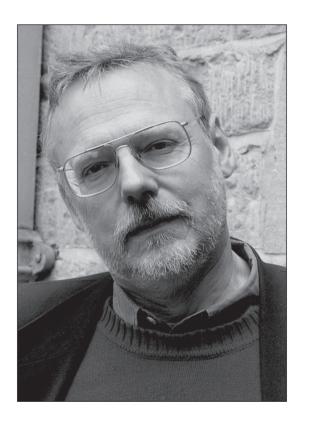Seminari internazionali
del Centro interuniversitario
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dell'alto medioevo

VI

Volume offered to Chris Wickham
as a gift for his 65th birthday

20-22 March 2014, All Souls College,
University of Oxford

Three empires, three cities: identity, material culture and legitimacy in Venice, Ravenna and Rome, 750-1000.

edited by
Veronica West-Harling

BREPOLS

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Veronica West-Harling

Preface

The workshop *Three empires, three cities: identity, material culture and legitimacy in Venice, Ravenna and Rome, 750-1000, Tre imperi, tre città: identità, cultura materiale e legittimazione a Venezia, Ravenna e Roma, 750-1000*, was held on 21-22 March 2014 at the University of Oxford. It was funded by the AHRC as part of a joint research project by C. Wickham and myself, and was hosted by All Souls College. We would like to thank both these institutions, the first for funding it, and the second for allowing us the use of College facilities (seminar room, lunches and dinner), as well as for its generous subsequent contribution towards the publication of the papers. In addition, we should like to thank Worcester College and Magdalen College for facilitating the accommodation of the guests.

The invited participants to the workshop were: from Italy, Profs. S. Gasparri and S. Gelichi (Università di Venezia Ca' Foscari), R. Santangeli Valenzani (Università Roma Tre) and P. Delogu (Università di Roma La Sapienza), C. La Rocca (Università di Padova), and Dr E. Cirelli (Università di Bologna Ravenna); from France, Prof. F. Bougard (IRHT Paris); from Germany, Prof. H. Keller (Universität Münster); and from the UK, Prof. T.S. Brown (University of Edinburgh), Drs C. Goodson (Birkbeck College, University of London) and C. Leyser (Worcester College, University of Oxford), as well as several colleagues who acted as moderators and respondents during one or more sessions: Profs. B. Ward-Perkins (Trinity College, Oxford) and K. Cooper (University of Manchester). We would like to thank them once again for coming to speak during these two days, and subsequently for editing for publication with patience and good humour not only their papers but also their contributions to the discussions and the final round table. I am very grateful to Chris Wickham for writing the concluding remarks, as well as for all his help in editing and pulling together the transcript of both the discussions and the round table, and to Stefano Gasparri for checking the Italian.

This volume was accepted for publication by the **Centro Interuniversitario per la Storia e l'Archeologia dell'Alto Medioevo** in its series of seminars published by Brepols as **Seminari del Centro Interuniversitario per la Storia e l'Archeologia dell'Alto Medioevo (Seminari SAAME)**, of which this is volume 6. I should like to thank the Committee of the Centro for accepting to publish this workshop, and especially S. Gasparri, its Chairman, for organising this publication. I should also like to thank the technical 'team' which has made it possible, D. Gasparri who has done the preparation and editing, and V. Rondano and B. Pacini, who did the audio transcript of the discussions.

This year will see a variety of forms of homage to Chris Wickham on the occasion of his retirement. His numerous friends, colleagues and students will have had various opportunities of expressing their respect and admiration – this is one of these opportunities. This volume is offered to him as a gift on his 65th birthday by the workshop participants as a token of their esteem and friendship, and to show her own regard for, and appreciation of, Chris's friendship and support over the years, by the volume editor.

Veronica West-Harling
Oxford, 9 March 2015

List of Abbreviations

ASRSP	*Annali della società romana di storia patria*
Agnellus, Liber pontificalis	Agnelli Ravennatis, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. D. Mauskopf Deliyannis, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis, 199 (Turnhout, 2006)
Annales regni Francorum	ed. F. Kurze, MGH, SSrG, 6 (Hannover, 1895)
Annales Fuldenses	*sive Annales regni Francorum orientalis*, ed. F. Kurze, MGH, SSrG, 7 (Hannover, 1891)
BISI	*Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano*
Codex Carolinus	ed. W. Gundlach, MGH Epist. III, Merowingici et Karolini aevi (Berlin, 1892)
Cessi, Documenti	*Documenti relativi alla storia di Venezia anteriori al Mille*, ed. R. Cessi (Padova, 1942, rpr. Venezia, 1991), 2 vols.
Chronicon	*Il Chronicon di Benedetto monaco di S. Andrea del Soratte e il Libellus de imperatoria potestate in urbe Roma*, ed. G. Zucchetti, FSI, 55 (Roma, 1920)
Chronicon Farfense	*Il Chronicon Farfense di Gregorio di Catino*, ed. U. Balzani, Fonti dell'Istituto Storico Italiano, I (Roma, 1903)
CISAM	Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo
DBI	Dizionario biografico degli Italiani
FSI	Fonti per la storia d'Italia
Giovanni diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*	Giovanni diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, ed. & tr. L. Berto, Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale (Bologna, 1999)
Libellus	see above, *Chronicon*
LP	*Le Liber Pontificalis, Texte, introduction et commentaire*, ed. L.M. Duchesne, 2nd edition with revised commentary and bibliography, C. Vogel, 3 vols (Paris, 1955-7)

Liudprand, *Antapodosis*	ed. P. Chiesa, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis, 156 (Turnhout, 1998)
MEFREM	Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen Age et Temps Modernes
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
AA	Auctores Antiquissimi
Cap. reg. Franc.	Capitularia regum Francorum, I, ed. A. Boretius (Hannover, 1883)
	Capitularia regum Francorum, II, ed. A. Boretius & V. Krause (Hannover, 1897)
Dipl. Karol.	Diplomata Karolinorum, 1, ed. E. Mühlbacher (Hannover, 1906)
	Diplomata Karolinorum, 3, ed. T. Schieffer (Berlin-Zurich, 1966)
	Diplomata Karolinorum, 4, ed. K. Wanner (München, 1994)
Dipl. reg. Ger. ex stirpe Karol	Dipl. regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum 2, ed. P. Kehr (Berlin, 1937)
Epist.	Epistolae
Poetae	Poetae
Poet. lat.	Poetae latini aevi carolini
Script.	Scriptores
SRM	Scriptores rerum Merowingicarum
SRG usum schol.	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum
SSrG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
SSrL	Scriptores rerum langobardicarum et italicarum saec. VI-IX ed. G. Waitz (Hannover, 1878)
PL	Patrologia Latina
Paolo Diacono, *HL*	Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SSrL (Berlin, 1878)
Regesto di Farfa	*Il Regesto di Farfa di Gregorio di Catino*, ed. I. Giorgi & U. Balzani (Rome, 1883)
Seminari SAAME	Seminari del Centro interuniversitario per la storia e l'archeologia dell'alto medioevo

The participants to the workshop's discussions and Round Table are identified thus:

FB	François Bougard
TB	Tom Brown
EC	Enrico Cirelli
PD	Paolo Delogu
SGA	Stefano Gasparri
SGE	Sauro Gelichi
CG	Caroline Goodson
HK	Hagen Keller
CLR	Cristina La Rocca
CL	Conrad Leyser
RSV	Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani
CW	Chris Wickham
VWH	Veronica West-Harling
BWP	Bryan Ward-Perkins

i.

Venice: creation of a city and its identity

Stefano Gasparri

The formation of an early medieval community: Venice between provincial and urban identity

The content of this paper will be structured in a somewhat different way from what the title suggests. The passage from the provincial identity to the urban one will be discussed in the second part. In the first part, I will try instead to outline the formation of the myth of the origins of the Venetian community; the two parts are obviously closely related to each other. The issue of the myth of the origins of Venice has been addressed many times: what interests me here is to examine it from a perspective restricted to the early medieval sources only, trying to read the myth in relation to the history of the period in which it was formed, and not in the light of later developments, when – in consequence of the extraordinary history of the city – there was a heavy reworking of the myth of the origins, which was carried out by Venetian historiography from the central and late Middle Ages onwards[1].

The oldest written sources of Venetian history are very disappointing. A key witness like Paul the Deacon gives us few informations: in addition to the transfer to Grado of the seat of Aquileia, and the subsequent schism, the only other useful information that Paul gives us is contained in a famous phrase in which he wrote that in his times, at the end of the eighth century, Venice was reduced to 'a few islands', while at the time of the Lombard invasion it was a vast region – the *Venetia et Histria* – that went from Pannonia to Adda: a precise piece of information, although Paul confused Istria, the true eastern boundary of the region, with the Ister, namely the Danube, so that he put the border on that river[2].

Paul the Deacon describes a trasformation which also occurred in the west, where the ancient *Liguria*, which at the time of the Lombard

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[1] On this issue, see the classical work of A. Carile, *Le origini di Venezia nella tradizione storiografica*, in *Storia della cultura veneta*, I, *Dalle origini al Trecento*, Vicenza, 1976, pp. 135-166.

[2] Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, in MGH, SSrL, II, 14.

conquest included the entire north-west of Italy, was restricted to the coastal region that still bears this name and which remained Byzantine until the middle of the seventh century. Even the ancient *Liguria* no longer existed in the eighth century, as there was no longer the old *Venetia*. The large provincial contours inherited from late antiquity had been swept away by the Lombard conquest[3]. Paul the Deacon gives us in this way an approximate date for the start of the process of transformation that led to the birth of Venice.

Between Paul and the next set of narratives, there are about two centuries, which are decisive for the formation of the new Venice. Among these narratives, the focus is on the role of the chronicle today known as *Istoria Veneticorum*[4], which is usually attributed to the deacon John, member of the court of the doge Pietro II Orseolo (991-1009): John is mentioned in the chronicle, in a diploma of Otto III of 995 and in other sources in the period between 995 (maybe 967) and 1018[5]. The *Istoria Veneticorum* is the only source that informs us about the oldest historical events of the Venetian lagoon, and therefore its value is very high. But we know very little about this chronicle; the very attribution to John the Deacon is only hypothetical. It is also possible that the first part of the *Istoria*, which comes up to the middle of the eighth century – and which is not present in the oldest, eleventh century manuscript of the chronicle –, may have been the work of another author[6].

I will return later to this issue. In any case, whoever wrote the first part put together passages from Paul the Deacon and Bede, discussing only general events, i.e. not ones related to Venice, and then used an

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[3] S. Gasparri, «L'identità dell'Italia nordorientale e Venezia. Dalla tarda età longobarda al regno di Berengario», in *Le identità urbane in Italia settentrionale (secoli IX-XI)*, ed. by C. La Rocca and P. Majocchi, Seminari SAAME, 5, in press.

[4] The latest edition of the chronicle is Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, ed. by L.A. Berto, Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale, 2, Roma, 1999.

[5] L.A. Berto, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale della "Istoria Veneticorum" di Giovanni Diacono*, Padova, 2001, pp. 11-14 (Engl. transl.: *The Political and Social Vocabulary of John the Deacon's "Istoria Veneticorum"*, Cursor Mundi, 12, Turnhout, 2013).

[6] This is the opinion expressed by Luigi Berto in the introduction to his edition of the chronicle cited above (note 4), pp. 7-21 and throughout his book *Il vocabolario politico* (note 5). I agree with Berto about the dual nature of the two parts of the chronicle, but I don't think that it necessarily implies that the first part was written later and by an author different from John (see below, text and note 42 and following).

anonymous text, the *Translatio Sancti Marci*, which can be definitely attributed to the tenth century[7]. This text also says very little about the internal history of Venice, because it is focused on the story of the arrival in the lagoon, from Alexandria, of the remains of St Mark (827)[8]. In Venetian sources, the origins of the lagoon community remain in the shadow.

From the side of the Byzantine Empire, in the middle of the tenth century Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in his *De administrando imperio*, already knew a legendary version of the Venetian origins[9]. As Cassiodorus did four centuries before in his famous letter to the *tribuni maritimorum*[10], he emphasizes the difficult characteristics of the lagoon environment ("the place was a wilderness, uninhabited and marshy"). In this environment Venice was formed, in a completely autonomous way, by groups of refugees who had escaped the invasion of Attila's Huns, were able to resist the Franks, and to remain free from any interference. Constantine points out that they, rejecting the claims of the Frankish king Pippin, claimed "to want to be subjected to the emperor of the Romans": of course, this is what matters to the emperor and what he wishes to point out, and what he personally adds to the story he is telling: a story whose origin cannot be other than a Venetian one. At the end of his narrative, Constantine mentions the free election of the Venetian duke by the inhabitans of the lagoon: the choice, writes Constantine, fell on the noblest of all.

The idea of the original freedom of Venice, as outlined by Constantine, would always remain a leitmotif of Venetian historiography of the

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[7] E. Colombi, «*Translatio Marci Evangelistae Venetias [BHL 5283-5284]*», Hagiographica 17, 2010, pp. 73-139 (text pp. 112-39). For the discussion about the dating of the text, see below, text and note 13.

[8] Not all the historians are sure that the relics of St Mark were really in Venice in the year 827: see P. Geary, *Furta sacra. Thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages*, Princeton, 1990², p. 92 (pp. 88-92 for the general discussion on the *Translatio Sancti Marci*).

[9] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, in *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, 1, ed. by Gy. Moravcsik, Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, Washington, 1985², c. 28 (intitled «History of the settlement now called Venice»), pp. 118-21 (Engl. transl. by E.J.H. Jenkins).

[10] Cassiodorus Senator, *Variarum libri XII*, in MGH, AA, 12, ed. T. Mommsen, Berlin, 1894, l. XII, 24, pp. 379-80. The letter is of the year 537/8.

following centuries. All this is well known[11]. What I would highlight here, however, is the possibility of dating the precise moment in which the Venetian myth of origins was formed: a myth that should be interpreted as a real text of identity[12] of the community of the lagoon, the source of legitimacy of its political reality and its institutions, starting with the duke itself. Moreover, I should like to identify its key contents.

First of all, the *terminus ante quem*. The story told by the emperor Constantine proves that the narrative of the myth in his time – the middle of the tenth century – was already well established, since he, though from a very distant point of view, already knows it. All this is confirmed by a local source, the *Translatio*, which can be dated about the second half of the tenth century, because the chapel where the relics of St Mark were initially kept is mentioned in the text as still existing: and we know that this chapel was buried in the fire of the ducal palace in 976[13].

The account of the mythical origins of Venice in the *Translatio* is not completely identical to that of Constantine. In fact the *Translatio* tells us how, "fearing the wrath of the Lombards"[14], the patriarch Paolo

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[11] Another classical work, in addition to Carile, *Le origini* (above, note 1), is G. Fasoli, «Nascita di un mito», in *Studi storici in onore di G. Volpe*, I, Firenze, 1958, pp. 445-79.

[12] On the concept of 'text of identity', see W. Pohl, «Paolo Diacono e la costruzione dell'identità longobarda», in *Paolo Diacono. Uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolingio*, ed. by P. Chiesa, Udine, 2000, pp. 413-426, and *Idem*, «Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition: A Response», in *On Barbarian Identity. Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by A. Gillet, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 4, Turnhout, 2002, pp. 227-235.

[13] Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, IV, 12, p. 163, tells the story of the fire of the ducal palace, and the murder of duke Pietro IV Candiano and his son (976); on that occasion also the churches of S. Marco, S. Teodoro and S. Maria Zobenigo were burnt down. For the dating, see the classical work of N.M. Cleary, «Note storiche e archeologiche sul testo della *Translatio Sancti Marci*», Memorie storiche forogiuliesi, 27-29, 1931-3, pp. 223-64, who proposed a dating the text to the middle of the eleventh century (pp. 233-34); now, according to the hypothesis of G. Cracco, «I testi agiografici: religione e politica nella Venezia del Mille», in *Storia di Venezia dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, I, *Origini-Età ducale*, ed. L. Cracco Ruggini, M. Pavan, G. Cracco e G. Ortalli, Roma, 1992, pp. 923-61, Colombi, «*Translatio Marci Evangelistae Venetias*», pp. 75-6, proposed the end of tenth century.

[14] Colombi, «*Translatio Marci Evangelistae Venetias*», p. 115: "Langobardorum rabiem metuens".

had moved from Aquileia to Grado; at the same time and for the same reason, the local population had transferred to the nearby islands and taken the name of 'Venetians' (*Venetici*)[15]. After having told in this way what was the *origo Veneticorum*, the author can then devote the rest of his text to the story of the recovery of the relics of St Mark. The story of the migration from the mainland contained in the *Translatio* was then added, partly in a literal way, at the beginning of the *Istoria Veneticorum*, and it is, for this subject, its only source[16].

Thus the new Venice was allegedly born from the population's flight from the mainland; according to this latest version, it was a flight from the Lombards. The interchangeability of the barbarians (Huns and Lombards) in the tale of the origins makes us understand that we are dealing, as I said previously, with an authentic text of identity, a narrative of the origins which must have been formed before the middle of the tenth century, when it appears in our sources in a fairly consolidated version.

Much more complex is the identification of the terminus *post quem*. In fact, Paul the Deacon, from whom both the *Translatio* and the *Istoria* take a lot of their information, speaks only of the escape to Grado of Paolo, the patriarch of Aquileia, at the time of the Lombard invasion in 569[17]. Paul the Deacon adds nothing. Where can we then find the roots of the myth of the peoples's escape from the mainland to the lagoon?

Of course, the historical foundation of these events is in fact non-existent. Mass migrations of populations did not occur in any other part of Italy, not to Liguria, not to the exarchate, and I don't see why they should have occurred in the lagoon. The reality, as far as we can reconstruct it, was different. Instead of thinking about mass migrations, the phenomenon that we are facing is simply the gradual – and slow – withdrawal of Byzantine control from the north-eastern part of Italy, an

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[15] Colombi, «*Translatio Marci Evangelistae Venetias*», p. 116: "At vero cum Langobardi Italiam introissent, hic inde populi multitudo, eorum gladios formidans, ad proximas insulas transiit. Sicque Venetiae nomen, de qua exierant, eisdem insulis indiderunt, quibus et habitantes usque ad tempus istud Venetici nominentur".

[16] Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, I, 4-5, p. 53.

[17] Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, II, 10. According to the acts of the synod of Grado of the year 579 (however heavily interpolated), the final decision of definitively transferring the patriarchal see to Grado was taken on that occasion, when the patriarch was Helias, second successor of the patriarch Paul: R. Cessi, *Documenti*, I, n. 6, pp. 7-13.

erosion that went on throughout the seventh century, up to the point that the Byzantine region was reduced to a series of military strongholds installed on the lagoon islands, whose key role from a military point of view explains the long resistance of the province of *Venetia*[18].

Likewise, the transfer of the Byzantine military elites to the lagoon was accompanied by a population increase, but the description of the migration of entire populations is purely legendary. Moreover, we should note that there was not even a general flight of the bishops from the lands occupied by the Lombards to the remaining Byzantine lands. In the north of Italy only two archbishops fled: Onorato of Milan to Genoa and Paolo of Aquileia to Grado[19]. Again, therefore, a parallel between the events of the north-west and the north-east is possible: it was interrupted, however, by the very early extension of Lombard conquest to Liguria and the return of the archbishop to Milan. Instead in the north-east the transfer from Aquileia to Grado set in motion a process that had lasting consequences, since it led to the division of the patriarchate. Aquileia became part of the Lombard kingdom, Grado remained in the Byzantine area and developed within the Venetian duchy, in close relationship with the ducal power[20].

The episode of the patriarch's transfer from Aquileia to Grado, as we have seen, is presented with great emphasis in the *Translatio*, and it is reasonable to think that this transfer was intended to become one of the founding episodes of the lagoon community by the Venetians. In this connection it may be interesting to consider a poetic text, the *Carmen de Aquilegia numquam restauranda*[21]. This text also can be dated fairly accurately: it could have been written in the period of joint governance of the *regnum Italiae* by Lothar and Louis II, that is between 844 and

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[18]   For a general reconstruction of the period of the Lombard invasion and the following century, S. Gasparri, *Italia longobarda. Il regno, i Franchi, il papato*, Roma-Bari, 2012, pp. 3-35.

[19]   For Paul, see above, note 17; for Onorato, Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, II, 25.

[20]   On the so-called 'schism of the Three Chapters', see G.P. Bognetti, «S. Maria foris portas di Castelseprio e la storia religiosa dei Longobardi», in *Idem*, *L'età longobarda*, II, Milano 1966; more recently, C. Chazelle and C. Cubitt (eds.), *The Crisis of the Oikoumene. The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean*, Turnhout, 2007.

[21]   *Carmen de Aquilegia numquam restauranda*, in MGH, Poet. lat., II, ed. by E. Dümmler, Berlin, 1884, pp. 150-53.

855 [22]. Written by an anonymous author, probably Venetian, it is a short poem that reacts, in the form of a heartfelt appeal to the two sovereigns, to the decisions of the council of Mantua in 827, which had deprived the Church of Grado of its patriarchal title and had submitted it to Aquileia, thereby nullifying a history by then already longer than two and a half centuries [23].

In the poem we find the story of the destruction of Aquileia, "gloriosa quondam urbs et inclita" by the Avars (i.e. the Huns), with the description of the massacres of priests, the imprisonment of women, the destruction of the walls. The topic of the destruction of Aquileia by Attila and the Huns is old, because it is already present in the acts of the synod of Grado of 579, where it was said that the city was "totally destroyed" by Attila, and it is also mentioned in Procopius' work, a few decades earlier [24]. The poem goes on to say that it was then, after the destroying attack of the Huns, that the patriarchate was transferred by the patriarchs, and "on that occasion the patriarchs gave trust only to Venetians", to the "ever bright and illustrious people of Venice" that "exceeds all nations for grace". Aquileia became instead a den of demons, where a heretical bishop was installed: the true faith and the true see of the patriarch had moved to Grado [25].

The poem does not speak of population transfer, that remains somewhat implicit; nonetheless, it is not possible to think that departing from this core of the story – the destruction of the old metropolis and the construction of a new see in the lagoon –, by extension, the story of the great migration of the population towards the lagoon of Venetia was formed? Could the legend not derive from an ancient nucleus, represented by the story of the transition from Aquileia to Grado? Given the central role of the events of the see of Aquileia in the origins of the

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[22] Cfr. ibid, v. 70 ("Ludowicus cum patre Lothario").

[23] *Concilium Mantuanum*, in *MGH*, *Concilia aevi Karolini*, 2,1, ed. by A. Werminghoff, Hannover, 1906, n. 47, pp. 583-9.

[24] Cessi, *Documenti*, I, n. 6, p. 9: "funditus destructa"; Procopio, «La guerra vandalica», I, 4, in *Le guerre. Persiana, vandalica, gotica*, ed. by M. Craveri, Torino, 1977, p. 202. The story told by Procopius is taken up by Paul the Deacon: *Pauli Historia romana*, in MGH, SRG usum schol., ed. by H. Droysen, Berlin, 1879, XIV, pp. 113-14 (other edition: Paolo Diacono, *Historia romana*, ed. by A. Crivellucci, FSI, 51, Roma, 1914).

[25] *Carmen de Aquilegia*, v. 30 ("sola fides Veneticis data per pontifices") e 31-2 ("lucida Venetiarum sempre gens et inclita omnes nationes prima superat per gratiam").

lagoon *Venetia*, I think it very likely. Moreover the Huns, the destroyers of Aquileia, are the same people who caused the great migration of Venetians towards the lagoon according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus[26]. There is a clear overlap of topics and narratives.

In support of this hypothesis we may recall another fact. The bishoprics of the lagoon were first mentioned in our sources very soon thereafter – from the seventh century onwards and with the likely endorsement by the pope – by using the titles of the bishoprics of the mainland (of Altino, Oderzo, Padova), thus supporting the ancient rights of ecclesiastical jurisdiction on those lands. These rights were founded, in much later sources (after the end of the tenth century), precisely on the legend of the migration of entire fleeing populations, led by their bishops[27]. Since the emphasis on the transfer, not only of the bishop of Aquileia, but of many bishops with their populations was a way to delegitimize the old Aquileia as a patriarchate, it is possible that these stories of migration had already formed in the decades following the council of 827, as a response to its decisions. At the same time, however, the story of the transfer of many urban populations, led by their bishops, could form the basis of the story of the birth of the new Venice on the lagoon.

We are in the field of hypotheses. However, if this hypothesis is acceptable, we could indicate as *a terminus post quem* for the formation of the origins story – with caution – the middle of the ninth century, when was written the poem on the destruction of Aquileia, in which there is already a strong self-consciousness of the *Venetiarum gens*, which is connected to the transfer from Aquileia to Grado of the patriarchal see, but where a displacement of peoples is not yet mentioned. At this date, the myth had not yet formed, there were only its assumptions.

In this way, we have identified a formation period of the story, ranging in its maximum extension from the second half of the ninth century to the first half of the tenth. This is precisely the period in which

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[26] See above, text and note 9.

[27] The main source on this topic is the *Origo civitatum Italiae seu Venetiarum (Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense)*, ed. by R. Cessi, FSI, 73, Roma, 1933 (composed between 1081 and 1204). One of the first to reject the idea of a mass migration of the populations together with their bishops was G.P. Bognetti, «Natura, politica e religioni nelle origini di Venezia», in *Le origini di Venezia*, Firenze, 1964, pp. 1-33.

the lagoon city, the *civitas Rivoalti*, was shaped, and the coincidence cannot be accidental[28].

In fact, even between the eighth and ninth centuries, the narrow lagoon area, to which alone can now be given the name *Venetia*, consisted of a series of settlements, (probably very modest yet), situated on the various islands or on the edges of the lagoon. A real city did not yet exist: see, for example, what happened in 806, when Charlemagne in Aachen issued a solemn order (*ordinatio*) about the dukes and the peoples of the *Venetia* and the *Dalmatia*[29]. On that occasion, the emperor summoned Obelerio and Beato, *duces Venetiae*, along with Paolo, duke of Zadar and Donato, bishop of the same city, these latter both ambassadors of the Dalmatians (*legati Dalmatarum*). Charles had to deal with two similar provincial realities, to which he sought to provide a stable place within the empire (though it would not be a long-lasting one); but the Venetian province did not have a city to represent it, while the Dalmatian had one, Zara. A similarity and a difference that are very significant: the two provinces were closely linked to each other, but the Venetians differed from the Dalmatians, because at the beginning of the ninth century they had not yet acquired a strong urban core.

The situation changed very soon. A turning point was to be found in the sudden coincidence of the events related to the Peace of Aachen, when, in 811, Agnello Particiaco, founder of the first ducal dynasty, took power in the lagoon. According to the second part of the *Istoria Veneticorum*, written at the time of Pietro II by the anonymous author whom we call John the Deacon, it was just then, during a short chronological span, that were founded, on the islands of Rialto, the *palatium*, the chapel where in 827 or 828 arrived the relics of St Mark, the monasteries of S. Zaccaria and S. Ilario and the church of S. Pietro in Olivolo[30]. The massive investment required for these operations, which represents

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[28] On this period of Venice's history, G. Ortalli, «Il *ducatus* e la *civitas Rivoalti*: tra carolingi, bizantini e sassoni», in *Storia di Venezia*, I, *Origini-Età ducale*, pp. 725-90. More recently, on the early medieval history of Venice s. V. Ortenberg West-Harling, «'Venecie due sunt': Venice and its grounding in the Adriatic and North Italian background», in *Italy 888-962: A Turning Point*, ed. by M. Valenti and C. Wickham, Seminari SAAME, 4, Turnhout, 2013, pp. 237-64.

[29] *Annales regni Francorum*, pp. 120-1.

[30] Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, II, 29, 33, 39, pp. 113-119.

the basis of the birth of Venice as a city, would reveal, if confirmed, a significant increase of wealth by the elites of the duchy: apparently, the takeoff of the city of Venice, as Michael McCormick wrote, may have taken place in the space of a single generation[31].

John the Deacon concludes his narrative about the dukes' building activity by telling us about the construction of the walls by Duke Pietro Tribuno, in the year 900, explicitly saying that in this way the duke "began to build a city in Rialto": the value of the walls for identifying a *civitas* is well known[32]. Morevoer, inside the new city there was already a bishopric, another key element needed to identify a *civitas*, located at Olivolo, an island that was part of the group of the islands of Rialto. The relics of St Mark, on the other hand, would represent in the future the centre of the religious identity of the duchy and the emerging *civitas Rivoalti*, but we must not anticipate too much the subsequent evolution: at that time, the relics were mainly the proof of the prestige (and substantial autonomy) of the Church of Venice, who responded in this way to the humiliation inflicted to Grado by Aquileia at the council of Mantua in 827.

Many of these operations are partly confirmed by the archival sources concerning S. Pietro, S. Marco, S. Zaccaria and S. Ilario; in part (for S. Ilario) also by the archaeological evidence[33]. Despite all the possible bias

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[31]   M. McCormick, «Where do trading towns come from? Early medieval Venice and the northern emporia», in *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, I, *The Heirs of the Roman West*, ed. by J. Henning, Berlin-New York, 2007, pp. 41-61 (esp. pp. 58-9). For correctly evaluating the takeoff of Venice and its commerce in the first half of the ninth century, it is necessary to take into account also of the role of Comacchio and the other Adriatic emporia: S. Gelichi. «The eels of Venice. The long eight century of the emporia of the northern region along the Adriatic coast», in *774. Ipotesi su una transizione*, ed. by S. Gasparri, Seminari SAAME, 1, Turnhout, 2008, pp. 81-117.

[32]   Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, III, 39: "civitatem aput Rivoaltum edificare cepit".

[33]   The churches of S. Marco and S. Zaccaria are cited in the will of Giustiniano Particiaco of 829: Cessi, *Documenti*, I, n. 44, pp. 71-5; *Ss. Ilario e Benedetto e S. Gregorio (819-1199)*, ed. by L. Lanfranchi and B. Strina, Fonti per la storia di Venezia, sez. II, Archivi ecclesiastici, Diocesi castellana, Venezia, 1965, n. 2, pp. 17-24; St Peter, together with another church of the Particiaci family, S. Lorenzo (also in the islands of Rialto) is cited in the will of Orso Particiaco, bishop of Olivolo and founder of the church of S. Pietro: *S. Lorenzo*, ed. by F. Gaeta, Fonti per la storia di Venezia, Venezia, 1959, pp. 5-12. Many mosaics of S. Ilario are now located (abandoned?) in a courtyard of the Archeological Museum of Venice.

that may be contained in John's story – many doubts remain about the walls he describes[34] – and the too well-defined urban image he would suggest, lining up neatly the construction of the palace and the construction of the churches (all work of the dukes), it seems difficult to deny that the decisive step towards the urban dimension of Venice-Rialto was carried out at this period. And, if the above reasoning can be relied on, in the same period in which the foundations of the city of Venice were built, was also developed the founding story of the migration.

The tale of the origins, as I already said, had the aim of building the new Venice's identity and of legitimizing its existence. It was built on two cornerstones. The first, which we have just examined, is the idea of the migration from the mainland of the population of the lagoon duchy. The second is the issue of the election of the first duke of Venice[35]. The history of Venice in fact cannot be separated from that of its doges: the appearance of the 'first duke' reveals the first steps of the new community in Venice, the acquisition of its own autonomous self-consciousness. Both these cornerstones were later the basis of the idea of the original freedom of Venice, despite the links (never totally denied) with Byzantium.

Only the *Istoria Veneticorum* speaks of the election of the first duke, in its first part (of uncertain date and completely anonymous authorship)[36]. According to it, the first duke was the legendary Paulicius, who would have lived in the age of Liutprand. The reason for the election of Paulicius is taken up by Paul the Deacon, who had written that the Lombards at one point, after a series of successes, "did not see fit to remain under the dukes but, in the likeness of other people" – obviously, since they considered it a most honorable circumstance – "they wanted to have a king"[37]. Similarly, the *Istoria* says that the Venetians, "gathered at the meeting" – the legendary first meeting mentioned

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[34] S. Gelichi, «Castles in the water? Defences in Venice and Comacchio during the Early Middle Ages», in *Fortified Settlements in Early Medieval Europe: Defended Communities of the the 8th-10th Centuries*, eds. N. Christie and H. Herold, Oxford, in press.

[35] I dealt with this issue in S. Gasparri, «Anno 713. La leggenda di Paulicio e le origini di Venezia», in *Venezia. I giorni della storia*, ed. by U. Israel, Venetiana, 9, Venezia, 2011, pp. 27-45.

[36] Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, II, 2, p. 95.

[37] Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, I, 14: "nolentes iam ultra [...] esse sub ducibus, regem sibi ad ceterarum instar gentium statuerunt".

also by Constantine Porphyrogenitus –, "decided that from now on it was most honorable to be under the dukes than remain under the tribunes"[38]. Venice, as well as its rival, the Lombard kingdom, would thus construct, according to these myths, the basis of its identity not only through a tale of migration – short-range migration for the Venetians, while the Lombards' migration had been long and over a very wide geographical space – but also by the setting up of a single royal or ducal power. It is an interesting analogy.

The story of Paulicius and his immediate successors – as I tried to demonstrate several years ago – derives from the distorted or misinterpreted reading of a document certainly preserved in the ducal palace, the pact (*pactum*) issued by the emperor Lothar to the Venetians in 840 and then repeatedly confirmed by following rulers of the north Italian kingdom[39].

I cannot analyse Lothar's *pactum* in detail here. But I would like to stress that Paulicius is mentioned in a part of the *pactum* where another agreement, more ancient than 840, is recorded, which is precisely referring to Liutprand's times: a settlement of the boundaries (*terminatio*) of the Venetian territory of Cittanova with the Lombard kingdom[40]. This is the reason why, in the *Istoria,* Paulicius was situated chronologically at that time. But, despite Paulicius's mention in the older pact, it is difficult to claim that the legendary story of his election was formed in Liutprand's time, i.e. about a century before the date of the Lothar agreement. It is very likely indeed that the legend was formed much later: it is not a coincidence that the two texts of the tenth century, the *Translatio* and the *De administrando imperio,* do not know Paulicius. His earliest mention as Venetian duke is in the first part of the *Istoria Veneticorum*[41], which is difficult to date, but could not go back to much before the end of tenth century.

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[38] Giovanni Diacono, *Istoria Veneticorum*, loc. cit.: "communi consilio determinaverunt quod dehinc honorabilius esse sub ducibus quam sub tribunis manere".

[39] *Pactum Lotharii*, in MGH, Cap. reg. Franc., II, Hannover, 1897, 233, pp. 130-5; Cessi, *Documenti*, I, n. 55, pp. 101-8. See also above, note 35. On the Venetian *pacta*, see G.V.B. West, «Communities and pacta in early medieval Italy: jurisdiction, regulatory authority and dispute avoidance», Early Medieval Europe 18/4, 2010, pp. 367-393.

[40] *Pactum Lotharii*, cc. 26 and 28; c. 26: "[...] a tempore Liuthprandi regis terminatio facta est inter Paulitionem ducem et Marcellum magistrum militum [...]".

[41] Above, note 36.

A diploma issued in 995 by Otto III to the Venetians is very inter-esting in this respect. The diploma, granted at the request of Duke Pietro Orseolo, contained a new confirmation to the Venetians of the territory of Cittanova, within the boundaries determined in the *terminatio* made at the time of Liutprand between the duke Paulicius and the *magister militum* Marcello. This *terminatio* is the same one that was included in Lothar's agreement; the diploma claims that the request was put forward, on behalf of the duke, by John, the duke's deacon and chaplain[42]. Likewise, on that occasion, John presented the text of the document – the text of the pact, I would say. If, as I believe, the deacon John mentioned in the diploma of 995 is the same person as the deacon John, to whom the second part of the *Istoria Veneticorum* is usually attributed by historians, it becomes very likely that he himself assembled also the first part of the chronicle, adding to Paul the Deacon, Bede and the *Translatio* the informations that he drew from the archives of the palace, thus 'inventing' the first duke: Paulicius, whose name he found in the *pactum*.

With Paulicius' story we are again faced with a hypothesis. In a more general sense, however, we can affirm that the political element of the identity of Venice – the free community that meets and elects the first duke (the first "doge") – although already present in Con-stantine Porphyrogenitus, in its most complete form, which includes the name of the duke and his successors, was added only later, around 1000, to the legend of the migration, thus completing the myth of the origins.

In the last part of this paper I would like to resume very briefly the discussion about the provincial character of Venetian identity in the oldest period, going back even before the formation of the myth of origins[43]. In the oldest existing Venetian document, albeit in a late copy, which dates from 819, Duke Agnello and his son Giustiniano, "per divinam gratiam Venecie provinces duces," gave permission to the abbot John and the monks of the island of S. Servolo to move to the mainland. This decision was taken by the dukes along with the patriarch of Grado Fortunato, Cristoforo bishop of Olivolo and

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[42] *Ottonis II et III diplomata*, in *MGH*, *Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniae*, II, ed. Th. Sickel, Hannover, 1893, n. 165; Berto, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale*, pp. 12-13.

[43] I have written very recently about this issue: Gasparri, «L'identità dell'Italia nordorientale e Venezia» (see above, note 3).

"universis Venecie populis habitantibus plebe Christo dilecta eiusque precioso sanguine acquisita." Thus, *Venetia* is a province, and the *populi* that inhabit it are the people loved by Christ and redeemed by the blood he shed [44].

Elsewhere in Italy, a similar image can be found only in Rome, where the *Liber pontificalis*, in the life of Gregory III (around 740), in reference to the annexation of the *castrum* of Gallese, said that it was annexed "in conpage sanctae reipublicae atque corpore Christo dilecti exercitus Romani" [45].

This expression puts aside the reference to the Church of Rome and calls into question, on the other hand, the *respublica* (the Roman or Byzantine state) and the army (*exercitus*) as representatives of the whole community. The army should be understood, I believe, as the true reference to the local community, the Roman duchy: the word *exercitus* here has the same meaning as *ducatus*. If this interpretation of *exercitus* is true, then this Roman army 'loved by Christ' is very similar to the Venetian people 'loved by Christ and redeemed by his blood'.

The origins of these two expressions were very likely to be found in Byzantine Italy, because the way to express the identity of these two communities is very different from that of the two famous city's *laudes* of the same period, those of Verona and Milan: there the city's identity was built around the episcopal church with its eponymous saint, accompanied by a network of churches and saints who were its crown [46]. Here, in Venice and in Rome, there was instead the direct and privileged link with the figure of Christ, which seems to suggest a particular fate for the two communities which referred to him [47].

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[44] Lanfranchi-Strina, *Fonti*, 1, pp. 5-17.

[45] *LP*, *vita Gregorii III*, pp. 420-421.

[46] Above, note 43.

[47] Another interesting analogy can be found between Venice and Rome. In the eighth century, in Rome the *Liber Pontificalis* and the popes' letters contained in the *Codex Carolinus* use a particular language, presenting the Romans – at different times, the inhabitants of the city or of the Byzantine's Italy – as the sheep (*oves*) of the pope: in this way, the latter is presented as the evangelical sheperd (*pastor*): S. Gasparri, *Italia longobarda* (see above note 18), pp. 95-97. A similar expression, as far as I know, can be found found only in the Venice area, where in a document of 932 (the pact between Venice and Koper) Duke Pietro II Candiano is defined by the inhabitants of Koper as their shepherd "because [...] until now you have protected the people of our city with benevolent mind and have always taken care of our salvation as a good shepherd" (*quia [...] usque ad presens*

In reality, there was a big difference between Rome and Venice: Rome had a completely urban dimension, while Venice was still on the road to gaining one. But what makes the two situations at least comparable, if not equal, is precisely their common reference to a broad, non-urban territorial and institutional framework: on the one hand the Roman army-duchy, on the other hand the *provincia Venecie* mentioned in the ducal title, i.e. the Venetian duchy. And just there the difference lies with the case of Verona or Milan, where instead the identity of a city in the true sense is expressed. Later, Venice, with the development of the cult of St Mark, would be closer to the pattern of the kingdom, so much so that the complex definition of 819 is not found anymore. But Venice would never fully adhere to that pattern, because the large spatial reference, not urban but "provincial", would always remain valid: the *Venetia* (the Venetian state) and the *civitas Rivoalti* (its urban core) would remain two different, only partially overlapping concepts [48].

The reference to the province remained in early medieval Venetian charters for a long time, as a collective framework also recognized by the neighbouring italic kingdom. This can be seen for example in Lothar's pact of 840 and in many others charters, written on the mainland, which always mention the *provincia Venecie*: furthermore, Lothar's *pactum* explicitly spoke of the various peoples who lived inside the old

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populum civitati nostre suprascripte Iustinopolim mente benivola protexistis et de nostra salvatione curam semper tanquam pastor optimus habuistis): Cessi, *Documenti*, II, n. 41, pp. 52-5.

[48]   In the development of a collective identity of a community such as the Venetian, which was long deprived of a true urban centre, the fact that its origin was that of an ancient Roman province was undoubtedly important. According to a recent study by F. Mitthof, «Zur Neustiftung von Identität unter imperialer Herrschaft: Die Provinzen des römischen Reiches als ethnischen Entitäten», in W. Pohl – C. Gantner – R. Payne (eds.), *Visions of Communities in the Post-Roman World. The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-110*, Farnham-Burlington, 2011, pp. 61-72, the provinces of the late Empire (from the second century onwards) did not represent mere administrative units, but were the basis for the construction of what he calls 'pseudo-ethnische Entitäten', pseudo-ethnic entity, i.e. territorial frameworks within which the population was able to create new collective identities. A conclusion which, if applied also to Italy (which Mitthof hardly deals with), can open the way to a reflection on the deep roots of the provincial identity developed within the Roman *Venetia* in Late Antiquity, long before the formation of the city of Venice. This provincial identity was the basis on which was later built the early medieval Venetian identity, through the myth of origins.

duchy and which are part of the *populus Veneticorum*[49]. On the other hand, the settlement of Rialto, even if it appears from the beginning of the documentation, i. e. from 819, has some difficulty in taking off as an urban reality. Often, as a topical dating of documents, next to the name of Rialto is mentioned the palace: "Rivoalti, curtis palatii" (919); in one case it is written "Venetia, curte pallatii" (880), where it remains unclear if Venice is the province or the city[50]. The monastery of S. Zaccaria, the family female monastery of the ducal dynasty of the Particiaci, is described in a document of Verona (914) as "built in Venetian territory ('in finibus Venetiarum') not far from the Rialto palace"[51]. Clearly, the hallmark of Rialto seems to have been especially the palace, around which coalesced the various churches; only slowly did the group of islands of Rialto took on a new urban dimension. Giustiniano, the builder of S. Marco, called himself still in his will (828) "humilis dux provincie Veneciarum". However, he was the last duke to be defined as 'duke of the Venetian province'. His successors would take the title of 'duke of the Venetians' (*dux Veneticorum*), with a strong reference to the political element represented by the people[52].

The roots of the most ancient Venetian identity can be found therefore in its provincial nature: this is the *patria Venecie* mentioned for the first time by Bishop Orso Particiaco in his will of 853[53]. This strong *provincial* dimension also makes it possible to explain the success of the idea of an original link with the mainland, an idea that gradually takes shape in the myth of origins represented by the migration of populations in the lagoon: a narrative which accompanies throughout the slow transition from province to city and, after the birth of the *civitas Rivoalti*, would become the main foundation of Venice identity.

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[49] Cessi, *Documenti*, I, n. 55, p. 102: the pact deals with the inhabitants of all the places "ad ducatum Venetiae pertinentibus".

[50] Cessi, *Documenti*, II, nn. 15 e 31, pp. 20-1 and 43-7.

[51] Cessi, *Documenti*, II, n. 30, pp. 40-3.

[52] See above, note 33.

[53] See above, note 33.