



Power and Patronage in Early Medieval Italy

Local Society, Italian Politics
and the Abbey of Farfa,
*c.*700–900

Marios Costambeys

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POWER AND PATRONAGE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ITALY

Founded around the beginning of the eighth century in the Sabine hills north of Rome, the abbey of Farfa was for centuries a barometer of social and political change in central Italy. Conventionally, the region's history in the early Middle Ages revolves around the rise of the papacy as a secular political power. But Farfa's avoidance of domination by the pope throughout its early medieval history, despite one pope's involvement in its early establishment, reveals that papal aggrandizement had strict limits. Other parties – local elites, as well as Lombard and then Carolingian rulers – were often more important in structuring power in the region. Many were also patrons of Farfa, and this book, the first detailed study of the abbey in the early Middle Ages, reveals how a major ecclesiastical institution operated in early medieval politics, as a conduit for others' interests and as a player in its own right.

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*Local Society, Italian Politics and the Abbey
of Farfa, c.700–900*

MARIOS COSTAMBEYS



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NOTE ON CHARTER EDITIONS

I have consistently preferred the editions of charters given in the *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo* (CDL) series up to the point where these finish (774 for vols. I–III and IV/2, 788/9 for vols. IV/I and V). For charters after those dates preserved in the Farfa tradition, the best editions are still those in Giorgi and Balzani's *Regesto di Farfa* (RF). Preference for the consistency offered by the CDL editions means that, for the handful of original pre-800 Italian charters dealt with here, I have not cited the most recent and comprehensive edition and facsimile, in the *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* series (ChLA, vols. XXIII–XL). The latter includes full concordances with earlier editions, however.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>Aistulf</i>	<i>Leges Aistulfi</i>
<i>ARF</i>	<i>Annales Regni Francorum</i> , ed. F. Kurze, MGH SRG (Hanover, 1895)
<i>BM</i>	<i>Regesta Imperii, I. Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751–918</i> , ed. J. F. Böhmer, rev. E. Mühlbacher et al., 2nd edn (Innsbruck, 1908)
<i>CC</i>	<i>Codex epistolaris Carolinus</i> , ed. W. Gundlach, MGH Epp. III (Hanover, 1892), pp. 469–567
<i>CCM</i>	<i>Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum</i> (Sigeburg, 1963–)
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> (Turnhout, 1952–)
<i>CDA</i>	<i>Codex diplomaticus Amiatinus. Urkundenbuch der Abtei S. Salvatore am Montamiata von den Anfängen bis zum Regierungsantritt Papst Innozenz III (736–1198)</i> , ed. W. Kurze, 4 vols. (Tübingen, 1974–1982)
<i>CDL</i>	<i>Codice diplomatico longobardo</i> , cited by volume and document number: vol. I, ed. L. Schiaparelli, <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> 62 (Rome, 1929) vol. II, ed. L. Schiaparelli, <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> 63 (Rome, 1933) vol. III, ed. C. Brühl, <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> 64 (Rome, 1973) vol. IV/1, ed. C. Brühl, <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> 65 (Rome, 1981) vol. IV/2, ed. H. Zielinski, <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> 65/2 (Rome, 2003) vol. V, ed. H. Zielinski, <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> 66 (Rome, 1986)

List of abbreviations

CF	<i>Il Chronicon Farfense di Gregorio di Catino</i> , ed. U. Balzani, 2 vols., <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> 33 (Rome, 1903)
ChLA	<i>Chartae Latinae Antiquiores. Facsimile Editions of Latin Charters prior to the Ninth Century</i> , ed. A. Bruckner and R. Marichal; vols. 1– (Olten and Lausanne, 1954–), cited by volume and number
CISAM	Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , 95 vols. (Vienna, 1866–)
CTh	<i>Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis</i> , ed. T. Mommsen and P. M. Meyer, 2nd edn (Berlin, 1954)
CV	<i>Chronicon Vulturense</i> , ed. V. Federici, 3 vols., <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> 58–60 (Rome, 1925–38)
DA	<i>Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters</i>
D Karl	<i>Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Deutschen, Karlmanns und Ludwigs des Jüngeren</i> , ed. P. Kehr, MGH <i>Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae</i> II (Berlin, 1888–93)
D L II	<i>Die Urkunden Ludwigs II.</i> , ed. K. Wanner, MGH <i>Dipl. Kar. IV</i> (Munich, 1994)
D Loth I	<i>Die Urkunden Lothars I. und Lothars II.</i> , ed. T. Schieffer, MGH <i>Dipl. Kar. III</i> (Berlin and Zurich, 1966)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
EME	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
ER	<i>Edictus Rothari</i> , ed. F. Beyerle, <i>Leges Langobardorum</i> 643–866, <i>Germanenrechte, Neue Folge, Westgermanisches Recht</i> , 2nd edn (Witzenhausen, 1962), pp. 16–94
FMS	<i>Frühmittelalterliche Studien</i>
Grimuald	<i>Leges Grimualdi</i>
HL	Paul the Deacon, <i>Historia Langobardorum</i> , ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, MGH <i>SRL</i> (Hanover, 1878), pp. 12–187
HZ	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
ICUR	G. B. De Rossi, A. Silvagni, et al., <i>Inscriptiones christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores. Noua series</i> (Vatican City, 1922–)
IGM	Istituto Geografico Militare
Jaffé, RP	P. Jaffé ed., <i>Regesta Pontificum Romanorum</i> , vol. 1, 2nd edn (Graz, 1956)
JMH	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
LF	<i>Il 'Liber Floriger' di Gregorio di Catino</i> , ed. M. T. Maggi Bei, <i>Miscellanea della Società romana di storia patria</i> 26 (Rome, 1984)
Liutprand	<i>Leges Liutprandi</i>

List of abbreviations

LL	<i>Liber Largitorius vel Notarii Monasterii Pharpensis</i> , ed. G. Zucchetti, 2 vols., <i>Regesta Chartarum Italiae</i> 11, 17 (Rome, 1913, 1932)
LP	<i>Le Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction et commentaire</i> , ed. L. Duchesne, 2nd edn, 3 vols. (Paris, 1955–7)
Manaresi	C. Manaresi ed., <i>I placiti del regnum Italiae</i> , 3 vols. (Rome, 1955–60), vol. 1
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica:
Capit.	Capitularia regum Francorum, eds. A. Boretius and V. Krause, MGH Leges sectio III, 2 vols. (Hanover, 1883–97)
Conc.	Concilia aevi Karolini, ed. A. Werminghoff, 2 vols., MGH LL, sectio III, vol. II, pts. 1–2 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1906, 1908)
Dipl.	Diplomata (Hanover and Berlin, 1872–)
Dipl. Kar.	Diplomata Karolinorum, vol. I, ed. E. Mühlbacher (Hanover, 1906); vol. III, ed. T. Schieffer (Berlin and Zurich, 1966)
Epp.	Epistolae III–VIII (Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini aevi) (Hanover, 1892–1939)
LL	Legum in quarto
SRG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi (Hanover, 1871–)
SRG NS	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, nova series (Hanover, 1922–)
SRL	Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX, ed. G. Waitz (Hanover, 1878)
SS	Scriptores (32 vols., Hanover, 1826–1934)
SRM	Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum, ed. B. Krusch, and W. Levison, 7 vols. (Hanover, 1885–1920)
MIÖG	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung</i>
NCMH II	R. McKitterick ed., <i>The New Cambridge Medieval History</i> , vol. II, c.700–c.900 (Cambridge, 1995)
NCMH III	T. Reuter ed., <i>The New Cambridge Medieval History</i> , vol. III, c.900–1024 (Cambridge, 1999).
PBSR	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1841–66).
QFIAB	<i>Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken</i> .

List of abbreviations

Ratchis	<i>Leges Ratchis</i>
Reg. Ep.	<i>Sancti Gregorii Magni Opera. Registrum Epistolarum</i> , ed. D. Norberg, 2 vols., Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 140, 140 A (Turnhout, 1982)
RF	Gregory of Catino, <i>Regestum Farfense</i> , ed. I. Giorgi and U. Balzani, <i>Il Regesto di Farfa</i> , 5 vols. (Rome, 1879–1914)
Rothari	<i>Edictus Rothari</i>
Tjäder, <i>PItal.</i>	<i>Die nichtliterarischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445–700</i> , ed. J.-O. Tjäder, 3 vols. (Lund and Stockholm, 1955–82), cited with volume and document number
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>



Map 1 Italy in the eighth century



Map 2 The Sabina

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

FARFA AND THE POLITICS OF MONASTICISM IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ITALY

The same apostolic lord not only recognized that he himself had no lordship over the rights of that monastery, except consecration, but also reinvested Leo, who was advocate of our party and of the same monastery, with all the properties located both in the Sabine territory and in Romania, which the power of the predecessors of the same Pope Paschal had unjustly taken away from the same monastery through their orders.¹

The diploma from which this quotation is taken, issued by Emperor Lothar I in December 840, was not the first attempt by a Carolingian emperor to settle matters between the abbey of Farfa and the papacy in the monastery's favour; it was not even Lothar's first attempt.² The repeated efforts of Farfa's abbots to stave off the threat of papal domination by appeal to the greatest secular power in the region do not simply indicate the feature of the abbey most often emphasized by the historiography – that is, its imperial affiliation.³ The fact that those efforts had to be repeated – that the issue of the control of the abbey and (perhaps especially) its patrimony had to be continually revisited – also highlights quite how precarious was the situation in which the abbey found itself for most of the first four hundred years of its existence. It was precarious, but also influential. If Farfa courted the support of secular powers, it was itself courted: gifts of land and privileges of all kinds flowed to the monastery not just from Italy's rulers, but from the propertied of all social levels. This

¹ RF II 282bis (= CF I, pp. 199–206 at 199–200; D Loth I 51): privilege of the Emperor Lothar, issued 15 Dec. 840, at Chagny, near Chalons.

² RF II 127, 128 (both a.775), 273 (a.801), 173 (a.803), 216, 217 (both a.815), 236 (a.818), 242, 248 (both a.820) and 272 (a.829); the latter issued jointly by Louis the Pious and Lothar.

³ Evident simply in the titles of prominent works on the abbey: I. Schuster, *L'imperiale abbazia di Farfa* (Rome, 1921); C. McClendon, *The Imperial Abbey of Farfa* (New Haven, CT, 1987).

book will investigate why this was the case, and what impact this extensive patronage had – on Farfa, on its immediate region and on Italy as a whole.

Patronage put the abbey among the great monasteries of early medieval Europe – the ‘multinational corporations’ of their era – and it is a standard saw that they should be accorded a prominent place in early medieval history. Nonetheless, despite significant attention to these institutions over decades, recent work focusing largely on the Frankish kingdom raises issues about how we can recapture the way monastic communities integrated with the societies from which they sprang.⁴ At the same time, the importance has also been recognized of the Italian monasteries of a similar size and wealth to those identified as influential north of the Alps. Many of those questions that have recently been asked of north European monasticism have yet to be posed in Italy. One task of this book, then, is to examine the former concerns through the prism of the latter, and specifically through the example of Farfa. A second aim arises from this choice of focus, for Farfa’s particular geographical position allows us to trace the development of a monastery in relation to the lay society around it, and to connect it with a problem of ‘global’ geo-politics. Because Farfa sits in the Sabina, on the edge of the hinterland of the city of Rome, it constantly felt the stresses involved in the continual struggle to define the city’s political status.

The securely historical foundation of Farfa took place between 680 and c.700, the work of Thomas, a monk from Maurienne in Provence.⁵ Although there is no evidence of Thomas’s personal background, we know something of the state of Christianity in the area from which he hailed at around this time, because the will survives of Abbo, who by 726 was rector of the region encompassing Maurienne and Susa (now on the French and Italian sides of the Mont-Cenis Alpine border respectively), and perhaps later also *patricius* of Provence. On 30 January 726 Abbo issued the foundation charter of the monastery of Novalesa, which he had built on and from his own property. Of this splendid charter, which still survives, two things are especially relevant to the early history of Farfa. First, Abbo enjoined that the abbot and monks should live ‘according to the evangelical norm and the rule of the lord Benedict and the institutes of

⁴ See for example M. Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages. The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000); J. Nightingale, *Monasteries and patrons in the Gorze reform: Lotharingia, c.850–1000* (Oxford, 2001); H. Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe. Alsace and the Frankish Realm, 600–1000* (Cambridge, 2006).

⁵ Stated first in the so-called *Constructio monasterii Farfensis*: ‘Fuit namque in Gallia vir vite venerabilis, Thomas nomine, ut alii ferunt Maurigena exortus provincia’, *CF* 1, p. 3; for reservations on this source’s reliability, see below, pp. 13–14.

the early orthodox fathers'.⁶ A concern for the Rule of St Benedict is, at this date, quite precocious but, as we shall see, it was probably shared at Farfa in its early years.⁷ Secondly, Abbo, through his capacity as *rector* of the region (a secular position, in this context), granted his foundation freedom from the control of the local bishop. This attention to the monastery's independence, frequently echoed by the words and actions of Farfa's abbots in its first two centuries, should not be seen as having been diluted by the proviso in Abbo's testament of 739 that Bishop Walchunus (presumably bishop of Maurienne)⁸ should take authority over the community after the founder's death. As Patrick Geary has pointed out, Abbo was seeking someone closely connected to himself on a personal level to replace him as 'secular' overseer and protector of the monastery. Later in the eighth century, the Carolingian kings would confirm Novalesa's independence of the bishop, and take over the role of its secular protector themselves.⁹

It will be evident from what follows that Farfa too was concerned both to secure its freedom from local bishops and to develop and exploit a relationship with the Carolingian kings. As with adherence to the Rule of St Benedict, however, these parallels between Novalesa and Farfa cannot be ascribed directly to Thomas. They become apparent in the Farfa evidence only some years after his abbacy. Nor are Novalesa and Farfa alone in attaching importance to such things as episcopal immunity and the Rule of St Benedict: these were two strands in a new fabric of monasticism that was being woven in the late seventh and earlier eighth century in a number of different parts of Europe. It may be significant for Farfa, nevertheless, that its founder's place of origin suggests that he may have been influenced by this development.¹⁰ The foundation of Farfa

⁶ '... ut secundum evangelica normam et regula domno Benedicto seu priscorum patrum orthodoxorum instetuta in ipso loco debiant conversare quietem et pro nos vel stabilitatem regno Francorum seo cumto populo Christi bapstimate perfoso Domni misericordia iugiter exorare'. *Monumenta Novaliciensia Vetustiora*, ed. C. Cipolla (Rome, 1898), vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 7–13, at p. 9. The original is Torino, Archivio di Stato, Archivio di corte, Museo storico, I scat. 1, no. 1 (= *ChLA* XLVII 1463). Though, somewhat surprisingly, its authenticity was challenged in the 1950s, it was convincingly vindicated by G. Tabacco, 'Dalla Novalesa a San Michele della Chiusa', in *Monasteri in Alta Italia dopo le invasioni saracene e magiare* (sec. IX–X) (Turin, 1966), pp. 479–526, at pp. 481–4.

⁷ On the nature and use of the Rule of St Benedict in this period, see G. Moyses, 'Monachisme et réglementation monastique en Gaule avant Benoît d'Aniane', in *Sous la règle de St Benoît: structures monastiques et sociétés en France du moyen âge à l'époque moderne* (Geneva and Paris, 1982), pp. 3–19, and C. Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 101–30.

⁸ See Cipolla's sensible comments: *Monumenta Novaliciensia Vetustiora*, vol. 1, p. 7, n. 1.

⁹ P. Geary, *Aristocracy in Provence. The Rhône Basin at the Dawn of the Carolingian Age* (Stuttgart, 1985), pp. 124–5.

¹⁰ For immunity, see B. Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space. Power, Restraint and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999).

was, in an Italian context, an exceptional event, but it did not happen in a vacuum.

Farfa shared one other general feature with Novalesa: it stood on, or very near, a political frontier. The spot where Thomas was to found Farfa was at that time in the debatable region between the Lombard duchy of Spoleto and the *ducatus* around the city of Rome ruled over, whether directly or indirectly, by the eastern Roman emperor in Constantinople. Abbo's Novalesa perched on the very edge of Frankish territory, just a few miles from the fortified *clusae* – the passes over the Maritime Alps – at Susa, in the valley of the Dora Riparia, which marked the entrance into the Lombard kingdom of northern Italy.¹¹ Thomas must have come from Maurienne into Italy through the pass that led across the Mont Cenis gap down to this border post. Later, this was to be the route that Charlemagne's army took when it came to conquer the Lombard kingdom in 773.¹² In being located in such politically sensitive areas, Farfa and Novalesa were not alone among the monasteries founded in late seventh- and eighth-century Italy: Nonantola, San Salvatore on Monte Amiata, Monte Cassino and San Vincenzo al Volturno can all be said to occupy similarly liminal positions on or near the borders of political territories (as indeed can Bobbio, founded much earlier in 613). All were also founded with the support of a king or duke. Bobbio, the earliest foundation among them, was established in the Ligurian mountains at a time when these formed the barrier between Byzantine Liguria and the Lombard hinterland.¹³ Nonantola was close to the debatable territory between the Lombard kingdom and the Byzantine exarchate of Ravenna.¹⁴ Three monasteries ringed the Roman *ducatus*: Monte Amiata in southern Tuscany, Farfa in the Sabina, and Monte Cassino, overlooking the Via Appia that led from the city to the south.¹⁵ The locations of these monasteries were to prove of great political importance.

¹¹ On the *clusae*, see G. Tangl, 'Die Passvorschrift des Königs Ratchis', *QFLAB* 38 (1958), pp. 1–66 and K. Schmid, 'Zur Ablösung der Langobardenherrschaft durch den Franken', *QFLAB* 52 (1972), pp. 1–36.

¹² On the details of that campaign, see S. Abel and B. Simson, *Jahrbücher des fränkischen Reiches unter Karl dem Grossen*, Bd. 1 (Leipzig, 1888), pp. 141–8.

¹³ See C. G. Mor, 'La fondazione di Bobbio nel quadro del diritto pubblico ed ecclesiastico longobardo', in *San Colombano e la sua opera in Italia* (Bobbio, 1953), pp. 76–7 and G. Hauptfeld, 'Sur langobardischen Eroberung Italiens. Das Heer und die Bischöfe', *MIÖG* 91 (1983), pp. 37–94, at p. 93.

¹⁴ K. Schmid, 'Anselm von Nonantola. *Olim dux militum – nunc dux monachorum*', *QFLAB* 47 (1967), pp. 1–122, at pp. 15–20.

¹⁵ For Monte Amiata, see W. Kurze and M. Ascheri eds., *L'Amiata nel medioevo* (Rome, 1991); for Farfa, Schuster, *L'imperiale abbazia* and T. F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St Peter. The Birth of the Papal State, 680–825* (Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 157–9; for Monte Cassino, M. Del Treppo, 'Longobardi, franchi e papato in due secoli di storia vulturinese', *Archivio storico per le province napoletane* n. s., 34 (1953–4), pp. 37–59.

San Vincenzo al Volturno occupied a key position on the frontier between the duchies of Spoleto and Benevento.¹⁶

Given these facts, scholars have long recognized that in endowing these monasteries rulers were helping to establish institutions that had the potential to maintain and administer tracts of otherwise sparsely populated land as bulwarks on the fringes of their territories. Their association with these monasteries, therefore, allowed rulers to stake a claim to areas that were marginal, both geographically and politically.¹⁷ Yet frontiers were not simply barriers: at least potentially, they were areas of interaction between different polities, different groups of landholders. Richard Hodges has stressed this aspect of San Vincenzo's position, and the archaeological discoveries there have revealed that it had an economic dimension too: it was partly through its role as an entrepôt that San Vincenzo was a forum for negotiation between the Carolingians and the dukes of Benevento.¹⁸ It is not clear, however, that the choice of such locations was deliberate: that the potential in a monastery's location was recognized from the outset by its founder. The monastic ideal of creating havens of retreat from the secular world may seem sufficient explanation of the foundation of the eighth-century houses at some distance from centres of lay power. It may equally be important that they were distant from episcopal power. Nevertheless, it is the case that the choice of a monastery's location had more usually been dictated by the property interests of its lay benefactors. These could not be bypassed by avoiding population centres. As the example of the 'Columbanian' monasteries in Francia shows, foundation in the countryside did not necessarily imply removal from secular influence.¹⁹ That influence may primarily have been motivated more by considerations of landholding than by direct political imperatives. The large tracts of land that formed monastic *terrae* were more likely to exist in economically marginal areas. Add to that the spiritual mystique associated with certain out-of-the-way places, and the now little-appreciated need to evangelize in the

¹⁶ See R. Hodges, J. Moreland and H. Patterson, 'San Vincenzo al Volturno, the kingdom of Benevento and the Carolingians', in C. Malone and S. Stoddart eds., *Papers in Italian Archaeology 4. Classical and Medieval Archaeology*, BAR International Series 246 (Oxford, 1985), pp. 279–80.

¹⁷ For northern European examples, see R. McKitterick, 'England and the Continent', in *NCMH II*, pp. 64–84, at pp. 67–70.

¹⁸ R. Hodges, 'In the shadow of Pirenne: San Vincenzo al Volturno and the revival of Mediterranean commerce', in R. Francovich and G. Noyé eds., *La storia dell'alto medioevo italiano (VI–X secolo) alla luce d'archeologia* (Florence, 1994), pp. 109–33, at pp. 120–4. Recognizing the significance of San Vincenzo's location that Hodges points out in no way implies acceptance of the other suggestions put forward in this highly original paper.

¹⁹ See I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751* (London, 1994), p. 195 for the foundation of Luxeuil and, more generally, pp. 184–9 and 191–4.

countryside, and we may have sufficient explanation for the foundation of monasteries there.²⁰ The notion that ruler-benefactors had a clear appreciation of the geo-political importance of rural monasteries when they first endowed them perhaps benefits too much from hindsight. Nevertheless, discussion of the problem highlights some of the issues involved in explaining not only the fact of these new foundations, but their location. The significance of the location of these abbeys can be explained in two apparently contrasting ways. It could be, and has been, said that political topography dictated that monasteries should be founded in these political frontier zones.²¹ On the other hand, it could also be argued that these abbeys themselves, by dint of the nature of their land-holding, and the legal status, both secular and ecclesiastical, that they enjoyed, actually contributed to defining or reconfiguring political boundaries. That these two explanations need not, in fact, be mutually exclusive will already be obvious. It is one of the goals of this book to explore further the political and social geography of such monasteries through the principal example of Farfa.

Both location and success direct the choice of Farfa. In the size and eminence that it had attained by the ninth century – attested by the privileges issued in its favour by the Carolingian emperors – it was apparently rivalled only by Nonantola.²² But its sources are far more extensive than those for the latter, as we shall see. In the second half of the eighth century, Farfa was the point at which four powers met. Our earliest documents for its foundation show that it provided a unique opportunity for co-operation between the popes and the dukes of Spoleto.²³ As it attracted donations from ever further afield, the abbey also became a crucial meeting point for landholders from the duchy of Spoleto and from the Lombard kingdom.²⁴ The advent of Carolingian power into northern Italy in 774 reconfigured the balance of power between the popes, the dukes of Spoleto and Benevento, and the Frankish king.²⁵ Farfa was, I shall argue, pivotal in these relationships. Not only its presence, but its very existence, tells us something about the modalities of power in this period.

²⁰ For the significance of rural monasteries as centres of evangelization in Francia, see *ibid.*, p. 191.

²¹ On Farfa, F. Felten, 'Zur Geschichte der Klöster Farfa und San Vincenzo al Volturno im achten Jahrhundert', *QFIAB* 62 (1982), pp. 1–58, at pp. 15–20. In general, see Schmid, 'Zur Ablösung der Langobardenherrschaft', esp. pp. 25–30.

²² As avowed by Abbot Hugh of Farfa himself in *Destructio monasterii Farfensis*, written at the end of the tenth century: 'in toto regno Italico non inveniebatur simile illi monasterio in cunctis bonis, excepto monasterio quod vocatur Nonantule' (*CF* I, p. 31).

²³ *RF* II, nos. 1 and 2, pp. 22–4; *CF* I, p. 136.

²⁴ For donations from Tuscan landholders, see *RF* II, no. 146.

²⁵ For a full analysis, see below, pp. 278–352.

Thomas of Maurienne himself seems to have taken the route across the frontier for a very different reason from that of the Frankish armies that periodically used it. If we can trust the report of our earliest (but still much later) sources (see below), it was on his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land that Thomas came to Farfa. The story as told by Farfa's great high medieval historian, Gregory of Catino, has Thomas embarking on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and in the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem having a vision of the Virgin Mary, who instructed him to return to Italy and to reopen an abandoned basilica dedicated in her name. With divine guidance and accompanied by a small group of followers, Thomas arrived in the Sabina and discovered the ruins of an ancient sanctuary, where he established his monastery.²⁶ Gregory's tale stands in a long tradition of narratives of monastic foundation, and several elements of it are topoi: Thomas was inspired by a saintly vision, he was a pilgrim, he founded his monastery in a deserted place far from habitation.²⁷ Yet in laying out his story, Gregory was not simply following monastic or hagiographical convention. Pilgrimage to Rome was established and relatively popular by the eighth century.²⁸ That pilgrims could and did also visit the Holy Land in this period is evident from other contemporary sources. Notable among these are two insular texts. In his *De Locis Sanctis*, Adomnán, the abbot of Iona (d. 704), reported the journey of the otherwise unknown Frankish bishop Arculf to the Holy Land, which must have taken place shortly before 683 × 688.²⁹ Forty years later (723–9) the Anglo-Saxon Willibald (d. c.786) journeyed first to Rome, and thence to the Holy Land, returning via Constantinople and Sicily to Monte Cassino, whence he was plucked by Boniface in 741 to be bishop of Eichstätt. His travels are related by Hugeburc, a nun of the double

²⁶ CF 1, pp. 5–6.

²⁷ The topos of monastic isolation is evident in Jonas, *Vita Columbani Abbatis Discipulorumque Eius*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM IV (Hanover, 1902), pp. 64–108, Bk. 1, ch. 10: see the comments by Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 195. Similarly, Fulda is said to have been founded in a 'horrendum desertum': Eigil, *Vita Sturmi*, MGH SS II (Hanover, 1829), pp. 365–77; that this is not strictly accurate has been shown by Chris Wickham, 'European forests in the early middle ages: landscape and land clearance', *L'ambiente vegetale nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del CISAM 37 (Spoleto, 1989), pp. 479–545, at pp. 481–3.

²⁸ See P. Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages* (London, 1971; repr. 1993), pp. 173–98, and B. Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity*, trans. A. Nevill and M. Humphries (Edinburgh, 2000; French publ. 1995), pp. 159–60.

²⁹ See Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis*, ed. and trans. D. Meehan and L. Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 3 (Dublin, 1958) and Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St Columba*, ed. and trans. R. Sharpe (Harmondsworth, 1995), pp. 54–5 and n. 424. The most likely candidate for identity with 'Arculf' is Arnulf/Arulf, bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne c.682–88, see L. Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*, vol. III (Paris, 1915), p. 97 and Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis*, ed. Meehan and Bieler, pp. 6–9.

monastery of Heidenheim, in her *Hodoeporicon*, written c.780.³⁰ These sources testify that the path to the Holy Land was relatively well trodden at the turn of the eighth century and, crucially, that that path led through central Italy. Remote as it may have been, in relative terms, the Monte Acuziano was not far distant from the Via Salaria that linked Rome with the Pentapolis. It is not inconceivable that Thomas had already travelled down this road. The evidence for habitation of the surrounding area – the Sabina – at this time, drawn from Farfa's own documents, reveals that, although it cannot be described as populous by early medieval standards, it was not quite the 'desert' that Gregory depicted. Many of the early donations to the abbey constitute land already parcelled out into cultivated farms.³¹ Gregory may, in fact, have derived his image of Farfa in its early years from the description of the foundation of San Vincenzo al Volturno by the latter's eighth-century abbot, Ambrosius Autpert. He ascribed to Thomas of Maurienne a speech directing San Vincenzo's founders, who were three monks of Farfa, to a spot in the wilderness: 'In which place is situated the oratory dedicated to Christ's martyr Vincent, and on each side of the river is a thick forest which serves as a habitation for wild beasts and a hiding-place for robbers.'³² The tradition at San Vincenzo, therefore, placed the site of the monastery in a *silva densissima*: in fact, San Vincenzo was founded on the site of a former villa in a settled landscape.³³

As at San Vincenzo, so at Farfa, later tradition has the monks reoccupying an earlier Christian site. Thomas of Maurienne is said to have established his monastery in an abandoned late antique basilica, reputedly the remains of a monastery built by the obscure St Laurence of Syria.³⁴ Laurence defies attempts to identify him securely. He was certainly not the famous third-century Roman martyr of that name, to whom, inter alia, the Roman basilica of San Lorenzo fuori-le-mura was dedicated. Farfa's great high medieval historian, Gregory of Catino, thought that his monastery's Laurence was a Sabine bishop of the sixth century, an opinion apparently based on no more evidence than is now available. The recent attempt to identify him with a sixth-century bishop at 'Forum

³⁰ Hugelburc of Heidenheim, *Hodoeporicon*, ed. O Holder-Egger, MGH SS xv/1 (Hanover, 1887), pp. 80–117. For comment, see W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 39–43 and McKitterick, 'England and the Continent', pp. 78–9. For Hugelburc's identity, Levison, *England and the Continent*, p. 294 and n. 3.

³¹ For a full analysis, see below, pp. 184–207.

³² *Vita Padonis, Tazonis et Tatonis Vulturmensium*, ed. G. Waitz, MGH SRL (Hanover, 1878), p. 550.

³³ *Chronicon Vulturmentense*, ed. V. Federici, 3 vols., *Fonti per la storia d'Italia* 58–60 (Rome, 1925–38), vol. 1 (Rome, 1925), p. 111. For this, and other instances of the same idea, see Wickham, 'European forests', p. 482.

³⁴ *CF* 1, 121–132 and *LF*, pp. 3–44.

Novum' (modern Vescovio) is equally incapable of proof.³⁵ On the available evidence, not only the identity but even the existence of Laurence must be questioned. The existence of the late antique church is less doubtful, but still difficult to establish. Excavations to the west of the present church by the British School at Rome between 1978 and 1985 uncovered a late antique phase of occupation, but no structures beyond a walled enclosure.³⁶ Traces of a church, however, are most likely to be found under the present church, where no excavation has been possible. It is at least clear that the terrace on which the abbey church now stands was created in the late antique period. It is also clear that legends linking this site with a St Laurence were current when Thomas of Maurienne arrived there. In the papal privilege granted to the abbey in 705, Pope John VII recorded that a monastery had been built there by a Bishop Laurence.³⁷ All that we can say for certain, therefore, is that Farfa was a recognized cult site by the time Thomas arrived there, albeit one that had fallen into disuse.

The terrace on which the abbey stands is on the north slope of the hill now called Monte San Martino, but then known as Monte Acuziano.³⁸ This rises above the left bank of the stream Riana, which flows into the Farfa river just to the north-west of the monastery. The Farfa itself joins the Tiber about 7 kilometres to the west. The quality of these swift-flowing waters had been recognized since antiquity.³⁹ The surrounding banks were as fertile in the nineteenth century as they had been in the first.⁴⁰ English travellers in the nineteenth century also noted that the slopes of the hill were heavily wooded, as they apparently were in the early middle ages, and still are to some extent today. Lower down on either side of the Riana and Farfa vines and olives have been cultivated at

³⁵ P. di Manzano and T. Leggio, *La diocesi di Cures Sabini* (Fara in Sabina, 1980), p. 14. At least one of the authors has since tempered this view: T. Leggio, *Da Cures Sabini all'Abbazia di Farfa. Trasformazioni del paesaggio tra Tevere, Corese e Farfa dall'età romana al medioevo* (Passo Corese, 1992), pp. 54–6.

³⁶ O. Gilkes and J. Mitchell, 'The early medieval church at Farfa: orientation and chronology', *Archeologia Medievale* 22 (1995), pp. 343–364, at p. 347.

³⁷ *RF* II, 2.

³⁸ See L. Branciani, 'Il monte S. Martino in Sabina: siti archeologici e storia', in P. Lombardozi ed., *Eremitismo a Farfa: origine e storia. Per una ricostruzione archeologico-ambientale del complesso eremitico del Monte S. Martino in Sabina*, Quaderni della Biblioteca 3 (Farfa, 2000), pp. 31–133; and R. Ring, 'The lands of Farfa: studies in Lombard and Carolingian Italy', PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 9 and nn. 1–2.

³⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid* VII, 715: 'Qui Tiberim Fabarimque bibunt' (those who drink from the Tiber and the Farfarus).

⁴⁰ For the state of the abbey and surrounding countryside in the nineteenth century, see A. C. Hare and St. C. Baddeley, *Days near Rome* (London, 1907), pp. 178–81; compare Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XIV, 30: 'opacae Farfarus umbrae' (the deeply shaded Farfarus).

least since our records begin.⁴¹ It is the Farfa river which gives the abbey its modern name. In eighth-century documents, the abbey appears, in its most elaborate form, as ‘monasterium sanctae Dei genetricis semperque virginis Mariae, quod fundatum est in territorio civitatis ... Reatinae in fundo Acutiano’.⁴² (Sometimes the territory is named as that of the Sabina rather than that of Rieti.) In general *fundus* was a term for a landed estate common in both late Roman and early medieval documents. The ‘fundus Acutianus’ seems to have been a relatively large coherent block of land. Some, if not most, of this, however, was not included in any initial endowment – any *terra* – that the abbey may have received: Farfa later acquired from Duke Lupo a church and lands ‘in casale Acutiano’.⁴³ Unlike the *terrae* of San Vincenzo al Volturno and Monte Cassino, acquired in the same period, the extent of Farfa’s endowment remains obscure. Gregory of Catino reported that Faroald’s initial endowment constituted eleven *curtes*, totalling 11,000 *modia* of land, but he admitted that their whereabouts were now unknown.⁴⁴ Lupo’s grant suggests that Farfa may not have been blessed with such a massive initial endowment as the other two abbeys.⁴⁵ It may have come to possess the core of land around it through not one but a series of conscious decisions made by landowners in the eighth century.

Explaining the rise of the abbey to the position of pre-eminent landowner in the Sabina will be a central concern of what follows. Here it suffices to say that the establishment of the material resources for Farfa’s success was an achievement of Lombard landowners that mostly took place before the Frankish conquest of the Lombard kingdom in 774 (though Farfa received not inconsiderable lands from Hildebrand, duke of Spoleto from the time of the Frankish conquest until 788/9; a Lombard allied, for the most part, with the Franks). As we shall see, the abbey’s relationship with the Carolingian family of Frankish kings was crucial both for the maintenance of its position and for the political situation of the region as a whole. That relationship must have rested in part on the reputation that Farfa had already established, one that was fully

⁴¹ Hare and Baddeley, *Days near Rome*, p. 181. ⁴² CDL IV/1 5 (746).

⁴³ CDL IV/1 14 (761) is the record of a judgement establishing the validity of an earlier grant by Duke Lupo (r. 745–51).

⁴⁴ CF I, pp. 135–6; and see E. Migliario, *Strutture della proprietà agraria in Sabina dall’età imperiale all’alto medioevo* (Florence, 1988), p. 39 and Migliario, *Uomini, Terre e Strade. Aspetti dell’Italia centroappenninica fra antichità e alto medioevo* (Bari, 1995), pp. 28–9 with n. 9. Faroald’s other major donation recorded in the *Chronicon* (though not in the *Regestum*) was in the Reatino, some miles north of the abbey: CF I, pp. 139–40.

⁴⁵ See C. Wickham, ‘The *terra* of San Vincenzo al Volturno in the 8th to 12th centuries: the historical framework’, in R. Hodges and J. Mitchell eds., *San Vincenzo al Volturno. The Archaeology, Art and Territory of an Early Medieval Monastery*, BAR Int. Series 252 (1985), pp. 227–58, esp. pp. 227–31.

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appreciated in Francia, as is evident in the desire of Alcuin, the Northumbrian who became the great court scholar of Charlemagne, to attach himself to the *familiaritas* of Farfa – that is, to the community of those bound in prayer to the abbey.⁴⁶ It is that reputation that makes Farfa a useful litmus test of the state of monasticism in the eighth and ninth centuries. In particular it allows us to ask which of the developments that we can trace in the nexus between monasteries and lay society depended on the direct influence of the Carolingian rulers, and which can be explained through autonomous, organic or local processes.

SOURCES: GREGORY OF CATINO

We owe most of our information about eighth-century Farfa to the pen of Gregory of Catino, a monk of the abbey who was one of the most accomplished monastic historians of his age.⁴⁷ Gregory was born into the comital family of Catino, a town some six and a half kilometres north of Farfa.⁴⁸ With his elder brother, he was entrusted to the monastery as a child oblate by his father Dono.⁴⁹ He was educated in the monastery's school that had been founded by Abbot Hugh (*d.* 1039), himself the chronicler of the abbey's late ninth-, tenth- and early eleventh-century history. Gregory remained at Farfa for the rest of his life, dying a few years after 1130.⁵⁰ The turbulent events that Hugh recorded had, by the late eleventh century, left the abbey's rights to its estates in considerable confusion. In 1092, Gregory proposed a major rearrangement of Farfa's archives, and was commissioned by Abbot Berard II to undertake the

⁴⁶ Alcuin, *Epistolae* 91, written 794 × 796, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epp. iv/1 (Berlin, 1895), p. 135: 'Saepius vestrae sanctitatis audiens famam, et ideo me vestrae familiaritati adiungere desideravi.' (Hearing often the fame of your holiness, I therefore desired to join myself to your *familiaritas*.) For *familiaritas*, see B. Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter. The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, 1989).

⁴⁷ For full details on Gregory of Catino, see now the excellent summary by Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity. Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000–1125* (Ithaca and London, 2006), pp. 18–36; the best earlier treatments are: U. Balzani, *Early Chroniclers of Europe, Italy* (London, 1883), pp. 149–59; H. Zielinski, *Studien zu den spoletinischen 'Privaturkunden' des 8. Jahrhunderts und ihrer Überlieferung im Regestum farfense*, Bibliothek des Deutschen historischen Instituts in Rom 39 (Tübingen, 1972), pp. 25–9; T. Kölzer, 'Codex libertatis. Überlegungen zur Funktion des "Regestum Farfense" und anderer Klosterchartulare', in *Il ducato di Spoleto*, Atti del IX congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1983), pp. 609–53, at pp. 612–13; McClendon, *Imperial Abbey of Farfa*, pp. 1–5.

⁴⁸ *RF* II, pp. 20–1 for his origin, *CF* I, p. 121 for his date of birth (also in *LF* prologue).

⁴⁹ Documents recording the possessions of Gregory's family are *RF* IV, nos. 949–74; see further P. Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval. Le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IX^e à la fin du XII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1973), vol. II pp. 1295–6.

⁵⁰ Zielinski, *Studien*, p. 26, n. 5. Schuster's suggestion that he died in 1133 appears to have been pure guesswork: *L'imperiale abbazia*, p. 226.

work. He began on 19 April 1092, copying the charters in the archives down to his own time, though omitting leases, which he was to treat in a separate work.⁵¹ The resulting collection he entitled *Liber gemniagraphus sive cleronomialis ecclesiae pharphensis*.⁵² It is usually referred to as the *Regestum Farfense*.⁵³ The survival of copies of three charters in Gregory's hand bound into the beginning of the manuscript of the *Chronicon Farfense* indicates that Gregory made a first attempt at such a collection, the so-called 'Prae-Regestum'. This seems to have been quickly abandoned by its author in favour of a fuller collection of the texts in Farfa's archive.⁵⁴ Political problems at the abbey forced Gregory to interrupt his work for some time. Nevertheless, he managed to copy most of the relevant documents up to and including 1099, the year of the death of the tyrannical Abbot Berard II. In 1125, the work was taken up again by his nephew Todinus. Todinus added some seventy folios to the *Regestum*, including both contemporary documents and some older texts which Gregory had missed.

While the *Regestum Farfense* documented the abbey's title to its lands, Gregory also saw a need for a more narrative treatment of the abbey's history.⁵⁵ Around 1107, he embarked on writing an untitled work, known today as the *Chronicon Farfense*, which he completed in about 1119.⁵⁶ This was not a straightforward history in the modern sense of the word, but it set the tone for the writing of monastic history in Italy in the twelfth century.⁵⁷ Part register, part chronicle, it offers a history of the monastery from its foundation by St Laurence, punctuated by some of the more important documents from Farfa's archive, which Gregory had either included in the *Regestum*, or was to include in the work he began around 1103, the *Liber Largitorius*. He also included much material from

⁵¹ *RF* II, pp. 6–7 and v, pp. 160–1. See also Zielinski, *Studien*, pp. 29–30.

⁵² Gregory indicated that by *gemniagraphus*, he meant *memoria descriptionis terrarum*, by *cleronomialem* the 'heredity' of the Farfa church, see *RF* II, p. 7.

⁵³ The work is preserved in the Vatican library in two volumes: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS lat. 8487 I–II: for a full description, see *RF* I, pp. xxxix–xlvi. The only edition is that given in this volume's list of abbreviations as *RF*, by Ignazio Giorgi and Count Ugo Balzani, published between 1879 and 1914.

⁵⁴ See Zielinski, *Studien*, pp. 103–9.

⁵⁵ On the intention behind the *RF* and *CF*, see Kölzer, 'Codex Libertatis', pp. 614–18.

⁵⁶ Extant as Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS Farf. 1. Edited by Balzani and listed under *CF* in the list of abbreviations.

⁵⁷ Works which are indebted to the *Chronicon Farfense*, directly or indirectly, include the *Chronicon Vultumense* (ed. V. Federici, 3 vols., *Fonti per la storia d'Italia* 58–60 (Rome, 1925–38)), the *Chronicon Novaliciense* (ed. G. Alessio, *Cronaca di Noalesa* (Turin, 1982)), and Leo Marsicanus's chronicle of Monte Cassino (ed. H. Hoffmann, *Chronica monasterii Casinensis*, MGH SS xxxiv (Hanover, 1980)). In general, see Kölzer, 'Codex libertatis', esp. pp. 624–5.

the two earlier narratives of the abbey's history, the *Constructio* and *Destructio Farfensis*.

The inclusion of large numbers of documents in the *Chronicon* reveals that the prime imperative behind Gregory's work was to defend the abbey's property by shaping its archival and historical memory. This is further evident in Gregory's two other works, the *Liber Largitorius vel Notarius Monasterii Pharphensis* and the *Liber Floriger Chartarum Coenobii Pharphensis*.⁵⁸ The *Liber Largitorius* (called by Gregory the *Liber Notarius Sive Emphyteuticus*), written between about 1103 and 1107, contains all those documents through which the abbey issued long leases on its lands, thus complementing the *Regestum*, which authenticated the abbey's fixed possessions, with a register of its temporary contracts.⁵⁹ Both the *Regestum* and the *Liber Largitorius* are works of immense size and detail, reflecting the enormous extent of Farfa's landholdings by the twelfth century.⁶⁰ Gregory was aware that this made them difficult for the abbey's agents, who were his primary readership, to use as quick and easy points of reference when they were called upon to demonstrate the validity of Farfa's title to particular lands or revenues. When in his seventies, in the 1130s, therefore, he compiled the *Liber Floriger*, a topographical index to all the documents included in his previous works. This offered the reader two levels of reference to the churches and the estates of the abbey.⁶¹ As such, it is chiefly testimony to the priorities of Farfa's estate administrators in the twelfth century. The historian of these properties in earlier centuries is better served by the indexes of the modern editions by Giorgi and Balzani, Zucchetti and, for the eighth-century charters, Brühl and Zielinski.⁶²

Gregory was not, however, the first writer to attempt a record of Farfa's history. Among his most important sources were the *Libellus Constructionis Farfensis* and the *Destructio Monasterii Farfensis*.⁶³ The former has generally been identified with a work that recounts the history of the abbey from its foundation by Thomas of Maurienne to the death of Abbot Hildericus in 857, but survives only in part, in an eleventh-century lectionary from

⁵⁸ Extant as Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale, MSS Farfense 2 and 3 respectively. The *Liber Largitorius* has been edited by G. Zucchetti, in the series *Regesta Chartarum Italiae* nos. 11 and 17, and appears under *LL* in the list of abbreviations. The *Liber Floriger*, edited by Maria Teresa Maggi Bei, appears under *LF* in the list of abbreviations.

⁵⁹ For the date of writing, see Zielinski, *Studien*, pp. 27–8.

⁶⁰ The extent of Farfa's lands by 1118 is traced by Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, p. 904.

⁶¹ Consulting the *Liber Floriger* is not always straightforward, however: see the comments of Maria Teresa Maggi Bei, *LF*, pp. xiv–xv.

⁶² The editions of Brühl and Zielinski are *CDL* iv/1 and *CDL* v: see list of abbreviations.

⁶³ The 'Constructio' and the 'Destructio' were included by Balzani in the first volume of his edition of the *Chronicon Farfense*: *CF* 1, pp. 1–23 and 27–51 respectively.

Farfa.⁶⁴ This text's accurate recording of the epitaph of Abbot Sichardus (c.830–42), a large portion of which was rediscovered in 1959, may not be sufficient grounds to consider the whole work reliable, but does at least show that the writer was a competent copier.⁶⁵ He also used Ambrosius Autpert's *Vita* of the founders of San Vincenzo, written probably in the 770s, but this provided only meagre information on Farfa. In so far as it is possible, the broad outlines of its story can be confirmed by comparison with documents extant in the *Regestum*. In matters of detail, however, we have no good grounds for trusting its narrative, and there is a strong case for thinking that this work is not the late ninth-century *Libellus Constructionis* that both Gregory and Hugh of Farfa used, but a later, eleventh-century composition.⁶⁶

The *Destructio*'s narrative falls mainly outside the chronological boundaries of this work, and can be briefly dealt with, taking up the story from 857. It is a highly personal work written by Abbot Hugh (998–1039), constituting part of his design to reform the abbey along Cluniac lines. In 897 or 898 Farfa, like San Vincenzo before it, was sacked by the Saracens. The monks were dispersed for some years. After their return, according to Hugh, their life was decadent and corrupt. In the second quarter of the tenth century the *princeps* of Rome, Alberic II, instigated an attempt to reform the abbey, and called in Odo of Cluny. The attempt failed, however, with the poisoning of Alberic's appointee as abbot, Dagobert, in 952. Hugh evoked this tale of Farfa's degeneracy in order to set the context for the reforms that he sought to put into place after 998, by which time Farfa was securely under the control of the Ottonian emperors.⁶⁷ It is difficult to comment on the rigour of Farfa's monastic observance in the tenth century for want of any evidence beyond Hugh's subjective account. In its activities as a landlord, the abbey was far from lax, taking a leading role in the reorganization of agriculture and settlement that is generally known as *incastellamento*.⁶⁸

The only other written source directly related to Farfa and relevant to the eighth century is a liturgical one. Farfa's abbot between c.761 and 769 was Alan, a native of Aquitaine and a famous scholar, who, according to Gregory of Catino, spent much of his abbacy in seclusion beside an oratory of St Martin on the summit of Monte Acuziano. Alan composed

⁶⁴ Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS Farfense 32. ⁶⁵ See McClendon, *Imperial Abbey of Farfa*, p. 2.

⁶⁶ U. Longo, 'Agiografia e identità monastica a Farfa tra XI e XII secolo', *Cristianesimo nella storia* 21 (2000), pp. 311–41, makes an extensive case for an eleventh-century date for the text MS Farfense 32.

⁶⁷ For brief synopses, see M. E. Stroll, *The Medieval Abbey of Farfa. Target of Papal and Imperial Ambitions* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 25–6, and Balzani, *Early Chroniclers of Europe: Italy*, pp. 109–11.

⁶⁸ Amply demonstrated by Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, pp. 303–549 and 960–1038. See also C. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy* (London, 1981), pp. 163–7.

one of the most successful homiliaries of the late eighth and early ninth centuries.⁶⁹ The usefulness of this text lies not only in its evidence for liturgical practices at Farfa in the later eighth century. If, as I have argued elsewhere, some of the eighth-century charters in Farfa's archive carry traces of contemporary liturgies in their proems, Alan's homiliary offers a useful point of comparison.⁷⁰ Other liturgical sources associated with the abbey, principally the *Consuetudines Farfenses*, date from a later period and have no relevance for this study.⁷¹

Assessing Gregory of Catino

Modern historians have raised two fundamental questions about the work of Gregory of Catino: was he a reliable copyist? And, what motives governed his work? The two questions are of course related, since his approach to copying may have been affected by his basic motivations. But the more technical question of his approach to the act of cartulary-making can be tackled first.

In the prologue to the *Regestum Farfense*, written by John Grammaticus in the name of Abbot Berard II, the principles supposed to underlie the compilation and edition of the abbey's documents are outlined: 'Quae veraciter elucubrando nichil eis omnino addidimus, vel minuimus, nec mutavimus, sed corruptis partibus rhetorice emendatis, eo respectu quo scripta erant, ea legaliter transtulimus per manus confratris nostri . . . Gregorii . . .'⁷² This appears to mean that in the copying of the texts, only grammatical mistakes were to be corrected. Nothing of substance was to be added, subtracted or changed. In his preface, Gregory of Catino echoes Berard's wishes.⁷³

He seems to have meant what he said. While the *Regestum Farfense* was the first and most influential of the great cartulary enterprises of eleventh- to twelfth-century Italy,⁷⁴ it was also among the most accurate. That is to

⁶⁹ R. Étaix, 'Le prologue du sermonaire d'Alain de Farfa', *Scriptorium* 18 (1964), pp. 3–10; R. Grégoire, *Homéliaires liturgiques médiévaux: Analyse des manuscrits*, Biblioteca degli Studi Medievali 22 (Spoleto, 1980), pp. 127–220. For a brief synopsis, see F. Brunhölzl, *Histoire de la littérature latine du moyen âge* (Louvain, 1990), pp. 253–4.

⁷⁰ M. Costambeys, 'Piety, property and power in eighth-century central Italy', PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1998, ch. 2.

⁷¹ See McClendon, *Imperial Abbey of Farfa*, pp. 3–4. ⁷² RF II, p. 20.

⁷³ RF II, p. 6: 'Itaque, sicuti michi a praedicto abbate et reliquis iussum est religiosus senioribus, nichil ex respectu chartarum ex his, quae uidi, minui, nichilque in rerum translatione adauxi, sed uti tunc cum scriberem oculis perspexi, et respectu capere uaceraci potui, rescribere studui, praeter uerborum prolixas, inutilesque reciprocationes, et transactas quorundam obligationes uidelicet, ne plurimis partium corruptionibus, diu fatigatus, et in scribendo longius immoratus, uolumen efficerem tardius, et fastidiosum, ineptumque ad perscrutandum, et immensum.'

⁷⁴ See Balzani, *Early Chroniders of Europe: Italy*, pp. 151–2 and Zielinski, *Studien*, pp. 5–6.

say that, in contrast to some of his apparent emulators, Gregory seems to have copied faithfully the original texts of those charters which he included in his collection. He himself admitted that he altered what he saw as vulgarisms in grammar and orthography,⁷⁵ but the wording of the formulae he left intact. Surveying the diplomatic of the *Regestum*'s charters, we can see a degree of variation that indicates neither a consistent controlling programme on the part of the copyist nor, on the other hand, complete haphazardness or incompetence; what it shows, quite demonstrably, are the minor variations in practice we would expect between one contemporary charter scribe and another, and, in appropriate parts of the charter, the imprint of the wishes of the author/issuer. Hence, for instance, the consistent use by individual scribes of a single rogation or subscription formula;⁷⁶ or the more haphazard inclusion of the *arenga* in donation charters, indicating above all the concerns of individual issuers.⁷⁷

Yet Gregory's working methods, and their reliability, were the subject of an acrimonious dispute between the German diplomaticists who, in the 1960s and 1970s, were responsible for excellent modern editions of some of the eighth-century Italian charters. In the, perhaps disproportionate, vehemence with which each side attacked the other, their argument bears the traditional hallmarks of the stereotypical academic dispute. Nevertheless, this dispute is of some importance for a study which depends so heavily on the working methods of one high medieval monk.

The dispute began in 1973 when Wilhelm Kurze attacked Herbert Zielinski's study of the eighth-century Spoletan charters, which had appeared in the previous year.⁷⁸ Zielinski had allowed that Gregory had altered the texts in front of him to the extent of correcting grammatical errors and adding or subtracting a word or two, as well as sometimes shortening subscription formulae, as we shall see. He demonstrated the level of Gregory's intervention in painstaking detail in his study.⁷⁹ Kurze, however, besides attributing to Gregory incisive interventions in the formulary of the diplomas, went as far as to conclude that it was not possible to write a diplomatic of the dukes of the eighth century, nor of the charters of that era, because all depend on Gregory.⁸⁰ In his edition of

⁷⁵ *RF* II, pp. 6 and 20. ⁷⁶ Zielinski, *Studien*, pp. 199–203.

⁷⁷ Costambeys, 'Piety, property and power in eighth-century central Italy', pp. 97–191; see below, pp. 38–48.

⁷⁸ W. Kurze, 'Zur Kopiertätigkeit Gregors von Catino', *QFIAB* 53 (1973), pp. 407–56.

⁷⁹ Zielinski, *Studien*, pp. 29–32.

⁸⁰ Kurze's conclusions were accepted uncritically by H. H. Kaminsky, 'Neufunde zur Diplomatik der beneventanischen charta', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 19 (1973), pp. 1–28, even though Zielinski prepared a swift response, and all the scholars involved were contemporaries in the same institution. The atmosphere in the Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rome in the early to mid-1970s can only be guessed at.

the Spoletan ducal diplomas, published in 1981, Carlrichard Brühl called this conclusion 'at once both surprising and absurd'.⁸¹ At the annual congress of the Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo the following year, he savaged Kurze's interpretation.⁸² Though intemperate, his arguments appear conclusive. Kurze's claim that the 'Prae-Regestum' represents the remains of a much longer register that Gregory replaced with the *Regestum* is disproved by the codicology of the two surviving folia bound into the *Chronicon* manuscript. Gregory had evidently originally tried to copy only the royal and ducal diplomas, but had quickly abandoned this attempt in favour of a much fuller project.⁸³ Kurze's objection that a serious study of the diplomatic of the charters in the *Regestum* is not possible can be countered by comparing the royal and ducal diplomas in the *Regestum* with those extant elsewhere.⁸⁴ By the time Brühl's refutation had been published, other scholars were already demonstrating how the *Regestum* could be used to gain a better understanding of early medieval monastic history.⁸⁵

In part, however, that understanding requires that allowance be made for the fundamental reasons behind Gregory's writings. One clue to these has been seen in the collection of excerpts from canon law that Gregory compiled between 1099 and 1103 to introduce the Register, known as the *Collectio Farfensis* or *Collectio Canonum*.⁸⁶ Unusually, we might almost say pointedly for such a collection at this date, the *Collectio Canonum* omits any canon relating to the themes dearest to the reform papacy of the later eleventh century, such as the morality of the clergy and the papacy's own

⁸¹ CDL IV/1, p. VII.

⁸² C. R. Brühl, 'Überlegungen zur Diplomatik der spoletinischen Herzogsurkunde', in *Il ducato di Spoleto*, Atti del IX congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1983), pp. 231–49.

⁸³ See further Kölzer, 'Codex libertatis', p. 617.

⁸⁴ Brühl, 'Überlegungen', pp. 243–7, offers convincing detailed retorts to several of Kurze's importunings of Gregory: it is true, for example, that the *datationes* of two of the royal charters in the *Regestum* – CDL III 23 and 35 – are unusual, but Kurze failed to recognize that they in fact followed ducal practice on this clause, and this borrowing of Spoletan practice could just as well have been by eighth-century royal scribes as by Gregory: Spoletan formulae may have been introduced when diplomas dealt with Spoleto. More straightforwardly, the *conclusio* of one of the *Regestum*'s royal diplomas (CDL III 14), which Kurze identified as an aberration of Gregory, finds an obvious parallel in a diploma for Bobbio (CDL III 22). The fact that Kurze uncritically accepts as genuine the ducal diploma extant in the work of one of the most notorious forgers of the high middle ages – the *Registrum* of Petrus Diaconus – only strengthens Brühl's argument. Even though the document is, in fact, genuine in this case, it was certainly careless of Kurze not to question it at all. For a concise version of Brühl's criticisms, see CDL IV/1, pp. VI–VII.

⁸⁵ E.g. Felten, 'Zur Geschichte', who explicitly accepts Gregory's reliability: pp. 4–5.

⁸⁶ The first of these titles is that preferred by L. Kéry, *Canonical Collections of the Early Middle Ages (c.400–1140). A Bibliographical Guide to the Manuscripts and Literature* (Washington, D.C., 1998), pp. 264–5; the second is that of the standard edition: *Collectio Canonum Regesto Farfensi Inserta*, ed. T. Kölzer, Monumenta iuris canonici, ser. B, Corpus Collectionum, vol. v (Vatican City, 1982).

supremacy over the church. Half of the included canons concern the property of the church. How can this selection be explained? Theo Kölzer argued that it was not a response to papal ambitions in the period, but was intended for the consumption of the monks within the community. It was a general affirmation of Farfa's property rights, not aimed at any party in particular.⁸⁷ Susan Boynton, on the other hand, believes that Gregory had some very specific threats in mind when he was writing.⁸⁸ The period when he was writing the *Regestum*, from 1092 to 1099, was a time of upheaval and uncertainty at the abbey. In the ten years after the death of Abbot Berard I in 1089 the abbey witnessed the failure of the abbacy of his immediate successor, the imposition by the emperor of the reckless and divisive Berard II, and the short-lived abbacy of another incompetent, Oddo.⁸⁹ The powers surrounding the abbey could and did intervene in its affairs, chief among them the anti-pope Clement III. Gregory, Boynton argues, was writing to defend Farfa's patrimony against the specific threat to it from irresponsible abbots and from the pope. This is certainly the more convincing scenario. Gregory was keen to include a series of documents that contributed to his argument against dominion over Farfa by the papacy. But this did not lead him to exclude other documents that might, in the right hands, harm his case: the privilege issued by Pope John VII on Farfa's foundation, and a bull of Pope Stephen IV which we shall discuss in chapter 8, are prominent examples of papal influence over Farfa's affairs that Gregory did include. *In toto*, Gregory's writings worked on a number of different levels. The most important of these was certainly the abbey's current situation at the end of the eleventh century, a situation resolved by the Concordat of Worms of 1122 between Emperor Henry V and Pope Calixtus II, in which, though it did not explicitly mention any monastery, the emperor effectively surrendered imperial control over Farfa as part of a much wider-ranging deal to end the Investiture Controversy.⁹⁰ But the earlier documents included by Gregory speak of a historian's concern to shape a long-term image of the abbey, as an institution that had mediated power between the political players in central Italy for centuries. What is more, Gregory could make a good case that those political players were essentially the same c.1100 as they had been three or four centuries previously. To understand the mental tools he brought to bear on this task, it is necessary to see his work in the context of the production of the

⁸⁷ Kölzer, 'Codex Libertatis', pp. 643–7. ⁸⁸ Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity*, pp. 21–36.

⁸⁹ For a brief summary of events, see McClendon, *Imperial Abbey of Farfa*, pp. 12–13.

⁹⁰ On the Concordat of Worms, see I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy, 1073–1198* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 398–521; on its impact on Farfa, Stroll, *The Medieval Abbey of Farfa*, pp. 240–76.

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documents that were his sources, and the processes of preservation that such sources underwent, processes in which Gregory played such an important part.

THE PRODUCTION AND USE OF DOCUMENTS IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ITALY

The reliability of the charters in the *Regestum Farfense* is therefore less of a problem than their selectivity.⁹¹ An immediate question to confront is: what proportion do the charters transcribed into the *Regestum* represent of the totality of those that had once resided, or had ever resided, in the abbey's archive? It is certainly not comprehensive: there is no extant record of the acquisition of a number of properties listed in the various ninth-century imperial confirmations of the abbey's patrimony,⁹² and many of the charters that are included refer to other documents that are not.⁹³ Although Gregory himself stated that some of the documents in the archive had become illegible, this situation was not simply a question of selection on his part.⁹⁴ Farfa and its archive had been through a number of vicissitudes in the long centuries between its foundation and the moment when Gregory sat down to write, not least the complete abandonment of the abbey in 897 in the face (apparently) of Saracen attack. While some of Farfa's monks and treasures went to Rome, and others to Rieti, the abbey's books and archive were taken by Abbot Peter to the church of S. Hippolytus near Fermo in Marche. From there they were soon moved to the nearby *castellum* of S. Vittoria on Monte Matenano.⁹⁵ They were not returned to Farfa until c.930 at the earliest, but there had certainly been losses in the meantime.⁹⁶

The problem, then, is not that Gregory of Catino was an untrustworthy copyist (as we have seen, he was not), but whether the *Regestum Farfense* is an absolutely trustworthy record of the abbey's transactions over the centuries between c.700 and c.1100. Even at this stage, we can say that it is not: the *RF* bears selective witness to Farfa's archive. According to Gregory, that selection was not his work: he copied what he had. It would be futile to speculate who else may have made decisions about

⁹¹ On the creation of cartularies in general, see P. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994).

⁹² Imperial confirmations are e.g. *RF* II 282a, 300.

⁹³ E.g. *RF* II 59, 73, 98, 125, 153. See further R. Ring, 'The lands of Farfa', PhD thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 4.

⁹⁴ *RF* II, pp. 6–7.

⁹⁵ Hugh of Farfa, *Destructio Monasterii Farfensis*, in *Chronicon Farfense* vol. 1, ed. U. Balzani (Rome, 1903), pp. 31–2.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

what to excise from the abbey's archive and what to retain. In addition to 'background loss', there must have been moments of deliberate selection. The flight from the Saracens was almost certainly important, but it was probably not the only one. Farfa's long history makes it likely that there were others.

Whether the current profile of the archive is the result of one moment of selection or many may be an irresolvable problem, but beneath lies a possibly more approachable question: was selection essentially haphazard, or can we discern a pattern or patterns in the profile of the surviving charters? One useful way to approach this problem is to try to distinguish between documents produced by and for ecclesiastical institutions, and those that were drawn up between two non-ecclesiastical parties. Gregory of Catino was a monk, compiling his works for other monks. Yet Farfa had had dealings with the laity throughout its existence. Recent work allows us to recognize that often this meant that 'lay' documents would find their way into ecclesiastical archives.⁹⁷ The question for us is what Gregory's inclusion or omission of such charters reveals about his purposes and methods.

We should begin by trying to define the 'lay' document, and we can do so by drawing an equation between the document and the transaction that it embodies. Thus we can distinguish charters embodying a transaction in which both parties were professed clerics (whether priests, deacons, monks, etc.); those in which the enacting party (the issuer of the charter) was a lay person but the other party (the addressee) was a cleric; and those in which *both* the issuer *and* the recipient/addressee were laymen or women. Distinct from these, we might suggest, are dispute records. We need to search, then, for those documents in which both the issuer and the addressee were lay people: figures for lay issuers addressing clerics or ecclesiastical institutions will be included here only for comparative purposes. Furthermore, we should exclude from our definition of the 'lay person' the ruler, whether duke, king, emperor or (obviously) pope. In fact, before 774 this means the Lombard king and, in the case of Farfa, the duke of Spoleto. Documents issued by these rulers are quite distinct in their diplomatic from those issued by non-royal people, and were published separately from the latter in their modern editions.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ See W. Brown, 'When documents are destroyed or lost: lay people and archives in the early middle ages', *Early Medieval Europe* 11/4 (2002), pp. 337–60.

⁹⁸ Lombard kings: *CDL* III; those for Farfa are nos. 14, 15, 23, 28, 35 and 43. Dukes of Spoleto: *CDL* IV/1 – all twenty-two of the genuine extant ducal diplomas dating before 774 are drawn from the *Regestum Farfense* (nos. 1–20 and 22–3).

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Applying the classification above to the *Regestum Farfense*'s record up to 774, we can see that of the total of sixty-three charters, forty-three had lay issuers, none had lay issuers and recipients, and four were dispute records, leaving sixteen documents that were issued by clerics.

If, then, we search for documents which may have been (at some point in their history) used and retained by lay people, we draw a blank. We can therefore state with some confidence that when Gregory of Catino rummaged through the shelves of Farfa's archive at the end of the eleventh century, he found no documents from the Lombard period issued by and to lay people. Here, then, is a 'pattern' which may tell us something about the business of selecting documents for, retaining them in, and excising them from, Farfa's archive. In addition, of course, it may tell us something about the lay documents that the Farfa monks encountered, individually or in collections, in the course of their administrative work.

Drawing comparisons with those archives that survive in their originals from eighth-century Italian monasteries, we immediately confront a complication. It should be said straight away that to find *no* lay documents at all from an entire region of early medieval Italy across a (relatively) extended period is unusual. Lombard Italy was emphatically not a place where the laity were unfamiliar with writing (nor, to be fair, has it ever really been portrayed as such).⁹⁹

Nevertheless, for our purposes it is still worth highlighting a couple of features of the Italian evidence. First, Italians were not (ever) solely or even mostly dependent on clerics for their writing. In fact, in the duchy of Spoleto as in the rest of Italy, there was a relatively substantial group of men (probably the majority of charter scribes) who did not profess a clerical title, who wrote charters with consistent frequency, and who may even have made their living from this activity. This has been widely recognized for at least two centuries, largely because some have sought in such men the origins of the precocious emergence in Italy of the professional lawyer.¹⁰⁰

Lay people were therefore heavily involved in the production of documents. But how did they use them, and keep them? There are two specific points to make here. The first is that charters were retained by lay people. One reason for this – and one that we can access most easily – was

⁹⁹ The high degree of familiarity with the written word throughout Lombard Italy is made very evident by N. Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy* (Cambridge, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ N. Everett, 'Scribes and charters in Lombard Italy', *Studi medievali* 3rd ser., 41 (2000), pp. 39–83, at pp. 42–55 offers a very lucid portrayal of these men in the more chronologically limited context of eighth-century Italy. See also Costambeys, 'Piety, property and power', pp. 97–117.

that they provided a form of proof of title to property. As such, they were displayed in court proceedings. There are numerous examples of this (not just from Farfa), and they help us to investigate the role in disputing of documents, in comparison with other forms of proof, quite closely. This will be attempted in chapter 3. For our purposes here, we can mention two examples transmitted in the *Regestum Farfense* that may be taken as fairly typical. The first records an inquest of 747 in which we find a certain Theodicius, the *conductor* (administrator) of a fiscal estate, producing a diploma issued in his favour by Duke Lupo, granting him freedom (*libertas*) of his person and property, including a farm in the *gualdus* 'ad Sanctum Iacinthum'. This latter had, however, been given in its entirety to Farfa by King Ratchis (a grant confirmed by Duke Lupo) in a diploma dated a year earlier than Theodicius's document. Theodicius therefore had to pay a render from his farm to the monastery.¹⁰¹ Secondly, the *RF* includes a dispute record of 750 which refers to two documents issued by a certain Claudianus, one in favour of Farfa, the other issued to his brothers and nephews, both concerning the same estate. As we shall see on examining this case in detail below, when the judges read the charter that the brothers and nephews claimed Claudianus had made in their favour, it was found to be fraudulent (*fraudulenta*), because 'they had neither a proper notary nor witnesses'.¹⁰²

The crucial points to emerge from these two pieces of evidence are therefore: first, that these lay people had retained documents relating to their property (or property that they claimed); secondly, that in both cases these documents failed to provide adequate proof of ownership because they were trumped by documents held by the abbey; thirdly, that the latter documents were preferred because of their precise diplomatic (the date clause in one case, the notarial subscription and eschatocol in the other); and finally, that we know about these lay documents *because* they failed in their essential purpose: Farfa retained the records of their victories, *notitiae iudicati*, which themselves nullified the lay documents.

The pattern of evidence from other ecclesiastical archives in which original documents survive (that is, that were not 'cartularized') is very different from that of the *Regestum Farfense*. It is natural to focus on two of the most extensive for this period: the charters in the Archivio arcivescovile in Lucca,¹⁰³ and the charters from the archive of the monastery of

¹⁰¹ *CDL* v 8.

¹⁰² *CDL* IV/1 12: 'nec notarium verum habebant nec testimonia'. See below, pp. 110–20.

¹⁰³ See, in brief, C. Wickham, *The Mountains and the City* (Oxford, 1988), pp. ix–xi. Those non-royal documents dated earlier than 774 are all published in *CDL* vols. I and II.

Table 1.1 'Lay' documents in Lucca and Monte Amiata collections

	Lucca	Monte Amiata
Total charters to 774	149	21
Charters with lay issuers	67	2
Charters with lay issuers and recipients	11	16
Dispute records, etc.	5	0

San Salvatore on Monte Amiata, now in the Archivio di Stato in Siena.¹⁰⁴ If we classify these according to the same categories as those applied to the Farfa material, the pattern – and contrast – is quite evident (see Table 1.1).

In other words, more than 7 per cent of Lucca's pre-774 charters are what I have defined as 'lay documents'. Most strikingly, more than 76 per cent of Monte Amiata's fall into the same category.

In collections of surviving original charters, therefore, lay documents are a significant presence. Yet, these collections are ecclesiastical archives, like Farfa's (and were such from an early date). If lay documents did pass into ecclesiastical archives in these cases, it is not an unreasonable assumption that they also did so in Farfa's case. Discrepancies between the survivals in Lucca and Monte Amiata and those copied into the *Regestum Farfense* therefore help to show how the latter collection was arrived at, as well as, of course, telling us something about the relationship between lay documents and ecclesiastical archives in the former cases.

How, then, to interpret the profiles of the Lucca and Monte Amiata collections? This is really two questions. First, how do the transactions that the charters embody relate to their preservation? And secondly, how does their subject matter, including the identity of their issuers and recipients, relate to their preservation?

As to types of transaction, the Lucca and Monte Amiata collections attest to a thriving market in land among the laity, which was routinely administered in writing. The figures here are straightforward. Of the eleven pre-774 lay documents from Lucca, seven are sales and one an exchange of property (two are essentially testamentary acts and one is a record that will be discussed shortly). For Monte Amiata, of the sixteen lay documents, ten are sales, the rest essentially leases (mostly in the form of promissory undertakings: that is, *promissiones* rather than *libelli*). So land sales predominate. But it is a document from Lucca that looks most anomalous. It suggests that this predominance might itself attest to

¹⁰⁴ And edited by W. Kurze, *CDA*.

selection on someone's part: *CDL* 70 is the record of a mother's *morgincap* (a 'morning gift') made by the father for the benefit of his sons. This is such a mundane document (and the list of the mother's goods – clothing, etc. – is so mundane) as to suggest that it is not the document itself that is anomalous, but its inclusion in Lucca's archive. In general, what were preserved at Lucca (and even more so at Monte Amiata) were *only* documents or bodies of documents about land transactions.

The absence of donations might be seen as the result of selection on the part of the ecclesiastical archivists. But it is hard to see why they should exclude a category of document that constituted quite as good a proof of ownership as any other. This may, instead, simply be an indication that gifts of land between lay people were not very common in early medieval Italy – a conclusion which, it should be noted, goes against the grain of current thinking about gifts and the 'gift economy' in the early medieval West.¹⁰⁵

The figures therefore indicate a straightforward reason why documents were retained both by lay people and subsequently by ecclesiastical institutions: they recorded the ownership history of landed property. As suggested above, such records were only or mostly useful when and if that ownership was disputed. They were essentially public documents, in the sense that they had no intrinsic value. There was no point in hoarding them: quite the reverse – they were created in order to be displayed. All that was important was to keep them secure.

To turn to these documents' issuers and their recipients, what has been said so far suggests that ecclesiastical institutions archived the documents relating to properties as and when they acquired them. We can see this quite clearly in cases from both the Lucca and Monte Amiata collections. From Lucca we have charters revealing that between 742 and 752 a certain Crispinus bought land in several places, including twice from laymen at Pescia near Lucca.¹⁰⁶ With these he established the church of San Martino in Lunata, the future of which he provided for in 764: after the deaths of himself and his immediate heirs, it was to pass to the bishop of Lucca.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the Monte Amiata archive includes charters of 765 and 791 by which a certain Walcari obtained from other laymen lands at Marano (near Sovana, Southern Tuscany).¹⁰⁸ These, evidently, he attached to the church that he had founded there, half of the substance of which in 793 he gave to Monte Amiata.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ See John Moreland, 'Concepts of the early medieval economy', in I. L. Hansen and C. Wickham eds., *The Long Eighth Century* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 1–34.

¹⁰⁶ *CDL* I 80, 88, 102 and 106 (the latter two not 'lay documents'). ¹⁰⁷ *CDL* II 179.

¹⁰⁸ *CDA* I 12 (a.765) and *CDA* I 39 (a.791): the former was a purchase, the latter an exchange.

¹⁰⁹ *CDA* I 42.