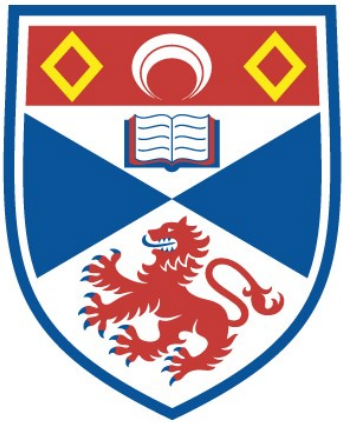
Italian queens in the ninth and tenth centuries

Roberta Cimino

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of queens in ninth and tenth century Italy. During the Carolingian period the Italian kingdom saw significant involvement of royal women in political affairs. This trend continued after the Carolingian empire collapsed in 888, as Italy became the theatre of struggles for the royal and imperial title, which resulted in a quick succession of local rulers. By investigating Italian queens, my work aims at reassessing some aspects of Italian royal politics. Furthermore, it contributes to the study of medieval queenship, exploring a context which has been overlooked with regard to female authority. The work which has been done on queens over the last decades has attempted to build a coherent model of early medieval queenship; scholars have often privileged the analysis of continuities and similarities in the study of queens' prerogatives and resources. This thesis challenges this model and underlines the peculiarities of individual queens. My analysis demonstrates that, by deconstructing the coherent model established by historiography, it is possible to underline the individual experiences, resources and strengths of each royal woman, and therefore create a new way to look at the history of queens and queenship.

The thesis is divided into four main thematic sections. After having introduced the subject and the relevant historiography on the topic in the introduction, in Chapter 2 I consider ideas about queenship as expressed by narrative and normative sources. Chapter 3 deals with royal diplomas, which are a valuable resource for the understanding of queens' reigns. Chapter 4 analyses queens' dowers and monastic patronage. Chapter 5 examines the experience of Italian royal widows. Finally, the conclusive chapter outlines the significance of this thesis for the broader understanding of medieval queenship.

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Abstract

Questa tesi analizza il ruolo delle regine italiche nel IX e X secolo. In questo periodo il regno italico fu teatro di una serie di significativi eventi politici: la conquista del *Regnum Langobardorum* da parte di Carlo Magno nel 774, la dissoluzione dell'impero carolingio nell'888 e l'accorpamento dell'Italia all'impero ottoniano nel 962. La mia ricerca parte dall'835, anno in cui si inizia ad assistere alla presenza attiva delle regine in Italia, e ha come punto d'arrivo il 951, anno in cui il regno entrò a far parte della sfera di influenza ottoniana. La mia ricerca ha due obiettivi fondamentali. Prima di tutto intende contribuire alla storia della regalità femminile, un tema che nel corso degli ultimi decenni è stato oggetto di crescente attenzione, grazie soprattutto ai contributi della storiografia anglofona. Tali studi riconoscono che le regine italiche hanno ricoperto spesso ruoli di grande importanza; tuttavia manca a tutt'oggi un'analisi complessiva del ruolo delle donne nella politica dei re d'Italia, una mancanza a cui questo studio mira a rimediare. In secondo luogo, la mia tesi intende offrire un contributo alla storia politica dell'Italia carolingia e postcarolingia. Questo studio analizza dunque i regni dei re italici dal punto di vista dell'influenza femminile. La tesi intende dimostrare che non è possibile parlare di un modello coerente di regalità femminile. Nonostante il ruolo di regine e imperatrici sia caratterizzato da aspetti ricorrenti - le risorse patrimoniali, il controllo di monasteri regi, il ruolo diplomatico e politico - il modo in cui queste risorse venivano impiegate varia in relazione all'evolversi della situazione politica e delle strategie di re e imperatori. Questo è tanto più evidente in un contesto instabile come il regno italico, che dalla fine del IX secolo fu caratterizzato da una conflittualità endemica per il trono e il titolo imperiale.

La tesi è basata sull'analisi di fonti narrative e diplomi regi, e in misura minore, sullo studio di carte private, testi normativi ed epistole. La tesi è divisa in quattro capitoli, preceduti da un'introduzione, e seguiti da una breve conclusione, che riflettono i temi principali affrontati in questa ricerca: la rappresentazione della regalità femminile nelle fonti narrative (capitolo 2), l'influenza politica delle regine attraverso l'analisi dei diplomi regi (capitolo 3), il significato politico ed economico dei dotari e della politiche monastiche delle mogli dei re (capitolo 4). Il capitolo 5 analizza infine il ruolo delle vedove dei re d'Italia nella politica italiana.

Capitolo II

Questo capitolo è dedicato alla rappresentazione di modelli della regalità femminile nelle fonti narrative prodotte nel corso del IX e X secolo. Il capitolo si interroga sull'esistenza di numerose immagini negative di donne di potere contenute in testi prodotti in Italia nel periodo carolingio e post-carolingio. La ragione per queste immagini va cercata soprattutto nelle evoluzioni politiche che caratterizzarono la storia del regno italico a partire dagli anni Settanta del IX secolo. Il venir meno della continuità dinastica, dovuta alla mancanza di eredi maschi nella famiglia carolingia e alla conflittualità politica seguita alla dissoluzione dell'impero, portò a una serie di dinastie di breve durata, nessuna delle quali riuscì a stabilire il controllo del *Regnum* per più di una o due generazioni. I testi prodotti a nord delle Alpi all'interno o in prossimità della corte avevano creato un modello di regalità femminile basato sulla virtù e sull'incorruttibilità morale, considerate assolutamente fondamentali per l'armonia e la rettitudine della coppia. Le donne della dinastia carolingia erano celebrate come madri e mogli, e venivano loro assegnati compiti amministrativi all'interno della corte, che rappresentava la sfera domestica e allo stesso tempo un centro politico del cui funzionamento la regina era in parte responsabile. Tuttavia i testi prodotti in ambito italico rovesciano questa prospettiva, presentando le donne regie come destabilizzanti per l'armonia familiare e politica, poiché trasgrediscono il modello di madre e moglie virtuosa. Poiché questa azione destabilizzante si svolge generalmente all'interno della corte, queste donne divengono anche l'emblema del disordine politico: esse sono di solito affiancate da uomini indegni che non possiedono le qualità necessarie per governare il regno. L'attenzione degli studiosi si è soprattutto concentrata su un testo di straordinaria importanza, l'Antapodosis di Liutprando da Cremona, che procede sistematicamente alla vilificazione delle donne del regno italico. Gli studiosi hanno cercato di esaminare la ragione di tale vilificazione, ma hanno tralasciato altri testi prodotti nello stesso periodo, le cui immagini, certo più sfuggenti, sono il risultato di un procedimento simile a quello liutprandeo. Questo capitolo analizza questi testi, prodotti in vari contesti geografici ma comunque da autori che avevano avuto esperienza della situazione politica dell'Italia tardo-carolingia e postcarolingia e presentavano la discontinuità dinastica come un segno di insuccesso da parte dei re d'Italia, di cui le loro mogli divenivano spesso i capi espiatori. Allo stesso tempo questi testi veicolano un'idea piuttosto confusa su cosa fosse una regina, quali fossero i suoi compiti e le sue prerogative.

Capitolo III

Questo capitolo è basato sull'analisi dei diplomi. Questi documenti registrano passaggi e transizioni di diritti e proprietà, e come tali sono strumenti attraverso cui l'autorità regia

veniva esercitata ed esibita. Per questo il loro contenuto e linguaggio sono fondamentali per la comprensione delle politiche di re e imperatori, e dell'interazione tra potere regio ed élites. La presenza delle donne nei diplomi, sia come beneficiare che come intercedenti, è stata soggetta a crescente attenzione da parte degli studiosi. Tuttavia i più hanno adottato un approccio selettivo: solo coloro che appaiono frequentemente in questi documenti sono state considerate influenti e carismatiche. Questo capitolo cerca di complementare questi studi esaminando i singoli documenti in cui regine e imperatrici appaiono come beneficiarie e intercedenti, anche solo sporadicamente. L'analisi si concentra in particolare sul linguaggio dei diplomi e sulle espressioni utilizzate per definire le moglie di re e imperatori. Si analizza in particolare il titolo *consors regni/imperii*, che è stato considerato una peculiarità del regno italico, poiché tra la metà del IX secolo e metà del X secolo fu utilizzato per definire le regine italiche più frequentemente che in altre aree europee. Gli studiosi hanno tentato di spiegare il significato di questa espressione, assegnandole sfumature politico–istituzionali e interpretandola alla luce di un maggiore potere delle regine italiche rispetto alle loro controparti a nord delle Alpi. In questo capitolo si tenta invece di analizzare il titolo di *consors regni*, e più in generale il linguaggio dei diplomi, come uno strumento fluido il cui significato e le cui sfumature variano a seconda del contesto politico-istituzionale in cui era utilizzato. Si conclude che la presenza delle donne nei diplomi e il modo in cui venivano definite sono fattori fluidi che vanno collegati al contesto di produzione del documento, al suo contenuto, agli scrittori che lo producevano e ai modelli su cui era basato. Si dimostra dunque che i diplomi offrono un'immagine disfunzionale e variegata del ruolo politico delle regine, e che quel potere poteva declinarsi ed essere rappresentato in maniera variabile.

Capitolo IV

Questo capitolo analizza i patrimoni delle regine italiche. Il dotario delle regine è riconosciuto come una componente importante della politica regia nell'Europa altomedievale. I patrimoni di alcune regine italiche nel IX e X secolo sono particolarmente consistenti: ciò è stato messo in relazione a una maggiore influenza politica e capacità d'azione di queste donne. La presente analisi si concentra sulla composizione e natura dei dotari di tutte le regine italiche, che vengono analizzati nella loro disposizione territoriale. Si pone inoltre particolare attenzione alla funzione dei monasteri regi che venivano sovente concessi alle mogli di re e imperatori. Siccome non c'erano regole precise per quanto riguardava la composizione del dotario, ognuno di questi patrimoni va considerato come una struttura a sé stante, creata dai re per specifici fini politici. Per questa ragione si intende dimostrare che la concessione di beni del fisco e di monasteri regi non necessariamente implicava che essi

fossero effettivamente controllati dalle loro proprietarie. Questi beni venivano concessi dai re d'Italia alle loro mogli per ragioni politiche, in particolare per rafforzare il legame con un territorio e con la sua elite. Tali concessioni rappresentavano dunque una rivendicazione del controllo di beni del fisco, spesso in zone strategiche del *Regnum*, soprattutto da parte di sovrani che avevano appena conquistato il trono e che non avevano la possibilità di rivendicare legittimità dinastica. Si trattava di una strategia messa in atto dal potere regio per rivendicare continuità politica e territoriale con la dinastia precedente. Questo capitolo dimostra inoltre che non esistevano beni specificamente destinati alla regina, ma piuttosto che il passaggio degli stessi beni da una regina all'altra è da collegare all'importanza politica di certe proprietà e monasteri. La struttura e l'entità di ciascun dotario vanno dunque lette alla luce di specifiche strategie di controllo territoriale. Allo stesso modo, le condizioni in cui le regine controllavano quei beni cambiavano di volta in volta.

Capitolo V

Questo capitolo analizza le strategie delle vedove dei re d'Italia. Grazie alle fonti documentarie e narrative è possibile ricostruire l'azione di alcune di queste vedove nell'Italia carolingia e postcarolingia. In questo capitolo vengono esaminate tre vedovanze molto significative e diverse tra loro: quelle di Cunegunda (vedova di Bernardo d'Italia), Angelberga (vedova di Ludovico II) e Ageltrude (vedova di Guido di Spoleto). Attraverso questa analisi si intende identificare le strategie messe in campo da ciascuna di queste figure per proteggere le loro risorse e i loro beni. Prive di eredi maschi, o comunque impossibilitate a rivendicarne i diritti, queste donne si trovarono a fare i conti con la loro potenziale estromissione dalla scena politica, e ad affrontare un nuovo re che poteva essere loro ostile. Questo capitolo intende dimostrare che le vedove dei re d'Italia tentarono di reagire a questa situazione potenzialmente pericolosa. Il modello della vedova priva di discendenti, che si ritira in un monastero e scompare dalla scena politica non è dunque applicabile ai casi presi in esame. Il ritiro in monastero, seppure una costante nei casi analizzati, non significava infatti il ritiro dalla politica. Al contrario, questa scelta faceva parte di una specifica strategia mirata alla sopravvivenza politica. Le vedove riuscirono a mantenere contatti con le élites del regno, grazie ai propri legami familiari e politici. Inoltre testamenti e donazioni illuminano il modo in cui esse cercarono di proteggere le proprie risorse e trasmetterle ai propri discendenti. Questo capitolo sostiene che l'attivismo delle vedove dei re d'Italia è da collegare all'instabilità dinastica: una situazione che, invece di subire, esse furono capaci di sfruttare per riuscire a raggiungere i propri obiettivi patrimoniali e politici. Nella diversità del contesto

in cui operarono, i tre casi presi in esame dimostrano come le vedove dei re d'Italia trassero benefici dalla delicata situazione politica, che sfruttarono consapevolmente per proteggere i propri interessi.

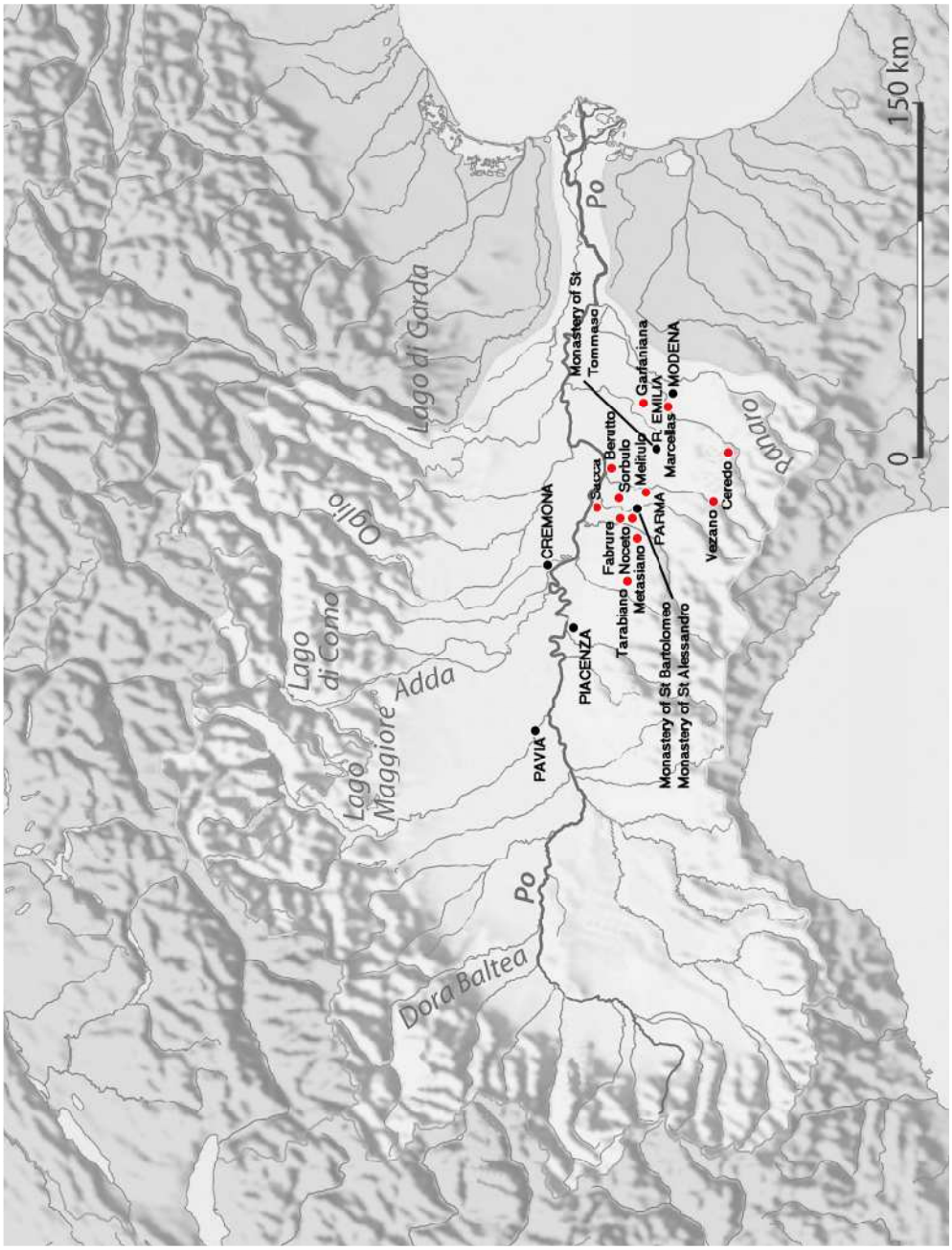
In conclusione, questa tesi intende offrire una nuova prospettiva per lo studio della regalità femminile, che guarda al ruolo di regine e imperatrici dell'Alto Medioevo attraverso un approccio mirato a evidenziare discontinuità e peculiarità. Questa tesi non intende offrire un'analisi comparativa tra diversi contesti geografici, ma sostiene comunque che il regno italico è un terreno particolarmente fertile per l'analisi dell'agire femminile in ambito regio. Non limitate al ruolo di mogli e madri esemplari, le donne dei re d'Italia godettero di altre opportunità. Il loro ruolo veniva costantemente ridisegnato ed adattato alle mutevoli condizioni politiche, e, per tale ragione, esse beneficiarono della conflittualità politica che caratterizzò il *Regnum* tra il IX e X secolo.

Abbreviations:

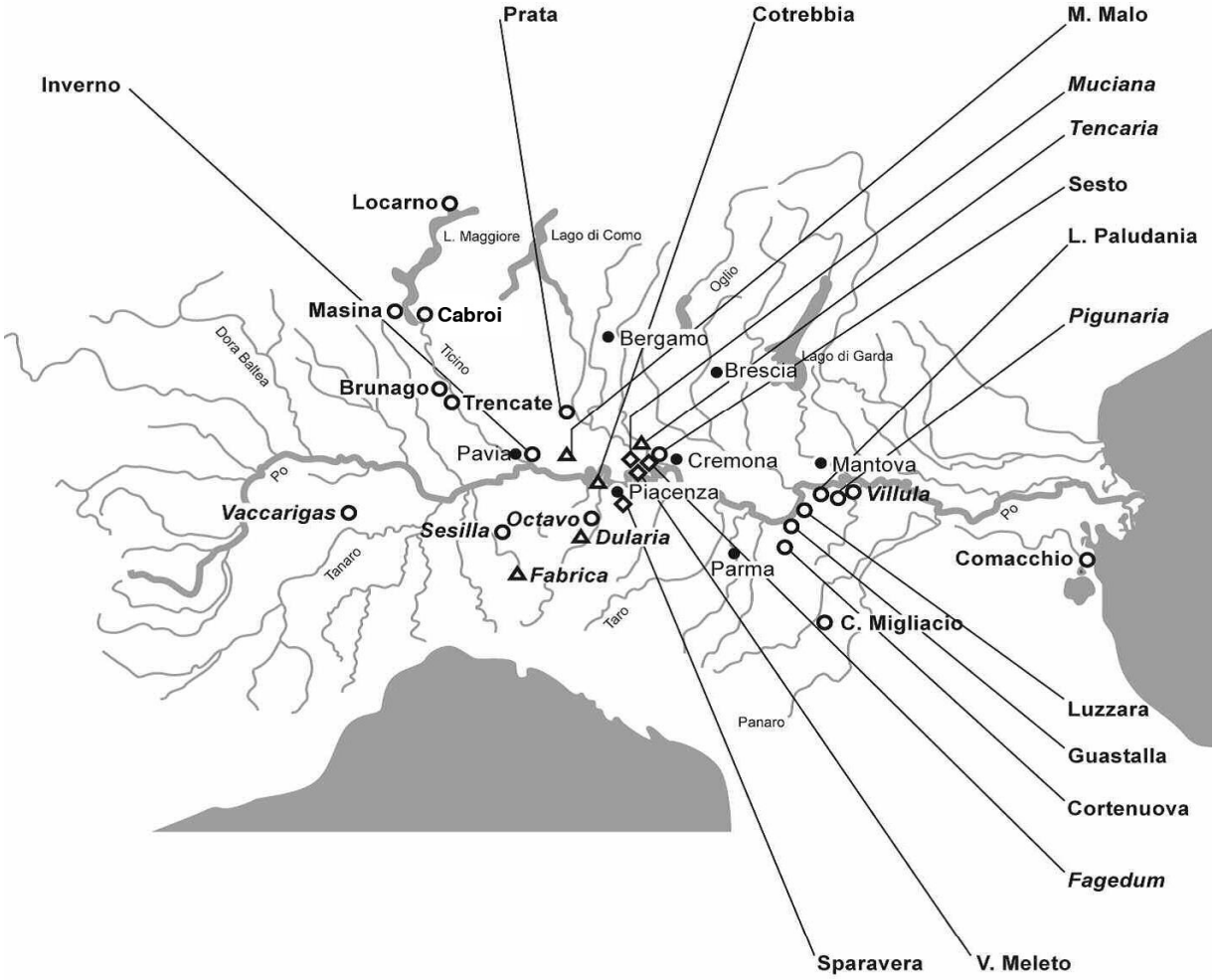
DArn	Diplomas of Arnulf, ed. P. Kehr, MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum, III (Berlin, 1936-37).
DBerI	Diplomas of Berengar I, ed. L. Schiaparelli, FISI 35 (Rome, 1903).
DBA	Diplomas of Berengar II and Adalbert, ed. Schiaparelli, FISI 38 (Rome, 1924).
DCIII	Diplomas of Charles the Fat, ed. P. Kehr, MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum II (Berlin, 1936-37).
DGui	Diplomas of Guy, ed. L. Schiaparelli, FISI 36 (Rome, 1906).
DGL	Diplomas of Guy and Lambert, ed. L. Schiaparelli, FISI 36 (Rome, 1906).
DKI	Diplomas of Charlemagne, ed. E. Mühlbacher, MGH Diploma Karolinorum I (Hanover, 1906).
DKm	Diplomas of Karlman, ed. P. Kehr, MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stripe Karolinorum I (Berlin, 1932-34).
DLa	Diplomas of Lambert, ed. L. Schiaparelli, FISI 36 (Rome, 1906).
DLOI	Diplomas of Lothar I, ed. T. Schieffer, MGH Diplomata Karolinorum, III (Berlin, 1966).
DLG	Diplomas of Louis the German, ed. P. Kehr, MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stripe Karolinorum I (Berlin, 1932-34).
DLOII	Diplomas of Lothar II of Lotharingia, ed. T, Schieffer, MGH Diplomata Karolinorum, III (Berlin, 1966).
DLotII	Diplomas of Lothar II of Italy, ed. L. Schiaparelli, FISI 38 (Rome, 1924).
DLUII	Diplomas of Louis II, ed. K. Wanner,MGH Diplomata Karolinorum, IV (München, 1994).
DLUIII	Italian diplomas of Louis III of Provence, ed. L. Schiaparelli, FISI 37 (Rome, 1910).
DOI	Diplomas of Otto I, ed. T. Sickel, MGH Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae I (Hanover, 1879-84).
DOIII	Diplomas of Otto III, ed. T. Sickel, MGH Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae II (Berlin, 1888-93).

DU	Diplomas of Hugh, ed. Schiaparelli, FISI 38 (Rome, 1924).
DUL	Diplomas of Hugh and Lothar, ed. L. Schiaparelli, FISI 38 (Rome, 1924).
DBI	Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani
CDP	U. Benassi, ed, *Codice diplomatico Parmense*, vol. I (Parma, 1910).
CDL	C. Brühl, L. Schiaparelli, eds, *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo*, III, FISI 64 (Rome, 1973).
FISI	Fonti per la Storia d'Italia
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
NCMH 2	R. McKitterick, ed, *The New Cambridge Medieval History, 2: c. 700 - c. 900* (Cambridge, 1995).
NCMH 3	T. Reuter, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History, 3: c. 900 - c. 1024* (Cambridge, 1999).
Rg.Io.	E. Caspar, ed, *Iohannis VIII Papae Registrum*, MGH Epistolae Karolini Aevi VII (Berlin, 1928).
Settimane	Settimane di Studio sull'Alto Medioevo
SS	*Scriptores*
SSGR	*Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separati editi*
SS RLI	*Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*

MAP 1: Properties of Cunegunda



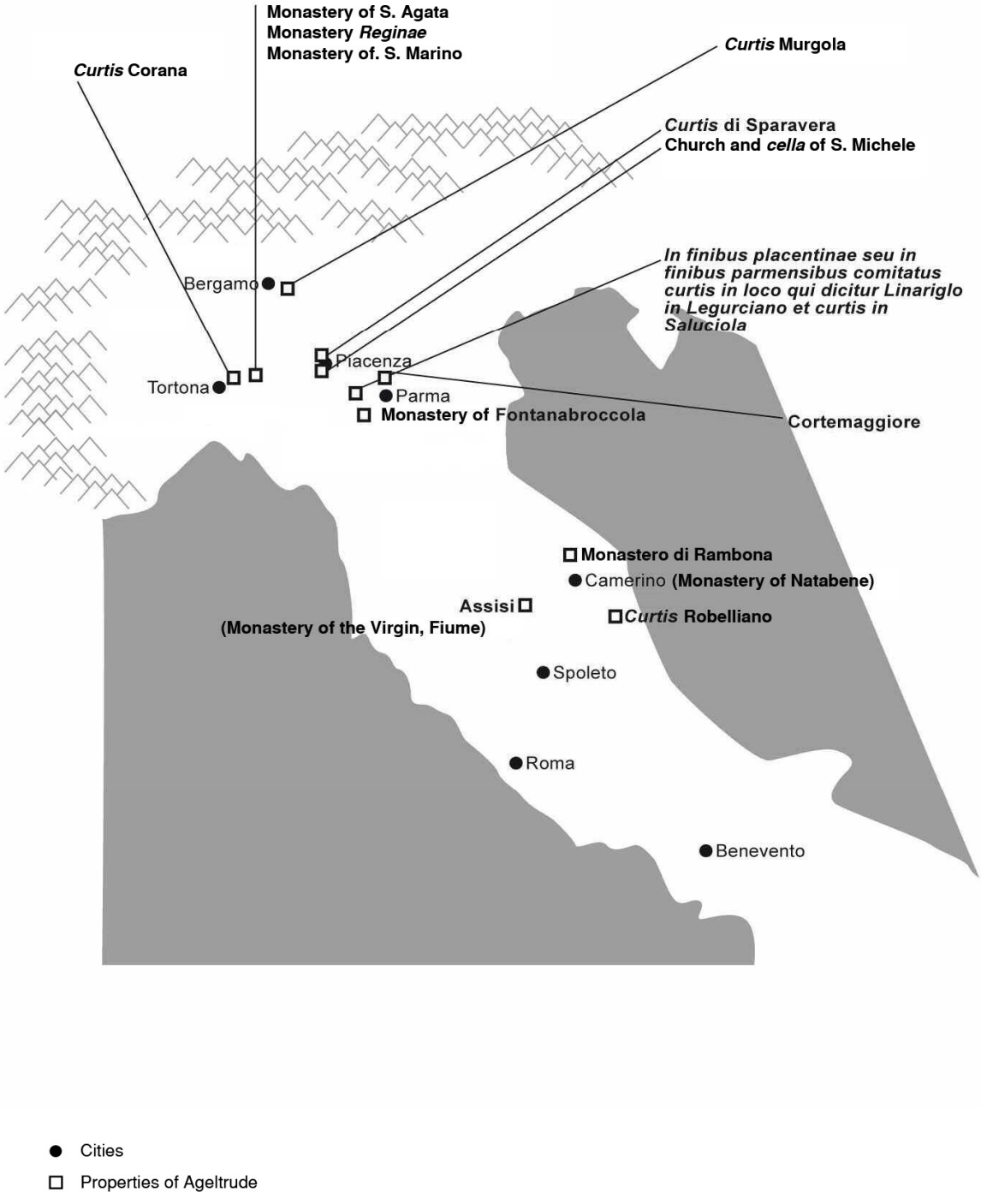
MAP 2: Properties of Angelberga



- Cities
- Grants of Louis II
- Grants of other rulers
- Others

Map adapted from: R. Cimino, 'Angelberga, il monastero di San Sisto di Piacenza e il corso del fiume Po', in Lazzari, *Il patrimonio delle regine*, pp. 141–162.

MAP 3: Properties of Ageltrude



Map adapted from: P. Guglielmotti, 'Ageltrude: dal ducato di Spoleto al cuore del regno Italico', in Lazzari, *Il patrimonio delle regine*, pp. 163 - 186.

MAP 4: Dowers of Berta and Adelaide

◆ Properties granted to Berta

1 *curtis de Senna*
2 *curtis de Gaumundio*
3 *curtis de Setiaco*
4 *castellum de Rivo Torto*
5 *curtis de Urba*
6 *curtis de Notiana*
7 *curtis de Advena*
8 *curtis de Longiano*
9 *curtis de Blentena*
10 *curtis quae dicitur Curte Nova*
11 *curtis de Sancto Quirico*
12 *curtis de Pinto*
13 *Agullia*
14 *abbatia de Valeriana*
15 *curtis de Valle Plana*
16 *curtis de Cumano*
17 *curtis quae dicitur Nova*

▲ Properties granted to Adelaide

1 *curtis de Marinco*
2 *curtis de Coriano*
3 *curtis de Olonna*
4 *curtis de Valli*
5 *alia curtis in Cornino*
6 *abbatia de Sexto*
7 *abbatia Sancti Antimi*
8 *abbatia domini Salvatoris in monte Amiate*

● Cities

Routes

Map adapted from: G. Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide: la politica di consolidamento del potere regio di Ugo di Arles' in Lazzari, *Il patrimonio delle regine*, pp. 247 – 294.

The kings of Italy c. 774 – 961 (simplified)

Chapter I. Introduction

One night in August 951 a young woman escaped from a castle in which she had been kept prisoner for several weeks. She ran free together with her maid, disguised in men's clothes. The woman had to remain hidden for several days, almost starving, until some powerful friends came to her assistance. She also found a husband in the process: a Saxon king, called Otto, who had come to her rescue, and had fallen in love as soon as he saw her.

The woman was called Adelaide and the source which tells us the story is her *Epitaphium* written by abbot Odilo of Cluny at the end of the tenth century.[1] The story is well known. It is reported – in slightly different versions – by several texts.[2] Adelaide had been queen of Italy – wife of the short-lived Lothar II - and, thanks to her second marriage, became queen of Saxony and then empress.[3] Her long and eventful life has made her one of the best known queens of the Middle Ages: a powerful woman both during her reign as the wife of Otto I and then as regent to her grandson Otto III. This story has entered popular knowledge, being converted into plays, operas and historical novels.[4] It shows the great charisma of the queen: she had been imprisoned because she had refused to marry her enemy, bore hard conditions and torture, escaped challenging dangers. It shows, moreover, that she had friends and supporters both inside and outside Italy. It implies, most importantly, that as a royal widow

[1] Odilo, *Epitaphium Adalheidae imperatricis*, ed. P. Winterfeld, MGH SS IV (Hanover, 1841), pp. 637-645, at pp. 638–639.

[2] Hroswitha, *Gesta Ottonis*, ed. W. Berschin, *Hrotsvit. Opera omnia* (München, 2001), pp. 271–305, at pp. 278-280; Adalbert, *Continuation of Regino's Chronicle*, ed. F. Kurze, *Reginonis abbatis prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, MGH SSGR 50 (Hanover, 1890); a. 951, pp. 164-166; Widukind, *Rerum Gestarum Saxonicarum lib. III*, ed. E. Hirsch, MGH SSRG 60 (Hanover, 1935), lib. III, ch. 7, p. 108; *Vita Mathildis reginae antiquior*, ed. B. Schütte, *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, MGH SSRG 66 (Hanover, 1994), pp. 131-132; *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. M. Giese, MGH SSRG 72 (Hanover, 2004), a. 951, pp. 465-466; Thietmar, *Chronicon*, ed. G. Pertz, MGH SS III (Hanover, 1839), pp. 723-871, ch. 5, p. 745; *Chronicon Novalicense*, ed. G. Pertz, MGH SSRG 21 (Hanover, 1846), pp. 68-69.

[3] G. Arnaldi, *Adelaide*, DBI, 1 (1960), pp. 246-249; P. Corbet, M. Goullet, D. Iogna-Prat, eds, *Adélaïde de Bourgogne: genèse et représentations d'une sainteté impériale* (Dijon, 2002); H.J. Frommer, ed, *Adelheid: Kaiserin und Heilige, 931 bis 999 - Adélaide: impératrice et sainte, 931-999* (Karlsruhe, 1999).

[4] P. Golinelli, 'La regina Adelaide e l'Italia: da storia cluniacense a mito romantico' in A. Degrandi, ed, *Scritti in onore di Girolamo Arnaldi* (Rome, 2001), pp. 217–232.

Adelaide had a very significant prerogative: she could transmit royal legitimacy. Sources report that it was thanks to his marriage with Adelaide that Otto became king of Italy.[5]

The real story starts when Adelaide, a Burgundian princess, married Lothar II of Italy. Originally betrothed to Lothar in 937, when they were only children, they married around 947 and had a daughter. Around the same period Lothar became the sole king of Italy, after the death of his father Hugh. It was not an easy reign: he had to deal with the opposition of his main enemy, *marchio* Berengar of Ivrea. After Lothar's premature death, in 950, Berengar had the perfect occasion to realize his royal ambitions and decided to marry the young widow to his son Adalbert. The queen, however, did not agree with this plan, hence the imprisonment and the rest of the story.

The woman described in this story is a fascinating character, not only for her personality, but more importantly for the political implications she has had for the study of Italian queenship. This character, however, is not the subject of this thesis. It is a literary product of Ottonian historiography, as it was created by authors writing in the late tenth and eleventh century in the Ottonian court environment.[6] I am only interested in Adelaide as Lothar's wife and queen of Italy (947 – 950), and in the influence that the story of her turbulent first widowhood had on the way in which scholars understand Italian queens, which are the subject of my study.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the queens of Italy from the beginning of the ninth century until the mid tenth century. By " Italian queen" I mean the women who were married to rulers who held the title of king of Italy. The chronological focus of my research is Carolingian and post-Carolingian - or pre-Ottonian - Italy. This period was marked by major political events which deeply affected the political structure of the kingdom: the Carolingian conquest of the Lombard kingdom in 774, the dissolution of the Carolingian empire in 888, and the annexation of Italy to the Ottonian empire, in 962.[7] The chronological span of my research is,

[5] For discussion and bibliography on this point, see: C. Brühl, *Deutschland- Frankreich: Die Geburt zweier Völker* (Bölhau, 1995), pp. 533–535; R. Hiestand, *Byzanz und das Regnum Italicum in 10. Jahrhundert* (Zürich, 1964), pp. 204 – 205.

[6] M. Goullet, 'De Hrotsvita de Gandersheim à Odilon de Cluny: images d'Adelaïde autour de l'an Mil', in Corbet, Goullet, Iogna-Prat, *Adélaïde de Bourgogne*, pp. 43-54.

[7] On the political history of the Italian Kingdom, see: G. Albertoni, *L'Italia carolingia* (Rome, 1997); P. Delogu, *Lombard and Carolingian Italy*, in NCMH 2, pp. 290–319; F. Bougard, 'Public Power and Authority', in C. La Rocca, ed, *Italy in the Early Middle Ages 476-1000* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 34-58; G. Tabacco, *Egemonie sociali e strutture del potere nel Medioevo italiano* (Turin, 1979); trans. by R. Brown Jensen, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy: Structures of Political Rule* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 109-181; O. Capitani, *Storia dell'Italia medievale, 410-1216* (Rome, 2000), pp. 110-186; C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local*

however, slightly different. I have chosen as the starting point of my thesis the year 835, as in this year we start to see the presence of Carolingian royal women in Italy and their involvement in Italian affairs. The chronological ending point of my research is represented by the end of the Italian kingdom as an autonomous unit *de facto*, after the arrival of Otto in 951 and his marriage to Adelaide. The geographical focus of this study is the Italian kingdom, that is to say northern and central Italy. Southern Italy was composed partly of Lombard duchies, which enter into my analysis only marginally, and partly of Byzantine territory. Although some Italian queens also played a relevant part in other areas of Europe - West and East Frankia - I have only focused on their activities in Italy.

My interest in this topic has arisen because scholars argue that Italian queens were extremely influential in comparison with their transalpine counterparts. As Pauline Stafford wrote some years ago: "In Italy personality, politics and tradition combined to allow queens of the ninth and tenth centuries more active roles than in most European countries".[8] Nevertheless, most of these women are still understudied. For this reason, the analysis of the active roles of these women is problematic and raises several questions. What is an active queen? How is this action represented and put in practice? And what, most importantly, made some women more active than others? By attempting to answer these questions, my thesis has two main purposes. First of all, it aims to contribute to the history of medieval queenship, a field that has seen a growing interest over the past few decades and whose achievements have helped historians to redefine the political history and institutions of early medieval Europe. Secondly, it aims to reconsider a period of political history – ninth- and tenth-century Italy – which lacks recent work on royal politics. My main argument is that queenship in ninth and tenth century Italy was not clearly defined. Rather, the role of the queen was continuously redefined, because of the fluidity of the political situation and the lack of dynastic continuity. The ways in which queens were represented and acted during this period reflect this fluidity. This thesis argues that the queen's role was not a clear and unified concept, and that we should talk of queenships, rather than queenship.

My argument is deeply rooted in the political context in which these women acted. For over a century the Italian kingdom was one of the regions which composed the Carolingian empire. From 840, the Italian throne was associated with the imperial title: the Carolingian emperor

Society 400-1000 (London, 1981), pp. 47-63, 168-193; V. Fumagalli, *Il Regno italico*, in G. Galasso, ed, *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 2 (Turin, 1978); G. Sergi, *The Kingdom of Italy*, in NCMH 3, pp. 346–371.

[8] P. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers. The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1983), p. 134.

had to be king of Italy. This association became particularly significant in the second half of the ninth century, when the struggle for imperial succession was focused in Italy. Despite the importance of Italy for the political history of Carolingian and post-Carolingian Europe, royal politics in ninth- and tenth-century Italy has often been overlooked. The attention of Italian scholars of early medieval politics and institutions has mainly focused on the study of elites – the so-called "ceti dominanti" – and has paid attention to the evolution of noble families in Italy. This tendency has emerged from two influential historiographical schools: the work of Cinzio Violante, focused on family structures and their evolutions from the ninth to the twelfth century, and the analysis of the relationships between socio-political groups proposed by Giovanni Tabacco.[9] Prosopographical research, in particular the work of Eduard Hlawitschka on office holders, has greatly expanded our knowledge of individual members of these elites.[10] The combination of these approaches has resulted in a considerable number of publications on aristocratic elites.[11] These works have highlighted the evolution of the Italian aristocracy in the course of the early Middle Ages and have expanded our understanding of the internal dynamics of these family groups. However, the analysis of royal politics has somewhat remained in the background. According to the historiography of Italian elites the crisis of the Carolingian empire corresponded to the emergence of a new aristocracy. The Carolingian nobility was mobile: top-level public offices were only rarely transmitted from father to son; the success of individuals depended on their relationships to rulers. According to the same view, from the end of the ninth century an increasingly autonomous seigniorial aristocracy was born. This was composed of family groups which settled in a territory, acquired increasing landed resources in that area and held public office for several generations. This model has somehow rested on the assumption that rulers gradually lost control of an increasingly territorial aristocracy in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. In

[9] G. Tabacco, *I liberi del re nell'Italia carolingia e postcarolingia* (Spoleto, 1966); Id., *Sperimentazioni del potere nell'alto medioevo* (Turin, 1993); C. Violante, 'Alcune caratteristiche delle strutture familiari in Lombardia. Emilia e Toscana durante i secoli IX-XII', in G. Duby, J. Le Goff, eds, *Famiglia e parentela nell'Italia medievale* (Bologna, 1977), pp. 19–82.

[10] E. Hlawitschka*, Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunder in Oberitalien (774-962)* (Freiburg im Breslau, 1960); R. Pauler, *Das Regnum Italiae in ottonischer Zeit. Markgrafen, Grafen und Bischöfe als politische Kräfte* (Tübingen, 1982).

[11] Some of the most significant studies have been published in the proceedings of three conferences: *Formazione e strutture dei ceti dominanti nel medioevo. Marchesi, conti e visconti nel Regno italico secc. IX-XII. Atti del primo Convegno di Pisa, 10-11 maggio 1983*, Vols. 1-2 (Rome, 1988)*; Formazione e strutture dei ceti dominanti nel medioevo. Marchesi conti e visconti nel regno Italico (secc. IX - XII)* (Rome, 1996); A. Spicciani, ed, *Formazione e strutture dei ceti dominanti nel medioevo. Marchesi conti e visconti nel regno Italico (secc. IX - XII). Atti del terzo convegno di Pisa, 18-20 marzo 1999* (Rome, 2003). See also: P. Cammarosano, *Nobili e re. L'Italia politica dell'Alto Medioevo* (Bari, 1998); G. Sergi, *I confini del potere: Marche e signorie fra due regni medievali* (Turin, 1995).

this way, royalty emerges as a rather passive actor in a system of political networks which were shaped and defined by noble elites. Recently, however, Anglophone historiography has proposed new ways of looking at rulers and at the way in which they interacted with the nobility.[12] This has allowed historians to reevaluate the degree of involvement and control of rulers in territorial politics, and changed the understanding of the relationship between "central" and local powers. This new historiography is starting to produce its effects on the study of Italian royal politics too, with some important contributions to the histories of Carolingian and post-Carolingian rulership.[13] My thesis employs this new perspective on royal politics. It considers the different reigns of each ruler, analysing them through queens' activities. In doing so, I have tried to avoid the teleological perspective which sees the transition from the Carolingian to the post-Carolingian world as a pattern of decline of royal authority.

According to the model of decline the history of ninth- and tenth-century Italy has traditionally been based on the partition between a period of dynastic continuity – represented by Carolingian rule - followed by the chaotic struggles among the regional kings – or would-be kings - of Italy.[14] However, dynastic and inter-dynastic conflict can be found consistently throughout the period. The Italian kingdom was assigned by Charlemagne to his son Pippin, and after the latter's death to Pippin's son Bernard. Bernard ruled the kingdom between 814 and 817. However, the 817 *Ordinatio Imperii* issued by Louis the Pious led to the redefinition of the succession established by Charlemagne: Italy and the imperial title were assigned to Louis' son, Lothar. This led to a rebellion organized by Bernard, who could count on the support of part of the Italian aristocracy. Bernard's revolt was, however, quickly defeated and the young king was blinded and died shortly thereafter. Louis' reign was very much troubled too. His sons rebelled against him: the internal rivalries of the family were further complicated by the fact that Louis changed the succession because of the birth of a further son, the future Charles the Bald, by his second wife Judith. In 834, at the climax of the

[12] J. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992); M. Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages. The Middle Rhine Valley, 400 – 1000* (Cambridge, 2000); S. MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2003); E. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817 – 876* (Ithaca, 2006).

[13] B. Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics of Berengar I, King of Italy 888-924', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), pp. 247-289; F. Bougard, 'La cour et le gouvernment de Louis II, 840-875', in R. Le Jan, ed, *La royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carolingienne (début IXe siècle aux environs de 920)* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1998), pp. 249–267; E. Screen, 'Lothar I: the Man and his Entourage', in M. Gaillard, M. Margue, A. Dierkens, H. Pettiau, eds, *De la mer du Nord à la Méditerranée. Francia Media* (Luxembourg, 2011), pp. 255-274; G. Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo: il Perpendiculum di Attone di Vercelli e la storia politica del regno italico* (Spoleto, 2011).

[14] Fumagalli, *Il regno Italico*, pp. 171–213.

rebellion, Lothar I moved to Italy and started to exercise his royal authority there. He remained in Italy until 840, when he was reconciled with his father, although after Louis the Pious' death (840) he had to face his brothers in a long and complex conflict over the division of the empire. Lothar left the Italian throne and the imperial title to his first son Louis II, who was crowned emperor in 844. In the early 870s, Louis II had to deal with potential problems related to his succession: he did not have male children, and his relationship with the other Carolingian rulers was not idyllic. After the death of his brother Lothar II, king of Lotharingia, in 869, Louis was unsuccessful in claiming the Lotharingian territories, which were divided between his uncles Charles the Bald and Louis the German. Although sources suggest that Louis II and his wife Angelberga had chosen to leave the kingdom to the eastern Carolingians – Louis the German and his sons – things did not go according to plan. Charles the Bald arrived in Italy straight after Louis' death, in late 875, and was crowned emperor by Pope John VIII. After the death of Charles the Bald, in late 877, the kingdom passed to the eastern Carolingians, Karlman (877- 879) and Charles the Fat (879 – 888).

In other words, the history of Carolingian Italy was also deeply affected by dynastic break and conflict. The novelty of post-888 is that the throne and the imperial title were no longer a prerogative of the Carolingian family and the conflict became inter-dynastic.[15] The throne passed through the hands of several members of Italian aristocratic families. The Widonids, the family that controlled the dukedom of Spoleto, ruled Italy between 889 and 898, in the shape of Guy of Spoleto (d. 894) and his son Lambert (d. 898), who died young and without heirs. Guy had a main enemy in Italy, *marchio* Berengar of Friuli, a member of the Unroching family, which was settled in north-eastern Italy. Although Berengar was elected king in 888, he was defeated by Guy in the battle of Trebbia in 889 and had to give up the control of most of Italy, retreating into the north east. He reacquired the kingdom after Lambert's death. His reign was also very troubled, with several revolts, conspiracies and internal and external threats. In 924, after Berengar died without heirs, the throne passed to Hugh of Provence (924 – 945), member of the Bosonid family, and son of Berta and Thebald of Arles. After Thebald's death Berta married *marchio* Adalbert of Tuscany, and managed to place her children in key positions in the Italian kingdom. Hugh's authority was challenged by another Italian magnate, Berengar of Ivrea – the grandson of Berengar I. Berengar managed to organize opposition to Hugh's rule, and forced him to abandon the kingdom in 945. Lothar II – Hugh's son - remained sole king of Italy until his death in 950, although his

[15] On this, see the collection of essays: S. Airlie, *Power and its Problems in Carolingian Europe* (Farnham, 2012).

authority was limited by Berengar's influence. After the death of Lothar, Otto of Saxony, who had developed ambitions towards Italy and the imperial title, descended into Italy and married Adelaide. Initially, he agreed that Berengar should remain king. Berengar, however, unable to control the Italian nobility, had to face internal opposition and finally Otto returned to Italy to take the throne in 961. Berengar resisted, but in vain. He was defeated and exiled to Bamberg, where he died in 966. Otto I finally obtained the crown and the imperial title.

The kingdom was characterized by recurring conflicts among several claimants to the throne: Guy and Berengar I at the end of the ninth century, Hugh of Provence and Berengar II in the 940s. This situation was further complicated by the fact that several Carolingians tried to regain the Italian throne in order to get the imperial title. Arnulf of Carinthia – illegitimate son of Karlman – attempted two expeditions to Italy, in 894 and 896. He managed to be crowned emperor by Pope Formosus in 896, but died shortly thereafter. Another Carolingian, Louis III of Provence, descended into Italy twice, in 901 and 905, with the support of the Italian nobility, but Berengar managed to defeat him. Rudolf II of Burgundy – Adelaide's father – arrived in Italy in 922 and was proclaimed king by the Italian nobles in Pavia. After Berengar's death, in 924, Rudolf remained the sole ruler, but in 926 he was defeated by Hugh.[16] Rudolf attempted another expedition to Italy in 933, but Hugh managed to negotiate an alliance, and granted him rights in Provence. In other words, 888 did not represent a turning point which marked the end of political continuity, as the rule of Italy was characterized by constant discontinuity. Nevertheless, this discontinuity became more evident once the Carolingian dynasty lost its control and royal authority became accessible to Italian magnates.

In this study I analyse the Italian queens who lived in this turbulent period. I have studied them both during their reigns, and when possible, during their widowhood. Cunegunda married Bernard of Italy probably in 814 and gave him a son called Pippin. She was left a widow in 818, but was still alive in 835. The first Carolingian empress to be involved in Italian affairs was Ermengarda, wife of Lothar I. Angelberga, wife of Louis II, came from a powerful family, the Supponids, which had great influence in Italy. She gave Louis only two daughters, but, despite the lack of male children who could support her, remained active after her husband's death. Richgard, wife of Charles the Fat, made a few appearances in Italy

[16] For the political history of Carolingian Europe I have mainly referred to: M. Costambeys, M. Innes, S. MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2011); G. Fasoli, *I re d'Italia* (Florence, 1948) is still a very useful synthesis on the dynastic struggles between 888 and 962.

between 881 and 887. Ageltrude, wife of Guy of Spoleto, was originally from southern Italy, but was very active in the kingdom during the reigns of both her husband and son, as well during her widowhood. Bertilla, a Supponid woman with strong connections to the Italian nobility, was the first wife of Berengar I. She died around 912-913; at that point Berengar married a woman called Anna, presumably of Byzantine origin. Anna survived Berengar and is documented still living in Italy in 936. Hugh's second wife – his first wife Willa of Burgundy died before he obtained the Italian crown - Alda was a noblewoman of German or Burgundian origin who gave him his only legitimate son, Lothar. After Alda's death Hugh attempted to marry Marozia, a powerful Roman noble woman, but the marriage was short and probably not even formally acknowledged. Finally, in 937, Hugh organized a double match: he married Berta, widow of Rudolf II of Burgundy, and betrothed Lothar to the young Adelaide, Berta's daughter. Berengar II was married to a noblewoman called Willa, daughter of Boso of Tuscany and Willa "senior", the daughter of Rudolf I of Burgundy.

All these women had to face significant challenges. Dynasties were unstable - because of the premature death of rulers, the lack of male children and internal and external opposition. This affected their success: after Louis II's death, rulers were not able to pass the throne on to their sons. In some cases this happened because of a lack of male children - especially in the case of the late Carolingians – and, after 888, also because rulers were challenged by other candidates for the throne. As a result, after Louis II's death no family managed to keep the throne for more than two generations. This situation also had an impact on queens and on the part they played in royal politics. Queens' crucial function was to provide an heir and therefore protect the transmission of the title. In this sense, dynastic conflict represented a potential danger for them in turn. This study, however, considers the unstable political situation as a great resource for looking at the way in which these women acted. Dynastic and political instability gave queens a less certain and less definite role, but at the same time gave them more room for manoeuvre.

Until recently there has been very little work on aristocratic women in the Italian kingdom. Historians have acknowledged their visibility, but have failed to explore their influence thoroughly. Italian historiography has hesitated to accept the progress of gender studies, which have changed the way scholars analyse early medieval political discourse and

structures.[17] Things have now started to change, thanks to innovative work which takes into account the evidence provided by juridical, diplomatic and archeological sources. These studies have redefined the roles of royal and elite women as social and political actors, as well as their crucial input in the evolution of familial structures and bonds.[18] However, an overall picture of the role of royal women in Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy is still missing. The few existing studies on Italian queens show the tendency to focus on a handful of "charismatic figures", forgetting other royal women who have less visibility but who should certainly not be ignored. Thanks to her influence in the Ottonian empire, and to the narrative with which I began, Adelaide has been considered a very powerful queen of Italy before 951. This idea is, however, teleological, as it is based exclusively on the narrative texts produced in the Ottonian kingdom. Angelberga, wife of Louis II, had a very active role both during her reign and her widowhood. She is considered as an extraordinarily charismatic figure, for she embodied all the aspects of a queen's powers: political, relational and patrimonial.[19] The assumption that queens were more active in Italy than in other areas of Europe has mainly rested on these two figures, as well as Theophanu, the Ottonian empress, whose career is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this is not the whole picture: several royal women appear on the Italian political scene whose role is much understudied. My study aims to fill this gap, by analysing each individual queen in relation to the conditions in which she acted.

This research benefits from the increasing amount of work that has been done on medieval queenship from the 1970s. As for the early Middle Ages, the groundbreaking study was the work of Pauline Stafford in 1983, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, which offers a rich

[17] See various articles in: A.B. Mulder-Bakker, P. Stafford, eds, *Gendering the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2001); L. Brubaker, J. Smith, eds, *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge, 2004); J. Nelson, S. Reynolds, eds, *Gender and Historiography. Studies in the History of the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford* (London, 2012).

[18] F. Bougard, 'Les Supponides: échec à la reine', in F. Bougard, L. Feller, R. Le Jan, eds, *Les élites au haut Moyen Âge. Crises et renouvellements* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 381–402; T. Lazzari, 'Una mamma carolingia, una moglie supponide: percorsi femminili di legittimazione e potere nel regno italico', in G. Isabella, ed, "*C'era una volta un re...": aspetti e momenti della regalità,* DPM Quaderni- Dottorato, 3 (Bologna, 2005), pp. 41-57; C. La Rocca, 'Pouvoirs des femmes, pouvoir de la loi dans l'Italie Lombarde', in A. Dierkens, R. Le Jan, S. Lebecq, J.M. Sansterre, eds, *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en Occident* (Lille, 1999), pp. 37-50; T. Lazzari, 'Le donne del Regno italico', in F. Bocchi, ed, *L'eredità culturale di Gina Fasoli: Atti del convegno di studi per il centenario della nascita (1905 - 2005)* (Rome, 2008), pp. 209-218, P. Skinner, *Women in Medieval Italian Society 500-1200* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 68-126.

[19] On Angelberga see: G. Pochettino, 'L'imperatrice Angelberga', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 48 (1921), pp. 39-149; S. Pivano, 'Il testamento e la famiglia dell'imperatrice Angelberga', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 49 (1922), pp. 263-294; G. Von Pölnitz Kehr, 'Kaiserin Angilberga. Ein Exkurs zur Diplomatik Kaiser Ludwigs II. von Italien', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 60 (1940), pp. 429-440; C. E. Odegaard, 'The Empress Engelberga', *Speculum*, 26 (1951), pp. 77- 103; F. Bougard, *Engelberga*, DBI, 42 (1993), pp. 668-676.

and thorough analysis of the role of royal women in the early Middle Ages.[20] Stafford's pioneering work has been followed by many significant studies on early medieval queens and queenship.[21] Carolingian queens have also enjoyed a great deal of attention.[22] These studies have completely redefined the way in which we look at early medieval royal women. They have explored the construction of gender categories and how they defined and changed political relationships between men and women.[23] Furthermore, studies on early medieval elite women have underlined the centrality of women in family groups.[24] Régine Le Jan has adopted an anthropological approach to look at family structures in the Frankish world, showing that the evolution of these structures also had significant repercussions for the status of noble and royal women.[25]

Furthermore, historians have dismantled the distinction between private and public domains, showing how fluid these concepts were in the early Middle Ages. This applies particularly to the royal court, which represented the "domestic sphere" of the queen's action, but was also a political arena. This suggests that there was a substantial ambiguity in the role of the queen: she acquired her role thanks to her sexual partnership with the king, which was accomplished on the private domain of the family and household. However, the royal household was a space in which private and public were interwoven: the queen personified this complex

[20] Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*.

[21] J.C. Parsons, ed, *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud, 1994); A. Duggan, ed, *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe. Proceedings of a Conference held at King's College London*, April 1995 (Woodbridge, 1997); J. Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship' in L. Mitchell, ed, *Women in Medieval Western European Culture* (New York, 1999), pp. 179-207; P. Stafford, 'Powerful Women in the Early Middle Ages: Queens and Abbesses' in P. Linehan, J. Nelson, eds, *The Medieval World* (Abington, 2001), pp. 398–415; M. Hartmann, *Die Königin im frühen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 2009).

[22] Various studies have been published on individual ninth- and tenth-century queens: J. Hyam, 'Ermentrude and Richildis', in M. Gibson, J. Nelson, eds, *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom* (Aldershot, 1990); E. J. Goldberg, 'Regina nitens sanctissima Hemma': Queen Emma (827 - 876), Bishop Witgar of Augsburg and the Witgar-Belt' in S. MacLean, B. Weiler, eds, *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany 800 - 1500* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 57-95; J. Nelson, 'Bertrada', in M. Becher, J. Jarnut, eds, *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751: Vorgeschichte, Legitimationsstrategien und Erinnerung* (Münster, 2004), pp. 93-108. For the bibliography on Judith, wife of Louis the Pious, see below, chapter 2.

[23] P. Stafford, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth and Eleventh Century England', *Past and Present*, 163 (1999), pp. 3–35; see various articles in the collection of studies: J. Nelson, *Courts, Elites and Gendered Power in the early Middle Ages: Charlemagne and Others* (Aldershot, 2007).

[24] For discussion and bibliography, see: P. Stafford, 'La mutation familiale: A Suitable Case for Caution', in J. Hill, ed, *The Community, the Family and the Saint. Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 1998), pp. 103-125; J. Smith, 'Did Women Have a Transformation of the Roman World?', *Gender&History*, 12.3 (2000), pp. 552-571; K. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 47–94.

[25] R. Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc* (Paris, 1995). See also: S. McLaughlin, *Sex, Gender and Episcopal Authority in the Age of Reform, 1000 – 1122* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 16-49.

status.[26] Her political success depended on her family life, particularly, though not always, on her ability to produce an heir. Pauline Stafford has noted this ambiguity, which has to be kept constantly in mind when studying the role of early medieval royal women.[27]

However, the queen was not only a bride and a mother. What did her office consist of? Scholars have discussed whether being a queen meant having an institutional role. In this regard, Janet Nelson has argued that the earliest existing examples of queen–making liturgies, namely the coronation rituals performed for Charles the Bald's daughter Judith in 856 and for his wife Ermentrude in 866, were the result of growing political attention towards the queen.[28] The spread of these rituals meant that contemporaries recognized the queen as the holder of a sacred office parallel to that of the king. The gradual diffusion of queen-making rituals in Europe coincided with the growth of charismatic female figures at court, as can be seen in West Francia, Ottonian Germany and England.[29] This has been accompanied, in scholars' view, by the moulding of a queen's institutional role.[30] Queenly coronation rituals suggest that the queen "was seen as exercising a specific role in the kingdom".[31] This "evolutionary" approach has been employed to explain other aspects of queens' powers, such as the growing relevance of dowers and monastic patronage in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries. As a bride, the queen had the right to be endowed by her husband: she received movable and immovable properties that were supposed to support her in case of widowhood. The dower of queens was mainly composed of fiscal lands and royal monasteries, and as such it represented an important component of rulers' territorial

[26] See review article: J. Nelson, 'The Problematic in the Private: Paul Veyne (ed.), A History of Private Life from Pagan Rome to Byzantium'*, Social History*, 15 (1990), pp. 355-364.

[27] P. Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers: Family Politics in the Early Middle Ages', in D. Baker, ed, *Medieval Women. Dedicated and Presented to Prof. Rosalind M. T. Hill on the Occasion of her Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 79 – 100; J.C. Parsons, 'Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1150 – 1500', in Parsons, *Medieval Queenship*, pp. 63–78.

[28] J. Nelson, 'Early medieval Rites of Queen-making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship', in Duggan, *Queens and Queenship*, pp. 301-316.

[29] On tenth- and eleventh-century queens, see: S. MacLean, 'Making a Difference in Tenth-Century Politics: King Athelstan's Sisters and Frankish Queenship', in P. Fouracre, D. Ganz, eds, *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages; Essays in Honour of Dame Jinty Nelson* (Manchester, 2008), pp. 167–190; S. MacLean, 'Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's "Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist" Reconsidered', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire / Belgisch tijdschrift voor filologie en geschiedenis*, 86 (2008); A. Fössel, *Die Königin im Mittelaterliche Reich* (Stuttgart, 2000); P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-century England* (Oxford, 1997).

[30] F.R. Erkens, '"Sicut Esther regina": Die westfränkische Königin als *consors regni*', *Francia*, 20, 1 (1993) pp. 15-38. I will discuss this approach and the title of *consors regni* in chapter 3.

[31] P. Stafford, 'Emma: The Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century', in Duggan, *Queens and Queenship*, pp. 3-23, at p. 13.

politics.[32] Historians have explained the increasing significance of these activities and resources in terms of the institutionalization of queenship.

However, this thesis argues that this was not the case. The evolutionary model – based on the evolution of marriage and family structures, dower and monastic patronage – is overstated for a fragmented and discontinuous political reality such as Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy. I argue that in this context we see a persisting indefiniteness of the queen's role. My aim is therefore to dismantle the evolutionary approach, by showing that in Italy queenship remains a fluid role. My thesis aims to analyse royal women who experienced very different political conditions, highlighting differences in each individual case rather than similarities and continuities. I consider this indefiniteness as an opportunity to bring out the peculiarities of each case, as well as to deconstruct the model of order/disorder which has been imposed on the political history of ninth- and tenth-century Italy. In other words, this indefiniteness must not be seen as a limitation, but rather as an opportunity. By a radical changing of the standpoint from which the subject is viewed, I argue that queenly office was continuously adapted and reshaped according to contemporary contingencies.

My thesis is mainly based on the analysis of two bodies of sources: narrative texts and royal charters. There is not a great amount of historical writings produced in Italy during this period. The political narrative of Carolingian Italy is mainly supported by annalistic texts and chronicles produced in West and East Frankia. Scholars of post-Carolingian Italy have to deal with a crucial source, Liudprand of Cremona's *Antapodosis*, which reports the political events of Italy from the dissolution of the Carolingian empire until the 950s. This text is not only our main source for the history of Italy in the tenth century, but also a crucial resource for understanding the role of elite and royal women in that period. Liudprand has absorbed scholars' attention and captivated the study of gender relationships and elite women's actions. Other texts produced in Italy during the same period offer elusive portrayals of women: for that reason they have been overlooked. My research aims to bring forward these texts – and the portrayals of women that they offer - considering them as equally significant for understanding the role of queens.

Secondly, my thesis is based on the analysis of the large collection of Carolingian and post-Carolingian royal diplomas issued in Italy. Royal charters are very significant for the study of

[32] F. Bougard, L. Feller, R. Le Jan, eds, *Dots et douaires dans le haut Moyen Âge. Actes de la table ronde "Morgengabe, dos, tertia … et les autres …" réunie à Lille et Valenciennes les 2, 3 et 4 mars 2000* (Rome, 2002).

queens, as they are often present in royal charters as intercessors or beneficiaries. This visibility, however, has often been analysed too simplistically. Queens that appear frequently in charters can be perceived as more influential than those who do not. I have tried to deconstruct this approach, by analysing each document in the specific context in which it was produced. Diplomas are crucial to understand political structures, as they display the exercise of royal authority in practice.[33] For this reason, the presence of a queen in charters and the way in which she was presented in these documents are vital elements for understanding the part she played in royal politics.

Furthermore, I have used, to a lesser extent, private charters: donations and wills issued by queens, which document their economic transactions. These documents cast light on queens' patrimonial resources, as well as their ability to administer their wealth and to liaise with monastic institutions. They illuminate the problematic relationship between "public" and "private" roles, which is key for understanding the role of the queen. I have also used other types of sources, where appropriate: imperial and papal letters, hagiographies and normative texts.

This study is divided into four thematic sections. Firstly, I analyse the way in which Italian queens were represented by contemporary authors. Chapter 2 is therefore devoted to the representation of royal women in narrative texts. It compares models of queenship created by ninth-century Carolingian courtly authors with texts produced in Italy in the late ninth and tenth centuries. In this chapter I argue that Italian authors inverted the model of the virtuous queen proposed by earlier Carolingian writers, in order to attack queens and use them as scapegoats of a corrupted political system. This has to be related to the political situation and to the precariousness of royal authority. At the same time, these texts show the lack of a unanimous model of queenship: each author had his own idea of what a queen was. Chapter 3 focuses on the analysis of charters, particularly on their language. It analyses titles, formulas and expressions related to queens. I relate this language to the political context in which each charter was produced. I argue that each queen was represented in a different way and that this reflects the peculiar role she was assigned. Chapter 4 analyses queens' dowers, underlining the variety of queenly resources, and arguing that they changed according to the political needs of rulers. Furthermore, this chapter underlines the different ways in which a queen could be linked to a property or a monastery. Finally, chapter 5 analyses three cases of royal

[33] G. Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas: the West Frankish Kingdom (840 - 987)* (Turnhout, 2012).

widowhood, arguing that the lack of sons and political instability put these women in danger of losing the resources they had accumulated during their reigns. However, the same situation gave women the means to survive politically, to deal with new rulers and to remain at the centre of political networks.

Ultimately, my analysis aims to show the indefiniteness and fluidity of queenship. This must not be seen as a limitation to queenly action, but rather as a resource. Rulers and their wives had the opportunity to play with the lack of boundaries to queenly powers, and to create a role that would fit their specific goals.

Chapter II. Representing queens and queenship

In 936 Bishop Rather of Verona composed the *Praeloquia*, a treaty on the Christian virtues demanded from each component of society. In this text he devoted a brief paragraph to the queen. The rhetorical question: "Regina es?" introduces this very short section.[1] In comparison with the attention Rather devoted to the role of the king and to the virtues of the ideal wife, the lines regarding the queen are scant and ambiguous. Rather's vagueness with regard to the queen's role reflects a general tendency that can be found in other Italian sources composed in the ninth and tenth centuries.

This chapter analyses images of queens in narrative and normative sources, in order to establish a framework for the way in which contemporaries thought about them. Carolingian and post-Carolingian texts show an increasing visibility of royal women. This has been read as the result of the definition of the queen's role during the ninth and tenth centuries. According to this view, the definition of queenly duties and the growing influence that queens exercised at court resulted in numerous portrayals of royal women in contemporary texts.[2] This chapter argues, instead, that the interpretation of queenship as an increasingly defined institution is hard to square with the political climate of ninth- and tenth-century Italy. The political crisis of Carolingian Italy from the 870s and the lack of a stable dynasty affected the ways in which royal women were represented. Italian queens were increasingly portrayed as disruptive and damaging to the political harmony of the royal household.

Carolingian texts produced north of the Alps created a model of queenly virtue based on the family role: as wife and mother the queen symbolized the familial and political order and its continuity. In Italy, however, where dynasties were abruptly interrupted every one or two generations and there was constant competition among different family groups, this model could not work. For that reason royal women were very rarely depicted as virtuous wives and mothers, but mainly as dissolute sexual partners and bad political counsellors. Actually, they were rarely depicted as mothers at all. Italian queens were denied the positive functions that

[1] Rather, *Praeloquia*, ed. C. Leonardi, *Ratherii Veronensis Opera Fragmenta Glossae* (Turnhout, 1984) pp. 3-196, Lib. IV, ch. 36, p. 141.

[2] G. Bührer-Thierry, 'La reine adultère', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 35 (1992), pp. 299-312; M. Fiano, 'Regine senza rituali. La rappresentazione di un sistema e delle sue devianze', in La Rocca, *Agire da donna*, pp. 171-188.

their transalpine counterparts often enjoyed. When the relationship with their husband and children was addressed, it was mostly in order to show its negative connotations. This depiction reflected the way in which writers perceived Italian rulers, their lack of confidence in them as worthy rulers and protectors of political stability. Italian authors employed royal women to depict an unbalanced relationship between king and queen: badly behaved queens were the most evident sign of the political and personal failure of male rulers.

In other words, although they were familiar with the queenly models of virtuousness, motherhood and domesticity, Italian authors consciously twisted and inverted them. In doing so, each of them underlined different aspects of queenship. Late ninth- and tenth-century Italian texts show that there was no agreement about what the queen was, and on what her prerogatives were. On the other hand, the lack of any defined glorification of royal women as continuators of the dynasty could allow queens to carry on their role outside the "traditional" domestic domain which had been created as the queenly sphere of action by Carolingian authors. Italian texts show, in other words, that being a queen was more than being a royal wife and mother: what "queenship" was, however, was constantly reconstructed and renegotiated.[3]

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first analyses the categories transmitted by Carolingian authors writing north of the Alps, with regard to courtly duties, morality, marriage and motherhood. These ideas created models with which writers could play to portray queens and the system they were part of. Secondly, I will look at the way in which these categories were recycled and inverted in the work of Liudprand of Cremona, our main source on Italian elite and royal women. In the third part of the chapter, I will analyse how other less known Italian texts approached these issues, arguing that they used similar techniques and strategies to those employed by Liudprand. However, I will argue that these texts also show the lack of a defined idea of queenship.

1. Carolingian ideology of queenship

Reality certainly shaped ideas; at the same time, ideas and the way in which they were transmitted affected reality. This section analyses texts that defined the ideology of queenship. It explores how this ideology was put into practice, and how models were used by

[3] Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', pp. 203 – 205.

Carolingian authors to represent individual queens. Although the evidence I describe is by no means exhaustive - there are many Carolingian texts that in one way or another deal with queenship - they nevertheless help in defining the framework on which the sources I am interested in, late ninth- and tenth-century Italian narratives, were built. I have divided the Carolingian models into two categories, which are obviously closely related to each other: familial role and morality, and household duties.

1.1 Marriage, morality and motherhood

The stress Carolingian authors put on the queen's role has been related to the significant part wives played in aristocratic life of the ninth century, which was in itself related to the growing attention to the concept of lawful marriage.[4] Régine Le Jan has argued that the weakening of horizontal family bonds made marriage a more fragile institution than it had been in the past, and this attracted the attention of Carolingian intellectuals and the Church to the matter.[5] This, in the long term, imposed stricter rules aimed at reinforcing homogamous marriage, that is to say marriage between family groups of the same social level. Royal women were chosen from the highest aristocratic families, and could not be of low origin anymore, as had been the case in the Merovingian kingdom.[6]

Along the same line, in an article on the theory of marriage expressed by Carolingian moralists, Pierre Toubert argued that churchmen's growing attention towards marriage had to do with their close experience of aristocratic society. Writers saw in a balanced conjugal life, based on the *castitas* - sexual moderation – of both husband and wife, the solution to the problems of social violence and tension that tormented aristocratic society.[7] These intellectuals understood that, in order to valorize marriage, they also had to enhance the wife's role, as a person, therefore creating what Toubert defines as "une éthique de la réciprocité".[8] In other words, their prestigious background and the new idea of the marital couple gave elite women more opportunities.[9] Not only was the woman acknowledged as a main component of the familial *consortium*, she was also given a very precise and highly

[4] J. Gaudemet, *Le mariage en Occident* (Paris, 1987), pp. 109-132; K. Heene, *The Legacy of Paradise. Marriage, Motherhood and Woman in Carolingian Edifying Literature* (Frankfurt, 1997), pp.61-98.
[5] Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, p. 285.
[6] On marriage see also R. Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 247–278.
[7] P. Toubert, 'La théorie du mariage chez le moralistes carolingiens', in *Il Matrimonio nell'Alto Medioevo*, Settimane 24 (Spoleto, 1977), pp. 233-285.
[8] Ibidem, p. 281.
[9] Ibidem, pp. 361–362.

gendered role to accomplish. Part of this role was practical, but its practicalities were strictly related to the couple's morality. The wife, as well as the husband, had to respect a precise moral code that was the more important the higher her class. In the case of queens, as Julia Smith puts it: "A wife's moral contribution to building a Christian society defined a queen's political role. A queen without modesty led to disorder throughout the polity".[10] In other words, the crucial quality of a queen was moral irreproachability in the marital union. Didactic and narrative texts produced during the ninth and tenth centuries expressed a growing concern with regard to the morality of the queen. An immoral queen was perceived as disruptive, as was her negative influence on her husband.

The central part that the morality of the queen played in royal politics is exemplified by the case of the empress Judith, who was blamed for the revolt of Louis the Pious' sons against their father at the beginning of the 830s. She was accused by her detractors of having had a relationship with Count Bernard of Septimania. Judith's life is well documented by contemporary sources, mainly because of violent attacks that were launched against her during the revolt.[11] In his *Liber Apologeticus*, written during the revolt of Louis' sons, Agobard of Lyon attributed the responsibility for the revolt to Judith's sexual misconduct. Agobard denounced Judith's misbehaviour, stating that a queen who is not able to control herself is unable to control the *honestas* of the household.[12] However, Judith's importance was mainly related to her role as mother. It was because of the birth of Charles, and the dynastic conflict that it created, that Judith became so notorious. Her role changed drastically after the birth of Charles, in 823, and her motherhood became a crucial component of her political role.[13] Ermold the Black, a poet who wrote celebratory poems for Louis the Pious, exalted Judith in various aspects of courtly duties. As Elizabeth Ward has underlined, in this text Judith is a vital component of an idealized model of political rule and familial harmony. One of the scenes portrays Judith's relationship with her son. This image is particularly fascinating and it shows Judith in an intimate way: she is described with her son Charles

[10] J. Smith, 'Gender and Ideology in the Early Middle Ages', in R. N. Swanson, ed, *Gender and Christian Religion*, Studies in Church History, 34 (1998), pp. 51 – 73, at p. 71.

[11] E. Ward, 'Agobard of Lyons and Paschasius Radbertus as Critics of the Empress Judith', in W. Sheils, D. Wood, eds, *Women in the Church,* Studies in Church History, 27 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 15 – 25; E. Ward, 'Caesar's Wife'; M. de Jong, 'Bride Shows Revisited: Praise, Slander and Exegesis in the Reign of the Empress Judith'; in Brubaker, Smith, *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, pp. 257–277; M. de Jong, 'Exegesis for an Empress', in E. Cohen, M. de Jong, eds, *Medieval Transformations. Texts, Power and Gifts in Context (*Leiden, 2001), pp. 69-100.

[12] Agobard, *Liber Apologeticus I*, ed. L. Van Acker, *Opera omnia Agobardi Lugdunensis* (Turnhout, 1981), pp. 305–319, ch. 4-5, pp. 311-312.

[13] Ward, 'Caesar's Wife', pp. 211-115.

during a hunting trip.[14] Ermold offered a positive image of Judith: the ideal wife and mother, therefore the ideal empress; the public and private domains are closely bound in the ideal of the perfect queen at court.

The delicate and numerous implications of breaking the conjugal equilibrium in the royal domain exploded in the controversial case of Lothar II's divorce. In 857 the king of Lotharingia decided to divorce his lawful wife Theutberga to marry his concubine Waldrada, from whom he had had a male child. He encountered fierce opposition from members of the religious and lay elites, with the support of other Carolingian rulers who aimed to get their hands on Lothar's kingdom. Lothar's marital problems provided him with a lot of trouble. He was forced by Pope Nicholas I to take back Theutberga, and in 869 he died in Italy, near Piacenza, on his way back from Rome, after having obtained the forgiveness of the new pope, Hadrian II. Stuart Airlie has analysed the divorce in relation to the role of the queen, arguing that the case was not just a matter of political relations - the royal succession - or a result of the stricter rules that churchmen were trying to impose on marriage. Neither of these factors gives sufficient explanation of its complex repercussions.[15] Lothar's divorce plea and the controversies which followed contributed to create a model of the ideal marital union. The case showed what was considered corrupted and unacceptable in a marriage. Lothar accused Theutberga of adultery and incest: by depicting Theutberga as an immoral woman, he declared her an unworthy queen. At the same time, Lothar's sexual urges proved that he did not have *castitas*, the sexual moderation that Carolingian churchmen considered vital for a good ruler.[16]

The cases of Lothar's divorce and the attacks against Judith show what damage corrupted women – and men - could represent for the royal household and the harmony of the kingdom. On the other hand, a good wife could help her husband greatly. In the *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, a *speculum principis* aimed at portraying the ideal Christian ruler, Sedulius Scotus describes the queen's duties focusing on two points: her moral irreproachability and

[14] "Ecce locum, quo turba potens et Caesera Iudith/Constiterant, Carolus cum quibus ipse puer,/ Praeterit instanter, pedibus spes constat in ipsis;/ Ni fuga subsidium conferat, ecce perit./Quam puer aspiciens Carolus cupit ecce parentis/ More sequi , precibus postulat acer equum;/ Arma rogat cupidus, pharetram celeresque sagittas,/ Et cupit ire sequax, ut pater ipse solet./ Ingeminatque preces precibus; sed pulcra creatrix/ Ire vetat, voto nec dat habere viam." Ermoldus Nigellus, *In Honorem Hludovici lib. IV*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Poetae Carolini Aevi II (Berlin, 1884), pp. 1–93, at p. 73.

[15] S. Airlie, 'Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce of Lothar II', *Past and Present,* 161 (1998), pp. 3 – 38, at pp. 8-20.

[16] K. Heidecker, *The Divorce of Lothar II: Christian Marriage and Political Power in the Carolingian World* (Ithaca, 2010), pp. 11-35.

the effective management of the household.[17] Sedulius gives a precise idea of what the wife of a good ruler should be: she must be noble, beautiful and fertile (the two things seem to go together), but also chaste, prudent and "compliant in all the holy values".[18] Sedulius states that "a foolish wife is the ruin of a household": a woman who is not capable of accomplishing what is expected from her provokes financial and moral decay.

On the other hand, if a woman is beautiful, outside and inside, if she is reliable and even-tempered, she can manage her house with success, and to the great benefit of her husband.[19] Moreover, a worthy spouse is expected – Sedulius' second main point – to be a good adviser. Giving bad advice to her husband could have disastrous effects. Sedulius chooses to use as a model of good *rectrix* an historical figure, Placilla, wife of the Roman emperor Theodosius, for she embodies the ideal that Sedulius describes – in particular with regard to Christian virtues. In the poem which closes the chapter Sedulius concludes: "If a ruler and his queen are to rule the people justly, let them first rule their own family". This reflects the model set out by a seventh-century text, Pseudo-Cyprian's *De Duodecim abusivis saeculi*. One of the abuses attacked by the author is the *femina sine pudicitia*. Decency is presented as the fundamental quality of a virtuous woman.[20] As a woman, the morality of the queen and the purity of her body were thought vital for her to be considered as worthy of that role. Moreover, because husband and wife were closely bonded, her immorality had a disastrous impact on the king's body.

In order to enhance and represent this ideal morality, Carolingian writers made frequent use of negative and positive biblical models.[21] The Virgin Mary, Judith and Queen Esther represented the epitome of queenly virtuousness. Biblical models were often used to represent idealized values with regard to moral and religious, as well as political, behaviour. In the 830s the theologian Hrabanus Maurus wrote several biblical commentaries; two of these in particular were focused on biblical queens: the Book of Esther and the Book of

[17] This text was produced around 869 for Charles the Bald. On Sedulius, see: P. Kershaw, 'English History and Irish Readers in the Frankish World', in Fouracre, Ganz, *Frankland*, pp. 126-151.

[18] Sedulius Scotus, *Liber de rectoribus Christianibus*, ed. S. Hellmann, *Sedulius Scotus*, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur lateinischen philologie des Mittelalters*, I (Munchen, 1906), ch. 5 pp. 34–37. English translation by P. Dutton, *Carolingian civilization. A Reader* (Peterborough, 1993), p. 410.

[19] Sedulius Scotus, *Liber de rectoribus Christianibus*, ch. 5, pp. 35–37.

[20] Pseudo-Cyprian, *De XII Abusivis Saeculi*, ed. S. Hellmann, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 34 (1909), pp. 1-61, at pp. 40-43. On this text see R. Meens, 'Politics, Mirrors of Princes and the Bible: Sins, Kings and the Well-being of the Realm', *Early Medieval Europe*, 7,3 (1998), pp. 345-357, at pp. 349-352.

[21] See the pages written by Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, pp. 24–31.

Judith. Hrabanus dedicated these two commentaries to Empress Judith in 833. Around 841 he "recycled" the Commentary to the Book of Esther, dedicating it to Empress Ermengarda, wife of Lothar I. The letters that Hrabanus sent to the empresses cast light on a churchman's ideas about queens in the first half of the ninth century.[22] The letter for Judith has to be read in the context of the delicate situation with which the empress was dealing, for Hrabanus stressed the *topos* of the fight against enemies. The letter declares that Judith and Esther provide exemplary models for the empress in danger. The biblical Judith was an example of chastity ("castitatis exemplar"); Hrabanus makes an implicit reference to the allegations of adultery launched against the empress. Esther was one of the most popular models, as she represented a queen who used her proximity to the king to do good for her people. As a virtuous queen, Esther managed to defeat her evil enemies thanks to her moral strength: the same outcome that Hrabanus wished for Judith.[23]

These ideas are reasserted in the letter for Ermengarda, to whom Hrabanus wrote after meeting her: "I have sent to your grace the Commentary on the Book of Queen Esther: her wisdom, the constancy of her mind and the victory over her enemies provide the most excellent example to the faithful: they can be sure that God will free them from every enemy, if they observe His holy law and put firm hope in His mercy."[24] As Hrabanus states, Esther provided an excellent example for everyone, but particularly for a queen who, in a time of civil war, had to face as many enemies as a male ruler. Mayke de Jong has analysed the commentaries and their reception in the Carolingian royal environment, arguing that through these texts Hrabanus successfully transformed the biblical Esther and Judith into models of Carolingian royal femininity.[25] The attacks against immoral women also employed biblical characters, for example Jezebel and Eve.[26] Invectives against women were launched when their sexual behaviour was shameful – as in the case of Judith - but also when they crossed

[22] De Jong, 'Exegesis for an Empress', passim. See also P. Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781-840)* (Sigmaringen, 1997), fn. 24, p. 281.
[23] Hrabanus Maurus, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epistolae Karolini Aevi III (Berlin, 1899), n. 17a.
[24] "Ego autem, quia nichil vestrae opulentiae et virtutibus addere possum, saltem hoc quod ex largitate divinae pietatis in sacris scripturis meditando et disserendo elaborare potui, vobiscum, si dignum ducitis, participare decerno. Idcirco primum vestrae dignitati expositionem libri Hester reginae transmisi, cuius prudentia et constantia mentis victoriaque de hostibus nobilissimum quibusque fidelibus praebet exemplum, ut divinam legem servantes et spem firmam in Dei bonitate habentes confidant se de universis inimicis liberandos." Hrabanus Maurus, *Epistolae*, n. 46.
[25] De Jong, 'Exegesis for an Empress', p. 97.
[26] J. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History', in Baker, *Medieval Women*, pp. 31-77; G. Bührer-Thierry, 'Reines adultères et empoissoneuses, reines injustement accusées: la confrontation de deux modèles aux VIII^{e}-X^{e} siècles', in C. La Rocca, ed, *Agire da donna: Modelli e pratiche di rappresentazione (secoli VI-X)* (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 151-170, at pp. 154-163.

the boundaries of what was considered appropriate for them to do. Women were stigmatized for using politics in a feminine way, and for exercising negative influence on men: in other words for defying their gender role.

1.2 The royal household: the space of queenly action

These categories and models were part of an ideology of Carolingian queenship which seems to have taken shape in the course of the late eighth and ninth centuries. This ideology was applied in particular in the setting of the royal palace: as the court was the core of the royal family, it was the queen's sphere of action. At the same time, it was also an environment where political relationships were shaped: as administrator of the court the queen was involved in this process. The domestic action of queens therefore became a crucial part of the ideology of queenship in the ninth century. The royal court was considered the centre of the kingdom and a vital representation of political harmony; therefore queenly duties were considered crucial. This idea is shared by several Carolingian narrative and normative texts which display the queen in action at court.

The rapid expansion of the Carolingian empire in the late eighth century meant that the court became a far more complex political and administrative centre than it had been under the Merovingians. Reorganized by Charlemagne at the palace of Aachen, the Carolingian court was a place in which political relationships were built and in which the political and cultural elites of the empire converged.[27] It was thanks to this convergence that we have significant evidence on the functioning of the palace: during the late eighth and ninth centuries several texts were produced that dealt with the organization and administration of the Carolingian court. According to these texts, the queen represented the embodiment of the ambiguity inherent in the royal palace: a place in which public and private life were closely interwoven, and hardly distinguishable.[28] The court was, in other words, presented as the symbolic and physical space of queenship.[29] On the other hand, this model could be exploited by writers that wanted to attack the queen: her negative conduct at court became the metaphor of the political chaos of the kingdom.

[27] J. Nelson, 'Aachen as a Place of Power', in M. de Jong, F. Theuws, eds, *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 217-241, fn. 47 at p. 227.
[28] Nelson, 'The Problematic in the Private', pp. 363-364.
[29] J.C. Parsons, 'Ritual and Symbol in English Medieval Queenship to 1500', in L.O. Fradenburg, ed, *Women and Sovereignty*, pp. 60–77, at p. 60 (quoted by Stafford, 'Emma, the Powers of a Queen', p. 10).

The two texts that have been considered as most valuable for understanding the queen's duties at court are Hincmar of Rheims's *De Ordine Palatii* and the *Capitulare de Villis* issued by Charlemagne at the beginning of the ninth century. *De Ordine Palatii* was written for the young king Carloman in 882.[30] Chapter 22 of this text is devoted to the queen. Hincmar declares that, together with the chamberlain, she has to be in charge of the decorum of the palace, as well as of the royal adornment ("ornamentus regalis").[31] This expression refers, according to Janet Nelson, to the *insignia*, the liturgical objects that symbolize royal authority.[32] Moreover, the queen and the chamberlain were to take care of the dispensation of gifts to soldiers. The queen was also involved in ceremonial aspects of diplomatic relations, as she collaborated in "providing gifts for the embassies". This text portrays a queen deeply involved in the functioning of the royal household, in charge not only of practical everyday tasks, but also of the custody of the *regalia*, which were part of the royal treasure. Furthermore, the supervision of the morality of the palace gave the queen the difficult task of controlling an enormous household in which young men and women lived together, often leading to rumours of sexual promiscuity.[33]

Hincmar was certainly a close observer of the Carolingian court, where he had spent a lot of time. However, *De Ordine* was not just the result of his work, as he revised a text originally written by another powerful man within the court, abbot Adalard of Corbie. This version, written around 812, has been lost. Adalard was not only a member of the Carolingian family - he was Charlemagne's cousin - but also the archchancellor to King Bernard of Italy, with whom he moved to Italy in 814. The original version of the *De Ordine* was probably written on the occasion of young Bernard's rise to the Italian throne in 814.[34] This text would therefore be related to Italy, even if one can assume that Adalard could have based his treaty on observations at the palace of Aachen, in which he had lived. Janet Nelson advanced the hypothesis that the role attributed to the queen in the *De Ordine* might be linked to the fact that it was written in the very same years in which Adalard arranged the marriage of the young Bernard with Cunegunda, an Italian noblewoman. Chapter 22 would in this view

[30] Hincmar*, De Ordine Palatii*, ed. T. Gross, R. Schieffer, MGH Fontes Iuris Germanici III (Hanover, 1980).
[31] Ibidem, ch. 22, pp. 72–74.
[32] J. Nelson, 'Les reines carolingiennes', in Lebecq, Dierkens, Le Jan, Sansterre, *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes*, pp. 121–132, at p. 121.
[33] J. Nelson, 'Gendering Courts in the Early Medieval West', in Brubaker, Smith, *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, pp. 185- 197; J. Nelson, 'Women at the Court of Charlemagne: a Case of a Monstrous Regiment?'*,* in Parsons, *Medieval Queeship*, pp. 43-61.
[34] B. Kasten, *Adalard von Corbie: die Biographie eines karolingischen Politikers und Klostervorstehers* (Düsseldorf, 1986), pp. 72-84.

represent written instructions for the young queen to follow and would reflect Adalard's experience of the role of the queen at court, which he had witnessed during the reign of Charlemagne.[35]

The *De Ordine* agrees with another source that was produced in the court environment, the *Capitulare de Villis*, a capitulary issued by Charlemagne around 800. Chapter 16 states that *iudices* or *ministeriales* of the palace had to follow orders given by the king *or* the queen.[36] According to the way in which the capitulary expresses it, the word of king and queen had the same value. Moreover, the queen had the power to judge and punish those who did not execute her orders. This disposition agrees with the *De Ordine Palatii* with regard to the administration of the palace, but also suggests that in certain situations the authority of king and queen was interchangeable. Chapter 47 states that the queen had the right to give written orders to hunters and falconers working at the palace who were sent to preside over councils in the royal estates.[37] The authority of the queen was usually exercised on those working in the palace, but could also be extended outside the boundaries of the royal household. The *Capitulare De Villis* shows that the queen had the option of giving both oral and written orders which were considered of the same value as those given by the king.[38]

Various authors confirm the image of the queen's responsibilities at court. In 847 Lupus of Ferrières wrote a letter to the empress Ermentrude, thanking her for the gifts she had sent him: garments she had personally made.[39] This suggests that Ermentrude was in charge of the creation and distribution of gifts with a diplomatic purpose. Charlemagne's court is described by his biographer Einhard as filled with women: Charles' wives, concubines and daughters.[40] An interesting insight into the courtly life of a queen is offered by a Ravenna writer, Agnellus, in his *Book of the Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*. In the biography of Archbishop George, Agnellus describes the baptism of Lothar's daughter, Rotruda: Ermengarda attends the ceremony "wearing a shining robe, surrounded by a gold fringe, hair

[35] Nelson, 'Aachen as a Place of Power', pp. 231-232.
[36] *Capitulare de Villis*, ed. A. Boretius, MGH Capitularia Regum Francorum I (Hanover, 1883), pp. 83-91, ch. 16, p. 84: "Volumus ut quicquid nos aut regina unicuique iudici ordinaverimus aut ministeriales nostri, sinescalcus et butticularius , de verbo nostro aut reginae ipsis iudicibus ordinaverit" .
[37] *Capitulare de Villis*, ch. 47, p. 87. See also ch. 58, p. 88.
[38] Nelson, 'Les reines carolingiennes', p. 122.
[39] *Lupi Abbati Ferrariensis Epistolae*, in MGH Epistolae Karolini Aevi IV, n. 89, p. 80. Ermentrude was the addressee of several letters from intellectuals and popes, who wrote to her to ask favours: Hyam, 'Ermentrude and Richildis', pp. 161–163; Nelson, *Charles the Bald,* pp. 174-177.
[40] Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SSRG 25 (Hanover, 1911), ch. 18-21, pp. 21-26. On the role of Charlemagne's daughters at court, see: Nelson, 'Women at the court of Charlemagne'.

bound with fillets, with blue gems, her face veiled, her appearance dripping with sard, emeralds, and gold".[41]

Annalist texts also give us very useful information on queens. One of them is the *Annals of St Bertin*, produced at the West Frankish court between 830 and 882, whose authors were Prudentius of Troys (until 861) and Hincmar of Rheims (c. 861-882). Hincmar informs us that, in 875, because of his wife Richildis' influence, Charles the Bald dismissed his chamberlain, who then joined Louis the German's side. At that point the East Frankish troops marched against Charles towards Attigny: on that occasion Charles' magnates swore oaths of fidelity "on the orders of Queen Richildis", although later she could not stop them from pillaging the region.[42] After Charles' death in 876, Richildis went to meet her son Louis the Stammerer to hand over to him the *regalia*, objects that symbolized the royal authority: as Nelson has argued, "Richildis' role as custodian of the *regalia* enhanced her political importance at this point".[43] The images described above depict virtuous queens, who accomplished the tasks and duties which were expected of them, and therefore underline their prominence in court and dynastic contexts.

Empress Judith is an excellent example for exploring the way in which writers dealt with the queen's status at court. The Astronomer, Louis the Pious' biographer, reports that after the death of his first wife Ermengarda, Louis was persuaded to remarry, "for many were afraid that he might wish to give up the governance of the realm".[44] The Astronomer meant that Louis' men were worried that he might retire to a monastery, but at the same time he suggested that royal authority was dysfunctional when the queen was lacking. Here the Astronomer referred to the queen's administrative duties at court. The status enjoyed by Judith was confirmed also by other authors. Lupus of Ferrières, in a letter written to a friend after the end of the revolt against Louis and Judith, in 837, describes a powerful *regina*: she invited him into the royal palace, where she "had great influence".[45] These authors show that Judith was in charge of the palace: the royal household was the centre of her political action.

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[41] Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* ed. D. Mauskopf Deliyannis (Turnhout, 2006), ch. 171, p. 351; translated into English by Eadem, *The Book of the Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*, (Washington, 2004), p. 299.

[42] *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SSRG 5 (Hanover, 1883), a. 875 p. 127, trans. by J. Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin*, Ninth-century Histories I (Manchester, 1991), p. 188.

[43] *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 877, p. 138. See Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin*, pp. 203-204, fn. 21.

[44] I used the translation of this passage by de Jong, *Bride Shows Revisited*, p. 260.

[45] "Plurimum valet": *Lupi abbatis Ferrariensis Epistolae*, n. 6, pp. 17-18, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epistolae Karolini Aevi IV (Berlin, 1925); for additional sources see : Ward, 'Caesar's Wife'.

In other words, these texts agree that the queen was supposed to be in charge of political relations, gift–giving and liturgical activities. She was to be, in conclusion, an *adiutrix regimine*, as Agobard of Lyon expresses it.[46] If the functioning of the Carolingian palace was regulated by these norms, certainly they were also applied at the Italian court of Pavia, where the royal palace was. One of the main sources on the Carolingian court, *De Ordine*, was originally written in Italy in order to teach a very young king, Bernard, and his bride, the duties of a royal couple. Further information about the functioning of the Italian court is offered by a later text, the *Honorantie Civitatis Papie*, composed in the fourteenth century, which is however based on an early eleventh-century text, the *Instituta regalia et ministeria camerae regum Langobardorum*.[47] The text describes the capital of Italy, Pavia, and its royal palace, as the administrative centre of the kingdom and as a powerful financial and economic organism. It informs us that the queen was responsible for the *camera regis*, the treasury, and had the right to a third part of tax and tolls income due to the *camera*.[48] The *Instituta* offer evidence that the queen's responsibilities at court were also reflected in her economic status; thanks to her position she was able to expand her economic resources.[49]

Based on the ideas of the queen's key role in the household, her everyday duties and moral irreproachability, these texts display a well defined framework of queenship. They underline the interdependence of the virtues of king and queen, as shown by the case of Lothar II. The action of the queen had a very precise domain, the royal household. This does not mean that we never see the queen outside the court, but certainly queenly duties are related to her position inside the palace. Furthermore, this does not reduce at all the queen to the private domain, as the royal palace was the physical and symbolic place in which "private" and "public" merged. In the following pages I will show how this ideology was used ambiguously by Italian authors. They recognized the ideas showcased by earlier Carolingian writers, but they transformed the royal court into a metaphor of moral and political decay. The *topoi* of morality and decency were employed in a negative way, in order to underline the degradation

[46] Agobard, *Liber Apologeticus* II, p. 316.
[47] *Die Honorantie civitatis Papie. Transkription, Edition, Kommentar* ed. C. Brühl, C. Violante (Köln, 1983), p. 23. On this text, see: C. Brühl, 'Das "Palatium" von Pavia und die "Honorantiae civitatis Papiae"', in *Atti del 4° Congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1969), pp. 189 – 220; On Pavia during the ninth and tenth centuries, see: P. Majocchi, *Pavia città regia: Storia e memoria di una capitale altomedievale* (Rome, 2008), pp. 39-67.
[48] *Die Honorantie civitatis Papie,* p. 25: "Et de omnibus ministeriis istis, que ad regem pertinent, debet uxor eius regina tertiam partem habere".
[49] See below, chapter 4.

of the kingdom, rulers and their wives. As for queens, the positive dimension of motherhood and family responsibilities was denied and subverted.

2. Representation of queens in Liudprand's *Antapodosis*

The conflict for the imperial title following the death of Louis II in 875, the dissolution of the empire and the political changes which occurred afterwards modified the perception of royal authority, and therefore of the royal court. In Italy ruling familes were short-lived, and consequently the court was no longer perceived as a mental projection of royal authority, but rather depicted as the symbol of political instability. Narrative texts produced in late-Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy frequently express opposition to, rather than praise of, these rulers, whom they present as ambitious, weak and unworthy.[50] Chris Wickham has analysed the scarcity of historical texts produced in this period and the way they deal with royal authority. He has pointed out that Italian kings' authority was scarcely relevant to the few historians that wrote after the fall of the Lombard kingdom. According to Wickham kings were no longer perceived as relevant for the good functioning of the state and they started to disappear from the texts.[51]

Parallel to the relegation of rulers from history writing, royal women emerge. In the late ninth and tenth centuries Italian royal women appear under a different light from their earlier Carolingian predecessors: they seem detached from everyday tasks of administering the court, controlling food provisions and settling juridical and administrative matters.[52] Authors' attention was mainly focused on the negative part they played in the heart of what should have been their domain, the royal court. These authors employed and inverted the models of the queen as good administrator of the household and family virtuousness, focusing instead on the queen's lack of moral and ethical boundaries. Italian historical narrative conveys the impression of an unstable and fragile political situation, for which women are often presented as scapegoats. Women became the main target because they were the sign of rulers' incapability to control the behaviour and morality of their wives. In other words, the change

[50] R. Balzaretti, 'Men and Sex in Tenth-century Italy', in D. Hadley, ed, *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 143 – 159.
[51] C. Wickham, 'Lawyers' Time: History and Memory in Tenth- and Eleventh- Century Italy', in H. Mayr-Harting, R. Moore, C. Wickham, eds, *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis* (London, 1985), pp. 53-71, at pp. 54-58.
[52] This is what emerges from narrative sources, for documentary sources give us a very different picture. See below, chapter 3.

in representation was linked to the change in political structure. As dynasties were unsuccessful in the long term, these women were represented as dynastic dead-ends, who did not guarantee the continuity of their dynasty. This resulted in the negative portrayals that we find so frequently in Italian texts.

The negative representation of royal and aristocratic women finds its apotheosis in the best-known work of Liudprand of Cremona, the *Antapodosis*.[53] In this text elite Italian women are depicted as charismatic and influential as well as immoral and badly behaved. Liudprand's literary and narrative talent is expressed at its best in the depiction of indecent Italian royal women of the post-Carolingian period. In the following section, I will analyse Liudprand's inversion of ideals of queenship, through his use of the Carolingian model of domesticity and morality.

2.1 Liudprand and the inversion of the domestic model

Composed between 958 and 962, Liudprand's *Antapodosis* is our main source with regard to late ninth- and tenth-century Italian political history. The author had had a turbulent relationship with Italian rulers: firstly he had worked for Hugh of Provence, but after the latter's fall he did not manage to maintain a good relationship with the new ruler Berengar II. Berengar is in fact the veritable target of his work.[54] Liudprand moved to Saxony in the mid-950s and became a member of Otto's entourage: his political and ecclesiastical career greatly benefited from this change. In his invective against the degeneration of Italian politics, women had a significant part. Liudprand used irony as a powerful weapon to unveil and denounce what bad women had done to the Italian kingdom.[55] These women are at the very core of Liudprand's narrative: they embodied lust, corruption and greed that tormented the kingdom. Liudprand is very careful to avoid recognizing as legitimate the political sphere of action of these women. The most remarkable ladies of the *Antapodosis* always appear in the bed-chamber or infamously plotting against their enemies, usually using sex to reach their goals. There is no mention of royal and elite women as good administrators and advisers as presented in Carolingian texts.

[53] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, ed. P. Chiesa, *Liudprandi Cremonensis Opera omnia* (Turnhout, 1998), pp. 1-150.
[54] For an introduction to Liudprand's career, see: J. Sutherland, *Liudprand of Cremona, Bishop, Diplomat, Historian: Studies of the Man and his Age* (Spoleto, 1988).
[55] On Liudprand's irony, see: R. Balzaretti, 'Liudprand of Cremona's Sense of Humour', in G. Halsall, ed, *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 114-128; R. Levine, 'Liudprand of Cremona: History and Debasement in the Tenth Century', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch*, 26 (1991), pp. 70-84.

The process by which women were mystified and condemned by Liudprand has deeply influenced the way in which historians look at post-Carolingian Italy and at its elite women. In her 1948 book on the kings of Italy, Gina Fasoli employed Liudprand as her main source to describe the personalities of tenth-century Italian queens: "The bossy Ageltrude, the reckless Bertilla, the simple Anna; Alda and Berta, offended and neglected spouses; Adelaide, wise and virtuous; Willa, greedy and cruel".[56] Recently the depiction of royal women offered by Liudprand has been subjected to more sophisticated analyses, which have dealt with the category of gender. In 1982 Enza Colonna underlined that Liudprand's negative female characters were Italian noble women who controlled politics thanks to the transmission of hereditary claims through the maternal line.[57] More recently Philip Buc has argued that the *Antapodosis* presents a binomial structure in which the negative behaviour of Italian women contrasted with the virtuousness of Ottonian women.[58] According to this view Liudprand wanted to offer to his contemporaries an image of sexual promiscuity that characterized the families which were opposing Ottonian control of Italy. His aim was to suggest that Italian rulers had uncertain origins, because of the sexual misconduct of their women. Following Buc's argument, Geneviève Bührer-Thierry argues that Liudprand inverted the idea of the sacred body of the queen/wife, by using his irony to deny the role that naturally it should have. For the same reason German matrons are instead represented as incorporeal. In Bührer-Thierry's words: "La reine adultère est le ferment de corruption qui infecte tout le système politique, en commençant par le propre corps du roi".[59] In Bührer-Thierry's view of Liudprand's argument, the adulterous queen is the motivating factor of the political crisis.

However, according to Liudprand adulterous queens were an effect rather than a cause: a means employed by the author not to denounce the abuse of royal power, but rather to represent the weakness of the king, who was manipulated by his wife. In order to achieve his aim, Liudprand inverted the Carolingian model according to which elite women were responsible for the royal household. An episode of the *Antapodosis* in particular casts light on this approach, although it does not concern a queen. Liudprand reports that Willa, wife of *marchio* Boso of Tuscany, had to protect the family treasure from Hugh's officers, who were

[56] Fasoli, *I re d'Italia*, p. 221.
[57] E. Colonna, 'Figure femminili in Liutprando da Cremona', *Quaderni Medievali*, 15 (1982), pp. 29-60, at pp. 58 – 61.
[58] P. Buc, 'Italian Hussies and German Matrons: Liutprand of Cremona on Dynastic Legitimacy', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 29 (1995), pp. 207-225.
[59] Bührer-Thierry, 'Reines adultères et empoissoneuses', p. 157.

searching the house. She then infamously hid a precious belt in "the most intimate part of her".[60] She did so because of personal greed, not because of her will to protect her family properties. Here Liudprand presents an ironic inversion of the model represented in *De Ordine*, the queen in charge of the *regalia*.

Willa was not a queen, but this inversion is applied also to royal women. The corruption of the royal palace and of the family order is crucial in the representation of queen Willa – daughter of the above mentioned Willa "senior" and of Boso - wife of Berengar II, probably the veritable villain of the *Antapodosis*. Her sexual corruption represents a narrative climax and the closure of book V. She committed adultery with a small ugly priest endowed with "massive priapic weapons", and when one night the priest was discovered near the queen's room, she accused him of having a relationship with the maids.[61] The episode casts light on the extreme wickedness of Willa: she is adulterous and cruel, and she corrupts her own daughters by involving them in her affair. In the *Antapodosis* aristocratic and royal women are never presented through their titles: they are not marchionesses, queens or countesses; they are defined only through their family bonds and often by unflattering epithets. The analysis of Liudprand's work shows, in other words, the persistence of the model of the queen in the palace, but at the same time how this model was inverted, as the palace became the stage of the kingdom's moral decay, symbolized by the behaviour of royal women.

2.2 Immoral queens and weak kings

Furthermore, Liudprand's negative representation of strong female characters is complemented by men who were weak and useless. This model has been applied to Liudprand's narrative by Cristina La Rocca, who has argued that Liudprand's representation of women was mainly aimed at debasement of men. La Rocca underlined that Liudprand depicts a "womanization" of the Italian political system: a political system in which men were deprived of their male attributes, and acted as women.[62] The marchioness Berta of Tuscany, who controlled the march with her husband Adalbert at the beginning of the tenth century, and continued to rule alone after her husband's death, is one of Liudprand's main targets.[63] She managed to persuade Adalbert to rebel against King Berengar I: "It was by the

[60] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, IV 12, pp. 103-104. I use the English translation by P. Squatriti, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (Washington, 2007).
[61] Liudprand, *Antapodosis,* V 32, pp. 142–144.
[62] C. La Rocca, 'Liutprando da Cremona e il paradigma femminile di dissoluzione dei Carolingi', in Ea., *Agire da donna*, pp. 291- 307; Balzaretti, 'Men and Sex in Tenth Century Italy', pp. 154-157.
[63] She died in 925. On Berta see: C. G. Mor, *Berta di Toscana*, DBI, 9 (1967), pp. 431-434.

inspiration of his wife, called Bertha, later in our own time mother of King Hugh, that he began such nefarious schemes".[64] Adalbert is depicted as a puppet in his wicked wife's hands. As well as Berta, Liudprand deeply hated Queen Willa. He hated her so much that he wrote the *Antapodosis* in order to unmask her wickedness. His authorial agenda is explicitly expressed in the preface to the third Book of the *Antapodosis*: "The purpose of this work is this: namely to depict, make public, and complain about the deeds of this Berengar [II], who nowadays does not so much rule as tyrannize in Italy, and of his wife Willa, who is appropriately called a second Jezebel on account of the immensity of her despotism and a child-eating witch on account of her insatiable desire for robbery".[65] Liudprand's retribution is designed to unmask the monstrous regiment created not by a king, not by a queen, but by a royal couple.

This is a system in which the ideal gender roles proposed by Carolingian writers are inverted or confused. According to the gender models proposed by ninth- and tenth-century intellectuals a good wife had to be chaste. Nothing could be further from the images of elite women offered by Liudprand. In the above mentioned tale about queen Willa's adultery Liudprand also says something about Berengar's ineptitude. The author reports that Berengar, despite knowing about his wife's affair, forgave her, because he was soft: so soft, that his mind was "enchanted".[66] How could a man of that sort be a capable ruler? This point is expressed even more explicitly in the Preface to the *Antapodosis*: "Nor should it bother anyone if I insert into this booklet deeds of weak kings and effeminate princes".[67] The "womanized" kings and noblemen that plague Italy are the cause and effect of this moral corruption that inevitably leads to political decay.

Another man to represent this corruption is Hugh of Provence. In Liudprand's view Hugh is not an unworthy man in principle: "King Hugh was of no smaller wisdom than boldness, nor of smaller strength than craftiness; also a worshipper of God and a lover of those who love holy religion". The bishop, who had worked for Hugh, did not seem to harbor extremely hostile feelings for him. However, Liudprand concludes that: "Hugh was a man, though, who, even if he shone with virtues, besmirched them through his passion for women".[68] Hugh's weakness is shown at its extreme consequences when he "marries" Marozia of Rome.

[64] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, I 39, p. 27.
[65] Ibidem, III 1, p.68. On the figure of Jezebel see also: Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels'.
[66] *Antapodosis*, V 32, p. 143.
[67] Ibidem, I 1, p. 5.
[68] Ibidem, III 19, p. 75.

Together with queen Willa and Berta of Tuscany, Marozia is the main female target of Liudprand's disdain. She was the daughter of the Roman aristocrat Theophylact and of his wife Theodora, a "shameless harlot", as Liudprand calls her, who taught the "exercise of Venus" to her two daughters.[69] Theophylact controlled the Roman nobility and was able to influence papal elections. Women played a very significant role in the rise of his family. At the beginning of the tenth century his daughter Maria, better known as Marozia, made her appearance on the political scene. Liudprand's portrait of this lady, her sister and her mother, who controlled Roman politics through their sexual relationships, has become so famous that it has led to the creation of the term "pornocracy".[70] After having an affair with Pope Sergius III at a very young age, Marozia married three times. Her first husband was Alberic of Spoleto, by whom she had a son, Alberic. Around 926-927 she married Guy of Tuscany, Hugh's brother. Theophylact and Theodora both died around 915, leaving Rome in the hands of Marozia. This did not please everyone. A conflict arose in the 910s between Marozia – later supported by her second husband Guy - and Pope John X. The pope had established an alliance with King Hugh of Provence, who threatened Marozia's interests in Rome and in the nearby territories. The dispute divided Romans into two factions, but Marozia managed to get rid of the Pope and his powerful brother, the *marchio* Peter.[71] At this point she made sure that her young son John - whom she had had from her relationship with Sergius III - was elected pope. After the death of Guy, Marozia started to negotiate a political alliance with Hugh, which culminated with the marriage; however it is not certain whether the union was lawful.[72]

According to Liudprand, the marriage was an aberration for several reasons. Marozia tried to become queen by selling the city of Rome as if it was her own property; she did not have the necessary qualities to be a queen. The union between an *effeminatus* king - because he was not able to control his sexual desire - and a woman that was nothing more than a "shameless

[69] Ibidem, II 48, pp. 54–55.

[70] The inventor of the term is the sixteenth-century Italian historian Caesar Baronius. See C. Leyser, 'Episcopal Office in the Italy of Liudprand of Cremona, c. 890- 970', *The English Historical Review*, 125 (2010), pp. 795-817, fn.2 at p. 795.

[71] For these events see: T. Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Marozia*, DBI, 70 (2008), pp. 681-685.; G. Arnaldi, 'Mito e realtà del secolo X romano e papale', in *Il secolo di ferro. Mito e realtà del secolo X*, Settimane 38 (Spoleto, 1991), pp. 25-53; C. Wickham, '"The Romans according to their malign custom": Rome in Italy in the late Ninth and Tenth Centuries', in J. Smith, ed, *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in honour of Donald A. Bullough* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 151–166; P. Toubert, *Les structures du Latium Médiéval* (Rome, 1972), pp. 968-998; B. Hamilton, 'The House of Theophilact and the Promotion of the Religious Life among Women in Tenth Century Rome', *Studia monastica*, 12 (1970), pp. 195-217.

[72] Apart from Liudprand and Benedict, the marriage between Hugh and Marozia is not mentioned by any other source.

harlot" could not end well. Hugh had to leave the city because of a revolt against him led by Alberic II, Marozia's son, who felt threatened by the king's arrival and by his arrogance.

2.3 Liudprand and virtuous queenship

In a violent invective against Marozia, which is contained in a poem, Liudprand says that she vainly attempted to "seem a queen".[73] This, interestingly, is the only time that the term "regina" is used in the *Antapodosis*. I would argue that this hints at the idea of queenship which Liudprand had. It seems that the author gave queenship not an institutional, but rather a moral value. In his view the queen was not just the king's wife, as she had to show moral qualities which Italian ladies clearly lacked. None of the ladies that he described, no matter who their husband was, were worthy of this title. Likewise, how a good queen should behave and what she should do remain vague also in Liudprand's narrative. He gives just one example: the short portrayal of Matilda of Saxony, wife of King Henry. Liudprand was writing for his patron Otto I and for his court. Matilda, Otto's mother, becomes the embodiment of the virtuous wife, prolific mother and pious queen: "venerabilis eius coniux regnique consors".[74] How did Matilda worthily hold her role of queen and sharer of the kingdom? By following the ideals of morality and piety and, most importantly, by being a bearer of children in charge of the commemoration of the family. Liudprand's idea of good queenship is focused on piety and motherhood.

In the *Antapodosis* all Italian matrons are defined just through their familial connections - or with offensive epithets - rather than with official titles. For Liudprand none of the Italian royal women deserved to be called a queen. Germana Gandino, who has analysed Liudprand's political and social vocabulary, devoted little attention to the lexicon related to women's power.[75] This is because there is very little definition to the political sphere of action of these women. Another episode, which however does not concern an Italian queen, casts light on this point. In chapter 26 of the third book Liudprand informs us that Zoe, mother of the future Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos, became the lover of the emperor Romanos Lekapenos.[76] Paolo Squatriti, translator of the *Antapodosis*, commented: "Oddly, given his interest in female authority, Liudprand overlooks Zoe's years

[73] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, III 48, pp. 54–55. For the literary analysis of this passage, see: E. Colonna, *Le poesie di Liutprando di Cremona: commento tra testo e contesto* (Bari, 1996), pp. 145–152.
[74] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, IV 15, pp. 105–106.
[75] G. Gandino, *Il vocabolario politico e sociale di Liutprando di Cremona* (Rome, 1995); ch. 1 (pp. 15-79) is focused on royal authority but does not deal with royal women.
[76] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, III 26.

as regent [for her son]".[77] I would object that this is not odd at all, as Liudprand was mainly interested in portraying the degeneration of female authority.

In the *Antapodosis* the royal palace is not the domain in which the queen's virtue shines, but the theatre of her infamies. As I have mentioned above, Philip Buc has underlined a dualistic pattern, stating that in the *Antapodosis* badly behaved Italian queens are counterbalanced by the positive portrayal of German women.[78] However, Ottonian royal women are very elusive in Liudprand's narrative: this contrasts with the high visibility that Italian ladies enjoy. Although in Liudprand's view Ottonian royal women were good queens – it could hardly have been otherwise, as he was writing for the Ottonian court - very little is said about them. There are only two exceptions. The first is the already mentioned portrait of Matilda as a prolific mother and virtuous wife. The second is the brief dedication of the *Relatio de Legatione Costantinopolitana* to "the most glorious august empress Adelheid".[79] The "good" German matrons remain in the background, and are never in the spotlight.

In other words, we can assume that Liudprand gave to the term *regina*, and to the role of the queen, a strong moral significance, and for this reason queenliness was left out of his narrative. According to Liudprand, being a queen was not just being the king's wife. He denied Italian royal women this title because he did not think they deserved it. Only Matilda is defined by a title that gives the impression of formal acknowledgement of her office, as Liudprand calls her *consors regni*.[80] The way in which he shows his ideology of queenship is through describing those who did not deserve to be queens. They were women without morality and decency, nor maternal affection. Behind them, are the weak, useless rulers, who allow these women to behave the way they wanted. Liudprand represented a political model in which the men were to blame, and the palace was the domain of female licentiousness.

Liudprand's hatred towards Italian ladies has somehow "monopolized" the study of women in tenth-century politics, and risks overshadowing the variety of historiographical representations offered by other authors. He is not the only one to talk about powerful women. It is therefore misleading to over-privilege his particularly loud and entertaining voice: his approach to women and power was shared by other Italian authors, as it was the result of a political climate which affected many of them. In the following section I will

[77] Squatriti, *The Complete Work*, p. 123, fn. 53.
[78] Buc, 'Italian Hussies', pp. 224-225.
[79] Liudprand, *Legatio*, ed. Chiesa, *Liudprandi Cremonensis opera omnia*, pp. 185–218, at p. 187.
[80] See below, chapter 3.

analyse these texts, composed in northern and southern Italy between the 880s and the end of the tenth century.

3. Beyond Liudprand: images of royal women in Italian narratives

The negative depiction of royal women in Italian narratives has to be related to the political instability produced by the frequent changes of dynasty. The experience of this dynastic discontinuity affected the way in which royal women were depicted in narrative texts, depriving them of the positive role of continuators of the family, namely of their function of wives and, most importantly, mothers.[81] The royal palace was the symbolic domain of royal and queenly authority. As such, several Italian authors transformed it into the stage of the ruler/husband's failure and of the queen/wife's immorality. At the same time, however, these texts stress different aspects of queens and queenliness, showing that a general confusion about what "the queen" was, and about what she was supposed to do, persisted in the tenth century. This challenges the interpretation of queenship as a defined concept in the course of this period. Italian authors adopted the same strategies in attacking bad queens, but were different in their views of queenly duties.

Some of the texts I am going to analyse in the following pages were written in late Carolingian Italy, most of them in the tenth century. They were produced in different geographical contexts – northern Italy, southern Italy and Germany – but they have in common that they deal with the actions of ninth- and tenth-century Italian rulers and their wives. Obviously, the regional and chronological differences, as well as the different agendas of each author, have to be taken into account. However, these texts share similarities in their representation of queens, as they were familiar with the model of ideal queenship which I have described above. In the following pages I will analyse each of these texts individually. I have chosen not to analyse them in chronological order, but rather according to the way in which, in my view, they are best linked to each other.

3.1 Marozia according to Benedict of Sant'Andrea

Further evidence on Marozia and her infamous attempt to become a queen is offered by a late tenth-century text, composed between 972 and 1000, the *Chronicon* of Benedict, a monk of

[81] Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers'.

Sant'Andrea in Soratte (near Ponzano, Latium). This text is mainly the history of the monastery, but also reports Roman political events. Benedict shows a patchy knowledge of the history of Carolingian Europe, and seems not to know many contemporary authors. Nonetheless, he is a precious source for Roman politics, in which he was particularly interested as he greatly admired Alberic II – Marozia's son - who had patronized his monastery.[82] Because he deals with Roman politics, Benedict has something to say about Theophylact's family. Even if he is less aggressive than Liudprand – he does not mention the infamous affair between Marozia and the Pope - he is not very partial to Marozia either. He introduces her when mentioning her relationship with her first husband, the margrave of Spoleto, Alberic. According to Benedict the union was not a lawful marriage, but rather a "wicked affair".[83] Benedict never mentions Marozia's name. He introduces her as "the daughter of Theophylact", adding the cryptic sentence "whose name survives".[84] This passage presents significant implications. It is possible that the manuscript's copyist committed a mistake, omitting the word "non".[85] In this case, Benedict would have implied that he did not actually know Marozia's name. However, it is also possible that the sentence was not a mistake, and that Benedict omitted Marozia's name on purpose, and decided to make his audience aware of that. Marozia's name was well known in Europe: Liudprand was familiar with these events and even the West Frankish writer Flodoard of Rheims mentions her, reporting that by 933 Marozia was kept prisoner by her son.[86] Therefore it seems quite unlikely that Benedict, who was familiar with Roman political events, had never heard her name.

Even if one assumes that Benedict's omission was a way to deny visibility to a very controversial lady, he did not avoid recognizing her political influence. He mentioned the conflict that had arisen in the 910s between Marozia and John X. He also defines Marozia as "domna senatrix", acknowledging her part in Roman politics. However, Benedict sees her

[82] *Benedetto di S. Andrea*, in DBI, 8 (1966), pp. 446-451.

[83] "Consuetudine maligna": Benedict, *Chronicon*, ed. G. Zucchetti, *Il Chronicon di Benedetto monaco di S. Andrea del Soratte e il Libellus de imperatoria potestate in urbe Roma*, FISI 55 (Rome, 1920), pp. 3-187, at p. 159.

[84] "Cuius nomine superest": Ibidem, pp. 158–159.

[85] Ibidem, p. 158, fn. 3.

[86] Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. G. Pertz, MGH SS III (Hanover, 1839), a. 933, pp. 381-382. See also Flodoard, *De Triumphis Christi apud Italiam*, ed. J.P. Migne, Patrologia Latina, 135 (Paris, 1853), cols 491-886, at cols 831-2: "Fratre ab Patricio iuris moderamine rapto,/ qui matrem incestam rerum fastigia moecho/ tradere conantem decimum sub claustra Joannem/ quae dederat, claustri vigili et custode subegit". Here Flodoard expresses a negative judgment against Marozia's moral and political conduct. On Marozia's death, see Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Marozia*, pp. 683-684; Hamilton, 'The House of Theophylact', pp. 210-216.

success as a political catastrophe: "Rome was subjected to the powerful hand of a woman".[87] Benedict quotes Isaiah's prophecy, which foresees the punishment of Jerusalem's inhabitants for their sins: "And I will give children to be their princes, and the effeminate shall rule over them".[88] According to Benedict Rome has become a new Jerusalem, in which moral and political decay has produced the distortion of the natural system. This perspective is shared by Liudprand. In his account of the diplomatic mission to Byzantium, the *Relatio de Legatione Costantinopolitana*, Liudprand reports a dialogue between himself and the Byzantine emperor. In this conversation Nicephoros accuses Liudprand's patron, Otto I, of having taken "Rome by force" and killed many noble people. In his answer, Liudprand refers to the same biblical quotation: "My Lord did not invade the Roman city by force or in a tyrannical way, but rather he freed it from the yoke of the tyrant, or tyrants. Were not effeminates lording it over Rome, and, what is more serious and sordid, were not whores doing the same?"[89]

Benedict's version of Marozia's story is somewhat different from that of Liudprand. Benedict attributes the marriage between Marozia and Hugh to political reasons rather than to Marozia's sexual appetite. Hugh needed support in Rome in order to become emperor, and Marozia needed external allies as opposition against her was growing. Benedict presents Marozia as the initiator of the negotiations that led to the wedding, and although he does not express an explicit opinion about these facts, he seems to imply that this is an aberration.[90] Benedict and Liudprand share a view according to which female power – or power held by unmanly men - means tyranny. Both their accounts show Marozia's failure as a wife and a mother, as she puts her sexual appetite and her personal ambition above the interests of her own son. Her shameful behaviour is allowed by the lack of male authority. However, their opinion of Hugh is slightly different. According to Liudprand, Hugh was ruined by his sexual incontinence, whereas Benedict considered him as an evil man, who plotted to blind Alberic, the true hero of the narrative. Moreover, Benedict implicitly condemned the Roman nobility that allowed a woman to take control.

[87] "Subiugatus est Romam potestative in manu femine": Benedict, *Chronicon,* p. 161.
[88] Book of Isaiah, 3:4: "Et dabo pueros principes eorum et effeminati dominabuntur eis".
[89] Liudprand, *Relatio*, ch. 5, p. 189.
[90] Benedict, *Chronicon*, pp. 165-166: "Mater Albericus principis Romani legatos mittens a Ticine civitatis ad Hugo quedam rex Langobardo, ut sibi matrimonio copularet".

Most importantly, unlike Liudprand Benedict acknowledges Marozia as a queen, as he calls her *regina* twice; thus presenting her as Hugh's lawful wife.[91] However, the title does not seem to imply any political prerogatives, at least not through her marriage with Hugh. Benedict only acknowledged Marozia's influence in Rome, but he portrayed it in a negative way. In other words, according to Benedict power and femininity are ill-suited. His idea recalls that expressed by another Carolingian text, the *Annals of Lorsch*, which use the same words ("femineum imperium") to identify and condemn female authority. In describing Charlemagne's coronation the annalist states that at the time "the name of the emperor was lacking among the Greeks, who were subject to the female imperial rule of Irene".[92] This does not seem to be the case for Liudprand. He prefers to underline the moral aspect of this degeneration: Roman disorder has to do with the power held by immoral women, *meretrices*, rather than with female power itself. These differences also reflect the diverse understanding of the two authors with regard to queenship.

The analysis of Benedict's narrative shows that he had a similar approach to the unworthiness of the Italian ruler, Hugh. His hatred was, however, more rooted in Roman politics, and was related to Hugh's usurpation. For this reason, he also condemned Marozia, as she had allowed Hugh to get involved in Roman affairs. However, Benedict seems to have a very different idea from Liudprand about what being a queen means. By calling an unworthy woman like Marozia *regina* he shows that he did not assign to the title - and to the concept – the moral implication that Liudprand did.

3.2 Andrew of Bergamo

The late ninth-century writer Andrew of Bergamo employed the *topos* of the queen's negative influence to explain some political disasters that plagued the kingdom. Andrew was a priest living in Bergamo and was a member of the entourage of Garibald, bishop of the city. It is the author himself who provides the reader with the information about his name and profession: "I, Andrew, an unworthy priest".[93] He seems to be very well informed about local events in the area of Bergamo and northern Italy. Written at the beginning of the 880s,

[91] Ibidem, p. 166: "Rex cum regina ascendit"; "Formidare cepit cor regis una cum regina".
[92] *Annales Laureshamenses*, ch. 34 p. 38, ed. G. Pertz, MGH SS I (Hanover, 1826), pp. 22–39. English translation by P.D. King, *Charlemagne: Translated Sources* (Kendal, 1987), p. 144, quoted by R. Collins, 'Charlemagne's Coronation and the Lorsch Annals', in J. Story, ed, *Charlemagne. Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 52–70, at p. 64.
[93] "Ego Andreas, licet indignus presbiter": Andrew, *Historia*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SS RLI (Hanover, 1878), pp. 220–230, at ch. 2, p. 223.

Andrew's work, known as *Historia*, is a puzzling text which combines a summary of Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* with an account of Italian political events of the ninth century.[94] His account of the reign of the Carolingian kings, from Charlemagne to Charles the Bald, is not particularly enthusiastic, without however being explicitly critical. The most positive praise goes to the young king of Italy, Bernard, who was deposed and blinded by Louis the Pious in 818 because he revolted against him.[95] Unlike other sources, Andrew blamed the fall of Bernard on the wickedness of a woman, Ermengarda, first wife of Louis the Pious.[96] According to Andrew the empress hated Bernard so much that she invited him to join her in Frankia, and there had him blinded. All this happened without the emperor being aware. The attribution of the fall of Bernard to the empress can be seen as a narrative device to clear Louis the Pious - who according to Andrew was "an emperor of much wisdom, prudent in his advice, merciful and peace-loving".[97] Despite praising the emperor as a good man, Andrew might also be implying that he was not the strongest of rulers. In other words, one can also read the episode as a veiled critique of a ruler who is not able to control his wife or to know what she did: a weak husband is inevitably a weak ruler. In this sense, Andrew was employing the same model displayed by Liudprand: an evil woman matched up with a weak husband that was not really able to control her. This inversion led to catastrophe. Bernard's death represented, in Andrew's view, a critical moment for the kingdom of Italy, which lost a worthy ruler.

Another critical point was reached several years later, in 875, when Louis II died. Louis is portrayed by Andrew as a victorious king, who fought to protect Christianity against the *infideles*. For this reason the emperor's death, in August 875, marks another turning point in the narrative. According to Andrew, after Louis II's death "great tribulation arrived in Italy".[98] The great tribulation was caused by the Italian elite who decided to call two Carolingian kings – the West Frankish Charles the Bald and the East Frankish Louis the German – to claim the imperial title. This decision was made after an assembly of local

[94] "On Andrew see: M.G. Bertolini, *Andrea da Bergamo*, DBI, 3 (1961), pp. 78-80; F. Crosara, 'Rex Langobardorum - Rex Italiae. Note in margine alla "Historia" di Andrea da Bergamo', in *Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di studi sull'alto Medio Evo* (Spoleto, 1953), pp. 175-179; G. La Placa, 'Andrea da Bergamo e l'«Adbrevatio de gestis Langobardorum»: note biografiche e testuali', *Maia*, 46 (1994), pp. 61-72; C.G. Mor, 'La storiografia italiana del sec. IX da Andrea da Bergamo ad Erchemperto', in *Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 1952), pp. 241-247.

[95] On Bernard's revolt see: T. Noble, 'The Revolt of King Bernard of Italy in 817: Its Causes and Consequences', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 15 (1974), pp. 315-325.

[96] Andrew, *Historia*, c. 6, p. 225. On Ermengarda see Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 188-189.

[97] "Imperator multae sapientae, consilio prudens, misericors et pacis amator": Andrew, *Historia*, ch. 6, p. 225.

[98] "Magna tribulatio in Italia advenit": Ibidem, ch. 19, p. 229-230.

nobles gathered in Pavia, presided over by Empress Angelberga. In Andrew's view, Angelberga's influence therefore had a negative effect on the situation of the Italian kingdom. However, Andrew avoids explicitly attributing the responsibility for the political disaster to the empress, as she had received bad advice ("pravum agens consilium").[99]

In the *Historia* Andrew used two royal women as scapegoats for two political crises. In the first case, Ermengarda is to blame, because of her wickedness. The queen acts alone, the emperor is far off and unaware. In the second case, Angelberga is rather an unconscious protagonist: she fails when strong male rule is lacking. Without condemning Angelberga's decision making explicitly, Andrew presents the empress as indirectly responsible for the political disaster that tormented Italy in the following year. At the same time, however, Andrew describes the public authority exercised by Angelberga as legitimate. This authority was not dependent on her role as a wife or mother, for she was a widow with no male heir to protect her. She was called, however, "their queen Angelberga".[100] In Andrew's view she had the authority to give orders to "her" men. Andrew does not question this position and does not attack Angelberga, despite being critical towards the results of the bad decision she takes.[101] Andrew suggested that, in fact, female authority was dangerous when left without control. In other words, he did not condemn the queen's political influence *per se*, but only when it was not accompanied by the supervision of a male ruler. This shows that, in Andrew's view, queens were allowed to play an active part in political affairs.

3. 3. Angelberga in southern narratives

The parallel between women's degenerate power and the absence of male rulers also emerges in narrative texts produced in southern Italy. The *Chronicon Salernitanum,* a chronicle written in the 970s at the court of Salerno by an anonymous author, tells the history of the principality and reports some information about Angelberga.[102] This information was probably based on oral tales that the authors had heard at the court of Salerno. Angelberga accompanied Louis II in his military campaign in the south of Italy against the Saracens (866 – 871). She stayed in Benevento while her husband was on campaign, and there she started to

[99] Ibidem, p. 229.
[100] "Angelberga suorum regina": Ibidem.
[101] Andrew's version is contradicted by the version reported by the author of *the Libellus de imperatoria potestate* (in Zucchetti, *Il Chronicon di Benedetto,* pp. 189-210, at p. 201). See below, chapter 5, p. 158.
[102] *Chronicon Salernitanum*, ed. G. Pertz, MGH SS, III (Hanover, 1839), pp. 467-561.

exercise excessive power and to plot against prince Adelchis.[103] As a result the town revolted against the imperial couple and imprisoned them. Once he was able to negotiate his release and leave the town with his wife, Louis II harshly reproached Angelberga for her behaviour. The revolt is attested in Erchempert's *Historia Langobardorum Beneventanorum*, which however does not say that it had been provoked by Angelberga.[104] According to the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, Angelberga offended Benevento's habitants, mocking their military skills, and their women. The most interesting aspect of the story is Louis II's reaction. He strongly blames his wife for her behaviour: "Did you not say, only a while ago, that the Beneventans scarcely know how to defend themselves with shields? Look at them now, how they defend themselves together and are prepared for war by their own keen spirit!"[105]

Angelberga was a charismatic woman, who was used to exercising power at the imperial court. She is likely to have behaved similarly in southern Italy, and this displeased the local elite. According to the *Chronicon* she was punished twice: by the revolt and by the humiliation of her husband's reproaches. A few chapters later the author of the *Chronicon* reports another episode: the bishop of Capua, Landulf, went to the imperial court and asked Louis II for military help against the Saracens. The emperor, still angry after the previous revolt, was hesitant to accept. But Landulf insisted and asked for forgiveness; he finally obtained the emperor's help, despite Angelberga trying to dissuade him with her "wicked words".[106] Angelberga is represented as a bad queen, because of her proud and arrogant behaviour. The text implies that a good queen should be modest, hold her tongue and respect her subjects. On the contrary, shameful behaviour could be so dangerous as to threaten the king's authority, as is the case for Louis II. Angelberga's habit of saying hostile words ("adversa dicere") is here characterized as a feminine custom ("mos feminarum"). This tendency becomes dangerous in the first episode because it concerns a royal woman who was left in charge without male control. The second episode reported in the same source

[103] Ibidem, ch. 109, p. 527. On the historical context see: H. Taviani-Carozzi, *La principauté lombarde de Salerne IXe- XIe siècle*. *Pouvoir et société en Italie lombarde méridionale* (Rome, 1991), pp. 62-95.

[104] Erchempert, *Historia Langobardorum Beneventanorum*, ed. G. Waitz , MGH SS RLI, pp. 231–264, ch. 34, p. 247. C. Russo Mailler, 'La politica meridionale di Ludovico II e il "Rythmus de captivitate Ludovici imperatoris"', *Quaderni Storici*, 14 (1982), pp. 6-27; L. Capo, 'Le tradizioni narrative a Spoleto e a Benevento', in *I Longobardi dei ducati di Spoleto e Benevento: atti del XVI Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 2004), pp. 243-287; L. Berto, 'L'immagine delle élites longobarde nella "Historia Langobardorum Beneventanorum" di Erchemperto', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 170 (2012), pp. 195-234.

[105] "Numquid non dudum dicebas, quia Beneventanis minime se sciunt munire clippeis? Cerne nunc eos, qualiter undique se communiunt atque ad bellum prompto animo sunt parati!"*Chronicon Salernitanum*, ch. 109, p. 527.

[106] Ibidem, ch. 117, pp. 531-532.

represents a sort of retribution. Angelberga had to suffer a further humiliation: being silenced by her husband in a public context. The wicked words of the empress are mentioned as the reason of the revolt also by another source, the *Annals of St Bertin*, which report that the rebellion had exploded because Angelberga had instigated the emperor to exile the duke Adalgis, a local magnate.[107] In the *Chronicon Salernitanum* Angelberga's negative influence is amended by an element that is lacking for Liudprand's women: the intervention of an authoritative – and just – king. Janet Nelson has pointed out that "as exponents of the word", [women] operated under particular constraints".[108] In this case Angelberga was constrained back to silence, only after her words provoked serious political damage. This shows her lack of moderation and diplomacy, and at the same time portrays Louis as a good husband and ruler, who is capable of controlling his wife.

The *Chronicon Salernitanum* is not the only text to accuse Angelberga of being dangerous when she is left uncontrolled. Another interesting case is represented by the *Epitome Chronicorum Casinensium*, composed by an anonymous author at Monte Cassino at the beginning of the tenth century. The text draws from several chronicles concerning the history of Montecassino; towards its end, it also reports a rumour that was circulating about Angelberga.[109] While her husband was fighting the Saracens in the south of Italy, she fell in love with a count of the palace, called Tucbald, and tried to seduce him. The man refused, and the humiliated empress decided to take revenge. She told her husband that she had been raped by the count, provoking his death sentence. This tale is clearly inspired by another biblical model of evil femininity, the wife of Potiphar who had attempted to seduce Joseph.[110] The text, however, presents a "happy ending": the count's widow fought for the reestablishment of her husband's reputation and managed to be tested through an ordeal. Once she passed the test, she obtained the emperor's apologies and some landed wealth as a compensation. The *Epitome* was written in a period when two parental groups, the Supponids, Angelberga's family, and the Hucpoldings, were fighting for the control of the *comitatus* of Modena. The Hucpoldings descended from a count named Hucbald, or Tucbald, the unlucky man whose death, according to the *Epitome*, was caused by Angelberga's evil nature. Tiziana Lazzari has therefore argued that the story was not only made up to attack

[107] *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 871, p. 118.
[108] J. Nelson, 'Women and the Word in the earlier Middle Ages', in Sheils, Wood, *Women in the Church*, pp. 53-78, at p. 71.
[109] *Epitome chronicorum Casinensium*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (ed. L. A. Muratori), vol. II/I, (Mediolanum, 1723), pp. 345-370, at p. 370.
[110] *Book of Genesis*, 39:7–39:23.

Angelberga's political position, but also to delegitimize the claims of her family.[111] More importantly for the present analysis, the case of the *Epitome* is an emblematic example that shows that very often queens and powerful women were represented by negative stereotypes. The author expresses a great animosity towards female power when it does not come together with personal virtues, as is the case for Angelberga. The empress loses control because she is dominated by sexual desire. She even dares to promise the count: "I will give you the Roman empire" in order to convince him.[112] She is described not only as a dishonest wife, but also as a proud woman who believes that she can dispose of the imperial power and take advantage of it for her personal needs.

Moreover, this text seems to suggest that a royal woman could theoretically transmit political claims to her sexual partner. The author of the *Epitome* conveys the idea that women could be potential weapons for the transmission of power and dynastic legitimacy. It was a model which can be found earlier in Carolingian texts, but these kinds of claims became more frequent in the tenth century, because of the multiple contemporary royal claims and because no durable dynasty emerged. The author is possibly dismissing Angelberga's promise of giving Tucbald the empire as unrealistic: this is part of her negative portrayal. However, at the same time he is also acknowledging that this kind of claim could be made by a woman.

Through the representation of Angelberga, these narratives convey a negative depiction of royal women based on gender stereotypes. As much as other wives, royal women needed to be controlled by men, and leaving them in charge was not a good idea. The absent ruler, rather than the weak ruler, is what causes troubles in these cases. At the same time, they underline different aspects of queenship. The *Chronicon Salernitanum* deals with the *topos* of the queen's word, which is dangerous and evil, depicting the negative influence that she was able to exercise on her husband. The *Epitome* focuses on the sexual licentiousness of Angelberga and on her arrogance. She wanted to commit adultery without giving up her royal position, in fact she wanted to exploit her role to persuade Tucbald to commit adultery. In doing so, the texts show that queenly power was dangerous; but most importantly they show in how many ways it could be criticised.

[111] T. Lazzari, 'La creazione di un territorio: il comitato di Modena e i suoi confini', *Reti medievali - Rivista*, 7,1 (2006), url: http://www.dssg.unifi.it/_RM/Rivista/saggi/Confini_Lazzari.htm, pp. 1-18, at pp. 11-12.

[112] "Romanum tibi tradam Imperium": *Epitome chronicorum Casinensium*, p. 370. For the analysis of this text see, also: Bührer-Thierry, 'Reines adultères et empoissoneuses', pp. 154-157.

3.4 The *Gesta Berengarii imperatoris*

The use of gender stereotypes and in particular of the *topos* of the word is present also in the *Gesta Berengarii Imperatoris*, a panegyric written in honour of the emperor Berengar I between 915 and 924 by a scholar working at his court.[113] The poem was written to celebrate the greatness of Berengar as a skilled military leader and a glorious emperor, as well as to exalt his family bonds and moral values. The narrative is mainly set on the battlefield: the author describes in detail the battles that cemented Berengar's rise to power, as well as the ones that put him in danger of losing the throne. The text is mainly constructed through the duality between the hero, Berengar, and the antagonists, the other claimants to the throne - "plures tirannos" who had neither the right nor qualities to be kings.[114] Berengar's path to success is presented as a progression accomplished through the defeat of adversities posed by his evil enemies; finally, the imperial coronation scene represents a triumphant Berengar celebrated and acclaimed by the Roman people.[115]

In this text, the queen is extremely elusive. Obviously she does not appear in the scenes that are set on the battlefield, but neither does she appear at the side of the emperor on the occasion of his coronation. The reason might be that Berengar did not have a wife at the time: it is uncertain when he married his second wife, the Byzantine Anna, and his first wife, Bertilla, had died around 912 or 913.[116] Bertilla makes an elusive and puzzling appearance in the poem's second book. According to the author, she had been poisoned because of a mysterious sin. The author is not eager to dwell on this matter and the queen is only mentioned in relation to her three brothers, as they took part in the battle of Trebbia between Berengar and Guy. "Likewise, the sons of Suppo banded together as three lightning-flashes of war; they had been drawn into an alliance with the beloved king by his wife, who was quite faithful at that time, but was going to die from poison, because later on she was going to swallow the hostile exhortations of Circes", the poet writes.[117]

[113] *Gesta Berengarii imperatoris*, ed. P. Winterfeld, MGH Poetae IV (Berlin, 1899), pp. 354-403, lib.II, pp. 374–375.
[114] Ibidem, lib. I, p. 359.
[115] F. Bougard, 'Le couronnement impérial de Bérenger Ier (915) d'après les *Gesta Berengarii Imperatoris*', M.Coumert, M.C. Isaïa, K. Krönert, S. Shimahara, eds, *Rerum gestarum scriptor. Histoire et historiographie au Moyen Âge. Hommage à Michel Sot* (Paris, 2012), pp. 329–343.
[116] Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics', pp. 256-258; G. Arnaldi, *Bertilla*, DBI, 9 (1967), pp. 29–30.
[117] "Pariter, tria fulmina belli,/Supponide coeunt; regi sotiabat amato/Quos tunc fida satis coniunx, peritura venenis/ Sed, postquam hausura est inimica hortamina Circes". *Gesta Berengarii imperatoris*, pp. 374- 375.

The identification of Circes, as well as the reason for Bertilla's death, remains obscure. The most obvious reason is that, after many years of marriage, Bertilla and Berengar did not have sons, and Berengar wanted to secure an heir. However, the author seems implicitly to suggest that Bertilla's death was due to immoral conduct, as her sinful behaviour was urged by another malicious woman. The definition of Bertilla as "tunc fida satis coniunx", "a wife that was then quite loyal", means she had become *infida*, that is to say unfaithful or treacherous. The word "fida" could refer to sexual faithfulness, as well as to loyalty, and in this sense could have a political meaning. Bertilla's death could have been due to political reasons. Tiziana Lazzari has recently argued that the reason might be found in the complex relations between Berengar and other family groups in the kingdom, and that "Circes" should be identified with Berta of Tuscany. Around 903 one of Berengar and Bertilla's daughters, Gisla, married Adalbert, son of the powerful margrave of Ivrea Anscar. They had a child – the future Berengar II - so we can infer that the families were on good terms at that point. However, shortly thereafter Gisla died and Adalbert remarried Ermengarda, daughter of the margraves of Tuscany, Adalbert and Berta, between 913 and 915. The margraves of Tuscany had always been fierce enemies of Berengar. The marriage determined a strong political turn for the family of Ivrea. At that point Bertilla may have chosen to carry on a conciliatory attitude towards the houses of Ivrea and of Tuscany, that were at that moment her husband's enemies, in the hope of protecting her grandson. This choice could have provoked the decision of Berengar to eliminate her, because she had become politically dangerous for him.[118] Bertilla's fall would have also involved her family: in 913 her brother Boso was defined in one of Berengar's diplomas as "infidelis noster Boso", suggesting that he had in some way betrayed the king.[119]

It is not possible to find out more about these events. The author of the *Gesta* is reluctant to talk about Bertilla's fate and uses ambiguous language that hints at the moral sphere: the morality is the domain in which Bertilla failed, and for which she died. This reticence suggests that Berengar was possibly involved in his wife's death, maybe for reasons that had little to do with her morality: her infertility or her political choices. What is important to notice here, furthermore, is that this poem does not leave any space for women. They are marginalized or even ignored. The marchioness Berta of Tuscany, who, together with her

[118] Lazzari, 'Le donne del regno italico', p. 216.
[119] DBerI91.

husband, supported Berengar's adversary Louis of Provence, is rather unflatteringly called only the "Beast of the Tyrrhenian" ("Belua Tirrenis").[120]

The *Gesta Berengarii* was a celebratory poem, aimed at exalting Berengar as a worthy warrior and ruler: the death of his first wife Bertilla possibly represented a black mark in his career, which the author of the poem did not want to explore. He attempted to conceal what could be a political or dynastic affair by representing it as a stereotyped feminine debacle. Bertilla had sinned as she had been induced by the evil words of another woman. The author is very careful not to say too much. He does give us Bertilla's name, he does not call her *regina*, but only *coniunx*. At the same time, he hints at some very specific aspects – adultery, feminine negative influence, moral corruption. There is not enough here to establish what the author thought about queenship, but this text certainly illuminates the strategies through which female political influence – and possibly the abuse of that power - could be concealed through gender stereotypes. This poem, in other words, denies and disguises queenly authority.

Other texts give us a very different portrayal of the elusive and easily corruptible Bertilla of the *Gesta Berengarii*. A precious source for the understanding of Bertilla's role in her husband's reign is a group of letters written by the Archbishop John X of Ravenna at the beginning of the tenth century.[121] Two of these letters, both written around 906-907, concern the relationship between the Church of Ravenna and the queen. In the first of the two letters John writes to an unnamed bishop, complaining that his Church is in a state of great difficulty, because Count Dido and his men had occupied some properties of his Church in the area of Saltopiano (near Bologna).[122] Dido had declared that he acted on the authority of the queen ("regine auctoritate"). John was greatly shocked by this event: the person who was meant to protect his Church – the queen – was damaging it. He therefore asked the bishop to intercede on his account with the queen and Dido. At the time Dido was one of the closest

[120] Ibidem, lib. IV, p. 395.

[121] The letters are contained in a roll found in a private archive at the end of the nineteenth century and have been published in A. Ceriani, G. Porro, eds, 'Il rotolo opistografico del principe Antonio Pio di Savoia', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, series II, 9,1 (1884). On the analysis of the documents see: S. Löwenfeld, 'Acht Briefe aus der Zeit Konig Berengards, gedruckt und erlaudert', in A. Ceriani, G. Porro, 'Il rotulo opistografico del principe Antonio Pio di Savoia. Aus dem Italienischen mit eigenen Bemerkungen', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft fur altere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 9 (1884), pp. 513-539; P. Fedele, 'Per la storia di Roma e del papato nel secolo X. III: Le lettere dell'arcivescovo Giovanni di Ravenna', *Archivio della società romana di Storia patria*, 34 (1911), pp. 75–130, at pp. 75–89.

[122] 'Il rotolo opistografico', n. 2, pp. 20–22.

men to Berengar: he had properties in the area of Modena, near Nonantola, not far from where he allegedly occupied the archbishop's land.[123]

The second letter concerns the same issue. This time John writes to an anonymous woman, whom he calls "sister in Christ": we can therefore assume that he was addressing a religious woman.[124] We get the impression that this woman is extremely influential, because of the way in which John addresses her and the expression of his strong desire to remain on friendly terms with her. In the letter the same incident is reported, and John's tone is, if possible, even more desperate. John says that Dido's men had occupied the lands of the Church by order of the queen ("iussione regine"): this sounds unbelievable to him, as he had been promised by the queen her friendship and protection. Furthermore, he had made himself several enemies, because of his friendship with the queen.

These letters give a lot of information about Bertilla, but also about the idea of queenship that John expressed. Bertilla was clearly influential: she could count on a close and powerful entourage. The two people to whom John's letters were addressed – the bishop and the *soror Christi* - clearly had influence on the queen, but were also powerful in their own right. They were probably close to Bertilla, possibly relations. It has been argued that the religious woman was Berta, Bertilla's daughter, a nun in the convent of San Salvatore in Brescia. There is little ground for this argument to be made, as there is little reason to see why the archbishop should write to the princess to complain about her mother's behaviour. I argue that a likely identification would be Ageltrude, widow of Guy of Spoleto, who at the time was living in a nunnery, presumably in central Italy, and maintained a close relationship with the political and religious elite of the kingdom.[125] Whoever the addressee, the letters cast light on the relationship between Bertilla and her husband's men. It is difficult to establish whether she was employing Dido to do some "dirty work", or rather he was exploiting his proximity to the king – and the queen - to occupy the Church of Ravenna's properties. Whichever the case, the letters show that Bertilla's influence was high. John expresses his despair: if the queen had actually betrayed him, there was no one else he could ask for support.

The idea of the queen that John's letters show is someone who had power in her own right, who is able to exercise authority and give orders (*iussio*). Certainly John's tone must be related to the fact that he was writing to people who were close to the queen, and bitter words

[123] Hlawitschka, *Franken,* pp. 168–169.
[124] 'Il rotolo opistografico', n. 3, pp. 22-24.
[125] See below, chapter 5, pp. 171-175.

would not have helped his case. However, we get the impression that the queen's authority over her husband's men and on the kingdom's territories was perceived as normal. We do, moreover, find a powerful queen who is perceived as the reference point in the relationship between churchmen and rulers. Finally, we see a queen who has what could be defined, in Pauline Stafford's words, as competitive power, because her friendship clashes with others' interests.[126]

3.5 The queen in Rather of Verona's *Praeloquia*

Now, I come back to the text with which I started this chapter. The fourth book of Rather of Verona's *Praeloquia* is devoted to the theme of royal authority.[127] Rather devotes several pages to kingship, describing the ideal king and the way in which he must exercise his authority. His instructions were based on personal experience, and directed to a specific ruler: Hugh of Provence.[128] Rather had been deprived of his see and imprisoned by Hugh in 934, because he had supported Arnold of Bavaria's expedition to Italy. Rather's idea of royal authority is therefore focused on the relationship between royalty and the Church. He declares that the king must submit himself to the authority of the Church and its ministers. The conflict between Hugh and Rather also arose because Hugh had appropriated lands belonging to the Veronese diocese. Rather's discourse therefore focuses on the king's duty of protecting the Church's economic resources. Only in that way could cooperation between royalty and the Church exist and the kingdom function effectively.

Rather starts with a rhetorical question and a short answer: "Are you a queen? Much of the advice given above applies to you too".[129] To which advice does he specifically refer? It might be his instructions to wives contained in book II, which is devoted to the Christian duties regarding family relationships, a sort of *speculum coniugatorum*.[130] Rather states that the wife's duties are similar, and in some cases complementary, to those of the husband. Both have to maintain their *castitas*: sexual moderation and modesty are the main virtues that a wife has to show, together with obedience to her husband. Moreover, she must not be jealous

[126] Stafford, 'Emma, the Powers of a Queen', p. 11.
[127] Rather, *Praeloquia*, IV 36, p. 141.
[128] G. Vignodelli, 'Il problema della regalità nei Praeloquia di Raterio di Verona', in Isabella, *C'era una volta un re*, pp. 59-74.
[129] Rather, *Praeloquia*, IV 36, p. 141.
[130] Smith, 'Gender and ideology', pp. 71-73.

of rivals, because in that case "her tongue is like a lash": this seems to agree with the abuse of words for which some royal women were denounced in the texts analysed above.[131]

If Rather is referring to his instructions for the married couple, he may also be implying a sharing of duties between king and queen. Furthermore he may be referring to the king's moral duties, the cardinal virtues of Justice, Wisdom, Temperance and Fortitude; for moral strength is as important for the queen as it is for the king. However, Rather's main concern was the king's use – and abuse – of the Church's resources: his words for the queen therefore suggest that she also had a part in that domain. Although Rather acknowledges the queen's role in financial and political affairs, this acknowledgement remains implicit. The short paragraph devoted to the queen only mentions a list of models that she must follow: the Virgin Mary, Helen, Radegund, Clotild and Placilla. These female characters are to be used as an inspiration for their religious and familial virtues. However, the only thing these figures have in common is that they were famous queens, some of them remembered as protectors of the Church. Not all of them follow the Carolingian ideal of the queen's family roles: Radegund, for example, is mentioned as "queen and virgin". She as an extreme example of *castitas*, which was only partially fitting in the "Carolingian" model of queenship.

Therefore, Rather expresses ideas already conveyed a century earlier, agreeing with the models described by Adalard and Sedulius, according to whom the queen's *honestas* is vital for the royal household. However, his notion of queenship remains vague. Rather concludes the paragraph on the queen stating that, by following his instructions, she will "win here the sceptre of the present kingdom".[132] He implies, therefore, something very interesting: virtuousness and piety give a queen power. What queenly authority, the "sceptre of the present kingdom" consists of, however, is not explicitly stated.

Conclusion

The texts that I have analysed above often display an unbalanced husband-wife relationship, which gave women more influence than they should have been allowed. All this abuse of power happens because of the lack – symbolic or physical – of a ruler to control his queen. In the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, Angelberga's interference in politics and its devastating effects are presented in a gendered light. Her power is characterized by a female weakness: that of speaking too much, inappropriately and with evil intentions. These texts also portray the

[131] Rather, *Praeloquia*, II 11, pp. 72–73.
[132] Ibidem, IV 36, p. 141.

household as the key theatre of women's shameful behaviour, inverting the Carolingian model of the queen as good administrator. Liudprand portrays the women at court by ridiculing their lust and greed. In the *Epitome* Angelberga's evil use of her institutional role provoked the death of an innocent man. Set at the heart of the royal household, the *Epitome* stresses the risk represented by what Liudprand defined as "a leadership of whores". The *Gesta Berengarii* depicts Bertilla as an unfaithful woman – although her sin could have been rather a political betrayal. The author does not want to say much, but implies that Bertilla's death is a fair outcome and the re-establishment of the natural order of things.

More importantly, Italian authors portray women as immoral and as having a negative influence when there was no real male authority. The royal court represented in these texts is not the orderly functioning organism of which the queen's authority is a vital component, but rather an immoral and chaotic environment. The representation of badly behaved powerful women was not necessarily designed to condemn female influence *per se*, but rather to underline a corrupted political and conjugal system in which the male/ruler lacked authority. In a few cases the lack of male authority was the result of the ruler's physical absence; and in this case his return might act as a catharsis, re-establishing the natural order of things. This is the case for Louis II in the *Epitome* and in the *Chronicon Salernitanum* and for Berengar in the *Gesta Berengarii*. In other cases, however, the female abuse of power was the dramatic result of the weakness of the husband/king, who is therefore considered as ultimately responsible for his wife's conduct. This is evident in Liudprand's narrative, where women become the personification of political chaos. The description of these women corresponds to a general moral degradation of men, who lose their masculine qualities and their virility, not in their bodies but rather in a metaphorical sense.

Furthermore, because they personify the vilification of the female body and the reversal of its greatest virtue, *castitas*, these women lose their positive function: namely that of sexual partners for their lawful husbands, aimed at the procreation of legitimate children. Elite and royal women described by Italian narratives are very rarely mothers, and if they are they often have conflicting or degrading relationships with their children. Marozia, Willa senior and Willa junior are among the examples of women that bring motherhood to the most degrading level; teaching their daughters how to use sex to reach their goals and putting their sons in danger. This way of representing motherhood is also a result of the kingdom's dynastic discontinuity: the glorification of motherhood was a vital component in the

celebration of a stable dynasty.[133] Italian queens could not enjoy the glorification of their role as royal mothers and wives, as their dynasties never managed to keep the throne for long.

However, these authors reveal very varied ideas about queenliness. Some authors perceived female power *per se* as dangerous, as women's authority was inherently negative. This is the approach displayed by Benedict of Sant'Andrea. On the other hand, Liudprand rather denounced the power of shameful women, who do not have the moral qualities to hold the role of queen appropriately. Was *regina* a word that defines the king's wife, or even just his concubine, as Benedict seems to imply? Or did it instead define a role that only worthy women were allowed to hold? Did a queen have the right to sit in assemblies and direct the court, as seems to be the case according to Andrew of Bergamo? Was the authority Angelberga was given by Louis in southern Italy acceptable? Or was Bertilla's right to occupy territories acknowledged? There is no explicit statement that it was not. Angelberga was punished only when she damaged the political order with her words or when she threatened it with her sexual appetite.

In other words, the conceptualization of queenship remains extremely elusive. What seems to be clear is that queenliness was perceived by contemporaries as a much more ambiguous and complicated status than that of wife and mother. The *Epitome* seems implicitly to acknowledge the queen's possible capacity to convey royal claims. Liudprand considers queenship as a role charged with moral significance and associated with family values – hence following the Carolingian model. Benedict, instead, considers the *regina* merely as the king's wife. Andrew is more focused on queenliness as a political authority that goes beyond the family role – Angelberga is called *regina* even when she is left widowed and without an heir. All these authors stressed different aspects and different ideas of queenship according to their authorial agenda, and possibly their understanding of women's authority. This shows that there was no agreement on what being a queen meant. It was a fluid role, which was constantly reshaped. This is shown by the example analysed in the last section of this chapter: the case of a non-queen who wanted to present herself as a queen.

[133] S. Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*: *the Lives of Mathild and the Epitaph of Adelheid* (Washington, 2004), pp. 8-12; P. Corbet, *Les saints Ottoniens. Sainteté dynastique, sainteté royale et sainteté féminine autour de l'an mil*, (Sigmaringen, 1986), pp. 73-152; M. Innes, 'Keeping it in the Family: Women and Aristocratic Memory, 700 – 1200', in E. Van Houts, ed, *Medieval Memories. Men, Women and the Past 700- 1300* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 17-35.

4. Berta of Tuscany: a paraqueen?

The example concerns an elite woman whom I have already mentioned in the previous pages, Berta of Tuscany. Berta was powerful, thanks to her origins, her marriages and her relational network.[134] She had Carolingian blood, as she was the illegitimate daughter of Lothar II and his concubine Waldrada: her royal origin played a significant part in her political career. After the death of her first husband, Thebald of Arles (c. 895), she married *marchio* Adalbert of Tuscany and became one of the great power-brokers in early tenth-century Italy, controlling political alliances and boosting her children's political careers. Among John of Ravenna's letters there is one directed to the marchioness (906 – 907).[135] In the opening of the document John calls her "inclita et gloriosissima Berta regalibus orta prosapiis". This letter deals with various political matters, but in particular with the resolution of a conflict between the archbishop and the marchioness. According to John, Berta had been angry at him "for no reason". The object of the dispute between the two is unknown, but the letter shows John's relief that the conflict has been solved. In the same years in which this letter was written, Berta sent a missive to the caliph of Baghdad to discuss diplomatic and military matters.[136] Beside the importance of this letter with regard to diplomatic, political and economic history, it also gives an insight into Berta's perception of her status. In the opening of the letter she declares herself as "Berta, daughter of Lothar, queen of all Franks". She also declares that her dominion comprises twenty-four kingdoms.[137]

Berta's letter is preserved in a later Arabic translation and the Latin original has been lost. One has therefore to take into account the possible misunderstanding of the translator. Nevertheless, the insistence on the concepts of royal authority suggests that Berta had the opportunity to present herself as a queen, playing with a vague concept of this role. She was probably able to do this because the caliphate did not know much about the political situation of the kingdom. However, it is also possible that she used the concept of queenship to her

[134] For an overview on her political career, see: Mor, *Berta*; G. Gandino, 'Aspirare al regno: Berta di Toscana', in La Rocca, *Agire da donna*, pp. 249-268.
[135] Ceriani, Porro, 'Il rotolo opistografico', n. 4, pp. 25–26.
[136] Ibidem; G. Levi Della Vita, 'La corrispondenza di Berta di Toscana col califfo Muktafi', *Rivista storica italiana*, 46 (1954), pp. 21-38; C. G. Mor, 'Intorno ad una lettera di Berta di Toscana al califfo di Bagdad', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 113 (1954), pp. 299-312; C. Renzi Rizzo, 'Riflessioni su una lettera di Berta di Toscana al califfo Muktafî: l'apporto congiunto dei dati archeologici e delle fonti scritte', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 159,1 (2001), pp. 3-46; A. Christys, *The Queen of the Franks offers Gifts to the Caliph al-Muktafi*, in W. Davies, P. Fouracre, eds, *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 149-170.
[137] I am using here the Italian translation by Gandino, 'Aspirare al regno', pp. 267-268. The twenty-four kingdoms might be referring to the administrative organization of Italy see Ibidem, p. 257, fn. 34.

own advantage. Berta was able to project a strong image of her authority outside the Italian kingdom, much stronger than her real institutional role. Her epitaph, still preserved in Lucca cathedral, stresses her royal background and her political influence.[138] A passage of the text reads: "Regalis generis quae fuit omne decus / Nobilis ex alto Francorum germine regum, / Karolus ipse pius rex fuit eius avus". Not only did she have a royal origin, but "Consilio docto moderabat regmina [sic] multa". This is an epitaph for a noblewoman that is redolent of royal ambition. The modes of representation employed by Berta reflect her royal ambitions and the flexibility of queenly authority: she could use her royal blood, and the power she was able to exercise in Italy, to represent herself and be represented as a "queen".

In conclusion, the evidence analysed above shows that the principles expressed by Carolingian authors were usually transmitted by texts written in close proximity to the Carolingian court. This is the case for normative texts such as *De Ordine Palatii* and the royal capitularies. Authors presented a situation they were familiar with: the queen's influence within the court. During the ninth century moralists and intellectuals also showed a growing focus on the moral duties of husband and wife: this concerned the behaviour of the queen, the most powerful of wives. The order of the royal household depended on the queen's moral behaviour, and therefore the queen had a crucial responsibility. Nevertheless, in Italian sources royal women often personify the political decay of Italy. They are rarely praised as virtuous wives and mothers, but rather condemned as corrupted women that abused their sexual relationships to gain power they did not deserve. These women are complemented by rulers who are absent or weak: as expressed by Carolingian moralists, a wife's virtuousness was dependent on her husband's worthiness. The most evident example is Liudprand's *Antapodosis*, but I have shown that other less known sources also express this idea. Most of the Italian authors I have analysed wrote in post-Carolingian Italy, a period of political turmoil in which the continuity expressed by the Carolingians deteriorated because of ceaseless conflicts among local magnates. Certainly Carolingian history had been full of conflicts too, but the family managed to maintain a dynastic continuity for several generations and created a court culture which contributed to building and transmitting images of a successful dynasty. Women had a significant part in this process: as mothers and wives they were a vital component of that continuity. Instead, Italian kings never managed to keep the throne for more than one or two generations and were never able to build a similar image of their royal authority. The only exception is the *Gesta Berengarii*, a celebratory poem that

[138] *Epitaphium Berthae*, ed. K. Strecker, MGH Poetae latini aevi Carolini IV/3 (Berlin, 1923), p. 1008.

exalts the deeds of Berengar I, who had the longest reign among the post-Carolingian kings of Italy. Authors who attacked royal women were usually detached from the royal court, and sometimes openly hostile to the weak royal authority that, in their view, "national" kings represented. Their women were therefore employed as scapegoats and presented as responsible for moral decay. This similarity suggests that the political context in which authors were writing had a dramatic impact on the way in which they viewed female influence.

However, these texts approach queenship from different angles. They do not display a unanimous notion of what queenship was. They are very precise in showing what a bad queen was, how she behaved and what damage she provoked. But the lack of positive queenly figures also means that this role remains complex. Each of the texts I have analysed shows a rather specific way of dealing with the concept of queen. For some, there were some vital moral qualities attached to it, for others it was simply the status of the king's wife. Some acknowledged the queen's right to lead assemblies, lead the nobility and take important decisions. They criticized the result of these actions, rather than the action *per se*. In other words, this confusion meant that there were no set boundaries to the potential of queenly authority. These boundaries became more fluid and negotiable in a context of dynastic instability. Ultimately, seeing the lack of the queen's office as an opportunity rather than as an obstacle allows us to do justice to royal women's political skills. The ways in which queens used this opportunity – in managing political relations, landed wealth and monastic policy - will be analysed in the following chapters.

Chapter III. Politics and royal titles: queens in diplomas

In 866 King Lothar II granted Inverno, a fiscal estate in north-western Italy, to his brother, Emperor Louis II, for him to donate to his wife, Empress Angelberga.[1] The document introduces a number of issues which are significant to this chapter. First of all, it shows the use of a royal grant to record an agreement between two rulers, performed through an exchange of landed wealth. Secondly, it shows the ambiguous status of fiscal properties: Lothar II was the king of Lotharingia, his kingdom did not include Italy, which was ruled by Louis, and yet Lothar's diploma presents Inverno as part of his royal domain. The charter reports more than a transition of land, for it shows the performance of an alliance which has to be read in relation to the political context of Lothar's struggle over his divorce. Moreover, and most importantly for the present chapter, this charter shows how a royal woman, in this case Empress Angelberga, could be employed in the establishment and performance of such an alliance.[2] The fact that Inverno was specifically meant to be for her confirms the part she played in the political conflict arising from Lothar's divorce, but is also an example of queens' involvement in the definition of rulers' support networks.

In other words, the grant of Inverno is an example of what the presence of a royal woman in a charter tells us about her role in royal politics. Scholars agree that queens and their relations were often a driving force in shaping royal politics and that this emerges from the analysis of diplomatic evidence.[3] These documents give information on queen's patrimonial resources, network of friends and family and the way they worked. The analysis of these factors, however, has not been carried out as extensively for Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy as it has been for other areas. Historians acknowledge that queens' frequent appearance in diplomas indicates their influence at court. However, not all women were "influential" in the same way: the nature and aims of their influence depended on evolving factors. Formal aspects, such as stylistic features and the authorship of documents, have been often overlooked in relation to the study of queens. Yet significant work has been done on charters' formal elements and paratexts. This has been defined by Mark Mersiowsky as

[1] DLOII29.
[2] On this see Koziol, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 19-62.
[3] Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, pp. 32-43. For examples of this kind of analysis see: Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith,* pp. 193-206; D. Bates, 'The Representation of Queens and Queenship in Anglo-Norman Royal Charters' in Fouracre, Ganz, *Frankland,* pp. 285–303.

"metadiplomatics", "which is interested in the history of ideas, in politics, in constitutional history and concepts of sovereignty found in various charter formulae".[4] Historians have discussed the use of charters as narratives, as well as the significance of the choice of specific formulas and features, which were imitated from one chancery to another.[5] These documents were often used by their recipients in juridical proceedings as legal evidence, or by royal chanceries as models for the production of other charters.[6] Diplomas were often based on older models. This happened when the charter in question was a confirmation of grants and benefices accorded by former kings. Furthermore, royal chanceries could also choose to imitate the form and language of a charter whose content was not relevant to the one they were producing. This suggests the use of a set of practices and knowledge which were passed from generation to generation of notaries. The imitation of previous charters could be also a means of claiming royal authority, for the king presented himself as the continuator of a royal tradition. Charters were therefore issued to record an exchange of properties or rights, but also to display royal authority in practice, hence with a specific audience in mind.[7] The language, structure and content of a charter reflected this potential audience and were therefore carefully structured by its writers.

Although scholars have explored these issues, up to now they have largely ignored their potential significance for the study of queens. My thesis aims to assess the impact that the changes which occurred in the kingdom during the ninth and tenth centuries had on the different ways in which "queenship" was practiced and represented. In order to do this, this chapter focuses on the presence of queens in royal charters. This presence was also the result

[4] M. Mersiowsky, 'Towards a Reappraisal of Carolingian Sovereign Charters', in K. Heidecker, ed, *Charters and the Use of the Written Word in Medieval Society* (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 15-25, at p. 20; H. Wolfram, 'Lateinische Herrschertitel im neunten und zehnten Jahrhundert', in *Intitulatio II. Lateinische Herrscher- und Fürstentitel im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1963), pp. 19-178.

[5] See various articles in R. Balzaretti, E. Tyler, eds, *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006). On the influence among documents see H. Bresslau, *Handbuch der Urkundenlehre für Deutschland und Italien*, Vol. II (Berlin, 1968), pp. 193-201.

[6] F. Bougard, *La justice dans le royaume d'Italie de la fin du VIIIe siècle au début du XIe siècle* (Rome, 1995), pp. 55-63; C. Wickham, 'Land Disputes and their Social Framework in Lombard and Carolingian Italy', in W. Davies, P. Fouracre, eds, *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 105-124; R. Balzaretti, 'Spoken Narratives in Ninth- Century Milanese Court Records', in Balzaretti, Tyler, *Narrative and History,* pp. 11-37; A. Padoa Schioppa, 'Giudici e giustizia nell'età Carolingia', in A. Padoa Schioppa, G. Di Renzo Villata, G.P. Massetto, eds, *Amicitiae Pignus. Studi in onore di Adriano Cavanna* (Milan, 2003), pp. 1623–1666, at pp. 1637–1644; R.H. Bautier, 'La chancellerie et les actes royaux dans les royaumes carolingiens', in Id., *Chartes, Sceaux et Chancelleries*, vol. II (Paris, 1990), pp. 5–80.

[7] I. Garipzanov, *The Symbolic language of Authority in the Carolingian World* (Leiden, 2008); Koziol, *The Politics of Memory.* On Italy see: F. Bougard, 'Charles le Chauve, Berenger, Hugues de Provence: Action politique et production documentaire dans les diplomes à destination de l'Italie', in C. Dartmann, T. Scharff, C.F. Weber, eds, *Zwischen Pragmatik und Performanz: Dimensionen mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 57 –84.

of choices made by the writers of charters. For this reason, the role held by the chancery needs to be taken into account. Although many aspects of the functioning of chanceries are still unknown, they certainly had an active part in the decisions related to the compilation of a document, such as the imitation of previous models and the choice of specific linguistic and stylistic features.[8] Because of the political value of charters, these choices were never neutral. The appearance of royal women in charters and the way they were presented had a specific function in the process of creation and propagation of the documents. Ultimately, the combination of the above-mentioned aspects with the political context in which the charter was produced can offer an insight into the way in which kings portrayed themselves and their political entourages – of which queens were a significant component.

1. *Consors regni/imperii*

The presence of queens in charters has occasionally been analysed, though in a rather limited way. With regard to Italy, scholars' attention has been absorbed by the appearance of the title *consors regni* - or *consors imperii* - in relation to the queen.[9] The term *consors* derives from *consortium*, which literally means "society", "association" and implies the "sharing of something". It could be used in an economic sense, as the sharing of a property, but also to define the "marital union" between the couple. Paolo Delogu, in what is still the most exhaustive study on the title, has shown that *consors imperii* was used by late Roman authors, who employed the expression to define co–emperors.[10] It then appeared occasionally in sixth-century Visigothic and Merovingian public documents to define the designated heir who had been associated to the throne, usually the king's son. It was also sporadically used in narrative texts, for example by Cassiodorus, Fredegar and Paul the Deacon.[11] The title saw a relatively wide use at the beginning of the ninth century in Carolingian charters and in some narrative sources - the *Annales Regni Francorum* and Einhard's *Vita Karoli* - to define the designated heir. This revival was related by Delogu to the Carolingian Renaissance.[12] From

[8] Bautier, *La chancellerie,* p. 510.
[9] C. G. Mor, '*Consors regni*: La regina nel diritto pubblico italiano dei secoli IX- X', *Archivio Giuridico*, 135 (1948), pp. 7-32; P. Delogu, '"Consors regni": un problema carolingio', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico Italiano per il Medioevo*, 76 (1964), pp. 47-98.
[10] Ibidem, pp. 66-67.
[11] Regarding the use of the title in Cassiodorus' *Variae* (ed. A.J. Fridh, *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori Variarum libri XII* (Turnhout, 1973) X, 3-4, pp. 386-389) see C. La Rocca, '*Consors regni*: a Problem of Gender? The *consortium* between Amalasuntha and Theodatus in 534', in Nelson, Reynolds, *Gender and Historiography*, pp. 127-143.
[12] Delogu, '"Consors regni"', pp. 64-65.

the middle of the ninth century the title started to be used to define kings' and emperors' wives.

Paolo Delogu pointed out that, to find the origin of this queenly title, one has to look beyond charters. Shortly after 841 Hrabanus Maurus, abbot of Fulda, wrote a letter to Empress Ermengarda, wife of Lothar I.[13] He attached to the letter his commentary on the Book of Esther, which he had composed a few years before and dedicated to another empress, Judith. The verse 16:13 of the Book of Esther defines the biblical queen as "consors regni": Hrabanus picked up this expression and the concept of *consortium*, using it to define Esther's queenship.[14] Hrabanus succeeded in his attempt, as the text circulated in the Carolingian courtly environment, and the title became part of the political language, was transmitted to the chancery and introduced in diplomatic language. The title never became very common in West and East Frankia, but was frequently used in Italy from the middle of the ninth century onwards.[15] It remained relatively frequent in Italian royal charters until the middle of the tenth century, and was later imported into Ottonian diplomatics.[16]

Because of the title's literal meaning and because it had a long tradition which originated in the Roman empire, historians have often read it as a sign of the political influence of the queen. The main studies on the term, at least for Italy, are however quite dated. In 1948, an Italian scholar, Carlo Guido Mor, argued that this expression was a technical term, which designated the queen as coregent, a role that became effective when the king was absent.[17] The above-mentioned article by Paolo Delogu, published in 1964, was a fundamental contribution to the subject. Delogu dismissed Mor's opinion, as he did not see in this expression a clear juridical meaning, but rather an ideological one, with literary echoes.[18] In his opinion, being a *consors regni* did not give the queen an institutional role, but was rather an acknowledgement of her influence at court. More recently, scholars have argued that the use of the title may be linked to the marital issues that Carolingian emperors were experiencing and to the stress put on monogamous marriages. Until the beginning of the ninth century the Carolingians might have several concubines whose status was similar to that of an

[13] Hrabanus Maurus, *Epistolae*, n. 46. See above, p. 21.
[14] M. de Jong, 'Exegesis for an Empress', pp. 86-94.
[15] Outside Italy it appears only in three charters of Charles the Bald, one of Charles the Fat, two charters of Charles the Simple for Frederun in 907 and a charter of Raoul for Emma in 932 (see Delogu, '"Consors regni"' p. 89).
[16] For an overview of the use of the title in Ottonian and Salian Germany see: Fössel, *Die Königin im Mittelalterliche Reich*, pp. 56-66.
[17] Mor, 'Consors regni', pp. 18-20.
[18] Delogu, '"Consors regni"', p. 61.

official wife: this situation caused trouble with the Church for some of these rulers.[19] The use of the expression therefore aimed, according to this view, to define the only legitimate wife and to stress the bond between man and wife as an official, unique and legitimate union.

However, these approaches have not taken into account a fundamental aspect: even in Italy the title was used neither always, nor with the same frequency, for all royal women. The same queen could be called *consors* in one charter and *coniunx* in another. Furthermore, these studies have not put enough stress on the use of the expression in the long term: over the course of the period considered – from the middle of the ninth century to the 960s - its meaning and use evolved. Why was it used in some charters and not in others? How did its use change over time? And what made Italian chanceries more receptive to the use of this title for the queen than other Carolingian chanceries? These questions remain to be dealt with, and will be the object of this chapter.

In order to answer these questions, the roles royal women played in the creation of royal charters need to be reconsidered. In Carolingian diplomatics the queen could appear in a charter in two capacities: as a beneficiary or as an intercessor. The grant to the queen of fiscal properties and royal monasteries became an increasingly common practice during the ninth century.[20] Carolingian women were often granted economic resources to found monastic institutions, or were given the control of existing monasteries.[21] During the ninth and tenth centuries Italian royal women were given significant amounts of property and royal monasteries. In general, the increment in the queen's wealth and its "greater political relevance", has been related to the growing importance that the queen's dower acquired for the validity of the marriage - partly as a result of the case of Lothar II's divorce – and at the same time to the increasing political influence of the queen.[22] The other role held by queens in charters, as intercessors, also seems to become more frequent in the course of the ninth century. The appearance of the queen in a charter as petitioner on account of a third party was

[19] Erkens, '"Sicut Esther Regina"', pp. 33-36; Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, pp. 356-365.
[20] R. Le Jan, *Douaires et pouvoirs des reines en Francie et en Germanie (VIe-Xe siècle)*, in Bougard, Feller, Le Jan, *Dots et douaires*, pp. 457–490.
[21] S. MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood in Carolingian Europe', *Past and Present*, 178 (2003), pp. 3-38; for a general overview: Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers,* pp. 60-79.
[22] C. La Rocca, 'Les cadeaux nuptiaux de la famille royale en Italie', in Bougard, Feller, Le Jan, *Dots et douaires*, pp. 499–526.

a sign of her privileged position as intermediary between the king and his men.[23] It therefore illuminates the position held by the queen in the shaping and definition of political networks.

However, studies on queens' roles as beneficiaries and intercessors have contributed to creating a general and rather vague idea of Italian queens' "influence" and do not take into account the evolving political climate in which the charters were produced. The main studies on the involvement of Italian royal women in royal politics, based on the analysis of documentary evidence, have underlined the significance of Italian queens without offering a punctual analysis of the situation in which each document was created. This is the case for the otherwise excellent study by Barbara Rosenwein on Berengar I's family politics. In analysing the data contained in Berengar's charters and underlining the impact that the women of his family had in the shaping of his political choices, Rosenwein fails to show the way in which women's involvement changed over time.[24] Other queens have been ignored with regard to the evidence offered by charters, with the occasional exception of the analysis of their patrimonial resources, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

The present analysis will therefore be based on the combination of the elements mentioned above: the political changes that occurred in the Italian kingdom during the "Carolingian" ninth century and the period of the national kings; as well as titles and expressions which need to be studied as means of expressing fluid political concepts. Combined, these elements give an idea of how queens' involvement in royal politics changed over the years. I will divide my analysis into three chronological periods. The first is the Carolingian control of Italy (835 – 888): I have also included in this section the period between 875 and 888, during which the Carolingians continued to control Italy, although the death of Louis II marked the start of a period of conflict between members of the dynasty. The second section covers the first phase of struggle among Italian magnates (888 – 924); and the third represents the final period of the so-called national kings, before Italy's incorporation by the Ottonian empire (924 – 962). This chapter aims to prove two main points. First of all, women's involvement in royal politics as it emerges from charters changes over the course of time, as rulers' needs, and the conditions in which they operated, evolved. In other words, we cannot consider a royal woman very powerful and influential merely because she frequently appears in charters, and vice versa a queen who does not appear often in royal documents is not necessarily an

[23] As François Bougard has underlined for Empress Angelberga: Bougard, 'La cour et le gouvernement', pp. 261-265. On intercessions see also Koziol, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 67–71.
[24] Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics', pp. 254–258.

outsider. Secondly, I aim to show that the formal elements of charters, in particular the title of *consors regni*, which has been considered a peculiarity of the Italian kingdom and a sign of the exceptional relevance of Italian queens, did not have only one meaning. Instead, titles must be read as flexible tools, which were employed in different ways and for different reasons according to when, how and by whom they were used.

In other words, I intend to focus not only on titles, but most importantly on the individual 'reigns' of queens, employing charters and their language as a way to look into their careers, arguing that diplomatic language helps to interpret their role, and their political relationships inside and outside the court. *Consors regni* and other titles are significant in explaining the peculiar political circumstances which affected these women and the space they were given in royal politics.

2. Carolingian empresses in Italian charters (c. 835 – 888)

Between 819 and 825, Louis the Pious issued a document confirming immunity to the nunnery of San Salvatore in Brescia, which at the time was held *in beneficium* by his wife Judith.[25] The convent had been founded in the second half of the eighth century by the Lombard Queen Ansa. Ansa is, in fact, the only Lombard queen whose role in politics emerges from charters: she was an active monastic patron and the foundation and endowment of San Salvatore seems to be her greatest political achievement.[26] The charter issued by Louis the Pious for San Salvatore presents several problems: first of all it is a partly damaged tenth-century copy, which lacks *datatio* and *signatio*. Elizabeth Ward suggested that the charter must have been issued shortly after Judith and Louis' marriage, in 819, and therefore it was also chronologically connected with the defeat of Bernard of Italy in 818.[27] In Ward's view, the confirmation of the immunity to San Salvatore was the result of Louis the Pious' will to reinforce the relationship with a religious institution, and with a city, Brescia, which had remained on the emperor's side during the conflict with his nephew Bernard.[28] This document, however, does not provide any significant information that could help to

[25] G. Porro Lambertenghi, *Codex Diplomaticus Langobardiae* (Turin, 1873), n. 103, coll. 188-89.
[26] See below, chapter 4.
[27] M. de Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814 – 840* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 28-29; J. Jarnut, 'Ludwig der Fromme, Lothar I. und das Regnum Italiae' in Godman, Collins, *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 349–362.
[28] E. Ward, *The Career of the Empress Judith 819 – 843*, unpublished PhD thesis, King's College London 2002, pp. 72–89.

illuminate Judith's interests and involvement in Italian affairs. Certainly much has been written on this unique empress, and her extraordinary political experience, but Judith's relationship with Italy remains elusive.

Judith's successors, however, appear more frequently in diplomas produced in Italy. Judith had revived a tradition that would go on for a long time, the patronage of Italian monasteries, but unlike her, her successors would spend part of their life in Italy. Moreover, Carolingian empresses would help their husbands to build alliances and create support networks, be involved in international diplomatic and political affairs, and exercise a role that was specifically tailored to the political circumstances. The first step was, as Elina Screen puts it, about "settlement and consolidation".[29] When Lothar I arrived in Italy in 834, he was in conflict with his father Louis the Pious, who had forced him to move there. He took with him men of his entourage, among whom was Hugh of Tours, one of the protagonists of the political struggles of the previous years.

Hugh of Tours was, moreover, Lothar's father-in-law, as his daughter Ermengarda had married the young king in 825.[30] Ermengarda and her family played a very significant part in Lothar's political settlement in Italy.[31] Elina Screen has underlined that Liudfrid, Ermengarda's brother, was a very influential member of the imperial entourage: he carried out military duties for Lothar and received several gifts from the emperor.[32] Ermengarda and Liutfrid's parents, Hugh and his wife Ava, who died respectively in 837 and 839, were buried in the cathedral of Monza, as testified by the *liber necrologicus* of the church.[33] Moreover, a diploma issued by Lothar in Corteolona in 836 granted a fiscal *curtis* called Locada (on the Lambro river, in the area of Milan) to Ava: "devotissime nobis Auae, coniugis videlicet Ugonis obtimatis nostri".[34] In 835 Ermengarda acted as intercessor for the grant of the *curtis* of Limonta to the monastery of St Ambrose in Milan, where her brother Hugh, who had died in childhood, was buried: "delatione fratris sui puerili eligantia delati Hugoni nomine".[35] The

[29] E. Screen, 'Lothar I in Italy, 834-40: Charters and Authority', forthcoming article.

[30] For Ermengarda's family, see Depreux, *Prosopographie,* on Hugh of Tours (pp. 262–264) and Matfrid d'Orléans (pp. 331-74); de Jong, *The Penitential State*, pp. 143–144; C. Wilsdorf, 'Les Étichonides aux temps carolingiens et ottoniens', *Bulletin philologique et historique*, 89 (1967), pp. 1-33.

[31] As noted by Screen, 'Lothar I in Italy'.

[32] See Screen, 'Lothar I: the Man and his Entourage', p. 262; On Liutfrid: Hlawitschka, *Franken,* pp. 221–223; Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 262–264.

[33] Depreux, *Prosopographie*, p. 263 quoting Wilsdorf, 'Les Étichonides', p.13, fn.1.

[34] DLOI29. On Hugh see H. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 155–163.

[35] DLOI23. On the economic and political significance of Limonta see R. Balzaretti, 'The Monastery of Sant'Ambrogio and Dispute Settlement in Early Medieval Milan', *Early Medieval Europe*, 13,1 (1994), pp. 1– 18.

donation had a memorial aim and reinforced the relationship between Ermengarda, her family and religious institutions in north-western Italy. Moreover, a diploma issued by Otto III in 998 for the monastery of San Martino in Pavia stated that it was: "a gloriosissimis regibus, Lothario scilicet et Hermengarda eorumque filiis Hludoyco et Lothario, in honore sancti Martini constructum".[36] According to this charter Ermengarda was involved in a further family foundation, possibly the only Frankish foundation of a monastery in Pavia,[37] which was later on passed to the Ottonian empress Theophanu among her dotal properties. At the same time, she was involved in the administration of properties in Lotharingia: in 849 Lothar I granted to his wife the *villa* of Erstein, which he had obtained from his father Louis the Pious, and where Ermengarda founded a royal nunnery.[38] Ermengarda's activities in Italy show that she was a vital component of her husband's politics, and her family was a significant ally for Lothar.

Furthermore, charters suggest that Ermengarda had a major role in the definition of Italian queens' prerogatives. These prerogatives had to do, first of all, with monastic patronage. Beside the above-mentioned grant for St Ambrose, in 837 emperor Lothar issued a diploma for San Salvatore in Brescia, which also involved the queen.[39] The charter confirmed benefices and twenty-seven estates which the nunnery had previously received through other royal donations. Lothar also granted to San Salvatore the right to nominate the abbess ("per successiones temporum vicissim eligendi inter se habeant licentia abbatissam") according to the Benedictine Rule. The grant was issued with the consent of Empress Ermengarda ("ut pari voto simul cum coniuge dilecta nostra Hyrmingardi statum et ordinem eiusdem vite sufficientiae a deo ordinatum firmissimo robore ibidem conferremus"), and following an inspection carried out by a group of imperial *missi*: the abbots Gisleramnus and Prando, the bishops Rambertus of Brescia and Adalgisus of Novara.[40] According to Mario Marrocchi the presence of this considerable group of churchmen was related to the violent epidemic that in

[36] DOIII304. This monastery lay next to Santa Maria *foris portam*; see G. Forzatti Golia, 'Monasteri femminili a Pavia nell'alto Medioevo'*, Nuova Rivista Storica*, 88.1 (2004), pp. 1-26, at pp. 22–23.
[37] Besides the possible foundation of San Marino by Richgard, see below, p. 75-76.
[38] DLOI 106. C. Goodson, *The Rome of Paschal I: Papal Power, Urban Renovation, Church Rebuilding and Relic Translation, 817-824* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 275.
[39] DLOI35.
[40] DLOI35: "Quapropter nos missis nostris dispositis atque ad hoc deliberandum et future rate mansurum confirmandum direximus Prandonem et Gisleranum eiusdem ordinis eruditissimos et prudentissimos abbates, qui in presentia venerabilissimorum episcoporum nostrorum Ramberti et Adalgisi cum nobilibus personis perquirerent atque nobis ita renunciarent, ut absque scrupulo nostra confirmatione perhenniter manere deberet; sicuti et fecerunt".

837 killed many members of Lothar's entourage.[41] These eminent churchmen were left in charge of the execution of Lothar's will. This indicates that San Salvatore and its wealth must have had a great significance for the emperor. Unlike Judith, Ermengarda does not appear to have been in control of the nunnery, but she rather acted as an intermediary on behalf of the abbess Amalberga, the requester of the confirmation.[42] She appears, nevertheless, to take part in the decision-making process, as the expression "pari voto simul cum coniuge dilecta nostra" suggests.[43] Ermengarda intervened again for San Salvatore in 848. On the 16th March 848, from the royal palace of Aachen ("Aquisgrani palatio"), Lothar I issued a diploma that granted the control of San Salvatore and its properties to Ermengarda and their daughter Gisla.[44] In the diploma Ermengarda was defined as "dulcissima coniunx nostra Hirmingardis praedictae amantissime coniugi nostrae […] quae iugali vinculo nobis sociata est consorsque imperii nostri effecta". This is the first royal charter which uses *consors imperii* for a woman. The writers of the document were very close to Italian monastic institutions. The charter was recognized by the notary Remigius, *ad vicem* archchancellor Hilduin, the former abbot of the Italian monastery of Bobbio and head of Lothar's chancery from 844. Remigius was to become, a few years later, abbot of the abbey of Leno, only a few miles from San Salvatore in Brescia.[45]

Although until recently it was believed that Lothar never returned to Italy after the middle of 840s, it has been discovered that the king was in Italy in 847.[46] This helps to reassess the meaning of numerous grants issued for Italian beneficiaries at the end of the 840s. The time Lothar I spent in Italy during 847 also helps to contextualize the grant for San Salvatore, which must have taken place shortly after his return to Aachen. It is possible that during his stay in Italy the emperor had been asked for a confirmation by the nunnery. In the lapse of time between the charter of 837 and the 848 grant, Gisla, Lothar's daughter, had become a nun in San Salvatore: Lothar I left a member of his family in charge of the administration of

[41] M. Marrocchi, *Lotario I*, DBI, 66 (2006), pp. 171–176.
[42] Suzanne Wemple has argued that this charter appointed Ermengarda as *rectrix* of the monastery, however there is no evidence of this in the document: S. F. Wemple, 'S. Salvatore/S. Giulia: A Case Study in the Endowment and Patronage of a Major Female Monastery in Northern Italy', in J. Kirshner, S. F. Wemple, eds, *Women of the Medieval World* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 85-102, at p. 90.
[43] DLOI35, p. 113.
[44] DLOI101.
[45] On Hilduin see the Introduction of T. Schieffer, *Die Urkunden Lothars I. und Lothars II.,* MGH Diplomata Karolinorum, vol. III (Berlin, 1966), pp. 19-21.
[46] On this see Screen, 'Lothar I: the Man and his Entourage', p. 258, quoting H. Zielinski, 'Eine unbeachteter Italienzug Kaiser Lothar I im Jahre 847', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 70 (1990), pp. 1-22.

the nunnery. This charter underlines the family network that Lothar had established around San Salvatore. In this context, his wife and daughter worked together in the building of a monastic network in significant areas and religious institutions of the kingdom.

The "invention" of the expression *consors imperii* for the queen in this charter has attracted historians' attention. In her studies on Italian queens' monastic policy and economic resources, Cristina La Rocca has related the appearance of this title to the object of the charter, San Salvatore. In La Rocca's opinion, the nunnery became, in the course of the ninth century, the core of the Italian queen's wealth. The introduction of this expression was therefore related to the new patrimonial status of queens of Italy. For the wife of the Italian ruler to be a queen, she had to control San Salvatore and all territorial wealth attached to it.[47] The nunnery was, in this view, the material proof of the royal marriage, or royal *consortium*. This is the reason why, according to La Rocca, the title makes its appearance in a charter related to the control of the Brescian nunnery. This argument is based on another diploma, issued four days later. Lothar I granted to his wife the nunnery of San Salvatore in Agna, which is also referred to as Alina, in the area of Pistoia.[48] The document states that the nunnery had been founded – or refounded, as it possibly had a Lombard origin[49] – by the empress herself. The charter for San Salvatore in Agna lacks the *recognitio*, but was probably issued by the same notary, Remigius, who had recognized the charter for San Salvatore in Brescia only a few days earlier. However, the title of the queen is different from the previous charter, as Ermengarda is presented "just" as *dilecta coniunx nostra*. In La Rocca's view, the fact that the title *consors regni* was not used in a diploma produced in the same period, by the same chancery and for a similar purpose, indicates the uniqueness of the relationship between queenly status and San Salvatore.

However, other elements make this argument questionable. The document for Agna was conserved in the archive of San Sisto in Piacenza, the nunnery founded by Empress Angelberga in 877.[50] Agna was granted to the bishop of Fiesole in 901 by Louis of Provence, and later confirmed to the same diocese by other rulers, and then returned to the control of San Salvatore in Brescia at the end of the tenth century. For this reason, it could have been

[47] C. La Rocca, 'Monachesimo femminile e poteri delle regine tra VIII e IX secolo', in G. Spinelli, ed, *Il Monachesimo italiano dall'età longobarda all'età ottoniana (VIII- X secolo)* (Cesena, 2006), pp. 119 – 142, at pp. 126-131; La Rocca, 'Les cadeaux', pp. 505 – 510.
[48] DLOI102.
[49] M. Giacomelli Romagnoli, *Il patrimonio artistico di Pistoia e del suo territorio* (Pistoia, 1967), pp. 286-288.
[50] Now conserved in the National Archive of Parma.

under the control of San Sisto only before 901.[51] We have several documents that list San Sisto's properties between 877 and 901, and none of them mentions San Salvatore in Agna. This might suggest that the charter had been preserved in San Sisto's archive, despite San Salvatore not being a dependency of San Sisto, because it had, at some point, belonged to Angelberga, and the Piacenza nunnery was created to protect the patrimony of the empress. The Tuscan nunnery seems to follow the same pattern suggested for San Salvatore in Brescia by La Rocca: a property which acquired a relationship with royal women could later be transmitted to their successors. The emergence of the title *consors regni* in a diploma concerning the Brescian nunnery does not offer enough evidence to establish the unique function of this religious centre. Other religious institutions – San Salvatore in Agna, St Ambrose – were equally significant for Ermengarda and her family group. This implies that there is not a clear answer to why *consors imperii* was introduced in this particular document. I would suggest that this introduction has to be read in connection to its use in literature, as argued by Delogu. Chancellors may have decided to use the title because it had a prestigious tradition, which dated back to the late Roman period. Furthermore, they might have been influenced by Hrabanus, as he re-employed the phrase used in the Vulgate to identify Esther.

In other words, *consors regni* should be read as a tool that chancellors adapted to their writing, and the political implications of the title also need to be reassessed. This is particularly significant for empress Angelberga, who has been considered the key figure in the emergence of a new type of queenship. Angelberga seems to embody the political meaning of *consortium imperii*, as she shared royal authority with her husband and worked actively as an intermediary between him and his *fideles*.[52] However, in her case the introduction of the title has to be seen in relation to broader political and administrative aspects, which until now have been largely overlooked. Angelberga's royal career was exceptional from its beginning. The marriage between Louis and Angelberga must have taken place in 851, but its first evidence is her dower charter in 860, which is backdated to 851.[53] Angelberga's dower can be contextualized in the complex situation related to Lothar II's marital problems, as he was attempting to divorce from his wife Theutberga and marry his concubine Waldrada. During the complex negotiations the existence of a dower for Waldrada was one of the points in support of Lothar II's claim.[54] It is therefore not surprising that Louis

[51] DLUIII5 (lost), p. 90.
[52] Bougard, 'La cour et le gouvernment', pp. 262-263.
[53] DLUII30. This has been demonstrated by Von Pölnitz Kehr, 'Kaiserin Angilberga'. See below, chapter 4.
[54] Heidecker, *The Divorce of Lothar II*, pp. 115-119.

II had chosen this moment officially to declare his union with Angelberga and reinforce it with the grant of a dower.

The charter is the oldest surviving example of a queen's public endowment, even if this was customary among the Carolingians, and the charter could therefore have been modeled on an older document.[55] As Wanner has suggested, the *arenga* indicates that the official *dotatio* of the queen was common in the Carolingian family: "sed etiam regum et imperatorum sublimitas huiuscemodi usibus atque negotiis effectum prebere non spreverit".[56] Moreover, the stress on the public aspect of the charter was reinforced by the approval of Louis II's *fideles*. In this charter Angelberga appears as "dilectissima sponsa nostra", a definition which does not seem to have an out of the ordinary political connotation – although this charter was issued for political reasons. The diploma, which granted to Angelberga two fiscal *curtes* in the north of Italy, Campo Migliacio in the *comitatus* of Reggio Emilia and Cortenuova in the area of Modena, was issued under the archchancery of Remigius, the same functionary who had worked as notary in Lothar I's chancery, and who had recognized the 848 charter in which Ermengarda was defined *consors imperii*. He had moved to Italy with Louis II at the beginning of the 850s, worked in Louis' chancery first as a notary and then became chancellor in 860. This explains why, despite its originality, Angelberga's dower charter - as well as other Louis II's charters - shows several similarities with Lothar I's diplomas.[57] The continuity represented by Remigius has to be combined with the archchancellor's political role. He was not only head of the chancery, but also the abbot of the monastery of Santa Maria of Leno.

Furthermore, in 861 Angelberga appeared in a diploma through which Louis II granted the control of San Salvatore and its properties to his daughter Gisla, after her aunt and namesake had died.[58] This diploma is modeled on the 848 diploma, and states that in the event of the premature death of Gisla, Angelberga would take control of the nunnery. However, this document challenges the model established by Cristina La Rocca about the relationship between the queen and the Brescian nunnery. Angelberga appears in this charter in a marginal position: she is not a key figure, as relevance is given to the continuity of the relationship between the imperial family – as a group – and the monastery, rather than

[55] S. Konecky, 'Eherecht und Ehepolitik unter Ludwig dem Frommen', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 85 (1977), pp. 1-21, at p. 12.
[56] K. Wanner, ed, *Ludovici II Diplomata*, MGH Diplomata Karolinorum, IV (München, 1994), p. 125.
[57] Ibidem.
[58] DLUII34.

between the monastery and the queen. For the same reason, the diploma stresses Angelberga's role as mother (she is only defined as "mater eius nobis dilecta Engilberga") rather than as an empress. In this transaction Gisla appears as the veritable intermediary between the monastery and the imperial family. This is a family operation with political significance, but Angelberga held only a marginal role.[59]

A significant change in the status of Angelberga has to be placed in the mid 860s. At the beginning of 864, she was with Louis II in Rome, where the emperor tried to intercede with the pope on account of his brother Lothar II, who was still in trouble over his marital affairs. It was Angelberga who, according to the *Annals of St Bertin*, conducted the negotiations with the pope.[60] In the autumn of the same year Louis II was seriously injured while hunting, but had a quick recovery.[61] In the same year she was granted the royal *curtis* of Guastalla.[62] Unlike the *curtes* granted in 860 as dower, for Guastalla – a royal estate with much political and economic significance[63] – there was more stress on the permanent nature of the donation: the *curtis* was granted "hereditario iure" and "iure proprietatis". A few days after the diploma was issued, Walbertus, the bishop of Modena (the diocese where Guastalla lies), gave approval to the grant of the *curtis* to Angelberga.[64] Guastalla was a royal estate, and there was no need for such an approval from the bishop. This appearance suggests that Angelberga was employed to create and strengthen alliances between the emperor and local elites, in this case the bishop of Modena. Moreover, in February 865, Louis II issued a diploma for the monastery of Bobbio, with the intercession of his wife ("per Angelberga dilectissima coniunx nostra").[65] The charter confirmed the privileges and rights granted to Bobbio by Lothar I in 843.[66] Angelberga acted as intercessor for one of the most important Italian monasteries, in a grant issued in a moment of political significance. The confirmation for Bobbio was requested by the abbot Ermericus. He was very close to the imperial circle, for he had worked in Lothar I's chancery and had probably moved to Italy at the same time as Louis II. The presence of Angelberga in the charter therefore indicates the growing importance of the empress in imperial diplomacy, in relation to the changing situation of the kingdom. In other

[59] For further discussion on the properties mentioned in the document and their significance see chapter 4, pp. 125-126.
[60] *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 864, p. 68.
[61] F. Bougard, *Ludovico II,* DBI, vol. 56 (2006), pp. 387 – 394, at p. 390.
[62] DLUII40.
[63] See below, chapter 4, p. 129.
[64] E. Falconi, ed, *Le carte cremonesi dei secoli VIII – XII*, vol. I (Rome, 1979), n. 18; I. Affò, *Istoria della città e ducato di Guastalla* (Parma, 1785) pp. 25 – 26.
[65] DLUII42.
[66] DLOI77.

words, these charters are showing changes in specific political circumstances and in political relationships at the royal court, with the empress getting increasing space. The titles, at the same time, can be seen as reflecting the different aspects of queenship that rulers wanted to underline: her familial role of wife and mother, as well as her involvement in political affairs. This shows that the role of the queen was neither familial and informal nor institutionalized: it was a combination of both domains, and each aspect was underlined from time to time according to the purpose of the charter.

The year 866 marked the preparation of Louis' military expedition in southern Italy. The involvement of Angelberga in this period is attested by her displacement to southern Italy with Louis and his court. During the period which Louis II spent in the south the empress received a considerable number of royal grants. The first one, which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, was issued in May 866, probably in Capua, and granted to Angelberga the "corticellam nostram Ibernam sitam non longe a corte Olonna".[67] For the first time, Angelberga was presented as *consors imperii*: "dilectam coniugem nostram atque consortem imperii nostri". As mentioned above, Inverno had been granted by Lothar II to his brother with the specific intention of passing it on to Angelberga.[68] This transaction can be related to the support Angelberga was giving to Lothar's case. However, this charter presents other complex implications. What was the right of Lothar II's ownership of a royal estate in Italy? Why was this estate specifically given to Angelberga and why did this passage require not one, but two royal grants? Why did Lothar not grant the *curtis* directly to Angelberga herself? This charter displays an alliance based on three components: the two Carolingian brothers, Louis II and Lothar II, and Angelberga as an intermediary.[69] As for the title of *consors imperii*, scholars have linked this element to the growing influence that Angelberga had gained in her husband's reign.[70] However, this argument remains vague, because it does not explain how the title would have acquired its specific significance nor its relationship to Angelberga's political activities.

The analysis of the context in which the charter was produced illuminates interesting aspects with regard to this problem. The diploma which granted Inverno to Angelberga was recognized by the notary Gauginus, who recognized most of the diplomas issued in southern Italy between 866 and 871. Gauginus was, as noted by François Bougard, a member of a

[67] DLUII45.
[68] DLOII29.
[69] See Koziol, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 12-13.
[70] Odegaard, 'The Empress Engelberga', p. 77; Bougard, *Engelberga.*

restricted administrative entourage who moved with Louis II in southern Italy. The expedition in southern Italy involved a displacement of the royal court, far from the traditional centres of power, and the reorganization of royal court and chancery.[71] The Carolingian chancery was usually a hierarchical structure: composed of a head chancellor, chancellors and notaries, and scribes. In southern Italy the chancery lacked a leader and was composed only of a small group of notaries, who were probably free to create a more flexible diplomatic language and to adapt it to the requirements of the moment.

However, not all charters produced in southern Italy and recognized by notary Gauginus use the same expression to define the empress. In July 866 Louis II issued another charter for Angelberga. This time she was granted three properties in north-eastern Italy, Sesto in the *comitatus* of Cremona, Locarno in the *comitatus* of Stazzona (Como) and *Aticianum* in the area of Diano (Liguria).[72] In this document Angelberga is not defined *consors imperii*, but rather "dilectae coniugi nostrae, clarissimae scilicet augustae Angilbergae". Gauginus recognized another charter, on 28th April 868 in Venosa, granting San Salvatore to Angelberga, and in case of her death, to her daughter Ermengarda. Based on the 861 diploma, this charter was issued following the death of Gisla, who until then had directed the nunnery. This charter explicitly stresses Angelberga's political role as "consors et adiutrix regni pariter dilectissime coniuge nostrae, clarissimae scilicet augustae Angilbergae". Expressions such as *adiutrix regni* and *augusta* seem to suggest an increasing stress on the empress' political role, which cannot be found in the previous donation of 861.[73] The second half of the 860s saw, therefore, a change in Angelberga's status, as well as the introduction of several queenly titles, which were used more frequently for her than other queens before her. A diploma issued in Venosa on 25th May 869, granted to Angelberga five *curtes* situated in the northeast of Italy.[74] The document presents Angelberga as "amantissimam coniugem nostram Angilbergam imperatricem augustam"; and requesting the grant of the *curtes:* "eiusdem dulcissimae coniugis nostrae petitioni serenitatis aurem libentissime accomodantes praescriptas res".

At the same time Angelberga's family, the Supponid group, started to be actively involved in royal affairs.[75] They had originally settled in Italy at the beginning of the ninth century, when

[71] Bougard, 'La cour et le gouvernement', pp. 259 - 262.
[72] DLUII46.
[73] This title reflects the expression used by Agobard of Lyon, see above, chapter 2, pp. 25-26.
[74] DLUII49. See below, chapter 4, pp. 129-131.
[75] For a complete and recent discussion on the family, see: Bougard, 'Les Supponides'.

Suppo I was sent to Italy from Frankia as an imperial *missus*. In the following years the Supponids managed to settle in Brescia, where Suppo I became count around 817. In 822 he was appointed duke of Spoleto. Brescia remained under the control of his family, as the title of count of Brescia passed to his brother Mauringus. One of Suppo I's sons, Adalgisus, became count of Parma before 835. It has been argued that Cunegunda, the wife of king Bernard of Italy, was Adalgisus' sister, but this hypothesis remains difficult to prove.[76] It is, however, with the third generation of the Parmense branch that the family reached their maximum success: Angelberga – Adalgisus' daughter – married the emperor, and her brothers all played important political roles in the second half of the ninth century. Her brother Suppo II made territorial acquisitions in the area of Asti and Turin and was mentioned in an 880 document as *vice comes* in Asti.[77] It seems, therefore, that Angelberga's family had developed interests in that region.

The 869 charter was recognized by Leudinus, who was shortly after to become bishop of Modena and had probably worked as chancellor during the military expedition in the south, mainly following the diplomatic model established by Gauginus.[78] In April 870, Louis II granted two fiscal *curtes* in the area of Parma to his *vassus* Suppo III, Angelberga's cousin, who had been sent to Costantinople as an imperial *missus* between 869 and 870.[79] This charter was also recognized by the notary Gauginus. The two *curtes* were granted with the intercession of the empress: "qualiter Angelberga dilectissima coniunx et consors imperii nostri expetivit [sic] clementiam nostram". Parma had been controlled by the Supponids for most of the ninth century: the office of count of Parma had probably been inherited by Angelberga's brother, Suppo II.[80] In this charter Angelberga interceded for her cousin in two different capacities: on one hand as the *consors imperii* at Louis II's side in administering concessions for his *fideles*, on the other hand as a member of a powerful and influential noble family. The document, however, gives more stress to the political aspect: the familial relationship between Angelberga and Suppo is not mentioned, instead the wording of the document rather emphasizes the relationship between Suppo and the emperor ("strenuo vasso", "dilecto consiliario nostro" "inclito vasso nostro"), as well as his political value.[81] In

[76] See below, chapter 4, p. 129.
[77] Hlawitschka, *Franken,* pp. 269–271.
[78] Wanner, *Ludovici II diplomata*, p. 161.
[79] Hlawtischka, *Franken*, pp. 271–273; DLUII50.
[80] Ibidem, pp. 110-111; see also Bougard, 'Les Supponides', p. 390.
[81] On the relationship between Angelberga and her family as it emerges from the documents see also C. La Rocca, 'Angelberga, Louis's II Wife, and her Will (877)', in R. Corradini, M. Gillis, R. McKitterick, eds, *Ego*

this way, it shows an attempt to de-emphasize the family connection between Angelberga and her kin: to present her exclusively as a royal woman.

The documents mentioned above show three main things. First of all they illuminate the influence that Angelberga exercised in southern Italy. This is confirmed by a revolt that exploded in Benevento against the royal family in 871, during which Louis, Angelberga and their daughter were imprisoned. Two sources, the *Annals of St Bertin* and the *Chronicon Salernitanum* attribute the responsibility to Angelberga, who, left by Louis in charge of controlling the city, vexed the Beneventans with her arrogance.[82] Although Angelberga's direct responsibility is hard to assess, these accounts acknowledge her involvement in the administration of royal affairs in southern Italy, as they tell us that the empress was a lieutenant while Louis II was on the battlefield. The second aspect is the growing involvement of Angelberga's family in Louis' politics. As local officials and *missi*, Angelberga's brothers and cousins were rewarded by the emperor. Their growing influence coincided also with the increasing economic and political resources that the empress acquired. The third aspect is the introduction of new *intitulationes* to define the empress and their possible meaning. *Consors regni*/*imperii* has been interpreted by several scholars as the acknowledgement of the empress' institutional role; I argue, instead, that the use of the title has to be related to broader political issues. First of all, *consors* was not used in all the grants for Angelberga, despite the fact that they were produced by the same group of notaries. The chancery used in fact a variety of titles – *consors regni*, *adiutrix*, *augusta*, *imperatrix* – which were rarely used for royal wives before Angelberga. Why, if *consors regni* had the institutional weight which scholars have attributed to it, was the title not used all the time?

What needs to be underlined is the introduction of several queenly titles, which were not particularly common before Angelberga. This must be related to the new situation of the chancery: to the freedom chancellors had to invent – or reinvent – the diplomatic lexicon.[83] Secondly, these titles echoed imperial authority. Their use was related to the historical moment in which they were employed, a moment of complex negotiations with the Byzantine

Trouble: Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages (Forschungen Zur Geschichte Des Mittelalters) (Vienna, 2010), pp. 221-226.

[82] See above, chapter 2, pp. 40-41.

[83] Bougard, 'La cour et le gouvernement', p. 261. According to Huschner, notaries had a growing role at Louis' court: W. Huschner, *Transalpine Kommunikation im Mittelalter; diplomatische, kulturelle und politische Wechselwirkungen zwischen Italien und dem nordalpinen Reich (9. - 11. Jahrhundert)* (Vols. 1-3), (Hanover, 2003), pp. 30 -32. According to Wolfram, in this period Louis II's diplomas imitate Lothar I's formulae and in general the East Frankish tradition, in line with Louis and Angelberga's political alliance to the Eastern Carolingians: Wolfram, 'Lateinische Herrschertitel', p. 69.

empire. The expedition in southern Italy intensified the relations between the two empires, as the Byzantines also had interests in that area. In 871 Louis II sent a letter, probably written by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, to Basil I, replying to a previous missive of the Byzantine emperor, which has not survived. Louis' letter discusses various matters, namely the military campaign and the patriarchate. However, its core is represented by Louis II's claim legitimately to call himself emperor, which the *basileus* was questioning.[84] Louis argued that he had the right to be called emperor, as his father and grandfather were emperors, and most importantly, as he had been consecrated by the pope.[85] The letter shows that Basil did not want to recognize the legitimacy of Louis' imperial title and hence that the language of authority was a very significant issue in these years. The language we find in Louis II's charters in this period – also with regard to his wife's titles - can be related to these discussions. The use of *consors imperii* – a solemn title, both because of its Roman origin and its use in Carolingian diplomatics – and of other titles that echoed political significance can be seen as an attempt to use a more formalized political language. This language would have stressed imperial authority in a period in which the relations with the Byzantine empire were extremely significant for Louis II.

The charters issued in southern Italy aimed at displaying Louis' authority to his own entourage, but also to the nobility of the Lombard principalities, whose support the emperor needed. Angelberga was employed in this operation: this is shown by the charters issued for her, or with her collaboration, but also by the coins that Louis issued during his stay in the south. In Benevento Louis II issued silver *denarii*, which represented a "radical break" with the tradition of Beneventan coinage.[86] Some of the Beneventan coins display Angelberga's name and title. There are four types of them. In the first type the couple's names - Louis on the obverse, Angelberga on the reverse - are accompanied by the title *dominus/a*; in the second the monogram "Agus" (in the obverse) is circumscribed by "Ludovicus Imp", while on the reverse "Agu/sta" is circumscribed by "Angilberga Imp". The third type shows "Ludovicus Inp" (obverse) and "Angilberga Inp" (reverse) written in the center of each side. The fourth type differs from the third only for the reverse, which has a small cross in the

[84] *Ludovici II imperatoris epistola ad Basilium I imperatorem Constantinopolitanum missa*, ed. W. Henze, MGH, Epistolae Karolini Aevi V (Berlin, 1928), pp. 385-394.
[85] G. Arnaldi, 'Impero d'Occidente e impero d'Oriente in una lettera di Ludovico II', *La Cultura*, I (1964), pp. 404–424.
[86] P. Grierson, M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*: *The early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986), i. 1116-1118; G. West, *Studies in Representations and Perceptions of the Carolingians in Italy 774-875*, unpublished PhD thesis, King's College London 1998, pp. 186–192.

centre. Ermanno Arslan has assessed the number of dies for Louis II's and Angelberga's surviving *denarii* – 48 for the obverse and 74 for the reverse.[87] This suggests that the coins were produced in a large number (Arslan has identified 104 surviving examples) and therefore were meant not only for a celebratory purpose, but to be in use and to circulate. Why would Louis decide to issue a considerable number of coins with his wife's name? This is almost unprecedented, as until the tenth century there is but one other case of coins issued under the name of a queen in the early medieval West.[88] According to Geoffrey West, "given Angilberga's uniquely important role as an imperial consort, the *Augusta* title may have been consciously intended to reinforce her position by presenting her as quite simply the female *Augustus*."[89] West underlines the lack of evidence for models which could have inspired Louis to issue this type of coins. However, these models can be found in the East: in the Byzantine empire coins were often issued in the name of empresses, usually accompanied by the title "augusta".[90] The issuing of Louis' coinage in southern Italy probably took place, according to Arslan, in 870- 871.[91] The coinage could be therefore seen as part of the attempt to promote Louis and his wife's imperial authority. Furthermore, it was a way to advertise Angelberga's role to the local population, which, according to narrative accounts, was not particularly partial to her.

The three aspects mentioned above – the empress' assistance in diplomatic affairs, her family involvement in royal politics and introduction of new titles in charters and coins – show that the emperor made the most of his wife's support. Even after their return to the north, Angelberga maintained her role as intercessor, reinforcing the relationship with religious institutions in northern Italy. In 872 she interceded for the church of Piacenza ("per Angilbergam coniugem nostram et consortem imperii nostri") and in 873 for St Ambrose in Milan ("Angilberga dilectissima coniux nostra et consors imperii").[92] In 874 she intervened for the *vassus* Gumbertus, probably a member of the empress' own entourage.[93] Between 870

[87] E. Arslan, 'Sequenze dei conii e valutazioni quantitative delle monetazioni argentea ed aurea di Benevento Longobarda', in G. Deyperot, T. Hackens, G. Moucharte, eds, *Rythmes de la production monétaire, de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1987), pp. 387–409.
[88] The only exception is the Anglo-Saxon Cynethryth, wife of the Mercian king Offa. See A. Rovelli, 'Imperatrici e regine nelle emission monetarie altomedievali', in La Rocca, *Agire da donna*, pp. 211–234, at p. 226.
[89] West, *Studies in Representations*, p. 189.
[90] L. Brubaker, 'The Gender of Money: Byzantine Empresses on Coins (324 – 802)', in Mulder-Bakker, Stafford, *Gendering the Middle Ages*, pp. 42-64.
[91] Arslan, 'Sequenze', p. 405.
[92] DLUII56; DLUII60.
[93] DLUII65. The charter for Gumbert ended up in the archive of San Sisto; therefore Gumbert seems related to the monastic foundation and hence to the empress.

and 874 Louis confirmed Angelberga's properties three times. The first time was when the empress and the emperor were still in southern Italy: Louis confirmed, with the support of his *fideles*, her landed wealth and movable goods, stressing the perpetuity of Angelberga's control of her properties ("omnia haec in perpetuum stabilientes ei et, ut praediximus, roborantes"; "Similiter donamus ei a praesenti die atque concedimus in perpetuum"; "…et haec… auctoritate munita perpetualiter potiatur et suo semper uiri vindicet atque defendat"; "ad possidendum videlicet et utendum omnibus his in perpetuum atque donandum ec reliquendum").[94] The same stress is present in two 874 diplomas issued at Corteolona: the first was a general confirmation, while the other was a concession of some properties in Piacenza in order that the empress could found a nunnery in that city.[95]

The stress on the perpetuity of Angelberga's ownership can be related to Louis' concerns. He did not have an heir – Angelberga, now in her forties, had given him two daughters. The *Annals of St Bertin* tell us that in 872, during a further expedition in southern Italy, Louis considered marrying the daughter of the count of Siena, Winigis, through the persuasions of his men. He therefore asked Angelberga to remain in the north of Italy, where she was living at the time, but the empress did not follow his instructions, and joined her husband in Benevento.[96] This episode suggests that the emperor may have thought about a divorce, but he later declined the idea, probably mindful of his brother's experience. Louis was therefore forced to make the most of his delicate position and to negotiate an agreement with the other Carolingians about his succession. The preference seems to have been directed towards the Eastern Carolingians, namely Louis the German and his sons. Angelberga had a significant role in the negotiations which took place at the beginning of the Seventies. The *Annals of St Bertin* report that she summoned both Louis the German and Charles the Bald to north eastern Italy to discuss the matter.[97] The fact that Angelberga was actively involved in these negotiations not only shows her influence, but also how precarious her position was. Were Louis II to die, she would have found herself without male children to support her. The stress on the perpetuity of her properties in these late confirmations indicates that Louis was concerned for Angelberga's situation in case of his death. Despite these efforts, after Louis

[94] DLUII51.
[95] DLUII66; DLUII67.
[96] *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 872, p. 120: "Et quia primores Italiae Ingelbergam propter suam insolentiam habentes exosam, in loco illius filiam Winigisi imperatori substituentes, obtinuerunt apud eundem imperatorem, ut missum suum ad Ingelbergam mitteret, quatenus in Italiam degeret et post illum non pergeret, sed eum in Italia reversurum exspectaret".
[97] Ibidem, a. 872, pp. 120-121.

II's death, in 875 Angelberga found herself in trouble. The emperor's death marked the beginning of a political crisis. In the following years, Italy would be ruled by three different Carolingian kings: Charles the Bald (875–877), Karlman (877-879) and Charles the Fat (879-888).

Their wives, however, were not present on the Italian scene. Only Richgard, Charles the Fat's wife, was occasionally involved in Italian affairs. Simon MacLean has argued that in the first years of his rule Charles was particularly interested in strengthening the support of the "power – brokers" of the kingdom. He inserted his wife into the system: Richgard acted as intercessor together with the archchancellor Liutward in a diploma of 881, which confirmed Louis II's donation of the *curtis* of Locate to the church of San Giovanni in Monza;[98] the same property had been previously granted by Lothar I to his mother-in-law Ava.[99] Charles' diploma mentions Louis II's donation ("gloriosi imperatoris Hludouuici nepotis") of the *curtis* to the church of San Giovanni, for the sake of the memory of his parents Lothar I and Ermengarda ("pro remedio animarum parentum suorum") and therefore aimed at presenting the grant as a Carolingian familial operation. The empress' involvement in Italy is also shown by the fact that she was asked by Pope John VIII to intercede for the liberation of Angelberga, who in these years had been sent into exile by Charles the Fat. The reasons of this exile are obscure (as is the place where she stayed) but it has been attributed to the support she may have given to her son-in-law, Boso, who in 877 had married her daughter Ermengarda.[100] The fact that the Pope chose to write to Richgard about such a significant matter demonstrates that she had gained influence in Italy, as the emperor was attempting to create for her the same role previously held by the absentee Angelberga.

During her husband's reign Richgard appeared in several charters as the beneficiary of imperial donations, but only on one occasion was she defined as *consors regni* ("Rickarde dilectissime nostre et regni nostri consorti").[101] This happened in a diploma issued in 881, by which she was granted the nunnery of San Marino in Pavia. The fact that the document concerned an Italian institution could reinforce the argument that the title was, after all, related to the Italian kingdom.[102] Although the lack of *recognitio* makes it impossible to

[98] DCIII46.
[99] DLOI29. On Charles' politics in Italy see MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, pp. 91–97.
[100] Io.Rg.309. I will discuss this below: chapter 5, pp. 164-165.
[101] DCIII42.
[102] Delogu ('"Consors regni"', pp. 95–96) argues that Charles the Fat's chancery was very much influenced by the models established by Louis II's diplomatics.

establish who wrote the charter, it is likely that it was recognized by the archchancellor Liutward of Vercelli, who was very much involved in Italian affairs.[103] The document was not produced in Italy, but at the royal estate of Bodman. However, the charter shows many similarities with the diplomatic language used in the donations for Angelberga: besides the use of the title *consors*, the lack of an intercessor is also worth noticing. Like Angelberga, Richgard did not have someone petitioning for her, and made the request for her own donation: "Insuper quoque amore et eius postulationibus instigata". Because of these similarities it is possible that this charter was modeled on a previous diploma for Angelberga.

After Angelberga's return to Italy, in March or April 882, she remained on good terms with Charles the Fat, who in the same year confirmed some of her properties.[104] The restoration of their friendship coincided with the exclusion of Richgard from Italian affairs, and with the deterioration of her relationship with Charles the Fat.[105] San Marino, the nunnery which Richgard acquired in 881, was later, in 889, confirmed – not granted – to Angelberga by Arnulf of Carinthia.[106] It could have been, therefore, controlled by Angelberga before Charles the Fat's arrival in Italy, even if there is no evidence of this in the sources. If that was the case, Charles the Fat assigned to his wife a nunnery that had belonged to the former empress while she was in exile, through a diploma that employed all the features we find in charters for Angelberga. The symbolic role that Richgard was assigned while Angelberga was away was performed through the assignment of queenly religious institutions.

Ermengarda, Angelberga and Richgard appear in charters with different frequency and different functions. Ermengarda and Angelberga were both employed, with the support of their familial groups, to help their husbands in setting up and reinforcing a system of support in areas that had just entered under their control, northern Italy for Lothar and southern Italy for Louis II. They were both involved in monastic patronage, but the "patrimonial reserve" of Italian queens was not necessarily attached to a particular religious institution, as has been argued in relation to San Salvatore, but rather to several properties and monasteries, which could be transmitted from one queen to another for several political reasons. In this view, the meaning of the title of *consors regni* needs reconsidering. It was not introduced in royal charters in relation to San Salvatore in Brescia, as has been argued, but rather in combination with the revival of the expression in Carolingian literature and thanks to its Late Roman

[103] On Richgard in Italy see MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, pp. 178–184.
[104] DCIII56.
[105] See below, chapter 5, pp. 164-165.
[106] DArn49.

tradition. Later on, it was used by Louis II's chancery to reinforce the language of imperial authority that the emperor was trying to advertise in southern Italy. By taking into account the reciprocal influences among various chanceries, and therefore the similarities among the documents, the institutional and political meaning which has been suggested by scholars – as well as the argument of its function in reinforcing the validity of marital union - becomes questionable. Instead, one must underline that the title was employed by Italian chanceries thanks to the close communication between members of the court, and thanks to the increasing political significance of Louis II's diplomatic production. Once accepted and customary in the diplomatic set of practices, it became a tool which could be employed for multiple reasons and with different semantic nuances.

3. Post-Carolingian queens in charters I (888 – 924)

The disappearance of Charles the Fat, in 888, marks the end of the Carolingian control of Italy. This ending, however, was not abrupt: descendants of the Carolingian family continued to fight for the Italian crown and the imperial title attached to it. Each of them had their own means to do so. Berengar, the first non-Carolingian king of Italy, had some Carolingian blood, as his mother, Gisla, was Louis the Pious' daughter. This would become one of the main arguments for his suitability for the Italian throne and imperial title.[107] His main opponent, Guy of Spoleto, did not have Carolingian connections, and used other means to boost his royal ambitions. This section is focused on the struggle between Berengar and Guy, on their respective reigns, and on the opposition they had to face from the other members of the Carolingian family who arrived in Italy to claim the imperial title. Through the analysis of documentary evidence I will show that royal women played a very significant part in these struggles; and more importantly that the different ways they were presented and employed in diplomatics reflect the different strategies of each ruler.

It is safe to say that at the time he settled in Italy - around 868/870 – Berengar did not have royal ambitions, as Louis II was still alive and the question of the succession not a pressing matter yet. Berengar's family, the Unrochings, originally settled in Flanders, were cementing an alliance with the Supponids, of which Berengar's marriage was one component. One of Berengar's aunts, who had been educated in San Salvatore, married Suppo III, Angelberga's

[107] G. Arnaldi, *Berengario I*, DBI, 9 (1967), pp. 1-26, at p.24.

cousin.[108] Berengar's marriage to a Supponid woman, Bertilla, Angelberga's niece, could be read in a teleological perspective. Historians have argued that Bertilla was chosen because other women of her family – Cunegunda, Bernard's wife, and Angelberga – had been married to Italian rulers. Berengar's marriage would have assumed much significance for his royal career: during the ninth century the Supponid family carried on a process of "female dynastisation", placing three Supponid women as wives for Italian rulers.[109] However, there is no sign that this pattern was recognized as such by their contemporaries: Berengar's choice of bride was related to his desire to reinforce bonds with a powerful family group in Italy. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that his marriage to Bertilla brought him advantanges in terms of territorial expansion: Bertilla's father controlled important landholdings in the area of Parma and in the north-east.[110] The bride may have brought some of these lands to her new family.

Berengar's influence rose during the 870s and especially the 880s, as he became one of the most influential magnates of the kingdom and a valuable ally for the East-Frankish Carolingians.[111] After the deposition of Charles the Fat, Berengar had the opportunity to be elected king of Italy; his choice of bride could, at that point, be extremely useful. Barbara Rosenwein, in her work on Berengar's political career, has shown that Bertilla, and more generally the women of Berengar's family, were the pivot of his family politics.[112] Although there are no surviving documents which show Bertilla being granted properties and rights for herself, she often appeared as intercessor in grants for others. In the period between 901 and 905 Bertilla's interventions reached about a third of the total grants issued by Berengar, an extraordinary number in comparison with other royal women. This suggests that she was at the core of her husband's diplomatic activities. However, according to La Rocca, Bertilla "faute de temps sans doute, n'acquit jamais une dimension pleinement autonome".[113]

This statement is questionable, as Bertilla's autonomy can be seen in the role she played at court during her marriage and even in her mysterious death in 912/913.[114] She had been married to Berengar for almost thirty years, and her influence at court during this period is evident. Rosenwein has pointed out that Bertilla's numerous interventions reveal "her wide

[108] Arnaldi, *Berengario I*, p. 3; Bougard, 'Les Supponides', pp. 392-393.
[109] Lazzari, 'Una mamma carolingia', p. 43.
[110] Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 269-271.
[111] Arnaldi, *Berengario I*, pp. 2-9; MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, pp. 70-80.
[112] Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics'.
[113] La Rocca, 'Les cadeaux', p. 519.
[114] *Gesta Berengarii imperatoris*, pp. 374-375. On this see above, chapter 2, pp. 44-45.

circle of friends".[115] In most royal charters, moreover, Bertilla was defined as *consors regni*: Rosenwein suggested that the recurrence of the title had political and familial implications, as the queen enjoyed the Supponid "female tradition". However, Rosenwein does not contextualize the occasions on which Bertilla appears as intercessor in the light of the broader political situation. She has suggested that Bertilla's familial relations had a strong impact on the way in which she was represented in charters: her *intitulatio* as *consors regni* would have aimed to establish a political continuity with Louis II's reign.[116] I argue, instead, that the diplomatic evidence available for Bertilla shows that her constant appearance as intercessor was not only down to a matter of personal contacts, nor Berengar's take on a political model established by Louis II and Angelberga, but rather a combination of Bertilla's family connections and Berengar's attempts to control the kingdom and its turbulent aristocracy.

A revision of the chronology related to Bertilla's interventions can help to clarify this point. In the early years of Berengar's reign Bertilla intervened only in two charters. The first, dated 3rd November 890, granted a *curtis*, called Mercoriatico, in the *comitatus* of Reggio Emilia, to the priest John, at the request of Bishop Adelard of Reggio and "Berchtilae dilectae coniugis et consortis regni nostri".[117] Not much is known about John, apart from the fact that he must have been one of Berengar's supporters and a member of the church of Reggio. The link between Bertilla and Reggio was probably represented by her family: Rudolf, son of Bertilla's cousin Unroch, is attested as count of Reggio Emilia in 931.[118] It is possible that a generation before that, the family had already started to settle in the area. In 890 Berengar confirmed to Unroch some *curtes* in that area, Malliaco and Fellina (together with other properties in the Parma area),[119] which had been granted in 870 to his father Suppo III by Louis II with the intercession of Angelberga.[120] The fact that Unroch is defined in the document as "consanguineus noster" has been seen as a hint that his mother was related to Berengar, thanks to the above-mentioned marriage between Berengar's aunt and Suppo III. A few months later Berengar granted the *curtis* Mercoriatico to Ropertus, vassal of Adalgisus, who acted as intercessor together with Adelard.[121] Adalgisus was Bertilla's brother and count of Piacenza; as Mercoriatico belonged to the jurisdiction of Reggio, it is possible that at that

[115] Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics', p. 256.
[116] Ibidem, p. 257.
[117] DBerI10.
[118] Hlawitschka, *Franken*, p. 258.
[119] DBerI8.
[120] DLUII50.
[121] DBerI10, p. 37.

time, Unroch not being yet count of Reggio, the office was held by his cousin Adalgisus. However, as Eduard Hlawitschka has pointed out, it is very difficult to assess what kind of relations Adalgisus built and maintained in Reggio at the time.[122] The issuing of these charters followed Berengar's military defeat at the hands of the other claimant to the Italian throne, Guy of Spoleto, who had defeated Berengar at the battle of Trebbia in 889. Girolamo Arnaldi has therefore argued that at this time Berengar was recovering his forces in the northeast and trying to get a stronger grip on the areas where he could count on local support, such as Reggio Emilia and Parma.[123] His wife represented an excellent connection with the local elite, and for this reason she was employed as intercessor. However, Berengar's attempt was not successful, or not successful enough, as *de facto* he left the kingdom in the hands of his adversary.

Unlike Bertilla, Ageltrude, Guy's wife, was not born into the north Italian nobility, as she was the daughter of the prince of Benevento, Adelchis. However, like Bertilla, she was chosen by Guy before he had nurtured royal ambitions. Being an outsider meant that Ageltrude had to find new friends and supporters once her husband managed to conquer the kingdom. She did this very successfully. Narrative sources report that she was involved in political affairs, and that after her husband's death she remained active in politics at the side of her son Lambert; documentary evidence shows that she granted a considerable amount of properties and monastic institutions in northern Italy. Most importantly, her presence in diplomas is characterized by three aspects: the peculiarity of her titles, her role as competitor for the Carolingian women, and the close relationship with the chancery. All these aspects help to illuminate Guy's political strategies to keep the kingdom under control.

A veritable turning-point in Guy's career was represented by his imperial coronation, which took place in Rome in February 891.[124] This deeply affected Guy's diplomatic production. Luigi Schiaparelli has argued that after the imperial coronation Guy's chancery was reorganized around the figure of the archchancellor Elbuncus and given a more defined structure.[125] Elbuncus' career continued also after Guy's death in 894, as archchancellor of his son Lambert: he represented therefore a continuity in the diplomatic language and

[122] Hlawitschka, *Franken,* pp. 112–113.
[123] Arnaldi, *Berengario I*, pp. 12-13.
[124] Cammarosano, *Nobili e re*, pp. 208–213.
[125] L. Schiaparelli, 'I diplomi dei re d'Italia. Ricerche storico-diplomatiche, II: I diplomi di Guido e di Lamberto', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano*, 26 (1905), pp. 7-104, at pp. 12-16; F. Bougard, *Elbungo*, DBI 42 (1993), pp. 379 – 380.

structures of Widonid kingship. Guy's imperial chapel, which was presided over by Wibod, bishop of Parma, also collaborated with the chancery.[126] Later on, after Wibod's death, Elbuncus became bishop of Parma: his testament in 913 proves that he survived the political end of the Widonids and that he became Berengar's man, for the will mentions some valuable objects that "senior meus domnus Berengarius piissimus rex mihi dedit".[127] Together with Wibod, who had been part of the royal entourage under the late Carolingians, the chancery represented continuity with the past – the Carolingians - and the future – Berengar and his successors.

Elbuncus also presided over the creation of an original diplomatic language: as Robert Henri Bautier has underlined, the end of the Carolingian empire provoked the disappearance of fixed rules in diplomatics and therefore chancellors' individual choices acquired more importance.[128] Four diplomas, issued on the day of Guy's imperial coronation in Rome, on 21st February 891, are particularly interesting for the analysis of political language, as well as for the role Ageltrude played. The diplomas, now preserved in the Archivio Capitolare of Parma, confirmed or granted properties to the new empress, with the intercession of the archchaplain Wibod and, in one case (DGui5) of the *marchio* of Ivrea Anscar, a member of Guy's family group.[129] They show common features, which are peculiar to Guy's chancery.[130] Among them are the emperor and empress' titles: "Vuido divina favente clementia imperator augustus" and "dilectissime coniugi nostrae Ageltrudi imperatrici et consortem imperii nostri".

The reason for the issuing of several diplomas in favour of Ageltrude on this particular day has been debated by scholars. Paola Guglielmotti has recently pointed out that Ageltrude's new patrimonial situation was created to fit her new public status.[131] In her case *consortium imperii* was associated with the acquisition of properties with a well-established royal identity. The granting of benefices to religious institutions could be the king's deliberate choice of imitating a tradition. Rosenwein has noted that new rulers tended "to follow the

[126] Schiaparelli, 'I diplomi dei re d'Italia. Ricerche storico-diplomatiche, II', pp. 11-12.
[127] G. Drei, *Le carte degli archivi parmensi*, vol. I (Parma, 1924), n. 9, pp. 37–41.
[128] Bautier, 'La chancellerie'.
[129] DGui4, DGui5; DGui6; DGui7. On Anscar see: M.G. Bertolini, *Anscario*, DBI, 3 (1961), pp. 375–378; Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 218-130; G. Sergi, 'Anscarici, Arduinici, Aleramici: elementi per una comparazione fra dinastie marchionali', in *Formazione e strutture dei ceti dominati* (1988), pp. 11–28.
[130] Schiaparelli, 'I diplomi dei re d'Italia. Ricerche storico-diplomatiche', II, pp. 69-72.
[131] P. Guglielmotti, 'Ageltrude: dal ducato di Spoleto al cuore del regno Italico', in T. Lazzari, ed, *Il patrimonio delle regine: beni del fisco e politica regia tra IX e X secolo*, *Reti Medievali - Rivista*, 13, 2 (2012), pp. 163-186.

tradition of kings in giving away the symbols and substance of fortified edifices".[132] This model has been applied by La Rocca to the relationship between Italian queenship and San Salvatore in Brescia. I have argued above that this can be generally applied to monastic institutions in northern Italy. In the case of Ageltrude it is applicable to the Pavese monasteries that had a royal identity, as they had been founded and endowed by Lombard and Carolingian queens.

Guy, however, had to choose other symbols of power, as San Salvatore and San Sisto were controlled by his adversaries, Berengar and the Supponids. Besides DGui4, which confirmed to Ageltrude properties and rights she already had, the other three charters concern three nunneries in the town of Pavia. DGui5 granted to Ageltrude San Marino, the nunnery probably founded by Richgard, which in 889 had been granted to Angelberga by Arnulf of Carinthia.[133] DGui6 concerns the confirmation of Sant'Agata: the convent was, therefore, already under the control of Ageltrude.[134] Finally, DGui7 established the grant of the nunnery *Reginae* in Pavia[135]. These charters qualify Ageltrude as *consors imperii* and as a significant member of Guy's entourage, granting her nunneries which were linked to past queens. The confirmation of Sant'Agata is particularly interesting, as this was a royal nunnery outside of Guy's sphere of control, and the original donation must date back to the royal coronation, that is to say after May 889. Moreover, the diplomas suggest that Ageltrude was close to other members of the imperial court and that she was supported by Guy's key men, especially bishop Wibod of Parma. The close relationship between the empress and the diocese of Parma would become more evident in the later part of Ageltrude's life: in her last testament, produced in 923, she granted her properties to the church of Parma.[136] The other person who appears as intercessor for Ageltrude is the *marchio* of Ivrea Anscar, who had been a faithful ally of Guy since 888, and fought in the battle of the Trebbia river in 889.[137] He appears in the charter with the title "marchio dilectusque consiliarius noster". Anscar is mentioned as *marchio* for the first time in this charter: this document records the creation of a significant territorial jurisdiction, the *marca* of Ivrea, which acquired a decisive strategic importance.[138] Following the imperial coronation, Ageltrude seems to be at the centre of a political network

[132] B. Rosenwein, *Negotiating space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999), p. 153. See below, chapter 4.
[133] DGui5; DArn49.
[134] DGui6.
[135] DGui7. On these monasteries see: Forzatti Golia, 'Monasteri femminili', pp. 4-11, 18-22.
[136] Drei, *Le carte degli archivi parmensi*, n. 28, pp. 94-97.
[137] *Gesta Berengarii imperatoris*, lib. II, p. 372.
[138] Sergi, *I confini del potere*, pp. 44-47.

which was expressed through a highly formalized diplomatic language, a formally organized chancery and the enhancement of relations with the *primores* of the kingdom. The use of *consors imperii* in the diplomas issued in February 891 suggests, moreover, a different meaning of the title, for it was employed by Guy's chancery exclusively in diplomas in which the empress appeared as beneficiary.

In order to clarify the last point, one needs to take into account that in 894 the Carolingian east-Frankish king, Arnulf of Carinthia, arrived in Italy and seriously threatened Guy's authority. Many northern Italian towns, such as Pavia, Milan and Piacenza, surrendered to him, while Guy hastily abandoned northern Italy and probably took refuge in the south. In April 894 he had set his court in the area of Petrognano, near Spoleto, which was controlled by his *fidelis* Liutald. However, Arnulf had soon to give up his plans to move towards Rome, because of the lack of adequate military forces;[139] during his retreat, in March 894, he encountered the opposition of Guy's ally, Anscar, at Ivrea. Just after this episode, in April 894, Guy granted to Ageltrude ("dilectissimae coniugi nostrae Ageltrudi imperatrici et consortem imperii nostri" [sic]) two *curtes* "iure hereditario", Murgola in the area of Bergamo and Sparavera in Piacenza.[140] Both those areas had been seriously affected by Arnulf's expedition in Italy. In particular, Bergamo had posed strenuous opposition to Arnulf; once the town had been taken by the Bavarian king, Count Ambrose had been ferociously executed.[141] Arnulf's expedition had also seriously affected Piacenza, where the Bavarian king had settled his court between February and March 894. Here he issued two diplomas, one of which was for the church of St Ambrose in Milan.[142] Arnulf had easy access into Milan as the count of the city, Manfred, had surrendered to the Bavarian king in order not to lose his office.[143] The diploma for St Ambrose proves that Arnulf could count on significant support inside the city, provided by the bishop and the lay elite. The diploma aimed at establishing a continuity with the previous rulers of Italy, as in the same document Arnulf confirmed to the monastery rights and properties granted by former Carolingian rulers, his own ancestors.

[139] For a synthesis of these events reported in narrative sources see Fasoli, *I re d'Italia*, pp. 24–30.
[140] DGui21.
[141] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, I 23, pp. 20-21.
[142] DArn122; DArn123.
[143] On these events see: E. Besta, 'Milano sotto gli imperatori Carolingi', in *Storia di Milano*, Vol. 2 (Milan, 1954), pp. 341 - 498. On Arnulf's expeditions to Italy and his relationship to Italian magnates, see: C. Hammer, 'Crowding the King: Rebellion and Political Violence in Late-Carolingian Bavaria and Italy', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 48 (2007), pp. 493-541, esp. pp. 511-517.

In this competitive situation, Guy's choice to grant to Ageltrude properties in two strategic areas of the kingdom, whose elite had recently, more or less willingly, passed to his opponent's side, was an attempt to reaffirm his authority in those areas. In the charter Ageltrude is presented as "imperatrix et consors imperii nostri", while Guy himself adopted the original title of "Vuido Caesar imperator augustus".[144] The formulary of the diploma is modeled on DGui7, issued on the day of the imperial coronation, evoking the imperial authority that Guy was at risk of losing. In other words, Ageltrude was the centre of a strategy of political legitimation. The two properties she received had a particular significance also for another reason. The *curtis* Murgola, as well as Almenno, had been granted to Ermengarda, Angelberga and Louis II's daughter, in the above mentioned diploma of Louis the German.[145] After the defeat and death of her husband, in 887, Ermengarda had not abandoned her ambitions.[146] After having attempted to have her son Louis succeed Charles the Fat, Ermengarda put herself and her son under the protection of the new king Arnulf, who had deposed Charles.[147] In 889 Arnulf of Carinthia confirmed a group of properties to Angelberga, among which there was also the *curtis* Sparavera, and established that after her death those properties had to be passed on to her daughter Ermengarda.[148] The request for the confirmation was made by Ermengarda herself, in order to protect her Italian properties after the death of her mother. As a result, in 890 Louis III was crowned king of Provence at Mantaille, with the approval of Arnulf. By granting Sparavera to Ageltrude, Guy deprived Ermengarda of part of her wealth, disposing of properties traditionally controlled by the Carolingians - in 883 Murgola was controlled by Charles III - [149] and gave them to his own wife, who was, according to the diploma, the truly legitimate *consors imperii*. This was a clear political claim against Arnulf, and more broadly against the Carolingian house.[150] The closeness of Arnulf and Ermengarda suggests that Guy's choice to grant properties which had belonged to the late empress Angelberga and to her daughter was an attempt to challenge the Carolingians' ambitions in Italy.

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[144] Wolfram, 'Lateinische Herrschertitel', pp. 84-85; Schiaparelli, 'Ricerche storico-diplomatiche II', p. 30.

[145] Then was lost again by Ageltrude, as in 904 Berengar granted part of it to the Church of St Alessandro of Bergamo (see DBerI43, p. 124).

[146] She is depicted as a very ambitious and arrogant wife by the *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 879, p. 150: "Interea Boso, persuadente uxore sua, quae nolle a vivere se dicebat, si, filia imperatoris Italiae et desponsata imperatori Greciae, maritum suum regem non faceret, partim comminatione constrictis, partim cupiditate illectis pro abbatiis et villis eis promissis et postea datis, episcopis illarum partium persuasit, ut eum in regem ungerent et coronarent".

[147] On these events, see MacLean, *Kingship and politics*, pp. 161–169.

[148] DArn49.

[149] DCIII86.

[150] M. Marrocchi, *Ludovico III*, DBI, 66 (2007), pp. 394–397.

This charter suggests that Guy's chancery associated the expression *consors imperii* with a patrimonial idea of the queen's office; for Ageltrude was defined *consors* only in diplomas in which she appears as beneficiary, and never when she acted as intercessor. She is not called *consors* in a diploma issued in May 892, in which she interceded, "per Ageltrudim amantissimam coniugem nostram imperatrice augustam", for *marchio* Conrad, a Widonid, who was granted a royal *curtis* of Almenno in the *comitatus* of Bergamo.[151] In this diploma, jointly issued by Guy and Lambert ("Vuido et Lantbertus gratia et misericordia eiusdem omnipotentis Dei imperatores augusti"), Conrad is defined as *patruus* and *patruelis*, that is to say uncle (of Guy) and great-uncle (of Lambert). According to the diploma the *curtis* of Almenno had been originally granted to Conrad by Louis II.[152] Hlawitschka has argued that the fiscal estates controlled by the Widonid family could have been lost in the early 870s, as a consequence of the support given by Lambert of Spoleto (Guy's father and possibly Conrad's brother) to the Beneventans' revolt against Louis II.[153] There is some evidence of these fiscal estates passing into the hands of the women of Louis II's family: in February 875 Louis the German had granted the royal *curtes* of Almenno and Murgola (also located in the area of Bergamo), together with other properties, to his niece Ermengarda.[154]

In other words, Guy decided to confirm properties which had belonged to Ermengarda and to San Sisto,[155] to a member of his family, using his wife Ageltrude as intercessor and therefore as the key figure of a family politics openly opposed to Arnulf. Louis the German's diploma presents the Italian *curtes* as properties controlled by the East-Frankish king: "res proprietatis nostrae consistentes in Italia". It is difficult to understand the process through which the estates had arrived in the hands of Louis the German. It is possible that this was the result of the negotiations that had taken place in the previous years between Angelberga, Louis II and Louis the German for the imperial succession. In view of Louis II's death, Angelberga and Ermengarda put themselves under the imperial protection of Louis the German, and the grant of these two properties had a strong symbolic function, namely to record an alliance between the king and the two royal women. Later, during Guy's reign Ermengarda was at the core of a complex political operation aimed at promoting her son Louis as a candidate to the imperial

[151] On Almenno see S. Del Bello, *Indice toponomastico altomedievale del territorio di Bergamo*, (Bergamo, 1986), pp. 26–29.
[152] The diploma is lost: see DLUII124 (lost), p. 257.
[153] Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp.213-125.
[154] DLG157, p. 221.
[155] Louis the German's charter was conserved in the San Sisto's archive.

succession.[156] Ageltrude was therefore employed by Guy as the Widonid counterpart of the influential Carolingian princess. Despite not being able to use Carolingian blood as a claim for his imperial title, Guy chose to refuse the Carolingian tradition and to carry on a political strategy which instead boosted his own family and friends. In 892, once returned to Pavia from Ravenna, Guy issued a diploma for Santa Cristina in Corteolona, one of the main monasteries in northern Italy and a royal *curtis* close to Pavia, confirming all its properties and rights.[157] The diploma, which depends on Charles the Fat's grant of 880, is therefore another example of the stress put by Guy's chancery on the control of royal estates with Carolingian connections.

Guy used other means to stress his continuity with the Carolingian empire. His seal (on the obverse) reads "Renovatio Regni Francorum", a *formula* previously used by Louis the Pious, and later by Charles the Fat.[158] In 896 the same expression was employed for a seal attached to a diploma of Arnulf of Carinthia.[159] It is interesting that Guy and Arnulf both used the same model, the seal of Charles the Fat. This casts light onto a conflict which was being fought with similar weapons on both sides: language was one of them. It shows, furthermore, Guy's desire to accentuate a continuity with the Carolingians, although - or maybe because - he did not have any dynastic claim. Furthermore, Guy and Lambert presented themselves as legislators, issuing three capitularies. This was an important aspect of Carolingian public activity, which was never undertaken by any other post-Carolingian Italian rulers.[160]

Guy, a "new man" facing struggles for the royal title, used law-making, diplomacy and gift-giving in order to assert his authority and territorial control over his new kingdom. Ageltrude's presence in charters, and the way she was presented in those charters, show that she was employed in this process. Not only was she granted a group of nunneries with a royal identity, which had all been founded or at some point controlled by Carolingian royal women. She was also given properties situated in areas with a strategic significance for Guy in terms

[156] P. Gavinet, 'La consolation de l'Empire. Louis III de Provence, dit "l'Aveugle", ou les ambitions d'un prince', *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 8 (2002), pp. 179-191.
[157] DGui15. On the *palatium,* see : F. Bougard, 'Palais princiers, royaux et impériaux de l'Italie carolingienne et ottonienne', in A. Renoux, ed, *Palais royaux et princiers au Moyen Âge* (Le Mans, 1996), pp. 181–196, consulted in the online version available on *Reti Medievali*: http://www.lett.unitn.it/_RM/biblioteca/scaffale/b.htm, pp. 1-18.
[158] DGui7; Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language of Authority*, pp. 216 –223.
[159] DArn141 (896); M. Mersiowsky, '*Carta edita, Causa finita*? Zur Diplomatik Kaiser Arnolfs', in F. Fucks, ed, *Kaiser Arnolf. Das ostfränkische Reich am Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts* (München, 2002), pp. 271-374, at pp. 367–368.
[160] *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. A. Boretius, V. Krause, MGH Leges II (Hanover, 1890), pp. 104-110.

of his attempt to face the Carolingian family and its supporters in Italy. For this purpose, the title *consors imperii* was employed in a different way from what had been done in the past, for it was associated with the queen's patrimonial status.

In other words, Ageltrude was presented as a royal landholder and monastic patron, who controlled estates and nunneries with a strong royal tradition. Her influence was evident also during her widowhood. Guy died in the summer or autumn of 894, leaving the kingdom in the hands of his young son Lambert, who at the time was about fourteen years old. Lambert's chancery was a continuation of his father's and involved the same group of people: the archchancellor Elbuncus remained at its head.[161] The language of charters reflects this continuity: Lambert frequently appears with the same, peculiar, title "Caesar imperator augustus", which had been used for his father.[162] Charters show that in this transition Ageltrude maintained an influential role. In December 895, she acted as intercessor in a charter that granted a fiscal *curtis* in the *comitatus* of Reggio Emilia to the viscount of Parma, Ingelbert. In that period Arnulf of Carinthia had arrived in Italy for the second time, taking control of the north with the support of part of the nobility. Lambert left the capital, and set up his court in the town of Reggio Emilia.[163] The *curtis* was granted to the viscount with the intercession of Ageltrude, of the vassal Liutald – a faithful friend of Guy - and of the count Radald "vasso scilicet Radaldi illustrissimi comitis atque summi consiliarii nostri". Radald belonged to the Attonids, and was the son of the *marchio* Conrad, Lambert's *patruelis*, to whom Guy had granted some properties in the area of Bergamo the year before (Conrad was *marchio* of Spoleto *and* count of Lecco).[164] As Hlawitschka has argued, this is an interesting political operation that took place in the key town of Parma: the *comitatus*, which for several generations had been linked to the Supponid family, Berengar's supporters, passed into the hands of a member of the Widonid family group. Radald was put in charge of the *comitatus* of Parma to undermine the Supponid influence in the area; although he had previously collaborated with the family politics of the Supponids.[165] He was one of the subscribers of Angelberga's testament for San Sisto, a document aimed at enhancing the family's economic

[161] Schiaparelli, 'Ricerche storico-diplomatiche II', pp. 16-19.
[162] Wolfram, 'Lateinische Herrschertitel', pp. 84–85.
[163] T. Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Lamberto*, in DBI, 53 (2004), pp. 208-211.
[164] V. Fumagalli, 'I cosidetti "conti di Lecco" e l'aristocrazia del regno italico tra IX e X secolo', in *Formazione e strutture dei ceti dominanti nel medioevo* (1996), pp. 113-124, at p. 118.
[165] R. Schumann, *Authority and the Commune. Parma 833 – 1133* (Parma, 1973), pp. 36-37; E. Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 247–248; L. Provero, 'Il sistema di potere carolingio e la sua rielaborazione nei comitati di Parma e Piacenza (secoli IX-XI)', in R. Greci, ed, *Studi sull'Emilia occidentale nel Medioevo: società e istituzioni*, (Bologna, 2001), pp. 43-64, consulted in the digital version available on *Reti Medievali*: http://www.itinerarimedievali.unipr.it/v2/pdf/P_provero_studi_sull_emilia.pdf, pp. 1-20, at pp. 3-4.

and territorial control of Emilia. This happened in 877, when the Widonids had not yet developed the royal claims that would later make them oppose the Supponids' territorial politics. The role held by Ageltrude in her son's political entourage is expressed in the charter through the title "domina et genitrix nostrae Ageltruda gloriosissima imperatrix augusta", which acknowledges her prominence.

Furthermore, in May 896 Lambert granted to his mother ("dulcissima genitrix nostra") the royal *curtis* of Corana, in the *comitatus* of Tortona.[166] The grant was given with the intercession of Adalbert of Tuscany, one of Lambert's supporters against Arnulf. Arnulf had to leave Italy during spring 896, after he had managed to enter Rome. Benedict of S. Andrea reports that Rome was strenuously defended by Lambert and Ageltrude, but they had to abandon the city to Arnulf, who was crowned emperor by Pope Formosus.[167] However, Arnulf did not manage to defeat Lambert, as the king took refuge in the area of Spoleto, where he could count on some support. Arnulf tried to pursue Lambert in order to defeat him. At this point an infamous episode about Arnulf's poisoning by Ageltrude is reported by Liudprand.[168] Although this tale has to be read in relation to Liudprand's impressionistic depiction of evil women, it suggests an active involvement of the empress in the struggle between her son and the Bavarian king, which is confirmed also by other narrative texts.[169] Arnulf's decision to abandon Italy was a good result for Lambert: he regained control of Pavia and the royal authority, and was therefore in a position to reward his allies. The grant for Ageltrude is to be placed in this context, and possibly to be related to the help the empress had given to her son. According to the *Annals of Fulda*, at this point Lambert and Berengar reached an agreement for the division of the kingdom, establishing the Adda river as a frontier: a period of relative stability followed the departure of Arnulf.[170]

Furthermore, Ageltrude appeared again as intercessor in a diploma issued in February 898 in Ravenna, for the church of San Giovanni in Florence.[171] The diploma was issued just after the Diet of Ravenna of February 898, during which Lambert had renewed his agreement - originally made in 892 - with the Pope and had the imperial title confirmed.[172] It is therefore

[166] DLa4.
[167] Benedict, *Chronicon*, p. 159.
[168] Liudprand, *Antapodosis,* l 32, p. 24.
[169] See below, chapter 5, pp. 170-171.
[170] *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SRG 7 (Hanover, 1891), a. 896, p. 129; See also Arnaldi, *Berengario I*, pp. 16-17.
[171] DLa8.
[172] Fasoli, *I re d'Italia*, pp. 48–51.

not a coincidence that Ageltrude appeared with an imperial title ("Ageltrudae serenissimae imperatricis augustae"), which she did not have in the previous diplomas issued by Lambert's chancery. DLa10, issued in Marengo on the 2nd September 898, also concerned Ageltrude, as she acted as intercessor on behalf of the church of Arezzo for the grant of the royal *curtis* of Cactianus. On this occasion Ageltrude interceded together with the new archchancellor Amolus, who was probably the bishop of Turin and who is mentioned as Lambert's chancellor from 896.[173] In this diploma Ageltrude is not mentioned by name, but as *domina genitrix nostra*, the title with which she is often presented in Lambert's diplomas.[174] One month later, on 15th October 898, Lambert died during a hunting accident at Marengo and Ageltrude found herself in the difficult position of an unprotected royal widow. [175]

The evidence analysed above shows that Ageltrude had a significant role in the shaping of Guy and Lambert's politics. As Guy did not have as extensive a network of supporters in northern Italy as that of his adversaries, he employed his wife in the process of building a network of friends and liaising with religious institutions. In these circumstances the representation of Ageltrude's importance was related to a patrimonial idea of queenship: this idea is reflected by the use of *consors imperii*. The title was used only in charters that granted properties and nunneries to the empress. Moreover, these properties and convents had all previously been in the hands of other Carolingian women. This suggests that the concept of imperial *consortium*, as it was intended by Guy's court, portrayed the shared control of the royal fisc between the imperial couple. In other words, Guy's chancery shaped the title's meaning around what was important for the emperor, namely the control of fiscal properties in northern Italy and the relationship with the Carolingian past and present represented by his contenders. In Ageltrude's case, the title was used because these gifts to her were potentially controversial or precarious - because she was an outsider with no Carolingian blood and no familial connection among the north Italian nobility.

After Lambert's death further struggle arose among the other would-be kings of Carolingian descent. This marked the second part of Berengar's reign, during which Bertilla's political role would become extremely important. After Guy and Lambert's disappearance, Berengar

[173] Ibidem.
[174] Schiaparelli, 'Ricerche storico-diplomatiche II', p. 36. The two diplomas were both recognized by the notary Andrew and written by the same scribe.
[175] *Catalogi regum Langobardorum et Italicorum Brixiensis et Nonantulanus*, ed. G. Waitz, SS RLI, pp. 501-504, at p. 503 ("Obitum Lamberti Id. Octbr."). Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, l 42, pp. 42–43. See below, chapter 5, pp. 169-175.

was left with a favourable political situation, which gave him the opportunity to develop his family politics based on gift-giving. Berengar had never renounced his royal and imperial ambitions, continuing to issue royal charters from his stronghold Verona even during the Widonid reign. The number of charters issued in this period is, however, low. In this period, Bertilla appeared only in one diploma, in April 896, as intercessor on behalf of Berengar's vassal Ingelfred for the concession of some land in the area of Verona.[176] In the charter she appeared with the title "nostram dilectam coniugem et consortem nostri regni". This diploma shows that Berengar's network was closely linked to San Salvatore in Brescia. Berengar's daughter Berta was educated in the nunnery, together with many other noble women: Ingelfredus' sisters, Rotpern and Reginberga, were nuns in San Salvatore and Ingelfred, his sisters and his father, the count of Verona Grimald, are mentioned in the *liber memorialis* of the nunnery.[177] San Salvatore was the religious center of Berengar's family politics, thanks to the fact that its administration was in the hands of the women of his family – in particular his daughter Berta, who later became abbess of the nunnery. She appeared again as intercessor at the beginning of November 898, shortly after Lambert's death in Marengo.[178] Two weeks after Lambert's death, Berengar quickly headed to Pavia in order to claim the royal title. In the charter, which was issued in Pavia, Berengar confirmed to the church of Reggio Emilia, represented by Bishop Atto, several donations granted by the former Bishop Sigefred, and confirmed by Louis II in 857 and Charles the Fat in 883.[179] Bertilla was again defined "dilecta coniunx et consors regni nostri": the language of the charter reflects the claimed continuity with the Carolingian tradition, in accordance with the content of the document, which established a relationship between Berengar and his predecessors.

In the following years, however, Berengar would have to face several political threats. The first was the invasions of the Hungarians in Italy. Their first expedition to Italy, in 899, provoked huge damage, such as the burning of Reggio Emilia's cathedral, and many casualties, as for example the former archchancellor of Charles the Fat, Liutward of Vercelli.[180] The second threat was Louis III's arrival in Italy. His arrival was a response to the

[176] On Ingelfred, one of the key men of Berengar, who appears as *comes* in a diploma of 894 (DBerI12) and later becomes count of Verona, see Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 209-211; Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics', pp. 262-264.
[177] Wemple, 'San Salvatore/ Santa Giulia'; D. Geuenich, U. Ludwig, eds, *Der Memorial- und Liturgiecodex von San Salvatore / Santa Giulia in Brescia*, MGH Libri memoriales et necrologia, IV (Hanover, 2000), p. 113.
[178] DBerI20.
[179] DLUII23; DCIII85.
[180] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, II 5-15, pp. 37-42; *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 900, p. 134. On Liutward's death: Regino, *Chronicon*, a. 901, p. 148, ed. F. Kurze, MGH SSRG 50 (Hanover, 1890); Cammarosano, *Nobili e re*, p. 220; on

inefficiency of Berengar in dealing with the Hungarian attack: the Italian nobility was not happy with Berengar's policy, hence started to look over the Alps for a new candidate. Louis arrived in Italy in the late summer of 900, and was crowned king in Pavia in early October of the same year.[181] One of his first actions was a grant to Ageltrude.[182] The property in question was Cortemaggiore, a *curtis* which in 876 had been granted by Louis the German to Louis' grandmother Angelberga. The diploma had established that after Angelberga's death the property would pass to her daughter Ermengarda, Louis' mother.[183] The division between the Carolingians and the Widonids was now over, and Ageltrude became one of Louis III's supporters, together with *marchio* Adalbert of Tuscany and his wife Berta.[184] Count Sigefredus of Piacenza, who had been a man of Berengar, also passed to Louis' side. As Hlawitschka has argued, it is possible that the memory of Angelberga, who had founded San Sisto in Piacenza, was still vivid in the area, hence bringing the local elite closer to Ermengarda and Louis III.[185] However, the Italian nobility did not manage - or did not want – to support Louis III effectively in the long term. After the imperial coronation, which took place in February 901, Louis III gradually lost his supporters in Italy, especially because of the about-face of Adalbert and Berta, and was forced to leave the kingdom in spring 902.[186]

Berengar entered Pavia in the summer of that year.[187] He forgave those who had betrayed him; among them was also Ageltrude, as shown by a diploma issued a few years later in which "domina Angeltrudis gloriosa imperatrix" asked Berengar to grant some land in the county of Ossola to the viscount Gariardus.[188] At this point, as Barbara Rosenwein has underlined, Bertilla's presence in diplomas started to grow exponentially. In June 900 she interceded on behalf of one of her husband's *fideles*, Vasingus, to whom Berengar granted a *curtis* in the area of Groppello, near Pavia: this was immediately before Louis' arrival in

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Reggio Emilia, see: J. C. Picard, *Le souvenir des évêques. Sépultures, listes èpiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie des origines au Xe siècle* (Rome, 1988), pp. 366, 379-383.

[181] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, II 32, p. 49.

[182] DLUIII1.

[183] See below, chapter 5, pp. 157-158.

[184] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, II 36, p. 26.

[185] Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 265–266.

[186] See L. Schiaparelli, 'I diplomi dei re d'Italia. Ricerche storico-diplomatiche, III: I diplomi di Lodovico III', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano*, 29 (1908), pp. 105-207, at pp. 129-152; Gavinet, 'La consolation de l'Empire', pp. 182–184.

[187] DBerI36 (902). Berengar granted to the monastery of Santa Cristina in Corteolona the *curtis* of Saluciola, which had previously belonged to San Nicomede. This grant possibly had a relationship with the fact that Elbuncus, bishop of Parma, who had previously interceded for San Nicomede (DBerI26, pp. 77-79), supported Louis III's election.

[188] DBerI71.

Italy.[189] On 19th January 903 she interceded, as "dilectissima coniunx et consors regni nostri", on behalf of the monastery of San Salvatore in Tolla (Piacenza), for the concession of a castle in Sperongia.[190] This diploma shows that Berengar still had to face a serious danger posed by the Hungarians, as the document states that the castle was "pro Paganorum ac depredantium persecutione ad utilitatem denominati monasterii fundatum". On 11th September of the same year Bertilla interceded for the confirmation of rights and properties to Bobbio,[191] and she appeared as intercessor again in January 904, this time for the church of Reggio – as part of a group of intercessors composed by the bishop of Lodi Ildegarius and the count of Piacenza Sigefredus. The two men had already appeared together in a *placitum* of 898 held in the church of San Antonino in Piacenza:[192] Sigefredus, who had supported Louis III during his stay in Italy, turned back to Berengar's side after the departure of the Provençal king and managed to keep the comital title. This charter therefore associated Bertilla to the noble and ecclesiastical elite of Piacenza, a town that, over the previous decades, had been controlled by her family. Sigefredus, however, did not directly belong to the Supponid family: he gained his office thanks to Guy of Spoleto, but was then left in his place by Berengar, who clearly forgave his temporary about-face to support Louis III.

These documents show two things. First of all Berengar employed Bertilla's connections in order to liaise with the local elite. Secondly the queen helped Berengar in his attempt to restore his credibility after the Hungarian attacks. In a diploma of January 904 Berengar granted, at Bertilla's request, the properties of mount *Cervarium* in Val d'Enza to the church of Reggio Emilia, as a compensation for the plundering of the Hungarians: "eiusdem ecclesiae necessitates vel depredationes atque incendia, quae a ferocissima gente Hungrorum passa est".[193] Moreover, Bertilla appeared as intercessor in a diploma, probably issued in 904 (the *datatio* is missing), which granted a property to the church of Aquileia.[194] These two charters are very similar in style; they may have been issued together or be different versions of the same model. Like the charter for Reggio Emilia, the diploma for Aquileia confirms rights and concessions "quia multa cartarum instrumenta casu condam incendii ac perfidorum persecutionibus Paganorum abolita noscuntur et perdita".

[189] DBerI32.
[190] DBerI38.
[191] DBerI40.
[192] C. Manaresi, *I placiti del Regno Italico* I, FISI, 92 (1955), n. 107.
[193] DBerI42.
[194] DBerI49. See also DBerI50.

In other words, Bertilla was in charge of liaising with religious institutions which had been particularly struck by the Hungarians. This was the result of Berengar's need to restore his authority, after he managed to negotiate a truce with the invaders whom he had not been able to defeat. He therefore employed Bertilla in this operation. He also promoted one of Bertilla's brothers, Ardingus, as archchancellor in 903.[195] Bertilla's growing influence on Berengar's politics coincided with her brother's promotion. Her visibility in charters reached its climax in 905, during which Bertilla appears as intercessor in five charters. This year was a particularly crucial time for Berengar, as Louis of Provence had arrived in Italy for the second time. This expedition seemed even more critical for Berengar, as Louis was supported also by part of the north-eastern nobility, traditionally faithful to the *marchio* of Friuli. However, the Piacenza elite, controlled by the Supponids, did not betray him. In June 905 Berengar issued a diploma for San Sisto in Piacenza, confirming at Bertilla's intercession all its properties and rights.[196] San Sisto had been founded by Bertilla's aunt, Angelberga, in 877 and since then had been controlled by Bertilla's family. In the official act of foundation of the nunnery Angelberga had established that its control had to pass on to her daughter Ermengarda, Louis III's mother.[197] Louis III tried to claim his rights on the nunnery through a diploma issued in January 901, relying on the support of the Piacenza elite.[198] For this reason, Louis' charter referred to his familial relations with the convent: "ab avia nostra Angelberga quondam imperatrice a fundamentis constructum". Through his diploma for San Sisto, Berengar used Bertilla's familial background as the link to the nunnery and its founder. Like other grants that the queen requested, this diploma mentions the damage provoked by the Hungarians: "quod per irruptionem Paganorum et incuriam quorundam nominum quaedam precepta ac instrumenta cartarum ipsius sancti loci dudum deperissent". However, the Hungarians had raided the region a few years earlier, therefore this intervention must be read as Berengar's attempt to gain the control of a strategic area. Berengar and Louis both employed the women of their family – Bertilla and Ermengarda - to advertize their right to control the nunnery and the area it lay in.

However, Louis' attempts were frustrated, as the support of the north-eastern nobility did not last long. According to Liudprand of Cremona Berengar still had several friends in Verona,

[195] Schiaparelli, 'I diplomi dei re d'Italia. Ricerche storico-diplomatiche, I: I diplomi di Berengario I', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano*, 23 (1902), pp. 1-167, at pp. 7-18.
[196] DBerI55.
[197] Falconi, *Le carte cremonesi*, n. 20.
[198] DLUIII5.

who helped him to defeat his adversary.[199] Louis III was blinded and had to leave the kingdom once and for all. The events of Louis III's defeat took place at the end of July 905: only a few days later Berengar was back in Verona and there he issued several diplomas to reward his supporters and punish the traitors. There are seven diplomas issued between the end of July and the beginning of August from the *curtis* of Torri (near Verona) for Veronese *fideles* and friends. These documents confirm Liudprand's account that Berengar defeated Louis thanks to the support of the local elite. Bertilla acted as intercessor in three of these diplomas and therefore played a significant part in this operation, as well as her brother Ardingus, the archchancellor, who appeared as intercessor in two of the seven charters.

On the 31st July the queen interceded for the king's *fidelis* Amezus, to whom Berengar granted some properties in the *comitatus* of Verona.[200] The following day Bertilla interceded for the monastery of Santa Maria in Gazo to which Berengar granted fiscal rights and a property on the river Gavo[201] and, on the 2nd August, she requested a grant for the monastery of San Zeno, which was given a property that had previously belonged to John Braccacurta, who had been unfaithful to the king ("nostre olim fidelitati offensum").[202] Immediately after Louis III's defeat Berengar carried out a systematic and radical reorganization of fiscal properties, by removing them from the hands of the people who had betrayed him in Verona and granting them to monastic institutions and members of the local clergy. This suggests that these monasteries and the church of Verona had remained on Berengar's side. The presence of Bertilla in these diplomas suggests, moreover, that the queen had excellent relationships with the religious institutions and the clergy in area of Verona.[203] Moreover, in these three diplomas Bertilla is always entitled *coniunx and consors regni*. Rosenwein has suggested that "having a queen as *consors* linked Berengar to Louis II, husband of Angilberga":[204] in moments of political precariousness, when he needed to state to his supporters his relation with the Carolingian tradition. However, Rosenwein fails to underline the importance of the chronology of Bertilla's involvement in Berengar's diplomacy. She interceded for five religious institutions which had been damaged by the Hungarians between

[199] Liudprand, *Antapodosis,* II 41, pp. 51-52.
[200] DBerI56.
[201] DBerI60.
[202] DBerI62. John might be identified as a John that is mentioned in the *Gesta Berengarii*, (lib. IV, p. 398) who helped Louis III. Another possibility is offered by a fragment of a letter of Pope John VIII (in E. Caspar, *Iohannis VIII Papae Registrum,* MGH Epistolae Karolini Aevi VII (Berlin, 1928), *Fragmenta*, 3, a. 886, p.335), which mentions a commander from Ravenna called John.
[203] And more generally in the north-east: in January 905 Bertilla also interceded on account of the Church of Treviso (DBerI52, pp. 149 –151).
[204] Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics', p. 257.

the end on the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth; she also took part in the operation carried out by Berengar at the end of summer 905 to punish his traitors and reward his supporters. Bertilla's presence in charters as *consors regni* is therefore related to the weak aspects of Berengar's authority and to his desire to restore his credibility in the kingdom.

Moreover, the geography of Bertilla's interventions is also notable. She seems particularly involved in the north-east, as her diplomatic activities are focused in that area. In August 908 she interceded for the grant of some rights and taxes to the church of Ceneda,[205] and, two years later, for the grant of the property *Duas Roveres*, in the *comitatus* of Verona, to the count of Verona Anselm.[206] Later that year the count granted the same property to the monastery of Nonantola through a testament.[207] In an undated charter, issued between 911 and 915, Bertilla also interceded for the count Grimald, who was granted some land in Lodi and the market in Vimercate.[208] Anselm and Grimald were both part of Berengar's entourage. As mentioned above, Grimald's daughters had been educated in San Salvatore together with Berengar's daughter Berta: the count therefore had a long-lasting relationship with the king's family.[209] In the last part of her life, Bertilla tightened her relationship with the Veronese entourage and with her husband's royal court – before disappearing mysteriously around 912 – 913.[210]

Laurent Feller has noted a diminution of Bertilla's influence at court in the last years of her life and linked it to the lack of male children, which made her situation fragile.[211] Unlike her aunt Angelberga, who had been able to maintain her political relevance despite not being able to produce a male heir, Bertilla may have fallen into disgrace because she was not able to assure her husband dynastic continuity. However, this might not be the only reason. Berengar's desire for a male heir is unlikely to have developed only after the 910s, when he had been married to his queen for more than twenty years. Her death has also been linked to

[205] DBerI67.
[206] DBerI72.
[207] Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 132-134; A. Castagnetti, G. Varanini, eds, *Il Veneto nel Medioevo vol. 2: Dalla "Venetia" alla marca veronese* (Verona, 1989), pp. 34–36.
[208] DBerI104.
[209] On Berengar's entourage, see: H. Keller, 'Zur Struktur der Königsherrschaft im karolingischen und nachkarolingischen Italien. Der "consiliarius regis" in den italienischen Königsdiplomen des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 47 (1967), pp. 123-223, at pp.163-177.
[210] *Gesta Berengarii imperatoris*, pp. 374-375.
[211] L. Feller, 'L'exercice du pouvoir par Bérenger Ier, roi d'Italie (888-915) et empereur (915-924)', *Médiévales: langue, textes, histoire*, 58 (2010), pp. 129–149, at p. 141.

political reasons – a betrayal of Bertilla and her family.[212] Strikingly, Bertilla's death is to be placed in the most stable period of Berengar's reign, when the king had managed to defeat internal and external opposition. The political crises that Berengar had to face in the previous years were over, and at the same time Bertilla's presence in diplomas decreases dramatically. One can assume that Bertilla had accomplished her function at court: Berengar might have felt that the need of a male heir was more pressing than the advantages which the alliance with the Supponids represented. There are signs that the relationship with the family was becoming more tense. In 913, probably shortly after the death of Bertilla, Berengar issued a diploma in which he granted to one of his *fideles* some properties which had been expropriated from men who had betrayed him. Among them was Boso, Bertilla's brother ("infidelis noster Boso").[213] However, this break up did not involve all members of the family: Ardingus remained firmly at the head of Berengar's chancery until 922.

Another possible reason for Bertilla's death is Berengar's intention to enhance his claim to the imperial title. The imperial coronation of Berengar took place only in 915.[214] According to Girolamo Arnaldi the main condition for this achievement, which however was to have few concrete political consequences, was Berengar's military victory against the Saracens at the battle of Garigliano in 914, and the political prestige that Pope John X would have obtained by it.[215] In this view, Berengar would have been looking for a bride more suitable to his desired imperial status. The choice was Anna, a Byzantine princess of whom not much is known. It has been argued that Anna was one of Louis III's daughters, born from his Byzantine wife Anna.[216] This hypothesis would cast light on the negotiations between Louis and Berengar, but is weakened by the chronology, because Anna would have been born around 910 and therefore a child at the time of the wedding. The period in which Anna took part in her husband's rule was a phase of relative political stability for Berengar. He did not seem to make any attempt to gain real authority outside the Italian kingdom and instead tried to strengthen relations with the Italian lay and religious elite.[217] Thanks to his daughter Berta, who was abbess of San Salvatore and San Sisto, two large royal nunneries, Berengar focused on the patronage of the great Italian monasteries. In this domain, charters suggest that Anna

[212] Lazzari, 'Le donne del regno Italico', pp. 216-218. See chaper 2, pp. 43-44.
[213] DBerI91, pp. 244-245; Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 162-163; Bougard, 'Les Supponides', p. 397.
[214] Despite his lack of effective authority, Louis III maintained the imperial title until 915. See Gavinet, 'La consolation de l'Empire', p. 185.
[215] Arnaldi, *Berengario I*, p. 24.
[216] Hiestand, *Byzanz und das Regnum Italicum*, pp. 128-130.
[217] This is the opinion of Arnaldi, *Berengario I*, p. 24, but see also Feller, 'L'exercise du pouvoir', p. 134.

had a rather marginal role: that of monastic patron remained in the hands of the more experienced Berta.

This is confirmed by the fact that Berengar's charters provide little evidence on Anna: she appears only in three diplomas. In the first one she interceded - with the title of "dilectissima coniunx" - for the grant of some properties to Ervin, nephew of Bishop Dagobert of Novara.[218] The charter is incomplete and lacks the *datatio*, however it must have been issued before the imperial coronation of 915, as Berengar is entitled "gratia Dei rex". Empress Anna appeared again in a charter of 920, this time with the title of *consors imperii*: she was granted Pratopiano, a *curtis* in the area of Piacenza, by Berengar with the intercession of Bishop Guy of Piacenza and *marchio* Olderic, one of Berengar's closest friends.[219] Mentioned for the first time in November 901, Olderic had a successful career at Berengar's court and acquired the title of *marchio* in 915. This career reached its climax in September 920, when Olderic interceded for most of the five diplomas issued by Berengar that month. However, as Hlawitschka has pointed out, Olderic was mentioned just as *comes* in November 920, and therefore might have lost the title of *marchio* between September and November.[220] According to Liudprand, Olderic was imprisoned in the following year by Berengar, because he had organized a rebellion against his former patron with the help of Adalbert of Ivrea and Giselbert, with the aim of removing Berengar from office.[221] Olderic frequently appeared as intercessor in that period, and Guy was the bishop of Piacenza, the town involved in the grant: this might suggest that Anna did not have a particular relationship with these men, and was therefore a marginal component in her husband's politics.

The situation was complicated by King Rudolf of Burgundy, who arrived in Italy at the end of 921 to claim the throne. Guy of Piacenza was probably among the people that supported him, as shown by the issuing of diplomas in Pavia with the support of local noblemen and bishops: the archbishop of Milan Lambert,[222] Adalbert of Ivrea, Guy of Piacenza and the bishop of Tortona. The political elite of Parma also seems to have helped Rudolf: in August 923 Ageltrude issued a testament in which she granted some properties to the church of

[218] DBerI107.
[219] DBerI129.
[220] Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 242-243.
[221] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, II 57-59, p. 58.
[222] See E. Besta, *Dalla fine dell'unità carolingia alla conquista di Ottone I. L'età ottoniana*, in *Storia di Milano, vol.2: Dall'invasione dei Barbari all'apogeo del governo vescovile (493-1002)* (Milan, 1954), pp. 427-470, at pp. 446-449; A. Ambrosioni, *Gli arcivescovi nella vita di Milano* in *X congresso internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo,* (Spoleto, 1986), pp. 85–118, at pp. 92-96.

Parma. The charter, issued in the monastery of San Nicomede, was dated according to the regnal year of Rudolf. It seems that, for the second time, the former empress had betrayed her "friend" Berengar and passed to the newcomer's side.[223] Guy of Piacenza had also appeared in a *placitum* held by Berengar in 912, which resolved a conflict between the bishop and Ageltrude over Santa Croce and San Bartolomeo in Monticello.[224] Ageltrude and her entourage were therefore supporting the Burgundian king, or at least acknowledging his authority. On the other hand, the north-eastern nobility remained faithful to Berengar, who took refuge in Verona.[225]

These years saw a chaotic situation: an outsider queen, who had no connection with the local elite, could hardly gain political space. The last mention of Anna as wife of Berengar and *consors regni* dates back to the second half of 923, when she interceded for the grant of some land to the church of Belluno.[226] This charter also marks the disappearance of Ardingus, who had been archchancellor for almost twenty years and had kept his place despite the political controversies that had closely involved his family: the death of Bertilla in 912 or 913 and the treachery of Boso, his brother, in 913.[227] After his death Berengar's alliance with the Supponid family was definitively over. The emperor died on 7th April 924, murdered in Verona by a local conspiracy. After his death, Anna remained in Italy, as shown by a royal diploma issued by Hugh and Lothar in 936, which confirmed to the former queen two royal *curtes* previously granted by Berengar.[228]

The constant recurrence of the title of *consors regni* has been interpreted by Rosenwein *inter alios* as a sign of the attempt by Berengar to imitate Louis II's diplomatic language.[229] In fact, Bertilla is always called *consors* with the exception of two diplomas.[230] However, what is striking in Bertilla's case is the constant use of the title, which challenges the idea that it always had strong political implications. Bertilla was *consors regni* in the period in which she was influential and in others in which she was less involved in politics. It seems that

[223] Drei*, Le carte degli archivi parmensi*, n. 28.
[224] DBerI85. On these events and Ageltrude's widowhood, see below, chapter 5, pp. 173-174.
[225] Arnaldi, *Berengario I,* pp. 24-25.
[226] DBerI139.
[227] DBerI91.
[228] DUL42.
[229] Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics', p. 257. On the relationship between Berengar and the Carolingians as it emerges from diplomas, see also: Bougard, 'Charles le Chauve', pp. 65-74.
[230] DBerI32, DBerI62. Neither of these diplomas is preserved in the original. DBerI32 has especially been strongly doubted of being a forgery. DBerI62 is however part of the group of diplomas issued at the beginning of august 905 by the same chancery: in that case the lack of the title "consors" may be an omission by the twelfth century copyist.

Berengar's chancery conceived the *consortium regni* of his queen as a diplomatic role related to her influential familial connections and which was partly inspired by the Carolingian model established by Bertilla's aunt, the empress Angelberga.

The analysis of the role held by two royal women, Ageltrude and Bertilla, who operated almost simultaneously, illuminates significant aspects of royal authority in post-Carolingian Italy. Firstly it shows that the use of *consors regni/imperii* was related to different strategies. For Bertilla, it was partly the attempt to liaise with the Carolingian tradition, which had a significant part in Berengar's royal claims. But most importantly it defined the role of networker that Bertilla held in her husband's reign, because she had the means to do so: she had friends and family in the north of Italy – Brescia and Piacenza - and Berengar was able to exploit that support network when his own position became critical. For Guy it was rather an attempt to challenge this tradition, and to show the part his empress had in the control of fiscal properties, properties which had belonged to other Carolingian women. In other words, Guy wanted to create for his wife a similar role to that held by the Carolingian women. In order to do so, he claimed his right to grant to his wife the same properties that had been in the hands of the Carolingians. Secondly, in relation to the first aspect, this analysis shows that Bertilla and her family were entrusted with the task of restoring the *status quo* after political crises. The competition among rulers – Guy and the Carolingians, Guy and Berengar, Berengar and Louis III – was also carried on through their women, hence the constant focus on queenly properties.

In other words, rulers could advertise queenship in different ways. According to the circumstances and their aims, they could choose to stress the role of their queens as institutionalized office – as for example Angelberga in southern Italy and Ageltrude. On other occasions, they could decide to present them through their familial roles - as wives, mothers or members of her natal family. This suggests that queens' power could be presented as informal and institutional by turns – it depended on the specific situation in which rulers operated, and on the aims that their charters had.

4. Post-Carolingian queens in charters II (924 – 962)

The death of Berengar I left the kingdom in Rudolf's hands, who however soon found a new opponent, Hugh of Provence, son of the marchioness of Tuscany, Berta.[231] Unlike Rudolf, Hugh could count on a solid basis of support among the Italian elite, thanks to his familial relations: his mother Berta and her husband Adalbert, his sister Ermengarda and her husband Anscar. Rudolf gave up and returned to Burgundy. During the following two decades the kingdom was controlled by Hugh and his son Lothar. In the second half on the 940s, however, the competition between Hugh and his opponent, Berengar of Ivrea, ultimately resulted in the external interference of Otto of Saxony. This section will be focused on this period, and on the role played by women during the last decades of the Italian kingdom as an independent reality. Laurent Feller has noted that in the first years of his reign Hugh continued the trend of previous kings of Italy: most grants were given to churches and monasteries generally already benefited by previous rulers, whereas there were few lay beneficiaries. This proportion is similar to those of the other Italian rulers.[232] Hugh's chancery also shows a continuity with the past with regard to its members: his first chancellor Beatus had previously worked for Berengar I and Rudolf of Burgundy.[233] What was new in Hugh's exercise of power was his way of controlling Italian politics and redefining relations between royal and local powers. In this section I will argue that this strategy had an impact on the role played by the women of his family.

In some cases this role has been misunderstood by scholars: some of the women in Hugh's family have been attributed a room for manoeuvre which is not confirmed by sources. Because of the prominence she acquired in her second marriage, Adelaide of Burgundy, who married Hugh's son, Lothar, in 937, has been considered as one of the power brokers in mid-tenth century Italy. I argue, instead, that this role needs to be downsized, as there is little evidence of her active involvement in politics before the 960s, at which point she was already married to her second husband, Otto of Saxony. On the other hand, the role of Alda, Hugh's second wife, has been underestimated: the scant evidence for this queen, who gave Hugh his only legitimate heir, shows that she influenced the political choices of her husband and had excellent relations with the royal entourage, as well as with some groups of the local aristocracy.

[231] On Berta's political ambitions see above, chapter 2, pp. 52-53.
[232] Feller, 'L'exercice du pouvoir', pp. 139 – 143.
[233] L. Schiaparelli, 'I diplomi dei re d'Italia. Ricerche storico-diplomatiche, V: I diplomi di Ugo e di Lotario', in *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano*, 34 (1914), pp. 7-255, at pp. 57-58.

Alda married Hugh at some point after the death of his first wife, Willa (914), the widow of Rudolf I of Burgundy.[234] According to Liudprand Alda was *ex genere Teutonicorum:*[235] this is a rather vague definition, but scholars have argued she might have come from Burgundy, as Gerlannus, a member of her entourage, seems to be from that region. The marriage between Hugh and Alda is surrounded by mystery, as we do not know when and for what reason she was chosen as a bride. The first appearance of Alda in Hugh's diplomas coincided with the introduction of Gerlannus in the royal chancery. He is attested as chancellor from 927 and, in 928, presumably after Beatus' death, was promoted archchancellor. In the same years he became also abbot of Bobbio.[236]

Gerlannus' rise at court was related to Alda's emergence in Hugh's politics. In 927 the queen acted as intercessor for the grant of San Salvatore in Agna to a man called Tegrimus, who is presented as the "compater" – literally godfather - of the king, which indicates that he had to be close to Hugh's family circle.[237] The term *compater* could, according to Rossella Rinaldi, also be a reflection of a political military alliance.[238] San Salvatore had been linked to the queen since the time of empress Ermengarda, who was granted the nunnery in 848. This aspect is underlined in the 927 document, as the nunnery is defined: "monasterio quod dicitur Regine, in honore domini Salvatoris". The denomination related to the queen, which is not found in previous documents, could have been linked to Ermengarda's foundation of the nunnery, but also to the long-lasting relationship between the nunnery and the queens of Italy. The grant was preceded by a diploma of Louis III (now lost) which granted the nunnery to the bishop of Fiesole in 901.[239] According to Schiaparelli this charter could have been issued after Louis III's imperial coronation, on his way back north.[240] DU9 presents Alda with the title of *consors regni*, and, like some of Hugh's other diplomas, is modeled on earlier

[234] This marriage was the result of the political interests Hugh had in Burgundy during the 910s. On this see: Fasoli*, I re d'Italia*, p. 73; G. Sergi, 'Istituzioni politiche e società nel regno di Borgogna', in *Il secolo di ferro. Mito e realtà del secolo X*, Settimane 38 (Spoleto, 1991), pp. 205-242, at pp. 207-210; C. Bouchard, 'Burgundy and Provence', in NCMH 3, pp. 328-345, at pp. 340-342.
[235] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, III 20, p. 75.
[236] See F. Bougard, *Gerlanno*, DBI, 53 (2000), pp.431-434.
[237] DU9; A more recent edition of the document, which however mostly follows Schiaparelli is in N. Rauty, ed, *Documenti per la storia dei conti Guidi in Toscana* (Florence, 2003), n. 3, pp. 30 – 31. See the introduction, in which Rauty argues that Teugrimus had been introduced to high level politics thanks to his marriage with Engelrada, daughter of count Martino of Ravenna and Engelrada I (pp. 1-3). On the term "compater" see Goody, *The Development of the Family,* p. 197, fn. 4.
[238] R. Rinaldi, 'Note sulla nascita e l'affermazione della stirpe comitale' in *La lunga storia di una stirpe comitale: I conti Guidi tra Romagna e Toscana. Atti del Convegno di Studi Modigliana – Poppi 28 – 31 Agosto 2003* (Forlì – Cesena, 2009), pp. 19–46, fn. 4 at p. 20.
[239]Schiaparelli, 'Ricerche storico-diplomatiche V', pp. 14-15.
[240] Ibidem.

Carolingian documents. At the same time this document introduced a set of formulas which contains some original features that were peculiar to Hugh's chancery.[241]

Alda reappears as intercessor, this time without the title of *consors regni*, in September 930, on behalf of the church of Parma, which asked for the confirmation of previous grants of properties and rights.[242] There are two versions of this grant, both dated 16th September 930 – the main difference is that the second one also mentioned as intercessors the Countess Ermengarda and the Count Samson. This diploma is the first document to mention Samson as a member of Hugh's entourage. He is mentioned in the *Miracula Sancti Columbani* – a hagiographic text produced in the 940s - as one of the noble men pillaging Bobbio's properties, and against whom Gerlannus organized a holy procession to ask Hugh to help them.[243] The monks, however, seem to have obtained a lukewarm reaction from Hugh: the procession was initially denied entrance into the royal palace.[244] As the episode is set in 929, we can assume that Samson and the other men involved in the controversy were very influential at the time, and this might be the reason why Hugh was not willing to get involved.[245] Moreover, the 930 charter associates Samson with the most influential women of the kingdom, the queen and the king's sister. The charter also stresses the king's familial relationship with these women, as Alda is presented as *karissima coniunx* and Ermengarda as *dilecta soror nostra*, but also *inclita comitissa*.

Samson's rapid success was possibly the result of a conspiracy organized by judges Walpert and Gezo against Hugh in the preceding years. Walpert was the father in law of Giselbert, count of Bergamo and palatine count, as Giselbert had married his daughter Roza.[246] The role held by Giselbert with regard to the rebellion is unknown: it is possible that his sudden disappearance from the records was linked to it. Giselbert was attested in 927 for the last

[241] Ibidem.
[242] DU25.
[243] *Miracula Sancti Columbani*, ed. H. Bresslau, MGH SS, 30/ 2 (Leipzig, 1934), pp. 993-1015, at pp. 1000-1006.
[244] The text and its political meaning has been analysed by F. Bougard, 'La relique au procès: autour des miracles de saint Colomban', in *Le règlement des conflits au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2001), pp. 35-66. See also the forthcoming article by A. O'Hara and F. Taylor, 'Aristocratic and Monastic Conflict in Tenth-century Italy: the Case of Bobbio and the *Miracula Sancti Columbani*'.
[245] The text mentions also a man called Gandulf, bishop Guy of Piacenza, his brother, the count of Piacenza Raginerius and a man called Alineus: *Miracula Sancti Columbani* p. 1001.
[246] The conspiracy is reported by Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, III 39, pp. 58-60; see C. G. Mor, 'La data della congiura dei giudici Valperto e Everardo contro re Ugone'*, Atti e memorie della Regia Accademia di Modena*, 5, 8 (1950), pp. 154–159. On Giselbert see F. Menant, 'I Giselbertini, conti della contea di Bergamo e conti palatini', in Id., *Lombardia feudale. Studi sull'aristocrazia padana nei secoli X-XIII* (Milan, 1992), pp. 51-54; J. Jarnut, *Bergamo 568-1098. Storia istituzionale sociale ed economica di una città lombarda nell'Alto Medioevo* (Bergamo, 1980), pp. 44-50, 91-95, 274.

time: the sources report that in the same years Samson suppressed the rebellion and became palatine count.[247] This suggests that Giselbert was actively involved in the rebellion: he was killed because of it and Samson took his place. After her husband's death, Roza became Hugh's concubine: the information is reported by Liudprand, but it is also proved by the existence of a daughter, called Rotlinda, who Hugh had from Roza.[248] The relationship between Hugh and Roza shows that Hugh employed noble women to whom he was not linked in an official way as political networkers. This is confirmed by another passage by Liudprand, who complains about Hugh's weakness: he was too attracted to women and he was surrounded by concubines.[249] In Liudprand's view Hugh's sexual promiscuity affected his political life, because it made him a weak man; but it is possible that the author was also complaining about the excessive influence that some of these women exercised on the king.

If concubines and women of his family group helped Hugh to gain and maintain the relationship with the local aristocracy, Alda had another role: the patronage of religious institutions.[250] However, because this role is poorly documented, it has been underestimated, though charters can illuminate the relationship she had with monasteries and churches. In June 948 Lothar granted to the church of Parma three estates in the areas of Parma and Modena.[251] According to the diploma, one of the *curtes*, called Roncaria, had been acquired by Alda ("domna et mater nostra"), who had established in her will that the property was to be granted to the church of Parma. The historical validity of this information is questionable, as it is difficult to see the reason why Lothar would have waited several years - Alda died around 932 - to fulfill his mother's will. In this period the fiscal estates in the area of Parma were at the core of political conflict, and it has been argued that Lothar was forced to cede the properties to the Bishop Adeodatus, who was in fact a supporter of his rival Berengar II. Bishop Atto of Vercelli was the requester of the grant: as Atto supported Berengar's claim to the throne against Lothar, it has been suggested that the two bishops were both hostile to Lothar.[252] This hypothesis remains difficult to prove. On the hypothesis that Lothar had been forced to cede the properties to the church of Parma, he used his mother's will in order to claim that this was his own decision, rather than the result of external pressure.

[247] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, III 41–42, pp. 88-89. See Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 259–262.
[248] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, IV 14, p. 105.
[249] Ibidem. See above, chapter 2, pp. 31-32.
[250] I will explore this aspect in chapter 4, pp. 140-142.
[251] DLotII9.
[252] Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*, p. 224.

In other words, as it is unlikely that at this stage Lothar was merely following Alda's will, he was, more or less willingly, employing his mother for rhetorical reasons. This suggests that Alda had a close relationship with the church of Parma, a relationship that, several years after her death, was still acknowledged and remembered in the royal court. Alda's role in royal politics remains undoubtedly elusive because the scant evidence does not allow us to explore her career in more depth. However the few sources we have – the *Miracula* and a few royal diplomas – show that she was involved in monastic and religious patronage in the area of Parma. This involvement has to be related to Gerlannus, who was her contact person not only in the monastic environment, but also at court as the leader of the royal chancery.

Alda was, among Hugh's wives, the only one who enjoyed some room for manoeuvre in royal affairs. The elusiveness of Hugh's wives is related to his political strategies. Hugh's matrimonial policy shows a clear tendency: unlike his predecessors, he always married women outside the Italian kingdom, because he had interests in areas outside the kingdom: Burgundy in particular. Moreover, Hugh aimed to conquer the imperial title, and therefore during the 930s his attention was also focused on Rome. His marriage with Marozia, the Lady of Rome, in 932, has been read in this perspective. However, Hugh did not succeed in his plans and the marriage lasted in fact a very short time, as he abandoned Rome and his Roman wife following the rebellion of her son Alberic, who felt threatened by king. It is even possible that the short marriage with Marozia was an informal one and that the union was never made official.[253] Hugh's fourth and last wife, Berta of Burgundy, takes us back to his interests north of the Alps. The choice to marry her was dictated by his ambition to control the kingdom of Burgundy, whose heir – Berta's son Conrad – was underage when Rudolf II died, in 937. Hugh's priority was not to employ his wives to establish and strengthen alliances in Italy. Hugh's marriages seem rather to have been aimed at boosting his international ambitions, namely the control of Burgundy and the imperial title. Hugh's marriage to Berta does however offer significant evidence for understanding his politics in the Italian kingdom. Only a few months after the death of Rudolf, Hugh decided to marry his widow and betrothed her daughter Adelaide to his son Lothar. In order to make the unions official, two dower charters were issued in Colombier (Switzerland) on the 12th December 937.[254] The two dowers granted by Hugh and Lothar to their Burgundian spouses were impressive: it has been calculated that Adelaide received a dower of about 4600 *mansi*,

[253] G. Arnaldi, *Alberico di Roma*, DBI, 1 (1960), pp. 647-650. See above, chapter 2, pp. 31-32.
[254] DUL47; DUL48.

whereas Berta's was at least 2000 *mansi*.[255] The properties and monasteries granted to the brides were localized in three main areas: south-eastern Piedmont, Tuscany and Lunigiana. The *curtes* in Piedmont were certainly fiscal estates: most of them had previously been controlled by other kings of Italy. With regard to the Tuscan and Lunigiana *curtes*, it is more difficult to define their origin: it has been argued that they were fiscal properties, but they could also have arrived in Hugh's hands through paternal or maternal inheritance.[256]

This grant was, most of all, an attempt to secure Hugh's control of some key areas of the kingdom. It was the culmination of a process started by Hugh in the 930s in order to affirm his royal authority, based on the introduction of new men in public offices. Hugh tried to deprive the *marchiones* of Tuscany of real territorial control, creating a system of local functionaries that depended only on the king. In this way the *marchiones* lost the exceptional power they had held in the previous generations. The process started with the elimination of members of Hugh's own family: after the death of Hugh's half-brother, Guy, the title of *marchio* passed to his other half-brother Lambert. Hugh, however, decided to eliminate him and had him blinded. Liudprand reports the information that Hugh tried to spread the rumour that Guy was not the real son of Berta and Adalbert, clearly in order to delegitimize his claim to the title and to the family's wealth.[257] Later on Hugh nominated his brother Boso as *marchio*, but had him killed in 936 – just one year before the wedding with Berta. Eventually the *marca* was assigned to Ubert, Hugh's illegitimate son. These events are key to understanding the importance of the territorial control of Tuscany. Hagen Keller was the first to underline the process through which Hugh managed to regain political control on Tuscia, by creating, from 930 on, a system of local *vassi* who reported directly to the king, and were not, therefore, controlled by the *marchiones.*[258] Mario Nobili has followed Keller's argument and noted that Hugh tried to present himself as the only legitimate heir to the patrimony of Adalbert and Berta. The elimination of other members of his family and the grant of Tuscan properties to his bride and daughter-in-law were part of this strategy.[259] By granting royal estates and Tuscan properties to his new wife, Hugh united his two roles, that of king and that

[255] According to the analysis of M. Uhlirz, 'Die rechtliche Stellung der Kaiserinwitwe Adelheid im Deutschen und im Italischen Reich', *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Germanistische Abteilung*, 74 (1957), pp. 85-97.
[256] G. Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide: la politica di consolidamento del potere regio di Ugo di Arles' in Lazzari, *Il patrimonio delle regine*, pp. 247–294, at pp. 271–286.
[257] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, III 47, pp. 92-93.
[258] H. Keller, 'La marca di Tuscia fino all'anno Mille', in *V Congresso internazionale di studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, *Lucca 3 – 7 Ottobre 1971* (Spoleto, 1973), pp. 116–131.
[259] Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide'.

of descendant of the *marchiones* of Tuscany. The properties granted to Berta and Adelaide lay in key areas in which Hugh aimed to affirm his authority, by depriving his political enemies of their power.

In other words, Berta and Adelaide did not play an active part in this operation, but rather emerge as passive means of Hugh's political strategy. The role played by Adelaide has been greatly exaggerated by scholars, who have been influenced by her extraordinary career in the second part of her life, as Ottonian empress. The marginal role the two women had in the definition of their patrimonial status is further shown by a feature of Adelaide's dower charters. The name Adelaide appears in the document three times, and each time is written on an erasure, which hides the name Willa; the corrections were made by the same hand that wrote the document.[260] The obvious reason for the correction is that Lothar was at first betrothed to a woman called Willa. There were some women from the Italian nobility with that name. One was Berengar II's wife and Hugh's niece.[261] Another was the daughter of Boniface of Bologna and Waldrada, another sister of Rudolf II.[262] But Boniface was an enemy of Hugh: it is therefore unlikely that such a marriage had been arranged. It is possible that the dower charter was copied from an older document relating to Hugh's marriage with Willa, his first wife. This is, however, unlikely, because at the time of his first marriage Hugh was not king and therefore could not have afforded to grant to his wife royal *curtes* in Italy. As the charter reports that Adelaide is "filia divae memoria Rodulfi regis", it is clear that it must refer to a daughter of Rudolf of Burgundy. Giacomo Vignodelli has argued that Lothar might have been previously betrothed to another daughter of Berta and Rudolf; Willa was a typical name of the Burgundian royal family. This girl would have died prematurely, and consequently Adelaide was chosen as the new bride. This would explain also why Adelaide was so young – about seven years old – whereas according to the Salic law a girl should be at least ten to be promised in marriage.[263] I would rather argue that at the time of the composition of the charter the writer did not know the name of the princess, and believed her to be called Willa. This would mean that when the dowers were prepared Hugh and Lothar had not yet met Berta and Adelaide. The two dowers were dated at the *curtis* of Colombier, but they could have been written prior to the official betrothal; the scribe of Adelaide's dower

[260] DUL48, p. 142.
[261] Born from Boso and Willa – sister of Rudolf II and first wife of Hugh. See above, chapter 2, pp. 30-31.
[262] M. Nobili, 'Le famiglie marchionali della Tuscia', in *I ceti dirigenti in Toscana in età precomunale: Atti del Primo Convegno (2 Dicembre 1978)* (Pisa, 1981), pp. 78–105.
[263] Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide', pp. 255-257.

put down the name Willa, as this was believed to be the name of the young princess, and later on corrected it. The charters were written and recognized by members of Hugh's chancery who did not necessarily follow the king north, and later dated according to the day and place of the official betrothal. Adelaide's dower was written by only one hand, which has been identified with Giselprandus, *notarius* and *cappellanus* of Hugh.[264] He recognized Berta's dower, written by another hand, and wrote the other himself.[265] This can be read as a sign that the documents were produced in different phases and therefore that Berta and Adelaide had very little to do with their composition.

The two women were, moreover, not meant to get involved in the administration of the properties they had received. Berta probably spent very little time in Italy, and soon after marrying Hugh returned to Burgundy, where she is likely to have spent the rest of her life.[266] Things, however, were different for Adelaide: she grew up at Hugh's court until she reached the age to marry Lothar. Her marriage with Lothar must have taken place around 947, as she appears for the first time in a charter of that year. Through that document Lothar granted to his wife, "reginae Adeleidae nostraeque amabili coniugi", some land near the *curtis* of Corana (south of Pavia, along the Po river), one of the fiscal *curtes* that Adelaide had received as part of her dower, and other lands in the neighbouring areas of Rivasioli and Cantone.[267] These properties were granted to the queen with the intercession of Bishop Manasses. Manasses played a significant part in Lothar's politics: already bishop of Arles, he moved to Italy in the 930s, and was assigned by Hugh some influential ecclesiastical offices.[268] He was a member of the king's family circle, for he was son of Teutberga, Hugh's sister. From 945 he became archbishop of Milan, after he had abandoned Hugh and gone over to Berengar II's side. Manasses' position became even stronger after Hugh was forced to leave Italy in 945, as the king was abandoned by the Italian nobility, which turned towards Berengar. Lothar, however, managed to negotiate an agreement with Berengar and to keep

[264] Schiaparelli, 'Ricerche storico-diplomatiche V', pp. 70-72.

[265] Schiaparelli ('Ricerche storico-diplomatiche V', p. 70) argues that the *datatio* of Adelaide's charter was written by the same hand that wrote the rest of document.

[266] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, suggests that tension soon started between Berta and Hugh (IV 14, p. 105); Adalbert of Magdeburg, the continuator Regino of Prüm's *Chronicon*, reports that Berta was granted the monastery of Erstein by her son-in-law Otto I (a. 953, p. 166: "Indeque in Alsatiam progrediens socrui suae Bertae, matri scilicet domnae Adalheidis reginae, abbatiam in Erestein dedit").

[267] DLotII3.

[268] On Manasses, see: F. Bougard, *Manasse* in DBI, vol. 68 (2007), pp. 428–432; Besta, *Dalla fine dell'unità carolingia*, p. 452; Leyser, 'Episcopal Office', pp. 807-810. In 931, when the archbishop Lambert died, Hugh tried to grant the Milanese office to his relative Ilduin. See Rather, *Epistolae*, n.7, pp. 33-34, ed. F. Weigle, ed, *Die Briefe des Bischofs Rather von Verona*, MGH Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit, I (Weimar, 1949).

the crown. Manasses joined Lothar's entourage at this point and during these years he remained one of the most influential men of the kingdom. Adelaide's association with the most powerful bishop in northern Italy, who was also Lothar's *consiliarius regius*[269] and a member of the king's family, is certainly worth noticing. However, the little diplomatic evidence for Lothar's reign makes it difficult to assess the queen's role during her husband's short life. Nevertheless, numerous narrative accounts describe the part Adelaide played in Italian politics after Lothar's death, showing that she had been able to create a network of friends and allies that supported her against her enemy Berengar II.[270] These accounts have been retrospectively interpreted by historians, as they have attempted to show that, after Hugh abandoned the kingdom, Adelaide became one of the main actors in Lothar's reign.

Scholars have argued that, although Adelaide could not rely on her own family circle to support her, she managed to build her own network of friends among Lothar's allies.[271] According to this view, narrative accounts about what happened to Adelaide after her husband's death, in 950, throw light on the system of support she had created.[272] This system is said to have rotated around the bishop of Reggio Emilia, Adelard, who helped the young widow after she escaped from Berengar II, who wanted her to marry his son Adalbert. Giacomo Vignodelli has identified other members of the queen's entourage: Manasses of Milan and Guy of Modena.[273] The evidence for this would be that Manasses acted as intercessor in the above mentioned 947 charter, whereas Guy was close to Adelard of Reggio. However, there is not enough evidence to establish a clear division, which probably never existed, between Adelaide's and Berengar's supporters, at least before Lothar's death. Figures such as Manasses and Guy show extreme flexibility in their alliances. Manasses acted several times as intercessor in Lothar's diplomas, therefore his intercession on account of Adelaide might have had more to do with his own role at court than with the relationship with the queen.

The title *consors regni* has played a significant part in attempts to demonstrate Adelaide's influence in Italy. Historians have tried to compensate for the scant evidence offered by diplomas with the significance of its content. This evidence is mainly constituted by the

[269] Ambrosioni, 'Gli arcivescovi nella vita di Milano', pp. 93–95.There is some debate as to whether Manasses could have been appointed by Berengar, however recent studies tend to agree that he was appointed by Lothar, as a member of his family circle. See, Bougard, *Manasse.*
[270] For an overview, see Golinelli, 'La regina Adelaide e l'Italia'.
[271] Most recently this has been argued by Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*, pp. 225-227, 251-252.
[272] Arnaldi, *Adelaide*, pp. 246-249.
[273] Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*, 225–227.

above mentioned diploma of 947, and by a 950 charter, through which Lothar granted to his wife properties in the area of Vallisnera, along the Cisa pass.[274] On this occasion Adelaide appeared with the title of "amantissima coniunx nostra et consors regni nostri". The reappearance of the title of *consors regni* for the Italian queen, a title that had not been used for twenty years, has been read as a sign of Adelaide's influence during her husband's reign.[275] However, it might be linked instead to the political significance of the grant. The diploma states that Lothar had received the *curtes* from his father, "ex paterna hereditate". Vallisnera was probably not a fiscal estate, but rather a part of the properties that Berta of Tuscany owned in that area and that she had left to her children. However, Hugh had to wait until the end of the 930s – when his siblings had all disappeared - to gain real control of the properties.[276] Through a *placitum* held in 935 the king had attempted to deprive his nephew Anscar II of his claims on Lugolo, a property very close to Vallisnera, and granted it to the church of Parma.[277] Besides Hugh, Anscar was at the time the only direct living heir of Berta and Adalbert. According to Vito Fumagalli, Anscar inherited his family's properties in that area: among them was Vallisnera.[278] Anscar was killed in 939 and only at that point did Hugh get control of the area. By granting a property that had been the object of a violent family conflict to his wife (*hereditario iure*), Lothar used her as a means to secure the control of a key territory. For Vallisnera was not only part of Lothar's familial properties, but also an area of transit between Emilia and Tuscany, that is to say the main communication route between northern Italy and the *marca*. The use of the title aimed to underline that this property belonged to the royal domain: Adelaide received it in her right as *consors regni*. However, this had more to do with the significance of the property itself than with the role that Adelaide might or might not have exercised at court.

The significance given to the use of *consors regni* in the diplomas of 947 and 950 derives from the use of the expression in narrative sources produced in Germany after Adelaide married Otto I.[279] Other sources show that *consors regni* was not necessarily meant to acknowledge the power of a queen. After Hugh abandoned Italy in 945, following the rebellion promoted by Berengar II, Lothar managed to negotiate an agreement with Berengar

[274] DLotII14.
[275] P. Golinelli, *Adelaide: Regina santa d'Europa* (Milan, 2000), pp. 53-57.
[276] Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide', pp. 285–287.
[277] Manaresi, *I Placiti del Regnum Italiae*, n. 136, pp. 506-513
[278] V. Fumagalli, *Alle origini di una grande dinastia. Adalberto Atto di Canossa* (Tübingen, 1971), pp. 30–52.
[279] For a recent analysis on Adelaide's career as Ottonian empress, see: Fössel, *Die Königin,* pp. 123-136; 156-158; pp. 262-267. See above, chapter 1, p.1.

and to remain, at least nominally, king. Liudprand comments on this: "For although the Italians raised up Hugh and Lothar as kings, in fact Berengar was margrave in name alone, and in real power he was the king, while they, kings in name, in deed were not even worth what counts are".[280] In June 948, a couple of months after Hugh's death, Berengar as intercessor appeared in one of the diplomas issued by Lothar's chancery for the Count Manfred; in this document he is defined "regnique nostri summus consors".[281] This charter shows a different use of the expression *consors*: it is used for a man, and this had not happened for over a century. Moreover, this man did not have any familial bond with the king, whereas in the past the expression had been employed only for members of the royal family. Historians have seen this charter as the proof of Lothar's formal surrender to Berengar: the fact that Berengar is called "summus consors" would imply that he was the second man in the kingdom.[282] Most importantly for the present work, this document shows that this title was not necessarily reserved to the queen. *Consors regni* was a political title with literary suggestions, which had been used in a very flexible way by Italian chanceries over the ninth and tenth centuries. This flexibility means that it could be used in different contexts and for different reasons.

Furthermore, the title was used for the last Italian queen, the wife of Berengar II, Willa, daughter of Boso of Tuscany (Hugh's brother) and the Burgundian princess Willa. In 960 she was granted by her husband and son "Berengarius et Adelbertus divina providente clementia reges", the *curtis* of Olbiano, which had previously belonged to a man called Rogo, who had betrayed the king. The charter defines her as "Vuilla regina nostraque delecta coniunx et consors regni nostri".[283] This is the only documentary evidence about a woman who had considerable room for manoeuvre in Italian politics.[284] This diploma was issued during a delicate phase of Berengar's reign: his agreement with Otto in 952, had left him in control of the Italian kingdom; but tension was starting to build up between the two rulers. Although it is difficult to assess the meaning of Willa's appearance in this diploma, as it is the only one, it is worth noticing that the title *consors* was used in a moment of political struggle. Moreover,

[280] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, V 30, p. 141.
[281] DLotII8.
[282] P. Delogu, *Beregario II*, DBI, 9 (1967), pp. 26-35.
[283] DBA14.
[284] See above, chapter 2, p. 31. I have not considered the role of Gerberga of Chalon, Adalbert's wife, as she never appears in charters as queen of Italy. She appears only in one diploma (DBA15 (958–961), pp. 334-336) as intercessor on account of *marchio* Aleramus, where she is termed "nostra dilecta filia". On her see C. Bouchard, *Sword, Miter and Cloister* (Ithaca and London, 1987), pp. 267–268, 310–311; C. Settipani, 'Les origines maternelles du comte de Bourgogne Otte-Guillaume', *Annales de Bourgogne*, 66 (1994), pp. 5-63.

this charter granted her a property which had been expropriated from a traitor: the queen was involved in the re-establishment of the *status quo* and the punishment of the king's enemies. She had a role that can be compared to that held by Bertilla, who, like Willa, belonged to the Italian aristocracy, and like Willa supported her husband in the re-establishment of political harmony after the defeat of his enemies.

This diploma illuminates further aspects of Berengar's reign. According to Schiaparelli the diploma was written by one of the scribes that had previously worked for Lothar: this suggests that, despite the conflict between Adelaide and Berengar after Lothar's death, there was a substantial continuity with regard to the royal entourage. Moreover, the charter was recognized by the archchancellor Guy of Modena. According to Liudprand, in 945 Guy was involved in the revolt organized by the Italian magnates, who forced Hugh to leave the Italian kingdom. Giacomo Vignodelli has argued that Guy might be the dedicatee of Bishop Atto of Vercelli's *Perpendiculum*, a political pamphlet which dealt with the situation of mid tenth-century Italy and supported Berengar's claim to the crown of Italy. The dedication would be an attempt of the bishop of Vercelli to persuade Guy to support Berengar's cause against Otto.[285] However, Guy's role in this situation remains ambiguous. In August 952 he took part in a diet held by Otto I at Augsburg with many Italian bishops: this shows his closeness to the Saxon king. Moreover, in 962 he was also granted by Otto I, who had become emperor, the monastery of Nonantola through the intercession of empress Adelaide.[286] Rather than indicating a consistent friendship between Guy and Adelaide, this diploma shows the evolution of political factions: even if it is difficult to establish which side, if any, Guy took when Adelaide and Berengar's interests clashed, ten years after Lothar's death the potential hostility between the empress and the bishop was definitely over. Liudprand himself is an example of the flexibility of such alliances and of the fluidity of political groups, as he had worked, in succession, for Hugh, Berengar and Otto. The little diplomatic evidence available for Willa is nonetheless significant for the understanding of broad issues, thanks to the analysis of the style, content and authorship of the charter. The language related to the queen can be read as an attempt to stress Berengar's authority in a moment of insecurity. The grant of land which had belonged to a traitor suggests that Willa was presented as responsible for the kingdom's order. The authorship of the charter shows the continuity of royal entourages

[285] On this text and its political meaning see Vignodelli, *Il Filo a Piombo*.
[286] DOI248.

of two enemies and, alongside that, the fluidity of alliances that historians have tried to fit into a rigid scheme.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to assess the role women played in royal politics through the analysis of diplomatic evidence. In the past historians have underlined the relevance of Italian queens: this idea also derives from the frequent presence of royal women in charters. However, besides indentifying this general pattern, historians have failed to look thoroughly into the specificities of each case. In other words, they have read the evidence with the purpose of underlining a coherent pattern – the prominence of Italian royal women. Although royal charters provide plenty of evidence for these strategies, the information they can give us in term of women's activities has been overlooked. This evidence has been analysed through a quantitative approach: the more frequently a woman appears in charters, the more influential she must have been. I argue that one must also give attention to other qualitative aspects, namely the language, composition and style of the charters, as well as, obviously, their content and context.

This chapter aimed to prove two main points. Firstly, by analysing the way in which each royal woman appears in documents, one can illuminate their husbands' political strategies. ninth- and tenth-century political turning points provoked fierce struggle for royal authority in Italy: this competitive situation meant that each ruler had to find his own strategy and his own means to succeed. This has been analysed very effectively by Rosenwein with regard to Berengar, less so with regard to other Carolingian and post-Carolingian rulers.[287] Secondly, the chapter has underlined the fluidity of charters' formal features – particularly titles - and how significant this fluidity is for the understanding of women's roles. Historians have given attention to the way in which women are portrayed in diplomas, in particular to the title *consors regni*. Many have read in this title political and institutional connotations. However, scholars have failed to look at how the use of this title evolves over the course of time, in the light of broader political aspects.

[287] With some exceptions: Screen, 'Lothar I and Italy'; Bougard, 'La cour et le gouvernement'; Id., 'Charles le Chauve'; Vignodelli, *Il filo a piombo*.

With regard to the first aspect, I have underlined three main phases. The Carolingians who ruled Italy in the ninth century were dealing with the problem of consolidating their authority and building local support networks. Charters show that their wives helped them in this process. Ermengarda was employed as a monastic patron, while her family was given the control of some areas in northwestern Italy. Angelberga's help became particularly significant to Louis II in southern Italy, when he had to face controversies with the Pope, political and military negotiations with the Byzantine empire and the potential hostility of the Beneventans. The issuing of several charters for his wife and her family was aimed at building and protecting support networks in southern and northern Italy. Once he had expelled Angelberga from the kingdom, Charles the Fat tried to introduce his wife into Italian politics. This attempt, however, was not successful, and it ended up with the return of Angelberga to Italy.

During the struggle for the Italian throne among Italian magnates and Carolingian descendants, women took part in political rivalries. Several aristocrats claimed the kingdom: the Carolingians Arnulf of Carinthia, Louis III and Rudolf II; the Italian magnates Berengar, who used his Carolingian blood as a legitimating argument, and Guy of Spoleto, who had the best military and political resources, but no connection with the former imperial dynasty. These men entrusted some responsibility to their women. Arnulf's grant to Ermengarda, Angelberga's daughter, was an attempt to claim his authority over Italy. Guy promoted a similar policy, by entrusting Ageltrude with properties which had a queenly identity and which had been previously controlled by Carolingian women. Berengar employed Bertilla as a networker, particularly to liaise with religious institutions in the area of Verona and Brescia, as well as with the aristocracy of Piacenza, where her family was settled. Her influence in royal politics became more evident during or just after periods of crisis – the Hungarian invasions and the arrival of Louis III. On the other hand, she disappeared completely from documents and was finally eliminated when Berengar's reign had achieved a certain political stability. Pre-Ottonian Italy saw the reigns of Hugh, Lothar and Berengar II. After the definitive departure of Rudolf II from Italy, a new dynasty acquired the Italian royal title and the Carolingians were excluded from Italy once and for all. Hugh's reign was not characterized by external threat posed by the Carolingians. On the contrary he put pressure on the Carolingian rulers of Burgundy. Hugh's matrimonial policy reflected his political ambitions. Hugh's wives arrived from outside the Italian kingdom: when they managed to carve out an active part in politics – as was the case for Alda – they did so thanks to the help

of their friends. In other cases, they did not have a particularly active role in royal politics, as happened for Berta and Adelaide.

I hope to have shown, in other words, that the part women played depended on three main factors: their origin, their husbands' political priorities and the challenges they had to face. These factors were continuously evolving. Italian royal women had different origins and backgrounds. Moreover their husbands' opportunities depended on their relationship with the Italian aristocracy. This fluidity also has repercussions on the formal features of royal charters. *Consors regni/imperii* has been at the core of my analysis because it has been considered as the peculiar expression of Italian queenship. I have challenged this view, by showing that this title changed meaning and nuances over the course of time. It was not introduced for Ermengarda to stress the significance of San Salvatore in defining Italian queenship, as has been argued by Cristina La Rocca. Rather, its appearance in diplomas derived from its use in exegetical texts and its association with biblical queenship. As for Angelberga, who has been considered the *consors imperii par excellence*, the title was introduced during the expedition in southern Italy, which saw a real change in the royal entourage and in the political situation. Louis II had three main goals: to report a military victory against the Saracens, to stand his ground with the Byzantine emperor and to appear credible to the Beneventans. The charters he produced during this period illuminate the last two aspects and so do the titles which were used to define his wife. In this context, *consors imperii* does not have a specific meaning, because it is interchangeable with other titles that suggest an active involvement of the empress, without actually having a precise institutional meaning. Another means of displaying his and his wife's authority was the significant production of coins with Angelberga's name and title, a novelty in the early medieval West.

Ultimately, this title was more used in Italy than in other areas of the Carolingian empire because it entered the set of diplomatic practices, thanks to its use in documents issued for Ermengarda and Angelberga. However, the diplomatic language which was imitated from chancery to chancery was a neutral tool which writers could shape and adapt to their needs. This is evident in the first period of post-Carolingian Italy: Ageltrude and Bertilla, the most prominent women on the Italian scene, were *consortes* in two different ways. For Ageltrude the title was associated to her control of queenly estates and nunneries, in order to state Guy's authority over areas which had previously been in the hands of his enemies, the Carolingians. For Bertilla the title rather recorded the role of networker she carried on in the most critical moments of Berengar's reign.

Finally, in the last phase of the Italian kingdom, the title was used only sporadically: one time each for Alda, Adelaide and Willa. Certainly this has to be related to the paucity of documentary evidence available for these queens. I have argued that, despite the lack of information, the sources show that Alda was active in political affairs, networking with the local aristocracy and clergy in the area of Parma. For Adelaide, however, the significance of her presence in documents has been largely overestimated. She has been attributed room for manoeuvre and a network of friends for which the sources provide little evidence. The misunderstanding is also linked to the title *consors regni*, which was adopted by Ottonian authors to define Adelaide and her successors. This, however, happened only later, in the 960s. In the Italian charter in which the title is used, Adelaide seems to have a rather passive function. Moreover, Berengar II was called *consors regni* in a charter issued by Lothar: this suggests that the title was not specifically intended for the heir or the royal wife, but could also be used to record and acknowledge a political alliance. Finally it was used again by king Berengar II for his wife Willa: even if it is difficult to assess whether the choice was linked to particular political conditions, it is worth noticing that this diploma was issued in a critical moment for Berengar.

My final point concerns the study of the charters' authors, the chancellors, which can provide important information in relation to queens. First of all, it is worth noticing that often the chancery reveals a continuity from one ruler to another. Remigius, the notary who recognized the charter for Ermengarda in which she is defined as *consors*, went to work for Louis II and supervised some of the charters issued for Angelberga: a continuity that is probably significant with regard to the similar features we find in charters for Ermengarda and Angelberga. Many post-Carolingian Italian rulers employed the chancellors who had previously worked for their adversaries. This shows the fluidity of political factions in post-Carolingian Italy. An excellent example is represented by Guy of Modena, Berengar II's archchancellor. He had previously worked for Hugh, but betrayed him to transfer to Berengar's side. At the same time, he has been considered as one of Adelaide's potential supporters, because he collaborated with Otto at the beginning of the 950s. However, he worked as Berengar's archchancellor until 960, when he supervised the issuing of a diploma for Willa, at the time when Otto and Berengar's relations started to be tense. Not only were chancellors the expression of political fluidity, they also illuminate the position of the queen at court. Queens and chancellors often seem to work together. The relationship between Liutward of Vercelli, Charles the Fat's archchancellor and Richgard, is probably the best

known and studied.[288] This seems, however, to be a recurring pattern. Ardingus, Berengar's archchancellor between 903 and 922, was Bertilla's brother: strikingly, most of her appearances in diplomas took place during the period in which her brother held his office. Ageltrude was clearly linked to Wibod, Guy's archchaplain and to Elbuncus, the archchancellor. Both of them became bishops of Parma and it seems that the empress used their support to settle in the town after the death of her husband and her son. Gerlannus, a man who had arrived in Italy with Alda, became archchancellor and abbot of Bobbio and maintained his relationship with the queen during her life. One can see a convergence and collaboration between the administrative elite of the kingdom and the queen: this certainly had repercussions on royal women's visibility in charters.

The combination of the aspects described above – political conditions, the queen's background, writing of charters and queenly titles – as they emerge from the analysis of royal charters, show that the variability of these factors ultimately resulted in the fluidity of Italian queens' roles and opportunities. In the light of what emerged from this analysis, in the next chapter I will assess how these opportunities were converted into resources, through monastic patronage and the acquisition and administration of landed wealth.

[288] MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, pp. 185–190.

Chapter IV. The queen's resources: land and monasteries

One of the reasons which have led scholars to underline the charisma of Italian queens is that they appear to have considerable landed wealth and control over monastic institutions. This chapter will attempt to establish whether this was the case, analysing the creation and use of the queens' wealth: landholdings and monastic patronage. It is often assumed that a queen who was given a property was able to dispose of it - although scholars debate the degree of freedom that she had. Instead, I will underline different models of queenly ownership, arguing that owning a property did not necessary imply having physical control over it. It has been argued that properties and monasteries owned by several generations of queens were "queenly": in other words, they had a crucial function in defining the queen's office. I will argue, instead, that the recurrence and visibility of these properties in relation to the queen must not be associated with her office, but rather with the political and symbolic significance of these estates. For this purpose, the size and distribution of each dower has to be analysed in relation to the political situation in which it was created.[1] The function of royal women's landed and monastic resources in Italy needs to be reconsidered and nuanced. In order to do this, attention will shift from the possession to the transaction. By analysing each individual gift queens were given during their marriage, I argue that each grant was the result of specific motives. At the same time, the physical control of the queen's wealth must not be taken for granted. The properties which we know more about are those that were politically significant, but that does not necessarily imply that they brought economic benefit to the queen who owned them.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first part I will examine the framework of queens' patrimonial resources and monastic networks. The second part analyses the dowers of Carolingian empresses and their relationship with San Salvatore in Brescia, the nunnery which has been considered as the core of Italian queens' wealth in the ninth century. I argue that the relationship between queens and the nunnery was much less defined than has been suggested. The control of San Salvatore was achieved through the appointment of royal daughters as abbesses – whereas the queen was left in a marginal position. The third section

[1] This approach has been used for some Italian and German queens in the articles published in Lazzari, *Il patrimonio delle regine*.

explores the way in which monasteries and properties were granted to royal women in the tenth century, when the structure of the queens' dower became more fragmented and varied.

1. Queeship, marriage and dower

1.1 Marriage and dower in the ninth century

The queen was, first of all, a bride: the definition of marriage is crucial to understand her patrimonial situation. Until recently, scholars have taken for granted that up to the ninth century there were two distinct forms of marriage. The *Muntehe* was the official marriage, which required an exchange of properties between the couple and a public ceremony. The other, the *Friedelehe*, was a sort of quasi-marriage, which was not completely lawful and did not require the exchange of properties and the consent of the couple's families.[2] Ruth Mazo Karras has recently questioned this partition, challenging the existence of these two forms, and arguing that there is no evidence that they were considered as alternatives.[3]

By showing that marriage was a much vaguer concept than previously thought, Mazo Karras also argues for the fluidity of patrimonial exchanges which were part of the process.[4] The *dos ex marito,* the dower, served for the economic sustenance of the woman in case of widowhood. Until the ninth century it was not a necessary requirement, but rather depended on the status of the wife. During the course of the ninth century the Church started to become more concerned about the regulation of marriage, and subsequently pressed for the *dos* as a crucial component of a lawful marriage.[5] The sources show that the requirement of providing a *dos* from the groom to the bride was imposed only slowly in the period, and probably not without resistance. There is little evidence of the size and modality of this endowment. Historians have tried to categorize the various types of patrimonial exchanges: in addition to the *dos ex marito* they have identified the existence of a custom called *tertia* (or *quarta*). This indicates that the dower of the bride would have included one third – or one quarter - of the properties of her husband.[6] This custom was very vague: some texts suggest that it concerned

[2] For the traditional distinction see Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, pp. 264–265.
[3] R. Mazo Karras, 'The History of Marriage and the Myth of Friedelehe', *Early Medieval Europe*, 14.2 (2006), pp. 119–151; but also Airlie, 'Private Bodies and the Body Politic', pp. 14-16.
[4] Ibidem, pp. 127-130.
[5] Heidecker, *The Divorce of Lothar II*, pp. 32-33.
[6] See the analysis and related bibliography in E. Santinelli, *Des femmes éplorees? Les veuves dans la société aristocratique du haut Moyen Âge* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2003), pp. 77–78. See also: L. Feller, '"Morgengabe",

only properties acquired together by the couple during their marriage, others that it included all properties owned by the husband.[7] However, as Mazo Karras has pointed out, "ecclesiastical leaders drew a distinction between marriage made with a *dos* and concubinage, but there is little evidence for how the laity felt".[8] These customs were very undefined, as they seem to be interchangeable and fluid, with regard to the way in which they were conceived and used.

1.2 The dower of the queen of Italy

On a royal level, things get more complicated. A number of studies on dowers of early medieval queens have attempted to assess the nature, size and significance of royal dowers. In her study on queens' dowers in ninth- and tenth-century Frankia and Germany, Régine Le Jan has argued that, for a queen to be "honoured" – that is to say for her role to be official - she had to be endowed. She also suggested that the dower of Carolingian queens was usually placed in the area where the queen came from. In other words, the location of the queen's properties was related to her family background. Le Jan has also argued that the modalities of the dower were defined parallel to the evolution of the queen's office in the course of the ninth century.[9] In this view, Italy was particularly important: Italian queens possessed bigger dowers than those of the queens of France and Germany. This has been related to a different status for the queen of Italy. The role of *consors regni* would indicate, in this view, that queens had a more institutionalized position than in other areas of Europe.[10] However, as I have shown above, *consors regni* must not be considered as the sign of institutionalized queenship: this weakens Le Jan's argument.

Furthermore, there is another substantial problem with this argument. It is ultimately based only on the cases of a few "visible" figures: Angelberga, Adelaide, and her mother Berta, who all received very considerable dowers. But what tells us that the reason was their status? As I have shown above, they had very different opportunities and roles. And what about the other queens of Italy that were not equally endowed? Does this imply that they were less

dot, "Tertia": rapport introductif', in Bougard, Feller, Le Jan, *Dots et douaires*, pp. 1-25; R. Le Jan, 'Aux origines du douaire médiéval (VIe-Xe siècle)', in M. Parisse, ed, *Veuves et veuvage dans le haut Moyen-Age: Table ronde organisée à Göttingen par la Mission Historique Française en Allemagne* (Paris, 1993), pp. 107-122.

[7] See R. Le Jan, 'Douaires et pouvoirs des reines en Francie et Germanie', in Bougard, Feller, Le Jan, *Dots et douaires*, pp. 457–484; and Santinelli, *Des femmes eplorées?*, pp . 77–78.

[8] Mazo Karras, 'The History of Marriage', pp. 139–142.

[9] Le Jan, 'Douaires et pouvoirs des reines', p. 471. On Ermengarda and the *consortium regni*, see above, chapter 3, pp. 61-66.

[10] Le Jan, 'Douaires et pouvoirs des reines', p. 470.

"powerful"? I argue that the constitution of a dower, no matter how extensive, was dictated by complex and variable reasons. Each dower needs to be understood in the light of the political situation in which it was created.

1.3 Queens and royal monasteries

The patrimonial resources of Italian queens in the course of the ninth century have been linked, as already mentioned above, to the nunnery of San Salvatore in Brescia. Founded in the mid eighth century, San Salvatore received numerous royal donations and built up huge landed wealth, a part of which according to scholars was meant to be controlled directly by the queen of Italy.[11] San Salvatore is an example of monasteries which were consistently part of the queen's dower.

The increasing significance of monastic patronage in the ninth century has also been read as the result – or at least directly related to - the parallel definition of the queen's office.[12] According to this view, monastic patronage was an activity which every queen was expected – and had the right – to undertake, as a part of her institutional role. It was related to commemorative aspects, as the queen was the repository of the dynastic memory of her family. Patrick Geary's model of the evolution of women's duties in commemorative activities and liturgies draws a distinction between two areas. In East Frankia women played a more active part, whereas in the West the commemoration of the dead was reserved to specialists.[13] This was reflected in the way in which queens' monastic foundations worked. In East Frankia royal women had more autonomy in the foundation and administration of monastic houses and this autonomy would result in the creation of a new queenly status.[14] Italy would follow the Eastern model: the memorial and monastic policy was carried out directly by queens, accompanied by patrimonial and dynastic strategies.[15] Although the significance of monastic patronage for the queen's dower needs acknowledging, the degree of involvement in the actual administration of a monastery is difficult to assess. The relationship between queens and "their" monasteries was practised in different ways.

[11] G. Pasquali, *S. Giulia di Brescia*, in A. Castagnetti, M. Luzzati, G. Pasquali, A. Vasina, eds, *Inventari altomedievali di terre, coloni e redditi*, FISI 104 (Rome, 1979), pp. 41-94.
[12] MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood', pp. 17-18; La Rocca, 'Monachesimo femminile', p. 121.
[13] P. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance : Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1996), pp. 48–81. See also Van Houts, *Medieval Memories,* pp. 1-10.
[14] Le Jan, 'Douaires et pouvoirs des reines', pp. 466–474.
[15] Ibidem, La Rocca, 'Monachesimo femminile', pp. 119-121.

In the following pages I will underline the multiplicity of these relationships. This is crucial for the understanding of royal politics, as monasteries were key for the definition of kings' territorial strategies. The choice of founding, endowing or granting protection to a monastery influenced several parties and changed the power balances in the area. Queens' foundation and patronage of monasteries therefore had a dramatic impact on the political landscape and on relations with local elites.[16] However, these conditions were not fixed. Elites, power balances and royal priorities changed from one ruler to another. The territorial and political function of monasteries and their relationship to royalty also changed. In other words, the practice of queenly monastic patronage cannot be confined to a single categorical frame.

The practice of several queens owning the same properties recurs often in the Carolingian empire. For this reason, scholars have argued that the possession of these "queenly" estates and monasteries defined the role of the queen.[17] Why was a property transmitted from one queen to another? Were these monasteries more significant than others? And for what reason? San Salvatore in Brescia was certainly a very powerful and rich nunnery in ninth-century Italy, thanks to its size and extensive properties. Although this trend should be recognized, we should not misinterpret it either. To give a royal monastery or a fiscal estate to the queen was a way of securing royal control of it: its queenly identity might have been used as pretext rather than a motive. In other words, the properties that we hear most about in the sources are so prominent precisely because of their political and symbolic significance. For the same reason one should not presume that they granted economic benefit to the queen.

1.4 To receive and to own: the language of propriety and its nuances

Historians have tried to assess queens' patrimonial status by looking at the language of charters which described the transactions. Diplomas are full of expressions which hint at the nature of the ownership: expressions like *iure hereditario*, *iure proprietario*, *meo iure* seem to define full and perpetual property.[18] On the other hand, expressions like *usufructario* and *beneficiario iure* define only a temporary ownership and limit the room for manoeuvre of the landholder. However, these expressions cannot be read categorically: language and practice are two very different things. As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, the analysis of

[16] MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood', p. 17; L. Feller, 'Familles aristocratiques et églises en Italie central', in F. Bougard, C. La Rocca, R. Le Jan, eds, *Sauver son âme et se perpétuer: Transmission du patrimoine et mémoire au haut Moyen Âge* (Rome, 2005), pp. 265–292, pp. 267-268; Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, pp. 1-24, 99-114.
[17] MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood'; Le Jan, 'Douaires et pouvoirs des reines'.
[18] T. Lazzari, 'Dotari e beni fiscali', in Ea., *Il patrimonio delle regine*, pp. 123-139.

the content and language of charters must take into account the circumstances in which a document was issued. There were many reasons why a woman could be given properties, and her own material security was only one of them. The physical control of these very same properties can be seen only in the long term – namely in the case of widowhood, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

As they were part of the royal fisc, queenly properties could be constantly reclaimed by rulers. The control of fiscal properties was related to the balances of power and support networks: by its very nature, the queen's wealth was at the core of this complex system. This made it more fragile. So, what was the status of queenly properties? Once granted to the queen did they remain part of the royal fisc? Or did they instead acquire a special status, which protected them from the renegotiation of their control? In what way were these properties effectively meant for the queen to benefit from them? I argue that there is no one answer to these questions: the language of property in charters left rulers room for manoeuvre and opportunities for renegotiations.[19] The control of fiscal lands involved multiple actors: the queen could be one of them, but her role was variable.

Nevertheless, scholars have attempted to categorize queens' rights over their properties. For example, Matilde Uhlirz, who studied the patrimonial rights of Adelaide in Italy, argued that she had full rights to dispose of the properties in Italy she had been given as dower by Hugh and Lothar.[20] Gerd Althoff has challenged her approach arguing instead that a queen always needed her husband's permission to alienate, sell or cede her dower properties.[21] Régine Le Jan has stated that the queen seems to enjoy full ownership rights over her dower. On the other hand, she admits that "Les solutions juridiques et diplomatiques varient, en fonction du statut d'épouse ou de veuve, et de la période considérée, mais toute donation de la reine doit être confirmée par un diploma royal".[22] The juridical and diplomatic solutions were indeed variable, but they did not depend on the status of the wife, as Le Jan says. They depended, instead, on the reason these transactions were issued in the first place, which was not necessarily, or not only, the economic security of the queen.

[19] M. Innes, 'Practices of Property in the Carolingian Empire', in J. Davis, M. McCormick, eds, *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 247-266, at p. 249.
[20] Uhlirz, 'Die rechtliche Stellung', pp. 96-97.
[21] G. Althoff, 'Probleme um die *dos* der Königinnen in 10. und 11. Jahrhundert', in Parisse, *Veuves et veuvage,* pp. 123-132, at pp. 125-126.
[22] Le Jan, 'Douaires et pouvoirs des reines', p. 475.

2. Wealth and monasteries in the ninth and early tenth century: San Salvatore in Brescia

The complex relationship between San Salvatore and the queen of Italy originated in the Lombard kingdom. After the Carolingian conquest, the nunnery was controlled by Carolingian empresses in the course of the ninth century. In the previous chapter I challenged the argument in relation to its role in the definition of the office of the queen. In the following pages I will focus on another implication of the argument, its significance for the definition of the patrimonial status of the queen. I do not deny that San Salvatore was closely connected to queens of Italy. It represented the chance to control a vital territory, Brescia, and a very extensive monastic patrimony. More importantly, it was the point of convergence of some of the greatest families of the kingdom, who sent their daughters to the nunnery. Kings had interests in controlling the convent. Nonetheless, this association has been taken a bit too far. I will show that the relationship with the queen is very nuanced and changed over the course of the ninth century. On the other hand, I will underline an important continuity: the crucial role of royal daughters – rather than queens – in the administration of the nunnery.

Italian queens had founded and patronized monastic houses since the Lombard period. During the seventh century monastic foundations were concentrated in Pavia, whereas from the eighth century onwards monasteries founded by queens started to be located in the queen's area of origin.[23] The most significant of these foundations was San Salvatore, promoted by the last Lombard queen, Ansa. She was presumably from Brescia, as the documents state that she founded San Salvatore with some properties given to her by her father Verissimus. Between 759 and 770 the nunnery was enriched with several donations issued by the king, the queen and their son Adelchis.[24] We have a lot of information about the monastery's wealth, thanks to the many royal charters which document its connection with the royal family. Members of Ansa's family were buried inside the convent, and one of Desiderius' daughters, Anselberga, was appointed as the first abbess.[25] In her analysis of the nunnery's history, Suzanne Wemple has shown the peculiar role of Ansa and her daughter in the creation of its wealth.[26] In particular, Ansa exploited her political relationships to provide San Salvatore with extensive landed wealth. The abbess Anselberga, with the support of her family, organized economic exchanges and obtained lands from other monasteries as well as

[23] La Rocca, 'Monachesimo femminile'.
[24] CDL, n. 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44.
[25] Nelson, 'Making a Difference in Eighth-century Politics', pp. 171-190.
[26] Wemple, 'S. Salvatore/ S. Giulia', pp. 85-90.

from members of the aristocracy.[27] San Salvatore was an innovative project: a nunnery that would serve to enhance territorial control, thanks to the strategic location of its properties, but also as a memorial place for the royal family.[28] After the conquest of the Lombard kingdom, the Carolingians are presumed to have taken over the special relationship that Ansa had established with the convent. In 774 Charlemagne's wife, Hildegard, acted as intercessor in a charter which granted the control of the monastery of Sirmione – previously a dependency of San Salvatore - to St Martin of Tours.[29] This has been considered as an attempt by the new ruler of Italy to "disarm" the resistance to the Carolingians in Italy, which was concentrated in Brescia, one of the strongholds of the Lombard royal family.[30] The first Carolingian queen to be granted the monastery was the empress Judith, who received it *in beneficium* from Louis the Pious in 819 – 825.[31] On the other hand, Tiziana Lazzari has underlined the decisive role of the powerful Supponid family in this process. The family controlled Brescia at the beginning of the ninth century, and they also maintained excellent connections with the nunnery.[32] This, she argues, resulted in rulers' tendency to marry Supponid women: there were several Supponid queens in the course of the ninth century - Cunegunda, Angelberga and Bertilla. Furthermore, in this view a specific part of San Salvatore's properties was intended as the queen's wealth, granted and transmitted to her independently from the rest of the convent's wealth.[33] Both these interpretations, however, ignore the specificity of each queen's relationship to the nunnery, which is what I will focus on in the following pages.

2.1 Ermengarda

The idea of San Salvatore as the core of the queen's wealth is based on a charter issued in 851 by Lothar I for his daughter Gisla, who was the abbess of the nunnery. Following the

[27] CDL, n. 151, 152, 226, 228, 257.

[28] On the history of the monastery, see: G. P. Brogiolo, 'Desiderio e Ansa a Brescia: dalla fondazione del monastero al mito', in C. Bertelli, G.P. Brogiolo, eds, *Il futuro dei Longobardi. L'Italia e la costruzione dell'Europa di Carlo Magno* (Geneve - Milan, 2000), pp. 143-155; La Rocca, 'Les cadeaux'; M. Bettelli Bergamaschi, 'Monachesimo femminile e potere politico nell'alto Medioevo: il caso di San Salvatore di Brescia', in G. Zarri, ed, *Il monachesimo femminile in Italia dall'alto medioevo al secolo XVII. A confronto con l'oggi. Atti del VI Convegno del Centro di Studi*, (San Pietro in Cariano, 1997), pp. 42-74; Wemple, 'S. Salvatore/ Santa Giulia', Lazzari, 'Una mamma carolingia'.

[29] DKI41.

[30] La Rocca, 'Monachesimo femminile', p. 127

[31] Porro Lambertenghi, *Codex Diplomaticus Langobardiae*, n. 103 "Coniux nostra Iudith, qui monasterium domini et salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi, quod situm est infra muros civitatis Brissie, nostra liberalitate, in beneficium habet". See also chapter 3, p. 60.

[32] Lazzari, 'Una mamma carolingia', pp. 46-50. On the relationship between the Supponids and San Salvatore, see also Bougard, 'Les Supponides', pp. 392-393, fn. 35.

[33] La Rocca, 'Les cadeaux', pp. 511-518.

death of her mother, Gisla was granted a group of properties and monasteries which San Salvatore controlled in northern and central Italy: Agna, Campora, *Sextuno* (Rieti), a harbour in Piacenza, the hospital of San Benedict in Montelungo (Liguria), the monasteries of San Salvatore in Brisciano (Lucca), Sirmione and *Reginae* in Pavia.[34] This was only a part of San Salvatore's properties. Why these properties? La Rocca has argued that they had previously belonged to Ermengarda and only after her death were given to her daughter. According to her view, they constituted the patrimonial reserve of the queen. While most of the wealth was administered by the abbess and was aimed at the maintenance of the nunnery, this group of properties were exclusively meant for the economic benefit of the queen – when there was one. The properties are likely to have arrived at the nunnery thanks to the efforts of Ansa and her daughter Anselberga: this origin would mark their special status.[35]

Although this argument is interesting, it is not supported by enough evidence. The charter of 851 does not necessarily imply the existence of special "queenly" properties: it only refers to the grant of San Salvatore to Gisla and Ermengarda in 848, which confirmed to the two women the control of the nunnery, without however mentioning any specific property. There is little ground to argue that the properties mentioned in 851 had been the object of previous grants to queens. For the same reason, there is no sign that the properties listed there had belonged to Ermengarda. The only exception is San Salvatore in Agna, which had been given to Ermengarda through a separate donation in 848.[36] This diploma appointed two *advocati*, two *cancellarii* and twelve *liberi* who were in charge of administrative and practical duties. They are presented as Ermengarda's own men (*advocates sui*), and for this reason one might assume that she had her queenly entourage to administer the monastery.

In other words, San Salvatore in Brescia was a component of a complex system of monastic patronage, of which Ermengarda was in charge. The charter of 835, in which Ermengarda acted as intercessor for St Ambrose in Milan, shows her relationship with the Milanese monastery, which was related to her familial background.[37] Her brother had been buried there, and this indicates that her family had a connection with the monastery. The charter of 848 for San Salvatore in Brescia, which confirmed to Ermengarda and Gisla the control of the monastery, was a familial operation as well – an operation that concerned the women of the

[34] DLOI115.
[35] La Rocca, 'Les cadeaux', p. 507.
[36] DLOI102.
[37] DLOI23.

royal family.[38] Ermengarda was granted the right of usufruct on the monastery: "dicta coniux nostra, sepe adviveret, eundem firmiter usu fructuario remota cuiuslibet contrarietate ordinaret atque disponeret locum". Furthermore, the diploma states that the monastery had to pass to her daughter Gisla after her death: "Filia nostra Gisla eundem similiter disponeret atque gubernaret locum regulariter et secundum monasticam disciplinam". In other words, Ermengarda is presented as a temporary keeper, before her daughter would take practical charge of it. San Salvatore in Brescia was not the only monastery to receive the queen's attention: she had acted as the co-founder of the monastery of San Martino in Pavia together with her husband.[39] The imperial attention towards the Brescian nunnery is to be read in the context of a broader relationship which Lothar I wanted to establish between his family and the political elite of the town on which the monastery depended. In the *Life of Wala*, Paschasius Radbertus mentioned Ermengarda's control of San Salvatore: "With a fondness for pious recollection, she often said that, at the departure of the great man [Wala], in the very hour of his death, she had sent throughout the different places of Italy for each person to commend with prayers the soul of the blessed man to the Lord. Among them she sent to her own illustrious convent below the walls of Brescia, about forty miles from Ticino, where a multitude of nuns serve the Lord". [40] Wala had been one of the chief advisers of Lothar, and a key figure in the conflict between Louis and his son. Ermengarda's monastic patronage illuminates Lothar's political strategy: the strengthening and consolidation of territorial control in Italy. Their action was concentrated in key areas such as Tuscany – the bridge between the north and Rome – the foundation of new monasteries (San Martino) and the strengthening of control over large monasteries such as San Salvatore in Brescia and St Ambrose.

In 849 Ermengarda founded a monastery north of the Alps, in Ersten (Alsace). The document that attests the foundation of Erstein states that Ermengarda had built the monastery "in rebus

[38] DLOI101.
[39] See above, chapter 3, p. 63.
[40] Paschasius Radbertus, *Epitaphium Arsenii seu Vita venerabilis Walae,* II ch.24, ed. Migne, Patrologia Latina, 120 (Paris, 1852) cols. 1557-1650; translated into English by A. Cabaniss, *Charlemagne's Cousins* (New York, 1967), p. 203. "Quod autem ad aeternae vitae gaudia angelicis sit ipse deportatus manibus, venerabili referente Ermengardi regina omnino cognovimus. Quae quam saepe piae recordationis affectu aiebat, in exitu tanti viri, et in hora obitus ejus misisse se per diversa Italiae loca, ut singuli beati viri animam precibus Domino commendarent. Inter quae, quod miserit etiam ad monasterium suum valde egregium, quod est infra moenia Brixae civitatis Domino dedicatum, distans a Ticino ferme quadraginta millibus, in quo sanctimonialium multitudo Domino famulatur, similiter eis praecipiens obnixius et obsecrans, ut beatam animam viri Dei Christo Deo precibus commendarent."

suis propriis", an expression that is never found in relation to the Italian monasteries.[41] Because the document explicitly states that these lands were part of the *dos* that Ermengarda had received from Lothar, it seems that the properties she had in Italy were considered as being of a different status. In other words, Ermengarda was not meant to be a landowner in Italy, but was employed by Lothar as a supporter in the shaping and strengthening of relationships with nunneries in various areas of the kingdom: Brescia, Pavia, Milan and Tuscany. On the other hand, it seems that she possessed landed wealth north of the Alps, thanks to the royal foundation of Erstein. Régine Le Jan has argued that the foundation of Erstein took place thanks to the resources Ermengarda obtained from her control of San Salvatore in Brescia.[42] However, this argument is questionable, as it assumes that Ermengarda had an economic income from San Salvatore. Instead, Ermengarda's case shows that there are different ways in which women controlled monasteries. These ways depended on the meaning these properties had for rulers. Lothar wanted to secure long term control of the Brescian nunnery: the best way to do this was to give it to his daughter, who as an abbess could manage it from the inside. San Salvatore was never meant to be directly controlled by Ermengarda. On the other hand, she may have been given another, smaller monastery, San Salvatore in Agna and she had the opportunity to manage it through her entourage in Italy.

2.2 Angelberga

Now, I come to Angelberga and to her patrimonial resources. The gifts she received during her marriage were related to very specific aspects of political and territorial control. Her dower was focused in key properties which were crucial for the control of the north of Italy. The wealth that she accumulated in northern Italy was extraordinary both for its size and particularly for the significance it gained during her widowhood. Furthermore, this project was realized in collaboration with the queen's family. The strategies Angelberga employed in order to protect her wealth depended on the support of her family members. On the other hand, San Salvatore in Brescia, which was assigned to Angelberga during the 860s, had a rather marginal function. Her resources lay in San Sisto, the monastic foundation that she planned and realized in Piacenza, with the collaboration of her family. Angelberga's dower

[41] DLOI106.
[42] Le Jan, 'Douaires', p. 481.

shows a convergence of interests between the emperor and the local elite represented by her family, the Supponids, which protected the empress' wealth.[43]

Angelberga was initially granted only two estates in the area of Modena and Reggio Emilia as a dower, in 860.[44] Von Pölnitz Kehr has demonstrated that the charter, dated 851, was actually issued in 860.[45] This led scholars to argue that Louis and Angelberga had been married in an informal union, and only ten years later, had Louis felt the need to validate the marriage with a dower. However, this argument is based on the idea that a very strong distinction existed between the official marriage, with endowment, and the unofficial one. Although some authors were concerned with this distinction, it is less certain that it was practised in reality. It is possible that Louis and Angelberga had been married in an official way since 851, and that the endowment of the empress was not perceived as a pressing matter. The same thing might have happened to Ermengarda, as the evidence indicates that her *dos* in Alsace had been granted to her long after the wedding.[46] It is undeniable, however, that the *dos* was acquiring growing importance in the definition of matrimonial relations - also because of the divorce of Lothar II - and therefore Louis II might have felt the moment had come to officialize their union with a dower.[47] In this regard, the language of the charter is very interesting. The *arenga* mentions the approval of Louis' men: "per consensum et voluntatem nostrorum optimatum", and refers to a legal custom: "iuxta legem Francorum", thus presenting the donation as a public and legal procedure.

At first glance, the properties that Louis granted to his wife in 860 were only marginally significant from a territorial point of view. The dower consists of Cortenuova (Reggio Emilia) and Campo Migliacio (south of Modena). These two estates appear for the first time in this charter and seem to be rather peripheral with regard to the great fiscal concentration in proximity of the Po river.[48] They represent, however, the first stage in the shaping of Angelberga's wealth over the course of her life. This process can be read as a well thought out strategy, which was developed in accordance with the territorial expansion of her family in northern Italy. Angelberga had been chosen by Louis as his wife because of her Supponid

[43] On the Supponid family, see above, chapter 3, pp. 71-72.
[44] DLUII30.
[45] See above, chapter 3, p. 66.
[46] DLO106.
[47] Also because of Lothar's divorce. See above, chapter 3, pp. 66-67.
[48] On Campo Migliacio see P. Bonacini, 'La *curtis* di Campo Migliacio', in in D. Labate, ed, *Fiorano e la valle del torrente Spezzano. Archeologia di un territorio*, *Quaderni di Archeologia dell'Emilia Romagna*, 14 (2006), pp. 81-85.

origin, which granted the king a wide support network. At the same time, the Supponid family benefited from this new imperial connection.[49] This family and its extensive control over parts of the Italian kingdom was a decisive component in the shaping of Angelberga's fortune, and in the outcome of her widowhood, which I will analyse in the following chapter.

A significant turning point in Angelberga's patrimonial status was the grant of the royal *curtis* of Guastalla, in 864, which was given to her "proprietario iure".[50] Although expressions of possession of fiscal estates must not be read as having a rigid meaning, it seems that this grant had a different nature from that of the original dower, as it put more stress on the concepts of full ownership and perpetuity. In the same year the grant was ratified by Walbertus, the bishop of Modena, officially accepting that the property was owned by the empress and administered by her *advocatus* Peter.[51] This donation can be read in a broader context of territorial alliances. Not only was Leudinus, Louis' chancellor, to become Modena's bishop after the death of Walbertus, but a generation later this position was occupied by a Supponid called Ardingus. Although this happened two generations after Angelberga's life - Ardingus is documented as count in 945 – the family had interests and resources in the territory from an earlier period.[52] Furthermore, in 866 Angelberga received the royal *curtis* Inverno, near Pavia, through a royal grant based on a transaction between Lothar II and Louis.[53] Properties like Inverno and Guastalla offered a series of important economic and political advantages. Guastalla allowed the control of a significant stretch of the River Po. This was a large royal *curtis* on the right bank of the Po, whose boundaries were marked by other rivers. One of them was the River Crostolo, the same river on which Campo Migliacio, the *curtis* Angelberga received in 860, lay.[54] Inverno lies north east of Pavia, in proximity with Corte Olona, one of the royal *palatia* since the Lombard period. It was close to a royal monastery, Santa Cristina, which Angelberga also controlled.[55] These were *curtes* with a strong economic and symbolic significance.

[49] See chapter 3, pp. 69-70.
[50] DLUII40.
[51] Falconi, *Le carte cremonesi*, n. 18.
[52] In 945 Ardingus "venerabilis Mutinensis aecclesiae presul" is mentioned in a diploma of Hugh and Lothar (DUL 78) Suppo IV is documented as count of Modena in 931: Hlawitschka, *Franken*, p. 273. See Lazzari, 'La creazione di un territorio', pp. 10-11.
[53] DLUII45. On Inverno see: P. Darmstädter, *Das Reichsgut in der Lombardei und Piemont (568-1250)* (Strassburg, 1895), pp. 191–193.
[54] On the history of the *curtis* and for further reference, see: T. Lazzari, 'Matilde e Guastalla', in G. Cantarella, D. Romagnoli, eds, *1106: il Concilio di Guastalla e il mondo di Pasquale II: atti del Convegno per il 9. centenario del Concilio di Pieve di Guastalla, 26 maggio 2006* (Alessandria, 2007), pp. 83-98, at pp. 84-91.
[55] See below, chapter 5, p. 159.

Angelberga's family seems to have played a vital part in the creation of her fortune, as her endowment followed the interests of the family in north-western Italy. The properties Angelberga received in the following years are of a very different nature from the ones mentioned above. A closer look at their locations suggests that these grants might have a lot to do with Angelberga's family. In July 866 the empress received the *curtes* of Sesto (Sesto Cremonese near Cremona, along the Po river), Locarno (north-west edge of Lake Maggiore) and *Aticianum* (near Cuneo).[56] Antignano, with which *Aticianum* can be identified, lay south-east of Asti, where Angelberga's brother Suppo II is documented as count in 880.[57] It is possible that Suppo became count of Asti thanks to Angelberga's resources in the area – it is also possible, on the other hand, that Angelberga had acquired properties in that area because of her family's settlement in the region. Furthermore, some of these properties – Locarno and Sesto - were very close to fluvial routes, in particular to the Po river and its tributaries.[58] This is an interesting grant, particularly for the language of property used in the charter: Angelberga is not only granted the properties, but also the right of deciding how to dispose of them after her death ("quicquid exinde elegerit et voluerit sibique placuerit in vita et post mortem, in omnibus perpetuam habeat potestatem faciendi"). This can be read as a sign that her relatives were involved in the process, and that they wanted to ensure that the properties remained in Angelberga's family, rather than have them reclaimed by the royal fisc.

In 869 Angelberga received five *curtes* in north-western Italy: Vaccarigas, Civisi, Doveno, Sesilla and Palmata.[59] Through the donation of 869, the empress was given properties with a strong territorial coherence, although the localization of these estates is difficult. According to the document, Vaccarigas and Civisi were situated in the *comitatus* of Asti,[60] Doveno in the *comitatus* of Tortona, Sesilla in the *comitatus Toresianus* and Palmata (unidentified) in the *comitatus* of Albenga.[61] Doveno seems to correspond to Dovanelli (south of Voghera), Sesilla to Susella (north-east of Voghera) or Sesella (Alessandria) in proximity to the river Sisola. Although their precise location is difficult to assess, all these *curtes* were situated in

[56] DLUII46.
[57] Hlawitschka, *Franken*, p. 270.
[58] I have already made this point in: R. Cimino, 'Angelberga, il monastero di San Sisto di Piacenza e il corso del fiume Po', in Lazzari, *Il patrimonio delle regine*, pp. 141–162.
[59] DLUII49.
[60] For the identification of these *curtes* see: A. Settia, '"Iudiciaria Torrensis" e Monferrato. Un problema di distrettuazione nell'Italia occidentale', *Studi medievali*, 3rd series, 15 (1974), pp . 967-1018, at pp. 978-979.
[61] On the discussion of the *comitatus Toresiano* documented here for the first time and the location of Sesella, see Settia, '"Iudiciaria Torrensis"', p. 980 and V. Fumagalli, 'Un territorio piacentino nel IX secolo: i fines Castellana', *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italianischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 48 (1968), pp. 1-35, at pp. 16-17.

southern Piedmont and Liguria, which suggests Louis' intent to strengthen his presence and authority in the area. This grant is puzzling, because the five properties do not appear in further royal documents or in relation to Angelberga and her family. An element of the document suggests, however, that these properties might have been granted with a long-term perspective in mind: the extensive *minatio* of the document reads:

"Liberam ac firmissimam habeat potestatem sicuti de proprietatis suae rebus nullo contradicente vel resistente, sed omni remota vel damnata sequatium nostrorum vel quorumlibet hominum molestia seu repetitione de praelibatis rebus, sicut supra praefinitum est, quicquid ipsi placuerit facere, plenissimam in omnibus habeat potestatem."

The same stress on the *minatio* can be found in the grants issued in the 870s. A confirmation of the empress' wealth issued in 870 stresses the ideas of full ownership and perpetuity with regard to all properties which Angelberga had obtained from royal donations, but also thanks to her own acquisitions ("per largitionis nostrae diverso tempore emissa praecepta sive per collata sibi ab aliis monumenta chartarum, donationum scilicet vel venditionum sive per quemcumque alium modum acquisisse sive possedisse dinoscitur vel a nunc acquirere potuerit").[62] The charter also states that the confirmation had been granted "tractatu et consilio atque unanimitate imperii nostri primorum": a further suggestion that Angelberga – and Louis II – were presented as needing external support. Similar language can be found in a second confirmation issued in October 874 and in a grant of public land in Piacenza issued on the same day.[63] In particular, these two charters refer to Louis' heirs (*proheredes* and *successores imperii nostri*), underlining Angelberga's growing concern that her properties, and her monastic project in Piacenza, might have been damaged after the death of the emperor. Louis II and Angelberga became more concerned with this issue in combination with the negotiations for the imperial succession – hence Louis II restated what he had already established in 870: Angelberga's rights to dispose of her properties freely.

Angelberga's dower was built to last during her widowhood. This is shown by the multiple confirmations that Louis issued for her. The second charter issued on 13th October 874 granted to Angelberga a property inside the town of Piacenza, where she was going to found a monastery.[64] The charter mentions some *partes publicae* in Piacenza, which the empress had acquired in exchange for her own properties, for she needed that land to build a

[62] DLUII51.
[63] DLUII66; DLII67.
[64] DLUII66.

monastery. Although it is not certain who was count of Piacenza at the time, we know that the Supponid family had joined the political elite of the town after Angelberga's brother, Suppo II, had married Berta, daughter of Wifred I - count of Piacenza between 843 and 870.[65] The empress' freedom to manage properties of the town can be related to her connections in Piacenza. Furthermore, this freedom was supported by Louis. The document states explicitly that the transaction was intended to enable the empress to build a monastery, the future nunnery of San Sisto, which she officially founded in Piacenza after her husband's death. This shows Angelberga's autonomy: she used her royal status to acquire properties that were allegedly part of the fisc, with the aim of building San Sisto. The grant of October 874 shows that Louis supported this project: in the last years of his life he was concerned to stress the perpetuity of Angelberga's ownership of the properties that he had granted to her. The diploma is particularly interesting for its language. The expression *pars publica* suggests that the properties Angelberga had acquired were part of the fisc in the town. However, the freedom with which she disposed of these properties is striking. It seems that she was able to acquire them autonomously – and that the transaction was later recognized by her husband – acknowledging in this way a *de facto* situation. The dower of the queen was based on fiscal wealth, but the degree of autonomy with which she was able to dispose of its constituent parts was highly variable.

At the same time, Angelberga was making personal acquisitions, probably aimed at further strengthening her patrimonial base. The evidence shows that she enjoyed a degree of autonomy that cannot be compared to that of any other royal woman in the same period.[66] Private charters and juridical records inform us of the network of friends and clients that Angelberga was able to build. In a charter dating back to 865 a count called Ermenulfus asked the empress to provide him with a diploma that documented the grant of the monastery of Masina, which he had previously received from the emperor. In return, Ermenulfus promised to leave all his properties to Angelberga.[67] It is uncertain what happened next and whether Angelberga fulfilled her promise and acquired the properties of the count. What we do know is that in 877 Angelberga was the owner of Masina, which the count had been so eager to protect, as she later left it to San Sisto. This charter shows that Angelberga had

[65]F. Bougard, 'Entre Gandolfingi et Obertenghi: Les comtes de Plaisance aux Xe et XIe siècles', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome*, 101 (1989), pp. 11-66, at pp. 16-17.

[66] F. Bougard, 'En marge du divorce de Lothaire II: Boson de Vienne, le cocu qui fut fait roi?', *Francia*, 27, 1 (2000) pp. 33-51, at pp. 47–50.

[67] CDP, n. 5 bis, pp. 233–235. On count Ermenulfus and his family, see: A. Castagnetti, *Una famiglia di immigrati nell'alta Lombardia al servizio del Regno (846-898)* (Verona, 2004), pp. 88–132.

autonomy in shaping relationships with the political elite of the kingdom, and that she used this relationship to accumulate wealth. In 874 she presided over a *placitum* which granted some lands to a chaplain called Ratcausus – a member of Louis II's entourage. The properties had been the object of a dispute between Ratcausus and a woman called Gernia and her husband, the Count Mantfrid.[68] According to a charter issued the previous year in Capua, the chaplain had promised to sell his Piacenza properties to Angelberga if he won the case.[69] It is evident that Angelberga used her role at court to carry out her project of territorial acquisitions in the area of Piacenza.[70] Furthermore, in 877 she signed a *libellum* contract with the monastery of Saint Maurice in Agaune (Switzerland), through which she acquired two properties in Tuscany.[71]

The relationship with monasteries was therefore an important part of Angelberga's career. Although she acted as intercessor on account of monastic and religious institutions - such as Bobbio, Milan and Piacenza – Angelberga stands out for the amount of royal estates granted to her and for their strategic location. This was related to her activity as founder of monasteries, a project started in the 870s and realized during her widowhood. La Rocca has argued that Angelberga represents the pinnacle of the public and private tradition of queenly monastic patronage.[72] She seems, however, to have developed this role especially during the latter part of her life. In 861 Louis granted the monastery of San Salvatore in Brescia to his daughter Gisla ("Gisla diebus vite sue sub integritate teneat"), and, only in case of her death, to Angelberga.[73] This charter mentions the same properties listed in the donation of 851 for Lothar's daughter. In that sense, it expresses a continuity between Gisla and her predecessor. The charter does not, however, stress the relationship between the monastery and Italian queens. Instead, it underlines the relationship of the monastery with the royal family, of which Gisla is presented as the central element. There is a very specific difference in the property rights: Gisla has the right to keep the properties in their integrity ("integritate"), Angelberga – only in case of her daughter's death – only in usufruct ("usu fructuario"). The document is largely based on Lothar's diploma of 848 and it lists the same properties that were granted to Gisla in 851. This has led to the argument, as mentioned above, that this group of properties had a special status, and should be considered as the patrimonial reserve

[68] Manaresi, *Placiti*, pp. 277–283.
[69] E. Falconi, ed, *Le carte più antiche di S. Antonino di Piacenza (secoli VIII e IX)* (Parma, 1959), n. 32.
[70] Bougard, 'En marge du divorce de Lothaire II', pp. 47–50.
[71] CDP 23.
[72] La Rocca, 'Les cadeaux', p. 513.
[73] DLUII34.

of the queen. Furthermore, in 868, after the death of her daughter Gisla, Louis II granted the monastery and the very same properties to Angelberga. The lexicon of the charter suggests full property rights ("ad possidendum regendum gubernandum disponendum ordinandum fruendum et, quicquid elegerit, faciendum"). However, the grant was only meant to be during her life – as the expression "cunctis diebus vitae suae" suggests. The charter also states that in case of the empress' death it would be passed to her daughter Ermengarda.[74] This must not necessarily be interpreted as an increase in Angelberga's responsibilities towards the monastery – as this might have been regarded by Louis as only a temporary solution. At that particular time, the emperor could not grant the monastery to Ermengarda, because she had not been educated to be a nun and because Louis II envisaged a different role for her. These charters show different ways in which royal women could relate to monasteries, in particular to San Salvatore in Brescia. In other words, I am arguing that royal monasteries did not go to the queen because they were meant for her, but because this was the easiest way for rulers to control them from inside, by appointing their daughter as abbess and their wife as supervisor. In doing so, they reinforced the relationship between their family and those institutions. Instead, the focus of Angelberga's wealth was the large-scale monastic project which she started in Piacenza in the 870s, with the help of Louis II. San Sisto was built in a town that was very significant to Angelberga's family, and the nunnery was in fact officially founded two years after Louis II died. Louis gave Angelberga imperial support and fiscal lands, while her family boosted the final stage of the process. San Sisto became a double pole of royal and noble memory embodied by Angelberga and her dower, which I will further explore in the next chapter.

Our sources never state explicitly that San Salvatore was considered the monastery of the queen. The reason it was handed down to two queens was its significance as a centre of territorial control. Rather than being the symbol of queenly patrimonial power, the monastery represented a centre of royal authority, as it embodied the relationship between the royal family, that territory and its elite. The memory of monasteries' queenly identity persisted over the generations and was used as a pretext by rulers to strengthen their authority in those regions. Instead, Angelberga's most significant resources were created in the final part of Louis II's reign, with the precise purpose of helping his wife to survive politically and materially after his death. For this reason not only did Louis focus his wife's dower in the most strategic areas of the kingdom – concentrations of fiscal estates, in particular along the

[74] DLUII48.

course of the Po and its tributaries – but he also took advantage of the presence of the Supponid family in north-western Italy and in the Piacenza area.

The analysis of the ways in which Carolingian empresses built and employed resources in Italy underlines the different strategies employed by each ruler. Emperors chose the patrimonial and monastic resources that were most functional to their political needs. Lothar I employed Ermengarda as a monastic patron in collaboration with her family, which allowed her to liaise with several monastic institutions. However, her dower lay in Erstein, and her activities in Italy were carefully orchestrated and closely controlled by Lothar, who left his daughter in charge of the most significant and wealthy royal monastery in the kingdom. A much more autonomous space was instead given to Angelberga: evidence shows that she was dealing with nobles and monasteries in different areas of the kingdom. Angelberga's patrimonial and monastic acquisitions increased in parallel with two phenomena: her growing involvement in politics and diplomacy, and the increasing political influence of her family. The patronage of San Salvatore in Brescia, which has been considered the main resource of Italian queens, was a family matter. Although Angelberga would later employ the monastery as a refuge,[75] the evidence suggests that her and Louis' main concern was to protect the fiscal estates which she was granted in the 870s, which had nothing to do with San Salvatore. Her career culminated in the foundation of San Sisto, which was to become the "patrimonial reserve" of the empress.

2.3 Berta

Although San Salvatore is not the crucial element of the queen's patrimonial status, its relationship to the royal family was extremely significant. This is also evident during the reign of Berengar I. As I have shown above, his first wife Bertilla had an extraordinarily active role in royal diplomacy. Nonetheless, there is no evidence for her dower and possessions. However, the lack of a dower for Bertilla is not surprising when one considers the events related to her death.[76] Because of her premature death, there was no need for the patrimonial memory of Bertilla to be transmitted and therefore for the documents regarding her properties to be preserved. In the likely case that Bertilla did have properties, it is probable that, after her death, they came back to Berengar. Because of the infamous events

[75] See below, chapter 5, pp. 159-160.
[76] Chapter 2, pp. 43-44.

that surrounded her death, the institutions which had been linked to her had little interest in preserving the memory of this association.

Nonetheless, charters show that Bertilla was a significant figure in networking with monastic institutions, as indicated by the number of her intercessions. What was her relationship with San Salvatore? We only know that her daughter, Berta, had the same role previously held by other Carolingian princesses: she became abbess of San Salvatore at some point at the beginning of the tenth century.[77] Berengar's choice to assign the monastery to his daughter followed a tradition: Gisla, Lothar I's daughter, and Ermengarda and Gisla, Louis II's daughters. Berta had an extremely active role in the administration of San Salvatore, as did other royal daughters before her.[78] The visibility of San Salvatore resides in its relationship with the royal family, which was administered by royal daughters. Behind them, in a rather elusive role, were their mothers. Because of its size and royal tradition, San Salvatore needed to be controlled from inside by female members of the Carolingian family. The queen had a role which symbolized the collective relationship of the royal family with the nunnery. San Salvatore was not the monastery of the queens of Italy, but rather the monastery of the royal princesses of Italy.

3. Queens, landed wealth and nunneries in the late ninth and tenth centuries

From the end of the ninth century San Salvatore – which around 915 was renamed and dedicated to Santa Giulia - stopped being associated with queens. This suggests that controlling San Salvatore was not a priority of rulers anymore. Berta remained abbess of the monastery until her death, in 951, and no ruler seems to have got involved in the administration of the monastery. One could see this as the result of the loss of power of the Supponids: and consequently of the monastery itself. The competition for the kingdom resulted in a change in the territorial balance. Guy was not able actually to control Brescia,

[77] The date is uncertain: C. Sereno, 'Bertilla e Berta: il ruolo di Santa Giulia di Brescia e di San Sisto di Piacenza nel regno di Berengario I', in Lazzari, *Il patrimonio delle regine*, pp. 187-202, at p. 190, argues that she was already abbess in 908, but this is purely based on the identification between Berta and the anonymous recipient of one of John's letters (Ceriani, Porro, 'Il rotolo opistografico', n. 3), with which I disagree (see above, chapter 2, p. 47).

[78] Sereno, 'Bertilla e Berta', pp. 193-195; and less recently Wemple, 'San Salvatore/S. Giulia'. The transmission of monasteries to royal daughters is a custom that can be found in other contexts. For example in tenth- and eleventh-century Spain a group of properties and monasteries reserved to royal daughters (the *Infanta*) was defined in documents as "Infantaticum". See T. Martin, *Queen as King: Politics and Architectural Propaganda in Twelfth-Century Spain* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 31-32, 62-65.

which remained under the influence of Berengar even during the Widonid reigns.[79] More importantly, there is no evidence that Angelberga's successors continued to patronize the nunnery. Nevertheless, Italian royal women continued to be endowed with properties and royal monasteries. In the following pages I will look at how the picture was fragmented: other properties appear as part of their dower. Some of these are passed from one queen to another – as had happened for San Salvatore. However, like San Salvatore, these monasteries were not associated with the queen because they defined her office, but rather because this was a strategy rulers adopted to strengthen and advertise their control over institutions with a strong political and symbolic significance. The nature of these transactions will be analysed case by case in order to show that the association among queens, fiscal estates and royal monasteries continued to be extremely fluid.

3.1 Anna

This association emerges, although elusively, for Berengar's second wife Anna. It is documented by a charter of 920, through which she received from her husband the *curtis* of Pratopiano ("curtem nostrae proprietatis") in the area of Piacenza (possible Palanzano, south-east of Parma in the Val Cedra, on the Parma-Luni road), in full ownership and *in perpetuum*.[80] The language of this charter has prompted some scholars to consider the property as part of Berengar's personal patrimony rather than a fiscal estate.[81] Was Anna's dower concentrated in the area of Parma? Probably not, as the picture changes when we consider another piece of evidence. In 936 Hugh confirmed to Berengar's widow two properties (*iuris regni nostri*): Riva (Riva del Garda) which was located in the area of *Summolaco*, and Mauriatica (Moradega, south of Verona).[82] These two properties illuminate the possible relationship of Anna with Italian monasteries. Riva had previously belonged to San Salvatore in Brescia.[83] Furthermore, the monastery of Bobbio had some properties in the area of *Summolaco*, the northern part of Lake Garda.[84] Mauriatica was a fiscal estate which had previously belonged to Charles the Fat.[85] Although it is not possible to explore this

[79] G.P. Bognetti, 'La Brescia carolingia', in *Storia di Brescia, I. Dalle origini alla caduta della signoria viscontea (1426)* (Brescia, 1963), pp. 447-483.
[80] DBI129.
[81] On the status of this property see C. Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium regis*. *Studien zu den wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des Königtums im Frankenreich und in den fränkischen Nachfolgestaaten Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien vom 6. bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (2 vols.) (Köln, 1968), vol. 1, p. 432.
[82] DU42; Castagnetti, *Il Veneto nell'Alto Medioevo*, p. 227.
[83] CDL, II, n. 348, 349.
[84] Castagnetti, Luzzati, Pasquali, Vasina, *Inventari altomedievali*, p. 61 (fn. 1), 137, 159.
[85] DCIII85.

relationship further, the location and nature of these properties suggest a convergence of interests between the queen, San Salvatore and Bobbio. Anna's properties were concentrated in an area which saw the presence of strong monastic institutions, and was at the same time a fiscal concentration. They followed the territorial structure of royal and monastic powers in northern Italy. This shows that there were other, more subtle ways, in which rulers associated their women to the great monastic institutions. In this case it was not direct control, but rather the territorial proximity of their properties, in what was clearly a very strategic and significant area of the kingdom.

3.2 Ageltrude

The case of the Widonid empress Ageltrude shows even more effectively the extent to which monasteries were symbolized instruments of royal politics. In the only recent work on Ageltrude, Paola Guglielmotti has argued that the grant of properties and monasteries to Ageltrude in the early 890s was aimed at taking them away from the Supponid family.[86] In the previous chapter I have argued that one has to read these donations in relation to Guy's political and ideological claims against the Carolingians.[87] The highly symbolized meaning of the grants made these properties visible. Although the monasteries had been owned by generations of Carolingian women, there is no mention in the documents of their connection to queens. In other words, these properties were not given to Ageltrude because they had a "queenly" identity, but rather because of their Carolingian past.

With regard to the most significant grant, the Pavese monasteries she received on the day of the coronation, there is no evidence of Ageltrude actually administering them. She had possibly received properties from her family and husband on other occasions. As she was the daughter of Adelchis of Benevento, it is likely that Ageltrude had possessions in the centre and south of Italy. If a *dos* had been provided by her family or Guy at the time of the wedding, these properties must have been concentrated in southern and central Italy, where the Widonids were localized at the time (c.875). This is confirmed by the diploma issued on the day of the imperial coronation, through which Guy confirmed to his wife her existing properties: "omnibus rebus ad eam pertinentibus, tam nostrae donationis quam suae

[86] Guglielmotti, 'Ageltrude', p. 169.
[87] Chapter 3, pp. 80-83.

hereditatis", plus her personal *adquisitiones* – which suggests that she also carried out personal transactions.[88]

Once he became king, Guy granted to Ageltrude the monastery of Sant'Agata in Pavia, as this is the only monastery that was confirmed – and not granted - on the day of the coronation. Sant'Agata - a Lombard royal foundation, which is mentioned in Arnulf's grant for Angelberga in 889[89] - would have represented the first attempt to present Ageltrude as a royal monastic patron. Most importantly, the charter stresses the perpetuity of the grant: the three monasteries – besides Sant'Agata, San Marino and the monastery *Reginae* - were granted to Ageltrude in full ownership, with the right to cede and exchange them. The monastery of the "queen" was a Lombard royal foundation entitled to San Salvatore, which later was dedicated to San Felice. It had been owned by San Salvatore in Brescia: at least until 868 it had been controlled by Angelberga and her daughter Ermengarda, as mentioned in Louis' diplomas.[90] The denomination *Reginae*, which appears since 851, might support the case of a "queenly" identity of the nunnery. However, this might simply be referring to possible foundation by Ansa or one of her predecessors.[91] Ageltrude was given a property that had previously belonged to San Salvatore, the institution which was now controlled by Berta, the daughter of Guy's enemy Berengar. Although Guy could not have got his hands on San Salvatore, he made this political claim by giving to his wife a monastery which had been associated with it. The continuity with the Carolingians, rather than the possession of queenly properties was at the centre of this grant. This is not the same thing: these monasteries were not granted to Ageltrude because they were meant for the queen, but rather because they had been associated to queens, and with a woman, Ermengarda, who was causing much trouble to Guy.[92]

The diplomas are rich in expressions related to the concepts of full ownership and inheritance rights.[93] This suggests that they aimed to transmit the idea of Guy's absolute control on these institutions. These expressions must therefore be read in the context in which the charters were issued, namely in relation to Guy's desire to state his authority and his rights over royal

[88] DGui4.
[89] DArn 49; Forzatti Golia, 'Monasteri femminili', p. 5.
[90] Ibidem, pp. 18–20. See below, chapter 5, pp. 156-157.
[91] See the introduction to the online edition of San Felice archive by M. Milani, in *Codice diplomatico della Lombardia medievale*, url: http://cdlm.unipv.it/edizioni/pv/pavia-sfelice/.
[92] See above, chapter 3, pp. 86-87.
[93] Such as: "iure proprietario illi suisque heredibus (DGui5); "de supranominatis rebus ipas suique erede ac proheredes habeant potestatem iure hereditario"; "heredibus [quoque] ac proheredibus suis monasterium …pertinere iuste et legaliter" (DGui6).

monasteries. It is unlikely that Ageltrude was personally involved in the administration of the nunneries, as she spent only a little part of her life in Pavia, and after the death of Guy she had to give them up. In other words, the Pavese monasteries were not necessarily aimed at being practically controlled by Ageltrude, or at representing economic resources. These, as I will show below, lay elsewhere. The estates she was granted by Guy in 894 – Murgola (Bergamo) and Sparavera (Piacenza) – had a very similar purpose.[94] The language of charters stated that these *curtes* were granted to Ageltrude "iure hereditario habendi, tenendi, fruendi, vendendi, commutandi ex nostra imperiale largitate et auctoritate plenissima". Although it apparently suggests full ownership, the language hides a political claim, and must be read as the performance of territorial control in the area of Bergamo and Piacenza.[95] Ageltrude's dower in northern Italy was charged with this symbolic value. In order to understand where her economic resources were concentrated and how she employed them, in the next chapter I will analyse the events that occurred during her widowhood.

3.3 Alda, Bobbio and the church of Parma

Alda, the second wife of Hugh of Provence, provides a further example of how monastic patronage and queen's wealth cannot be straightforwardly related. It seems that, thanks to Gerlannus' election as abbot of Bobbio in 928, she became involved in the patronage of that monastery. Before becoming abbot, Gerlannus had been *rector* of the monastery. Hugh put him in charge of a task of high responsibility, the economic administration of the monastery. Not only did the queen probably play a part in Gerlannus' career, but she also benefited from it. The most interesting aspect is that this relationship is illuminated not by a charter, but by a narrative text. It shows that the queen could perform a role as protector, without actually having direct control of the monastery. The *Miracula Sancti Columbani*, which were composed a few years after the deaths of Alda and Gerlannus (c. 944 – 967) present the queen as the ultimate patron of the monastery.[96] She appears in the text as a key figure in the relationship between the monastery and the king. The *Miracula* not only describe the translation to Pavia of St Columbanus' relics, but also portrays the political and economic struggle between the monastery and local magnates.[97] According to the text, the translation took place in 929 because Bobbio's monks wanted to ask for royal protection of the monastery, which was suffering the plundering of local noblemen. After the monks were

[94] Jarnut, *Bergamo*, pp. 35–36.
[95] See above, chapter 3, pp. 84-86.
[96] *Miracula sancti Columbani*, pp. 1005-1006.
[97] See chapter 3, p. 102.

denied entrance to the royal palace by the king ("non esse dignum dicens, ut tam preciosissimum corpore ad se venire debeat, sed ipse magis ad eum venire"), they carried the body to the church of San Michele. There the saint performed several miracles, among which there was one which personally involved the royal couple. Lothar, son of Hugh and Alda, was ill: he was carried into the presence of the holy body and healed thanks to the saint's miraculous intervention. Afterwards, the queen went to the church to give thanks to the saint and promised the monks that she would intercede on their behalf with the king and his *optimates*. The portrayals of the king and the queen are therefore very different. Hugh is depicted as a fearful ruler, who does not intend to help the monks possibly because he does not want to oppose the strong local powers in the area. On the other hand, Alda is presented as a believer in the power of the saint, and in charge of the religious liturgies and ceremonies at the royal court.[98] The portrayal of Alda as protector of Bobbio follows the experience of other queens before her – the Lombard queen Theodolinda, Angelberga and Bertilla who had all patronized the monastery. However, there is no evidence that queens had real control of the monastery and materially benefited from this relationship. Alda's case does show, however, that queenly patronage could be perceived as a vital aspect in rulers' attempts to gain influence over significant resources in a competitive context. A queen could support her husband in keeping the nobility under control, and in mediating between political factions. This text shows how kings performed their interest in a monastery through queens and their "spiritual" activities.

In other words, the role of active monastic patron that the *Miracula* suggest did not necessarily enrich Alda's dower, but it is very useful for exploring the political relationship between the ruler, local magnates and monastic institutions. However, she also owned properties that she was able to use more autonomously. In 930 she interceded for the grant of some properties to the church of the town.[99] She also had some properties in the area: the above mentioned diploma of 948 granted to the church of Parma three properties in the area of Parma and Modena, one of which ("de montis que dicitur Runcaria") had belonged to Alda: "ex proprio comparavit precio".[100] The political significance of this charter has been discussed in the previous chapter. The document also suggests that Alda had properties in the area, which she had acquired on her own. We can assume that she had arranged for these properties to be passed on to the church of Parma, as there is no reason why Lothar should

[98] Miracula Sancti Columbani, ch. 15-17, pp. 1005-1006.
[99] DU25.
[100] DLotII9. See above, chapter 3, pp. 104-105.

have lied on that point, although clearly his purpose was not merely to follow his mother's will. It seems, therefore, that Alda had a set of resources and contacts in the area of Parma.[101] Hugh employed his wife as monastic patron, without giving her the power concretely to influence the administration of monastic institutions, but left her the autonomy to use her economic resources in other areas of the kingdom.

Alda's death might have nullified, as already happened for Bertilla, the reason to transmit her patrimonial memory. Nevertheless, traces of her resources survive, and these traces point to the fact that she had some autonomy in the administration of her wealth. It seems that Alda followed a tradition with regard to her relationship with royal monasteries. Not only was she remembered by the Bobbio monastic community as a patron and saviour. In 927 she also interceded for the grant of the monastery of San Salvatore in Agna – the monastery associated with Ermengarda and then Angelberga – which for the first time in this charter is defined "of the queen" (*Reginae*), to the bishop of Fiesole Teugrimus.[102] The monastery was not any longer in the hands of the queen - Louis III had granted it to the bishop of Fiesole in 901.[103] However, the grant of the same monasteries from one queen to another did not mean that they had an established patrimonial function. One should rather point out the interest of rulers in interacting with and controlling monasteries that were landmarks of strategic territories. In order to do so, they could use the monasteries' queenly identity as a pretext - hence the name *Reginae* - and employ their wife as intercessor. Alda's resources are not to be found in her relationship with royal monasteries, which she carried out because of her husband's needs and thanks to her friends, but rather in her independent acquisitions. The properties that are more visible – as for example Bobbio and San Salvatore - are so prominent precisely because of their political and symbolic significance.

3.4 Berta and Adelaide

Although the role of monastic patron seems a recurring aspect of the experience of Italian queens, we find little evidence of this in the case of Berta and Adelaide. The two very consistent dowers, however, were not meant to offer their owners any real economic significance. The territorial distribution and significance of the properties which were granted

[101] On this territory see: Schumann, *Authority and the Commune*, p. 100, fn. 31.
[102] DU9; On San Salvatore in Agna see: F. Schneider, *L'ordinamento pubblico nella Toscana medievale*: *i fondamenti dell'amministrazione regia in Toscana dalla fondazione del regno longobardo alla estinzione degli Svevi (568-1268)* (Florence, 1975), p. 317; N. Rauty, *Storia di Pistoia, I. Dall'alto medioevo all'età precomunale 404-1105* (Florence, 1988), pp. 120-121.
[103] DLIII5 lost.

on the day of the betrothal have been recently analysed. This work shows that the two dowers were coherently conceived together as a plan of territorial control, focused on the key strategic areas of the kingdom.[104] Although their similarities help to understand the strategies of territorial control pursued by Hugh, I argue that their differences are significant as they tell us about interesting aspects of queen-making. Despite their territorial continuity, the two dowers had a very different nature, as only one of them – Adelaide's – was meant for a queen. Her dower can be read as a symbolic acknowledgement of her future role.

Scholars have been puzzled by the extraordinary size of the two dowers. Berta's dower, whose overall value added up to about 2000 *mansi*, consisted of properties in three areas of the kingdom: northwestern Italy, Tuscany and Lunigiana.[105] The properties in the north were Senna (Senna Lodigiana), Gaumundio (Castellazzo Bormida), Setiaco (Sezzadio) and Rivotorto (Retorto). All these properties were situated at the confluence between the rivers Orba and Bormida, in proximity to the *Silva Urba*, a great concentration of fiscal estates documented since the Lombard period. This suggests their status as fiscal properties. In central Italy, the situation was more complicated. The Tuscan properties were distributed in various areas: the charter mentions *curtes* (not named) in the *comitatus* of Lucca and Pisa, the estates of San Quirico and Cortenuova in the area of Empoli, one *curtis* in the area of Pistoia (Pinto, whose location is unknown). Finally Berta received a group of *curtes* in Lunigiana, the area between Tuscany, Emilia and Liguria: the abbey of Valeriana (Vezzano Ligure),[106] Valle Plana, Curtenova and Cumano. Vignodelli has noted that these properties formed a coherent pattern, which permitted the control of the communication routes across the Appenines.[107]

Adelaide received a much more extensive dower than her mother: about 4600 *mansi*. The properties were situated in the northwest and Tuscany. The estates assigned to Adelaide in the north belonged to the same fiscal concentration mentioned above, but were distributed across a wider area, which can be read as part of a royal itinerary between Pavia and Piacenza: Marengo, Coriano (Corana) and Olona (Corteolona).[108] Like her mother's, they were properties that had royal status: most of them appear in previous charters mentioned as

[104] Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide'.
[105] DUL47.
[106] Which had previously belonged to the monastery of Sant'Antimo, granted to Adelaide.
[107] Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide', pp. 283–286. See MAP 4.
[108] DUL48.

palatia.[109] Some of these properties also had connection with queens: Corteolona was a royal foundation attributed to queen Ansa, and had probably belonged to the empress Angelberga. However, the properties granted to Adelaide in central Italy were very different from those given to Berta. Her dower in Tuscany consisted of a few estates (only two *curtes*: *curtis de Valli* and *Cornino*), which lay in an area of fiscal concentration in the area of Populonia - Cornino, although it is not certain that they were fiscal estates.[110] Most importantly, Adelaide was granted three large monasteries: San Salvatore in Sesto, San Salvatore in Monte Amiata and Sant'Antimo in Chiusi. San Salvatore in Sesto, situated near Lucca, was the richest of the properties granted to Adelaide, as its patrimony consisted of more than 2000 *mansi*.[111] As Vignodelli has noted, this monastery lay at the centre of the properties granted to Adelaide's mother, supporting the argument that the two dowers were complementary and organized as a coherent territorial system.[112] Secondly, Adelaide was granted the monastery of Sant'Antimo, in the area of Chiusi (although the document wrongly associated it to the *comitatus* of Siena). According to the charter, Sant'Antimo was one of the richest Tuscan monasteries, owning lands to the value of 1000 *mansi*. Unlike San Salvatore, which appears here for the first time as a royal monastery, Sant'Antimo had a documented tradition of attention from Carolingian rulers, having received grants and confirmations from Charlemagne, Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald.[113] Finally, Adelaide's dower charter mentions the monastery of San Salvatore in Monte Amiata, a royal monastery founded in 743 by King Ratchis, which later benefited from most of the Carolingian rulers of Italy. Hugh had already shown interest in the monastery, having made a donation only a few months before heading north of the Alps to meet his future bride and daughter-in-law.[114]

Both San Salvatore and Sant'Antimo had a royal tradition and they lay along significant routes that led to Rome: this location was useful from a practical point of view, but also highly symbolic. Furthermore, one needs to stress the fact that, although contiguous to her mother's dower in term of its distribution, the properties Adelaide received were of a different kind. Hugh and Lothar granted to the young princess three of the greatest monasteries in the kingdom. These monasteries had the function of fulfilling Hugh's political requirements of concentrating landed resources in his hands and in this way challenging

[109] Bougard, 'Palais princiers, royaux et impériaux', pp. 2-7.
[110] Schneider, *L'ordinamento pubblico*, pp. 116–121.
[111] Ibidem, pp. 304–209.
[112] Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide', p. 275. See MAP 4.
[113] Ibidem, pp. 344–348.
[114] Ibidem, pp. 336-344

antagonistic powers in the area.[115] At the same time, however, Adelaide's dower transmitted the idea of the queen's capital role in the patronage of royal monasteries. This suggests, in other words, that Adelaide's dower was shaped with a long-term perspective in mind: she was to be the queen – as Berta was never to be involved in the kingdom. For this reason her dower was a symbolic acknowledgement of her future role as monastic patron and queen.

Later on, after their marriage, Lothar was eager to reinforce his wife's patrimonial status by granting her some of the properties she had already obtained in 937.[116] The property in question was Corana ("terram iuris nostri in villa Coriano"), together with two more properties situated in the area of Cantone and Rivasioli (possibly along the Po river, in the Piacenza area, Castelvetro). Furthermore, in 950, Lothar granted to his wife properties in Vallisnera, which according to the diploma, he had received *paterna hereditate*.[117] No record is preserved of Adelaide's role as monastic patron during her short marriage with Lothar. However, the relationship with the monasteries she had been granted in 937 apparently remained somehow alive, as in 962, on his way back from Rome, Otto confirmed to Monte Amiata some rights and properties, for the sake of his soul and that of his wife Adelaide and son Otto.[118] Even if at this stage of Otto's reign her role was still marginal, her action in Italy seems important for the legitimacy of the new ruler.

The dowers of Berta and Adelaide were extensive, because they were meant to create and reinforce Hugh's territorial control rather than provide his wife and future daughter-in-law with material resources. However, the different types of properties that were given to the two women reflect the different roles that they were meant to play in Italy. Berta was to remain detached from Italian affairs, but it is likely that Hugh envisaged a more active – and obviously long term – role for Adelaide. She was given royal monasteries because this was what queens were given. Which royal monasteries and with which type of benefit, depended on the rulers' needs. This can to be read as a symbolic investiture and suggestion of her future role as queen.

[115] Vignodelli, 'Berta e Adelaide', pp. 271-282 and my discussion above, pp. 106-108.
[116] DLotII3.
[117] DLotII14.
[118] DOI237.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed dowers of royal women with the aim of underlining the structures, economic and political significance of queenly resources. The dower is an elusive institution which started to be regularly used in the ninth century, but there were no specific rules with regard to its size and structure. Rulers adopted this custom with extreme flexibility, according to their means and to their needs. On these grounds, I have challenged the idea that some properties and monasteries were "reserved" to queens and represented their patrimonial basis. I have argued that such reserves did not exist, and that the recurrence of the same properties and monasteries for more than one queen was related to their location and function. They were often located in key areas of the kingdom, where political control was vital for rulers. Hence they were assigned to the queen to state and strengthen their relationship to royal authority. There is a crucial aspect of continuity that needs acknowledging: the constant presence of royal monasteries. Queens seem to be involved in the patronage of institutions which had previously been associated with royal authority. However, this connection has been overrated by modern historians.

For this reason, I have refuted the assumption that the monastery of San Salvatore has to be considered as the centre of the queen's patrimony in the ninth century. Although it was founded by a queen, and granted to two Carolingian empresses, its function has been overemphasized. It is undeniable that San Salvatore was a powerful and wealthy institution, which attracted great interest on the part of rulers. In order to control its resources as closely as possible, rulers acquired the habit of appointing their daughters as abbesses, in order to have an "inside agent". The queen was involved in this process in the capacity of *rectrix*, but it is difficult to establish any practical return and whether she had any administrative tasks. There is no mention, in our sources, that this monastery was considered as the queen's nunnery.

This does not imply that queens and empresses were not left the autonomy of building and expanding a personal reserve of properties. Alda did this in Parma, Ageltrude in central Italy and around Piacenza and Parma, Angelberga, the most affluent of them all, in the Po valley. She could benefit from the support of a powerful and extensive network composed of members of her family, which controlled religious and public offices in Asti, Piacenza, Parma and Modena. Adelaide would have had the same possibility, had her marriage lasted longer. By analysing the structures, sizes and distributions of queens' dowers in the ninth and tenth

centuries, it is possible to underline the differences in the reigns of all these royal women. The different means which each ruler had to use between 835 and 962 led the nature of this association to change, had different purposes and produced different results for each royal woman. It could be related to personal connections between the queen and the elite that controlled the monastery, as is the case for Alda and Parma. It could be a highly symbolized grant used to claim relevant resources in a key area of the kingdom, as for Ageltrude in Pavia and Adelaide in Tuscany. Monasteries were centres of political negotiation. The relationship between the two aspects changes according to the political conditions; however, the economic significance of religious institutions for the queen becomes evident only in the case of widowhood.

The dowers which we are able to analyse closely thanks to royal charters enable us to see very specific strategies of royal politics. Angelberga was given properties that lay along communication routes in the core of fiscal concentrations, and that were close to the territorial interest of her family. She was also more independent as she used these resources autonomously. The properties and monasteries that Ageltrude acquired were, on the other hand, focused on the political ideology of Guy. They were all properties that had been owned by queens before her. As I pointed out in chapter 3 this did not make them queenly, but shows that Guy was interested in stressing a sort of continuity for some significant royal properties and monasteries. Adelaide and Berta were granted a very considerable amount of land and some big-scale monasteries in 937. This, however, was related with Hugh's interest in creating a reserve of properties. There is little evidence that these highly strategic and productive landed resources were meant for the economic benefit of the two women.

In other words, all these dowers are different, as they express different strategies of territorial control. At the same time, they illuminate different practices of queenship. The relationship with these monasteries, the "practice of property", changed considerably. But what could women really do with their properties? Only in one case - that of Angelberga - do contemporary sources show the queen's actual activism in managing her properties. However, this does not mean that we cannot get a more thorough insight into queen's economic activities. In the next chapter I will show that an excellent way to look into queen's 'economic' resources is to explore the challenges and opportunities that they had as royal widows.

Chapter V. Royal widowhood and patrimonial strategies

In 835, a few months after Ermengarda interceded for St Ambrose in Milan,[1] a woman called Cunegunda issued a will in Parma, granting her properties to the monastery of Sant'Alessandro, which she had founded in the town.[2] Cunegunda was not just a rich noble woman, for she had been married to a king. As she declares in her will ("relicta quondam Bernardi inclite regis") Cunegunda had been the wife of Bernard of Italy, who had died as the result of his revolt against Louis the Pious in 818.[3] What happened to Bernard's widow during the seventeen years that followed his death? This is unknown, as her life is not recorded by any source. Cunegunda's will does suggest, however, that she had spent her widowhood in a reasonably wealthy state, gathering a considerable number of properties in the areas of Parma, Modena and Reggio Emilia, and using her resources to patronize monasteries in the same area. Had Cunegunda been endowed by her husband? If so, what had happened to these properties after his death? How had she been able to use and preserve them? If she acquired them privately, by what means had she done so?

The analysis of royal widowhood is an excellent way of looking into queens' resources – in terms of both monastic patronage and landed wealth. In this regard, Italy offers some extraordinary evidence, as in the ninth and tenth centuries several royal widows maintained high status and attempted to protect their resources. Wills and donations *pro anima* record their activities as landholders. In Italy, the fragile situation of royal widows was complicated by the fact that they often were left without sons to protect them, and the new ruler had little interest – if any – in supporting them. Ultimately, these women had to protect themselves from both friends and enemies.[4] At the same time, this fragility and the political turbulence gave women visibility, thanks to their attempts to protect and transmit their wealth. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, there were no clear rules about the preservation of a woman's dower. This vagueness also left widows some room for manoeuvre: they could manage to exploit political divisions to their own advantage. The different strategies that they

[1] DLOI23. See chapter 3, p. 62.
[2] CDP, n. 2.
[3] Noble, 'The Revolt of King Bernard of Italy'.
[4] Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', pp. 91-94.

employed can be related to the political and dynastic conditions in which royal widows operated.

The status of elite widows has gained much attention in recent years.[5] However, less work has been done specifically on royal widowhood.[6] This excludes those widows who had the chance to maintain their influence through regency. A woman who had been able to produce a male heir could successfully hold her place at court – especially if her son was still in his minority. This, however, happened rarely in Italy. The lack of male children certainly made former queens more vulnerable.[7] What happened to them? Royal widows usually retired to a nunnery. This was usually a monastery that the queen had founded or protected during her reign, often an institution specifically created for the purpose of granting her protection, security and stability. In other words, former queens apparently retired from the political scene and devoted themselves to spiritual and administrative tasks inside a nunnery. In the following pages I will analyse three examples of royal widows which show that this was not necessarily the case. They did live in monasteries, which they had founded or endowed. However, the evidence indicates that they did not want to retire at all. These women used monastic institutions and their wealth to remain active on the political scene, defying the difficult political circumstances which they had to face.

Royal widows and wills

My analysis will be based on several pieces of evidence, but particularly on queens' testaments and donations. The nature and quantity of the documentation often make it difficult for historians to understand the relationship between royal women and their properties. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, we rarely have evidence of a queen directly administering her own properties. By analysing royal widowhood, the difficulties former queens experienced and the way in which they attempted to overcome them, one can get a unique picture of royal women's resources. Italy provides a number of examples in this regard, which effectively show the ambiguity of the status of a royal widow. Former queens struggled to maintain their political influence. At the same time they were not willing to give up their resources, which was often demanded because of the political symbolism of their properties.

[5] See the collection of essays: Parisse, *Veuves et veuvage*; Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', pp. 85–90; Santinelli, *Des femmes éplorées?*.
[6] With the recent exception of MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood'.
[7] Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers', pp. 90-93.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that in Italy dynastic discontinuity meant that royal widows were often confronted with a new ruler, with whom they had no familial connections. Late Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy offers several examples of queens issuing wills and donations – much more frequently than in other areas of Europe. These valuable documents can be read as queens' attempts to protect themselves: they cast light on the patrimonial and political strategies pursued by former queens during their widowhood. At first glance, they show the queen giving up her properties, putting them under the protection of a monastery, and giving up their administration. However, this should not necessarily be interpreted as a sign that the queen intended to retire. Queens' wills and donations hide very specific political and patrimonial claims, marking a new stage of the queen's career.

These documents offer a valuable insight into the interweaving of familial strategies of patrimonial preservation and royal politics.[8] The juridical framework in which they were issued is difficult to assess: it is difficult to establish what women – and particularly royal women – were allowed to do with their dower.[9] Inheritance rights and transmission of properties were not regulated by rigid rules, but were the result of negotiations and struggles.[10] Widows therefore needed to choose the right strategies in order to succeed. In this domain, monasteries held a key role: they functioned as means of accumulation and protection of the widow's wealth. As *deo sacrata*, a woman could inhabit the monastery and attempt to guarantee herself security, respect and active control over her wealth. Often, however, their former royal status was not the best weapon they had, as their previous role could be problematic with regard to the rise of a new dynasty – or sometimes even within the same dynasty.

The reason why royal widows were active in late ninth- and tenth-century Italy is found precisely in this competitive situation, as it affected the way in which women behaved and were perceived. The means they used to react to their difficulties have to be analysed in relation to the situation that they experienced as widows. One of the main difficulties for a former royal woman was not only that she had to face the new, often hostile, ruler, but also a new queen who took on her prerogatives and privileges. The co-existence of two royal

[8] C. La Rocca, L. Provero, 'The Dead and their Gifts. The Will of Eberhard, Count of Friuli, and his Wife Gisela, Daughter of Louis the Pious', in F. Theuws, J. Nelson, eds, *Rituals of Power* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 225-280, esp. pp. 225–233; B. Kasten, 'À propos de la dichotomie entre privé et public dans les testaments des rois francs', in Bougard, La Rocca, Le Jan, *Sauver son âme et se perpétuer*, pp. 159-201.
[9] Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', pp. 85–90.
[10] Innes, 'Keeping it in the Family', pp. 22-23; Id. 'Practices of Properties', p. 250.

women in the kingdom could be problematic for rulers. But what concrete problem would a widow pose to the new ruler? Raising internal opposition may have been one of them, as often Italian queens were members of the Italian aristocracy, who frequently had better candidates to propose. However, in order to maintain contacts, women needed resources.

In the following pages I will analyse three cases of competitive royal widowhood: Cunegunda, Angelberga and Ageltrude. I will focus on the attempt made by rulers to limit or control these widows' resources and the ways in which women reacted to them. These three cases give a fascinating insight into the strategy of survival that these women put in place. They are not the only royal widows who appear in this period. Anna – whose case has been mentioned in the previous chapter – remained in the Italian kingdom after Berengar's death and preserved some properties, as well as good connections with the ecclesiastical elite. After her husband's death, Adelaide found herself in a particularly difficult position, but she was able to count on the support of the local elite. Her short widowhood and second marriage with Otto I is extensively documented by Ottonian texts. However, only Cunegunda, Angelberga and Ageltrude stand out as extraordinarily resourceful. Most importantly, they stand out for their ability to bring together their properties and connections in order to reach their aims: patrimonial and political survival for themselves and their kin. This goal was reached thanks to – or in spite of - their problematic relationship with the new ruler and his wife.

1. Cunegunda

The will drawn up by Cunegunda in 835 provides the evidence for our first case. First of all, its timing is worth noticing. The document was issued only a few months after Lothar's arrival in Italy, and after Ermengarda, the new queen of Italy, started to appear in diplomas. This political change must have been perceived by Cunegunda: the document can therefore be read as a response to the changed circumstances. We do not know what had happened to her during the preceding years, but the content of the will makes it clear that she was not a secluded woman. She rallied a group of notables and clergymen as signatories of the will, who represented the political and religious elite of the area of Parma, where the economic transaction was focused. Among them was the count of Parma Adalgisus and the bishops Lambert of Parma and Nordbert of Reggio Emilia. The two bishops had already collaborated with imperial authorities, as they had taken part in a council in 827, which gathered together

Italian clergymen and imperial *missi*.[11] The others were *gastaldi* – local officials – all defined *ex genere Francorum*. The Carolingians had overseen intense change in the area, introducing a new local political elite. Furthermore, Adalgisus is the first count documented in Parma. All this suggests an intense political and administrative reorganization of the region, which might have affected landowners such as Cunegunda.

Furthermore, Adalgisus' mention as count marks the political rise of the Supponids in north-western Emilia.[12] His mention in the charter has led scholars to argue that Cunegunda belonged to the Supponid family.[13] The concentration of her wealth suggests that she must have had familial connections in the area. In her 877 will Angelberga appointed her sister, also called Cunegunda, as abbess of San Sisto: this suggests that the name belonged to the Supponid onomastic tradition.[14] However, the familial background of Cunegunda remains obscure, as we do not have enough data to make a case for her being a Supponid. More recently, François Bougard, following Christian Settipani, advanced the hypothesis that Cunegunda was the grand-daughter of William of Toulouse.[15] However, it is impossible to ascertain Cunegunda's origin. Similarly, the nature of her marriage with Bernard has been debated. Cristina La Rocca has argued that Cunegunda might have not been lawfully married to Bernard, but was an aristocratic concubine - a "youth bride".[16] However, this argument rests on little evidence. In fact, there is no evidence to prove that Cunegunda and Bernard were not lawfully married. What emerges very clearly from the document is Cunegunda's desire to present herself as an independent proprietor and to protect and transmit her wealth to her offspring.

In 835, Cunegunda might have felt that the time had come for her to issue a testament. Lothar's arrival in Italy was the result of his struggle with Louis the Pious, the man who had determined Bernard's death. If Cunegunda still had reasons to be hostile towards Louis the Pious, she might have felt more confident to proceed now that Lothar was in charge. On the other hand, the arrival of Lothar might have represented, for many, a cause of concern. The arrival of a new ruler necessarily meant the redefinition of power relations and support networks, which were reflected in territorial control. Cunegunda's will attests for the first

[11] *Concilium Mantuanum*, ed. A. Werminghoff, MGH Concilia Aevi Karolini I/II (Hanover, 1908), pp. 583–589, at p. 585.
[12] See above, chapter 3, p. 71.
[13] Bougard, 'Les Supponides', p. 386-388.
[14] Falconi, *Le carte cremonesi*, n. 20, p. 53.
[15] Ibidem, esp. fn. 20 p. 387.
[16] La Rocca, 'Les cadeaux', p. 512.

time to the existence of a count in the city of Parma. This suggests a reorganization of Carolingian territorial control, which was related to the emergence of the Supponid family in the area.[17] The properties Cunegunda had acquired were possibly at risk now that the new ruler was physically in Italy and the political elite of the town was being reorganized.[18] Even if Cunegunda was not a Supponid, she found a successful way of liaising with them. For this reason she might have felt it necessary to secure her landed wealth, by granting it to a religious institution. At the same time, Cunegunda might have looked for the new ruler's protection. Her will is dated according to the years of both Louis' and Lothar's reigns: the document seems to acknowledge the new political situation, namely Lothar's authority in Italy.

The will is presented as a *donatio pro anima mariti*, that is to say a donation to commemorate her husband and to protect her kin ("pro mercedem et remedium anime seniori meo Bernardi vel mea seu filio meo Pippino [sic]"). Cunegunda chooses not to define herself as a former queen, even though she mentions her husband as *Bernardus inclitus rex*. At the end of the document her signature consists only of her name, or rather of her "signum manu", and there is no further indication of her former royal status. However, this document shows that during her long widowhood Cunegunda carried on activities often associated with queens and members of the political elite: monastic patronage, as she had founded a monastery in Parma, Sant'Alessandro, to which she left all her properties. Among them were two further monasteries, San Bartolomeo in Parma and San Tommaso, in the vicinity of Reggio Emilia. The donation also consists of a significant group of landed estates concentrated in the Parma area and in the neighbouring *comitatus* of Modena and Reggio Emilia. The charter mentions a *curtis* located "ad quattuor arcas" which can probably be identified as the place now called Quattro Castella, south east of Reggio Emilia and in close proximity to the border with the *comitatus* of Parma. Then the will mentions Fabrure, which is probably identifiable with Fraore, west of Parma.[19] The third *curtis* mentioned is Ceredo, which is said to be near the river Siccla (Secchia): this place can probably be identified as the hamlet of Cerredolo, a place on the Apennines in the area of Modena, which is near the River Secchia. The other landholdings mentioned are situated in Marcellas (possibly Marzaglia, east of Modena),

[17] Provero, 'Il sistema di potere carolingio', pp. 2-3.
[18] Although, as pointed out by L. Provero, 'Chiese e dinastie nel mondo carolingio', in R. Greci, ed, *Storia di Parma*, *3, 1: Parma medievale: poteri e istituzioni* (Parma, 2010), pp. 41-68, at pp. 44-45, there is little evidence of Carolingian rulers' direct action on the area before mid ninth century. On the relationship between Adalgisus and Lothar see ibidem, pp. 50–51.
[19] Schumann, *Authority and the Commune*, p. 40.

Noceto (east of Parma), Garfaniana (San Possidonio, near Modena), Tarabiano (probably Tabiano Terme, Parma), Vezano (Vezzano on the Crostolo river, south of Reggio Emilia), Sorbulo (Sorbolo, near Parma), Berutto (Boretto, north of Reggio Emilia on the River Po), [20] Melitulo (Meletole, Reggio Emilia) and Sacca (north of Parma, near the River Po).[21]

Although it has not been possible to locate a number of landholdings mentioned in the document,[22] the will clearly suggests that all properties owned by Cunegunda had a territorial coherence, as they were situated in a delimited area ("in finibus Parmensis seu Regiensis, Motinensis"). We can infer that Cunegunda's resources were related to Parma, which appears to be the veritable centre of her patrimonial action. Not only did she issue the will in Parma, where she had founded a monastery to which she left everything she owned, but she also had the count of the city as main signatory of her will. What was the origin of the properties? Cunegunda is very eager to leave no doubts that they were the result of her own economic transactions. The most important feature of this document is the stress that it places on the fact that Cunegunda had acquired the properties privately, *ex cartula comparationis*. Apart from the monasteries, the mention of each property is followed by the details of the transaction: the name of the seller, their occupation and origin. This precision is certainly not accidental. Cunegunda was concerned to stress the private origin of her properties, because she wanted to state her full right to own them and to dispose of them accordingly. Through the charter she wanted to present herself as an independent proprietor and state her legitimate right to dispose freely of her properties, clearly with her descendants in mind.

For this reason, the private status of the properties claimed by the document can be read as part of a political discourse. Although the issuing of her will was probably related to the changes happening on a royal level, Cunegunda had a strong interest in stating that her wealth was not related to her previous royal status. As she wanted to secure her properties, she had to produce evidence that they were hers by her own right, and they had nothing to do with her former status. Her ultimate aim was, after all, to pass them on to her heirs: she established that she would maintain the usufruct of all the properties, and that, after her death, the properties and monasteries would pass on to her son, Pippin, and to his heirs. In this sense, it is clear that Cunegunda's donation of all her properties to Sant'Alessandro was a strategic move. She wanted to put them under the nominal control of a religious institution - despite

[20] Ibidem, p. 437
[21] See MAP 1.
[22] Famardaco, Puteo Alto, Galegana, Benena, Foleniano, Fingaida, Paratineas, Molino Antoni, vico Sambulani and Curtiliano.

maintaining their control in practice - and pass them *hereditario iure* to her offspring. Cunegunda made use of monastic patronage to protect and legitimize her wealth, acting through what La Rocca has defined "a private dimension", although clearly keeping an eye on what was going on at a royal level.[23] La Rocca has argued that she had no fiscal property because she might have been a "youth bride", that is not a fully lawful wife.[24] However, there is little ground for this argument. This private dimension must not necessarily be seen as a limitation: it is likely that it was a posture, rather than a clearly-defined sphere of action.

If Cunegunda was acting with a long-term goal in mind, her strategy was successful. In 948, Lothar II of Italy promulgated a diploma in favour of the count of Parma Maginfred.[25] The count was granted and confirmed several landholdings, divided into three groups. Lothar granted to the count some fiscal properties and confirmed some landholdings in the area of Piacenza, Parma and Modena. The third group includes landholdings which had been previously confirmed by Berengar I to Maginfred's father Hugh.[26] These landholdings belonged to Maginfred *successione parentum,* that is to say he had inherited them from his family. Some of the landholdings mentioned in this group were the same properties that Cunegunda had mentioned in her will. Maginfred received the monasteries of Sant'Alessandro and San Tommaso, the *curtes* of Cerredo, Fabrure and some land in the proximity of Sacca. In a diploma of Otto I (967) three sons of the Count Maginfred are mentioned: they are called Hugh, Guy and Bernard.[27] This third name is particularly significant, as Cunegunda's grandson was also called Bernard.[28] Maginfred owned estates formerly controlled by Cunegunda, he was the count of Parma, and his son carried the name of Bernard. These facts suggest that Maginfred was a descendant of Cunegunda and that part of her patrimony was therefore successfully transmitted through subsequent generations. It is very likely that his father Hugh had held the same office, and controlled the same properties, which, according to Lothar's diploma, had been confirmed to him by Berengar I. Hugh was probably the first count of Parma among the descendants of Cunegunda. The family had managed to maintain control of a considerable patrimony in the areas of Parma, Modena and Reggio Emilia, and to expand it through private means and political relations, and to connect

[23] La Rocca, *Les cadeaux*, pp. 512-513.
[24] Ibidem.
[25] DLotII8. On this see G. Albertoni, 'Il potere del vescovo. Parma in età ottoniana', in Greci, *Storia di Parma*, pp. 69-114, at pp. 89–92.
[26] The diploma is lost. See DBerI43(lost).
[27] DOI340, p. 464.
[28] Regino of Prüm mentions three sons of Pippin (Bernard and Cunegunda's son): Bernard, Herbert (count of Vermandois) and Pippin. Regino, *Chronicon*, a. 818, p. 73.

it to a significant public office. The descendants of Cunegunda and Bernard were able successfully to conquer and maintain an important public role thanks to Cunegunda's success in defining her patrimony as the prerogative of her family.

Cunegunda's widowhood can be considered successful in terms of patrimonial strategies. Not only did she manage to place her son in a position of power in West Frankia – we can presume this as her grandson was count of Vermandois at the end of the ninth century.[29] Her descendants still controlled the properties she had acquired and used them as a basis to build a political career. Furthermore, the memory of her patrimonial operation and monastic patronage was still alive, in 877, when Wibod defined the monastery of Sant'Alessandro as "monasterium quondam Cunicunde".[30]

2. Angelberga

Cunegunda's will can be read as an anti-dower charter, because of her desire to stress her private means. Other royal widows adopted radically different strategies. After the death of Louis II, Angelberga tried to protect the properties she had received through royal donations. As I have mentioned above, at the beginning of the 870s Angelberga was involved in the political negotiations aimed at establishing the successor of Louis II. The *Annals of St Bertin*, which report that Angelberga met Louis the German in Trento in 872, suggest that she supported the Eastern Carolingians.[31] In February 875, a few months before Louis II's death, Ermengarda travelled to Germany to ask for the confirmation of some properties in Italy: Murgola and Almenno in the *comitatus* of Bergamo, Cortemaggiore in *Aucia* (Piacenza area) and a *monasterium novum* in Pavia.[32] The monastery could be identified with Santa Maria and S. Martino, founded by Ermengarda and Lothar. This donation concerns some relevant fiscal estates in the north of Italy: Cortemaggiore, in particular, was situated in the *fines Aucenses*, a significant administrative district, of which it was the centre.[33] This confirmation represents a performed alliance between Louis the German and the women of Louis II's

[29] For bibliography see S. MacLean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: the Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (Manchester, 2009), p. 130, fn. 30.
[30] CDP, n. 13.
[31] *Annales Bertiniani*, a. 872, p. 119.
[32] DLG157. See above p. 85.
[33] V. Fumagalli, 'Città e distretti minori nell'età Carolingia, un esempio', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 1 (1969), pp. 107-117. Consulted in the digital version available on Itinerari Medievali: http://www.itinerarimedievali.unipr.it/v2/pdf/F_fumagalli_citta_distretti_carolingi.pdf, pp.1-10, at pp. 7-8.

family, but at the same time concerns some very significant landed resources.[34] Interestingly, the diploma defines the *curtes* as "proprietates nostrae", implying that they belonged to Louis the German: one must assume that these properties had come under Louis the German's control as a result of the negotiations between him and Louis II in previous years. This charter shows, in other words, that fiscal properties could be used as means to negotiate, record and display alliances within the Carolingian family.

Furthermore, in February 876 – six months after Louis II's death – Angelberga sent her *missi* Gisalpertus and Hamadeus to Louis the German, asking him to confirm all her properties:

"Ad usufruendum et ordinandum seu etiam proprietario nomine habendum per largitionis suae dispensationem clementi, ut decebat, animo condonavit, quamque ea, quae ipsa sibi qualicumque contractu iuste et legaliter adquisivit, per hoc nostrae auctoritatis praeceptum simili modo habere et posidere aut etiam venerandis locis seu amicorum suorum usibus pro commemoratione aeterna praescripti senioris sui et sua tradere liberam absque alicuius infestatione potestatem haberet."[35]

This passage is particularly interesting. First, it shows that Angelberga was interested in stressing and recording her properties' royal origin. Secondly, it shows that Angelberga wanted to present her control of religious institutions as being aimed at royal commemoration. In other words, the former empress wanted to protect her properties by underlining their royal status, but also the importance they had for the royal *memoria*. For this reason the confirmation of Louis the German - a member of the same family of whose *memoria* the empress was in charge - was particularly significant. This supports the case that Angelberga boosted the Eastern Carolingians' ambitions to the Italian throne and imperial title. According to the traditional narrative, after the death of Louis II the Italian nobility split into "pro-German" and "pro-French" factions. These factions have also been territorially defined, as the north-western nobility mostly supported Charles the Bald, and the north-eastern (the Friulans) Louis the German. The Carolingians were aware that the support of the Italian nobility and the Pope would have been decisive for their success.

One of the main sources regarding the events following Louis's death, Andrew of Bergamo's *Historia*, has fuelled the idea that the political factionalism in Italy corresponded to political chaos and weak royal authority.[36] This approach has recently been challenged, as it has been

[34] S. MacLean, '"After his death a great tribulation came to Italy…" Dynastic Politics and Aristocratic Factions after the Death of Louis II, c.870 – c. 890', *Millennium Jahrbuch*, 4 (2007), pp. 239-60, at p. 245.
[35] DLG171.
[36] Fumagalli, *Il regno Italico*; P. Delogu, 'Vescovi, conti e sovrani nella crisi del Regno italico. Ricerche sull'aristocrazia carolingia in Italia 3', *Annali della Scuola Speciale per Archivisti*, 8 (1968), pp. 3-72, at pp. 19-31.

shown that Italian factions were extremely fluid and moved by very practical interests: the existence of factionalism in Italy did not mean the weakening of royal authority.[37] Angelberga's widowhood and her attempts to preserve her wealth fit effectively within this picture and emerge from Andrew's narrative as well.[38] Andrew reports that Charles the Bald and Louis the German were both called to Italy to claim the imperial rights. This decision was made by an assembly of the local nobles held in Pavia, and presided over by Empress Angelberga.[39] Andrew is the only author to attribute this political responsibility to Angelberga and therefore he must not necessarily be taken seriously. The *Libellus de imperatoria potestate*, a political pamphlet produced in Rome at the end of the ninth century, also states that the empress and "sui primates" sent a missive to Karlman.[40] As we have seen, evidence shows that Angelberga had, at this stage, a favourite: Louis the German and his sons. However, this does not imply that she had to maintain this attitude. Louis the German was soon to die, and according to Andrew his sons did not deserve much political consideration.[41] Andrew's portrayal might be related to his impression that political consistency was not Angelberga's priority and thus inspired by the fluctuating attitude of the empress. By the time he was writing, probably at the beginning of the 880s, Andrew had witnessed the change in the empress' political attitude.

Initially, Angelberga's hostility towards Charles the Bald seemed evident. Her appeal to Louis the German to confirm her properties was contemporary with the coronation of Charles in February 876. It is clear, therefore, that at the time Charles' victory was not good news for Angelberga. At the same time, however, Pope John VIII, one of Angelberga's closest friends, supported the West Frankish candidate.[42] The same can be said for the archbishop of Milan Anspert, a relevant figure in relation to Angelberga's troubled widowhood. In September 875 Anspert had organized what has been defined as "one of the most daring and political acts of his government":[43] the procession that took Louis II's body from Brescia, where it had been

[37] For a discussion of this approach see MacLean, 'After his death', pp. 240–242.
[38] Andrew, *Historia*, ch. 19, p. 229.
[39] Ibidem: "Colligentes se maiores nati in civitate Ticino simul cum Angelberga suorum regina […] et pravum agentes consilium, quatenus ad duo mandarent regi, id est Karoli in Frantia et Hlodovici in Baioaria, sicut et fecerunt". See chapter 2, pp. 39-40.
[40] *Libellus*, p. 207–208. The text, written probably during the Spoletan reign, was a claim of imperial authority, and denounces the concessions granted by Charles to John VIII. On the text see G. Arnaldi, *Natale 875*: *Politica, ecclesiologia, cultura del papato altomedievale* (Rome, 1990), pp. 37-44.
[41] Andrews portrays Charles the Fat as plundering the area of Bergamo with his men: "domibus devastantes, adulteria vel incendia fatientes", ch. 19, p. 230.
[42] Arnaldi, *Natale 875*, pp. 29-35.
[43] M.G. Bertolini, *Ansperto*, DBI, 3 (1961), pp. 422-425.

originally buried, to the church of St Ambrose in Milan. According to Paolo Delogu, Anspert took the body with the aim of claiming "the role of keeper of the royal tradition in Italy, burying him beside King Pippin and Bernard in the church of St Ambrose in Milan".[44] The representatives of the archbishop sent to transfer the body were the bishops Benedict of Cremona and Garibald of Bergamo, with an entourage of clerics: among them was Andrew of Bergamo, as he reports in the *Historia*.[45]

This event has been read as a sign that relations between Angelberga and the church of Milan were tense: she wished to keep the body of Louis in Brescia, whereas Anspert had decided to move the royal body to the mausoleum of the kings of Italy.[46] However, this may not have been the case. In March 880 Charles the Fat issued a diploma that confirmed some properties to the monastery of St Ambrose. Among them was the monastery of Santa Cristina in Corte Olona, which, according to the diploma, had been granted to St Ambrose by Angelberga "for the sake of Louis' soul".[47] If Angelberga had granted the monastery of Corte Olona to St Ambrose in Louis' memory, this must have been done after the body had already been moved to Milan. Moreover, the grant must have taken place before March 877, when the empress issued a testament that listed all her properties, because it does not mention Santa Cristina. This exchange between the empress and the diocese of Milan might indicate that the removal of Louis' body from Brescia happened with the empress's consent, and that Angelberga's grant was the result of an agreement between the empress and the Milan clergy led by Anspert.[48]

This shows that the empress was happy to come to agreement with people who, according to the alleged French/German partition, would have belonged to the opposite party. Furthermore, it shows that Angelberga used her royal properties to negotiate alliances and support. After Louis the German died, in August 876, she had no guarantee that Louis' sons would have been on her side. On 27th March 877 Pope John VIII wrote an enraged letter to Charles the Fat, because, according to Andrew, the latter had been plundering the monastery of San Salvatore in Brescia, in which the empress was living at the time.[49] On the same day the pope wrote to the empress to comfort her for her sufferings. In the letter the pope said that

[44] Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy', p. 315.
[45] Andrew, *Historia*, ch. 18, p. 229.
[46] P. Majocchi, 'La morte del re. Rituali funerari e commemorazione dei sovrani nell'Alto Medioevo', *Storica*, 49 (2011), pp. 7–61.
[47] DCIII21.
[48] On Corteolona, see MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, pp. 93-95.
[49] Rg.Io.43.

he was doing his best to persuade Charles the Bald, whom he calls "our spiritual son Charles", to help her, and that the emperor was showing exceptional piety and devotion.[50] This indicates that Angelberga had asked the pope to intercede on her behalf with Charles the Bald, and therefore that between 876 and 877 she was attempting a policy of conciliation towards the winner.

This conciliatory policy is confirmed by the fact that in March 877 she issued her testament in San Salvatore in Brescia. The testament asserted the foundation of the nunnery of San Sisto – formally dedicated to the Resurrection, the holy Apostles San Sisto, Bartolomeo and Fabiano in Piacenza - to which Angelberga assigned all her properties.[51] This document is an extraordinary source of information with regard to the economic strategies of preservation of a queen's patrimony. The list of properties left to San Sisto includes a great number of *curtes* located in several areas of the Italian kingdom. The document divides these landholdings into two groups: Angelberga's private acquisitions ("michi inibi legibus pertinet aut in antea Deo propicio adquirere potuero") and what she had acquired with her dower ("michi in dotis nomine advenerunt de eodem domino et vir meo"). The first group includes landholdings that Angelberga had probably received from her family or through personal acquisitions. They are situated in the *comitatus* of Piacenza (a *curtis* inside the town, Flaviano, Dularia and Fabrica), Lodi (Monte Malo and Prata), and Cremona (Sesto and Tencaria). The landholdings received from Louis II are more numerous and distributed over a larger territory. In this group of estates there are the two *curtes* granted in 860, Campo Migliacio and Cortenuova, and other estates in the areas of Reggio Emilia (Guastalla, Luzzara and Piguniaria), Stazzona (Masina and Cabroi), Burgaria (Trencate and Burnago) and Mantova (Villula).[52] In this group we find also the *curtes* of Salmata (whose location is unknown), Octavo (probably near Piacenza) and some saltworks in Comacchio.

The territorial analysis of these properties illuminates interesting elements of territorial control.[53] It shows that Angelberga had sufficient resources to carry out private acquisitions. The fact that the documents do not mention some of the properties obtained in royal donations – for example the properties in the north east received in 869 – might suggest that she had lost them, or that she had used them to purchase other properties. The territorial analysis of these landholdings shows that they had a very strong and coherent strategic

[50] Rg.Io.44.
[51] Falconi, *Le carte cremonesi*, n. 20.
[52] See MAP 2.
[53] I have thoroughly developed this argument in Cimino, 'Angelberga', passim.

significance: most of them were estates situated along the Po river. These properties can in fact be divided into two big groups: one in the area of Mantua and Parma (Piguniaria, *Litoria Paludiana*, Villula, Guastalla and Luzzara), and another near Piacenza and Cremona (Cotrebbia, *Fagedum*, Vualdo Meleto, Muciana and Sesto).[54] These cities were the main riverine harbours of the Italian kingdom. The high level productivity and economic and political value of the Po valley seems to be the main reason behind this large donation. This document shows that Angelberga's monastic patronage was a coherent plan of economic and political control, whose basis had been created in collaboration with Louis II.

However, Louis II was not the only figure behind the creation of Angelberga's wealth. This big project was realized with the support of Angelberga's family. Among the subscribers of Angelberga's will we find members of the highest elite of the kingdom, some of whom were also members of her own family. The charter mentions the count of Piacenza, Richardus (her brother's brother-in-law), and her three brothers Egifredus, Ardingus and Suppo II. Angelberga's sister, Cunegunda, was chosen as abbess of San Sisto and Angelberga herself held the role of *rectrix*, that is to say the role of protector and administrator of the monastery and its properties. Furthermore, the will states that after her death this role would be taken over by her daughter Ermengarda. The will also established that if Ermengarda had a daughter, she should be educated in the monastery, "ad pastoralem ministerium utilis et idonea", and would become abbess after Cunegunda's death. If Ermengarda did not have a daughter, the future abbess was to be chosen from among Angelberga's female descendants, in the first instance from her paternal branch, and secondly from the maternal one.

These detailed dispositions demonstrate that Angelberga was concerned with the monastery's future and that she wanted it to remain under the control of her family. San Sisto had an ambiguous status. Although it was born with a royal identity, because it was founded by an "olim augusta imperatrix", it was not meant to be controlled by royals, but by the founder's kin. For this reason the monastery needed support: Angelberga gathered imperial *missi*, who represented the royal protection which the empress had obtained from Charles the Bald. Furthermore, Angelberga also decreed that the nunnery should not be supervised by an external religious authority ("absque episcopali providentia competenti et congruenti esse non debet"), unless in case of extreme necessity, namely if a dispute or a controversy could not be

[54] MAP 2.

solved by the abbess. She assigned this role to the archdiocese of Milan, that is to say to Anspert.

Once again, and despite their initially different views on imperial candidates, Angelberga and Anspert were happy to collaborate. This collaboration continued after Charles the Bald's death in October 877, when the throne passed to Karlman - son of Louis the German. In October or November 878 John VIII asked Count Suppo – Angelberga's cousin - to join him at the Alpine pass of Moncenisio, where he had stopped on his way back from France, with Angelberga, Anspert and Wibod of Parma.[55] John had already been joined there by Ermengarda and her husband Boso of Vienne. In the same period the pope wrote to Anspert, asking him to join them.[56] The meeting was probably held to find a way to protect the Pope from Duke Lambert of Spoleto, who was threatening Rome. Karlman had proven himself incapable or unwilling to help the pope, who for this reason travelled to France to crown the West Frankish king Louis the Stammerer and to ask for his help.[57]

The collaboration between Angelberga and Anspert would go on for several years: in August 879 Angelberga begged John VIII to forgive Anspert, who, as a consequence of the growing hostility with the Pope, had been excommunicated.[58] She also seems to have establish good relations with Karlman: in late 877 she obtained a confirmation of San Sisto's possession of the church of Cotrebbia, one of the properties she mentioned in the testament.[59] This confirmation must therefore be read as the record of an alliance between the new king and the old empress. The alliance was confirmed a year later, in October 878, when Karlmann granted to the monastery some land "iuris publici" and a mill in Piacenza.[60] Finally, in August 879, Karlman granted to San Sisto three *curtes* at the confluence between the Po and Adda – Fagedum, Muciana (Mezzano Passone di Sotto, Noceto, Parma) and Vualdo Meleto.[61] Angelberga is mentioned in the charter as founder of the monastery and this suggests that she played a part in this grant. A few days later Garibert and Adalbert, representatives of the monastery, were given the responsibility of managing the properties.[62]

[55] Rg.Io.116.
[56] Rg.Io.108.
[57] On John VIII's politics, see J. Fried, 'Boso von Vienne oder Ludwig der Stammler?', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 32 (1976), pp. 193-208.
[58] Bertolini, *Ansperto,* p. 424.
[59] DKm5.
[60] DKm16.
[61] DKm27.
[62] Falconi, *Le carte cremonesi*, n. 24.

The last two donations are particularly interesting, because they follow the territorial structure that emerges from the will. The charter of 878 concerns public land that connected San Sisto to the port of Piacenza, plus a mill, clearly another indication of the monastery's connection to fluvial routes. The donation of 879 concerns three properties situated at the confluence between Po and Adda, in proximity to the harbour of Bergamo. The mention of Angelberga associates the empress with the nunnery and the territorial acquisitions that it was carrying on: Angelberga appears as the intercessor between the monastery and rulers, and continued her project of territorial acquisitions in the Po valley.

For his part, Karlman had more or less willingly accepted the influence of the Supponids in that area, as well as the project of territorial expansion that they were carrying on through San Sisto and its patron. However, this attitude was not common to everyone. In April 878 John wrote again to console Angelberga.[63] She had been humiliated by some members of the Italian aristocracy. Count Liutfred was excommunicated by the pope because he and his wife had kidnapped a nun from San Sisto.[64] Bougard has convincingly argued that Liutfred, a member of Manfrid's family circle, had reasons for hostility towards Angelberga, because of her intervention in a dispute between Ratcausus and Manfrid in 874.[65] In June 879 the pope appealed to Bishop Wibod of Parma, asking him to intercede with Karlman or Charles the Fat. This letter is particularly interesting, because it shows that the abuse that Angelberga was suffering from Italian noblemen was not only spiritual, but, more importantly, material: "quod res et possessiones dilecte ac spiritalis filie nostre et sancti Petri commendite Angelberge imperatrici sint a quibusdam malefactoribus omnimodis depredate, non solum que foris extitere in agris et villis, sed etiam que intus per venerabilia et non violanda loca sanctorum monasteriorum reposite fuerant". [66]

This letter shows that Angelberga was using her monasteries as strongholds and refuges. She had deposited her mobile goods in San Salvatore, where she lived: this suggests that she considered it a safer refuge than San Sisto, which had been targeted by Liutfred. Furthermore, John VIII's letter to Charles the Fat shows that the threat could come from members of the very same family that Angelberga had been eager to support in the previous years. The papal appeals sent in these years to members of the Italian nobility show how concerned

[63] Rg.Io.82.
[64] Rg.Io.173.
[65] See above chapter 4, p. 133.
[66] Rg.Io.181.

Angelberga was for the fate of her wealth.[67] Not even her family seemed willing, or able, to help her: in October 879 John wrote to five counts, among whom were two members of Angelberga's family - Egifredus and Suppo - asking them to help the empress.[68] Finally, he resolved to assign the protection of San Sisto to Gisulf, abbot of Santa Cristina in Corteolona, the monastery that Angelberga had previously controlled.[69]

Furthermore, the election of Charles the Fat as new king of Italy meant new troubles for Angelberga. Initially Charles seems to have tried to maintain a good relationship with Angelberga, one of the main landholders in the kingdom.[70] In March 880 he confirmed the donations that Angelberga had received from his predecessors – Louis II, Louis the German and Karlman.[71] However, something made him change his attitude. The deterioration of the relationship between the new ruler and the former empress could be attributed to the help that Angelberga may have given to her son-in-law Boso of Vienne, who had married Angelberga's daughter, Ermengarda, in 877.[72] There is no evidence of Angelberga playing a part in the marriage. Instead, one of our sources states that Ermengarda had been Boso's concubine before marrying him.[73] It seems that Boso had pressed for the marriage more than Angelberga, who may instead have wished for her daughter to take charge of San Sisto.[74] Boso's revolt against the Carolingians created a struggle that would continue for three years and that would bring the whole Carolingian family together against him.

This may have affected the struggle between Angelberga and Charles which culminated in the exile of the empress to a monastery, possibly Zurzach.[75] The traditional interpretation is that Angelberga may have offered help to her son-in-law during his revolt.[76] The timing of her exile – she must have left Italy in spring 881 - coincided with the political crisis of Boso's revolt. Several letters written by Pope John VIII explicitly declare that Angelberga had no intention of supporting her son-in-law. However, the argument of Angelberga's involvement

[67] To Olderic and Liutfred Rg.Io.238; To Notingus, Rg.Io.244; to Cunipert: Rg.Io.242.
[68] Rg.Io.239.
[69] Rg.Io.243.
[70] MacLean, *Kingship and politics*, pp. 92–96.
[71] DCIII22.
[72] F. Bougard, *Ermengarda*, DBI, 43 (1993), pp. 214-215. On Boso's revolt and its effects see: S. MacLean, 'The Carolingian Response to the Revolt of Boso, 879-887', *Early Medieval Europe*, 10 (2001), pp. 21-48.
[73] *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 878, p. 91. Regino reports that the marriage had happened with Charles the Bald's consent: Regino, *Chronicon*, a. 877, p. 113.
[74] Bougard, *Engelberga*, p. 673.
[75] D. Geuenich, 'Zurzach - ein frühmittelalterliches Doppelkloster?', in H. Maurer, H. Patze, eds, *Festschrift für Berent Schwineköper*, (Sigmaringen, 1982), pp. 29-43, at pp. 42-43.
[76] Odegaard, 'Empress Angelberga', p. 93; Bougard, *Engelberga*, p. 673.

in the revolt may have been used by Charles the Fat as a pretext to expel the empress from Italy. There is no evidence that the old empress had the means to help Boso from Italy. Rather, Angelberga's significance for Charles resided in her role of power broker and landholder in Italy.

In other words, Charles may have wanted to expel Angelberga from Italy because, as imperial widow, she had significant support and resources in Italy. At first, Charles tried to negotiate with Angelberga and keep her on his side, later he may have decided to expel her. As *deo dicata* she resided in the monastery of San Salvatore, which was a centre of convergence for the political elite.[77] To replace Angelberga's role in Italy, Charles decided to use his wife Richgard. For this reason, Richgard was granted San Marino in October 881, only a few months after Angelberga departed.[78] As I have shown above, the monastery is likely to have been associated with Angelberga prior to its grant to the new empress.[79] San Marino does not seem to have held a patrimonial significance for Richgard; her wealth lay elsewhere - north of the Alps.[80] This grant should be read, therefore, as a symbolic transfer between the old empress and the new one. To assign to Richgard a monastery that had probably been controlled by the former empress was an attempt to state the new situation, and symbolically to put his wife in charge of royal monastic patronage in Italy. In other words, this charter was performing a queenly succession.[81] In this process Angelberga had no say – she was just forced to accept the new situation. However, which monastery was the object of this transaction is only marginally significant. Although the act of granting a royal monastery to the queen was a performance of queenly succession, which institution was chosen to perform this transition depended on rulers' priorities.

However, Charles might have realized that his decision had too many political implications – Pope John VIII was an advocate of Angelberga's cause and maybe Charles did not want to fight with him. John seems to have been very concerned about Angelberga's situation and used all his influence to make sure that the empress returned to Italy. It is likely that this intervention was urged by Angelberga herself, who clearly was not happy with her new situation. John's first appeal, on 12th March 881, was aimed at the kings of Provence and

[77] Rosenwein, 'The Family Politics', pp. 254–256.
[78] DCIII42.
[79] See above, chapter 3, pp. 76-77.
[80] MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood', pp. 20-26.
[81] On the importance of diplomas as performances of royal succession see Koziol, *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 97-118.

West Frankia, Louis and Carloman, and at the abbot of Auxerre, Hugo. In the letter John promised that Angelberga would be under his control and not do anything to subvert the order of the empire:[82] this is a clear reference to her possible involvement in the revolt of Boso. Furthermore, John suggested as a solution that Angelberga would be conducted to Rome and would live under his supervision. This passage is very interesting, as it suggests that the place where Angelberga was living was not considered safe. This place gave the empress the opportunity to network with the aristocratic elites and possibly build opposition to the Carolingians there. Around the same time John wrote to the Italian bishops and counts, asking them to intervene for the empress' liberation: he stressed again the fact that she would live in such a place where she would not be able to cause any trouble ("in tali loco habitare faciemus, quo nichil adversi moliri nichilque valeat machinare contrarium ad huius regni et imperii perturbationem").[83] Finally, John resorted to writing to the empress Richgard and to the archchancellor Liutward, in March 882.[84]

Angelberga reappeared in Italy shortly after, in April 882, when she obtained a confirmation of her properties from Charles - a confirmation which sounds like the renewal of a friendship.[85] Immediately after that, Charles left Italy for Germany, because of the death of his brother Louis the Younger, king of Saxony. Possibly his priorities had changed at this point, and he did not see Angelberga as a real danger any more. Coincidentally, Richgard disappeared from Charles' charters. Angelberga did not move to Rome, as John VIII had promised in his letters. It is not clear where she spent the last years of her life, but she must have been in the north in 885, when two of her *advocates* leased some land (*livello*) of the empress in the area of Feline, near Guastalla.[86] A year later, another of her properties near Guastalla was granted *ad livellum* by her *gastaldus* Martin.[87] Furthermore, Angelberga managed to maintain good relations with Italian rulers and make sure her properties survived the political mayhem. In August 887, when Charles the Fat was already facing troubles due to his divorce and bad health, he confirmed the properties that she had received from former rulers. In August, she acted as intercessor for the monastery of San Salvatore to which Charles confirmed a piece of land in Verona and granted the immunity. Although the charter defines San Salvatore as "monasterium suum", referring to Angelberga, it also states that the

[82] Rg.Io.268.
[83] Rg.Io.293.
[84] Rg.Io.309.
[85] DCIII56.
[86] Falconi, *Le carte cremonesi*, n. 30.
[87] *Ibidem*, n. 31.

grant was aimed at sustaining the nuns.[88] In November 887 Charles was deposed and Angelberga did not lose any time: in 888 Berengar I confirmed some of her properties.[89] These properties had been formally granted to San Sisto more than ten years before: with this grant Angelberga wanted to restate her control of her monastery and the fact that she had the support of the new ruler, whose family had been connected to the Supponids for a long time. Furthermore, in 889 she asked her daughter Ermengarda, who was on good terms with Arnulf of Carinthia, to intercede on her account for the confirmation of her properties.[90] Among these properties were several monasteries: San Salvatore in Brescia and three Pavese monasteries (San Tommaso, the monastery *Regine* and the monastery of San Marino). Furthermore, Arnulf confirmed to Angelberga a group of *curtes* in various areas of the kingdom: Sparavera, Masina, Locarno, Sesto and *Fagedum*. When this grant was issued, a new ruler was claiming to control Italy, Guy of Spoleto. Unlike Berengar, he was not a friend to Angelberga. Angelberga and Berengar had been working together during Charles the Fat's reign, because of their Supponid connection, but more importantly because of their common support for the Eastern Carolingians in 875-876. She therefore decided to take some precautions by asking Arnulf for a confirmation of her Italian properties. This grant can therefore be read as a symbolic acknowledgement of her influence in Italy. She wanted to state that she was still a patron of royal monasteries. The benefit related to this grant was symbolic rather than economic: a political claim against a hostile new ruler.

Angelberga's widowhood was difficult, but mostly successful. She managed to make the most of the changes in royal authority and often exploited the struggles among the Carolingian and non-Carolingians to her own advantage. She remained active throughout her widowhood: negotiating exchanges, carrying out transactions and forming – and performing - alliances. Her experience illustrates extremely well the fluidity of Italian factions in the late 870s and 880s. Angelberga's main concern was to preserve her material resources. The new rulers of Italy had to deal with her and with the potential threat she represented: they tried conciliatory politics, but some of them opted for a more aggressive approach. I would not categorically dismiss the hypothesis that her exile in 880 may have been related to what was happening in Provence, but I would suggest that the problems Angelberga was creating for Charles the Fat were more likely linked to Italy – because of the extraordinary resources she controlled here. The success can be seen in the future of San Sisto, where she probably spent

[88] DCIII156.
[89] DBerI37.
[90] DArn49.

the very last years of her life.[91] After her death, in 891, the monastery continued to represent a crucial instrument of territorial control with which all new rulers had to deal.

Finally, Angelberga's experience shows that monasteries were vital centres for royal women to create and strengthen alliances. Although royal monasteries must not be considered as "repositories" of queenship, they offered valid practical solutions to a woman in danger, as she could use them as strongholds. The potential threat Angelberga represented for Charles the Fat lay in these monasteries from where, it seems, she was able to coordinate her properties and supporters. It is not a coincidence that the plundering of Angelberga's properties and treasure was usually focused on monastic institutions: even the kidnapping of a nun can be seen as a highly symbolized outrage to the dignity of the old empress, which was embodied by her monasteries.

Angelberga aimed at keeping the properties she had received through royal donations. The diplomas rulers issued for her always stress the royal origin of those properties, and their significance in imperial commemoration. In these charters, Angelberga presented herself as *a deo dicata* in charge of spiritual duties, and at the same time she had very material concerns. The imperial couple had carried out a strategic plan aimed at building and strengthening their control of the Po valley. These properties were concentrated in the areas around Mantua - Modena and Pavia - Piacenza. These territories had a considerable value, thanks to their productivity but also to their location, as they were centres for collection of duties and they made it possible to control river traffic. The foundation of a monastery in Piacenza was a project with royal identity but was also supported by her family group, whose power was expressed in those same strategic territories.

Angelberga and Cunegunda had similar aims: keeping their properties and transmitting them to their kin. They used a similar strategy, the foundation and endowment of a monastery in an area where they had resources and connections. However, there is a vital difference in their strategies and in the way they are presented in the two wills. Whereas one aimed at stressing the idea of private ownership, the other used the rhetoric of royal authority over fiscal lands.

[91] It is likely that she died in San Sisto on the 23rd March 890 or 891. She was still alive in 889, when Arnulf confirmed her properties (DArn49), but was dead by November 891, when her daughter Ermengarda granted a donation to San Sisto, in commemoration of her mother (DBerI37). Angelberga's name is preserved under the date 23rd March in the memorial book of the monastery of San Savino in Piacenza, which also includes the *liber memorialis* of San Sisto: "Obierunt [...] Ingelberga regina" (F. Neiske, ed, *Das ältere Necrolog des Klosters S. Savino in Piacenza. Edition und Untersuchung der Anlage. Bestandteil des Quellenwerkes Societas et Fraternitas* (München, 1979), p. 252). This, according to François Bougard, suggests that she probably died in her nunnery: Bougard, *Engelberga*, p. 674.

These two dimensions must not be read as defined categories, but they were rather rhetorical poses. Cunegunda was the widow of an "unsuccessful" ruler, who had been defeated and delegitimized. For that reason, even if she had properties obtained through royal donations, she chose to conceal that and stressed instead her own property rights. Angelberga was instead the wife of a successful ruler, whose legacy was at the core of the political struggle for the imperial succession. She took advantage of that situation: she seemed to suggest to rulers that, if they wanted to present themselves as the legitimate heirs of Louis II, they had to respect his choices with regard to his widow's patrimonial status.

3. Ageltrude

Royal widows' experiences were characterized by the instability with which they had to deal. This could result in competition when the new ruler was not a member of their dynasty. He might aim to dismantle some of the political structures that the previous ruler had built. As the queen – and her wealth - was usually a significant component of these structures, the more influential she had been, the more difficult her widowhood could be. Ageltrude's situation was of such a kind, because she had to face the rise to power of Berengar, who had been the principal enemy of her husband and son. Unlike Angelberga, Ageltrude did not have her family support, as her family was not involved in the north of Italy – Guy had married her in a period when he was focusing his political strategy in the area of Spoleto, and did not have imperial ambitions.[92] Although Ageltrude could not count on family networks, she had nonetheless made some influential friends. The main one was Wibod, who had acted several times as intercessor of grants for Ageltrude.[93]

Apparently, Ageltrude's widowhood did not start too badly. Her son Lambert, who had already been crowned co-emperor in 891, succeeded his father, and Ageltrude remained at his side. This was not without difficulties. Arnulf of Carinthia decided to come back to Italy with the aim of getting to Rome and being crowned emperor.[94] In reporting Arnulf of Carinthia's descent into Italy, the *Annals of Fulda* mention the empress' efforts to defend the city of

[92] For the territorial politics of the Widonids in central Italy see: E. Hlawitschka, 'Die Politischen Intentionen der Widonen im Dukat von Spoleto', in *Atti del 9° Congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1983), pp. 123-147.
[93] Provero, 'Chiese e dinastie', pp. 52-56.
[94] G. Arnaldi, 'Papa Formoso e gli imperatori della casa di Spoleto', *Annali della facoltà di lettere e filosofia dell'università di Napoli*, 1 (1951), pp. 85-104.

Rome: "Ageltrude had all the gates around the wall shut and barred".[95] Arnulf's army managed to conquer the city and Arnulf was granted the support of the Roman nobility; Ageltrude had to leave and took refuge in Spoleto. This account is partly confirmed by Regino of Prüm's continuator, according to whom, after Arnulf took the city of Rome with the consent of the pope, Ageltrude had to flee the city "with her men".[96] Liudprand reports that Arnulf then followed the empress and besieged the castle of Fermo, in which she had barricaded herself. At this point Ageltrude, "vipperina calliditate", poisoned him, almost provoking his death.[97] This last episode is probably false; first because Liudprand commits a chronological mistake by placing Arnulf's arrival (896) before the death of Guy (894). Secondly, the *Annals of Fulda* do not report this episode, but only state that Arnulf had to abandon Italy because of illness.[98] Neither of these authors, both quite hostile to Ageltrude – the *Annals of Fulda* were produced in the East-Frankish court environment – condemns the fact that she was left in charge of directing military operations. Although the responsibility of Ageltrude in Arnulf's illness is very questionable, sources agree that he was forced to abandon Italy and returned north. Ageltrude and Lambert then returned to Rome, where at the beginning of 897 they may have taken part in the so-called "cadaver synod". This was a post-mortem trial of Formosus, the pope who had died in 896, who had crowned Arnulf as emperor. Formosus was judged culpable and stripped of his title of pope. It is possible that Ageltrude and Lambert were involved in planning the trial: the condemnation of Formosus clearly represented a political advantage for them. However, there is little evidence that this was the case, and Girolamo Arnaldi has convincingly argued that the trial of Formosus was the result of internal dynamics related to Roman politics.[99]

We do not know anything else about Ageltrude until the end of 898. In October, her son had suddenly died in a hunting accident, which may have been organized by his political enemies. Ageltrude's situation became suddenly very precarious. In 898 Berengar confirmed some of her properties. The charter states that Berengar's confirmation concerns all the properties she had acquired both through *adquisitiones* and royal donations.[100] However, the charter only specifically mentions two monasteries in central Italy: Rambona (in the area of Camerino)

[95] *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 896, p. 129. English translation by T. Reuter, ed, *The Annals of Fulda*, Ninth-century Histories II (Manchester, 1992), pp. 132-134.
[96] Regino, *Chronicon*, a. 896, p. 144.
[97] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, I 32, p. 24.
[98] *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 896, p. 129.
[99] Arnaldi, 'Papa Formoso e gli imperatori della casa di Spoleto'.
[100] DBerI22.

and the monastery of Fiume in the *pagus* of Assisi. We know that Ageltrude was the founder of Rambona, as a surviving ivory inscription found in the church reading "Ageltrude construxit" proves.[101] This document has been read as a declaration of friendship between Ageltrude and Berengar.[102] I would argue that, on the contrary, it can be read as the formal renunciation by Ageltrude of her queenly role. The document focuses on properties in central Italy, which were part of Widonid "private" wealth, and far from fiscal concentrations in the north. Although the diploma also mentions properties that Ageltrude would have acquired through royal donations, we can infer that the agreement between Berengar and Ageltrude represented a "defeat" and a substantial exclusion of the empress from northern Italy. Berengar claimed back the properties and monasteries that Ageltrude had received on the day of the coronation, a transaction with a strong ideological nature. For her part, Ageltrude may not have wanted to fight for the royal monasteries in Pavia, because she was not interested in them. The resources she was more worried about, and which affected the relations between her, Berengar and local elites in the following years, lay in the areas of Parma and Piacenza.

A small parchment attached to the main foil of the 898 diploma reads: "Promitte ego Berengarius rex tibi Ageltrude relicta quondam Vuidoni imperatoris, quia ab hac ora et deinceps amicus tibi concessa a Vuidone seu filio eius Lamberto imperatoribus nec tollo nec ulli aliquid aliquando tollere dimitto iniuste".[103] This *promissio* focuses on the friendship and collaboration between the two parties: Berengar promised not to take away anything that Ageltrude had acquired and presents himself as her protector. However, things turned out quite differently. In 904 the *curtis* Murgola, which Ageltrude had been given by Guy in 894, was granted by Berengar to the church of Sant'Alessandro in Bergamo. The diploma defines it "iuris regni nostri".[104] This example suggests that, despite promising to protect Ageltrude and her properties, Berengar aimed at depriving her of her resources.[105] The properties and monasteries she had in the north of Italy had been originally given to her with the aim of underlining her royal status and Guy's authority over the royal fisc. Depriving the former empress of those highly significant properties was a political claim in its own right. Berengar's ultimate aim could also have been to exclude Ageltrude from northern Italy: as

[101] For relevant bibliography on the monastery, see Guglielmotti, 'Ageltrude', pp. 174–175.
[102] Ibidem.
[103] DBerI22.
[104] DBerI43.
[105] Guglielmotti, 'Ageltrude', talks instead of "royal benevolence", pp. 175-176.

her remaining resources were concentrated in central Italy, she may have been forced to head south.

This grant represented a provisional defeat for Ageltrude; however it was only the first stage of a complex patrimonial and political struggle that would go on for several years. On the first occasion, Ageltrude turned to Berengar's antagonist, Louis III, who granted the empress Cortemaggiore in October 900.[106] The same property had been owned by Angelberga, who had received it from Louis the German in 876 through Ermengarda's intercession.[107] This area, belonging to the jurisdiction known as *fines Aucienses*, had a vital significance for the control of the Piacenza area and concentration of fiscal properties.[108] The act was issued in Pavia: there was no intercessor and Ageltrude seems to have requested the grant in person. Ageltrude's presence there, on the occasion of Louis' coronation, suggests that she was an active supporter of the new king. This is an important grant: it shows Louis III performing the role of king, bestowing property on the widow of a former enemy of the Carolingians. It shows, more importantly, that Ageltrude made an active claim against her "friend" Berengar, taking advantage of the peculiar situation of multiple kings competing for authority.

Unfortunately there is no further evidence on Ageltrude's movements between 900 and 907 and we do not know what became of her after the defeat of Louis III. However, in 907 she reappears issuing a charter in Camerino, from a monastery called Natabene.[109] She introduces herself as "femina religiosa induta": it seems that ultimately Berengar had managed to expel her from the north of Italy, as Ageltrude was living secluded in a monastery in central Italy. The charter states that Ageltrude left the *tertia pars* of her properties, consisting of a *curtis* in Robelliano (Iesi), to the monastery of Sant'Eutizio in Campli. Paola Guglielmotti has argued that the abbot of Sant'Eutizio, called Majo, could have been Ageltrude's brother.[110] Although there is not enough evidence to support this case, this would imply that Ageltrude was supported by her family network. In the charter Ageltrude presented herself as a woman

[106] DLUIII1.
[107] See above, chapter 4, p. 157.
[108] On this territory see Fumagalli, 'Città e distretti minori nell'età Carolingia', pp. 7-9; Provero, 'Il sistema di potere carolingio', pp. 2-8; D. Cerami, 'La percezione del confine nelle terre dell'Emilia Occidentale (secoli VII-XI)', R. Greci, D. Romagnoli, eds, *Uno storico e un territorio: Vito Fumagalli e l'Emilia occidentale nel Medioevo (*Bologna, 2005), pp. 287 – 312, consulted in the digital version available on "Itinerari Medievali":http://www.itinerarimedievali.unipr.it/v2/www/main/html/fumagalli.htm
[109] DE MINICIS *Cronache della città di Fermo* (Florence, 1870), pp. 297- 298.
[110] Guglielmotti, 'Ageltrude', p. 181. On this monastery see: G. Casagrande, A. Czortek, 'Monasteri dell'Umbria nell'alto Medioevo (sec VIII –X)', in *Il monachesimo italiano dall'età longobarda all'età ottoniana, Atti del VII Convegno di studi storici sull'Italia benedittana Nonantola* (Cesena, 2006), pp. 363–371.

excluded from politics, but in fact she was still active. The charter specifies that she has received Robelliano from a woman called Damelgarda through a written document ("per cartula [sic]"). In other words, even if she had been "exiled" from the north of Italy, she continued to carry out economic activities. This strategy recalls that employed by Cunegunda, a century before: Ageltrude wanted to underline that her present possessions were not related to her husband. Furthermore, Ageltrude presents herself as a woman of limited means. If Robelliano – the extent of which, however, is impossible to establish– represented a third of her properties, we should assume that she was not left with much.

However, this may not have been the case. The *Chronicon Vulturnense* reports that in 899 Ageltrude exchanged properties with Majo, abbot of San Vincenzo al Volturno: thanks to this exchange she obtained the *cella* of San Michele in Piacenza and ceded to San Vincenzo a *curtis* in Capua, which, owing to its location, is likely to have been part of her dowry.[111] Ageltrude's relationship with the monastery seems to date back to her marriage. The *Chronicon Vulturnense* contains a *praeceptum* that commemorates a visit of Guy and Ageltrude to the monastery in 876: on that occasion Ageltrude gave birth to Lambert.[112] Furthermore, evidence shows that she had preserved properties in the north of Italy which she was not keen on giving up. In a *placitum* of 912, Berengar settled a dispute between the former empress and Guy of Piacenza. The dispute concerned Ageltrude's properties in the area of Parma and Piacenza, which, according to the *placitum*, in 900 she had granted to the church of Santa Croce and San Bartolomeo in Monticelli (near Parma).[113] Ageltrude agreed with the bishop that the document was fake and that she had never founded a monastery in that place; Berengar approved the bishop's claims. The document is poorly preserved and it is impossible to read the whole text. Nevertheless, the *placitum* suggests that in 900 Ageltrude still owned a significant amount of property. The landholdings mentioned in the *placitum* are Linariglo, Roveritulo, Caurili, Rivulo, Caput Taro, an island "iuxta Padum" (along the River Po), Saluciola and Cortemaggiore – which she had received from Louis III – and a *curtis* in San Nicomede. Saluciola had formerly been a property of the monastery of Santa Cristina in Corteolona: it had been granted to Wibod of Parma by Charles the Bald and then confirmed by Arnulf in 894.[114] In 899 Berengar granted it, together with the *curtis* of Evoriano, to the

[111] *Chronicon Vulturnense* III ed. V. Federici, FISI 60 (1938), lost document n. 46, pp. 146-148.
[112] Ibidem, II pp. 95–97.
[113] Ibidem, n. 85, pp. 226-230.
[114] MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, pp. 92-95.

church of San Nicomede in Fontana Broccola.[115] Ageltrude had controlled fiscal properties that had been assigned to San Nicomede, a monastery which at the time was controlled by the church of Parma, in the person of Wibod. In addition to being part of the royal fisc, these lands were strategically located. Saluciola was situated along the River Stirone, east of Parma. This property, together with San Nicomede, and its dependence *Evorianum*, lay at the border between the dioceses of Parma and Piacenza, the object of a long dispute between the two churches.[116]

One must therefore assume that during Guy's reign, exchanges of properties had been going on between the church of Parma and the royal couple, as a result of political collaboration. In 890 Guy issued a diploma for San Nicomede, through the intercession of Wibod, which mentioned some of the properties (Caput Taro and the island along the Po river) that Ageltrude was defending in 912.[117] Once left without family support in the north of Italy, Ageltrude seems to have aimed to preserve those estates with the help of the bishop of Piacenza, Everard, who had been a member of her son's entourage. The grant of Cortemaggiore on the part of Louis III should be read in the same light. The new bishop Guy, however, had a very different plan in terms of the control of the border, and therefore asked Berengar for support.[118] Guy attempted to take advantage of Ageltrude's political weakness and claimed the significant landholdings she held in the area. It is clear, however, that around 900 Ageltrude had tried to ensure the transmission of her northern possessions through a monastic foundation, and this suggests she had the local support to do it. Furthermore, she had obtained support from Louis III. This operation, however, was not approved by the Piacenza church – the bishop of Parma Elbuncus was probably too old to intervene - or possibly by Berengar, who decided to invalidate the donation.[119]

The last stage of Ageltrude's attempt to preserve her properties is represented by a charter of 923, through which the empress, now residing in the monastery of Fontanabroccola, granted to the church of Parma her properties in the area.[120] The document has some interesting features: first of all it presents Ageltrude as *deo dicata* and as living in another monastery, this time in northern Italy. It shows, moreover, that she had maintained properties around the

[115] DBerI26.
[116] MAP 3. See Provero, 'Chiese e dinastie', pp. 52–56 with maps and bibliography.
[117] DGui2.
[118] Fumagalli, 'Vescovi e conti', pp. 155-158; I. Scaravelli, *Guido di Piacenza*, DBI, 61 (2004), p. 488.
[119] Provero, 'Chiese e dinastie', pp. 60–62.
[120] Drei, *Le carte degli archivi parmensi*, n. 28, pp. 94-97.

area of Parma: these are two *massariciae*, one in Soragna and one in *fundo et loco Teudensi* (unidentified) in the area of Pariola, both nuclei of fiscal concentrations.[121] Furthermore, it shows that her relationship with the church of Parma had remained strong. This relationship dated back to the ninth century, when she had worked together with Wibod and Elbuncus. Aiccard, the bishop of the city, and previously archchaplain at Berengar's court, is mentioned in the donation.[122] At the time Rudolf of Burgundy had arrived in Italy and claimed the royal title. He had also issued several grants for the elite of Parma: Aiccard appears in several of these charters, which shows that he had moved over to Rodulf's side. Ageltrude's donation must be read in the context of this political struggle: it is dated according to the years of Rudolf's reign and issued in coincidence with a moment of political weakness for Berengar. Despite the struggles with Berengar and with some members of the local elite – especially Guy of Piacenza – Ageltrude had made several attempts to maintain her prerogatives in the north. In 907, after Berengar's victory over Louis III, she was living in central Italy, using her monasteries there, and perhaps her connection with the abbot Majo, to preserve and administer her wealth. Every time she had the opportunity, Ageltrude tried to seek support from Berengar's enemies in pursuit of her goals. She did so in 900, when she decided to bring together her properties in the area, taking advantage of the change in royal authority. This attempt, however, was not successful because Louis III did not remain in Italy for long. She had to face strong antagonistic powers – Guy of Piacenza – who had interests in the area. She attempted the same again in 923, taking advantage of Rudolf II's arrival. We must presume, however, that her age was very advanced at that point, and that she died shortly after.

The widowhood of Ageltrude, in other words, shows that women had the chance to remain on the political scene even when there had not been a well structured plan of patrimonial concentration, as there had in the case of Angelberga. They could use political divisions and the struggle for the royal title to pursue their goals. In the case of Ageltrude, she did not have direct heirs, but still wanted to maintain control of her properties. She seems to have respected Berengar's will – retiring to central Italy, giving up her monastic project in Monticelli d'Ongina – when she was forced to, but also to change strategy at every chance she got. She made the most of the opposition to Berengar and the arrival of other claimants to the throne – although the short duration of their reigns clearly affected her chances negatively. Dynastic discontinuity threatened royal widows, because they had to deal with

[121] Provero, 'Chiese e dinastie', p. 44.
[122] He appears in several charters with the title of archchaplain.

their husband's successors and often former enemies. At the same time it made them strong, because they could use the divisions to their own advantage.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the queens of Italy are extremely "visible" as widows. They are more visible and powerful than their west-Frankish counterparts. Even queens that had been very influential during their husband's reign, such as Empress Judith or Richildis, virtually disappeared from the records after their husband's death. I have argued that this visibility has to be attributed to the rather unique situation in which Italian royal widows found themselves. Provided with a set of economic resources thanks to their personal, familial and royal background, once widowed they faced threats. These threats were represented by the multiple agendas of different claimants to the throne and the extreme fluidity of political factions. Cunegunda probably issued her will to coincide with Lothar's arrival in Italy, which may have represented a cause of concern. Angelberga often used her extensive means to support the candidate to the throne who could give her better security. She had enemies, but ultimately her strategies proved successful. San Sisto, the monastery to which she left all her properties in Italy, remained for several decades one of the most powerful and wealthiest institutions in northern Italy. It was an operation realized with the help and support of her natal family, who had economic and political interests in the area. Ageltrude was able to take advantage of political divisions to face Berengar I. She might have apparently reached an agreement with him, but she also exploited the opposition to the king in order to gather, pass on and protect her wealth in the north of Italy. Italian factionalism did not simply represent danger for rulers, as it was an endemic element of political practice, with which rulers were familiar and knew how to deal. Similarly, it did not necessarily represent an obstacle for women: they could exploit this situation to their own advantage.

This chapter has pointed out that formal retirement of royal women in monasteries did not necessarily mean their political retirement. The sources show that former queens were usually eager to remain on the political scene: they preserved their relationships with the political elite, created new bonds, and always sought powerful protectors. This was aimed at protecting the interests of their offspring – when they had any – or ensuring that their wealth would survive their reign. In other words, they exploited political factionalism and the struggle for the throne to their own advantage, demonstrating that they had a very good

understanding of the political situation of the kingdom. These strategies were often successful. This shows that the Italian kingdom, and its instability, was a fertile terrain for royal widows to build and strengthen their resources.

Chapter VI. Conclusion

The intention of this study has been to analyse the role Italian queens played in the political events of the ninth and tenth centuries. I have argued that by considering the different practices of queenship one can get a nuanced picture of female action in royal politics. Certainly, these women were not all powerful in the same way: queenly powers and influence are, by their very nature, difficult to define. Scholars acknowledge this, but they have often considered the indeterminate nature of the queen's role as a limitation on the opportunities of royal women. This thesis argues that this was actually a crucial resource, which kings and queens exploited to their own advantage.

I have argued that Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy is an excellent terrain for the study of queens, because its political situation unveils the malleability of queenly action. Not "limited" to being mothers and wives – often actually unsuccessful as such – queens were given other opportunities. Although there were some specific duties and responsibilities which were considered part of the queen's role, how these duties were carried out changed in each individual case. I have tried to underline these changes, by analysing some key themes, which are extremely significant for the understanding of queenly action and influence. These themes are all interrelated: family bonds and their implications, landed wealth, monastic patronage and involvement in political activities.

I have firstly reflected on the expectations that contemporaries had about queens. In Chapter 2, I analysed the ideology of queenship as it emerges from narrative and – to a lesser extent - normative texts produced in Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy, comparing them with works produced in Carolingian West and East Francia. The purpose of this chapter was to understand the reason for the numerous negative portrayals of royal and elite women in Italian texts. Italian authors inverted the Carolingian ideals of queenship - based on virtuousness, supervision of the royal court and family duties - in order to show the political disorder of the kingdom. This inversion of queenly models took them in different directions, as each of them underlined different aspects of queenly actions. This shows that there was not a unified idea of what the queen was expected and allowed to do, especially concerning political affairs.

Secondly, my study has been based on the large body of documentary evidence available for Italy. First of all, I have discussed queens' involvement in royal politics. Chapter 3 examines the role of queens as it emerges from the analysis of royal diplomas. I tried to underline the enormous potential of these documents for the study of royal women. I have argued that the language of diplomas, as well as their content, is a crucial resource for understanding the role that rulers designed and envisaged for their wives. The same body of evidence, integrated with private documents, has been analysed in Chapters 4 and 5, in order to examine the landed resources of queens, and their broader significance in territorial politics. Some aspects seem constantly significant in the experience of each queen. Her family background was usually a crucial aspect: queens' natal families often played an important part in the shaping of their fortunes. The queen's life at court represented the opportunity to make friends among the political elite of the kingdom. Economic resources and monastic patronage represented the chance to liaise with local elites and religious institutions. Widowhood was a challenging situation, which was made more uncertain for Italian royal women, as they had to face the new ruler and try to carve out a new political dimension to protect themselves and their children.

My analysis has considered the life-cycle of queens, examining the transition from married life to widowhood and its impact on the public and private activities of these women.[1] Often, widowhood has been interpreted as the most fragile and dangerous time for a woman. This is true, I have argued, only to a certain extent. In some cases widowhood can be considered as a golden age for royal women: it could grant them the potential to be landowners and to have a more active role than during their marriage. In addressing less visible aspects of a queen's life, I have also reconsidered the significance of queenly monastic patronage and wealth. These, I have argued, should not been interpreted in a rigid framework, which hardly matches the variability found in the cases studied in this thesis. Scholars have often tended to merge the experiences of individual queens, with the aim of coming up with a model or a pattern. This approach has been applied to the study of the transmission of queenly properties, as well as to the evolution of monastic patronage between the ninth and tenth century.[2] Scholars have tried to define a clear evolution of these processes, relating them to the definition of the queen's office. On the other hand, they have largely ignored the significance of women's titles and representation in charters. I have therefore paid particular attention to documentary

[1] On the study of queens' life-cycle see: Stafford; 'Sons and Mothers'; Ea. *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*.
[2] Le Jan, 'Douaires et pouvoirs des reines'; Althoff, 'Probleme um die *dos*'. On queenly monastic patronage see especially: La Rocca, 'Monachesimo femminile'; MacLean, 'Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood'.

evidence, keeping in mind the interrelation between gender and power as it emerges in these sources, and the high subjectivity and variability of this relationship.[3]

My approach stems from the combination of two historiographical traditions. Studies on early medieval queenship, largely – but not only - carried out by Anglophone scholars, have been fundamental for this research, although they have only marginally considered the unique situation of Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy. On the other hand, Italian scholars have mostly ignored queenship, concentrating instead on aristocratic families and their relationship to local realities. This has resulted in a thorough understanding of territorial and political dynamics in early medieval Italy; women, however, have been largely left out of this picture. This work has been used as a basis for the study of the impact of queenly activities on the political and economic landscape of Italy. By bringing together these two historiographical approaches, I have come to the conclusion that the lack of queenly office can be considered as a resource for royal women, because queens were left with more room for manoeuvre. I have argued that, because of its situation, the Italian kingdom represents a very fertile terrain on which to explore these issues. The Italian *reguli* were not necessarily weak, but often they could not use dynastic claims to obtain and maintain the throne. For this reason, they had to elaborate other strategies. Employing the queen for networking and territorial control was one of them.

Through my analysis I have attempted to dismantle two main patterns. Firstly the idea that queenship was evolving and becoming increasingly defined in this period. I have argued that everyone was well aware that this was not the case, and that they exploited it for their own agenda. Rulers exploited it to do what they wanted and to shape their wives' role according to what they needed. Writers exploited it to represent a political system – or rather royal authority – which they wanted to present as unsuccessful. This study argues that the methodology that has been applied to the study of early medieval queenship so far needs to be reconsidered. Rather than trying to define similarities, and create models and patterns, we should look for specificities. By diversifying the approach according to the political situation in which each queen acted one can get a more thorough picture of her role, and also of the specific context in which she operated.

[3] J. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, 91,5 (1986), pp. 1053-1075.

My interest in Italian queens has arisen from a comparative observation: Italian women were "more powerful" than their European counterparts. However, this thesis did not intend to be a comparative study between different geographical areas. Nevertheless, I have tried, when possible – because Italy was part of a broader political and symbolic world represented by the Carolingian empire – to relate the situation of Italian queens with that of other political realities. However, this comparison is very limited, and it is not sufficient to argue that Italy is unique. I have argued, instead, that an approach which highlights fluidity and discontinuity can be applied to the study of royal women in other European regions. In this sense, this study aims to represent a starting point, a way of looking at royal politics and female powers from a different angle.

Secondly, this study did not aim to reassess the history of royal politics in Carolingian and post-Carolingian Italy. However, it has hopefully offered a useful perspective from which to reconsider the reigns and strategies of Italian rulers, most of which are still understudied. It has refuted the model of declining royal authority, and in this way it proposes to look at rulers as active players, who exploited endemic conflict to their own advantage. In the *Antapodosis* Liudprand wrote: "The Italians always want to have use of a pair of kings since they can manipulate the one through his fear of the other".[4] We should not see rulers – and their wives - as victims of the situation described by Liudprand, but rather as active promoters and players in that very same system.

[4] Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, I 37.

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