

SOME ASPECTS OF LOCAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CAROLINGIAN ERA

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ABSTRACT

It was critical for governing the Carolingian Kingdom to convey the emperor's intention to every corner and gather the information of each place in the court and discuss the response. Therefore, the Carolingian elite had to communicate not only among themselves (central communication) but also with the residents, most of whom were illiterate and only understand vulgar language (local communication). On the occasion of drawing up a transaction or confirmation charter, the sovereign sometimes sent his entourage to the site to examine the current situation with interviews with residents. The lord sometimes investigated the situation of his farmers and took measures to reduce the burden. Local communication thus created a circuit which routed local information and the actual situation of the people to the Carolingian court. However, communication was also an opportunity to distort information, especially in ways that did not conform to the will of the people.

I

In a book treating the reign of Charlemagne, Rosamond McKitterick considers his network of communication covering all over his realm to be one of the fundamental components of the dynasty^[1]. Emperor desired to send his intentions all over the kingdom and to gather from there vital informations. Indeed, a treatise usually called *De ordine palatii* assigns two tasks to the king's counselors: investigate the events carefully around his home, and bring these findings to the palace for deliberation^[2]. They are among the most critical missions entrusted to them. By the way, Hincmar of Reims, its author confesses the second part of this treatise, including the sentence we just looked at is a reproduction of a memorandum by Adalhard, cousin of Charlemagne and abbot of Corbie abbey^[3]. We shall refer him several times in this paper.

Emphasizing the importance of the communication and the transmission of information for the Carolingian state, McKitterick thus suggests a way of revealing some characters of the socio-legal structure of the Carolingian State. So the sentence mentioned above of *De ordine palatii* makes us turn our attention not only to communication within the elites themselves (central communication) but also another that local people practice with elites or even within themselves (in all, local communication). However, while not a few correspondences written by Carolingian elites disclose to us some aspects of the way and contents of the former, there is seldom direct testimony to the latter in which the illiterate took an important part. We must reconstruct some features of it from fragmentary and scattered pieces of information to investigate some actual conditions of the local

[1] Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge, UK, 2008), pp. 214-215.

[2] Hincmar of Reims, *De ordine palatii*, ed. and tr. Thomas Gross and Rudolf Schieffer, *MGH Fontes iuris germanici antiqui in usum scholarum separatim editi III* (Hannover, 1980), p. 94; *Secunda auem ratio regis erat interrogatio, quid*

unusquisque ex illa parte regni, qua veniebat, dignum relatu vel retractatu secum afferret.

[3] Carlrichard Brühl, "Hinkmariana, 1. Hinkmar und die Verfässerschaft des Traktats 'De ordine palatii'", *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 20 (1964): 48-54.

communication. To begin our study, we would look at some diplomatic and administrative documents, especially charters confirming a monastic property.

II

It is customary for medieval ecclesiastical organization to ask a new sovereign for a charter of confirmation of its property or privilege, each time he ascends to the throne. For example, emperor Louis the Pious grants the property of monastery Stavelot-Malmédy (the Province of Liège, Belgium) by a charter dated 1 October 814^[4]. According to this, showing to the emperor a charter of confirmation issue by Childeric II, the abbot pleads him to ratify the property of his abbey. Louis grants abbot's wish and orders to issue a new charter of confirmation. A series of procedures attached to the ratification, that is, the supplication and presentation of the testimony on the abbot's side, the examination of testimony, consent to entreaty and lastly issue of a new charter on the emperor's side, deserve to be considered as a sort of communication. Indeed we find here the transmission and sharing of information and sentiment between the emperor and an abbot, a Carolingian elite. Now, this charter leaves on record not only a central communication but also a trace of local one. It fixed the boundary of the monastic realm by a series of landmarks (such as road, forest, brook). Here we find a fish-trap (or a breeding pond) owned by *Gerlaicus*^[5]. Without a field inspection, it is impossible to register the name of its owner. As a matter of fact, this sentence is a carbon copy of that in a charter by Childeric II dated 6 September 670^[6]. King ordered two aides to go around the monastery with the guards of the royal forest to fix its boundary and to inscribe its result on a charter. Yes, as Theo Kölzer noted, it is rare for the charter of confirmation to refer concretely to an on-the-spot investigation^[7]. However, we encounter more examples of similar investigation in some Carolingian documents.

Confirming charter by Pippin III, mayor of the palace then, addressed in favour of Saint-Denis abbey, also tells the investigation on the spot by a commission of inquiry before its drafting^[8]. Pippin who accepted the solicitation by Fulrad, abbot of Saint-Denis, to recover the properties usurped because of the inappropriate machination and the negligence of the past abbots and officials, ordered two entourages to inspect the estates took away from Saint-Denis with the charters presented by Fulrad. Following the result of their investigation, Pippin issued a new charter which lists the estates to revert to the monastery.

We can imagine that in both cases the commission gathers information from local inhabitants during the itinerary, but the charters we have seen are silent in its practical way. Fortunately, an act granted by Louis the Pious gives us some concrete information. It is a diploma dated 25 May 827 by which the emperors (Louis and his son, joint emperor Lothair) settled a conflict between the abbey of Stavelot-Malmédy and the fiscal guard of Theux touching the usufruct of the royal forest of *Astanetum*^[9]. In answering the prayer of the abbot, Louis and Lothair sent two aides to examine the current conditions. Their examination made the situation clear; the abbot of Stavelot-Malmédy, based on the royal charter, has the right to benefit from the usufruct of the forest while the *familia* settled in the fiscal domain of Theux also has the same right, out of custom. The emperors passed a decision that both the parties can equally nourish animals get timber and fish in the forest. However, neither uprooting the woods nor building a house nor opening up the forest is their license^[10].

[4] MGH, *Diplomata Karolinorum*, II, *Ludovici Pii Diplomata*, 1. Teil (Wiesbaden, 2016), No. 33: 85-89.

[5] Jan-Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden, 1976), p. 1072.

[6] MGH, *Diplomata Regum Francorum e Stirpe Merovingica*, 1. Teil (Hannover, 2001), No. 108: 277-280.

[7] MGH, *Diplomata Regum Francorum e Stirpe Merovingica*, 1. Teil, p. 278.

[8] *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores*, XV (Dietikon-Zurich, 1986), No. 595: 3-9.

[9] MGH, *Diplomata Karolinorum*, II, 2. Teil, No. 262: 654-656.

[10] MGH, *Diplomata Karolinorum*, II, 2. Teil, No. 262, pp. 655-656; ... cum utraque pars, monasterii videlicet et fisci nostri, eandem silvam in pascuis animalium et porcorum utendis cum in materiamentibus faciendis et piscationibus exercendis sine aliquolibet alterius partis impedimento, dimissa sibi

This charter suggests a non-negligible contribution of the questioning of the inhabitants to the arbitration of the sovereign. Without it, the usufruct that inhabitants around the forest have enjoyed would not become known to the emperor. It holds in the case of inhabitants in fiscal domain all the more because there is no document certifying their right. In other words, local communication between the commission of inquiry and the local inhabitants was indispensable for the central communication to be successfully operated.

III

Besides the charters we have seen, two other documents tell us some interesting aspects of the local communication. The first document is handed down to us as a sample form of the charter of exchange of estate between the emperor and an abbot (*vir venerabilis Adalardus Abbas*) compiled in *Formulae imperiales*^[11] and second records the course of an exchange of lands between the monasteries of Saint-Silvester (Nonantola, Provincia di Modena, Emilia-Romagna, Italy) and Saint-Saviour (Brescia, Provincia di Brescia, Lombardia, Italy)^[12]. Both documents owe to Adalhard. So we must consider in advance if it is possible to generalize the information drawn from them to all the Carolingian society. Indeed his ability in administration is out of ordinary, but he is not a destructive innovator. He respects tradition and does not take part in ideal enthusiasm^[13]. We can, therefore, think that, although he took precedence over his time, his measures are not isolated from his contemporaries. According to Jean-Pierre Devroey the Carolingian elites, including Adalhard tend to give priority instead to practical and concrete intelligence than to the abstract idea^[14]. Indeed we find several traces of the investigation on the spot from the Carolingian charters. At least we can consider his policies as an *Idealtypus* of that of Carolingian elites.

Return to the first document. As is usual with this type of source, the author replaced a few proper names with pronouns and deleted the protocol and the eschatocol of the original charter. It is therefore impossible to identify the emperor who participated in this exchange. However, concerning *Adalardus Abbas*, another protagonist of exchange, most of the Medievalists are of accord to recognize him as the abbot of Corbie, cousin of Charlemagne. Although Léon Levillain pointed out the possibility that the *Adalardus* in question is a namesake who has directed the monks of Corbie during the exile of the cousin of Charlemagne forced by Louis the Pious (814-821)^[15], François Bougard recently mentioned this document with the idea that we can identify him with the cousin of Charlemagne^[16]. In judging the exchange of property proposed by the abbot to be useful and rational, the emperor ordered his count to measure and carefully examine *quantitas et qualitas* of the properties in question with the assistance of the messenger of the abbot, the inhabitants and the *fiscalinus* for the purpose of recording its result on the emperor's register^[17]. Indeed the category and area of each land are specified in the charter. We cannot know if the commission had measured

invicem pastionatici solutione, equaliter et communiter habeant, et neutra pars nullatenus memoratam silvam ultra extirpare aut mansioniles in ea facere presumat.

[11] MGH, *Legvm sectio V, Formvlae merovingici et karolini aevi* (Hannover, 1886), No. 36: 314; Léon Levillain, *Examen critique des chartes mérovingiennes et carolingiennes de l'abbaye de Corbie* (Paris, 1902), No. 22: 247-249.

[12] *Chartae latinae antiquiores*, 2e s., LXXXVIII (Dietikon-Zurich, 2008), No. 29: 110-115 (p. 111).

[13] Brigitte Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie. Die Biographie eines karolingischen Politikers und Klostervorstehers* (Düsseldorf, 1986), pp.143-144.

[14] Jean-Pierre Devroey, "Gérer et exploiter la distance. Pratiques de gestion et perception du monde dans les livres fonciers carolingiens", Philippe Depreux, François Bougard et Régine Le Jan (dir.), *Les élites et leurs espaces mobilité,*

rayonnement, domination (du VIe au XIe siècle) (Turnhout, 2007): 49-65 (pp. 62-63).

[15] Levillain, *Examen critique des chartes*, pp. 92-96.

[16] François Bougard, "Adalhard de Corbie entre Nonantola et Brescia (813): *Commutatio*, gestion des biens monastiques et marché de la terre", Errico Cuozzo, Vincent Déroche, Annick Peters-Custot et Vivien Prigent (ed.), *Puer Apuliae. Mélanges offerts à Jean-Marie Martin* (Paris, 2008), 51-67 (p. 59).

[17] Levillain, *Examen critique des chartes*, pp. 248-249; Cujus petitioni, quia utilis et rationabilis nobis esse viebatur, libenter adsumum praebuimus et praecepimus Maginario comiti et actori nostro, ut cum missis praedicti venerabilis Adalardi abbatis, adscitis etiam pagensibus hominibus et fiscalinis in eadem vicinia commanentibus, mensuraret easdem res propositas, earumque quantitatem et qualitatem hinc et inde diligenter inspiceret et consideraret, et inlibatam ad nostram

their surface by himself. However, it is plausible that here, Carolingian elite and local inhabitant co-operated on the investigation.

Another document dated 4 June 813 is a unique *brevis* we can look at the signature in Adalhard's handwriting. In charge of acting as intermediary between the two abbeys, Adalhard brought the abbot of Saint-Saviour before Charlemagne to obtain the permission to exchange. In answer to the question of the emperor whether this exchange will be of benefit to both monasteries, the abbot of Saint-Saviour, probably at the instigation of the abbot of Corbie, replied that the concentration of domains near each monastic seat would be profitable to both. Receiving Charlemagne's permission, Adalhard visited the spot with the commission of inspection composed of the priests of higher rank of Brescia and a lay inhabitant familiar with the affairs of the region and inquired the price of each land in question from the local inhabitants. Based on the price informed by the inhabitants, he determined the proportion of exchange of each land and the negotiations have been successfully concluded^[18].

These two documents from Adalhard share with *De ordine palatii* the intention to inform themselves carefully on-site. We have already seen that *De ordine palatii* obliges the king's counselors to investigate with the highest care on the events inside and outside the kingdom. It also orders not to change the way of dealing with information according to their sources, either friend or foe^[19]. Bernard S. Bachrach regards this chapter as an article treating a system of intelligence that leads Charlemagne to victory over foreign tribes^[20]. Admittedly, its following sentence orders the entourages to observe the tribes outside the kingdom, and as soon as they find a sign of rebellion, to promptly remedy it^[21]. We are ready to give him a complete reason. However, Bachrach seems to focus exclusively on the military effects of this course of information and overlook its another effect. The same text instructs to deal without prejudice with local circumstances, including the difficulty that the people encounter or their anxiety and discontent caused by this^[22]. We would be able to read this sentence also in the context of "social assistance". The statutes the abbot of Corbie wrote the year of 822 record some measures against the exhaustion of his subjects^[23]. The measurements highlight features of his attitude towards the local communication.

IV

Reinstated to Abbot of Corbie in 821, Adalhard faced a dysfunction of the perception of tithe. First of all, he writes, he went through all the *villae* and convinced himself that it is so difficult, if not impossible, for the peasants to bring to the monastery the products raised from them as a tithe without much trouble and lament^[24]. Understanding the problematic situations, Adalhard has taken steps to improve them. Inquiring personally into the local circumstances and bringing a remedy

referret notitiam; ...

[18] *Chartae latinae antiquiores*, 2e s., LXXXVIII, p. 111.

[19] *De ordine palatii*, p. 94; Quia et hoc eis non solum permisum, verum etiam arctius commissum erat, ut hoc unusquisque studiosissime, usque dum reverteretur, tam infra quam extra regnum perquireret, si quid tale non solum a propriis vel extraneis, verum etiam, sicut ab amicis, ita et ab inimicis investigaret, intermissa interim nec magnopere, unde sciret, investigata persona: ...

[20] Bernard S. Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns (768-777) A Diplomatic and Military Analysis*, (Leiden, 2013), pp. 595-596.

[21] *De ordine palatii*, p. 96; ... extra vero, si aliqua gens subdita rebellare vel rebellata subdere, si necdum tracta insidas regni moliri vel tale aliquid oriri voluisset.

[22] *De ordine palatii*, pp. 94-96; ... si populus in qualibet regni parte, regione seu angulo turbatus, quae causa turbationis

esset, si murmur populi obstreperet vel tale aliquid inaequale resonaret, unde generale consilium tractare aliquid necessarium esset, ...

[23] Adalhard of Corbie, *Brevis quem Adalhardus ad Corbeiam regressus anno incarnationis domini DCCCXXII mense ianuario indictione quinta decima imperii uero gloriosi Chludiuci Agusti octauo fieri iussit*, ed. Josef Semmler and K. Hallinger, *Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum*, t. 1 (Siegburg, 1963): 357-408.

[24] *Brevis quem Adalhardus fieri iussit*, p. 391; Ecce, etenim cuncti nouimus, quod de Uualiao et Montiao, de Haiono quoque Uillare et de Domno Aglino sicut et in ceteris quibusdam locis non solum graue sed etiam pene impossibile est, ut illae annonae quae in manipulos colliguntur aut fenum quod ibidem collectum reconditur ad monasterium deduci possit sine graui ualde afflictione familiae.

without delay to the difficulties, the abbot of Corbie seems faithful to the instruction he had written in *De ordine palatii*. However, his arrangements are not ordinary. Adalhard has paired a *villa* located near to the abbey with another far from it. He then exempted the latter's peasants from carrying the products of the tithes (corn and straw) into the monastic seat and charged to the former's the doubled tithe on the condition that it would be transported to the abbey by leased carriers at the expense of the gatekeeper. Thanks to this, the monastery can protect peasants against exhaustion and obtain the required quantity of products for itself^[25]. The statutes say nothing about the inhabitants' response towards these measures appears at the height of inequality. We must leave this question open for a short while.

However, to examine this sentence from the viewpoint of information management, we find some characters of communication in the monastic space of Corbie. The statutes are much interested in the transport of the data itself independent of that of the real object. They notice the variation of productivity varies from *villa* to *villa* according to their geographical condition and instruct the monastic officers to estimate in each *villae* the amount of grain extracted from a shave of wheat to make its conversion table^[26]. At the time of tithe collection, the agent first recovers the tithes at a remote one between the coupled two *villae*, then goes to another located near to Corbie carrying the table and a file in which he inscribed the number of sheaves he had collected. Information he carries with him make him to know the number of sheaves he will gather at another *villa*. Thus the agent can levy the "second" tithe which replaces precisely that of the distant *villa*^[27].

Two points attract our attention. Firstly, to evaluate the ratio of the amount of cereals to number of sheaves, abbatial functionary had to dispute, negotiate, namely, communicate with the peasantry about its fixation. Secondly, the product raised at the remote *villa* is no longer carried to the monastic seat but placed on the spot and often converted into money. It would not be worthwhile to say the buying and selling of goods belong to one type of communication. Our statutes include much more its witnesses. They allow the servants holding the lands as *beneficium* located at a place far from the monastery to replace the tithe (the sheaves of wheat and the hay) with money. The servants in question consult the gatekeeper about the time when the products are sold most advantageously and pass him all these receipts^[28]. Moreover, the statutes mention here and there to a selling of the products of the abbey^[29]. These sentences indicate not only direct communication between peasants and officers within Corbie abbey but also between the seller and the buyer going through the "wall" of a monastery. Even more, the officers of Corbie often hired temporary workers for garden work and product transport^[30]. To carry out the deal and employment, they had to be

[25] *Breuis quem Adalhardus fieri iussit*, p. 393; Haec exempli causa de his duabus uillis dicta suffitiant, ut ad hanc similitudinem ceterae uillae duae et duae una longius et altera uicinius posita coniungantur prout oportunitus et aptius coniungi possunt, ut eo modo sicut supra intimatum est de uicinioribus duplex decima daetur, ut eadem sepe dicta decima pleniter ad monasterium absque ullo detrimento uel deminatione perducatur et familia nullatenus affligatur: ...

[26] *Breuis quem Adalhardus fieri iussit*, p. 391; Haec autem ideo prosecuti sumus, ut, cum per ueram rationem probatum fuerit, quanta modia de singulis annonis, si omnes manipuli decimati excutiuntur, ad decimam uenire debuissent, nulla remaneat dubitatio, qualiter in alio loco restaurari possint. Similiter de feno diligenter et equaliter considerandum et numerandum est, quanta carra ad decimam ueniant, ut eadem qualitate in alio loco restitui ualeant.

[27] *Breuis quem Adalhardus fieri iussit*, p. 392; Iungamus ergo Uualiacum et Uernum, ut, cum illa decima data fuerit et perducta ad monasterium quae de Uerno est, tunc ueniat ille missus et breuis qui illam decimam in Uualiaco dinumerauit et fatiat de ipsis manipulis per diuersa genera annonae probationem in Uernis, quantum ad equalitatem eiusdem decimae

quae ad Uualiacum dinumerata est cum ueniat, et tunc ipsa decima ad monasterium deducta siue in manipulis integris et non excussis siue in feno pleniter ueniat.

[28] *Breuis quem Adalhardus fieri iussit*, p. 402; Si uero beneficium eius paulo longius positum fuerit quam ut manipuli aut fenum sine nimio labore adduci possint, sciat, quantum de decima est, et conuenientia cum portario faciat, quo tempore haec eadem utiliter uenundare possit et absque ulla fraude uel subtractione uenundatum pretium eius portario deferatur. Si uero portarius cum suo magis carra conducere uoluerit, unde hoc ad monasterium perducatur, quam ibi uenundatum fiat, in eius potestate sit.

[29] *Breuis quem Adalhardus fieri iussit*, p. 395; De ortis uero iuxta quod consuetudo in singulis locis laborandum est sicut sunt porri, ascaloniae, algi uel cetera his similia quae rationabiliter uenundari possunt uenundentur aut contra denarios aut contra annonam et <pretium> ad portarium deferatur: p. 398; ... consideret portarius cum magistro gregum, quid exinde fatiat aut uenundando aut occidendo et suspendendo aut certe porcos commutando, ...

[30] *Breuis quem Adalhardus fieri iussit*, p. 381; Constituimus etiam illis dare ad conducendos homines qui areas leuent in

based, if not entirely, on the local communication between the interested parties.

Generally said, we would note the aforementioned “communications” took place without the intervention or intermediation of the abbot of Corbie. He has given in advance the power to sell the products or to hire labor to his officials. Besides, statutes order the gatekeeper to judge for himself how he distributes bread to the poor or the pilgrims^[31]. Here it is not negligible that for all his zeal to gather and respect the information on the spot, he does not seem inclined to centralize it to him to manage all the functions by himself. On the contrary, Adalhard gave priority instead to the practical judgment of local agents than to the idealized principle that came from the centre sovereign. Our statutes suggest us an autonomous network of local communications or a “nebula” of the networks of communications extend on the abbatial space of Corbie. How relate this “nebula” with the network of communication McKittrick argued over^[32]?

V

When we convince ourselves that local people are never isolated from the central communication, a question arises. In what way did the Carolingian elite communicate with the local people, most of whom had been illiterate? The former must have communication with the latter first of all (apart from the “body language”) through the medium of oral language. Michel Banniard noted that generally in the eighth century, even in the Mediterranean region, people neither speak nor comprehend “classic” Latin any longer^[33]. However, the language situations around the local people under the reign of Charlemagne were not uniform. Banniard mentioned an anecdote about Alcuin when he visited Saint-Riquier abbey (Abbeville, Picardie, France) to improve the text of *Vita* of its founder^[34]. He found here priests preferred a version of the *Vita* with many grammatical errors to another more correct as suitable to read out in front of people. This anecdote suggests that even at the end of eighth century in the present northern region of France, local people were able to understand what a priest talks to them in “broken” Latin. Furthermore, the Carolingian elites themselves, at least a part of them, had a good command of both classic Latin and people language.

Banniard drew our attention to two elites who played an active part around Carolingian palace in the latter half of eighth century: Paul the Deacon and Chrodegang, bishop of Metz^[35]. Former is born probably of a noble Lombard family and became one of the leading figures of Carolingian Renaissance in the palace of Charlemagne. In the palace, he spoke well Latin; furthermore, he communicates with many people in Germanic language. In his work, *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium* (history of successive bishops of Metz), Paul described Chrodegang as eloquent in Latin and Germanic. Banniard thought Chrodegang had learned Latin in the palace of Charles Martel (he noted a possibility that Chrodegang had been given its elementary knowledge in his home as a child) and became proficient in the local language by preaching a sermon to local inhabitants^[36]. We would think at least some Carolingian elite was able to communicate with local inhabitants by latter’s language. Our Adalhard was also one of “bilingual elites”. Paschasius Ratbertus, author of the *Vita* of Adalhard, tells he was an excellent speaker (and writer) of Latin and Germanic language (*Teutisca*

autumno et plantationes primo tempore facere adiuvent nec non et sarcolare herbolis in aestate cum necesse fuerit unicuique fratri ortolano per uices panes centum prouendaricios. ... Et debet unusquisque modium unum accipere de ligumine; et unicuique debent dari ab abbate solidi quinque per annum ad conducendos homines sicut diximus; qui conducticii non sunt necessarii quaerere aliubi nisi infra monasterium: p. 392; Hoc tamen sciendum, quia nullatenus uolumus, ut illa familia per imperium ipsam secundam decimam ad monasterium deducat, sed ipse portarius sibi carra cum pretio conducat secundum quod tunc tempus fuerit et ipsa carra locare potuerit.

[31] *Breuis quem Adalhardus fieri iussit*, pp. 372-373; Ipsam tamen distributionem panum arbitrio committimus hospitalarii ea uidelicet ratione, ut, si uenerit maior numerus pauperum aut plus uel minus indigentes sicut inedia defecti aut pueroli paruuli, ipse discernat iuxta quod oportet.

[32] McKittrick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 215-222.

[33] Michel Banniard, *Viva voce. Communication écrite et communication orale du IVe au IXe siècle en Occident latin* (Paris, 1992), pp. 489-490.

[34] Banniard, *Viva voce*, pp. 254-258.

[35] Banniard, *Viva voce*, pp. 281-284.

[36] Banniard, *Viva voce*, p. 283.

lingua)^[37]. Indeed the abbot of Corbie collected the pieces of information on the local circumstances through the on-the-spot investigation by himself. Furthermore, his manipulation of Latin is worthy, making Alcuin take hat off to him^[38].

However, to speak a language of people is one thing; to “communicate” with local inhabitants on equal footing or to get a piece of accurate information from them is quite another. Banniard named the communication between the literate and the illiterate the vertical communication in contrast to the horizontal one among literates or illiterates themselves^[39]. We need not say that the difference of skill in language often influences the power-balance or “politics” in the practice of communication. This fact would make the elite run a risk of getting incorrect information critical for them.

So the Carolingian elite sometimes rely upon some intermediary to “communicate” smoothly or efficiently with the local person. We find in some charters mentioning an on-the-spot investigation someone who seems to act as a mediator between the committee and the local inhabitants. A charter by Childeric II^[40] tells guards of royal forest went with a bishop (probably that of Tongeren-Maastricht) and a nobleman to fix the boundary of the monastic property. Moreover, according to a charter of exchange survived as a sample form in *Formulae imperiales*^[41], the *fiscalinus* and inhabitants joined the investigation team. On investigating the spot in Italy, Adalhard recruited a person of reputation and well informed about the region^[42]. It is plausible that he was expected to play a similar role in making smooth communication. Without him (or his mediation) Adalhard would not be able to be informed of the prices of each land. These are probably just the tip of the iceberg.

Now, the charter of exchange just we have looked at commands the commission of investigation to register the result of inquisition in a royal register^[43]. Outcome of on-the-spot investigation, in other words, the result of a local communication practiced by oral is converted into a piece of literary information. It is impossible to know who and how executed the conversion. Wolfgang Metz points out a possibility that someone as an officer of the *villa* had undertaken this task. According to him, some monasteries hold a “support tool” for translate German vulgar words to Latin. Becoming aware of some similarity of the order to enumerate the implements among several administrative documents, he assumes that the draftsmen of each material, although they belonged to different organizations, referred to an identical text as an example and listed them according to the order of enumeration found in it. It is a lexicon contrasting the Old High German word with Latin. According to Metz, some Carolingian monasteries in Germania were equipped with this to facilitate a translation of people speaking Germanic languages to Latin and scribe into the document^[44].

By the way, we would recall one Carolingian elite who is good at communication with local persons. In *Epitaphium Arsenii*, Paschasius Radbertus, also the author of this work tells that Wala, Adalhard’s half-brother, enjoyed an enormous confidence of both the aristocrat and the people in Saxony^[45]. It was entirely due to his persuasion that a noble Saxony agreed to transfer his patrimo-

[37] Paschasius Radbertus, *Vita sancti Adalhardi corbeiensis abbatis*, PL 120, c. 77, col. 1546; ... vel quis sine mentis scrupulo poterit epistolarum ejus nitorem eloquentiae recitare? quem si vulgo audisses, dulcifluus emanabat: si vero idem barbara, quam Teutiscam dicunt, lingua loqueretur praeminebat claritatis eloquio; quod si Latine, jam ulterius prae aviditate dulcoris non erat spiritus. Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie*, p. 173. Concerning the terminology of “Latin”, see Banniard, *Viva voce*, pp. 285-286.

[38] MGH, *Epp* IV. No. 9, p. 34; Videbar enim mihi ex consolatione eloquii tui, Deo miserante, dignum incipere posse, quod tamen Dei solius perficere est: ...; Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie*, p. 173.

[39] Banniard, *Viva voce*, pp. 38-40.

[40] MGH, *Diplomata Regum Francorum e Stirpe Merovingica*, 1. Teil, No. 108: 277-280.

[41] Levillain, *Examen critique des chartes*, No. 22: 247-249.

[42] *Chartae latinae antiquiores*, 2e s., LXXXVIII, No. 29, p. 110; ... et Grimoaldus, qui ex nobilibus cibibus regionis illius ortus, et propter vite senceritatem pluribus testimonium habens, pro quo testimonio et actor regis iam antepositus erat, ...

[43] Levillain, *Examen critique des chartes*, pp. 248-249. For the text see n. 17.

[44] Wolfgang Metz, *Das karolingische Reichsgut* (Berlin, 1960), pp. 26-53.

[45] Paschasius Radbertus, *Epitaphium Arsenii*, ed. Ernst Dümmler (Berlin, 1900), p. 45; Quod claruit, cum ad quoddam placitum non multum longe ab eodem loco Antonius venisset, ubi multitudo eorum propter eos confluerat. A quibus cum suscepti essemus venerabiliter, coeperunt omnes post Arsenium nostrum vultus intendere, eumque pro nimio

nial property for the construction of a new monastery^[46]. We are impressed by the fact that despite the repeated loss of positions, Wala continued to make his presence in the palace of kingdom^[47]. Is it, if not entirely, thanks to his communication skill well said with many “outsiders” of kingdom?

VI

Instead of a hasty conclusion, we would return to peasant of the *villa* near to Corbie where Adalhard doubled the charge of tithe. As we have already seen, the statutes say nothing about his attitude towards the doubling of the tithe load. Was he happy about this? We would advance a hypothesis: the exemption from the pains of transport would offset so sufficiently the doubling of the burden that the peasant would give, if not decidedly, consent to this measure. Indeed, Adalhard considered transport as one of the prime causes of peasant’s exhaustion. He regards as well the long-distance movement of human beings, if not for transport of heavy or bulky articles, as really burdensome for the person in charge. *De ordine palatii* commanded the officials to inform the people concerned as soon as possible when, where and how long the king (and his palace) will stay so as not to put their *familia regis* to unwanted pains caused by the delay of the notification^[48]. These testimonies seem at least partially justify our hypotheses.

Even if so, we are not yet set free. We must all the better impressed by the burdensome character of communication, especially central communication in the Carolingian era. For the Carolingian elite, it is indispensable to carry the information with them or to visit by themselves where the data exists unless they make someone send the information to them. We had to estimate its weight accurately and examine how social groups at that time shared this burden.

Finally, in connection with the probable consent of the peasantry, we would refer to a charter of Charles the Bald dated 1st July 861^[49]. According to this, the peasants of Mitry (Seine-et-Marne, France), domain of Saint-Denis abbey, complained to the king that the officer of this *villa* had inflicted them a slavish burden despite their free origin. However, the king rejected their plea. Although it is not clear if these peasants had agreed with their lord about the contents of charges imposed on them, this incident suggests latent contradictions between seigneur and peasant concerning appreciation of the peasant charge. At that time, the content of peasant burdens was unsteady as a reflection of the fluidity of his socio-legal status^[50]. Chris Wickham cited more examples of a similar case and drew our attention to the general tendency of restriction against the peasant’s autonomy^[51]. Drawing up the statutes does not seem entirely unrelated to that social context.

Moreover, as we have seen, in the communication between lord (or his agent) and peasant, two of them are not always on equal terms. The information transmitted from the peasantry to the inquiry commission can be modified (or distorted) in the course of drafting. In other words, peasant’s information shared by all the interesting ones involves the risk of causing the discontent of the

amore et admiratione pressius eum circumvallare; ...

[46] *Epitaphium Arsenii*, p. 45; Igitur nemo nostrum ignorat, cuius fuerit hereditas, quam nulli alteri omnino cessisset in vita, etiam (ut ita fatear) nec regi, nisi divinis ab isto fuisset compulsus persuasionibus, cui nihil contradicere poterat, quia ab ineunte aetate eius carissimus atque familiarissimus fuerat pre omnibus.

[47] Lorenz Weinrich, *Wala. Graf, Mönch und Rebell. Die Biographie eines Karolingers* (Lübeck, 1963).

[48] *De ordine palatii*, pp. 74-76; Ad tres autem ministeriales, senescalcum, buticularium et comitem stabuli, secundum uniuscuiusque ministerii qualitatem vel quantitatem pertinebat, ut cum communi consensu de suo quisque ministerio admonendi non esset segnis, ut, quantocius esse potuisset, omnes actores regis praescirent, ubi vel ubi rex illo vel illo tempore tanto vel tanto spatio manere debuisset, propter ad-

ductionem vel praeparationem; ne forte tarde scientes, dum inoportuno tempore vel cum nimia festinatione exigeretur, familia regalis per negligentiam sine necessitate opprimeretur.

[49] Georges Tessier (ed.), *Recueil des actes de Charles II le Chauve, roi de France*, tome II (861-877) (Paris, 1952), No. 228: 7-9.

[50] Yoshiki Morimoto, “In ebdomada operatur, quicquid precipitur ei (Le polyptyque de Prüm, X): Service arbitraire ou service hebdomadaire? Une contribution à l’étude de la corvée au haut Moyen Âge”, Yoshiki Morimoto, *Études sur l’économie rurale du haut Moyen Âge. Historiographie, Régime domanial, Polyptyques carolingiens* (Brussels, 2008): 381-398.

[51] Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, NY, 2005), pp. 581-585.

informant. Would it be possible to think here that the peasants of the *villae* near Corbie, although he did not take action, shared a little part of the feelings of the inhabitants of Mitry?

The scope of the problem concerning "politics" of communication in the drafting of the management documents far exceeds that of this presentation. However, the "politics" the communication involves by nature is something we should not neglect. At the same time, we would underline a reciprocal character involved in the communication themselves. So the information presented by the general public was not always helpless. It was worth Charlemagne's while to care about at all costs. Furthermore, the fact that Adalhard, author of the statutes and a part of *De ordine palatii*, emphasized here and there the respect of on-the-spot investigation would be reviewed again in the perspective of the study of the "communication".

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