



DPP

Digitising Patterns of Power Peripheral Mountains in the Medieval World

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SIGNS OF POWER IN CAROLINGIAN NORTH-EASTERN ITALY (8TH-9TH CENT.):

an Archaeological Approach

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The strategic importance of the eastern Alps in the Carolingian empire can hardly be overestimated: its complicated networks of passes, roads, tracks and rivers guaranteed direct north-south connections from and to Italy, Bavaria, Carantania, the Carpathian Basin and the Danube. The consolidation of Carolingian power over the region determined a reorganization and redistribution of power, and north-eastern Italy was more securely tied to the Empire by reworking its political and ecclesiastical institutions. If Lombard office holders were gradually replaced by Carolingian appointees and Frankish agents inserted piecemeal in place of local aristocrats, local churches were integrated into Francia through the bestowing of grants and privileges. Although the volume of evidence is not great, archaeology, architecture and texts can combine to reveal the Carolingian impact on the Italian side of the eastern Alps. Historical developments can be archaeologically detected in the construction, renewal and redecoration of urban and rural churches, in the re-occupation of late antique and early medieval fortified settlements, and in a (limited) series of dress-accessories closely paralleled in other areas of the Carolingian world. The paper will explore this evidence setting it within its larger historical context.

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