds., *Diverging Paths? The Shapes of Power and Institutions in Medieval Christendom and Islam* (Leiden, 2014).

Mayke de Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism: the Power of Prayer", in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, 2: c. 700–c. 900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), 622–53.

Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, "Introduction: Comparison and Beyond: Traditions, Scope and Perspective of Comparative History", in *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, eds. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka (New York, 2012), 1–30.

Matthew Lange, *Comparative-Historical Methods* (Los Angeles 2013).

Niklas Luhmann, *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik* (Frankfurt am Main 1999).

Ian Morris and Walter Scheidel, eds., *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires: State Power from Assyria to Byzantium* (Oxford, 2009).

Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge, 1986).

Dorothy Noyes, "On Sociocultural Categories", *Indian Folklife* 19, *Folklore Abroad: On the Diffusion and Revision of Sociocultural Categories*, ed. Dorothy Noyes (April 2005), 3–7.

Otto Gerhard Oexle, *Die Wirklichkeit und das Wissen: Mittelalterforschung—Historische Kulturwissenschaft—Geschichte und Theorie der historischen Erkenntnis*, eds. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch et al. (Göttingen, 2011).

Monika Palmberger and Andre Gingrich, "Qualitative Comparative Practices: Dimensions, Cases, and Strategies", in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, ed. Uwe Flick (Thousand Oaks, Calif., 2013), 94–108.

Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner and Richard Payne, eds., *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300–1100* (Farnham/ Burlington, 2012).

Walter Pohl, "Comparing communities—the limits of comparison", *History and Anthropology* 26, 1 (2014), 18–35; http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2014.930739.

Walter Pohl, and Gerda Heydemann, "The Rhetoric of Election—1 Peter 2.9 and the Franks", in: *Religious Franks*, eds. Rob Meens et al. (Manchester, forthcoming).

Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley 1987).

Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Transformation der Kulturtheorien: Zur Entwicklung eines Theorieprogramms* (Weilerswist 2000).

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1978).

Thomas Scheffer and Jörg Niewöhner, eds., *Thick Comparison: Reviving the Ethnographic Aspiration*, International studies in sociology and social anthropology 114 (Leiden, 2010).

Walter Scheidel, ed., *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires* (Oxford, 2009a).

Walter Scheidel, "Introduction", in *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*, ed. id. (Oxford, 2009b), 3–10.

Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (London, 1986).

Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann, 5th rev. ed. (Tübingen, 1980).

Max Weber, "Die Objektivität sozialwissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis", in Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann, 6th ed. (Tübingen, 1985), 146–48.

Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity", *History and Theory* 45 (2006), 30–50.

Chris Wickham, "Historical Transitions: A Comparative Approach", *The Medieval History Journal* 13, 1 (2010), 1–21.

Veronika Wieser, ed., *Making Ends Meet: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the End of Times in Medieval Christianity, Islam and Buddhism* (Berlin, New York, forthcoming).

MAP 1. *Important locations in Western Europe, Central Europe and Dalmatia that are mentioned in the volume.*
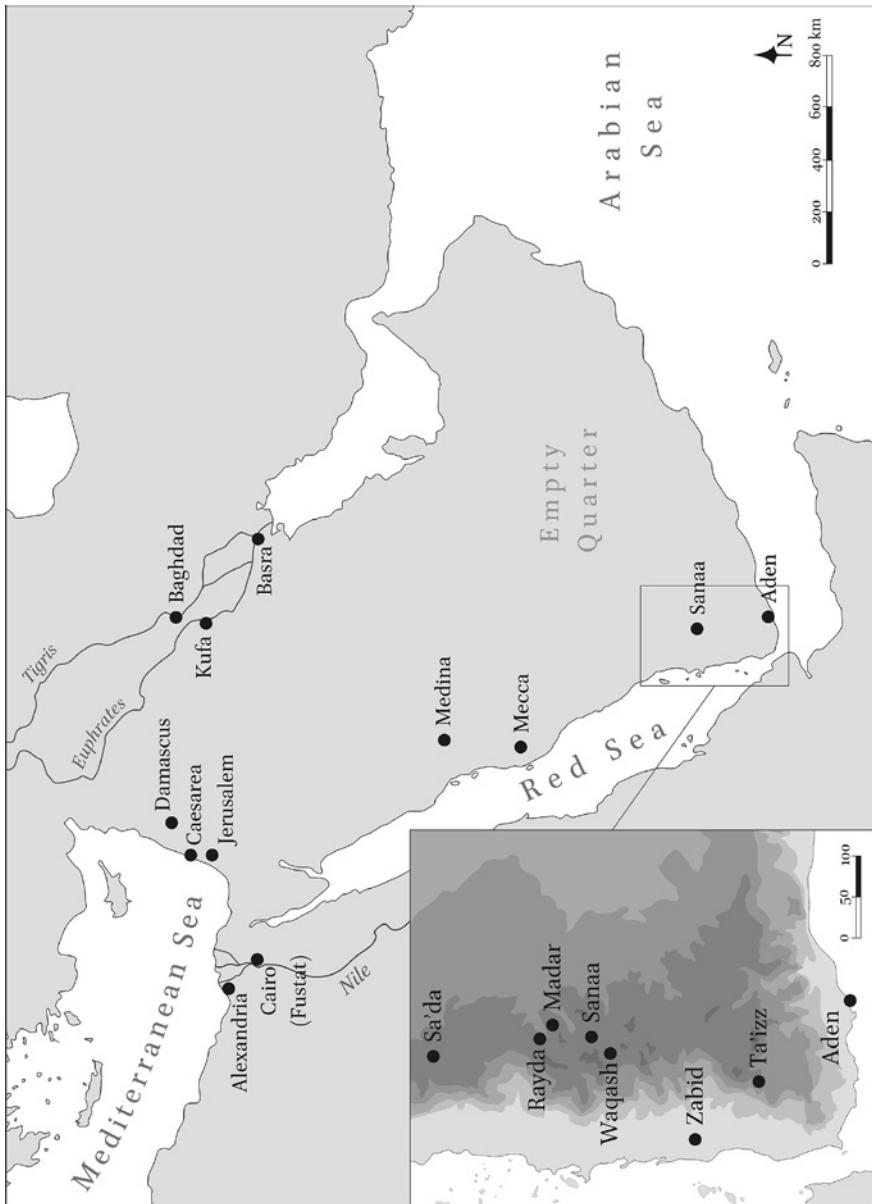
MAP 2. *Important locations in the central Islamic areas and south-west Arabia that are mentioned in the volume.*
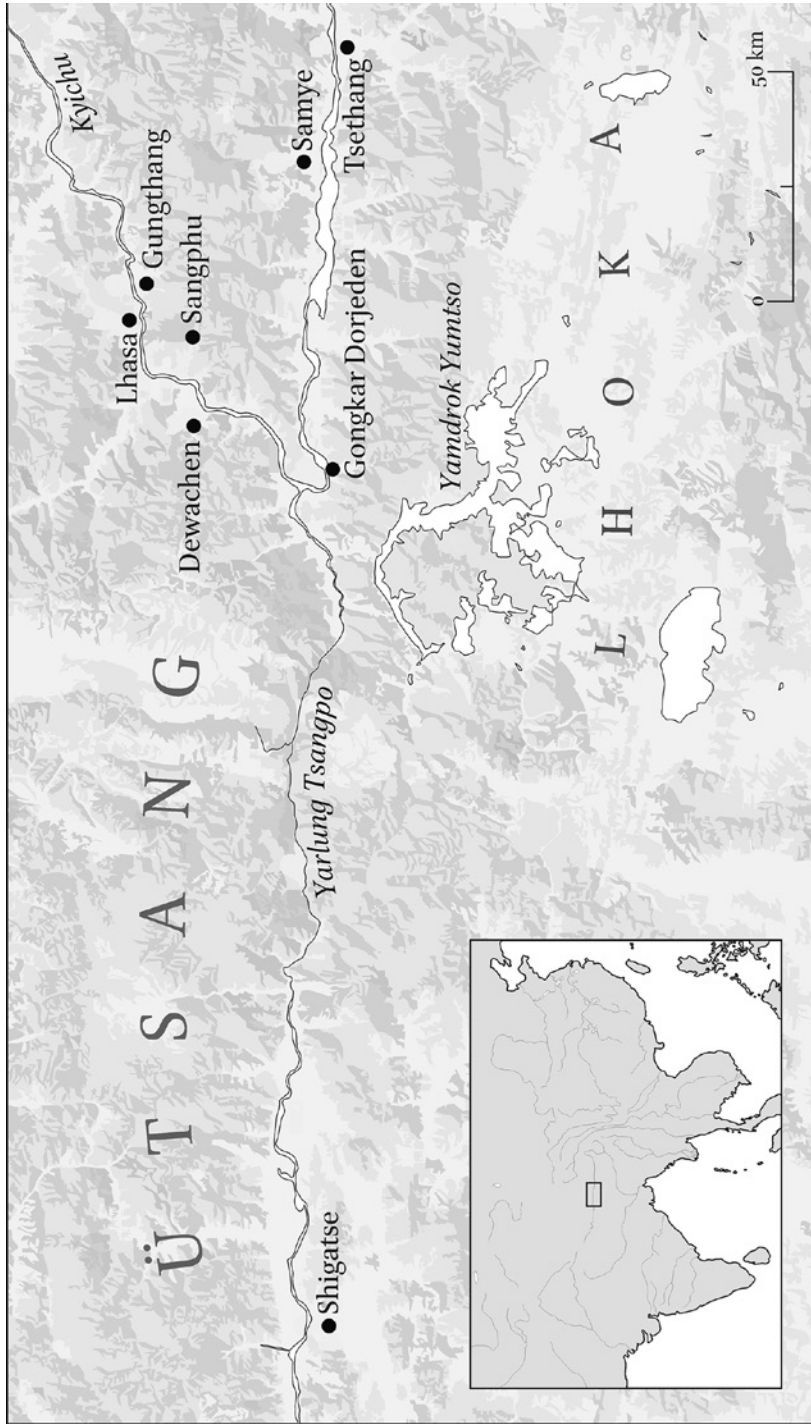
MAP 3. *Important locations in the Tibetan Highlands that are mentioned in the volume.*

PART 1

Addressing Community: Terms, Concepts and Meanings

∵

People(s) of God? Biblical Exegesis and the Language of Community in Late Antique and Early Medieval Europe

Gerda Heydemann

Christians in late antique and early medieval Europe were accustomed to imagining their religious community as a people. The notion of the "chosen people", the "people of God", functioned as a governing metaphor for articulating the sense of belonging to a community which was at the same time universal and took multiple local forms, all-encompassing but exclusive in its special bond with God. Christian authors used the vocabulary associated with political or ethnic communities—*populus, plebs, natio* or *gens*—to describe and define their community and its coherence, or to delineate its boundaries.

Christians encountered the metaphor of the people of God through their engagement with the text of the Hebrew Bible ("Old Testament"). The Old Testament narratives about Israel as God's chosen people provided a powerful model for Christian communities. When Christian authors appropriated this model they had to explain the ancient biblical concepts to their contemporary audiences. In doing so, they linked the text of the Bible to the political vocabulary of their own present. They not only drew on a common-sense understanding of what it meant to belong to a people, but also sometimes explicitly reflected on the range of meanings and the usage of the relevant terminology. Biblical exegesis—the interpretation of scripture in the form of written commentaries or sermons—therefore provides rich material for understanding the interplay between religious, political, and/or ethnic language in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

This paper investigates how and why the terminology related to peoples and particular communities served Christian authors to envision (universal) Christian communities. What were the effects of the entanglement between religious and political visions of community, and how did they relate to shifting political and social contexts? To explore these questions, I will take the history of interpretation of a specific biblical verse as a starting point. In the book of Deuteronomy, God rebukes the people of Israel for worshipping other deities besides him, warning them that he will retaliate by abandoning them in favour of another people: "*They have provoked me with that which was no god,*

and have angered me with their vanities: and I will provoke them with that which is no people ['am/ethnos/non gens],[1] *and will vex them with a foolish people* [gōj/gens]" (Deut. 32:21). This text, which was commonly interpreted as a prophetic foretelling of the transition of the covenant to the Christians, raised interesting questions about the relationship between Israel and the other peoples, and about its status as a community chosen by God. By tracing the interpretation of this passage through selected examples between the Roman empire of the 3rd and 4th century and the post-imperial world of the 6th, it is possible to investigate how different exegetes, working in different political contexts and with different agendas in mind, conceptualized the role of the people(s) as political and ethnic entities within the Christian people of God.

Looking at the use and semantic range of the generic terminology for peoples in biblical interpretation can also contribute to modern debates about the significance of ethnic identities for political organization during the period of transition from the 5th century AD onwards, when the Roman empire in the west was gradually replaced by a number of largely independent Christian kingdoms ruled by so-called barbarian peoples, such as Franks, Goths or Vandals.[2] It provides an opportunity to explore the tension between wide-ranging Christian visions of community and visions of smaller, more particular communities. What emerges from these debates is that in order to understand the shifting political role of the barbarian peoples, it is also necessary to understand the corresponding concepts of community. As has been noted, terms such as *gens* ("people") were used to describe a range of groups bound together by various criteria, from clans and extended families to ethnic groups, military units or political elites; but *gens/gentes* could also have religious connotations, designating "pagans", "heretics", or simply demons and vices.[3] This suggests that rather than assuming any rigid distinction between ethnic, religious or political/civic identities, we should investigate the interplay of these elements in ancient and early medieval conceptions of peoples.[4]

---

1 Most Old Latin versions read *non gens*, while the Vulgate has *qui non est populus*. Unless otherwise noted, biblical texts and translations follow the version as used by the exegetes in their commentaries. The research for this article was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): F42 "Visions of Community".

2 For an extensive discussion with bibliography see Pohl, "Strategies of identification"; see also the positions outlined in Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, 35–62; Geary, *Myth of Nations*, and the sometimes polemical articles in Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity*, with the response by Walter Pohl. See also Pohl, "Introduction" in this volume.

3 For studies of the terminology see Gschnitzer/Werner, "Volk"; Zientara, "Populus-gens-natio"; Goetz, "Gens".

4 Pohl, "Comparing communities", 20–21.

Chosen People(s)

The biblical "chosen people" is a complex model of community, in which Israel's identity is defined by religious, but also by ethnic and political factors. According to the biblical narrative, God has elected Israel and concluded a covenant with his people. Israel's status as chosen people is characterized most of all by the implications of the covenant: monotheistic belief, adherence to divine law, sacred rites such as circumcision and sacrifice, and rules of lifestyle such as food regulations or the keeping of the sabbat. In return for meeting these obligations, Israel receives divine gifts such as possession of the promised land or divine protection in war, but also the revelation of the law and the prophets.[5] Apart from the common acceptance of the covenant and the law, notions of descent and lineage, a common territory, political independence (and its loss) and a shared history play a decisive role in the forging of Israel's collective identity.[6]

The idea of the chosen people served to describe an ideal of community, but it was also a model of separation and demarcation.[7] Israel is elected by God in contrast to the other, non-chosen peoples, who worship numerous other gods and have not received the law; it is a special people which adopts a distinctive model of community through the covenant with God. In the biblical text, this distinctiveness was expressed through the semantic contrast between *'am* (for the chosen people) and *gōjīm* (for the other peoples).[8] The Latin versions generally reproduced this contrast by calling the people of God *populus* and the other peoples *gentes* (sometimes *nationes*). While this translation did not do justice to the semantic range of the Hebrew terms, which in some respect differs from that of the Latin ones, it did align the biblical terminology with the

---

5 For an introduction into the theme see Nicholson, *God and his People*; Wells, *God's Holy People*; Perlitt, *Bundestheologie*; and the papers in Kaminsky et al., eds., *"A Covenant to the People"*; from a sociological perspective: Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 44–65.

6 For discussions of the negotiation of Israel's identity in various books of the Hebrew Bible see the different approaches in Hendel, *Remembering Abraham*; Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity*; Mullen, *Narrative History and Ethnic Boundaries*; Lemche, *Israelites*, 86–132; Grosby, *Biblical Ideas*; and the papers in Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible*. Cf. also Clements, "Gōj", 967–68; Cody, "When is the chosen people".

7 Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain*; Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, 277–86; Bächli, *Israel und die Völker*; Crouch, *Making of Israel*, esp. 165–223.

8 Concise overviews: Hulst, "Volk"; Colpe, "Heidenbegriff"; see further Bächli, *Israel und die Völker*.

terminology current in Roman historiography and political thought.[9] There, a parallel binary existed between the Roman *populus*, characterized by a sense of political or legal/constitutional unity, and the *gentes*, which were perceived as "barbarian" peoples defined by common descent and characterized as uncultivated in contrast to Roman civilization. It is important to note that the opposition between *'am*/*populus* and *gojim*/*gentes* is not an absolute distinction between Israel and the other peoples, but rather a conceptual distinction between two "models of peoplehood".[10] It is used from an Israelite (or Roman) perspective to express differences with regard to religious status (Israel) or political organization and cultural identity (the Romans).

When Christian exegetes appropriated the biblical models and terminology, they had, generally speaking, two options. Christians either styled themselves as a new people of God after the model of Israel, claiming the title *populus Dei*, *populus Christianus* or "true Israel".[11] Like the people of Israel, this Christian people was defined first and foremost through its special relationship to God; membership in the community was dependent on faithfulness to God (and Christ) and on obedience to his commandments. As a typological counterpart to the Old Testament people of God, the Christian *populus* appears in exegetical texts in a largely equivalent function with the Church (*ecclesia*). It could either encompass the Christian world in its entirety, thus presenting an ideal notion of community, or be applied in quite specific terms to a concrete historical embodiment of such a Christian people, for example to the congregation gathered in a church building as a liturgical community. The claim to being the new people of God could be formulated by asserting either continuity or difference with regard to the biblical Israel.[12] On the other hand, Christians could also identify with the *gentes*, who were called to believe in Christ and were destined to replace Israel as a people of God in the New

---

9   Colpe, "Heidenbegriff", 71–73; for Jerome's Vulgate translation see Adams, *The Populus of Augustine and Jerome*, 84–108.

10   Geary, *Myth of Nations*, 52–56; Tugène, *L'idee de la nation*, 76–77. It should also be noted that the status of the *gojīm*/*gentes* is by no means clear-cut or stable throughout the Bible: Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, 287–307; Lohfink et al., eds., *Der Gott Israels und die Völker*; Hendel, *Remembering Abraham*, 3–30.

11   This has its roots already in the New Testament see, among others, Strathmann/Meyer, "Laos"; Bobichon, "Le thème du 'Verus Israel'"; Horell, "'Race', 'nation', 'people'"; Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes*, esp. 347–61; Kok, "The true covenant people"; Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 218–33; Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 239–68. For an overview of the material in patristic exegesis see Dassmann, *Die eine Kirche in vielen Bildern*, 164–220.

12   Fredriksen, "Allegory and reading God's book"; Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews*, 185–98; Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 75–86; Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 227–32.

Testament, thus extending the idea of the chosen people to all other peoples. This peculiar combination of claims to election and universalism was expressed through the notion of the Christians a single people of God, but one which consisted of believers from many different peoples, a *populus ex* (*diversis*) *gentibus*.[13] From a Christian perspective, the *gentes* however remained an ambiguous category. The calling of the *gentes* could refer to the calling of a diversity of peoples, but it could also mean the calling of individual "non-Jewish" or "gentile" Christians.[14] Moreover, notions of religious alterity continued to be associated with the *gentes*. The Old Testament distinction between Israel and the *gentes* was often reinterpreted as a distinction between the Christian people of God and its opposites, namely pagans, heretics or Jews who rejected the Christian faith.[15] It is perhaps due to this ambiguity that writers increasingly chose other terms, such as *gentilis* ("heathen") or the non-biblical *paganus* ("pagan"), which became current from the 4th/5th century onwards, to express religious alterity.[16]

In biblical exegesis, visions of the Christian community remained closely tied to the language of the Old Testament, and Christians persistently used terminology taken from the semantic field of peoples and ethnic groups to describe their community. Yet exegetical texts remain under-explored as a source for our understanding of the early medieval concepts and terminology. One reason for this is that scholars have usually assumed that Christianity, as a universal religion, transcended particular political or ethnic identities, and that descriptions of the Christians as a people or the use of terminology of kinship and common descent for the Christian community should therefore be understood in a purely metaphorical way. In recent years, such "ethnic argumentation" to define religious communities has become the subject of renewed discussion in studies of early Christianity.[17] Moving away from concepts of Christianity as a "disembedded religion" and from Christian identity as an "identity *sui generis*", these studies have questioned the assumption that it is possible to draw a neat distinction between "religious", "ethnic" or "political"

---

13   Barclay, "Universalism and Particularism"; Buell, "Race and universalism".

14   For discussion regarding the Pauline epistles see Scott, *Paul and the Nations*; Gadenz, *Called from the Jews and the Gentiles*; for a different interpretation see Heckel, "Das Bild der Heiden". Cf. also the discussion in Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*.

15   Colpe, "Heidenbegriff", 69–73.

16   Colpe, "Heidenbegriff", 73–82. *Gentilis*, of course, was connected etymologically to *gens*, see Isidore, *Etymologies* 8.10.2–4, ed. Lindsay.

17   See, in addition to the studies cited in n. 11, Buell, *Why this New Race?*; Olster, "Classical ethnography and early Christian identity"; Townsend, "Another Race". For a sceptical view see Gruen, "Did ancient ethnicity".

identities and communities in late Antiquity. They suggest that Paul and later Christian authors used the language of identity available in their societies to negotiate the status of the Christians in relation to both Jewish communities and the wider political context of the Greco-Roman empire, and that this was a world in which ethnic, religious and political modes of identification were much more closely linked than a modern viewpoint often assumes. Rather than starting from modern concepts of what a people is, we should therefore investigate the terminology in its multi-layeredness, and ask questions about its concrete use and its argumentative functions in texts about Christian communities.

Although biblical exegesis is a highly specialized genre and thus often difficult to contextualize, these texts offer rich material for such a study. Exegetes adapted the biblical text and terminology according to their specific questions and problems, and to the shifting positions of their Christian communities within a broader social and political environment.[18] Biblical exegesis was often the domain of scholarly elites, but the texts (or their content) were also widely diffused, for example through preaching. Many exegetes were also actively involved in the politics of their time, acting as bishops and local leaders, advisers to kings or administrative officials. They approached the biblical text with their own intellectual and conceptual background, and their texts can provide valuable insights into late antique and early medieval concepts of peoples and how they are constituted.

With these preliminary remarks in mind, we can now turn to our case study, the interpretation of Deut. 32:21. Although few late antique commentaries on the book of Deuteronomy exist, the passage in question was often commented upon because it was cited by the apostle Paul in his Letter to the Romans (Rom. 10:19). Romans, in particular Chs. 9–11, was a key text in patristic debates about the relationship between Jews and Christians; its central theme is the transition of the faith (and the covenant) from the Jews to all (non-Jewish) peoples, and the diverse modes in which believers from these groups have access to salvation. The interpretation of Romans was also connected to theological discussions of sin, free will, and divine grace, particularly from the end of the 4th century onwards—topics that lie beyond the scope of this paper, which will focus only on the question of the people(s) of God and its uses.[19]

---

18   For orientation see Karla Pollmann, "Forms, methods and functions"; Blowers, "Interpreting scripture"; Young, *Biblical Exegesis*. Valuable handbooks include: Kannengiesser, ed., *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*; Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*.

19   See Gorday, *Principles of Patristic Exegesis*; see also the overview of patristic interpretations in Schelkle, *Paulus, Lehrer der Väter* (with 376–77 for Romans 10:19).

Christianity and Empire: Origen and Ambrose

We will begin by looking at the writings of Origen of Alexandria (d. ca. 254), who discussed the Deuteronomy passage twice in his exegetical works. His *Commentary on Romans*, originally written in Greek, has been preserved (like many of his texts) only in the Latin translation made by Rufinus of Aquileia at the end of the fourth century, which means that we do not have unmediated access to Origen's thought or wording.[20] Origen was a very controversial figure, yet as an exegete, he exerted tremendous influence in the Latin West, and his work was read and used by many of the authors we will discuss later on. Origen originally wrote in a political context where Christianity was not a majority or "state" religion and Christians were periodically subject to persecution by the imperial power—Origen's father died during the persecution of Septimus Severus. The *Commentary on Romans* was written in Egypt in the 240s, during a time of growing tensions between Christians and non-Christians within the empire, shortly before the renewed persecutions broke out under the emperor Decius.[21]

For Origen, the basic meaning of the passage "*I will make you jealous of those who are not a people* (non gens)" as cited by Paul was clear. It was a prophecy about the election of the (non-Jewish) Christians: "Doubtless, he is speaking here of Christians, who have been received by God, to the jealousy of the first unbelieving people (*populus*) and of the scorner".[22] Origen further explains that the Christians are supposed to function as a positive example for the unfaithful people of Israel. This, however, elicited the question of why, if the Christians have been elected by God as his new people because of their faith and devotion, the biblical text nevertheless seems to deride them by suggesting that they do not even merit the title of a *gens* (or, alternatively, by calling them a "foolish *gens*")? Origen's answer is interesting because, incidentally, it reveals what he understood to be the characteristics of such a *gens*:

> Each *gens*, for example the *gens* of the Egyptians, the Syrians or the Moabites, is distinguished by its own territory, language, *habitus* and

---

20   The accuracy and trustworthiness of Rufinus' translations has been much debated, especially in the case of the commentary on Romans, which is also heavily abbreviated: see Bammel, *Der Römerbrieftext des Rufin*, 43–104; Haither, *Paulusdeutung*, 14–22; and recently Chin, "Rufinus of Aquilea", with further bibliography.

21   For a brief overview of Origen's life and background, see Trigg, *Origen*.

22   Origen-Rufinus, *Commentary on Romans* 8.5, ed. Bammel, p. 663; trans. Scheck, p. 152.

customs, as well as institutions. Syrians are never called Egyptians, nor are Moabites named Idumeans, nor Arabs, Scythians.[23]

Origen presents here a quite elaborate list of features which distinguish a people that is remarkably similar to many (ancient and modern) lists which seek to define "peoples" or "ethnicity" through such a set of "objective criteria". Like most such lists, it contains a common territory, language, shared culture and customs, as well as a degree of social or political organization (*instituta*) and a distinctive proper name (ethnonym).[24] Notably, common descent or biological origin, perceived or otherwise, do not play a role in Origen's argument. Another important aspect is that the list shows Origen's understanding of *gens* as a term referring to the division of the world into a number of distinctive groups, each of which can be unambiguously addressed by its own ethnonym.[25]

It is precisely this particularism, of course, which according to Origen makes it impossible to characterize the Christians as a *gens*. Christians cannot be defined as a group through cultural and other criteria in the same way as these other *gentes*. Rather, Christian identity forms an overarching identity, which crosscuts—and can subsume—all these distinctive groups. Christians, Origen continues, are "not a single *gens* but are one people (*populus*) from all *gentes*. And for this reason Moses named them 'not a *gens*' as a supreme honour since they were not one *gens*, but can be called the *gens* of all *gentes*".[26] Thus, if it is possible to think of the Christians as a people at all, it is fitting to call them a *populus*. The Christian people of God is a universal community—only in that sense can it be called a *gens*, a *gens omnium gentium*. Belonging to the Christian people in this sense is not necessarily incompatible with membership in another *gens* as it would be for the peoples named in Origen's definition, even if Christianity represents, to Origen at least, a much more important layer of identity. In this, the Christian community is not dissimilar from Roman imperial identity, which is likewise supposed to be over-arching and inclusive.

Unfortunately, there are no Greek fragments for this part of the text which would make it possible to compare Rufinus' Latin with the Greek terminology.

---

23   Origen-Rufinus, *Commentary on Romans* 8.5, ed. Bammel, p. 664; trans. Scheck, p. 152 (slightly modified, G H).

24   Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, 22–30. Cf. Pohl, "Strategies of identification", 6–8. Despite a remarkable general stability of such lists, the specific criteria could vary among different authors, as could their practical usefulness (or lack thereof) and salience in different contexts: Pohl, "Telling the difference"; Geary, "Ethnic identity as a situational construct".

25   Cf. Pohl, "Strategies of identification", 2.

26   Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 8.5, ed. Bammel, p. 664; trans. Scheck, p. 152.

This is, however, possible for Origen's homily on Psalm 36, which contains a similar discussion of Deut. 32:21.[27] There, Origen again explained why the Christians cannot be called a *gens*, using a similar argument: the term for the Christians as a (non-) people in the Deuteronomy passage is *ethnos*, while he referred to Israel as people of God as *láos*.[28]

Origen's reasoning in these commentaries is reminiscent of similar arguments used by Christians in apologetic debates with non-Christian Greeks and Romans. One of the central issues in these debates was the question of whether the Christian claim to universality was legitimate, and whether their religious exclusivism jeopardized their loyalty to their original *ethnos* and its traditional customs, or, an even more alarming problem, their political loyalty to the empire. In his apologetic work *Against Celsus*, Origen reported that his pagan adversary Celsus had raised precisely such a charge.[29] According to Celsus:

> the Jews were Egyptians by origin [*genos*], and left Egypt after revolting against the Egyptian community and despising the religious customs of Egypt [...]. What they did to the Egyptians they suffered in turn through those who followed Jesus and believed him to be Christ; in both instances a revolt against the community led to the introduction of new ideas.[30]

The Christians were thus a particular group who, instead of sticking to the customs and religious practices of their *ethnos*, wrongfully raised universalist claims.

Origen's exegetical argument in the homily on Psalm 36 reads almost like a response to such charges. There, Origen differentiated the Christians from both the *gentes* in the sense of pagans or gentiles and from *gentes* in the sense of peoples.[31] According to him, they do not qualify as a *gens* because they lack numerical quantity and spatial cohesion. Again, he emphasized that the

---

27   Latin text in Origen, *Homilies on Psalms 36–38*, 36.1.1, ed. Prinzivalli, pp. 56–59. The Greek text has only recently been rediscovered in a Munich manuscript, see Molin Pradel, "Novità origeniane"; Perrone, "Rediscovering Origen".

28   I have used the transcription by Alex Poulos (Washington): <http://mapoulos.wordpress.com/origen>, accessed March 28, 2014. I thank the author for making it available to me, as well as Cinzia Grifoni (Vienna) for helping me with the Greek text. Meanwhile, the printed edition has appeared, see Origenes, *Die neuen Psalmenhomilien*, ed. Perrone, pp. 113–26 (at pp. 115–16 for the passage in question).

29   Schott, *Christianity,* 45–51; on the text, see Frede, "Origen's treatise".

30   Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.5, trans. Chadwick, p. 131. Schott, *Christianity*, 45–51, translates "ancestral custom" for "community".

31   Origen, *Homilies on Psalms 36–38*, 36.1, ed. Prinzivalli, p. 56.

Christian community does not overlap either with a people or a civic community but rather crosscuts both of these: "there are few from this one city to believe, and others from another, and never in the history of our faith has an entire *gens* as whole been converted". The Christians as a group, Origen concluded, are thus of a different kind (*genus*) than other *gentes*—he names the Jews or the Egyptians—being gathered from many different peoples. Origen's specific choice of Jews and Egyptians as groups with which to contrast the Christians matches Celsus' argument, but it also makes sense given his location in an Egyptian town with a large Jewish community.[32] In a phrase left untranslated by Rufinus, Origen added that it is only after they have been united by Christ that the Christians can be called a people (*ethnos*).[33]

The question of the Christians as a *gens/genus* was a recurrent theme in apologetic contexts, and Christian authors developed a variety of strategies in response.[34] When Rufinus translated Origen's exegesis into Latin towards the end of the 4th century, he did so in the changed context of a Christian empire, when the apologetic debate was no longer so urgent and both Paul's Letter to the Romans and Origen's works had become the subject of different, inner-Christian debates.[35] The theme of the Christian *gens Dei* is peripheral to the main arguments pursued in the texts of Origen's later readers; however, they did adopt and modulate it according to their specific concerns and changing political contexts.

One of the first Latin exegetes to use Origen's homily on Psalm 36 was Bishop Ambrose of Milan, in a sermon addressed to a group of catechumens (new converts who were preparing for baptism). Largely following Origen's exegetical argument, Ambrose explained how Israel had lost its exclusive claim to the

---

32   See DeLange, *Origen and the Jews*.

33   In Rufinus' Latin version, the Christians are instead equated with the "foolish *gens*" mentioned next in the biblical text, which is so called because, in contrast to Israel, they lacked the law and the word of God.

34   See Lieu, "Race of the god-fearers"; Young, "Greek apologists"; Horell, "'Race', 'nation', 'people'", 132–34 ; Buell, *Why this New Race*, 52–59, 98–115; contrast Gruen, "Did ancient identity", 17–20; and the classic study by Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung*, 259–89. Frequently, the Christian response to challenges from pagans and Jews was the exact opposite from the argument traced here, claiming that the Christians could indeed be viewed as a people with respectable ancestral customs and a distinct way of life. For Origen's use of this strategy, see Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument*, 8–9.

35   Bammel, "Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul" and "Rufinus' translation of Origen's commentary"; De Bruyne, "Introduction", 1–24; Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*.

status of chosen people to its Christian successor.[36] The distinction between the people of God and the other peoples became blurred when Israel started to worship foreign gods and God retaliated by electing a new people, the Church, from among those previously considered unworthy (Ambrose speaks of an *electio uiliorum*). A new community, this time gathered from different peoples (*plebs ex nationibus*), acquired the attributes of the ancient people of God, namely the divine law, the revelations of the prophets and the new covenant.

Like Origen, Ambrose differentiated the Christian community both from pagans (*gentiles*) and from *gentes* and *nationes* as political or ethnic entities, in his case, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Syrians, Jews, and Arabs, suggesting that the Christian people derived its identity from a different basis.[37] Interestingly, he stated that peoples regularly take their name from the territory—more specifically, the province—which they inhabit.[38] From Origen's list of criteria for what constitutes a people, Ambrose thus singled out only the aspect of territorial coherence, explicitly linking it to an imperial framework, and the distinctive ethnonym. He stated that in contrast to other *gentes*,

> we Christians, who are assembled from diverse peoples [*populi*], cannot claim the name of a single *gens*; and since we do not have a name on earth, we acquire one from heaven, so that we are called people of Christ [*populus Christi*].[39]

This passage neatly highlights the tensions inherent in the Christian language of community. Although the respective status of Israel and the other peoples had been reversed and the distinction between the *populus Dei* and the *gentes* has theoretically become obsolete, *gens* remained problematic as a term for the Christian community as a whole, being trumped by the more adequate *populus*.

Ambrose is no exception here—indeed, many Christian authors like him, writing with a Roman cultural background in a Christian empire, clearly preferred *populus* as a concept for defining the Christian community. As mentioned above, *populus* as a term for the people of the covenant corresponded

---

36   Ambrose, *Explanation on Psalm 36*, 6, eds. Petschenig et al., pp. 74–75. On the text, see Rondeau, *Les commentaires*, 149–54. The standard biographical account in English is McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*.

37   Ambrose, *Explanation on Psalm 36*, 7, eds. Petschenig et al., p. 75.

38   On the relationship between provincial and ethnic identities in the later Roman empire, see Mitthof, "Zur Neustiftung von Identität".

39   Ambrose, *Explanation on Psalm 36*, 7, eds. Petschenig et al., p. 75.

well with the traditional Roman notion of the *populus* as a "people by constitution" current in political thought.[40] Like the biblical people of God, the Roman *populus* was a political community which was bound together by written law and common political (or religious) action. It existed by virtue of consensus and contract, because of a shared will to community.[41] And like the Christian people of God, it was assembled from many different *gentes*: Roman historians narrated how the Roman *populus* had come into being through the amalgamation of diverse Italian peoples.[42] In a Christian Roman empire, it provided a model for an overarching, inclusive identity, even if many Christian authors remained sceptical of too close an alignment between Christian universalism and Roman imperialism.[43] By contrast, *gens*, with its connotations of common descent, being perceived as a form of belonging which was inborn rather than freely chosen, seems to have been more difficult to appropriate for the spiritual community of the Christians. Moreover, readers of Roman historiography and ethnography continued to encounter the *gentes* as barbarian enemies at the periphery of the Roman Empire. The tension between the *gentes* as part of the Church and the *gentes* as barbarians, pagans or unbelievers thus persisted.[44]

Similar observations can be made for Ambrose's younger contemporary Augustine, who had heard Ambrose preach at Milan and later became bishop of Hippo in North Africa and one of the most influential Latin writers throughout the Middle Ages.[45] In his *Exposition of certain propositions on Romans*, written in response to a series of questions raised by a group of brethren after a joint reading of the biblical text in Carthage, we can observe how he balanced the notion of the Christian *gens* with the idea of the people of God as a *populus*.[46] He used the traditional contrast between the people of God and a

40   Geary, *Myth of Nations*, 54–55. See above, n. 2.

41   The definition of the Roman statesman Cicero has become emblematic in this respect: he defines the state, the *res publica*, as the responsibility of the people (*res populi*). A *populus*, in turn, is not any multitude, but a congregation which is bound together by consensus of law and common interests (*populum autem non omnem coetum multitudinis, sed coetum iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatum*: Cicero, *De republica* 1.39, ed. Powell, p. 28).

42   Gruen, "Did ancient identity", 4–5, with references to the sources; for more detailed studies, see Dench, *Romulus' Asylum*; Farney, *Ethnic Identity*.

43   Pohl, "Strategies of identification", 23; Adams, *The Populus*, esp. 17–22, 71–84 and 123–35; cf. also Dassmann, *Die eine Kirche*, 177–88.

44   Maas, "Barbarians", 67–68; Chauvot, *Opinions romaines*, 429–59; Colpe, "Heidenbegriff", 69–73.

45   The classic study is Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*.

46   On the text, see Fredriksen, "Die frühe Paulusexegese", 284–86.

gens, with its connotations of right faith vs. idolatry and pagan worship, to suggest the possibility of transition from one status to the other. The Christian community (the "unwise *gens*"), he argued, had left behind the cult of idols and adopted faith in Christ, thereby shaking off the mark of its religious alterity: its *gentilitas*. It thus ceased to be a *gens*, and accordingly, at this point Augustine called this community a *populus*.[47] To support this idea of transformation from the status of a *gens* to the status of a people of God, Augustine reminded his readers of the apostle Paul's argument that the boundary between circumcised and uncircumcised (between Jews and Gentiles) could be crossed through righteous behaviour.[48]

In the *City of God*, Augustine developed a similar idea regarding the transition from *gens* to *populus* with reference to the Old Testament people of Israel. According to Augustine, the Israelites were certainly a *gens*, albeit one that was chosen to fulfil a special function in God's plan for the salvation of mankind, a *gens prophetica* ("prophetic people"), whose history and fate foreshadowed the coming community of the Christian Church or the "city of God".[49] The establishment of the covenant between God and the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai marked the beginning of a special stage in Israel's history, of its existence as a *populus*, a people defined by their obedience towards divine law.[50]

Augustine was also very interested in the plurality of *gentes* within the Christian Church, and in their positive role in salvation history. When speaking about the transition of the status of the chosen people to the Christians, he often juxtaposed the particularity of the old covenant with the universality of election in Christian times.[51] Even so, *populus* remained the term preferred by Augustine to develop his vision of the Christian people of God. Significantly, the famous definition of the *populus* formulated by the Roman statesman Cicero was central to Augustine's definition of the Christian community as an ideal polity (*civitas*) in the *City of God*.[52]

47   Augustine, *Explanations on Certain Propositions on Romans* 60 (68), ed. Divjak, p. 42.

48   Ibid.

49   Augustine, *City of God* 10.32, eds. Dombart et al., p. 312. See Corradini, "Die Ankunft der Zukunft", 75; Fredriksen, "Allegory and reading God's book".

50   Augustine, *City of God*, 16.43, ed. Dombart et al., p. 549. Adams, *Populus*, p. 115; Marshall, *Studies in the Political and Socio-Religious Terminology*, 61–74.

51   Borgomeo, *L'Église de ce temps*, 49–73; Hübner, "Gentes".

52   Augustine, *City of God*, 2.21 and 19.24, ed. Dombart et al., pp. 52–55 and 695–96; cf. Suerbaum, *Staatsbegriff*, 177; Adams, *Populus*, 17–22 and 123–35.

Gens Dei: Competing Visions of Community

There are, however, instances in which Augustine was compelled by the biblical text or the polemical context of his exegesis to engage with the notion of a Christian *gens*. This was the case in a sermon preached on Psalm 85 in the early years of the 5th century, where Augustine attempted to define the concept of *gens* in such a way as to delegitimize its use by a specific community, namely the Donatists.

The Donatists had existed as a separate (and highly successful) Church in his native Africa for almost a century, which defined itself in contradistinction to the wider imperial Church.[53] The Donatists claimed that they alone had preserved the integrity of the Church in an uninterrupted line of episcopal succession, while accusing their Catholic opponents of having lapsed into apostasy during the Diocletianic persecutions and therefore compromised the purity of their Church and the validity of the sacraments. According to their opponents, the Donatists were an elitist and separatist group who had broken community with the empire-wide Catholic Church and remained stubbornly restricted to the confines of North Africa.

In the sermon, Augustine contrasted a psalm verse which predicts that all the peoples on earth will believe in God (Ps 85:9: "*All the nations* [gentes] *thou hast made shall come and adore before thee, O Lord: and they shall glorify thy name*") with a biblical passage which speaks about the people of God as a *gens* in the singular (Prov. 14:28: *in the multitude of the people* [gens] *is the dignity of the king*).[54] According to Augustine, the contradiction between these two biblical passages was only apparent. They were, he argued, meant to convey the same message, namely that a Christian community would come into being which encompassed a variety of different peoples across the whole world: the "spacious people" (*lata gens*) of Proverbs 14:28 was equivalent to "all the nations [God had] made" of the Psalm. All these different peoples (*gentes*) had been united to form one single people (*gens*). Augustine thus redefined the Christian *gens* as a universal community. The many different peoples, he explained, related to the universal people of God in the same way as the many local or regional Churches to the Church as a whole. If it was possible to speak of the people of God as a single *gens*, it was because all the different *gentes* shared

---

53   The classic study is Frend, *The Donatist Church*; see most recently Shaw, *Sacred Violence*; Brown, *Through the Eye*, 326–38.

54   Augustine, *Enarrations on the psalms* [*EnPs*], 85.13–14, eds. Dekkers et al., 2: pp. 1185–88.

"one single faith, one single hope, one single charity, one single expectation [i.e., Christ]".[55]

Augustine thereby stated his view of the ideal relationship between particular communities and a universal Christian identity. The term *gens* functioned to express the unity and shared sense of belonging of the Christians across these different particular communities. At the same time, Augustine took care to redirect the sense of belonging and loyalty of his congregation towards a spiritual, otherworldly community rather than any concrete human polity or local congregation. Christians could be said to belong to a *gens* in the same way that they could think of themselves as citizens in the heavenly Jerusalem, the celestial homeland (*patria*). Augustine linked membership in this *gens* with notions not of common descent, but rather of citizenship and civic identity as they were more commonly associated with the people by constitution, the *populus*.[56]

In this sermon, Augustine thus sought to establish a quite specific understanding of the people of God. He attempted to negotiate a balance between the notion of a *gens Dei*, a single, unified Christian people, and the plurality of peoples which constituted this community. It seems likely that this "universal vision" of the Christian *gens*, which he carefully established in a long and complicated argument, was designed to exclude competing definitions of the Christian community, namely that of the Donatists.[57]

As Peter Brown has observed, the Donatist understanding of their Church was heavily inspired by the Old Testament model of the chosen people of Israel. Presenting themselves as the heirs of the biblical Israel, they applied claims to divine election and special favour exclusively to their own community.[58] For example, in the *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs*, the Donatists appropriated the formula of the covenant ("*and I will be their God, and they will be my people*") for themselves.[59] Augustine's opponent Petilian cited Psalm verses about Israel as an elected community threatened by hostile *gentes* to describe

---

55   Augustine, *EnPs* 85.14, eds. Dekkers et al., 2: p. 1188.

56   Augustine, *EnPs* 85.14, eds. Dekkers et al., 2: p. 1188. For a discussion of the significance of Augustine's choice of *civitas* (rather than, for example, *regnum* or *corpus*) as a leading metaphor and of its twin background in biblical and Roman political thought, see Ladner, *Idea of Reform*, 242–83.

57   For the importance of sermons and preaching as a means of communicating to and mobilizing the wider population in the struggle between Donatists and Catholics see Shaw, *Religious Violence*, 409–33; Dossey, *Peasant and Empire*, 147–94.

58   Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 214–15.

59   *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs*, 22, ed. Maier, no. 4, p. 89 (citing 2 Cor. 6:16).

the status of the Donatist Church.[60] Conversely, the Donatists challenged the Catholic claim to be the true Church because of their conformity and consensus with other Churches throughout the Christian world. At the Conference of Carthage in 411, the Donatist representative argued before the imperial magistrate who adjudicated the dispute between the two Churches:

> [The Catholics] define the name "catholic" by reference to provinces or peoples (*gentes*), whereas the name "catholic" signifies that which has the fullness of the sacraments, is perfect and unspotted; it has nothing to do with *gentes*.[61]

Augustine's sermon on Psalm 85 was preached during a crucial phase in the struggle between these two Churches, when Augustine and his colleagues were finally gaining the upper hand against their Donatist rivals with the support of the imperial government. In 405 and again in 412, imperial edicts outlawed the Donatist Church as heretical, prohibiting its assemblies and confiscating its property.[62] When Augustine emphasized the necessary unity among the various Christian peoples within the single *gens Dei* in the sermon, he was arguing against what he perceived as an attempt to restrict the true Christian Church to one particular community among one particular people or province, that is, against a too restricted understanding of the chosen people.[63] Emphasis on the notion of the Church as a plurality of *gentes* occurs frequently in the context of anti-Donatist arguments in Augustine's texts.[64] A complementary strategy, likewise frequently employed by Augustine against the Donatists, was to reject the notion of a single Christian *gens*, allowing it instead only in the

---

60   Augustine, *Against the Letters of Petilian* 2.82.202, ed. Petschenig, p. 123.

61   *Conference of Carthage* (a. 411) 3.102, ed. and trans. Lancel, p. 1064. Markus, "Africa and the orbis terrarum", 326.

62   Suggested dates for *EnPs* 85 vary between 401, 405 and 414/5. See Müller, "Enarrationes in psalmos", 820. On the imperial edicts see Shaw, *Religious Violence*, 535–43; Brown, "Religious coercion".

63   That Augustine had the Donatists in mind as the target of his argument is clear from explicit references to them which occur later in the text: Augustine, *EnPs* 85.15, eds. Dekkers et al., 2: p. 1188.

64   Tholen, *Die Donatisten in den Predigten Augustins*, 128f., 211–16. The argument of the universality of the faith among all the *gentes* is also made in the Acts of the conference of Carthage, see *Conference of Carthage* 1.55.30–105 and 3.98, ed. Lancel, pp. 644–51 and 1058 (Augustine's own statement).

plural, as *tot christianae gentes* ("so many Christian peoples"), in contrast to the Donatist Church in Africa.[65]

In another sermon preached on the topic, Augustine responded to the doubtful questions of an imaginary interlocutor about the conversion of the *gentes*, asserting boldly that "we know that many barbarian *gentes* have already come to believe in Christ; Christ already possesses regions where Roman imperial power has not yet taken hold".[66] Later in the same text, Augustine reacted to a Donatist attempt to relate the multiplicity of peoples (*gentes*) to whom Christ's glory should be proclaimed to "the peoples of Getulia, Numidia, Mauretania or Byzacena" and thus not to foreign peoples, but to the provinces of Roman Africa. Augustine would have none of it: rather the passage referred to "all peoples, without exception".[67] Again, it is notable how much weight was given by both parties to assert the precise congruity between their vision of community and the biblical citation in question. The sermon also reveals how the mental map of both Augustine and his opponents was defined by the political framework of the Roman Empire.[68]

The *Gens Dei* and the People(s) of God in a Post-Imperial World

In the final section of this paper, I want to raise the question of how the problem of the *gens Dei* and the relationship between the people of God and the *gentes* was open for re-negotiation in a world in which the political framework of the Roman empire could no longer be taken for granted. In the course of the 5th century, political power in the west had gradually shifted away from the imperial centre, as barbarian *gentes* such as the Visigoths, Vandals, Burgundians, Franks and Ostrogoths in turn came to rule former Roman provinces as kingdoms.[69] I will consider the interpretation of Deut. 32.21 and related passages by two 6th-century exegetes, Verecundus of Iunca and Cassiodorus, authors who worked at the crossroads between the new political landscape in the west and

---

65   The *tot gentes Christianae* is a recurrent phrase in Augustine, *Against Cresconius*, for example, 4.25.32; 4.37.44; 4. 43.50; 4.52.62; 4.66.83, ed. Petschenig, pp. 531, 542, 549, 560, 582. See also Augustine, *Letter* 108.2 and 11, ed. Daur, pp. 65, 74; Augustine, *Against the Party of Donatus*, 3.3 and 9.25, ed. Petschenig, pp. 100, 124.

66   Augustine, *EnPs* 95.2, eds. Dekkers et al., 2: p. 1344. On the sermon and its anti-Donatist context, see Partoens, "Predigttätigkeit", 395–401.

67   Augustine, *EnPs* 95.3, eds. Dekkers et al., 2: p. 1345.

68   On Christian-Roman triumphalism (and Augustine's scepticism towards it), see Markus, *Saeculum*, 30–44; Brown, "Christianisation"; Pollmann, "Unending sway", 186–91.

69   For the historical context, cf. the literature cited above n. 2.

the empire in the east. Both were members of the Roman intellectual elite who had lived or worked under a barbarian regime for some time, Verecundus in Vandal North Africa and Cassiodorus in Ostrogothic Italy, but they also had contacts (not always pleasant) with the imperial court and spent some time in the capital Constantinople. Both Verecundus and Cassiodorus were careful readers of the work of their predecessors such as Origen, Ambrose or Augustine, and they adapted this tradition to define the place of their Christian communities in changing political contexts.

Cassiodorus, like Augustine, was profoundly interested in the Christian meaning of the *gentes* and their role within the universal Church.[70] In his *Commentary on the Psalms*, written around the middle of the sixth century, he carefully sought to demonstrate that the Old Testament distinction between the chosen people and the *gentes* was no longer valid, and that in Christian times, it was possible for every *gens* to become (part of) God's people. He interpreted the language of community contained in the psalms so as to suggest convergence between *gens/gentes* and the Christian *populus Dei* and to dissolve the contrast between the two biblical models of peoplehood.[71]

Building upon Augustine's writings, Cassiodorus underlined the plurality of peoples (*gentes*) as one of the most important characteristics of the Christian Church. Throughout the commentary, he was careful to emphasize this notion of a universal Church spread among all the different peoples (*ecclesia ex diversis gentibus*). But where the context of Augustine's interest was first and foremost tied to his polemical arguments against the Donatists, for Cassiodorus, the role of the *gentes* in the Christian world became a theme in its own right.[72]

Cassiodorus also picked up on Augustine's line of thought regarding the *gens Dei* to develop it into a concept for Christian self-definition. As we have seen, Augustine used *gens* to suggest a balance between the idea of unity and the plurality of peoples within the universal Church in an attempt to counter its particularist use by his Donatist opponents in his sermon on Psalm 85. Cassiodorus made a similar argument in his commentary on Psalm 82, but here it appears dissociated from its polemical context. Cassiodorus insisted on

---

70   O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* remains the standard biographical treatment; Vessey, "Introduction", is very helpful on the modern historiographical tradition.

71   For a fuller study of the language of community in the *Expositio* see my "Biblical Israel and the Christian gentes", with further bibliography on the *Expositio*.

72   Thus Cassiodorus often chose to relinquish the references to the Donatists contained in Augustine's text. Compare for example Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum* [*EP*], 44.10, 85.9 and 95.3, ed. Adriaen, pp. 409–10, 784, 863, with Augustine, *EnPs* 44.32; 95.3 and 5, eds. Dekkers et al., 2: p. 516, 3: pp. 1345–47. He did take over anti-Donatist statements in other places, for example *EP* 21.29, 71.11, 116.1 ed. Adriaen, pp. 206, 654, 1046.

the appropriateness of *gens* as a term for the Christian people, explaining that this expression functioned to express the specific unity and mode of cohesion of the Christians as a group. Like a *gens*, its members shared a common origin, namely baptism.[73] The language of genealogical origin and kinship (lacking in our previous examples) has the effect of "naturalizing" the community, underlining its deep-rooted character.[74] In this context, it is also interesting to consider the passages in which Cassiodorus explicitly defined the term *gens*. On the one hand, his definition is closely tied to notions of common genealogical origin. "*Gentes* means the peoples (*nationes*) divided throughout the whole world which, [each] distinct and separate, are bound together by a blood relation. For the word *gens* derives from *genus*".[75] Yet at the same time Cassiodorus was very well aware of the religious meanings of the term. All these different *gentes*, he continued, were called to the Christian faith.[76] Cassiodorus was thus highly sensitive towards the multiple layers of the concept. Still, the contrast with Augustine (and his other predecessors) is very interesting. Rather than linking membership in a *gens* to civic identity as Augustine did in his sermon on psalm 85, Cassiodorus linked it to notions of common descent. This does not mean, however, that Cassiodorus was a more narrow-minded supporter of a biologist view of peoples. Indeed, his concrete use of the term *gens* is much more elastic than the narrow definition suggests—especially when he applied it to the Christian community, the boundaries of a *gens* became more permeable.[77] What it does show, perhaps, is that Cassiodorus needed to carefully balance ethnic and religious meanings of the term *gens* in a new way. Many passages in the commentary suggest that, for Cassiodorus, the Christian *gentes* remain *gentes* in the "ethnographic" sense, social groups distinguished by common descent and/or political organization.[78] By being integrated into a

---

73 Cassiodorus, *EP* 82.5, ed. Adriaen, p. 783, commenting on the verse: *They have said: Come, let us destroy them so that they be not a gens*: Contrast Jerome, who dryly remarked that Israel/the Christians will cease to exist as a *gens*, as the biblical text implied, stating that they "will not be a *gens*, because they are God's people (*populus Dei*)" (Jerome, *Tractates on the Psalms*, 82.5, ed. Morin, p. 91). To Augustine, God's people in Christian times was indeed equivalent to the *gentes*, but only in the plural: *EnPs* 82.5, eds. Dekkers et al., 3:p. 1142.

74 Cf. Pohl, "Strategies of identification", 3.

75 Cassiodorus, *EP* 2.9, ed. Adriaen, p. 46. Cf. also *EP* 78.1, ed. Adriaen, p. 733.

76 Cassiodorus, *EP* 2.9, ed. Adriaen, p. 46.

77 In Cassiodorus, *EP* 95.7, ed. Adriaen, p. 865 the *gens*, while still associated with common descent, can explicitly include foreigners; in *EP* 44.10, ed. Adriaen, p. 410, in a passage about the *gentes* within the Church, common descent is not listed as a criterium for belonging to the *gens*.

78 Heydemann, "Biblical Israel and the Christian *gentes*", 188–93.

universal Christian community, the *gentes* assume a providential meaning without losing their role as political or ethnic units. In this way, *gens* becomes an important tool to conceptualize Christian communities. Such an interpretation also legitimizes the place of the *gentes* in a post-imperial world in which different peoples (*gentes*) and their kingdoms had become very important political players.

In this sense, it is not surprising that Cassiodorus' interpretation of our key passage from Deuteronomy differed from that of most of his predecessors in that the *gens Dei* could be accepted as a metaphor for the chosen people without problems. Cassiodorus dealt with the verse in a commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans. This text was a revision of an earlier commentary written by Pelagius shortly after 400, which Cassiodorus undertook for students and peers in his monastic foundation Vivarium in order to purge it of the "heretical" teachings on free will, human merit, and divine grace which it contained.[79] The underlying assumption in this discussion of the *gens Dei* is not that of a contrast between the Christians and a *gens*, or between the *gentes* and the people of God. To the contrary, it is underlined that the biblical passage confirmed the possibility of the *gentes* to become the people of God:

> Before they [the *gentes*] believed in God, they were not a people of God (*gens Dei*). It is as if [God] was saying, "I call those who previously were not my people (*gens mea*), and they will believe in me".[80]

According to this interpretation, when the biblical text says that the Christians are not a *gens* this does not mean that they lack status of a political or ethnic group; it simply means that they are not (yet) a people *of God*, a *gens Dei*. Once they have left behind their idolatry and start to believe, they can indeed achieve a status similar to the chosen people of the Old Testament (and eventually replace it). *Gens* has here displaced *populus* as a term for articulating the identity of the Christian community.[81] The biblical image of the "non-people" is turned into a positive term for the people of God, by carefully differentiating

---

79   Cassiodorus' students later continued this work for the other Pauline epistles. See his description of his work in Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 1.8.1, ed. Mynors, pp. 28–29. See Souter, *Pelagius' Expositions*, 1:318–26; Johnson, "Purging the Poison". The text of the commentary is most easily accessible (under the name of Primasius of Hadrumetum) in the *Patrologia Latina* 68, cols. 415–505, which I cite.

80   Cassiodorus-Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans* 10, ed. PL 68, col. 488A. Compare Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. Souter, p. 84.

81   The same tendency to level out the distinction *populus Dei/gens* is visible at other points in Cassiodorus' text, see *Commentary on Romans* 3, PL 68, col. 432D (Israel and the

the *gens Dei* from the *gentes* in their pagan, pre-Christian state, when they had not yet received the law, worshipping idols and consulting astrologers instead. Cassiodorus, of course, took over this argument from Pelagius, but this is in itself significant given that he altered Pelagius' text considerably at other points.[82] In the passage under consideration, Cassiodorus seems to put more emphasis on the election of the *gentes* by adding additional comments, for example at the beginning of the paragraph, where he stated that the "vocation of the *gentes* to the faith" concerned not *gentes* as individual gentiles (proselytes) who joined the Jewish community, but rather "the whole world".[83] Other changes he made helped to clarify the distinction between the "foolish *gentes*" and the *gentes* as elected by God. He also excused their previous ignorance by reference to the lack of an opportunity to attain knowledge of God and the law.[84] Cassiodorus' acceptance of the *gens Dei* as a concept for the Christian community fits well with his heightened sensibility for the theme of the calling of the *gentes*, as suggested by other additions and alterations in the commentary, which would merit a fuller analysis than can be provided here. In any case, it seems that in the *Commentary on Romans*, this interest is mainly determined by reflections on the economy of salvation and on the *gentes* as objects of divine grace as opposed to the Jews. By comparison, in his exegesis of the psalms, it is very clear that Cassiodorus had the *gentes* in mind not only as a religious category, but also as concrete ethnic and political communities.

Although Cassiodorus was certainly not unique in his interest in *gens/gentes* as a concept for Christian communities, this interest was most likely related to specific concerns of his time. His views, like those of Augustine, were formulated against a background of competing ideas about the political and religious order. When Cassiodorus composed his Psalm commentary, the emperor Justinian was engaged in military campaigns against the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Visigoths in order to bring the western provinces back under direct imperial control. To legitimize these wars, the official propaganda of the court emphasized the "barbarian otherness" of the western kingdoms, as well as the

---

Christians as *utraque gens*); 3, PL 68, col. 427D (Israel called both *gens sancta* and *populus electus*); 4, col. 435B.

82 For a discussion of Cassiodorus' treatment of Pelagius' text, see Johnson, "Purging the Poison", 74–169.

83 Cassiodorus-Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans* 10, ed. PL 68, col. 488A.

84 A point which directly contradicted Pelagius' theological view. Contrast Cassiodorus, *Commentary on Romans* 10, ed. PL 68, col. 488B, with Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, 10.20, ed. Souter, p. 84, and see ibid. 1.19–21, ed. Souter, pp. 13–15 and the remarks by DeBruyne, "Introduction", 36–37.

heterodoxy of their rulers.[85] Most members of the ruling elite in the barbarian kingdoms were homoeans ("Arians"), adhering to a form of Christianity which was considered heretical by the majority of the imperial population. To make matters even more complicated, many Romans in the western kingdoms disagreed with the imperial version of orthodoxy which Justinian attempted to impose with increasing vigour throughout the Mediterranean. At the time, then, it was not only the political role of the *gentes* in relation to the empire which was problematic, but also their religious role in relation to the (imperial) Church. Intellectuals associated with Justinian's court promoted a notion of the *gentes* which differed significantly from that proposed by Cassiodorus, describing them as barbarian and heretical peoples who posed a threat to the Christian imperial order.[86]

In this sense, it is interesting to contrast Cassiodorus' exegesis with that of his contemporary Verecundus, bishop of the North African town of Junca. Verecundus had experienced both the Vandal regime in North Africa, which had a tradition of strong anti-Nicene politics, and the collapse of that regime in the Justinianic wars of the 530s. Like Cassiodorus, he was a fierce opponent of the homoeans, but he also belonged to the many North African ecclesiastics resisting the religious policies of Justinian, who sought to achieve a compromise with the miaphysites, who rejected the position on Christ's two natures as they had been formulated at the council of Chalcedon in 451.[87]

Verecundus commented on Deuteronomy in the context of his commentary on the Old Testament canticles (a series of hymns taken from various biblical books for liturgical purposes). Unlike Cassiodorus, he used the biblical passage to draw a firm boundary between the Christian people of God and the *gentes*. According to him, the verse:

> says that the Christians are not a *gens*, who are not like other peoples
> (*nationes gentium*)[88] gathered together in one place, such as the Jewish

---

85   Amory, *People and Identity*, 135–47; Mirşanu, "The imperial policy of otherness".

86   For example, the court poet Corippus drew a very traditional contrast between the Romans and the barbarian peoples (especially the Berbers) in his account of the wars in North Africa. On this use of *gens* as a pejorative term to denigrate Roman opponents and express their alterity, see Modéran, *Les Maures*, 418f.; Opelt, "Barbarendiskriminierung".

87   Little detail is known about his life: Bruns, "Verecundus von Junca".

88   *Nationes gentium* is difficult to translate: perhaps it harks back to a distinction between *natio* as defined by a common homeland and *gens* as defined by common descent, suggesting a group which unites both these features. For this distinction see for example Charisius, *Ars grammtica,* De differentiis, ed. Barwick, p. 397. I owe this reference to Cinzia Grifoni.

gens (there were six hundred thousand gathered there), or whatever other [people], like the Gothic, Parthian [Persian] or Herul one.[89]

Following Ambrose, whose text he evidently used, Verecundus emphatically distinguished the Christians as a group from the *gentes*. But he updated Ambrose's list of peoples, which was still very much part of a framework of imperial provinces, to hint at a world of contemporary *gentes*. Apart from the reference to the Jews, which is difficult to interpret, it is likely that Verecundus intended to enumerate groups who, in his view, destabilized the orthodox (or imperial) Christian order.[90] Persians and Goths were prestigious enemies of the Roman empire, while various Herul groups were active both in Ostrogothic Italy and within the imperial army.[91] Interestingly, the Vandals, the barbarian *gens* which was most important to Verecundus' political experience, are not mentioned.[92]

However, the contrast between the Christians and these groups is clear. Unlike Cassiodorus, Verecundus did not suggest that these *gentes* would eventually become part of the new people of God, but rather went on to describe the Christians as a small and scattered minority, embattled by all kinds of (religious) opponents. "But we", he claimed, "live dispersed throughout the whole wide world, we are few and divided between various places, staying in between schismatics, heretics, Jews and unbelievers". And he concluded: "We are thus not called a *gens*, and deservedly so".[93] Verecundus, then, clearly did not conceive of the relationship between the people of God and the *gentes* as a positive one; rather, he associated the *gentes* with the spiritual enemies of the Christians. For Verecundus, the different types of enemies of the (orthodox) Christian community, heretics and (barbarian) *gentes*, largely overlapped.[94] Thus, in the following passage, he combined the explanation of the "foolish *gens*", the idolatrous people, with fierce anti-Jewish polemic and used the reference to the idolatrous practices ("and they have made be jealous with foreign idols, with that which is no God") for equally fierce anti-Arian polemic.[95]

---

89   Verecundus, *On the Canticles*, Deut. 22, ed. Demeulenaere, p. 40.
90   For the Jews, interpretation is complicated not least because the number 600,000 is a reference to the ancient Israelites in Egypt (Exod. 12:37).
91   See Steinacher, "The Herules", and Sarantis, "The Justinianic Herules".
92   It is possible, however, that Verecundus tacitly subsumed them under "Goths", which could be understood as a broad ethnographic category including Goths, Vandals, Alans and Gepids in the 6th century. See Steinacher, "Who is the barbarian?", 439–41.
93   Verecundus of Iunca, *On the Canticles*, Deut. 22, ed. Demeulenaere, p. 40.
94   Verecundus, *On the Canticles*, Azar. 14, ed. Demeulenaere, p. 97.
95   Verecundus, *On the Canticles*, Deut. 22, ed. Demeulenaere, p. 39.

The same link between the biblical *gentes* and heretics or schismatics appears at numerous other places in Verecundus' work as well.[96] With the notable exception of the chapter on Habacuc's canticle, where the vocation of all the *gentes* to the faith is an important theme, the term is mostly used in a negative sense. Nowhere is the singular *gens* used to describe the Christian community. *Populus* generally appears to be a more neutral term in Verecundus' text, and a *populus christianus* occurs a few times, but it is by no means always used in an affirmative sense. Verecundus' vision of the Christian *populus* was one in which righteous Christians and wicked heretics coexisted side by side, and in which the true Church was always endangered by sin and persecution.[97] He deployed the differential collective terminology of the bible as an argument to separate the orthodox Christian Church from heterodox or competing groups. His choice to portray the chosen people as threatened by heretics and other enemies may have been influenced by his first-hand knowledge of the anti-Nicene religious policy in Vandal North Africa, as well as by his opposition to the religious politics of the emperor Justinian and the christological tradition of parts of the imperial Church.[98]

By contrast, Cassiodorus argued for the compatibility between the *gentes* and the traditions of the Roman-Christian world, and emphasized the possibility of cultural and religious accommodation. In his political writings, which Cassiodorus composed in his function as an office holder in the Ostrogothic kingdom (namely in the *Variae*, a collection of official correspondence), we can observe a strategy to deal with concepts and terminology of community similar to that which we have encountered in his exegesis. There, Cassiodorus underlined the "Romanness" of Gothic rule in Italy, thereby obliterating the conceptual boundary between Romans and Goths (and between the Roman *populus* and the barbarian *gentes*). The effect of this strategy was to demonstrate that the Gothic *gens* was a legitimate political player.[99] In Cassiodorus' exegetical texts, it is the Christian perspective which makes it possible to affirm the potential integration of the *gentes* as legitimate actors in a Christian world through conversion.

---

96   Examples: Verecundus, *On the Canticles*, Exod., 15, ed. Demeulenaere, p. 13; Deut. 9, pp. 25–26; Deut. 18, p. 34; Az. 13, p. 94; Az. 14, p.97: *Quia* [*Iudaei*] *utique in gentibus dissipati huc illucque feruntur, omnis ablata est dignitas prophetalis. Eadem fiunt uel cum haeresum nobis barbara saeuitia concitatur*.

97   Verecundus, *On the Canticles*, Deut. 33, ed. Demeulenaere, p. 58: The Christian people is compared to a vine which contains both good and bad grapes.

98   On the religious policy of the Vandal rulers, see Merrils/Miles, *The Vandals*, 177–203, with further references; Modéran, "L'Afrique reconquise".

99   See Heydemann, "Biblical Israel", 150 with references to further studies.

Conclusions

In this paper I have looked at the ways in which Christian authors between the 3rd and the 6th century conceptualized the Christian community as a people of God, and how they adapted the differentiated Latin terminology for peoples and the models of community associated with it. The study of the diverse interpretations of Deut. 32:21 reveals the considerable sensitivity of Christian exegetes for political and ethnic language, but also a remarkable elasticity of the terminology and changing ideas of what constitutes a people. In exegetical texts, *gens* can be defined as a geographic or cultural unit or in terms of common descent; it can refer to the universal Christian community, to the many peoples which constitute it or to its pagan and heretical enemies.

It seems that for the exegetes under study the different terms for "people" were useful as a conceptual tool because they made it possible to negotiate the status and identity of Christian communities. Concepts such as *populus* and *gens* functioned to claim a special status for Christian communities (in analogy to the chosen people of Israel), to express its mode of cohesion or to suggest a "naturalized" sense of groupness which such communities otherwise lacked. At the same time, ethnic language was employed to draw boundaries between one's own ("true") community and those outside it, be they pagans, heretics, or (frequently) the Jews. It offered an opportunity to raise the question of who actually belonged.

Although it would be misleading to suggest a linear narrative or to disregard the limits to the contextualization of exegetical texts, it is clear that the ways in which Christian authors conceived of the relationship between Christian communities and other forms of political or social identification depends on their political context and polemical agenda. When Origen was first writing, he had to deal with a Roman political order that was not Christian. His discussion of the label *gens* for the Christian people of God may be linked to a broader debate about Christian identity, in which the status and the legitimacy of the Christians as a group within imperial society was at stake. Ambrose and Augustine developed their visions of the Christian community within the framework of a still functioning empire which increasingly came to define itself as Christian. Augustine argued against the particularism of a rival Christian group, the Donatists. While he devoted much thought to the religious significance of the *gentes* and their place in the Christian world, *populus* (along with notions of civic identity and community) remained conceptually more important to him than *gens*. Cassiodorus' texts show that by the 6th century, the political and religious role of the *gentes* had changed and necessitated renewed reflection. His emphasis on the many Christian *gentes* who could claim to be (part of) a people

of God can be read as an attempt to make sense of a Christian world in which the imperial framework could no longer be taken for granted and had come to be displaced by other forms of political integration. Like Augustine, he reacted against competing visions of community. This shows that the idea of the chosen people always had the potential for concretization, and that it could be appropriated as a powerful ideological resource. In this context, it is interesting to see that Verecundus, writing at roughly the same time after the demise of the Vandal kingdom, made very different exegetical choices. The contrast between them can highlight how the biblical language of identity could be used both for formulating an argument of inclusivity and compatibility and for othering outsiders and promoting the exclusivity of one's own particular community.

The use of ethnic language also shows how Christian visions of community were defined and negotiated in relation to a broader social and political order, and had to rely on corresponding categories of identification. Most of the time, the authors under study emphasized the primary importance of Christian identifications, which often lead to a spiritual or distinctly "religious" interpretation of the language of community. Yet they were also concerned with the compatibility between Christian identities and other types of community. The common vocabulary related to "peoples" linked Christian and political visions of community, with the potential effect to legitimize or delegitimize concepts of social order or political claims from a Christian perspective.

The ways in which Christian exegetes conceptualized their religious community either by analogy or in contradistinction to a people invites comparison with other cultural and religious traditions. The tension between religious visions of community with universalist claims and the particular social and political contexts to which these had to be adapted was also relevant in Islamic contexts. The following contributions suggest some similarities, but also important differences in the use of political terminology to address religious communities (and vice versa). The distinction between "religious" and "political" (or "ethnic") communities and discourses is certainly not always easy to draw; yet a comparative perspective on overlapping visions of community can help us to better understand the dynamic interplay between religious visions of community and the formation of social identities.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs, ed. Jean Louis Maier, *Le Dossier du Donatisme*, 1: *Des Origines à la mort de Constance II (303–361)* (Berlin, 1987), no. 4, pp. 57–92.

Ambrose, *Explanation on 12 Psalms*, eds. Michael Petschenig and Michaela Zelzer, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 64 (Vienna, 1999).

Augustine, *Against Cresconius*, ed. Michael Petschenig, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 52 (Vienna, 1909a), pp. 323–582.

Augustine, *Against the Letters of Petilian*, ed. Michael Petschenig, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 52 (Vienna, 1909b), pp. 17–141.

Augustine, *Against the Party of Donatus*, ed. Michael Petschenig, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 53 (Vienna, 1910), pp. 95–162.

Augustine, *Enarrations on the Psalms*, eds. Eligius Dekkers and Jean Fraipont, 3 vols., Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 38–40 (Turnhout, 1956).

Augustine, *The City of God*, eds. Bernhard Dombart and Alphons Kalb, 2 vols., Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 46 (Turnhout, 1970).

Augustine, *Explanations on some Propositions on the Letter to the Romans*, ed. Johannes Divjak, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 84 (Vienna, 1971), pp. 1–52.

Augustine, *Letters 101–139*, ed. Klaus D. Daur, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 31B (Turnhout, 2009).

Cassiodorus-Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, Patrologia Latina 68 (1866), cols. 415–505.

Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*, ed. Marc Adriaen, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 97–98 (Turnhout, 1958).

Cassiodorus, *Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning*, ed. Roger A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1937); Engl. trans. James Halporn, *Cassiodorus: Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and on the Soul*, Translated Texts for Historians 42 (Liverpool, 2004).

Charisius, *Ars grammatica*, ed. Karl Barwick (Berlin, 1997).

Cicero, *De republica*, ed. Jonathan Powell (Oxford, 2006).

Isidore, *Etymologies*, ed. Wallace M. Lindsay (Oxford, repr. 1989).

Conference of Carthage (a. 411), ed. and trans. Serge Lancel, 4 vols., Sources Chrétiennes 194, 195, 224 and 373 (Paris, 1975–1991).

Jerome, *Tractates on the Psalms*, ed. Germain Morin, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 78 (Turnhout, 1958).

Origen, *Against Celsus*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge, 1953).

Origen-Rufinus, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. Caroline Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes*, 3 vols., Vetus Latina 16, 33 and 34 (Freiburg, 1990–1998); Engl. trans. Thomas P. Scheck, *Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., The Fathers of the Church (Washington, 2001).

Origen, *Homilies on Psalms 36–38*, ed. and trans. Emanuela Prinzivalli, Sources Chrétiennes 411 (Paris, 1995); edition of the Greek text: Origen, *Die neuen Psalmenhomilien. Eine kritische Edition des Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*, ed. Lorenzo Perrone with Marina Molin Pradel, Emanuela Prinzivalli and Antonio Cacciari, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte N.F. 19 (Berlin,

2015); transcription of the Greek text in Munich, BSB cod. graec. 314 by Alex Poulos, <http://mapoulos.wordpress.com/origen>, accessed March 28, 2014.

Pelagius, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. Alexander Souter, *Pelagius' Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1922) 2: 6–126; Engl. trans. Thomas De Bruyne, *Pelagius's Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford, repr. 2002).

Verecundus of Iunca, *On the Canticles*, ed. Richard Demeulenaere, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 93 (Turnhout, 1976), 1–203.

Secondary Literature

Jeremy duQuesnay Adams, *The Populus of Augustine and Jerome: A Study in the Patristic Sense of Community* (New Haven, 1971).

Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge 2003).

Otto Bächli, *Israel und die Völker: Eine Studie zum Deuteronomium* (Zürich 1962).

Caroline Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbrieftext des Rufin und seine Origenes-Übersetzung*, Aus der Geschichte der Lateinischen Bibel 10 (Freiburg, 1985).

Caroline Hammond Bammel, "Augustine, Origen and the exegesis of St. Paul", *Augustinianum* 32,2 (1992), 341–68; repr. in ead., *Tradition and Exegesis in Early Christian Writers* (Aldershot, 1995a), XVII.

Caroline Hammond Bammel, "Rufinus' translation of Origen's commentary on Romans and the Pelagian controversy", in *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concordia* (Udine 1992), 131–42; repr. in ead., *Tradition and Exegesis in Early Christian Writers* (Aldershot, 1995b), XVIII.

John M.G. Barclay, "Universalism and particularism: twin components of both Judaism and early Christianity", in *A Vision for the Church: Studies in Early Christian Ecclesiology in Honour of J.P.M. Sweet*, eds. Markus Bockmuehl and Michael G. Thompson (Edinburgh, 1997), 207–24.

Paul M. Blowers, "Interpreting scripture", in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, 2: *Constantine to c. 600*, eds. Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris (Cambridge, 2007), 618–36.

Philippe Bobichon, "Le thème du 'Verus Israel': Est-il constitutif de la controverse entre christianisme et judaisme?", *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 22 (2005), 421–44.

Pasquale Borgomeo, *L'Église de ce temps dans la prédication de saint Augustin*, Études augustiniennes (Paris 1972).

Mark Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden, 1996).

Peter Brown, "Religious coercion in the later Roman empire: the case of North Africa", in id., *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1971), 301–31.

Peter Brown, "Christianisation: narratives and processes", in id., *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge, 1995), 1–28.

Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, 2000).

Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, Oxford, 2012).

Peter Bruns, "Verecundus von Junca", in *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, eds. Siegmar Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings (Freiburg, 1998), 623–24.

Denise K. Buell, "Race and universalism in early Christianity", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002), 429–68.

Denise K. Buell, *Why this New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York 2005).

Alain Chauvot, *Opinions romaines face aux barbares au IVe siécle ap. J.-C.* (Paris, 1998).

Catherine Chin, "Rufinus of Aquilea and Alexandrian afterlives: translations as Origenism", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010), 617–47.

Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992).

Ronald Clements, "Gōj", in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, eds. Gerhard Johannes Botterweck und Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart, 1973), 1:965–73.

Aelred Cody, "When is the chosen people called a gōj?", *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964), 1–6.

Karsten Colpe, "Die Ausbildung des Heidenbegriffes von Israel zur Apologetik und das Zweideutigwerden des Christentums", in *Die Restauration der Götter: Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus*, eds. Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier (Würzburg, 1986), 61–87.

Richard Corradini, "Die Ankunft der Zukunft: Babylon, Jerusalem und Rom als Modelle von Aneignung und Entfremdung bei Augustinus", in *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, eds. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 13 (Turnhout, 2013), 65–142.

Carly L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy* (Leiden, 2014).

Ernst Dassmann, *Die eine Kirche in vielen Bildern: Zur Ekklesiologie der Kirchenväter* (Stuttgart, 2010).

Emma Dench, *Romulus' Asylum: Roman Identities from the Age of Alexander to the Age of Hadrian* (Oxford, 2005).

Thomas DeBruyne, "Introduction", in id. (trans.), *Pelagius's Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford, repr. 2002), 1–53.

Nicolas DeLange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (Cambridge, 1976).

Lesley Dossey, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa* (Berkeley, 2010).

Gary D. Farney, *Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition in Republican Rome* (Cambridge, 2007).

Michael Frede, "Origen's treatise *Against Celsus*", in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians*, eds. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price (Oxford, 1999), 131–55.

Paula Fredriksen, "Allegory and reading God's book: Paul and Augustine on the destiny of Israel", in *Interpretation and Allegory*, ed. Jon Whitman (Leiden, 2000), 125–49.

Paula Fredriksen, "Die frühe Paulusexegese", in *Augustin Handbuch*, ed. Volker Drecoll (Tübingen, 2007), 279–94.

William H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford, 1952).

Pablo T. Gadenz, *Called from the Jews and the Gentiles: Pauline Ecclesiology in Romans 9–11* (Tübingen, 2009).

Patrick Geary, "Ethnic identity as a situational construct in the early Middle Ages", *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983), 15–26.

Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Modern Europe* (Princeton, 2002).

Andrew Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002).

Hans-Werner Goetz, "Gens: terminology and perception of the 'Germanic' peoples from late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages", in *The Construction of Communities: Texts, Resources and Artefacts*, eds. Richard Corradini, Maximilian Diesenberger and Helmut Reimitz, The Transformation of the Roman World 12 (Leiden, Boston, 2003), 39–64.

Peter Gorday, *Principles of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9–11 in Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine* (New York, 1983).

Steven Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality, Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake, 2002).

Eric Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton, 2011).

Eric Gruen, "Did ancient identity depend on ethnicity? A preliminary probe", *Phoenix* 67 (2013), 1–22.

Fritz Gschnitzer and Karl Ferdinand Werner, "Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse: Altertum", in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch–sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 7 (Stuttgart, 1992), 151–281.

Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge, 2007).

Theresia Haither, *Translatio Religionis: Die Paulusdeutung des Origenes*, Bonner Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte 16 (Cologne, 1990).

Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten,* 1: *Die Mission in Wort und Tat*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1924).

Ulrich Heckel, "Das Bild der Heiden und die Identität der Christen bei Paulus", in *Die Heiden: Juden, Christen und das Problem des Fremden*, eds. Reinhard Feldmeier and Ulrich Heckel (Tübingen, 1994), 269–96.

Ronald Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory and History in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford, 2005).

Gerda Heydemann, "Biblical Israel and the Christian *gentes*: Social metaphors and concepts of community in Cassiodorus' Expositio psalmorum", in *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, eds. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 13 (Turnhout, 2013), 65–142.

Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford, 2007).

David G. Horrell, "'Race', 'nation', 'people': ethnic identity-construction in 1 Peter 2.9", *New Testament Studies* 58 (2012), 123–43.

Wolfgang Hübner, "Gentes", in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 3/1–2, ed. Cornelius Mayer (Basel, 2004), 140–47.

Alexander R. Hulst, "Volk", in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 2, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, 5th ed. (Zurich, Munich, 1998), 290–325.

Aaron Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford, 2006).

David W. Johnson, "Purging the Poison: The Revision of Pelagius' Pauline Commentaries by Cassiodorus and his Students" (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989).

Joel Kaminsky and Dana Hollander, eds., *"A Covenant to the People, a Light to the Nations": Universalism, Exceptionalism and the Problem of Chosenness in Jewish Thought, Jewish Studies Quarterly Special Issue* 16, 1 (2009).

Charles Kannengiesser, ed., *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Latin Christianity* (Leiden, 2006).

Michael Kok, "The true covenant people: ethnic reasoning in the epistle of Barnabas", *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 40 (2011), 81–97.

Wolfgang Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes: Zur Grundlegung der Ekklesiologie bei Paulus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 85 (Tübingen, 1996).

Gerhart Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959).

Niels P. Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (London, 1998).

Judith Lieu, "The Race of the Godfearers", in ead., *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (Edinburgh, 2002), 49–68.

Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford, 2004).

Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, eds., *Der Gott Israels und die Völker: Untersuchungen zum Jesajabuch und zu den Psalmen* (Stuttgart, 1994).

Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, 1994).

Michael Maas, "Barbarians: problems and approaches", in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott F. Johnson (Oxford, 2012), 60–91.

Robert Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970).

Robert Markus, "Africa and the orbis terrarum: the theological problem", in *Augustinus Afer: Saint Augustin: Africanité et universalité*, ed. Pierre-Yves Fux (Fribourg, 2003), 321–27.

Robert T. Marshall, *Studies in the Political and Socio-Religious Terminology of De civitate Dei* (Washington, D.C., 1952).

Andrew Merrils and Richard Miles, *The Vandals* (Chichester, 2010).

Dragoş Mirşanu, "The imperial policy of otherness: Justinian and the Arianism of barbarians as a motive for the recovery of the West", *Ephimerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 84 (2008), 477–98.

Fritz Mithoff, "Zur Neustiftung von Identität unter imperialer Herrschaft: Die Provinzen des römischen Reiches als ethnische Entitäten", in *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World*, eds. Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner and Richard Payne (Aldershot, 2012), 61–72.

Yves Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine* (*IVe–VIIe siècle*), Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 340 (Rome, 2003).

Yves Modéran, "L'Afrique reconquise et les Trois Chapitres", in *The Crisis of the Oikumene: The Three Chapters Controversy and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean*, eds. Celia Chazelle and Catherine Cubitt (Turnhout, 2007), 39–82.

Marina Molin Pradel, "Novità origeniane dalla Staatsbibliothek di Monaco", *Adamantius* 18 (2012), 16–40.

E. Theodore Mullen, *Narrative History and Ethnic Boundaries: The Deuteronomistic Historian and the Creation of Israelite National Identity* (Atlanta, 1993).

Hildegund Müller, "Enarrationes in psalmos: Philologische Aspekte", in *Augustinus-Lexikon* 2/5–6, ed. Cornelius Mayer (Basel, 2001), 804–38.

Ernst W. Nicholson, *God and his People: Covenant Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1986).

James O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley, 1979).

David M. Olster, "Classical ethnography and early Christian identity", in *The Formulation of Christianity by Conflict through the Ages*, ed. Katharine B. Free (Lewiston, 1995), 9–31.

Ilona Opelt, "Barbarendiskriminierung in den Gedichten des Cresconius Flavius Corippus", *Romanobarbarica* 7 (1982/83), 161–79.

Gert Partoens, "Mit der Predigttätigkeit zusammenhängende Werke", in *Augustinus Handbuch*, ed. Volker Henning Drecoll (Tübingen, 2007), 377–416.

Lothar Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969).

Lorenzo Perrone, "Rediscovering Origen today: first impressions of the new collection of homilies on the Psalms in the Codex monacensis Graecus 314", *Studia Patristica* 56, 4 (2013), 103–22.

Walter Pohl, "Telling the difference: signs of ethnic identity", in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities*, 300–800, eds. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz, The Transformation of the Roman World 2 (Leiden, New York, Cologne, 1998), 17–69.

Walter Pohl, "Introduction: Strategies of identification: A methodological profile", in *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 13 (Turnhout, 2013), 1–64.

Walter Pohl, "Comparing communities—the limits of comparison", *History and Anthropology* 26, 1 (2014), 18–35.

Karla Pollmann, "Forms, methods and functions of biblical commentaries", in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rosseau (Oxford, 2009), 258–69.

Karla Pollmann, "Unending sway: the ideology of Empire in early Christian thought", in *The Calling of the Nations: Exegesis, Ethnography, and Empire in a Biblical-Historic Present*, ed. Mark Vessey, Sharon V. Betcher, Robert A. Daum and Harry O. Maier (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2011), 176–99.

Marie-Josèphe Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristique du psautier* (*IIIe–Ve siècles*), 1: *Les travaux des pères grecs et latins sur le psautier*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 219, (Rome 1982).

Magne Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation* 1: *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1996–2000).

Alexander Sarantis, "The Justinianic Herules", in *Neglected Barbarians*, ed. Florin Curta (Turnhout, 2010), 361–40.

Karl Hermann Schelkle, *Paulus, Lehrer der Väter: Die altkirchliche Auslegung von Römer 1–11* (Düsseldorf, 1956).

Jeremy Schott, *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 2008).

Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago, 1997).

James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: The Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (Tübingen, 1995).

Brent Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge, 2011).

Jeffrey Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville, 1991).

Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (London, 1986).

Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford, 2003).

Alexander Souter, *Pelagius' Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1922), 1: *Texts and Studies*.

Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, 1998).

Roland Steinacher, "The Herules: Fragments of a history", in *Neglected Barbarians*, ed. Florin Curta (Turnhout, 2010), 319–60.

Roland Steinacher, "Who is the barbarian? Considerations on the Vandal royal title", in *Post-Roman Transitions: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West*, eds. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 14 (Turnhout, 2013), 437–85.

Herrmann Strathmann and Rudolf Meyer, "Laos", in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 4 (Stuttgart, 1942), 29–47.

Werner Suerbaum, *Vom antiken zum frühmittelalterlichen Staatsbegriff: Über Verwendung und Bedeutung von Res publica, regnum, imperium und status von Cicero bis Jordanis*, 3rd ed., Orbis Antiquus 16/17 (Münster, 1977).

Ivonne Tholen, *Die Donatisten in den Predigten Augustins: Kommunikationslinien des Bischofs von Hippo mit seinen Predigthörern*, Arbeiten zur historischen und systematischen Theologie 16 (Berlin, 2010).

Philippa Townsend, "Another Race? Ethnicity, Universalism and the Emergence of Christianity" (PhD Diss., Princeton University, 2009).

Jo Bailey Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements 305 (Sheffield, 2000).

Joseph Trigg, *Origen* (London, 1998).

Georges Tugène, *L'Idee de la nation chez Bède le Venerable*, Collection des études augustiniennes, série Moyen Âge et temps modernes 37 (Paris, 2001).

Mark Vessey, "Introduction", in *Cassiodorus: Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and on the Soul*, trans. James Halporn, Translated Texts for Historians 42 (Liverpool, 2004), 1–101.

Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge, 1997).

Frances Young, "Greek apologists of the second century", in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, ed. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price (Oxford, 1999), 81–104.

Benedykt Zientara, "Populus-gens-natio. Einige Probleme aus dem Bereich der ethnischen Terminologie des frühen Mittelalters", in *Nationalismus in vorindustrieller Zeit*, ed. Otto Dann (Munich, 1986), 11–20.

The Political Usage of Religious and Non-religious Terms for Community in Medieval South Arabia: A Comparative Response to Gerda Heydemann's Chapter

Johann Heiss and Eirik Hovden

Introduction

This comparative response, or perhaps rather "reflection", will provide comparative cases to be seen in relation to Gerda Heydemann's article "People(s) of God? Biblical Exegesis and the Language of Community in Late Antique and Early Medieval Europe" in this volume. It will focus on several comparable community-related terms.

However, some fundamental epistemological considerations have first to be introduced in order to establish further comparability. A comparison of terms only, used in different regions, languages, and periods would not lead very far, since their meaning, potential, and significance are very much related to the way in which they are used by actors in specific contexts. An analysis based on one or more written "texts" certainly has some merits as a starting point and an orientation. However, it makes sense to take account of a wider range of primary and secondary context-related data, especially (but not only) considering community-related terms. The basic object of comparison must contain ideal and literal contents, in addition to a more or less "real", graspable historical context. Agency has to be included in the analysis, even though some of the terms used seem at the first glance to be remarkably stable across time and space, as if existing in their own right. A term itself has no agency, but the usage and belief in the term does. For us, the various community-related terms indicate the ability of people to (re)present, claim or resist visions of community, reflecting political aims, social realities or political-religious hierarchies. We do not intend to take an extreme instrumentalist position and claim that our study objects (people with agency and a particular usage of terms) did not "believe" in their community-related terms. Most of those using these terms may even have taken them for granted. However, most of our sources were written by highly educated individuals who chose to use specific terms deliberately and in specific ways, employing advanced conceptual apparatuses to

describe the social and ideal world around them, influenced by their particular interests or the interests of their patrons.

In the following, selected community-related terms will be analysed without taking extensive account of the usual modern political/religious divide. The separation between "religious" and "political"[1] terms of communities is problematic on a theoretical/analytical level. However, there are certainly terms that are more frequently used in religious/theological discourse, while others refer to peoples and groups not directly involved in religious hierarchies, or not primarily related to religious discourse. In Arabic as in Latin and Greek, terms denoting groups (and many others) are taken from existing pre-Christian or pre-Islamic, often non-religious contexts (such as pre-Islamic poetry) and used in, and adapted to religious and other settings.

As is to be expected, our comparative cases are only apparently similar, at first glance resembling the European cases, which are used as a starting point for our response. The similarities but also the differences will be elaborated upon.

The Term *Umma/Umam*

Many meanings are ascribed to this word, among them one that many researchers would at first rightly refer to, which is "the Islamic community".[2] But there are other usages. In its most basic sense, its plural *umam* means "categories" or "peoples" as found in the Quran.[3] The 10th-century South-Arabian author al-Hamdānī uses the term this way. In the first part of his geographical work "Description of the Arab Peninsula" (*Ṣifat jazīrat al-ʿArab*), he gives a thorough description of the inhabited world, where he uses, comments on and cites an Arabic translation of Ptolemy's (between ca. 100 and 150) *Tetrabiblos*.[4] The word

---

1 The research for this article was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): F42 Visions of Community. The concept of "ethnicity" used by Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann is partly different from its usage(s) in present day anthropology. We cannot go into the theoretical debates in depth here, but refer to the introduction to this volume.

2 Lewis, "Umma".

3 Quran 46:18: "It is [such as] these upon whom the sentence [of doom] will fall due, together with the [other sinful] communities [*umam*] of invisible beings and humans that have passed away before their time. Verily, they will be lost". This and the following quotations from the Quran are modified renderings of Asad's translation. See also the contribution by Lohlker in this volume.

4 Nowhere does al-Hamdānī give an indication that he read Greek, so he presumably used an Arabic translation of Ptolemy's work.

ἔθνη (*ethnē*, plural of ethnos) used by Ptolemy is rendered as *umam*.[5] Among other random examples, the same plural occurs in the description of the earth of al-Idrīsī (1099 or 1100–1165 or 66), who, writing around 1154 in Sicily, used the term *umam* to describe the "peoples" along the East African Coast or Turkic peoples in Central Asia.[6] At least in the plural, the term *umma* could be used as a very general expression for "peoples", comparable to the Latin *gens*, but certainly without the etymological implications of common descent.

The most common meaning of the term in its singular is the invocation of the totality of the Muslim community, e.g. when the Yemeni imam al-Manṣūr al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī al-ʿIyānī (reigned 999–1003) wrote in a letter of appointment to one of his governors: "The *fuqahāʾ* [legal experts] are the specialists of religion and the wise men of the *umma*".[7] However, this concept of "the Islamic community" is highly ideal, just like its notions of unity. By using the term *umma*, the imam addressed an ideally egalitarian community; yet at the same time implicitly saw himself at the top of the hierarchy. Around 200 years later, Imam ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥamza (reigned 1187–1217) did not hesitate to call his internal Yemeni Zaydi enemies unbelievers,[8] thus in effect placing them outside the *umma*. The *umma* is therefore used as an idealized vision of a community. With this idea as a tool, internal, "heterodox" enemies could be excluded, with potentially severe consequences for them. The term *umma* is just one of many such all-encompassing, ideal religious community terms which can be appropriated by a self declared "orthodox" group and used against another group, with varying degrees of hostility, clearly depending on context. *Umma* can even carry a notion of "chosen people", e.g. in Quran 3:110: "You are the best of peoples" (*kuntum khayra ummatin*). But when in the Quran 2:213 the beginning of human society is alluded to, *umma* is used in a possibly not, or not only, religious way: "Mankind was once a single community" (*kāna al-nāsu ummatan wāḥidatan*).

The terms "Muslims", "Islam" and "believers" can be used almost synonymously to *umma*. However, these terms can also be used in a less politico-legal way to describe and invoke an ideal moral community. Musallam al-Laḥjī (died around 1150) wrote a large biographical collection of the members of the

---

5   Cf. Uhden, "Das Erdbild", 321. For ἔθνη see Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 2.3, ed. Robbins, p. 132; for *umam* as translation of Ptolemy's text see al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat jazīrat al-ʿArab*, 39.

6   Al-Idrīsī, *Opus geographicum*, ed. Bombaci, 58; 849.

7   Al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad, *Sīrat al-Imām al-Manṣūr*, 114; in Imam al-Qāsim's description of the duties of the *fuqahāʾ*, al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad uses the word *umma* again three times, ibid., 114–15.

8   Abū Firās b. Diʿtham, *al-Sīra al-sharīfa*, 852–93.

Muṭarrifiyya (a Yemeni Zaydi branch). When he uses the term "Muslims", such as "the Muslims of the town of Shibām",[9] he vaguely implies that not everyone there was "Muslim" in his eyes. Perhaps his claim should be interpreted as an appeal to the ideal moral individual as part of an equally ideal community of moral and pious men, something that is clearly the overall theme of his work (of course according to al-Laḥjī's version of morality focusing on ideal notions, rather than using the term in strict inclusive/exclusive legal ways).

The use of *umma* as a community with clear borders, a common law, *sharīʿa*, common activities, and its implied claim to universal validity corresponds in many respects to the term *populus* in a Christian sense, the *populus Christianus*, as shown by Heydemann.[10] But especially in the plural, *umam* (like the *gentes*) can be defined as geographic units, without the notion of common descent as implied with *gentes*; in its singular, it frequently refers to the universal Muslim community, and in the plural to the many peoples which constitute it or to its pagan and heterodox opponents. The way *gens* and *populus* are used by Christian authors who also have political agendas is highly comparable. But the "meanings" of the terms must be seen in relation to the specific intention and context. Perhaps the clearest case Heydemann presents is that of Augustine in the Enarrationes in psalmos, where he defines the "people of God" (*gens Dei*) as a universal community in his polemic against the competing vision of community of the Donatists.[11]

It would be outside the scope of this response to trace the development over time of some of these terms found in our sources from Yemen to match Heydemann's long durée of the usage of the *gens*/*populus* terms over three centuries, but it would be a rewarding task. Other terms used for communities, which are usually translated as "tribes", cannot be given a religious meaning (unlike the Latin terms for ethnic groups such as *gens* or *natio*). However, the fact that these terms are non-religious at first glance does not mean that they do not have relevance for religious actors of the medieval period, as will be demonstrated below.

Tribes: *Qabāʾil* and *ʿAshāʾir*

The tribal people in South Arabia had their specific terms with which to express visions of their own communities or which were used by outsiders

---

9   Musallam al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 253; cf. 248.
10   See Heydemann in this volume.
11   Ibid.

to characterize and categorize them. Mainly, two different terms were used in South Arabia in the 10th century which are usually translated as "tribe": *qabīla* (pl. *qabāʾil*) and *ʿashīra* (pl. *ʿashāʾir*). Two other terms that are additionally but rarely used can only be mentioned here in passing: *shaʿb* (pl. *shuʿūb*), a South-Arabian word originally denoting sedentary tribes,[12] and *ḥayy* (pl. *aḥyaʾ*). "*Qabīla*" and "*ʿashīra*" both occur in the Quran, *qabāʾil* only in the plural, together with *shuʿūb*, in Quran 49:13 (a passage popular with all genealogists):[13]

> O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you *qabāʾil* and *shuʿūb* so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Indeed, God is knowing and acquainted.

ʿAshīra[14] occurs three times in the Quran, and only in the singular, e.g. 9:24:

> Say, if your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your *ʿashīra*, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than God and His Messenger and *jihād* in His cause, then wait until God executes His command. And God does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.

Another passage is Quran 26:214: "And warn your closest *ʿashīra*". A comparison of the quotations shows that *ʿashīra* in Quran 9:24 is mentioned in the context of the nearest consanguine and affinal relatives of a single person, the "you" who in this case is threatened by God. This group of relatives is obviously also meant with *ʿashīrataka al-aqrabīna* ("your closest kin-group"; Asad translated: "thy kinsfolk") in Quran 26:214. In the often cited verse Quran 49:13 no specific individuals are alluded to, but the *qabāʾil* and *shuʿūb* denote at least groups whose members know each other, as the immediately following clause shows.

---

12   Al-Selwi, *Jemenitische Wörter*, 123–24; Beeston, "Shaʿb"; Beeston, "Some features of social structure in Saba".

13   The verb *qabala* in its third form (*qābala*) means "to meet, to be face to face with", see Chelhod, "Ḳabīla", 334–35, and in its sixth form (*taqābala*) "to face one another" (this form is taken by al-Hamdānī as explanation for *qabīla*, see al-Hamdānī, *Kitāb al-iklīl* 1, 6).

14   For the discussions regarding *ʿashīra* see the entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* by Lecerf, "ʿAshīra", 1:700, where he cited the lexicon *Lisān al-ʿArab*: "The *ʿashīra* of a man is constituted by the nearest male offspring of his father".

Groups like *qabāʾil* and *shuʿūb* offer the people the possibility of getting to know one another.

In the following we want to describe these two terms, *qabīla* and *ʿashīra*, as they are used by two 10th century authors in South Arabia. The first author is ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿUbaydallāh al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, a follower of the first imam of Yemen, al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq, who also wrote the latter's biography ("Sīrat al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn"). Al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī was born around 880 near Medina in what is today Saudi-Arabia, and followed Imam al-Hādī (and his father, who fought at the imam's side) to the Yemen in the year 897. His North-Arabian descent (and at least partly that of his expected audience) becomes evident in some instances in his *sīra*, when he has to explain South-Arabian words which he could not expect his hearers/readers to know (e.g. the word "*mikhlāf*",[15] "region, province, district"). The second author is Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī, born possibly 893 near Sanaa, an opponent of the "immigrant" *ashrāf* (members of the family of the Prophet) and also an opponent of the sons and successors of the first imam. In his genealogical and geographical works (*Al-Iklīl*, *Ṣifat jazīrat al-ʿArab*) he described landscapes and inhabitants of Yemen and their genealogies from a tribal point of view, as elaborated by Mahoney in this volume. As his name shows, he was a member of one of the large South-Arabian tribal federations, the Hamdān.

One difference between the two authors becomes immediately visible: in al-Hamdānī's work, *qabīla* is used far more often than *ʿashīra*, whereas in al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī's the term *qabīla* occurs rarely, and *ʿashīra* is preferred. For al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, and in accordance with the Quranic usage, *ʿashīra* usually is the group of people immediately surrounding an individual, his or her close relatives. To give a few examples: he mentions the *ʿashīra* of a person whose name he simply cites as al-Baḥrī of Banū Baḥr;[16] in another context he speaks of a certain Ḥunaysh, a man from a tribe called Wādiʿa, and of a group (jamāʿa)[17] of his *ʿashīra*;[18] in another case he refers to the *ʿashīra* of al-Hādī, the first imam.[19] But in other instances a slightly different use can be discovered. Al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī once mentions the *ʿashāʾir* of Hamdān,[20] or the *ʿashāʾir* of

15   Al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī*, ed. Zakkār, 43; Al-Selwi, *Jemenitische Wörter*, 78.

16   Al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī*, ed. Zakkār, 80.

17   The term *jamāʿa* is a very common word for "group" with neither negative nor positive connotations.

18   Al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī*, ed. Zakkār, 89; see also 90.

19   Ibid., 156.

20   Ibid., 92.

Banū Miʿmar.[21] In such cases he talks of a large tribal group (the Banū Miʿmar) or even a whole confederation (Hamdān), which contains ʿashāʾir. Obviously with this usage he wanted to denote tribal subgroups, but avoided the usual terms given for them e.g. by al-Hamdānī (e.g. *bayt* or *rahṭ*). Thus the author of the *sīra* uses the word ʿashīra in two ways: according to the Quranic usage as the group of people related by kinship to a special individual (usually in singular), or as a word for tribal subgroups (usually in plural).

In al-Hamdānī's texts ʿashīra is rarely used. Twice it occurs in *Iklīl 8* (not a genealogical book) in tales about rather legendary persons of pre-Islamic times, where the author speaks of people possibly related through kinship to a certain individual.[22] This use is similar to the Quranic one. But in al-Hamdānī's genealogical works (*Iklīl* 1, 2 and 10), where the word might be expected to occur, the term is not used. The focus on *qabīla* results in a reverse picture. The word takes the place of ʿashīra of al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī's second meaning: when he means tribal (sub)groups, al-Hamdānī uses *qabīla*, for example he speaks of *qabāʾil* of Hamdān,[23] or of *qabāʾil* of Qaḥṭān living in Syria (al-Shām), making it clear that he is talking of all genealogically southern Arabs when he cites their common ancestor Qaḥṭān.[24] In yet another passage he declares that Ḥāshid the older (or the greater) and Bakīl are the two important *qabīlatā* (dual) of Hamdān;[25] in the same book he denotes the offspring of (a group named) Alhān as the nearest *qabīla* to Hamdān. When speaking of the Yursam, al-Hamdānī describes the individual components of this genealogically incoherent group as *qabāʾil* in his "Description of the Arab Peninsula",[26] whereas in a similar attempt in *Iklīl 1* the same groups, as components of Yursam, are designated as "*bayt*" (pl. "*buyūt*", "house"),[27] thereby showing that the terms *qabīla* and *bayt* are not entirely mutually distinguishable and have meanings partly congruent with each other. Consequently, with *qabīla* al-Hamdānī denoted a distinct tribal group, in many cases a subgroup of greater units or confederations like Hamdān.

In al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī's biography of the first imam, the word *qabīla* occurs only once (!), in iterated form: "…and Ibn Bisṭām set out to ask Banū al-Ḥārith

---

21   Ibid., 134.

22   Al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl 8*, ed. al-Akwaʿ, 191, 279.

23   Al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl 2*, ed. al-Akwaʿ, 234; cf. al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī*, 92: ʿashāʾir of Hamdān.

24   Al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl 2*, ed. al-Akwaʿ, 242.

25   Al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl 10*, ed. al-Khaṭīb, 28.

26   Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, ed. al-Akwaʿ, 21.

27   Al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl 1*, ed. Löfgen, 118.

for security, one *qabīla* after the other [*qabīlatan qabīlatan*]".[28] In this instance, the term *qabīla* denotes subgroups of the confederation of Banū al-Ḥārith. Thus it has a function that the author usually characterizes by using *ʿashīra*. For an explanation of this use of *qabīla* in this special case one has to rely on guesswork. One possibility might be that, similarly to "*bayt*" and "*qabīla*", the terms were not clearly defined and could in certain cases be used indiscriminately. Alternatively, the author al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī might have reproduced an account from a South-Arabian source. Or he was using a fixed figure of speech—in his travelogue, the Andalusian Ibn Jubayr (540/1145–614/1217) described a procession in Mecca where people followed "*qabīlatan qabīlatan wa-ḥāratan ḥāratan*", "*qabīla* after *qabīla* and quarter after quarter".[29]

In conclusion an attempt will be made to explain the cause of the difference between the two authors where one uses almost exclusively the term *ʿashīra* and the other only *qabīla*. An obvious possibility would be to regard the different origin of the authors: one—al-Hamdānī—originated from South-Arabia, the other—al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī—from the north. Terminological differences between the two regions, together with the geographical location of the expected audience, might explain the disagreements. But there is another possible explanation: for an author writing, arguing and legitimizing largely in religious terms like al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī in his biography, a large community like a *qabīla*, with its power-related structures and claim to political influence and legitimacy, must have been seen as a threat to a religious community, an *umma*, under an imam who is striving to claim political (and religious) power for himself and his community. By contrast, perceiving an individual together with his or her nearest relatives as *ʿashīra* could rather be seen as something natural not per se standing in the way of an imam's claim to power. Thus al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī could consciously have avoided the term *qabīla* in order to undermine tribal visions of community and enhance the Islamic vision of it. On the other hand, al-Hamdānī, as an opponent of the descendants of the family of the prophet arriving from the north (*ʿAlids*, *ashrāf*, *ahl al-bayt*), and as a member of one of the most influential South-Arabian tribal confederations of his time, could have done exactly the opposite: he may have preferred the use of the term *qabīla*, thus emphasizing the political role the *qabāʾil* or tribes played in South-Arabian politics, thereby invoking a tribal vision of community where religion did not have the importance attributed to it by the imam and his followers, as also dealt with by Mahoney in this volume.

---

28   Al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī*, 358.

29   Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels*, ed. Wright, 130.

One last remark should be added here: *qabīla* or tribe is not a term reserved exclusively for Arabs. When Arab authors described non-Arab people living far away from them, or when Arab travellers visited foreign non-Arab, non-Islamic lands, they sometimes discovered *qabā'il* or tribes. Al-Idrīsī for instance described the Türgesh in Central Asia as a *qabīla* of the Turkic peoples, who for him consist of several *qabā'il*.[30] Another example is provided by the famous traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (703/1304—779/1377). When he traversed India, he passed through a town called Mālawa, named after a *qabīla*, which, as he states, "is one of the *qabā'il* of the Indians (al-Hunūd)".[31] And finally, in South Arabia in Ayyubid times, al-ʿArashānī (d. 1229), when he in his *Kitāb al-ikhtiṣāṣ* (book of preference) cited the origin of Amir ʿAlam al-Dīn Wurdasār, twice mentions a group living in Yemen called *qabīlat* Shānkān, "one of the *qabā'il* of the Kurds who belong to the Arabs, and it is maintained, to Nizār b. Maʿadd b. ʿAdnān". With his genealogical allusion he somewhat hesitantly ("it is maintained") ascribed a northern Arab genealogy to the Kurds, thus converting them into a kind of near "others".[32] The Amir Wurdasār lives on in memory together with his *qabīla*, here called Shākān, because he left a building inscription on one of the minarets of the Great Mosque in Sanaa, which he erected in 1206/7.

As we have already mentioned, we wish to exercise caution in defining group terms as either religious or non-religious. Although the terms *ʿashīra* and *qabīla* are not religious per se, they can be used that way, as exemplified by al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī's usage. In early medieval European history the development of "ethnic" groups has received much attention, while it seems problematic to export an exact notion of "ethnicity" to the Islamic and Yemeni context. Another community term, which interestingly is both related to "religion" and to the Europeanists' usage of "ethnic"[33] and at the same time is at odds with the terms *umma* and *qabīla* described above, is the *ashrāf*. We will come back to "ethnicity" after describing the *ashrāf*.

The Term *Ashrāf*

The *ashrāf* (sing. *sharīf*) is the group that elsewhere in the Muslim world are called *ʿAlid*s[34] and in later periods *sāda* (sing. *sayyid*) in Yemen. The term is

30   Al-Idrīsī, *Opus geographicum*, 850.

31   Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Voyages*, 4:28.

32   Al-ʿArashānī, *Kitāb al-ikhtiṣāṣ*, 506 and 534.

33   For "ethnicity", see the introduction by Walter Pohl in this volume.

34   Lewis, "ʿAlids"; Bernheimer, *The ʿAlids*.

linked to the well-known value "*sharaf*", meaning "honour" thus a good literal translation might be "nobility". The *ashrāf* are most central actors in the sources in the medieval period from the Yemeni highlands. During the early medieval period, we see an influx of individuals and families from the male descent group of the family of the Prophet into various parts of Yemen.[35] They often played an oppositional role in the Abbasid Empire, also inside Yemen, situating themselves in local tribal politics on the side of tribes opposing the Abbasids. In the highlands of Yemen they mainly adopted a Zaydi (Shi'i) creed, thus creating an Islamic counter-hegemony to the Abbasid agents there. The *ashrāf* claimed to carry on the true religious orthodoxy and authority from the Prophet through the male blood line as individuals making up a group. This concept fitted well with the way communities at the time were conceived along genealogical lines. Most of the important *ashrāf* families in Yemen, at least the leading families who laid claim to the Zaydi imamate, were descendants of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 860).[36] It was first with Imam al-Hādī Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 911) that the tradition of Zaydism was introduced to Yemen in the years around AD 900 and since that time, his relatives and descendants have had a special grip on Zaydism and religious authority in the highlands of Yemen.[37]

The meaning of the term *ashrāf* has seen significant change. At the beginning of the period under scrutiny (ca 900 AD) they are usually referred to as *'Alid*s or *'Alawī*s, also elsewhere in the Muslim world.[38] Around 1000–1100 AD the term *ashrāf* became common in highland Yemen, but we also see it used for the *ashrāf* in Mecca and the *ashrāf* in al-Mikhlāf al-Sulaymānī in today's Saudi Arabia. "*Ashrāf*" is a term they seem to have "occupied", as it was originally a local, tribal term referring to tribal "nobility". In around 1150 there are still a few instances where the term *ashrāf* is used for tribal elites, but then always in a construct such as the "*ashrāf* of Hamdān";[39] "the tribal elites" or "nobility" of Hamdān, thus the appropriation of the term does not seem to be absolute. Perhaps one can also see a tendency that the term *ashrāf* was used

---

35   One can talk about at least three distinct regions they settled in South Arabia: Hadramawt in the east where they today remain an important religious elite in local Shafi'i Sufism, in Lower Yemen and in the highlands of Yemen. Here we only deal with the latter and unlike the two first-mentioned regions, the 'Alids in the highlands usually claim to come from the Ḥasani branch, and a large majority of the important Zaydi elites claim descent from al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 860).

36   Madelung, "al-Rassī, al-Ḳāsim b. Ibrāhīm".

37   For literature about the *sāda*, see Dresch, *Tribes*; Gochenour, "The Penetration".

38   Bernheimer, *The 'Alids*, "Introduction", 1–12.

39   Al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 30; Dresch, *Tribes*, 169, 191, n. 10.

about specific *ashrāf* clans such as the Qāsimi *ashrāf* (*al-ashrāf al-qāsimiyyūn*) based in Shahāra, while the ideal and religious status of all *ashrāf* was rather invoked by the term *ahl al-bayt*, "the family of the House [of the Prophet]" or *āl al-rasūl*, "the family of the Prophet", or similar. Some of the *ashrāf* clans are also referred to in "tribal" terms like "Banū Ḥamza". At some point in the late medieval period, the *ashrāf* began to be called "*sāda*" (sing. *sayyid*), which is the term still used for them today as a community or social category in Yemen.[40] Around 1000 AD this was also originally a tribal term for tribal elites, much used by al-Hamdānī in his works,[41] meaning "master" or "lord". Thus the community (insofar as one can claim they remain the same group over time) had several names, changing over time, of which *ashrāf* is only one. It is problematic to use the term *ashrāf* as the only term for this group in this rather short period when so many different terms were used for various phenomena related to them, and when other terms were used in other periods, but in this response, for the sake of simplification, they will be called *ashrāf*.

The *ashrāf* were perceived to be northern Arabs and thus "outsiders" by intellectuals like al-Hamdānī.[42] Their role and importance in the highlands of Yemen can be seen as one slowly increasing from the 9th to the 14th century AD, when we have reports of them immigrating to Yemen and becoming a group that increasingly held religious authority in the Zaydi sect there.[43] By constantly invoking their religious status as being different from non-*ashrāf*, they also marked a distance to the local tribal population as well as to local low-status groups. Over the course of the medieval period they became a distinct group in Yemeni society and they claimed a vision of community in the form of stratification towards a religious-political hierarchy with themselves at the top. They accepted that scholarly religious knowledge could also be transmitted among *non-ashrāf*. However, the *ashrāf* as a collective are portrayed as the bearers of religious knowledge and authority. In the version of Zaydism they upheld, the imamate, the ultimate leadership of the Muslim community, could only be held by a man of the *ashrāf*. Unfortunately, most of our sources from the period were written by them, or by their local Yemeni supporters/ co-believers, which adds a decisive bias to the texts.

---

40   For the change towards using "sāda", see Zayd, *Tayyārāt*, 146.
41   Heiss, "Ein šayḫ ist ein šayḫ", 125–28.
42   See the article in this volume by Daniel Mahoney.
43   With certain setbacks, such as the opposition they faced from the Muṭarrifiyya described by Hovden in this volume. For the growth of the *ashrāf*, see Gochenour, "Towards a Sociology".

Contrary to the ideal notion of *umma*, the term *ashrāf* is only applied to a specific group of believers, who in Zaydi (and Shi'i) law also have specific rights and duties relative to other Muslims.[44] However, the term *ashrāf* also includes certain notions of universality, since it refers back to "Islamic authority"; the existence of other groups with similar status is an impossibility. There cannot be other *ashrāf* (although in practice there were certainly competing branches both inside and outside Yemen, there is only one *ahl al-bayt*).

To what extent can we use the term "ethnic" for such a group? They seem to straddle both the labels "religious" and "ethnic". Andre Gingrich has argued that "ethnicity" is a term ill fitted to describing the differences *among* the tribal groups in Yemen, since these are a majority in a society with a more or less shared language and culture.[45] Indeed it is uncommon among anthropologists and historians to conceive of the tribal groups in Yemen as "ethnic" groups. Minority groups like the Jews, the Baniyans (Hindu traders) or the Abnāʾ (alleged descendants of Persians) could more readily be seen as ethnic groups. During the time of colonial interest and until the 1980s the social stratification of Yemeni society was a main focus for Western anthropologists, while later anthropologists have been more sceptical of reproducing this model, partly because it has such a strong bias in favour of those at the top. If we are to learn from contemporary ethnography, we can apply the same scepticism to the medieval period. The *ashrāf* and the tribes are seen as two different communities partly alongside each other and partly arranged in a hierarchy, at least seen from the religious perspective of the *ashrāf*. Both groups were Arabs and spoke Arabic, which supposedly makes them the same ethnic group. However, they were also northern Arabs and southern Arabs respectively, with different dialects and cultural traits, which make them different. Both similarities and differences can be exaggerated and made significant, depending on the need to draw a line and the need to construct a difference.

If the *ashrāf* invoked religion and were a "religiously" legitimated community, do they also fall outside the common usage of "ethnic"? The term "ethno-religious", which could be used for an ethnic group that is also religiously distinct, is also not entirely fitting, because both the *ashrāf* and the surrounding tribes are all Muslims. Arguably, the important point is not to answer whether or not the *ashrāf* were an "ethnic" group, but rather to ask what we can

---

44   For a discussion of the conditions of the Zaydi imamate, see Zayd, *Tayyārāt*, 101–03, and
       the imamate in general; Madelung, "Imāma".

45   Gingrich, "Envisioning Medieval Communities in Asia".

learn from theoretical debates on ethnicity and make use of this in the study of the *ashrāf*. In the scope of this response this is something we can only mention in passing.

One obvious difference between *ashrāf* and tribal visions of community is the vast written and intellectual culture of the Islamic sciences that the *ashrāf* attached to, specialized in, and partly also monopolized. The *ashrāf* also had elaborate documentations of their genealogy all the way back to their forefather, the Prophet. Most tribal groups in Yemen or "ethnic" groups do not emphasize this documentation between individual and group in such a precise way, and therefore inclusion and exclusion is easier and more flexible. The *ashrāf* could be quite strict in keeping their "purity". In this endeavour the *ashrāf* are similar to European nobility and their ways of excluding other members of the allegedly same ethnic background. But when it comes to more general mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, emphasizing differences in everyday practices vis-a-vis other groups, in clothing, ways of praying, marriage patterns etc., perhaps "ethnicity" can partly be seen.

The religious-political descent group is not so present in European medieval history, either for their elites or for the broader population. But, if we zoom out from Yemen, then we should not forget that the *ashrāf* were a peripheral opposition phenomenon, a rather small minority in the wider Islamic world that indeed was also met with resistance locally. In Yemen the *ashrāf* were met with opposition both from "below"[46] and from other political and religious elites. One should not present the ideal of the *ashrāf* as a "true" model of society in a historical sense, but rather as one vision of community among many, which was quite significant in the medieval period, and which inspired action and formed institutions. It was mainly an ideal useful for certain influential families among the *ashrāf* in restricting ("religious") authority and the privileges combined with it to themselves. The position of the *ashrāf* and the idea of the *ahl al-bayt* ("the house of the Prophet") is still controversial in Islam today, because it could be a logical breach in the idea that all believers are equal. Islamic reform movements have several times in history rejected and opposed this possibility of inequality.

The fact that genealogies of religious authority follow patrilineal bloodlines and not just "religious learning" is perhaps more common in Islam and Arabia than Europe. But then in the medieval period South Arabian society was

---

46 Perhaps the Muṭarrifiyya can be seen an example where local Yemenis, tribal and low-status individuals used Zaydi doctrine, see Hovden in this volume. See also ʿAlī Muḥammad Zayd, *Tayyārāt*.

already totally infused with ideas and discourses of patrilineal genealogy. Thus it is no wonder that this form of religious vision of community could therefore grow and exist within a highly tribalized society. One can perhaps ask if it was not *because* of the tribal visions of community in the highlands that the *ashrāf* managed to persist for so long and to carve out a space in the otherwise universalist and egalitarian notions of "*umma*" and "Islam". The actors behind the Islamic and tribal visions of community could draw on each other's resources. This reminds us how important it is not to take the *ashrāf*/tribe and religious/political divide for granted, but rather to look at specific acts of community construction and develop models and representations of these.

Conclusion

The community-related terms that we have looked at more closely in this comparative analysis received their emotional, effective and adapted meanings from actors who used them for their own interests and strategies. This can explain the differences in usage among various authors and the development and change in the apparent meanings of the community-related terms over time. Unfortunately, unlike later periods in history, most of our sources were written by highly educated individuals, often in close proximity to political elites. It is therefore difficult to estimate which terms for community were common among a wider spectrum of the population; was it *qabīla* or was it *ʿashīra*? Did commoners believe in and accept the *ashrāf's* claims to superiority? If the term *umma* is "interpreted", it quickly leads us to highly idealized and complicated legal and theological theories that only experts could fully understand. The meaning of *umma* presumably changed rapidly between times of war and times of peace, the political tension adding momentum and potential to the term.

Perhaps the most useful exercise initiated by our comparison has been to learn more about the political situatedness of the authors of our sources. In this way we can also better tease out and separate the more taken-for-granted layers of the sources—layers that could be attributed to a general presence of certain visions of community—from those that are more propagandistic, written to serve a specific political purpose. In any case we must compare and contrast the different sources we have in order to see the dynamics and tensions between them and employ source criticism. A first step is content analysis of which terms appear in certain texts. But the second is to look for and theorize the agency behind the usages of these terms and to situate term, usage and agency in its historical context.

Bibliography

ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn* [Biography of al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn], ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut, 1981).

ʿAlī Muḥammad Zayd, *Tayyārāt muʿtazilat al-Yaman fī l-qarn al-sādis al-hijrī* (Sanaa, 1997).

Alfred Felix Landon Beeston, "Shaʿb", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004), 9:150–52.

Alfred Felix Landon Beeston, "Some features of social structure in Saba", in *Sources for the history of Arabia*, 2 vols. (Riyadh, 1979), 2:115–23.

Al-ʿArashānī, Sarī b. Fuḍayl, Niẓām al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-ikhtiṣāṣ* [Book of preference], in al-Rāzī, Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad, *tārīkh madīnat Ṣanʿāʾ*, ed. Ḥusayn b. ʿAbdallāh al-ʿAmrī, 3rd ed. (Beirut, Damascus, 1989), 491–724.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Lawātī al-Tanjī, *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah*, 4 vols., eds. Charles Defrémery and Beniamino R. Sanguinetti (Paris, 1853–1858).

Theresa Bernheimer, *The ʿAlids: The First Family of Islam, 750–1200*, (Edinburgh 2014).

Joseph Chelhod, "Ḳabīla", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004), 4:334–35.

Ibn Diʿtham, Abū Firās, *al-Sīra al-sharīfa al-Manṣūriyya* [The noble Manṣūrī biography], ed. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Āṭī (Beirut, 1992).

Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*, (Oxford 1989).

Andre Gingrich, "Envisioning Medieval Communities in Asia: Remarks on Ethnicity, Tribalism and Faith", in *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300–1100*, eds. Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner and Richard Payne (Farnham, Burlington, 2012), 29–41.

David Thomas Gochenour, "The Penetration of Zaydi Islam into Early Medieval Yemen", (unpublished PhD diss., Harvard University, 1984).

David Thomas Gochenour, "Towards a Sociology of the Islamisation of Yemen", in *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background*, ed. Brian R. Pridham (New York, 1984), 1–19.

Al-Hamdānī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb, Abū Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-iklīl al-juzʾ al-awwal* (Book of the Crown, first part), ed. Oscar Löfgren (Leiden, 1954/65), cited as *Iklīl 1*.

Al-Hamdānī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb, Abū Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-iklīl al-juzʾ al-thānī* [Book of the Crown, second part], ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ al-Ḥiwālī (Baghdad, 1980), cited as *Iklīl 2*.

Al-Hamdānī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb, Abū Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-iklīl al-juz' al-thāmin* [Book of the Crown, eighth part], ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ al-Ḥiwālī (Damascus, 1979), cited as *Iklīl 8*.

Al-Hamdānī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb, Abū Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-iklīl al-kitāb al-ʿāshir* [Book of the Crown, tenth part], ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (Cairo, 1949), cited as *Iklīl 10*.

Al-Hamdānī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb, Abū Muḥammad, *Ṣifat jazīrat al-ʿArab* [Description of the Arab peninsula], ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ al-Ḥiwālī (Riyadh, 1974).

Johann Heiss, "Ein šayḫ ist ein šayḫ, aber was für ein Ding ist ein sayyid? Zur sozialen Entwicklung des Wortes sayyid", in *Veränderung und Stabilität, Normen und Werte in islamischen Gesellschaften*, ed. Johann Heiss, Veröffentlichungen zur Sozialanthropologie 7 (Vienna, 2005).

Al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb al-Hamdānī, *Sīrat al-Imām al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī al-ʿIyyānī* [Biography of the Imām al-Manṣūr bi-Allāh al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī al-ʿIyyānī], ed. al-Ḥibshī (Sanaa, 1996).

Al-Idrīsī, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, Abū ʿAbdallāh, *Opus geographicum sive "Liber ad eorum delectationem qui terras peragrare studeant"*, ed. Alessio Bombaci, Umberto Rizzitano et al. (Naples, Rome, 1970–1984).

Ibn Jubayr, Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Jubayr, al-Kinānī, al-Balansī, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, ed. William Wright, 2nd ed., revised by Michael J. de Goeje (Leiden, London, 1907).

Al-Laḥjī, Abū al-Ghamr Musallam b. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya min ahl al-bayt ʿalayhim al-salām wa-shīʿatihim bi-al-Yaman" [Reports of the Zaydiyya consisting of people of the family of the prophet—peace be on them—and their Shiʿa in Yemen], Jāmiʿat Al-Imām Muḥammad b. Saʿūd al-Islāmiyya, Riyadh, MS 2449.

Jean Lecerf, "ʿAshīra", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004), 1:700.

Bernhard Lewis, "Umma", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960), 10:859–63.

Bernhard Lewis, "ʿAlids", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960), 1:401–03.

Wilferd Madelung, "Imāma", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960), 1:1166.

Wilferd Madelung, "al-Rassī, al-Ḳāsim b. Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960), 8:453–54.

Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* ed. Frank E. Robbins (Harvard, Mass., 1940).

Ibrahim Al-Selwi, *Jemenitische Wörter in den Werken von al-Hamdānī und Našwān und ihre Parallelen in den semitischen Sprachen*, (Berlin 1987).

Richard Uhden, "Das Erdbild in der Tetrabiblos des Ptolemaios", *Philologus* 88 N.F. 42 (1933), 302–25.

Jamāʿa vs. Mulk: Community-Centred and Ruler-Centred Visions of the Islamic Community

Rüdiger Lohlker

The following—preliminary—thoughts are the result of ongoing research into concepts[1] related to ideas we may call—somewhat anachronistically—political, in an Islamic context.[2]

If we understand community both in its social and affective dimension,[3] the concepts of *jamāʿa* will further an analytical approach to the concept of community in an Islamic context. *Jamāʿa* and other concepts are of greater importance to the analysis of community in Islamicate societies than the *umma*, often referred to as the most central term for community in Islamic contexts.

A caveat: since anything else would mean turning to the most common orientalist fallacy, taking a limited number of sources—see, for example, the article "ḏjamāʿa" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*[4]—and claiming to be able to give a general idea of *the* Islamic term for community, this chapter is restricted to an exploration into the the semantics of terms related to community, establishing a starting point for further research.[5]

---

1 In this chapter *concept* is used intentionally in a broad sense instead of other terms, taking account of the present indeterminacy of the semantic field of community in Arabic sources.

2 I owe my special interest in the concept(s) of *jamāʿa* to the research by Riḍwān al-Sayyid and Ovamir Anjum. Riḍwān al-Sayyid is a renowned specialist in the history of Islamic ideas and has published several monographs and articles on the concept of community in the history of Islamic ideas trying a concept based on Qurʾan and Hadith. Ovamir Anjum's studies focus on the epistemology of intellect/reason in classical Islam. His recent study on Ibn Taymiyya has an analysis of the intricate relation of the ideas of community and ruler.

3 See the contribution by Christina Lutter in this volume.

4 See the entry by Gardet, "*ḏjamāʿa*" in the second edition of the Encyclopedia of Islam, at the moment the third edition still has no entry on *ḏjamāʿa*.

5 Islamic scholars have been aware of the difficulties of defining terms. There is a vast corpus of literature on definitions of technical terms in many disciplines. For law see, e.g., Ibn Farhūn, *Kashf al-niqāb*.

Just taking one or two sources for an analysis would not be helpful given the background of a lack of knowledge of the concept to be discussed here. Worse, it would fall in the trap of producing another case of orientalist essentialism. We are leaving aside the crucial question for a thorough understanding of the terms used—at least—in the learned discourses in Islamicate societies: how do we cope with the inherent ambiguity?[6]

Umma as Community

The *umma*, as a community, is mentioned several times in the Quran; but at first we should note the use of *umma* in another document, the "Constitution of Medina", to avoid a reading of terminology centred on the Quran, an often misleading approach producing a "Quranocentric" view of Islamicate cultures. This document was drawn up by Muhammad when he emigrated from Mecca to Medina to act as a mediator between competing local groups. Here again the *umma* is mentioned. Some scholars regard *umma* as a loose political confederation between several autonomous tribes,[7] or a community of believers living in Medina (including at least certain groups of Jewish inhabitants in a *ḥilf*[8] to other Medinese tribes), whose main object was to protect the territory of this city.[9] Despite the disputes among scholars as to the interpretation of parts of this document and its significance, there is a shared opinion on several points: the covenant aimed at maintaining the previous tribal groupings, agreements and ties. It was a contract for defence against an external enemy, uniting new Muslims, Jews and pagans. While each group continued to preserve its blood ties and its social and religious laws, they were bound to mutual aid and support in the case of war against an external enemy.

> In its deployment of the term *umma*, the Constitution of Medina clearly reflects Qur'anic understandings of this term. It should be pointed out that the Qur'an uses the term *umma* not only in reference to the community of Muslims but to the communities of Jews and Christians as well, and specifically to refer to the righteous contingent within distinctive

---

6   Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität.*

7   According to Serjeant, "The Sunna Jāmiʻah".

8   A form of alliance often cemented by marriage ties (for the context see Ibrahim, "Social and Economic Conditions").

9   Rubin, "The 'Constitution of Medina'".

religious communities. Thus, righteous Muslims constitute an *umma wasaṭan* ("a middle community", Qur'an 2:143) while righteous Jews and Christians constitute an *umma muqtaṣida* ("a balanced community", Qur'an 5:66) and *umma qāʾima* ("an upright community", Qur'an 3:113). The Constitution's emphasis on righteousness and upright behavior as constituting the principal requirements for membership within the Medinan community is thus shaped by the Qur'anic perspective on *umma*.[10]

The development in the following decades of early Islamic history may be summarized as the gradual emergence of the idea of a unified community of believers, based on Quranic sayings.

Following Ridwān al-Sayyid[11] I would assume that by the time of the rule of the second successor of the prophet Muhammad, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 644 CE), the concept of the unitarian *umma* had been perfected based on three principles: the common ownership of land by all Muslims, the common ownership of all booty during the period of expansion of the Islamicate empire, and the necessity to follow the call to jihad.[12]

Misreading Umma

A brief remark about the contemporary or modern understanding of the concept of the *umma* may help to avoid conceptual confusion. The *umma* is reformulated in modern Islam as a counter-institution constituted against global colonialism, then capitalism, then the globalized situation we are living in.[13] Today we may characterize the *umma* as a globalized nationalism based on religious assumptions although there is no legal concept of this kind of Islamic *umma*[14] and even the transnational practice of Muslims today cannot always be seen as related to this community.[15] The *umma* as a concept of a unified body of believers is belied in the day-to-day practice of Muslims at least until

---

10   Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims*, 7. The transliteration (and italics) is adapted to the system used in this chapter.

11   Al-Sayyid, *al-Umma*.

12   Technical terms borrowed from Arabic are not transliterated.

13   Following Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus*, 47 and *passim* and id., "Die Politisierung", here 110.

14   Schulze, "Citizens of Islam".

15   E.g., Schmidt, "The Transnational".

the 19th century.[16] As Nile Green in his seminal book on Islam in Bombay (and beyond) in the 19th century stated:

> In its cosmopolitan environment, different Muslims protected their customary community boundaries; and in the period with which we are dealing, the idea of an Indian Muslim "nation" or a collective Pan-Islam was still a minority discourse of the privileged and few. […] In such circumstances, Pan-Islamic visions of a single *umma* under Allah were insubstantial indeed, and visions that, in circumstances of increasing religious production, comprised only one of many Islams on offer.[17]

We have to add that the idea expressed by Hamilton A.R. Gibb: "The key word for everything that has to do with Islamic culture is *Umma*, Community",[18] is a fine example of Orientalist over-simplification trying to grasp one of the many essences ascribed to Muslim cultures so dear to the traditional Orientalist discourse. Moreover, the stress on the concept of *umma* as the main concept of community in an Islamic context has to be regarded as another example of backreading contemporary concepts of intra-Muslim discussions. For a better understanding of community another approach is needed:

> The early Islamic political vision […] has the following characteristics: (1) It places the *umma*, the community of all the believers, as the recipient of the Prophet's mission to humankind; one Qur'anic term to refer to this mission is *al-ʿahd*, keeping of God's covenant. (2) It requires rendering qualified obedience to authorities from among themselves. (3) It requires *shūrā*, the practice of participation and consultation in collective affairs, and (4) by corollary, considers the Community's collective affairs in need of rational human management. Finally another corollary of the Community's inheritance of the mission and God's covenant is that (5) this vision considers the caliph answerable to those he rules, the Community. I will name this the Community-centered vision of Islam, that is, a vision of ordering authority and responsibility of Islam's mission […] in such a way that the entirety of the Community, rather than a ruler, particular institution, or lineage stands atop the hierarchy of legitimation.

---

16   Further research on the modern history of concepts related to community is needed.

17   Green, *Bombay Islam*, 6.

18   Gibb, "The Community".

This community, of course, is ruled by a successor of the Prophet but one who does not inherit the infallible authority of the Prophet.[19]

Anjum[20] thus outlines the framework for our understanding of community in the early, classical, and middle[21] period of Islamicate societies, especially the dialectics of community-centred and ruler-centred visions of Islam.

Community as Jamāʿa

This community is called *jamāʿa*.[22] The Arab lexicographic tradition defines *jamāʿa* as a collectivity of humans—and even of non-humans.[23] The term was applied, we are told, for example to tribal groups (*jamāʿāt*) in early Islamic time,[24] but it is not Quranic, although may be reconstructed in the Quran.[25] We will have to look into the history of this concept and the related concept of *mulk* to understand the historical process that was the context of *jamāʿa*.

Jamāʿa the Organized Umma

As Ridwān al-Sayyid puts it, the ideal of Islamic unity prevalent in early decades of Islamic history—making it possible, for example to take moral excellence into account as a criterion for the decision on who will be the successor of the prophet—turned into the ideal of a unity of emperorship (of both Byzantine

---

19   Anjum, *Politics*, 61–62; for another analysis of hierarchy and egalitarianism in Islamic thought cf. Marlow, *Hierarchy*.

20   Ovamir Anjum's studies focus on the epistemology of intellect/reason in classical Islam. His recent study on Ibn Taymiyya has an analysis of the intricate relation between the ideas of community and ruler.

21   The periodization of the history of Islamicate societies follows a modified versions the periods proposed by Marshall G.S. Hodgson in his seminal work *The Venture of Islam*: the early period (until 692), the classical period (until 945), and the middle periods (until 1503), a periodization much more in consonance with the logic of the development of Islamicate societies (Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam 1* and id., *The Venture of Islam 2*).

22   For the traditional Islamic studies view see the article in the Encyclopedia of Islam by Gardet, "ḏjamāʿa".

23   Al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, 451 and Abū ʿUbayd, *al-Gharīb*, 908.

24   Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, 1:680.

25   Al-Sayyid, *al-Umma*, 21–24.

and Persian origin).[26] This meant the community-centred view of the early caliphate (*khilāfa*) turned into kingship (*mulk*); this implies a turn away from community (*jamāʿa*) to obedience (*ṭāʿa*) to the ruler.[27]

The role of the *jamāʿa* at this moment of transformation of the structure of early Islam is central. During the internal strife about the succession of the prophet under the reign of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (d. 656) and ʿAlī b. a. Ṭālib (d. 661) this internal dissent was seen as a danger to the existence of the Islamic community. This internal strife was called divide, Arab. *furqa*.[28] The concept regarded as being able to close this divide was called *jamāʿa*, community or unity.[29] This idea was based, among other things, on traditions from the prophet saying: "*Jamāʿa* is a mercy [of god] and internal strife is a punishment".[30]

The first dynasty after the four successors of the Prophet, the Umayyads (r. 661–750), reconstructed this idea during the early and beginning classical period. They, and especially the poets singing their praise, used *jamāʿa* to identify the people who were obedient to the Umayyad rulers,[31] taking up the concept Ridwān al-Sayyid mentioned: *ṭāʿa*, obedience. The Umayyad instrumentalization of *jamāʿa* led to an appropriation of the concept by opposition movements, especially in Iraq and the eastern parts of the Islamicate empire. They projected the concept back into the time before the Umayyad takeover and assigned it to a group of companions of the prophet speaking out for unity of the Islamic community.[32] This identity was projected back into the time of the Prophet. We read in reports about his farewell sermon in the last period of his life that he had said: "Know that your bosoms will not be filled with rancour [if your acting is based on] three habits: acting sincerely towards God, giving

---

26   Referring to companions of the prophet like Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar, or ʿAbd al-Rahmān b.a. Bakr when asked to swear the oath of allegiance to the successor of the first Umayyad caliph (al-Sayyid, *al-Umma*, 151).

27   Ibid., 151.

28   Playing with the similarity to *firqa*, group, since, in Arabic script; the two are indistinguishable when not vocalized. The concept of *firqa* is related to the idea that at the end of time there will be a "saved group" (*firqa nājiyya*) (van Ess, *Der Eine*, 22). Another semantic subfield of the root *f-r-q*—emerging during the first Islamic centuries—is *farqa* or *farīq* denoting politico-military factions.

29   Van Ess, *Der Eine*, 22.

30   http://library.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?hflag=1&bk_no=1849&pid=908991 (accessed March 2, 2014).

31   Van Ess, *Der Eine*, 24–25.

32   Ibid., 26–28.

honest counsel to those in command, and keeping to the community of the Muslims (*luzūm jamāʿat al-muslimīn*)".[33]

Until the end of the first century of the Islamic era and the beginning of the second century, the period of transition between the early and the classical period, there are several concepts denoting religious and other groupings among Muslims or forms of community:

—group of beings and objects (*jamāʿa*)
—tribal group (*jamāʿa*)
—obedient *jamāʿa*
—oppositional *jamāʿa*,

and the *umma*[34]—but which was not as important as we may think. There are other concepts like group/community (*milla*), variants/groups/communities (*ṣinf*; pl. *aṣnāf*), group/tribal group (*ṭāʾifa*), or group/faction (*firqa*). This is not the place to discuss every concept in detail, a task to be accomplished in future research, but we have bear in mind that these concepts were taken up by authors until the end of the middle periods and were the common point of reference for the learned discourses.[35] To give an overview over at least one concept of community, the *jamāʿa*, we have to describe it in the context of the relation of the community-centred to the ruler-centred vision (Anjum) to understand the role of the community.

Ruler-Centred Political Vision

Let us return to the rulers, more precisely the ruler-centred political vision in the last part of the early period. The community-centred vision, "when brought to bear on political life, comprised two parts".[36] One was the task of elaborating on the divine message, making it accessible to the community and, if necessary, criticizing the way the members of the community may try to live up to

---

33   Al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, Part 1, 592.

34   See the remarks by Heiss/Hovden in this volume.

35   All the authors mentioned lived in the Mashriq and Egypt. A case study claiming to exemplify a known idea of community in Islamicate societies would be worthless, since there is no shared notion based on a thorough knowledge of sources. So this would be a single, isolated case without any power to explain differences of meaning in different historical situations.

36   Anjum, *Politics*, 63.

it. This may prove that there are—maybe many—people who are more pious than the ruler. The other task is the mission to spread the message to the rest of humankind. In Umayyad times—at least in some regions—this meant military jihad at the frontiers.[37] This necessitated the unity of the community and an authority, the authority of the ruler. We may sense a tension between the two tasks and will look into the results of this tension, to quote Anjum again:

> Inasmuch as this vision remained dependent on the piety and integrity of those in authority rather than enshrined in robust institutions, its inherent tension could readily yield another vision in which a ruler became the center and the Community's rights were left to the mercy of the ruler's pious scruple.
>
> ... During Muʿāwīya's reign (661–80) [this process led] to a readjustment of the modus operandi and vision of the caliph's office. The transfer of the caliphate to Damascus is described in idealist sources as the transformation of caliphate to kingship. […] This change was registered by early Muslims as the loss of *shūrā*, which remained the most important weapon in the armor of the critics of the Umayyads. Some even saw it as the end of the caliphate itself and as the advent of worldly kingship (*mulk*) in Islam. […] The Umayyads could lay claim to many redeeming qualities, the most important of which was their ability to hold together an increasingly volatile empire.[38]

During Umayyad times the representatives of community-centred vision focused on the reinstatement of the mechanisms of consultation, Arab. *shūrā*.[39] However, the predominant attitude of the speakers of the community—or later on communities—was political quietism and neutralism. The classical period of the rule of the Abbasids (750–1258) furnished further reasons for this attitude. The ruler-centred vision of the Abbasids is different from the vision of the Umayyads, so a reconfiguration of this vision took place, as in the case of the community-centred vision. "As the community could no longer be maintained as a united political body, the theoretical part of its job was transferred to the sacred Sunna, and the living part to a minority of every generation who embodied the Sunna".[40]

---

37 Bonner, *Jihad*.
38 Anjum, *Politics*, 63–64.
39 A thorough discussion of the concepts of *shūrā* is still a desideratum.
40 Anjum, *Politics*, 83–84.

This minority of the community made compromises with the Abbasid ruler, saying that God has appointed the rulers to be caliphs.[41] The ruler-centred vision clearly expresses the prerogatives of the rulers. In the years to come the Abbasid rulers had to accept a tenuous status quo and accept the status of the Muslim *jamāʿa* and its representatives, i.e., the Muslim scholars (and other leaders), as an embodiment of normativity. This story, however, tells only half of the truth, the theoretical much more than the practical one. The *jamāʿa* in this view remains on the theoretical level, not able to be expressed in politics and political institutions. "The consequences of giving up the Community's claims amounted to a loss of normative agency in the political realm".[42] What remains is to discuss the role of *jamāʿa* at other levels of Islamicate societies.

The Histories of Jamāʿa

Did the concept of *jamāʿa* work at a practical level? At this stage we have to look at the various histories of the concept of community in the first centuries of the history of the Muslim communities. We have defined *jamāʿa* as the organized form of the *umma*.

To trace this idea we will look into two genres of early Islamic sources: the *Maghāzī* of al-Wāqidī on the battles of Muhammad and works on the biography of Muhammad (the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām and *Zād al-maʿād* of Ibn Qayyim), both written in the classical period. Scholars in the middle periods and later on constantly refer to both works.

In the *Maghāzī* of al-Wāqidī, a book describing the battles fought by Muhammad, *jamāʿa* is mentioned several times. ʿUtba b. Rabīʿa, a leading member of the Quraysh in Mecca, is called their chief (*sayyiduhā*) and the chief of the community (*sayyid al-jamāʿa*), i.e., the confederation of the Quraysh.[43] In another story in al-Wāqidī the Quraysh were warned against a person who is creating strife (*mufarriq*[44]) in the community (*jamāʿa*) of the Quraysh.[45] The antagonism of *furqa* (aroused by the *mufarriq*) and *jamāʿa*, a united community, mentioned by Ridwān al-Sayyid thus had pre-Islamic precursors.[46]

41 Abū Yūsuf, *K. Al-Kharāj*, following Anjum, *Politics*, 84.

42 Anjum, *Politics*, 92.

43 Al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, Part 1, 30–31.

44 Thus creating the *furqa*, division, mentioned above.

45 Al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, Part 1, 42.

46 The article by Gardet, "ḏjamāʿa", does not mention any pre-Islamic occurrence of the term. Even arguing for a backreading of the term will not eliminate the fact of the

A more general concept is *jamā'a* as a sub-group. In *Zād al-ma'ād* by Ibn Qayyim, a collection of biographical traditions on Muhammad, we read: "there was a group of Jews (*jamā'a min al-yahūd*) with a group of Arabs (*jamā'a min al-'arab*) attached to them",[47] "Nawfal b. Mu'āwīya al-Daylī[48] moved out with a group (*jamā'a*) of the Banī Bakr",[49] or "with them moved out a group of the hypocrites (*jamā'a min al-munāfiqīn*)".[50] In the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām Muhammad entered a Jewish "assembly house with a group of Jews (*jamā'a min yahūd*) [in it] and called upon them to follow Islam. Al-Nu'mān b. 'Amr and al-Hārith b. Zayd asked: Oh, Muhammad, what is your religion (*dīn*)?[51] It is the 'creed of Ibrahim' (*millat Ibrāhīm*)[52] and his religion".[53]

Coming back to the united community. The companions of the prophet are collectively seen as *jamā'a*. Derived from this idea, the Sunni Muslim community was called *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*, the people of prophetic custom and communal solidarity.

Its full appellation—*ahl al-sunna wa-'l-jamā'a* ("the people of prophetic custom" [Sc. those who follow the practices of Muhammad] "and of communal solidarity")—underscores their basic accommodationist outlook which strove to contain dissension as much as possible in order to preserve the unity of the Muslim community.

It appears that by the mid 9th century, a less hard-line 'Uthmani position that was willing to include 'Ali as one of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and a considerably watered-down 'Alid position that was willing to settle for third place for 'Alī were fast finding niches for themselves within the broad platform of the Sunnis-in-the-making. Membership within the *ahl al-sunna* began to

---

existence of the term in the first decades of the existence of the Islamic community and the fact that it was understood.

47   Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Zād*, 354.

48   Owing to the limited scope of this article, it is not possible to give full details of all those mentioned.

49   Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Zād*, 395.

50   Ibid., 230.

51   I.e., cultic practice.

52   Here *milla* means a group united by a common creed. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 205, writes: "The Qur'ān therefore instructs Muhammad and the believers to regard themselves as neither Jews nor Christians, but a community distinct from both, followers of the 'creed of Abraham' (*millat Ibrāhīm*); and Abraham is described as a *hanīf*, a *muslim* (that is, one surrendered to God), not one of the idolaters. The religion of Abraham is simply the pure religion of God, since all the prophets have received in essentials the same revolution".

53   Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat*, 307.

broaden at this juncture in history to include all those who accepted the caliphate of the four Rāshidūn caliphs, with Abū Bakr and ʿUmar inevitably ranked as first and second in order of excellence while some compromise was allowed (and even expected) in the ranking of ʿUthmān and ʿAlī relative to one another. The 11th-century scholar ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 1037) indicates as much when he describes the Sunnis as those who showed preference for Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and those who came after him, even though they differed with regard to the respective merits of ʿAlī and ʿUthmān.

A clear and more detailed hierarchy of merit for the Companions of the Prophet had emerged by the late 10th to early 11th century. This is apparent in the following statement by al-Baghdadi:

> The *ahl al-sunna* are universally agreed that the most excellent of men after the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, are Abu Bakr, then ʿUmar, then ʿUthmān, then ʿAlī, then the rest of the ten [Sc. the ten Companions assured of heaven by the Prophet], then the rest of the people of Badr, then the rest of the people of Uhud, then the rest of the people of allegiance (*ahl al-bayʿa*), then the rest of the Companions.[54]

Other forms of community emerge in Islamic history, often related to specific religious or professional orientations. These forms of community often have a specific name,[55] but refer implicitly or explicitly to the concept of *jamāʿa*.

We may notice the emergence and stabilization of a phenomenon called traditionally the schools of law,[56] Arab. *madhāhib* (*madhhab*), or, in my opinion[57] more apt: guilds of law, i.e., at the end of the classical period and the beginning of the middle period, the organization of teaching and training scholars and to integrate them into the "scholastic community" to find ways of earning their living. These guilds of law fit our concept very well, since their internal modes of discussion, the fight over symbolic capital are—to a certain extent—independent of political control. Since the consensus of the scholarly communities (*ijmāʿ*) is at the core of the methodological apparatus of these guilds, we may consider them as another case of *jamāʿa*.[58] The guilds are

---

54 Afsaruddin, *First Muslims*, 57–59.
55 I leave aside terms like *banū*, "sons of", e.g., the *banū Sāsān*, for the subcultures of thieves, beggars, etc.
56 Bearman, *The Islamic school of law*.
57 Referring to George Makdisi's term *guilds of law* (see below).
58 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges* and id., "Guilds".

constructed—or "done"—by regular interactions and exchanges of the members thus creating a communal identity.[59]

This argument may be strengthened by the fact that the concept of *madhhab* has been transferred to other non-juridical phenomena of community building. The most important may be the "school of passionate love" (*madhhab-i ʿishq*) dominant in Persian poetry for a long time since the beginning of the middle period, denoting a group of poets emerging over time who shared a common tradition, world view and way of living.[60]

However, "lines were not always drawn according to *madhhab* identity"[61] and debates "often tended to go beyond the boundaries of the *madhhab*".[62] Debates often occurred within the boundaries of the *madhhab*, not only as inter-*madhhab* polemics.[63] And then the *jamāʿa* emerges again as the appropriate term to identify the intra-*madhhab* subgroups. A pertinent case is the *jamāʿa* of the scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), today more influential than during his lifetime and the centuries after his death. As Bori puts it,[64]

> Ibn Taymiyya, like other scholars, had his own "circle" (*jamāʿa*) of faithful associates who honoured him, obeyed him and who at times were subject to public humiliation on his behalf. Contemporary sources use the term *jamāʿa* […] to indicate the group of people who most closely affiliated with Ibn Taymiyya. This collective term refers both to intellectual association with Ibn Taymiyya (i.e., disciples who studied with him, shared his doctrines and were involved in the transmission of his works), and to those individuals who accompanied the Shaykh in public and shared his penchant for activism, especially on his excursions against popular religion.
>
> The term *jamāʿa* is also used by Ibn Taymiyya and his brothers when writing letters to each other or to his disciples.[65]

We see here that *jamāʿa* is used for a "circle" of disciples transcending *madhhab* boundaries since among the "faithful associates" were members of several

---

59   See the chapter by Christina Lutter in this volume.

60   For the case of Hafiz see the contributions in Lewisohn, *Hafiz*.

61   Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya", 24.

62   Ibid.

63   Leaving aside the fact that the boundaries were not as fixed as is often assumed (see Lohlker, *Islamisches*).

64   For recent research on Ibn Taymiyya's role in the history of Islamic thought cf. Rapoport/Ahmad, eds., *Ibn Taymiyya*.

65   Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya", 25; there are similarities of this understanding of *jamāʿa* to that of the Sufi *tarīqa* mentioned below.

*madhhab*s. This understanding of *jamāʿa* as a group of like-minded people following the same set of ideas and a master they are affiliated to can be enlarged to describe non-specific groups throughout Islamic history. To give just one later example, the leading Syrian scholar ʿAbd al-Ghaniyy al-Nabulusī (d. 1731)[66] writes in his treatise on the Mevlevi Sufi order: "The gathering of the Mevlevis comprise a group of Muslims (*jamāʿa min al-muslimīn*) and a group (*ṭāʾifa*) of various people with various intents and different aims".[67]

This may lead us to another concept of community available in Islamic contexts, the Sufi order, or *ṭarīqa* (pl. *ṭuruq*), particular "initiatory ways" associated with the teachings of an eponymous Sufi master reflexively "passed down" by his spiritual, and in no small number of cases blood, heirs to their own confraternity of disciples,[68] emerging over the course of the sixth/twelfth and early seventh/thirteenth centuries. The discussion of this concept lies outside the scope of this paper.

Turning back to the *jamāʿa*, we may regard the congregation of the Friday prayer, the *jumʿa* prayer, also called *ṣalāt al-jamāʿa*, community prayer, to be one of the most common references when talking about *jamāʿa*.[69] As such we may see the *jamāʿa* as an embodiment of the *umma*, an organized form, visible every Friday (see below).

A Case Study

One way to establish the identity of a guild of law as a community is to write a history of the members of this guild, a way to "do" community. This history of the generations of scholars is called in Arabic *ṭabaqāt*, classes. We will take one of this *ṭabaqāt* works as a case study to understand how the concept of *jamāʿa* is understood in the context of a specific *madhhab*, the Hanbalite guild of law. We will take as the source for this case study the *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila* of the famous Hanbali author Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā b. Al-Farrāʾ (d. 1065) flourishing at the beginning of the middle periods when the guilds of law started to reach their fully institutionalized form.[70]

66 Akkach, *ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi.*

67 Al-Nābulusī, *al-ʿUqūd al-luʾluʾiyya*, 65.

68 Ohlander, *Sufism*, 1.

69 E.g., al-Bājī, *Muntaqā*, 207: "the time at which the leading scholars recommend performing the community prayer."

70 "Abū Yaʿlā was one of the most capable teachers and prolific authors of the Hanbalite school, attracting to his study circles a great number of students early in his career and until he died at 78 years of age". (Makdisi, "Autograph Diary", 11)

We find the following meanings of *jamāʿa* (leaving aside the general idea of "a group"):

—a group united by belief: "He was an innovator (*mubtadiʾ*), leaving the community (*jamāʿa*)".[71] "He is an innovator, contradicting and separating himself from the community (*jamāʿa*)".[72] "He contradicted the *sunna* and separated himself from the community (*jamāʿa*)".[73]
—the believing[74] Sunni Muslims (*ahl al-sunna waʾl-jamāʿa*).

In the biographical entry on the Hanbali scholar al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Barbahārī (d. 941), called a manifest demagogue by Michael Cook,[75] the concept of *jamāʿa* is frequently mentioned. This may be due to his identitarian worldview.

We find the following meanings of *jamāʿa*:

—an indication of belonging: "There was no Friday prayer (*jumʿa*), no community (*jamāʿa*), no two feasts".[76]
—a corpus of knowledge: "He studied the knowledge on the prophetic customs and the community (*jamāʿa*) [of the companions of the prophet];"[77] "without proof from the prophetic custom and [the custom] of the community (*jamāʿa*) [of the companions of the Prophet];"[78] "the consensus (*jamāʿa*), on what the companions of the Prophet [...] agreed upon in the caliphate of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān".[79]
—community of companions: "Anyone who rejects the *sunna*, contradicts the truth (*ḥaqq*), and the custom [of the companions of the prophet] (*jamāʿa*) and who declares the whims of humans to be licit is more dangerous for this community (*umma*) than the devil".[80] Anyone who rejects these ideas is "a

71   Abū Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 14.
72   Ibid., 16.
73   Ibid., 21.
74   E.g., ibid., 19 and 238.
75   Cook, *Forbidding Wrong*, 103.
76   The feast of sacrifice at the end of Ramadan and the feast of breaking the fast, communal events indicating the belonging to the community of the believers. Abū Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 333.
77   Ibid., 333.
78   Ibid., 334.
79   Ibid.
80   Ibid., 335.

follower of the *sunna* and the community (*jamāʿa*) [of the companions of the prophet]".[81]

We see the concept of *umma* placed at a higher, ideal,[82] non-practical level of this discourse reminding us that *jamāʿa* was more important than *umma* at a practical level. Taking *umma* as the central term risks theologizing the practical logic symbolized by *jamāʿa*.

—community of praying believers: "anyone who leaves the Friday prayer (*ṣalāt al-jumʿa*) and the community (*jamāʿa*) [of the people praying]".[83]
—being together: "If you see a man being engaged in fulfilling his religious duties together with (*fī jamāʿa*) the ruler and others, you may know he is a follower of the *sunna*, God willing. If you see a man who is lax in fulfilling the religious duties in a group (*fī jamāʿa*) even with the ruler being part of it, you may know, he is a follower of his whims".[84]
—community and communal solidarity: "a follower of the *sunna* and the perfect community (*jamāʿa*) in which communal solidarity (*jamāʿa*) was perfected".[85]
—the eschatological group: "It is the saved group (*firqa nājiyya*), the just community (*jamāʿa ʿādila*), and the victorious group (*ṭāʾifa manṣūra*) until the day of resurrection".[86]

Here we can see the complex structure of the semantic field of *jamāʿa*. Whatever the community is called and what is meant by *jamāʿa*, throughout the first centuries of the history of Islamicate societies we notice a reconfiguration of its role in relation to the rulers, the sphere of *mulk*.

Political Elites and Communities

We have once again to return to the dichotomy between political elite and religious scholars as an epitome for the non-elite elements of society:[87]

---

81   Ibid.
82   See the remarks by Heiss/Hovden in this volume.
83   Abū Yaʿlā, *Tabaqāt*, 337.
84   Ibid., 338.
85   Ibid., 341.
86   Ibid., 470.
87   For a detailed classification of societal groups in the perspective of the support of successors of the throne see Ibn al-Khatīb (in Hoenerbach, "Was verspricht sich").

Although the loss of political community and sensibility is ubiquitous in the legal culture of the classical period, perhaps few anecdotes bring out its implications as dramatically as the following one. It concerns the chief judge of Cairo, the great Shāfi'ī jurist, an emblem of piety and speaking truth to power, 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī (*ca.* 577/1181–660/1262) [...] When al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb b. Kāmil Najm al-Dīn (d. 647), the grandson of Saladin who had ruled over Syria as a governor, acceded amidst internecine warfare to the throne of the Ayyubid dynasty, he brought along to Cairo the slave army he had built during his governor-ship and distributed governmental offices among them. The biographer Subkī tells us that the pious, daring, and learned chief justice, 'Izz al-Dīn, in keeping with the rules of the Shāfi'ī school of law, refused to accept the rule of these slaves as governmental officials, which included the com-mander of the army, and to ratify the contracts they made, which caused great angst and annoyance. When the Sultan interfered, 'Izz al-Dīn aban-doned his post and prepared to leave town. The Sultan, moved, sum-moned him and apologized, and finally the *qāḍī*'s verdict was carried out: The military slaves were publicly auctioned and freed before resuming their posts.[88]

This story has a certain historical plausibility, but what is interesting for me is the fact that the hero in his uprightness is falling back on unrelenting legal formalism.

To the gradual takeover of the government by imported slaves who were completely detached from the Community and whose instrument of gov-ernance was primarily violence, the most heroic scholarly objection was that this violated a minor legal rule that could be fixed by a theatrical act![89]

Or let us say: a political tragedy turned into a legal trifle. Anjum described this process as the "'ulamā''s deliberate flight from politics".[90] As a result there was a very tenuous separation of spheres between religious authority and political elite—and the life of the majority.

    What are the theological and religious implications of this separation of community and ruling elite? Discursive traditions of religious thought in the classical period (10th–13th century) of the time stressed "that the appointment

---

88   Anjum, *Politics*, 135.
89   Ibid.
90   Ibid.

of a caliph is an obligation and that this obligation is [established] by revelation, not reason. […] reason has no rule in obligating or prohibiting, nor in judging things to be good or bad—for it does so merely as a result of custom".[91]

One of the elements we may refer to is the inherent elitism of the theologians preventing them from intervening in political strife and reserving rationality to the intellectual elite; the other may be the need to uphold the order of the Sunni world against other communities, be they Shi'i-Isma'ili or other kinds of "heretic" groups; the third may be cynicism, denying the possibility of a rational understanding of the role of the community and the ruler any longer. In the classical period the role of the caliph became more and more reduced to a ritual role, acknowledging the access of a local ruler to the throne, for example, and so forth. This was aptly expressed in the classical theory of the caliphate:

> The foundation of the classical caliphate theory, namely a ritualistic understanding of the caliphate and depoliticization of the Community, were underpinned by theological cynicism toward reason in postrevelational life on the one hand and elitism on the other, both of which deepened as the Sunni *kalām* doctrine matured in the classical period. Both elitism and cynicism toward reason militated against the other option, that of resurrecting and re-imaging a Community-centered vision of Islam. A politically vibrant society requires grounding political practice and theory in the normative apparatus of society, which the socio-political trends of the classical period made difficult to attain and the intellectual commitments of the age had rendered impossible to imagine.[92]

The re-emergence of a community-centred vision of Islam took place in the second half of the middle period, beyond the immediate scope of this paper. But, beyond the theoretical level of ruler-community relations, the various types of *jamāʿa* flourished among the majority and made up the fabric of Islamicate societies. A reconstruction of the developments of the concepts used—*jamāʿa* and others—and their relations to other concepts remains to be done.

Bibliography

Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *al-Gharīb al-Muṣannaf* [Rare words categorized], 3, ed. Muhammad al-Mukhtār al-ʿUbaydī (Tunis, 1996).

---

91   Al-Nawawī following Anjum, *Politics*, 138–39.

92   Anjum, *Politics*, 168–69.

Abū Yaʿā al-Ḥanbalī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*; via http://www.almeshkat.net.

Asma Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford, 2007).

Samir Akkach, *ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi: Islam and the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2007).

Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge et al., 2012).

Abu l-Walīd Sulaymān b. Khalaf al-Bājī, *Muntaqā Sharḥ Muwaṭṭaʾ Mālik* [The Selected: Commentary on the *Muwatta'* of Mālik], 1, ed. Muḥammad ʿAtā (Beirut, 1999).

Thomas Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams* (Berlin, 2011).

Peri J. Bearman et al., eds., *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution and Progress* (Cambridge, Mass., et al., 2005).

Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton, Oxford, 2006).

Caterina Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya *wa-jamāʿatuhu*: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Taymiyya's Circle", in *Ibn Taymiyya and his Times*, 2nd ed., eds. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad (Karachi, 2011), 23–52.

Michael Cook, *Forbidding Wrong in Islam: An Introduction* (Cambridge et al., 2003).

Josef van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere: Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten*, 1 (Berlin, New York, 2011).

Louis Gardet et al., "d̲j̲amāʿa", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004) 2: 411–13.

Hamilton A.R. Gibb, "The Community in Islamic History", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107, 2 (Apr. 15, 1963), 173–76.

Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the Western Indian Ocean, 1840–1915* (Cambridge et al., 2011).

Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam 1: The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago, London, 1977a).

Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago, London, 1977b).

Wilhelm Hoenerbach, "Was verspricht sich das Volk von seinem Herrscher", *Oriens* 16 (1963), 61–78.

Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī Ibn Farhūn, *Kashf al-niqāb al-ḥājib min muṣṭalaḥ Ibn al-Ḥājib* [Unveiling of the concealing veil from the terminology of Ibn al-Hājib], eds. Hamza Abū Fāris and ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sharīf (Beirut, 1990).

Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Ibn Hishām* [Biography of the prophet by Ibn Hishām] (http://www.al-mostafa.com).

Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab* [The tongue of the Arabs], 1, (Bulaq, n.d.).

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Zād al-maʿād fī hady khayr al-ʿibād* [The provisions of the hereafter following the guidance of the best of the servants of God], 3, 27th ed., eds. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūt andʿAbdalqādir al-Arnāʾūt (Beirut, Kuwait, 1994).

Mahmood Ibrahim, "Social and Economic Conditions in Pre-Islamic Mecca", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14 (1982), 343–58.

Leonard Lewisohn, ed., *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (London, New York, 2010).

Rüdiger Lohlker, *Islamisches Recht* (Wien, 2011).

George Makdisi, "Autograph Diary of an Eleventh-Century Historian of Baghdād—I", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 18 (1956), 9–31.

George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh, 1981).

George Makdisi, "Guilds of Law in Medieval Legal History: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Inns of Court", *Cleveland State Law Review* 34 (1985/1986), 3–16.

Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge et al., 1997).

ʿAbd al-Ghaniyy al-Nābulusī, *al-ʿUqūd al-luʾluʾiyya fī ṭarīq al-sāda al-mawlawiyya* [The pearl necklaces on the way of the masters of the Mevlevis], ed. Bakrī ʿAlāʾ al-dīn (Damascus, 2009).

Erik S. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden/Boston, 2008).

Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad, eds., *Ibn Taymiyya and his Times*, 2nd ed. (Karachi, 2011).

Uri Rubin, "The 'Constitution of Medina': Some Notes", *Studia Islamica* 62 (1985), 5–23.

Riḍwān al-Sayyid, *al-Umma waʾl-jamāʿa waʾl-sulṭa: Dirāsāt fī l-fikr al-siyāsī al-ʿarabī al-islāmī* [The *umma*, the community, and the power: Studies in Arab-Islamic political thought] (Beirut, 2011).

Garbi Schmidt, "The Transnational Umma—Myth or Reality? Examples from the Western Diasporas", *The Muslim World* 95 (2005), 575–86.

Reinhard Schulze, "Citizens of Islam: The Institutionalization and Internationalization of Muslim Legal Debate", in *Law and the Islamic World: Past and Present*, eds. Christopher Toll and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (Copenhagen, 1995), 167–84.

Reinhard Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert* (Leiden, 1990).

Reinhard Schulze, "Die Politisierung des Islam im 19. Jahrhundert", *Die Welt des Islams* 22 (1982), 103–16.

Robert B. Serjeant, "The Sunna Jāmiʾah, Pacts with the Yathrib Jews, and the Taḥrīm of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in the So-Called 'Constitution of Medina'", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978), 1–42.

Al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī* [The Military Expeditions], Part 1, 30–31 (via http://www .al-mostafa.com).

William Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956).

Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs* [The Crown of the bride from the jewels of the *Qāmūs*], 20, ed. ʿAbdalḥakīm al-ʿIzbāwī (Kuwait, 1983).

PART 2

Urban Communities and Non-Urban Sites

∴

The City as Commune

Elisabeth Gruber

Introduction

Throughout the regions of medieval Europe as well as in South Arabia, urban settlements played an important role in the political, economic and social development of a landscape. These settlements not only had infrastructural or centralizing functions but also provided opportunities for as well as constraints on the coexistence of several groups with specific qualities, forms and practices of belonging, togetherness, and solidarity.[1] Within the *Visions of Community* project (VISCOM), we investigate various forms of identification and belonging in different settings of coexistence and thus ask to what extent dense settlements like European urban communities or South-Arabian non-urban sites can be considered as communities.[2] We are aware that we are comparing communities under different legal, economic, religious, political, and also social conditions. But we are also interested in developing shared criteria to establish how and by what means these forms of settlement provided the framework for the formation of coexisting but also conflicting groups in late medieval times.[3]

In this paper I first want to examine the legal basis on which cities in the Holy Roman Empire can be typologically understood as urban communities. Civic rights and duties, confirmed by a civic oath, had long been held to be the most significant elements of formal belonging which entitled a person to participate in this thus politically defined type of community. In a second step I will look at concrete forms and practices of belonging, using the example of towns and cities situated in the Central European regions of Austria and Bohemia. My research shows that kinship and religious affiliations are useful categories to deepen our understanding of what held these urban communities together beyond legal issues.

---

1 On terminological issues see Lutter, "Social Groups", 48.
2 Within the VISCOM project a transversal working group comprising Eirik Hovden, Johann Heiss (P03), Fabian Kümmeler (P07), Elisabeth Gruber and Judit Majorossy (P06) has been established.
3 Lutter, "Comparative Approaches".

Civic Right and Civic Oath

Starting from the perspective of legal history, historians of urban history have discussed at length and in detail what can be described as a city in the Christian West. For a long time, the predominant criteria used to distinguish the city from its hinterland were the existence of a city wall and princely privileges. In this scholarly tradition walls were not only seen to serve defensive purposes, but also to demarcate a defined sphere of urban rights separating it from the surrounding countryside structured in terms of "feudalism".[4] Since then, many studies with different approaches and research perspectives have shown that the criteria for defining a city are multifaceted, which has resulted in a kind of working definition that most researchers have meanwhile basically agreed upon.[5] A settlement's relatively dense population, broad range of economic functions, complex social and political structures, cultural and economic influence often extending beyond the spatial and mental borders of the settlement, and distinctive architectural environment including public buildings and public space describe this particular form of living together in a complex manner.[6] Differences in time and region, and the relation with the city's surrounding areas also play an important part in the description and characterization of European medieval cities.

In any case, however, the existence of an urban community is an indispensable requirement for any definition of a city. What follows now should help to understand in more detail the social changes which were decisive for the establishment of urban communities in the Holy Roman Empire. Where are the origins of this new development that simultaneously also led to a more nuanced understanding of personal freedom, political participation and self-determination of those people who participated in it—at least in a conceptual manner? What ideas and requirements were associated with the formation of these communities?

---

4   It was Edith Ennen who described the late medieval city as a clearly defined space of people and activities: Ennen, *Stadt des Mittelalters*. The topos of urban and rural divide has its roots in antiquity, but the sociological discourse emphasizing the demarcation of the city from its hinterland occurred in the 19th century. Later, Max Weber argued that the Western city as a distinct space was among other criteria characterized by its corporative capacity and autonomy. See Arnade/Howell/Simons, "Fertile Spaces", 530. Also the concept of feudalism has been thoroughly criticized and revised since then, cf. the classic study by Susan Reynolds: Reynolds, *The Middle Ages without feudalism*.

5   For the research discussion see Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 39–52. Arnade/Howell/Simons, "Fertile Space", 534–35, with a focus on urban space.

6   Clark, "Introduction", 4. For an overview see Pauly/Scheutz, "Space and History", 22–28.

It is a matter of definition when we can begin to speak of urban settlements in Central Europe north of the Alps, but there are good reasons to place them in the 10th century in the case of episcopal sees with attached artisans' and merchants' settlements, especially those with roots in late antiquity, such as Trier, Köln (Cologne), Augsburg or Regensburg (Ratisbone). When investigating the basic principles of cooperation and the conditions which were important for the political emancipation of these cities during the 10th and 11th centuries, we have to keep in mind some aspects of broader societal change.[7] From the 11th century onwards, sources begin to talk of conflicts between people living in dense settlements (often near episcopal sees) and their lords, because the former developed their own organization and were no longer willing to submit to all of their lords' demands. We learn from source material that by the mid 12th century the word *commune* was coming into common use to describe urban organization and communities and their government. Its use in urban contexts may derive from *communia*—meaning common property. Occasionally these changes took place during conflicts between town communities and their bishops or other local lords—but this was by no means a necessary pattern.[8] An increase in population, which promoted the rapid growth of settlements since the turn of the millennium, the recovery of trade relations and the differentiation of crafts and commerce, as well as the weakening of manorial ties have been argued as important conditions for this development.[9]

During the 11th and 12th centuries the inhabitants of towns in the Holy Roman Empire north of the Alps were not, as mostly in Italy, persons of personal "free" status, but legally "unfree" to different degrees. Personal freedom and legal liberties were often obtained from the respective lords in phases of conflict and/or by negotiation. To promote frictionless living in an urban context, it was necessary for the inhabitants to acquire and keep the settlement of conflicts in their own hands, since they knew their needs and ways. This meant pushing back or taking over the lord's jurisdiction and—with less success—acquiring judicially exempt spheres in the townspeople's competence, such as the municipal jurisdiction or the right to collect taxes. Research for a long time considered emancipation from a legally unfree status to be a crucial requirement for the formation of municipal institutions and economic independence,

---

7   Schulz, *Kommunale Aufstände*, 5–11; id., "Stadtentwicklung", 73–93; id., "Freiheitsrechte", 461–84; id., "Urbanisierung", 147–72; Diestelkamp, "Freiheit", 485–510.

8   Reynolds, *Kingdoms*, 170–71; Steiner, *Klöster*; Isenmann, "Notion", 107–48; Haverkamp, "Bruderschaften", 153–92.

9   Schulz, *Aufstände*.

all of which were defining marks of urbanity during the 12th and 13th centuries.[10] For example, in his autobiography the Benedictine monk Guibert de Nogent (1055–1124) reported on a town's uprising against its bishop in the French city of Laon. Although the story mainly deals with the bishop's corrupt character, it is the burghers' conspiracy that forms the framework for the events. "Now Commune is a new and a bad name", Guibert de Nogent concluded his description of this new situation, where "the people seizing on this opportunity for freeing themselves gathered huge sums of money to fill the gaping mouths of so many greedy men".[11] What kind of development is Guibert's cause for complaint? During this period, the social order in most western regions of Europe was based—at least theoretically—on manorialism: free aristocrats lent property of their manor to unfree peasants. They offered them protection and in return were compensated with services and taxes. The manorial system, based on agriculture, formed the backbone and power base for the king, the nobility, and ecclesiastical institutions.[12] Concerning legal matter: the *familia* of the manorial lord comprised his next of kin as well as all servants and dependants, who were—at least theoretically—completely subject to his power. How then did it come about that "unfree" persons living in towns (contemporary sources call them *manicipia, servi; ancillae, homines ecclesie, litones, censuales; tributarii*) were legally freed from personal bonds and commitments?

The historian Knut Schulz, who dealt with this question for the German-speaking regions, typologically defines three stages of development. These differ depending on their regional and temporal contexts, and may be clearly observable in some situations, hardly visible in others.[13] Schulz sees the first stage of this development in the free availability of the town's own workforce, and therefore a chance for a certain self-determination of the commune. This model applies particularly to two groups of in this specific sense unfree persons: *censuales* and *ministeriales*. *Censuales* are individuals obligated to pay contributions and whose status is defined by membership in the manorial *familia* and a duty-based attachment to the lord, at least according to the extant sources, which mostly represent an ecclesiastical perspective. This bond consisted in annual fees: per capita duty and wax duty, as well as a duty in case of death (*Besthaupt* and *Bestkleid*), payable from the deceased person's inheritance. Marriage regulations prohibited unions with members of other

---

10   Schulz, "Freiheitsrechte", 461.

11   Archambault, ed., *A Monk's Confession*, 146; Kaiser, "Guibert de Nogent", 121–58; Boone, "Cities", 329–49.

12   Rösener, "Grundherrschaft", cols. 1746–47.

13   Schulz, "Freiheitsrechte", 462–63.

lords' *familiae* and threatened transgressions with severe sanctions. From the 12th century onwards, the status of censuality and bondage drifted apart, leaving *censuales* bound only by their financial obligations; in some cases, they gained exemption from personal services and the right of unlimited mobility. This created many new opportunities and led to considerable social differences among *censuales*. The establishment of distinctive rights and obligations (*Zensualenrecht*) in the 12th century supported the formation of a separate area of law and justice. In some regions, especially in southern Germany, the transfer of persons under this type of law can be documented by entries into a book of deeds, which were not confirmed with single-sheet charters but only by the entry. Both individuals and families of free and unfree origin were able to submit themselves to the protection of religious houses. It is striking that the legal institution of censuality increasingly seems to have developed especially in landscapes that were dominated by large ecclesiastical lordships.[14] However, it must also be emphasized that this impression mainly results from the fact that written records for lay lords are mostly lacking in this period.

Another milestone on the way to a "self-determined" urban society is the granting of the free and unrestricted right to inherit and to marry.[15] This applies especially to the group of *ministeriales*, a large majority of nobility, legally unfree and with a wide variety of duties and restrictions towards their current lord. They remained integrated into the liege lord's *familia*, though some of them settled in towns as well. Over time, they took over important functions within the municipal administration due to their closeness to the town's lord. While restrictions on marriage and inheritance often remained in force for them, as a result of their right to obtain fiefs, social advancement was more likely to be possible for this group. In a number of cases, its members can be shown to have been incorporated, at least to some extent, into the urban community, and in some cities they were actually part of the citizenry as a political body.[16] Due to a lack of sources, generalization based on single cases is hardly possible. Still, in many charters, citizens and knights, *cives* and *milites*, are named next to each other. Importantly, social differences could mostly be

---

14   Diestelkamp, "Freiheit", 492–93.

15   Thus, for example, emperor Henry V granted the inhabitants of Speyer (1111) and Worms (1114) the freedom from the death levy, which in practice meant a release from the consequences, as stated by inheritance and matrimonial law, of a marriage outside the group. See Schulz, "Zensualen", cols. 530–33.

16   For Austria, for example in Laa/Thaya, see Weltin, "Stadtministerialität", 9–23; for Steyr, Klosterneuburg, Krems, Tulln, Ybbs, and St Pölten, see Weigl, *Materialien*; id. "Städte und Adel", 74–100.

levelled by a group consciousness created through this new independent legal domain of a commune.

As the last remnants of personal subjection began to disappear during the 11th century, members of the urban elite joined together by means of the legal instrument of a "civic oath" which committed them to loyalty and obedience to the lord of the town, but also to the urban community as such.[17] Thus communities gradually emerged which were in the first place composed of men with equal rights—at least theoretically—and united by obligations to each other. This oath among peers was explicitly aimed at establishing a long-term community, based on peace and law, in order to secure matters of common interest against neighbours inside and outside the town as well as against competitors and superiors. Ideally, an urban community was able to develop an institutional, cultural, and social life of its own with limited influence from outside, often preceded by serious conflicts between urban community and its lord. In these processes, the urban communities gained (sometimes limited) rights of political self-organization and decision-making.

It is important to note that the 11th-century church reform resulting from and accompanying the struggle between imperial and papal powers over hegemony in Europe, provided at least part of the theoretical—as well as the political—framework for this municipal striving for emancipation. Ecclesiastical concepts of community may well have joined hands with the political and judicial group-consciousness of peer communities, such as vassals, ministerials and, of course, townspeople.[18] The concept of confraternities—in a religious sense or else addressing fraternal support between secular or economic groups with common interests—finds its expression in the concern for the salvation of souls.[19] As safeguards of the citizens' salvation, ecclesiastical endowments as well as monastic or hospital foundations had their functions in the earthly present as well as with regard to the afterlife.[20] In the course of these reforms, sacramental and pastoral administrators became central for the city's community. During the 12th century, for example, this becomes evident by the topographic connection of main street, market place, and church.[21] Even the constitutional bodies of the cities could organize themselves in

---

17   Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt*, 146–47.

18   Schneidmüller, Weinfurter, "Ordnungskonfigurationen", 7–18; Haverkamp, "Bruderschaften"; cf. also Lutter, "Vita Communis", in this volume.

19   Oexle, "Gegenwart", 19–77; examples in Lutter, "Vita Communis", O'Riain, "The *Schottenklöster* in the World", in this volume.

20   Jakobs, "Stadtgemeinde", 28.

21   Jakobs, "Stadtgemeinde", 29.

fraternities to limit the number of persons who were entitled to hold a leader-
ship position.[22]

To establish and maintain the townspeople's peaceful coexistence, moral
concepts of behaviour and political association were developed to provide—
at least in theory—the concern for the common good (*bonum commune*).
Common property of a city and its written representations in books of munici-
pal statutes preserved a public benefit.[23]

In most Central European regions, this development took place later, during
the 12th and 13th centuries, when many new towns were founded, foremost,
but by no means exclusively, in the eastern regions of the Holy Roman Empire,
and mostly as a means of consolidating the territorial sovereignty of the
regional princes. In many cases, however, in these regions the established pat-
tern of community-building, which was based on the swearing of civic oaths
by the members of the functional and social urban elites, was used right from
the beginnings of these urban settlements, according to the available sources.[24]
With the establishment of a certain degree of internal organization, forms of
communal life and public representation developed as well. Different types
of municipal authority and city council stood for the external representation
and institutionalization of these communities. Whereas urban space embraced
different social groups that were often closely related to each other, accepted
norms and rules—which led to a more formal and longer-lasting differentia-
tion between them—were, in the course of time, gradually established explic-
itly, or else evolved implicitly.

Urban Communities in the Duchies of Austria and Styria: Towns and their Sovereign

In recent research, cities have increasingly been seen in a wider context of
urban–rural relationships. In order to give a more nuanced picture of the qual-
ity of specific urban communities, their importance for a particular region and
its structure has to be determined.[25] In Central Europe, and especially in the
kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary as well as in the duchies of Austria and

---

22   Jakobs, "Stadtgemeinde", 26.
23   Isenmann, "Notion", 109–10; id., *Die deutsche Stadt*, 229–30; Rogge, *Politisches Handeln*.
24   Csendes, "St. Pölten"; Csendes, *Stadtrechtsprivileg*; Gutkas, "Städtewesen".
25   Herbert Knittler's contribution focuses on princely towns of the Duchy of Austria in late
      medieval and early modern times: Knittler, "Städtelandschaften", 111–33.

Styria, the foundation of towns and cities was closely related to the establishment and consolidation of territorial sovereignty. Princely territories needed to be stabilized not only in military and political ways, but also by ecclesiastical and infrastructural means. Many towns that were founded along trade routes in times of territorial expansion illustrate the close connection between these factors.[26]

How much and in what ways did the development of these towns differ from that in the core regions of the Holy Roman Empire, and why were these towns at the same time motivated to sustain their own community interests as well as to support the strategies of their lords in various ways? Although preserved only as a copy in a cartulary, the earliest known charter with provisions for an Austrian town is the one for St Pölten. It was issued in 1159 by the town's lord, Bishop Konrad of Passau, and regulates procedures in law courts in favour of the burghers, the *burgenses* of St Pölten.[27] It grants them the right to use a *responsor* (*vorsprech*) in court, prohibits the use of ordeals in cases against them, and declares accusations in matters of property and mortgage brought forward by outsiders against a burgess as invalid if not supported by the testimony of other *burgenses*. A charter of Leopold VI for the town of Zwettl (1200) refers to the rights previously granted to *Chremenses urbani nostri*, "our townspeople in Krems". Obviously, these townspeople were already perceived and addressed as a new and defineable distinct social group.[28] These acts of codification and granting of rights in writing are closely related to a process of increasing literacy. The urban communities' increasing confidence in literacy also played an important role. The reorganization of the judicial competences of the town's judge was a notable step towards the establishment of an urban community.[29] The formation of a law court consisting of members of the urban elite together with the judge could—but did not necessarily need to—reduce the influence of the lord who owned the town.

This can be shown by the municipal law of Vienna from 1221,[30] where the close bonds between the lord and his citizens are emphasized. Medieval Vienna was built on the ancient remains of a Roman military camp, Vindobona.

---

26   On the concept of urban landscapes in the European context see Gräf/Keller, eds., "Städtelandschaft", esp. for Bohemia and Moravia see Žemlička, "Böhmen" in the same volume.

27   Katzinger, ed., *Elenchus 3/1*, 20–21 no. 24; see also Dienst, "Privileg", 79–86.

28   Fichtenau, Zöllner, eds., *Urkundenbuch Babenberger*, 1:117 no. 86; Csendes, "St. Pölten", 79–84.

29   Schulz, "Familia", 476.

30   Edition and comment: Csendes, *Stadtrechtsprivileg*.

Around the turn of the millennium there are signs of the development of an early, still very modest medieval settlement. Only from the beginning of the 12th century do an increasing number of sources allow us to trace the city's development with any certainty. In this period, the Austrian princes were able to consolidate their position and relocated their residence to Vienna.[31] As a result of losing the Duchy of Bavaria, the Babenberg dukes gained the dukedom for Austria. Consequently, their former residence in Regensburg became exemplary for the shaping of the new Austrian—now ducal—residence of Vienna. In some important respects, however, Vienna differs from its model. While at the beginning of the 10th century Regensburg was an episcopal see, Vienna did not manage to achieve this position until the 15th century. While in Regensburg it was the episcopal infrastructure that greatly influenced the legal development of the city, in Vienna it was the duke who chiefly affected the legal and, as a result, also the social and political development of the city.[32] Nevertheless, the municipal rights of Vienna, formally granted by the Austrian duke in 1221, answered the demands of the city's burghers, who wanted to obtain the confirmation of their rights. These included the establishment of a civic council, which was obliged to provide for the city's reputation, and benefit: *de universis, que ad honorem et utilitatem civitatis pertinent*.[33]

By the beginning of the 13th century the Austrian dukes had founded several new towns in the Danube region or acquired existing ones to establish their reign in the Duchy of Austria. Most of these towns—50 privileged with specific urban rights—were small, with an average of 2,000 to 3,000 inhabitants. These estimates indicate an aproximate number of inhabitants, but by no means the whole group of members of the political community. In this sense it is useful to address them as towns and not as cities.[34] Although the Austrian towns were formed only by small communities, they played an important role for the sovereign's policy. From the beginning of his rule in the Duchy of Austria, the Bohemian king Přemysl Ottokar II (1253–1278 King of Bohemia, 1251/1260-1278 Duke of Austria and Styria) used the existing infrastructure of the towns. The Upper Austrian city of Freistadt, for example, is situated on the road from Bohemia to the Danube and was the first town King Ottokar visited during his

---

31 For this see Csendes, "Grundlagen", 69–74; detailed material on Vienna collected in Lohrmann/Opll, eds., *Regesten zur Frühgeschichte von Wien*; forthcoming: Gruber/Zapke, *Medieval Vienna*.

32 Csendes, "Babenbergerresidenzen", 163–71; Frauenknecht, "Bischof", 688–709; for Regensburg see Wanderwitz, "Regensburg", 43–54; Schmid, "Herrschaftsträger", 45–56.

33 Csendes, *Stadtrechtsprivileg*, 74–75.

34 Knittler, "Problem", 91; for an overview see: Opll, "Stadtgeschichtsforschung".

journey through the Duchy in 1251. In the first ten years of his rule, he stayed six times in Linz, a town with a Danube crossing. He also held his first diet in a town, namely Korneuburg on the Danube near Vienna.[35] We know about this sojourn from deeds and privileges he issued there. The noble ministeriality supporting the king was not the only one present at the diets. The urban ministerials who controlled important towns also supported Ottokar as new ruler. These included, for instance, the Tröstel family from Linz, the Polheims in Wels, and Dietmar of Steyr, all of whom were loyal supporters of Ottokar's policies.[36]

But also in the eastern regions of the reign towns secured the borders in local and regional conflicts. The Lower-Austrian town of Marchegg was founded as a military base and assembly point for Austro-Bohemian forces fighting the Hungarians. Moreover, cities like the Hungarian town Hungarian-Hradisch, as well as Radkersburg/Mur, Bruck/Mur and Leoben in the Duchy of Styria, were founded and their urban development supported in order to ensure the protection of borders and transport routes.[37]

The reign of the Bohemian king also prompted new accents in the internal developments of Austrian towns. With the *Landfrieden*, the *Pax Austriaca* (1251), judicial districts comprising a town and its closest surroundings were exempted from the earlier, larger districts under the administration of ministerials or noblemen, thus giving birth to a genuine office, the town judges.[38] Like some of the most powerful ministerials devoted to the new ruler, they exercised the office on behalf of the lord, but soon the citizens became interested in—and succeeded in obtaining—the position for one of their own. Characteristically, a Viennese privilege from the mid-13th century distinguished the *bonus homo* as someone who *non est homo nobilis*. Here, a civic group is contrasted to a prominent noble elite. In the later 13th century, citizens who were recognizable as knights (*milites*) or land-owning citizens (*cives*)—or even both in the same person—would emerge from this group.[39] It was Rudolf I of Habsburg who declared all citizens of Vienna eligible to hold fiefs. Thereafter, Viennese knights' and citizens' rights of marriage and inheritance were hardly restricted at all, and both were entitled to receive fiefs.[40] They formed the elite of the late medieval city of Vienna. This process was

---

35   Zauner, "Ottokar II. Přemysl", 1–72, with material.

36   Gutkas, "Städtepolitik", 107–25.

37   Pferschy, "Ottokar II. Přemysl", 73–91.

38   Weltin, "Landesherr", 146–54.

39   Csendes, *Stadtrechtsprivileg*, 20.

40   Csendes, *Stadtrechtsprivileg*, 70–71.

completed during the course of the 14th century. These entangled legal and social developments provided the framework for the formation of an urban elite in the various provincial and manorial towns in the duchies of Austria and Styria. Its members tried to secure their legal, financial, infrastructural, political, public, and private position within the urban community, but also towards the town's lord.

But what were the expressions of belonging, practices of community that characterized different social groups within an urban community? What influence do the various religious communities (parishes, monasteries, confraternities) have on the formation of groups within the city? How do they affect internal coherence, established norms and institutions?

In the second part of this contribution I will discuss different forms of bonds that were important for the internal cohesion and external representation of late medieval urban elites: kinship and urban memoria.

Practices of Urban Communities: Kinship and Donation

One of the most important cohesive elements in late medieval society, and therefore also in urban society, was kinship. It represented a key principle of urban society[41] and could be used as an interface bridging different interests, securing economic friendships or confirming existing ties.[42] Although noble family structures have been a subject of research for centuries, the analysis of medieval urban family structures has long been comparatively neglected by historical research. Apart from the limitations posed by the sources, there are also various conceptual reasons for this, as Simon Teuscher observed.[43] For researchers who considered medieval urban society as a "pioneer of modernization" and tried to fit it into modern social frameworks, a traditional concept like kinship did not fit the pattern. Others argue that while the noble self-image in the Middle Ages produced different forms of genealogical description and even gained additional importance in the modern era, one is faced with a completely different tradition when exploring the urban elites. Earlier perceptions claimed that the strong ties of coherent kinship groups represented a more conservative element, which had to be broken by the modern forms of city

---

41   Seidel, *Freunde*, 310; Blockmans, "Constructing", 575–77.

42   Jussen, "Verwandtschaftsforschung", cf. 304–12; Teuscher, *Sozialität und Politik*, 65; Sabean, Teuscher, "Kinship", 1–13, 24–26; Signori, *Gütergemeinschaft*, cf. 57–123.

43   Teuscher, "Kinship", 76.

government.[44] Both estimations led to a disregard of the forms, role, and usage of kin relations in the urban context, Teuscher argues. Recent research, however, has shown that kin relations depended on a wide range of exchange and communication: patterns of inheritance and succession, systems of marriage alliance, circulation of goods, patterned practices of relationship, and cultural representations of kinship can be observed both in noble and urban contexts.[45]

A glance at the written sources of late medieval towns in the region of Austria raises more questions than it provides answers. In most Austrian cases, neither marriage agreements nor any other series of sources recording precise family relations can be found. Kinship connections have to be reconstructed from hints in legal and administrative records. It is rarely possible to trace a family genealogy for more than two or three generations, while due to the number and types of sources this is more practicable for noble families.[46] What kind of source material can be used to answer our question? What are the types of relationships formulated in the available sources? The Archive of the City of Vienna, for instance, includes records relating to sales of townhouses to married couples. From these documents we learn both the names of the sellers and the buyers, as well as the location of the property and any obligations upon it. Thus, the texts give relevant, but not always precise, details of kin relations and inheritance rights, which were regulated by the municipal law.[47] For example, a certain Leopold and his wife Katharina together sold their house, which they had built with their own means at one of the main gates of Vienna, to a Viennese burgher, his wife Elisabeth, and their heirs.[48] These formulations are typical as is the lack of personal data beyond the protagonists given names.

The terms and clauses used relate to the legal protection of ownership in case of death, but also to the rights of ownership during marriage. The heirs mentioned can be understood both as the buying couple's children and, if there are no children, as the closest relatives of each of the spouses as their respective heirs. This form of legal protection of the transfer of ownership

44   Teuscher, "Kinship", 77.

45   Sabean, Teuscher, "Kinship", 6–10; for the Low Countries see Howell, *Marriage Exchange*; Keil, ed., *Besitz*, with examples from Prague and Dalmatia; for the German nobility Spieß, *Familie*; for South Europe recently Wessell Lightfoot, *Marriage*.

46   Zajic, *Memoria*, 15–17; Scheibelreiter, "Typologie", cf. 292–310.

47   Lentze, "Wiener Testamentsrecht"; Neschwara, "Rechtsformen", 131–47.

48   "*daz wir mit einander eraribait und gechaufft haben, dem erbn mann Pauln dem Rostauscher ze Wienn, vrown Elsbeten, seiner hausvrown und ir baider erben*", see: Uhlirz, ed., *Quellen*, 176, no. 735.

within the family appears interesting insofar as—as far as the source material allows an assessment—it obviously had to be made explicit. There are similar records in the various municipal archives of the Duchy of Austria, where systematic property registers are only available from the late 15th and 16th centuries onward.[49] The organization of property and its monopolization in the hands of the family is closely linked to the organization, representation, and reconfiguration of kinship and family practices. Kinship and property were two fundamental categories of social hierarchy and economic order. Economic and political contacts and commitments were strengthened, secured and extended via multiple forms of kinship.[50] Marriage was used to establish, manifest, and secure one's own social but also economic standing.[51] In this practical sense, urban community was forged and maintained by family ties, maintaining economic or political associations in a quite cohesive manner.

Another sign of the protection not only of family structures but also community-related internal balances, in this case by spiritual means, can be seen in the prayer communities centred on commemorative masses endowed with pious donations. During the 14th and 15th centuries, this type of community increasingly turned into an instrument of urban memoria.[52] These charitable practices cannot be explained by the individual motivations of benefactors alone, but must also be interpreted as conscious as well as habitual, active as well as socially embedded actions and reactions of individual persons and groups answering contemporary needs.[53] From the benefactor's perspective, one of the most important motives was the durability of his or her donation. Thus social and legal strategies to secure an endowment's long-term duration were central. Chapel and altar donations, anniversary and memorial donations, as well as donations of liturgical objects and alms only fulfilled their purpose of long-term, and even eternal, memory if the mechanisms of binding social ties and responsibilities were kept in place. Corresponding to this, the attitudes and social behaviour of individuals and groups towards the dead to whom they were connected by acquaintance, friendship or kinship were especially significant.

---

49   For Vienna e.g. Lohrmann, *Grundbücher*.

50   Jancke and Schläppi, "Ökonomie sozialer Beziehungen", 94–95; Bourdieu, "The forms of capital", 251.

51   Signori, "Gütergemeinschaft", 13–53.

52   The classical study is Chiffoleau, *La Comptabilité*; for case studies on urban memoria see for Cologne Seidel, *Freunde*, 56–121; for Bratislava, Sopron and Presov see Szende, "Otthon a városban"; for Vienna see Pohl-Resl, "Family"; for urban and noble memoria in the Austrian lands see Zajic, *Memoria*; Gruber, "Memoria"; id. "Handlungsspielräume".

53   The classical study is Oexle, "Gegenwart der Toten", 20–77.

Research into medieval donations, which has been stimulated considerably by the ground-breaking work of Otto G. Oexle and Michael Borgolte,[54] covers almost all fields of human memorial behaviour. Within this tradition, courtly as well as monastic and urban spheres have been—and still are—the object of research. For the region of Lower Austria, for example, publications on Korneuburg, Krems, Tulln, Vienna, and Wiener Neustadt concern various aspects of citizens' memorial economies.[55] Each town's internal organization was already well established by the 15th century, when a significant documentation of memorial practice starts to become available: town magistrates, mayors and town councils formed the functional and for most of the time also the economic elite of the town. According to the town's geographic location, they had developed different economic and political interests, and these had a great impact on the town's profile. The location along important trade routes, close to mining resources or a strategic positioning, for example in border regions of the duchy, had influenced the development of the towns, as had the interaction between the towns and their respective lords. However, the source material is inconsistent and passed on coincidently. In comparison to other European towns like Constance, Paris or Stralsund (just to mention some), where series of last wills are preserved that allow a dense description of people's final wishes, the situation in our region under review is characterized by the lack of serial data.[56] Thus a comparative analysis of selected towns relating to available source material could be a promising starting point to emphasize the interplay between kin relations, family memoria and mechanisms of urban-based internal cohesion as well as external connection. I want to focus on urban memorial culture using the example of an entire region, instead of single towns. Within the region of South Bohemia and the borderlands of Austria three towns played an important role during the late Middle Ages: the Upper Austrian town of Freistadt and the two South Bohemian towns of Český Krumlov/Krumau and Český Budějovice/Budweis.[57] They constantly remained in touch with each other, especially in terms of economy and infrastructure. Two of these, Freistadt and Budweis, were founded by the sovereign or were characterized by his control over the town by the 13th century at the latest. However, Krumau was the urban centre of an impressive and powerful

---

54   Oexle, "Gegenwart", 20–29; Borgolte, "Stiftungen", 267–85; Geary, *Memory*.

55   For the Austrian region two studies on urban foundations should primarily be mentioned: Pohl-Resl, *Wiener Bürgerspital*; Holzner-Tobisch, *Seelenheilstiftungen*.

56   Lusiardi, *Stiftung*, 13; Oberste, "Macht und Memoria", 25–48.

57   The sources refer to the towns by German names and for readability these are used in the text. For the first mention the current Czech name is given.

manorial estate belonging to the noble Rosenberg family.[58] Budweis had been founded by King Přemysl Ottokar of Bohemia as a political and economic counterweight to the Austrian Freistadt.[59] We therefore have to take a close look at a region in which several influential political forces were active: the king of Bohemia, the duke of Austria, and the Rosenberg family in South Bohemia—but also the Schaunberg family in Upper Austria, which sometimes decided to change sides as needed. The monasteries of the region played an important part in the noble and increasingly also urban culture of memory: above all the Cistercian abbeys of Baumgartenberg in Austria and Vyšši Brod/Hohenfurt and Zlata Koruna/Goldenkron in South Bohemia.[60]

The construction of the town of Krumau began in the second half of the 13th century. Although there was already a town magistrate by the end of the 13th century, the town administration only became well established after the first third of the 14th century. Since the beginning of this century, the town had been owned by the Rosenberg family, who quickly transferred its powerbase to Krumau, developing it into a manorial residence and arranging the construction of the parish church of St. Vitus. The foundation of a monastery of the Poor Clares and of the Franciscan friary in the middle of the 14th century were also important for the town lord, who donated liberally to these religious institutions. Krumlov reached the apex of its development in the second half of the 15th century. As Krumau—like Budweis—stayed loyal to the Catholic party during the Hussite Wars, the town repeatedly became the target of Hussite attacks.[61] The castle and the residence of the Rosenberg family, however, remained a safe place of refuge for the Catholics in difficult times. The archive of Goldenkron contains an inventory of the treasures from Goldenkron and the religious houses of Krumau and other monasteries and churches, which were brought to the castle of Kruman in 1418: relics, chalices, crosses, monstrances, liturgical vestments and books, as well as a detailed register of privileges were safely stowed away there.[62]

---

58   Semotanová, ed., *Český Krumlov*; Šimůnek, "Česky Krumlov", 475–520; Cechura, *Grundherrn*.

59   Dvořák, ed., *České Budějovice*.

60   For an overview of the Bohemian towns, see: Kuča, "Města"; Bahlcke et al., eds., *Böhmen und Mähren*; Žemlička, "Böhmen"; for an overview of the Bohemian monasteries see Lutter, "Vita Communis", in this volume, 367–68. Johanek, "Städtelandschaft", 295–316; Lomickova, "Visitationsurkunden", 241–82.

61   Šmahel, *Die hussitische Revolution*; Fudge, *Heresy and Hussites*; for Austria see Petrin, *Hussitenkrieg*; Stöller, "Hussiten", 1–87, lists different sources: charters and chronicles of Bohemian, Moravian and Austrian origin. For the military and political impact on Austria see Niederstätter, *Jahrhundert*, 343–46.

62   Schmid/Picha, eds., *Urkundenbuch Krumau,* 1:176 no. 657.

The rebuilding of the town during the mid-15th century was impressive: by granting commercial privileges, changing the course of trade routes, and intensifying the town's internal administration (drawing up last wills, keeping town records, and issuing town ordinances) the manorial residential town gained supraregional importance.[63] Due to this revaluation of the urban polity, the citizens of the town also came to the fore. This is exemplified, among other things, by the increasing number of records of citizens' donations and by formal regulations concerning the disposition of last wills. Apart from the two hospitals and the Poor Clares' convent, the altar benefices of the town's parish church of St Vitus played a central role. All these institutions had been founded and endowed by members of the Rosenberg family. A number of Krumau citizens are recorded in the necrology of the Poor Clares' convent. Moreover, citizens from other cities are mentioned, like several merchants from Krems/Danube or the citizen Wenzel Zinespan from Freistadt, who made a donation to the nearby monastery too. His family was a long-term follower of the Rosenbergs.[64]

The situation in Budweis is different concerning the relationship between town dwellers and the town lord.[65] Already in the middle of the 13th century, the king of Bohemia had founded the Goldenkron Cistercian monastery. Soon afterwards, he constructed the town of Budweis. Both of them constituted new centres of royal power in a region strongly influenced by the nobility, far from the centre of power in Prague. During the town's reconstruction after the damage caused by the Hussite wars, the Dominican monastery was founded and the St Nicholas Church was built. By the middle of the 14th century, the town had already received economic privileges, including the right to force merchants travelling from the Austrian town of Freistadt to stop at Budweis. The close economic contacts were also evident in other contexts as well, for example when the judge and the town council of Budweis confirmed that Thomas of Linz had donated to various altars in the Budweis parish church. Consulting the town's collection of documents, which provide information on various legal transactions until the end of the 14th century, one notices the large number of citizens' donations. The hospital had been founded by Zacharias, a burgher of Budweis, and numerous altars of the town's parish church also had been donated by burghers. The common interest of these urban communities

---

63   Semotanová, *Český Krumlov;* Šimůnek, "Town", 168–71.

64   Basic research on the noble Zinespan family—among others—was carried out by Klaus Birngruber within the FWF-funded project *Adel, Burg und Herrschaft im Mühlviertel, Oberösterreich (11.–14. Jahrhundert)*, (FWF P20416, project leader Karl Brunner); results will be published.

65   Dvořák, ed., *České Budějovice.*

is obvious in this context. The existing donations were constantly added to, and the community of people who felt connected to them increased. All in all, records of testamentary donations for Budweis are more frequent than in Krumau. In the period between 1251 and 1391, ten per cent of the 543 registered documents are testamentary donations and donations for the salvation of souls.[66]

The Austrian town of Freistadt assumed a position similar to that of Budweis in economic and political terms.[67] Owned by the duke, the town close to the border with Bohemia was the "long arm" of the Austrian dukes. When the enlargement of the ducal castle and town into a border fortress took place in the 14th century, there was already a functioning municipality with a range of economic privileges. The parish church of St Catherine and its numerous altars were the centre of civic remembrance, as were the civic hospital and the town hall. Surprisingly, in Freistadt there are no monasteries. Of the seventeen last wills and approximately 60 deeds of endowment, twenty contain donations to various altars in the parish church of St Catherine, and sixteen to the civic hospital or its Church of Our Lady.[68] The remaining donations were given to various institutions, including the hospital (to provide the care of poor people), the Corpus Christi confraternity, and St Peter's chapel, founded by an influential burgess family. The nearby Cistercian abbey of Hohenfurt, however, received donations from Freistadt citizens only sporadically.[69] It was the private monastery of the Rosenberg family. Apart from these gifts to recipients in the town, the donations from Freistadt families were rather given to the Cistercian monastery of Baumgartenberg, located near the Danube, dating from the 12th century and endowed by a noble family that had since vanished.

At the end of the 15th century, the widow Anna Zinespan, formerly married into an influential family of Freistadt, dictated her last will and took measures to secure her memoria. The family had founded the All Saint's benefice in St Peter's chapel on the hill, and remained its patrons. Furthermore, its members were affiliated to the prayer confraternity in the Krumau monasteries. They donated to the hospital Church of Our Lady and bequeathed their residence in Freistadt to St Catherine's Church for financing memorial services for themselves, their ancestors and descendants and all the souls. Apart from this, the family also had other means to keep its memory alive. The city lords of Krumau, Budweis and Freistadt pursued different interests in terms both of

---

66   Köpl, ed., *Urkundenbuch Budweis*.

67   Opll, *Freistadt*; Opll, "Anfänge", 79–94; Gruber, *Freistadt*, cf. 13–25.

68   Gruber, "Memoria", 31–50, with material on Freistadt.

69   Pangerl, ed., *Urkundenbuch Hohenfurt*.

economic and political function. In this context, burghers could use their influence to establish and strengthen their impact on municipal autonomy. This is also reflected in the choice of religious institutions. As an individual undertaking, donating liturgical instruments, large sums of money, and valuable objects demonstrated a sense of social belonging. Contributions to the common good could only maintain their function as long as the social mechanisms of the donating community continued to function. Adding donations to existing ones, as well as periodic updating of the donation records and rent-rolls by the donation's recipients, were both instrumental in the long-term and everlasting impact on the community's common good. Analysing these various forms of social mechanisms for an entire region gives us insights into the interplay between individuals and groups and their political and economic interdependencies. It can be observed that noble, urban and spiritual milieus refer to each other within the scope of their regional and societal influence. The example of this Central European region showed that every particular urban community developed a self-image dependent both on its legal and economic options as well as on the influence of the town's lord. The council and the townspeople were both entitled and responsible to protect the city as a legal and peace district (*Friedensbezirk*). Moreover, the urban elite was closely intertwined with the religious institutions, and they provided for the maintenance of the spiritual community. The example showed that in times of conflict or crisis existing groups were activated to secure the community's memory. But it also could have happened that new groupings, alliances, and oppositions were established within this framework. Yet, further research has to be done in the regional and supra-regional context. Nevertheless, it was clearly possible for contemporaries to question existing notions of community and to develop new ones, without questioning their urban community as such. They made use of proven models to express their internal but also external bonds. We also learned from this example, that there were spatial relations not only within the town but also established and maintained beyond it. These extended beyond social bonds within specific social groups—at least in the case of memorial practice.

As Oliver Schmitt argues in his paper on late medieval Dalmatian urban communities, "addressing community in the sense of defining community, defining rules and delimitations of belonging are […] a key pattern of social life".[70] This is true for the Dalmatian towns, but has also to be examined for the Austrian towns and their environments. Research on the groups' organization, implementation and maintenance in urban areas is a possibility for successfully

---

70   Schmitt, "Addressing community", in this vol. 25–47, cf. 29.

pursuing various groupings within the town and the strategies used to establish, address, and secure community—at least in European urban contexts. Further studies also have to be carried out at a comparative level within the VISCOM project, based on the question of how social and spatial boundaries are established, committed or overcome and what role social bonds, such as family patterns, kinship or religious affiliations play in these very different regional, political, but also social contexts.

Bibliography

Paul J. Archambault, ed., *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent* (Philadelphia, 1996).

Peter Arnade, Martha Howell and Walter Simons, "Fertile Spaces: The Productivity of Urban Space in Northern Europe", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32 (2002), 515–48.

Joachim Bahlcke, Winfried Eberhard and Miloslav Polivka, eds., *Böhmen und Mähren,* Handbuch der historischen Stätten (Stuttgart, 1998).

Wim Blockmans, "Constructing a sense of community in rapidly growing European cities in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries", *Historical Research* 83, 222 (2010), 575–87; DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2281.2010.00553.x.

Marc Boone, "Cities in late medieval Europe: The promise and the curse of modernity", *Urban History* 39 (2012), 329–49.

Michael Borgolte, "Stiftungen des Mittelalters im Spannungsfeld von Herrschaft und Genossenschaft", in *Memoria in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*, eds. Dieter Geuenich and Otto Gerhard Oexle, Veröffentlichungen des Max Planck Instituts für Geschichte 111 (Göttingen, 1994), 267–85.

Pierre Bourdieu, "The forms of capital", in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York, Greenwood, 1986), 241–58.

Jaroslav Cechura, *Adelige Grundherrn als Unternehmer: Zur Struktur südböhmischer Dominien vor 1620*, Sozial- und wirtschaftshistorische Studien 25 (Vienna, Munich, 2000).

Jacques Chiffoleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge (vers 1320–vers 1480)* (Paris, 2011).

Peter Clark, "Introduction", in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, ed. Peter Clark (Oxford, 2013), 1–24.

Peter Csendes, *Das Wiener Stadtrechtsprivileg von 1221* (Vienna, 1987).

Peter Csendes, "Regensburg und Wien—Babenbergerresidenzen des 12. Jahrhunderts", *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 47/48 (1991/1992), 163–71.

Peter Csendes, "Das Werden Wiens—die siedlungsgeschichtlichen Grundlagen", in Peter Csendes and Ferdinand Opll, *Wien: Geschichte einer Stadt. 1: Von den Anfängen bis zur Ersten Wiener Türkenbelagerung (1529)* (Vienna, 2001).

Peter Csendes, "Die burgenses von St. Pölten und ihr Recht", in S*t. Pölten im Mittelalter. Historische und Archäologische Spurensuche. Referate der gleichnamigen Tagung am 29. Okober 2009 in St. Pölten*, ed. Heidemarie Bachhofer (St Pölten, 2012), 79–84.

Heide Dienst, "Das Privileg Bischof Konrads II. von Passau für die St. Pöltner Bürger vom 3. Mai 1159", in *Sant Ypoelten. Stift und Stadt im Mittelalter: Katalogbuch zur Sonderausstellung des Diözesanmuseums St. Pölten aus Anlass der Verleihung des Privilegs von 1159* (St Pölten, 2009), 79–86.

Bernhard Diestelkamp, "Freiheit der Bürger—Freiheit der Stadt", in *Die abendländische Freiheit vom 10. zum 14. Jahrhundert: Der Wirkungszusammenhang von Idee und Wirklichkeit im europäischen Vergleich*, ed. Johannes Fried, Vorträge und Forschungen 39 (Sigmaringen, 1991), 485–510.

Jiří Dvořák, ed., *České Budějovice: Historický atlas měst České republiky* [České Budějovice: Historic Town Atlas of the Czech Republic] (Prague, 1996).

Edith Ennen, *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen, 1979).

Erwin Frauenknecht, "Der Bischof und die Stadt: Ein Spannungsverhältnis zwischen geistlicher Intensität und weltlicher Aktivität", in *Geschichte der Stadt Regensburg*, 2, ed. Peter Schmid (Regensburg, 2000), 688–709.

Heinrich Fichtenau and Erich Zöllner, eds., *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Babenberger in Österreich, 1: Die Siegelurkunden der Babenberger bis 1215*, Publikationen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 3/1 (Vienna, 1950).

Thomas A. Fudge, *Heresy and Hussites in Late Medieval Europe*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 1044 (Farnham 2014).

Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994).

Elisabeth Gruber, "Memoria—bürgerliches Selbstverständnis im späten Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit am Beispiel Freistadt", in *Stadtkultur—Kultur(haupt)stadt*, eds. Ferdinand Opll and Walter Schuster (Linz, 2012), 31–50.

Elisabeth Gruber, "Wer regiert hier wen? Handlungsspielräume in der spätmittelalterlichen Residenzstadt Wien", in *Mittler zwischen Herrschaft und Gemeinde: Die Rolle von Funktions- und Führungsgruppen in der mittelalterlichen Urbanisierung Zentraleuropas*, eds. Elisabeth Gruber, Susanne Pils et.al., Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte 56 (Wien, 2013), 9–48.

Elisabeth Gruber, *Formen kommunaler Rechnungspraxis im oberösterreichischen Freistadt. Edition und Kommentar der Stadtgrabenrechnung von 1389–1392*, Quelleneditionen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 14 (Vienna, 2015).

Elisabeth Gruber and Susana Zapke, *A Companion to Medieval Vienna (1250–1529)* (Leiden, forthcoming).

Karl Gutkas, "Das österreichische Städtewesen im Mittelalter", in *Die mittelalterliche Städtebildung im südöstlichen Europa*, ed. Heinz Stoob, Städteforschung, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für vergleichende Städtegeschichte in Münster Reihe A/4, (Cologne, Vienna 1977) 134–63.

Karl Gutkas, "König Ottokars Städtepolitik in Österreich und in der Steiermark", in *Böhmisch-österreichische Beziehungen im 13. Jahrhundert: Österreich (einschließlich Steiermark, Kärnten und Krain) im Großreichprojekt Ottokars II. Přemysl, König von Böhmen. Vorträge des internationalen Symposions vom 26. bis 27. September 1996 in Znaim*, eds. Marie Bláhová and Ivan Hlaváček (Prag, 1998), 107–25.

Alfred Haverkamp, "Bruderschaften und Gemeinden im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert", in *Ordnungskonfigurationen im hohen Mittelalter*, eds. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Ostfildern, 2006), 153–92.

Kornelia Holzner-Tobisch, *Investitionen für die Ewigkeit: Die Seelenheilstiftungen in den letztwilligen Verfügungen der Stadt Korneuburg im 15. Jahrhundert*, Medium Aevum Quotidianum Sonderband 19 (Krems, 2007).

Martha C. Howell, *The marriage exchange: property, social place, and gender in cities of the Low Countries, 1300–1500* (Chicago, 1998).

Eberhard Isenmann, "The notion of the Common Good, the concept of politics, and practical policies in late Medieval and Early Modern German Cities", in *De Bono Communi: The Discourse and Practice of the Common Good in the European City (12th–16th c.); Discours et pratique du Bien Commun dans les villes d'Europe (XIIIe au XVIe siècle)*, eds. Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, Studies in European Urban History (1100–1800) 12 (Turnhout, 2010), 107–48.

Eberhard Isenmann, *Die deutsche Stadt im Mittelalter 1150–1550* (Vienna, 2012).

Hermann Jakobs, "Stadtgemeinde und Bürgertum um 1100", in *Beiträge zum Hochmittelalterlichen Städtewesen*, ed. Bernhard Diestelkamp, Städteforschung A 11 (Cologne, 1982), 14–54.

Gabriele Jancke and Daniel Schläppi, "Ökonomie sozialer Beziehungen: Wie Gruppen in frühneuzeitlichen Gesellschaften Ressourcen bewirtschaften", *L'Homme: Europäische Zeitschrift für feministische Geschichtswissenschaft* 22,1 (2011), 85–97.

Peter Johanek, "Die Entstehung der südböhmischen Städtelandschaft", in *Zentrum und Peripherie in der Germania Slavica: Beiträge zu Ehren von Winfried Schich*, ed. Doris Bulach (Stuttgart, 2008), 295–316.

Bernhard Jussen, "Perspektiven der Verwandtschaftsforschung fünfundzwanzig Jahre nach Jack Goodys 'Entwicklung von Ehe und Familie in Europa'", in *Die Familie in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*, ed. Karl-Heinz Spieß (Ostfildern, 2009), 275–324.

Reinhold Kaiser, "Guibert de Nogent und der Bischofsmord in Laon (1112)", in *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter: Murder of Bishops*, eds. Natalie Fryde and Dirk Reitz, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 191 (Göttingen, 2003), 121–58.

Willibald Katzinger, ed., *Elenchus fontium historiae urbanae*, 3/1 (Leiden, New York, Cologne, 1992).

Martha Keil, ed*., Besitz, Geschäft und Frauenrechte: Jüdische und christliche Frauen in Dalmatien und Prag 1300–1600* (Kiel, 2011).

Herbert Knittler, "Zum Problem des bürgerlichen Untertanenbesitzes auf dem Lande: Die landesfürstlichen Städte ob der Enns und des Viertels ober dem Manhartsberg (NÖ) im Vergleich", in *Zwischen Land und Stadt. Wirtschaftsverflechtungen von ländlichen und städtischen Räumen in Europa 1300–1600*, eds. Markus Cerman and Erich Landsteiner, Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes 6, 2009 (Innsbruck, 2010), 91–121.

Herbert Knittler, "Städtelandschaften in Österreich im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit", in *Städtelandschaft. Réseau Urbain. Urban Network: Städte im regionalen Kontext in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Holger Thomas Gräf and Katrin Keller, Städteforschung A 62 (Cologne, 2004), 111–33.

Karl Köpl, ed., *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Budweis in Böhmen 1251–1391*, Städte- und Urkundenbücher aus Böhmen 4 (Prague, 1901).

Karel Kuča, Města a městečka v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku 1–8 [Städte und Ortschaften in Böhmen, Mähren und Schlesien] (Prague, 1996–2011).

Hans Lentze, "Das Wiener Testamentsrecht. 1 und 2. Teil", *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 69 (1952), 98–154; 70 (1953), 159–229.

Klaus Lohrmann, *Grundbücher*, Veröffentlichungen des Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchivs Reihe A, Archivinventar: Serie 1, Stadtarchiv 2 (Vienna, 1986).

Klaus Lohrmann and Ferdinand Opll, eds., *Regesten zur Frühgeschichte von Wien*, Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte 10 (Vienna, 1981).

Radka Lomickova, "Visitationsurkunden aus böhmischen und österreichischen Zisterzienserklöstern: Das Leben hinter Klostermauern im 14. Jahrhundert", *Citeaux—commentarii cistercienses*, 62,1–4 (2011), 241–82.

Ralf Lusiardi, *Stiftung und städtische Gesellschaft: Religiöse und soziale Aspekte des Stiftungsverhaltens im spätmittelalterlichen Stralsund*, Stiftungsgeschichten 2 (Berlin, 2000).

Christina Lutter, "Social Groups, Personal Relations, and the Making of Communities in Medieval *vita monastica*", in *Making Sense as Cultural Practice: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Jörg Rogge et al., Mainzer Historische Kulturwissenschaften 17 (Bielefeld, 2013), 45–64.

Christina Lutter, "Comparative Approaches to Visions of Community", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 129–43. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2014.930738.

Christian Neschwara, "Rechtsformen letztwilliger Verfügungen in den Wiener Stadt-büchern (1395–1430): Eine Bilanz aufgrund der vorliegenden Edition", in *Testamente aus der Habsburgermonarchie: Alltagskultur, Recht, Überlieferung*, ed. Thomas Olechowski and Christoph Schmetterer, Beiträge zur Rechtsgeschichte Österreichs 1 (Vienna, 2011), 131–47.

Alois Niederstätter, *Das Jahrhundert der Mitte: An der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit 1400–1522*, Österreichische Geschichte (Wien, 1996).

Jörg Oberste, "Macht und Memoria: Religiöses Leben und soziale Netzwerke des Regensburger Patriziates im späteren Mittelalter", in *Regensburg im Spätmittelalter*, ed. Peter Schmid, Forum Mittelalter—Studien 2, (Regensburg, 2007), 25–48.

Otto G. Oexle, "Die Gegenwart der Toten", in *Death in the Middle Ages* (Leuven, 1983), 20–77; repr. in id., *Die Wirklichkeit und das Wissen: Mittelalterforschung—historische Kulturwissenschaft—Geschichte und Theorie der historischen Erkenntnis* (Göttingen, 2011), 99–155.

Ferdinand Opll, "Die Anfänge der Stadt Freistadt", *Jahrbuch des oberösterreichischen Musealvereins* 134,1 (1989), 79–94.

Ferdinand Opll, *Freistadt*, Österreichischer Städteatlas. 4. Lieferung, 1. Teil (Vienna, 1991).

Ferdinand Opll, "Stadt und Region: Internationale Forschungen und Perspektiven", in *Zur österreichischen Stadtgeschichtsforschung: Bilanz und Perspektiven, Stadt und Region. Internationale Forschungen und Perspektiven. Kolloquium für Peter Johanek*, eds. Heinz Duchhardt and Eberhard Reininghaus (Köln, 2005), 43–72.

Mathias Pangerl, ed., *Urkundenbuch des Cistercienserstiftes B. Mariae V. zu Hohenfurth in Böhmen* (Wien, 1865).

Michel Pauly and Martin Scheutz, "Space and history as exemplified by urban history research", in *Cities and their Spaces: Concepts and their use in Europe*, eds. Michel Pauly and Martin Scheutz, Städteforschung A 88 (Cologne, 2014), 15–28.

Silvia Petrin, *Der österreichische Hussitenkrieg 1420–1434* (Vienna, 1982).

Gerhard Pferschy, "Ottokar II. Přemysl, Ungarn und die Steiermark", in *Ottokar-Forschungen*, ed. Maximilian Weltin, Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von NÖ. N.F. 44/45 (Vienna, 1979), 73–91.

Brigitte Pohl-Resl, *Rechnen mit der Ewigkeit: Das Wiener Bürgerspital im Mittelalter*, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 33 (Vienna, 1996a).

Brigitte Pohl-Resl, "Family, Memory and Charity in Late Medieval Vienna", *Medium aevum quotidianum* 35 (Krems 1996b), 125–32.

Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900–1300* (Oxford, 1997).

Susan Reynolds, *The Middle Ages without Feudalism: Essays in Criticism and Comparison on the Medieval West*, Variorum collected studies series 1019 (Farnham, 2012).

Walther Rösener, "Grundherrschaft, II. Deutschland/Mitteleuropa", in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 10 vols. (Stuttgart, 1977–1999), 4:cols. 1746–47, *Brepolis Medieval Encyclopaedias—Lexikon des Mittelalters Online*.

Jörg Rogge, *Für den gemeinen Nutzen: Politisches Handeln und Politikverständnis von Rat und Bürgerschaft in Augsburg im Spätmittelalter*, Studia Augustana 6 (Tübingen, 1996).

David Warren Sabean and Simon Teuscher, "Kinship in Europe: A New Approach to Long-Term Development", in *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to long-term development (1300–1900)*, eds. David Warren Sabean and Simon Teuscher (New York, 2007), 1–32.

Georg Scheibelreiter, "Zur Typologie und Kritik genealogischer Quellen", in *Wappenbild und Verwandtschaftsgeflecht: Kultur- und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Forschungen zu Heraldik und Genealogie*, ed. Georg Scheibelreiter, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 53 (Vienna, 2009), 287–310.

Peter Schmid, "Die Herrschaftsträger und ihre Einflußsphären im früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Regensburg", in *Regensburg im Mittelalter, 1: Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte vom frühen Mittelalter bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit*, ed. Martin Angerer (Regensburg, 1998), 45–56.

Valentin Schmid and Alois Picha, eds., *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Krumau in Böhmen, 1: 1253–1419*, Städte- und Urkundenbücher aus Böhmen 5 (Prague, 1908).

Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter, "Ordnungskonfigurationen: Die Erprobung eines Forschungsdesigns", in *Ordnungskonfigurationen im hohen Mittelalter*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter, Vorträge und Forschungen 64 (Ostfildern, 2006), 7–18.

Knut Schulz, *"Denn sie lieben die Freiheit so sehr …": Kommunale Aufstände und Entstehung des europäischen Bürgertums im Hochmittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1992), 5–11.

Knut Schulz, "Zensualen, Zinsleute, Zensualität", in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 10 vols. (Stuttgart, 1977–1999), 9:cols. 530–33, *Brepols Medieval Encyclopaedias—Lexikon des Mittelalters online*.

Knut Schulz, "Zensualität und Stadtentwicklung im 11./12. Jahrhundert", in *Beiträge zum Hochmittelalterlichen Städtewesen*, ed. Bernhard Diestelkamp, Städteforschung A 11 (Cologne, 1982), 73–93.

Knut Schulz, "Von der familia zur Stadtgemeinde: Zum Prozeß der Erlangung bürgerlicher Freiheitsrechte durch hofrechtlich gebundene Bevölkerungsgruppen", in *Die abendländische Freiheit vom 10. zum 14. Jahrhundert: Der Wirkungszusammenhang von Idee und Wirklichkeit im europäischen Vergleich*, ed. Johannes Fried, Vorträge und Forschungen 39 (Sigmaringen, 1991), 461–84.

Knut Schulz, "Die Urbanisierung Mitteleuropas im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert", in *Die Urbanisierung Europas von der Antike bis in die Moderne*, eds. Gerhard Fouquet and Gabriel Zeilinger, Kieler Werkstücke: Reihe E, Beiträge zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte 7 (Frankfurt am Main, 2009), 147–72.

Kerstin Seidel, *Freunde und Verwandte: Soziale Beziehungen in einer spätmittelalterlichen Stadt* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009).

Eva Semotanová, ed., *Český Krumlov: Historický atlas měst České republiky 11* [Český Krumlov: Historic Town Atlas of the Czech Republic] (Prague, 2003).

Gabriela Signori, *Von der Paradiesehe zur Gütergemeinschaft: Die Ehe in der mittelalterlichen Lebens- und Vorstellungswelt* (Frankfurt am Main, 2011).

Robert Šimůnek, "Česky Krumlov v 15. Století pozdně středověké město jako jeviště sakrální reprezentace" [Česky Krumlov in the 15th century: The late medieval city as stage of representation of the sacred], in *Česky Krumlov: Od rezidenčního města k památce světového kulturního dědictví* [Česky Krumlov: From Residential town to World Heritage Site] (Ceské Budějovice, 2010), 475–520.

Robert Šimůnek, "Town and its vicinity as spaces for sacral Representation, Bohema 1350–1600", in *Cities and their Spaces: Concepts and their use in Europe*, eds. Michel Pauly and Martin Scheutz, Städteforschung A 88 (Cologne, 2014), 167–81.

František Šmahel, *Die hussitische Revolution 1–3* (Hanover, 2002).

Matthias Günter Steiner*, Die Klöster und ihr Wirken—eine der Wurzeln des Stiftungswesens?* Rechtshistorische Reihe 387 (Frankfurt am Main, 2009).

Ferdinand Stöller, "Österreich im Kriege gegen die Hussiten (1420–1436)", *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde Niederösterreich* N.F. 22 (1929), 1–87.

Katalin Szende, *Otthon a városban: Társadalom és anyagi kultúra a középkori Sopronban, Pozsonyban és Eperjesen* [At Home in the City: Society and material culture in medieval Sopron, Bratislava and Presov], Társadalom-és művelődéstörténet tanulmányok 32 (Budapest, 2004).

Simon Teuscher, *Bekannte, Klienten, Verwandte: Soziabilität und Politik in der Stadt Bern um 1500* (Cologne, 1998).

Simon Teuscher, "Politics of Kinship in the City of Bern at the End of the Middle Ages", in *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to long-term development (1300–1900)*, eds. David Warren Sabean and Simon Teuscher (New York, 2007), 76–90.

Karl Uhlirz, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Wien, Abt. 2/1: Verzeichnis der Originalurkunden des Städtischen Archives 1239–1411* (Vienna, 1898).

Heinrich Wanderwitz, "Regensburg, ein früh- und hochmittelalterliches Handelszentrum", in *Das mittelalterliche Regensburg im Zentrum Europas*, ed. Edith Feistner (Regensburg, 2006), 43–54.

Herwig Weigl, "Städte und Adel im spätmittelalterlichen Österreich", in *Oberdeutsche Städte im Vergleich: Mittelalter und Frühe Neuzeit*, eds. Joachim Jahn, Wolfgang Hartung and Immo Eberl, Regio. Forschungen zur schwäbischen Regionalgeschichte 2 (Sigmaringendorf, 1989), 74–100.

Herwig Weigl, *Materialien zur Geschichte des rittermäßigen Adels im südwestlichen Österreich unter der Enns im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, Forschungen zur Landeskunde von Niederösterreich 26 (Vienna, 1991).

Maximilian Weltin, "Zur niederösterreichischen Stadtministerialität im 13. Jahrhundert (am Beispiel von Laa an der Thaya)", in Maximilian Weltin, *Das Land und sein Recht: Ausgewählte Beiträge zur Verfassungsgeschichte Österreichs im Mittelalter*, eds.

Folker Reichert and Winfried Stelzer, Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 49 (Vienna, 2006a), 9–23.

Maximilian Weltin, "Landesherr und Landherren: Zur Herrschaft Ottokars II. Premysl in Österreich", in Maximilian Weltin, *Das Land und sein Recht: Ausgewählte Beiträge zur Verfassungsgeschichte Österreichs im Mittelalter*, eds. Folker Reichert and Winfried Stelzer, Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 49 (Vienna, 2006b), 130–87.

Dana Wessell Lightfoot, *Women, Dowries and Agency: Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Manchester, New York, 2013).

Alois Zauner, "Ottokar II. Přemysl und Oberösterreich", *Ottokar-Forschungen*, ed. Maximilian Weltin, Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von NÖ. N.F. 44/45 (Vienna, 1979), 1–72.

Andreas Hermenegild Zajic, *"Zu ewiger gedächtnis aufgericht": Grabdenkmäler als Quelle für Memoria und Repräsentation von Adel und Bürgertum im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit. Das Beispiel Niederösterreichs*, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 45 (Vienna, 2004).

Josef Žemlička, "Böhmen–von den slawischen Burgzentren zum spätmittelalterlichen Städtenetz (mit Berücksichtigung Mährens)", in *Städtelandschaft—Städtenetz—zentralörtliches Gefüge: Ansätze und Befunde zur Geschichte der Städte im hohen und späten Mittelalter*, eds. Monika Escher, Alfred Haverkamp and Frank G. Hirschmann, Trierer Historische Forschungen 43 (Mainz, 2000), 233–54.

Addressing Community in Late Medieval Dalmatia

Oliver Schmitt

Community is a social and cultural construct. As such it exists in terminology, discourse and social practice. This paper aims at assessing community both in its terminological/discursive and practical dimension in normative texts and "*pragmatische Schriftlichkeit*" with particular emphasis on their interrelation with social practice in late medieval Dalmatia. This region is chosen because of the extraordinary density of evidence concerning discourses on normative rules in daily socio-cultural practice.[1] Norm and practice are not perceived as separate, but as interconnected dimensions of community building. The focus is on socio-cultural processes that trigger change both in normative systems and in the social practice of communities. Norms are constantly constructed and adapted by social actors. But they also have on strong impact on social actions. These actions are analysed here as representations of patterns of belonging and identification. Community is understood as a consciousness of belonging, which was repeatedly visualized in daily social practice, especially in cases of conflict and dissent that activated communitarian solidarity. There were multiple layers of communitarian belonging in late medieval Dalmatian communities, and emphasizing the highly complex fault lines of these societies stands at the core of this paper.

In a first step this paper seeks to address the problem by analysing various late medieval terms which defined and/or circumscribed different types of community in Dalmatia. The analysis starts with normative texts and in a second step integrates examples of "*pragmatische Schriftlichkeit*".[2] Community does not only exist where groups are explicitly characterized as "*comunitas/comune/universitas*". Community is enacted in social practice. *Belonging* to a community in daily life is a situative act. Social rituals and conflicts have a particularly huge potential for making patterns of belonging physically visible. A third part of the paper will explore this dimension. Community encompasses

---

1 For the cultural context of community studies in the Venetian Commonwealth see Muir, "The Idea of Community"; Gentile, "Factions and Parties". *The research for this article was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): F42 Visions of Community*.

2 Keller et al., eds., *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit*; in particular: Gerhard Dilcher, "Verschriftlichung und Wandlungen der Normstruktur in den Stadtrechten des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts", 9–19; Hagen Keller, "Die Veränderung gesellschaftlichen Handelns".

groups of people, and usually communities are studied as social entities. As a complementary dimension this paper proposes a micro-historical approach. Although the main structure of the paper concentrates on community as a collective entity, it seeks to combine this analysis with the perspective of a single person whose life and deeds are documented in hundreds of documents (protocols, petitions, contracts, testimonies): Zuanin Dragačić (ca. 1410–ca.1475) was born as the son of a peasant in the village of Čara; he was to become the leader of the non-patricians, a successful businessman and investor, legal expert, diplomat, confidant of Venetian central authorities, head of a political and social network that encompassed important parts of the island. Dragačić certainly was not a "normal" or average representative of the Korčula peasantry, and the extraordinary documentary density covering his lifespan is due to his socio-political advancement. Nevertheless, he is probably one of the best documented non-noble person in the late Venetian overseas empire.

His life story can be combined with a structural analysis of community building and major changes in the Adriatic world and Dragačić's eminent role in processes of community building will give sense to this approach.

The Socio-Cultural and Legal Context

Normative Sources

In the 15th century, Dalmatian urban communities could look back on at least 150 years of written law codification (*statuta*).[3] This codification process was part of a general modernization of urban law in Italy and the Adriatic area. Law terminology was therefore well developed and rather sophisticated. The institution which commissioned these codifications was the town, or more exactly those free men who had sworn an oath of loyalty to a *comune/comunitas*. A commune denoted both a political space and a group of people who inhabited it and possessed the political right to participate in its administration. Comunitas was coined as key term for a socio-political congregation which draws a clear line between members of the community and all others, e.g. peasants in surrounding villages (the so-called *contado*), but also foreigners, even if they had lived in the community for a longer period. *Comunitas* and *comune* thus served as terminological abstractions for a personal network *and* a clearly defined space, but it also materialized in architecture (city hall, loggia, religious buildings as cathedrals), material culture (e.g. the codex which contained the statute) and socio-cultural practice (assemblies, councils, common

---

3 Steindorff, *Die dalmatinischen Städte*; Steindorff, "Privilegien"; Malz, "Frühneuzeitliche Modernisierung".

defence, e.g. communal police boats, galleys etc.). Traditional research assumed that discourse on this terminology was based on the statutes, i.e. that statutes were composed first and that community virtually emanated from this source. Research on the Dalmatian statutes, mainly by historians of law, often produces a rather static picture of the statutes. Here one has to take into account recent research on Italian and German urban statutes in order to reveal processes of negotiation which eventually led to the final result, the codification of law which moreover was the subject of constant change.

"Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit"

This paper focuses on one case study, the island of Korčula in southern Dalmatia which was under Venetian rule from 1420.[4] This example is chosen because of the unusual character of its archival text corpus. The archive of Korčula contains one of the most complete regional archives for the late medieval Mediterranean world. This text corpus was mainly produced on the island, but by different actors: normative texts were usually codified in the pre-Venetian period and reflect both communal/regional legal traditions and the process of law codification in the late medieval Adriatic area. "*Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit*" emanates mainly from different administrative bodies on the island which were supervised by Venetian authorities. Although the production of documents virtually exploded after the beginning of Venetian administration, it is unclear if this is to be explained by new administrative methods or by the contingency of archival preservation. Since the transition from pre-Venetian to Venetian administration was a smooth process in which Venetians played only a minor role, the latter seems the more probable explanation. Indeed, local councils and local administrative bodies continued their work without any major interruption or interference on the part of the Venetian governor. Venetian administrative presence on the island was limited to the person of the governor, his chancellors and two or three servants.

Our text corpus does not constitute a genetic unit: we can distinguish between the chancery of the Venetian governor and texts produced on a more local level, mainly reports of local officers to the Venetian governor. Over a period of roughly 60 years (1420–80) the administration gradually introduced rules of a homogenized central administration, a slow development that is also visible in language, style and structure of many texts. Chancellors accompanied Venetian governors during their two-year term and consequently changed every two years. Despite of this tendency towards a homogenization

---

4   Orlando, *Gli accordi con Curzola*; Ortalli, "Il ruolo degli statuti"; Dokoza, *Dinamika otočnog prostora*; Schmitt, *Korčula*; id., "Storie d'amore".

of "*pragmatische Schriftlichkeit*", the production of the Venetian chancery does not constitute a purely "foreign" perspective. Local narratives are present both in petitions and protocols of lawsuits. Protocols are the result of a transfer from orality to "*Schriftlichkeit*", in this case under the control of a foreign (not local) secretary. Whenever testimonies had to be translated from čakav (in the sources usually "*lingua sclavonica*", "*sclavonice*") into Italian, the chancellor referred to that process in a special note. Nevertheless, if interpreted carefully, bearing in the mind the process of "filtration", they offer evidence for analysing regional discourses on community and communitarian belonging.

Naming Community: Terminological Concepts of Community

Late medieval Dalmatian societies possessed a differentiated terminology for labelling and defining communities. This terminology evolved in the wider socio-cultural context of the Italo-Slavic Adriatic area and does not constitute a regional specificity. Key terms are both *comune* and *comunitas*, which denote both the above-mentioned personal and territorial unit. *Civitas* refers more precisely to urban communities, while *universitas* is often used for rural communities, mainly village communities which encompass both a personal network and a territory. Peasant leaders resorted to this term to denote "*the whole people of Korčula*" (*tuta quela università de popolo de Curzola*), which in their eyes was the proper denomination for the non-patricians.[5] These terms constitute legal terms in the sense that they were used in codified local legal systems, the "statute". Since these statutes were codified in an urban environment, they define urban domination on a rural hinterland as normative political system. The case of Korčula is rather atypical of these socio-cultural structures because of the survival of rural law traditions and even assemblies. Their Slavic term, *veće*, attested uniquely in Latin texts, points to socio-cultural differences in legal terminology:[6] although urban and rural groups both belonged to the same linguistic group, a cultural difference was visible in legal terminology between rural/Slavic and urban/Latin. It would however be erroneous to construct two culturally and socially different worlds on an island with a remarkable linguistic and confessional homogeneity: rural political leaders mostly referred to the same set of legal terms as urban political actors did—but as we shall see, not the terms but the meanings given to them were different and the object of contest.

5   DAZ AK 10/14/4, fol. 1r.
6   DAZ AK 7/9/1, fol. 130r.: "veche".

The title of this paper contains the term "addressing communities"—the semantic field of "addressing" includes naming, labelling, designing, interpreting. We now have to analyse how members of social and political groups approached our key term from various perspectives. To do this we have to categorize this local society into different groups; this follows both contemporary constitutional categories and groups that are constructed for our research design: the island society was divided into people who possessed political rights (who could elect and be elected as members of councils and offices) and those who were excluded from political participation on the level of the entire island, i.e. the Council of Korčula. There were differences in status and wealth within the politically privileged group. The excluded did not constitute a homogenous group either: wealth and status, rural or urban environment, literacy or illiteracy were markers of social difference. Furthermore, formal exclusion did not necessarily imply absence from political life. Participation in public life, i.e. in the island community as political entity was the object of fierce contest. Many men who could not attend the meetings of the Council of Korčula were fully entitled to take part in village assemblies, mainly in the western part of the elongated island. Exclusion is therefore a relative category and concerns only participation in the main island council. It is not by chance that villagers seriously challenged its competence to represent the whole island community.

Addressing community in the sense of defining community, defining rules and delimitations of belonging is, on the contrary, a key pattern of social life in the late medieval Adriatic. Community was addressed in our text corpus both by individuals and by groups, the former case being the more frequent. Analysing individual behaviour should not induce us to postulate a high degree of individuality—individual patterns of addressing community are studied here as expressions a group discourses—and of personal interests, or as Edward Muir puts it, "precepts and practices of community also worked in the opposite direction, transforming and expressing interpersonal conflicts".[7] The latter have to be reconstructed by a careful analysis of their social position and context. The key question however is how these—social, political, constitutional, economic—groups can be defined. A simple division into politically privileged/non privileged which still dominates research debates can only be a starting point.[8]

Consensual Patterns of Addressing Communities

Screening our text corpus on the search of terms designing community, one easily comes across a wide range of social, economic and politico-constitutional

---

7   Muir, "The Idea of Community", 4.

8   Foretić, "Borbe".

meanings. Persons belonging to all groups outlined above refer to communal institutions (council, offices as the *avogadori de comun* or state prosecutor, ambassadors of the community),[9] communal law, communal territories (usually leased by the council), communal roads and the communal loggia.

It is remarkable that religious or ethnic patterns of belonging do not appear in our text corpus at all. The clergy and clergymen emerge predominantly as a social group. This is certainly due to the high degree of ethno-religious homogeneity on a Catholic and čakav-speaking island. But it also depends on text genres: on the neighbouring island of Hvar humanist discourses of Slavic descent and Slavic pride flourished around 1500.[10] Although the influence of Renaissance discourses is visible in the political language of the island and even in personal names in all social strata (Paris, Hector), ethnicity was completely absent in an otherwise sophisticated political discourse. Focusing on constitutional, political and social layers of belonging is thus a justified approach.

Community thus conveys both a discursive and a material dimension: the latter materialized mainly in the loggia, where public life (conclusion of contracts, business, but also leisure activities as games) had its epicentre. A loggia was perceived as symbol of community life both in the political and the societal dimension—but it also enshrined urban life. The village of Blato possessed a loggia: the villagers thus expressed their aspiration to political and social status, challenging the town/countryside model typical for the late medieval Adriatic space.

Naming community was obviously a rather common discursive act on the island, simply because the term community was included in many expressions denoting important elements of public and everyday life. Community was invoked as the term encompassing the whole island society in cases of emergency: a typical case is the recurrent grain shortages in early spring. In 1440, local judges and the Venetian count decided to stop and unload a grain cargo on the way to Venice. They justified this illegal act by stating "*all noblemen and all commoners were shouting 'Lord, if you release the ship, we will not release it, because you should know that we all will starve'*".[11] In 1456, two patricians declared to the Venetian governor: "*It was we who took this grain cargo and not Your Excellency, and if something should be paid, we will do it all together*".[12] Island people acted in this case as a community of survival. Famine, pirate

---

9   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 125v.

10   Pribojević, *O podrijetlu i zgodama Slavena*; on discourses of ethnic identifications see Fine, *When ethnicity did not matter*.

11   DAZ AK 7/10/1, fol. 16r.

12   DAZ AK 15/26/5, fol. 6v.

threats, conflicts with neighbours over the control of fisheries, foreign inva-
sions, but also resistance against certain elements of Venetian rule (mainly
Venetian control of the Church) all activated strong mechanisms of loyalty to
an island community which in times of peace decomposed quickly into groups
competing for political and economic resources and for socio-cultural status.

Dimensions of Dissent

Late medieval Korčula was the scene of intense internal political strife. It is
thus not surprising that consensus on what community meant was limited. We
will present some examples which demonstrate fault lines of conflict on the
island.

1. The surrender of Korčula to Venice in 1420 was negotiated uniquely by
patricians. While other Dalmatian and Friulan towns were conquered by the
Signoria manu militari, the Korčulan elite concluded a treaty that guaranteed
the local constitutional tradition and even foresaw the election of Venetian
governor by the local Korčulan council. It soon became evident that the
Korčulan elite wanted to restrict Venetian interference in local affairs; they did
everything to curtail the governor's competences by invoking local law and tra-
ditions and by developing a discourse which contrasted tyranny with the good
old law. In 1426, tax collection by the governor "*on the territory of our county
and community*" was compared to tyranny.[13] This patrician discourse was—
unwillingly—put into social practice when the governor physically attacked a
peasant who refused to pay a tax on wine; local people on the spot supported
the peasant; the governor addressed the bystanders "*Do you see how your gov-
ernors are treated here*?"[14] By addressing the bystanders in this way he con-
structed a difference between himself as representative of the Venetian state
and the local society, but he did so in order to claim ties of loyalty.

This obligation of loyalty was soon afterwards contested, this time once
again by patricians. In 1428 plague broke out, patricians retreated to the vil-
lages, and the governor had to man the walls with foreigners. When a leading
patrician wanted to return, entrance was denied to him because of the quaran-
tine. This provoked an exchange of words between the Venetian chancellor
and the patrician: "*I will shit on your beard of shit. …You are a tyrant and you
want to tyrannize our town. …I will take revenge.*" The chancellor responded:
"*This town is not yours, but it belongs to our most serene domination. It is not
me, but our governor and his officers who issued this order for the sake of public*

---

13   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 83r.
14   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 87v.

welfare". The governor added *"I am not a tyrant, and if I were a tyrant, our state would know that, but you are a tyrant, because you refuse to accept the laws and orders of the state".*[15] This dispute about political models and patterns of belonging is revealing: two concepts of state and community were clashing. The Venetian governors defends the concept of abstract rule ("domination", the "state", "*salus publica*") whose representative he is; the patrician equally refers to political categories of the Renaissance (tyranny), but combines it with personal attacks against Venetian officers and a personal claim of possession regarding the urban space. The patrician's challenge to Venetian rule thus also contains the claim to define community and legitimacy of power. This dispute has to be put in the context of Venetian constitutional thinking. In fact, modern historiography characterizes Venice as a "composite state" and as "jurisdictional state" with multiple legal systems coexisting beside one another. The respect for local law systems was even at the very core of Venetian state propaganda.[16] Communal law and Venetian law were juxtaposed, and both were applied at the same time: in June/July 1442 for instance, the Venetian governor applied Venetian law to condemn a Korčulan patrician who had bought a ship in the port town of Vieste in Apulia, and he resorted to local law against men from Dubrovnik who had illegally cut wood and against a Korčulan who had exported grain from Venetian Albania to Dubrovnik.[17]

Layers of Belonging in the Rural Area

The patricians' claim to absolute political domination on the island caused several serious upheavals on the part of Korčulan peasants. Conflict lines cut across social and political divides, but once again invoking legitimate rule and legal traditions are key elements of the conflict. In 1439, the village community (*universitas*) of Blato as political entity defended its village pasture area against the intrusion of a flock whose owner was a patrician and whom they considered as a foreigner since he did not belong to the village community. The villagers explained to the governor: "*Do not be astonished that we oppose to our homeland* [patria] *being subjugated by a single man who against our laws and against all good customs stipulated by our assembly* [veće]*, and by perverting our law*" entered the communal pasture grounds.[18] The villagers accepted only

---

15   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 146r–148r.

16   Povolo, "Liturgies of Violence".

17   DAZ AK 10/13/1, fols. 2r, 4r–v.

18   DAZ AK 7/9/1, fol. 133v.

the Venetian governor as their judge and refused patrician judges. suspecting them of being biased. "*Patria*" and "*veće*"—"homeland" and "assembly"—are the central terms for addressing community: this village community constituted itself as a political, territorial, economic and legal unit with its own system of traditions and values. The "other" was the patrician owner of the flock and his shepherd, who in this discourse of belonging, although they were Korčulans, were both excluded from the village community. The people of Blato also tried to curtail the area of validity of the island statutes. Their attempt at territorializing their communitarian law, however, was eventually rejected by the governor after a scrupulous examination of the island law. Thus he opposed the plan for a legal fragmentation of the island into independent constitutional communities.

The villagers of Blato were certainly the most outspoken advocates of independent rural communities. But the social practice of rural community very often consisted in defending territorial rights, usually in cases of the liability of village communities for damage in their territory. In 1440, the "men of the village" (*casale*) of Čara declined any responsibility for damage to gardens, theft of agricultural products or burning of fields and justified their behaviour by referring to legal traditions.[19] Rural communities were also entitled to prosecute crimes on their territory: their policemen (*gastaldi*) represented the embodiment of rural self-administration at the level of village communities; most cases deal with the theft of cattle: in 1425, the *gastaldi* of Blato arrested a man who still smelt of roast beef for stealing a goat,[20] in 1440 the *gastaldi* in the same village enquired into a case of two stolen sheep by checking the brands on the flocks grazing on the community territory.[21] Villagers also experienced their village community as a political entity when electing legal representatives, for example to defend property rights.[22] Zanin, son of Franciscus, Dragačić appears for the first time in our records as testimony in 1425.[23] He must have been a very young man at that time, but what matters is the early integration of young peasant into local traditions of law and justice. His later career as legal expert is based on this experience "on the ground".

Villagers were also accustomed to thinking in multiple dimensions of community; this can easily be shown by analysing the importance of island law, "*the customs of Korčula*", which regulated contracts with herdsmen for

---

19   DAZ AK 7/10/2, fol. 29r.

20   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 15r: "*Tu habes odorem carnium assatarum....*"

21   DAZ AK 7/10/2, fol. 19v.

22   DAZ AK 15/26/5, fol. 43v.

23   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 42r.

example.[24] It was the island community and the Venetian governor who supervised the herdsmen's annual accounting; in 1434, controllers and pastors met in the loggia of Blato thus underlining the status of the village as an administrative centre in the rural space of Korčula.[25]

Communities of Conflict

In spring 1428, Zoane, son of master Kranić, had to defend himself against the accusation of having said "*I do not care for the noblemen*". He said that he had reacted only to the nobleman Gabriel di Antonio who had shouted on the main square: "*Our slaves and our subjects, we can do everything against you, whatever we want!*". Zoane responded:

> You are not the count and you are not the whole of Korčula, you have no right to humiliate the poor men of Korčula, because they are not your slaves nor your subjects; they are slaves and subjects of the glorious Lordship of Venice which God may keep in a good state.

Other patricians rushed to the scene and threatened to kill the young non-patrician, who answered:

> I am not afraid of your threats because I am not guilty, and especially because I am under the domination of the glorious Lordship of Venice which does not torture any humble person against reason.[26]

This is certainly one of the most blatant constructions of socio-constitutional fault lines on the island in daily discourse: the same patricians who accused Venice of "tyranny" used the concept of slavery for the non-patricians. Zoane acted as representative of his community and denounced this humiliation. He responded with his own definition of belonging: he invoked the Venetian state as supreme political authority. Zoane referred to an abstract dimension of statehood and community in order to counter a concept which was based on a much more personal relation between the dominators and the dominated. The case is also an early example of how non-patricians avoided the binary social model patrician/non-patrician by introducing a new object of political loyalty

---

24   DAZ AK 8/11/1, fol. 181r.

25   DAZ AK 7/7, fol. 9r.

26   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 127r.

and communitarian belonging: being a loyal subject of the Republic of Venice and invoking its promise of impartial justice. By playing what would become the "Venetian card", non-patricians reinforced their political position.

Their claims were supported by Venice, which aimed to counteract the excessive political independence of Korčulan patricians. Venetian mediation could not prevent conflicts: indeed, around 1440, the clash between peasants and urban patricians about the discursive hegemony over the island law reached its peak. The "*statuta et ordinationes*" were invoked both by patricians and peasant leaders to justify their political claims before institutions of the Venetian state, i.e. its representatives on the island and the central authorities in Venice.[27] In May 1441, patrician leaders claimed to defend "*the good and quiet status of the community*"[28]; they characterized Korčula as a

> ...small homeland which has always lived in peace and love between the citizens of the island, and there has never been neither conflicts nor party struggle between the noblemen and the people.

Peace and tranquillity were disturbed by the "*comunità*" of some peasants—patricians used the term "community" both to denote the patrician-ruled constitutional island community and to define an opposition group (*in comunità over in specialità*).[29] Later on, the same group is mentioned as "*compagnia*" under its own leaders (*chavi*). The patricians divided the non-patricians into loyalists and "*this evil seed*".[30] Among the spokesmen in the camp of the non-patricians, Zuanin and Zanin Dragačić from the village of Čara emerged as leaders of rural communities against the patricians. In 1444, the Dragačić as "advocates of the people" (*advocatores popularium*[31]) gathered a village assembly (*congregacion*[32]) "*both with those from the villages and those from the 'terra' (city)*"[33] in order to prepare a petition to the Venetian central authorities. The leader of the patricians, ser Forte d'Antonii, contested the legitimacy of this ensuing non-patrician delegation on the grounds that the two brothers did not represent the entire group of non-patricians. Forte constructed a new constitutional group, the "*zitadini del povolo antigo*", i.e. pro-patrician members of the

---

27   DAZ AK 7/9/I–II, fols. 160r, 182r, 194v.

28   DAZ AK 7/10/1, fol. 30v.

29   DAZ AK 7/10/1, fol. 34r.

30   Ibid.

31   DAZ AK 10/14/4 s.p.

32   DAZ Ak 10/14/4, fol. 116v.

33   DAZ AK 10/14/4, fol. 116v.

non-patrician community.[34] Most interestingly, a petition from this group concluded:

> we from the people of the town have always defended welfare and hon-
> our of the fatherland together with the noblemen, and now we are
> obliged to cover expenses together with the villagers for their business
> and liability for damages.[35]

The Dragačić reacted by stating (a) that their assembly had been convoked us usual by the peal of bells and that its participants had gathered in the Church of All Saints of Blato; (b) that previous governors had assented to these assemblies (c) that Forte's followers were illiterate and therefore unable to submit petitions against the Dragačić brothers.

> We from the people always have been able to hold our assemblies, since
> we have been under Venetian rule, and especially since that time because
> our Illustrious Domination wanted that by its Council of the Pregadi [*the
> Venetian senate*] [*which allowed us*] to do that if we inform the governor
> either before or after the assembly was held.

Dragačić reminded the governor of all the assemblies held since 1420, dating them either by political events ("the attack of people from Apulia") or by the terms of Venetian governors.[36] He insisted that these privileges "*were not a novelty, but our old customs and tradition*". Dragačić unfolded a whole programme of community building: written privileges, confirmed by the highest Venetian authorities and local constitutional traditions are invoked as sources of legitimacy, a double reinsurance of non-patrician constitutional rights of participation. A ritual of community is described in detail—church bells, the church as meeting place, the legitimacy of these assemblies.

Community was also constructed by interpreting texts or precisely by claiming the right or monopoly to read these texts. When trying to destroy Dragačić's career, the Venetian governor Marco Gradenigo was seen reading in the manuscript of the statutes and exclaiming "*This chapter is against Zuanin Dragačić*".[37] In 1464, a quarter of a century after the violent clashes between patricians and non-patricians, the peasant leader Zuanin Dragačić, who in the meantime had

---

34   DAZ AK 10/14/4, fol. 168r.

35   DAZ AK 10/14/4, fol. 8a.

36   DAZ AK 10/14/4, fol. 167r.

37   DAZ AK 10/15/3, fol. 98r.

made a splendid career as businessman, litigated with a priest. He used his defence to demonstrate his intimate knowledge of the statutes; at the same time, he linked this reference to local law with a declaration of loyalty to the Republic of Venice: "*The law of Korčula, confirmed by our glorious Lordship of Venice*". He then embarked on a detailed interpretation of paragraphs 36 and 37 of the statutes.[38] Another process, in 1464, opposed Dragačić to the patrician ser Mateus q. de Mixa. Dragačić invoked "*our law on page 24*" and declared "*I want to prove by the law of Korčula which refers to real estate boundaries on page 11*". These quotations from local law outraged the patrician, who tried to ridicule his non-patrician adversary: "*ser Zuhanino brings in many arguments as a wise man, someone who knows the statutes, the laws, the customs and other nice legal texts*".[39] The patrician was unable to prevent the non-patrician *homo novus* from citing the statutes, but he contested his intellectual capacity to do so. However, he was quite wrong: Dragačić owed his social and political advancement to his excellent knowledge of legal procedures both on Korčula and in the Venetian state. He was well versed with the mechanisms of Venetian justice. In a process about a heritage in the village of Vela Luka, for instance, Dragačić cites a long petition to the *auditori novi*, the court of appeal in Venice, producing oral and written evidence from the previous forty years.[40]

Enacting Community: Status, Gender, Public Space

Spatial Dimensions

Patterns of social belonging were not constantly visible in daily life; but many examples point to the fact that they could be easily activated even by minor incidents. They happened in structured forms of social encounters (e.g. processions) and in spontaneous incidents. It is not by chance that the latter often took place in a symbolically charged environment such as the loggia. "Community was not only a set of institutions and a nexus of social relationships but also a particular moment in a certain kind of space".[41] In the early years of Venetian administration, justice was administered by the governor and local patrician judges in the loggia;[42] it was in the loggia in February 1431 that the patrician judge Marko Obradović checked a report by the priest of

---

38 DAZ AK 17 Processus doni Marci Radetini, fol. 38r.
39 DAZ AK 18/33/3, fol. 50v.
40 DAZ AK 18/33/16, fols. 204r, 233v–250v.
41 Muir, "The Idea of Community", 10.
42 e.g. DAZ AK 10/14/4, fol. 18a.

Čara about missing cattle—Dragačić's father, Frane, had lost two animals.[43] Contracts were concluded in the loggia, but above all it was the main meeting point for patricians, a point of intense sociability, of gambling, drinking and discussing.[44]

The patricians regarded the loggia as their reserved social space: it was a pavilion separated from the open public space by a balustrade. The loggia was situated close to the main gate on the way to the main square of Korčula. Everyone who entered the town had to pass by. The loggia had a high potential for provoking conflict: patricians observed and commented on people coming in; on the other hand, it was easily possible to see what was going on in the loggia and to comment on it. The exclusive and at the same time communicative character of the loggia turned it into a focal point for enacting patterns of communitarian belonging, it was what Edward Muir called "the generative spaces of communities".[45] In 1444 the patrician Marin Baronić overheard a quarrel between Dragačić and one of his main political enemies, the master George Grubšić[46]; he also observed the governor, who was likewise sitting in the loggia, stand up, insult Dragačić, and then turn to the judges who were sitting nearby and demand Dragačić's immediate condemnation. Some years later, Dragačić took his revenge: he was in the loggia when the news of a Venetian naval victory arrived and George Grubšić ridiculed it.[47] When Dragačić was insulted close to the loggia by a priest because of an unpaid debt, the priest's voice could be heard "from the loggia to the city gate".[48] Dragačić's sworn enemy, the Venetian governor Marco Soranzo virtually administered the island from the loggia: his conflict with his Venetian fellow patrician Francesco Lombardo aroused the curiosity of many bystanders: Soranzo who had refused to store Lombardo's grain cargo in the communal warehouse shouted: "*Don't you know who you are in Venice? You are a damned liar if you want to imprison me in Venice*". The ensuing trial allows us to reconstruct the people who frequented the loggia: there were Pietro Riverio from Chioogia, Jacobo da Trani, an inhabitant of Korčula, Bartolomeo de Ursis, whose father sold spices in the contrata S. Polo in Venice, the Korčulan nobleman Nikola Petrović, Nikola Ivanović, a servant of a Bosnian nobleman (who was declared to have been too

---

43   DAZ AK 6/3/8, fol. 6r.

44   In 1477, a prohibition "*ludere de Dio ad aliquod ludum alobi qual sub lobia comunis et ad marinam et ad muros extra civitate*" was proclaimed in Korčula. DAZ AK 25/48/2, fol. 1v.

45   Muir, "The Idea of Community", 10.

46   DAZ AK 12/20/1 s.p.

47   DAZ AK 13/22/3, fol. 366r–v.

48   DAZ AK 15/29/4, fol. 24r.

occupied playing cards, "*ponebat mentem ludere ad cartas*") and Frane Marsić, a wealthy Korčulan priest.[49] The loggia was an Adriatic meeting place for men from the metropolis, from Apulia and the neighbouring Balkans. It was where peasants like the Dragačići became acquainted with the outside world, political news, information about Venetian justice and state apparatus. It was also the place where the Dragačići enacted their role as leaders of the non-patricians.

In February 1456, Zanin Dragačić was passing by the loggia when he saw the gastaldi taking an arrested man, who was obviously one of his acquaintances, to prison. He opposed his arrest. Many patricians who were playing games observed this quarrel. They immediately rushed to the scene and accused him of obstructing public justice. Within a very short time, the incident mobilized patricians and non-patricians, partisans of both groups gathered and the quarrel degenerated into an exchange of severe accusations with "very rude words", and eventually both sides became violent.

> You have ever been the enemies of the noblemen of this place and you have always wanted to destroy them. …you want to protect thieves because you have built a house out of the blood of this people which you have swallowed. …you should not obstruct justice.

were some of the patricians' arguments; they even accused Dragačić of planning to murder the governor. Dragačić replied "*You will get to know me, if I go to Venice*".[50]

Traditional Socio-Cultural Structures

Processions made social belonging and social differences perceptible. Processions also mirrored social and gender status: first male patricians, secondly male non-patricians, in the third place female patricians. In February 1460, three non-patricians marched in front of the female patricians. A non-patrician tried to correct a patrician lady, in Slavic as is expressly remarked: "*Do not say the credo now, say the paternoster*". The lady was outraged because of what she perceived as insult and replied: "*What the hell, do you dare to approach noble ladies, why don't you go on your own way*?" The man replied: "*I do not want to have anything to do with you. I will not speak with you, may bad blood come upon you*".[51] The procession as embodiment of social and gender hierarchy

---

49   DAZ AK 12/13/1, fols. 5r–6r.

50   DAZ AK 14/25/17, fol. 10r.

51   DAZ AK 15/29/5, fol. 22r.

could be turned into a scene of struggle about cultural prestige and social contest: by correcting the patrician lady, the non-patrician man was constructing a symbolic superiority; the lady opposed her own definition of social status linked with gender to this transgression. Thus targeting women as supposedly weaker members of competing communities was not unusual on Korčula. Patricians attempted to destroy the political career of Zuanin Dragačić by denouncing him as a violator and later on by denigrating his mistress Franuša as a "whore".[52]

These examples demonstrate how minor conflicts could quickly turn into a conflict between communities and over political principles. Decades of political strife were recalled, fears of violence and total annihilation appear as an immediate reaction on the part of the patricians. Korčulans were extremely sensitive where questions of belonging to the main categories patricians/non-patricians were concerned. A deep consciousness of belonging could be activated at any moment, a feeling that was closely linked to concepts of honour and pride.

Community was constructed on both sides by a highly emotional discourse ("we" and the "other", existential fears) which pointed to basic questions as implementation of justice, conflicts between groups which were explicitly named (noblemen vs people) and the importance of Venice as the mediating power and supreme authority on the island.

An Island Community? Patterns of Othering on Korčula

a)   Others within

Patricians and non-patricians had one thing in common—they belonged to communities which were defined in the city statutes as constitutional groups. Building community also implies also a process of seclusion and exclusion. Patricians excluded non-patricians, non-patricians in the rural area excluded people who did not belong to the village (but they included patricians living in their village!); there were socio-economic communities with their own bonds of mutual loyalty and solidarity, such as clergymen, pastors, and fishermen, but the all were part of the island community which acted as a political entity in cases of emergency. There was no Jewish community on the island, nor any other non-Catholic religious group. There were no differing linguistic communities either, nor were there any sizable groups of excluded people such as beggars or lepers. Othering had therefore to refer to "strangers" or "outsiders" (*forenses*, *forestieri*), people from the Adriatic world and the Balkan hinterland of Korčula.

---

52   DAZ AK 15/29/4, fol. 14r.

b)   The Close "Other"

Traditional historiography has very much concentrated on "class struggles" between patricians and non-patricians. It rather overlooked cases where the islanders as a community opposed what they perceived as foreign intrusion. This solidarity bridged structural conflicts on the island. It could be activated in minor conflicts or in major riots if islanders felt a spontaneous consensus on how to assess the behaviour of those who were "outsiders". There were basically two types of foreigner on Korčula: a rather small group permanent residents (*habitatores*), and people who were passing through, both legally (mainly seamen and traders) and illegally (robbers, illegal woodcutters from Dubrovnik, pirates, and escaped slaves).

Korčula was very much exposed to raids from the neighbouring mainland, the Krajina. Men from Krajina often crossed the narrow Korčula Channel and committed serious robberies in the rural hinterland. Since all Korčulans were concerned, socio-political differences disappeared in the common defence of economic interests against "foreigners".[53] Islanders organized naval patrols, they warned one another when men from Krajina crossed the channel, and they also kept watch over the coastline. There was another neighbour who was considered to be much more dangerous: the Republic of Dubrovnik. In fact, since 1420, an international sea border ran between Korčula and the nearby peninsula of Pelješac. These waters were troubled by smugglers, corsairs and the competition between Korčulan and Dubrovnik fishermen. There were many clashes between the fishermen, especially at night, and confronting people from Dubrovnik very much contributed to the patterns of identification of an island community. Korčulans also emphasized Venice's obligation to protect them—this maritime protection was probably one of the most important advantages of Venetian rule for the entire island community. In the 15th century corsairs and maritime enemies, mainly Catalans operating from the Kingdom of Naples, were also perceived as threat to the whole community—an attack by a Neapolitan fleet mobilized this island solidarity and blurred differences between patricians, non-patricians and foreigners living in Korčula. Smuggling was a two-edged sword in the sense that Venice defined it as a crime, which meant that traditional Korčulan trade with the Neretva valley in Herzegovina or with Apulia suddenly came under a legal ban. Leading Korčulan patricians were involved in what Venice considered as smuggling, and some of them even delivered arms to the Ottomans during the Veneto-Ottoman wars.[54] Venice was unable to punish these crimes, because of the high social status of

53   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 27v.
54   Schmitt, "Contrabannum".

many of the wrongdoers, whose support it needed for administering the island. Korčulan smugglers and their crews certainly functioned as close-knit communities, but they were never excluded by their fellow Korčulans even if denunciations were not rare; but these had to do with interpersonal conflicts.

c)   "Foreigners" from Far Away

There were never many Venetians on the island, but those who remained in Korčula for some time enjoyed special prestige. Their behaviour was closely observed, however, especially when female honour seemed to be in danger. Six years after the contract with Venice, a Korčulan surprised some young Venetian noblemen harassing a young local girl in the church of St Michael. He tried to reprimand them, first respectfully, "*You who are wise are not doing well*", then accusing them directly of violation. The young patricians responded with insults and counter-accusations.[55] Venetian patricians often stopped over on Korčula, but usually they left no trace—cases of shipwreck excluded. The number of Venetian patricians doing business on the island was rather limited. Nevertheless, frictions between Korčulans and Venetians did occur; in June 1458, the "youth of the community" (*multa iuventus comunitatis*) quarrelled with the Venetian patrician Lodovico Contarini; on that occasion, the patrician ser Antonius Stanoe called the Venetians "*worthless men*".[56]

The only group of Venetians that had a permanent impact on the island society were the governors and their small administrative staff—they were perceived both as individuals and as representatives of the Venetian state. They constituted the institutionalized, but powerful political "other" on the island. All constitutional communities tried to establish special relations with them, and the Venetian system of office rotation opened a regular opportunity for renegotiating these relations. Negotiating was very much a reciprocal process, because Venetian governors usually had no detailed knowledge of the island community they had to administrate and therefore were dependent on local information. This dependency and commercial interests induced some governors to lean towards local political communities, thus exacerbating socio-political strife on the island.[57] Local political leaders attempted to play off governors against their local adversaries. The behaviour of Venetian governors thus contributed essentially to the process of building and maintaining communities bonds. Venetian central authorities, on the other hand, tried to

---

55   DAZ AK 6/6/6, fol. 32v.

56   DAZ AK 15/29/3, fol. 497v: "*redundant in despectum vilipendium et contemptum Nostri Illustrissimi dominii et magistratus et regiminis ipsius domini comitis*".

57   This was the case with Dragačić's adversaries Marco Soranzo or Marco Gradenigo.

placate communitarian tensions on the island. Distinguishing between these two contradictory effects of Venetian rule is essential in assessing the Venetian factor in local communitarian processes of identification. Protest delegations to Venice and visits by Venetian state controllers to the island both served as outlets for dissent. They also made an essential contribution to the discursive negotiation of the governors' position in local society. The preparation and composition of these protest delegations was a constant bone of contention— patricians contested the non-patricians' right to send embassies to Venice, non-patricians on the other hand used preparative assemblies as a tool for raising the profile of their community. The Dragačić brothers played an essential part in this process.[58] They were prominent among those who insulted and intimidated Venetian governors because of their alleged or real pro-patrician position or because of what they perceived as misconduct.[59]

Venice was also present on the island in another hypostasis: it increasingly emphasised the election of Venetian patricians as bishops of Korčula; a process a slow Venetianization of church hierarchies took place throughout the Venetian overseas empire. Venetians thus controlled the two most prestigious positions on the island. The bishop, however, did not consider himself as representative of the Venetian state, and his power base on the island was quite different from the resources of the governors. The bishops held sway over the island clergy and ecclesiastical property. Thus they were directly involved in internal economic and social networks of Korčula. Since their presence on the island was in principle not limited, conflicts between the bishop and parts of the local society had a much higher potential for escalation.

A Case Study: Layers of Belonging in an Island Community—The Riot Against the Venetian Bishop in October 1458

In the 1450s, the Venetian patrician Luca Leon served as bishop of Korčula. Soon after his arrival on the island, he began to increase taxes and to centralize Church property under his personal control. He quickly made many enemies on the islands—clergymen who in June 1457 refused to pay,[60] patricians and even pastors, whom he obliged to pay higher tithes. This economic threat united all flock owners, patricians and the peasant leader Zuanin Dragačić.[61]

---

58   DAZ AK 9/2/2, fol. 63r; 10/14/4, fol. 1r.
59   DAZ AK 15/29/3, fols. 514r; 524v–525r.
60   DAZ AK 15/29/4, fol. 44r.
61   DAZ AK 15/26/5, fol. 42v.

When they agreed to send a protest delegation to Venice, the governor stopped them in the port of Korčula under the pretext that they had not previously shown him their letter of complaint.[62] The conflict with the island clergymen reached its peak when Leon tried to seize the possessions of an extremely wealthy village priest, whose nephew, a priest himself, refused to hand over his uncle's property.[63]

Resentment against the bishop exploded on 4 October 1458, when a local priest refused to pay the tithe. The bishop started beating the priest and tore his clothes to pieces. The priest rushed to a window of the bishop's palace, threw his priestly robes into the main square and called some of his patricians friends to his help. Within a few moments, rumours were circulating in the narrow streets of Korčula and people ran to the palace. An angry crowd besieged the bishop, while the priest escaped through a kitchen window. When the bishop tried to follow him, he was surrounded by the crowd which shouted at him accusations as "*You keep whores, thieves and bastards in your house, and this is the reason for these evil things. …You keep bastards in your house, and this dishonours honest people*". Particular hatred was directed against Don Feliciano, the bishop's illegitimate son who served as his notary. People touched the person of the bishop, although they did not dare assault him directly.[64]

Gender, age and social status played an essential role in the interpretation of the uproar. When the governor investigated the events, many patrician witnesses asserted the leading role of women in spreading rumours and provoking the upheaval. Others declared that they suspected the bishop of beating women and that this time people had wanted to react. Only after non-patrician women had stirred up public unrest, were the patricians obliged to play a leading role. Patrician and non-patrician witnesses insisted on violent acts perpetrated by the bishop and his bastard son, who had both beaten up a patrician and other enemies of the bishop. Once again, Zuanin Dragačić was part of the events. He said that he was informed about the incident in the bishop's palace by the wife of a cooper, and that he had tried to calm down a cowgirl called Anica, saying: "*Be quiet, the bishop is helping you and your children, and you are screaming!*"[65] According to male patricians, the crowd on the main square was made up of many women, and the bishop added that women had helped the priest to escape through the window.

---

62   ibid. fol. 52v 29th October 1457.

63   DAZ AK 17/32/3, fol. $: "*Copia processus facti contra Antonium Marsich per Reverendum patrem dominum episcopum*".

64   DAZ AK 15/29/3, fol. 508–513r.

65   DAZ AK 15/29/3, fol. 509v.

It is obvious that the senior patricians and peasant leaders understood how serious the investigation was, which is why they tried to reinterpret the events as an unimportant and spontaneous uproar by women and young patricians—sons and sons-in-law of leading men, people without social prestige and political importance. They did everything to downplay their own role, especially as one of them had been seen with a sword, and carrying arms in the town was a clear sign of open rebellion, not against the bishop but against the authority of Venetian rule. Dragačić, who as an owner of cattle had grudge against the bishop, carefully presented himself as defender of public order. Many patricians had every reason to hide their actual role in the uproar: the Obradović and Paperčić clans belonged to the political and social elite of the island. The man with the sword was Nicolaus Quarussich, father-in-law of the protest-leader Marinus Paperčić, whose wife was the sister of a late archdeacon.[66]

The uproar physically united people from different constitutional communities and at a first glance expressed the opposition of at least the urban community to the bishop—a closer analysis however reveals that personal interests were behind the protest. Dragačić's role is quite telling: although he shared economic interests with patricians involved in the affair, he avoided supporting them in public. Once the affair had degenerated into something that could be interpreted as rebellion, the patricians tried to shift responsibility onto people with lesser social status.

Conclusion

Korčula is not an exceptional case. On the contrary, it fits into the long research discussion on civic communities mainly in late medieval Italy. It is exceptional only because of its extraordinary archival documentation. Community is a key concept for understanding social fault lines on this island. The main divisions between patricians and non-patricians were not just on paper but had a great potential for social and political mobilization. Korčulan society was extremely thin-skinned as far as belonging to these constitutional communities was concerned, and minor incidents could stir up serious uproar where belonging to community materialized in a gathering of people, in speech acts and body language. Community was enacted in public space, and the latter was "branded" by competing communities. Community was enacted in institutions by means of inclusion and exclusion but also by protest and contention. Community was

---

66   DAZ AK 15/26/4, fols. 14v, 42v, 52v, 257v, 261r.

constructed very much by addressing "outsiders" such as the Venetian state and its central and local representatives. Invoking community did not just help to define one's place in society, it also expressed personal relations and personal interests that where conveyed in a communitarian discourse. Edward Muir sees in communities a network of "thin trust" where networks of "thick trust" were able to recruit new loyalties. In a small and manageable society such as Korčula the difference between "thick trust" based on intimate personal knowledge and "thin trust" encompassing a whole community however cannot always easily be drawn.

Bibliography

Gerhard Dilcher, "Verschriftlichung und Wandlungen der Normstruktur in den Stadtrechten des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts", in *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter: Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungsstufen*, eds. Hagen Keller, Klaus Grubmüller and Nikolaus Steinbach (Munich, 1992), 9–19.

Serđo Dokoza, *Dinamika otočnog prostora* (Split, 2009).

John V.A. Fine, *When ethnicity did not matter: A Study of Identity in Pre-Nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods* (Michigan, 2006).

Vinko Foretić, "Borbe između pučana i plemića na Korčuli u 15. i 16. stoljeću", *Sveučilište u Zagrebu – Institut za hrvatsku povijest. Radovi* 10 (1977), 249–74.

Mario Gentile, "Factions and Parties: Problems and Perspectives", in *The Italian Renaissance State*, eds. Andrea Gamberini and Isabella Lazzarini (Cambridge, 2012), 304–22.

Hagen Keller, "Die Veränderung gesellschaftlichen Handelns und die Verschriftlichung der Administration in den italienischen Stadtkommunen", in *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter: Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungsstufen*, eds. Hagen Keller, Klaus Grubmüller and Nikolaus Steinbach (Munich, 1992), 21–36.

Hagen Keller, Klaus Grubmüller and Nikolaus Steinbach, eds., *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter: Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungsstufen* (Munich, 1992).

Arie Malz, "Frühneuzeitliche Modernisierung als Sackgasse: Die dalmatinische Städtewelt vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert", in *Städte im östlichen Europa*, eds. Carsten Goehrke and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker (Zurich, 2006), 103–33.

Reinhold C. Mueller, "Aspects of Venetian Sovereignty in Medieval and Renaissance Dalmatia", in *Quattrocento adriatico: Fifteenth century art of the Adriatic rim*, ed. Charles Dempsey (Bologna, 1996), 29–56.

Edward Muir, "The Idea of Community in Renaissance Italy", *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002), 1–18.

Monique O'Connell, *Men of Empire* (Baltimore, 2009).

Ermanno Orlando, *Gli accordi con Curzola* (Rome, 2002).

Gherardo Ortalli, "Il ruolo degli statuti tra autonomie e dipendenze: Curzola e il dominio veneziano", *Rivista storica italiana* 98,1 (1986), 195–220.

Gherardo Ortalli and Oliver Jens Schmitt, eds., *Balcani occidentali, Adriatico e Venezia fra XIII e XVIII secolo* (Vienna, 2009).

Gherardo Ortalli, Oliver Jens Schmitt and Ermanno Orlando, eds., *Il Commonwealth veneziano tra 1204 e la fine della Repubblica: Identità e peculiarità* (Venezia, 2015).

Claudio Povolo, "Liturgies of Violence: Social Control and Power Relationships in the Republic of Venice between the 16th and 18th Centuries", in *Companion to Venetian History*, ed. Eric R. Dursteler, Brill's Companions to European History (Leiden, 2013), 513–42.

Vinko Pribojević/Vincentius Priboevius, *O podrijetlu i zgodama Slavena/Oratio de origine successibusque Slavorum*, eds. Grga Novak and Veljko Gortan (Zagreb, 1951).

Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Contrabannum: Der adriatisch-balkanische Schmuggel im ausgehenden Mittelalter", *Südost-Forschungen* 67 (2008), 1–26.

Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Korčula sous la domination de Venise au 15e siècle*, Les conférences du Collège de France (Paris, 2011); e-book http://conferences-cdf.revues.org/.

Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Storie d'amore, storie di potere—la tormentata integrazione dell'isola di Korčula/Curzola nello Stato da mar", in *Venezia e Dalmazia*, eds. Uwe Israel and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Rome, 2013), 89–109.

Ludwig Steindorff, *Die dalmatinischen Städte im 12. Jahrhundert: Studien zu ihrer politischen Stellung und gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung*, Städteforschung, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für vergleichende Städteforschung in Münster A 20 (Cologne, Vienna, 1984).

Ludwig Steindorff, "Privilegien als Ausdruck kommunaler Emanzipation: Der Fall Šibenik", in *Grafenauerjev zbornik*, ed. Vincenc Rajšp (Ljubljana, 1996), 391–402.

Urban Communities in Medieval South Arabia: A Comparative Reflection[1]

Johann Heiss, Eirik Hovden and Elisabeth Gruber

Introduction

In this short comparative response to the chapters by Elisabeth Gruber and Oliver Schmitt, we focus on some of the insights that stand out from cooperation on the topic. Some are on a theoretical and methodological level, others on a more empirical one. Most of these insights were developed during fruitful and challenging discussions in the VISCOM-related working group "Urban communities and non-urban sites". Below we will present some of these insights, seen from a South Arabian perspective. In our cooperation leading up to this response we have taken a bottom-up approach, looking closely from different angles at the particular cases we have, as seen through textual sources and physical remains, along with the focus on connectedness between cities and their hinterland.

"City", "Stadt", "*Madīna*"

Our debates started by trying to define the objects of comparison. This quickly led us to several research debates that on the one hand cannot be ignored, and on the other hand sharpened our interdisciplinary cooperation. The old Weberian concept of "city", as used by several historians of (Central) European history,[2] is not only highly Eurocentric, but also ideological, with its emphasis on the active participation of townspeople in the nomination of administrative and political positions in medieval European cities. This definition is today

---

2 While most historians recognize that Weber's theories and ideal types need to be criticized, one can still not totally overlook his theories and his impact and reception, especially in studies of the development of cities and the transition from "medieval" to "modern". For example see: Dilcher, "Max Webers 'Stadt'", 91–125.

supplemented with outcomes from decades of debates. The concept of European "city" is still—to a certain extent—related to the development of the "free citizen" as opposed to the otherwise unfree population in the rural countryside and to the introduction of "city rights" granted by local rulers. In Yemeni studies, it has not been common for historians to think of a system of subjections[3] in which cities had to appear over time as "enclaves of freedom" with corresponding development of city rights. Rather, a majority of the surrounding population, at least in the Yemeni highlands, were to a large extent seen as tribal members and thus "free" in the first place, something we shall come back to below.

The English term "city" is an apparently easy starting point for a comparison. The term we see much used in our sources from Yemen—denoting what is commonly known as a city or town—is *madīna*. Like "city" (*civitas*), this term has strong connotations of "civilization" (*tamaddun*). But the term is not used together with any comparable legal notions of a separation between a free city population and an unfree rural population, or with the notion of "citizenship" as in a community of free equals. Obviously, both the European and "Islamic" sides in the comparison have their old theories and research debates, which in various ways had their own specific ideological undertones.

In pre-Islamic times, the term *hajar* seems to have meant a "city" or "town" that was central and common to a certain "people" (*shaʿb*),[4] but later, into Islamic times, this term is known more as referring to a tribal market/meeting place. It is a different term than *hijra*, which is of Islamic origin.[5] However, in medieval history these two very similar words seem to have partly merged; when a city or village has protection agreements with surrounding tribe(s), the two terms partly merge in the term *tahjīr*, (the act of) granting protection.[6] A significant difference here would be whether a town or a market is located fully inside the borders of a well-established tribe, or on the borders of several, like Sanaa, which clearly does not belong to just one tribe, although the governorship may be held by one tribe for a certain period. The *hijra*s of the Yemeni highlands described by Hovden in this volume can also be partly seen as "urban communities", being smaller "enclaves" of religious specialization, surrounded by otherwise tribal territory, at least the larger and more important *hijra*s. Looking at terms and emic concepts is a useful first starting point of a

---

3   What is meant here concerns the concept of feudalism, which has been criticized for a couple of decades, mainly due to the enormous variations in time and space of actual practices. For examples see Cerman, "Villagers"; Rady, *Nobility*.

4   Beeston, "Shaʿb".

5   Madelung, "The Origins of the Yemenite Hijra".

6   Dresch, *Tribes*, 24–48; Puin, "The Yemeni *Hijrah* Concept".

comparison; however, it is ultimately the phenomena behind such terms that we are interested in. We needed a common concept that could be applied to all our cases in Central Europe, Dalmatia and Yemen.

Just as there is a long and complex research tradition on the development of European cites, there is a parallel, still differently configured research tradition on "Islamic cities" in Western academia. The notion of "the Islamic city" is also a theoretical construct that gained some momentum in Western historiography in the colonial period. The Islamic city was seen as a distinct type of city largely formed and influenced by "Islam". However, in more recent years the concept and theory of the Islamic city has received less attention, and arguably rightly so. There is currently a general consensus that cities in the Muslim world were quite diverse and that the impact of "Islam" has always been accompanied by other, more local ideologies, contextual and external factors. In Yemen, cities—and by logical necessity also city culture and institutions—existed before the advent of Islam. An important question would therefore be to ask how this transition took place. Unfortunately, not much is known about the early phase of Islamization in Yemen, and most research related to the "Islamic city" has been undertaken on cities that were previously under Roman and/or Byzantine influence, something not found in Yemen, a fact that makes the application of such theories to Yemen even more problematic, if not useless. Several strands of the theories of the "Islamic city" also have strong ideological components.[7] Being aware of these debates, it is most important to point out that we do not intend to compare the "European medieval city" with the "Islamic city" based on these vast debates.

More current debates in European history on medieval cities and urbanism are also most useful for South Arabian historical research. One field that we find particularly interesting is the various degrees of social differentiation within the city and the various ways this was practised and legitimized. The issue of degrees of freedom and social control outside and inside the city is still highly relevant for how we can conceptualize urban communities and how we can understand their development. How is social inequality justified by religious world-views and/or egalitarian tribal visions of community? Is "freedom"

---

7   The cases and patterns we see from cities in medieval Yemen are much more diverse and more situated in unique Yemeni contexts. It would be unhelpful to first reduce our cases to incidents of "Islamic cities" before comparing them with cases from Central Europe. For a discussion on the concept, see Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City"; Raymond, "The Spatial Organization of the City", and the volume of which it is part, Jayyusi et. al., eds., *The City in the Islamic World*. Such debates, however, are most useful, also when studying (Islamic) cities in Yemen.

a necessary pre-condition for the formation of a city? Is a special personal city-status and city-identity based on relative freedom necessary for a city to function and develop? These questions still remain important in our cooperation and we shall come back to them shortly below.

Urban Complexities

An alternative approach to defining the object of comparison, and to structuring the comparison itself is to simply look at a wider cluster of phenomena related to cities and urbanism, revolving around a flexible and open working definition: medium to large settlements, relative density, centrality, and complexity.[8] Rather than talking about "cities" in a strict categorical sense, we can talk about urban complexity as something different from a comparably sized and more homogenous large village. From there we developed a working comparative matrix consisting of several sub-topics, a work that is still very much in progress. To give an impression how this comparative matrix could work, we present three South Arabian "cases": the cities of Sa'da, Sanaa and Zabid, which we inserted into the matrix, or list of sub-categories. They are all major cities in their regions and highly interrelated with and integrated into their surrounding hinterlands.

Main Functions and Defining Features

Some cities have one or several clearly specialized functions, for example as a fortress or military centre. Thus the question of the settlement's main functions seemed to be a good starting point for comparison. Other such specializations could be centred on religion, politics, and/or economy. The specialization of a city must of course always be seen in relation to the wider geographical region and in relation to other nearby cities.

Zabid was founded in AD 822 in the centre of the long and narrow coastal plain called Tihama. Before its foundation, there was a string of smaller settlements along the coastal plain, each situated at irrigated pockets where major wadis descend from the highlands onto the plain. Ever since the founding of Zabid, this city became the largest and most important in the region. For many centuries it was the seat of several dynasties ruling this part of Yemen, partly as a sub-unit under the (Sunni) Abbasids, but also more and more independently,

---

8   Clark, "Introduction".

a prominent example being the Rasulids and their government.[9] One can clearly see Zabid as a city of government in the medieval period, with all the side-effects of increased economy, and the resulting centrifugal force on practices related to science, arts and (Sunni) religious learning, that this entailed.

Sa'da and Sanaa are both major cities in fertile basins surrounded by hills in the highlands where the main trade route leads roughly north–south along the mountain plateau. In the late pre-Islamic period the population centres shifted from the eastern fringe of the desert to the highlands, indicating that cities in this region formed before Islam.[10] Sanaa, and even more Sa'da saw periods were the city was not dominated by a single regional polity for longer periods of time, yet still they remained as important economic and trading centres. Even in pre-Islamic times there was a settlement called Sa'da.[11] In 814–15 it was called a *madīna*. The modern town of Sa'da was founded by the first Zaydi imam of Yemen, al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, during his reign from AD 897 until 911, possibly on the site of an existing village called al-Ghayl, a couple kilometres north of the old town of Sa'da, which gradually ceased to exist.[12] Ever since, Sa'da has had a central religious status for Zaydi Muslims.

In the whole medieval period Sanaa was the most important city of the highlands, being a central point for trade and government. Several dynasties and tribal elites in the surrounding districts competed with each other for control over the city. The function as governmental/garrison-centres was important for all of the cities mentioned above, but to varying degree. Governmental activities led to additional income for people in the city; it enhanced the local market and boosted the city economy.

Topography Inside and Surrounding the City

Here we propose looking at the relation to trade routes, harbours, rivers, strategic military positions, street patterns, planned versus unplanned city quarters, etc.

Comparable to many European towns, the cities Zabid, Sanaa and Sa'da all have a central market area next to the major religious building; the Friday mosque (*al-jāmiʿ*). All three have city walls. Although there is more uncertainty

9   Croken, "Zabid under the Rasulids of Yemen"; Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*. For the Rasulids Zabid was usually the winter capital, in summer they recided in Taʿizz.

10   Brunner, *Jemen*, 38–41.

11   Niewöhner-Eberhard, *Ṣaʿda*; Heiss, "Historical Aspects of Ṣaʿda".

12   Heiss, "Ṣaʿda Revisited".

about the extent of the city walls in the early period,[13] in the later medieval period both Sanaa and Zabid had prominent fortresses at the periphery of the city, integrated into the city wall, in Sanaa on the highest point of the city wall on a small hill, similar to many medieval towns in Central Europe. Sanaa and Sa'da are surrounded by hills and mountains and there are several fortresses in strategic places. Zabid had a city wall that was moved several times as the city expanded or retracted.[14] Zabid was served by several smaller port cities of changing importance and was firmly integrated into and connected with trade routes on the Red Sea and on land. The hinterland of the city consisted of smaller, but significant areas of irrigated agriculture, large areas of grazing lands and rain-fed sorghum agriculture.[15] Sa'da is situated on the highland route, a main trade- and pilgrim-route connecting the south of the Arabian Peninsula with Mecca and the eastern Mediterranean regions. From Sa'da, connecting routes lead to Najrān to the east (a town and wadi with which close relations developed over time) and to the west, the coast of the Red Sea, especially to a harbour called Sharja (no longer existing). Sa'da was an important centre for iron processing and export. Sometimes tribal groups lived in separate walled-off quarters with their own gates and markets and their own town square, as in Sa'da. The (in most cases weekly) market could be both inside and outside the town wall.[16]

City-Countryside Relations

It hardly makes sense to analyse a city and its urban communities without looking at various ties and connections with its environs. Relations between urban and rural elites, market dynamics, ownership dynamics, and kinship ties are only a few we could mention here.

Tihama (the Red Sea coastal plain) is considered an area where tribal bonds among the inhabitants are weaker compared to the highland areas surrounding Sanaa and Sa'da. Elites in Zabid could own agricultural land outside and control much of the agricultural surplus in the fertile and productive Tihama. The tribal affiliations imagined as genealogies tend to weaken over time among the inhabitants of towns, a fact that becomes apparent in the way the individual

---

13   For the city wall of Zabid, see Sadek, "Zabid". For Sanaa, see Lewcock et al., "The Urban Development of Ṣanʿāʾ", 129–32.

14   Sadek, "Zabid".

15   Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande.*

16   Heiss, "Ṣaʿda Revisited".

groups are named. Certain families of high standing in cities remain independent of tribal affiliations. They often specialized in administration and religious/legal services. These and other families inside the city could also own land in the environment of the city, for example orchards and—easily comparable with Vienna—vineyards.

On the late medieval Dalmatian island of Korčula, even members of the urban noble elite were to be found living in small villages on the countryside and sometimes even taking care of their vineyards personally. A clear-cut contrast between urban and rural areas in terms of socio-cultural diversity does not always hold true, as examples from late medieval Dalmatia show. For example, on Korčula, the rural areas were as complex as Dalmatia's urban areas in terms of social and socio-cultural organization. Both the urban and rural areas on Korčula saw a similar population composition of rich and poor, and noble and non-noble people who engaged in various kinds of economic and even political or juridical activities, even though formal political participation in the city's council was restricted to certain members of the urban patriciate.[17]

Also in Yemen, the effects of various ties between urban and rural areas such as kinship, economic and other ties makes the theoretical border between urban and rural more problematic. Not only did people in cities have strong ties to the countryside and vice versa, we also find similar institutions in the countryside as we find in the cities, although to a lesser extent. In this response we have focused on the larger cities, however the picture might have looked more nuanced had the cases been chosen from smaller towns, of which there are many more.

Social Division and Structure Inside the City

In Sanaa, the medieval city was divided into two major parts, each dominated by a distinct group, the Banū Shihāb, which is the tribe immediately to the south west of Sanaa, and the Abnāʾ, of allegedly Persian descent.[18] Saʿda was also divided into two main parts around 900 AD, each dominated by a tribal group, and had been so for a long time.[19] In addition to these two cases, al-Hamdānī provides a list of cities and settlements that are shared between

---

17   See Schmitt, *Korčula sous la domination de Venise au XVᵉ siècle*.
18   Lewcock et al., "The Urban Development of Ṣanʿāʾ", 124–29.
19   Heiss, "Ṣaʿda Revisited".

two competing tribes.[20] Some families specialized in trades and crafts. Were these specialized groups semi-ethnic groups due to their way of practising endogamy and sustaining their special community? In the case of the Jews, they also had a different religion. These groups show the difficulty of using categorisation such as "ethnic", "tribal" and "religious", when they partly could fit in all of them. The urban complexity in both social organization and culture can be seen in contrast to a more homogenous countryside, where ties to land, territory and tribe were more important.

Legal and Administrative Communities

A major important issue, and one that is more a hypothesis at this stage, is the focus on the introduction of Islamic law in Yemeni cities. There are mentions of Umayyad and Abbasid governors of Sanaa in the early period of Islam but little is known about the actual government.[21] From the time of the first Zaydi imams judges (*qāḍī* pl. *quḍāt*) and governors were appointed over certain areas in the northern highlands, with a basis in regional centres. The highlands of Yemen saw several competing Islamic sects during the medieval period, and local elites appointed judges of their own doctrine. Zaydi, Isma'ili, Sunni and Ibadi judges are mentioned in our sources, the first three as judges of Sanaa for various periods. Producing and authorizing ownership documents is perhaps one of the most important tasks of a judge, but unfortunately we do not have many sources of this type from the medieval period.

One can also make the hypothesis that there must have been some sort of legal community, a community of property owners who respected each others' ownership documents, the authority of the judge and the more or less agreed upon common ownership law. This is not necessarily "Islamic" per se (but therefore also more easily comparable), but these ideas and practices would have been framed in Islamic concepts and in Islamic law. The townspeople seem to have regulated their legal affairs according to the provisions of the customary law ('urf) of the city and of the tribes in the surroundings, but specialists in religious law (sharī'a) were also available, thus a kind of plurality of legal systems existed where each city had its special features and special mix of law. On this basis there are numerous points on which one could work further and compare with sources and theories from European history.

20 Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, ed. Al-Akwa', 237.

21 For some reflections on this, see Al-'Amrī/Serjeant, "Adminstrative Organisation".

On Korčula we do not see a strong focus on religious law, but rather a competition between statutory law and (less well-documented) forms of customary law, which tended to be part of conflicts between local inhabitants and the Venetian authorities, as much as it was—traditionally understood—also a conflict between the island's social elites and other inhabitants. The statutory law was composed of documented traditional law and regulations imposed by Venice.[22]

Perhaps the actual imposition of Islamic law in Yemen was not as significant for the local population as the imposition of more "secular" forms of law made and enforced by ruling dynasties, especially related to regulating taxes and privileges of elites. Perhaps we should also focus less on the value-system ("Islam"), which the law was largely formulated in and legitimated by, and rather focus more on the actual types of conflict that the law sought to regulate, inside social groups and between various statuses and groups in society. Here the problem of sources becomes apparent; for the medieval period in Yemen, one mainly has relatively ideal and normative sources (*fiqh*, *fatwās*, administrative treatises) on how the law should be implemented, but very few court documents regarding specific cases.

Religious Infrastructure

What we certainly can see in our cases from medieval Yemen is the final stages of a presumably slow emergence and development of the usage of Islam as a repertoire in institutions, religion, law and landscape of cities. Clearly, religion plays a central role in providing a framework and a conceptual and legal language for many of the city's institutions. Symbolically and architecturally, religious structures are also prominent parts of the city's landscape; much of "public" infrastructure and its management was framed in religious concepts, most notably the concept of Islamic foundations or endowments (*waqf*, pl. *awqāf*, in German: Stiftungen) and the treasury of the Muslims (*bayt māl al-Muslimīn*), controlled by the government headed by a *sulṭān* on behalf of the caliph or an *imam*. Mosques were important public spaces where ceremonies of government and political speeches and sermons could take place. Individuals initiated endowments for mosques, schools (*madrasa*, pl. *madāris*), public baths (*ḥammām*, pl. *ḥammāmāt*) or facilities for public water supply.[23]

---

22   See Schmitt, *Korčula sous la domination de Venise au XVᵉ siècle*; Foretić, "Borbe"; Ortalli, "Il ruolo degli statuti".

23   See for example Al-ʿAmrī/Serjeant, "Adminstrative Organisation", 153; Al-Ḥaḍramī, *Zabīd*, 239.

Zabid was the centre of a rich court culture, in which individuals sponsored religious institutions such as a large number of Islamic schools (*madrasa*, pl. *madāris*), founded and funded as endowments.[24]

Several of the sub-topics treated above, which together make up a "city", also have parallel aspects of community arising from the cooperation and politics within them, such as in matters of management of common infrastructure (e.g. upkeep of traffic routes, of public water supply and of sanitation systems). A comparative matrix like the one above works best when kept open to change and adjustment in the process of comparison. The friction between the data from the cases and the common categories/theory is a fruitful field were new questions can arise. It may be too artificial to talk about data and theory; however, it is important that we speak the same language and that there is a level in the comparison where categories have to mean more or less the same on both sides of it and have the same validity. A necessarily fuzzy definition built up by such a matrix has proven to function very well to produce new questions. The initially ill-fitted Eurocentric (and for some historians out-dated) definition of city based on the introduction of "civic freedom" is, however, a most important comparative/contrastive point, therefore we shall return to it below.

Urban Autonomy?

As pointed out above, "feudal" conditions involving local overlordship over unfree peasants as they are known from parts of Europe in the Middle Ages can hardly be claimed to exist in South Arabia, at least not to the same degree and at least not in the tribal highlands. One can also say that this question has not been seen as relevant in the same way as it was in Europe for European historians.[25] As mentioned above, the question of civic autonomy granted by a lord or an emperor to the city has not been seen as theoretically relevant by historians of South Arabia. The existence of something comparable to a "civic oath" as in Central European cities cannot be confirmed from South Arabian sources; more or less binding oaths (*ḥilf*) can rather be found among tribes surrounding the city. We can still learn from the European cases and ask to

---

24   Al-Akwaʿ, *al-Madāris al-islāmiyya*; al-Ḥaḍramī, *Zabīd: Masājiduhā wa-Madārisuhā*.

25   The term "feudalism" does not at all have the same (negative?) meaning for researchers on South Arabian history as for many European historians. When applied to medieval South Arabia and compared with tribalism, "feudalism" generates interesting questions that would be otherwise difficult to arrive at, uncovering basic differences and surprising similarities.

what extent there must have been a community inside the city in matters of representation and agreements with surrounding tribes and elites.

In the tribal social order of the highlands, farmers owned their fields individually, and acted as free persons under the protection of the tribe of which they were members, represented vis-a-vis states and other tribes by their tribal lords/shaykhs. This is of course an ideal picture of tribes, an egalitarian model or vision of community, which deserves better elaboration and historical criticism. In practice, tribes were represented by tribal elites at that time called *salāṭīn* (pl. of *sulṭān*) or *mulūk* (pl. of *malik*, "king") or today's *shaykh* (pl. *shuyūkh*), some of whom had considerable power also in the tribal highlands. Today, the power of the representatives of the tribal elites can vary greatly from area to area and over time, and this seems also to have been the case in medieval times. Tribal lords might have owned more land than an average tribal member, and there are cases from the present where tribal members work the land of their lords. Tribes could also have individuals, families and whole groups as clients, often with special tasks such as Islamic legal experts and musicians or barbers, specialist groups one might think of as belonging to an "urban" community, who, however, could also live in smaller towns at the countryside, or even travel around.

Individual towns often had protection agreements with surrounding tribes, as was the case with Sanaa and Sa'da.[26] The protection was usually guaranteed by a tribe as a whole represented by its leadership, its elites, or by several tribes and their tribal elites. Somehow this situation is comparable with conditions in Central Europe at the time, but the situation in the highlands of Yemen seems much more unstable because of the strong competition over the "possession" of a town, which often led to tribal wars and rapid changes concerning the "protection" of a city, especially important cities located on tribal borders. In the period under scrutiny, we do not see an imperial ruler or a dynasty controlling the tribes and the tribal elites in the highlands and thereby securing a lasting peace and stability over generations, as can perhaps can be said to be the case under the Rasulid dynasty ruling Lower Yemen and Zabid.

A major difference between medieval Central Europe and South Arabia seems to be that the majority of the farmers in the environment of a city, at least in the highlands of Yemen, were relatively free and owned their land, as already mentioned. However, similar to central European conditions, a tribe, or rather its "overlordship" granted the city its protection, and tribal elites thus had access to income from local markets and taxation, partly in cooperation with Islamic sects and rulers, such as the Zaydi imams. In both cities, in

26   Serjeant, "Ṣanʿāʾ the protected Hijra".

Sanaa and in Saʿda, different tribal groups competed for the overlordship over these cities, and allied themselves with different Islamic denominations and thus situated themselves for or against e.g. the Abbasids and mainstream Sunni orthodoxy. When the term "tribes" (*qabīla* or *ʿashīra*) is used in the medieval South Arabian literature in contexts like this, it is difficult to establish whether an entire tribe or rather a small, elite part of it is meant. This is a field where more research is needed. In some shorter periods in the history of Sanaa there was even a total lack of overlordship, especially in times of fierce competition between tribal groups, ensuing wars and political fragmentation, an example being AD 1006 and the few years before and after. In cases like this the citizens or their leading men obviously had to develop their own ways of governing the city; however, we have no information on how they proceeded. The historians provide just a minimum of information, e.g. Ibn ʿAbd al-Majīd (d. 1342–43, writing more than 300 years after the events) stated that Sanaa was without "*ṣulṭān*" for some months in 1006.[27]

Conclusion

In this comparative analysis we have touched briefly upon a wide range of topics, which all certainly deserve much more thorough elaboration, research and documentation. However, what we have presented will help to understand and conceptualize the different forms of communities inside South Arabian cities and how they were invoked and implemented, also across the city-countryside divide, reaching into otherwise rural, tribal areas. From the very basic descriptions of geographic and practical conditions as starting points it is relatively easy to employ a conceptual language that is valid and useful for understanding cases from Central Europe, Dalmatia and South Arabia. This is due to the geographical and "practical" approach to the topic, which is much easier than to find a common conceptual language for more ideological phenomena, such as emic terms for communities, institutions and norms. However, taking what we have presented, we can use this comparative analysis to make the following hypothesis: there must have been many forms of communities inside South Arabian cities, as well as across the city-countryside divide, reaching into otherwise rural, tribal areas. At this stage it is difficult to say to what extent there was a "civic community" comparable to medieval Central Europe. In times of war, when the cities were surrounded by enemies and under siege, it is difficult not to imagine a single community. Under more normal circumstances,

---

27   Ibn ʿAbd al-Majīd, *Bahjat al-zaman,* 64.

visions of community rather followed a wider range of groups, networks, and common activities, partly overlapping and partly diverging, some of which are mentioned above. The question of whether or not there was a civic community is a challenging and interesting one, but one that is difficult to answer due to its Eurocentric origin. Research into the complex forms of community potentially found in family structures, city quarters, legal statuses, religious and ethnic groups, trade and craft production/cooperation and the management of common practical challenges, such as water supply, security and public order is a much more rewarding task. In this way we can ensure that we do not compare only ideological terms, but also the practices behind the terms and the invocation of community by actors and groups with different and conflicting interests.

Bibliography

Ibn ʿAbd al-Majīd, ʿAbd al-Bāqī, Tāj al-Dīn, al-Yamānī, *Bahjat al-zaman fī tārīkh al-Yaman*, eds. al-Ḥibshī, ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad and Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Sanabānī (Sanaa, 1988).

Al-Akwaʿ, Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī, *al-Madāris al-islāmiyya fī-l-Yaman* (Sanaa, Beirut, 1986).

Alfred Felix Landon Beeston, "Shaʿb", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004), 9:150–52.

Ueli Brunner, *Jemen: Vom Weirauch zum Erdöl* (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 1999).

Markus Cerman, "Villagers and Lords in Eastern Europe" (Basingstoke, 2012).

Peter Clark, "Introduction", in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, ed. Peter Clark (Oxford, 2013).

Barbara Eileen Croken, "Zabid under the Rasulid of Yemen 626–858 AH/1229-1454 AD", (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1990).

Gerhard Dilcher, "Max Webers 'Stadt' und die historische Stadtforschung der Mediävistik", *Historische Zeitschrift* 267,1 (1998), 91–125.

Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford, 1989).

Al-Ḥaḍramī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAbd ʿAllāh, *Zabīd: Masājiduhā wa-madārisuhā al-ʿilmiyya fī l-tārīkh* (Sanaa, Damascus, 2000).

Vinko Foretić, "Borbe između pučana i plemića na Korčuli u 15. i 16. stoljeću", *Sveučilište u Zagrebu – Institut za hrvatsku povijest. Radovi* 10 (1977), 249–74.

Al-Hamdānī, al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb, *Ṣifat jazīrat al-ʿArab*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ (Sanaa, 1990).

Johann Heiss, "Historical Aspects of Ṣaʿda, a Yemeni Town", *Proceedings of the Seminar of Arabian Studies* 17 (1987), 63–80.

Johann Heiss, "Ṣaʿda revisited", in *Southwest Arabia across History: Essays to the Memory of Walter Dostal*, eds. Andre Gingrich and Siegfried Haas (Vienna, 2014), 79–89.

Ronald Lewcock, Paolo Costa, Robert Bertram Serjeant, and Robert Wilson, "The Urban Development of Ṣanʿāʾ", in *Ṣanʿāʾ An Arabian Islamic City*, eds. Robert Bertram Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock (London, 1983), 122–41.

Janet L. Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19,2 (1987), 155–76.

Wilferd Madelung, "The origins of the Yemenite Hijra", in *Arabicus Felix: Luminosus Brittanicus: Essays in Honour of A.F.L. Beeston on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Alan Jones (Reading, 1991), 25–44. Republished in *Religious and Ethnic Movements in Medieval Islam* (Farnham, Brooksfield, 1992).

Elke Niewöhner-Eberhard, *Ṣaʿda: Bauten und Bewohner in einer traditionellen islamischen Stadt*, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients. Reihe b. Geisteswissenschaften 64 (Wiesbaden, 1985).

Gherardo Ortalli, "Il ruolo degli statuti tra autonomie e dipendenze: Curzola e il dominio veneziano", *Rivista storica italiana* 98 (1986), 195–220.

Gerd R. Puin, "The Yemeni *Hijrah* Concept of Tribal Protection" in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1984), 483–94.

Martyn C. Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary*, (Basingstoke, 2010).

Andre Raymond, "The Spatial Organization of the City", in *The City in the Islamic World*, eds. Salma K. Jayyusi, Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli and André Raymond (Leiden, 2008).

Noha Sadek, "Zabid: The Round City of Yemen", in *Studies in Honour of Professor G. Rex Smith*, eds. John F. Healey and Venetia Porter (Oxford, 2002).

Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Korčula sous la domination de Venise au XVᵉ siècle. Pouvoir, économie et vie quotidienne dans une île dalmate au Moyen Âge tardif*, Les Conférences du Collège de France (Paris, 2011). <http://books.openedition.org/cdf/1501>

Robert Bertram Serjeant, "Chapter 5: Ṣanʿāʾ the Protected Hijra", in *Ṣanʿāʾ: An Arabian Islamic City*, eds. Robert Bertram Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock (London, 1983), 39–43.

Eric Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande: Etat et commerce sous les sultans rasûlides du Yémen (626–858/1229–1454)* (Paris, 2010).

Genealogies as Means for Constructing Communities

∵

The Political Construction of a Tribal Genealogy from Early Medieval South Arabia*

Daniel Mahoney

Introduction

Genealogy was a key concept and practice for the wider tribal community of Arabia in the early medieval period. Its diverse manifestations offered a distinct view of the deep past through constellations that structured the relationships among the various nomadic and sedentary groups who resided in the broad expanse of the peninsula. At the same time, these genealogies also represented contemporary political concerns and viewpoints as framed through their specific selected content and organization, which brought some tribes more closely together while delineating clear divisions among others.[1] This paper investigates the historiographic context and socio-political implications of a 3rd/10th century[2] genealogy from South Arabia, which at the time, in addition to being on the periphery of the Abbasid Caliphate, had also come under attack from various Islamic minority groups from the north. To begin, I outline a very brief overview of the early development of genealogies from the Arabian Peninsula and two basic structural paradigms around which they were organized, culminating in the description of an enormous genealogical compilation created in 2nd/9th century Iraq. Then I offer an alternative view from the south of these same genealogical paradigms as they manifest differently in a second large compilation due to the region's contrasting past historical experience and current political situation. Finally, I focus on an example of the specific tribal group of Madhḥij, as it appears in both major genealogies, in order to further highlight the specific political perspectives and social milieu of their respective architects.

---

1 These historical genealogies seem to represent the products of similar practices undertaken by modern tribal groups of Arabia as observed by ethnographers and historians alike (e.g., Brandt, "Remarks"; Donner, "Bakr B. Wā'il Tribes", 5–38; Kennedy, "Oral tradition", 531–44; Shryock, *Nationalism*).

2 Centuries and dates are given in both the *hijrī* (AH) and *mīlādī* (AD) calendars.

The Early Development of Genealogy in Arabia

In Arabia, the use of genealogy has provided a fundamental tool for tribal groups to document, organize, and understand their past, as well as to structure their contemporaneous social relationships in the present. It has been generally associated with the term *nasab* in Arabic, although there has been speculation over the semantic evolution of this term through the course of the early Islamic period, and instead it may be more directly linked to the specific concept of "descent".[3] Records of the patrilineal line of descent in rock inscriptions, in the form of a "personal name, son of personal name" ("*fulān b. fulān*") sequence, have been located in various regions of the peninsula dating back millennia in proto-Arabic languages.[4] These personal and intra-tribal lineages continued to be memorized and recited in the present day to varying numbers of generations depending on the tribesperson. Documented in both the historical and ethnographic record, there are also genealogical specialists (*nussāb*, s. *nassāba*), who were specifically designated to preserve this knowledge for individual tribal groups. In the early medieval period, however, an academic tradition of genealogy (*ʿilm al-nasab*) emerged that began to focus more often on the relationships among the tribes, dividing and clustering them into specific formations that represented past and present socio-political relations.[5]

The beginning of this change can be traced back to the emergence of Islam and the effects of the subsequent conquests, migration, and settlement of many tribes in other areas of the Near East and beyond. An aim of the Prophet Muḥammad was to encourage his fellow tribesmen to look past and forget their kinship-based social ties and unify in submission to one god. While this goal was not fully accomplished, as was most clearly evidenced almost immediately by the outbreak of the Ridda wars upon the death of Muḥammad, it did set a foundation upon which Arabs began to view themselves as a more

---

3   Szombathy, *Roots*, 62–66.

4   These have been primarily documented in the deserts of northern Arabia, although some texts are also found on the edge of the Ramlat al-Sabatayn in Yemen (Macdonald, "Literacy", 49–118). Beyond these texts, it is assumed, based on knowledge of the practices in the present and historical periods, that these personal lineages would have primarily been preserved through oral recitation and memorization.

5   Szombathy provides an extensive critical overview of the emergence of this discipline (*Roots*, 105–71). Nonetheless, an important exception to the focus on inter-tribal relationships is the understandable attention given to the lineage of the Muhammad and his tribe of Quraysh, which has received ample scrutiny by numerous medieval and modern scholars (e.g., Varisco, "Metaphors", 139–56).

cohesive and connected community.[6] The larger influence on this transformation of genealogy to focus more on groups, however, came about as a result of the Islamic conquests and the consequent migration and settlement of tribes across the peninsula. During the Islamic conquests, while tribesmen generally fought in battle together with their own specific tribes, the increased intermingling and interaction simultaneously caused new connections to begin to form among them. Furthermore, the additional influence of leaving their homelands to develop new social networks and ways of life within new surroundings engendered similar effects. Although the tribes set up their own separate living quarters in the military camps, these new settlements began to form into cities in which contact and intermixing among them and with other locals was inevitable. At the same time, their tribal affiliation and date of conversion became the basis for the amount and sequence that they were paid for their military service. An office (diwan) was set up by Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb for the equitable distribution of war booty. In order for the caliphate to determine this information, the extensive tribal genealogies were written down in a register (daftar).[7] Thus, as the tribes in this context were now becoming new types of political-economic units and integrating in new ways, the genealogical connections among them were beginning to be more systematically documented.

One result of this documentation was the start of the development of a common, albeit by no means standard, terminology used to record and analyse the different vertical and horizontal levels in the extensive genealogical webs. Over time the human body, extending from head to toe, became a common metaphor to describe these segmentary intertribal relationships that comprised their overall macro-structure.[8] In this hierarchical organization, at the

---

6   As Islam spread and non-Arabs wanted to convert into the religious community for various reasons, new genealogical connections and constructs were created to incorporate other ethnic groups as a whole, such as the Persians, into this ideological web of social relations (Savant, *New Muslims*, 31–60).

7   There is speculation that this story may be apocryphal, but it nonetheless emphasizes the point that the genealogies began to be written down, in at least a more comprehensive manner, during this period (Kennedy, "Oral tradition", 540).

8   Descriptions of these human skeletal expressions of genealogy can be found, for example, in the works of al-Nuwayrī, al-Zamakhsharī, and al-Qalaqashandī (Varisco, "Metaphors", 141–44). Conversely, although the idiom of a tree was occasionally mentioned in texts, it has been argued that it did not become a popular form of representation in Islamic historiography until much later on, when it emerged from Persia and South Asia after the Mongol conquest in the 7th/13th century (Binbas, "Structure", 465–544). One possible reason Binbas offers for this late appearance is that the trees become easy-to-understand depictions of genealogies for uneducated people who could not read the narratives of the universalist histories where

top level was the *sha'b*, meaning an entire people or ethnic group such as the Arabs, or a more generically defined major group.[9] Represented as the midline suture at the top of the skull, it was the source from which the rest of the genealogy emerged. The next level, represented by the skull bones, was the *qabīla*, roughly denoting "tribe" or more literally "those who meet face-to-face".[10] The third level, represented by the neck or chest, was the *'imāra*, meaning a large tribal segment that is self-sufficient. The fourth level, represented respectively by either the stomach or the thigh, was the *baṭn* or *fakhidh*, signifying a group that interacts on an everyday basis. The final level, represented by the lower leg, foot, or toe joint, was the *fāṣīla*, denoting the extended family household. There are many other terms which may be inserted into this hierarchy of segmentation coming from different regions of Arabia, but this concise summary broadly demonstrates how genealogical specialists were characterizing these connections through a more workable vocabulary and paradigmatic lens in order to organize, teach, and ultimately transmit the intricate relationships among the tribal groups in their past and present.

A second paradigm through which genealogists organized tribes focused on the early (pre-)history of the high-level macro-groupings and their resulting political relationships. Because the newly Islamized Arabs traced their roots back to the Prophet Adam as the first man, genealogists connected their Arab forefathers to patriarchs which the Islamic community shared with the other monotheistic belief systems in the Near East. This model of genealogical reasoning resulted in a tripartite world-view of their ancestry and ancient history.[11] First, the most ancient Arabs, known as the "perished Arabs" (*al-'arab*

---

most of these pictorial trees are found. But he instead favours the idea that the new Mongol rulers of Baghdad used the branches depicted in the trees, including lines connecting them to Muhammad and Chingis Khan, in order to legitimize their authority over the newly subjugated population. Furthermore, he parallels this ideological use of genealogical trees to similar developments occurring at the same time in the elite families of late medieval Europe, who also connected themselves to popular historical figures.

9   In contrast, in the ancient South Arabian language 'sha'b' denotes a more low-level unit of social organization (e.g., sometimes translated as "tribe" or the even more problematic concept of "chiefdom"), demonstrating the malleability and non-fixed nature of the meanings of these terms for different regions (Beeston, "Sha'b"); (Korotayev, "Chiefdom", 242–56).

10   Chelhod, "Ḳabīla".

11   This perspective on the ancestral history of the Arabs appears to have matured as propaganda for the Umayyads during the early 8th century. But, over the course of the medieval period, Islamic scholars differed in opinion on the composition of and relationships among these groups (Retsö, *Arabs*, 30–40).

al-bāʾida), were those tribes who were admonished by previous prophets about their wicked ways, but who had all died because they did not change their behaviour.[12] As a result, the peninsula was repopulated by two different groups of Arabs. On the one hand, there are the "pure Arabs" (al-ʿarab al-ʿāriba), descendants of Joktan (Qaḥṭān) the great-great-grandson of Noah (Nūḥ) through Shem (Sām), who settled in the southern region of Arabia. On the other hand, there are the "Arabized Arabs" (al-ʿarab al-mustaʿriba), descendants of Abraham (Ibrāhīm) through Ishmael (Ismāʿīl), who journeyed into the northern region of Arabia and married into the local tribe of Jurhum. His eponymous descendent is ʿAdnān, from which the northern Arabs including the lineage of Muḥammad document themselves. Stories describing battles between groups on either side of this dichotomy (akhbār al-ayyām) were bandied about in the early medieval period and attributed to the pre-Islamic period. They frequently became incorporated into the texts of the early medieval genealogies themselves in order to explicate or embellish certain personalities or groups, causing this literary-historiographic genre to become a complementary source of evidence that fleshes out the genealogical skeletons and bringing to life this seemingly primordial conflict between them. Unfortunately, however, the dating and historicity of most of these stories cannot be confirmed without separate supporting evidence, and their historical value has been criticized as being merely folkloric propaganda with a limited foundation in actual events.[13] Hence they are now thought to reveal less about the tribal tensions in pre-Islamic Arabia than the politics of the early medieval period, during which a rivalry developed between tribes of the northern Arabs and the tribes of the southern Arabs, as both claimed legitimacy for political leadership of the Islamic community as whole.[14] Overall, these two framing paradigms for Arabian genealogy and their underlying politics reached an apex in the early Abbasid period in a large genealogical compilation created by Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī.

Al-Kalbī was born and grew up in al-Kūfa during the decline of the Umayyad caliphate, and subsequently developed relationships with the Abbasid caliphs, although the exact extent of these ties is not entirely clear.[15] While he was interested in and a prolific writer of many branches of knowledge, including a

---

12 Tales about the unheeded warning and subsequent vanquishing of these groups are located in the Quran, such as the Thamūd (7:73) and the ʿĀd (11:50–57).

13 El-Sakkout, "Arab", 40–67.

14 Crone, "Qays", 1–57.

15 Caliph al-Maʾmūn mourned Ibn al-Kalbī's death in 819/821, and Caliph al-Mahdī utilized his knowledge in the conflict with the remaining Umayyads in Spain (Atallah, "al-Kalbī").

specialization in pre-Islamic Arabia, he is most well-known for his work in the science of genealogy, following the path of his father, from whom he learned much of his information on the subject.[16] The crowning achievement of al-Kalbī, *Jamharat al-nasab* (*The Multitude of Genealogy*), is an unparalleled compilation of Arab genealogies encompassing over 35,000 names and based on a panoply of oral and written sources to varying degrees, including specialists of Biblical, Pahlavi, and Palmyrean texts, Arabian antiquities, and the archives of the Christian communities of al-Ḥīra. While most previous genealogies followed only certain tribes or lineages, this one combined them all into an intricate masterpiece displaying precisely how each fitted into the multi-level constellation of groups from ancient history until the time of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mūn. While appearing to be a work of reference in an encyclopaedic sense, it is also clearly laden with choices reflecting the political milieu of the time. Interspersed within the genealogical chains are brief biographical descriptions of select personalities, ranging from pagan poets and war heroes to Islamic religious figures and military officers. Moreover, its organization reveals a distinct and immensely detailed perspective on the political divisions in the Islamic community from the late Umayyad period, including its division of all of the tribes into two macro-conglomerates, reflecting the northern Arabs and the southern Arabs, respectively descending from the two eponymous figures of 'Adnān and Qaḥṭān.

A Short History of the North–South Tribal Interface in South Arabia and its Impact on South Arabian Genealogy

While there was a limited textual record in North Arabia during the pre-Islamic period, in the first millennium BC South Arabia developed a script that chronicled events in different textual genres and mediums, mainly focusing on the building accomplishments and conquests of military leaders of the early caravan kingdoms. One of the historical narratives to come out of the modern scholarly reconstruction of these events is the gradual infiltration of nomads from North Arabia beginning in early centuries of the Christian era.[17] Although the raiding of the northern Arabs initially led to confrontations with the inhabitants of South Arabia, some also began to be incorporated as auxiliaries into the militaries of the South Arabian kingdoms. As this interaction increased

16   The extent of his father's influence and data that went into Ibn al-Kalbi's work is not clear, although he is clearly indebted to him (Caskel, *Ğamharat*, 72–81).

17   Robin, "Pénétration", 71–88.

and the conquests of the South Arabian militaries moved further into the peninsula, the incorporation of whole tribes became prevalent and an emergent symbiosis developed between the groups, peaking with the dominance of Ḥimyar over much of Arabia from the 3rd century until the beginning of the 6th century AD. Over the next few centuries, during the decline of the Himyarite empire and the emergence of Islam, unfortunately there is a limited historical record from which to try to understand this transitional period. By the 3rd/10th century, however, texts show that an entirely new demographic distribution had developed in South Arabia, in which much of its eastern and central regions were now occupied by the northern Arab groups that were formerly only located along the northern desert periphery. Hence, instead of viewing the socio-political transformation of Arabia in the early medieval period with the more commonly referenced emphasis on the migration of South Arabian tribes to the north through their participation in the Islamic conquests, alternatively the reverse, more long-term movement of pastoral-nomadic tribes from the central peninsula into the south and their incorporation into its social fabric is also important.

This social transformation seems to have affected the ways that the tribal community of South Arabia both organized itself and expressed its connections to others. While the tribes remained as sedentary territorial units for the most part, the terminology used to describe them changed from *shaʿb* to *qabīla*, and the idiom of kinship became an important mode for expressing relationships among them. Previously, genealogy was apparently only a shallow record, but now it effectively became a much more extensive method for documenting the past and present ties both within the South Arabian tribal community and into North Arabia.[18] Moreover, while the increased interest in genealogy may have come from the population movement to the south, it is also important to keep in mind the effects of the Islamic conversion of most of the South Arabian tribes and the gradually increasing imperial footprint emplaced on the region since the time of Muḥammad. During this period, governors were sent to South Arabia by the Rashidun caliphs, the Umayyads, and the Abbasids, and at the same time representatives of minority religious groups from the

---

18   Beeston supports this observation by citing Old South Arabian genealogies to consist mainly of a personal name and social group along with the possibility of the addition of the father's names as well ("Kingship", 257–58). Korotayev further explicates this transmission of "genealogical culture" ("Chiefdom", 249–51). However, it has also been shown that more extensive blood ties were recorded at least in the desert lowlands of pre-Islamic South Arabia, whereas the names of communities in the highlands are associated with their particular land or city (Robin, "Esquisse", 18–22; Schiettecatte, "Population", 35–51).

north, including the Kharijites, Isma'ilis, and Zaydis, also entered the region and developed their own political bases. This political dynamic of invasion and attempted subversion is the context in which the major genealogical compilation of South Arabia in the early medieval period was produced by a local tribesman named Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb al-Hamdānī.

Nicknamed Lisān al-Yaman ("the tongue of Yemen") and Ibn al-Ḥāʾik ("son of the weaver"), the polymath al-Hamdānī (d. 334/945) belonged to the Bakīl section of the Hamdān tribal confederation in the northern highlands.[19] Born into a merchant family in Ṣanʿāʾ at the end of the 2nd/9th century, he wrote about scientific topics such as geography, agriculture, and metallurgy. But his interest in both pan-peninsular regional politics and Yemeni local politics, specifically the threat of the external invading groups of the Zaydis and Isma'ilis, took over his focus.[20] Accordingly, he created a ten-volume compendium, called al-Iklīl (The Crown), which celebrated the history and heritage of some of the inhabitants of South Arabia. Not all southern tribesmen, however, seem to have agreed with this presentation, and the biographer al-Qiftī reports that some had succeeded in destroying at least parts of it.[21] Currently, only four of its volumes are known to have survived. Three of these volumes (1, 2, and 10) are genealogical compilations comprising much (but not all) of the South Arabian tribal community.

In his introduction to the first volume, al-Hamdānī openly criticizes the genealogies produced in the north, specifically calling out the work of Hishām al-Kalbī and his father. He accuses them of purposely contracting the genealogies of the tribes of South Arabia and making limited attempts to travel to South Arabia in order to improve their knowledge of them.[22] In response, through the compilation of these genealogical volumes based on local written and oral sources,[23] he emphasizes their closer connections to the Arabs and

---

19   Löfgren, "al- Hamdānī".

20   Gochenour, "Penetration", 259–61; Hamdani, "Al-Hamdānī", 159–67.

21   Al-Qiftī, Inbāh, 1:283.

22   Al-Hamdānī, al-Iklīl, 1:60–61. Duri, Rise, 17 interprets this section of al-Iklīl as indicating the relationship between the partisan tension among the southern and northern Arabs at this time and its manifestation in the contemporary genealogical compilations. More precisely, the northern genealogists were shortening the genealogies of the southern tribes in order not to accept that they were of greater antiquity than the northern tribes.

23   These include tribal experts such as Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Saʿīd al-Yaharī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Awsānī, and Muḥammad b. Yūnis al-Abrahī, the texts of previous South Arabian historians such as ʿAbīd b. Sharya al-Jurhumī and Wahb b. Munabbih, and the written records (sijill) of the Khawlān tribe in Ṣaʿda. The term sijill is first found in Arabic in the Quran (21:104) in reference to written documents or letters. It may relate to the Byzantine Greek term sigillion or Roman term sigillum, whose meanings took on a

patriarchs of antiquity, bolstering their claim to the leadership of the Islamic political community as a whole. These volumes thus represent al-Hamdānī's vision of the internal cohesion and exclusionary boundaries of the South Arabian tribal community that reflect his political interests and motivations. In volume one, he first concentrates on the higher levels of the Qaḥṭān lineage, then gives the contested genealogy of the politically important Quḍāʿa confederation,[24] and finishes by describing the genealogy and events associated with the tribal group of Khawlān which had been neglected in previous genealogical compilations. In volume two, he focuses on the genealogy of Ḥimyar b. al-Humaysaʿ in order to give the full segmentation of this once dominant group of the region. Finally, in volume ten, he reviews the Kahlān side of the South Arabian genealogy, but mostly concentrates on his own tribal confederation of Hamdān. As a result, he does not give much information on its other groups, including the Madhḥij, which were among those northern Arab tribes that had migrated into South Arabia over the previous millennium.

The Madhhij Tribal Confederation in Early Medieval Genealogical Compilations of Arabia

During the 3rd century AD, the Madhḥij tribal confederation is mentioned in Old South Arabian inscriptions as "mhjm" among the auxiliary armies that accompanied the Himyarite forces in their expansion into the peninsula and continued in this role for centuries. With the emergence of Islam, one of its leaders, Mālik b. Murāra of the Ruhāʾ, became the intermediary between Muḥammad and the tribes of South Arabia, and many others took on leadership roles in the military during Islamic conquests to the north.[25] By the

---

more bureaucratic sense associated with imperial edicts, treaties, or the seals placed on them. For al-Hamdānī, *sijill* refers to written records that primarily consists of genealogical content but also contain information about historical events. They presumably originated in the pre-Islamic period, although some of them may have been fabricated at a later date (Heiss, "Tribale Selbstorganisation", 48–56).

24   In the late Umayyad period this tribal group changed their genealogical affiliation from ʿAdnān to Qaḥṭān in order to remain powerful (Crone, *Slaves*, 35). Kister provides further details into how this genealogical malleability was worked out by various scholars through narrations which personify these groups ("Quḍāʿa"). For example, one tradition trying to reconcile how this transformation occurred states that Quḍāʿa was born the son of Maʿadd (son of ʿAdnān), but later his mother married Mālik b. ʿAmr al-Ḥimyarī, who also adopted the Quḍāʿa, and thus he was then called Quḍāʿa al-Ḥimyarī.

25   Smith, "Maḏḥiḏj".

3rd/10th century, parts of this major confederation seem to have broken apart into disunited segments scattered across South Arabia, most prominently in the central highlands and eastern desert region, occupying much of the former lands of the Ḥimyar tribes.[26] Al-Hamdānī's geographical description of the Arabian Peninsula (*Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab*) provides the most spatially precise information regarding its presence in South Arabia. In this text he describes an area called Sarū Madhḥij where the tribes of Madhḥij were predominant. But he prefaces this description with an emphatic statement that they had only recently settled in this region, and previously it was the lands of the Ḥimyar group of Dhī Ruʿayn, containing its markets, royal graves, fortresses, and archaeological remains.[27] Beyond this section, al-Hamdānī then goes on to describe many other adjacent areas to the west, north, and south, which they were then cohabiting with other tribal groups.[28]

The nature of Madhḥij's infiltration into these new regions remains unclear, and it cannot be assumed that it was entirely or necessarily an antagonistic process. There are stories (in the vein of the previously mentioned *akhbār al-ayyām* literature) found in both the *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab* and *al-Iklīl* that describe pre-Islamic and early Islamic period battles between the Madhḥij confederation and other South Arabian groups. A commonly cited confrontation is the Yaum al-Razm in which the Hamdān confederation defeated Madhḥij in 2/622.[29] But its war with Ḥimyar, which extended across various sections of South Arabia, is more commonly cited in these works. Succinct reports state that the population of the city of Shabwa in the Hadramawt region was forced to evacuate during one of these battles,[30] that Ḥimyar tribesman Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd b. Sālim al-Aṣbahī led the conflict against Madhḥij in al-Sarū,[31] and that another conflict took place in the Jazīrat al-Sakāsik.[32]

---

26   Some of the remaining tribes in South Arabia include the Janb, Murād, Zubayd, Ḥakam b. Saʿd al-ʿAshīra, and ʿAns (Gochenour, "Penetration", 330–33).

27   Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 175–80.

28   For example, the *mikhālif* of central South Arabia from the highlands descending to the eastern desert are recorded as containing tribes of both the Madhḥij and Ḥimyar, including Dhamār (al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 208), Banī ʿĀmir (al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 181), and Radāʿ wa-Thāt (al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 203).

29   Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 216. This conflict has been also interpreted in a wider sense by contemporary historians as a clash between the sedentary tribes and nomadic tribes of Yemen (al-Madʾaj, *Yemen*, 8; Dresch, "Tribes of Ḥāshid wa-Bakīl", 12).

30   Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 171.

31   Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 177.

32   Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 2:66. This report directly states that this war took place during the pre-Islamic period (*al-Jāhilīyya*), but it cannot be confirmed that this periodization applies to all of its conflicts.

Additionally, they also cite specific individuals from Ḥimyar who were either killed in this war,[33] or who made a truce between the parties during it.[34] Finally, there is also indication that Madhḥij clashed with the Quḍāʿa under the leadership of Abū Raʿtha al-Akbar.[35] But in addition to these reports of conflict, there is also other evidence that may hint at a less violent integration process, during which previous Ḥimyar or Hamdān tribes switched their allegiance to Madhḥij as well as the name of their confederation.[36] For example, Kawmān, a tribe in central Yemen, is described as transforming into Madhḥij (*yatamadhḥajūn*) from their Himyarite roots,[37] and the Ḥimyar tribes of Radmān[38] and Dhī Juzb[39] are stated to have entered into (*dakhalū fī*) the Madhḥij tribe of Murād. In these cases, however, it is not clear if their motivations for these realignments were more coerced or voluntary. Nonetheless, with this brief narrative sketch of Madhḥij in mind, which included some migrating north during the Islamic conquests and others migrating south into Yemen, how then was this confederation represented in the major genealogical compilations of the early medieval period?

Looking first at Madhḥij's location within al-Kalbī's *Jamharat al-nasab*, what immediately becomes noteworthy is the placement of this tribal group

33 Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 2:104.

34 Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 2:115.

35 Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 1:215. There is also another battle described in the second volume of *al-Iklīl*, which begins as a confrontation of Madhḥij in an alliance with Khawlān and Nahd against the tribe of Khawāzin, which then seems to escalate into a full-fledged war between Quḍāʿa and the tribes of Qays (ibid., 2:178).

36 In the *Ṣifat*, al-Hamdānī directly indicates his awareness of the fluidity of the practice of Bedouin tribes taking on the names of other more famous tribes than them to the point that they are on the verge of establishing genealogical connections with them (175). Heiss provides a fuller discussion of these dynamics between changes in tribal names and their affiliations with specific examples cited from the medieval and modern periods ("Tribale Selbstorganisation", 96–99). One possible result of this re-naming process in South Arabia would be that tribes could stay in the same location and "become Madhḥij" with only minimal groups of "actual" Madhḥij immigrating into the region. This process, however, runs counter to the popular concept of a fixed territorialization of tribes in South Arabia, which is based largely on contemporary ethnography as well as the general observation that many current tribes in Yemen seem to be located in the same place as they were in the medieval period. In this perspective, it is the immigrants that change their affiliation instead of the extant population (Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History*, 320–329; Wilson, "Al-Hamdānī's"; 95–104).

37 Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 180.

38 Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 2:50–51. Interestingly, al-Hamdānī cites Hishām al-Kalbī as a reference to support this story.

39 Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 2:123.

within the Qaḥṭān macro-conglomerate.[40] Despite its apparent closer original connections to tribes of North Arabia, pastoral-nomadic economic livelihood, and aggressive history against the inhabitants of South Arabia in the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, al-Kalbī chose to group it with the tribes of the South, perhaps in order to emphasize the more symbiotic relationship that they had developed by the 2nd/9th century. A second observation clearly emerges from Caskel's genealogical table based on al-Kalbī's *Jamharat al-nasab* (Figure 7.1).[41] The extensive detailing of its individual groups extends down to the perhaps apparent historical personalities or groups of contemporary times. This expansive record may be credited to al-Kalbī's diverse source base for his research as well as his desire to be as comprehensive as possible, as reflected in his compilation overall.

Looking next at the genealogical documentation for Madhḥij in *al-Iklīl*, al-Hamdānī likewise accepts this group into the southern fold and outlines its genealogy in the tenth volume (Figure 7.2).[42] In contrast to the *Jamharat al-nasab*, however, Madhḥij receives only a brief mention at the beginning of this volume, when he describes it as Mālik among the descendants of Udad alongside Murra, Nabt (al-Ashʿar), and Julhuma (Ṭayʾ).[43] But he does not subsequently list any further progeny for it. Instead he abruptly moves on to delineate somewhat haphazardly the genealogical lines of other groups of Kahlān before commencing with the extensive documentation of the Hamdān confederation—the clear main subject of this volume overall. This apparent neglect of the genealogy of the Madhḥij confederation may be the result of three scenarios.

One potential reason for the absence of the genealogical description of Madhḥij is that al-Hamdānī was ignorant of this confederation or only had minimal information with which to write it. This scenario seems unlikely. The

---

40　Caskel, *Ğamharat,* Table 176. Its genealogical line is recorded as Malik (Madhḥij) b. Udad. b. Zayd b. Yashjub b. ʿArīb b. Zayd b. Kahlān b. ʿĀmir (Sabāʾ) b. Yashjub b. Muʿraf (Yaʿrub) b. Qaḥṭān.

41　Caskel, *Ğamharat,* Table 258.

42　Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklil,* 10:22.

43　These "siblings" of Madhḥij are the same as found in *Jamharat al-nasab,* but there are some discrepancies in the full genealogical line. These include the absence of Muʿraf and Yashjub between Qaḥṭān and Sabāʾ, and the substitution of ʿAmr for the other Yashjub. Furthermore, the "sons" of Madhḥij listed in *Jamharat al-nasab* are found in abbreviated or non-genealogical contexts of other sections of al-Iklīl, such as Murād, ʿAns, and Saʿd al-ʿAshīra. But the two other "sons" listed, Lamīs and Jald, are not, and may instead possibly be recognized as two other well-known tribes of Madhḥij, respectively Zubayd and Janb.

FIGURE 7.1 *al-Kalbī's genealogy of Madhḥiǧ in* Jamharat al-nasab
CASKEL, *ĞAMHARAT*, TABLE 258.

detailed passages written about them in various parts of his *Sifat* and other sections of *al-Iklīl* reveal his deep knowledge of them. Al-Hamdānī was also very aware and readily cites the work of al-Kalbī in various sections of *al-Iklīl*, and therefore there is no reason he could not have simply also used this source to continue with their genealogy. Another possible reason for this genealogical

```
                              Qaḥṭān
                                |
                              Sabāʾ
                                |
                              Kahlān
                                |
                               Zayd
                                |
                              ʿArīb
                                |
                               ʿAmr
                                |
                               Zayd
                                |
                               Udad
                                |
    ┌─────────────┬─────────────────────┬──────────────────┐
  Murra      Nabt (al-Ashʿar)    Mālik (Madhḥij)    Julhuma (Ṭayʾ)
                                        |
                                        ?
```

FIGURE 7.2   *al-Hamdānī's genealogy of Madhḥij* (al-Iklīl *10:22*)

lacuna is al-Hamdānī's lack of interest in Madhḥij or the fact that he found them irrelevant or unimportant to South Arabia. If this were the case, however, he would not have given them extensive coverage in the other sections of this work. Nor would he have cited the Prophet Muḥammad's mention of them as a tribe of South Arabia in the first volume of *al-Iklīl*.[44] In a story describing the genealogical context of Sabāʾ, Muḥammad states that he was a man among the Arabs from whom ten tribes (pl. *abṭun*, s. *baṭn*) descended.[45] Madhḥij is listed here among those who were related or belonged to South Arabia (*tayāmanū*), including Kinda, al-Ashʿarūn, Ḥimyar, Anmār, and al-Asad.[46] Hence, the gravity

---

44   Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 1:131.

45   In a list from the *Ṣifat* which describes binary oppositional groups in different regions of South Arabia, however, Sabāʾ is placed in confrontation with Madhḥij in region of Māʾrib, potentially portraying these two tribal groups as being on the same genealogical level instead of "father" and "son". This seeming contradiction clearly demonstrates the inconsistency, flexibility, or general confusion surrounding the genealogical levels for these groups (al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 237). In this list, Madhḥij is also described as being in opposition to Hamdān in the region of al-Jawf in the north-east of South Arabia.

46   Those descendants of Sabāʾ listed as relating or belonging to North Arabia (*tashāʾmū*) are Judhām, Lakhm, ʿĀmila, and Ghassān.

associated with quoting Muḥammad demonstrates al-Hamdānī's understand-
ing of the importance of this group to South Arabia.

In spite of this awareness, however, a third scenario for not listing the genea-
logical descendants of Madhḥij may be that al-Hamdānī specifically intended
to make an implicit political statement that Madhḥij is not truly a South
Arabian tribe but rather a foreign intruder from North Arabia. That is, he only
minimally wanted to accept this group into his own southern genealogy due to
his personal bias against contemporary northern foreigners, such as the Zaydis
and Isma'ilis, who during the time of his writing *al-Iklīl* were infiltrating and
attempting to take over South Arabia. Al-Hamdānī was not ignorant of
Madhḥij's own violent interactions with South Arabian groups as cited through
numerous examples throughout the text. In addition to the more generalized
clashes mentioned with the confederations of Ḥimyar, Quḍāʿa, and Hamdān,
in volume ten of *al-Iklīl* he also describes more personalized incidents involv-
ing specific members of Hamdān. One individual is stated to have died during
Yaum al-Razm,[47] and another was killed in the battle of Yaum Jaysh al-ʿAkār.[48]
Moreover, one of the most colourful and detailed narratives of conflict in
al-Iklīl is between the Murād tribe of Madhḥij and a group of Hamdān, in
which there are back-and-forth raids between the two parties.[49] Even if these
battles were interpreted as probable fictional accounts, as many conflicts of
the *akhbār al-ayyām* literature have been, their ideological content still stress
the antagonism of Madhḥij in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic history of
South Arabia. In this way al-Hamdānī may have wanted to use the collective
memory of this group to mirror the contemporary politics that he himself was
engaged in. By often presenting the Madhḥij confederation as a predatory
group from outside South Arabia who fought and occupied the land of its pre-
vious inhabitants, some of whom were shown to have switched their alliances
to them, he seems to have not wanted to perceive them as genuine southern
Arabs and hence did not devote space to describing their genealogy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, with its own particular political viewpoint, the genealogical
compilation of al-Hamdānī's *al-Iklīl* fits well into the overall historiographic
tradition of early medieval Arabia. It uses fairly similar terminology for the

---

47   Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 10:77–78.

48   Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 10:157–58.

49   Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 10:159–60.

different levels of its hierarchical organization, and is directly structured as a response to the northern genealogists in order to provide its own representation of the macro-confederation of Qaḥṭān in contradistinction to other genealogies that focus more on the tribes of ʿAdnān. Like other texts of the medieval period devoted to promoting the identity and role of the South Arabian tribal community in the history and current affairs of the larger Islamic community, this particular vision was constructed to include what its author believed were the important ancestors and major tribal groups while at the same time excluding or minimizing others. One of these latter tribal groups seems to have been the Madhḥij confederation. Due to the scant presentation of their genealogy and the repeated narratives of their battles with South Arabian tribal groups in *al-Iklīl*, he seems to have perceived them as foreign intruders, somewhat on a par with other contemporary northern invaders, such as the Zaydis and Ismaʾilis, and therefore not part of the proud heritage of the more established confederations such as the Hamdān and Ḥimyar.

Bibliography

Wahib Atallah, "al-Kalbī", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004) (Brill Online, 2013).

Alex F.L. Beeston, "Kingship in Ancient South Arabia", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 15 (1972), 256–68.

Alex F.L. Beeston, "Shaʿb", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2013).

Ilker Evrim Binbas, "Structure and function of the genealogical tree in Islamic historiography (1200–1500)", in *Horizons of the World: Festschrift for Isenbike Togan*, eds. Ilker Evrim Binbas and Nurten Kilic Schubel (Istanbul, 2011), 465–544.

Marieke Brandt, "The Contemporary Structures and Historical Formation of the Khawlān and Jumāʾah Tribes in Saʾdah, Northwest Yemen", *Anthropology of the Middle East* 9,1 (2014), 59–82.

Werner Caskel, *Ǧamharat an-Nasab: Das genealogische Werk des Hisham ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī* (Leiden, 1966).

Joseph Chelhod, "Ḳabīla", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2013).

Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic polity* (Cambridge, 1980).

Patricia Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad period political parties?" *Der Islam* 71 (1994), 1–57.

Fred Donner, "The Bakr B. Wā'il Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam", *Studia Islamica* 51 (1980), 5–38.

Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford, 1989).

Paul Dresch, "The Tribes of Ḥāshid wa-Bakīl as Historical and Geographical Entities", in *Arabicus Felix: Luminosus Britannicus: Essays in Honor of A.F.L. Beeston on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Alan Jones (Reading, 1991), 8–24.

Abd al-Aziz al-Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs* (Princeton, 1983).

Ihab Hamdi El-Sakkout, "The Arab Tribes 'from Jahiliya to Islam': Sources and Historical Trends" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1998).

David Thomas Gochenour, "The Penetration of Zaydi Islam into Early Medieval Yemen" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1984).

Abbas Hamdani, "Al-Hamdānī, the outset of the domination of the Hamdān over Yaman", in *al-Hamdānī, lisān al-Yaman*, ed. Yūsuf Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh, Dār al-tanwīr li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-al-nashr (Sanaa, 1986), 159–67.

Al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat jazīrat al-ʿarab*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ (Riyadh, 1989).

Al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ, 4 vols. (Sanaa, 2004).

Johann Heiss, "Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung: Der Norden des Jemen zur Zeit des ersten Imams (10. Jahrhundert)" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1988).

Hugh Kennedy, "Oral tradition to written record in Arabic genealogy", *Arabica* 44 (1997), 531–44.

Meir J. Kister, "Qudāʿa", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2013).

Andrey Korotayev, "The Chiefdom: Precursor of the Tribe? (Some Trends of the Evolution of the Political Systems of the North-East Yemen in the 1st and 2nd Millennia AD)", in *Alternatives of Social Evolution*, eds. Nikolay Kradin et al. (Vladivostok, 2000), 242–57.

Oscar Löfgren, "al-Hamdānī, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb b. Yūsuf b. Dāwūd b. Sulaymān D̲h̲i 'l-Dumayna al-Bakīlī al-Arḥabī, often named Ibn D̲h̲i/Abi 'l-Dumayna or Ibn al-Ḥā'ik", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2013).

Michael Macdonald, "Literacy in an Oral Environment", in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard*, eds. Piotr Bienkowski et al. (New York, 2005), 49–118.

Abd al-Muhsin Mad'aj Al-Mad'aj, *The Yemen in Early Islam 9-233/630-847: a political history* (London, 1988).

ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt ʿalā anbāh al-nuḥāt*, 1, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1950), 279–84.

Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London, 2003).

Christian Robin, "Esquisse d'une histoire de l'organisation tribale en Arabie du sud antique", in *La Peninsule Arabique d'Aujourd'hui*, 2, ed. Paul Bonnenfant (Paris, 1982), 17–30.

Christain Robin, "La pénétration des Arabes nomades au Yémen", *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 61 (1991), 71–88.

Sarah Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge, 2013).

Jérémie Schiettecatte, "La population des villes: sudarabiques préislamiques: entre ʿaṣabiyya et ḥaḍarī", *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 121/122 (2008), 35–51.

Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Berkeley, 1997).

Gerald Rex Smith, "Madhḥidj", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2013).

Zoltan Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic genealogy: A Study in Historical Anthropology*. (Piliscsaba, 2003).

Daniel Varisco, "Metaphors and Sacred History: The Genealogy of Muhammad and the Arab 'Tribe'", *Anthropological Quarterly* 68 (1995), 139–56.

Robert Wilson, "Al-Hamdānī's Description of Ḥāshid and Bakīl", *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 11 (1981), 95–104.

Genealogical Representations of Monastic Communities in Late Medieval Art

Christian Nikolaus Opitz

Depicting Spiritual Genealogies

Genealogical representations of monastic communities are a common subject in the arts of late medieval Europe. So common in fact that we tend to take their emergence as almost self-evident when in reality it is anything but. After all, genealogies in the stricter sense of the term refer to groups bound together by biological descent and, considering the vows of chastity required from all members of Christian religious orders, this type of social cohesion was, strictly speaking, unavailable to communities of friars, monks, and nuns. However, as is also discussed in Christina Lutter's contribution to this volume, the concept of *familia* was frequently adopted by monastic communities as a means of self-conception and self-representation, including all the biological and, more importantly, sociological implications it entails.

Just like family, the concept of genealogy is about more than just real or imagined blood ties and kinship relations—as Gabrielle Spiegel put it, genealogies are "symbolic forms" and "expressions of *social* memory".[1] One could perhaps say that the potential of genealogy as a symbolic form lay (and still lies) precisely in its association with kinship relations, and that these associations are what made it an attractive choice for the self-representation of groups that lacked such ties. It comes as no surprise, then, that genealogical representations, both in written and in pictorial form, were frequently employed by monastic communities. And although in the following I will mainly be concerned with late medieval Europe, it is important to note that the same or similar phenomena are also to be found in other geographical and cultural contexts: depictions of such spiritual genealogies were widespread not only in the visual arts of Europe, but also of Tibet.[2]

In Tibet there is a strong tradition of what modern-day scholars have termed "lineage painting" in monastic contexts from the 13th century onwards.[3]

---

1   Spiegel, "Genealogy", 104, 105 (emphasis added).
2   See Birgit Kellner's contribution in this volume.
3   Kossak, "Lineage Painting", 49–57.

Usually, these lineage paintings are *thangkas*, that is paintings on cloth, show-ing the spiritual leader of a sect or a monastery surrounded by smaller depic-tions of his teachers and predecessors (ill. 1). In terms of content, like most genealogies, these images include a certain amount of fabrication, depending on their original context and intention, but a common goal seems to have been to trace back one's lineage to India, the homeland of Buddhism. In formal terms, they follow a tradition of Tibetan religious painting where Buddhas,

ILLUSTRATION 1   *An Abbot and His Lineage, Western Tibet, 14th century or earlier, painting on cloth, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (image: public domain, via www. lacma.org)*

Bodhisattvas and deities were commonly placed in the centre of *thangkas*, surrounded by smaller depictions of attendants, other Buddhas and lesser deities.[4] It may be said, therefore, that this kind of spiritual lineage painting appropriates a type of pictorial composition which at the time was already established in religious art of the region.

We encounter similar processes of appropriation when we shift our attention to late medieval Europe: here, the visual model of the genealogical tree was adopted by monastic communities, resulting in the creation of *Ordensstammbäume* (genealogical trees of monastic orders) (ill. 2).[5] This type of representation enjoyed great success especially in the 15th century, when it was represented in a wide range of artistic media (such as woodcuts, panel painting, mural painting, tapestry) and seemingly employed by all monastic orders of Western Christianity. It was, however, particularly popular with the two largest mendicant orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, and, as will be explained below, it seems that it was among these two orders that such images were first developed.

Symbolic Representations of the Dominican Order

The concept of the genealogical tree, in the guise of the family tree, is of course highly familiar to us today. However, as the Tibetan tradition of lineage painting briefly outlined in my introduction reminds us, a spiritual genealogy could also be depicted in an entirely different way. It is, I believe, important to remember that the use of a tree pattern is not as obvious as it may seem to us. And yet, when we look at modern art historical writing, we find that most of the authors seem to consider the existence of *Ordensstammbäume* in late medieval art as something that is almost self-evident and does not require further explanation.

A particularly striking case of this attitude is found in Charlotte Gutscher-Schmid's otherwise excellent discussion of the *Dominican Tree* in Bern, Switzerland (ill. 2),[6] perhaps the finest surviving example among of the late medieval *Ordensstammbäume*. Painted in 1495, this mural painting is located on the screen which separates the nave from the chancel in the former

---

4   Singer, "Painting".

5   Walz, "Von Dominikanerstammbäumen"; Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en images*; Preisinger, *Lignum Vitae*, 209–33; Ilg, "Quasi lignum vitae".

6   Gutscher-Schmid, *Nelken*, 97–100, 215–18.

ILLUSTRATION 2   *Bernese Carnation Master: Genealogical Tree of the Dominican Order, 1495, wall painting, French Church, Bern (image from: Charlotte Gutscher-Schmid, Nelken statt Namen: Die spätmittelalterlichen Malerwerkstätten der Berner Nelkenmeister, Bern, 2007, p. 87)*

Dominican church in Bern (now commonly known as the French Church).[7] The image shows St Dominic, the founder of the Dominican order, lying asleep on the floor; from his body there emanates a tree, the branches of which carry the figures of both male and female saints who during their lifetime had belonged to the Dominican order. They are placed in bright red blossoms and arranged around the centrally placed figure of the Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus.

As Gutscher-Schmid rightly points out, this ideal collective representation of the Dominican Order is derived directly from woodcut models of the same subject, the then new medium of print having played a crucial part in the rapid dissemination of this iconographic type. Then, however, she outright simply states that *all* genealogical trees of the Dominican Order are ultimately derived from the Chapter House in the Dominican convent of Treviso, Italy.[8] The main feature of the Treviso Chapter House's pictorial decoration, executed in 1352 by Tommaso da Modena,[9] is a sequence of portraits of 40 Dominican saints and scholars, all shown at work at their desks, taking up the upper part of all four walls, interrupted only by an image of the Crucifixion. In the dado zone of the walls, there are three tiers of medallions containing inscriptions: in the upper tier, they list the names of the order's province, in the middle tier the convents in the province Lombardia Inferior (to which Treviso belonged), and in the lower tier the names of the order's generals in chronological order. There can be no doubt that the decorative scheme we find in Treviso is one of the most compelling and comprehensive attempts to visualize the Dominican Order as a whole in all of medieval art,[10] and with its sequence of portraits and its lists of names it even features elements that may be described as genealogical.[11] What one looks for in vain, however, is a genealogical *tree*.

---

7   Regarding the screen see Schmelzer, *Lettner*, 86–90.

8   "Vorbildlich für alle Dominikanerbäume war der Kapitelsaal des Dominikanerklosters von Treviso", Gutscher-Schmid, *Nelken*, 100.

9   See Gibbs, Tommaso, 50–87, 258; Stein-Kecks, *Kapitelsaal*; 346–55; El Saman, "Studien", 133–47; Donadieu-Rigaut, "L' image".

10   See also the Cappella Spagnola in Florence, for which see below.

11   As mentioned, the order's generals are listed chronologically, and the convents of Lombardia Inferior are also arranged by their foundation date. As regards the portraits of Dominican saints and scholars, the situation is slightly more ambiguous: while they are not arranged in a strict chronological sequence, temporal aspects seem to have been considered nonetheless (for instance, there is a clear separation between those who lived in the 13th and those who lived in the 14th century); see El Saman, *Studien*, 136–43.

All in all, the decoration of the Treviso Chapter House presents us with a way of depicting an order and its genealogy that is markedly different from what we have seen in Bern. It is not easy to believe, therefore, that the murals in Treviso could have been the model for the later *Ordensstammbäume.* Such a proposition only makes sense if one takes the concept of the genealogical tree so much for granted that the progression from a linear sequence of portraits to such a tree seems like a small, logical next step. In fact, however, it is quite remarkable and far from self-evident that the 15th century Dominicans employed genealogical trees as a medium of self-representation at all.

The Emergence of the Family Tree

Contrary to popular belief, family trees as we know them, were not common at all during the Middle Ages—like witch-hunts, they are essentially an early modern phenomenon which only gained wider significance around and after 1500.[12] If for instance a lord or a king wanted to adorn the hall of his castle with a depiction of his genealogy, from the 13th to the late 15th century the standard format was to present his predecessors in a plain, uninterrupted line of standing or, occasionally, seated figures.[13] In this respect, then, the sequence of Dominican portraits in Treviso corresponds perfectly to what was then the usual way of visualizing a genealogy in a monumental format.

If we look at other artistic media, such as manuscript illumination, the situation is slightly different and more complex. In manuscripts, we find various kinds of schematic representations of genealogies, some of which already look relatively close to what we are used to calling a family tree.[14] A good example of this kind of imagery are the Kuenring genealogies in the *liber fundatorum* of Zwettl Abbey in Lower Austria, the so-called *Zwettler Bärenhaut*, dating to c. 1310.[15] Here, rather than just a line of figures, we already have a sort of diagram, the various members of the family being included in medallions

---

12   See Klapisch-Zuber, "Genesis".

13   Prominent examples were once found in: Paris, Palais de la Cité, c. 1300, see Bennert, "Art"; Karlstein Castle, c. 1360, see Stejskal, "Rekonstruktion"; Munich, Alter Hof, c. 1460, see Hoffmann, *Meister*, 197–200, 240–46; Esztergom Castle, c. 1470, see Radocsay, *Wandgemälde*, 139–41.

14   See for instance Worm, "Arbor"; Norbye, "Arbor".

15   , *Stiftungen-Buch*, ed. Von Frast; *Liber fundatorum*, ed. Rössl. On the *liber fundatorum* see also Maria Mair's forthcoming PhD, written in the VISCOM project, and Christina Lutter's contribution in this volume as well as Lutter, "Zisterzienser", 148–60.

spread across the entire length of the page, arranged chronologically in several registers and connected by double lines.

In some instances, contemporary writers even referred to diagrams such as those in the *Bärenhaut* as "trees", and there are some examples for such diagrams where the lines connecting the single individual family members are decorated with leaves so that they look like actual branches.[16] But while writers invoked the concept of the genealogical tree from the high Middle Ages onwards, and while painters would occasionally hint at the plant metaphor in depictions of families and lineage, these medieval images still differ from modern family trees in one key aspect: the tree metaphor relies essentially relies on the idea of *upwards* growth, while the diagrams we encounter in the *Bärenhaut* and elsewhere show lineages arranged from top to bottom. This top-down structure allowed medieval illuminators to place the *Spitzenahn* (the founder of a family or dynasty) in the most prestigious position on top of the page and to show his progeny as literally *descending* from him. And, of course, it also corresponds to the usual way of reading a page in a manuscript from top to bottom. As Christiane Klapisch-Zuber has shown, it is likely that medieval artists avoided the tree structure for lineage paintings because it would have meant reversing the usual reading order and placing the *Spitzenahn* in the lowest position, at the roots of the tree.[17]

There is one prominent exception to this rule, and that is the so-called *Tree of Jesse* (ill. 3), an allegorical image of the genealogy of Christ which had already developed in the course of the high Middle Ages.[18] The pictorial subject of the *Tree of Jesse* is based on a combination of Christ's ancestors as listed in the gospel of St Matthew with certain passages from the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 11,1: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots". The resulting images show Jesse, the father of King David, lying asleep as a rod or tree grows out of his body, the fruits and branches of the tree being the ancestors of Christ up to the Virgin Mary, who is shown holding the Infant Christ himself. Since the composition culminates in Christ, in the case of the *Tree of Jesse* it was perfectly reasonable, if not downright necessary to retain the upward thrust inherent in the tree metaphor suggested by Isaiah's prophecies. That way Christ is placed in the highest-ranking position and the image as a whole can be read as an ascent towards spiritual perfection.[19]

---

16   Klapisch-Zuber, "Genesis", 113–15.
17   Klapisch-Zuber, "Genesis", 115–18.
18   See Bogen, "Träumt Jesse?"; Gelin, "Stirps".
19   Klapisch-Zuber, "Genesis", 120–22.

ILLUSTRATION 3   *Bernese Carnation Master: Tree of Jesse, 1495, wall painting, French Church, Bern (image from: Charlotte Gutscher-Schmid, Nelken statt Namen: Die spätmittelalterlichen Malerwerkstätten der Berner Nelkenmeister, Bern, 2007, p. 86)*

Genealogical Trees in the Dominican Order

Now, if we return to the Dominican *Ordensstammbäume* of the 15th century, it is instantly evident that they are modelled directly upon the *Tree of Jesse*, and nowhere is this more evident than in Bern, where the Dominican genealogy is actually placed face to face with a contemporary image of that very subject (ill. 2–3). Indeed, Dominican genealogies not only show the tree as emanating from the reclining figure of St Dominic in the same way as the genealogy of Christ emerges from the sleeping Jesse, most of them even include the Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus in a similarly prominent position. In Bern, her inclusion among the Dominicans is justified by the fact that she is shown handing the order's white habit to one of them, an episode recalling the legend that the habit used by the Dominicans had first been presented in a vision to one of the friars by the Virgin herself.[20] In this way, another element which was crucial to the order's identity and visual appearance could be introduced into these painted self-representations. And, based on Klapisch-Zubers considerations regarding upwards versus downwards structures in genealogical representations, one could perhaps ask whether the inclusion of Jesus and Mary also helped to justify the upwards movement of the composition and the placing of St Dominic in the more humble bottom position.

It has to be noted, though, that the Virgin Mary is a relatively late addition to Dominican genealogical trees. She is still absent in the earlier versions of the subject, most notably in the famous woodcut illustration(s) from Johannes de Turrecremata's book of *Meditationes*. Turrecremata, a Roman cardinal and Dominican, had first published his book of meditations in Rome in 1467. It was, famously, the first book printed in Italy to include woodcut illustrations.[21] While most of the illustrations—based on a series of now lost frescoes in the cloister of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome[22]— contain scenes from the Bible, one of them shows a genealogical tree of the Dominican Order (ill. 4) remarkably similar in its general layout to what we have seen in Bern. Turrecremata's book proved to be highly popular, and several more editions with only small variations in the illustrations were published before 1500. Thus it became one of the main vehicles for spreading the iconography of the Dominican *Ordensstammbaum* across Europe. As indicated, however, the genealogical tree in the *Meditationes* does not include an

---

20   Gutscher-Schmid, *Nelken*, 217.

21   De Gregori, *Chiostro*.

22   See Bourgeois, *Reconstructing the lost frescoes*.
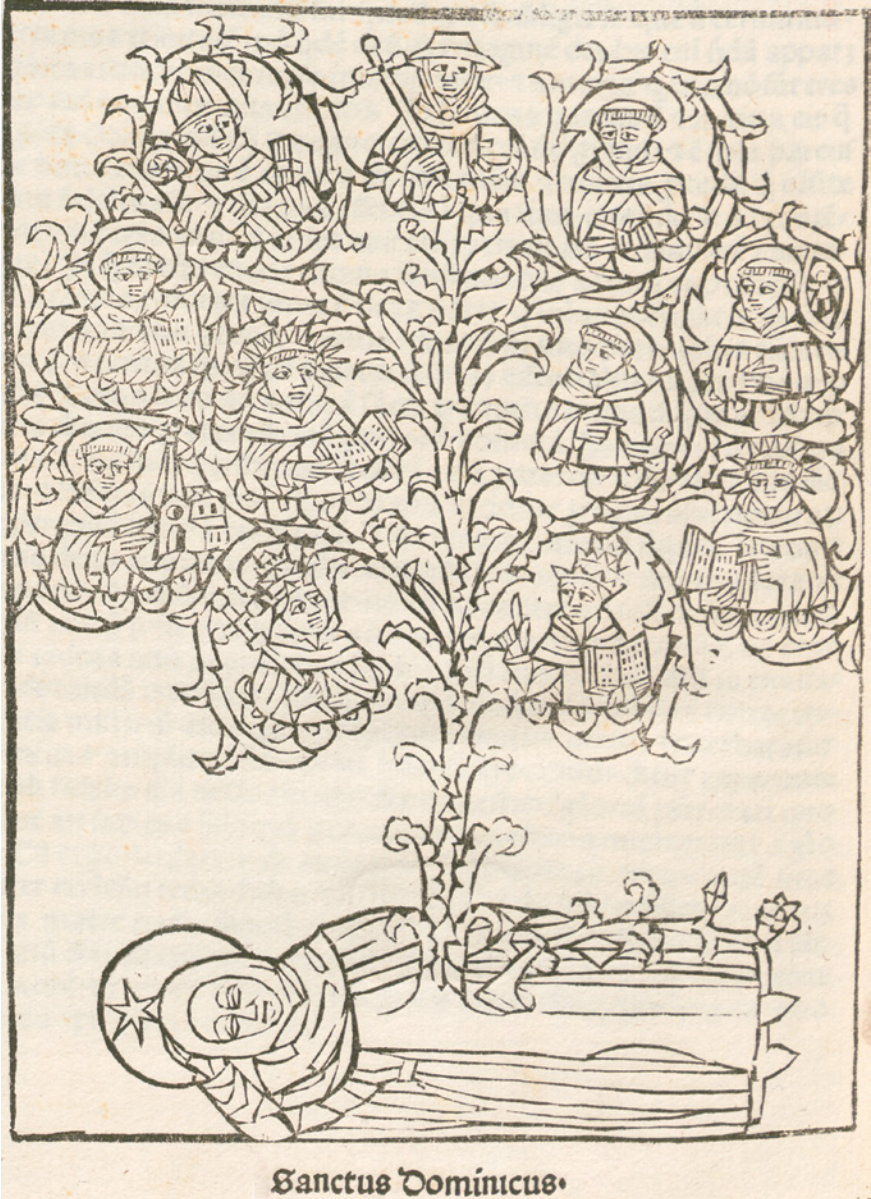
ILLUSTRATION 4 *Genealogical Tree of the Dominican Order, from: Johannes de Turrecremata, Meditationes, Rome, 1473 (image: public domain, via Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich).*

image of the Virgin Mary, but the sleeping St Dominic as the source of the tree is featured prominently at the bottom of the image.

The fact that Dominic, like Jesse, is shown as sleeping adds another important aspect to the composition that may help to explain why the scheme of the *Tree of Jesse* was appropriated in self-representations of monastic orders in the first place: it suggests that the genealogical tree itself is a dream vision experienced by the order's founder himself.[23] While the image as a whole presents the viewer with a visualization of the order's past, it can also be read as a vision of its future as experienced by St Dominic. One might therefore argue, therefore, that the concept of upward growth inherent in the tree metaphor was deemed suitable because these images are not (only) representations of past descent but also and perhaps even more of future expansion. What the image conveys is, in a way, the teleological aspect inherent in genealogy, i.e. a sense that the present may be viewed as a fulfilment of the past while also bearing the promise for continuation into the future.[24]

The idea of a dream vision representing an entire order in the shape of a tree appears quite early on in the history of the mendicant orders, especially with the Franciscans (also known as the Friars Minor). As early as the 13th century Fioretti di San Francesco, one reads of a friar who "*saw in a vision a beautiful, large and very strong tree, the root of which was of gold, and its fruits were all men and all of them were Friars Minor. Its main branches were distinguished according to the number of the order's provinces, and each branch had as many friars as there were in the entire province of that branch*".[25]

It is important to note that this passage does not allude to concepts like lineage or family at all—while it makes use of the tree metaphor, what we have here is not a genealogical tree. Indeed, all kinds of tree metaphors and tree diagrams, such as Trees of Virtues and Vices, were extremely popular throughout the Middle Ages, and most of them had very little if anything to do with genealogy.[26] The Franciscans in particular were fond of tree metaphors, both in their writings—most prominently St Bonaventure's *Lignum Vitae*—and in their images.[27] At least the early 14th century onwards one frequently

---

23   On the aspect of the dream vision see Bogen, "Träumt Jesse?" 223–31.

24   See Birgit Kellner's contribution in this volume.

25   "*…vide in visione uno arbore bello e grande e molto forte la qual radice era d'oro, i frutti suoi erano uomini e tutti erano frati Minori. I rami suoi principali erano distinti secondo el numero delle Province dell'Ordine, e ciascun ramo avea tanti frati, quanti n'era nella Provincia piena per quel ramo*". *I Fioretti*, ed. Sarri, p. 198.

26   See Berns, "Baumsprache"; Bolzoni, *Rete*.

27   Preisinger, *Lignum vitae*.

finds elaborate depictions of diagrammatic trees in Franciscan contexts, most importantly images of the *Tree of Life*, developed from the writings of Bonaventure and others. In these images Christ's cross is transformed into a tree, the branches of which are inscribed with short texts, often excerpts from the writings of Bonaventure, meditating on the life and death of Christ. More such inscriptions are inserted in medallions, representing the fruits of the tree, which are placed among the branches. In some examples, these medallions contain not merely words but small depictions of scenes from the Life of Christ. The ends of the branches grow into images of prophets and evangelists.

By the second half of the 14th century the Franciscans had developed this type of image further, turning it into *Franciscan Trees*. While these still retained the central image of the crucified Christ, they now placed the figure of St Francis right underneath it, symbolizing the trunk of the tree; the scenes in the medallions were now scenes from the life of St Francis rather than from the life of Christ, and, most importantly in this context, the prophets and evangelists at the ends of the branches were substituted by saints from the Franciscan order. It is not quite clear how widespread these early Franciscan trees ever were. Today only two fragmentary examples survive, both of them large-scale murals, one in Verona, one in Padua.[28] It seems, however, that the iconographic model was at least prominent enough to be adopted by the Dominicans as well: at the end of the 14th century, a Dominican Tree of this type was painted on the walls of the cloister, the so-called *Chiostro Verde*, in Santa Maria Novella in Florence.[29]

This fresco was not an isolated image but has to be seen in connection with a slightly earlier scheme of decoration in the same cloister. The vaults of the *Chiostro Verde* were painted with no fewer than 96 roundels, each containing the portrait of a haloed Dominican carefully identified by an inscription.[30] While these inscriptions are now mostly illegible, there can be little doubt that these painted figures were intended to present the order as a whole and through the depiction of so many saintly members stress the order's central place in the wider Christian community. Placed in the immediate vicinity of the entrance from the cloister to the church, the fresco of the Dominican Tree seems like a condensed and slightly more complex variation of the vault

---

28   See Simbeni, "Lignum Vitae"; Preisinger, "Bilder"; Preisinger, *Lignum Vitae*, 209–23.
29   El Saman, *Studien*, 225–27; Ilg, "Quasi lignum vitae", 203–04.
30   Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 182–85.

decoration, almost a kind of succinct summary to be viewed just before entering the church.

In many respects, the decoration of the *Chiostro Verde* at Santa Maria Novella seems to resume the strategy of symbolic representation employed by the much more famous frescoes in the adjacent chapter house, also known as the Spanish Chapel. Here, in 1366–68, Andrea Bonaiuti executed painted what is rightly considered one of the most important fresco cycles in *Trecento* Florence, remarkable both for its artistic quality and for its innovative iconographic choices.[31] As is to be expected in a chapter house, one finds the Crucifixion depicted on the wall facing the entrance, with several more scenes from the Life of Christ added underneath it as well as in the vault. The remaining parts of the decoration, however, are dedicated entirely to the Dominican Order. On the entrance wall, there are episodes from the lives and martyrdoms of Dominican saints Peter Martyr and Peter of Verona, while the two side walls contain what is often referred to as the Dominican Allegories: on the one side the elaborate Triumph of St Thomas Aquinas (which has also, and perhaps more accurately, been described as the Glorification of the Wisdom of St Thomas Aquinas' Doctrines), on the other side a complex composition sometimes termed the Road to Salvation, sometimes the Path from Earthly to Heavenly Church, a road on which members of the Dominican Order are prominently depicted in the function as spiritual guides.

It is worth noting that Andrea Bonaiuti's Florentine frescoes were painted relatively shortly after Tommaso da Modena's decoration in the Dominican chapter house in Treviso, discussed earlier. When considered together, these works show a certain preoccupation of the Dominicans around that time with creating comprehensive monumental representations of their order as a whole. As, I believe, has become evident, this process involved a certain amount of experimentation and led to a range of diverse solutions from the almost genealogical yet linear arrangement in Treviso, to the combination of saints' lives and complex allegories in the Florentine chapter house, to the Dominican Tree in the adjoining cloister. In this context, there are two aspects of this development I would like to stress: First, that the image of the tree appears relatively late in the process. Apparently, to the 14th-century Dominicans it was not the most obvious choice. Second, that the Dominicans were not the only monastic order at the time creating visual self-representations like

---

31   See for instance Russo, "Religion"; Cannon, *Religious Poverty*, 188–98.

the ones just discussed, and they generously helped themselves from pictorial compositions devised by other, rival orders. For instance, the Triumph of St Thomas Aquinas seems to be based on similar images of the Triumph of St Augustine created in convents of the Augustinian Hermits.[32] More importantly in the given context, the concept of the allegorical tree, as already mentioned, appears to have been adapted from models found in the Franciscan Order.[33]

It has to be emphasized once again that neither the early Franciscan Trees discussed above nor the Dominican Tree at Santa Maria Novella are genealogical trees in the strict sense of the term at all, but are derived from different types of tree diagrams. They visualize the order's founder on (or as?) the trunk of the tree, but not lying at its root. From the surviving evidence it seems that only in the 15th century, when the concept of non-genealogical "monastic trees" was already well established, did certain orders, especially the Dominicans, take the step of adopting the genealogical model of the Tree of Jesse as a means of self-representation.

This process added new layers of complexity to depictions of Dominican trees: they were now were no longer merely visualizations of one single biological metaphor ("a monastic order is like a tree"), but incorporated two sets of metaphors ("a monastic order is like a family" *and* "a family is like a tree"). We can get an idea of how this process might have taken place, when we look not only at the woodcut of the Dominican Tree in Turrecremata's *Meditationes*, but also at the text of the accompanying meditation.[34] Here, we find several allegorical epithets referring to St Dominic, and one of them is *patriarcha*. Thus he becomes easily comparable to the figure of a Biblical progenitor like Jesse. This is followed immediately by the metaphor of Dominic as a vine planted for the salvation of mankind and bearing copious fruit. In the text, these two concepts do not appear to be directly related to one another and no direct reference is made to the pictorial composition it accompanies, nor is there an explicit mention of the Tree of Jesse. However, the use of such different allegorical concepts side by side makes it comprehensible how the generation of the Dominican Tree as a pictorial subject might have taken place. It seems debatable, however, whether the doubling of the metaphorical content described above actually strengthened the message of such images— one could argue that, on the contrary, it actually lessened the composition's poignancy.

---

32   See Hansen, *Bild*.

33   See also Ilg, "Quasi lignum vitae", 204.

34   Turrecremata, *Meditationes*, 27.

Conclusion

The step from non-genealogical tree diagrams to genealogical trees under-taken by the Dominicans seems only logical, especially from the retrospective point of view of our own culture, where family trees are ubiquitous. This view is, however, somewhat challenged by the fact that even in the 15th century, the Franciscans never took that step at all but rather continued to use monastic trees based on other models such as the Tree of Virtues. A representative example of this is found in a late 15th-century panel painting, now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Tournai.[35] It replicates a composition also found in other media such as prints, where the roots of the Franciscan Tree are formed by three allegorical female personifications. They are Obedience, Poverty and Chastity, the virtues that form the core of Franciscan identity and which also correspond to the three vows undertaken by each friar upon entering the order.

So what the case of the Franciscans shows is that while adopting a genea-logical model of self-conception may have been an obvious choice for late medieval monastic communities it was by no means inevitable or compelling. We therefore have to ask what led to the differing approaches employed by different monastic orders, especially Dominicans and Franciscans.[36] At this point, considering the current state of research, any answer to this question can only be of a hypothetical nature,[37] but it may be helpful to remember something discussed more extensively in Christina Lutter's contribution to this volume: the way(s) in which monastic groups conceived of themselves as communities were shaped not least by the rules they adhered to, and these differed significantly between Franciscans and Dominicans. The former

---

35 "*Franziskus*, eds. Stiegemann et al., 314 (cat. no. 97)" with "Meier, Franziskanischer Ordensbaum" - cf. note on p. 196.

36 While *Ordensstammbäume* are occasionally found in other monastic orders as well, they appear most commonly with the Dominicans and the Franciscans. See Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en images*.

37 Recently, Ulrike Ilg sought to explain the differences between Franciscan and Dominican Trees by stating, with regard to the wall painting in Santa Maria Novella: "The Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella apparently tried to outdo their Franciscan rivals by portraying Saint Dominic in a composition similar to the Tree of Jesse as the root of the tree" (Ilg, "Quasi lignum vitae", 204). This explanation, however, seems a bit too simplistic, espe-cially since it leaves the question: if the Dominican model outrivalled the Franciscan one, why did the Franciscans not follow suit and adopt the Tree of Jesse iconography in the course of the 15th century as well?

followed a rule based essentially on that of St Benedict, i.e. a rule that was very much focused on obedience. In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that they resorted to the image of a tree rooted in personifications of their binding monastic vows, obedience itself being one of them. The Dominican rule, on the other hand, is adapted from that of St Augustine, and stresses concepts such as love and fraternity as the central principals of community identity. While it does not necessarily explicitly emphasize family or genealogy, this particular vision of monastic community certainly facilitates the adoption of concepts related to family ties and kinship in a way the Benedictine/Franciscan rule does not.

Admittedly, this hypothesis seems to be somewhat contradicted by the existence of *Ordensstammbaum* imagery based on the Tree of Jesse within the Benedictine Order itself.[38] Apparently, then, following the rule of St Benedictine did not automatically stop an order from adopting genealogical ways of self-representation. On the other hand, there never appears to have been any noteworthy tradition of Benedictine tree images, and the couple of surviving examples seem to be rather isolated cases. It is questionable, therefore, how much weight should be ascribed to this particular strand of evidence. And, of course, we also need to take into account that, unlike the Benedictines, the Franciscans already had a long tradition of allegorical tree imagery at the time when other orders began to adopt the Tree of Jesse-model in the 15th century. So all in all the situation presents itself as quite complex, and a confirmation (or indeed a refutation) of the hypothesis I have just outlined definitely requires further research not only into the pictorial but also into the textual traditions within the Franciscan and Dominican Orders.

One thing that clearly seems to emerge from everything said above is that it really was the Franciscans who were the odd ones out when it came to the use of tree imagery in their visual self-representation. While they continue to stick to their very own traditions of tree metaphors, based not least on the writings of St Bonaventure, until the end of the Middle Ages, by the 15th century all the other orders seem to have been content to appropriate the Biblical model of the Tree of Jesse. Presumably, the appeal of this Biblical model lay in the fact that it added a certain amount of prestige to Monastic Trees through its association with the genealogy of Christ, thus emphasizing a monastic order's

---

38   Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en images*, 245–58. Occasionally, the model was also used by other orders such as the Cistercians and the Carthusians. See ibid., 258–59, 265–74.

sanctity.[39] Moreover, by the 15th century, the Tree of Jesse had become a popular and potent symbolic form, expressing, as Klapisch-Zuber puts it, "both the continuity of a line and the community of a lineage".[40] In the case of 15th century *Ordensstammbäume*, the second aspect seems to have been the more important one. Rather than emphasizing a long lineage leading into the past, images such as the one in Bern create what has been described as the timeless or mythical quality of genealogy, i.e. "eine Präsenz des Anfangs in der Gegenwart, eine Gemeinschaft der ganzen Sippe [in this case of the entire order], die den toten Spitzenahn als Anwesenden unter den Lebenden vorstellt".[41]

The timeless quality of most *Ordensstammbäume* is also evident from the fact that while they imitate a genealogical model, they make little or no effort to arrange the members of a given order chronologically. In most cases, they rather employ a hierarchical model, e.g. by placing the most important saints of an order closest to its founder or by grouping high-ranking persons, such as bishops, cardinals and popes together, and awarding them a particularly prominent position within the composition. This hierarchical arrangement, however, also highlights the fact that the envisioned monastic order constitutes a community which encompasses members from a wide range of different social groups, both men and women, simple friars to high-ranking clergyman and members of the nobility (such as Margaret of Hungary, whose royal descent is made apparent by the inclusion of her coat of arms).

What *Ordensstammbäume* in late medieval Europe represent is therefore first and foremost the idea of a monastic order as an all-encompassing, timeless community. On the other hand, expressing the continuity of lineage—a concept central to genealogical thought—seems to be of little if any importance at all. This emphasis of present community over past lineage also marks a notable difference between European depictions of monastic genealogies and their Tibetan counterparts, which I briefly discussed at the beginning of this paper. In Tibetan monasticism, the continuous, uninterrupted tradition of learning and oral transmission from teacher to student was/is a key element;[42]

39　See Klapisch-Zuber, "Genesis", 122–23, who also argues that monastic orders adopted the model of the Tree of Jesse earlier than secular dynasties precisely because the orders' inherent sanctity made it easier and less blasphemous to associate themselves with the genealogy of Christ than it would have been for a secular dynasty.

40　Klapisch-Zuber, "Genesis", 122.

41　Heck and Jahn, "Genealogie", 4.

42　Kossak, "Lineage Painting".

in visual representations of monastic genealogies, the depiction of an uninterrupted lineage was therefore decidedly more important than in medieval Europe, where the concept of the monastic order as a community appears to have been the crucial factor.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Francesco Sarri OFM, *I Fioretti di S. Francesco d'Assisi, da un codice della Biblioteca Reale di Torino*, ed. (Florence, 1926).

Johann von Frast, *Das "Stiftungen-Buch" des Cistercienser-Klosters Zwetl*, ed. Fontes rerum Austriacarum—Österreichische Geschichts-Quellen. Zweite Abtheilung. Diplomata et acta, vol. 3 (Vienna, 1851).

Johannes de Turrecremata, *Meditationes* (Rome, 1473).

Joachim Rossl, *Liber fundatorum Zwetlensis monasterii "Bärenhaut"*, ed. (Graz, 1981).

Secondary Sources

Uwe Bennert, "Art et propagande politique sous Philippe IV le Bel: le cycle de la Cite", *Revue de l'art* 97 (1992), 46–59.

Jörg Jochen Berns, "Baumsprache und Sprachbaum. Baumikonographie als topologischer Komplex zwischen 13. und 17. Jahrhundert", in *Genealogie als Denkform in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Kilian Heck and Bernhard Jahn (Tübingen, 2000), 155–76.

Steffen Bogen, "Träumt Jesse? Eine ikonographische Erfindung im Kontext diagrammatischer Bildformen des 12. Jahrhunderts", in *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren: Bildtheorie und Bildgebrauch in der Vormoderne*, eds. David Ganz and Thomas Lentes (Berlin, 2004), 19–239.

Lina Bolzoni, *La rete delle immagini* (Turin, 2002).

Angi Elsea Bourgeois, *Reconstructing the lost frescoes of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome from the Meditationes of Cardinal Juan de Torquemada* (Lewiston, 2009).

Joanna Cannon, *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches: Art in the Dominican Churches of Central Italy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New Haven, London, 2013).

Luigi De Gregori, *Il chiostro della Minerva e le Meditationes del cardinale Turrecremata* (Rome, 1940).

Dominique Donadieu-Rigaut, "L' image d'un ordre en pleine expansion: La salle capitulaire du convent de Trévise", in *Die Methodik der Bildinterpretation*, ed. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Göttingen, 2002), 381–413.

Dominique Donadieu-Rigaut, *Penser en images les ordres religieux: XIIe–XVe siècles* (Paris, 2005).

Yvonne El Saman, "Studien zu Kapitelsaalprogrammen zwischen 1250 und 1450 in ober- und mittelitalienischen Klöstern", (Inaugural-Dissertation, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg i. Br., 2000).

Esther Meier, "Franziskanischer Ordensbaum (cat. no. 97)", in *Franziskus—Licht aus Assisi*, Katalog zur Ausstellung im Erzbischöflichen Diözesanmuseum und im Franziskanerkloster Paderborn, eds. Christoph Stiegemann et al. (Munich, 2011), p. 314.

Marie-Pierre Gelin, "Stirps Jesse in capite ecclesiae: Iconographic and Liturgical Readings of the Tree of Jesse in Stained-Glass Windows", in *The Tree: Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, eds. Pippa Salonius and Andrea Worm (Turnhout, 2014), 13–33.

Robert Gibbs, *Tomaso da Modena: Painting in Emilia and the March of Treviso 1340–80* (Cambridge, 1989).

Charlotte Gutscher-Schmid, *Nelken statt Namen: Die spätmittelalterlichen Malerwerkstätten der Berner Nelkenmeister* (Bern, 2007).

Dorothee Hansen, *Das Bild des Ordenslehrers und die Allegorie des Wissens: Ein gemaltes Programm der Augustiner* (Berlin, 1995).

Kilian Heck and Bernhard Jahn, "Genealogie in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit: Leistungen und Aporien einer Denkform", in *Genealogie als Denkform in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Kilian Heck and Bernhard Jahn (Tübingen, 2000), 1–9.

Ingrid-Sibylle Hoffmann, *Der Meister der Pollinger Tafeln: Wege der Erneuerung in der bayerischen Malerei des mittleren 15. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar, 2007).

Ulrike Ilg, "Quasi lignum vitae: The Tree of Life as an Image of Mendicant Identity", in *The Tree: Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, eds. Pippa Salonius and Andrea Worm (Turnhout, 2014), 187–212.

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The Genesis of the Family Tree", *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 4 (1991), 105–29.

Steven Miles Kossak, "Lineage Painting and Nascent Monasticism in Medieval Tibet", *Archives of Asian Art* 43 (1990), 49–57.

Christina Lutter, "Locus horroris et vastae solitudinis? Zisterzienser und Zisterzienserinnen in und um Wien", *Historisches Jahrbuch* 132 (2012), 141–76.

Marigold Anne Norbye, "Arbor genealogiae: Manifestations of the Tree in French Royal Genealogies", in *The Tree: Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, eds. Pippa Salonius and Andrea Worm (Turnhout, 2014), 69–93.

Raphaèle Preisinger, "Die Bilder des Lebens Christi im Orden des Heiligen Franziskus", in *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, eds. Kristin Marek et al. (Munich, 2006), 315–42.

Raphaèle Preisinger, *Lignum Vitae: Zum Verhältnis materieller Bilder und mentaler Bildpraxis im Mittelalter* (Paderborn, 2014).

Dénes Radocsay, *Wandgemälde im mittelalterlichen Ungarn* (Budapest, 1977).

Daniel Russo, "Religion civique et art monumental à Florence au XIVe siècle: La décoration peinte de la salle capitulaire à Sainte-Marie-Nouvelle", in *La religion civique à l'époque médiévale et modern: Chrétienté et islam*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome, 1995), 279–96.

Monika Schmelzer, *Der mittelalterliche Lettner im deutschsprachigen Raum: Typologie und Funktion* (Petersberg, 2004).

Alessandro Simbeni, "Il Lignum vitae sancti Francisci in due dipinti di primo Trecento a Padova e Verona", *Il Santo* 46 (2006), 185–213.

Jane Casey Singer, "Painting in Central Tibet, ca. 950–1400", *Artibus Asiae* 54 (1994), 87–136.

Gabrielle Spiegel, "Genealogy. Form and Function in Medieval Historiography", in Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), 99–110.

Heidrun Stein-Kecks, *Der Kapitelsaal in der mittelalterlichen Klosterbaukunst: Studien zu den Bildprogramen* (Munich, Berlin, 2004).

Karel Stejskal, "Die Rekonstruktion des Luxemburger Stammbaums auf Karlstein", *Umění* N.S. 26 (1978), 535–62.

Angelus Walz OP, "Von Dominikanerstammbäumen", *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 34 (1964), 231–74.

Andrea Worm, "Arbor autem humanum genus significant: Trees of Genealogy and Sacred History in the Twelfth Century", in *The Tree: Symbol, Allegory, and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*, eds. Pippa Salonius and Andrea Worm (Turnhout, 2014), 35–67.

Genealogy into the Future: Glimpses from Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's (1653–1705) Exposition of the Extended Dalai Lama Lineage[1]

Birgit Kellner

In the course of the 17th century, Tibet became an ecclesiastical or "bodhisattva-cratic" state under the leadership of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–82). As the Fifth was not only regarded as the latest link in a chain of reborn religious hierarchs, but also as an emanational embodiment of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Tib. Spyan ras gzigs), Tibet became envisioned as a society under the tutelage of a supreme bodhisattva. Spiritual genealogy, which had been a pervasive element of Tibetan religious culture for several centuries and had more recently become a preferred method for regulating succession among religious hierarchs, now acquired unprecedented political significance.

This new constellation also motivated a refashioning of the past. Aiming to establish the supremacy of the Fifth Dalai Lama as a person, as well as that of the Dalai Lama lineage as an institution, Blo bzang rgya mtsho and his advisers, the regents, propagated an expansive version of his lineage, constructed as a potentially unlimited succession of emanations of Avalokiteśvara reaching back into a distant Indian past, 991 aeons ago (one aeon alone is already an inconceivably long time). The ambitious regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705) was particularly invested in the construction of Blo bzang rgya mtsho's persona, especially after the Fifth's death in 1682, which he famously managed to conceal for altogether 13 years by mummifying the corpse (and reportedly hiring a look-alike for official appearances) while orchestrating and preparing

the Fifth's succession. Having acted as the de facto ruler of Tibet after the Fifth's official resignation in 1679, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho composed a large amount of biographical literature on his master, which also contains an extensive exposition of the extended lineage. Combining motives from Tibetan historiographic tradition with themes and narrative devices from popular religious biography, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's exposition can be read as making an ideological as well as teleological argument for the continuity of a religious institution with newly gained political significance into the indefinite future. This argument is ideological in that it effaces the historicity of the Dalai Lama's claim to supremacy, and teleological because it presents Tibetan history as the fulfilment of a salvific plan, in particular through predictions attributed to Avalokiteśvara, his various manifestations and their helpers in the past.

Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's exposition of the extended Dalai Lama lineage sheds interesting light on mechanisms and strategies involved in the construction and negotiation of lineage in Tibet. As we shall see, he operates with the standard that the lineage should be a single line of successive incarnations, yet the extension of the lineage into the past, and the Fifth's own choices in that extension, make it impossible to apply this standard rigidly. This did not prevent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho and later authors from referring to the resulting array of Avalokiteśvara incarnations as a "lineage", but the tensions revealed by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's arguments suggest that genealogy here serves less as a method for anchoring a community in a past and much more as a means of regulating its future.

Historical and Conceptual Background

Rebirth Lineage and Incarnation

Tibetan culture is, if anything, pervaded by lineages. Esoteric or tantric traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism such as came to flourish in Tibet emphasize the transmission of teachings and practices from teacher to disciple in a close personal bond. Being part of an unbroken lineage is what authorizes a tantric master. The significance of lineage is itself inscribed in, and continually confirmed by, tantric religious practice, right from the preparatory steps where the lineage *guru*s are invoked in ritual. The importance of lineage as a personalized transmission vehicle in tantric Buddhism may well have contributed to the very concrete reality of lineage in Tibetan religious life, but lineage as a phenomenon extends far beyond the confines of esoteric practice. Lineages were kept alive in liturgy through "lineage supplication prayers" (*gsol 'debs*), depicted in painting, enacted through ritual practice, and carefully recorded

and transmitted in "records of teachings received" (*gsan yig, thos/thob yig*).[2] Besides being nearly ubiquitous in religious life and literature, lineage serves both as an organizing structure and as a source of authority and reputation in virtually all contexts where theoretical or practical knowledge is passed on, whether it is in monastic learning, in medical practice, or in arts and crafts.

Lineage is subject to various forms of differentiation; in the context of Buddhist religious transmission and practice, one may for instance distinguish rebirth lineages (*skye brgyud*) from teaching lineages (*chos brgyud*), with the latter acting as a framework for the former. Lineages of rebirths (*yang srid, skye ba*) have been attested in Tibetan Buddhism since the 12th century. Examples of what may be recognitions of reborn masters from late Indian Buddhism are rare and dubious.[3] In Tibet, the earliest documented cases took place in the Bka' gdams teaching lineage. The tantric master Chos kyi rgyal po (1069–1144) considered himself a rebirth of Nag tsho (1011–ca. 1068), a master-translator whom a western Tibetan king had dispatched to bring the famous Bengal scholar-monk Atiśa (982–1054) to Tibet, who was to become the founding figure of the Bka' gdams as self-conscious tradition. Other Bka' gdams teachers around that time are identified as embodiments of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and also as rebirths of an earlier teacher. Tibetan tradition itself claims that the tradition of recognised "emanational embodiments" (*sprul sku*) began with Karma pakṣi (1206–83), counted as the second hierarch of the Karma branch of the Bka' brgyud school, who recognized himself as a rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–93) and later also as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara; this recognition was accepted by his disciples.

Two concepts are at work here. Rebirth expresses that consciousness perpetuates itself after the death of a living being and takes on a new body. Although every living being is regarded as a rebirth in this general sense, the Tibetan practice of rebirth recognitions is limited to important religious masters, and in their case is typically guided by intention.[4] The second concept,

---

2   For the Fifth Dalai Lama's own *gsan yig* see Ehrhard, "Flow".

3   See van der Kuijp, "Die Dalai Lamas", for a more detailed account of the historical events summarized in the following.

4   The possibility of controlling one's rebirth is already suggested in (albeit sporadic) canonical passages where someone's wish, thought, meditation or resolve—especially at the moment of death—is said to determine where and how one is reborn (Schmithausen, "Critical Response", 206). One should note that the continuity of consciousness across existences on which rebirth is premised is only an apparent one; Buddhist philosophers are quick to point out that there are at best only short-lived mental episodes that cause others and constitute a series; there is no lasting substrate that would endure from one life to the next.

that of an "emanational embodiment" or incarnation (*sprul pa, sprul sku*), is derived from a complex metaphysics of buddhahood, according to which, in simplified terms, buddhahood can appear to ordinary living beings in a particular form, usually as an animal or a human, chosen in accordance with the faculties and characteristics of the people who are to be instructed or converted.[5] A *sprul sku* manifests one or another aspect of buddhahood, typically in the form of a bodhisattva like Mañjuśrī (the bodhisattva of wisdom) or Avalokiteśvara (the bodhisattva of compassion).

The Avalokiteśvara Cult and Bka' gdams Incarnation Narratives

It is perhaps not a coincidence that the first known cases of reborn incarnations of Avalokiteśvara are documented among the Bka' gdams school, which centuries later would become an important point of reference for Blo bzang rgya mtsho and Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho in their expansion of the Dalai Lama lineage. The early Bka' gdams pa were engaged in missionary activities, aiming to bring Tibetans to support the Buddhist Dharma—and their lineage—during a period of Buddhist revivalism that followed decades of political disorder and religious disintegration in the aftermath of the collapse of the Tibetan empire from 842 onward. Across Tibet, Atiśa and his disciples taught various meditative techniques centred around Avalokiteśvara, making use of simplified sets of practices geared towards the conversion of the laity. An identification of a Tibetan master with the bodhisattva of compassion would in this context certainly have raised his prestige—especially in an environment where mythical narratives reshaped the history of the old Tibetan empire into an unfolding of Avalokiteśvara's benevolent agency. In such narratives, king Srong btsan sgam po (605?–649), who is credited with having laid the foundations for Buddhism in Tibet, is identified with Avalokiteśvara. One finds these in several works of "discovered" or "revealed" literature, so-called "treasure" (*gter ma*) texts, attested to by the 11th and 12th centuries, but possibly reaching back into the early post-imperial period. Some of these treasure texts present themselves as personal manifestos, or testaments, by Srong btsan sgam po himself. In a telling passage from the *Maṇi bka' 'bum,* a treasure text that was probably compiled around 1175,[6] the buddha Śākyamuni himself predicts the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's future births in Tibet, and assigns Tibet to him as his special

---

5   Tibetan *sprul sku* translates Sanskrit *nirmāṇakāya*. The terms "emanation", "emanational embodiment", and "incarnation" are here used interchangeably, for the process whereby a bodhisattva manifests as a living being, or for that living being that constitutes such a manifestation.

6   See Gyalbo, Hazod and Sørensen, *Civilisation*, Appendix I.

domain, invoking the idea of the snow-land as an immoral wilderness in need of civilizing, which was to become such an important element in Tibetan cultural awareness:

> The snowy domain to the north [Tibet] is presently a domain of animals, so even the word "human being" does not exist there—it is a vast darkness. And all who die there turn not upwards but, like snowflakes falling on a lake, drop into the world of evil destinies. At some future time, when that doctrine declines, you, O bodhisattva, will train them. First, the incarnation of a bodhisattva will generate human beings who will require training. Then, they will be brought together [as disciples] by material goods. After that, bring them together through the doctrine! It will be for the welfare of living beings![7]

The *Maṇi bka' 'bum* goes even further and grounds the predicted embodiment of Avalokiteśvara in Srong btsan sgam po in the very nature of the universe.[8] Moreover, like the "testaments", the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* supports Avalokiteśvara's embodiment in Srong btsan sgam po through a number of the bodhisattva's rebirth stories,[9] in which Avalokiteśvara typically appears in the guise of Indian kings and princes. Stories of the same type are encountered in the "Book of Bka' gdams" (*Bka' gdams glegs bam,* henceforth KLB), a popular collection set down in writing in 1302 after a period of oral transmission.[10] They are modelled on popular narratives of buddha Śākyamuni's own previous births (Skt. *jātaka*),[11] in which the buddha as the all-knowing narrator identifies a character from a story in a distant past as a buddha-to-be, while other characters have been reborn as members of his audience (and entourage) in the present. In the stories of the KLB Atiśa replaces the buddha as the authoritative narrator, and

---

7   MKB I.87 (quoted in DGS 78a6-b1). The translation is borrowed from Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation*, 149.

8   Kapstein, "Remarks", 526 (originally published in 1992). For further details on the Avalokiteśvara cult in 11th-century testamentary literature see Appendix I in Gyalbo, Hazod and Sørensen, *Civilisation*.

9   See Appendix I in Gyalbo, Hazod and Sørensen, Sørensen, *Civilisation,* for a comparative table, comparing two recensions of the MKB with the *Bka' chems mtho[n] mthing ma.*

10   Ehrhard, "Transmission", 44. For brief summaries of the individual stories see Schuh, *Tibetische Handschriften.*

11   The title pages attached to individual sections of the KLB identify these stories as *skyes rabs*, which is the customary Tibetan translation of *jātaka* (Schuh, *Tibetische Handschriften*, 1, 16 and 22). See Roesler, "Operas", for a closer analysis of parallels between the KLB and *jātaka* tales as far as narrative devices are concerned.

he places his chief Tibetan disciple 'Brom ston rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1004/5-64) at the centre of the narratives, identifying him with Avalokiteśvara in his numerous manifestations. Set in a timeless Indian universe populated by good and evil kings, saintly monks and forest renunciates and Brahmins as well as demons hostile to the Dharma, many of these lively stories narrate how princes and kings come to devote themselves to the Dharma, often only after overcoming a number of obstacles placed in their path.

While Atiśa himself might have transmitted such Indian tales to his Tibetan disciples, more specific links to the Bka' gdams tradition in its Tibetan environment were inserted in some of them at some unidentifiable point in their transmission prior to 1302. Two stories especially stand out in this respect, and will be of particular significance for the Fifth Dalai Lama and Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. In the story of prince Dkon mchog 'bangs,[12] the prince resists his father's command to marry in order to continue the royal line. A Buddhist saint appears in the sky and advises the prince to travel to the land of U rgyan, where he is to find the Wisdom "sky-goer" (*mkha' 'gro ma*, Skt. *ḍākinī*) Gsang ba ye shes and take her home as his bride. After a complicated and dangerous journey, during which the prince is also called upon to do battle with fierce demons, he at long last finds Gsang ba ye shes in the company of the spiritual teacher and Vajraholder Dri ma med pa and other *ḍākinī*s, numbering in the thousands. He receives numerous predictions about future rebirths, and the future identity, of all present. The prince himself will be reborn as Srong btsan sgam po and 'Brom ston, and Gsang ba ye shes promises to be reborn as his companion (during his existence as Srong btsan sgam po, as the king's Chinese wife). The foundation of the monastery of Rwa sgreng in Central Tibet, as the palace of Avalokiteśvara, is also predicted; the monastery, the first monastic seat of the Bka' gdams, was founded by 'Brom ston in 1056/7. Of the altogether 21,000 junipers that would be found in Rwa sgreng, the prophecy continues, two central ones stand for Atiśa and 'Brom ston; the trees have seven layers of bark that symbolically represent the seven Victorious Ones (*rgyal ba*) who will instruct human beings in an age of decline. The long story of king Lha'i rgyal po continues along the same lines.[13] Here the story of a childless king, whose wish for offspring is fulfilled when upon Atiśa's request he builds *stūpa*s and takes a *yoginī* for his bride, serves as a frame for detailed prophecies and extensive explanations on incarnational connections between the main saints of the Bka' gdams school and Tibetan kings. Tibetan history is seen as the fulfilment

---

12   No. 5 in the *bu chos*-section of the KLB (Schuh, *Tibetische Handschriften*, 5–8). See Roesler, "A Palace", 134–35 for a summary focusing on the content of the predictions.

13   No. 19 in the *bu chos* section of the KLB (Schuh, *Tibetische Handschriften*, 16).

of predictions made in a mythical Indian past, and in particular, of predictions of future rebirths.

Rebirth Lineages as a System for Regulating Succession

Approximately at the time when the narratives in the KLB were written down—1302—rebirth lineages began to turn into a system of passing on authority, power and property; it seems that "the interest in previous incarnations mirrored in the stories and the institutional promotion of the *sprul sku* system went hand in hand".[14] In the 16th century, the recognition of a child rebirth gradually became the preferred method for regulating the succession of religious hierarchs. As Buddhism had been reintroduced into a politically fragmented situation after the collapse of the empire, networks of religious centres had sprung up that were closely related to the noble families, or clans, that ruled over their territory. Exponents of noble families not only sponsored and supported these, but became religious masters themselves. Religious and temporal authority were first transmitted within family lines, from father to son or, in male monastic groups that were bound to celibacy, from uncle to nephew. The shift of the transmission of authority from family lines to lineages of rebirths is nicely illustrated in the history of the 'Brug pa branch of the Bka' brgyud school, founded by Gtsang pa rgya ras (1161–1211). Authority over this school was kept within the Rgya clan for two centuries. Rgyal dbang kung dga' dpal 'byor (1428–76), in the tenth generation descended from the lineage founder, claimed to be not only his rebirth, but also a rebirth of the Indian yogin Nāropa, as well as an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. Other rebirths had occurred in the intervening generations, but they had not been recognized. Rgyal dbang kung dga' dpal 'byor was still a member of the Rgya clan, and his proclamation of a spiritual genealogy can be seen as serving to increase the prestige of the family. When no male heir appeared for a number of years after his death, a child outside the family was chosen as his rebirth and given the name 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa. The next in the line was the famed historian Padma dkar po (1527–92), also recognized as a child, and also not a member of the Rgya family. Despite attempts of the Rgya to reappropriate the lineage, it remained outside the family and became based exclusively on spiritual genealogy.[15] The recognition of Padma dkar po's own rebirth was heavily disputed. The unsuccessful of the two candidates eventually fled to Bhutan, where the 'Brug pa remain dominant until today.

---

14   Roesler, "Operas", 116, n. 6.
15   Smith, "Padma dkar po", 81–83.

Transferring authority within rebirth lineages rather than family lines offered certain advantages. As was the case in the Rgya clan, male heirs were not always available; in other cases familial succession brought out rivalries between different parts of a family competing for the privilege of their off-spring to advance to prestigious offices. Devising a path to religious offices through the neutral model of rebirth might have seemed an attractive work-around to avoid problems and delays caused by familial strife.[16] The determi-nation of succession through the family-independent notion of rebirth supported the independence of monasteries and monastic networks from the prerogatives of noble families; it significantly contributed to the rise of monas-tic institutions to positions of political power. In historiographical literature, one notes the shift of succession from family descent to spiritual genealogies insofar as family genealogies become redescribed as involving incarnation lines. Gradually, the genealogical representation of incarnate lineages replaces that of noble families. On this level, notions of social belonging adapted from Indian Buddhism displaced the self-identification via patrilinear and matrilin-ear kinship groups that are pervasive throughout Tibetan culture.

The Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) and the Extended Dalai Lama Lineage

These shifts in genealogical representation illustrate how changes in the social and political framework of religion impact on Tibetan visions of the past, a process that can be observed over and over in Tibetan historiography. The early history of the lineage of the Dalai Lamas, high-ranking religious hierarchs within the Dge lugs or "yellow hat" school[17] is another case in point. The title "Dalai Lama" was conferred on Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1543–88) by the Altan Khan[18] of the south-east Mongolian Tümed Mongols as part of a longer sequence of titles. The event recalled the relationship between the Sa skya hierarch 'Phags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–80) and Qubilai Khan (r. 1260–94), the founder of the Yuan dynasty that had enabled the Sa skya school of Buddhism to dominate Central Tibet politically for some time. Conceived as

---

16   Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 242.

17   The self-referential term "Dge lugs pa", "The Virtuous Ones", came into use some time after the foundation of the school. The term "Dga' ldan pa" ("Those from Ganden") is also in use, referring to one of their main monastic seats.

18   The transliteration of Mongolian names and titles follows Atwood, *Encyclopedia*.

relationships between patron and priest (*yon mchod/mchod yon*),[19] and there-fore framed from the perspective of religion, these relations were reciprocal in that the "priest" offered instructions and tantric initiations to the ruler, while the ruler in turn extended his patronage to the master and his community, which included political and military protection.

The title "Dalai Lama" was then retrospectively awarded to the two prede-cessors in Bsod nam rgya mtsho's rebirth lineage, Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1475–1542), as well as Dge 'dun grub (1391–1475), a disciple of the Dge lugs' founding father Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419). Bsod nams rgya mtsho therefore came to be counted as the third in the Dalai Lama lineage. A posthu-mously composed biography of Dge 'dun grub dating to 1494 already presents him as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, and mentions as his previous exis-tences king Srong btsan sgam po, as well as 'Brom ston. The identification with 'Brom ston is anchored in familial connections, since Dge' dun grub himself belonged to the 'Brom family, but it also reflects the fact that the Dge lugs pa understood themselves as reviving and continuing the Bka' gdams lineage, as Tsong kha pa had initiated his tradition as the "new Bka' gdams" (*bka' gdams gsar ma*). The biography highlights the beneficial activities of numerous and manifold manifestations of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in Tibet, for Avalokiteśvara may assume various forms, as kings, as lay or monastic bodhisattvas—forms chosen in accordance with the people to be converted. Just like the one moon is reflected in various water surfaces on the earth, so Avalokiteśvara shows his numerous manifestations.[20]

The identification of a Dalai Lama as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara became politically significant with Blo bzang rgya mtsho who came to rule over Central Tibet. A text dating to 1698, 16 years after his death, noted tellingly that the Dalai Lama's government served Tibet just as a bodhisattva serves all humanity.[21] This political shift was, once more, facilitated by the close relation-ship between Dge lugs hierarchs and their Mongol patrons. In 1642, Güüshi Khan of the Khoshud Mongols offered the 13 myriarchies of Tibet as a gift to Blo bzang rgya mtsho; the Mongol ruler was in turn awarded the title "Upholder

---

19   See Seyfort Ruegg "*mChod yon*", *Ordre Spirituel* and "The Preceptor-Donor (*yon mchod*) Relation" for detailed studies of the relationship between spiritual and temporal order in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist thought, and further Cüppers, ed. *The Relationship*.

20   See the passage translated in Ishihama, "On the dissemination", 543–44. In a biography of the Third Dalai Lama composed in 1596, Maitri Don grub rgyal mtshan also once refers to the Third Dalai Lama Bsod nams rgya mtsho as an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara and a rebirth of 'Brom ston (van der Kuijp, "Die Dalai Lamas", 16).

21   Quoted after Schaeffer, "Der Fünfte Dalai Lama", 65.

of Doctrine, King of the Dharma". A "patron-priest" relationship between the two had already been established in a series of earlier meetings, and the event was understood to re-enact the alliance of 'Phags pa with Qubilai Khan. The act marked the end of a long period of civil war between the forces of Dbus (Central Tibet) and Gtsang (Western Tibet), which, given that the ruling houses were aligned with the Dge lugs and the Karma Bka' brgyud schools respectively, had been ideologically projected as a sectarian conflict.

The activities of the Dalai Lama and his regents after 1642 include key ingredients of what a modern political analyst would refer to as "nation-building": the establishment of a new form of government—the Dga' ldan pho brang government—uniting religious and secular branches, new administrative structures, accompanied by large-scale public projects expressed in a symbolic language that reinforced the identification of the Dalai Lama with Avalokiteśvara. The most visible of these was the construction of the Potala palace in Lhasa, which was named after Avalokiteśvara's residence on the summit of mount Potala[ka] in South India (although, given that Avalokiteśvara was already known to reside in his palace at Rwa sgreng, the bodhisattva was effectively only relocated within Central Tibet).[22] As scholars, the Fifth and Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho engaged in wide-ranging projects to gather, organize and systematize Tibetan scholarship and sciences, whether medical sciences, historiography or astronomy. The project to establish the Dalai Lama's supremacy, while having broader cultural, social and diplomatic reach, was at the same time also aimed to secure Dge lugs supremacy over other schools in an atmosphere of sectarian hostility and competition. This included the conversion of Karma Bka' brgyud monasteries to Dge lugs centres, and the appropriation of their assets.

Blo bzang rgya mtsho undertook a variety of activities that stressed his identification with Avalokiteśvara and with king Srong btsan sgam po. After 1642, he performed an increasing number of rituals relating to Avalokiteśvara in front of occasionally large numbers of people, where he presented himself as Avalokiteśvara and Srong btsan sgam po.[23] During a journey to China in 1652–53, his autobiography mentions approximately 50 Avalokiteśvara-related rituals of various sizes and types, in front of audiences of different ethnicities and from various social strata. The Fifth further commissioned a series of paintings of parts of his lineage in monastic assembly halls, that is, in publicly visible locations. A lineage of Dge 'dun grub's previous incarnations was

---

22   Van der Kuijp, "Die Dalai Lamas", 31.

23   For documentation of the activities referred to here and in the following see Ishihama, "On the dissemination".

painted in the monastery at Rdzing phyi, which had been restored in 1644 after suffering damage in a fire caused by upheavals in 1642. The same lineage was also painted on the walls of the great assembly hall in the Potala in 1648, and in 1651 in the inner sanctuary of the assembly hall of the Dga' ldan don gnyis gling monastery at Lho brag. Whole series of succession paintings were produced, as murals or in the form of *thang ka* scrolls, although few complete sets appear to survive.[24]

The lineage, however, was no longer limited to the five successive rebirths with the title "Dalai Lama". Blo bzang rgya mtsho authored a short undated treatise on the pictorial depiction of the succession of Indian and Tibetan incarnations of Avalokiteśvara, entitled "The Clear Mirror" (*gsal ba'i me long*).[25] The treatise lists 16 incarnations, plus the Fifth Dalai Lama himself. In addition to the first four Dalai Lamas, these comprise, among others, Avalokiteśvara himself, the Indian prince Dkon mchog 'bangs from the "Book of Bka' gdams", king Srong btsan sgam po and the two other kings who had become enshrined as "Dharma kings" owing to their importance in establishing Buddhism—Khri srong lde btsan (742–797) and Khri ral pa can (805–836). The list also includes 'Brom ston, as well as five Tibetan religious masters from different schools and traditions, active between the 11th and 13th centuries. We shall return to this list and the motives behind its constitution below, in our discussion of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's exposition.

The literary corpus expounding the Dalai Lama genealogy further includes biographies of the Fifth's two predecessors, composed in 1646 and 1652[26]—as well as three autobiographies, and, last but not least, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's biographical literature on him. Finally, the Fifth also composed several supplication prayers to his own lineage, one of which lists altogether 78 Avalokiteśvara incarnations. In general, this list expands each of the groups that were already represented in the shorter list of 16: Indian pre-existences from the "Book of Bka' gdams", Tibetan kings, and Tibetan religious masters. The list also includes figures whose inclusion is more difficult to explain, such as Padmavajra, a 14th-century Nepalese scholar, reportedly a pre-birth of the First Dalai Lama, but, as we shall see, even Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho knew very little about him.

No doubt due to the enormous prestige of the Fifth, the extended Dalai Lama lineage became authoritative, although later authors do not always

---

24 See Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", for a reproduction and discussion of a set of seven *thang ka* of the Dalai Lama lineage, associated with the Ninth Dalai Lama Lung rtogs rgya mtsho (1805–15).

25 Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie".

26 Van der Kuijp, "Die Dalai Lamas", 15.

exactly reproduce the list given by Blo bzang rgya mtsho himself. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's list contains—as we argue below—66 incarnations up to and including the Fifth himself, while Klong rdol bla ma (1719–95), a leading historian in the Dge lugs school, counts 58 incarnations from Avalokiteśvara to the Eighth Dalai Lama.[27]

The Extended Lineage of the Fifth Dalai Lama in Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's "Silken Dress Supplement"

Blo bzang rgya mtsho resigned from office in 1679, leaving Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho to rule; three years after his resignation he passed away. During much of the 1690s, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho was chiefly concerned with shaping the public perception and legacy of the Fifth Dalai Lama, authoring a large quantity of literature—Kurtis Schaeffer counts 7000 pages—in praise of the Fifth, which included a substantial number of biographical works.[28] Although no Tibetan author quite matched Blo bzang rgya mtsho and Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho as far as the volume of their (auto)biographical output was concerned, their works nevertheless have to be seen against the background of a general increase in religious (auto)biography in Tibet in the 17th century.[29] Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho produces his lengthy exposition of the extended lineage as part of a biographical supplement, appended to the first three volumes of Blo bzang rgya mtsho's autobiography, "The Silken Dress" (*du kū la'i gos bzang*), covering the period from 1617 to 1681. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho classifies this as the "ordinary, outer" autobiography of the Dalai Lama. Conceived as a biography, the "Silken Dress Supplement" (henceforth DGS), which was completed in 1696,[30] has the figure of the Fifth as its vanishing point. The very structure of the work shows this clearly. The opening verses contain a summary of Blo bzang rgya mtsho's life in 12 acts (1–13b), following a well-established structure of the life of buddha Śākyamuni. An extended version of his life in 12 acts is given as the final part of

---

27   See Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 248, and 284, n. 23, for a detailed comparison of Klong rdol bla ma's list with Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's (but see below n. 37 on Sørensen's counting of the latter list).

28   See Schaeffer, "Der Fünfte Dalai Lama", 83, and Schaeffer, "Ritual", for a more extensive discussion of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's writings and activities in this period.

29   This is impressively demonstrated by Schaeffer, "Tibetan Biography", whose data analysis helped by the digital resources of the *Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre* (TBRC) shows the enormous potential of computational methods in Tibetological research.

30   Schaeffer, "Ritual", 197. The "Supplement" as a matter of fact consists of three volumes, covering altogether 1081 folios.

the lineage (133a–162b), so that the lineage is structurally framed by the figure of the Fifth likened to buddha Śākyamuni himself.[31]

In addition to appearing as the culmination point of the lineage, the Fifth is also present in the DGS as an authority on its actual form. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho refers to three supplication prayers to the lineage that Blo bzang rgya mtsho composed: "Blo bzang the Victor" (*blo bzang rgyal ba ma*), the outer version, "Compassion for the World" (*'gro la rjes rtse ma*), the inner version, and "Sarasvatī's Lute" (*dbyangs can rgyud mang ma*), the secret version.[32] Like the "Clear Mirror", the first two present a list of 16 incarnations, while the Sarasvatī prayer presents the long list of 78 rebirths. The Sarasvatī prayer was composed in connection with a set of 65 thangka paintings called the "Array of Life-Stories" (*rtogs brjod kyi zhing bkod*, which had been sponsored by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. These paintings were completed in 1681, but no longer seem to be extant.[33]

The presentation of the actual "succession of births" (*'khrungs rabs*) of the Fifth is dominated and driven by the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, since the extended lineage after all consists in a potentially infinite succession of Avalokiteśvara's manifestations. Reduced to a logical core, the ideological and teleological argument that Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho constructs for the supremacy of the Fifth and its continuation, on altogether 324 pages, is not a formally rigid argument. It is rather made by accumulating a large number of variations on core themes. In keeping with the scholastic character of Tibetan intellectual practices,[34] exegesis is a key element in argument. Quotations from authoritative sources make up a large part of the text, as is the case for all of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's works.[35] The text begins with an extensive *florilegium*, a compilation of passages from Mahāyānasūtras, the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* and other authoritative sources that establish the legend of Avalokiteśvara, including his residence on mount Potala[ka] (13b–30a)—not an uncritical *florilegium*, for a number of apparent inconsistencies between these sources have to be

---

31   The lineage exposition is followed by an account of the Iron-Bird year (19 February 1681–7 February 1682) in which Blo bzang rgya mtsho died. The DGS concludes with an account of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's own rule during the years 1679–1682. Only the lineage exposition itself (1–203a) has been translated into English so far (Ahmad, Life). Ahmad has announced a translation of the remaining parts of the text (203b–360a), but it has not yet been published.

32   DGS 137b1-2.

33   I owe this information to Nancy Lin.

34   See Dreyfus, *The Sound,* for an in-depth study of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism and its intellectual practices revolving around commentary and debate.

35   Schaeffer, "Ritual".

explained away. The section on the Tibetan kings is prefixed by a similar compilation—notably drawing also on the "Book of Bka' gdams"—that recalls Avalokiteśvara's special task of protecting the domain of Tibet, and presents his salvific activities as a frame in which Tibetan history is inscribed (77b–82b). No comprehensive study of the DGS has been undertaken so far; its extent, complexity and exuberance make this a daunting task, which certainly cannot be accomplished here.[36] To bring out the tensions in Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's argument, I will highlight three aspects: the very constitution and composition of the list, problems of chronology and evidence, the use of predictions, and, lastly, the conceptual foundations of the extended lineage.

The Constitution and Composition of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's List of 66 Avalokiteśvara Incarnations

A list of altogether 66 incarnations can be extracted from the "Silken Dress Supplement"—not without some difficulty, however, as the incarnations are not sequentially numbered in the text, nor is the number 66 mentioned anywhere as the total.

The list in table 9.1 follows the order of appearance in the text; life dates have been added for historical figures wherever available.[37] Sangs rgyas rgya

---

36   This, of course, also prevents any assessment of the originality of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's presentation. As far as more immediate models for the DGS are concerned, one may note that a biography of the Fifth by Smon 'gro pa 'Jam dbyangs dbang rgyal rdo rje, composed before 1647 and thus predating it, exhibits at least two features that also characterize the DGS: the use of an array of authoritative quotations, and the appeal to various prophetic traditions (Karmay, "A Most Pleasing Symphony").

37   Life dates are given in accordance with Martin, *Tibetan Histories*, Schaeffer, "Der Fünfte Dalai Lama", Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", and van der Kuijp, "Die Dalai Lamas". Ishihama, "History", 312–14 gives a chronological arrangement of the same list, counting 67 items. No. 36 Dge ba dpal also occurs as no. 47 in her list, after Khri ral pa can; he does not occur twice in the text, and hence this may be a simple mistake (but one, interestingly, also found in Klong rdol bla ma's genealogy, Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 284, n. 23). Schaeffer, "Der Fünfte Dalai Lama", 83 and Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 247 count 58 rebirths. Sørensen only counts three Tibetan kings, not ten, and while he lists the eight additional rebirths, he only counts seven in his numbering. References to the sets I, II and IV dispersed in the DGS expressly mention the number of the elements that they comprise. For set III, the number five of its elements is fixed by the enumeration of body, speech, mind, qualities and action in various places where the set is referred to in the text. Lastly, the identification of actual lineage members—among the large number of other figures mentioned in the text—is also helped by markers on the xylograph print, as lines of small circles underline the names of incarnations in the text.

TABLE 9.1 *The Dalai Lama's extended lineage according to Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's "Silken Dress Supplement" (DGS)*

1	The 36 Indian incarnations of Avalokiteśvara[38]

1. (King) 'Jig rten dbang phyug (*Lokeśvara)
2. The boy Snang ba
3. The boy Gsal ba
4. Prince Chags med (*Asaṅga)
5. Prince Kun tu dga' (*Ānanda)
6. King Lha skyes (*Devajāta)
7. (Prince) Dkon mchog 'bangs (*Ratnadāsa)[39]
8. (Prince) Dad pa brtan pa
9. King Dpal bzang (*Śrībhadra)
10. (Prince) Dad pa rab brtan
11. Prince Blo gros 'phel (*Mativardhana)
12. The boy Dga' 'dzin

13. Dge bsnyen btsun pa
14. Nor bu bzang po (*Sudhana)
15. The boy Zla ba (*Candra)
16. The boy Rin chen snying po (*Ratnagarbha)
17. The boy Padma
18. The boy 'Od zer (*Raśmi)
19. Byams pa (Maitreya)
20. Seng ge sgra (*Siṃhanāda)
21. Prince Bde mchog or Ba lang skyong (*Śaṃvara/Gopāla)
22. Lha'i rgyal po (*Devarāja)
23. The boy Dge 'dun'phel (*Saṅghavardhana)
24. Rājā, man without family

25. (Prince) Ge sar
26. The hare (*Śaśa)
27. The eight-year-old boy
28. The herdsman
29. Rin chen mchog the Brahmin
30. Bsam gtan bzang po
31. The yogi of the charnel ground
32. The king of a small country
33. Kun tu rgyu the sro-*long*-bird
34. King Skyabs sbyin (*Śaraṇadatta)
35. King Gtsug lag 'dzin
36. King Dga' ba dpal or Dge ba dpal

38 Reconstructed Sanskrit names of Indian incarnations have been added in accordance with Ahmad, *Life*, although their significance may be doubtful given that these stories may have been put together in Tibetan idiom from the start, and we might be faced with Tibetans mimicking conventions of Tibetan translations of Sanskrit names without such names ever having been in use. Identifiers—"king", "prince", "the boy"—are in many cases part of the names that are used as headings to the Indian life-stories. In some cases these are supplied on the basis of the story's content, and then given in brackets.

39 The variant spelling *cog* for *mchog* is used consistently in the text.

TABLE 9.1 *The Dalai Lama's extended lineage according to Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's "Silken Dress Supplement" (DGS) (cont.)*

II	Ten Dharmarājas (*chos rgyal*) of Tibet
	37. Gnya' khri btsan po
	38. I sho legs
	39. Lde 'phrul gnam gzhung btsan
	40. Lde rgyal po
	41. Khri sgra dpung btsan
	42. Lha tho tho ri gnyan btsan
	43. Srong btsan sgam po
	44. 'Dus srong mang po rje
	45. Khri srong lde btsan (742–97)
	46. Khri ral pa can (805–36)
	47. 'Brom ston (1004/5–64)

III	The successive incarnations of body, speech, mind, qualities and actions of Padmasambhava and Khri srong lde btsan
	48. Nyang ral (nyi ma'i 'od zer) (1124–96) [body]
	49. Chos dbang (1212–70) [speech]
	50. Mnga' ris paṇ chen (Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje) (1487–1542) [mind]
	51. Dharmarāja Bkra shis stobs rgyal (1551–1602) [qualities]
	52. 'Phags pa (1235–80) [actions]

53. Paṇḍita Padmavajra of Nepal (14th century)[40]

IV   Eight further reincarnations of Avalokiteśvara

54. Kha che dgon pa ba
55. Dpal ldan sa skya pa chen po kun dga' snying po (1092–1158)
56. G.yu brag pa of Zhang (1123–93)
57. G.ya bzang pa (1169–1233)
58. Sum ston ye shes gzungs (12th/early 13th century)[41]
59. Lha rje dge ba 'bum (1200–50)
60. Blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1384–1435)
61. Dpal ldan bla ma rin chen mkhyen rab chos rje (1448–98)

V   The Dalai Lamas

62. Dge 'dun grub (1391–1475)
63. Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1475–1542)
64. Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1543–88)
65. Yon tan rgya mtsho (1589–1617)
66. Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–82)

---

40   Dge 'dun grub is said to be a direct rebirth of Paṇḍita Padmavajra, hence the latter can be dated to the 14th century. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho mentions that he had no biographical information on Padmavajra (DGS 107b5–108a1).

41   According to Martin, *Tibetan Histories*: 30, Sum ston was a student and contemporary of G.yu thog pa (1127–1203).

mtsho arranges the incarnations into sets; only 'Brom ston (no. 47) and Paṇḍita Padmavajra (no. 53) are not part of any expressly labelled set. It is quite possible that a total of just how many incarnations there are was omitted deliberately, in order to avoid stating what was obvious, yet potentially problematic, namely that Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's list is not fully identical to the list of 78 given in the Fifth's own Sarasvatī prayer, even though that list served as his point of reference and must have enjoyed authority. The sequence in the Sarasvatī prayer differs in several places regarding the order of the members.[42] The Sarasvatī prayer places Avalokiteśvara himself at the very beginning, before *Lokeśvara. Moreover, the prayer mentions 21 Tibetan kings, while Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho only regards ten as proper Avalokiteśvara incarnations, although he connects the even larger number of 46 with Avalokiteśvara by admitting all of them as the bodhisattva's "illusory appearances" (*sgyu 'phrul*).[43]

Quite obviously, this lineage is not just an extension of the lineage of Dalai Lamas by tracing further and further "rebirth ancestors" into the past. Several members of sets III and IV lived at the same time as one of the Dalai Lamas: Blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (no. 60; 1384–1435) overlaps with the First Dalai Lama Dge 'dun grub (no. 62; 1391–1475), Rin chen mkhyen rab chos rje (no. 61; 1448–98) and Mnga' ris paṇ chen (no. 50; 1487–1542) both overlap with the Second Dalai Lama Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (no. 63; 1475–1542); Bkra shis stobs rgyal (no. 51; 1551–1602) overlaps with the Third Dalai Lama Bsod nams rgya mtsho (no. 64; 1543–88). Further examples of temporal overlap can be readily amassed, between as well as within the individual sets, especially in the sets III–IV. Even sets I and II overlap. According to his life story, King Gtsug lag 'dzin (no. 35) is the father of the famous Indian scholar-monk Śāntarakṣita (725–788), whom Khri srong lde btsan (no. 45) invited to Tibet. It does not take a historian of Tibet of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's calibre to notice this; he must have been aware of such overlaps.

The list, basically a product of Blo bzang rgya mtsho's selection, cannot be read as a genealogy informed solely by a strict logic of rebirth succession, such that each member would have a single ancestor; this would logically rule out the simultaneous existence of two members in the line. Although one may agree with Sørensen that chronological inconsistencies in the lineage were not considered a major problem either by the Fifth or by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, it seems, however, overstated to say that many of these were tacitly

42   I owe this as well as other information regarding the Sarasvatī prayer to Nancy Lin.

43   DGS 81a6; see also 108a1. The individual names of the ten proper incarnations are listed at DGS 137a5-6. See also Ahmad, Life 358, n. 570. The concordance of lists of Tibetan kings in Haarh, *The Yar-Luṅ Dynasty* (supplemented by Sørensen, *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography*, 526–34) contains only 42.

accepted.[44] Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho addresses problems of chronology and evidence in relation to the individual sets. He balances different kinds of evidence, including predictions, which, while effectively supporting the teleological character of the genealogy, are nevertheless subject to critical evaluation and creative use. Lastly, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho also explicitly discusses the concepts of rebirth and incarnation that inform the list in more fundamental terms.

Problems of Chronology and Evidence

To bring the problems of chronology and evidence that Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho raises into sharper relief, it will also be helpful to discuss the Fifth's possible motivations for including certain figures, or types of figures, in his own list of 78 incarnations in the Sarasvatī prayer.

The 36 Indian pre-existences, also found in the Sarasvatī prayer, are not regarded as problematic as a whole, though some aspects of this set are seen to be in need of justification. The 36 existences are for the most part taken from the "Book of Bka' gdams", the KLB, which the Fifth Dalai Lama expressly mentions as a major source. The KLB was, as a matter of fact, the topic of the Fifth's first public teaching, delivered in 1630,[45] which demonstrates the importance he accorded to it as a vehicle for instruction even prior to 1642. Some differences between the KLB and the DGS may in fact go back to the Fifth's own incorporation of additional material from other sources, while Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho also exercised his own judgement, which essentially amounted to conducting source-criticism to find evidence in support of his master's selection.[46]

---

44   Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 248.

45   Schaeffer, "Der Fünfte Dalai Lama", 65.

46   The list in the DGS largely follows that of 20 rebirth stories in the KLB's section on the "Teachings for the Son" (*bu chos*), after which a further ten are given in the section on the "Teachings for the Nephew" (*ku chos*). The story of Skyabs byin (DGS no. 34) is found separately after the *ku chos*-section. See Schuh, *Tibetische Handschriften*, nos. 1–3. Although the KLB contains further stories (see again Schuh, ibid.), the Fifth confined himself to these 31, which he extended to 36. Although a more in-depth study would be needed that also compares the KLB stories in detail to those found in the MKB and the "testament" literature, it appears in general that the further five figures were obtained by extracting subsidiary figures from the KLB, and through adding figures from (as yet unidentified) other sources. The KLB contains no separate stories for *Lokeśvara (no. 1), Snang ba (no. 3), king *Śrībhadra (no. 9), and the two kings Gtsug lag 'dzin (no. 35) and Dge ba dpal (no. 36). King *Lokeśvara's life-story is found as the first in the relevant section of the MKB (see the table in Gyalbo, Hazod and Sørensen, *Civilisation*, Appendix 1). Snang ba has been extracted from the KLB's story of Gsal ba (no. 2). *Śrībhadra's life story in the DGS (46b5) only consists of a quotation from a "supplement" (*'phros don*) to the life story of

Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho must have attempted to establish a chronological order among the Indian existences, but the sources at his disposal seem to have only allowed him to place them very broadly in particular aeons: king *Lokeśvara lived 991 aeons ago, Lha'i rgyal po before the previous aeon, and others many aeons ago. By contrast, king Dkon mchog 'bangs, like Srong btsan sgam po and the other Tibetan kings, belong to this aeon. Concluding that there is no evidence for any specific chronological sequence, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho notes, wryly, that the Indian existences "were all either before or after each other and were of the same mind-continuum (*thugs rgyud gcig pa*)". But beyond that one cannot determine the order of their lives intelligently.[47] This observation seems to go back to the Fifth himself.[48]

As for the ten Tibetan kings, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's departure from the Fifth's list of 21 in the Sarasvatī prayer is, again, a matter of lack of evidence. The Fifth Dalai Lama had quoted a prophecy from the life story of the Indian incarnation Lha'i rgyal po in the KLB that predicted most of the kings, ministers and bodhisattvas in the future would be incarnations of 'Brom ston, in turn an emanation of Avalokiteśvara. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho suggests that some interpreted this prophecy to mean that all Tibetan kings were incarnations. But there are only "ad hoc papers" (*skabs thob*)[49] on them; life stories showing the true descent of many of these do not exist.[50]

The sets III and IV, comprising Tibetan religious luminaries from the 11th to the 15th century, are heterogeneous, and the reasons for their inclusion as

---

Dad pa rab tu brtan pa (no. 10), which identifies him as a previous existence of Dad pa rab tu rtan pa. The bird Kun tu rgyu (no. 33) is taken from the KLB's *ku chos* section where Kun tu rgyu is the narrator of the ten stories, in what is effectively a Buddhicized Tibetan adaptation of the popular Indian parrot-book, the *Śukasaptati* (Herrmann, *Die tibetische Version*). Conversely, the child god 'Od zer mchog, subject of the tenth of the bird's stories, is not recognized in DGS, as no complete life story was available to Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, who states that the Fifth mentioned 'Od zer mchog in the Sarasvatī prayer (DGS 136b2f.). On the two kings Gtsug lag 'dzin and Dge ba dpal, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho states that they were commonly known to have been Indians and were therefore included (DGS 77b3f., 136b6). Blo bzang rgya mtsho listed Dge ba dpal among his pre-births in the "Silken Dress", and also claimed a family connection with the ruling family of Za hor to which Gtsug lag 'dzin belonged (DGS 145b). According to the life stories in the DGS, Gtsug lag 'dzin was the father of Śāntarakṣita, and Dge ba dpal that of Atiśa, hence they are connected to two Indian masters of vital importance in the history of Tibetan Buddhism.

47   DGS 77b1-2, as well as 136b3-6.

48   See his *Bla ma'i stod tshogs*, as related in Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 284, n. 14.

49   This translation of *skabs thob*, some kind of hand-written document not considered an authoritative source, follows Ahmad, *Life Saṅs-rGyas*, 396, n. 908.

50   DGS 137a1-5.

incarnations are manifold. Some of these came to be remembered for having contributed to the protection of the Jo khang temple of Lhasa, erected by Srong btsan sgam po, or were already known as incarnations of Avalokiteśvara.[51] Both sets contain masters from the tradition of the "ancients", the Rnying ma pa, for which the Fifth Dalai Lama had a special personal preference. Nyang ral nyi ma'i 'od zer (no. 48) and Guru Chos dbang (no. 49) are major revealers and historians of treasure. Nyang ral in particular was regarded as responsible for "discovering" and disseminating the testamentary literature ascribed to Srong btsan sgam po that had played an important role in establishing Avalokiteśvara's special connection with Tibet. Sum ston ye shes gzungs (no. 58) is also a treasure-revealer.[52] Mnga' ris paṇ chen padma dbang rgyal rdo rje (no. 50) and Bkra shis stob rgyal (no. 51) belong to the Fifth's Dalai Lama's preferred lineage among the treasure cycles of the Rnying ma pa, the "Northern Treasures" (*byang gter*) lineage.[53] The Sa skya hierarch 'Phags pa, also included among the 78 incarnations in the Sarasvatī prayer, has special historical significance, marking the Fifth's recognition of 'Phags pa's relationship with Qubilai Khan as a precedent for his own relationship with Güüshi Khan. The Fifth identified himself as 'Phags pa in his autobiography, the "Silken Dress".[54] On a sectarian background the inclusion of 'Phags pa in an Avalokiteśvara-based lineage can also be interpreted as a statement of Dge lugs supremacy, as is also the case with 'Phags pa's great-grandfather Sa chen kun dga' snying po (no. 55), the first patriarch of the Sa skya school. But while Sa chen had already been recognized as an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara in quite early sources of the Sa skya school, in their doctrinal position the erudite scholar 'Phags pa was an incarnation of the bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañjuśrī, and not of Avalokiteśvara.[55]

Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's distribution of these altogether 13 Tibetan masters[56] over the two sets III and IV may well be due to the recognition of different sets of evidence supporting their acceptance as Avalokiteśvara incarnations, and

---

51 Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 247. Several of these are also found in the Fifth's *Gsal ba'i me long*, see Sørensen, ibid.

52 Sum ston is also mentioned in the Fifth's "teachings received" (*gsan yig*), see Ehrhard, "Flow", 94.

53 Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 247; Ehrhard, "Flow", 86.

54 A passage to that effect is quoted in DGS 105b. In his biography of the Third Dalai Lama, composed in 1646 and therefore predating the "Silken Dress", the Fifth refers to the Third as 'Phags pa, and inserts himself in this episode as having been Qubilai Khan (van der Kuijp, "Die Dalai Lamas", 16).

55 Van der Kuijp, "Die Dalai Lamas", 18.

56 Only five of these are found in Blo bzang rgya mtsho's *Gsal ba'i me long*: Kha che dgon pa ba, Sa chen, and Lama Zhang (no. 54–56), as well as Nyang ral (no. 48) and Lha rje dge ba 'bum (no. 59) (Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie", 247).

the anticipation of objections related to that evidence. The five Tibetan masters in set III can be determined as incarnations on the basis of their own testimony, and of that by individual incarnations in their lineage. Hence they are not subjected to any critical examination.[57] More generally, as regards the 36 Indians, the ten Tibetan kings, the four consecutive Dalai Lamas, 'Brom ston and Nyang ral, as well as the other masters in set III, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho believes that their life stories are consistent with historical accounts (*lo rgyus*) and other sources,[58] and offer sufficient evidence. Set IV, the "eight additional rebirths", presents greater difficulties. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho notes there was no direct succession of rebirth from a single mind-series after the appearance of the first figure in this group, that is, Kha che dgon pa ba (no. 54). These eight rebirths, extolled in the Sarasvatī prayer and elsewhere, are consequently counted individually, on the basis of whatever documents are found regarding their status as incarnations.[59] If this verdict is to be consistent with an earlier statement in the text that all eight incarnations are "of one mind-series" (*thugs rgyud gcig pa*),[60] one has to understand him as saying that while all eight belong to one mind-series, they are not a chain of rebirths. That would require their chronological succession, but as historical research reflected in the life-dates given in Table 9.1 demonstrates, and as Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho must have known, some of them lived at the same time. Elsewhere in the text, the eight incarnations are compared to the many reflections that the moon casts in vessels filled with water.[61] We have seen that the moon-simile had already been used in the 1494 biography of the Third Dalai Lama in a more general sense, simply to support a large number of Avalokiteśvara incarnations irrespective of their temporal alignment. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho uses it for the more specific purpose to support simultaneity; as usual, he supports its use with an array of authoritative quotations (135a–136b). The figure of Paṇḍita Padmavajra of Nepal (no. 53) is not part of any set. While Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho includes him in the list, he is not entirely satisfied with evidence. A prediction is quoted from the life story of prince Dkon mchog 'bangs, which says, "One incarnation will go to Nepal". The First Dalai Lama Dge 'dun grub mentioned a prediction that a scholar reaching 80 years of age would appear, and Padmavajra, this much is known, was not only well-versed in all five fields of learning, but also long-lived. Yet Sangs rgyas

---

57   DGS 137b1-2.

58   DGS 108a2.

59   DGS 137b2f.

60   DGS 116a5.

61   DGS 108a1-2.

rgya mtsho adds that he has never seen a biography or other documentation on him (*rnam thar sogs*).[62]

The Use of Predictions

As the case of Padmavajra shows, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's discussion balances different types of evidence in his endeavour to provide a well-supported list of incarnates. He evaluated historical records, and carefully read life stories. Predictions, found in historiographical literature as well as religious biographies, are repeatedly used as evidence, but as the example of Padmavajra shows, their use involves interpretation and critical evaluation.

In the study of authoritative sources that must have been involved in the composition of the DGS, the search for predictions that could be put to use must have played an important role, considering how many of them can be found throughout the text. Some predictions are directly attributed to earlier sources such as the MKB and the KLB. Already in the first life story, that of king *Lokeśvara, the buddha 'Od mdzes ye shes tog predicts his incarnations under ten subsequent buddhas, and foretells that under buddha Śākyamuni—the buddha of our current world-age and the last one in the line—he will be born as king Srong btsan sgam po, and that the holy Dharma will flourish in Tibet (32b5–33b1). A considerable number of predictions are taken from the life stories of Dkon mchog 'bangs (no. 7) and Lha'i rgyal po (no. 22) from the KLB, which we discussed above. In a long passage cited from Lha'i rgyal po's life story, various Tibetan kings are predicted right down to etymological explanations of their names.[63] In Srong btsan sgam po's (83a–b) and 'Brom ston's (89b) life stories, prophecies are cited that establish them as rebirths of Dkon mchog 'bangs.[64] The teacher Dri ma med pa from Dkon mchog 'bangs' life story is reborn as Padmasambhava during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan (86b). For Khri srong lde btsan himself, a prediction that 'Brom ston (qua Avalokiteśvara) will be his rebirth is quoted from Lha'i rgyal po's life-story (86a)—and so on.

While these fulfilments of predictions remain within the historical frame of the KLB—put down in writing in 1302—Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho extends the same stories from the KLB to also predict more recent figures, and in doing so applies more creative interpretations to connect the KLB with biographies of

---

62   DGS 107b5–108a1. The prediction is also referred to at 86b1 (two folios are numbered 86, distinguished as *gong* and *'og*; this passage is found on the one labelled as *gong*).

63   DGS 80a–81a.

64   See DGS 43a for these prophecies in the context of Dkon mchog 'bangs' story.

later Tibetan masters. The birth of the Second Dalai Lama Dge 'dun rgya mtsho was predicted by *ḍākinī*s, who produced a song on the occasion of Dkon mchog 'bangs' meeting with the *ḍākinī* Gsang ba ye shes: Dkon mchog 'bangs would be reborn on a plain (*thang*) where colourful flowers (*me tog*) grow. Together with a passage that states Avalokiteśvara would take residence in a field, to work for the benefit of others, these words predict the place of Me tog thang (119b). The same song of the *ḍākinī*s unfortunately does not provide much material for the prophecy of the birthplace of the Third Dalai Lama Bsod nams rgya mtsho, but Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho solves this problem by drawing on a *ḍākinī*'s generic prediction of Dkon mchog 'bangs' future rebirths as a holy man in Tibet, combined with the Third's own account of his birth (124b). Lastly, the coming of the Dalai Lamas as a whole is famously supported by the prediction of the monastery of Rwa sgreng in the KLB's story of Dkon mchog 'bangs: they are the seven "Victorious Ones" (*rgyal ba*) symbolically represented in the seven layers of bark of Rwa sgreng's juniper trees.[65] Although Tibetan history was thus the fulfilment of predictions from the past, just how this was to be the case had to be shown and demonstrated through a careful and conscientious reading of sources. Predictions are here not embedded in a deterministic eschatology, but form part of an epistemology that demands interpretative genius to reveal the teleology of history. While Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho invests great effort in appealing to tradition—showing compliance with authorities—he also expands and "invents" tradition.[66] As a matter of fact, he appears to have done so quite self-consciously, for in the end he also composed a "succession of lives" (*'khrungs rabs*) for himself.[67]

The Conceptual Foundations of the Dalai Lama Lineage

Prior to presenting the life-story of Blo bzang rgya mtsho as the culmination of the lineage, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho addresses the conceptual foundations of the lineage, motivated by the observation that some unnamed fellow Tibetans had not paid proper attention to them (134b–137b). Here he draws attention to the distinction between "(re)birth" (*skye ba*) and "incarnation" (*sprul pa*). One speaks of rebirth when consciousness takes hold of a later body after an earlier one had passed away, and of incarnation when further and further physical manifestations appear, yet the "incarnation basis" (*sprul gzhi*) does not pass away. This distinction points to two different dynamics: rebirth rests on the

---

65   DGS 89b; see also 116b. See Karmay, "A Most Pleasing Symphony".

66   See Schaeffer, "Ritual", for a more wide-ranging account of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's activities through the lens of Hobsbawm's "invention of tradition".

67   Ishihama, "History".

continuity of consciousness (in a series) and the succession of physical exis-
tences, whereas incarnation allows for a multiplicity of (possibly even simulta-
neous) appearances while the "basis" for incarnation—buddhahood that
becomes manifest in various aspects—does not pass away.

This distinction makes it possible to conceptually detach incarnation from
rebirth. Rebirth and incarnation, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho goes on to stress, are
not always conjoined. Rebirth necessarily occurs within one and the same
(consciousness-)series (*brgyud*), but the new existence may be an incarnation
or not. Prince Siddhārtha, the future buddha Śākyamuni, was for instance an
incarnation, but the brahmin boy Snang byed, one of Siddhārtha's rebirths, did
not seem to have become an incarnation, that is, in addition to a rebirth also a
manifestation of some aspect of enlightenment. Moreover, even within one
and the same rebirth lineage, different "incarnation bases" may manifest them-
selves, although these all are ultimately grounded in the one Vajra essence (*rdo
rje'i snying po*) that permeates all buddhas; this would help to explain why in
one rebirth lineage one might find, for instance, incarnations of Avalokiteśvara
as well as Mañjuśrī. A bodhisattva may incarnate in numerous bodily appear-
ances, comparable to the moon, which can have innumerable reflections in
various water vessels. Just as there are not two moons in this simile, neither are
there two separate bodhisattvas or buddhas behind these multiple manifesta-
tions. While these arguments may have more specific targets than we can cur-
rently determine, the conceptual distinctions that Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho
introduces here can be read as informed by the same tendency than his discus-
sion of problems with set IV, the "eight additional rebirths", which apparently
did not constitute a single rebirth lineage: this is the tendency to separate
incarnation in its function to support a "single mind-series" (*thugs rgyud gcig*)
from the dynamics of rebirth as demanding strict temporal succession.

The Tensions of Spiritual Genealogy

In a way, the Fifth had left Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho with a conundrum when he
extended the lineage of his rebirths to a potentially unlimited succession of
Avalokiteśvara incarnations. He drew on the precedent of the Bka' gdams pa's
recognition of themselves as incarnations of the bodhisattva in his various
manifestations among mythical Indian figures, as well as their acclaimed
incarnational connections with Tibetan kings. He further selected Tibetan
luminaries from the past who were already recognized as Avalokiteśvara, had
made achievements that he regarded as personally important, or had contrib-
uted to Tibetan Buddhist histories in other crucial ways. The extension of the

Dalai lama lineage to 78 members was clearly not informed by the same logic of spiritual genealogy that had come to underlie the narrative structure and social practice of child recognitions as *sprul sku*.

The retrospective incorporation of many past figures into an array of Avalokiteśvara incarnations comes into conflict with the expectation that this "array" should conform to the genealogical structure of a single line. The problems of chronology and evidence that Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho raises demonstrate that this single-layered linear structure indeed, at first, served as a standard: it is precisely because one should *expect* a single line of succession that the obvious contemporaneity of some incarnations in the Fifth's list becomes problematic. Yet Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho also speaks of incarnations, even simultaneous ones, as being "of one mind-series" (*thugs rgyud gcig pa*). The oneness of this series cannot be achieved through belonging to the same mental series in the logic of rebirth, but, if we rely on his final remarks, it is probably warranted by the oneness of the "emanation basis" (*sprul gzhi*) that is the source of all the various appearances. The simultaneous reflection of the moon in many vessels filled with water is designed to make such possibly simultaneous multiple incarnation intelligible.

Although the Fifth's inclusion of individual figures from the past was driven by a variety of motives, the very impulse to expand the list by such a large number—from five through 16 to 78—signals an attempt to connect as many of the noble aspects of Tibet's past with the present as embodied in the figure of Blo bzang rgya mtsho himself—and, in turn, to anchor the Fifth Dalai Lama and his office in a reconstituted vision of Tibetan history. This expansive attitude to revising the past effectively undermines a narrower notion of spiritual genealogy that is premised on the norm of rebirth lineages as a single successive line. This norm, it can be argued, is not a logical consequence of a rigorous analysis of lineage as a concept, but rather has its basis in lineage as a social practice to regulate succession. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho wrote his "Supplement" at a point in time when the Fifth Dalai Lama had already passed away, and the establishment of his successor was a vital and immediate concern; the work was completed in 1696, 14 years after the death of the Fifth, and his successor, the unfortunate Sixth Dalai Lama, was enthroned in 1697. The events of the time, and the historical shift that the Dalai Lama lineage had undergone with Blo bzang rgya mtsho, would have enforced a strict conception of rebirth lineage. It is only logical that when succession to the position of supreme authority in the state is to be regulated by finding a rebirth of a deceased master, the pressure to reduce lineage to a single line increases considerably. Yet at the same time the arguments in favour of the Fifth's

supremacy involved an expansive vision of the past as populated by a large number of manifestations of Avalokiteśvara that could not subscribe to the same logic. Perhaps ironically, at this moment in Tibetan history it seems that the application of spiritual genealogy as a method of guiding the future introduces stricter limitations on its structure, while the past is almost liberated from genealogical elements and acquires its coherence by different means.

Abbreviations

DGS   Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's Supplement to the *Du kū la'i gos bzang*. Full title: *Drin can rtsa ba'i bla ma ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i thun mong phyi'i rnam thar du kū la'i gos bzang glegs bam gsum pa'i 'phros bzhi pa*. Xylograph print from 'Bras spungs, n. d., Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre (http://tbrc.org), W8239. Vol. 1. Based on pagination, it can be established that these prints were produced from the same blocks as the Xerox copies from the India Office Library and British Library used in Ahmad, *Life Saṅs-rGyas*.

KLB   *Bka' gdams glegs bam* or "Book of Bka' gdams".

MKB   *Maṇi bka' 'bum.*

Bibliography

Zahiruddin Ahmad, Saṅs-rGyas *rGya-mTSHo : Life of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, 4, 1, translated from the original Tibetan, Śata-Piṭaka Series 392 (New Delhi, 1999).

Christopher P. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York, 2004).

Christoph Cüppers, ed., *The Relationship between Religion and State* (*chos srid zung 'brel*) *in traditional Tibet* (Lumbini, 2004).

Georges B.J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley, L.A., 2003).

Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "The transmission of the *thig-le bcu-drug* and the *bka' gdams glegs bam*", in *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism*, eds. Helmut Eimer and David Germano, Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (Leiden, 2000), 29–56.

Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "'Flow of the River Gaṅgā': the gSan-yig of the Fifth Dalai Bla-ma and its Literary Sources", in *Studies on the History and Literature of Tibet and the Himalaya*, ed. Roberto Vitali (Kathmandu, 2012), 79–96.

Tsering Gyalbo, Guntram Hazod, and Per Sørensen, *Civilisation at the Foot of Mount Sham-po, The Royal House of lHa Bug-pa-can and the History of g.Ya'-bzang*, Denkschriften der philosophisch-historischen Klasse 290/Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens 36 (Vienna, 2000).

Erik Haarh, *The Yar-Luṅ Dynasty: A Study with Particular Regard to the Contribution by Myths and Legends to the History of Ancient Tibet and the Origin and Nature of its Kings* (Kobenhavn, 1969).

Silke Herrmann, *Die tibetische Version des Papageienbuches* (Sankt Augustin, 1983).

Yumiko Ishihama, "History of Incarnations ('Khrungs rabs) of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho", *China Tibetology, Special Issue* (1992), 307–14.

Yumiko Ishihama, "On the dissemination of the belief in the Dalai Lama as a manifestation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara", in *The History of Tibet, 2: The Medieval Period: c.850–1895: The Development of Buddhist Paramountcy*, ed. Alex McKay (London, 2003), 538–53; repr. *Acta Asiatica* 64 (1993), 38–56.

Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation and Memory* (Oxford, 2000).

Matthew Kapstein, "Remarks on the *Maṇi Bka'-'Bum* and the Cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet", in *The History of Tibet, 2: The Medieval Period: c.850–1895: The Development of Buddhist Paramountcy*, ed. Alex McKay (London, 2003), 523–37; repr. *Tibetan Buddhism: Reason and Revelation*, eds. Stephen D. Goodman and Ronald M. Davidson (Albany, NY, 1992), 79–94, 163–69.

Samten Karmay, "A Most Pleasing Symphony: An Unknown Biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama", in id., *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet,* 2 (Kathmandu, 2005), 95–108.

Dan Martin, in collaboration with Yael Bentor, *Tibetan Histories: A Bibliography of Tibetan-Language Historical Works* (London, 1997).

Ulrike Roesler, "A Palace for Those Who Have Eyes to See: Preliminary Remarks on the Symbolic Geography of Reting (Rwa-sgreng)", *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 8,1 (2007) 123–44.

Ulrike Roesler, "Operas, Novels, and Religious Instructions: Life-stories of Tibetan Buddhist Masters between Genre Classifications", in *Narrative Pattern and Genre in Hagiographic Life Writing: Comparative Perspectives from Asia to Europe*, eds. Stephan Conermann and Jim Rheingans, Narratio Aliena? Studien des Bonner Zentrums für Transkulturelle Narratologie (BZTN) 7 (Berlin, 2014), 111–39.

Kurtis Schaeffer, "Der Fünfte Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso", in *Die Dalai Lamas: Tibets Reinkarnationen des Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*, ed. Martin Brauen (Stuttgart, 2005), 65–88.

Kurtis Schaeffer, "Ritual, Festival and Authority under the Fifth Dalai Lama", in *Power, Politics and the Reinvention of Tradition: Tibet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries; Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for*

Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003, eds. Brian J. Cuevas and Kurtis Schaeffer, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library 10,3 (Leiden, 2006), 187–203.

Kurtis Schaeffer, "Tibetan Biography: Growth and Criticism", in *Edition, éditions: l'écrit au Tibet, évolution et devenir*, eds. Anne Chayet, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, Françoise Robin, and Jean-Luc Achard, Collectanea Himalayica 3 (Munich, 2010), 263–306.

Lambert Schmithausen, "Critical Response", in *Karma and Rebirth: Postclassical Developments*, ed. Ronald Neufeldt (Albany, NY, 1986), 203–30.

Dieter Schuh, *Tibetische Handschriften und Blockdrucke (THB), Teil 8, Sammlung Waddell der Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland X1, 8* (Wiesbaden, 1981).

Gene Smith, "Padma dkar po and His History of Buddhism", in id., *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau* (Somerville, 2001), 81–86, repr. *Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po* (New Delhi, 1968), 1–8.

Per Sørensen, "Eine Sieben Thangka Sukzessions-Serie des Neunten Dalai Lama", in *Die Dalai Lamas: Tibets Reinkarnationen des Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*, ed. Martin Brauen (Stuttgart, 2005), 242–57.

David Seyfort Ruegg, "*mChod yon, yon mchod* and *mchod gnas/yon gnas*: On the historiography and semantics of a Tibetan religio-social and religio-political concept", in *Tibetan history and language, Studies dedicated to Uray Géza on his seventieth birthday* (Wien, 1991), 441–53.

David Seyfort Ruegg, *Ordre Spirituel et Ordre Temporel dans la Pensée Bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet. Quatre conférences au Collège de France* (Paris, 1995).

David Seyfort Ruegg, "The Preceptor-Donor (*yon mchod*) Relation in the Thirteenth Century Tibetan Society and Polity, its Inner Asian Precursors and Indian Models", in *Tibetan Studies*, ed. Helmut Krasser et al. (Wien, 1997), vol. II, 857–72. Per Sørensen, *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies* (Wiesbaden, 1994).

Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp, "Die Dalai Lamas von Tibet und die Ursprünge der Lama-Wiedergeburten", in *Die Dalai Lamas: Tibets Reinkarnationen des Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*, ed. Martin Brauen (Stuttgart, 2005), 15–31.

Genealogy: A Comparative Perspective from the Early Medieval West

Walter Pohl[1]

Genealogies and similar forms of structuring descent were widely diffused in recorded history; indeed, they offered one basic "perceptual grid" for shaping the past, legitimizing the present and preparing for the future.[2] Yet they did not carry the same weight, or have the same meaning in different historical contexts. The present article addresses the question how much they mattered in early medieval continental Europe, where and when. It will briefly reassess the evidence from the mid-6th to the mid-9th century. Taken together, the following examples provide impressive traces of genealogical thinking; they could be (and often have been) taken as tips of an iceberg, and interpreted as written traces of detailed genealogical knowledge and its oral transmission among the "Germanic" elites of the post-Roman kingdoms. I will argue that we need to be more precise and also acknowledge the limits of genealogical thinking and of its social impact: perhaps there was no single iceberg? Among the elites, noble descent may have mattered, but it rarely needed to be specified, and it seems that actual genealogical knowledge seldom stretched back more than three or four generations.[3] Royal succession was usually represented by king lists rather than royal pedigrees. Strikingly, neither of these have been transmitted from the Merovingians' more than 250 years of rule. Genealogies gradually become more prominent in our evidence from the Carolingian period; but it seems that the emerging Merovingian and Carolingian pedigrees were not based on pre-conceived oral genealogical knowledge ultimately written down, but were experimentally created and expanded on the basis of written documents in ecclesiastic institutions.

Comparison between genealogical thinking in the post-classical West and in Early Islamic Arabia make it possible to step back from old certainties, and assessing remarkable differences beneath certain evident similarities.

---

2   Spiegel, "Genealogy", 103.

3   A point already made by Wenskus, *Stammesbildung,* 55.

In the early medieval West, genealogies have been transmitted in writing almost exclusively for ruling dynasties, whereas Arabic genealogies—although written from the perspectives of various elites—reference and address much broader social ranges, and are much more numerous. Tribal genealogies constructed relative distances between kin groups and tribes. Sometimes, pedigrees also make it possible to connect families or lineages with a common ancestor of a tribe, more elaborately so in Northern Arabia than elsewhere.

There is little trace of such connections between family pedigrees and tribal genealogies in the early medieval West. Conceptually, the *gentes* (peoples) of Latin Europe were derived from "the generations of families", as Isidore of Seville states;[4] however, there is little evidence that families were ever actually traced back to common ancestors of tribes of peoples. On the other hand, the political role of ethnicity grew considerably in the post-Roman West. The polities that replaced the Roman Empire—the kingdoms of the Goths, Franks, Lombards, Anglo-Saxons and others—were generally known by the ethnic background of their ruling elites, and increasingly styled themselves as ethnic communities.[5] In early Islamic polities, tribal or ethnic affiliations were relevant for access to power and privilege, but they were not the decisive criterion for the right to rule a specific realm as in Latin Europe.[6] The relationship between ethnicity, kinship and political power therefore developed differently in Arabia and in the West in the Early Middle Ages. Thus genealogies represent an attractive field for comparative study of the different balances among genealogical thinking, kinship patterns, ethnic distinctions and political cohesion in the societies under scrutiny.

Daniel Mahoney's contribution in this section outlines very well that intricate and ever-shifting genealogies were an important expedient of structuring and conceiving the social world from the perspectives of tribal elites in early medieval highland Yemen.[7] In the Islamic world at large, genealogies came to be written down soon after the Islamic conquest, when new tribal allegiances and social identities emerged and became relevant for the status of conquering groups.[8] They seem to have been more relevant for negotiating

---

4 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.1, ed. Lindsay: *Gens autem appellata propter generationes familiarum, id est a gignendo, sicut natio a nascendo.*

5 Pohl, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Religion and Empire".

6 For instance, Charlemagne's conquest of the Lombard kingdom in Italy in 774 was perceived as the transfer of the rule over Italy from Lombards to Franks: Pohl, "Gens ipsa peribit".

7 See the overview in Kellner, *Ursprung und Kontinuität*; Gingrich, "Kinship".

8 Kennedy, "Arab genealogical literature"; see also Savant and de Felipe, eds., *Genealogy and Knowledge.*

status than in a comparable situation in post-Roman Western Europe. Genealogical literature acquired considerable significance in the late Umayyad and the early Abbasid periods. Genealogies mattered most for those who could claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad's lineage, the Nasab Quraysh. As early as the period up to the middle of the 8th century, "the Arabic historical sources record the names of approximately 3,000 Qurashīs of this period for whom we know the names of their fathers and at least the status of their mothers".[9] After the battle of Kerbala (680) the Shi'ite claim to priority succession for members of the Prophet's house suffered a major political setback, yet this did not necessarily decrease its social relevance. In the middle of the ninth century, al-Zubayrī synthesized the genealogical information about the Nasab Quraysh.

Other family pedigrees could also be attached to tribal ones, whereas tribes could be linked with each other in webs of increasing and decreasing solidarity, and traced back to Adnan and Qahtan as ancestors of North and South Arabians' regional-ethnic and tribal groupings.[10] In the context of this wide framework of locating groups and individuals in a modulated network of genealogies, scholars such as the tenth-century Yemeni author al-Hamdānī produced encyclopaedic genealogical compendia and developed critical approaches to their material. Of course, and as usual with elaborate genealogies, the material could be handled very flexibly or even invented according to contemporary interests and perceptions. Some Islamic scholars were aware of that, for instance, Ibn Khaldun in the 14th century: "Pedigrees are useful only in as far as they imply close contact that is a consequence of blood ties and that eventually leads to mutual help and affection. Anything beyond that is superfluous. For a pedigree is something imaginary and devoid of reality. Its usefulness consists only in the resulting connection and close contact".[11] Genealogical writing tended to decrease in importance in certain regions in later medieval Islam; Zoltán Szombathy has argued that this was due to changing academic traditions rather than to a transformation of the main social context.[12] However, genealogical reasoning has remained important in some areas, such as the highlands of Yemen, up to the present day.

---

9   Robinson, "Prosopographical Approaches to the Nasab Tradition", 12; I am grateful to Daniel Mahoney for this and other information. See also Bernheimer, *The 'Alids*.

10   See the contribution by Hovden and Heiß, in this volume.

11   Ibn Khaldun, *Muqadimmah* 2.8, trans. Rosenthal, p. 99.

12   Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy*.

Genealogies in the Post-Roman Kingdoms on the European Continent (6th–8th Centuries)

Confronted with such a high level of genealogical discourse and its written transmission, early medieval Europe (or at least its continental part) is surprisingly poor in attested genealogies. Claims of noble descent were not infrequent, but they are rarely based on elaborate pedigrees; Karl Schmid remarked that early medieval noblemen knew they had illustrious ancestors, but rarely remembered all their names.[13] Most written examples, at least up to the 9th century, are king lists of more or less explicitly dynastic character; very few aristocratic genealogies have been passed on.[14] This is all the more surprising as both classical Rome and the Bible provided ample models for genealogical thinking. In the aristocracy of Republican Rome, genealogies linking families with the mythical kings of Alba Longa were frequent; these had in turn been constructed to bridge the gap between the Trojan hero Aeneas and the founder of the city, Romulus.[15] Descent from the *gens* and the dynasty also played a role in imperial representation.[16] An inscription by Septimius Severus in the theatre at Ostia gives his (adoptive) genealogy back to the Emperor Nerva, in the sixth generation.[17] Such public displays of genealogical legitimacy are hard to find in the Early Middle Ages.

In the Old Testament, the patrilinear list of patriarchs from Adam to Abraham is linked by *genuit*, begat, and complemented by chronological information about their extraordinary life-spans, and the age at which their eldest sons were born. This was very relevant for the reckoning of time by years of the world in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. The founding fathers of Christian historiography, Eusebius and Jerome in the 4th century, left out this first part of history and started with Abraham and the first kingdom, as they believed, that of the Assyrians. Later authors, such as Jordanes in the mid-6th century, supplemented the patriarchs; he repeatedly emphasizes that in those years when humans were raw and simple, their *genera*, descent groups, were not ruled by kings but by the heads of families, and therefore the chronology had to be counted by families.[18] The powerful Old-Testament narratives of the

---

13   Schmid, "Zur Problematik", 57.

14   Génicot, *Les généalogies*; Kellner, *Ursprung*.

15   Farney, *Ethnic Identity*, pp. 53–65.

16   Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors*, esp. pp. 21–25.

17   See http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio2/7/7-2.htm (10/10/2015).

18   Jordanes, *Romana* 6–11, ed. Mommsen, pp. 3–4.

Flood and the Tower of Babel provided two different explanations for the origins of peoples and of languages, which made Isidore of Seville in the 7th century wonder whether peoples had sprung from languages or vice versa. The myth of the sons of Noah allowed grouping all the peoples of the known world into descendants of Sem, Cham and Japhet, and that is also how Isidore's long list of peoples is structured; only occasionally does he give more precise indications of their genealogical connections.[19]

In line with Old Testament prophecies, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke offered two differing genealogies of Jesus going back to David and beyond.[20] Matthew even begins with the heading: *Liber generationis Iesu Christi filii David filii Abraham*. They also differ formally: while Matthew's pedigree descends from Abraham (following the *A genuit B* scheme), Luke's ascends to Adam and God (*A, qui fuit B*). The different descent lines in Matthew and Luke provoked discussion, and Eusebius devoted a whole chapter of his Ecclesiastical History to a complicated argument trying to reconcile them, and maintaining that thus Jesus came both from the tribe of Judah, repository of royalty, and from the priestly tribe of Levi.[21] The fact that these lines ran through Joseph, who was only the legal father, also presented a problem; in the Byzantine East, alternative genealogies through Mary were constructed.[22] In the wake of Augustine, the early medieval West was not always as concerned with these genealogical problems, but they did matter, for instance in the Carolingian period.[23] From the 11th-century, depictions of the "tree of Jesse" (David's father) became current in Latin Europe.[24] Biblical models were widely used to structure historical time and to relate actors in the biblical narrative to one another, and their formal design remained influential wherever genealogies mattered. However, they did not inspire a profuse production of pedigrees of families and tribes in early medieval Europe.

The most impressive genealogy of the period between the 6th and the 8th century is that of the Ostrogothic Amals, who ruled over Italy in the early 6th century AD. Their Roman administrator, the senator Cassiodorus, extolled King Athalaric for being "of royal stock to the seventeenth generation", and his

---

19   Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 9.1, ed. Lindsay; Borst, *Turmbau von Babel*, 1:6–11.

20   Mt. 1:1-17; Lk. 3:23-28; Is. 11:1; 11:10; 53:3.

21   Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.7, ed. Lake, 1:pp. 54–64; Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 313–18.

22   Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 316.

23   Leyser, "From Maternal Kin to Jesus as Mother".

24   Kellner, *Ursprung*, 46–49; see also Weaver and Caviness, *The Ancestors of Christ Windows*, and the contribution by Christian Opitz, in this section.

mother, Theoderic the Great's daughter Amalasuintha, for having "as many kings as ancestors". This ancient lineage was highlighted to please the Roman senators, as Cassiodorus expressly stated: "As you have ever been thought noble because of your ancestors, so you shall be ruled by an ancient line of kings".[25] As Herwig Wolfram has observed, the Amal family "manifests itself like a second *gens Iulia*".[26] The Gothic history written by Cassiodorus, to which these passages refer, is lost, but was excerpted by Jordanes, who wrote a Gothic history some 20 years later, after 550. Indeed, his Getica contains a genealogy of the Amals that makes Athalaric the 17th in number.[27] It is built into a literary construction which identifies the Goths with Scythians, Getae and Dacians from antiquity, and the genealogy is inserted after the account of the victory of the Dacian king Diurpaneus over the Roman general Fuscus in AD 86. This triumph gives the opportunity to claim that the success of the Goths was due to their fortune derived from their ancestors, "whom they did not call pure men, but demigods, that is, Ansis".[28]

Jordanes marks out the Amal genealogy with an almost tedious introduction: "I will briefly go through their genealogy, that is, who was begotten by which relative, where the origin lay and to which end it came". The eponymous founder of the dynasty, Amal, comes fourth in the list. This means that the line of descent is continued back beyond the family genealogy to include a wider stock of shared ancestors that remains hard to decode. The first of these "heroes, as they refer themselves in their fables", was Gapt. He is usually identified with Gaut, a name with strong Scandinavian associations—Gautr was one of the eponyms of the god Odin, and Gauti one of his sons.[29] Gapt thus seems to have referred to a mythological patrimony related to Scandinavia, and shared by many Anglo-Saxon dynasties in whose pedigrees, as we shall see, the Old English name form Geat appears. It is implausible that Jordanes' insistent references to orally-transmitted fables are a mere authorial fabrication, and that the Goths lived on Roman soil completely oblivious of their pre-Roman past. However, such "traditions" did not feed directly and coherently into Jordanes' account, but come in disconnected fragments and are attached to an

---

25   Cassiodorus, *Variae* 11.1.9, trans. Barnish, p. 147; 9.24, trans. Barnish, p. 128; Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 31.

26   Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, 154.

27   Jordanes, *Getica*, 14.79, ed. Mommsen, p. 76; Wolfram, *History*, 31. The lively debate on the "authenticity" of this genealogy (e.g. Heather, *Goths in the Fourth Century*; Goffart, *Narrators*) does not concern us here, but it was hardly made up by Cassiodor or Jordanes in its entirety.

28   Jordanes, *Getica*, 13.78, ed. Mommsen, p. 76; Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, 29.

29   Simek, *Lexikon*. See also Wolfram, *Goten*, 31 and 37; Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, 104.

overarching construction of Gothic history devised on the basis of Roman ethnographic literature.

Remarkably, a name that we could regard as an eponymous tribal ancestor, Ostrogotha, is found two generations after Amal. In fact, a Gothic leader named Ostrogotha is not only attested to in Jordanes in a 3rd-century context (as predecessor of King Cniva),[30] he (or another Gothic leader of the same name) is also mentioned as Cniva's less successful rival in newly-found fragments of the 3rd-century historian Dexippos.[31] It is thus likely that Ostrogotha in the genealogy represents an actual Gothic leader, perhaps retrospectively regarded as a mythical *heros eponymos*.[32] Cassiodorus (or Jordanes) could have tracked down his name in third-century historiography; but then one might ask why he had been included instead of the better-known and more successful Cniva. However that may be, the clear impression is that the Amal pedigree in Jordanes is not a streamlined list carefully tailored as a whole in the 6th century.[33] Traces of inner tensions and contradictions are evident. It glorified a dynasty that had fallen and become extinct in the male line; the names were Germanic, the interest in compiling the list was Roman; there is no trace of the Dacian king to whose victory Jordanes had attached it; and the links with a however imaginary shared Gothic (or Scandinavian/Germanic) past were ambiguous. The list had been patched together in 6th-century political contexts, and fused elements of a king-list with those of a genealogy to the higher glory of the Amals and of those who might have aspired to take their position. However, it must have relied on some native knowledge, for it is clearly not simply compiled from the Roman historiography available to Cassiodorus. Most remarkably, Cassiodorus's grand ethnographic construction of identifying the Goths with several previous south-eastern European peoples had no bearing on his Amal genealogy, which contained no Scythian, Getic or Dacian names. Different layers of material had been brought in line, but not smoothly merged.

On the whole, the profile of extant genealogical legitimation from other post-Roman kingdoms is relatively low. The Burgundian code lists Gundobad's "ancestors of royal memory" (all with names alliterating in G-), but the purpose

30   Jordanes, Getica 17.98–100, ed. Mommsen, p. 83.

31   Grusková and Martin, "Ein neues Textstück"; Martin and Grusková, "'Scythica Vindobonensia'".

32   The Dexippos passage invalidates the argument in Heather, *Goths and Romans*, 22, that Ostrogotha was just a mythical name-giver and not a real king.

33   Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, 114; 218.

is purely legal and concerns the status of freedmen and slaves.[34] The Visigothic evidence is thin, apart from Jordanes' reference to the dynasty of the *Balthi*.[35] In both the Visigothic and the Lombard kingdoms, sons (if available) ascended the throne after their fathers, but more often than not this default filial succession was soon subverted by regicide or revolt. Thus no stable dynasty established itself in the Lombard realm in Italy (568–774). Rather atypically, the 7th-century *Origo gentis Langobardorum* and texts based on it name the different families (*genera*) of these kings; often, they also mention their wives and offspring.[36] The king list prefixed to the edict of King Rothari (636–653) notes filiation where it applied, and the name of the *genus* when a new dynasty took over. This prologue to the law code also contains the only genealogy of a Lombard king. It lists 11 male ancestors of Rothari, the *genus Harodos*.[37] The name of the family, Harodi, corresponds to an ethnonym attested to several centuries earlier (and mentioned by Julius Caesar, among others). It is a strange list, without any of the name elements occurring in the king's own name, partly containing short appellatives (Noctzo, Mammo) together with the more prestigious "bithematic" Germanic names (such as Alamund or Rothari himself), and showing rather archaic name forms for the earlier generations. It is structured by stave rhyme pairs (Faccho—Frocho), and probably takes us as closely to orally transmitted genealogies as Latin written transmission and political expedience in post-Roman kingdoms allowed. It is in fact not a royal genealogy but that of a high aristocrat who had become king seven years earlier.

Knowledge of one's ancestors was required by Rothari's edict of 643: "He who desires the succession must be able to give the names of all his related ancestors. If litigation should be brought before a royal court, he who seeks the inheritance may offer oath with his legitimate oath-helpers to the effect: the deceased is our legitimate kinsman and we are related to him in the following manner".[38] In practice, the genealogical knowledge required here would hardly go beyond one's grandfather and his offspring. A further example from Lombard Italy is the family of Paul the Deacon, who wrote a history of the Lombards towards the end of the 8th century. He interrupts his history at a point where he deals with his native city of Cividale, and announces that he

34   *The Burgundian Code* III, trans. Fischer Drew, p. 24.

35   Pohl, "'Morbus Gothorum'"; Jordanes, *Getica* 5.42, ed. Mommsen, pp. 64 and 29.146, ed. Mommsen, p. 96.

36   *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, eds. Bethmann/Waitz, pp. 2–6; Pohl, "Gender and Ethnicity".

37   Haubrichs, "Amalgamierung und Identität", 81 and 94–99 (philological reconstruction and commentary).

38   *The Lombard Laws*, trans. Fischer Drew, *Rothari* 153, p. 77.

would "privately…weave in" a bit about his own genealogy. In this section, he not only names his ancestors into the fifth generation, to Leupchis who came to Italy in 568, but also tells some stories related to them, in particular about his great-grandfather, who had been enslaved in Avar Pannonia but managed to escape.[39] Paul uses the word *genealogia* twice in a way that makes it clear that he did not understand it as pedigree, but more broadly as his family and its history.

Genealogy and the Merovingians

The most successful ruling family of the post-Roman period, the Merovingians, who ruled the Frankish kingdom/s from c. 500 to c. 750, made much less of their genealogy and their name. The name *Merovingi(i)* is mentioned only rarely in the texts. Most Merovingian kings had several sons from a number of successive or parallel and often rather informal relationships with women, most of whom were "not of remotely equal status".[40] Some were foreign princesses (but rarely treated any better for that), and the Merovingians (unlike the Carolingians) did not cultivate marriage alliances with the leading families of their kingdoms. Their sons all potentially belonged to the dynasty and were fit for succession to the Frankish throne (or had to be killed to prevent it). Dynastic politics were quite similar in contemporary Byzantium, where the "horizontal family" mattered more than the vertical structures of the dynasty, as Gilbert Dagron has put it.[41] Eligibility was a political decision, not a biological given.[42] Genealogy, as Régine Le Jan has stated, "justified the capacity to wield power, but not the way of transmission of that power".[43] Correspondingly, historiographical interest was more in the succession of kings than in their genealogy. The first major historian of the Franks, Gregory of Tours, who wrote at the end of the 6th century, demonstrates by a display of accurate source criticism that Frankish kingship had been established rather recently.[44]

---

39   Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, 4.37, eds. Bethmann/Waitz, pp. 131–32.

40   Wood, "Deconstructing the Merovingian family", 168; Lubich, *Verwandtsein,* 149–64.

41   Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 29–31. Still, fancy genealogies were produced for Byzantine emperors, see Ksrmanović and Radošević, "Legendary Genealogies".

42   Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*.

43   Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, 40.

44   Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* 2.9, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 52–58; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of European Ethnicity*, 52–55.

The Fredegar Chronicle, in the late 7th century, accordingly starts its Merovingian king list only four generations before the founder of a *supra-regional* Frankish monarchy, Clovis (482–511). However, it was attached to a Frankish origin legend from Troy, and thus King Priam became the first named ancestor of the Merovingians. Versions of this myth in the Chronicle and its genealogical implications differ slightly, but concur in recording a number of successive splits. Priam's son Friga became the ancestor of the Phrygians/Frisians, Francio (his son?) was the eponymous founder of the Franks and Torcoth of the Turks—a genealogy that connects the origins of a surprising set of peoples.[45] The complicated Frankish origin story continues with an intermediate phase of migrations, ducal rule and wars against the Romans, up to the late beginnings of Merovingian kingship. Furthermore, Fredegar intriguingly leaves open the question who the father of Merovech was, from whom the Merovingians derived their name: one day, his mother went for a swim in the sea, and was attacked by a "beast of Neptune" called Quinotaurus; soon, she became pregnant, "whether by the beast or by her husband" Chlodio.[46] What sounds like a parody of classical mythology has long been taken to reflect a genealogical role of some supernatural (bull-headed?) maritime creature, but may rather go back to a folk etymology of the ancestral name Merovech as "beast from the sea", and represent an ironi-cal critique of the Merovingians in the Fredegar Chronicle.[47] The passage also implies that what counted was the female line. Only in the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, written in 726/27, has the narrative of Frankish origins been streamlined into a continuous Merovingian succession from father to son. Francio as eponymous ancestor of the Franks has been eliminated; the Trojans under Priam and Antenor receive the name Franks from the Roman Emperor Valentinian (II). The story is here telescoped by more than a millen-nium, so that Priam becomes Chlodio's great-grandfather.[48]

Families in the Frankish kingdoms were not devoid of family memories, both in the male and the female lines. Gregory of Tours, in the late 6th century, had a wide knowledge of his descent group, a Gallo-Roman senatorial family among whom many were bishops, and claims at some point that all but five of his predecessors in the see of Tours had been, in the rather vague phrase that

45   Fredegar 3.2, ed. Krusch, p. 93; 4.2–6, ed. Krusch, pp. 124–25; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of European Ethnicity*, 168.

46   Fredegar 3.9, ed. Krusch, pp. 94–95.

47   Wood, "Fredegar's Fables".

48   *Liber Historiae Francorum* 1–5, ed. Krusch, pp. 241–45; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of European Ethnicity*, 272.

he uses, "linked to our lineage (*prosapia*) of relatives".[49] However, his family relations have to be reconstructed from widely dispersed remarks in his works.[50] His concrete genealogical memories highlight successful churchmen, such as his mother's grandfather, Bishop Gregory of Langres, to whom he dedicates a chapter in his hagiographical work *Life of the Fathers*.[51] Senatorial origin with a good number of saintly bishops in the family, and a reliable network seem to have been decisive for ecclesiastical careers at the time; what mattered therefore were extensive bilateral parental networks, not linear descent. But these senatorial descent groups seem to have faded out in the course of the 7th century. We can reconstruct Frankish aristocratic pedigrees, for instance of the Agilolfing group, which was related to the Bavarian dukes, from scattered references, but the sources do not give any genealogies.[52] Venantius Fortunatus, who wrote his panegyric poems at Gregory's time, often underlines the noble family or progeny of the addressees, both Romans and Franks, but rarely specifies it. Only in his epitaph for the Merovingian prince Chlodobert does he list his royal ancestors from his great-grandfather Clovis.[53] A group of seven male and two female Merovingian names occurs in a long series of Latin names written on the reverse of the ivory plates of the Barberini Diptych.[54] As Jean Vezin has shown, rather than a genealogical fragment it is a memorial list of kings and queens of the late 6th and 7th centuries, in which some are omitted (or illegible).[55]

Merovingian king lists appear only in manuscripts from the Carolingian period. Like other king lists and like *Origines gentium* (origin legends of peoples), they are often transmitted in law manuscripts. Examples indicate that dynastic genealogies did not appear in such manuscripts as a fully developed genre, but in a more tentative way. For instance, several of the Merovingian genealogies edited by Pertz and Krusch come from two Carolingian law-books kept in St Gall. The Codex Sangallensis 731 contains the Lex Romana

---

49   Gregory of Tours, *Historiae* 5.49, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 262: *praeter quinque episcopos reliqui omnes, qui sacerdotium Turonicum susceperunt, parentum nostrae prosapiae sunt coniuncti.* On Gregory's family, see Wood, *Gregory of Tours*, 36–46.

50   Wood, "The Individuality of Gregory of Tours".

51   Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers* 7, trans. James, pp. 43–48.

52   Le Jan, *Famille et Pouvoir*, 387–95.

53   *De proavo veniens Clodouecho celsa propago,/Chlodacharique nepos Chilpericique genus.* Venantius Fortunatus, *Poèmes* 9.4, ed. Reydellet, 3:pp. 23–24; Clovis as *proavus* also in 10.17, p. 97.

54   Eckhardt, "Exkurs IV: Merowinger im Dyptichon Barberini", 262–79; Vezin, "Une nouvelle lecture".

55   Vezin, "Une nouvelle lecture", 44.

Visigothorum, the Lex Salica and the Lex Alamannorum and was written and illustrated in 793 by Wandalgarius in Lyons.[56] It contains a Frankish king list which only begins with Chlothar II and Dagobert I, placing them in a calculation of time that starts with the fifth year of emperor Heraclius (614/15) and the fourth year of the Visigothic king Sisebut. It does not mention that the listed Frankish kings were Merovingians, nor does it mark the transition from Childeric III to the first Carolingian king Pippin III, with whom the list ends.[57] Genealogical models would have been available to Wandalgarius; the codex contains a Liber Generationis of Jesus Christ from Abraham through David.[58]

The Codex Sangallensis 732, probably written at Freising c. 818, presents an interesting mix of the Lex Alamannorum and several catechetic texts about pilgrimages to Jerusalem or about the Virgin Mary.[59] Pages 142 to 154 contain the so-called *Chronica de VI aetatibus mundi*, an extensive calculation of the years of the Six Ages of the World. Genealogy structures the first age of the Old Testament patriarchs, for which their age at the birth of their successor is given; then the principle of calculation switches to king lists of Israel, Persia, the Hellenistic kings, and the Roman emperors up to Justinian II. From there, omitting the Merovingians, it turns to the Carolingian mayor of the palace, Pippin II, and continues until the 42nd year of the rule of Charlemagne. The idea that the years of the world are to be counted *per familias* of the patriarchs before kings whose reigns can be reckoned appear goes back to Julius Africanus and Eusebius, and is attested to in Jordanes' *Romana*; the model of the Six Ages of the World was first used in historiography by Isidore of Seville.[60] In a sense the *Chronica* ends with a family, the Carolingians, but formally it is structured as a king list, and that conforms with the overall logic of the text: family mattered before kings took over. The *Chronica de VI aetatibus* spread fast as a result of a synod at Aachen in 809, which dealt with issues of the reckoning of time; the Sangallensis 732 is an early example.[61] Then the rubric announces *Incipit generatio regum*, and starts with a brief and rather concocted list of Roman kings in Gaul with distorted names, from the *primus rex Romanorum Analeus* to Aegidius and Syagrius. Then the so-called "Frankish Table of Nations" is

56   See http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0731, accessed 23/12/2014; cf. Schott, *Lex Alamannorum.*

57   *Codex Sangallensis* 731, pp. 293–94; *Regum Francorum Genealogiae*, ed. Pertz, pp. 307–08. See McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 70.

58   *Codex Sangallensis* 731, pp. 231–33.

59   See http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0732, accessed 23/12/2014.

60   Jordanes, *Romana* 6–12, ed. Mommsen, pp. 3–4.

61   Most recently edited as *Die ostfränkische Ahnentafel von 807*, ed. Borst; see Corradini, "ZeitNetzWerk", 76–120.

inserted (see below), which has Romans, Britons, Franks and Alamanni descending from a common ancestor, Escio; it should obviously demonstrate that the rule had passed to a people related to the Romans.[62] The text continues with a second rubric, *De regum Francorum*, starting with Chlo[d]io; unlike the king list of the Sangallensis 731, the names are connected with *genuit*, begat, just like the Old Testament genealogy in the previous text. The list ends where the one in the Sangallensis 731 begins, with Dagobert.[63]

On the whole, the two St Gall manuscripts allow several observations. The character of a king list prevailed even where a genealogical element was introduced; these lists occurred together with law books; no names of dynasties were mentioned. Old-Testament-based genealogies were present in both manuscripts, which could serve as a formal model (descent lists connected by the verb *genuit*). Even where genealogies of peoples appear alongside the king lists (such as the genealogy of Noah or the Frankish Table of Nations), no clear link with the dynastic genealogy is established. The connection was between king lists, genealogies and the reckoning of time. Women do not play a role in the catalogues. And finally, the lists and genealogies were all incomplete, and often combined genealogically disparate elements connected by succession in rulership.

The Emergence of Genealogies in the Carolingian Period (Later 8th–9th Centuries)

The creation of a Carolingian genealogy was entrusted to an intellectual from abroad: Paul the Deacon. In his Liber de Episcopis Mettensibus, he "provides the first genealogy of the Carolingian dynasty, one that places Arnulf…at its origins".[64] Paul wrote the text during his stay in Francia in the mid-780s, commissioned by Bishop Angilram of Metz, who sought to promote the interests of his church and his family at court (in 794, his cousin Irmingard would be married to Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious). According to Paul, Charlemagne's ancestor, the early 7th-century saintly bishop Arnulf of Metz, had been "born from a most noble and strong Frankish pedigree" (he does not mention the

---

62   Cf. Goffart, "Frankish Table", and see below.

63   *Codex Sangallensis* 732, pp. 154–55; *Catalogi regum Francorum praetermissi*, ed. Krusch, p. 851.

64   Kempf, "Introduction", 1. For a lucid general discussion of Carolingian genealogy and the alternative between an 'Arnulfing' and 'Pippinid' lineage, see Bouchard, "The Carolingian Creation", 106–25.

names). Paul takes care to explain that Arnulf's sons came from an early marriage before he had become a bishop. His younger son (otherwise known as Ansegisel), according to Paul, was called Anschises, after Anchises, the father of Aeneas, because the *gens Francorum* traced their origin back to the Trojans.[65] As Anschises, unlike his elder brother, had given his inheritance to the poor at his father's behest, Arnulf "blessed him and all his offspring that would be born in the future", a scene that recalls the blessing of Jacob by Isaac.[66] Paul thus rather subtly links the Carolingians with Frankish origins from the Trojan *prosapia* as a whole (without trying to construct any direct genealogical link between Arnulf and the presumptive Trojan forefathers), and sanctifies the entire Carolingian/Arnulfing *progenies*, without ever using their dynastic name. He does not mention that Anschises/Ansegisel married Begga, the daughter of Pippin I, mayor of the palace, and continues directly with his son Pippin II, and from there follows the male line to Charlemagne.[67] Father and son are connected by *genuit* and each ruler receives a brief description of his achievements. Women only appear in the present, when Paul dwells at length on Charlemagne's wives and the sons and daughters they bore him. Finally, he quotes the verse epitaphs of three Carolingian princesses who were buried in Metz, which Charlemagne had asked him to write. The first of these epitaphs, for Pippin III's daughter Rothaid, again rehearses the entire line of descent from Rothaid and her brother Charlemagne back to Arnulf.[68] As Paul's account shows, Charlemagne was interested in his pedigree—in the words of Janet Nelson: "The picture Paul paints of his patron is not just of a garrulous narrator of barbarian histories, nor in any simple sense of a purveyor of oral traditions. Instead, Paul's Charlemagne had reflected long and hard on the history of his lineage, allowed a place for religious preoccupations in his ancestor's secular career...a thinking man, convinced that God intervened directly in affairs of his own family, and willing to read biblical typology therein".[69]

An alternative Pippinid-Carolingian genealogy would have been available, that of Pippin I. One of his daughters was the saintly Geretrud of Nivelles, whose Vita was probably composed in the later 7th century.[70] It contains a telling remark about her descent: "It would be tedious to insert in this account

---

65   Paulus Diaconus, *Liber de Episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. Pertz, p. 264.

66   Goffart, "Narrators", 374.

67   Wood, "Genealogy Defined by Women".

68   Paulus Diaconus, *Liber de Episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. Pertz, p. 265: *genus* [...] *excelso de germine*.

69   Nelson, "Charlemagne the Man", 32–34.

70   Heinzelmann, "L'hagiographie mérovingienne", 79.

in what line of earthly origin she was descended (*quo ordine de terrena origine genealogiam adsumpserat*). For who living in Europe does not know the loftiness, the names and the localities of her lineage (*progenies*)?"[71] This appears to be the earliest attestation to the word *genealogia* in a Frankish source, and it allows interesting observations about terminology. Yet the (male) Arnulfing-Carolingian lineage prevailed over the (female) Pippinid one. For instance, Thegan placed it at the beginning of his Life of Louis the Pious; here, it was complemented by a genealogy of Louis' mother Hildegard, remarkably starting with her mother and only then tracing the male line to the Alamannic duke Gotefrid in the fifth generation.[72] During a long vacancy of the see of Metz after Angilram's death in 791, Paul's Arnulfing genealogy had already been further extended in a text called in an early manuscript *Commemoratio de genealogia domni Arnulfi episcopi et Confessoris Christi*.[73] Here, a link to the Merovingians was established. The first ancestor is Ansbert *ex genere senatorum*, from senatorial stock, who married Chlothar II's daughter Blithild—the connection with the Merovingian dynasty ran through the female line, whereas the male progenitor was an obscure Gallic senator with a Frankish name.[74] Was that what Paul the Deacon called "a noble Frankish pedigree"? The generations between Ansbert and Arnulf are dominated by bishops, confessors and a holy virgin. The message, in line with Gregory of Tours, was clear—the Carolingians owed their success, but also their responsibility to an early progeny of saintly clerics.[75] Conrad Leyser has placed this emerging interest in Carolingian genealogies in the context of Marian devotion and of intense exegetical effort to deal with the garbled pedigree of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.[76] In spite of its unspectacular beginnings (by later standards), the *Genealogia domni Arnulfi* was widely circulated, and its female link between the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties became mainstream. Not only the church of Metz sought genealogical proximity to Carolingian ancestors; later

---

71   *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis* A and B, Prologus, ed. Krusch, p. 454; translation and commentary (and a probable date of c. 670): Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 303 and 319.

72   Thegan, *Vita Hludovici*, p. 176; in Walahfrid's Prologue (ibid. p. 168) the geneaology is described as *series regii generis Francorum*.

73   Edited as *Commemoratio genealogiae domni Karoli gloriosissimi imperatoris* by Georg Waitz; see Oexle, "Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf"; Reimitz, "Anleitung zur Interpretation"; Reimitz, "Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge".

74   Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, 203.

75   Reimitz, "Anleitung zur Interpretation", 169–72; Leyser, "From Maternal Kin to Jesus as Mother", 29.

76   Leyser, „From Maternal Kin to Jesus as Mother".

in the 9th century, the monastery of St Wandrille inserted its founder, Wandregisel, into the pedigree as Saint Arnulf's nephew.[77] As Helmut Reimitz has shown, several manuscripts of Carolingian history books after the mid-9th century contain *Genealogiae regum Francorum* that attach the Carolingians to the Merovingians through Blithild.[78] In some cases, the fierce competition between Carolingian rulers in the divided empire in the later 9th century made royal genealogy a field where legitimation was sought by subtle modification.[79] On the other hand, clerics could remind their rulers that kings did not acquire their position by their ancestry, but by the grace of God.[80]

After the demise of the Carolingian dynasty, Carolingian origins could in some contexts become an attractive political expedient. In the later Middle Ages, more and more noble families claimed to be descended from Charlemagne.[81] Pedigrees gradually became more elaborate. Merovingian genealogies were complemented on the basis of Merovingian historiography, sometimes with an imaginative turn.[82] While royal continuity and Carolingian origins became important for political status in France, in Germany actual Carolingian links could also be forgotten: in the 12th-century *Genealogia Welforum*, Welf and his daughter Judith, wife of the emperor Louis the Pious, were not featured.[83] Ottonian descent seems to have been politically more relevant. When in the 13th-century Holy Roman Empire the election of kings was formally restricted to seven prince-electors (*Kurfürsten*), all four lay families who achieved that privilege traced themselves back to the first Ottonian king,

---

77   Reimitz, "Anleitung zur Interpretation", 176–77.

78   Reimitz, "Ein karolingisches Geschichtsbuch". For 10th- to 12th-century genealogies following the Ansprand-Blithild model, see *Genealogiae Karolorum*, ed. Waitz.

79   Basic but debatable editions: *Regum Francorum Genealogiae*, ed. Pertz; *Catalogi regum Francorum praetermissi*, ed. Krusch.

80   *Nemo regum a progenitoribus regnum sibi administrari, sed a Deo veraciter et humilter credere debet dari*: *Concilium Parisiense* a. 829, ed. Werminghoff, p. 655. See also Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione regia*, ed. Dubreucq.

81   See a number of high medieval genealogies edited by Georg Waitz in MGH SS 13, pp. 241–59, 344–45 and 726–36. West, "Dynastic historical writing", 510–16, with interesting comparative observations.

82   The *Genealogia Sancti Arnulfi* was also complemented with previous ancestors, for instance in the 12th-century *Genealogia ex stirpe sancti Arnulfi descendentium Mettensis*, ed. Heller, pp. 381–82, which starts with *Anafledes regina Gothorum* as a mother of the four sons of Clovis, without mentioning Clovis himself. In fact, Audofleda was Clovis's sister and indeed married to the Ostrogothic king Theoderic. It is remarkable that this *genealogia ... que ex regibus Francorum originem sumpsit* (p. 381) begins with a woman, and a Gothic queen. Cf. Wolf, "Königswähler".

83   *Genealogia Welforum*, p. 733; Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 51.

Henry I, through the female line (*Töchterstämme*).[84] It is remarkable how frequently in the European Middle Ages genealogical links to ancient royal lineages were constituted by women and not through male sidelines.

The gradual and rather fragmentary emergence of genealogical writing in the 8th and 9th centuries indicates that there was no developed oral genealogical memory that could simply be put down in writing when it was needed. Early Carolingian genealogies were not only written down by clerics, they were also linked to ecclesiastical *memoria*. These genealogical constructs involved bishops, senators, martyrs, abbots and nuns, and were attached to a more ancient royal pedigree through the female line. No more convincing alternative seems to have been available. Of course, spiritual capital and saintly ancestors were assets in Carolingian political culture. Yet even dissent was expressed by modifying the *Genealogia Arnulfi*, and not by producing a more Germanic and war-like pedigree. The evidence for efforts of aristocratic families to preserve their genealogical record in the 9th to 11th centuries remains rather scarce, but makes it possible to detect a shifting balance between memory and oblivion.[85] Apart from educated monks or clerics, women also cared for family memories; thus, in the mid-9th century, Dhuoda admonished her son to remember his *genealogia*.[86]

In the Carolingian period, *genealogia* could also be used in a broader sense. The word is not attested to much in the pre-Carolingian centuries. It is remarkable that the word does not occur in the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, in spite of very detailed lists explaining the terminology of kinship and ethnicity.[87] In the 8th century, it was increasingly used for the family itself.[88] An early example is found in the *Liber Historiae Francorum*, written in 726/27. In a civil war between two Merovingian rulers, Chlothar II is said to have reproached his enemy, Queen Brunichild: "Why have you dared to kill so many of the royal family, *tanta genealogia regale*?"[89] A broader social panorama emerges from 8th-century Bavarian sources. The Bavarian law book, the *Lex Baiuvariorum*, establishes that five named *genealogiae,* families or clans, enjoy special privilege and receive double compensation for any offences because they are the "the first" after the ducal dynasty of the Agilolfings. This clause also states that

---

84   Wolf, "Königswähler".

85   See Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 48–80.

86   Dhuoda, *Liber Manualis*, 10.5, ed. Thiébaux, pp. 226–29; Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 49; Thiébaux, "Introduction", 30–32.

87   Isidor, *Etymologiae* 9.4–6, ed. Lindsay.

88   See the list of sources in Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure*, 99–108.

89   *Liber Historiae Francorum* 40, ed. Krusch, p. 310.

the dukes always had to come from the *genus* of the Agilolfings, without referring specifically to their genealogy.[90] *Genealogia* could also denote social and legal status, as in the clause about the double compensations paid to monks, to be fixed *secundum genealogiam suam*, each according to their legal status (defined by their kin).[91] By the Carolingian period, the term in its non-technical meaning had penetrated deeply into the social tissue, as is demonstrated by several occurrences in charters and legal formulae, where the properties of *genealogiae* can be transferred, mostly in cases where uncultivated land was shared by inheritance communities.[92] The term could even be used to locate land, as in a formula from Passau, which dealt with the transfer of a property *in vico et genealogia*, in the village and (land owned by a) genealogy.[93] Vague ideas of lineage were relevant in questions of inheritance, and these *genealogiae* were pictured in the legal sources as a succession of property owners who had, collectively or individually, legally inherited the land, although none of the charters contains any explicit reference to predecessors or pedigrees.

Genealogical Multiplicity on the British Isles (8th–10th Centuries)

In England, royal genealogies are already well attested in the 8th century. Bede, in the 730s, gives brief genealogies of the kings of Wessex, as descended from the leaders of the invading Saxons, Cerdic and Cynric, and of Kent, traced back to the brothers Hengist and Horsa, and beyond that, to Woden, interestingly through alliterative names. As Bede remarks, the dynasties of many kingdoms had originated from Woden's lineage.[94] This probably reflects attempts in specific 8th-century constellations to project a common denominator into the

---

90   *Lex Baiwariorum* 3.1, ed. Schwind, pp. 312–13.

91   *Lex Baiwariorum* 1.8, ed. Schwind, p. 279.

92   For instance, n. 5, in Bitterauf, *Traditionen*. For this and other examples, see Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure*, 99–108. Murray's agenda is to argue against the notion that these *genealogiae* represent traditional Germanic patrilineal clans, and indeed this evidence cannot be used to hypothesize about more ancient Germanic kinship structure. For that argument it would not be necessary to downplay, as he does, the idea of descent groups that lies in the terminology.

93   *Collectio Pataviensis* 5, ed. Zeumer, p. 459; Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure*, 105.

94   Hengist and Horsa *erant autem filii Victigisili, cuius pater Vitta, cuius pater Vecta, cuius pater Voden, de cuius stirpe multarum provinciarum regium genus originem duxit.* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1.15, ed. Colgrave/Mynors, pp. 50–51, cf. ibid. 2.5, ed. Colgrave/Mynors, pp. 150–51; cf. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", 79.

past.[95] The "Anglian collection" of genealogies is supposed to have been composed in Northumbria in the 760s/770s.[96] The oldest extant, late-9th-century manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* from Winchester (often called the A version or the Parker Chronicle), contains rich genealogical material, and starts with the genealogy of King Alfred of Wessex, again through Cerdic to Woden.[97] Further back in Aethelwulf's pedigree, the Wessex genealogy is extended as far as Noah and Adam.[98] The B version, written in the 970s, even introduces a further son of Noah, called Scef and born on the ark, as an ancestor of the kings of Wessex.[99]

In the Chronicle, pedigrees are usually given at the beginning of a king's reign to legitimize his accession, "to provide for the current ruler the *cynn* (kin) which makes him *cyning* (king)".[100] In Old English, *cynedom* (kingdom) is actually derived from "kin-dom", and the royal kindred could be marked out as *cynecynn*, "kinly kin".[101] Each successive ruling family is linked back to the leaders of the invasion, and often beyond that, to the mythical ancestors, which involves a good number of ambiguities and contradictions, not least in the Wessex genealogies. The god Saxnot, also revered on the continent, featured at the beginning of the genealogy of the kings of Essex, where he was later made a son of Woden. A Scandinavian element, and a link to the Amal genealogy, appears in Geat/Gaut. Asser's *Life of Alfred* starts with Alfred's extensive genealogy ascending via Scyld, founder of the Danish (Scylding) dynasty, Wodan and Geat to Adam. Here, Geat is specially highlighted, and receives an *interpretatio Romana*, being identified with "comedy's absurd Geta" as mentioned by the late antique poet Sedulius. This strange equation shows that the author possibly valued Latin poetry higher than the household names of distant pedigrees, or was even making fun of the pagan god.[102] A second and briefer genealogy of Alfred's mother follows, with a claim that her grandfather was a Goth,

95   Dumville, "The Anglian Collection".

96   Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", 72–104; short overview in Thornton, "Genealogies, Royal", 199–200.

97   *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, trans. Swanton [A], pp. 2–4.

98   *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, trans. Swanton a. 855 [A], p. 66.

99   *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, trans. Swanton a. 855 [B], p. 67; see Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, 245–73, who links Sce(a)f with the Seth in Asser's genealogy of Alfred (Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, trans. Keynes and Lapidge, p. 67) and with the Danish king Scylf's epithet Scefing in the prologue of Beowulf, and regards him as a Wessex addition probably going back to Alfred himself.

100   Charles-Edwards, "Anglo-Saxon kinship revisited", 187.

101   Charles-Edwards, "Anglo-Saxon kinship revisited", 189–92.

102   Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, trans. Keynes and Lapidge, 67.

"for he was descended from the Goths and Jutes". The identification of Goths and Jutes seems to be derived from an Isidorian approach to etymology based on equation between similar names, and from rather vague ideas about Scandinavia; thus, Jutland and Gotland, Geat and the Geats (Beowulf's people in the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf epic), Goths, Jutes and Danes became loosely amalgamated.[103] Scandinavian origins and Danish royal ancestors were surely attractive for a king who spent much of his reign fighting Danish invaders.

The competition between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and their dynasties, their need to find some common ground during the process of unification, the confrontation with external forces on the British Isles (Britons, Scots or Vikings), and the interest in defining relations with the continent (not only with the "old" Saxons) and Scandinavia provide some likely motives for the literate and political interest in genealogies. The interest seems to have declined in England in the 10th and 11th century.[104] Eighth-century missionaries promoted the notion of a blood relationship with the "old Saxons" on the continent in order to win support for their efforts to convert them—it is in this context that we find one of the strongest statements of a blood relationship between members of an ethnic group, even centuries after the former unity had been broken. In c. 738, Saint Boniface, an Anglo-Saxon and a leading missionary impresario in the eastern periphery of the Frankish kingdoms, wrote to the Anglo-Saxons at home asking them to pray for their pagan brothers on the continent: "Take pity on them, for they also keep saying, 'We are of one blood and one bone'".[105] Boniface's argument seems to reflect a sense of common origin between insular and continental Saxons; still, his intention in promoting it is clear. Can we take this strong but rather isolated statement as an indication that common blood was regarded as defining a people, and even as constituting kinship between peoples? Boniface's argument must have latched on to existing attitudes to be plausible, but it is also remarkable that a Christian missionary was the only one to use it so emphatically.

Traditional scholarship has assumed that ideas of ethnic origins and common descent expressed in orally transmitted lineages were an archaic Germanic characteristic that had been marginalized on the continent by Latin written

---

103 Nelson, "Reconstructing a Royal Family", 50–52; Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List"; Murray, "Beowulf, the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy"; Beck, "Genealogie".

104 Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", 95.

105 Bonifatius, *Epistolae* 46 (c. 738), ed. Tangl, p. 75: *Miseremini illorum, quia et ipsi solent dicere: De uno sangue et de uno osse sumus.*

culture.[106] At first glance, it may seem plausible that in Britain, where vernacular literacy was already well-established since the 7th century, Germanic-style genealogical reasoning may have surfaced more easily than on the continent. A somewhat parallel case is constituted by Scandinavia, where the sagas often focus on ideas of kinship.[107] Unfortunately, their written transmission is much later than the period under scrutiny here, and one of our main witnesses is Snorri Sturlusson in the early 13th century, a Christian intellectual in Iceland with a Latin education. Much of the seeming plausibility of the Germanic argument relies on the colourful reconstruction of "authentic" Germanic culture and religion, to which generations of scholars since the Brothers Grimm have contributed. It was based on a very disparate set of evidence, from Caesar and Tacitus to Anglo-Saxon lore and Icelandic sagas, spanning almost 1500 years and ranging from Italy to Scandinavia. Recent research has picked much of this grandiose "Germanic" edifice apart.[108]

The material discussed above suggests that oral genealogical memory can be made plausible in some cases, but the evidence is too patchy to generalize. Furthermore, several observations do not seem to fit the picture of a coherent Germanic interest in genealogies ignored in much of the written record. Genealogical thinking and pride in ancient ancestry had in fact been strong in classical Roman culture, and it was also important in the Old Testament. Why should Christian Latin authors have suppressed it? The experimental beginnings of Carolingian genealogies strongly suggest that there was no ancient family tradition that could simply be put into writing. Furthermore, no distinctive "Germanic" genealogical practice emerges. The 9th-century *Historia Brittonum* takes a rather similar approach to the coeval *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and also includes numerous genealogies.[109] Indeed, as David Dumville has demonstrated, Anglo-Saxon genealogies show certain British features, and Irish missionaries may have had an impact on them.[110] In Ireland there is an abundance of genealogies. In a way reminiscent of the tribes of Yemen, kindreds were named after a putative common ancestor, for instance, the Uí Néill, the descendants of Níall, a dynasty that dominated in the north of Ireland

---

106   Scheibelreiter, "Genealogie".

107   Beck, "Genealogie".

108   Beck, ed., *Germanenprobleme in heutiger Sicht*; Pohl, *Germanen*; Geary, *Myth of Nations*.

109   *Historia Brittonum*, 7–10, ed. Mommsen, pp. 149–52, tracing the Britons back to Aeneas and his grandson Brutus/Britto, and various genealogies added later; see also Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*.

110   Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", 80–83; cf. Ireland, "Aldfrith of Northumbria".

since the 6th century.[111] Even Irish saints could be placed in these lineages. A manuscript from St Gall from the first half of the 9th century contains brief genealogies of its Irish founder saint, Gallus, and of St Bridget, both supposedly from royal Irish stock.[112] The insular manuscript compendia, in which the great Irish genealogies are transmitted, are relatively late (mostly 11th century), but the age in which these genealogies mattered seems to have been before c. 800, whereas interest in them later declined.[113] Irish scholars have often assumed that this was authentic Irish oral material faithfully written down by monks. Donnchadh O'Corrain, however, has argued that oral lore, as far as traces have been preserved, and written genealogies were organized quite differently, and that the model for the latter was the Old Testament.[114]

As mentioned above, genealogical thinking could indeed find numerous models in the Bible. These common biblical-ethnic origins were both familiar and generally accepted, and situated in a very distant past. In the 9th century, as we have seen, the genealogies of Anglo-Saxon kings were the first to be connected to the sons of Noah. Occasionally, dynastic pedigrees could be more or less explicitly linked to the origins of a people, as in the prologue of Aethelweard's late-10th-century Latin translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: he would relate "what is known about our common family (*prosapia*) and also about the migration of our stock (*genus*)".[115] And the 12th-century *Textus Roffensis* introduces its copy of the Anglian royal genealogy as *Angel Cynnes Cyne Cynn*, "the kingly kin of the Anglian people".[116] In their structure, however, genealogies of peoples, *gentes*, were largely dissociated from family pedigrees. Belonging to Goths, Franks or Angles/Saxons conveyed privilege in the respective kingdoms, like belonging to the Qurashīs did in the Umayyad Caliphate. But there was little need to prove this privileged status by extending family pedigrees unequivocally to tribal ancestors.

The same applies to another genealogy of peoples that was copied into several early medieval manuscripts in slightly differing versions, the so-called "Frankish Table of Nations", probably going back to the 6th century.[117] It was

---

111   Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 84–95.

112   *Codex Sangallensis* 553, p. 263, http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0553, accessed 25/12/2014. Edited as *Genealogia Sancti Galli*, ed. Pertz, p. 34. Even the (Latin) names of St Patrick's parents were noted. See Löwe, "Irische Genealogien aus St. Gallen".

113   O'Corrain, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy".

114   O'Corrain, "Creating The Past"; Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*.

115   *The Chronicle of Aethelweard*, ed. Campbell, p.1; Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, 246.

116   Anlezark, *Water and Fire*, 250, after *Textus Roffensis*, ed. Hearne, pp. 59–60.

117   Goffart, "Frankish Table".

obviously built on the three sons of the mythical Germanic ancestor Mannus, found in the "Germania" by Tacitus, from whom he says the Ingaevones, Istaevones and Hermiones were descended.[118] The Table of Nations does not mention the Germans; Mannus appears in some versions in the corrupted form Alanus. Four (or five) peoples were attached to each ancestor—not only Germanic peoples: for instance, Romans, Britons, Franks and Alamanni were grouped together as descendants of Istio/Escio.[119] No direct link with family pedigrees emerges; even in the Codex Sangallensis 732, where this text is inserted between a Roman and a Frankish dynastic king list (paradoxically, the Germanic ancestor Mannus has moved into the king list as the first Roman king *Analeus*). This strange overlap between an ethnic and a royal genealogy shows that no coherent argument could be derived from their combination, apart from referring to the common origin of Romans and Franks.

We can conclude from these observations that no simple model fits the manifold evidence. On the one hand, the genealogies transmitted to us were not just Latin-Christian fabrications, although they were often written down by educated clerics—therefore we should not exclude possible "native" elements in them from our analysis. On the other hand, they certainly do not add up to any coherent "Germanic (genealogical) culture" that would be common to the continent, and more visible in England and Scandinavia. Neither do genealogies simply represent archaic thinking and oral practices that gradually lose their authenticity and significance when incorporated in a written culture. Rather they offer ways of structuring the social world and its perception which may lose or gain importance in societies of very different complexity. Tracing pedigrees kept many humanist intellectuals of the Renaissance busy in the service of their princes, and it still motivates much professional and dilettante research today. The relative social significance of genealogical arguments in a society thus cannot simply be deduced from its archaic character; neither is it a direct expression of the forms of kinship prevalent in these societies and their importance. Kinship structures, inheritance patterns, gender roles, ethnic identifications and distinctions, eligibility for office, the legitimation of rulership or styles of social cognition may all have had an influence on the production and dissemination of genealogies. Indeed, as Jack Goody has shown, kinship patterns seem to have changed profoundly in the course of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Latin-Christian Europe.[120] Studying the uses of genealogies may help to historicize concepts of kinship

---

118   Tacitus, *Germania* 2; Pohl, *Germanen*, 56.

119   Tacitus, *Germania* 2.2; Goffart, "Frankish Table".

120   Goody, *The Development*.

and ethnicity in the period. A thorough contextualization of the role of genealogies in the period would require further research; and it could profit from the rich and controversial debates about kinship in anthropology.[121] The final section of this article can only indicate the direction in which recent research on early medieval kinship has moved, and what it can tell us about the social significance of genealogies.

Kinship, Ethnicity and Genealogy

It is obvious that Christianization and the end of the Roman ancestor cult marked a relevant change in ideas about kinship. In Roman religion, the memory of the ancestors was the task of the *pater familias*, and a place in the house was usually devoted to them. Christianity transformed this practice, and transgenerational remembrance came to be entrusted to specialists in Christian institutions. Soon donations for one's soul and for perennial remembrance became routine practices. To an extent this implied a decreasing sense of responsibility for the memoria in the family.[122] In parallel, in Late Antiquity the classical Roman naming system of the *tria nomina* faded out.[123] The Roman *nomen gentilicium* had expressed affiliation to a named patrilineal descent group called the *gens* (Claudia, Iulia, Flavia etc.). In spite of their often elaborate genealogies, these *gentes* were rather inclusive groups. Liberated slaves and new citizens could adopt a gentile name, often that of the emperor, so that in the later empire it gradually lost its distinctive character. Personal names thus balanced personal identification on the one hand, and subsumption under a rather inclusive group on the other. In the course of the "transformation of the Roman world", recognition of group or family affiliation was abandoned in favour of single names, whether they were Roman, Christian or Germanic. It is characteristic how Flavius, once denoting origin from the *gens Flavia*, was vastly extended as a *nomen* adopted by many new citizens after citizenship had been extended to all free inhabitants of the empire in 212; finally, it became a fossilized part of the Gothic and Lombard royal titles, *flavius N. rex*, as a marker of Roman institutional tradition.[124] In the Germanic naming system characterized by its composite names, repetition of names in the next

---

121   See, for instance, Goody, "Kinship"; Goody, *The Development*; Parkin and Stone, eds., *Kinship and Family*; Godelier, *The Metamorphoses of Kinship*; Gingrich, "The Prophet's Smile".

122   Paxton, *Christianizing Death*.

123   Salway, "What's in a Name?"; Solin, "Entwicklung des römischen Namensystems"; Heinzelmann, "Les changements"; cf. Patzold and Ubl, eds., *Verwandtschaft.*

124   Wolfram, *Intitulatio*, 56–76.

generation (*Nachbenennung*), variation (e.g., the 6th-century Merovingian kings Theuderich-Theudebert-Theudebald) or alliteration showed continuing attention to filiation, but could only be understood by a much smaller circle.[125] Family names only appeared in the late Middle Ages and laid the basis for the modern naming system.

It had long been recognized that the kinship system in the early medieval West was not agnatic and patrilineal. In the 1960s, Karl Schmid and Georges Duby established a two-phase model of medieval European kinship: cognatic kinship prevailed until c. AD 1000, when the "feudal transformation" led to a more agnatic system and a flowering of patrilineal aristocratic lineages.[126] This model is still found in handbooks but has largely been superseded; the terminology and practice of kinship also included cognatic kin after the 11th century.[127] The two-stage model was also challenged by Jack Goody, who argued that Christianization implied fundamental changes in generational rites of passage, such as birth, marriage, and death, which not only came to be accompanied by Christian liturgy, but also structured by new taboos. In the course of these transformations the ancient Mediterranean clan system, shared with modifications by Israel, Greece and Rome, disappeared.[128] The emerging Christian norms banned all practices by which wealthy families could seek to ensure a smooth passage of property from one generation to the next in the absence of direct male heirs. Legal ways to guard against biological contingencies in succession and inheritance, such as adoption, divorce, concubines or polygyny, were removed.[129] Female rights of inheritance were protected, even where that did not match provisions in "Germanic" law codes, so that widows stood a fair chance of accessing the property of their husbands (which they then might donate to Christian institutions). Endogamy was increasingly outlawed. In the course of the 9th century the Church pushed through sharp rules against incest up to the seventh grade, while occasional

---

125   Haubrichs, "Typen der anthroponymischen Indikation", 36–47.

126   Schmid, "Zur Problematik von Familie", 1–62; Duby, *Le chevalier*; cf. Bouchard, "The Carolingian Creation". I am grateful to Bernhard Jussen for an inspiring conversation about this and the following. See also Kellner, *Ursprung*, 71–77; Sabean and Teuscher, "Kinship in Europe".

127   Goetz, "Verwandtschaft um 1000"; Bouchard, *Those of My Blood*.

128   Goody, *The Development*, 222–39; see also Mitterauer, "European Kinship Systems"; id., "Mittelalter", 171–372; LeJan, *Famille et pouvoir*; Jussen, "Perspektiven", including a discussion of all types of exceptions to these rules.

129   Goody, *The Development*, 48–82; Jussen, "Perspektiven".

attempts to ban foreign marriages came to nothing.[130] These rules were not always respected, but they required a certain genealogical knowledge not only in the families but also by those who aspired to control them. Tables explaining the degrees of parenthood such as the one in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* were widely distributed, and offered early models of trees of consanguinity.[131] Genealogical reasoning became a matter of canon law. Christianity thus did not simply sever genealogical thinking in favour of a purely Christian identity, but rather contributed to reconfiguring it. In a sense, it even insisted much more firmly than the Roman kinship system on its God-given biological character, with a measure of cognatic awareness in attitudes towards kinship. Goody sought to explain these changes as a policy of Christian leaders to ease bequests to the Church, in particular by rich widows, whose re-marriage was restricted. His diagnosis was influential among European medieval historians, although his explanations were not always judged satisfactory. The debate is still open, and it is not the aim of this contribution to engage in it.[132]

Recent research makes it clear that things were complex. Medieval kinship served many purposes: creating networks of mutual support, securing inheritance, legitimizing access to power and office, establishing legal responsibilities, negotiating status, defining gender roles, framing marriage alliances, providing maintenance for widows and orphans, and more.[133] Patrilineal genealogies might serve some of these purposes but not others. For instance, proof of noble lineage as a prerequisite for public office or privilege seems to have developed relatively late in the Middle Ages. As recent research about late medieval and early modern genealogies has shown, aristocrats proud of their ancestry were not necessarily in contrast with an intensification of central rule and state administration.[134]

In any case, elaborate proof of noble ancestry was not necessary for a career at court in the Merovingian period; aristocratic competition in the post-Roman centuries does not seem to have relied on fancy pedigrees. We may see Merovingian or Carolingian succession as dynastic, but neither the name of the dynasty nor the exact line of descent was highlighted in the sources; what mattered was the order of succession of kings, which was filial by default and

---

130   Ubl, *Inzestverbot*; id., "Bischöfe"; de Jong, "An Unsolved Riddle"; Pohl, "Why not Marry a Foreign Woman?"
131   Isidor, *Etymologiae*, 9.6, ed. Lindsay; cf. Kellner, *Ursprung*, 34–43.
132   Jussen, "Erbe"; Ubl, *Inzestverbot*; Sabean and Teuscher, "Kinship in Europe".
133   Spieß, *Familie*.
134   Sabean and Teuscher, "Kinship in Europe".

might include other forms of kinship, but rarely required more sophisticated genealogical arguments. In the Latin West from the 6th to the 8th century, therefore, genealogies were not the prevalent form in which political legitimacy, social status and inheritance rights were negotiated, or in which memories of the past were structured. Those that have been transmitted represent a broad spectrum of forms. Royal dynasties could have long or short genealogies. These could include material from classical mythology, Scandinavian or Germanic traditions, or biblical genealogies; they highlighted royal ancestry or not; they might feature eponymous heroes, pagan gods, Old-Testament figures or Roman senators; they were presented in descending or ascending lines, including (or more frequently excluding) women. There was no received model or widespread practice that the transmitted examples followed. One has the impression that self-assured and smoothly-tailored memories of ancient heritage needed time to unfold after the crisis of identity that the dissolution of empire had provoked, not only for the Romans but also for the composite "barbarian" groups that succeeded them in power. Succession in kingship might require genealogical legitimation, but often did not. When, for instance, Frankish kingship passed from the Merovingians to the Carolingians in 751, genealogical succession (that is, some form of descent of the new ruling family from the old one) was not used as an argument, while many other legitimations were sought. There is little evidence of genealogical reasoning in aristocratic competition for office or in disputes over inheritance.

The secondary role of genealogies in the early medieval West, however, does not mean that kinship as a whole had become unimportant.[135] In many contexts, ego-related perspectives of parenthood were more important that ancestor-related ones.[136] Knowing who one's kin was could be essential in many respects, not least in legal matters. In Lombard law, a number of oathhelpers from the kin-group could clear someone of a suspicion. That implies, of course, a certain genealogical knowledge. For all practical purposes, a memory of three or four generations and their offspring would suffice—a genealogical horizon represented by many of the examples cited above. A similarly limited perspective applied to ethnic identifications. Early medieval peoples had emerged from quite heterogeneous elements in the course of the "migration period" between the 4th and 6th centuries. We do not know how many Franks, Goths or Lombards in the post-Roman kingdoms claimed to be descended from a distant forefather from the same ethnic group, and how many actually were. But we have no indications that a long record of

135   Lubich, *Verwandtsein*; Ubl, "Zur Einführung".
136   For this distinction, see Goody, *The Development*, 134–42.

identification with the same people was decisive for group affiliation or status in these kingdoms. For all that we know, the ethnic landscape of early medieval Europe was not perceived as immutable and unchanged since time immemorial. To ensure the success of their minority governments, Franks, Goths or Lombards did not emphasize the idea of common blood, either within one *gens* or between them. Ethnicity could only serve as a political expedient if integration was not prevented by insurmountable boundaries of blood and origin. Identification with the *gens* rather than with a more specific descent group could suffice for access to privilege.[137] The Frankish myth of Trojan origin, which made the Franks relatives of the Romans, certainly helped to create a sense of common purpose between Frankish and Roman elites in the Frankish kingdoms.[138] And indeed, in the long run, Frankish identity came to include the majority of the Romance-speaking "French". A similar merging of identities happened in Burgundy and Lombardy. There was no sense of any common "Germanic" identity that would have prevented such integration. It is remarkable that as early as in the course of the 4th century, the use of the umbrella term "Germani" for the Germanic-speaking peoples east of the Rhine and north of the Danube disappeared.[139]

The idea that the Franks were related to Trojans, Romans, Phrygians, Frisians and Turks, or the highly composite genealogy of the kings of Wessex, represent concepts of kinship between peoples very different from our modern views. In spite of all their differences of form and content, the genealogies of the early medieval West display a remarkably wide horizon. They included classical mythology, Old-Testament lineages, Christian saints, Germanic gods and Scandinavian heroes, and could criss-cross apparent ethnic divides. They do not come from a dark age in which barbarian rulers had fallen back on the narrow focus of their ethnic lore. To the contrary, they reflect a process of intellectual accommodation in an entangled ethnic landscape that was solidly set in a much wider world, and where the new elites sought to come to terms with a rich and manifold heritage. Faced with such a composite past, distinction could not simply be achieved by exclusion. Geat and Wodan, Noah and Adam could all be included in a single pedigree, and Geat might even be identified with a figure from Roman comedy.

Modern scholars used to regard such hybrid genealogies as erudite but insignificant speculations, and tried to extract "authentic" pedigrees from

---

137 Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir,* 40: "Invoquer l'origine ethnique plutôt que des ancêtres"; Pohl, "Introduction: Strategies of Identification".

138 Reimitz, *Frankish Identity and European Ethnicity*, 83–87.

139 Pohl, "Germanenbegriff".

them. However, the idea that only what seems coherent (for instance, purely Germanic) to us can be authentic is a modern projection that has led generations of excellent scholars astray. We may assume that core pedigrees were remembered in noble families. Later sagas and epics also contain many instances in which they were used for self-identification within an aristocratic milieu, were employed to express group affiliation, and could explain inherited bonds of friendship or enmity. These instances are rare in the early medieval record. Of course, royal (and aristocratic) succession was largely claimed by family members, even in those kingdoms where no stable dynasties emerged. However, it is notable that the generational transmission of office and lands was rarely accompanied by strong genealogical arguments (for instance, in contested cases), or by attempts to ascertain who belonged to a dynasty and who did not. There was no dynastic propaganda (with the exception of the Amals), and a family name was hardly used for identification. We do not even know whether the early Carolingians thought of themselves as Carolingians, as Arnulfings or as Pippinids. Information about royal succession was preserved in king lists which, however, rarely contain any genealogical information. It has become common to call the principle of filial succession "genealogical"; however, that is not very helpful for a distinction between various modes of representing kinship in past societies. Andre Gingrich, in his conclusion to the present volume, argues for a much more differentiated approach, which includes distinguishing between genealogy and descent, and addressing the particular circumstances of authorial decisions to streamline a genealogy into a unilinear descent order. As he maintains, "genealogical memories and descent reckoning are merely one of several strategic elements in any kinship system".

Those genealogies that we have served various purposes: royal legitimation (or perhaps, implicit critique, as in the Merovingian case), praise of a particular prince (often one who had died early), legal affirmation, securing inheritance rights (which in Bavaria only required the wholesale reference to "*genealogia*"), integrating different strands of a family or population, enhancing the prestige of a church or monastery, or displaying biblical and classical erudition. The art of genealogy in the period must have required balancing identities: barbarian and Roman, Christian and pagan, lay and clerical, distinctive and inclusive. It was a demanding task. Could genealogies, as Ibn Khaldun would say, lead to mutual help and affection? Straightforward lists of ancestors which did not provide points of reference for other groups in those hybrid societies, like Rothari's pedigree, do not seem to have become very popular. Distinction can rarely be achieved simply by being different. More open constructions, such as the Frankish Trojan legend or the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, achieved much wider currency. They made it possible to place common origins

in a distant but familiar past, increasingly provided by biblical models. We may assume that it took time to develop genealogical schemes that could achieve the balance required to place a lineage within a complex web of kinship, ethnicity and shared Christian history. Only then could genealogy again become a widely-understood idiom of distinction within a common frame of identification.

Bibliography

Daniel Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, New York, 2006).

Aleida Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition: Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer* (Cologne, 1999).

Peter Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff, 1966).

Heinrich Beck, ed., *Germanenprobleme in heutiger Sicht*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde 1 (Berlin, 1986).

Heinrich Beck, "Genealogie", in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde 11*, ed. Heinrich Beck, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin, 1998), 54–55.

Teresa Bernheimer, *The 'Alids: The First Family of Islam, 750–1200* (Edinburgh, 2014).

Arno Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel: Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker*, 1 (Stuttgart, 1957).

Constance Bouchard, "The Carolingian Creation of a Model of Patrilineage", in *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies*, eds. Felice Lifshitz and Celia Chazelle (New York, 2007), 194–220.

Constance Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia, 2001).

Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993).

Thomas Charles-Edwards, "Anglo-Saxon Kinship Revisited", in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. John Hines (Woodbridge, 1997), 171–203.

Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000).

Richard Corradini, "ZeitNetzWerk: Karolingische Gelehrsamkeit und Zeitforschung im Kompendium des Walahfrid Strabo"(unpublished Habilitationsschrift, University of Vienna, 2014).

Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*: *The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003).

Georges Duby, "The eleventh and twelfth centuries", in id., *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (London, 1977), 149–57.

Georges Duby, *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre: Le mariage dans la France féodale* (Paris, 1981).

David N. Dumville, "The Anglian Collection of Genealogies and Regnal Lists", *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976), 23–50.

David N. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", in *Early Medieval Kingship*, eds. Peter Hayes Sawyer and Ian N. Wood (Leeds, 1977), 72–104.

David N. Dumville, "The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List and the Chronology of Early Wessex", *Peritia* 4 (1985), 21–66.

Karl August Eckhardt, "Exkurs IV: Merowinger im Dyptichon Barberini", in Karl August Eckhardt, *Studia Merovingica* (Aalen, 1975).

Guy Farney, *Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition in Republican Rome* (Cambridge, 2007).

Paul Fouracre and Richard Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640–720* (Manchester, 1996).

Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994).

Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: the Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, NJ, 2002).

Léopold Génicot, *Les généalogies* (Turnhout, 1975).

Andre Gingrich, "The Prophet's Smile and Other Puzzles: Studying Arab Tribes and Comparing Close Marriages", *Social Anthropology* 3,2 (1995), 147–70.

Maurice Godelier, *The Metamorphoses of Kinship* (New York, 2011).

Hans-Werner Goetz, "Verwandtschaft um 1000: ein solidarisches Netzwerk?" in *Verwandtschaft, Name und soziale Ordnung (300–1000)*, eds. Steffen Patzold and Karl Ubl (Berlin, Boston, 2014), 289–302.

Walter Goffart, "The Supposedly 'Frankish' Table of Nations: An Edition and Study", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1983), 98–130.

Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ, 1988).

Anthony Good, "Kinship", in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, eds. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, 2nd ed. (London, 2012), 396–404.

Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983).

Jana Grusková and Gunther Martin, "Ein neues Textstück aus den 'Scythica Vindobonensia' zu den Ereignissen nach der Eroberung von Philippopolis", *Tyche* 29 (2014), 29–44.

Wolfgang Haubrichs, "Amalgamierung und Identität: Langobardische Personennamen in Mythos und Herrschaft", in *Die Langobarden—Herrschaft und Identität*, eds. Walter Pohl and Peter Erhart, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 8 (Vienna, 2005), 67–102.

Wolfgang Haubrichs, "Typen der anthroponymischen Indikation von Verwandtschaft bei den 'germanischen' *gentes*: Traditionen—Innovationen—Differenzen", in

Verwandtschaft, Name und soziale Ordnung (300–1000), eds. Steffen Patzold and Karl Ubl (Berlin, Boston, 2014), 29–71.

Peter Heather, *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool, 1991).

Peter Heather, *Goths and Romans 332–489* (Oxford, 1991).

Martin Heinzelmann, "Les changements de la dénomination latine à la fin de l'antiquité", in *Famille et parenté dans l'occident médiéval*, eds. Georges Duby and Jacques LeGoff (Rome, 1977), 19–24.

Martin Heinzelmann, "L'hagiographie mérovingienne: Panorama des documents potentiels", in Monique Goullet, Martin Heinzelmann and Christiane Veyrard-Cosme, *L'hagiographie mérovingienne à travers ses réécritures* (Beihefte der Francia 71, Ostfildern, 2010), 27–82.

Olivier Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors: Roman Rulers and the Constraints of Tradition* (Oxford, 2015).

Colin A. Ireland, "Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish Genealogies", *Celtica* 22 (1991), 64–78.

Mayke de Jong, "An Unsolved Riddle: Early Medieval Incest Legislation", in *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Ian Wood (San Marino, 1998), 107–40.

Bernhard Jussen, "Perspektiven der Verwandtschaftsforschung zwanzig Jahre nach Jack Goody's 'Entwicklung von Ehe und Familie in Europa'", in *Die Familie in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*, ed. Karl-Heinz Spieß (Ostfildern, 2009), 275–324.

Bernhard Jussen, "Erbe und Verwandtschaft: Kulturen der Übertragung im Mittelalter", in *Erbe: Übertragungskonzepte zwischen Natur und Kultur*, eds. Stefan Willer, Sigrid Weigel and Bernhard Jussen (Frankfurt/M., 2013), 37–64.

Beate Kellner, *Ursprung und Kontinuität: Studien zum genealogischen Wissen im Mittelalter* (Munich, 2004).

Damien Kempf, "Introduction", in Paulus Diaconus, *Liber de Episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. and trans. Damien Kempf, Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations 19 (Paris, Leuven, Walpole MA, 2013), 1–39.

Hugh Kennedy, "Arab Genealogical Literature from Oral Memory to Written Record", *Arabica* 44 (1997), 531–44.

Bojana T. Ksrmanović and Ninoslava J. Radošević, "Legendary genealogies of Byzantine emperors and their families", *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 41 (2004), 71–98.

Régine LeJan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VIIe–Xe siécle): Essai d'anthropologie sociale* (Paris, 1995).

Conrad Leyser, "From Maternal Kin to Jesus as Mother: Royal Genealogy and Marian Devotion in the Ninth-Century West", in *Motherhood, Religion and Society in Medieval Europe, 400–1400: Essays Presented to Henrietta Leyser*, eds. Conrad Leyser and Lesley Smith (Farnham, 2011), 21–40.

Heinz Löwe, "Irische Genealogien aus St. Gallen und ihr historischer Hintergrund", in *Tradition als historische Kraft*, eds. Norbert Kamp and Joachim Wollasch (Berlin, 1982), 138–55.

Gerhard Lubich, *Verwandtsein: Lesarten einer politisch-sozialen Beziehung im Frühmittelalter (6.–11. Jh.)* (Cologne, 2008).

Gunther Martin and Jana Grusková, "'Scythica Vindobonensia' by Dexippus (?): New Fragments on Decius' Gothic Wars", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 54 (2014) 728–54; online: http://grbs.library.duke.edu/article/view/15071/6581.

Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge, 2008).

Michael Mitterauer, "European Kinship Systems and Household Structures: Medieval Origins", in *Distinct Inheritances: Property, Family and Community in a Changing Europe*, eds. Hannes Grandits and Patrick Heady (Münster, 2003), 35–52.

Michael Mitterauer, "Mittelalter", in Andreas Gestrich, Jens-Uwe Krause and Michael Mitterauer, *Geschichte der Familie: mit 17 Tabellen* (Stuttgart, 2003), 171–372.

Alexander Callander Murray, "Beowulf, the Danish Invasions, and Royal Genealogy", in *The Dating of Beowulf*, ed. Colin Chase (Toronto, 1981), 101–11.

Alexander Callander Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure: Studies in Law and Society in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1983).

Janet L. Nelson, "Reconstructing a Royal Family: Reflections of Alfred, from Asser, Chapter 2", in *Peoples and Places in Northern Europe, 500–1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, eds. Ian Wood and Niels Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), 47–66.

Janet L. Nelson, "Charlemagne the Man", in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Jo Story (Manchester, 2005), 22–37.

Donnchadh O'Corrain, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy: Recurrent Aetiologies", in *History and Heroic Tale*, ed. Tore Nyberg (Odense, 1985), 51–96.

Donnchadh O'Corrain, "Creating the Past: The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition: The Carroll Lecture 1992", *Chronicon* 1,2 (1997) 1–32.

Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1967), 250–364.

James T. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World 690–900* (Turnhout, 2009).

Robert Parkin and Linda Stone, eds., *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader* (Oxford, Malden, 2004).

Steffen Patzold and Karl Ubl, eds., *Verwandtschaft, Name und soziale Ordnung (300–1000)*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde 90 (Berlin, 2014).

Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: the Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY, 1990).

Walter Pohl, *Die Germanen*, 2nd ed., Oldenbourgs Enzyklopädie der deutschen Geschichte 57 (Munich, 2002).

Walter Pohl, "Der Germanenbegriff vom 3. bis 8. Jahrhundert—Identifikationen und Abgrenzungen", in *Zur Geschichte der Gleichung 'germanisch—deutsch'*, eds. Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, Heiko Steuer and Dietrich Hakelberg, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde 34 (Berlin, New York, 2004), 163–83.

Walter Pohl, "Gender and Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages", in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, eds. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge, 2004), 23–43 or in *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble (London, 2006), 168–88.

Walter Pohl, "Gens ipsa peribit: Kingdom and Identity after the End of Lombard Rule", in *774—ipotesi su una transizione*, ed. Stefano Gasparri (Turnhout, 2008), 67–78.

Walter Pohl, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Religion and Empire", in *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300–1100*, eds. Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner and Richard Payne (Farnham, Burlington, 2012), 1–23.

Walter Pohl, "Introduction: Strategies of Identification: A Methodological Profile", in *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, eds. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 13 (Turnhout, 2013), 1–64.

Walter Pohl, "Why not Marry a Foreign Woman: Stephen III's Letter to Charlemagne", in *Rome and Religion in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Valerie Garver and Owen Phelan (Farnham, 2014), 47–63.

Walter Pohl, "'Morbus Gothorum': Nachfolgeprobleme bei Westgoten und Langobarden", in *The Arts of Succession*, eds. Ulrich Gotter and Nino Luraghi, forthcoming.

Helmut Reimitz, "Ein karolingisches Geschichtsbuch aus St Amand", in *Text—Schift—Codex: Quellenkundliche Arbeiten aus dem Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, eds. Herwig Weigl and Christoph Egger, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 35 (Vienna, 2000), 34–90.

Helmut Reimitz, "Anleitung zur Interpretation: Schrift und Genealogie der Karolingerzeit", in *Vom Nutzen des Schreibens: Soziales Gedächtnis, Herrschaft und Besitz*, eds. Walter Pohl and Paul Herold, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 5 (Vienna, 2002), 167–82.

Helmut Reimitz, "Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge in der fränkischen Historiographie", in *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen: Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters*, ed. Walter Pohl, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 8 (Vienna, 2004), 191–210.

Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of European Ethnicity, 550–850* (Cambridge, 2015).

Majied Robinson, "Prosopographical Approaches to the Nasab Tradition: A Study of Marriage and Concubinage in the Tribe of Muḥammad, 500–750 CE" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2013).

David Sabean and Simon Teuscher, "Kinship in Europe: A new approach to long-term development", in *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to long-term development (1300–1900)*, eds. David Warren Sabean, Simon Teuscher and Jon Mathieu (Oxford, 2007), 1–32.

Benet Salway, "What's in a Name? A Survey of Roman Onomastic Practice from c. 700 BC to 700 AD", *Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994), 124–45.

Sarah Bowen Savant and Helena de Felipe, eds., *Genealogy and Knowledge in Muslim Societies: Understanding the Past* (Edinburgh, 2014).

Georg Scheibelreiter, "Genealogie", in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde 11*, ed. Heinrich Beck, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin, 1998), 33–45.

Karl Schmid, "Zur Problematik von Familie, Sippe und Geschlecht, Haus und Dynastie beim mittelalterlichen Adel", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte des Oberrheins* 105 (1957), 1–62.

Clausdieter Schott, *Lex Alamannorum. Codex Sangallensis 731: Faksimile, Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar zum Faksimile aus der Wandalgarius-Handschrift*, 2nd ed. (Augsburg, 1993).

Rudolf Simek, *Lexikon der germanischen Mythologie* (Stuttgart, 2006).

Heikki Solin, "Zur Entwicklung des römischen Namensystems", in *Person und Name*, eds. Dieter Geuenich, Wolfgang Haubrichs and Jörg Jarnut (Berlin, New York, 2003), 1–17.

Gabrielle Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historiography", in id., *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Historiography* (Baltimore, London, 1997), 99–110.

Karl-Heinz Spieß, *Familie und Verwandtschaft im deutschen Hochadel des Spätmittelalters: 13. bis Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1996).

Zoltán Szombathy, *The Roots of Arabic Genealogy: A Study in Historical Anthropology* (Berlin, 2003).

Marcelle Thiébaux, "Introduction", in Dhuoda, *Liber Manualis*, ed. Marcelle Thiébaux, Cambridge Medieval Classics (Cambridge, 1998), 1–39.

David E. Thornton, "Genealogies, Royal", in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Oxford, 1999), 199–200.

Karl Ubl, *Inzestverbot und Gesetzgebung: Die Konstruktion eines Verbrechens, 300–1100* (Berlin, 2008).

Karl Ubl, "Bischöfe und Laien auf dem Konzil von Tribur 895: Zur Politisierung der Ehe in der Karolingerzeit", *Deutsches Archiv* 70,1 (2014), 143–62.

Karl Ubl, "Zur Einführung: Verwandtschaft als Ressource sozialer Integration im frühen Mittelalter", in *Verwandtschaft, Name und soziale Ordnung (300–1000)*, eds. Steffen Patzold and Karl Ubl (Berlin, Boston, 2014), 1–28.

Jean Vezin, "Une nouvelle lecture de la liste de noms copiée au dos de l'ivoire Barberini", *Bulletin archéologique*, Nouvelle Serie 7 (1971), 19–53.

Jeffrey Weaver and Madeline H. Caviness, *The Ancestors of Christ Windows at Canterbury Cathedral* (Los Angeles, 2013).

Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes*, 2nd ed. (Cologne, Vienna, 1977).

Charles West, "Dynastic Historical Writing", in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, 2: 400–1400*, eds. Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson (Oxford, 2012), 496–516.

Armin Wolf, "Königswähler und königliche Tochterstämme", in *Königliche Tochterstämme, Königswähler und Kurfürsten*, ed. Armin Wolf (Frankfurt/M., 2002), 1–78.

Herwig Wolfram, *Intitulatio: 1 Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna, Cologne, Graz, 1967).

Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, 1988).

Herwig Wolfram, *Gotische Studien: Volk und Herrschaft im frühen Mittelalter* (Munich, 2005).

Ian N. Wood, "Fredegar's Fables", in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, eds. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 32 (Vienna, 1994a), 359–66.

Ian N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751* (London, New York, 1994b).

Ian N. Wood, *Gregory of Tours* (Bangor, Oxford, 1994c).

Ian N. Wood, "The Individuality of Gregory of Tours", in *The World of* Gregory *of Tours*, eds. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (Leiden, Boston, 2002), 29–46.

Ian N. Wood, "Deconstructing the Merovingian Family", in *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artefacts*, eds. Richard Corradini, Max Diesenberger and Helmut Reimitz, The Transformation of the Roman World 12 (Leiden, Boston, 2003), 149–72.

Ian N. Wood, "Genealogy Defined by Women: the Case of the Pippinids", in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, eds. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge, 2004), 234–56.

Sources

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, trans. Michael Swanton (London, 2000).

Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth, 1983).

Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and Roger A.B. Mynors (Oxford, repr. 1992).

Theodor Bitterauf, *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising* 1: *744–926*, Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen und deutschen Geschichte N.F. 4 (Munich, 1905).

Bonifatius, *Epistolae*, ed. Michael Tangl, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (hereafter MGH) Epistolae selectae 1 (Berlin, 1916).

Cassiodorus, *Variae*, translated with notes and introduction by Sam J.B. Barnish, (Liverpool, 1992).

Catalogi regum Francorum praetermissi, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 7 (Hanover, Leipzig, 1920), pp. 850–55.

Chronica de VI aetatibus mundi = Die ostfränkische Ahnentafel von 807, ed. Arno Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21/2 (Hanover, 2006), pp. 951–1008.

The Chronicle of Aethelweard, ed. Alistair Campbell (London, 1962).

Commemoratio genealogiae domni Karoli gloriosissimi imperatoris, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH Scriptores 13 (Hanover, 1881), pp. 245–46.

The Burgundian Code: book of constitutions or law of Gundobad, trans. Katherine Fischer Drew (Philadelphia, 1996).

Collectio Pataviensis, ed. Karl Zeumer, Formulae Merov. et Carol. Aevi (Hanover, 1886), pp. 456–61.

Concilium Parisiense a. 829, ed. Albert Werminghoff, MGH Concilia Aevi Carolini 1, 2 (Hanover, 1908), p. 655.

Dhuoda, *Liber Manualis*, ed. Marcelle Thiébaux, Cambridge Medieval Classics (Cambridge, 1998).

Paulus Diaconus, *Liber de Episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH Scriptores 2 (Hanover, 1829), pp. 260–68.

Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, eds. Ludwig Bethmann and Georg Waitz, MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum (Hanover, 1878), pp. 45–187.

Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, 2 vols., Loeb's Classical Series (Cambridge, Mass., 1926).

Venantius Fortunatus, *Poèmes*, vols. 1–3, ed. Marc Reydellet, Collection des universités de France, Série latine 315, 374, 376 (Paris, 1994–2004).

Fredegar, *Chronicae,* ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 18–193.

Genealogiae Karolorum, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH Scriptores 13 (Hanover, 1881), pp. 241–48.

Genealogia ex stirpe sancti Arnulfi descendentium Mettensis, ed. Johannes Heller, MGH Scriptores 25 (Hanover, 1880), pp. 381–85.

Genealogia Sancti Galli, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH Scriptores 2 (Hanover, 1829), p. 34.

Genealogia Welforum, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH Scriptores 13 (Hanover, 1881), pp. 733–34.

Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, eds. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 1/1 (Hanover, 1937).

Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, trans. Edward James, Translated texts for historians: Latin series 1 (Liverpool, 1986).

Historia Brittonum, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH Auctores antiquissimi 13 (Berlin, 1898), pp. 111–222.

Isidore, *Chronica Maiora*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH Auctores antiquissimi 11 (Berlin, 1894), pp. 424–79.

Isidore, *Etymologiae*, ed. Wallace M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911; repr. 1991).

Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione regia*, ed. Alain Dubreucq, Sources Chrétiennes 407 (Paris, 1995).

Jordanes, *Romana*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH Auctores antiquissimi 5/1 (Berlin, 1882), pp. 1–52.

Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH Auctores antiquissimi 5/1 (Berlin, 1882), pp. 53–138.

Ibn Khaldun, *Muqadimmah: an introduction to history*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. Nessim Joseph Dawood (Princeton, N.J., 2005).

Lex Baiwariorum, ed. Ernst von Schwind, MGH Leges nationum Germanicarum 5/2 (Hanover, 1926).

Liber Historiae Francorum, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 215–328.

The Lombard Laws, trans. Katherine Fischer Drew (Philadelphia, 1973).

Origo gentis Langobardorum, eds. Ludwig Bethmann and Georg Waitz, MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum (Hanover, 1878), pp. 2–6.

Regum Francorum Genealogiae, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, MGH Scriptores 2 (Hanover, 1829), pp. 307–14.

Textus Roffensis, ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1720).

Thegan, *Vita Hludovici*, ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum 64 (Hanover, 1995), pp. 167–278.

Vita Sanctae Geretrudis, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 447–64.

PART 4

Spiritual Communities: Texts, Sites and Interactions

∵

Introduction: Spiritual Communities across Medieval Eurasia*

Rutger Kramer

In 1712, the Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri embarked on a mission to bring Christianity to Tibet. He ended up in the capital, Lhasa, and started voraciously reading all the Buddhist treatises he was given by his caretakers. In the process, he became the first European to understand, speak, and even write Tibetan.[1]

From Desideri's travelogue we get a portrait of a man who was genuinely interested in the new world around him, and who understood that he needed more than the language to communicate with the people in it.[2] Thus he strove to learn the rules of Tibetan monastic debate (*rtsod pa*), and he immersed himself in Buddhist teaching. At first he even found this to be fascinatingly close to Christian beliefs, equating the belief in Buddha with a form of monotheism and detecting a Pythagorean streak in ideas about reincarnation.[3] Soon, however, he would come to describe Buddhism as a "hodgepodge of bizarre dogmas", and set about the conversion of its adherents in the hope that the Tibetan rejection of polytheism would at least provide an opening for his missionary successors.[4]

The almost surprisingly open-minded Desideri exhorted his readers to avoid "that malign prejudice that believes everything extraordinary must be false for the mere reason that it is extraordinary".[5] Nevertheless, well-intentioned though he was, one of Desideri's ways of coping with such prejudices was to relate many things he experienced to European examples with which he and his audience were familiar.[6] As such, he not only looked for classical (Hellenistic) roots for many Tibetan beliefs he encountered, but also used the vocabulary at his disposal to describe what he saw: the Great Lama, for

---

1 A recent study of Desideri's travels may be found in Pomplun, *Jesuit on the Roof of the World*.

2 Desideri, *Notizie Istoriche del Thibet*, 4–7; trans. Zwilling/Sweet, *Mission to Tibet*.

3 Pomplun, *Jesuit*, 74–75 and 182–85.

4 Desideri, *Notizie Istoriche del Thibet*, 3.1, trans. Zwilling/Sweet, p. 297.

5 Desideri, *Notizie Istoriche del Thibet*, Prologue, trans. Zwilling/Sweet, p. 114. Cf. Pomplun, "Divine Grace and the Play of Opposites".

6 Cf. Kaschewsky, "The Image of Tibet", 9–13.

example, became "the pope of these people", and when he reached Sakya (Sa skya) (in present-day Shigatse), one of the first places he considered to be large enough to mention on his journey towards the capital, he compared it to a concept very familiar to him: he called it a monastery, and compared the lama (*bla ma*) to a prince.[7] From his point of view, this was a logical analogy—but, as Desideri himself quickly discovered, much more scrutiny was needed for such a comparison to be reliable.[8]

The contributions in this section on *Spiritual Communities* all grew out of a sense of wonder similar to that felt by Ippolito Desideri when he ascended into the Tibetan Highlands. It began with the simple observation that the cultures studied within viscom all hosted a plethora of religious communities that served as nodal points for the religious, intellectual, social and economic life in their respective regions. From a European point of view, the communities in question are what would commonly be referred to as monasteries: places where, as per the etymological roots of the Latin *monasterium* (itself a Greek loan word), people would be able to live alone, isolated from the temptations of the outside world in order to devote their lives to the practice of Christianity, most commonly according to a given set of rules.[9] It is a word pregnant with meaning, not least because it evokes the long tradition attached to the concept of solitude, going back to the hermitic foundations of the so-called "Desert Fathers" of Egypt. The continuous struggle of Western monastic communities to retain this isolation in spite of (but also thanks to) operating as a collective is part and parcel of their communal identity, and plays a not inconsiderable part in the way they were represented over time. The word used to describe their Tibetan counterparts, while similar at first glance, carries subtly different connotations. Literally speaking, "*gompa*" (*dgon pa*; Skt. *araṇya*) also refers to a remote or solitary place, with the seclusion here meant to enable the intense spiritual practice that was at the heart of Tibetan Buddhism.[10] The term *gompa* still carries strong connotations of isolation, which appear to have grown as

---

7 Desideri, *Notizie Istoriche del Thibet*, 2.5, trans. Zwilling/Sweet, p. 227. Desideri also refers to Sakya (which he called Secchia) as a "town" or "city" in some passages.

8 See the remarks by Eco, *Serendipities*, 74–75, on how misinterpretations can nonetheless lead to serendipitous discoveries.

9 The choice of monasteries mainly reflects the research interests of those involved in this working group: *madrasas* were not common in the Zaydi areas of Yemen, for example, and cathedral schools or universities only emerged in Europe in the course of the High and Late Middle Ages; on this phenomenon, see generally Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*.

10 See the contribution by Mathias Fermer in this volume for other terms for these types of community—especially the concept of the *choede* (*chos sde*), with its connotations of "religious faculty" has comparative potential as well. See also the characterization of the

these temples became more and more institutionalised; the concept of the *gompa* at its inception was one where shared religious practice was the norm, with isolation being one of the "tools" available to the practitioners residing there.[11] As time progressed, their importance within the Tibetan cultural landscape increased and, although the religious significance of *gompas* was never completely lost, they also took on characteristics of other types of settlement. Nonetheless, a strong sense of togetherness centred on the *gompa* seems to have been a major part of the monks' self-understanding.[12] Both types of community, *monasterium* and *gompa*, therefore designate a similar genre, a place founded with the intention of providing people with a location where they would congregate and "devote their lives to the pursuit of an elevated state of religious dedication, which pursuit set them apart from other members of society".[13] Still, the basic understanding of what this meant in each region and, *mutatis mutandis*, the (self-) perception of the different communities cannot be compared in a straightforward, quantitative manner.

While *monasteria* and *gompas* can be said to have been founded upon similar ideas of worldly renunciation, the cross-regional comparison attempted in this section becomes even more complicated with the realization that there appears to be no such equivalent in the Islamic world of South Arabia. Generally, while Medieval Islam did know *madrasas*, intellectual centres focused on (religious) education, and *ribats*—buildings "to which Muslims would repair for periods of devotion"—those living there were not expected to remain there indefinitely in order to dedicate their lives to their religion.[14] While centred on a mosque, these institutions were more closely comparable to the universities or cathedral schools of medieval Europe, communities where the majority of their members entered the *curriculum* with a clear understanding of the finite nature of their sojourn. Although *madrasas* only became prevalent in medieval South Arabia from around the late 12th century onwards, Zaydi Yemen did host another, rather particular type of community, which, while not founded as an institution *per se*, owed its existence to a certain religious idealism. These were the *hijras*, villages that served as centres

---

"*gompa* proper" by Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 29–36, in his description of Kumbum Gompa.

11   This appreciation of seclusion continues even to the present day: Terrone, "Householders and Monks", 87.

12   See for example Adams, "Production of Self", 157.

13   Dey, "Bringing Chaos out of Order", 28–29.

14   Kennedy, "The *Ribat* in the Early Islamic World", 161; Pryds, "*Studia* as Royal Offices", 95–98.

of Zaydi Islamic religious and scholarly activities in the midst of the tribal landscape of Yemen. A characteristic type of community, the "rules" concerning membership could be quite strictly defined. According to the traditions of one specific Zaydi sect, for instance, one would essentially be born into a *hijra* rather than entering such a community voluntarily, as its inhabitants would invariably claim to be descendants of the Prophet.[15] This prerequisite seems to clash with the meaning of the word itself, which carries connotations of retreat or even emigration, specifically from unjust rulers—an association that makes sense given the turbulent early history of these communities. The retreat or refuge implied in *hijra* was sought in order to live according a specific version of Islam, and the name thus seems to refer to isolation from an overarching orthodoxy that was not accepted by this particular sect.

To the extent that the names used to designate the communities under scrutiny provide any indication as to their nature, it appears that *hijra*, *monasterium* and *gompa* are in many ways functionally equivalent, and may thus be comparable. All three were designated sites where religious ideologies and practices collided in a way that gave meaning to the people living and interacting there. Furthermore, upon closer scrutiny, it also becomes evident that each of these communities represented entire worlds of meaning to their inhabitants and their surroundings alike.[16] These were more than just villages, educational institutes, or centres of religious authority—they were firmly embedded within a larger social whole, which influenced and was influenced by everything from the practice of daily life to the myths and stories that were invented to make sense of it all.

For instance, the foundation legend of a network of religious communities around the imperial temple in Lhasa tells how these had been built at specific points in the landscape in order to pin down a "supine demoness" (*srin mo*)—her ritual subjugation by means of these auxiliary temples being essential to the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet.[17] The subsequent mythology created around this network anchored these foundations in the (social) landscape of Tibet in a way that is different from the reasoning behind the geographic placement of European monasteries, which is often justified with reference to the

---

15   Eirik Hovden's contribution in this volume provides more insight into the development of the *hijra* in South Arabia. For a more general description of the context within which this happened, see Dresch, "Imams and Tribes", esp. 264–65. It should be noted, however, that not everyone who could claim to be a descendant of the Prophet would also enter a *hijra*.

16   For the case of Tibet, see Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 53–82; exemplary case-studies of the social importance of medieval European monasteries were undertaken by Davies, *Small Worlds* and Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter*; on the Yemeni *hijra*s, see among others Puin, "Yemeni *Hijrah*", and Madelung, "Yemenite *Hijra*".

17   Gyatso, "Down with the Demoness".

ideal of having found either a *locus amoenus*, a "pleasant place", that marked the monastery out as a reflection of paradise on Earth, or a *locus heremus*, an uninhabited wilderness that needed to be "tamed" by the establishment of a monastic presence.[18] In a more practical sense, the role played by Cistercian foundations in the cultivation of arable lands throughout Europe—fuelled by the Benedictine ideal of *ora et labora*, but also by the aristocracy's inclination to grant these new foundations property that they considered to be wasteland—is in marked contrast to the way the more intellectually inclined *hijras* and *madrasas* of the Muslim world ingrained themselves in their societal surroundings, or, for that matter, the observation that *ribats* originated as fortifications rather than spiritual retreats.[19] In each case, there was a large overlap between the "spiritual" and more down-to-earth concerns that were, at various times and by various observers, considered their main *raison d'être*. Such concerns need to be taken into account in order to achieve a fully realised comparison between these areas. The development of a spiritual community helped shape the self-understanding and sense of belonging of its members, which in turn affects the different ways the sources at our disposal represent the communities from which they sprang.[20] This, then, leads to an interesting epistemological challenge. When comparison is attempted solely with a view towards shedding more light on the subject of one's own research interests, the initial inclination may be to treat the communities encountered on such an intercultural endeavour as mere foils to one's own frame of reference.[21] This is a viable comparative goal in its own right, but the moment the different approaches to the concept of community in the relevant regions themselves become an object of study, then the many forms and levels of community that come together in these nodal points have to be taken into account.

As is pointed out throughout this volume, community formation is a processual, dynamic phenomenon, a series of perpetually evolving interactions that each result from a specific combination of individual needs and external factors.[22] On the other hand, given communities would also affect individual

---

18   Mills, "Re-Assessing the Supine Demoness"; Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape*, 23–24.

19   Berkley, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 6–8; for a brief description of the impact of Cistercian monasteries on the landscape of the Low Countries, see Mills, "Counts, Cities and Clerics", 45–46. On *ribats*, see Masarwa, "The Mediterranean as a Frontier".

20   Dey, "Bringing Chaos out of Order", 24–25.

21   For a study of how even Max Weber fell into this trap, see, for example, Turner, "Islam, Capitalism and the Weber Theses", as well as the contributions in the volume on *Max Weber and Islam*, esp. the one by Crone, "Islamic Law".

22   See the introduction by Walter Pohl in this volume, but also Gingrich and Lutter, "Visions of Community: An Introduction".

identities—for example, one can identify strategies of distinction and inclusion in specific texts, which may apply to a small community or to a larger social whole. The communities and the actors that form them, as well as the associated texts, ideas and practices do not operate in isolation. Instead, the concept of community as represented in a given source could be seen to function on various interconnected "levels", which reflect the complex ideas and ideological statements visible in the sources.[23] In this model there are individual communities with a relatively clear sense of belonging, in which face-to-face communication and daily interaction are the norm. On a larger scale, there are communities that share a certain set of values that mark them out as different from their surroundings without being geographically limited. For example, these could take the form of networks bound together by common interests or by bonds of association that supersede direct contact—religious sects or prayer confraternities, for example.[24] Often these networks would be characterized by competition with other sects operating at the same "level". On an even larger scale, these networks would also operate and compete for interest *en bloc*, similar to the way in which small communities would express themselves within a network. At this level we see larger polities, monastic orders, or economic interest groups, for example groups in which face-to-face interaction would be limited to all but those operating on the highest rungs of the social ladder, but where a sense of togetherness—characterized by a shared discourse—would still be palpable and help guide the actions of individual members, communities or even networks.[25] Superseding all others is the over-arching ideological community created by a common faith or

---

23   The following paragraph is partly based on ideas formulated in Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging*. The articles by Hovden, Ó Riain and Fermer in this volume also engage with the various levels of community, whereas Kramer shows how understanding of the "highest" levels would impinge on self-representation with a more intra-communal focus.

24   On the various Islamic sects in the Middle East, see Khuri, *Imams and Emirs*; an overview of the various sects that developed during the second introduction of Buddhism in Tibet (1000–1200) is presented by Reat, *Buddhism*, 229–41. For the specific phenomenon of prayer confraternities in the early Christian West, see, among many others, Angenendt, "Kloster und Klosterverband"; Geuenich, "Gebetsgedenken und Gebetshilfe".

25   These last two levels (and the difficulties of distinguishing between them) are central to the ideas behind, for example, Palme, "Political Identity versus Religious Distinction?"; Conermann, "Volk, Ethnie oder Stamm?", esp. 330–31. See also the term "community of discourse" as proposed by Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse*, 5–19, showing how a shared discourse itself would be a catalyst in the formation of large-scale affective communities.

religion—the *umma* of the Muslim faith, the *populus Christianus* of the Christian Church, or the *nang pa* (literally "insiders", understood to be Buddhists) in Tibet.[26] Contemporary actors describing society at this level were already aware that many different social groups come under this all-inclusive label—and for researchers the ideas espoused by such authors and the way this translated into everyday practice could themselves be turned into a category for comparison.[27]

In contemporary sources, these levels were hardly ever ordered sequentially. Any contemporary depiction of small communities operating in the greater scheme of things cannot function if the intended audience is not able to comprehend how the many layers of community are interdependent—to the extent that this was even a relevant issue for the audiences in question. These issues inevitably boil over in the studies undertaken by modern researchers. For instance, the temples founded in order to pin down the Tibetan demoness mentioned earlier can only function if some concept of a Tibetan polity, supported by a network of religious orders, also exists.[28] Similarly, as shown by Diarmuid Ó Riain in this section, the emergence of the *Schottenklöster* in the Holy Roman Empire depended on the reputation of earlier Irish ecclesiastics—a reputation the monks themselves would propagate. Conversely, invocation of the final, over-arching community would automatically have implications for the author's understanding of the "lower" levels: in the constant struggle to establish orthodoxy in European Christendom, any decision to brand heterodox beliefs as being heretical would essentially place people adhering to these beliefs outside the social and political system, especially once the initial idea of heterodoxy gained social traction.[29] Should a "heterodox" sect have enough followers, a concurrent system could even emerge, as shown by the emergence of the Mutarifiyyah network in South Arabia for example, or the endurance of Donatism in Late Antique North Africa.[30] Various ideals are sometimes claimed simultaneously, even if they are incoherent,

---

26   On the use and developement of *umma* through the ages, see the article by Rüdiger Lohlker in this volume, as well as Halliday, "The Politics of the *Umma*", esp. 24–25; on the conception of *populus* see, for example, Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, 49–56.

27   Generally, see Gwynne, *World Religions in Practice*. For the case of Europe, cf. also Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, 1:337–38, who comments that, according to contemporary observers: "If Europe was a 'society', it was a society defined by the boundaries of ideological power, Christendom".

28   Miller, "Consolidation of Empire".

29   Zito, "Towards a Sociology of Heresy", 123–30.

30   See, for example, the contribution by Gerda Heydemann in this volume. Tibetan Buddhists would similarly represent themselves in opposition to "outsiders" (*phyi pa* or

ambiguous and self-contradictory. Nevertheless, such sources, the communities they represent and the world they sprang from all correspond to a certain "social logic", as guided by a discursive process which formulated these ideas and visions.[31]

While a focus on this social logic would help harmonize the sometimes complex tensions between source and audience, representation and reception, it may also overcomplicate any comparative endeavour by its insistence first and foremost on treating the sources at our disposal as entities unto themselves. The communities under scrutiny in this section cut through all these levels, operating at an affective, face-to-face level while also presenting themselves as representative of the ideologies shared among many people beyond their immediate sphere of influence. Studying even one such medieval community thus also implies studying the contemporary sensibilities underlying their existence. The worlds, world-views and visions of community of each of the cultural settings and the periods involved would also need to be compared. In short, comparing spiritual communities across cultures requires more than a strictly source-focused methodology. As shown in an earlier article by Christina Lutter, comparison itself not only addresses specific communities and the ideologies they represented in the medieval period, but also operates on a conceptual level, where the many different theoretical and methodological approaches needed for a project of this scope are negotiated and reconciled with one another in order to make any comparison viable.[32]

To begin this attempt to "compare the incomparable", the authors of the articles that follow have started out by isolating the communities that formed the core of their own individual research: *monasteria* in Europe, *hijra*s in Yemen, and *gompa*s in the Tibetan Highlands—the last of these being the sites taken for monasteries by Desideri.[33] As argued in an earlier article, the model of "enclaves" was chosen as a first comparative avenue to make it possible to distinguish these communities from their surroundings without conveying a sense of full isolation. Primarily used in a more political or economic sense, the concept usually describes an entity that is separated from its wider environment spatially, temporally, and by other socially defined means and borders, while simultaneously interacting with it.[34] Although the communities

---

        phyi rol pa) who adhered to non-Buddhist belief systems: Sagaster, "Identität im tibetischen Buddhismus", 185.

31   Spiegel, "History, Historicism and the Social Logic"; Bryant, "On Sources and Narratives".

32   Lutter, "Comparative Approaches", 3–4.

33   Detienne, *Comparer l'Incomparable*.

34   See Kramer/Hovden, "Wondering about Comparison", 26, where a similar definition is used and explained in greater detail.

studied by each of the authors in this section are primarily distinguished by a heavy emphasis on religious practices as their main function, the problematic nature of the Western concept of "religion" as a comparative category—exacerbated by the multifaceted nature of each of the respective religions within VISCOM—made it exceedingly challenging to use it as a point of departure.[35] After all, a primary goal of the authors has been to show the communities themselves in a comparative light, not the religions represented by them.

In order to facilitate this comparative endeavour, a common descriptive term for the diverse communities was arrived at, which both acknowledged their fundamental religious character as well as indicating in broad brushstokes some of the basic aspects shared by each of them. The name chosen, *Enclaves of Learning, Religion, Ideology and Practice*, was deliberately all-embracing, a low-threshold term designed to avoid the potential pitfalls of narrow definition and therefore make it possible to reach the next level of comparative discourse. As a model it was not intended to be used as a universally acceptable typology, but rather it helped put highly disparate types of community on a comparable level for the purposes of study.[36] Additionally, the sense of alienation caused by the introduction of new terminology helped remind the researchers involved to take nothing for granted and regard their own object of study with the same sense of wonder they used in approaching the newly introduced material with which they were confronted. In turn, in keeping with the shorthand term that came to be used for the communities under scrutiny, namely *Enclaves of Learning*, the management, fostering and use of knowledge and learning emerged as a primary research focus of the collective, as is reflected in many of the papers published in this volume. Given the mostly "religious" contexts of knowledge production and transmission throughout the worlds of medieval Eurasia, and the fact that specific forms of knowledge would often be harnessed by those with a vested interest in maintaining an imperial *status quo*, a focus on learning allowed the researchers to distinguish the specific types of communities from their surroundings, and to make them comparable without losing sight of the questions that serve as a driving force behind VISCOM as a whole.

Nevertheless, while a helpful methodological tool, the ongoing discussion has shown that it was a challenge to use the narrower term *enclaves of learning* as anything more than a model used to catalyse comparative communication. Being an "enclave of learning" is not the sole characteristic behind the spiritual communities under scrutiny in the articles in this section. Whether or not

---

35   Tolan, "*Lex Alterius*"; but see also the introduction by Walter Pohl in this volume.

36   Gingrich, "Comparative Methods", 218–19.

these enclaves can be studied as "intentional communities" is highly dependent on the sources available and used to study them, while the many different meanings of learning, knowledge and education in each culture highlight different aspects of the communities characterized as such.[37] Conversely, the three types of community at the core of this section are by no means the only ones that fit the description of an "enclave of learning".[38] Still, the comparative dialogue engendered by initially concentrating on the learning aspect ensured that this approach proved to be a useful tool.

In this sense, it is noteworthy that "enclaves" by their very nature exist within a larger framework.[39] Their existence could become institutionalized as the religious movements supporting them became ever more successful;[40] conversely, if they were part of a sect that ended up being branded as "heterodox" or otherwise undesirable, new strategies of distinction and processes of "Othering" would need to be formulated in order to figure out their place in the world.[41] In both cases, this applied to the community itself as well as the society surrounding it. Understanding how a community fits into a larger social whole is inextricably bound up with understanding both the community itself and its relation to the ideals it represents.[42]

On the other hand, the type of learning going on in these enclaves would almost invariably be of a "religious", "spiritual" or "moral" nature and would have universal aspirations in and of itself. It could be seen as a way in which these communities made sense of their own existence, for example by exerting power or sustaining tradition.[43] It is through understanding the deeper truths of their religion that localized, face-to-face communities could seek to present themselves as paradigmatic for their region, their state or their religion. At a more practical level, studying knowledge and its transmission generates questions both about the mechanics underlying the migration of knowledge and about the regional or imperial power structures governing it, while the simple question as to how the inhabitants of these "enclaves" were able to support their intellectual pursuits opens up avenues of research into such

---

37   On such intentional communities see Brown, "Introduction", esp. 6.

38   See the response by Jonathan Lyon, in this section. The "monastic" focus reflects the research interests of the working group at the time of its inception.

39   Noted for the case of (contemporary) *hijra*s by Gingrich, "Connecting and Disconnecting", 52–54.

40   Shown for the network known as *Schottenklöster* by Ó Riain in this volume.

41   As was the case with the Zaydi network studied by Hovden in this volume.

42   See, for example, the remarks by Bartelson, *Visions of World Community*, 19–28.

43   Stafford, "Education". For the case of the European Middle Ages, see also Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, 325–29; Brown, "Carolingian Renaissance", 20–21.

issues as patronage, regional economic management and (religiously motivated) taxation. Eirik Hovden, for instance, presents a model in which the religious and intellectual functions of a network of communities also served to justify their levying of taxes—which in turn made them a target for the other economic interest holders in South Arabia. Finally, the many rituals and liturgical practices that were part and parcel of the daily life of these communities brought together ideal and practice, showing how practitioners put their learning into practice, while simultaneously providing a visible representation of their religious importance for their surroundings—and thereby also adding to their legitimacy. In one of the cases presented by Rutger Kramer, a conflict within an early medieval European monastery is shown as being resolved by allowing an apparent outsider to perform an essentially liturgical, but also educational function: according to one narrative, the community is saved from falling apart through a sermon delivered by an emperor, who was teaching the monks how they should behave. Starting from the ostensibly narrower concept of "enclaves of learning" therefore allows the authors to show—through the use of texts and other types of source material—how these communities came into being and were maintained, how its members interacted, both among themselves and with the outside world, and how a sense of spiritual purpose pervaded the life of everyone living there.[44]

As has been mentioned, most of the contributions in this section rely predominantly on written sources which range from idealized hagiographical narratives and rules for the common life to more "pragmatic" texts and less prescriptive forms of written evidence. Invariably, regardless of the nature of these sources, what we are left with are descriptions and representations of communities that can be glimpsed through the texts at our disposal—which requires the researchers to attempt to reconstruct the social logic of these texts together with studying the social logic of the community that caused them to be written in the first place. Methodologically, this leads to various conceptions of community, used in different ways. Christina Lutter, for example, highlights the importance of a shared, codified discipline for the formation of communal identities—and also, how the conscious choice to adhere to earlier conceptions of the *vita communis* would never cease affecting the development of newer foundations. On the other hand, Mathias Fermer and Pascale Hugon, both focusing on religious lives in a Tibetan Buddhist context, highlight the importance of "spiritual masters" and the teachings they represent. In line with their understanding of their own religious goals, the inhabitants of a *gompa* saw the intellectual legacy

---

44   Cf. Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, 6.

represented by their temple and its founder as the rationale behind the formation of a community, and not so much communal living as such. The cultural contexts of each of the narratives allow for different readings of the source material, which in turn occasion disciplinary and methodological differences among the authors.

At this point, the common goal therefore cannot be to arrive at a homogeneous picture or to provide a fully balanced, systematic comparative analysis. Rather, we start form the assumption that, at each of the levels outlined above, the existence of any community was part of a process in which compromises had to be made between aspirations and possibilities, and in which those compromises had to be justified by doctrines, explained through the medium of idealized narratives, codified into pragmatic rules, laws and prescriptions, and eventually taught to subsequent generations.[45] It is the very tensions and discussions over these ideals and their implementation in communal practice that forms the object of the comparative approach attempted here, not the development of a reduced model of ideal types of communities. As the "enclaves" presented in this section function as windows into the perception of the complexities of medieval societies and the many visions of community operating simultaneously within and across them, so, on their way to developing a comparative matrix as part of the research process, the authors have highlighted many different angles from which these communities can be studied.

When Desideri embarked on his mission to Tibet, he ended up learning much more than the language or the rules of Buddhist scholarly debate.[46] In order to be able to communicate with his interlocutors, he had had to immerse himself totally in the new culture he encountered. As he endeavoured to learn, he also learnt to compare. It is an example the contributors to this section have striven to follow.

Bibliography

Vincanne Adams, "The Production of Self and Body in Sherpa-Tibetan Society", in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnomedicine*, ed. Mark Nichter (Amsterdam, 1992), 149–90.

---

45   For a discussion of similar issues in a contemporary context, see De Ruyter/Conroy, "The Importance of Ideals".

46   In fact, learning how to hold a debate is an essential practice in Tibetan scholastic education, see Onoda, *Monastic Debate in Tibet*; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping,* 195–291.

Arnold Angenendt, "Kloster und Klosterverband zwischen Benedikt von Nursia und Benedikt von Aniane", in *Vom Kloster zum Klosterverband: Das Werkzeug der Schriftlichkeit*, eds. Hagen Keller and Franz Neiske (Munich, 1997), 7–35.

Ellen Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes* (Philadelphia, 2013).

Jens Bartelson, *Visions of World Community* (Cambridge 2009).

Jonathan Porter Berkley, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*, Princeton Studies on the Near East (Princeton, 2014).

Giles Brown, "The Carolingian Renaissance", in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1994), 1–51.

Susan Love Brown, "Introduction", in *Intentional Community: An Anthropological Perspective*, ed. Susan Love Brown (Albany, 2001), 1–15.

Joseph M. Bryant, "On Sources and Narratives in Historical Social Science: A Realist Critique of Positivist and Postmodernist Epistemologies", *British Journal of Sociology* 51,3 (2000), 489–523.

Stephan Conermann, "Volk, Ethnie oder Stamm? Die Kurden aus mamlukischer Sicht", in *Mamlukica: Studien zu Geschichte und Gesellschaft der Mamlukenzeit*, ed. Stephen Conermann, Mamluk Studies 4 (Bonn, 2013), 317–58.

Patricia Crone, "Weber, Islamic Law, and the Rise of Capitalism", in *Max Weber and Islam*, eds. Toby E. Huff and Wolfgang Schluchter (New Brunswick, 1999), 247–72.

Wendy Davies, *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1988).

Ippolito Desideri, *Notizie Istoriche del Thibet e memorie de' viaggi e missione ivi fatta dal P. Ippolito Desideri della Compagnia de Gesù dal medesim scritte e dedicate*, ed. Luciani Petech, *I Missionari italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal*, 7 vols. (Rome, 1954–57); trans. Leonard Zwilling and Michael Sweet, *Mission to Tibet: The Extraordinary Eighteenth-Century Account of Father Ippolito Desideri S.J.* (Boston, 2010).

Marcel Detienne, *Comparer l'Incomparable* (Paris, 2000).

Hendrik Dey, "Bringing chaos out of order: new approaches to the study of Early Western monasticism", in *Western Monasticism* ante litteram: *The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Hendrik Dey and Elizabeth Fentress, Disciplina Monastica 7 (Turnhout, 2011), 19–41.

Paul Dresch, "Imams and Tribes: The Writing and Acting of History in Upper Yemen", in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. Philipp Sukry Khouri and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley, 1990), 252–87.

Georges Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2003).

Umberto Eco, *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*, trans. William Weaver (New York, 1998).

Stephen C. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and their Critics, 1100–1215* (Stanford, 1985).

Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, 2nd paperback ed. (Princeton, 2002).

Dieter Geuenich, "'Dem himmlischen Gott in Erinnerung sein…': Gebetsgedenken und Gebetshilfe im frühen Mittelalter", in *Erinnerungskultur im Bestattungsritual: Archäologisch-Historisches Forum*, eds. Jörg Jarnut and Matthias Wemhoff (München, 2003), 27–40.

Andre Gingrich, "Comparative Methods in Socio-Cultural Anthropology Today", in *SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*, 2, eds. Richard Fardon, Olivia Harris, Trevor H.J. Marchand, Mark Nutall, Cris Shore, Veronica Strang and Richard A. Wilson (Los Angeles, 2012), 201–14.

Andre Gingrich, "Connecting and Disconnecting: Intentionality, Anonymity and Transnational Networks in Upper Yemen", in *Anthropology Now and Next: Essays in Honor of Ulf Hannerz* eds. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Christina Garsten and Shalini Randeria (Oxford and New York, 2015), 48–69.

Andre Gingrich and Christina Lutter, "Visions of Community: An Introduction", *History and Anthropology* (2014), 1–7.

Paul Gwynne, *World Religions in Practice: A Comparative Introduction* (Oxford, 2009).

Janet Gyatso, "Down with the Demoness: Reflections on a Feminine Ground in Tibet", in *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women in Tibet*, ed. Janice D. Willis (Ithaca, 1987), 33–51.

Fred Halliday, "The Politics of the *Umma*: States and Community in Islamic Movements", in *Shaping the Current Islamic Reformation*, ed. Barbara A. Roberson (London, 2003), 21–40.

C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 1994).

Rudolf Kaschewsky, "The Image of Tibet in the West before the Nineteenth Century", in *Imagining Tibet: Perceptions, Projections, and Fantasies*, eds. Thierry Dodin and Heinz Räther, (Sommerville, 2001), 3–20.

Hugh Kennedy, "The *Ribat* in the Early Islamic World", in *Western Monasticism* ante litteram: *The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Hendrik Dey and Elizabeth Fentress, Disciplina Monastica 7 (Turnhout, 2011), 161–75.

Fuad I. Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion and Sects in Islam* (London, 1990).

Rutger Kramer and Eirik Hovden, "Wondering about Comparison: Enclaves of Learning in Medieval Europe and South Arabia—Prolegomena to an Intercultural Comparative Research Project", *Networks and Neighbours* 2, 1 (2014), 20–45.

Christina Lutter, "Comparative Approaches to Visions of Community", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 129–43; http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2014.930738.

Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Yemenite *Hijra*", in *Arabicus Felix—Luminosus Brittanicus: Essays in Honour of A.F.L. Beeston on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Alan Jones (Reading, 1991), 25–44.

Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 3 vols. (Cambridge 1986).

Yumna Masarwa, "The Mediterranean as a Frontier: The Ummayyad *Ribats* of Palestine", in *Western Monasticism* ante litteram: *The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Hendrik Dey and Elizabeth Fentress, Disciplina Monastica 7 (Turnhout, 2011), 177–99.

Andrew Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and their Normative Significance* (Cambridge, 2000).

Robert Miller, "The Supine Demoness (*Srin Mo*) and the Consolidation of Empire", *Tibet Journal* 23, 3 (1998), 3–22.

Martin A. Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: The Foundations of Authority in Gelukpa Monasticism* (London, New York, 2003).

Martin A. Mills, "Re-Assessing the Supine Demoness: Royal Buddhist Geomancy in the *Srong btsan sgam po* Mythology", *Journal of the International Association for Tibetan Studies* 3 (2007), 1–47.

Ludovicus J.R. Mills, "Counts, Cities, and Clerics: The Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Centuries", in *History of the Low Countries*, eds. Johan C.H. Blom and Emiel Lamberts (New York, Oxford, 1998), 23–54.

Shunzō Onoda, *Monastic Debate in Tibet: A Study on the History and Structures of* Bsdus Grwa *Logic*, Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien (Vienna, 1992).

Bernhard Palme, "Political Identity versus Religious Distinction? The Case of Egypt in the Later Roman Empire", in *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300–1100*, eds. Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner and Richard Payne (Farnham, 2012), 81–98.

Trent Pomplun, "Divine Grace and the Play of Opposites", *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 26 (2006), 159–72.

Trent Pomplun, *Jesuit on the Roof of the World: Ippolito Desideri's Mission to Tibet* (Oxford, New York, 2010).

Darleen Pryds, "*Studia* as Royal Offices: Mediterranean Universities of Medieval Europe", in *Universities and Schooling in Medieval Society*, eds.William J. Courtenay and Jürgen Miethke (Leiden, 2000), 83–99.

Gerd R. Puin, "The Yemeni *Hijrah* Concept of Tribal Protection", in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1984), 483–94.

Noble Ross Reat, *Buddhism: A History* (Fremont, 1994).

Barbara Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, 1989).

Doret de Ruyter and Jim Conroy, "The Formation of Identity: The Importance of Ideals", *Oxford Review of Education* 28, 4 (2002), 509–22.

Klaus Sagaster, "Identität im Tibetischen Buddhismus", in *Religion und Identität: Im Horizont des Pluralismus*, eds. Werner Gephart and Hans Waldenfels (Berlin, 1999), 170–91.

Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages", *Speculum* 65 (1990), 59–86.

Charles Stafford, "Education", in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed., eds. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (London, 2010), 217–20.

Antonio Terrone, "Householders and Monks: A Study of Treasure Revealers and their Role in Religious Revival in Contemporary Eastern Tibet", in *Buddhism Beyond the Monastery: Tantric Practices and Their Performers in Tibet and the Himalayas*, eds. Sarah Jacoby and Antonio Terrone (Leiden, 2003), 73–110.

John Tolan, "*Lex Alterius*: Using Law to Construct Confessional Boundaries", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 55–75.

Bryan S. Turner, "Islam, Capitalism and the Weber Theses", *The British Journal of Sociology* 25, 2 (1974), 230–43.

Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European Socialism* (Cambridge, 1989).

George V. Zito, "Toward a Sociology of Heresy", *Sociological Analysis* 44, 2 (1983), 123–30.

Enclaves of Learning, Religious and Intellectual Communities in Tibet: The Monastery of gSang phu Ne'u thog in the Early Centuries of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism

Pascale Hugon[1]

Introduction

The period that Tibetan religious histories call the "Early Diffusion of Buddhism" (*snga dar*), which had started in the beginning of the 7th century under the reign of the emperor (*btsan po*) Srong btsan sgam po (618–49), came to an end in 842 with the assassination of the emperor Glang dar ma, which signalled the demise of the empire. The transmission of Buddhist teachings and their diffusion was resumed in the middle of the 10th century, while Tibet underwent a re-shaping of its whole socio-political landscape. The re-establishment and foundation of new religious structures—monasteries in particular—played a major role in both these processes.

This paper focuses on the monastery of gSang phu Ne'u thog, founded in the 11th century in Central Tibet south of Lhasa.[2] gSang phu became a famous and influential centre of intellectual life, especially famed for the development

---

1 Work on this paper has been generously supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF, project P23422-G15 "Early bKa' gdams pa scholasticism").

2 On the history of gSang phu, see van der Kuijp, "The Monastery of Gsang-phu ne'u-thog", Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers,* 685–88, and Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog". A recent dissertation (in Japanese) by Fumihito Nishizawa, which includes an extensive survey of the available Tibetan materials pertaining to gSang phu's history, will hopefully be published in the future. It was not available to me at the time of writing this paper. On gSang phu's name and location see Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers,* 116, n. 192 and 182, n. 434. Two articles by Onoda ("The Chronology" and "Abbatial Successions") deal with the succession of abbots. Nishizawa, "gSang phu ne'u thog", presents a four-stage model of the development of gSang phu scholasticism. For a list of the sources containing accounts of the monastery's foundation see Onoda, "The Chronology", 203–04, Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers,* 685, Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 138, and Nishizawa, "gSang phu ne'u thog", 345–46. Note that all these sources are quite late—the earliest one available, the *Deb ther dmar po* by Tshad pa Kun dga' rdo rje (1309–64), postdates the foundation of gSang phu by almost three centuries.

of a scholastic system embracing specific areas of non-tantric Buddhist learn-
ing such as epistemology, logic, the philosophy of the Middle Way, etc.[3] The
large number of texts composed on these topics by scholars affiliated with
gSang phu gives us a bright picture of the scope of their endeavours and also
allows us to appreciate the pervasive impact these scholars had on all further
developments in the Tibetan religio-philosophical tradition:[4] in particular, in
the field of epistemology, the textual interpretations of the relevant Indian
corpus and the individual compositions that stemmed from scholars of this
monastery were unchallenged up to the 13th century, and even later remained
the building blocks for Tibetan compositions in the domain. On the other
hand, the range of historical sources at our disposal only sheds a partial light
on the practicalities of the organization of gSang phu as a monastic centre and
the learning and teaching activities carried out within its walls, or on its place
in the socio-political landscape and its interaction with other monastic struc-
tures founded in the same period.[5]

In this paper I focus on gSang phu's activities as an intellectual centre,
thereby adopting the concept of an "enclave of learning". In what follows, I first
recall some data pertaining to its founding, highlighting factors that contrib-
uted to its prosperity and repute. I then consider its functioning as a dynamic
entity via two aspects linked with the characterization of gSang phu as an
enclave of learning—its operating as a "centre of gravity" and as a "centrifugal
point"—and examine how these aspects delineate the enclave's interaction
(in terms of teaching and learning practices) with the world *extra muro*. gSang
phu's learning horizon promoted an extended intellectual community which
largely outgrew the community circumscribed by the monastery as an enclave
of learning. In the conclusion, I discuss the question of the inclusion of gSang

3   On the use of the term "scholasticism" in this context, see Hugon and Vose, "Unearthing the
    Foundations", 238.

4   In particular, the recent publication, in the *bKa' gdams gsung 'bum*, of manuscripts that had
    been preserved for the most part in the library of 'Bras dpungs monastery, has opened the
    way to new research in this area.

5   This shortage of information is due on the one hand to the incomplete materials at hand to
    conduct such a study, on the other to the very genre of the sources available, such as, typi-
    cally, religious histories and hagiographies of famous scholars. In this regard see the Section
    "Textual Evidence and the Current State of Research" in Fermer's article in this section of
    the volume. While one can hope that future research will make it possible to reconstruct a
    more complete picture of the history of gSang phu, this falls outside the purpose of the pres-
    ent paper. At the risk of disappointing the reader specializing in the field of Tibetology, here
    I draw for the most part from published studies of the available materials in order to stress
    the aspects relevant to the common topic of the contributions in this section of the volume.

phu scholars in the religious community of the bKa' gdams pa school, an inclusion perceived by some Tibetan historians to be at odds with their scholastic endeavours.

The Founding and Prosperity of gSang phu Ne'u thog

The founding of gSang phu took place at the beginning of the period of the renewed spread of Buddhism in Tibet, a period referred to in the tradition as the "Later Diffusion of Buddhism" (*phyi dar*).[6] The starting point of this process can be associated with a group of men ordained in eastern Tibet and their pupils who, in the late 10th century, returned to Central Tibet, where they organized congregations that promoted the construction and restoration of temples. Among them, four primary groups were active in Central Tibet.[7] Initially based in bSam yas—the first Buddhist monastery to be established in Tibet, around 775, at the time of the Early Diffusion of Buddhism—they then spread to the regions surrounding Lhasa. Although they shared a common goal, the four groups came to constitute rival factions competing for the control of Lhasa's most holy sanctuaries, each group holding a specific zone of influence. These groups benefited from the patronage of local rulers and clans, including descendants and supporters of the former dynasty, a patronage that added to the conflicts and sometimes alliances between them.[8] In return, the patrons gained spiritual and religious repute from the Buddhist communities.[9]

6 This period has been referred to by some modern scholars such as Davidson as the "Tibetan Renaissance". The outline that follows draws mainly from Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, and Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, and in particular from Sørensen and Hazod (Sect. 5, "Historical background"), 27–30 and the appendix 11 "Control over the Lha-sa maṇḍala zone" by Sørensen on 401–47.

7 These groups—Klu mes, 'Bring, rBa, Rag—take their names from the clan-name of their respective leader: Klu mes Tshul khrims shes rab, 'Bring Ye shes yon tan, rBa btsun Blo gros dbang phyug and Rag shi Tshul khrims 'byung gnas. For more details see Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 92–105 and Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 410–13.

8 On this role of clans in the 10th and 11th centuries, see Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 80–83.

9 On the reciprocity of this relation, Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 27, note: "The historical importance of these local rulers, as stated, largely depends on their roles as patrons of the religious movements and settlements that mushroomed in Central Tibet (as elsewhere) during the early Renaissance epoch (*bstan pa phyi dar*)". Further, "The spread and distribution of the communities within the different regions and the distinct patron-priest bonds that were established should slowly lead to increased political influence, with hegemonic implications, since the vital alliances based on patronage conduced to the forging of political unions. This

Another keystone in the re-establishment of Buddhist communities was the invitation of the Indian master Atiśa (982–1054) by the king of Guge (western Tibet). gSang phu was founded in 1073 as one of the four seats set up in the wake of Atiśa's visit to Central Tibet.[10] These seats were held respectively by the four above-mentioned groups,[11] and formed the ground from which the bKa' gdams pa school emerged.[12] Some 30 years after its founding, gSang phu even came to assume the centre stage among the four seats, overtaking Rwa sgreng in this role.[13] On a larger scale within the Tibetan world, gSang phu became a renowned centre, depicted in Tibetan sources as the "uppermost

---

process thus went hand in hand with the mobilization of political forces in the country, namely the local aristocratic clans who made themselves felt as patrons behind the distinct groups". (ibid., 28).

10   The alternative dates 1059 and 1071 for its foundation are also found (see van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 106 and Onoda, "The Chronology", 205). Van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 106 reckons that most sources do not provide information on the circumstances of the foundation of gSang phu monastery. Sørensen notes that a biography of Atiśa "appears to tell us that the temples initially had been erected to serve the Jo-bo statues in lHa-sa simply suggesting that the four groups and their main seats originally had been set up as institutions in order to uphold the bKa'-gdams-pa teachings and the maintenance of the Jo-bo sanctum in lHa-sa" (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 405).

11   On the four groups see n. 7. The monastery of sNye thang 'Or was held by the sBa and Rag groups, lHa sdings or Se rdur by the Klu mes group, and gSang phu by the 'Bring. Rwa sgreng, was erected in 1056 as an unifying convent seat after Atiśa's passing (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 404).

12   On the bKa' gdams pa school see Vetturini, *The bKa' gdams pa*, which contains the edition and study of a 15th-century history by Lo dgon pa bSod nams lha'i dbang po (1423–1496). While 'Brom ston rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1005–1064), the disciple of Atiśa who founded Rwa sgreng, is regarded as the founder of the bKa' gdams pa school, it is with his disciples or spiritual sons, the so-called "three brothers"—Po to ba Rin chen gsal (1027–1105), sPyan snga ba Tshul khrims 'bar (1033–1103) and Phu chung ba gZhon nu rgyal mtshan (1031–1106) that it took form as a monastic order. On the term itself, Vetturini (ibid., 10, n. 12) notes that the expression *jo bo bka' gdams* is attested as a reference to Atiśa's hermeneutics in the early 14th century, while "by the 15th century, the term *bka' gdams pa* specifically came to denote the endorsement of Atiśa's interpretation of Buddhist thought". For the period that precedes, Vetturini states that: "The life of Lo dgon pa demonstrates the bKa' gdams, or the taught word, was regarded as one of the teaching cycles current in his times rather than a formal school or sect" (ibid., 173).

13   In 1105, after the passing of Po to ba, 'Brom ston's disciple, gSang phu came to assume the centre stage among the four bKa' gdams centres, following a faltering of leadership in Rwa sgreng. Rwa sgreng "came to be seen and administered as a second satellite of the Sangpu enclave" (Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 279).

of Tibetan learning centres" (*bod yol bshad grwa'i thog ma*) and a "second Bodhgaya" (*rdo rje gdan gnyis pa*).[14] Among the factors that may have contributed to this success, I discuss below the support gSang phu received from clans and religious groups, its location, the popularity of its first abbots, and its specialization as an enclave of learning in the philosophical domain.

Clan and Congregation Support

The background data regarding the foundation of gSang phu exemplifies the interaction between clans and religious factions mentioned above, which provided suitable conditions for the establishment of a stable and successful monastery. gSang phu was founded by rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab, one of the three most famous disciples of Atiśa.[15] This figure benefited from a dual affiliation, as Legs pa'i shes rab was linked on the one hand to one of the four congregations mentioned above, the 'Bring,[16] and on the other hand to the rNgog clan. These constitute two overlapping groups of influence: members of the rNgog clan were associated with various congregations,[17] while the 'Bring group had the allegiance of various clans.[18]

The success of the rNgog clan can be explained by a number of factors: it went back to the old aristocracy of the imperial period,[19] it included

---

14   Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 685.

15   There is hardly any biographical data available concerning rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab. Kramer (*The Great Tibetan Translator,* 34, n. 12) lists sources providing basic biographical information. See Vetturini, *The bKa' gdams pa*, 97 for that provided in the bKa' gdams pa history by Lo dgon pa, and Onoda, "The Chronology", 204 for that from the *Blue Annals*.

16   Legs pa'i shes rab was ordained in the presence of the leader of the 'Bring group, 'Bring Ye shes yon tan (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 405). In Atiśa's biographies, the monastery of gSang phu is said to have been financially supported by the 'Bring (van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 108). Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 143, specifies that "there is no record of any particular feudal lord who sponsored or owned the monastery of gSang phu".

17   For instance rNgog Byang chub 'byung gnas, who assisted Legs pa'i shes rab in succeeding to welcoming Atiśa, was associated with the Klu mes group, another of the four primary congregations.

18   The 'Bring group was supported by the rNgog clan, the sNa nam and the gNyos, and possibly the mGar clan (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 407). In particular "most of the 'Bring communities in sTod-lung and Chu-shur eventually were dominated by branches of the gNyos clan" (ibid., 406, n. 6). On the gNnyos clan see ibid. 413–28, and in particular 426 regarding its link with the 'Bring community. See ibid. 427 for notes on the relationships between the various clans.

19   A member of this clan is found among the ministers of the emperor Khri Srong lde btsan (Kramer, *The Great Tibetan Translator*, 33).

individuals who upheld the transmission of a specific Buddhist teaching,[20] and it benefited from high-level patronage from none other than dBang phyug lde, the king of Guge.[21] In addition, there is the popularity of rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab and of his nephew rNgog Blo ldan shes rab as religious teachers, which, besides being instrumental in the development of gSang phu as a famous scholastic centre (see below), certainly counted in the continuity of the clan's status of influence. For the rNgog, as for other clans, the clan's religious allegiances (combined with marriage alliances) were instrumental in securing a leading role, political as well as religious.[22]

The status of the rNgog clan, and in particular the massive patronage it obtained from the king of Guge,[23] was certainly instrumental in the success of the 'Bring group. The latter owed its stability and pre-eminence over the other factions to the rNgog and other clans with which it was also linked.[24]

rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab's leading status is notably illustrated by the fact that he was in the position to invite Atiśa to Ra sa 'Phrul snang. While this is indicative of the pre-eminence of the 'Bring group in the Lhasa area,[25] Legs pa'i shes

---

20   For instance rNgog ston rDo rje gZhon nu, Legs pa'i shes rab's father, "came from an uninterrupted line of followers of the Vajrakīla cult, who traced themselves back to a direct disciple of the Indian adept Padmasambhava" (Kramer, *The Great Tibetan Translator*, 33).

21   The latter notably financed the stay in Kashmir of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab, Legs pa'i shes rab's nephew (see Kramer, *The Great Tibetan Translator*, 38, n. 32 and 113, n. 180).

22   Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 407. On these clans they further say: "Their relative success not least was hinged upon an ideal combination of ample military and secular power combined with appropriate ancestral prestige and background linked up with necessary spiritual and religious repute embodied in a number of prominent hierarch figures and their lineages (often born into the same clan to cement loyalty and commitment or to ensure adequate patronage) who held their position through sheer religious authority, ensured not least by being main propagators and transmitters of both orthodox and esoterically idiosyncratic key cycles" (ibid., 407–08).

23   Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 407, n. 8.

24   This stability and pre-eminence may be surmised by comparing the evolution, over time, of the links of the respective communities with the four seats founded after Atiśa's visit (see van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 109–10). Sørensen also highlights its dominance by the number of 'Bring settlements in the environs of Lhasa in the 11th to 12th century (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 408–09). Sørensen notes: "The strong rNgog clan along with the sNa-nam [...] and the gNyos, possibly in confederation with the mGar clan [...] either were the stout supporters of the 'Bring, or they constituted the political-hegemonic backbone behind the 'Bring themselves" (ibid., 407).

25   Its success in inviting the Indian master took place "clearly to the discomfort and frustration of other factions" (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 405).

rab's clan affiliation may also have played a role, as he was assisted by another member of the clan, rNgog Byang chub 'byung gnas, himself affiliated with the Klu mes group, who succeeded in inviting Atiśa to another location.[26]

Location

rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab's activities started in rGyang mkhar (one of the first establishments of a branch of the 'Bring group)[27] and other seats, seats that fell into oblivion after gSang phu became the main centre of his teachings. The reason for Legs pa'i shes rab's choice of gSang phu's location for the founding of this monastery and whether the location played a role in its success remain to be ascertained.[28] In the available sources this choice is merely justified by a prediction of Atiśa's (which has every chance of being a later invention).[29] It is common in Tibetan sources to adduce predictions and remarks on the auspicious setting of the land to explain the choice of location of monastic units. But surely there are other concerns that must have come into consideration. Likely criteria (which would find an echo in other, non-Tibetan, settings) may have been space for living quarters, the availability of water and food supplies, the proximity of a supporting lay community, access for travellers and pilgrims, etc. These criteria certainly had more or less weight depending on the structure envisaged (a hermitage for isolated monks or larger centres),[30] while in some cases other considerations, such as the auspiciousness of the setting, could prevail. The acquisition of the land itself could be an issue, depending on the interests (spiritual or not) of the owner.[31] Politico-religious issues at

---

26 Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 405.

27 See Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 406, n. 7.

28 Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 139, specifies that "While in the beginning this monastery was erected in a lower region of the gSang-valley, later it was shifted by rNgog lo tsa ba Blo ldan shes rab [...] to the uppermost region of that valley".

29 As reported by Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 139, when travelling with rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab from sNye thang to Lhasa, Atiśa pointed his finger in the direction of the gSang-valley and prophesied that if he built a monastery there his tradition would flourish. The relevant passage is cited and translated in van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 106–07.

30 In this regard it would be interesting to look more closely at the terminology used for religious centres thorough the sources. For instance, the *Blue Annals* describes gSang phu Ne'u thog as a *gtsug lag khang*, but the monastery previously founded by rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab in Brag nag as a *dgon pa*.

31 For instance 'Brom ston intended to found a temple at Bye ma lung of gNam district, but the land was not granted by the local patron; 'Brom ston therefore erected Rwa sgreng to the north-east, with the sponsorship of the Ber clan of Phrang kha (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 404, n. 5).

a higher level may also have played a role.[32] While Legs pa'i shes rab's priority criteria when founding gSang phu remain in question, it has been noted regarding the centres founded in the 'Phan po area by 'Brom ston (another of Atiśa's disciples), by his disciples, and by subsequent generations of bKa' gdams pa, that over time the locations appear to have changed from the upper part of the side valleys to more travelled places along the trading routes of the main valley of 'Phan po, a change that mirrors modifications in the size of the monasteries and the scope of the masters' teachings, from selected disciples to a broader audience.[33]

Popular Abbots

While, thanks to its founder's dual affiliation with the rNgog clan and the 'Bring religious faction, gSang phu had promising assets in terms of religious and political influence and monetary patronage, one can discern a further factor in its success: the popularity of gSang phu's founder and first abbot rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab, and of his nephew and second abbot rNgog Blo ldan shes rab. Their popularity as teachers is conveyed in several reports by impressive numbers: around 20,000 students are mentioned, as well as a number of "assistants".[34] These numbers, of course, cannot be taken at face value but are

---

32   Although according to Roesler and Roesler (*Kadampa Sites of Phempo*, 3), in the 11th and 12th centuries "political involvement was still marginal" in the founding of monasteries and Buddhist schools.

33   The locations moved "closer to the trading routes from Lhasa and the Kyi Chu valley" (Roesler and Roesler, *Kadampa Sites of Phempo*, 5). See also ibid., 7–8. Regarding the region of 'Phan po, where monasteries were founded already during the Early Diffusion of Buddhism, the authors note that "it offered valleys of recluse for meditation and study, but was still easily accessible and close to the more public life around Lhasa" (ibid., 1). They say, further, regarding the new locations that "these places were automatically visited by travellers and pilgrims passing through, and large numbers of lay visitors were guaranteed" (ibid., 8). Roesler and Roesler note that the two monasteries of Po to ba's two main disciples together housed around 5000 monks, "a considerable number, compared with the modest numbers of yogis and monks that had lived in Radeng in the early days" (ibid., 6).

34   According to Yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1713–93), "in the wake of the establishment of gSang-phu Ne'u-thog in 1073, the number of Vinaya students and followers of rNgog Legs-pa'i shes-rab (and eventually of his nephew, the equally erudite rNgog Blo-ldan shes-rab—1059–1109) in the late 11th century [...] counted over 17,300 students in lHa-sa" (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 406). He further gives the number of students attached to 'Bring communities as 13,000 in bSam yas, 20,000 in rGyang mkhar, and 10,000 in Ngan lam. According to Sørensen and Hazod, "these figures probably refer to the sum of Vinaya students in the communities within the narrow lHa-sa area including gSang-phu under

indicative of quite a large audience. Note that they are not given as representative of the numbers of students in gSang phu proper (the community had about 500 members at the beginning),[35] but are linked with other religious centres such as Lhasa, bSam yas, etc.

Specialization

From early on gSang phu specialized as a centre promoting the study of a specific genre of Buddhist non-tantric learning with a strong emphasis on epistemology and logic. It thereby stood apart from other monastic establishments, as well as from the general orientation of other (proto-) bKa' gdams pa monasteries.[36] This orientation appears to be mainly a consequence of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab's endeavours, as attested from the list of the works he translated and composed,[37] and does not seem to have been promoted already by gSang phu's founder Legs pa'i shes rab, whose focus was on the cycle of teachings from Atiśa.[38] It was perpetuated by some of Blo ldan shes rab's students and,

---

the 'Bring" (ibid., 406). In 'Gos lo tsā ba's (1392–1481) *Blue Annals* it is reported that Blo ldan shes rab gathered 23,000 monks around him, and that his assistant preachers (*zur chos pa*) numbered 280 specialists of the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (a work of epistemology by Dharmakīrti [7th c. or earlier] that was the most influential in Tibet up to the 13th century) and 55 specialists of the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra* (a commentary on another major work of Dharmakīrti) and of Dharmottara's commentary or commentaries on Dharmakīrti's works, 1,800 teachers of scriptures (*lung chos smra ba*) and about 2,130 preachers of the dharma (*chos smra ba*) (see Roerich, *Blue Annals*, 326). Shes rab seng ge's colophon to Gro lung pa's biography of rNgog Lo gives a similar account with different numbers and, like 'Gos lo tsā ba, relates the numerous students of rNgog Lo not to gSang phu, but to "Lhasa, bSam yas, sGang thog, lHa yangs da lhan and Myug gu sna" (Kramer, *The Great Tibetan Translator*, 114–15).

35   Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 140.

36   As Vetturini, *The bKa' gdams pa School,* 8, notes in his introduction: "After the death of Atiśa in 1054, the objective of the first seats established by the school was to invigorate the traditions of the prātimokṣa and the vinaya, suggesting the fortunes of the bKa' gdams pas initially hinged upon the proliferation of the monastic ideal". The trend favouring dialectic was resisted to some extent (ibid., 172). I come back to the question of the compatibility of gSang phu's specialization in epistemology and its bKa' gdams pa affiliation in the conclusion.

37   See Kramer, *The Great Tibetan Translator*, 103–13 for Gro lung pa's list and appendix 3 for two other lists. Blo ldan shes rab's interests focused on epistemology, Madhyamaka philosophy and the group of texts known as the Five Treatises of Maitreya.

38   See Vetturini, *The bKa' gdams pa*, 145–48 on Legs pa'i shes rab and the advent of the *bKa' gdams glegs bam*. This is not to say that Blo ldan shes rab did not prolong his uncle's legacy to some extent. For instance, in his anthology of bKa' gdams pa literature, Lo dgon

although it was likely not the exclusive teaching activity carried out in gSang phu, it became the trademark of the monastery. The specialization of the monastery in the scholastic domain in the generations that follow rNgog Blo ldan shes rab is revealed notably by its inclusion, along with that of two of its dependencies (bDe ba can and Gung thang chos 'khor gling), in the list of the "six great seminaries" (*chos grwa chen po drug*) of dBus province.[39] gSang phu, we could say in today's terms, had the status of a "centre of excellence".[40]

In these last two aspects—popularity of the leaders as teachers and philo-sophically oriented specialization—there is a strong contrast between gSang phu and other centres built in the same period, such as Rwa sgreng, whose leaders were not public figures with a large number of students and empha-sized the study of contemplative systems.[41] Still, Rwa sgreng also qualified as a famous and successful monastic centre, at least until its demise at the begin-ning of the twelfth century. The success factors we have outlined for gSang phu thus represent one possible configuration that does not exclude other models at play in other cases.

gSang phu as an Enclave of Learning

In terms of promoting a specific type of study and teaching within its walls— the passing on of knowledge that took place in the monastery was backed up by scholarly endeavours including the translation of Indian Buddhist texts

---

pa attributes a 20-folio commentary on Legs pa'i shes rab's *Lam rim shlo ka drug* to him (ibid., 164).

39 The other three are sKyor mo lung (affiliated to the sBal clan) and two of its dependen-cies, Zul phu and dGa' ba gdong. These six were all grouped in the sKyid shod area. Note that the term itself is a later dGe lugs pa classification. As Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 685, note: "These seats exerted signal influence on the formation of the ensuing establish-ments of the dGe-lugs-pa key monasteries in the 15th century, being later incorporated into their network". See ibid., 689 for more details and 700 for a map of their location.

40 See the passage by the 16th-century author dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba comparing gSang phu to a snow mountain from which all streams of reading in Tibet are flowing (cited in Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 139–40).

41 Roesler and Roesler, *Kadampa Sites of Phempo*, 4, note that the followers of 'Brom ston "were not public figures who played any leading political or official role, but were rather monk yogis who stressed the need for seclusion and meditation and transmitted their teachings only to a limited number of selected students". However, this changed over time: "While the first generation of students, i.e., the generation of Potowa, Chengawa and Phuchungwa, passed on their teachings only to selected disciples, the next genera-tion, i.e., of Langtangpa and Sharawa, is said to have started public teachings" (ibid., 7).

into Tibetan and the composition of indigenous commentaries and other treatises—gSang phu can be subsumed under the concept of "enclave of learning" as broadly defined by the contributors of the section. Far from functioning as a closed entity, gSang phu developed a broad range of interaction with the world *extra muro*. Here I distinguish two aspects of this interaction: gSang phu as a centre of gravity, and as a centrifugal point.

gSang phu as a Centre of Gravity

First, gSang phu functioned as a *centre of gravity* for students and thinkers interested in scholastic learning.[42] One can draw up lists of individuals of all traditions and regional identities who went to gSang phu to study at some point of their training/career.[43] Unfortunately, the sources at our disposal often do not shed light on all the specifics. Religious histories concentrate on the establishment of lineages of transmission of Buddhist scriptures, while biographies/hagiographies notably aim at grounding a scholar's competence by highlighting his background studies. Both typically lack precise and/or exhaustive information pertaining for instance to the date of a scholar's stay at gSang phu, the names of the teachers he studied with, the titles of all the texts he learned, etc. But the very fact that the sources deem it worth mentioning that this or that scholar went to gSang phu to study is significant. Some of them were famous figures. While they were certainly attracted by the renown of gSang phu, it is likely that their presence in gSang phu, in return, enhanced gSang phu's repute.

It is difficult to estimate how early gSang phu achieved its status of centre of renown. But two centuries after gSang phu's founding, an indication of its status as "the place to be" for Buddhist scholastic studies is found in the account

---

42   I borrow the expression "centre of gravity" from Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 279, who notes: "The strong intellectual tradition brought to Sangpu by Ngok-lotsāwa served as a center of gravity for monks intent on Buddhist intellectual life. Consequently, those concerned mainly with the Kadampa contemplative system of purifying the intellect (*blo sbyong*) and the related Stages of the Path literature tended to study at Retreng and its associated retreat centers. Conversely, those focusing on the cutting-edge philosophical works were more often at Sangpu or competing institutions in Lhasa or Pen-yül, for these were the sites where the newly translated material, particularly from Kashmir, was disseminated".

43   Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 141, lists famous religious figures belonging to various schools (bKa' brgyud pa, rNying ma pa, Jo nang pa, Bo dong pa) who visited gSang phu between the 12th and the 15th century. Van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 104, mentions that "it was frequented by Bon-po masters in search of scholarship as well". gSang phu students were not necessarily ordained monks (e.g., bSod nams rtse mo).

of the life of Maṅgala Guru (1231–1297) in the *Blue Annals*. Favouring medita-
tive practice over scholastic endeavours, he is reported to have told prospective
disciples: "If you desire to study, go to gSang phu!"[44] In contrast, the rNying ma
teacher Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug (1212–1270/73) writes: "If you wish to be a
scholar, meet the Sa skya pa". This stance is sometimes cited as an evidence of
the decline of gSang phu's fame as a scholastic centre in this period. However,
this interpretation must be tempered by the fact that Chos kyi dbang phyug
was a student of "the Sa skya pa", i.e., Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), a master of Sa
skya monastery who had embarked on an overt generalized refutation of his
predecessors and contemporaries in the field of epistemology.[45] Hence Chos
kyi dbang phyug's remark primarily indicates that a new competitor had
emerged, even though it is known that Sa skya Paṇḍita's criticism did not result
in an immediate or unanimous change in the scholarly community.

   After the 13th century gSang phu also hosted "study centres" (*bshad grwa*) of
various religious schools (Sa skya pa and dGa' ldan pa) within its walls and over
time became made up of a cluster of colleges.[46] These colleges, or study cen-
tres, which occupied distinct locations within the monastery's perimeter,[47]
appear as enclaves within the main enclave, with their own religious orienta-
tion and funding. For some time they perpetuated the power of attraction that
the monastic centre had in the preceding centuries.

   Later (after the 15th century), even though gSang phu's status had somewhat
faded, the monastery still attracted students on an occasional basis by hosting
mass gatherings for "summer sessions" (*gsang phu dbyar kha, gsang phu dbyar
gnas*).[48]

---

44   Roerich, *Blue Annals*, 630.

45   Chos kyi dbang phyug's stance is discussed in van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 104–05.

46   See Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", esp. 142–43, which deals with the rise of the "thirteen
      colleges". Both the terms *grwa tshang* ("college") and *bshad grwa* ("study centre") are
      used synonymously in this regard. See also van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 115f. Onoda,
      "Abbatial Successions", 1050, notes: "By the mid-15th century both monasteries* had
      become organized as a cluster of *grwa tshangs* or almost selfsupported colleges" [*i.e.,
      the upper and lower colleges that resulted from the split of gSang phu, cf. below n. 49].
      The topic is taken up afresh in Nishizawa, "gSang phu ne'u thog", in particular 356–57, who
      refers to this phenomenon in terms of the "inner aspect of the diffusion of gSang phu
      scholasticism" (ibid., 352).

47   For a map see Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 144.

48   Onoda, "The Chronology", 208, notes that "most of those students who belonged to the
      dGe lugs pa and Sa skya pa monasteries in the Lhasa area had special summer sessions
      at gSang phu". According to Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 146, for the 15th to the 17th

gSang phu as a Centrifugal Point

In addition to being a centre of gravity, gSang phu also functioned as a *centrifugal point*, in that the type of learning carried out within the enclave was exported and reproduced elsewhere. Here I distinguish several vehicles of diffusion in terms of "satellites" of gSang phu:

The first type of vehicle consists in "itinerant satellites", namely abbots/scholars of gSang phu going on "teaching tours". We have seen that this activity was carried out notably by rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab and rNgog Blo ldan shes rab (see above).

The second type consists in "fixed satellites" of gSang phu. Rather than travelling teachers, these are establishments founded as extensions of gSang phu and maintaining an official or acknowledged link with the "mother-monastery". One can distinguish two types of fixed satellites: the first are independent centres and peripheral monasteries that begin to be founded by the end of the 12th and in the 13th century.[49] One can give bDe ba can (founded in 1205) as an example, which was also one of the major scholastic centres of the time and figures in the list of the "six great scholastic centres" mentioned earlier. "Fixed satellites" of the second type consist of "study centres" (*bshad grwa*) established by gSang phu scholars within other bKa' gdams pa monasteries (e.g., sNar thang,[50] gNas rnying), or monasteries of other Buddhist schools, such as Khro phu and Tshal gung thang (bKa' brgyud pa), Sa skya (Sa skya pa), Zhwa lu (Zhwa lu pa).[51] In the centuries that follow, some of these satellites preserved

---

century, this tradition was designed to preserve some continuity in gSang phu's scholastic tradition in spite of the split within the monastery. Everding, ibid., 141, cites a source that reports that from the 17th or 18th century onward, gSang phu was empty except for the time of the summer-session, when members of the *bla khag bcu* ("the group of ten monastic divisions") gathered there. Such sessions were reintroduced as the monastery regained in activity and were still held in the first half of the 20th century.

49   Their foundation follows the splitting of gSang phu into an upper and lower college. On the reasons of this separation see van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 112–13 and Onoda, "The Chronology", 206–07.

50   Vetturini, *The bKa' gdams pa*, 35, writes: "sNar thang monastery, the seat of the bKa' gdams pas of gTsang, reached its scholastic apogee after an important school of dialectics was established during the life of the seventh abbot mChims Nam mkha' grags (c.1210–1285) by the gSang phu dialectician sKyel nag Grags pa seng ge".

51   Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 143. The establishment of *bshad grwa* by the disciples of gNyal zhig 'jam dpal rdo rje (c. 1150–1220) is investigated in Nishizawa, "gSang phu ne'u thog", 352–54. Nishizawa refers to this phenomenon as the "outer" aspect of the period of the diffusion of gSang phu scholasticism (352).

their original link to the mother enclave through their participation in the summer gathering held in gSang phu.[52]

I would like to propose that scholars who at some point studied at gSang phu and then settled as teachers in another location also qualify as "satellites" insofar as they functioned as proxies of gSang phu provided that they promulgated teaching activities on the same corpus and along interpretative lines that bore a strong family resemblance with those upheld in gSang phu. These are "intellectual satellites" rather than "institutional" ones. The category could even be extended to scholars who had not actually studied in gSang phu but were schooled in a teacher-student lineage going back to a gSang phu scholar. Note that the paucity of biographical information often makes it difficult to determine the degree of an individual's link with gSang phu.[53] Another question is whether these individuals would be willing to identify themselves in terms of their direct or indirect affiliation with gSang phu or a gSang phu-scholar. Nevertheless, the substitutability of such informal satellites for the mother enclave appears to be illustrated in the account of the scholarly careers of bSod nams rtse mo (1142–1182) and his nephew Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251). These two scholars are major figures of the Sa skya pa school (which, as mentioned before, became a competitor to gSang phu in the field of epistemology). The grandson of Sa skya's founder dKon mchog rgyal po (1034–1102) and son of Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158), bSod nams rtse mo first studied with his father. But obviously there were areas of Buddhist scholarship he could not study "at home". At the age of 17 he went to gSang phu to study with Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109–1169), who remained his teacher until his death in 1169.[54] A generation later, Kun dga' rgyal mtshan likewise started his religious and scholarly training under his father and his uncle Grags pa rgyal mtshan (bSod nams rtse mo's brother). But when it came to philosophical training, like his uncle bSod nams rtse mo (who had passed away the year of Kun dga' rgyal mtshan's birth) he went outside of Sa skya. But unlike his

---

52   See Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 141 on the *bla khag bcu*, and 143 and 146–47 on the Sa skya-affiliated centres of Dwags po grwa tshang and 'Phan po Nalendra.

53   For instance rGya dmar ba Byang chub grags, who is known to have held a teaching centre in sTod lung (Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 420, n. 25), studied with two of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab's disciples, but we do not know whether this took place in gSang phu or while they were travelling or established in a fixed satellite type of institution. We can also note that Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109–1169), the sixth abbot of gSang phu, often mentioned as a paragon of gSang phu scholarship, first studied with rGya dmar ba in sTod lung before coming to gSang phu.

54   Cf. van der Kuijp, *Contributions*, 97–98.

uncle, Kun dga' rgyal mtshan did not go to gSang phu. Instead, when he was 19 years old, he went to rKyang 'dur in upper Nyang to study with mTshur ston gZhon nu seng ge (ca. 1150–1210).[55] The latter had been a student of Phya pa's and of Phya pa's student gTsang nag pa (although we do not know where and when he studied with them), a student-teacher affiliation which comes out clearly in the epistemological work he composed and that Kun dga' rgyal mtshan studied with him. He thus qualifies as a "satellite" of gSang phu at least in the second degree. Why did Kun dga' rgyal mtshan not go to gSang phu instead of studying with mTshur ston, who was not an especially famous figure? One hypothesis is that gSang phu was no longer "the place to be" to study epistemology. However, the epistemological tradition at this time must have been kept alive by gNyal zhig 'Jam dpal rdo rje—who had been a student of Dan bag pa sMra ba'i seng ge, himself one of the foremost students of Phya pa—who would have been the abbot of the upper college of gSang phu at that time. Another explanation suggests itself: location. Indeed, gSang phu is situated much further from Sa skya than rKyang 'dur. rKyang 'dur thus represented a valuable alternative to gSang phu in the form of a satellite enclave, although it was probably not an institutional one at this time.[56] It offered a similar possibility to gain access to a given corpus of texts, while having the advantage of a greater proximity to Sa skya.[57] In bSod nams rtse mo's case, the choice of going to gSang phu may have been driven either by the fame of the monastic centre or the fame of its foremost scholar in residence, Phya pa. For Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, access to learning a given set of texts in a functional location seems to have supplanted the search for a famous teacher or a famous enclave of learning.

55   On Sa skya Paṇḍita's early scholarly training, see van der Kuijp, *Contributions*, 99 and Jackson, *The Entrance Gate*, 25–26.

56   In the *Blue Annals* (Roerich, 335), gNyal zhig's disciple 'Jam (dbyangs) gsar ma is credited with founding a study centre (*bshad pa'i grwa*) that many monks attended in sKyang 'dur (which I take to be an orthographic variant or a typo for rKyang 'dur). The existence of a monastic college (*chos grwa*) in rKyang 'dur is mentioned in the *Blue Annals* (Roerich, 771) in the account of the life of Kun spangs thugs rje brtson 'grus (born in 1243). Provided it is the same thing as the study centre mentioned previously, it gives us a *terminus ad quem* for its founding, for which no precise date is otherwise available. It is likely however to have post-dated Sa skya Paṇḍita's stay in 1202–1203.

57   According to some biographers, Sa skya Paṇḍita had already spent the previous year in upper Nyang (in 'Phrang) studying with Zhu ston rDo rje skyabs, who was a disciple of his uncle Grags pa rgyal mtshan (Jackson, *The Entrance Gate*, 25) and is probably to be identified with Zhu ston Hral mo, who had been an abbot of the Upper College of gSang phu (Jackson, "Madhyamaka Studies", 23).

"Satellites", whether fixed or itinerant, illustrated and reproduced gSang phu's scholarship outside its walls, thereby expanding the impact of the learning activities carried out within the enclave. At the same time, to a certain degree they duplicated gSang phu's function of centre of gravity.[58] As such they contributed to some extent to the power of attraction of gSang phu itself.[59] However, in the long run they were part of the factors that led to the demise of gSang phu, as they replaced it as centres of gravity.[60]

On the Practicalities of Learning

As seems to be the case for other monastic centres in this period as well, the mother enclave and its satellite enclaves constituted an open network where prospective students were taught irrespective of their school affiliation, and might even not be ordained monks. However, "laymen" in the sense of "the non-specialized" were not included in this process. In particular the type of teaching considered in this paper, relative to the Buddhist scholastic tradition, was not designed to educate the masses. How were learning activities organized for the individual students attracted to gSang phu and its satellites? While we are well informed about the organization of the monastic curriculum

---

58   For an example see Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers*, 230 on the activities of 'Jam dbyangs śākya gzhon nu, sixteenth abbot of gSang phu, who founded the college of Chos 'khor gling (he directed it for six years, before ruling in gSang phu for 27 years), and the list of savants that went to Chos 'khor gling during this period.

59   In Everding's opinion ("gSang phu Ne'u thog", 143), the second type of "fixed satellites" I defined above particularly promoted gSang phu's power of attraction. He proposes that "we may assume that slowly even at this period traditions came into being, to send monks and scholars of these monastic branches to gSang phu, at least for a limited period of studies".

60   See van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 115: "In course of time, its position was in part usurped not only by Sa-skya monastery and its affiliates, but also by such institutions as had been founded by its students which began to attract potential staff members and students away from it". Regarding gSang phu's demise, Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog", 151, points on the one hand to the internal quarrels and individuation of the groups of monks within the monastery, and on the other hand to political and cultural changes in Tibet, notably linked with the rise of the dGe lugs pa school and the appearance of new seats of learning linked with the latter. Similarly, the Sa skya pa side of gSang phu and its colleges gave way to the new seats of learning established by Sa skya scholars such as Rong ston Śākya rgyal mtshan and Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po. gSang phu's prior fame as an enclave disappeared at this point, and the monastery lost in prestige and activity, finally becoming a ruin. It was revived in the 20th century thanks to the efforts of the 13th Dalai lama, but later destroyed during the "Cultural Revolution" (see van der Kuijp, "The Monastery", 118–19). On this issue, see also Nishizawa, "gSang phu ne'u thog", 357–58.

and methods of teaching in modern and pre-modern Tibetan monasteries, one cannot *prima facie* assume that they have been perpetuated unchanged from the earlier, medieval period. Many features may have been retained. But, against the myth of an enduring continuity, evidence is lacking for some prominent features (such as the use of debate for pedagogical purpose, hinted at at the earliest in the 13th century), or contradicted by the available materials (e.g. the hypothesis that teaching was based on textbooks modelled like *bsdus grwa* manuals). Nothing is known of an established curriculum, potential standard texts or scholastic degrees in the early days.[61] It is unclear whether teaching was carried out on an individual basis or whether scholars taught classes to small or large groups of students *in situ*.[62] Recently rediscovered philosophical texts authored by gSang phu scholars offer a promising alternative perspective to learn about teaching curriculum and techniques in this context. Indeed, through an examination of their form and content, as well as features of specific manuscript exemplars, these treatises can shed light on the context of

---

61   In his paper dealing with the life of Rong ston Shes bya kun rig (1367–1449), Jackson speaks of the "ten scriptures from the standard monastic curriculum" in which scholars were being tested, noting that "Such a testing in ten scriptures had become a fixed practice for advanced scholars in the reputable seminaries of dBus province in that time, i.e., in gSang phu, its branches and those seminaries following its traditions" ("Rong ston bKa' bcu pa", 346). This title, which Rong ston bore, "arose in the late fourteenth century as a further extension of the previous almost universal *geshe* degree, 'master of four scriptures' (*bka' bzhi pa*)" (ibid., 346). The latter title (given for instance to Tsong kha pa), which had emerged by the early 14th century, refers to the four subjects of Perfection of Wisdom, Epistemology, Monastic disciple and Buddhist metaphysics (ibid., 346–47). It was "upgraded" "from about the 1390s" to "master of the ten scriptures"—it is not exactly known which texts this included, "they must have been a standard group of four scriptures augmented by six more basic Indian treatises that had by his [i.e. Rong ston's] generation recently come into common use at gSang phu" (ibid., 348). The title lasted about two generations before the emergence of the title *rab 'byams pa* "short for *bka' rab 'byams pa smra ba'i dge ba'i bshes gnyen*, 'religious teacher who expounds all scriptures'. The 'all scriptures' (*bka' rab 'byams pa*) here must have designated the entire agreed upon corpus of about eighteen texts" (ibid., 347).

62   For the time of Gro lung pa (rNgog Blo ldan shes rab's disciple), the 16th-century Tibetan historian of the Karma-Kagyu dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba (1504–66) speaks of a configuration of four teachers with teaching quarters in the four directions devoted, respectively, to epistemology, monastic discipline, Abhidharma (Buddhist philosophy/metaphysics) and Maitreya-texts (van der Kuijp, "The Monastery of Gsang-phu ne'u-thog", 111). This information should be treated with caution: in addition to the fact that this author was writing some four centuries after the events, his description appears too symbolically loaded to be taken at face value—it evokes both a maṇḍala configuration, and the configuration occurring in the description of Indian monastic universities.

their production and dissemination, and on their use in learning processes. The form of these indigenous texts would in particular undoubtedly benefit from a comparison with the literary forms of European medieval philosophy, especially because we know more in the European context about the way these forms were used in teaching at universities. The manuscript exemplars of these early works can also provide some hints regarding learning practices through manuscript colophons and marginal notes made by students, which for instance reveal the input of oral information and of other works used in parallel. Such sources, which are usually studied for their philosophical content, become relevant to a historically oriented inquiry insofar as these texts allow us to draw tentative inferences about the context of which they are the product and in which they were designed to be used.

Conclusion—Intellectual and Religious Communities

This paper has focused on the status of gSang phu as an enclave of learning specializing in the philosophical aspects of the Buddhist corpus. But in terms of the purpose underlying its foundation, we have seen that it was founded by one of the main disciples of Atiśa and was presumably intended to uphold his teachings. This makes it a proto-bKa' gdams pa seat, and thereby part of a religious community which, at that time, was defined by its adherence to the teaching cycle of Atiśa rather than as a monastic order. But it is not certain whether the preservation of Atiśa's teachings remained a priority in the generations that followed rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab. Clearly, however, the "philosophical turn" promoted by the second abbot, rNgog Blo ldan shes rab, was not in phase with the usual orientation of other proto-bKa' gdams pa and bKa' gdams pa centres. This led to a disagreement in the Tibetan tradition as to whether rNgog Blo ldan shes rab and his disciples are to be classified as bKa' gdams pa, and whether the philosophical treatises they composed are to be counted as bKa' gdams pa works.[63] Further research would be required to

---

63   The *Blue Annals*, whose author, 'Gos lo tsā ba, was ordained in a bKa' gdams pa monastery and studied in gSang phu (Vetturini, *The bKa' gdams pa*, 13–14), states that gSang phu scholars should not be considered to be bKa' gdams pa (see ibid., 25). A mes zhabs's (1597–1662) history also supports this claim (Vetturini, ibid., Part 2, 9). However, this was not an opinion shared by the author of the above-mentioned history, see Vetturini, ibid., 10: "Reflecting views of the earlier dGe g.ye ba history, Lo dgon pa differs with the *Blue Annals* by considering it one of the local traditions inspired by Atiśa". See also ibid., 25 and 144. However Lo gdon pa does not include any epistemological treatise in his compendium of bKa' gdams pa literature, whereas modern Tibetan scholars chose to include

establish to what extent the teaching cycle of Atiśa was kept alive by Blo ldan shes rab and his successors, and whether this aspect had any weight in drawing students to gSang phu in the centuries that followed. To my knowledge, it is commonly the status of gSang phu as a a scholastic enclave of learning that is stressed rather than as a place devoted to the teaching cycle of Atiśa. This aspect of the activities carried out in the monastery (even if it was co-existent with other teaching orientations) did not define an affiliation to a religious community, but delineated an intellectual community that extended well beyond the walls of gSang phu and pervaded other monasteries through its spread via the various "satellites" discussed in the previous section.

For monastic centres or individual scholars, belonging to this intellectual community was merely a matter of sharing an orientation (in terms of the corpus of predilection and topics of study) and a method of analysis, without necessarily agreeing on all points of interpretation. The intellectual tradition that stemmed from gSang phu and its satellites was indeed far from being a monolithic one. The study of the texts of the various authors that have recently become available shows the need to temper the notion of a homogeneous trend by doing justice to the diversified contribution of individual thinkers over the concept of a mainstream textual interpretation.[64] As mentioned earlier, the very spread of gSang phu's intellectual tradition via its various satellites was one of the factors in the decline of the monastery. But through them the intellectual community that had stemmed from gSang phu also continued to flourish even after gSang phu had lost its initial prestige.

Bibliography

Ronald Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York, 2005).

Karl-Heinz Everding, "gSang phu Ne'u thog, Tibet's Earliest Monastic School (1073): Reflections on the Rise of its Grva tshang bcu gsum and Bla khag bcu", *Zentral Asiatische Studien* 38 (2009), 137–54.

---

such works in the recently published collection of bKa' gdams pa texts (*bKa' gdams gsung 'bum*) (ibid., 26 and 177).

64   The internal divisions that appeared within this tradition, even when they are strongly expressed, were in the beginning essentially a matter of interpretative disagreements. It is only in later times that they became entangled with conflicts between individuals, monasteries and schools that were more of a religio-political nature than a philosophical one.

Pascale Hugon and Kevin Vose, "Unearthing the Foundations of Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy", *Tibetan Scholasticism in the 11th and 12th Centuries—Contributions to a panel at the XVth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Atlanta, 23–28 June 2008, Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 32 (2009) [2010], 237–48.

David Jackson, "Madhyamaka Studies Among the Early Sa-skya-pas", *Tibet Journal* 10,2 (1985), 20–34.

David Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise* (*Section III*)*: Sa-skya Paṇḍita on Indian and Tibetan Traditions of Pramāṇa and Philosophical Debate* (Vienna, 1987).

David Jackson, "Rong ston bKa' bcu pa: Notes on the title and travels of a great Tibetan scholastic", in *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ: Papers dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, eds. Birgit Kellner, Helmut Krasser, Horst Lasic, Michael T. Much and Helmut Tauscher (Vienna, 2007), 345–60.

Ralf Kramer, *The Great Tibetan Translator: Life and Works of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab* (*1059–1109*) (Munich, 2007).

Fumihito Nishizawa, "gSang phu ne'u thog—Its Contribution to the Re-establishment and Development of Tibetan Buddhism in the Later Diffusion (*phyi dar*) Period", in *Current Issues and Progress in Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Third International Seminar of Young Tibetologists, Kobe 2012*, eds. Tsuguhito Takeuchi, Kazushi Iwao, Ai Nishida, Seiji Kumagai and Meishi Yamamoto (Kobe 2013), 343–66.

Shunzō Onoda, "The Chronology of the Abbatial Successions of the gSang phu sNe'u thog Monastery", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 33 (1989), 203–13.

Shunzō Onoda, "Abbatial Successions of the Colleges of gSang phu sNe'u thog Monastery", *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology* 15, 4 (Osaka, 1990), 1049–71.

George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, 2 vols. (Delhi, 1949; repr. 1996).

Ulrike and Hans-Ulrich Roesler, *Kadampa Sites of Phempo: A Guide to Some Early Buddhist Monasteries in Central Tibet* (Kathmandu, 2004).

Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod, in cooperation with Tsering Gyalbo, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet. A Study of Tshal Gung-thang* (Vienna, 2007).

Leonard van der Kuijp, *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology* (Wiesbaden, 1983).

Leonard van der Kuijp, "The Monastery of Gsang-phu ne'u-thog and Its Abbatial Succession from ca. 1073 to 1250", *Berliner Indologische Studien* 3 (1987), 103–27.

Gianpaolo Vetturini, *The bKa' gdams pa School of Tibetan Buddhism* (revised PhD dissertation, University of London, 2007) http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/rarebooks/downloads/Gianpaolo_Vetturini_PhD.pdf.

Teaching Emperors: Transcending the Boundaries of Carolingian Monastic Communities*

Rutger Kramer

When the Frankish Emperor Charlemagne died in 814, his son Louis the Pious inherited the responsibility for an empire that proved a challenge to control. His new realm encompassed most of Western Europe, making it a sizeable territory to control from Aachen, the *de facto* seat of the empire.[1] Moreover, his father and grandfather had set in motion an almost programmatic series of reforms that had been gaining momentum from the mid-8th century onwards.[2] The overarching goal of this policy was nothing less than the salvation of all the people within the empire—to ensure that all subjects of the Carolingian rulers would be given the tools to be good Christians, so that they would not only lead good lives but also be rewarded in the afterlife.[3]

A primary tool for this was education, which could be anything from Christianizing pagans, combating heterodox movements, or simply making sure that members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy—from the highest archbishop to the lowliest village priest—were capable of performing the functions

---

1 On the challenges posed by the size of the empire, see Gravel, *Distances, Rencontres, Communications*; on the status of Aachen as the capital, see Nelson, "Aachen as a Place of Power", as well as McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 157–71.

2 Generally, see Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*. On Louis the Pious specifically, see among others Werner, "*Hludovicus Augustus*".

3 See among others De Jong, "Charlemagne's Church"; Brown, "Carolingian Renaissance"; McKitterick, *Frankish Church*; Smith, *Europe after Rome*, 217–30 and 239–52. It is tempting to compare the position of the Carolingian emperors to the medieval Islamic concept of *mulk* as described by Lohlker in this volume, but a more thorough comparison is needed to fully appreciate the extent to which these ideas overlap. For two different iterations of the concept, see Rabi', *Political Theory of Ibn Khaldun*, 137–50, or Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought*, 63–73 and 258–76.

required of their position. The impetus behind the Carolingian cultural reform movement was provided by a need to ensure that everybody had been taught what they needed to know.[4] The keyword for all this was *correctio* rather than *reformatio*, as the intention behind this policy was to improve and correct existing customs rather than to reform or rebuild the empire at an institutional level.[5] Charlemagne and Louis the Pious would foster a climate among the elites of the realm in which mutual admonition was the norm, where intellectuals from all corners of the realm were gathered to elevate the learning of their colleagues to a higher level in a highly competitive yet ultimately productive environment.[6] In the end, however, this court would go to lengths to present itself as a cohesive whole, acting more or less *ex aequo* with the emperor in spite of not being continuously in touch with one another.[7] In doing so, the Carolingian intellectual elites combined the legacy of the Roman Empire with a Christian ideology that had been developed over the centuries, and so laid a solid foundation for their own political theology.[8] Instead of reinventing the wheel, their goals were, firstly, to hammer out the details of their programme and, secondly, to make sure that all the subjects of the empire would be capable of learning the results of the high-level deliberations that took place at court.[9] Ideally, once the members of the court had determined what needed to be done, they would impart this knowledge to their entourage—who would then pass it on again, so that in the end everyone was expected to live exemplary lives themselves based on the *correctio* as it trickled down from the court.[10]

Hand in hand with this *correctio* movement was the Carolingian court's ever-growing concern for the establishment of the right order, the idea that

4   Ganz, "Visions of Carolingian Education"; Van Rhijn, "Priests and the Carolingian Reforms".

5   Schramm, "Karl der Grosse"; Reuter, "Kirchenreform und Kirchenpolitik", 40–42. For a long-term study on the dynamics between monastic reform, the context within which this occurred, and its subsequent representation, see for example, Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process*, esp. 1–14. On the use of the concept of "reform" by medieval and contemporary scholars, see also Barrow, "Ideas and Applications of Reform".

6   De Jong, *Penitential State*, 142–47; on the competitive atmosphere at the Carolingian court, see, for example, Tignolet, "Jeux poétiques".

7   Airlie, "Carolingian royal authority", 233, describes the court as a "frame of mind".

8   See, for example, Wickham, *Inheritance of Rome*, 405–26.

9   Garipzanov, *Symbolic Language*, 5–6; MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, 144–45; Nelson, "Kingship and Empire".

10   On the role of the court as the primary tool for providing guidance to the Christians in the empire, see De Jong, "*Sacrum Palatium*".

society ought to be organized in such a way that everybody knew his or her place in the greater scheme of things, and, importantly, would be satisfied with their lot. Given the sheer size of the Frankish realm, it was simply vital to have a well-ordered society in order for the "Carolingian experiment" to work.[11] Moreover, the Carolingian elites contended that one could not have a properly functioning hierarchy if its order were not supported by everybody who was part of it.[12] This had an impact on the perception of both teaching and learning. The authority of teachers hinged not only on their knowledge, but also on their students' willingness to actually learn from them. Concurrently, an idea that a symbiosis existed between power, responsibility, and knowledge was embedded in the Carolingian conception of how society worked: the more you knew, the more social power you could have, and the more powerful you were, the more knowledge you should possess.[13] Taken together, this was a societal model that is called the *ecclesia*, in which religion, politics, ideology, and power all acted in close concord for the greater good.[14]

Monasteries played a crucial role in the development and propagation of these ideals. The many religious communities that dotted the Frankish ecclesiastical landscape fulfilled several important functions, the most important of which was to harness the "power of prayer" of the monks and nuns residing there.[15] These people, who had dedicated their lives to the service of God, were given the task of interceding on behalf of those who were not in a position to do so directly, and as such it was up to them to ensure that their prayer duties were satisfactorily performed. To that end, they would congregate in communities that were, in theory, isolated from the world, and aspire to live the perfect Christian life in accordance with the monastic rules that governed their daily routine—chief among them the Rule of Saint Benedict, which had come to be propagated as the best of the monastic options available at the time.[16] As written in that Rule, one of the most important tools for monks to perform their function in the *ecclesia* was to learn and to keep learning to the point

---

11   A point made, among others, in Nelson, "Kingship and Empire", esp. 220–23.

12   Depreux, "Hiérarchie".

13   Mann, *Social Power*, 376–90; Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, 123–24.

14   De Jong, "State of the Church", and by the same author, "*Sacrum Palatium*", esp. 1246. Given its emphasis on a shared *cultus divinus* among the believers, coupled with the strong sense of hierarchy implicit in the concept, the Carolingian *ecclesia* should not be confused with the ideas of the *populus Christianus* or the *umma* described in this volume by Heydemann and Lohlker respectively.

15   De Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism", esp. 651.

16   Diem, "Inventing the Holy Rule".

where they would have internalized the tenets of their faith, ensuring that their prayers would be as effective as possible.[17]

Conversely, it was up to the court to ensure that the monks and nuns were in a position to do so. Charlemagne's father and grandfather had already established a system of support for the larger monasteries in their realms, primarily through land grants and other economic means.[18] Charlemagne and his son would continue this tradition, and even extend the immunities granted to monastic communities until they became veritable enclaves within the empire, answerable only to the court.[19] Monasteries, in return, were expected to support the empire, sometimes materially, but mostly by liturgical means or by acting as outposts of Carolingian culture in recently conquered areas.[20] They were expected to take the liberty granted by them through imperial support to become examples to their surroundings, and lift up the *ecclesia* in the process. So it was that in the course of the 8th and early 9th centuries, court and cloister became inextricably intertwined in a mutually interdependent relation, and that *correctio* and monastic culture also became bound up with one another.[21]

This cooperation depended to a large extent on the willingness of those who had opted for a monastic life to participate, even if this meant changing their political allegiance, or forsaking traditions that they might have held on to for centuries if they clashed with the ideals propagated from the court.[22] It also engendered an interesting paradox of Carolingian monastic life: in order for monasteries to persist as theoretically isolated enclaves, they had to come to terms with the fact that they needed to articulate their function as a part of the Carolingian world as a whole.

As demonstrated by Christina Lutter in this volume, one of the main ways in which a monastic community could persist in the face of the outside world was a strong sense of discipline. This paper will highlight another strategy of self-articulation, employed in several monastic narratives. In fact, the tools to develop this strategy were provided by the very institution that caused the paradox in the first place: the Carolingian empire itself. Thus we will take a

---

17   *Regula Benedicti* 73, ed. Lashofer et al., 294–97. For a contemporary reflection on this idea, see also Smaragdus, *Diadema Monachorum*, c. 100, ed. Migne, cols 689A–690A.

18   Semmler, "Pippin III"; Dierkens, "Politique Monastique".

19   Kölzer, *Urkunden*, 27–29; Semmler, "Benediktinische Reform und kaiserliches Privileg".

20   Demonstrated most clearly in the *Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum*, ed. Becker, pp. 483–99; see also Wagner, "Zur Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum".

21   Fried, "Der karolingische Herrschaftsverband".

22   Cf. for example Kramer, "Représentations de l'Autorité Impériale".

closer look at three stories that stand out in that they present instances where empire and monastery overlapped in a way that clashed with the "classic" image of monastic isolation. The first two texts, from the first half of the 9th century, describe rulers and communities that were alive and well at the time they were composed, and reflect upon a situation their authors could see unfolding as they wrote. The third narrative, written much later, takes a more nostalgic turn and looks back to the time of Charlemagne in order to teach its audience a valuable lesson. Taken together, however, their juxtaposition allows us not only to see various strategies as to how and why monasteries in the Carolingian age established themselves as spiritual communities connecting the various levels of community within Carolingian society. They also show the entanglement of political and religious ideologies in the 9th century, and, consequently, how one of the tools used by monasteries to delineate their sphere of influence was to allow someone—but not just anyone—to cross into their territory and provide them with the instructions they needed to prosper in their role.[23]

Monastic authors were aware of the existential difficulties caused by the cooperation between their community and the empire. Ideally, the communities they represented had been founded in splendid isolation far away from civilization. They were devoted solely to the spiritual and intellectual pursuits of their inhabitants, the intention being to isolate their inhabitants from worldly concerns so that they could focus all their energy on living the perfect Christian life in the seclusion provided by the walls of the cloister.[24] Many medieval monasteries broke this stereotype and became powerful economic or political institutions in spite of themselves. Still, it remained an influential vision of monasticism, and continued to make its mark on the self-perception of the people living in these communities.[25] A considerable part of their textual output was concerned with providing a justification as to why the

---

23   Lutter, "Affektives Lernen" shows how a comparable situation persisted in the High Middle Ages, while also showing how gender did not necessarily stand in the way of this relationship between court and cloister. For the purposes of this article, questions of gender have been left out of the equation: given that they are all written within a predominantly male environment, the chosen anecdotes do not touch upon issues relating to gender (either masculinity or femininity). On this topic, see, among others, Diem, "Gender of the Religious".

24   Hildebrandt, *External School*, 21–37; De Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism", 627–29; Raaijmakers, *Making of Fulda*, 28–30.

25   Mulder-Bakker, "The Invention of Saintliness"; for a general methodological overview of how to deal with this genre of texts, see Dubois and Lemaitre, *Hagiographie Médiévale*, or Sot, *Gesta Episcoporum*.

community had sprung into existence in the first place, and subsequently how its founders had managed to consolidate its position as *the* religious and intellectual powerhouse in the area.[26] They were not content to let the production of religious manuscripts, their role as advisers to rulers or the development of surrounding lands speak for themselves. Such was the power of their prayer, these authors believed, so strong were the constant aspirations of perfection, the drive to create a piece of heaven on earth, that they represented themselves as primarily concerned with exemplary lives so that the brilliance of their community would radiate outwards. From their vantage point, members of the early medieval monastic elite thus helped shape the idea of "enclaves of learning" through their actions as much as through their self-promotion.[27]

Composing hagiographical narratives served a very clear purpose for the consolidation of a community from within. They would furnish the inhabitants of a monastery with a common past and a common vision of the life they should all aspire to, for instance. Moreover, many of these texts were also part of a larger discourse, meant to show their intended audience that monasteries retained their place in the *ecclesia*.[28] This was expected of them at the time. From the shared practices and cooperation implicit in the Carolingian conceptualization of the *ecclesia*, it logically followed that monastic communities should play to their strengths, which meant setting the standard as to what exactly constituted a perfect life. They were enabled to do this by their supporters, but it was up to them to live up to the great expectations placed on their shoulders.

A Leading Emperor? The Sacred Foundations of Inda

It was against this background that Louis the Pious made his way to Aachen early in 814, to continue in the footsteps of his father. One of the most visible effects of his aspirations was the organization of an almost continuous series of councils at the imperial palace. Under the *aegis* of the emperor, who "had

---

26   See Pohl, "History in Fragments", for one such case-study in which a monastery employed its textual prowess as a "troubled and [...] desperate attempt to make ends meet in the light of adversity and controversial debate".

27   See also Faure, *Visions of Power*, 194–95, who describes Buddhist monasteries (in Japan) as "a closed space, an enclave of the cosmos within the surrounding chaos [...] a living organism, a utopia, a microcosm sufficient unto itself"—a description with which many a Carolingian monk might agree.

28   As shown for example in the case of Redon by Smith, "*Aedificatio Sancti Loci*".

the most ardent zeal for divine worship through the inspiration of Heaven", several lengthy capitularies were issued from these gatherings of bishops and abbots between 816 and 819, striving to ensure that "many useful and necessary measures were taken with care and diligence for the improvement (*emendatio*) of the holy Church of God".[29] In the process, Louis the Pious also took care to restructure his court, and replaced several key members from his father's entourage with his own trusted advisers.[30] Among these was Benedict, founding abbot of the monastery of Aniane close to the city of Montpellier. The son of a local nobleman, Benedict underwent an epiphany as he approached adulthood, and opted for a monastic instead of a courtly life. As Aniane, the monastery he subsequently founded on his father's land, grew in size and importance, he also became an influential figure on the local scene, attracting the attention of many intellectuals in the empire, and eventually becoming a valued player at the Carolingian court.[31]

Ardo, who composed the hagiographical account of Benedict's life, the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, shortly after the abbot's death in 821, went to great lengths to portray this ascent through imperial ranks as being an almost inevitable function of his increasing holiness: as Benedict learnt more and more about the proper monastic way of life, he also became a better Christian and thus better able to advise the ruler than some of his more worldly colleagues.[32] This in turn led to something of a crisis of conscience. As outlined by Ardo, Benedict had started his monastic career in order to flee the intrigues of the Carolingian court. However, this should not mean he no longer needed to be obedient to the emperor. Obedience was, after all, one of the cornerstones of the monastic ideal that he strove to emulate—why should this be any different for the *ecclesia* within which these monasteries were to function?[33]

As represented in the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* (*VBA*), Louis the Pious seems to have appreciated the ensuing tension as well. Thus, although he bade the abbot to move from his community in the south to the palace in Aachen, it also "pleased him [Louis] to provide him [Benedict] with a convenient place not far from the palace", so that he would have the abbot at his beck and call. Moreover, the text continues, Louis "decreed that thirty monks should dwell there in the service of Christ", which in turn prompted the abbot to "command brothers

---

29   *Institutio Canonicorum*, prologus, ed. and trans. Bertram, pp. 96 and 133.

30   Scharer, "Charlemagne's Daughters"; De Jong, *Penitential State*, 19–24.

31   Semmler, "Benedictus II", but cf. also Geuenich, "Kritische Anmerkungen".

32   Ardo, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, ed. Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, pp. 139–223.

33   De Vogüé, "Structure et Gouvernement"; Noble, "Monastic Ideal"; on the later medieval situation, see also the contribution by Lutter in this volume.

selected from noted monasteries to come", where "he might instruct them by his example to be lessons of salvation to others".[34] It is the interaction between cloister and court in a nutshell, from a monastic perspective: the emperor ensured the existence of the monastery as an enclave unto itself by providing it with land and immunities, while the designated abbot took care of the education of the monks living there. Moreover, the monks chosen to live in Inda were expected to pass on what they had learned once they had fully internalized Benedict's teachings, thus spreading them across the empire. Ardo wanted to show that Benedict truly was involved in "the direction of the realm", working together with the ruler to give advice to everyone.[35] His abbacy was not limited to Inda, but the emperor had indeed "set him over all monasteries in his realm" by making him the teacher of the ever-changing community founded so close to the centre of the empire.[36]

Ardo wrote from a monastic perspective, with a view to presenting his protagonist as a veritable holy man, a teacher to those who constituted his intended audience.[37] Although he wanted his work to be read at court as well and possibly to establish a cult around Benedict, he did not claim to speak to the empire in its entirety.[38] Another narrative of the foundation of Inda, however, presents an altogether different perspective, allowing us to add some nuance to this vision of monastic communities and their function in the greater scheme of things. This is the *Carmen in Honorem Hludowici*, a panegyric written in the later 820s by a certain Ermold, known as Ermoldus Nigellus ("the Black").[39] Ermold was courtier of one of Louis' sons. He had been exiled for unclear reasons and was attempting to get back into favour with his erstwhile patron. One of the tools he employed to that effect was to compose a poem in honour of Louis, expressing the hope that the emperor's intercession might alleviate his punishment and allow him to go back home. Unwilling to take half-measures, Ermold ended up writing four books of poetry, praising almost every aspect of the imperial reign thus far, from Louis' youthful exploits to his building programme, and from his martial prowess to his piety.[40]

---

34   Ardo, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* 35, trans. Cabaniss, p. 243.

35   Ardo, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* 35, trans. Cabaniss, p. 244.

36   Ardo, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* 36, trans. Cabaniss, p. 244.

37   Claussen, "Benedict as Teacher".

38   Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*, 71–74; Ardo, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, praefatio, ed. Kettemann, pp. 140–43.

39   Ermoldus, *Carmen*, ed. and trans. Faral, pp. 2–200.

40   Depreux, "Pietas".

The foundation of Inda occurs at the culmination of the second book, which details Louis' first steps as an emperor. After his father's death, Louis started on a tour of his empire, visiting all the important holy places so that his reign would have an auspicious start. Having arrived in Aachen, he was confirmed by Pope Stephen IV in a highly ordered ceremony, which, according to Ermold, concluded with a lengthy, sermon-like speech to everyone present. "May the holy rule of the fathers regulate the life of the clergy, and may the venerable law of our fathers bring our people together. May the order of monks increase in the teachings of Benedict; may it seek by the character of its life the holy and heavenly pasture", Ermold has Louis proclaim, before affirming his status as "ruler of the Christians", protector of the faith for which Christ had shed His own blood.[41] Deftly weaving together biblical, antique and contemporary motifs, one of Ermold's goals here was to demonstrate not only that the Carolingians had indeed provided the best possible ruler, but also that they were constantly reminded (and reminding themselves) of their duty to bear the responsibility of the ecclesiastical *correctio* that characterized their reign.[42]

At this point, Ermold tells the story of Inda's foundation and its role as the eye in the storm of Louis' *correctio*. While the emperor's messengers were sent out to investigate "the canonical flock, both men and women, who live in holy fortresses", he himself established a monastery close to him, to serve as Benedict's headquarters.[43] Louis got rid of all the wildlife in the area, rendering it unsuitable for hunting—that favourite pastime of the ruler and his courtiers—while simultaneously making it "pleasing to God".[44] Benedict of Nursia's *Regula* flourished in this subdued wilderness, and Benedict of Aniane, "who was everything to everyone", became the "father" of the community.[45] The emperor, however, was never far away either, as Ermold elaborates on the "imperial custom" mentioned in Inda's foundation charter.[46] Louis "stayed there often and came frequently to see the sheepfold; he took care of the expenses and supplied big gifts".[47] In short, he was "at once caesar and abbot"—*caesar et abba simul*.[48]

---

41   Ermoldus, *Carmen*, 2.954–57, trans. Noble, p. 149.

42   Bobrycki, "Self-promotion, Self-suppression".

43   Ermoldus, *Carmen*, 2.1161–65, trans. Noble, p. 154.

44   Ermoldus, *Carmen*, 2.1242–45, trans. Noble, pp. 155–56. Cf. Verdon, "Recherches sur la chasse"; Diesenberger, "Bausteine der Erinnerung", 60–61.

45   Ermoldus, *Carmen*, 2.1246–48, trans. Noble, p. 156.

46   Stengel, "Immunitätsurkunde", 390–93. The "imperial custom" (*mos imperialis*) seems to refer to the donation of land specifically.

47   Ermoldus, *Carmen*, 2.1250–51, trans. Noble, p. 156.

48   Ermoldus, *Carmen*, 2.1249, ed. Faral, pp. 96–97.

Compared to the description given in the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, Ermold seems more insistent on the abbatial role of the emperor. However, whereas Ardo's narrative included several anecdotes in which Louis took an active interest in communal living—and dying—Ermold simply showed the emperor as a teacher of the *ecclesia* in its entirety.[49] For Ardo, Inda was a pretext for Benedict to go to Aachen, whereas Ermold treated the new foundation as a monastic extension of the emperor's teaching. In both cases, the wording and the description of the relationship between Benedict and Louis seems deliberately ambiguous, attesting both to the actual importance of the abbot's idea(l)s and the dynamic, productive and educational relationship between court and cloister.

Both Ardo and Ermold stopped short of showing Louis as actually being a teacher to his monks. To them, he was a leader, at the top of the Frankish hierarchy, charged with exercising God's will for the benefit of all. To fulfil this duty, he had to choose the best people available to help him carry out his responsibility, and Benedict was simply one of these people. However, sometimes the system would break down despite the ruler's best efforts, calling for him to play a different role altogether. It is to such a scenario that we now turn, as we will see Louis directly intervening in a conflict within a monastery before the situation truly got out of hand.

A Preaching Emperor: Louis the Pious in the *Vita Aegil*

This situation was described in another idealized narrative, composed sometime between 822 and 845—most probably around 840, near the end of the abbacy of Hrabanus Maurus, who died in 842, well after the resolution of a political crisis that had held the elites of the realm in its grip between 829 and 833.[50] In a way, this crisis marked both the high and the low points in the Carolingian ecclesiastical system. On the one hand, the empire came to the verge of imploding when a combination of questionable political decisions, filial discontent over Louis' inheritance, and turmoil within the elite itself brought two opposing Frankish armies into the field, and led to the deposition and public penance of the emperor in 833.[51] On the other hand, however, outright war was prevented, Louis underwent this penance more or less

---

49   In this he would be comparable to the ideal of the Zaydi imams, as described by Hovden in this volume. See also Cornell, *Voices of Islam*, 240–42.

50   Raaijmakers, *Making of Fulda*, 237–40.

51   De Jong, *Penitential State*, 38–50.

voluntarily, and the bishops overseeing the ritual (as well as the reconciliation several months later) were still fully supportive of the very system that had almost brought about its own downfall. If anything, they had shown that everybody was subject to this self-imposed ideal of society—which was *de facto* seen as being divinely approved—and that *ecclesia* and empire had come out even stronger.[52] Still, the seeds of discord had been sown, and came to a head once again in 841, when the Battle of Fontenoy pitted the sons of Louis the Pious against each other as part of a bitter struggle for empire.[53]

In part, the *Vita Aegil*, composed by Brun Candidus, a monk of the monastery of Fulda who had lived through these events, was a product of these machinations. As one of the largest monastic communities in the empire, Fulda was, after all, a major player at the highest political level, as well as a powerful intellectual and economic force in the region.[54] The protagonist of this hagiography, the abbot Aegil, had died in 822, but it had taken Candidus another 15 to 20 years to finish his work about the life of his teacher. In the meantime, Fulda had lived through a lengthy conflict itself as well, catalysed by the erection of a large and prestigious church in the monastery.

The construction of this building had already started under Aegil's predecessor, Ratgar, who had been accused by the monks of pursuing an all-too-ambitious building programme.[55] Although nobody seems to have disobeyed him directly, the dispute escalated in 812, when the monks aired their grievances in the *Supplex Libellus*, a letter to Charlemagne asking him to intervene on their behalf.[56] As the monks implied, Ratgar had started building this church not for the glory of God, but for his own prestige—and that ran counter to the monastic ideal of the time. The conflict lasted until the start of the reign of Louis the Pious, and ended with the deposition of Ratgar in 817, at which point Aegil took over. Peace had been restored, and the construction of the church continued, albeit at a more moderate pace.[57]

In spite of this benevolent interference, the community was left reeling in the wake of the conflict, and it must have left a deep impression on Candidus. As such, this conflict and the controversial circumstances under which Aegil had become abbot form the background of the entire work. The author had deliberately used it as a counterpoint to the ideal community that had been

52   Nelson, "Last Years"; Kramer, "Justified and Ancient".

53   Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 101–05.

54   Candidus, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, ed. Becht-Jördens.

55   Raaijmakers, *Making of Fulda*, 99–131.

56   Semmler, "Studien zum Supplex Libellus".

57   Raaijmakers, *Making of Fulda*, 132–74.

established by his protagonist. "Let the reader not consider the frequent reference to this unrest to be slanderous", he wrote—to him, he was not simply continuing a (now mostly lost) chain of hagiographical narratives that told the lives of all the abbots of Fulda; he was also recording past calamities in order to edify his future audience.[58]

The *Vita Aegil* was a production in two parts—a so-called *opus geminum*.[59] One of the parts took the form of a long poem which was meant to convey to the monks of Fulda the idea that their church should be seen as a symbol of the *ecclesia* and the tradition for which they stood.[60] Conversely, the prose part was a didactic text in the best tradition of Carolingian hagiography, aiming to provide "a monastic programme in prose", painting the picture of an ideal monastery for a rather broad audience.[61] This was, after all, part of a communal tradition, and even though Aegil was not the founder of the monastery, he had guided the community through a severe existential crisis. In a sense, he had re-founded the monastery on a sturdy Carolingian base. For Candidus, composing the narrative the way he did thus not only aimed at re-establishing a sense of togetherness within the community, but also showed the outside world that Fulda was back and ready for action.

Curiously, a centrepiece of this edification was a sermon—not by the abbot or high-ranking prelate, but by the emperor himself.[62] He delivered this speech to a group of monks who had come to ask him to arbitrate in their conflict.[63] Louis obliged, but not before admonishing the monks that they ought not to have let it come this far. The problem, he told them, was not only the abbot himself, but also the fact that the monks, in spite of their learning, had diverged from the right path, letting go of the Rule and their discipline simply because they felt compelled to do so by one man. "After all, brothers", he berated them, "you have knowledge of Divine Scripture; you have the examples of the holy fathers who have preceded you, and you have a Rule instituted especially for you. In all these you can without doubt observe yourselves as if looking in a mirror, what you are and what you strive to become".[64] In spite of all that potential, the monks had strayed from the right path, and thus proven

---

58   Candidus, *Vita Aegil* 24, ed. Becht-Jördens, p. 19. This was a common enough reason for recording such episodes in a community's history: Booker, "New prologue", 91.

59   Walter, *Opus Geminum*, 57–66.

60   Raaijmakers, *Making of Fulda*, 143–44.

61   Raaijmakers, *Making of Fulda*, 243–57.

62   Candidus, *Vita Aegil* 9–10, ed. Becht-Jördens, pp. 9–13, or about 25 per cent of the total length.

63   A similar situation is described in Frotharius, *Epistola* 21, ed. Hampe, p. 291.

64   Candidus, *Vita Aegil* 9, ed. Becht-Jördens, p. 9.

themselves to be unable to live together in love and concord. That, Candidus impresses upon his audience, was why their new church was simply an opulent building and not a House of God. As Louis concluded, "people live in buildings, but God lives in holy people".[65]

It is doubtful that Louis the Pious ever actually delivered a sermon of this scope and magnitude. Even if it is clear that the Carolingians, like many rulers in the Early Middle Ages, would frequently visit large monasteries on their travels, it seems more logical that they did so as part of their travels, not to quell a specific conflict in a specific community—important though it might be.[66] Similarly, it should not be forgotten that there are indications that the real Ratgar, though controversial, was not the bad abbot represented in the *vita* of his successor: Candidus clearly intended to use him as an exemplary bad abbot, a foil to the idealized abbacy of Aegil, which would have influenced his portrayal of Ratgar.[67] In fact, Ratgar himself had probably been the subject of a hagiographic narrative as well, having been part of the monastery's communal history and identity despite the dispute surrounding his new church.[68]

Instead, the inclusion of this story should be seen as a claim on the nature of imperial authority and its impact on the self-assertion of a monastic community faced with the reforms proposed by the court. It was a community in search of itself after a rather severe crisis of identity. Brun Candidus deemed it best to convey the moral *admonitio* he wanted to impress upon his audience not by means of the abbot whose life he was narrating, but through an actor who was an integral part of the *ecclesia* without being part of the smaller monastic world of Fulda. The emperor in this story had assumed an idealized *persona*, akin to the *caesar et abba simul* described by Ermold or, using a formulation that recurred more often in the Carolingian discourse, a *rex et sacerdos*, a "king and priest" who represented both the worldly and the spiritual leadership of the Christian world.[69] Candidus's emperor was able to transcend the boundaries of theoretically closed-off monasteries and to help them acquire the knowledge they needed to strengthen their sense of community.[70]

65   Candidus, *Vita Aegil* 10, ed. Becht-Jördens p. 12. See also Nelson, "Cour Impériale".

66   McKitterick, "A King on the Move".

67   Raaijmakers, *Making of Fulda*, 259–63.

68   Although many such *vitae* from Fulda are now lost, an example of such a monastic serial hagiography may be found in the *Gesta Abbatum Fontanellensium*, ed. Pradié, from Saint-Wandrille. Cf. Howe, "Hagiography of Saint-Wandrille", 128–29 and 190–91.

69   Angenendt, "*Rex* und *sacerdos*".

70   De Jong, *Penitential State*, 133.

In the story of Fulda, Louis' sermon was the catharsis of a conflict that had lasted over a generation.

The imperial sermon occurred at a time when it was acceptable to identify the ruler, the imperial court of the Carolingians, as a source of wisdom, a place from which the monks of Fulda might receive guidance that would strengthen their monastic ideology—both the "internal cloister" of each individual monk residing there, and their community as a whole.[71] The fact that this Louis was most likely a literary construct, and that the anecdotes themselves had little to do with what actually happened, is beside the point: if hagiographical narratives were expected to describe ideals, we cannot blame the authors for describing what they considered an ideal situation—within the boundaries of what their intended audience would expect, of course. To Candidus, the all-inclusive vision of community propagated by the court was strong enough to allow the walls of the cloister to be breached, and even to admit that not all was well within the community *until* the emperor came and set things right. From his position on top of the *ecclesia*, an intermediary between God and the people, he was in a prime position to do so. Candidus' emperor was not angry—just disappointed.

For the author of the final narrative treated in this article, mere disappointment was not enough. Jumping forward another 50 years, to the end of the 9th century, and to yet another monastic community, we will now turn to a text that does not show an emperor acting within a monastery—it attempts to describe how a ruler ought to behave in his own court.

A Teaching Emperor: Charlemagne in Notker's *Gesta Karoli*

Thus far, the texts under scrutiny have described situations that were fairly close to both author and intended audience. Our next text takes a wholly different approach. Written sometime around 885–6 by Notker the Stammerer, a monk of the monastery of Sankt-Gallen, the *Gesta Karoli* present a vision of past circumstances in order to entice the audience to recreate the former

---

71   Perhaps the clearest example of the idea that the court was a source of divine wisdom may be found in the prologue to the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, where Ardo describes the palace as providing a "flow of wisdom from an unfailing watercourse of the purest fountain", 142, echoing Sir. 1:5. See also De Jong, "Internal cloisters", as well as Breitenstein, "Verantwortung als Ziel der Gewissensbildung" for an example of a similar mentality in the High Middle Ages.

glory described.[72] More specifically, it concerns a narrative about the deeds of Charlemagne, dedicated to his great-grandson, who was also named Charles (nicknamed "The Fat"). Far from being a biography *stricto sensu*, however, the work reads like a series of anecdotes that are difficult to place chronologically.[73] What is clear is that most of the stories related had a predominantly literary character and were based around Charlemagne's towering reputation rather than his actual life story. Nevertheless, their sequence gives us an impression of this one monk's advice to the court, using the memory of Charlemagne, combined with his own wit, to educate the current generation of rulers on how to improve the state of affairs.[74]

Time had not stood still since the death of Louis the Pious in 840. By the time Notker was active, the Carolingian Empire had endured political crises, division and even civil wars. It had quelled heresies. It was threatened on all sides by invasions by Vikings, Hungarians and Saracens, but it had persisted, and its elites had tenaciously clung to the ideal of cultural and religious improvement as best as they could.[75] Nevertheless, it had become clear that the empire was shaking at its foundations. The momentum generated by Charlemagne and his heir had been dampened, and the fact that Charles the Fat had failed to produce a suitable heir led many to fear that the dynasty was about to come to an end. In this climate, Notker took it upon himself to remind people of the greatness that once was—to remind the current emperor of the deeds that had made his great-grandfather "Great".[76]

For its part, the monastery of Sankt-Gallen weathered the times as best as it was able. A large, powerful institution with a tradition stretching back to pre-Carolingian times, it had been founded in its current incarnation in 719 by Othmar, reputedly on the site of the *cella* of an Irish monk, Gallus, who was believed to be one of the 12 companions of the 6th-century missionary Columbanus. By the 9th century, the community had grown into one of the most influential monasteries of the empire, and was sponsored by local nobility and imperial court alike.[77] Its library and extensive collection of original charters and other manuscripts stand as a testament of its achievements even

---

72   Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, ed. Haefele, p. 1–93; MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, 201–04.

73   Goetz, *Strukturen der spätkarolingischen Epoche*, 4–8.

74   Ganz, "Humour as History".

75   Costambeys et al., *Carolingian World*, 379–426.

76   MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, 199–229.

77   Cf. Zettler, "Bischofs- und Königskloster". A charter from 881 even refers to the same "imperial custom" as in the case of Inda: Karolus III, *Diploma* 38, ed. Kehr, p. 65. On the charters as a reflection of the community's relation to the empire, see furthermore, Zeller, "Karolingisches Imperium und regionales Urkundenwesen".

today.[78] From the community's—or rather, Notker's—vantage point, they, as guardians of knowledge, tradition and the proper way of life, were in a perfect position to educate the current ruler and his court.[79]

The opening chapters of the work are telling in this regard, as they are set right at the start of Charlemagne's reign, at a time when "the study of letters was almost everywhere forgotten, and even the worship of the true God had become tepid".[80] Just then, two monks arrived from Ireland, offering to teach anyone who would accept their wisdom. At first, things did not go well. They even had to go to a marketplace and pretend "that they had wisdom for sale—because they saw that the people had come to trade what was for sale, not what was for free".[81] Their cries eventually reached the ears of Charlemagne, who asked them the price of their teaching—to which they promptly responded that they only wanted "suitable dwellings and eager minds, food and clothing, for without these things our mission cannot be completed".[82] What they needed was an enclave where they could devote their time to studying and teaching without being fettered by worldly concerns. They asked the emperor to take care of their earthly needs, so they could set their sights to a higher purpose.

Given Notker's own background, it seems obvious that he envisaged this to be a monastery—and this was an idea that would have resonated with his peers, given the importance of monasteries in the Carolingian *correctio*. To sponsor a monastery was to live up to the expectations of the Church. Establishing such educational ventures was about more than teaching people to read and write—it was about spreading wisdom throughout the empire.

As such, it is not surprising that Notker's Irish monks also asked Charlemagne to provide them with "eager minds" to teach. This the emperor did. "He assigned to [Clement, one of the monks] many boys of the nobility, of the middling sort, and of the lower classes" to educate, while he went off to deal with "urgent military affairs".[83] After a short intermezzo where Notker describes the arrival of Alcuin of York, yet another insular scholar with an impressive pedigree of learning,[84] the story continues when Charlemagne returned victorious and "ordered the boys whom he had commended to Clement to come to him

---

78   Geuenich, "Mönche und Konvent".

79   Siegrist, *Herrscherbild und Weltsicht*, 139–45.

80   Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.1, trans. Noble, p. 59.

81   Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.1, trans. Noble, p. 59.

82   Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.1, trans. Noble, p. 60.

83   Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.1, trans. Noble, p. 60.

84   See Bullough, *Alcuin*, 17–34, on the life and posthumous reputation of this scholar.

and to offer him their letters and poems"; they did so, and to his surprise "those of the middling and lower sort offered works adorned [...] with every sweet sign of wisdom, whereas the noble boys handed over flimsy works that were wholly silly".[85]

The ruler responded in kind. Invoking imagery from the New Testament, Notker casts Charlemagne in the role of the Divine Judge, and describes how he "set those who performed well at his right hand", commended them and admonished them to "be eager to do even better" so that they may eventually receive "bishoprics and splendid monasteries".[86] Then he addresses the ones on his left, and tells them off in a thunderous speech: "You nobles, you sons of magnates, you delicate and pretty boys, you who trust in your birth and wealth, setting aside my command and your own advancement, you neglected the study of letters, and you indulged in luxury, games, idleness, and useless pastimes". To make matters worse for them, Charlemagne then swears the following oath: "By the king of Heaven, I give no weight to your nobility and good looks even though others may esteem you. Know this beyond any doubt: unless you make up for your earlier negligence by diligent study, you will never obtain anything of value from Charles".[87]

It is the type of anecdotal example for which Notker was known. This was his ideal of the way the empire should be run: by well-educated people who continuously strove to improve their capabilities, not by people who were given power by virtue of their inheritance, or who were only out for their own advancement.[88] Consequently, one of the main functions of monasteries, as far as he was concerned, was to improve the empire through the education of the aristocracy.[89] As we have seen earlier, these enclaves of learning would be marked by their specialized function within the world, relying on the benevolence of the empire (or whatever sponsors they could find) to actually focus on fostering learning full-time. Although this ideal was never completely lost, Notker seems to have been nostalgic for an empire vital enough to bear that burden, in a climate that was increasingly veering toward monastic autonomy.[90]

---

85   Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.3, trans. Noble, p. 61.

86   See Mat. 25:31–46 and Rev. 20:11–15. This is not the only instance of eschatological imagery in Notker—see Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, 38–43.

87   All quotations are from Notker, *Gesta Karoli* 1.3, trans. Noble, p. 61.

88   See Stone, *Morality and Masculinity*, 137–39.

89   Hageneier, *Jenseits der Topik*, 187–237, esp. 218.

90   Ganz, "Humour as History", 182; Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*; cf. also Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process*, 79–101.

Notably absent from Notker's ideal is an insistence on the purity of the teachings offered—one of the reasons behind the foundation of Inda, for example. The knowledge generated in Notker's school should of course hark back to the Bible and the wisdom of the Church Fathers, but was not defined by the community or its "spiritual master" *per se*. At the start of the story, the teachers who kick-started the renaissance of learning in the Frankish realms were outsiders, Irish monks—a logical choice, if Notker's *ecclesia* was based on the monastery he lived in. The anecdote then ends with the ruler himself berating some of the students (and by extension, their teacher) for not doing an adequate job. This Charlemagne, this literary creation of Notker's, wanted only the best for the management of his realm. For that reason he had to become both a judge and, in effect, a teacher, meting out punishment while also explaining his reasons for doing so. The students could obtain knowledge from anyone qualified to pass it on, but to learn about the empire, to learn about their place in the greater scheme of things, these fledgling functionaries needed guidance from outside.

This was perfectly acceptable to Notker—laudable, even. Given the circumstances under which he was writing and the intended audience of his work, he was describing a situation that he would like to be re-instituted, and it is tempting to think that he as an *auteur* used Charlemagne's *persona* to criticize some less-than-exemplary students in his own monastery.[91] The model he advocated was one where monasteries could function as enclaves in a practical, material sense, but which would be integrated into the world—the Carolingian Church—in all other ways, be it spiritually, intellectually, or even politically.

Learning Empire

The *Gesta Karoli* described an idealized past, a longing for an ideology that Notker felt had been watered down over the generations. Ardo's *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* and Ermold's *Carmen in Honorem Hludowici* presented their audience with a vision of their communities—cloister and court respectively—just at the time when the grandest possible design for the empire was being implemented. Candidus, finally, also used Louis' role in the resolution of the conflict described in the *Vita Aegil* as a commentary on recent events, representing his community as a microcosm of the empire at large. Consequently,

---

91   Cf. Pizarro, "Images of Church and State", 35–36.

the way each of the authors represented their rulers also differed; the emperor is a saint's adviser in one story, a bishop or preacher in the next, and an arbitrator or judge in another. More accurately, each of these roles overlap to a large extent—Louis' arbitration in Fulda is described in pastoral terms, for example, whereas Notker's angry schoolteacher is portrayed as a heavenly judge. Each different role thus reflected different facets of ecclesiastical authority, and the portrayals of Louis the Pious and Charlemagne in these stories actually demonstrate different interpretations of how one person would combine these requirements. Nonetheless, the rulers in these stories were significant for these communities, and their significance is expressed in terms of imparting knowledge (and the accompanying change of attitude), of strengthening a community through religious teaching, which in turn strengthened their discipline as well.[92] The two terms were, after all, closely related: as Augustine had already pointed out in his *De Disciplina Christiana*, "Discipline comes from learning (*disco*), and the house of discipline is the Church of Christ (*disciplinae domus est Ecclesia Christi*)".[93] Highlighting the multiplicity of learning, this also points out one basic characteristic that speaks volumes about the status of monastic communities within the wider Christian community of the Carolingian Empire. Learning or knowing the right way of doing things was not dependent on the isolation of the communities themselves, on the guidance provided by a codified set of rules. Far from it: in each of these stories, it was the Carolingian court, personified by the Carolingian ruler, which provided essential guidance on how to proceed—how to learn.

Carolingian *correctio* required people in key positions who could transcend the spiritual boundaries of their communities.[94] They were to act as a conduit between the secluded world of the cloister and the wider world of the *ecclesia*. The ability to foster knowledge, internalize teachings, and acquire wisdom remained a prerogative of monks and nuns alike. They took recourse to the sacred texts at their disposal, and the traditions that had served them so well over the years, commented upon them and even added to them as they saw necessary.[95] However, in order for the rest of the empire to profit from their

---

92   See also Lutter, "*Vita Communis*".

93   Augustinus, *De Disciplina Christiana*, 1, ed. Plaetse, p. 407 ; trans. Hill, p. 458.

94   Semmler, "Zur verfassungsrechtlichen Einordnung"; Fichtenau, *Das karolingische Imperium*, 140–42.

95   As a prime example of how this was not just the prerogative of monks, the *Annales Mettenses Priores*, which were most likely composed at the nunnery of Chelles, provide an interesting alternative to the historiographical discourse current at the time, forming a distinctive piece of "pro-Carolingian propaganda" without losing the author's "distinctive voice": Hen, "The Annals of Metz".

learning, they needed people who embodied the best of both worlds. Ideally, these would be the emperors themselves.[96] As had been written in the name of Louis the Pious in 825, "the sum of all responsibilities came together in the person of the ruler".[97] According to the model developed by the Carolingians, it was the rulers who bore the ultimate responsibility for the well-being—both spiritually and materially—of every Christian within the empire.[98] Thus it was equally important for them to be able to teach everybody as well, or at the very least they had to be able to teach the teachers, who would then be able to teach their students, and so on.

It is for this reason that it is deceptively easy to think about monastic communities in 9th-century Europe as being institutions quintessentially devoted to the fostering of knowledge specifically. By the time the Carolingian dynasty had taken power, monasteries had become firmly embedded within the apparatus of rulership. Once again, the keyword was interdependence. For the Carolingian court, establishing what exactly constituted a monastery and what would be its place in the *ecclesia* was something that followed from even grander imperial ideologies. For the monasteries themselves, presenting themselves as enclaves providing spiritual guidance within the empire meant buying into that Carolingian ideal. This could be profitable from a spiritual, but also from a material point of view: fully integrated communities were granted immunities more easily, and it would be more opportune for potential benefactors to associate with them, as this would not only net them saintly protection provided by the monastery, but also reveal them as supporters of the imperial court.

It was the insistence on the establishment of such a system which turned the Carolingian empire into an "imagined community", an ideological construct writ large, with all the dues and obligations that came with it.[99] As presented in courtly sources from the later 8th and 9th centuries, the Christianization of the empire had developed to the point that it was difficult for monasteries to rely on their status as "Christian" institutions *par excellence*. Everybody would be part of the same system, and answerable to God in the end. Carolingian monasteries were not separate from the world around them, and came to be seen as the sacred foundations of the *ecclesia*. As a contemporary observer

---

96   Werner, "*Hludovicus Augustus*", 101–02.

97   *Admonitio ad Omnes Regni Ordines* 3, ed. Boretius, p. 303; Guillot, "Une *ordinatio* méconnue", as well as Hannig, *Consensus Fidelium*, 269.

98   Alberi, "*Imperium christianum*"; Van Espelo, "Testimony".

99   Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 5–7.

reminded the monks of the empire: "if the dwelling of one person is properly called a monastery [...] we must ask why the dwelling of many persons established in one place is also called a monastery, unless perhaps [...] it is because there is *one faith, one baptism, one heart and one soul* [Eph 4:5] in all monks who are living good and upright lives, just as there was earlier in the religion of those who believed rightly and lived good lives".[100] Carolingian monks strove to re-establish this "earlier religion"—starting with themselves, then within their own communities, and finally, in the world. To remain Christian communities in a Christian empire, these monastic communities could not afford to persist in their isolation. Instead, monasteries had to be the very best the *ecclesia* had to offer, and it did not matter who taught them as long as the teaching was sound.[101] To retain their status as enclaves of learning, they had to allow some people to transcend their self-imposed boundaries and remind them of the importance of their mission.[102] And if the emperor himself were not able to do this, then who would?

This offers an alternative to the strategies of distinction outlined in the other papers in this section of the volume. Compared to those cases, the Carolingian monasteries as presented in the chosen narratives were less concerned with marking boundaries using "learning" as a category. For them it was a tool to demonstrate how they, as a community, were integrated into a framework that expected them to put all their knowledge at the service of the *ecclesia*. They were not presented as vehicles for the more individualized education of (and by) venerable masters exclusively, as seems to have been the case for medieval Tibet, and neither was the uncorrupted teaching as passed on through an intellectual genealogy of abbots a *conditio sine qua non* for the consolidation of a communal identity.[103] The monasteries in the Carolingian *ecclesia* were not strictly defined according to their heritage or the provenance of their members, as with the South Arabian *hijras* inhabited by the *ashraf* for example, or the *Schottenklöster* in high medieval Central Europe—Notker's description of the two monks as being Irish notwithstanding.[104] Most importantly, the communal identity of these monasteries did not contradict the

---

100   Smaragdus, *Expositio regulae Sancti Benedicti* 3, trans. Barry, p. 154.

101   Cf. Bullough, "Kingdom of Heaven".

102   De Jong, "*Sacrum Palatium*", 1252–55.

103   See the contributions by Hugon, "Religious and Intellectual Communities", and Fermer, "Among Teachers" in this volume.

104   See the contributions by Hovden, "Competing Visions" (on the Yemeni *hijra*) and Ó Riain, "*Schottenklöster* in the World" (on the phenomenon of *Schottenklöster*), in this volume.

mores of the larger social whole within which they functioned.[105] Their exemplary function and the way in which they interacted with the world around them were not institutionalized, but represented the community's willingness to be exemplary. The monks that produced these narratives were aware of their role in the great Carolingian ecclesiastical *correctio*. They accepted that learning was not a strictly self-perpetuating endeavour, and they applauded initiatives from their rulers to enhance their qualities— and *mutatis mutandis*, of all monasteries in the empire.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Admonitio ad Omnes Regni Ordines, ed. Alfred Boretius, Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH) Capitularia regum Francorum 1 (Hanover, 1883), pp. 303–07.

Ardo, *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, ed. and trans. Walter Kettemann (Duisburg, 2001), pp. 139–223; trans. Alan Cabaniss (Elms Court, 1979).

Augustinus, *De Disciplina Christiana*, ed. Roel Vander Plaetse, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 46 (Turnhout, 1969); trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park NY, 1995).

Candidus, *Vita Aegil abbatis Fuldensis*, ed. Gereon Becht-Jördens (Marburg, 1994).

Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmen in Honorem Hludovici Augusti*, ed. and trans. Edmund Faral (Paris, 1932), pp. 2–200; trans. Thomas Noble (Philadelphia, 2009), pp. 127–85.

Frotharius, *Epistola*e, ed. Karl Hampe, MGH Epistolae 5, 1 (Berlin, 1898), pp. 275–98.

Gesta Abbatum Fontanellensium, ed. Pascal Pradié (Paris, 1999).

Institutio Canonicorum, ed. and trans. Jerome Bertram (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 96–131.

Karolus III, *Diploma*38, ed. Paul Fridolin Kehr, MGH Diplomata Karoli III, (Berlin 1937).

Notitia de Servitio Monasteriorum, ed. Petrus Becker (Siegburg, 1963), pp. 483–99.

Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, ed. and trans. Hans Haefele, MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum N.S. 12 (Berlin, 1980); trans. Thomas Noble (Philadelphia, 2009), pp. 59–118.

Regula Benedicti, ed. Clemens Lashofer et al. (Göttweig, 1992).

Smaragdus, *Diadema Monachorum*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris, 1853), cols. 593–690.

Smaragdus, *Expositio regulae Sancti Benedicti*, ed. Alfred Spannagel and Pius Engelbert (Siegburg, 1974), pp. 3–337; trans. David Barry (Kalamazoo, 2007).

---

105   As opposed, for example, to the *hijra* of the Mutarrifyya Zaydis, the existence of which clashed with the established economic, political and religious powers in the region: see Hovden, "Competing Visions".

Secondary Literature

Stuart Airlie, "'For it is written in the Law': Ansegis and the writing of Carolingian royal authority", in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds. Stephen Baxter, Catherine E. Karkov, Janet L. Nelson, and David Pelteret, Studies in Early Medieval Britain (Aldershot, 2009), 219–35.

Mary Alberi, "The evolution of Alcuin's concept of the *Imperium christianum*", in *The Community, the Family and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Joyce Hill, International Medieval Research (Turnhout, 1998), 3–17.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York, 1983).

Arnold Angenendt "Karl der Große als *rex* und *sacerdos*", in *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794: Kristallisationspunkt karolingischer Kultur. Akten zweier Symposien (vom 23. bis 27. Februar und vom 13. bis 15. Oktober 1994) anläßlich der 1200-Jahrfeier der Stadt Frankfurt am Main*, ed. Rainer Berndt, Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelrheinischen Kirchengeschichte 80 (Mainz, 1997), 255–78.

Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment*, (Cambridge 2012).

Julia S. Barrow, "Ideas and applications of reform", in *The Cambridge History of Christianity 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600–1100*, eds. Thomas F.X. Noble and Julia M.H. Smith (Cambridge, 2008), 345–62.

Shane Bobrycki, "Nigellus, Ausulus: self-promotion, self-suppression and Carolingian ideology in the poetry of Ermold", in *Ego Trouble: Authors and their Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Richard Corradini, Matthew Gillis, Rosamond McKitterick and Irene van Renswoude, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 15 (Vienna, 2010), 161–73.

Courtney Booker, "A new prologue of Walafrid Strabo", *Viator* 36 (2005), 83–105.

Mirko Breitenstein, "Der Traktat 'Vom inneren Haus': Verantwortung als Ziel der Gewissensbildung", in *Innovation in Klöstern und Orden des Hohen Mittelalters: Aspekte und Pragmatik eines Begriffs*, ed. Mirko Breitenstein, Vita Regularis 48 (Berlin, 2012), 263–92.

Giles Brown, "Introduction: the Carolingian Renaissance", in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1994).

Donald Bullough, "Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven: liturgy, theology and the Carolingian Age", in *Carolingian Essays: Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in Early Christian Studies*, ed. Uta-Renate Blumenthal (Washington DC, 1983), 1–69.

Donald Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation*, Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 16, (Leiden 2002).

Martin A. Claussen, "Benedict of Aniane as teacher", *Discovery and distinction in the early Middle Ages: studies in honor of John J. Contreni*, eds. Cullen J. Chandler and Steven A. Stofferahn (Kalamazoo, 2013), 73–87.

Vincent Cornell, ed., *Voices of Islam* (Westport CT, 2007).

Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks, (Cambridge 2011).

Mayke de Jong, "Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer", in *The New Cambridge Medieval History II: c. 700—c. 900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), 622–53.

Mayke de Jong, "Charlemagne's Church", in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester, 2005), 103–36.

Mayke de Jong, "Internal cloisters: the case of Ekkehard's *Casus sancti Galli*", in *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, eds. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 1 (Vienna, 2000), 209–21.

Mayke de Jong, "*Sacrum palatium et ecclesia*: L'autorité religieuse royale sous les Carolingiens (790–840)", *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58 (2003), 1243–69.

Mayke de Jong, "The state of the church: *ecclesia* and early medieval state formation", in *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat: europäische Perspektiven*, eds. Walter Pohl and Veronika Wieser, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 16 (Vienna, 2009), 241–54.

Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814–840*, (Cambridge 2009).

Adalbert De Vogüé, "Structure et gouvernement de la communauté monastique chez Saint Benoît et autour de lui", in *Atti del 7° Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 1982), 563–98.

Philippe Depreux, "La pietas comme principe de gouvernement d'après le Poème sur Louis le Pieux d'Ermold le Noir", in *The Community, the Family and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, eds. Joyce Hill and Mary Swan (Turnhout, 1998), 201–25.

Philippe Depreux, "Hiérarchie et ordre au sein du palais: l'accès au prince", in *Hiérarchie et Stratification Sociale dans l'Occident Médiéval 400–1100*, eds. Dominique Iogna-Prat, François Bougard and Régine Le Jan, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 6 (Turnhout, 2008), 305–24.

Albrecht Diem, "Inventing the Holy Rule: some observations on the history of monastic normative observance in the Early Medieval West", in *Western Monasticism ante litteram: The Space of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Hendrik W. Dey and Elizabeth Fentress, Disciplina Monastica 7 (Turnhout, 2011), 53–84.

Albrecht Diem, "The gender of the religious: wo/men and the invention of monasticism", in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, eds. Judith M. Bennet and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford, 2013), 432–47.

Alain Dierkens, "*Carolus monasteriorum multorum eversor et ecclesiasticarum pecuniarum in usus proprios commutator*? Notes sur la politique monastique du maire

du palais Charles Martel", in *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, ed. Jörg Jarnut, Beihefte der Francia 37 (Sigmaringen, 1994), 277–94.

Maximilian Diesenberger, "Bausteine der Erinnerung: Schrift und Überrest in der *Vita Sequani*", in *Vom Nutzen des Schreibens: Soziales Gedächtnis, Herrschaft und Besitz im Mittelalter*, eds. Walter Pohl and Paul Herold, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 6 (Vienna, 2002), 39–66.

Jacques Dubois and Jean-Loup Lemaitre, *Sources et Méthodes de l'Hagiographie Médiévale*, (Paris 1993).

Bernard Faure, *Visions of Power: Imagining Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Princeton, 1996).

Heinrich Fichtenau, *Das karolingische Imperium: Soziale und geistige Problematik eines Grossreiches*, (Zürich 1949).

Johannes Fried, "Der karolingische Herrschaftsverband im 9. Jahrhundert zwischen 'Kirche' und 'Königshaus'", *Historische Zeitschrift* 235 (1982) 1–43.

David Ganz, "Humour as history in Notker's *Gesta Karoli Magni*", in *Monks, Nuns and Friars in Medieval Society*, eds. Edward B. King, Jacqueline T. Schaefer and William B. Wadley, Sewanee Medieval Studies 4, (Sewanee, 1989), 171–83.

David Ganz, "Conclusion: Visions of Carolingian education—past, present, and future", in *The Gentle Voices of Teachers: Aspects of Learning in the Carolingian Age*, ed. Richard E. Sullivan (Columbus OH, 1995), 261–83.

Ildar H. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World (c. 751–877)*, Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages 16 (Leiden, 2008).

Dieter Geuenich, "Kritische Anmerkungen zur sogenannten 'anianischen Reform'", in *Mönchtum—Kirche—Herrschaft 750–1000: Josef Semmler zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Dieter R. Bauer, Rudolf Hiestand, Brigitte Kasten and Sönke Lorenz (Sigmaringen, 1998), 99–112.

Dieter Geuenich, "Mönche und Konvent von St. Gallen in der Karolingerzeit", *Alemannisches Jahrbuch* (2003), 39–62.

Hans-Werner Goetz, *Strukturen der spätkarolingischen Epoche im Spiegel der Vorstellungen eines zeitgenössischen Mönchs: Eine Interpretation der Gesta Karoli Notkers von St. Gallen* (Bonn, 1981).

Eric J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German (817–876)* (Ithaca NY, 2006).

Martin Gravel, *Distances, Rencontres, Communications: Realiser l'Empire sous Charlemagne et Louis le Pieux*, (Turnhout 2012).

Olivier Guillot, "Une *ordinatio* méconnue: le capitulaire de 823–825", in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, eds. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1990), 455–86.

Lars Hageneier, *Jenseits der Topik: Die karolingische Herrscherbiographie*, (Husum 2004).

Kassius Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny: Studien zu den monastischen Lebensformen und Gegensätzen im Hochmittelalter*, Studia Anselmiana 22–25 (Rome, 1950–51).

Jürgen Hannig, *Consensus fidelium: Frühfeudale Interpretationen des Verhältnisses von Königtum und Adel am Beispiel des Frankenreiches*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 27 (Stuttgart 1982).

Yitzhak Hen, "The Annals of Metz and the Merovingian Past", in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), 175–90.

M.M. Hildebrandt, *The External School in Carolingian Society*, Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 1, (Leiden 1992).

Howe, "The Hagiography of Saint-Wandrille (Fontenelle) (Province of Haute-Normandie)", in *L'Hagiographie du Haut Moyen Age en Gaule du Nord: Manuscrits, Textes et Centres de Production*, ed. Martin Heinzelmann, Beihefte der Francia 52 (Stuttgart, 2001), 127–92.

Walter Kettemann, *Subsidia Anianensia*: *Überlieferungs- und textgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Witiza-Benedikts, seines Klosters Aniane und zur sogenannten "anianischen Reform"*, (Duisburg 2000).

Theo Kölzer, *Kaiser Ludwig der Fromme (814–840) im Spiegel seiner Urkunden* (Paderborn, 2005).

Rutger Kramer, "Justified & ancient: Bishops and the Bible in the *Relatio Compendiensis*", in *Politische Theologie und Geschichte unter Ludwig dem Frommen/Histoire et Théologie Politiques sous Louis le Pieux*, eds. Sören Kaschke and Martin Gravel, Relectio: Karolingische Perspektiven—Perspectives Carolingiennes—Carolingian Perspectives 2 (Ostfildern, forthcoming).

Rutger Kramer, "'…ut normam salutiferam cunctis ostenderet': représentations de l'autorité impériale dans la *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* et la *Vita Adalhardi*", in *Normes et Hagiographie dans l'Occident Chrétien (Ve–XVIe siècles): Actes du Colloque International de Lyon, 4–6 Octobre 2010*, eds. Marie-Céline Isaïa and Thomas Granier, Hagiologia 9 (Turnhout, 2014), 101–18.

Anne Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800–1229*, (Ithaca, NY 2013).

Christina Lutter, "Affektives Lernen im höfischen und monastischen Gebrauch von *exempla*", in *Funktionsräume, Wahrnehmungsräume, Gefühlsräume: mittelalterliche Lebensformen zwischen Kloster und Hof*, ed. Christina Lutter, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 59 (Vienna, 2011), 121–44.

Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire,* Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Series 4 vol. 57 (Cambridge, 2003).

Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power Volume 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760*, (Cambridge 1986).

Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms 789–895*, (London 1977).

Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, (Cambridge 2008).

Rosamond McKitterick, "A king on the move: the place of an itinerant court in Charlemagne's government", in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective*, eds. Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan and Metin Kunt, Rulers & Elites 1 (Leiden, 2011), 145–69.

Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, "The invention of saintliness: texts and contexts", in *The Invention of Saintliness*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture 2 (London, 2002), 3–24.

Janet L. Nelson, "Kingship and Empire", in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought: c. 350–c. 1450*, ed. James Henderson Burns (Cambridge, 1988), 211–51.

Janet L. Nelson, "The last years of Louis the Pious", in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, eds. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1990), 147–60.

Janet L. Nelson, "La cour impériale de Charlemagne", in *La Royauté et les Élites dans l'Europe Carolingienne*, ed. Régine le Jan, (Lille, 1998), 177–91.

Janet L. Nelson, "Aachen as a place of power", in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Mayke de Jong, Frans Theuws and Carine van Rhijn, Transformation of the Roman World 6 (Leiden, 2001), 217–41.

Thomas F.X. Noble, "The monastic ideal as a model for empire", *Revue Bénédictine* 86 (1976), 235–50.

Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, "Images of Church and State: From Sulpicius Severus to Notker Balbulus", *The Journal of Medieval Latin* (1994), 25–38.

Walter Pohl, "History in fragments: Montecassino's politics of memory", *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001), 343–74.

Janneke Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda, c.744–c.900* (Cambridge, 2012).

Muhammad Mahmoud Rabi', *The Political Theory of Ibn Khaldun* (Leiden, 1967).

Timothy Reuter, "'Kirchenreform' und 'Kirchenpolitik' im Zeitalter Karl Martells: Begriffe und Wirklichkeit", in *Karl Martell in seiner Zeit*, ed. Jörg Jarnut, Beihefte der Francia 37 (Sigmaringen, 1994), 34–59.

Anton Scharer, "Charlemagne's Daughters", in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds. Stephen Baxter, Catherine Karkov, Janet L. Nelson and David Pelteret, (Farnham, 2009), 269–82.

Percy Ernst Schramm, "Karl der Grosse: Denkart und Grundauffassungen - Die von ihm bewirkte Correctio ("Renaissance"). *Historische Zeitschrift* 198/2 (1964), 306–345.

Josef Semmler, "Studien zum Supplex Libellus und zur anianischen Reform in Fulda", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 69 (1958), 268–97.

Josef Semmler, "Pippin III. und die fränkischen Klöster", *Francia* 3 (1975), 88–146.

Josef Semmler, "*Iussit...princeps renovare...praecepta*: zur verfassungsrechtlichen Einordnung der Hochstifte und Abteien in die Karolingische Reichskirche", in *Consuetudines monasticae: Festgabe für Kassius Hallinger*, eds. Joachim F. Angerer and Josef Lenzenweger, Studia Anselmiana 85 (Rome, 1982), 97–124.

Josef Semmler, "Benedictus II: una regula—una consuetudo", in *Benedictine Culture 750–1050*, eds. Willem Lourdaux and Daniel Verhelst, Mediaevalia Lovaniensia 1 Studia 11 (Leuven, 1983), 1–49.

Josef Semmler, "Benediktinische Reform und kaiserliches Privileg: Die Klöster im Umkreis Benedikts von Aniane", in *Società, Istituzioni, Spiritualità: Studi in onore di Cinzio Violante*, 2 vols., Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo: Collectanea 1, (Spoleto, 1994), 1:787–832.

Theodor Siegrist, *Herrscherbild und Weltsicht bei Notker Balbulus: Untersuchungen zu den Gesta Karoli*, (Zürich 1963).

Julia M.H. Smith, "*Aedificatio sancti loci*: the making of a ninth-century holy place", in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Mayke de Jong, Frans Theuws and Carine van Rhijn, Transformation of the Roman World 6 (Leiden, 2001), 361–96.

Julia M.H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History 500–1000*, (Oxford 2005).

Michel Sot, *Gesta Episcoporum, Gesta Abbatum*, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental 37, (Turnhout 1981).

Sita Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens im Früh- und Hochmittelalter: Autorität, Wissenskonzepte und Netzwerke von Gelehrten*, (Cologne 2011).

Edmund E. Stengel, "Die Immunitätsurkunde Ludwigs des Frommen für Kloster Inden (Kornelimünster)", *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 29 (1904), 375–93.

Rachel Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Series 4 vol. 81 (Cambridge, 2012).

Claire Tignolet, "Jeux poétiques à la cour de Charlemagne: compétition et intégration", in *Agon: La Competition Ve–XIIe Siècle*, eds. François Bougard, Régine Le Jan and Thomas Lienhard, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 17 (Turnhout, 2012), 221–34.

Dorine van Espelo, "A testimony of Carolingian rule? The Codex epistolaris carolinus, its historical context, and the meaning of imperium", *Early Medieval Europe* 21. 3 (2013), 254–82.

Carine van Rhijn, "Priests and the Carolingian reforms: the bottlenecks of local *correctio*", in *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Richard Corradini, Rob Meens, Christina Pössel and Philip Shaw, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 13 (Vienna, 2006), 219–38.

Steven Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900–1100*, (Ithaca NY 2013).

Jean Verdon, "Recherches sur la chasse en Occident durant le haut moyen âge", *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 56 (1978), 805–29.

Heinrich Wagner, "Zur *Notitia de servitio monasteriorum* von 819", *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 55 (1999), 417–38.

Ernst Walter, *Opus Geminum: Untersuchungen zu einem Formtyp in der mittellateinischen Literatur*, (Erlangen 1973).

Karl-Ferdinand Werner, "*Hludovicus Augustus*: Gouverner l'empire chrétien—Idées et réalités", in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)*, eds. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1990), 3–123.

Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, (London 2009).

Bernhard Zeller, "Karolingisches Imperium und regionales Urkundenwesen am Beispiel Sankt Gallens", in *Von Stadtstaaten und Imperien: Kleinterritorien und Großreiche im historischen Vergleich—Bericht des 24. Österreichischen Historikertages, Innsbruck, 20–23. September 2005*, eds. Christoph Haidacher and Richard Schober (Innsbruck, 2006), 65–72.

Alfons Zettler, "St. Gallen als Bischofs- und Königskloster", *Alemanisches Jahrbuch* (2003), 23–28.

Competing Visions of Welfare in the Zaydi Community of Medieval South Arabia

Eirik Hovden

Introduction

This chapter addresses ways in which followers of the Zaydi Islamic sect in the highlands of early medieval Yemen (c. AD 900–1200) invoked and engaged in visions of welfare for their community. The visions of community were subject to strong tensions from various actors, and this chapter uses disagreements over "welfare" and the religious alms tax (*zakāt*) as lenses through which to study this dynamic situation of competing visions of spiritual community.

Although it has rarely been attempted to compare the phenomenon of *hijra*s with European and Tibetan monasteries or similar institutions of learning in the medieval period,[1] it seems clear that the study of *hijra*s in Yemen and their inhabitants and their visions of community will benefit enormously from comparison. Comparing our terms and concepts against contrasting cases and theories allows us to achieve a better analytical distance to our study object. The concept of the *hijra* was central for Muslim visions of community, based on its reference to the act of the Prophet when he emigrated away from unjust rule and set up his own ideal Islamic community.[2] More specifically, in medieval Zaydi Yemen, the *hijra* was at first an ideal and imagined "enclave" in which ideal religious life could be upheld and practised, including core activities such as transmission of learning, however, over the period under scrutiny, we also see the development of *hijra*s into institutions arguably comparable to monasteries and *gompa*s, a transition described by the historian and Islamologist Wilferd Madelung.[3] This development will be discussed in this chapter, with a special focus on tensions and competing visions within the Zaydi community, especially related to welfare.

---

1 For such a comparison, see Kennedy, "The Ribāṭ in the Early Islamic World". The research for this article was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): F42 Visions of Community.

2 Montgomery, "Hidjra"; Madelung, "Has the Hijra Come to an End?".

3 Madelung, "The Origins".

Instead of focusing broadly on all aspects of *hijra*s as "enclaves of learning", this chapter will focus on the role of "welfare" in visions of community invoked and contested by their members. One of the forms of welfare specifically scrutinized is the ideals, rules and practices related to the collection and distribution of the obligatory religious tithe called *zakāt,*[4] but also other forms of welfare will be looked at. The word *ṣalāḥ* means "good", "proper" and "welfare" and recurs frequently in the sources from the period. The related word maṣlaḥa and its plural, *maṣāliḥ*, can refer to the "interests of Islam" or "the common good". However, these two words are only some among many terms conveying meanings related to "welfare". Welfare can also be an etic, analytical concept that we can look for in the sources, also expressed through symbols and practices. "Welfare" may relate to sharing of food, clothing, housing, scholarships for students, paid positions for teachers etc., but it can also be the "welfare of the wider Muslim community". The principle of *maṣlaḥa* (utility) and *maṣlaḥa ʿāmma* (common good, public interest) are well-known Islamic concepts, where the "Muslim community" is the ultimate frame of reference.[5] This can also lead to notions of public order, government and rule of law,[6] however this would be too large an expansion to be useful for an analysis.

In this chapter, welfare, as an analytical tool in studying visions of community is deliberately kept open to ensure a dynamic and explorative reading of the sources, but the focus is kept on the terms *ṣalāḥ* and *maṣlaḥa.* Through three cases we will try to see how members of "enclaves of learning" sought to organize the collection and distribution of wealth in a way that strengthened the enclave and the wider community they were part of and who they saw as included in their community and who were to be excluded. As we shall see, there were several competing visions on how, for example, religiously

---

4   *Zakāt* is one of the five pillars of Islam and thus a most central religious obligation. In medieval Zaydi Yemen, *zakāt* generally meant paying ten per cent of normal agricultural output to one's religious authorities. *Zakāt* law is complicated and some simplifications are made here for clarity of argument. See Zysow, "Zakāt"; Madelung, "Land Ownership and Land Tax".

5   Zysow separates the notion of *maṣlaḥa* into two: the philosophical principle of utility on the one hand, and the common good on the other, both being powerful arguments in Islamic law. Zysow, "Maṣlaḥa". For discussions of *maṣlaḥa* in medieval Zaydi law, see Hovden, "Flowers", Chapter 8: "Knowledge and Utility; Conclusions", 498–505. For an interesting study of related phenomena in the present, see Salvatore and LeVine, "Socio-Religious Movements", 29–56.

6   There are several academic works analysing such topics in Islamic literature or in "Islamic thought", a prominent example being *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* by Michael Cook. He also has a chapter on Zaydis, including medieval Zaydism. Cook, *Commanding Right.* For medieval Zaydism see, ibid. 227–47, and Crone, *God's rule*, 99–109.

legitimated taxes such as *zakāt* were to be collected and spent, and for which purposes. The visions invoked had often clear legal and economic consequences for those involved, and these visions were therefore also constantly contested and opposed. It is important to point out that welfare is more than just "economy" or "*zakāt*-law", words which may sound too disconnected from notions of community, spirituality, morality, and piety. The use of "welfare" as an analytical tool is an attempt to connect the economic and the religious/ spiritual level of our analysis.

The *hijra* is at the present an important institution in the highlands of Yemen. It is an enclave, usually a village, situated in an otherwise tribal context enjoying protection agreements with the surrounding tribes.[7] The inhabitants of the *hijra* have a special religiously oriented identity and they engage in religious and scholarly activities. Usually, the inhabitants claim to be direct descendants from the Prophet in the male line, so-called *sāda* (sing. *sayyid*). These were mainly called *ʿAlid*s, or especially *ashrāf* (sing. *sharīf*) in the medieval period. This latter term will be used in this chapter. Exceptions to these *ashrāf*-dominated *hijra*s were the Muṭarrifī *hijra*s in the medieval period, which we will come back to shortly below.[8] Patrilineal genealogy (*nasab*) was and still is important in identity and self-definition for the *ashrāf* vis-a-vis the local tribal population, and they do not (ideally) intermarry with members of local tribes or low-status groups.[9] At certain times in history, the *hijra*s were important administrative centres and centres of support for the Zaydi imams (a combined religious and political leader for the Muslim community according to Zaydi doctrines). Yet for most of history *hijra*s were rather semi-independent from any effective state-like polities and only loosely interconnected with each other, often through kinship ties and intellectual networks. The inhabitants were mainly sedentary farmers owning land in and around the *hijra*, thus not differing entirely from the surrounding local tribal population in terms of economic activities. A few individuals were travelling students and scholars specializing in Islamic learning. Some *hijra*s were famous religious schools or centres, but few remained so for a longer period of time.

---

7 Tribes in Yemen are mainly sedentary farmers and tribal territory is a geographically defined area. There is a wide variation in the phenomenon of *hijra* in Yemen, which we cannot deal with here. For the most important historical overview from the Zaydi highlands, see Dresch, *Tribes*, 136–83. For the medieval period see Madelung, "Origins".

8 In the Qāsimi period (starting ca. 1650) and afterwards, we also see *hijra*s with non-sayyid, so-called *Quḍāh* population, thus non-*ashrāf hijra*s were certainly not endemic only to the medieval period.

9 In recent times we know that *sāda* may marry tribal women (hypogamy), but not the other way around.

The phenomenon of *hijra*s in the highlands of Yemen sees much variation, an important topic, which cannot be fully treated in this chapter.

This chapter is only about the early medieval period (c. AD 900–1200) and thus the period of formation of both Zaydism and the *hijra*s in Yemen. It is not about the late medieval period (c. 1300–1550) or the subsequent first Ottoman or Qasimi periods, where the development of the institution of *hijra*s reached a more stable phase. Although the institution of *hijra* at a first glance shows remarkable stability over time, the political and religious context was quite unique in the early medieval period. For example, this formative and dynamic era saw the growth and decline of a strong local, popular, personal-merit/piety-oriented (and finally, "heretical") variant of Zaydism, the so-called Muṭarrifiyya, including its final repression. The Zaydis were also in fierce conflict with local political dynasties, which had Isma'ili or Sunni leanings and creeds and in tension with local, tribal shaykhs and lords who constantly shifted religious affiliation according to their needs—being Sunni one day, Zaydi the other and Isma'ili next year. It was in this highly heterogeneous political landscape that the *hijra*s appeared as institutions providing frames for engagement in religious learning and practice in the rural areas of the highlands of Yemen. In the following, we will chronologically look more closely at three distinct cases, roughly from three subsequent centuries, starting from c. AD 900. The cases show how different visions of community can be seen within the Zaydi sect, partly related to the formation and the development of the institution of the *hijra*. As a final note on the concept of *hijra* it must also be pointed out that the term itself may have merged with the local tribal (and pre-Islamic) concept of *hajar*, meaning "town" or "sanctuary". In modern usage the term *tahjīr* means to give the status of sanctuary to a place, a person or a family. The term itself was thus not only an Islamic innovation introduced to Yemen in the early medieval period; the Islamic and the tribal meanings are partly overlapping.[10]

The 10th Century AD

In AD 897, Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn settled with his family and a few followers at al-Ghayl[11] near the (old) town of Sa'da. He came from a "noble" (*ashrāf*) family from near Medina, meaning that he belonged to the direct descendants of the Prophet. His family upheld a Zaydi (Shi'a-related) version of Islam, claiming that the Abbasids were not the rightful rulers of the *umma*, but rather, that the

---

10   This is clarified and discussed by Puin, "The Yemeni *Hijrah* Concept of Tribal Protection", and Serjeant, "Ṣanʿāʾ the protected Hijra".

11   The location of today's town of Sa'da.

leadership of the Muslim community should have stayed within the direct male descendants of the (daughter of the) Prophet, the so-called *ahl al-bayt* or *ashrāf*. He took the imamic title "al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq" (hereafter al-Hādī).[12]

AD 897 marks the beginning of Zaydism in Yemen. For the rural tribal areas in the highlands, this time is not only a phase where one can see the seed of Zaydism and its growth through certain networks, but also a new phase of Islamization in general.[13] While that term can mean many different things depending on which phenomenon one aims to look at, I am referring to the use of the Islamic intellectual tradition, and more specifically the use of this tradition by local elites in their own political projects and the use of this tradition in attempts to build new non-tribal polities and visions of community based on Islamic discourse and concepts. In this perspective, Islam was at this time increasingly being used by certain actors in order to create new alliances, new polities, new discourses, and new visions of community. Most of the local contemporary culture in the highlands, at least outside major cities like Sanaa, centred around tribal visions of community—being members of tribes, sharing obligations in protection of common land and common interests, having ties to one's tribe and to other neighbouring tribes and regulating all this with tribal custom. The tribal vision of community offered an egalitarian brotherhood ideal, where all men could be part of a just and proud community—ideally, of course. Some would say there was no need for Islam in this situation.[14]

The new phase of Islamization increasingly seen at the end of the 9th century was characterized by the appearance of certain new forms of charismatic

---

12   For information about al-Hādī and his context see the biography written by his secretary ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī*. For analysis of this period see: Van Arendonk, *De Opkomst*; Gochenour, "The Penetration"; Heiss, "Tribale Selbstorganisation". The *ahl al-bayt* is not entirely the same as the term *ashrāf*, but for the sake of simplicity of argument I will not go into this here. In the beginning of the period described here, we see the term *ʿAlawīs* (*ʿAlids*) being used, but for most of the early medieval period the common term is *ashrāf*. In later periods and today they are called *sāda*, sing. *sayyid*. See Zayd, *Tayyārāt*, 146. See also the comparative analysis by Heiss and Hovden to Heydemann in this volume.

13   See for example Gochenour, "Towards a Sociology of the Islamisation of Yemen", and "The Penetration".

14   This can be seen in the famous intellectual al-Hamdānī's works as treated by Daniel Mahoney in this book. In al-Hamdānī's description of the South Arabian tribal society, although he does not oppose Islam directly, he indirectly describes a society where the Zaydi *ashrāf* and other Islamic sects have no importance.

leaders basing their ideologies exclusively[15] on Islam, claiming to be the inter-preters, executors and representatives of religion. The political momentum that followed some of these charismatic leaders had a large impact on the Yemeni highlands for some short periods, while for most of the time their power was confined to very limited networks and geographically small pock-ets. These religious leaders also had to compete with other religious leaders from the same sect or other sects, and with powerful local tribal lords (*salāṭīn*, *mulūk*). We also almost only get to hear about their success stories, since the sources we have from this time are mainly biographies and chronicles written by their secretaries or court scholars. The timing of these new activities is partly related to the general activities of the (proto-)Shi'a elsewhere in the Islamic world and we certainly see an influx of *ashrāf/sāda/ʿalid* families into South Arabia at this time.

There were several such Shi'a-oriented groups at this time in opposition to the Abbasids in Baghdad, mostly Zaydi or Isma'ili. One of the fundamental doctrines of Zaydism is that in the presence of an unjust ruler, withdrawing from loyalty and "going out" (*khurūj*) and outwardly declaring political opposi-tion is not only allowed, but a religious obligation, and further, that one should follow the righteous leader of the Muslim community, the imam. The imam was to be chosen[16] among the Ahl al-Bayt. To leave unjust and oppressive rule (*ẓulm*) and to follow a rightful imam was called an act of *hijra*, in analogy to the act of the Prophet as he left his home town of Mecca where his own tribe was opposing him, setting up his new base of Islamic rule in Medina with his *hijra* followers (*muhājirūn*) and helpers (*anṣār*) around him. At the time when al-Hādī arrived in Yemen the term *hijra* could thus also refer to the concept of creating a new, righteous religious enclave in an otherwise tribal context char-acterized partly by the lack of religion, and partly by the diffusion of "errone-ous" forms of Islam.

Setting up his new enclave in Sa'da, in the very north of today's Yemen, al-Hādī was still close to his Zaydi/*Ashrāf* network elsewhere in the Hijaz and in other parts of the Abbasid Empire. Yemen consisted of relatively fertile areas where agricultural surplus made taxation profitable for those who could claim political and military power, yet at the same time, he was far enough away from

---

15   Actually, when reading the sources in a less ideological light, we can easily see that these charismatic rulers had to compromise in several values in order to be accepted in the local, tribal community.

16   The theories of *bayʿa*: call of allegiance (*daʿwa*), which should be met with a pledge of loyalty (*bayʿa*). For a detailed history of the developments of these doctrines, see Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm*.

the Abbasid Empire centred on Baghdad. He could utilize the relative lack of centralized rule in Yemen and rather cooperate with certain local tribes and tribal elites. He set up his little "enclave"[17] in tribal territory by invoking protection as a holy man who could perform religious services and mediate in tribal conflicts. His high status of learning was an important part of his self-legitimation. He called himself a Zaydi imam, taking the title al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq, "The guide to the truth", claiming to be the leader of the Muslim community in religion, law, learning and in political matters. In little more than ten years he managed to unify several of the local tribes and to make them pay religious taxes and military duties to him.

Al-Hādī's secretary ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī describes the political career and success of al-Hādī in the biography *Sīrat al-Hādī*.[18] However, he also describes the resistance al-Hādī met from various local tribal leaders and from the competing Isma'ili sect, which had a strong presence in the areas west of Sanaa. Al-Hādī was also joined by fellow *ashrāf* from elsewhere in the Muslim world, and in the end he commanded a substantial network of allies. His ideal vision of community was to introduce and implement an Islamic society based on the canon of Islamic doctrine and law formulated by himself, his Zaydi grandfather al-Qāsim bin Ibrāhīm al-Rassī, and other scholars of the Zaydi tradition. At that time, Islamic law was still under active development, but there was already a vast intellectual tradition that could easily be tapped into, also in doctrinal and legal matters regarding the organization of welfare. With the help of a small group of Islamic scholars and intellectuals, Al-Hādī could therefore set up a vision including a system of religiously sanctioned taxation and redistribution to the local poor and payments to his own followers, which in its ideal form would undermine a tribal society where each tribe or lord ruled their own areas independently. In its not-so-ideal form, the tribal elites did not feel threatened as long as they were allowed to keep their privileges and remain the tie between the imam and the local tribe. Some tribal leaders were obviously satisfied with performing military services in al-Hādī's political project, receiving booty and positions as governors in return. Al-Hādī for his part, was very clear that he did not want to demand more taxes than the Quran and the Sunna (the collected and authorized sayings and deeds of the Prophet) stipulated; he had to appear absolute in his role as a religiously sanctioned leader.[19]

---

17   This is an example where I think "enclave of religion" or "enclave of religious practice" would fit better than "enclave of learning". Cf. Fermer in this volume on the various designations for monasteries in Tibet.

18   ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq*; Van Arendonk, *De Opkomst*.

19   See also: Gochenour, "The Penetration", 84.

It would be too much to go into detail here about al-Hādī's ideals and rules concerning taxation and *zakāt*, however we shall mention a bare minimum: Arabia was theoretically land that submitted voluntarily to Islam, therefore the land remained "private property" (contrary to most other parts of the Islamic world were land belonged to the *umma* and was rented out by the commander of the faithful).[20] Taxation legitimized by Islamic law was therefore limited to a maximum of ten per cent (*'ushr*) of agricultural output.[21] This tax, called *zakāt*, is one of the five pillars of Islam and conveys the notion of "purification". Other terms interchangeably used were *'ushr* (lit. "tithe"), *jibāya, ḥuqūq, wājibāt, amwāl Allāh*, and *kharāj*. There was a lower yearly limit of five *awsaq*[22] or 200 *dirham qifla*[23] of each single type of crop, below which, *zakāt* would not have to be paid. It seems that it was very important for al-Hādī, who was also presenting himself as a learned Islamic scholar of the ultimate level, to show that he knew the details of law and followed it without exception. It was part of his image that when he conquered an area, or offered his government, he claimed that he would abolish the high, uncanonical taxes and only take what is stipulated in the religiously sanctioned Islamic law.

We find al-Hādī's theories rather elaborated in his *fiqh* works (Islamic legal theory), but also in more practical form; for example in a letter to his governors telling how they should behave: they should teach the local population about Islam and administer the collection and spending of taxes.[24] We know little

---

20   This is according to al-Hādī himself. *Al-Aḥkām*, 1:171. It is also a common view of later Zaydi imams. *Kharāj* was something very different in the central Islamic lands where land was owned by the *umma* or the state and rented out for a rent called *kharāj*, in effect, something that could be seen as a normal tax and much higher than 10 per cent.

21   There are many exceptions to this and details in the *zakāt* law, but for sake of clarity of argument, we shall use the 10 per cent estimate here.

22   *Wasaq* is a grain volume measurement according to al-Hādī equal to 60 ṣā', but he does not indicate what this means in the local context in Yemen in value or weight, except that the sum 200 dirham qifla is usually mentioned along with the *niṣāb* in later Zaydi *fiqh* texts. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām*, 1:181. Madelung calls *wasaq* "a camel load". Madelung, "Land Ownership and Land Tax", 190. The *niṣāb* is not supposed to be measured in weight because it is a measure of volume, but if it is converted the weight and value depends on the quality of the grain. Zyzow gives the estimate of ca. 600 kilos of grain. Zysow, "Zakāt".

23   The dirham may be around 3 g. But since the figure of 200 dirham is repeated in several later Zaydi *fiqh* works when the actual value could not be have been stable, it is difficult to see that this exact figure was taken literally. Five *awsaq* of grain was not always worth 200 dirham, as grain price is not stable over time, but the jurists still repeated this ratio, and it is simply taken from the Sunna in direct wording and cannot be changed.

24   Van Arendonk, *De Opkomst*, 113–58. An edition of the letter is given on page 292–94.

about the extent to which this was actually carried out, since the author of our source just re-presents al-Hādī's order to his governors. Of course, we must assume that al-Hādī's network and followers got their share of the resources in the form of positions as army leaders, judges, teachers and governors, and he indeed allowed for this.[25] Contrary to many other Islamic historical contexts,[26] *zakāt* in the view of al-Hādī was not a voluntary act of piety, it was the main bulk of his legitimate tax income and it was to be compulsory for Zaydis. Al-Hādī also explicitly prohibited any other person from collecting and distributing the *zakāt* other than he himself, the Commander of the faithful.[27]

Ideally, the local poor were to receive a quarter of the locally collected *zakāt*[28] (two of the eight recipient categories mentioned in the Quran are the poor; the *fuqarāʾ* and the *masākīn*,[29] thus a quarter), and the governors of the various districts were ordered to keep lists of the local poor. Al-Hādī also stated that if the Muslims (i.e. the *umma*, *the* community) had what they needed, then he would give a half of the *zakāt* income to the poor, or even all of it.[30] However, we know that he quickly had to compromise on his ideal way of

---

25   Al-Hādī said that the governors could divert funds directly from the tax income in order to cover their expenses for eating, drinking, clothing, transport (riding), servants and housing, "according to the norm" (*bi l-maʿrūf*) and the imam's approval. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām*, 1:174.

26   Zysow writes that by the year 1100 it was no longer common for *zakāt* to be organized by the state in the Muslim world. Zysow, "Zakāt". It seems that Zaydi Yemen must have been very different, at least in the views of the Zaydi elites themselves, where *zakāt*-related arguments were at the centre of visions of welfare.

27   Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām*, 1:192. The *zakāt* seems to have a similar status for all the later Yemeni Zaydi imams in the medieval period. While most other Islamic regimes could take land rent, the *zakāt* was the only Islamic tax available to the Zaydi imams in South Arabia.

28   The quarter to be distributed to the poor quoted after the letter itself: Madelung, "Land Ownership and Land Tax", 190–91. Van Arendonk, *De Opkomst*, 125 and 294. Al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī*, 48.

29   The *fuqarāʾ* are those who only have a house, a servant and clothes and the *masākīn* are those in need. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām*, 195.

30   Al-Hādī committed to increase this share to a half or even all of it when the *zakāt* was not needed by community ("the Muslims"!) in the future: "For everything called *ṣadaqa* is to be set aside a quarter for the poor (*masākīn*). If God makes the situation better for the Muslims [in the future] we will set aside a half for the poor. If the Muslims become rich [and do not need it], we will give everything to the poor". Al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat al-Hādī*, 48. Madelung, "Land Ownership and Land Tax", 48.

spending the funds. One of his most prominent students, Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Ṭabarī, asked him directly why he had stopped distributing funds to the local poor, and al-Hādī answered:[31]

> We [I, the Imam] made this [decision] regarding the *zakāt* (*al-aʿshār*): In some cases we distribute it [to the poor] and in some cases not. And in making that decision, we look for the welfare[32] (*ṣalāḥ*) of Islam, if we can identify it and if it becomes clear for us, and if we can know it. Only when Islam and the Muslims get what they need, and our [the imam's] need for this *zakāt*-income diminishes, then can we divide it according to the eight [Quranic] categories of recipients, or, whoever we can find identical to these. However, if the Muslims and Islam are in need of it [the *zakāt*-income], we would bypass them [the local poor], according to what we think and know would be more important (*arjaḥ*) in each specific case.
>
> And that specific case is that the welfare of the community (*al-dār*) cannot be upheld (*lā tuṣlaḥ*) without armies (*juyūsh*) and loyal followers (*anṣār*), horses and men. Community cannot be upheld and kept together (*lā tujtumiʿa*) without funding.
>
> So therefore we have decided (*naẓarnā*) that because in these lands that we are in there are no other [legitimate taxes] than this *zakāt* income, and because of the needs for support of my followers (the *muhājirūn* and the *anṣār*), and also because the needs for defence when facing death and devastation by the help of this insignificant income [which is so low in the first place]. If we had to return these funds to the poor and divide them on the other recipient categories, then the standby soldiers would disappear and the community (*al-jamāʿa*) would disintegrate (*tabaddada*), the *muhājirūn* would dissipate and the Muslims would be degraded, calamity would take place, chaos (*fitna*) would be complete,

---

31 At the end of his career, al-Hādī is accused of using all of the *zakāt* for war. See Madelung, "Land Ownership and Land Tax", 191, 207 n. 8. Madelung refers to van Arendonk 260 (*sic*, 237–38 is correct). Arendonk, *De Opkomst*, 237–38.

32 One could also translate this as "interest", utility, but here the word is *ṣalāḥ* and not *maṣlaḥā* and it is "for" someone; for Islam. "Interest" is close in meaning to "welfare" when the interest is for the good of something/someone, as already mentioned above, referring to Zysow, "The Obligation". "Welfare", just as "good" is a powerful word, not possible to fully capture in a translation, just as "*ṣalāḥ*" is an also self-legitimizing term, and when used in religious discourse it a powerful tool, invoking the totality of religion, and at the same time it is used in a very specific legal argument.

> the land would not be controlled, and none of the believers would see
> welfare (*wa-lam yuṣliḥ aḥad min al-ʿubbād*).[33]

And so al-Hādī goes on, elaborating vividly and in elegant style, partly in
rhyme, about the misfortune that would affect all parts of the Muslim com-
munity if chaos and war is not fought off. Following, he likewise describes how
the community will benefit from wise spending of the taxes: the merchants
can then trade safely and the farmers can again farm and income and prosper-
ity will come back, and, in the end, the poor will also benefit from this decision.
The decision to not divert funds to the poor, but rather to spend them on war
and on government was for the welfare (*ṣalāḥ*) of the community. The reins of
this decision were to be held by the imam himself, and he was to delegate
power to regional governors in a top-down system. Al-Hādī's community is
a community where the imam is at the absolute centre and at the top of
the hierarchy, in this specific argument, because it would be for the best of the
community.

Another of the compromises al-Hādī had to make relates to the concept of
the enclave. He did not demand that his version of Islamic law had to be fully
implemented in all areas, as long as the basics were followed, like prohibiting
extramarital sex, or wine-drinking. However, among his followers, both locals
and of *ashrāf* descent, a much more ideal culture and conduct developed, cre-
ating a strong feeling of a community based on ideals and practices of (Zaydi)
religious purity, in an elitist network centred around the leader. One can imag-
ine the difference between the Zaydi elites and the tribes using different iden-
tity markers and discourses, one Islamic and the other tribal, while the tribal
elites somehow fall in between in certain aspects. Al-Hādī did not mark out
one clearly geographically defined "enclave" with clear borders around it, but
rather established multiple smaller centres, by appointing governors and
scholars to be judges and to teach about Islam and to administer taxes in a
network of nodes in a political and geographical landscape. Al-Hādī himself
travelled around and stayed in these places, like an itinerary emperor of medi-
eval Europe, even though his main base was at al-Ghayl just outside the town
of Saʿda. It is clear that the vision of community that al-Hādī claimed and
invoked contained welfare for the local poor and for other "Islamic" interests,
including the material infrastructure needed for activities related to (Zaydi)
learning. The "enclaves of learning" in this very first century of Zaydism in
Yemen were more like administrative centres where religion and learning also

---

33   Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, *al-Majmūʿa al-Fākhira*, 670–74. Another translation of this text is
      given in Stookey, *Yemen*, 89–90.

had an important place, as the leading members of the sect were both religious scholars and administrators loyal to the same person and project. Al-Hādī's "enclave", *hijra*, in singular, was an ideological ideal of some sort, however, situated and spatially distributed in certain centres chosen because they were already important market towns and situated near towns with important seats of regional elites. These places were not called *hijra*s (in plural) at this time, only later (from c. 1070–1100) were they called so. Rather, at al-Hādī's time, a *hijra* was the act of leaving the lands of an unjust ruler (such as Sunni Abbasid-controlled lands) and following the rightful leader in his quest, joining his community.[34]

These centres were highly dependent on those few *ashrāf* families who remained in Yemen after al-Hādī's death in AD 911 and the following rule of his two sons. Their family dynasty almost collapsed when the last son died in AD 934. The remaining Hādawi family saw much internal strife and in around AD 950, we are talking about only a small handful of Zaydi centres; Sa'da being perhaps the only notable one. These centres were not called *hijra*s at this time, but perhaps we could still see these centres as "enclaves of learning" when we imagine the activities, especially related to learning taking place there.

The 11th Century

The 11th century saw a relatively weak, disunited and unorganized Zaydi movement. The tribal lords were powerful, and from the 1040s[35] a strong Isma'ili charismatic and military leader by the name of ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayḥī took large parts of the highlands starting from the mountains west of Sanaa. Further north, in the areas around al-Ahnūm and near today's Khamir, the descendants of the Imam al-Manṣūr al-Qāsim (al-ʿIyānī)[36] set up an enclave, explicitly called a *hijra*, in the impressive mountain fortress of Shihāra, allying themselves with parts of the Hamdān tribes. This is the first time we see the term *hijra* referring to a specific place rather than an act or an abstract religious concept.[37] One source tells us that this *hijra* had almost 600 houses and 764 pupils in the school there, of which 40 were *ashrāf*.[38] *Zakāt* was still highly

---

34   Madelung, "The Origins".

35   The exact year is debated; see Gochenour, "The Penetration", 310–16.

36   The so-called "Ḥusayniyya" or "Qāsimiyya", "al-Ashrāf al-Qāsimiyyūn".

37   Madelung, "The Origins", 29.

38   Mufarriḥ b. Aḥmad al-Rabaʿī, *Sīrat al-amīrayn*, 196–97. Descriptions of Shihāra is given in ibid., 152–53; Madelung, "Al-Hamdānī's Description of Northern Yemen", 137.

important for the viability of this small polity in securing payments for soldier and followers.

In one biography describing the acts of the leaders around the 1070s[39] we are presented with a critical question: "Is it really legal to take more taxes than the canonical *zakāt?*" The answer is a short treatise justifying taking not only a tenth, but even nine tenths if it was necessary to fight the Isma'ilis.[40] These were times of war and the costs for war (*jihād*) against the Isma'ilis were higher than the income from the normal *zakāt*. The same leaders also explicitly point out that *zakāt* is a religious duty, and if it is not paid, one's prayers will not be accepted by God.[41] Paying *zakāt* was not only showing loyalty to the only true religion and its representatives, it was simply an act of declaring and renewing one's political loyalty. *Zakāt* was in effect just one concept among many used to fund and legitimate warfare, where notions of safety, welfare, and the survival of the community was mixed together in a populist political discourse and blurred, rather than upholding a strict religious/legal definition of *zakāt*. The concept of *jihād* is closely linked to *zakāt* in this period in that both are obligations owed to the imam, legitimized by the need to secure and protect the welfare of the religion and community. To summarize so far: at the end of the 11th century the political elite of the Zaydis was divided into (at least[42]) two regional powers, one represented by the Qāsimī *Ashrāf* in Shihāra and western Hāshid, while Sa'da and its immediate surroundings remained under the control of the Hādawī family, who in this period were at a slightly safer distance from the Isma'ilis, who held the wider Sanaa area. These two Zaydi dynasties were both similar in that they claimed that the central imamic authority should control the "welfare" of the community, although the Hādawīs were quite weak at this time. The Qāsimi *Ashrāf* were perhaps even more extreme in their focus on war, especially if it really is true that they took as much as nine tenths of the harvest from the local farmers and tribes.[43]

The 11th century also saw the start and initial growth of the Muṭarrifiyya, a populist movement focusing on personal piety, the love for God, knowledge

---

39   Al-Rabaʿī, *Sīrat al-amīrayn*, 84.

40   Al-Rabaʿī, *Sīrat al-amīrayn*, 84–85.

41   Al-Rabaʿī, *Sīrat al-amīrayn*, 289.

42   What later became the Banū Ḥamza started their activity in the 11th century, and their power base seems to have been in the eastern Ḥāshid and Bakīl areas.

43   This is legitimated by the al-Sharīf al-Fāḍil according to his secretary Mufarriḥ al-Rabāʿī. Al-Rabaʿī, *Sīrat al-amīrayn*, 84. Later, Musallam al-Laḥjī criticizes the two *Amīr*s for this practice, especially in the lands near the front line such as the areas west of Sanaa. Al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 319.

and worship. The Muṭarrifiyya started a local Zaydi alternative to the imam-centred vision of community.[44] They wanted to establish their own system and to collect and distribute their own taxes, in much smaller face-to-face networks and communities. In addition to Islamic taxes they also encouraged personal generosity and support from wealthy individuals to the other sect members. However, in terms of doctrine, theology, and law, they claimed to be orthodox Zaydis and they called themselves "the Zaydis", (*al-Zaydiyya*). In the beginning they operated in a rather unorganized way seeking patronage from local lords with Zaydi leanings, especially in the Bawn area, which was a borderland between the Isma'ilis in the south and the two smaller Zaydi polities in the north. Later, they were also allowed to partly operate inside nominally Isma'ili territory, probably because of their apolitical profile in the beginning. Thus there were no powerful Zaydi imams who could "discipline" them, and the few imams who tried to claim the imamate needed their support. To conclude so far: the *ashrāf* and the Hādawi and Qāsimi dynasties did not produce strong imams in this period, and a bottom-up movement grew on the basis of the same Zaydi intellectual tradition, namely the Muṭarrifiyya.

In the latter half of this century the Isma'ilis slowly lose their grip, leaving more room for institutionalization of the Muṭarrifi *hijra*s, especially in the areas west of Sanaa, from the Bawn in the north to Banū Shihāb in the south. The capital of the Isma'ilis is moved to Dhū Jibla near Ibb and the Sanaa area was held by the client dynasty called the Hatimids. The areas west of Sanaa where the Muṭarrifiyya could now operate were densely settled rich agricultural areas with several important lords/elite-tribes. We do not know much about how the Muṭarrifiyya balanced their vision of community with the existing tribal/feudal structures, but many of the local elites in these areas are presented as sect members and patrons at the same time. If the Muṭarrifiyya really had collected the full amount of *zakāt*, would they not have become more powerful in politics? The Muṭarrifiyya does not seem to have had ambitions to compete for political authority in a military sense. We simply do not know enough about their internal organization, coordination, and political ambitions, but we do know that they founded several *hijra*s in their core areas in this period.[45]

Much of what we know about the Muṭarrifiyya comes from the historiographical/biographical work[46] by the Muṭarrifi scholar Musallam al-Laḥjī

---

44   An article about the start of the Muṭarrifiyya is being prepared by Johann Heiss and Eirik Hovden.

45   For the Muṭarrifiyya in general, see Zayd, *Tayyārāt*; Madelung, "Muṭarrifiyya".

46   Al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya".

(d. c. 1150). He describes study circles as being common and that towards the end of this century they became increasingly institutionalized. Sometimes they met regularly during the grape harvest (in the season called *kharīf*).[47] Some lived together in small villages, emphasizing prayer and solitude, others in villages where they focused on intellectual interaction. They called these villages or centres for *hijra*s. The Muṭarrifis seem not to have challenged the political authority directly, even though they were of course against Isma'ili overrule in doctrinal and theological matters. The Muṭarrifiyya did much to further spread Zaydism in the highlands west and south of Sanaa, where the Zaydi *ashrāf* previously had little influence.[48]

The vision of community that the Muṭarrifis propagated, as least seen through the eyes of al-Laḥjī, around 1140, was one where love of God was the motivation to share one's wealth and knowledge with other adherents in the sect. Obvious outsiders were the Isma'ilis. But at the time when al-Laḥjī writes the history of the sect he also indirectly attacks the imam-centred vision of Zaydi community and introduces a series of other ideals for welfare management: pious individuals could manage welfare on the lowest possible level without a centralizing structure. A simple example is the biography of a person, probably living at the very end of the 11th century, possibly the beginning of the 12th. At the first glance it is not very impressive compared to the biographies of Zaydi scholars and imams, but underlying is a very different ideal of how *zakāt* could be collected and distributed locally:

> *Al-Ṣalūlī*
> He is ʿAbd Allāh b. —[49] al-ʿAshbī,[50] known as al-Ṣalūlī. He is among the earlier ones described in his generation (*ṭabaqa*). He was among the representatives of good, having qualities like diligence, companionship, polite speech, a humble appearance, love for being useful for the Muslims (*nafʿ al-muslimīn*) and being a supporter of religion (*al-maʿūna fī al-dīn*). ʿUlyān b. Ibrāhīm, *raḥimahu Allāh*, told me: People used to call upon ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣalūlī to collect their *zakāt* and to distribute it within their local community (*wa-tafrīqihā fī ahlihā*), and he [al-Ṣalūlī] used to encourage them in that. He only approved of this [procedure] if every man had submitted his *zakāt* to him.[51] If he saw a poor believer deserving that [charity

---

47   See Al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 30–32.

48   Gochenour, "The Penetration", 200.

49   Open space in the manuscript.

50   Vocalization uncertain.

51   This sentence is not entirely clear.

from the *zakāt*], and he approved of him [being a recipient], then he would give to him and give the rest back to them [the local community]. It is said about him [al-Ṣalūlī], related to this, that he said: "I would prefer that every believer could enjoy from it [the *zakāt*] what God has defined; I fear that people (*al-qawm*) will distribute it [the *zakāt*] to recipients outside the local community (*fī ghayr ahlihā*), among God's enemies. If I should do what you asked me to do, I would have liked to support those and those [specific persons] (*arādtu an anfaʿa hāʾulāʾī wa- hāʾulāʾī*)".[52]

The idea of spending the welfare locally and on local poor where the effect can be easily seen and recognized by the givers is indeed a powerful one. The Muṭarrifis did not oppose al-Hādī's theories on the imamate; they themselves claimed to be orthodox Zaydis following al-Hādī. But they opposed contemporary individual imam-pretenders, saying that they did not have enough personal quality (*faḍl*) to be accepted as imams, since the imam should be the best of the believers in his time. And following al-Hādī's rules, if there is no imam present, the *zakāt* is still an obligation and should still be collected and distributed locally.[53] There is no space here to present and analyse similar narratives written by al-Laḥjī, but there are many that emphasize the ideal of sharing meals, hosting fellow sect members, and behaving generously, in addition to mentions of local usage of the *zakāt* (and *khums*).[54] For al-Laḥjī, the "community" is made up of pious individuals ("Muslims" and "Zaydis") who come together and share according to the ideals of Islam, partly specified and codified by Zaydi-Hādawi Islamic law. Documenting personal quality (*faḍl*) of sect members is important for him, be they of high or low status. War and political hegemony are not explicitly given priority, although stated implicitly only; the Zaydi community could be built locally without an imam.

The 12th Century

This is the century when the Muṭarrifiyya became more institutionalized. Before AD 1100 they existed in more loosely organized networks with only a few important permanent places, like the school Muṭarrif b. Shihāb established in

---

52 Al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 248. It is difficult to date the content of this story, but it seems like it must have been around 1100, at least some time before al-Laḥjī himself.

53 Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām*, 1:201.

54 For similar reflections on the importance of *khums*, see for example al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 6.

Ṣināʿ outside Sanaa, and the town of Madar 45 km north of Sanaa, where many adherents lived. Some time around AD 1100, Hijrat Waqash was established 25 km south-west of Sanaa. Several other *hijra*s were also established, although few of them remained stable institutions independent of the founding teacher living there. Wilferd Madelung and David Thomas Gochenour provide lists of these *hijra*s, which depending on the definition, give something like 20 *hijra*s.[55] The areas in the north were still more or less under control of the Hādawi and Qāsimi *ashrāf*, but from the Bawn southwards, south through al-Maṣāniʿ and Ḥaḍūr, to Banū Shihāb and even further south, the Muṭarrifiyya grew in strength and towards the end of the century they became a political factor in these territories. What was special about the largest of these *hijra*s, such as Waqash, was that they were institutions of their own, arguably calling for comparison with European or Tibetan monasteries. Earlier, transmission of learning had taken place in someone's private reception room or in various public places. Now the *hijra*s became stable meeting places where travelling students and teachers could stay. The sources do not say much about how these *hijra*s differed from normal villages and to what extent "normal" inhabitants lived there as well. Waqash became the main centre for the Muṭarrifiyya and is perhaps therefore not representative of *hijra*s in general. However, it must have been well known and perhaps been seen as some sort of ideal for other *hijra*s. In one of the biographies of al-Laḥjī we can read about the role that a man by the name of Ibn Rifād (d. 1120)[56] had in the management of the welfare in Hijrat Waqash:

> And when he [Ibn Rifād] moved to Waqash, he became one of its most important leaders there. He was in charge of [the services for] guests (*al-ḍayf*) and strangers (*al-gharīb*) and those who had needs (*dhawī al-ḥāja*) and [he had the role of] being an inspector (*al-naẓar*) in matters regarding [the hosting of] travelling representatives (*wāfid*) and students of the Islamic sciences (*mutaʿallimīn*) and the overseeing of the welfare (*ṣalāḥ*) of its [*hijrat waqash*'s] mosques and its ritual baths (*maṭāhir*) and its reception rooms (*majālis*) and other welfare[57] related to Islam there (*wa-sāʾir maṣāliḥ al-Islām bihā*).[58]

---

55   Gochenour, "The Penetration", 172–73; Madelung, "The Origins", 32–37.

56   Al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 253.

57   A more conventional translation of *maṣāliḥ* would perhaps be "interests" or "public interest" as mentioned above, or even "the community property" (*al-maṣāliḥ*), but here, it is clear from the context that what is meant is welfare institutions for people in the *hijra*, which at the same time are conflated with "Islam".

58   Al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 254.

Al-Lahjī studied in Waqash in the year 1116–17[59] and would himself have known the institutions of the *hjira* very well. These services imply that there were buildings and food, which had to be supplied for the users of the *hijra*. The term "inspector" (*nāẓir*) is the same as later used for the manager or guardian of an endowment or foundation, although we do not have concrete textual evidence that these services were paid by endowments (*waqf*, pl. *awqāf*) belonging to the *hijr*a at the beginning of this century. That mosques could have endowments, however, must have been normal already at this time and the Mutarrifiyya may have managed or overseen local endowments, for example for mosques in their region.[60] Note how welfare, in the translation above, is something that is to be provided for the inhabitants and other users of the *hijra*, something again related to "Islam". These values are conflated into one.

For the Muṭarrifis, visions of welfare for their community were not a matter of securing funding for war and government. The welfare they provided for the local population, and for the network of sect members in the *hijra*s and elsewhere, must still have contributed to the consolidation of their feeling of community. The welfare facilitated the intellectual activities and activities related to learning by providing food and housing for those who wanted to live a life devoted to learning and religious practice. How this welfare was controlled and managed is a question that needs more research. One could hypothesize that in the mature phase of the Muṭarrifiyya, in major *hijra*s like Waqash, there must have been fault lines and discussions over who should get access to the welfare and the resources. We do not know to what extent some of these *hijra*s pressed the local population for *zakāt* and the views of the power that these *hijra*s could exert over the local population. Here we must point out again that the *hijra*s and the people in them, and in constant movement between them, must have been few compared to the general population, who held various degrees of sympathy with them and loyalty towards them. Thus "the community of Muṭarrifis" could range from networks of especially active Mutarrifis, to the community of the regional population who believed in their Muṭarrifi doctrines or supported them.

---

59   Mentioned in *Tabaqāt al-Zaydiyya al-kubrā*, 2:1123.

60   Madelung quotes the *Ghāyat al-amānī,* which states that the Muṭarrifiyya wanted in to hold back *zakāt* and revenue from endowments from al-Manṣūr ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥamza. Madelung, "The Origins", 43 n. 85. This information indicates that there were *awqāf* inside Muṭarrifi territory, the control over which was valuable to them and to the imam. ʿAlī Muḥammad Zayd quotes the "Ajwibat masāʾil" stating that around 1215, the Muṭarrifiyya were forced to sell some of their lands and endowments (here: *waṣāyā*) to the Ayyūbids and the imam criticized them for that. Zayd, *Tayyārāt*, 174. The "Ajwibat masāʾil" is edited in ʿAbd al-ʿĀṭī, al-Ṣirāʿ al-fikrī, 142–74. For the passage about the *waṣāyā*, see ibid, 161.

The 11th century is also the mature phase of the Muṭarrifiyya. They are opposed by two strong Zaydi imams, first al-Mutawakkil Aḥmad b. Sulaymān (r. 1138–1171), and later al-Manṣūr ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥamza (r. 1187–1217). Al-Mutawakkil was contemporary with al-Laḥjī, and perhaps his main opponent. In his later career Al-Mutawakkil was not recognized as imam by al-Laḥjī and his fellow Muṭarrifis. He is a typical representative of the imam-centred vision of community, which remained quite stable throughout the whole period under scrutiny. Not only did he claim to control the collection and usage of *zakāt* like al-Hādī, but he and his court scholar al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār also claimed the right to claim support for holy war, *jihād*, and that this was in addition to the right to demand *zakāt*. This support tax was called *maʿūna* and legitimized by "necessity" and by quoting stories of al-Hādī demanding a quarter of the property of the people of Sanaa in order to finance the defences.[61] The imam al-Manṣūr ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥamza (r. 1187–1217) also demanded control over the *zakāt*, but he went even further and declared the Muṭarrifis to be heretical, confiscated their lands and destroyed their main *hijra* by military force. The latter episode and the process leading up to it cannot be treated here as it is outside the scope of this chapter. However, is should be mentioned that from now on *hijra*s were no longer Muṭarrifi and after this point in history a *hijra* mainly refers to a village of *ashrāf* or *sāda* population.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the ideas, practices and institutions related to the *hijra* in the period AD 900–1200 in Zaydi medieval highland Yemen changed a great deal. Likewise, the importance of the role of *zakāt* and management of surplus, wealth and welfare varied greatly from time to time, from place to place and from sect to sect, and the ideals differed from the pragmatic rules. I have tried to sketch out some of the most basic differences and dynamics related to this over the centuries, but needless to say is this chapter only a vague beginning of a portrait of a much finer detail. In this chapter I have shown three source texts, or cases: first, al-Hādī's justification of not spending *zakāt* income on the poor, and the two others demonstrating how *zakāt* and welfare was used in a non-imamic-centred vision of community promoted by the Muṭarrifiyya. The first of these two latter cases shows how *zakāt* could be collected and spent locally, and the last show how welfare could be organized inside an enclave of learning as an institution, arguably similar to a gompa or a monastery.

---

61   Al-Thaqafī, *Sīrat al-Imām Aḥmad b. Sulaymān*, 298–305 and especially 302–03.

The early *ashrāf*-dominated *hijra*s were a very different phenomenon compared to the later Muṭarrifī *hijra*s, just as the imam-centred vision of community was very different from that produced and upheld in local networks of pious Muṭarrifī individuals.

In this chapter, I have not sought to prove the relative importance of welfare in Zaydi visions of community, but rather how visions of welfare and its role for the community was contested among Zaydis at the time. The enclaves of learning (*hijra*s) were both products of such visions, but also the frames in which such visions could be formulated, discussed, codified, and learned. Welfare was important for the inhabitants, but the exact nature of the causal relation between visions, practice, and institutions cannot be established from the few sources analysed here. Our sources from this period are highly situated and biased and the deliberate contrasting of competing visions allows us to better see the relation between the ideal and pragmatic versions of their visions, and it allows us to carry out (at least to start) source criticism.

The visions of community discussed in this chapter can been seen in at least four distinct, yet interconnected levels, as also mentioned in the introduction to this section of this volume. First, individual "enclaves of learning": this level of community refers to the community inside single, individual enclaves, for example Hijrat Waqash. It is characterized by daily face-to-face interaction and common practices and rituals. The "outsiders" are the tribal surroundings around the enclave and other enclaves located at a distance. Individual *hijra*s had protection agreements with surrounding tribes (*tahjīr, juwāra, jiwār*).[62] Second, sub-sects: this level refers to networks and sects[63] within Zaydism in Yemen in the medieval period, for example the Mutarrifiyya. Outsiders are the other competing Zaydi sects, elites and networks, such as various *ashrāf* clans (Hādawiyya, Qāsimiyya, Ḥamzawiyya), or the more theologically defined counterpart to the Muṭarrifiyya, the Mukhtariʿa.[64] The landscape of Zaydi sects changes much during this period, as we have seen. In short, this level

---

62 For the protection agreement regarding (*ʿaqd jiwār*) of foundation of Hijrat Waqash see Madelung, "Origins", 32; al-Laḥjī, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya", 78.

63 A practical comparative question is to what extent the word "sect" is useful. In contemporary popular English it has a negative meaning. What do we call a religious sub-community in a generic term? And how can we differentiate between a monastic order and a religious sect? Alternative terms like "networks" or "movements" have other additional connotations. The degree of institutionalization and forms of hierarchy would be important to clarify. See especially the chapter by O'Riain in this volume. Some terms used in the Yemeni sources to indicate religious sub-groups are *firqa, ṭāʾifa* and *madhhab*.

64 The Mukhtariʿa consisted of various scholars, among them several court scholars of powerful Muṭarrifī-hostile imams who especially attacked the natural causation theory of the

comprises several "enclaves of learning" coming together in a network, sharing fundamental doctrines and sharing ideas and practices of welfare, rituals and religion. Third, the (Yemeni) Zaydi community: this level refers to the general Zaydi cause in Yemen. The real, imagined or invoked enemies are other Islamic sects, such as the Sunnis and Isma'ilis, who especially at times of war were portrayed as non-believers and outside the community. The Zaydis cultivated a distinct form of Islamic doctrine both in theology and law. The doctrinal differences were presumably not always obvious to commoners, but in cases where this level was invoked among them, more simplified slogans could be used. For many commoners, the most practical difference would be to whom one had to pay taxes in times of peace and whom one would be forced to side with in times of war. The fact that certain tribes and tribal elites in the border areas could change sides several times does not mean that commoners changed doctrines overnight. Fourth, the wider Muslim community: this is possibly a fourth level, at least commonly seen invoked in the sources—the *umma*, the totality of Muslim community, similar to *jamā'a* in the chapter by Rudiger Lohlker and in the response to the chapter of Gerda Heydemann. The outsiders would be people of other religions, such as the Jews, or groups with a "deficiency" of religion altogether, such as the tribal population that religious authors at times describe as un-Islamic or mention when describing al-Hādī's quest to spread Islam among the tribes. To scientifically represent the community of the *umma* or other ideal communities is problematic, since it exists only at a highly ideal level, as a vision; usually, there is no corresponding social group in reality matching the vision, yet the vision is constantly invoked and claimed in a wide variety of ways. Discourse invoking this level of community is also used parallel to, and mixed with, the second and third level described above, for example when declaring other Zaydi sects to be heretical and therefore not part of "the *umma*" and outside of *dār al-Islām* ("territory of Islam", where individuals have rights as Muslims according to Islamic law, as opposed to *dār al-ḥarb*, territory of war, or *dār al-fisq* "territory of immorality", invoked to confiscate land belonging to recalcitrant Zaydis).[65]

This summary of four levels reminds us that visions of community are ideas and notions that are constantly invoked and used in rather creative and ambiguous ways, and therefore we have to be careful in not representing them as

---

Mutarrifiyya. The name comes from the theological concept *ikhtirā'*, creation *ex nihilo*. Madelung, "Muṭarrifiyya", Thiele, *Theologie*; Zayd, *Tayyārāt*.

65   For the legal concept of *dār al-fisq* located between *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-kufr*, see al-Imām al-Manṣūr 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥamza, *al-Majmū al-Manṣūrī*, 2:64–67.

fixed essences, and further, that we must always look at the exact context in which they are used, grounding the visions in the social and political context where they are invoked, transmitted, and used. To claim that the *umma* existed, as a vision of community, means in a minimal historical sense that it existed as an idea (re)presented in a text. What concerns us, however, is how this vision was used on various levels and to which extent the agency behind these claims resulted in an effective community, and further, how this effect was observed, commented upon, and resisted by others. We need ideal types of these visions of community and to represent these as models. However, the phenomena located on the borders of these ideal types, where visions are unclear and contested, are more yielding study objects if we want to understand the dynamic and the agency that we can see in our sources.

Bibliography

ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥamza, al-Imām al-Manṣūr Biʾllāh, *Al-Majmūʿ al-Manṣūrī* (*al-Qism al-thānī*) *Majmūʿ rasāʾil al-Imām al-Manṣūr Bi-llāh ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥamza*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh (Sanaa, 2001).

ʿAbd al-Ghanī Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-ʿĀṭī, *al-Ṣirāʿ al-fikrī fī l-Yaman bayna al-Zaydiyya wa-l-Muṭarrifiyya: Dirāsa wa-nuṣūṣ* (Cairo, 2002).

ʿAlī b Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-ʿAbbāsī al-ʿAlawī, *Sīrat Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn* [Biography of al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn], ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut, 1981).

Cornelis van Arendonk, *De Opkomst van het Zaidietische imamaat in Yemen* (Leiden, 1919).

Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 2010).

Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (New York, 2005).

Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford, 1989).

David Thomas Gochenour, "The Penetration of Zaydi Islam into Early Medieval Yemen", (PhD diss, Harvard University, 1984a).

David Thomas Gochenour, "Towards a Sociology of the Islamisation of Yemen", in *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background*, ed. Brian R. Pridham (New York, 1984b), 1–19.

Johann Heiss, "Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktreglung: Der Norden des Jemen zur Zeit des ersten Imams (10. Jahrhundert)" (unpublished PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1998).

Eirik Hovden, "Flowers in *fiqh* and Constructions of Validity: Practices and Norms in Yemeni Foundations of Forever Flowing Charity" (Unpublished PhD diss., University of Bergen, 2012).

Ibrāhīm b. al-Qāsim b. al-Muʾayyad, *Ṭabaqāt al-Zaydiyya al-kubrā; al-Qism al-thālith wa-yusamma: Bulūgh al-marām ilā maʿrifat al-isnād*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh (Sanaa, 2001).

Hugh Kennedy, "The Ribāṭ in the Early Islamic World", in *Western Monasticism Ante Litteram*, eds. Hendrik Day and Elizabeth Fentress (Turnhout, 2011), 161–75.

Al-Laḥjī, Abū al-Ghamr Musallam b. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar, "Akhbār al-Zaydiyya min ahl al-bayt ʿalayhim al-salām wa-shīʿatihim bi-al-Yaman", MS Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Saʿūd al-Islāmiyya, MS no. 2449.

Wilferd Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen*, Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients, Neue Folge Band 1. (Berlin, 1965).

Wilferd Madelung, "Land Ownership and Land Tax in Northern Yemen and Najrān: 3rd-4th/9th-10th Century", in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1981), 189–207. Republished in id., *Religious and Ethnic Movements in Medieval Islam* (Farnham, Brooksfield, 1992).

Wilferd Madelung, "Has the Hijra Come to an End?" *Revue des études islamiques* (1984), 225–37. Republished in id., *Religious and Ethnic Movements in Medieval Islam* (Farnham, Brooksfield, 1992).

Wilferd Madelung, "Al-Hamdānī's Description of Northern Yemen in the Light of Chronicles of the 4th/10th and 5th/11th Centuries", in *Al-Hamdānī a Great Yemeni Scholar: Studies on the Occasion of his Milennial Anniversary*, ed. Yusuf Mohammad Abdallah (Sanaa, 1986), 129–37. Republished in id., *Religious and Ethnic Movements in Medieval Islam* (Farnham, Brooksfield, 1992).

Wilferd Madelung, "The origins of the Yemenite Hijra", in *Arabicus Felix: Luminosus Brittanicus: Essays in Honour of A.F.L. Beeston on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Alan Jones (Reading, 1991), 25–44. Republished in id., *Religious and Ethnic Movements in Medieval Islam* (Farnham, Brooksfield, 1992).

Wilferd Madelung, "Muṭarrifiyya", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004), 7:772–73.

Gerd R Puin, "The Yemeni *Hijrah* Concept of Tribal Protection", in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1984), 483–94.

Al-Rabaʿī, Mufarriḥ b. Aḥmad, *Sīrat al-amīrayn al-jalīlayn al-sharīfayn al-fāḍilayn al-Qāsim wa-Muḥammad Ibnay Jaʿfar b. al-Imām al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī al-ʿIyānī. Naṣṣ tārīkhī Yamanī min al-qarn al-khāmis al-hijrī*, eds. Riḍwān al-Sayyid and Abd al-Ghanī Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-ʿĀṭī (Beirut, 1993).

Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine, "Chapter 1: Socio-Religious Movements and the Transformation of 'Common Sense' into a Politics of 'Common Good'", in *Religion, Social Practice, and Contested Hegemonies: Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies*, eds. Armando Salvatore and Mark LeVine (New York, 2005), 29–56.

Robert Bertram Serjeant, "Chapter 5: Ṣanʿāʾ the protected Hijra", in *Ṣanʿāʾ An Arabian Islamic City*, eds. Robert Bertram Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock (London, 1983), 39–43.

Robert W Stookey, *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic*, Westview Special Studies on the Middle East (Boulder, 1978).

Al-Thaqafī, Sulaymān b. Yaḥyā, *Sīrat al-Imām Aḥmad b. Sulaymān 535–566 H*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-ʿĀṭī (Giza, 2002).

Jan Thiele, *Theologie in der jemenitischen Zaydiyya: die naturphilosophischen Überlegungen des al-Ḥasan ar-Raṣṣāṣ* (Leiden, 2013).

Montgomery W. Watt , "Hidjra", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004), 3:366–67.

Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq, *al-Majmūʿa al-Fākhira: Majmūʿ kutub wa-rasāʾil al-Imām al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn* (Sanaa, 2000).

Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām fī al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*, paginated file downloaded from http://www.anazydi.com, last retrieved 10.12.2013.

ʿAlī Muḥammad Zayd, *Tayyārāt muʿtazilat al-Yaman fī l-qarn al-sādis al-hijrī* (Sanaa, 1997).

Aron Zysow, "Zakāt", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden, 1960–2004) 6:406–22.

Aron Zysow, "The obligation to obey God's commands", in *The Law Applied*, eds. Peri Bearman, Wolfhart Heinrichs and Bernhard G. Weiss (London, New York, 2008), 397–421.

Vita communis in Central European Monastic Landscapes

Christina Lutter

Addressing Community

The *Visions of Community* project (VISCOM) proposes a transcultural concept of *community* as a frame of reference to compare interrelated social and symbolic categories of identification and belonging that are at work on diverse societal levels. Among other factors, they are responsible for the making and un-making of social groups defined, for instance, by religious and ethnic qualities as well as through criteria related to ancestry and kinship, or their position in entangled social and political networks.[1]

Community can be addressed both as a social and as an affective category.[2] Hence, in what follows, I refer to community in terms of symbolic, yet dynamic representations of belonging that are narrated and enacted, imagined and felt in a variety of ways. Visions of communities hold social groups together. They are on the one hand expressions of belonging to social groups, providing such groups with specific norms and values, narratives and symbols of togetherness and solidarity; but on the other hand they may also be articulations of perceived difference and used for exclusion. Importantly, community involves social practices as well—community is not only imagined, but also "done", especially by means of regular exchanges and interactions that play a crucial role in processes of community construction.[3]

---

1 See the introduction to this volume by Walter Pohl and its conclusion by Andre Gingrich; cf. also Gingrich/Lutter, "Visions of Community", on the programme VISCOM: "Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire", funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) 2011–2019 through its Special Research Realm (SFB) programme as F-42. Special thanks for important feedback and discussion above all to my co-editors Eirik Hovden and Walter Pohl, to the other contributors to this collection, especially those to this section of the volume, Andre Gingrich and Elisabeth Gruber; as well as to Mirko Breitenstein, Franz Felten, and Jonathan Lyon.

2 Lutter, "Social Groups", and ead., "Comparative Approaches"; seminal on the latter aspect is Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities* and most recently ead., *Generations of Feeling*.

3 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, discussed in Gingrich/Lutter, "Visions of Community". For European medieval history see Otto

This set of defining elements can be used comparatively to structure our search for traces of *community* in different historical settings and types of source material. In what contexts and by what means were people and groups identified and classified according to perceptions of their shared properties? When and how did people specifically link such markers of "groupness" to the specific quality of *community*?[4] When and where did they explicitly address community, or else implicitly refer to it by means of symbols?[5] What other forms of communicating belonging or togetherness do we find in our source material, e.g. rhetorical or narrative strategies, hints at ritual, or performative practices detectable in written texts as well as in pictorial and material evidence?

One of the advantages of a transcultural concept of *community* as just outlined is that it allows for a broader assessment of relations and translations between our own analytical terminology and the semantics of our sources, and also between the terminologies of the sources in the different geographical regions that are the objects of VISCOM's comparative endeavour.[6]

Concepts of Christian monastic community can serve as appropriate test cases to explore these entangled dimensions: first, because of the long-lasting societal importance of this specific way of life throughout medieval Europe; second, because of its impact on and entanglement with a variety of other social fields; third, because some key texts of medieval monasticism directly address community, expressly using the term *vita communis*, while also developing a related figurative vocabulary. Moreover these texts refer to it as a specific way of life defined by regular practice as a primary instrument for adopting, training—and hence *doing* community.[7]

G. Oexle´s work on social groups, e.g. the section "Soziale Gruppen in der Gesellschaft", in his (re)printed essays *Die Wirklichkeit und das Wissen,* 441–687.

4   The term "groupness" was coined by Brubaker/Cooper, "Beyond Identity", in their critical assessment of the concept of identity.

5   On this set of questions see particularly the contributions to the first section of this volume.

6   Lutter, "Comparative approaches", 13–19. The nature of the—often fragmented—evidence and the problems thereby raised for terminological questions is an issue tackled in most contributions to this section, e.g. Fermer, "Among Teachers and Monastic Enclaves", on late medieval Tibet.

7   Derda, *Vita communis*. Klaus Schreiner's and Gert Melville's work is pioneering, see e.g. Schreiner, *Gemeinsam leben*; Melville, "Innovationskraft" with extensive references. On historical and anthropological approaches to performative aspects of symbolic constructions of meaning see Martschukat/Patzold, *Geschichtswissenschaft und "performative turn"*; Korom, *The Anthropology of Performance*. For comparative aspects see for example the contributions by Eirik Hovden and Mathias Fermer in this volume as well as Vanderputten's concept of

I will first look at the formative period of Christian monasticism and the career of the *vita communis* concept in 11th- and 12th-century reform monasticism, drawing on an approach that links visions of an apostolic way of life to their relation to social groups in the secular world.[8] Second, I will trace the concept's significance for Central European monastic houses: does the source material provide distinguishable articulations of belonging that address specific concepts and forms of community life within and beyond these monasteries' walls?

Vita communis—Ordo Disciplinae

In occidental Christianity, community is most obviously connected to the key concept of *vita communis*, established as a way of living together in the name of Christ. Its main features were developed by early Christian spiritual leaders, such as Pachomios (292–346), Basilius (d. 379), John Cassian (360–430/435), and—with the longest lasting impact—St Augustine (d. 430).[9] He turned the biblical model of *vita apostolica*, which promoted the community of Christ's earliest followers regardless of their ancestry or rank, ethnicity or gender, into a powerful norm of coenobitic life. His vision of community was modelled on the apostolic life, with its key symbols of living together as one heart and one soul. Augustine's *societas sancta*, sharing all possessions in the spirit of love and fraternity, became one of the most successful monastic rules in medieval Europe.[10]

While the biblical concept of community also plays an important role in the other early rules, most of them elaborated on alternative key elements of coenobitic life: above all, ascetic—if moderate and shared—exercise and discipline of conduct in each respect of daily routine were conceived of as crucial for each member's path to salvation.[11] Correspondingly, and in contrast to the key vocabulary of Augustine's *Praecepta*, other early rules, when they refer

---

"communities of practice" as proposed in this volume, and also id., *Reform as Process* and id., "Communities of Practice".

8   Oexle, "Max Weber und das Mönchtum", 311–34; id., "*Koinos bios*", 470–95.

9   For a comparison of these normative texts see Derda, *Vita communis*; Oexle, "*Koinos bios*"; Schreiner, "Communio", 205–41, here 219–23.

10   Acts 4:32: *erat cor unum et anima una…erant illis omnia communia*; and *La règle de Saint Augustin*, ed. Verheijen, 1:417. Cf. Schreiner, "Ein Herz und eine Seele" and id., "Communio". On this notion in the context of the Carolingian concept of *ecclesia* cf. Kramer, "Teaching Emperors", in this volume, p. 326–29 with further references.

11   Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism*; Diem, *Das monastische Experiment*.

to monastic life, use the terms *coenobiotarum disciplina* or *ordo disciplinae* rather than Augustine's community-based vocabulary.[12]

Augustine's *societas sancta*, based on the biblical *ecclesia primitiva* united through the idea of entwined love to God and to one's neighbour, on the one hand, and the rule of St Benedict (d. 547) on the other hand, provided two key normative strands of many debates that were a constant part of recurrent religious reform movements. Benedict's rule was designed as a *schola servitii* (prol. 45) and was thus conceptually closer to the discipline-oriented coenobitical projects of Augustine's predecessors.[13] At first glance, Augustine's *Praecepta* and Benedict's rule even seem to follow opposing principles of love and unanimity versus discipline and obedience. Moreover, and contrary to Augustine, it appears that Benedict does not care much about discussing community as an issue. In fact, he does not even use the term *community*—except once, when quoting the Acts of the Apostles (4:32) on the shared property of Christ's followers (c. 33).

Nevertheless, Benedict leaves no doubt about the advantages of coenobitic life as opposed to individual asceticism. If his focus is on the spiritual progress of the individual soul, he considers this endeavour to be best realized under the guidance of the abbot and in the shared environment of one's fellow brothers.[14] Chapter 7 describes the 12 grades of humility as a progress of ascetic exercise from fear of God to love for God. *Disciplina regularis*, one of Benedict's key terms, is warranted by fear of God, obedience to the abbot and control by the fellow community members. Hence, even while *not* using the vocabulary of community, Benedict is clearly addressing *vita communis* by addressing monastic discipline as a way of life. His rule provides detailed instructions for all types of shared daily routine—prayer and liturgy, learning and meals—and

---

12   Derda, *Vita communis*, 86–92; Oexle, "*Koinos bios*", 488–89. The body of rules ascribed to Augustine consists of three parts: the most famous *Praecepta*; a rule for women (*regularis informatio*) with an admonishing letter (*obiurgatio*) to the specific community it was addressed to serving as a preface, and operative instructions (*ordo monasterii*) for the implementation of the *Praecepta*, which are much stricter than the more general rule. In the reception of these normative texts during the Middle Ages *Praecepta* and *ordo monasterii* were often integrated and adapted into new forms of "mixed" rules; cf. Schreiner, "Communio", 208–11.

13   Derda, *Vita communis*, 135–82; Melville, *Klöster*, 35–42, provides a recent overview. The vast literature on monastic regulations is readily accessible through the *vita regularis* series, see http://fovog.de/vitaregdt.html.

14   The seminal study on meanings of monastic community based on 11th and 12th century reform treatises from Benedictine and Cistercian reform monasteries as well as by regular canons is Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, here 59 and 76–77; cf. Derda, *Vita communis,* 139–49.

correspondingly, of different grades of *excommunication*, i.e. of being excluded from the monastic body (*corpus monasterii,* c. 44,5) as a consequence of each and every instance of breaking the rule.[15]

Looking at the importance that Benedict and other late antique and early medieval rules, including Augustine's *ordo monasterii*, attributed to regular practice it becomes clear that—beyond the semantic uses of the term—*vita communis* was basically defined by coenobitic discipline and liturgical routine, by regularly and performatively adopting a specific *habitus*. Individuals' inner affective lives were conceived of as fundamentally related to their external behaviour. It was this *habitus*, representative of a specific way of community life, that made it distinguishable from others; and in turn members of specific monasteries, movements or orders conceived of themselves as being part of communities with specific traits.[16] Individual members of social groups outside monasteries formed new groups inside monastic space, and, both by complying with visions of community and by means of regular practice, these groups were constructed into "imagined communities".

The Double Dialectics of Occidental Monasticism

The dialectic between community in terms of love and fraternity, as opposed to community in terms of discipline and exercise, corresponds to another constitutive tension deeply built into Christian monasticism: the one between, on the one hand, the aim and claim of turning away from the world to increase religious people's own and the world's chances of salvation, and on the other hand of constantly relating to the world through acts of charity and prayer in exchange for donations. Hence monastic life was fundamentally connected to the secular world.[17]

---

15   This was also common practice in high and late medieval orders drawing on Benedict's rule, cf. Füser, *Mönche im Konflikt*, and more specifically Kramer, "Teaching Emperors", in this section. On the importance of routine and practice-oriented aspects in Tibetan communities see Fermer, "Among Teachers and Monastic Enclaves", in this section.

16   Derda, *Vita communis,* 86–93, 120–23, 171–78; Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 61–62, Melville, *Klöster*, 273–85. On the multiple ways of conceiving of the relations between homo interior and homo exterior see Bynum, "Body and Soul"; cf. also Lentes, "Andacht und Gebärde", and Schnell, "Wer sieht das Unsichtbare", 86–93.

17   On European monasticism cf. Schreiner, "Mönchsein", 557–620; recently e.g. Melville et al., eds., *Klöster im Mittelalter zwischen Jenseits und Welt*. This is a point made in several contributions to this section—if in a variety of different ways—when it comes to assessing the validity of the term "enclaves" as our object of comparison.

Emerging during the transformation of the Roman world, monastic communities played an integral part in this complex political and societal process.[18] This is what Otto G. Oexle highlights when he draws on the Weberian differentiation between asceticism based on total withdrawal from the world as opposed to asceticism within the world. The close relations that coenobitic religious institutions continued to have to the social world outside their walls help explain their societal impact and sustainable achievements. Even more, according to Oexle, this long-term success can only be understood if the specific traits of a methodological and disciplined monastic way of life are related to the specific quality of religious communities as social groups. This is most obvious in the context of the Roman Empire's urban culture.[19] Augustine himself had developed his community concept in this environment even before his conversion to Christendom, based on his personal experience with a circle of close friends committed to merging their possessions to live from them together, as he reports in his *Confessiones* (VI, 14). With them, he initially wanted to establish a community of dialogue between like-minded people, located in the countryside and thus remote from bustling daily routines, but yet connected to them.[20]

Hence it does not seem a coincidence that from the 11th century onwards Augustine's ideas and vocabulary were specifically taken up in religious movements that aimed at a broader societal renewal, which among other factors resulted from the fundamental contest between spiritual and secular powers and affected concepts of negotiated governance as well as new forms of urban and rural communal organization and related new concepts of community.[21] During the history of Western monasticism, the tension between—in fact interrelated—"love-based" and "discipline-based" visions of community had always been a defining moment whenever there was a call for religious reform, as the tension between withdrawal from and entanglement with the secular world had been. The complex relations between the political, economic, and pastoral tasks of religious communities increased the challenge to balance *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* according to Gregory the Great's (d. 604) *Regula*

18　Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*.

19　Oexle, "Koinos bios", 476–80.

20　References and discussion in Schreiner, "Communio", 213–14.

21　Haverkamp, "Neue Formen von Bindung und Ausgrenzung", 85–122; Weinfurter, "Die Macht der Reformidee", 13–39; Breitenstein et al., eds., *Innovation in Klöstern und Orden*; cf. the contributions to the section on urban communities in this volume. For a comparison to earlier European reform movements see Kramer, "Teaching Emperors", in this section.

pastoralis.[22] Concepts of how to renovate ideals and practices of living together were taken up and rephrased according to Augustinian visions of apostolic community on the one hand and a call for stricter discipline to realize them on the other. Thus the European monastic reform movements of the 11th and 12th centuries generated a particularly wide variety of partly experimental and sometimes only temporary new forms of spiritual life.[23]

Numerous foundational texts, reform statutes, constitutions, reform treatises and commentaries, especially written by regular canons, Premonstratensians, and later Dominicans and Augustinian hermits—to mention just some of the most successful communities—drew on Augustine's community ideal, which at once provided clarity and yet flexibility, as well as avoided extreme ascetic rigor.[24] Their authors used both its terminology and metaphorical imagery, adapting them in a variety of ways into new "mixed rules", thus reflecting different claims and standards of disciplinary practice and of institutionalization. In such texts, community is variously addressed as *societas sancta*, *communio* and *vita communis*; key concepts are its members' unity of concord (*unitas concordiae*) and unanimity (*unanimitas*), love (*caritas*), and fraternity (*fraternitas*), socially articulated by sharing everything (*omnia communia*) and symbolically by being one heart and one soul (*cor unum et anima una*).[25]

A famous example is Norbert of Xanten (d. 1134), reform canon and founder of Prémontré, who struggled—as stressed in his vita—deciding which rule this new community should follow to best fulfil the principles of a truly apostolic life. He opted for Augustine's *Praecepta*, and by the mid-12th century, after a decade-long process of negotiations, the Premonstratensian *Liber consuetudinum* embodied the growing movement's statutes and *consuetudines*, their by then formally established way of life. It opens with an exhortation to be one heart and one soul and stresses the importance of unity of inward conviction and outward comportment, expressed by a uniformity of liturgy, discipline, and *habitus*.[26]

---

22   Gregorius Magnus, *Liber regulae pastoris*, ed. Rommel; cf. Straw, *Gregory the Great*.

23   Constable, "Religious Communities".

24   Schreiner, "Communio", 239.

25   On various forms of adaptation in different religious movements and orders see the contributions in: Melville/Müller, eds., *Regula Sancti Augustini*. For a comparative assessment of selected European examples see ibid., Schreiner, "Ein Herz und eine Seele", 14–15 and 43, and id., "Communio", 224–41.

26   References ibid., 224–25 and more comprehensively Bomm, "Augustinusregel" and Ehlers-Kisseler, "Norm und Praxis".

In addition, the large textual legacy of the reform movements that arose from Benedictine monasticism and thus drew on Benedict's rule, most notably texts written in the context of the Cistercian order, reflect shifts in community concepts. They were among others necessitated by increased pastoral tasks, and related to theological considerations of how God could best be served, not by focusing only on the individual souls of monks and nuns in monasteries remote from the world, but also through the service of one's neighbour both inside the spiritual community and beyond it. A turn to an increasingly affective theology stressing love and compassion, the imitation of good examples of others, and personal experience as opposed to merely intellectual learning as a means of progress of the individual soul within the community are some of the most significant features of these reform strands.[27] Thus the tension between "love-based" and "discipline-based" elements of *vita communis* remained as defining as their integration was an issue. Many reform texts moved beyond the clear-cut conceptual realm of spiritual legacies or rules. They discussed ideas stemming from different traditions, partly engaged with pastoral experience, which often resulted in new rules or constitutions combining elements from a variety of older models and adapting them according to contextually specific requirements that related to all sorts of political, economic, and social aspects of community life. Still—their variety notwithstanding—as these normative texts present ideal visions of community they rarely reflect upon this social background, nor on the actors of community, i.e. religious men and women, or their personal relations and interactions.

Recent research on medieval religious communities has therefore started to consider a wider range of source material to get a fuller picture of what the specific *spiritual profile* of a religious community, movement, or order might have been, and to what extent normative community concepts as represented in the rules of St Augustine, St Benedict, or other key spiritual thinkers made a real difference in their contextually specific implementation. If we consider that *vita communis*, according to most rules, fundamentally consisted in regular community practice, it is even more imperative to broaden the evidence base to understand why people in a given social environment and spiritual

27   Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 63–77 for similarities and differences between models developed by regular canons, reformed Benedictines, and Cistercians; for the latter see Boquet, *L'ordre de l'affect*. The variety of ways of conceiving of "learning" is highlighted by all members of this section and the respective VISCOM working group; see Kramer, introduction to this section on communities of learning in recent comparative research see the excellent overview by Steckel, Networks of Learning, esp. pp. 191–202.

context opted for a particular religious movement and its vision of community to which to devote their lives.[28]

Central European Monastic Landscapes

I now want to consider these issues by turning to Central European monastic landscapes and by moving beyond the traditional divide of focusing on either the spiritual or the social—including material—aspects of religious life.[29] What did *community* specifically mean in Central European regions where monastic development and reform in the high and late Middle Ages closely linked to territorial expansion—and thus often had to work in a very hands-on way? Did monastic houses in these regions actively engage in addressing and debating community, and how are their visions of community represented in the sources? The first challenge is that—abundant work on individual monastic houses or orders notwithstanding—comparative research in many regions lacks comprehensive data, while in others important work has already been achieved in this respect.[30] Part of our current project therefore consists in establishing a database on monastic landscapes in Austria and Styria, Bohemia and Moravia, starting with Benedictines and Cistercians, Regular Canons, and Premonstratensians as well as Carthusians.[31] This database will provide

---

28   McGuire, *Friendship and Community*; Felten, "Vergleichende Ordensgeschichte"; Schreiner, "Communio", who also coined the phrase *spiritual profile*, 241. Cf. also the arguments in the comments on this section by Jonathan Lyon and Steven Vanderputten.

29   For a recent general overview see Berend et al., eds., *Central Europe in the Middle Ages*. On the concept of monastic landscape as an instrument for comparative research cf. for instance the archaeological approach by Bond, *Monastic Landscapes*, or the conference *Monastic Landscapes: Spiritual and Physical*, organized by József Laszlovszky et al. at the Department of Medieval Studies at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, March 5–8, 2009 and most recently the section "Spatial Approaches to Settlement an Religion in Central Europe", in Rasson and Szénde, eds., *Annual of Medieval Studies*, 207–75. For an approach comparable to the one proposed here see Laszlovszky, "Crown, Gown, Town". Cf. also Czaja et al., eds., *Klosterlandschaften*, as well as Felten et al., eds., *Landschaften*, esp. the contributions by Felten and Melville on monastic landscapes, ibid., at 157–91 and 195–221.

30   Examplary is Beatrix Romhany's work on the specifically complex situation in Hungary; see her seminal overview: Romhany, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok a középkori Magyarországon*, as well as most recently her regionally comparative study, ead., "Kolostorhálózat—településhálózat—népesség".

31   For overviews on Austria and Styria see the *Germania Benedictina* series, vol. 3, 1–3: Faust/Krassnig, eds., *Die benediktinischen Mönchs- und Nonnenklöster*; Röhrig, ed., *Die*

comprehensive information on each religious house's foundation context, its position in the political and ecclesiastical topography, and its relations to monastic houses of the same order and beyond, as well as to secular and ecclesiastical authorities.[32]

Bohemia and Moravia feature 50 religious foundations of these orders prior to 1350, most prominently Benedictine and Cistercian, but also Premonstratensian. Of the 47 Austrian and Styrian houses, regular canons/canonesses are most common, followed by Benedictine and Cistercian houses. Interestingly, the Austrian lands—in contrast to Bohemia and Moravia—feature a significant number of women's communities as well as "double monasteries".[33] These types of community were of special interest in religious reforms, as the concept of *vita apostolica* addressed men and women alike (Ac 1,14). Reformers thought about how women and men could serve God together without running into the dangers brought about by cohabitation.[34] Moreover, although the ideal of enclosure was generally more strictly claimed for religious women,[35] recent case studies on medieval monasticism have convincingly shown that double monasteries and women's houses served as centres of social communication that linked both communities and individual members to networks of kinship and friendship outside their walls.[36] Donations were crucial to enabling religious houses to fulfil their task of prayer: When new members renounced the secular world, they traded their birth families for their new spiritual *familia*, yet they kept close ties to their extant networks and even reinforced personal relations. Monastic community ideals would be integrated with concepts of

bestehenden *Stifte der Augustiner-Chorherren*; id., ed., *Die ehemaligen Stifte der Augustiner-Chorherren*. On Cistercians no comparable handbook literature exists. For a specific case study on Benedictine "Schottenklöster" see Ó Riain, in this section. On Bohemia and Moravia Vlček et al., eds., *Encyklopedie* and Foltýn et al., eds., *Encyklopedie* provide overviews; on Augustinian canons see Röhrig, ed., *Augustiner-Chorherren in Böhmen, Mähren und Ungarn*; on Cistercian men's communities: Charvátová, *Dějiny cisterckého řádu*. The project will later extend this comparison to the Mendicant orders, and also include comparative data on Hungary.

32   My special thanks go to the project's collaborators Martin Haltrich, Herbert Krammer, Anna Jagošova, Edith Kapeller, and Radka Lomičkova.

33   Total: 20 male, ten female, 17 "double monasteries". A first overview based on a PhD thesis from 2003 is provided by Kurz, *Ubi et est habitatio.*

34   Felten, Vita religiosa sanctimonialium; Melville/Müller, eds., Female "vita religiosa"; on "double monasteries" see Elm/Parisse, Doppelklöster; Griffiths/Hotchin, Partners in Spirit; cf. also Mecham, Sacred Communities, Shared Devotions.

35   Leclercq, "La clôture"; recently Röckelein, "Inklusion—Exklusion".

36   For overviews see the contributions in Hamburger et al., eds., *Frauen—Kloster—Kunst*, 211–311; Lutter, "Geistliche Gemeinschaften".

affiliation from outside—the term *familia* for such communities is a strong case in point.[37]

Admont

The Benedictine double monastery of Admont in Styria, founded in 1074 by the archbishop of Salzburg initially as a community for men, developed into a key reform site in south-eastern Germany during the 12th century. It is one of the most comprehensively researched religious community of the region.[38] This comparatively early foundation was influenced by the Hirsau reform, a strand of religious renewal related to the famous one of Cluny and named after its key site in the Schwarzwald.[39] This religious movement strove for a particularly severe renovation of a Benedictine way of life as represented in its customs (*consuetudines Hirsaugienses*), out of which Admont in turn developed its own version. Programmatic reform texts and narrative accounts clearly state that Admont was proud of its disciplinary austerity and spiritual excellence, and these became central features of Admont's sense of community, which was referred to as *Admuntina religio, que tunc celebris habebatur*. Other key terms stress the specific profile of the *ordo Admuntensis*, praising its stricter discipline.[40]

The earliest accounts of the women's community date from around 1120, and subsequently both genders are addressed correspondingly: the women are called to fight (*militare*) jointly with the men in the service of God and to follow the strict regulations of everyday life just the same as their brothers. Still, the nuns' exemplary way of life is highlighted on several occasions by affirming the normative ideal of an especially strict enclosure for women. A comparable assessment characterizes the nuns' epistolary dialogue with Gerhoh of Reichersberg, a protagonist of the contemporary reform of the Augustinian canons in the region. In his letters the nuns are not only referred to as *mulieres fortes* and brides of Christ—both central figurative representations from the

---

37   Schreiner, "Consanguinitas", 176–305. Cf. Mitterauer, "Geistliche Verwandtschaft"; Borgolte, *Stiftung und Memoria*. Cf. the contribution by Christian Opitz on visual representations of genealogies, this volume.

38   Lutter, *Geschlecht&Wissen*; Roitner, "Das Admonter Frauenkloster", and the respective contributions in Beach, ed., *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture*. On the political and reform context Weinfurter, *Salzburger Bistumsreform* is seminal.

39   Schreiner, ed., *Hirsau*.

40   Arnold, "Admont", 368–69 provides the text of Admont's *consuetudines* and further references.

Old Testament—but also as "incarcerated women" who by virtue of their devotion suffer in order to redeem their own and the world's sins.[41]

Hence spiritual evidence from this monastery clearly conforms to Benedict's discipline-based community model, which was intensified by many reform concepts elaborating on his rule. But if discipline plays an outstanding role, Admont's reform texts also display a rich affective vocabulary referring to the convent as a community of men and women united in the spirit of reform. They not only stress love and fraternity as guiding principles, but also address the personal attachments of the monks and nuns to one another. A beautifully illuminated prayer book is dedicated by a prior Johannes to "our beloved sisters".[42] Admont was exemplary in its involvement in contemporary theological debates, in which the "learned sisters" took an active part. Perhaps the most important source material is the extraordinary number of about 800 surviving, often illuminated, manuscripts, some of them expressly written for and also within the women's community.[43]

Thus, Benedictine reform discipline notwithstanding, personal relations and collaboration in a rather Augustinian spirit of fraternity—also reminiscent of Cistercian affective theology—are striking features of Admont's community life. This is less surprising if we consider how much contemporary theological debate crossed the borders of monastic and scholastic, and of different coenobitic, traditions. Extant manuscripts from Admont feature more than sixty medieval and early modern versions of normative texts— monastic rules, statutes, constitutions, etc.—among them seven versions of St Benedict's rule (four of them Latin, three German), two versions of Augustine's Praecepta, and one of his *ordo monasterii*. Admont had close spiritual and political ties, and even an official spiritual confraternity (*confraternitas*) with the protagonists of the canonical reform in Salzburg, sustained by a dense social and intellectual network within the archbishopric and beyond.[44]

---

41 Lutter, *Geschlecht&Wissen*, 107–19. This indeed can be interpreted as a very powerful representation of the idea of a spiritual community as an "enclave".

42 Cod. Admont. 18, before fol. 1r. Seeberg, *Illustrationen* provides a comprehensive iconographic study of the manuscript.

43 Beach, *Women as Scribes*; Seeberg, *Illustrationen*; Lutter, *Geschlecht&Wissen*, 56–58 and 61–2 on *sanctimoniales litteratae*; on visual representations of late medieval European religious communities cf. also Opitz, Genealogical Representations, in this volume.

44 I am grateful to Martin Haltrich for providing me with manuscript data on Admont. Weinfurter, *Salzburger Bischofsreform*, and id., "Die Macht der Reformidee"; cf. Mews, "Scholastic Theology"; on this type of contemporary confraternities as another form of

A prominent case in point is the *Vita magistrae*, an extraordinary piece of hagiography about the head of Admont's women's community who came there from a Salzburg family around 1120. The text is preserved in Admont's copy of the *Magnum Legendarium*, an important legendary collection with all copies stemming from Austrian monasteries. It provides important material to understand spiritual models and their relations to monastic community building.[45] The *Vita* refers in detail to community ideals modelled on Benedict's rule and well-known hagiographic patterns, and gives "contextually specific" information on community life: we learn that the *magistra* composed *litterae* at night and dictated them to a scribe, but also at the request of the small children wrote down vernacular verse and prose on wax tablets. The text also mentions the *magistra*'s education prior to her entry, her noble ancestry, her powerful preaching and her relations to bishops and archbishops.

A singular letter collection, mostly concerning questions of patronage and interventions on behalf of relatives, evidences more such contacts.[46] Once, several nuns intercede with the archbishop of Salzburg for their fellow brothers. Frequently they remind their male relatives of their duties towards the community. These contacts and interventions show the women's active role as members of influential families and their weight as intercessors in spiritual and secular matters. Some letters even allow glimpses of emotional issues: a sister accuses a male relative of breaking his promise and turning from the "exile" of the monastery to join his people back home, leaving her alone "in a distant land like someone deceased delivered to oblivion", separated from all her friends' consolations.[47] Thus, despite all the reform rhetoric of ideal visions of community, and despite the impression that Admont's community members tried to live up to these ideals, the tension between turning from the world and being connected to it remained.

The monastery's donation charters and necrologies provide additional evidence of the different ways in which a community embedded itself within larger networks of religious and secular communities. Exceptional is the charter of 1130 by which the women's community was assigned an important part

addressing and practising community see Ó Riain, "*Schottenklöster* in the World", p. 393 in this section.

45   On this collection see Ó Riain, "*Magnum Legendarium*". The *Vita magistrae* is only preserved in Cod. Admont. 25, fol. 235r–v. Text in Lutter, *Geschlecht&Wissen*, 226–29; discussed ibid., Chapters 2.3 and 3.1.2.

46   The letters are edited and analysed in Beach: "Voices from a Distant Land", 34–54.

47   Ibid., 52.

of the monastery's revenues. It states that on entering the monastery all women would be allowed to keep money, clothes, and small domestic animals, with the sole exception of the revenues from the property they had given to Admont on their conversion.[48] This corresponds with the monastery's narrative sources stressing the noble origin of its members. The community's material, social, and symbolic value grew with the number of affluent persons abandoning the secular world for a new way of spiritual life in this particular environment. Reformed monasteries did not exist outside contemporary social structures, but fulfilled an important function within them. If the secular elites took care of the economic welfare of the monasteries, these were in turn designed to provide for the benefactors' memory and spiritual welfare. The social order outside the monastery translated into visions and practices of community inside, and vice versa.[49]

More Examples—New Perspectives

Rarely do monastic communities in the region boast a comparable abundance of source material permitting such a nuanced picture. Still, most of them provide evidence of community life. A good example are the Cistercian monasteries in the *marchae* and later duchies of Austria and Styria. When Cistercian monks established their first houses in these lands, around 1130—and over the following decades expanded their spiritual, political and economic influence by means of filiations, not least in Bohemia, Moravia, and Hungary—the focus of their endeavour differed from that of the Salzburg regular canons, from Benedictine reform monasteries like Admont, but also from Cistercian houses in the core regions of religious reform in the Rhineland, Flanders, or northern France.[50]

---

48   Zahn, ed., *Urkundenbuch Steiermark*, 1:170, n. 171, discussed in Lutter, *Geschlecht&Wissen*, 197–200.

49   Borgolte, *Stiftung und Memoria*; and id., Enzyklopädie des Stiftungswesens, provides a comparative perspective; see also Dendorfer, "Gescheiterte Memoria?" Gender aspects are explicitly included in Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*; van Houts, *Memory and Gender*; ead., ed., *Medieval Memories*. Cf. Ó Riain, "*Schottenklöster* in the World", at in this section for another example in the respective region making the case for another pattern of patronage in Europe; for a comparative perspective see especially Eirik Hovden's contribution to this section on competing visions of welfare in medieval South Arabia.

50   Overview and perspectives in: Felten/Rösener, eds., *Norm und Realität*; cf. also the respective bibliography in footnotes 30–31; on the respective region: Lutter, "Locus horroris".

Both Heiligenkreuz, the first and most prominent foundation (1133) in Austria by the Babenberg margrave, and its daughter house Zwettl (1137/38), a foundation of the Kuenring family—the most influential Babenberg *ministeriales*—played an important role during the processes of territorial expansion and inner consolidation of the country until the end of the 13th century. Despite the Cistercian claim of a spiritual life in the wilderness, religious houses in these "developmental" regions were almost from the beginning connected to the emerging towns and smaller settlements in their vicinity, above all to Vienna, which developed into a central place for the Babenberg rulers around the same time. Documentary records on these mutual relations go back to exactly the time when social differentiation is evidenced by more written sources and when urban elites become visible as political communities.[51]

Like elsewhere in Europe, Cistercian nunneries in Central Europe were for the most part founded later than the bulk of the monks' houses. But contrary to the European trend, which shows a large number of foundations of nunneries during the 13th century, there are only a few in the Austrian lands, Bohemia, and Moravia.[52] Nevertheless, some of them provide sufficient evidence to establish pastoral relations with their mother houses, most prominently those between Heiligenkreuz and St Niklas outside the city walls of Vienna. The nunnery of St Niklas, moreover, seems to have functioned as a key site in the political confrontations between the Bohemian king Přemysl Otakar II and Rudolf I of Habsburg, and also between the former and king Bela IV of Hungary, if we believe the monk Gutolf of Heiligenkreuz, who was this nunnery's pastoral advisor in the 1260s and 1270s: he used a traditional hagiographic account of a relic translation from Prague to Vienna to integrate a rare—and thus valuable—coherent historiographic assessment of what happened on the larger political scene. His report is also an excellent example of a narration of community by means of well-balanced strategies of identification, as Gutolf in fact addressed different communities, the nunnery being one of them.[53]

---

51 Ibid., esp. 163–66; cf. Csendes, "Urban Development", and Gruber, "The City as Commune" in this volume with further references. Material on Vienna collected in Lohrmann/Opll, eds., *Regesten zur Frühgeschichte von Wien*. On Cistercians and urban space cf. Rösener, "Stadthöfe der Zisterzienser".

52 Lutter, "Locus horroris", 166–76; Vlček, et al., eds., *Encyklopedie*, 116, 433–35, 483, 635–37; Foltýn et al., eds., *Encyklopedie*, 66–7, 589–94, 208–15, 612–20. On Cistercian nunneries in cities cf. Freed, "Urban Development" and Johanek, "Stadt und Zisterzienserinnenkonvent".

53 Redlich/Schönbach, eds., "*Translatio Sanctae Delicianae*", text 8–20; Schönbach, "Über Gutolf von Heiligenkreuz". For a detailed analysis in this context see Lutter, "Geteilte soziale Räume". The *Translatio S. Delicianae* provides one of the key texts of Maria Mair's VISCOM-based PhD project *Visions of Community in Austrian Historiography*.

As their pastor, he makes a strong case for the shelter of the religious women, whose monastery was endangered by Hungarian raids brought about by Přemysl Otakar's expansionist politics, by using the topical motive of the necessity to especially protect women by means of enclosure. Yet, as Gutolf quite openly reports, when the nunnery was in fact struck by a Hungarian assault the women immediately found shelter in the residences and castles of their families and kin in the surrounding area. This incident caused the author, as their spiritual adviser, to support the request by abbess Margardis for a new house to be dedicated to the nuns inside the walls of Vienna in order to ensure their protection. In need of a benefactor—King Otakar, once a strong supporter of the community, did not respond to their pleas—Gutolf and Margardis turned to one of the king's most influential supporters, the burgher Paltram, who with his family proved willing and able to fulfil the community's needs. They found a place within the shelter of the city walls, and the financial means to convert it into a nunnery. Gutolf's report thus stresses both the gendered, disciplinary aspect of community construction related to the religious practice of St Niklas' women, and the gendered nature of their social networks. Later documentary records suggest that many nuns were members of regional elite families who played a crucial role in the political and military conflicts between the Bohemian king and Rudolf I of Habsburg.[54] From around 1300 onward, prosopographical information on abbesses, functionaries, and members of the convent increases.

Comparable to parts of Admont's source material, Gutolf's text addresses community less theoretically but more in terms of affiliation, by means of narrative strategies that he deploys to highlight personal relations. Moreover, as in Admont, some of the Cistercian houses in Austria also provide a substantial manuscript tradition capable of broadening the picture of community articulations and of shedding light on their spiritual aspects. For instance, besides the *Translatio S. Delicianae* and his *Historia annorum 1264–1279*, Gutolf composed a life of St Scholastica, a didactic dialogue between a Cistercian and St Agnes, a Latin Grammar for the nuns of St Niklas, and a number of works for his fellow brothers in Heiligenkreuz.[55] The Cistercian nunnery of St Bernhard near Horn on the Bohemian border, under the pastoral care of Heiligenkreuz's daughter house Zwettl, possesses a vernacular foundation history written around 1300 displaying a number of elements comparable to its temporal and functional equivalent, the *liber fundatorum* of Zwettl. Both feature a number of the elements of community construction discussed so far—in both cases

54   Opll, "St. Maria bei St. Niklas", 171–75.

55   Knapp, *Die Literatur des Spätmittelalters*, 2/1:38–52.

again supported by documentary records.[56] Fourteenth-century visitation protocols preserved in Bohemian and Austrian Cistercian monasteries give important insight into daily community life and discipline-oriented visions of community according to the Cistercian adaptation of St Benedict's rule, as Radka Lomičková has shown in a recent comparative analysis.[57]

My final example, which may provide an outlook on future research perspectives, is the important Babenberg foundation Klosterneuburg, consisting of Augustinian regular canons and two women's communities, St Magdalena and St Dorothea. Comparable to the Cistercian communities in Lower Austria and to Admont in the archbishopric of Salzburg, all of these exhibit close relations to each other as well as to the territorial lord and to regional families. Klosterneuburg was founded by margrave Leopold III in 1133—in the same year as the foundation of the Cistercian Heiligenkreuz took place.[58] This is not a coincidence, but hints at Leopold's strategic use of monastic foundations during an important formative period of the Babenberg lands. Like most of the princes in the Holy Roman Empire and other Central European regions, the Babenberg relied both on religious institutions and on urban settlements to exercise their family's power in a country that was then only in the process of being formed with the help of the most important elites and their networks.

It therefore does not come as a big surprise that from the 12th century onwards the Klosterneuburg foundations feature a large number of men and women from influential families representing the regionally specific, upwardly mobile group of the *ministeriales,* who by the end of the 13th century constituted the country's main elite. Nor is it surprising that these people chose the community model of regular canons and canonesses, which was by definition less severe and more adaptable than other rules and thus left open more space for negotiations over personal property, living conditions, and contacts with the outside world.[59]

From the mid-12th century onwards, charters start documenting the popularity of the foundations among the regional elites. During the next two centuries, papal and episcopal mandates repeatedly state the necessity of limiting

---

56   On Zwettl's *liber fundatorum* see the contributions by Brunner, "Die Zwettler 'Bärenhaut'", 647–62 and Rössl, "Die Zwettler 'Bärenhaut'", 663–80; on St Bernhard: Andraschek-Holzer et al., eds., *St. Bernhard.*

57   Lomičková, "Visitationsurkunden", 241–82, esp. 247–55 on punishment by means of different grades of exclusion from the community (*excommunicatio*) combined with other penalties. Cf. Oberste, *Visitation und Ordensorganisation.*

58   Brunner, *Leopold, der Heilige*, 158–63 and 181–83.

59   Dienst, *Regionalgeschichte*, 174–87.

the number of members; from the 14th century on, visitation charters, later substantiated by often detailed data in Klosterneuburg's account books, repeatedly try to constrict and control the extravagant lifestyle both in the women's and men's communities, obviously often without success. Regulations concern private property and noble comportment—elegant clothes, carriages with up to 16 horses permitted for the prior—but also constant and unregulated contacts between both genders. The demand that St Augustine's rule should be read at least once per quarter differs considerably from Augustine's own command to have his guideline read in common once a week.[60] At first glance, it seems self-explanatory that these houses located at a key political site would have opted for community models for which the flexibility of Augustine's *Praecepta* provided a convenient conceptual framework. Still, if we compare Admont, St Niklas and Klosterneuburg, it is also evident that they shared important features, and particularly in this respect: they were all related to centres of political power. Moreover, they represented or were close to intellectual centres producing not only manuscripts but also documentary records that help us integrate the social and spiritual aspects of community.

So how significant are the differences between key community models such as Augustine's *Praecepta* or the rule of St Benedict when it comes to assessing the specific profiles of these communities in a monastic landscape? The most important differences are still those arising from the inconsistent research situation. Strikingly, for instance, very little in-depth research has been undertaken thus far on the spiritual life of the large number of "double houses" in the Austrian lands following the Augustinian rule: from Klosterneuburg alone we know of more than two dozen different manuscript versions of normative texts, both in Latin and in the vernacular, let alone hagiographic collections, sermons, and didactic spiritual literature, all of them reflecting upon visions and practices of community in the ways outlined above.[61] Only if we continue to relate this material to the key early medieval texts and to their contextually specific reception in reform movements and throughout monastic landscapes will we gain a more comprehensive picture of how community was in fact addressed and lived, and be able to assess comparatively the specific profile of spiritual communities in relation to their wider societal environment. At least in the European context, kinship, property, and gender cannot be separated

60   Zeibig, ed., *Urkundenbuch Klosterneuburg*, 1:67–70: visitation report by bishop Bernard of Passau from 1301, May 26; cf. *Rechnungsbücher* (Rb) 31/1-8 (1445–1533), Stiftsarchiv Klosterneuburg.

61   Detailed information at www.manuscripta.at, a web portal providing significant data on medieval manuscripts extant in Austrian and selected other Central European libraries.

from either the political or spiritual practices constitutive for these institutions—or from the visions of the people who made them into communities. These additional categories help to assess the different types of community to which a given monastery might belong; at the same time they provide an interface to eventually move beyond the European phenomenon of monastic houses to engage with patterns of comparison in the parts of the VISCOM project for which "monastery" is not even a specific category for defining ways of belonging to a religious community.[62]

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Rudolf Hanslik, ed., *Benedicti Regula*, Corpus Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 75 (Vienna, 1960).

Gregorius Magnus, *Liber regulae pastoris*, ed. and trans. Floribert Rommel and Charles Morel, Sources Chrétiennes 381–382 (Paris, 1992).

Oswald Redlich and Anton E. Schönbach, eds., "Des Gutolf von Heiligenkreuz *Translatio Sanctae Delicianae*", in *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse* 159/2 (Vienna, 1908), 1–38.

Luc Verheijen, ed., *La règle de Saint Augustin*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1967).

Josef Zahn, ed., *Urkundenbuch des Herzogthums Steiermark*, 1 (Graz, 1876).

Hartmann Joseph Zeibig, ed., *Urkundenbuch des Stiftes Klosterneuburg bis zum Ende des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts, part 1*, Fontes rerum Austriacarum 2/10 (Vienna, 1857).

Secondary Literature

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (1983; London, 2006).

Ralph Andraschek-Holzer et al., eds., *St. Bernhard und die Zisterzienser: Neue Forschungen zu Geschichte und Kunst* (St Pölten, 2001).

Klaus Arnold, "Admont und die monastische Reform des 12. Jahrhunderts", *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* (1972), 350–69.

Alison I. Beach, "Voices from a Distant Land: Fragments of a Twelfth Century Nun's Letter Collection", *Speculum* 77 (2002), 34–54.

---

62   See esp. the questions raised by Hovden, "Competing Visions", in this section. Several contributors to this section highlight the temporal, regional, and social heterogeneity of spiritual communities in the respectively examined cultural realm, their quality as possible configurations that do not exclude other models, see for instance Hugon, "Enclaves of Learning", in this section.

Alison I. Beach, *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria* (Cambridge, 2004).

Alison I. Beach, ed., *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture: Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany* (Turnhout, 2007).

Nora Berend et al., *Central Europe in the Middle Ages: Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, c.900–c.1300* (Cambridge, 2013).

Werner Bomm, "Augustinusregel, *professio canonica* und Prämonstratenser im 12. Jahrhundert: Das Beispiel der Nobert-Viten, Philipps von Harvengt und Anselms von Havelberg", in *Regula Sancti Augustini: Normative Grundlage differenter Verbände im Mittelalter*, eds. Gert Melville and Anne Müller (Paring, 2002), 239–94.

James Bond, *Monastic Landscapes* (Tempus, 2004).

Damien Boquet, *L'ordre de l'affect au Moyen Âge: Autour de l'anthropologie affective d' Aelred de Rievaulx* (Caen, 2005).

Michael Borgolte, *Stiftung und Memoria*, ed. Tillman Lohse, Stiftungsgeschichten 10 (Berlin, 2012).

Michael Borgolte et al., eds., *Enzyklopädie des Stiftungswesens in mittelalterlichen Gesellschaften* (Berlin, 2014).

Mirko Breitenstein et al., eds., *Innovation in Klöstern und Orden des Hohen Mittelalters: Aspekte und Pragmatik eines Begriffs*, Vita regularis 48 (Münster, 2013).

Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity A.D. 200–1000* (Oxford, 1996).

Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity", *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 1–47.

Karl Brunner, "Die Zwettler 'Bärenhaut' – Versuch einer Einordnung", in *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter*, ed. Hans Patze, Vorträge und Forschungen 31 (Sigmaringen, 1987), 647–62.

Karl Brunner, *Leopold, der Heilige: Ein Portrait aus dem Frühling des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 2009).

Caroline Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982).

Caroline W. Bynum , "Soul and Body", in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Supplement, ed. William Chester Jordan (New York 2004), 588–94.

Kateřina Charvátová, *Dějiny cisterckého řádu v Čechách 1142–1420* [*History of the Cistercian Order in Bohemia*], 3 vols. (Prague, 1998–2009)

Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester et al., 1985).

Giles Constable, "Religious Communities, 1024–1215", in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, eds. David Luscombe and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Cambridge et al., 2004), 335–67.

Peter Csendes, "Urban Development and Decline on the Central Danube, 1000–1600", in *Towns in Decline, AD 1000–1600*, ed. Terry R. Slater (Aldershot, 2000), 137–53.

Roman Czaja et al., eds., *Klosterlandschaften: Methodisch-exemplarische Annäherungen* (Paderborn, 2008).

Jürgen Dendorfer, "Gescheiterte Memoria? Anmerkungen zu den 'Hausklöstern' des hochmittelalterlichen Adels", *Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte* 73 (2014), 17–38.

Hans-Jürgen Derda, *Vita communis: Studien zur Geschichte einer Lebensform in Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Cologne et al., 1992).

Albrecht Diem, *Das monastische Experiment: Die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entstehung des westlichen Klosterwesens*, Vita regularis 36 (Münster, 2005).

Heide Dienst, *Regionalgeschichte und Gesellschaft im Hochmittelalter am Beispiel Österreichs*, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 27 (Vienna, Cologne, 1990).

Ingrid Ehlers-Kisseler, "Norm und Praxis bei den Prämonstratensern im Hochmittelalter", in *Studien zum Prämonstratenserorden*, eds. Irene Crusius and Helmut Flachenecker, Studien zur Germania Sacra 25 (Göttingen, 2003), 335–88.

Kaspar Elm and Michel Parisse, eds., Doppelklöster und andere Formen der Symbiose männlicher und weiblicher Religiosen im Mittelalter, Ordensstudien 8, Berliner historische Studien 18 (Berlin 1992).

Ulrich Faust and Waltraud Krassnig, eds., *Die benediktinischen Mönchs- und Nonnenklöster in Österreich und Südtirol* (St Ottilien, 2000–2002).

Franz Felten, "Wozu treiben wir vergleichende Ordensgeschichte?", in *Mittelalterliche Orden und Klöster im Vergleich: Methodische Ansätze und Perspektiven*, eds. Gert Melville and Anne Müller, Vita regularis 34 (Münster, 2007), 1–51.

Franz Felten and Werner Rösener, eds., *Norm und Realität: Kontinuität und Wandel der Zisterzienser im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2009).

Franz Felten, *Vita religiosa sanctimonialium: Norm und Praxis des weiblichen religiösen Lebens vom 6. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christine Kleinjung, Studien und Texte zur Geistes- und Sozialgeschichte des Mittelalters 4 (Korb, 2011).

Franz J. Felten, Harald Müller and Heidrun Ochs, eds., *Landschaft(en): Begriffe— Formen—Implikationen* (Stuttgart, 2012).

Dušan Foltýn et al., eds., *Encyklopedie moravských a slezských klášterů* [*Encyclopaedia of Moravian and Silesian Monasteries*] (Prague, 2005).

John B. Freed, "Urban Development and the 'cura monialium' in Thirteenth-Century Germany", *Viator* 3 (1972), 311–27.

Thomas Füser, *Mönche im Konflikt: Zum Spannungsfeld von Norm, Devianz und Sanktion bei den Cisterciensern und Cluniazensern: 12. bis 14. Jahrhunderts*, Vita regularis 9 (Münster, 2000).

Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millenium* (Princeton, 1994).

Andre Gingrich and Christina Lutter, "Visions of Community: An Introduction", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015) 1–7; DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2014.930739

Fiona J. Griffiths and Julie Hotchin, *Partners in Spirit: Women, Men, and Religious Life in Germany*, 1100–1500 (Turnhout, 2014).

Jeffrey F. Hamburger et al., eds., *Frauen—Kloster—Kunst: Neue Forschungen zur Kulturgeschichte des Mittelalters* (Turnhout, 2007).

Alfred Haverkamp, "Neue Formen von Bindung und Ausgrenzung: Konzepte und Gestaltungen von Gemeinschaften an der Wende zum 12. Jahrhundert", in *Salisches Kaisertum und neues Europa: Die Zeit Heinrichs IV und Heinrichs V*, eds. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Darmstadt, 2007), 85–122.

Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (London, 1999).

Elisabeth van Houts, ed., *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past 700–1300* (London, 2001).

Peter Johanek, "Stadt und Zisterzienserinnenkonvent: Ausblick auf ein Forschungsprogramm", in *Stadtarchiv und Stadtgeschichte: Forschungen und Innovationen*, ed. Archiv der Stadt Linz (Linz, 2004), 217–30.

Fritz Peter Knapp, *Die Literatur des Spätmittelalters: Geschichte der Literatur in Österreich*, vol. 2/1: *Die Literatur des Spätmittelalters* (Graz, 1999).

Frank C. Korom , ed., *The Anthropology of Performance* (Chichester, 2013).

Christiane Ulrike Kurz, *"Ubi et est habitatio sororum et mansio fratrum": Doppelklöster und ähnliche Klostergemeinschaften im mittelalterlichen Österreich (Diözese Passau in den Ausdehnungen des 13. Jahrhunderts)* (Kiel, 2015).

József Laszlovszky, "Crown, Gown and Town: Zones of Royal, Ecclesiastical and Civic Interaction in Medieval Buda and Visegrád", in *Segregation—Integration—Assimilation: Religious and Ethnic Groups in the Medieval Towns of Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Derek Keene et al. (Farnham, 2009), 179–203.

Jean Leclercq, "La clôture: Points de repère historiques", *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 43 (1981), 366–76.

Thomas Lentes, "Andacht und Gebärde: Das religiöse Ausdrucksverhalten", in *Kulturelle Reformation: Sinnformationen im Umbruch (1400–1600)*, eds. Bernhard Jussen and Craig Koslowsky, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Institutes für Geschichte 145 (Göttingen, 1998), 29–67.

Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000).

Klaus Lohrmann and Ferdinand Opll, eds., *Regesten zur Frühgeschichte von Wien*, Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte 10 (Vienna, 1981).

Radka Lomičková, "Visitationsurkunden aus böhmischen und österreichischen Zisterzienserklöstern: Das Leben hinter Klostermauern im 14. Jahrhundert", *Citeaux—Commentarii cistercienses* 62,1–4 (2011), 241–82.

Christina Lutter, *Geschlecht&Wissen, Norm&Praxis, Lesen&Schreiben: Monastische Reformgemeinschaften im 12. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 2005).

Christina Lutter, "*Locus horroris et vastae solitudinis*? Zisterzienser und Zisterzienserinnen in und um Wien", *Historisches Jahrbuch* 132 (2012), 141–76.

Christina Lutter, "Social Groups, Personal Relations, and the Making of Communities in Medieval *vita monastica*", in *Making Sense as Cultural Practice: Historical Perspectives,* ed. Jörg Rogge (Bielefeld, 2013), 45–61.

Christina Lutter, "Comparative Approaches to Visions of Community", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 129–43; DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2014.930738

Christina Lutter, "Geistliche Gemeinschaften in der Welt", in *Klöster im Mittelalter zwischen Jenseits und Welt*, eds. Gert Melville et al. (Regensburg, 2014), 145–60.

Christina Lutter, "Geteilte soziale Räume und gemeinsame Zugehörigkeiten: Die Wiener Zisterzienserinnen um 1300", in *Konstanz und Wandel: Religiöse Lebensformen im europäischen Mittelalter*, eds. Christine Kleinjung und Thomas Kohl (Korb, 2016), in press.

Jürgen Martschukat and Steffen Patzold, eds., *Geschichtswissenschaft und "performative turn": Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit* (Cologne et al., 2003).

Brian P. McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350–1250*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, 2010).

June Mecham, *Sacred Communities, Shared Devotions: Gender, Material Culture and Monasticism in Late Medieval Germany,* eds. Alison I. Beach et al., Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 29 (Turnhout 2014).

Gert Melville and Anne Müller, eds., *Regula Sancti Augustini: Normative Grundlage differenter Verbände im Mittelalter* (Paring, 2002).

Gert Melville and Anne Müller, eds., *Female 'vita religiosa' between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, Vita religiosa 47 (Berlin, 2011).

Gert Melville, *Die Welt der mittelalterlichen Klöster: Geschichte und Lebensformen* (Munich, 2012).

Gert Melville et al., eds., *Innovationen durch Deuten und Gestalten: Klöster im Mittelalter zwischen Jenseits und Welt* (Regensburg, 2014).

Gert Melville, "Im Spannungsfeld von religiösem Eifer und methodischem Betrieb: Zur Innovationskraft der mittelalterlichen Klöster", *Denkströme: Journal der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 7 (2011), 72–92, http://denkstroeme.de/heft-7/s_72-92_melville (20.07.2015).

Constant Mews, "Scholastic Theology in a Monastic Milieu in the Twelfth Century: The Case of Admont", in *Manuscripts and Monastic Culture: Reform and Renewal in Twelfth-Century Germany*, ed. Alison I. Beach (Turnhout, 2007), 217–40.

Michael Mitterauer, "Geistliche Verwandtschaft im Kontext mittelalterlicher Verwandtschaftssysteme", in *Die Familie in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters,* ed. Karl-Heinz Spieß (Vorträge und Forschungen 71, Sigmaringen, 2009), 171–95.

Jörg Oberste, *Visitation und Ordensorganisation: Formen sozialer Normierung, Kontrolle und Kommunikation bei Cisterziensern, Prämonstratensern und Cluniazensern (12.-frühes 14. Jh.)*, Vita regularis 2 (Münster, 1996).

Otto G. Oexle, "Max Weber und das Mönchtum", in *Max Webers Religionssoziologie in interkultureller Perspektive,* eds. Hartmut Lehmann and Jean Martin Ouédraogo (Göttingen, 2003), 311–34.

Otto G. Oexle, *Die Wirklichkeit und das Wissen: Mittelalterforschung—Historische Kulturwissenschaft—Geschichte und Theorie der historischen Erkenntnis*, eds. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch et al. (Göttingen, 2011).

Otto G. Oexle, "Koinos bios: Die Entstehung des Mönchtums", in id., *Die Wirklichkeit und das Wissen: Mittelalterforschung—Historische Kulturwissenschaft—Geschichte und Theorie der historischen Erkenntnis*, eds. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch et al. (Göttingen, 2011), 470–95.

Ferdinand Opll, "St. Maria bei St. Niklas vor dem Stubentor", *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 50 (1994), 13–81.

Judith A. Rasson and Katalin Szénde, eds., *Annual of Medieval Studies at the Central European University* (CEU) 21 (Budapest, 2015).

Diarmuid Ó Riain, "The *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*: A New Investigation of one of Medieval Europe's Richest Hagiographical Collections", *Analecta Bollandiana* 133 (2015), 87–165; DOI 10.1484/J.ABOL.5.107710.

Hedwig Röckelein, "Inklusion—Exklusion: weiblich—männlich", in *Klöster im Mittelalter zwischen Jenseits und Welt,* eds. Gert Melville et al. (Regensburg, 2014), 127–44.

Floridus Röhrig, ed., *Die Stifte der Augustiner-Chorherren in Böhmen, Mähren und Ungarn* (Klosterneuburg, Vienna, 1994).

Floridus Röhrig, ed., *Die bestehenden Stifte der Augustiner-Chorherren in Österreich, Südtirol und Polen* (Klosterneuburg, Vienna, 1997).

Floridus Röhrig, ed., *Die ehemaligen Stifte der Augustiner-Chorherren in Österreich und Südtirol* (Klosterneuburg, Vienna, 2005).

Werner Rösener, "Die Stadthöfe der Zisterzienser im Spannungsfeld der Stadt-Land-Beziehungen des Hochmittelalters", in *Kloster und Wirtschaftswelt im Mittelalter*, ed. Claudia Dobrinski (Munich, 2007), 85–99.

Joachim Rössl, "Die Zwettler 'Bärenhaut' – nochmals als exemplarischer Beleg", in *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter*, ed. Hans Patze, Vorträge und Forschungen 31 (Sigmaringen, 1987), 663–80.

Ingrid Roitner, "Das Admonter Frauenkloster im 12. Jahrhundert: Ein Musterkloster des Ordo Hirsaugiensis", *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Bendiktiner-Ordens und seiner Zweige* 116 (2005), 190–289.

Beatrix Romhany, *Kolostorok és társaskáptalanok a középkori Magyarországon* [*Monasteries and Collegiate Chapters in Medieval Hungary*] (Budapest, 2000).

Beatrix Romhany, "Kolostorhálózat—településhálózat—népesség: A középkori Magyar Királyság demográfiai helyzetének változásaihoz" [On the Demographic Changes of the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom], *Történelmi Szemle* 57,1 (2015), 1–49.

Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2006).

Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge, 2015).

Rüdiger Schnell, "Wer sieht das Unsichtbare? Homo exterior und homo interior in monastischen und laikalen Erziehungsschriften", in *'anima' und 'sêle': Darstellungen und Systematisierungen von Seele im Mittelalter*, eds. Katharina Philipowski and Anne Prior, Philologische Studien und Quellen 197 (Berlin, 2006), 83–112.

Anton E. Schönbach, "Über Gutolf von Heiligenkreuz: Untersuchungen und Texte", in *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse* 150/2 (Vienna, 1904), 1–129.

Klaus Schreiner, "Consanguinitas—Verwandtschaft als Strukturprinzip religiöser Gemeinschafts- und Verfassungsbildung in Kirche und Mönchtum des Mittelalters", in *Beiträge zu Geschichte und Struktur der mittelalterlichen Germania Sacra*, ed. Irene Crusius (Göttingen, 1989), 176–305.

Klaus Schreiner, "Mönchsein in der Adelsgesellschaft des hohen und späten Mittelalter: Klösterliche Gemeinschaftsformen zwischen spiritueller Selbstbehauptung und sozialer Anpassung", *Historische Zeitschrift* 248 (1989), 557–620.

Klaus Schreiner, ed., *Hirsau St. Peter und Paul 1091–1991*, vol. 2: *Geschichte, Lebens- und Verfassungsformen eines Reformklosters* (Stuttgart, 1991).

Klaus Schreiner, "Ein Herz und eine Seele: Eine urchristliche Lebensform und ihre Institutionalisierung im augustinisch geprägten Mönchtum des hohen und späten Mittelalters", in *Regula Sancti Augustini: Normative Grundlage differenter Verbände im Mittelalter*, eds. Gert Melville and Anne Müller (Paring, 2002), 1–47.

Klaus Schreiner, "Communio", in id., *Gemeinsam leben: Spiritualität, Lebens- und Verfassungsformen klösterlicher Gemeinschaften in Kirche und Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*, Vita regularis 53 (Berlin, 2013), 205–41.

Klaus Schreiner, *Gemeinsam leben: Spiritualität, Lebens- und Verfassungsformen klösterlicher Gemeinschaften in Kirche und Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*, eds. Mirko Breitenstein and Gert Melville, Vita regularis 53 (Berlin, 2013).

Sita Steckel, "Networks of Learning in Byzantine East and Latin West: Methodological Considerations and Starting Points for Further Work", in Networks of Learning. Perspectives on Scholars in Byzantine East and Latin West, c. 1000-1200, ed. ead. et al (Zürich, Berlin, 2014), 185–233.

Stefanie Seeberg, *Die Illustrationen im Admonter Nonnenbrevier von 1180: Marienkrönung und Nonnenfrömmigkeit: Die Rolle der Brevierillustration in der Entwicklung von Bildthemen im 12. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 2002).

Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1991).

Steven Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900–1100* (Ithaca, London, 2013).

Steven Vanderputten, "Communities of Practice and Emotional Aspects of Loyalty in Tenth and Eleventh-Century Monasticism", in *Loyalty in the Middle Ages: Ideal and Practice of a Cross-Social Value*, eds. Jörg Sonntag and Coralie Zermatten (Turnhout, 2016) in press.

Pavel Vlček et al., eds., *Encyklopedie českých klášterů* [*Encyclopaedia of Bohemian Monasteries*] (Prague, 1998).

Stefan Weinfurter, *Salzburger Bistumsreform und Bischofspolitik im 12. Jahrhundert: Der Erzbischof Konrad I. von Salzburg (1106–1147) und die Regularkanoniker* (Cologne, 1975).

Stefan Weinfurter, "Die Macht der Reformidee: Ihre Wirkkraft in Ritualen, Politik und Moral der spätsalischen Zeit", in *Religiöse Ordnungsvorstellungen und Frömmigkeitspraxis im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter,* ed. Jörg Rogge (Korb, 2008), 13–39.

The *Schottenklöster* in the World: Identity, Independence and Integration*

Diarmuid Ó Riain

Introduction

One of the central concerns of the original *Enclaves of Learning, Religion, Ideology and Practice* working group was to examine the multifaceted connections between the "enclave" and the surrounding world and to illustrate how texts produced within these communities served to both record and reinterpret this interaction as well as having the potential to change the underlying relationships.[1] This approach essentially treats of the physical, legal or other factors underpinning the identification as an *enclave of learning, religion, ideology and practice* within the broader context of the institution's social relations, thereby seeking to redress the potentially problematic semantic implications of the term "enclave". The focus of my paper will be the so-called *Schottenklöster* or Irish Benedictine monasteries, which were established between the later 11th and early 13th centuries in modern-day southern Germany and Austria. That the monasteries of medieval Europe were deeply embedded in the wider social environment rather than detached islands goes, of course, almost without saying.[2] This reality coexisted, however, with what Hallinger called the traditional *gegenweltliche* instincts of monasticism, and the rhetoric of withdrawal from the world would always remain prominent, particularly in the context of the emergence of new monastic movements.[3] What makes the *Schottenklöster* an especially interesting case-study with regard to the interplay between idealized detachment and actual integration is the issue of ethnicity; the Irish identity of the monasteries was their *sine qua non*, and, accordingly, had a profound influence on the level of independence and integration they

---

1 See the introduction to this section.

2 See, for example, the contributions by Rutger Kramer and Christina Lutter to this volume as well as Melville, *Welt der mittelalterlichen Klöster*, 303–07, Vanderputten, "Introduction", and Lutter, "Geistliche Gemeinschaften".

3 Hallinger, "Zur geistigen Welt", 437. On the importance of the idea of *Weltflucht* within monasticism see Melville, *Welt der mittelalterlichen Klöster*, 13–18, 56, 114–15, 127–31, 167–68.

sought and achieved. Texts written at the *Schottenklöster* reveal the concerns of the Irish monasteries in these matters, while promoting a particular concept of Irishness that, it will be argued, served simultaneously to emphasize the essential difference of the Irish monks and to communicate a sense of their belonging. Moreover, an examination of the historical record concerning the motivations of the early patrons of the *Schottenklöster* can help to cast light on the external reception of the Irish monks' visions of community. In short, this article will focus on the construction and safeguarding of the monastic identity of the *Schottenklöster*, and on the impact it had on the relationship between the monasteries and the outside world.

The ten Irish Benedictine monasteries—eight abbeys and two priories—were part of a definable group or union, with the monastery of St James in Regensburg as motherhouse.[4] The term *Schottenklöster* derives from the common Latin nomenclature for the monasteries, namely *monasteria Scotorum*, *Scoti* being the standard Latin word for Irishmen up to the high medieval period, at which point *Hibernia* began to replace *Scotia* as the chief designation for the island of Ireland.[5] The origins of the movement can be traced back to a community of Irish monks that formed in Regensburg in the 1070s and which was attached to the extramural church of Weih Sankt Peter. Reportedly due to the great expansion in the size of the community, a second Irish monastery dedicated to St James was founded at Regensburg circa 1100 and would assume a central role in the movement's subsequent expansion, which began with the founding of a daughter-house in Würzburg around 1138.[6] The *Schottenklöster* operated as a separate group within the Benedictine order, a situation given papal sanction in 1185 and again in the wake of the 1215 Laternan council, despite rules introduced there concerning the holding of general chapters and the conducting of visitations on a provincial basis.[7]

---

4 On the general history of the Irish Benedictine monasteries in Germany, see Hammermayer, "Die irischen Benediktiner-'Schottenklöster'"; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster;* Ó Riain-Raedel, "Irish Benedictine Monasteries"; Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster"; Weber*, Iren auf dem Kontinent.*

5 See Hammermayer, "Die irischen Benediktiner-'Schottenklöster'", 319–25; Richter, "Die Iren", 245.

6 Although the establishment of the *Schottenklöster* at Erfurt is traditionally dated to 1136, I have argued elsewhere that the historical basis for this date is weak and that the monastery is not likely to have been founded until the 1150s; Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster", 237–79.

7 García y García, ed., *Constitutiones concilii quarti Lateranensis*, pp. 60–62. The implementation of this *canon XII*, which was inspired by the Cistercian model, would ultimately prove very limited within the Benedictine order; see Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 291–92; Cygler, *Generalkapitel*, 10–11; Moore, *Pope Innocent III*, 242, 270–71. Regarding the 1185 and 1215 papal bulls for St James, see below, n. 58 & 59.

Instead the Regensburg monastery held rights of visitation and correction over the other Irish monasteries, the abbots of which were supposed to attend an annual general chapter at Regensburg.[8] In reality, the leading role of the Regensburg motherhouse within the movement was the subject of repeated resistance during the more than 400 years of the monasteries' existence, and the integrity and distinct identity of the *Schottenklöster* group within the "fractured monastic landscape" remained more a matter of ethnicity than the product of any robust centralized power structure.[9] These monasteries were Irish in more than just name: the national exclusivity of the brethren was jealously guarded. Only a few examples of this rule being circumvented are recorded, in some cases extremely ostentatious donations having led to particular local patrons being admitted to the community.[10] The sources surviving from the medieval *Schottenklöster* speak only of the island of Ireland as the origin of their brethren. It is nonetheless conceivable that monks drawn from Gaelic-speaking parts of Scotland, the inhabitants of which could also be referred to as *Scoti* in the early and high medieval periods, may have entered the Irish monasteries. This seems more likely to have occurred in the earliest phase of the movement, when most of the monks, including Marianus and his initial companions, appear to have been natives of the northern part of Ireland, which had extensive cultural ties to Scotland.[11] In the early 12th century, however, the principal source of *Schottenklöster*

---

8   See Hammermayer, "Die irischen Benediktiner-'Schottenklöster'", 270–96; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 289–309.

9   Quotation from Vanderputten, "Introduction", xxiv. See also Röhrkasten, "Regionalism and Locality", 253–58.

10   One early German patron of the Irish monastery at Würzburg, called Adalhard, who contributed generously to the construction of the western end of the monastic church, was granted this honour before his death, according to an 1176 charter; Staatsarchiv Würzburg, Standbuch 545 (=*Schottenklöster* chartulary), fol. 8r; Wieland, "Schottenklöster", reg. no. 18; Oswald, "Westbau", 35–36. This is almost certainly the *Adalhardus monachus Sancte Jacobi Wirceburgensis* commemorated in both the Würzburg and general *Schottenklöster* necrologies on 28 and 29 January respectively; Ó Riain-Raedel, "Nekrolog", 53, 58. Another example appears to have been one Bethselinus, a townsman (*urbanus*) who is said in the *Vita Mariani* to have been the principal financier of the *claustrum et claustri edificia* erected at Weih Sankt Peter after the church was granted to Marianus and his companions; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 122–23. The *Bezilinus monachus nostrae congregationis* commemorated on 21 July in the *Schottenklöster* necrology is most probably the same individual; Ó Riain-Raedel, "Nekrolog", 69; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 98–99; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 376.

11   See Broun, *Irish Identity*, 1–10 et *passim*; Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, 312–50.

monks switched to the southern province of Munster.[12] It was there that a number of priories subject to the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* were established to serve the role of recruitment centres, in the hope of ensuring the supply of Irish novices necessary to sustain the monasteries on the Continent.[13] Persistent difficulties in attracting sufficient personnel for all of the daughter-houses would, nonetheless, remain one of the chief problems that faced the *Schottenklöster*, the wave of expansion in the 12th century ultimately leaving the movement overstretched.[14]

The Schottenklöster and Community

As in the case of the *enclaves* which form the subject of Eirik Hovden's contribution to this volume, it is possible to discern different overlapping levels of community from an examination of the historical record concerning the *Schottenklöster*, and this approach can aid the contextualization and interpretation of the monasteries' literary output. A perception that each Irish monk belonged both to their respective individual monastic community and also to the larger group composed of the brethren of all of the *Schottenklöster* can be retrieved from surviving sources. For example, in addition to necrologies maintained at the individual monasteries, from the mid-12th-century onwards a necrology was kept at the Regensburg motherhouse recording the deaths of monks from all the Irish monasteries combined.[15] It should be noted, however,

---

12   According to the *Vita Mariani*, the first abbot of the newly established monastery of St James at Regensburg was from the south of Ireland, his predeccessors at Weih Sankt Peter having hailed from the north; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 126. The subsequent Munster predominance within the *Schottenklöster* would persist into the 16th century and is clearly reflected in the sources surviving from the monasteries; see Ó Riain-Raedel, "Irish Kings and Bishops"; ead., "Cashel and Germany"; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 277–87; Ó Riain, "New Light".

13   Regarding the Irish priories, see Coombes, "Benedictine Priory"; Ó Riain-Raedel, "Nekrolog", 21–27; ead., "Irish Benedictine Monasteries", 58–63; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 282–87; Ó Riain, "New Light"; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 485–92.

14   Concerning the personnel difficulties experienced by the Schottenklöster, see Hammermayer, "Die irischen Benediktiner-'Schottenklöster'", 307–10.

15   This necrology is transmitted in a 17th-century copy: Vat. lat. 10100 (edited in Ó Riain-Raedel, "Nekrolog"). According to the transcript, the original necrology was kept from 1150 onwards. No medieval witness of a necrology survives from any of the individual *Schottenklöster*, but post-medieval necrologies ostensibly copied from earlier templates survive from the Irish monasteries at Regensburg, Würzburg and Vienna. On the community-building nature of

that it was in the interests of the Regensburg motherhouse to foster an image of a "super-community" embracing all of the *Schottenklöster*, united by their ties to the motherhouse.[16] The feeling of belonging may have been considerably weaker in the daughter-houses, which have generally left a much smaller mark on the historical record.

The *Schottenklöster* were urban monasteries, and plenty of evidence for a sense that the individual houses were part of their local civic communities is also available, and most clearly manifest in their participation in the annual rituals of feast-day celebrations and processions. A dramatic memorial testifying to the importance of such communal activities for the Irish monks can be seen to this day in Würzburg. Here in the late 13th century the monks of the *Schottenklöster* strenuously objected to plans of the Teutonic Order to build their new church blocking the traditional route of processions to and from the Irish monastery.[17] The Teutonic Knights were eventually forced to relent, and to incorporate a large passageway running under their church for the benefit of the Irish monks. While sources such as necrologies and deeds of donation also testify to interaction with civic elites, the extent to which the existence of the *Schottenklöster* impacted upon lower social groups within each town is difficult to determine. A limited caritative role can be inferred from isolated references to hospitals or pilgrim hospices, but the general paucity of evidence for pastoral engagement on the Irish monks' part suggests that, unlike the later mendicant orders, this was not a primary motivation for locating their houses at centres of population. As far as the texts produced at the *Schottenklöster* were concerned, it was the Irish monks themselves who were the *pauperes christi* deserving of charity, in keeping with a motif common within contemporary monasticism.[18]

---

memoria such as necrologies, see Schmid and Wollasch, "Gemeinschaft der Lebenden", 365–66; Oexle, "Memoria als Kultur", 37–41.

16   Quotation from steven Vanderputten's response to this section.

17   See Herzig, "Die Deutschordenskommende", 59–65. A letter written in 1290 to King Rudolf I by the abbots of the Benedictine monasteries of St Stephan and St Burkhard and the deans and chapters of the secular canonries of Neumünster and Stift Haug in Würzburg highlighted the importance of the relevant road to the *Schottenklöster* monks and its use as a processional route since time immemorial: "…*quod quidam transitus, apud domum honorabilium virorum, fratrum Teutonicorum, extra muros Civitatis Herbipolensis, omnibus transeuntibus, præcipue autem venerabilibus viris, Abbatj et conventuj Sancti Jacobi Scotorum, et etiam nobis in solemnibus processionibus nostris est communis et fuit, ante tempora quorum non extat memoria*".; Würzburg, Staatsarchiv, Standbuch 545, fol. 20r; Bendel, ed., *Urkundenbuch*, vol. 1, no. 314.

18   On this concept, see Werner, *Pauperes Christi,*19–24, 198–99; Constable, *Monastic Tithes*, 169–70. The term is applied to the Irish monks three times in the *Vita Mariani*; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 92–95, 136–37, 160–61; see also the quotation in n. 36 below.

A sense that the Irish monasteries also saw themselves as part of a wider monastic community, not exclusively of Benedictine hue, can be read from their involvement in confraternities with non-Irish houses and from the travel of manuscripts between the *Schottenklöster* and outside monasteries.[19] The prominent place of the Irish monastery at Vienna within the complex manuscript tradition of the 12th- and 13th-century Austrian annals provides a good illustration of the underlying contacts that existed between the *Schottenklöster* and other monasteries in the region belonging to various orders.[20] The dissemination across southern Germany and Austria of hagiographical works and other Irish *Kulturgut* written or collected at the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* in the 12th century offers a further example.[21]

Solos Elegimus Scotos: The Monastic Identity of the Schottenklöster

There is nothing in the available sources to suggest that the form of communal life pursued in the *Schottenklöster* differed greatly from other Benedictine houses in the region, no indication of a particular reform agenda. What marked the *Schottenklöster* out from contemporary monasteries was primarily the ethnic make-up of their communities. The concept upon which the entire notion of a separate union of monasteries rested was the Irish identity of these *Schottenklöster*. Key to attracting the patronage necessary for the expansion and financial stability of the movement was therefore the ability to ensure that Irishness was not perceived as simply equating to foreignness, but instead carried with it notions of piety and monastic rigour. The *Schottenklöster* were greatly aided in this regard by the positive legacy attached to the Irish and pseudo-Irish missionaries and monastic pioneers who had made their mark on the Continent in the early medieval period. This had led within the ecclesiastical sphere to the intermingling of the concept of Irishness with notions of sanctity, piety and asceticism, a development most patent within the field of hagiography, where the spurious attribution of Irish origins to saints had been widespread for centuries before the emergence of the *Schottenklöster*.[22]

---

19   Wollasch, "Spuren Hirsauer Verbrüderungen", 473–75; Ó Riain-Raedel, "Patrician documents", 713 n. 4.

20   See below, n. 79.

21   See Bieler, *Four Latin Lives*, pp. 233–34; Ó Riain-Raedel, "Patrician Documents"; ead., "*Vita sancti Coemgeni*", 147–52; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 697–749.

22   See Rutger Kramer's contribution to this volume for an example of this topos in Notker's 9th-century *Gesta Karoli*. The most detailed discussion of the Hibernicization phenomenon remains Koch, *Sankt Fridolin*, 55–92. See also O'Hara, "Constructing a Saint", 113–16.

Indeed, at the very cradle of the *Schottenklöster* movement, Regensburg, a Life written in the mid-11th century had hibernicized a venerated late-7th-/ early-8th-century bishop of the town, Erhard, who in all likelihood actually hailed from the Narbonne region in southern France.[23]

There can be little doubt that the traditionally positive connotations attached to Irishness in an ecclesiastical context contributed towards the expansion of the *Schottenklöster*. This is clear in the case of the earliest daughter-house at Würzburg, founded by Bishop Embricho (*ep.* 1127–1146), where the memory of the Irish saint, Kilian, who is believed to have been martyred in the town in 689, is recalled in an 1142 confirmation charter.[24] Although direct evidence is lacking, it is plausible that the local traditions of Irish saints also helped pave the way for the establishment of other daughter-houses such as those at Constance and Vienna.[25] While the pre-existing goodwill would have made southern Germany and Austria a fertile ground for the Irish monks, in order to attract patronage on an ongoing basis it was incumbent upon them to ensure by word and deed that the outside perception of the all-important Irish identity of the *Schottenklöster* continued to be benign. The *Vita Mariani*, the key historical text produced at the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* in the 12th century, suggests that it was primarily the most favourable reputation of the Regensburg motherhouse that had moved Bishop Embricho to found a daughter-house at Würzburg.[26] An 1161 confirmation charter issued by Duke Heinrich II of Austria in favour of the *Schottenklöster* he had founded at Vienna in 1155 provides less tendentious evidence for the Irish monasteries enjoying a strong standing at the time. The charter praises the *simplicitas* or pious innocence of the Irish monks and, in a remarkable endorsement of the mono-ethnicity of the *Schottenklöster*, suggests that the virtue of *unanimitas*, one of those central tenets of monastic life discussed in Christina Lutter's paper in this volume, was better nurtured within a community composed of monks belonging to a single *gens*:

> Since it repeatedly comes to pass that no little diversity in character arises
> from the different customs of different peoples and out of the same

---

23   BHL 2590; *Vita Erhardi*, ed. Levison, p. 10; Koschwitz, "Der heilige Bischof"; Mai, "Der heilige Bischof"; Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster and the Legacy".

24   "*…peregrini Scoti, videlicet compatriotae patronj nostrj, pretiosj martyris Kiliani*"; Würzburg, Staatsarchiv, Standbuch 545, fol. 1v; Wieland, "Schottenklöster", reg. no. 1.

25   See Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster and the Legacy".

26   BHL 5527; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent,* 142–43. The memory of St Kilian is also cited as a motivating factor in the same passage.

[develops] disagreement, we, wishing to prevent in every possible way the torments of envy and mutterings of discontent, which are thoroughly harmful to the unanimity of monastic life, in the disposition of this new plantation choose Irishmen only, of whose praiseworthy simplicity we know both from our own experience and above all through the reports of reliable witnesses[27]

Whether the Irish monks benefited elsewhere from similar perceptions of a correlation between ethnic diversity and discord is unattested. The Babelian tenor of this sentiment does find an echo in a passage early in the *Vita Mariani.* Here the author recounts that before reaching Regensburg, Marianus and his two Irish companions, Iohannes and Candidus, entered the Benedictine monastery of St Michael at Bamberg, ostensibly at the prompting of the illustrious Bishop Otto of the same town.[28] Otto, having observed the zealous exertions of the three monks in respect of fraternal peace and charity and the fact that they were ignorant and inexperienced in the German language, decided to establish a separate *cellula* for the Irish monks at the foot of a hill neighbouring the Michelsberg. Here they are said to have been free to devote themselves to attending more diligently and more privately (*accuratius ac secretius*) to the precepts of divine law. This distinct Irish enclave is a proto-*Schottenklöster*, and the implication of the passage appears clear: a monastic life of superior quality is possible within a mono-linguistic or mono-ethnic environment. It seems that justification for the very existence of the ethnically exclusive *Schottenklöster* is being offered here. Furthermore, the author anachronistically proffers no less a figure than Bishop Otto of Bamberg, the foremost monastic patron of the high medieval period in the region, as a proponent of the concept of Irish-only monasteries.

Combined with a reputation for piety, during the phase of expansion such notions of a correlation between mono-ethnicity and accord may have led to a perception of the *Schottenklöster* as particularly well-equipped to rigorously fulfil the daily duties of the *vita monastica*. Such a semblance of a well-ordered

---

27   Hauswirth, ed., *Urkunden,* no. 4; also available at http://www.mom-ca.uni-koeln.de/mom/AT-StiAScho/SchottenOSB/1161_IV_22.1/charter.

28   Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 108–11. The involvement of Otto of Bamberg is a chronological impossibility, as Marianus and his companions would have to have been in Bamberg in the late 1060s and Otto's episcopacy did not commence until 1102; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 60–62; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 276–77. It seems likely that Otto was written into the story for reasons of prestige, the great monastic patron being cast here as an admirer and advocate of the Irish monks.

claustral life would also have promoted the monasteries as eminently suitable guardians of the all-important *memoria* of potential patrons. A vital part of the memorial culture of any monastery was the necrology, and the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* appears to have maintained a list of deceased brethren and benefactors of it and its daughter-houses from at least the mid-12th century onwards.[29]

The benign opinion of the Irish monks held by Heinrich II of Austria, who would choose the Viennese *Schottenklöster* as his burial place, may have stemmed from direct contact with the Irish monastery at Regensburg, seat of the Duke of Bavaria, a position Heinrich II had held until his dispossession in 1154.[30] His sister Bertha, wife of the Regensburg Burgrave, Heinrich von Riedenburg, was a valued benefactor of the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* and had been interred within the chapter-house of that monastery circa 1150.[31] She may have been one of those reliable witnesses referred to in the 1161 Viennese charter, among whose number may also have been Heinrich's half-brother and ally King Konrad III (*reg.* 1138–1152), who had himself founded a *Schottenklöster* at Nuremberg circa 1140.[32] With regard to Konrad's own motivations for choosing Irish monks—who, according to the *Vita Mariani*, were charged with praying for the well-being of the *imperium* and its *reges*—it may again have been a case of personal experience combined with the recommendations of others.[33] One of Konrad's closest advisors was namely Bishop Embricho, founder of the Würzburg *Schottenklöster*.[34] The Staufer palace at Würzburg appears to have been located in close proximity to the *Schottenklöster*, and there is reason to believe that Konrad may have attended a consecration ceremony at the monastery in July 1138.[35] Such royal endorsement of the monastic offering of the

---

29   Ó Riain-Raedel, "Nekrolog", 49.

30   Whether Heinrich, then also Margrave of Austria, actually resided permanently in Regensburg or rather in Austria is uncertain; see Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 215–16; Lechner, *Babenberger*, 245; Csendes, "Regensburg und Wien". Heinrich's brother, Otto of Freising, refers to Regensburg as *sedes ducatus* in his *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. Hofmeister, p. 349.

31   *Vita Mariani*, § 15 (Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 138–39). Regarding Bertha, see ibid., pp. 497–99; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 101, 105.

32   Indeed, he is credited in a 16th-century source with having commended the Irish monks to Heinrich II of Austria; Rasch, *Stifftung und Prelaten*.

33   Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 154–57.

34   Described by Konrad as "*cor nostrum et anima nostra*" in a letter sent to the Byzantine emperor, Manuel I in 1145; MGH, DD K III, no. 126; Otto of Freising, *Gesta Friderici*, ed. Waitz, p. 42. See also Ziegler, *König Konrad III.*, 109–22.

35   See Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster", 121–23.

Schottenklöster can only have boosted their attractiveness to potential patrons. Thus it appears that by the mid-12th century a reputation for a peculiar piety was bound up in the monastic identity of the *Schottenklöster*, which, while inextricable from the ethnic backdrop, supplemented the traditional positive connotations associated with Irish clerics on the Continent.

Written texts offered the Irish monasteries an additional means of enhancing their reputation, constituting a vehicle to explain and extol their unique monastic offering and to shape public perceptions of the essential Irish identity. To this end, the authors of the two principal historical texts produced at the Irish monastery in Regensburg in the 12th and 13th centuries, the *Vita Mariani* and the *Libellus de fundacione ecclesie Consecrati Petri*, fixed on a leitmotif characterizing the monks of the *Schottenklöster* as pilgrim monks or *Scoti peregrini*. This was part of an attempt to exploit and build upon the positive legacy associated with the Irish monastic and missionary tradition on the Continent in the early medieval period. Lacking a missionary purpose or pioneering form of monasticism, the notion of the *Scoti peregrini* provided a means to portray the monks of the *Schottenklöster* as successors of their venerated compatriots: they too had exiled themselves from Ireland to do Christ's work.[36]

Irishmen and the concept of the *peregrinatio pro Christo*, the author of the *Libellus* argued, were inextricably linked.[37] The notion of the Irish Benedictine monks as *Scoti peregrini* was not an invention on the part of the author of the *Vita Mariani*, the idea already being well-rooted in the collective identity of the *Schottenklöster*.[38] Earlier references to the Irish monks as *monachi peregrini* or *Scoti peregrini* in charters issued by Emperor Heinrich IV in 1089 and by Bishop Embricho in 1142 point to an external reception of this self-portrayal as pilgrim monks.[39] The 1089 charter also refers to the monks of the Irish

---

36 The following sentence from the opening chapter of the *Vita Mariani* illustrates the author's strategy in this regard: "*Quapropter antecessores nostri nos quoque Christi pauperes pro remedio animarum de finibus occidentis nudum Christum nudi sequentes, patriam carosque propinquos amore ac desiderio uitę cęlestis derelinquentes* [...] *commendabo*". (I will commend to you why our predecessors and we also, the poor of Christ, following from a western land nude the nude Christ for the salvation of our souls, leaving behind our homeland and our dear relatives out of love and desire for a heavenly life); Weber*, Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 92–94.

37 E.g. "*Et duxerunt in consuetudinem omnes Scoti ab illo die invisere loca sancta Christi et peregrinari*". (And they introduced the custom from that day forward for all Irishmen to visit sacred places and go on pilgrimage); Breatnach, *Schottenlegende*, p. 183.

38 For more on this subject, see Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster and the Legacy".

39 MGH, DD H IV, no. 403; Würzburg, Staatsarchiv, Standbuch 545, fol. 1v; Wieland, "Schottenklöster", reg. no. 1.

monastery at Weih Sankt Peter, as "certain Irishmen, who had exiled them-selves from their homeland for the torment of the body and the salvation of the soul, and who, after spending a long time visiting places of prayer, had come at last to Regensburg", a vision of the community which tallies closely with that offered in the *Vita Mariani* nearly a century later. Whereas the 1089 description can be said to reflect the fact that the Irish community at Weih Sankt Peter did in the early period include many Irish monks who had already been on the Continent—whether as pilgrims or, perhaps, resident in other non-Irish monasteries—before being drawn to Regensburg, by the time of the *Vita Mariani*'s writing the Irish monasteries are likely to have been peopled predominantly with monks recruited directly from Ireland, who would have been much more firmly grounded in the Benedictine precept of *stabilitas loci*. While their self-portrayal as *Scoti peregrini* served to "other" the monks of the *Schottenklöster*, the extreme selflessness of pious exile differentiating them from all others, it can also be seen as an attempt at the normalization of the *Schottenklöster*; the authors of the *Vita Mariani* and *Libellus* contend that there were always Irish pilgrim monks active on the Continent and that the *Schottenklöster* were simply continuing this tradition. By association with their more illustrious compatriots, whose contribution to the development of the Church they highlighted—particularly with respect to southern German regions—a justification for the existence of their contemporary, exclusively Irish enclaves was being offered.

The image of the *Schottenklöster* monks as *peregrini* was further empha-sized by the choice of the patron-saint of pilgrims, St James, for the mother-house and three of the daughter-houses, while a further daughter-house at Eichstätt was dedicated to another pilgrimage cult, that of the Holy Cross and Holy Sepulchre. Although supporting the notion of the Irishmen as pilgrim monks, it is interesting that universal rather than Irish saints and cults were chosen. While there was a strong emphasis on Irish saints within the hagio-graphical and liturgical output of the *Schottenklöster*, they were never chosen for church dedications and very rarely for chapels or altars.[40] This may be attributable to different target audiences for these media. The intended out-side audience for hagiographical works produced at the *Schottenklöster* is likely to have been one located within a monastic milieu, while the dedications of churches, chapels and altars may have been chosen with an eye to the pref-erences of a more general public. The promotion of themselves as pilgrim monks and the fostering of pilgrimage-related cults may have contributed to the attractions of Irish monks for patrons during the 12th century, when

---

40   See Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster and the Legacy" for some exceptions.

interest in pilgrimage reached new heights in tandem with the Crusades. There is evidence, for example, that the cult of the Holy Sepulchre was strong at the Irish monastery at Weih Sankt Peter in Regensburg, and this association may well have been one of the principal considerations that led Walbrun, Dean of Eichstätt cathedral, to found a *Schottenklöster* dedicated to the Holy Cross and Holy Sepulchre at Eichstätt circa 1150.[41]

As an extension of the Irish monks' manner of self-representation there were a growing number of attempts to write the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* into the town's historical narrative by connecting the monastery or the notion of *Scoti peregrini* with celebrated figures and events in Regensburg's past. Building on the earlier Hibernicization of St Erhard, the *Vita Albarti archiepiscopi* was written at the Abbey of St James in the 12th century, possibly quite soon after the foundation of the monastery.[42] The *Vita* sees Erhard, here cast as Bishop of Armagh, accompanied by Albart, Archbishop of Cashel, leaving Ireland for the Continent as *peregrini pro Christo*, both ending their days at Regensburg. The historically unattested figure of Albart was almost certainly invented by the hagiographer, the aims of the legend apparently being to fabricate a link between Ireland and Regensburg, to remind a local audience of the Irish origins of their venerated Erhard and to interpolate two *Scoti peregrini* into the historical tradition of Regensburg as forerunners of the *Schottenklöster* monks. This Life effectively amounts to an attempt to strengthen the position of the fledgling Irish monastery in Regensburg by integrating itself into local tradition.

The *Libellus*, a work part-history, part-fantasy, written anonymously at the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* in the mid-13th century, put it plainly when it depicted the monks of the *Schottenklöster* as arriving in Regensburg "*post vestigia sanctorum Herhardi et Alberti*" ("in the footsteps of Erhard and Albart").[43] The *Libellus* shows due deference to the spurious cult of Albart and Erhard, but its greatest feat was to link the foundation of the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* in the 11th century directly to the most exalted of all German medieval figures, namely the long-deceased Charlemagne. He is said to have founded the church of St Peter at the site of his victory over a heathen enemy outside the walls of Regensburg, with Irish pilgrim monks arriving shortly afterwards to occupy

---

41   See Ó Riain, "Irish Jerusalem", 224–25.

42   BHL 218; *Vita Albarti archiepiscopi Casellensis*, ed. Levison. The legend is discussed at length in Hennig, "St Albert", 21–39; Flachenecker, "Hagiographische Werke", 110–13; Ó Riain-Raedel, "Cashel and Germany", 183–85; Weber, "Konstruktion"; id*., Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 732–35; Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster and the Legacy".

43   Breatnach, *Schottenlegende*, p. 202.

the church, in accordance with an angelic vision experienced by the Emperor.[44] Despite the extraordinary chronological gymnastics performed by the author of *Libellus*—Marianus, who lived a quarter of a millennium later, was among the first Irish monks to arrive—this so-called *Regensburger Schottenlegende* gained widespread acceptance within the Regensburg historical tradition, before being repudiated by Aventinus in the early 16th century.[45] As in the case of the *Vita Albarti*, the attempt to embed the *Schottenklöster* within the town's historical narrative is unmistakable.

It is difficult to determine the impact the *Schottenklöster* strategy of attaching themselves to the tradition of the saintly Irish monks and missionaries of the early medieval period had on the outside world, whether their particular vision of community was shared by an external audience. The content of the *Libellus*, which aside from its glorification of all things Irish includes praise and pseudo-historical material concerning *Ratispona urbs preclara*, leaves little doubt that the work was aimed in part at a Regensburg readership.[46] The incorporation of the Charlemagne legend or *Schottenlegende* into the town's late-medieval and early modern historical narrative, albeit with the Irish element toned down, indicates success in this regard.[47] A Regensburg target audience can also be assumed for the *Vita Albarti*, but its reception was more limited, perhaps due in part to fundamental inconsistencies with the *Vita Erhardi*, which made no mention of the saint's *peregrinatio* or his purported companion, Albart.[48] The development of a modest cult associated with Albart

---

44   Ibid., 158–234.

45   Aventinus, *Herkommen der Stadt Regensburg*, ed. Lexer, pp. 294–97: "Es stên in der lugent drauß zu Weich S. Petter noch wol mêr lugen, als das die Schotten zu kaiser Karls zeiten her kumen solten sein…" (296). See also Kraus, *Das Bild Regensburgs*, 86–102.

46   Breatnach, *Schottenlegende*, p. 158 (quotation).

47   The *Libellus* is transmitted in whole or part in 16 manuscripts, all but two of which were copied from other, lost witnesses; Breatnach, *Schottenlegende*, pp. 79–112. The Latin text was also translated into German verse and prose versions in the 14th century; Shaw, *Karl der Große*; Gröber, "Res factae versus res fictae". On the reception of the *Libellus* see also Kraus, *Das Bild Regensburgs*, 90–102; Wolf, *Bilder und Vorstellungen*, 214–20.

48   The *Vita Erhardi* and *Vita Albarti* appear, nonetheless, as consecutive items in two manuscripts of Regensburg provenance, one an early-13th-century legendary from the Benedictine monastery of St Emmeram, the other a compilation from the Franciscan friary dating to between 1434 and 1436; 1) Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14473: Halm et al, *Catalogus codicum latinorum*, vol. 4/2, 178; Klemm, *Die romanischen Handschriften* (text vol.), 43;2) Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 2928: Schneider, *Die deutschen Handschriften*, 364–379. The complete Life is otherwise only preserved in the late-12th-century, *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*; Poncelet, "De Magno Legendario Austriaco", 62; Ó Riain, "Magnum Legendarium Austriacum"; id., "Schottenklöster and the Legacy".

is, nonetheless, indicated by the construction of a sepulchral monument for the saint at the Niedermünster canonry in the 14th century.

The question of the intended audience of the *Vita Mariani* is a particularly interesting one. Ostensibly an account of the exploits of Muiredach Macc Robartaig, who is styled therein as the founding father of the *Schottenklöster* movement, the Life, written by an anonymous author at the monastery of St James in Regensburg circa 1180, is more a *historia fundationis* than a hagiographical work; the recounting of the role of Marianus in the foundation of the first Irish monastery of Weih Sankt Peter in Regensburg soon makes way for an outline of the history of the *Schottenklöster* movement up to the time of writing.[49] This work was undoubtedly aimed in part at an internal audience, as the author's invocation of his *fratres* towards the beginning of the Life suggests, thereby seeking to shape the collective memory of the Regensburg community.[50] Unsurprisingly, considering where it was written, the *Vita Mariani* narrative represents very much a Regensburg version of events, emphasizing the central role of the Abbey of St James in the founding of each daughter-house, and asserting its primary position within the movement. It seems likely that a wider "internal" audience, comprising the monks of the other *Schottenklöster,* who would arguably also have been understood as the author's *fratres*, was also intended to receive this message. Although none of the surviving text witnesses is associated with these daughter-houses, there is some evidence for the work's reception there.[51] Flachenecker speculated that the *Vita Mariani* might have been laid before Pope Lucius III as evidence supporting Regensburg's

---

49 Marianus dies ten chapters into the work and after receiving a couple of mentions in passing (§ 11 & 12) is the subject of a final reference in the concluding chapter 24. Only one miracle is attributed to Marianus in the Life (§8), and there is little evidence for his cult having been otherwise fostered at the medieval *Schottenklöster* in Regensburg (chapter numbers after the edition in Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*).

50 Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, 102. The general message of Regensburg's primordial role and its importance to the cohesion of the Irish monasteries is delivered in symbolic terms in one particular passage in the *Vita*, where the author suggests that many of the Irish monasteries in Bavaria and Franconia rely for the most part upon manuscripts transcribed by Marianus himself, who was indeed a noted scribe; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 114–15. This motif neatly ties all of the *Schottenklöster* to the Regensburg motherhouse through the person of the movement's founding father.

51 For example, passages from the *Vita Mariani* provided the basis for a foundation history written at the *Schottenklöster* of St Aegidius at Nuremberg in the 14th or 15th century, and contained in "*Das altt sal puch deß closters santt Egidii in Nuremberg*"; Nuremberg, Stadtarchiv, A 21–2: No. 107, fols. 36r–39v (Extracts reproduced in Pfeiffer, "Anfänge der Egidienkirche", 261–62). For a discussion of the dating, see ibid., 262; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 183–84.

claim to the leadership role within the *Schottenklöster* movement, a position recognized by the 1185 papal bull.[52] That a perceived need for papal confirmation of Regensburg's status as the group's leader inspired the composition of the *Vita* at this particular point in time is certainly conceivable. The Life was written after the great expansion of the movement in the mid-12th century and contemporaneously with the completion of an elaborate new monastic complex at Regensburg, and the writing of a *historia fundationis* would be consistent with a prevailing desire to consolidate and take stock. It appears certain that the author intended his account of the great achievement of the Irish monks from their humble origins at Weih Sankt Peter to broadcast the virtues of the *Schottenklöster* to the wider world. The modest manuscript transmission of the Life, however, speaks against a particularly widespread reception for his work outside of the enclave.[53] While the *Libellus* incorporated much material drawn from the *Vita Mariani*, its fantastic retelling of the foundation history of the Irish monastery at Regensburg easily eclipsed the considerably more sober account contained in the earlier work with regard to its impact on an external audience.

"*Hec Est Mea Plantacio*": The Independence and Legal Status of the *Schottenklöster*

Because the Irish identity of the *Schottenklöster* monks was the essential point of difference in their monastic package and underlay the whole concept of the Regensburg-led union of monasteries, it required not only promotion, but also protection. The earliest charter surviving from the *Schottenklöster* at Regensburg, arguably the most extraordinary document among a rich diplomatic collection covering the 450 years of the Irish presence in the town, was crucial in this regard. As mentioned above, in 1089 Heinrich IV granted imperial protection to a group of Irish *monachi peregrini*, who had for some time being pursuing a *vita monastica* at the church of Weih Sankt Peter in Regensburg.[54] The securing of the *mundiburdium defensionis* of the Emperor, the highest secular power, was undoubtedly a major coup for the Irish monks, for this was a monastic community in a fledgling state and hitherto in a legal limbo. While, as foreigners, the Irishmen could as individuals expect to receive

---

52   Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 290.

53   The Life is preserved in ten manuscripts, the earliest five of which belong to exemplars of the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*; Weber, *Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 27–60.

54   MGH, DD H IV, no. 403.

the level of protection traditionally afforded to pilgrims and monks in the high medieval period, the emergence of a permanent monastic community at Regensburg created a new and uncertain legal situation.[55] The circumstances were complicated further by the fact, as stated in the 1089 charter, that the church of Weih Sankt Peter did not belong to Irish monks, and their use of it was dependent on the assent of the owner, the abbess of the Obermünster canonry, and of the Bishop of Regensburg. The hitherto ambivalent standing of the Irish community, which had by this stage occupied the Weih Sankt Peter site for more than a decade, is reflected particularly in the opening line of the charter, which colourfully describes the recipients as "*quidam Scottigenae pro cruciando corpore salvandaque anima patria sua exulerant ac diu orationum loca visitantes Ratisponam tandem venerant*".[56] The granting of the imperial charter gave the Irish monastic community an independent legal status, notwithstanding the recognition of the rights of the Obermünster abbess in relation to the property, and marks a major step towards the integration of the enclave into the wider legal, ecclesiastical and social framework.

This was the first of numerous royal and papal privileges received by the various *Schottenklöster*, which, in addition to charters granted by the founders of the individual daughter-houses, bestowed a legal standing and a level of secular and ecclesiastical protection upon the Irish monasteries in medieval Germany and Austria that was basically equivalent to that enjoyed by a "local" Benedictine institution. Yet the monasteries' Irish identity—their *sine qua non*—did impinge to a certain degree upon their legal status and prompted a particular concern with the issue of independence. The Irish monasteries were marked out from other Benedictine houses by virtue of their affiliation to the wider Regensburg-led union. Because this union was basically built on *mater-filia* relationships, analogies can be drawn with contemporary Cistercian practice, but the key ingredient of ethnicity makes the *Schottenklöster* group a unique phenomenon. The existence of this union of monasteries under the rule or *regimen* of the abbot of St James in Regensburg is attested in a papal bull of 1185, which also contains reference to an already existing practice of holding general chapters of *Schottenklöster* at the motherhouse.[57] While reforms introduced at the 1215 Lateran council, which prescribed the holding

---

55   Thieme, "Fremdenrecht"; Schubert, "Fremde", 13–16. From the mid-11th century onwards a series of papal decrees calling for the protection of, among others, pilgrims and monks were also issued; Birch, *Pilgrimage,* 84–85.

56   For translation, see above, p. 394.

57   Ried, *Codex chronologico-diplomaticus* 1, no. 285;, *Germania Pontificia* 1.2, ed. Brackmann, p. 293.

of regional general chapters within the Benedictine order with associated powers of visitation and correction, had the potential to impinge upon the integrity of the union of *Schottenklöster*, a charter obtained from Pope Innocent III by the Regensburg motherhouse excluded the Irish monasteries from the new arrangement.[58] This ensured the independence of the group as a whole, but, by virtue of the powers granted to the Regensburg abbot by successive papal bulls, the autonomy of the daughter-houses in respect of matters such as the election of abbots could be constrained.

The unique Irish identity of the *Schottenklöster* gave rise to other noteworthy developments that would influence the level of their independence and integration. Lacking strong kinship or other ties to their new surroundings, the Irish monks were in a potentially vulnerable position, or at least this may have been the perception, both on their part and that of others. Arising from the outsider status of the *Schottenklöster*, a relatively pronounced dependence on their founders and protectors is appreciable, particularly in the foundation phase.[59] This reliance probably explains one of the curious aspects of the *Schottenklöster*, namely that all houses were erected within urban areas, rather than in the relative isolation of the countryside, as was the dominant preference within contemporary monasticism. The need for physical proximity to their patrons' power centres, presumably for reasons of physical security and the safeguarding of their independence, most likely inspired this choice. In a number of cases, the Viennese house being a salient example, the monastery and residence of its patron were situated almost side-by-side.[60]

The unusual willingness of the Irish monks to establish monasteries in urban areas may have been one of the attractions of the movement to its

---

58   This bull does not survive, but its content is known from its citation in 13th- and 14th-century charters relating to the Regensburg, Erfurt and Vienna monasteries; Hammermayer, "Die irischen Benediktiner-'Schottenklöster'", 272; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 293–94.

59   Cf. Hammermayer, "Die irischen Benediktiner-'Schottenklöster'", 270: "Als Fremdlinge auf Wahrung nationaler Eigenständigkeit bedacht, blieben die Irenmönche in weit stärkeren Maße als die deutschen Konvente angewiesen auf die Unterstützung durch weltliche und geistliche Herrschaftsträger. Reichsrechtliche bzw. kanonische Fixierung und Konfirmation ihrer Rechte und Freiheiten, urkundliche Sicherung des jeweiligen Güterbestandes bedeuteten für die Iren Existenzfragen; sie konnten positiv nur beantwortet werden mit Hilfe des Kaisers, des Papstes und der jeweiligen Territorialherren".

60   The *Schottenklöster* at Vienna stood in close proximity to the believed site of the Babenberg palace, namely the square known today as Am Hof; Lechner, *Babenberger,* 245; Csendes, "Aufenthaltsorte der Babenberger", 29; id., "Regensburg und Wien", 168; Ebner, "Frühgeschichte Wiens", 63; Ó Riain, "*Schottenklöster*", 282–83.

patrons during the 12th century. In a number of cases, including Nuremberg, Memmingen and Vienna, the monasteries were the first religious houses to be founded within a town at a stage early in its development. The construction of the *Schottenklöster* can be viewed in the context of the desire of the founder, in each case also the town lord, to develop the urban area, a monastery being a virtually indispensable part of any medieval town's infrastructure. The Irish monks could prove useful to their founders in other practical ways; there is evidence that the monks of at least two daughter-houses performed scribal duties in the chancelleries of their patrons, while there are some instances where members of the community appear to have also occupied the role of royal or ducal chaplain.[61] The term court-monastery might not be too strong a term to describe the relationship between some houses and their founders and successors, albeit for limited periods. It may be that the vulnerability of the Irish monks arising from their outsider status resulted in them being more compliant to their benefactors' wishes in relation to the manner in which the monasteries functioned. A perception that this was the case may again have contributed to the attractiveness of the Irish monks to potential patrons in the 12th century. Perhaps the *simplicitas* spoken of in Heinrich II's 1161 confirmation charter for the Viennese *Schottenklöster* should, beyond its connotations of an exemplary piety, also be interpreted to encompass a perceived innocence on the part of the Irish monks in worldly affairs and thus their greater potential malleability from the founder's perspective.[62]

The Irish monasteries' need to have their independence safeguarded led to a growing dependence on their patrons. This could have dramatic consequences, as an example concerning the Viennese *Schottenklöster* illustrates. The relationship between the monastery, which had been founded by Duke Heinrich II in 1155, and the Babenberg court remained close into the 13th century, but a perception of the *Schottenklöster* as a Babenberg institution encouraged Duke Leopold VI to seek to evict the Irish monks in the early 13th century in order to convert their monastic church into the cathedral of the planned new Viennese diocese. Through recourse to the papacy, thereby pitting one *defensor* against another, the Irish monks were able to stave off Leopold's attempts and the plan to erect a new diocese ultimately failed.[63] Interestingly,

---

61   Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 175–77, 180–90, 233–34

62   See above, p. 390–391.

63   The monastery had received papal privileges in 1177, 1185, and 1191. In response to Leopold VI's attempts to gain papal approval for his diocesan scheme, which was also strongly resisted by the Bishop of Passau, Abbot Marcus managed in 1208 to secure confirmation of the papal protection owing to the *Schottenklöster*, in effect helping to force Innocent

the Viennese *Schottenklöster* had secured its first papal privilege within three months of the death of Heinrich II in 1177.[64] Perhaps this initiative indicates an awareness on the part of the Irish monks that their dependence on the Babenberg dynasty had left them somewhat vulnerable and that the founder's successors might not remain as benignly disposed towards their monastery, notwithstanding that it is stated in the charter that it was the new duke, Leopold V, who requested papal protection for the monastery. The advantages of having a counterweight to Babenberg guardianship were certainly borne out during the diocesan affair.

A distinction must be drawn between the *Schottenklöster* daughter-houses and the Regensburg motherhouse with respect to their level of independence. As mentioned above, the rights attached to Regensburg's papal-sanctioned stewardship of the union of *Schottenklöster* circumscribed to a certain degree the autonomy of the daughter-houses. Furthermore, the Abbey of St James was in the unusual position of being a monastery effectively without a founder. While, according to an 1112 imperial charter, a large number of leading Regensburg citizens paid for the purchase of the site of the monastery, there was no single founding figure associated with the establishment.[65] The issues affecting a monastery's autonomy attaching to the dependence or over-dependence on a founder did not therefore arise in the case of St James. This is not to suggest that the question of its level of independence was not a concern for the motherhouse. The circumstances surrounding the emergence of the Irish monastic community at Weih Sankt Peter must surely have fed anxieties in this regard. As discussed above, the Irish monks had the use but not ownership of the church of Weih Sankt Peter, which belonged to the Obermünster canonry, whose abbess could claim significant rights with respect to the running of the Irish monastery there.[66] According to an episcopal decision of 1216, these included the right to choose the prior of Weih Sankt Peter from among its brethren and that of St James, a power retained until at least the middle of the 15th century.[67] The issue of independence is broached a number of times in

---

III's hand in the matter; Hauswirth, ed., *Urkunden*, nos. 6, 8,10, 13; *Germania Pontificia* 1.1, ed. Brackmann, pp. 252–53; also available at http://www.mom-ca.uni-koeln.de/mom/AT-StiAScho/SchottenOSB/fond?block=1. Regarding Leopold VI's endeavours in this respect, see Lechner, *Babenberger*, 200–03; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 227–28; Krabbo, "Versuche der Babenberger", 17–24.

64   See preceding note for references.

65   MGH, DD H V, no. 100.

66   See Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 98.

67   "*Quando Prioratus sancti Petri vacabit Priore, abbatissa superioris Monasterii veniens ad abbatem et Conventum sancti Jacobi et Deum pre oculis habens petat aliquem Scotum de*

texts produced at the Regensburg *Schottenklöster*. For the most part, this involved the authors trumpeting the autonomy of the monastery. A salient example is provided by the *Vita Mariani,* the late-12th-century hagiographical work cum foundation history already encountered above. After describing the origins and development of the *Schottenklöster* movement up to the time of writing, the narrative reaches something of a crescendo with the following statement, which appears in the Life's penultimate chapter:

> Indeed, what I find otherwise more worthy of admiration is that, so far from home, with only the help of God and without the support of any worldly prince or bishop, the saintly men and simple pilgrims from the land of Ireland providently and fittingly erected a church in honour of God and St James in a suburb of Regensburg. And with the help of the living God, with the advice and assistance of Pope Calixtus and the pious Emperor Henry the elder, made it in such a way independent, that neither the emperor, nor the Bishop of Regensburg, nor the Duke of Bavaria, nor the Burgrave of that town, nor any man other than the Irish can truthfully say: "This is my plantation, this is my institution, by the law of inheritance I can hold possession of this house of God, this sanctuary".[68]

Here only the reference to the assistance of pope and emperor tempers the absolutism of the author's declaration of independence and his picture of single-handed achievement on the part of the Irish monks.[69] The importance of imperial and papal protection to the founderless Irish monastery alluded to here is more strongly emphasized elsewhere in the Life.[70] According to the author of the *Vita*, a privilege granted to the abbey by Innocent II, while confirming the papacy's *cura et tutitio* of the Irish monastery, stated that the

---

ipso Conventu vel de Fratribus sancti Petri idoneum sibi dari Priorem, et si bonus ac idoneus est, quem postulaverit, dandus erit in Priorem Ecclesie prenominate"; Ried, *Codex chronologico- diplomaticus,* no. 335.

68 Weber*, Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 162–64.

69 The author is mistaken here in his reference to Henry the Elder; it was Heinrich v rather than his father who was a contemporary of Pope Calixtus and who granted the new monastery of St James an imperial privilege in 1112.

70 Reference is also made to the various imperial and papal charters underpinning the *libertas* of the monastery at §9 (1089 imperial charter), §12 (1112 imperial charter and the privilege received from Pope Calixtus), §14 (charter granted by Innocent II) and §23 (list of all papal privileges received to date: Calixtus (date unknown), Innocent II (date unknown), Eugene III (1148), Adrian IV (1156) and Alexander III (1177)); Weber*, Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 122–23, 130–31, 134–35, 164–65.

emperor was to serve the role of its lay advocate and protect it from an unjust attack, insofar as the monastery concerned both the *curia Romana et dominus imperator*.[71] This is a somewhat curious mingling of papal and royal protection and particularly interesting on account of the implication that it was the duty of the emperor to enforce not only his own but also the pope's responsibilities with respect to the *Schottenklöster*. Because no privilege from Innocent II actually survives, it must remain open as to whether the content of the charter, presuming it existed, is accurately recounted in the *Vita Mariani*. The passage appears to reflect notions of the emperor as *advocatus* of the Roman church as they were current in the second half of the 12th century.[72] Instances of the role of emperor as advocate of individual papal-protected monasteries being said to derive from his position as *advocatus Romanae ecclesiae* arise in this period and the contemporary development of the concept of the emperor as *defensor* of all Cistercian houses within the empire can also be seen to be rooted in the same underlying idea.[73]

As is most clear in respect of the 1089 charter, the privileges received from pope and emperor were, in effect, as Hammermayer put it, *Existenzfragen* for the Irish monks, protections without which the enclave could not hope to prosper.[74] With regard to imperial protection, the question arises as to what figure was actually entrusted with the protective role of the emperor on the ground in Regensburg by serving as the monastery's *advocatus*. There is no clear documentary evidence to illuminate this issue, but there are certainly hints that the Regensburg Burgraves, a position held by members of the Babonen or von Riedenburg family from 974 until the late 12th century, occupied this role.[75] This would make the mention of the Burgrave in the above excerpt from the *Vita Mariani* more pointed.

The recorded circumstances of the foundation of St James cast further light on the context of the reference to the Burgrave in the above quotation from the *Vita Mariani*. The imperial privilege granted by Heinrich V in 1112 credits Burgrave Otto von Riedenburg and 16 named Regensburg citizens with the purchase of the site for the monastery.[76] This charter was clearly available as a source for the author of the *Vita*, but his account of the acquisition of the site

---

71 Weber*, Iren auf dem Kontinent*, pp. 134–35.

72 See Goez, "Imperator advocatus Romanae ecclesiae"; Schuldi, "*Advocatus sanctae Romanae ecclesiae*", 41–47.

73 See Hirsch, *Klosterimmunität*, 108–22; Szabó-Bechstein, "'*Libertas ecclesiae*'", 164–72.

74 See quotation in n. 60.

75 Störmer, "Babonen"; Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster*, 265–66.

76 MGH, DD H V, no. 100.

transforms Otto into a mere mediator between the Irish monks and the vendor. While unnamed Regensburg citizens are said to have contributed generously towards the payment of the masons who built the monastery, in the light of the 1112 charter the *Vita* account essentially amounts to an underplaying of outside involvement in the foundation process. This approach almost certainly stems from the author's desire to stress the independence of the Regensburg monastery, leading ultimately to the sentiments expressed in the bombastic statement quoted above. The 16 Regensburg *cives* involved in purchasing the site were effectively written out of the monastery's foundation history, and the role of the leader of the group and therefore the nearest thing the *Schottenklöster* had to a potential founding figure, Burgrave Otto, reduced to that of a go-between. If the Babonen family did indeed hold the position of monastic advocate, it seems possible that the diminution of Otto's role might have been aimed at staving off any attempt on the part of his successors to claim additional rights in respect of the monastery on the basis of *ius fundationis*. The importance of the question of the circumstances surrounding the foundation of St James with regard to the autonomy of the monastery is again apparent in the other major historical work produced at the Regensburg *Schottenklöster*, namely the above-mentioned 13th-century *Libellus*. Here also Regensburg citizens are attributed a role in the acquisition of the site for the new monastery, but it is assuredly stated that the purchase price and cost of construction were paid for entirely by donations collected on a fund-raising trip back to Ireland.[77] While monies were raised on such missions to Ireland in the 12th century, none of the recorded journeys predates the foundation of St James. Considering it is in clear contradiction of the 1112 charter, the *Libellus* spin on events can again be seen as an attempt to assert the independence of the Regensburg monastery, making it appear even more Irish and detached than it actually was. The contrast with the general thrust of the *Libellus*, which sought to integrate the Irish monastery into the historical narrative of the town, is striking.

Conclusion

The *Schottenklöster* story was marked by the constant need to strike a balance between independence and integration, and texts written in the monasteries provide ample evidence of this interplay. The monasteries needed autonomy in order to preserve the essential Irish identity of their enclave, but this could only be achieved by way of integration into the local legal and political

---

77   Breatnach, *Schottenlegende*, pp. 237–54.

framework. The black-and-white vision of an independent Irish plantation offered by the author of the *Vita Mariani* disguises this reality. More representative of the Irish monks' extensive interactions with the world outside the enclave are texts such as the recently-discovered 12th-century Boole Library litany, a text of *Schottenklöster* provenance which seeks the intercession of a series of both Irish and Regensburg/Bavarian saints, and the annals of the Viennese *Schottenklöster*, in which the affairs of Babenberg Austria and of Ireland are interspersed.[78]

The notion of the monks of the *Schottenklöster* as *Scoti peregrini* fostered by the authors of the historical and hagiographical texts written at the Regensburg *Schottenklöster* served, on the one hand, to differentiate or "other" the Irish monks, but, through the invocation of the legacy of the Irish missionary saints of the early medieval period and the invention of new legendary material, the existence of Irish monasteries on the Continent was also justified and normalized. The reciprocal relationship between the ideal vision of an enclave and a more pragmatic reality and the role of texts between the two has been a core interest of the *Enclaves of Learning, Religion, Ideology and Practice* working group, as is reflected in a number of the contributions to this section.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Annales Austriae, ed. Wilhelm Wattenbach, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (MGH SS) 9 (Hannover, 1851), pp. 479–843.

Johannes Aventinus, *Herkommen der Stadt Regensburg*, in *Johannes Turmair's, genannt Aventinus sämmtliche Werke*, 1, ed. Matthias Lexer (Munich, 1881), pp. 255–97.

Franz Josef Bendel, ed., *Urkundenbuch der Benediktiner-Abtei St. Stephan in Würzburg*, 1 (Leipzig, 1912).

Ludwig Bieler, *Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick: Colgan's Vita Secunda, Quarta, Tertia, and Quinta*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae 8 (Dublin, 1971).

Albert Brackmann, ed., *Germania Pontificia*, 1, parts 1 & 2, Regesta pontificum Romanorum 1.1.2 & 1.2.2 (Berlin, 1910–1911).

---

78 Cork, University College, Boole Library, U.331; Ó Riain-Raedel and Ó Riain, "Irish Saints". Regarding the *Schottenklöster* annals and their place within the labyrinthine manuscript tradition of the high and late medieval Austrian annals, see *Annales Austriae*, ed. Wattenbach, pp. 604–26; Klebel, "Fassungen und Handschriften", *passim*; Lhotsky, *Quellenkunde*, 191–92; Schmale, "Österreichische Annalistik", 181–85; Ó Riain-Raedel "Irish Annals", 127–36.

Pádraig Breatnach, *Die Regensburger Schottenlegende—Libellus de fundacione ecclesie Consecrati Petri: Untersuchung und Textausgabe*, Münchner Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 27 (Munich, 1977).

Antonius García y García, ed., *Constitutiones concilii quarti Lateranensis una cum commentariis glossatorum*, Monumenta iuris canonici, series A, 2 (Vatican City, 1981).

Dietrich von Gladiss and Alfred Gawlik, eds., *Die Urkunden Heinrichs IV.* (MGH, DD H IV). Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniae, 6 (Berlin, Weimar, Hannover, 1941–78).

Friedrich Hausmann, ed., *Die Urkunden Konrads III. und seines Sohnes Heinrich* (MGH, DD K III). Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniae, 9 (Vienna, 1969).

Karin Schneider, *Die deutschen Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München: Die mittelalterlichen Handschriften aus Cgm 888–4000*, Catalogus codicum manu scriptorum Bibliothecae Monacensis V/6 (Wiesbaden, 1991).

Ernest Hauswirth, ed., *Urkunden der Benediktiner-Abtei Unserer Lieben Frau zu den Schotten in Wien vom Jahre 1158 bis 1418*, Fontes Rerum Austriacarum 2.18 (Vienna, 1859).

Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "Das Nekrolog der irischen *Schottenklöster*: Edition der Handschrift Vat. lat. 10 100 mit einer Untersuchung der hagiographischen und liturgischen Handschriften der Schottenklöster", *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bistums Regensburg* 26 (1992), pp. 1–119.

Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel and Pádraig Ó Riain, "Irish Saints in a Regensburg litany", in *Clerics, Kings and Vikings: Essays on Medieval Ireland in Honour of Donnchadh Ó Corráin*, eds. Emer Purcell et al. (Dublin, 2015), pp. 55–66.

Otto of Freising, *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. Adolf Hofmeister, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum (MGH SS rer. Germ.) 45 (Hannover, 1912), pp. 1–457.

Otto of Freising, *Gesta Friderici I. imperatoris,* ed. Georg Waitz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum (MGH SS rer. Germ.) 46 (Hannover, 1912), pp. 1–161.

Johannes Rasch, *Stifftung und Prelaten unser lieben Frauen Gottshaus Benedicter-ordens genannt zu den Schotten zu Wienn in Österreich* Anno Domini MCLVIII (Vienna, 1586).

Thomas Ried, ed., *Codex chronologico-diplomaticus episcopatus Ratisbonensis*, 1 (Regensburg, 1816).

Vita Albarti archiepiscopi Casellensis, ed. Wilhelm Levison, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum (MGH SS rer. Merov.) 6 (Hannover, 1913), pp. 21–23.

Vita Erhardi episcopi Bavaraci auctore Paulo, ed. Wilhelm Levison, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum (MGH SS rer. Merov.) 6 (Hannover, 1913), pp. 8–21.

Matthias Thiel and Alfred Gawlik, eds., *Die Urkunden Heinrichs V. und der Königin Mathilde* (MGH, DD H V). Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniae, 7. (not yet printed, available online at http://www.mgh .de/ddhv/toc.htm).

Stefan Weber*, Iren auf dem Kontinent: Das Leben des Marianus Scottus von Regensburg und die Anfänge der irischen "Schottenklöster"* (Heidelberg, 2010).

Secondary Literature

Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change*, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion 13 (Woodbridge, 1998).

Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Studies in Celtic History 18 (Woodbridge, 1999).

Peter Csendes, "Die Aufenthaltsorte der Babenberger in Niederösterreich und Steiermark", *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 34 (1978), 24–32.

Peter Csendes, "Regensburg und Wien—Babenbergerresidenzen des 12. Jahrhunderts", *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien* 47/48 (1991/1992), 163–71.

James Coombes, "The Benedictine Priory of Ross", *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 73 (1968), 152–60.

Giles Constable, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1964).

Florent Cygler, *Das Generalkapitel im hohen Mittelalter: Cistercienser, Prämonstratenser, Kartäuser und Cluniazenser*, Vita regularis 12 (Münster, 2002).

Herwig Ebner, "Die Frühgeschichte Wiens", in *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt: Vorraussetzungen und Grundlagen*, eds. Hansjürgen Brackmann and Joachim Herrmann, Schriften zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte 44 (Berlin, 1991), 60–67.

Helmut Flachenecker, *Schottenklöster: Irische Benediktinerkonvente im hochmittelalterlichen Deutschland* (Paderborn, 1995).

Helmut Flachenecker, "Hagiographische Werke als Kommunikationshilfen für Fremde", in *Hagiographie im Kontext: Wirkungsweisen und Möglichkeiten historischer Auswertung*, eds. Dieter R. Bauer and Klaus Herbers (Stuttgart, 2000), 96–116.

Bettina Gröber, "Res factae versus res fictae: Konrad von Megenberg und seine überlieferungsgeschichtliche Relevanz für die Lektüre der Regensburger Schottenlegende", in *Konrad von Megenberg (1309–1374): ein spätmittelalterlicher "Enzyklopädist" im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Edith Feistner, Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein-Gesellschaft 18 (Wiesbaden, 2011), 359–69.

Kassius Hallinger, "Zur geistigen Welt der Anfänge Klunys", *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 10 (1954), 417–45.

Karl Halm et al., eds., *Catalogus codicum latinorum bibliothecae regiae Monacensis*, 4/2 (Munich, 1876).

Ludwig Hammermayer, "Die irischen Benediktiner-'Schottenklöster' in Deutschland und ihr institutioneller Zusammenschluß vom 12.-16. Jahrhundert", *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige* 87 (1976), 249–339.

John Hennig, "St Albert, Patron of Cashel: a Study in the History of Diocesan Episcopacy in Ireland", *Mediaeval Studies* 7 (1945), 21–39.

Arno Herzig, "Die Deutschordenskommende Würzburg im Mittelalter (1219–1549): Ihre Stellung als bischöfliche 'Hauskommende' und Komturspfründe", *Mainfränkisches Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kunst* 18 (1966), 1–120.

Hans Hirsch, *Die Klosterimmunität seit dem Investiturstreit: Untersuchungen zur Verfassungsgeschichte des deutschen Reiches und der deutschen Kirche* (Weimar, 1913).

Werner Goez, "Imperator advocatus Romanae ecclesiae", in *Aus Kirche und Reich: Studien zu Theologie, Politik und Recht im Mittelalter*, ed. Hubert Mordek (Sigmaringen, 1983), 315–28.

Ernst Klebel, "Die Fassungen und Handschriften der österreichischen Annalistik", *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich* N.S. 21 (1928), 43–185.

Elisabeth Klemm, *Die romanischen Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek. Teil 1: Die Bistümer Regensburg, Passau und Salzburg* (text vol.) (Wiesbaden, 1980).

Margrit Koch, *Sankt Fridolin und sein Biograph Balther: Irische Heilige in der literarischen Darstellung des Mittelalters* (Zürich, 1959).

Gisela Koschwitz, "Der heilige Bischof Erhard von Regensburg: Legende—Kult—Ikonographie", *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige* 86 (1975), 481–644.

Hermann Krabbo, "Die Versuche der Babenberger zur Gründung einer Landeskirche in Österreich", *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 93 (1905), 1–41.

Andreas Kraus, *Das Bild Regensburgs in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, Regensburg historische Forschungen 3 (Kallmünz, 1972), 86–102.

Karl Lechner, *DieBabenberger: Markgrafen und Herzöge von Österreich 976–1246* (Vienna, 1976).

Alphons Lhotsky, *Quellenkunde zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte Österreichs*, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 19 (Graz, 1963).

Christina Lutter, "Geistliche Gemeinschaften in der Welt", in *Innovationen durch Deuten und Gestalten: Klöster im Mittelalter zwischen Jenseits und Welt*, eds. Gert Melville et al. (Regensburg, 2014), 145–160.

Paul Mai, "Der heilige Bischof Erhard", in *Bavaria Sancta: Zeugen christlichen Glaubens in Bayern*, 2, ed. Georg Schwaiger (Regensburg, 1971), 30–51.

Gert Melville, *Die Welt der mittelalterlichen Klöster: Geschichte und Lebensform* (Munich, 2012), 303–07.

John C Moore, *Pope Innocent III (1160/1-1216): To Root Up and to Plant* (Leiden, 2003).

Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Memoria als Kultur", in, *Memoria als Kultur*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 121 (Göttingen, 1995), 9–78.

Alexander O'Hara, "Constructing a Saint: the Legend of St Sunniva in Twelfth-Century Norway", *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 5 (2009), 105–21.

Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Irish Annals in Vienna", *Peritia: Journal of the Irish Medieval Academy* 2 (1983), 127–36.

Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "Irish Kings and Bishops in the Memoria of the German Schottenklöster", in *Irland und Europa: die Kirche im Frühmittelalter*, eds. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart, 1984).

Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "Patrician Documents in Medieval Germany", *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 49–50 (1997/1998), 712–24.

Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "Irish Benedictine Monasteries on the Continent", in *The Irish Benedictines*, eds. Martin Browne and Colmán Ó Clabaigh (Dublin, 2005), 25–63.

Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "Cashel and Germany: the Documentary Evidence", in *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century: Reform and Renewal*, eds. Damian Bracken and Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin, 2006), 176–217.

Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "*Vita sancti Coemgeni*: an Edition of the Earliest Manuscript Version", in *Glendalough: City of God*, eds. Charles Doherty, Linda Doran and Mary Kelly (Dublin, 2011), 145–64.

Diarmuid Ó Riain, "New Light on the History of St Mary's Priory, Rosscarbery", *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 113 (2008), 56–68.

Diarmuid Ó Riain, "Schottenklöster: the Early History and Architecture of the Irish Benedictine Monasteries in Medieval Germany" (unpublished PhD thesis, University College Dublin, 2008).

Diarmuid Ó Riain, "An Irish Jerusalem in Franconia: the Abbey of the Holy Cross and Holy Sepulchre at Eichstätt", *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (Section C) 112 (2012), 219–70.

Diarmuid Ó Riain, "The Magnum Legendarium Austriacum: a New Investigation of one of Medieval Europe's Richest Hagiographical Collections", *Analecta Bollandiana* 133 (2015), 87–165.

Diarmuid Ó Riain, "The *Schottenklöster* and the Legacy of the Irish *sancti peregrini*", in "*A Fantastic and Abstruse Latinity*": *Hiberno-Continental Cultural and Literary Interactions in the Middle Ages*, eds. Wolfram Keller and Dagmar Schlüter (Münster, in press).

Friedrich Oswald, "Der Westbau der ehemaligen Schottenkirche in Würzburg", *Mainfränkisches Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kunst* 10 (1958), 20–39, at 35–36.

Gerhard Pfeiffer, "Die Anfänge der Egidienkirche zu Nürnberg: Ein Beitrag zur ältesten Stadtgeschichte", *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 37 (1940), 255–308.

Albert Poncelet, "De Magno Legendario Austriaco", *Analecta Bollandiana* 17 (1898), 24–96, 123–216.

Michael Richter, "Die Iren—Identität und Struktur einer *gens* am europäischen Rand", in *Völker, Reiche und Namen im frühen Mittelalter*, eds. Matthias Becher and Stefanie Dick, Mittelalterstudien 22 (Munich, 2010), 245–54.

Jens Röhrkasten, "Regionalism and Locality as Factors in the Study of Religious Orders", in *Mittelalterliche Orden und Klöster im Vergleich: Methodische Ansätze und Perspektiven*, eds. Gert Melville and Anne Müller, Vita regularis 34 (Berlin, 2007), 243–68.

Franz-Josef Schmale, "Die österreichische Annalistik im 12. Jahrhundert", *Deutsches Archiv zur Erforschung des Mittelalters* 31 (1975), 144–203.

Karl Schmid and Joachim Wollasch, "Die Gemeinschaft der Lebenden und Verstorbenen in Zeugnissen des Mittelalters", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1967), 365–405.

Karin Schneider, *Die deutschen Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München: Die mittelalterlichen Handschriften aus Cgm 888-4000*, Catalogus codicum manu scriptorum Bibliothecae Monacensis V/6 (Wiesbaden, 1991).

Ernst Schubert, "Fremde im mittelalterlichen Deutschland", *IMIS-Beiträge* 7 (1998), 7–33.

Ulrich Schuldi, "*Advocatus sanctae Romanae ecclesiae* und *specialis filius beati Petri*: Der römische Kaiser aus päpstlicher Sicht", in *Staufisches Kaisertum im 12. Jahrhundert: Konzepte—Netzwerke—Politische Praxis*, eds. Stefan Burkhardt et al. (Regensburg, 2010), 41–73.

Frank Shaw, *Karl der Große und die schottischen Heiligen*, Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 71 (Berlin, 1981).

Wilhelm Störmer, "Babonen", in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 1 (Munich, 1977), cols. 1322–23.

Brigitte Szabó-Bechstein, "'*Libertas ecclesiae*' vom 12. bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts. Verbreitung und Wandel des Begriffs seit seiner Prägung durch Gregor VII", in *Die abendländische Freiheit vom 10. zum 14. Jahrhundert: Die Wirkungszusammenhang von Idee und Wirklichkeit im europäischen Vergleich*, ed. Johannes Fried (Sigmaringen, 1991), 147–75.

Hans Thieme, "Fremdenrecht", in *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, ed. Adalbert Erler and Ekkehard Kaufmann, 1 (Berlin, 1971), 1270–72.

Steven Vanderputten, "Introduction", in id., *Reform, Conflict, and the Shaping of Corporate Identities: Collected Studies on Benedictine monasticism, 1050–1150*, Vita regularis 12 (Vienna, 2013), IX–XXVIII.

Stefan Weber, "Die Konstruktion eines fabulösen 'irischen' Heiligenlebens? Der heilige Albert, Regensburg und die Iren", in *Irische Mönche in Süddeutschland: Literarisches*

und kulturelles Wirken der Iren im Mittelalter, eds. Dorothea Walz and Jakobus Kaffanke (Heidelberg, 2009), 229–304.

Ernst Werner, *Pauperes Christi: Studien zu sozial-religiösen Bewegungen im Zeitalter des Reformpapsttums* (Leipzig, 1956).

Michael Wieland, "Das Schottenkloster zu St. Jakob in Würzburg", *Archiv des Historischen Vereins von Unterfranken und Aschaffenburg* 16 (1863), 1–183.

Peter Wolf, *Bilder und Vorstellungen vom Mittelalter: Regensburger Stadtchroniken der frühen Neuzeit*, Frühe Neuzeit 49 (Tübingen, 1999).

Joachim Wollasch, "Spuren Hirsauer Verbrüderungen", in *Hirsau St. Peter und Paul 1091–1991*, vol. 2.: *Geschichte, Lebens- und Verfassungsformen eines Reformklosters*, ed. Klaus Schreiner, Forschungen und Berichte der Archäologie des Mittelalters in Baden-Württemberg 10, 2 (Stuttgart, 1991), 173–93. Repr. in Joachim Wollasch, *Wege zur Erforschung der Erinnerungskultur: Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Münster, 2011), 455–98.

Alex Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba 789–1070*, The New Edinburgh History of Scotland, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 2007).

Wolfram Ziegler, *König Konrad III. (1138–1152): Hof, Urkunden und Politik*, Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters 26 (Vienna, 2008).

Among Teachers and Monastic Enclaves: An Inquiry into the Religious Learning of Medieval Tibet

Mathias Fermer

Dedicated to my late supervisor Helmut Krasser (†), who was a fearless learner and gracious teacher.[1]

Introduction

This chapter, as part of the section featuring "Spiritual Communities" in the various geographical contexts that are part of the VISCOM project, will explore the training of Tibetan Buddhist monastics and how it was represented in medieval sources of the time. Taking as the basis for textual investigation the biography or *namthar* (*rnam thar*) of a renowned 15th-century Tibetan tantric master together with his own "learning account", known in Tibetan as *senyig* (*gsan yig*), I will offer some observations on practices as well as ideas of religious "learning" in late medieval Tibet.

To begin, some general remarks will be made about procedures for deriving empirical data on the training of the Buddhist professionals who shaped the dense monastic landscape that evolved on the Tibetan plateau together with the Later Diffusion of Buddhism (*bstan pa phyi dar*) in the 11th century. I will then explain the study's methodology in view of the main focus of this VISCOM working group, "Enclaves of Learning". This will be followed by a few observations about the subject matter, with an examination of how, in the texts under consideration, the protagonist's course of learning is depicted and contextualized. Finally, a synopsis will be provided of the religious training of

Gongkar Dorjedenpa Kunga Namgyal (Gong dkar rdo rje gdan pa Kun dga'
rnam rgyal; 1432–1496), a territorial ruler in Central Tibet/Ütsang (dBus
gtsang) who started his spiritual career as a lay practitioner and later founded
his own monastic seat, which became known as Gongkar Dorjeden (Gong
dkar rdo rje gdan) or Gongkar Choede (Gong dkar chos sde; "the religious
enclave of Gong dkar"). To facilitate the study's broader accessibility, the con-
cluding section provides a general overview of the various areas of the mas-
ter's learning.

Enclaves of Learning

As was discovered in the preliminary discussions of the VISCOM working
group,[2] despite the geographic distance between the religious enclaves in
Arabia, Central Asia and Western Europe under examination, not to mention
their distinctive belief systems, a common field of engagement in these
enclaves was in particular activities connected to learning. The concept of
spiritual communities, or more specifically their "Enclaves of Learning", was
thus adopted as the overall designation of our working group and in the end,
"learning" became the focus of this chapter. Even with the obvious differences
in the orientation or function of religious education, the knowledge and out-
standing expertise of such communities were kept alive and passed on through
practices of learning (and instruction). Seen functionally and from a wider
historical perspective, the engagement with specific forms of learning—
whether collective or individual, with or without guidance, or in formal or
informal settings—is directly linked to what is often referred to as the preser-
vation and organization of knowledge. The educational practices supported by
sophisticated systems of learning (and instruction) can be seen as crucial com-
ponents for the integrity and survival of intellectual traditions, including those
of the religious communities under examination here.

   With regard to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which extends far beyond the
political boundaries of today's PR China, ethnographic fieldwork can verify a
continuity in monastic customs and educational methods, in many cases

---

2 The group of investigators consisted of four principal researchers (doctoral and postdoc-
   toral) belonging to one of the different project sections within the overall project. This small
   group started meeting from the beginning of the VISCOM project in 2011 and worked together
   for almost the entire first phase of the project. Tangible results of our regular meetings are
   well reflected in this section of the volume.

continuing to the present day.[3] Nonetheless, if monastic institutions in the Tibetan Highlands are described here as "enclaves of learning", it must be stressed that Tibetans themselves refer to their monasteries with expressions which allude to functions and activities that are different from what is typically understood as learning.[4] In our comparative approach, which stresses the exceptional role these religious communities play, particularly in terms of erudition and the promotion of text-based knowledge, it should be recognized that Buddhist monasteries in the Tibetan cultural sphere—generally referred to as *gompa* (*dgon pa*) by Tibetan speakers—have a strong ritualistic and practice oriented dimension that is largely unrelated, or even opposed, to intellectual or scholastic learning and the propagation of knowledge as such.[5] Further, learning, in its broader terminological sense, has specific implications in each of the disciplines represented within VISCOM, and still more with regard to the

---

3 This is the case for monastic institutions outside modern Tibet in the southern ranges of the Himalaya in northern India, Nepal and Bhutan. Despite the complete break in monastic traditions as a consequence of the political transformation in the 1950s, several of the erstwhile larger monasteries in Tibet managed to revive basic parts of their practices (as prior to the Chinese occupation) in the second half of the 20th century. See Maher, "Tibetan Monastics and Social Justice" on the revival of monasticism under Chinese governance (272–74) and in the Tibetan Diaspora (274–76). On the re-establishment and continuity of the Tibetan monastic tradition in institutions in the Diaspora, see Strøm, "Between Tibet and the West"; Gyatso, "Of Monks and Monasteries". With regard to Gongkar Choede, I have begun to investigate the continuity of monastic practices in relation to the written corpus of the tradition. This started with a first survey of the existing ritual cycle and an attempt to trace back its activities to the underlying, but often missing source texts.

4 "Enclaves of Learning" was developed as a loose research framework to meet the particular terminological and cross-disciplinary challenges of comparative work in one of VISCOM's transversal working groups, leaving aside wider claims of classifying Tibetan monasteries as enclosed types of community exclusively dedicated to learning. Common designations for Tibetan monastic institutions in classical and modern parlance are *gompa* (*dgon pa*; Skt. *araṇya*; "remote place"), *drasa* (*grwa sa*; "monk's locality/residence"), *choede* (*chos sde*; "religious enclave/unit/entity"), *choedra* (*chos grwa*; "religious faculty/school") or *densa* (*gdan sa*; "seat [of successive teachers]").

5 On Tibetan Buddhist monasteries as ritual communities drawing on a range of ritualistic activities and performative services, cf. for instance Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 44–47, 49; Samuel, "Religion in Tibetan Society—A New Approach", 58–59. Generally speaking, Tibetan monastic institutions maintain close ties to the local laity in terms of pastoral care and spiritual services (e.g. Miller, "Educational Practices of Tibetan Lama Training", 205–08), functions that in the Christian/European medieval world were also performed by local priests and the parish churches.

diverse cultural settings in which the institutions being comparatively analysed operate. It thus seems necessary, before embarking on a textual-historical investigation, to clarify how learning is understood.

But before examining the implications and conceptual scope of learning as applied to this chapter, some considerations will be made regarding how this study was undertaken, including its empirical and methodical framework, with the nature and availability of textual evidence being briefly introduced, as well as the current state of research in the field. This helps define the scope and validity of this specialized study for its use in further comparative undertakings.

As mentioned above, the common point of departure and basis for analysis of the VISCOM working group has been the idea of spiritual communities as localized enclaves. While separated spatially from their social environment, these enclaves belong to distinct regional and socio-cultural settings with which they interact through mutual support. For methodological reasons the present study deviates slightly from this departure point, presenting an examination from the micro-historical perspective of an individual learner, rather than from the level of community and its *habitat* at large.

The Spiritual Community (*dge ʼdun*)

Within the VISCOM project, a recurring challenge in investigating the social groups, communities and networks in question has been the distinction between their "idealized" and "historically manifested" natures. Indeed, when doctrinal discourses address the community of Buddhists, Indian and Tibetan exegetes are clearly aware of this divergence in how spiritual community can be understood. Generally speaking, canonical texts and their later commentators in Tibet refer to the Buddhist community, those who follow and employ the Buddha's teachings, with the Tibetan term *gendün* (*dge ʼdun*; "aspirant/s to virtue"), based on the Sanskrit *saṃgha* (*inter alia*, "assemblage"). At the idealized level, *gendün* refers to liberated individuals who have gained the spiritual rank of a "noble being" (*ʼphags pa*; Skt. *ārya*) through their realization of the religious truth formulated in the Buddha's first public sermon on the Four Noble Truths. This rather abstract collective of spiritually mature beings who have attained the Path of Seeing and embody the Buddhist teachings is revered as the "ultimate community" (*don dam gyi dge ʼdun*) or the "assembly of Noble Ones" (*ʼphags paʼi dge ʼdun*; Skt. *āryasaṃgha*). They form the ideal spiritual community, worshipped (and imagined) by Buddhist believers as one of the Three Jewels (*dkon mchog gsum*; Skt. *triratna; ratnatraya*) in which they take

refuge (*skyabs 'gro*; Skt. *śaraṇa*) to escape this unsatisfactory world. In a conventional sense, however, *gendün* is a designation for the Buddhist order and celibate communities in general. Here *gendün* refers to the "conventional community" (*kun rdzob kyi dge 'dun*), which is comprised of monks, nuns and novices who have taken monastic vows, as well as the Buddhist laity in a wider sense.[6] This basic distinction in understanding community has been adopted in the religio-historical literature of Tibet. The texts serving as the basis of this study address "the spiritual community of the Buddhists" in both of these dimensions: in its ideal, perfected stage as the symbolic community in which to take refuge (i.e. *dge 'dun dkon mchog*; Skt. *saṃgharatna*), and in its conventional (historically traceable) manifestation as concrete communities of monastic orders (i.e. *dge 'dun gyi sde*). Here, however, the spiritual community will be primarily examined based on the latter definition.

The Monastic Community/Assembly (*dge 'dun gyi sde, dge 'dun gyi tshogs pa*)

The organization of larger and more prominent monastic institutions in traditional, pre-occupied Tibet (up to the 1950s) is known to have been based on different levels of interaction and coexistence.[7] Only to a certain extent did

---

6   On the two-fold distinction of the spiritual community (*saṃgha*) in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, cf. for instance Apple, *Stairway to Nirvāṇa*, 2ff., 62–63; Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 63. Moreover, the tradition has various typological lists for classifying the "ultimate community" of spiritually accomplished beings into "Eight Noble Beings" (*phags pa'i gang zag brgyad*; Skt. *aṣṭāryapudgala*), "Twenty *Saṃgha*s" (*dge 'dun nyi shu*; Skt. *viṃśatiprabhedasaṃgha*), the "*Saṃgha* of the Lesser and Greater Vehicle" (*theg dman nyan rang gi dge 'dun, theg chen byang chub sems dpa'i dge 'dun*) and the "Common and Extraordinary *Saṃgha*s" (*thun mong gi dge 'dun, thun min gyi dge 'dun*); see *inter alia* Apple, *Stairway to Nirvāṇa*, 93–98; Ngag dbang dpal bzang, *rDzogs pa chen po*, 154–55. On the soteriological function attributed to the Buddhist community of spiritual followers, figuratively compared with the supportive role of a caring nurse (*nad g.yog*), cf. Vasubhandu's *Treasury of Abhidharma Autocommentary* (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, 75b); Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 63.

7   As, for instance, noticed in the studies by Goldstein, "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism", 8–11; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 49–53; Gyatso, "Of Monks and Monasteries", 218–19, 230–31. See particularly Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism*, Chapter 2 (30–31, 63, 39, 49, 51). Organization into separate monastic fractions may have been less a case of smaller, locally based ritual institutions whose past is rarely documented in written histories but can be reconstructed from ethnography and oral history; see for example Goldstein et al., "Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism", 23–26 on the religious programme at a small monastery belonging to the Kagyu (bka' brgyud) branch.

their residents receive similar training in ritual and scripture. Their members also did not follow the same obligations and disciplinary rules *per se*, nor did they share a common schedule or enjoy equal status and living conditions. It can be assumed that in the medieval period not all monks affiliated with a particular monastic enclave went through the same educational programme. Depending on the number of residents and the range of activities, at larger Tibetan monasteries it appears to have been the custom for members to have been organized in smaller units based on what they did, their position and their place of residence in the monastic compound. Depending on the type and size of the *gompa*, as well as a particular candidate's social background and personal aspirations, possible activities would have included (1) scriptural and ritualistic training, (2) ritual performance, spiritual assistance and service, (3) administration, labour and crafts, and (4) secluded practice/personal retreat.[8] Within this given set of possibilities, monastics pursued joint activities in smaller, interconnected groups, both inside and outside enclave compounds. Moreover, late medieval sources tell us that monks from densely populated institutions were affiliated to sub-monastic units—"monastic faculties/colleges" (*grwa tshang*) or "lama palaces" (*bla brang*)—through which these large religious enclaves were administered, sometimes providing homes for up to a thousand monks or more.[9] Based on their regional origins, monks were further

---

8   This very simplified scheme of the various activities pursued at Tibetan monasteries deserves further investigation. M. Miller gives an overview of the various career opportunities for monastics in traditional Tibet; see "Educational Practices of Tibetan Lama Training", 212–17. Other authors have proposed distinguishing between different types of monks with their respective fields of activity and functions for the community; see Goldstein, "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism", 10; Gyatso, "Of Monks and Monasteries", 218–19, 227–29; Ekvall, "Three Categories of Inmates". The Tibetan tradition also allowed for a dynamic tradition of non-ordained ritual specialists and tantric practitioners (*sngags pa*), who were only marginal to the institutionalized forms of religious practice at monasteries.

9   The divisions of Gongkar Dorjeden monastery, for example, are visually depicted on a wall on the second floor of the main temple; see cover illustration of this volume. The small mural panel dating to the 1940s shows the monastic complex with all four colleges (*grwa tshang*) and the surrounding monk's residences (*grwa shag*). The large monastic colleges of the three great Gelugpa (dGe lugs pa) universities near Lhasa have been described as self-supporting and separate monastic entities that enjoyed religious, administrative and disciplinary autonomy from their parent institutions; see Goldstein, "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism", 9; Onoda, *Monastic Debate in Tibet*, 26; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 49–50. The organizational structures of monasteries adhering to other sects have had less attention in academic research; with regard to the Sakyapa (Sa skya pa), see especially Cassinelli et al., *A Tibetan Principality*, in particular 289–319, 355–57, 367–71, 397–400. On the size of monastic communities in the medieval period, see n. 15.

assigned to sections (*khams tshan*) and/or residential or housing units ([*grwa*] *shag*; *shag tshang*; hon. *gzims shag*) within the cloister complexes. Before the Chinese occupation it is known that newly admitted members of Tibet's big monasteries underwent similar elementary training in basic prayer and ritual, although student monks (often entering monasteries at a very young age) were not taught collectively, but in individual groups or under personal tutorship within the residential quarters.[10] Other than the major periodic monastic gatherings that required the participation of the "assembly [of the community]" (*tshogs*),[11] interaction seems to have been less customary between the members of the different community fractions. It can be assumed that affiliation and group cohesion between the inhabitants of Tibetan monasteries tended to develop around joint practices, from regular encounters in occupational groups on one hand, to adherence to the larger monastic subdivisions and regionally based housing units on the other.[12]

---

10   Initial training entails the memorization (*blo la 'dzin/zin*; hon. *thugs la 'dzin/zin*) of the monastic liturgy in order to guarantee the participation of its members in the regular chanting and collective prayer. Liturgical texts are gathered and compiled in a separate literary genre known as "[manuals for] religious engagement" (*chos spyod*). The memorization of main prayers and the key ritual texts is at the core of monastic practice and is often a requirement for taking up further studies; see Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 44, 89–90; Dodin, "Negi Lama Tenzin Gyaltsen", 95 n. 11; Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, 4, 14. According to Goldstein, young boys were generally recruited between six and twelve years of age; see "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism", 4. See also Cassinelli et al., *A Tibetan Principality*, 297 n. 10. On the role of personal tutors for a child's initial education, see Goldstein, "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism", 4ff.; Goldstein et al., "Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism", 20; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 55–9; Miller, "Educational Practices of Tibetan Lama Training", 246–48.

11   On the function of the assembly hall (*'du khang*; *tshogs khang*) in the monastic community, see Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 44–45. Periodical activities and events of a monastery are laid down in the religious programmes of the various traditions. These include regular rituals and celebrations of common Buddhist festivities, as well as those exclusive to the tradition such as "commemorative offerings [and prayer]" (*dus mchod*) for deceased masters or intensive cycles of tantric deity practice (*sgrub mchod*). A condensed practice agenda (*nyams len gyi rim pa*) of Gongkar Choede monastery in its early period is found in *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 148–49. See also Gedun Rabsal, *Gong dkar chos sde dgon pa'i lo rgyus*, fols. 11a-18b, and a recently discovered manuscript by a disciple of Lu phu ba 'Jam dbyangs nam mkha' rgyal mtshan entitled *rDo rje gdan gyi sgrub mchod dus bzhi'i dkyil 'khor dang phyag len mdzad pa po kha gsal dang bcas pa* (4 ff.), which treats the monastery's annual practices in reference to the respective text tradition.

12   Elijah Ary similarly points to the bonding aspect of group performances within larger monastic bodies. In his recently published inquiry on the early biographical tradition of the Gelugpa, he connects these joint activities with a common group ideology that is

Textual Evidence and the Current State of Research

The different layers of community organization in the larger monasteries that existed on the Tibetan plateau up to the first half of the 20th century can already be traced in the religio-historical writing of the medieval period. Such narratives primarily describe individual divisions and groups at monasteries (persons who perform collective rituals, engage in joint studies, or are from the same native region, etc.), not the community at large.[13] This is because Tibet's historical literature is heavily constructed around the celebrated lives of religious masters and *lama*s (*bla ma*; Skt. *guru*), rather than around the communities with whom they interact. Accordingly, most historical sources describe monastic sites and their communities in terms of a particular master's spiritual career: as one of the places where he was trained or where he instructed others, where he visited on pilgrimages or for worship, or as his residential/ abbatial seat (*gdan sa*). For the modern historian, the monastic community as such often remains an abstract entity, although its subgroups and adherents do appear marginally in these narratives of prominent masters and their teaching lineages. This textual evidence thus makes a socio-historical analysis at the

---

explained as deriving from a shared textual basis, in this case monastic textbooks (*yig cha*); see Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 8–9, 82ff.

  Although these organizational structures seem to be less binding in the re-established exile institutions in Nepal and India, the contemporary tradition has preserved a strong notion of regional identity among monastics from the same native region (*pha yul gcig pa*). Gyatso ascribes an integrating function to this regional sense of belonging and argues that common pursuits can transcend these regional differences, while other aspects in the monastic life depend upon them especially; see "Of Monks and Monasteries", 231–32. It is difficult to say what role kinship plays in this context; ibid., 231. As for Drepung monastery ('Bras spungs), Goldstein does not notice any kinship ideology; see "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism", 9. On the role of daily routine and shared practices (of liturgy, discipline, text production) in Christian late medieval monasticism as inspired by the ideal of *vita communis*, see Lutter, this volume.

13 The overall monastic community (*dge 'dun* [*gyi*] *sde/tshogs*) of Gongkar Dorjeden, for instance, is explicitly mentioned two times in its founder's hagiography; see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 148, 162. Note that permanent residence is not a requirement for monastic membership and that the community of a Tibetan monastery also includes individuals who reside temporarily outside the parent monastery (*ma dgon*) at affiliated monastic branches (*dgon lag*) or larger institutions specializing in higher training. See also Miller, "Educational Practices of Tibetan Lama Training", 227–28; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 47; Goldstein et al., "Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism", 17–18; Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism*, 39. On Gongkar Choede's different branch institutions, see Jackson, "Branch Monasteries of Gongkar Dorjeden".

larger level of community difficult, either with regard to the contents of learning or other aspects of monastic life.[14]

Generally speaking, the source material available for investigating monastic learning in medieval Tibet is inadequate for a comprehensive study of all the monks or nuns affiliated with a single institution. Due to the general lack of evidence about residents in monasteries during Tibet's hegemonial period (11th-17th cent.), it is even difficult to estimate the size of such communities.[15] In the case of most institutions, charters and administrative documents that might yield information about monastic populations, community organization, organizational units and members' interaction and exchange with the surrounding laity have largely been lost or been made unavailable by the Chinese authorities. Moreover, the religious literature that is extant and available rarely touches on monastic routines or the practical implementation of spiritual training.[16] Data on monastic education has still not been assessed systematically, other than for the pre-modern period (early 17th to mid-20th cent.) and for the better-researched monastic universities of the Gelugpa tradition.[17]

---

14   E. Hovden, in his chapter on community welfare in medieval Yemen, distinguishes different layers of community in his genealogical sources. With regard to their visions—often only implicitly articulated in the texts at our disposal—Hovden proposes distinguishing four intersecting levels of community according to the extent of their conceptual and practical nature. C. Lutter, on the other hand, by taking into account a wide range of monastic sources, attempts to track religious communities and their specific profiles in relation to key texts of medieval monasticism.

15   As also noticed by Dreyfus; see *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 347 n. 44. The first systematic survey of Tibet's monastic population (within the three traditional provinces and from the perspective of the Gelugpa tradition) was put together by the regent of the Fifth Dalai around the turn of the 17th century. On the basis of his popular history of the Gelugpa order (i.e. *dGa' ldan chos 'byung baiḍūrya ser po*), Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (1927–1997) calculated the total population and number of the Gelugpa affiliated monasteries; see *Bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel*, 105–06. For earlier periods, we have to rely on the sparse numerical information that is provided in the religious histories and biographical accounts of Tibetan masters.

16   In contrast to the vast doctrinal and ritualistic literature that was earlier found at monasteries, historical accounts and descriptions of practical routines were far fewer and not part of the curriculum. History (*lo rgyus*) as a subject was in some cases even considered harmful to the monk's attitude toward learning; Miller, "Educational Practices of Tibetan Lama Training", 230 n. 3.

17   M. Miller's pioneering contribution on "lama training" deserves particular attention in this regard. She provides a systematic overall picture of monastic education for the pre-modern period on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork and extensive analysis of the available reports by travellers to Tibet before 1950. The (primarily scholastic) educational

Particularly when it comes to smaller, locally based monasteries and those following less prominent teaching lineages of Tibetan Buddhism,[18] the limited available material reveals little about their members' ritual training, monastic obligations, or scholastic programmes. A great deal of research remains to be done on Tibet's medieval monastic traditions before the establishment of the Ganden Potrang (dGa' ldan pho brang) administration/Dalai Lama state in 1642.[19] This includes research on Tibet's first monastery, Samye (bSam yas), founded with the advent of Buddhism in Tibet in the 8th century, as well as on the seminary of Sangphu (gSang phu), which gained exceptional fame as a trans-regional "enclave of learning" that shaped the scholastic tradition on the

---

training of the Gelugpa sect in modern and pre-modern times has been the focus of a number of studies. See, for instance, Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*; Dreyfus, "Tibetan Scholastic Education"; Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture;* Onoda, *Monastic Debate in Tibet*. Havnevik, in her monograph on Tibetan Buddhist nuns (*a ne*; hon. *btsun ma*; *chos lags*), briefly addresses the training of female renunciates in Tibet; see *Tibetan Buddhist Nuns*, 50–55, 114. Most of these studies have addressed aspects of monasticism from eyewitness accounts and ethnographic data, and do not include textual evidence from historical sources in their analysis.

18   Religious affiliation is understood here as a loose and tentative category which can help identify a person's institutional adherence and/or inclination towards a teaching system. As far as my understanding goes, Tibetan religious specialists of the late medieval period engaged in a range of diverse (and often contradictory) practices and studies that had come down to them through different transmissions from teacher to disciple, to a large extent independently from institutional frameworks. They rarely followed a single teaching system in their manifold spiritual endeavours. Thus affiliation in Tibetan Buddhism indicates the adherence of an individual or a collective to a particular teaching tradition, but it does not testify to a definite institutional affiliation, doctrinal outlook or a fixed set of practices and techniques employed. Marta Sernesi kindly made me aware of the fact that monastic ordination should also be taken into account when discussing questions of religious affiliation and identity.

19   As has been attempted for recent comparative studies on medieval monasticism in Europe (Lutter in this section), it would be desirable also to study Tibetan medieval monasteries (with regard to their educational training) by drawing upon the different genres of monastic literature. The curricula could be studied from scholastic text books (*yig cha*) and aspects of its social organization and disciplinary regulations from monastic constitutions (*bca' yig*). An analysis of monasteries' liturgy (*chos spyod*) and manuals for ritual and practice (*cho ga phyag len*), which are still widely extant, would provide new information about monastic programmes as such. Aspects of monasteries' literary culture and text production could be investigated by gathering information about former library holdings and a systematic colophon analysis of surviving block prints and manuscripts.

plateau for more than four centuries (11th-15th cent.).[20] Scholars examining medieval Tibetan monasticism deal largely with fragmentary and implicit forms of evidence; this further reinforces the need to begin research at a micro-historical level of an individual learner, whose activities, also with regard to larger groups and communities, are traceable in available texts.[21] Since it is currently difficult to gather sufficient textual evidence for a comprehensive study of an educational syllabus of a medieval Tibetan monastery, this chapter, as mentioned above, examines the learning of an individual 15th-century Buddhist scholar-adept through his hagiography and his autobiographical "learning account" (*senyig*).

Sources for Investigation

Tibetan hagiographies, *namthar* (*rnam thar*) in Tibetan, relate the lives of accomplished teachers. These are respectfully given the title *lama* (*bla ma*; "superior") or *rinpoche* (*rin po che*; "Precious One").[22] Believed to possess supernatural powers and command over worldly circumstances through ritual

20   On the monastery of Sangphu as a "centre of gravity", see Hugon's contribution in this section.

21   Previously, scholars drew conclusions about scholastic curricula from biographical data (and the literary output) of students and teachers active at these sites. In the case of the seminary of gSang phu in the sKyid shod area of Central Tibet, see *inter alia* van der Kuijp, *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology*; Roloff, *Red mda' ba*, 389–90 n. 550 and 392–93 n. 555; Jackson, "Rong ston bKa' bcu pa", 346–50; Jackson et al., *Rong-ston on the Prajñāpāramitā philosophy*, ii, iv, v. Volker Caumanns, largely relying on the hagiographical corpus about Shākya mchog ldan's life, examines in his monograph the syllabus of several scriptural seminaries in Central Tibet, particularly with regard to the master's main site of scholastic training at gSang phu and his later seat at gSer mdog can; see Caumanns, *Der Mahāpaṇḍita des Klosters gSer-mdog-can*. A discussion of monastic curricula and titles is found in Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degrees* and Jackson, "Rong ston bKa' bcu pa", as above. J. Willis, who translated the life stories of six early Gelugpa adepts from an 18th-century biographical collection, concludes that "from these accounts, we get a clear sense of what Tibetan monastic education involved"; see Willis, *Enlightened Beings*, 13. In the case of Austrian hagiographical material from the 12th century, C. Lutter, this volume, highlights its value as a source for community life and to understand spiritual models and their relations to monastic community building. See also Ó Riain's contribution to this section.

22   Other titles by which the protagonists are frequently referred to in this genre are *chos [kyi] rje* (Skt. *dharmasvamin*; "spiritual lord"), *bdag nyid [chen po]* (Skt. *mahātmān*; "great being"), *kun mkhyen* (Skt. *sarvajña*; "Omniscient One"), *mgon po* (Skt. *nātha*; "guardian").

expertise and meditative practice, *lama*s not only occupy the highest authority in monastic communities and a prominent status among the Buddhist laity, but are considered by their devotees to be incarnated Buddhas or completely enlightened beings. In the biography of Gongkar Dorjedenpa Kunga Namgyal, also known as Gongkarwa (Gong dkar ba; "the One from Gongkar"), he is repeatedly credited with having attained the highest goal of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi go 'phang*; Skt. *buddhapada*) in a previous lifetime, a state of omniscience and liberation beyond the human condition of suffering.[23] Due to unbiased compassion for beings exposed to the painful experiences of trans-migratory existence (*'khor ba*; Skt. *saṃsāra*), as hagiographical authors further argue, these liberated beings manifest a physical emanation (*sprul sku*; Skt. *nirmāṇakāya*) and descend from the heavenly spheres of the Buddhas "into this realm" (*zhing 'dir*; i.e. this world).[24] As the genre designation suggests, *namthar* record the "liberated" deeds/performances (*rnam* [*par*] *thar* [*pa*]; hon. *mdzad pa*) of an incarnated Buddha who has taken the physical form of a human agent.[25] In this mode of appearance (*tshul bstan pa; tshul mdzad pa*), these biographers write, the saintly masters teach "those [who are] to be tamed/disciplined" (*gdul bya*; Skt. *vineya*) by the "Good Law" (*dam pa'i chos*; Skt. *saddharma*) of the Buddha/s, thereby assisting them in overcoming their unenlightened state.[26] Appealing to the wider community of a master, includ-ing his circle of devotees, benefactors, faithful students, monastic inhabitants and future incarnations (*yang srid*; Skt. *punarbhava*), the hagiographies describe the "enlightened activity" ([*mdzad pa*] *'phrin las*) of historically attested teachers, praising them for their achievements in promoting the Buddhist path of liberation. The introduction and concluding parts of

23   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 32, 33, 89–90, 92, 176.

24   Ibid., 9–10, 13, 183–84. The idea of physical emanation, *tulku* in Tibetan, (*sprul sku*; Skt. *nirmāṇakāya*) is to be understood in the context of the cosmological/soteriological model of the "three bodies" (*sku gsum*; Skt. *trikāya*). See also Seyfort Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che*, 47–49. On the concept of reborn masters, see also B. Kellner's introductory section on rebirth lineages in this volume.

25   An early but accurate overview of Tibetan hagiographical writing is found in Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 1:150–70. A thorough synopsis of the diverse genre covering the most important literature on Tibetan life writing recently appeared in *Brill's Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*; see Sernesi, "Biography and Hagiography in Tibet". In comparison to Christian hagiographies, J. Willis argues that the *namthar* surpasses its Western equiva-lent in depth and richness of the genre, particularly in its role as an instructional account; see *Enlightened Beings,* 5, 20.

26   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 9–10, 32, 90, 176. See also Seyfort Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che*, 44.

hagiographical accounts emphasize the genre's positive impact on the reader: blessing them, fostering their faith, and inspiring them by recounting extracts from the deeds of enlightened individuals who have proven themselves beneficial (*don mdzad*) in their functions as monastic heads, scholarly teachers, ritual adepts, wandering ascetics or solitary hermits.[27] Most of the content of *namthar* texts is presented accordingly, diligently describing a *lama*'s profound commitment to the study and practice of various doctrines (*chos*; Skt. *dharma*) under authorized teachers.

Similarly, the hagiography of Gongkarwa pays particular attention to the exemplary training of its protagonist, providing the reader with many details about his disciplinary observances, daily practice commitments, scriptural studies and contemplative exercises.[28] The hagiographer Gyatön Jangchub Wangyal (rGya ston Byang chub dbang rgyal; 1470-c. 1540s, hereafter Jangchub Wangyal), who compiled the main biography of this eminent teacher from the Gongkar region,[29] presents the complete range of his master's scriptural learning in a lengthy section describing "how [he] relied on venerable tutors and became the possessor of the entire teachings".[30] As his personal servant and close disciple from the Yangpachen (Yangs pa can) quarter of Gongkar Choede monastery, the author probably drew on Gongkarwa's personal learning account to reproduce the content and textual foundation of his teacher's religious training.

Learning accounts (*senyig*) or "records [of teachings] received", *thobyig* (*thob yig*) in Tibetan, are basically lists in which the author records the titles of

27   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 3–4, 7–8, 210. On the inspirational function of Tibetan life writing, see particularly Willis, *Enlightened Beings,* 5, 6, 16, 19; Schaeffer, "Tibetan Biography", 276–77, 292; Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self*, 9–10.

28   See particularly the chapters on Gongkarwa's efficient adaption of pure conduct (*rNam par dag pa'i spyod pa rlabs po che mdzad pa'i skabs*; *Gongkarwa Namthar*, Chapter 6, 32–39), his scriptural mastery under the tutelage of excellent teachers (*Yongs 'dzin dam pa bsten zhing gsung rab kun gyi bdag por gyur pa'i skabs*; ibid., Chapter 7, 39–89), his practice in the "common and the uncommon path" [of the Pāramitāyāna and the Mantrayāna] (*Thun mong dang thun mong ma yin pa'i lam nyams su bzhes pa'i skabs*; ibid., Chapter 8, 89–92) and Chapter 11 on his elucidation of the Buddha's teachings by way of exposition, disputation, and composition (*'Chad rtsod rtsom gsum gyis thub bstan gsal bar mdzad pa'i skabs*; ibid., 151–76).

29   Four hagiographies of this master have survived, of which Jangchub Wangyal's account is the most extensive. His block-printed text of 63 folios (published in 2001 in a modern book format under *rDzong pa kun dga' rnam rgyal gyi rnam thar*) seems to have served as the basis for two shorter biographies in later works of religious history. Taking these as the starting point, D. Jackson provided the first synopsis of Gongkarwa's life three decades ago; see "Notes on Two Early Printed Editions", 10–12.

30   See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 39–89 (as in n. 28).

books he has been formally introduced to by his teachers. Compiled by the learners themselves, *senyig*s are first-hand testimonies of their individual text-based education.[31] These personal records, often filling several fascicles in the collected writings (*gsung 'bum*; *bka' 'bum*) of late medieval masters, were written by learners who felt the need to keep track of the scriptural corpus for which they had obtained authorization—in its fullest extent consisting of the permission to read/study a text (*yig cha'i lung*), the ritual empowerment to practice it (*dbang; rjes gnang;* Skt. *abhiṣeka*), and auxiliary instructions (*khrid*; *man ngag*; Skt. *upadeśa*) or explanations (*bshad pa*). With the transmission line of each text documented schematically, the initiate or student establishes himself as an authorized holder of a textual corpus (often representing a particular teaching lineage) that he has received as the last in an unbroken line from teacher to disciple (*bla brgyud;* Skt. *guruparaṃparā*).[32] In addition to the contextual information about a *lama*'s training that can be derived from texts such as hagiographies, personal learning accounts have proven an indispensable source for studying the education of Tibetan masters. Meticulously recording the scriptural foundation upon which the author's religious training was based, *senyig*s can provide clues about a master's doctrinal outlook, his affinity towards a certain exegetical system or the scriptural impact of his teachers.[33] By analysing stylistic features, textual annotations and the arrangement of the contents, the reader can occasionally acquire additional

---

31   This has already been pointed out by A.I. Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, 199, 202. Despite their rich detail and probable accuracy, these autographic lineage accounts should however not be considered complete with regard to non-tantric doctrines. In reconstructing the scriptural learning of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456), J. Heimbel notices inconsistencies and incompleteness in the master's *thobyig*; see Heimbel, *Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po*, 142–43, 170–71. Similarly, Gongkarwa's *senyig* does not, for the most part, document the content of studies the author undertook with regard to non-tantric, *sutra* literature.

32   Transmission lineages begin with their originator in the form of the historical Buddha, the transcendental Buddha Vajradhāra or Samantabhadra (in the *gSar ma-* and the *rNying ma* tradition respectively) or the author of a transmitted text. The superiority of the *guru* or lineage master, who holds the highest position in the spiritual hierarchy, is deeply embedded in the iconography of Tibetan art; see Jackson, "Lineages and Structure in Tibetan Buddhist Painting", 10–11, 13. Also Opitz in this volume.

33   For his study on the core doctrines of the Sakya tradition, J. Sobisch drew heavily upon A mes zhabs's (1597–1659) immense literary knowledge preserved in his learning account; see *Hevajra and Lam 'bras Literature*, 9–10, 14. For the study of a single master's transmission, see Yamamoto, *Vision and Violence*, 85–95, 348–55.

information, such as how teaching sessions were structured internally and carried out.[34]

Tibetan Buddhist Learning (*bslab pa*)

Before presenting a specific reconstruction and description of the training and education of a Tibetan master, I will examine how learning and related undertakings are described in the literary sources. In Tibetan hagiographical literature, which can include eulogies (*bstod pa*) and supplication prayers (*gsol 'debs*), the protagonist's engagement in study and practice is typically depicted in the light of spiritual accomplishments and higher soteriological goals leading toward Buddhahood. While taking biographical details into account, a master's training, be it with regard to scripture, ritual, disciplinary observances, prayer or contemplative techniques, is typically presented in reference to religious ideas and principles as formulated in the normative texts of a tradition.[35] By merging the biographical dimension with a tradition's prevalent discourse, Tibetan hagiographies seem to fulfil two functions for their audience. By recounting the exemplary deeds of an enlightened master, the biographer makes abstract concepts and ideals accessible to the reader. At the same time, by placing the biographical events of a teacher's life within a doctrinal framework, the protagonist is presented as an authentic teacher and representative of the Buddhist tradition.[36] This is reinforced by the master's *senyig*, which—in the case of Gongkarwa—was also worked into the narrative of the hagiography,[37] providing further testimony of how teachings (and their respective texts) were properly imparted to him in a continuous line of transmission.

A classical scheme that biographers frequently take up to illustrate the entirety of their subjects' spiritual training is that of the "Three Trainings" (*bslab pa gsum*; Skt. *triśikṣā, śikṣātraya*), comprising "training in morality",

---

34   Personal annotations in Gongkarwa's learning account point to the fact that physical texts were actively consulted when granting him reading authorization and empowerment; see, for instance, *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 403, 412, 430.

35   Roughly speaking, normative texts comprise Indian and Tibetan treatises contained in the Tibetan canon (*bka' bstan*) and the para-canonical literature at the core of a monastic tradition.

36   The exemplary and affirmative function of Tibetan hagiographies was pointed out elsewhere (Larrson, *Crazy for Wisdom*, 33; Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self*, 103; Buswell et al., eds., *Paths to Liberation*, 10).

37   See Chapter 7 in *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 40–84 (as in n. 28).

"training in concentration" and "training in insight/knowledge".[38] Gongkarwa is portrayed as having fully mastered the ethical, concentrative and gnostic training of this threefold learning programme of the complete Buddhist path.[39] In terms of Buddhist soteriology, the "Three Trainings" encompass the complete prescribed range of physical, verbal and mental exercises and obligations for reaching liberation through the removal of ignorance (*ma rig pa*; Skt. *avidyā*), which is seen as the source of suffering and continuous rebirth in cyclic existence or *saṃsāra*. Hence of central importance in Buddhism is the cultivation of knowledge/insight (*shes rab*; Skt. *prajñā*) that sees the "ultimate truth" (*don dam bden pa;* Skt. *paramārthasatya*) of how the individual and the phenomenal world exists. The ambition of overcoming the innate lack of knowledge as a means of attaining a state beyond suffering is also expressed in the formula of "hearing, reflection and cultivation" (*thos bsam sgom*; Skt. *śruta-cintā-bhāvanā*), in the various Buddhist traditions a strategy for accessing the religious truth formulated in the diverse teachings of the Buddha.[40] Approaching these teachings through hearing, reflection and cultivation, in this order, is said to lead to three corresponding types of knowledge/insight (*shes rab rnam pa gsum*; Skt. *trividhā prajñā*). The highest of these, required for actual (i.e. transforming) truth experience/s, is reached through techniques of mental cultivation.[41]

Using this standard theme for dispelling the layers of ignorance in the ordinary mind, Jangchub Wangyal recounts his master concerning himself with the various objects of Buddhist learning in a successive process of "hearing,

---

38   The "Three [Higher] Trainings" ([*lhag pa'i*] *bslabs pa gsum*) summarize the Eight-Fold Noble Path (*'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad pa*; Skt. *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*), which the Buddha taught as the Fourth Noble Truth to bring an end to suffering (i.e. the Third Noble Truth) and to reach liberation from cyclic existence. The unsatisfying human condition formulated in the context of the First and the Second Noble Truths is the rationale for Buddhist practice; see the *Dharmacakrapravartanasūtra*; Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, 26–47. For an outline of the "Three Trainings", see ibid., 42–45; Buswell et al., eds., *Paths to Liberation,* 6–7.

39   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 32, 90, 91.

40   A synopsis of the three-fold scheme for attaining knowledge is provided by É. Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, 45–46. Jangchub Wangyal quotes the *locus classicus* on the sequence of the three insights from Vasubhandu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharmakośa*, 6.5ab) to demonstrate his master's accordance with the tradition; see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 90: *tshul gnas thos dang bsam ldan pa/ sgom pa la ni rab tu sbyor*. An interpretation of this classical theme with respect to modern education is found in Samdhong Rinpoche, "Zhib 'jug gi gal gnad", 36.

41   On the sequence of the three *prajñā*s with particular emphasis on the role of reflection (*bsam pa*; Skt. *cintā*), see Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 318–28.

reflecting and cultivating".[42] Interestingly, the wording he uses to describe the different stages in the master's religious undertakings is analogous to the Three Trainings. Religious instruction as such and formal text reception are usually referred to in the narrative by the verb *thos pa* (hon. *gsan pa*; "hear, listen"), implying a "passive" act of text/scriptural acquisition in the sense of simple "hearing" or "listening" (Skt. *śruta*).[43] The study of texts, however, is frequently expressed as *sbyong ba* (hon. *gsan sbyong ba*; "train"), *thos bsam* (hon. ~ *gnang ba*; "listen and reflect") or *slob gnyer ba* ("pursue studies"), words that denote active reflective learning and investigative inquiry into scriptural content.[44] And the master's engagement in contemplative, ritualistic, and yogic techniques relating to the sphere of "cultivation"[45] (*sgom pa*; Skt. *bhāvanā*) are described with verbal forms such as *nyams* [*su*] *bzhes* [*pa*] ("put into experience") or *phyag bzhes* [*su btab pa*] ("[implement in] practice"), indicating "learning" through the practical implementation and adaptation of what is expressed in the scriptures.[46] The author's distinctive language for presenting the master's range of spiritual endeavour in loose analogy to the threefold model of "hearing, reflection and cultivation" reflects the idea of gradual steps in a system of learning that calls for initial authorization through a knowledgeable master and final internalization through application in meditative and yogic practices. This pragmatic notion of the Buddha's teachings—commonly defined as consisting of what has come down through the scriptures (*lung*; Skt. *āgama*), what is to be listened to, and what is realized (*rtogs*; Skt. *adhigama*) through practices of cultivation[47]—is also referred to by Jangchub Wangyal,

---

42 See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 6 and 85. Compare to Seyfort Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che*, 39.

43 *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 56, 76–77 (...*lung gsan*), 79 (...*thugs bshad gsan*); *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 235 (...*legs par thos*). The verbal noun *thos pa* (hon. *gsan*) refers to the acquisition of teachings (ibid., 25, 76–77, 85, etc.) and learning in a general sense, e.g. *rgya chen thos pa*; see ibid., 39.

44 See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 8, 90 (...*thos bsam gyis*), 58 (...*thos bsam mdzad*), 77 (...*mkhas par mdzad*), 78 (...*gsan sbyong mdzad*), 82 (...*thos bsam gnang; ...gsan sbyong dpyis phyin pa*), 155, 156 (...*legs par sbyangs*); *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 402, 406 (...*slob gnyer bgyis*).

45 Here I follow a broader definition of the term *bhāvanā*, not limited to meditative and contemplative practices *per se*, but comprising a whole range of activities conducive to the soteriological goals formulated in Buddhism; see Sponberg, "Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism", 19–20.

46 See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 32, 89 (...*thugs nyams su bzhes*), 26 (...*phyag bzhes su btab*).

47 A definition of *lung rtogs* is found in Vasubhandu's *Treasury of Abhidharma Autocommentary* (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, 8.39). The idea of mastering the Buddhist teachings by means of theoretical encounter and experimental realization is likewise referred to by the term *bshad sgrub* ("explanation and accomplishment"); see *Gongkarwa*

who makes it clear that Gongkarwa mastered them all, both theoretically and practically.[48]

Another way in which Gongkarwa's learning of Buddhist doctrine and applied practice is presented by his biographer is in the context of the overarching Mahāyāna soteriology. In line with Tibetan Buddhism, Jangchub Wangyal presents his master as adhering to the "common path [of the Mahāyāna]" (*lam thun mong ba*), that is, the "Perfection Vehicle" (Phar phyin gyi theg pa; Skt. Pāramitāyāna), while employing the efficient techniques of the "Secret Mantra" (*gsangs sngags*; Skt. *mantra*).[49] Here the programme of learning that is laid out for the Perfection Vehicle covers the "Six Perfections" (*pha rol tu phyin pa drug*; Skt. *ṣaṭpāramitā*), whereas the training of the "uncommon path" of the Mantra- or Vajrayāna (gSang sngags rDo rje theg pa) is said to comprise the stages related to the ten yogic practices (*rnal 'byor bcu'i rim pa*).[50] The Six Perfections define the training of a bodhisattva (*byang chub sems dpa'*), the Mahāyāna aspirant who follows its six fields of conduct in order to attain Buddhahood.[51] In the context of the non-tantric Mahāyāna, a bodhisattva's learning is said to extend over a series of lives and cosmic aeons; it is not concluded within a single human lifetime. In view of this progressive journey toward enlightenment, a course of successive realization stages is laid out in "Ten Levels" (*sa bcu;* Skt. *daśabhūmi*) corresponding to the "Five Paths" (*lam lnga*; Skt. *pañcamārga*) of practice.[52] According to the major Indo-Tibetan

---

Namthar, 107, 109, 148, etc. On the "spiritual pragmatism" in Buddhism, see Dreyfus, "Tibetan Scholastic Education", 51; Buswell et al., eds., *Paths to Liberation*, 3–6.

48   See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 151.

49   See ibid., 33, 85, 90–91.

50   See ibid., 90–91. The "Ten Yogas" (*rnal 'byor bcu*) are likely to be understood in the context of the contemplative practice of Hevajra (*kye rdor mngon rtogs*; Skt. *hevajra-abhisamaya*). The Sakya hierarch bSod nams rtse mo (1142–1182) explains them as consisting of the practice applications of the "Two Stages" (*rim [pa] gnyis*; Skt. *dvikrama*), i.e. the "generation stage" (*bskyed rim*; Skt. *utpattikrama*) and the "completion stage" (*rdzogs rim*; Skt. *sampannakrama*), complemented with a set of eight conducts (*spyod lam*) to be pursued in daily life between the actual practice sessions (i.e. *mnyam par ma bzhag pa'i rnal 'byor*); see *dPal kye'i rdo rje'i mngon par rtogs pa yan lag bzhi pa*, in Sakya Centre et al., eds., *The Collected Works of the Founding Masters of Sa-skya*, 5:68.

51   The "Six Perfections" comprise (1) giving, (1) discipline, (3) patience, (4) vigour, (5) meditative concentration and (6) insight/knowledge, and can be understood in the framework of the "Three Trainings"; see Asaṅga's *Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras* (*Mahāyānasūtrālaṁkāra*, 16.7). A definition of the perfections with its soteriological effects is given in Nāgārjuna's *Jewel Garland* (*Ratnāvalī*, 5.35–39).

52   On the "Five Paths" and the "Ten Levels", see the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*. On different doctrinal models that conceptualize the Buddhist path (Skt. *mārga*) leading its follower to

treatises that discuss the bodhisattva's conduct (*byang sems kyi kun spyod*), after long training and familiarization with the enlightened attitude, learning has been completed upon reaching the eighth bodhisattva level and with it, the "Path of Non-Learning" (*mi slob pa'i lam*; Skt. *aśaikṣamārga*). In line with this, Gongkarwa is reported to have traversed the respective "levels and paths" (of the Perfection Vehicle) and the "Two Stages" (of the Secret Mantra) and attained the state of the Buddha Vajrasattva.[53] As a means of speeding up the lengthy learning process in the "common" Mahāyāna (i.e. Pāramitāyāna), applying powerful esoteric techniques pertaining to the "uncommon path" (i.e. Vajrayāna) outlined in the *tantra*s (*rgyud*) receives particular attention in the soteriological process of Tibetan Buddhism.[54] Jangchub Wangyal's account leads to an understanding of learning that embraces the attainment of the spiritual abilities and higher realization that led his protagonist over previous lifetimes to omniscient Buddhahood. In other words, the stereotypical depiction of a master's learning in Tibetan hagiographies emphasizes its soteriological function as a gradual training (exoteric and esoteric) in cognitive correction and altruistic transformation. However, this can include disciplines in addition to the soteriological aspects of the Six Perfections, the Three Trainings and the Stages of Yogic Practices. Based on the classical model of Indian scholarship, Tibetans adopted a system of scholastic learning that is divided into five major and minor "Branches of Knowledge" (*rig [pa'i] gnas*; Skt. *vidyāsthāna*).[55]

---

salvation, see Buswell et al., eds., *Paths to Liberation*, 1–36. According to the Tibetan historiography, for their soteriological framework "the Tibetans" have built on the Indian-Buddhist tradition, which—in contrast to the Chinese doctrinal view—assumes the eventual goal of enlightenment to be achieved by a gradual approach. On the idea of gradual progression in spiritual practice and its presentation in successive steps of training, see also Roesler, *Frühe Quellen zum buddhistischen Stufenweg in Tibet*, 9–18, 32–47.

53 See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 92. The "Yogas of the Two Stages" (*rim gnyis rnal 'byor*), that is, the generation stage and the completion stage, define the framework of Gongkarwa's tantric learning; see ibid., 32, 90–91.

54 The "common path" (*lam thun mong ba*) refers to the non-tantric Mahāyāna based on the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*s (i.e. Pāramitāyāna), whereas the "uncommon path" (*lam thun mong ma yin pa*) designates the esoteric Mahāyāna of the *tantra*s (*rgyud*), i.e. the Mantra- or Vajrayāna. The tantric path is also referred to by various epithets in Gongkarwa's biography; see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 153, 157 (*bstan pa'i yang snying;* "the very core of the teachings"), 6, 8, 10, 94 (*bstan pa khyad par;* "the eminent teachings"), 153 (*bla na med pa'i lam srol;* "the unsurpassable tradition").

55 On these classical Indian sciences, see Seyfort Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel*, Part two, 93–147 (Science religieuse et sciences séculières en Inde et au Tibet: Vidyāstāna Indo-Bouddhiques et Rig gnas Indo-Tibétains—remarques sur la nature et les finalités des études indo-tibétaines); a listing of the "Five Branches of Knowledge" (*rig gnas lnga*; Skt.

In addition to the Buddhist subjects subsumed in the category of "Inner Knowledge" (*nang don rig pa*; Skt. *adhyātmavidyā*) covering dogmatics and soteriology, this scheme also contains traditional forms of Indic knowledge (i.e. arts and crafts, medicine, grammar, logic, etc.) that are not exclusively Buddhist in origin and do not have soteriological goals. Nonetheless, due to the inclusive approach of the Mahāyāna (which prescribes the well-being of all sentient beings as its goal), these conventional subjects are to be fully integrated into the training of a bodhisattva.[56] In this regard, Gongkarwa's life story states, rather self-evidently, that he studied the various subjects of the "conventional sciences" (*tha snyad kyi gtsug lag;* i.e. *rig pa'i gnas*) properly[57] before beginning to teach others, by means of "exposition, debate and composition" (*'chad rtsod rtsom*), the "three activities of a scholar" (*mkhas pa'i bya ba rnam gsum*).[58]

To sum up, Gongkarwa is described by his biographer as having trained himself in line with the above paradigms, although he had perfected the various stages of learning and accomplishment even before entering his present existence. Jangchub Wangyal portrays his master as being endowed with the qualities of "erudition, venerability and benevolence" (*mkhas btsun bzang*)[59] and frequently praises him as a second Buddha,[60] spiritually accomplished and knowledgeable about the ultimate nature of the phenomenal world. The religious training recorded in his biography thus needs to be seen in the context of the genre's meta-narrative retelling of excerpts from the exemplary deeds of an enlightened teacher who incarnated voluntarily for no other reason than to

---

     pañca vidyāstāna) is given in ibid., 102. On their implementation and role for traditional monastic curricula, see Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 101–03. Dreyfus also compares the normative curriculum of Tibetan scholasticism with similar models found in Christianity and Islam; see ibid., 103–06.

56   In the case of medicine (*gso ba'i rig pa*; Skt. *cikitsāvidyā*) and arts and crafts (*bzo rig pa*; Skt. *karmasthānavidyā*) for the sake of giving aid to others, but in the case of grammar (*sgra rig pa*; Skt. *śabdavidyā*) and logic (*gtan tshigs rig pa*; Skt. *hetuvidyā*) to defeat the opponents of the Buddha's teachings; see ibid., 101; Krasser, "Are Buddhist Pramāṇavādins non-Buddhistic?", 135–37. According to the Indian master Śāntideva (8th cent. AD), the scope of learning for a Mahāyāna follower goes even further, concluding that "there is nothing whatsoever a bodhisattva should not be trained in". See *Entering the Bodhisattva's Conduct* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 100ab).

57   See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 26, 86, 156.

58   See ibid., 8, 36–37. For a detailed presentation, see Chapter 11 on Gongkarwa's teaching activity by way of the exposition, disputation, and composition; ibid. 151–76 (as in n. 28). Compare with Seyfort Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che*, 39.

59   See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 36, 86, 107.

60   See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 7, 25, 37, 107, 175.

assist and instruct other beings in overcoming suffering. The readership seems to understand the retelling of the master's learning (and instruction) as a testimony to his liberated performance on this earth, undertaken with the intention of elucidating the proper Buddhist path and its result (i.e. Buddhahood).[61] In fact, all of his involvement, whether "spiritual" or "worldly", is seen in the light of his completely liberated status and as a compassionate means to set others on the beneficent path (*lam*) that he had already traversed.

Educational Training of Gongkar Kunga Namgyal (Gongkarwa) (1432–1496)

Biographical Context

Gongkar Dorjedenpa Kunga Namgyal, also known as Dranga Gyalpo (Grwa lnga rgyal po) or just Gongkarwa, lived during the religiously highly productive period of the 15th century. He was born into a noble family that controlled the fertile region of Yargyab (Yar rgyab) on the southern banks of the Yarlung Tsangpo River in present-day Lhokha (Shānnán Prefecture).[62] During the hegemonial rule of the Rlangs Phag mo gru pa (1354-c. 1480), the Yargyab family, who claimed descent from the ancestral line of Thon mi Sam bho ṭa (6th/7th cent. AD),[63] had risen to become a powerful ruling house in the Ü province (dBus) of Central Tibet/Ütsang. In view of a prospective political

---

61   See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 13, 151–52. Due to the fact that great masters are presumed to have attained enlightenment prior to their present existence, Tibetan biographers portray them as deliberately demonstrating a spiritual quest under human conditions. Hence, cosmologically speaking, a *namthar* does not present a path leading to Buddhahood as the common translations of "liberation story" or "story of liberation" suggest, but the performances (*rnam [par] thar [pa]*; hon. *mdzad rnam*) and activities (*mdzad [pa] 'phrin [las]*) that evolve from it. In colloquial language the terms *mdzad pa* and *mdzad 'phrin* still carry this notion of benevolent agency of proficient beings. Furthermore, considering the author's declaration (*rtsom pa'i dam bca'*) to recount excerpts from the extensive activities resulting from the protagonist's liberation, the quasi-historical *namthar* text can be well understood literally as an "[account of] liberated [performance/s]"; see also the direct translations of the term *rnam thar* in Seyfort Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che*, 92, 128.

62   According to the life story of Byams pa gling pa bSod nams rnam rgyal (1400–1475), the Yargyab territory stretched from the mountain range of Jo mo Kha rag in the west to [the temple of] Bya sa (near rTsed/s thang) in the east; *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fol. 5a.

63   The genealogical lineage of the Yargyab house up to the 15th century is recorded in *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 14–16; *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fols. 3b–5a*.*

career, Gongkarwa is said to have received a comprehensive literary educa-
tion in secular subjects. In his early teens he was entrusted with political
duties: at the age of 13 (wood-mouse year; i.e. 1444) he was appointed the
"great officer" (*dpon chen*) of Yargyab[64] and two years later (fire-tiger year; i.e.
1446) given the post of the "district officer" (*rdzong dpon*) of the Gongkar
estates, which had previously been administered by his father and grandfa-
ther.[65] From an early age, Gongkarwa, benefiting from noble family descent
(*rigs rus cho 'brang phun tshogs pa*) and enjoying the esteemed position of a
territorial ruler (*sa skyong*),[66] must have come into close contact with the
venerated masters and religious authorities who visited the family court.
Thus his religious education naturally began with instruction from teachers
who were invited to render services and give spiritual advice to the ruling
family in Yargyab and Gongkar. Three masters from the closer vicinity are
commonly credited as his main teachers, each imparting their respective
teaching systems to Gongkarwa.[67] Occupied with the duties of a secular ruler,
Gongkarwa is portrayed as having approached monastic life gradually. At the
age of 20 he took the five precepts of a lay follower; only about a decade later
did he receive his monastic ordination. In 1464 (wood-monkey year), at the
age of 33, he began the construction of a large monastic site opposite the
Gongkar palace, from where he (had earlier?) wielded power.[68] At the age of
43 (wood-horse year), ten years after founding the monastery of Gongkar
Dorjeden (or Gongkar Choede) and supposedly after having withdrawn from
secular affairs, Gongkarwa took the vows for full ordination in a large cere-
monial gathering at his religious seat.[69] Until his death, Gongkarwa stayed in

64   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 24–25; *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fol. 31a.

65   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 25.

66   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 13–14, 27.

67   Gedun Rabsal lists Brag thog pa bSod nams bzang po (*fl.* mid-15th cent.), Byams pa gling
      pa bSod nams rnam rgyal (1400–1475) and Shar chen Ye shes rgya mtsho (1404–1473) in
      his modern account of the monastic tradition of Gongkar Choede; *Gong dkar chos sde
      dgon pa'i lo rgyus,* fols. 2b-3a; see also Jackson, "Notes on Two Early Printed Editions", 11.
      Sakya masters such as Shākya mchog ldan (1428–1507) or Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po
      (1382–1456), who were mainly active in the gTsang region at the time, are reported to
      have relied on a handful of main teachers; see Heimbel, *Ngor chen Kun dga'
      bzang po*, 79; Caumanns, "Paṇ chen Shākya mchog ldan's Monastic Seat", 67, n. 9.
      Gongkarwa's hagiography itself enumerates 24 teachers in total who can be identified as
      prominent masters coming from or residing in the wider region; see *Gongkarwa
      Namthar*, 84.

68   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 108–13.

69   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 29–31; *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 137; *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fol. 68a–b.

close contact with the religious dignitaries and teachers who were members of the various monasteries and teaching lineages in the wider region, continuing his intense learning in the second part of this life. By the time he passed away (fire-dragon year; i.e. 1496), his monastic community seems to have been well established. Jangchub Wangyal, in the biography of his master, reports that a group of several hundred tantric celibates performed the funeral rites at the monastery for their deceased teacher.[70] As the founder of Gongkar Dorjeden he is remembered as the first *tulku* (*sprul sku*; "emanational embodiment") in the line of the Gongkar Dorjedenpa incarnations, who continue to enjoy the highest authority at the monastery and are considered to return to their community in the form of successive reincarnations (*sku 'phreng*) up to the present day.[71]

Gongkarwa's Programme of Learning

The learning programme of Gongkarwa consisted of five major fields of engagement: (1) language, (2) disciplinary codes, (3) non-tantric subjects, (4) tantric subjects, and (5) visionary experiences. The following synopsis will ignore the chronology of events as well as the fact that these subject areas are strongly interconnected and were certainly not studied or practised independently of one another.[72] It rather aims at portraying the founder's vast range of religious training, which has continued to shape the monastic tradition at Gongkar Choede until the present day.

---

70   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 188–89. The enormous size of the main assembly hall (*'du khang, khyams chen*) resting on 64 pillars (*Gongkarwa Namthar*, 105, 137) supports the assumption that Gongkar Choede was a highly populated enclave in its early phase of existence. Parts of the large assembly hall were customarily reserved for the arrangement (*sbrengs*) of sand-coloured *maṇḍala*s throughout the religious year; personal communication with ex-monk of pre-1959 Gongkar Choede (Fieldwork India, 2015). See also *rDo rje gdan gyi sgrub mchod dus bzhi'i dkyil 'khor dang phyag len mdzad pa po kha gsal dang bcas pa* (as in n. 11).

71   A small exile branch of Gongkar Choede became established near Dehradun (India) in the late 1990s for the sole purpose of offering the present Dorjedenpa *tulku* bsTan 'dzin 'jam dpal lung rtogs (b. 1977), who had reincarnated as a boy in north-eastern India, a seat to safeguard his monastic tradition.

72   For the sake of illustration I have adopted here the traditional division of the Buddha's scriptures into either *sūtra* or *mantra* teachings (*mdo sngags* [*kyi bstan pa*]); see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 152, 156. A chronological analysis of Gongkarwa's learning together with a survey of his literary oeuvre was presented in my unpublished M. A. thesis "The Life and Works of Gong dkar rDo rje gdan pa Kun dga' rnam rgyal (1432–1496)" (University of Hamburg, 2009).

Language Training (Reading and Writing)

Not much is known about Gongkarwa's basic acquisition of literacy. As in the other extant hagiographies, Jangchub Wangyal's lengthy account does not provide any details about his language instructors or the contents and process of his early education. The author stereotypically refers to his master's innate literary talent by stating that he learned reading and writing without great effort or obstacles.[73] Given the fact that, in preparation for a political career, Gongkarwa is reported to have studied secular and historical matters in his youth, there is good reason to assume that the boy enjoyed intensive literary training in a secular environment.[74] The sources reveal little more about his study of Sanskrit. Two of Gongkarwa's close teachers were involved in text translation projects in collaboration with Indian *pundits* visiting Tibet at the time, and it was under their direction that Gongkarwa became proficient in the Indic script, later enabling him to pursue some of his textual studies on the basis of Indian originals (*rgya gzhung*).[75] Under the tutorship of his ordination teacher Byams pa gling pa bSod nams rnam rgyal (1400–1475), a member of the Yargyab family and an accomplished scholar,[76] Gongkarwa was trained in grammar (*sgra*) on the basis of classical Indian grammatical treatises such as the *Kalāpasūtra*, the *Chandoratnākara* and the *Kāvyādarśa*.[77] In addition, Gongkarwa studied the Indian grammatical system extensively with the celebrated "translator from Tagtsang", sTag tshang lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen (b. 1405), again relying on the *Kalāpasūtra* and similar treatises.[78]

---

73   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 23. Also in his learning account, Gongkarwa does not provide any information about his elementary training.

74   This early training was based on secular treatises of Indian and Tibetan authorship (*rgya bod kyi 'jig rten lugs kyi bstan bcos;* Skt. *nītiśāstra*) such as Nāgārjuna's *Nītiśāstrajantupoṣaṇabindu*, Sa skya Paṇḍita's *Elegant Sayings* (*Sa skya legs bshad*), as well as works of Indian and Tibetan history (*rgya bod kyi rgyal rabs*) and the *Eight Investigations* (*brtag pa brgyad*); see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 23–24.

75   Sanskrit renderings of Tibetan names and his mention of consulting Indian manuscripts point to his proficiency in the Indic script; see for instance *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 52, 71, 79, 82. Also ibid., 3, 5, 46, 198, 375.

76   Owing to his profound knowledge of the five traditional sciences (*rig gnas lnga*), he was commonly addressed with the title of "great scholar" (*paṇḍi ta chen po, paṇ chen*; Skt. *mahāpaṇḍita*); see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 29. Byams gling paṇ chen is portrayed as an outstanding expert in Indic and Tibetan grammar who fostered many students; see *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fols. 74a–75a.

77   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 58. These studies are not mentioned in Gongkarwa's learning account. For the year 1474 (wood-horse year) he is reported to have still been receiving instructions on Sanskrit paradigms; see *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fol. 68b.

78   *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 402; *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 77.

Disciplinary Codes (Buddhist Precepts)

Gongkarwa began his spiritual career, under his birth name Dranga Gyalpo, as a tantric lay practitioner (*sngags 'chang*; Skt. *mantradhara*). In several successive steps over a period of more than two decades he gradually assumed Buddhist precepts from two of his main *lama*s, Byams pa gling pa bSod nams rnam rgyal of the Yargyab family and Brag thog pa bSod nams bzang po from the nearby monastery of Brag thog. From the latter, Gongkarwa received the vows of a layperson (*dge bsnyen*; Skt. *upāsaka*) at the age of 20 (iron-sheep year; i.e. 1451), together with an interim ordination (*bar ma rab byung*). The hagiography reveals that, despite his great desire to take monastic ordination at that time, Gongkarwa took only the provisional vows of interim ordination owing to the objections of his mother.[79] Having pursued yogic practices for many years while performing secular duties at Gongkar, he became a renunciate monk and received the ordination name Kunga Namgyal Pelsangpo (Kun dga' rnam rgyal dpal bzang po) with the monastic precepts from bSod nams rnam rgyal in 1460 (iron-dragon year).[80] Three years later (water-sheep year; i.e. 1463) he again approached his ordination teacher to request taking the vows of a novice (*dge tshul*; Skt. *śramaṇera*),[81] and a decade later, in 1474 (wood-horse year), to take the vows of a fully ordained monk (*dge slong*; Skt. *bhikṣu*).[82] Putting into practice the disciplinary rules (*bslab pa'i gnas*) involved in receiving these respective sets of precepts,[83] Gongkarwa also undertook scriptural studies, approaching the subject of monastic precepts from a doctrinal direction, with Byams chen rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas 'phel (1412–1485) and his Sanskrit tutor Shes rab rin chen, using the *Vinayasūtra* of Guṇaprabha as the basis for his studies.[84] For his monastic ordination in 1460(?), his late

---

79   See ibid., 28–29.

80   The ordination ceremony took place at dGa' ldan lha rtse in the gZhung valley; see *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fol. 45a–b. It is, however, not reported in Gongkarwa's main biography. Furthermore, Jangchub Wangyal ascribes the bestowal of his master's ordination name to Brag thog pa bSod nams bzang po; *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 28–29.

81   This time he invited his teacher to the rNam rgyal rab brtan estate in the gZhung valley; see *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fol. 46b. Jangchub Wangyal dates the novice ordination already to 1458 (earth-tiger year) and does not mention a separate event for the year 1463; see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 29.

82   *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fol. 68a–b; *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 29–31. See also *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 137.

83   His dedication to the observance of precepts is poetically illustrated by Jangchub Wangyal in *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 31–32.

84   The *Vinayasūtra* seems to have been part of the "Four Great Scriptures" (*bka' chen bzhi*), which Byams chen rab 'byams pa bestowed upon him; see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 82. On its

ordination teacher bSod nams rnam rgyal personally instructed him in explanations of the different codes of monastic life (*'dul ba;* Skt. *vinaya*).[85] Gongkarwa's successive reception of precepts, culminating in his full ordination as a *bhikṣu*, reflects the intensification of his religious life and his gradual change from a non-ordained lay practitioner in political service to a celibate monk, monastic founder and religious authority.

Training in Non-Tantric (Exoteric) Subjects

With regard to exoteric subjects, that is non-tantric doctrines pertaining to the literature of the *sūtra*s (*mdo*) and the conventional sciences (*rig [pa'i] gnas; tha snyad kyi gtsug lag*), Gongkarwa engaged in wide-ranging scholastic studies, mainly under the guidance of scholars from the Sakyapa (Sa skya pa) tradition.[86] Under Shes rab dpal ldan, the incumbent abbot of the Gling smad college at Sangphu, he studied Middle-Way philosophy (*dbu ma;* Skt. *madhyamaka*) and epistemology (*tshad ma;* Skt. *pramāṇa*), the latter on the basis of Sa skya Paṇḍita's (1182–1251) *Mine of Reasoning* with its auto-commentary (*Rigs gter rang 'grel*).[87] The above-mentioned Sakya scholar Byams chen rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas 'phel provided Gongkarwa with training in the "Four Great Scriptures" (*bka' chen bzhi*), a group of Indian key texts that were studied at scriptural seminaries at the time.[88] Likewise, sTag tshang lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen introduced his disciple to the large text corpus of the *Twenty Treatises Associated with Maitreya* (*Byams pa dang 'brel ba'i chos sde nyi shu*) and numerous teaching cycles of the Kadampa (bKa' gdams pa) sect.[89] While the contents for most of his study of the "Vehicle of Dialectics"[90] is not specified, the

---

study under the guidance of Lo chen Shes rab rin chen from sTag tshang chos 'khor sgang monastery, see *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 78; *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 405–06. On the collective of the *Four Great Scriptures,* see n. 88.

85   *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fol. 45a–b.

86   Here the practice of memorization is an integral part of Tibetan monastic training and scholasticism; it is principally organized around the study of Indian root texts and its commentarial literature; see Miller, "Educational Practices of Tibetan Lama Training", 242–43; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 91.

87   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 82; *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 25–26.

88   The subjects of the *bka' chen bzhi* comprise the Six Perfections, epistemology, cosmology and monastic discipline. See Jackson, "Rong ston bKa' bcu pa", 346–47; Dreyfus, "Tibetan Scholastic Education", 144; Roloff, *Red mda' ba*, 392; Onoda, *Monastic Debate in Tibet*, 29; Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degrees*, 11.

89   See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 78; *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 408ff.

90   The "Vehicle of Dialectics" (mTshan nyid kyi theg pa; Skt. Lakṣaṇayāna) comprises exclusively exoteric subjects pertaining to the *sūtra*s.

scholastic training Gongkarwa completed under sTag tshang lo tsā ba is well documented.[91]

Also with regard to his learning of exoteric subjects, Gongkarwa received the complete reading transmission (*lung*) of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. bKa' 'gyur ba Shākya rgyal mtshan conferred upon his student from Gongkar 30 volumes from the *sūtra* and 16 volumes of the *vinaya* section of the Kanjur (*bKa' 'gyur*), the collection containing the "translated word [of the Buddha]".[92] Having obtained the *lung* for the Tibetan canonical text-collections (i.e. the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*) from Shākya rgyal mtshan, Gongkarwa is remembered as one of its greatest transmitters.[93] As for studies in the traditional sciences (*rig* [*pa'i*] *gnas*; *tha snyad kyi gtsug lag*), Jangchub Wangyal enumerates arts and crafts (*bzo*; Skt. *śilpakarmasthāna*), medicine (*gso*; Skt. *cikitsā*), grammar (*sgra*; Skt. *śabda*), epistemology (*tshad ma*; Skt. *pramāṇa*), poetry (*snyan dngags*; Skt. *kāvya*), metrics (*sdeb sbyor*; Skt. *chandas*), lexicography ([*ming gi*] *mngon brjod*; Skt. *abhidhāna*), poetical embellishment (*tshig gi rgyan*; Skt. *alaṃkāra*) and astrology (*skar rtsis*; Skt. *jyotis*, *gaṇita*), but does not specify the textual basis for any of these studies.[94]

Training in Tantric (Esoteric) Subjects

In addition to the doctrines of the *sūtra*s, Gongkarwa undertook esoteric studies based on the scriptural corpus of the *tantra*s (*rgyud*). His biography and learning account portray him as a tantric-adept scholar who committed himself to extensive training in the Vajrayāna. Gongkarwa is reported to have obtained authorization for practices associated with the various meditational (*yi dam*) and protective deities (*chos skyong*) from an early stage in his life. Under the spiritual care of his first teachers, as summed up by Jangchub Wangyal, he successfully undertook rites of "invocation and realization" (*bsnyen sgrub*; Skt. *sevāsādhana*) and gained fame as an accomplished lay practitioner, known at the time by the name of "Fearless Hero" ('Jigs med dpa' bo).[95] The wide range of his learning in this field is demonstrated not only by his voluminous *senyig*, but also from personal notes (*zin bris*) recording his

---

91   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 77–78; *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 402–13.

92   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 63–66; *Gongkarwa Senyig*, 217–57, 265–68. Note that Gongkarwa's training in the Buddhist monastic code (i.e. *vinaya*), a subject that is traditionally classified under the category of non-tantric literature, is listed above.

93   See Jackson, "Notes on Two Early Printed Editions", 12 and 23 n. 28.

94   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 26, 86, 156.

95   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 25–26, 93–95; Jackson, "Notes on Two Early Printed Editions", 11.

everyday practices, all of which were later incorporated into his hagiography.[96] Teachers of the different lineages that had reached Tibet in the earlier (8th-9th cent.) and later phases (after the 10th cent.) of the Buddhist dissemination granted Gongkarwa authorization of their scriptures and the connected deity practices. Under their guidance Gongkarwa received a broad training in the various forms of tantric practice (including *maṇḍala* practice, deity yoga, ritual dance, etc.) of the old and new *tantra*s (i.e. *gsar ma* and *rnying ma*). To mention only a few of his tutors in this regard,[97] it was his chief *lama* Brag thog pa bSod nams bzang po and his nephew Brag thog pa dPal 'dzin bzang po who passed on the main teaching cycles of the Sakyapa to him, such as its core teachings, the *Path with the Result* (Lam 'bras), and the *Collected Works* of the five great Sakya founders (*Sa skya bka' 'bum*). For the Shalu (Zhwa lu) tradition, Gongkarwa gained expertise in the Shalu ritual system from Shar chen Ye shes rgya mtsho (1404–1473), particularly with regard to the *Yogatantra*s (*rNal 'byor kyi rgyud*). From Shes rab dPal ldan of Sangphu and the sNe'u gdong official Drung chen Kun bzang rtse pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1417–1487), Gongkarwa received instruction in the teachings of the *Great Perfection* (rDzogs chen) and central doctrines of the Nyingma (rNying ma) and Kagyu (bKa' brgyud) sects. Further teachings from the Kagyu lineage and its sub-sects were imparted to him by lineage holders of the rNgog clan in the gZhung valley, the abbot of the mTshal min *gompa* in Dol and the *yogin* Bo dong Ras chen pa dPal 'byor bzang po, who is described as an expert in the Bodong (Bo dong) and Shangpa (Shangs pa) doctrines. Dus zhabs pa Don grub kun dga' from the Tsang province (gTsang) and Byams pa gling pa bSod nams rnam rgyal were responsible for introducing him to the teachings of the Kālacakra and its system of astrology.

Visionary Experiences

In addition to the above-mentioned encounters with teachers from the various traditions, Jangchub Wangyal recounts that Gongkarwa also received spiritual knowledge through direct visionary experiences. While on a meditative retreat at a solitary place called dBen gnas Yid bde tshal, Gongkarwa is said to have beheld a vision in which the Indian *yogin* Virūpa (7th or 8th cent. AD) explained

---

96   See *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 33–35. The section begins: *des na zhag re'i thugs dam gyi rim pa ni...*

97   For a detailed listing of the teachings Gongkarwa received from the individual masters, see Chapter 7 in his *namthar* (as in n. 28) and the respective sections of his learning account.

some difficult points related to the *Path with the Result*.[98] In another instance it is reported that the protector deity Pañjaranātha Mahākāla appeared to him in the form of a black person who then showed him the choreography of a ritual dance. It was on the basis of this visionary instruction, Jangchub Wangyal reports, that Gongkarwa taught a group of tantric initiates the sequence of this protector's dance and later composed a dance manual on it.[99]

Concluding Remarks

Focusing primarily on the phenomenon of learning, this chapter has analysed the hagiography (*namthar*) and autobiographical learning account (*senyig*) of Gongkar Dorjedenpa Kunga Namgyal. Jangchub Wangyal, who compiled the life story of this 15th-century master from southern Central Tibet, addresses the issue of learning mainly in the context of rhetorics related to the Buddhist path leading to liberation and omniscience. Except for a lengthy section recording Gongkarwa's scriptural training, which seems to be derived from the *lama*'s personal *senyig*, for the most part the narrative outlines the protagonist's course of training in a very generic way. Drawing on soteriological models, which are illustrated by means of doctrinal definitions and religious imagery, he leaves the historical context and practical aspects of the master's education largely unstated. Apart from central events in Gongkarwa's monastic career (i.e. the acceptance of precepts), the hagiography rarely contextualizes the *lama*'s training regarding time or place. Thus the study of Gongkarwa's hagiography does not shed light on educational activities at Tibetan monastic enclaves as such. Nonetheless, the biography, through its generic character and laudatory style, conveys something that is no less relevant for understanding medieval Tibetan-Buddhist learning. In the narrative, a clear image emerges of the prevailing vision of learning as well as the role of those who accomplished it and those who seek it. Learning accounts, like that by Gongkarwa, testify to the fact that the form of Buddhism found in Tibet is built on a system of text-based learning that is centred on teachers who are given the key role in its

---

98   *Gongkarwa Namthar,* 100–01. According to natives from Lhokha, the site of Yid bde tshal can be located some 3.5 km to the south of Gongkar Choede monastery (Fieldwork, Tibet 2010).

99   *Gongkarwa Namthar*, 97, 161. An old, finely-written *dbu med* manuscript (3 ff.) of Gongkarwa's dance ritual was recently re-discovered in Tibet. The title reads *Pu tra ming sring ru 'dren dang bcas pa'i 'chams yig sngags 'chang 'jigs med dpa' bos mdzad pa.*

dissemination. Access to spiritual knowledge lies with those who have received formal authorization from their teachers and who are part of an unbroken line of transmission. Perceived by their (community of) followers as proficient individuals who are in charge of the teachings (*bstan pa'i bdag po*) and hold the textual transmission (*brgyud 'dzin*), respectively, it is not surprising that historical narratives pay special attention to these figures and their learning. It is the spiritual teacher, and with him the textual corpus he holds (often related to larger sectarian orders and monastic institutions), that is of central importance for the religious seeker.[100] The *namthar*s and *senyig*s of Tibetan masters accurately mirror this, particularly with regard to esoteric teachings, which require formal initiation rites.[101] The location where instruction takes place and the precise occasion of it being conferred are often soteriologically irrelevant for the recipient and of marginal significance for the traditional reader. As Jangchub Wangyal reveals in his ahistorical style of narration, whether events are described in a geographic or social context lies solely with the biographer's preferences.[102] The hagiography of Gongkarwa's ordination teacher Byams pa gling pa bSod nams rnam rgyal, for example, is quite different from that of his student: it precisely documents the wider context and chronology of its protagonist's life. Interestingly, it is from this detailed account that we gain information about the locations of Gongkarwa's spiritual education. In fact, this text gives the impression that Gongkarwa—before being ordained and withdrawing from the political arena—received most of his religious education at secular sites that he visited or from which he invited teachers for spiritual council, rites and instruction.[103]

---

100   The superiority of the spiritual teachers who are considered to be embodiments of enlightenment also found expression in Tibetan ideas of governance see B. Kellner in this volume. Also Seyfort Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel*, Part one, 13–92 (Matériaux pour l'histoire des fonctions de l'officiant-précepteur donataire et du roi donateur et de leur relation dite yon mchod/mchod yon).

101   In addition to written evidence, the documentation of lineage and transmission in Tibetan Buddhism also found expression artistically; see in particular Jackson, "Lineages and Structure in Tibetan Buddhist Painting", 14, 38. For an example, see Opitz in this volume, Illustration 1.

102   For unknown reasons, Jangchub Wangyal compiled his master's life story only in the year 1540 (iron-mouse year), almost half a century after Gongkarwa had passed away; *Gongkarwa Namthar,* 211.

103   The hagiography of bSod nams rnam rgyal states that Gongkarwa invited his teacher for instruction and ordination to estates in the Gongkar territory; see *Jampalingpa Namthar*, fols. 45a-46b. For the years 1466 (fire-dog year) and 1467 (fire-pig year) it is reported that Gongkarwa travelled to (the three main Yar rgyab) estates Dar rgyas gling, rGyal chen

To conclude I will offer a final thought about Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in light of the cross-disciplinary framework of VISCOM. Given the central role of teachers for the spiritual growth of their followers, *gompa*s are above all sites where such masters reside (*gdan sa*), thus providing access to their exclusive knowledge and proficiencies. In the context of the comparative concept "Enclaves of Learning", Tibetan monasteries are sites in which monks or nuns practise, process and pass on this knowledge, within the boundaries of an institutionalized community or enclave (*chos sde*).

Bibliography

Tibetan-Language Sources

Gong dkar rdo rje gdan pa Kun dga' rnam rgyal (=Gongkar Dorjedenpa Kunga Namgyal), *rDzong pa kun dga' rnam rgyal gyi gsan yig* [*Gongkarwa Senyig*] (Kathmandu, 2005).

dGe 'dun rab gsal (=Gedun Rabsal), *Gong dkar chos sde dgon pa'i lo rgyus rags bsdus rin chen do zhal*, *dbu can*-ms., 1a-19a.

Ngag dbang dpal bzang, *rDzogs pa chen po klong chen snying thig gi sngon 'gro'i khrid yig kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung gi zin bris* (Dehli, 1996).

Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel skor bshad pa* (Beijing, 1981).

Byang chub dbang rgyal (=Jangchub Wangyal)*, rDzong pa kun dga' rnam rgyal gyi rnam thar* [*Gongkarwa Namthar*], ed. bsLab gsum rgyal mtshan (Lhasa, 2001).

Byang chub rnam rgyal dge legs, *dPal byams pa gling pa'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar phreng ba* [*Jampalingpa Namthar*], *dbu med*-ms., 1a-95a.

Slob dpon Zam gdong rin po che (=Samdhong Rinpoche), "Zhib 'jug gi gal gnad dang gna' deng zhib 'jug gi thabs lam skor", *Journal of Tibetan Studies* 2 (2014), 31–42.

Sakya Centre and Nagwang Topgyal, eds., *The Collected Works of the Founding Masters of Sa-skya* (*Sa skya bka bum*), 15 vols. (Dehradun, 1992–93).

Western-Language Sources

James B. Apple, *Stairway to Nirvāṇa: A Study of the Twenty Saṃghas Based on the Works of Tsong kha pa* (Albany, 2008).

Elijah S. Ary, *Authorized Lives: Biography and the Early Formation of Geluk Identity* (Somerville, 2015).

Robert E. Buswell and Robert M. Gimello, eds., *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (Honolulu, 1992).

---

gling and lHun grub gling in order to receive further religious instructions from Byams pa gling pa; see ibid., fols. 49b–50a.

Charles W. Cassinelli and Robert B. Ekvall, *A Tibetan Principality: The Political System of Sa sKya* (Ithaca, New York, 1969).

Volker Caumanns, "Paṇ chen Shākya mchog ldan's Monastic Seat Thub bstan gSer mdog can (Part I): The History of its Foundation", in *Nepalica-Tibetica: Festgabe for Christoph Cüppers*, 2 vols., eds. Franz-Karl Ehrhard and Petra Maurer (Andiast, 2013), 1:65–88.

Volker Caumanns, *Der Mahāpaṇḍita des Klosters gSer-mdog-can: Leben und Werk des Sa-skya-Meisters Shākya-mchog-ldan (1428–1507)* (Wiesbaden, 2015).

Thierry Dodin, "Negi Lama Tenzin Gyaltsen—A Preliminary Account of the Life of a Modern Buddhist Saint", in *Recent Research on Ladakh 6: Proceedings of the Sixth International Colloquium on Ladakh, Leh 1993*, eds. Henry Osmaston and Nawang Tsering (Bristol, 1997), 83–98.

Georges Dreyfus, "Tibetan Scholastic Education and the Role of Soteriology", *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20,1 (1997), 31–62.

Georges Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2003).

Robert Ekvall, "Three Categories of Inmates within Tibetan Monasteries: Status and Function", *Central Asiatic Journal* 5,3 (1960), 206–20.

Vincent Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics: Studies on the History, Self-understanding and Dogmatic Foundations of Late Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Vienna, 2014).

Melvyn Goldstein et al., "Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism: Social, Psychological & Cultural Implications", *Tibet Journal* 10,1 (1985), 14–31.

Melvyn Goldstein, "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism", [English e-version of paper in French] in *Des moines et des moniales dans le monde: La vie monastique dans le miroir de la parenté*, eds. Adeline Herrou and Gisele Krauskopff (Toulouse, 2010).

Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary* (Princeton, 1998).

Sherab Gyatso, "Of Monks and Monasteries", in *Exile as Challenge: the Tibetan Diaspora*, eds. Dagmar Bernstorff and Hubertus von Welck (Hyderabad, 2003), 213–43.

David Jackson, "Notes on Two Early Printed Editions of Sa-skya-pa Works", *Tibet Journal* 8,2 (1983), 3–24.

David Jackson and Shunzō Onoda, *Rong-ston on the Prajñāpāramitā Philosophy of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra: His Sub-commentary on Haribhadra's "Sphuṭārthā"* (Kyoto, 1988).

David Jackson, "Lineages and Structure in Tibetan Buddhist Painting: Principles and Practice of an Ancient Sacred Choreography", *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 1 (2005), 1–40.

David Jackson, "Rong ston bKa' bcu pa—Notes on the Title and Travels of a Great Tibetan Scholastic", in *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ: Papers Dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the*

Occasion of his 70th Birthday, eds. Birgit Kellner, Helmut Krasser et al. (Vienna, 2007), 345–60.

David Jackson, "Branch Monasteries of Gongkar Dorjeden and Phenpo Nalendra, Two Sakya Convents in Central Tibet", in *The Illuminating Mirror: Tibetan Studies in Honour of Per K. Sørensen on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, eds. Olaf Czaja and Guntram Hazod (Wiesbaden, forthcoming), 244–52.

Hanna Havnevik, *Tibetan Buddhist Nuns: History, Cultural Norms and Social Reality* (Oslo, 1989).

Jörg Heimbel, "Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456): An Investigation into the Life and Times of the Founder of the Ngor Subschool of the Sa skya Order" (PhD diss., University of Hamburg, 2014).

Helmut Krasser, "Are Buddhist Pramāṇavādins non-Buddhistic? Dignāga and Dharmakīrti on the Impact of Logic and Epistemology on Emancipation", *Hōrin* 11 (2004), 129–46.

Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka era* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988).

Stefan Larsson, *Crazy for Wisdom: The Making of a Mad Yogin in Fifteenth-Century Tibet* (Leiden, 2012).

Derek F. Maher, "Tibetan Monastics and Social Justice", in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religion and Social Justice*, eds. Michael D. Palmer and Stanley M. Burgess (Hoboken, New Jersey, 2012), 268–79.

Margaret Miller, "Educational Practices of Tibetan Lama Training", *Asian Folklore Studies* 16 (1957), 185–267.

Martin Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: The Foundations of Authority in Gelukpa Monasticism* (London, 2003).

Shunzō Onoda, *Monastic Debate in Tibet: A Study on the History and Structures of bsdus grwa* (Vienna, 1992).

Ulrike Roesler, *Frühe Quellen zum buddhistischen Stufenweg in Tibet: indische und tibetische Traditionen im dPe chos des Po-to-ba Rin-chen-gsal* (Wiesbaden, 2011).

Carola Roloff, *Red mda' ba: Buddhist Yogi-Scholar of the Fourteenth Century* (Wiesbaden, 2009).

Geoffrey Samuel, "Religion in Tibetan Society—A New Approach; Part One: A Structural Model", *Kailash—A Journal of Himalayan Studies* 6,1 (1978), 45–66.

David Seyfort Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che: With the Tibetan Text of the Bu ston rNam thar* (Rome, 1966).

David Seyfort Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel dans la pensée bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet: quatre conférences au Collège de France* (Paris, 1995).

Kurtis Schaeffer, "Tibetan Biography: Growth and Criticism", in *Edition, éditions: l'écrit au Tibet, évolution et devenir*, eds. Anne Chayet and Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (Munich, 2010), 263–306.

Marta Sernesi, "Biography and Hagiography in Tibet", in *Brill's Encyclopaedia of Buddhism. Volume One: Literature and Languages* (Leiden, 2015), 734–43.

Jan Sobisch, *Hevajra and Lam 'bras Literature of India and Tibet as Seen Through the Eyes of A-mes-zhabs* (Wiesbaden, 2008).

Geshe Lhundup Sopa, *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture* (Dharamsala, 2004 [1st ed. 1983]).

Alan Sponberg, "Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism", in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu, 1986), 15–43.

Axel Strøm, "Between Tibet and the West: On Traditionality, Modernity, and the Development of Monastic Institutions in the Tibetan Diaspora", in *Tibetan Culture in the Diaspora: Papers presented at a panel of the 7th seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995*, ed. Frank J. Korom (Vienna, 1997), 33–50.

Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls,* 2 vols. (Rome, 1949).

Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Academic Degrees in Buddhist Philosophy* (Copenhagen, 2000).

Leonard van der Kuijp, *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology From the Eleventh to the Thirteenth Century* (Wiesbaden, 1983).

Andrej I. Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, trans. Harish Chandra Gupta (Calcutta, 1970).

Janice Willis, *Enlightened Beings: Life Stories from the Ganden Oral Tradition* (Boston, 1995).

Carl Yamamoto, *Vision and Violence: Lama Zhang and the Politics of Charisma in Twelfth-century Tibet* (Leiden, 2012).

Enclaves of Learning: A Commentary on the Papers in the Section on "Spiritual Communities"

Steven Vanderputten*

One of the principal goals of comparative study of past societies, besides verifying the validity of common assumptions about similarities and differences, is to identify hitherto-unsuspected points of interest and to explore ways of integrating these into future research. In the present section on religious communities, identifying such points of interest is made possible because each contributor has offered very different answers to a set of questions deriving, to quote Rutger Kramer, from the concept of Enclaves of Learning as a "low-threshold, common sense approach to comparison" of religious communities across the Eurasian sphere.[1]

The different answers can be explained in the first place by the varied nature and context of the religious communities, or enclaves of learning, under scrutiny. But an important additional factor is the significant difference in the typology, scope and discourse of the primary evidence, which necessarily gives the analytical approach of each paper a particular focus: intellectual exchanges with the outside world, learning, welfare, communal identity, spiritual self-understanding. When reading all the papers in succession, one cannot help but be struck by the way in which each contributes to the complex process of identifying the limits of the evidence relied upon in the other studies. Through exploring, understanding, and trying to address these limits, new opportunities for deepening our understanding of these communities will present themselves. This, in addition to the obvious merits of testing the semantic relevance of "communities" and "enclaves of learning" in the context of cross-cultural historical research, is what makes the comparative effort in this section such a resounding success.

In what follows, I want to single out a few such perspectives for further comparative research. Four levels of analysis seem particularly promising: first,

---

1   Kramer, "Spiritual Communities", this volume.

that of the "others" and "otherness" in community formation; second, hierarchies within enclaves of learning; third, so-called "communities of practice"; and fourth, the individual and his/her shaping of, and response to, the religious community to which he or she belongs.

Community and the Other

Community, as Christina Lutter aptly states in her paper, is a particularly useful transcultural concept to "compare interrelated social and symbolic categories of identification and belonging that are at work at diverse social levels".[2] It allows us to study up close, through contemporary testimonies of those who participated in these communities, and to document, the process of the "making and un-making" of social groups.[3] Strategies of self-identification and discourses of social, religious, or ethnic demarcation not only allowed communities to shape a cohesive and operational (in an ideological sense, but certainly also in a social one) understanding of self, but also to draw functional lines between that self and the outside world. In this drawing of lines, across all the cultures under review a great deal of attention was paid to how one's community or enclave relied for its existence on a state of mutual interdependence with the outside world. As various authors have argued, such interdependency could be defined in political, socio-economic and ideological terms, or, more often than not, a combination of all three.

This attention paid by medieval commentators to the position of enclaves in the world allows us to identify an opportunity to expand VISCOM's collective reflection on community: that of investigating the outside world's otherness as an operative category for defining community and of looking at how such otherness impacted on the specific choices communities made when engaging with the outside world. In the current focus adopted by the project members, the degree to which both of these strategies and/or perspectives contributed to the shaping of a cohesive understanding of the outside world remains, for the most part, an open question. On the one hand, communal identities could only be established on the basis of a more or less clear vision of what society outside of these communities represented; on the other, communities' views of the outside world also depended upon the processes underpinning their mutual interdependency. Trying to reconstruct and explain this dialectic—that is, between the pre-existing notions of the other and the

2   Lutter, "Vita communis", this volume.
3   Ibid.

experiences based on the creation of relations of interdependence—would surely benefit our understanding of how these enclaves saw themselves and allow more detailed reconstruction of how groups' ideas and *habitus* guided their interaction with the outside world.[4] Admittedly these notions are hinted at in the papers included in this section,[5] but they deserve to be singled out for closer scrutiny and explicit discussion.

Otherness as an analytical concept is also relevant in a further sense. Since the self-understanding and behaviour of these communities was deeply influenced by feedback from the outside world, there is also a need to explore the degree to which different communities in this outside world (aristocratic and urban ones, to name but two) were also impacted by this process. How did it change the way in which they thought of themselves, and how in turn did this shape their interactions with other communities? As Rutger Kramer has shown, in Carolingian times, monastic enclaves boasted about their service to the secular rulership in communicating principles of good government based on the pursuit of an ideal Christian society. And they seem to have been successful in this service, as there is sufficient evidence to argue that their influence in determining rulers' behaviour was real and directly influenced contemporary justifications of royal and imperial authority.[6] In her discussion of Buddhist learning in Tibet, Pascale Hugon also remarks that, even though the "open networks" of learning she observes were exclusive to a particular social elite, there are strong indications of indirect benefits for a much larger section of society.[7] For these and other societies, however, our understanding of such benefits and impact is still relatively limited, particularly as regards their significance for the shaping and transformation of non-religious group identities. There lies a vast, if methodologically challenging, area of investigation still waiting to be explored systematically and comparatively.

Hierarchies in Communities, Hierarchies in Learning

Hierarchy has also been touched upon, but often only in passing, as a relevant parameter in assessing the shaping and experience of group identity. From an analytical point of view, the term can be made operational on two levels.

---

4   The concept of *habitus*, mentioned only in Lutter's paper, warrants further exploration as regards the interactions of enclaves with society; Lutter, "Vita communis".

5   Kramer, "Teaching Emperors", this volume.

6   Kramer, "Teaching Emperors".

7   Hugon, "Enclaves of Learning", this volume.

The first relates to the question of hierarchies within these enclaves of learning. In the Buddhist communities of Tibet, Mathias Fermer notes how intellectual and spiritual learning was compartmentalized in specific, specialized "subgroups".[8] This raises the question of whether such subgroups originated exclusively on the basis of a hierarchy in intellectual and spiritual activity, or whether these hierarchies were also designed to accommodate the differences in intellectual and spiritual proficiency of group members. Common sense tells us the latter, and, as such hierarchies must have existed in enclaves of learning across the different cultures under scrutiny, the question of whether these impacted on the identity and self-perception of such communities seems absolutely relevant. In almost all the cases presented in this volume, the primary evidence compels us to consider questions of self-perception and social positioning almost exclusively in monolithic terms, simply because we can only observe these communities from the perspective of one, or at most a handful of, commentators. But these testimonies by default fail to convey the impact of intellectual and spiritual hierarchies on group formation and a community's understanding of self. This is so whether these hierarchies are based on the capabilities of each member or on specialized subgroups within a community.[9] Put differently, there is a need to ask three questions: Did authors address the natural hierarchies within enclaves of learning? If they did not, how do we explain the fact that they thought of intellectual or spiritual "divisions of labour" as a problem in representing community? Finally, is there a way of finding out how these hierarchies nonetheless impacted on the way in which views of monastic communal identity—and also and most especially, a community's *habitus*—were shaped?

The second level on which we can bring hierarchy to bear in our analysis is by looking at how hierarchical relations between similar religious enclaves impacted on the self-understanding of each. As we have seen in several of the contributions in this section, there could be a tendency to either support, or implicitly reject, a notion of a "larger" community based on this unity in purpose and identity. Remarkably, in some cases the communities that attempted to describe and define such a "super-community" were not those who were looking to address issues that were jeopardizing their existence, but precisely those that were flourishing and were seeking to capitalize on their prosperity. This appears to have been the case in Diarmaid Ó Riain's *Schottenklöster*,[10] and it would not be surprising at all if further research showed that such perceived

8   Fermer, "Among Teachers", this volume.

9   For this I refer to Snijders, "Textual Diversity".

10   Ó Riain, "The *Schottenklöster* in the World", this volume.

hierarchies also explain some of the centrifugal and centripetal dynamics in the emergence of the new monastic orders of the European West in the later 11th century and beyond. The question of whether such ideas for a "super-community" were realized is, of course, relevant. However, so is the mere existence of such ideals, and how different communities in different hierarchical positions—based, for example, on social standing, or religious or intellectual prestige—reacted to them.[11]

Communities of Practice

A third perspective for further research concerns the notion of communities of practice. As an analytical tool, this is useful in that it allows us to view the transmission of knowledge, expertise and attitudes not so much as a top-down, institutionalized process, but as a participatory one. In a community of practice, teachers and disciples all contribute equally to a situation where such skills, expertise and attitudes are transmitted not through theoretical instruction, but through actual practice.[12] Creating a context where disciples engage actively with a master in spiritual reflection while gaining technical knowledge or skill in intellectual procedures constitutes a step up on a social and cognitive level from settings where information is transmitted strictly in an ex-cathedra fashion. This is a phenomenon that emerges from Mathias Fermer's discussion of Buddhist communities in Tibet,[13] where enclaves of learning could in some circumstances exist in the first place as groups of individuals centred on the figure of a charismatic leader. Eirik Hovden has made a similar point in his discussion of the early Zaydi communities in Southern Arabia.[14] In both of these cultures, we see that charismatic leaders and their disciples were regarded not as the membership of the community of learning, but as the community itself. And from a Western medieval viewpoint, scholarship on education and the transfer of cultural capital in monastic contexts has of late argued persuasively in favour of shifting attention away from institutional settings (e.g. cathedral schools and monastic reform centres) to focus instead on clusters of like-minded individuals grouped around one or several charismatic

11   Also see Hovden, "Competing Visions" this volume.

12   For the notion of "communities of practice" and its relevance to learning processes and contexts, see Lave/Wenger, *Situated Learning*; also, among numerous others, Hughes, ed., *Communities of Practice*.

13   Fermer, "Among Teachers".

14   Hovden, "Competing Visions".

teachers.[15] Similar trends are noticeable in the study of the transmission of leadership attitudes and expertise.[16]

Applying the concept of communities of practice systematically in a comparative analysis of enclaves of learning in different societies would undoubtedly reveal much. To begin with, it would make clear how our natural tendency to focus on institutions as the primary means for sophisticated societies to transmit intellectual and spiritual knowledge (a tendency strongly influenced by modern modes of education and the professionalization of science), while useful in many ways, should not monopolize the discussion. In medieval times, individuals acquired knowledge and expertise not, primarily, by being a member of a particular school or institution, but by participating actively in contexts where knowledge and expertise were concretely applied. One could, of course, maintain that such applications were strictly determined by consolidated rules, as has traditionally been argued for Western monasticism. But recent studies of the bewildering variety in internal practices in 10th- to 12th-century cloistered communities have suggested that even the seemingly rigid normative framework of Western monastic groups intentionally left a great deal of room for intellectual, spiritual and ritual creativity based on a community's specific context, experiences, and customs.[17] Secondly, allowing for communities of practice to play a role in our analysis would also make it possible to provide a significant additional dimension to previous explanations of the reason why enclaves of learning could display such vast hierarchical differences in terms of the production of intellectual texts, spiritual resonance and ability to engage with the outside world in mutually beneficial ways. Such a perspective will remain out of reach for as long as historians continue to systematically prioritize the institutional aspects of these enclaves.[18]

---

15   Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*; Ferzoco/Müssig, eds., *Medieval Monastic Education*; Münster-Swendsen, "The Model of Scholastic Mastery"; and Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*. Also see the case study by Lutter, "Ways of Knowing".

16   Münster-Swendsen, "Medieval Virtuosity"; also Vanderputten, "Communities of Practice".

17   For instance, I remain doubtful of the idea that the reformers of the 11th and early 12th centuries developed very clear procedures for renewing liturgical practice, discipline and other aspects of the conventual *habitus* before they actually implemented their reformist ambitions in concrete, institutional settings; on this see Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform*. Also see the extensive literature on the emergence of the monastic orders of the 12th century and their normative output, discussed succinctly, with ample references, in id., "The 1131 General Chapter".

18   Fermer, "Among Teachers", relies on a notion very similar to that of communities of practice to reconstruct how Buddhist groups shaped a sense of community.

Community and the Individual

A final point I want to highlight in this commentary concerns the individual's relationship to enclaves of learning. As various authors have indicated, one should not forget that, even in some of the most enclosed contexts of these medieval societies, individuals could, and often did, belong to multiple communities at the same time.[19] To give one example, we know that Benedictine monks of the central Middle Ages, despite formally abandoning their worldly existence upon taking up their profession, throughout their lives often maintained intensive relations with, and belonged to, other communities. Leaving aside the specific problem of abbots' itinerancy,[20] the most obvious example is where, for reasons that were often inspired by the interests of their monastic environment, monks remained connected with their aristocratic relatives. Also, as the procedures of managing monastic economies became increasingly complex, and as specialization and division of responsibilities imposed itself on these institutions, numerous monks were sent away to manage distant estates owned by their monastery. A surprisingly large proportion of the monastic population at some point in their lives also actively engaged in the exchange of technical, social, intellectual and spiritual knowledge with non-group members, at least some of which belonged to other enclaves of learning. Once again it is common sense that tells us that for these enclaves of learning at least, membership was very heterogeneous in terms of individuals' participation in other communities.

At first sight, the "madrasas" in medieval Islam may look completely different from the other forms of community discussed in this section, primarily because their organization did not involve a form of physical enclosure and had university-like features, in the sense that most individuals participating a priori acknowledged that their membership of such communities was limited in time.[21] However, a closer look at what was going on within the membership of some of the other enclaves studied in this section may well reveal that, while physical mobility may have been limited in some cases, in mind and likely also in behaviour, throughout their lives members could have very different experiences of community. Advanced network analysis could, as far as the primary evidence allows, give us a glimpse of the extent to which the

---

19   I refer to the comments at the end of Lutter, "Vita communis".

20   Bulst, "La filiation"; Rosé, "Circulation abbatiale"; and Vanderputten, "The Mind as Cell". More generally, see the papers in Cottier et al., eds., *Les personnes d'autorité en milieu régulier*.

21   Kramer, "Introduction", also Hugon, "Enclaves of learning".

communal identities projected in contemporary accounts overlapped with the views of individual members, both in regard to single identities and the collective.

Conclusions

All of the observations in this brief commentary do nothing to negate the significance of the VISCOM researchers' approach to enclaves of learning as a relevant category for comparative analysis. But they may point towards what could be an extra dimension to the research. While these enclaves functioned as nodal points for religious, intellectual, social and economic life in medieval societies, focusing on the complexity behind this function might take us still further.[22] A closer look at the dialectics between individual and communal development, and at the other hierarchies at work in these communities, will undoubtedly reveal that these nodal points were not uniform reflections of collective interests and self-perceptions. Rather they consisted of clusters of smaller nodal points, some of which derived from the actions, connections, and interests of individuals, while others were collective.[23] And even among the collective interests and views a great deal of diversity is likely lurking below the sources' discourse of unity and uniformity.[24] In terms of impact and resonance, communities from any of the cultures investigated in this section did not have the same effect on all other groups with whom they interacted. They did not consistently implement their view of self and society in exactly the same way. They also certainly allowed their position to change over time—or were forced to do so.[25] What processes were behind these differences still awaits systematic investigation.

With various degrees of persuasiveness depending strictly upon the nature of the evidence, the papers in this session indicate that community functioned both as a social and an affective category, where representations of belonging were subject to a continuous, multi-level process of imagination and enactment.

---

22   An expression borrowed from Kramer, "Introduction".

23   I am referring to the comments on subgroups in Fermer, "Among Teachers", and Hovden, "Competing Visions".

24   On this see Hugon, "Enclaves". Surely the notion that "literate communities" may be studied as uniform entities, with no hierarchical differences or conflict-bearing dynamics fuelled by different interpretations of a shared written legacy, is one of the least fortunate (and unintended) consequences of Brian Stock's ground-breaking work *The Implications of Literacy*.

25   As pointed out in Kramer, "Introduction", and Lutter, "Vita communis".

As Rutger Kramer points out in the introduction, relying on the imperfect yet highly relevant notion of enclaves of learning allows scholars to place on the agenda a thorough investigation of other issues relevant to the study of medieval communities. It also enables them to identify cross-culturally significant opportunities for further research. I hope to have been successful in highlighting a few of these, and that some of them may be incorporated into the VISCOM team's further endeavours.

Bibliography

Neithard Bulst, "La filiation de St-Bénigne de Dijon au temps de l'abbé Guillaume", in *Naissance et fonctionnement des réseaux monastiques et canoniaux: Actes du 1er Colloque International du CERCOM, Saint-Etienne, 16–18 septembre 1985* (Saint-Etienne, 1991), 33–41.

Jean-François Cottier, Daniel-Odon Hurel and Benoît-Michel Tock, eds., *Les personnes d'autorité en milieu régulier: Des origines de la vie regulière au XVIIIe siècle. Actes du septième colloque international du CERCOR, Strasbourg, 18–20 juin 2009* (Saint-Etienne, 2012).

George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig, eds., *Medieval Monastic Education* (London, 2000).

Jason Hughes et al., eds., *Communities of Practice: Critical Perspectives* (London, 2007).

Charles S. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe 950–1200* (Philadelphia, PA, 1994).

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge, 1991).

Christina Lutter, "Ways of Knowing and Meanings of Literacy in Twelfth-Century Admont", in *Strategies of Writing: Studies on Text and Trust in the Middle Ages*, ed. Petra Schulte, Marco Mostert, and Irene Van Renswoude (Turnhout, 2008), 355–76.

Mia Münster-Swendsen, "The Model of Scholastic Mastery in Northern Europe c. 970–1200", in *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000–1200*, eds. Sally N. Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein (Turnhout, 2006), 306–42.

Mia Münster-Swendsen, "Medieval Virtuosity: Classroom Practice and the Transfer of Charismatic Power in Medieval Scholarly Culture c. 1000–1230", in *Negotiating Heritage: Memories of the Middle Ages*, eds. Mette Bruun and Stéphanie Glaser (Turnhout, 2009), 43–64.

Isabelle Rosé, "Circulation abbatiale et pouvoir monastique de l'époque carolingienne au premier âge féodal (IXe–XIe siècle)", in *Des sociétés en mouvement: migrations et mobilité au Moyen Âge. XLe congrès de la SHMESP (Nice, 1–6 juin 2009)* (Paris, 2010), 251–66.

Tjamke Snijders, "Textual Diversity and Textual Community in a Monastic Context: The Case of Eleventh-Century Marchiennes", *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 107 (2012), 897–930.

Sita Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens im Früh- und Hochmittelalter: Autorität, Wissenskonzepte und Netzwerke von Gelehrten* (Cologne, 2011).

Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Methods of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 1983).

Steven Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900–1100* (Ithaca, NY, 2013).

Steven Vanderputten, "The Mind as Cell and the Body as Cloister: Abbatial Leadership and the Issue of Stability in the Early Eleventh Century", in *Innovationen durch Deuten und Gestalten: Klöster im Mittelalter zwischen Jenseits und Welt*, eds. Gert Melville et al. (Mainz, 2015a), 105–26.

Steven Vanderputten, "The 1131 General Chapter of Benedictine Abbots Reconsidered", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 66 (2015b), 715–34.

Steven Vanderputten, "Communities of Practice and Emotional Aspects of Loyalty in Reformist Circles of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries", in *Loyalty in the Middle Ages: Ideal and Practice of a Cross-Social Value*, eds. Jörg Sonntag and Coralie Zermatten (Turnhout, 2015c) 279–303.

Response to the Chapters in "Spiritual Communities" Section

Jonathan R. Lyon

Comparing similar-looking institutions from different cultures across the globe can be a challenging and perilous undertaking—especially when the comparative research is being conducted by a group of Europeans. In recent decades, scholars working in the field of postcolonial studies have frequently pointed out the many dangers of allowing Eurocentric world views to shape scholarship and to privilege Western developments over non-Western ones. One need only read Edward Said on Orientalism or Dipesh Chakrabarty on the provincializing of Europe to understand that a research project based in Europe, and relying on European modes of thinking about culture, risks completely misunderstanding or misusing the history of other regions of the world.[1] Michael Mitterauer, in his book *Why Europe? The Medieval Origins of its Special Path*, skirted this problem by making it clear from the beginning that his comparative approach was designed to better explain Europe, not the rest of the world. Thus, like the articles published here, his book discusses Christian, Muslim and Buddhist forms of spiritual communities—but his focus throughout remains on the distinctive characteristics of Western European monasteries.[2] To do a truly comparative project, one that is not designed to elevate one culture and one form of religious community over another, is a very different task—and a very challenging one as well.

The scholars writing here are therefore to be commended for working collaboratively toward a more complex, cross-cultural analysis of spiritual communities in parts of the Christian, Muslim and Buddhist worlds. Whether or not their term "enclaves of learning" is the most appropriate and most useful term to use as a starting point for examining the communities under consideration here is an open question. Regardless, it is unquestionably a good way to open the conversation, and it moves this comparative project in the right direction. Most importantly, it shifts the focus away from the term *monastery*, which carries with it too much cultural baggage for Europeans (and Americans)

---

1   Said, *Orientalism* and Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe.*

2   Mitterauer, *Why Europe?* I cite the original German edition here: *Warum Europa?* 169–78.

whose societies have been permeated by Christian traditions for centuries.[3] Both the terms "spiritual communities" and "enclaves of learning" subsume monasteries under broader categories that are much more flexible and more open to cross-cultural comparison.

Admittedly, it is probably impossible to find a single word or term, in any European language, that can effectively capture the essence of Christian, Muslim and Buddhist forms of spiritual community—without bringing with it a Eurocentric perspective on those communities. One might be tempted to solve this problem by taking a radically non-Western viewpoint and employing the *hijra* of Yemen or the *gompa* of the Tibetan Highlands as the frame of reference through which all this comparative work is channelled. Such an approach—Western scholars using non-Western concepts as the basis for analysing both Western and non-Western forms of spiritual communities—would undoubtedly lead to some interesting results! Nevertheless, this approach would bring cultural baggage with it as well, since *hijra* and *gompa* are also terms deeply embedded in their specific social settings—as the articles in this section have convincingly shown. Thus, employing an entirely new term like "enclaves of learning", while not a perfect solution, seems like a necessary first step toward developing a comparative process that has the potential to treat all the cultures under investigation here on as equal a basis as possible.

If there is an obvious weakness in the term "enclaves of learning", it is this: although the project being undertaken here is a comparison of communities across three different religious cultures, the term fails to embrace any notion of religion. The contributors' frequent use of the phrase "spiritual communities" helps to alleviate this problem to a certain extent, but all the contributors avoid drawing comparisons and contrasts at the level of spiritual understanding. *Faith*—a word that tends to make many secularist, 21st-century Western scholars deeply uncomfortable—has no role to play here. And yet, as all these papers show in different ways, *what* was being *learned* in these different communities varied significantly across the three religious cultures for reasons relating directly to their religious traditions. A Buddhist transported to a Yemeni *hijra* or an Irish monastery in the German kingdom might have seen similarities in the *outward form* of the different institutions, but it is hard to imagine he would have agreed with the *spiritual content* of what was being learned in these various enclaves. As a result, one must be careful not to over-emphasize the *learning* aspect of these enclaves to the detriment of the underlying religious faiths that shaped their various communal identities.

---

3 Rutger Kramer's Introduction to this section makes this point eloquently with its opening story about the Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri.

A second concern I have with both terms used here—"enclaves of learning" and "spiritual communities"—is not necessarily a weakness: the open, flexible nature of these terms is certainly appealing, but just how broad do these contributors envision them to be? For the period under consideration in these articles, it is easy to identify other institutions in Western Europe (the region I know best) that might fit under these umbrella terms as well. For the 10th and 11th centuries, cathedral schools come to mind; beginning in the 12th century, universities—which were also very much religious institutions in the medieval period—might fit comfortably under these rubrics. Is there something distinctive about the *monasteries* of Latin Christendom that make them different from these other potential forms of "spiritual communities" and "enclaves of learning"? Are there other institutions in the Buddhist and Muslim worlds that might profitably be included under these rubrics—or whose exclusion needs to be explained?

Of course, the potential breadth of the terms "spiritual communities" and "enclaves of learning" might also be one of their greatest benefits—if they can be used to make even more expansive comparisons amongst different kinds of specialized religious and intellectual communities across human societies. This obviously takes us beyond the parameters of the VISCOM project, but an effective comparative approach should always raise broader questions and open wider avenues of research. For example, expanding the use of the terms makes it possible to think about these Christian, Muslim and Buddhist enclaves alongside the Academy founded by Plato (d. 347 BC) in ancient Athens.[4] It was a community that comprised like-minded sophists and philosophers who talked and argued with each other—and who taught others. It lay outside the city walls of Athens, in a park with a shrine, on property purchased by Plato— perhaps with the financial assistance of a friend. And the members seem to have lived in small cabins clustered around a main building. Is this not an "enclave of learning" and "spiritual community"? And what ought we to do with the story St Augustine tells in his *Confessions* of gathering a circle of his friends to live together in a community of like-minded individuals sharing their possessions?[5] Did this group constitute an "enclave of learning" and/or a "spiritual community"?

My aim with these examples is not to argue for antecedents, or to suggest a direct classical influence on any of the later institutions under consideration here. Rather it is to show that the terms used in this section to enable comparison of the *monasterium*, the *hijra* and the *gompa*, if defined broadly, can be

---

4   What follows is drawn from Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato*.
5   See Lutter's contribution to this volume for more on this point.

applied to many other past human societies. Indeed, they could even be used to argue for our species' persistent efforts throughout our long history to create places dedicated to the life of the mind and to spiritual reflection. Viewed from this perspective, we can just as easily look forward as backward with the terms "enclaves of learning" and "spiritual communities". That the modern university is so frequently referred to in the English-speaking world as the "Ivory Tower" suggests a similar vision of enclave-like communal identity to the ones discussed in these papers. The comparison with the modern university could be extended further as well, since like the earlier Christian, Muslim and Buddhist "enclaves of learning", the modern university has never been as isolated—politically, economically, socially—from the surrounding society as some of its rhetoric might suggest. Thus universities are frequently used by local leaders to promote their political agendas: the foundation of the Freie Universität in West Berlin during the Cold War to counter East German control over the Humboldt Universität is a well-known example. Moreover, modern universities are often nodes in networks of nepotism for local elites, and like some earlier "enclaves of learning", they can become entangled in drawn out legal cases about their property rights and their economic privileges.

In the United States, where private, religious universities are much more common than in Europe, I suspect even more connections could be drawn between medieval and modern "spiritual communities" and "enclaves of learning". The University of Notre Dame, for example, was founded in the 19th century in sparsely-populated Indiana by members of a Roman Catholic religious order, the Congregation of Holy Cross. Since then, the university has always had a member of that order as its president—and many members of the order have been professors as well. In the early 1960s, its president Father Theodore Hesburgh worked closely with President John F. Kennedy on civil rights, clear evidence for how the university's members have sometimes been embedded in national political networks. And today, thanks in large part to the financial support of its "patrons"—students, alumni, alumnae and their parents—it has an endowment worth approximately $7 billion.

I could continue: it is striking, for example, that although the university is completely surrounded by the city of South Bend, it actually has its own town name and postal zip code: Notre Dame, IN 46556. Moreover, there is a crucifix in every classroom and a basilica on campus, where some faculty members and students attend Mass together on Sunday mornings. Here then, we seem to have a quintessential "enclave of learning" and "spiritual community" in the heart of the American Midwest. Indeed, we can see with this example the interplay of a complex (and one might also say contradictory) set of institutional elements that simultaneously promote both separation from the

outside world and close engagement with it. Similar trends are evident in all the papers presented here as well, where we see different visions and ideals of community interacting with each other at the level of the individual institution.

Whether or not "enclaves of learning" and "spiritual communities" are ultimately the best terms to capture this research project's main goals, I hope they continue to generate debate. What this project shows is that the *process* of discussing the advantages and disadvantages of these terms has been just as fruitful—if not more so—as the end *results* offered in the papers printed here.

In closing, however, I would like to look beyond these terms to the issues raised about Christian, Muslim and Buddhist religious centres in the VISCOM project more generally. At the level of comparison conducted by many of the contributors to this volume, it is possible to identify various ways in which aspects of all three religious cultures are similar. One noteworthy feature of all the settings discussed in the papers in this section is the challenge these communities faced in balancing internal communal identity with external connections to the surrounding society. Like the smallest figurine in a set of Russian nesting dolls, the individual "enclave of learning" within each of these societies fits inside a series of other communities, each one larger than the next. How the members of an "enclave of learning" chose to set themselves apart from (and work together with) surrounding groups differed in each case, but everywhere we find a combination of both theoretical and practical elements at work in establishing a distinctive community.

The challenge of how to balance ideals with reality when building a specialized community—religious, intellectual or otherwise—has long been recognized. More than 2000 years ago, when pondering how to create the perfect political community, Plato proposed for his ideal polity a ruling class of guardians free from traditional family attachments. According to the *Republic,* if the members of this elite shared their wives and children, it would "prevent them tearing the community apart by using the expression 'mine' to refer not to the same thing, but to various things [...] Different people call different things 'mine' when they each have their own houses into which they pull anything they can keep out of the hands of others, and when they each have their own wife and children; and this situation introduces into the community the personal pleasures and pains of private individuals".[6]

A short time later, Aristotle, in his *Politics,* countered Plato by arguing that the family is a necessary foundation of the political community because it

---

6 Plato, *Republic*, 464c-d, trans. Waterfield, p. 180.

fosters love and virtue, both of which are essential for the state to survive.[7] Equally problematic for Aristotle was Plato's assumption in the *Republic* that family bonds could simply be suppressed and ignored amongst the members of the guardian class.[8] Aristotle makes it clear in his discussion of monarchy that family relationships are not so easily cast aside: "Even supposing the principle to be maintained that kingly power is the best thing for states, how about the family of the king? Are his children to succeed him? If they are no better than anybody else, that will be mischievous. But perhaps the king, though he might, will not hand on his power to his children? That, however, is hardly to be expected, and is too much to ask of human nature".[9]

I have always been an Aristotelian when it comes to this particular point. *Proposing* an idealized vision of community free of family attachments is easy, and Plato is certainly not the only one to do it. Several centuries later, St Benedict would do so as well in his Rule for Christian monasteries. *Implementing* such a vision of community is a different story, however, and as Aristotle argues, it is not even clear that such a community would be inherently better. To my pleasant surprise, all of the papers presented here also tend to follow Aristotle in developing a pragmatic sense of how any enclave is inevitably embedded in the society around it. None of the authors falls into the trap of letting idealistic rhetoric overshadow the basic realties on the ground. Thus we learn that even the Irish monks who left their homeland to establish communities for themselves in the German kingdom were not truly isolated; they were deeply embedded in local society while also maintaining connections to Ireland and Irish culture. In short, all of these articles show that the common (European/American) understanding of the term "monastery" as a place walled off from society is misleading and unhelpful—not only when thinking about Christian monasteries but also when thinking about how other religious cultures created spaces, both physical and mental, where their own spiritual and intellectual elites could flourish. Idealistic visions of how a community ought to function can tell us much about a society's understanding of itself, but those visions only make sense when studied alongside the local realities faced by the people trying to build a functioning community.[10]

Successful cross-cultural comparisons should teach us that what seems clear and self-evident about a society—whether it is "our" society or "somebody else's", whether it be a past society or a present one—is never as simple as

---

7   Saxonhouse, "Family, Polity & Unity", 202–19.

8   Aristotle, *Politics*, 2.3.1262a, ed. Barnes, pp. 2002–03.

9   Ibid., 3.15.1286b, ed. Barnes, p. 2042.

10   See Lutter's contribution to this volume for more on this point.

it seems. These scholars, in proposing new concepts as a means of starting the process of comparing spiritual and intellectual centres across the Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist worlds, have done exactly that. I look forward to learning more from them in the future.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Aristotle, *Politics* in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, 1984), pp. 1986–2129.

Plato, *Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford, New York, 1993).

Secondary Literature

Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton, 2000).

John Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy (347–274 BC)* (Oxford, 2003).

Michael Mitterauer, *Why Europe? The Medieval Origins of its Special Path*, trans. Gerald Chapple (Chicago, 2010). Originally *Warum Europa? Mittelalterliche Grundlagen eines Sonderwegs* (Munich, 2003).

Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, 1978).

Arlene W. Saxonhouse, "Family, Polity & Unity: Aristotle on Socrates' Community of Wives", *Polity* 15, 2 (1982), 202–19.

Medieval Eurasian Communities by Comparison: Methods, Concepts, Insights*

Andre Gingrich

When an early 21st-century interdisciplinary research project comprises comparative investigations across three religions and their main realms of influence in medieval Eurasia as here, basic conceptual and epistemological approaches to history emerge. Despite their heterogeneous disciplinary backgrounds, most contributors to the present set of studies operate within the broad middle ground between universalism and particularism. A certain more or less explicit commitment to investigate comparative dimensions is invested from the outset, and thus combines with being open to scrutinizing and assessing potential similarities and parallels. At the same time, this combines with a solid respect for the specificities of particular historical processes in smaller and wider contexts. Writing "multiple histories" is a loose and flexible description for such a set of approaches.[1]

In view of current debates and buzzwords, it should be clarified that avenues toward elaborating multiple histories are by no means identical with actively participating in debates about "axial age" legacies, nor in sharing that paradigm. This does not deny that the concept "axial age" is as much debated and highly contested as it is pervasive. In one or the other version, as elaborated since the mid-20th century by generalists ranging from Karl Jaspers (1949) in philosophy to S.N. Eisenstadt (1986) in sociology,[2] this concept and the underlying sets of hypotheses have been fairly influential for the study of earlier periods in some of the same regions that this volume is engaging with. The basic "axial age" argument holds that between 800 and 200 BC, new ways of philosophical and religious thinking had appeared in written genres across major parts of Asia and Europe—providing a "breakthrough" to specific dynamics of state formation, and to new civilizational patterns with a focus on conceptualizing the relation between transcendental and mundane order in new ways, largely independently of each other yet sharing a basic emphasis upon

---

1 Gingrich, "Multiple Histories".

2 Jaspers, *The Origin*; Eisenstadt, ed., *Origins and Diversity of Axial Age.*

self-discipline and morality.[3] It is true that more recent phases of debates and research[4] based on this hypothesis have abandoned any dichotomy between "Orient and Occident" as introduced by Jaspers, and acknowledge more inclusive approaches and some priority for diversity without any inherent necessity for teleological hegemony.[5] Still, by contrast to the somewhat more cautious approaches toward multiple history, "axial age" research by definition tends to lean more favourably towards universalist interpretations of its historical periods of interest—as is demonstrated by debates currently attracting archaeologists, historians, psychologists, anthropologists, and even biologists alike.[6]

Visions of Community, by contrast, investigates a smaller set of regions for more recent periods of history, with a more limited research agenda: this investigative process has set out to examine and comparatively assess processes of community formation between late antiquity and early modernity in selected contexts of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. In whatever ways these eras are understood and defined within regional and continental contexts, this will result in a historical focus on, roughly, the millennium between AD 500 and 1500. By definition then, explorations with such temporal and historical parameters will not focus on any results about the underlying reasons for and the main logic promoting the *emergence* of certain specified Eurasian religions but, rather, on insights into their enduring legacies, their dissemination, and their respective interpretations: What was the socio-economic impact on the ground once some of these scriptural world religions were established? What were their modes of actual operation at the levels of various local and supra-local communities? Within the current, new paradigmatic research contexts of the present, *Visions of Community* is one of the first research endeavours in this realm—clearly centred in its programme around the cooperation between historians, philologists, and socio-cultural anthropologists.

Similar only in that spatial regard to "axial age" debates, the present research endeavour maintains a selectively and loosely defined yet explicitly regional focus on the two continental realms of Europe and mainland Asia. This includes their mutual interplay as well as an appreciation of parallel yet not directly interrelated developments and, furthermore, recognizing Europe's growing intercontinental role since Mediterranean antiquity. Consequently, "Eurasia" is chosen as a descriptive and rather pragmatic term for this spatial-temporal focus. This choice comes along with a critical *caveat* about the term's

---

3   Árnason, "Axial Age", 47.

4   E.g. Graeber, *Debt*, Rüpke, *Religion*.

5   Armstrong, *Great Transformation*.

6   See, for instance, Baumard et al., "Increased Affluence".

potential abuse, and, simultaneously, this choice does not necessarily entail any wider commitment to ongoing conceptualizations of Eurasia by other scholarly endeavours, although one might benefit from the other in the future.[7]

The following concluding remarks to this volume subscribe to an understanding of research as being always in flux, and usually as operating within bundles of partially interacting processes.[8] In that sense, intermediate results from a collaborative research program with a duration of about a decade are perhaps just slightly more in flux than any other academic output. Still, these intermediate results would be of no benefit if readers' expectations and curiosity were to be constantly reoriented away from them towards the final results that may or may not be waiting somewhere in the future. In short, as partial as they may be, the present intermediate results deserve to be critically assessed in their own right. My concluding remarks will therefore aspire to emphasize some of those insights in the present volume that seem to be of a more enduring and wider relevance beyond the specific regional and historical contexts within which they were at first achieved. I will discuss this possible wider and enduring relevance primarily in dialogue with the comparative comments that accompany each of this volume's four main parts, thereby organizing these remarks into the corresponding Sections 2–5. Before these, an initial methodological section will sum up some of the merits and potential of this kind of comparative inquiry.

Cross-Cultural Historical Comparisons of Meanings: Methodological Toolkits

Whenever historians, philologists, and socio-cultural anthropologists embark upon a joint comparative enterprise, early on in this process they are bound to discover that each of their respective disciplines has already been engaged in its own comparative practices for some time. While fairly self-evident within each field, these practices are acknowledged merely in passing by many

---

7   E.g. Hann, "Towards a Maximally Inclusive Concept of Eurasia".

8   The core version of the present text was written in December 2014 and January 2015 in Bali, Indonesia. Wherever the text refers to other chapters in the present volume, this is done on the basis of text drafts as they were available by that time. For their helpful suggestions and feedback on the March 2015 version of this chapter, I would like to thank the three co-editors of this volume as well as Brill's anonymous reviewers. In addition, I acknowledge having benefited from comments by the following colleagues: Regina Bendix (Göttingen); Philippe Buc (Vienna); Dipesh Chakrabarty (Chicago); David Gellner (Oxford); Barbara Götsch (Vienna); Chris Hann (Halle); Julene Knox (London); Charles Ramble (Paris/Oxford). Any remaining mistakes, however, would of course not be their responsibility but remain mine.

outside. By necessity, historians (of various European and Asian societies) always compare their source materials and the social contexts to which they refer, or specific phenomena within these contexts, in terms of time lines—usually within smaller or larger regions, and within more limited time spans. Philologists (of various European and Asian cultures) also compare based on time lines, but in contrast to historians their sources comprise linguistic, written—and sometimes also spoken—material; they analyse and compare genres of textual production within and across specific linguistic traditions and their respective variants. Again by contrast, during ethnographic fieldwork in Asia or in Europe socio-cultural anthropologists constantly compare their hosts' interactions (including speech acts) with them, with others, and among themselves, and sometimes they compare the results of their findings with those from other cultural settings or with earlier reports about their host society.

When carrying out a joint comparative enterprise, each of these three fields is therefore prepared to move to a certain extent into the common ground where the three distinct disciplinary experiences and practices of comparison partially intersect and reinforce each other. In addition, each of them also brings their more exclusive and specialized comparative experience for potential cross-fertilization. The methodological procedures to be negotiated, tried out, and elaborated are "cross-cultural historical comparisons of meanings": Once you decide to work on medieval periods, your comparative exercises are bound to be "historically grounded" if not historical. While you cooperate in this, the type of available evidence requires the constant analysis of textual and other forms of "meaning". And as soon as you agree to carry this out across various regions of religious and linguistic diversity, *cross-cultural* continues to be the best available term to describe what you are actually doing. Cross-cultural historical comparison of meaning is therefore understood here as a descriptive working term for the methodological toolkits, in the plural, employed by historians, philologists, socio-cultural anthropologists, and related disciplines collaborating in spatially and temporally grounded endeavours such as *Visions of Community*.

As an additional qualifier, the present endeavour is characterized by a preference for small numbers when it comes to operational size: small numbers of units to be compared, as well as of phenomena under scrutiny within and across these units. No privilege is therefore being assigned to the processing of big data but, instead, a clear priority is given to qualitative comparison on a small or medium scale. The advantage of working at this scale is that the appropriate methodological procedures yield much more detail and precision than is possible with the rough overview outcomes that usually result from big-data processing.

What are the actual goals, purposes, and potential results of such a qualitative, tri-disciplinary comparative endeavour? Given an elementary research understanding of comparison as the analysis of similarities and parallels as well as of differences and contrasts,[9] we may distinguish three markers of such goals, purposes, and potential results along a sliding scale of different scopes with specific challenges—i.e., between "a minimum challenge", through "a challenge of medium difficulty", to "a maximum challenge".

"A minimum challenge" to cross-cultural historical comparisons of meaning is to bring out the specificities in each case or process under scrutiny. This should be the basic aim and goal to be aspired to, which, if achieved, will be of great benefit, because the truly specific properties and features stand out more clearly when compared than if they had not been compared.[10] Even passionate followers of epistemological relativism or of empiricism should therefore be able to accommodate their convictions within this minimal challenge. A good example for such an endeavour is provided by Rutger Kramer's introduction to this volume's final section. On the other hand, if comparison in general and, likewise, if cross-cultural historical comparison of meanings in particular does not promise even a chance of yielding the minimal potential of highlighting the specific, then comparison is better avoided from the outset.

While busily identifying specificities, however, a researcher's comparative activity may once in a while—and perhaps more often than anticipated—deliver evidence of processes and cases that are not as unique as they at first sight appear, or that display certain dimensions that have parallels to other cases under scrutiny. This may then result in the insight that in some of its dimensions, an individual case or process represents just one item within a wider range. This I would call the "challenge of medium difficulty" among our three markers of possible goals and results. If successfully met, it may lead to the identification of certain dimensions in specific cases or processes as examples within a more or less wide range of diversity as a class or set of variants.[11] It is precisely this range, set, or class that may then become the new focus of theorizing and of conceptualization. In fact, the mere establishing of inventories of diversity would fall short of actually tackling the challenge of medium difficulty, and would amount to little more than "collecting butterflies"—as Edmund Leach[12] once disapprovingly referred to such documentary

---

9   Gingrich, "Comparative Methods"; Palmberger and Gingrich, "Qualitative Comparative Practices".

10   Pohl, "Comparing Communities"; Rosenwein, "An Historian in the Amazon".

11   See Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies".

12   Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*.

endeavours of limited intellectual relevance. Unless the range (or set, or class) itself becomes the focus of conceptualization (which would include a recognition of its internal varieties and their rationales), the mere celebration of diversity falls back into emphasizing many specificities. For some, this may be the golden road for their hidden agenda, namely, towards elevating the specificity of their choice and its allegedly unique role within humanity at large.

Once a range (or set, or class) of diverse historical phenomena has been regionally or cross-culturally proposed, discussed, conceptualized, and sufficiently theorized, one may move on to other related or unrelated phenomena. Alternatively, in a few of these instances of more or less wide ranges of diversity, clusters may eventually become apparent. Wherever such clusters of sets and examples are discernible, and in the event that several of them contrast with each other in meaningful ways, this would then allow the elaboration of typologies. Formulating such comparative typologies (which may or may not be related to Max Weber's "ideal types", see Pohl's introduction to this volume) is what I would call the "maximum challenge" in cross-cultural historical comparison of meanings. Scholarly representatives of some epistemological orientations will be less enthusiastic than others about addressing this challenge at all. Still, an "abductive" approach[13] rather than either a strictly deductive or a narrow inductive line of reasoning might accommodate at least a fair number of the sceptics.

So some basic methodological agreement on comparative goals and aims is essential, despite and because of epistemological pluralism: be that in the minimalist sense only, or beyond that by at least trying to also integrate medium and maximum goal dimensions. On such a basis, cross-cultural historical comparisons of meanings, just like any other comparative procedure, require some clarity about the "empirical features" of comparison as well as about the "cross-cutting criteria" by which these features will be comparatively assessed. In one crucial sense, the question of whether specific features are empirically available is based on the evidence and its potential. If the available sources, however narrowly or loosely they are identified and interpreted, do not yield any evidence in one set of cases and processes then there is nothing available to be compared. Yet often there is, and within such a given range of options and choices about available and potential evidence, path dependency and theory then intervene. In the other sets of cases under scrutiny, if an abundance of relevant source materials is available in one case of sets and processes, it may still not be useful to subject them to comparison if they do not correspond sufficiently or do not correspond at all. Alternatively, there may be an

---

13   Reichertz, "Abduction, Deduction, Induction".

abundance of source materials available in several sets, yet these materials then may have no apparent relevance for the key research question. The empirical features of comparison in this volume, and the cross-cutting criteria by which they were examined, thus had to fulfil precisely these two sets of conditions: first, substantial relevance for the central research question(s) about "visions of community", and second, a minimal source-based occurrence of evidence across all (or, at least: across most) European and Asian cases under scrutiny in order to make comparison not only meaningful but, even more importantly, possible.

Since the key research question asks about the integrating effects of visions of community, a first obvious field of comparing relevant evidence relates to public references about and by communities. "Addressing communities" in terminology, tropes, or textual genres, and analysing contexts, structures, and actors in these processes of addressing communities was thereby chosen as the first of four subfields of investigation. The other three subfields were then singled out for the purpose of scrutinizing specific social arenas through which processes of community formation would take place. The second and the fourth subfields are "urban settings" and "spiritual communities" (i.e. monasteries and other comparable "enclaves of learning") that to an extent allow analyses from "below" and from the "inside" while also relating these to wider interactions in the respective regions and the outside world at large. The third subfield is more explicitly oriented toward the formation, articulation, and representation of elites and toward their "top-down" perspectives, taking "genealogies" as a strategic avenue for analyses focused on this purpose. In theory, other choices of subfields might have been possible, but together with only a few alternatives, the present choice best fulfilled both methodological prerequisites as previously outlined and answers theoretically inspired key questions by means of analytical assessment of evidence through processes of cross-cultural historical comparison of meanings.

Diverse and Similar Ways of Addressing "Community"

A recent introduction to the topic of the "Visions of Community" project[14] has already explained that for comparative purposes of Eurasian medieval history, the term "community" is best understood as a low-threshold research concept referring to group identity formation processes in context. Such an orientation

14   Gingrich and Lutter, "Visions of Community: An Introduction"; see also Lutter, "Comparative Approaches".

simultaneously distances itself critically from two alternative approaches which are not useful or productive for our present purposes: first, an "exclusively native" approach might prefer to accept evidence for addressing community only when and where the term "community" itself or a one-to-one correspondence in other languages occurs—thereby ignoring all other possible processes of group identity formation that did not find their way into this narrow crystallization of terminology chosen by specific authors in their chosen periods. Second, an "exclusively modernist" approach might prefer to search specifically for those indications of community that seem to speak to the quasi-evolutionist theories[15] according to which community is seen as more or less synonymous with the pre-modern. From the outset this approach thus introduces a theoretical paradigm that by definition cannot be shared by many experts of medieval Eurasian studies, namely, society as a more recent and more modern sequence to the allegedly more archaic, pre-modern formations of community.

Current approaches to addressing medieval communities, such as the majority of those represented in this volume, are thus not exclusively nativist and are non-modernist at the same time. Their primary reference and scriptural evidence are what might qualify as key items in public discourse, such as language and text productions designed for wider circles of readers and audiences with the explicit intention to leave a mark, to convince, and to remain relevant over time. Socio-cultural and public contexts as well as authors' agency within these contexts thus emerge as key dimensions of analysis, as Heiss and Hovden (this volume) appropriately observe in their comparative reflections on this subfield. Still, they do not deny the continuing salient relevance of source criticism, etymological assessment, or of semantic and literary criticism in general as essential prerequisites. The fact that these tropes and themes in medieval public discourses on community, just as on many other subjects, were framed within religious paradigms is self-evident: any *a priori* separation between religious and other public spheres of life in those circles and strata of medieval Eurasia that were able to read would have been exceptional, if such separation existed at all. The fact that most texts and arguments as analysed by Heydemann, Lohlker, Hovden, and Heiss are embedded within rationales that either seek to elaborate and confirm religious norms (Heydemann, this volume), or at least to explore the ranges of potential agency without openly contradicting them (Lohlker, this volume), is not an unexpected insight. Although corresponding analyses from Tibeto-Buddhist realms

---

15   See Tönnies, *Community and Society*, but also Parsons, *Action Theory and the Human Condition.*

are unfortunately still lacking in this subfield, it is highly unlikely they would deviate in this basic regard. What is new in the comparative exercise on addressing community here is the diversity of forms; yet once the analysis moves on to a level of modest abstraction, a fair amount of similarity about the basic social forms of community is actually addressed beneath and beyond normative religious paradigms. A certain search for social realism within their sources of course informed the researchers' choices from the outset. Yet conversely one may also argue that a healthy amount of social realism precisely facilitated the enduring relevance of these sources over time.

Rüdiger Lohlker's distinction between community-centred and ruler-centred visions of community in the Arab-speaking early centuries of Islam is a good case in point. Lohlker starts with a clear distinction between certain terms' modern and contemporary use and abuse, and their different meaning in early and medieval Islamic history. By elaborating some of his earlier contributions to this field, the author demonstrates how other more practical terms came into use alongside a normative theological one in early and medieval Islam, and these were used differently according to the social interests of various stratified players. Historical anthropologists would hope that such splendid insights from Arabists' analyses might also find some more regionalized grounding within their respective time horizons, that is, to specify whether these distinctions were similarly relevant for regions and developments as distant as, say, Andalusia and Oman. Yet notwithstanding such open questions for future research, an innovative and important breakthrough has been achieved that simultaneously sets an example for similar investigations in other linguistic and discursive traditions.

In a way, Gerda Heydemann follows similar pathways while arriving at different results for the three centuries during which Christianity found its way from Western Asia to the centres of Mediterranean Europe (3rd–6th century). Her study of diverse interpretations of Deut. 31:21 by Christian exegetes first of all reveals a plethora of flexible terms for the "community of God" and their usages according to context and purpose, including their reference to rivals and outsiders. This basically highlights the changing meanings of *populus* and *gentes*, which could serve inclusive as well as exclusive arguments. Heydemann, as well as Heiss and Hovden in their response to her—which itself is primarily based on evidence from the Arab peninsula in general and from South West Arabia in particular—raise the issue of ethnic diversity and of interethnic relations in their discussions. By precisely historicizing their contextual relevance and purpose, Heydemann as well as Hovden and Heiss identify the various purposes of usage of these terms, while simultaneously confirming their overall secondary relevance. None of these contributions argues that the topic of

ethnic diversity was of primary relevance for the authors and the texts under scrutiny, let alone that the topic was addressed in any manner in isolation from other, usually more important themes.

Yet having said that, it nevertheless remains worth mentioning that ethnic diversity and interethnic relations were indeed an explicitly addressed socio-cultural topic and a more or less secondary feature in many early medieval authors' references to processes of community formation. This may not be a sensational new insight for medieval historians or for historical anthropologists—after all, why should authors and their interested public in those centuries *not* have been able to address linguistic and cultural diversity when it came to their attention? Yet for those historians of modernity, and for those anthropologists of the contemporary who for a long time have repeated their convictions about ethnicity allegedly being an invention of European modernity (or, for that matter, of European colonialism), this may actually come as the most significant eye-opener in the entire volume before them. "Ethnicity", not as an academic and analytical concept but as a social and cultural interrelation, did not require the curious gaze of modern Europeans to come into being. It was certainly redefined and thereby newly installed as a concept for specific purposes by early modern and colonial European interests—but that does not preclude its prior existence in those scholarly and everyday forms of knowledge characterizing the different contexts of antique and medieval Eurasia.

In addition, the debate between Heydemann, Heiss, and Hovden is indicative of a certain structural relativity in the relationship between interethnic formations and the smaller or larger units with which they might intertwine. In Western Asia, tribe-like or tribal units were usually seen as being of somewhat smaller size and positioned either within or at the periphery of much larger and more heterogeneous units that could be understood as ethnic or regional majorities. If we also include smaller ethnic (i.e. linguistic and/or religious) minorities, a tripartite pattern emerges that became widespread across Asia in general, while in Western Asia in particular it could build upon old Semitic traditions ranging from Gilgamesh's epic narrative[16] to the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament, in which Israel is represented as the (larger) ethnic group composed of a definite number of (smaller) tribes. Muslims continued to tolerate and to promote these distinctions of structural relativity while including, embracing, and integrating them into Islam's concepts of "communities of believers". By and large, these historical Asian and Western Asian relations therefore situate tribal or quasi-tribal entities as medium-sized units that are smaller than those ethnic majorities of which

---

16   Dostal, "Konstanz von Kulturformen".

they are a part and which may also include non-tribal sections; simultaneously, the same tribal or quasi-tribal entities are larger than the ethnic (i.e. linguistic and/or religious) minorities that may or may not coexist within the overall constellation. In early exegetic Christian discourses this relative and loose conceptual structural relation between "larger" ethnic units and "smaller" quasi-tribal subunits (which might again include ethnic minorities), while not a stable given, was obviously even more frequently rhetorically and ideologically shifted and turned around according to contexts and to the authors' intentions.

Against the backgrounds of those Middle Eastern legacies, Johann Heiss and Eirik Hovden suggest also considering the tensions and conflicts in medieval South West Arabia of the 9th and 10th centuries AD from an interethnic hierarchical perspective. Although both sides in those conflicts followed certain versions of Islam, and both of them spoke particular versions of Arabic, available sources make it quite clear that regional socio-cultural differences—including vernacular language and ancestral understanding—mattered more than broad commonalities of language and religion. Interpreting the (North West Arabian) *"Alids"* gradual establishment in South West Arabia from the 10th century as a conflict-ridden process with interethnic dimensions contributes not only to our understanding of the formation of tribal and religious communities in medieval Yemen; in addition, it makes those regional Yemeni processes more readily comparable to developments elsewhere in wider regions such as North Africa and the Greater Middle East, wherever parts of the newly established local elites were for some time of North Arabian background. Furthermore, these processes in medieval Western Asia to some extent have their interethnic counterparts in certain corners of medieval Europe as well—Norman and Plantagenet elite formation in England after the battle of Hastings being the best known. Interethnic elite formation is thus an important by-product of these comparative reflections on ethnicity in medieval Eurasia.

If addressing communities as embedded within "hierarchical social strata" is thus one enduring outcome of this volume's first part, and communities as "secondary interethnic affiliations" across various parts of Eurasia is a second one, then the tribal topic as addressed by Heiss and Hovden represents a third noteworthy result of these comparative interdisciplinary efforts. In my understanding, their concise outline of the usage of different terms in the Quran (with the *Hijazi* and Western Arabian linguistic context of original emergence in the 7th century AD), and primarily as used by two different authors (with their respective backgrounds in central Yemen, and in Yathrib/Madina) from the 10th century for tribal groups of the Yemeni highlands, is again exemplary in its careful and detailed assessment and conclusion. As a result, Heiss and

Hovden are able to highlight the different political intentions and conflict-driven agency involved in both main texts under scrutiny. Consequently, they insist on the necessity of identifying not only context, but also agency—and specifically authors' agency—in the version of cross-cultural comparison of meanings that is implemented here. To this set of orientation markers—that is, contexts and agency—I would like to add structures, and structural relations. This leads to the proposition of a "methodological triangle of key markers of orientation" within which the processes of cross-cultural comparisons of meanings might profitably oscillate and unfold, in other words, that triangle being marked by contexts, agency, and structural relations.

In the particular case analysed by Heiss and Hovden, semantic and etymological analysis provides the relevant "structural" indicators that confirm existing ethnographic insights. *'Ashira*—the North Arabian term used most frequently by the *'Alid* author for *tribe*—goes back to the Arabic word, *inter alia*, for the number ten, and here paraphrases a background of common ancestry lasting about ten generations. The North Arabian term thus emphasizes time, and long sequences of generations. By contrast, the South Arabian *Qabila*, used regularly by the Yemeni author for tribal groups, in etymological terms refers back to the Arabic word for, *inter alia*, the spatial position of being in front of something or somebody. Here it paraphrases a background of co-residence among others, "in front of" whom one speaks and acts. The South West Arabian (and, likewise, the more frequently used Quranic) term thus emphasizes space, location, and co-residence rather than time, generations, and descent. Ethnographic analyses throughout the past three decades have been pointing out that in their basic dimensions the tribal formations of South West Arabia were essentially territorial by configuration while genealogies were less important for the non-elite tribal people but primarily relevant only for the tribal and non-tribal elites.[17] By contrast, ethnographic analyses from Northern Arabia demonstrate the much more pervasive role of long chains of descent in various social status groups among the elites, yet partly also beyond them.[18]

To sum up, the sources examined by Heiss and Hovden on various usages and meanings of *tribe* in 10th-century Arabia (and before that) primarily indicate different "contexts" and opposing "agency". Yet as a third marker of orientation, they also seem to imply different "structural relations", here those of personal and group affiliation to tribal status and the inherent orientation of that status in different parts of Arabia, namely, of a more territorial structural

---

17   See e.g. Gingrich, "Multiple Histories" and the references indicated there.

18   See e.g. Shryock, *Nationalism*; Musil, *Manners and Customs*.

orientation in the southwest and of a more genealogical structural orientation of tribal groups in the north of the Arab peninsula.

Urban Medieval Settings and the Relevant Priorities of Classification

Comparing medieval urban settings across Eurasia to an extent is a matter of scale, as, unavoidably, are all comparisons, within certain limits. The smaller the scale, the greater the attention to detail, and, by consequence, the more likely it is that the analysis of specificities will predominate over the identification of similarities with other comparable cases. This is the methodological side to a somewhat problematic coin—in other words, why the present explorations into medieval and early modern urban settings of Central Europe, the Dalmatian Coast, and South West Arabia yield three studies in regional diversities rather than, at this point, any comparative analysis across continents. The case is further aggravated by the absence of corresponding investigations from the Tibeto-Buddhist realms, for which many experts continue to claim that the term "urban" is not even applicable in the medieval and early modern periods.

The other side of the same coin is theoretical in nature, as indicated by Walter Pohl in his introduction as well as by Gruber, Heiss, and Hovden in their joint comparative reflections on the urban subfield (this volume). Throughout the 20th century, questions of urban constellations and their roles in Eurasian history were loaded and in fact overburdened with theoretical claims and interests. This is particularly true in relation to the oeuvre of German legal and economic historian and sociologist Max Weber in the early 20th century, which in this regard still continued to have its negative resonance with Karl Jaspers' early version of the axial age hypothesis by the mid-20th century. One of the key propositions put forward and popularized by Weber—albeit suggested by several before him, and further elaborated by many of his followers—concerned cities' special relevance for Europe's unique pathway(s) into modernity. Weber and many Weberians argued that legal freedom for certain cities and citizens of late medieval and early modern Europe became the decisive precondition which opened up the way for the unprecedented growth of capital, the emergence of the urban bourgeoisie, and Europe's subsequent leadership in mercantile, colonial, and industrial hegemonies.[19]

---

19   Bruhns/Nippel, eds., *Max Weber und die Stadt*; Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*.

Apart from the many productive consequences for research which these theses and their impact indeed have had, which are not being denied here *per se*, they have also implied a downside for medieval historians of Eurasian cities. Most importantly, the Weberian theses increased the modernist pressure upon them: their studies' relevance was often treated in a reductionist and instrumental manner as if they were only meaningful as long as they delivered building blocks in support of these theses, that is, pre-modern outlines of the emerging presence of the urban liberties that advanced European cities, and how their absence left Asian cities lagging behind. It is understandable then that for some time a set of theses was transformed into something close to a dogma and ended up inadvertently suffocating good new interdisciplinary research by historians, philologists, and anthropologists in the relevant sub-field of comparative urban investigations across medieval Eurasia. In consequence, precisely because such large-scale comparisons could hardly avoid the suffocating effects of the Weberian theses for medieval urban studies in Eurasia, a healthy retreat set in within this particular subfield and by means of such tri-disciplinary cooperation. Instead, new source materials were identified in micro-regions, new methods for their analysis were elaborated and tried out, and on that basis small-scale regional comparison was reinvigorated.

In sum, there are particular methodological and theoretical reasons why at this point the specific subfield in which historians, philologists, and anthropologists study medieval and early modern cities in Eurasia is yielding elements of well-developed regional comparison, which, however, are so far only loosely interconnected with each other at conceptual and intercontinental levels. To my mind, this also raises the question of whether these three disciplines engaged in the urban subfield can afford to continue this conceptual paralysis caused by the Weberian theses, or whether it is high time to profit from neighbouring disciplines that have been less haunted by an inappropriate priority given to a modernist paradigm. After all, Weber elaborated his theses before and after World War I—at a time when European colonialism had peaked, when (Western) European hegemony had reached a global scale, and while for a few decades it appeared as if that constellation could last forever. In such a context, a thesis about the origins of that allegedly enduring role of Europe in world history could potentially have been fascinating to many.

However, merely a hundred years later we are already aware that European hegemony in the world has not even outlived that century. Moreover, since the studies of Joseph Needham and his network of collaborators[20] we have come to realize that the levels of technological and intellectual complexity and

---

20   Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*.

sophistication achieved in China (and elsewhere in Asia) were rarely actually "lagging behind Europe" before the 15th and even the 16th centuries. In short, European hegemony in many ways has gone today, and its overall duration in world history was much shorter than Weber and his contemporaries would have expected. As a result, the question of European urban specificities turns out to have less world historical relevance than was assumed 50 or 90 years ago.[21] Weber's theses on the absence or presence of urban legal freedom have not become irrelevant, but they are far less important than previously assumed, and they need not set the priorities of medieval urban studies in Eurasia.

The world's largest and most sophisticated city between the 9th and the 12th centuries was Angkor, in what today is Cambodia. During its peak era Angkor covered an area about the size of today's Berlin, while hosting about one million inhabitants. In addition to its size and complexity, it is also highly probable that Angkor offered its residents one of the best living standards available anywhere on the globe at the time. One of the leading experts, Australian archaeologist Roland Fletcher, has systematized these and other key indicators to conceptualize "low density/larger size" (or: dispersed) types of medieval garden cities with Angkor as one key example, and to contrast them with "high density/smaller size" cities with correspondingly lower levels of agriculture and garden cultivation.[22] In principle these two forms can be conceptualized as the poles or extremes at the two ends of a scale, with a variety of intermediate forms between them. Yet empirically and historically, the polar forms were fairly widespread and come close to what was addressed in the second section of this chapter as types. Both of these types outlined by Fletcher shared what by definition characterized urban settlements, at least in medieval Eurasia: a relative demographic concentration and agglomeration, a nodal position with wider networks of communication and transportation of all kinds, a relatively higher occurrence—if not a "critical mass"—of specialized intellectual skills related to administration, communication, and religion, and thereby including, among other things such specialized crafts as the arts of writing and reading. The first dispersed or garden type (type 1 for present purposes) according to Fletcher included features of the Roman *oppida*, while in Asia, type 1 occurred in the dry zones of northern Sri Lanka before the 13th century, and reached its maximum form in Angkor after the 11th century. Because of its higher integration of horticulture and agriculture, this type 1 involved two additional features: first, it displayed a gradual rather than any abrupt transition toward the wider rural environment, and, second, for the same reasons

---

21   Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.
22   Fletcher, *Limits of Settlement Growth*; Fletcher, "Low-Density, Agrarian-Based Urbanism".

this type was fairly exposed to seasonal instabilities. This is why it declined somewhat more easily if such environmental crises exceeded certain limits. Many archaeologists of Asia such as Fletcher are convinced that the dispersed, low density/larger size garden type 1 of urban development was more widespread in medieval history than had been understood until recently.

Fortunately enough for historians, philologists, and anthropologists of medieval Eurasia, archaeologists with the same regional and temporal expertise have therefore elaborated a broad intercontinental comparative typology that permits debates and assessments in this field without necessarily engaging with Weber's theses. As Gruber, Heiss and Hovden (this volume) already propose, this archaeological typology does in fact operate with empirical criteria such as size and demographic density. This, then, offers an opportunity to conceptually experiment with the "maximum challenge" addressed in this paper's first section, i.e. the identification and trying out of certain types. If Fletcher's typology is therefore applied for present purposes as I suggest, then two new hypotheses would emerge from such an exercise.

First, a Tibetan hypothesis on horticultural urban settings: it would in fact seem worthwhile explore with some patience and in some detail whether any of the larger oases on the Tibetan plateau in medieval times might perhaps figure as dispersed settlements which in their wider regional contexts could emerge as coming close to peripheral subversions, or peripheral proto-versions, of Fletcher's "dispersed" type 1. While it was often argued that there were "no cities in medieval Tibet", this argument was consistently formulated on the assumption of type 2 models, namely, of a high-density/smaller-size pattern, which indeed would not apply to medieval Tibet. The case might look different if type 1 were used with an eye for potential sources: "Part of the problem is sources, but an even bigger problem may be the fact that no one has really been interested in looking for those sources".[23] For such an endeavour, we have to consider that population density and size are relative and relational criteria to be assessed in their respective contexts. What may look like a large group of dispersed villages in contemporary Yemen or Bohemia might in fact represent a proto-version of type 1 in medieval Tibet, where such a larger group of dispersed villages would have to be situated in one of the plateau's few oases while being surrounded by sparsely populated, vast areas of arid nomadic lands. Perhaps, by contrast, the oases would once in a while also attract a market, a garrison, a monastery, or all of these.

Secondly, *a South West Arabian hypothesis on the mixed occurrence of horticultural (type 1) and mural (type 2) medieval urban settings*: As for the three cases of

---

23 Charles Ramble, personal communication, March 19, 2015.

Sanaa, Zabid, and Sa'da, which Heiss and Hovden introduce into their joint analysis with Elisabeth Gruber (this volume), these three urban medieval Yemeni examples are certainly fairly representative South West Arabian versions of the mural type 2. Yet simultaneously, none of them represents the kind of horticultural type 1, or the dispersed oasis garden settlement that simultaneously existed elsewhere in South West Arabia too. The dispersed oasis settlement of Najran, or some of the major settlements in the Wadi Hadramawt, would be relevant cases in point. On the other hand, during certain phases of history the capital, Sanaa, could be reconsidered; in fact it might have represented a mixed form situated somewhat closer to type 2 than to type 1. These examples indicate that South West Arabia in this regard differed quite markedly from the Tibetan plateau as much as from the Central European and Dalmatian cases throughout long periods of the millennium under scrutiny: if Fletcher's distinction is applied to a larger sample, South West Arabia hosted both basic types of urban setting.

In short, once the large but basic scales of Fletcher's typology are used for the three regional case clusters discussed as urban settings in this volume, then it turns out that at first sight they all seem to belong to type 2. So notwithstanding their important socio-cultural and architectural differences, a certain large-scale perspective such as Fletcher's typology reveals that Dalmatia's early modern island cities, Central Europe's border towns, and some of the Yemen's most important urban-mural settlements have more in common than is apparent at first sight. Their basic demographic and subsistence patterns all feature much higher population densities within sharply confined boundaries, along with a lower amount of horticultural and agricultural subsistence areas inside these urban settlements, and a more clearly marked division of labour between type 2 cities and their immediate environments. According to Fletcher, this type is less susceptible to *in situ* decline or abandonment and subsequent reinstallation elsewhere, and it displays a more inflexible bipolar tendency toward either longevity or disappearance.

If these lines of reasoning are pursued somewhat further, the present research subfield of envisioning communities among urban settings across medieval Eurasia might come to the point where fascinating insights can be positioned within wider forms of reference and typology. With his distinctions of various forms of othering in the community lives of the Dalmatian towns he investigates, Oliver Schmitt (this volume) already provides a lucid line of orientation which could lead to such insights in a given case of comparative analysis. Gruber provides inspiring elements of network analysis and of differing forms of urban specialization in regional contexts that also have great potential for further elaborating and refining criteria and tools for comparisons of type 2 settlements.

A further continuation of the kind of reasoning proposed here would ultimately allow the question of comparative subtypes within and across types 1 and 2 to be addressed, in addition to intermediate forms between 1 and 2 in Asia (such as, perhaps, Sanaa) as well as in Europe (such as, perhaps, in Rome after late antiquity as suggested by Pohl [personal communication]). This might then open up a reconsideration of some enduring insights by a 20th-century master of historical and economic anthropology, Karl Polanyi.[24] After all, Polanyi's concept of "ports of trade", for instance, designated a very specific but widespread subset of urban conglomerations. This subset rarely found its way into the Weberian legacies of reasoning, and neither does it yet have a place in Fletcher's typology: from my perspective, however, ports of trade as a possible type 3 would have to be considered as cross-cutting both types 1 and 2—coexisting with each of them in dependent ways and intermittent cycles of existence, but also existing without either of these two types in cases of interaction with a suitably structured rural or insular hinterland. The integration of "ports of trade" into a refined and elaborated form of Fletcher's typology will be indispensable for understanding and analysing some of Eurasia's medieval communities' key contact zones with their outside worlds: perhaps, after all, several of Dalmatia's proud early modern port cities can best be comparatively assessed precisely from such a perspective.

Scrutinizing Medieval Genealogies

The genealogical subfield of the present inquiry can build on a fairly straightforward and explicit comparative cross-cultural basis and, in that sense, it faces less challenging tasks than the subfields discussed so far. In its empirical dimensions, this comparative cross-cultural basis is provided by evidence from all over Eurasia, that is, by all regional fields under scrutiny here. In their methodological and conceptual dimensions these grounds have been exceptionally well prepared by more than a century of anthropological kinship analyses and their cumulative and revised results.

Genealogies are records of the passing on of expertise, offices, and/or property from one past generational representative to a successor through alleged or metaphorical lines of streamlined descent. Quite elaborate versions of such records are known in predominantly or exclusively verbal form from West African history, where they were transmitted by performance experts, for example from the *Griot* stratum. Yet across medieval Eurasia such verbally or

---

24   Polanyi et al., eds., *Trade and Markets*.

poetically memorized genealogies seem to have been exceptions to the rule—which was the transmittance of genealogical records either through written text alone or through combinations of text and imagery.

By definition, succession in office, in expertise, or in property *per se* is not identical with descent, although both concepts connect the present with the past by informing one through the other. Claims of streamlined descent may, but need not, serve as an implicit or explicit grammar for the construction of genealogical records. In fact, at times, representing records of succession as being connected through direct descent may not even have appeared necessary for the authors, as Pohl demonstrates (this volume) for Merovingian history or as is known for generations of successive Zaydi Imams in the Yemen between the 10th and the 15th centuries AD (who were only related to each other indirectly by common belonging to the house of the Prophet Muhammad). Cases such as these indicate that succession in office was more often *merité* rather than *herité*, with the meritocratic principle rarely being implemented without violence and conflict. In turn, meritocratic instances testify to the non-identity between genealogies and records of descent.

The distinction between descent and genealogy is illustrated even more explicitly through the depiction of representatives of theological wisdom and religious expertise in medieval Europe (Opitz, this volume) and Tibet (Kellner, this volume). In fact, these genealogies of religious wisdom explicitly use notions of descent merely as a peripheral metaphor, while simultaneously, and more importantly, this peripheral metaphor is substituted by something much more valuable in the eyes of contemporary artists, spectators, and readers: the transmission of religious wisdom is passed on across generations—from teacher to disciple in Central European cases, and from one rebirth or reincarnation to the next in the Tibetan case, as impressively analysed in Birgit Kellner's pioneering contribution. Both these modalities thereby, in a way, celebrate the inferiority of descent and the superiority of succession principles by means of higher values and ideas. Kellner observes that the resulting genealogies were no "visions of the archaic" but contemporary attempts at ordering the social world. Still, in almost all extant cases the lines of succession are composed exclusively of male names, and in that sense they do echo and resonate with pre-existing notions of patri-lineage among their readers and spectators despite their explicit hierarchical distance to descent principles.

It is worth mentioning at this point that even if the successive lines of generational representatives were composed of females alone, one basic feature of genealogies would not be erased: in principle, the political and religious quest to author and establish written genealogies evokes the unavoidable necessity of representing the relevant names as if they emanated from a

"unilineal descent order or lineage", be it patrilineal or—as among certain historical kingdoms of southern Africa, for example—more rarely, matrilineal. By its unavoidable proposition of a step-wise and thereby linear sequence, the genre of written transmission across many generations therefore evokes and promotes *per se* the representation of unilineality. In turn, unilineality necessitates the streamlining, the erasure from written records of those members of previous generations who have no relevance for succession. "Structural amnesia" is therefore an indispensable technique and ingredient within any form of genealogical representation. In addition, methods such as "telescoping" and "merging" have been identified throughout decades of kinship analyses—methods by which unilineal genealogical chains can be constructed, invented, or simplified for many of those instances where other ethnographic or historical evidence points to the contrary.[25]

We have thus left the basic realm of non-identity between genealogy and descent and moved on to those more specific genres in which the integration of descent into genealogical representation is seen as desirable, necessary, and legitimate. For these cases—often of a dynastic kind—the important point has to be reiterated that genealogical records not only reflect and illustrate unilineal (mostly patrilineal) reasoning among certain elites: simultaneously, they serve to inform and organize this type of descent reasoning among the elites—that is, by contrast to the majority population. If more than, say, seven to twelve predecessor names have to be memorized then this either requires experts in verbal mnemo-techniques or visualized, mostly written records. Simultaneously, even written records of more than twelve predecessors may easily become too complicated if they are not streamlined and manipulated as outlined, on unilineal principles and according to aspects of authority, power, and legitimacy.

It was stated from the outset of this section that the analyses of medieval genealogies in Eurasia primarily concern various elite strata. We now can add that, in particular, these genealogical representations dealt with their inner organization as well as with their public display. To an extent, this also concerned their social distinctions vis-à-vis each other and, more importantly, against the medium and lower strata and status groups. Two more general aspects of kinship and of literacy underline this point. Literacy, on the one hand, can only be inferred from more recent indicators: yet if, for instance, the literacy rate in northern Yemen shortly after the collapse of the Imamate in the 1970s was estimated to be less than 25 per cent of the population then it is highly probable that a millennium earlier it was not higher but rather lower

---

25   Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*; Parkin, *Kinship*.

than that on the average, notwithstanding phases of rising and falling occurrence. So, in addition to the fact that written genealogical records for members of the middle and lower classes are rare, then there are good reasons to assume that such records not only are not known today but that neither did they exist in medieval times, because they could not be used. On the other hand, as far as kinship is concerned at large, genealogical memories and descent reckoning are merely one of several strategic elements in any kinship system—the other key elements being marriage options and practices, inheritance rules, and terminology. From a comparative ethnographic perspective, the one-sided and biased elevation of genealogical records and descent order above all other key elements in a kinship system is usually a distinctive characteristic feature of elites' desire to mark their special status, while the same being fairly atypical in most other strata of society.

Kinship and family in the middle and lower strata and status groups of urban and rural contexts often followed differing versions of kinship forms, including much shorter chains of descent in unilineal cases or, alternatively, one or the other of the non-unilineal forms identified by anthropological analyses such as bilinear and bilateral forms. In large parts of Central Asia including the Tibetan-speaking areas, for instance, ethnographic evidence demonstrates the widespread occurrence of bilateral elements in local kinship systems by which the matrilateral side contributes the "flesh" while the patrilateral side provides the "bone" to a person's identity. In turn, these strong bilateral elements in local kinship systems are in marked contrast to the more explicit patri-lineage metaphorical representations among the elites. In addition, the earlier argument about the basic non-identity between descent and genealogies has to be supplemented by a similar point about descent and inheritance. As most cases of Islamic law demonstrate, the official reckoning of descent may be unilinear while inheritance rules basically follow bilinear principles.

It therefore to a certain extent makes sense to argue, as Pohl and Daniel Mahoney do (this volume), that genealogical reasoning was more relevant in medieval Arabia than it was in medieval Europe. Yet, as we have seen, this had its clear limits even inside Arabia—where it was somewhat more relevant in Northern Arabia than in the south-west, and in both of these regions it was more relevant for the elites than for the broad middle and lower strata. The elites' special interests did not coincide with the living conditions of the common people regarding family organization, property rights, or the status of women. The elites certainly were influential in their respective arenas, and they evoked mimesis as well as support—otherwise they would not have remained elites for long. Their rhetorical claims, including their genealogical

statements, were primarily self-referential but simultaneously they included *claims* about the rest of those societies in which they were the leading forces. Still, discursive influence is one important element in elite organization, and elite distinction is another.

Spiritual Communities and Their Enclaves of Learning

My final section concerns the largest subfield in this volume, namely, spiritual communities and the related "enclaves of learning" which many of these spiritual communities across medieval Eurasia inhabited. Quite obviously, this subfield has gone through longer and even more productive discussions and comparative reflections than the other subfields under scrutiny. This section has the most contributions in this volume—including an introductory overview of its own and two comments—and it also is by far the most intensely discussed. After a long period of tilling and sowing we may thus benefit from a productive intellectual harvest. In turn, this allows me to confine my concluding remarks to three main points: conceptualization, selected insights, and a few consequences.

First, *on conceptualization*: a number of contributors to this section (Kramer, Hovden, Hugon, Vanderputten, Lyon) explicitly refer to the underlying concept of "enclaves of learning", which actually served as a key comparative criterion for many debates preceding the relevant section in this volume and the conference panel before it. As the person who wrote that piece to prepare the conference panel in question I will quote the relevant text here to make the conceptualization accessible (with two minor alterations as indicated):

> ENCLAVES OF LEARNING: In the social sciences and humanities, the concept of enclaves usually designates a sub-entity that is spatially, temporally, and by other socially defined means and borders separated from its wider environment, while simultaneously interacting with it out of that separation. By necessity, this goes together with three forms of coexisting and intersecting relations, namely, inside each enclave, among various enclaves of similar or related types, and as the main and defining form, between the enclave(s) and the outside world. Enclaves may have various purposes—some of them quite explicit and others more implicit, some of them of primary importance and others only in a secondary manner. One way of analytically distinguishing enclaves across different historical periods and various cultural realms is thus the identification of one or the other of their main purposes.

As a concept, "enclaves of learning" therefore singles out one specific variety among enclaves, and one purpose among what may actually be a cluster of purposes. Military training camps or crafts' production centres may also be understood and investigated in their dimensions as enclaves of learning (and training). In the present context, however, enclaves of learning relates to some of those forms that were almost specific to certain regions and periods of medieval Europe and of Asia and the Circum-Mediterranean: this refers to such "enclaves of learning" that were to an important extent anchored in written texts and their transmission. In cultural contexts and at times when research and belief were intrinsically connected with each other, learning therefore refers as much to contents of faith and belief as to those of understanding and analysing.

Inside and among these entities, the research concept of "enclaves of learning" thus includes knowledge and its transfers and transmission forms about such texts: know-how about their location, access to them, how to read, translate, and interpret them, how to quote, copy and edit them, how to write new ones, and how to relate them to actual practices in ceremonial and discursive arenas as well as in everyday lives. Between these entities and their wider socio-cultural environments, "enclaves of learning" as a concept includes the recruitment of juniors, the question whether the two genders were thought to live and learn together or separately or if women were to be allowed to participate in specific forms of knowledge at all, the extent of popularizing textual knowledge, its reception among those who usually live outside these enclaves, the differences and inequalities in interpreting and applying the knowledge in question outside the enclaves (by orientation of opinion and by social access to the knowledge in question), and the forms of deviant knowledge that may emerge among the population outside these enclaves as much as, again, inside old or new enclaves.

[Within] the "Visions of Community" research project, "enclaves of learning" is embedding this concept inside the wider project concerns about "community": it thus relates to social and ideational processes of building, maintaining, and challenging communities inside and among these enclaves as well as between them and their wider socio-cultural environments. Main questions that could and should be addressed [here] therefore include, along a temporal axis: Under what conditions, and driven by which interests, did such enclaves first emerge in regional history (e.g. the *Hijra* enclaves in the Zaydi highlands of Southern Arabia after the 9th century)? Which were the circumstances allowing certain enclaves to succeed in becoming radiation centres for new ideas that

took hold in their wider environments (e.g. Christian monasteries in central Europe during certain periods)? When and why did certain enclaves undermine the influence of earlier denominations and orientations, and with what kind of social messages and consequences (e.g. the rise of the *Gelug-pa* ['yellow hat'] version in Tibetan Buddhism during the late "Middle Ages", and the ensuing deterioration of nuns' and non-monastic women's position)? With regard to cognitive and intellectual specialization, what were the main institutional and personal competitors for enclaves of learning, within their respective historical and social environments, and cross-culturally?

Hovden and Kramer[26] have elaborated the concept towards some of its more methodological and normative fields of application, while several of the other contributors to this volume acknowledge with or without reservations some heuristic value for present comparative purposes. From an author's perspective, the concept thus seems to have served its purpose fairly well. It has helped to highlight a specific socio-territorial concentration of intellectual expertise in stratified medieval agrarian societies of Eurasia, while opening up ample room for outlining internal diversities and typologies of all kinds. In this manner, the concept is an "abductive" tool of comparison as proposed in the second section of this chapter—searching for certain, theory-inspired parallels and commonalities that are grounded in available evidence.

On this basis, my second point leads on to the discussion of selected insights from this specific discussion on the basis of some of the case studies in the section. In this context, reference to insights from each of the three main religions seems appropriate—namely, Buddhism in medieval Tibet (Hugon), Islam in South West Arabia (Hovden), and Christianity in Central Europe (Lutter).

In another of this volume's studies on Tibeto-Buddhist visions of community, Pascale Hugon examines *gSang phu* as a specializing medieval enclave with an eminent foundational background, a network of intellectual and social influence, of dissemination, but also as a site to be addressed by incoming scholars. She outlines the philosophical turn promoted by the second abbot, and the possible consequences this had in Tibetan philosophical and Buddhist history. This also included affiliations to intellectual rather than spiritual communities, extending well beyond these specific monastic walls and also including "satellite" and other monasteries. In summing up, Hugon emphasizes that such an institutional, social, and intellectual setting promoted diversity in

---

26   Hovden/Kramer, "Wondering about Comparison".

discourse, as well as movements beyond homogeneity and the mainstream. Even after *gSang phu* lost its initial prestige, the intellectual movements beyond their institutional point of emergence enabled ongoing processes to flourish elsewhere.

On the basis of three sources and periods, Hovden analyses differing forms of welfare practices and ideas in medieval Zaydi South Arabia between AD 900 and 1200. The first source shows how the first Zaydi Imam and descendant of the Prophet, al-Hadi, justified why and when the alms tax (*zakat*) would not have to be spent on the poor and others in need but for warfare. Two other examples then demonstrate how *zakat* and welfare could be conceptualized and used in non-Imamic-centred visions of community as promoted by the *Mutarrifiya*, a Zaydi movement of local Yemeni background. The first of these two cases shows how the *zakat* could be spent locally, while the second features how it was spent inside a *hijra* as an institutionalized enclave of learning whose forms and modes were contested at the time. Hovden aptly characterizes *hijras* as both the products of visions of communities, but also as frames in which such visions could be formulated, codified, and learned—for example for spending welfare. In doing this he further clarifies important differences between the Imam-centred and the *Mutarrifi*-based early *hijras*. Contrasting these sources with each other allows Hovden to situate them more precisely, and to distinguish visions of community on four levels: inside single enclaves on a face-to-face basis; within certain subsects as opposed to others; within the wider denomination (*madhhab*) inside Islam; and inside the wider regionally grounded Muslim community of believers.

Christina Lutter examines the Christian-monastic concept of "*vita communis*" and its relevance during the long period in which this specific way of life in medieval Europe enjoyed societal importance, and also in view of its entanglement with a variety of other social fields. Some key texts of medieval monasticism directly address community and *vita communis*, while also developing a related figurative vocabulary. These texts thereby refer to a specific way of life defined by regular practice as a primary instrument for adopting, training, and, hence, doing community. Moving beyond the limits of normative sources, the subsequent extension of consulted materials then modifies current modes of understanding these specific monastic communities and their relations to their outside worlds, also facilitating comparison with spiritual communities in Asia. Lutter thus demonstrates that at least in the European context, kinship, property, and gender cannot be separated from either the political or spiritual practices constitutive for these institutions, or from the visions of the people who made them into communities. These additional categories help to assess the different types of community to which a given monastery might

belong; at the same time they provide an interface to eventually move beyond the European phenomenon of monastic houses with patterns of comparison for those parts of Eurasia in which *monastery* is not a useful term to address enclaves of spirituality and learning.

These insights by two of this volume's co-editors, and by a leading expert in Tibetan medieval studies, help us to return full circle to some of the main starting points from which these concluding remarks started: each of these three analyses begins by marking significant advances in its respective field of study, thereby first of all highlighting the specificities in each field and context. Beyond that, however, each also moves on to outline ranges of diversity within the region and its times, and how these ranges might relate to similar forms beyond the region and elsewhere in Eurasia.

In the end this leads on to a discussion, thirdly, of *a few consequences of these analyses*. Jonathan Lyon quite appropriately emphasizes that enclaves of learning of the more religiously oriented varieties of *hijras* and monasteries may also be seen in their interrelation with other, more academic forms of learning such as the prototypes of medieval universities. He also emphasizes that at most levels of comparison, *what* was learned in many of those enclaves of learning differed quite significantly between (but also, I would like to add, within) these various religious traditions—so, as also is suggested by Vanderputten (this volume), perhaps *how* learning proliferated gradually became as important as *what* the learning was all about.

These reflections are helpful, and I share their general orientation. The most engaged "pro axial age" participants in their own debates of course have tended to adopt different positions by emphasizing commonalities of rationales, and hence of content and inner logic, across axial age religions and philosophies. One may well sustain the argument that elements of public moralizing and of self-discipline remained common to all of those world religions while they proliferated. However, those commonalities became less and less visible with the proliferation and dissemination into increasingly diverse theological and epistemological orientations, while, simultaneously, distinctions between monotheism and polytheism were not systematically attenuated.

Yet while those diversities of content expanded into ever-widening richness, diversity, and multiplicity, the *social and institutional foundations and techniques of learning* indeed maintained and strengthened certain elements displaying greater similarity across medieval and early modern Eurasia. First of all, writing and reading were gradually leaving behind their status as secret elite techniques wherever this was made accessible to a gradually growing cohort from other strata and status groups—be that through their access to regular trade or formal administration, at court or, precisely, in religious

hierarchies. Second, wherever these opportunities were passed down over generations, they promoted standardization in communication, an element of reliability within interactions that were not primarily based on face-to-face communication, and the storage and transmittance of ideas and knowledge[27]—together with the downside of these same processes, namely, the potential to facilitate contrasts among orthodoxy, dogma, and heresy.

Nevertheless, within these multifaceted, uneven, and dispersed processes, and after scriptural communication had been established among many Eurasian elites, medieval "enclaves of learning" represented the possibility for crucial institutional turning points. They helped to create critical mass in the sense that mathematicians and physicists use the term: decisive nuclear points emerged in which the arts of writing and reading became not something special, but rather perfectly normal forms of expressing values, beliefs, insights, convictions, arguments, messages, orientations, and visions. Once enclaves of learning had been established and continued to exist across generations, the understanding that knowledge and insights were techniques and processes to be acquired and achieved, and not only inherited among special upper status groups grew and spread beyond their walls. The possible relations between the enclaves of learning as discussed here—that is, with a still inherent more formal religious hegemony—and those proto-universities of a somewhat more pragmatic and secular orientation—as they had already emerged in urban settings of southern Europe, China, and the Middle East during the first medieval centuries—still needs some careful further exploration and investigation. Even if enclaves of learning had no direct impact on proto-universities, through their institutionalized relevance they nevertheless broadened the social and cognitive basis for access to active and passive written expertise. After all, enclaves of learning are a good indicator of the undeniable fact that during the higher and later medieval centuries, Eurasia was gradually moving toward a new historical threshold phase in the social and technological organization of scriptural cultures.

That movement progressed through the gradual proliferation of writing and copying as a manual craft—and at least in part through the establishment and proliferation of institutionalized enclaves of learning, these processes eventually approached the watershed phase when, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin,[28] the arts and crafts of writing and reading gradually entered their very specific "age of technical reproduction".

---

27   Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book*; Goody, *Logic of Writing*.

28   Benjamin, "The Work of Art".

Based on Tibetan practices of using wooden printing blocks and on the Han craftsman Bi Sheng's pioneering invention, the first metal movable-type system for printing was developed by Chinese and Korean experts between the 11th and the 13th centuries. Something that operated in very similar ways was independently invented by Johannes Gutenberg around 1450. These media revolutions contributed to the dawn of a new era in the multiple trajectories of world history.

Bibliography

Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* (New York, 2006).

Jóhann P. Árnason, "The Axial Age and its Interpreters: Re-opening a Debate", in *Axial Civilization and World History*, eds. Johann P. Árnason, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Björn Wittrock (Leiden, 2005), 19–49.

Nicolas Baumard, Alexandre Hyafil, Ian Morris and Pascal Boyer, "Increased Affluence Explains the Emergence of Ascetic Wisdoms and Moralizing Religions", *Current Biology* 25 (2015), 10–15.

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproduction", in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (French orig. 1936; Germ. orig. 1955; New York, 1968), 217–52.

Hinnerk Bruhns and Wilfried Nippel, eds., *Max Weber und die Stadt im Kulturvergleich*, Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft 140 (Göttingen, 2000).

Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2000).

Walter Dostal, "Zur Frage der Konstanz von Kulturformen", in *Festschrift für Adolf E. Jensen*, *Teil 1*, eds. Eike Haberland, Meinhard Schuster and Helmut Straube (Munich, 1964), 91–101.

Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (Albany, NY, 1986).

Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford, 1940).

Roland Fletcher, *The Limits of Settlement Growth: A Theoretical Outline* (Cambridge, 2007).

Roland Fletcher, "Low-Density, Agrarian-Based Urbanism: Scale, Power, and Ecology", in *The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies,* ed. Michael E. Smith (New York, 2012), 285–320.

Ernest Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History* (Chicago, 1988).

Andre Gingrich, "Comparative Methods in Socio-cultural Anthropology Today", in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*, vol. 2, eds. Richard Fardon, Olivia Harris, Trevor H.J. Marchand, Mark Nutall, Cris Shore, Veronica Strang and Richard A. Wilson (Los Angeles, 2012), 201–14.

Andre Gingrich, "Multiple Histories: Three Journeys through Academic Records, Medieval Yemen, and Current Anthropology's Encounters with the Past", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 110–28.

Andre Gingrich and Christina Lutter, "Visions of Community: An Introduction", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 1–7.

Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge, 1986).

David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (Brooklyn, 2011).

Lawrence Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?" in *Questions of Cultural Identity,* eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London, 1996), 87–107.

Chris Hann, "Towards a Maximally Inclusive Concept of Eurasia", *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers* 157 (Halle/Saale, 2014).

Eirik Hovden and Rutger Kramer, "Wondering about Comparison: Enclaves of Learning in Medieval Europe and South Arabia—Prolegomena to an Intercultural Research Project", *Networks and Neighbours* 2 (2014), 20–45.

Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (Germ. orig. 1949; New York, 2011).

Edmund Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London, 1961).

Christina Lutter, "Comparative Approaches to Visions of Community", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 129–43.

Alois Musil, *The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins* (New York, 1928).

Joseph Needham, *The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China: An Abridgement of Joseph Needham's Original Text*, 7th ed. (1980; Cambridge, 1997).

Monika Palmberger and Andre Gingrich, "Qualitative Comparative Practices: Dimensions, Cases, and Strategies", in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, ed. Uwe Flick (Los Angeles, 2014), 94–108.

Robert Parkin, *Kinship: An Introduction to Basic Concepts* (Oxford, 1997).

Talcott Parsons, *Action Theory and the Human Condition* (New York, 1978).

Walter Pohl, "Comparing Communities: The Limits of Typology", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 18–35.

Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson, eds., *Trade and Markets in the Early Empires* (Glenco, 1957).

Jo Reichertz, "Abduction, Deduction and Induction in Qualitative Research", in *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, eds. Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorff and Ines Steinke (London, 2004), 159–65.

Barbara H. Rosenwein, "An Historian in the Amazon", *History and Anthropology* 26 (2015), 76–79.

Jörg Rüpke, *Religion in Republican Rome: Rationalization and Ritual Change* (Philadelphia, PA., 2012).

Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Oakland, CA, 1997).

Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community & Society* (Germ. orig. 1887; East Lansing, MI, 1957).

Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte Teilband 5: Die Stadt*, ed. Wilfried Nippel, Max Weber, complete edition, vol. I/22-5 (Germ. orig. 1921/22; Tübingen, 1999).

Index