

Matthias M. Tischler, Carlemany a Europa. Història i memòria, Barcelona (Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona) 2023, 354 p., ISBN 978-84-9168-896-9, EUR 35,00.

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Roger Collins, Edinburgh

This learned and informative book contains eight separate studies, in three sections, convincingly held together by common themes that include the role of literary memory. Each of these chapters can be treated as an individual contribution to its subject, but collectively they make a satisfying whole, aided by their substantial footnotes and complemented by an extensive bibliography and list of manuscripts. Written in a clear and elegant style, the contents are structured chronologically, except for the final chapter devoted to the Carolingian legacy in 9th- and 10th-century Catalunya.

The first two chapters are connected by their focus on the interest of the Carolingian court in the time of Charlemagne (768–814) and Louis the Pious (813–840) in late Antique models of political conduct, not least as represented by the Ostrogothic king Theoderic the Great (493–526) and the Roman senator and philosopher Boethius (executed in 524). Two distinct phases are detected: firstly, a more general one in the 770s and 780s, linked directly to the recent Frankish conquest of the Lombard kingdom, and exploring the age of Theoderic as a model for »Germanic« rule in Italy. In the later 820s, it is his negative reputation, resulting from the execution of Boethius and ill-treatment of Pope John I, that contributes imagery for debates over imperial power and the structure of the Frankish empire.

The second chapter, devoted to the Carolingian reception of Boethius's »De consolazione philosophiae«, pursues this theme further. Again, the period of most intense interest comes in the troubled second half of the reign of Louis. The contribution of Einhard is strongly expounded here, in addition to those of Modoin, Paschasius Radbertus and Walahfrid Strabo.

These years also feature prominently in the third chapter, devoted to the memory of Charlemagne in the 9th and 10th centuries, combined with the use of the biblical figures of David and Herod to criticise Carolingian monarchs. Particularly interesting is the section devoted to »the Losers«, the supporters of branches of the ruling dynasty that failed or were abruptly truncated. Here the silence of Einhard and others is as significant as explicit criticism, for example, of Louis for the violent death of his nephew Bernard, king of Italy.

The fourth chapter takes these themes further, exploring the manipulative use of historical writing to re-interpret both persons and events, not least to conceal problems of legitimacy, notably in



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Charlemagne's acquisition of his brother's kingdom in 771 and in the status of his first wives and their offspring.

Chapter five has the intriguing title of »Alcuin, biographer of Charlemagne« and raises the question of to what extent could scholars from the 9th to the 15th century identify anonymous works as being those of Alcuin. This is examined in relation to the circulation of the known manuscripts of Einhard's »Vita Karoli«, of which 68% are anonymous. One consequence was the emergence of a tradition, centred in both Burgundy, especially Cluny, and on the Loire, of attributing its authorship to Alcuin (d. 804), despite the chronological impossibility.

The sixth chapter continues the concern with Einhard's presentation of Charlemagne, but here seen in comparison with that of »Pseudo-Turpin«, the unidentified author of a legendary recasting of the Frankish ruler's career, written c. 1129 and much indebted to the »Chanson de Roland«, that was particularly aimed at promoting the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. His work is seen here, in contrast to Einhard, as presenting Charlemagne as a model of Christian rulership and as »an Apostle to the Gentiles«; its innovative narrative dominates the depiction of the emperor both in art and in literature for the rest of the Middle Ages.

Chapter seven offers a further contrast, this time between Pseudo-Turpin and Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny (1122–1156) in their approach to the encounter of Christianity and Islam. In the context of the early Crusading period, the former presents military force as the ultimate source of victory for one over the other, while the latter prefers reasoned argument as the route to conversion. In pursuit of this, Peter commissioned a Latin translation of the Qur'an and the compiling and writing of controversial materials. As evidenced by the existence of just one 12th-century manuscript of the resulting collection, Peter's project is seen as out of step with contemporary taste, which favoured Pseudo-Turpin's martial alternative.

The final chapter is devoted to the question of just how Carolingian, in cultural terms, the Catalan counties became in the 9th and 10th centuries. This is answered in terms, firstly, of the scribal move from »Visigothic« script to Caroline minuscule; a process virtually complete by c. 900. The second marker is the dissemination of Carolingian texts on the religious life, both in the form of Benedictine monasticism and in the use of the »Institutio Canoniorum Aquisgranensis« of 816 as the model for canonical life in the cathedrals and collegiate churches of Catalunya. Here the survival, mainly in Catalan libraries and archives, of manuscripts of a variety of key texts, not least those of works by Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, and, including very importantly, fragments of otherwise lost codices, makes a powerful case for the deep penetration of Carolingian influence on religious institutions in this peripheral region of the empire.



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The final determinants are the presence of manuscripts of reformed Bible texts of early Carolingian date, attested to again largely by surviving fragments, and the evidence for comparable influence on Catalan liturgical practices. This last feature is of particular interest to Professor Tischler, who is currently working on the first critical edition of the homiliary known by its unidentified compiler as that of »Luculentius«. Contrary to earlier views, this is now seen as a work of Catalan origin, probably from the 9th century, and widely diffused in the region. The use of such homiliaries in daily liturgical practice and for meditation was distinctively Carolingian. The so-called »Homiliary of Toledo« is not a product of the Visigothic period, let alone representative of its liturgical practices. So, the diffusion of »Luculentius«, attested to again by numerous fragments, is evidence of both Carolingian influence and enthusiastic local response to it.

It might be added that this was also reflected in the political sphere, with the Catalan counties remaining formally and voluntarily subject to a succession of Carolingian rulers, whose names and regnal dates helped authenticate documentary records, long after any of them could intervene militarily or administratively in this frontier region. It is interesting to compare this Catalan enthusiasm for the Carolingian legacy in its various forms with far more muted equivalents in the Western Pyrenees.

A review can hardly do justice to the wealth of valuable analysis in this book and its provision of much specialised detail, especially information about manuscripts and fragments in Catalan collections. Further results may be expected from their study, not least by its author. A few small suggestions can be made here: a reference to »Chartae Latinae Antiquiores« 1627 would be helpful in note 48 on page 216, and »Catalunya Carolíngia« references would have been a useful supplement to those of other editions of Catalan charters. Overall, this is a wide-ranging, informative and stimulating book that deserves to be well known.



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